Rhetorical Grammar

Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects

Martha Kolln · Loretta Gray

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Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects

EIGHTH EDITION

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Preface for Teachers

Grammatical choices. Rhetorical effects. These two phrases tell the story of rhetorical grammar, the marriage of grammar and rhetoric for the composition classroom. Writers who recognize the choices available to them will be well equipped for controlling the effects of their words. As we explain to students in the Introduction,

> To study grammar in this way—that is, to consider the conscious knowledge of sentence structure as your toolkit—is the essence of rhetorical grammar.

But is there really a place for the study of grammar in the composition class? Is there time for grammar in a syllabus already filled with prewriting, drafting, and revising and with reading what others have written? The answer is yes. In fact you are already spending time on grammar—when you discuss cohesion and transition; when you explain in a conference why a structure is misplaced, awkward, or incomplete; when you help students understand the effects of certain words on the reader; when you point out redundancy; when you suggest sentence revision; when you praise gems of precision. These are principles of grammar and style and revision that are now part of your writing class. *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects* will help you teach these and many more such principles—and it will do so in a systematic way.

And while the book is addressed to student writers in the composition classroom, we are gratified to know that it is also being used successfully in grammar courses for teacher preparation. In addition to the basics of grammar, future language arts teachers will gain valuable insight into the teaching of writing.

You'll discover that the lessons in this book are not the definitions and categories and rules of traditional grammar that your students may have encountered back in middle school. Rather, *Rhetorical Grammar* brings together the insights of composition researchers and linguists; it makes the

connection between writing and grammar that has been missing from our classrooms. It also de-emphasizes the prescriptive rules and error correction prominent in some textbooks, offering instead explanations of the rhetorical choices that are available. And, perhaps what is most important, it gives students confidence in their own language ability by helping them recognize the intuitive grammar expertise that all human beings share.

This difference in the purpose of *Rhetorical Grammar* is especially significant. Too often the grammar lessons that manage to find their way into the writing classroom are introduced for remedial purposes: to fix comma splices, misplaced modifiers, agreement errors, and such. As a consequence, the study of grammar has come to have strictly negative, remedial associations—a Band-Aid for weak and inexperienced writers, rather than a rhetorical tool that all writers should understand and control.

This book substitutes for that negative association of grammar a positive and functional point of view—a rhetorical view: that an understanding of grammar is a valuable tool for the writer; that it can be taught and learned successfully if it is presented in the right way and in the right place, in connection with composition. The book can also stimulate class discussion on such issues as sentence focus and rhythm, cohesion, reader expectation, paraphrase, diction, revision—discussions of rhetorical and stylistic issues that will be meaningful throughout the writing process. And the students will learn to apply these grammar concepts to their own writing. This is the kind of knowledge that will support not only their academic career but their lifelong literacy as well.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

This textbook, now in its eighth edition, has benefited from suggestions offered by reviewers, who have all used *Rhetorical Grammar* in their classrooms. These suggestions are reflected in the changes made to the book you are now holding in your hands or reading on your screen:

- Chapters include new terminology for the two major word categories: the *open* classes (formerly called form classes) and *closed* classes (formerly called structure classes). This change has been made to help students avoid the possible confusion caused by other uses of the terms *form* and *structure*.

- The chapters on adverbials, adjectivals, and nominals have been moved forward so that students can more readily draw on their knowledge of sentence patterns, coordination, and subordination when studying these chapters.

- Chapter 1 incorporates more detailed explanations to help students who have little experience studying grammar. The revisions in Chapter 13, on punctuation, give students the opportunity to

    review the punctuation rules they have studied in previous chapters and to learn the distinction between open and close punctuation.

- A new exercise or discussion prompt has been added to each chapter. Whenever possible, sentences in an exercise form connected discourse or center on a single theme or topic.

- New passages from published sources have replaced passages that are old or no longer considered fair use. New sample student assignments have also been added.

- Explanations and examples have been revised throughout for clarity, accuracy, and currency.

Retained in this edition are the closing sections—Key Terms, Rhetorical Reminders, and Punctuation Reminders—all designed to help students organize and review material. The Glossary of Terms provides easy access to definitions of new vocabulary; the Index directs students to other pages where topics are discussed. An Answer Key gives students the opportunity to check their work on odd-numbered items in the exercises.

The primary focus throughout the book remains on revision and style, on the importance to students of understanding the writer's tools. For students interested in further study, we have placed at the end of the book a bibliography of sources relevant to the topics discussed.

Depending on the goals of your course, you may find that *Rhetorical Grammar* is the only text your students need; on the other hand, it can certainly work well in conjunction with a reader or rhetoric. In either case, you'll discover that class time can be used much more efficiently when your students come to class with the shared background that this textbook provides. The Instructor's Manual includes answers to the even-numbered items in the exercises, further explanations of grammatical principles, and suggestions for class activities.

STUDENT SUPPLEMENT: PEARSON WRITER

Pearson Writer is a digital, mobile-first, all-in-one application intended to assist with all aspects of college writing. When students have questions about writing, grammar, research, or specific disciplines as they work on writing assignments, they can easily search Writer—in their own words, at anytime, from anywhere—and get accurate, easy-to-understand help. A *My Projects* component keeps track of writing assignments for all courses in one place with due dates, monitors where one is in the process, helps at each stage, and provides a place to manage sources, notes, and a bibliography. A *Writing Review* component offers preliminary feedback to help revise and edit writing by automatically highlighting grammar and

style issues in one's writing. Students paste their writing into the Review space, and possible errors are automatically highlighted with feedback and suggested revision. In addition, Pearson Writer includes tools to help cite sources in any citation format, and a rich database of sources that can be used for research on any topic for any course.

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To learn more about Pearson Writer and to purchase access online, go to: http://www.writer.pearsonhighered.com.

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As always, we are indebted to our families for their unwavering support. We hope they see their influence on these pages.

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Introduction

WHAT IS RHETORICAL GRAMMAR?

To understand the subject matter of a book with the title *Rhetorical Grammar*, you'll obviously have to understand not only the meaning of both *rhetoric* and *grammar* but also their relationship to each other. *Grammar* is undoubtedly familiar to you. *Rhetoric*, on the other hand—as well as *rhetorical*—may not be familiar at all. So, to figure out what rhetorical grammar is all about, we'll begin with the familiar *grammar*.

If you're like many students, you may associate the idea of grammar with rules—various dos and don'ts that apply to sentence structure and punctuation. You may remember studying certain rules to help you correct or prevent errors in your writing. You may remember the grammar handbook as the repository of such rules.

But now consider another possibility: that YOU are the repository of the rules. You—not a book. It might help you to understand this sense of grammar if you think of a grammar rule not as a rule or law created by an authority but rather as a description of language structure. Stored within you, then, in your computer-like brain, is a system of rules, a system that enables you to create the sentences of your native language. The fact that you have such an internalized system means that when you study grammar you are studying what you already "know."

According to linguistic researchers,[1] you began internalizing the rules of your language perhaps before you were born, when you began to differentiate the particular rhythms of the language you were hearing. In the first year of life you began to create the rules that would eventually produce sentences.

You were little more than a year old when you began to demonstrate your grammar ability by naming things around you; a few months later

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[1]See the section Language Development in the Bibliography.

you were putting together two- and three-word strings, and before long your language took on the features of adult sentences. No one taught you. You didn't have language lessons. You learned all by yourself, from hearing the language spoken around you—and you did so unconsciously. When you started to read, your acquisition of language continued. In fact, you are still acquiring language: As you learn new words, you learn (not necessarily through studying) the sentence structures in which those words commonly appear.

This process of language development is universal—that is, it occurs across cultures, and it occurs in every child with normal physical and mental development. No matter what your native language is, you have internalized its basic grammar system. By the time you were five or six years old, you were an expert at narrating events, at asking questions, at describing people and places, probably at arguing. The internalized system of rules that accounts for this language ability of yours is our definition of *grammar*.

When you study grammar in school, then, you are to a great extent studying what you already "know." Note that the verb *know* needs those quotation marks because we're not using it in the usual sense. Your grammar knowledge is largely subconscious: You don't know consciously what you "know." When you study grammar you are learning *about* those grammar rules that you use subconsciously every time you speak or write—as well as every time you make sense of what you hear or read.

But as you know, learning to write involves other rules, the conventions of writing. When you write, you must pay attention to rules about paragraphing and sentence completeness and capital letters and quotation marks and apostrophes and commas and, perhaps the trickiest of all, spelling.

To be effective, however, writing also requires attention to rhetoric—and here is where the term *rhetorical* comes into the picture. *Rhetoric* is the art of using language effectively. Attending to your rhetorical situation means that your audience—the reader—and your purpose make a difference in the way you write on any given topic. To a large degree, that rhetorical situation—the audience, purpose, and topic—determines the grammatical choices you make, choices about sentence structure and vocabulary, even punctuation. Rhetorical grammar is about those choices.

This meaning of *rhetoric* is easy to illustrate: Just imagine the difference between texting a friend and writing a letter to the dean of your college, requesting funds for a new film club. Think of the differences there might be in those two different rhetorical situations. One obvious difference, of course, is vocabulary; you wouldn't use the same words with two such different audiences. The grammatical structures are also going to be different, determined in part by your tone or level of formality.

Understanding rhetorical grammar means understanding both the grammatical choices available to you when you write and the rhetorical

effects those choices will have on your reader. The dean of your college will probably recognize—and approve of—your letter as evidence of a serious-minded, articulate student. She will feel assured that any funding she provides will benefit the students on campus. The good friend who gets your text message will recognize your texting style and understand your abbreviated note.

You can think of the grammatical choices you have as tools in your writer's toolkit. You have a variety of tools for the differences in language that different rhetorical situations call for. To study grammar in this way—that is, to consider the conscious knowledge of sentence structure as your toolkit—is the essence of rhetorical grammar.

We begin this study of the tools by focusing, in Part I, on the words and phrases that constitute basic sentences, the patterns these sentences typically follow, the important role of verbs, and techniques for joining sentences (really *clauses*, but we'll discuss that term later). Part II looks in more detail at expanding sentences and the rhetorical reasons for doing so. In Part III, you'll learn to control your message to account for reader expectations, while at the same time developing your writer's voice.

In Part IV, you'll find yourself consulting—and appreciating—your subconscious language expertise in the chapter covering word classes. The final chapter, in Part V, describes the purpose and rhetorical effects of punctuation. The Glossary of Punctuation that follows Chapter 13 pulls together all the punctuation rules you have studied in context throughout the book and adds a few more to your toolkit.

The Bibliography that follows the Glossary of Punctuation lists the works mentioned in the text, along with other books and articles on rhetoric and grammar. The future teachers among you will find them useful for research purposes and for your teaching preparation.

Throughout the book you'll find exercises on the topics you've studied. Answers to the odd-numbered exercise items are included in the back of the book. You'll also be able to keep a style inventory, revise your own essays, and participate in group discussions on topics related to your reading.

Be sure to use the Glossary of Terms and the Index if you're having problems understanding a concept. They are there to provide help.

We'd like to conclude this brief introduction with a piece of advice: Don't be deceived by the bad press the word *grammar* has been given over the years. The study of grammar is not dull, and it's not difficult. If you take the time to read the pages in this book carefully and study the language you hear or read every day, you will easily fill your writer's toolkit to the brim and become confident and skillful at creating sentences appropriate for the rhetorical situations you encounter.

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PART I

The Structure of Sentences

Using a language may be compared to riding a horse: much of one's success depends upon an understanding of what it can and will do.
—RICHARD WEAVER

You read in the Introduction that it's useful to think of your grammatical choices as tools in your writer's toolkit. Consider the tools filling the drawers in the mechanic's toolbox and the tools in the carpenter's shop. Each has its name and its place and its particular job to do. The same is true for your writer's tools.

In these first four chapters you'll learn about your writing tools: their names, their places, their jobs, what they can and will do:

Chapter 1: A Review of Words and Phrases
Chapter 2: Sentence Patterns
Chapter 3: Our Versatile Verbs
Chapter 4: Coordination and Subordination

You'll discover that understanding the tools available to you—knowing the terminology of grammar and using it to think about and talk about your writing—will give you confidence as you compose and as you revise.

Some of the terminology will already be familiar. After all, you have spent a dozen years learning to read and write, learning the conventions of spelling and punctuation and paragraphing. In other words, you're not encountering an exotic new subject in these pages. So as you read, don't make the mistake of trying to memorize every new term and grammatical concept. Instead, filter what you are reading through your own experience; ask yourself how and where that concept fits into your understanding.

A Review of Words and Phrases

CHAPTER PREVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review words and phrases. For the most part, we'll be using the terms of traditional grammar; however, instead of discussing the traditional eight parts of speech, we'll introduce you to two broad categories for classifying words: open classes and closed classes. (Pay attention to any words in boldface; they constitute your grammar vocabulary. Definitions for these terms are provided in the Glossary.) This review will lay the groundwork for the study of the sentence patterns and their expansions in the chapters that follow. By the end of this chapter, you'll be able to

- distinguish between the open classes and the closed classes of words;
- identify features of the four open classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs;
- identify the main components of phrases;
- recognize the subject–predicate relationship as the core structure in all sentences.

OPEN CLASSES

Let's begin our review by looking at **open classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives**, and **adverbs**.[1] Constantly admitting new members, these four word classes constitute over 99 percent of our vocabulary. They

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[1]Words in bold type are defined in the Glossary of Terms, beginning on page 240.

differ from **closed classes** not only because of their open membership but also because most nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs can be identified by their form. The majority of words in each of the open classes have particular endings, or suffixes. (The open classes are also called form classes.)

NOUNS AND VERBS

Here are two simple sentences to consider in terms of form, each consisting of a noun and a verb:

> Cameras flashed.
> People clapped.

You're probably familiar with the traditional definition of *noun* as the name of a person, place, or thing and *verb* as an action word. These definitions based on meaning are certainly useful (*noun* actually means "name" in Latin), although they're not always accurate. For example, a noun like *kindness* is not exactly a thing, nor is *expect* an action. And many, if not most, so-called action words, including *flash* and *clap*, are also nouns: *a flash of light*; *a clap of thunder.*

So in the case of our open classes, we'll go beyond meaning and consider a word's form in our definitions. Our two sample sentences illustrate one suffix for nouns and one for verbs: the **plural** marker, *-s*, on the noun *camera*; the **past tense** marker, *-ed*, on the verbs *flash* and *clap*. We'll use these "formal" characteristics as criteria in our definitions of *noun* and *verb.*

The plural *-s* is one of two noun endings that we call **inflections**; the other noun inflection is the **possessive-case** ending, the apostrophe-plus-*s* (*Mary's laugh*)—or, in the case of most plural nouns, just the apostrophe (*the readers' expectations*).

When the dictionary identifies a word as a verb, it begins with the **base form** (*clap*). Comprehensive dictionaries will also list inflected forms. The **third-person singular**, which adds an *-s* to the base form (*claps*), is used with the **pronouns** *he*, *she*, *it*, or with nouns these pronouns can replace. The **present participle** adds *-ing* to the base form (*clapping*). The addition of *-ed* to the base form produces a verb's past tense and **past participle** (*clapped*). We'll look at these forms more closely in Chapter 3.

But for now, let's revise the traditional definitions by basing them not on the meaning of the words but rather on their forms:

> ***A noun is a word that can be made plural and/or possessive.***
> ***A verb is a word that can show tense, such as present and past.***

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Many words in English can serve as either nouns or verbs.

>   I made a *promise* to my boss. (noun)
>
>   I *promised* to be on time for work. (verb)

   Write a pair of short sentences for each of the following words, demonstrating that they can be either nouns or verbs.

>   *visit   plant   point   feature   audition   offer*

Compare your sentences with those of a classmate. First, identify the nouns and verbs. Put an N next to each sentence that contains one of these words as a noun. Put a V next to each sentence that uses one of these words as a verb. Next, explain your reasoning. Can the word you identified as a noun be made plural or possessive? Can the word you identified as a verb be inflected?

THE NOUN PHRASE

The term **noun phrase** may be new to you. A **phrase** will always have a head, or **headword**; and as you might expect, the headword of the noun phrase is a noun. Most noun phrases also include a noun signaler, or marker, called a **determiner**. Here are three noun phrases you have seen in this chapter, with their headwords underlined and their determiners shown in italics:

>   *the* <u>headword</u>
>
>   *a* <u>unit</u>
>
>   *the* traditional <u>definition</u>

   As the third example illustrates, the headword may be preceded by an **adjective**—a word that modifies (that is, provides information about) a noun. Notice how *definition*, without an adjective, is a generic reference, while *traditional definition* is more specific.

   As you may have noticed in the three examples, the opening determiners are the **articles** *a* and *the*. While they are our most common determiners, other word groups also function as determiners, signaling noun phrases. For example, the function of nouns and pronouns in the possessive case is almost always that of determiner:

>   *Mary's* laugh, *Sam's* expression, the *Johnsons'* invitation
>
>   *her* laugh, *his* expression, *their* invitation

Other common words functioning as determiners are the **demonstrative pronouns**—*this*, *that*, *these*, *those*:

> *this* old house, *that* new condo
>
> *those* expensive sneakers, *these* cheap boots

Because noun phrases can be single words, as we saw in our earlier examples (*Cameras flashed*; *People clapped*), it follows that not all noun phrases will have determiners. **Proper nouns**, such as the names of people and places (*Mary*, *Boston*), and plural nouns with a general meaning (*cameras*) are among the most common that appear without a noun signaler.

In spite of these exceptions, however, it's accurate to say that most noun phrases do begin with determiners. Likewise, it's accurate to say— and important to recognize—that whenever you encounter a determiner, you can be sure you are at the beginning of a noun phrase. In other words, articles (*a/an*, *the*) and certain other words, such as possessive nouns and pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and numbers, usually tell you that a noun headword is on the way.

We can now identify three defining characteristics of nouns:

A noun is a word that can be made plural and/or possessive; it occupies the headword position in the noun phrase; it is usually signaled by a determiner.

EXERCISE 1

Identify the determiners and headwords of the noun phrases in the following sentences. If a noun phrase does not have a determiner, how do you know it is still a noun phrase?

Note: Answers to the odd-numbered exercises are provided, beginning on page 253.

1. The use of computer-generated imagery, or CGI, has become widespread since the 1990s.

2. CGI helped produce the lush, cinematic rain forests of James Cameron's *Avatar* as well as the teeming orc armies of Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* series.

3. In the courtroom, a jury's decision may now be informed by CGI models.

4. In the operating room, surgeons may rely on three-dimensional images to improve their patients' prognoses.
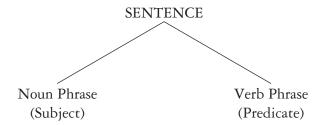
5. And in simulated environments, ordinary CGI users can inhabit their fantasies while interacting with fictional characters.

6. Clearly, this innovation has the potential to shape our future.

....

THE VERB PHRASE

As you'd expect, the headword of a **verb phrase** is the verb; the other components, if any, will depend in part on the subclass of verb, for example, whether it is followed by a noun phrase. A noun phrase follows a **transitive verb** (*The comedian <u>greeted</u> the audience*) but not an **intransitive verb** (*The audience <u>laughed</u>*). Our two earlier examples—*Cameras flashed*; *People clapped*—illustrate instances of single-word noun phrases and single-word verb phrases. In the sections that follow, you'll learn how phrases are expanded.

NP + VP = S

This formula, NP + VP = S, is another way of saying "**Subject** plus **Predicate** equals Sentence." Our formula with the labels NP and VP simply emphasizes the form of those two sentence parts, noun phrase and verb phrase. The NP functions as the subject of the sentence; the VP functions as the predicate. The following diagram includes labels for both form (*noun phrase*, *verb phrase*) and function (*subject*, *predicate*):

Given what you have learned so far about noun phrases and verb phrases—and with the help of your intuition—you should have no trouble recognizing the two parts of the following sentences. If you have trouble finding the subject (NP) and predicate (VP) of a sentence, you can use your subconscious knowledge of pronouns. Simply substitute a **personal pronoun** (*I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*) for the subject. What remains is the predicate.

Our county commissioners passed a new ordinance.
The mayor's husband spoke against the ordinance.

The mayor was upset with her husband.

The merchants in town are unhappy.

This new law prohibits billboards on major highways.

As a quick review of noun phrases, identify the headwords of the subject noun phrases in the five sentences just listed.

You probably had little difficulty identifying the headwords: *commissioners*, *husband*, *mayor*, *merchants*, *law*.

EXERCISE 2

Find the border between the subject and the predicate of the sentences from the previous discussion; then supply a pronoun for the subject.

Examples: Our county / has three commissioners. (It)

1. Our county commissioners passed a new ordinance. (   )

2. The mayor's husband spoke against the ordinance. (   )

3. The mayor was upset with her husband. (   )

4. The merchants in town are unhappy. (   )

5. This new law prohibits billboards on major highways. (   )

As your answers no doubt show, the personal pronoun stands in for the entire noun phrase, not just the noun headword. Making that substitution, which you do automatically in speech, can help you recognize not only the subject/predicate boundary but the boundaries of noun phrases throughout the sentence.

Recognition of this subject–predicate relationship is the first step in the study of sentence structure. Equally important for the classification of sentences into sentence patterns is the concept of the verb as the central, pivotal position in the sentence. Before moving on to the sentence patterns, however, we'll look briefly at two other word classes, adjectives and adverbs, which, like nouns and verbs, can often be identified by their forms. We'll then describe the prepositional phrase, perhaps our most common modifier, one that adds information to both the noun phrase and the verb phrase.

ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

The other two open classes, adjectives and adverbs, like nouns and verbs, can usually be recognized by their form and/or by their position in the sentence. Both function as **modifiers**.

The inflectional endings that identify adjectives and some adverbs are the **comparative** suffix, *-er*, and the **superlative**, *-est*:

Adjective	Adverb
big	near
bigger	nearer
biggest	nearest

When a word has two or more syllables, the comparative and superlative markers are usually *more* and *most*, rather than *-er* and *-est*:

beautiful	quickly
more beautiful	more quickly
most beautiful	most quickly

Another test of whether a word is an adjective or adverb, as opposed to a noun or verb, is its ability to pattern with a **qualifier**, such as *very*:

very beautiful	very quickly

You'll notice that these tests (the inflectional endings and *very*) can help you differentiate adjectives and adverbs from nouns and verbs, but they do not help you distinguish the two word classes from each other.

There is one special clue about word form that we use to help identify adverbs: the *-ly* ending. However, the *-ly* is not an inflectional suffix like *-er* or *-est*; when we add one of these to an adjective—*happier*, *happiest*— the word remains an adjective (just as a noun with the plural inflection added is still a noun). In contrast, the *-ly* ending is typically added to adjectives to turn them into adverbs:

Adjective				Adverb
quick	+	ly	=	quickly
happy	+	ly	=	happily

Rather than an inflectional suffix, the *-ly* is a **derivational suffix**: It enables us to *derive* adverbs from adjectives. Incidentally, the *-ly* means "like": quickly = quick-like; happily = happy-like. And because we have so many adjectives that can morph into adverbs in this way, we are not often mistaken when we assume that an *-ly* word is an adverb. Nonetheless, you will encounter common *-ly* words that are not adverbs (*friendly*, *chilly*, *curly*). (In Chapter 12 you'll read about derivational suf- fixes for all four open classes.)

In addition to these adverbs of manner, as the *-ly* adverbs are called, we have an inventory of other adverbs that present no clue of form; among them are *then*, *now*, *soon*, *here*, *there*, *everywhere*, *afterward*, *often*,

sometimes, *seldom*, *always*. Often the best way to identify an adverb is to determine the kind of information it supplies to the sentence—information of time, place, manner, frequency, and the like; in other words, an adverb answers such questions as *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*, and *how often*. (Adjectives will tell you *which one*, *what sort*, *how big*, and so on.) Adverbs can also be identified on the basis of their position in the predicate and their movability.

As you read in the discussion of noun phrases, the position between the determiner and the headword is where we find adjectives:

> the <u>traditional</u> definition   this <u>old</u> house

Adverbs, on the other hand, modify verbs and, as such, will be part of the predicate:

> Some residents spoke <u>passionately</u> for the ordinance.
> Mario <u>suddenly</u> hit the brakes.

One of the features of adverbs that makes them so versatile for writers and speakers is their movability: They can often be moved to a different place in the predicate—and they can even leave the predicate and open the sentence:

> Mario hit the brakes <u>suddenly</u>.
> <u>Suddenly</u> Mario hit the brakes.

Bear in mind, however, that some adverbs are more movable than others. We probably don't want to move *passionately* to the beginning of its sentence. And in making the decision to move the adverb, we also want to consider the context, the relation of the sentence to others around it.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Identify the adjectives and adverbs in the following sentences. Are the adverbs movable? If so, rewrite the sentence, moving the adverb to another position. Compare your revised sentences with those of your classmates.

1. I have finally finished my annual report.
2. Maria has now made great progress toward her goal.
3. The hunters moved stealthily through the deep woods.
4. The young activists organized rallies everywhere.
5. My best and oldest friend occasionally surprises me with a visit.

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Before discussing sentence patterns, we'll now take a quick look at the **prepositional phrase**, a two-part structure consisting of a **preposition** followed by a noun phrase called the **object of the preposition**. Prepositions generally have meanings referring to time, space, or connection. Ten of the most common prepositions are *of*, *in*, *to*, *for*, *with*, *on*, *at*, *from*, *by*, and *about*. Prepositional phrases appear throughout our sentences, sometimes as part of a noun phrase and sometimes as a modifier of the verb.

In a noun phrase, the prepositional phrase, which itself includes a noun phrase, adds a detail or makes clear the identity of the noun it follows.

> Fans <u>in the ballpark</u> celebrated boisterously.

In this sentence the *in* phrase, with its own noun phrase *the ballpark*, is part of the subject noun phrase. Notice that *they* can replace *fans in the ballpark*:

> They celebrated boisterously.

Because this *in* phrase functions like an adjective, telling us which fans are celebrating boisterously (those in the ballpark, not those in the parking lot), we call it an **adjectival** prepositional phrase. In a different sentence, that same phrase could function adverbially:

> Fans celebrated boisterously <u>in the ballpark</u>.

Here the *in* phrase in the predicate functions like an adverb, telling where the fans are celebrating—so we refer to its function as **adverbial**. Another good clue that the phrase is adverbial is its movability; it could open the sentence:

> <u>In the ballpark</u> fans celebrated boisterously.

Remember that the nouns *adjective* and *adverb* name word classes; they name forms. When we add the *-al* or *-ial* suffix—*adjectival* and *adverbial*—they become the names of modifying functions—functions that adjectives and adverbs normally perform. In other words, the terms *adjectival* and *adverbial* can apply to structures other than adjectives and adverbs—such as prepositional phrases, as we have just seen.

> **Modifiers of nouns are called *adjectivals*, no matter what their form. They usually answer the questions *which one* or *what sort*.**
>
> **Modifiers of verbs are called *adverbials*, no matter what their form. They answer the questions *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*, and *how often*.**

EXERCISE 3

Underline the prepositional phrases in the following sentences and identify them as either adjectival or adverbial:

1. You will often find a cake at special parties.

2. Birthday cakes are common in many Western cultures.

3. Birthday cakes in ancient Rome contained nuts and honey.

4. Cupcakes are a popular alternative to birthday cakes.

5. Many people add candles to the top of a birthday cake.

....

Unlike the open classes, a preposition cannot be distinguished by its form; that is, there are no special endings that identify it. Prepositions are one of the word classes called **closed classes**. Other closed classes include determiners, qualifiers (such as *very*, which you saw in the discussion of adjectives and adverbs), **auxiliaries**, also known as helping verbs, and **conjunctions**. We discuss auxiliaries and conjunctions in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

Because prepositional phrases are such common structures in our language, you might find it helpful to review the lists of **prepositions** in Chapter 12.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Add modifiers (adverbs, adjectives, or prepositional phrases) to the five sentences that follow. Then exchange your sentences with a classmate and identify the modifiers added. As a class, vote on your favorite sentences.

Example: The pipes caused contamination.

The *rusty* pipes *under the sink* caused *serious* contamination *of our water.*

1. The tulips are finally blooming.
2. The children annoyed the neighbors.
3. The carpet matches the furniture.
4. The water glistened in the light.
5. Thunderstorms frightened the hikers.

KEY TERMS

In this chapter you've been introduced to many basic terms that describe sentence grammar. This list may look formidable, but some of the terms were probably familiar already; those that are new will become more familiar as you continue the study of sentences.

Adjectival	Headword	Possessive case
Adjective	Intransitive verb	Predicate
Adverb	Inflection	Preposition
Adverbial	Modifier	Prepositional phrase
Article	Noun	Present participle
Auxiliaries	Noun phrase	Pronoun
Base form of verb	Object of the	Proper noun
Closed class	preposition	Qualifier
Comparative	Open class	Subject
Conjunctions	Past participle	Superlative
Derivational suffix	Past tense	Third-person singular
Demonstrative	Personal pronoun	Transitive verb
pronoun	Phrase	Verb
Determiner	Plural	Verb phrase

Sentence Patterns

CHAPTER PREVIEW

This chapter extends your study of sentence structure, focusing on seven sentence patterns that account for the underlying skeletal structure of nearly all sentences in the language. These basic patterns will give you a solid framework for understanding the expanded sentences presented in the chapters that follow. This chapter will help you to

- recognize four types of verbs: *be*, linking, intransitive, and transitive;
- identify seven basic sentence patterns;
- distinguish among different types of verb complements;
- discuss the placement and function of optional adverbials;
- recognize imperative and interrogative sentences (commands and questions);
- use short sentences to good effect.

RHETORICAL EFFECTS

We open our study of sentence patterns by looking at the first paragraph of an essay by Annie Dillard, a well-known essayist and observer of nature:

> A weasel is wild. Who knows what he thinks? He sleeps in his underground den, his tail draped over his nose. Sometimes he lives in his den for two days without leaving. Outside, he stalks rabbits, mice, muskrats, and birds, killing more bodies than he can eat warm, and often dragging the carcasses home.

> Obedient to instinct, he bites his prey at the neck, either split-
> ting the jugular vein at the throat or crunching the brain at
> the base of the skull, and he does not let go. One naturalist
> refused to kill a weasel who was socketed into his hand deeply
> as a rattlesnake. The man could in no way pry the tiny weasel
> off, and he had to walk half a mile to water, the weasel dan-
> gling from his palm, and soak him off like a stubborn label.

> —Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*

Dillard's opening sentence couldn't be simpler. She has used what may be our most common sentence pattern: "Something is something." Dillard could easily have come up with fancier words, certainly more scientific-sounding ones, if she had wanted to:

> Scientists recognize the weasel, genus *Mustela*, as a wild crea-
> ture. As with other wild animals, one can only speculate about
> the weasel's thinking process, if, indeed, animals do think in
> the accepted sense of the word.

Are you tempted to read on? (If you have to, maybe—if there's a weasel test coming up!) It's possible that some people might continue reading even if they didn't have to—weasel specialists, perhaps. But for the aver-age reader, the effect—the rhetorical effect—of this stodgy rewrite is cer-tainly different from the breezy original,
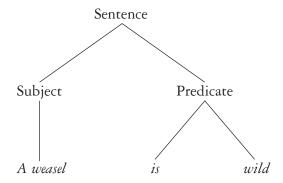
> A weasel is wild. Who knows what he thinks?

Dillard's reader is likely to think, "Here comes an essay that promises a new glimpse of nature—one that I will understand and enjoy. It's written in my kind of language."

The "something is something" pattern relies on the use of the verb *be*, here as the present-tense *is*. Because a form of *be* links the subject to what follows, we will refer to this pattern more specifically as the **linking-*be*** sentence pattern. It exemplifies both the concept of rhetorical awareness and our subconscious grammar ability. As native speakers, we learn to use *be,* including its irregular past forms—*was* and *were*—and its three present-tense forms—*am*, *are*, and *is*—perhaps without even realizing they are related to the base form *be.* If you are not a native speaker of English, you have probably spent a great deal of time learning the various forms of *be* and their uses, just as native English speakers studying another language must do when learning its equivalent of *be.*

The linking-*be* pattern is one of seven basic sentence patterns we describe in this chapter. These seven patterns represent the underlying skeletal structure of nearly all sentences in English—perhaps 95 percent

of them. As you study the patterns, you'll find it useful to think of them in terms of their required parts. You've already seen the two basic sentence units: the **subject** and **predicate**. The next step is to differentiate among the seven patterns on the basis of the structures in the predicate. Here are the two units in the predicate of the weasel sentence:

```
                    Sentence
                   /        \
                  /          \
            Subject          Predicate
               |             /        \
               |            /          \
          A weasel         is          wild
```

In this pattern the structure following the linking *be* is called a **subject complement** because it says something about the subject. The word *complement* comes from the verb meaning "to complete"; it's useful to think of a complement as a completer of the verb.

There are four categories of verbs that produce our seven patterns: *be* **patterns**, the **linking verbs**, the **intransitive verbs**, and the **transitive verbs**. These categories are differentiated on the basis of their complements. The patterns add up to seven because *be* is subclassified into two groups and the transitive verbs into three.

THE *BE* PATTERNS

Because *be* plays such an important part in sentence structure, not only as a main verb but also as an auxiliary, we put our *be* sentences into two patterns separate from the linking verbs in the third pattern. And while most *be* sentences do have a subject complement, like the one we saw in the weasel sentence, some do not. The first pattern describes those sentences in which the second unit in the predicate contains an **adverbial** of time or place rather than a subject complement. Pattern 1 is not generally considered the linking use of *be*.

PATTERN 1	SUBJECT	BE	ADVERBIAL
	The weasel	*is*	*in his den.* (Prepositional phrase)
	The deadline	*is*	*quite soon.* (Adverb phrase)

In Pattern 2, the subject complement describes or renames the subject. If it's a noun phrase, it has the same **referent** as the subject. *Referent* means

the person, thing, event, or concept that a noun or pronoun stands for; in other words, *I* and *an optimist* refer to the same person—in this case, the writer or speaker.

PATTERN 2	SUBJECT	BE	SUBJECT COMPLEMENT
	I	*am*	*an optimist.* (Noun phrase)
	The winters	*are*	*very cold.* (Adjective phrase)

When the subject complement contains an adjective, as we have seen in two examples—*A weasel is wild*; *The winters are very cold*—that complement names a quality of the subject. An alternative way of connecting the quality to the subject is to shift the adjective to the position before the noun headword: *a wild weasel*; *the cold winters.* The difference between the two structures, the prenoun modifier and the subject complement, has to do with emphasis and purpose rather than meaning. The subject complement position puts greater emphasis on the adjective.

THE LINKING VERB PATTERN

The term *linking verb* applies to all verbs other than *be* completed by a subject complement—the adjective or noun phrase that describes or identifies the subject. Among the common linking verbs are the verbs of the senses—*taste*, *smell*, *feel*, *sound*, and *look*—which often link an adjective phrase to the subject. *Become* and *remain* are the two most common linking verbs that connect a noun phrase to the subject. Other common linking verbs are *seem*, *appear*, and *prove*.

PATTERN 3	SUBJECT	LINKING VERB	SUBJECT COMPLEMENT
	The trail	*looked*	*steep.* (Adjective phrase)
	My sister	*became*	*a nurse.* (Noun phrase)

As with Pattern 2, the subject complement is in line for emphasis.

THE INTRANSITIVE VERB PATTERN

In the intransitive pattern, the predicate has only one requirement: the verb alone.

PATTERN 4	SUBJECT	INTRANSITIVE VERB
	Cameras	*flashed.*
	Accidents	*happen.*

As you know, such skeletal sentences are fairly rare in actual writing. The point here is that they are grammatical: No complements are required. In the section "The Optional Adverbial" later in this chapter, we'll look again at adverbial modifiers, structures that add information about time, place, manner, reason, condition, and so on. However, adding a modifier does not change the basic pattern. The following variations of our samples remain Pattern 4 sentences:

> Cameras flashed in his face.
> Accidents happen quickly.

Other common intransitive verbs are *change*, *laugh*, *live*, *meet*, *occur*, *smile*, *wait*—and literally thousands more. These are among the many verbs known as **action verbs**.

EXERCISE 4

Identify the boundaries of the sentence units in each of the following sentences. Then identify the pattern number. The adverbials are identified with italics. (Remember the trick you learned in Chapter 1 of substituting a pronoun to find the boundaries of a noun phrase.)

Example: Camp David / is / a presidential retreat in northern Maryland. (Pattern _____2_____)

1. Diplomatic negotiations between Egypt and Israel occurred *at Camp David in 1978.*

2. Leaders and diplomats from Egypt, Israel, and the United States were *at Camp David.*

3. No journalists were *there.*

4. The negotiations were secret.

5. Peace between the two nations had seemed an impossibility.

6. A successful conclusion to the 1978 negotiations appeared unlikely.

7. Negotiations ended *on September 17, 1978.*

8. The Camp David Accords were a set of agreements between former enemies.

THE BASIC TRANSITIVE VERB PATTERN

Transitive verbs are the other action verbs. Unlike intransitive verbs, all transitive sentences have one complement in common: the **direct object**. Pattern 5 is the basic pattern for transitive verbs.

PATTERN 5	SUBJECT	TRANSITIVE VERB	DIRECT OBJECT
	Weasels	*stalk*	*rabbits.*
	My roommate	*borrowed*	*my laptop.*

Transitive verbs are traditionally defined as those verbs in which the action is directed to, or transmitted to, an object—in contrast to the intransitive verbs, which have no object. The direct object tells *what* or *whom*.

In Pattern 3 we also saw a noun phrase following the verb, and it too answers the question *what*:

> My sister became <u>a nurse</u>.

The distinction between Patterns 3 and 5 lies in the relationship of the complement noun phrase to the subject: In Pattern 3, the two units have the same referent; they refer to the same people. We could, in fact, say

> My sister <u>is</u> a nurse,

using the linking *be*, turning the sentence into Pattern 2.

In Pattern 5, on the other hand, the two noun phrases, the subject and the direct object, have different referents. We obviously cannot say, with any degree of seriousness,

> Weasels are rabbits.

Incidentally, the pronoun trick you learned for identifying the boundaries of the subject works for all noun phrases in the sentence, including direct objects. For example, in the right context the second sample sentence could be stated,

> My roommate borrowed it,

perhaps in answer to the question *Where's your laptop?*

TRANSITIVE PATTERNS WITH TWO COMPLEMENTS

The last two patterns have two complements following the verb: In Pattern 6 an **indirect object** precedes the direct object; in Pattern 7 an **object complement** follows the direct object.

PATTERN 6	SUBJECT	TRAN-SITIVE VERB	INDIRECT OBJECT	DIRECT OBJECT
	Marie	*sent*	*Ramon*	*a birthday gift.*
	Annie Dillard	*gives*	*her readers*	*insights into nature.*

In this pattern, two noun phrases follow the verb, and here all three—the subject, the indirect object, and the direct object—have different referents. We traditionally define *indirect object* as "the recipient of the direct object" or "the person to whom or for whom the action is performed." In most cases this definition applies accurately. A Pattern 6 verb—and this is a limited group—usually has a meaning like "send" or "give" (for example, *bring*, *buy*, *offer*), and the indirect object usually names a person who is the receiver of whatever the subject gives.

An important characteristic of the Pattern 6 sentence is the option we have of shifting the indirect object to a position following the direct object, where it becomes the object of a preposition:

> Marie sent a birthday gift to <u>Ramon</u>.

You might choose this order if, for example, you want to focus on Ramon, or if you want to add a comment. A long comment often fits the end of the sentence more smoothly than it would in the middle. Compare the two:

> Marie sent a birthday gift to Ramon, <u>a friend from her old neighbor-hood in Northridge</u>.
> Marie sent Ramon, <u>a friend from her old neighborhood in North-ridge</u>, a birthday gift.

The original order will be more effective if it's the direct object you wish to emphasize or expand:

> Marie gave Ramon a birthday gift, <u>a necktie she had made herself</u>.

PATTERN 7	SUBJECT	TRANSITIVE VERB	DIRECT OBJECT	OBJECT COMPLEMENT
	The director	*considered*	*the performance*	*a success.*
	The critic	*called*	*the acting*	*brilliant.*

In this pattern the direct object is followed by a second complement, called an **object complement**, a noun phrase that has the same referent as the direct object or an adjective phrase that describes the referent. Note

that the relationship between these two complements is the same as the relationship between the subject and the subject complement in Patterns 2 and 3. In fact, we could easily turn these two complements into a Pattern 2 sentence:

> The performance was a success.
>
> The acting was brilliant.

It's obvious, however, that this linking-*be* version of the relationship changes the meaning: To call the acting brilliant does not mean that it really is brilliant.

Other verbs that conform to this pattern are *elect*, *find*, *make*, and *prefer*:

> Voters elected her governor.
>
> Some runners found the course challenging.
>
> The secretary of state made his position clear.
>
> I prefer my coffee black.

SENTENCE PATTERN SUMMARY

1. **Subject**   **Be**   **Adverbial**
   The weasel   *is*   *in his den.*

2. **Subject**   **Be**   **Subject Complement**
   I   *am*   *an optimist.* (NP)
   The winters   *are*   *very cold.* (AP)

3. **Subject**   **Linking Verb**   **Subject Complement**
   The trail   *looked*   *steep.* (AP)
   My sister   *became*   *a nurse.* (NP)

4. **Subject**   **Intransitive Verb**
   Cameras   *flashed.*

5. **Subject**   **Transitive Verb**   **Direct Object**
   Weasels   *stalk*   *rabbits.*

6. **Subject**   **Transitive Verb**   **Indirect Object**   **Direct Object**
   Marie   *sent*   *Ramon*   *a birthday gift.*

7. **Subject**   **Transitive Verb**   **Direct Object**   **Object Complement**

   The director   *considered*   *the performance*   *a success.* (NP)
   The critic   *called*   *the acting*   *brilliant.* (AP)

THE OPTIONAL ADVERBIAL

The units that make up the sentence patterns can be thought of as the basic requirements for grammatical sentences. For instance, a linking verb requires a subject complement to be complete; a transitive verb requires a direct object. But there's another important unit that can be added to all the formulas, as mentioned in connection with the intransitive pattern: an optional adverbial, a structure that adds information about time, place, manner, reason, and the like.

Pattern 4, the intransitive pattern, usually appears with at least one adverbial. Sentences as short as our two examples (*Cameras flashed*; *Accidents happen*) are fairly rare in prose; when they do appear, they nearly always call attention to themselves. The adverbials in the following sentence are underlined:

An accident happened <u>downtown</u> <u>during rush hour</u>.

As you learned in Chapter 1, the term *adverbial* refers to any grammatical structure that adds what we think of as the kind of information that adverbs add. In the example, *downtown* refers to place; *during the rush hour* refers to time.

It's important to recognize that when we use the word *optional* we are referring only to grammaticality, not to the importance of the adverbial information. If you remove those underlined adverbials, you are left with a grammatical, albeit skeletal, sentence. However, even though the sentence is grammatical in its skeletal form, many times the adverbial information is the very reason for the sentence—the main focus. For example, if you tell your readers

An accident happened downtown during rush hour,

you're probably doing so to provide information for readers to envision the scene; the adverbials are important information.

The variety of structures available for adding information makes the adverbial a remarkably versatile tool for writers. You can add a detail about frequency, for example, by using a single word, a phrase with more than one word, or a clause (which has its own subject and predicate):

My friends and I have pizza <u>regularly</u>.
My friends and I have pizza <u>with persistent regularity</u>.
My friends and I have pizza <u>whenever the mood strikes</u>.

And it's not just their form that makes adverbials so versatile. Perhaps even more important is their movability: They can open the sentence or close it; they can even be inserted between the required units for special

effect. Not all adverbials occur in all positions, but the movability test will help you identify most of them.

◖   **FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

Although the movability test is useful for identifying adverbials, it isn't infallible. Look at how *for everyone* is used in the following sentences. Would you label it adverbial or adjectival? Are there instances in which both labels would be possible?

1.   The budget was a problem for everyone.
2.   A problem for everyone was the budget.
3.   For everyone the budget was a problem.

◗

EXERCISE 5

A. Draw vertical lines to separate the sentence units, paying special attention to the various adverbials. Identify the verb category: *be*, linking, intransitive, or transitive.

Example: The Lincoln penny / first / appeared / in 1909.

   Verb: intransitive

1.   Many people now consider the penny a nuisance coin.
2.   Early Lincoln pennies are very valuable today.
3.   During World War II the government required large amounts of copper for war production.
4.   In 1943 zinc-coated steel replaced the copper in the production of pennies.
5.   The Philadelphia Mint unwittingly produced twelve copper pennies that year in addition to the new model.
6.   The copper blanks for those twelve pennies were still in the press hopper during the production of the zinc-coated coins.
7.   Those twelve 1943 copper pennies soon became valuable collectors' items.
8.   Even after 100 years, the production of the Lincoln penny continues today.

B. Now revise the sentences in Part A by shifting the adverbials to other locations. You'll find that some are more movable than others.

QUESTIONS AND COMMANDS

This two-part structure—subject and predicate—underlies all of our sentences in English, even those in which the two parts may not be apparent at first glance. For example, in **questions**—also called **interrogative sentences**—the subject may not be in its usual position at the beginning of the sentence. To discover the two parts, you have to recast the question in the form of a statement, or **declarative sentence**:

> *Question:* Which chapters will our test cover?
>
> *Statement:* Our test / will cover which chapters.

In the **command**, or **imperative sentence**, the subject—the understood *you*—generally doesn't show up at all; the form of the verb is always the base form:

> (You)   Hold the onions!
>
> (You)   Be a good sport.
>
> (You)   Come with me to the concert.

Questions and commands are certainly not structures to worry about: You've been an expert at using them for many years.

PUNCTUATION AND THE SENTENCE PATTERNS

There's an important punctuation lesson to be learned from the sentence patterns with their two, three, or four required units:

Do not mark boundaries of the required sentence units with punctuation. For example, never use a comma to separate the following:

- **the subject from the verb;**
- **the direct object from the object complement;**
- **the indirect object from the direct object;**
- **the verb from the subject complement;**

and, with one exception,

- **the verb from the direct object.**

The one exception to this rule occurs when the direct object is a direct quotation following a verb like *say*:

> He said, "I love you."

Here the comma separates the words used to designate the speaker from the quoted words.

Even though the separate units in the following sentence may be long and may require a pause for breath, there is simply no place for commas:

> Every sportswriter who saw the preseason contest between the Buckeyes and the Aggies / said / that it was a game that will be remembered for a long time to come. (Pattern 5)

In discussions of modifiers in later chapters, you'll encounter sentences in which punctuation is called for *within* a unit:

> My roommate, who grew up in New York City, now lives on a farm in Vermont.
>
> Weasels, because they are wild, should be approached with great caution.

In both cases, the only reason for the commas is to set off the modifier. Note that the rule, highlighted at the beginning of this section, refers to a *single* comma as a boundary marker.

EXERCISE 6

Draw vertical lines between the separate units of the following sentences, and then identify their sentence patterns. You might want to use pronoun substitution to find all the noun phrases in the sentences: subject, direct object, indirect object, subject complement, and object complement, as well as the object in a prepositional phrase. Optional adverbials are underlined. You can disregard them when identifying patterns.

1. <u>In 1747</u> a physician in the British navy conducted an experiment <u>to discover a cure for scurvy</u>.

2. <u>For sailors</u> scurvy was a serious problem.

3. Dr. James Lind fed six groups of scurvy victims six different remedies.

4. <u>When the men consumed oranges and lemons every day</u>, they recovered miraculously.

5. <u>Although fifty years passed before the British Admiralty Office recognized Lind's findings</u>, a daily dose of fresh lemon juice became a requirement.

6. <u>Interestingly</u>, Lind's discovery affected the English language.

7. <u>In the eighteenth century</u>, the British called lemons limes.

8. <u>Because of that navy diet</u>, people call British sailors limeys.

9. This word is in the dictionary, <u>though it is labeled derogatory</u>.

....

> **EXERCISE 7**

Explain why the following sentences are punctuated *in*correctly.

1. The first American winner of a Nobel Prize, was Theodore Roosevelt.

2. After the assassination of President William McKinley, Roosevelt, took office at the age of 42.

3. Voters elected Roosevelt, president of the United States in 1904.

4. Roosevelt told, veterans in Illinois "A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards."

....

BASIC PATTERNS IN PROSE

You really don't need instructions for writing or punctuating short sentences—as you have seen, most of them need no punctuation—but you may need to permit yourself to use them. It's not unusual for inexperienced writers to believe that academic writing calls for long sentences rather than short ones. However, the bare sentence pattern as a paragraph opener is a common strategy, especially the Pattern 2, something-is-something sentence like Annie Dillard's "A weasel is wild." Dillard uses many such sentences in her prose—sometimes with other patterns, sometimes with an added adverbial, but still very short. The following examples are from her book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*:

> Today is the winter solstice.
> In September the birds were quiet.
> I live in tranquility and trembling.

In his biography of President Harry Truman, David McCullough often introduces a long paragraph with a short *be* sentence:

> He had been a big success as a soldier.
> His real love, however, was politics.
> Politics was personal contact.

But short sentences like these commonly appear in other positions as well. In the following example, two short sentences in the middle of the paragraph link the time before 1825 and the time after:

> Artists had known for hundreds of years about an effect called camera obscura (Latin for "dark room"), in which a darkened chamber with a small aperture can cast the image of whatever is outside the chamber against an interior wall of the chamber, upside down but highly detailed. The Chinese scientist Mo Ti wrote about this in 470 BC. He called it a "locked treasure room." The image could be preserved if an artist with an ink pen or brush simply painted over the light shadows with the appropriate colors. Leonardo da Vinci used a camera obscura—and there the technology remained, until 1825, when Nicéphore Niépce coated a plate inside a camera obscura with bitumen dissolved in lavender oil and exposed it to the light. <u>A hazy image appeared on the plate</u>. <u>Photography was born</u>. Niépce later partnered with a man named Louis Daguerre, and together they developed the pysautotype, a process that also used lavender oil. After Niépce's death, Daguerre developed a different process by coating silvered copper plates with silver iodide. He named the process the daguerreotype.
>
> —Stephen Apkon, *The Age of the Image*:
> *Redefining Literacy in a World of Screens*

Short, focused sentences like these are bound to attract the reader.

Commands and questions can also be used to establish a topic or to shift focus:

> Start with the taste. Imagine a moment when the sensation of honey or sugar on the tongue was an astonishment, a kind of intoxication. The closest I've ever come to recovering such a sense of sweetness was secondhand, though it left a powerful impression on me even so. I'm thinking of my son's first experience with sugar: the icing on the cake at his first birthday. I have only the testimony of Isaac's face to go by (that, and his fierceness to repeat the experience), but it was plain that his first encounter with sugar had intoxicated him—was in fact an ecstasy, in the literal sense of the word. That is, he was beside himself with the pleasure of it, no longer here with me in space and time in quite the same way he had been just a moment before. Between bites Isaac gazed up at me in amazement (he was on my lap, and I was delivering the ambrosial forkfuls to his gaping mouth) as if to exclaim, "Your world contains *this*? From this day forward I shall dedicate my life to

it." (Which he basically has done.) And I remember thinking, this is no minor desire, and then wondered: Could it be that sweetness is the prototype of *all* desire?

In *The Botany of Desire*, Michael Pollan not only draws the reader into the paragraph with two opening commands but also raises a question at the end of the paragraph to establish the topic of his book.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

A. The following paragraph opens a chapter of William W. Warner's *Beautiful Swimmers*: *Watermen, Crabs and the Chesapeake Bay.*

Winter

It can come anytime from the last week in October to the first in December. There will be a fickle day, unseasonably warm, during which two or three minor rain squalls blow across the Bay. The sun appears fitfully in between; sometimes there is distant thunder. <u>A front is passing</u>. The first warning that it is more than an ordinary autumnal leaf-chaser comes near the end. The ragged trailing edge of a normal front is nowhere to be seen. Ominously absent is the steady procession of fleecy white puffball clouds that usually presages two or three days of fine weather. Rather, the front picks up speed and passes so rapidly that it is stormy at one moment and unbelievably clear and cloud-free the next. <u>Then it comes</u>. The wind rises in a few minutes from a placid five or ten knots to a sustained thirty or forty, veering quickly first to the west and then to the northwest. <u>The dry gale has begun</u>. Short and steep seas, so characteristic of the Chesapeake, rise up from nowhere to trip small boats. Inattentive yachtsmen will lose sails and have the fright of their lives. Workboat captains not already home will make for any port.

1. Note that the title word *winter*—which is also the topic here—does not appear in the paragraph, represented only by the pronoun *it*. What effect does that omission have?

2. You saw a three-word, a four-word, and a five-word sentence in this paragraph. What purpose do they serve?

B. Imagine an unusual place. Think of three versions of an opening sentence for a paragraph describing this place. Use a short sentence, a command, and a question. Ask at least two of your classmates which version they consider most engaging.

THE SHORT PARAGRAPH

Another attention-getter is the short paragraph that appears on a page of long, well-developed ones. In *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard adds drama with an occasional paragraph of one or two sentences, often used for transition from one topic to another:

> The world has locusts, and the world has grasshoppers. I was up to my knees in the world.

In *Undaunted Courage*, the story of Lewis and Clark's journey to the Pacific, Stephen E. Ambrose often uses the short paragraph of transition:

> Thus armed with orders, guns, and goods, Lewis set out to meet the Indians of the Great Plains.

Like short sentences in a paragraph of long ones, these short paragraphs call attention to themselves.

<div style="text-align:center">KEY TERMS</div>

Action verbs	Indirect object	Question
Adverbial	Interrogative sentence	Referent
Be patterns	Intransitive verb	Sentence pattern
Command	Linking-*be*	Subject
Declarative sentence	Linking verb	Subject complement
Direct object	Object complement	Transitive verb
Imperative sentence	Predicate	

RHETORICAL REMINDERS

Have I made use of short sentences or paragraphs to focus the reader's attention or to create a transition?

Have I used commands or questions to establish a topic or to shift focus?

PUNCTUATION REMINDER

Have I made sure that a comma does not separate the required units of my sentences?

Our Versatile Verbs

CHAPTER PREVIEW

This chapter focuses on the expansion of verbs for expressing subtle variations in time and focus. After you study each section closely, completing all the exercises, you'll be able to

- choose verbs that convey your message clearly and engagingly;
- select verb tenses that maintain a consistent time frame;
- explain why some shifts in time frame are logical;
- recognize effective uses of the passive voice;
- understand the positive effects of showing, not just telling.

THE EXPANDED VERB

In Chapter 1 you were introduced to the five forms that all verbs have. Let's take a minute to review those forms:

Base form	film	drive
-s form	films	drives
Past tense	filmed	drove
Past participle	filmed	driven
Present participle	filming	driving

All verbs have these five forms. Notice that the past tense and past participle forms are identical in the case of *film*, a **regular verb**. In fact, this characteristic—the addition of *-ed* to the base form to produce a verb's

past and past participle—is the essential definition of *regular verb*. The verb *drive* is one of our 150 or so **irregular verbs**, those in which the past tense and the past participle are *not* produced with the regular inflections. Among the irregular verbs, there's a great variety in these two forms.

The verb *be*, our only verb with more than these five forms, has eight forms: *am*, *are*, *is*, *was*, *were*, *been*, *being*, and *be*—the base form. *Be* is our only verb that has a base form that is different from the present tense.

In the first two chapters the verbs provided in examples were usually the one-word variety, the simple **present** and **past tenses**. As you are well aware, many of the predicates we use go beyond these tenses to include **auxiliary verbs**, also called **helping verbs**. You'll find the auxiliary—sometimes more than one—in the position before the main verb:

> The company *is accepting* internship applications until May 1.
>
> My little brother *has* read all the Harry Potter books three times.
>
> Jamal *has been* volunteering at the food bank on Saturdays.

Sometimes the auxiliary and the main verb are separated by an adverb:

> The company *is* now accepting internship applications.

Although the way auxiliaries are combined with main verbs may seem chaotic, it's actually systematic. To understand this system, you must be able to distinguish between the two ways verb tenses are labeled. The first is perhaps familiar to you: Verbs are labeled according to time as present, past, or future. The second is probably less familiar: Verbs are also labeled as simple, progressive, perfect, or perfect progressive. The following chart shows how these two different ways of labeling combine to create the traditional names for our wide array of tenses. In the chart we use the verb *drive* as our example.

Verb Tenses			
	PRESENT	PAST	FUTURE
Simple	drive, drives (simple present)	drove (simple past)	*will* drive (simple future)
Progressive	*am* (*is*, *are*) driving (present progressive)	*was* (*were*) driving (past progressive)	*will be* driving (future progressive)
Perfect	*has* (*have*) driven (present perfect)	*had* driven (past perfect)	*will have* driven (future perfect)
Perfect progressive	*has* (*have*) *been* driving (present perfect progressive)	*had been* driving (past perfect progressive)	*will have been* driving (future perfect progressive)

As you can see, in the first row, a verb in the simple present or simple past does not have an auxiliary in front of it. A verb in the simple future, though, does take an auxiliary, the **modal auxiliary** *will* (which is discussed further on page 38). In the second row, you will find that the **present participle** (the *-ing* form of the verb) appears in all progressive tenses along with *be*, the form of which is determined by the time: *am*, *is*, and *are* for the present tense; *was* and *were* for the past tense; and *will be* for the future tense. Similarly, in the third row, the **past participle**, *driven,* appears in all the perfect tenses along with a form of the auxiliary *have*: *Has* and *have* are in the present tense, *had* is in the past tense, and *will have* is in the future tense. The fourth row is a combination of the previous two: In each of the perfect-progressive tenses, you'll see *been*, the past participle of *be*, as one auxiliary followed by the main verb, the present participle *driving*; the first auxiliary in the string is a form of *have.*

You may be wondering why the chart includes some verbs in parentheses. The form of the auxiliary verb depends on the subject of the sentence. For example, when *I* is the subject, the verb in the present progressive will be *am driving*; the verb will be *are driving* when *you*, *we*, or *they* is the subject; *he*, *she*, or *it* as subject calls for *is driving*. (These variations will come up again in connection with point of view in Chapter 11; you'll also read about personal pronouns in Chapter 12.)

Using the Expanded Verbs

In this section you'll be encouraged to pay attention to the verb tenses used in prose. Consider the verb forms in the following paragraph from Scott Turow's essay "An Odyssey That Started with Ulysses":

> At the age of eighteen, after my freshman year in college, I <u>worked</u> as a mailman. This <u>was</u> merely a summer job. My life's calling, I <u>had decided</u>, <u>was</u> to be a novelist, and late at night I <u>was</u> already <u>toiling</u> on my first novel.

This passage includes five main verbs: *work*, *be*, *decide*, *be*, and *toil.* Notice that they do not occur in the same tense:

> *worked*—simple past
>
> *was*—simple past
>
> *had decided*—past perfect
>
> *was*—simple past
>
> *was toiling*—past progressive

When you check the chart on page 34, you'll discover that Turow's verbs are all in the "Past" column. By using the past tense throughout

the paragraph, Turow is able to provide a consistent **time frame** for his narrative. This point may seem obvious. But sometimes, amid the fury of producing that first draft, the writer may inadvertently shift time frames:

> Sara was watching her kite when suddenly she slips and falls in the mud.

Something sounds wrong here. You might be asking yourself why the verb *was watching* refers to the past, but *slips* and *falls* are in the present tense. This is the type of confusion that can occur when time frames in a sentence or paragraph differ. The confusion in the previous example would be avoided if the last two verbs were *slipped* and *fell*.

There are occasions, however, when you may want to shift from one time frame to another. You can do this by using a time marker, very likely an adverbial, such as *today*, *yesterday*, *soon*, *in 2015*, *when I was younger.*

> We <u>take</u> our old magazines to a recycling center. *Soon*, however, we <u>will leave</u> them in curbside recycling bins.

The tense in the first of these two sentences is present; the tense in the second is future. The time marker *soon* signals the shift in time frame.

It is also possible for writers to shift time frames without using a specific time marker—but only when the reason for shifting is easily understood. The second sentence in the following pair of sentences provides historical information to support the assertion in the first sentence, so the shift from a present time frame to a past time frame is appropriate.

> Our recycling center <u>has moved</u>. The owners of the barn housing the center <u>refused</u> to renew the lease.

Another common shift occurs when a writer wants to add a comment that might aid the reader's understanding. In this example, the opening sentence is in the past tense, but the second sentence, the comment, is in the present.

> We recently <u>established</u> a website for reporting local air quality.

> Our reports <u>are</u> important to citizens with respiratory diseases.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

A. Read the passage below from Robert Grudin's *Time and the Art of Living.*

> In the late November of 1968, I <u>spent</u> a few days in a hotel just off the Piazza San Marco in Venice. At 6 one morning, hearing the loud warning bells, I <u>jumped</u> out of

bed, <u>grabbed</u> my camera and <u>rushed</u> out to see the famous Venetian flood. I <u>stood</u> in the empty and as yet dry Piazza and <u>looked</u> out toward the Gulf, for I <u>expected</u> the flood tides to come in from the open water. Many minutes <u>passed</u> before I <u>turned</u> to see that the Piazza <u>was flooding</u>, not directly from the Gulf, but up through its own sewers. The indented gratings in the pavement <u>had</u> all but <u>disappeared</u> under calm, flat silver puddles, which <u>grew</u> slowly and silently until their peripheries <u>touched</u> and the Piazza <u>had become</u> a lake. That morning I <u>experienced</u> vividly, if almost subliminally, the reality of change itself: how it <u>fools</u> our sentinels and <u>undermines</u> our defenses, how careful we <u>are</u> to look for it in the wrong places, how it <u>does</u> not <u>reveal</u> itself until it <u>is</u> beyond redress, how vainly we <u>search</u> for it around us and <u>find</u> too late that it <u>has occurred</u> within us.

Notice how Grudin begins with one time frame and then shifts to another. Why does he make this shift? Is it effective? Why or why not?

B. Reread Annie Dillard's weasel paragraph at the opening of Chapter 2 with time frames in mind. Are the shifts in this paragraph effective? Why or why not?

Exercise 8

Correct any unnecessary tense shifts in the following paragraph.

The exchange of wedding rings during the wedding ceremony came into fashion in the late nineteenth century. Before the Great Depression, it is more common for just women to wear wedding rings. However, successful advertising campaigns after the Second World War convinces couples to exchange rings. This custom is now widespread.

Special Uses of the Present Tense

Although you might assume that the present tense is used only to refer to present time, this is not the case. In some rhetorical situations writers use the present tense to refer to past events. For example, fiction writers

sometimes use the simple present tense to make action more immediate or suspenseful. The following sentences are from the first chapter of William Trevor's novel *Felicia's Journey.* In this scene Felicia is riding on a train:

> The train <u>judders</u> on, rattling on the rails, slowing almost to a halt, gathering speed again. Felicia <u>opens</u> her eyes. A hazy dawn <u>is distributing</u> farmhouses and silos and humped barns in shadowy fields.

The present tense is also used in the analysis of literature. In this sentence, John Elder discusses Robert Frost's poem "Directive":

> Frost's opening lines not only <u>point</u> up to the ridge above Bristol, they also <u>identify</u> a tension fundamental to America's environmental movement.

Another common use of the present tense is to refer to habitual actions or regular events:

> Most people <u>commute</u> to work.
> The library <u>closes</u> early on Fridays.

Other Auxiliaries

***Do*-Support.** So far we have looked at three auxiliary verbs: *be, have,* and *will.* Another common auxiliary is *do.* We call on *do,* or one of its other two forms, *does* and *did,* when we need an auxiliary for converting a positive sentence into a negative, for turning a statement into a question, or for carrying the emphasis—but only when the sentence has no other auxiliary:

> The crew <u>didn't film</u> at night.
> <u>Did</u> the crew <u>film</u> at night?
> The crew <u>did film</u> at night.

This auxiliary use of *do* is called ***do*-support**. Like *be* and *have*, *do* can also serve as a main verb; in fact, all three are among our most common verbs.

Modal Auxiliaries. You're already familiar with one of the **modal auxiliaries**: *will,* primarily used to discuss the future or to make strong predictions. Unlike *be, have*, and *do*, the job of the modals is to add nuances to the meaning of the main verb. The other modal auxiliaries are