Descriptive Writing
Lesson 5

Student objectives:
I. Grammar
   What are adverbs again?
      Adverbs: A review
      Clauses
      Adverb clauses
      Adjective clauses
   How can I use adverb and adjective clauses to make my sentences more interesting?
      Compound sentences
      Complex sentences
   Combining sentences using dependent clauses
II. Figurative Language
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III. Writing
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Grammar

What are adverbs again?

Adverbs: A review

The word adverb gives you a clue as to what it does in a sentence. The “ad” can remind you that it sometimes describes adjectives. The “verb” can remind you that it sometimes describes verbs. Finally, adverbs modify other adverbs as well. To put it another way, adverbs describe or modify adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs.

Adverbs in a sentence usually show when, how often, where, to what degree, or the manner in which something happens. Look at the following examples to see how adverbs add detail and precision to a sentence.

Example 1: The incredibly small dog has an enormously loud bark.
   The adverb incredibly modifies the adjective small. It helps the reader to understand what degree of small the dog is. Additionally, the adverb enormously modifies the adjective loud, describing what degree of loud the dog’s bark is.

Example 2: The young child walked clumsily across the grass before falling down.
   The adverb clumsily modifies the verb walked. It helps the reader understand the manner in which the girl walked.
**Example 3:** The turtle moved **dreadfully slow** while racing the hare. The adverb **slow** modifies the verb **moved**. It helps the reader to understand the **manner in which** the turtle moved. The adverb **dreadfully** modifies the adverb **slow**. It helps the reader to understand **to what degree** of slow the turtle moved.

(Careful: You may have noticed that many adverbs end in -ly. However, not all adverbs end in -ly. Look for the adjectives and verbs to help you identify the adverbs.)

Now You Try It
Underline the adverbs in the following sentences and circle the words that the adverbs describe.

Example: The **terribly smelly** trash can was taken outside.

1. The bright red car whizzed by my house.
2. My mom smiled mischievously as she hid my favorite blanket.
3. Walking very slowly, the little girl watched the ball roll over the grass.

**Clauses**

A **clause** is a group of words that has a subject and a predicate. There are two types of clauses: an **independent clause** and a **dependent clause**.

An **independent clause** has a subject and predicate and can stand on its own as a complete sentence.

**Example:** The bark was loud.

*Bark* is the subject, and *was loud* is the predicate. The sentence expresses a complete thought.

A **dependent clause** is a group of words that also has a subject and a predicate but **does not** express a complete thought. A **dependent clause** cannot stand on its own; it relies on an **independent clause** to make complete sense. **Dependent clauses** can function as adjectives and adverbs in a sentence.

**Example:** Whose bark was loud.

*Bark* is still the subject and *was loud* is still the predicate, but this idea does not express a complete thought. It needs an independent clause to make complete sense.

**Example:** We walked by the dog **whose bark was loud**.

*Now* it is a complete idea!
Adverb Clauses

Instead of using a single adverb, a writer may choose to use a group of words to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. This group of words, which contains a subject and a predicate, is called an adverb clause. The adverb clause functions the same way as a single adverb in a sentence by telling how, when, where, to what degree, or under what condition.

An adverb clause is introduced by a subordinating conjunction. The subordinating conjunction is what makes the adverb clause a dependent clause. Remember, a dependent clause needs an independent clause to become a complete thought.

Common subordinating conjunctions include after, although, as, as if, as long as, as soon as, because, before, if, since, though, unless, until, when, where, and while.

Example: Before I eat breakfast, I take a long walk outside in the morning air. “Before eating breakfast” helps the reader understand when I take long walks. The adverb clause is modifying the verb take in the previous sentence. You may notice that the clause does not come immediately before or after the verb in the sentence.

Note: Adverb clauses can come first or last in a sentence. If they come first, they act like an introductory clause. This means that a comma is placed after the dependent clause.

Now You Try It

1. Underline the adverb clause in the following sentence, and circle the word that the adverb describes. (Remember, the clause describes a verb, adjective or another adverb in the sentence.)

I took the garbage can outside as soon as I came home.

2. Add an adverb clause to the following sentences to show when, how, where or under what condition something happens. Be sure the adverb clause has a subject and a predicate.

a. I am going to ride my bike ____________________________.

b. ____________________________ I am going to ride my bike with my friend, Leah.
Adjective Clauses
Just like an adverb clause can act as a single adverb, an adjective clause can function like a single adjective.

**Example:** We quickly walked by the dog whose bark was loud.

In the previous example, notice how the dependent clause, whose bark was loud, describes the noun, dog. For this reason, this clause is an *adjective clause*. An adjective clause usually begins with a *relative pronoun* such as who, whom, whose, that, and which.

How can I use adverb and adjective clauses to make my sentences more interesting?
Before combining sentences with adjective and adverb clauses, we first need to look at the different between a compound and a complex sentence.

**Compound Sentences**
A *compound sentence* occurs when two independent clauses (or two complete sentences) are joined together with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

**Example:** I will ride my bike tomorrow, but I can’t ride my bike today.

**Complex Sentences**
A *complex sentence* is made up of one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. The dependent clause in a sentence can function as an adverb or an adjective.

**Adjective clauses** begin with *relative pronouns* such as who, whom, whose, that, and which.

**Example:** I had coffee today with a girl whom I met yesterday.
The underlined part is a dependent clause that works like an adjective describing the girl I met yesterday. It begins with the relative pronoun whom; the relative pronoun makes this clause dependent. Therefore, this is a complex sentence.

**Adverb clauses** begin with subordinating conjunctions such as after, although, as, as if, as long as, as soon as, because, before, if, since, though, unless, until, when, where, and while.

**Example:** We rode our bikes as soon as the sun came out.
The dependent clause is underlined. It begins with the subordinate conjunction as soon as and describes when we took our bike ride. Therefore, this is a complex sentence.
Note: The dependent clause is sometimes the first clause in a sentence; it acts as an introductory clause, and a comma typically follows it. In addition, a dependent clause can share information in the middle of an independent clause that is not necessary to understanding the meaning of the sentence. When this happens, the dependent clause is enclosed within commas.

Now You Try It

Look at the following complex sentences. Underline the dependent clause in each sentence and decide whether or not it works like an adjective or an adverb.

1. The donut that I bought yesterday was absolutely delicious.
2. Before leaving the house, I had to lock all the doors and shut off all of the lights.

Combining sentences using dependent clauses.

You can also add variety to your paragraph with complex sentences. You can use them to combine sentences, correct sentence fragments, and correct run-on sentences. Remember, the difference between compound and complex sentences is that a compound sentence is made up of two independent clauses, while a complex sentence is made up of an independent clause and a subordinate clause. Please watch below as clauses are joined together to form complex sentences.

Clause 1: I gave my daughter raisin bread for breakfast.
Clause 2: I changed her diaper before breakfast.
Complex sentence: Before giving my daughter raisin bread for breakfast, I changed her diaper.

Clause 1: The yummy chocolate came from Mexico.
Clause 2: My family consumed the chocolate for dessert.
Complex sentence: My family consumed the yummy chocolate, which came from Mexico, for dessert.

Now You Try It

Combine the clauses below to make a complex sentence.

1. Clause 1: We finished our schoolwork.
   Clause 2: We were waiting for Mom to get home.
2.  
**Clause 1:** The walrus was born on the ice.  
**Clause 2:** The newborn walrus weighed 100 pounds.

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**Figurative Language**

**What is onomatopoeia?**

**Onomatopoeia** is a figure of speech where an author names a thing (noun) or an action (verb) by imitating the sound associated with it.

Example: The box *thudded* to the ground.

*What does this mean in plain language?* The box made a loud noise when it hit the ground. The noise sounded like *thud*.

Example: I find it especially annoying when my sister *munches* popcorn.

*What does this mean in plain language?* My sister makes noise when she eats popcorn. The noise sounds like *munch*.

The poem below was written by a 6th grade student. The poem combines two types of figurative language: **hyperbole** and **onomatopoeia**.

**The Class**

The class is noisy  
*Whistling, talking*  
“*Shhhhh*, the teacher is coming.”  
*Munch*  
“You’re not supposed to eat in class!”  
*Stomp, yell, clap*  
“Stop!” Cough,  
sneeze “*E-hem,*  
*achoo!*” Crying  
“*Whaaa*, you hit me.”  
“CAN I GO TO THE NURSE’S OFFICE?”  
Airplanes go  
*Zoom*  
That’s what happens in the room.
Now You Try It
Use onomatopoeia to add life to the following sentences.

1. The book hit the table with a __________________________.
2. The ball ______________ past my ear.
3. ______________ _______________ went the fireworks.
4. Write your own sentence below using onomatopoeia.

Writing

Showing vs. Telling
You may have received feedback on some of your previous writing assignments that stated, “You have included many details, but you need to show me, instead of telling me.” What exactly do your instructors mean when they give you this feedback?

In short, showing means that you describe details using figures of speech and specific adjectives, verbs, nouns, and adverbs. This way, you create an image in the mind of your readers. When you tell in your writing, you merely list details without stimulating your readers’ senses.

Example of telling: The field was filled with pretty orange flowers.
Example of showing: Each California poppy swayed softly in the breeze like an orange bird fluttering its wings.

Did you notice how the telling sentence simply listed adjectives, while the showing sentence adds action, specific words, and figures of speech to create a movie in your readers’ minds? A key to showing is adding action or movement to your description even if you are describing a still photograph.

Review the following examples and identify which examples tell and which show. Please be ready to discuss these examples in class.

Example A:
I was going to feed my mother’s horse a section of hay. Before I got in the stall, the door slid open and the horse walked out and accidentally knocked me over.

Example B:
My mother opened the stall slowly. The big, brown pregnant horse, Fatalean, wobbled out while I charged in. We hit! Bang! Boom! My head to her chest. I fell to the concrete flat on my stomach. Fatalean walked right over the top of me.


Example C:
This river did not chortle and splash. It did not crash over falls and race. It was a slow river that gleamed like quicksilver. We know it today as the Everglades.

Into the shallow, warm river came tiny one-celled animals and plants. They lived and died and made gray-green soil on the bottom of the river. Saw grass took root in the soil.

The grass prospered. When the winds blew, the saw grass clattered like a trillion swords. Each sword was edged with cutting spines. Of the larger animals, only the leathery alligator could walk unharmed among the terrible spears of the saw grass.


Example D:
The Everglades consist of slow moving water containing microscopic organisms. These plants and animals give the soil a gray, green color. In this fertile soil, masses of saw grass have taken root. Of all the animals in the Everglades, only the alligator is able to walk through this sharp grass unscathed.

Which examples above create a clear picture in your mind? ______________________________

How are these examples different than the ones that do not create a picture in your mind? ______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Describe in your own words what it means for writing to show rather than tell. ______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Descriptive Writing – Lesson 5 Assignments:

**When typing your assignments, please make sure to use MLA format.** When naming your documents, please be sure to include the class name (DW), your name, and the assignment number.

**Example:** DW-Your name-5A

Also, when you e-mail your assignments to me as an attachment, be sure the subject line of your email includes the name of your assignment. If you attach several assignments, your subject line should look like the sample below:

**Example:** DW-Your name-5A, 5B, 5C (and so on)

**5A. Vocabulary:** For this week’s vocabulary, please choose two new adverbs from a book you are reading. *Make sure to choose adverbs that you do not know.* You will need to look up the definition and synonyms for each of your words. You will also use the word in your own sentence. Do not copy the sentence from the book. Using Word or Open Office, you should create two word entries using the following format:

- **Word:**
- **Definition:**
- **Synonyms:**
- **Part of Speech:** Remember, these should be adverbs!
- **Sentence:**

Remember to use MLA format!

**5B. Figures of Speech Journal:** In a book you are reading or in another text, find two examples of onomatopoeia. Then on one side of an index card or a piece of paper, copy down the example of onomatopoeia and beneath it draw a picture to represent it. Please feel free to be silly and have fun with it. On the other side of the card or paper, identify the figure of speech as onomatopoeia. Write down what it means in plain language. I highly encourage you to hand write and hand draw these cards.

When you have finished your cards, type out each of them (minus the picture) into Word or Open Office. These must be written in complete sentences. Or you can write a poem using onomatopoeia. Your choice!
5C. **Guess that “thing or action”:** Prepare two to four sentences that describe a person, place, thing, or action that is common enough that people around the world would be able to identify it. In our next class, your classmates and instructor will have three tries to guess what you are describing. (You can write a new description or you can use any part of a past assignment.) Good luck! 😊

5D. **Descriptive Writing Assignment:** In this assignment, you will describe an action you have observed. This could be any action, such as your sister spilling grape juice all over your parents’ white carpet, or the time you dropped marbles all over the hard floor and it sounded like a rainstorm.

CAUTION: Any action you perform for this assignment needs to be approved by your parents or guardians.

In your paragraph, remember to include sensory details and show rather than tell. Please spend time revising your paragraph with all of the tools we have practiced in this class. Please use your favorite graphic organizer presented in Lessons 1 through 4.

You will need to include an example of onomatopoeia in addition to using MLA format. I would also love to see examples of the other forms of figurative language where appropriate in your writing.

**Step 1: Topic:** __________________________________________________________________

**Step 2: Record your details using a graphic organizer of your choice.**
Step 3: Write a topic sentence: ________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Step 4: Write a closing sentence: ___________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Step 5: Complete the paragraph using the details you listed in your graphic organizer.
(Please remember to include at least one example of onomatopoeia.)

Step 6: Please spend time revising your paragraph with all of the tools we have practiced in this
class. Also, make sure you have included sensory details to create a movie of your action in the
mind of your readers. Use your thesaurus to find colorful, interesting, and specific words.
(Double check to be sure you used at least one example of onomatopoeia.)

Step 7: Beginning with the last sentence, proofread each sentence in your paragraph to correct
errors in spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and MLA format.
(Try to include at least one complex sentence.)

Step 8: Think of a creative title for your descriptive paragraph. If you want, you may add a
picture to your assignment.