

# Writing Tips

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Soc Sci 172AW

# **What is wrong with this sentence?**

Howard Zinn argues that the American Revolution did not bring about radical social change, it simply replaced one elite group with another.

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Howard Zinn argues that the American Revolution did not bring about radical social change, it simply replaced one elite group with another.



**Comma splice**

# Comma splice

- A comma splice happens when you connect two independent clauses with a comma. There are three easy ways to fix this:
  - Split the sentence in two.
  - Add a conjunction
  - Add a semicolon

# Comma splice fixed

- Howard Zinn argues that the American Revolution did not really bring about radical social change. Instead, it replaced one elite group with another.
- Howard Zinn argues that the American Revolution did not really bring about radical social change because it simply replaced one elite group with another.
- Howard Zinn argues that the American Revolution did not really bring about radical social change; it simply replaced one elite group with another.

# **What is wrong with this sentences?**

Tecumseh had tried to unite Native American tribes against the US government, but Andrew Jackson had succeeded in removing them.

# What is wrong with this sentences?

Tecumseh **had** tried to unite Native American tribes against the US government, but Andrew Jackson **had** succeeded in removing them

# Past Tense

- When writing about the past, use the simple past tense (verb + ed)
  - Tecumseh **tried** to unite the Native American tribes.
- DO NOT use the past continuous tense (was + verb + ing)
  - Tecumseh **was trying** to unite the Native American tribes.
- DO NOT use the past perfect tense (had + verb + ed)
  - Tecumseh **had tried** to unite the Native American tribes.

# Past tense fixed

Tecumseh tried to unite Native American tribes against the US government, but Andrew Jackson succeeded in removing them.

# **What is wrong with this sentence?**

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**Dangling Modifier**

# Dangling participle

- The subject of a dependent clause should match the subject of the sentence.
  - The subject of “protesting racism at peaceful rallies” is “civil rights activists”
  - The subject of “the police were often violent toward civil rights activists” is “the police.”
- So, as it is, the sentence means that the police themselves were protesting racism at peaceful rallies.
- Better to say “**The police were often violent towards civil rights activists who protested racism at peaceful rallies.**”

# Dangling participles, other examples

- Acting in a very racist way, Derrick Bell describes the founding fathers' response to a black woman.
- Soaring through the sky, I watched an airplane from my office window.
- Tired from partying all weekend, the student's draft didn't meet the page requirement.

