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Grammar explained

The **exclamation mark** is used after an exclamation (*Goodness, that's amazing!*) or interjection (*Ouch!*). It indicates a strong feeling or powerful utterance. It indicates to the reader how that sentence should be read or spoken, with the inflection moving upwards suggesting forcefulness.

Stop! You can't do that; it's too dangerous. Stop!

- 1 Read the letter to the editor below. Find and highlight the seven exclamation marks in this text.
- 2 What difference, if any, would replacing the exclamation marks with full stops have on the effect of the sentences on you as the reader and the way in which you read them?

- 3 What might the risks be of overusing the exclamation mark?

Language in use

- 4 Read the letter to the editor and answer the questions that follow.

Dear Sir/Madam

What is wrong with teenagers today? Despite all the so-called advances in communication, they are utterly socially inept! If they are not staring like drones at walls of plasma screens, they are grasping the remote of some console where they play fake tennis against fake people and pretend like it is doing them good! They 'chat' endlessly on MySpace sending fake kisses to fake friends and pretend like they are popular. They hang onto their phones like they are defibrillating machines; talking to the voice on the other end when they have real people sitting with them who have taken the time to do so and are rewarded for that effort by waiting for the ignoramus to get off the damn phone!

In person they are reticent, staring through real people like they are pixilated, unable to make meaningful eye contact or have a conversation about anything that isn't punctuated by 'like' every two seconds. It's 'like' really annoying! They have the attention span of a gnat, the vocabulary of an average 3-year-old and the general knowledge of my budgie! For all that communication they know nothing about what is going on in their world. In this global village we now inhabit these guys are primates living somewhere remote from which they can't see the village, let alone be citizens in it!

If this generation of technology-rich, communication-poor people is the future, it will be a very quiet one. As parents we need to turn technology off to turn their brains on. Like us, schools need to lead, not follow. Allowing these technologies to creep like hobyahs into classrooms will dismantle civilisation as we know it. We must make a stand for intelligence, communication and knowledge before it is too late for all of us!

- a What is the author's contention (main point under dispute)?

- b Who do you think is the intended audience of this piece? Why do you think so?

c What is the topic of the first paragraph?

d What is the topic of the second paragraph?

e What word would you use to describe the mood (tone) of the first two paragraphs of the letter?

f The tone changes in the last paragraph. What is the new tone and why do you think it changed here?

g Of the seven exclamation marks, one is less appropriate than the others. Which one is it and why is it less appropriate?

h Do you think the author is exaggerating? Where and why do you think so?

Vocabulary builder

5 The author of the letter to the editor presents young people in a very poor light and uses strong attacking language to do so. What would happen to the power of the letter to persuade if that language was softened? Provide a softer alternative for each expression in the table. Two examples have been provided.

	Original text	Softened version
a	they are utterly socially inept	<i>they are socially challenged they are not as socially capable as others may be</i>
b	staring like drones	
c	pretend like they are popular	
d	ignoramus	
e	reticent	
f	attention span of a gnat	

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g	vocabulary of an average 3-year-old	
h	general knowledge of my budgie	
i	these guys are primates	
j	creep in like hobyahs	

- 6 If you are looking to persuade, which of the two versions in question 5 is more persuasive and why?

Building on language

Persuasive techniques

Letters to the editor, like the one on page 1, usually present personal points of view. Often readers have been personally affected by the situation at the heart of the issue and they write passionately from that position. Therefore they make extensive use of emotive persuasive techniques, which are writing conventions designed for a particular purpose; in this case, to persuade. There are several persuasive techniques:

- * **metaphor**—used to draw a direct comparison between two things to bring an image/idea to the mind of the reader without needing to write out a full description; for example, ‘the unfaithful boyfriend was a rat’ (see Unit 6)
- * **simile**—used to draw an indirect comparison between two things in the same way as a metaphor does, but includes ‘like’ or ‘as’ to indicate that it is not a metaphor (It is a softer metaphor.)
- * **repetition**—the use of a repeated word or idea to emphasise a significant point the author is trying to make
- * **inclusive/exclusive language**—to include the reader, an author might use ‘us’ or ‘we’ a lot; to exclude, an author might use ‘they’ or ‘them’ to indicate separateness
- * **allusion**—in much the same way as a metaphor works to deepen our understanding of something without having to describe it, an allusion makes direct or indirect reference to another known idea, person, place, text or event, and what is known is then part of the description of the idea or person in the text (see Unit 10)
- * **cliché**—a well-used phrase, the meaning of which is known by the general population without requiring any further explanation; for example, ‘you could have knocked me down with a feather’
- * **rhetorical question**—a question to which the answer is so obvious, it needs no answer; used to drive an author’s key point home
- * **sarcasm**—saying the opposite of what is sincerely meant and doing so to belittle or humiliate; for example, referring to a piece of art that is generally considered terrible

as a 'masterpiece' is being sarcastic (Sarcasm only works if the reader knows the opposite to be true, so the sarcastic expression is often put in inverted commas to indicate clearly that it is so.)

7 Re-read the letter to the editor on page 1 and complete the following questions.

a Locate and underline the following persuasive techniques in the letter:

- i four metaphors
- ii four similes
- iii repetition of one particular word
- iv inclusive and exclusive language; who is 'us' and who is 'they' in the letter
- v one allusion
- vi one cliché
- vii one rhetorical question
- viii two expressions of sarcasm.

b In your notebook, explain how each persuasive technique is used by the author to affect the reader. For example:

They have the attention span of a gnat ...

This metaphor insults young people's intelligence by comparing them to a tiny insect that has, therefore, a tiny brain.

c List the eight persuasive techniques in order from the most effective (made you react a lot) to the least effective (didn't move you much).

- i _____
- ii _____
- iii _____
- iv _____
- v _____
- vi _____
- vii _____
- viii _____

d Compare your list with others in your class. Did they differ and, if so, how would you explain those differences?



When we feel really passionate about something, we can come on too strong and too fast. If the reader doesn't agree with you, they may disengage immediately rather than read or listen to what you have to say. So, build arguments—don't yell.

Sample pages

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Grammar explained

The **ellipsis** (plural is *ellipses*) is three full stops in a row (...). It is used particularly when quoting from other sources to inform the reader that some of the original text has been left out, usually because it is either irrelevant or ineffective. For example:

When I think about what happened to her, I get filled with such rage from this overwhelming sense of injustice that I don't know what to do with myself. And then I look at her, how she is so accepting and understanding, and the rage disappears because she needs me to be there for her.

Choosing what to put in and leave out using ellipsis points can make a significant difference to the text you end up with.

Smith was arrested this morning, charged with assault. She was heard to have commented that she often would be '... filled with such rage from this overwhelming sense of injustice that I don't know what to do with myself'. It would appear from her statement that she found a way to express that rage.

Or:

Smith was arrested this morning, charged with assault. She was heard to have commented that, while she was often '... filled with such rage from this overwhelming sense of injustice ...', that rage '... dissipates because she needs me to be there for her'. She will be fighting the charges.

QUESTION DID YOU KNOW?

Politicians often tell us that they were 'taken out of context' when they are quoted back at themselves. Ellipses might have been used to do that. (Or maybe the politicians are telling fibs?)

So it is vital that you use the original text in a way that reflects the original author's feelings about the subject or issue. In other words, it should be in the same context as the original.

- 1 Choose four phrases from four different sentences in the excerpt of the report 'Dealing with Bullies' in question 2. Create a paragraph on your knowledge of bullies in which you quote from each of those sentences. Because these are phrases, you must use an ellipsis to indicate text you have omitted from each sentence.

Language in use

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- 2 Read the excerpt from the report 'Dealing with Bullies' and answer the questions that follow.

Bullies are people who abuse their power to the detriment of others. The definition offered by some educational institutions is that bullying consists of '... persistently negative attacks ...', which are '... typically unpredictable, irrational and often unseen'. While some bullies exert their power through physical means, others do so through mental torment, exclusion and humiliation. The accepted profile of a bully suggests that they are deeply insecure people with little self-esteem who have often suffered as a victim of bullying themselves. In short, they hurt others before those others can hurt them. In some ways, therefore, they may deserve our sympathy because they are fixed in their position of hurting others whether they want to continue the practice or not. However, there are some bullies that do '... find satisfaction in causing injury and suffering to other students ...'. This is alarming because it suggests a sadistic tendency that could, if left unchecked, result in more malicious and dangerous behaviour. These bullies need special care in counselling to rebalance that skewed view of themselves in relation to others. What makes the problem even more difficult is the fact that many bullies, particularly girls, are socially very pleasant—to teachers even sycophantically pleasant—so that it is '... often difficult for adults to discover or even imagine that these students engage in bullying behaviour'. Irrespective of why the bullying occurs, it is generally agreed that bullies must be '... held accountable ...' for their actions and the hurt suffered by victims be recognised and dealt with by psychologists and school counsellors. In the end, though, bullies are people who need our help as much as do the victims who suffer as a result of their antisocial behaviours.

- a Define the following words.

- i detriment _____
- ii exert _____
- iii sadistic _____
- iv malicious _____
- v sycophantically _____
- vi irrespective _____

- b Define bullying.

- c Explain how 'sycophantically pleasant' girls make bullying hard to detect.

- d Given that none of the piece is actually about something good or nice, what effect does the word 'alarming' have on you as the reader? What is alarming the author here?

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- e The first use of ellipsis takes two quotes from the same text and takes out the middle. Write what might have been in between them.

Vocabulary builder

- 3 The author of 'Dealing with Bullies' attempts to see the issue of bullying objectively but there are few who do see it that way. Our experiences (whether we are bullied, a bully, or friends of either) colour how we see bullies and victims. What language would you use to describe the bully, the victim and the atmosphere in a school during an episode of bullying? Using both a dictionary and a thesaurus, complete the table.

The bully	The victim	The atmosphere
<i>Cruel</i>	<i>Nervous</i>	<i>Tense</i>
<i>Malevolent</i>	<i>Afraid</i>	<i>Stressful</i>

- 4 Using at least ten words from question 3, write a highly descriptive paragraph about a bullying situation.



It is often more interesting to write from the opposite position than the one the reader expects; for example, to write as the bully rather than the victim. Even more interesting would be to become an object in the schoolyard (for example, a basketball ring or a piece of playground equipment) and write from that perspective.

Building on language

Informative writing

The main feature of informative writing is that it seeks to inform the reader about a particular topic but with no interest in persuading the reader to accept a given point of view on it. At times it may seem as if there is a point of view but ultimately it should present all aspects of the subject without bias towards any one side.

- 5 Re-read the excerpt from 'Dealing with Bullies'. Do you think the author has only written information or is there an opinion too? Where do you find the opinion?

- 6 While students often think informative writing needs to sound like an encyclopaedia, informative writing really should be interesting to read too and can be quite descriptive because description deepens our understanding. Complete the table, identifying four facts from the excerpt on page 6, the descriptive words the author uses and how they affect your understanding as a reader.

Fact	Descriptive language	Effect
<i>Bullies have power over others.</i>	<i>Abuse Detriment</i>	<i>Abuse gives you the impression of hurting someone, while detriment makes you think the bully knows they are hurting someone.</i>

- 7 Informative writing should always be in the present tense. What difference would it make if it was in the past tense? Rewrite two lines from the excerpt in the past tense.

- 8 It is also important not to use pronouns such as 'I' or 'we' in informative writing. Why do you think that is?

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Grammar explained

Colons are punctuation marks used to indicate that a list, an explanation or a definition is to follow. The colon implies 'and they are' or 'here they are'.

* List

We need five sports for the sports day: soccer, hockey, football, tennis and cricket.

If you replace the colon with words, it would be:

*We need five sports for the sports day **and they are** soccer, hockey, football, tennis and cricket.*

You cannot use both the colon and words in this case.

* Explanation

I need your help: unclip the guide rope, hook it onto the sail and pull towards the port side.

* Definition

That is an adjective: a describing word.

Semicolons are used to indicate a direct relationship between two independent clauses (clauses that could stand as sentences by themselves). Using a semicolon allows the reader to deduce the nature of that relationship.

Jane was up; Brian was down.

These two people are in different states but the context should tell you whether or not they are happy that way. If it is not an unpleasant situation, the semicolon replaces 'and', but it if is an unpleasant situation, the semicolon might replace 'but'.

Jane was up and Brian was down. (They might be on a carnival ride.)

Jane was up but Brian was down. (This may refer to their moods on a particular occasion.)

Semicolons are also used directly preceding transitional words such as 'however' or 'therefore', which move the understanding from one idea or mood to another.

Jackson was selfish; however, he did give up his seat to the elderly woman.

- 1 Write one sentence for each use of a colon and semicolon that clearly demonstrates its specific use.

- a Colon for a list:

- b Colon for an explanation:

c Colon for a definition:

d Semicolon for a relationship:

e Semicolon for a transition:

Language in use

2 Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

Participation in sport is unquestionably good for you—physically, mentally and even emotionally. If we accept this statement as true, there remains one question; what sport is best for you? A team sport or an individual sport?

Team sports: sports involving groups of like-minded individuals, have the advantage of bringing together a range of people who you might not otherwise meet. Participation in team sports enables you, therefore, to meet new people and potentially make new friends. On the field, team-mates encourage you to strive for them and for you. They cheer you on and give you a tremendous feeling of satisfaction; however, this is not so positive when you don't meet their expectations. It allows you to support others in their pursuits too. For some this is a positive thing; for others it is not so positive.

An individual sport has the advantage of relying only on yourself. There is nobody to share the adulation with; nobody to blame but yourself in failure. In the absence of a group it is possible to push yourself to higher achievement; however, there have been occasions where the pushing became obsessive and dangerous. There are many individual sports: running, cycling, swimming and field athletics to name but a few. Getting motivated is the key to getting started; personal pride is often the driver after that.

Whatever you decide to do, the advice is basic: get out, get active and have some fun!

a There are three colons in this passage. In order, for what are they used?

i _____ **ii** _____ **iii** _____

b There are six semicolons. In order, for what are they used?

i _____ **ii** _____ **iii** _____

iv _____ **v** _____ **vi** _____

c Rewrite either the second or third paragraph in a way that eliminates the colons and semicolons.

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While you need to use punctuation correctly, in texts that are more descriptive or narrative, the colon is often jarring on the reader. It can be an effective tool, or disturb the flow of your writing. Use it with care.

Vocabulary builder

3 Both expository and informative writing often require us to use the correct terminology of the topic. If the topic is really technical, we may have to use jargon. Without the correct terminology we will not sound like an authority on the matter. Computer technology is a good example of the need to use jargon.

a Complete the table, inserting the jargon appropriate to the description.

	Non-technical language	Technical language/jargon
i	The television that sits on the desk that you use to see what your computer is doing	<i>Monitor</i>
ii	The panel with all the letters and numbers and punctuation and stuff on it	
iii	The thing that shows you your position in a document	
iv	The whatsit that you can carry around with all your stuff on it and plug into any computer to see your stuff	
v	The hole in the computer that you put that whatsit into	
vi	The box that sits under the desk that all the bits are plugged into	
vii	The drawer that opens up for you to put your CD on	
viii	The hole that you put your headphones into	

b Rewrite the following sentences without the jargon. What is the effect on your text's authority?

Computers are remarkable instruments. The clarity of the *monitor* makes organising work easy, the *data* is stored safely on the *hard drive* where only something terrible will make it crash. Most are familiar with how to work a *mouse*, a *disc drive* and a *USB port*, enabling swift usage and delivery of text.
