**SYNTAX – OVERVIEW**

* What is syntax, anyway?
  + It is the grammatical structure of sentences – the deliberate sentence structure the author chooses to make his or her desired point.
* Why do we need to worry about syntax? What difference does it *really* make?
  + We need to examine syntax to interpret how it contributes to and enhances meaning and effect.
  + We should also examine our own syntax in order to become better writers and communicators.

Remember…

Phrases = groups of related words w/o subject, predicate, or both

Clauses = groups of related words with subject and predicate – ***can be dependent or***

***independent***

**ELEMENTS OF SYNTAX**

* **Sentence length**
  + - Staccato = one to two words, abrupt
    - Telegraphic = shorter than five words
    - Short = approx. 5-10 words
    - Medium = approx. 15-20 words
    - Long = 30 or more words
  + Consider: What variety of lengths is shown? How is it effective?
* **Number of sentences**
* **Rhythm of sentences**
* **Sentence beginnings – variety or pattern**
* **Voice – active or passive?**
* **Word order / arrangement of ideas** 
  + Are words set out in a special way for a purpose or effect?
    - Loose sentence (main point is at the beginning, “front loaded”)
      * Ex: We reached Edmonton that morning after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences.
    - Periodic sentence (main point at the end, “end loaded”)
      * Ex: That morning, after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences,we reached Edmonton.
    - Parallel structure
    - Antithesis
    - Natural order (subject before main verb)
      * Ex: Oranges grow in California.
    - Inverted order (verb before subject)
      * Ex: In California grow oranges.
    - Interrupted sentence: subordinate clauses come in the middle, set off by dashes or commas
      * Ex: These had been her teachers – stern and wild ones – and they had made her strong….
* **Sentence purpose**
  + Declarative = statements
    - Ex: The clock struck eight. She waited. Nobody came.
  + Interrogative = questions
    - Ex. Had she left only a moment too soon?
  + Imperative = commands, requests
    - Ex: Don’t leave just yet. Wait a few more minutes just to be certain.
  + Exclamatory = expressing extreme emotion
    - Ex. Her arrival was simply a miracle, reviving his fragile heart!
* **Sentence Type**
  + Simple sentences = 1 independent clause
    - Examples:
      * The price of gold rose.
      * Stock prices may fall.
      * Van Gogh painted *The Starry Night*.
  + Compound sentences = two or more independent clauses joined with coordinating conjunctions, transitional words/phrases, semicolons, or colons
    - Examples:
      * The saxophone does not belong to the brass family; in fact, it is a member of the woodwind family.
      * In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more (Hemingway).
  + Complex sentences = one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses
    - Examples:
      * After the town was evacuated, the hurricane began.
      * Town officials, who were very concerned, watched the storm.
      * Although the houses had their windows boarded up, many were still badly damaged because the intense wind tore the boards right off.
  + Compound-complex = two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause
    - Examples:
      * When small foreign imports began dominating the US automobile industry, consumers were very responsive, but American auto workers were dismayed.
* Also be sure to pay careful attention to the use of fragments and run-ons; some writers play with these in order to achieve certain effects.
* In your own writing, however, you should completely avoid the use of either fragments or run-ons. These have a place in *creative* writing, but they do not belong in formal, analytical writing such as the writing you will be doing in my class.