

Rhetorical Grammar for Expository Reading and Writing

Developed by Roberta Ching

STUDENT VERSION

MODULE 8: JUVENILE JUSTICE

Strengthening Verbs and Using Adverbial Clauses

Activity 1

Guided Composition

This activity is based on Gail Garinger, “Juveniles Don’t Deserve Life Sentences.”

The purpose of this activity is for you to write a paragraph on the topic of this module. Your teacher will read a paragraph while you listen and then read it again while you take notes. You will then write your own paragraph based on what you heard using your notes.

Noticing Language

What is the difference in the relationship of the sentences in 1 and 2 below?

1. A small minority of juvenile criminals will continue to commit crimes. The majority will grow up to be law-abiding citizens.
2. Although a small minority of juvenile criminals will continue to commit crimes, the majority will grow up to be law-abiding citizens.

Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

The materials labeled Rhetorical Grammar Concepts are for your reference as you do the activities in this unit.

Selecting Active Verbs

Proficient writers often select active verbs that are more precise and interesting, avoiding “to be” and other verbs that don’t communicate much information. A good revision strategy is to look back at your writing and identify verbs like *be*, *have*, *make*, *go*, *do*, *say*, *get*, and *take*. Then see if you can replace them with verbs that provide more information. You can also often rewrite *there is* and *there are* sentences to emphasize an active verb.

Examples

Weak verb: Politicians and prosecutors say that hard-line stands against juvenile offenders are better.

Activity 2

Stronger verb: Politicians and prosecutors press for hard-line stands against juvenile offenders.

There is/There are: There is research that suggests that adolescents squeezed through the adult system are more likely to come out as violent career criminals.

Stronger verb: Research suggests that adolescents squeezed through the adult system are more likely to come out as violent career criminals.

Selecting Active Verbs

This activity is based on Jennifer Bishop Jenkins, “On Punishment and Teen Killers.”

Rewrite the following sentences, replacing a weak verb with a stronger one or eliminating *there is/there are*.

1. A teenager was the killer of my younger sister and her husband in 1990 in suburban Chicago.
*A teenager **murdered** my younger sister and her husband in 1990 in suburban Chicago.*
2. She asked for the life of her unborn child as he shot her.
3. He said to a friend that it was a “thrill kill.”
4. There are some advocates who wish to minimize these offenders’ culpability.
5. This is a particular problem that Americans have to own, with weapons so easily available.
6. There are teens who commit murder at alarming rates in the U.S.
7. There is evidence that demonstrates that teens murder at a lower rate in other countries compared to the U.S.

Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

Adding Information to Verbs

Proficient writers choose strong verbs, but they also modify verbs to provide more detailed information. Remember that the more precise a statement is, the more defensible it is—an important consideration in academic writing. Two structures that can be used to modify verbs are adverbs and adverbial phrases. They provide information about **time** (a week from now), **place** (in Florida), **frequency** (routinely), **direction** (towards adulthood), **duration** (during the last decade), **manner** (unsuccessfully), **cause** (for murdering another child), or **purpose** (in order to reduce crime).

Once you have identified adverbials in sentences, you can consider the logical effect of the location of adverbs. Sometimes meaning can be changed completely by shifting an adverb. At other times, the location of an adverb determines what is emphasized in a sentence. Prepositional phrases likewise add information and are also moveable.

Because adverbials carry so much information, it can be tempting to use them one after the other, creating stringy sentences. When revising, a good idea is to look for these piled-up adverbials and find an alternate way to express the same meaning, perhaps by breaking one sentence into two. Also, check to make sure the adverb or adverbial phrase is near the verb it modifies; if it is too far away, the sentence becomes less clear or even factually incorrect.

Activity 3

Adding Information with Adverbs and Adverbial Phrases

These activities are based on Gail Garinger, “Juveniles Don’t Deserve Life Sentences.”

Underline the adverbs and adverbial phrases in these sentences. Then write the question or questions that they are answering.

1. In the late 1980s, an influential group of criminologists predicted a wave of violent juvenile crimes.

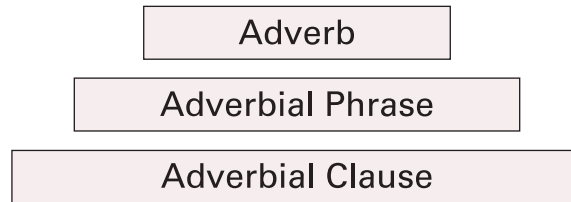
In the late 1980s, an influential group of criminologists predicted a wave of violent juvenile crimes.

When did they make the prediction?

2. Violent juvenile crime has declined steadily through the present day.
3. Juvenile life sentences are not imposed anywhere else in the world.
4. But the prediction of a generation of superpredators never came to pass.
5. Young people are biologically different from adults.
6. In 2005, the Supreme Court recognized that “juvenile offenders cannot with reliability be classified among the worst offenders.”
7. The superpredator myth presupposed that certain children were hopelessly, genetically defective.
8. I have seen firsthand the enormous capacity of children to change.

Adding Information to Verbs Using Subordination

Good writers add information to verbs by modifying them with adverbs and adverbial phrases. They also add information by adding an adverbial clause to an independent clause. Just as adverbs and adverbial phrases add information to verbs, adverbial clauses provide the same types of information and are simply larger building blocks with the same function.



An adverbial subordinate clause by itself is a fragment. When you edit, check that all your adverbial clauses are connected to a main clause unless you have created a fragment for a rhetorical purpose. Below are some of the words that introduce subordinate clauses classified by the logical relationships they express.

Expressing Logical Relationships with Subordination

Reason: *because, since*

Time: *when, after, while, before, since, as soon as, once, until, whenever*

Concession/Contrast: *although, though, even though, while*

Condition: *if, when(ever), unless, otherwise*

Result/Purpose: *so... that, so that, in order that*

Example:

The main clause can stand alone while the subordinate clause must be connected to another clause.

Activity 4

Identifying Subordinating Words and Logical Relationships

These activities are based on Gail Garinger, “Juveniles Don’t Deserve Life Sentences.”

Circle the subordinating word and identify the relationship it expresses in the following sentences.

1. When a teenager murdered my sister and her husband, my sister was pregnant with her first child.

Logical relationship: *time*

**Rhetorical
Grammar Concepts**

2. Some advocates wish to minimize these offenders' culpability simply because they are adolescents.

Logical relationship:

3. Since I have worked lovingly with teens all my life, I understand how hard it is to accept that a 16- or 17-year-old can form the requisite criminal intent to kill someone.

Logical relationship:

4. The Inuit people had no juvenile crime at all until television was introduced in 1980.

Logical relationship:

5. Some people view juvenile offenders as a terrible danger to society while others believe that adolescents have diminished responsibility.

Logical relationship:

6. Advocates for reform need to compromise so that the rights of victims are respected as well.

Logical relationship:

Find the commas in the sentences above. Why do some sentences have commas and others do not? What is the rule?

Punctuation rule:

The Meaning of Subordinating Words/Phrases

Words That Connect Ideas			
Logical Relationship	Coordinating Words	Subordinating Words/Phrases	Transition Words/Phrases
Addition	and, not only... but also, both... and		in addition, furthermore, moreover, also, besides
Concession or Contrast	but, yet	although, though, while, even though, in spite of the fact that, despite the fact that	however, nevertheless, on the other hand, still, in contrast, instead, on the contrary

Logical Relationship	Coordinating Words	Subordinating Words/Phrases	Transition Words/Phrases
Alternatives, Choice, or Option	or, nor, either... or, neither... nor		alternatively, on the other hand
Cause or Reason	for	because, since, as, in that	therefore, consequently, thus, for that reason
Result	so	so that, such that	as a result, therefore, thus, consequently, for this reason
Purpose		so that, in order that, (in order) to	
Condition		if, even if, unless, provided that, as long as, when(ever), wherever	otherwise
Time or Sequence		when, after, before, until, till, as, while, since, once, now that, whenever, as soon as, by the time that	then, first, second, third, finally, next, afterwards, after that, before that, meanwhile, at first, eventually
Place		where, wherever	
Comparison or Contrast	but	whereas, if	similarly, likewise, in contrast
Restatement			in other words, that is
Example, Generalization, or Conclusion			for example, for instance, in general, overall, in conclusion

Activity 5

Combining Sentences Using Adverbial Clauses

This activity is based on Marjie Lundstrom, “Kids Are Kids—Until They Commit Crimes.”

Combine the sentences below using adverbial subordinating clauses. Check that you have punctuated the sentences correctly. **Circle** the subordinating words or phrases.

1. Age can shape every aspect of a capital case.
Questions are raised about how reliable and consistent jurors have been.
Because age can shape every aspect of a capital case, questions are raised about how reliable and consistent jurors have been.
2. Some jurors believe that adolescents have diminished responsibility and should be treated leniently.
Others view them as a terrible danger to society.
3. Lionel Tate is only fourteen.
He might be sentenced to life in prison.
4. Teenagers under eighteen are not allowed to smoke, drink, or vote.
We are eager to try and sentence them as adults when they commit crimes.
5. We don't really believe that fourteen-year-olds are adults.
We would not let them vote.

Activity 6

Adding Information to Sentences and Making Logical Connections

This activity is based on Paul Thompson, “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains.”

Using information from Paul Thompson's article “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains,” rewrite the sentences below to make them more interesting and informative. You may add information to nouns, but focus on using adverbs, adverbial phrases, and adverbial clauses. As you think about what information to add, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who did it?
- What happened?
- Where did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- When did it happen?
- How did it happen?

Make sure that your sentences are accurate and express the correct logical relationship between the ideas. Edit for correct punctuation.

1. Scientists have made discoveries about the brain.

Scientists have made startling discoveries about the teenage brain because they have used imaging technology to map changes over time.

2. Brain tissue loss occurs.
3. Scientists have developed technology.
4. The brain is like a puzzle.
5. The brain loses cells and connections.
6. A 13-year-old is not an adult.
7. Changes occur in the frontal lobe.
8. The legal system should not view teens as mature.

Activity 7

Editing Student Writing

Read the following student essay on the topic of sentencing juveniles to life in prison. Combine clauses with coordinating words, transitions, and subordinating words. Select strong verbs to replace weaker ones, and avoid the use of “there is/there are” whenever possible. Use adverbs and adverbial phrases to provide additional information as appropriate. (Circle) the connecting words that you use to combine independent clauses, and check that you have punctuated your sentences correctly.

Garinger has the belief that violent children are able to “grow out of crime.” There is a child in prison facing a life sentence. He killed his abusive parents. He can sit there. He can take steps towards improvement. Scott Anderson told the story of Greg Ousley, who killed both his parents. He was in prison. He worked to improve himself. Ousley was able to get an education. He made sense of what he did. It took many sessions of psychological counseling.

He was determined to understand why he committed his crime. That is someone who does not want to continue going into the pits of darkness. There are not many young offenders who are willing to work for years to find peace. Greg Ousley put in that kind of effort. His reward should be eligibility for parole. Everyone must be punished for committing crimes. Those who work to improve themselves should be given another chance to live a better life. Some troubled teenagers cannot be saved. There are others who can turn into adults who can help children like themselves. They can help in ways that no one else could.

Activity 8

Editing Your Guided Composition

Return to your guided composition from Activity 1.

- Combine independent clauses with conjunctions, transitions, and subordinating words to improve the paragraph. Remember to leave some short sentences if they are rhetorically effective.
- **Select** strong verbs to replace weaker ones.
- Rewrite sentences that use of *there is/there are* whenever possible.
- Use adverbs and adverbial phrases to provide additional information as appropriate.
- Circle the connecting words that you use to combine independent clauses, and check that you have punctuated your sentences correctly.

What did you learn through this activity that you can apply to your own writing?

Activity 9

Editing Your Own Writing

Select a paragraph from your essay on juvenile justice to edit.

- Connect independent clauses using subordinating words, coordination, and transitions. Make the logical relationships between clauses clear. Use some short sentences for rhetorical impact.
- Choose strong verbs instead of *to be* verbs or *there is/there are*.

- Use adverbs for a purpose. Use a strong verb in place of an adverb and a weaker verb.
- Punctuate your sentences correctly.
- Put a question mark in the margin next to any connecting words, transitions, or punctuation you are unsure about.
- Exchange your paragraph with a partner, and discuss any questions you have. Check with your teacher if you can't agree on an answer.
- Now edit the rest of your essay.