

# Imperative Sentence

## Definition of Imperative Sentence

An imperative sentence is a type of sentence that gives instructions or advice, and expresses a command, an order, a direction, or a request. It is also known as a *jussive* or a *directive*. Depending upon its delivery, an imperative sentence may end with an exclamation mark or a period. It is usually simple and short, but could be long and complex, depending upon its [context](#).

For instance, John F. Kennedy shares a wish with his people, when he stated, “*And so, my fellow Americans: [ask](#) not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.*” (President John Kennedy in his Inaugural Address, 1961). Note that this imperative sentence is not only long, but simply and ends with a period.

## Types of Imperative Sentence

**Share a Wish or Request** – This type of imperative sentence shares polite wishes and requests with someone, such as, “Have a good day!”

**Offer an Invitation** – This type of imperative sentence extends an invitation, such as, “Please join me for dinner tonight.”

**Share a Command/Request** – This type of imperative sentence gives a command or shares a request, such as, “Stop beating the dog!”

**Give Instructions** – This type of imperative sentence gives instructions, such as, “Let him cool down, and then ask about the incident.”

## Everyday Use of Imperative Sentence

Consider vegetables over meat. (Advice)

Leave this luggage at the gate. (Direction)

Come here, check these documents, and give me your opinion. (Order)

Put it down now! (Command)

Please clean your room. (Request)

## Examples of Imperative Sentences in Literature

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### Example #1: *I have a Dream* (by Martin Luther King, Jr.)

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“You have been the veterans of creative suffering. *Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.*”

All the sentences shown in italics are imperative sentences. The tone of the [speaker](#) is to convey a sense of command, as well as advice.

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### Example #2: *At the Bottom of the River* (by Jamaica Kincaid)

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“Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don’t walk barehead in the hot sun ... when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn’t have gum on it, because that way it won’t hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it ...”

This entire passage is in imperative sentences. All of them have commanding tones. The speaker is giving instructions, requests, and commands to someone about what to do or what not to do.

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### Example #3: *Fergus and the Druid* (by William Butler Yeats)

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“Take, if you must, this little bag of dreams;  
Unloose the cord, and they will wrap you round.”

In this example, Druid offers a bag to Fergus, which is filled with dreams. This bag helps him to know all in the end. These imperative sentences have

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#### Example #4: *Self Reliance* (by Ralph Waldo Emerson)

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“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. *Speak what you think now in hard words, and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said today.*”

In this passage, the speaker is giving direction and advice to the [audience](#) regarding the importance of speaking during hard times.

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#### Example #5: *The Princess Bride* (by William Gold)

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Westley: *Give us the gate key.*

Yellin: I have no gate key.

Inigo Montoya: *Fezzik, tear his arms off.*

Yellin: Oh, you mean *this* gate key.

In the first line, the [character](#) “Westley” has requested but without using appeals. In the third line, the character has given an order to break “Yellin’s” arms.

### Function of Imperative Sentence

An imperative sentence plays an important role in writing as well as in speaking. It is not very common in literary writing, but very important in everyday conversational language. Besides this, it is commonly used in advertisements, manuals, instructions and road signs. It is more intentional as compared to an exclamatory sentence, as it requires a specific audience to be addressed. Writers mostly use imperatives to give clear and straightforward instructions, commands, or to express displeasure, likeness, fondness, and love through their writings.