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SSC - 245

Phrases

Overview: Phrases are groups of related words that do not form a complete sentence. They act as parts of speech within sentences. In other words, phrases are groups of words that serve as nouns, adjectives or adverbs in sentences. Because sentences are made up of phrases and clauses, understanding these basic elements of sentence structure will help you create writing that is clear, concise, stylistically interesting and free of errors such as sentence fragments. Here you will find a basic overview of the different types of phrases and how they function within sentences.

An **infinitive phrase** contains a verb in its infinitive form (starting with "to"), and its modifiers or complements. Infinitive phrases can function as nouns, adjectives or adverbs.

Examples:

1) Shannon likes _____ .

2) Exercising everyday is one way _____

The infinitive phrase in the first example functions as a noun and is the object of the sentence. In the second example, the infinitive phrase functions as an adjective modifying _____ and in the third sentence the infinitive phrase functions as an adverb modifying "take."

A **participial phrase** contains a participle and its modifiers or complements. Remember that participles are verbs that end in _____ or _____ (except for some irregular verbs). Participial phrases function as adjectives within a sentence.

Examples:

1) The student _____ raised his hand to answer the question.

2) The sculpture, _____ is no longer valuable.

Notice that the participial phrase in the second example is set off by commas. This is because it is a _____

Practice: Now look at your own writing. Choose a few sentences and try to figure out what types of phrases they contain. You will notice, from your writing as well as the examples given here, that some phrases also have other phrases within them. Understanding phrases and how they function within sentences will help you thoughtfully create sentences whose meanings are clear and precise. Try using a variety of phrases within your sentences to help vary your sentence structure for more interesting writing.