

Rhetorical Grammar for Expository Reading and Writing

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STUDENT VERSION

MODULE 2: RHETORIC OF THE OP-ED PAGE

Sentence Problems: Run-ons and Subject-Verb Agreement

Activity 1

Guided Composition

This activity is based on John Edlund, “Three Ways to Persuade.”

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 wrong with these sentences? How do you know?

1. Aristotle argued that there was three basic ways to persuade an audience.
2. The rhetorical appeal of ethos refers to the speaker’s character pathos is an appeal to emotion.
3. A politician often question the character and values of an opponent.
4. Many advertisements aim to make us insecure about our attractiveness, they offer a remedy in the form of a product.

Correcting Run-On Sentences

1. Make a **separate sentence** out of each main clause:

We value logic and rationality. Arguments based on logos are often persuasive.

2. Combine the clauses with a **comma and a coordinating conjunction**. This method is useful when you have two ideas of equal importance, and you want to show the relationship between them:

Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

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

We value logic and rationality, **so** arguments based on logos are often persuasive.

Coordinating conjunctions are *and, for, yet, but, so, or, and nor*.

3. Make one clause a **subordinate clause**. This is an effective way to solve the problem if one of the clauses is less important than the other.

Because we value logic and rationality, arguments based on logos are often persuasive.

Common subordinating words are *because, since, when, whenever, even though, although, though, if, unless, while, before, where, as . . . as, who, which, that, whose, and whom*.

4. Combine the clauses with a **semicolon (;)**. This method is effective when the two clauses are very closely related and you don't want to break them up with another word. Be careful to use semicolons only when the ideas are closely related; don't use them simply as an alternative to periods.

We value logic and rationality; arguments based on logos are often persuasive.

5. Combine the clauses with a **semicolon and a transition word followed by a comma**. This method is also useful when you have two equally important ideas, and you want to show their logical relationship.

We value logic and rationality; **consequently,** arguments based on logos are often persuasive.

Common transition words are *therefore, thus, however, nevertheless, furthermore, consequently, and then*.

Activity 2

Correcting Run-On Sentences

This activity is based on Jeremy Rifkin, "A Change of Heart About Animals."

Correct the following run-on sentences. Try to use each of the five options.

1. Researchers are finding that many of our fellow creatures are more like us than we ever imagined, these findings are changing how we view animals.

Researchers are finding that many of our fellow creatures are more like us than we ever imagined. These findings are changing how we view animals.

2. Fast food companies are being pressured by animal-rights activists, they are financing research into animal emotions and behavior.
3. Pigs crave affection and are easily depressed the lack of mental or physical stimuli can result in deterioration of health.
4. In Germany farmers give pigs human contact each day, they also provide them with toys to prevent them from fighting.
5. New Caledonian crows make hooks from wire to snag food Koko, a gorilla in Northern California, understands several thousand English words.
6. We thought tool-making and sophisticated language skills are exclusively human attributes, self-awareness is another.
7. Animal behaviorists argued that animals were not capable of self-awareness they lack a sense of individualism.
8. It is commonly believed other animals have no sense of their mortality they are unable to comprehend the concept of their own death.

Correcting Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

If two or more subjects are joined by the conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*, the conjunction determines if you use a singular or a plural verb.

- When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by *and*, use a **plural verb**.

Incorrect: *Anger and pity* is powerful emotions.

Correct: *Anger and pity* are powerful emotions.

- When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more singular nouns or pronouns connected by *or* or *nor*, use a **singular verb**.

Incorrect: Either *anger or pity* are an emotion that can cause us to take action.

Correct: Either *anger or pity* is an emotion that can cause us to take action.

- When the subject of a sentence is composed of a singular and a plural noun connected by *or* or *nor*, the noun closest to the verb determines whether it is singular or plural.

Incorrect: In the commercial, neither the *doctor* nor the *advertisers* is being completely honest.

Correct: In the commercial, neither the *doctor* nor the *advertisers* are being completely honest.

If the subject and verb are separated by a phrase or clause, make sure the verb still agrees with the true subject of the sentence—not with a noun or pronoun in the phrase or clause.

Examples

One of the philosophers <u>is</u>	“philosophers” is not the subject
The <u>people</u> who understand rhetoric <u>are</u>	“rhetoric” is not the subject
The <u>farmer</u> , as well as his neighbors, <u>is</u>	“neighbors” is not the subject
The <u>farmer</u> with all the pigs <u>is playing</u>	“pigs” is not the subject

Some words that might sound plural are actually singular and take a singular verb. These words are **each, each one, either, neither, everyone, everybody, anybody, anyone, nobody, somebody, someone, and no one.**

Examples

- Each of these animals is
- Either of the philosophers is
- Everyone is

(“Everyone” seems plural, but the verb agrees with “one,” which is singular.)

In sentences beginning with “there is” or “there are,” be aware “there” is not the true subject. Therefore, the verb has to agree with the noun that *follows* the verb.

Examples

- There are many arguments
- There is an argument

Many words in English that were originally Greek end with an –s but are singular. Some examples are **ethos, pathos, logos, ethics, and mathematics.** Other singular words that end in –s include **news** and **measles.**

Examples

- The ethos of a writer helps determine whether we believe his or her argument.
- The ethics of doctors forbids them to do harm.
- The good news is that toys prevent pigs from fighting.

Activity 3

Correcting Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

This activity is based on John Edlund, "Three Ways to Persuade."

Double-underline the verb and underline the subject in these sentences. Then correct the subject-verb agreement problems. Note: All verbs should be in the present tense. When you are finished, compare your answers with a partner. If you are not sure about a sentence, ask your teacher for help.

1. For Aristotle, a speaker's character contribute to whether the audience will believe the speaker's argument.

For Aristotle, a speaker's character contributes to whether the audience will believe the speaker's argument.
2. There is several other reasons why an audience might believe an argument.
3. Advertising, both for products and in politics, depend on the *ethos* of the person in the advertisement.
4. One of the advertisements use a slender movie star to sell a new diet drug.
5. Each of the advertisements that rely on celebrities are really deceptive.
6. *Ethos*, largely created through word choice and style, help establish a writer's credibility.
7. Everyone, including student writers, want to communicate an image of authority.
8. Using difficult and unusual words seem like a good way to sound like an expert, but this strategy can backfire.
9. Sometimes a writer or a speaker attack the character of the opponent, a tactic called an *ad hominem* argument.

Activity 4

Combining Sentences

This activity is based on Jeremy Rifkin, "A Change of Heart about Animals."

The sentences below are complete, but they are short and choppy. Combine them to make one or more sentences that are longer and more interesting. Make sure your new sentences are complete, that their subjects and verbs agree, and that they contain all the ideas in the original sentences. Also make sure they are punctuated correctly. There is more than one way to combine the sentences correctly. When you have finished, look back at the article, and observe how the writer composed his sentences. Number 1 appears below as an example.

1. Much of big science has centered on breakthroughs.

The breakthroughs have been in biotechnology and nanotechnology.

They have also been in more esoteric questions.

One esoteric question is the age of our universe.

A quieter story has been unfolding.

The story has been unfolding in laboratories around the world.

The story's effect on human perception is likely to be profound.

The story's effect on our understanding of life is likely to be profound.

New sentence(s):

Much of big science has centered on breakthroughs in biotechnology and nanotechnology and also on more esoteric questions such as the age of our universe. A quieter story has also been unfolding in laboratories around the world. Its effect on human perception and our understanding of life is likely to be profound.

Original:

Though much of big science has centered on breakthroughs in biotechnology, nanotechnology, and more esoteric questions like the age of our universe, a quieter story has been unfolding behind the scenes in laboratories around the world, one whose effect on human perception and our understanding of life is likely to be profound.

2. Until very recently, scientists were still advancing an idea.

The idea was that most creatures behaved by sheer instinct.

The idea was that some things appeared to be learned behavior.

Those things were merely genetically wired activity.

New sentence(s):

Original:

3. In fact, we are finding that learning is passed on.

The passing on is from parent to offspring.

The passing on happens far more often than not.

Most animals engage in all kinds of experience.

The experience is learned.

The experience is brought on by continued experimentation.

New sentence(s):**Original:**

4. There are recent studies in brain chemistry.

The brain chemistry is of rats.

The studies show the rats' brains release large amounts of dopamine.

This happens when they play.

Dopamine is a neurochemical.

The neurochemical is associated with pleasure and excitement.

The pleasure and excitement is in human beings.

New sentence(s):**Original:**

5. Some philosophers have argued for a long time.

Some animal behaviorists have argued for a long time also.

They have argued that other animals are not capable of self-awareness.

They have argued it is because other animals lack a sense.

The sense is of individualism.

New sentence(s):**Original:**

Activity 5

Editing Student Writing

This activity is based on a student Letter to the Editor in response to Jeremy Rifkin, "A Change of Heart about Animals." Make two passes through the passage below. (1) Check for complete sentences. Make a check next to fragments (✓) and ✗ where two sentences run together. (2) Underline subject-verb agreement errors. Then rewrite the passage, correcting the run-on sentences, fragments, and subject-verb agreement errors.

Jeremy Rifkin makes some very good points about how complex the thinking of animals are. ✓ How they might feel emotions similar to humans. However, putting animals on the same level as humans distract us. From the beneficial roles animals can play in research.

Many of the drugs we use today was developed by using animals. To test the drugs' safety for humans. Modern technology has allowed us to evaluate drugs and medical techniques more without animals, some experimentation using animals are unavoidable. I wonder how anyone would feel if their child were sick, a medicine that might help could not be developed. Because no experiments on animals were allowed.

Activity 6

Editing Your Guided Composition

Return to your guided composition from Activity 1.

- Check for complete sentences. Make a check (✓) next to fragments and an ✗ where two sentences run together.
- Check for subject-verb agreement. Underline subjects and double-underline verbs. Then rewrite the paragraph, correcting the run-on sentences, fragments, and subject-verb agreement errors.
- Exchange your paragraph with a partner and discuss your questions. Check with your teacher if you can't agree on an answer.

Activity 7

Editing Your Own Writing

Select a paragraph from your writing assignment for Rhetoric of the Op-Ed Page.

- Double-underline the main verbs and underline the subjects.
- Make sure the sentences are complete (have both subjects and verbs) and are connected and punctuated correctly. Rewrite any sentences you think are incomplete. Put a question mark in the margin next to anything you are unsure about.
- Exchange your paragraph with a partner and discuss your questions. Check with your teacher if you can't agree on an answer.
- Now edit the rest of your essay for missing subjects and verbs and for correct punctuation.