

Writing Tips

Tips for Writing Good Sentences

- Fix **run-on sentences** by rewriting the sentence or adding punctuation between two independent clauses.
- Correct **sentence fragments** by adding the missing subject or predicate to phrases or subordinate clauses.
- Eliminate **faulty agreement** by making subjects and predicates agree in person and number.
- Avoid **misplaced modifiers** by keeping them near the word they modify.
- Prevent **faulty parallelism** by matching grammatical structures in a sentence.
- Combine short, choppy sentences and vary word order for a **smooth style**.
- **Commas** should be used to join introductory clauses, after introductory clauses and phrases, to set off interrupting elements, with restrictive and nonrestrictive elements, with appositives, and between items or modifiers in a series.
- **Semicolons** are used to join closely connected independent clauses and between items in a series.
- **Colons** are used to introduce a list, formal statement, or restatement in a sentence.
- The **dash**, used to add interrupting phrases or clauses, and the parentheses, which sets off incidental information, should be used sparingly.
- Use **quotation marks** to identify quotes.
- **Punctuation** usually belongs inside the quotation marks.
- Watch out for frequently confused words.
- Hyphenate most compound adjectives that appear before a noun.
- Generally, spell compound adjectives that follow a noun and words with prefixes or suffixes as one word.
- Most compound adverbs are spelled as two words.
- Experience and a dictionary can help you choose the correct idiom when writing.
- Eliminate cliches, jargon, faddish words, and slang in your writing.
- Avoid redundant expressions and wordiness in writing.

Improving the Writing Process

- Be aware of your audience.
- Choose a topic that is narrowly defined and interesting to you.
- Begin by writing a thesis, an assertion about your topic.
- Develop several logical main ideas to support your thesis statements.
- Avoid plagiarism by identifying other writers' research and words with citations.
- Paraphrase long passages or main ideas in your own words.
- Organize your main ideas and outline them in writing before you begin drafting.
- Introductions should catch the reader's attention and provide a general orientation.
- Paragraphs should be unified around a central idea and connected to one another and to other paragraphs through transitional devices.
- Conclusions should bring all your main ideas together and leave the reader thinking.
- Never bring up new points or apologize in the conclusion.
- Always carefully edit and revise your drafts.

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