



Sentence Structure Techniques for National 5 English

Below you will find our list of sentence structure/punctuation techniques that we feel is worth learning ahead of your National 5 English RUAЕ paper. You may be asked to comment on some of these if you are asked directly about “sentence structure” or in “use of language questions”.

Types of Sentences

Short sentence: used for IMPACT or to sum up a key point. *“There is only one cake left. You’ve got to have it.”*

Listing: to highlight the extent of the situation/variety of things/can be used to heighten the positive or negative tone. *“The grassy lawn was, filled with insects, wild flowers, various grasses, saplings and potted plants.”*

Repetition: to emphasise and reinforce an idea; to help build to a climax. *“Time after time he lets me down”.*

Minor sentences: a sentence which isn’t grammatically correct as it lacks the verb or the subject. Used for emphasis/heightening an emotion/draw attention to something. *“Gutted.”*

Parenthesis: to add extra information; to add an aside to make clear the writer’s viewpoint. *“Outdoor diners in England, (though many consider brave due to the weather) are in fact, stupid.”*

Rhetorical question: to make a point or a strong, emphatic statement designed to make you agree with them. *“Who wouldn’t want to see war eradicated?”*

Inversion (changing normal word order): to place emphasis on the words at the start or end of the sentence by changing the normal word order. *“Forward you must pass”*

Complex sentence: a longer sentence with dependent clauses. *Tiddles, our house cat, pawed the mouse, threw it into the air and licked - as it worked up to the final, fatal bite.*

Command: a sentence in which an order is made. *Hand me the book.*

Question: a question that is asked hoping for an answer. *Which team has scored the most runs?*

Exclamation: a sentence that includes an exclamation mark and shows passion or urgency. *I've asked you to stop doing that!*

Punctuation

Another aspect of **sentence structure** is punctuation. You may wish to comment on the use of punctuation such as colons, semi-colons, dashes, parenthesis and inverted commas.

Inverted Commas

Can be used to mark off a word or a phrase from the rest of the passage to suggest **irony** or humour.

In Victorian times foreign travel was the preserve of the "superior" classes.

The inverted commas around 'superior' distances the author from this word showing that he/she believes the opposite of what he/she seems to say – this is **irony**.

Colons are used for three main purposes:

- To introduce a list. *We need the following items: bread, milk, water, soup and eggs.*
- To introduce an explanation or example. They point the reader's attention forward. *The government had struggled for one main reason: the rise in unemployment.*
- To add emphasis. *She had one purpose: to get the job.*

Semi-colons are used for three main purposes:

- To separate items in a list if the list already contains commas. This is to avoid confusion. *There were many things to do: cut the grass in the front garden; weed all of the vegetable patch, including the asparagus; deadhead the roses, in particular the pink ones; clean out the pool and spray the leaves to get rid of the Green Fly.*
- To connect short sentences that are closely connected. *It was a cold day; we decided to stay indoors.*

- To show contrast.
You may be delighted; I am disappointed.

A single dash is used for two main purposes:

- To add on an extra piece of information at the end of a sentence.
He ran all the way home to check the football results – he had been a supporter since he was five.
- To show a breathless pause or breaking off in a sentence.
It was a long time ago – and I was a different person back then.
- Or can create a dramatic pause/bring emphasis to a dramatic point.
It was horrific – truly horrific.

Parenthesis

- Indicated by a pair of commas, dashes or brackets. Used to add extra information.
The young man – who had just won the lottery – was singing in the street.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has announced the sacking of the political correspondent, Nick Robinson. Huge crowds, which had been gathering from all over the UK, descended on Broadcasting House to celebrate.
- Sometimes it can be used to offer the writer's opinion on the topic they are writing about. *Outdoors diners in England (though I do respect their bravery) are, in fact, lunatics.*

Repetition

- A key word or expression is repeated by the writer, usually to emphasise an idea or to build up to a climax. *Down and down the fighter planes swarmed – screaming down and spreading panic.*

