

Grammatical Sentence Openers

- **Prepositional Phrase**

Start with a phrase beginning with one of these common prepositions:

aboard, about, above, according to, across, after, against, along, among, around, as, as to, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, beyond, but, by, despite, down, during, except, for, from, in, inside, instead of, into, in place of, in spite of, like, near, next, of, off, on, onto, outside, out of, over, past, regardless of, since, than, through, throughout, to, toward, under, underneath, unlike, until, up, upon, with, within, without

Place a comma after a prepositional phrase sentence opener when a noun or pronoun follows.

Example:

Behind the cabinet, he found the missing watch

- **Adjective**

Start with a word or phrase that describes a proper noun, common noun, or pronoun with How Many? Which One? or What Kind? Place a comma after an adjective or adjective phrase sentence opener.

Examples:

Angry, the neighbor refused to leave.

Happy as always, the child played in the park.

- **Adverb**

Start with a word that answers these questions: How? When? Where? or What Degree? Many adverbs end in *ly*. Usually place a comma after an adverb sentence opener if the adverb is emphasized.

Example:

Everywhere, the flowers were blooming; *quickly,* the winter turned to spring.

- **Adverbial Clause**

Start a dependent clause (a noun and verb that does not express a complete thought) with one of the following subordinating conjunctions:

after, although, as, as if, as long as, as much as, as soon as, as though, because, before, even if, even though, how, if, in order that, once, since, so that, than, that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, whether, or while.

Place a comma after an adverbial clause that begins a sentence.

Example:

Although better known for its winter activities, Lake Tahoe offers much during the summer.

- ***__ed, __d, __t, or __en* Participial Verb Forms**

Start with a *__ed, __d, __t, or __en* verb, acting as an adjective, and/or add additional words to form a participial phrase. Usually place a comma after the sentence opener.

Examples:

Frightened, I sat up straight in my bed. *Told to stop,* the child finally did so.

Burnt to a crisp, the toast was horrible. *Taken quickly,* the pill did not dissolve for minutes.

- **To + Verb**
 Start with *To* and then add the base form of a verb. Add related words to create a phrase. Place a comma after the sentence opener, if a noun follows.
Examples:
To smile takes great effort.
To play the game, Mark had to sign a contract.
- **__ing Verbs and Nouns**
 Start a phrase with an *__ing* word that acts as an adjective. Usually place a comma after the sentence opener. Start a phrase with an *__ing* word that serves as a noun. Usually do *not* place a comma after the sentence opener.
Examples:
 (Adjective) *Falling* rapidly, the climber hopes the rope will hold.
 (Noun) *Tasting* the sauce makes them hungry for dinner.
- **Having Verbs and Nouns**
 Start a phrase with *Having* and then add a verb that ends in *__d*, *__ed*, or *__en* to serve as an adjective or a noun, referring to something that happened in the past. Usually place a comma after the sentence opener.
Examples:
 (Adjective) *Having listened* to his teacher, the student knew how to study.
 (Noun) *Having learned all of the answers* is helpful.
- **Noun Clause**
 Start with a group of words that acts as the subject of a sentence beginning with: *How*, *However*, *What*, *Whatever*, *When*, *Whenever*, *Where*, *Wherever*, *Which*, *Whichever*, *Who*, *Whoever*, or *Whomever*. Place a comma after the noun clause when used as a sentence opener if it does not serve as the subject of the sentence.
Example:
However the students answered, the scores were marked wrong.
- **Nominative Absolute**
 Start with a possessive pronoun (*my*, *mine*, *our*, *your*, *his*, *her*, or *their*) followed by a verb with a *d*, *__ed*, or *__en* ending to serve as a noun phrase that provides information, but no grammatical connection with the rest of the sentence. A comma is placed at the end of the nominative absolute when it opens a sentence.
Example:
His friends angry and frustrated, Paul promised to change his behavior
- **Direct Object**
 Start with a direct object. A direct object is the *whom* or *what* of a sentence and receives the action. Linking verbs, prepositions, and possessive pronouns do not signal direct objects. No commas follow the direct object when it opens a sentence.
Example:
A gift John and Rachael sent to their parents.