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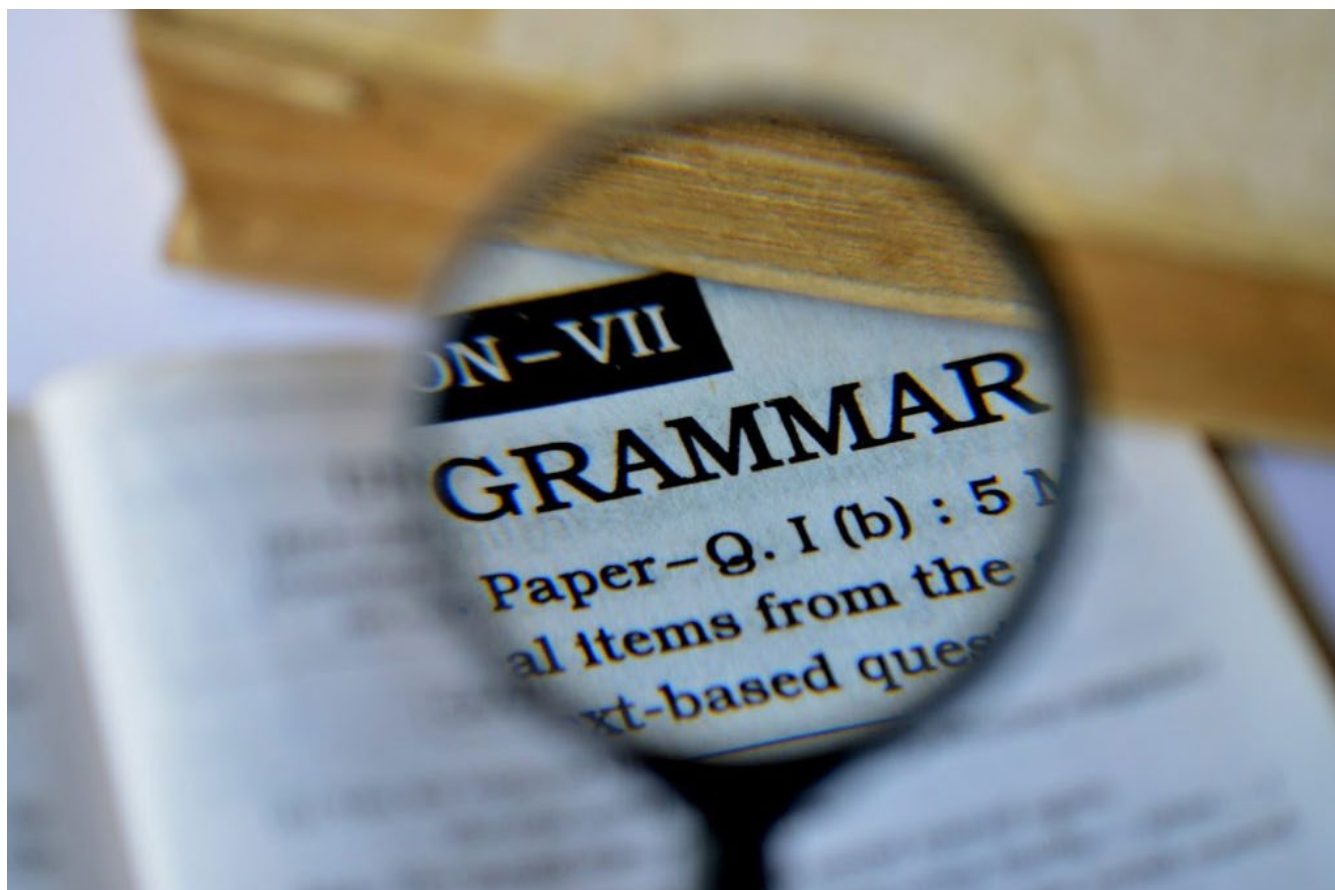
1.22 American Writing Styles, Argument, and Structure

GB1: What is Grammar?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the purpose of grammar.
2. Learn why grammar is important.

Grammar is the study of how words and their component parts combine to form sentences, according to the Wikibook *Rhetoric and Composition*. Grammar is also the scientific study of language that includes *morphology* (also “accidence” or the forms that words take) and syntax (the relation of the words to other words). Grammar also involves the study of the different parts or elements of speech (for example nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.) and the relations between those elements. A knowledge of grammar provides a vocabulary to discuss how the language works.



But for our purposes, the first definition will do. And here's a video from Khan academy that gives another explanation of what grammar is:

[https://www.youtube.com/embed/O-6q-siuMik?
enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu](https://www.youtube.com/embed/O-6q-siuMik?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu)

[Introduction](#) to Grammar | Grammar | Khan Academy

This webpage adapted from “What is Grammar?” from [Rhetoric and Composition](#), used according to [Creative Commons CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

GB2: Parts of Speech

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify parts of speech

In English, words are used in one of eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and interjection. This table includes an explanation and examples of each of the eight parts of speech.

PARTS OF SPEECH

There are eight!

In English, words are used in one of eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and interjection. This table includes an explanation and examples of each of the eight parts of speech.

NOUNS

PRONOUNS

Person, place, or thing

Example: cat, game, carrots,
grammarian, Pete the Cat

Takes the place of a noun

Example: he, she, her, it, we, us

VERBS

Shows action or state of being

Examples: throw, eat, love, ponder,
mesmerize, write

ADVERBS

**Describes a verb, another adverb, or
an adjective and tells how, where, or
when something is done**

Examples: slowly, quickly, very

ADJECTIVES

Describes a noun or pronoun

Examples: sticky, silly, crazy

PREPOSITIONS

**Links nouns, pronouns, or phrases
to other words in a sentence.**

Examples: in, on, to

CONJUNCTIONS

Joins words, phrases, and clauses

INTERJECTION

A word that shows emotion and is

Joins words, phrases, and clauses

Examples: and, because, but

not related to the rest of the sentence

Examples: Hey, Wow, Look

Parts of Speech.

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GB3: Complete Sentences

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize elements of a sentence.**
2. **Understand differences between clauses.**
3. **Write complete sentences.**

The core elements of complete English sentences include subjects, objects, predicates, and modifiers. Subjects and predicates are needed in order for a sentence to be “complete.” Sentences need an action and someone (or something) doing it. The action is the predicate, and the person (or thing) doing it is the subject.

Without a subject performing an action, a sentence is incomplete. Compare and [contrast](#) the sentences below:

1. I like pizza. Because it tastes delicious.
2. I like pizza because it tastes delicious.

Of the two examples above, the first contains a fragment: “Because it tastes delicious” is a fragment, or an incomplete thought. This is a fragment because the phrase includes an “action” (tasting delicious) but no subject.

The second example is correct; it has all the necessary components of a full sentence—a subject and a predicate. It also has a subordinate clause, because it tastes delicious, which modifies the word pizza.

Subjects

The subject of a sentence is a noun or pronoun (and its article, if it has one). In active-voice sentences, the noun or pronoun performs the action in the sentence. See the italicized subjects in the examples below:

1. *The boy* crossed the street.
2. *She* works in the city.
3. *Mark* is a good athlete.

In example 1, the subject, “the boy,” is both a noun and its article. In example 2, the subject is a pronoun. In example 3, the subject is a noun (no article).

Predicates

The predicate explains the action of the sentence. Sometimes “predicate” can simply mean “everything except the subject.” The simple predicate is the action (verb or verb phrase) of a sentence.

In the examples below, the predicates are italicized:

- The house *is* green.
- She *seems* angry.
- The burden *became* excessive.

Objects

The object of a sentence is the noun or pronoun which is being acted upon, or at which the action is directed. There are two types of objects: direct objects and indirect objects.

Direct Object

The direct object is the object which is being acted upon in the sentence. See the italicized direct objects in the examples below:

- Johnny throws *the ball*.
- Jill cuts *the cake*.
- Bill rides *the bike*.

Indirect Object

The indirect object answers the questions “to whom/what?” or “for whom/what?” in a

sentence. It is not acted upon. See the italicized indirect objects in the examples below:

- Johnny throws the ball to *me*.
- Jill cuts the cake for *her friends*.
- Bill rides the bike to *school*.

No Object

Some sentences do not need an object and consist of only a subject and a verb predicate. For example:

- Mary smiled.
- Fred sneezed.

This can happen because some verbs (like the ones above) don’t require an object. When a verb doesn’t need an object, it is called an intransitive verb.

Modifiers

A modifier is a phrase in a sentence that provides additional information about an element within that sentence. There are three basic kinds of modifying constructions:

- Single-word modifiers (adjectives and adverbs): It was a *nice* house.

Modifying phrases (e.g., prepositional, participial, infinitive, and appositive phrases): Barry

- Goldwater, *the junior senator from Arizona*, received the Republican nomination in 1964. (appositive phrase)
- Modifying clauses (a clause is any group of words with its own subject and predicate): The only one of the seven dwarfs *who does not have a beard* is Dopey. (adjective clause)

Compound Elements

In a given sentence, there may be more than one of any of the four core sentence elements. Compound elements can include:

- Compound subject: *Mary and Tom* went to the dance.
- Compound predicate: He *ran to the house and knocked on the door*.
- Compound modifier: He rode a *small white* pony.

Phrases

A phrase is a collection of words that may have nouns or verbals, but it does not have a subject performing an action. The following are examples of phrases:

- leaving behind the dog
- smashing into a fence
- before the first test
- after the devastation
- between ignorance and intelligence
- broken into thousands of pieces
- because of her glittering smile

In these examples, you will find nouns (dog, fence, test, devastation, ignorance, intelligence, thousands, pieces). You also have some verbals (leaving, smashing), but in no case is the noun functioning as a subject performing the action in the predicate. They are all phrases.

Clauses

A clause is a collection of words that has a subject that is actively performing an action. The following are examples of clauses:

- since *she laughs at jokes*
- I despise individuals of low character
- when the *saints go marching in*
- because *she smiled at her*

Note that in the examples above, we find either a noun or a pronoun that is a subject (italicized) attached to a verb phrase (also italicized).

Independent and Dependent Clauses

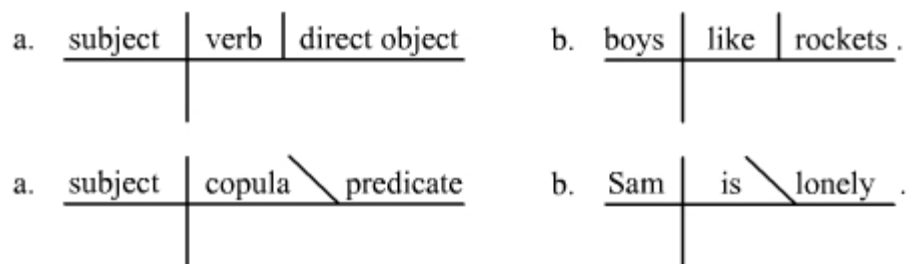
If the clause could stand by itself—that is, form a complete sentence with punctuation—we call it an independent clause. The following are independent clauses:

- I despise individuals of low character
- Helen loves Canadian geese

We could easily turn independent clauses into complete sentences by adding appropriate punctuation marks. We might say, “I despise individuals who possess pretensions of superior learning.” Or we might write, “Helen loves Canadian geese!” We call them independent because these types of clauses can stand by themselves, without any extra words attached, and be complete sentences.

By contrast, dependent (also called subordinating) clauses cannot stand on [their](#) own. The following are dependent clauses:

- when the saints go marching in
- because she smiled at him



Sentence diagram 1: This diagram shows some of the component parts of a sentence, and demonstrates how they relate to each other.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key Points

Within a sentence:

- The **subject** is the noun (or pronoun) that performs the action.
- The **predicate** is the verb or verb phrase that tells what action is being performed by the subject.
- The **direct object** is the person or object upon which the subject is acting.
- The **indirect object** answers the question “to whom/what?” or “for whom/what?”
- A **modifier** gives information about a sentence element.
- A **phrase** is a group of words that does not contain both a subject and a verb.
- Sentences are made up of **clauses**. A clause contains at least a subject and a finite verb. A finite verb is the main verb in a sentence.

Key Terms

- **clause:** Typically contains at least a subject noun phrase and a finite verb. The two main categories are independent and subordinate (or dependent).
- **modifier:** A word, phrase, or clause that limits or qualifies the sense of another word or phrase.
- **object:** The noun or pronoun which is being acted upon, or at which the

action is directed. There are two types: direct and indirect.

- **simple predicate:** The verb or verb phrase of a sentence.
 - **predicate:** The part of the sentence (or clause) that states something about the subject or the object of the sentence.
 - **subject:** In a clause, the word or word group (usually a noun phrase) that represents a person, place or thing. In active clauses with verbs denoting an action, the subject and the actor are usually the same.
 - **fragment:** An incomplete sentence, lacking a subject or a predicate.
 - **phrase:** A group of words that cannot stand on its own because it does not have both a subject and a verb.
 - **complement:** A word, phrase, or clause that is necessary to complete the meaning of a given expression.
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GB4: Structure of a Sentence

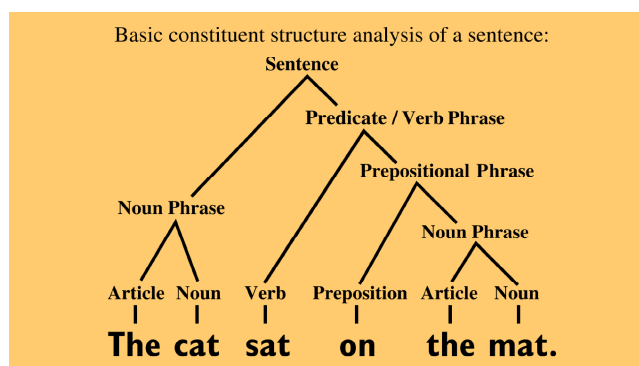
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Identify the subject and verb in a sentence.**
2. **Recognize different sentence styles.**
3. **Understand different sentence constructions.**

The foundation of all good sentences is a strong subject and verb.

Building Sentences

Like an architect can create walls, bridges, arches, and roads with the same bricks, you can create sentences that serve varying functions using the building blocks of words. Just as an architect plans different features in an edifice to create a strong and beautiful building, a writer must use a variety of sentence structures to capture readers' interest. And like a builder must begin with a solid foundation, your sentences need to begin with clear, strong words. The more practice you have putting sentences together, the more interesting your writing will become.



Basic Constituent Structure [Analysis](#) of a

Sentence

First, let's work on clarity through specificity. “Le bon mot,” or “the right word,” is key, and it begins with nouns and verbs.

Subjects and Verbs

Despite contrary trends in the popular press, formal writing still requires of a sentence both a subject and a verb.

- Jesus wept.
- The schooner capsized.
- She died.
- They won.
- Paris seduces.
- It is.
- These are all sentences.

You already know that you need a subject and a verb to create a sentence. What you may not know is that these are the two most important parts of a sentence. The more specific the noun, the more your reader will be able to picture what it is you're talking about (“schooner” is more specific than “boat,” “Paris” more specific than “France”). Pronouns work well when the antecedent is clear. While repeating a noun can get ponderous, unidentifiable pronouns confuse the reader.

Verbs, too, captivate when they're exact. Adjectives and adverbs, it's said, were invented for those who don't know enough verbs. Take the sentence “Paris seduces,” for example. You could just as easily say, “Paris is seductive,” but the use of the verb “to be” makes the sentence less active and alive.

From this solid base, you can begin adding your objects and clauses to create more complex sentences.

Classifying Sentences by Structure

Sentences can be classified by [their](#) structure or by their [purpose](#). You'll want to keep both in mind as you write.

Structural classifications for sentences include simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences.

You'll want to have a mix of sentence types in almost anything you write, as varying length and complexity keeps the reader's attention. The sing-song nature of same-length sentences seems to trigger a lullaby response in our brains, and our eyes can't help but droop. In addition to the rhythm of it, though, you'll communicate more substance with varying sentence lengths.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/TeiuG81mbII?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

What is a sentence? | [Syntax](#) | Khan Academy

Simple Sentences

- A simple sentence consists of a single independent clause with no subordinate clauses. For example:

- I love chocolate cake with rainbow sprinkles.
- “Without love, life would be empty.” This sentence contains a subject (*life*), a verb (*would be*) and two types of modifiers (*without love* and *empty*).

Simple sentences are often used to introduce a topic or present a new thought in an [argument](#) —for example, “Juries are charged with rendering impartial verdicts,” or “Income taxes are high in Scandinavian countries.” You may notice that with both these examples, the reader is likely to start formulating objections or opinions about the topic right away. As a writer, you can use simple sentences in this way. Writing a simple sentence to begin a paragraph can have the reader making your argument for you before you’ve even begun to state your point.

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence consists of multiple independent clauses with no subordinate clauses. These clauses are joined together using conjunctions, punctuation, or both. For example:

- I love chocolate cake with rainbow sprinkles, and I eat it all the time for breakfast.
- Together we stand; united we fall.

You can feel the power of that second example. Using a semicolon without a conjunction adds drama to a compound sentence, especially when you’re comparing two concepts and the independent clauses are of approximately equal length.

Compound sentences connected with “and” make connections between ideas. The sentence, “It’s clear that we do have the means to end poverty worldwide, and every moment we hesitate means one more child dies of hunger,” exposes the connection between having the means to end poverty and the consequences of not employing those means.

Using “but” takes exception with the first clause: “Eileen treats her boyfriend like a servant, but he isn’t going to stand for that for long.”

You can use a semicolon to show a relationship between clauses: “Bats are nocturnal; they are active only at night.”

“However,” “nonetheless,” and “still” are often used as qualifiers between independent clauses. For example, “There were no luxuries like pillows in the convent; however, some residents did find ways to create comfort.”

You can show causation using “therefore” and “thus,”—for example, “The countries that are least committed to reducing fossil fuel use are the largest; therefore, we are unlikely to stave the crisis.”

You can show emphasis using connectors like, “moreover,” and “furthermore.” “Hilda has not done her chores in a week; moreover, she has been eating twice her share at dinner.”

Complex Sentences

A complex sentence consists of at least one independent clause and one subordinate clause. For example:

- “While I love him dearly, I will rehome my pterodactyl for the sake of the community.”
- “Those who eat chocolate cake will be happy.” In this case, the subordinate clause, “who eat chocolate cake” is in the middle of the sentence.

“If-then” sentences are complex sentences: “If Americans don’t change their dietary habits, the medical system will soon be bankrupt.” (Notice that the “then” is implied.)

Other connectors for complex sentences include “because,” “although,” “so that,” “since.”

- “I have had strong convictions since I was old enough to reason.”

Compound-Complex Sentences

A compound-complex sentence (or complex-compound sentence) consists of multiple independent clauses, at least one of which has at least one subordinate clause. For example:

- “I love my pet pterodactyl, but since he’s been eating neighborhood cats, I will donate him to the city zoo.” Here, the subordinate clause is, “since he’s been eating neighborhood cats.”
- “Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.” This sentence contains two independent clauses (one before and one after the comma), and each independent clause contains a subordinate clause (“what you eat” and “what you are”).

There are countless variations of compound-complex sentences, and while they can be complicated, they are often necessary in order to make complete connections between ideas. Don’t make the mistake, though, of using them unnecessarily. Break thoughts into new sentences when you can. When you do use one, try to insert a simple sentence after it. Your reader may need a rest.

Selecting Sentence Construction

- North Americans eat a lot of fast food. They also have a high rate of disease.
- North Americans eat a lot of fast food, and they have a high rate of disease.
- If North Americans continue to eat a lot of fast food, they will continue to have a high rate of disease.
- If North Americans, who eat a lot of fast food, continue to do so, they will likely continue to have a high rate of disease, as proper nutrition is vital to immune function.

In looking at the various sentence forms above, you can see that each sentence gives you a different feel. Can you see how each might be appropriate in

different contexts? The simple sentences might work in an [introduction](#) to begin to draw the parallel. The compound sentence makes the connection clear. The complex sentence sounds more like a lesson in its “if-then” format, and the compound-complex sentence packs all the information into one conclusive sentence. Which of these sounds most convincing as an argument? Which allows you to draw your own [conclusion](#) ?

Classifying Sentences by Purpose

English sentences can also be classified based on their purpose: declarations, interrogatives, exclamations, and imperatives. When you’re composing a paper, you’ll want to clarify the purpose of your sentences to be sure you’re selecting the appropriate form.

Declarations

A declarative sentence, or declaration, is the most common type of sentence. It makes a statement. For example:

- “Most Americans must work to survive.”
- “I love watching the parrots migrate.”

Because you’ll be relying on statements most of the time, you’ll want to vary the structure of your declarative sentences, using the forms above, to be sure your paragraphs don’t feel plodding. One declaration after the next can lull the reader into complacency (or, worse, sleep).

Interrogatives

An interrogative sentence, or question, is commonly used to request information. For example:

- “Do you know what it’s like to have to go to work to be able to eat?”
- “Why has the sky suddenly turned green?”

While you don't want to overuse the interrogative in an essay, it does serve to wake the reader up a bit. You're asking the reader to find the answer within him- or herself, rather than simply digesting fact after fact. Helping the reader formulate questions about the topic early can engage readers by accessing their curiosity.

Exclamations

An exclamatory sentence, or exclamation, is a more emphatic form of statement that expresses emotion. For example:

- I have to go to work now!
- Get away from me!

“Show some restraint!” is the general guideline for using exclamations in a paper. And yet, there are times when it won't seem amateurish or overly hard-hitting. When you're exposing a contradiction in your opposition's views, for example, or an inconsistency between views and behaviors, you can signal the importance of this diversion with an exclamation. Recognize, though, that using exclamations only sparingly will bolster your credibility. Like the boy who cried wolf, if you get a reputation for yelling all the time, people will begin to ignore you, even when it really matters.

Imperatives

An imperative sentence tells someone to do something (and may be considered both imperative and exclamatory). This may be in the form of a request, a suggestion, or a demand, and the intended audience is the reader.

- Go to work.
- Trust me!

Imperatives can be effective in making an argument. You can introduce evidence with an imperative (e.g., “Consider the current immigrant crisis in

Europe”). You can use an imperative to transition from a counter-argument: “Don’t be fooled by this faulty logic.” You might include an imperative in your conclusion, if you’re including a call to action: “Act now to end human trafficking.”

Checking for Appropriate Sentence Structure and Purpose

In the revision stage of writing, make sure to make a pass over the paper with an eye toward sentence construction. Are there too many interrogatives or exclamations? Does the prose sound convoluted because I use too many compound-complex sentences?

Do I sound condescending because I’m using too many simple sentences? Do the connectors I’m using fit with this particular sentence?

Enjoy constructing your argument using the forms sentences can take. Designing a paper using your skill with sentence structure can feel thoroughly satisfying.

Introduction to Inflection

In the context of grammar, inflection is altering a word to change its form, usually by adding letters.

In English grammar, “inflection” is the broad umbrella term for changing a word to suit its grammatical context. You’ve probably never heard this word before, but you actually do it all the time without even thinking about it. For example, you know to say “Call me tomorrow” instead of “Call I tomorrow”; you’ve changed the noun “I” to fit the context (i.e., so it can be used as a direct object instead of a subject).

A word you might have heard before, especially if you’ve taken a foreign

language like Spanish, is “conjugation.” Conjugation is the specific type of inflection that has to do with verbs. For example, you change a verb based on who is performing the verb: you would say “You call me,” but “She calls me.” Again, you know to do this automatically.

Nouns and Pronouns

We often need to change nouns based on grammatical context. For example, if you change from singular to plural (e.g., from “cat” to “cats,” or from “syllabus” to “syllabi”), you’re “inflecting” the noun. Similarly, if you’re changing the pronoun “I” to “me,” or “she” to “her,” the person you’re referring to isn’t changing, but the word you use does, because of context. “She calls I” is incorrect, as is “Her calls me”; you know to instead say “She calls me.”

Verbs

To recap, “conjugation” refers to changing a verb to suit its grammatical context. This can mean changing the verb based on who is performing the verb (e.g., “you read,” but “she reads”) or based on the time the action is occurring, also known as the verb’s “tense” (e.g., “you walk” for the present, and “you walked” for the past).

Adjectives

You also might need to change some adjectives based on the grammatical context of the rest of your sentence. For example, if you’re trying to compare how sunny today’s weather is to yesterday’s weather, you would change the adjective “sunny” to “sunnier”: “Today is sunnier than yesterday.”

Adverbs

Inflecting adverbs is very similar to how you change adjectives. For example, if you want to compare how quickly two students are learning math, you would change the adverb “easily” to “more easily”: “Huck is learning his fractions

much more easily than Tom is.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key Points

- In English grammar, ” inflection ” refers to changing a word to suit its grammatical context (e.g., making a noun plural when you’re talking about more than one, making a verb past tense when you’re talking about something that has already happened).
- In English, there are many rules that tell you how to change words to suit context, but there are also quite a few exceptions that you’ll just have to memorize.
- Pronouns and nouns change form depending on whether they are the subject (i.e., the actor) or the direct or indirect object (i.e., the thing being acted upon) of a sentence.

Key Terms

- **conjugation:** The creation of derived forms of a verb from its principal parts by inflection.
- **declension:** The inflection of nouns, pronouns, articles, and adjectives.
- **inflection:** In the grammatical sense, modifying a word, usually by adding letters, to create a different form of that word.

Grammar Basics Key Takeaways

Key Points

- To create a strong sentence, begin with a specific subject and a strong verb.
- Sentences can be classified by their structure or by their purpose.
- Structural classifications for sentences include: simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences.

Particular connectors are used to impart particular meanings in compound and complex sentences.

- Classification categories for sentences by purpose include declarations, interrogatives, exclamations, and imperatives.
- In the revision stage of writing, it's useful to go over the paper with an eye toward the appropriateness and variety of sentence construction.

Key Terms

- **simple sentences:** A single independent clause with no subordinate clauses.
- **complex sentence:** At least one independent clause and one subordinate clause.
- **compound-complex sentence:** Multiple independent clauses, at least one of which has at least one subordinate clause.
- **declarative sentence:** A statement or declaration about something.
- **exclamatory sentence:** An emphatic form of statement that expresses emotion.
- **imperative sentence:** A statement that tells the reader, in the form of a request, suggestion, or demand, to do something.
- **compound sentence:** Multiple independent clauses with no subordinate clauses.
- **interrogative sentence:** Also called a question, it is commonly used to request information.

The Grammar Basics section is adapted from multiple sources:

- “What is Grammar?” from [Rhetoric and Composition](#), used according to [Creative Commons CC BY-SA 3.0](#),
- “21.1 Parts of Speech.” from [Appendix A: Writing for Nonnative English Speakers](#), used according to [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)
- And [Introduction to English Grammar and Mechanics](#) from Lumen Learning, by Boundless.com, used according to [Creative Commons CC BY-](#)

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SB1: Incorporating Core Sentence Components (Avoiding Fragments)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize fragments.
2. Convert fragments to complete sentences.
3. Write complete sentences.

A complete sentence includes two core components: a **subject** and a **predicate**. **Fragments** are essentially **dependent clauses** that cannot stand on their own. They result when you attempt to write a sentence without one of those two core components. You can use these pointers to recognize fragments:

When you read a sentence, ask yourself, “Who (or what) performed the action?” If you can answer that question, you are reading a sentence. If not, you are reading a fragment.

Self-Tests for Identifying Fragments

Test these examples:

- Where are you?
 - Who or what is asking?
 - *I am asking you where you are.*
 - *I can answer the question, so it's a sentence.*
- Sandra ate lunch early.
 - Who or what ate lunch early?

- *Sandra ate her lunch early.*
- *I can answer the question, so it's a sentence.*
- After the shelf came loose.
 - Who performed an action or what action occurred?
 - *Something happened after the shelf came loose, but I don't know what.*
 - *I can't answer the question, so it's a fragment.*

Fill in this blank with your sentence: Did you know that _____? If the completed question makes sense, you are reading a sentence. If it doesn't make sense, you are reading a fragment.

Test these examples:

- Lost my earring.
 - *Did you know that lost my earring?*
 - *The test doesn't make sense, so the original is a fragment.*
- The dog with the white paws near the gate.
 - *Did you know that the dog with the white paws near the gate?*
 - *The test doesn't make sense, so the original is a fragment.*
- Someone left the window open.
 - *Did you know that someone left the window open?*
 - *The test makes sense, so the original is a sentence.*
- Spaghetti squash is a great substitute for pasta.
 - *Did you know that spaghetti squash is a great substitute for pasta?*
 - *The test makes sense, so the original is a sentence.*

To identify fragments, when you have a group of sentences within a paragraph, read the sentences from last to first so that no sentence can gain information from the preceding sentence. This technique will help sentence fragments stand out since they will not make sense alone.

Ultimately all these pointers are designed to get you into the habit of asking whether your sentences stand on their own. If you have problems with writing fragments, perform these tests until recognizing a sentence becomes second

nature to you. When you recognize a fragment, you can turn it into sentence by adding the missing component. Try these examples:

- This fragment has no subject: Giggling and laughing all the way to school.
 - *One possible way to add a subject and turn this fragment into a sentence:*
 - *The girls were giggling and laughing all the way to school.*
- This fragment has no predicate: A brand new iPhone with all kinds of apps.
 - *One possible way to add a predicate and turn this fragment into a sentence:*
 - *A brand new iPhone with all kinds of apps isn't cheap!*

Just as sentences require a subject and a predicate, they also have boundaries. See Section P [“Punctuation”](#), which covers “Eliminating Comma Splices and Fused Sentences,” “Using Commas Properly,” and “Writing with Semicolons and Colons” for guidelines on fixing fused sentences and comma splices and for options on punctuating independent clauses.

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SB2: Choosing Appropriate Verb Tenses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Understand the simple verb tenses: past, present, and future.**
2. **Recognize the progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive verb tenses.**
3. **Correctly use the different verb tenses.**

The tense of a verb usually gives readers a sense of time. In other words, verb tense explains if the action in the sentence 1) took place previously (past tense), 2) is taking place right now (present tense), 3) or will take place some time in the future (future tense).

Tense can also indicate continual or recurring action (progressive), action completely taken place as of a certain time (perfect), and action that began in the past but continues or recurs through the present time (perfect progressive).

Verbs also use different forms based on number and point of view. In other words, if a pronoun is singular (*I, you, he, she, it*) or plural (*we, you, they*), this will make a difference in the verb form used. Additionally, first person (*I, we*) might require a different verb form from second person (singular *you*, plural *you*) and third person (*he, she, it, they*). The following graphics illustrate the ways time can be expressed using a regular and an irregular verb.

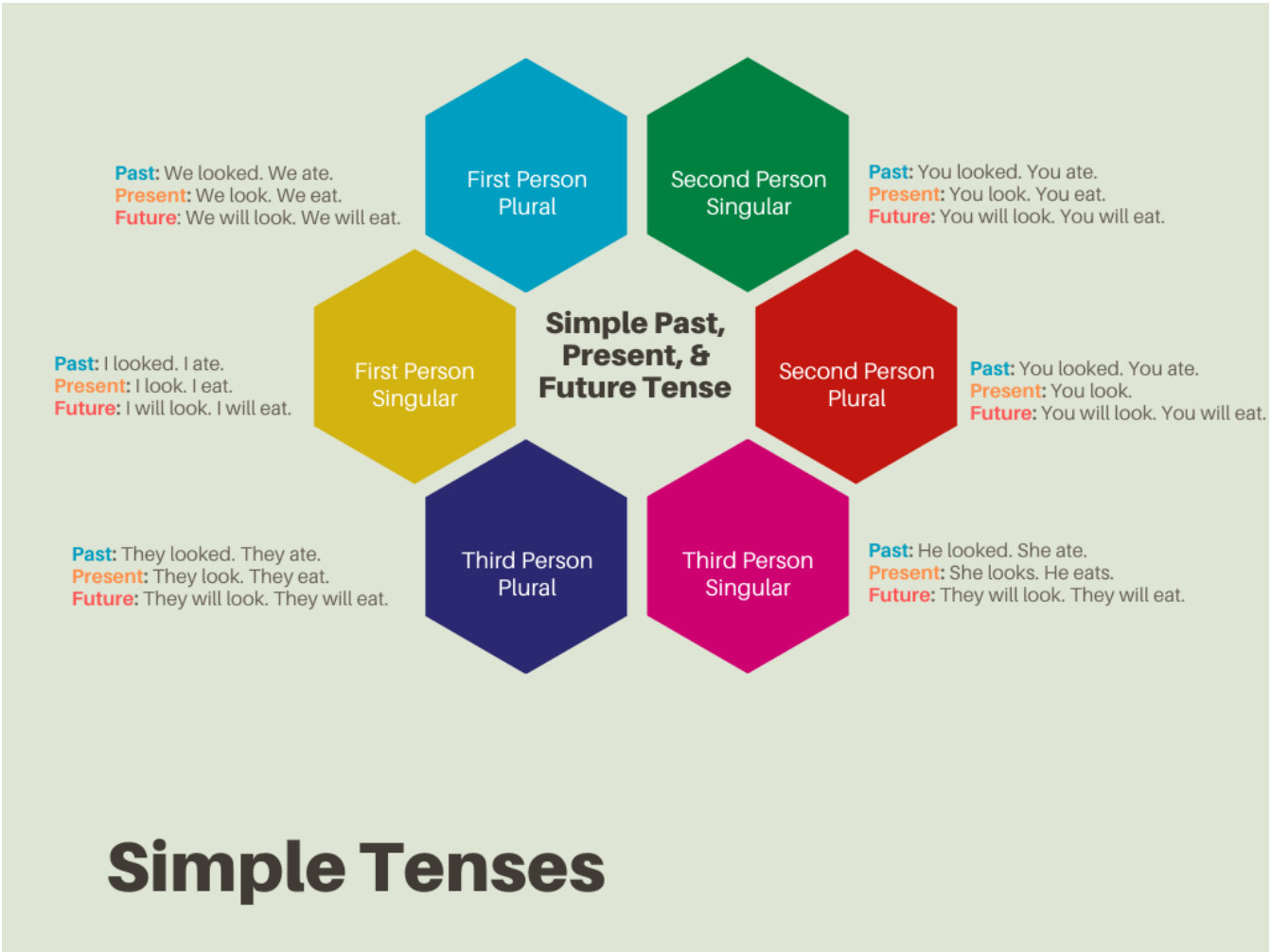


Figure SB2.1 Simple Verb Tenses for the Regular Verb “Look” and the Irregular Verb “Eat”



Figure SB2.2 Progressive Verb Tenses for the Regular Verb “Look” and the Irregular Verb “Eat”



Figure SB2.3 Perfect Verb Tenses for the Regular Verb “Look” and the Irregular Verb “Eat”



Figure SB2.4 Perfect-Progressive Verb Tenses for the Regular Verb “Look” and the Irregular Verb “Eat”

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SB3: Making Sure Subjects and Verbs Agree

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Locate subjects and verbs in sentences.**
2. **Determine whether subjects and verbs agree in number and person.**
3. **Write sentences with proper agreement between the subjects and verbs.**

By the time you reach college, you probably have a fairly well-developed sense of whether a sentence sounds right. For that reason, it is a good idea to include reading your drafts aloud as part of your [editing](#) process. Or better yet, ask a friend to read your draft to you. It may be surprising to see how easy it is to hear errors versus reading them.

One key grammar rule that affects the sound of a sentence subject-verb agreement. To be grammatically correct, subjects and verbs must agree in number and person. Agreeing in number means that a plural subject is matched up with the plural form of the verb. Although the plural of a noun often ends in –s, it is the singular of a verb that usually ends in –s.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/4fMipjAnlRk?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Subject-verb agreement | [Syntax](#) | Khan Academy

Examples

- –The rabbit hops all around the cage. (singular subject and verb)
- –The rabbits hop all around the cage. (plural subject and verb)

Agreeing in person means, for example, a third-person noun must be matched with the proper third-person verb. The chart below shows first, second, and third person for a few present-tense verbs. As you can see, most of the verbs are the same in all columns except for the third-person singular. The verb “to be” at the bottom also varies in the first-person singular column. So to match subjects and verbs by person, you could choose, for example, to say “I am,” but not “I are.”

Table SB3.1 A Few Present-Tense Verbs

Table SB3.1 A Few Present-Tense Verbs					
First-Person Singular: I	First-Person Plural: We	Second- Person Singular: You	Second- Person Plural: You	Third-Person Singular: He, She, It	Third-Person Plural: <u>They</u>
walk	walk	walk	walk	walks	walk
laugh	laugh	laugh	laugh	laughs	laugh
rattle	rattle	rattle	rattle	rattles	rattle
fall	fall	fall	fall	falls	fall
think	think	think	think	thinks	think

am are are are is are

Examples

- The window rattles when the wind blows. (third-person subject and verb)
- I think I am a funny person. (first-person subject and verb)

Each of the following sentences represents a common type of **agreement error**. An *explanation* and a *correction* of the error follow each example:

- 1. Pete and Tara is siblings.

A subject that includes the word “and” usually takes a plural verb even if the two nouns are singular.

- The sentence should read “Pete and Tara *are* siblings.”

-
- 2. Biscuits and gravy are my favorite breakfast.

Sometimes the word and connects two words that form a subject and are actually one thing. In this case, “biscuits and gravy” is one dish. So even though there are two nouns connected by the word “and,” it is a singular subject and should take a singular verb.

- The sentence should read “Biscuits and gravy *is* my favorite breakfast.”

-
- 3. The women who works here are treated well.

Relative pronouns (*that, who, and which*) can be singular or plural, depending on their antecedents (the words they stand for). The pronoun has the same number as the antecedent. In this case, “who” stands for “women”

and “women” is plural, so the verb should be plural.

–The sentence should read “The women who *work* here are treated well.”

4. One of the girls sing in the chorus.

A singular subject is separated by a phrase that ends with a plural noun. This pattern leads people to think that the plural noun (“girls” in this case) is the subject to which they should match the verb. But in reality, the verb (“sing”) must match the singular subject (“one”).

–The sentence should read “One of the girls *sings* in the chorus.”

5. The data is unclear.

The words “data” and “media” are both considered plural at all times when used in academic writing. In more casual writing, some people use a singular version of the two words.

–The sentence should read “The data *are* unclear.”

6. The basketball players with the most press this month is the college men playing in the Final Four tournament.

In some sentences, like this one, the verb comes before the subject. The word order can cause confusion, so you have to find the subject and verb and make sure they match.

–The sentence should read “The basketball players with the most press this month *are* the college men playing in the Final Four tournament.”

7. I is ready to go.

A subject and verb must agree in person. In this case, “I” is a first-person noun, but “is” is a third-person verb.

–The sentence should read “I *am* ready to go.”

8. What we think are that Clyde Delber should resign immediately.

Words that begin with “what” can take either a singular or a plural verb depending on whether “what” is understood as singular or plural. In this case, “we” collectively think one thing, so the verb should be singular even though “we” is plural.

–The sentence should read “What we think *is* that Clyde Delber should resign immediately.”

9. Either the dog or the cats spends time on this window seat when I’m gone.

The word “or” usually indicates a singular subject even though you see two nouns. This sentence is an exception to this guideline because at least one of the subjects is plural. When this happens, the verb should agree with the subject to which it is closest.

–The sentence should read “Either the dog or the cats *spend* time on this window seat when I’m gone.”

10. Molly or Huck keep the books for the club, so one of them will know.

The word “or” usually indicates a singular subject even though you see two nouns. An exception to this guideline is that if one of the subjects is plural, the

verb should agree with the subject to which it is closest.

–The sentence should read “Molly or Huck *keeps* the books for the club, so one of them will know.

11. The wilderness scare me when I think of going out alone.

When a singular noun ends with an -s, you might get confused and think it is a plural noun.

–The sentence should read “The wilderness *scares* me when I think of going out alone.”

12. Each of the girls are happy to be here.

Indefinite pronouns (anyone, each, either, everybody, and everyone) are always singular. So they have to always be used with singular verbs.

–The sentence should read “Each of the girls *is* happy to be here.”

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SB4: Avoiding Misplaced Modifiers, Dangling Modifiers, and Split Infinitives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, and split infinitives.**
2. **Correct misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, and split infinitives.**
3. **Write sentences that do not include misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, and split infinitives.**

Consider this sentence: “For her birthday, Megan received an attractive woman’s briefcase.” The modifier “attractive” is in an awkward position. The person who wrote this sentence most likely intended to suggest that the briefcase was attractive. However, people reading it or listening to it might easily assume that the briefcase was intended for (or already belonged to) an attractive woman.

Three categories of modifier problems include misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, and split infinitives. These three categories, explained in the following subsections, are all similar because they all involve misplacing words or phrases. Understanding the differences between these categories should help you be on the lookout for such mistakes in your writing and that of your peers.

Misplaced Modifiers

The easiest way to clarify a word being modified in a sentence is to place the

modifier close to the word it modifies. Whenever possible, it is best to place a modifier immediately before or after the modified word.

Read the following example of a misplaced modifier, note the point of confusion, and review the *correction*.

Example

The malfunctioning student's phone beeped during class.

Misplaced modifier: “malfunctioning”

Modifying link: “phone” (not “student”)

Point of confusion: The writer wants to say that the student had a malfunctioning phone that beeped during class, not that the student was malfunctioning.

Rewritten link: *The student's malfunctioning phone beeped during class.*

Dangling Modifiers

Often a dangling modifier modifies the subject of a sentence, but the placement of the modifier makes it seem as though it modifies another noun in the sentence. Other times, a dangling modifier actually modifies someone or something other than the subject of the sentence, but the wording makes it appear as though the dangling modifier modifies the subject. The resulting image conveyed can often be rather confusing, humorous, or just embarrassing.

Read the following examples of dangling modifiers, note the point of confusion in each case, and review the *possible corrections*. Note that there is often more than one correct way to rewrite each sentence.

Example

The child was climbing the fence that always seemed adventuresome.

Misplaced modifier: “that always seemed adventuresome”

Modifying link: “child” (not “fence”)

Point of confusion: The wording makes it sound as if the fence is adventuresome, not the child.

Rewritten link:

The child, who always seemed adventuresome, was climbing the fence.

OR

The adventuresome child was climbing the fence.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/SjunMcrXgEo?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Dangling modifiers

Split Infinitives

Splitting infinitives refers to placing a word between “to” and a verb, as in “Miss Clark set out to clearly define the problem.” Technically, you should not place the word “clearly” between “to” and “define.” This grammar rule came about in the eighteenth century when people held Latin up as the language standard. Since Latin did not have two-word infinitives, such as “to define,” grammarians wanted to preserve the unity of the two-word infinitives in an effort to make English more Latin-like. The use of split infinitives, however, has become increasingly common over the decades (e.g., “*to boldly go* where no man has gone before”—*Star Trek*, 1966). In fact, split infinitives are gaining acceptance in professional and academic writing as well. For your purposes, knowing what split infinitives are will help you know your options as a writer.

Example

I’m going **to quickly run** to the store, so I’ll be back when you get home.

Infinitive link: “to run”

Splitter link: “quickly”

Rewritten link: *I’m going to run to the store quickly, so I’ll be back when you get home.*

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SB5: Preventing Mixed Constructions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize sentences with mixed construction problems.**
2. **Correct sentences with mixed construction problems.**

Switching grammatical direction midway through a sentence can result in writing mixed constructions, which make a sentence difficult to understand. Mixed constructions often take place when you start out a sentence with a thought, shift your thinking midway through it, and then fail to reread your completed or revised thought upon completing the sentence. Another common cause of mixed constructions is the revision process itself, especially as it occurs in word processing. When you are proofreading and making changes, it is easy to change a part of a sentence without realizing that the change does not mesh with the rest of the construction. Sometimes mixed construction sentences can be fixed by moving words around, adding words to the sentence, or both. Other times, the best repair is to turn the sentence into two or more sentences.

Look at the following examples of mixed constructions, and consider the confusion that could result.

Example 1

Stripping, sanding, and painting, I will turn this chest into a real treasure.

Correction

Stripping, sanding, and painting this chest will turn it into a real treasure.

OR

This chest will turn into a real treasure once I've stripped, sanded, and painted it.

Example 2

Although the swimmers practiced twice a day, lost their first six meets.

Correction

Although the swimmers practiced twice a day, the team still lost its first six meets.

OR

The swimmers practiced twice a day, but the team still lost its first six meets.

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SB6: Connecting Pronouns and Antecedents Clearly

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize pronoun antecedents.**
2. **Identify antecedents as singular or plural.**
3. **Match antecedents and pronouns.**

Antecedent Identification

The antecedent is the noun (a person, place, or thing) that a pronoun represents in a sentence. The word antecedent means “a thing or event that existed before or logically precedes another.” In grammar, think of the antecedent as the noun that is represented by a pronoun in a sentence. Easy-peasy. Readers become confused when they see a pronoun and it’s not clear to what that pronoun refers. When you see a pronoun, you should be able to understand its meaning by looking at the rest of the sentence. Look at the following sentence:

- The Smiths picked apples for hours, and they put them in large boxes.
 - The antecedent for “they” is “the Smiths.” The antecedent for “them” is “apples.”

Read each of the following sentences and note the *antecedent* for each *pronoun*.

- LaBeth fell on the floor and found out *it* was harder than *she* thought.
 - *it—floor; she—LaBeth*

- The women chatted as *they* jogged along with their pets.
 - they—the women; their—the women’s

As sentences become more complicated or whole paragraphs are involved, identifying pronoun antecedents might also become more complicated. As long as pronouns and antecedents are used properly, however, you should be able to find the antecedent for each pronoun. Read the following sentences and note the *antecedent* for each *pronoun*.

The ancient Mayans targeted December 12, 2012 as a momentous day that marks the end of a 5,126-year era. Today scholars speculate about what the Mayans expected to happen on that day and if *they* (*the Mayans*) saw *it* (*December 12, 2012*) as a time for celebration or fear. Some say that the end of an era would have been a cause for celebration. Others view *it* (*December 12, 2012*) as an impending ominous situation due to *its* (*December 12, 2012’s*) unknown nature. At any rate, *you* (*the reader*) can rest assured that many scholars will continue to speculate even as the date has passed.

Singular versus Plural Antecedents

When you are writing and using pronouns and antecedents, begin by identifying whether the antecedent is singular or plural. This will determine the pronoun you choose to use. As you can see by looking at the following table, making this determination is sometimes not as easy as it might seem.



Figure 6.1 Connecting Pronouns and Antecedents Clearly

Antecedent and Pronoun Matches

Antecedents and pronouns need to match in terms of number (singular or plural) and gender. Matching a pronoun with its antecedent, which is a word that the pronoun refers to, in terms of number (singular or plural) can be tricky, as evidenced in sentences like this one:

- Each student should do their own work.

Since student is singular, a singular pronoun must match with it. A correct, but rather clunky, version of the sentence is the following:

- Each student should do his or her own work.

To avoid pronoun and antecedent problems, you should take three steps:

1. Identify the antecedent.
2. Determine if the antecedent is singular or plural.
3. Make sure the antecedent and pronoun match, preferably by making both plural if possible.

With reference to people, however, using *they* as a singular pronoun is a grammatical option when referring to a person whose gender identification is nonbinary, meaning they identify as neither a he nor a she. *The Associated Press* updated their [style](#) guide in 2017 to reflect this grammatical evolution

An article in *The Washington Post* quotes the *Associated Press* entry:

They, them, their In most cases, a plural pronoun should agree in number with the antecedent: The children love the books their uncle gave them.

They/them/their is acceptable in limited cases as a singular and-or gender-neutral pronoun, when alternative wording is overly awkward or clumsy.

However, rewording usually is possible and always is preferable. Clarity is a top priority; gender-neutral use of a singular they is unfamiliar to many readers.

We do not use other gender-neutral pronouns such as xe or ze...

In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as he/she/him/her: Use the person’s name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence, whenever possible. If they/them/their use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun. Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person (as qtd. in Andrews).

Depending on your teacher and their grammatical preferences, you may or may not be marked down when using the singular *they*; however, the best advice for students is to be aware of why you are making your choices in grammar. And keep in mind that there are often ways to navigate around using *they* as a singular pronoun—by changing sentence structure or word choice.

The following sources also expand on the use of *they* and *their* as gender-neutral singular pronouns:

From *Merriam Webster*: [Singular “They”](#)

From *Grammarly*: [What is the Singular They](#)

For purposes of clarity, try to keep a pronoun relatively close to its antecedent. When the antecedent is not immediately clear, make a change such as rearranging the words, changing from singular to plural, or replacing the pronoun with a noun. Each of the following sentences has an antecedent/pronoun matching problem. Read each sentence and think about the problem. Then check below each example for a *correction* and an explanation.

Number (Singular or Plural)

Original: Each **student** should complete **their** registration for next semester by October 5.

Revision: *Students* should complete *their* registration for next semester by

October 5.

Explanation: Often, as in this situation, the best solution is to switch the subject from singular to plural so you can avoid having to use “his or her.”

Original: **Everyone** should do what **they** think is best.

Revision: *Everyone* should do what *he or she* thinks is best.

OR

All *employees* should do what *they* think is best.

Explanation: Indefinite pronouns are treated as singular in the English language even when they have an intended plural meaning. You have to either use a singular pronoun or revise the sentence to eliminate the indefinite pronoun as the antecedent.

Original: To compete in the holiday tournament, the **team** took **their** first airline flight as a group.

Revision: To compete in the holiday tournament, the *team* took *its* first airline flight as a group.

Explanation: Collective nouns are singular since they represent, for example, one team, one crowd, or one family. Although the pronoun “it” is used for nonhuman reference, it can also be used to reference a singular collective noun that involves humans.

Original: The **dogs and the cat** ate all **its** food immediately.

Revision: The *dogs and the cat* ate all *their* food immediately.

Explanation: When joined by “and,” compound antecedents are plural and,

therefore, take a plural pronoun.

Gender

Original: Each **member** is responsible for **his** own dues and registration.

Revision: *Members* are responsible for *their* own dues and registration.

Explanation: Using “he,” “his,” or “him” as a universal singular pronoun is no longer acceptable. Either use both a masculine and a feminine pronoun as in the first revision or change the noun to plural and use a plural pronoun as in the second revision. Stylistically, pluralizing is preferable.

Works Cited

Andrews, Travis M. “The Singular, Gender-Neutral ‘They’ Added to the AP Stylebook. (Associated Press Stylebook).” *The Washington Post*, (28 Mar. 2017): Na, 2017.

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G1: Making Sure Subject and Verbs Agree

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize typical subject/verb agreement.**
2. **Learn how to match the subject and verb when other words come between them, how to work with compound subjects, how to use titles involving collective subjects, and how to use indefinite subjects.**
3. **Learn the rules for matching subjects coming after the verb, relative pronouns, gerunds, infinitives, and singular subjects that look plural.**

Subjects and verbs must agree in two ways: number (singular or plural) and person (first, second, or third). These two general rules hold through all the different subject/verb guidelines. As a rule, plural subjects end in –s and plural verbs do not end in –s.

This video from Khan Academy explains the [concept](#) of subject-verb agreement:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/4fMipjAnlRk?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Subject-verb agreement

Pairing Verbs with Singular and Plural Subjects

Many sentences have subjects and verbs that appear side by side. The subjects in these sentences are often clearly singular or plural, and they clearly determine the needed verb form.

In the following grammar samples, the noun is in **bold** and the verb is in *italic*.

Pairing Verbs with Singular and Plural Subjects		
Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Typical singular subject followed directly by the verb	The US government <i>establishes</i> national parks on an ongoing basis, such as the six parks formed in Alaska in 1980.	Don't get confused into thinking that a singular subject needs a verb without an -s. The plural version would be "governments establish."
Typical plural subject followed directly by the verb	National parks <i>provide</i> wonderful opportunities for people to commune with nature.	The subject "parks" is plural and it agrees with "provide." The singular version would be "park provides."

Matching Subjects and Verbs That Are

Separated by Other Words

When words fall between a subject and verb, the singular/plural state of the subject is sometimes confusing. Always make sure you are matching the verb to the subject and not to one of the words between the two.

Matching Subjects and Verbs

Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Words fall between subject and verb	Six national parks in Alaska <i>were formed</i> in 1980.	Mistaking “Alaska” for the subject would make it seem as if the verb should be “was formed.” In Alaska is a prepositional phrase.

Joining Plural Verbs to Compound or Double Subjects

Compound subjects joined by the word “and” are plural since there is more than one of them. Double subjects joined by “or” or “nor” match to a verb based on the status of the subject closest to the verb.

Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Compound subject with plural verb	Rock and grass <i>combine</i> to make Badlands National Park amazing.	“Rock and grass” is a plural subject formed by two singular words. Don’t get confused and use “combines” for the verb because the individual subjects are singular.

Non-compound double
subject functioning as a
singular subject

Depending on where you
look, **rock or grass**
dominates your view.

Since the subjects are
joined by “or,” they do
not automatically
become plural because
there are two of them.

Pairing Singular Verbs with Titles and Collective Subjects

Regardless of the singular or plural nature of the words within a title, the title is considered one unit; thus it is a singular noun. Similarly, collective nouns, such as “committee,” function as singular nouns regardless of how many people or items might actually make up the collective noun.

Pairing Singular Verbs with Titles and Collective Subjects		
Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Title with singular verb	Everglades National Park <i>preserves</i> thousands of acres of wetlands.	This title isn’t plural just because word “Everglades” is plural. The park is one thing and, therefore, is singular.
Collective subject with singular verb	The team <i>meets</i> twice a year at Far View Lodge in Mesa Verde National Park.	Although you know that the “team” is made up of more than one person, “team” is viewed as a single unit.

Teaming Singular Verbs with Indefinite Subjects

Whether an indefinite subject is singular or plural depends on whether the indefinite noun has a singular or plural meaning on its own or based on the rest of the sentence. But first, it is important to understand what is meant by indefinite subject, and here is a video from Khan Academy to explain:

Indefinite Pronouns | The parts of speech | Grammar | Khan Academy

Now that you have an understanding of what an indefinite subject looks like, this table illustrates how to create grammatically correct sentences with indefinite subjects.

Teaming Singular Verbs with Indefinite Subjects

Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Indefinite subject with singular meaning on its own	Each of the fossils in the Petrified Forest National Park tells a story.	Even though there is more than one fossil, the word “each” is always singular. Many indefinite subjects are always singular. Examples include another, anyone, anything, each, everybody, everything, neither, nobody, one, other, and something.
Indefinite subject with singular meaning based on the rest of the sentence	All of Arizona <i>was</i> once located in a tropical region.	Since “Arizona” is singular, “all” is singular. Some indefinite subjects can be singular or plural. Examples include all, any, more, most, none, some, and such.
Indefinite subject with plural meaning based on the rest of the sentence	All the petrified trees in the Petrified Forest National Park <i>are</i>	Since “trees” is plural, “all” is plural.

millions of years old.

Indefinite subject with plural meaning on its own

Both scrubland and rock formations *are* common in desert settings.

Some indefinite subjects are always plural. Examples include both, few, fewer, many, others, several, and they.

Choosing Verbs When the Subject Comes after the Verb

The standard sentence format in English presents the subject before the verb. In reversed sentences, you need to find the subject and then make sure it matches the verb. To find the subject, fill the following blank with the verb and then ask the question of yourself: who or what _____?

Choosing Verbs When the Subject Comes after the Verb

Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Subject comes after the verb	Throughout Mammoth Cave National Park <i>run</i> passages covering over 367 miles.	Who or what runs? The passages do. Even though you might be tempted to think “Mammoth Cave National Park” is the subject, it is not doing the action of the verb. Since “passages” is plural, it must match up to a plural verb.

Deciding If Relative Pronouns Take a Singular or Plural Verb

Relative pronouns, such as *who*, *which*, *that*, and *one of*, are singular or plural based on the pronoun’s antecedent. You have to look at the antecedent of the relative clause to know whether to use a singular or plural verb.

Deciding If Relative Pronouns Take a Singular or Plural Verb

Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Relative pronoun that is singular	The Organ, which rises up seven hundred feet, <i>is</i> so named for its resemblance to a pipe organ.	The word “organ” is singular and is the antecedent for “which.” So the word “which” is also singular. The word “which” is the subject for the relative clause “which rises up seven hundred feet” and, therefore, requires a singular verb (rises).
Relative pronoun that is plural	Arches National Park in Utah offers sites that <i>mesmerize</i> the most skeptical people.	The word “sites” is plural and is the antecedent for “that.” The word “that” is the subject for the relative clause “that mesmerize the most skeptical people.” So “that” is plural in this case and requires a plural verb (mesmerize).

Matching Singular Subjects to Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds are nouns formed by adding *–ing* to a verb. Gerunds can combine with

other words to form gerund phrases, which function as subjects in sentences. Gerund phrases are always considered singular. The concept of gerunds, nouns created from verbs is tricky, and the following video goes more in-depth to explain the idea:

Two Minute Teacher – Gerunds

Infinitives are the “to” forms of verbs, such as to run and to sing. Infinitives can be joined with other words to form an infinitive phrase. These phrases can serve as the subject of a sentence. Like gerund phrases, infinitive phrases are always singular. The following video explains the concept of infinitives in more depth:

Infinitives (Phrases) – 2 Minute Teacher

The table down below explains how to create subject-verb agreement with gerund and infinitive phrases.

subject-verb agreement with gerund and infinitive phrases.		
Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Gerund phrase as singular subject	Veering off the paths <i>is</i> not <i>recommended</i> on the steep hills of Acadia National Park.	Don’t be fooled by the fact that “paths” is plural. The subject of this sentence is the whole gerund phrase, which is considered to be singular. So a singular verb is needed.
Infinitive phrase as singular subject	To restore Acadia National Park after the 1947 fire <i>was</i> a Rockefeller family mission.	All words in an infinitive phrase join together to create a singular subject.

Recognizing Singular Subjects That Look Plural and Then Choosing a Verb

Some subjects appear plural when they are actually singular. Some of these same subjects are plural in certain situations, so you have to pay close attention to the whole sentence.

Recognizing Singular Subjects

Situation	Example	Watch Out For
Singular subjects that look plural	Politics <i>plays</i> a part in determining which areas are named as national parks.	Many subjects are or can be singular, but look plural, such as athletics, mathematics, mumps, physics, politics, statistics, and news. Take care when matching verbs to these subjects.
A subject that looks plural, and is sometimes singular and sometimes plural	State and national politics <i>sway</i> Congress during national park designation talks.	Just because words such as “politics” can be singular doesn’t mean that they always are. In this case, the adjectives “state and national” clarify that different sources of politics are involved (“state politics” and “national politics”), so “politics” is plural in this case.

Adapted from “Grammar” in [Writer’s Handbook, 2012](#), used according to [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

G2: Avoiding General Verb Problems

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1. **Understand the difference between regular verbs and irregular verbs and use both versions correctly.**
- 2. **Use verb tenses accurately and completely.**
- 3. **Match infinitives and participles to verb tenses.**

What if all coffee makers worked the same way, all vehicles had the exact same dashboard setup, and all verbs followed the exact same format? Life would simply be easier all the way around! But we live in a world of variety, and just as you take the needed steps to become familiar with the coffee maker and car you own, you should also take the effort to become familiar with the language you speak. This section presents an overview of common issues that impede the proper use of English verbs. To understand the possible problems, study the following chart that shows the five main forms of verbs. Notice that for verbs other than *be*, the present tense for all but third-person singular pronouns is the base verb (third-person singular uses the base verb + *-s*). The **present participle** is usually a form of “to be” + the base word + *-ing*, and the past tense and **past participle** follow irregular patterns.

Base	<u>Present Tense</u> (+ <i>-s</i> for Third-Person Singular)	Past Tense	Past Participle (Preceded by Form of “to Have”)	Present Participle (Preceded by Form of “to Be”)

run	run	ran	run	running
smile	smile	smiled	smiled	smiling
sing	sing	sang	sung	singing
beat	beat	beat	beaten	beating
see	see	saw	seen	seeing

Using Irregular Verbs Correctly

Some verbs are harder to put in a box. This video from Khan Academy gives an intro to irregular verbs.

https://www.youtube.com/embed/ZKr--3HpP_A

Introduction to irregular verbs

REGULAR VERBS

Since the present tense of irregular verbs is almost always the same as the base and since the present participle is almost always a form of “to be” + the base + -ing, those two columns are not included in this table. Take note of some underlying patterns in the other three main verb forms for each set of irregular verbs.

BASE	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE (PRECEDED BY FORM OF “TO HAVE”)
ACCEPT	ACCEPTED	ACCEPTED
BUMP	BUMPED	BUMPED
DRY	DRIED	DRIED
HOP	HOPPED	HOPPED
OBSERVE	OBSERVED	OBSERVED
PRINT	PRINTED	PRINTED
SHRUG	SHRUGGED	SHRUGGED

IRREGULAR VERBS

Since the present tense of irregular verbs is almost always the same as the base and since the present participle is almost always a form of “to be” + the base + -ing, those two columns are not included in this table. Take note of some underlying patterns in the other three main verb forms for each set of irregular verbs.

BASE	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE (PRECEDED BY FORM OF "TO HAVE")
BREAK	BROKE	BROKEN
TEACH	TAUGHT	TAUGHT
FALL	FELL	FALLEN
GIVE	GAVE	GIVEN
RING	RANG	RUNG
LIE	LAY	LAIN
RISE	ROSE	RISEN

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/1iDCV5NbbzM>

The truly irregular verbs

Handling Specific Problematic Verbs

Some verbs are especially problematic either because [their](#) meanings are confused or because some of their forms sound alike. Handle these verbs by knowing which ones give you trouble and then focusing on the conjugation of those specific verbs. Some of these most commonly troublesome verbs are in the following table. You need to know two key verb types to read this table: **transitive** (when an object receives the action of the verb; in other words, something is done to something) and **intransitive** (a verb that does not act on an object). Click on the individual tables for a closer look.

Fig. G2.1

Problematic Verb Sets
borrow...lend

BASE, PAST, P. PART	GUIDELINES	EXAMPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• borrow, borrowed, borrowed• lend, lent, lent• bring, take	The verb borrow means "to temporarily get from someone else," and lend means "to temporarily give to someone else."	I borrowed Kyle's backpack since I had lent mine to Alice.

Fig. G2.1 Problematic Verb Sets borrow...lend

Fig. G2.2

Problematic Verb Sets
bring...take

BASE, PAST, P. PART	GUIDELINES	EXAMPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• bring, brought, brought• take, took, taken	If you bring something, you start somewhere else and end up at the common location. If you take something, you have to start at the common location and end up somewhere else.	He brought his clean life jacket to the river and took away a filthy life jacket.

Fig. G2.2 Problematic Verb Sets bring..take

Fig. G2.3

Problematic Verb Sets
feel...think

BASE, PAST, P. PART	GUIDELINES	EXAMPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• feel, felt, felt• think, thought, thought	The verb feel is emotion based and the verb think is logic based.	I feel excited about the tree-top ride, but I think it might cost more than I can afford.

Fig. G2.3 Problematic Verb Sets feel...think

Fig. G2.4

Problematic Verb Sets
lay...lie

BASE, PAST, P. PART	GUIDELINES	EXAMPLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lay, laid, laid• lie, lay, lain (rest)• lie, lied, lied (fib)	The verb lay is transitive and means "to put," so whenever you put something down, use lay. If you could replace the verb with put or place, you should use lay. The verb lie means "to rest" or "to tell a falsehood."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I laid my sunglasses down on a rock.• I lay on the rock myself for twenty minutes.• The ranger jokingly lied about the trail being a short one.

Fig. G2.4 Problematic Verb Sets lay...lie

Fig. G2.5
Problematic Verb Sets
learn...teach

BASE, PAST, P. PART	GUIDELINES	EXAMPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• learn, learned, learned• teach, taught, taught	The verb learn always means to "take in information" and to teach always means to "give out information."	I learned that Yellowstone was the first national park in the United States. When we go there this summer, I'm going to see what Old Faithful can teach me about geysers.

Fig. G2.5 Problematic Verb Sets learn...teach

Fig. G2.6
Problematic Verb Sets
raise...rise

BASE, PAST, P. PART	GUIDELINES	EXAMPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• raise, raised, raised• rise, rose, risen	The verb raise is transitive, so you always have to raise something. The verb rise means to "go up" or "get up."	We are planning to rise early so that we are ready to start hiking when the sun rises, so raise your hand now if you have a problem with that plan.

Fig. G2.6 Problematic Verb Sets raise...rise

Fig. G2.7
Problematic Verb Sets
set...sit

BASE, PAST, P. PART	GUIDELINES	EXAMPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• set, set, set• sit, sat, set	The verb sit is always intransitive and set usually transitive. The most common confusion is when referring to putting something down. Whenever the meaning is to put, use set.	The squirrel set his nut on the ground and sat looking at me.

Fig. G2.7 Problematic Verb Sets set...sit

Adding -s and -es for the Third Person

Many verbs require the addition of –s or –es when used in the third-person singular present tense. Although these verbs are slightly different from the present tense form of the verb, they are not considered a separate verb form.

Example

Present tense verb: walk

Present tense verb used in first person: I walk for hours looking at the trees and

plants.

Present tense verb used in second person: You walk too quickly for me.

Present tense verb used in third person: He walks around as if he knows where he’s going.

Using Verb Tenses Accurately and Completely

Verb tenses allow you to attach timing to sentences you write and vocalize. To make your meaning clear, you need to choose the correct tense for the timing and you need to be sure to include all the needed words for that tense.

Verb Tenses	Timing of Action	Additional Words and Endings Needed to Complete Verb	Examples
Simple present	Taking place right now	None	I hike.
			You hike.
			She hikes.
Simple past	Started and finished in the past	Add <i>-ed</i> to verb.	I hiked.
			You hiked.
			She hiked.

Simple future	Will take place after now	Add <i>will</i> or <i>shall</i> to the present-tense verb	I will hike.
			You will hike.
			She will hike.
Present progressive	Taking place right now and will continue to take place	Add <i>am</i> , <i>is</i> , or <i>are</i> to the verb + <i>-ing</i>	I am hiking
			You are hiking.
			He is hiking.
Past progressive	Took place in the past at the same time that another action took place	Add <i>was</i> or <i>were</i> to the verb + <i>-ing</i>	I was hiking.
			You were hiking.
			He was hiking.
Future progressive	Will take place in the future and will continue on indefinitely	Add <i>will be</i> or <i>shall be</i> to the verb + <i>-ing</i>	I will be hiking.
			You will be hiking.
			He will be hiking.
Present perfect	Happened at an indefinite time in the past or started in the past and continues now	Add <i>has</i> or <i>have</i> to the past participle of the verb (usually- <i>ed</i>)	I have hiked this trail before. (in the past)
			I have hiked this

			trail since I was five years old. (in the past and continues)
Past perfect	Took place before some other past action	Add <i>had</i> to the past participle of the verb (usually <i>-ed</i>)	By the time I saw Jenny, I had hiked past the food station.
Future perfect	Will take place some time in the future before some other action	Add <i>will have</i> to the past participle of the verb (usually <i>-ed</i>)	I will have hiked for two hours before you even wake up.
Present perfect progressive	Began in the past, continues now, and might continue into the future	Add <i>has</i> or <i>have been</i> to the verb <i>+ing</i>	I have been hiking for a while.
Past perfect progressive	Took place on an ongoing basis in the past and was completed before another past action	Add <i>had been</i> to the verb <i>+ -ing</i>	You had been walking for an hour when you saw the swans.
Future perfect progressive	Takes place in the future on an ongoing basis	Add <i>will have been</i> to the verb <i>+ -ing</i>	<u>They</u> will have been hiking once a week by then.

Matching Infinitives and Participles to Verb Tenses

Verbals are words formed from verbs that function as other parts of speech. One type of verbals, gerunds (laughing, eating), always function as nouns (e.g., “*Laughing* is good for you”). Present, past, and present perfect participles are verbals that function as adjectives (e.g., “The sound of *laughing* children always cheered him up,” “The sight of the *broken* tricycle left in the rain made him gloomy”). Infinitives (to laugh, to have eaten) are another main type of verbals that function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. When using any of these verbals, make sure you match the tense of the verb in the sentence.

Infinitives

When the action of the infinitive takes place after or at the same time as the action of the main verb, use the present tense:

- We plan *to camp* in the National Redwood Forest this week.

When the action of the infinitive takes place before the action of the main verb, present the infinitive in **perfect tense**:

- We planned *to have been camping* in the National Redwood Forest last week.

Participle Phrases

Participle phrases can begin with the present participle, past participle, or present perfect participle.

The present participle is the correct choice when the action of the participle is

happening at the same time as the action of the main verb:

- *Resulting* in large openings called goosepen scars, fire ravages redwood trees without killing them.

When the action of the participle takes place before the action of the main verb, you can use either a past participle or a present perfect participle:

- *Scarred* by a fire years ago, the large redwood tree still stands tall and awesome. (past participle in participle phrase)
- *Having posed* for several pictures inside the redwood trunk, we climbed out and previewed the shots.

Adapted from “Grammar” in [Writer’s Handbook](#), 2012, used according to Creative Commons [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

G3: Choosing the Correct Pronoun and Noun Cases

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize pronoun cases.**
2. **Recognize noun cases.**
3. **Learn tips for handling pronoun case situations that confuse you.**

One feature that is easier in English than in many other languages is noun cases. While other languages have changes for the objective case as well as changes based on gender, English nouns do not change form except for the formation of plurals and possessives.

Pronouns in English, on the other hand, have different forms for the subjective, possessive, and objective cases. The subjective case refers to words as they are used in the subject position, while the possessive and objective cases designate words that are used in the possessive and object positions, respectively. Study the following table for an overview of the noun and pronoun cases.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/q5HmV3Czl6g?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Subject and object pronouns | The parts of speech | Grammar | Khan Academy

FIGURE G3.1 EXAMPLES OF NOUNS IN DIFFERENT CASES

NOUNS	SUBJECTIVE CASE	POSSESSIVE CASE	OBJECTIVE CASE
Singular	jar	car’s	car
	Jordy	Jordy’s	Jordy
Plural	apples	apples’	apples
	children	children’s	apples

FIGURE G3.2: SINGULAR PRONOUN IN DIFFERENT CASES

SINGULAR NOUNS	SUBJECTIVE CASE	POSSESSIVE CASE	OBJECTIVE CASE
First person	I	my	me
		mine	
Second person	you	your	You
		yours	
Third	he	his	him

person	she, her, hers	her, hers	her
	it	its	it

FIGURE G3.3: PLURAL PRONOUNS IN DIFFERENT CASES

SINGULAR NOUNS	SUBJECTIVE CASE	POSSESSIVE CASE	OBJECTIVE CASE
First person	we	our ours	us
Second person	you	your, yours	you
Third person	they	<u>their</u> theirs	them

FIGURE G3.4: INDEFINITE PRONOUNS IN DIFFERENT CASES

SUBJECTIVE	POSSESSIVE	OBJECTIVE
everybody	everybody’s	everybody
someone	someone’s	someone
anybody	anybody’s	anybody

FIGURE G3.5: RELATIVE AND INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS PRONOUNS IN DIFFERENT CASES

SUBJECTIVE CASE	POSSESSIVE CASE	OBJECTIVE CASE
that		that
which		which
who	whose	whom
whoever	whoever’s (slang)	whomever

Correct Gender Pronouns

As it is unacceptable to refer generically to a doctor as “him,” a teacher as “her,” or a politician as “him,” it is also false to assume that all people identify as either a *him* or a *her*. Gender identification does not always fall under two opposing forms of masculine and feminine, also known as a gender binary.

The pronouns *he* and *she* are third-person personal pronouns traditionally specific to biological sex; however, English lacks a gender-neutral third person pronoun, and this is problematic for people who identify as neither a him nor a her. In response to this language void, a variety of new pronouns have been coined that do not bear a resemblance to the traditional pronouns of he/him or she/her ([Third Person Pronoun](#); Shank).

The table below lists a range of gender inclusive pronouns that have come into usage. According to the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools, “In English, the most commonly used singular gender neutral pronouns are ze (sometimes spelled zie) and hir” ([Third Person Pronoun](#)); however, the singular [they](#) is also coming into usage when referring to a person whose gender identification is nonbinary.

CNM offers the option for transgender and gender non-binary students to let instructors know of their gender pronouns and preferred name to be used in the classroom. This service is detailed on the [LGBTQ+](#) page on CNM’s website.

Here is a table of Gender Pronouns, table G3.6.

TABLE G3.6. GENDER PRONOUNS

Subject Pronoun	Object Pronoun	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive Pronoun
_____ is an activist.	I am proud of _____.	That is _____ book. or That book is _____.	That person likes _____.
She	her	her/hers	herself
He	him	his	himself
Ze	hir	hir/hirs	hirsself
Ze	zir	zir/zirs	zirsself
E or Ey	em	eir/eirs	eirself or emself

Per	per	per/pers	perself
Hu	Hum	hus/hus	himself
<u>They</u> (are)	them	their/theirs	themselves

Table G3.6: Correct Gender Pronouns is adapted from two sources: [Preferred Gender Pronoun Handout](#) and [Third Person Pronoun](#)

Some of the pronouns in the table above cannot be located in a dictionary. Every year, hundreds of words are added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Take for example, the terms whatevs (circa 1990) or noob (early 21st century). These innocuous words came into wide usage and were later added to the dictionary. Even though whatevs and noob are informal words, they have a dictionary definition. While the pronouns in the table above may not conform to Standard American English because they do not have a dictionary entry, that does not mean the words will never become mainstream. Language is constantly evolving, and when usage of any of these pronouns grows, dictionary entries will follow.

Tips for Avoiding Pronoun Problems

Tip #1

If you have trouble choosing between “I” and “me” in compound subject and object situations, remove the other subject or object, and try “I” or “me” alone.

- **Example:** Which of these two choices are correct?
 - At Bryce Canyon, Carol took thirty pictures of Anna and I.

OR

- At Bryce Canyon, Carol took thirty pictures of Anna and me.
- **Test:** At Bryce Canyon, Carol took thirty pictures of (I, me).
- **Result:** Since the correct choice alone is “me,” the correct choice within the compound object is also “me”—At Bryce Canyon, Carol took thirty pictures of Anna and me.

Tip #2

If you are confused about whether to use *who* or *whom* in a dependent clause, try isolating the clause that includes *who* or *whom*. Then reword the clause as a sentence and substitute a personal pronoun (subjective case: he, she, they; objective case: him, her, them) for *who* or *whom*. If *he*, *she*, or *they* sounds right, use *who*. If *him*, *her*, or *them* sounds right, use *whom*.

This video explains in more detail:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/bPqMLKXoEac?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Subject and object pronouns | The parts of speech | Grammar | Khan Academy

And here is an example for you to read over as well:

- **Example:** I don't know (who, whom) to ask about where to stay at the Grand Tetons.
- **Test:** Possible rewording—I don't know if I should ask (he, she, they, him, her, them).
- **Result:** Since *him*, *her*, or *them* are the choices that work, the correct choice in the first sentence is *whom*—I don't know whom to ask about where to stay at the Grand Tetons.

Tip #3

If you are confused about whether to use *who* or *whom* at the beginning of a sentence, think of an answer for the sentence using a personal pronoun. Then mimic the case of the answer pronoun in the original sentence.

- **Example 1:** (Who, Whom) is getting up at sunrise to watch the sun come up over these magnificent trees?
 - **Test:** They will get up.
 - **Result:** Since *they* is subjective case, you should use *who*, which is also subjective case.
- **Example 2:** (Who, Whom) did you ask to watch the fire?
 - **Test:** I asked her to watch the fire.
 - **Result:** Since *her* is objective case, you should use *whom*, which is also objective case.

Tip #4

In casual usage, some words are sometimes left out, thus requiring a pronoun to do extra work. If you are confused about which pronoun case to use in these situations, think about how the sentence would be written if it were totally complete. Considering the whole sentence meaning should help clarify the pronoun choice.

- **Example 1:** Harry likes camping more than (her, she).
 - **Test:** Harry likes camping more than she (likes camping).

- **Result:** The pronoun *she* is the subject of the assumed verb *likes*. So subjective case is needed.
- **Example 2:** Harry likes camping more than (her, she).
 - **Test:** Harry likes camping more than (he likes) her.
 - **Result:** The pronoun *her* is the object of the assumed verb *likes*. So objective case is needed.

Tip #5

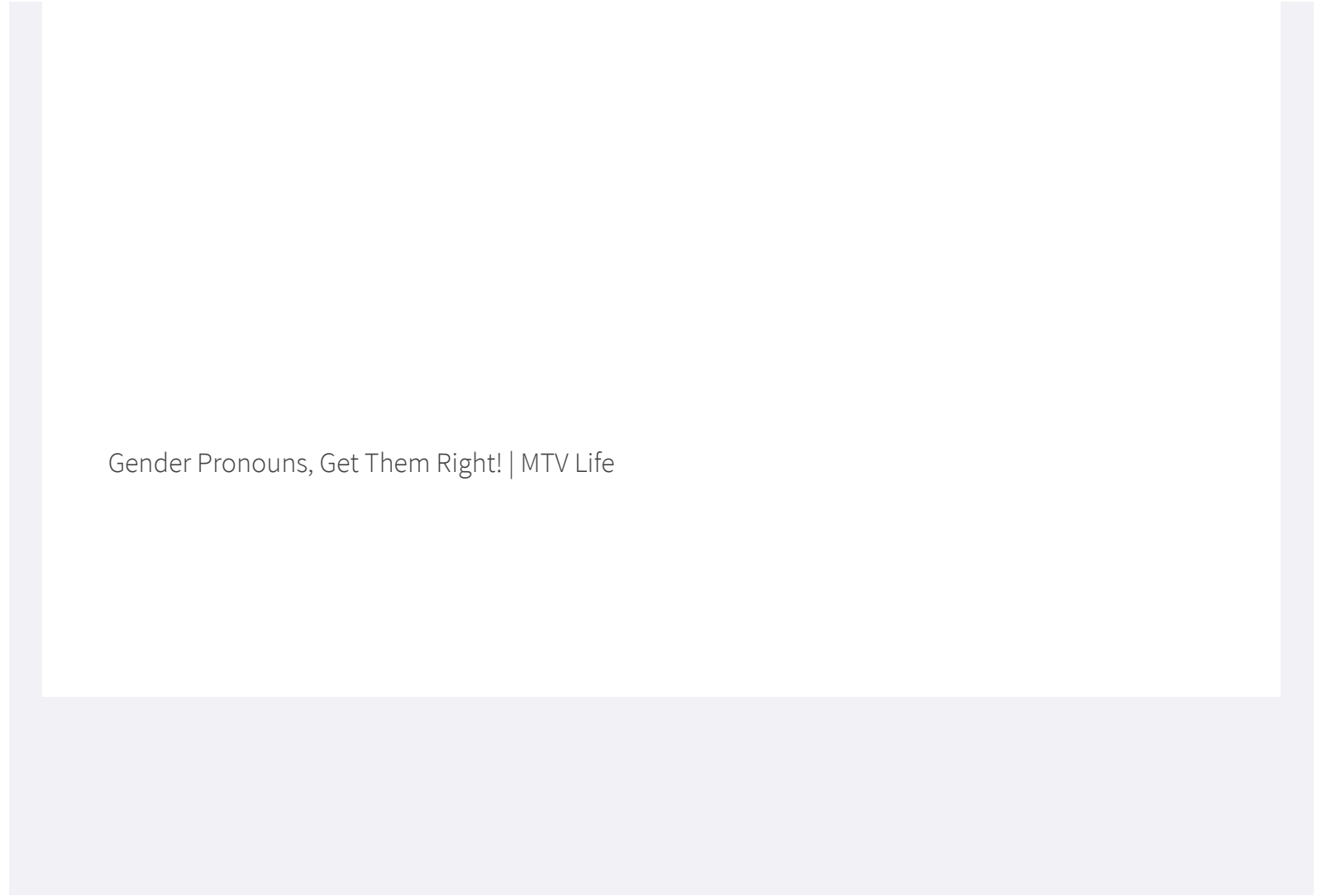
If you are unsure whether to use *we* and *us* before a noun or noun phrase, say the sentence without the noun or noun phrase in place. Whichever pronoun works without the noun or noun phrase is also the correct pronoun to use with the noun.

- **Example 1:** Even (us, we) people who like our creature comforts fall in love with nature when viewing the Grand Tetons.
 - **Test:** Even we fall in love with nature when viewing the Grand Tetons.
 - **Result:** Once *people who like our creature comforts* is dropped out, it becomes clear that the pronoun needs to be subjective case.
- **Example 2:** Don't wait for (us, we) creature-comfort people to come up with a plan.
- **Test:** Don't wait for us to come up with a plan.
- **Result:** Once *creature-comfort people* is dropped, it becomes clear that the pronoun needs to be objective case.

Tip #6

You can also watch this short video to learn more about the history of Gender Pronouns:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/gXLFdYNEI_I?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu



Gender Pronouns, Get Them Right! | MTV Life

G4: Making Pronouns and Antecedents Agree

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Understand the different types of pronouns.**
2. **Recognize pronoun antecedents.**
3. **Make sure pronouns and antecedents are relatively close together and match in person, number, gender, and human versus nonhuman state.**

Pronouns can be somewhat confusing, but [they](#) can help make your use of language smoother and more compact. For example, if your name were Pete Rando, you could write, “Pete Rando is going back to wait to go back to Pete Rando’s camper until Pete Rando’s friends have seen the sunset at the Grand Canyon.” Or you could say, “I’m going to wait to go back to my camper until my friends have seen the sunset at the Grand Canyon.” A first step in understanding how and when to use pronouns properly is having an overall picture of pronouns. The following video explains pronouns and antecedents:

<

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/j9kIACViG6o?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Pronoun-antecedent agreement | [Syntax](#) | Khan Academy

Study the following table for an overview of the different types of pronouns. Note that some pronouns, such as possessive pronouns and interrogative pronouns, show up on more than one list.

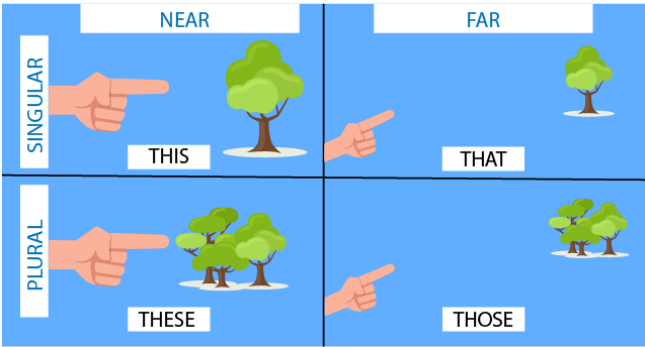


Figure G4.1: Demonstrative Pronouns




Figure G4.2: Indefinite Pronouns


INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

USED TO FORM A QUESTION AND ARE AT THE BEGINNING OF A QUESTION


THAT
WHAT
WHATEVER
WHICH
WHICHEVER
WHO
WHOEVER
WHOM
WHOSE



Whose book are you reading?



Which car are you taking?



Where can i get a burger?

Figure G4.3: Interrogative Pronouns

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

REFERS TO PEOPLE OR THINGS

SUBJECTIVE CASE:
HE
I
IT
SHE
THEY
WE
YOU

OBJECTIVE CASE:
ALL
ANY
MORE
MOST
NONE
SOME

POSSESSIVE CASE:
HIS
HER(S)
ITS
MY
MINE

OUR(S)
THEIR(S)
YOUR(S)

If you ask Zac,he will tell you that I am scared of bunny rabbits even though they are soft and cute.




Figure G4.4: Personal Pronouns

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

SHOW OWNERSHIP WITHOUT USING AN APOSTROPHE

HIS
HER(S)
ITS
MY
MINE
OUR(S)
THEIR(S)
YOUR(S)

REGARDLESS OF THE COST, A SPACESHIP RIDE TO THE MOON IS MY CHOICE.



Figure G4.5: Possessive Pronouns

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

SHOWS HOW A DEPENDENT CLAUSE RELATES TO A NOUN

THAT
WHAT
WHATEVER
WHICH
WHICHEVER
WHO
WHOEVER
WHOM
WHOMEVER
WHOSE

WHICH HOUSE WOULD YOU PREFER TO LIVE IN?




Figure G4.6: Relative Pronouns



Figure G4.7: Reciprocal Pronouns

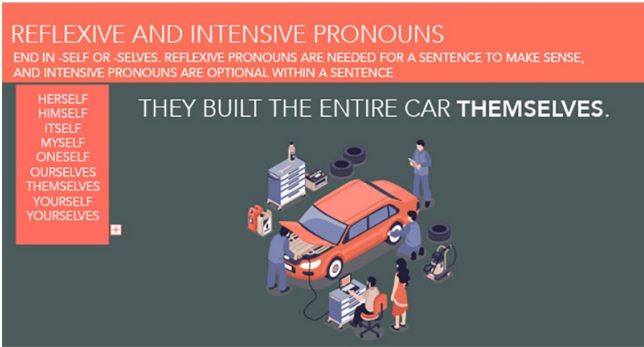


Figure G4.8: Reflexive and intensive pronouns

Another step in properly using pronouns is to recognize a pronoun’s antecedent, which is the noun or pronoun to which a pronoun refers, and make sure the pronoun and antecedent match in number, person, gender, and human versus nonhuman state. Also, to make the antecedent-pronoun match clear, the pronoun should follow relatively soon after the antecedent, and no other possible antecedent should fall between the antecedent and the pronoun.

Figure G4.9: Compound Antecedent Guidelines

Antecedent Situations	Example in a Sentence	Pronoun Antecedent Guidelines
Compound antecedents	Joey and Hannah spent the weekend with <u>their</u> parents at the Grand Teton National Park.	As an antecedent, “Joey and Hannah” is plural, non-gender-specific, human, and third person, so the pronoun must match. Hence <i>their</i>

		works, but, for example, <i>our</i> , <i>his</i> , <i>her</i> , and <i>them</i> would not work.
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Figure G4.10: Indefinite Pronoun Antecedent Guidelines

Antecedent Situations	Example in a Sentence	Pronoun Antecedent Guidelines
Indefinite pronouns that act as an antecedent for other pronouns	Some of the moose left their footprints in our campsite.	Since “of the moose” is a nonessential phrase, the antecedent for <i>their</i> is <i>some</i> . The pronoun <i>some</i> can be singular or plural, so it agrees with <i>their</i> , which is plural.

Figure G4.11: Collective Noun Antecedent Guidelines

Antecedent Situations	Example in a Sentence	Pronoun Antecedent Guidelines
Collective noun antecedents	The Teton Range is quite regal as it protrudes upwards nearly seven thousand feet.	<i>Teton Range</i> is a collective noun and, therefore, is considered single (multiple mountains within the range, but only one range). It is nonhuman, so it agrees with <i>it</i> . Collective nouns are sometimes an exception to the <i>human versus</i>

		<i>nonhuman</i> guideline since a noun, such as “crew” or “ <u>audience</u> ,” can match to the pronoun <i>its</i> .
--	--	--

Figure G4.12: Collective Noun Antecedent Guidelines

Antecedent Situations	Example in a Sentence	Pronoun Antecedent Guidelines
Antecedents and gender-biased pronouns	Everyone should make his or her own choice about hike lengths. Or Everyone should make their own choice about hike lengths.	Years ago, acceptable writing included using male pronouns to refer to all unknown- or collective-gender antecedents. Today such usage is considered sexist. Some people opt to use <i>their</i> with singular antecedents instead of using <i>his or her</i> and it is becoming more common. Their can be a pronoun choice, and it is a pronoun option for people with non-binary gender identification.

Figure G4.13: Ambiguous Antecedent Guidelines

Antecedent Situations	Example in a Sentence	Pronoun Antecedent Guidelines
Ambiguous Antecedents	Ambiguous: The trails wind high into the	When a pronoun antecedent is unclear, such as in this situation

	<p>mountains where they seem to disappear into the sky.</p>	<p>where readers do not know if the trails or the mountains seem to disappear into the sky, you should reword the sentence by either (1) eliminating or (2) moving the pronoun (and probably other words).</p> <p>Example #1: The trails wind high into the mountains where the trails seem to disappear into the sky.</p> <p>Example #2: High in the mountains, the trails wind as they seem to disappear into the sky.</p>
--	---	--

Figure G4.14: Vague or Implied Antecedent Guidelines

Antecedent Situations	Example in a Sentence	Pronoun Antecedent Guidelines
Vague or implied antecedents	Vague or implied: The Grand Teton park wetland trails go past areas where deer, elk, and moose are often seen, so it should be a lot of fun.	The antecedent of <i>it</i> is not clear because the writer used a shortcut. Instead of referring to any of the nouns that preceded it in the sentence, <i>it</i> refers to an unstated antecedent, such as <i>the experience</i> or <i>the hike</i> . A better way to write the sentence: The Grand Teton park wetland trails go past areas where deer, elk, and

moose are often seen, so the hike should be a lot of fun.

Figure G4.15: Antecedents in Previous Sentences Guidelines

Antecedent Situations	Example in a Sentence	Pronoun Antecedent Guidelines
Antecedents in previous sentences	The Grand Teton National Park was formed in 1929. In 1950, it was sort of re-formed when additional land was added.	Antecedents should be present within the same sentence unless the flow of the sentences is such that the antecedent/pronoun connection is very clear.

G5: Using Relative Pronouns and Clauses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize noun and adjective clauses that begin with relative pronouns.**
2. **Use appropriate relative pronouns in noun and adjective clauses.**

Noun clauses can serve as subjects or objects and often begin with one of these relative pronouns: *that, what, whatever, which, whichever, who, whoever, whom, whomever, whose*. Logically, you should use subjective case pronouns in noun clauses that function as subjects and objective case pronouns in noun clauses that function as objects.

The following video explains the [concept](#) of relative pronouns in more depth:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/ZHzKQkX3IxI?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Relative pronouns | The parts of speech | Grammar | Khan Academy

Examples

Subjective Case Example:

Joshua Tree National Park, which is in California, is named after a tree that is actually a member of the lily family.

Objective Case Example:

A Joshua tree looks like neither its relative, the lily, nor the biblical figure, Joshua, whom the tree is said to be named after.

Adjective clauses modify nouns and pronouns that usually immediately precede the clauses. Adjective clauses often begin with these relative pronouns: *that, which, who, whom, whose*. Adjective clauses contain a subject, usually a relative pronoun, and a predicate, the verb following the relative pronoun.

Here's a video that explains what an adjective clause is in more depth:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/2o_No13VbVc?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu

“What is an adjective clause? I’ll show you!” Created by Grammar Revolution, License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube License ©

Adjective Clause Example:

The Mohave and the Colorado are the two deserts that meet in Joshua Tree National Park. If you guessed that the adjective clause was “that meet in Joshua Tree National Park,” then you are right. That is the subject. Meet is the verb.

Often adjective clauses leave the relative pronoun implied, as in the following example: I couldn’t get the stain out of the pants (that) I wore to the party.

G6: Using Adverbs and Adjectives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1. Use **general adverbs and adjectives correctly.**
- 2. Use **comparatives and superlatives correctly.**
- 3. **Recognize how incorrect usage of adverbs and adjectives can result in double negatives.**
- 4. **Learn the correct use of *good* and *well* and *bad* and *badly*.**

Many adverbs and adjectives are paired with slight changes in spelling (usually adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to the adjective). A few adverbs and adjectives have the same spelling (like **best**, **fast**, **late**, **straight**, **low**, and **daily**), so it is only their use that differentiates them.

Adjectives	Adverbs
bad	badly
beautiful	beautifully
quick	quickly
quiet	quietly
slow	slowly

soft	softly
sudden	suddenly

Using Adverbs to Modify Verbs, Adjectives, and Adverbs

Adverbs tell *when, how, why, where, under what condition, to what degree, how often, and how much*. Many adverbs end in *–ly*, but certainly not all them. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

The following video from Khan Academy explains what adverbs are and how [they](#) function in sentences:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/b3RaBB7IDZc?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Intro to Adverbs.” Created by Khan Academy.

In the following sentences, the adverbs are in **bold** font and the words they modify are in *italic* font.

1. About a quarter million bats *leave* Carlsbad Caverns **nightly**.
2. When do they leave? **nightly**; modifies a verb
3. The bats *flew* **above** our heads. Where did they fly? **above**; modifies a verb
4. The bats are **incredibly** *dense*. To what degree are they dense? **incredibly**; modifies an adjective
5. Each little bat can *change* directions **amazingly fast**! How do they change directions? **fast**; modifies a verb AND To what degree do they change directions **fast**? **amazingly**; modifies an adverb

Using Adjectives to Modify Nouns and Pronouns

Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns and answer the questions *what kind?* *how many?* and *which one?*

The following video from Khan Academy explains adjectives in more depth:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/pt-cjNaErXI?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Intro to Adjectives.” Created by Khan Academy.

In the following sentences, the adjectives are in **bold** font and the words they modify are in *italic* font.

1. It takes **excited** *people* to go to a cave at 4:00 a.m. to wait for the bats to leave! What kind of people? excited ones; modifies a noun
2. A **few** *bats* seemed to circle above as the rest flew off. How many bats? a few; modifies a noun
3. **That** *one* almost got in my hair. Which one? that one; modifies a pronoun

Using Comparatives and Superlatives

Most adjectives and adverbs have three levels of intensity. The lowest level is the base, or positive, level, such as *tall*. The second level is the **comparative** level (*taller*), and the top level is the **superlative** level (*tallest*). You use the base, or positive, level when you are talking about only one thing. You use the comparative level when you are comparing two things. The superlative level allows you to compare three or more things.

With short adjectives, the comparative and superlative are typically formed by adding *-er* and *-est*, respectively. If an adjective has three or more syllables, use the words *more* or *less* (comparative) and *most* or *least* (superlative) in front of the adjectives instead of adding suffixes. When you are unsure whether to add the suffix or a word, look up the word.

The following video from Khan Academy describes the comparative and superlative levels of description:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/jROzZfJbplU?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Intro to the Comparative and Superlative.” Created by Khan Academy.

Sample Comparative and Superlative Adjectives

Formed with -er and -est		
big	bigger	biggest
old	older	oldest
wise	wiser	wisest
Formed by Using <i>More or Less</i> and <i>Most or Least</i>		
ambitious	more ambitious	least ambitious
generous	less generous	least generous
simplistic	more simplistic	most simplistic

With adverbs, only a few of the shorter words form superlatives by adding the -er or -est suffixes. Rather, most of them use the addition of more or less and most or least.

Sample Comparative and Superlative Adverbs

Formed with -er and -est		
early	earlier	earliest
fast	faster	fastest
late	later	latest
Formed by Using <i>More or Less</i> and <i>Most or Least</i>		
happily	more happily	most happily
neatly	more neatly	most neatly
quickly	more quickly	most quickly

Some adjectives and adverbs form superlatives in irregular patterns instead of using the -er or -est suffixes or adding more or less and most or least.

Sample Adjectives That Form Superlatives Using Irregular Patterns

good	better	best
------	--------	------

bad	worse	worst
far	farther	farthest
many	more	most

Sample Adverbs That Form Superlatives Using Irregular Patterns

badly	worse	worst
little	less	least
much	more	most
well	better	best

Avoiding Double Negatives

One negative word changes the meaning of a sentence to mean the opposite of what the sentence would mean without the negative word. Two negative words, on the other hand, cancel each other out, resulting in a double negative that returns the sentence to its original meaning. Because of the potential for confusion, double negatives are discouraged.

Example

Example of a sentence with one negative word: I have **never** been to Crater Lake National Park.

Meaning: Crater Lake is a place I have **not** visited.

Example of a sentence with two negative words: I have **not never** been to Crater Lake National Park.

Meaning: I have been to Crater Lake National Park.

Using Good and Well and Bad and Badly Correctly

Two sets of adverbs and adjectives that are often used erroneously are *good* and *well* and *bad* and *badly*. The problem people usually have with these two words is that the adverb forms (*well* and *badly*) are often used in place of the adjective forms (*good* and *bad*) or vice versa. In addition, *well* can be used as an adjective meaning “healthy.” If you have problems with these two sets of words, it could help to keep the following chart taped to your computer until you change your habits with these words.

Good is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

Incorrect: Cecilia felt that she had never done so good on a test.

Correct: Cecilia felt that she had never done so well on a test.

Well is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because good is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

Incorrect: Cecilia’s team received a well score.

Correct: Cecilia’s team received a good score.

Bad is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because badly is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

Incorrect: I did bad on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Correct: I did badly on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Badly is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because bad is an adjective that describes the noun thunderstorm.

Incorrect: The coming thunderstorm looked badly.

Correct: The coming thunderstorm looked bad.

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“Using *Good* and *Well* and *Bad* and *Badly* Correctly” is adapted from The Saylor Foundation’s [Business English for Success](https://www.saylor.org/books/saylor-org-book-business-english-for-success/). It is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>).

P1: Using Commas Properly

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Use introductory, series, and compound-sentence commas correctly.**
2. **Use commas to isolate words that are not essential to a sentence.**
3. **Use commas with adjectives, quotations, and details.**

Commas are to readers as road signs are to drivers. Just as a driver might take a wrong turn if a sign is missing or misplaced, a reader cannot navigate a sentence when commas are not properly in place.

You are most likely already acquainted with the comma, but the people at Khan Academy have an [introduction](#) to commas that is very helpful.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/WkOk2FLjM1c?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Meet the Comma.” Published by Khan Academy.

Using Commas with Introductory Words, Phrases, and Clauses

Commas set introductory words, phrases, and clauses apart from the rest of a sentence. This separation serves to signal a reader to pause and to give words a chance to have meaning without interference from other words.

Examples

Single-word example: Afterward, fans came backstage and surrounded the actors and actresses.

Phrase example: Without an invitation, fans swarmed backstage in excitement.

Clause example: After the fans began to head to their cars, the actors and actresses took their first break in two hours.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/NvGBug8iORE?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Commas and Introductory Elements.” Published by Khan Academy.

Using Commas in a Series

A series is a list embedded in a sentence with a conjunction, typically the word “and,” between the last two items in the list. Without the commas, a series can be quite confusing.

Example

Series in a sentence without commas: Penny’s costume included a long blue dress a red bonnet black lace-up shoes a heavy gold pendant on a chain and a very-full petticoat.

With a little work, a reader can possibly identify the five items that made up Penny’s costume. But the sentence is confusing and requires too much work to read. Inserting commas makes reading this sentence easy and clear.

Example

Series in a sentence with commas: Penny’s costume included a long blue dress, a red bonnet, black lace-up shoes, a heavy gold pendant on a chain, and a very-full petticoat.

Some usage experts promote the idea that the comma immediately before the conjunction is optional since it has fallen out of universal use. However, it is still wise to use it to avoid inadvertent confusion.

This video from Khan Academy further illustrates the [concept](#):

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/DBMQOK64VQY?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Using Commas in a Series.” Published by Khan Academy.

Using Commas in Compound Sentences

When a sentence is made up of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, nor/or, so, yet*), a comma is needed between the two clauses. Remember that an independent clause must have both a subject and a verb and be able to serve as a stand-alone sentence.

Examples

Example of a compound sentence with two independent clauses:

Mitch arrived an hour early for the first rehearsal, and he spent the time looking through the costume closets.

Example of a sentence with two clauses, one of which is not independent: Mitch arrived an hour early for the first rehearsal and spent the time looking through the costume closets. (The second clause is not independent because it lacks a subject, so no comma is needed.)

Using Commas to Isolate Nonessential Words within a Sentence

To create interest and increase clarification, you may want to add words and phrases to basic sentences. These additional pieces often function as add-ons that are not essential to the core meaning of the sentence and do not change the meaning of the sentence. You should separate such words and phrases from the rest of the sentence. Some examples of nonessential words include adjective phrases and clauses, words of direct address, interjections, and appositives.

Adjective Phrases and Clauses

Some adjective phrases and clauses are essential to the meaning of a sentence and some are not. If they are essential, no comma is needed. If the meaning of the sentence would be intact if the phrase or clause were removed, a comma is needed. You can identify adjective clauses since they often begin with the relative pronouns *where*, *when*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, *whose*, or *that*.

Example

Comma needed: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which was Malik’s first play, lasted almost two hours.

A comma is needed because, even without the adjective phrase, the reader would know that the play lasted for two hours.

Example

Commas not needed: Actors who give constant effort can inspire others in the cast to do well.

A comma is not needed because the phrase “who give constant efforts” clarifies which actors are being referenced within the sentence. Since the sentence

meaning would not be complete without the phrase, no comma is needed.

Words of Direct Address

Some sentences name the person being spoken to. A person's name that is used in this way is called a noun in direct address. Since naming the person does not change the meaning of the sentence, you should separate such a name from the rest of the sentence.

Example

Your performance, Penny, was absolutely amazing!

Interjections

Some words interrupt the flow of a sentence but do not actually change the meaning of the sentence. Such words are known as interjections and should be set apart from the rest of the sentence with commas. Aside from “yes” and “no,” most interjections express a sudden emotion.

- Yes, I am going to the Saturday matinee performance.
- I suppose you will think it is a problem if I don't arrive until a few minutes before the curtain goes up, huh?
- There is a chance, drat, that I might miss the first few minutes.

Appositives

Appositives are nouns or noun phrases that restate an immediately preceding noun or noun phrase.

- Malik's first play, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, had six performances.

Malik only has one “first” play, so the title of the play is a restatement of “Malik's first play.” Since this sentence is complete with all meaning intact even

if the words “*To Kill a Mockingbird*” were removed, the words need to be separated with commas.

- My husband, Kyle, has visited the *To Kill a Mockingbird* museum in Monroeville.

Since “my husband” identifies a single person, the name “Kyle” merely restates his identity and thus adds no new information. Therefore, “Kyle” should be set apart with commas.

This video from Khan Academy discusses appositives in more depth:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/QFcaUTd8DgY?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Appositive.” Published by Khan Academy.

Using Commas with Coordinate Adjectives

You should place a comma between coordinate adjectives that are not joined with the word “and.” Coordinate adjectives are double adjectives that describe the same noun and can be joined with the word “and,” rearranged, or both and still work fine.

Example

Sentence with coordinate adjectives: Atticus is a good role for Malik since Malik is a tall, stately guy.

This sentence requires commas since Malik could be “a stately, tall guy,” or he could be “tall and stately,” or he could be “stately and tall.”

Do not use commas between cumulative adjectives. Cumulative adjectives build on each other, modify the next one in line, and do not make sense if rearranged.

Example

Sentence with cumulative adjectives: Atticus Finch is a dedicated defense attorney.

This is a cumulative adjective situation because it would not work to rearrange the adjectives to say “defense dedicated attorney” or “dedicated and defense attorney.” Therefore, no commas are needed in this example; the adjective “defense” modifies “attorney” and the adjective “dedicated” modifies “defense attorney.”

Using Commas with Dialogue and Direct Quotations

You should use a comma prior to or just after the quotations in dialogue. Also, use a comma before a direct [quotation](#) when preceded by a verb such as declares, says, or writes.

Example

Comma before dialogue: Jem said, “There goes the meanest man that ever

took a breath of life.”

Comma after dialogue: “The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience,” said Atticus Finch.

No comma needed before or after a direct quotation that is not preceded by a verb: According to Miss Maudie Atkinson, Atticus “can make somebody’s will so airtight you can’t break it.”

No comma needed before or after an indirect quotation: Atticus told Jem that it was a sin to kill a mockingbird.

Using Commas When Inserting Details into Text

Details such as dates, addresses, geographic names, company names, letter and email components, titles that go with names, and numbers all require commas when used in text and sometimes when used alone.

Dates

When a date is written in month–day–year order in isolation, you need to use a comma between the day and year.

- December 25, 1962

When a date is written in month–day–year order within a sentence and does not fall at the end of the sentence, you need to use a comma between the day and year and between the year and the rest of the sentence.

- On December 25, 1962, the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird* opened in theaters.

Addresses

When an address is written in mailing format, commas are needed between the city and state.

- Old Courthouse Museum

Courthouse Square

31 N. Alabama Ave.

Monroeville, AL 36460

When an address is written within running text, commas are needed between the city and state as well as between each of the “lines” of the address and between the address and the rest of the sentence if the address does not fall at the end of the sentence.

- Annual performances of *To Kill a Mockingbird* are performed in the Old Courthouse Museum, Courthouse Square, 31 N. Alabama Ave., Monroeville, AL 36460, near where [author](#) Harper Lee grew up.

Geographic Names

Use a comma after each item within a place name when the place name is used in running text, even when it is not part of a complete address.

- Atticus Finch lived and worked in the fictitious city of Maycomb, Alabama, which many assume is patterned somewhat after Monroeville, Alabama, where the author grew up.

Company Names

Company names that include “incorporated” or “limited” (or the like) require a

comma between the name and “Inc.” or “Ltd.” only when a comma is placed there as part of the official company name. Check for letterhead or the company’s website for clarification on its preferred usage.

- Invesco Ltd.
- Replacements, Ltd.
- Citigroup, Inc.
- Citizens Inc.

When “incorporated” or “limited” is part of a company name within a sentence, a comma is needed between the word and the rest of the sentence only when a comma precedes it.

Citigroup, Inc., is making some noise in the banking industry lately.

Invesco Ltd. started out slowly in that sector of the market.

Letter and Email Greetings and Closings

Commas are used to separate letter and email components both in isolation and within running text.

- Dear Alice,
- Sincerely,
- Hi, Jerry,
- Later,

Titles That Go with Names

Use commas to set off descriptive titles that follow names. However, don’t use a comma before “Jr.” or “III” (or the like) unless you know the person prefers a comma.

- Atticus Finch, attorney-at-law

John Hale Finch, MD

- Walter Cunningham Jr.

Within text, include a comma both before and after the descriptive title to set it off from the whole sentence.

Atticus Finch, attorney-at-law, at your service.

Numbers

In numbers with more than four digits, begin at the right and add a comma after every third digit. In a four-digit number, a comma is omitted in page and line numbers, addresses, and years, and it is optional in other cases. No commas are used in numbers with less than four digits. Numbers are treated exactly the same when used in text.

- 335,353,235
- 8,302 (as number, comma is optional)
- 2016 (as year, no comma)

Example

In an Internet search for “reviews of *To Kill a Mockingbird*,” 2,420,000 results surfaced.

Using Commas to Avoid Confusion

Sometimes you simply have to use a comma to avoid confusion. For example, when a word is removed for effect, a comma can sometimes make up for the missing word.

To perform is a skill; to transform, art.

When two like or nearly like words are placed side by side, a comma can

sometimes help clarify the intended meaning.

The whole cast came walking in, in full costume.

Sometimes you will need to use a comma so the reader understands how the words are to be grouped to attain the author's desired meaning. Read the following example without the comma and note the difference.

Fans who can, come each year to see the annual *To Kill a Mockingbird* performance.

Adapted from Chapter 18 "Punctuation" in [Writer's Handbook v 1.0](#) used according to [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

P2: Avoiding Unnecessary Commas

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

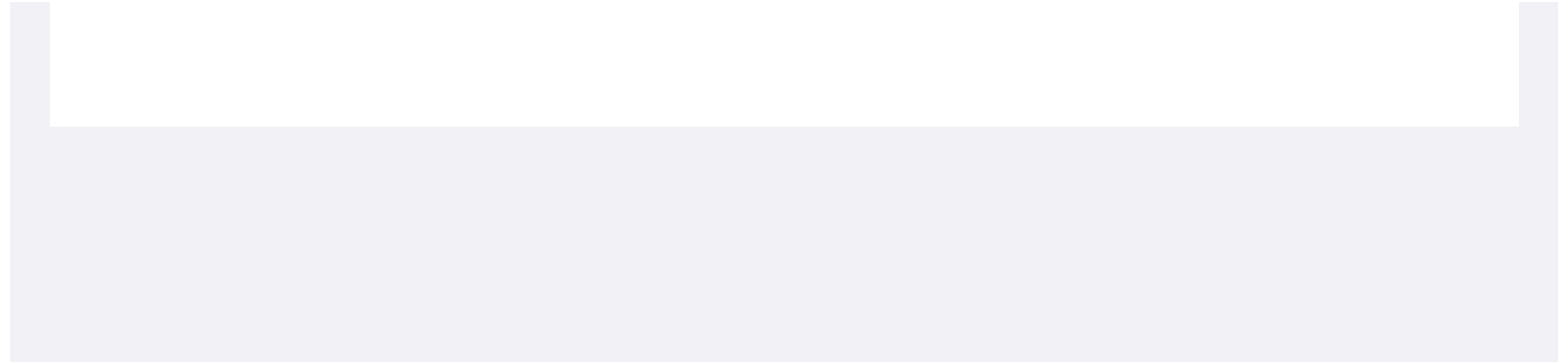
1. **Identify some categories of unnecessary commas.**
2. **Avoid using unnecessary commas.**

To use or not to use? That is the question when it comes to commas. Just as you want to be sure to use commas in all the correct places, you also want to make sure to avoid using commas when you don't need them.

Do not use commas before a conjunction when the sentence is not compound.		No comma: Scout thinks Calpurnia is harsh , and unfairly gets Atticus on her side.
Do not use a comma before the first and after the last word in a series		No comma: The actors , Gregory Peck, Phillip Alford, Estelle Evans, Robert Duvall, and Mary Badham , play some of the main characters in the To Kill a Mockingbird movie.
Do not use commas around an appositive if it adds clarity, or new information, to the sentence. For example, in the following sentence, "Joey" identifies which cousin played the part.		No comma: My cousin , Joey , once played the part of Atticus Finch.
Do not use a comma to set off an adverb clause that is essential to the sentence's meaning. Adverb clauses are usually essential when they begin with after, as soon as, because, before, if, since, unless, until, or when.		No comma: Scout was surprised when Calpurnia , kissed her because she didn't think Calpurnia liked her much.
Do not use a comma around a word that could be viewed as an interjection if using the comma would cause confusion or interruption in the sentence.		No comma: Scout is , basically , a tomboy.
Do not use a comma after although, such as, or like.		No comma: Mayella didn't seem believable because of her actions, such as , exchanging her mind on the stand.
Do not use a comma after a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, so, and yet).		No comma: Jem called Atticus by his first name, so , it seemed natural for Jem to do it as well.
Do not use a comma along with a period, question mark, or exclamation point inside of a quotation		No comma: "Don't you remember me, Mr. Cunningham?" , asked Scout.

To use or not to use? Commas

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P3: Eliminating Comma Splices and Fused Sentences

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Use commas correctly in compound sentences.**
2. **Use semicolons correctly in compound sentences.**
3. **Recognize comma splices and fused sentences.**

Two of the most common problems people have with compound sentences are **comma splices** and **fused sentences**. The key to understanding these problems is to recognize the possible compound sentence formats:

1. two independent clauses separated with a comma and coordinating conjunction (*and, but, so, for, nor, or, yet*);
2. two independent clauses separated with a semicolon by itself;
3. two independent clauses separated with a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb (*however, therefore, consequently, moreover, etc.*), used to clarify a specific logical relationship between the two independent clauses.

The following video from Khan Academy explains how to spot comma splices and run-on or fused sentences:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/Fh45mhVsZrU?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Run-ons and Comma Splices.” Published by Khan Academy.

Understanding and Avoiding Comma Splices

Two different situations can result in comma splices.

Examples

Problem: A comma joins independent clauses instead of the clauses being joined by a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction.

Example: Her name was Jean Louise Finch, she wanted everyone to call her “Scout.”

Correction: Her name was Jean Louise Finch, **but** she wanted everyone to call her “Scout.”

Problem: A comma joins two independent clauses when a semicolon should be used.

Example: Atticus didn’t want Scout to fight, however, she could not ignore injustices.

Correction: Atticus didn’t want Scout to fight; however, she could not ignore injustices.

Understanding and Avoiding Fused Sentences

A fused sentence is also called a run-on sentence and occurs when two independent clauses are joined without any punctuation.

Example

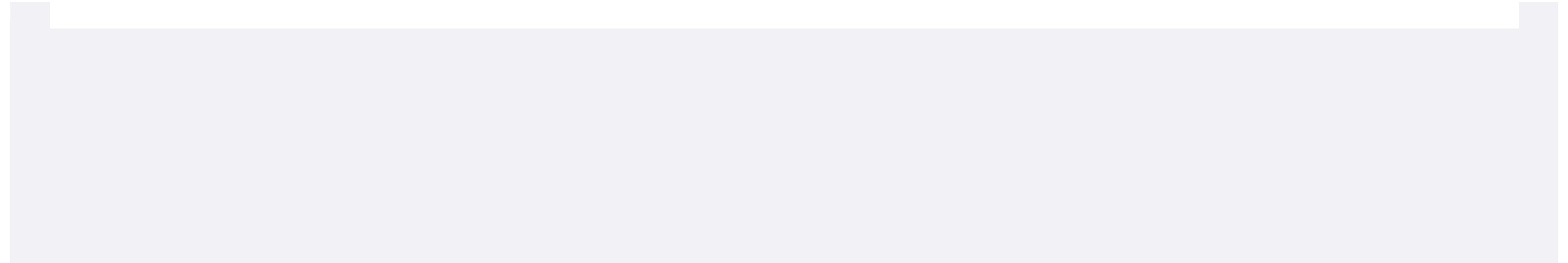
Mr. Cunningham is poor he cannot pay Atticus for legal services.

- **Correction option 1:** Add a coordinating conjunction and a comma: Mr. Cunningham is poor, **so** he cannot pay Atticus for legal services.
- **Correction option 2:** Place the independent clauses into two separate sentences: Mr. Cunningham is poor. **He** cannot pay Atticus for legal services.
- **Correction option 3:** Place a semicolon between the two clauses: Mr. Cunningham is poor; he cannot pay Atticus for legal services.
- **Correction option 4:** Place a semicolon between the two clauses, and use a conjunctive adverb for further clarification: Mr. Cunningham is poor; **therefore**, he cannot pay Atticus for his legal services.
- **Correction option #5:** Turn one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause: Mr. Cunningham cannot pay Atticus for his legal services **because** he is poor.

OR

- **Because** he is poor, Mr. Cunningham cannot pay Atticus for his legal services.

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P4: Writing with Semicolons and Colons

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Understand when to use semicolons.**
2. **Understand when to use colons.**
3. **Recognize when semicolons and colons are used incorrectly.**

By the time you were taught how to use semicolons and colons in eighth grade or so, you were likely already set in your ways regarding punctuation. Here's the good news: it isn't too late to add these marks to your commonly used list and to appreciate how much [they](#) can do for your writing.

The School of Life explains how to use semicolons and colons, explaining how semicolons show how items are related and not dependent, while colons are logical and unpack things ("Colons and Semicolons")

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/xHa5tWKkvd4?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

#TheSchoolOfLife Colons and Semicolons

Using Semicolons

A semicolon is a punctuation mark that signals a pause that is stronger than a comma but weaker than a period. Appropriately, a semicolon (;) looks like a period on top of a comma. The standard uses for semicolons are to separate two independent clauses instead of using coordinating conjunctions, to separate two independent clauses along with a conjunctive adverb, or to clarify a series that includes other punctuation.

Compound Sentences without Coordinating Conjunctions or with Conjunctive Adverbs

Compound sentences with conjunctive adverbs or without coordinating conjunctions require a semicolon.

Examples

Compound sentence with a coordinating conjunction: Scout and Jem do not know much about Boo Radley, but they are afraid of him.

Compound sentence without a coordinating conjunction: Scout and Jem do not know much about Boo Radley; they are afraid of him.

Compound sentence with a conjunctive adverb: Scout and Jem do not know much about Boo Radley; nevertheless, they are afraid of him.

Items in a Series with Commas

Typically, commas separate items in a series. Sometimes multiple-word series

items include commas. In these cases, the commas within the items would be easily confused with the commas that separate the items. To avoid this confusion, you should use semicolons between these series items. You should not use semicolons to separate items in a series when the items do not include commas.

Examples

Sentence with series that results in comma confusion: In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch defends justice, the underprivileged, and his children, teaches his kids values, and stands up to the people of the town.

Sentence rewritten using semicolons to avoid comma confusion: In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch defends justice, the underprivileged, and his children; teaches his kids values; and stands up to the people of the town.

Using Colons

A colon is used to separate parts or to signal that some related information or words are coming.

Introductions

Colons are used to introduce a variety of text components, including [explanations](#) and examples.

- *To Kill a Mockingbird* won three Oscars: Best Actor; Best Art Direction-Set Decoration, Black-and-White; and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium.
- There is a good reason no one has ever visited Maycomb, Alabama: it is a fictitious city.

Independent Clauses Where One Restates or Supports the Other

Most sets of independent clauses require a comma and a conjunction or a semicolon between them. An exception is when the second clause clearly restates or supports the first clause.

The movie *To Kill a Mockingbird* was well received in Hollywood: it was nominated for eight Academy Awards.

The following video from Khan Academy describes how colons can be used to link parts of sentences:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/oyZoehTLxoo?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Linking Function of the Colon.” Published by Khan Academy.

Salutations and Isolated Elements

A variety of elements call for colons to separate the details.

- Time: 5:30 p.m.
- Professional/Business Letter or email openings: Dear Ms. Moore:
- Ratios: 4:7

Chapters and verses: 7:2–3

- Titles: Spark Notes: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Bibliographies: New York: Random House
- Arrangements of categories and examples (**such as this list**)

Quotations

When the lead-in to a [quotation](#) is a complete sentence, you can use a colon between the lead-in and the quotation.

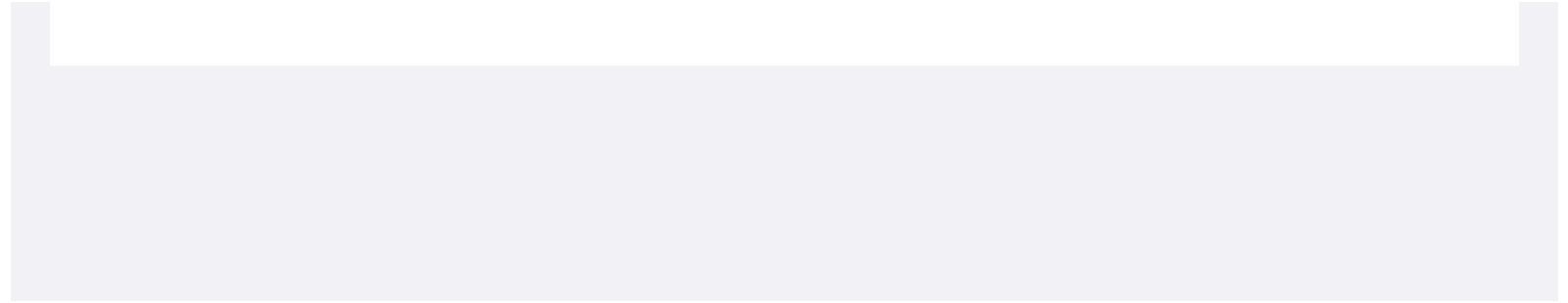
Scout spoke with her usual frankness and wisdom beyond her years: “Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing.”

The following video from Khan Academy explains more uses of the colon:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/3Eis7atPUKU?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“The Colon as Separator.” Published by Khan Academy.

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P5: Using Apostrophes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Use apostrophes with nouns to show possession.**
2. **Know when to use apostrophes to show possession in pronouns.**
3. **Know how to use apostrophes to form contractions.**

Apostrophes are a [tool](#) for making English more streamlined. Instead of saying, “the book that belongs to Elizabeth,” you can say, “Elizabeth’s book.” Instead of saying, “I cannot come,” you can say, “I can’t come.” Although you could avoid using apostrophes, your writing will be more natural if you learn the rules for using possessives and contractions appropriately. Some people also opt to use apostrophes to form plurals in certain situations, but many usage experts continue to warn against this practice.

The following video introduces you to some funny, yet common misuses of the apostrophe, and a song with a catchy chorus that is hard to forget: “Don’t put an apostrophe in *i-t-s* unless you mean *it is*!” (“Apostrophe Song” 00:22). <https://youtu.be/Vc2aSz9Ficw> “Apostrophe Song.” Created by Shaun McNicholas, published on 4 Aug. 2010. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License ©

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/Vc2aSz9Ficw?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Apostrophe Song.” Created by Shaun McNicholas, published on 4 Aug. 2010. License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube License ©

Using Apostrophes with Nouns to Show Possession

You form a possessive when you want to show a noun or pronoun in a sentence has ownership of another noun or pronoun.

Standard Singular and Plural Nouns

As shown in the following table, most nouns follow standard patterns for forming plurals.

Situation	Rule	Example 1	Example 2
Singular noun	Add apostrophe + -s.	dog’s collar	class’s assignment
Plural noun ending in s	Add only an apostrophe.	dogs’ collars	classes’ assignments
Plural noun	Add apostrophe +	people’s plans	women’s plans

ending in any letter other than s	–s.		
Proper nouns	Follow the regular noun rules.	Finches’ family home	Atticus’s glasses
Business names	Use the format the company has chosen whether or not it matches possessive formation guidelines.	McDonald’s employees	Starbucks stores

Compound Nouns

When forming the possessive of a compound noun, form the possession only on the last word. Use standard guidelines for that word.

- sister-in-law’s hair
- six-year-olds’ growth patterns
- wallpapers’ patterns
- courthouse’s aura

Two or More Nouns

When two or more nouns both possess another noun, form the possession only with the second noun if you are noting joint ownership. Form a possession on both nouns if each possession is independent.

- Jem and Scout’s escapades (the joint escapades of the two children)
- Jem’s and Scout’s escapades (the separate escapades of the two children)

Understanding Apostrophes and Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns (*his, her, hers, its, my, mine, our, ours, their, theirs, your, yours*) show possession without an apostrophe.

- Is this hat yours?
- Those are his shoes.
- The dress is hers.

Indefinite pronouns (*another, anybody, anyone, anything, each, everybody, everyone, everything, nobody, no one, nothing, one, other, others, somebody, someone, something*) require an apostrophe to show possession.

- another's problem
- everyone's problems

Using Apostrophes to Form Contractions

Contractions are shortened versions of two or more words where an apostrophe marks the missing letters. English has a wide range of common contractions, including those in the following table.

Words in Contraction	Contraction	Words in Contraction	Contraction
I am	I'm	what will	what'll
we are	we're	<u>they</u> will	they'll
what is	what's	what has	what's
can not	can't	should not	shouldn't

does not	doesn't	do not	don't
----------	---------	--------	-------

In addition to the many standard contractions, people often create custom, informal, on-the-spot contractions. Generally speaking, these informal uses of apostrophes can be omitted from college and workplace writing.

Example: My husband's (husband is) also coming.

As a reader, you have to use [context](#) to know if the use of “husband's” is possessive or a contraction since the two are visually the same.

- My husband's also coming.
- My husband's watch is on the table.

Using Apostrophes to Form Plurals

Some people choose to form plurals of individual letters, numbers, and words referred to as terms. Many usage experts frown on this practice and instead choose to form the plurals by simply adding an –s. Here are some examples of the two options, as well as methods of avoiding having to choose either option.

Examples

- **Situation:** more than one of the letter *t*
 - **Plurals using apostrophes:** There are two *t*'s in Atticus.
 - **Plurals without using apostrophes:** There are two *ts* in Atticus.
 - **Avoiding the choice:** The letter *t* shows up in Atticus twice.
- **Situation:** more than one of the number 5
 - **Plurals using apostrophes:** If I remember right, the address has three 5's in it.
 - **Plurals without using apostrophes:** If I remember right, the address has three 5s in it.

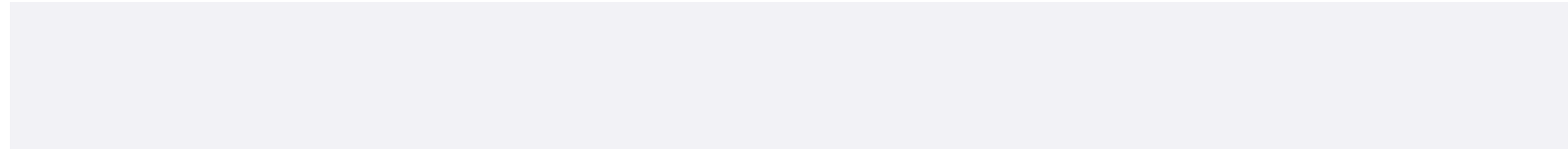
- **Avoiding the choice:** If I remember right, the number 5 shows up three times in the address.
- **Situation:** more than one “there” in a sentence
 - **Plurals using apostrophes:** This sentence has five there’s.
 - **Plurals without using apostrophes:** This sentence has five theres.
 - **Avoiding the choice:** The word “there” is used five times in this sentence.

The following video from Khan Academy has an in-depth [introduction](#) to the uses of apostrophes:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/o6zzLAhEyqo?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“[Introduction](#) to the Apostrophe.” Published by Khan Academy.

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P6: Using Quotation Marks

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Properly place quotation marks around dialogue and borrowed words.**
2. **Appropriately use quotation marks with titles of short works, definitions, words used in special ways, and original words.**
3. **Correctly incorporate other punctuation with quotations.**

Quotation marks are used to mark dialogue, to indicate words that are borrowed, to emphasize certain details, and to help when giving credit for written works.

The following video from Howcast explains how and why quotation marks are used:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/V7LNkNcDMEY?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“How to Use Quotation Marks.” Created by Howcast, License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube License ©

Using Quotation Marks to Signal Dialogue and Borrowed Words

Quotation marks are a key component of written dialogue. All words of a dialogue must be enclosed within quotation marks to indicate that these words are the exact words of the speaker.

- “The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience,” Atticus said.
 - When you write about or [summarize](#) spoken words rather than presenting them as dialogue, you should not put quotation marks around them since you are not necessarily saying that [they](#) are the exact words the person said.
- Jem once said that Boo’s dad was the meanest man alive.
 - As with dialogue, you also should use quotation marks to mark the exact words that you borrow from someone else.
- About Harper Lee’s first interview since 1964, Paul Harris writes, “Lee has regularly turned down every interview request for decades but now, aged 79, has been tempted out of her shell by the University of Alabama.”

(Paul Harris, “Mockingbird [Author](#) Steps out of Shadows,” *The Observer*, Feb. 6, 2006.)

An exception to using quotation marks around borrowed words is that lengthier quotations of others’ work (those of more than four lines of text) are set in

indented block format for the sake of easier readability. Also, if you paraphrase another's ideas in your words, you need to cite the [source](#) of the ideas, but you should not use quotation marks since the words are your own. Use single quotation marks around a quotation within a quotation.

Example

According to Paul Harris, Lee “did have warm words about the screenplay of her book, which was turned into the hit film starring Gregory Peck in the 1960s. ‘I think it is one of the best translations of a book to film ever made,’ she said.

(Paul Harris, “Mockingbird Author Steps out of Shadows,” *The Observer*, Feb. 6, 2006.)

Using Quotation Marks to Enclose Titles of Short Works

Italics indicate titles of full-length books and other lengthy, completed works. To separate short works from these longer works, short works are enclosed in quotation marks rather than being placed in italics. Some examples of short works that should be included in quotation marks are articles in periodicals, book chapters or sections, essays, newspaper and magazine articles and reviews, short poems and stories, song titles, titles of television episodes, and titles of unpublished works, such as dissertations, papers, and theses.

Examples

Use italics for full-length books: I first read *To Kill a Mockingbird* in eighth grade.

Use quotation marks for short works: In “A Child Shall Lead Them,” Michael Richardson suggests that Lee presents justice through the innocent eyes of a child in an effort to show its true form.

Using Quotation Marks to Identify Definitions

Using quotation marks is the accepted technique for identifying definitions that are used in running text.

Characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* visit the apothecary, which means “drugstore.”

Using Quotation Marks to Draw Attention to Words Used in a Special or Original Way

Quotation marks can help clarify that a word is being used in an unusual rather than in a straightforward manner. Without the quotation marks, readers might get a totally different meaning from a sentence.

- That course was challenging.
- That course was “challenging.” (Putting the word *challenging* in quotation marks lets us know that the sentence is probably using irony to say that the course was not challenging at all.)

If you create an original word to fit your specific needs, put the word in quotation marks to indicate to readers that the word is not a standard word.

- Many accounts suggest that Harper Lee was very “Scout-like.”

Whether to use these more informal ways of punctuating with quotation marks depends on your audience since it is not formal to use quotation marks to draw attention to words.

Using Other Punctuation with Quotation Marks

Rules

Rule: Put question marks and exclamation marks inside the quotation marks if the marks relate directly and only to the text within quotation marks. If, on the other hand, the marks relate to the whole sentence, put the marks outside the

quotation marks.

- **Example 1:** A girl in the back of the room asked, “What character did Robert Duvall play?”
- **Example 2:** Did Mary Richards really “make it after all”?

Rule: Periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks, even if the quotation marks are only around the last word in the sentence.

- **Example 1:** Scout asked Jem how old she was when their mother died, and Jem answered, “Two.”
- **Example 2:** Even as an adult years later, Scout was likely to say that the summer of the trial lasted “forever,” due to the many life lessons she learned.

Rule: Place colons and semicolons outside quotation marks.

- **Example 1:** I remember my first impression after reading Frost’s “Death of a Hired Man”: confusion.
- **Example 2:** We had tickets to see the one-act play “Masks”; however, the blizzard hit just as we were trying to leave.

Guarding against Using Unneeded Quotation Marks

Special word usage, such as irony and made-up words, are placed in quotation marks. But do not use quotation marks just to make regular-use words stand out.

Example

When Jem met Dill, Jem said that Dill was awfully “puny.” (The word *puny* should not be put in quotation marks since it is a standard word being used with its straightforward meaning.)

If you choose to use slang or colloquialisms, do not give a sense that you are apologizing for the words by putting them inside quotation marks. Choose the slang words and colloquialisms you want to use and let them stand on their own.

Example

Calpurnia was “down-to-earth.” (Do not put quotation marks around *down-to-earth*.)

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P7: Incorporating Dashes and Parentheses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Learn the various uses for dashes.**
2. **Learn the various uses for parentheses.**
3. **Learn how to punctuate dashes and parentheses.**

Dashes and parentheses are both used to give more importance to a word or group of words. The information enclosed by dashes and parentheses often supports the information directly before or after it.

Using Dashes

Dashes separate emphasis-adding text from the rest of the words in a sentence. You can use one long dash to set apart text at the end of a sentence. You can use dashes before and after the text to set it apart in the middle of a sentence. Here are some uses for dashes:

- Creating a sudden change in [tone](#), thought, or ideas
 - **Example:** We had predicted that the storm would come soon—but not this soon!
- To show emphasis
 - **Example:** The book—if one can call it that—received mediocre reviews.
- Suggesting hesitation in dialogue
 - **Example:** The old lady said to the man working the register, “I’ve got an extra nickel for the little girl’s candy—that is, if she’ll take it.”
- Providing a [summary](#), an explanation, or an example

- **Example:** The book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is narrated by Scout Finch—a character who has much in common with the tomboy childhood of the author, Harper Lee.

For more illustrations about the use of dashes, watch this video from Khan Academy:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/tLmDYzhv6Zo?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Dashes.” Published by Khan Academy.

Using Parentheses

Dashes and parentheses have similar purposes—to set apart information—but where dashes emphasize, parentheses downplay. Parentheses allow you to interrupt the flow of your text to give additional information. They can be used in the middle of a sentence or at the end. Some uses of parentheses include the following:

- Enclosing numbers in an in-text list.
 - **Example:** My mother asked me to stop on the way to visit and pick a few things up at the store: (1) a half gallon of milk, (2) a dozen eggs, and

(3) a loaf of bread.

- **Setting** apart **citation** components in in-text references and in reference lists.
 - **Example:** “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (Lee 34).
- Separating nonessential but helpful information.
 - **Example:** My dog (some sort of a terrier-spaniel mix) has a unique personality.

Specific rules guide using punctuation with parentheses. End punctuation can be placed inside parentheses if the **content** of the parentheses is a complete sentence. If the content inside the parentheses is part of a larger sentence, the end punctuation should go outside the parentheses. If a comma is needed, it should always be placed outside the closing parenthesis. A comma should not be used immediately before an opening parenthesis, except in the case of in-text lists (e.g., “We need to (1) go to the bank, (2) buy some cereal at the store, (3) pick up the tickets, and (4) get to the party by 7:00 p.m.”

For more examples about how to use parentheses, watch the following video from Khan Academy:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/hJtaY-iZRvU?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Parentheses.” Published by Khan Academy.

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P8: Choosing Correct End Punctuation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Use periods correctly.**
2. **Use question marks correctly.**
3. **Use exclamation points correctly.**

You have three choices for end punctuation: periods, question marks, and exclamation points. End punctuation gives readers information about how to read a sentence and how to interpret the sentence.

Using Periods

Periods have three main uses: punctuating many abbreviations, marking the end of many sentences, and separating components in reference [citations](#).

Some abbreviations take periods all the time, while some never take periods. You simply have to learn the category of each abbreviation or look them up as you use them.

Examples

Examples of abbreviations that end in periods: approx., Ave., Dr., etc., Jr., Mrs., Univ.

Many acronyms do not include periods: LBJ, MLK, N/A, NV, TV, DVD, IBM, UK, USA, CEO, COD, RSVP

Periods end sentences that are not questions or exclamations, such as statements, commands, and requests.

- Statements
 - *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in the early 1930s.
- Commands
 - Over the weekend, read the first four chapters.
- Requests
 - Please let me know at what parts of the book you get confused.

In reference citations, use periods to separate components.

Examples

MLA: Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, HarperCollins, 2002.

OR

APA: Lee, H. (2002). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: HarperCollins.

CMS: Lee, Harper. 2002. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: HarperCollins.

Using Question Marks

Question marks have one main use: to end sentences that ask direct questions.

They are also sometimes used to indicate questions in a series.

- Question mark at the end of a sentence
 - Do you think Atticus encouraged Scout to be mature beyond her years, or do you think it just came naturally to Scout?
- Question marks in a series
 - We should go to the city council meeting with three basic questions:

should the housing development be placed so close to the wildlife preserve?, could a better location be found?, and how much time do we have to come up with alternatives?

When you choose to use a question mark at the end of a sentence, make sure the sentence is actually a sentence since some sentences give a sense of being a question when they are not. Such sentences are called indirect questions.

Example

Jem asked Scout what she was thinking?

Correction: Jem asked Scout what she was thinking.

Using Exclamation Points

Exclamation points are a method of showing surprise or strong emotions in writing. To preserve the impact of an exclamation point, you should use them sparingly. Besides lessening their impact, the use of too many exclamation points is distracting for readers.

Examples

Overuse of exclamation points: This course has been very engaging!
There's never been a dull moment! The instructor has always been very helpful!
She's always there when you need her!

Proper use of exclamation points: The national debt stacked in dollar bills would be high enough to reach the moon—and back!

Khan Academy has more examples illustrating the three different ways to end a sentence:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/B9bJaoIHRp4?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Three Ways to End a Sentence.” Published by Khan Academy.

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P9: Knowing When to Use Hyphens

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize compound words that require hyphens all the time and those that require hyphens due to specific situations.**
2. **Learn how to use hyphens in writing numbers.**
3. **Learn which prefixes and suffixes require the use of a hyphen.**

Some hyphen usage rules are set requirements, such as in certain compound words and fractions and numbers. Other hyphen usage rules are subjective or situation-specific, such as with certain compound words, prefixes, confusing situations, and continuations to the next line of text.

Using Hyphens with Compound Words

Some standing compound words are written with hyphens, some as one word without a hyphen, and some as two words without a hyphen.

Examples

Examples of compound words that are written with hyphens: merry-go-round, over-the-counter, six-year-old, son-in-law

Examples of compound words that are written as one word with no hyphen: drywall, firefly, softball, toothpaste

Examples of compound words that are written as two separate words without a hyphen: high school, middle class, peanut butter, post office

Other rules for hyphens in compound words include the following:

- Hyphenate compound words when they are used together to modify the same word (e.g., “Scout was a quick–witted child”).
- Do not turn words into a hyphenated compound adjective if words are placed after the word they modify (e.g., “Scout was a child who was quick witted”).
- Do not hyphenate *–ly* adverbs and adjectives (e.g., “Georgie has a highly coveted first-run copy,” not “Georgie has a **highly-coveted** first-run copy”).

Using Hyphens to Write Fractions and Numbers

Use hyphens to write all two-word numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine. Also, use hyphens when writing those numbers within larger numbers. Hyphenate a fraction you are expressing as a single quantity, regardless of whether you are using it as a noun or as an adjective.

Examples

- twenty-one
- four hundred twenty-one
- two-thirds of the pie
- a one-quarter share of the profits

Using Hyphens with Prefixes and Suffixes

Use hyphens in certain situations to add prefixes and suffixes to words.

- To join a capitalized word to a prefix
 - anti-American
 - post-Renaissance
- To join a number to a prefix
 - pre-1960
- To join a single capital letter to a word
 - A-team
 - T-shirt
- To join the prefixes *all-*, *ex-*, *quasi-*, and *self-* to words
 - Ex-neighbor
 - self-aware
- To join the suffixes *-elect*, *-odd*, and *-something* to words
 - President-elect
 - fifty-odd

Using Hyphens to Avoid Confusion

Sometimes a hyphen can separate two visually alike words from each other. Consider that the use of the hyphen in the first of the following two sentences helps to avoid confusion that would be generated without the hyphen.

- I think the assistant prosecutor should re-sign.
- I think the assistant prosecutor should resign.

The difference between when to use a hyphen and when to use a dash can be confusing. The following video from Khan Academy illustrates this point:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/CgpExkmY6Yo?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Hyphens vs. Dashes.” Published by Khan Academy.

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M1: Mastering Commonly Misspelled Words

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize ways to become a better speller.**
2. **Implement methods of monitoring your common spelling problems.**

Regardless of your spelling ability, knowing the type of spelling errors you are likely to make can help you correct the errors.

Common Causes of Spelling Errors	Examples	Ways to Deal with the Problems	Correct Spelling
Some words do not follow common spelling rules.	<i>i</i> before <i>e</i> except after <i>c</i> , so is it height or heIght?	Know the rules, know some of the exceptions, and use a dictionary or spell checker if you have the slightest hesitation.	height
You interchange homophones without	I want to go to.	Be extra careful with each homophone you use; learn	I want to go, too.

realizing it.		the commonly confused pairs of homophones.	
You often do not recognize that a word has a homophone or you do not know which homophone to use.	The cat chased its tale for an hour.	Read through your work once (preferably aloud) looking (and listening) only for homophone issues. Ask someone to proofread your work.	The cat chased its tail for an hour.
You misspell some words almost every time you use them.	I defiantly want to attend the concert.	Keep a list of your problem words where you can easily glance at them.	Unless you like going to concerts feeling angry, use the word definitely. “I definitely want to attend the concert”.
You find words from other languages confusing since <u>they</u> do not follow standard	I’m going to make an orderve for the party.	Add foreign words you often use to your list of problem words. Look the others	I’m going to make an hors d’oeuvres for the party.

English spellings.		up each time you use them.	
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Spell Check

The combination of extensive computer use and spell checkers have changed the way we look at spelling. Today’s software programs often provide both manual and automatic spell checking. Manual spell checking lets you go through the entire document or selected text from it and checks for spellings not present in the dictionary of reference. Automatic spell checking underlines spelling errors for you (usually in red). By right-clicking on the misspelled word, you’ll be given one or more correctly spelled alternatives. When you find the spelling you think is correct, clicking on that word will change the text automatically. Sometimes automatic spell checking underlines words that aren’t misspelled, but it rarely misses words that are. So if you check all the marked words, you can “spell check as you write.”

Make sure you don’t rely too heavily on spell check. Consider the following sentence: “It was sunny win I drove of this mourning, so I lift my umbrella in the car port.” If you use a spell checker on this sentence, you will be alerted to fix the problem with “umbrella.” You won’t, however, be given any indication that “win,” “mourning,” “of,” “lift,” and “car port” are problems. Spell checkers have no way to tag misspelled words if the misspelling forms another word, incorrectly used homophones, or compound words that are presented as two words. So even though spell checkers are great tools, do not give them the sole responsibility of making sure your spelling is accurate.

Spell checkers can also suggest the wrong first choice to replace a misspelled word. Consider the following sentence: “My shert was wet cleer thrugh to my skin, and my shos sloshed with every step.” A spell checker might list “though” as a first-choice for “thrugh” and “through” as the second choice, thus forcing you to know that “though” is not right and to look on down the list and choose

“through.”

As a rule, only common proper nouns are part of spell checking dictionaries. Consequently, you are left to check your spelling of those words. Many software programs allow users to add words to the dictionary. This permission lets you incorporate proper nouns you use often into the dictionary so you will not have to address them during a spell check. You might, for example, add your name or your workplace to the dictionary. Besides adding proper nouns, you can also add your list of other words you’ve commonly misspelled in the past.

Common Spelling Rules

Although they all have exceptions, common spelling rules exist and have become known as common rules because they are true most of the time. It is in your best interest to know both the rules and the common exceptions to the rules.

Common Spelling Rules

- **Rule: *i* before *e***
 - Examples: belief, chief, friend, field, fiend, niece
 - Exceptions: either, foreign, height, leisure
- **Rule: ...except after *c***
 - Examples: receive, ceiling
 - Exceptions: conscience, financier, science, species
- **Rule: ...and in long-*a* words like neighbor and weigh**
 - Examples: eight, feint, their, vein
- **Rule: In short-vowel accented syllables that end in a single consonant, double the consonant before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.**

- Examples: beginning, mopped, runner, sitting, submitting
- Exceptions: boxing, buses (“busses” is also acceptable), circuses, taxes
- **Rule: There is no doubling if the syllable ends in two consonants, the last syllable is not accented, or the syllable does not have a short vowel.**
 - Examples: asking, curling; focused, opening; seated, waited
- **Rule: With words or syllables that end in a silent *e*, drop the *e* before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.**
 - Examples: achieving, baking, exciting, riding, surprising
- **Rule: If the suffix doesn’t start with a vowel, keep the silent *e*.**
 - Examples: achievement, lately
 - Exceptions: hoeing, mileage, noticeable, judgment, ninth, truly
- **Rule: With syllables that end in *y*, change the *y* to *i* before adding a suffix (including the plural *–es*).**
 - Examples: carries, cities, dries, enviable, ladies, luckiest, beautiful, bountiful
 - Exceptions: annoyance, babyish
- **Rule: Keep the final *y* when it is preceded by a vowel.**
 - Examples: keys, monkeys, plays
- **Rule: ...and when the suffix begins with *i*, since English words do not typically have two *i*’s in a row.**
 - Examples: babyish, carrying, marrying
 - Exceptions: skiing
- **Rule: When forming the plural of a proper noun, just add *–s* unless the proper noun ends in *ch*, *s*, *sh*, *x*, or *z*.**
 - Examples: Bartons, Blairs, Hubbards, Murphys, Bushes, Collinses,

Lynches, Martinezes, Wilcoxes

- **Rule: When forming plurals of hyphenated nouns, use the plural form of the main word, regardless of where it falls within the word.**
 - Examples: brothers-in-law, clearing-houses, ex-wives, not-for-profits, runners-up, T-shirts
- **Rule: Add *–es* to words ending in *s*, *sh*, *ch*, *x*, or *z*.**
 - Examples: classes, dishes, couches, quizzes, taxes
 - Exceptions: epochs, monarchs (*ch* spelling makes *k* sound)
- **Rule: For words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add *–es*.**
 - Examples: heroes, potatoes, tomatoes, zeroes
 - Exceptions: memos, photos, zeros (also acceptable)
- **Rule: For words ending in a vowel and an *o*, add *–s*.**
 - Examples: patios, radios, zoos
- **Rule: For words ending in *f* or *fe*, either change the *f* to *v* and add *–s* or *–es* or just add *–s* with no changes.**
 - Examples: knives, leaves OR cuffs, roofs
- **Rule: Some words have whole word changes for the plural forms.**
 - Examples: children, feet, geese, mice, women
- **Rule: Some words have the same spellings for singular and plural forms.**
 - Examples: deer, fish, sheep

Homophones

Homophones are words that sound alike but have different spellings and different meanings. The best way to handle these words is to view them as

completely separate words by connecting the spellings and the meanings rather than relying totally on the sounds. You can make mnemonics (memory clues) to use with words that are a problem for you. The following video from Khan Academy helps to clear up the confusion between eight frequently-confused words:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/aIOYJ2Vlwy8?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Frequently Confused Words.” Published by Khan Academy.

Here’s a small sampling of the thousand or more homophones in the English language:

FREQUENTLY CONFUSED WORDS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ad/add • ant/aunt • band/banned • be/bee • beat/beet • billed/build • bold/bowled • bridal/bridle • ceiling/sealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • him/hymn • hole/whole • hour/our • in/inn • knead/need • knew/new • knight/night • lead/led • lessen/lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rose/rows • sail/sale • scene/seen • sew/so/sow • sight/site/cite • soar/sore • some/sum • son/sun • suite/sweet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cents/cents/sense • chews/choose • clothes/close • creak/creek • crews/cruise • days/daze • dear/deer • die/dye • ewe/yew/you • feat/feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loan/lone • maid/made • might/mite • miner/minor • none/nun • pail/pale • pain/pane • pair/pare/pear • passed/past • patience/patients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tail/tale • tea/tee • their/there/they're • throne/thrown • toe/tow • time/thyme • to/too/two • undo/undue • vain/vane/vein • very/vary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fairy/ferry • flour/flower • for/fore/four • genes/jeans • groan/grown • guessed/guest • hair/hare • heal/heel/he'll • hear/here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peace/piece • pedal/peddle/petal • plain/plane • poor/pore/pour • principal/principle • rain/reign/rein • read/red • ring/wring • road/rode/rowed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wail/wale/whale • ware/wear/where • weather/whether • weak/week • which/witch • whine/wine • wood/would • yoke/yolk • your/you're

M1.2: FREQUENTLY CONFUSED WORDS

And there's still more. For a discussion of the difference between compliment and complement and desert and dessert, check out this video from Khan Academy:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/WnAzZWxiGs4?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Frequently Confused Words.” Published by Khan Academy.

Commonly Misspelled Words

The following list includes some English words that are commonly used and often misspelled. You, personally, might or might not have problems with many of the words in the list. The important issue is for you to identify your problem words and negate the problems. You can handle your spelling problems by keeping a list of those words handy. Another way to deal with spellings that puzzle you is to use mnemonics (a [tool](#) you can use to help you remember the correct spelling) such as those shown for the words in bold italics on this list:

COMMONLY MISPELLED WORDS

And ways to deal with it

SOME WORDS DO NOT FOLLOW COMMON SPELLING RULES.

Example: I before e except after c, so is it height or hieght?

Ways to deal with the problem:

- Know the rules
- Know some of the exceptions
- Use a dictionary or spell checker if you have the slightest hesitation.

Correct spelling:
Height

YOU DON'T KNOW WHICH HOMOPHONE TO USE.

Example: The cat chased it's tale for an hour.

Ways to deal with the problem:

- Read through your work once (preferably aloud)
- Look and listen for homophone issues
- Find a proofreader

Correct spelling:
The cat chased its tail for an hour.

YOU INTERCHANGE HOMOPHONES WITHOUT REALIZING IT.

Example: I want to go to.

Ways to deal with the problem:

- Be extra careful with each homophone you use
- Learn the commonly confused pairs of homophones.

Correct spelling:
I want to go, too.

YOU MISSPELL SOME WORDS ALMOST EVERY TIME YOU USE THEM.

Example: I defiantly want to attend the concert.

Ways to deal with the problem:

- Keep a list of your problem words where you can easily glance at them.

Correct Spelling:
I definitely want to attend the concert.

YOU FIND WORDS FROM OTHER LANGUAGES CONFUSING.

Example: I'm going to make an orderve for the party.

Ways to deal with the problem:

- Add foreign words you often use to your list of problem words.
- Look the others up each time you use them.

Correct Spelling:
I'm going to make an hors d'oeuvres for the party.

M1: COMMONLY MISPELLED WORDS

Selected Mnemonics

- *calendar*: Remember that a calendar is made up of many *days*.
- *conscience*: If you *con* people about your *science* work, your conscience

should bother you.

- *forty*: *Forty* people are hiding in the fort.
- *gauge*: You use a *gas gauge*.
- *judgment*: The *general manager* might pass judgment, but the lowly employee won't even be there.
- *ninth*: Ninth...Take the *e* out so you can use it for the tenth.
- *quiet*: You need to be *qui*(end)(*talking*).
- *scissors*: She used some sharp *s*(cut)*iss*(off)rs.
- *tomorrow*: There's only one *morning*, but every day there are two *red* skies (sunrise and sunset).
- *weird*: Halloween last year was *wild* and *eerie*.

Of course, these mnemonics are not universal. Some of the suggestions on this list might seem corny or even incomprehensible to you. The point is to find some that work for you.

Words from Other Languages

English is an ever-evolving language. Part of this ongoing evolution is the incorporation of words from other languages. These words often do not follow typical English spelling rules, and thus require extra attention. This chart shows a small portion of such words that are used in English.

Borrowed Word	<u>Source</u>	Borrowed Word	Source
ad hoc	Latin	en route	French
adios	Spanish	et cetera (etc.)	Latin
armadillo	Spanish	faux pas	French
art deco	French	fiancé	French

attaché	French	frankfurter	German
ballet	French	garbanzo	Spanish
bon appétit	French	gourmet	French
bratwurst	German	homo sapiens	Latin
burrito	Spanish	hors d'oeuvre	French
café	French	incommunicado	Latin
chauffeur	French	jalapeño	Spanish
Chihuahua	Spanish	kaput	German
concierge	French	kindergarten	German
cul-de-sac	French	margarita	Spanish
curriculum vitae	Latin	megahertz	German
Dachshund	German	née	French
déjà vu	French	per capita	Latin
diesel	German	résumé	French

Many common words in British and American English are spelled differently. For example, American English words ending in *-er* are often spelled with *-re* in British English. American English tends to use *-yze* or *-ize* while British English prefers *-yse* or *-ise*. Words that include the letter *o* in American English are often spelled with an *ou* in British English. American English uses *-ck* or *-tion* as word endings, whereas British English often uses *-que* or *-xion*.

American English	British English	American English	British English
anemia	anaemia	fetus	foetus
analyze	analyse	humor	humour
anesthetic	anaesthetic	judgment	judgement
apologize	apologise	inflection	inflexion
canceled	cancelled	labor	labour
center	centre	licorice	liquorice
check	cheque	mold	mould
civilization	civilisation	mustache	moustache
color	colour	pajamas	pyjamas
connection	connexion	realize	realise

cozy	cosy	smolder	smoulder
criticize	criticise	theater	theatre
defense	defence	traveled	travelled

Some words from other languages have plural formations that appear unusual within the English language. A good approach is to simply memorize these plural formations. If you don't want to memorize them, remember that they are unusual and that you will need to look them up.

Singular Spelling	Plural Spelling	Singular Spelling	Plural Spelling
alumnus	alumni	datum	<u>data</u>
<u>analysis</u>	analyses	medium	media
antenna	antennae	memorandum	memoranda
appendix	appendices	phenomenon	phenomena
basis	bases	radius	radii
chateau	chateaux	stimulus	stimuli
criterion	criteria	syllabus	syllabi (Americanized: syllabuses)

crisis	crises	<u>thesis</u>	theses
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M2: Using Capital Letters

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize standard capitalization conventions.**
2. **Utilize capitalization in proper situations.**

With the advent of new social networking [structures](#), such as text messaging, IM (instant messaging), and Facebook, the reliance on traditional standard capital letters has been relaxed in informal settings. The use of capital letters required additional efforts for people using only a couple of fingers or thumbs for typing words, and this laxity of capitalization became more commonplace.

Rather quickly, the use of abbreviations and lack of capital letters became fashionable—almost like a status symbol indicating a person’s social networking awareness. Despite the common exclusion of capital letters in personal situations, capital letters are still the proper choice in professional and academic settings. If you are someone who writes far more often on a cell phone than on a computer, you are likely to benefit from a brush up on capitalization rules for those occasions when you are composing more official documents.

Proper Nouns, Trade Names, I, and O

Some words are capitalized whenever [they](#) are used. The following video from Khan Academy explains the difference between common and proper nouns:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/bGz1acC3Wew?>

[enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu](https://mytext.cnm.edu/enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu)

“Common and Proper Nouns.” Published by Khan Academy.

Proper nouns, trade names, the pronoun “I,” and “O” when used as an interjection make up this category of words.

Proper nouns include names of specific persons, places, or things. Words that are typically **common nouns** can become proper nouns when they are used as part of a name.

People

Proper Nouns

- Mike Smith
- Mrs. Fenora
- Judge Holloway
- Slick (used as a name)
- President [Abraham Lincoln](#)
- Mom (used as a name)
- Methodist
- Kelly

Common Nouns (Not Proper)

- girl
- teacher
- mom (my mom)
- friend
- judge
- president

Places

Proper Nouns

- Florida
- Disney World
- Tampa
- Africa
- Stockton High School
- Winnie's Grocery Store
- 1432 W. Cherry Ave.
- Museum of Modern Art
- Atlantic Ocean

Common Nouns (Not Proper)

- state
- city
- street
- park
- town
- store
- kitchen
- museum

Things

Proper Nouns

- Washington Monument (a monument)
- Great Wall of China (a landmark)
- Chico (a dog)
- *USS California* (a ship)
- US History 101 (a course)
- University of Arizona (a university)
- Renaissance (an era)
- Bible (a book)
- Tuesday (a day)
- April (a month)
- Albuquerque High School (the name of a specific school)

Common Nouns (Not Proper)

- boat
- newspaper
- dog
- house
- book
- history
- university
- century
- high school (not a specific school)

Trade Names

Trade names include names of specific companies and products.

Proper Nouns

Kellogg's

- Panasonic
- Starbucks
- BlackBerry
- Chevrolet
- Land's End

Common Nouns (Not Proper)

- cereal
- television
- doll
- phone
- car
- company

I and O

The letters “I” and “O” each represent words that are always capitalized.

- I (as a proper noun): If you have time, I will go with you.
- O (as a vocative in direct address): O you who are about to enter here, beware!

First Word in a Sentence

Capitalizing the first word in a sentence appears fairly straightforward at first glance. But there are actually some variations you should keep in mind.

TABLE M2.1
Capitalizing Sentences
CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD OF A STANDARD, SIMPLE SENTENCE.
We usually start mowing our lawn in March.
CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD IN A SENTENCE OF DIALOGUE.
Beth said, "Please help me lift this box."
DO NOT CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD OF DIALOGUE THAT CONTINUES AFTER THE SPEAKER'S NAME WHEN THE SENTENCE HAS NOT YET ENDED.
"Please," Beth said, "help me lift this box."
CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD IN A QUOTED SENTENCE WHEN IT IS WRITTEN IN DIALOGUE FORMATION.
Ellery Jones noted, "Online education is here to stay."
DO NOT CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD IN QUOTED TEXT WHEN IT IS IMBEDDED IN AN EXISTING SENTENCE.
Ellery Jones agrees that online education is "here to stay."
DO NOT CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD OF A SENTENCE THAT FOLLOWS A COLON, UNLESS THE COLON INTRODUCES TWO OR MORE SENTENCES.
Sports carry a lot of weight at our school: the football program is the only program that is funded at 100 percent each year.
CAPITALIZE STAND-ALONE SENTENCES WITHIN PARENTHESES.
Order your binders ahead of time. (You'll need one for each course.)
DO NOT CAPITALIZE SENTENCES WITHIN PARENTHESES IF THEY ARE INCLUDED AS PART OF ANOTHER SENTENCE.
Order your binders ahead of time. (You'll need one for each course.)
CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD OF CONTINUOUS QUESTIONS.
Are you attending on the eighth? The ninth? The tenth?
DO NOT CAPITALIZE THE FIRST LETTER OF A NON-CAPITALIZED PROPER NOUN. (TRY NOT TO START A SENTENCE WITH ONE.)
iPhones took the market by storm. OR The iPhone took the market by storm.
DEFER TO THE CAPITALIZATION USED IN POETRY OR IN OTHER SOURCES. (IN SOME CASES, THE POEM WILL NOT CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD OF EACH LINE.)

Key Words in Titles and Subtitles

In titles and subtitles, capitalize key words, including first words, last words, nouns, verbs, pronouns, adverbs, and adjectives. Do not capitalize articles,

conjunctions, or prepositions unless they are in the initial position (either at the beginning of the entire title or at the beginning of the phrase after a colon if there is one).

Abbreviations

Capitalize abbreviations of proper nouns, such as the following:

- School names: UNL, ISU, U of I
- Government agencies: USDA, CIA, FBI
- Countries and states: USA, NY, TX
- Organizations: BSA, AFS
- Corporations: IBM, AT&T
- Television and radio stations: NBC, CBS, WLS

Bulleted Items

If the items in a bulleted list are sentences, capitalize the first word of each item, as follows:

Semester exam schedule:

- Semester exams for M-W-F classes will be given on December 12.
- Semester exams for T-Th classes will be given on December 13.
- Semester exams for once-a-week classes will be given as arranged by the professor.

If the items are not sentences and are not continuations of a sentence stem, capitalize the first word of each item, as follows:

Semester exam schedule:

- Classes held on M-W-F: December 12
- Classes held on T-Th: December 13

Classes held once-a-week: As arranged by instructor

If the items are continuations of a sentence stem, do not capitalize the first word unless it happens to be a proper noun.

Semester exams will be held on

- December 12 for M-W-F classes,
- December 13 for T-Th classes,
- A date arranged by the professors for once-a-week classes.

Common Misuse of Capital Letters

Avoid the unnecessary use of capital letters. As a rule, you can avoid capitalization errors by adhering to the rules for capitalization. But the following “don’t capitalize” suggestions can help you to avoid making some common mistakes.

- Capitalize names of holidays and months but not seasons:
 - winter, spring, summer, fall
- Do not capitalize words such as “mom” and “dad” when they are used to talk about someone as opposed to when used as a name:
 - Capitalize: “What did you say, **Mom**?”
 - Don’t capitalize: “My mom and dad came with me.”
- Do not capitalize words that are often used as part of a name when they are used in other ways:
 - “My family tree includes a general, a US president, and a princess.”
- Only capitalize direction words that designate a specific location:
 - Capitalize: “I live out **West**.”
 - Don’t capitalize: “I live west of Nebraska.”
- You can choose to capitalize a word for emphasis, but avoid overusing this technique since it will lessen the effect.
- Entire words and sentences written in capital letters are hard to read. Also, in online situations, this type of typing is referred to as shouting. So except

in very rare situations, avoid typing in all capitals.

Adapted from Chapter 19 “Mechanics” in [Writer’s Handbook v 1.0](#) used according to [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

M3: Abbreviating Words and Using Acronyms

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Be familiar with common abbreviations.**
2. **Understand when to use and not to use abbreviations.**
3. **Recognize common symbols when you see them and learn to use them.**

Abbreviations are shortened forms of words used for convenience or to manage space. In its purest form, an abbreviation includes initial letters of a word followed by a period, such as “in.” for “inches.” However, many abbreviations skip over letters, such as “yd.” for “yard,” and are still written with a period. Some multi-word terms are abbreviated by using the first letter of each word and are called acronyms rather than abbreviations. An example of an acronym is “FBI” for “Federal Bureau of Investigation.”

Some abbreviations or acronyms require a period (etc.), but quite a few never take periods (IBM or FBI). You simply have to learn these differences through the experience of seeing specific examples in print.

The following sections will clarify when to use them and how to write them appropriately.

Common Abbreviations for Titles with Names

Titles that are used with names are often abbreviated—in fact, [they](#) are almost

always abbreviated. You should spell out religious, academic, and government titles in [academic writing](#), but otherwise, use the standard abbreviations.

Common Abbreviations

Use these standard abbreviations before names: Mrs. Jones, Mr. Hernandez, Ms. Fieldston, Sen. Brown, Rev. Arles, Gen. Bradford, Dr. Borray, Rep. Anderson, Prof. Cruz, St. Francis, Sgt. Appleby

Use these standard abbreviations after names: Alex Jones, DDS; Arnold Wilson, PhD; George A. Ortiz, Jr.; George A. Ortiz, Sr.; Hannah Borray, MD; Phil Horace, BA; Millie Mance, MA; Gloria Wills, MBA; Fred Flores, CPA

Do not use an abbreviation both before and after a name: Write Dr. Tien Nguyen or Tien Nguyen, MD, but do *not* write Dr. Tien Nguyen, MD.

Spell out these titles in academic writing: Professor Rafael Martinez, Reverend Martin Luther King, General [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#), Senator Kamala Harris

Do not use these title abbreviations if not attached to a name: Do not use any of these abbreviations on [their](#) own without a name. Instead spell the titles out, as in “I’m going to see the doctor after my meeting with my professor.”

Commonly Used Stand-Alone Abbreviations and Acronyms

Many abbreviations and acronyms are widely used as stand-alone words. A small sampling of these abbreviations and acronyms is listed in the following tables.

Word	Abbreviation

Avenue	Ave.
Boulevard	Blvd.
chapter	ch.
company	co.
Incorporated	Inc.
January	Jan.
Katherine	Kathy
maximum	max.
miscellaneous	misc.
months	mos.
North	N.
Ohio	OH
package	pkg.
page	p.
pages	pp.

paid	pd.
Robert	Bob
September	Sept.
Southwest	SW
Tuesday	Tues.
University	Univ.

Phrase	Acronym
Alcoholics Anonymous	AA
Bachelor of Arts	BA
Central Intelligence Agency	CIA
digital video disk	DVD
Environmental Protection Association	EPA
Food and Drug Administration	FDA

Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure	https
Internal Revenue Service	IRS
Parent-Teacher Association	PTA
World Wide Web	www

Abbreviations with Numbers

Some abbreviations are used almost exclusively to describe or clarify numbers. These abbreviations should not be used as stand-alone abbreviations. In other words, you can use the dollar-sign abbreviation to write “\$5.00” but not to write “I earned several \$ last night.” Some of these abbreviations can be used within text, such as [BCE](#), p.m., and CST. Measurement abbreviations, however, should be used only in tables, graphs, and figures and should be spelled out within continuous text. Some of these abbreviations will be addressed as symbols later in this section.

Abbreviation	Purpose/Meaning
300 BCE	Before the Common Era
1900 CE	Common Era
34 m	meters
28 in.	inches

5¢	cents
6:00 p.m.	post meridiem (after noon)
1:00 a.m.	ante meridiem (before noon)
15 cm	centimeters
No. 8	number
85 lbs.	pounds
#5	number
11:30 a.m. EST	Eastern Standard Time
4 hr. 10 min. 30 sec.	hours, minutes, and seconds
4 + 3	plus
$\frac{1}{2} = .5$	equals
7 ft.	feet
$7n < 21$	is less than
$432 \neq 430$	does not equal

44 cu. in.	cubic inches
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Abbreviations in Academic Writing

Academic [citations](#) include their own set of common abbreviations. [They](#) vary somewhat depending on the [citation style](#) you’re using, so always follow your specific style guidelines. Some typical academic citation abbreviations are provided here.

Abbreviation	Purpose/Meaning
anon.	anonymous
b.	born
c. or ca.	circa; about (used with dates)
ch. or chap.	chapter
d.	died
ed., eds.	editor, editors
et al.	et alia (Latin: “and others”)
illus.	illustrated
n.d.	no date available

n.p.	no publisher information available
p., pp.	page, pages
vol., vols.	volume, volumes

Topic- or Profession-Specific and Incident-Specific Abbreviations

If you are writing for an [audience](#) familiar with a specific vocabulary that incorporates abbreviations—for example, readers with a strong military base—you can use those abbreviations freely. But when you are writing for readers who do not share that common knowledge base, you will have to spell out abbreviations.

Incident-specific abbreviations are created for use in one specific situation and thus require obvious references so the audience can understand their meaning. For example, say you are writing a story about a teacher named Mr. Nieweldowskilty. If you refer to him by his full name once and then note that students call him Mr. Niews for short and then refer to him as Mr. Niews the rest of the time, your audience can easily understand that Mr. Niews is short for Mr. Nieweldowskilty. Be consistent though, once you introduce him as Mr. Niews, you should use the shortened version for the rest of the story; don't switch back and forth between Mr. Niews and Mr. Nieweldowskilty because you can confuse your reader. And if you write a second story about him, you cannot assume that readers will know the abbreviated name, Mr. Niews.

Recognizing and Using Symbols

Symbols are actually a form of abbreviating and are used widely in mathematics, on maps, and in some other situations. Here’s a small sample:

75%	Percent sign
#5	Number sign
4 + 3	Plus sign
@	At sign
\$5.00	Dollar sign
5¢	Cents sign
1/2 = .5	Equals sign
432 ≠ 430	Not equal to sign
>	Greater than
7n ≤ 21	Less than or equal sign
©	Copyright
98.6º	Degrees

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M4: Inserting Numbers into Text

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Understand general rules for using numbers in text.**
2. **Recognize exceptions to the general rules for using numbers in text.**

Writing numbers properly in text is rather simple as long as you are familiar with the general guidelines and the exceptions to those guidelines.

General Guidelines for Using Numbers in Text

APA style calls for writing out numbers from one to nine in words and using **numerals** for all other numbers. The Chicago Manual of **Style** calls for spelling out zero through one hundred as well as certain round multiples such as five thousand or six hundred. **MLA style**, however, requires that all numbers that are composed of one or two words be written out in words (e.g., one hundred, thirty-six, five million), and all numbers with more than two words be written in numerals (137; 6,482; 3,500,000). There are two general exceptions in MLA:

1. If a number falls at the beginning of a sentence, it should be written out in words.
2. If both large and small numbers are used within a single sentence or passage, all should be written as numerals in order to be consistent.

Exceptions to the General Guidelines for Using Numbers in Text

Exceptions to the general guidelines are logical, and [they](#) help avoid awkward situations. These exceptions are in place in all [citation](#) formats and style sheets.

Numerals with Abbreviations

In a situation where abbreviations are used, use numerals, not number words, with the abbreviations.

- 6 in.
- 25 cm
- 125 lbs.
- 4 mos.

Numerals for Time of Day

Within text, you can use either words or numbers to write the time of day. Within a document, be consistent in your choice.

- 4:30 in the morning
- four thirty in the morning
- (but) 4:30 a.m.

Numerals in Dates

Use words to write months and numerals to write years. When the month, day, and year are all included, also use a numeral to write the day. If the year is not included, you can use either a numeral or a word to write the day. Express decades in numerals or words.

- July 23, 1985

July 23 or July twenty-third

- the sixties or the 1960s

Numerals in Sports' Scores and Statistics

Use numerals to write sports' scores and sports' statistics.

- The Bulls have a 34–6 record.
- The score was 4 to 3.

Numerals Used Side by Side

To avoid confusion when using two numbers side by side, spell out one of the numbers and use a numeral for the other one. Generally, you should write out the number with fewer letters and leave the longer one as a numeral.

- Two 20-page papers
- 24 three-pound bags

Numerals in Addresses and Phone Numbers

Generally, you should use numerals in addresses and phone numbers. One exception is that, when a street is a numeral, you can either use the numeral or spell out the word.

- 3545 N. Willow
- Denver, CO 80202
- Fifth Street or 5th Street
- 210-555-7485

Numerals as Part of Proper Nouns

Numbers that are part of proper nouns should always be written as they appear.

Psychology 101

- Room 222
- 7-Up
- Fifth Third Bank
- Second City

Numerals as Divisions of Books and Documents

Use numerals to indicate page, volume, chapter, unit, and section numbers as well as other divisions that are used to organize written text.

- Section 2, Chapter 4
- page 8
- Act 2, [Scene](#) 7
- Volume 2, Unit 7, Item 12

Numerals in Decimals and Percentages

As a rule, numerals are used to express decimals and percentages.

- 34.72
- 75 percent

Numerals Used for Identification

Use numerals when writing identification numbers, such as the serial number for a computer, a driver's license number, or a social security number.

- Serial: 25485359243642
- Driver's license: 245Y823

Numerals in Money Amounts

When a money amount is briefly mentioned in a piece of writing that is not

necessarily about money, spell the money amount out. However, if you are writing about money or are writing text that will reference money amounts on multiple occasions, use numerals and symbols.

- Offhand reference: ten dollars
- Repeated reference: \$10 or \$10.00

Punctuating Numerals

When writing numerals, use a decimal point to separate dollars and cents and use a comma to divide numbers of one thousand or more into units of three digits. Do not use these punctuation marks when writing numbers in words.

45,329

FORTY-FIVE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED
TWENTY-NINE

\$12.43

twelve dollars and forty-three cents

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M5: Marking Words with Italics

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Know when to use italics versus quotation marks in titles of works.**
2. **Review other circumstances when italics are appropriate.**
3. **Understand how to use italics in moderation for emphasis.**

Traditionally, underlining was used as a means of emphasis in handwritten text. Since the advent of the personal computer, italics have replaced underlining. If you are creating text by hand or by some other means where italics are not available, use underlining instead of italics.

Italicize Titles of Published Texts, Lengthy Works, and Legal Cases

As a rule, you should italicize the titles of published works, but you should not italicize parts of published works, such as a poem within a book, or unpublished works. Some exceptions that should be italicized include lengthy works, such as a very long poem within a book and legal cases. Some exceptions that should not be italicized include titles of published short stories and titles of individual television shows. Works that are not italicized are typically placed in quotation marks. Some other exceptions that should not be italicized include long religious works, such as the Bible and the Koran, and easily recognizable texts, such as the US Constitution.

Italicize Titles of Books, Magazines, and Newspapers

- *The Runaway Jury*
- *People*
- *The New York Times*

Italicize Titles of Long Poems, Plays, and Television Series (but Not Individual Television Shows)

- *The Odyssey*
- *Billy Elliot the Musical*
- *The Mentalist*

Italicize Names of Spacecraft, Aircraft, and Ships

- *Apollo 13*
- *Boeing 777*
- the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa María*

Italicize Foreign Words Used in English Sentences

- We would like to develop a positive *esprit de corps* within the company.
- His actions over the past month have made him persona *non grata* within my group of friends.
- But you need not italicize foreign words which have come into common usage, like burrito.

Italicize Words, Letters, and Numbers That Are Called Out or Emphasized

- She is, by the very definition, *irascible*.
- Make a list of words that begin with *hu*.
- The word *cinnamon* is hard for me to pronounce.
- The numbers 36, 84, and 300 are all divisible by 6.

Italicize Scientific Names

- *Homo sapiens* are members of the *Animalia* kingdom.

Do Not Over-italicize

You might be tempted to use italics to emphasize a key phrase, word, or idea even though it doesn't fall into any these categories. Fight off the temptation since an overuse of italics is distracting for readers.

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WCS1: Controlling Wordiness and Writing Concisely

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize and eliminate repetitive ideas.**
2. **Recognize and remove unneeded repeated words.**
3. **Recognize unneeded words and revise sentences to be more concise.**

It is easy to let your sentences become cluttered with words that do not add value to what you are trying to say. You can manage cluttered sentences by eliminating repetitive ideas, removing repeated words, and rewording to eliminate unneeded words.

Eliminating Repetitive Ideas

Unless you are providing definitions on [purpose](#), stating one idea in two ways within a single sentence is redundant and not necessary. Read each example and think about how you could revise the sentence to remove repetitive phrasing that adds wordiness. Then study the suggested revision below each example.

Examples

Original: Use a **very heavy skillet made of cast iron** to bake an extra juicy meatloaf.

Revision: Use a cast iron skillet to bake a juicy meatloaf.

Original: Joe thought **to himself**, “I think I’ll make caramelized grilled salmon tonight.”

Revision: Joe thought, “I think I’ll make caramelized grilled salmon tonight.”

Removing Repeated Words

As a general rule, you should try not to repeat a word within a sentence. Sometimes you simply need to choose a different word. But often you can actually remove repeated words. Read this example and think about how you could revise the sentence to remove wordiness. Then check out the revision below the sentence.

Example

Original: The student who won the cooking contest is a very talented and ambitious **student**.

Revision: The student who won the cooking contest is talented and ambitious.

Rewording to Eliminate Unneeded Words

If a sentence has words that are not necessary to carry the meaning, those words are unneeded and can be removed to reduce wordiness. Read each example and think about how you could revise the sentence to remove phrasing. Then check out the suggested revisions.

Examples

Original: Andy **has the ability to make** the most fabulous twice-baked potatoes.

Revision: Andy makes the most fabulous twice-baked potatoes.

Original: For his **part in the** cooking class group project, Malik **was responsible for making** the mustard reduction sauce.

Revision: Malik made the mustard reduction sauce for his cooking class group project.

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WCS2: Using Appropriate Language

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Be aware that some words are commonly confused with each other.**
2. **Recognize and use appropriate words, taking care to avoid jargon or slang.**
3. **Write in a straightforward manner and with the appropriate level of formality.**

As a writer, you do not want inappropriate word choice to get in the way of your [message](#). For this reason, you need to strive to use language that is accurate and appropriate for the writing situation. Learn for yourself which words you tend to confuse with each other. Omit **jargon** (technical words and phrases common to a specific profession or discipline) and **slang** (invented words and phrases specific to a certain group of people), unless your [audience](#) and [purpose](#) call for such language. Avoid using outdated words and phrases, such as “dial the number.” Be straightforward in your writing rather than using **euphemisms** (a gentler, but sometimes inaccurate, way of saying something). Be clear about the level of formality needed for each different piece of writing and adhere to that level.

Focusing on Easily Confused Words

Words in homophone sets are often mistaken for each other. (See Section M1, Mastering Commonly Misspelled Words for more about homophones.) Table WCS 2.1 “Commonly Confused Words” presents some examples of commonly

confused words other than homophones. You will notice that some of the words in the table have similar sounds that lead to their confusion. Other words in the table are confused due to similar meanings. Keep your personal list handy as you discover pairings of words that give you trouble.



**Commonly
Confused Words**

- affect / effect
- all ready / already
- allusion / illusion
- among / between
- are / our
- award / reward
- breath / breathe
- can / may
- conscience / conscious
- desert / dessert
- emigrate / immigrate
- especially / specially
- explicit / implicit
- good / well
- lay / lie
- leave / let
- ordinance / ordnance
- precede / proceed
- quiet / quite
- quote / quotation
- sit / set
- statue / statute
- that / which
- through / thorough
- who / whom

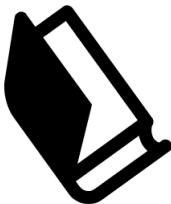


Table WCS 2.1 Commonly Confused Words

Writing without Jargon or Slang

Jargon and slang both have their places. Using jargon is appropriate when you can safely assume your readers also know the jargon. For example, if you are a lawyer, and you are writing to others in the legal profession, using legal jargon is perfectly fine. On the other hand, if you are writing for people outside the legal profession, using legal jargon would most likely be confusing, and you should avoid it. Of course, lawyers must use legal jargon in papers [they](#) prepare for clients. However, those papers are designed to navigate within the legal system.

You are, of course, free to use slang within your personal life, but unless you happen to be writing a sociolinguistic study of slang itself, it has no place in [academic writing](#). Even if you are writing somewhat casual responses in an online discussion for a class, you should avoid using slang or other forms of abbreviated communication common to instant messaging (IM) and texting.

Be Straightforward

Some writers choose to control meaning with flowery or pretentious language, euphemisms, and double-talk. All these choices obscure direct communication and have no place in academic writing. Study the following three examples that clarify each of these misdirection techniques.

Technique	Example	Misdirection Involved	Straightforward Alternative
Flowery or pretentious language	Your delightful invitation arrived completely out of the blue, and I would absolutely	The speaker seems to be trying to relay serious regrets for having to refuse an	We are sorry, but we have a prior commitment. I hope you have a great event.

	love to attend such a significant and important event, but we already have a <u>commitment</u> .	invitation. But the overkill makes it sound insincere.	
Euphemisms	My father is follicly challenged.	The speaker wants to talk about his or her father’s lack of hair without having to use the word “bald.”	My father is bald.
Double-talk	I was unavoidably detained from arriving to the evening meeting on time because I became preoccupied with one of my colleagues after the close of the work day.	The speaker was busy with a colleague after work and is trying to explain being tardy for an evening meeting.	I’m sorry to be late to the meeting. Work ran later than usual.

Presenting an Appropriate Level of Formality

Look at the following three sentences. [They](#) all three carry roughly the same meaning. Which one is the best way to write the sentence?

1. The doctor said, “A full eight hours of work is going to be too much for this patient to handle for at least the next two weeks.”
2. The doctor said I couldn’t work full days for the next two weeks.
3. my md said 8 hrs of wrk R 2M2H for the next 2 wks.

If you said, “It depends,” you are right! Each version is appropriate in certain situations. Every writing situation requires you to make a judgment regarding the level of formality you want to use. Base your decision on a combination of the subject matter, the audience, and your purpose for writing. For example, if you are sending a text message to a friend about going bowling, the formality shown in example three is fine. If, on the other hand, you are sending a text message to that same friend about the death of a mutual friend, you would logically move up the formality of your [tone](#) at least to the level of example two.

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WCS3: Choosing Precise Diction

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Understand connotations of words and choose words with connotations that work best for your purposes.**
2. **Incorporate specific and concrete words as well as figurative language into your writing.**
3. **Recognize and avoid clichés and improperly used words.**

By using precise wording, you can most accurately relay your thoughts. Some strategies that can help you put your thoughts into words include focusing on denotations and connotations, balancing specific and concrete words with occasionally figurative language, and being on guard against clichés and misused words.

Focusing on Both Denotations and Connotations

Consider that the words “laid-back” and “lackadaisical” both mean “unhurried and slow-moving.” If someone said you were a “laid-back” student, you would likely be just fine with that comment, but if someone said you were a “lackadaisical” student, you might not like the **connotation**. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs all have both **denotations** and connotations. The denotation is the definition of a word (think D for dictionary definition). The connotation is the emotional sense of a word. For example, look at these three words:

- excited
- agitated
- flustered

The three words all mean to be stirred emotionally. In fact, you might see one of the words as a definition of another one of them. And you would definitely see the three words in a common list in a [thesaurus](#). So the denotations for the three words are about the same. But the connotations are quite different. The word “excited” often has a positive, fun underlying meaning; “agitated” carries a sense of being upset; and “flustered” suggests a person is somewhat confused or nervous. When you are choosing a word to use, you should first think of a word based on its denotation. Then you should consider if the connotation fits your intent.

Choosing Specific and Concrete Words

You will always give clearer information if you write with specific words rather than general words. Look at the following example and think about how you could reword it using specific terms. Then check out the following revision to see one possible option.

Examples

Original: The **animals** got out and ruined the **garden produce**.

Revision: The *horses* got out and ruined the *tomatoes and cucumbers*.

Another way to make your writing clearer and more interesting is to use concrete words rather than [abstract](#) words. [Abstract](#) words do not have physical properties. But concrete words evoke senses of taste, smell, hearing, sight, and touch. For example, you could say, “My shoe feels odd.” This statement does not give a sense of why your shoe feels odd since odd is an abstract word that doesn’t suggest any physical characteristics. Or you could say, “My shoe feels wet.” This statement gives you a sense of how your shoe feels to the touch. It

also gives a sense of how your shoe might look as well as how it might smell. Look at the following example and think about how you could reword it using concrete words. Then check out the following revision to see one possible option.

Examples

Original: The horses **got** out and **ruined** the tomatoes and cucumbers.

Revision: The horses *stampeded* out and *squished and squirted* the tomatoes and cucumbers.

Study this table for some additional examples of words that provide clarity to writing.

General Words	Specific Words
children	Tess and Abby
animals	dogs
food	cheeseburger and a salad

Abstract Words	Concrete Words
noise	clanging and squealing
success	a job I like and enough money to live comfortably

civility

treating others with respect

Enhancing Writing with Figurative Language

Figurative language is a general term that includes writing tools such as alliteration, **analogies**, hyperbole, **idioms**, **metaphors**, **onomatopoeia**, personification, and **similes**. By using figurative language, you can make your writing both more interesting and easier to understand.

Figurative Language

Alliteration: Repetition of single letters or sets of letters.

- **Effect:** Gives a poetic, flowing sound to words.
- **Example:** *Dana danced down the drive daintily.*

Analogy: The comparison of familiar and unfamiliar ideas or items by showing a feature they have in common.

- **Effect:** Makes an unfamiliar idea or item easier to understand.
- **Example:** Writing a book is *like raising a toddler*. It takes all your time and attention, but you'll enjoy every minute of it!

Hyperbole: A greatly exaggerated point.

- **Effect:** Emphasizes the point.
- **Example:** I must have written *a thousand pages* this weekend.

Idiom: A group of words that carries a meaning other than the actual meanings of the words.

- **Effect:** A colorful way to send a [message](#).
- **Example:** I think this assignment will be *a piece of cake*.

[Metaphor](#): An overall comparison of two ideas or items by stating that one is the other.

- **Effect:** Adds the connotations of one compared idea to the other compared idea.
- **Example:** This shirt *is a rag*.

Onomatopoeia: A single word that sounds like the idea it is describing.

- **Effect:** A colorful way to describe an idea while adding a sense of sound.
- **Example:** The jazz band was known for its *wailing* horns and *clattering* drums.

[Personification](#): Attributing human characteristics to nonhuman items.

- **Effect:** Adds depth such as humor, drama, or interest.
- **Example:** The *spatula told me* that the grill was just a little too hot today.

[Simile](#): Using the word “like” or “as” to indicate that one item or idea resembles another.

- **Effect:** A colorful way to explain an item or idea.
- **Example:** Hanging out with you is *like eating watermelon* on a summer day.

Using Clichés Sparingly

Clichés are phrases that were once original and interesting creations but that became so often used that they have ceased to be interesting and are now viewed as overworked. If you have a tendency to use a [cliché](#) or see one while

you are [proofreading](#), replace it with plain language instead.

Example

I'm loose as a goose today.

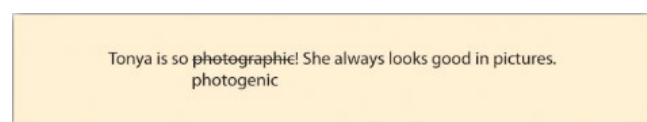
Replace cliché: I feel relaxed today.



Guarding Against Misusing Words

If you are uncertain about the meaning of a word, look the word up before you use it. Also, if your spell -checker identifies a misspelled word, don't automatically accept the suggested replacement word. Make an informed decision about each word you use.

Look at [Figure 17.1](#).



Equipment and memories can be photographic, but to look good in pictures is to be photogenic. To catch an error of this nature, you have to realize the word in question is a problem.

The truth is, your best chance at knowing how a wide range of words should be used is to read widely and frequently and to pay attention to words as you read.

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WCS4: Using Varied Sentence Lengths and Styles

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Understand the value of varied sentence lengths within a body of text.**
2. **Use a variety of sentence beginnings and endings.**
3. **Recognize different sentence styles.**
4. **Learn how to use subordination to include main ideas and minor ideas in the same sentence.**
5. **Learn how to use coordination to include two or more ideas of equal weight in a single sentence.**
6. **Within a single sentence, learn to keep subordinated ideas to a minimum.**

Text written with only one type of sentence is boring for readers. To make your texts more interesting, use sentences of varying lengths, with different openings and endings, and with a variety of [structures](#).

Featuring Short Sentences

Short sentences, when not overused, can be used to emphasize an idea and catch a reader's attention. Notice how the ideas expressed through the following short sentences grab your attention more than the same ideas do when embedded in longer sentences.

Ideas separated into shorter sentences: My mother wants me to spend next weekend with her and my two aunts. [They](#) all talk nonstop. I am sure I would be nothing more than a fly on the wall while [they](#) talk about all the family members. I am simply not going!

Ideas embedded in longer sentences: My mother wants me to spend next weekend with her and my two aunts who all talk nonstop. I am sure I would be nothing more than a fly on the wall while they talk about all the family members, so I am simply not going!

But be careful to choose your short sentences strategically so that they carry emphasis without making your writing appear unsophisticated. A third option might be to use one

longer sentence and break up the other one into two shorter sentences.

Here is a video on sentence length and how to vary length for effect:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/1jJunV2HtWw?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Created by Mr. Bruff. "Varying Sentence Length: Look at This!" Published on May 30, 2017. License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube License ©

Combining Short Sentences

Since an abundance of short sentences will give a simplistic appearance to your writing, you don't want to use an excessive number of them close together. You can combine short sentences as a means of explaining an idea or a connection between two ideas. When you combine two complete sentences, you have to choose to either subordinate one of the ideas to the other or coordinate the two ideas by giving them equal weight. Your choice should always reflect the intended emphasis and **causality** of the two initial sentences.

Example

Two short sentences: My television is broken. It is Karen's fault.

Sentence combination that maintains intended emphasis and causality:
Because of Karen, my television is broken.

Incorporating Sentences of Varying Lengths

Text of varying lengths is easier to read than text with sentences that are the same length. A whole page of extremely long sentences is overwhelming. Try reading a high-level academic paper on a scientific topic; the sentences are often long and involved, which results in difficult reading. A whole page of short sentences, on the other hand, is choppy, unsophisticated, and equally hard to read through. Consider the following text that begins the first chapter of Mark Twain's *A Tramp Abroad*. Twain begins with a long sentence (thirty-three words), follows with a medium-length sentence (seventeen words), and closes with two short sentences (six and five words, respectively). This mix of sentence lengths creates text that flows smoothly and is easy to read.

One day it occurred to me that it had been many years since the world had been afforded the spectacle of a man adventurous enough to undertake a journey through Europe on [foot](#). After much thought, I decided that I was a person fitted to furnish to mankind this spectacle. So I determined to do it. This was in March, 1878.

Now read a different version of the same paragraph. Notice how the short sentences sound choppy and juvenile.

I was thinking one day. I thought of something the world hadn't seen lately. My thought was of an adventurous man. The man was on a walking trip through Europe. I thought some more. Then I decided that I should take such a trip. I should give the world something to watch. So I determined to do it. This was in March 1878.

Here's another version of the same paragraph written in one long and rather overwhelming sentence.

One day it occurred to me that it had been many years since the world had been afforded the spectacle of a man adventurous enough to undertake a journey through Europe on foot, so after much thought, I decided that I was a person fitted to furnish to mankind this spectacle, and it was in March 1878 that I decided I was determined to do it.

These examples illustrate the importance of varying your sentence lengths.

Diversifying Your Sentence Openers and Endings

Like making all your sentences the same length, starting all your sentences in the same format—say, with “the” or “there”—could result in seriously boring text. Even if you vary your openings slightly but still follow the basic subject–verb–object format every time, you're missing an opportunity to make your sentences more interesting. Study how the following techniques for varying sentence openers adds interest.

Example 1

All sentences begin with one or two words:

Original: The girl was terribly upset when her purse was stolen. There wasn't anything that could get the [image](#) out of her mind. The thief was running when he grabbed her purse. The girl didn't see him coming and was caught off guard. The girl fell down and never got a

good look at him.

Revision: [Reverse the sentence.] Having her purse stolen upset the girl terribly. [Start with the key issue.] Her mind held onto the image and would not let it go. [Add an adverb.] Unfortunately, she didn't see him coming and was so caught off guard that she fell down and never got a good look at him.

Example 2

Sentences begin with a variety of words but all follow the subject–verb–object format:

Original: The young woman got up off the ground. Then she ran to her dorm room in a state of shock. She got in the elevator without looking at anyone. She started crying as soon as she walked into her room. Her roommate held her hand and tried to get her to calm down. Some friends from down the hall showed up.

Revision: The young woman jumped up off the ground. [Rearrange to create an introductory phrase.] In a state of shock, she ran to her dorm room. [Insert an adjective at the beginning.] Frightened, she walked into the elevator without looking at anyone. [Choose an unusual subject for the sentence.] Tears came as soon as she walked into her room. [Rearrange to create an introductory phrase.] In an effort to calm her down, her roommate held her hand. [Add some new content at the beginning of the sentence.] As timing would have it, some friends from down the hall showed up.

By placing a keyword or phrase at the end of a sentence, you can also hold readers' attention as they wait for the full meaning to unfold. This approach of building to a climax places added emphasis on an idea.

Example 1

The stern instructor looked like he was about to start yelling at everybody, so I held my breath right up until the moment he broke into a wide grin.

Example 2

The whole family gathered around the computer waiting for my sister to say the words we'd been waiting to hear for fifteen months—that she was coming home.

Including Sentences with Differing Structures

Just as you need to use a variety of sentence openers to keep text interesting, you should vary your sentence structure. The types of clauses you use are key factors in varying your sentence structure. Look at the following table for an overview.

Sentence Type	Number of Type of Clauses	Example(Independent Clauses Underlined, Dependent Clauses in Bold)
Simple Sentence	One independent clause	Ted threw the bat.
Compound Sentence	At least two independent clauses	Ted threw the bat, and it hit the umpire
Complex Sentence	At least one independent clause <i>and</i> one or more dependent clauses	While wincing in pain, the umpire ejected Ted, causing the manager to protest.
Compound-complex Sentence	At least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause	Losing control of his emotions, Ted threw the ball, and it nearly hit the umpire too.

Using Subordination and Coordination

[Subordination](#) and [coordination](#) are used to clarify the relative level of importance or the relationship between and among words, phrases, or clauses within sentences. You can use subordination to arrange sentence parts of unequal importance and coordination to convey the idea that sentence parts are of equal importance.

Subordination

Subordination allows you to convey differences in importance between details within a sentence. You can use the technique within a single sentence or to combine two or more

smaller sentences. You should always present the most important idea in an [independent clause](#) and use dependent clauses and phrases to present the less important ideas. Start each [dependent clause](#) with a [subordinating conjunction](#) (e.g., *after, because, by the time, even though, if, just in case, now that, once, only if, since, though, unless, until, when, whether, while*) or a [relative pronoun](#) (e.g., *that, what, whatever, which, whichever, who, whoever, whom, whomever, whose*). These starters signal the reader that the idea is subordinate. Here's a sentence that uses a relative pronoun to convey subordination:

- I will come to your house or meet you at the gym, **whichever** works best for you.

The core idea is that I will either come to your house or meet you at the gym. The fact that you'll choose whichever option works best for you is subordinate, set apart with the relative pronoun "whichever."

In the next example, two smaller sentences are combined using the subordinating conjunction "because":

- Smaller sentence 1: The number of students who live at home and take online college classes has risen in the past ten years.
- Smaller sentence 2: The rise has been due to increased marketing of university online programs.
- Larger sentence using subordination (version 1): The number of students living at home and taking online college classes has risen in the past ten years **because** of increased marketing of university online programs.
- Larger sentence using subordination (version 2): **Because** of increased marketing of university online programs, the number of students living at home and taking online courses has risen in the past ten years.

Coordination

Some sentences have two or more equal ideas. You can use coordination to show a common level of importance among parts of a sentence, such as subjects, verbs, and [objects](#).

Examples

Subject example: Both green beans and asparagus are great with grilled fish.

Verb example: We neither talked nor laughed during the whole two hours.

Object example: Machine embroidery combines the beauty of high-quality stitching and the expediency of modern technology.

The underlined ideas within each sentence carry equal weight within their individual sentences. As examples of coordination, they can be connected with coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*) or correlative conjunctions (*both...and, either...or, just as...so, neither...nor, not...but, not only...but also, whether...or*).

Controlling Emphasis

You likely use subordination and coordination automatically. For example, if you say that something happened (e.g., Dale broke his leg while sledding) because of something else (e.g., he broke his leg when he sledded into a tree), you can use separate sentences, or you can use subordination within one sentence.

Ideas presented in two sentences: Dale broke his leg while sledding this weekend. His leg broke when the sled hit a tree.

Ideas presented in one sentence using subordination: This weekend, Dale broke his leg when his sled hit a tree. [Dale broke his leg is the main idea. The fact that it happened when the sled hit a tree is the subordinated idea.]

A natural way to use coordination is, for example, to discuss two things you plan to do on vacation. You can present the two ideas in separate sentences or in one sentence using coordination to signal equal emphases.

Ideas presented in two sentences: I'm planning to see the Statue of Liberty while I'm in New York. I'm also going to go to a Broadway play.

Ideas presented in one sentence using coordination: While I'm in New York, I am planning to see the Statue of Liberty and go to a Broadway play.

Subordination Pitfalls

You will want to avoid two common subordination mistakes: placing main ideas in subordinate clauses or phrases and placing too many subordinate ideas in one sentence.

Here's an example of a sentence that subordinates the main idea:

- LoDo, a charming neighborhood featuring great art galleries, restaurants, cafés, and shops, is located in the Lower Downtown District of Denver.

The problem here is that main idea is embedded in a subordinate clause. Instead of focusing on the distinctive features of the LoDo neighborhood, the sentence makes it appear as if the main idea is the neighborhood's location in Denver. Here's a revision:

- LoDo, located in the Lower Downtown District of Denver, is a charming neighborhood featuring great art galleries, restaurants, cafés, and shops.

A sentence with too many subordinated ideas is confusing and difficult to read.

Here's an example:

- Television executives, who make the decisions about which shows to pull and which to extend, need to consider more than their individual opinions so that they do not pull another *Star Trek* mess-up where they don't recognize a great show when they see it, while balancing the need to maintain a schedule that appeals to a broad audience, considering that new types of shows don't yet have a broad following.

And here's a possible revision:

- Television executives need to consider more than their individual opinions when they decide which shows to pull and which to extend. Many years ago, some of these very executives decided that *Star Trek* should be canceled, clearly demonstrating they do not always know which shows will become great. Television executives should also balance the need to maintain a schedule that appeals to a broad audience with an appreciation for new types of shows that don't yet have a broad following.

For more on subordinating and coordinating clauses, check out this Khan Academy video:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/XH0mBV4js_E?feature=oembed&enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu

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WCS5: Writing in Active Voice and Uses of Passive Voice

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Differentiate between active and passive voice.**
2. **Write in active voice.**
3. **Know when and how to use passive voice.**

Sydney J. Harris, a Chicago journalist, said, “We have not passed that subtle line between childhood and adulthood until we move from the passive voice to the active voice—that is, until we have stopped saying, ‘It got lost,’ and say, ‘I lost it.’” Besides being a rite of passage in human development, routinely using active voice also marks growth in your writing ability.

As a college writer, you need to know when and how to use both active and passive voice. Although active voice is the standard preferred writing style, passive voice is acceptable, and even preferred, in certain situations. However, as a general rule, passive voice tends to be awkward, vague, and wordy.

Recognizing Active and Passive Voice

Lack of awareness or understanding of passive voice may cause you to use it regularly. Once you fully grasp how it differs from active voice, passive voice will begin to stand out. You will then recognize it when you use it as well as when others use it.

To use active voice, you should make the noun that performs the action the subject of the sentence and pair it directly with an action verb.

Read these two sentences:

- **Matt Damon left** Harvard in the late 1980s to start his acting career.
- Matt Damon's acting **career was started** in the late 1980s when he left Harvard.

In the first sentence, “left” is an action verb that is paired with the subject, “Matt Damon.” If you ask yourself “Who or what left?” the answer is “Matt Damon.” Neither of the other two nouns in the sentence—“Harvard” and “career”—left anything.

Now look at the second sentence. The action verb is “started.” If you ask yourself “Who or what started something?” the answer is again “Matt Damon.” But in this sentence, “career” has been placed in the subject position, not “Matt Damon.” When the doer of the action is not in the subject position, the sentence is in passive voice. In passive voice constructions, the doer of the action usually follows the word “by” as the indirect object of a prepositional phrase, and the action verb is typically partnered with a version of the verb “to be.”

Look at the following two passive voice sentences. For each sentence, note the **noun** in the subject position, the form of the verb “**to be**,” the **action verb**, and the **doer** of the action.

- The original **screenplay** for *Good Will Hunting* **was written** by **Matt Damon** for an English class when he was a student at Harvard University.
- As an actor, **Matt Damon is loved** by millions of **fans** worldwide.

The following video diagrams the differences between active and passive voice:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/ePfmGMTgXl8?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

Active vs. [Passive Voice](#).” Created by Learn English on Skype. License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube License ©

Using Action Verbs to Make Sentences More Interesting

Two sentences can generally say the same thing but leave an entirely different impression based on the verb choices. For example, which of the following sentences gives you the most vivid mental picture?

- A bald eagle was overhead and now is low in the sky near me.

Or

- A bald eagle soared and then dove low, appearing to come right at me.

As a rule, try to express yourself with action verbs instead of forms of the verb “to be.” Sometimes it is fine to use forms of the verb “to be,” such as “is” or “are,” but it is easy to overuse them (as in this sentence—twice). Overuse of such verbs results in dull writing.

Read each of the following sentences and note the use of the verb “**to be**.” In your head, think of a way to reword the sentence to make it more interesting by using an action verb. Then look at how each revision uses one or more *action verbs*.

Examples

Original: A photo **was** snapped, the tiger **was** upset, and Elizabeth **was** on the ground.

- **Revision:** Elizabeth innocently *snapped* the photo and the lion *let out* a roar that *sent* Elizabeth *scrambling* backward until she *fell* down.

Original: A giraffe's neck **is** long and thin, but it **is** as much as five hundred pounds in weight.

- **Revision:** A giraffe's neck *wanders* far above its body and often *weighs* as much as five hundred pounds.

Original: An elephant **is** able to drink eighty gallons of water and **is** likely to eat one thousand pounds of vegetation in a day.

- **Revision:** In one day, an elephant *slurps* down eighty gallons of water and *grinds* away one thousand pounds of vegetation.

Starting sentences with “there is,” “there are,” “there were,” “it is,” or “it was” is another form of passive voice. Read each of the following examples of this kind of **passive voice construction**. In your head, think of a way to reword the sentence to make it more interesting by using an action verb. Then look at how each sentence can be revised using an *action verb*.

Examples

Original: **There are** thousands of butterflies in the Butterfly House.

- **Revision:** Thousands of butterflies *flutter* around in the Butterfly House.

Original: **There were** four giraffes eating leaves from the trees.

- **Revision:** Four giraffes *ripped* mouthfuls of leaves from the trees.

Using Action Verbs Alone to Avoid Passive Voice

Even though the passive voice might include an action verb, the strength of the action verb is lessened by the structure of the sentence. Also, the passive voice tends to create unnecessary wordiness. Read the following sentences and think of a way to reword each using an action verb in active voice. Then study the suggested revision in each case.

Examples

Original: The zebras were fed by the zoo workers. (eight words)

- **Revision:** The zoo workers fed the zebras. (six words)

Original: Water was spewed in the air by the elephant. (nine words)

- **Revision:** The elephant spewed water in the air. (seven words)

Original: The home of the hippopotamus was cleaned up and made tidy by Hank the Hippo Man. (sixteen words)

- **Revision:** Hank the Hippo Man cleaned up and tidied the hippopotamus's home. (eleven words)

Writing in the Active Voice

Once you understand the difference between active and passive voice, writing in active voice becomes easy. All you have to do is to make sure you clearly explain who or what did what. And if you notice you are using forms of the verb “to be”

with your action verb, look closely at the reason. If you are writing in progressive tense (“Carrie is walking to my house”) or perfect progressive tense (“Melissa will have been married for four years by then”), you will need to use such helping verbs, even in active voice. (See Section SB [“Sentence Building”](#), and SB2 [“Choosing Appropriate Verb Tenses”](#) for more information on progressive and perfect progressive tenses.)

Using Passive Voice

Sometimes passive voice actually is the best option. The point is to only use passive voice when you consciously decide to do so. Consider the following acceptable uses of passive voice.

When you don’t know who or what is responsible for the action:

- **Example:** Our front door lock was picked.
- **Rationale:** If you don’t know who picked the lock on your front door, you can’t say who did it. You could say a thief broke in, but that is an assumption. You could, theoretically, find out that the lock was picked by a family member who had forgotten to take a key.

When you want to hide the person or thing responsible for the action, such as in a story:

- **Example:** The basement was filled with a mysterious scraping sound.
- **Rationale:** If you are writing a story, you might logically introduce a phenomenon without revealing the person or thing that caused it.

When the person or thing that performed the action is not important:

- **Example:** The park was flooded all week.
- **Rationale:** Although you would obviously know that the rainwater flooded the park, it is not important to say so.

When you do not want to place credit, responsibility, or blame:

- **Example:** A mistake was made in the investigation that resulted in the wrong person being on

trial.

- **Rationale:** Even if you think you know who is responsible for a problem, you might not want to

expose the person.

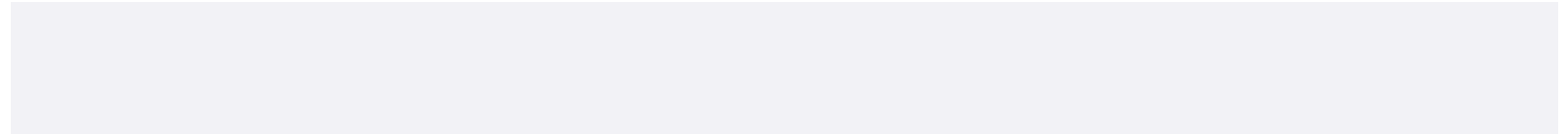
When you want to maintain the impression of [objectivity](#):

- **Example:** It was noted that only first graders chose to eat the fruit.
- **Rationale:** [Research reports](#) in certain academic disciplines attempt to remove the researcher from the results, to avoid saying, for example, “I noted that only first graders....”

When you want to avoid using a gendered construction and pluralizing is not an option.

- **Example:** If the password is forgotten by the user, a security question will be asked.
- **Rationale:** This construction avoids the need for “his or her” (as in “the user forgets **his or her** password”).

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WCS6: Using Parallelism

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize lack of parallelism.**
2. **Present paired ideas in parallel format.**
3. **Present items in a series in parallel format.**

Parallelism is the presentation of ideas of equal weight in the same grammatical fashion. It's one of those features of writing that's a matter of grammar, style, rhetoric, and content. Used well, it can enhance your readers' (and even your own) understanding and appreciation of a topic. The most famous line from John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address provides another example (a specific kind of reversal of phrasing known as antimetabole): "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." You'll encounter parallelism not only in politics but in advertising, religion, and poetry as well:

- "Strong enough for a man, but made for a woman."
- "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."
- "Some say the world will end in fire, / Some say in ice."

The following video from Khan Academy provides a detailed description of what parallel structure is:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/2l2FgUrn1A?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Parallel Structure.” Published by Khan Academy.

Here are a couple of examples of sentences in need of parallelism.

Example 1

While it was raining, I had to run into the grocery store, the dry cleaners, and stop at the bookstore.

This sentence is not parallel because it includes three equally weighted ideas but presents two of them with action verbs and one without. By simply adding words such as “swing by” to the middle item, the sentence becomes parallel:

While it was raining, I had to run into the grocery store, swing by the dry cleaners, and stop at the bookstore.

You could also correct this sentence by removing “stop at” from the third idea:

While it was raining, I had to run into the grocery store, the dry cleaners, and the book store.

Example 2

The test was long and requiring skills we hadn’t learned.

This sentence is not parallel because it presents two like-weighted ideas using two different grammatical formats. Here is a parallel version:

The test was long and required skills we hadn't learned.

Parallelism is most often an issue with paired ideas and items in a series as shown in the preceding two examples. A key idea to keep in mind is that you need to use common wording with both items, such as common articles (e.g., *the, a, an*) and common prepositions (e.g., *by, for, of, on, to*). The next two subsections provide more in-depth discussion of these two concepts.

Making Paired Items Parallel

In a sentence, paired items or ideas are often connected with either a comparative expression (e.g., *easier than, as much as, bigger than*), a coordinated conjunction (e.g., *and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*), or a correlative conjunction (e.g., *both...and, either...or, just as...so, neither...nor, not...but, not only...but also, whether...or*). Read the following examples that contain errors. Think of a way to correct each sentence. Then look below the error to see *possible corrections*. Note that you can usually correct each error in more than one way.

Example 1

Comparative Expression

Our neighbor's house is bigger than the size of our house.

Possible Corrections:

Our neighbor's house is bigger than our house.

OR

The size of our neighbor's house is bigger than the size of our house.

Example 2

Coordinated Conjunction

Louie, my crazy shih tzu loves running after Frisbees and plays with leaves.

Possible Corrections:

Louie, my crazy shih tzu, loves running after Frisbees and playing with leaves.

OR

Louie, my crazy shih tzu, loves to run after Frisbees and to play with leaves.

Example 3

Correlative Conjunction

Not only was he rude, but also ate all the shrimp balls.

Possible Correction:

Not only was he rude, but he also ate all the shrimp balls.

Here's a video by Khan Academy which explains how to use correlative conjunctions:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/R74Ly00UygU?enablejsapi=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fmytext.cnm.edu>

“Correlative Conjunctions.” Published by Khan Academy.

Making Items in a Series Parallel

Items in a series include ideas embedded in a sentence as well as those in numbered or bulleted lists. One way to check for parallelism is to say the sentence stem that precedes the first item and then, one at a time, add each subsequent series item to the stem. Assuming the stem works with the first item, subsequent items that do not work with the stem are not parallel with the first item.

Example

After I get off work, I’m driving to the gym, doing five miles, and weights.

Stem prior to the first item: After I get off work, I’m...

Stem works with the first item: After I get off work, I’m driving to the gym.

Stem works with the second item: After I get off work, I’m doing five miles.

Stem does not work with the third item: After I get off work, weights.

A version of the sentence that is parallel: After I get off work, I’m driving to the gym, running five miles, and lifting weights.

Now stem does work with the third item: After I get off work, I'm lifting weights.

Read the two **error examples** and imagine how you could correct each one. Then check below the error for *possible corrections*.

Utilizing Parallel Structure

If you take the most impressive or startling item in a series and place it last, you can draw attention to it as well as to the whole series. Look at the difference in the following two sentences:

Most impressive item last: In the accident, he received cuts on his face, a mild concussion, a cracked rib, and a ruptured spleen.

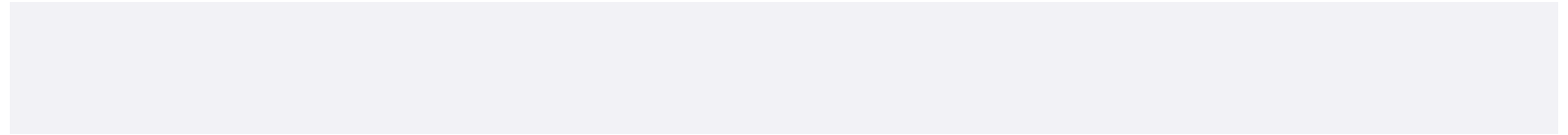
Most impressive item buried within the series: In the accident, he received cuts on his face, a ruptured spleen, a cracked rib, and a mild concussion.

Using like or paired words along with ideas you are comparing can help you emphasize the [comparison](#).

Example with like words: It's unusual to feel intense attraction and intense repulsion for the same person.

Example with paired words: You always seem to run to guitar lessons and crawl to piano lessons.

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WCS7: Avoiding Exclusive and Offensive Language

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize language that is considered sexist or exclusive.**
2. **Avoid exclusive language in your writing.**
3. **Recognize and avoid language that is offensive to any specific group of people.**

Only recently has written English started to reflect the fact that women and other under-represented groups—including transgender people or those who do not fall under the gender binary of identifying as a him or her—have the same rights afforded to majority groups. Language is evolving to match changes in equity.

It is now unacceptable to refer generically to a doctor as “him,” a teacher as “her,” or a politician as “him,” and to make the false assumption that all people identify as either a *him* or a *her*. Such usage is considered exclusive. (For a discussion of correct gender pronouns, see table [G3.2](#))

In addition to being mindful of a person’s gender pronouns, there are more ways to avoid using exclusive language. You can use more inclusive language through the following methods:

- Employing [passive voice](#) (see the example in [Section SS.2 “Using Passive Voice”](#))
- Using plural formats (see the examples in this section under [“Using Plural Format”](#))

- Eliminating pronouns
- Switching to direct address (with the use of second person)
- Using the plural pronoun of them for people who identify as [their](#)
- And choosing inclusive terms whenever possible (see table [G3.2](#) “Correct Gender Pronouns”)

Using Plural Format

By using plural nouns instead of singular nouns, you can switch from sex-specific singular pronouns to gender-neutral pronouns.

Examples

Example of sexist and exclusive language using singular pronoun: A *family member* who misses a holiday dinner will find *he* has missed more than the food.

Example of nonsexist and inclusive language using plural pronoun: *Family members* who miss holiday dinners will find [they](#) have missed more than the food.

Revising to Eliminate Pronouns

Since English includes many singular, gender-specific pronouns, another way to eliminate sexist language is to eliminate the use of pronouns.

Examples

Example of exclusive language using singular pronoun: A *family member* who misses a holiday dinner will find *he* has missed more than the food.

Example of inclusive language due to elimination of pronoun: A

family member who misses a holiday dinner misses more than the food.

Using Direct Address

Sometimes you can simply switch from third-person singular to second-person singular or plural and in the process make your tone more engaging.

Examples

Example of exclusive language using third-person pronoun: A student who forgets to bring his book to class will be assessed a ten-point penalty for his daily work.

Example of nonsexist language using second-person pronoun: If you forget to bring your book to class, you will be assessed a ten-point penalty for your daily work.

Choosing Nonsexist Terms

One of the best methods of solving the sexist or exclusive language problem is to choose nonsexist terms. With a little practice, you can learn to naturally use the currently preferred inclusive language rather than terms that are no longer acceptable. Study the following table for some examples.

Formerly Acceptable	Currently Acceptable
Businessman, Businesswoman	Businessperson, Business Executive
Chairman, Chairwoman	Chairperson, Chair, Head, Leader
Congressman, Congresswoman	Congressperson, Legislator, Member of Congress
Fireman	Firefighter
Mailman	Mail Carrier, Mail Delivery Person,

	Letter Carrier, Postal Worker
Man, Mankind	Humankind, Humans, People, <i>Homo Sapiens</i> , Humanity, The Human Race
Policeman, Policewoman	Police Officer, Officer of the Law, Trooper
Salesman	Sale Associate, Salesperson, Seller, Vendor

Avoiding Other Offensive Language

Whether language is identified as offensive depends entirely on the [audience](#). If the audience or part of the audience views the wording as offensive, then the wording is offensive. To avoid inadvertent offensive text, adhere to the following general guidelines.

- Use currently accepted terminology when referencing groups of people. If you are writing about a group of people and you are unsure of the proper terminology, [research](#) the most recent usage patterns before you write.
- Be sensitive when referencing people with disabilities by using a “people first” approach. For example, say “a person who uses a wheelchair” instead of “a wheelchair-bound person.”
- Do not use profanity or vulgar words of any kind. When in doubt, don’t use the term, or if you must use it as part of a [quotation](#), make clear that you’re quoting it.
- Avoid **stereotyping** (ascribing positive or negative attributes to people based on groups to which they belong).
- With reference to people, *they* as a singular pronoun is a pronoun option for those whose gender identification is nonbinary, meaning they identify as neither a he nor a she. *The Associated Press* updated their [style](#) guide in 2017 to reflect this grammatical evolution. (See [G4](#) on “Making Pronouns and Antecedents Match” to learn more).

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WCS8: Managing Mood

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1. **Understand imperative, indicative, and subjunctive verb moods.**
- 2. **Revise passages with inconsistent verb moods.**
- 3. **Write passages using uniform verb mood.**

The mood of a verb can be imperative, indicative, or subjunctive. Although those three words might make mood sound somewhat complicated, in reality you are likely quite familiar with the different moods. Study this table for clarification.

Verb Moods	<u>Explanations</u>	Examples
Imperative	<p>The subject is understood to be the reader and is not given in the sentence.</p> <p>Imperative sentences include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commands• Requests• Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Control your partying when you are in college.• Please keep your furniture in mind as you make choices• Limit partying to the weekends so you will be more likely to find success as a college student
Indicative (or	Indicative sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• During my first year

declarative)	<p>include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statements• <u>Facts</u>• Opinions• Questions	<p>in college, I was more focused on having fun with my friends than on studying.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About one-third of eighteen-year-old college freshmen drop out within <u>their</u> first year of college.• Although some colleges try to control your behavior with rules, you need to figure out for yourself how to successfully balance your class work and your personal life.• Do you think it helps to have midnight curfews for students who live in dormitories?•
Subjunctive	<p>Present-tense verbs remain in the base form rather than changing to match the number or person of the subject. Past-tense verbs are the same as simple past</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [<u>present tense</u>] It is important that I be [NOT am] focused on doing homework before partying.• [present tense] I suggest a student

	<p>tense.</p> <p>Exception: The verb “to be” uses “were” in all situations.</p> <p>Subjunctive sentences include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wishes• Recommendations• Doubts• Contrary-to statements	<p>work [NOT student works] on assignments every Friday afternoon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [past tense] If I were [NOT was] him, I’d have stayed at the library with my laptop for a few hours. <p>[past tense] If I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn’t have believed it.</p>
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Problems with mood occur when the mood shifts within a sentence, as shown in the following table. In the table, the revisions were all made to match the mood that the sentence initially used. You could also choose to make different revisions that are equally acceptable.

Verb Moods	Problem Shifts	Revisions
Started with imperative and switched to subjunctive	Control your schedule, and I’d choose the number of hours I need for homework before talking to anyone about weekend plans.	Control your schedule and choose the number of hours you need for homework before talking to anyone about weekend plans.
Started with indicative and switched to imperative	People don’t think for themselves and stop being so wishy-washy.	Think for yourself and stop being so wishy-washy.
Started with subjunctive	It matters that you be in	It matters that you be in

and switched to imperative	charge of your success and you should stop blaming others.	charge of your success and stop blaming others.
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The sentence [style](#) sections are all adapted from “Chapter Sixteen” of Writers’ Handbook, 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 cc-by-nc-sa

Writing for Nonnative English Speakers

1.1 Parts of Speech

1.2 English Word Order

1.3 Count and Noncount Nouns

1.4 Articles

1.5 Singulars and Plurals

1.6 Verb Tenses

1.7 Correct Verbs

1.8 Modal Auxiliary Verbs

1.9 Gerunds and Infinitives

1.10 Forming Participles

1.1 Parts of Speech

Multilingual Writers

If you learned English as a second language and you regularly speak a language other than English, this appendix is for you. It also provides a refresher course on many of the elements in [Chapter 15 “Sentence Building”](#), [Chapter 16 “Sentence Style”](#), [Chapter 17 “Word Choice”](#), [Chapter 18 “Punctuation”](#), [Chapter 19 “Mechanics”](#), and [Chapter 20 “Grammar”](#).

Parts of Speech

In English, words are used in one of eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and interjection. This table includes an explanation and examples of each of the eight parts of speech.

Noun	Person, place, or thing	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	Iowa	book	arm
			horse	idea	month
Pronoun	Takes the place of a noun	Wow! After the game, silly Mary	he	it	I
			her	my	theirs

		ate her apples and carrots quickly.			
Adjective	Describes a noun or pronoun	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	sticky	funny	crazy
			long	cold	round
Verb	Shows action or state of being	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	run	jump	felt
			think	is	gone
Adverb	Describes a verb, another adverb, or an adjective and tells	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and	slowly	easily	very
			often	heavily	sharply

	how, where, or when something is done	carrots quickly.			
Conjunction	Joins words, phrases, and clauses	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	and	because	but
			since	or	so
Preposition	First word in a phrase that indicates the relationship of the phrase to other words in the sentence	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	in	on	to
			after	at	over
Interjection	A word that shows	Wow! After the game,	Hey	Wow	Look
			Super	Oh	Yuck

	emotion and is not related to the rest of the sentence	silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.			
--	---	---	--	--	--

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1.2 English Word Order

The simplest level of English word order within a sentence is that subjects come first followed by verbs and then direct objects.

HIERARCHICAL ORDER OF ADJECTIVES

Start with a determiner (The), then follow with opinion (pretty), physical descriptions like size (small), shape (round), age (young), color (green), then noun (cactus). Use commas to separate.

The

pretty,


small,

round,

young,

green,

cactus



NNS 1.2.1 Hierarchical Order of Adjectives

When you have more complicated sentences, use the following general order.

much (noncount nouns)	more	most
many (count nouns)	more	most
little (size)	littler	littlest
little (number)	less	least
old (people and things)	older	oldest
old (family members)	elder	eldest

When an English sentence includes more than one adjective modifying a given

noun, the adjectives have a hierarchy you should follow. The adjectives that modify the noun show that hierarchical order. You should, however, keep a string of adjectives to two or three. The example includes a longer string of adjectives simply to clarify the word order.

Some languages, such as Spanish, insert “no” before a verb to create a negative sentence. In English, the negative is often indicated by placing “not” after the verb or in a contraction with the verb.

Example

I can’t make it before 1:00 p.m.

Incorrect example: I no can make it before 1:00 p.m.

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1.3 Count and Noncount Nouns

Nouns that name separate things or people that you can count are called count nouns. Nouns that name things that cannot be counted unless additional words are added are called noncount nouns. You need to understand count and noncount nouns in order to use the nouns correctly with articles, in singular and plural formations, and in other situations. Some nouns can serve as either count or noncount nouns.

Examples of Count Nouns

- box(es)
- dog(s)
- house(s)
- leaf (leaves)
- moon(s)
- peach(es)
- sheep
- women

Examples of Noncount Nouns

- advice
- cheese
- equipment
- furniture
- information
- Internet
- mail
- weather

Examples of Nouns That Can Be Either Count or Noncount Nouns

- baseball (play baseball vs. throw a baseball)
- love (He is my love! vs. two loves: poetry and basketball)
- marble (play with a marble vs. a floor made of marble)

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1.4 Articles

In English, nouns are identified or quantified by determiners. Articles, such as *a*, *an*, and *the*, are one type of determiner. Use the following guidelines to alleviate confusion regarding whether to use an article or which article to use.

- Use *a* and *an* with nonspecific or indefinite singular count nouns and some proper nouns where you do not have enough information to be more specific. Use *a* before nouns beginning with a consonant sound and *an* before nouns beginning with a vowel sound.

Example 1

I have *a dog* at home, also. (The word “dog” is a nonspecific noun since it doesn’t refer to any certain dog.)

Example 2

(before a vowel): Carrie gave everyone *an apple* at lunch.

Example 3

(before a consonant; with proper noun): He was wearing *a Texas* shirt.

- Use *every* and *each* with singular count nouns and some proper nouns.

Example 1

I heard every noise all night long.

Example 2

I tried each Jell-O flavor and liked them all.

- Use *this* and *that* with singular count and noncount nouns.
-

Example 1

(with count noun): I am going to eat *that apple*.

Example 2

(with noncount noun): I am not too excited about *this weather*.

- Use *any*, *enough*, and *some* with nonspecific or indefinite plural nouns (count or noncount).
-

Example 1

I didn't have *any donuts* at the meeting because he ate them all.

Example 2

Do you have *enough donuts* for everyone?

Example 3

He ate *some donuts* at the meeting.

- Use *(a) little* and *much* with noncount nouns.
-

Example 1

I'd like *a little meatloaf*, please.

Example 2

There's not *much spaghetti* left.

- Use *the* with noncount nouns and singular and plural count nouns.
-

Example 1

(with noncount noun): *The weather is beautiful today.*

Example 2

(with singular count noun): Who opened *the door*?

Example 3

(with plural count noun): All *the houses* had brick fronts.

- Use *both*, *(a) few*, *many*, *several*, *these*, and *those* with plural count nouns.
-

Example 1

I have *a few books* you might like to borrow.

Example 2

Daryl and Louise have been traveling for *several days*.

Example 3

Are those shoes yours?

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1.5 Singulars and Plurals

English count nouns have singular and plural forms. Typically, these nouns are formed by adding *–s* or *–es*. Words that end in *–ch*, *–sh*, or *–s* usually require the addition of *–es* to form the plural. Atypical plurals are formed in various ways, such as those shown in the following table.

Singular Nouns	Plural Nouns
dog	dogs (<i>–s</i> added)
table	tables (<i>–s</i> added)
peach	peaches (<i>–es</i> added)
wish	wishes (<i>–es</i> added)
kiss	kisses (<i>–es</i> added)
man	men (atypical)
sheep	sheep (atypical)
tooth	teeth (atypical)
child	children (atypical)

alumnus	alumni (atypical)
leaf	leaves (atypical)

Proper nouns are typically either singular or plural. Plural proper nouns usually have no singular form, and singular proper nouns usually have no plural form.

Singular Proper Nouns	Plural Proper Nouns
Kentucky	Sawtooth Mountains
Alex	The Everglades

Noncount nouns typically have only one form that is basically a singular form. To quantify them, you can add a preceding phrase.

Noncount Nouns	Sentences with Noncount Nouns and Quantifying Phrases
gas	We put twelve gallons of gas in the car this morning.
anguish	After years of anguish, he finally found happiness.

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1.6 Verb Tenses

You can practice conjugating many English verbs to increase your awareness of verb tenses. Use this format for the basic conjugation:

- I laugh at Millie.
- You laugh at Millie.
- He/She/It laughs at Millie.
- We laugh at Millie.
- You laugh at Millie.
- They laugh at Millie.

You can also practice completing these five forms of English. A mixture of tenses is used to show that you can practice the different forms with any tense.

Affirmative Usage

- I play ball.
- You play ball.
- She plays ball.
- We play ball.
- You play ball.
- They play ball

Negative Usage

- I do not play ball.
- You do not play ball.
- She does not play ball.
- We do not play ball.
- You do not play ball.

- They do not play ball.

Yes/No Questions

- Do you play ball?
- Does she play ball?
- Do we play ball?
- Do they play ball?

Short Answers

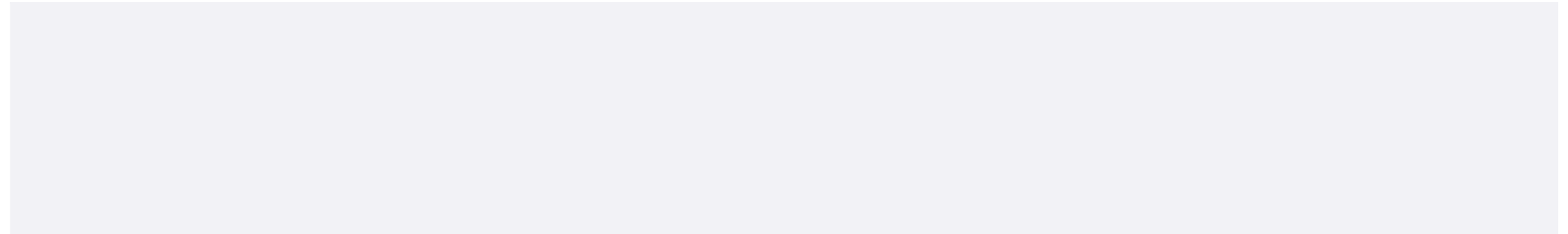
- Yes, I do.
- Yes, she does.
- No, they do not.
- No, you do not.

Wh- Questions

- Who is she?
- Where did you find it?
- When are you coming?
- Why won't it work?
- What are you going to do?

See [Chapter 15 “Sentence Building”](#), [Section 15.2 “Choosing Appropriate Verb Tenses”](#) for an in-depth overview of verb tenses.

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1.7 Correct Verbs

People who are new to English often experience confusion about which verb forms can serve as the verb in a sentence. An English sentence must include at least one verb or verb phrase and a tense that relays the time during which the action is taking place. Verbals (such as gerunds and infinitives) should not be confused with verbs.

- A sentence with a gerund must also have another verb.

Example

Correct example: Roger enjoys driving the RV.

Incorrect example: Roger driving the RV.

- A sentence with an infinitive must have another verb.

Example

Correct example: Kyle decided to write a long message.

Incorrect example: Kyle to write a long message.

- Verbs must match the timing indicated by the other words in a sentence.

Example

Past tense correct example: Yesterday, I called you at 5:00 p.m.

Past tense incorrect example: Yesterday, I call you at 5:00 p.m.

Future tense correct example: The next time it rains, I will bring my umbrella.

Future tense incorrect example: The next time it rains, I bring my umbrella.

Present tense correct example: Come in and get warm.

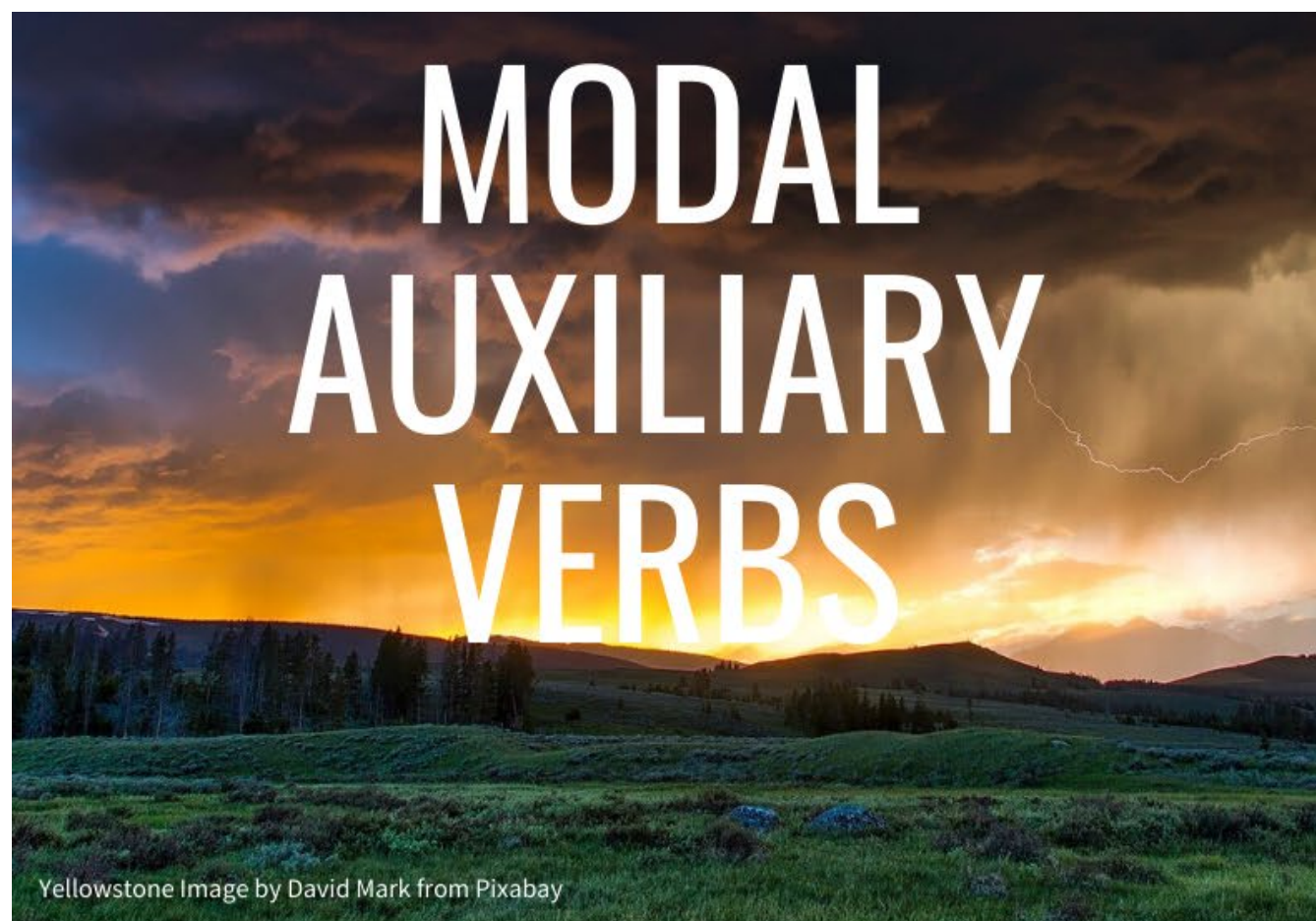
Present tense incorrect example: Come in and got warm.

See [Chapter 15 “Sentence Building”](#), [Section 15.2 “Choosing Appropriate Verb Tenses”](#) for a more extensive overview of verb tenses.

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1.8 Modal Auxiliary Verbs

The English language includes nine main modal auxiliary verbs that are used with other verbs. These modals, shown in the wheel in four pairs and a single, can refer to past, present, or future tense based on the verbs that are used with them. The modals themselves do not change form to change tense. As shown in the following table, you can use modals to express an [attitude](#) in regard to the action or general situation of the sentence.



Advisability

Format for future or past tense

- *should* or *ought to* + base verb
- You *should* take the time to visit Yellowstone.

Deduction

Format for future or past tense

- *must*, *has to* + base verb
- Hank *must know* where to camp at Yellowstone.

Yellowstone.

Format for past tense

- *should* or *ought to* + *have* + past participle
- You *ought to have taken* the time to visit Yellowstone.

Yellowstone.

Format for past tense

- *must* + *have* + *past participle*
- Lucy *must have set up* the campsite before dusk.

Capability

Format for future or past tense

- *can*, *am able to*, *is able to*, or *are able to* + base verb
- Aisha *can tell* you about Yellowstone.

Format for past tense

- *could*, *was able to*, *were able to*, + base verb or past participle
- Saul *was able to walk* to Old Faithful.

Expectation

Format for future or past tense

- *should* + base verb
- The sun *should set* about 7:15 today.

Format for past tense

- *will* or *shall* + base verb
- The kids *should have finished* their hike by now.

Intention

Format for future or past tense

- *will* or *shall* + base verb
- I *will meet* you at the trailhead.

Format for past tense

- *would* + base verb
- I said I *would finish* the scavenger hunt today.

Necessity

Format for future or past tense

- *must* or *have to* + base verb
- I *must finish* setting up the tent before it rains.

Format for past tense

- *had to* + base verb
- Greg *had to get* gas before we started the trip.

Permission request

Format for future or past tense

- *can*, *could*, *may*, or *might* + base verb (in question format)
- *Could* I go with you?

Format for past tense

- *might* or *could* + base verb
- My parents said I *could use* their car for the trip.

Possibility/Uncertainty

Format for future or past tense

- *may*, or *might* + base verb
- Alice *might be* at the lodge by 11:00 a.m.

Format for past tense

- *might* + *have* + past participle
- I don't remember, but I *might have been* on the same trail where a wolf was spotted.

Modal Auxiliary Verbs

MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS CONT'D

Yellowstone National Park Image by David
Mark from Pixabay

Forbiddance

Format for future or past tense

- *must + not + base verb*
- You must not take his food.

Format for future or past tense

- N/A

Past Habit

Format for future or past tense

- N/A

Format for past tense

- *would or used to + base verb*
- When I worked there, I *used to* eat at Marvy's every day.

Polite Request

Format for future or past tense

- *could or would + base verb* (in question format)

Speculation

Format for future or past tense

- *could, might, or would + base verb*
- If we pack more food, we can stay

- *Would* you please *hand* me that hiking stick?

Format for past tense

- N/A

another night.

Format for past tense

- *could, might, or would* + *have* + past participle
- There *could have been* a bear walking through the campsite last night.

Modal Auxiliary Verbs

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1.9 Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds are nouns formed by adding *–ing* to a verb, such as *running*. Infinitives are nouns formed from the “to” form of a verb, such as *to run*. These two noun forms are called verbals, because [they](#) are formed from verbs. Experience with English will teach you which form to use in which situation. In the meantime, the following lists provide a brief overview.

Verbs That Should Be Followed Only by Gerunds and Not by Infinitives

These Verbs Could Fill This Blank: _____ (His) Walking

- admit
- avoid
- complete
- consider
- delay
- deny
- dislike
- finish
- imagine
- miss
- postpone
- quit
- recommend
- resist
- stop
- suggest

- understand

Verbs That Should Be Followed Only by Infinitives and *Not* by Gerunds

These Verbs Could Fill This Blank: _____ to Walk

- agree
- appear
- ask
- beg
- claim
- decide
- demand
- desire
- fail
- happen
- hesitate
- intend
- manage
- offer
- plan
- pretend
- struggle

Verbs That Can Be Followed by Either Gerunds or Infinitives

These Verbs Could Fill Either of These Blanks: _____ (His) Walking or _____ to Walk

- begin

can('t) afford

- **can('t) bear**
- **cease**
- **commence**
- **continue**
- **dread**
- **hate**
- **intend**
- **like**
- **loathe**
- **love**
- **neglect**
- **prefer**
- **start**
- **try**
- **undertake**

See [Chapter 20 “Grammar”](#), [Section 20.1.7 “Deciding If Relative Pronouns Take a Singular or Plural Verb”](#) for more information regarding gerunds and infinitives.

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1.10 Forming Participles

Participles are verb forms that combine with auxiliary verbs to create different tenses.

- To form perfect tenses, use *had*, *has*, or *have* with the past participle.
- Example: My dog has eaten twice today.
- To form progressive tenses, use a form of the verb *to be* with the present participle, or gerund.
- Example: My dog is eating a treat.
- To write in [passive voice](#), use a form of the verb *to be* with the past participle.
- Example: The treat was eaten by my dog.

See [Chapter 15 “Sentence Building”](#), [Section 15.2 “Choosing Appropriate Verb Tenses”](#) for a more [extensive](#) overview of the relationships between participles and verb tenses, and see [Chapter 16 “Sentence Style”](#), [Section 16.3 “Using Subordination and Coordination”](#) for more on [passive voice](#) constructions.

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1.11 Adverbs and Adjectives

Adverbs

Adverbs often end in *-ly* and modify verbs, other adverbs, and adjectives. As a rule, you should place an adverb next to or close to the word it modifies, although adverbs can be placed in different positions within a sentence without affecting its meaning.

Example

- Before the verb: “He slowly walked to the store.”
- After the verb: “He walked slowly to the store.”
- At the beginning of the sentence: “Slowly, he walked to the store.”
- At the end of the sentence: “He walked to the store slowly.”
- Between an auxiliary and main verb: “He was slowly walking to the store.”

Some adverbs, however, have a different meaning based on where they are placed. You should check to make sure that your placement carries the intended meaning.

Example

- “She only loved him.”
- Translation: “The only emotion she felt toward him was love.”
- “Only she loved him.”
- Translation: “The only person who loved him was her.”
- “She loved only him.” or “She loved him only.”
- Translation: “The only person she loved was him.”
- Some adverbs simply do not work between the verb and the direct object in

a sentence.

Example

Acceptable adverb placement: She barely heard the noise.

Unacceptable adverb placement: She heard barely the noise.

Adjectives

Adjectives modify nouns and in some more heavily inflected languages, the endings of adjectives change to agree with the number and gender of the noun. In English, adjectives do not change in this way. For example, within the following sentences, note how the spelling of the adjective “eager” remains the same, regardless of the number or the gender of the noun it modifies.

- The eager boy jumped the starting gun.
- The eager boys lined up.
- The eager girls eyed the starter.

As in these sentences, adjectives usually are placed before a noun. The noun can be the subject, as in the preceding example, or a direct object, as in the following sentence.

- Harold admired his shiny red car.

Adjectives can also be placed after a linking verb. The adjective still modifies a noun but is not placed next to the noun, as in the following example.

- The weather was miserable.

When two or more adjectives are used to modify a single noun, they should be used in a set order, as shown in [The Royal Order of Adjectives](#). Even though the table shows several levels within the hierarchy, you should limit your adjectives

per noun to two or three.

The Royal Order of Adjectives

Determiner	Observation	Physical Description				Origin	Material	Qualifier	Noun
		Size	Shape	Age	Color				
a	beautiful			old		Italian		touring	car
an	expensive			antique			silver		mirror
four	gorgeous		stemmed		red		silk		roses
her			short		black				hair
our		big		old		English			sheepdog
those			square				wooden	hat	boxes
that	dilapidated	little						hunting	cabin
several		giant		young		American		basketball	players
some	delicious					Chinese			food

Adapted from Adjectives. (n.d.) Capital Community College Foundation. Retrieved from grammar.ccc.commnet.edu

Determiner	Opinion or Assessment	Physical Description				Nationality	Religion
		Size	Shape	Age	Color		
The	pretty	small	thin	young	white	French	Methu

When using an adverb and adjective together with a noun, you should typically place the adverb first, followed by the adjective, and then the noun.

- the strikingly golden tree

You can also check out this video on Adjective Order from Khan Academy:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/grammar/parts-of-speech-the-modifier/adjective-order-and-commas-with-adjectives/v/adjective-order>

For more information about adverbs and adjectives, see [Chapter 20](#)

“Grammar”, Section 20.6 “Using Adverbs and Adjectives”.

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“Using Adverbs and Adjectives” from [Writer’s Handbook](#), 2012, used according to Creative Commons CC [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

1.12 Irregular Adjectives

Irregular Adjectives

In English, adjectives have comparative and superlative forms that are used to more exactly describe nouns.

Example

Joey is tall, Pete is taller than Joey, and Malik is the tallest of the three boys.

One common way to form the comparative and superlative forms is to add *-er* and *-est*, respectively, as shown in the preceding example. A second common method is to use the words *more* and *most* or *less* and *least*, as shown in the following example.

Example

Lucy is eager to start, Callie is more eager, and Shannon is the most eager.

Some adjectives do not follow these two common methods of forming comparatives and superlatives. You will simply have to learn these irregular adjectives by heart. Some of them are listed [Table 21.2 “Sample Adjectives That Form Superlatives Using Irregular Patterns”](#). Notice that some are irregular when used with a certain meaning and not when used with a different meaning. See [Chapter 20 “Grammar”, Section 20.6.3 “Using Comparatives and Superlatives”](#) for more examples of irregular adjectives.

Table 21.2 Sample Adjectives That Form Superlatives Using Irregular Patterns

--	--	--

much (noncount nouns)	more	most
many (count nouns)	more	most
little (size)	littler	littlest
little (number)	less	least
old (people and things)	older	oldest
old (family members)	elder	eldest

Some adjectives' comparatives and superlatives can be formed with either -er and -est or with more and most (or less and least). In these cases, choose the version that works best within a given sentence. Table 21.3 Sample Adjectives That Can Form Superlatives Using -er and -est or More and Most

clever	cleverer	cleverest
clever	more clever	most clever
gentle	gentler	gentlest
gentle	more gentle	most gentle
friendly	friendlier	friendliest
friendly	more friendly	most friendly

quiet	quieter	quietest
quiet	more quiet	most quiet
simple	simpler	simplest
simple	more simple	most simple

Some adjectives do not have comparative and superlative forms since the simplest form expresses the only possible form.

Sample Adjectives That Do Not Have Comparative and Superlative Forms

- blind
- dead
- fatal
- final
- left
- right
- unique
- universal
- vertical
- wrong

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1.13 Indefinite Adjectives

Indefinite adjectives give nonspecific information about a noun. For example, the indefinite article *few* indicates some, but not an exact amount. Indefinite adjectives are easily confused with indefinite pronouns since [they](#) are the same words used differently. An indefinite pronoun replaces a noun. An indefinite adjective precedes a noun or pronoun and modifies it. It is important for you to understand the difference between indefinite adjectives and pronouns to assure you are saying what you mean. Some common indefinite adjectives include *all*, *any*, *anything*, *each*, *every*, *few*, *many*, *one*, *several*, *some*, *somebody*, and *someone*.

Example

Indefinite adjective: We are having *some* cake for dessert.

Indefinite pronoun: I like cake. I'll have *some*, please.

Indefinite adjective: You can find a state name on *each* quarter.

Indefinite pronoun: I have four Illinois quarters, and *each* is brand new.

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1.14 Predicate Adjectives

Since linking verbs express a state of being instead of an action, adjectives are used after them instead of adverbs. An adjective that follows a linking verb is referred to as a *predicate adjective*. Be careful not to use an adverb simply because of the proximity to the verb.

Example

Correct (adjective follows linking verb): Kelly is selfish.

Incorrect (adverb follows linking verb): Kelly is selfishly.

Correct (adjective follows linking verb): Beth seems eager.

Incorrect (adverb follows linking verb): Beth seems eagerly.

Linking Verbs That Can Be Followed by Adjectives

- appear
- be
- become
- feel
- get
- grow
- keep
- look
- prove
- remain
- seem
- smell

- sound
- stay
- taste
- turn

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1.15 Clauses and Phrases

Clauses include both subjects and verbs that work together as a single unit. When they form stand-alone sentences, they're called independent clauses. An independent clause can stand alone or can be used with other clauses and phrases. A dependent clause also includes both a subject and a verb, but it must combine with an independent clause to form a complete sentence.

Types of Dependent Clauses	Descriptions	Examples
Adverb clause	Serves as an adverb; tells when, how, why, where, under what condition, to what degree, how often, or how much	To avoid sunburn, she plastered her body with sunscreen.
		She thought that she would win the race.
Noun clause	Serves as a noun when attached to a verb	That she would win the race seemed quite likely.
		The day that he lost his watch was an unlucky day.*
Adjective clause (also called a relative clause)	Begins with a relative pronoun (<i>that, who, whom, whose, which</i>) or a relative adverb (<i>when, where, why</i>); functions as an adjective; attaches	The house where they lived is gone.

	to a noun; has both a subject and a verb; tells what kind, how many, or which one	
Appositive clause	Functions as an appositive by restating a noun or noun-related verb in clause form; begins with <i>that</i> ; typical nouns involved include possibilities such as assumption, belief, conviction, idea, knowledge, and theory	The idea that Josie will someday be taller than me is crazy.
*In some instances, the relative pronoun or adverb can be implied (e.g., “The day he lost his watch was an unlucky day”).		

Phrases are groups of words that work together as a single unit but do not have a subject or a verb. English includes five basic kinds of phrases.

Types of Phrases	Descriptions	Examples
Noun phrase	Multiple words serving as a noun	Darcy ate a ham sandwich.
Verb phrase	Used as the verb in sentences that are in the progressive and perfect tenses	The class should have started a half-hour earlier.

Prepositional phrase	Begins with a preposition (covered in more depth in Section 21.9 “Gerunds and Infinitives”)	Work will be easier after the holiday rush.
Adjective phrase	Functions as an adjective; might include prepositional phrases and/or nouns	My brother is very tall and handsome.
Adverb phrase	Functions as an adverb; might include prepositional phrases and/or multiple adverbs	Let’s go walking after dinner.
		Ignacia walked wearily and unsteadily.

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1.16 Relative Pronouns and Clauses

An adjective clause gives information about a preceding noun in a sentence. Look at the following examples.

The car that Richie was driving was yellow.

Des Moines, where I live, is in Iowa.

Mr. Creeter, whose brother I know, is the new math teacher.

Like many other adjective clauses, these begin with a relative adjective (*which, who, whom, whose, that*) or a relative adverb (*when* or *where*). When you use a relative clause to describe a noun, make sure to begin it with one of the seven relative adjectives and adverbs listed in the previous sentence.

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1.17 Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

Prepositions are words that show the relationships between two or more other words. Choosing correct prepositions can be challenging, but the following examples will help clarify how to use some of the most common prepositions.

Types of Prepositions	Examples of Prepositions	How to Use	Prepositions Used in Sentences
Time	at	Use with hours of the day and these words that indicate time of day: <i>dawn</i> , <i>midnight</i> , <i>night</i> , and <i>noon</i>	We will eat <i>at 11:30</i> .
			We will eat <i>at noon</i> .
	by	Use with time words to indicate a particular time	I'll be there <i>by 5:00</i> .
			I'll be finished <i>by October</i> .
	in	Use with <i>the</i> and these time-of-day words: <i>afternoon</i> , <i>evening</i> , and <i>morning</i>	We'll start <i>in the morning</i> .

		Use on its own with months, seasons, and years	The rainy season starts <i>in June</i> .
	on	Use with days of the week	I'll see you <i>on Friday</i> .
Location	at	Use to indicate a particular place	I'll stop <i>at the dry cleaners</i> .
	in	Use when indicating that an item or person is within given boundaries	My ticket is <i>in my pocket</i> .
	by	Use to mean "near a particular place"	My desk is <i>by the back door</i> .
	on	Use when indicating a surface or <u>site</u> on which something rests or is located	Place it <i>on the table</i> , please.
			My office is <i>on Lincoln Boulevard</i> .
Logical relationships	of	Use to indicate part of a whole	I ate half <i>of the sandwich</i> .
		Use to indicate	I brought a bag <i>of</i>

		contents or makeup	<i>chips.</i>
	for	Use to show <u>purpose</u>	Jake uses his apron <i>for grilling</i> .
State of being	in	Use to indicate a state of being	I am afraid that I'm <i>in trouble</i> .

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1.18 Omitted Words

Some languages, especially those that make greater use of inflection, do not include all the sentence parts that English includes. Take special care to include those English parts that you might not be used to including in your native language. The following table shows some of these words that are needed in English but not in other languages.

Sentence Parts	Language Issues
Articles	Neither Chinese nor Arabic includes articles, such as <i>a</i> and <i>an</i> , so people with Chinese or Arabic as a first language have to take great care to learn to use articles correctly.
Verbs	Many languages have verb tense setups that vary from English, so most new English learners have to be very careful to include auxiliary verbs properly. For example, Arabic does not include the verb “to be,” so native speakers of Arabic who learn English have to take special care to learn the usage of “to be.” An Arabic speaker might say, “The girl happy,” instead of, “The girl is happy.”
Subjects	Spanish and Japanese do not include a subject in every sentence, but every

	English sentence requires a subject (except in commands where the subject <i>you</i> is understood: “Go get the box”).
Expletives	Inverted English sentences can cause problems for many new English speakers. For example, you could say, “An apple is in the refrigerator.” But in typical English, you would more likely say, “There is an apple in the refrigerator.” This version is an inverted sentence, and “there” is an expletive. Many new English learners might invert the sentence without adding the expletive and say, “Is an apple in the refrigerator.”
Plurals	Neither Chinese nor Thai includes plurals, but English does. So many new English learners have to take great care to differentiate between singular and plural forms and to use them at the appropriate times.
Subject pronouns	In Spanish, the subject pronoun is often not used, so Spanish speakers learning English will often omit the subject pronoun, saying, “Am hungry,” instead of, “I am hungry.”

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1.19 Not and Other Negative Words



Figure 1.19 Negative Words

To form a negative in English, you have to add a negative word to the sentence. Some of the negative words in English are shown in the blue arrow. Typically, you should place the negative word before the main verb.

I was *barely* awake when I heard you come home.

Kurt is *not* going with us.

In casual English, it is common to form contractions, or shortened combined words, with the auxiliary or linking verb and the word *not*. Contractions are typically not acceptable in very formal writing but are becoming more and more common in certain academic and public contexts.

I haven't heard that before.

Jill isn't my cousin.

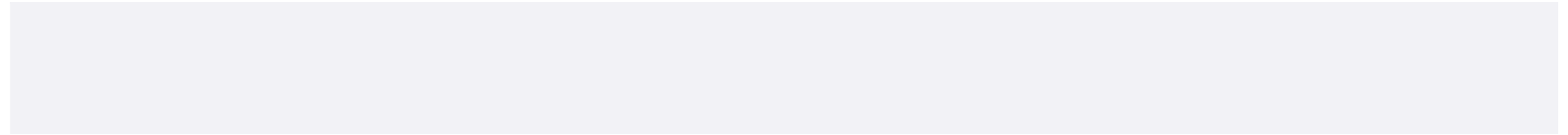
Using two negative words in the same sentence changes the meaning of the negative words to positive, thus supporting the common saying "Two negatives make a positive." Think of it as being similar to multiplying two negative numbers and getting a positive number. Double negatives are often used in extremely casual talk but never in professional or academic settings.

Example

Correct: I didn't hear anything.

Incorrect: I didn't hear nothing. (The two negatives change to a positive, so the sentence technically means "I heard something.")

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1.20 Idioms

Idioms are informal, colorful language. Although their intent is to add interest to the English language, they also add a lot of confusion since their intended meanings are not aligned with their literal meanings. In time, you will learn the idioms that your acquaintances use. Until then, reading lists of idioms, such as the following, might prove helpful. Just remember that when a person says something that seems to make no sense at all, an idiom might be involved. Also, keep in mind that this list is just a very small sampling of the thousands of idiomatic expressions that occur in English, as happens with any language.

Idiom	Intended Meaning
A little bird told me.	I know some information, and I'd rather not say where I heard it.
Don't count your chickens before they hatch.	Don't decide before you have all the <u>facts</u> .
Don't jump out of your skin.	Don't get overly excited.
Go fly a kite.	What you are saying doesn't make sense.
Hank's got some major-league problems.	Hank has some serious problems.
Nothing ventured, nothing gained.	You can't succeed if you don't try.

People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.	You should not criticize others for faults that you also have, or since you aren't perfect, you should not criticize others.
<u>They</u> are joined at the hip.	They are always together and/or think alike.
We've got it made in the shade.	Everything is working out just right.
What does John Q. Public say?	What does the average person think?
You're crazy.	Your words do not make sense.

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1.21 Spelling Tips

Spelling is a vital part of your written English skills. Your spelling needs to include both an understanding of general spelling rules and a mastery of common words that you will use often. You can visit [Chapter 19 “Mechanics”](#), [Section 19.1 “Mastering Commonly Misspelled Words”](#) for an overview of general English spelling rules. The following are some of the most common words you will need to spell listed in categories.

Days and Months		Time	Directions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January February March April May June July August September October November December 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> second minute hour day week month year decade century millennium moment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> left right straight east west north south far near next to up down

Grocery Lists		General Shopping Lists	Family Words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bath soap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> aunt

asparagus <ul style="list-style-type: none">bananasbeansbreadbuttercabbagecarrotscelerycheesechickencucumber	ham <ul style="list-style-type: none">hamburgerfishlamblettucemilkpork chopsroastsodatortillas	deodorant <ul style="list-style-type: none">dish soapflossshampootoilet bowl cleanertoothpastewindow cleaner	brother <ul style="list-style-type: none">father/dadgrandfathergrandmotherhusbandmother/momsisterunclewife
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Services	Words for Packing to Move	Math Words	Measurement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">barberdentistdoctorhair dresserlawyernursepharmacistteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">bathroombedroomdining roomfamily roomgaragekitchenlaundry roomliving room	<ul style="list-style-type: none">addsubtractmultiplydividemorelesssumdifferenceequalsplustotal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">inch (in.)foot (ft.)yard (yd.)mile (mi.)millimeter (mm)centimeter (cm)kilometer (km)cupquart (qu.)gallon (gal.)teaspoon (tsp.)tablespoon (tb.)

Holidays	Common Names	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Year’s Day • Martin Luther King Jr. Day • Valentine’s Day • St. Patrick’s Day • Mother’s Day • Memorial Day • Flag Day • Father’s Day • Fourth of July • Labor Day • Halloween • Columbus Day • Thanksgiving • Christmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barbara • Elizabeth • Jennifer • Linda • Maria • Mary • Patricia • Susan • Adam • David • James • John • Michael • Richard • Robert • William 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anderson • Brown • Davis • Garcia • Harris • Jackson • Johnson • Jones • Martin • Miller • Moore • Smith • Taylor • Thomas • White • Wilson

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1.22 American Writing Styles, Argument, and Structure

Your original language has its own [structures](#), formats, and cultural assumptions that are likely natural to you but perhaps different from those of English. The following broad guidelines underlie basic [academic writing](#).

- Citing sources: In US academic situations, it is customary to cite sources of ideas and outside texts using a [style](#) of [citation](#) like MLA or APA (see the sections in the English 1110 and 1120 OER on [MLA](#) and [APA](#) for more details). Not citing using a specific academic style can be interpreted as plagiarism and can result in serious ramifications, including failing grades, damaged reputations, school expulsions, and job loss.
- Introducing the topic early: Academic papers typically present the topic early in a paper.
- Staying on topic: Although some languages view diversions from the topic as adding interest and depth, academic writing is often focused and on topic.
- Writing concisely: Some genres of writing hold eloquent, flowing language in high esteem. Consequently, the style and [diction](#) in those genres may be long and elaborate. [Academic writing](#), on the other hand, prefers concise, to-the-point wording.
- Constructing arguments: US academic writing often involves [argument](#) building. To this end, writers use [transitions](#) to link ideas, [evidence](#) to support [claims](#), and relatively formal writing to ensure clarity.

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