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Unacademy is India's largest online learning platform. Download our apps to start learning Call us and we will answer all your questions about learning on Unacademy by Craig Shrives This Page Includes... An imperative sentence is a sentence that gives a direct command. It can end in a period (full stop) or an exclamation mark, depending on the forcefulness of the command. Tidy your room! Please tidy your room. Shut up! Please keep the noise down. Consider the lily. Forceful commands end with an exclamation mark. Get out! Watch your mouth, young man! Go, and never darken my towels again! (Comedian Groucho Marx) Polite or gentle commands end with a period (full stop). Pass the pepper. Don't forget to feed the pony. If you've heard this story before, don't stop me, because I'd like to hear it again. (Groucho Marx) A child of five would understand this. Send someone to fetch a child of five. (Groucho Marx) (Here, only the second sentence is an imperative sentence, i.e. a command.) Commands in the form of advice also end with a period. Don't count the days. Make the days count. (Boxer Muhammad Ali) Do not condemn the judgement of another because it differs from your own. (Philosopher Dandemis) Be aware that not every sentence that ends with an exclamation mark is an imperative sentence. Exclamatory sentences, which are used to deliver a jolt of emotion, end in exclamation marks too. I came first, Lee! (This is an exclamatory sentence conveying the emotions of joy and surprise.) Shut up! (Of course, this could be an imperative sentence, but this expression is also used to mean "no way!", in which case it's an exclamatory sentence expressing surprise. You'll know from context, not the exclamation mark, whether the person is being hostile or astonished.) The main verb in an imperative sentence is said to be in the imperative mood. In grammar, mood is the form a verb takes to show how it is to be regarded (e.g., as a fact, a command, a wish, an uncertainty.) There are three moods in English: the imperative mood, indicative mood, and the subjunctive mood. Read more about mood. In English, the verb in an imperative sentence uses the bare infinitive form (i.e., the version without "to"). Example 1: Infinitive form: to run Bare infinitive form: to run Imperative verb: Run to the hills. Example 2: Infinitive form: to be Bare infinitive form: to be Imperative verb: Be the best version of yourself. Example 3: Infinitive form: to do Bare infinitive form: to do Imperative verb: If you've heard this story before, do not stop me, because I'd like to hear it again. (Groucho Marx) Notice that an imperative verb does not have a subject. The subject is "you," but it is implied. It is never used. On the whistle, you jump in the lake. (The subject "you" is implied, not used.) For the rest of the day, you be the best version of yourself. (The subject "you" is implied, not used.) Here are some examples of other sentence types: Declarative Sentence A declarative sentence states a fact or an argument and ends with a period (full stop). For example: Lee has caught another wheelk. Getting older is no problem. You just have to live long enough. (Groucho Marx) (These are all declarative sentences.) Interrogative Sentence An interrogative sentence asks a question. It ends with a question mark (?). For example: Is that another wheelk, Lee? Why should I care about posterity? What's posterity ever done for me? (Groucho Marx) Exclamatory Sentence An exclamatory sentence expresses excitement or emotion. It ends with an exclamation mark (!). For example: I've hooked another wheelk! (Conveys surprise.) Either he's dead, or my watch has stopped! (Groucho Marx) (Conveys candidness.) Read more about the sentence types. There are two good reasons to think about imperative sentences. When writing an imperative sentence, be mindful of how much force an exclamation mark adds. Be there at seven. Be there at seven! Never use more than one exclamation mark! (That point is nearly worth two exclamation marks, but, actually, nothing is.) The subject of an imperative sentence is an implied "you" (either singular or plural). This means you can pair your verb with "yourself" or "yourselves." For example: Please help yourself, mate. (Here, the implied "you" is singular. Please (you) help yourself.) Ladies and gentlemen, please chat among yourselves. (Here, the implied "you" is plural. Please (you) chat among yourselves.) You cannot, however, pair your imperative verb with any other words of that type, e.g., "myself," "himself," "herself," and "ourselves." (These are known as reflexive pronouns or emphatic pronouns.) Please contact your manager or myself with any suggestions. (It should be "me" not "myself.") Allow myself to introduce myself. (This is from "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery". Only the first "myself" is wrong. It should be "me" not "myself.") You can only pair your imperative verb with "yourself" or "yourselves." Knock yourself out. Do it yourself. Please email Irene or myself. (Should be me.) Never use more than one exclamation mark. Here is an 8-minute video summarizing this lesson on imperative sentences: Find Us Quicker! When using a search engine (e.g., Google, Bing), you will find Grammar Monster quicker if you add #gm to your search term. Next lesson > In order to continue enjoying our site, we ask that you confirm your identity as a human. Thank you very much for your cooperation. Imperative sentences are how you communicate the things you need others around you to do. When you tell your friend where to pick you up after work, when you teach your new colleague how to perform their job duties, and even when you tell your dog to sit, you're using imperative sentences. Grammarly helps you communicate confidently What is an imperative sentence? When you make a request, offer advice, issue a command, or give an instruction, you use the imperative mood. Sentences that use the imperative mood are known as imperative sentences. To put it bluntly, an imperative sentence is a sentence that tells somebody to do something. That "somebody" doesn't necessarily have to be another person—when you use voice commands with virtual assistants such as Alexa and Google Assistant, you're using imperative sentences. Similarly, when you tell your dog to sit, stay, leave it, or come, you're speaking in imperative sentences. Here are some examples of imperative sentences: Remember to pick up the dry cleaning today. Tell me if I should go to Hawaii or Alaska for my summer vacation. Leave the book under my doormat. Imperative sentences are just one kind of sentence. Others include: Declarative sentences Exclamatory sentences Interrogative sentences A declarative sentence is a sentence that makes a statement. This statement can be a fact or an opinion. Here are two examples of declarative sentences: German Shepherds are big dogs. Sushi is delicious. Sometimes, it's not always clear whether a sentence is imperative or declarative. Consider this: You need to put your phone away. Although this sentence tells the listener what they need to do, it's not directly commanding them to put their phone away. Because of this, it's a declarative sentence. An imperative version of this sentence would be "Put your phone away." An exclamatory sentence is a sentence that expresses a heightened emotion. This kind of sentence always ends with an exclamation point, like these: I love ice cream! We won! An interrogative sentence is a sentence that asks a question. Here are two interrogative sentences: When is the band going to start? May I have a cookie? An imperative sentence that makes a request isn't the same as an interrogative sentence. Think about the difference between these two sentences: Please join me in the study. Could you join me in the study? While the first one, an imperative sentence, firmly tells the listener what the speaker wants them to do, the second feels more open-ended and implies that the speaker would accept either "yes" or "no" as an answer. The listener can certainly say "no" to the first sentence, but doing so—especially when the asker is a supervisor or another person in a position of power over the listener—can feel like an act of noncompliance and thus awkward. We talk more about lessening the awkwardness that can come with imperative sentences later on in this post. Imperative sentence examples An imperative sentence can tell its subject to do (or not do) just about anything. Take a look at a few more examples: Don't answer the door unless your parents are home. Please open with care. Judge the submissions by their artistic merit, not their technical skill. Affirmative vs. negative imperative sentences Imperative sentences come in two forms: affirmative and negative. An affirmative imperative sentence tells the reader or listener to take a specific action. Here are a few examples: Put your plate in the sink. Ask the teacher about last night's homework. Call me! A negative imperative sentence tells the reader or listener to not do something. Examples of these include: Don't touch the thermostat. Never judge someone before knowing their story. Stop making that noise. Conditional imperative sentences Although most of the example sentences we've used so far are simple, one-clause sentences, don't assume every imperative sentence is this brief. An imperative sentence can have multiple clauses, and in many cases, these multi-clause sentences are conditional sentences. A conditional sentence is a sentence that illustrates a cause and its (guaranteed, likely, or even highly unlikely) effect. Take a look at these examples of conditional imperative sentences: If you miss the bus, call an Uber. When you hear your name, raise your hand. Imperative sentence structure Imperative sentences nearly always start with imperative verbs. Imperative verbs are the root forms of verbs that, when followed by the objects of their sentences, form imperative sentences. Take a look at the imperative verbs bolded in these examples: Follow me. Go back to school. Walk on the right side of the pathway. As you can see, the verb usually comes first in an imperative sentence. But this isn't always the case. Take a look at where the verb fits into these examples: Make sure you understand why we do this exercise. Please don't spoil the movie. Typically, the subject of an imperative sentence is implied. In some imperative sentences, an indirect object also follows the verb. In others, there is no indirect object. And in some imperative sentences, like these, the verb is the entire sentence: An imperative sentence always ends with either a period or an exclamation point. How to soften imperative sentences The following imperative sentence could land as rude: "Don't tell me what to do." One challenge writers often run into with imperative sentences is that they can come across as bossy, even when the writer doesn't mean for them to be. This is especially true when you're communicating via text or email because you can't use your tone of voice or body language to soften the request. So how can you tell people to do things without sounding like you're barking orders at them? There are a few ways, and the right way for a given sentence depends on a few factors: The request or direction you're giving Your relationship to the listener/reader The circumstances under which you're stating the imperative sentence The subject the sentence concerns Generally, adding the word "please" to an imperative sentence instantly makes its tone more polite. Compare these sentences: Turn off the lights. Please turn off the lights. With a request, another way to soften your sentence's tone is to turn it into a question: Please seat our party near the window. Could you please seat our party near the window? In this case, it stops being an imperative sentence, but it achieves the same goal of making a request to the listener. What about situations where you need to make a direct instruction? Context can help. For example, if your party invitation simply states, "Don't park in our driveway," this could be interpreted as cold and rude. But if you follow it up with the reason for the command with something like, "Don't park in our driveway: it's a shared driveway and our neighbors need to be able to get in and out during the party," your tone instantly changes from demanding to approachable. Navigating tone can be tricky in written communication, especially when you're communicating with people who've never met you face-to-face. If you ever aren't sure how a sentence or a longer piece of text will come across to its reader, try reading it aloud and listening to its tone. It can also be helpful to have another person read your writing and tell you how your tone comes across. Don't use emojis to soften your tone except for in very casual conversation. While you might interpret an emoji one way, your recipient might interpret it completely differently—and potentially perceive you as smug, condescending, or mocking. Stick to softening your tone with politeness when necessary, but don't convolute your writing with excessive niceties. This only makes your message less clear, which is the exact opposite of what you need when you're using imperative sentences. Grammarly can also help you determine if your tone is impolite and can be softened. Grammarly's tone detector will flag when your writing veers into unfriendly territory, and our tone suggestions can offer help for adjusting your wording to help make your sentences, imperative or not, be interpreted as polite. Imperative sentence FAQs What is an imperative sentence? An imperative sentence is a sentence that gives the reader an instruction, makes a request, or issues a command. How do you make a sentence imperative? To make a sentence imperative, use an imperative verb. This is the root form of a verb followed by an instruction to the subject to take a specific action. What are examples of an imperative sentence? Call your sister on Friday. Please pass the salt. Stop crying and do something about it. Can an imperative sentence also be a declarative, interrogative, or exclamatory sentence? No. Each type of sentence achieves a specific goal, and when a sentence tells the listener to do something specific, it's an imperative sentence.



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