



Writing Tip Wednesday

NCEH/ATSDR Writer-Editor Services

“I love the Writing Tip Wednesday! I would like to suggest one on the appropriate use of ‘comprise.’
Thanks!”

The parts compose the whole.

“Compose” is written in passive voice:

-- A pizza is composed of eight slices.

The whole comprises the parts.

“Comprise” is written in active voice:

-- A pizza comprises eight slices.

compose, comprise

Compose means “to be made of,” “to include,” or “to contain,” and take

Example: Fuel oils are composed of many chemicals.

Comprise means “to be composed of” or “to consist of;” the whole con never the reverse. *Comprise* takes the active voice. Never use *to be com*

Incorrect: The United States is comprised of 50 states.

Incorrect: Fifty states comprise the United States.

Correct: The United States comprises 50 states.

CDC Style Guide

Note: “Is comprised of” is never correct!

The parts compose the whole.

It is written in passive voice.

-- This online archive is composed of collections tailored for public health research needs.

-- Malika’s farm is composed of ten cows, three horses, and four pigs.

-- The Ethics Subcommittee is composed of academic and professional ethicists from outside CDC.

The whole comprises the parts.

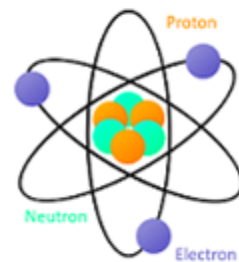
It is written in active voice.

-- This online archive comprises collections tailored for public health research needs.

- Malika's farm comprises ten cows, three horses, and four pigs.
- The Ethics Subcommittee comprises academic and professional ethicists from outside CDC.

- The class is composed of 25 students.
- Our class comprises five women and six men.

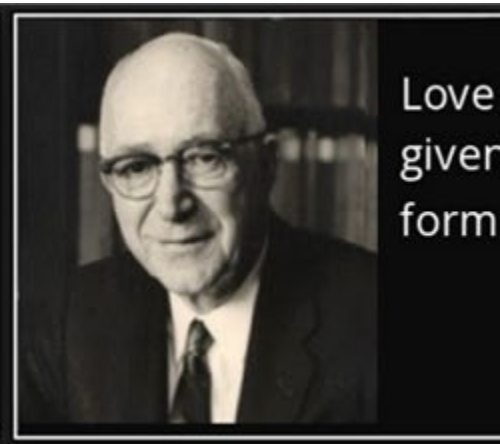
- **The atom is composed of protons and neutrons.**
- **Electrons comprise most of the atom's volume.**



Test Yourself!

Correct any incorrect sentences.

1. Hawaii is composed of eight main islands.
2. It was noted that the document comprises three short sections.
3. The curriculum composes biology, public health, and epidemiology.
4. The forum is comprised of a series of three 1.5-hour seminars.
5. The new building is comprised of twelve office suites.



Check Us Out!

Learn more about NCEH/ATSDR's Writer-Editor Services:

<http://intranet.cdc.gov/nceh-atsdr/ClearWriting/default.html>

Archive

Find past Writing Tip Wednesdays here:

http://intranet.cdc.gov/nceh-atsdr/ClearWriting/writing_tip_wednesdays.html

Answers

1. correct
2. correct
3. The curriculum comprises biology, public health, and epidemiology.
4. The forum is composed of a series of three 1.5-hour seminars.
5. The new building is composed of twelve office suites.

Reply!

Send feedback:

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