

PSSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GUIDE

GRADE 8

Types of Phrases

Prepositional Phrases

[preposition + NOUN] Phrases that begin with a **preposition** and include the object of the preposition (a noun) (ex: **under** the table). A prepositional phrase can be used as an adjective or an adverb in a sentence.

Adjective Phrase – **[usually must be right next to the noun it's describing]** A **prepositional phrase** that describes a noun or a pronoun.

Adverb Phrase – **[usually can be moved in the sentence]** A **prepositional phrase** that describes a verb, an adjective, or an adverb.

Verbal Phrases

Phrases that contain verbs but are used as a different part of speech.

Participial Phrase – [-ing, -ed, DESCRIBES] A verb form that is used as an **adjective** in a sentence. (Participles can be present or past participles. Present end in -ing, and past participles *usually* end in -d or -ed.)

Infinitive – [to + VERB] A verb form that is used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. Most infinitives begin with **to**. (ex: To succeed is my goal. I plan to take the cat to obedience class.)

Gerund - [-ing, acts as a NOUN, can be replaced by a pronoun] - A verb phrase that contains an -ing word and functions as a noun in a sentence.

Noun—person, place, thing or idea

Verb—an action or state of being

Adjective—modifies a noun or pronoun

Pronoun—takes the place of a noun

Adverb—modifies a verb, adjective or other adverb

Appositive Phrases

A phrase placed beside another noun or pronoun to identify it. It's like saying the same thing twice. (ex: Luke, a student at FMS, is in the band.)

Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

A modifier is a word or group of words that describes, clarifies, or gives more detail about a concept.

A **dangling modifier** is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence.

Having arrived late for school, a written excuse was needed. (*Who* arrived late and needed an excuse?)

Corrected: Having arrived late for school, Billy needed a written excuse.

A **misplaced modifier** occurs when the subject of the modifier is unclear.

The art dealer sold a painting to the man in a black frame. (Makes it seem like the man is in a frame)

Corrected: The art dealer sold a painting in a black frame to the man.

Punctuation Marks

Abbreviations

Many abbreviations are followed by a period. Ex: Mr. / Mrs. / A.M. / Ave. / Dr. / T.S. Eliot

Exceptions:

Two-letter state abbreviations followed by the zip code do not need periods. Ex: Pittsburgh, PA 15238.

Acronyms do not need periods. Ex: CIA / DVD / NFL

Abbreviations for units of measurement do not need periods, except for in. (ex: lb / kg / ft)

Commas

Items in a series: A series is three or more items written one after another. The items may be single words or groups of words. Separate each item in the series with a comma. (ex.: They nominated one candidate, voted for her, and installed her in office.)

Coordinating Adjectives: Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives immediately before a noun. (ex.: Jupiter is a large, strange planet.)

Compound sentences: Use a comma before and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet [conjunctions = FANBOYS] when they join independent clauses (whole sentences) in a compound sentence. (ex.: The twins will see their favorite baby sitter, for their parents are going out.)

Nonessential Phrases: Use commas before and after phrases and clauses that are NOT essential to the basic meaning of the sentence. (ex.: My sister, listening to her radio, did not hear me.)

Introductory Elements: Use a comma after an introductory phrase, two or more introductory prepositional phrases, or an introductory adverb clause.

Examples:

Introductory phrase: Beginning a new school year, Zelda felt somewhat nervous.

Prepositional phrases: At the bottom of the hill, you will see the baseball field.

Adverb clauses: After I finish my homework, I will go to the park.

Interrupters: Use commas before and after expressions that interrupt the sentence when they're not needed to understand the basic meaning of the sentence.

Examples:

Appositives: Carrie, my cousin, is here today.

Direct address: Ben, please answer the doorbell.

Parenthetical expressions: Carl, for example, prefers football to baseball.

Introductory elements: Yes, you may borrow my bike.

Conventional situations: Use commas in certain conventional situations, such as dates, addresses, and letters.

Examples:

Dates: She was born on January 26, 1981, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Addresses: A letter dated November 23, 1888, was found in the old house at 980 West Street, Davenport, Iowa.

Salutation of a friendly letter: Dear Dad,

Closing of a letter: Sincerely,

Semicolons

Compound sentences: Use a semicolon between the parts of a compound sentence if they are not joined by a conjunction (FANBOYS). (ex.: Jimmy took Mother's suitcase upstairs; he left Dad's in the car.)

Complex Compound sentences: A semicolon may be used (rather than a comma) to separate the parts of a compound sentence if there are commas within the parts. (ex.: I wrote to Ann, Beth, and Meg; and Jean notified Terry and Sue.)

Items in a series: Semicolons are used between items in a series when the items contain commas. (ex.: He was born on September 24, 1983; began school on September 4, 1988; and graduated from high school on May 17, 2001.)

Sentences joined with a transition: Use a semicolon between independent clauses that are joined by a transitional expression. (ex.: English was Bob's hardest subject; accordingly, he spent more time studying it than any other subject.)

Colons

List of items: Use a colon before a list of items, especially after expressions such as the following and as follows. (ex.: Jack's pocket contained the following items: a knife, half an apple, a piece of gum, and two rusty nails.)

Conventional Situations: Use a colon between the hour and minute when writing the time, after the salutation of a business letter, between a title and subtitle, and between the chapter and verse of Biblical references.

Use a colon before a statement that explains or clarifies the statement before it. (ex.: Aaron felt that he had accomplished something worthwhile: He had written his first short story.)

Apostrophes

There are three main reasons to use apostrophes: (1) to form the possessive case of nouns and some pronouns, (2) to indicate omitted letters or numbers in contractions, and (3) to form some plurals.

Apostrophes with possessives: The possessive case of a noun or pronoun shows ownership. To see if you need to make a possessive, turn the phrase around and make it an "of the..." phrase. (ex.: The student's book [the book of the student], The cat's toy [the toy of the cat]).

To make a noun or pronoun possessive using an apostrophe, follow these guidelines:

- **add 's to the singular form of the word (even if it ends in -s):** (ex.: the girl's doll, James's folder [James' folder is also satisfactory.] For plural, proper nouns that are possessive, use an apostrophe after the 's': "The Youkers' children were at the game."
- **add 's to the plural forms that do not end in -s:** (ex.: the men's department, the deer's field)
- **add ' to the end of plural nouns that end in -s:** (ex.: two puppies' toys, four friends' pictures)
- **add 's to the end of compound words:** (ex.: my sister-in-law's house)
- **add 's to the last noun to show joint possession of an object:** (Alyssa and Bill's dog)

Do NOT use an apostrophe with possessive personal pronouns. (ex.: yours, mine, ours, theirs, his, hers, its)

Use an apostrophe to form the possessive case of some indefinite pronouns. (ex.: someone's pencil, no one's fault, anybody's guess)

Use an apostrophe to form contractions. (ex.: I'm, o'clock, they'd, it's)

You do NOT usually use apostrophes to form plurals, but there are some exceptions. Use an apostrophe to form the plurals of letters, numbers, symbols, and words referred to as words. (ex.: two *d's* in the word *hidden*, the 1920's, \$'s)

Quotation Marks

Put quotation marks before and after another person's exact words.

Katie stated, "Yes, I did study for the test."

Capitalize the first letter of a direct quote when the quoted material is a complete sentence.

If a direct quotation is interrupted mid-sentence, do not capitalize the second part of the quotation.

"Although I studied," Katie said, "there were still some questions that I couldn't answer."

Periods and commas go inside closing quotation marks.

"The test was very difficult," Katie complained. "Yes," Kyle agreed. "It definitely was challenging."

An exclamation point or a question mark is placed inside the quotation marks when it punctuates the quotation; it is placed outside when it punctuates the main sentence.

"When is our next test?" asked Katie.

Did the teacher really say, "Finish this by tomorrow"?

Quotation marks are also used to punctuate titles of songs, poems, short stories, episodes of TV shows, chapters of books, and articles found in magazines, newspapers, or encyclopedias.

Single quotation marks are used to punctuate a quotation within a quotation.

I never read "The Raven!"

Ellipses

Use an ellipsis when omitting a word, phrase, line, paragraph, or more from a quoted passage.

Full quotation: "Today, after hours of careful thought, we vetoed the bill."

With ellipsis: "Today ... we vetoed the bill."

Use an ellipsis to express hesitation, changes of mood, suspense, or thoughts trailing off.

Examples: I don't know ... I'm not sure.

Pride is one thing, but what happens if she ...?

He said, "I ... really don't ... understand this."

Dashes

Use a dash to indicate an added emphasis, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought or speech.

Examples: Ms. Alonzo—she just left—will be one of the judges of the talent show.
At the end of the novel, the main character—but I don't want to ruin the surprise.

Hyphens

Use a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line.

Examples: Lisa wrote her science report on the tyrannosaurs, the largest meat-eating dinosaur.

Use a hyphen with compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and with fractions used as adjectives.

Examples: thirty-five students, one-third pint of milk

Use a hyphen with the prefixes *all-*, *ex-*, *great-*, and *self-* and with the suffixes *-elect* and *-free* and with all prefixes before a proper noun or proper adjective.

Examples: all-star, ex-principal, president-elect, mid-September, pro-American

Hyphenate a compound adjective when it precedes the noun it modifies.

Examples: a well-worn book, a small-town girl

Brackets

Use brackets to enclose an explanation or added information within quoted or parenthetical material.

Examples: At the press conference, Detective Stamos stated, "We are following up on several leads regarding the [Mills Sporting Goods] robbery."

During the Revolutionary War, Mohawk leader Joseph Brant (his Indian name was Thayendanegea [1742-1807]) became a colonel in the British army.

Parentheses

Use parentheses to enclose material that is added to a sentence but is not considered of major importance.

Examples: Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948) led India's struggle for independence from British rule.

Mrs. Matsuo served us the sushi (soo' shē) that she had prepare.

NOTE: If material in parentheses ends a sentence, the period goes after the parentheses.

Example: He bought a new car (a Ferrari).

Periods go inside parentheses only if an entire sentence is inside the parentheses.

Example: Please read my essay. (You'll be impressed.)

Active and Passive voice

Active Voice: The subject DOES the action of the verb. Example: The alien landed the spaceship.

Passive Voice: The subject RECEIVES the action of the verb. Example:

In passive voice, the verb always has a form of "to be" as a helping verb and if there is an object, the preposition "by" will be in the sentence. Example: The spaceship was navigated by aliens.

Watch out for shifts in voice

INCORRECT: The **boys** liked basketball, but **baseball** was also enjoyed by them. (The subject shifts from boys to baseball.)

Active voice

Passive Voice

CORRECT: The boys like basketball, but they also liked basketball. (The subject remains consistent throughout the sentence.)

Active voice

Active voice

Verb Mood

Indicative

The indicative mood expresses a fact or opinion.

I am going to the school dance.

I think school dances are fun.

Imperative

The imperative mood expresses a command or a direct request. (A hint to recognizing this mood is that the subject 'you' is implied in the sentence, but not stated:

(You) Go to the school dance!"

Interrogative

The interrogative mood asks a question that requests an action or asks for information. In this mood the main verb comes **before** the subject.

Will you go to the school dance with me?

Conditional

The conditional mood expresses a state that **depends** on something else to happen. One hint to recognizing this mood is the common use of the words might, should, could, and would.

I would go to the dance if I could get a ride.

Subjunctive

The subjunctive mood most often expresses a wish, doubt, imaginary situation, or anything else contrary to fact.

NOTE #1: When using the third person singular (he, she, it) in the subjunctive mood, there is no 'es' or 's' at the end of the verb.

*The boy asked that **she go** to the dance with him.*

NOTE #2: The verb "to be" is used differently with this mood.

In the present tense, the verb is always **be**, not the normal use of *am*, *is*, or *are*.

*May **he be** happy at the dance!*

In the past tense, the verb is always **were**, never *was*.

*I wish I **were** going to the school dance.*

Writing Tips

Argument writing:

Author's Purpose: to argue a point and convince the reader.

Should consist of the Following:

- Introduction (hook the reader, restate prompt, state claim, introduce reasons [optional])
- 3 body paragraphs
 - First argument with arguments and evidence
 - Second argument with arguments and evidence
 - **Briefly** acknowledge counterclaim and have **STRONG** rebuttal
- Conclusion—Restate your claim and your arguments to sum up your writing

ARGUMENTS AND EVIDENCE TRANSITIONS

For example, Yet another example... For instance, Next, Not only...but also... Surely, With this in mind,	Equally important is... Most convincingly, Indeed, Another key point... In fact, The truth is... Also,	Take, for instance, the case of... Additionally, In addition, Furthermore, In a similar way, Similarly,	Finally, Consequently, As a consequence, Moreover, It must not be forgotten that...
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COUNTERCLAIM/REBUTTAL TRANSITIONS

It is true that...however...therefore Certainly...but Admittedly...on the other hand...so	Of course...nevertheless...as a result Sure...however...in addition
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Expository (informational) writing

Author's Purpose: to explain or tell about something.

Should consist of the Following:

- Introduction—Hook the reader, include thesis statement
- 3 body paragraphs
 - First idea with evidence/examples
 - Second idea with evidence/examples
 - Third idea with evidence/examples
- Conclusion—Restate your explanations to sum up your writing

1ST PARAGRAPH TRANSITIONS:	2 ND /3 RD PARAGRAPH TRANSITIONS:	CONCLUSION TRANSITIONS:
first of all, most important, to begin with, to start with	also, another reason, equally important, furthermore, in addition, in fact, last of all, likewise, moreover, of greatest importance, undoubtedly	all in all, in summary, on the whole, to conclude, to summarize

Narrative Writing

Author's Purpose: to entertain the reader. Use dialogue!

Elements of a narrative:

1. **Exposition**—This is the beginning of the story – the introduction of the characters, inciting incidents, the establishment of the setting, etc.
2. **Rising Action**—These are the events which lead up to the main action – usually a series of events which build suspense, add drama and develop characters.
3. **Climax**—The climax is the most exciting part of the story. Often a turning point or pivotal moment in the story, the climax is usually the main action or the biggest moment of decision for the protagonist.
4. **Falling Action**—These are the events which follow on from the climax. Usually the falling action deals with the aftereffects of the climax, or the resolution for the characters.
5. **Resolution**—This is the ending of the story. Loose ends should be tied up, conflicts resolved and some sort of conclusion should be reached.

TIME/SEQUENCE TRANSITIONS			SUSPENSE TRANSITIONS	
At first	For the time being	Simultaneously	All of a sudden	Instantly
It all started...	In turn	Finally	Abruptly	Little by little
One day	and done	As a result	At once	Out of the blue
First of all	Later on	That night	Before I knew it	Shockingly
Earlier	Next	Before dark	just then	Without warning
At the same time	Meanwhile	Not long after	in a flash	
		When all was said		

Text Dependent Analysis

Author's Purpose: to respond to a passage in order to **prove** that you understood what was read. You **MUST** use text evidence (direct quotes or paraphrasing from the passage), and you **MUST analyze (explain)** the text evidence!

Should consist of the following:

- Introduction—restate the prompt
- 1-3 body paragraphs (depending on the prompt)—You should include **at least 2** pieces of text evidence!
- Conclusion—restate the prompt and summarize

Restate key words from the prompt.

AnsWER the whole question.

Cite evidence directly from the text using direct quotes or paraphrasing.

Explain each piece of evidence.

Sum it up, using more key words from the prompt

Text evidence Sentence Starters		
According to the text...	The author stated	Based on what I read...
On the... paragraph I read...	When the author said...I inferred...	From the reading I know that...
After I read...I concluded that...		
Analysis signal phrases		
This shows that...	This suggests that...	This means...
This illustrates...	This reveals...	