

‘Such as’ vs. ‘Like’

Such as is used to indicate **examples**

Like is used to indicate **similarities**

‘Of’ Construction

Do not get confused by subjects followed by the word **of**.

‘Of’ constructions are just middlemen that try to disguise the true subject.

‘And’ vs. Additive

The word **and** can unite two or more singular subjects, forming a compound plural subject.

There are other words or phrases besides **and** that can add to a subject. These are called **additive phrases**.

Example

along with, in addition to, as well as, accompanied by, together with, including

Additive phrases do not form compound subjects

‘Or’, ‘Either...Or’, and ‘Neither...Nor’

Some subjects contain **disjunctive phrases** such as ‘or’, ‘either...or’ and ‘neither...nor’.

Find the subject that is nearest the verb and make sure that the verb agrees in number with this subject.

Example

Neither Joe **nor** his **friends** are going to the beach

Neither his friends **nor** **Joe** is going to the beach

When the words ‘**either**’ or ‘**neither**’ are in a sentence alone, they are not considered to be part of a disjunctive phrase. In these cases, they are considered singular and take only singular verbs.

Indefinite Pronouns

An ***indefinite pronoun*** is one that is not definite about the thing it refers.

All pronouns that end in -one, -body or -thing are considered singular subjects and therefore require singular verb forms.

Singular Pronouns

Any**one**, Any**body**, Any**thing**

No **one**, No**body**, No**thing**

Some**one**, Some**body**, Some**thing**

Every**one**, Every**body**, Every**thing**

Whatever, Whoever

Either, Neither

Each, Every

There are however **5 indefinite pronouns** which can be **singular or plural** depending on the context of the sentence

Some

Any

None

All

Most

For SANAM pronouns, look at the object of the 'of' construction to determine the number of the subject. (I.e. the 'of' construction which usually follows the pronoun)

Example

Some of the **money** was stolen from the bank

Some of the **documents** were missing.

‘Each’ and ‘Every’

When ‘each’ or ‘every’ is the **subject** of the sentence, it requires a singular verb form.

The same is true for any subject preceded by the word ‘every’ or ‘each’.

Example:

Every dog has paws.

Each of these **shirts** is pretty

When each or every follows a subject, it has no bearing on the verb form.

Example

They each are great tennis players.

‘The number of’ vs. ‘A number of’

The number of is always **singular**

A number of is always **plural**

Other **numerical words** such as **majority**, **minority**, and **plurality** can be either **singular or plural** depending on their context.

If one means the many individual parts of the totality, then use a plural verb form.

Example

The majority of the students in this class are hard workers

If one means the totality itself, then use a singular verb form.

Example

The student majority is opposed to the death penalty.

Subject Phrase

Sometimes the subject of a sentence is an entire phrase or clause.

These subject phrases are always singular and require singular verb forms.

Example

Having good friends is a wonderful thing.

Whatever they want to do is fine with me.

Infinitives

When a verb takes the form **to + the verb**, it is called the infinitive form.

Avoid sentences that insert a word between **to** and the verb. This error is called a split infinitive and is often incorrect.

Example

Correct: I need you **to run** quickly to the store.

Wrong: I need you **to quickly run** to the store.

Progressive Tense

In general, try to use the simple tenses (present, past, future) instead of the progressive tense.

However, **if the meaning of the sentence emphasizes the ongoing nature of an action, you can use the progressive tense.**

Example

She was **playing** with her friends when the babysitter arrived.

Present Perfect

If an event **started in the past but continues into (or remains true) in the present**, you use the present perfect tense.

Have/Has + Past Participle

Past Perfect

If more than one action in a sentence **occurred at different times in the past**, you must use the past perfect tense for the earlier action and the simple past for the later action.

Had + Past Participle

Some Past Participle of Irregular Verbs

| Verb | Simple Past | Past Participle |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Begin | Began | Begun |
| Brought | Brought | Brought |
| Do | Did | Done |
| Drink | Drank | Drunk |
| Forget | Forgot | Forgotten |
| Get | Got | Gotten |
| Go | Went | Gone |
| Hang (Object) | Hung | Hung |
| Hang (Person) | Hanged | Hanged |
| Lay (to put) | Laid | Laid |
| Lie (to tell a lie) | Lied | Lied |
| Lie (to recline) | Lay | Lain |
| Rise | Rose | Risen |
| Swim | Swam | Swum |
| Throw | Threw | Thrown |

If...Then Construction

Sentences that use the word **'if'** to describe hypothetical conditions require a conditional verb construction.

These sentences have two parts: **if clause**, and the **then clause**.

The word **'if'** does not always signal a conditional sentence.

Only when the sentence has a **'then'** clause, then the sentence is considered a conditional sentence.

Also note would/could never appears in the 'if' clause.

The actual word then is frequently omitted

| If Clause | Then Clause |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Present Tense | Will + Base Verb |
| Past Tense | Would/Could + Base Verb |
| Past Perfect Tense | Would/Could + Have + Past Participle |

If vs. Whether

Whether is preferable over if

Example

Incorrect: I do not know **if** I will go to the dance

Correct: I do not know **whether** I will go to the dance

Subjunctive Mood

The Subjunctive Mood is used for two types of sentences:

If clauses: When the if clause expresses a condition contrary to reality

In this use of the subjunctive, the verb '**to be**' always appears as the word '**were**', regardless of the subject.

It **never appears** as the word **was**.

Example

If I **were** rich, I would donate money to rebuild my old school.

If he **were** tall, he would be able to play basketball better.

Hopes, Proposals, Desires and Request formed with the word that

The subjunctive is also used to express the desire of one person or body for another person or body to do something.

This use of the subjunctive is **formed** with the word **that + the infinitive form of the verb (without the word 'to')**

Example

Wilfred knew it was imperative **that** he **pass** the GMAT quickly

Passive Voice

The passive voice is formed with a form of to be, followed by a past participle.

The person or people performing the action in the sentence almost always follow the verb.

Example

The pizza **was eaten** by the hungry students.

It **has been decided** by Jason that he will not attend college

The passive voice is required when the non-underlined portion of the sentence contains the person or agent performing the action preceded by the word '**by**'.

Example

The shuttle launch **was seen** around the world **by** people of all ages, all races, and all religions.

Pronouns

| Subject | Object | Possessive |
|---------|--------|-------------|
| I | Me | My, Mine |
| You | You | Your, Yours |
| He | Him | His |
| She | Her | Her, Hers |
| It | It | Its |
| We | Us | Ours |
| They | Them | Theirs |
| Who | Whom | Whose |

Who or Whom

You can tell when '**who**' is more appropriate, and when '**whom**' is more appropriate by changing the adjective clause into a **free running sentence**.

If the free running sentence contains he, she or they – use who

Example

He had none of the appearance of a man **who** sailed before the mast.
(**He** sailed before the mast)

If the free running sentence contains him, her or them – use whom

Example

A man stepped in on **whom** I had never set my eyes before.
(I have never set my eyes on **him** before)

Example

Who are you going to marry? I am going to marry '**he/she**'. (Wrong)
Whom are you going to marry? I am going to marry '**him/her**'. (Correct)

Whose

Whose relates to people or to things.

You can tell when to use '**whose**' by changing the adjective clause into a free-running sentence.

If the free running sentence contains his, hers, its, theirs – use whose

Example

I am walking beside my father **whose** name is Simon Dedalus.

(**His** name is Simon Dedalus)

Adjectives and Adverbs

Many adverbs are formed by adding '-ly' to the adjective

Example: Real, Really. Nice, Nicely. Slow, Slowly.

An adjective can only modify nouns or pronouns.

An adverb can modify verbs, adjectives, another adverb, preposition, or a phrase.

Example

Incorrect: Schumacher is a real good driver.

The adjective 'good' modifying driver can only be modified by an adverb. 'Real' is an adjective and so should not be used.

Correct: Schumacher is a really good driver.

The adverb 'really' now modifies the adjective 'good' correctly.

Good vs. Well

Good is an **adjective** that describes a noun.

Well can be used as an **adjective** that means healthy, **or** as an **adverb** that means competently.

Example

Schumacher is a good driver

- Good is an adjective, modifying the noun driver

Schumacher is feeling well.

- Well is an adjective modifying Schumacher

Schumacher drives well

- Well is an adverb modifying drives

Modifier

A modifier, or modifying phrase, describes someone or something in the sentence.

Modifiers are usually (not always) set off from the rest of the sentence by commas.

If the noun that is being modified by a modifier or modifying phrase is not in the sentence, we have a **dangling modifier**.

In some cases, the modified noun is in the sentence but is not directly next to the modifying phrase. This is called a **misplaced modifier**.

A modifying phrase should not be separated from the noun it modifies.

Adverbial Modifier

When the word being modified is **not a noun**, the modifying phrase is called an **adverbial phrase** and does not need to touch the word being modified.

Example

The running back ran towards the end zone, faster and harder than he had ever run before.

The **modifying phrase**, faster and harder than he had ever run before **modifies how the running back ran**. Thus the phrase modifies 'ran' and not 'running back'

Modifiers with relative pronouns

Modifying phrases are often introduced by relative pronouns such as: **which, that, where, who, whose, whom**

On the GMAT, it is sometimes preferable to insert a modifier **using a relative pronoun and a simple verb tense** than using just an '-ing' form of a verb.

Example

We test-drove a car **having** engine trouble (Awkward and not preferable)

We test-drove a car **that had** engine trouble. (**Relative Pronoun + Simple Verb Tense**)

The pronoun **'who'** introduces phrases that **modify a person or a group of people**.

The pronoun **'which'** introduces phrase that **modify things**.

The pronoun **'that'** can be used to **modify either people or things**.

Essential vs. Non-Essential Modifier

'Which' is used to introduce **non-essential** modifiers. These are clauses that provide information about a **noun** that is not necessary for identifying that noun.

'That' is used to introduce **essential** modifiers. These are clauses that provide information about a **noun** that is necessary for identifying that noun.

Example (Non-Essential)

To find my house, walk down the left side of the road until you reach the third house, **which** is red.

The sentence above always leads you to the third house on the left side of the road, and this house happens to be red.

Example (Essential)

To find my house, walk down the left side of the road until you reach the third house **that** is red.

The sentence above leads you to the third red house on the left side of the road. This may be the third house on the left side of the road, or it may be the tenth house on the left side of the road.

A modifier introduced by 'which' can be removed from the sentence without the sentence losing any essential meaning.

A modifier introduced by 'that' is essential to the meaning.

Commas are used to separate non-essential modifiers from the noun that is modified.

The pronoun **'who'** can be used in **either essential or non-essential modifiers**.

Example (Essential)

Only guests **who** are accompanied by tenants may use the gym facilities.

The sentence above identifies a subgroup of guest to whom the pool is open: those accompanied by tenants

Example (Non-Essential)

Only guests, **who** are accompanied by tenants, may use the gym facilities.

The sentence above indicates that only guests (as opposed to tenants) may use the gym facilities and that they just happen to be accompanied by tenants.

Be careful when using 'which' to introduce modifiers

When '**which**' is used as a relative pronoun to introduce a modifier, it **refers to the noun immediately preceding** it.

Example

The police found the murder weapon, which made the prosecutor's job easier.

It is the finding of the murder weapon that helped the prosecutor. However, by using '**which**' to introduce the modifier, it points to the noun 'murder weapon'. So now it means the murder weapon helped the prosecutor instead of the action of find the murder weapon.

To fix the sentence:

The police found the murder weapon, making the prosecutor's job easier.

If '**which**' seems to refer to the action of the preceding clause, you must look for an alternative that either links '**which**' properly with a noun antecedent, or rework the sentence to avoid the use of '**which**' completely.

Parallelism

Often, pronouns such as '**which**', '**that**', '**those**', '**who**', etc. - signal parallel structures.

If one item includes a pronoun, it is often appropriate to include the same pronoun in parallel items.

Example

I prefer to hire employees **who** work hard to those **who** don't.

I enjoy going out with people **who** are humorous than those **who** aren't.

Verbs of Being

Verbs of being express what a subject is, or the condition the subject is in.

The most common **verb of being** is the verb **to be**.

| To Be | Other Verbs of Being or Condition | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Is | Appear | Seem |
| Am | Become | Smell |
| Are | Feel | Sound |
| Was | Grow | Stay |
| Were | Look | Taste |
| Been | Remain | Turn |
| Being | | |

When you see a form of the verb '**to be**', be sure that the two sides are parallel.

Example

The **flower bouquet** **was** the **husband's loving gift** to his wife.

Like vs. As

'**Like**' is used to compare people or things (**nouns**).

'**As**' is used to compare **clauses**.

A clause is any phrase that includes a verb.

Example

Jack and Jill, **like** **Humpty Dumpty**, are extremely stupid.

Just **as** jogging **is** a good exercise, swimming **is** a great way to burn calories.
(**verb**)

X of Y

X: %, percent, number, fraction etc.

Y: subject

X of Y is a case where the combined subject is singular or plural, **based on whether Y is singular or plural**.

Example

A high percentage of the population **is** voting for the new school.

- Population is singular

A high percentage of the people **were** voting for the new school.

- People is plural

More Examples:

10% of the students **are** not in the class (plural)

One third of the cake **has been** eaten (singular)

Conjunctions

A conjunction connects parts of a sentence.

Watch out for sentences that have no logical connectors between two independent clauses.

This is termed a **run-on sentence** because it involves two independent sentences connected by nothing more than a comma. It can be corrected by adding a **coordinating conjunction**.

Coordinating Conjunction

For

And

Nor

But

Or

Yet

So

Example (run-on sentence)

I need to relax, I have so many things to do.

Example (Fixing run-on sentence)

I need to relax **but** I have so many things to do.

Other connecting words

Although, When, Because, Since, Before, After, If, Unless

Make sure that clauses are connected by a logical connecting word.

Example

She **is** not interested in playing sports, **but** she **likes** watching them on TV.

Colon and Semicolon

The semicolon is used to connect two closely related statements. Both statements must be able to stand alone as independent sentences.

Example

Incorrect: Andrew and Lisa are inseparable; doing everything together.

Correct: Andrew and Lisa are inseparable; they do everything together

The colon is used to equate two parts of a sentence where the second part is dependent on the first part (i.e. first part must be independent).

You should be able to insert the word **namely** after the colon.

Example

Incorrect: I love listening to: classical, rock, and pop music.

Correct: I love many kinds of music: **[namely]** classical, rock, and pop.

Uncountable vs. Countable Nouns

If you are talking about something that you **can count individually**, use 'fewer' or 'many'.

If you are talking about something that you **can't count individually**, use 'less', 'a lot of', 'much'.

Example

I ate fewer French fries that you did

You ate less mashed potato that I did