

David's detailed grammar spiels:

I. Watch out for your placement of prepositional phrases and prepositions. These are the bits of language that describe how something happens. (*While playing guitar*, I broke a string. My dog keeps hiding *under the bed with my socks in his mouth*. [two prepositional phrases there]) Prepositional phrases help to make a sentence more specific, but they can be confusing if placed incorrectly. It is very easy to place the subject and verb of a sentence very far apart. It is also very easy to layer prepositional phrases and confuse the reader as to what is actually happening. Additionally, prepositional phrases can act like “red herrings” within the sentence. They can make the reader think the sentence will be about one thing, when in fact the sentence is about something else entirely. In these cases, it is often better to break the sentence apart into two, three, or more simple sentences. For example:

Before I knew about Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the man who inspired King by bringing the British Empire to its knees without so much as killing a person and mobilizing the South Asian people of my grandparents' and great-grandparents' generations to form a collective nation (a goal that was not recognized with the official division of Pakistan and India), Dr. King was my personal role model.

Mechanically, this sentence says, “Dr. King was my personal role model.” This thought is modified by the preposition “before I knew about Gandhi.” However, by starting the sentence with the prepositional phrase “Before I knew about . . .” and then including a 52-word description of Gandhi, the reader expects the sentence, mechanically, to be about Gandhi. It might be better to have two sentences: 1 about King and Gandhi; 1 describing Gandhi.

II. Watch out for separating the subject and the verb by long stretches of description. Also watch out for putting the verb (and the subject) at the end of the sentence. This can make it hard for the reader to know what he is reading about. It is easier to have the subject and verb up front to give the sentence a solid context. For example:

The principles of determination through hardship, greater cooperation between all peoples, and using nonviolent means to achieve various ideals are principles for which I have the utmost reverence, and have since that young age.

In this sentence, the subject is *I* (24th word in sentence) and the verb is *have* (25th). It would be much clearer to say:

Since that young age, I have had the utmost reverence for the principles of determination through hardship . . .

III. There are a lot of word constructions in English that don't actually say anything. *In order to* communicates nothing more than simply *To*. *In fact* or *What were* can be replaced by just stating that something *is*. And some constructions can be simplified. *In the town where I come from* can be *My hometown*. *The ideas of Bill* can be *Bill's ideas*.

[Also, in the sentence containing *In the town where I come from*, notice the placement of the subject and verb (*the messages can*) at the end of the sentence.]

Yellow = problem

Orange = addition

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...'" [Watch out for hyperlinks] – Martin Luther King Jr., *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, 1963.

Most children are taught from a young age to admire and respect the great American civil rights leaders, but for many the reasons for this near-immortalization are not so clear. In the town where I come from, an affluent suburb of Hartford, Connecticut, where most inhabitants are Caucasian, wealthy, and don't have too many interactions with people of other races, the messages can be especially lost or taken for granted. Despite all the forces that may have held me back from understanding Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s declaration of rights and equality, I still felt his the influence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s declaration of rights and equality from that my first kindergarten lesson on him. As the son of immigrant parents from India who work intimately with the diverse yet politically, economically, and racially polarized towns and cities of the greater Hartford area, Dr. King always modeled for me how a human could bring people together into causes for the greater good [Confusing syntax: almost sounds as if Dr. King was the son of immigrant parents from India.]. Dr. King was my personal role model before I knew about Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the man who inspired King by bringing the

British Empire to its knees without so much as killing a person and mobilizing the South Asian people of my grandparents' and great-grandparents' generations to form a collective nation (a goal that was not recognized with the official division of Pakistan and India), ~~Dr. King was my personal role model.~~

The principles of determination through hardship, greater cooperation between all peoples, and using nonviolent means to achieve various ideals are principles for which I have the utmost reverence, and have since that young age. My application of such principles to the real world did not begin to have grounding in reality until I was ~~about~~ in middle school and had to apply them to my every-day life. During this time, a short period of only two or three years, I had my perceptions of reality shattered over and over again. Though I suppose now that this was just an ~~effect~~ ~~affect~~ of the regular trends of adolescent emotion, I struggled during this time with issues of racial identity. In a town that, as I mentioned before, is largely white and homogenous, I found it very difficult to come to terms with my own heritage and, when that finally happened, place myself in the context of this town I had lived in for my entire life but never understood until that point. I also felt ~~what were~~ the first and most prominent examples of racism in my life as a bully [*in my life as a bully* reads as if you were the bully!], probably acting not out of racism but anger camouflaged as hatred, labeled me with racial epithets more commonly known through *The Simpsons* and *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*. As a lot of this also happened in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the ensuing invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, I was further singled out by some of my more bigoted classmates as “one of them” (though now the absurdity of associating a Hindu and an Indian with Arab, Islamic terrorism sometimes makes me chuckle). Thus, the rapidly changing world combined

with the strange new development of a racial identity that didn't fit with the rest of picture-perfect Avon, Connecticut, put me in a position that often left me feeling disenfranchised and that I, really, did not belong. [The last three sentences here need some syntactical work. Refer to my grammar comments above for hints.]

So where do Dr. King's philosophies come in to play? About at this point, [Which point? Middle School? Kindergarten? You have to clarify within each paragraph where you are in time.] as I became very interested in my ancestral culture and learned more about Gandhiji, I discovered that Dr. King's methods of protest were a direct descendant from those of the Satyagraha philosophy. It became apparent to me that, through the same principles, I could conquer the oppression of my own insecurities and the naïve yet bigoted atmosphere around me. I have always maintained a pride in my culture, along with understanding that its most prominent historical figure founded the nation in nonviolence (though the considerable communal violence that even he eventually succumbed to should not be ignored) the same way that Dr. King led a movement for equality of all peoples, that, unfortunately, the opposition end of claimed his life later on.

I learned a lot about how to deal with situations from Dr. King. His own sense of determination and hard work for a hopeful gain influenced me greatly in my desire to continue working hard in school, as well as the nonprofit work I do in the Hartford area to help the underserved, immigrants, and refugees, as well as raise voter awareness in the state among all population groups. His principles of cooperation helped me to reconcile my many friendships with people of other races with the way I felt as an Indian-American. His successes with the use of non-violence, in the face of growing physical violence amongst teens in both the malevolent and joking varieties, aided me through a

period of physical and emotional bullying, as well as a lot of bigotry and joke-related violence from my friends. His insight opened doors into new worlds for humankind, and the application of this insight to my life has made all the difference between leading a mundane, self-serving existence and working to make the world a better place.

Upon the eve of my adult life, I know not the direction that the **E**arth will take, whether equal justice will be granted to all peoples or if oppression will reign supreme over the masses. What I do know is that Dr. King's message cannot and will not die, for it has left too strong of an impression on all Americans and people of the world, whether we realize it or not, that can never be ignored.