

The Tyler P. Fick Writing Center

**Writing Effective Sentences**

Good writers use effective sentences. What are some of the qualities of effective sentences? Most readers and writers would say that effective sentences are clear, logical, and grammatical. Add some syntactical variation, sensory imagery, and vivid verbs—suddenly you are writing sentences people will want to read! Remember: connecting with your reader is the objective. You will connect more effectively if your prose is free of distracting errors, but you must also polish your writing so that it engages the reader.

Read the following sentences and think about how they could be improved. You might try writing a revised version of the sentence. Some suggested revisions are on the back of this sheet. You will also find the grammatical labels for the problems.

1. After he finished college, he begins a career as a journalist.

2. If you are applying to a selective college, one should consider its early action program.

3. The master baker showed us how to mix the batter, how to use the oven, and icing the finished cake.

4. Andrea and Monique plan to become an astronaut.

5. Everyone who does their work are going to earn an “A” in this course.

6. Rita has pneumonia, and she will be absent for a week.

7. Students found the teacher’s comparison between *The Hunger Games* and George Orwell to be fascinating.

8. Having grown up in the jungle as a wild baboon, I knew that Wiki had special nutritional needs.

9. Did you hear they discovered an earth-like planet outside the solar system?

10. I believe firmly in the principals upon which this country was founded.

11. Every year the desert area receives only about two inches of rainfall annually.

12. Mistakes were made, but the company continues to be a sound enterprise.

13. She always does her classwork careless.

14. Just between you and I, there is something wrong with sentence!

15. The movie *Clueless* is loosely based off of the novel *Emma* by Jane Austen.

16. Of the two writers, J.K. Rowling has written the most books.

17. Whatever the consequences.

18. She loves writing sentences, she writes them all the time.

**Suggested Revisions**

The sentences on the other side of this document show various errors. The following revisions are classified and labeled.

**CONSISTENCY**

1. After he finished college, he **began** a career as a journalist. TENSE CONSISTENCY

2. If you are applying to a selective college, **you** should consider its early action program. PRONOUN SHIFT

3. The master baker showed us how to mix the batter, how to use the oven, and **how to ice** the finished cake.

4. Andrea and Monique plan to become **astronauts**. NOUN NUMBER AGREEMENT

5. Everyone who does **her** work **is** going to earn an “A” in this course. PRONOUN/ANTECEDENT AND SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT

**LOGIC**

6. **Since** Rita has pneumonia, she will be absent for a week. SUBORDINATION

7. Students found the teacher’s comparison between *The Hunger Games* and **1984** to be fascinating. LOGICAL COMPARISON

8. Having grown up in the jungle as a wild baboon, Wiki had special nutritional needs. MODIFICATION

**CLARITY**

9. Did you hear **astrophysicists** discovered an earth-like planet outside the solar system? VAGUE PRONOUN

10. I believe firmly in the **principles** upon which this country was founded. DICTION

11. Every year the desert area receives only about two inches of rainfall. REDUNDANCY

12. **I made mistakes**, but the company continues to be a sound enterprise. ACTIVE NOT PASSIVE VOICE

**GRAMMAR**

13. She always does her classwork **carelessly.** ADJECTIVE/ADVERB CONFUSION

14. Just between you and **me,** there is something wrong with sentence! PRONOUN CASE

15. The movie *Clueless* is loosely based **on** the novel *Emma* by Jane Austen. IDIOM

16. Of the two writers, J.K. Rowling has written the most books. COMPARISON OF MODIFIERS

17. We will pursue this course of action whatever the consequences. FRAGMENT

18. She loves writing sentences**. She** writes them all the time. COMMA SPLICE