**SENTENCE-COMPOSING TOOLS Note-Taking Guide**

*All sentences need a subject and a predicate, but good sentences usually have something else: tools or adders, which are sentence parts of different shapes and sizes that you’ll learn and practice here by seeing how authors use them to build their sentences. Then you’ll have your own toolbox for building good sentences.*

*Tools are added sentence parts that provide details and dazzle to make sentences more interesting. Look at the following examples. Subjects are underlined once. Predicates are underlined twice. Tools are bold. Look what happens when tools are added.*

EX.

I remember District 8.

I remember District 8, **an ugly urban place stinking of industrial fumes, the people housed in run-down tenements, barely a blade of grass in sight.**

Suzanne Collins*, Catching Fire*

EX.

The pig burst from under the fence.

**In an explosion of dirt and pebbles,** the pig burst from under the fence**, heaving Taran into the air.**

Lloyd Alexander, *The Book of Three*

**What two sentence parts cannot be removed without destroying the sentence?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Take out either and the sentence is dead.**

STUDENT ACTIVITY

*What is the bolded sentence part—a subject* ***(S),*** *a predicate* ***(P),*** *or a tool* ***(T)?*** *(REMEMBER: A subject is a topic. A predicate is a comment about the topic. A tool is a structure providing additional details for the sentence.*

*HINT: Subjects and predicates are indispensable, but tools are removable.*

\_\_\_\_\_1. A large woman **came out from the back room**, her hair in a frazzled bun. -Clare Vanderpool, *Moon Over Manifest*

\_\_\_\_\_2. Taken by surprise and overwhelmed by sheer numbers, **the Peacekeepers** were initially overcome by the crowds.

-Suzanne Collins, *Catching Fire*

\_\_\_\_\_3 That night I took a pair of embroidery scissors and, **with great exhilaration and a pounding heart**, cut off the first inch.

-Jacqueline Kelly, The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate

\_\_\_\_\_4. **A thin spider web of sweat** draped itself over his forehead, s[reading into his hair.

-Jacqueline Davies, *The Lemonade War*

\_\_\_\_\_5. He was white and shaking, **his mouth opening and shutting without words.**

-Leslie Morris, “Three Shots for Charlie Benson”

\_\_\_\_\_6. Templeton, asleep in the straw, **heard the commotion and awoke.**

-E. B. White, *Charlotte’s Web*

\_\_\_\_\_7. **White sail and white bird** were visible for a long time.

-Paul Gallico, *The Snow Goose*

\_\_\_\_\_8. **Faintly, over the rain**, Grant heard the sound of a little girl screaming.

-Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park*

\_\_\_\_\_9. At night **I would lie in bed and watch the show,** how bees squeezed through the cracks of my bedroom wall and flew circles around the room, making the propeller sound, a high-pitched sound that hummed along my skin.

-Sue Monk Kidd, *The Secret Life of Bees*

**\_\_\_\_\_**10. Taking off his cap, **he** placed it over the muzzle of his rifle.

-Liam O’Flaherty, “The Sniper”

STUDENT ACTIVITY

*In the models, identify the subjects, predicates, and tools. Then, combine the list of sentences to imitate the model. Finally, write your own imitation about something from your imagination or from a TV show, movie, or book.*

1**. Model**: He remained unnaturally quiet, a long pale sword in his hand.

-Christopher Paolini, *Eragon*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. **Model:** The class drifted off to lunch, the girls holding their stomachs, and the guys pushing each other around and acting like doofuses.

-Rick Riordan, *The Lightning Thief*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3. **Model:** Cupping his hands tightly around his lips, he pitched the call high enough to make it sound like a young turkey gobbling.

-Virginia Hamilton, *M. C. Higgins, the Great*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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4. **Model:** All four members of Maxwell, the other team in the final round, were in the eighth grade.

-E. L. Konigsburg, *The View from Saturday*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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5. **Model:** There were three men, all in dark suits, standing on the front porch.

-Gary Paulsen, *The River*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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6. **Model:** Howard stood in the darkened doorway, cold, wet, and muddy.

-Paul Harding, *Tinkers*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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7. **Model:** She noticed two small blackbirds nearby, panting like dogs from the heat, their beaks open, their feathers puffed up.

-Susan Patron, *The Higher Power of Lucky*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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8. **Model**: They threw away their lives for money, for packets of powder, for a stranger’s charming smile.

-Cassandra Clare, *City of Bones*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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9. **Model:** He raised one eyebrow, stared at me for five seconds, then stomped to the recliner and sat down on the very edge, his back ramrod straight.

-Stephenie Meyer, *Breaking Dawn*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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10**. Model:** In the quiet, I heard them beyond the corral, Cyclone barking, and the lamb making its kind of noise, and the ewe making her kind of noise.

-Joseph Krumgold, *…And Now Miguel*

**IMITATION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **TOOL FACTS** | |
| 1. Tools are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from the sentence. | I was sitting in a baby carrier on the floor, **strapped in and safe as I checked out my world of green shag carpet and matching sofa**. (Sharon M. Draper, *Out of My Mind)* |
| 2. Tools can be at the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the sentence. | **When the anthem finished and the screen went dark**, a hush fell on the room. (Suzanne Collins, *Hunger Games*)  Two boys, **each carrying a shovel**, were coming across the compound. (Louis Sachar, *Holes*)  The necklace I have always wanted now weighs me down, **a shiny, hateful thing**. (Libba Bray, *A Great Terrible Beauty*) |
| 3. A sentence can have more than \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tool. | That face belonged to Phoebe Winterbottom, **who had a powerful imagination, who would become my friend, and who would have many peculiar things happen to her.** (Sharon Creech, *Walk Two Moons)* |
| 4. Tools can be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. | Two boys, **each carrying a shovel**, were coming across the compound. (Louis Sachar, *Holes*)  **When I was four and Cass was six**, she whacked me across the face with a plastic shovel at our neighborhood park. (Sarah Dessen, *Dreamland*)  By the door lay another dog,  **its brown eyes open and watchful in contrast to the peacefulness radiated by the other occupants of the room.** (Louis Sachar, *Holes*) |

**BUILDING STRONGER PARAGRAPHS**

*Authors pepper their sentences with tools to increase interest, content, and style. In the following paragraph, a character in Michael Crichton’s Jurassic Park has fallen into a leech-infested swamp and discovers, to his horror, a blood-sucking leech clinging to his lip.*

*Contrast the two versions of the paragraph, the first without tools, and the second with tools. Notice the power in the second.*

**WITHOUT TOOLS**

(1) The side of his mouth felt funny. (2) He touched his face and felt swollen flesh. (3) He realized the swollen flesh was a leech. (4) It was practically in his mouth. (5) He pulled the leech away. (6) He spat, and flung it. (7) He saw another leech on his forearm and pulled it off.

**WITH TOOLS**

(1) The side of his mouth felt funny, **numb and tingling.** (2) **Wondering if he had hurt it during the fall,** he touched his face and**, and on the side of his mouth** felt swollen flesh. (3) **Suddenly,** he realized the swollen flesh was a leech**, growing fat as it sucked his lips.** (4) It was practically in his mouth. (5) **Shivering with nausea,** he pulled the leech away, **feeling it tear from the flesh of his lips, feeling the gush of warm blood in his mouth.** (6) He spat, and flung it **with disgust into the forest.** (7) He saw another leech on his forearm and pulled it off, **which left a dark bloody streak behind.**

**YOUR TURN**

*The following paragraph is based upon an incident in Stephen King’s story “The Body” in which a group of middle school boys, camped out in a forest at night, are awakened and startled by a loud, terrifying sound.*

*Rewrite the paragraph and at each hash tag (#) add a tool to make the paragraph even more terrifying. Also anywhere add two more spectacular, scary sentences with lots of sentence-composing tools!*

**The Scream**

(1) A long, loud, and hollow scream rose from the woods, #. (2) The wild, sobbing cry rose into the night again, #, #. (3) the scream climbed with a crazy ease through octave after octave, #. (4) It hung there for a moment and then whirled back down again, #. (5) This was followed by a burst of what sounded like mad laughter, and then there was silence again.

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