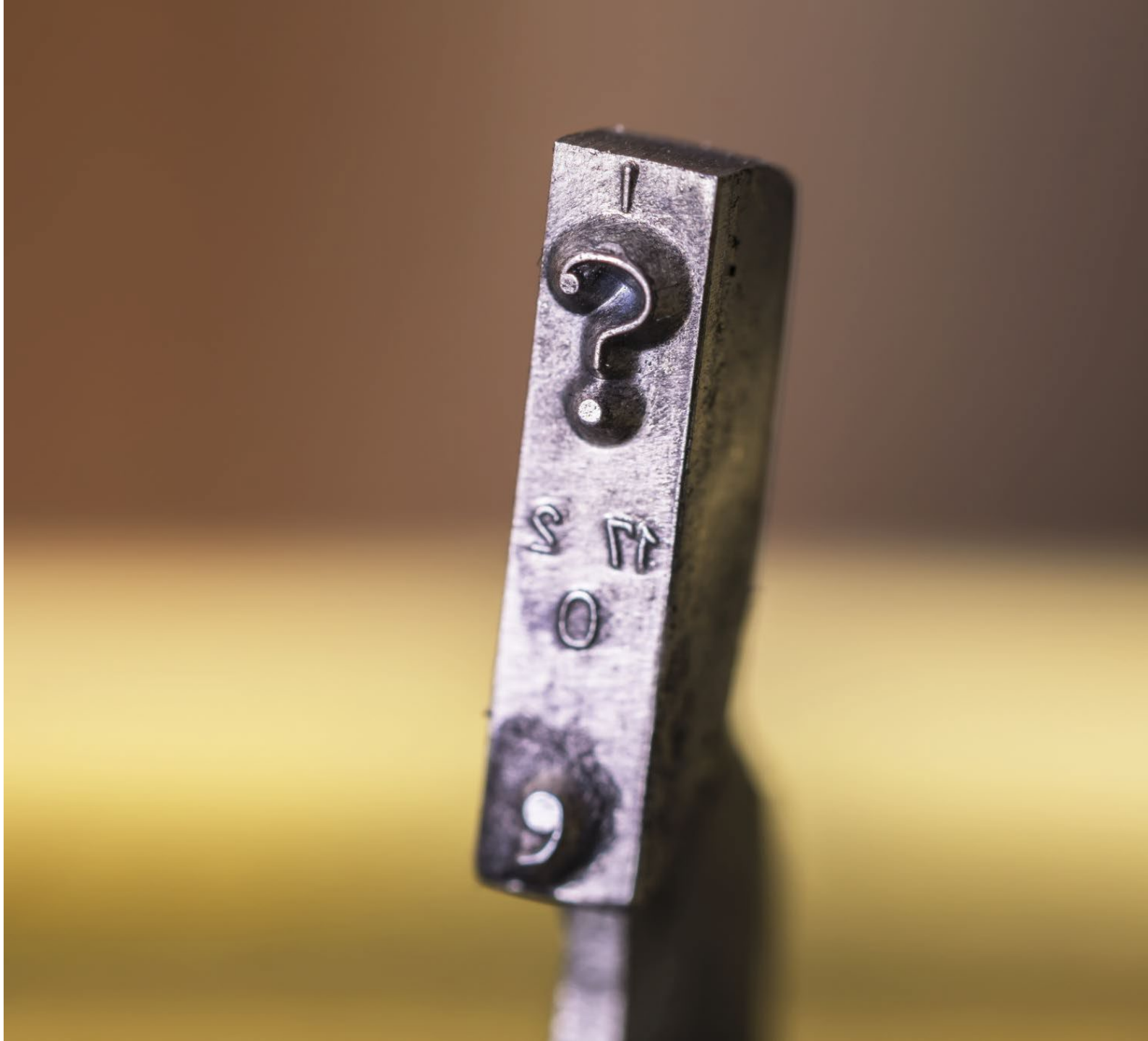


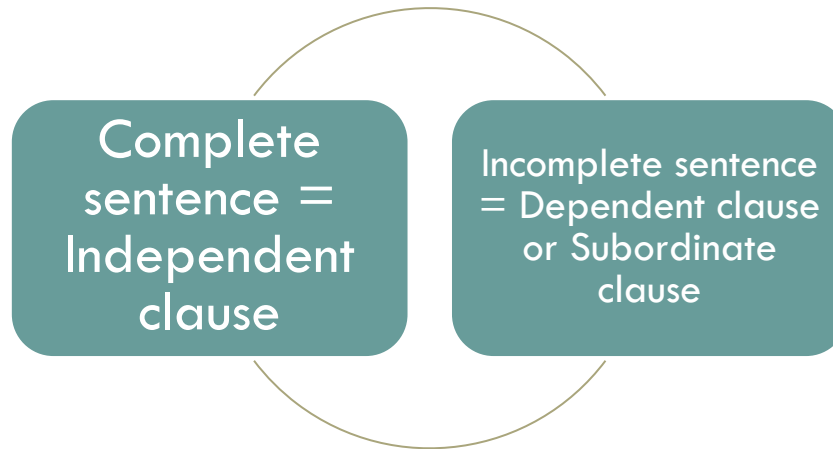
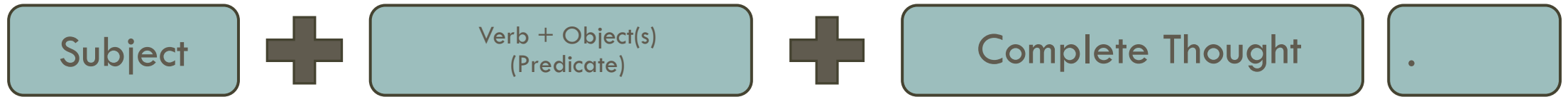
# COMMON SENTENCE ERRORS

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# WHAT IS A SENTENCE?



# TYPES OF SENTENCES





# SIMPLE SENTENCES

**Simple sentence → Independent clause**

- I like lemon sorbet.



# COMPOUND SENTENCES

**Independent clause + independent clause (closely related)**

Joined with semi-colon:

- I like lemon sorbet; she prefers vanilla ice cream.



SVO



;



SVO

# COMPOUND SENTENCES

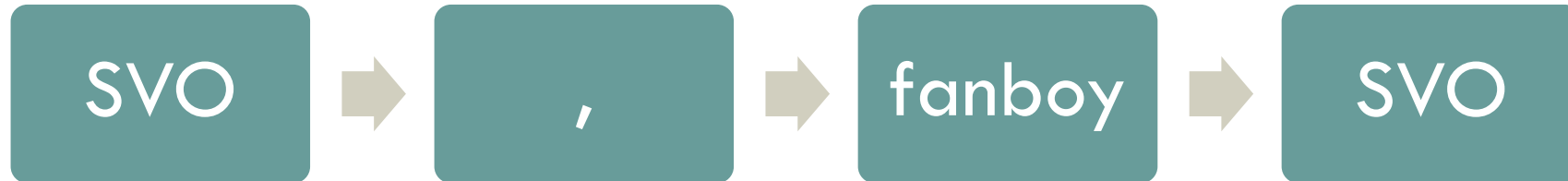
**Independent clause + independent clause**

Joined with comma + coordinating conjunction/fanboy:

I like lemon sorbet, **but** she prefers vanilla ice cream.



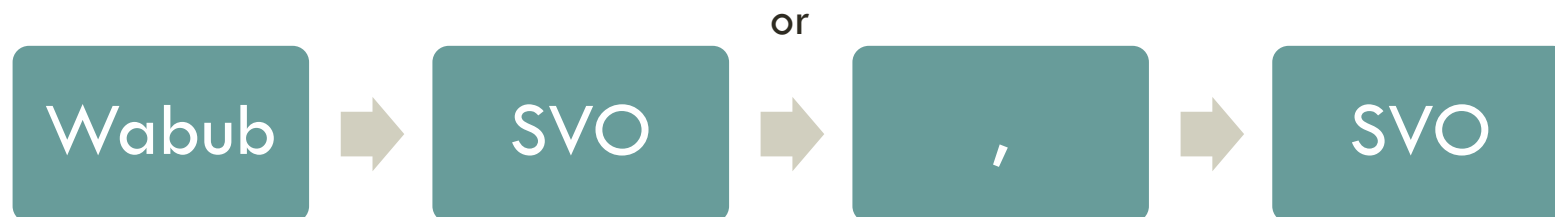
**For  
And  
Nor  
But  
Or  
Yet  
So  
!!!**



# COMPLEX SENTENCES

Independent clause + dependent clause(s) (subordinating conjunction)

- I like lemon sorbet **because** it is very refreshing.
- **Because** it is very refreshing, I like lemon sorbet.



**"I saw a wabub!"**

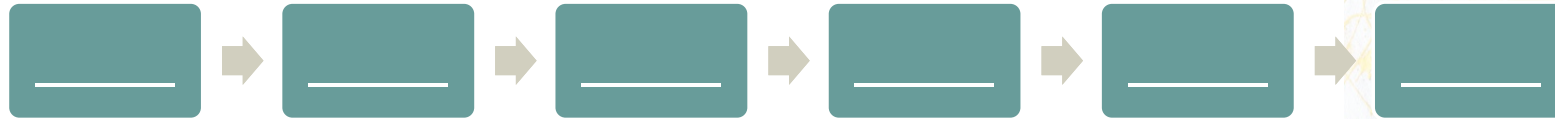


If, Since, As, When, Although, While,  
After, Before, Until, Because

# COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES

Independent clause + independent clause(s) + dependent clause(s)

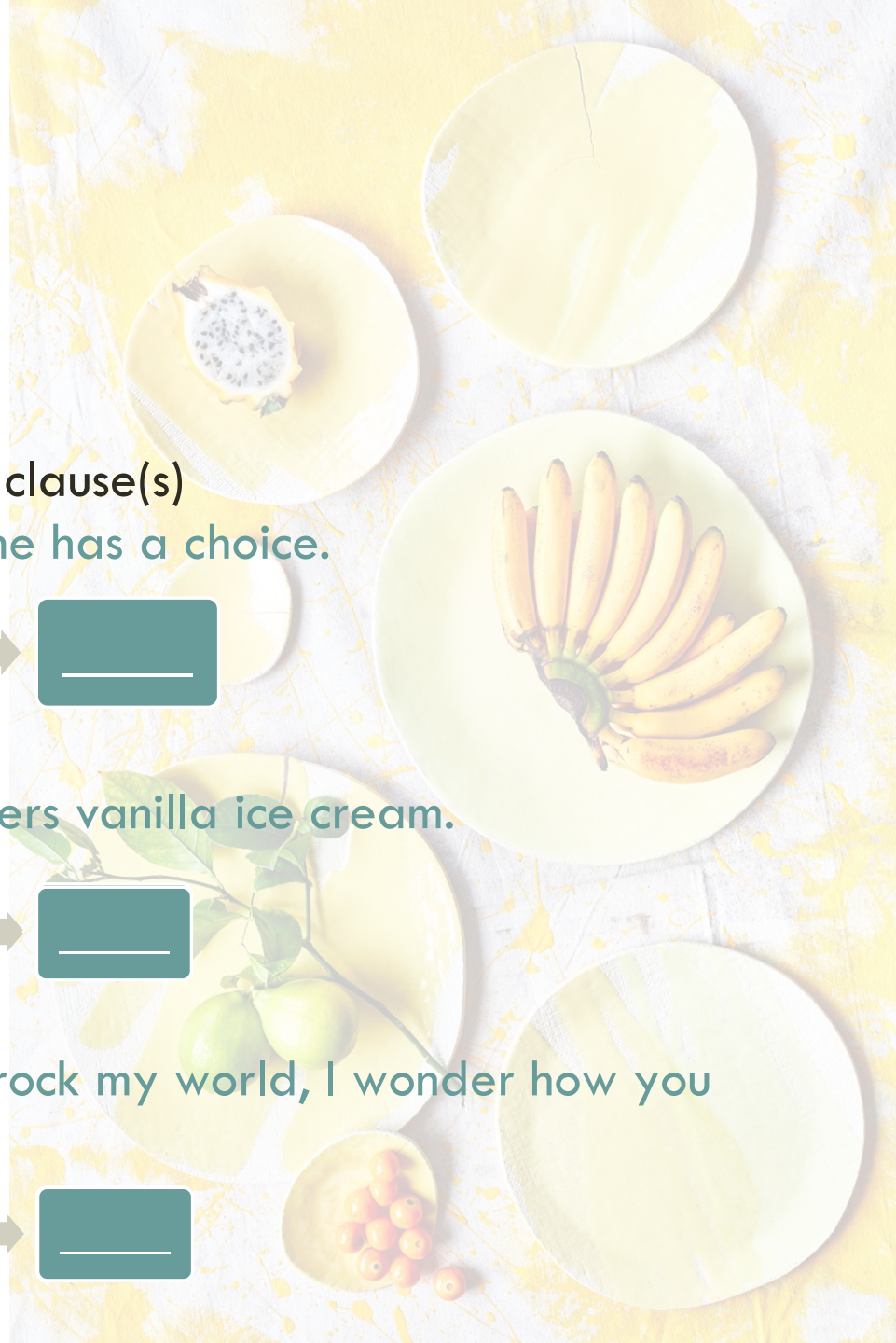
- I like lemon sorbet, but she prefers vanilla ice cream if she has a choice.



- Because I like lemon sorbet, it was all I had, but she prefers vanilla ice cream.



Lemon sorbet rocks my world, and although it will always rock my world, I wonder how you feel about it.



# REVIEW: TYPES OF SENTENCES

- 1) Simple
- 2) Compound
- 3) Complex
- 4) Compound-complex

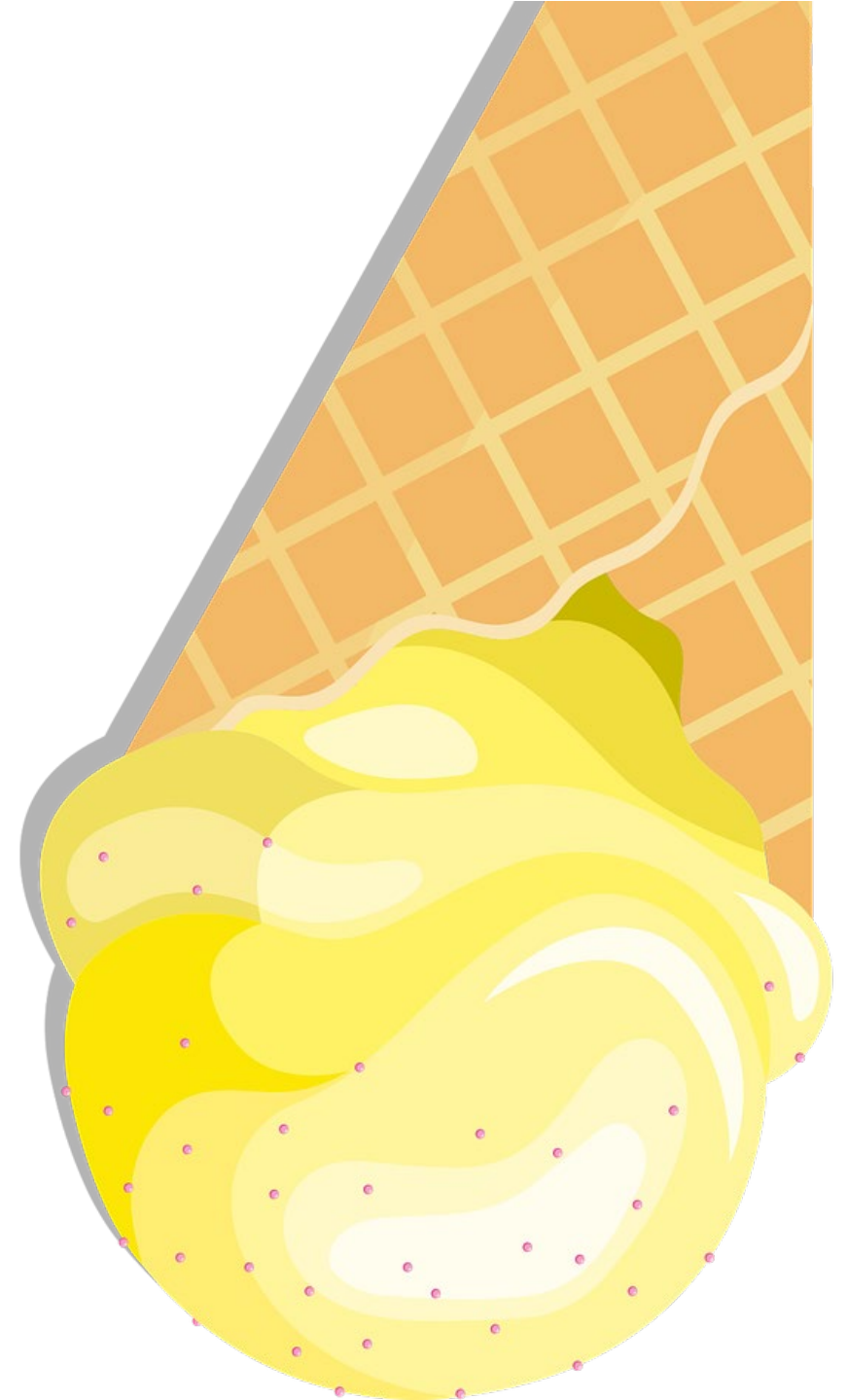
## Tips:

- Memorize and look for FANBOYS and WABUBS.
- Use sentence structure to help you identify and correct sentence errors.



# TYPES OF ERRORS

[Common Sentence Errors](#) | [Write Site](#) | [Athabasca University](#)



# COORDINATION

Coordination serves as a method to connect sentence elements (words, phrases, and clauses) to **indicate their grammatical equivalence**. In essence, coordination indicates that these elements hold equal significance, rank, and value.

## Coordinating conjunctions

- FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

## Correlative conjunctions

- Both ... and, either ... or, neither ... nor, not ... but, not only ... but also

## Conjunctive adverbs

- However, consequently, therefore, nevertheless, etc. (used after a semicolon; followed by a comma)



# EXAMPLES OF COORDINATION ERRORS

## Illogical coordination

Computers were first introduced to the office environment in the late 60s, and they are less expensive **now** than they were then.

## Correct

Computers were first introduced to the office environment in the late 60s, and they have **since** become an integral part of office routine.

## Overuse of coordination

At times, a series of less complex sentences is best, and this is especially the case when you may want to make each idea or detail stand out as equally important, **but** at most times, **however**, you will want to make one idea stand out and you will want to present that idea along with secondary details.

## Correct

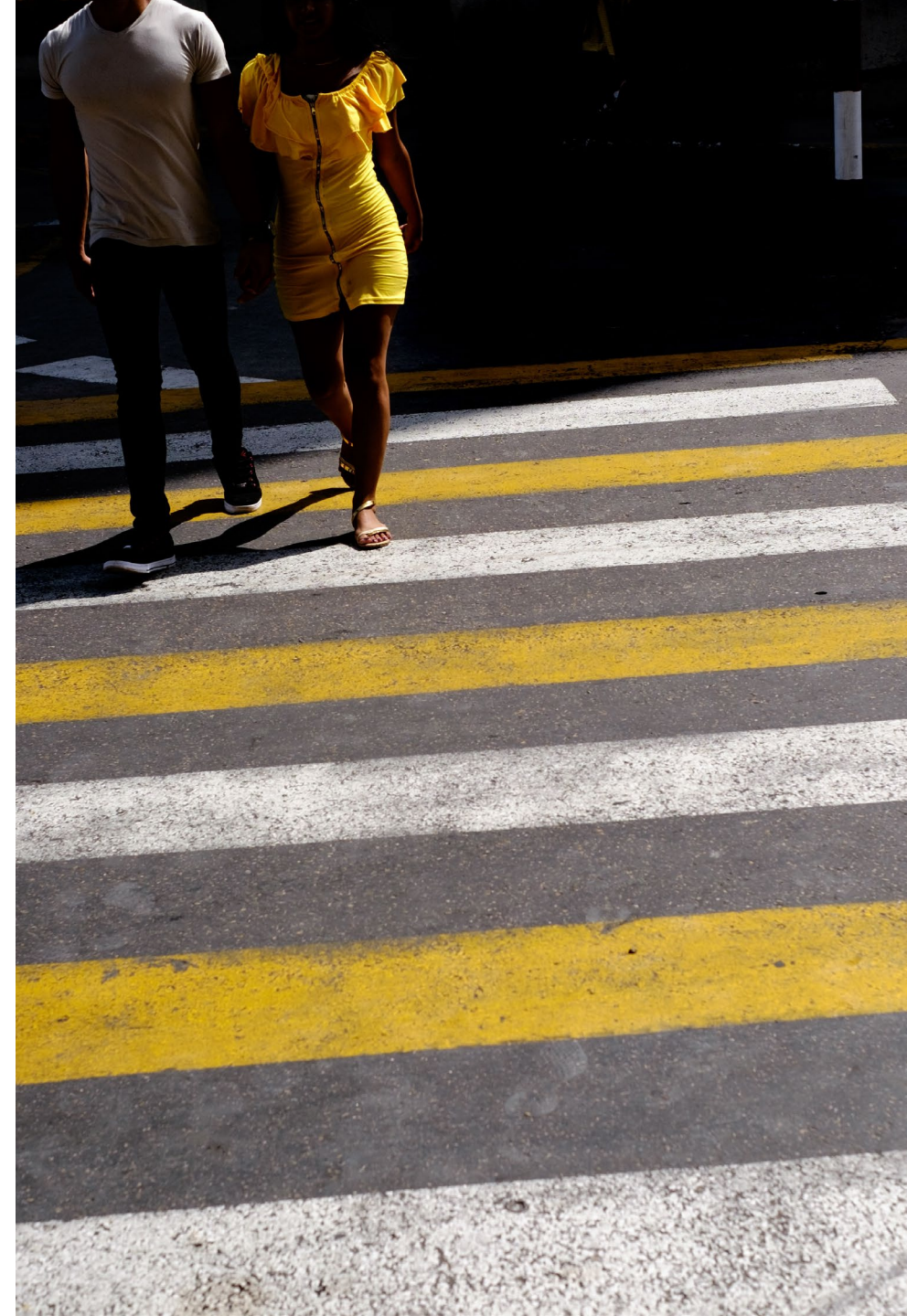
At times, a series of less complex sentences is best, and this is especially the case when you may want to make each idea or detail stand out as equally important. At most times, however, you will want to make one idea stand out and to present that idea along with secondary details.

# PARALLELISM

Parallelism in a sentence refers to the **balanced and grammatically consistent arrangement** of words, phrases, or clauses that have similar or related meanings.

Parallelism helps create symmetry and rhythm in writing, making the sentence easier to understand. It is **often used in lists and comparisons** to emphasize the relationship between elements.

- She enjoys books, jogging, and to swim. ❌
- She enjoys reading, jogging, and swimming. ✅



# EXAMPLES OF PARALLELISM ERRORS

With coordinate elements ❌

She found herself out of love, with no money, and having no luck.

With "than" and "as"/Comparison errors ❌

A labourer's salary is as difficult to earn as a lawyer.

With correlative conjunctions (either...or/neither...nor/both...and/not only...but also)

He not only felt sorry for her but also was feeling sorry for himself. ❌

Correct ✓

She found herself out of love, out of funds, and out of luck.

Correct ✓

A labourer's salary is as difficult to earn as a lawyer's.

He felt sorry not only for her but also for himself.

He not only felt sorry for her but also for himself. ✓

# COMPARISON

Comparison in a sentence involves **describing the similarities or differences** between two or more things.

Comparisons often use words like "like," "as," "than," "similar to," "different from," and "more/less than."

## Equal Comparison

- Her smile is as bright as the sun.

## Comparative Comparison

- His house is bigger than mine.

## Superlative Comparison

- This is the most delicious cake I have ever tasted.



# EXAMPLES OF COMPARISON ERRORS

## Incomplete comparisons ✗

Many people eat margarine because they think **it's healthier**.

## Correct ✓

Many people eat margarine because they think **it's healthier than butter**.

## Illogical comparisons ✗

The new committee's approach is more value-driven **than their predecessors**.

## Correct ✓

The new committee's approach is more value-driven **than their predecessors'**.

## Grammatically incomplete comparisons ✗

The Trans-Canada Highway is longer **than any Canadian highway**.

## Correct ✓

The Trans-Canada Highway is longer **than any other Canadian highway**.

## Incorrect/illogical quality or quantity ✗

He had **more good** marks this term than last.

That rose is **the beautifullest** I've ever seen.

## Correct ✓

He had **better** marks this term than last.

That rose is the **most beautiful** I've ever seen.

# SUBORDINATION

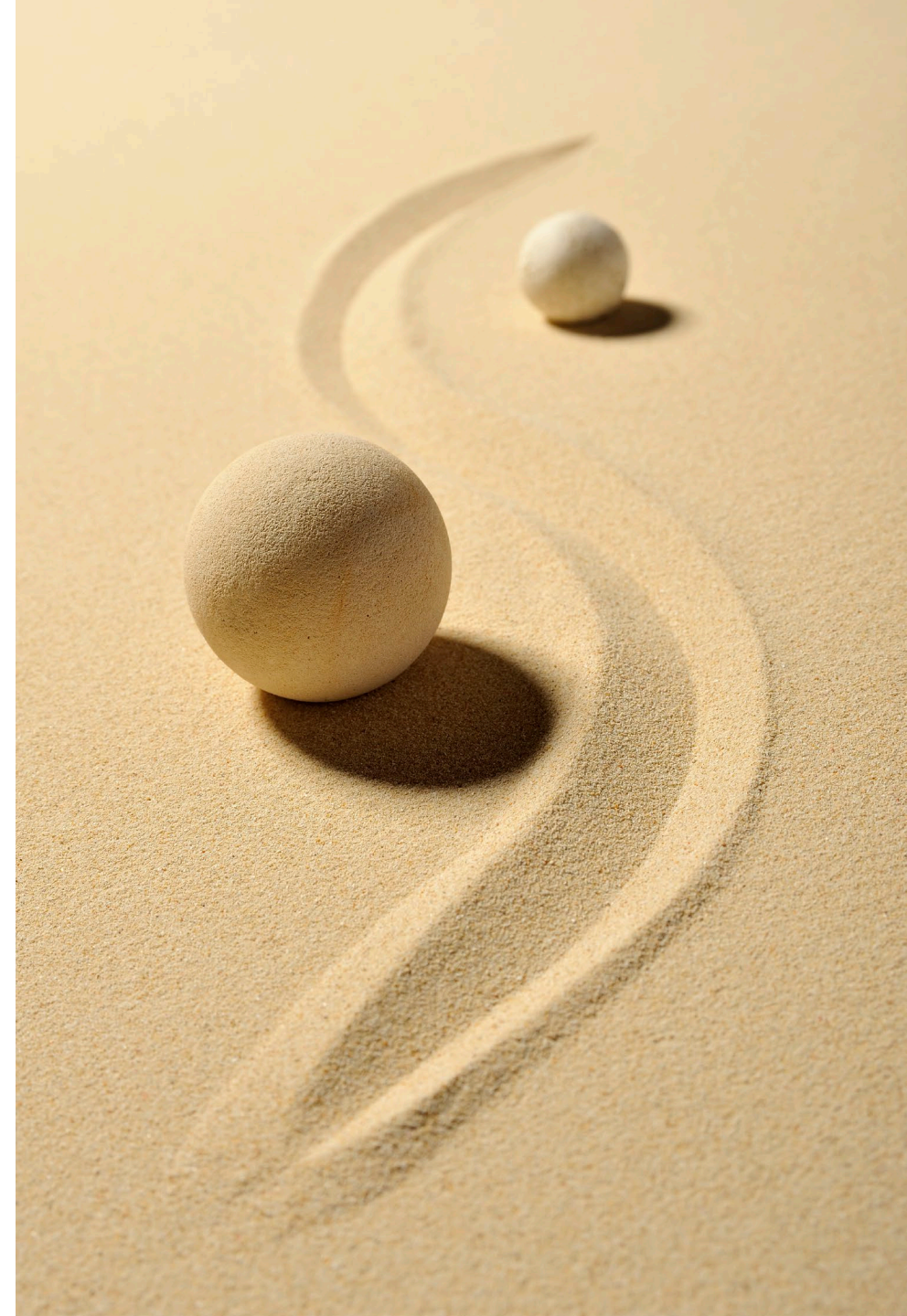
Subordination helps to establish relationships between different ideas, indicating which one is more important or primary while also contributing to sentence variety and complexity.

## Conjunction (WABUBS)

- If, Since, As, When, Although, While, After, Before, Until, Because

## Adjective or relative clauses

- Provide additional information about an element in the main clause
  - Non-restrictive/non-essential clauses (which)
  - Restrictive/essential clauses (that or which)



# EXAMPLES OF SUBORDINATION ERRORS

## Overuse of subordinate clauses ❌

In the middle of a traffic island which is off the north-east corner of the park, there is a brass plaque, which marks the spot where the famous hanging tree once stood.

## Correct ✅

In the middle of a traffic island off the north-east corner of the park, there is a brass plaque which marks the spot where the famous hanging tree once stood.

## Illogical relationships/Incorrect use of subordinating conjunctions

While I discovered this old love-letter folded neatly between two pages, I was browsing through a book at the library. ❌

While I was browsing through a book at the library yesterday, I discovered this old love-letter folded neatly between two pages. ✅

## Misplacement of the most important information ❌

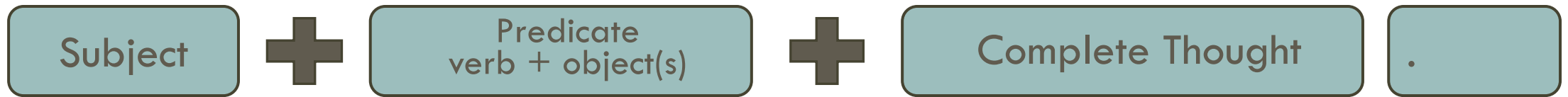
It was extremely dry out though the family decided to organize a wiener roast.

## Correct ✅

Although it was extremely dry out, the family decided to organize a wiener roast.

# SENTENCE FRAGMENTS = INCOMPLETE SENTENCES

A sentence fragment occurs if one of the components of a sentence is missing.



Ran through the park. ✗

The green park. ✗

When I run. ✗

Running through the park. ✗

**He** ran through the park. ✓

The park **is** green. ✓

When I run, **I feel free.** ✓

Running through the park **requires a steady pace.** ✓

# EXAMPLES OF SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

With subordinate clauses ❌

I sent Dalia to the store. **Because we'd run out of milk.**

With prepositional phrases ❌

It came as a great relief. **To everyone.**

With gerund phrases ❌

She sat with the cellphone on her lap. **Waiting for the familiar ring.**

With appositives ❌

The story takes place in Thompson. **A small mining town in northern Manitoba.**

Correct ✔

I sent Dalia to the store **because we'd run out of milk.**

Correct ✔

It came as a great relief **to everyone.**

Correct ✔

She sat with the cellphone on her lap, **waiting for the familiar ring.**

Correct ✔

The story takes place in Thompson, **a small mining town in northern Manitoba.**

# FIXING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Add the missing element (subject, verb, complete idea):

Combine a sentence fragment with the previous or following sentence.

- People seek counselling. **When they are experiencing difficulty coping with aspects of their lives.** ❌
- People seek counselling **when they are experiencing difficulty coping with aspects of their lives.** ✅

Remove the subordinating conjunction.

- **Although** I am tired and hungry. ❌
- I am tired and hungry. ✅

Finish the thought.

- Don't forget. ❌
- Don't forget **that I like lemon sorbet.** ✅



# COMMA SPLICES

Two independent clauses (or complete sentences) are combined with **only** a comma.

## **Independent clauses:**

- I like lemon sorbet.
- She prefers vanilla ice cream.

## **Comma splice:**

- I like lemon sorbet, she prefers vanilla ice cream. ❌

# FIXING COMMA SPLICE ERRORS

Use a period to separate them into two independent clauses (or complete sentences).

- I like lemon sorbet. **She** prefers vanilla ice cream. ✓

Combine them with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

- I like lemon sorbet, **but** she prefers vanilla ice cream. ✓

Use a semicolon, which is stronger than a comma and can carry the weight of both independent clauses on each side.

- I like lemon sorbet; **she** prefers vanilla ice cream. ✓

# RUN-ON SENTENCES

Two independent clauses (or complete sentences) are joined **without punctuation**.

## Independent clauses:

- I like lemon sorbet.
- She prefers vanilla ice cream.

## Run-ons:

- I like lemon sorbet she prefers vanilla ice cream. ❌
- I like lemon sorbet but she prefers vanilla ice cream. ❌



# FIXING RUN-ON OR FUSED SENTENCES

Use a period to separate them into two independent clauses (or complete sentences).

- I like lemon sorbet. **She** prefers vanilla ice cream.

Add a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

- I like lemon sorbet, **but** she prefers vanilla ice cream.

Use a semicolon, which is stronger than a comma and can carry the weight of both independent clauses on each side.

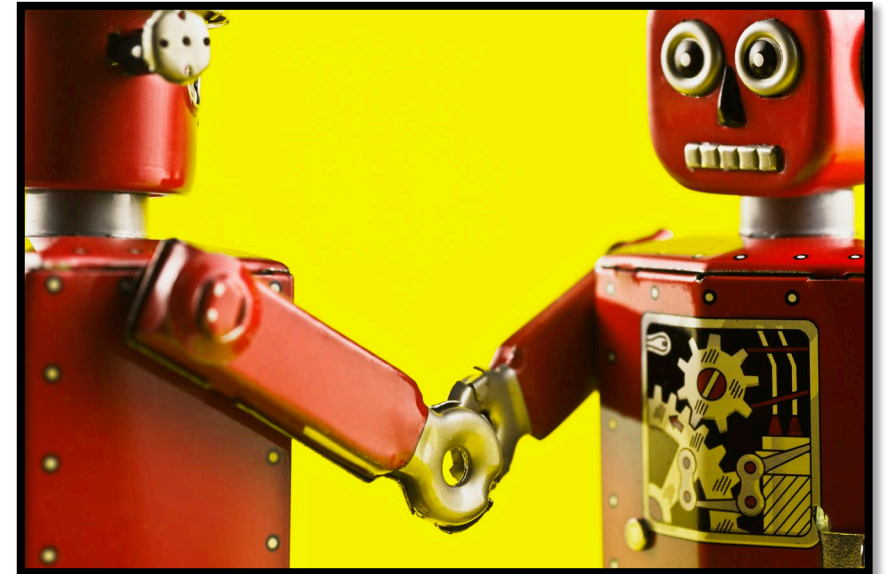
- I like lemon sorbet; **she** prefers vanilla ice cream.

# SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

A verb must agree with its subject in number (singular or plural).

- Singular (only one)
  - Plural (more than one)
- 
- The girl wears glasses. ✓
  - The girls wear glasses. ✓
  - The girl wear glasses. ✗
  - The girls wears glasses. ✗

**Hint:** In most cases, there should be one “s” (and only one “s”) at the end of the subject and verb.



# EXAMPLES OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS

With non-count nouns (singular) ❌

The news this morning **were** more depressing than ever.

Correct ✅

The news this morning **was** more depressing than ever.

With compound subjects when they refer to the same thing (singular)

His friend and lover of twenty years **have** finally proposed to him. ❌

His friend and lover of twenty years **has** finally proposed to him. ✅

With correlative conjunctions (singular) ❌

Neither John nor Fred **have** been invited to the wedding.

Correct ✅

Neither John nor Fred **has** been invited to the wedding.

With collective nouns when they are treated as a single unit (singular)

A steering committee **have** been formed to manage the Heritage Project. ❌

A steering committee **has** been formed to manage the Heritage Project. ✅

# EXAMPLES OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS

With “all,” “any,” “most,” “more,” and “some” referring to a plural noun (plural)

We order sandwiches for our meetings, and any left over **is** given to the office staff. ❌

We order sandwiches for our meetings, and any left over **are** given to the office staff. ✅

With “none” when it refers to a plural noun (plural)

None of the sheep **has** been shorn. ❌

Correct ✅

None of the sheep **have** been shorn.

With mass, quantity, or number when they are treated as plurals (plural)

Forty per cent of the houses in the town **was** severely damaged in the storm. ❌

Forty per cent of the houses in the town **were** severely damaged in the storm. ✅

When several words or phrases separate the subject and the verb

Melon slices of cantaloupe, honeydew, and watermelon **is** a favourite treat of pet rats. ❌

Melon slices of cantaloupe, honeydew, and watermelon **are** a favourite treat of pet rats. ✅

# PRONOUN REFERENCE AGREEMENT

A pronoun replaces a previously mentioned noun (the antecedent).

- It must be clear which noun the pronoun refers to.
- The noun and pronoun must agree in number.
  - Mark and Mike went to **his** favourite restaurant. ❌
    - (Whose favourite restaurant?)
  - Mark and Mike went to **Mike's** favourite restaurant. ✅
  - Mark and Mike went to **their** favourite restaurant. ✅



# EXAMPLES OF PRONOUN REFERENCE ERRORS

When the antecedent to which the pronoun should refer is not clear

Hamza was helping an elderly man cross the road when **he** tripped and fell. (Who tripped and fell?) ❌

When **he** was helping an elderly man cross the road, Hamza tripped and fell. ✅

When the pronoun is too far away from the antecedent

The plague had a profound influence on political and social developments in the fourteenth century: it greatly reduced the population, which created an atmosphere of distress and a sense of crisis. **It** was the direct cause of social and economic conflict. ❌

Correct ✅

The plague had a profound influence on political and social developments in the fourteenth century: it greatly reduced the population, which created an atmosphere of distress and a sense of crisis. **The plague** was therefore the direct cause of social and economic conflict.

When a pronoun is used to refer to an implied but unexpressed noun

I had hoped Lila would call, and I waited all afternoon for **it** to ring. ❌

I had hoped Lila would call, and I waited all afternoon for **the phone** to ring. ✅

# EXAMPLES OF PRONOUN REFERENCE ERRORS

With the vague use of "this," "that," or "which" when referring to the general idea in a preceding clause or sentence

The orchestra rose to its feet and the conductor twirled her baton, **which** delighted the audience. ❌

The orchestra rose to its feet, and **the audience was delighted when** the conductor twirled her baton. ✅

With the vague use of "they" and "you" ❌

In some homes, **they** consider speaking during meals bad manners.

Correct ✅

In some homes, **speaking during meals is** considered bad manners.

With "it says" when referring to information in newspapers, magazines, books, etc.

**It** says that astrogeologists are exploring the possibility of mining asteroids. ❌

**The author** explains that astrogeologists are exploring the possibility of mining asteroids. ✅

# SHIFTS

A sentence should maintain consistency in subject, voice, tense, mood, and pronoun reference.

Sudden shifts should be avoided.

Shifts are allowed if accurately indicated.

- **Yesterday**, Mike **went** to the office, but **today** he **works** from home. ✓
  - A time reference justifies this shift in verb tense.



# EXAMPLES OF SHIFT ERRORS

## Tense ❌

He **picked up** his mail and **started to say** something, but then **leaves** without a word.

## Mood ❌

**Enter** your login information, **press** enter, then **you have to type** in your password.

## Pronoun reference ❌

**Jan** likes to holiday in remote places where **you** don't see another person for days on end.

## Correct ✅

He **picked up** his mail and **started to say** something, but then **left** without a word.

## Correct ✅

**Enter** your login information, **press** enter, then **type** in your password.

## Correct ✅

**Jan** likes to holiday in remote places where **he** doesn't see another person for days on end.

# MISPLACED MODIFIERS

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that **modifies** another element in the sentence.

- Blue sky
- The neighbourhood where I rent
- The conspiracy that many people believe

A **misplaced** modifier is improperly positioned in a sentence, creating confusion or ambiguity regarding what it is modifying.

Place the modifier close to the word or phrase it modifies to ensure clear communication.



# EXAMPLES OF MISPLACED MODIFIERS

## With adverbs of degree or limitation

We **almost drove** the whole way without stopping. ❌

Correct ✓

We drove **almost the whole way** without stopping.

## With modifying phrases

Ann was pleased to meet her great-grandmother for **the first time that she called “Mimzy.”** ❌

Correct ✓

Ann was pleased to meet for the first time **the great-grandmother she called “Mimzy.”**

## With modifying clauses

When crossing the park, I met Mr. Jacobs walking **his dog whose partner had just died.** ❌

Correct ✓

When crossing the park, I met **Mr. Jacobs, whose partner had just died,** walking his dog.

**When it began to stink, the cleaning committee** cleared the garbage from the picnic site. ❌

Correct ✓

The cleaning committee cleared the garbage **from the picnic site when it began to stink.**

# EXAMPLES OF MISPLACED MODIFIERS

## Squinting modifiers ❌

We told him **often** to practice.



## Correct ✓

We told him **to practice often**.

We **often told him** to practice.

## With split infinitives ❌

The director tried to **realistically** make a film about everyday life in the Yukon.

## Correct ✓

The director tried to make **a realistic film** about everyday life in the Yukon.

## With modifying phrases ❌

Miriam had already reported the incident to the Occupational Health and Safety officer **according to Angelo**.

## Correct ✓

Miriam had already reported **the incident according to Angelo** to the Occupational Health and Safety officer.

# DANGLING MODIFIERS

A dangling modifier is a type of misplaced modifier that **occurs when the word or phrase intended to be modified is missing** from the sentence.

The modifier "**dangles**" without a clear noun or pronoun to modify.

To correct a dangling modifier, rephrase the sentence to include the missing element that the modifier should logically modify.



# EXAMPLES OF DANGLING MODIFIERS

## With participle phrases ❌

**Being extremely hot**, the artist called a glassblower must be very careful when handling it.

## With subordinate clauses ❌

**After locking all the doors and windows**, the house felt impenetrable.

## With infinitive phrases ❌

**To get to where he is today**, a lot of people had to be pushed out of his way.

## With elliptical clauses ❌

**While crossing the bridge**, a sudden gust of wind blew his hat off.

## Correct ✓

**Because the molten glass is extremely hot**, the artist called a glassblower must be very careful when handling it.

## Correct ✓

**After locking all the doors and windows**, we felt the house was impenetrable.

## Correct ✓

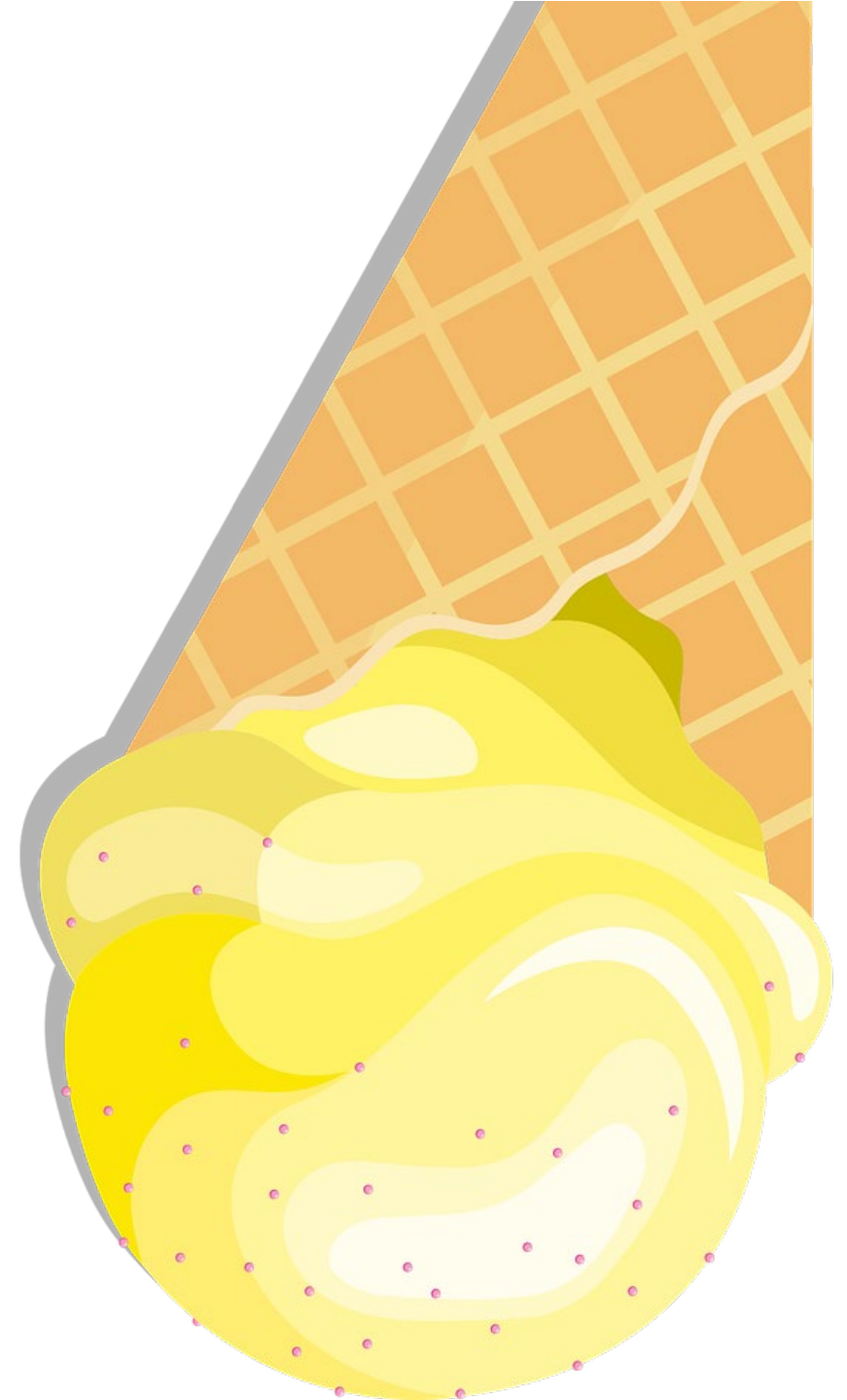
**To get to where he is today**, he had to push a lot of people out of his way.

## Correct ✓

**While he was crossing the bridge**, a sudden gust of wind blew his hat off.

# REVIEW: TYPES OF ERRORS

- 1) Coordination
- 2) Parallelism
- 3) Comparison
- 4) Subordination
- 5) Sentence fragments
- 6) Comma splices
- 7) Run-ons
- 8) Subject-verb agreement
- 9) Pronoun reference agreement
- 10) Shifts
- 11) Misplaced modifiers
- 12) Dangling modifiers



**ANY QUESTIONS?**

VISIT THE ENGLISH GRAMMAR  
HANDBOOK

<https://www.athabascau.ca/writing-site/english-grammar-handbook/sentences-grammar/common-sentence-faults.html>