ADVANCED ENGLISH GRAMMAR

The Superior English Grammar Guide Packed With Easy to Understand Examples, Practice Exercises and Brain Challenges

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CHAPTER 1
THE PARTS OF SPEECH

The parts of speech are the categories into which each word in the language fits. In a sentence, each part of speech plays a different purpose, and certain words, depending on their use in a specific sentence, may be more than one part of speech. These parts of speech are the language's building blocks. When individuals refer to the parts of speech, they mean these eight categories that can be placed in all words.

Here are the eight parts of speech:

- Noun
- Pronoun
- Verb
- Adjective (and Articles)
- Adverb
- Preposition
- Conjunction
- Interjection

NOUNS

A noun is a person, place, thing, idea, or emotion. Here are some nouns: sun, girl, dog, happiness, California, book, doctor, rain, religion, family, Susie, seashore.

- **People:** Susie, girl, doctor, family.
- **Places:** California, seashore.
- **Things:** book, dog, sun, rain.
- **Ideas or emotions:** happiness, religion.

You can check to see if something is a noun: Usually, you can put the words a, an, the, or my before nouns.

Examples: the sun, a dog, a girl, a religion, my happiness.

This doesn't work as well with words that start with capital letters, such as California or Suzie. However, most words that start with

capital letters are nouns anyway.

Remember that you don't have to be able to see it for it to be a noun. You can't see ideas or emotions, but they are still things.

EXERCISE 1

RECOGNIZING NOUNS

Identify all the nouns in the following sentences:

1. Peter gave his cake to his younger brother.
2. Do you know where this idea came from in the first place?
3. I still collect stamps, but I have a new hobby: making scrapbooks of photos I have taken.
4. The department has had five meetings in the past month.
5. He was sad until he learned he had won the award; then he was filled with happiness.

The words above are all people, places, things, ideas, or emotions.

THE FIVE TYPES OF NOUNS

There are five categories of nouns:

- **Common nouns**: Are regular nouns that do not start with capital letters, such as happiness, boy, desk, and city.
- **Proper nouns**: Are the nouns that start with capital letters. They are specific people, places, things, or ideas such as Florida, Buddhism, Joe, and Thanksgiving.
- **Concrete nouns:** Are nouns that represent things you can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel. Most nouns are concrete. Concrete nouns are either common or proper too. Concrete nouns include grass, paper, perfume (you can smell it), air (you can feel it), Susie, and Golden Gate Bridge.
- **Abstract nouns**: are the nouns that represent ideas or emotions; you cannot perceive them with your senses. Religion, happiness, anger, and Buddhism fall into this category.
- **Collective nouns:** are nouns that represent a group of things or people without being plural (although they can also be made plural). Family, group, orchestra, audience, flock,

bunch, and herd fall into this category. These nouns become important when we discuss noun and verb agreement.

Most nouns can be counted (girls, pencils, stars), but some cannot be (salt, wisdom, sand, beauty).

EXERCISE 2

RECOGNIZING TYPES OF NOUNS

Find the type of noun asked for in the following sentences. There is only one noun of the type asked for.

1. Find the proper noun: We went to New York City on our vacation last summer.
2. Find the concrete noun: You need to add more soil before you finish.
3. Find the abstract noun: You seem to know all the rules of this game!
4. Find the collective noun: The band played all day in the gymnasium.

Find all the nouns of the type requested in each series:

1. Find all the proper nouns: Bob, brother, summer, Ireland, Buddhism, decision
2. Find all the abstract nouns: idea, book, school, dog, sadness, shirt, Christianity, Empire State Building, hunger
3. Find all the collective nouns: group, committee, boys, tribe, happiness, bunch, clocks, collection

PRONOUNS

Pronouns take the place of nouns. For example, compare these two sentences:

Mary baked Mary's famous lasagna for dinner.

Mary baked her famous lasagna for dinner.

Her is a pronoun. It is used in the second sentence to take the place of *Mary*, so we don't have to repeat *Mary*. Doesn't the second sentence sound better?

Some common pronouns are: I, you, he, she, them, they, we, us,

him, her, and it.

ANTECEDENTS

An antecedent is the word the pronoun is standing in for. In the sentence above, *Mary* is the antecedent of *her*. An antecedent can also be a pronoun. Pronouns can stand in for other pronouns, as in the following sentence:

> He showed the manager his report. (His and he are the same person. He is the antecedent.)

In the following sentence, there are no antecedents present in the sentence:

> He showed the manager her report.

Obviously, he is showing the manager the report of a female (her), not his own. We would probably find the antecedents in previous sentences in the text if we had them. However, we can tell that *he* is not the antecedent for *her* because they don't agree in gender. Pronouns must agree in gender and number (singular or plural) with their antecedents.

Make sure that when you write, your antecedents are clear, so that you don't confuse the reader. They should be able to tell who is who. (See? In the previous sentence *they* is unclear. Does *they* refer to the word antecedents or the word reader?)

Unclear antecedent: Mary and Jenny went to visit her mother. (Whose mother?)

EXERCISE 3

PRONOUNS AND ANTECEDENTS

Identify the antecedent for the italicized pronoun.

1. June brought *her* books back to the library.
2. I baked you a cake, but I burned *it*.
3. They came to the party and brought *their* costumes.
4. I want to take singing lessons, but my mother cannot afford to pay for *them*.
5. Bob loves his younger brother, who worships *him*.

TYPES OF PRONOUNS

Pronouns can be a little tricky. There are six different types of pronouns.

1. **Personal pronouns:** Are the most commonly used pronouns.

Here is the complete list:

- **First Person:** *I, me, my, mine* (singular); *we, us, our, ours* (plural)
- **Second Person:** *You, your, yours* (both singular and plural)
- **Third Person:** *He, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its* (singular); *they, them, their, theirs* (plural)

EXERCISE 4

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Identify only the personal pronouns in each sentence. There may be more than one.

1. I didn't tell him about the new idea I had.
2. My brother told me who is coming to my party.
3. We students are having a carwash to support our school.
4. The story about the accident was so terrible that I didn't believe it at first.
5. Don't forget to bring your bathing suit when we go to the beach.

2. **Demonstrative pronouns point things out:** There are only four of them: *this, that, these,* and *those*. Here are some examples:

This is my new CD. (Once again, make sure your reader knows what this refers to!)

I want those!

If you *say I want those cookies*, *those* becomes an adjective because it is describing *cookies*.

More about that in Section 1.5.

EXERCISE 5

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

Rewrite the following sentences using a demonstrative pronoun instead of the words in italics:

Example: The pencil over there is mine. <u>That</u> is mine.

1. *The shirt I am holding* is new.
2. I want some of *the cookies in the kitchen*.
3. Please take some of *the books I am giving you*.

3. **Interrogative pronouns:** Are used to ask questions. There are five of them: *which*, *who*, *whose*, *whom*, and *what*. For example:

Who is that man? What is wrong?

EXERCISE 6

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

The following sentences contain personal, demonstrative, and interrogative pronouns. Find only the interrogative pronouns. Remember that they must ask a question, and that there are only five of them and are listed above. Not all the sentences will have an interrogative pronoun.

1. Why are you asking me this question?
2. Whom are you going with?
3. This is where I live.
4. Which do you like better, dogs or cats?
5. When are you going to get here?

Write the five interrogative pronouns:

4. **Relative pronouns:** They begin adjective clauses. There are five of them: *which*, *whom*, *whose*, *who*, and *that*. Notice that they are almost the same as the interrogative pronouns we just learned about. However, relative pronouns do not ask a question, and they do not appear at the beginning of a sentence. Here are some examples of how relative pronouns are used:

You can borrow the book that I just finished.

My neighbor, who is a lawyer, just came back from Paris.

(Yes, you will learn the difference between *who* and *whom*)

EXERCISE 7

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Each of the following sentences contains one of the relative pronouns. However, the sentences also contain other types of pronouns, including interrogative and demonstrative pronouns, which can look like relative pronouns. Relative pronouns begin clauses and won't be at the beginning of a sentence. Find the relative pronoun in each of the following sentences.

1. I have a dog that barks all the time.
2. Do you know who that man in the costume is?
3. That is my neighbor, whose daughter lives in Mexico.
4. I really like the girl whom I have invited to go with us.

5. **Reflexive/intensive pronouns:** Are personal pronouns with *-self* at the end:

myself, ourselves, yourself, yourselves, himself, herself, itself, and *themselves*

Here are some examples of how they are used. Notice the difference between using them reflexively and intensively:

I wrote that poem myself. (Reflexive—*myself* reflects back to *I*)

She baked the wedding cake herself. (Reflexive—*herself* reflects back to *she*)

I myself wrote that poem. (Intensive—used to emphasize *I*)

I saw Jim himself at the wedding! (Intensive—used to emphasize *Jim*)

A reflexive pronoun must refer back to the subject of the sentence. For example, you cannot use *myself* as a reflexive pronoun unless *I* is the subject of the sentence. Likewise, you cannot use *herself* as a reflexive pronoun unless *she* (or the noun that *she*

represents) is the subject of the sentence. Here are examples of the incorrect and correct uses of the reflexive *myself*.

Correct: I fixed the broken fence myself.

Incorrect: She gave Jim and myself new books. (*Myself* should be *me*.)

Note that *hisself*, *theirselves*, and *ourself* are not words.

EXERCISE 8

INTENSIVE/REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

Fill in the blank with the appropriate reflexive/intensive pronoun. Remember that the pronoun will refer to the same person who is the subject of the sentence.

1. I made that dress_____.
2. She__said that it was true.
3. He made__a huge sandwich for a snack.
4. You__said it couldn't be done, but you did it!
5. The little boy made the tower of blocks all by__.

6. **Indefinite pronouns:** They do not refer to a specific noun. Here are some examples of indefinite pronouns: *someone*, *everyone*, *anyone*, *no one*, *somebody*, *anybody*, *everybody*, *everything*, *something*, *anything*, *nothing*, *none*, *few*, *many*, *several*, *all*, and *some* (and there are more). They are important because you need to know which ones are singular and which ones are plural, so you know which verb form and personal pronoun to use with them.

EXERCISE 9

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

1. You and I should eat something before we go.
2. Is anyone home?
3. Everyone who is going on this trip should bring some books to read.

4. All of the pizza is gone, but most of the salad that I made is still here.
5. She didn't do it by herself; she had help from her friends.
6. What are you doing with that?
7. We did nothing yesterday, but tomorrow we are going to the movies.
8. Those who think they can do anything usually can!

Do not confuse pronouns with proper nouns. Proper nouns begin with capital letters and are nouns.

EXERCISE 10

PRONOUN REVIEW

There are three pronouns in each of the following sentences. Find each pronoun and tell which kind it is: personal, demonstrative, interrogative, intensive/ reflexive, indefinite, or relative.

1. You and I should be friends with him.
   - _____ _____ _____
2. Which shirt do you think I should buy?
   - _____ _____ _____
3. This is the book that I read last summer.
   - _____ _____ _____
4. They finally did something by themselves!
   - _____ _____ _____
5. I have never heard of anything like that!
   - _____ _____ _____
6. When are you going to tell someone about this?
   - _____ _____ _____

BRAIN CHALLENGE

Can you write a sentence with one pronoun of each type in it? Hint: It will have to be a question in order to use an interrogative pronoun. Here is an example:

What (interrogative) are you (personal) doing all by yourself (reflexive) that (relative) sounds like that (demonstrative) and

disturbs everyone? (indefinite)

No, you wouldn't really write a sentence like that, but sometimes it is fun to try!

VERBS

Verb: It's what you do!

ACTION VERBS

Most verbs are action words: *Jump*, *run*, *bake*, *study*, *read*, *swim*, *give*, and *walk* are examples of verbs.

Verbs can also indicate mental action, not just physical: *think*, *wonder*, *plan*, and *consider*.

The boys hid in the forest. (*Hid* is a verb.)

I took the math test yesterday. (*Took* is a verb.)

The hotel provided us with rooms after the game. (*Provided* is a verb.)

Every sentence needs a verb. Without a verb, there is no sentence!

EXERCISE 11

ACTION VERBS

Find the verbs in the following sentences. There may be more than one verb in a sentence. Remember that most verbs are action words, but they don't necessarily involve movement.

1. Jack threw the ball to Sam, who caught it.
2. Do you know anything about European history?
3. My cat jumped up on the table and ate the cookies.
4. I wonder if she likes me.
5. Tell me the truth.

LINKING VERBS

In addition to action verbs, there is another important type of verb called a linking verb. A linking verb ties together the word

or words before the verb and the word or words after the verb. A linking verb is like the equal sign in math. The most common linking verb is the verb *to be*. That verb has many different forms. You probably recognize the *to be* verb by these familiar forms: *is*, *am*, *are*, *will be*, *was*, *has been*, *have been*, etc. Here are some sentences with forms of the *to be* linking verb:

I am hungry. (*Hungry* describes *I*; they are linked by the verb *am*.)

She was a dancer. (*Dancer* describes *she*; they are linked by the verb *was*.)

There are linking verbs other than the forms of the verb *to be*. *Taste*, *appear*, *look*, *sound*, *seem*, and *feel* are also examples of linking verbs. Usually, if you can substitute a form of the *to be* verb and the sentence still makes sense, you have a linkingverb.

She felt tired today. (*Tired* describes *she*; they are linked by the verb *felt*. She <u>is</u> tired today also makes sense.)

He seemed angry at me. (*Angry* describes *he*; they are linked by the verb *seemed*. He <u>was</u> angry at me makes sense.)

Mary threw the ball. (*Ball* does not describe *Mary*; *threw* is **not** a linking verb! Mary <u>is</u> the ball makes no sense.)

To make things just a bit more confusing, words like *taste, smell*, and *feel* are sometimes linking verbs and sometimes action verbs. Notice the difference:

The cake tasted great! (*Great* describes *cake*; *tasted* is a linking verb. The cake is great makes sense. The cake didn't do anything. There is no action here.)

I tasted the cake. (*Cake* does not describe *I*; *taste* is an action verb here. I am doing something. And *I am the cake* doesn't make sense.)

Why does it matter which verbs are linking and which are action?

EXERCISE 12

LINKING VERBS

Identify the linking verbs in each sentence. There may be more than one in a sentence. Some sentences may have an action verb and NO linking verb. Other sentences may have both action and linking verbs. Identify only linking verbs.

1. I am tired, so I will go to bed.
2. This cake tastes burned.
3. She seems fine, but she says she is sick.
4. I study until my eyes hurt.
5. That cake is too pretty to eat!

EXERCISE 13

ACTION AND LINKING VERBS

Identify all the verbs in the following sentences, and tell whether each one is action or linking. There may be more than one verb in a sentence.

1. If you are correct, then there is no answer to this problem.
2. Clean your room, and then mow the lawn.
3. I think that she is the tallest girl in the room.
4. My office is too small, and my desk won't fit.
5. I shop, clean, and visit my mother on weekends.

TENSES

Verbs have some qualities you should know about. One of these is tense, which has to do with time. The tense of a verb tells you when the action took place. Verbs are the only action part of speech, so they are the only part of speech with tense. As you know, things can take place in the past, in the present, or in the future. There are six main tenses, each representing a different time. Each of these six has a partner (the progressive form), making the total number of tenses twelve. Here they are, using the action verb *walk*:

- **Present tense:** I walk to the store. (It is happening now.)
- **Present progressive tense:** I am walking to the kitchen.
- **Past tense:** I walked to the store. (It happened in the past, and it is over.)
- **Past progressive tense:** I was walking to the store.
- **Future tense:** I will walk to the store. (It will happen in the future.)
- **Future progressive tense:** I will be walking to the store.
- **Present perfect tense:** I have walked to the kitchen every day this week. (It happened in the past and is possibly continuing.)
- **Present perfect progressive tense**: I have been walking to the store.
- **Past perfect tense:** I had walked for an hour by the time I found the library. (It happened in the past before something else happened in the past.)
- **Past perfect progressive tense:** I had been walking to the kitchen when I met Sue.
- **Future perfect tense:** I will have walked five miles by the time I get to your house. (It will happen in the future before some other future event.)
- **Future perfect progressive tense:** I will have been walking five miles a day for six years by the time I graduate from high school.

The progressive tenses represent the same time as their matching tenses. The words that we use to help specify the tenses (such as *will*, *have*, and *have been*) are called helping verbs.

Although some helping verbs look like forms of the linking verb *to be*, they are not. Because they are with another verb (in this case, *walk*), they are called helping verbs. For example, in "I will have been walking," *will have been* are helping verbs, and *walking* is the main verb. If *"will have been"* is used without a main verb, then it is a linking verb. For example, in "I will have been a teacher for three years," *will have been* is a linking verb.

There is no other verb in the sentence, and *teacher* describes *I*.

Here are the tenses for the linking verb *to be*, using the pronoun *you*:

- ***Present/Present Progressive:*** you are/you are being
- ***Past/Past Progressive:*** you were/you were being
- ***Future/Future Progressive:*** you will be/you will be being
- ***Present Perfect/Present Perfect Progressive:*** you have been/you have been being
- ***Past Perfect/Past Perfect Progressive:*** you had been/you had been being
- ***Future Perfect/Future Perfect Progressive:*** you will have been/you will have been being.

EXERCISE 14

VERB TENSES

Fill in each blank with the verb and tense in parentheses. You may use the progressive form if you like.

1. We _____ to the movies three times this week. (verb: to go—present perfect tense)
2. I _____ a cake for your birthday. (verb: to bake, future tense)
3. We _____ at that mall before. (verb: to shop—past perfect tense)
4. I _____ piano lessons for seven years by this winter. (verb: to take—future perfect tense)
5. I _____ until I couldn't study any longer. (verb: to study—past tense)
6. She _____

IRREGULAR VERB FORMS

When we talk about different forms of a verb, we are usually referring to how the verb changes in a different tense, generally past or present perfect. Most verbs add *-ed* to the end for the past tense, but many verbs have other past tense forms; these verbs are called irregular. We will talk more about irregular verbs

in Section 7.2, but here are a few examples of regular and irregular verbs.

REGULAR VERBS

I walked to the train station. (ends in *-ed*)

He wondered about his dream. (ends in *-ed*)

IRREGULAR VERBS

He thought about it for a while. (not *thinked!*)

The cat ate its food. (not *eated!*)

EXERCISE 15

REGULAR VERBS

1. rain rained
2. wash _____
3. study _____
4. play _____
5. graduate _____

VOICE

Another quality of verbs is voice. There are two voices: active and passive. In active voice, the subject of the sentence (Usually, the noun or pronoun before the verb) is doing the action. In passive voice the subject is usually not doing the action of the verb. Can you see the difference between the voices?

He drove to the mall. (Active—the subject of the sentence, he, did the driving.)

He was driven to the mall by his sister. (Passive)

When you write, use active voice most of the time. It is stronger and more effective.

EXERCISE 16

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

See if you can identify the verbs in the following sentences as active voice or passive voice. The verbs are in italics.

1. I *mowed* the lawn this morning.
2. I *was told* a secret.
3. Did you *see* that dog?
4. We *celebrated* her birthday with cake and ice cream
5. She *bought* six dresses and four pair of pants.
6. She *was awarded* the gold medal.
7. I *thought* about it for a long while.
8. The committee *met* for the last time on Friday.
9. The school *was built* in 1970.
10. I *built* a roller coaster out of Legos.

TRANSITIVE/INTRANSITIVE

One more thing about verbs (yes, they are rather complicated). Verbs are also classified as either transitive or intransitive. The dictionary refers to verbs as either vi (verb intransitive) or vt (verb transitive) where it tells you the part of speech.

Transitive verbs have a direct object; intransitive verbs don't. Direct objects are discussed in Section 2.4. Basically, if you ask what or who about the verb, the answer is the direct object. Direct objects are always nouns or pronouns. Here are some examples:

They played baseball. (Played what? Baseball. *Baseball* is the direct object, so *played* is transitive.)

They played in the yard. (Played what or who? The sentence does not tell you. There is no direct object, and *played* is intransitive.)

EXERCISE

TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE VERBS

In each of the following sentences, identify the italicized verb as either transitive or intransitive. If it is transitive, identify its direct

object.

1. I *played* chess with George.
2. She *walked* to school.
3. Jess *bought* a new suit.
4. Did you *see* the cat jump over the fence?
5. I *wrote* the monthly report for my company.

You already learned in Section 1.2 that you can tell if a word is a noun by putting *a*, *an*, or *the* in front of it. How can you tell if a word is a verb? Put the word *to* in front of it, for example, to jump, to think, to be, to study, to allow.

ADVERBS

Like adjectives, adverbs are describing words. However, while adjectives describe nouns or pronouns (people and things), adverbs are used to describe verbs (actions). Sometimes adverbs also describe adjectives or other adverbs.

Adverbs tell where, when, how, or to what extent. Adverbs usually end in *-ly*, but not always. Here are some examples of adverbs:

- She ran quickly. Quickly describes how she ran (ran is the verb).
- He is extremely intelligent. Extremely describes the adjective intelligent.
- He writes really quickly. Really describes quickly, also an adverb. Quickly describes how he writes (writes is the verb).

As we said above, not all adverbs end in *-ly*. And, some words that end in *-ly* are adjectives, not adverbs, because they describe nouns. Here are some examples:

- What a lovely dress. Lovely describes the noun
- dress, so it is an adjective.
- I have three sisters, so I am never lonely. Lonely describes the pronoun I. The two words are linked with the linking verb am. (Note that the word never is an adverb telling when. It describes the adjective lonely.)

Many adverbs do not end in *-ly*. Some of these adverbs include

now, *then*, *soon*, *very*, *only*, *often,* and *not*.

- There is usually more than one place to put an adverb in a sentence. Sometimes the location of an adverb changes the meaning of a sentence (for example, see Chapter 12 for a discussion about the adverb only). Other times, the sentence is simply clearer if you place the adverb close to the verb.
- I go for a walk in the woods often.
- I often go for a walk in the woods. (better way to write it)
- Often, I go for a walk in the woods. (also good)

Be careful not to overuse the adverbs *really*, *so*, and *very*. Always avoid using two *really*s, *so*s, or *very*s in a row (for example, really, really good).

EXERCISE 17

IDENTIFYING ADVERBS

Identify each adverb in the following sentences. Some sentences may have more than one adverb

1. We went up the stairs quietly.
2. Soon I will be 12 years old.
3. He drives very slowly.
4. This is too heavy for me to carry.
5. She tenderly held the baby and kissed her softly.

EXERCISE 18

PLACING ADVERBS

In some of the following sentences, the adverb is not in the best place. Find a better place to put the adverb. Other sentences are correct. Identify which sentences are written well. Remember that many times there is more than one correct place to put the adverb.

1. We walked down carefully the stairs.
2. He will be soon coming home.
3. Put the toys away quietly.
4. The cat purred and ran up the stairs contentedly.
5. Gladly I gave him the old baby clothes I had collected.

CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions are joining words. They join words, phrases (a short group of related words), or even sentences together. The most common conjunction is *and*.

- Jack and Jill (joins two words together).
- I went to school and to the movies (joins two phrases together).
- I am a student, and my brother is a dentist (joins two sentences).

And is called a coordinating conjunction. There are seven coordinating conjunctions. They are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet,* and *so*. The first letters of these words spell out FANBOYS.

Remember the "word" FANBOYS, and you will remember these conjunctions!

EXERCISE 19

COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Fill in the blank in each sentence with one of the seven FANBOYS conjunctions. Use a different conjunction for each sentence. Use the conjunction that makes the most sense in that sentence.

1. I would buy that toy for you,_____I don't have any money.
2. She is small,_____very strong.
3. Do you want the chicken___the steak?
4. Bobbie____Jim are getting married.
5. I like neither liver_____brussels sprouts.
6. I have other plans,_____I won't be going with you.
7. You will need to study more,_____you got a bad grade.

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

The FANBOYS conjunctions are called coordinating conjunctions because they connect, or join, two or more things. There is another kind of conjunctions, called a subordinating conjunctions. These conjunctions begin subordinate clauses. Subordinating conjunctions include (but are not limited to) these words: *although*, *since*, *if*,

because, *until*, *when*, *whenever*, *before* (sometimes) and *after* (sometimes).

Although I am small, I am strong (subordinate clause begins with *although*).

Because I have no money, I cannot go to the movies (subordinate clause begins with *because*).

I cannot get my license until I turn sixteen (subordinate clause begins with *until*).

When you are joining two words, there is no comma. However, in a series or more than two things, use a comma after each item in the series except, of course, the last item. The comma before the conjunction (usually *and*) is optional and is called the Oxford comma. I prefer to use it.

I packed shoes and socks. (two items only; no comma).

I packed shoes, socks, pants, and shirts. (comma after *pants* is optional).

There is generally a comma before a FANBOYS conjunction that connects two complete sentences.

I sprained my ankle, so I cannot go hiking today.

I cannot go with you, but my sister can.

Can you begin a sentence with a FANBOYS conjunction? Yes, and no. Most people now say it is perfectly okay to begin a sentence with *and*, *but*, or *so*. My opinion? I do it in this book. Would I do it in a cover letter or a job application? No.

EXERCISE 20

IDENTIFYING SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Fill in each blank with the best subordinating conjunction. Use a different conjunction for each sentence. Choose from these five conjunctions:

1. _____ I read that book, I don't remember it very well.
2. We never made it to Paris _____ we ran out of time.
3. I didn't believe it _____ I saw it with my own eyes.

4. _____ you see your cousin; tell him I miss him.
5. _____ I eat chocolate, I am happy!

ADJECTIVES

Compared to verbs, Adjectives are pretty simple. They are used to describe nouns (people, places, things, ideas) and sometimes pronouns. Adjectives can also describe other adjectives. They tell how many, what kind, or which ones. Here are some examples of adjectives describing (or modifying) nouns:

- Pretty bird six trees blue dress.
- Handsome guy.
- Good idea.

Here is an example of an adjective that describes a pronoun:

- He is handsome.

Notice that the structure is a little different here. When describing a pronoun, the adjective is usually after the verb rather than right before the pronoun. Notice that when the adjective comes after the verb, the verb is always a linking verb (*is,* in the sentence above). Sometimes, of course, the adjective can come before the pronoun. For example:

Silly me!

Here is an adjective describing another adjective:

Bright blue dress.

The adjective *blue* is describing the noun *dress*. However, the adjective *bright* is describing the type of *blue* (not the dress).

What if you said old, torn dress? *Old* and *torn* are both adjectives, but they both describe the noun *dress*. It is an old dress, and it is a torn dress.

When both adjectives describe the noun (as in old, torn dress), you generally put a comma between the two adjectives. When one adjective describes the other adjective (as in bright blue dress), do not use a comma. One way to figure this out is to put the word *and* between the two adjectives. If it makes sense, use a comma.

Old and torn dress makes sense.

Use a comma: Old, torn dress

OTHER TYPES OF ADJECTIVES

There are a couple of special types of adjectives. However, they have the same function as any other adjective.

1. **Demonstrative Adjectives:** In Section 1.3 we discussed demonstrative pronouns. They are *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. These same four words, when placed right before a noun, are demonstrative adjectives. Notice the difference:
    - This is my book. (demonstrative pronoun)
    - This book is mine. (demonstrative adjective describing *book*)
2. **Proper Adjectives**: Proper adjectives, like proper nouns, begin with a capital letter. Here are a few examples: Thanksgiving dinner, Italian food, Catholic religion
3. **Articles:** The words *a*, *an*, and *the* are called articles. Sometimes they are thought of as a separate part of speech, but they are really adjectives.

Some words can be used as more than one part of speech, depending on how they are used in a particular sentence. Nouns can often be used as adjectives. Here are some examples: Beef stew, bread pudding, prom dress, Christmas vacation.

EXERCISE 21

IDENTIFYING ADJECTIVES

Each of the following sentences contains three adjectives. See if you can identify them by circling each adjective. These adjectives may include articles, proper adjectives, and demonstrative adjectives.

I had three books, but I gave one book to my younger brother.

1. The tall tree in the yard has fallen.
2. This cat is mine, but that cat is from the shelter.
3. Which of these two cookies looks good to you?

4. We had a fabulous Thanksgiving dinner!

PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions are usually little words, and they are always part of a phrase (a group of a few related words—see Section 3.2) known, not surprisingly, as a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase generally consists of a preposition, sometimes an article (*a*, *an*, or *the*), and a noun or pronoun (which is called the object of the preposition). Prepositional phrases usually answer the questions where? or when?

Here are some examples of prepositions in a phrase (the preposition is in bold):

In the box

With my friends

At school

Around the room

Of ours

Between the chairs

By the author

To the movies

Up the tree

Down the stairs

Beside the desk

Within the city

For the committee

Among the students

Beneath the table

After the storm

Before dinner

Before dinner

There are many other prepositions, but you get the idea!

If a preposition does not have a noun or pronoun after it, it is generally not a preposition; it is being used as an adverb.

- I am going inside the house (prepositional phrase; inside is a preposition).
- I am going inside. (There is no prepositional phrase; inside is an adverb here.)

You may have heard that you aren't supposed to end a sentence with a preposition. There are some cases where you probably should not end a sentence with a preposition; however, sometimes you should because it sounds better.

Whom are you going with? It is fine to end the sentence this way (with the preposition *with*).

With whom are you going? is also fine.

Where are you at? Please do not end a sentence this way. You don't need the *at*. Just leave it off.

What are you staring at? This is fine. You can't leave *at* off here. You can say, At what are you staring? but ending this sentence with *at* is fine.

It is very important to be able to recognize prepositional phrases. Often, recognizing a prepositional phrase will help you decide whether to use *who* or *whom*, *I* or *me*, *him* or *he*, etc. It is also important to put your prepositional phrases in the correct place in the sentence.

EXERCISE 22

IDENTIFYING PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Each sentence below contains one prepositional phrase. Can you find it?

1. The cat is under the table.
2. We camp at the lake every summer.
3. Come into the house before you freeze!
4. We ran around the track twenty times!
5. I went to the museum.

INTERJECTIONS

Wow! This is an easy part of speech. Interjections are words that don't add anything grammatically to the sentence; they are usually exclamatory words, but not always. Sometimes they are followed by an exclamation point; other times they are connected to the sentence with a comma. Interjections are generally not used in formal writing like business letters.

Here are some interjections: *hey*, *gosh*, *ouch*, *gee whiz*, *wow*, *oh*, *well*.

1. Wow! What a nice car!
2. Ouch! That really hurt!
3. Well, I think I am going with you.
4. Oh, I am sorry about that.

EXERCISE 23

ADDING INTERJECTIONS

Fill in each blank with one of the following interjections. Use each interjection only once.

Ouch Wow Help

1. ! Look at that beautiful sunset.
2. _____! The garage is on fire!
3. _____! I stepped on a rock!

USING THE PARTS OF SPEECH

We have now talked about each of the parts of speech. Every word in the English language belongs to one or more of those parts of speech. If a word can be used as more than one part of speech, then it depends on how it is used in the sentence. For example, let's look at the word *spring*.

1. Spring is my favorite season. (noun)
2. I can't wait until spring break. (adjective describing *break*)
3. My cat will spring forward to grab the ball of yarn! (verb)

BRAIN CHALLENGES

The following sentences have just one part of speech missing. Can you tell which one it is?

1. Well, I looked in the car and I couldn't find the purple sweater.
2. Wow! You and little John swim well, but I don't.
3. Oh, they are happily baking cookies and brownies in the kitchen.

The following sentences are missing two parts of speech. Can you fill in the blanks with those two parts of speech?

4. _____! Jim and ____ are quietly playing Scrabble, and Marcy is playing computer games with Tim.
5. Ouch! I _____ my foot on the table, and then
6. I saw my ____ toe bleeding.

Can you write a sentence using all eight parts of speech? Try to make it no longer than 12 words long. (You can repeat parts of speech.) Here is mine:

Wow! My friends and I stupidly ran up that huge hill!

Noun—friends, hill

Pronoun—my, I

Verb—ran

Adjective—that, huge

Adverb—stupidly

Conjunction—and

Preposition—up

Interjection—wow

You probably won't ever have the need to write a sentence with all eight parts of speech, but isn't it nice to know that you can? Knowing the parts of speech gives you more control over what you write and more freedom to write exactly what you are trying to say.

TEST
THE PARTS OF SPEECH

Part 1—Match each word with its part of speech. Use each letter only once.

1. around ___ a. noun
2. wow ____ b. pronoun
3. desk ____ c. verb
4. think ____ d. adjective
5. but ____ e. adverb
6. really ____ f. preposition
7. pretty ____ g. conjunction
8. them ____ h. interjection

Part 2—In each sentence, identify the pronoun of the type in parentheses.

1. Which of these chairs do you like? (interrogative)
2. You and Penny are sure to love the movie! (personal)
3. I smell something good in the kitchen. (indefinite)
4. I made the cookies myself. (reflexive)
5. This is my cookie! (demonstrative)
6. This is my sister, who is ten years old. (relative)

Part 3—Write all 7 coordinating conjunctions

Part 4—Multiple Choice. Find the correct answer.

1. She drove her new car to school. The verb in this sentence is:
2. a. passive b. a noun c. transitive d. future tense
3. I attend Mills College. What type of noun is *Mills College*?

   a. simple b. proper c. pronoun d. passive

4. We will go to Paris next year. The verb in this sentence is in what tense?

   a. present b. past c. future d. future perfect

5. You and I should do something fun for your birthday. How many pronouns are in the sentence?

   a. four b. two c. three d. none

6. That book is interesting but difficult to read.

Part 5—Fill in the blanks with the information in parentheses.

7. _____! That's a huge bike for you! (interjection)
8. _____ and I are on our way to work. (proper noun)
9. We ran _____ all morning. (prepositional phrase)
10. We picked _____ up from the airport. (personal pronoun)
11. Susan _____ when she gets home. (future tense verb)

CHAPTER 2
Phrases

WHAT IS A PHRASE?

A phrase is a small group of words that go together. A phrase is never a complete sentence, and it never has both a subject and a verb.

Phrases generally function as one part of speech. Some phrases act as adjectives, describing a noun in the sentence. Other phrases function as adverbs, describing a verb or perhaps an adjective in the sentence. Still, other phrases act as nouns and might be the subject or object in a sentence.

Phrases add information and variety to your writing. We talked briefly about verb phrases (the verb and its helping verbs). There are several other common types of phrases.

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

We talked about prepositional phrases. Prepositions always appear in phrases, which all have pretty much the same structure: preposition, (sometimes an article), noun, or pronoun. Prepositional phrases tell *where*, *when*, and sometimes *how* or *what kind*. Prepositional phrases function as either adjectives or adverbs. The important thing to know about prepositional phrases is where to put them in the sentence.

Here are examples of adverbial prepositional phrases.

- I put it on the table. (on the table answers where, so the phrase functions as an adverb describing put.)
- She is at school. (at school also tells where and modifies the verb is.)
- During the movie the baby cried. (during the movie tells when and describes the verb cried.)

Here are some examples of adjectival prepositional phrases:

- She wore the dress with stripes. (with stripes tells what kind of dress, so the phrase functions as an adjective.)
- This is the new book by J. K. Rowling. (by J. K. Rowling tells which book, so the phrase functions as an adjective.)
- The flag of the United States is red, white, and blue. (of the United States tells which flag, so the phrase functions as an adjective describing flag.)

EXERCISE 24

IDENTIFYING PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Each of the following sentences has one prepositional phrase. Identify the phrase, and tell whether it isbeing used as an adverb or adjective.

1. I slept on the chair.
2. After dinner, wash the dishes.
3. The chair with the pillow is very comfortable.
4. The cat is sitting under the tree.
5. The girl in blue is my sister.
6. We walked around the park.
7. You will find the computer in the office.
8. The poem was written by Robert Frost.

INFINITIVE PHRASES

First of all, there are infinitive phrases and there are plain old infinitives. Infinitives are pretty easy to understand. An infinitive is a verb with the word *to* in front of it. But it doesn't function as a verb. An infinitive is a noun. You will see that in the examples.

The *to* in front of an infinitive is not a preposition, so don't get an infinitive confused with a prepositional phrase. If a verb comes after *to*, you have an infinitive. If a noun or pronoun comes after *to*, then *to* is a preposition:

- I want to jump. (infinitive)
- I jumped to the ground. (preposition)

An infinitive can be used by itself in a sentence; however, if you add some words to it, it becomes an infinitive phrase.

Here are some examples:

- I like *to write quickly*. (*to write* is an infinitive, and *to write quickly* is the entire phrase. Notice that *write* is no longer a verb. The verb in the sentence is *like*. Since *to write quickly* tells what you like, it is actually the direct object: a noun.)
- *To be an actor* is my greatest ambition. (*to be* is the infinitive, *to be an actor* is the entire phrase, and it is the subject of the sentence, thus functioning as a noun. The verb of the sentence is *is*.)
- I want *to go to the movies* later. (*want* is the verb, and *to go to the movies* is the phrase serving as the direct object of the sentence: want what? to go to the movies. Notice there is also a prepositional phrase (*to the movies*) inside the infinitive phrase. That's okay.

It's easy to use infinitives and infinitive phrases correctly.

EXERCISE 25

FIND THE INFINITIVE OR INFINITIVE PHRASE

Each of the following sentences has one infinitive. Identify each one.

1. I want to go to the movies right now.
2. To tell the truth is always important.
3. I plan to hand in my report tomorrow.
4. To become a doctor, you must go to school for many years.
5. It's not good to eat too many sweet things.

EXERCISE 26

IDENTIFING INFINITIVES AS SUBJECTS OR OBJECTS

Each of the following sentences has an infinitive phrase. Identify the infinitive phrase and whether it is being used as the subject or an object in the sentence.

1. To be an astronaut was his dream in life.
2. I want to read that new book.

3. I cannot decide whether to see the new movie or the concert.
4. To go to college is a necessity in this family.

PARTICIPIAL PHRASES

Participles, like infinitives, come from verbs, but they are now adjectives (whereas infinitives are now nouns).

There are two kinds of participles: present and past.

PRESENT PARTICIPLES

A present participle is formed by adding *-ing* to a verb: *running, jumping, thinking, reading,* etc.

Here are some sentences using present participles (or participial phrases). Notice that they are used as adjectives:

- Running quickly, I got to school late anyway. (*Running* is the participle, and it describes the pronoun *I*.)
- Dad, driving the car, wasn't listening. (*Driving* is the participle, and it describes the noun *Dad*.)
- The hopping bunny was so cute. (*Hopping* is the participle, and it describes *bunny*.)

Can you tell the difference between *running* in these two sentences?

- *Running* for the bus, he tripped and fell.
- He was *running* for the bus when he tripped and fell.

Answer: In the first sentence, *running* is a participle that describes *he*. In the second sentence, *running* is not a participle. It is the verb (past progressive tense) in the first part of the sentence, and its subject is *he*.) Did you figure it out?

PAST PARTICIPLES

A past participle is formed by using the form of the verb that you would use with the present perfect tense (that is the one using the helping verb *have* or *has*): *written, burned, seen, run, baked*, etc.

Here are some sentences using past participles (or participial phrases). Notice that they are used as adjectives:

- Written quickly, my essay didn't get a very good grade. (*Written* is the participle, and it describes the noun *essay*.)
- We noticed the burned building as we drove by. (*Burned* is the participle, and it describes the noun *building*.)
- Baked to a perfect brown, the crust was delicious. (*Baked* is the participle, and it describes the noun *crust*.)

If you aren't careful, you can run into trouble with participial phrases: If you put them in the wrong place (called a misplaced modifier), your sentence won't make sense—and sometimes writers overlook these. For example, take the first sentence above. Let's rewrite it a bit:

- Written quickly, I didn't get a very good grade on my essay.

Can you see the problem? We know that *written quickly* is an adjective. What is it describing in the sentence above? Generally, in the English language things are assumed to belong to words that are placed near them. *Written quickly, I*? The rewritten sentence says that *I* was written quickly not *the essay*, so it is incorrect. We have a misplaced modifier.

EXERCISE 27

IDENTIFYING PARTICIPLES

Find the participles and participial phrases in the following sentences. Some sentences have no participles, and some may have more than one. They may be either past or present. If you can, find the word the participle modifies.

1. Running after the car, the dog wasn't quite fast enough.
2. I could not eat the baked apple because I like my apples raw!
3. I love skating on the frozen pond.
4. Sitting on my lap, my dog enjoyed the television show about cats.
5. I took a very difficult math test last week.

6. Sneezing and coughing, my sister could barely talk.
7. Chasing the ball is my dog's favorite hobby!
8. Chasing the ball, my dog was almost smiling!

GERUNDIAL PHRASES

Gerunds look like present participles; they have the form of a verb with *-ing* added to the end. However, whereas participles function as adjectives, gerunds function as nouns. They can be subjects or objects in sentences. Here are some examples of gerunds and gerundial phrases:

- Skiing is a favorite hobby of mine. (*Skiing* is a gerund and is the subject of the sentence.)
- I love skiing as much as you do. (*Skiing* is a gerund and is the direct object of the verb *love*. Love what? skiing.)
- I have read many books about skiing. (*Skiing* is a gerund and is the object of the preposition *about*.)

Don't worry too much about gerunds. They are nice to know about, but it's difficult to make a grammatical mistake with them.

EXERCISE 28

FIND THE GERUND

Can you find the gerunds in the following sentences? Each sentence has one. Gerunds are used as nouns, so be careful not to confuse them with plain old verbs ending in *-ing*.

- Swimming in the pool at my friend's house is my favorite thing to do.
- While she was walking, she heard yelling in the park.
- I love knitting my own sweaters.

He was completing his report when his boss told him that his writing wasexcellent.

His job consists of tasting the chocolate to make sure it is perfect.

EXERCISE 29

GERUND OR PARTICIPLE

All of the following sentences contain a gerund, a participle, or both. Some sentences may have more than one gerund or participle. Find all the gerunds and participles and identify which each is. You don't need to worry about the rest of the phrase.

1. Running around the track, I was out of breath.
2. Running is great exercise!
3. While I was running, I saw a burning building.
4. Closing her book, she thought about how much she loved to read.
5. Did you finish writing yet?
6. My job consists of reading and writing.
7. Lying in the sun, she was getting a sunburn.
8. Stop talking while I explain these written instructions to you.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT APPOSITIVES

An appositive is a word or group of words (phrase) that describe a noun or pr0noun that comes right before it. Here are some examples of appositives:

- My sister *Ellen* is visiting next week. (*Ellen* is describing *sister*.)
- Ellen, *my older sister*, is visiting next week. (*My older sister* is an appositive phrase describing *Ellen*.)
- My company, *SWT Publications*, is expanding to two new locations.
- Joe Clark, *my neighbor across the street*, is a famous author. (This appositive contains a prepositional phrase.)

Notice that sometimes the appositive is set off by commas and sometimes it isn't. When do you use commas? As a rule, setting something off in commas means that whatever is between the commas could be left out of the sentence, and the reader would still know what the sentence meant; the words inside

the commas are added information. If the appositive is needed to identify the noun or pronoun that comes before it, then no comma is used. Look at the following sentences:

- My brother, Joe, went to Princeton and then to law school.
- My brother Joe went to Princeton and then to law school.

They are both correct, but they are different. In the first sentence, Joe is set off with commas, implying that it isn't really necessary to know the brother's name or that the reader already knows the name. In the second sentence, Joe is not set off with commas, meaning that it is a necessary part of the sentence. This implies that Joe is needed to identify the brother. One case in which this might happen is if you had more than one brother and needed to identify which brother went to Princeton. Sometimes whether or not to use commas is tricky, and sometimes you can really go either way.

EXERCISE 30

FIND THE APPOSITIVES

Each of the following sentences contains one or more appositives. Identify each appositive.

1. My sister Jean is the oldest of the six of us.
2. Mr. Green, a psychology professor, has written our textbook.
3. He gave me a gift, a pearl necklace, for my birthday.
4. This book, one of my favorites, is very worn!
5. These pizza toppings, peppers and olives, are not my favorites!

TEST PHRASES

Part 1—The following sentences contain all types of phrases: prepositional, infinitive, participial, appositive, and gerundial. Can you find them and identify which type they are? Each sentence has at least one phrase.

1. Smiling broadly, John gave his girlfriend a hug for her birthday.
2. Lisa, his girlfriend, is a senior in high school.
3. Walking through the park, they held hands.
4. Giving gifts is fun, and receiving them is also fun!
5. Receiving a bicycle for Christmas, Luke, my cousin, learned how to ride it that very day!

Part 2—The following sentences contain either a participle or a gerund. Identify it and tell which one it is. If it is a participle, tell what it modifies. If it is a gerund, tell whether it is a subject or an object.

1. She laughed as the swimming dog chased the waves.
2. Going to the movies isn't much fun for me.
3. I like talking too much to sit through a long movie!
4. My frightened sister didn't like the scary movie.
5. Can you tell me which way the speeding car went?

Part 3—Some of the following sentences contain infinitives. Others don't. Find any infinitives in the sentences.

1. The child cried, "I want to go home!"
2. She saw the man as he went into the building.
3. Did you want to see the new painting I bought?
4. I went to the mall to buy a new suit.
5. Did you go to the museum with your guests?

Part 4—Fill in the blanks with the correct answer.

1. **My sister Jane is a doctor.** The appositive is ____

   a. doctor b. sister c. Jane d. is

2. **I have a talking bird named Joey.** *Talking* is _____

   a. gerund b. verb c. noun d. participle

3. **I walked all the way to school.** *To school* is _____

a. prepositional phrase b. infinitive c. adjective d. noun

4. **There is too much salt in this omelet.** This sentence contains ___

   a. no phrases b. an infinitive c. a prepositional phrase d. a gerund

5. **The book that is here is yours.** This sentence contains ____

   a. a gerund b. a prepositional phrase c. a participle d. none of those

CHAPTER 3
Sentences

WHAT IS A SENTENCE?

Words are combined to make up sentences. A sentence is a complete thought. Almost everything you read is made up of sentences. Every word in a sentence is, of course, one of the eight parts of speech. A sentence might contain more than one instance of a certain part of speech (for example, four nouns, or three verbs, or five adjectives) and does not need to contain all the parts of speech. In fact, hardly any sentence would contain all eight parts of speech. However, remember that each word in a sentence is one of the eight parts of speech. Each word in a sentence also performs a certain function in the sentence. These functions will be described in this chapter. The function a word performs in the sentence is not always the same as its part of speech. "Parts of speech" refers only to these eight words: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective (and article), adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

Knowing how sentences are formed and what a sentence requires will help your writing.

SUBJECTS

Every sentence has a subject. The subject is the who or what that the sentence is about. The subject of the sentence is always a noun or a pronoun (or a group of words that functions as a noun, but don't worry about that right now.) The subject is usually whatever or whoever is doing the action of the verb. The subject is often the first word in a sentence, but not always. There are sometimes introductory words, phrases, or clauses (see Chapters 3 and 4). However, the subject usually does come before the verb it belongs to, wherever that might be in the sentence. Every sentence needs a subject (or more than one). To find the subject, first, find the verb and ask who is doing the action. If there are two subjects, generally

joined with a conjunction (for example, Jack and Jill), we call that a compound subject.

1. The man tied his shoes. (The subject is *man*.)
2. Everyone is going to the movies. (The subject is *everyone*, a pronoun.)
3. Who is knocking at the door? (The subject is *who*.)
4. After school, she and I always do our homework. (The subjects are *she* and *I*; remember that more than one subject is called a compound subject.)
5. Do you know who is at the door? (The subject is *you*.) In a question, it is often easier to find the subject and the verb if you make the question a statement: You do know who is at the door.

EXERCISE 31

IDENTIFYING SUBJECTS

Identify the subject or subjects in the following sentences:

1. I play tennis with my friends every Wednesday.
2. You and Jane should visit me this weekend.
3. My boss gave me instructions to do this report.
4. Next summer we are going to Disneyland.
5. Although it is hot out, I still need to mow the lawn.
6. Jack, Joan, and Fred are still not home.
7. What are you doing today?
8. Clean your room before dinner.

COMPLETE SUBJECTS

Sometimes adjectives or phrases are part of a subject, along with the noun or pronoun. The entire subject is called the complete subject. For example:

(complete subject) (complete predicate)

The girl in the blue dress/is walking toward the school.

In the above sentence, *the girl in the blue dress* is the complete subject. The verb phrase (new term? It simply refers to the verb

and any helping verb with it) is *is walking*, which is also the simple predicate (see the next section). The complete predicate is *is walking toward the school*, which is the whole sentence without the complete subject.

PREDICATES

The predicate of the sentence is the verb. The verb, along with any helping verbs it may have is called the simple predicate. The complete predicate is actually the whole sentence except for the subject. Every sentence needs at least one verb.

EXERCISE 32

IDENTIFYING VERBS

Identify the verbs in the following sentences. They might be either linking verbs or action verbs, and there may be more than one verb in the sentence. Twoverbs that have the same subject and are connected with a conjunction are called compound verbs. If you can find the helping verbs, include them in your verbs.

1. Everyone went on the field trip to the city.
2. I climbed the mountain, and then I was very tired.
3. The teacher has given us the instructions many times.
4. The dogs barked and growled as we walked by.
5. Are you going to the party?
6. I am going to the movies, but my brother is taking a nap.
7. Tell me the truth.

EXERCISE 33

DIVIDING THE SENTENCE INTO SUBJECT AND PREDICATE

Place a line between the complete subject of the sentence (the subject and anything that modifies it) and the predicate (the verb and anything that modifies it).

1. The large dog scared us.
2. Fourteen boys and nine girls came to the party.
3. The chocolate cake in the kitchen is for dessert after dinner.

OBJECTS

Like subjects, objects are always nouns or pronouns (or groups of words that function as a noun). Unlike subjects and verbs, sentences do *not* need to have objects to be complete sentences. However, most sentences have objects. There are three kinds of objects a sentence might have: direct, indirect, and objects of prepositions (see Section 1.7). A sentence can have any combination of the three types of objects, or no object at all.

DIRECT OBJECTS

Direct objects receive the action of the verb. If you ask what? or who? about the verb, the answer will be the direct object. Here are some examples:

- I threw the ball at Jim. (Threw what? The *ball* is the direct object.)
- We ate pizza for dinner last night. (Ate what? *Pizza* is the direct object.)
- Last week, I wrote three papers for history class. (Wrote what? *Papers* is the direct object. *Three* is an adjective describing how many papers. It doesn't really matter if you include that as part of the direct object.)
- We walked to the movies yesterday afternoon. (Walked what? The sentence doesn't answer this question, so there is no direct object.) You might think *to the movies* would be the direct object. However, it doesn't answer who? or what? and it is a prepositional phrase. Prepositional phrase are not direct objects, not any part of a prepositional phrase will be a direct object.)
- We walked the dog around the block. (Walked what? *Dog* is the direct object here. So unlike in the previous example, the verb *walked* has a direct object here.)

Verbs that have a direct object in a particular sentence are called transitive. Verbs without a direct object are called intransitive. Some verbs are usually transitive; others are always intransitive.

Other verbs can be either transitive or intransitive, depending on the sentence.

EXERCISE 34

IDENTIFYING DIRECT OBJECTS

Identify the direct objects in the following sentences. Two direct objects with the same verb are called compound objects, and you may find some of those too. Some of the sentences will not have a direct object.

1. I play chess every evening.
2. Every Monday morning, I go to a yoga class.
3. I ate pizza and salad for dinner last night.
4. He took his book back to the library.
5. Tell him your secret.
6. We walked around the park.
7. Did you see a purple sweater anywhere?

INDIRECT OBJECTS

Indirect objects come between the verb and the direct object. You cannot have an indirect object unless you also have a direct object, but you can have a direct object without an indirect object. Examples will help here!

- I threw the ball at James. (The direct object is *ball*—answers *threw what?*)
- Jane ate three pieces of cake. (The direct object is *pieces—ate what?* The direct object is not *cake* because *cake* is part of a prepositional phrase. You won't find the direct or indirect object in a prepositional phrase.)
- I gave *her* a gift. (*Gift* is the direct object—*gave what?* The indirect object is *her*.)
- Mom baked *me* a cake. (The direct object is *cake—baked what?* The indirect object is *me*.)

Some verbs lend themselves to having indirect objects, but there are many verbs that will never have an indirect object. It is rare to make a grammatical mistake with indirect objects, so

don't worry. Do note, however, the following two sentences that mean the same thing:

She gave me the tickets to the concert.

She gave the tickets to the concert to me.

In the first sentence, *me* is the indirect object (*tickets* is the direct object). In the second sentence, there is no indirect object. *To me* is a prepositional phrase; some people call it an indirect object anyway, but I call it a prepositional phrase. It doesn't matter which way you write the sentence. They mean the same thing.

EXERCISE 35

IDENTIFYING INDIRECT OBJECTS

Identify the indirect objects in the following sentences. Some sentences will have no indirect objects. Some sentences may have a compound indirect object. If you can, identify the direct objects too.

1. I gave you the tickets yesterday.
2. We walked for miles and miles!
3. Did you bake me that beautiful cake?
4. Did you see my book anywhere?
5. Blue is my favorite color.
6. He invited us to his birthday celebration.
7. He showed Jim and me his insect collection.
8. I told my baby sister a story.

OBJECTS OF A PREPOSITION

We talked about objects of prepositions in Section 1.7. A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition (for example, *in, out, up, down, with, along, between,* etc.), usually followed by an article (*a, an,* or *the*), and then always by a noun or pronoun. This noun or pronoun is the object of the preposition. Here are some examples:

- Jimmy ran up the stairs. (Stairs is the object of the preposition up.)
- In Paris we saw the Eiffel Tower. (Paris is the object of the preposition in. There is no article in this phrase.)
- Something is stuck between the pages. (Pages is the object of the preposition between.)

EXERCISE 36

IDENTIFYING OBJECTS OF PREPOSITION

Each of the following sentences has at least one object of a preposition. Remember that objects can be either nouns or pronouns. Identify all the objects of prepositions in the following sentences.

1. I finished my report for psychology class.
2. That song is sung by my favorite artist.
3. For my birthday, I received a lot of money.
4. I gave that book to my cousin and my uncle.
5. My older sister is at college now.
6. We jogged around the track and then along the river.

We mentioned compound subjects and objects. Any type of object can be compound. Verbs can be compound too. Here are some examples:

- Jack and Jill came down the hill. (compound *subject*—*Jack and Jill*)
- We ate and drank until we were stuffed! (compound verb—*ate and drank*)
- He read mysteries and science fiction most of the time. (compound direct object—*mysteries and science fiction*)
- Maddie baked my sister and me a pie. (compound indirect object—*my sister and me*)
- He sent the memo to my boss and me. (compound object of the preposition—my boss and me)

PREDICATE WORDS

Linking verbs do not have objects. Because linking verbs function as equal signs in a sentence, there is no receiver of the action of the verb.

Linking verbs have predicate adjectives and predicate nominatives (nouns) that may look like objects.

Here are some examples of predicate adjectives and predicate nominatives.

- I am a writer. (*Am* is a linking verb, so *writer* is not an object. Since *writer* is a noun, it is called a predicate nominative.)
- I am happy. (*Am* is a linking verb, so there is no object. Since *happy* is an adjective, it is called a predicate adjective.)
- It seems cold outside. (*Seems* is a linking verb, so there is no object. *Cold* is a predicate adjective.)
- This cookie tastes stale. (*Tastes* is a linking verb here, so there is no object. *Stale* is a predicate adjective.)

EXERCISE

IDENTIFYING PREDICATE ADJECTIVES AND PREDICATE NOMINATIVES

Identify the predicate nouns and adjectives in the following sentences. Remember that you must have a linking verb to have predicate words. If the verb is an action verb, it may have an object, but it will not have a predicate nominative or predicate adjective. Some of the sentences will not have predicate words, and others may have more than one.

1. This dress looks beautiful on you.
2. The cookies look terrible, but they taste great!
3. I baked these cookies last night.
4. She is tall, but her brother is even taller!
5. She plays the violin really well.
6. Her cousin is an actor.

Remember that a linking verb connects the words before and after it. It functions as an “equal” sign in the sentence. The subject and the predicate word are equal. In the examples

at the beginning of this section, *I* is the "same" as *writer* and *happy*. However, when there is an action verb, there is no linking of words before and after the verb. In the example I threw the ball, threw is not linking I and ball. I am not equal to a ball!

THE FOUR KINDS OF SENTENCES

we will talk about the different structures of sentences, but here we will identify the kinds of sentences by describing what the sentence is doing.

DECLARATIVE SENTENCE

A declarative sentence makes a statement and generally has a period at the end of it. Here are two examples:

- I am changing jobs next week.
- We all enjoyed the concert last night.

INTERROGATIVE SENTENCE

Interrogative sentence is a fancy name for a sentence that asks a question. This type of sentence would generally end with a question mark. Here are two examples:

- Which movie do you want to see?
- Did you ask her if she has the report ready?

On the other hand, *I asked her if she had the report ready* is not a question even though the word *asked* is there. It is simply a declarative sentence, or a statement.

IMPERATIVE SENTENCE

Imperative sentence is a fancy name for a sentence that gives a command. These sentences usually end with a period. Here are two examples:

- Please do your chores now.
- Go to the store and get some salad for dinner.

When you look at most commands, they do not seem to have a subject. For example, you might tell your dog, "Sit." While that

may not look like a sentence (since it is only a verb), it is actually a sentence. Most commands do not have a subject visible in the sentence. However, there is an implied subject, which is usually indicated in grammar books by putting the subject in parentheses. What is the subject? *You*. It is the person you are talking to:

- *(You)* please do your chores now.
- *(You)* go to the store and get some salad for dinner.

Exclamatory Sentence

An exclamatory sentence expresses emotion (usually excitement of some type) and ends with an exclamation point. Notice that sometimes an interrogative (question) or imperative (command) can be treated as an exclamatory sentence, although most of the time the sentence is declarative said with emotion. Here are some examples:

- There is a fire in the garage!
- Don't crash into that car! (also imperative)
- What do you think you're doing! (also interrogative)

EXERCISE 37

IDENTIFYING THE TYPES OF SENTENCES

Identify each sentence as declarative, interrogative, imperative, or exclamatory.

1. Look at that huge cat!
2. I saw a cat in those bushes.
3. There's a train coming!
4. Did you see the cat hiding in the bushes?
5. Try to get the cat out of the bushes.

TEST SENTENCES

Part 1—Identify the subject(s) and verb(s) in these sentences:

1. Jim reads for an hour every night.
2. You and I will walk a mile to the mall.
3. The grapes taste really good.
4. On the last test, I received an A.
5. The dog ate and drank everything in its bowl.

Part 2—Separate each sentence into the subject and predicate.

1. That big brown dog attacked the neighbor yesterday.
2. Suzie, Jack, Holly, Mike, and all the others are invited to our party.
3. Dinner consists of steak, potatoes, salad, and bread.

Part 3—Find all the objects in the following sentences, and identify which type each one is: direct object, indirect object, or object of the preposition. Sentences may have more than one object, but each sentence has at least one.

1. Take your coat and come with me.
2. She gave me a birthday gift yesterday.
3. We exercise in the morning and at night.
4. Joe took me to the baseball game.
5. In Paris, we took a train around the countryside.

Part 4—Label each predicate word as a predicate adjective or a predicate nominative. There is at least one (and maybe more) in each sentence.

1. She is pretty.
2. Aren't you tired yet?
3. She is a cheerleader with the football team.
4. I didn't know whether you were Santa Claus last Christmas.

Part 5—Identify all the objects and predicate words in the following sentences, and tell which type of object or predicate word each is. Sentences may have one or more.

1. Finish your dinner before you go to the beach.
2. She told me the story about the rabbit and the bear.
3. At work I have six reports that I must finish before Friday.
4. Those cherries are tasty, but the bananas are not ripe yet.
5. Which tickets are you giving him for the game on Sunday?

Part 6—Which sentence in Part 5 is imperative?

CHAPTER 4
TYPES OF SENTENCE STRUCTURES

You want your writing to be interesting. If all your sentences have the same structure and same length, your writing could get boring to the reader. Knowing the types of sentence structures, you can use will allow you to make your writing more interesting.

In this chapter, we will look at sentences in a slightly different way. We will talk about sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Then you will learn about the various sentence structures, so that your writing will be interesting and contain a wide range of sentence types. Sentences are made up of combinations of clauses, both subordinate and independent.

All you really need to have in a sentence is a subject (noun or pronoun) and a verb. So a sentence can have only two words and still be a perfectly complete sentence. This is a complete sentence: *Jack runs*.

Obviously, you don't want to write in two-word sentences. However, this chapter will show you how something much longer than two words—that might look as if it is a sentence—may not be a complete sentence. Finally, this chapter will talk about how sentences are put together, and the various ways you can build sentences to make your writing more interesting.

You can actually have a sentence that contains only one word! For example, you may tell your dog, "Sit." *Sit* is a complete sentence. It is a verb. You might ask, "Where is the subject?" In a command there is often an implied subject—meaning it isn't actually in the sentence, but is understood. The subject of a command is always *you*, whether it is written there or not.

NOT A SENTENCE

One of the most important things to know when you are writing is the difference between a sentence, a fragment, and a run-on.

We will discuss fragments and run-ons in the following sections. Generally, you should write in complete sentences and avoid run-on sentences and fragments. Run-ons and fragments are grammatically incorrect. Are there exceptions? Of course. There are always exceptions. Many people use sentence fragments for effect (these are called minor sentences). I am sure you can find some in this book. Fiction writers in particular use fragments. Run-ons are an entirely different story, and they are not usually used in any way that improves writing.

If you are writing a story or memoir or even a memo, you might want to use a sentence fragment. However, if you are writing a college essay, a cover letter, a letter asking your boss for a raise, or a book proposal to an agent, I would stick to complete sentences!

As we already mentioned, a sentence is a complete thought. It can be really short or really long. All it really needs is a subject and a verb. Here are some examples of sentences:

- He ran.
- He ran and ran and ran and ran and ran and ran and ran, and then he stopped.
- Because I have no money, I cannot go to the movies.

SENTENCE FRAGMENT

A sentence fragment is not a sentence, but sometimes people think it is. A fragment is not a complete thought. Sometimes subordinate clauses are written as sentences, but they are not. Here are some samples of fragments, or incomplete sentences. Do not use them in your writing!

- *Because I have no money.* (This is not a complete thought; it cannot stand on its own.)
- *And I went with my friend.* (Many people say it is fine to begin a sentence with a FANBOYS conjunction—I personally don't like it. I wouldn't do it in formal writing; however, if you must, do it sparingly, and in informal writing.)
- *If I try really hard.* (This is another subordinate clause that cannot stand on its own.)

- *The person whom I met and told me that she knew a woman who lived across the street from me.* (This may sound like a sentence, but read it again. It's long, but it is not a complete thought. What about *the person?* The fragment doesn't tell us.)

EXERCISE 38

IDENTIFYING AND REWRITING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Identify each of the following as a complete sentence or a sentence fragment. Then, make the fragments into complete sentences by adding words.

1. Since the work isn't done and we need to leave, but we can come back tomorrow.
2. He fell.
3. Who she is, I don't know.
4. Where he is calling from.
5. Because your mother told you to go.

RUN-ON SENTENCES

A run-on contains more than one complete sentence without proper punctuation. Here is an example of a run on:

- I have a new job, it pays more than my old job.

You cannot separate two complete thoughts with just a comma. If you do, you have a run-on sentence (often called a comma splice.)

Two complete thoughts (sentences) must be separated in one of these three ways:

1. Put a period between them, and start the second sentence with a capital letter.

   I have a new job. It pays more than my old job.

2. Put a semicolon between them if the two sentences are closely related. (Do not capitalize the beginning of the second sentence.)

I have a new job; it pays more than my old job.

3. Add a FANBOYS conjunction (*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*) after the comma.

I have a new job, and it pays more than my old job.

If the two sentences are very short, you can omit the comma:

- I work and I sleep.

Sometimes, but not too often, a colon is used between two sentences. I recommend you avoid doing this to eliminate the chance of using a colon when it really isn't appropriate. The colon can separate two sentences when the second sentence is an explanation of the first. However, any one of the three solutions above will also work in that case. If you do decide to use a colon, do not capitalize the second sentence. Here is an example:

She is looking for a new job: her last job did not work out.

EXERCISE 39

IDENTIFYING AND CORRECTING RUN ONS

Some of the following "sentences" are actually run-ons. Others are fine as they are. Identify the run-ons, and fix them with punctuation and/or conjunctions.

1. I ate pizza, my brother ate a hamburger.
2. The weather was great, the scenery was beautiful, the company was exciting, and the cost was reasonable; what a great vacation!
3. I took the train, then I had to take two buses to get there.
4. Sweep the floor, and then take out the trash.
5. She asked what kind of dog he wanted, however, he was allergic to dogs, so he couldn't have one.

TYPES OF SENTENCE STRUCTURES

All sentences are made up of one or more clauses. Remember that a clause is a group of words that has a subject and a verb. Some clauses are complete sentences and can stand on their own. Other clauses cannot stand on their own; they are not complete

thoughts, and they must be added to an independent clause, which is a complete thought. By combining independent and subordinate clauses, we are able to create the four sentence structures. Therefore, by being familiar with the different types of clauses, you can form more interesting and varying sentences. What about phrases? Clauses can have any number of different types of phrases in them.

SIMPLE SENTENCE

A simple sentence is made up of one independent clause. That doesn't mean that the sentence looks short or simple. There might be several phrases in that one clause. Here are some samples of simple sentences (say that three times fast!):

- Jack and Jill went up the hill. This sentence is pretty simple. It contains a compound subject (*Jack and Jill*), a verb (*went*), and a prepositional phrase (*up the hill*).
- Picking blueberries, Jack and Jill decided to climb to the top and to pick some flowers, pink roses. This sentence may look complicated, but it is still a simple sentence, containing only one clause.

Here is what it includes:

- Picking blueberries—Participial phrase
- Jack and Jill—Compound subject
- Decided—verb
- To climb and to pick—Infinitives
- To the top—Prepositional phrase
- Pink roses—Appositive

COMPOUND SENTENCE

A compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses (in other words, sentences) joined by a FANBOYS conjunction (*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*) or a semicolon. Here are some compound sentences:

- I ate dinner, and I went to bed. Notice that there is an independent clause before the conjunction (*and*) and

another independent clause after the *and*.

- Of course, the independent clauses can be more complicated than these. And yes, there can be more than two independent clauses in a compound sentence:
- I ate dinner, I went to bed, and I forgot to set the alarm clock.

Note that you need complete sentences for the sentence to be compound. The sentence below, very similar to the one above, is just a simple sentence with a compound verb. There is only one subject (*I*). The two clauses after the first one have no subjects:

- I ate dinner, went to bed, and forgot to set the alarm clock.

EXERCISE 40

SIMPLE AND COMPOUND SENTENCES

Identify each of the following sentences as either simple or compound. Remember that a compound sentence has two (or more) independent clauses. A simple sentence can have a compound subject, compound verb, or compound object; that doesn't make it a compound sentence.

1. The dog eats every morning, but the cat eats every night.
2. Jane and her brother went to France, Italy, and Spain on their vacation.
3. I'll clean the kitchen; you clean the bathroom.
4. I don't know whether I want to work at the local company or the larger company.
5. My brother and sister are having dinner together and then driving me to college.
6. Is that a boy or a girl?

COMPLEX SENTENCE

A complex sentence contains an independent clause (complete sentence) and one or more subordinate (adverb, adjective, or noun) clauses. So it is a combination of the types of clauses. Remember that you must have an independent clause in a sentence. You could string together 300 subordinate clauses and you still wouldn't have a complete sentence.

Here are two complex sentences with adverb subordinate clauses:

Because I missed the bus, I had to walk three miles. (The words before the comma make up a subordinate clause; the words after the comma are a complete sentence, or independent clause.)

I walked three miles before I saw the bus. (This sentence, unlike the previous example, begins with the independent clause and ends with the adverb clause.)

Both of these sentences could be flipped around, and they would be saying the same thing. Remember that when you begin the sentence with the subordinate clause, you generally follow the clause with a comma. When you end the sentence with the subordinate clause, there is usually no comma before it.

Here are two complex sentences with adjective subordinate clauses:

- My mother, who was born in Ireland, lived in England and Scotland before she moved to the United States. (The adjective clause is in the middle of the sentence here, and the independent clause surrounds it: My mother lived in England and Scotland before she moved to the United States.)
- This is the book that I read last week. (People are usually referred to as who and never as which. Things are referred to as which for nonessential clauses [set off with commas] and that for essential clauses [no commas]).

And here are two complex sentences with more than one subordinate clause:

- The book that I read last week is the one that I bought when we were at the airport. (If you leave out the essential adjective clauses you have The book is the one. Easy to see why you need those clauses!)
- Since I bought a new sofa, I won't buy those red leather chairs, which I really don't need. (The sentence begins with

an adverb clause and ends with an adjective clause.)

EXERCISE 41

COMPLEX SENTENCES

Add a subordinate clause in these sentences to make them complex sentences. Add the type of clause that is in parentheses.

1. My pen,____, is out of ink. (adjective)
2. I burned the cake. (adverb)
3. I have met the president of the company,_____. (adjective)
4. My report is late__. (adverb)
5. I want_____. (noun: tough one!)

COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCE

If you mix a compound sentence with a complex sentence, you get a compound-complex sentence, which is a little bit of each. A compound-complex sentence has more than one independent clause (like a compound sentence), and at least one subordinate clause (like a complex sentence). Here is an example of a compound- complex sentence:

I am learning about UFOs, which are very interesting, and I am doing a research paper about aliens. (The compound sentence is *I am learning about UFOs, and I am doing a research paper about aliens*. The subordinate clause is *which are very interesting*.)

EXERCISE 42

IDENTIFYING SENTENCE STRUCTURES

Identify each of the following sentences as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.

1. He didn't want any vegetables or rice with dinner.
2. Do you want the pasta, or would you prefer the steak?
3. In Paris last year we saw many attractions, including the Eiffel Tower.
4. After the game on Thursday, we are going to the movies.

5. After you go to the game on Thursday, come to dinner with us.
6. The book that is on the shelf is yours, and you can take it whenever you want it.
7. Although the cookies were burned, they tasted good.
8. Jamie and Ralph called me last night and then came over for a visit.

A VARIETY OF SENTENCE PATTERNS

We learn about different types of phrases and clauses so that we can use them in our writing. Simple sentences that always start with a subject and verb can get very boring. Check out this paragraph:

My friends and I went to the concert last night. We really enjoyed the music. We went out for dinner after the concert. I had the best pizza I have ever eaten! My friends shared a huge plate of appetizers. The waiter was very friendly. The service was great. I came home after midnight and was really tired when I had to get up for work this morning.

That paragraph sounds a little choppy, doesn't it? All the sentences begin with a subject and a verb, and most of the sentences are simple. How about this rewrite?

- My friends and I went to the concert last night. To say we enjoyed the music is an understatement! After the concert, we went out for dinner. I had the best pizza I had ever eaten, and my friends shared a huge plate of appetizers. Because the waiter was so friendly and the service was so great, we left a big tip! However, coming home after midnight made it really difficult to get up for work this morning.

Better? It is always better to use a variety of sentence types and structures. Besides starting a sentence with the subject, you can start a sentence with a phrase or clause:

- Last night my friends and I went to a movie. (prepositional phrase)

- Going to the movies is a favorite pastime for me. (gerundial phrase)
- Watching movies, I escape into another world. (participial phrase)
- To be able to go to the Academy Awards would be a dream come true! (infinitives)
- Because I love movies so much, I try to see one at least once a week. (adverb clause)

Of course, it isn't just how you start the sentences. You can vary sentences in other ways. You can use adjective clauses (the ones that begin with *that*, *which* or *who*), compound sentences, and appositives to vary your sentences even more.

EXERCISE 43

WRITING SENTENCES WITH DIFFERENT STRUCTURES

Combine the following sentences into one sentence using the structure in parentheses. The first one is an example.

1. Fred is my best friend. He is a great student. (Use an adjective clause.)

   Fred, who is a great student, is my best friend.

OR

   Fred, who is my best friend, is a great student.

2. I couldn't stay until the end. The movie was very long. (Start the sentence with an adverb clause.)
3. I went to visit my cousins in Nevada. I went last weekend. (Start the sentence with a prepositional phrase.)
4. I just saw a cute bunny. I was running around the track. (Start the sentence with a participial phrase.)
5. I want to become a doctor. It is my most important goal. (Start the sentence with a gerund.)
6. I would love to go to Paris. It is my greatest dream. (Start the sentence with an infinitive.)

TEST
TYPES OF SENTENCE STRUCTURES

Part 1—Identify each sentence as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.

1. Whenever I can't find my keys, I look in my refrigerator!
2. Over the mountain and through the woods, Benny and Mikey ran and ran.
3. I lost my keys because I was in such a hurry.
4. I think I have lost my keys; do you know where they might be?
5. My keys, which are very important to me, are lost, and no one will help me look for them.

Part 2—Add an adjective clause to each sentence to make it a complex sentence.

1. This dress,_, is old.
2. My mother,_____, has a part in a play.
3. I didn't know this was a game_____.

Part 3—Add an adverb clause to each sentence to make it a complex sentence.

1. _____, I won't eat your cooking!
2. Don't tell me a secret _____.
3. _____, I got a great job!

Part 4—Add a noun clause to each sentence to make it a complex sentence.

1. I don't know _____.
2. _____ I will believe it.

Part 5—Add the requested items to each sentence.

1. I baked a cake. (Start sentence with a prepositional phrase.)
2. _____, I saw a lion. (Start the sentence with a participle or participial phrase.)

3. I exercise every day. (Start the sentence with an infinitive.)
4. This pizza,__, is the best pizza I have ever eaten! (Add an adjective clause.)

CHAPTER 5
CLAUSES

WHAT IS A CLAUSE?

A clause is a group of related words with both a subject and a verb. You might ask, "Well, isn't that a sentence?" Sometimes. Some clauses are complete sentences, but others are not.

There are two main types of clauses: dependent clauses (otherwise known as subordinate clauses) and independent clauses, otherwise known as sentences.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

An independent clause can stand on its own; in other words, it is a sentence. One independent clause equals one simple sentence. It has a subject and a verb, and it may also have objects and phrases. It may have more than one subject or more than one verb. Here are examples of two different independent clauses. One is very short and the other very long. However, they are both just one independent clause each.

- She spoke.
- She spoke loudly to the class, trying to be heard over the noise.

EXERCISE 44

IDENTIFING INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

Some of the following are independent clauses (complete sentences); some are not. Identify which ones are independent clauses.

1. I want a cheeseburger.
2. Do you want some?
3. Because I am hungry.
4. She stood and stared at me.
5. Sit.

6. Although he wouldn't tell me what he wanted.
7. Is your homework done?
8. Went home and ate dinner.

SUBORDINATE (DEPENDENT) CLAUSES

A subordinate clause has both a subject and a verb, yet it cannot stand alone as a sentence. Here are some examples of subordinate clauses:

- Because I am working late (Subject is *I* and verb is *am working*)
- After we come home from vacation (Subject is *we* and verb is *come*)
- Whenever we go to the movies (Subject is *we* and verb is *go*)
- Which is the last movie I saw (Subject is *which* and verb is *is*)
- Who is my best friend (Not a question: subject is *who* and verb is *is*)
- Whom you are talking to (Subject is *you* and verb is *are talking*)

Notice that in the first three examples, you could take the first word away and you would have a sentence. However, that first word is part of the clause and indicates that more information is needed. There is more that needs to be added to the thought.

Now, let's add some words to those subordinate clauses (sometimes called sentence fragments) to make them complete sentences.

- Because I am working late, I will miss dinner.
- We will unpack after we come home from vacation.
- Whenever we go to the movies, you want to sit in the back row.
- I loved *Blue Jasmine*, which is the last movie I saw.
- Jim, who is my best friend, just moved to Oregon.
- I don't know whom you are talking to.

Look at the words we added to each subordinate clause to make it a sentence. What did we add? Yes, we added an independent clause (a complete sentence) to each one. You could string together 100 subordinate clauses, and you still wouldn't have a complete sentence because every sentence must contain at least one independent clause.

There are a few different types of subordinate clauses, which we will discuss in the next sections.

EXERCISE 45

SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

The column on the left consists of subordinate clauses. The column on the right contains independent clauses. Match the appropriate independent clause with the subordinate clause to create a complete sentence. The subordinate clause can go anywhere, including in the middle, of the independent clause.

1. Who is visiting from China

2. Although it isn't dinner time yet

3. Until the game starts

4. Which I bought yesterday

5. Because I couldn't go last year

A. Stay in your seat

B. I am going this year

C. My brother is in college

D. I am really hungry

E. The blue dress was on sale

ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

One type of subordinate clause is an adjective clause. Here are a few things about adjective clauses:

- They function as adjectives in the sentence, modifying a noun or pronoun.

- They are always in the middle or at the end of the sentence. They do not begin sentences.
- Sometimes they are essential to the meaning of the sentence and are not set within commas, but sometimes they are additional information and, in that case, are enclosed in commas.
- They begin with relative pronouns.

Here are some sentences containing adjective clauses:

- This is my neighbor who owns six dogs. (clause describes *neighbor*)
- My boss, whom I really respect, just won a national award. (clause describes *boss*)
- This is the book that I read last week. (clause describes *book*)

Notice that the second example sets off the clause with commas. That means the clause is nonessential and could be left out without losing the meaning of the sentence. We don't need that clause to identify the boss. It is more of a "by the way."

In the third example, the clause identifies which book you are talking about. *This is the book* might not be very clear without it. Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether or not a clause is essential to the meaning or not. It might depend on the context that comes before the sentence. Sometimes it helps to read the sentence out loud. If you tend to pause before and after the clause, it might need a comma.

In the first example above, the clause might be essential, but it might not be. You might need to go by the situation or previous context for this one. You might be identifying which neighbor you are talking about by mentioning that it is the neighbor who has the dogs. Or, it may be additional information if you are simply introducing the neighbor to someone.

One thing about essential versus nonessential clauses: If your clause is not essential and you are using commas around it, use *which* for things and *who* for people. If your clause is essential and you are not using commas to set if off, use *that*. However, if

your essential clause describes a person, most people use *who* (or *whom* or *whose*). However, it is acceptable to use *that* if you prefer (I don't). Here are some examples:

- I want the dress that has the blue buttons.
- I want this dress, which is less expensive than the other one. (Since you are saying *this dress*, we know which dress you are talking about; the clause is added information.)
- Mary, who is my first cousin, is graduating college this year.
- The girl that is sitting in the front row is my cousin. (It is okay to use *that* here, but I would use *who*.)

EXERCISE 46

IDENTIFYING ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

Some of the following sentences contain adjective clauses. Identify the clause (if the sentence has one), and tell which word in the sentence the clause modifies.

1. The job application that I just filled out was four pages long.
2. I don't know where you are.
3. The pasta, which I just made, is already gone.
4. This is the book whose author I met at the meeting.
5. My professor, who is an expert on insects, is very interesting.

ADVERB CLAUSES

Here are a few things about adverb clauses:

- They function as adverbs in the sentence, usually modifying a verb.
- They can be at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a sentence.
- When they begin a sentence, they are followed by a comma. When they are at the end of a sentence, they are usually not preceded by a comma.
- They begin with the words that are called subordinating conjunctions.

Here are some of the more common subordinating conjunctions: *because, although, if, since, until, whenever, wherever, before, after*.

Here are some examples of sentences with adverb clauses:

- Because I got home late, I missed the TV program.
- Although I got paid today, I spent all my money!
- If I finish my work early enough, I can go with you.
- It has been a week since I returned from my vacation.
- I won't be home until I finish the speaking tour. Whenever I work late, I end up staying up too late. I will follow you wherever you go.
- Before I pay for the trip, I need to check my calendar.
- I will pay for the trip after I check my calendar.

Notice two things about the examples above. First, when the clause comes at the beginning of the sentence, we have used a comma after it. However, when the clause is at the end, we don't use a comma before it. All of those sentences can be flipped around and the clauses put in the opposite place. If you say the sentences out loud, you will probably pause where the commas are and not pause in the sentences where there are no commas.

The second thing to notice is that some of the subordinating conjunctions are often other parts of speech, namely prepositions. As we said before, a word can function as more than one part of speech (but only one part of speech at a time), depending on its use in the sentence. *Until, since, before,* and *after* can also be prepositions. If they are followed by an article (sometimes) and a noun or pronoun, they are prepositions. If they are followed by a subject and a verb, they are subordinating conjunctions that introduce an adverb clause. Notice the differences:

- After I check my calendar (clause)
- After school (prepositional phrase)
- Before I pay for the trip (clause)
- Before the game (prepositional phrase)
- Until I finish the speaking tour (clause)

- Until last night (prepositional phase)
- Since I returned from my vacation (clause)
- Since last night (prepositional phrase)

EXERCISE 47

IDENTIFING ADVERB CLAUSES

Each of the following sentences contains an adverb clause. It may also have adjective clauses. Identify only the adverb clauses.

1. I was late for the meeting because I was in a traffic jam.
2. If my sister, who is coming to visit, wants to go, I will go too.
3. I haven't heard from him since he moved away.
4. Wherever I go, my cat follows me.
5. I am going hiking, although it is raining.

NOUN CLAUSES

Noun clauses, like nouns, function as subjects or objects in a sentence. Here is an example where the noun clause is the subject of the sentence:

- Whoever comes to the party will get a gift. (The clause is the subject, and *will get* is the verb. Note that you can substitute a noun or pronoun for the clause and it still makes sense (for example, *Joe will get a gift*). (Note also that the clause itself has a subject and a verb as all clauses do: The subject is *whoever*, and the verb is *comes*. However, the clause as a whole is the subject of the sentence, and the main verb in the sentence is *will get*.)

Here is an example where the noun clause is the direct object in the sentence.

I know who you are. (I know what? *who you are*. The subject of the clause is *you*, and the verb is *are*; the subject of the sentence itself is *I*, and the verb is *know*.)

Here is an example where the noun clause is the object of the preposition.

I gave the books to whoever wanted them. (The subject of the clause is *whoever*, and the verb is *wanted*. The entire clause is the object of the preposition *to*. The subject of the entire sentence is *I*, and the verb is *gave*.)

TEST CLAUSES

Part 1—Identify each of the following as an independent or a subordinate clause.

1. If I told him a story.
2. Mom tells my little brother a story every night.
3. Whoever you are.
4. Because it is Friday.
5. I have been studying since yesterday.
6. After the party, I went home.
7. Wherever they sit.

Part 2—Each of the following sentences has either an adverb or an adjective clause. Identify the clause, and tell which type it is.

1. Whenever I am with him, I have fun.
2. I don't know the girl who is walking in front of us.
3. The story that I am telling you is a secret.
4. I didn't go because I had a game that day.
5. Did you see the boy whose dog was lost?

Part 3—Identify the noun clause in each sentence and tell whether it is a subject or an object.

1. I don't know who you are.
2. Whoever is making that noise should stop.
3. I am going with whoever wants to go.

Part 4—Fill in the blanks with an appropriate subordinate clause of the type in parentheses.

1. _____ I am wearing a sweater. (adverb)
2. That doll, _____, is very expensive. (adjective)
3. _____ should bring a heavy jacket. (noun)
4. You should take that vacation _____ (adverb)
5. The pen _____ belongs to me. (adjective)

CHAPTER 6
SPECIAL ISSUES WITH PRONOUNS

Of all the parts of speech, pronouns probably cause the most trouble (with verbs coming in a close second.) Here are some of those pesky pronoun problems, which you have probably run across yourself.

- Do I use *I* or *me* here?
- Do I use *he* or *him*? *She* or *her*? Is it okay to use *myself* here?
- What's the difference between *who* and *whom*, anyway?
- What's this *his or her* thing? Can't I use say *they*? Or *him/her*?

Yes. These are all pronoun problems. But we will clear it all up in this chapter.

PERSONAL PRONOUN PROBLEM: CASES—IS IT *I* OR *ME*?

The choice of whether to use *I* or *me* is one of the most common issues in grammar, and the choice is often made incorrectly. The *I* or *me* issue is actually the same problem as the choice between *who* and *whom*, or *he* and *him*. Here are some sentences with the correct use of these pronouns:

- To ***whom*** did you give those tickets.
- ***He*** gave the tickets to him and me.
- ***He*** and ***I*** went shopping yesterday.
- ***Whom*** did you bring with you?
- ***She*** brought the pizza to ***him*** and ***us.***
- ***He*** gave her and me some candy.

So how can you figure out which pronoun to use? We are dealing with an issue of pronoun forms, or *cases*, as they are called. Many languages in addition to English have cases. In English there are three cases: nominative, objective, and possessive. Let's look at the different forms of pronouns for these three cases.

- ***Nominative Objective Possessive***

- *Singular:*
  - *(1st person) I, me, my, mine*
  - *(2nd person) you, you, your, yours*
  - *(3rd person) he, she, it, him, her, it his, her, hers, its*
- *Plural:*
  - *(1st person) we, us, our, ours*
  - *(2nd person) you, you, your, yours*
  - *(3rd person) they, them, their, theirs*
  - *Who, whom, whose*

Who is not really a personal pronoun, but it does have cases to worry about, so we will include it here. And we aren't going to worry about possessive case here.

You may already be able to figure out where we are going. Simply put, you use the nominative form of the pronoun for sentence subjects. You use the objective form for direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions. Refer back to Sections 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 for more information about subjects and objects. It is as simple as that. All you have to do is figure out whether your pronoun is a subject or an object.

Let's look at the sentences we looked at above—the ones that were written correctly.

But before we continue, here are a couple of handy tools you can use to figure this all out.

For ***who*** and ***whom*****,** sometimes you can flip the sentence around, answer it if it is a question, or somehow try to substitute ***he*** or ***him*** for ***who*** or ***whom***. If you would use ***him*** in the sentence, then ***whom*** is correct. Alternatively, if you would use ***he*****,** you need to use ***who.***

1. If there are two pronouns, as in a few of the sentences below, or if there is a person's name and a pronoun, here is what you do: Take one name or pronoun out and try them separately. Whatever pronoun you would use separately; you would use it when you put the other name or pronoun back in.

To whom did you give those tickets? Answer the question: I gave the tickets to ***him.*** Therefore, you need to use ***whom*** because it is the same case as ***him*****:** objective. Looking at it grammatically, ***to whom*** is a prepositional phrase where ***whom*** is the object of the preposition *to*, so you know you will use ***whom*****,** *candy*. *He gave me some candy*. So, *He gave her and me some candy*. *Her* and *me* are *indirect objects*.

He gave the tickets to Judy and me. Simply follow tool #2 above. Take out Judy: He gave the tickets to me. You would never say He gave the tickets to I, so you wouldn't say He gave the tickets to Judy and I. Me is the object of the preposition to.

He and I went shopping yesterday. Use tool #2. He went shopping yesterday. I went shopping yesterday. So He and I went shopping yesterday. He and k are the subjects of the sentence, so we use the nominative case.

Whom did you bring with you? Back to tool #1. Answer the question, substituting he or him for whom. I brought him with me. You used him, so whom is correct. They are both in the objective case.

If you turn the sentence around and make it a statement instead of a question, you can see that whom is the direct object of the verb bring. (You did bring whom with you.)

She brought the pizza to him and us. Use tool #2 and take out one pronoun and then the other one. She brought the pizza to him. She brought the pizza to us. Him and us are objects of the preposition to.

He gave her and me some candy. Again, take out one pronoun and then the other. He gave her some candy. He gave me some candy. So, He gave her and me some candy. Her and me are indirect objects. Refer back to Section 2.4 for more information about indirect objects.

If who/whom comes after the words by, with, for, to, between, from (and any other preposition) use whom:

To whom, from whom, with whom, by whom, etc.

EXERCISE 48

USING THE CORRECT PRONOUN CASE

Choose the correct answer for each of the following sentences.

1. Jim and _____ (I, me) are marching in the parade on Saturday.
2. _____ (We, Us) kids are staying home by ourselves.
3. Give the notes you took to Sally and _____ (I, me).
4. For _____ (who, whom) are you painting the picture?
5. Between you and _____ (I, me), I think she will win the award.
6. Please tell a story to _____ (we, us) students.
7. _____ (He, Him) and his friends are on the team.
8. Listen to _____ (he and I, him and me) when we talk to you!
9. _____ (Who, Whom) are you, anyway?
10. I remember that she is the girl _____ (who, whom) I dated years ago

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS AND ADJECTIVES: *THIS, THAT, THESE, THOSE*

We are actually going to talk about these four words as demonstrative adjectives here, not demonstrative pronouns.

These demonstrative words are not difficult to use, and you will rarely run into a problem with them. Just remember that *this* and *that* are singular, and *these* and *those* are plural. If you use them with a noun, make sure that you use singular with singular, and plural with plural:

- *These* kind of insects are dangerous. Incorrect. *These* is plural, and *kind* is singular.
- *This* kind of insect is dangerous, or *These kinds* of insects are dangerous. (Also notice that with the singular words, we used the singular verb *is*, and with the plural words, we used the plural verb *are*.)

Just for your information: When the demonstrative is directly before a noun, it is an adjective. When it is not describing a noun, it is a pronoun:

- *This* is mine. (pronoun)
- *This* car is mine. (adjective)

EXERCISE 49

USING DEMONSTRATIVES CORRECTLY

Fill in the blanks with the correct demonstrative pronoun or adjective.

1. _____ (This, these) is the type of apples I like.
2. _____ (This, These) kinds of caterpillars are my favorites.
3. I don't like_____ (That, those) type of dog.
4. _____ (This, That) book over there is a collector's item.
5. _____ (This, That) kitten that I am holding is very soft!

REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

Using the *-self* Words Correctly

The pronoun *myself* is often used incorrectly, possibly because of the confusion between *I* and *me*. However, *myself* has a different use than either *I* or *me*. Less often, the other pronouns ending in *-self* or *-selves* are used when the nominative or objective case should be used instead. There is a simple rule about using these pronouns:

- *myself, yourself, yourselves, himself, herself, itself, themselves, ourselves*

Please note that there are no such words as *theirselves, hisself,* or *ourself.*

Here is the rule for using the reflexive pronouns:

- Do not use *myself* unless the subject of the sentence is *I*.
- Do not use *yourself* unless the subject of the sentence is *you*.
- Do not use *herself* unless the subject of the sentence is *she*.
- Do not use *himself* unless the subject of the sentence is *he*.
- Do not use *yourself* or *yourselves* unless the subject is *you*.
- Do not use *itself* unless the subject of the sentence is *it*.
- Do not use *ourselves* unless the subject of the sentence is

we.

- Do not use these the pronouns ending in *-self* as the subject of your sentence.

Here are some examples of correct and incorrect uses:

Correct:

- I made that quilt *myself*. (subject is *I*)
- Did you do that by *yourself*? (subject is *you*)
- We should make dinner *ourselves*. (subject is *we*)

Incorrect:

- My friends and *myself* are getting together tomorrow.
- (Don't use *myself* as a subject. Use *I* here.)
- He told Joe and *myself* about the plan. (Don't use *myself* as an object. Use *me*.)
- They are going with my brothers and *ourselves*.
- (Don't use *ourselves* as an object. Use *us*.)

The correct way to write or say the sentences above:

- *My friends and I* are getting together tomorrow. He told *Joe and me* about the plan.
- They are going with my *brothers and us*.

You can use these pronouns as *intensive* pronouns when they don't match the subject:

- I saw *Mary herself* at the meeting.
- It was *Jim himself* in the movie!

EXERCISE 50

USING -SELF PRONOUNS

Mark these sentences as correct or incorrect. Correct the incorrect sentences.

1. He and myself are going camping.
2. I made the apple pie myself.
3. What do you think of yourself now that you have accomplished the big task?
4. Give it to Joe and myself.

5. She told herself that she could do it.
6. That is the car that my husband and myself just bought.
7. She herself said that she wasn't coming with us.

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN ISSUES

As we discussed there are five interrogative pronouns, or pronouns we use to ask questions.

They are:

- who
- whom
- whose
- which
- what

These pronouns are not difficult to use—until we get to.

who and *whom*! However, we talked about this earlier in this chapter when we learned about pronoun cases.

In a question, answer the question, substituting *he* or *him* for *who* or *whom*. If you used *he*, you should use *who* in your question. If you used *him*, you should use *whom* in your question. Here are some examples:

- Who is coming? (*He* is coming. *Who* is correct.)
- With whom are you going? (I am going with *him*. *Whom* is correct.)
- Whom are you talking about? (You are talking about *him*. *Whom* is correct.)
- Who are you? (Tricky one. You are *he*? You are *him*? Actually it is *You are he*.)

When we use a linking verb, such as *are*, we use the nominative case, not the objective.

You can also try to figure out if *who/whom* is the subject or an object in the sentence. If you can figure that out, you will know whether to use *who* (subject) or *whom* (object). It isn't that difficult to figure it out in most cases: Find the verb and find

the subject of the verb. If there is more than one verb, find the subject of all the verbs. If *who/whom* is not a subject of any of the verbs, it must be an object, so use *whom*.

EXERCISE 51

WHO AND WHOM AS INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

Choose the correct answer for each interrogative sentence.

1. (Who, Whom) are you?
2. (Who, Whom) are you taking with you?
3. (Who, Whom) did you appoint to the job?
4. To (who, whom) did you give the money?
5. (Who, Whom) is going to the movies with you.

WHOSE OR WHO'S?

The other problem you might have with interrogative pronouns is deciding whether to use *whose* or *who's*.

Whose is possessive. The possessive pronouns do not have apostrophes: *its*, *ours*, *yours*, *their*, *whose*.

Who's is a contraction meaning *who is*. Contractions *always* have apostrophes: *can't*, *I'm*, *it's*, *he's*, *who's*, and so on.

If you mean *who is*, use *who's*; otherwise, use *whose*. Here are some examples of the two words used correctly:

- *Whose* book is this? (Implies ownership, so use *whose*.)
- *Who's* going with you? (*Who is* going with you, so use *who's*.)
- Do you know *whose* jacket this is? Do you know *who's* going with us?

EXERCISE 52

WHOSE AND WHO'S

Fill in each blank with either *whose* or *who's*.

1. going to the party with you?
2. car is that?
3. I don't know _____ winning the award.

4. Is that the friend _____sister is in the play?
5. I can't tell _____ who!

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Using *Who*, *Which*, and *That* Correctly

Relative pronouns are the pronouns that begin adjective clauses. There are five relative pronouns: *who, whom, whose, which, and that*. Here is an example of each of them used correctly in an adjective clause:

- I am the new employee *who* started yesterday. That is the girl *whom* he took to the dance.
- I live next to the woman *whose* brother is your boss. This dress, *which* is on sale, is too short.
- The dress *that* is on the sale rack is not my style.

Whose probably won't cause you any problems. It is a possessive, as we already learned (as opposed to *who's*, which is a contraction meaning *who is*). And we already discussed the difference between *who* and *whom* earlier in this chapter.

That leaves us with *which* and *that*. *Which* and *that* are used for anything that is nonhuman (yes, including animals), while *who* is used for people.

The main issue with *which* and *that* is which one of them to use in a particular sentence. Looking at the examples above, you will see that the clause using *which* is enclosed in commas; the clause beginning with *that* does not have commas around it.

That is generally the way it is. If you use *which*, use commas around your clause (where you would likely pause if saying it aloud). If you use *that*, no commas are used.

Okay, that is easy enough. But, you ask, when do I use *which* and when do I use *that*? And, if I use *who*, are there commas around the clause or not?

Putting commas around something means you could take it out without losing the meaning of the sentence. It is additional information, and such a cause is called nonessential or

nonrestrictive. If you do not put commas around a clause, the information in the clause is necessary for the sentence and is called essential or restrictive.

It can sometimes be difficult to determine if a clause is essential or not. When using commas in general, it is sometimes said that you put commas where you would pause if saying the sentence aloud. Actually, this is not a bad "rule." It is probably correct a great deal of the time. And if you would pause around your clause, it may very well be additional information that requires a comma.

Let's look at some examples:

- Women who are smart exercise.
- Women, who are smart, exercise.

The first sentence identifies the women who exercise:

women who are smart.

The sentence implies that if you are a smart woman, you exercise.

The second sentence says that women exercise, and that women are also smart. It doesn't limit the smart women to those who exercise. This sentence implies that women exercise, and by the way, women are smart too!

Let's look at more examples of both essential and nonessential clauses:

- The girl *who is sitting in front of me* is my cousin. (This essential clause is identifying which girl.)
- Jill Dean, *who is on a famous TV show*, is the one in the red gown. (This nonessential clause doesn't identify, but instead adds information.)
- They say that yellow, *which is my favorite color*, indicates a sunny personality. (We know what yellow is, so the nonessential clause is added information.)
- The dog *that is barking the loudest* is mine! (This essential clause identifies which dog we are talking about.)
- The dog, *which we adopted from the shelter last year,* is a Pomeranian. (This clause could be added information.)

- The dog *that we adopted from the shelter last year* is a Pomeranian. (The clause could also identify the dog.)

In the last pair of sentences, you could go either way, depending on the context of the rest of the conversation or text. Sometimes it is a little tricky to decide if a clause is essential or nonessential.

EXERCISE 53

ESSENTIAL VERSUS NONESSENTIAL CLAUSES

Fill in the blanks and put in any necessary commas in the following sentences.

1. He is the man (which, who) lost his glasses.
2. My favorite dessert is a fresh-baked cookie (which, that) is soft.
3. That teacher (who, that, which) gave me a D is really mean.
4. This is the book (which, that) I have been telling you about.
5. Maine (that, which) is a state on the East Coast is very beautiful.
6. The dog (that, which, who) is in the yard doesn't live here.
7. You (that, who) doesn't know the multiplication tables shouldn't criticize myspelling!
8. That blue dress in my closet (which, that) I bought on sale doesn't fit.

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS: SINGULAR OR PLURAL?

There are many indefinite pronouns. Here are some of them:

anyone, anything, anybody, everyone, everything, everybody, no one, nothing, nobody, someone, something, somebody, one, each, either, both, several, neither, many, all, none, any, every

SINGULAR INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

All of the indefinite pronouns that end in *-one*, *-thing,* and *-body* are singular. That means you use a singular verb with them, and if there is another pronoun in the sentence that refers back to one of them, you should use a singular pronoun because everything

needs to agree.

Here are some examples:

- Everyone is going. (*Everyone* and *is* are both singular.)
- Somebody is calling you.
- Is anybody there?
- Everybody on the girls' basketball team needs her uniform to practice.

Here is the problem:

Everybody who is going needs to bring his or her ticket.

That sentence is correct. However, most people say *their* instead of *his or her*. If you know *everybody* refers to girls only (as in the example about the girls' basketball team), you can use her. If *everybody* refers to boys only, you can use *him*. However, what if *everybody* refers to both boys and girls, or men and women? Or what if you don't know? Do you have to use *his or her*?

No, you don't. But you can, and it is completely grammatically correct, even though having to use three words can be a little awkward. Here are some options:

Do Not Take These Options:

- Do not use *him* if you could be referring to women too. Do not use *her* if you could be referring to men too.
- Do not alternate, using *her* and then using *him* the next time.
- Do not use *him/her*. Do not use *him (her)*.

What About This Option?

Some people now use *their* as a singular. While some style guides, teachers, etc., might think this is fine, others will not. Here is an example:

Everybody who *is* coming needs to bring *their* passport.

Is it okay? Possibly. Do I like it? No. Would I use it? I would use it in conversation, but I would not use it in a speech, a business letter, a cover letter, or a college essay. I would stick to *him or her*. However, the best option is to rewrite the sentence to avoid the issue entirely. And that is generally easy to do:

Everybody who is coming needs to bring a passport. All those who are coming need to bring passports. All travelers need to bring passports.

There are a number of ways to rewrite. Problem solved!

Some other indefinite pronouns are also singular and take singular verbs: *each, every, either, neither, one, another, much*

- *Each* of us is going.
- *Every* volunteer is bringing *his or her own* lunch. (*or their* or rewrite to just bringing lunch.)
- *Is either* of you coming with me?
- *Neither* one of us is going. One of us is going.
- *Another is coming* with us.
- *Much is said* about unimportant things!

We keep talking about singular verbs. What is a singular verb anyway? Just like nouns, verbs have singular and plural forms. We generally form the plural of a noun by adding an *s*. Verbs, on the other hand, have an *s* in the singular form. Tofigure out the singular and plural forms of a verb, use the verb with *he* and *they*. The verb that sounds right with *he* is the singular form of the verb, while the verb that sounds right with *they* is the plural form of the verb: he *jumps* (singular verb); they *jump* (plural verb).

EXERCISE 54

SINGULAR INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

Fill in the blanks with the correct answer. All of the indefinite pronouns are singular.

1. Everybody should know (his or her, their) buddy's name.
2. Either Jane or Mary can bring (her, their) computer.
3. Neither my brother nor my cousin (is, are) bringing a date.
4. Can anybody in class tie (his or her, their) shoes?
5. Neither boy is eating (his, their) dinner with us.
6. Everyone (is, are) invited to the party.
7. In our office nobody brings (his or her, their) lunch.
8. Someone on the boys' team left (his, their) shoes on the field.

PLURAL INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

Here are the plural indefinite pronouns that take plural verbs:

Both, *few*, *many*, *others*, and *several* (easy to remember because they sound plural)

Here are some examples:

- *Both* of us are coming.
- *Few are* chosen.
- *Many are* attending the wedding.
- *Others are* coming too.
- *Several* of us *play* soccer.

Note that some of the indefinite pronouns can also be used as adjectives. Here are a few of them:

- *Neither dog* is barking.
- *Another chance* will come.
- *Both people* are wearing red.
- *Several cats* live here.

Using the pronoun as an adjective does not affect whether it is singular or plural.

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS THAT CAN BE EITHER SINGULAR OR PLURAL

To complicate matters a little more, some of the indefinite pronouns can be either singular or plural, depending on the noun that they refer to, which is usually in a prepositional phrase that comes right after the pronoun:

all, any, more, most, some, none

All of the *pie is* gone. (singular)/*All* of the *guests* are *here*. (plural)

- *Is any* of the *pie* left? (singular)/*Are any* of the *pieces* left? (plural)
- *More* of the *book* is done. (singular)/*More of* the *pages* are done. (plural)
- *Most* of the *cake* is gone. (singular)/*Most* of the *pieces are* gone. (plural)

- *Some* of the *dress* is blue (singular)/*Some* of *us are* friends. (plural)
- *None* of the *pizza was* eaten (singular)/*None* of the *houses are* occupied. (plural)

EXERCISE 55

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

Fill in the blanks with the correct word.

1. All of the pie (is, are) gone.
2. Most of the pieces (is, are) gone.
3. Several of us (is, are) going.
4. Everyone at the girls' school took (her, their) college entrance tests.
5. Either pizza or spaghetti (is, are) fine with me.
6. Neither of the boys (is, are) getting on the bus.
7. Everyone should hand in (his or her, his/her, his, their) report on time.
8. Both dogs and cats (is, are) my favorite pets.

UNCLEAR ANTECEDENTS

The job of a pronoun is to stand in for a noun, or sometimes another pronoun:

- Joe brought his lunch. (*Joe* is the antecedent of the pronoun *his*.)
- They brought their lunches to the park. (*They* is the antecedent of the pronoun *their*.)

In those two examples, it is easy to see what the antecedent is. However, sometimes when we write we might use a noun or pronoun with an unclear antecedent, making the writing really difficult to understand.

Sometimes the unclear antecedent will be in a previous sentence, and other times the unclear antecedent will be in the same sentence. Here are some examples.

- Joe and Mike went for a hike in the woods near his aunt's house. (We can't tell whose aunt we are talking about, Joe's or Mike's.)
- People were saying mean things behind Mike's back, and Joe was agreeing with them. This hurt his feelings. (Here, we can't really tell what *this* is referring to. What exactly caused hurt feelings? Mean things or the fact that Joe was agreeing. Or both? And whose feelings are hurt? Joe's or Mike's?)

Be careful that your writing is clear with regard to your pronouns. Don't leave any question in the reader's mind about whom or what you are talking. Some of the most common pronouns that tend to be unclear are *it*, *this*, and *which*, so be careful withthem.

TEST
SPECIAL ISSUES WITH PRONOUNS

Part 1—Choose the correct pronoun for each sentence. You may also need to add punctuation.

1. (Who's, Whose) jacket is this?
2. I remember the girl (who, whom) I invited to my first dance.
3. Give the directions to Jim and (me, I, myself).
4. (We, Us) computer programmers are attending the big conference.
5. Anyone who is going on the trip needs to bring (his, his or her, their) passport.
6. I like (this, these) kind of cookies better than the other ones.
7. Neither Jenny nor Jane has (her, their) book.
8. To (who, whom) did you give your ticket?
9. My friends and (I, me) work in the same department.
10. Don't make my friends and (I, me) angry!
11. I think they will separate (we, us) friends when they assign classes.
12. All of the kids have (his or her, their) hoods up in the rain.
13. Do you know (who, whom) has been invited?
14. (Who, Whom) did you say was coming with you?
15. Neither of the boys talked to (his, their) parents yet.
16. He told (me, myself) about his family.
17. Rob and (me, I, myself) are the finalists for the award.
18. Do you think she knows (who's, whose) going to win?
19. I have a hat (which, that) has a pink feather on top!
20. My grade on this paper is C (which, that) is not as good as my usual A.

Part 2—Rewrite the following sentences to make the pronoun clear.

1. Beth saw Maggie as *she* drove by the park.
2. I ate cake, cookies, and ice cream before dinner, *which* made me happy.
3. Bob and Joe were hiking up the mountain when *he* fell and broke his leg.
4. Mother was yelling at my sister when *she* started to cry.
5. The homework was due yesterday, and the report was due today, but I didn't know *this*.

CHAPTER 7
SPECIAL ISSUES WITH VERBS

Verbs have more "variety" than the other parts of speech. While a noun is a noun, a verb has tense, voice, mood, and some forms that can be perplexing. Remember that verbs are either action words or "state of being" words. The most common "state of being" verb is the verb *to be* (I *am*, you *are*, he/she/it *is*, etc.). States of being verbs are also called linking verbs. In this chapter, we will talk about tense, voice, mood, and the other qualities of verbs.

TENSE

We talked about tense in Chapter 1, but let's review. Verb tense refers to time. Since verbs are primarily action words, tense refers to when something was done. Common tenses include present tense (happening now), past tense (already happened), and future tense (will happen). However, it isn't quite that simple: there are actually 12 tenses in the English language. There are six main tenses and each of them has a matching tense called the progressive.

The six main tenses can be put on a timeline:

Past Perfect > Past > Present Perfect > Present

Future > Perfect > Future

Let's see how they are each used:

- **Present Tense:** Used for something happening now.

I walk to work.

- **Present Perfect:** Used for something that happened in the past and may still be happening.

I have walked to work every day this week.

- **Past Tense:** Used for something that happened already.

I walked to work this morning.

- **Past Perfect:** Used for something that happened in the past before something else that also happened in the past.

I had stopped to buy coffee before I arrived at work. (Use of past perfect and then past tense.)

- **Future:** Used for something that will happen in the future.

I will walk to work tomorrow.

- **Future Perfect:** Used for something that will happen in the future before something else in the future.

I will have walked to work by the time you get there in your car.

Each of these six tenses has a matching tense called progressive, which is simply the form with an *-ing* at the end.

Here are the 12 tense forms, using the verb *play*.

- **Present:** I play (no helping verbs)/ Progressive: I am playing
- **Past:** I played (no helping verbs)/ Progressive: I was playing (*was* or *were* are used as helping verbs)
- **Present Perfect:** I have played (uses *have* or *has* as a helping verb)/Progressive: I have been playing
- **Past Perfect:** I had played (uses helping verb *had*)/Progressive: I had been playing
- **Future:** I will play (uses *will* as a helping verb)/Progressive: I will be playing
- **Future Perfect:** I will have played (uses *will have* as helping verbs)/Progressive: I will have been playing

EXERCISE 58

TENSES

Change the verb tense in the following sentences to the tense in parentheses.

1. I eat dinner at six. (future)
2. I danced in New York. (present perfect)
3. I will be going to Paris next year. (present progressive)
4. I always went to school with my sister. (past perfect)
5. I have worked here for ten years. (future perfect)

TENSE TROUBLE

Some of the tenses can cause problems. For example, if you are talking about something that happened in a book you read or a movie you saw, you should use the present tense, rather than the past tense. You may have seen or read it in the past, but it still exists.

In this book, the main character *is looking* for his real mother. He *has not seen* her in 20 years, since she *gave* him up for adoption. He finally *meets* her and they *begin* to establish a mother/son relationship.

In the above example, he *is looking* for his mother and he *meets* her, so those are present tense. However, she *gave* him up for adoption in the past, and he *saw* her in the past, even in the story, so we use past tenses for those verbs.

However, if you are talking about something you did last week, do not use present tense:

Wrong: I go to the movies last week and I see my cousin, who I haven't seen in a long time. We decide to have dinner together, and then I go home.

Right: I went to the movies last week, and I saw my cousin, whom I haven't seen in a long time. We decided to have dinner together, and after dinner I went home.

USING THE PAST PERFECT

If you are talking about two things that happened in the past, but one of them clearly happened before the other, you need to use different tenses for the verbs. For example:

Mary told me that she went to see that movie last week.

Both verbs are in the past tense. However, Mary went to the movies before she told you about it. You need to use the past perfect for the earlier event. The correct way to write or say this sentence is Mary told me that she had gone to see that movie last week.

EXERCISE 59

USING CORRECT TENSES

1. Correct any incorrect verb tenses in these sentences. Some are correct.
2. I went there every year since I was a child.
3. I went there before I was five years old.
4. I will have been working here five years by next year.
5. In the book, Mary was looking for her long lost sister.
6. I was sitting in the movie theater and suddenly I see my cousin!

IRREGULAR VERB FORMS

What do we mean by verb forms? Well, let's look at the verb *play*, which we used in Section 7.2. If we want to use the verb *play* in the past tense, what do we do? We add an *-ed* to the end to make *played*. Since most verbs add *-ed* to make the past tense, we call those verbs regular verbs. Here are some regular verbs: *Kick, want, walk, talk, show, pick, cook, pass, weigh*

Verbs with more than one syllable that ends in *y* usually change the *y* to *i* and then add the *-ed*. We can still call those regular verbs. Some examples are: *Study (studied)*, and *reply (replied)*.

Verbs that already end in *e* just add *-d*. They are also considered regular verbs. Some examples are: *Bake (baked),* and *date (dated)*.

Verbs that end in a short vowel sound and then a consonant often double the consonant to create the past tense form. We still consider these verbs regular. Some examples are: *Hop (hopped)*, and *plan (planned)*.

Some verbs stay the same in the past tense or take on a whole new form. These verbs are irregular. There are actually three forms of a verb. Regular verbs are the same in the second and third forms:

Present Tense	(Not Brang)	Do
Begin	Build	Draw
Bite	Buy	Drink
Blow	Choose	Eat
Break	Come	Fall
Bring	Cut	Fly

Past Tense		
Began	Built	Drew
Bit	Bought	Drank
Blew	Chose	Ate
Broke	Came	Fell
Brought	Cut	Flew
(Not Brung)	Did	

Past Participle		
Have begun	Have done	Forgave
Have bitten	Have drawn	Froze
Have blown	Have drunk	Got
Have broken	Have eaten	Gave
Have brought	Have fallen	Went
(Not boughten)	Have flown	Have forgiven
Have built	Forgive	Have frozen
Have bought	Freeze	Have gotten
Have chosen	Get	Have given
Have come	Give	Have gone
Have cut	Go	

EXERCISE 60

IRREGULAR VERB FORMS

Correct the verb forms in the following sentences. Some are correct.

1. I have swam every night this week.
2. The pond has froze, so we can skate on it.
3. The balloon burst as soon as I blew it up.
4. The tickets costed ten dollars each.
5. He through the ball to me.
6. I have always drank milk every day.
7. The school bell has already rung.
8. Have you went to the new mall yet?
9. I have tore my new shirt!
10. He lended me his sweater.
11. Last year he lead the parade.
12. Yesterday I laid out in the sun all day.
13. The sun rose very early this morning.
14. Sit this book down on the chair.
15. Lie this blanket down in the sun.

VERBS OF BEING

We have previously talked about verbs of being. To review, verbs of being are sometimes called linking verbs because they act as an equal sign joining the words on either side of them. The most common linking verb is the verb *to be* with all its various forms: *I am, you are, he is, I was, you were, they were, I will be, I have been,* etc.

Note that *to be* is a linking verb only when it is the main verb! Sometimes the *to be* verb is a *helping verb*— changing the tense of the main verb. For example:

I am a writer. (*am* is a linking verb, joining *I* and *writer*. *I = writer*)

I am playing chess. (*am* is a helping verb; *playing* is the main verb. *I* does not equal *chess*.)

There are a couple of things about linking verbs that can cause

problems. But before we talk about those, let's list some other linking verbs. *To be* isn't the only one.

These verbs are also linking verbs, some or all of the time. *Look, taste, smell, sound, grow, remain, become, feel*

See if you can imagine the verbs in the first sentence in each pair as equal signs linking the word before them with the word after them. Then, in the second sentence in each pair, see how the verb is not a linking verb, but an action verb:

The cake looks good.	I taste the pizza.
The pizza tastes good.	I smell coffee.
The coffee smells fresh.	I sound the horn.
The music sounds loud.	The flowers grow tall.
The room grows quiet.	She remained in her seat.
It remained noisy.	(Generally not used as an action verb)
It became clear to me.	
I feel sad about that.	I feel the cat's fur.
I look at the cake.	

ADJECTIVES AFTER LINKING VERBS

As we discussed, adverbs are used to modify verbs. However, adverbs modify only action verbs. We use adjectives, not adverbs, after linking verbs. If you look at the examples in the previous section, you will see that in the first column, the words after the linking verb are adjectives: *good, fresh, loud, quiet, noisy, clear, sad*.

Here are a few examples of sentences with action verbs followed by adverbs:

She plays piano *well*.
He talks very *quietly*.
He walked up the stairs *hurriedly*.

The adjective after the linking verb usually doesn't cause any trouble. Here is a case where it can cause a problem:

I feel bad about this. (Not *badly*)
Many people say *I feel badly*, but that is not correct.
Badly is an adverb.
Bad is an adjective and should follow the linking verb *feel*.

But what if you feel *good*? Can you use *well* (an adverb)? Yes, you can. Although *well* is an adverb, you can use it to mean *a state of health*, so in this case either *good* or *well* is fine.

PRONOUNSAFTER LINKING VERBS

We talked about pronoun cases. After a linking verb, we use a nominative case pronoun. In this instance, the linking verb will usually be the *to be* verb. After a *to be* verb, you use the pronoun you would use as a subject, not an object. Here are some examples:

Is Nancy there? Yes, this is *she*. (not this is *her*)
It is *they* who are coming with us. (not *them*)
It is *I* who played the trick on you. (not *me*)

Does that sound a little too formal for you? Yes, I know it does! I would recommend if you are writing something important you do it correctly. In conversation, you can certainly be more relaxed!

VOICE: ACTIVE OR PASSIVE?

Verbs, in addition to having tense, have a voice: active and passive. These two voices are pretty easy to understand:

In active voice, the subject of the sentence is performing the action of the verb. For example:

She drove to school.

In passive voice, the subject does not perform the action of the verb, but receives the action. For example:

She was driven to school by her brother. *She* is still the subject, and *was driven* is still the verb, but this sentence is passive because *she* didn't drive.

Here is the rule: Use active voice most of the time in your writing.

It makes your writing much stronger.

There are a couple of instances in which you use passive voice:

- Use passive voice when you don't know who performed the action. For example:

The school was built in 1960.

- Use passive voice when it isn't important who performed the action, or you don't want to say who performed the action. For example:

He was awarded the Medal of Honor. It doesn't matter who gave him the award. The important thing is that he received it. However, perhaps the President of the United States gave him the award, and that is the important thing. In that case, you might want to use the active voice and say, "The President of the United States gave him the Medal of Honor."

EXERCISE 61

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Identify each verb as active or passive:

1. The ball was thrown by the rookie.
2. I sat in the front row at the game!
3. The game went into overtime.
4. The popcorn was bought by my friend.
5. After the game we drove home. Rewrite each sentence in the active voice:
6. He was bitten by a mosquito.
7. The museum was built by ABC Construction.
8. The car was driven by the salesman.
9. The dog paced back and forth before he was fed by his owner.
10. The book was donated to the library by my aunt and her family.

WHAT IS SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD, ANYWAY?

Verbs don't just have tense and voice. They also have a mood. Most of the time mood doesn't pose a problem, but sometimes it can.

There are generally considered to be three moods:

- The indicative mood is used most of the time. Regular, old statements are indicative mood.
- Imperative mood includes imperative sentences, which are commands (*Tell me a story*, for example).
- The subjunctive mood is the one that can be a little confusing, Subjunctive mood is used for sentences with commands and recommendations, and for things that are not true.

COMMANDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some examples of the subjunctive mood used with commands or recommendations:

- I demand that you be there to answer questions. In this sentence, *you be there* is subjunctive. Generally, you would say *you are there*.
- I recommend that she cook dinner for the party on Friday. In this sentence *she cook* is in the subjunctive. Generally, you would say *she cooks*.
- Most of the time, we don't have a problem with this use of the subjunctive. It just *sounds right* to us.

THINGS THAT ARE NOT TRUE

Here is where some people have problems with the subjunctive. Your clues here are clauses that are introduced with *as if*, *as though*, and *if*. What follows is generally not true. Another clue is a clause following the verb *wish*. Here are some examples:

I wish I *were* rich. It is not correct in this case to say I wish I *was* rich. You need the subjunctive because you *aren't* rich. Notice that although the sentence is present tense, subjunctive looks like the past tense.

If I *were* rich, I would buy a big mansion. It is not correct to say If I *was* rich. You need the subjective because you aren't rich.

She acts as though she *were* the boss. We use subjunctive here because she is not the boss; she just acts that way.

He speaks as if he *were* from Britain, but I know he is American. We use subjunctive because he is *not* from Britain.

In the present tense subjunctive, you see how we actually use the past tense form of the verb. If we want to use the subjunctive in the past tense, we go back further and use the past perfect! Here are some examples:

If I had known you were coming, I would have baked you a cake. (Not *if I knew you were coming*...)

EXERCISE 62

USING SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

Rewrite the following sentences correctly. Some may already be correct.

1. If I was you, I would call them.
2. If I were company president, I would do things differently.
3. She looks as if she were tired.
4. She acts as if she were a queen.
5. I recommend that you are there for the meeting.
6. I sure wish I was rich like you!
7. I told her I thought she should be there.

USING STRONG VERBS

When you write, you want to use strong verbs that tell what is going on. You will then need fewer adverbs and adjectives. One of the verbs you want to limit is the *to be* verb, which is not very interesting.

Instead of *she is tall*, you could say *she stands over six feet tall*.

Instead of *it is a rainy day*, you could say *the rain is pouring down*.

Instead of *the diamond is very pretty*, you could say *the diamond sparkles on her finger*.

Just be aware that overusing verbs like *is* and *has* can be boring in your writing. You want to be more precise in your descriptions.

TEST
SPECIAL ISSUES WITH VERBS

Part 1—Choose the correct answer.

1. I have (brung, brought) you the newspaper.
2. I (shrank, shrunk) my jeans in the dryer.
3. Can we skate on the pond that has (froze, frozen)?
4. He did (good, well) on the exam.
5. It is (her, she) who is wearing the dog costume.
6. I told my dog to (lay, lie) down.
7. (Set, sit) the cake on the counter.
8. If I (wasn't, weren't) so scared, I would just jump into the deep water.
9. The sun has (risen, rose) over the horizon.
10. I recommend that you (are, be) more polite next time.
11. Every day I (sat, have sat) in this tree.
12. My balloon (burst, bursted) right after I blew it up.
13. I feel (bad, badly) about the broken vase.
14. My stomach just (growled, has growled), so it must be time for dinner!
15. I (lay, laid) my backpack down right over there.
16. The water has (laid, lain) there all day.
17. She had (gone, went) to get some supplies at the stationery store.
18. I wish I (was, were) going with you.
19. Yesterday I say to my friend that I know who you are.
20. The fish smells badly, so I don't think I will eat it.

Part 2—Identify each sentence as written in the active or passive voice.

1. Follow this street for about seven miles.
2. The map shows the shortest route.
3. The cake was baked by my favorite aunt.
4. Wait until the sun goes down.

5. I have given you all the money I have.

Part 3—Identify the tense of the main verb in each sentence.

1. I *wanted* to go to the movies tonight.
2. It *is* true that she told a lie.
3. I *will have been* out of school for five years when you graduate.
4. I *have seen* my friends every day this week.
5. Where *are* you *going*?

CHAPTER 8
COMMAS

TO COMMA OR NOT TO COMMA: THAT IS THE QUESTION

Commas, commas, commas: nothing confuses writers, editors, students, and everyone else more than commas. Some of us don't like commas and use too few of them. Others of us don't really know where they belong and use too many of them.

There are many comma rules. There are also some places where a comma is optional. The main use of a comma is to make writing easier and clearer to read, but there are many situations where a comma rule really doesn't make anything clearer but is expected of good writers. What to do, what to do . . .

In this chapter, I will give you the comma rules. But more than lengthy explanations, I will give you examples. Sometimes an example is worth a thousand words of explanation.

There are two basic comma rules:

1. Don't use a comma unless you have a reason to use one.
2. Use a comma anywhere where not using one would cause the reader confusion.

See what I mean? Here are the rules:

SERIES COMMA (OXFORD COMMA)

One of the most common uses of the comma is in a series. This can be a series of words, phrases, or sentences.

I brought oranges, apples, bananas, pears, and grapes. (series of words)

I went to the museum, to the mall, to the post office, and to school. (series of phrases)

Mary went to see a movie, Mom went to visit Grandma, Dad went to an auto race, and I stayed home. (series of clauses/sentences)

So what about that final comma—the one before the *and*. Do you need that one? That one is famously called the Oxford comma because it was first used by the Oxford University Press. Some people use it and others don't. Unless you are following a particular style guide that dictates whether or not to use it, it is really up to you. The only advice I have is this: whether or not you decide to use the Oxford comma, use it or don't use it consistently within one piece of writing. Don't switch around.

Warning: Sometimes leaving out the Oxford comma can cause confusion. Sometimes putting it in can also cause confusion, so watch out for these instances:

The President of the United States, the actress and model attended the party. (This sentence could be read as meaning the President was an actress and model.) *The President, the actress, and the model were at the party.* (That is much clearer!)

COMPOUND SENTENCES

Use a comma before the conjunction in compound sentences (two or more complete sentences joined by a conjunction like *and*, *but*, or *so*. Examples:

- I live in Texas, and my brother lives in Utah.
- I would love to go, but I don't have any money.

If the part of the sentence after the conjunction is not a complete sentence, do not use a comma.

- He went to the grocery store and bought some items for the party

In the above sentence, the words after *and* are not a complete sentence; there is no subject (*bought some items for the party*).

If the two parts of the compound sentence are very short and closely related, you do not need the comma.

I played the piano and my brother danced.

Sometimes authors will choose not to put a comma in a compound sentence. Unless the sentence is difficult to read,

this is not a great problem. However, I would recommend using the comma.

If the two (or more) parts of the compound sentence are complicated and already contain commas, it is wise to separate the two sentences with a semicolon (;) rather than a comma. Example:

Harry, who is a surgeon, went to school on the East Coast; but his brother, Paul, went to school in Europe, where he met his wife.

Note that *then* is *not* one of the FANBOYS conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, so, yet*) and cannot be used to connect two sentences unless you also use a conjunction or you use a semicolon. Example:

My sister went to the mall, then she came home. (incorrect)
My sister went to the mall, and then she came home. (correct)
My sister went to the mall; then she came home. (correct)

BETWEEN TWO ADJECTIVES

Use a comma between two adjectives in a row that both describe the same noun. You can usually tell if you need a comma by putting *and* between the adjectives. If it makes sense with *and*, you need a comma:

The dress had a big, blue bow. (*Big* and *blue* both describe the bow.)

She wore a bright blue dress. (Here, there is no comma because *bright* describes *blue*, rather than *dress*.)

The old, torn dress was not appropriate to wear to the wedding. (*Old and torn dress* make sense.)

I have a new black purse. (*New and black purse?*
Probably not. No comma needed.)

EXERCISE 63

SOME IMPORTANT COMMA RULES

Add commas where necessary for series, compound sentences, or consecutive adjectives. Some sentences may be correct as they are.

1. Joe was late for work but he was on time for the meeting.
2. Please buy eggs, milk, bread, and butter when you go to the store.
3. I was late for school and late for dinner too.
4. I bought a bright blue dress for the party.
5. I found some valuable jewels in my grandmother's old dusty trunk.
6. I brought pens, pencils, paper and a notebook.

INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

A comma is used after certain words, phrases, and clauses that come at the beginning of a sentence. Here are some examples of where commas should and shouldn't be used.

First, we will examine the situation. Next, we will form a plan. (Transition words)

In my opinion, we are on the right track. (Introductory phrase)

Indeed, I think you are correct.

Well, I think you should try to go with your friends.

Yes, I think you are correct.

By the way, I brought your book back to you.

INTRODUCTORY PHRASES

In Paris, we saw the Eiffel Tower. (Introductory, short prepositional phrases don't really require commas after them.)

In Paris last September, we saw the Eiffel Tower.

According to the instructions, we should do it my way.

Walking down the street, the man dropped his heavy bag.

Make sure that when you use a participial phrase, like that last example, the person doing the action is right after the phrase. Otherwise, you will have a misplaced modifier and quite possibly a silly sentence:

Walking down the street, the man dropped his bag. (correct)
Walking down the street, the bag fell to the ground. (NO)

INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES

While I was walking, I ran into a friend I hadn't seen in years.
After we ate dinner, we went for a long walk.
Because we had run out of money, we couldn't buy any snacks at the movies.

Those sentences, which begin with adverb clauses, can all be turned around. Generally, when you turn them around, you omit the comma.

I ran into a friend I hadn't seen in years ***while I was walking.***

We went for a long walk ***after we ate dinner.***

We couldn't buy any snacks at the movie ***because we had run out of money.***

Do not use a comma after introductory phrases if they are immediately followed by a verb:

Into the cave in the middle of the night ***came*** a bear.

Out of the blue ***came*** a man wearing a clown costume.

To be an astronaut ***is*** my ambition.

INTERRUPTING MATERIAL

Use a comma around elements that interrupt the flow of the sentence, whether they are words, phrases, or clauses. Sometimes, if the element is required for the sentence to make sense, it is called restrictive, and no commas should be used.

COMMAS NEEDED

My brother, Ken, is in the Army. (The commas here imply that we don't need to mention your brother's name, either because he is your only brother or because the listener or reader knows

whom you are talking about.)

My neighbor, the chief of police, is hardly ever home.

The cake, chocolate with vanilla frosting, was gone in a minute!

This dress, by the way, was on sale.

I say, indeed, you should come with us.

Mr. Paul, who has taught at the school for many years, is retiring this year.

My brother, if he can get the time off, will go with us.

The detective looked at the evidence and, if he found anything unusual, he didn't tell the news reporter about it.

NO COMMAS NEEDED

My brother Ken is in the Army. (As opposed to the very same sentence up above, let's assume you have more than one brother and you need to identify which brother you are talking about in this sentence. If that is the case, use no comma. This is called a *restrictive* element. It restricts the brother to *Ken*, not one of your other brothers.)

My neighbor across the street is very noisy. (Identifies your noisy neighbor as the one across the street, as opposed to the neighbor next door, for example.)

The cake with the white frosting was gone in a minute! (Using no commas identifies the cake as the one with the white frosting, not another cake with a different type of frosting.)

All the teachers who have worked at the school for more than 25 years are retiring this year. (The clause in bold is necessary to identify which teachers are retiring.)

EXERCISE 64

COMMAS FOR INTRODUCTORY AND INTERRUPTING ELEMENTS

Insert any necessary commas into these sentences. Some may be correct as they are.

1. My cousin who is in college is graduating next year.
2. Finally, I got a dog!
3. First you must add this column, and then you can subtract

this number.

4. In the cupboard on the top shelf you should see the sugar.
5. Although I live far away from my sister I see her frequently.
6. My brother Jack is the tallest of all my brothers.
7. The pen that I have in my hand was very expensive.
8. Next, put the chocolate chips in the batter.
9. This is in my opinion the wrong way to do it!
10. In December we usually get several feet of snow.

OTHER COMMON USES FOR COMMAS

The following sections discuss the other important uses for commas: *etc., i.e., e.g.*

If you are using any of these abbreviations in the middle of a sentence, use commas both before and after the abbreviation. Since *etc.* is generally used at the end of the sentence, just use a comma before it. For more information about these three abbreviations, see Chapter 12. Etc. means *and so on* or *and the others*; e.g. means *for example*; and i.e. means *that is*. Here are some examples:

Bring a pencil, pen, paper, erasers, etc.
Bring something to write with, e.g., a pencil.
I speak only one language, i.e., my native language, English.

DATES

When you are writing the date on the top of a letter or where it isn't in the text (in a sentence), use a comma between the day and year.

August 29, 2013

Whenever, and wherever, you write the date, if you omit the day; you do not need a comma between the month and the year.

August 2013

If you write the date in text, the year is followed by a comma if you have included the day. The two examples below are both correct:

The March 2014 issue of *Golf Digest* has an article you should read.

The March 5, 2014, issue of *Golf Digest* has an article you should read.

COMMAS WITH NUMBERS

Use a comma in numbers of four or more numerals.

1,000

12,000

350,000

2,000,000

Use a comma to separate two numbers that happen to fall in a row in a sentence (or, better yet, rewrite the sentence to avoid the situation).

Out of the total of 350, 45 were women.

WITH TOO

If you use *too*, meaning *also*, in the middle of a sentence, it is set off with commas. However, if *too* is used at the end of the sentence, there is no comma.

I, too, would love to see that play.

I would love to see that play too.

DIRECT ADDRESS

When you are talking to someone using their name, regardless of where the name falls in the sentence, use commas to set off the name. Here are some examples, including examples using another word that also needs to be set off.

Charlie, eat that sandwich! Eat that sandwich, Charlie!

Eat that sandwich, Charlie, and then you can go out to play.

No, Charlie, you cannot go out to play.

Well, Charlie, did you finish your sandwich yet?

SETTING OFF ACADEMIC DEGREES

A comma is used to set off academic degrees. Here are some examples.

Marc Jones, Ph.D., is speaking at graduation. Peter Wolf, M.D., has just started to work here.

LETTERS AND EMAILS

Use a comma after both the greeting and the closing of a letter, note, or email. (In business letters or business emails, the greeting is generally followed by a colon rather than a comma.

Dear Jerry,

Hi, Stacy,

Yours truly,

Sincerely,

ADDRESSES

Commas are used in addresses, whether they are on an envelope, on the top of a letter, or used in a sentence. Here are some examples:

Envelope: Margaret Toll
151 Broadway Avenue
Savannah, Georgia 21456
Text: I live at 15 Market Street, Boston, MA 02215.

Use a comma to set off the name of the state in text, when it follows the name of a city.

I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in a small farmhouse.

I was born in Atlanta in a small farmhouse.

COMPANY NAMES

Spell and punctuate company names exactly as the company does, whether you think it is correct or not.

Contrasting Expressions and Elements

Use a comma in contrasting expressions (they generally begin with *but*, *not*, or *rather than*).

I like chocolate, but not milk chocolate. I like nonfat milk, not cream.

I like my pizza with pesto, rather than with tomato sauce.

Use a comma in contrasting expressions.

Here today, gone tomorrow.

Garbage in, garbage out

WHEN A WORD IS LEFT OUT

Sometimes when a word is left out of a sentence (intentionally), the sentence is difficult to understand. Use a comma if that is the case. Most of the time, when a word is left out, the sentence is perfectly clear.

The fact of the matter is, they never liked us. (*That* before *they* is left out.)

This sentence is perfectly clear without a comma:

I know she doesn't like us.

COMMAS FOR EMPHASIS

You may use a comma for emphasis, but don't overdo it. Here are some examples:

I agree, completely, with what you have to say.

I, myself, will bake and decorate the wedding cake.

UNUSUAL WORD ORDER IN A SENTENCE

If you choose to write a sentence that has an unusual word order, you might need a comma for clarity.

Why he wants to move to Michigan, I will never understand.

SETTING OFF HOWEVER AND THEREFORE

When *however* and *therefore* are in the middle of a sentence, sometimes you can set them off with commas. Other times you will need a period or semicolon on one side of them. How do you know? Take out the *however* or *therefore*. Read the sentence. If the sentence is fine without *however* or *therefore,* you can set the word off with commas. But if you are left with a run-on sentence, you need a period or semicolon before *however,* or *therefore*. (Instead, you can add a conjunction like *and* or *but*.)

I know, however, that he is coming with us. (*I know that he is coming with us* is fine. Therefore, commas are enough.)

I know that he is coming with us; however, I don't know how long he is staying. (*I know that he is coming with us, I don't know how long he is staying* is a run on. You need a semicolon before *however*.)

ANYPLACE WHERE NOT USING A COMMA WOULD BE CONFUSING

Here is the best rule of all! Use a comma wherever not using one would be confusing. Here are some examples:

After eating ants invaded our blanket. (Place a comma after *eating* to avoid eating ants!)

The two dresses were blue with white dots, and yellow with red dots.

EXERCISE 65

MORE COMMA RULES

Insert commas where necessary. One or more of the sentences may not need commas.

1. I was born in Boston Massachusetts in July 1990.
2. The population of Ourtown is 67000.
3. The math department offers algebra, geometry, statistics etc.
4. I too would love to visit France.

5. I agree completely that you need a vacation.
6. I love scary movies; therefore I want to see the new monster movie.
7. Please mow the lawn, Phil.
8. I counted the books, and there are 75 35 of them children's books.
9. There is an old saying, "Here today gone tomorrow."
10. What he meant I don't know.

DON'T PUT COMMAS HERE!

Although there are many comma rules and places where you do need commas, there are also places where you don't put commas. Don't use a comma unless you have a reason. Here are some places where you don't use commas.

1. Do not use a comma before a FANBOYS conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) if the words that follow the conjunction are not a complete sentence.
    - I washed the dishes and swept the floors. (*Swept the floors* is not a complete sentence.)
    - Would you like pizza or chicken? (Chicken is not a complete sentence, and two items do not make a series.)

    The conjunction *but* is an exception, and you can use a comma before it when the words on either side of it contrast.
    - She is tiny, but strong.
    - He took the sofa, but left the chairs and table.
2. Do not use a comma before or after something in parentheses unless the sentence would have a comma there anyway.
    - Right: The company president (he is my cousin) offered me a job.
    - Wrong: The company president (he is my cousin), offered me a job.
    - Right: Although he is my cousin (the company

president), I think I would have gotten the job anyway. (If you left out what is in parentheses, there would still be a comma.)

3. You do not need a comma after Jr. or Sr. or Esq. in a name.
    - Martin Luther King, Jr. is a well-known American.
4. Never put a comma between a subject and its verb unless there is an interrupter set off in commas between them.
    - Wrong use of comma: Hannah and her brothers, went to Paris last week.
    - Wrong use of comma: The bright blue dress, is in the closet.
5. Never put a comma between a verb and its object.
    - Wrong use of comma: He threw, the ball into the window.
    - Wrong use of comma: He is baking, a cake and brownies.
6. Never put a comma between an adjective and its noun.
    - Wrong use of comma: She wore a blue, dress to the party. (No comma between *blue* and *dress*.)
    - Wrong use of comma: It was a huge, airplane.
7. Never put a comma between a noun or verb and a prepositional phrase that immediately follows it.
    - Wrong use of comma: She was making cookies, in the kitchen.
    - Wrong use of comma: There are football fields, tennis courts, and a swimming pool, at the new school. (There should be no comma after *pool*.)
8. Sometimes you use a comma to avoid confusion. However, sometimes putting a comma in causes confusion, so you leave it out.
    - Richard, my boss, and I are taking a break. In this sentence you can't tell if the writer is talking about two or three people. Is Richard my boss? We can't tell. It is best to rewrite a confusing sentence like this. Here are two possibilities:
    - Richard, who is my boss, and I are taking a break. I am

taking a break with Richard and my boss.

A FEW HELPFUL NOTES

1. Sometimes you have a choice of whether or not to use a comma.

   Of course, I will go with you.

   Of course I will go with you.

2. If you are setting off something with commas, make sure you have your commas in the correct place. To check read the sentence without the words within the commas.

If it makes sense, you are okay. (Incidentally, the same rule applies for words set off by dashes.)

This car is as good as, but not better, *than my old one*. (*This car is as good as than my old one* doesn't make sense.)

This car is as good as, but not better than, *my old one*. (Now, the sentence is correct.)

TEST
COMMAS

Some of these sentences are missing commas; some of them have commas that don't belong there. Some sentences are correct as they are. Rewrite the incorrect sentences. Write "correct" if the sentence is fine as it is.

These are comma mistakes only.

1. Angie made a great presentation and the audience loved it.
2. Bring me a pencil, a pen and some paper, Jack.
3. In June, 2000, my sister was born in New York.
4. The January 6, 1950 issue of this magazine is very, valuable.
5. Send the money to me at 555 Wisconsin St. Bakersfield, CA, 93677.
6. My dog, whose name is Fred is a terrier.
7. Because of the wind we, can't sail today.
8. The difficult classes, e.g. calculus are offered only in the evening.
9. Yes, we are all going on vacation to Miami, Florida.
10. The woman who is wearing the yellow hat, is my aunt
11. She is very thin but very strong too.
12. He cleaned the house, and then mowed the lawn.
13. When I took the exam for the second time I passed it; however I did poorly the first time I tried it.
14. We visited an old beautiful castle on a warm sunny day.
15. Uncle Joe, Aunt Betty, and I love to play Scrabble, whenever we have the chance.
16. As we were eating ants invaded our picnic blanket.
17. The two dogs were black and white and brown and white, respectively.
18. I was late for school because there was traffic.
19. The suit, that is on the back rack, is on sale for $100.
20. John Rivers, M.D. received his degree from Winchell College, in Nebraska.

CHAPTER 9
PUNCTUATION (EXCEPT COMMAS)

Punctuation makes our writing easier to read. Without punctuation, our words would be just that—words. Punctuation puts in the pauses, the stops, the tones of questions, and exclamations. It also shows what is possessive, what a contraction is, and what an abbreviation is.

PERIODS (.)

Obviously, the most common use of the period is to put one at the end of a sentence unless the sentence is a question or an exclamation.

If a question is indirect, rather than direct, you will also use a period rather than a question mark:

He asked who was coming with us.

The question is how to find out who did it.

ABBREVIATIONS

Periods are used in some abbreviations. For example, Jr., Sr., Dr., Mr., Ms., Mrs., Esq., and Ph.D. generally have a period at the end.

If an abbreviation that uses a period comes at the end of the sentence, only one period is used.

I was always in awe of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Abbreviations that are made up of all capital letters usually do not use periods:

IBM, FBI, YMCA, NHL, VIP (but *Washington D.C.* does have periods)

Some words in our language are merely "shortened" and should not have periods after them. Here are some examples: *typo, exam, memo, limo, logo, info, lab, rep, photo*

Generally speaking, most abbreviations should be avoided in the text; some are fine to use in tables or graphs. In the text, avoid using abbreviations for names of the months or days, measurements, etc.

There are so many abbreviations it is best to look up the correct punctuation of a specific abbreviation if you are unsure.

If an abbreviation or acronym (an acronym is an abbreviated form of a name that uses all capital letters and spells out its own word, such as OSHA or EPCOT) might not be understood by your reader, it is customary to spell it out the first time it is used and to put the acronym in parentheses. Then the other times you use it, you can use just the acronym or abbreviation.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Hints for Using Abbreviations

1. When in doubt, don't use an abbreviation. Spell the words out.
2. The abbreviations *a.m.* and *p.m.* generally use periods.
3. *U.S.* is commonly used as an adjective, but United States is spelled out as a noun: *U.S. Navy*, but *the population of the United States*.
4. The abbreviation *OK* has no periods, but it is better to just spell it out (*okay*).
5. When in doubt about an abbreviation, look it up or spell it out.

DECIMALS

Periods are used in decimals: 11.05, 3.2, $5.00

Lists or Outlines

Periods are usually used after the numbers in a numbered list, or numbers and letters in an outline:

1.
2.
a.
b.

MEASUREMENTS

Measurements are often abbreviated. In the text you can always spell them out. However, they do deserve some special attention here.

Just remember that although *ft* (foot), *yd* (yard), and *m* (meter) are not followed by periods, *in.* (inch) always is, to avoid confusion with the preposition *in*.

EXERCISE 66

USING PERIODS

There are no periods in any of these sentences. Insert periods where necessary.

1. Dr L Martin, MD is my skin doctor
2. My cousin, Walter Hummel, Jr used to work for the FBI
3. He stands 6 ft and 3 in tall
4. I work at H Hall Corp
5. Please meet me at my house at 7:45 pm
6. Here is my address: 54 Elm St, Albany, NY

EXCLAMATION POINTS (!)

Exclamation points are used to express emotion after a complete sentence, an expression, or a word (interjection).

Help! The house is on fire!

Gee whiz! Did you see the size of that dog!

Notice that in the second example, the sentence is actually a question. However, it is said with such emotion that you could use an exclamation point instead of a question mark.

TIPS FOR USING EXCLAMATION POINTS CORRECTLY

1. Do not overuse them. (Yes, I did in this book.)
2. Do not use two or more in a row (!!).
3. Do not use them with question marks (!?).

A novelist told me that an author should use no more than two exclamation points in an entire novel. And they really have no place at all in formal writing. So please don't use them unnecessarily! (like there)

The rules for using exclamation points with quotation marks are the same as the rules for question marks with quotations.

EXERCISE 67

EXCLAMATION POINTS

1. Insert exclamation points where necessary.
2. She shouted that there was a fire in the kitchen
3. She shouted, "There's a fire in the kitchen"
4. I hate it when you say to me, "I forgot to call you"
5. If you are just joking, don't ever shout, "There's a fire in the kitchen"

QUESTION MARKS (?)

Obviously, the most common use of the question mark is after a question!

Besides putting a question mark after a complete sentence that is a question, you also use a question mark after a question that may not be a complete sentence:

Why? When?

Did he say he was coming with us? When?

If a short question is embedded within a sentence, set off the question with commas (or sometimes even a dash will do) and use a question mark after it.

I can come with you, can't I, if I finish all my chores?

You can also use a question mark at the end of a statement if it is said with the tone of a question:

You expect to go to the party dressed like that?

QUESTION MARKS WITH QUOTATIONS

We will cover this topic later in this chapter, but for now; Question marks can go either inside or outside quotes, depending on the sentence. If the entire sentence is a question, but the quote isn't, the question mark goes outside. If the quote is a question, but the entire sentence is not, quotes go inside. If both the quote and the sentence are questions, use one question mark, inside the quotes.

He asked, "When will we get there?" Did he say, "I hope we get there soon"? Did he ask, "When will we get there?"

EXERCISE 68

QUESTION MARKS

Insert question marks in the necessary places in the following sentences. Some sentences may not need any question marks.

1. She asked if I could go with her tonight
2. Do you know the way
3. Did she say, "I can't go with you this time"
4. Did he ask, "When will we be there"
5. He asked, "When will we be there"

SEMICOLONS (;)

Despite the fears that some people have about using them, semicolons are not too complicated. Unlike commas, semicolons really have only three rules. A semicolon is not interchangeable with either a comma or a colon but is probably closer to a comma than to a colon.

COMPOUND SENTENCES

Use a semicolon in a compound sentence (two sentences that could be joined together with the conjunctions *for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so*—the FANBOYS) to join the two sentences if you don't want to use the FANBOYS conjunction. Or, alternately, use a semicolon to join two closely related sentences instead of using a period. The second part of the sentence, following the

semicolon, does not begin with a capital letter.

I took an airplane, but my brother took the train.

I took an airplane; my brother took the train.

If you looked at the second sentence and thought that however might fit in nicely, you are right. However, you will need to put a semicolon (or period) before it. *However* is not a conjunction, and you cannot separate two sentences with it.

My brother took a train. My sister and I flew.

My brother took a train; my sister and I flew.

The examples above are all correct. It is your choice whether you want to use (1) comma with conjunction, (2) semicolon, or (3) period.

Incidentally, two sentences connected with a conjunction or with a semicolon are both called compound sentences.

CONFUSING SERIES

Check out this sentence:

Please pack these items for our trip: jeans, dress pants, shorts, tee shirts, white, blue, and red uniform shirts, socks, and black and brown shoes.

Or this one:

We will be joined in the meeting by John, the president of the company, Sandy, the director of the department, Larry, Carmen, the personnel director, and the treasurer.

Both sentences are difficult to understand. Rewriting can solve the problem. Otherwise, you will want to use semicolons to separate the main items so that you can see what goes with what:

Please pack these items for our trip: jeans; dress pants; shorts; tee-shirts; white, blue, and red uniform shirts; socks; and black and brown shoes.

We will be joined in the meeting by John, the president of the

company; Sandy, the director of the department; Larry; Carmen, the personnel director; and the treasurer. (Now you that there will be five people joining you.)

Don't use a semicolon for other things. Semicolons never replace colons for introducing lists, etc.

COMPOUND SENTENCES WITH SERIES OR OTHER COMMAS

If you have a compound sentence, and one or both of the sentences in it already have a series of commas, you might want to separate the two sentences with a semicolon rather than just a comma for clarity. You can either leave the conjunction between the two sentences or take it out.

She visited Rome, Paris, and Barcelona, and London, Belfast, and Stockholm are on her itinerary for the next trip. (unclear)

She visited Rome, Paris, and Barcelona; and London, Belfast, and Stockholm are on her itinerary for her next trip. (clearer) (You can take out the *and* right after the semicolon, or you can leave it there.

Of course, you can also rewrite the sentence to avoid the issue.)

COLONS (:)

When we think of colons, we most often think of them introducing lists—and that is a common use of a colon. There are, however, some other common uses for a colon:

DIGITAL TIME

There is a colon between the hours and minutes in digital time.

12:45 means 45 minutes past the hour of 12.

SALUTATION OF A BUSINESS LETTER

While you put a comma after the salutation (greeting) of a friendly letter or email, you put a colon after the salutation of a business letter.

Dear Sirs:

Dear President Hamilton:

BETWEEN THE TITLE AND SUBTITLE OF A BOOK

While you do not put a colon on the cover itself, if you write the name of a book in text and want to include the subtitle as well as the title, use a colon between the two.

I am reading *The Best Little Grammar Book Ever: 101 Ways to Impress With Your Writing and Speaking*.

A colon is also used to separate a chapter from a verse in scripture references.

Romans 1:16

IN A COMPOUND SENTENCE

We have already talked about using either a comma and a FANBOYS conjunction, or a semicolon to separate the two parts of a compound sentence. In some instances, you can also use a colon, but be very careful. You can use a colon if the second sentence is either an explanation of the first sentence or a result of the first sentence. However, in either case, it is not necessary to use the colon. A semicolon or a comma with a conjunction is also fine.

He brought a variety of vegetables to the party: he was going to make a salad. (No capital letter is required to begin the second sentence.)

INTRODUCING A QUOTE

Sometimes a colon is used to introduced a quote of a sentence or longer (not in dialogue).

Mayor Jones said in his speech to the city: "I am committed to cutting crime in the city. We have already made great strides in this area."

INTRODUCING LISTS

Finally, we get to the most common use for colons: introducing lists. (Yes, the preceding sentence is correct. You need a complete sentence before the colon, but not after it.)

Your list can be vertical or horizontal. Just remember that you need to have a complete sentence before your colon. Don't put a colon after a verb.

Please *bring pencils*, pens, and paper to the test. (correct)
Please *bring: pencils,* pens, and paper to the test. (incorrect)
Please bring these items with you: pencils, pens, and paper. (correct)

Here are some examples of horizontal lists.

Please bring the following items to the test:
Pencils
Pens
Paper
Please bring
Pencils
Pens
Paper
Please bring
Pencils,
Pens, and
Paper.

All of the above lists are correct. This one is not. No colon should be used in this case.

Please bring: pencils pens paper

Notes: If your list items are complete sentences, they should be followed by periods. If one list item is a complete sentence, all list items should be complete sentences, and they should all be constructed similarly. You can use bullets or numbers before your list items if you wish. If you use numbers (such as in steps), the order of your items should be important. Otherwise, don't use numbers.

Colons are also used in citations and bibliographical entries. Consult a style guide for information about citations.

EXERCISE 69

SEMICOLONS AND COLONS

These sentences have missing colons and semicolons. Put the correct mark (either semicolon or colon) in the blanks:

1. My favorite season is winter___ my sister prefers summer.
2. The title of the book is Adopting a Dog__ Which Breed Is for You?
3. Dear Department Chair__
4. Mayor Jones said the following in his speech___"I believe that the best is yet to come for the city."
5. I have visited Paris, France__ Rome, Italy__ and London, England.

These sentences may have missing or incorrect punctuation. Please correct them. If you add or change any punctuation, use either a semicolon or colon. Some sentences may be correct as they are.

1. We invited Mr. and Mrs. Greeley, our next door neighbors, Mr. Jagger, our realtor, and Mr. Thomas.
2. Please bring a jacket, warm gloves, and extra socks on the hike.
3. Please bring these items with you
    a. jacket
    b. warm gloves
    c. extra socks
4. The choice of dresses was the blue and white or the red and black.
5. I don't know what is wrong with my computer, however, the technician might know.
6. I haven't gotten paid yet and, therefore, I can't buy the gift yet.
7. I have to wait for a phone call, then I can go with you.
8.

PARENTHESES ( ) AND BRACKETS [ ]

Parentheses and brackets are used to add additional information to text. Let's talk about brackets first, since there are two obvious places to use them.

BRACKETS

If you should need parentheses inside other parentheses, you use brackets inside the parentheses. However, it is generally better to rewrite your sentence so you don't need two levels of parentheses.

Look at the illustration on page 67 (Figure A [Item 7]) for instructions.

The example above is correct. However, it is easy to avoid using the brackets:

Look at the illustration on page 67 (Figure A, Item 7) for instructions.

Brackets are also used to add information to a quote, making the quote easier to understand. For example, you may be quoting part of a speech in a newspaper article you are writing. Because you are not quoting the entire speech, something may be unclear to the reader. The explanation can be put in brackets. The information in the brackets is NOT part of the quote.

The mayor said, in his speech to the City Council last night, "I feel that it [the new mall] will greatly help the economy in this city."

PARENTHESES

Extra information can be placed in parentheses. Sometimes this information can also be set off by commas (but never if the information is a complete sentence) or dashes (see Section 9.8). Parentheses can be included in a sentence or can be a separate sentence. The following examples are all correct.

Please look at the information on verbs (Chapter 12) for help.
Please look at the information on verbs (see Chapter 12) for help.

Please look at the information on verbs. (See Chapter 12.)

Please look at the information on verbs. (This information is located in Chapter 12.)

Please look at the information on verbs, Chapter 12, in this book.

As you see above, if the parentheses are around a complete sentence that is standing on its own after a sentence (rather than part of the sentence), it is treated as a sentence, with a capital letter and a period. However, often the parentheses are not needed at all in cases like that.

With parentheses that appear in the middle of a sentence, no commas are needed before or after the parentheses unless there would be a comma there anyway:

My uncle, who was a famous painter (he died last year), is featured in this artbook. (Correct: the comma would be needed even without the parentheses.)

EXERCISE 69

PARENTHESES AND BRACKETS

1. Insert parentheses, brackets, and necessary periods and commas in these sentences:
2. You can park for two hours the parking lot is on your left if you have a parking pass.
3. Please look at page 75 the figure of the dinosaur bottom left to see the completeskeleton.
4. The President was quoted as saying, “They the Senate will meet in a special session to discuss the new laws.”
5. Uncle Morris 1899–1990 was a fairly famous artist.
6. We are leaving the children with a babysitter tomorrow evening no children are allowed in the theater.

HYPHENS AND DASHES (-/–/—)

There are three varieties of hyphens and dashes: short, medium, and long. Each of them has a different function.

HYPHEN (-)

The hyphen is the shortest line, easily made on your keyboard on the number line. The hyphen is used to separate words. It can separate a word at the end of a line (on the syllable break only) if there is no room on the line for the entire word. This use is not as common anymore, since most writing is on the computer. Often the computer adjusts spacing to avoid dividing words.

Hyphens are also used in compound words: *ex-husband, self-esteem*. However, in many cases, compound words are not hyphenated. Here are some things to keep in mind about word hyphenation.

1. Many words are not hyphenated: cooperate, reestablish, nonfat, etc. If you cannot determine whether or not to hyphenate a word, look it up in the dictionary. If you cannot find it, or if two sources say different things, the most important thing is just to be consistent throughout your piece of writing.
2. Some compound words use a hyphen if they are placed before a noun they modify, but not if placed after the noun. Here are some examples:

    She won a well-deserved award.
    The award she won was well deserved.
    She is the mother of a five-year-old boy.
    Her son is five years old.
    I would like a well-done steak.
    I like my steak well done.
    She had a lost-puppy look.
    She looked like a lost puppy.

EN DASH (–)

The en dash is longer than a hyphen and shorter than the long dash (called an em dash). Often people use this dash instead of the long dash because it might be easier to create on the computer. On my Mac, I make an en dash by pressing Option along with the hyphen. Sometimes people just use the hyphen

for either dash. Often, people type two hyphens in a row to represent any type of dash. Sometimes your computer will put the two hyphens together for you. Mine doesn't.

The en dash doesn't have many purposes in writing. It is used as the minus sign in math. In writing, it is generally used to indicate a range:

John Marks (1935–1990) wrote this poem. Verbs, 12–20 (index entry)

Spring is March–June every year.

EM DASH (—)

The em dash is longer than the en dash. On my Mac, I press Shift+Option+hyphen simultaneously to create it. It is the dash most often used in the text. It is used to indicate a distinct and abrupt break in thought. Yes, sometimes you can use parentheses or commas (only if the words do not make a complete sentence) instead.

We found the dog—he disappeared over a week ago— all the way across town.

Notice that if you take the words inside the dashes out, the sentence makes sense. You can check to make sure your dashes are in the right place by taking out the information between the dashes and reading the sentence. It should make sense. If it doesn't, check the location of your dashes.

Dashes work well in the above sentence. However, you could also use parentheses:

We found the dog (he disappeared over a week ago) all the way across town. *OR*

We found the dog all the way across town. (He disappeared over a week ago.)

You cannot use commas to set off the above material in dashes because it is a complete sentence. However, you can change the wording:

We found the dog, which disappeared over a week ago, all the way across town. (Yes, animals are *which*, not *who*.)

There are generally no spaces before or after hyphens and dashes.

EXERCISE 70

HYPHENS AND DASHES

Add hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes where needed. Some sentences may be correct as they are.

1. She was very well suited for her position as chief nurse.
2. My cat he disappeared for eleven days had gone all the way over to the next neighborhood.
3. Please read the information on pages 68. (Place the correct mark between the numbers).
4. The two and a half year old boy was climbing the tree.
5. Tom Bowers (1903 1969) lived in this house. (Place the correct mark between the numbers).
6. I don't know perhaps you do what time the wedding begins.
7. I have seen a number of purple haired people in the parade.
8. The girl is three years old.

ITALICS

While italics are not actually punctuation, we can include them here, since they do have rules for use. (Italics are the slanted letters you can make on your computer.) You cannot make italics in handwriting, so don't even try! If you are writing by hand, underlining indicates italics. If using a computer, use italics. Do not use both italics and underlining at the same time!

WORDS USED AS THEMSELVES

Italicize a word you use as itself, rather than as a grammatical part of a sentence:

You used the word *blatant* incorrectly in your essay.

What does *defenestrate* mean?

If you use a word as itself and make it plural, sources disagree about whether or not you need an apostrophe. However, the *s* is not in italics.

You have too many *the*s in your sentence. *OR*

You have too many *the*'s in your sentence.

Although I tend to dislike putting apostrophes in, I think the second sentence is clearer and it's up to you.

LETTERS AND NUMBERS USED AS THEMSELVES

Italicize a letter or number you use as itself.

You left out the final *e* when you spelled this word.

You left out one of the *4*s in the phone number.

You don't really need an apostrophe when making a number plural. The apostrophe can be used when making letters plural if you think it improves clarity. Sometimes, you do need to put an apostrophe:

I got all *A*'s. (not to be confused with the word *as*)

I grew up in the 1970s.

I know my *ABC*s.

With capital letters, you can decide whether to italicize. I like to, but if you don't want to, just make sure you are consistent.

FOREIGN TERMS AND PHRASES

Uncommon foreign terms and phrases are generally italicized, but commonly used ones are not. Once a word or phrase becomes common in English, you don't need to italicize it. These are among the many foreign words and phrases that do not require italics:

a la carte, alma mater, bona fide, chutzpah, en route, et al., etc., non sequitur, per annum, per diem, magnum opus, rendezvous, savoir-faire, status quo, summa cum laude, and *vice versa*

Consult a dictionary if you have questions.

USING ITALICS OR QUOTES FOR TITTLES

A common use for italics is for titles. However, some titles are quoted rather than italicized. So how do you know which is which? Generally speaking, large things are in italics, and parts of those things are in quotes:

Italics	*Quotes*
Book title	Short story, poem, or chapter title
Movie title	Title of a scene
Play title	Title of an act or scene
TV series title	Title of an episode
Opera title	Title of an aria
CD title	Song title

Paintings Planes, boats, spacecraft if given names other than their brand or model

OTHER USES FOR QUOTES

Sometimes quotes are used in the text for emphasis. This is fine, but don't get carried away and emphasize too much. Using italics is better than boldface, quotes, or all capital letters for emphasis.

Often a fiction or memoir writer will use italics to represent thoughts rather than dialogue or background text.

EXERCISE 71

ITALICS

Underline any words you would put in italics. Some sentences may be correct as they are.

1. Please look up the word incoherent in the dictionary.
2. You have used I to begin your sentences too many times.
3. I would like my steak served a la carte.

4. He has a new boat, which he named Lucille.
5. I told you the suspect had blonde hair, not brown.
6. I flew on a Boeing 757 to Miami.
7. I just read a book called The Silent Spring.

EXERCISE 72

ITALICS VERSUS QUOTATION MARKS

Please underline (italics) or use quotes, as appropriate.

1. Please turn to Chapter 2, The Order of Operations.
2. The Mona Lisa is my favorite painting.
3. I was excited to see the movie Star Wars for the tenth time!
4. I always watch the television show From Now to Then, and my favorite episode is called Going to the Future.
5. I thought it was weird that he called his new airplane Honey.
6. Gone with the Wind is a great book.
7. I just sent for tickets to the play The Book of Mormon.
8. There was an article in The New York Times called Children and Technology.
9. I subscribe to Time magazine.
10. Hey! That boat is named Sue, just like you!

QUOTATION MARKS WITH OTHER PUNCTUATION

Quotation marks are often used in combination with other punctuation: commas, periods, question marks, exclamation points, and possibly semicolons and colons.

There are specific ways to use quotation marks with other punctuation. I am giving you the American way to do things. The British style is often different and sometimes opposite of the American style.

Periods and commas *always* go inside the quotation marks.

"I said I didn't do it," said Jack.

Jack said, "I didn't do it."

I read the short story, "Jack and Jill."

Colons and semicolons *always* go outside the quotation marks.

She said, “I have had enough”; then she left the room.

Bring the following items “just in case”: toothbrush, extra clothes, and a towel.

Question marks and exclamation points can go *either* inside *or* outside quotation marks, depending on the sentence.

He asked, “Are we there yet?” (Inside: quote is a question.)

Did he say, “I hope we get there soon”? (Outside: quote is not a question, but the whole sentence is. The quote does not get a period.)

Did he ask, “Are we there yet?” (Inside: both quote and sentence are questions.)

Exclamation points are treated exactly the same way.

SINGLE QUOTATION MARKS

Single quotation marks are used if you need quotes inside of quotes. That is their only use, so do not use single quotes for emphasis or for any of the reasons you might use double-quotes.

He said, “I just finished listening to ‘Take Five.’ I love that song.”

She said, “I really love the song ‘Take Five.’” (Three quotes in a row? Yes. The first is the ending quote for the song. The other two are for the end of the quote.)

EXERCISE 73

QUOTATION MARKS

Put quotation marks in the following sentences where necessary. You may need to add other punctuation with the quotation marks. Some of the sentences may be correct as is.

1. Judy said I think it is going to rain today.
2. Judy said that it will probably rain today.
3. Please just answer yes or no!
4. I hired her because of her I can do anything attitude.
5. It’s raining cats and dogs this morning.
6. Yesterday is one of my favorite Beatles songs she said

7. I am running late she said, and I will probably miss the beginning of the movie.
8. She asked me if I would like to see her new digs, which she just painted and carpeted.
9. The box was marked fragile, so I put it in the closet right away.
10. Please do some backwards planning before you complete these lesson plans.
11. In his speech the valedictorian began with the following words: This is a day all you graduates will remember. Wherever life takes us, we will remember the friends we made in this place.
12. I don't think we can solve this problem he said I think we will need to hire outside help.

QUOTATION MARKS (“”)

Quotation marks are most commonly used to enclose direct quotations, the exact words said by someone. They are not used for indirect quotes.

Direct quote: Mary said, “It's really cold outside.”
Indirect quote: Mary said that it is really cold outside.
(Indirect quotes often have the word *that* in them.)

Here are some examples of using quotation marks correctly.

Mary said, “It is really cold outside.”
“It is really cold outside,” Mary said.
“It is really cold outside,” said Mary, “but I need to go out.”

A quotation, of course, can be more than one sentence long. If it is, do not put quotes around every sentence. Just put quotes at the beginning of the quote and again at the end. If a single quote by one person goes on for more than one paragraph, put quotes at the beginning of the quote and at the beginning of each paragraph, but at the end of only the last paragraph (the end of the quote).

DIALOGUE

If you are writing dialogue, you need to begin a new paragraph every time a different person speaks.

"I am going to the movies. Do you want to come along?" Mary asked Joe.

Joe replied, "I don't think so. I have so much to do."

"Suit yourself," said Mary, "but you are going to miss a good one."

OTHER USES FOR QUOTATION MARKS

There are several other rules for using quotes.

1. Quote a word or phrase that comes directly from another person or source.

She said that she had a "secret magical plan" for accomplishing her goal.

2. You do not need to quote *Yes* and *No*.

When I ask the questions, please just answer yes or no.

3. You do not need to quote well-known sayings, proverbs, or colloquial expressions.

It is raining cats and dogs.

You know that the early bird catches the worm!

4. Put quotation marks around slang expressions, or words and phrases that are intentionally misspelled or grammatically incorrect.

She replied that she had gotten the book at the "liberry."

5. Put quotation marks around a word or phrase that has an unusual or "abnormal" place in a sentence.

I admire his "stick-to-it" attitude.

6. If you define a word, put the definition in quotes.

The word *defenestrate* means "to throw out of a window."

7. If you use business or other jargon, put the word in quotation marks the first time you use it.

We were unable to get the computer "booted up" with the new operating system.

8. Use quotation marks after such verbs as *marked* and *labeled*.

The package was labeled "personal and confidential."

ELLIPSES (. . .)

Personally, I don't like ellipses—probably because I never learned how to use them correctly. However, fiction writers like to use them—and they do come in handy. They are used to indicate an omission in a quote or a trailing off at the end of a sentence.

An ellipsis consists of three periods with spaces between each. If the omission occurs at the end of the sentence, add the fourth period for the end of the sentence (or another suitable end mark, such as a question mark).

If you are indicating trailing off at the end of the sentence, use the three periods only.

"I think there are many reasons for this situation . . . and the final reason is the most important."

". . . and it seems that the most important reason is lack of action."

She thought and thought about the mess she had gotten herself into, sinking into deeper and deeper despair . . .

TEST
PUNCTUATION

Punctuate the following sentences correctly. You can use all the punctuation marks: periods, commas, semicolons, colons, parentheses, brackets, hyphens, dashes, quotation marks, ellipses, question marks, underlining (italics), and exclamation marks. There will sometimes be options as to what punctuation you can use. Do your best. Some sentences may be correct as they are.

1. I finished the project should I send it to you?
2. My coworker and her friends are coming to visit.
3. He said I heard the song Forget You.
4. Life of Pi didn't win the Oscar.
5. Bob was usually a quiet man however he screamed upon entering the room.
6. To whom it may concern
7. I love the television show Detectives of New York and my favorite episode is called The Man in the Tan Shirt.
8. It is a cold rainy day.
9. This book which was written by William Golding is my favorite.
10. The cookies that are on top of the table are for you and your friends.
11. I decided not to attend the meeting and went to the movies instead.
12. Don't know if I will ever get over this she said as her voice trailed off.
13. I packed these three items for my hike water a jacket and a knife.
14. I was born on August 10 1980 in Lincoln Nebraska.
15. The only four items on the agenda are budgets vacations report formats and marketing.
16. I did not do very well on the test however so I failed the course.

17. The word collaborate means to work together.
18. He was very self-confident when he went on interviews.
19. My neighbor he was gone for five months sailed around the world.
20. Please read the information on pages 60 85. (Place the correct mark between the numbers.)
21. My six and a half year old cousin looks like my sister.
22. Jean Smith MD has just started to work here.
23. I think you should pack these clothes for the trip a suit shoes black brown and white socks and three shirts.
24. Yes Elaine the party is at my house.
25. My address is 6800 Park St Albany New York 01987 please send my mail there not to my old address.
26. Although this food tastes terrible I will eat it anyway.
27. I failed the test because I didn't study.
28. I am running late she said, and I will probably miss the beginning of the movie
29. I love his can't fail attitude.
30. I can't believe since I didn't do anything wrong that I got fired.

CHAPTER 10
SOME REALLY IMPORTANT GRAMMAR ISSUES

This is really the most important chapter in this book because it most affects the way you write and speak. However, you need to go through the rest of the book to gain the background for understanding the issues in this chapter. Some of the issues have been touched upon in other chapters; others are newhere.

One of the most important things to do when you are writing is to avoid run-on sentences. Another is to avoid writing sentence fragments, although there is a time and place for them (but not in formal writing).

RUN-ON SENTENCES

A run-on sentence can be any length. Some people think a run-on sentence is just a really long sentence, but a sentence can be a mile long and still be a perfectly legitimate sentence, although perhaps not a very well written one.

After I got up this morning, I went out for a run, and then I came back and took the dog for a walk, and then I ate breakfast and got dressed because I had to go to work.

I read, my sister sewed.

Sentence 1 is not a run on, although it is very long and not well written.

Sentence 2 is a run on.

A run-on is a sentence that is actually two or more sentences that are strung together and not separated properly. Look at sentence 2 above. It contains two complete sentences separated by a comma. YOU CANNOT SEPARATE TWO COMPLETE SENTENCES WITH JUST A COMMA. Yes, I am yelling to make my point here.

Here are some correct ways to separate sentences:

1. You can put a period to separate them instead of the comma, and then start the second one with a capital letter. (I read. My sister sewed.)
2. You can use the comma, but add a conjunction. (I read, and my sister sewed.)
3. You can use a semicolon if the sentences are closely related. Do not use a capital letter after a semicolon. (I read; my sister sewed.)
4. You can use a colon if the second sentence is a result of the first sentence or explains the first sentence. (I read to my sister: she does not know how to read yet.) Any of the other three ways to fix this sentence would work just as well as using the colon, which isn't used too often to connect sentences.

There is never a right time to use a run-on sentence.

FRAGMENTS

Sentence fragments are words that are put together and followed by a period, but that are not complete thoughts. Sometimes writers use fragments for effect, and that is okay, as long as they are aware that they are fragments. If you are trying to pass something off as a sentence, but it is a fragment, *that* is a problem. Usually, the fragments that a writer thinks might be a real sentence are dependent adverb clauses—the clauses that begin with *although, since, whenever, wherever, until,* and especially *because*.

Because I just met you yesterday is not a sentence. You need to add a whole independent clause to it to make it a sentence. This sentence is fine:

Because I just met you yesterday, *I cannot go in the car with you*.

I wouldn't recommend using fragments in cover letters or college essays. However, there is a time and a place for a well-

written fragment for effect. Many authors, including me, use them in our books. Enough said. (Fragment!)

Here is a sample paragraph from a short story that uses two fragments for effect:

She was tall. Very tall. She made her way over to the buffet line, and he couldn't help staring at her. He wanted to follow her and to say something witty. Something to catch her attention.

EXERCISE 74

RUN ONS AND FRAGMENTS

Identify each group of words as a proper sentence, a fragment, or a run on. Fragments and run-ons can be fixed in a number of ways. Try to fix the fragments and run-ons.

1. I am getting ready to give a party on Friday night.
2. Since everyone will be bringing a snack to share.
3. I am providing drinks and some great desserts.
4. Many of my friends are coming, some of my neighbors are too.
5. Maybe having a costume party.
6. I am baking my specialty: chocolate chip apple pie.
7. Apples, cinnamon, chocolate chips, butter, all mixed together.
8. Are you coming, I sent you an invitation and didn't hear back from you.
9. It is going to be a fun time.
10. Come.

AGREEMENT

The agreement means that verbs agree in number with their subjects, and pronouns agree in number and gender with their antecedents. Huh? Okay. Let's simplify that. If your subject is singular, the verb that goes with that subject must also be singular. If the subject is plural, its verb must be plural. Yes, there are singular and plural verb forms (generally the distinction is mostly in present tense): Take the verb *run*. You would say *she*

runs. But you would say *they run*. *Runs*, then, is the singular form of the verb, since it sounds right with *he*, a singular pronoun. We don't say *he run*; we say *they run*, because *run* is the plural form of the verb. It is the opposite of nouns. The noun with the *-s* at the end is the plural one (usually), but the plural verb form is generally the one without the *-s*.

The purpose of a pronoun is to take the place of a noun or another pronoun. The antecedent is the word that the pronoun is taking the place of. The pronoun must agree in both number (singular or plural) and gender (male or female) with its antecedent:

Judy brought her suitcase. *Judy* is singular and female, so we use *her* to replace it; we don't use *him* (male) or *they* (plural).

Usually, an agreement is pretty simple, and we do it right just because it "sounds right" that way. And while that is true, some issues make it more complicated than it seems. We will discuss those in the following sections.

INTERRUPTING WORDS AND PHRASES WITH SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT

Sue goes to college. (*Goes* is singular and agrees with Sue.)

Sue, along with her brother and her cousins, goes to college. (still singular)

Sue, accompanied by her brother, goes to dance lessons. (still singular)

Phrases such as *along with*, *together with*, *as well as*, *in addition to*, *accompanied by*, *including*, *except*, and *and not* do not make a singular subject plural.

If you have a positive subject and then a negative subject, the verb agrees with the positive subject:

Sue, but not her brothers, is going to college. (still singular)

Prepositional and other phrases inserted between subject and verb also do not change the number of the subject:

The photographer for the three weddings has not been

selected. (singular)

The painting that we ordered when we ordered the six frames has not arrived yet. (still singular)

EXERCISE 75

AGREEMENT

Choose the verb that agrees with the subject.

1. Mary, along with her three brothers, (is, are) going to college in New England.
2. They (walk, walks) three miles every morning.
3. The dresses for the wedding party (has, have) not yet been chosen.
4. The pizza, in addition to the salad and desserts, (is, are) dinner for tonight.
5. The dog that I adopted when I still had the other two dogs (live, lives) in the garage at night.

USING AND, OR, NEITHER, EITHER BETWEEN SUBJECTS

Two (or more) subjects joined by *and* will always be plural, even if each one is singular on its own because we are adding them together:

- Jack and Jill are going up the hill. (plural)
- The boy and the girl are going up the hill. (plural)
- Both the boy and the girls are going up the hill. (plural)
- Both the boys and the girl are going up the hill. (plural)
- Both the boys and the girls are going up the hill. (plural)

Two subjects joined by *or* or *nor* can be either singular or plural depending on the subjects. We are not adding them together, as we do with *and*. Look at the following examples:

John or his brother is going with us. (singular: one or the other one)

The boys or the girls are going first. (plural: It is either *boys* or *girls* and each is plural by itself.)

What about this one, where one subject is singular and the

other is plural?

Either the girl or her brothers__going with us. Is this one *is* (singular) or *are* (plural)? It is plural. In this case, the verb agrees with the noun closer to it. So,

Either the girls or the boy is going with us is also correct because this time the singular subject (*boy*) is closer to the verb.

EXERCISE 76

MORE AGREEMENT

Choose the correct verb that agrees with the subject(s).

1. John and his friends (is, are) going fishing on Saturday.
2. Either John or Uncle Fred (is, are) renting a boat.
3. Either Juliet or her sister (has, have) your books.
4. Either the red dress with the bows or the three green shirts (was, were) on sale, but I don't remember which!
5. Neither the trumpet players nor the tuba player (is, are) tuned up yet.

PRONOUN/ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT

All the rules in the preceding section apply to pronoun/antecedent agreement, as well as subject/verb agreement. Look at these examples:

Judy, along with her friends, is bringing her suitcase. (Singular)

Judy, accompanied by her friends, is going to her prom. (Singular)

Judy, but not her friends, is going to her prom. (Singular)

The painting that we ordered when we ordered the three frames is in its box. (Singular)

Either Judy or her sister is bringing her guitar. (Singular)

Either Judy or her sisters are bringing their guitars. (Plural)

Either her sisters or Judy is bringing her guitar. (Singular)

What about this?

Either Judy or her brother is bringing_____guitar.

One is female and the other is male. What do we do? How about just saying *a guitar*? Rewriting to avoid an issue is often the best solution.

SENTENCES THAT BEGIN WITH *THERE*

Even though a sentence may begin with the word *there*, *there* is never a subject. In this type of sentence, the subject will be right after the verb, so you can figure out if the verb should be singular or plural by looking at the noun or pronoun after the verb.

There are three books on that shelf. Yes, plural.

There is three books on that shelf. No, not singular.

EXERCISE 77

MORE AGREEMENT

Choose the correct answer for each sentence:

1. Ellen, along with her sisters, (is bringing her lunch, are bringing their lunches).
2. Either my cousin or my uncles (is taking his vacation, are taking their vacations) in France.
3. There (is, are) three pieces of pizza left in the box.
4. Either John or Kate is singing in (his, her, his or her, their) first concert ever!
5. There (is, are) not many apples left on the tree.

SINGULAR NOUNS THAT LOOK PLURAL

News, mathematics, thermodynamics, and other such words that end in *-s* are singular, although they may look plural. So, we use singular verbs with them.

The *news is* good.

Mathematics is my favorite subject.

COLLECTIVE NOUNS

They are nouns that, while singular, represent a group. They can generally also be made plural. Here are some singular forms of

collective nouns:

Group, band, family, flock, class, herd, tribe, bunch, committee, clan, club, pack, cast

People usually use singular verbs and pronouns with these words:

The band is playing in the parade.

The class is having *its* party today.

However, there is a distinction to be made, and some-times these collective nouns are plural. When we use plural verbs to agree with them, however, sometimes we sound wrong because most everyone just uses them as singular all the time. Check this out:

The band are tuning their instruments.

In the above example, we used a plural verb and a plural pronoun, thus assuming that *band* is plural. Is it?

Collective nouns are singular when they are thought of as a single unit. They are considered plural when we are talking about the members of the collective noun as individuals rather than a unit.

The band are tuning their instruments. (Plural: They are acting as individuals.)

The band is having a party after the show. (Singular: They are having a party together, as a unit.)

Can you see the difference in these sentences?

My family is coming over for Christmas dinner.

My family are coming from all over the country to visit us for Christmas.

In the first sentence, the family is a unit, all coming over together. In the second sentence, the individuals in the family are being talked about, since they are coming from different places; they are not a unit.

Will the sky fall if you use a singular verb with a collective noun? No. In fact, if you use a plural, it may sound wrong to some people.

However, it is correct to make the distinction between singular and plural collective nouns.

A QUIRKY LITTLE ISSUE

All the girls wore a gown to the prom.

Be careful here. Did all the girls wear the same gown? The sentence is confusing. The correct way to say or write this sentence is

All the girls wore gowns to the prom.

EXERCISE 78

MORE AGREEMENT

Choose the correct answer in the following sentences:

1. The news about my dogs (is, are) good.
2. One of these songs (is, are) my favorite.
3. Everyone who has a ticket can take (his or her, their) seat now.
4. Few (is, are) selected to be in the show.
5. Many of my friends (is, are) coming to the party.
6. Most of the pizza (is, are) gone.
7. The vase, along with all the flowers, (was, were) thrown away.
8. None of the boys (is, are) old enough to drive.
9. (Is, Are) physics or economics you favorite subject?
10. Correct any of the following sentences that isn't already correct:
11. All of the bridesmaids wore a purple dress.
12. The band are tuning up their instruments.
13. My company is having a picnic on Friday.
14. The family is all going their separate ways for Christmas this year.
15. One of the men are wearing a red hat.
16. All of the students are carrying a dog.

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

Indefinite pronouns probably present the biggest issue with pronoun/antecedent agreement. We have discussed these pronouns before. Some of these pronouns are singular, some are plural, and others can be either singular or plural.

1. *Everyone*, *everything*, *everybody*, *anyone*, *anything*, *anybody*, *someone*, *something*, *somebody*, *no one*, *nothing*, *nobody*, *each*, *neither*, *either*, *nothing*, and *one* are singular.

    Everyone is bringing his or her suitcase.

Everyone is singular. The verb *is* agrees and is also singular. The pronoun *his or her*, which refers back to *everyone* agrees because it is also singular.

Most people would say

    Everyone is bringing their suitcase.

Is this okay? *Their* is plural, but *everyone* is singular.

Yes and no. The English language doesn't have one word for the singular that can be either male or female. Of course, if we know that only girls are going, we can easily say *her suitcase*. Problem solved. But if both girls and boys are going, we have no singular word for that without using *his or her*.

It is perfectly fine and correct to use *his or her*. It is also now acceptable (in some style guides and to some people) to use *their* as singular in this case. I wouldn't recommend using *their* in the singular in a formal letter or college application.

Avoid using *he/she*, *(s)he*, or alternating between *he* and *she*. The best thing to do is to rewrite; why not just say

    Everyone is bringing a suitcase.

2. *Both*, *few*, *several*, and *many* are indefinite pronouns that are plural:
    Several are bringing their suitcases.
    Few are bringing their suitcases.

Both are bringing their suitcases.

Many are bringing their suitcases.

3. *All*, *any*, *more*, *most*, *none*, and *some* can be either singular or plural, depending upon how they are used. Usually, they are followed by a prepositional phrase. Look at the noun in that phrase. The verb generally agrees with the noun in the phrase.

All of the *pie is* gone.

All of the *cookies are* gone.

Any of the children can *take their* naps. Any of the *cake is* available to cut.

More of the *pizza is* gone than left on the plate. More of the *pieces have* been eaten.

Most of the *cake is* gone. Most of the *cookies are* gone. None of the *pizza is* left.

None of the *pieces are* left. Some of the *people have* left. Some of the *crowd has* gone.

One of is generally singular.

One of my books *is* missing.

COMPARISON

Adjectives and adverbs have comparative and superlative forms, used for comparison:

I am taller than you.

First of all, remember to use *than* in comparisons, not *then*. *Then* is an adverb that has to do with time.

Use the comparative form of the adjective or adverb when comparing two items.

I am taller than you.

Use the superlative form of the adjective or adverb when comparing three or more items.

I am the tallest of the three of us brothers.

FORMING COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

One-syllable adjectives and adverbs:

- Add *-er* to adjectives and adverbs to form the comparative: *taller*, *smaller*, *colder*, *warmer*, *hotter*, *sooner*
- Add *-est* to adjectives and adverbs to form the superlative: *tallest*, *smallest*, *coldest*, *warmest*, *hottest*, *soonest*

There are, of course, exceptions. One of them is fun. There is no *funner* or *funnest*! It is *more fun* and *most fun*.

TWO-SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

- Most add *-er* for comparative. If they end in *-y*, the *y* generally changes to an *i*, thus making the ending *-ier*. Others have no form ending in *-er* (particularly adverbs). In that case, use *more* for comparative: *funnier*, *prettier*, *lonelier*, *more sudden*, *more quickly*, *more slowly*.
- Most add *-est* for superlative. If they end in *-y* the *y* generally changes to an *i*, thus making the ending *-iest*. Others have no form ending in *-est*. In that case use *most* for superlative: *funniest*, *prettiest*, *loneliest*, *most sudden*, *most quickly*, *most slowly*.

If there is a form that ends in *-er* or *-est*, use it. Do not use *more* or *most* before the adjective unless no *-er* or *-est* form exists. Consult your dictionary to find out. For example, do not say *more happy*, since there is the correct word *happier*.

Avoid double comparisons; do not say *more happier*. Three-syllable or more adjectives and adverbs:

Use *more* and *most* before the adjective or adverb: *more beautiful*, *most adventurous*, *more happily*, *most glorious*.

Adjectives that end in a suffix such as *-ous* or *-ful* will never have an *-er* or *-est* ending. Use *more* or *most*. For example, *more wonderful*, not *wonderfuler*.

What If It Isn't More? What If It Is Less?

If you are going the other direction in your comparison, always use *less* for comparative and *least* for superlative:

I am less intelligent than you are.

My brother is the least intelligent of us all. This ride is less fun than that one.

This ride is the least fun of all. I am less pretty than my sister.

My cousin is the least pretty of the three of us. I snore less quietly than my brother.

My sister snores the least quietly of us all.

IRREGULAR FORMS

There are some adjectives and adverbs that add neither *-er/-est* or *more/most* to make them comparative or superlative. Here are some:

Good	Better	Best
Bad	Worse	Worse
Many	More	Most

FAULTY COMPARISONS

Look at this sentence:

She likes pizza more than me!

What does the sentence mean? Does it mean she likes pizza more than I like pizza? Or does it mean that she likes pizza more than she likes me?

Well, you probably would think it means that she likes pizza more than I like pizza. And that is usually the intention of the writer. However, the sentence actually means that she likes pizza more than she likes me.

When you write a comparison like the one above, put in the missing words, if even just in your head. Then, you will use the correct pronoun. Compare these two sentences:

She likes pizza more than I like pizza.

She likes pizza more than she likes me.

If you are writing a comparison like this, you can leave out the words, but pretend they are there to figure out which pronoun to use:

She likes pizza more than I. (more than *I like pizza*)

She likes pizza more than me. (more than *she likes me*)

EXERCISE 78

COMPARISON

Choose the correct answer:

1. She is the (taller, tallest) of the two sisters.
2. She likes school more than (I, me).
3. She says she likes me, but I really think she likes my sister more than (I, me).
4. You would be (more smart, more smarter, smarter) if you used more common sense!
5. The roller coaster was (funner. more fun) than the Ferris wheel.
6. Which do you like (least, less), poetry or opera?
7. This doll is (fragiler, more fragile) than that one.
8. Who makes (more, the most) money, you or your brother?
9. Of all the types of food, I know (less, the least) about Asian food.
10. He talks (louder, more loudly) when he is angry.
11. The poodle is the (taller, tallest, most tall) of the six dogs here.
12. The weather is (more worse, worse, worser) today than it was yesterday.
13. He is the (less, least) adventurous of the two of us.
14. She is shorter than (I, me).
15. My older brother is (more truthful, truthfuler, most truthful) than my twin brother.

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

One of the easiest mistakes to make when you are writing is the misplaced or dangling modifier. A modifier is a word or phrase (or clause) that describes or modifies something. Adjectives and adverbs are modifiers.

Participles are, if you remember, adjectives that come from verbs. Prepositional phrases (are also modifiers and can be used as adjectives or adverbs. And it is participles and prepositional phrases that are most often misplaced.

In the English language, it is assumed that modifiers are placed near what they are modifying, or describing. Look at these sentences:

Sitting in my lap, my cat yawned and stretched.

Laughing, she ran down the hill.

She heard on the news that there was a big parade on Thanksgiving.

These sentences are all correct. Now look at these sentences:

Reading a book by the window, my cat scratched my hand.

Laughing, that joke seemed very funny to me. She heard about the parade on the news.

These sentences are all incorrect.

The modifiers are misplaced (not near what they are modifying in the sentence) or dangling (not modifying anything in the sentence).

The first sentence says that the cat is reading a book by the window. The participial phrase *reading a book by the window* is dangling because it doesn't describe anything in the sentence. It is meant to describe *I*, but there is no *I* in the sentence. Note that it doesn't describe my hand, because my hand wasn't reading either! Here is one of the ways to correct the sentence:

While I was reading a book by the window, my cat scratched my hand.

The second sentence says that the joke was laughing. However,

I was laughing. Here are some ways to correct the sentence:

Laughing, I thought the joke was funny.

I laughed because I thought the joke was funny. I laughed at the funny joke.

The third sentence says that the parade was on the news.

The prepositional phrase *on the news* is in the wrong place. Most anyone reading the sentence would probably understand what you meant, but it really isn't written correctly. Here is a way to fix the sentence:

On the news, I heard about the parade.

It is very easy to unintentionally put misplaced modifiers in your writing, so be very careful!

EXERCISE 79

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

Some of the following sentences are correct; others have some type of misplaced or dangling modifier. Identify which sentences are incorrect and fix them if you can. There are always multiple ways to fix a sentence.

1. He read from his new book wearing glasses.
2. I heard about the volcano on the evening news.
3. While still in diapers, my mother went back to college.
4. Forgetting I had a cake in the oven, I took the dog for a walk.
5. Growling loudly, I knew it was time to feed my hungry dog.
6. Freshly baked, I took the cookies out of the oven.
7. Looking around, I spotted my cousins in the crowd.
8. Many of the people in the audience after her performance congratulated her and gave her flowers.
9. At 5 p.m. next Monday, the employees who attended the meeting said there would be a follow-up discussion.
10. Take this big bag and go to the library with all the books.

POSSESSIVES

Possessives are forms of nouns and pronouns that show ownership. Most of the time, making a noun possessive is pretty simple, but some problems can arise.

SINGULAR NOUNS

Add an *apostrophe* and an *s* to most singular nouns to make them possessive.

Boy—the boy's toy
Book—the book's plot
Dog—the dog's bone

Sometimes you have what looks like a compound possessive. Here is what you do:

My mom and dad's new car is in the driveway. (Just make the last noun possessive because it belongs to both of them.)

My mom's and dad's new cars are in the driveway. (Make them both possessive, since cars is plural; they each have a new car.)

PLURAL NOUNS

Add just an apostrophe to plural nouns that end in *s*.

Boys—the boys' toys (belonging to more than one boy)
Books—the books' plots (belonging to more than one book)
Dogs—the dogs' bones (belonging to more than one dog)
Buses—the buses' routes (belonging to more than one bus)

Add an apostrophe and *s* to plurals that end in something other than *s*.

Children—children's toys men—men's suits mice—mice's cheese

WORDS THAT ALREADY END IN *-S*

Some singular words end in *-s* or even *-ss*. These words are generally treated the same as any other noun. To form the possessive, you still add an apostrophe and an *s* (you can usually go by how you pronounce the possessive).

Boss—boss's (belonging to the boss)

Bosses—bosses' (belonging to more than one boss)

Note that the two words above are pronounced the same, but spelled differently. One is singular possessive and the other plural possessive.

Princess—princess's (belonging to one princess)

Princesses—princesses' (belonging to more than one princess)

Thomas—Thomas's (belonging to Thomas)

Mr. Douglass—Mr. Douglass's (belonging to Mr. Douglass)

Words that end in *-x* actually have an *-s* sound at the end and are treated the same way:

Fox—fox's (belonging to the fox)

Foxes—foxes' (belonging to more than one fox)

LAST NAMES

Last names can be tricky because when you make them possessive, you are often also making them plural.

First, let's look at some singular possessives:

Jean Thomas's desk
John Smart's book
Annie Green's dress

How about plural possessive last names? First, you need to figure out how to make the name plural. Then you need to figure out how to make that possessive. (Once again it is best to go by how you would pronounce the name.) Of course, you can always rewrite to avoid having to use the possessive (often the best idea).

The Thomases' house (singular: Thomas, plural: Thomases)
The Gonzaleses' house (singular: Gonzales, plural: Gonzaleses)
The Greens' house (this one is easy)

How to avoid the situation?

The Thomas family's house

The house that belongs to the Gonzales family

EXCEPTIONS

Some words that end in *-s* do not add an apostrophe and an *s* to make the possessive. These are the exceptions.

Words and names that end in *-es* with the sound of *–ez* add simply an apostrophe. Here are some examples:

Socrates—Socrates' (belonging to Socrates) Hercules—Hercules' (belonging to Hercules)

Note: that *Jesus* and *Moses* are also exceptions and simply add an apostrophe for the possessive: *Jesus'* and *Moses'*

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

Here are the possessive pronouns:

> *My, mine, our, ours, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, their, theirs, whose*

Notice that none of them has an apostrophe in it. Remember this next time you are confused about *its* versus *it's*.

Please do not put apostrophes in your plain old plural words, because you will usually be wrong. There are very few plurals that have apostrophes.

EXERCISE 80

POSSESSIVE

Choose the correct answer:

1. This is Mr. (Glass', Glass's, Glasses) book.
2. This is my older (brothers', brother's, brothers) motorcycle.
3. Our new house has room for a (childrens', children's) playroom.
4. The cat hasn't finished (its, it's, its') food yet.
5. These are my three (sisters, sister's, sisters', sisters's) rooms.
6. This is my (boss', boss's) office.
7. We read about (Socrates's, Socrates, Socrates') ideas in this course.

8. That house on the corner is (ours, our's).
9. (Who's, Whose, Who'se) new car is that?
10. This is the (Clarks, Clark's, Clarks' house), where five children and their parents live.
11. My (horses, horse's) stable is right over there.
12. (John and Jane's, John's and Jane's) house is across the street.
13. (John and Jane's, John's and Jane's) houses are across the street from each other.
14. (My mother and father, My mother and father's, My mother's and father's) new car is red.
15. (Her's, hers) is the green gown.

PARALLEL STRUCTURE

What do we mean by parallel structure? Let's look at a simple example of a sentence that is not written with parallel structure:

My friends and I like shopping, going to the movies, and to hike.

When you are writing about similar things you need to use similar structure. *Shopping* and *going* are parallel, but *to hike* is a different grammatical construction. It is not parallel. This sentence is parallel:

My friends and I like shopping, going to the movies, and hiking.

Here is an example that is a little more complicated:

Jon felt that to do well in his new job he had to impress his boss by writing his reports on time, by answering all his e-mails in a timely manner, and to be courteous to his customers. (Make it parallel by saying *by being courteous to his customers*.)

Here is another example:

Sarah thought that she was being a good parent when she let her kids do whatever they wanted and not telling them when they made bad choices.

Here is the same sentence with parallel construction:

Sarah thought that she was being a good parent when she let

her kids do whatever they wanted and when she kept quiet when they made bad choices.

PARALLEL STRUCTURE IN LISTS

It is important to make your lists parallel. If one of your list items is a complete sentence, all your items should be complete sentences. If all items are phrases, they should be constructed in the same way. Here is a list that is not parallel.

In this class, you will learn

- how to use the new software
- how to design a newsletter
- how to use special effects
- writing effective text
- how to publish your newsletter

You would change *writing effective text* to *how to write effective text*.

EXERCISE 81

PARALLEL STRUCTURE

All of the following have problems with parallel structure. Identify the problems and rewrite them correctly.

1. I love shopping, going to the movies, and to eat out.
2. I thought I would do well on the exam because I memorized all the words and that I made flashcards.
3. Here are the things you need to do: Go to the library. Returning all the phone messages. Pick up the groceries. Take out the trash.
4. Here is the agenda for the meeting:
   - Introduce new members
   - Reading the minutes
   - Discuss new issues
   - Review old issues
   - Close the meeting
5. Whenever I think of you I remember when we went fishing and going to that concert at midnight.

USING NUMBERS: WHEN TO SPELL THEM OUT.

We could write a whole book about them, but let's keep it short and simple. The basic rules are as follows:

In technical and scientific writing, write out numbers through nine, and use numerals (10) for all numbers higher than nine.

In formal writing, nontechnical, and more literary writing, spell out all numbers up through ninety-nine.

Here are some other rules for using numbers:

1. In tables and diagrams, generally use numerals (numbers).
2. If you have two numbers referring to the same thing in a sentence, treat them both the same way, either both written out or both numerals.

There are 9 girls and 21 boys in the group.

This is not necessary if the numbers refer to different things:

There are 350 children in the school and they each have four textbooks.

3. Never begin a sentence with a numeral. Rewrite the sentence or spell out the number.

Four hundred students graduated today.

4. If you have two numbers in a row, rewrite the sentence or separate them with a comma.

In 2009, 435 people worked for the company,

5. Really large numbers, over a million, for example, may be expressed as follows:

The company sold 21 million widgets last year.

6. If a day comes before the month (or stands by itself) use an ordinal, either spelled out or numeric.

The 6th of September *OR*

The sixth of September

7. If a day comes after the month, the number is used.

September 6, 2000

8. Sometimes well-known numbers and dates of graduation are abbreviated.

The blizzard of '09 The class of '75

9. Money is usually expressed in figures.

We made $59 at our garage sale.

10. For amounts less than a dollar, use the numeral and the word *cents*.

This fan costs only 75 cents.

11. Spell out approximate amounts.

We have a few hundred dollars.

12. As a rule, we spell out fractions.

I have two-thirds of a pizza left.

Some style guides tell you to hyphenate the fraction only if it is an adjective directly before a noun. You can decide on this one. For example:

We need a three-fourths majority to pass the rule.

Three fourths of the people voted to pass the rule.

13. Measurements should generally be expressed in numerals, even if they are below 10.

The room is 5 feet wide and 9 feet long.

14. Birthdays and anniversaries are generally spelled out.

We are celebrating our tenth anniversary.

15. References to periods of time are generally spelled out:

We bought the house thirty years ago.

16. More technical timeframes are often numerals.

My new job requires a 45-hour workweek.

17. Centuries can be either spelled out or expressed as numerals:

I remember the 1970s well.

I remember the seventies well.

18. When expressing time, always use numerals with *a.m.* and *p.m.*

Meet me at 3:45 p.m.

However, if there is no time mentioned, use morning or evening; do not use *p.m.* or *a.m.*

Meet me in the morning.

If *a.m.* or *p.m.* is not mentioned, you can spell out the time or use numerals.

Meet me at eight. Meet me at 8:00.

19. Write decimals as numbers.

I measured the window as 35.7 inches wide.

20. For percentages, use numbers, but spell out *percent* unless it appears in a table or figure, in which case you can use the percent symbol (%).

Only 7 percent of the class received an A.

21. If you refer to a number as itself, always use a figure:

Please count to 99.

Add 30 and 64, and then multiply by 7.

22. To make a number plural, add *s*. NO apostrophe, please.

The 1990s was a good decade for me. It was in the 70s all day today.

When spelling out numbers, hyphenate all numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine whether the number stands alone or is part of a greater number:

Twenty-seven

Twenty-seven thousand

EXERCISE 82

NUMBERS

Many of the following sentences have mistakes using numbers. Some of the sentences may be correct as they are. Find and correct the mistakes.

1. The class is made up of nine boys and 18 girls.
2. 350 people were in the audience.
3. My birthday is on September 6th.
4. There are a total of 450 diagrams in the science book.
5. I have only $.50 left in my pocket because I spent twenty-five dollars at the movies.
6. There are over 3,000,000 people in our county.
7. The meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m.
8. I am a member of the class of ’75.
9. ¾ of the class is on a sports team.
10. I moved to California thirty years ago.
11. I got a score of 85 percent on my project.
12. The answer to the math question is 31.66.
13. I have a problem writing 5’s so that you can read them!
14. The total count is 150, 50 of whom are teenagers.
15. There are sixty-five poems in this anthology.
16. Could you please write your two’s more clearly.
17. He has been working 16-hour workdays!
18. My room measures 8 feet wide by 12 feet long.
19. I begin my workday at nine a.m.
20. I begin my workday at 8 in the morning.

DOUBLE NEGATIVES

There are negatives, and then there are double negatives. *No* and *not* are often part of a negative sentence.

I have *no* bananas.

I do not have any bananas.

Even though two wrongs don’t make a right, two negatives do make a positive. Sometimes you might purposely use two

negatives. Other times you might use a double negative by mistake.

I cannot sit here and say nothing.

That sentence is a perfectly good double negative. It means that you want to say something. It comes out as a positive.

I can't say nothing about that.

This sentence is likely incorrect. The writer probably means *I can't say anything about that*.

Here are some sentences in which the double negative is probably incorrect:

I don't need no pencil. (I don't need a pencil?)

Please don't wait and end up doing nothing about it.

They don't have any more candy left.

I can't see no one. (I can't see anyone?)

She don't have no children. (She doesn't have any children?)

There are some words that don't sound like negative words, but they are, so do not use another negative with them by mistake.

Barely, hardly, and *scarcely* are negative words:

I can't barely see anything in the dark theater. (Should be I can barely see anything in the dark theater.)

I can't scarcely read the writing because it is so small. (Should be I *can* scarcely read the writing because it is so small.)

I can't hardly believe it is you! (Should be I *can* hardly believe it is you!)

I suppose that if you use three negatives in a sentence, the sentence goes back to having a negative meaning, but I wouldn't try it:

I *can't barely* see *nothing* in this dark theater.

EXERCISE 83

DOUBLE NEGATIVES

Some of the sentences below contain incorrect double negatives. Some of the sentences are correct. Correct the incorrect sentences:

1. I don't want no more pizza.
2. I can hardly see anything.
3. We couldn't scarcely see in the fog.
4. I didn't barely eat anything for dinner.
5. There are no words for this situation.
6. Please don't wait and end up doing nothing about it.
7. They don't have any more candy left.
8. No animals were harmed in this experiment.

APOSTROPHES IN PLURALS

I have one word to say about putting apostrophes in plurals: DON'T!

There are very few exceptions. The great majority of the time there is no apostrophe in a plural. Apostrophes go in possessives, not plurals (unless the plural is possessive, of course.

When should you use an apostrophe in a plural?

Answer: When not doing so would confuse.

- Whit the capital letters *A*, *I*, AND *U*:

I got all *A*'s on my report card.

You have too many *I* 's beginning your sentences.

There are two *U* 's on that sign.

- With lowercase letters or abbreviations for clarity. However, note that if you are using a letter or word as itself, you would italicize the word but not the *s* on the end.

Don't forget to dot your *I*'s.

Are you still wearing your pj's?

- That is just about it. No other plurals need to be written with apostrophes including numbers.

Remember the 1990s?

She must be in her 60s.

She must be in her sixties.

EXERCISE 83

PLURALS WITH APOSTROPHES

Some of these sentences are correct. Others have errors with apostrophes. Circle any incorrect plurals.

1. I took these photo's this morning.
2. You put too many *a*s in the word *accommodate*.
3. I am too young to remember the 1950's.
4. My godmother is in her sixties'.
5. This is my little sister's doll.
6. My cousin's are coming to visit us next month.
7. Does the baby know her *ABC*'s yet?
8. The book takes place in the '80s.
9. This dollhouse belongs to the girls'.
10. I never get any *D*s on my report card.

LET'S BE CLEAR: AVOIDING VAGUENESS

Writing can be vague or unclear in several ways. Most of the ways we will discuss here have to do with words that refer to something we are not quite sure about.

THIS AND IT

We might begin a sentence with *this* or *it*. While in certain situations, that may be all right in itself, if we don't know what *this* or *it* is referring to, there will be a problem. Look at this paragraph, for example:

Last summer my family and I visited relatives in France. We stayed for three weeks and wished we could have stayed longer. While we didn't visit Paris, we did see many of the small villages in

the countryside. We got to eat real French food, prepared by the villagers, and we got to stay in small country cottages. This made it the best trip I have ever taken.

What made it the best trip? Here is a better way to write the ending to this paragraph:

Eating real French food, prepared by the villagers, and staying in small country cottages made this trip to France the best trip I have ever taken.

THE LONELY *WHICH*

Which is one of those pronouns that are used to begin an adjective clause that describes a noun or pronoun that precedes it. Here is an example:

I bought this painting, which is by a local artist.

Which refers back to *painting*.

However, sometimes when *which* is used, we don't really know what it is referring back to. Technically, *which* should refer back to a word, rather than an entire idea. Here is an unclear *which*.

We went to France, where we ate real French food and stayed in French country cottages, which made it the best trip I have ever taken.

Which is a little fuzzy in the above sentence. Here is a clearer use of *which*:

The best trip I ever took was to France last summer, where I ate authentic French food, which was prepared by the owners of the little French cottages we stayed in.

In the above sentence, it is clear that *which* refers to the *food*.

UNCLEAR PEOPLE

Sometimes *he* and *she* (and other personal pronouns too) can be confusing and unclear.

When Betsy passed Lucy waking down the street, *she* waved.

Who waved? Betsy? Lucy? We have no idea unless the sentence

is rewritten.

Betsy waved as she passed Lucy walking down the street.

When Betsy passed by her, Lucy waved.

EXERCISE 84

CLARITY

Find the word (or words) that are unclear and underline it (them). Then, rewrite the sentence(s) to make it (them) clear. Some sentences may be fine as they are.

1. I had a good time on the trip, which was important.
2. I saw Ben and Joe on the rollercoaster, and he waved.
3. Holding up a pretty blue dress, Mary said, "This is the dress I was talking about."
4. Which of these two books did you write?
5. I saw two movies last week, which were pretty good.
6. Joe saw his cousin at the park and he stopped to talk to him.
7. I have a deadline at work, which is Tuesday.
8. I got a raise last year, and I think I will get a larger raise this year. This is unheard of!

CAN I DO THESE THINGS?

Writers (and speakers) often have questions about what is okay to do and what is not. Sometimes what is okay in a text or a memo, or in an informal conversation, is not okay in formal writing and speaking. In this book, we are mostly talking about more formal and academic/ business writing and speaking.

USE ABBREVIATIONS

It is best not to use too many abbreviations in formal or academic writing. This includes resumes. Although a resume needs to be concise, you don't want to use too many abbreviations. However, there are indeed some things that are usually abbreviated. Here are some guidelines for abbreviations:

Mr., Dr., Jr., Ms., and *Mrs.* are always abbreviated when they are used as part of a name: Mr. Smith, Dr. Lang, Henry Foster, Jr.

1. If a company uses an abbreviation in its name, write the company name the same way they write it.
2. Abbreviations that consist of all capital letters generally do not have periods: *FBI, CIA, ASPCA*
3. If you want to use an abbreviation, for example, *FBI*, spell it out the first time you use it and then put the abbreviation in parentheses. After that, you can just use the abbreviation: *The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)*
4. Names of academic degrees are generally abbreviated, except in very formal writing. And although they often consist of capital letters, they do use periods: *B.A., B.S., Ph.D. M.D., M.Ed, MBA* (generally does not have periods).
5. Be consistent. Don't go back and forth between spelling out and abbreviating.
6. If you write *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)* and then start to use the abbreviation, use the abbreviation throughout the whole piece of writing.

If you are compiling a graph, table, or illustration, and you are using many abbreviations, make sure your audience will know what they mean, even if you have to give them a guide.

USE CONTRACTIONS

Like abbreviations, most contractions are best avoided in formal writing. While you might want to use *I'm, can't, she's,* etc., I would definitely avoid the contractions where *have* is shortened: *would've, should've, could've*. I recommend spelling those out.

USE SLANG

Slang; shortened spellings; trite, overused, general words; these have no place in your writing:

1. If you must use *a lot*, remember it is two words. Avoid it whenever possible.
2. *Good*, *bad*, *great*: There must be a more colorful and specific adjective you could use. The same goes for *nice* and *fun*.

3. *Stuff*, *things*, *bunch*: Rid your writing of these words. Use *bunch* only if you are talking about bananas.
4. *Really* and *very* are also boring. How about *extremely*, *particularly*, *exceedingly*, or some other more descriptive adverb?
5. *Cool*, *awesome*, and whatever is the newer version of these words have no place in formal writing. You can use them in dialogue in fiction, or in informal writing.
6. *Gonna*, *coulda*, *woulda*, *shoulda*, *'cuz*, *nite*, and *lite* are not words at all. In dialogue or some type of informal or humorous writing, be my guest.

START A SENTENCE WITH *AND*, *SO*, OR *BUT*

Many people say that you shouldn't start a sentence with a conjunction. Most people today think it is fine. I have mixed feelings about it. I still wouldn't use it on a college or job application or a business letter. However, using *and*, *so*, or *but* at the beginning of a sentence can have a certain effect you might want in fiction, creative nonfiction, more informal writing, and certainly in promotional writing and advertisements.

END A SENTENCE WITH A PREPOSITION

The rule that you shouldn't end a sentence with a preposition has become more of an old wives' tale. Many times a sentence sounds a lot better with a preposition at the end:

Whom are you going with? (Rather than With whom are you going?)

Whom did you bake the cake for? (Rather than For whom did you bake that cake?)

However, the rule still applies when there should be no preposition at all!

Where are you at?

No. It's just:

Where are you?

SPLIT AN INFINITIVE

This rule is another old wives' tale. Remember *Star Trek*'s

To boldly go where no man has gone before?

The infinitive *to go* is split by the adverb *boldly*. Don't worry about it. Yes, it can always be rewritten, usually without losing too much of the effect.

To quietly sing to the baby.

To sing quietly to the baby.

Six of one, a half dozen of the other.

Avoid it if you can, but don't worry about it too much.

USE *THEY* AS A SINGULAR

Yes and no. Please refer back to the discussions in Sections 6.7 and 11.3.

EXERCISE 85

CAN I DO THESE THINGS?

For this exercise, assume that we are writing formal English, not conversational. There is something in each sentence that is not appropriate for formal English. Please identify what it is.

1. I could've done this better if I had had more time.
2. Dear Doc Mitchell: I am writing to you for my test results.
3. This job sounds really cool to me.
4. So I graduated from college last year.
5. I have a bunch of letters of recommendation if you need to see them.
6. I live on 55 Maple St.
7. Each student should bring their test booklets.

TEST
IMPORTANT GRAMMAR ISSUES

Whoa! Chapter 11 covered a wide range of issues! See how well you do on this test. You may find a sentence or two that is correct, but most of them have problems with any of these issues from Chapter 11: run-ons, fragments, agreement of subject and verb, agreement of pronoun and antecedent, comparison, misplaced modifiers, possessives, parallel structure, using numbers, double negatives, apostrophes in plurals, clarity, abbreviations, slang, contractions, and ending sentences with prepositions. Some sentences may have more than one problem. Rewrite the sentences correctly:

1. I think Jane is more pretty than Ellen.
2. There is three choices for dinner.
3. Mayor Jones, along with two of the police officers, are coming to the court.
4. My class consists of 15 girls and seven boys.
5. Polished until gleaming, I picked up my ring from the jeweler.
6. I walked to work in the morning, ran two miles at lunch, and resting at home after work.
7. I can't hardly see you hiding in the closet!
8. As I was walking to school, I saw Jim, who waved at me.
9. I wish you would a come with us!
10. I will meet you at eight a.m.
11. Because I didn't see you coming.
12. Neither my cousin nor I see the point in this argument
13. This is my younger sisters' doll; I bought it for her birthday.
14. During my interview I told the boss that I had a bunch of experience.
15. My brother swims much better than me.
16. The president of the club, but not the other officers, have

special privileges.

17. I have the report for you, I think it is complete.
18. One of us are going to be promoted.
19. He is the less intelligent of the four brothers.
20. All these boys play a clarinet.
21. The cast of the play are going over their lines before the opening.
22. Whom are you going to the meeting with?
23. Anyone who is going with us should pack their heaviest clothes.

CHAPTER 11
CAPITALIZATION

Capitalization can be tricky. While the basic rules are easy, you will always find something that makes you stop and wonder. If you have a question about whether or not a word or phrase should be capitalized, consult a comprehensive style guide or dictionary. If there is disagreement, be consistent in your capitalization if the word(s) is used in the same context, whether or not you decide to capitalize.

In this chapter, we will go over some primary capitalization conventions, but mainly some of the more confusing aspects of capitalization.

THE BASIC RULES

Here are some easy ones:

1. Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
2. *A*lways be consistent in your capitalization.
3. Capitalize phrases or clauses that are used as complete sentences:
    - *E*nough said.
4. Also, capitalize an independent question within a sentence:
    - The question is Did you or did you not steal the car?
5. Always capitalize the pronoun *I*, as well as *I've* and *I'm* and *I'd*.
6. Capitalize *proper nouns* and *proper adjectives*. A *common noun* is a person, place, thing, or idea. A *proper noun* is a specific person, place, thing, or idea.

Common Noun	*Proper Noun*
Boy	Michael
School	Wilson High School

Soup	Campbell's soup (Soup isn't really part of the name.)
Computer	Apple computer (Computer isn't part of the name, unless you are talking about the company.)
Theory	Theory of Relativity
Newspaper	The New York Times (The is part of the name, so it would be capitalized. This is not always the case.)
Magazine	Seventeen magazine (In this case, magazine is not actually part of the name of the magazine, therefore it is not capitalized or italicized.)

The next several rules are more specific rules about proper nouns.

1. Capitalize cities, states, countries, continents, oceans, islands, streets, mountains, forests, and regions of the country. Examples:

Boston, Massachusetts, France, Asia, Pacific Ocean, Bahamas, Jones Street, Rocky Mountains, Sherwood Forest, New England, the Midwest

2. Capitalize the names of clubs, teams, and government bodies. Examples:

Boy Scouts, New York Mets, House of Representatives

3. Capitalize holidays, events, and historical periods. Examples:

Thanksgiving, Sonoma County Fair, Bronze Age, Civil War

4. Capitalize the names of nationalities, races, and peoples. Examples:

Japanese, Native American, Aztecs

Capitalize businesses and brand names. Examples:

First Union Bank, Kleenex tissues

5. Capitalize the names of ships, trains, spacecraft, and aircraft. Examples:

Mayflower, Gemini V, Spirit of St. Louis

6. Capitalize the names of buildings and other structures. Examples:

Empire State Building, Hoover Dam

7. Capitalize the names of awards, monuments, and memorials. Examples:

Nobel Peace Prize, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial.

8. Capitalize religions, holy books, and some deities. Examples:

Buddhism, the Bible, Allah, God

Note: that the word *god* is not capitalized when it refers to a mythological god.

9. Capitalize planets, stars, constellations, and other heavenly bodies Examples:

Jupiter, the Milky Way, Orion's Belt (Note that sun, moon, and, often, earth are not capitalized.)

10. Capitalize a person's title if it comes before the name. Examples:

Mr. Jones, Dr. Abbott, Mayor Flynn, President Seymour.

11. Capitalize a word that shows a family relationship if it comes before the name or is used in place of the name. Examples:

Aunt Joan (but Joan, my aunt), Mom (but my mom), Grandma Wallis (but my grandma).

EXERCISE 86

BASIC CAPITALIZATION RULES

Some of the words in these sentences should be capitalized and are not. Others are capitalized and should not be. Circle any word that is incorrectly capitalized or incorrectly **not** capitalized. Some sentences may be correct as they are.

1. i love the Spring because the weather begins to get warm.
2. The fourth of July is my favorite holiday.
3. i'm going to visit aunt Joyce in Florida over winter break.

4. I think Mayor Jost will win the Election again.
5. I think there will be a full Moon tonight.
6. The Celtics Basketball Team won the championship that year.
7. In history class, we are learning about the Greek Gods.
8. Mike Scott is the new mayor of our city.
9. The President of the United States is about to make a speech.
10. We traveled over the Rocky mountains on our vacation, and we stayed in a really nice Hotel.
11. The question is what time should we leave?
12. Until we meet again.

MORE CAPITALIZATION RULES

Here are some less obvious, but very important, capitalization rules:

TITLES

There are several styles in capitalizing titles (book titles, movie titles, chapter titles, headlines, etc.):

- Capitalize the first word only.
- Capitalize the first letter of every word.
- Capitalize every letter.

The most common and traditional style, however, is as follows:

Capitalize the first letter of all words with these three exceptions:

- Articles (*a, an, the*) unless the article is the first or last word of the title. The first and last words are always capitalized.
- Coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* and *so*—be careful because sometimes *yet* and *so* can be used as adverbs).
- Prepositions of four letters or fewer (such as *in*, *out*, *by*, *with*, *for*, *as*, *to*)

Make sure you always capitalize the words *is*, *am*, *are*, *was*, and other forms of the *to be* verb. They are short, but they are verbs,

and verbs are always capitalized in titles.

DIRECTIONS

Do not capitalize *north*, *south*, *east*, and *west* when they are directions. However, do capitalize them when they refer to a geographic area.

Head south down Broadway.

The population in the South is growing.

He comes from southern California.

He is from the Midwest.

LETTER/EMAIL SALUTATIONS AND CLOSINGS

The first words of both the greetings and closings of letters/memos/emails are capitalized. Many times, all the words in a greeting are capitalized because they are titles or names.

Dear Mayor:

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. Smith

To whom it may concern:

Sincerely yours,

Yours truly,

Thank you is not really an appropriate closing to a letter. If you say *thank you*, make it a sentence and put a period after it. Then, put a more appropriate closing. Also, avoid the sentence *Thank you in advance*.

EARTH

Many people feel that *earth* should always be capitalized (except when it refers to dirt), but this is not the case. *Earth* is capitalized when it is used in a sentence with other heavenly bodies that are capitalized.

Jupiter and Saturn are larger than Earth.

Otherwise, you can use lowercase for *earth*. Alternatively, you can choose to capitalize Earth when it is not preceded by the article *the*.

Life on Earth is relatively new in the scheme of the cosmos.

We need to save the resources of the earth for future generations.

SEASONS

The seasons are not capitalized. The months, days of the week, and holidays are, but the seasons are not unless they are part of a title.

I would say that summer is my favorite season.

Are you going to the Snowflake Winter Festival next weekend?

SOME "COMMON" PROPER NOUNS

A few words have become so common that they are no longer capitalized:

French fries

Roman numerals

It is best to consult a dictionary to see if other words such as these are capitalized.

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER TITLES

Titles are capitalized when they precede, and are thus part of, a name. Otherwise, they are generally lowercase.

Listen carefully when Mayor Jones is speaking.

The mayor is speaking.

An exception is President, but only when it refers to the President of the United States.

The company president is resigning.

The speech was made by President Jones of ABC Company.

You should vote to reelect President Jones.

The President will be going by as the parade passes the White House.

DEPARTMENTS

Company departments are generally not capitalized unless they refer to the writer's own company.

I spoke to the credit department about my bill.

The Advertising Department is meeting in five minutes.

SCHOOL COURSES

The names of languages are always capitalized in course titles. Otherwise, general course topics are not capitalized, but the names of specific courses are capitalized.

I am taking French, math, World History II, art, and science this semester.

DECADES

Do not capitalize the names of decades and centuries unless they are special expressions.

The twenties

The twenty-first century

The Roaring Twenties

DOG BREEDS/NAMES

Dog breeds are generally not capitalized unless there is a proper noun or adjective in the name. That word is then capitalized.

German shepherd

Boston terrier

Poodle

WORDS THAT COME BEFORE NUMBERS

Do not capitalize *line, paragraph, page, note, step,* and *size* before a number. Do capitalize *chapter, figure, room*, and most other words that precede numbers.

Refer to line 5.

See Chapter 7.

Go to page 550.

I am in Room 110.

This dress is a size 8.

Go back to step 10.

HYPHENATED WORDS

If a capitalized word happens to be hyphenated, the second part of the word is not usually capitalized:

I live on Thirty-fourth Street.

In a hyphenated word, capitalize only the part of the word that is a proper noun or adjective:

He is a Spanish-speaking student.

I am going to a mid-December party.

EXERCISE 87

MORE CAPITALIZATION

Some of the words in these sentences should be capitalized and are not. Others are capitalized and should not be. Circle any word that is incorrectly capitalized or incorrectly **not** capitalized. Some sentences may be correct as they are.

1. I like my French fries with ketchup, and my french toast with butter only.
2. I did my report on the differences between Mars and Earth.
3. (letter salutation) Dear sirs: (letter closing) Yours truly,
4. We are voting for class President today.
5. Please turn to chapter 6, page 111.
6. I just found out I need to take an Algebra class to graduate on time.
7. We need to stop the destruction of earth by controlling climate change. Sometimes I wish I lived back in the Thirties because I love the fashion!
8. I heard that algebra II is a very difficult class.

9. My friend just wrote a book called *The Color Of My Dress is Blue*.
10. Head East on North Street.
11. I just adopted an Alaskan Malamute from the local shelter.
12. The meeting is in room 715.
13. I am trying to make some irish stew for dinner tomorrow night.
14. I can tell from her accent that she is from the south.
15. *Back to the future* is one of my favorite movies.
16. I was so young I barely remember president Carter.
17. She moved to 445 West thirty-third Street.
18. She is from Mid-Texas.
19. I read *A Tale of two Cities* last week.

TEST
CAPITALIZATION

Most of these sentences have capitalization errors: words that should be capitalized and are not and words that are capitalized that shouldn't be. Circle all the capitalization errors in each sentence. Some sentences may be correct as they are.

1. My brothers both joined the United States army when they graduated from high school.
2. I like to read *The New York times* every day.
3. I don't really like Winter, but I enjoy going to the Winter Festival in our town.
4. The answers to the questions in chapter 8 are on page 122.
5. On St. Patrick's day, my Mom and my cousin Frankie go to the Parade.
6. I wrote to the complaint department at ABX Company to discuss my computer.
7. I am really excited about going to the middle east next month with mom and dad.
8. I spoke to both a senator and mayor Blue last night.
9. I can see both Mars and the Moon tonight.
10. *Polytheism* refers to the belief in many gods rather than just one.
11. I signed the letter with "Sincerely Yours."
12. Better luck next time!
13. I learned the roman numerals at Burke Elementary school, but i don't remember them any longer.
14. The question I always ask myself is Did I leave a big enough tip?
15. My new courses include Introduction to Music, Advanced Calculus, and a Sociology course.

16. Please save the earth by taking care of it!
17. *Guess who's Coming to Dinner* was a very popular movie decades ago.
18. *Love is all You Need* was written by the beatles, a very popular singing group in the Sixties.
19. You should head North to get home.
20. There were poodles, collies, Dalmations, and an Irish Setter at the Animal Shelter today.
21. She is from an Italian-Speaking family, although she speaks english very well.
22. My address is 4457 Twenty-Third Street, Portland, Oregon.
23. I was a member of the Girl scouts when I was a child, and I also took Piano Lessons from John Smith, ph.d.
24. I was amazed at the beauty of the Golden Gate bridge when I visited California to see my cousin Sue.
25. I work in the Human Resources Department, and my job consists of interviewing recent College graduates for Sales jobs.