

GENERAL TERMS

DICTION

etymology: speaking; style (from *dicere*, to say)

definition: "The use of words in oral or written discourse" (Holman); choice of words.

Cliché. "Any expression so often used that its freshness and clarity have worn off. The reader or speaker of the expression pays no attention to the real meaning of the words." "The new policy is just the tip of the iceberg, but it has already bred verbal pyrotechnics that throw a wet blanket over the in-depth brainstorming of seminal issues" (Holman).

Connotation. "The emotional implication that words may carry as distinguished from their denotative meanings. Connotations may be (1) private and personal, the result of individual experience, (2) group (national, linguistic, racial), or (3) general or universal, held by all or most people. Connotation depends on usage in a particular linguistic community and climate. A purely private and personal connotation cannot be communicated; the connotation must be shared to be intelligible to others" (Holman).

Dead Metaphor. "A figure of speech used so long that it is now taken in its denotative sense only, without the conscious comparison or analogy to a physical object once conveyed" (Holman). "The keystone of his system is the belief in an omnipotent God," "keystone"--literally an actual stone in an arch--functions as a dead metaphor (Holman).

Denotation. "The specific, exact meaning of a word, independent of its emotional coloration or associations" (Holman). "The word *home*, for instance . . . means only a place where one lives [denotation], but by connotation it suggests security, love, comfort, and family" (Perrine). "The words *childlike* and *childish* both mean 'characteristic of a child,' but *childlike* suggests meekness, innocence, and wide-eyed wonder, while *childish* suggests pettiness, willfulness, and temper tantrums" (Perrine). "The word *doubloon* . . . immediately will suggest pirates, though a dictionary definition [denotation] includes nothing about pirates. Pirates are part of its connotation" (Perrine).

Idiom. "A use of words, a grammatic construction peculiar to a given language, or an expression that cannot be translated literally into a second language" (Holman). Shooting yourself in the foot, don't put all your eggs in one basket, between a rock and a hard place.

Levels of diction. "There are at least four levels of diction: formal, informal, colloquial, and slang." "It should be noted that the accepted diction of one age is often unacceptable to another" (Holman).

Formal diction "refers to the level of usage common in serious books and lofty discourse" (Holman). "Ultimately every successful character represents a fusion of the universal and the particular and becomes an example of the CONCRETE UNIVERSAL" (Holman).

Informal diction "refers to the level of usage found in the relaxed but polite and cultivated conversation" (Holman). "Let's go to a movie tomorrow night" rather than the formal, "Would you like to attend the cinema with me tomorrow evening?"

Colloquial diction "refers to everyday usage and may include terms and constructions accepted in that group but not universally acceptable" (Holman). "How y'all doing?" instead of "How are you all doing?"

Slang "refers to a group of newly coined words that are not yet a part of formal usage" (Holman). "That movie was the bomb," meaning that it was a good movie

Pun. "A play on words. It exploits the multiple meanings of a word, or else replaces one word with another that is similar in sound but has a very different meaning. Puns are sometimes used for serious purposes, but more often for comic effect--almost exclusively so after the eighteenth century".

Zeugma. "occurs when a word (usually a verb) has the same grammatical relation to two or more other words, but a different meaning in each application." "Alexander Pope uses this figure in 'The Rape of the Lock' (1714) when 'black Omens' threaten the heroine with 'dire disaster': perhaps she will err in some respect, 'Or stain her honour, or her new brocade.' 'Stain' has a figurative sense when applied to 'honour' (meaning the loss of chastity) and a literal sense when applied to 'brocade' (a stain on her dress). Here the effect of the zeugma is comical because of the disparate importance of the two threatened disasters yoked together."

IMAGERY: the representation through language of sense experience

Auditory imagery. The representation through language of an experience pertaining to sound. "Br-r-r-am-m-m, rackety-am-am, OM, Am: / All-r-r-room, r-r-ram, ala-bas-ter- / Am, the world's my oyster." --Mona Van Duyn, "What the Motorcycle Said" "Sssh the sea says / Sssh the small waves at the shore say, sssh / Not so violent, not / So haughty, not / So remarkable. / Sssh / Says the tips of the waves / Crowding the headland's / surf." --Rolf Jacobsen, "Sssh"

Gustatory imagery. The representation through language of an experience pertaining to taste. "Taut skin / pierced, bitten, provoked into / juice, and tart flesh" --Helen Chasin, "The Word Plum" "The excrement of the dugong is precious ambergris / because it eats such beauty. Anyone who feeds on Majesty / becomes eloquent. The bee, from mystic inspiration, / fills its rooms with honey." --Rumi, "The Force of Friendship"

Kinesthetic imagery. The representation through language of an experience pertaining to the movement of the body's muscles, tendons, and joints. "They are like great runners: they know they are alone / with the road surface, the cold, the wind, / the fit of their shoes, their over-all cardio- / vascular health" --Sharon Old, "Sex Without Love" "Teeth tear through the walls of the apple / like a plane crashing in the suburbs." --Ricardo Pau-Llosa, "Foreign Language"

Olfactory imagery. The representation through language of an experience pertaining to smell. "To sniff the heavy honeysuckled-smell / Twined with another odor heavier still / and hear the flies' intolerable buzz." --Richard Wilbur, "The Pardon"

Tactile imagery. The representation through language of an experience pertaining to touch. "Touching you I catch midnight / As moon fires set in my throat / I love you flesh into blossom." --Audre Lorde, "Recreation"

Visual imagery. The representation through language of an experience pertaining to sight. It / sits there like a glass of beer foam, / Shiny and faintly golden, he gurgles and / coughs and reaches for it again and / gets the heavy sputum out, / full of bubbles and moving around like yeast" --Sharon Olds, "The Glass" "Like them in shapes of fleeting fire / She mingles with the light / Till whoso saw her sees her not / And doubts his former sight." --Hugh MacDiarmid, "A Herd of Does"

SOUND DEVICES

Alliteration. The repetition of initial consonant sounds in words, as in "rough and ready." Precédence, none, whose portion is so small / Of present pain, that with ambitious mind / Will covet more." --John Milton, "Paradise Lost"

Assonance. The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds, especially in stressed syllables, without repetition of consonants. tilting at windmills "My words like silent raindrops fell" --Paul Simon, "Sounds of Silence"

Consonance. The repetition of consonant sounds--not limited to the first letters of words. ". . . and high school girls with clear skin smiles" --Janis Ian, "At Seventeen"

Onomatopoeia. The use of a word whose sound suggests its meaning: *bang, clang, buzz, sigh, murmur.*

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

etymology: *figuratus*--of unlike things.

definition: language that "express[es] one thing in terms normally denoting another" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

Euphemism. "A mild word or phrase that substitutes for another that would be undesirable because it is too direct, unpleasant, or offensive. The word 'joint' is a euphemism for the word prison. 'W. C.' is a euphemism for bathroom". "little boys room" in replace of "bathroom" "passed away" in place of "died" "French velvet" in place of "prostitute"

Hyperbole (overstatement). "Figurative language that greatly overstates or exaggerates facts, whether in earnest or for comic effect".

Litotes (understatement). "Understatement purposefully represents a thing as much less significant than it is, achieving an ironic effect". In Swift's "A Modest Proposal," which suggests eating children as a solution for Ireland's poverty, the speaker raises possible objections to dispense with them, saying, "some scrupulous People might be apt to censure such a Practice (although indeed very unjustly) as a little bordering upon Cruelty".

Metaphor. "In a metaphor, a word is identified with something different from what the word literally denotes. A metaphor is distinguished from a simile in that it equates different things without using connecting terms such as *like* or *as*. Whereas a simile states, 'My love is like a burning flame,' a metaphor refers to 'the burning flame of my love.'

An extended metaphor explores a variety of ways in which a metaphor is appropriate to its subject."

"There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads." "the burning flame of my love"

According to Perrine there are four types of metaphors classified by whether the literal and figurative terms are stated or implied.

1. Both terms are stated:

Her eyes are the blue sea flowing into the horizon.

Both the literal image (eyes) and the figurative image (blue sea) are stated.

2. The literal term is stated and the figurative term implied:

The man slithered through the woods.

The literal image (man) is stated, but the figurative image (snake) is implied by the use of the word *slither*.

3. The literal term is implied and the figurative term is stated:

"A Route of Evanescence With a revolving Wheel" --Emily Dickinson

The literal terms (the hummingbird's path and wings) are implied but the figurative terms (route of evanescence, revolving wheel) are stated.

4. Both terms are implied:

I like to see it lap the miles (Emily Dickinson).

Both the literal term (a train) and the figurative term (a horse) are implied.

Metonymy. "A figure of speech in which a word represents something else which it suggests." A person's says that a pot is boiling. The pot is not actually boiling. Only the water is boiling.

Oxymoron. "An oxymoron is a type of paradox that combines two terms ordinarily seen as opposites, such as Milton's description of God in Paradise Lost as 'Dark with excessive bright.' Simply put, oxymoron is the combination of words which, at first view, seem to be contradictory or incongruous, but whose surprising juxtaposition expresses a truth or dramatic effect, such as, cool fire, deafening silence, or wise folly".

Paradox. "A statement that contains seemingly contradictory elements or appears contrary to common sense, yet can be seen as perhaps, or indeed, true when viewed from another angle, such as Alexander Pope's statement in 'An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' that a literary critic could 'damn with faint praise.'"

Personification. "The attribution of human qualities to inanimate objects or abstract concepts." "Stormy, husky, brawling, City of the big shoulders" --Carl Sandburg "Justice is blind."

Simile. "A figure of speech which takes the form of a comparison between two unlike quantities for which a basis for comparison can be found, and which uses the words 'like' or 'as' in the comparison." "...as happy as the day is long" "He smelled like a donkey."

Symbol. "Something that is itself and yet also represents something else, like an idea. For example, a sword may be a sword and also symbolize justice. A symbol may be said to embody an idea. There are two general types of symbols: universal symbols that embody universally recognizable meanings wherever used, such as light to symbolize knowledge, a skull to symbolize death, etc., and invested symbols that are given symbolic meaning by the way an author uses them in a literary work, as the white whale becomes a symbol of evil in *Moby Dick*."

Synecdoche. "A figure of speech wherein a part of something represents the whole thing. In this figure, the head of a cow might substitute for the whole cow. Therefore, a herd of fifty cows might be referred to as 'fifty head of cattle' "I should have been a pair of ragged claws Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." --T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" The U.S. won three gold medals. (Instead of the members of the U.S. boxing team won three gold medals.)

Synesthesia. "One sensory experience described in terms of another sensory experience." Emily Dickinson, in "I Heard a Fly Buzz-When I Died," uses a color to describe a sound, the buzz of a fly "with blue, uncertain stumbling buzz."

SYNTAX

etymology: to arrange together (*syn* + *tassein* --which is also the root of "tactics")

definition: the order or arrangement of words in a sentence

BALANCE

Parallelism. "Similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses" (Corbett). In other words, equivalent items (those joined by coordinate conjunctions) must be placed in comparable grammatical structures. Parallel items are joined by coordinate conjunctions (especially *and*, *or*, *nor*) and correlative conjunctions (*either / or*, *neither / nor*, *not only / but also*). She went to the grocery store, post office, and gas station. Either you will turn in the essay on time, or you will suffer a significant penalty. "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this CONSTITUTION for the United States of America." --Constitution of the United States

Faulty parallelism. If parallelism is ignored, the grammar and coherence of the clause is ruined. She believed in democracy, she worked hard for the candidate of her choice, and was ecstatic when he was elected. Not only could Henry tune a normal piano but also repair player pianos. The cat and the large, complex amoeba went for a walk through the forest.

Isocolon. An isocolon exists when parallel structures have the same number of words and sometimes even of syllables. "His purpose was to impress the ignorant, to perplex the dubious, and to confound the scrupulous" (Corbett). ". . . but what else can one do when he is alone in a jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?" --Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" A good student questions his teachers, studies his books, and learns his lessons.

Climax. A climax in structure exists when the arrangement of parallel words, phrases, or clauses is in an order of increasing importance. "Renounce my love, my life, myself--and you. --Alexander Pope, "Eloise to Abelard"
". . . we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." -- Declaration of Independence The industrialist made money, friends, and peace with himself.

Antithesis. "The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure" (Corbett). Conjunctions that express antithesis include *but*, *yet*, and *while*. I offered to help, but he refused my assistance. The prodigal robs his heir; the miser robs himself. ". . . ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." --John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address" "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." --Neil Armstrong Antithesis can occur when the wording contrasts, when the sense of the statement contrasts, or when both contrast. Contrasting wording: Let the rich give to the poor. Contrasting sense: I helped him gain a balance in this world, but he pushed me down in return. Contrasting wording and sense: "Those who have been left out, we will try to bring in. Those left behind, we will help to catch up." --Richard M. Nixon, "Inaugural Address"

REPETITION

Anaphora. "Repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginnings of successive clauses" (Corbett). "In every cry of every man, / In every infant's cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban, / The mind-forged manacles I hear." --William Blake, "London" "So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California." --Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream"

Antimetabole. "Repetition of words, in successive clauses, in reverse grammatical order" (Corbett). "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man." -- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*

Chiasmus. "Reversal of grammatical structures in successive phrases or clauses " (but without the repetition of words) (Corbett). "By day the frolic, and the dance by night." --Samuel Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes"

Polyptoton. "Repetition of words from the same root" of or the same word used as a different part of speech (Corbett). "Love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds, / Or bends with the remover to remove" --William Shakespeare, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds" "Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." --Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address"

Polysyndeton. Repetition of conjunctions. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day." --Genesis 1:1-5

UNUSUAL ARRANGEMENTS

Anastrophe or inversion. The inversion of natural word order. "Once upon a midnight dreary . . ." --Edgar Allen Poe, "The Raven" "United, there is little we cannot do in a host of co-operative ventures. Divided, there is little we can do . . ." --John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address"

Apposition. Placing side by side two nouns, the second of which serves as an explanation of the first. The bear, a massive black object, frightened the small children. I ran from the woman, a wrinkled stranger.

Asyndeton. Omission of conjunctions between a series of related clauses. "I came, I saw, I conquered." --Julius Caesar The elephants charged, the horses scattered, the Big Top tent fell down.

Ellipsis. Deliberate omission of a word or words implied by context The man lost three teeth, the woman two. I read Shakespeare, you Agatha Christie.

Parenthesis. Insertion of some verbal unit in a position that interrupts the normal flow of the sentence. One day in class we got off the subject (as often happens with over-worked, sleep-deprived seniors) and began to discuss the literature of Dr. Seuss. Grades (which should be abolished) are detrimental to the health and sanity of students.

SENTENCE VARIETY

Grammatical types. Sentences are divided into four grammatical types:

Simple sentence--one independent clause. The dog barks.

Complex sentence--one independent and one or more dependent clauses. After the dog barks, it goes to sleep.

Compound sentence--two or more independent clauses The dog barks, and then it goes to sleep.

Compound-complex sentence--two or more independent and one or more dependent clauses.

After the dog barks, it goes to sleep, and then it wakes up.

Loose and periodic sentences. In *The Elements of Style*, William Strunk and E. B. White counsel that we should avoid "a succession of loose sentences." "This rule refers especially to **loose sentences** of a particular type: those consisting of two clauses, the second introduced by a conjunction or relative" (25). Here is part of the example the authors employ to illustrate the point:

"The third concert of the subscription series was given last evening, and a large audience was in attendance. Mr. Edward Appleton was the soloist, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra furnished the instrumental music" (25).

A **periodic sentence**, on the other hand, is one in which the most important matter arrives at the end. Strunk and White note, "The effectiveness of the periodic sentence arises from the prominence it gives to the main statement" (33). Here is one sentence they offer to exemplify the point:

"With these hopes and in this belief I would urge you, laying aside all hindrance, thrusting away all private aims, to devote yourself unswervingly and unflinchingly to the vigorous and successful prosecution of this war" (33).

Rhetorical question. A question that conveys a point rather than expects an answer. "How many roads must a man walk down before you can call him a man?" -- Bob Dylan "If we live in the nineteenth century, why should we not enjoy the advantages which the nineteenth century offers? Why should our life be in any respect provincial? If we will read newspapers, why not skip the gossip of Boston and take the best newspaper in the world at once?" --Henry David Thoreau, (Walden)

Sentence openers. One way to provide variety in our writing is to experiment with the following openers (Corbett):

Subject John fought the battle.

Expletive (both exclamatory and grammatical) Wow, that was amazing! It is true that I enjoy learning this material.

Coordinate conjunction But John didn't die.

Adverb (single word or clause) First, John killed Luke. When the ship arrived safely, the passengers lept ashore.

Conjunctive phrase On the other hand, John may have known all along.

Prepositional phrase By the way, John didn't cry. After the game we went home.

Verbal phrase To be certain, he pondered a moment before making his decision. Tired but happy, the old man crossed the sea.

Absolute phrase The ship having arrived safely, the passengers lept ashore.

Inversion Gone was the wind that had brought us here. Tired is he who faithfully does all his work.

PERSUASION

etymology: *per* (denotes completion) + *suadere*--to advise or urge

definition: the act of moving an audience to belief in a certain position or action

CONCEPTUALIZING PROBLEMS

The debate about the purposes of persuasion is an age-old one (see the dialogue between Socrates and Gorgias). Is the goal of persuasion to win, or is it to work towards the truth? We gain more when we strive to discover the truth, and he provided the following schemes to help us diagnose problems broadly and consider solutions thoughtfully.

Four causes. According to Aristotle, there are four kinds of causes--and hence four possible causes for any problem. Considering these causes may help us to diagnose a problem and discover solutions. The four causes are:

material cause (parts)

formal cause (architecture)

efficient cause (agent)

final cause (purpose)

Take, for example, a pencil and its causes:

parts: wood, lead, eraser

architecture: a stick with lead and an eraser at one end

agent: pencil factory

purpose: to draw, to write

Now consider the possible causes of this problem: "The building is falling down."

parts: bad bricks

architecture: faulty architecture

agent: poor craftsmanship

purpose: overcrowded

Depending on which of these causes is responsible for the problem with the building (or which combination of these causes), we have a variety of solutions available:

parts: sue the supplier

architecture: sue the architect

agent: sue the contractor

purpose: sue the landlord

Now consider the possible causes of this problem: "The girl's room is messy."

parts: furnishings; the girl; her parents

architecture: design of the room; parental rules

agent: the girl; the parents

purpose: sleep, work, play

This framework helps us see the variety of possible solutions:

solution: get rid of some objects; reform the girl; readjust the parents' expectations

solution: change the space (add more closets, for example); change the rules

solution: reform the girl; reform the parents

solution: provide other space for work and play; make the room for sleeping and dressing

Diagnosing a problem according to its four causes may help us avoid oversimplifying it. If the Student Center is messy, the problem may not simply be with one of the parts (the students).

Three levels of discourse. Even if people agree on the causes of a problem, they may have difficulty arriving at a solution. Too often, they become bogged down in a problem because they refuse to compromise or to think beyond the obvious. The following ways to conceptualize problems may lead to better solutions.

Point/counterpoint (the method of debate). We see the problem as an either/or question.

Problem: How should we finance next year's budget?

Either/or: The school must either cut expenses or raise tuition.

Problem: I am failing English.

Either/or: My mother must help me, or I'll fail.

Positions on a spectrum (the method of resolution). We take the either/or alternatives, stretch them to the extremes, and try to find a compromise in between.

Extremes: One end--we'll hold expenses by cutting programs and teaching positions. The other end--we'll raise tuition a bundle, add programs, and give faculty a huge pay raise.

Compromise: We'll cut some expenses and raise tuition just a bit.

Extremes: One end--my mother does my homework. The other end--I give up.

Compromise: My mother will help me thirty minutes a night, and I'll try to study harder.

Multiple perspectives (the method of discrimination). We try to move off the line and imagine other ways to approach the problem.

How else can the school save or raise money?

Possibilities: become more energy efficient; rent the facilities; increase enrollment in summer programs; earn more on the endowment--and so on.

How else can the girl pass English?

Possibilities: Go to extra help every day; hire a tutor; do lots of extra credit--and so on.

THE APPEAL TO LOGOS (REASON): DEDUCTION

Etymology: *de* means out of, from; *ductio* is the noun form of *ducere*, which means to lead. Thus: a leading out of.

Definition: coming to a conclusion by reasoning, and in particular, reasoning from (out of) the general to the specific.

Premise. A proposition leading to a conclusion. In other words, a premise is the idea with which one starts to produce a conclusion. Examples:

Trees have leaves.

People have souls.

Slavery is wrong.

Syllogism. The underlying structure of deductive reasoning. $A = B, B = C, \text{ therefore, } A = C$

Major premise: Animals with hooves eat grass. (A)

Minor premise: Horses have hooves (B)

Conclusion: Horses eat grass. (C)

Valid and invalid syllogisms. Syllogisms that follow the pattern above are valid, but a syllogism is invalid if the subject of the minor premise is not a member of the group named (first) in the major premise.

Major premise: When someone is in a swimming pool, he or she is wet.

Minor premise: Bob is wet.

Conclusion: Bob is in a swimming pool.

Simply because someone is wet, it doesn't follow that he is in a swimming pool. Here is the valid version of this syllogism:

Major premise: When someone is in a swimming pool, he or she is wet.

Minor premise: Bob is in a swimming pool.

Conclusion: Bob is wet.

True and false premises. Truth and validity are not the same. The conclusion of an invalid syllogism may be true. (Bob may be in a pool). The conclusion of a valid syllogism will be false if one of the premises is false. (Bob is enclosed in some sort of diver's bubble.) Only if the syllogism is valid and the premises are true do we know that the conclusion is true.

Conditional syllogisms. We sometimes run across a conditional syllogism. It is useful to remember when such syllogisms are valid and when they are not.

If you're in a pool (x), you are wet (y). "If x, then y" is valid.

If you are wet, then you're in a pool. "If y, then x" is invalid.

If you're not wet, then you're not in a pool. "If not y, then not x" is valid.

If you're not in a pool, then you're not wet. "If not x, then not y" is invalid.

The enthymeme. A syllogism in which one of the premises is implied rather than stated. Enthymemes are common in persuasive discourse:

He's the quarterback; I'm surprised he's in AP English.

Implied (false) premise: football players aren't excellent students.

That gay teacher should be fired.

Implied (false) premise: gay people aren't good teachers.

He must like his job; he's been doing it for more than twenty years.

Implied (true?) premise: people who stay in a job for decades are happy with it.

Deductive fallacies. A fallacy is an error in reasoning. We have already considered the two most common deductive fallacies, the invalid syllogism and false premise. A special kind of false premise is the fallacy of either/or: assuming a situation is either one way or the other without allowing other possibilities. Examples:

Invalid syllogism. If you don't study hard, you won't pass. You studied hard, so you passed. (If not x, then not y.) Valid: If you passed, then you studied hard. (If not y, then not x.)

False premise. People who make all A's are genius. You made all A's, so you're a genius. True premise: People who make all A's are smart or hard-working or have easy teachers or are lucky or . . .

Either/or. You must make all A's or you won't be admitted to a selective college. True premise: You must have solid academic achievement (or reasonable academic achievement and some special talent or influence) or you won't be admitted to a selective college.

Begging the question. This fallacy is also called circular reasoning. It is usually deductive because we assume in the premise what we are trying to prove. An example:

Clear cutting rain forests is destructive because it is the cutting down of trees.

This is a fallacy because all the person is saying is that clear cutting is destructive because it is destructive. The person hasn't defined destruction or stated why cutting down trees is destructive. Other examples:

These dangerous toys should be outlawed.

I'm against capital punishment because it involves killing.

THE APPEAL TO LOGOS (REASON): INDUCTION

Etymology: *in* means into or toward; *ductio* is the noun form of *ducere*, which means to lead. Thus: a leading toward.

Definition: arriving at a general conclusion on the basis of particular instances, thus reasoning from the specific to the general.

Instances. As opposed to deduction, induction relies on specific instances to arrive at a general conclusion. For example, all humans that we have seen have two legs, so we can make the assumption that all humans have two legs. Another example is that we have observed that certain types of trees lose their chlorophyll in fall, and then their leaves fall off. Based on this observation, we can assume that all trees of the type we have observed will also lose their leaves in the fall.

Induction and truth. Induction leads to the truth only if the instances on which we base a conclusion meet certain requirements:

- 1) The instances must be known.
- 2) The instances must be sufficient.
- 3) The instances upon which we base a generalization must be representative.
- 4) Any negative instances must be explained.

The example. In *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* Edward P. J. Corbett states, "Just as deductive reasoning has its rhetorical equivalent in the enthymeme, so inductive reasoning has its rhetorical equivalent in the *example*" (68). Because of limited time or space, the speaker or writer ordinarily cites relatively few instances. Even one example, however, may be effective, especially if it disproves a generalization. In "A Daughter's Inheritance," for example, Kate Rath portrays her father as wonderful, loving, and gay. Even with one example, she effectively disproves the notion that gay men can't be good parents.

Hasty generalization. Sometimes people make inductive arguments far too quickly. For example:
Neither the valedictorian nor the salutatorian smoke cigarettes. Students who make good grades don't smoke.
This is a hasty generalization. Two instances are not sufficient to conclude that all good students do not smoke.

False analogy. Another temptation involving inductive reasoning is to offer an analogy as proof. In fact, although two situations may be similar in several ways, it does not follow that they are similar in every way. Thus an analogy, while it may feel persuasive, is not logically conclusive. For example:

Students should be able to use reference works during tests; when they're adults on their jobs, they'll be free to consult any source that may prove helpful.
Like any analogy, this is false at some level. No matter what we do, there is a good bit of information that we simply must remember; if we looked up everything, we'd be hopelessly inefficient.

Other inductive fallacies.

Non sequitur (it does not follow). This fallacy occurs when a person makes a statement and then backs it up with a fact that has no bearing on the statement. This fallacy is often a desperate attempt by someone losing an argument. For example:

Joe will make a good baseball player because he is an avid reader.

The fact that Joe is an avid reader has absolutely no bearing on his ability to play baseball.

Post hoc ergo propter hoc (after this, therefore because of this). This fallacy occurs when someone assumes that an event that precedes a second event is therefore the cause of it. (The fallacy is inductive because it relies on the observation that an earlier event can cause a later one: drinking too much tea can make it difficult for me to sleep all night.) For example:

Giving the star baseball player a huge raise threw the team into a slump; the team wasn't in a slump before the raise was announced.

The fact that the baseball team went into a slump might have no connection to the contract. Baseball teams have slumps from time to time for a variety of reasons.

Slippery slope (also known as *reductio ad absurdum*--reducing to the extreme). This fallacy presupposes that movement in one direction, however small, must lead to an extreme. If one thing (a) is allowed to occur, then b, c, and d will necessarily follow. (In fact, b, c, and d may not result.) For example:

If Montana eliminates speed limits, a) in several years, there will be no speed limits anywhere, b) the number of wrecks will skyrocket, c) the roads will be unsafe, and d) the roads will no longer serve any purpose at all.

This is not a logical result of Montana eliminating speed limits. Other states will not follow, and the roads will not necessarily become unsafe.

THE APPEAL TO ETHOS (CHARACTER)

One way to think of persuasion is as a triangle with the speaker, the audience, and the topic serving as the three points. Although those unfamiliar with the language of persuasion often assume that the appeal to ethos is an appeal to the audience's ethical beliefs, it is in fact the appeal that derives from the speaker or writer's own ethos, ethical beliefs, character. Corbett notes, "The ethical appeal is exerted . . . when the speech itself impresses the audience that the speaker is a person of sound sense . . . high moral character . . . and benevolence" (Corbett 80). How does the speaker convince the audience of his/her ethical appeal? The orators' ethical appeal derives in part from a certain amount of knowledge of the subject. For example, the speaker's knowledge of detailed facts or statistics suggests to the audience that the speaker is a trustworthy authority and knows the topic well. Stating one's beliefs, values, and priorities in connection with the subject assists in convincing the audience of the argument. Corbett cites as an effect ethical appeal the following introduction in a speech by Benjamin Franklin to the Constitutional Convention, an introduction that portrays the speaker as "a modest, magnanimous, open-minded gentleman" (82). "It is with great reluctance that I rise to express a disapprobation of any one article of the plan, for which we are so much obliged to the honorable gentleman who laid it before us. From its first reading, I have borne a good will to it, and, in general, wished it success. In this particular of salaries to the executive branch, I happen to differ; and, as my opinion may appear new and chimerical, it is only from a persuasion that it is right, and from a sense of duty, that I hazard it. The Committee will judge of my reasons when they have heard them, and their judgment may possible change mine." Similarly, in this passage from *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau creates an effective ethical appeal by saying that he is no different from the people in his audience (and skillfully using first person plural):

"I do not wish to flatter my townsmen, nor to be flattered by them, for that will not advance either of us. We need to be provoked,--goaded, like oxen, as we are, into a trot" (154-55). And in his Inaugural Address, President Kennedy established his ethical appeal, in part, by this statement in his conclusion: ". . . ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you."

Fallacies of ethos.

Ad hominem (to the man). This fallacy occurs when a speaker abandons the argument to attack the opponent. through name calling, appealing to prejudice, or associating the opponent with some extreme. For example:

Stop talking. You're an idiot who doesn't know anything about the death penalty.
You can't argue about abortion; you're a right-wing Christian.
You're like Saddam Hussein; you'd nuke the whole world if you could.

Appeal to false authority. Examples are numerous in everyday life. Models who advertise cars, celebrities who advertise toothpaste, and politicians who advertise television shows are examples of appeal to false authority. Basically, this ethical fallacy occurs when a product or idea is advertised by a person who has no knowledge about what he or she is selling.

Strawperson. A person commits this fallacy by misstating an opponent's argument and then attacking it. For example:

So you want a million babies to die because their teenage mothers are too irresponsible to abstain from sex or even use a condom?

THE APPEAL TO PATHOS (EMOTION)

Just as the appeal to ethos is to the character of the speaker, the appeal to pathos is to the emotions of the audience. Although people are rational creatures who appreciate a reasonable argument, they are also emotional creatures, and as Corbett notes, "since it is our will ultimately that moves us to action and since the emotions have a powerful influence on the will, many of our actions are prompted by the stimulus of our emotions" (86). How does a speaker appeal to the emotions of the audience? The speaker must draw on the sympathies and emotions of the audience, causing them to accept the ideas or propositions that the speaker suggests. A speaker might characterize the social groups such as the elderly or the wealthy and then discuss emotional topics that work well to persuade them. For example, the elderly are for the most part nearing the end of their life; an orator might sympathize with relevant subject matter concerning death. President Kennedy's Inaugural Address appeals frequently to the patriotism, courage, and virtue of citizens of the United States: "Now the trumpet summons us again--not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but as a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, 'rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation,' a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself." When appealing to an audience's emotion, one does well to remember Socrates' concern about rhetoricians who might persuade people to evil actions. Although President Kennedy appeals to what was best in his audience, twentieth century demagogues like Hitler provide ample proof that appealing to an audience's baser emotions can lead to disastrous consequences.

Fallacies of pathos. Instead of appealing to the audience's logic, a speaker who commits a fallacy of pathos appeals to the audience's emotion.

Ad populum (to the people). This is a commonly committed fallacy of pathos that occurs when a speaker appeals to the audience's biases and prejudices rather than the audience's ability to reason. By appealing to an audience's patriotism or their prejudices, a speaker can sway the audience's emotions to encourage support for the speaker's cause. Anything from playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" after a speech to negatively mentioning the opponent's race, sex, or religion can be examples of this fallacy of pathos.

Appeal to tradition. When a person makes an appeal to tradition, he or she maintains that something should be done one way because it always has been done that way. Anyone who works in a school is familiar with appeals to tradition.

Bandwagon. This one's easy. It can be summed up in one very overused cliché: "If everyone else jumped off a bridge, wouldn't you?" Here are a few more examples:

"Everyone else is doing it; we should too."

"Sally and Janie both have the latest pair of GAP jeans; I just have to have them."

Red herring. This is kind of like saying, "Hey look! It's Elvis!" in a crowded room after you've just done something really embarrassing, but rhetorical of course. This fallacy is a cheap ploy to divert the audience from the real or central issue to some irrelevant detail. For example, with the AIDS epidemic, some people are so engaged by the idea that it's a primarily gay disease that they overlook the fact that heterosexual sex transmits the virus as well.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIALS

How one organizes the parts of his or her persuasive speech may control whether or not the speech is effective. Generally the introduction needs to come at the beginning, followed by the statement of fact. The conclusion needs to conclude the piece. How one arranges the confirmation and refutation depends on the quality of the arguments, the context of the speech, the audience, and the speaker.

Introduction. The introduction prepares the audience for the discourse by doing two things according to Corbett: 1) "It informs the audience of the end or object of our discourse," and 2) "It disposes the audience to be receptive to what we say" (282). The introduction provides the audience with an insight into the topic before the speaker breaks down the issue. There are several types of introductions:

Introduction inquisitive. By asking a question or questions, this type of introduction proves that the issue at hand is important and interesting (Corbett). "Economics has everything to do with Life and Happiness. Why? Allow me to elaborate. Few will argue that economics is not about money or wealth, so let us start there: Economics is about wealth. As I have explained in two essays ("The Myth about Money," and "A Short Story about Wealth"), real wealth is constituted by those things which have real value--the things we ultimately seek to acquire. Thus, the wealth each of us acquires, refers to all the goods and services we consume and own. Think about all of your possessions, and all the goods and services you consume. Are any of them "natural"? Does Mother Nature produce them? Very likely, you will struggle to think of the things you own or consume which are in fact natural. But even if you have thought of something, did you acquire it yourself? Did you find it lying around outside, ripe for the picking? I very much doubt it. The fact is, that all the values we own or consume are created. They are man-made. They have to be produced. Therefore, Economics is about production. To live we have to satisfy our needs. To achieve happiness we have to satisfy our wants. All the material values we need are produced. Material goods and services also form a large proportion of our wants. Economics is all about the production of the goods and services we need and want. Therefore, Economics has everything to do with Life and Happiness." (From Lobo, Adrian. "Why Man Needs Capitalism and Why Capitalism Means Freedom" by Adrian Lobo

Introduction paradoxical. this introduction persuades the audience that the points of the discourse have to be acknowledged even if they appear implausible (Corbett 284). "The most characteristic English play on the subject of physical love is Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. It is characteristic because it has no love scenes. The English, as their drama represents them, are a nation endlessly communicative about love without ever enjoying it. Full-blooded physical relationships engaged in with mutual delight are theatrically taboo. Thwarted love is preferred, the kind Mr. Coward wrote about in *Brief Encounter*, where two married people (married, of course, to two other people) form a sad and meager attachment without being able to follow it through. At the end of a play on some quite different subject-- religion, perhaps, or politics--it is customary for the hero to say, as he does in *Robert's Wife*: 'I was deeply in love with a fine woman,' and for the wife to reply: 'My dear, Dear husband; but there should be no hint elsewhere in the text that they have as much as brushed lips.'" (Tynan, Kenneth. *Curtains*. Atheneum 1961. Reprinted in Corbett 284)

Introduction corrective. If the author feels that there has been some sort of misconception about the subject, he or she will use this type of introduction to mend any false notions (Corbett 284). "Explaining my father is impossible. I'm flooded with images of him: picking up objects with his toes, tickling me with his beard when he kisses me goodnight, writing me a note every morning, wishing me a good day or good luck on a test, attending Back-to-School Night and taking notes avidly, laughing when he is on the phone with my sister, calling for another garlicky dinner, dancing with me at our yearly Christmas get-together, swimming with me at the pool, giving me great bear hugs when I need them. This is my father. But for some people the fact that he is also gay overshadows this picture and keeps them from seeing him as a whole." (Rath)

Introduction preparatory. This introduction prepares the audience for the author's method of discourse, the lack of knowledge about a detail, or the misconceptions about the topic in general (Corbett 285).

Introduction narrative. An anecdote characterizes this introduction as it rouses the audience's interest in the topic (Corbett 286). "James was an average college kid seven years ago. He belonged to a fraternity, had lots of friends, and was just a year away from graduation. He drank a bit, but that was expected. For some college students, drinking is almost routine. His grades stayed decent, though, and he had a bright future. Within that year he inherited some money. His grandfather left him over \$100,000. That was when he found his 'bitter snow.' Snorting cocaine started out as just a social thing, but it soon became a necessity. The money he had, was gone in less than a year. He dropped out of school--he couldn't afford it anymore. Shortly after, he was homeless and living out of his car. That was when he quit, and it wasn't hard. When he realized that he had no gag mechanism left in his throat (the nerves were shot from the coke), the powder was easy to let go." (From Kress, Tricia. "Bitter Snow.")

Statement of Fact. This section of the discourse describes the details surrounding the topic in order to familiarize the audience with it. This section can be omitted if the audience is already well-informed about the issue (Corbett 294-295).

Confirmation. This section can be the essence of the discourse. The author needs to prove his or her point here. The various points of the confirmation can be organized in a way that suits the discourse. The author can choose the order: strong arguments to weak arguments, or vice versa, or a mixed order (strong, weak, strong, etc.). The order should take into consideration the purpose the author wants to achieve. If he or she wants a climactic ending, then the arguments should be organized weak to strong. There are many options, and the author needs to do whatever he or she feels will be most effective with the audience at hand. This section of the discourse can be followed or preceded by the refutation (Corbett 306-307).

Refutation. In this section of the persuasive speech or essay, the author addresses a view opposed to his. Therefore, the opposite of the author's argument is refuted. Depending on the quality of the refutation, the author can choose to lead with the refutation before the points of his confirmation or vice versa (Corbett 302).

By appeal to reason. Appealing to reason for the purpose of refutation involves two things: 1) "By denying the truth of one of the premises on which the argument rests and proving, perhaps through evidence or testimony, that the premise is false." 2) "By objecting to the inferences drawn from the premises" (Corbett 303).

By appeal to emotion. In order to appeal to emotion, one must know and understand the attitude of the audience one is addressing. Different refutations suit different attitudes. Consequently, an effective refutation needs to recognize the audience's general feelings (Corbett 304).

By appeal to ethics. In order to disprove the opposing view, the audience must trust the author, and they must believe in his or her moral capacity. Therefore, an ethical appeal is necessary for an adequate refutation (Corbett 304).

Witty refutation. The use of sarcasm in the refutation can discredit an opposing view by making the audience laugh at it (Corbett 305).

Conclusion. A conclusion needs to close the argument in the discourse by recapitulating the idea, generalizing a point, or allowing for further emotional appeal. Conclusions can vary depending on the nature of the discourse. The main purpose of a conclusion is to leave the audience with a good opinion of the argument that the author is trying to prove. Some examples:

Generalizing conclusion on euthanasia by a Christian theologian:

"In many circumstances of the sort discussed here, human beings confront limits to their wisdom. We make decisions in the presence of objective uncertainty and conflicting values. Tragedy and ambiguity pervade the scene. No solutions are foolproof, infallible, or free from the possibility of abuse despite good intentions or because of ill intent. Sometimes every possible course of action makes us uneasy. We can continue to subject our own convictions to the scrutiny of others whose criticism we trust in the hope that deeper insight will dawn regarding what love bids us do for each other when life becomes a burden rather than a blessing. Meanwhile, our final recourse is to the mercy of God, who has pity on us pathetic, error-prone creatures, who 'knows our frame,' who 'remembers that we are dust' (Psalm 103: 13-14 RSV)." (From Cauthen, Kenneth. "Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia.")

Emotional appeal in a conclusion:

"I am staring at a photograph of what looks, at first glance, to be a bold, wizened old man. Actually it is a child. The child is sucking the withered breast of a woman who could be 19 years old. It is a sight to concentrate the mind on limestone mines full of food." (From Will, George. "Why Not Use Food as Food?" Reprinted in Cooley)

GRAMMAR

etymology: the study of how words and their component parts combine to form sentences (from *grammatica*, art of the letter)

definition: the study of language as a body of words

PARTS OF SPEECH

Noun. A name for a person, place, thing, or idea. Bob, Delaware, dog, existentialism

Abstract noun. The name of something intangible. love, existence, equality

Concrete noun. The name of something tangible. cat, automobiles

Note: when we write poetry, it is a temptation best avoided to use abstract nouns rather than concrete ones.

Pronoun. Word used as a substitute for a noun.

There are five types of pronouns:

Personal pronouns.

Singular Plural

1st person: I, me we, us

2nd person: you, you

3rd person: he, she, it they, them

Possessive forms: my, mine, your, yours, his, hers, etc.

Reflexive and intensive forms: myself, yourself, etc.

Reflexive and intensive pronouns should never be used as subjects in a sentence.

WRONG: My friends and myself went to the store.

RIGHT: My friends and I went to the store.

Indefinite pronouns. Pronouns substituted for something of unknown quantity or quality. all, any, every, most, some, one, most, etc. Note that most of the indefinite pronouns are singular; we use singular pronouns to agree with them (or substitute a plural word for the indefinite pronoun):

WRONG: Everyone brought their books to class.

RIGHT: Everyone brought his or her books to class.

RIGHT: All the students brought their books to class.

Relative pronouns. Pronouns that relate or connect a dependent clause to an independent clause. who, whom, which, that, whoever, whomever, whosoever, and what The relative pronouns present two sorts of problems: faulty reference and incorrect case. Reference errors occur when a pronoun has no antecedent:

WRONG: He ran hard, which was fun. (There is no noun for *which* to rename.)

RIGHT: Running hard was for him a kind of fun.

Case errors occur when we confuse nominative case (for nouns and predicate nominatives) for objective case (for objects). The easiest way to be sure about case is to substitute a form with which we are comfortable (say *he* or *they* for *who*, or *him* or *them* for *whom*):

WRONG: Please send the report to whomever asked for it. (We substitute *they*--they asked for it--and realize we should use *whoever*.)

RIGHT: Please send the report to whoever asked for it.

Interrogative pronouns. Pronouns that begin questions. who, whom, whose, which, and that

Demonstrative pronouns. Pronouns that point out items. this, that, these, those

Verb. A word that expresses an action or a state of being. run, fly, is

There are action verbs and linking verbs:

Linking verb. A verb that relates the predicate to the subject. is, be, seem

Action verbs come in two forms:

Intransitive verb. A verb that has no direct object. walk, speak, run

Transitive verb. A verb that has a direct object. love, hate, trust

Transitive verbs have voice. "The voice of the verb shows whether the subject acts or receives the action." Transitive verbs are in active or passive voice.

Active voice. "A verb is said to be transitive active if the subject acts through the verb on a direct object." The teacher threw the book.

Passive voice. "A verb is said to be transitive passive if the subject is acted upon by the verb." The book was thrown by the teacher.

Many English teachers consider passive voice anathema:

WRONG: The snowball was thrown by the unruly student.

RIGHT: The unruly student threw the snowball.

However, we can use passive voice for stylistic effect:

"...the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans..." -John F. Kennedy in his Inaugural Address

Verb Mood. There are three types of verb mood:

Indicative mood. Where a verb indicates something: I will go there someday.

Imperative mood. Where a verb expresses a command: You, go over and help her.

Subjunctive mood. Where a verb expresses a wish or condition contrary to fact: If I were like my teacher, I wouldn't need grammar instruction pages.

Adjective. A word that modifies or describes a noun. slow, cunning

Limiting adjectives. Adjective that answers which and how many. Articles (a, an, the), this, that, these, many, few, five (numbers)

Descriptive adjectives. Answer what kind. hideous, scrumptious

Adverb. A word that modifies or describes verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

Time. Answers when. when we are ready, in a few years

Place. Answers where. in the room, by the street

Manner. Answers how. maliciously, clumsily

Reason. Answers why. because, in spite of

Degree. Answers how much. almost, too, very, quite Adverbs of degree are also called qualifiers, and good writers avoid them: "Rather, very, little, pretty—these are the leeches that infest the pond of prose, sucking the blood of words" (Strunk and White 65). Qualifiers water down prose with excessive words. Careful diction can eliminate the need for a qualifiers barrage.

WRONG: She was really a very smart person.

RIGHT: She was astute.

Preposition. A word that relates a noun or pronoun to another word in the sentence.

Prepositions have objects and begin a prepositional phrase. above, around, of, to

Some prepositions come in pairs: next to, instead of, due to.

A prepositional phrase begins with the preposition, ends with the object of the preposition, and includes any adjectives that modify the object of the preposition. Prepositional phrases can act as adjectives or adverbs. Adjective: The trunk with the red camper is mine. Adverb: I ran to the large, red truck.

Note: Despite Winston Churchill's famous ridiculing of the rule against ending a sentence with a preposition ("This is the type of arrant pedantry, up with which I shall not put" [Trimble 91]), it often is better to avoid ending a sentence with a preposition:

AWKWARD: There is the person I went to the party with.

BETTER: There is the person with whom I went to the party.

Conjunction. A word that join units of a sentence.

Coordinate conjunction. Joins sentence units that are of equal importance. The acronym *fanboys* reminds us of the coordinate conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

A sentence unit may be a word, phrase, or clause. When conjoining, use parallel units. I went for a run and ate a taco for lunch.

When conjoining two independent clauses, use a comma. I went for a run, and I ate a taco for lunch.

Subordinate conjunction. One unit is below the importance of the other sentence unit. In the sentence that follows, the important fact is that the speaker played in the street: Although it was raining, I still played in the street.

Correlative conjunction. These are conjunctions that come in pairs and so relate to one another: either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also. Neither Joseph nor Jim knew about the other's existence. It is important to maintain parallelism when we use correlative conjunctions: whatever grammatical entity follows the first conjunction should also follow the second:

WRONG: They not only decided to follow the suspect but also to keep the police in the dark.

RIGHT: They decided not only to follow the suspect but also to keep the police in the dark.

Interjection. A word or phrase that conveys emotion. Wow, oh my goodness

PHRASES

Prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase begins with the preposition, ends with the object of the preposition, and includes any adjectives that modify the object of the preposition. Prepositional phrases can act as adjectives or adverbs.

Adjective: The trunk with the red camper is mine.

Adverb: I ran to the large, red truck.

Note that we do not put a comma after a single short prepositional phrase, but we do put a comma after a long introductory phrase or two or more phrases:

Before the game we ate lunch.

Before finishing all of his homework that night, she dozed off.

Before asking your teacher for an extension, you might want to the work that you've already done.

Verbal phrases. A verbal phrase consists of a form of a verb plus any complements and modifiers. Note that we put a comma after an introductory verbal phrase:

Hammering diligently, he didn't hear the phone ring.

Before going to bed, she checked on the children.

To prove her point, she listed several passages from the novel.

Participial phrase. A participial phrase includes a present participle (a verb form ending in -ing) or a past participle (a verb form ending in -ed or irregularly as in flown, bitten, and so on), plus any complements and modifiers.

Participial phrases always act as adjectives.

Singing very softly, the boy lulled his baby brother to sleep.

Racing through the woods, the girl tore her coat.

Dangling Modifiers. The participial phrase dangles if the person or thing doing the action is not mentioned in the sentence.

WRONG: While walking home, the Coke bottle broke on the pavement.

RIGHT: While I was walking home, the Coke bottle broke.

RIGHT: While walking home, I dropped the Coke bottle, and it broke.

Gerund phrase. A gerund phrase includes a present participle (a verb form ending in -ing) plus any complements and modifiers.

Since a **gerund phrase always acts as a noun**, it can serve as the subject or object of a verb, as a predicate nominative, or as the object of a preposition.

Subject: Waiting for his grades drove him crazy.

Direct object: They recommended watering more often.

Predicate nominative: The key to fast typing is practicing over and over and over.

Object of a preposition: After mowing the lawn, I enjoyed a tall glass of iced tea.

Since gerunds are nouns, we use pronouns in the possessive case in front of them:

WRONG: Him vomiting on his date was extremely gross.

RIGHT: His vomiting on his date was extremely gross.

Infinitive phrase. An infinitive phrase consists of an infinitive (to plus a verb) followed by any complements or modifiers. Infinitive phrases act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs
Noun (subject): To live in Boston is his main goal in life.

Adjective: The person to see about grammar is Mr. Cushman.

Adverb: They were determined to beat their arch-rivals.

To split an infinitive is to separate the "to" from the verb. In general, it is best to avoid splitting infinitives unless we simply can't help it.

AWKWARD: To never try to read a difficult book is a waste of a good mind.

BETTER: Never to try to read a difficult book is a waste of a good mind.

Appositive phrase. An appositive phrase includes a noun renaming another noun plus any modifiers attaching to it.

The gentleman, our president, spoke out against racism.

"Our president" renames the subject "the gentleman" and so is in apposition to it.

Commas and essential and nonessential appositives. If an appositive identifies the noun it renames, it is essential and therefore not set off by commas:

My cousin Barbara lives in LA. (Barbara is an essential appositive, identifying which cousin I have in mind.)

The great New England poet Robert Frost is one of my favorites. (Robert Frost is an essential appositive identifying which New England poet I mean.)

If an appositive renames a noun already identified, it is nonessential and therefore set off by commas:

Barbara, my Aunt Kop's second daughter, lives in LA. (The appositive simply supplies additional information.)

Robert Frost, the great New England poet, read a poem at JFK's inauguration. (Again, the appositive is informative but not essential.)

Notice that an appositive that follows a proper noun is usually nonessential, while an appositive that contains a proper noun often is essential.

CLAUSES. A clause is a group of related words with a subject and a verb.

Since she was going to the store, I asked her to pick up some bread for me. ("Since...store" is a dependent clause; "I...me," is an independent clause.)

Independent Clauses. An independent clause is one that expresses a complete thought and can stand alone (hence, a sentence).

The woman went to the mall, and she bought a dress. ("The...mall" is the first independent clause; "she...dress" is the second independent clause. These clauses are conjoined by the coordinate conjunction "and.")

Dependent Clauses. A dependent clause begins with a relative pronoun or a subordinate conjunction and does not express a complete thought. A dependent clause acts as an adjective, adverb, or nouns.

Adjective Clauses. Beginning with who, whom, whose, which, or that, an adjective clause provides information about a noun or a pronoun generally more complicated than an adjective or adjective phrase can say.

The girl whom we saw at the football game Friday night was at the movie theater on Saturday night too.

The flowers that I got at the football banquet are still in my room.

When you are writing an adjective clause, you must know when you should use 'which' and when you should use 'that.' You use 'that' when the clause is essential to the meaning of the rest of the sentence (and so not set off by commas). You use 'which' when the clause is nonessential to the rest of the sentence (and hence set off by commas).

The car that passed by was red.

My car, which passed by, was red.

Note also that 'which' should refer only to things, not people; many argue that this stipulation should apply to 'that' as well. In other words, use 'who' or its forms when beginning an adjective clause about a human being:

WRONG: Those boys which committed the robbery were thrown in jail.

RIGHT: Those boys who committed the robbery were thrown in jail.

QUESTIONABLE: The woman that spoke in chapel was eloquent indeed.

BETTER: The woman who spoke in chapel was eloquent indeed.

Adverb clauses. Beginning with a subordinate conjunction, an adverb clause answers one of the adverb questions:

how: She ate the ice cream as fast as she could.

when: After you get back from a lunch leave, you must sign in.

why: My mom ordered a birthday cake because it was my brother's birthday.

A comma separates an introductory adverbial clause from the rest of the sentence:

Because of his health problems, the general had trouble concentrating on the battle.

An adverb clause that follows the independent clause is not separated from it by a comma:

The general had trouble concentrating on the battle because of his health problems.

Noun clauses. A noun clause acts in a sentence as a subject, direct object, predicate nominative, object of a preposition, or an indirect object. These clauses begin with relative pronouns (who, whom, whose, which, that, whoever, whomever, whosoever, and what) or subordinate conjunctions such as how, which, why, and where.

subject: Where she had been all afternoon was a mystery.

direct object: I know that running long distance is hard.

predicate nominative: The problem was that the girl did not tell her mother the truth about where she had been the night before.

object of preposition: The nonprofit organization sent the solicitation to whoever had contributed money in the past.

indirect object: Please send whoever requests it the information about camp.

Because we expect a noun to come after a linking verb rather than an adverb, it is best to avoid expressions such as "An example is when" or "The reason is because."

AWKWARD: The reason that Ahab hates Moby Dick is because the great whale ate his leg.

BETTER: The reason that Ahab hates Moby Dick is that the great whale ate his leg.

BETTER: Ahab hates Moby Dick because the great whale ate his leg.

Expletive. A grammatical expletive ('it' or 'there') acts like a filler in a sentence. Often the expletive 'it' is followed by a noun clause that acts as the subject:
It is true that I was late to class.

Complements. A complement completes the sentence. There are four principal complements.

Direct object. A noun receiving the action of the verb.

John hit the ball. ('ball' is the direct object)

Indirect object. "A noun or pronoun that indicates to whom or for whom, to what or for what the action of a transitive verb is performed" (Strunk and White 91).

John hit Kate the ball. ('Kate' is the indirect object)

Predicate nominative. A predicate nominative follows a linking verb and renames the subject.

She is a fabulous writer. ('writer' is the predicate nominative; 'She' and 'writer' refer to the same person.)

Notice that a predicate nominative must be in nominative case. Hence the grammatically correct response, "This is she" or "This is I."

Predicate adjective. A predicate adjective follows a linking verb and describes the subject.

She is athletic. ('athletic' is the predicate adjective; it describes the subject, 'She'.)