

Task 1: X-words and Main Verbs

1. Write 20 questions that can be answered “Yes” or “No.” (For example, “Is this your pen?”) Start each question with a **different word**. Do not use the word **ought** or words that end in **-n’t**.

*The 20 Yes-No question words are called **x-words**.*

2. If you are missing some x-words, put them in their families: 3 members of the **DO** family, 3 members of the **HAVE** family and 5 members of the **BE** family. (**BE** itself is not an x-word.) The other 9 x-words are called **modals**. Put 8 of them in pairs.
3. For the **DO** and **HAVE** x-words and the modals, find the main verb following them and mark **x** for the x-word and **v** for the verb. There may not be a main verb following the **BE** x-words. Mark it if there is.

*All x-words must have a **main verb** except the **BE** family. It can have an -ing form or a participle but never a base form as main verb.*

Task 2: Hidden X-words

1. Open any book and find some short, ordinary sentences that do not seem to have an x-word. (Don’t use instructions or captions under pictures.) Copy 3 sentences of this kind and leave 5 or 6 spaces between them.
2. Turn each sentence into a Yes-No question and write it under the original statement. Then write each one as a negative statement with *-n’t* or *not*.
3. If any of your questions start with a member of the **DO** family of x-words, you have found a **hidden x-word**.

*Only 3 x-words can “hide” in a main verb:
do, does, and did.*

4. Did you find examples of all 3 hidden x-words? If not, try to make 2 or 3 more sentences of your own that have the other ones. Turn them into Yes-No questions as well.

Task 3: Trunks and Subjects

1. Write 5 short sentences in your group, leaving spaces between. Mark the x-word(s) or hidden x-word(s) in each sentence. Turn each sentence into a Yes-No question.
2. (a) Did the x-word move to the left without moving anything else?
(b) Did the sentence have just a period to begin with, no commas?
(c) Do you think it is just a subject and a predicate, nothing else? If you answered “Yes” for each sentence, that sentence is a **trunk**.

A trunk is a basic sentence unit: subject & predicate only. Every written English statement has at least 1 trunk. Every trunk will turn into a – Yes-No question.

3. Draw a box around everything between the 2 x-word positions in the sentences you found. That is the subject of the sentence.

A subject is everything between the 2 x-word positions.

Task 4: Trunks with Shifters

1. Have each person in your group contribute a short sentence about something they did in the past. Use their names as the subjects of the sentences and leave space between them.
2. Ask each person when the event took place. Recopy each sentence with its “When?” information. Then turn it into a Yes-No question.
3. Did you put the “When?” information at the beginning of any sentence? If not, try it. It should “shift” easily from front to end.

*A **shifter** is a position on both sides of a trunk for adverbials.*

4. Label the sentences with the shifter in front **FT**. Label those with the shifter at the end **TE**.
5. Rewrite some of the original trunks with different adverbials in the front or end shifter position.

Task 5: Trunks with Inserts

1. Write 2 different sentences about someone in your group. Use the person's complete name.
2. Now try to "insert" the information from the 2nd trunk next to the subject of the 1st trunk. Use a comma on each side of the insert. Label the resulting sentence **TI** (trunk with insert).

*An **insert** is extra information about something in a sentence. It goes next to the thing it adds to, and it always brings along its own punctuation: commas, dashes, parentheses, etc.*

3. Write 3 more **TI** sentences about people in your group. Try to put at least 1 insert at the end of the sentence. Also, use different punctuation and different words or symbols to introduce the insert: *who, whose, namely, especially, for example, e.g., i.e.,* etc. They try to write one final **TI** sentence that has no connector but is recognizable by its insert punctuation.

Task 6: Trunks with FANBOYS

1. Look at any text you can mark and find every example of *and, but, and so* in at least 300 words. Check to be sure each one actually joins 2 things. If it doesn't, don't count it.
2. On a separate piece of paper, write the 2 things that are joined by the examples of *and, but, and so* that you have counted: e.g. *little but mighty; It was hut, and there was dust everywhere; apples and oranges?*

FANBOYS join 2 equal structures:

F = for A = and N = nor B = but O = or Y = yet S = so

3. Do any of your FANBOYS join 2 whole trunks? (**T + T**) Do any of your FANBOYS join 2 predicates that share 1 subject? (**T=**)
4. Using the most common FANBOY, *and*, write 3 more sentences that have 2 whole trunks with different subjects. These are **T + T**. Then write 3 more with *and* and 2 predicates. These are **T=**.

Task 7: The Plus Position

1. Write a paragraph of 5 or 6 sentences about today's weather and the weather this season. Include at least 1 contradiction and some speculation about coming weather. Use shifters and inserts if you wish, but no FANBOYS.
2. Mark your paragraph with a box for the subject of its one trunk and a single parenthesis for any shifter, and highlight any insert.
3. Can you add a single word or phrase *that doesn't shift* to the very beginning of any of your sentences *except the first sentence*? The word or phrase you add probably fills the plus position.

*The **plus position** is a position for a non-shifting word or phrase that connects the meaning of a trunk to that of a previous trunk. It follows a **period** or a **semi-colon**, not a **comma**.*

Task 8: Sentence Patterns and Punctuation

1. Choose an expository text of approximately 300 words.
2. Label the pattern for each sentence right above its first word.
3. Circle any commas, colons, semi-colons, dashes, parentheses or quotation marks in the passage.
4. On a separate sheet of paper, try to match the punctuation marks you have found with particular patterns, e.g. *Use a comma at the end of the first trunk in a **T + T** sentence.*
5. Which patterns do you think generally need no punctuation besides their final period or question mark?
6. Do you see other syntactic features that need special punctuation?