

Grammar for Writers

LESSON 1

Building Better Sentences

Essential Question: How do writers construct effective sentences?

Today the
sun is bright
and the wind
is gentle.



Bellringer

Which sentence is the strongest?

1

A

The boy ran.

2

B

The frightened boy sprinted across the rain-soaked football field.

3

C

Running across the football field.

4

D

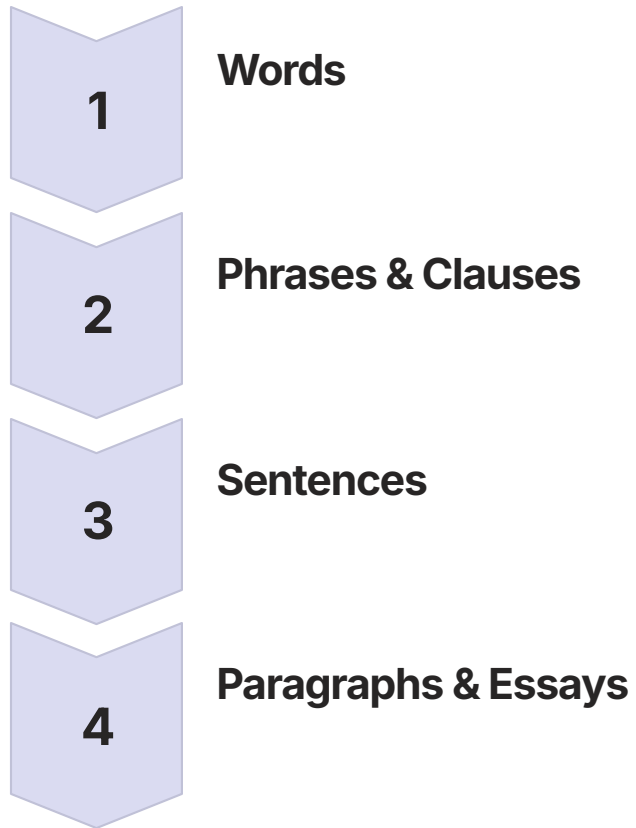
Because the football match had ended.



Vote only. No discussion yet — we'll revisit this at the end of the lesson.

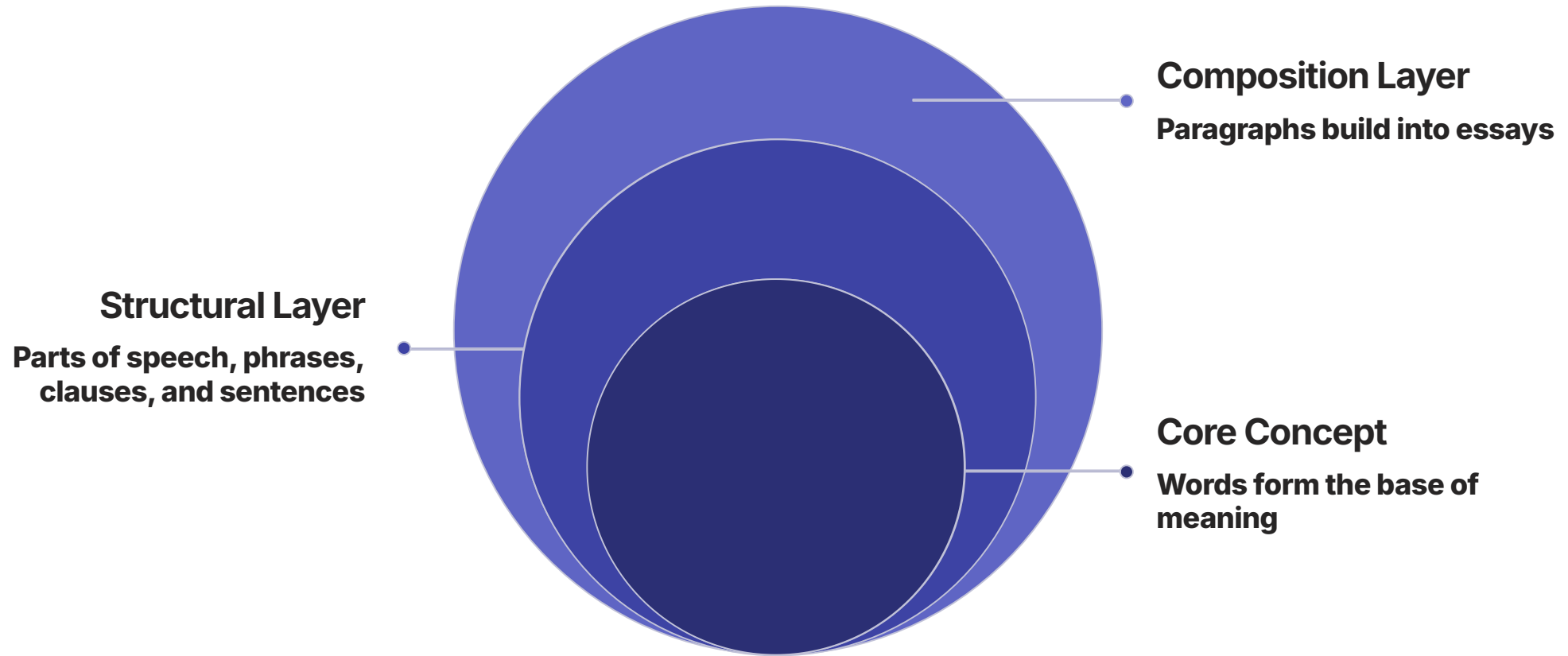
Every Sentence Has Layers

Think of English like LEGO® — individual pieces that snap together to form something bigger and more complex. Grammar isn't about memorizing rules. It's about construction: understanding how the pieces fit together so you can build exactly what you imagine.



The Building Blocks of English

Every essay you've ever read — and every essay you'll ever write — begins with a single word. Here's how those words climb toward meaning:



Understanding each level gives you deliberate control over your writing. The stronger your foundation, the more powerful your final essay becomes.

Review: Parts of Speech

Every word in the English language belongs to at least one part of speech. These are the raw materials that writers use to construct meaning. Knowing what role each word plays helps you build sentences with precision and confidence.



Nouns & Pronouns

People, places, things, ideas — and the words that replace them.



Verbs & Adverbs

Actions, states of being, and the words that modify them.



Adjectives & Articles

Descriptors that add detail and specificity to nouns.



Prepositions & Conjunctions

Words that show relationships and connect ideas together.

Sentence Anatomy

"The exhausted marathon runner crossed the finish line after four hours."

This single sentence is packed with information. Let's dissect it layer by layer. Can you identify each of the following parts?

What to Find

- Complete Subject
- Simple Subject
- Complete Predicate
- Simple Predicate (Verb)

Look Deeper

- Direct Object
- Prepositional Phrase
- Object of the Preposition

Write your answers in your notebook before we discuss.

Building a Sentence

Every grammatically complete sentence must contain three essential ingredients. Leave one out, and your sentence collapses — like a table missing a leg.

Subject

Who or what the sentence is about.



Verb

The action or state of being.



Complete Thought

An idea that can stand on its own.

Everything else — adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases — adds meaning and texture. Good writers build. Great writers construct.

Sentence Analysis

"The committee reached a unanimous decision after two hours of debate."

Apply what you've learned. Working independently, analyze this sentence and label each of the following parts in your notebook.

Subject

Who is performing the action?

Verb

What action is being taken?

Direct Object

What receives the action of the verb?

Prepositional Phrase

Which phrase begins with a preposition?

Object of the Preposition

What noun follows the preposition?

Sentence or Fragment?

Read each example carefully. A complete sentence has a subject, a verb, and expresses a complete thought. A fragment is missing at least one of these. Which are which?

1

Example 1

Although the experiment appeared successful.

2

Example 2

The students submitted their essays before lunch.

3

Example 3

Hidden beneath the old wooden bridge.

4

Example 4

The orchestra performed beautifully despite the heavy rain.

Explain Your Thinking

It's not enough to label something a fragment — great writers can explain *why*. For each example from the previous slide, identify the problem and articulate what's missing.



Sentence or Fragment?

State your verdict clearly for each example.



If It's a Fragment — What's Missing?

Is it the subject? The verb? Or does the group of words simply fail to express a complete thought?



How Would You Fix It?

Rewrite any fragment in your notebook so that it becomes a complete, polished sentence.



Sentence Surgery — Remove the Verb

"The experienced teacher explained the lesson carefully."

Now remove the verb — explained. What are you left with?

What Remains

"The experienced teacher the lesson carefully."

The meaning collapses completely.
There's no action — nothing actually *happens*.

The Takeaway

The verb is the engine of the sentence. Without it, you don't have a sentence at all — you have a broken fragment. Every complete sentence must have one.

Sentence Surgery — Remove the Subject

"The experienced teacher explained the lesson carefully."

This time, remove the subject — The experienced teacher. What's left?

What Remains

"Explained the lesson carefully."

There's action — but we have no idea *who* is performing it.

The Takeaway

The subject anchors the sentence. A reader needs to know *who* or *what* is acting. Without a subject, the sentence has no identity and cannot stand on its own.

Clauses: The Heart of Every Sentence

A clause is a group of words containing a subject and a verb. But not all clauses are created equal.

Independent Clause

Can stand alone as a complete sentence. It expresses a complete thought.

Example: "The rain stopped."

Dependent Clause

Cannot stand alone. It depends on an independent clause to complete its meaning.

Example: "Although the rain stopped..." — then what?



A dependent clause written alone is a fragment — one of the most common errors in student writing.

Writers Break the Rules

Professional authors sometimes use fragments — and they do it on purpose. Once you understand the rules, you can break them strategically. Intentional fragments create specific effects that full sentences can't always achieve.



Emphasis

A single word or short phrase commands full attention.



Tension

Short fragments create suspense and urgency.



Rhythm

Varying sentence length controls the pace of reading.



Voice

Fragments help writers sound natural and distinctive.



Writer's Effect

Silence.

This is not a complete sentence. It has no verb. By every grammar rule we've covered today, it is a fragment — and yet it works powerfully.

Why Is It Effective?

The single word commands full attention. It creates a pause. It forces the reader to stop — just as silence forces us to stop in real life.

What Does It Make You Feel?

Discuss with a partner. What emotions or images does the word call up? How does its isolation on the page change its impact compared to a full sentence?

Grammar Lab

"The frightened children hurried toward the old stone bridge before the storm arrived."

This is your most complex analysis yet. Working carefully, identify every element listed below. Write your answers in your notebook, then compare with a partner.

Subject

Who is performing the action?

Verb

What action are they performing?

Direct Object

What or whom receives the action?

Prepositional Phrase

Find the phrase beginning with a preposition.

Object of the Preposition

What noun follows the preposition?

Notebook Challenge

Now it's your turn to construct. Write three original complete sentences — each one must include all of the following requirements. This is not just grammar practice; it's writing practice.



Include One Adjective

Choose a descriptive word that adds vivid detail to your noun.



Include One Direct Object

Show what receives the action of your verb.



Include One Prepositional Phrase

Add information about where, when, or how something happens.



Mark It Up

Underline the subject, circle the verb, and box the prepositional phrase in each sentence.

Peer Review

Exchange notebooks with a partner and read their three sentences carefully. Your job is to act as an editor — check their work against the requirements and give constructive, specific feedback.

Can You Find the Subject?

Is it clearly stated? Is it the right word or phrase?

Can You Find the Verb?

Is there a clear action or state of being?

Can You Find the Direct Object?

What receives the action? Is it present?

Can You Find the Prepositional Phrase?

Does it start with a preposition? Is it clearly identifiable?

If anything is missing or unclear — revise the sentence together.



Exit Ticket

"The students in Room 301 completed the challenging grammar assignment after lunch."

Before you leave, demonstrate what you've learned today. Analyze this sentence on your own — no notes, no partners. Identify each element below and write your answers on your exit slip.

Subject

Who completed the assignment?

Verb

What did they do?

Direct Object

What did they complete?

Prepositional Phrase

Find both prepositional phrases in this sentence.

Object of the Preposition

Name the object of each preposition.

Looking Ahead

Tomorrow's Lesson

Today you mastered the foundations of sentence construction. Tomorrow we go deeper — into the errors that trip up even experienced writers, and the strategies that skilled authors use to fix them.

Fragments

Why incomplete thoughts slip into our writing — and how to catch them.

Run-ons

What happens when sentences grow too long without proper punctuation or conjunctions.

Comma Splices

One of the most common punctuation errors — and the three ways to fix it.

We'll learn why these errors happen — and how skilled writers recognize and correct them with confidence.

