

# **WRITING SKILLS FOR BUSINESS ENGLISH**

## **Training for NGO Staff**

### **Module 1**

#### **Basic Grammar Skills**

*The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.*

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## **What This Course Is About**

Looking, listening, feeling, thinking, talking, reading, and writing; these are the main abilities you need, in order to exchange information and ideas with other people.

Of course, you already have most of these abilities. You could look, listen, and feel from the day you were born. You learned to think and talk soon after that. Nobody had to teach you how to do these things. You didn't have to memorise any rules. Somehow, you just knew them.

With reading and writing, it's different. There are some rules that you need to know in order to write correctly. These rules make it easier for other people to read and understand your writing.

The four modules of this course will help to remind you of what you already know. These modules will also give you some rules for grammar, spelling, and punctuation that will help you become a better writer. And, finally, you will have opportunities to put into practise what you have reviewed and learned in these modules.

## What You Can Learn

This course is designed to help you understand what you see, hear, and read. It will help you express yourself clearly when speaking and writing.

By the end of the course, it is expected that you will be able to:

- Increase your vocabulary and choose more appropriate and persuasive words.
- Identify the main points in anything you read (a newspaper, magazine article, or book).
- Write simple sentences, correctly using the recognised rules of grammar and punctuation.
- Construct longer, more complex sentences correctly.
- Write a correct paragraph using proper paragraph structure.
- Write a concise report, letter, or proposal.
- Write and design effective promotional pieces.
- Construct a case history that has emotional appeal.
- Communicate effectively through writing with other colleagues, officials, and the public.

## Course Outline

The following is an outline of the four modules of this course.

### Module 1: Basic Grammar Skills

- Using a Dictionary
- A Guide to Basic Punctuation
  - Terminal Punctuation
  - Sentence Punctuation
- Traditional Parts of Speech
- Sentence Structure
  - Sentence Fragments
  - Run-on Sentences

### Module 2: Putting Grammar to Use

- Mastering Subject-Verb Agreement
  - Words to Trick You
- Using Active and Passive Voice
  - Passive Voice
  - When to use Active and Passive Voice
- Writing Paragraphs
- What Is a Paragraph?
- Developing a Paragraph
  - Paragraph Development by Example or Detail

- Paragraph Development by Comparison and Contrast
- Paragraph Development by Process
- Transitions and Coherency
- Outlines
- Business Letters
- Writing an Inquiry or Request Information Letter
- Writing a Request for Funding or Services Letter
- Writing a Memo

### **Module 3: Creating Short Writing**

- Writing Facts and Opinions
- Writing for Community Involvement
  - Writing Pamphlets, Flyers, and Newsletters that People Will Read
- The Process of Writing
  - Plan
  - Write
  - Design
  - Print
- Editing and Proofreading

### **Module 4: Applying English Skills to Special Projects**

- Using Sentence Variety to Create Interest
- Project 1: Writing a Successful Project Proposal

- Solicited Proposals
- Unsolicited Proposals
- Project 2: Writing Reports
  - Report Writing Process
- Project 3: Writing for Community Relations
- Project 4: Turning Case Studies into Success Stories

## How to Work through the Modules

The modules have been written in such a way that you can study on your own. Although the modules are complete in themselves, you may benefit from group discussion with your peers. An experienced facilitator would be helpful in those discussions. Each module has:

- Background information, including details, explanations, and examples of key concepts.
- Exercises to help you confirm that you recall and understand the background information.

### Where to Study

You can read the modules anywhere, but if you want to get the most from your study, you need to be able to concentrate without distractions such as conversations and interruptions.

### When to Study

This is entirely up to you. You should be able to complete a module in about 8 hours. If you participate in discussions with your peers, then you may need to take more time to complete all of the work. The best way to complete the modules successfully is to plan ahead and set aside a certain time and specific days to finish the particular topic you are studying.

## How to Complete the Modules

Do not be too ambitious. Start with regular periods of study, perhaps 30 minutes at a time. This will yield far better results than occasional long periods or many short periods with many interruptions.

Concentrate on what you are studying. Read, make notes, and complete all of the exercises as you progress through the materials. You may wish to share your ideas or talk to other people to obtain more facts. This may help to clarify ideas.

## Icons Used in The Modules

You will see the following icons used in the modules:



**READ**—Read the background information that is contained in the module. You should read through the information carefully, before continuing on with the exercises. Make notes while you read.



**EXERCISE**—You will need to write down your answers to check that you understood the information preceding the exercise. Suggested answers to many of the exercises are provided at the end of the module, so you can check your answers.



# Module 1

## Basic Grammar Skills

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# Basic Grammar Skills

## Overview

Each person plays a variety of roles in life. You are a friend, a mate, a colleague, an employee, a supervisor, and a representative of your organisation. You communicate with diverse groups such as salespeople, suppliers, government representatives, co-workers, and community groups.

Much of your success in dealing with other people depends on your choice of words. You must choose words that other people will understand. Your words must capture their interest while reflecting your sincerity and objectivity. Equally important, you must make sure that you are using words correctly.

In this section, you will learn some simple techniques for expanding your vocabulary. Learning new words allows you to add detail to your documents and speech. Using the correct word also makes your writing concise and easy to follow.

## Objectives

By the time you complete this module, you will be able to:

- Use a dictionary to help select appropriate words for your writing.
- Apply basic rules that describe when and where to use punctuation such as periods, questions marks, commas, semicolons, colons, and apostrophes.
- Identify the parts of speech used in sentences, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections.
- Identify sentence fragments and change them into complete sentences.
- Use several techniques to construct complete sentences from run-on sentences.



## Using a Dictionary

A dictionary provides you with a wealth of information to help you choose, use, and spell the right word. When in doubt about what word to use or the meaning of a word that you are reading, look it up in your dictionary.

A good dictionary gives the following information on a word (usually in this order):

1. The word correctly spelled and with hyphens to show syllable breaks.
2. The pronunciation (definitions of the pronunciation symbols can usually be found at the front of the dictionary).
3. The part of speech that the word represents (i.e., noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.).
4. Spelling of alternate forms if the word can be grammatically changed by adding letters at the end (e.g., *-ed*, *-ing*, etc.).
5. Definitions of the word (numbered if there is more than one definition). The first definition is generally the most common.
6. The origin of the word (the etymology) – Latin (L), Greek (G), French (Fr), etc.
7. Other information on synonyms (words of roughly similar meaning), antonyms (words of roughly opposite meaning), usage, and alternative spellings.

Here is an example of an entry in a dictionary:

**Con-sult** (kan sult) *v.* **1.** to seek information or advice from; refer to: *Consult a dictionary for the meaning of a word.* **2.** to exchange ideas; talk things over: *He is consulting with his lawyer.* **3.** to take into consideration; have regard for: *A good ruler consults the interests and feeling of his people.* [*< L consultare < consulere* take counsel, consult]

Syn. **2. Consult, confer** = to talk something over with someone in order to make a decision. **Consult** = to talk over something of importance with another or others who are in a position to give wise advice: *He decided to consult with his attorney before buying the property.* **Confer** = to exchange ideas, opinions, or information with another, usually as equals: *The manager conferred with the committee of employees.*

Dictionaries usually have full explanations of how to use the abbreviations and symbols in their front pages.

Keep a dictionary close by when you write or read any article. Looking up the meaning of words can expand your vocabulary quickly.

Use your dictionary to do the following exercises.



## Exercise 1

### Part A

You are editing some reports written by a rather wordy writer, who likes to show off his large vocabulary. The only problem is that hardly anyone can understand some of the words he uses. So you need to make the sentences as clear as possible, and this means changing some of the words.

Here are some of the wordy extracts. Find simpler, more familiar words to replace the words in *italics*. When you are done, check your answers against the key provided at the end of this module.

1. He is far too *garrulous* to work in such a confidential position.

---

2. Action in this case should be *expeditious*.

---

3. It should be illegal to *hydrate* the area during the summer.

---

4. In my estimation, this politician is *impervious* to harsh criticism.

---

5. It's ridiculous to ask representatives from across the country to *convene* for just three hours.

---

6. I have seen *intimations* of his being the right person for the job.

---

### Part B

Determine what the following one-liners are really saying. In their current form, the words are correct but hide the meaning. Replace each sentence with one that can be clearly understood.

1. Members of an avian species of identical plumage congregate.  

---
2. It is fruitless to become lachrymose over precipitately departed lacteal fluid.  

---
3. Neophyte's serendipity.  

---
4. Pulchritude possesses solely cutaneous profundity.  

---
5. The stylus is more potent than the claymore.  

---
6. Scintillate, scintillate asteroid minific.  

---

What you have just done in this exercise is very important in writing. Your main task when you write is to be understood – to communicate. You must use familiar, everyday words that everyone should be able to understand. Don't think that you have to impress people with complicated words and phrases.

In the next section, you will review the key punctuation marks that help to clarify written ideas, add emphasis, and link thoughts together.





## A Guide to Basic Punctuation

The following section provides some simple rules to follow when using common punctuation such as periods, question marks, exclamation points, commas, semicolons, colons, and apostrophes. English grammar has many more rules for other punctuation not covered in this section. Parentheses, quotation marks, hyphens, dashes, and ellipses are all part of the punctuation rules that you may come across in English grammar books. The following is not intended to be a complete English grammar course.

### Terminal Punctuation

This section will cover the basic punctuation most commonly used to end sentences in business writing.

#### Period

A period is used to indicate the end of a sentence. The sentence is either declarative (makes a statement) or imperative (the implied subject is “you”).

#### Examples:

The three boys waited for their mother. (a declarative sentence)

Wait there. (an imperative sentence; note that you can insert the subject “you” in this command so that it reads “You wait there.”)

Periods are not used at the end of sentences within sentences.

#### Examples:

The storm (I caught a glimpse through the curtain) was starting to approach.

Mary’s reply, “I do not want to go,” was expected.

## Question Mark

The question mark is used to identify a query (an interrogative sentence). These sentences usually start with *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*.

### Examples:

Who will represent the poor?

How do I complete this report without the correct information?

When can you get me the information?

A question mark should be used at the end of an element that is part of a sentence.

### Examples:

“How can the two women be reconciled?” was the question on everyone’s mind.

“What for?” he wondered. (*not*: “What for,” he wondered?)

As he asked himself, “How am I going to pay for this?” he noticed a rupee on the ground.

## Exclamation Point

An exclamation point is used to note an emphatic remark. Remember, it should be used sparingly. Used too often, it loses its effect on a reader.

### Examples:

Look out!

Your comment certainly lacked tact!

Suddenly, the street child looked as if all were lost!

In most business writing you will be making statements of fact, so you will use the period. To be more effective in writing a fact, you will need to join your thoughts together or separate them to make the meaning clear. The next section shows the simplest method to do this using punctuation.



## Sentence Punctuation

### Comma

The comma is by far the hardest punctuation mark to use correctly. Do not insert a comma merely because the sentence is long and you feel there ought to be a comma somewhere. Learn where a comma is required, and only use one when you know it is needed.

Commas are used when:

1. Two sentences are joined together by a co-ordinating conjunction.
2. An introductory clause, phrase, or word precedes the sentence.
3. Three or more words, phrases, or clauses are written in a series.
4. A sentence is interrupted by a clause, phrase, or word that is not part of the sentence structure.
5. A series of coordinated adjectives describes the same noun.
6. With places, addresses, dates, and titles.
7. A sentence introduces a quotation.

The following pages contain fuller explanation and examples of these rules for using commas.

1. Two sentences are joined together by a co-ordinating conjunction. Use commas to separate two main clauses in a compound sentence when they are joined by one of the seven co-ordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*).

**Examples:**

Mary wrote the novel, and Julie edited it.

The house burned to the ground, but the fire station was not notified.

2. An introductory clause, phrase, or word should be followed by a comma. Common introductory words that should be followed by a comma include *yes, however, and well*. Introductory clauses that start with certain words (including: *after, although, as, because, if, since, when, while*) should also be followed by a comma. Many introductory phrases require a comma. However, prepositional phrases of less than five words usually do not require a comma unless it is needed for clarity.

**Examples:**

When you have completed the progress report, we will discuss the project in Delhi.

Since you insist, please make the flight arrangements yourself.

If you insist on making the flight arrangements, you will need a purchase order.

After a long and heated discussion, the board voted in favour of the development.

In the meantime I will order the spare parts. (Here the reader can see the introduction without the help of a comma because it is so short.)

3. Use commas with *and* or *or* to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses written in a series.

**Examples:**

The report was clear, concise, complete, and correct.

Required skills are comprehension, business math, word processing, or related computer skills.

He agreed to follow instructions, train the student, write regular progress reports, and live on site.

She brought up three children, ran a convenience store, attended fitness class three times a week, and took regular correspondence courses.

4. Use a pair of commas in the middle of a sentence to separate a clause, phrase, or word from the rest of the sentence. These words are separated because they do not grammatically belong to the sentence, and are not essential to the meaning. Considering the following questions may help you to decide whether the clause, phrase, or word is essential.
- If you leave it out, does the meaning of the sentence stay the same?
  - Does it interrupt the grammatical flow of the sentence?
  - If you move it somewhere else in the sentence, does the sentence still make sense?

If the answer to one or more of these questions is yes then the clause, phrase, or word is not essential and should be separated with a pair of commas.

**Examples:**

You can, without a doubt, use it all year round.

Frogs, for example, are eaten in France.

He will, however, be expected to attend committee meetings.

The manager, who always wore a blue suit, was asked to represent our committee at the public meeting.

Do not use commas with restrictive modifiers, which are essential to the meaning of the sentence. *That* clauses after nouns are always essential.

**Examples:**

My sister *who lives in Delhi* is older than my sister *who lives in Mumbai*. (Take away the essential *who* clauses, and the sentence says “my sister is older than my sister”!)

The report that is written in Hindi contains more information than the report that is written in English.

The girl, who is only thirteen, works as a secretary. (Take away the non-essential *who* clause, and the sentence still makes sense.)

5. Use commas to separate a series of coordinated adjectives describing the same noun. To determine if adjectives are coordinated, try asking these questions:

- Can you change the order of the adjectives?
- Can you write *and* between the adjectives?

If you can do either and the sentence still makes sense then the adjectives are coordinated and require a comma.

**Examples:**

He usually wore a white linen suit. (not coordinated)

She is a friendly, happy person. (coordinated)

6. Commas must be used to separate places and addresses (except between the street name and number), parts of dates (except between the month and day), and titles that follow a name.

**Examples:**

I sent the package from Camden, NJ to New Delhi, India.

On April 16, 1945, the Red Army began the battle to liberate Berlin.

Dr. Robert Atkins, MD, researched effects of the “low-carb” diet.

7. Use a comma to introduce a quotation.

**Examples:**

“What,” Manju asked, “do you expect me to do about it?”

He replied, “I don’t know, but something must be done!”



## Exercise 2

### Part A

Add commas as needed in the sentences below. If the sentence is correct, check the box to the left of the sentence.

- ☐ He left the scene of the accident and tried to forget that it had happened.
- ☐ Oil which is lighter than water rises to the surface.
- ☐ Mrs. Sharma was an attractive gracious lady.
- ☐ Nice is a word with many meanings and some of them are contradictory.
- ☐ The contractor testified that the house was completed and that the work had been done properly.
- ☐ Some people refuse to go to the zoo because of pity for creatures that must live in small cages.
- ☐ Taxicabs that are dirty are illegal in some cities.
- ☐ The closet contained worn clothes old shoes and dirty hats.
- ☐ The uninvited guest wore a dark blue tweed suit.
- ☐ After surviving this ordeal the sailor felt relieved.
- ☐ Shakespeare's early plays I believe stand the test of time.
- ☐ September 11 2001 will never be forgotten.
- ☐ Write the editor of the *National India Report* 2041 Dr. Prasad Road New Delhi 100-1100.
- ☐ He replied "I have no idea what you mean."
- ☐ After a good washing and grooming the pup looked like a new dog.
- ☐ Because of their opposition to institutions that force creatures to live in captivity some people refuse to go to the zoo.

- ☐ Men who are bald are frequently the ones who are the most authoritative on the subject of baldness.
- ☐ Vests which were once popular have been out of vogue for several years.

## Part B

Place commas where appropriate in the following sentences.

1. There was no question that John's painting a huge colourful and ugly mural was the worst entry in the art exhibit.
2. Werner von Braun Willy Ley and Edward Teller noted authorities in the field of rocket development have done much to guide the missile programme of the United States.
3. Mr. Kapur's ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time is I believe amazing.
4. Running around the house the dog was abruptly stopped by a fence.
5. If the opposition should win our candidate would never have any political future.
6. Gracefully lightly and daintily the ballerina moved across the stage.
7. *Glamour* the women's fashion magazine recently incorporated with *Charm* another fashion journal.
8. Joe was born on May 7 1955 and his best friend was born exactly two months later on July 7 1955.
9. Mr. and Mrs. Kwon my parents' best friends sat in front of us at the football game.
10. On November 11 1918 the armistice ending World War I was signed.
11. Wow! The football match that was played this afternoon was amazing!



12. So if you are so interested in this project why are you not writing the report?
13. What is the best way to convince our wealthy patron to support our new learning centre?

Check the Answer Key at the end of the module for the correct answers.



## Semicolon

The semicolon is one of the most misused punctuation marks. This is because many people do not understand sentence structure. You will look at sentence structure in the next section of this module.

1. Use a semicolon to separate main clauses not joined by co-ordinating conjunctions. Co-ordinating conjunctions are the words *and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, and *yet*.

### Examples:

A manager must be decisive and he cannot hesitate.  
Replacing the *and* with a semicolon the sentence becomes:  
A manager must be decisive; he cannot hesitate.

A report is due but the information is not quite ready.

A report is due; the information is not quite ready. (Note that you can replace the co-ordinating conjunction *but* between the two main clauses with the semicolon.)

2. Use a semicolon before an adverb that joins two main clauses. This is called a conjunctive adverb.

### Examples (the conjunctive adverbs are in italics):

She made a great effort to persuade them to join;  
*nevertheless*, they declined.

He wrote a plea for more funding; *however*, the politicians did not listen.

3. Use semicolons to separate the elements in a series that already contains commas.

### Example:

The speeches were made by Ms. Reddy, the director; Mr. Kaul, the treasurer; and Mr. Dutt, the assistant.

Note: We have three units here, each containing a comma. If we used commas to separate the units, the sentence would be confusing and the reader could not tell that Ms. Reddy is the director. Therefore, semicolons are used to clarify the meaning.



## Colon

A colon is used after a complete statement, in order to introduce one or more directly related ideas, such as a series of directions, a list, a quotation, or some other comment illustrating or explaining the statement. It often comes after “as follows” or “the following.”

### Examples:

The report makes the following recommendation: contracts with Desiso Corporation should be thoroughly checked for accounting errors.

Our financial statements contain too many difficult terms like the following: debit, credit, carry-over, annualised, and cost plus.

Once we have completed our review, each person will have to perform the procedures as follows: write a covering letter, add in the appropriate appendices, and photocopy the file for further documentation.

A colon must always be preceded by a complete statement.

### Examples:

CORRECT: We have two choices: right or wrong.

INCORRECT: Two things that I cannot stand are: dogs and fleas.

Note that the last example is wrong because there is no complete statement before the colon.

A colon cannot follow “They are” because it is not a complete statement.

### Example:

INCORRECT: They are: intelligent, clever, resourceful, and brave.

In the above example it would be correct to leave out the colon and use the comma rule for a simple series.

A colon is also used between the hour and minutes in time notation (for example, 5:30 p.m.) and between chapter and verse in biblical references (for example, Genesis 1:18).



## Apostrophe

A common writing error is the incorrect use of the apostrophe. It should be used as follows:

1. Use the apostrophe to show omission of letters in a contraction.

do not = don't

does not = doesn't

I would = I'd

they have = they've

it is = it's

there is = there's

2. Use the apostrophe with -s to show possession.

- ❑ Add an apostrophe and -s to singular nouns.

### Examples:

of Bill = Bill's (meaning "belonging to Bill")

my aunt's house (meaning "the house belonging to my aunt")

**Note:** If the singular word already ends in -s, there are two options: either add an apostrophe with -s, or just add an apostrophe after the already existing -s.

of James = James' or James's

- ❑ Add only an apostrophe to plural nouns ending in -s.

of the boys = the boys'

- ❑ Add an apostrophe and -s to plural nouns not ending in -s.

of men = men's

- ❑ To indicate joint possession, add an apostrophe (and -s if necessary) to the second noun.

of Mary and Jim = Mary and Jim's

- ❑ With compound words or word groups, add an apostrophe (and -s if necessary) to the last unit.

of mother-in-law = mother-in-law's

3. Do not use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns (whose, ours, yours, hers, theirs, its).

Remember that *its* is a possessive pronoun (meaning "belonging to it"), so does not need an apostrophe. *It's* means "it is."

**Examples:**

*Its Peter's car.* means that the car belongs to Peter.

*The dog chases its tail.* means that the tail belongs to the dog.

*It's the report.* means that the report has been found or it is the report.

*The board is reviewing its reports.* means that the reports belong to the board.

4. Avoid using the possessive apostrophe with inanimate things.

The front door of the house — *not* the house's front door

5. Use the apostrophe to help form the plurals of lowercase letters.

**Examples:**

three f's

mind your p's and q's



### Exercise 3

Write out the following sentences, inserting commas, semicolons, colons, and apostrophes wherever they are needed.

1. The men in question (Harold Keene Jim Peterson and Gerald Greene) deserve awards.

---

---

2. Several countries participated in the airlift Italy Belgium France and Luxembourg.

---

---

3. Only one course was open to us “surrender” said the ex-major and we did.

---

---

4. Judge Carswell later to be nominated for the Supreme Court had ruled against civil rights.

---

---

5. In last week’s *India Today* one of my favourite magazines I enjoyed reading Leland’s article “How Not to Go Camping.”

---

---

6. Managers should consider the workers feelings.

---

---

7. There was only one thing to do study till dawn.

---

---

8. Montaigne wrote the following "A wise man never loses anything, if he has himself."

---

---

9. The following are the primary colours red blue and yellow.

---

---

10. Arriving on the 8 10 plane were Liz Brooks my old roommate her husband and Tim their son.

---

---

11. When the teacher commented that her spelling was poor Lynn replied "All the members of my family are poor spellers. Why not me?"

---

---

12. He used the phrase "you know" so often that I finally said "No I don't know."

---

---

13. The automobile dealer handled three makes of cars Volkswagen Porsche and Mercedes Benz.

---

---

14. Though Phil said he would arrive on the 9 19 flight he came instead on the 10 36 flight.

---

---

15. "Whoever thought" said Helen "that Jack would be elected class president?"

---

---

16. In baseball a showboat is a man who shows off.

---

---

17. The minister quoted Isaiah 5 21 in last Sunday's sermon.

---

---

18. There was a very interesting article entitled "The New Rage for Folk Singing" in last Sunday's *Times of India* newspaper.

---

---

19. Whoever is elected secretary of the club Ashley Chandra or Aisha must be prepared to do a great deal of work said Jumita the previous secretary.

---

---

20. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* 1859 caused a great controversy when it appeared.

---

---



21. This computers speed is relatively slow.

---

---

22. Today is Jones day off but tomorrow is Adams rest day.

---

---

23. We check each persons productivity once every hour.

---

---

24. Stock prices are at a yearly low therefore we cannot afford to sell now.

---

---

25. At the price suppliers are charging we cannot make a profit on re-sale but we must meet the price of our competition.

---

---

Check the Answer Key at the end of the module for the correct answers.



## Traditional Parts of Speech

You use punctuation to add clarity to your sentences, but that is only the first step toward writing clearly. You need to be able to identify the parts of a sentence and combine them in understandable ways. The combination of correct punctuation and correct sentence construction allows your readers to grasp the meaning of your writing quickly.

When we discuss writing and rules, we have to use terms such as “parts of speech.” Knowing the parts of speech helps you to understand rules that clarify your writing style. Each of the parts of speech performs a specific function in a sentence. Most parts of speech are single words; however, verbs and prepositions can be more than one word.

The eight parts of speech are:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Noun         | Names a person, place, thing, or abstraction (runner, town, pen, love).  |
| 2. Pronoun      | Refers to a noun already used or implied. Replaces noun (who, that, she, himself).   |
| 3. Verb         | Asserts an action or a state of being (to jump, to be).  |
| 4. Adjective    | Describes or limits a noun or pronoun (happy, lucky, Indian).  |
| 5. Adverb       | Describes or limits a verb, adverb, or adjective (quickly, really, very).  |
| 6. Conjunction  | Connects words, phrases, and clauses (but, and, because, when).  |
| 7. Preposition  | Relates a noun or pronoun to another noun or pronoun – often in a relationship of position or direction (on, into, between, of, with). |
| 8. Interjection | Expresses spontaneous feelings (Oh! Ouch! Alas!).  |

Note: Some words can be more than one part of speech, depending on their function in a specific sentence. “Drink” can be a noun, a thing: “A drink is what I need.” And “drink” can be a verb: “When I get back, I will drink a litre of water.” Therefore you cannot presume a word will always be the same part of speech. A word is labelled according to its **function** in a specific sentence. “Drink” can name a thing and it can also assert an action. Only the context will tell you if it’s a noun or a verb.

Beyond the eight parts of speech, you also need to identify the following:

1. Articles are the two words *a* and *the*, which function as adjectives by specifying whether nouns are specific or general.

Definite article: *the*

**Example:**

Our play contained *the* death of Othello. (This is a specific reference to a scene in which Othello is playing that cannot be confused with others.)

Indefinite article: *a, an*

**Example:**

Our play contained *a* death scene. (This is a general reference not identifying a specific scene.)

2. Verbals are forms of the verb that function as other parts of speech. Verbals consist of infinitives and participles. Using them adds variety to your writing of simple sentences.
  - a) Infinitive: the “to” form of the verb may be used as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

**Example:**

*To swim* in the lake is dangerous. (used as a noun to name something – an activity)

It was his job *to reply*. (used as an adjective to modify the noun “job”)

I was ready *to start*. (used as an adverb to modify the adjective “ready”)

b) Participle: the adjectival form of the verb.

**Present form** (formed by adding *-ing* to the verb)

**Examples:**

*Sobbing*, he told me the story. (modifies pronoun “he”)

I tended to the *bleeding* patient (modifies noun “patient”)

**Past form** (formed by adding *-ed* to the verb)

**Examples:**

*Exhausted*, he dropped to his knees. (modifies pronoun “he”)

He likes her *varnished* nails. (modifies noun “nails”)

**Gerund** (the noun form of the verb)

**Examples:**

*Smoking* is dangerous to your health.

Most people enjoy *eating*.



## Exercise 4

Indicate the part of speech, type of article, or type of verbal of each of the words in *italics*. (Remember that verbs are often more than one word; for example, I *used to work*. I *was working* last month. I *will be working* there next year.)

1. The *manager* decided that *she* would check all incoming *mail*.

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2. She *wrote* a *really stylish* memo and sent a *copy to* everyone *in* the office.

---

3. The sales manager *responded quickly* with a memo.

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4. He *was unhappy* with the way she *was asserting* her authority.

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5. As soon as he *had read* the memo, he *charged into* her office waving the *memo* in front of her *nose*.

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6. The office manager *was* busy interviewing a trainee, *but* she said that she would be *happy to discuss* the matter later.

---

7. *Embarrassed* at disturbing her, the sales manager *apologised very politely* and left the *room*.

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8. When *the two managers* finally *met*, *they* agreed to *air* the matter at the *next* committee meeting.

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9. *Writing* was a *skill* that the *young* applicant was willing to *develop*.

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Check the Answer Key at the end of this module for the correct answers.



## Sentence Structure

You have just covered two essential ingredients that will help you to structure your thoughts: punctuation and parts of speech. A sentence is an organised group of words that expresses a complete thought and can stand on its own as an independent statement. It is important to check your writing to ensure that your sentences meet these two criteria. If they do not, they are not complete sentences and may require correction. To correct sentence fragments a verb or noun will need to be added.

You should be able to write simple sentences with a subject and verb. If one of these two components are absent from a sentence, the meaning may be unclear. This can cause confusion for the reader. The two most common sentence errors are (i) creating sentence fragments or incomplete thoughts and (ii) writing run-on sentences, which bring too many thoughts together in one sentence.

## Sentence Fragments

A sentence fragment is an incomplete unit of thought punctuated to look like a complete sentence. A fragment cannot stand on its own because it lacks a subject, a verb, or both.

The following are two examples of sentence fragments:

Some of the contributing factors in the accident.

Walks on the conveyor.

The first sentence fragment could be corrected by adding a verb to give the following:

Some of the contributing factors in the accident were the weather and the driver's age.

The second sentence fragment could be corrected by adding a noun to serve as the subject, giving the following complete sentence. (Note that the punctuation also changes.)

When the worker walks on the conveyor, he holds on to the safety belt.

Sentence fragments are sometimes difficult to detect because they seem to make sense when they are surrounded by other sentences. When checking your writing for fragments, make sure each sentence makes sense on its own. Read the sentence separately from those around it.



## Exercise 5

The following are sentence fragments. Change each fragment to a complete sentence by adding a subject, a verb, or both.

### Examples:

Fragment: When welding or cutting.

Sentence: When welding or cutting, protective clothing and equipment must be worn.

Fragment: The proper tools for the job.

Sentence: Make sure you use the proper tools for the job.

1. Once the funding is removed.

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2. Any reports which need re-writing.

---

3. Who sort each donation into food, household, or toys.

---

4. As the child passes through the system.

---

5. Another important factor to consider.

---



6. Depending on client requirements.

---

7. From an operating point of view.

---

8. Using information from the community.

---

9. After an initial breakdown at the parents' meeting.

---

10. To become proficient in the art of fundraising.

---

11. Improving utilisation and lowering operating costs.

---

12. Before beginning any maintenance or repairs.

---

13. Knowledge of the behaviour of children under various conditions.

---

14. After the situation of the child has been determined.

---

Check the Answer Key at the end of the module for the correct answers.



## Run-On Sentences

A run-on sentence contains two or more complete thoughts that are joined together only by a comma or that are written as one long sentence without any punctuation whatsoever.

Examples of run-on sentences:

### Example 1:

Bob has to work overtime | he will be late for dinner.

First complete thought | Second complete thought

### Example 2:

Before a report is approved, it must be checked | it is spell checked.

First complete thought | Second complete thought

### Example 3:

Dan is a social worker employed at the centre, Jim is a health worker working at the outreach centre.

Note that this is an incorrect use of the comma.

Correcting a run-on sentence can be accomplished in several ways:

- A semicolon can be used when there is an implied connection between the two thoughts.
- A semicolon followed by a conjunctive adverb such as *therefore*, *however*, or *consequently* can be used to connect related thoughts.
- A period can be used to separate the thoughts completely.
- A comma plus a conjunction such as *and* or *but* can be used when there is a close, logical relationship between the two thoughts.

**Examples:**

Using a semicolon to correct:

Bob has to work overtime; he will be late for dinner.

Using a semicolon and *therefore*:

Bob has to work overtime; therefore, he will be late for dinner.

Using a period to separate thoughts:

Dan is a social worker employed at the centre. Jim is a health worker working at the outreach centre.

Using a conjunction and a comma:

Dan is a social worker employed at the centre, and Jim is a health worker working at the outreach centre.



## Exercise 6

Indicate which of the following are run-on sentences by writing “R” in the margin. Then correct the run-on sentences by adding proper punctuation or a conjunction. If the sentence is correct as written, use a check mark beside the sentence to indicate that it is correct.

1. A saw cuts lumber to standard lengths it makes the ends square.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Most children are considered flexible they require direct attention to perform well.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The log is loaded on the carriage, clamps called dogs are used to hold it firmly in place.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. A motor vehicle can travel up to 100 kilometres per hour, so an instant stop can generate a great deal of reactive force.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Read and know the safety rules, be alert, and protect yourself and your co-workers.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Proper health and safety procedures were not followed consequently a warning slip will be issued.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. The safety committee will meet tomorrow afternoon it will probably be a long meeting.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Al and Jim were unable to attend we cancelled the meeting.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Don't forget your poster, it must be displayed at the public meeting tonight.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. She passed the administrator exam with high marks, she should be congratulated.

---

11. Here is the list of materials you requested; it is accurate and complete.

---

12. He tried to flip the board over it wouldn't budge.

---

13. Make sure you write that number in the log book the next shift will need to know it.

---

14. The cable slipped and the load fell to the ground fortunately no one was injured.

---

Check the Answer Key at the end of the module for the correct answers.



## Summary

In this module, you started by learning about words. Vocabulary is important in developing clear ideas. You need to know the right word to express your thoughts.

Next, you learned how to make your thoughts in written form clear by using the correct punctuation. In this module you covered only some of the key punctuation that is used in business writing.

Using your knowledge of vocabulary and punctuation, you can put together sentences with a subject and a verb. As a basis for understanding sentence structure, you learned the traditional parts of speech. Finally, the last section of this module covered some basic rules for combining thoughts into more complete sentences.

In later modules you will apply what you have learned to construct more complex sentences. This is the first step in creating documents that will interest and appeal to your audience.

## Answer Key to Exercises

### Exercise 1

#### Part A

You are editing some reports written by a rather wordy writer, who likes to show off his large vocabulary. The only problem is that hardly anyone can understand some of the words he uses. So you need to make the reports as clear as possible, and this means changing some of the words.

Here are some of the wordy extracts. Find simpler, more familiar words to replace the words in *italics*.

The following are some suggested answers, but you will find that more than one correct answer is possible in some cases.

1. He is far too *garrulous* to work in such a confidential position.

He gossips too much to be in such a confidential position.

2. Action in this case should be *expeditious*.

Action in this case should be prompt (or: timely).

3. It should be illegal to *hydrate* the area during the summer.

It should be illegal to water the area during the summer.

4. In my estimation, this politician is *impervious* to harsh criticism.

In my estimation, this politician is resistant to harsh criticism.

5. It is ridiculous to ask representatives from across the country to *convene* for just three hours.

It is ridiculous to ask representatives from across the country to meet (or: get together) for just three hours.

6. I have seen *intimations* of his being the right person for the job.

I have seen suggestions of his being the right person for the job.

## Part B

Determine what the following one-liners are really saying. In their current form, the words are correct but hide the meaning. Replace each sentence with one that can be clearly understood.

The following are some suggested answers, but you will find that more than one correct answer is possible in some cases.

1. Members of an avian species of identical plumage congregate.

Birds of a feather flock together.

2. It is fruitless to become lachrymose over precipitately departed lacteal fluid.

Don't cry over spilt milk.

3. Neophyte's serendipity.

Beginner's luck.

4. Pulchritude possesses solely cutaneous profundity.

Beauty is only skin deep.

5. The stylus is more potent than the claymore.

The pen is mightier than the sword.

6. Scintillate, scintillate asteroid minific.

Twinkle, twinkle little star.



## Exercise 2

### Part A

Add commas as needed in the sentences below. If the sentence is correct, check the box to the left of the sentence

- ☒ He left the scene of the accident and tried to forget that it had happened.  
Oil, which is lighter than water, rises to the surface.  
Mrs. Sharma was an attractive, gracious lady.  
Nice is a word with many meanings, and some of them are contradictory.
- ☒ The contractor testified that the house was completed and that the work had been done properly.
- ☒ Some people refuse to go to the zoo because of pity for creatures that must live in small cages.
- ☒ Taxicabs that are dirty are illegal in some cities.  
The closet contained worn clothes, old shoes, and dirty hats.  
The uninvited guest wore a dark blue tweed suit.  
After surviving this ordeal, the sailor felt relieved.  
Shakespeare's early plays, I believe, stand the test of time.  
September 11, 2001, will never be forgotten.  
Write the editor of the *National India Report*, 2041 Dr. Prasad Road, New Delhi, 100-1100.  
He replied, "I have no idea what you mean."  
After a good washing and grooming, the pup looked like a new dog.  
Because of their opposition to institutions that force creatures to live in captivity, some people refuse to go to the zoo.
- ☒ Men who are bald are frequently the ones who are the most authoritative on the subject of baldness.  
Vests, which were once popular, have been out of vogue for several years.

### Part B

Place commas where appropriate in the following sentences.

1. There was no question that John's painting, a huge, colourful, and ugly mural, was the worst entry in the art exhibit.

2. Werner von Braun, Willy Ley, and Edward Teller, noted authorities in the field of rocket development, have done much to guide the missile programme of the United States.
3. Mr. Kapur's ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time is, I believe, amazing.
4. Running around the house, the dog was abruptly stopped by a fence.
5. If the opposition should win, our candidate would never have any political future.
6. Gracefully, lightly, and daintily, the ballerina moved across the stage.
7. *Glamour*, the women's fashion magazine, recently incorporated with *Charm*, another fashion journal.
8. Joe was born on May 7, 1955, and his best friend was born exactly two months later on July 7, 1955.
9. Mr. and Mrs. Kwon, my parents' best friends, sat in front of us at the football game.
10. On November 11, 1918, the armistice ending World War I was signed.
11. Wow! The football match that was played this afternoon was amazing!
12. So, if you are so interested in this project, why are you not writing the report?
13. What is the best way to convince our wealthy patron to support our new learning centre?

### Exercise 3

Write out the following sentences, inserting commas, semicolons, colons, and apostrophes wherever they are needed.

1. The men in question (Harold Keene, Jim Peterson, and Gerald Greene) deserve awards.
2. Several countries participated in the airlift: Italy, Belgium, France, and Luxembourg.

3. Only one course was open to us; "surrender," said the ex-major, and we did.
4. Judge Carswell, later to be nominated for the Supreme Court, had ruled against civil rights.
5. In last week's *India Today*, one of my favourite magazines, I enjoyed reading Leland's article, "How Not to Go Camping."
6. Managers should consider the workers' feelings.
7. There was only one thing to do: study till dawn.
8. Montaigne wrote the following: "A wise man never loses anything, if he has himself."
9. The following are the primary colours: red, blue, and yellow.
10. Arriving on the 8:10 plane were Liz Brooks, my old roommate; her husband; and Tim, their son.
11. When the teacher commented that her spelling was poor, Lynn replied, "All the members of my family are poor spellers. Why not me?"
12. He used the phrase, "you know" so often that I finally said, "No, I don't know."
13. The automobile dealer handled three makes of cars: Volkswagen, Porsche, and Mercedes Benz.
14. Though Phil said he would arrive on the 9:19 flight, he came instead on the 10:36 flight.
15. "Whoever thought," said Helen, "that Jack would be elected class president?"
16. In baseball, a showboat is a man who shows off.
17. The minister quoted Isaiah 5:21 in last Sunday's sermon.
18. There was a very interesting article, entitled, "The New Rage for Folk Singing," in last Sunday's *Times of India* newspaper.
19. "Whoever is elected secretary of the club, Ashley, Chandra, or Aisha, must be prepared to do a great deal of work" said Jumita, the previous secretary.
20. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, 1859, caused a great controversy when it appeared.
21. This computer's speed is relatively slow.
22. Today is Jones' day off but tomorrow is Adams' rest day.
23. We check each person's productivity once every hour.
24. Stock prices are at a yearly low, therefore we cannot afford to sell now.
25. At the price suppliers are charging we cannot make a profit on re-sale, but we must meet the price of our competition.

## Exercise 4

Indicate the part of speech, type of article, or type of verbal of each of the words in italics.

1. The *manager* decided that *she* would check all incoming *mail*.

Noun, pronoun, noun

2. She *wrote* a *really stylish* memo and sent a *copy* to everyone *in* the office.

Verb, adverb, adjective, noun, preposition, preposition

3. The sales manager *responded* *quickly* with *a* memo.

Verb, adverb, indefinite article

4. He *was* *unhappy* with the way she *was* *asserting* her authority.

Verb, adjective, verb

5. As soon as he *had read* the memo, he *charged* *into* her office waving the *memo* in front of her *nose*.

Verb, verb, preposition, noun, noun, noun

6. The office manager *was* busy interviewing a trainee, *but* she said that she would be *happy* *to discuss* the matter later.

Verb, conjunction, adjective, infinitive

7. *Embarrassed* at disturbing her, the sales manager *apologised* *very politely* and left the *room*.

Adjective, verb, adverb, adverb, noun

8. When *the* two *managers* finally *met*, *they* agreed *to air* the matter *at* the *next* committee meeting.

Definite article, noun, verb, pronoun, infinitive, preposition, adjective

9. *Writing* was *a* *skill* that the *young* applicant was willing *to develop*.

Gerund, indefinite article, noun, adjective, infinitive

## Exercise 5

The following are sentence fragments. Change each fragment to a complete sentence by adding a subject, a verb, or both.

1. Once the funding is removed.

Once the funding is removed, we must seek new resources.

2. Any reports which need re-writing.

After a panel review, any reports which need re-writing will be sent back to the authors.

3. Who sort each donation into food, household items, or toys.

Our dedicated staff, who sort each donation into food, household items, or toys, make our organisation run efficiently.

4. As the child passes through the system.

As the child passes through the system, we monitor his or her progress.

5. Another important factor to consider.

The English writing skill of the candidate is another important factor to consider.

6. Depending on client requirements.

Depending on client requirements, we will make adjustments to our reporting.

7. From an operating point of view.

From an operating point of view, our programmes are very successful.

8. Using information from the community.

Our representative is developing new programmes using information from the community.

9. After an initial breakdown at the parents' meeting.

After an initial breakdown at the parents' meeting, we reconsidered our own schedule for the meeting.

10. To become proficient in the art of fundraising.

To become proficient in the art of fundraising is a requirement of the job.

11. Improving utilisation and lowering operating costs.

Improving utilisation and lowering operating costs are major concerns for the senior administration.

12. Before beginning any maintenance or repairs.

Before beginning any maintenance or repairs, check the availability of the parts.

15. Knowledge of the behaviour of children under various conditions.

Knowledge of the behaviour of children under various conditions is an asset for working with problem children.

16. After the situation of the child has been determined.

We will make a final judgement after the situation of the child has been determined.

## Exercise 6

Indicate which of the following are run-on sentences by writing “R” in the margin. Then correct the run-on sentences by adding proper punctuation or a conjunction. If the sentence is correct as written, write “C” in the margin.

1. A saw cuts lumber to standard lengths it makes the ends square.  
R A saw cuts lumber to standard lengths and it makes the ends square.
2. Most children are considered flexible they require direct attention to perform well.  
R Most children are considered flexible but they require direct attention to perform well.
3. The log is loaded on the carriage, clamps called dogs are used to hold it firmly in place.  
R The log is loaded on the carriage; clamps called dogs are used to hold it firmly in place.
4. A motor vehicle can travel up to 100 kilometres per hour, so an instant stop can generate a great deal of reactive force.  
C Correct.
5. Read and know the safety rules, be alert, and protect yourself and your co-workers.  
C Correct.
6. Proper health and safety procedures were not followed consequently a warning slip will be issued.  
R Proper health and safety procedures were not followed; consequently a warning slip will be issued.
7. The safety committee will meet tomorrow afternoon it will probably be a long meeting.  
R The safety committee will meet tomorrow afternoon; it will probably be a long meeting.

8. Al and Jim were unable to attend we cancelled the meeting.
- R Al and Jim were unable to attend, therefore we cancelled the meeting.
- R Al and Jim were unable to attend; therefore we cancelled the meeting.
- (either is acceptable)
9. Don't forget your poster, it must be displayed at the public meeting tonight.
- R Don't forget your poster. It must be displayed at the public meeting tonight.
10. She passed the administrator exam with high marks, she should be congratulated.
- R She passed the administrator exam with high marks; she should be congratulated.
11. Here is the list of materials you requested; it is accurate and complete.
- C Correct.
12. He tried to flip the board over it wouldn't budge.
- R He tried to flip the board over, but it wouldn't budge.
13. Make sure you write that number in the log book the next shift will need to know it.
- R Make sure you write that number in the log book because the next shift will need to know it.
14. The cable slipped and the load fell to the ground fortunately no one was injured.
- R The cable slipped and the load fell to the ground. Fortunately no one was injured.