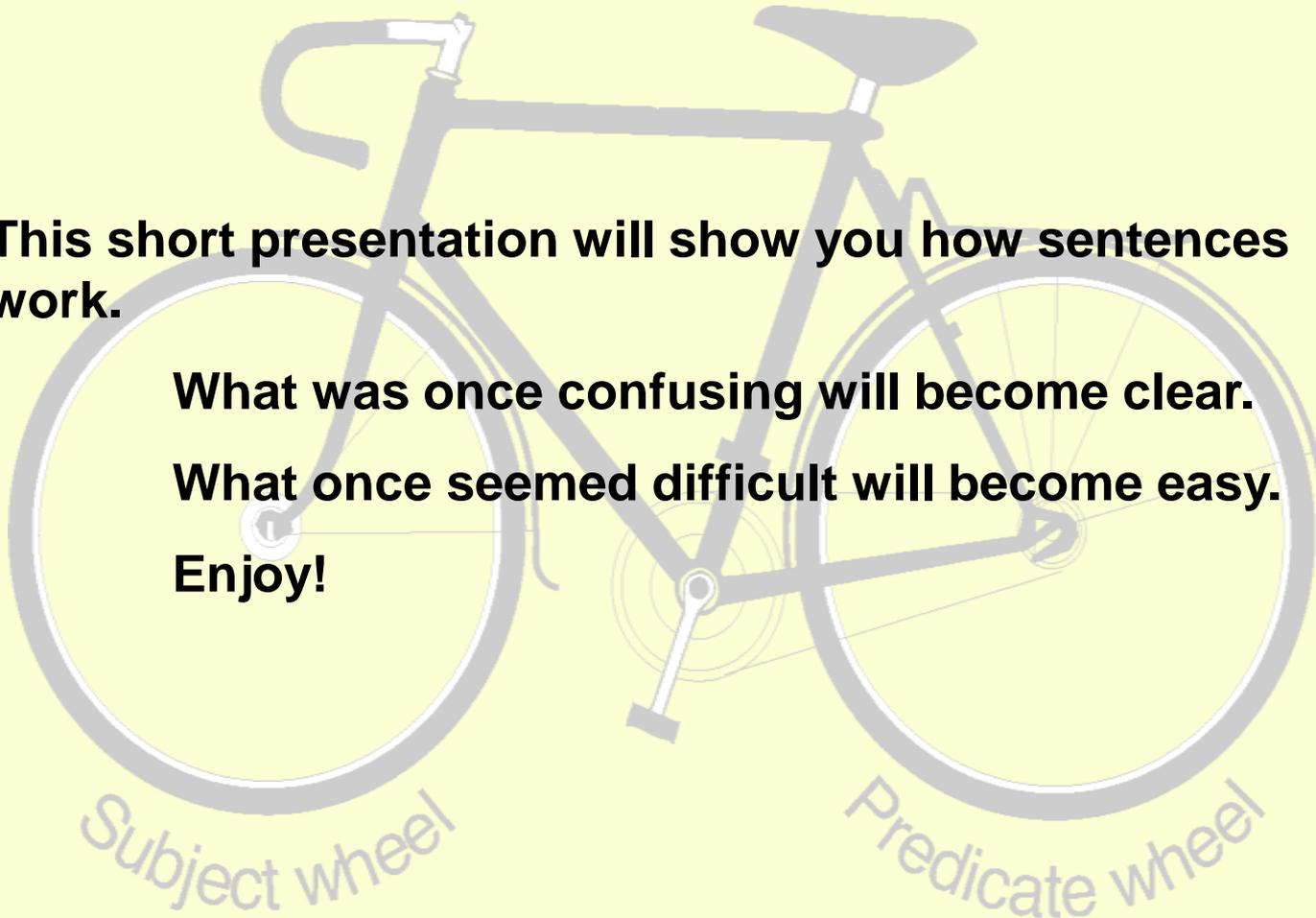


THE BIKE



How Sentences Work



This short presentation will show you how sentences work.

What was once confusing will become clear.

What once seemed difficult will become easy.

Enjoy!

SENTENCES

Which of the following do you think are sentences?

- Autumn leaves twirled gently to the ground.
- The park district will open an outdoor ice skating rink in November.
- He smiles.

A SENTENCE HAS 2 PARTS

If you thought all three were sentences, you're right. Length does not determine what is and is not a sentence. Regardless of how long or short a group of words is, it needs two parts to be a sentence: a subject and a predicate.

- The subject tells us ***who or what***.
- The predicate tells us ***what about it***.

THE 2 PARTS CONNECT

The subject and predicate parts connect to form a basic sentence, also known as an independent clause.

Subject

Who or what?

Predicate

What about it?

He

smiles.

Autumn

leaves twirl gently to the ground.

The park district

will open an outdoor ice skating rink in November.

Another way to describe a sentence is to compare it to a bike...

The subject is one wheel;
the predicate is the other wheel.



These two parts connect to form a stable structure.

A SENTENCE HAS 2 WHEELS

We can have just one word in each wheel...



Children play.
Students studied.

2 WHEELS

But most of the time our ideas include more details. We add extra words to the wheels.



The neighborhood **children play** basketball at the community center.

Students in the biology lab studied cells under an electron microscope.

2 WHEELS

Regardless of how much detail we add, the wheels give the same kind of information. The subject tells us *who or what*. The predicate tells us *what about it*.

Subject

Predicate

Who or what?

What about it?

Randy

loves pizza.

Companies

benefit from customer loyalty.

Efficient train service

will decrease traffic congestion.

Review

A sentence needs two wheels.

Front wheel

Everyone on our block



Front wheel

back wheel

Everyone on our block has joined a citizen watch group.

Review

Here's another example:

Front wheel



The new manager at the restaurant



Front wheel *back wheel*

The new manager at the restaurant wants to lower prices.

Review

The subject and predicate can be short.



The baby sleeps.

But most of the time we add more details.



The four-month old baby now sleeps through the night.

Review

A subject tells us *who or what*. The predicate tells us *what about it*.



Who or what

What about it

Someone has sent us flowers.

How you play the game makes all the difference.

What goes around comes around

The children's dreams have come true.

ADJECTIVES

One of the ways to add detail is to use adjectives.
Adjectives are words that modify a person, place, or thing.

I love cookies with **crispy** edges and **chewy** centers.

The **annual** seminar explains how to start a **small** business.

Exercise helps create a **peaceful** mind and **healthy** body.

We saw a **quiet** gentleness hidden beneath his smile.

Notice the extra details that adjectives give to these sentences:

He explained it with logic.

He explained it with **cold, chilling** logic.

— Joseph Marshall, Jr., *Street Soldier*

Dinner was a time of dishes and activity.

Dinner was a **noisy** time of **clattering** dishes and **endless** activity.

— Leo Buscaglia, “Papa the Teacher”

ADVERBS

We can also expand the wheels by adding adverbs. Words that modify verbs are called adverbs. Most of them end in *-ly*.

We **carefully** loaded the van with furniture.

The driver realized **immediately** that he had missed the exit.

The kindergarten teacher **quietly** took the child's hand.

A new path **slowly** emerged from the mist.

Notice the detail adverbs add to these sentences:

Moonbeams splash and spill in the rain.

Moonbeams splash and spill **wildly** in the rain.

-- Virginia Woolf, "A Haunted House"

The wind blew.

The wind blew **mournfully**.

-- Bernard Malamud, "The Presence of Death"

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

We can also add prepositional phrases. Prepositional phrases begin with a preposition (a word such as *in*, *on*, *at*, *with*) and end when the idea in the phrase is completed.

The windows rattled **in the winter storm**.

We loaded our hamburgers **with ketchup, mustard, and onion**.

A large percentage **of new jobs** are created **by small businesses**.

Prepositional phrases often appear in a series. In the sentences below, they are marked in different colors.

He kicked **at the slush** **on the sidewalk**.

-- James Thurber, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

He walked **with the creeping movement** **of the midnight cat**.

-- Stephen Crane, "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky"

Playing shamelessly **to the crowd and camera**, Henderson chucks his bat high **over his head**, ambles **to first by way of the Yankee dugout**, lowers his head and proceeds **around the bases in an endless, mock-serious trot**.

-- Jim Kaplan "Baseball's Hot Dogs"

Review

A sentence needs two wheels. The wheels can be plain:

Eyes disappeared.

Or the wheels can be decorated:

Her big brown eyes almost disappeared under the cone-shaped baseball hat.

Either way, the two wheels connect directly.

Try It Out

Read the following sentences and ask yourself, “Who or what?” and “What about it?” The answers to those questions will give you the subject and predicate. Then mouse-click to see if you got it right.

The weather report predicts thunderstorms this afternoon.

The weather report / predicts thunderstorms this afternoon.

Math and chemistry are easy for my cousin.

Math and chemistry / are easy for my cousin.

WHEELS CONNECT DIRECTLY

The two wheels connect to form a stable structure. Do not separate them with a comma.



Correct: Carl and his family showed me that honor is more important than winning.

Incorrect: Carl and his family, showed me that honor is more important than winning.

DEPENDENT CLAUSES

We've been looking at sentences. A sentence can stand alone and make sense. Now we'll look at groups of words that cannot stand alone and make sense because they begin with a dependent word.

Dependent words are powerful. If you put one in front of a sentence, you no longer have a sentence.

Sentence: **The music began.**

Not a sentence: **When the music began**

The minute we add *when*, we no longer have a sentence. This word sets up a questionable situation: we wonder what happened when the music began.

DEPENDENT CLAUSES

Here are some more important dependent words, called “subordinating conjunctions”: *after, although, as, as soon as, because, before, if, since, unless, until, whenever, wherever, while.*

None of these are sentences:

After the music began

As soon as the music began

Because the music began

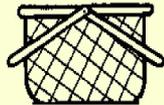
Before the music began

While the music began

They are called dependent clauses or subordinate clauses.

BASKETS

Dependent clauses are like baskets. They need to be attached to a bike.



When the music began



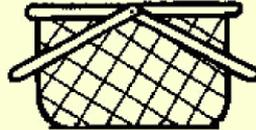
Everyone started to dance.



When the music began, everyone started to dance.

BASKETS

Here are some more dependent clauses:



As soon as it stopped raining

Because I registered early

If they need a quiet place to study

These baskets need to be attached to a bike.

BASKETS ON THE FRONT

We can place them on the front of a bike.



As soon as it stopped raining, we saw a double rainbow.

Because I registered early, I got the classes I wanted.

If they need a quiet place to study, they go to the library.

BASKETS ON THE BACK

We can also place them on the back of a bike.



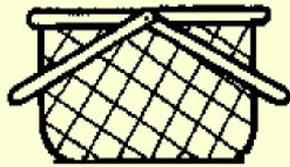
We saw a double rainbow as soon as it stopped raining.

I got the classes I wanted because I registered early.

They go to the library if they need a quiet place to study.

MORE DEPENDENT CLAUSES

Another kind of dependent clause begins with the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that*.



who works part-time

which includes a swimming pool

that we just bought

These clauses are not sentences. They are like baskets that need to be attached to a bike.

BASKETS IN THE MIDDLE

These baskets go after the word they describe. Sometimes they're in the middle of the bike.



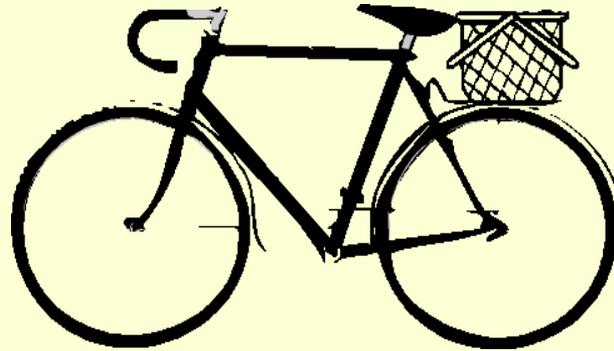
Frank, **who works part-time**, will be our guide.

The new fitness center, **which includes a swimming pool**, opened in February.

The refrigerator **that we just bought** has a high energy rating.

BASKETS ON THE BACK

Sometimes they are on the back of the bike.



We are making pasta for the Richardsons, **who do not eat meat.**

I have tickets to the jazz festival, **which begins at noon.**

Karen likes books **that have a happy ending.**

Review

Make sure the bike has 2 wheels.



One wheel and a basket do not make a sentence.

Front wheel

basket

back wheel?

The fitness center, which includes a tennis court ??



We need to add a wheel.

Front wheel

basket

back wheel

The fitness center, which includes a tennis court, will open soon.

Review

Here's another example:

Front wheel and basket



The car that is parked in the driveway

We need a back wheel



The car that is parked in the driveway is mine.

FRAGMENTS

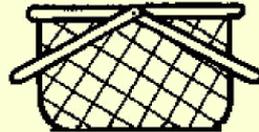
A fragment is just a part of a sentence. It can't stand alone and make sense because it doesn't have a subject (*who or what*) or predicate (*what about it*).

We have already looked at one kind of fragment: the dependent clause. It's not a sentence, but a basket. We'll now look at three more kinds of fragments: added-detail fragments, *-ing* fragments, and *to* fragments.

Most fragments have just been disconnected from the sentence and need to be reattached. Sometimes it's a wheel; most of the time, it's a basket.

PROBLEM: DISCONNECTED BASKET

Notice the words in green. They are added-detail fragments. They are like baskets that have been disconnected from the bike.



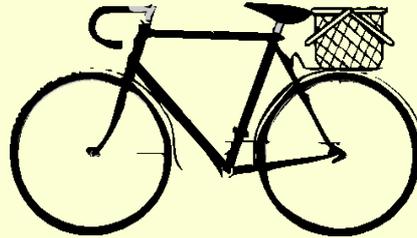
It was an easy task. Especially for someone so small.

The corporation provides employees with benefits. Like medical insurance and a pension.

We have ordered everything on the menu. Except fried buffalo wings.

SOLUTION: ATTACH THE BASKET

We need to attach these fragments to the sentence.



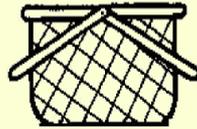
It was an easy task, especially for someone so small.

The corporation provides employees with benefits, like medical insurance and a pension.

We have ordered everything on the menu except fried buffalo wings.

PROBLEM: DISCONNECTED BASKET

Many fragments begin with a word ending in *-ing*. The words in green are *-ing* fragments. They are like baskets that have been disconnected from the bike.

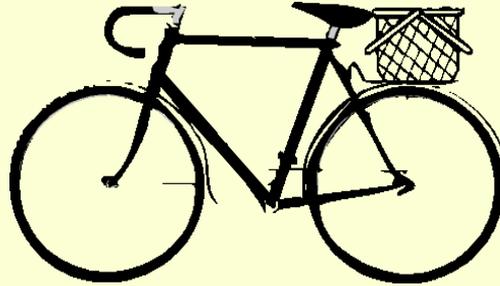


I sprinted down the street. Trying to catch the train.

The campers sat by the fire. Telling stories and playing card games.

The scientists continued their research. Hoping to find a cure.

SOLUTION: ATTACH THE BASKET



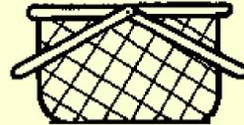
I sprinted down the street, trying to catch the train.

The campers sat by the fire, telling stories and playing card games.

The scientists continued their research, hoping to find a cure.

PROBLEM: DISCONNECTED BASKET

Other fragments begin with the word *to*. The words in green are *to* fragments.



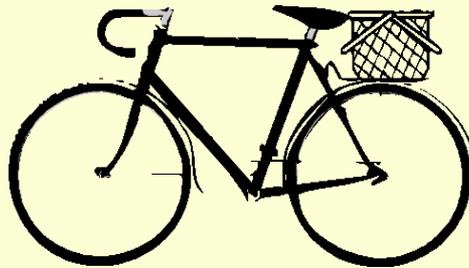
They are going to Ashville for the weekend. **To celebrate their anniversary.**

We walked up sixteen flights of stairs. **To prove to ourselves we could do it.**

Tanya reads the newspaper daily. **To find out about job possibilities.**

SOLUTION: ATTACH THE BASKET

We need to attach these fragments to the sentence.



They are going to Ashville for the weekend [in order] to celebrate their anniversary.

We walked up sixteen flights of stairs [in order] to prove to ourselves we could do it.

Tanya reads the newspaper daily [in order] to find out about job possibilities.

SENTENCE VARIETY

Baskets are excellent ways to create sentence variety. Once we have a stable structure, we can add baskets

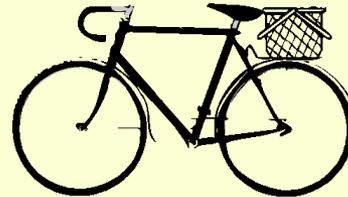
on the front



in the middle



or on the
back.



BASKETS ON THE FRONT

We can add a variety of baskets on the front:



Earlier this spring, the viaduct was closed because of flooding.

Sitting on the back steps, we talked about tomorrow.

By the time they got home, it was dark.

Irritable after a long day at work, we took a nap before studying.

BASKETS IN THE MIDDLE

A variety of baskets in the middle:



My little brother, **unable to sleep**, turned on the light.

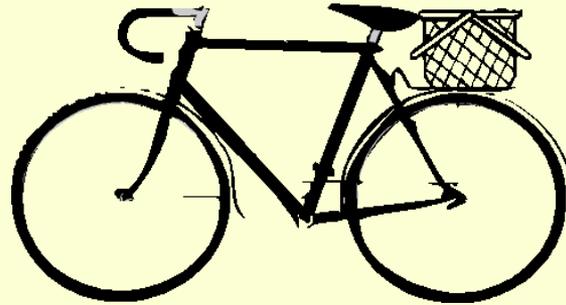
The elderly couple, **walking slowly up the driveway**, waved at their grandchildren.

A modern art gallery, **funded by a million dollar grant**, is under construction.

John Jackson, **a friend since grade school**, is my math tutor.

BASKETS ON THE BACK

And a variety of baskets on the back:



Jeff wants a hybrid, his best hope for good gas mileage.

A gentle rain fell throughout the night, lulling us to sleep.

We are building a home with Habitat for Humanity, a national volunteer program.

Everyone wants to leave at noon, even my sister.

THE LOGIC OF PUNCTUATION

We've been looking at bikes and baskets. Now let's look at punctuating them. Punctuation is easy--it makes sense. It's a system of signs to help readers understand our thoughts.

Readers always look for the main ideas of a sentence:

- the subject (*who or what*),
- the predicate (*what about it*).

Periods and commas help them find the main idea.

PERIODS

A period marks the end of a sentence. Readers need to know when one idea is over and another begins. Without the period, the bikes will run into each other, which is a run-on sentence.



COMMAS

Commas are used to help readers see the *who or what* and *what about it* of a sentence. If a sentence begins with a basket, the comma shows readers where the basket ends and the main idea begins.



When I finish this paper, I will breathe a sigh of relief.

Basket: When I finish this paper

Who or what/what about it: I will breathe a sigh of relief.

COMMAS

If the sentence has a basket in the middle, the commas show where the basket begins and ends. These commas are like handles that the reader can use to lift the basket out of the sentence and see the main idea: the *who or what* and *what about it*.



Ruby, my sister's best friend, will loan me her car.

Basket: my sister's best friend

Who or what/what about it: Ruby will loan me her car.

COMMAS

If the basket is attached to the end of the sentence, the comma shows readers where the addition begins.



The woman wore a large hat, blocking our view.

Basket: blocking our view

Who or what/what about it: The woman wore a large hat.

Try It Out

The baskets in the sentences below need to be marked with commas. Decide where the commas go, and then mouse-click to see if you placed them correctly.

To welcome first-time visitors the college installed a large map of the campus.

To welcome first-time visitors, the college installed a large map of the campus.

Mayfair Lane the primary entrance to campus is closed for resurfacing.

Mayfair Lane, the primary entrance to campus, is closed for resurfacing.

Try It Out

Decide where the commas go, and then mouse-click to see if you placed them correctly.

The award was given to James Johnson the most respected person in our town.

The award was given to James Johnson, the most respected person in our town.

If we go to the early movie we can save money.

If we go to the early movie, we can save money.

According to the weather report Monday will be hot and humid.

According to the weather report, Monday will be hot and humid.

Try It Out

Read each sentence and identify the basket and the basic bike. Then mouse-click to see if you got it right.

Since last April, the company has hired 75 people.

Basket: Since last April

Basic bike: the company has hired 75 people.

Scoops, the local ice cream shop, features home made waffle cones.

Basket: the local ice cream shop

Basic bike: Scoops features home made waffle cones.

Try It Out

Identify the basket and the basic bike. Then mouse-click to see if you got it right.

Mandy's art gallery, which opens this weekend, features local artists.

Basket: which opens this weekend

Basic bike: The art gallery features local artists.

When I finish this paper, I will breathe a sigh of relief.

Basket: When I finish this paper

Basic bike: I will breathe a sigh of relief.

They are living in the present, not the past.

Basket: not the past

Basic bike: They are living in the present.

SUMMARY

- A sentence has two wheels.
- The subject wheel tells *who or what*.
- The predicate wheel tells *what about it*.
- These two wheels connect to form a stable structure.



SUMMARY

Once you have a stable bike, you can add baskets to the front, middle, or back.



When the game was over, they danced in the streets.



Music, blaring from the second story window, woke us up.



We put an ad in the Lake Norman Times, our local newspaper.

BIKE AND BASKET BENEFITS

- You know how sentences work.
- You know how to test for sentences: Ask if it has a *who* or *what* and *what about it*. If it has, it's a sentence.
- Use the same test to find fragments. If it doesn't have a *who* or *what* and *what about it*, it's not a sentence.
- You know how to use commas to show readers where baskets begin and end.
- You know how to write with sentence variety.

**You now have the confidence you
need to write effectively.**

ENJOY!

For more information about the bike, grammar, and writing paragraphs and essays, see

AN EASY GUIDE TO WRITING

Pamela Dykstra

Prentice Hall, 2006

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Subject wheel

Predicate wheel