Sentence Review Checklist

After you have written a draft and revised it to get all your ideas down in the desired organization, that's when to start your careful proofreading. To have a strong foundation for any later proofreading, focus first on having complete sentences in each paragraph.

Here is a checklist you can use to review each sentence to determine if the necessary grammatical elements are present. It can seem like a lot of steps and questions at first, and they might even seem obvious, but we have to consciously focus our attention on something to really notice its presence or absence in a sentence. If you do these steps often enough, they can become good proofreading habits.

Verbs (V)

❑ Is there an action? (= action verb or state-of-being verb)

❑ When is the action happening?

❑ Is the action finished, ongoing, or always true?

❑ Does the verb act on something or work alone?

Nouns

All Nouns (person/place/thing/idea)

❑ How many? (One, more than one, or non-count?)

❑ Is it general (a, an) or specific (the, my, etc.)?

❑ Is a pronoun getting an action done to it? (him/her/them/us/me/it)?

Subjects

❑ Who or what is doing the action?

❑ Is the subject clearly stated for each verb, so the reader will understand?

Subject and Verb Agreement

❑ Is the verb in the right form for the subject?

Sentence Parts for Punctuation Placement

In the following, S means subject, V means verb, *sub* means subordinator, and the combination of abbreviations and punctuation are to show sentence structures

❑ Is there someone/something doing an action? = a clause = SV

❑ Is the clause necessary to the sentence, and does it answer "Who/What does what and when?" = an independent clause = SV.

❑ Is there a subordinator at the beginning of the clause? (e.g., *which, as, although, while, because,* etc.) = a dependent clause. If it is at the beginning of the sentence, then this is the structure: *sub* SV, SV.

Punctuation Placement to Avoid Fragments and Run-Ons

❑ Is there an introductory word or more before the subject of the first independent clause? Put a comma before that subject: **Introduction,** SV.

❑ Is one independent clause followed by another? Two can be joined into one sentence in several ways, for sentence variety:

- a comma and a **coordinating conjunction**: SV**,** {**FANBOYS**} SV.
- a semicolon: SV**;** SV.
- a semicolon with a **transitional expression**, such has *however, therefore, as a result,* etc.:

   SV**; Transitional Expression,** SV.

   SV**;** S**, Transitional Expression,** V.

❑ Is there anything between subject and verb? Put commas before and after it:

   S**, phrase/dependent clause,** V.

❑ Is a word, phrase, or dependent clause hanging onto the last independent clause? Is the dependent clause not working as an adverb? Put a comma after the last independent clause: SV**, phrase/dependent clause**.

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