5 The 5 Chunks
Bundles of Creativity

Chunks are those neat extra bits of detail or action that can fit into a sentence -- at the start or the end, or even in the middle of the SVO. And to make things more fun, you can stack Chunks up next to each other, or one after another. There are about a handful of different kinds of Chunks so they are not hard to learn. In fact, you've been using Chunks for years as you talk. Imagine! You already know how to use them (except for their punctuation) just from talking to people every day.

What are Chunks?

Let's start with our classic SVO, the five-word sentence: *I went to the store.*

Now, since five-word sentences get really boring after a while, you will want to know how to add more detail to them. Here's where Chunks come in.

SVO.	**I went to the store.**
Next add a chunk and a comma:	**I went to the store, <u>before Mom came home</u>.**
Or add that chunk at the start:	**<u>Before Mom came home</u>, I went to the store.**
Or even add it in the middle:	**I went, <u>before Mom came home</u>, to the store.**
Or add two chunks:	**<u>Before Mom came home</u>, I went to the store <u>to get milk</u>.**

Or if you want to go wild you try:

<u>Before the sun went down</u>, <u>hiding its face from sight</u>, I went, <u>quickly and quietly</u>, <u>tiptoing in fact</u>, <u>without my shoes on</u>, to the store, <u>the 7-11</u> <u>over by Bailey's Crossroad</u>.

Remember: Commas are an important thing to add whether you are putting a Chunk at the start or the end, or in the middle of your sentence. Just be sure you are not adding a comma and trying to glue two SVO's together, because that's a Comma Splice and that's wrong.

5 Chunks to know and love

		Example Chunk
Connectors	start with a Preposition	"with a banana"
Describers	start with a Participle	"running for his life"
Identifiers	start with an Article	"the green one"
Elaborators	combines Describer and Identifier	"the engine running fast"
Relatives	start with "who" or "which"	"which broke in half"

HINT: Chunks are known by the first word in them.

Using the 5 Tools to Fix 5 Word Sentence

Chunks are tools, the phrases and clauses that you add to make your sentences better. It's not that longer sentences are always best, but they are better than lots of five-word sentences. So how do you add them? And where? Let's go back and a Chunk or two to our standard five-word sentence. Yes, let's start with the basic sentence structure: S V O.

S V O
I went to the store.

To this you can add chunks before the sentence: *, S V O.

Suddenly and for no reason, I went to the store.

You can add chunks at the end of the sentence: S V O, *.

I went to the store, bumping into my brother along the way.

And if you're tricky, you can add chunks in the middle: S V, *, O.

I went, quickly and quietly, to the store.

Less useful, but still possible, you can interrupt the Subject and Verb like this:

I, quickly and quietly, went to the store.

*You can even do some combination of all three: *, S V, *, O, *.*

Suddenly and for no reason, I went, quickly and quietly,
to the store, bumping into my brother along the way.

HINT: The nice thing about chunks is they are movable, and you can put two of them together or move them all around in your sentences, fitting them neatly into these three slots anyway you choose: (1) at the start, (2) at the end, and (3) between the verb and the object.

Suddenly and for no reason, quickly and quietly, I went to the store.

I went to the store, quickly and quietly, suddenly and for no reason,
bumping into my brother on the way.

RECAP: How you add Chunks determines the style and power of your sentence.

Chunks: 5 Tools to Fight Off 5 Word Sentences

Adapted from the works of Don Killgallon

1. Connector (Prepositional Phrase)**:** When a preposition appears at the start of a phrase it helps to add more detail to a sentence. These phrases are not required and can be removed, which means you don't usually need to add a comma before you throw one or more of these into your sentences. Why use them? They are so good at so many things, such as:

Causation: Because of, due to
Direction: From, out, above, under, beside
Connection: Including, about, according to, against
Transition: since (time), around, from
Duration: during, after, at, since

> *Above the trees and rooftops, the dingy glare of the London sky faded upwards into weak violet heights.* – A. Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*

> *He sat by the windows, hunched down in a rocking chair, scowling, waiting.* – Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

> *In an armchair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see.* – Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

2. Describer (Participial Phrase): Verbs can be used to describe a noun. This as one of the easiest ways to add movement, detail, and imagery. All you do is start with a participle: either the present *"--ing"* form of a verb, or the past form (most often the *"—ed"* form). These participles also work well when you add more than one of them in a row, separating them by commas, keeping the action going, moving things right along. Like that. Or, like this:

> *The stone struck the spider plunk on the head, dropping the spider to the ground.* – adapted from J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

> *The ducks come on swift, silent wings, gliding through the treetops as if guided by radar, twisting, turning, never touching a twig in that thick growth of trees that surrounded the lake."* – Jack Denton Scott *The Wondrous Wood Duck*

> *Hating himself, repulsed by what he was doing, Harry forced the goblet back toward Dumbledore's mouth and tipped it for Dumbledore to drink the remainder of the horrible potion inside.* – J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

3. Identifier (Appositive): These phrases start with an article (like *"a," "an,"* or *"the"*), and are made of nouns, and are used to identify the noun that sits right next to it in the sentence.

> *A balding, smooth-faced man, he could have been anywhere between forty and sixty.* – Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

> *In an armchair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see. She was dressed in rich materials, satins, and lace and silks, all of white.*
> – Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

> *One night, the twentieth of March, 1888, I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice), when my way led me through Baker Street.* – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

4. Elaborators (Absolute Phrases): These combine the Identifier and the Describer into a literary great that tells about a noun that is doing something. Elaborators are good for zooming in on a subject and describing it in greater detail. HINT: Funny thing about Elaborators is if you added the word "was" or "were" to it, the Elaborator would be a complete sentence on its own.

> *A teenager in a blank tank top, a greenish tattoo flowing across her back, hoisted a toddler.* -- Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*

> *Holly strapped on her mechanical harness, her wings extending with the touch of a button.* -- adapted from Eoin Colfer, *Artemis Fowl, The Eternity Code*

5. Relatives (Relative Clauses): Some clauses begin *with "who," "which,"* and *"whose,"* or for things they begin with: *"that"* or *"which."* These phrases are helpful for identifying people, and/or adding more detail to your sentences … but watch out because sometimes you'll need to add a comma and sometimes you won't. It's all up to Rule #1 of English, sadly.

> *Sully, whose skills were already maturing, moved up from the Wolves level to the Lions.* -- Stephen King, *Hearts in Atlantis*

> *The blood that soaked through his shirt was still warm. I could feel him breathing.*
> -- Ransom Riggs, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*

But wait, there's more!

Along with these basic 5 Tools, you can use Adjectives and Adverbs as Chunks, moving them about, with commas, to add detail. Now I know, I have said elsewhere that you should avoid using Adjectives and Adverbs – but what you should avoid is the standard way of placing adjectives before a noun. Move them about, set them up as a Chunk, out of order in the sentence, and your Adjectives become more stylish and useful. Like this:

The Opener A modifier (adjective or adverb) at the start of a sentence can get you off to a good start, describing the subject in more detail and what he/she is doing.
Remember: **Adjectives**: which one/what kind/how many
Adverbs: how/when/how much/where

"Numb of all feeling, empty as a shell, still he clung to life and the hours droned by."
-- JK Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*

"Then, slowly, he fell to his knees and pitched forward onto the road."

The Delayer A modifier (adjective or adverb) that is delayed until the middle of the sentence, sitting next to the word it modifies, and set off by commas.

"He worked himself to death, finally and precisely, at 3:00 a.m. Sunday morning."
-- Ellen Goodman, *Close to Home*

"People under the helicopter ducked, afraid, as if they were being visited by a god."
-- Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*

As an added bonus, here is one more Chunk for you to use.

6. Effects (Relative Clauses): Another verb form, an infinitive, this one starts with the word *"to"* but is not a prepositional phrase. Think of someone yelling, *"To infinity and beyond!"* The infinitive phrase tells you why someone is doing something, what the goal or effect is supposed to be. So, an infinitive is the word *"to"* and the root form of a verb, such as *"run"* giving us the phrase: *"to run."*

To get his feet wet in such a freezing temperature meant trouble and danger.
-- Jack London, *To Build a Fire*

Suddenly, she had an overwhelming desire to see what was behind the other doors. -- Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die*

Lego Linguistics
"Seeing is Understanding"

Just for fun let's look at how sentences are formed, using Lego blocks to help visualize the results. This is simply another way of describing the process of using Chunks. If this helps, good; if this confuses you, please ignore it.

We'll start by assigning different parts of our sentences to different colored bricks. As you know from Rule #2, the basic English sentence is SVO. The subject is some kind of a noun phrase – maybe a pronoun like "I" or "She." The Subject might also be a noun with some added words like "The tractor" or "His bike" or even "Running a marathon." Verbs are the action words telling you what the subject is doing or has done or will do or might have … well, you get the idea. Objects are any extra words needed to allow the SVO to be a complete thought. Simple. That is, the basic SVO is a Simple Sentence. What follows is how we take a Simple Sentence and turn it into more exciting things like Complex Sentences (Periodic, Cumulative), and Compound Sentences and the mash-up of these known as the Compound Complex one. And with that, we might be better off just going to the graphics.

Subject = Noun or Pronoun (plus Article) 

Verb = Action 

Object = The rest of the Sentence (if needed) 

Modifier = Adjective/Adverb 

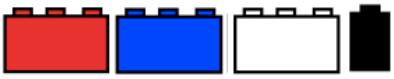
Conjunction = FANBOYS 

Chunk = The Tools listed above 

Comma  **Semicolon**  **Period/Question Mark/Exclamation** 

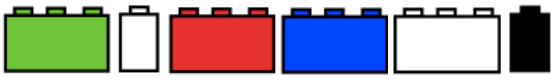
This means that the basic sentence / SVO looks like this:

I went to the store.

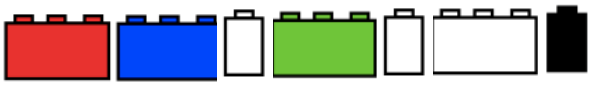


Adding Chunks to a Simple Sentence

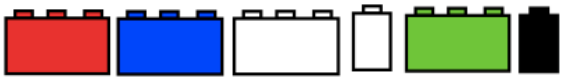
"After lunch, I went to the store."



"I went, after lunch, to the store."



"I went to the store, after lunch."



Compounds

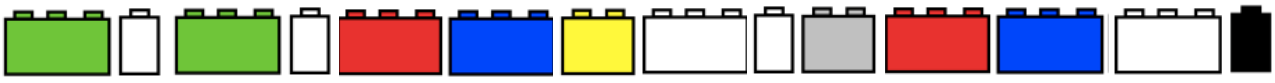
"I went to the store, and I bought some cookies."

"I went to the store; I bought some cookies."

Compound-Complex

"After lunch, I went to the store, and I bought some cookies."

"In a hurry, feeling stressed, I went quickly to the store, and I grabbed lunch."



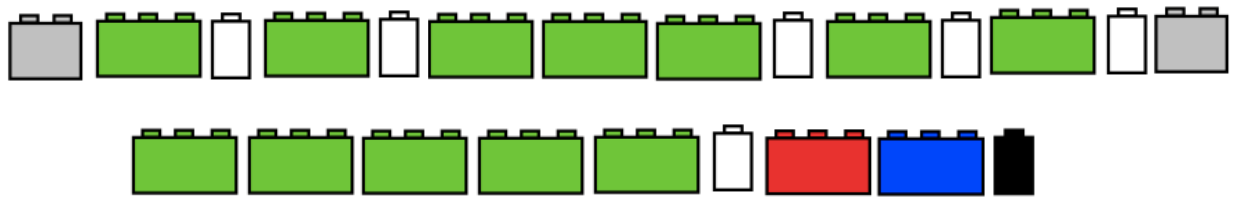
Special Sentences

Authors often use different kinds of sentences to show action or to create suspense. Without getting too overly complicated here, we can identify 4 of the most common types of sentences. Here is how they look when built using Lego Linguistics:

Periodic Sentences – here all the chunks come before the SVO, leaving the action, the verb, until the very end. Periodic sentences were once common in Literature (See Charles Dickens for example) but today have become less common. Here is an example, first in normal print form, and then in a graphic format. Notice how the details give a sense of suspense to the text:

> *"And when Jarvis Lorry saw the kindled eyes, the resolute face, the calm strong look and bearing of the man whose life always seemed to him to have been stopped, like a clock, for so many years, and then set going again with an energy which had lain dormant during the cessation of its usefulness, he believed."* -- Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Here is what this sentence looks like in Legos! Notice all the Chunks coming before the Subject.



Balanced Sentences – Instead of adding complexity to a Simple Sentence, to make a Balanced one you add symmetry. Here is where authors use parallel structures, where one part of the sentence looks like another grammatically. Why use one? The better questions is "When?" Balanced Sentences allow the author to compare and contrast two ideas, to set up an antithesis (opposites), and to make a line that is easy to remember. Politicians use this form often, as do poets, though otherwise the two have little enough in common. Again, this form was popular in the 1800's, and a bit less so now, but once you learn to recognize them, you will begin to see them more often.

> *"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich …"* -- President J F Kennedy

> *"The ambition of the novice is to acquire the Literary Language; the struggle of the adept is to get rid of it."* – George Bernard Shaw

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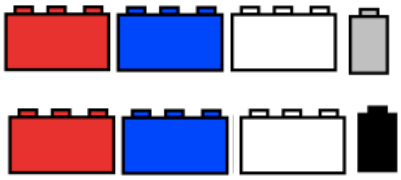
There is no real need to show one of these sentences – it is as simple as our original example of a Compound Sentence. Notice that the format is identical on both sides of the comma, which acts like a balancing point in the middle of the sentence. (Hence a Balanced Sentence, right?)
NOTE: For those of you who are overachievers, here both sides are almost equal, with the first part being a Dependent Clause which is why there is a comma and not a semicolon acting as the central balancing point.

Conj. Subject Verb Object / Chunk , Subject Verb Object / Chunk.

If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

In this example, the separate sections are equal, forming two complete sentences (SVO's / Independent Clauses) which are then separated by a semicolon for the balancing point:

"The ambition of the novice is to acquire the Literary Language;
the struggle of the adept is to get rid of it."



Fragment Though Sentence Fragments are often marked as "wrong" by English teachers everywhere, authors just as often use them in their writing to make a short quick statement for emphasis. Fragments can be jarring and simple; they can come as a break after a series of long sentences, or as a short, sharp statement, filled with the emotions of yelling, "Score," or "Watch out!" Fragments are easy to write when you don't mean to, but also useful to write when you do so on purpose. All you need do is leave out a Subject or a Verb, or start with a Dependent word – and so, write a Chunk instead of an SVO.

> *He was forever following the man in the raincoat. He stood out in the rain all night at times, shadowing the man he was paid to follow. It was a tough job, and he wasn't getting paid enough. Nope, not enough.*

"Not enough" is not enough grammatically to be a sentence. There is no S or V here. And yet, it works in the text, emphasizing the thoughts of the man in the rain. Just be careful not to do this too often.

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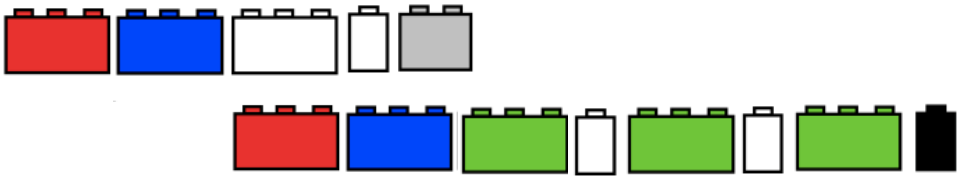
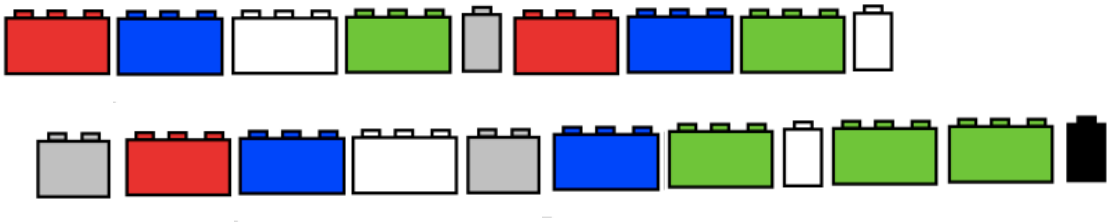
Cumulative / Loose Sentences A Cumulative Sentence (also known as a Loose Sentence) is a Chunky SVO, only more so. Cumulative Sentences accumulate (grab onto, collect) Chunks to add details to it's main SVO, which usually appears at the start. A very detailed and Chunky sentence that had the SVO at the end would be the Periodic Sentence we have already seen. This one acts like a normal SVO only it is bigger and stronger and rolls along, adding Chunks, collecting images, deepening understanding all the way until the final period. Like that. Or this:

> *Harry snapped the book shut, but the shriek went on and on, one high, unbroken, earsplitting note.* – JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*



> *He passed Filch in the doorway; Filch's pale, wild eyes looked straight through him, and Harry slipped under Filch's outstretched arm and streaked off up the corridor, the book's shrieks still ringing in his ears.* – JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*



In the end this is a Compound-Complex Sentence. However:

NOTE: What makes you call it a Cumulative Sentence is how the sentence branches off from the first SVO "He passed Filch." From there the details are added on branching always to the right, adding more and more green blocks (Chunks) to explain what happened after those first few words about "passing Filch."

NOTE: What makes this a good sentence and not a Run-on is that everything that appears in the sentence is simply added detail to that original three-word SVO.