

Identifying and Writing Loose and Periodic Sentences Foundation Lesson

A **loose or cumulative sentence** is one in which a *main* or *independent clause* comes first, followed by further grammatical units, both phrases and dependent clauses. A loose sentence makes sense and will stand alone as a sentence even if brought to a close before the period.

Read aloud the underlined portions of the following sentences, noting how they make a complete sentence even if you do not read the remainder of the sentence. These three sentences are called “loose” or “cumulative” sentences.

“One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it.”

“The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe

“As I spoke, a light came over him, as though the setting sun had touched him with the same suffused glory with which it touched the mountains.”

“A Mother in Manville” by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

“Arnie hollered, arguing that some people were meant to work and others to come up with brilliant ideas.”

“Born Worker” by Gary Soto

A **periodic sentence** has its main clause at the end of the sentence with additional grammatical units added before this *main* or *independent clause*. A periodic sentence does not make sense and will not stand alone as a complete sentence until the main clause is included at the end.

Read the underlined portions of the following sentences aloud, noting how they do not create a full sentence unless you read the remainder of the sentence. These are called “periodic” sentences; the main clause is at the end.

“And while Arnie accompanied him, most of the time he did nothing.”

“Born Worker” by Gary Soto

“In the brightness of the wintry sun next morning as it streamed over the breakfast table, he laughed at his fears.”

“The Monkey’s Paw” by W. W. Jacobs

“Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house”

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

Activity One

Classifying Sentences as Loose and Periodic

Read the following sentences, and place an L by the loose sentences and a P by the periodic sentences. Leave blank the sentence(s) that do not fit either pattern.

1. _____ “You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation!” “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe
2. _____ “The details of packing my personal belongings, loading my car, arranging the bed over the seat, where the dog would ride, occupied me until late in the day.” “A Mother in Manville” by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
3. _____ “I felt an inexpressible relief, a soothing conviction of protection and security, when I knew that there was a stranger in the room, an individual not belonging to Gateshead, and not related to Mrs. Reed.” *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
4. _____ “Whatever her reasons, whether she is fat, or can’t climb the stairs, or is afraid of English, she won’t come down.” *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
5. _____ “She [Winnie] wandered for a long time, looking at everything, listening to everything, proud to forget the tight, pruned world outside, humming a little now, trying to remember the pattern of the melody she had heard the night before.” *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt
6. _____ “After seventy days of wind and sun, of wind and clouds, of wind and sand, a little rain came.” *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse
7. _____ “One morning, the hobbits woke to find the large field, south of Bilbo’s front door, covered with ropes and poles for tents and pavilions.” *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien
8. _____ “Close by Miss Temple’s bed, and half covered with its white curtains, there stood a little crib.” *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
9. _____ “Dazed and suffering intolerable pain from throat and tongue, with the life half throttled out of him, Buck attempted to face his tormentors.” *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London
10. _____ “My father started chipping away at a plaster wall in the living room of our house in Bybanks shortly after my mother left us one April morning.” *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech

Analyzing for Effect or Purpose

11. In your own words, explain the general effect created through the use of
 - a. a loose/cumulative sentence

 - b. a periodic sentence

12. Select a sentence that you thought was particularly effective and explain how or why the pattern of the sentence affects the reader.

Manipulating Sentence Structure

13. Rearrange the sentence below to make it into a periodic sentence. You may have to change a few words.

“The king and his court were in their places opposite the twin doors—those fateful portals so terrible in their similarity.” “The Lady or the Tiger?” by Frank Stockton

14. What is the effect of the change from loose to periodic?

15. Select one loose sentence and one periodic sentence from the previous page to use as models. Write original sentences following the same pattern as your model sentences.

Activity Two

Loose/Periodic sentences used for effect

Read the following sentences from *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom, a nonfiction book about the relationship between the author and his college professor Morrie Schwartz. Then answer the questions following each sentence.

Sentence One

He is a small man who takes small steps, as if a strong wind could, at any time, whisk him up into the clouds.

1. Put parentheses around the independent clause.
2. Is this sentence loose, periodic, or neither?
3. What character trait of the man (Morrie) is emphasized by the sentence structure?

Sentence Two

To compensate for my youth on campus, I wear old gray sweatshirts and box in a local gym and walk around with an unlit cigarette in my mouth, even though I do not smoke.

4. Put parentheses around the independent clause. Underline the compound verbs. Circle the coordinating conjunctions in the sentence.
5. Is this sentence loose, periodic, or neither?
6. Create a new sentence arrangement by placing the independent clause at the beginning of the sentence.
7. Where is the best place to move the modifying phrase *to compensate for my youth on campus*?

Sentence Three

If you want the experience of having complete responsibility for another human being, and to learn how to love and bond in the deepest way, then you should have children.

8. Put parentheses around the independent clause.
9. Is the sentence loose, periodic, or neither?
10. Separate the introductory dependent clauses into two clauses that begin with *if*.
If you want _____
If you want _____
11. Could any other independent clause logically follow these introductory elements?
12. What is the intended effect of this sentence structure?