

## Writer's Handbook

### Writing Basics

**Sentences** are a writer's building blocks. To be a good writer, one must first be a good sentence writer. A sentence always begins with a capital letter.

**He** walked around the block.

A sentence must always tell a complete thought. It has a subject and a predicate.

Complete Sentence: He lives around the corner.

Incomplete Sentence: The block where he lives.

A sentence always ends with an end mark. There are three kinds of end marks. A sentence that tells something ends with a period.

He walked around the block.

A sentence that asks something ends with a question mark.

Did he walk around the block?

A sentence that shows excitement or fear ends with an exclamation point.

He ran all the way around the block!

**Punctuation** can be a writer's road map.

End marks on sentences show whether a sentence is a statement, a question, or an exclamation.

Commas help keep ideas clear.

In a list or series: I saw sea stars, crabs, and seals at the beach.

In a compound sentence: I wanted a closer look, but the crab crawled away.

After an introductory phrase or clause: Later that day, a storm blew up.

To separate a speech tag: I called to Mom, "It's really getting windy!"

"I hope it doesn't rain," she said.

Quotation marks show the exact words that a speaker says. Quotation marks enclose the speaker's words and the punctuation marks that go with the words.

"Does it matter?" Neil remarked. "We're already wet."

"I'd rather be wet from below than from above," said Dad.

"Be careful!" Mom yelled. "Those waves are getting big!"

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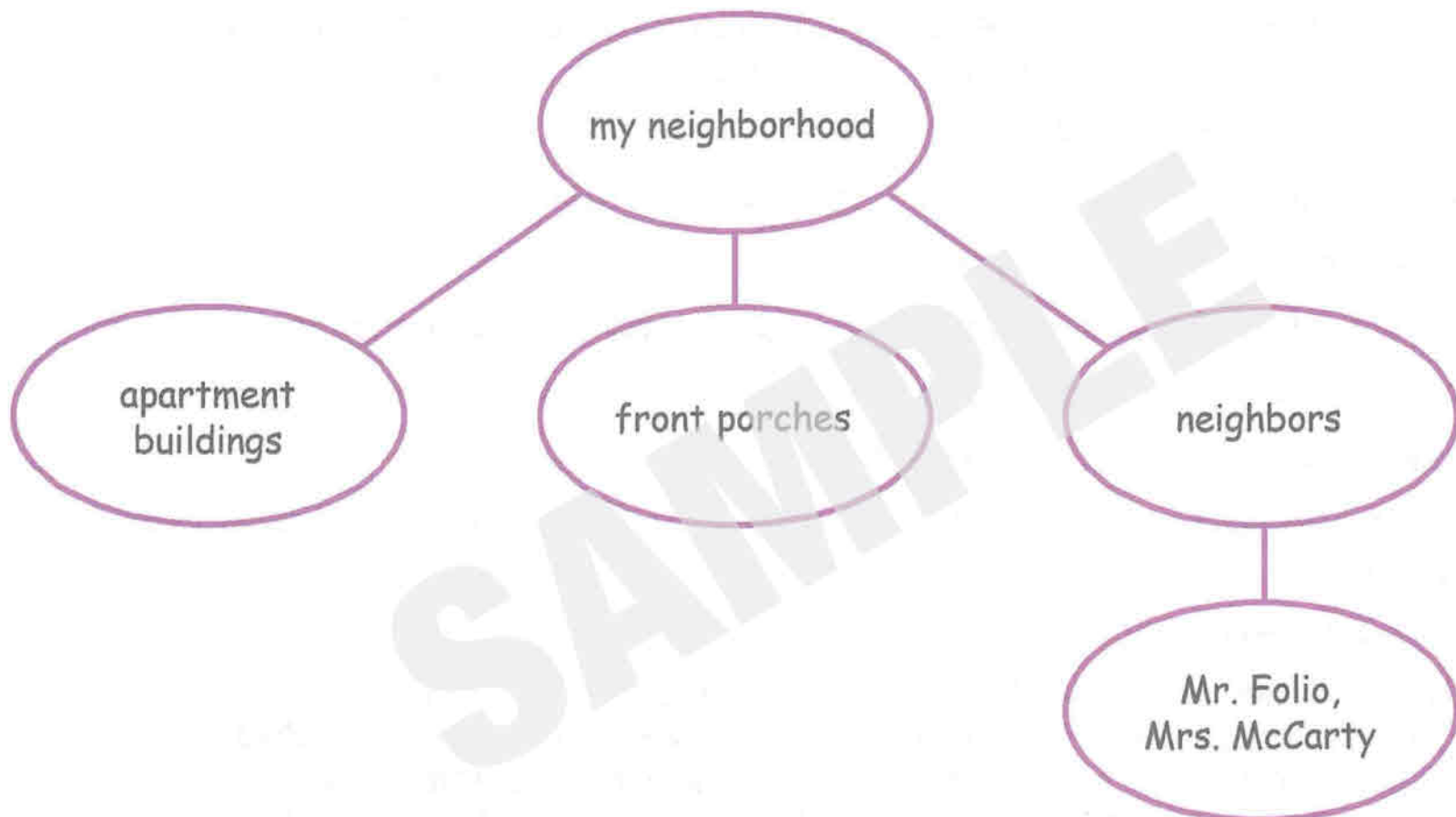
### The Writing Process

When writers write, they take certain steps. Those steps make up the writing process.

#### Step 1: Prewrite

First, writers choose a topic. Then, they collect and organize ideas or information. They might write their ideas in a list or make a chart and begin to put their ideas in some kind of order.

Mariko is going to write about her neighborhood. She put her ideas in a web.



#### Step 2: Draft

Next, writers put their ideas on paper in a first draft. Writers know that there might be mistakes in this first draft. That's okay. Here is Mariko's first draft.

Brick apartment houses are all around me. I live in tallest one. Across the street is the shortest. I like to think of the windows as eyes, and the front porches are the mouths People go in and out. Mr. Folio, my favorite neighbor, sits and sings songs. Mrs. McCarty pretends to shake a rug out the window but she is really listening to Mr. Folio.



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### Step 3: Revise

Then, writers change or fix their first draft. They might decide to move ideas around, add information, or take out words or sentences that don't belong. Here are Mariko's changes.

Brick apartment houses are all around me. I live in <sup>the</sup> tallest one. ~~Across the street~~  
~~is the shortest.~~ I like to think of the windows as eyes, and the front porches are the  
 mouths. People go in and out. Mr. Folio, my favorite neighbor, sits <sup>on his porch</sup> and sings <sup>Italian</sup> songs.  
<sup>In the evening,</sup> Mrs. McCarty pretends to shake a rug out the window but she is really listening to  
 Mr. Folio.

### Step 4: Proofread

Writers usually write a new copy so their writing is neat. Then, they look again to make sure everything is correct. They look for mistakes in their sentences. Mariko found several more mistakes when she proofread her work.

Brick apartment houses are all around me. I live in the tallest one. I like to think  
 of the windows as eyes, ~~and the~~ front porches <sup>as</sup> ~~are the~~ mouths. People go in and out.  
 Mr. Folio, my favorite neighbor, sits on his porch and sings Italian songs. In the evening,  
 Mrs. McCarty pretends to shake a rug out the window, but she is really listening to  
 Mr. Folio.

### Step 5: Publish

Finally, writers make a final copy that has no mistakes. They might choose to add pictures and create a book. Then, they are ready to publish their writing. They might choose to read their writing out loud or have a friend read it.



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### Personal Narrative

In a personal narrative, a writer writes about something he or she has done or seen. It might tell about something funny, sad, or unusual. A personal narrative can be about anything, as long as the writer is telling about one of his or her own experiences. Here is the final version of Mariko's paragraph about her neighborhood.

Describing words help readers "see" or "hear" what is happening.

Brick apartment houses are all around me. I live in the tallest one. I like to think of the windows as eyes and front porches as mouths. People go in and out. Mr. Folio, my favorite neighbor, sits on his porch and sings Italian songs. In the evening, Mrs. McCarty pretends to shake a rug out the window, but she is really listening to Mr. Folio.

The words *me* and *I* show that the writer is part of the action.

A time word tells when something happens.

The writer stayed on topic. All of the sentences give information about Mariko's neighborhood.

### Stories

Writers write about made-up things. They might write about people or animals. The story might seem real, or it might seem fantastic, or unreal. Here is a story that Mariko wrote. It has both human and animal characters in it. The animals speak, so Mariko's story is not realistic.

The story has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

**In the Neighborhood**

It is nearly sunrise, and the neighborhood is waking up. Windows glow where the early birds prepare breakfast. Bacon sizzles in the Hooper kitchen, and the smell draws a hungry crowd.

In the corner, eight furry paws scramble through the crack between the wall and the baseboard. They pause at the corner of the wastebasket, then scamper to the refrigerator. Blue fuzzy slippers come quickly forward and stamp on the floor. "Go away, you critters!" The critters huddle deeper in the darkness. Four black eyes watch for crumbs to fall. Two long tails twitch with excitement.

Mrs. Hooper's slippers scuff across the floor. "It's ready!" she calls upstairs. In a moment, Mr. Hooper's heavy work boots thump down the stairs. Scuff-thump, Scuff-thump, the people go into the other room.

"Now, it's our turn," smiles Velvet.

Her brother Flannel nods and shrugs. "It's a dirty job, but someone has to do it." And he and his sister go to work, clearing the floor of crumbs.

The first paragraph establishes the setting.

Sensory words help readers visualize what is happening.

Time and order words keep ideas in order.

The story includes dialogue, or conversation among characters.

This story is written in third-person point of view. So, words such as *he*, *she*, *her*, *his*, and *they* refer to the characters.



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### Descriptive Writing

When writers describe, they might tell about an object, a place, or an event. They use sensory words so that readers can see, hear, smell, feel, or taste whatever is being described. In this example of descriptive writing, Mariko compared her old bedroom with her new bedroom.

The writer uses the whole-to-whole comparison method. She describes one whole room in the first paragraph, and the other room in the second paragraph.

My bedroom in our old apartment was green. It was a nice grassy green, and it always made me think of a forest. My bed was in the left corner, between the two windows. The wall straight ahead was almost all shelves, where I kept my turtle collection, my books, and all my other stuff. My yellow beanbag chair and the closet were on the right side of the room.

My new bedroom is blue. I like to think of it as sky blue. On the left side of the room is one big window. I put my beanbag chair right beside the window. Straight ahead is my bed. On the right is a built-in bookshelf and the closet door.

Sensory details help readers visualize the scene.

The writer organizes details from side to side. She first tells what is on the left, then straight ahead, then on the right.

### Informational Writing

When writers write to inform, they present information about a topic. Informational writing is nonfiction. It is not made up; it contains facts.

Mariko interviewed her neighbor, Mr. Folio. Then, she wrote about what she learned. Here is one of her paragraphs.

Mariko states her main idea in a topic sentence. It is the first sentence of the paragraph.

Transition words connect ideas.

My neighbor, Mr. Folio, has lived in the same apartment building all his life. His parents and his grandparents lived there, too. In fact, his grandparents were the first people to move into the building in 1921. He remembers his grandmother telling about how new and shiny the doorknobs and the stair railings were. Mr. Folio's grandparents lived on the top floor because his grandfather liked the view. Later, his parents lived on the fourth floor because that was what was available at the time. Now, Mr. Folio lives on the first floor. He says he likes to see what is going on in the neighborhood.

These sentences contain details that support the main idea.



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### Explanatory (or How-to) Writing

Writers explain how to do things. They might write about how to play a game, create an art project, or follow a recipe. Mariko has written instructions for a marble game that she plays with her sister.

The steps are all in order, starting with the items needed to play the game.

**Mariko's Marbles**

(First), you need 20 small marbles, two shooter marbles, and someone to play with. Choose a square of sidewalk that doesn't have very many cracks or bumps in it. Roll the small marbles onto the square. Then, players take turns using their shooters to try to knock marbles out of the square. Each player gets two tries per turn. Players may knock out only one marble at a time. If a player knocks out more than one marble, the player must put back all of her knocked-out marbles. Finally, when all 20 marbles have been knocked out of the square, the player with the most marbles is the winner.

Clear words help readers understand the instructions.

Order words help readers keep the steps in order.

### Persuasive Writing

In persuasive writing, writers try to make readers think, feel, or act in a certain way. Persuasive writing shows up in newspaper and magazine articles, letters to the editor, business letters, and in advertisements, of course. Mariko's mom has written a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.

The writer begins by stating some opinions.

Dear Editor:

I used to be proud of my neighborhood. The streets used to look nice, and people cared about keeping them that way. Now, however, the sidewalks on 41st Street are terribly cracked and broken, and the city has no plans to fix them. In some places, it is not even safe to walk. The older people in the neighborhood have to walk in the street to get to the grocery store. Can't the city repair the sidewalks? It would feel good to be proud and safe in my neighborhood again.

F. Torunaga

The writer states some facts to lend support to her opinions.

The writer uses an emotional appeal to persuade readers to agree with her.

The writer includes a specific request for action.

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### Friendly Letters

Writers write friendly letters to people they know. They might share news or ideas or request information. A friendly letter has four parts: the date, the greeting, the body, and the closing, which includes the signature. Here is a letter Mariko wrote to her grandfather.

Each word in the greeting begins with a capital letter.

There is always a comma after the person's name.

The date is in the upper, right corner.

September 2

Dear Grandfather,

We are all settled in our new apartment. I love my new bedroom. Dad says we can even paint some white puffy clouds on the ceiling. Then it really will seem like a sky-blue room.

I like the neighbors, so far. Mr. Folio is my favorite. He lives in a building across the street. When there's nothing to do, I go sit on his front steps and visit. He can tell a story about almost everyone who passes by on the sidewalk.

I think you would like Mr. Folio. When are you and Grandmother going to come and visit? Soon, I hope.

Love as always,  
Mariko

The body of the letter gives information.

Only the first word of the closing begins with a capital letter. There is always a comma after the closing.

The writer signs his or her name.



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### Business Letters

Writers write business letters to people or organizations with whom they are not familiar. Business letters usually involve a complaint or a request for information. Mariko needs information for a school report. She wrote a business letter to request information.

<p>The heading includes the sender's address and the date.</p>	<p>764 41st Street Indianapolis, IN 46208 October 5, 2015</p>	
<p>The inside address is the name and address of the recipient.</p>	<p>Monroe County Historical Society 202 E. 6th Street Bloomington, IN 47402</p>	
<p>The text of the letter is the body.</p>	<p>Dear Monroe County Historical Society:</p> <p>My class is studying state history this year. Each of us has chosen a county to study. I chose Monroe County because my grandparents live there.</p> <p>On your Web site, I saw that you have a free pamphlet titled "Monroe County: Through the Years." Please send me one copy of that brochure. I have included an envelope with postage.</p>	<p>The greeting is followed by a colon.</p>
<p>The sender always includes a signature.</p>	<p>Thank you for your help with my report.</p> <p>Sincerely, <i>Mariko Torunaga</i> Mariko Torunaga</p>	<p>The closing is followed by a comma.</p>