

Sentence Structure Fact Sheet

Introduction to sentence construction

A **sentence** is a group of words that makes sense on its own. For example:

Naz went to the shops.

A sentence always has a **subject** ('Naz') and a **verb** ('went').

'To the shops' is not a sentence, because it does not give enough information. You need to know who (subject) did what (verb).

A sentence always starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop (.), question mark (?) or exclamation mark (!). For example:

- The cat ate the food. (A fact or statement.)
- Do you want more? (A question.)
- You must go! (A command or shout.)

NOTE: Sentences that take the form of a command do not need to have a subject.
(eg Shut the door!)

Tips

- Sentences can be very short (two words) or long.
- If they are too long they can be difficult to read and understand.
- Before you write, you should be able to say the whole sentence to yourself. If you can't it might be too long.

More information about sentence construction

Commas and Joining words

It's a common mistake to link two sentences by using a comma. For example:

Sam ran home, she was still late.

The comma here should be a full stop:

Sam ran home. She was still late.

Short sentences are fine, but if you want to link two sentences, **use a Joining word (conjunction)**, such as 'and', 'but', 'because', etc. For example:

Sam ran home but she was still late.

Describing words

Sentences can be made longer and more interesting by adding describing words, such as adjectives and adverbs.

- An **adjective** describes a noun: eg 'hungry cat'.
- An **adverb** describes a verb: eg 'ran quickly'.

For example:

The starving cat quickly ate the food.

In this sentence 'starving' is the adjective. quickly is the adverb).

Order

- It's important to put the words in the right order.
- Putting words in the right order makes the sentence clearer and easier to understand.
- You can often change the word order to make the sentence clearer.

'Starving, the cat quickly ate the food' makes the reader understand how hungry the cat is.

'Quickly the starving cat ate the food' makes the reader understand how fast it ate.

Which of the following sentences is clearer?

Making a sentence as clear as you can is important.

It's important to make a sentence as clear as you can.



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