

The image features the Wiley logo at the top left. The background is a close-up photograph of green wheat stalks against a bright blue sky with soft, white clouds. The wheat stalks are in sharp focus in the foreground, while the sky is slightly blurred in the background.

# WILEY

ENABLING DISCOVERY | POWERING EDUCATION | SHAPING WORKFORCES

# Scientific Writing Tips for Non-Native English Speakers

Dr. Radhika Shridharan  
Publisher  
Publishing Development  
Health Sciences

# Language errors

---

- Grammar
- Readability
- Style
- Vocabulary

# POLL

**Which is why we conclude that the EV-Fingerprint test reduced unnecessary prostate biopsies.**

Is this sentence OK?



Yes, it looks fine to me.



No, it doesn't make sense.

# Sentence fragments

---

Sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence that is punctuated like a complete sentence. Sentence fragments cannot stand on their own.

Fragments can occur because of:

- Missing subjects and verbs
- Afterthoughts
- Abandoned clause
- Words meant only to support or describe another idea
- Typographical errors or omission of words

**Ensure that your sentence is complete and makes sense on its own!**

# Examples

---

**Problem:** The fragment does not have a subject.

**Incorrect:**

Used 10% lignocaine spray via oral cavity. (Who used?)

Provide the missing subject.

**Revised:**

The anesthetist used 10% lignocaine spray via oral cavity.

# Examples

---

**Problem:** The fragment does not have a verb.

## **Incorrect:**

The patient suffering from weakness and shortness of breath. (What happened to the patient?)

Add the missing verb.

## **Revised:**

The patient **is/was** suffering from weakness and shortness of breath.

The patient suffering from weakness and shortness of breath **was admitted to the hospital.**

# Examples

---

**Problem:** The fragment was added as an afterthought.

## Incorrect:

There are several risk factors for diabetes. For example, family history, ethnicity, weight, and blood lipid levels. (An example of what? Is the example doing anything?)

Use comma to complete the sentence.

## Revised:

There are several risk factors for diabetes, **for example**, family history, ethnicity, weight, and blood lipid levels.

# Examples

---

**Problem:** Abandoned clause.

**Incorrect:**

When we discontinued alprazolam. (What happened when the treatment was stopped?)

Use comma to complete the sentence.

**Revised:**

When we discontinued alprazolam, the patient stopped experiencing the adverse effects such as drowsiness.



# Examples

---

**Problem:** Words meant to support or describe another sentence.

**Incorrect:**

Medication was stopped. If the symptoms had subsided. (What happened if the symptoms subsided?)

Connect the two sentences without a comma. Or, add the fragment as an introductory phrase and connect the two sentences with a comma.

**Revised:**

Medication was stopped **if** the symptoms had subsided.

**If the symptoms had subsided,** medication was stopped.

## POLL

**The patient fell on the street, he had a medical history of hematoma and vascular dementia.**

Is this sentence OK?

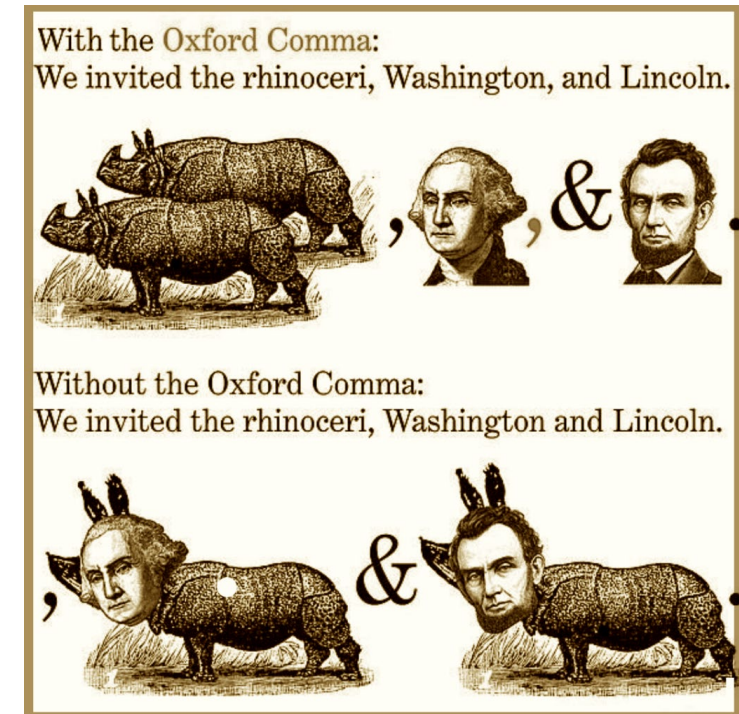
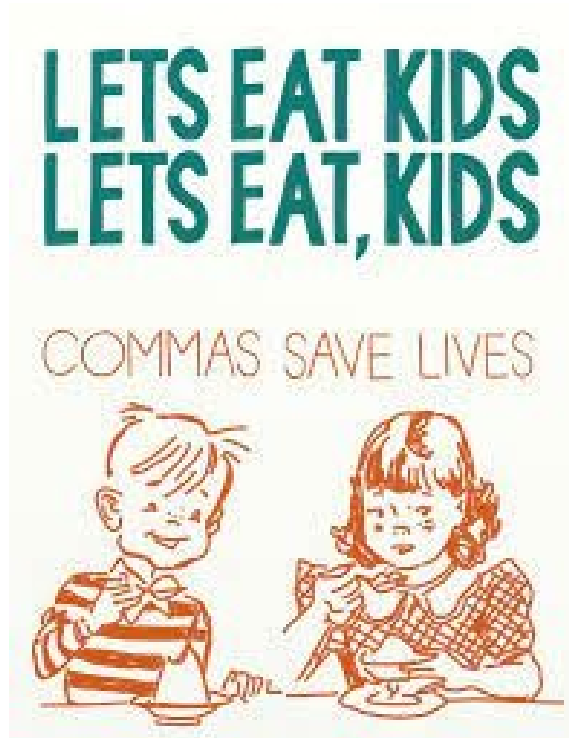


Yes, it looks fine to me.



No, something is amiss.

# Punctuation



# Comma splice

**To comma, or not comma, that is the question!**



**A comma splice occurs when two complete sentences or independent clauses are joined with a comma.**

**Don't join two complete sentences using a comma!**

# Examples

## Incorrect:

We recruited 500 patients and conducted the blood test, the results were still unreliable.

## Use a period:

We recruited 500 patients and conducted the blood test. The results were still unreliable.

## Use a semicolon:

We recruited 500 patients and conducted the blood test; the results were still unreliable.

## Use a comma and one of the FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so) conjunction to connect the two sentences:

We recruited 500 patients and conducted the blood test, but the results were still unreliable.

## NOTE:

Never try to join two sentences with a comma followed by a conjunctive adverb. Use a semi-colon or a period in front of the second independent clause:

- ✗ The patient was offered immunotherapy, however he refused it.
- ✓ The patient was offered immunotherapy; however, he refused it.
- ✓ The patient was offered immunotherapy. However, he refused it.

# POLL

---

**About 85% of lung cancers are NSCLC one of the subtypes is adenocarcinoma.**

**Is this sentence OK?**



Yes, it looks fine to me.



No, something is amiss.

# Run-on/fused sentences

---

Run-on or fused sentences occur when two complete sentences/independent clauses are joined together with no connecting word or punctuation.

Correct the fused sentences as you would correct the comma splice.

# Examples

---

## Incorrect:

About 85% of lung cancers are NSCLC one of the subtypes is adenocarcinoma.

## Revised:

About 85% of lung cancers are NSCLC. One of the subtypes is adenocarcinoma.

About 85% of lung cancers are NSCLC; one of the subtypes is adenocarcinoma.

About 85% of lung cancers are NSCLC, and one of the subtypes is adenocarcinoma.



# POLL

---

**The patient was referred to a specialist  
with stomach pain.**

**Is this sentence OK?**



Yes, it looks fine to me.



No, it doesn't make sense.

# Misplaced and dangling modifiers

---

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that adds to the meaning of, changes, clarifies, or describes another word, phrase, or clause.

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies.

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence.

**Place the modifier next to the word/phrase it describes!**

# Examples

---

**Incorrect:** The patient was referred to the physician with stomach pain. (Did the physician have stomach pain?)

**Revised:** The patient with stomach pain was referred to the physician.

**Incorrect:** Waking up in the hospital, the surroundings looked blurry. (Who is waking up in the hospital?)

**Revised:** As the patient was waking up in the hospital, the surroundings looked blurry.

**Revised:** The surroundings looked blurry as the patient was waking up in the hospital.

# POLL

---

**Notice in the park:**

- No loitering
- Don't smoke
- Jumping not allowed on the benches
- Parking not permitted

**Does this notice in the park read well?**



Yes, it looks fine to me.



No, it doesn't make sense.

# Faulty parallelism

Faulty parallelism occurs when a list or sentence does not use the same types of words to describe similar ideas.

**Incorrect:** The patients were asked to lie down, close their eyes, and then **inhaling** the anesthetic. (List of words that do not match)

**Revised:** The patients were asked to lie down, close their eyes and then **inhale** the anesthetic.

**Incorrect:** The patient could **undergo either** a surgery or continue chemotherapy. (Conjunctions that do not correlate)

**Revised:** The patient could **either undergo** a surgery or continue chemotherapy.

**Incorrect:** Her study signifies the antitumor activity of Nivolumab and helps in improving targeted therapy. (Uncoordinated conjunctions)

**Revised:** Her study signifies the antitumor activity of Nivolumab and improves targeted therapy.

# POLL

**First, we searched PubMed database, then one author selects the studies for review.**

**Is this sentence OK?**



Yes, it looks fine to me.



No, it doesn't make sense.

# Sentence shifts

Sentence shifts occur due to changes in tense, number or person. Shifts happen when a sentence begins in one way and ends in another.

**Incorrect:** Prior to chemotherapy, the oncologist **examined** patient and **reviews** the treatment history. (Shift in tense)

**Correct:** Prior to chemotherapy, the oncologist **examined** patient and **reviewed** the treatment history.

**Incorrect: Each participant** was asked to submit their psychological evaluation the next day. (Shift in number)

**Revised: All participants** were asked to submit their psychological evaluation the next day.

**Revised: Each participant** was asked to submit **his/her** psychological evaluation the next day.

**Incorrect:** Before **one** prescribes the medicines, **they** should check the pulse. (Shift in person)

**Revised:** Before **one** prescribes the medicine, **one** should check the pulse.

**Revised:** Before **they** prescribe the medicine, **they** should check the pulse.

## POLL

**Psycho-oncologists are among the most sought-after specializations.**

**Is this sentence OK?**



Yes, it looks fine to me.



No, it doesn't make sense.



# Faulty comparison

---

Faulty comparisons occur when two things are incorrectly compared.

**Incorrect:** Diagnosis of dementia is **easier than** schizophrenia. (Comparing two incomparable things)

**Revised:** Diagnosis of dementia is **easier than that of** schizophrenia.

**Incorrect:** Diagnosis of viral infections is more difficult. (Than what?)

**Revised:** Diagnosis of viral infections is more difficult **than treating the disease.**

# Other errors

---

**Wordiness:** Use of too many/unnecessary words that make a sentence or paragraph long and confusing.  
(Ex: 'A number of' can be replaced by 'Many').

**Redundancy:** Unnecessarily repetition of words to convey the same idea.  
(Ex: Collaborated together, Plus in addition, Red in color, Summarize briefly)

**Sentence length:** Simplify sentences and break it into parts where necessary. Use compound sentences to (i) complete your ideas, (ii) make your concepts clear to the reader.

# Tips

- Place the subject and the verb as close together as possible in a sentence.

Example: Several variables to measure the effect of the therapy, some more effective and precise than others, were used.

**Revised:** Several variables were used to measure the effect of the therapy, some more effective and precise than others.

- Place the subject in the topic position to highlight the focus of the topic discussed (Placement of topic sentence).

- Mention old information first followed by new information (Cohesion, Coherence, and Emphasis).

Example: Pancreatic cancer is associated with poor prognosis if not diagnosed early (old information). Based on recent preclinical findings, cancer-related mRNA and miRNA expression changes occur during early stages of pancreatic cancer (new information).

- Use passive voice judiciously.
- Use transitions to connect paragraphs (Example: Additionally, However, Therefore, Besides, Finally, Furthermore etc.).
- Reporting verbs (Neutral: demonstrate, show, describe; Tentative: suggest, hypothesize; Strong: argue, emphasize).

# Tips

---

- Structure – Not just IMRaD, but the quantity and quality of details presented.
- Title: direct, accurate, and informative.
- Clarity of the core ideas, take home message.
- Flow of ideas, ideas presented methodically or in a sequential manner, use of sections and subsections.
- Focus on a particular topic, justify the importance of research in Introduction and re-emphasize it in later sections.
- Build a logical argument – hypothesize in Introduction followed by detailed interpretation in Discussion with comparison to previous studies.
- Research approach – rationale for study framework/design in Introduction or Methods and highlighting the limitations in the Discussion section.
- Avoid long and repetitive results – explain the main patterns and direct the reader towards tables and figures. Use subheadings to help the readers understand the details of the significant findings.
- Novelty – present the broader perspective and importance of the study in the Abstract and Introduction and describe the implications/practical applications in the Discussion/Conclusions.

# Language and presentation

- Make sure you set the language on your word processing software to English.
  - Carry out at least one spell-check.
  - Ask a colleague in your field to proof-read your manuscript.
  - Ask a native or fluent English speaker to proof-read your manuscript.
- Editors and reviewers are impressed by a well-presented manuscript**
- Be **consistent** with heading/subheading format. Use the Style function of word-processing software.
  - Be consistent with formatting in the text. Certain scientific terms (e.g., genes, species names, etc.) require italics.
  - Ensure the manuscript is free from typos and careless mistakes.
  - Be consistent in formatting in figures/graphics.
  - Ensure **abbreviations are defined** in the first instance, and then used consistently thereafter. Note, the abstract should stand-alone.

# The A,B,C of good scientific writing

## Be accurate

- Avoid vague language and be precise/specific
- Say **exactly** what you mean and avoid over/under statements

## Be brief

- Make the discussion concise but informative. Focus on the important and unexpected results. Not on small details.
- Use as few words as possible while retaining meaning without sacrificing scientific details

## Be clear

- Use simple words and avoid jargon
- Use verb tense consistently throughout the paper
- Where possible, use verbs instead of noun forms

The  
ABC of  
writing  
style





# Wiley Editing Services

From preparation to promotion...

## Article Preparation Services

*Expert help to ensure your manuscript is ready for submission*

Comprehensive editing, translation, formatting, and design services to assist you with preparing your article to save you time and allow you to submit your manuscript with confidence.

## Article Promotion Services

*Extend the reach and impact of your research*

Professional video, design, and writing services to create shareable video abstracts, infographics, conference posters, lay summaries, and research news stories to help get your work the attention it deserves.



# WILEY



PROPRIETARY & CONFIDENTIAL