

The Simple Sentence

13

The **sentence** is a fundamentally human creation. Like the human beings who write them, sentences come in a seemingly endless variety of shapes and sizes: some stretch out for line upon line; others stop short after two or three words. Yet for all its variety, the sentence has a definable structure.

How much do you need to know about this structure to write well? If you can speak and write English, you already know a good deal about the structure of the English sentence. But to make your sentences both grammatically correct and rhetorically effective, you may need to know more about the basic parts.

13.1 THE SUBJECT AND THE PREDICATE

A sentence consists of at least one **clause**—a word group with a subject and a predicate. The **subject** identifies a person, place, or thing. The **predicate** tells what the subject does or is, where it is, what it has, or what is done to it. In statements the subject often comes first:

SUBJECT

Economists

The American economic system

Control of production

Consumers

Prices of goods and services

PREDICATE

study the production and consumption of goods and services.

rewards individual initiative.

is private.

have a variety of choices.

are largely determined by supply and demand.

In this chapter we consider the basic parts of the one-clause sentence (the **simple sentence**) because all other sentences are based on this structure.

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13.2 VERBS AND VERB PHRASES

The predicate always includes a **verb**, which may be one word or a phrase:

The comet *is* visible now.

A solar eclipse *will be* visible in October.

Napoleon's victory *revived* his dream of political domination.

Dreams *can revive* old memories.

Over 80 percent of the first inhabitants *perished* in 1607.

All of the early settlers *would have perished* without help from the natives.

Is the ceremony a humane one?

Do the initiation rites *include* bloodletting?

Are interest rates *falling*?

The recession *has* not *ended* yet.

Every **verb phrase** consists of a base verb and at least one “helping” verb or auxiliary. Auxiliaries include forms of *be* (*is, are, was, were*), *have, has, had, do, does, may, might, can, could, will, shall, would, and should*.

13.3 TYPES OF VERBS

Verbs may be *linking, intransitive, or transitive*.

LINKING VERBS

A **linking verb** connects the subject to a word or phrase that identifies, classifies, or describes it:

John Marshall *was* the fourth chief justice of the United States.

Pyrite *is* a mineral chiefly used as a source of sulfur.

The primaries *are* testing grounds for the candidates of political parties.

Primary campaigns soon *become* expensive.

The most widely used linking verb is a form of *be*, such as *am, is, are, was, or were*. Other linking verbs include *seem, become, feel, sound, and taste*.

The word or phrase that follows a linking verb is called a **subject complement**. If the word is a noun, such as *mineral*, it is called a **predicate noun**. If the word is an adjective, such as *expensive*, it is called a **predicate adjective**.

INTRANSITIVE VERBS

An **intransitive verb** names an action that has no direct impact on anyone or anything named in the predicate:

The Earth *turns* on its axis.

All symptoms of the disease *vanished*.

The volcano *could erupt* at any time.

As the examples show, intransitive verbs do not have objects. Compare them with transitive verbs, shown in the next section.

TRANSITIVE VERBS

A **transitive verb** names an action that directly affects a person or thing mentioned in the predicate. The word or phrase naming this person or thing is called the **direct object** (DO):

DO

An enthusiastic crowd *greeted* the president at the airport.

DO

Gamblers *lose* money.

DO

A fungus *has been threatening* maples in the region.

Some verbs take an **indirect object** (IO), which may go before or after the direct object:

IO

DO

The president *gave* his staff a stern warning.

You could also write:

DO

IO

The president *gave* a stern warning to his staff.

Other verbs that give you this option include *make*, *send*, *offer*, *show*, *write*, and *tell*. But whatever the verb, you must put the direct object first whenever both objects are pronouns:

DO IO

Ellen offered it to them.

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Another kind of transitive verb takes an **object complement** (OC), a word or phrase that follows the direct object and classifies or describes it:

Many scientists *considered* the experiment a disaster.

DO OC

Unfair accusations *make* most people angry.

DO OC

The jury *found* the defendant guilty of treason.

DO OC

Other verbs of this kind include *name*, *elect*, *appoint*, *think*, *judge*, and *prove*.

You can use a transitive verb in either the active or the passive voice. When the subject performs the action named by the verb, the verb is **active**:

Farmers *plow* fields.
Vandals *defaced* the queen's portrait.

When the subject undergoes, receives, or suffers the action named by the verb, the verb is **passive**:

Fields *are plowed* by farmers.
The queen's portrait *was defaced* by vandals.

For a full discussion of voice, [see chapter 24](#).

IN BRIEF

Types of Verbs

A **linking verb** connects the subject to a word or phrase that identifies, classifies, or describes it:

Lima *is* the capital of Peru.
Some professional athletes *become* wealthy.

An **intransitive verb** names an action that has no effect on a person or thing mentioned in the predicate:

Children *giggle*.
Palm trees *were swaying* in the moonlight.

A **transitive verb** in the **active voice** names an action performed by the subject and affecting a person or thing mentioned in the predicate:

Winston Churchill *inspired* the people of Great Britain during World War II.
Traffic jams *inhibit* the flow of goods and services.

A **transitive verb** in the **passive voice** names an action affecting the subject. The person or thing performing the action may be mentioned in the predicate after the word *by* or left unmentioned:

During World War II the people of Great Britain *were inspired* by Winston Churchill.

The flow of goods and services *is inhibited* by traffic jams.

Traces of mercury *were found* in the water.

13.4 WRITING THE SUBJECT

The **subject** of a simple sentence can be a noun, a noun phrase, a pronoun, or a verbal noun.

1. A **noun** is a word naming one or more persons, creatures, places, things, activities, conditions, or ideas:

SUBJECT	PREDICATE
Children	thrive on loving care.
Freedom	entails responsibility.
Dinosaurs	became extinct some sixty-five million years ago.

2. A **noun phrase** is a group of words consisting of a main noun (MN) and the words that describe, limit, or qualify it:

SUBJECT (NOUN PHRASE)	PREDICATE
MN The price of gold	has dropped sharply.
MN Long-standing labor disputes	can be difficult to settle.
MN The sound of snoring in the audience	distracted the performers.

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3. A **pronoun** (PR) takes the place of a noun (N):

SUBJECT	PREDICATE
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N Investors	have become cautious
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PR They	fear a recession.
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N Traffic	moved briskly at first.
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PR It	soon slowed to a crawl.
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For a full discussion of pronouns, [see chapter 20](#).

4. A **verbal noun** is a word or phrase formed from a verb and used as a noun. It can function as the subject in a sentence:

SUBJECT	PREDICATE
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To err	is human.
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Splitting logs	takes muscle.
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Verifying the testimony of witnesses to an accident	can be a time-consuming process.
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Verbal nouns enable you to treat actions as things, and thus to get more action into your sentences. There are two types: the **gerund**, which ends in *-ing*, and the **infinitive**, which is usually marked by *to*. A verbal noun may also serve

- a. as a predicate noun (PN) after a linking verb:

Their aim is	PN <i>to obstruct justice</i> .
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The most common mishap of all is	PN <i>breaking a test tube</i> .
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- b. as the direct object (DO) of a transitive verb:

Gourmands love	DO <i>to eat</i> .
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Few enjoy my	DO <i>singing of the national anthem</i> .
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Writing the Subject**IN BRIEF**

The subject of a simple sentence may be—

- ▶ a noun:
Children thrive on loving care.
- ▶ a noun phrase:
All the children of the world thrive on loving care.
- ▶ a pronoun:
They need our help.
- ▶ a verbal noun:
To work is to pray.
Seeing is believing.

13.5 PUTTING THE SUBJECT AFTER THE VERB

The subject of a **declarative** sentence—a sentence that makes a statement—usually precedes the verb. But the subject follows the verb in sentences like these:

There were *riots* in the occupied territories.

It is hard to *read small print*.

In these sentences *there* and *it* are introductory words or **expletives**. They are not part of either the subject or the predicate.

The subject also follows the verb when the word order is inverted:

In the center of the painting stands *a white unicorn with a golden horn*.

The inversion of subject-verb order gives special prominence to the subject, so you should use inversion sparingly—and only when you want this special effect.

In most questions the subject (S) follows a verb so that the predicate (P) is divided:

P	S	P
Can	we	find a cure for AIDS?
Have	we	the will and the means?

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13.6 OMITTING THE SUBJECT

A sentence that gives a command or makes a request often omits the subject, which is understood to be *you*:

Keep off the grass.

Please don't litter.

Submit your application before June 1.

For more on this type of sentence, which is called **imperative**, see 25.3.

13.7 USING MODIFIERS

The complete subject and the complete predicate of a sentence normally include modifiers. A **modifier** is a word, phrase, or clause that describes, limits, or qualifies another word or word group. The italicized words are all modifiers in this sentence:

SUBJECT

PREDICATE

The price of gold had dropped *sharply*.

The words modifying *price* form part of the subject; the word modifying *had dropped* forms part of the predicate. Here are further examples:

S

P

A negligent workman spilled lye over *the oriental* rug.

S

P

The equivocal statements of the *prime minister* are sending *mixed* signals
to the *opposition*.

S

P

The brightly painted masks used in the *hunting rituals* are sacred objects
representing *tribal*
ancestors.

S

P

Grandfather sat in *his rocker*, watching the *children*.

For a full discussion of modifiers, [see chapter 14](#).

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13.8 USING COMPOUND PHRASES

Compound phrases help to turn short, meager sentences into longer, meatier ones. A **compound phrase** joins words or phrases to show one of the following things:

1. ADDITION

Presidential election campaigns have become long.

Presidential election campaigns have become expensive.

COMBINED: Presidential campaigns have become *long and expensive*.

The dancer was lean.

The dancer was acrobatic.

The dancer was bold.

COMBINED: The dancer was *lean, acrobatic, and bold*.

Ants crawled over the floor.

They crawled up the wall.

They crawled onto the counter.

They crawled into the honey pot.

COMBINED: Ants crawled *over the floor, up the wall, onto the counter, and into the honey pot*.

The witness blushed.

He cleared his throat.

He began to speak in a halting manner.

COMBINED: The witness *blushed, cleared his throat, and began to speak in a halting manner*.

2. CONTRAST

Marketing U.S. products in Japan is difficult.

But it is not impossible.

COMBINED: Marketing U.S. products in Japan is *difficult but not impossible*.

3. CHOICE

The government must reduce its spending.

Or it must raise taxes.

COMBINED: The government must *either reduce its spending or raise taxes*.

The senator had not anticipated the setback.

Her staff had not anticipated the setback.

COMBINED: *Neither the senator nor her staff* had anticipated the setback.

For advice on punctuating the items in a compound phrase, [see 29.7–29.8](#).



13.9 EDITING MIXED CONSTRUCTIONS

A **mixed construction** is a combination of word groups that do not fit together grammatically or meaningfully:

MODIFIER MISUSED AS SUBJECT

1. *Fearful of the dark

PREDICATE

kept the boy awake all night.

To correct a sentence like this, you can do one of two things:

- a. Turn the modifier into a noun:

SUBJECT

PREDICATE

EDITED: Fear of the dark / kept the boy awake all night.

- b. Furnish a noun as the subject:

MODIFIER

SUBJECT

PREDICATE

EDITED: Fearful of the dark, the boy / lay awake all night.

2. *The head of the shipbuilding company congratulated the achievement of the workers.

An *achievement* cannot be congratulated; only people can be. To correct the error, change the verb or the object so that the two things fit together:

EDITED: The head of the shipbuilding company congratulated the workers on their achievement.

[or] The head of the shipbuilding company praised the achievement of the workers.

3. *Of the two hundred persons questioned, no correct answer was given.

The first part of this sentence leads us to expect that the second part will say something about the *persons questioned*. Since the second part says nothing about them, it leaves us confused:

EDITED: Of the two hundred persons questioned, none answered correctly.



13.10 EDITING FAULTY PREDICATION

Faulty predication using a linking verb between two words that are not equivalent or compatible:

1. *Another kind of flying is a glider.

The sentence classifies an activity (*flying*) as an object (*a glider*). But an activity is not an object. To correct the sentence, make the verb link two activities or two objects:

EDITED: Another type of flying is gliding. (two activities)
[or] Another type of aircraft is a glider. (two objects)

2. *According to the senator, his greatest achievement was when he persuaded the president not to seek reelection.

An achievement is not a time, a *when*. It is an act:

EDITED: According to the senator, his greatest achievement was persuading the president not to seek reelection. (two acts)

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3. *The reason for the evacuation of the building was because a bomb threat had been made.

This sentence equates *reason* with *because*. Those two words are related but not equivalent. *Reason* is a noun, and *because* is not.

EDITED: The reason for the evacuation of the building was that a bomb threat had been made. (noun plus noun equivalent)
[or] The building was evacuated because a bomb threat had been made.

This sentence contains an adverb clause; for more on adverb clauses, [see 17.8](#).



13.11 ADDING THE POSSESSIVE BEFORE A GERUND

Normally a noun or pronoun used before a gerund should be in the possessive case:

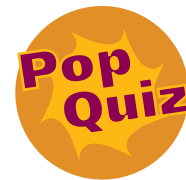
- ▶ Jake ^swinning surprised everyone.
- ▶ Everyone was surprised by him ^swinning.

The possessive shows that what concerns you is not the person but the action—the winning. When the gerund is followed by a noun, you can use *of* to clarify the meaning:

Jake's winning of the marathon surprised everyone.

Everyone was surprised by his winning of the marathon.

For more on the apostrophe, [see 34.9–34.10](#). For more on the possessive case of pronouns, [see 20.10](#).



14 *Modifiers*

14.1 WHAT MODIFIERS DO

A **modifier** is a word or word group that describes, limits, or qualifies another word or word group. Consider this sentence:

The stag leapt.

This is a **bare-bones sentence**. It has a subject (*stag*) and a predicate (*leapt*), but no modifiers (except *The*), no words to tell us what the stag looked like or how he leapt. Modifiers can show the reader the size, color, and shape of a thing, or the way an action is performed. Thus they can help to make a sentence vivid, specific, emphatic, and lively:

Startled and terrified, the stag leapt suddenly from a high rock, bounding and crashing through the dense green woods.

Modifiers also let you add information without adding more sentences. If you had to start a new sentence for every new piece of detail, you would begin to sound monotonous:

The stag *leapt*.

He was *startled*.

He leapt *suddenly*.

He leapt *from a rock*.

The rock was *high*.

Instead of serving up information in bite-size pieces like these, you can arrange the pieces in one simple sentence, putting each piece where it belongs:

The *startled* stag leapt *suddenly from a high rock*.

14.2 USING ADJECTIVES AND ADJECTIVE PHRASES

Adjectives modify nouns, specifying such things as what kind and which ones:

Complex problems require *careful* study.

Investors were *jubilant*.

The prosecutor, *intense and aggressive*, jabbed her forefinger at the witness.

Adjective phrases begin with a preposition—a word like *with*, *under*, *by*, *in*, *of*, or *at*:

Applicants *with experience* found jobs immediately.

From our house *on the hill* we could see the whole town.

It was Seymour, *with a big bottle of champagne in his hand, a mile-wide grin on his fat, jolly face, and a triumphant gleam in his eye*.

14.3 OVERUSING NOUNS AS ADJECTIVES

A noun used before another noun often serves as an adjective:

Cars may not travel in the *bus* lane.

A *stone* wall surrounded the *dairy* farm.

An orthopedist is a *bone* doctor.

But the overuse of nouns as adjectives makes a sentence confusing:

The *fund drive completion target date* postponement gave the finance committee *extension* time to gather *area business* contributions.

In this sentence, too many nouns are lined up, and the reader is left to figure out how they relate to one another. To clarify the statement, turn some of the nouns into ordinary adjectives, and use prepositional phrases:

Postponement of the final date of the fund drive gave the finance committee more time to gather contributions from local businesses.

14.4 USING ADVERBS AND ADVERB PHRASES

An **adverb** tells such things as how, when, where, why, and for what purpose:

The delegates cheered *loudly*. (adverb modifying verb)

Two bolts were *dangerously* loose. (adverb modifying adjective)

Light travels *amazingly* fast. (adverb modifying another adverb)

Unfortunately, acid rain has damaged many forests. (adverb modifying entire clause)

To form most adverbs, you add *-ly* to an adjective. Thus *quick* becomes *quickly*, and *gruff* becomes *gruffly*. Exceptions are as follows:

1. A few words (such as *fast*, *far*, *well*, and *little*) keep the same form when they turn from adjectives into adverbs:

We made a *fast* stop. (adjective)

We stopped *fast*. (adverb)

2. Adjectives ending in *-y* must be made to end in *-ily* when they become adverbs:

A *lucky* guess saved me. (adjective)

Luckily, I knew the answer. (adverb)

3. Adjectives ending in *-ly* do not change their endings when they become adverbs:

A *deadly* blow struck him. (adjective)

He looked *deadly* pale. (adverb)

4. Some adverbs—such as *never*, *soon*, and *always*—are not based on adjectives at all and have their own special forms:

The injured child *never* cried.

She will *soon* be walking again.

An **adverb phrase** begins with a preposition—a word such as *at*, *with*, *in*, or *like*—and works like an adverb, telling how, when, or where:

In 1885 a severe drought forced some farmers to increase their mortgages.

The production of machine tools has fallen *behind schedule*.

Tyson used his right fist *like a sledgehammer*.

14.5 MISUSING ADJECTIVES AS ADVERBS

When the adjective form differs from the adverb form, do not use the first in place of the second. In conversation you might say that a car *stopped quick* or that its driver *talked gruff*, but formal writing requires *stopped quickly* and *talked gruffly*. Most adverbs require the *-ly* ending. On *good* and *well*, *bad* and *badly*, *poor* and *poorly*, [see the Glossary of Usage](#).

14.6 FORMING AND USING COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

The **comparative** lets you compare one person or thing with another; the **superlative** lets you compare one person or thing with all others in a group of three or more:

Jake is *tall*.

Jake is *taller* than Steve. (comparative)

Jake is the *tallest* man on the team. (superlative)

COMPARATIVES

A **comparative adjective** starts a comparison that normally must be completed by *than* plus a noun or noun equivalent:

Dolphins are *smarter* than sharks.

To form a comparative adjective, add *-er* to most short adjectives. To form the comparative of adjectives ending in *-y*, such as *risky*, change the *-y* to *i* before adding *-er*:

Skiing is *riskier* than skating.

With a long adjective, form the comparative by using *more* rather than *-er*:

Are women *more observant* than men?

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Use *less* with an adjective of any length:

Are they any *less quick*?

To form a **comparative adverb**, use *more* before an adverb ending in *-ly*; otherwise, add *-er*. Use *less* before any adverb:

The north star shines *more brightly* than any other star.

Does anything move *faster* than light?

Roberts campaigned *less effectively* than Johnson did.

SUPERLATIVES

To form a **superlative adjective**, add *-est* to most short adjectives:

St. Augustine, Florida, is the *oldest* city in the United States.

The blue whale is the *largest* of all living creatures.

With a long adjective, form the superlative by using *most* rather than *-est*:

Forest Lawn Meadow Memorial Park in Los Angeles has been called “the *most cheerful* graveyard in the world.”

Use *least* with an adjective of any length:

According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the *least successful* author in the world is William A. Gold, who in eighteen years of writing earned only fifty cents.

Use *most* or *least* to form a **superlative adverb**:

The *most lavishly* decorated float in the parade came last.

Of all grammatical forms, the superlative adverb is perhaps the one *least commonly* used.

IN BRIEF

Forming Comparatives and Superlatives

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
high	higher	highest
confident	more confident	most confident
anxious	less anxious	least anxious
carefully	more carefully	most carefully
commonly	less commonly	least commonly

SPECIAL FORMS

Some modifiers have special forms for the comparative and superlative:

	POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
good	[adjective] }	better	best
well	[adverb] }		
bad	[adjective] }	worse	worst
badly	[adverb] }		
little	[adjective and adverb, for quantity]	less	least
much	[adjective and adverb]	more	most
far	[adjective and adverb]	farther	farthest

14.7 MISUSING COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

Do not use *-er* and *more* or *-est* and *most* at the same time:

- ▶ Anthracite is ~~more~~ harder than bituminous coal.
- ▶ Mount Everest is the ~~most~~ highest peak in the world.

14.8 DOUBLE NEGATIVES

A **double negative** occurs when the writer uses two negative words to make one negative statement:

*The patient didn't want no sleeping pills.

To correct a double negative, remove or change one of the negative words:

EDITED: The patient did not want any sleeping pills.
[or] The patient wanted no sleeping pills.

14.9 appos

Modifiers

Negative words include *not* (*n't*), *never*, *hardly*, *scarcely*, *barely*, *none*, *nothing*, *no one*, *no*, *neither*, and *nor*. Here are further examples of the double negative, with corrections:

- ▶ People sitting in the back couldn't hardly hear the speaker.
- ▶ The foreman ~~didn't give~~ ^{gave} me nothing but grief.
- ▶ [or] The foreman didn't give me ~~nothing~~ ^{anything} but grief.
- ▶ The other team didn't follow the rules ~~neither~~ ^{either}.

For advice on **could care less*, [see the Glossary of Usage](#).

14.9 USING APPOSITIVES

An **appositive** is a noun or noun phrase that identifies another noun phrase or a pronoun:

Graduation, *the hush-hush magic time of frills and gifts and congratulations and diplomas*, was finished for me before my name was called.

—Maya Angelou

Could I, a *knock-kneed beginner*, ever hope to ski down that icy slope without breaking a leg?

An appositive is usually placed right after the word or phrase it identifies. But it may sometimes come just before:

A chronic complainer, he was never satisfied.

Most appositives are set off by commas, as in all the examples above. But you can set off an appositive with dashes if you want to emphasize it, and you should use dashes if the appositive consists of three or more nouns in a series:

Two athletes—Brandi Chastain and Briana Scurry—helped the U.S. win the Women's World Cup soccer championship.

Use no commas when the appositive identifies the noun just before it and the noun is not preceded by *a* or *the*:

Reporters questioned city employee *Frank Mason* about the fire. (**COMPARE:** Reporters questioned a city employee, Frank Mason, about the fire.)

Film producer *Brenda Budget* has a new project underway.

14.10 USING PARTICIPLES AND PARTICIPLE PHRASES

A **participle** is a word formed from a verb and used to modify a noun; it can enrich any sentence with descriptive detail:

The *sobbing* child stared at the *broken* toy.

A **participle phrase** is a group of words based on a participle:

Her father, *taking her in his arms*, promised to fix it.

Participles may be present, past, or perfect:

1. The **present participle**, formed by the addition of *-ing* to the bare form of the verb, describes a noun as *acting*:

Athletes from fifty nations entered the stadium with *flaming* torches.

Building contractors watch for *falling* interest rates.

Present participles can be expanded into phrases:

Planning every minute of the journey, she studied maps and tourist guides.

The prospector stared in disbelief at the gold dust *shining brightly in his palm*.

2. The **past participle**, commonly formed by the addition of *-d* or *-ed* to the bare form of the verb, describes a noun as *acted upon*:

A *sculpted* figure graced the entrance to the museum.

Past participles can be expanded into phrases:

Politicians *influenced by flattery* talk of victory at receptions *given by self-serving backers*.

In the last sentence, the past participle *given* ends in *-n* because it is formed from an irregular verb, *give*. The past participles of other irregular verbs have various other forms, such as *seen*, *bought*, *flung*, and *bred*. (For the past participles of commonly used irregular verbs, [see 22.11](#).)

3. The **perfect participle**, formed with *having* plus a past participle, describes the noun as *having acted*—having completed some action:

Having struck a reef, the supertanker dumped over ten million gallons of oil into the waters of Prince William Sound.

PUNCTUATING PARTICIPLES

Punctuate participles and participle phrases as follows:

1. Normally, use one or more commas to set off a participle or participle phrase from the word or phrase it modifies:

Stalking her prey noiselessly, the cat crept up to the mouse.

The mouse, *frightened by a shadow*, darted into a hole.

The cat squealed, *clawing the hole in vain*.

2. Don't use commas to set off a single participle when it is part of a noun phrase or when it immediately follows a verb:

The *exhausted* fighter sank to his knees.

Let *sleeping* dogs lie.

Steve walked *muttering* out of the room.

3. Don't use commas to set off a participle phrase when it restricts—limits—the meaning of the word or phrase it modifies:

Students *majoring in economics* must take one course in statistics.

For more on restrictive modifiers, [see 17.6](#) and [29.6](#).

14.11 MISFORMING THE PAST PARTICIPLE

The past participle is misformed in these sentences:

*For lunch I ate nothing but yogurt and *toss* salad.

**Prejudice* persons see no difference between one Chicano and another.

If you write this way, it may be because you speak this way, not pronouncing the final *-d* and *-ed* when they are needed. To hear the difference those endings make, see if you can make them audible as you read the following sentences aloud:

EDITED: For lunch I ate nothing but yogurt and *tossed* salad.

EDITED: *Prejudiced* persons see no difference between one Chicano and another.

Participles

IN BRIEF

Present participle:	planning
Present participle phrase:	planning every minute of the journey
Past participle:	influenced
Past participle phrase:	influenced by flattery
Perfect participle:	having lost
Perfect participle phrase:	having lost the election



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14.12 USING INFINITIVES AND INFINITIVE PHRASES

The **infinitive** (usually made by placing *to* before the bare form of the verb) can be used to modify various parts of a sentence:

Civilization has never eradicated the urge *to hunt*.

My favorite time *to run* is early in the morning.

Determined *to succeed*, she redoubled her efforts.

In every situation Chester plays *to win*.

Infinitives can form phrases:

To write grammatically, you must know something about sentence structure.

On August 27, 1966, Sir Francis Chichester set out *to sail a fifty-three-foot boat single-handedly around the world*.

Infinitives with *have* and *have been* plus a participle identify an action or condition completed before another one:

The work *to be done* that morning seemed enormous. Sandra was glad *to have slept* a full eight hours the night before. But she was annoyed *to have been told* nothing of this work earlier.



14.13 AVOIDING THE SPLIT INFINITIVE

When one or more adverbs are wedged between *to* and a verb form, the infinitive is **split**:

Detectives needed special equipment to *thoroughly and accurately* investigate the mystery.

This sentence is weakened by the cumbersome splitting. The adverbs should go at the end of the infinitive phrase:

EDITED: Detectives needed special equipment to investigate the mystery *thoroughly and accurately*.

Sometimes an infinitive may be split by a one-word modifier that would be awkward in any other position:

The mayors convened in order to *fully* explore and discuss the problems of managing large cities.

A construction of this type is acceptable nowadays to most readers. But unless you are sure there is no other suitable place in the sentence for the adverb or adverb phrase, do not split an infinitive with it.



14.14 USING ABSOLUTE PHRASES

An **absolute phrase** usually consists of a noun or noun phrase followed by a participle. It can modify a noun, a pronoun, or an entire clause:

Donna laughed, *her eyes flashing with mischief*.

Its fuel line blocked, the engine sputtered to a halt.

The participle may sometimes be omitted:

Head down, the bull charged straight at the matador.

Nose in the air, she walked right past me.

You can form compounds with absolute phrases, and you can use them in succession anywhere in a sentence:

Its freshly painted walls gleaming in the sunlight and dazzling the beholder, the factory symbolized economic progress.

The village was silent, *its shops closed, the streets deserted*.

The skaters are quick-silvering around the frosty rink, *the girls gliding and spinning, the boys swooping, their arms flailing like wings*.

—college student





14.15 PLACING MODIFIERS

One of the hardest things about writing an effective sentence is that unless you can plan it out completely in your head beforehand, you may not know at once the best way to arrange all of its parts. You know by habit, of course, that an adjective usually comes before the noun it modifies. You don't write *leaves green* or *fumes smelly* or *brass hot*; you write *green leaves*, *smelly fumes*, and *hot brass*. But the placing of other modifiers—especially modifying phrases—may call for some thought. Often, in fact, you will not be able to decide where to put a particular modifier until *after* you have written out the whole sentence in which it appears.

While you are writing a sentence, therefore, don't worry right away about where to place the modifiers. You can often start with the base sentence and put the modifiers at the end, using one modifier to lead you to another. See how this sentence grows:

Mary traveled.

Where from?

Mary traveled *from* Denver.

Where to?

Mary traveled *from Denver to San Francisco*.

How?

Mary traveled *from Denver to San Francisco by hitchhiking*.

Did she hitchhike all the way?

Mary traveled *from Denver to San Francisco by hitchhiking to the house of a friend in Salt Lake City*.

And how did she finish the trip?

Mary traveled *from Denver to San Francisco by hitchhiking to the house of a friend in Salt Lake City and then borrowing his motorcycle to make the rest of the trip*.

14.16 mispl

Modifiers

Now, having written your base sentence and added as many modifiers as you want, you can think about where to place those modifiers. You may decide, for instance, that you want to put most of them up front instead of at the end. In that case, bracket the words you want to move and use an arrow to show where they are to go:

Mary traveled from Denver to San Francisco [by hitchhiking to the house of a friend in Salt Lake City and then borrowing his motorcycle to make the rest of the trip].

When you rewrite the sentence, it will look like this:

By hitchhiking to the house of a friend in Salt Lake City and then borrowing his motorcycle to make the rest of the trip, Mary traveled from Denver to San Francisco.

Do you like this version better than the other? That's the kind of question you will have to answer for yourself. If you want to state a simple point and then develop it, you will lead with that point and then put the modifiers after it. But if you want to create suspense, you will put all or most of your modifiers first. In that position they signal that the main point is coming at the end, where it gets special emphasis. (For more discussion of how to emphasize your main point, [see 17.1](#) and [17.10](#).)

Placing a modifier well means connecting the modifier to its **headword**—the word or phrase it modifies. If the modifier doesn't clearly point to its headword, the modifier is *misplaced*; if the headword is missing from the sentence, the modifier *dangles*.

14.16 EDITING MISPLACED MODIFIERS

A **misplaced modifier** does not point clearly to its headword—the word or phrase it modifies:

1. *I asked her for the time while waiting for the bus to start a conversation.

The sentence seems to say that the bus was ready to start a conversation. To get the meaning straight, put the modifying phrase right before its headword—I:

EDITED: To start a conversation, I asked her for the time while waiting for the bus.

2. *The college librarian announced that all fines on overdue books will be doubled yesterday.

The sentence puts the future into yesterday or yesterday into the future. Either way, it makes no sense:

EDITED: The college librarian announced yesterday that all fines on overdue books will be doubled.

EDITING SQUINTING MODIFIERS

A **squinting modifier** is one placed where it could modify either of two possible headwords:

*The street vendor she saw on her way to school occasionally sold wild mushrooms.

Did she see the vendor occasionally, or did he sell wild mushrooms occasionally?

EDITED: The street vendor she occasionally saw on her way to school sold wild mushrooms.
[or] The street vendor she saw on her way to school sold wild mushrooms occasionally.

EDITING MISPLACED RESTRICTERS

A **restrictor** is a one-word modifier that limits the meaning of another word or a group of words. Restrictors include *almost*, *only*, *merely*, *nearly*, *scarcely*, *simply*, *even*, *exactly*, *just*, and *hardly*. Usually a restrictor modifies the word or phrase that immediately follows it:

1. *Only* the Fabulous Fork serves brunch on Sundays.

2. The Fabulous Fork serves *only* brunch on Sundays.

3. The Fabulous Fork serves brunch *only* on Sundays.

A restrictor placed at the end of a sentence modifies the word or phrase just before it:

4. The Fabulous Fork serves brunch on Sundays *only*.

If you place *only* carelessly, you will confuse your reader:

*The Fabulous Fork only serves brunch on Sundays.

Is brunch the only meal it serves on Sundays, or is Sunday the only day on which it serves brunch? The meaning becomes plain only when *only* stands right next to *brunch* or *on Sundays*, as shown above in sentences 2, 3, and 4.

14.16 mispl

Modifiers

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14.17 EDITING DANGLING MODIFIERS

A modifier **dangles** when its headword is missing. Since a modifier always needs a headword, it will attach itself to a false one if the true one is not in the sentence.

*After doing my homework, the dog was fed.

And any dog that can do your homework for you certainly deserves his food! Unless the dog is unusually clever, though, this sentence contains a dangling modifier. You can eliminate it by saying who actually did the homework:

EDITED: After I did my homework, the dog was fed.

But this version still doesn't tell us who fed the dog. It fails to do so because *The dog was fed* is in the passive voice and does not mention the agent—the one *by whom* the dog was fed. That agent should be named:

The dog was fed by me.

Once you've named the agent, you can turn this sentence from the passive to the active voice ([chapter 24](#)):

I fed the dog.

Now you can write:

After I did my homework, I fed the dog.

Or you can drop the first *I* and change *did* to *doing*:

After doing my homework, I fed the dog.

Here is one more example:

*Based on the gradual decline in College Board scores over the past twenty years, American high school education is less effective than it used to be.

There is a miscombination of two sentences:

American high school education is less effective than it used to be. This conclusion is based on the gradual decline of College Board scores over the past twenty years.

So how can you combine these two sentences and not leave *Based* dangling? We suggest you kick the *Based* habit altogether. To combine sentences like these, use *shows that*, *indicates that*, or *leads to the conclusion that*:

EDITED: The gradual decline of College Board scores over the past twenty years indicates that American high school education is less effective than it used to be.

14.17 dangl

Modifiers

IN BRIEF

Spotting Misused Modifiers

Misplaced modifier:

*I asked her for the time while waiting for the bus to *start a conversation*.

Squinting modifier:

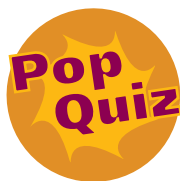
*The street vendor she saw on her way to school *occasionally* sold wild mushrooms.

Misplaced restricter:

*The Fabulous Fork *only* serves brunch on Sundays.

Dangling modifier

**After doing my homework*, the dog was fed.



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15

Coordination: Compound Sentences

To **coordinate** two or more parts of a sentence is to give them the same rank and role by making them grammatically alike. As we noted in 13.8, you can coordinate words or phrases to make a compound phrase. In this chapter we show how you can coordinate simple sentences to make a *compound sentence*.

15.1 MAKING COMPOUND SENTENCES

A **compound sentence** consists of two or more independent clauses joined by conjunctions, semicolons, or conjunctive adverbs. Each clause is called **independent** (IC) because each could stand by itself as a complete sentence:

IC	JOINED TO	IC	JOINED BY
They acquired horses	and	their ancient nomadic spirit was suddenly free of the ground. —N. Scott Momaday	conjunction
History does not stutter	;	it rhymes.	semicolon
The average age for women to marry in Ireland is twenty-six;	in contrast,	women of India marry at an average age of fourteen.	conjunctive adverb

15.2 COMPOUNDING WITH CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions include the set of words commonly known as “A. B. Fonsy”: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet*. They show the following relations:

1. SIMPLE ADDITION

The economists considered budget cuts, *and* the politicians thought of votes.

2. ADDITION OF A NEGATIVE POINT

Many of the settlers had never farmed before, *nor* were they ready for the brutal Saskatchewan winters.

3. CONTRAST

The delegates came to discuss world trade, *but* the protestors wanted to stop them.

All the candidates claim to understand Europeans, *yet* none has ever lived in Europe.

4. LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE

My father never attended the military parades in the city, *for* he hated war.

During World War II, Americans of Japanese descent were unjustly suspected of disloyalty, *so* they were placed in detention camps.

For introduces a reason; *so* introduces a consequence.

5. CHOICE

Nelson could keep his ships near England, *or* he could order them to attack the French in Egypt.

PUNCTUATION WITH CONJUNCTIONS

A conjunction used between independent clauses normally needs a comma just before it, as shown by all the examples above. But there are two exceptions.

1. You can omit the comma when the clauses are short:

Many are called but few are chosen.

15.3 and

Coordination: Compound Sentences

2. You can replace the comma with a semicolon when there are commas elsewhere in the sentence:

On the morning of June 28, 1969, the weather finally cleared; but the climbers, wearied by their efforts of the previous days, could not attempt the summit.

You can use a comma without a conjunction when there are more than two clauses, but you should normally use a conjunction between the last two:

The sun shone, a stiff breeze ruffled the bay, the sails bellied out, and the bow cut the water like a knife.

15.3 OVERUSING AND

Use *and* sparingly in compound sentences. A series of clauses strung together by *and* can become boring:

I was born in Illinois, and the first big city I ever saw was Chicago, and was I ever excited! I went there with my father and mother, and we stayed in a big hotel in the Loop, and I saw lots of interesting sights. We spent a whole day just walking around the city, and I got a stiff neck from looking up at the skyscrapers, and my feet got sore too from walking down so many streets. I was glad to go back to the hotel and take a long soak in the Jacuzzi.

To break the monotony of compounding with *and*, substitute other linking words—or other constructions:

Since I was born in Illinois, the first big city I ever saw was Chicago. Was I ever excited! My father and mother took me to a big hotel in the Loop. On the day after our arrival, we spent eight hours just walking around the city to see the sights. It was exhausting. In fact, I got a stiff neck from looking up at all the skyscrapers and sore feet from walking down so many streets. I couldn't wait to take a long soak in the Jacuzzi at our hotel.

For alternatives to the overuse of *and* constructions, [see chapter 17](#).

15.4 COMPOUNDING WITH THE SEMICOLON

A semicolon alone can join two independent clauses when the relationship between them is obvious:

Some books are undeservedly forgotten	;	none are undeservedly remembered	—W. H. Auden
Too much, perhaps, has been said of his silence	;	too much stress has been laid upon his reserve.	—Virginia Woolf

15.5 COMPOUNDING WITH CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS

A **conjunctive adverb**—sometimes called a **sentence adverb**—is a word or phrase that shows a relation between the clauses it joins, as a conjunction does. But a conjunctive adverb is usually weightier and more emphatic than a conjunction:

The Iron Duke had complete confidence in his soldiers' training and valor;
furthermore, he considered his battle plan a work of genius.

Conjunctive adverbs indicate the following relations between one clause and another:

1. **ADDITION** (*besides, furthermore, moreover, in addition*)
Some economists oppose legislation restricting foreign trade; *in addition*, they attack proposals to increase corporate taxes.
2. **LIKENESS** (*likewise, similarly, in the same way*)
Many young Englishmen condemned the English war against France in the 1790s; *likewise*, many young Americans condemned the American war against North Vietnam in the 1960s.
3. **CONTRAST** (*however, nevertheless, still, nonetheless, conversely, otherwise, instead, in contrast, on the other hand*)
Einstein's theory of relativity was largely the product of speculation; experiments made within the past fifty years, *however*, have confirmed many of its basic points.

15.5 adv

Coordination: Compound Sentences

4. CAUSE AND EFFECT (*accordingly, consequently, hence, therefore, as a result, for this reason*)

Chamberlain made an ill-considered peace treaty with Hitler after the German invasion of Czechoslovakia; *as a result*, England was unprepared for the German invasion of Poland.

5. A MEANS-AND-END RELATION (*thus, thereby, by this means, in this manner*)

Florence Nightingale organized a unit of thirty-eight nurses for the Crimean War in the 1850s; *thus* she became a legend.

6. REINFORCEMENT (*for example, for instance, in fact, in particular, indeed*)

Public transportation will also be vastly improved; a high-speed train, *for instance*, will take passengers from Montreal to Toronto in less than two hours.

7. TIME (*meanwhile, then, subsequently, afterward, earlier, later*)

At first, members of the audience were overtly hostile to the speaker; *later*, they cheered her as one of their own.

As items 3 and 6 show, you may use a conjunctive adverb *within* a clause, not just before its subject.

PUNCTUATION WITH CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS

A conjunctive adverb normally takes punctuation on either side of it. The punctuation depends on where the conjunctive adverb is used:

1. When used *between* two independent clauses, the conjunctive adverb is normally preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma:

Townpeople consider the covered bridge a link to a golden age; *as a result*, they have voted funds for its restoration.

2. Some conjunctive adverbs (including *thus, then, still, otherwise, and hence*) may begin a clause with no comma after them:

The rise of the dollar against foreign currencies drives up the price of our exports; *thus* we lose customers abroad.

3. When used *within* the second clause, the conjunctive adverb is normally set off by commas:

Jackson did not get the nomination; he managed, *however*, to win the votes of over one thousand delegates.

EXCEPTION: Some conjunctive adverbs, including *therefore*, *nevertheless*, *nonetheless*, *instead*, and those mentioned above in entry 2, may be used without commas when they are placed just before the main verb:

The hole in the ozone layer is steadily growing; we must therefore stop sending fluorocarbons into the atmosphere.

Joining Independent Clauses

IN BRIEF

The independent clauses (IC) of a compound sentence are normally joined in one of the following three ways:

1. IC ; IC when the relation between clauses is obvious.
2. IC , conjunction IC to make the relation explicit.
3. IC ; conjunctive adverb, IC to make the relation emphatic.
(Placement of the conjunctive adverb is optional)





15.6 EDITING COMMA SPLICES

The **comma splice** is the error of joining two independent clauses—two possible sentences—with nothing but a comma:

*One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion, she collapsed two miles from the finish.

When you use the comma to join or splice two distinct statements, you are probably trying to keep two related points together in one sentence. But the comma alone cannot do that for you. You should therefore do one of four things:

1. PUT A CONJUNCTION AFTER THE COMMA:

EDITED: One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion, so she collapsed two miles from the finish.

2. REPLACE THE COMMA WITH A SEMICOLON:

EDITED: One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion; she collapsed two miles from the finish.

3. REPLACE THE COMMA WITH A SEMICOLON AND A CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB:

EDITED: One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion; as a result, she collapsed two miles from the finish.

4. REPLACE THE COMMA WITH A PERIOD, MAKING TWO SENTENCES:

EDITED: One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion. She collapsed two miles from the finish.

Sometimes a comma splice occurs when the second clause in a sentence begins with a conjunctive adverb:

*Most working people get at least one raise a year, nevertheless, inflation often leaves them with no increase in buying power.

A conjunctive adverb used between two clauses must be preceded by a semicolon:

EDITED: Most working people get at least one raise a year; nevertheless, inflation often leaves them with no increase in buying power.

Alternatively, you can use a period, making two sentences:

EDITED: Most working people get at least one raise a year. Nevertheless, inflation often leaves them with no increase in buying power.



15.7 run-on

Coordination: Compound Sentences



15.7 EDITING RUN-ON (FUSED) SENTENCES

A **run-on sentence**, sometimes called a **fused sentence**, joins two independent clauses—two possible sentences—with no punctuation or conjunction between them:

*Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

Here the first independent clause simply pushes into the second one. We cannot tell for sure where the first one ends. Is its last word *sea* or *cove*?

You make this error when your thoughts come in a rush, outrunning your hand. You are most likely to find the error by reading your sentences aloud, listening for the drop in your voice to tell you where one statement (or independent clause) ends and another begins. When you find that point and see no punctuation to mark it, do one of four things:

1. USE A COMMA AND A CONJUNCTION BETWEEN THE CLAUSES:

EDITED: Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove, and she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

2. USE A SEMICOLON BETWEEN THE CLAUSES:

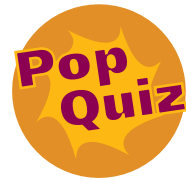
EDITED: Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove; she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

3. USE A SEMICOLON AND A CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB BETWEEN THE CLAUSES:

EDITED: Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove; then she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

4. USE A PERIOD AT THE END OF THE FIRST CLAUSE. You will then have two sentences:

EDITED: Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove. She watched the gulls sailing overhead.



16 *Parallel Construction*

16.1 WHY CHOOSE PARALLELISM?

Parallel construction, also called **parallelism**, shows that two or more ideas are equally important by stating them in grammatically parallel form: noun lined up with noun, verb with verb, phrase with phrase. Parallelism can lend clarity, elegance, and symmetry to what you say:

*I came;
I saw;
I conquered.*

—Julius Caesar

Using three simple verbs to list the things he did, Caesar makes coming, seeing, and conquering all equal in importance. He also implies that for him, conquering was as easy as coming and seeing.

In many ways writing is the act *of saying I,*
of imposing oneself upon
other people,
of saying listen to me,
see it my way,
change your
mind.

—Joan Didion

Didion gives equal importance to saying *I*, imposing oneself, and voicing certain commands. Furthermore, she builds one parallel construction into another. Using a series of imperative verbs, she puts equal weight on *listen*, *see*, and *change*. The result is a rhetorically commanding definition of the act of writing.

We look for signs in every strange event; we search for heroes in every unknown face.

—Alice Walker

Walker stresses our searching by making the second half of this sentence exactly parallel with the first.

16.2 WRITING PARALLEL CONSTRUCTIONS

To write parallel constructions, put two or more coordinate items into the same grammatical form:

I have nothing to offer but *blood, toil, tears, and sweat*.

—Winston Churchill

Churchill uses four nouns to identify what he offers the British people in wartime.

. . . and that government *of the people, by the people, for the people* shall not perish from the earth.

—Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln uses three prepositional phrases to describe the essential characteristics of American democracy.

On all these shores there are echoes *of past and future: of the flow of time, obliterating yet containing* all that has gone before.

—Rachel Carson

Carson uses two prepositional phrases about time, and then a pair of participles to contrast its effects.

We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly *we shall all hang separately*.

—Benjamin Franklin

Franklin uses two parallel clauses to stress the difference between two equally pressing alternatives.

A living dog is better than *a dead lion*.

—Ecclesiastes

The likeness in form between the two phrases lets us clearly see how much they differ in meaning.

16.3 correl

Parallel Construction

16.3 USING CORRELATIVES WITH PARALLELISM

Correlatives are words or phrases used in pairs to join words, phrases, or clauses. The principal correlatives are *both . . . and*, *not only . . . but also*, *either . . . or*, *neither . . . nor*, and *whether . . . or*. When using correlatives to highlight a parallel construction, be sure that the word or word group following the first member of the pair is parallel with the word or word group following the second:

Before the Polish strikes of 1980, *both* the Hungarians *and* the Czechs tried in vain to defy Soviet authority.

His speech *not only* outraged his opponents, *but (also)* cost him the support of his own party. (*Also* is optional here.)

Near the end of the story Daniel Webster threatens to wrestle with the devil *either* on Earth *or* in hell.

In the nineteenth century, tuberculosis spared *neither* the wealthy *nor* the poor.



16.4 EDITING FAULTY PARALLELISM

When two or more parts of a sentence are parallel in meaning, you should coordinate them fully by making them parallel in form. If you don't, the **faulty parallelism** may jar your reader:

- ▶ The Allies decided to invade Italy and then ~~that they would~~^{to} launch a massive assault on the Normandy coast.

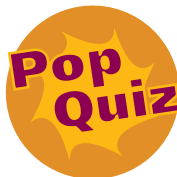
Here are further examples:

- ▶ I like swimming, skiing, and ~~to hike~~^{hiking} in the mountains.
- ▶ [or] I like ~~swimming, skiing, and to~~^{to swim, ski,} hike in the mountains.
- ▶ Either we must make nuclear power safe or ~~stop~~^{we must} using it.
- ▶ [or] ~~Either we must~~^{W either} make nuclear power safe or stop using it.

In sentences made with correlatives, each correlative goes just before one of the parallel items.

- ▶ The more I see of men, I find dogs ~~more likable~~^{the more likable}.
—Madame de Staël
- ▶ My idea of heaven is a great big baked potato, ~~and I would like~~ⁱⁿ someone to share it with.
—Oprah Winfrey
- ▶ They fought ~~in the streets, the fields, and in the woods~~ⁱⁿ.

In a series of phrases beginning with a word such as *to* or *in*, repeat the word before each phrase or don't repeat it at all after the first one (*in the streets, the fields, and the woods*).



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17

Subordination: Complex Sentences

17.1 WHAT SUBORDINATION DOES

Subordination lets you show the relative importance of the parts of a sentence. Suppose you want to describe what a dog did on a particular night, and you want your description to include the following points:

The dog lived next door.

The dog was scrawny.

The dog barked.

The dog was old.

The dog howled.

The dog kept me awake.

I was awake all night.

What is the best way to arrange these isolated facts in a sentence? Part of the answer is to coordinate facts that are equally important to the point you want to make:

The dog was scrawny and old, and he lived next door; he barked and howled and kept me awake all night.

This sentence puts all the facts together, but it fails to show which fact is most important to the writer—to you.

Which *is* the most important? That depends on the topic of your essay. If you're writing about yourself, for instance, the most important fact about the dog is that it kept you awake all night. To highlight that fact, you could rewrite the sentence like this:

The scrawny old dog next door kept me awake all night by barking and howling.

This sentence emphasizes just one statement: the dog kept me awake. By turning all the other statements into modifiers of *dog* or *kept me awake*, it subordinates them to the point that is most important to you. You can stress this point even more by placing it at the end of the sentence—the stress position:

By barking and howling, the scrawny old dog next door kept me awake all night.

Alternatively, you can subordinate all the other facts about the dog to the fact that it lived next door:

The dog *that kept me awake all night with its barking and howling* lived next door.

The entire group of italicized words modifies *dog*. So all the other facts about the dog are now subordinated to the fact that it lived next door.

Finally, suppose you want to subordinate all of these facts about the dog to a brand-new fact. Suppose you mainly want to tell what happened to you *as a result* of that sleepless night. Then you might write a sentence like this:

Because the barking and howling of the scrawny old dog next door had kept me awake all night, I fell asleep in the middle of the chemistry final.

Subordination helps make a sentence fit its context. Consider these paragraphs:

For me, the one big problem with dogs is noise. On the night before I had to take a final exam in chemistry, “man’s best friend” turned out to be my worst enemy. I got to bed at eleven, but I didn’t sleep a wink. *What kept me awake all night was the barking and howling of the scrawny old dog next door.*

The Bible tells us all to love our neighbors, but I have always had trouble even liking most of mine. When I was about six years old, I climbed over the fence in our backyard, wandered into Mr. O’Reilly’s flower garden, and sat down in the middle of some big yellow daffodils. Mr. O’Reilly came up from behind and whacked me so hard I can still feel it now. We’ve moved a few times since then, but I have yet to find neighbors that I love. On the contrary, many of the things I don’t love seem to come from across a fence. In El Paso, for instance, *a scrawny old dog that kept me awake all night with its barking and howling lived next door.*

17.2 are

Subordination: Complex Sentences

In the chemistry course I managed to do just about everything wrong. To begin with, I bought a used textbook at a bargain price, and then found out that I was supposed to buy the new edition. Trying to get along instead with the old one, I almost always wound up reading the wrong pages for the assignment and giving the wrong answers to quiz questions. I did no better with beakers and test tubes; the only thing my experiments showed is that I could have blown up the lab. But the worst came last. *Because the barking and howling of the scrawny old dog next door had kept me awake all night, I fell asleep in the middle of the final.*

The sentence about the dog is written three different ways to emphasize three different things: the noise it made, the fact that it lived next door, and the fact that something happened because of its noise. In each case, the methods of subordination make the sentence fit the particular paragraph for which it is written. The three ways of writing the sentence also illustrate three different kinds of subordinate clauses. We consider these in the next sections.

17.2 WHAT SUBORDINATE CLAUSES ARE

A **subordinate clause** (SC), also called a **dependent clause**, is a group of words that has its own subject and predicate but cannot stand alone as a simple sentence. It must be included in or connected to an **independent clause** (IC)—one that can stand by itself as a sentence:

SC	IC	
Before she spoke to reporters,	she conferred with her advisers.	
IC	SC	
Medical researchers have long been seeking a cure for a disease	that takes thousands of lives each year.	
IC	SC	SC
Pavarotti was cheered	as he finished the beautiful aria	in which Rodolfo declares his love to Mimi.

A sentence containing one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause is called **complex**. Complex sentences are made with various kinds of subordinate clauses, as explained below.

17.3 USING ADJECTIVE (RELATIVE) CLAUSES

An **adjective clause**, sometimes called a **relative clause**, normally begins with a **relative pronoun**—*which*, *that*, *who*, *whom*, or *whose*. The relative pronoun refers to a noun or noun phrase that is called its **antecedent**. The adjective clause modifies this antecedent, which usually appears just before the relative pronoun:

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An adjective clause can say more about its antecedent than a single adjective does. Compare these two sentences:

Medical researchers have long been seeking a cure for a *fatal* disease.

Medical researchers have long been seeking a cure for a disease *that takes thousands of lives every year*.

An adjective clause also enables you to subordinate one set of facts to another set. See how these two sentences can be combined:

Amelia Earhart disappeared in 1937 during a round-the-world trip. She set new speed records for long-distance flying in the 1930s.

COMBINATION 1: Amelia Earhart, *who set new speed records for long-distance flying in the 1930s*, disappeared in 1937 during a round-the-world trip.

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Combination 1 subordinates Earhart's record-setting to her disappearance; combination 2 subordinates her disappearance to her record-setting. Which combination the writer chooses depends on which fact the writer wants to emphasize in a particular context.

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The relative pronoun you choose depends chiefly on the antecedent—the noun or pronoun the clause modifies.

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Subordination: Complex Sentences

Millard Fillmore, *whom* almost nobody remembers, was president of the United States from 1848 to 1852.

Never trust a doctor *whose* office plants have died. —Erma Bombeck

Pedestrians *that* ignore traffic lights are living dangerously.

The case endings of *who*, *whom*, and *whose* depend on what the pronoun does in the clause it introduces. (For a full discussion of case endings, [see 20.11.](#))

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We must preserve the freedoms for *which* our ancestors fought.

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For more on this use of *which*, [see 20.4](#), “Broad Reference.”

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(**COMPARE:** The children worked in a schoolroom *of which* the windows were never opened.)

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► Mothers ~~of small children~~ ^{and who have small children} who work must juggle conflicting responsibilities.

Alternatively, you can reconstruct the sentence:

Working mothers of small children must juggle conflicting responsibilities.

For more on the placement of modifying phrases, [see 14.14–14.17](#).

17.5 adje

Subordination: Complex Sentences

3. If the adjective clause is long, you can move the antecedent (in bold print here) to the end of the main clause:

Leonardo da Vinci, *whose knowledge of sculpture, painting, architecture, engineering, and science made him the intellectual wonder of his time*, painted the *Mona Lisa* in Florence about 1504.

EDITED: The *Mona Lisa* was painted in Florence about 1504 by **Leonardo da Vinci**, *whose knowledge of sculpture, painting, architecture, engineering, and science made him the intellectual wonder of his time*.

The second version keeps both parts of the main clause together.



17.6 PUNCTUATING ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

1. Use commas to set off an adjective clause only when it is **nonrestrictive**—that is, not needed to identify the antecedent. A nonrestrictive adjective clause has a well-identified noun as its antecedent:

Linda Watson, *who earned a cumulative grade-point average of 3.8*, was graduated with highest honors.

This adjective clause is not needed to identify the antecedent because she is already identified by name. Without the adjective clause, some details would be lacking, but the essential information would remain:

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Well-identified nouns include not only names of persons but also names of things, job titles, and any other phrases that plainly identify one of a kind:

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In all of these examples, the adjective clauses are nonrestrictive. They give information about the antecedents but do not identify them.

EXCEPTION: When the antecedent is the proper name of a group, the clause may restrict its meaning to certain members of the group and would therefore require no commas:

Most Canadians *who speak French* live in the province of Quebec.

2. Do not use commas to set off a **restrictive** adjective clause—one that *does* identify the antecedent:

Students *who earn a cumulative grade point average of 3.7 or more* will be graduated with highest honors.

This adjective clause restricts the meaning of the antecedent, specifying which students are eligible for highest honors. Without the clause the sentence would say something quite different:

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Since a restrictive clause is essential to the meaning of the antecedent and of the sentence as a whole, it must not be set off from the antecedent by commas. Here is one more example:

Tree surgeons may have to remove the oak *that towers over the new greenhouse*.

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- ▶ Some of the compact cars ~~that are~~ sold by American companies are manufactured in Japan.
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17.8 USING ADVERB CLAUSES

An **adverb clause** begins with a subordinator—a word like *when*, *because*, *if*, and *although*. Modifying a word, phrase, or clause, an adverb clause tells such things as why, when, how, and under what conditions. Normally it gives more information than a simple adverb does:

17.9 subord

Subordination: Complex Sentences

ADVERB

Then I hit the brakes.

ADVERB CLAUSE

As the deer leaped onto the road, I hit the brakes.

An adverb clause also enables you to subordinate one point to another:

As he was being tackled, he threw the ball.

This sentence highlights the throwing of the ball and is designed to fit into a paragraph like this:

The line wavered, and Keene knew it would break in seconds. But he dropped back, dancing around until he spotted a receiver. *As he was being tackled, he threw the ball.* Polanski made a leaping catch at the twenty-five-yard line, came down running, zigzagged past the Iowa safety, and crossed the goal line. The crowd went wild.

On the other hand, if the most important thing is not the pass but the tackle, the sentence should emphasize that:

Keene looked desperately for a receiver, sensing the seconds ticking away. Suddenly his blocking broke down, and he was surrounded. *As he threw the ball, he was being tackled.* The pass went nearly straight up, then fell to Earth behind him. The game was over.

In each version of the italicized sentence, the adverb clause lets you indicate which of two points is more important.

17.9 CHOOSING SUBORDINATORS

A **subordinator** is a word or phrase that subordinates the clause to whatever it modifies. Subordinators signal a variety of relations:

1. TIME

The factory closed *when* the owner died.

Until power was restored, we cooked our meals in the fireplace.

While Marian sang, Zachary played the piano.

2. CAUSALITY

Kate was happy *because* she had just won her first case.

Since I had no money, I walked all the way home.

3. CONCESSION AND CONTRAST

Money cannot make you happy, *though* it can keep you comfortable.

Though money cannot make you happy, it can keep you comfortable.

Although the mosquitoes were out in force, we spent an enjoyable hour fishing before sundown.

In my new car, I am averaging over thirty-five miles per gallon of gas, *whereas* I got only twenty in my old one.

While Finnegan himself never ran for any office, he ran many successful campaigns.

4. CONDITION

If battery-powered cars become popular, the price of gas will drop.

He ran *as if* he had a broken leg.

5. PURPOSE

I worked in a department store for a year *so that* I could earn money for college.

6. PLACE

Where federal funds go, federal regulations go with them.

7. RESULT

We are *so* accustomed to adopting a mask before others *that* we end by being unable to recognize ourselves.

—William Hazlitt

She fixed the clock *so that* it worked.

8. RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

Whatever the president wants, Congress has a will of its own.

You can also signal general possibility with *whenever*, *wherever*, *whoever*, *whichever*, and *however*:

I can't pronounce the name *however* it is spelled.

9. COMPARISON

The river is cleaner now *than* it was two years ago.

17.9 plac

Subordination: Complex Sentences

Relations Signaled by Subordinators

Time

after
as
as long as
as soon as
before
ever since
until
when
whenever
while

Concession and Contrast

although
even though
though
whereas
while

Condition

as if
as though
if
provided that
unless

Range of Possibilities

however
whatever
whichever
whoever

Place

whence
where
wherever

Purpose

in order that
lest
so that

Causality

because
since

Result

so that
that

Comparison

than

17.10 PLACING ADVERB CLAUSES

An adverb clause of result and comparison normally follows the main clause. But most other adverb clauses are movable. So where do you put them?

To be clear-cut and straightforward, lead with your main clause and let the adverb clause follow:

The colonel ordered an investigation as soon as he heard the complaint of the enlisted men.

I worked in a department store for a year so that I could earn money for college.

This kind of order has a brisk, no-nonsense effect, and you will seldom go wrong with it. But it is not always the best order. To create suspense, or to build up to your main point, put the adverb clause at the beginning and save the main clause for the end. Consider these two versions of a sentence spoken by Winston Churchill in 1941, when the Germans had occupied most of Europe and were threatening to invade England:

We shall not flag or fail even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule.

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail.

There is nothing grammatically wrong with the first sentence, which starts with a main clause and finishes with a long adverb clause. But this sentence has all the fire of a wet match. Because the crucial words *we shall not flag or fail* come first, they are virtually smothered by what follows them. By the time we reach the end of the sentence we may even have forgotten its main point. The arrangement of the second sentence—the one Churchill actually wrote—guarantees we will remember it. Precisely because we are made to wait until the end of the sentence for the main clause, it strikes with telling effect.

17.11 PUNCTUATING ADVERB CLAUSES

Introductory adverb clauses are followed by a comma:

Even though I knocked loudly on the door, the storekeeper would not open it.

When the gate opened, the bull charged into the ring.

Ordinarily, an adverb clause coming at the end of a sentence is not preceded by a comma:

The bull charged into the ring *when the gate opened*.

A wall collapsed *because the foundation was poorly constructed*.

If the adverb clause at the end of a sentence is nonrestrictive—not essential to the meaning of the sentence—a comma may precede it:

We planted the trees in the fall of 1984, *just after we bought the house*.



17.12 MAKING ADVERB CLAUSES COMPLETE: AVOIDING FAULTY COMPARISONS

1. Do not use an incomplete adverb clause when a complete one is needed to make a comparison clear:

► The river is as clean now ^{it was} as two years ago.

The original sentence seems to compare the river with *two years*.

2. Do not skip any word that is essential to a comparison:

► Roger moves faster than any ^{other} player on the team [;] ~~does~~.

If Roger himself is a player on the team, the original sentence seems to compare him with himself as well as others.

- Tokyo's population is larger than New York's is.

The original seems to compare a population with a city. Another way of correcting the sentence is this:

Tokyo's population is larger *than that of New York*.

3. You may skip any words in a comparison that can be easily supplied by the reader:

The exhaust system emits less sulphur dioxide *than the original system (did)*.

Some writers think more about plot *than (they do) about characters*.

Ever since I began swimming every day, I have felt better *(than I did before I began swimming)*.

Roger moves faster than any other player on the team *(does)*.

Tokyo's population is larger than New York's *(is)*.



17.13 noun

Subordination: Complex Sentences

17.13 USING NOUN CLAUSES

A **noun clause** is used as a noun within a sentence. Normally it gives more information than a simple noun can. Compare the following:

Government officials did not anticipate the *problem*.

Government officials did not anticipate *that protestors would occupy the presidential palace*.

A noun clause can serve as subject, object, or predicate noun.

1. NOUN CLAUSE AS SUBJECT

What Sylvia did amazed me.

Whoever wins the nomination will be running against a popular incumbent.

2. NOUN CLAUSE AS OBJECT

I feared *(that) we would never get out alive*. (*That* is optional.)

The police have not discovered *how the prisoner escaped*.

No one knew *whether or not interest rates would rise*.

We will plug the leaks with *whatever is handy*.

Alexandra wondered *what marriage would do to her*.

3. NOUN CLAUSE AS PREDICATE NOUN

The main reason for the change is *that all in the company will benefit*.

A computer with the brain of a genius is *what I need right now*.

The most puzzling mystery of all is *why she abdicated at the height of her power*.

Subordinate Clauses**IN BRIEF**

The **adjective (relative) clause** begins with a relative pronoun—*which, that, who, whom, or whose*. The relative pronoun refers to its antecedent, the noun or noun phrase that normally appears just before it:

All *that glitters* is not gold.

The **adverb clause** begins with a subordinator—a word like *when, because, or although*—and tells such things as why, when, or how something happened:

I missed class *because I had to go out of town for a job interview*.

The **noun clause** is used as a noun within a sentence:

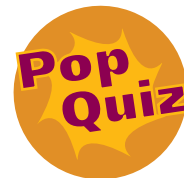
Many people want *what they cannot afford*.

Noun clauses may begin with

- ▶ a pronoun: No one knows exactly *who* built Stonehenge.
- ▶ an adverb: Astronomers can explain *how* stars are born.
- ▶ *that*: Many workers fear *that* they will lose their jobs.

That may be omitted if the meaning is clear without it:

Many workers fear they will lose their jobs.



17

Subordination: Complex Sentences

17.1 WHAT SUBORDINATION DOES

Subordination lets you show the relative importance of the parts of a sentence. Suppose you want to describe what a dog did on a particular night, and you want your description to include the following points:

The dog lived next door.

The dog was scrawny.

The dog barked.

The dog was old.

The dog howled.

The dog kept me awake.

I was awake all night.

What is the best way to arrange these isolated facts in a sentence? Part of the answer is to coordinate facts that are equally important to the point you want to make:

The dog was scrawny and old, and he lived next door; he barked and howled and kept me awake all night.

This sentence puts all the facts together, but it fails to show which fact is most important to the writer—to you.

Which *is* the most important? That depends on the topic of your essay. If you're writing about yourself, for instance, the most important fact about the dog is that it kept you awake all night. To highlight that fact, you could rewrite the sentence like this:

The scrawny old dog next door kept me awake all night by barking and howling.

This sentence emphasizes just one statement: the dog kept me awake. By turning all the other statements into modifiers of *dog* or *kept me awake*, it subordinates them to the point that is most important to you. You can stress this point even more by placing it at the end of the sentence—the stress position:

By barking and howling, the scrawny old dog next door kept me awake all night.

Alternatively, you can subordinate all the other facts about the dog to the fact that it lived next door:

The dog *that kept me awake all night with its barking and howling* lived next door.

The entire group of italicized words modifies *dog*. So all the other facts about the dog are now subordinated to the fact that it lived next door.

Finally, suppose you want to subordinate all of these facts about the dog to a brand-new fact. Suppose you mainly want to tell what happened to you *as a result* of that sleepless night. Then you might write a sentence like this:

Because the barking and howling of the scrawny old dog next door had kept me awake all night, I fell asleep in the middle of the chemistry final.

Subordination helps make a sentence fit its context. Consider these paragraphs:

For me, the one big problem with dogs is noise. On the night before I had to take a final exam in chemistry, “man’s best friend” turned out to be my worst enemy. I got to bed at eleven, but I didn’t sleep a wink. *What kept me awake all night was the barking and howling of the scrawny old dog next door.*

The Bible tells us all to love our neighbors, but I have always had trouble even liking most of mine. When I was about six years old, I climbed over the fence in our backyard, wandered into Mr. O’Reilly’s flower garden, and sat down in the middle of some big yellow daffodils. Mr. O’Reilly came up from behind and whacked me so hard I can still feel it now. We’ve moved a few times since then, but I have yet to find neighbors that I love. On the contrary, many of the things I don’t love seem to come from across a fence. In El Paso, for instance, *a scrawny old dog that kept me awake all night with its barking and howling lived next door.*

17.2 are

Subordination: Complex Sentences

In the chemistry course I managed to do just about everything wrong. To begin with, I bought a used textbook at a bargain price, and then found out that I was supposed to buy the new edition. Trying to get along instead with the old one, I almost always wound up reading the wrong pages for the assignment and giving the wrong answers to quiz questions. I did no better with beakers and test tubes; the only thing my experiments showed is that I could have blown up the lab. But the worst came last. *Because the barking and howling of the scrawny old dog next door had kept me awake all night, I fell asleep in the middle of the final.*

The sentence about the dog is written three different ways to emphasize three different things: the noise it made, the fact that it lived next door, and the fact that something happened because of its noise. In each case, the methods of subordination make the sentence fit the particular paragraph for which it is written. The three ways of writing the sentence also illustrate three different kinds of subordinate clauses. We consider these in the next sections.

17.2 WHAT SUBORDINATE CLAUSES ARE

A **subordinate clause** (SC), also called a **dependent clause**, is a group of words that has its own subject and predicate but cannot stand alone as a simple sentence. It must be included in or connected to an **independent clause** (IC)—one that can stand by itself as a sentence:

SC	IC	
Before she spoke to reporters,	she conferred with her advisers.	
IC	SC	
Medical researchers have long been seeking a cure for a disease	that takes thousands of lives each year.	
IC	SC	SC
Pavarotti was cheered	as he finished the beautiful aria	in which Rodolfo declares his love to Mimi.

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An **adverb clause** begins with a subordinator—a word like *when*, *because*, *if*, and *although*. Modifying a word, phrase, or clause, an adverb clause tells such things as why, when, how, and under what conditions. Normally it gives more information than a simple adverb does:

17.9 subord

Subordination: Complex Sentences

ADVERB

Then I hit the brakes.

ADVERB CLAUSE

As the deer leaped onto the road, I hit the brakes.

An adverb clause also enables you to subordinate one point to another:

As he was being tackled, he threw the ball.

This sentence highlights the throwing of the ball and is designed to fit into a paragraph like this:

The line wavered, and Keene knew it would break in seconds. But he dropped back, dancing around until he spotted a receiver. *As he was being tackled, he threw the ball.* Polanski made a leaping catch at the twenty-five-yard line, came down running, zigzagged past the Iowa safety, and crossed the goal line. The crowd went wild.

On the other hand, if the most important thing is not the pass but the tackle, the sentence should emphasize that:

Keene looked desperately for a receiver, sensing the seconds ticking away. Suddenly his blocking broke down, and he was surrounded. *As he threw the ball, he was being tackled.* The pass went nearly straight up, then fell to Earth behind him. The game was over.

In each version of the italicized sentence, the adverb clause lets you indicate which of two points is more important.

17.9 CHOOSING SUBORDINATORS

A **subordinator** is a word or phrase that subordinates the clause to whatever it modifies. Subordinators signal a variety of relations:

1. TIME

The factory closed *when* the owner died.

Until power was restored, we cooked our meals in the fireplace.

While Marian sang, Zachary played the piano.

2. CAUSALITY

Kate was happy *because* she had just won her first case.

Since I had no money, I walked all the way home.

3. CONCESSION AND CONTRAST

Money cannot make you happy, *though* it can keep you comfortable.

Though money cannot make you happy, it can keep you comfortable.

Although the mosquitoes were out in force, we spent an enjoyable hour fishing before sundown.

In my new car, I am averaging over thirty-five miles per gallon of gas, *whereas* I got only twenty in my old one.

While Finnegan himself never ran for any office, he ran many successful campaigns.

4. CONDITION

If battery-powered cars become popular, the price of gas will drop.

He ran *as if* he had a broken leg.

5. PURPOSE

I worked in a department store for a year *so that* I could earn money for college.

6. PLACE

Where federal funds go, federal regulations go with them.

7. RESULT

We are *so* accustomed to adopting a mask before others *that* we end by being unable to recognize ourselves.

—William Hazlitt

She fixed the clock *so that* it worked.

8. RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

Whatever the president wants, Congress has a will of its own.

You can also signal general possibility with *whenever*, *wherever*, *whoever*, *whichever*, and *however*:

I can't pronounce the name *however* it is spelled.

9. COMPARISON

The river is cleaner now *than* it was two years ago.

17.9 plac

Subordination: Complex Sentences

Relations Signaled by Subordinators

Time

after
as
as long as
as soon as
before
ever since
until
when
whenever
while

Concession and Contrast

although
even though
though
whereas
while

Condition

as if
as though
if
provided that
unless

Range of Possibilities

however
whatever
whichever
whoever

Place

whence
where
wherever

Purpose

in order that
lest
so that

Causality

because
since

Result

so that
that

Comparison

than

17.10 PLACING ADVERB CLAUSES

An adverb clause of result and comparison normally follows the main clause. But most other adverb clauses are movable. So where do you put them?

To be clear-cut and straightforward, lead with your main clause and let the adverb clause follow:

The colonel ordered an investigation as soon as he heard the complaint of the enlisted men.

I worked in a department store for a year so that I could earn money for college.

This kind of order has a brisk, no-nonsense effect, and you will seldom go wrong with it. But it is not always the best order. To create suspense, or to build up to your main point, put the adverb clause at the beginning and save the main clause for the end. Consider these two versions of a sentence spoken by Winston Churchill in 1941, when the Germans had occupied most of Europe and were threatening to invade England:

We shall not flag or fail even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule.

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail.

There is nothing grammatically wrong with the first sentence, which starts with a main clause and finishes with a long adverb clause. But this sentence has all the fire of a wet match. Because the crucial words *we shall not flag or fail* come first, they are virtually smothered by what follows them. By the time we reach the end of the sentence we may even have forgotten its main point. The arrangement of the second sentence—the one Churchill actually wrote—guarantees we will remember it. Precisely because we are made to wait until the end of the sentence for the main clause, it strikes with telling effect.

17.11 PUNCTUATING ADVERB CLAUSES

Introductory adverb clauses are followed by a comma:

Even though I knocked loudly on the door, the storekeeper would not open it.

When the gate opened, the bull charged into the ring.

Ordinarily, an adverb clause coming at the end of a sentence is not preceded by a comma:

The bull charged into the ring *when the gate opened*.

A wall collapsed *because the foundation was poorly constructed*.

If the adverb clause at the end of a sentence is nonrestrictive—not essential to the meaning of the sentence—a comma may precede it:

We planted the trees in the fall of 1984, *just after we bought the house*.



17.12 MAKING ADVERB CLAUSES COMPLETE: AVOIDING FAULTY COMPARISONS

1. Do not use an incomplete adverb clause when a complete one is needed to make a comparison clear:

► The river is as clean now ^{it was} as two years ago.

The original sentence seems to compare the river with *two years*.

2. Do not skip any word that is essential to a comparison:

► Roger moves faster than any ^{other} player on the team ^{does}.

If Roger himself is a player on the team, the original sentence seems to compare him with himself as well as others.

- Tokyo's population is larger than New York's is.

The original seems to compare a population with a city. Another way of correcting the sentence is this:

Tokyo's population is larger *than that of New York*.

3. You may skip any words in a comparison that can be easily supplied by the reader:

The exhaust system emits less sulphur dioxide *than the original system (did)*.

Some writers think more about plot *than (they do) about characters*.

Ever since I began swimming every day, I have felt better *(than I did before I began swimming)*.

Roger moves faster than any other player on the team *(does)*.

Tokyo's population is larger than New York's *(is)*.



17.13 noun

Subordination: Complex Sentences

17.13 USING NOUN CLAUSES

A **noun clause** is used as a noun within a sentence. Normally it gives more information than a simple noun can. Compare the following:

Government officials did not anticipate the *problem*.

Government officials did not anticipate *that protestors would occupy the presidential palace*.

A noun clause can serve as subject, object, or predicate noun.

1. NOUN CLAUSE AS SUBJECT

What Sylvia did amazed me.

Whoever wins the nomination will be running against a popular incumbent.

2. NOUN CLAUSE AS OBJECT

I feared *(that) we would never get out alive*. (*That* is optional.)

The police have not discovered *how the prisoner escaped*.

No one knew *whether or not interest rates would rise*.

We will plug the leaks with *whatever is handy*.

Alexandra wondered *what marriage would do to her*.

3. NOUN CLAUSE AS PREDICATE NOUN

The main reason for the change is *that all in the company will benefit*.

A computer with the brain of a genius is *what I need right now*.

The most puzzling mystery of all is *why she abdicated at the height of her power*.

Subordinate Clauses**IN BRIEF**

The **adjective (relative) clause** begins with a relative pronoun—*which*, *that*, *who*, *whom*, or *whose*. The relative pronoun refers to its antecedent, the noun or noun phrase that normally appears just before it:

All *that glitters* is not gold.

The **adverb clause** begins with a subordinator—a word like *when*, *because*, or *although*—and tells such things as why, when, or how something happened:

I missed class *because I had to go out of town for a job interview*.

The **noun clause** is used as a noun within a sentence:

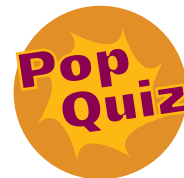
Many people want *what they cannot afford*.

Noun clauses may begin with

- ▶ a pronoun: No one knows exactly *who* built Stonehenge.
- ▶ an adverb: Astronomers can explain *how* stars are born.
- ▶ *that*: Many workers fear *that* they will lose their jobs.

That may be omitted if the meaning is clear without it:

Many workers fear they will lose their jobs.



Coordination and Subordination

18

18.1 USING COORDINATION AND SUBORDINATION TOGETHER

Using coordination and subordination together, you can arrange all the parts of a sentence according to their relative importance and the desired emphasis. For example:

1. No one had the guts to raise a riot.
2. But suppose a European woman went through the bazaars alone.
3. Somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress.

COMBINED: No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress.

—George Orwell

In the combined sentence, both sentence 1 and sentence 3 remain independent clauses, though they are now joined by *but*. The result is a compound sentence. Within it, sentence 2 becomes a subordinate clause introduced by *if*. Here is another example:

When Matthew heard about the accident, he molded his face into a mask as he had seen actors do, and he holed up in his bedroom, where he unplugged his stereo and tried to cry.

—college student

18.1 using

Coordination and Subordination

PLEASE TURN TO NEXT PAGE



PLEASE TURN TO NEXT PAGE



18.1 using

Coordination and Subordination

PLEASE TURN TO NEXT PAGE





18.2 UNTANGLING SENTENCES

It is sometimes hard to put several ideas into a single sentence without getting them tangled up in the process. Consider this sentence:

*Due to the progress in military weaponry over the years, there has been an increased passivity in humankind that such advancements bring as wars are easier to fight resulting in a total loss of honor in fighting.

If you come across such a sentence in your own writing, you should first of all break it up into single ideas:

1. There has been progress in military weaponry over the years.
2. There has been increased passivity in humankind.
3. Such advancements bring passivity.
4. The passivity is due to the progress.
5. Wars are easier to fight.
6. This results in a total loss of honor in fighting.

Once you have broken up the sentence into single ideas, you can use coordination and subordination to put them back together clearly:

Since progress in military weaponry over the years has made humankind more passive and wars easier to fight, there has been a total loss of honor in fighting.

[or] Since progress in military weaponry over the years has made humankind more passive and wars easier to fight, fighting has lost all honor.



back   **next**

Sentence Fragments

19

Complete sentences help the writer to sound well organized and the reader to grasp the writer's point. Sentence fragments often do just the opposite. Unless skillfully used, they give the impression that the writer's thoughts are incomplete or disorganized, and they may confuse the reader.

19.1 USING AND MISUSING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

A **sentence fragment** is part of a sentence punctuated as if it were a whole one:

A new mountain to be climbed.

In conversation we often use fragments that make perfectly good sense:

"When is she leaving?"

"Tomorrow."

"Really?"

"No question about it."

"Rats!"

Occasionally, sentence fragments also occur in writing:

For so many years college had seemed far-off, but all of a sudden it was there, staring me in the face. A new mountain to be climbed.

—college student

This passage ends with a sentence fragment whose meaning is perfectly clear in its context. In fact, the fragment highlights a point that might not have been made so effectively with a complete sentence.

19.2 spot

Sentence Fragments

But sentence fragments must be handled with care. If you don't know how to use them sparingly and strategically, your writing will look disorganized:

In conclusion I feel Falstaff proves to be a most likable and interesting character. Showing an ability to think quickly in tight spots. But above all he lends a comical light to the play. Which I feel makes it all the more enjoyable.

—college student

This passage includes two fragments—one after the first sentence and one at the end. Alternating with sentences of about equal length, they seem improvised and arbitrary, as if the writer could only now and then form a complete thought.

If you know how to use fragments effectively, do so. If you don't, or if your instructor will not accept any fragments at all, make sure all of your sentences are complete.

19.2 SPOTTING AND EDITING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

How can you tell whether a particular word group is a sentence fragment? Here are some useful questions to ask if you aren't sure.

1. DOES THE "SENTENCE" START WITH A SUBORDINATOR OR A RELATIVE PRONOUN? A clause that starts with a subordinator or a relative pronoun and stands by itself is a fragment. It should be attached to an independent clause:

- a. On Halloween night some years ago, a full-grown man with a sick sense of humor disguised himself as a ghost. *So that he could terrify little children. (fragment starting with subordinator)

EDITED: On Halloween night some years ago, a full-grown man with a sick sense of humor disguised himself as a ghost so that he could terrify little children.

- b. The British and French developed a supersonic plane called the Concorde. *Which can fly from New York to London in three hours. (fragment starting with relative pronoun)

EDITED: The British and French developed a supersonic plane called the Concorde, which can fly from New York to London in three hours.

2. DOES THE “SENTENCE” LACK A SUBJECT?

Lancelot won fame as a knight because of his prowess in battle. *Defeated the other great warriors in the kingdom.

EDITED: He defeated the other great warriors in the kingdom.

3. DOES THE “SENTENCE” LACK A PREDICATE?

*The common cold. It strikes everyone at least once a year.

This fragment should be combined with the sentence following it:

EDITED: The common cold strikes everyone at least once a year.

4. IS THE “SENTENCE” MERELY A MODIFYING PHRASE?

They went to a ski lodge. *With a view of the Rockies.

This fragment should be combined with the sentence preceding it:

EDITED: They went to a ski lodge with a view of the Rockies.

Spotting Sentence Fragments

IN BRIEF

Word group starting with a subordinator:

*So *that* he could terrify little children.

Word group starting with a relative pronoun:

*Which can fly from New York to London in three hours.

Word group missing a subject:

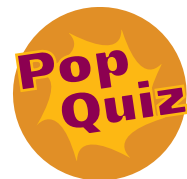
*Defeated the other great warriors.

Word group missing a predicate:

*The common cold.

Word group that is merely a modifying phrase:

*With a panoramic view of the Rockies.



20 Using Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that commonly takes the place of a noun or noun phrase:

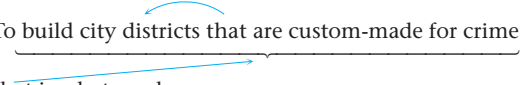
Brenda thought that *she* had lost the dog, but *it* had followed *her*.

She and *her* take the place of *Brenda*, a noun; *it* takes the place of *the dog*, a noun phrase. Pronouns thus eliminate the need for awkward repetition.

20.1 USING PRONOUNS WITH ANTECEDENTS

The word or word group that a pronoun refers to is called its **antecedent**. *Antecedent* means “going before,” and this term is used because the antecedent usually goes before the pronoun that refers to it:

1. The old man smiled as he listened to the marching band. Its spirited playing made him feel young again.

2. To build city districts that are custom-made for crime is idiotic. Yet that is what we do.


—Jane Jacobs

In the second example, the antecedent of the first *that* is *city districts*. The antecedent of the second *that* is a whole word group: *To build city districts that are custom-made for crime*.

The antecedent sometimes follows the pronoun that refers to it:

By the time he was three, Coleridge could read a chapter of the Bible.


20.2 USING PRONOUNS WITHOUT ANTECEDENTS

Some pronouns have no antecedent, and others may sometimes be used without one.

1. Indefinite pronouns have no antecedents. Compare these two sentences:

Ellen said that *she* wanted privacy.

Everyone needs some privacy.

She is a **definite** pronoun. It refers to a particular person, and its meaning is clear only if its antecedent has been provided—that is, if the person has already been identified. But *everyone* is an **indefinite** pronoun. Because it refers to no one in particular, it has no antecedent. Other widely used indefinite pronouns include *everybody*, *one*, *no one*, *each*, *many*, and *some*.

2. The pronouns *I* and *you* have no antecedent because they are understood to refer to the writer and the reader or to the speaker and the listener.
3. The pronoun *we* sometimes appears without an antecedent—for example, in newspaper editorials, where the writer clearly speaks for a group of people.

20.3 USING PRONOUNS CLEARLY

The meaning of a definite pronoun is clear when readers can identify the antecedent with certainty:

People who saw the Tall Ships sail up the Hudson River in 1976 will long remember the experience. It gave them a handsome image of a bygone era.

The antecedent of each pronoun is obvious. *Who* clearly refers to *People*; *It* refers to *the experience*; *them* refers to *People who saw the Tall Ships*.

20.4 avoid

Using Pronouns

20.4 AVOIDING UNCLEAR PRONOUN REFERENCE

The meaning of a definite pronoun is unclear when readers cannot identify the antecedent with certainty. The chief obstacles to clear reference are as follows:

AMBIGUITY

A pronoun is **ambiguous** when it has more than one possible antecedent:

*Whenever Mike met Dan, he felt nervous.

Does *he* refer to *Mike* or to *Dan*? The reader cannot tell. The simplest way to eliminate the ambiguity is to replace the pronoun with a noun:

EDITED: Whenever Mike met Dan, Mike felt nervous.

To avoid repeating the noun, you can put the pronoun before it:

EDITED: Whenever he met Dan, Mike felt nervous.

BROAD REFERENCE

Pronoun reference is **broad** when *that*, *this*, *which*, or *it* refers to a whole statement containing one or more possible antecedents within it:

*The senator supports the bottle bill, which rankles many of his constituents.

Are they rankled by the bill or by the senator's support for it?

EDITED: The senator's support for the bottle bill rankles many of his constituents.

*Some people insist that a woman should have a career, while others say that she belongs in the home. This is unfair.

What is unfair? *This* could refer to the whole sentence that precedes it, to the first half, or to the second:

EDITED: This contradictory set of demands is unfair.

MUFFLED REFERENCE

Pronoun reference is **muffled** when the pronoun refers to something merely implied by what precedes it:

A recent editorial contained an attack on the medical profession. *The writer accused them of charging excessively high fees.

Who is meant by *them*? Before using *them*, the writer should clearly establish its antecedent:

EDITED: A recent editorial contained an attack on hospital administrators and doctors. The writers accused them of charging excessively high fees.

*Lincoln spoke immortal words at Gettysburg, but most of the large crowd gathered there couldn't hear it.

The writer is thinking of Lincoln's address, of course, but the word *address* is missing. It must be inserted:

EDITED: Lincoln gave an immortal address at Gettysburg, but most of the large crowd gathered there couldn't hear it.

[or] Lincoln spoke immortal words at Gettysburg, but most of the large crowd gathered there couldn't hear his address.

[or] . . . couldn't hear them.

The last way of editing the sentence changes the *number* of the pronoun to match the number of its antecedent; [see 20.6](#).

FREE-FLOATING *THEY* AND *IT*

They and *it* are **free-floating** when they are used as pronouns but have no definite antecedents:

*In the first part of the movie, it shows clouds billowing like waves.

What shows clouds? The pronoun *it* has no antecedent. The writer is probably thinking of the *it* that simply fills out a sentence, such as *It was cloudy*, meaning *There were clouds*. That kind of *it* (called an expletive) needs no antecedent. But the pronoun *it* does. If you can't readily figure out a way to furnish one, reconstruct the sentence:

EDITED: The first part of the movie shows clouds billowing like waves.

Traveling in Eastern Europe used to be difficult. *At some checkpoints they held foreigners for questioning.

The word *they* needs an antecedent:

EDITED: Traveling in Eastern Europe used to be difficult because of the *security police*. At some checkpoints they held foreigners for questioning.

Alternatively, you can replace the pronoun with a noun:

EDITED: At some checkpoints the security police held foreigners for questioning.

20.4 avoid

Using Pronouns

Or you can use the passive voice:

EDITED: At some checkpoints foreigners were held for questioning.

INDEFINITE YOU AND YOUR

You and *your* are **indefinite** when used to mean anything but the reader. Though writers sometimes use *you* to mean “people in general,” you will increase the precision of your sentences if you use *you* and *your* for your reader alone.

*You didn’t have microphones in Lincoln’s day.

EDITED: There were no microphones in Lincoln’s day.

One of Orwell’s contradictions is the unperson, a man who existed once, but doesn’t anymore, so he never existed. *But by defining someone as an unperson, you are saying that he once existed.

EDITED: But to define someone as an unperson is to say that he once existed.

REMOTE REFERENCE

Pronoun reference is **remote** when the pronoun is so far from the antecedent that readers cannot find their way from one to the other:

Bankers have said that another increase in the prime lending rate during the current quarter would seriously hurt their major customers: homeowners, small-business personnel, and self-employed contractors using heavy equipment. *It would keep all of these borrowers from getting needed capital.

EDITED: Such an increase would keep all of these borrowers from getting needed capital.

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IN BRIEF

Obstacles to Clear Pronoun Reference

Ambiguity:

*Whenever Mike met Dan, *he* felt nervous.

Broad reference:

*The senator supports the bottle bill, *which* rankles many of his constituents.

Muffled reference:

A recent editorial contained an attack on the medical profession.

*The writer accused *them* of charging excessively high fees.

Free-floating *they* and *it*:

*In the first part of the movie, *it* shows clouds billowing like waves.

*Traveling in Eastern Europe used to be difficult. *At some checkpoints *they* held foreigners for questioning.

Indefinite *you* and *your*:

**You* didn't have microphones in Lincoln's day.

Remote reference: [see p. 334](#).

20.5 MAKING ANTECEDENTS AND PRONOUNS AGREE IN GENDER

In some languages, many words change in form to indicate **gender**. In French, for instance, the word for *the* is *le* when used of a male (as in *le garçon*, the boy) and *la* when used of a female (as in *la femme*, the woman).

In English, gender affects only personal pronouns referring to a single being or thing in the third person. (*I* and *we* are first-person pronouns; *you* is the second-person pronoun; third-person pronouns include *he*, *she*, *it*, and *they*.) The gender of a personal pronoun in the third-person singular depends on the gender of its antecedent.

When Marie Curie outlined the first steps of the award-winning research to *her* husband, *he* encouraged *her* to complete *it*. Though *he himself* was an eminent chemist, *he* wanted *her* to gain credit for *it*.

When the antecedent is a word of unspecified gender such as *doctor* or *lawyer*, you should use something other than a singular masculine pronoun ([see 8.2](#)).

20.6 MAKING ANTECEDENTS AND PRONOUNS AGREE IN NUMBER

An antecedent is singular if it refers to one person or thing and plural if it refers to more than one. A singular antecedent calls for a singular pronoun; a plural antecedent calls for a plural pronoun:

The boy saw that he had cut his hand.



The Edmonton Oilers believed that they could win the Stanley Cup in 1988, and they did.



20.7 RESOLVING PROBLEMS IN NUMBER

Some antecedents can be hard to classify as either singular or plural. Here are guidelines:

1. TWO OR MORE NOUNS OR PRONOUNS JOINED BY *AND* ARE USUALLY PLURAL:

Orville and Wilbur Wright are best known for *their* invention of the airplane.

Nouns joined by *and* are singular only if they refer to one person or thing:

The chief cook and bottle washer demanded *his* pay.

2. WHEN TWO NOUNS ARE JOINED BY *OR* OR *NOR*, THE PRONOUN AGREES WITH THE SECOND NOUN:

Neither Pierre LaCroix nor his boldest followers wanted to expose *themselves* to danger.



3. A NOUN OR PRONOUN FOLLOWED BY A PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE IS TREATED AS IF IT STOOD BY ITSELF:

In 1980 Canada, together with the United States and several other countries, kept *its* athletes from participating in the Moscow Olympics.

The antecedent of *its* is *Canada*. Unlike the conjunction *and*, a phrase like *together with* or *along with* does not make a compound antecedent.

20.7 prob

Using Pronouns

The leader of the strikers said that *he* would get them a new package of benefits.

The pronoun *he* agrees with *leader*. The antecedent of *them* is *strikers*.

4. COLLECTIVE NOUNS CAN BE EITHER SINGULAR OR PLURAL, DEPENDING ON THE CONTEXT:

The team chooses *its* captain in the spring.

Since the captain is a symbol of unity, the writer treats *the team* as singular, using the singular pronoun *its*.

The audience shouted and stamped *their* feet.

Since each person in the audience was acting independently, the writer treats *the audience* as plural, using the plural pronoun *their*.

5. SOME INDEFINITE PRONOUNS ARE SINGULAR, SOME ARE PLURAL, AND SOME CAN BE EITHER SINGULAR OR PLURAL:

ALWAYS SINGULAR

anybody	either	one
anyone	neither	another
anything		
each	nobody	somebody
each one	none	someone
	no one	something
everybody	nothing	
everyone		whatever
everything		whichever
		whoever

ALWAYS PLURAL

both	few	others	several
------	-----	--------	---------

SOMETIMES SINGULAR
AND SOMETIMES PLURAL

all	many	some
any	most	

As this list indicates, *each* by itself is always singular:

Each of the men brought *his* own tools.

But *each* does not change the number of a plural subject that it follows:

The men  each brought *their* own tools.

Though some writers treat *everybody* and *everyone* as plural, we suggest you treat them as singular or simply avoid using them as antecedents:

Everyone in the cast had to furnish *his* or *her* own costume.

All cast members had to furnish *their* own costumes.

The number of a pronoun in the third group depends on the number of the word or phrase to which it refers:

Some of the salad dressing left *its* mark on my shirt.

Some of the students earn *their* tuition by working part-time.

Many of the customers do not pay *their* bills on time.

Many a man learns to appreciate *his* father only after *he* has become one *himself*.

6. THE NUMBER OF A RELATIVE PRONOUN DEPENDS ON THE NUMBER OF THE ANTECEDENT:

Mark is one of those independent carpenters  who *want* to work for *themselves*.

Marilyn is the only one of the gymnasts  who *wants* to compete in the Olympics.

20.7 prob

Using Pronouns

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20.8 AVOIDING FAULTY SHIFTS IN PRONOUN REFERENCE

To make sure pronouns fit their antecedents, do as follows:

1. Avoid using *they*, *them*, or *their* with a singular antecedent:

► No one should be forced into a career that ~~they~~^{he or she does} not want to pursue.

2. Avoid shifting the reference of a pronoun from one grammatical person to another:

*When one [third person] is alone, one is free to do whatever you [second person] want.

EDITED: When one is alone, one is free to do whatever one wants. [or]
When you are alone, you are free to do whatever you want.

For the correct use of *you*, [see p. 334](#), “Indefinite *You* and *Your*.”



20.9 forms

Using Pronouns

20.9 PRONOUN CASE FORMS

The form of a pronoun referring to a person depends partly on its **case**—that is, on the grammatical role it plays in a sentence. Consider this passage:

The Kiowas are a summer people; *they* abide the cold and keep to themselves, but when the season turns and the land becomes warm and vital *they* cannot hold still; an old love of going returns upon *them*. The aged visitors who came to my grandmother's house when I was a child were made of lean and leather, and they bore *themselves* upright. *They* wore great black hats and bright ample shirts that shook in the wind. *They* rubbed fat upon *their* hair and wound *their* braids with strips of colored cloth.

—N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

They, *them*, *themselves*, and *their* all have the same antecedent, *Kiowas*. But these four pronouns differ in form because they play different roles: subject (*they* abide), object (upon *them*), reflexive object (bore *themselves*), and possessive (*their* braids). Because each form signifies a different case, the difference between one case form and another helps this writer show exactly what his pronouns mean.

Case Forms of Pronouns

Personal Pronouns

	<i>I</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>they</i>
SUBJECT CASE	I	he	she	it	we	you	they
OBJECT CASE	me	him	her	it	us	you	them
POSSESSIVE CASE	my, mine	his	her, hers	it	our, ours	your, yours	their, theirs
REFLEXIVE/ EMPHATIC CASE	myself	himself	herself	itself	ourselves	yourself, yourselves	themselves

Pronouns Used in Questions and Adjective Clauses

	<i>who</i>	<i>whoever</i>
SUBJECT CASE	who	whoever
OBJECT CASE	whom	whomever
POSSESSIVE CASE	whose	

20.10 USING PRONOUN CASE**SUBJECT CASE**

Use the subject case when the pronoun is the subject of a verb:

When Adam and Eve were accused of eating the forbidden fruit, *they* each excused themselves; *he* blamed Eve for tempting him, and *she* blamed the serpent for tempting her.

OBJECT CASE

1. Use the object case when the pronoun is the object of a verb:

We heard birds but could not see *them*.

2. Use the object case when the pronoun is the object of a gerund, infinitive, or participle:

GERUND **INFINITIVE**
Hearing *them* made us eager to see *them*.

PARTICIPLE
Seeing *them*, we could hardly believe our eyes.

3. Use the object case when the pronoun is the object of a preposition:

I hate to spread rumors, but what else can one do with *them*?
—Amanda Lear

4. Use the object case when the pronoun comes immediately before an infinitive:

A sentry ordered *us* to leave the area.

POSSESSIVE CASE

1. Use the possessive case of the pronoun—with *no* apostrophe—to indicate ownership of an object or close connection to it:

My car has a dent in *its* right rear door.

The car with the new paint job is *hers*.

20.10 case

Using Pronouns

2. Use the possessive case of the pronoun before a gerund—an *-ing* word used as the name of an action:

Joan hoped that *her* leaving the class early would not be noticed.

For more on this point, [see 13.11](#).

REFLEXIVE/EMPHATIC CASE

Use the reflexive/emphatic case of the pronoun when

1. the object of a verb or preposition is a pronoun referring to the subject:

He gazed at *himself* in the mirror as she dressed *herself*.

2. you want to stress the antecedent of the pronoun:

The governor *herself* conceived the new plan.





20.11 USING *WHO*, *WHOM*, *WHOSE*, *WHOMEVER*, AND *WHOMEVER*

The form you need depends on which grammatical role the pronoun plays in the sentence or clause that contains it. Observe the following guidelines:

1. Use *who* or *whoever* whenever the pronoun is a subject:

Some people *who* attended the concert were lucky.

Tickets were given away to *whoever* wanted them.

2. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is an object:

To *whom* can we turn?

Some voters will support *whomever* their party nominates.

They back a candidate *whom* others have selected.

A sentence like this last one can be tightened by the omission of *whom*:

They back a candidate others have selected.

And if you find *whomever* stiff, you can replace it with *anyone*:

Some voters will support *anyone* their party nominates.

3. Use *whose* whenever the pronoun is a possessor:

The colt *whose* picked skeleton lay out there was mine.

—Wallace Stegner

20.12 MISUSING PRONOUN CASE FORMS

To avoid misusing the case forms of pronouns, observe the following guidelines:

1. Use the same case forms for pronouns linked by *and*:

a. *Her and I went swimming every day.

Her is in the object case; *I* is in the subject case. Since they are linked by *and*, both should be in the same case. To see which case that should be, test each pronoun by itself:

TEST: Her went swimming every day. I went swimming every day.

EDITED: She and I went swimming every day.

b. *He and myself took turns driving.

TEST: He took turns driving. Myself took turns driving.

EDITED: He and I took turns driving.

c. *There was little to choose between them and we.

TEST: There was little to choose between them. There was little to choose between we.

EDITED: There was little to choose between them and us.

2. Avoid using *me*, *him*, *myself*, *himself*, *herself*, or *themselves* as the subject of a verb:

*Me and Sally waited three hours for a bus.

TEST: Me waited three hours for a bus. Sally waited three hours.

EDITED: Sally and I waited three hours for a bus.

3. Avoid using a *-self* pronoun as the object of a verb unless the pronoun refers to the subject:

► The director chose Laura and ~~myself~~^{me} for two minor parts, and then cast herself in the leading role.

4. Avoid using a *-self* pronoun as the object of a preposition:

- ▶ The letter was addressed to ~~myself~~ ^{me.}
- ▶ The director had to choose between Laura and ~~myself~~ ^{me.}

EXCEPTION: A *-self* pronoun may be the object of *by*:

Diana organized the exhibition by herself.

5. Avoid using the forms **hissself*, **theiresself*, or **theiresselves* under any conditions in academic English.

6. Avoid using *I*, *he*, *she*, *we*, or *they* as the object of a verb or preposition:

- ▶ My uncle always brought presents for my sister and ~~I~~ ^{me.}
- ▶ We rarely gave anything to my aunt or ~~he~~ ^{him.}

7. When a pronoun after *than* or *as* is compared with a subject, use the subject case:

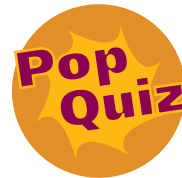
- ▶ Pete [subject] dribbles faster than ~~me~~ ^{I.}

8. Use the object case after *than* or *as* when the pronoun is compared to an object:

*The manager pays a veteran like Bob [object] more than I [subject case].

EDITED: The manager pays a veteran like Bob more than he pays me.

9. Avoid confusing *its* and *it's*; or *their*, *there*, and *they're*; or *whose* and *who's*. For help distinguishing these words, see the Glossary of Usage.



Subject-Verb Agreement

21

21.1 WHAT IS AGREEMENT?

To say that a verb **agrees** in form with its subject is to say that a verb has more than one form and that each form matches up with a particular kind of subject. Here are three parallel sets of examples:

	STANDARD ENGLISH	FRENCH	SPANISH
SINGULAR	I live	je vis	(yo) [†] vivo
	you live	tu vis	(tú) vives
	he lives	il vit	(él) vive
	she lives	elle vit	(ella) vive
PLURAL	we live	nous vivons	vivimos
	you live	vous vivez	vivis
	they live	ils vivent [masc.]	(ellos) viven [masc.]
		elles vivent [fem.]	(ellas) viven [fem.]

In this example, Spanish has six different verb forms, French has five, and Standard English has just two: *live* and *lives*.

To write Standard English correctly, you need to know which form goes with each type of subject, where to find the subject in a clause, and whether the subject is singular or plural.

[†]In Spanish, when the subject is a pronoun, it is sometimes omitted.

21.2 MAKING VERBS AGREE WITH SUBJECTS

In most cases, the subject affects the form of the verb only when the verb is in the present tense. Except for the verb *be* (21.3) and for subjunctive verb forms (25.4 and 25.5), the rules of agreement in the present tense are as follows:

1. With third-person singular subjects, add *-s* or *-es* to the bare form of the verb:

Peggy *wants* to study economics.

She *works* at the bank.

It *serves* over two thousand depositors.

Each of them *holds* a passbook.

Marvin Megabucks *owns* the bank.

He *polishes* his Jaguar once a week.

EXCEPTION: The verb *have* becomes *has*:

Everyone *has* moments of self-doubt.

Uncertainty *has* gripped all of us.

2. With all other subjects, use the bare form of the verb:

Economists *study* the stock market.

They *evaluate* the fluctuation of prices.

Like the experts, we *want* to make profitable investments.

My brother and his wife both *work* on Wall Street.

I *do* other things.

3. Whatever the subject, use the bare form of any verb that follows an auxiliary, such as *does*, *can*, or *may*:

Does she *play* the sax?

She can *sing*.

She may *become* famous.

21.3 MAKING THE VERB *BE* AGREE WITH SUBJECTS

1. When *be* is a main verb, its forms are as follows:

PRESENT TENSE

I *am* cold.

You *are* cold.

She

He

It

Everyone

The student

We

You

They

Many

The students

is cold.

are cold.

PAST TENSE

I *was* busy.

You *were* busy.

She

He

It

Everyone

The student

We

You

They

Many

The students

was busy.

were busy.

2. When *be* is an auxiliary, its form depends on the subject, just as when *be* is a main verb:

I *am* *annoyed* by most tax forms.

The current one *is* *written* in incomprehensible language.

The pages *are* *covered* with small print and confusing diagrams.

What *were* the experts *thinking* of when they designed the form?

21.4 AVOIDING DIALECTAL MISTAKES IN AGREEMENT

The rules of agreement in academic English differ from the rules of agreement in regional and ethnic dialects. To write academic English correctly, observe the following guidelines:

21.4 dialect

Subject-Verb Agreement

1. If you're writing about what anyone or anything does now, make sure you add *-s* or *-es* to the verb:

- ▶ My brother ~~work~~^s for the post office.
- ▶ He ~~live~~^s with a couple of his friends.

2. If you're writing about what you or they (any group of two or more) do now, use only the bare form of the verb:

- ▶ I ~~needs~~ a job.
- ▶ Politicians ~~loves~~ to make promises.
- ▶ They ~~wants~~ votes.

3. The only verb to use between *I* and a verb with *-ing* added is *am* or *have been*:

- ▶ I ~~be~~^{am} taking calculus this semester.
- ▶ I ~~been~~^{have} living in Seattle since 1998.

4. If you're writing about what anyone or anything is at present, use *is*:

- ▶ Veronica ~~be~~^{is} my best friend.
- ▶ Smoking ~~be~~^{is} risky.

5. If you're writing about what two or more persons or things are, use *are*:

- ▶ Banks ~~be~~^{are} closed on holidays.

6. Use *has* after any one person or thing:

- ▶ My sister ~~have~~^{has} a new apartment.
- ▶ It ~~have~~^{has} two bedrooms.

7. Use *have* after *I*, *you*, or any words naming more than one:

- ▶ I ~~has~~^{have} a lot of bills to pay.
- ▶ My feet ~~has~~^{have} been hurting.

8. Before *been*, always use *has*, *have*, or *had*:

- ▶ Everyone ^{has} been hurt by the layoffs.
- ▶ I ^{have} been studying chemistry.
- ▶ I ^{had} ~~done~~ been watching the news when the phone rang.



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Subject-Verb Agreement

21.5 FINDING THE SUBJECT

You can find the subject easily when it comes right before the verb:

S

Alan Paton / has written movingly about life in South Africa.

S

Many readers / consider *Cry, the Beloved Country* a classic.

But the subject follows the verb in sentences of the following kinds:

1. Sentences starting with *There* or *Here* plus a form of the verb *be*:

S

There was once / a thriving civilization in the jungles of the Yucatán.

S

Here is / a translation of *Popol Vuh*, the Mayan book about the dawn of life.

2. Sentences with inverted word order:

S

Visible near Monte Alban in southern Mexico are / massive pyramids constructed over two thousand years ago.

3. Some questions:

S

Have / archeologists / identified the builders of the pyramids?

S

Are / you / going to Egypt this year?

S

Will / the travel agent / book you on a charter flight?

21.6 RECOGNIZING THE NUMBER OF THE SUBJECT

To make a verb agree with the subject, you must know whether the subject is singular or plural. Observe the following guidelines for various kinds of subjects:

NOUNS MEANING ONE THING

A noun meaning one thing is always singular, even if it ends in -s:

The *lens* was cracked.

The *Grapes of Wrath* is John Steinbeck's greatest novel.

Gas is cheaper this summer than it was last fall.

NOUNS MEANING MORE THAN ONE THING

A noun meaning more than one thing is always plural:

The *lenses* were cracked.

His *teeth* are crooked.

Women deserve to be paid as much as *men* are.

The new *data* require study.

Mice like cheese.

Cats like mice.

PRONOUNS FIXED IN NUMBER

Most pronouns are fixed in number. They include the following:

ALWAYS SINGULAR

he	each	one
she	each one	another
it		
	everybody	somebody
this	everyone	someone
that	everything	something
anybody	either	whatever
anyone	neither	whichever
anything		whoever
	nobody	
	none	
	no one	
	nothing	

ALWAYS PLURAL

we	these	both	few
they	those	others	several

PRONOUNS VARIABLE IN NUMBER

The pronouns *all*, *any*, *many*, *more*, *most*, *some*, *who*, *that*, and *which* are variable in number. The number of such a pronoun depends on the number of the word or phrase to which it refers:

Most of the sand *is* washed by the tide.

Most of the sandpipers *are* white.

Some of the oil *has* been cleaned up.

Some of the problems *have* been solved.

Titan is one of the fifteen known satellites that *revolve* around Saturn.

Titan is the only one of the satellites that *has* an atmosphere.

Many is singular only when used with *a* or *an*:

Many of the artists *visit* Florence.

Many an artist *visits* Florence.

Other pronouns are not affected in number by the phrases that modify them; see “[Modified Nouns and Pronouns](#),” p. 357.

VERBAL NOUNS AND NOUN CLAUSES

Verbal nouns are always singular:

Reassembling the broken pieces of a china bowl is difficult.

To fit the fragments together takes considerable patience.

Noun clauses are always singular too:

What one also needs is steady hands.

NOUNS FOLLOWED BY A FORM OF THE VERB BE

The verb agrees with what comes before it, no matter what comes after it:

Newspapers are his business.

His *business* is newspapers.

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Subject-Verb Agreement

ITEMS JOINED BY **OR**, **EITHER . . . OR**, AND **SO ON**

When items are joined by *or*, *either . . . or*, *neither . . . nor*, *not . . . but*, or *not only . . . but also*, the verb agrees with the item just before it:

Neither steel nor glass cuts a diamond.

Not a new machine but new workers are needed for the job.

NOUNS SPELLED THE SAME WAY IN SINGULAR AND PLURAL

A noun spelled the same way in the singular and the plural depends for its number on the way it is used:

A deer was nibbling the lettuce.

Two deer were standing in the middle of the road.

One means of campaigning is direct mail.

Two other means are TV advertising and mass rallies.

COLLECTIVE NOUNS AND NOUNS OF MEASUREMENT

Collective nouns and nouns of measurement are singular when they refer to a unit, and plural when they refer to the individuals or elements of a unit:

Half of the cake was eaten.

Half of the jewels were stolen.

Statistics is the study and analysis of numerical information about the world.

Recent statistics show a marked decline in the U.S. birthrate during the past twenty years.

Fifty dollars is a lot to ask for a cap.

SUBJECTS BEGINNING WITH **EVERY**

A subject beginning with *every* is normally singular:

Every cat and dog in the neighborhood was fighting.

But if the subject includes plural items, treat it as plural:

Every cat and two of the dogs were fighting.

THE WORD *NUMBER* AS SUBJECT

The word *number* is singular when it follows *the*, plural when it follows *a*:

The number of applications was huge.

A number of teenagers now hold full-time jobs.

FOREIGN WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

When the subject is a foreign word or expression, use a dictionary to find out whether it is singular or plural:

The *coup d'état* has caught diplomats by surprise.

The *Carbonari* of the early nineteenth century were members of a secret political organization in Italy.



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Subject-Verb Agreement

IN BRIEF

Trouble Spots in Agreement

Singular nouns ending in -s:

The *lens* needs to be polished.

Plurals not ending in -s:

The new *data* require study.

Pronouns variable in number:

Hospital patients like doctors *who* listen.

My aunt has a doctor *who* listens.

Modified nouns and pronouns:

Each of the chairs is an antique.

Subjects joined by *either . . . or*, *not only . . . but also*, and so on:

Not only the managers but also the umpire was at fault.

Neither the pitcher nor his teammates were responsible.

Collective nouns and nouns of measurement:

The *jury* has a private room.

The *jury* are unable to agree on a verdict.

Modified nouns and pronouns:

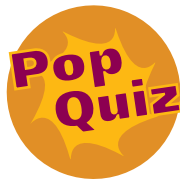
One-third of the seniors are planning to study medicine.

Each of them has applied to medical school.

The word number as subject:

A number of women have applied for the job.

The number of applications has exceeded expectations.



back



next

22

Verbs: Tense

If English is your native language, you probably have a good working knowledge of tenses. You know how to describe what someone or something did in the past, is doing in the present, or will do in the future. But you may not know just how to describe an action that doesn't fall neatly into one time slot. For instance, how do you describe the action of a character in a novel or a play? How do you describe an action that started in the past but is still going on now? How do you write about an action that will be completed at some time in the future? This chapter is chiefly meant to answer questions like these.

The chapter is limited to verbs in the indicative mood (the mood of fact or matters close to fact) and in the active voice (in which the subject performs the action, as in "Whales eat plankton"). For a full discussion of mood, [see chapter 25](#); for a full discussion of voice, [see chapter 24](#).

22.1 TENSE AND TIME

The **tense** of a verb helps to indicate the time of an action or condition:

PAST: The sun *rose* at 6:03 this morning.

PRESENT: As I *write* these words, the sun *is setting*.

FUTURE: The sun *will rise* tomorrow at 6:04.

But tense is not the same as time. A verb in the present tense, for instance, may be used in a statement about the future:

The bus leaves tomorrow at 7:30 A.M.

The time of an action or state is often indicated by a word or phrase like *tomorrow*, *next week*, or *last month*.

22.2 FORMING THE TENSES

The tenses of all but a few verbs are made from the four **principal parts**. The principal parts of regular verbs are formed by the addition of *-ing* or *-ed* to the bare form, as shown here:

PRESENT (BARE FORM)	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
cook	<i>cooking</i>	<i>cooked</i>	<i>cooked</i>
lift	<i>lifting</i>	<i>lifted</i>	<i>lifted</i>
polish	<i>polishing</i>	<i>polished</i>	<i>polished</i>

Verbs with some principal parts formed in other ways are called irregular:

eat	<i>eating</i>	<i>ate</i>	<i>eaten</i>
write	<i>writing</i>	<i>wrote</i>	<i>written</i>
go	<i>going</i>	<i>went</i>	<i>gone</i>
speak	<i>speaking</i>	<i>spoke</i>	<i>spoken</i>

For the principal parts of other commonly used irregular verbs, [see 22.11](#).

FORMING THE PRESENT

With most subjects, the form of a verb in the present tense is simply the bare form:

Seasoned traders *drive* hard bargains.

I *polish* my shoes every day.

But after a singular noun or a third-person singular pronoun, such as *she*, *it*, *this*, *each*, or *everyone*, you must add *-s* or *-es* to the bare form of the verb:

Helen *drives* a cab.

She *polishes* it once a week.

For more on this point, [see 21.1–21.4](#).

22.2 form

Verbs: Tense

FORMING THE PAST

The past tense of regular verbs is formed by the addition of *-d* or *-ed* to the bare form:

Helen *liked* her work.

She *polished* her cab regularly.

For the past tense of commonly used irregular verbs, [see 22.11](#).

FORMING TENSES WITH AUXILIARIES

Besides the present and the past, there are four other tenses. You form these by using certain auxiliary verbs, such as *will*, *has*, and *had*:

	REGULAR VERB	IRREGULAR VERB
FUTURE	She will work.	She will speak.
PRESENT PERFECT	She has worked.	She has spoken.
PAST PERFECT	She had worked.	She had spoken.
FUTURE PERFECT	She will have worked.	She will have spoken.

USING THE COMMON AND PROGRESSIVE FORMS

The **common** forms shown above indicate an action viewed as momentary, habitual, completed, or expected. The **progressive** forms indicate that the action named by the verb is viewed as continuing. Either form may be used with each tense:

PRESENT

COMMON: Coluntuano *runs* two miles every morning.

PROGRESSIVE: Coluntuano *is running* for mayor.

PAST

COMMON: Charles Dickens *wrote* many novels.

PROGRESSIVE: Charles Dickens *was writing* a mystery novel when he died.

FUTURE

COMMON: In the years ahead, many cars *will run* on batteries.

PROGRESSIVE: Many of us *will be driving* electric cars.



22.3 USING THE PRESENT

1. USE THE *COMMON PRESENT*

a. To report what happens regularly:

Concert pianists usually *practice* every day.

Leaves *change* color in autumn.

b. To state a fact or widely held belief:

Water *freezes* at 32°F.

Opposites *attract*.

c. To describe characters, events, or other matters in an aesthetic work, such as a painting, a piece of music, a work of literature, a movie, or a television show:

22.3 pres

Verbs: Tense

In *Jaws*, a vicious shark *attacks* and *terrifies* swimmers until it is finally killed.

In the first chapter of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Gabriel *sees* the beautiful Bathsheba, but she *does not see* him.

- d. To say what a writer or a creative artist does in his or her work:

Many of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings *convey* the stark contrasts of the harsh and beautiful desert.

In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith *argues* that an "invisible hand" regulates individual enterprise for the good of society as a whole.

In his Fifth Symphony, Beethoven *reveals* the power and fury of his imagination.

- e. To describe an opinion or idea:

In the Marxist vision of history, the ruling classes ceaselessly *oppress* the working class.

- f. To indicate that a condition or situation is likely to last:

My sister *loves* chocolate ice cream.

- g. To describe a future action that is definitely predictable:

The fair *opens* on Wednesday.

- h. To report a statement of lasting significance:

"All art," *says* Oscar Wilde, "is quite useless."

2. USE THE PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

- a. To indicate that an action or state is occurring at the time of the writing:

The sun *is setting* now, and the birches *are bending* in the wind.

- b. To indicate a gradual process that need not be taking place at the exact moment of the writing:

Suburban life *is losing* its appeal. Many young couples *are moving* out of the suburbs and into the cities.

22.4 USING THE PRESENT PERFECT

1. USE THE *COMMON PRESENT PERFECT*

- a. To report a past action or state that touches in some way on the present:

I *have just finished* reading *Gone with the Wind*.

A presidential commission *has already investigated* the causes of one nuclear accident.

The words *just* and *already* are often used with the present perfect.

- b. To report an action or state begun in the past but extending into the present:

Engineers *have begun* to explore the possibility of harnessing the tides.

Since the invention of the automobile, traffic accidents *have taken* many thousands of lives.

- c. To report an action performed at some unspecified time in the past:

I *have seen* the Statue of Liberty.

2. USE THE *PROGRESSIVE FORM OF THE PRESENT PERFECT* when you want to emphasize both the continuity of an action from the past into the present and the likelihood of its continuing into the future:

Some instrumental satellites *have been traveling* through space for years.

The cost of routine medical care *has been growing* at a staggering rate.

22.5 USING THE PAST

1. USE THE *COMMON PAST*

- a. To report an action or state that was definitely completed in the past:

Thomas Edison *invented* the phonograph in 1877.

The city *became* calm after the cease-fire.

22.6 perf

Verbs: Tense

- b. To report actions repeated in the past but no longer occurring at the time of the writing:

The family always *went* to church on Sundays.

2. USE THE *PAST PROGRESSIVE*

- a. To emphasize the continuity of a past action:

His insults *were becoming* unbearable.

- b. To state that one action was being performed when another occurred:

I *was pouring* a glass of water when the pitcher suddenly cracked.

22.6 USING THE PAST PERFECT

1. USE THE *COMMON PAST PERFECT*

- a. To state that an action or state was completed by a specified time in the past:

By noon we *had gathered* three hundred bushels.

- b. To indicate that one past action or state was completed by the time another occurred:

By the time Hitler sent reinforcements, the Allies *had* already *taken* much of France.

I suddenly realized that I *had left* my keys at home.

By the age of thirty, she *had already borne* seven children.

- c. To report an unfulfilled hope or intention:

Mary *had planned* to travel as far as Denver, but her money ran out while she was still in Chicago.

2. USE THE *PROGRESSIVE FORM OF THE PAST PERFECT* to indicate that the first of two past actions or states went on until the second occurred:

Before Gloria entered Mark's life, he *had been spending* most of his time with books.

22.7 USING THE FUTURE1. USE THE *COMMON FUTURE*

- a. To report a future event or state that will occur regardless of human intent:

The sun *will rise* at 6:35 tomorrow morning.

I *will be* nineteen on my next birthday.

- b. To indicate willingness or determination to do something:

The president has declared that he *will veto* the bill.

- c. To report what will happen under certain conditions:

If you get up early enough, you *will see* the sunrise.

- d. To indicate future probability:

The cost of a college education *will increase*.

In the preceding examples, the auxiliary *will* is used. Years ago, *will* generally went with *you, they, he, she, it*, and noun subjects, and *shall* was used with *I* and *we* to express the simple future. When *will* was used with *I* and *we*, it signified the speaker's (or writer's) determination: "We will stop the enemy." The use of *shall* with *you, they, he, she, it*, or a noun subject had the same function: "You shall pay the tax." But in current usage *shall* and *will* mean about the same thing, and most writers use *will* with all subjects to express the simple future. Some writers substitute *shall*, again with all subjects, to express determination or certainty: "We shall overcome."

2. USE THE *FUTURE PROGRESSIVE*

- a. To say that an action or state will be continuing for a period of time in the future:

Twenty years from now, many Americans *will be driving* electric cars.

In doing so, they *will be helping* to reduce our consumption of fuel and our pollution of the air.

22.9 misus

Verbs: Tense

- b. To say what the subject will be doing at a given time in the future:

Next semester I *will be taking* Sociology 101.

Also, I *will be auditing* two other social science classes.

22.8 USING THE FUTURE PERFECT

1. USE THE *COMMON FUTURE PERFECT*

- a. To say that an action or state will be completed by a specified time in the future:

At the rate I'm living, I *will have spent* all my summer earnings by the end of October.

- b. To say that an action or state will be completed by the time something else happens:

By the time an efficient engine is produced, we *will have exhausted* our supplies of fuel.

2. USE THE *PROGRESSIVE FORM OF THE FUTURE PERFECT* to say that an activity or state will continue until a specified time in the future:

By 2000 the *Pioneer 10* probe *will have been traveling* through space for more than twenty-five years.

No one *will have been tracking* its progress longer than Dr. Stellar.

22.9 MISUSING TENSES

1. USE THE *COMMON PRESENT*—not the present progressive—to report what happens regularly:

- Usually my day ^{starts} ~~is starting~~ at 7:00 A.M.

2. USE THE *PAST PERFECT*—not the simple past—for action completed by the time something else happened:

- By the time the game ended, many of the spectators ^{had} left.

3. USE THE *PRESENT PERFECT*—not the past—for action continuing into the present:

- Ever since the steel plant closed, the town ^{has} suffered.

22.10 MANAGING TENSE AND TIME WITH PARTICIPLES AND INFINITIVES

Participles and infinitives have two tenses: the present and the perfect:

	PRESENT	PERFECT
INFINITIVE	to dance	to have danced
PARTICIPLE	dancing	having danced

1. USE THE *PRESENT TENSE* when the action or state named by the participle or infinitive occurs at or after the time of the main verb:

We spend hours in conference with individual students, hours *meeting* together and with counselors, *trying to teach* ourselves how *to teach* and *asking* ourselves what we ought *to be teaching*.

—Adrienne Rich

2. USE THE *PERFECT TENSE* when the action or state named by the participle or infinitive occurred before the time of the main verb:

Having lost his cargo during the hurricane, the captain faced bankruptcy when his vessel finally reached port.

Several reporters are sorry *to have missed* the president's impromptu press conference.

22.11 form

Verbs: Tense

22.11 FORMING THE PRINCIPLE PARTS OF COMMONLY USED IRREGULAR VERBS

Following is a selected list of irregular verbs—those with special forms for the past, the past participle, or both. When more than one form for a principal part is shown, the first is more commonly used (except for *was* and *were*, which are used with equal frequency). For verbs not listed here, see your dictionary.

PRESENT (BARE FORM)	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
arise	arising	arose	arisen
awake	awaking	awoke, awaked	awoke, awaked, awoken
be [†]	being	was / were	been
bear [bring forth]	bearing	bore	born, borne
bear [carry]	bearing	bore	borne
beat	beating	beat	beaten, beat
begin	beginning	began	begun
bid [command]	bidding	bade	bid, bidden
bid [offer to pay]	bidding	bid	bid
bite	biting	bit	bitten
bleed	bleeding	bled	bled
blend	blending	blended, blent	blended, blent
blow	blowing	blew	blown
break	breaking	broke	broken
bring	bringing	brought	brought
buy	buying	bought	bought
catch	catching	caught	caught
choose	choosing	chose	chosen
clothe	clothing	clothed, clad	clothed, clad
come	coming	came	come

[†]In this case the bare form (*be*) is not the same as the present (*am, is, are*).

PRESENT (BARE FORM)	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
cost	costing	cost	cost
creep	creeping	crept	crept
dig	digging	dug	dug
dive	diving	dived, dove	dived
do	doing	did	done
draw	drawing	drew	drawn
drink	drinking	drank	drunk, drunken
drive	driving	drove	driven
eat	eating	ate	eaten
fall	falling	fell	fallen
feel	feeling	felt	felt
fight	fighting	fought	fought
find	finding	found	found
fly	flying	flew	flown
forbid	forbidding	forbade, forbad	forbidden, forbid
forget	forgetting	forgot	forgotten, forgot
freeze	freezing	froze	frozen
get	getting	got	got, gotten
give	giving	gave	given
go	going	went	gone
grow	growing	grew	grown
hang [execute]	hanging	hanged	hanged
hang [suspend]	hanging	hung	hung
have	having	had	had
hear	hearing	heard	heard
hide	hiding	hid	hidden, hid

22.11 form

Verbs: Tense

PRESENT (BARE FORM)	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
hit	hitting	hit	hit
hold	holding	held	held
keep	keeping	kept	kept
know	knowing	knew	known
lay	laying	laid	laid
lead	leading	led	led
learn	learning	learned, learnt	learned, learnt
leave	leaving	left	left
let	letting	let	let
lie [recline]	lying	lay	lain
lie [tell a falsehood]	lying	lied	lied
lose	losing	lost	lost
make	making	made	made
pay	paying	paid	paid
prove	proving	proved	proved, proven
ride	riding	rode	ridden
ring	ringing	rang	rung
rise	rising	rose	risen
run	running	ran	run
saw	sawing	sawed	sawed, sawn
see	seeing	saw	seen
seek	seeking	sought	sought
shake	shaking	shook	shaken
shine	shining	shone	shone
show	showing	showed	shown, showed
shrink	shrinking	shrank, shrunk	shrunk, shrunken
sing	singing	sang	sung

PRESENT (BARE FORM)	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
sink	sinking	sank, sunk	sunk, sunken
slay	slaying	slew	slain
sleep	sleeping	slept	slept
smell	smelling	smelled, smelt	smelled, smelt
speak	speaking	spoke	spoken
spin	spinning	spun, span	spun
spring	springing	sprang	sprung
steal	stealing	stole	stolen
stride	striding	strode	stridden
strike	striking	struck	struck, stricken
strive	striving	strove	striven
swear	swearing	swore	sworn
sweep	sweeping	swept	swept
swim	swimming	swam	swum
take	taking	took	taken
teach	teaching	taught	taught
tear	tearing	tore	torn
throw	throwing	threw	thrown
tread	treading	trod	trodden, trod
wake	waking	woke, waked	woke, waked, woken
wear	wearing	wore	worn
weave	weaving	wove	woven
wed	wedding	wed, wedded	wed, wedded
weep	weeping	wept	wept
wind	winding	wound	wound
work	working	worked, wrought	worked, wrought
write	writing	wrote	written

IN BRIEF

Picturing the Tenses

Simple Present

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

Water *freezes* at 32°F.
My sister *loves* ice cream.

Present Progressive

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

Sam *is cooking* linguine.

Simple Past

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

Edison *invented* the phonograph in 1877.

Past Progressive

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

I *was pouring* water when the pitcher cracked.

Simple Future

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

The cost of a college education *will increase*.

Future Progressive

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

Next semester I *will be taking* Sociology 101.

Present Perfect

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

Up to now, traffic accidents *have taken* many lives.

Present Perfect Progressive

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE (probably)

The cost of medical care *has been growing*.

Past Perfect

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

I suddenly realized that I *had left* my keys at home.

Past Perfect Progressive

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

Before Gloria entered Mark's life, he *had been spending* his time with books.

Future Perfect

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

By the time we arrive, she *will have gone*.

Future Perfect Progressive

PAST ——— NOW ——— FUTURE

By June I *will have been taking* courses for six quarters in a row.

23

Verbs: Sequence of Tenses

23.1 UNDERSTANDING SEQUENCE OF TENSES

When a passage has more than one verb, the relation between the tenses of the verbs is called the **sequence of tenses**. Various sequences are possible.

When all the verbs in a sentence describe actions or states that occur at or about the same time, their tenses should be the same:

Whenever the alarm clock *rings*, I *yawn*, *stretch*, and *roll* over for another fifteen minutes of sleep. (all present tense)

The prima donna *opened* her arms to the audience, *smiled*, and *bowed* deeply. (all past tense)

On the other hand, a sentence may describe actions that happen at different times. It will then have verbs in different tenses:

Beth *had been working* on the research project for almost three years before she *made* the first discovery. (past perfect and past)

Recently the largest bank in the area *lowered* its interest rate on loans; the directors *want* to stimulate borrowing. (past and present)

23.2 SEQUENCES IN COMPOUND SENTENCES

A **compound sentence** consists of two or more independent clauses. Since the clauses are independent, the tenses of the verbs may be independent of each other:

In the past, most Americans *wanted* big cars, but now many *drive* small ones. (past and present)

The number of finback whales *is decreasing*; as a result, they *will be added* to the list of endangered species. (present and future)

I *wanted* a big raise, but I *will be getting* a small one. (past and future)

23.3 SEQUENCES IN COMPLEX SENTENCES

A **complex sentence** consists of one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause ([see chapter 17](#)). In this kind of sentence, which often deals with two different times, many sequences are possible. The sequence chiefly depends on the tense of the main verb.

MAIN VERB IN THE PRESENT

MAIN VERB

Some Americans *are* so poor

Most children *learn* to talk

Greg *likes* to boast about the marlin

Astronomers *predict*

SUBORDINATE VERB

that they *suffer* from malnutrition.
(present)

after they *have learned* to walk.
(present perfect)

that he *caught* last summer. (past)

that the sun *will die* in about ten billion years. (future)

MAIN VERB IN THE PRESENT PERFECT

MAIN VERB

Scientists *have studied* the rings of Saturn

SUBORDINATE VERB

Although drivers *have complained* about the heavy traffic,
(present perfect)

SUBORDINATE VERB

ever since Galileo *discovered* them.
(past)

MAIN VERB

the police *have done* nothing to alleviate the problem.

23.3 compl

Verbs: Sequence of Tenses

MAIN VERB IN THE PAST

MAIN VERB

Centuries ago most people *believed*

Copernicus *discovered*

Recently archaeologists working in Egypt *opened* a tomb

SUBORDINATE VERB

that the sun *revolved* around the Earth. (past)

that the Earth *revolves* around the sun. (present, for statements of timeless truth)

that *had been sealed* in about 2500 B.C. (past perfect)

SUBORDINATE VERB

When the crewmen *saw* land, (past)

MAIN VERB

they cheered.

MAIN VERB IN THE PAST PERFECT

SUBORDINATE VERB

By the time Columbus *sighted* land, (past)

MAIN VERB

most of his crew *had lost* all hope of survival.

MAIN VERB INDICATING FUTURE

MAIN VERB

People *will buy* new homes

Students *will get* their diplomas

I *start* my summer job

SUBORDINATE VERB

when interest rates *are* (or *have been*) *lowered*. (present or present perfect)

only after they *pay* (or *have paid*) their library fines. (present or present perfect)

just as soon as I *take* (or *have taken*) my exams. (present or present perfect)

As the examples show, the subordinate verb in this kind of sequence is never future in form:

- ▶ The building will be demolished when the school year ~~will end~~ ^{ends.}
- ▶ [or] The building will be demolished when the school year ~~will end~~ ^{has ended.}

MAIN VERB IN THE FUTURE PERFECT

MAIN VERB

Workers *will have completed* repairs

SUBORDINATE VERB

by the time the airport *reopens*.
(present)On the sequence of tenses in the indirect reporting of discourse, [see 26.2](#).**23.4 USING SEQUENCES IN PARAGRAPHS**

A paragraph normally includes many verbs and often several different tenses. But you should **shift tenses** in a paragraph only when you have a good reason for doing so.

A well-written paragraph is usually dominated by just one tense. Consider the following example:

Before I *set* my world record, I *was* a great fan of *The Guinness Book of World Records* and *read* each new edition from cover to cover. I *liked* knowing and being able to tell others that the world's chug-a-lug champ *consumed* 2.58 pints of beer in 10 seconds, that the world's lightest adult person *weighed*

23.5 sent

Verbs: Sequence of Tenses

only 13 pounds, that the largest vocabulary for a talking bird *was* 531 words, spoken by a brown-beaked budgerigar named Sparky. There *is*, of course, only a fine line between admiration and envy, and for awhile I *had been* secretly *desiring* to be in that book myself—to astonish others just as I *had been astonished*. But it *seemed* hopeless. How could a nervous college sophomore, an anonymous bookworm, perform any of those wonderful feats? The open-throat technique necessary for chug-a-lugging *was* incomprehensible to my trachea—and I *thought* my head alone must weigh close to 13 pounds.

—William Allen, “How to Set a World Record”

The author is describing a past condition, so the dominant tense here is the simple past, as in *was*, *read*, *liked*, *consumed*, *weighed*, and *seemed*. Midway through the paragraph the author shifts out of the simple past, to express a general truth in the present tense (there *is* a fine line) and two conditions that existed before the simple past (*had been desiring*, *had been astonished*). Then the author returns to the simple past with *seemed*, *was*, and *thought*.

Now consider this paragraph:

February 2, 1975. Wasps *begin* to appear in country houses about now, and even in some suburban houses. One *sees* them dart uncertainly about, *hears* them buzz and bang on window panes, and one *wonders* where they came from. They probably *came* from the attic, where they *spent* the early part of the winter hibernating. *Now* with longer hours of daylight, the wasps *begin* to rouse and *start* exploring.

—Hal Borland, “Those Attic Wasps”

This passage describes not a past condition but a recurrent one—something that happens every year. The dominant tense of the verbs, therefore, is the present: *begin*, *sees*, *hears*, *wonders*, *begin*, *start*. Since the presence of the wasps calls for some explanation, the writer shifts tense in the middle of the paragraph to tell us where they *came* from and where they *spent* the early part of the winter. But in the final sentence, *now* brings us back to the present, and the verbs of this sentence, *begin* and *start*, are in the present tense.

23.5 CORRECTING FAULTY TENSE SHIFTS IN SENTENCES

The shift of tenses in a sentence is faulty when the tense of any verb differs without good reason from the tense of the one before it, or when the tense of a subordinate verb is inconsistent with the tense of the main verb:

- The novel describes the adventures of two immigrant families who enter the United States at New York, withstand the stresses of culture shock, and ~~traveled~~^{travel} to the Dakota Territory to make their fortune.
- Marthe likes to display the miniature spoons she ~~had~~^{has} collected since her marriage to an antique dealer.



23.6 CORRECTING FAULTY TENSE SHIFTS IN PARAGRAPHS

The shift of tenses in a paragraph is faulty when the tense of a verb differs without good reason from the dominant tense of the paragraph. Consider two examples, the first a commentary on *Green Mansions*, a novel by W. H. Hudson:

[1] On his return to the once peaceful woods, Abel *is horrified* to learn that his beloved Rima *has been slain* by savages. [2] Rage and grief *swell* within him as Kua-kó *tells* how Rima *was forced* to seek refuge in a tree and how

23.6 para

Verbs: Sequence of Tenses

the tree *became* a trap when the savages *sent* searing flames and choking smoke high into the branches. [3] As Abel *hears* of her final cry—"Abel! Abel!"—and fatal plunge to earth, he *fought* against a wild impulse to leap upon the Indian and tear his heart out.

Since the present tense is normally used in the summary of a literary work (see 22.3), the dominant tense is the present (*swell*, *tells*, and *hears*). There is one shift to the present perfect (*has been slain* in sentence 1) and four shifts to the past (*was forced*, *became*, *sent* in sentence 2; *fought* in sentence 3). The shifts in sentences 1 and 2 are correct; the shift in sentence 3 is not. In sentence 1, *has been slain* tells what has just happened before Abel is horrified to learn about it. In sentence 2, the past-tense verbs describe what happened well before Kua-kó *tells* about it. But in sentence 3, the verb *fought* tells what Abel does when he *hears* of Rima's death. *Fought* should be *fight*s.

[1] To understand Marx, we *need* to know something about the times in which he *lived*. [2] The period *was characterized* by revolutionary pressures against the ruling classes. [3] In most of the countries of Europe, there *was* little democracy, as we *know* it. [4] The masses *participated* little, if at all, in the world of political affairs, and very fully in the world of drudgery. [5] For example, at one factory in Manchester, England, in 1862, people *work* an average of 80 hours per week. [6] For these long hours of toil, the workers generally *receive* small wages. [7] They often *can do* little more than feed and clothe themselves. [8] Given these circumstances, it *is* little wonder that revolutionary pressures *were* manifest.

—Deliberately altered from Edwin Mansfield, *Economics*

In sentence 1 the writer correctly shifts from the present tense (*need*), which signifies the writer's time, to the past tense (*lived*), which signifies Marx's time. In the last part of sentence 3, he correctly returns to the present tense (*know*) to signify his own time, and then shifts back to Marx's time with the past tense (*participated*). But in sentences 5, 6, and 7, the shifts to the present tense (*work*, *receive*, *can do*) are wrong because the verbs refer to past actions; they should be *worked*, *received*, and *could do*. In sentence 8 both tenses are correct. The present tense *is* signifies the writer's time, while the past tense *were* signifies Marx's time.

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23.6 para

Verbs: Sequence of Tenses

IN BRIEF

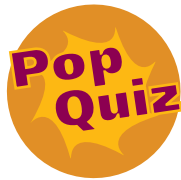
Avoiding Faulty Tense Shifts

In discussing literary works, use the common present—not the past—as the dominant tense:

As Macbeth *ponders* the prophecies, a desire to be king *rises* within him. He ^{envisions}~~envisioned~~ the crown upon his head and ^{imagines}~~imagined~~ how the Scots ^{will}~~would~~ cheer when he *sits* upon the throne.

In writing about past events from the vantage point of the present, use the past tense for what applies to the past, and the present tense for what applies to the present:

Today many Democrats *like* to swap stories about Harry Truman, who *was* noted for his plain speech. He *is* especially *remembered* for what he ^{threatened}~~threatens~~ to do after he *ready* a harsh review of a concert *given* by his daughter.



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Verbs: Active and Passive Voice

24

24.1 WHAT VOICE IS

The **voice** of a verb depends on the relation between the verb and its subject. When the subject of a verb *acts*, the verb is in the **active voice**; when the subject is *acted upon*, the verb is in the **passive voice**.

The active voice stresses the activity of the subject and helps to make a sentence direct, concise, and vigorous:

The old woman *threatened* me with her umbrella.

The tornado *flattened* entire houses.

You can't *steal* second base and *keep* one foot on first.

—Anonymous

The passive voice presents the subject as the target of an action:

Entire houses *were flattened* by the tornado.

The barn *was struck* by a bolt of lightning.

In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I *was hated* by large numbers of people—the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me.

—George Orwell

In passive constructions, the performer of the action is called an **agent**. In the examples above, *a bolt of lightning* and *large numbers of people* are agents.

24.2 form

Verbs: Active and Passive Voice

24.2 FORMING THE ACTIVE AND THE PASSIVE VOICE

Verbs in the active voice can take many forms: the bare form, the past-tense form, the *-ing* form with *be*, and the form with *have*:

My sisters often *chop* logs for exercise.

Last week they *stacked* firewood for the stove.

But today they *are lifting* weights.

They *have done* wonders.

Verbs in the passive voice are formed from their past participle and some tense of *be*:

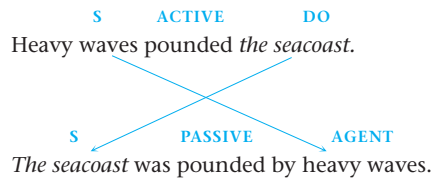
The burglar alarms *were chosen* by a security guard.

They *will be installed* next week.

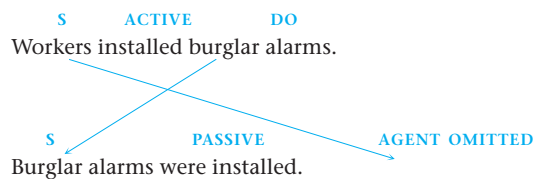
They *will be tested* every month.

CHANGING FROM ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

You can change a verb from active to passive only if it has a direct object (DO):

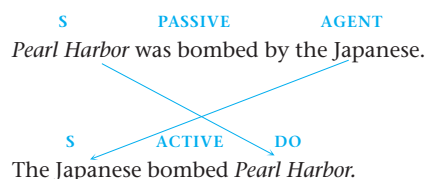


If the performer of an action is not important to your point, you don't need to mention the agent:



CHANGING FROM PASSIVE TO ACTIVE

To change a verb from the passive to the active voice, turn the subject of the passive verb into the direct object of the active one:



If the passive version does not include the agent, you must either keep the passive or supply the agent itself before changing to the active:

The city of Washington was planned in 1791. (passive, no agent)

The city of Washington was planned in 1791 by Pierre-Charles L'Enfant.
 (passive, agent supplied)

Pierre-Charles L'Enfant planned the city of Washington in 1791. (active)

PASSIVE VOICE VERSUS PROGRESSIVE FORM

Passive-voice verbs look something like verbs in the progressive form, because both types of verbs include a form of *be*. But don't confuse the types. The passive voice includes a form of *be* and the *past* participle, which usually ends in *-ed*; the progressive form includes a form of *be* and the *present* participle, which always ends in *-ing*. The progressive form is never used in the passive and often used in the active:

PROGRESSIVE FORM**ACTIVE VOICE**

Ellen *was washing* her dog when I arrived.

PASSIVE VOICE

The dog *was washed* as I watched.

24.4 choos

Verbs: Active and Passive Voice

24.3 CHOOSING THE ACTIVE VOICE

To make your writing forceful, direct, and concise, you should use the active voice frequently. Compare these sentences:

Through her studies of child-rearing and culture, world fame was achieved by Margaret Mead. (passive)

Through her studies of child-rearing and culture, Margaret Mead achieved world fame. (active)

The active version ditches the excess verbal baggage—*was* and *by*—and highlights the action of the subject. To a great extent, the life and energy of your writing will depend on what the subjects of your sentences do.

24.4 CHOOSING THE PASSIVE VOICE

Forceful as the active voice is, you should know when to use the passive.

1. Use the passive when you want to keep the focus on someone or something that is acted upon:

On August 13, 1927, while driving on the Promenade des Anglais at Nice, Isadora Duncan met her death. She *was strangled* by her colored shawl, which became tangled in the wheel of the automobile.

—Janet Flanner

If our heads swim occasionally, if we grow giddy with change, is it any wonder? We *are urged* to take our rightful place in the world of affairs. We *are* also *commanded* to stay at home and mind the hearth. We *are lauded* for our stamina and *pitied* for our lack of it. If we run to large families, we *are told* we are overpopulating the earth. If we are childless, we *are damned* for not fulfilling our functions. We *are goaded* into jobs and careers, then warned that our competition with men is unsettling both sexes.

—Phyllis McGinley,

2. Use the passive when the agent is unknown or unimportant to your point:

Traces of the oil spill *were found* as far away as Newfoundland.

3. Use the passive when you want to put the agent at the end of a clause, where you can easily attach a long modifier:

A secret mission to help thousands of starving Cambodians was organized in the summer of 1979 by *Father Robert I. Charlesbois*, a forty-eight-year-old Catholic priest from Gary, Indiana, with twelve years of experience in the Vietnam war zone.

Active Voice and Passive Voice

IN BRIEF

In active-voice constructions, the subject of the verb acts:

Wolfe *defeated* Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham in 1759.

In passive-voice constructions, the subject of the verb is *acted upon*:

Montcalm *was defeated* by Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham in 1759.

Use the active voice to make your writing direct, forceful, and concise:

Marie Curie *won* the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1911.

Use the passive voice to keep the focus on someone or something that is acted upon:

She *was honored* for her discovery of polonium and radium.

24.5 MISUSING THE PASSIVE

Avoid switching from active to passive when you have no particular reason to do so:

Usually I run two miles in the morning, but that morning it *was decided* that a four-mile run *should be taken*.

Who made the decision?

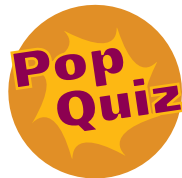
EDITED: Usually I run two miles in the morning, but that morning I decided to run four.

The active voice snaps the sentence into shape and keeps the focus on the one who is acting. Switch to the passive only to gain a special advantage—such as keeping the focus on someone who is acted upon:

Usually I run two miles in the morning, but that morning I *was kept* in bed by the flu.

24.5 misus

Verbs: Active and Passive Voice



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Verbs: Mood

25

25.1 WHAT MOOD IS

The **mood** of a verb or verb phrase indicates your attitude toward a statement as you make it. Do you think of it as a statement of fact? Then you will use the *indicative* mood. Do you think of it as a command? Then you will use the *imperative*. Do you think of it as a wish, a recommendation, or an imaginary condition? Then you will use the *subjunctive*.

25.2 USING THE INDICATIVE

The **indicative** mood is for statements of actuality or strong probability:

The spine-tailed swift *flies* faster than any other bird in the world.

The Missouri and Mississippi Rivers *rose* to record heights in 1993.

Midwesterners *will remember* the flooding for many years to come.

Use *do*, *does*, or *did* with the indicative for emphasis.

25.3 USING THE IMPERATIVE

The **imperative** mood is for commands and requests made directly.

1. Use the bare form of the verb for commands addressed entirely to others:

Vote for change.

Fight pollution.

25.4 modal

Verbs: Mood

Be yourself.

Kindly *send* me your latest catalog.

2. When a command or suggestion includes yourself as well as others, use *let us* or *let's* before the bare form of the verb:

Let us negotiate our differences in a spirit of mutual trust and respect.

Let's cooperate.

25.4 USING THE SUBJUNCTIVE: MODAL AUXILIARIES

The **subjunctive** mood is for statements of hypothetical conditions or of wishes, recommendations, requirements, or suggestions. To express the subjunctive, you often need one of the modal auxiliaries, which include *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *ought*, *should*, and *would*. Use them as follows:

1. USE CAN TO EXPRESS

CAPABILITY: *Can* the Israelis and the Palestinians ever make peace?

PERMISSION: Why *can't* first-year college students live off campus?

In formal writing, permission is normally signified by *may* rather than *can*, which is reserved for capability. But *can* may be used informally to express permission and is actually better than *may* in requests for permission involving the negative. The only alternative to *can't* in such questions is the awkward term *mayn't*.

2. USE COULD TO EXPRESS

THE OBJECT OF A WISH: I wish I *could* climb Mount Everest.

A CONDITION: If all countries of the world *could* set aside their antagonism once every four years, the Olympics would be truly international.

A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY: A major earthquake *could* strike California within the next ten years.

On the distinction between *would* and *could*, see item 8 below.

3. USE MAY TO EXPRESS

A MILD POSSIBILITY: The next president of the United States *may* be a woman.

PERMISSION: Students who cannot afford tuition *may* apply for loans.

4. USE *MIGHT* TO EXPRESS

A REMOTE POSSIBILITY: Biogenetic experiments *might* produce some horribly dangerous new form of life.

THE RESULT OF A CONTRARY-TO-FACT CONDITION: If I had driven all night, I *might* have fallen asleep at the wheel.

5. USE *OUGHT* TO EXPRESS

A STRONG RECOMMENDATION: The Pentagon *ought* to eliminate waste in defense spending.

LIKELIHOOD: The new museum *ought* to be ready by next fall.

Ought is normally followed by the infinitive.

6. USE *MUST* TO EXPRESS

AN ABSOLUTE OBLIGATION: Firefighters *must* be ready for action at any hour of the day or night.

A FIRM CONCLUSION: William Bligh, who sailed a small boat nearly four thousand miles, *must* have been an extraordinary seaman.

7. USE *SHOULD* TO EXPRESS

ADVICE: Students who hope to get into medical school *should* take biology.

EXPECTATION: By the year 2050, the population of the world *should* exceed eight billion.

8. USE *WOULD* TO EXPRESS

THE RESULT OF A CONDITION OR EVENT: If a one-kiloton neutron bomb were exploded a few hundred feet over the Earth, it *would* kill everyone within a radius of three hundred yards.

THE OBJECT OF A WISH: Some people wish the federal government *would* support them for the rest of their lives.

Both *would* and *could* may be used to express the object of a wish. But “I wish you could go” means “I wish you were able to go”; “I wish you would go” means “I wish you were willing to go.”

25.5 special

Verbs: Mood

MISUSING MODAL AUXILIARIES

Avoid putting two or more modal auxiliaries together:

- ▶ I might ~~could~~ move to Calgary.
- ▶ [or] I ~~might~~ could move to Calgary.



25.5 USING THE SUBJUNCTIVE: SPECIAL VERB FORMS

The **subjunctive** mood is sometimes indicated by a special verb form instead of by a modal auxiliary.

1. The *present subjunctive* is the same in form as the bare form (infinitive form) of the verb, and it is the same with every subject. Use the present subjunctive to express a hope, a requirement, a recommendation, a demand, a request, or a suggestion:

INDICATIVE

God *has* mercy on us.

The queen *lives*.

A premed student normally *takes* biology.

The toxic dump *is* still open.

The trustees' meetings *are* closed.

SUBJUNCTIVE

God *have* mercy on us!

Long *live* the queen!

The college requires that every student *take* first-year English.

Protesters demand that the dump *be* closed.

The students demand that those meetings *be* open.

The present subjunctive of the verb *be* is *be* with every subject (dump *be* closed; meetings *be* open).

2. The *past subjunctive* is the same in form as the common past, except that the past subjunctive of *be* is *were* with every subject. Use the past subjunctive to express a wish for something in the present:

INDICATIVE (FACT)

I *have* five dollars.

I *am* a pauper.

I *am taking* Math 36.

I *live* in Ottawa.

I *am* in New York.

It *is* summer.

SUBJUNCTIVE (WISH)

I wish (that) I *had* a hundred dollars.

I wish (that) I *were* a millionaire.

I wish (that) I *were taking* Math 23.

I wish (that) I *lived* in Vancouver.

I wish (that) I *were* in Texas.

I wish (that) it *were* winter.

3. The *past perfect subjunctive* is the same in form as the common past perfect. Use it to express a wish for something in the past:

INDICATIVE (FACT)

I *saw* the second half of the game.

I *was* there for the second half.

I *had* no binoculars with me.

SUBJUNCTIVE (WISH)

I wish (that) I *had seen* the first. [or] I wished (that) I *had seen* the first.

I wish (that) I *had been* there for the first.

I wish (that) I *had had* them.

25.6 FORMING AND USING CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

A **conditional sentence** normally consists of an *if* clause, which states a condition, and a result clause, which states the result of that condition. The mood of the verb in the *if* clause depends on the likelihood of the condition.

THE POSSIBLE CONDITION

If the condition is likely or even barely possible, the mood is indicative:

[condition] If electric cars *replace* gas-powered cars in our cities, [result] urban air will be much cleaner than it is now.

THE IMPOSSIBLE OR CONTRARY-TO-FACT CONDITION

If the condition is impossible or contrary to fact, the mood of the verb in the *if* clause is subjunctive, and the result clause usually includes a modal auxiliary, such as *would* or *might*. The tense of the verb in the *if* clause depends on the tense of the condition.

1. A *condition contrary to present fact* should be stated in the past subjunctive:

If the federal government *spent* no more than it collected, interest rates would plunge.

If I *were* a millionaire, I would buy an airplane.

The new clerk acts as if he *were* the owner.

The expression *as if* always signals a condition contrary to fact. Some writers now use *was* instead of *were* in sentences like the second and third, but in formal writing you should use *were*.

2. A *condition contrary to past fact* should be stated in the past perfect subjunctive:

After the fight, the former champion looked as if he *had been put* through a meat grinder.

If Montcalm *had defeated* Wolfe in 1759, the Canadian province of Quebec might now belong to France.

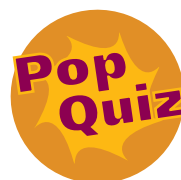
MISUSING *WOULD HAVE* IN CONDITIONAL CLAUSES

Avoid using *would have* to express a condition of any kind:

*If I *would have* attended the meeting, I would have attacked the proposal.

Use *would have* only to express the *result* of a condition:

EDITED: If I had attended the meeting, I *would have* attacked the proposal.



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Direct and Indirect Reporting of Discourse

26

Any statement, whether spoken or written, can be reported *directly*—by quotation of the actual words. Or it can be reported *indirectly*—by a paraphrase of those words. In this chapter we explain when and how to use each method of reporting discourse.

26.1 DIRECT REPORTING

Use **direct reporting** when the exact words of the original statement are memorable or otherwise important. Enclose the words in quotation marks:

“The vilest abortionist,” writes Shaw, “is he who attempts to mould a child’s character.”

Frost puts four stresses in his opening line: “The well was dry beside the door.”

For a full discussion of how to punctuate quotations, [see chapter 32](#).

USING TENSES IN TAGS

Since no statement can be reported until after it has been made, you should normally use the past tense for the verb in the accompanying tag:

“No child should be homeless,” *said* the nurse.

“I agree with you completely,” *answered* the orderly.

In 1782 Thomas Jefferson *wrote*: “There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us.”

26.2 state

Direct and Indirect Reporting of Discourse

But use the present when you are quoting an undated statement of lasting significance or a statement made by a character in a work of literature:

“In every work of genius,” *observes* Emerson, “we recognize our own rejected thoughts.”

In the first chapter of *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck *says*, “I don’t take no stock in dead people.”

QUOTING EXTENDED DIALOGUE

In reporting an exchange between two speakers, you should first indicate clearly who is speaking and in what order. You can then omit tags until the dialogue ends or is interrupted:

“Our market surveys indicate,” Hurts said, “that there are also a lot of kids who claim their parents don’t listen to them. If they could rent a gun, they feel they could arrive at an understanding with their folks in no time.”

“There’s no end to the business,” I said. “How would you charge for Hurts Rent-A-Gun?”

“There would be hourly rates, day rates, and weekly rates, plus ten cents for each bullet fired. Our guns would be the latest models, and we would guarantee clean barrels and the latest safety devices. If a gun malfunctions through no fault of the user, we will give him another gun absolutely free. . . .”

“Why didn’t you start this before?”

“We wanted to see what happened with the gun-control legislation. . . .”

—Art Buchwald, “Hurts Rent-A-Gun”

Paragraph indentations mark the shift from one speaker to another.

QUOTING SEVERAL LINES OF PROSE OR POETRY

When you quote more than four lines of prose or three lines of poetry, you should indent instead of using quotation marks, as described in sections [32.4](#) and [32.5](#).

26.2 INDIRECT REPORTING OF STATEMENTS

Use **indirect reporting** when the exact words of a statement are less important than their content:

During the campaign, the senator said that she favored federal subsidizing of daycare.

Form indirect statements as shown here:

ORIGINAL STATEMENT: I want you to play the lead.

DIRECT REPORT (QUOTATION): The director said, "I want you to play the lead."

INDIRECT REPORT: The director said that she wanted me to play the lead.

As this example shows, an indirect report does the following:

1. It refers to the speaker or writer.
2. It uses no quotation marks.
3. It often puts *that* just before the reported statement. But *that* may be omitted:

The director said she wanted me to play the lead.

4. It changes the pronouns in the reported statement where necessary. In this example, *I* becomes *she*, and *you* becomes *me*.
5. It may change the tense of the verb in the original statement so that it matches the tense of the introductory verb. Thus *want* in the original statement becomes *wanted* in the indirect report. But if the original statement has continuing force at the time it is reported, the indirect report may keep the original tense:

The director said that she wants me to play the lead.

Generalizations may be reported with the present tense for both verbs:

Farmers say that rain before seven means sun by eleven.

They also say that when cows lie down, a storm is coming.

26.3 ques

Direct and Indirect Reporting of Discourse



26.3 DIRECT REPORTING OF QUESTIONS

To report a question directly, you normally use a verb of asking (such as *ask*, *request*, or *inquire*) in the past tense:

The Sphinx asked, "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?"

"Have you thought about college?" my father inquired.

"When did the plane leave?" I asked.

Use the present tense when you are reporting a question of standing importance or a question asked by a literary character:

The consumer advocate asks, "How can we have safe and effective products without government regulations?"

The business owner asks, "How can we have free enterprise with government interference?"

When Tom Sawyer proposes to form a gang that will rob and kill people, Huck asks, "Must we always kill the people?"

26.4 INDIRECT REPORTING OF QUESTIONS

To report a question indirectly, you normally introduce it with a verb of asking and a word like *who*, *what*, *whether*, *how*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *if*:

ORIGINAL QUESTION: Why do birds migrate each year?

INDIRECT REPORT: The teacher asked why birds migrate each year.

The indirect report drops the auxiliary verb *do*, which is commonly used in questions. Also, the question mark becomes a period.

Use the present tense for the introductory verb when reporting a question of continuing importance or a question asked by a literary character:

The consumer advocate asks how we can have safe and effective products without government regulation.

When Tom Sawyer proposes to form a gang that will rob and kill people, Huck asks whether they must always kill the people.

After a past-tense verb of asking, you must normally use the past tense in the reported question:

The interviewer asked me what I knew about programming.

She also asked if I had an advanced degree.

But you may use the present tense if the reported question is essentially timeless:

The utilitarian asks what practical purpose poetry serves.

The romantic asks how we could live without it.

26.5 CONFUSING THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT REPORTING OF QUESTIONS

1. Do not use a question mark to punctuate the indirect report of a question:

*The customer sat down at the counter and asked did we have any scruples?

26.6 fit

Direct and Indirect Reporting of Discourse

The **direct report** of a question repeats its actual words and ends in a question mark:

EDITED: The customer sat down at the counter and asked, "Do you have any scruples?"

The **indirect report** of a question states that a question has been asked. It must end with a period:

EDITED: The customer sat down at the counter and asked if we had any scruples.

2. When reporting a question indirectly, do not use interrogative word order:

*The police officer asked when was the car stolen.

The direct report of a question preserves its word order, putting the auxiliary verb before the subject:

EDITED: The police officer asked, "When was the car stolen?"

The indirect report uses declarative word order, putting the subject first:

EDITED: The police officer asked when the car was stolen.

26.6 FITTING QUOTATIONS INTO YOUR OWN PROSE

The combination of your own prose and a quotation should always make a complete, coherent sentence:

According to Phyllis Rose, "We shop to cheer ourselves up."

Ambrose Bierce defines achievement as "the death of endeavor and the birth of disgust."

Barbara Garson writes: "The crime of modern industry is not forcing us to work, but denying us real work."

MISFITTED QUOTATIONS

A quotation is misfitted when it fails to combine with your own prose to make a complete, coherent sentence:

*According to Orwell, "When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims."

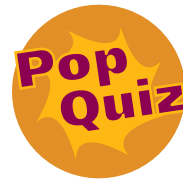
This sentence fragment lacks a main clause, and it leaves the reader guessing about what happens “when there is a gap.” To correct the error, do one of the following:

1. Quote a complete sentence:

EDITED: According to Orwell, “When there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttle fish squirting out ink.”

2. Make the quoted matter part of a complete sentence:

EDITED: According to Orwell, one resorts to obscure language “when there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims.”



27 *Invigorating Your Style*

Nearly all of the chapters in parts 2 and 3 of this book aim to help you improve your **style**: to write not just correctly but cogently, to shape your sentences with coordination and subordination, to enhance them with parallel structure, to enrich them with modifiers, and to perfect them with well-chosen words. In this chapter, we focus specifically on what you can do to invigorate your style.

Good writing exudes vitality. It not only sidesteps awkwardness, obscurity, and grammatical error; it also expresses a mind continually at work, a mind seeking, discovering, wondering, prodding, provoking, asserting. Whatever else it does, good writing keeps the reader awake.

Unfortunately, much of what gets written seems designed to put readers to sleep. In most college writing you are expected to sound thoughtful and judicious, but no reader wants you to sound dull. To enliven your writing on any subject, here are five specific things you can do.

27.1 VARY YOUR SENTENCES

Take a hard look at one of your paragraphs—or at a whole essay. Do all of your sentences sound about the same? If most are short and simple, combine some of them to make longer ones. If most are lengthened out with modifiers and dependent clauses, break some of them up. Be bold. Be surprising. Use a short sentence to set off a long one, a simple structure to set off a complicated one. Though you need some consistency in order to keep the reader with you (did you notice that all of our last five sentences are imperatives?), you can and should spurn the monotony of assembly-line sentences.

To see what you can do with a variety of sentences, consider this example:

Someone is always at my elbow reminding me that I am the granddaughter of slaves. It fails to register depression with me. Slavery is sixty years in the past. The operation was successful and the patient is doing well, thank you. The terrible struggle that made me an American out of a potential slave said “On the line!” The Reconstruction said “Get set!”; and the generation before said “Go!” I am off to a flying start and I must not halt in the stretch to look behind and weep. Slavery is the price I paid for civilization, and the choice was not with me. It is a bully adventure and worth all that I have paid through my ancestors for it.

—Zora Neale Hurston

Among the many things that invigorate the style of this passage is the variety of sentence types that Hurston uses—simple, compound, complex, and compound with a subordinate clause:

SIMPLE: It fails to register depression with me.
Slavery is sixty years in the past.

COMPOUND: The operation was successful *and* the patient is doing well, thank you.
I am off to a flying start *and* I must not halt in the stretch to look behind and weep.

COMPLEX: Someone is always at my elbow reminding me *that I am the granddaughter of slaves*.
It is a bully adventure and worth all *that I have paid through my ancestors for it*.

COMPOUND WITH SUBORDINATE CLAUSE: Slavery is the price *that I paid for civilization*, and the choice was not with me.

Now consider this passage:

This looking business is risky. Once I stood on nearby Purgatory Mountain, watching through binoculars the great autumn hawk migration below, until I discovered that I was in danger of joining the hawks on a vertical migration of my own. I was used to binoculars, but not, apparently, to balancing on humped rocks while looking through them. I reeled.

—Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Dillard varies both the structure and the length of her sentences. She moves from five to thirty-five words, then down to just two at the end. When a very short sentence follows one or more long ones, it can strike like a dart.

27.2 USE VERBS OF ACTION INSTEAD OF BE

Verbs of action show the subject not just *being* something but *doing* something. At times, of course, you need to say what your subject *is* or *was* or *has been*, and these words can speak strongly when used to express equality or identity, as in *Beauty is truth*. But verbs of action can often replace verbs of being:

- ▶ Sheila ~~was the winner of~~ ^{won} the nomination.
- ▶ Frederick's desire to learn reading would have ~~been a shock to~~ ^{shocked} other slaveholders.
- ▶ Mr. Ault believed that learning would ~~be the ruin of~~ Frederick as a slave.

27.3 USE THE ACTIVE VOICE MORE OFTEN THAN THE PASSIVE

Use the active voice as much as possible. Verbs that tell of a subject acting usually express more vitality than verbs that tell of a subject acted upon:

PASSIVE: After a big hole was dug and sprinkled with fertilizer, the tree *was planted*.

ACTIVE: After digging a big hole and sprinkling it with fertilizer, I *planted* the tree.

While some sentences work better in the passive voice, overuse of the passive can paralyze your writing. This is a problem *to be seriously considered by anyone who has ever been asked* to write an essay in which a subject of some sort is *to be analyzed, to be explained, or to be commented upon by him or her*. That sentence shows what overuse of the passive will do to your sentences: it will make them wordy, stagnant, boring, dead. Whenever you start to use the passive, ask yourself whether the sentence might sound better in the active. Often it will. (For a full discussion of the active and passive voice, [see chapter 24](#).)

27.4 ASK QUESTIONS

Break the forward march of your statements with an occasional question:

He falls back upon the bed awkwardly. His stumps, unweighted by legs and feet, rise in the air, presenting themselves. I unwrap the bandages from the stumps, and begin to cut away the black scabs and the dead, glazed fat with scissors and forceps. A shard of white bone comes loose. I pick it away. I wash the wounds with disinfectant and redress the stumps. All this while, he does not speak. What is he thinking behind those lids that do not blink? Is he remembering a time when he was whole? Does he dream of feet?

—Richard Selzer, “The Discus Thrower”

Questions like these can draw the reader into the very heart of your subject. And questions can do more than advertise your curiosity. They can also voice your conviction. In conversation you sometimes ask a question that assumes a particular answer—don’t you? Such a question is called **rhetorical**, and you can use it in writing as well as in speech. It will challenge your readers, prompting them either to agree with you or to explain to themselves why they do not. And why shouldn’t you challenge your readers now and then?

27.5 CUT ANY WORDS YOU DON’T NEED

Cut out all needless repetition and strive to be concise (see 8.13):

- ▶ During their tour of Ottawa, they saw the Parliament buildings/and ~~they saw~~ the National Art Center.
- ▶ ~~The reason for his decision to make a visit to Spain was his desire~~ to see a bullfight. *He decided because he wanted*
- ▶ [or] ~~The reason for his decision to make a visit to Spain was his desire~~ to see a bullfight. *He went*

IN BRIEF

Invigorating Your Style

- ▶ Vary the length and structure of your sentences:

I was used to binoculars but not, apparently, to balancing on humped rocks while looking through them. I reeled.

—Annie Dillard

- ▶ Use verbs of action instead of *be*:

Sheila won the nomination.

- ▶ Use the active voice as much as possible.

- ▶ Ask questions:

What on earth is *our* common goal? How did we ever get mixed up in a place like this?

—Lewis Thomas

- ▶ Cut unneeded words:

~~The reason for his decision to make a visit to Spain was his desire to~~
^{He went}
 see a bullfight.



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Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

28

This chapter discusses some features of American English that often cause trouble for students of English as a second language. Though it includes explanations of key grammatical points, it should be supplemented with a good English–English dictionary and a grammar-reference guide, such as Jocelyn M. Steer and Karen A. Carlisi’s *Advanced Grammar Book*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1997), or Betty Schramper-Azar’s *Understanding and Using English Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Paramus, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998). The *Newbury House Dictionary of American English*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 2000), speaks to ESL students and comes with a CD-ROM demonstrating pronunciation and usage.

28.1 ARTICLES AND OTHER DETERMINERS

DETERMINERS DEFINED

A **determiner** (D) is a type of modifier: a modifier that always precedes the noun (N) it modifies and marks it as such:

D D D N D N D N

We spent *the first two* weeks of *our* trip in *a* village.

Though an adjective (A) can follow the noun it modifies, a determiner must always precede it:

D A N

It was *a* remote village.

28.1 deter

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

D N A A

It was *a* village remote from modern development.

Unlike adjectives, determiners have no comparative (C) or superlative (S) forms:

D A N A(C) D D N

It was also *a* poor village, poorer than *any other* village in the province.

D A(S) N

It was *the* poorest village I had ever seen.

COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

To choose the right determiner, you must know whether the noun it modifies is *countable* or *uncountable*.

Countable nouns may be singular or plural:

car, cars

book, books

woman, women

course, courses

Uncountable nouns are normally singular. They include:

WORDS NAMING A MASS OF
SOMETHING, SUCH AS

cement

wheat

dirt

rice

mud

air

cotton

WORDS NAMING ABSTRACT IDEAS,
SUCH AS

fortune

luck

justice

advice

knowledge

cowardice

bravery

Some nouns are countable in one sense and uncountable in another:

We added *sand* [a mass] to the mixture.

The sands of time [individual grains] are running out.

Life is full of surprises.

What is the value of *a life*?

USING A, AN, AND THE

A and *an* are Group 1 determiners (see pp. 426–27). Use *a* or *an* before a noun that is singular, countable, and indefinite:

Recent labor statistics in the U.S. show that *a woman* earns seventy-five cents for every dollar earned by *a man* doing the same job.

According to *an old story*, Sir Isaac Newton discovered the principle of gravity when *an apple* fell on his head.

If you refer again to a noun introduced by *a* or *an*, use *the*:

I have often wondered if Newton ever ate *the apple*.

The second sentence refers to something that has been made definite by the first one. *An apple* is now *the apple that fell on Newton's head*.

Use *a/an* in expressions of measurement where the meaning is “each”:

Swordfish now costs four dollars *a pound*.

In my new job I work just four days *a week*.

In choosing between *a* and *an*, look only at the first letter of the next word. Use *a* when the first letter of the next word is a consonant, including an *h* that is pronounced:

a car

a big apple

a book

a green umbrella

a woman

a hacienda

a history book

Use *an* when the first letter of the next word is a vowel or an unpronounced *h*:

an apple

an absorbing book

an orange car

an imbecile

an injured woman

an heir

28.1 deter

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

MISUSING OR MISTAKENLY OMITTING A/AN Do not use *a/an* before an uncountable noun:

- ▶ I asked my uncle for ~~a~~ advice.
- ▶ The medal was awarded for ~~a~~ bravery.
- ▶ My question provoked ~~a~~ laughter.
- ▶ The room needs ~~a~~ new furniture.

Do not use *a/an* before any plural noun:

- ▶ ~~A~~ paperback books are cheaper than ~~a~~ hardbound books.
- ▶ ~~A~~ women generally earn less than ~~a~~ men.

Do not omit *a/an* before a singular, countable, definite noun:

- ▶ Marie Curie was ^a brilliant scientist.
- ▶ Every undergraduate studies ^a variety of subjects.

USING THE *The* is a Group 1 determiner (see pp. 426–27). Use *the* before a noun referring to one or more specific persons or things:

The first woman in *the* U.S. Senate was Hattie Caraway of Arkansas, who served out her husband's term after his death in 1931. She gained *the* seat on her own in *the* election of 1932.

In this instance, *the* voters of Arkansas were more progressive than *the* voters of any northern state.

The present form of *the* Great Wall of China largely originated in *the* Ming dynasty.

To commemorate *the* American Revolution, *the* Statue of Liberty was given to *the* United States by *the* Franco-American Union in 1886.

Use *the* with superlatives:

Many basketball fans consider Michael Jordan *the* greatest player in *the* history of the game.

Soccer is still *the* most popular sport in many countries.

Use *the* with any adjective or participle used as a noun:

The rich cannot understand the misery of *the* poor.

The sick, the suffering, and the neglected all need our help.

The real and *the ideal* have little in common.

The British transferred Hong Kong to *the Chinese* in the 1990s.

MISUSING THE Do not use *the* before nouns used in a generalized sense. In the sample sentences below on the left, the italicized words particularize the nouns they modify; the sample sentences on the right contain no such particularizing words.

PARTICULAR

The men and the women *in my office* often have trouble understanding each other.

The dog *next door to me* barks at everyone.

The mistake *made by a ticket agent* cost me \$250.

GENERAL

Men and women often have trouble understanding each other.

When a dog is happy, it wags its tail.

Scientists often make discoveries by making mistakes.

Some nouns follow neither *the* nor *a* when used in a general sense. They include *night, prison, school, court*, and the names of meals:

The breakfast *I had this morning* was nothing but coffee.

I saw her on the night *before she left*.

The school *I once attended* is now closed.

The prison *on Alcatraz Island* is a ruin.

Ellen never forgot the court *where she won her first case*.

I take coffee with breakfast and wine with lunch and dinner.

She takes classes at night.

Most American children start going to school at the age of five.

No one wants to go to prison.

In court, judges wear black.

EXCEPTIONS:

Some nouns—such as *morning, afternoon, evening*, and *hospital*—regularly follow *the*, even when used in a generalized sense:

I take classes in *the morning* and work in *the afternoon*.

A night in *the hospital* can be very expensive.

28.1 *deter*

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

As nouns, *left* and *right* follow *the* except when used with *at*:

On the left stood the church; *on the right* was the school.

At left stood the church; *at right* was the school.

USING THE WITH PROPER NOUNS Use *the* with names of the following:

POLITICAL/ECONOMIC UNIONS

the United States

the British Commonwealth

the European Union

RIVERS

the Mississippi River

the Colorado River

the Amazon River

GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS

the Arctic

the South Pole

the Canary Islands

the Southwest

MOUNTAIN RANGES

the Rocky Mountains

the Appalachians

the Himalayas

the Adirondacks

OCEANS

the Pacific

the Atlantic

the Indian Ocean

the Mediterranean

BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS

the Empire State Building

the Washington Monument

the Eiffel Tower

the World Trade Center

Do not use *the* with names of persons, churches, languages, countries, political regions, lakes, or ponds:

- ▶ ~~The~~ Simón Bolívar liberated a great part of ~~the~~ Latin America from ~~the~~ Spain.
- ▶ In parts of San Francisco, ~~the~~ Chinese is spoken more often than ~~the~~ English.
- ▶ When recession struck ~~the~~ China, the Chinese government could not pay its debts.
- ▶ ~~The~~ Lake Michigan is much larger than ~~the~~ Walden Pond.

- The pastor of ~~the~~ Trinity Church was invited to deliver a sermon at ~~the~~ St. Patrick's Cathedral.

EXCEPTIONS:

Use *the* before *Church* when referring to a religious organization:

The Roman Catholic Church strongly opposes abortion.

Use *the* before *Church* or *Cathedral* when a name follows either of those words:

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine is in New York.

Use *the* before the name of a language when the word *language* follows the name:

The English language is widely spoken.



28.1 deter

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USING *SOME*, *ANY*, *NO*, AND *NOT*

Some, *any*, *no*, and *not* are all Group 1 determiners (see pp. 426–27). *Some* denotes an unknown or unspecified amount or number. Use it in affirmative and imperative sentences:

Some people are always lucky.

Please give us *some help*.

Any denotes an unknown or unspecified small amount or number. Use it in sentences that are negative or express uncertainty:

The box office did not have *any tickets*.

I asked if there was *any standing room*.

Use *no* to negate a noun:

No tickets were left.

I saw *no animal* in the cage.

NOTE: Do not use *not* to negate a noun. Use it only to negate a verb:

- ▶ There was ~~not~~ ^{no} solution [noun] to the problem.
- ▶ I could ~~no~~ ^{not} solve [verb] the problem.

USING THE DEMONSTRATIVES (*THIS*, *THAT*, *THESE*, *THOSE*)

Demonstratives (Group 1 determiners, pp. 426–27) are words that point to one or more particular persons or things. Use them as follows:

Use *this* and *that* with singular nouns, whether countable or not. *This* suggests nearness (*this weekend*, *this room*) while *that* suggests distance in space or time (*that weekend*, *that room*).

Use *these* and *those* with plural countable nouns (*these men*, *those women*). As with *this* and *that*, *these* suggests nearness while *those* suggests distance.

USING NUMBERS, *MUCH*, *MANY*, *LITTLE*, *FEW*

Ordinal numbers (Group 2 determiners, pp. 426–27) refer to the order of the items in a group (*first*, *second*, *third* . . .). Use the ordinals after a Group 1 word or by themselves:

The *third chapter* of the novel describes the groom.

Marilyn's story won *first prize*.

Cardinal numbers (Group 3 determiners, pp. 426–27) refer to the quantity of items in a group (*one, seven, forty-three, two hundred*, etc.); words denoting quantity include *many, much*, and *few*.

Use any of these numerical determiners after words from Group 1 and Group 2 or by themselves before a noun:

The first *three men* had tickets.

Three men were waiting at the airport gate.

Those *three tickets* cost a lot of money.

Ten poems were in the book.

Her first *few poems* were short.

The anthology included *many poems*.

Use *much* and *little* (Group 3) with uncountable nouns and singular countable nouns:

much wisdom

little creativity

much land

little industry

Use *few, several*, and *many* with plural countable nouns:

few settlers

several farms

many animals

When *little* means “small in stature,” it can be used with countable nouns: *little boys, little girls*.

USING ALL, BOTH, HALF, AND OTHER PREDETERMINERS

Predeterminers are words and phrases that can be used before some Group 1 determiners:

1 2 3

All the first five runners beat the record.

Half a loaf is better than none.

Both these nations have suffered.

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Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

Both and *all* can also be used before a noun:

Both women won congressional seats.

At night *all cats* are gray.

Some, *any*, *none*, and *any* Group 3 determiner may be used with *of* as a **predetermining phrase**:

None of the first five passengers had tickets.

Much of our confusion was due to inaccurate reports.

We did not hear *any of the latest news*.

Some of the food was missing.

Three of the women left the room.

IN BRIEF

Using A, AN, THE, and Other Determiners

A **determiner** is a word marking a noun that follows it. Determiners come in three groups corresponding to the order in which they may be used:

1

Some applicants had interviews.

1 2

The first applicants had interviews.

1 2 3

The first five applicants had interviews.

Group 1

a, an with singular countable nouns: *a boy, a mistake, an orange*

the with nouns referring to particular persons or things: *the Statue of Liberty, the owner of that car, the people of Nicaragua, the capital of Arkansas*

with superlatives: *the greatest athlete in the world*

some with nouns in affirmative sentences: *Some people are always lucky.*

any with nouns in negative sentences: *I never have any luck.*

<i>no</i>	to negate any noun: <i>No tickets were left.</i>
<i>this, that</i>	with singular nouns, countable or not: <i>this college, this courage, that movie, that fear</i>
<i>these, those</i>	with plural countable nouns: <i>these men, those women</i>
<i>my, your, his, her, its, our, their</i>	with any noun: <i>my car, her job, his letter, their property, our town, your house, its roof</i>

Group 2

the ordinal numbers: <i>first, second, third, etc.</i>	after a Group 1 word or by themselves: 1 2 2 <i>the first chapter, first prize</i>
--	--

Group 3

the cardinal numbers: <i>one, two, three, etc.,</i> and words denoting measurement	after words from Group 1 and Group 2 or by themselves with a noun: 1 2 3 3 <i>the first three men, three men</i> 1 2 3 3 <i>the last few sheep, few sheep</i>
--	---

<i>much, little</i>	with uncountable nouns: <i>much land, little industry</i>
---------------------	---

<i>few, several, many</i>	with countable nouns: <i>few settlers, several farms, many animals</i>
---------------------------	--

Predeterminers

<i>all, both, half</i>	before some Group 1 determiners: 1 1 <i>all the first five runners, half a loaf,</i> 1 <i>both the women</i> <i>all</i> and <i>both</i> may be used right before a noun: <i>all runners, both women</i>
------------------------	---

28.2 verbs

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers



28.2 VERBS

VERB TENSE

For a full presentation on using English verb tenses, including those for irregular verbs, [see chapters 22](#) and [23](#).

NUMBER AND AGREEMENT

For a full presentation on agreement of verb forms (person and number) with subjects, [see chapter 21](#).

MODAL AUXILIARIES

For a full presentation on modal auxiliary verbs, [see chapter 25](#), especially 25.4.

FORMING VERB PHRASES

A phrase is a group of words that functions as a single part of speech. A **verb phrase** therefore contains two or more words, including an auxiliary verb. These words function together as the predicate of a sentence, not as a complete sentence.

EXAMPLES:

The workers *have gone* home for the day.

She *might have told* me her name, but I *don't remember* it.

Professor Casey *will be giving* a lecture next Friday.

USING DO AND DOES

Do is used as a main verb and as a helping (auxiliary) verb.

DO AS A MAIN VERB As a main verb, *do* takes the following forms:

	PRESENT	PRESENT PERFECT	PAST	PAST PERFECT	FUTURE	FUTURE PERFECT
you	do	have done	did	had done	will do	will have done
we						
they						
he	does	has done				
she						
it						

As a main verb, *do* can serve any one of the following purposes:

It can be a transitive verb:

Carmen *does* many things.

The storm *did* no damage to the house.

28.2 verbs

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It can finish a comparison:

Andrea speaks French better than Mark *does*.

It can take the place of a verb used in the preceding sentence:

Carpenters recently renovated the cafeteria. They *did* it [the work] in just three weeks.

It can help to form an interrogative tag at the end of a statement:

The soloist played well, *didn't* she?

Guards never admit strangers, *do* they?

DO AS A HELPING VERB Use *do* as a helping verb in questions and negative statements:

Does money grow on trees?

Do jobs fall from the sky?

► Money ^{*does*} not grow on trees, and jobs ^{*do*} not fall from the sky.

You could also write *doesn't* and *don't*, which are both less formal than *does not* and *do not*.

MISUSING S WITH DOES When using *does* as a helping verb, never add *s* to the base form of the main verb (MV):

► *Does* smoking causes^{MV} cancer?

► It certainly *does* not serves^{MV} the cause of health.





PHRASAL VERBS

A phrasal verb is a verb combined with certain adverbs (*away, forward*) or one or more prepositions. When combined with the verb, these adverbs and prepositions no longer function as such and instead are known as *particles*. The addition of a particle can dramatically change the meaning of the verb.

NO PARTICLE: When I *dropped* [let fall] the glass, I was lucky it didn't break.

PHRASAL VERB: We *dropped in on* [visited] Alonzo over the weekend.

NO PARTICLE: She *broke* [injured] her leg in a skiing accident.

PHRASAL VERB: Keiko and James *broke up* [ended a relationship] last year.

Phrasal verbs are usually less formal than single-word verbs or verbs with auxiliaries, but they are commonly used in writing and speech.

SEPARABLE PHRASAL VERBS Some phrasal verbs may be separated to make way for a direct object (DO) of one or two words:

DO

After the party, he *cleaned* the kitchen *up*. (Also acceptable: . . . he cleaned up the kitchen.)

Whenever a separable phrasal verb has a pronoun (PR) for its object, the pronoun goes between the verb and the particle:

PR

Since the kitchen was a mess, he *cleaned* it *up*.

PR

As soon as I got the application, I *filled* it *out*.

Some phrasal verbs (such as *care about*) may not be separated by a noun or pronoun.

28.2 verbs

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

COMMON PHRASAL VERBS: A BRIEF LIST Following is a list of common phrasal verbs, with daggers marking those that should never be separated by a noun or pronoun.

agree

The negotiators have †*agreed to* [accepted] changes in the plan.

They have †*agreed with each other* [concurred] *on* some points.

Some shellfish †*doesn't agree with me* [makes me sick].

approve

The governor †*approved of* [accepted] the new proposal.

believe

Many people †*believe in* [accept the reality of] ghosts.

Magda was the only one who †*believed in* [accepted the value of] Jorge.

break

When she heard the news, she *broke down* [collapsed] and cried.

Finally, the relentless salesman *broke down* [overcame] my resistance.

In 1990, the Soviet Union *broke up* [disintegrated].

In the same year, Maria and Jose *broke up* [ended their relationship].

bring

I hated to *bring up* [raise for discussion] the question again.

Without help, how can a single parent *bring up* [nurture] a child?

burn

One night someone *burned down* [leveled by fire] the police station.

call

She was so sick that she decided to *call off* [cancel] the party.

She had to *call up* [telephone] all her friends.

The president has *called up* [summoned to duty] the reserves.

care

He †*cared about* [loved/carefully considered] his family.

He often †*cared for* [tended] his children when they were sick.

clean

We *cleaned up* [cleaned thoroughly] the house before moving into it.

come

Rounding the bend, we †*came across* [encountered, found] a dog in the middle of the road.

I †*come from* [originate from] Costa Rica.

consist

My apartment †*consists of* [includes altogether] two bedrooms, a little kitchen, a bathroom, and a sitting area.

depend

I †*depend on* [need] my alarm clock to wake me each morning.

drop

On my way home, I †*dropped in on* [visited] my cousin.

I told her that I had decided not to †*drop out of* [quit] school.

Then I *dropped off* [left] my shirts at the laundry.

get

My sister and her husband try to †*get along* [subsist] on one salary.

People of different races often do not wish to †*get along with* [cooperate with, coexist with] each other.

Police say that the robbers †*got away with* [stole] a million dollars.

How many students †*get away with* [escape punishment for] cheating?

She *got up* [rose from bed] at 7:00 A.M.

give

The rebels refused to †*give in* [submit] or †*give up* [surrender].

keep

Whatever happens, I will †*keep on* [continue] trying.

I aim to *keep up* [maintain] my studies.

Can American companies †*keep up with* [compete effectively with] the Japanese?

28.2 verbs

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I am trying to †*keep up with* [meet the requirements of] all my courses.

Some private clubs *keep out* [exclude] women.

look

My brother †*looked after* [tended] my apartment while I was away.

We †*looked at* [examined] many photographs.

We were †*looking for* [seeking] pictures of my grandfather.

Reporters are †*looking into* [investigating] the scandal.

Public radio †*looks to* [solicits] its listeners for financial support.

Egotists †*look down on* [despise] most other people.

While in the city, I *looked up* [arranged to meet] my cousin.

Children †*look up to* [admire] superstar athletes.

I †*looked over* [surveyed] the books quickly.

make

The ink was so blurred that I couldn't *make out* [decipher] the words.

In spite of setbacks, she *made out* [succeeded] handsomely. (slang)

To celebrate, she *made over* [redecorated] her office.

Arriving hours late, he *made up* [invented] a ridiculous excuse.

After feuding for years, they *made up* [agreed to be friendly].

The five superstar players *made up* [constituted] a "dream team."

The professor let me *make up* [do at a time later than originally specified] the exam I had missed.

put

At the end of the day, the carpenter *put away* [stored] her tools.

She also *put back* [replaced] the broom she had taken from the closet.

The army soon *put down* [suppressed] the rebellion.

Whenever I say anything, he *puts me down* [criticizes me].

The committee voted to *put off* [postpone] a final decision.

The manager *put off* [dismissed] all my objections.

His indifference *put me off* [irritated me].

I felt thoroughly *put out* [annoyed].

Midnight was high time to *put out* [place outside] the cat.

The Acme Tire company *puts out* [produces] ten thousand tires a day.

When asked to serve a third time, she felt †*put upon* [overburdened].

There is no reason to †*put up with* [endure] bad service.

refer

In a lecture on civil disobedience, the professor †*referred to* [mentioned] Henry David Thoreau.

run

While reading the paper, I †*ran across* [met by chance] a strange word.

At the party she †*ran into* [met by chance] an old friend.

While backing up the car, I *ran into* [collided with] a truck.

I was afraid the gas would †*run out* [be wholly consumed].

By noon the store had †*run out of* [exhausted its supply of] milk.

Spending lavishly, he *ran up* [incurred] big debts.

take

My sister and I sometimes †*take care of* [tend] my baby brother.

The hot weather led me to *take off* [remove] my coat.

Did you ever hear her *take off* [impersonate] the boss? (colloquial)

After the meeting he *took me out* [escorted me] to dinner.

After just three months on the job, she was ready to *take over* [assume control or management of] the shipping room.

think

When asked to †*think about* [consider] the problem, she tried to *think of* [devise] a solution.

What do you †*think of* [how do you judge] her proposal?

Do you need time to *think it over* [consider it]?

28.2 verbs

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers



IN BRIEF

Phrasal Verbs (Verb-Particle Combinations)

A **phrasal verb** is a single verb combined with one or more *particles*. A particle is part of the verb and strongly affects its meaning. For example:

NO PARTICLE: When I *dropped* [let fall] the glass, I was lucky it didn't break.

PHRASAL VERB: We *dropped in on* [visited] Alonzo over the weekend.

NO PARTICLE: She *broke* [injured] her leg in a skiing accident.

PHRASAL VERB: Keiko and James *broke up* [ended a relationship].

In a few cases, the same combination can produce different meanings in different sentences:

He *made up* [invented] a ridiculous excuse.

The five superstar players *made up* [constituted] a "dream team."

After their quarrel Helen and Bob soon *made up* [restored good relations, became friends again].

Some phrasal verbs may be separated to make way for a word or short phrase. Whenever a separable phrasal verb has a pronoun (PR) for its object, the pronoun goes between the verb and the particle:

PR

Since the kitchen was a mess, he *cleaned it up*.

Some phrasal verbs (such as *care about*) may not be separated. For a brief list of common phrasal verbs, see above.

28.3 GERUNDS, INFINITIVES, PARTICIPLES, PROGRESSIVE VERBS

GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

A **gerund** (G) is a word or phrase made from a verb (V), ending in *-ing*, and used as a noun:

V

I run every day.

G

Running keeps me fit.

V

At night I play the piano.

G

I like *playing the piano*.

G

But my upstairs neighbor complains about *losing sleep*.

Words made from a verb and ending in *-ing* are gerunds only when they serve as nouns. A word made from a verb and ending in *-ing* may also be used as a **participle** (PART) modifying a noun and as part of a **verb phrase**:

PART VERB
PHRASE

For one *shining* moment, we *were basking* in the sun.

28.3 gerund

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

An **infinitive** (I) is a phrase made from a verb and starting with *to*. It is often used as a noun:

V V

Some pray; others work.

I I

To work is *to pray*.

I

Paula hopes *to publish* her poems.

CHOOSING BETWEEN GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES Use gerunds—*not* infinitives—as objects of prepositions (PREP):

- PREP
What are the advantages of *living* ~~to live~~ in Miami?
- PREP
Nothing matches the excitement of *seeing* ~~to see~~ New York.
- PREP
The cost of *living* ~~to live~~ rises steadily.
- PREP
The professor explained the purpose of *studying* ~~to study~~ sociology.
- PREP
I like to take a walk after *eating* ~~to eat~~ lunch.
- PREP
I read about the movie before *seeing* ~~to see~~ it.
- PREP
Without *taking* ~~to take~~ her hat off, she sat down at the table.

Use infinitives after nouns (N), participles (PART), adjectives (A), and most verbs (V):

N

I felt a desire *to roam*.

N

The urge *to wander* possessed me.

PART

I was determined *to travel*.

A

It was hard *to get* a passport.

A

It was easy *to buy* a plane ticket.

A

Eager *to see* the rest of the world, I boarded the plane.

PART

I was dismayed *to lose* my passport.

A

I was glad *to find* it.

V

I want *to explore* Latin America.

V

I hope *to become* a journalist.

N

My wish *to work* has been granted.

Some verbs may be followed by *either* a gerund *or* an infinitive:

I love *dancing*.

I love *to dance*.

I like *singing*.

I like *to sing*.

I hate *to wait*.

I hate *waiting*.

A few verbs may be followed by the gerund but *not* by the infinitive:

► I enjoy ~~to walk~~ *walking*.

► I dislike ~~to jog~~ *jogging*.

28.3 gerund

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- ▶ She didn't mind ^{working} to work late.
- ▶ She finished ^{writing} to write the report at two in the morning.

Other verbs of this type are *avoid*, *delay*, *miss*, *practice*, *risk*, *resent*, and *suggest*.



PARTICIPLES

A **participle** is a word made from a verb and ending in *-ing* or *-ed*. It can serve as part of a verb phrase and as a modifier. We treat each use in turn.

USING PRESENT AND PAST PARTICIPLES IN VERB PHRASES When you want to say how someone or something is, was, or will be *acting*, use the present participle, which ends in *-ing*:

My cousin is *studying* economics.

He will be *taking* an exam next week.

Last week he was *preparing* for a sociology exam.

Next week he will be *visiting* me.

When you want to say how someone or something is, was, has been, had been, or will be acted *upon*, use the past participle, which ends in *-ed*, *-d*, *-n*, or *-t*:

My car is *washed* once a week.

It was *washed* yesterday.

It has been *washed* regularly since I bought it.

Before then, it had never been *washed*.

It will be *washed* regularly as long as I own it.

The simple past (SP) of many verbs is the same in form as the past participle (PP):

PP

My car is *washed* once a week.

SP

I *washed* it yesterday.

For more on the use of participles in verb phrases, [see chapters 22 and 24](#).

USING PAST AND PRESENT PARTICIPLES AS MODIFIERS Whenever a present participle is used to modify a noun, it tells what the noun is *doing*:

I woke up to the sound of *laughing* children.

A *singing* waiter brought our food.

Whenever the past participle is used to modify a noun, it tells what has been *done* to the noun:

Lincoln left behind a *stricken* nation, a people *divided* by civil war.

After the long walk, Raul was *tired*.

For more on the use of participles as modifiers, [see sections 14.10 and 14.11](#).

PRESENT AND PAST PARTICIPLES COMMONLY CONFUSED Confusion of past and present participles leads to sentences like these:

- ▶ The movie was ~~excited~~. *exciting.*
- ▶ I was very ~~exciting~~ by it. *excited*

28.3 gerund

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

To avoid mistakes like these, you need to know the difference between present and past participles that are commonly confused.

NOUN/PRONOUN SAID TO BE
ACTING

^N
The mosquitos were annoying.

^N
The boring speech lasted two hours.

^N
The explanation was confusing.

^N
The news is often depressing.

^N
The song was exciting.

^N
An exhausting day began the week.

^N
She told a fascinating story.

^N
The robber was frightening.

^N
We ate a satisfying meal.

^N
A surprising sight greeted us.

NOUN/PRONOUN SAID TO BE
ACTED UPON

^{PR}
We were all annoyed by them.

^N
The bored listeners fell asleep.

^N
It left the students confused.

^N
The economy is often depressed.

^N
The crowd was excited by it.

^{PR}
Exhausted, I crawled into bed.

^N
Her fascinated listeners loved it.

^N
The frightened onlookers froze.

^{PR}
It made us all feel satisfied.

^N
A surprised raccoon sat on our porch.

PROGRESSIVE VERBS

The progressive form of the verb combines a form of *be* with the present participle.

USING THE PROGRESSIVE FORMS Use the **present progressive** to indicate

► what is happening as you write:

I *am* now *sitting* at my desk.

- ▶ what is in progress as you write, whether or not it is occurring at the moment of writing:

The public school teachers in Los Angeles *are planning* a protest march.

Use the **present perfect progressive** to indicate what continues from the past into the present:

They *have been planning* the march for several weeks.

On the progressive forms of other tenses, [see 22.5–22.8](#).

MISUSING THE PROGRESSIVE FORMS Do not use the present progressive with any phrase referring to past action that is continued up to the present. Use the perfect progressive:

- ▶ ~~I am living~~ ^{have been} living in San Diego for six months.

You can also use the simple perfect:

I have lived in San Diego for six months.

Do not use the present progressive for any action or condition that has become habitual and is likely to continue indefinitely. Use the simple present:

- ▶ ~~I am living~~ ^{live} in San Diego.
- ▶ ~~I am working~~ ^{work} for the telephone company



28.4 pron

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers



28.4 PRONOUNS

A **pronoun** (PR) is a word that takes the place of a noun. Usually the noun (N) comes before the pronoun referring to it:

N PR
Arturo smiled when he recognized the old man.

You need a pronoun only when referring to a noun mentioned in a different clause:

CLAUSE 1 CLAUSE 2
Arturo smiled when he recognized the old man

Do not use a pronoun to refer to something already mentioned in the same clause:

- ▶ Arturo ~~he~~ smiled.
- ▶ The store ~~it~~ belongs to my grandfather.

Do not mistake the second half of an *interrupted* clause for a *new* clause:

- CLAUSE 1

CLAUSE 2
- ▶ The store [that was burglarized] ~~it~~ belongs to my grandfather.

CLAUSE 1

CLAUSE 2

- The town [where I was born] ~~there~~ is near Cartagena.

Do not use two pronouns referring to the same noun as objects of one verb:

CLAUSE 1

CLAUSE 2

- Gabriella wore the kind of dress that I have always loved ~~it~~.

Since *that* and *it* both refer to *dress*, they cannot both be objects of *loved*.

For a full presentation on pronoun use, [see chapter 20](#).

USING THE POSSESSIVES

Possessives (Group 1 determiners, [pp. 426–27](#)) are pronouns in the possessive case, such as *my* and *your*. Use them as follows:

Use *my*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *ours*, and *their* before any noun:

my car	their properties	its roof
her job	our town	their courage
his letters	your house	her wisdom

Use the other possessives—*mine*, *yours*, *hers*, *ours*, and *theirs*—after any noun and a linking verb (LV):

LV

The house was *mine*.

LV

The car was *hers*.

On the possessive case of *nouns*, see *case* in the Glossary of Grammatical Terms; also [see 34.9](#).





28.5 PREPOSITIONS

The use of prepositions is one of the most highly idiomatic features of the English language. Few easily explained rules govern prepositions, though the section above on phrasal verbs does provide information about one aspect of preposition use. As you encounter other uses, write them down in order to learn the idioms.

Listed below are some idiomatic uses for the common prepositions *in* and *on* and for *adjective-preposition combinations*:

IN: *in the summer, in December, in the evening, in the library, in San Francisco, in 2001, in California, in Japanese, in class, in school, in your hair, in the hospital, in the sun, in love, in bed, in time, in order, in a letter, in the office*

ON: *on top of, on time, on Broadway, on the table, on the menu, on a chair, on the moon, on Earth, on her head, on paper, on TV, on the Internet, on the phone, on a plane, on purpose, on foot*

ADJECTIVE + PREPOSITION: *afraid of, ashamed of, aware of, capable of, careful of, independent of, full of, proud of, tired of, bored with, cooperate with, satisfied with, dependent on, responsible for, responsible to, interested in, worried about*

28.6 TIPS ON SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND STYLE

SENTENCE COMPLETENESS

SUPPLYING A SUBJECT In some languages the subject may be part of the verb. In Spanish, for instance, *vivo* means “I live,” a complete sentence. But an English sentence normally requires a subject that is separate from the verb:

I live in Miami.

She works in Chinatown.

We need jobs.

They are scarce.

You are thin.

EXCEPTION: Sentences that make commands omit the subject and start with the verb:

Watch the conductor.

Lift the handle.

Use the seat belt in your car.

Close the door.

In sentences like these, the subject is understood as *you*.

For more on subjects, [see 13.4](#).

USING LINKING VERBS (*IS, ARE, WAS, WERE*) A **linking verb** (LV) is so called because it links the subject (S) to an adjective (A) or noun (N):

S LV A

The house is old.

S LV N

The men were thieves.

In some languages, the subject may be linked by position alone to a word that follows it (*My brother a police officer). In English the link must be made by a verb:

28.6 tips

Academic English for Nonnative Speakers

- ▶ The walk^{was} long.
- ▶ The people^{were} tired and hungry.
- ▶ My brother^{is} a police officer.

USING THERE AND IT (EXPLETIVES) TO START A SENTENCE An **expletive** (E) is a word typically used at the beginning of a sentence whenever the subject (S) follows the verb:

E S
There are alligators in the Florida everglades.

E S
It is dangerous to skate on thin ice.

Normally, you must start with an expletive whenever the subject follows the verb:

- ▶ ^{It is} ~~Is~~ hard to climb a mountain.
- ▶ ^{There is} ~~Is~~ no fool like an old fool.

When an opening *It* refers to the weather, the temperature, the date, or the time, *It* is the subject:

S
It is always cold in the Arctic.

It was Friday, July 2, when the earthquake struck.

It was noon when I felt the first tremor.

WORD ORDER

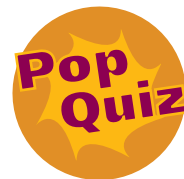
Subject-verb-object (SVO): The most common sentence pattern in English is subject, verb, direct object, as in *She enjoys sports*.

Time and place: Expressions of time and place should come at the beginning or end of a clause, but not between the verb and the direct object.

INCORRECT: *Hakim saw yesterday his brother.*

CORRECT: *Hakim saw his brother yesterday.*

CORRECT: *Yesterday Hakim saw his brother.*



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The Comma

29

29.1 USING COMMAS WITH CONJUNCTIONS

1. Use a comma before a conjunction (*and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet*) linking two independent clauses:

Canadians watch America closely, *but* most Americans know little about Canada.

The prospectors hoped to find gold on the rocky slopes of the Sierra Madre, *so* they set out eagerly.

Cowards never started on the long trek west, *and* the weak died along the way.

2. Use a comma before a conjunction linking the last two items in a series:

She loved life, liberty, and the happiness of being pursued.

For more on conjunctions, [see 15.2](#) and [15.3](#). For more on punctuating items in a series, [see 29.7](#).

29.2 MISUSING COMMAS WITH CONJUNCTIONS

1. Do not use a comma before a conjunction within a series of just two items:

▶ The manager was genial/*but* shrewd.

▶ She checked my weekly sales/*and* asked to speak with me.

29.2 conj

The Comma

EXCEPTION: You may use a comma to set off a contrasting phrase:

She liked running her own business, but not working on weekends.

2. Do not use a comma after a conjunction:

▶ The speaker coughed, studied his notes, and/frowned.

▶ He was scheduled to discuss Rembrandt. But/ the notes treated the etchings of Picasso.

EXCEPTION: Use a pair of commas after a conjunction to set off a word, phrase, or clause:

But, he sadly realized, the notes treated the etchings of Picasso.



29.3 MISUSING COMMAS BETWEEN INDEPENDENT CLAUSES: THE COMMA SPLICE

Do not use a comma alone between two independent clauses:

- ▶ The beams have rotted, they can no longer support the roof.
- ▶ [or] The beams have rotted, they can no longer support the roof.
- ▶ [or] ^{Since the} beams have rotted, they can no longer support the roof.

For a full discussion of the comma splice, [see 15.6](#).

29.4 USING COMMAS AFTER INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

1. Use a comma after an introductory clause, phrase, or word:

Whenever it rains hard, the roof leaks.

To stop the leak, we have been replacing old shingles with new ones.

Unfortunately, last night's thunderstorm showed us that we still have more work to do.

2. Use a comma after a conjunctive adverb at the beginning of a sentence or clause:

The kitchen was drenched; *in fact*, an inch of water covered the floor.

Nevertheless, the living room remained dry.

For more on conjunctive adverbs, [see 15.5](#).

EXCEPTION: To accelerate the pace of their sentences, writers sometimes skip the comma after an introductory adverb or short introductory phrase:

Today students protest individually rather than in concert.

—Caroline Bird

Throughout the 1930s the number of addicts remained about the same in both England and the United States.

—Edward Bunker



29.5 USING COMMAS WITH NONRESTRICTIVE ELEMENTS

Use a comma or a pair of commas to set off **nonrestrictive** elements: words, phrases, and clauses that are not essential to the meaning of the sentences in which they appear. Compare these two sentences:

Anyone *who publishes a book at the age of six* must be remarkable. (restrictive)

Dorothy Straight of Washington, D.C., *who published her first book at the age of six*, was a remarkable child. (nonrestrictive)

In the first sentence, the *who* clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence because it restricts the meaning of *anyone* to a certain person. The clause tells *which one* is remarkable. In the second sentence, the *who* clause is nonrestrictive and nonessential because it does not identify *Dorothy Straight*. She has already been identified by her name.

Now compare these two sentences:

At the microphone stood a man *wearing a green suit*. (restrictive)

At the microphone stood the master of ceremonies, *wearing a green suit*.
(nonrestrictive)

In the first sentence, the italicized phrase is restrictive because it identifies *a man*. In the second sentence, the italicized phrase is nonrestrictive because the man has already been identified by his title. The italicized phrase just adds further information about him.

The distinction between restrictive and nonrestrictive is commonly applied to adjective clauses, such as *who publishes a book at the age of six*, and participle phrases, such as *wearing a green suit*. Broadly speaking, however, nonrestrictive elements include anything that supplements the basic meaning of the sentence, anything not essential to that meaning. Here are further examples:

The surgeon, *her hands moving deftly*, probed the wound.

Fearful, *not confident*, he embarked on his journey.

At midnight, *long after the final out of the game*, the losing manager was still shaking his head in disbelief.

In October of 1987, *however*, stock prices plummeted.

A single comma sets off a nonrestrictive element that comes at the end of the sentence:

The tour includes three days in Toronto, *which must be one of the cleanest cities in the world*.

Celia stood in the wings, *waiting for her cue*.

29.6 MISUSING COMMAS WITH RESTRICTIVE ELEMENTS

Do not use commas with restrictive elements: with words, phrases, or clauses essential to the meaning of the sentences in which they appear:

29.6 restr

The Comma

- ▶ All entries/postmarked later than July 1/will be discounted.
- ▶ Plants/that aren't watered/will die.

(Adjective clauses starting with *that* are always restrictive.)

- ▶ No one/without a ticket/will be admitted.
- ▶ Film director/François Truffaut/died of cancer in 1984.

A name that follows a common noun or noun phrase is restrictive and should not be set off by commas. But when the name comes first, the common noun that follows it is nonrestrictive and should be set off by commas:

François Truffaut, *the film director*, died of cancer in 1984.





29.7 USING COMMAS WITH COORDINATE ITEMS IN A SERIES

1. Use commas to separate three or more coordinate items in a series:

Maples, oaks, and sycamores have been afflicted.

The leaves shrivel, wither, and fall to the ground before autumn.

Scientists are seeking to learn what is causing the blight, how it enters the trees, and whether it can be halted.

2. Use commas to separate two or more coordinate adjectives modifying the same noun:

A big, old, dilapidated house stood on the corner.

Its owner always spoke in a low, husky voice.

For more help with punctuating items in a series, [see 29.1, item 2](#).

29.8 MISUSING COMMAS WITH COORDINATE ITEMS IN A SERIES

1. Do not use a comma to separate adjectives when they are not coordinate—that is, when they do not modify the same word:

► His deep/blue eyes stared at me.

Deep modifies *blue*; *blue* modifies *eyes*. Coordinate adjectives can be reversed. A *low, husky* voice can become a *husky, low* voice. But *deep blue* eyes cannot become *blue deep* eyes.

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2. Do not use a comma before a conjunction when there are just two items:

► Her hair was black, and long.

(For an exception, [see 29.2, item 1.](#))



29.12 quot

The Comma

5. Use a comma after the last part of a proper name when the last part comes first:

Lunt, George D.

6. Use commas to mark groups of three digits in large numbers, counting from the right:

Antarctica is 5,400,000 square miles of ice-covered land.

29.11 MISUSING COMMAS WITH DATES AND ADDRESSES

1. Do not use a comma to separate the name of the month from the day:

▶ October/22 ▶ 15/May

2. Do not use a comma to separate the name of the month from the year:

▶ January/1988 ▶ 22 April/1939

3. Do not use a comma to separate a street number from the name of the street:

▶ 15/Amsterdam Avenue

4. Do not use a comma before a zip code or anywhere else in an address that is written out on an envelope:

▶ 24 Mechanic Street	▶ 35 Rosemount Avenue
Lebanon/NH/03766	Montreal/Que./H3Y3G6
	Canada

(On the abbreviations used here, [see 35.4.](#))

29.12 USING COMMAS WITH QUOTATION MARKS

For a full discussion of how to use commas with quotation marks, [see 32.3.](#)

Using Commas**IN BRIEF**

Generally, use a comma before a conjunction linking independent clauses:

Canadians watch America closely, *but* most Americans know little about Canada.

Generally, do not use a comma after a conjunction:

The speaker coughed, studied his notes, and/frowned.

Do not use a comma alone between two independent clauses:

The beams have rotted, they can no longer support the roof.

Generally, use commas after an introductory item:

Whenever it rains hard, the roof leaks.

Unfortunately, we haven't yet fixed it.

Use commas with nonrestrictive elements:

Dorothy Straight of Washington, D.C., *who published her first book at the age of six*, was a remarkable child.

Do not use commas with restrictive elements:

Anyone/who publishes a book at the age of six/must be remarkable.

Generally, use commas to separate three or more coordinate items in a series:

We played cards, told stories, and sang old songs.

29.13 MISUSING THE COMMA BETWEEN BASIC PARTS OF A SENTENCE

1. Do not use a comma between a subject and its predicate:

- In August, all the members of the Johnson clan/gathered for their annual picnic.

EXCEPTION: Use a *pair* of commas to set off a phrase or clause that comes between the subject and the predicate:

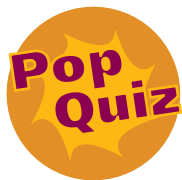
29.13 parts

The Comma

In August, all the members of the Johnson clan, from little Susie to ancient Winona, gathered for their annual picnic.

2. Do not use a comma between a verb and its object:

- ▶ Altogether we ate/forty hamburgers and six big watermelons.
- ▶ I don't know/how many ears of corn we consumed.



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The Semicolon and the Colon

30

30.1 USING THE SEMICOLON

1. You may use a semicolon to join two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning:

Insist on yourself; never imitate.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

2. You may use a semicolon to join two independent clauses when the second begins with or includes a conjunctive adverb:

Shakespeare's plays are four hundred years old; nevertheless, they still speak to us.

Many of his characters resemble people we encounter or read about daily; a few, in fact, remind us of ourselves.

For more on semicolons and conjunctive adverbs, [see 15.5](#).

3. You may use a semicolon before a conjunction to join two independent clauses that contain commas:

By laughing at our faults, we can learn to acknowledge them graciously; and we can try to overcome them in a positive, even cheerful way, not grimly and disagreeably.

4. Use semicolons to emphasize the division between items that include commas:

There were three new delegates at the meeting: Ms. Barbara Smith from Boulder, Colorado; Ms. Beth Waters from Omaha, Nebraska; and Mr. James Papson from Greenwood, Arkansas.

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The Semicolon and the Colon

30.2 MISUSING THE SEMICOLON

1. Do not use a semicolon between a phrase and the clause to which it belongs:

- ▶ The climbers carried an extra nylon rope;/to ensure their safe descent from the cliff.
- ▶ Proceeding cautiously down the rock face;/they neared the floor of the canyon.

2. Do not use a semicolon between a subordinate clause and the main clause:

- ▶ Most of the crowd had left;/before the concert ended.
- ▶ Although the hall was almost empty;/she came out for a second bow.
- ▶ Ticket sales had been good;/which made both her agent and her manager happy.

3. Do not use a semicolon to introduce a list. Use a colon:

- ▶ The prophets denounced three types of wrongdoing;/idolatry, injustice, and neglect of the needy.

For more on colons, see the next section.



**30.3** USING THE COLON

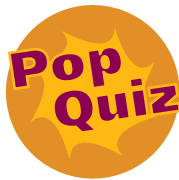
1. Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list:
Success depends on three things: talent, determination, and luck.
2. Use a colon to introduce an example or an explanation related to something just mentioned:
The animals have a good many of our practical skills: some insects make pretty fair architects, and beavers know quite a lot about engineering.
—Northrop Frye
3. Use a colon to introduce one or more complete sentences quoted from formal speech or writing:
In the opening sentence of his novel *Scaramouche*, Rafael Sabatini says of his hero: “He was born with the gift of laughter, and a sense that the world was mad.”
4. Use a colon to follow the salutation in a formal letter:
Dear Mr. Mayor:
Dear Ms. Watson:
To Whom It May Concern:
5. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes when the time of day is shown in numerals:
8:40 6:30 11:15

30.4 colon

The Semicolon and the Colon

30.4 MISUSING THE COLON

1. Do not use a colon after *such as*, *including*, or a form of the verb *be*:
 - ▶ On rainy days at camp, we played board games such as/ Monopoly, Scrabble, and Trivial Pursuit.
 - ▶ One morning I woke up to find that someone had taken all of my valuables, including/ my watch, my camera, and my money.
 - ▶ Still in my locker were/ my toilet kit, my flashlight, and my wallet—now empty.
2. Do not use a colon between a verb and its object or between a preposition and its object:
 - ▶ Before heading home, we stopped at/ the supermarket, the hardware store, and the gas station.
 - ▶ We needed/ pasta, a window screen, and a tank of gasoline.



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31

End Marks

31.1 USING THE PERIOD

1. Use a period to mark the end of a declarative sentence, a mild command, or an indirect question:

The days are growing shorter, and the nights are becoming cool.

On some mornings a hint of frost chills the air.

Nature is proceeding at her accustomed pace.

Note her ways closely.

I wonder what she will do next.

When typing on a computer, skip one space after the period before beginning the next sentence. (On a typewriter, skip two spaces.)

2. Use a period to mark the end of some abbreviations:

Dr. Boyle

500 Fifth Ave.

Kate Fansler, Ph.D.

Mr. G. H. Johnson

Mrs. L. S. Allingham

Ms. N. A. Stephens

3:28 P.M.

350 B.C.

(NOTE: MLA recommends not using periods in abbreviations that include capital letters, such as PhD and BC.)

Generally, you don't need periods with acronyms (words formed from the initials of a multiword title), with capital-letter abbreviations of technical terms, or with abbreviated names of states, agencies, and organizations:

CBS	ROTC	IBM
NATO	TVA	IQ
FM	ID	KP
NY	CIA	VISTA

But you do need periods with abbreviations standing for the names of political entities:

U.S.A. U.K. C.I.S.

For guidance, see your dictionary.

3. Use a period to mark letters or numerals used in vertical lists:

Woven into the history of the world is the history of its four great religions:

1. Buddhism
2. Judaism
3. Christianity
4. Islam

If you give the information in a sentence, enclose the letters or numbers within parentheses and omit the periods:

Woven into the history of the world is the history of its four great religions: (1) Buddhism, (2) Judaism, (3) Christianity, and (4) Islam.

31.2 MISUSING THE PERIOD

1. In formal writing, do not use a period to separate the different parts of a sentence. If you do, you will create a sentence fragment:

- Customers should be treated courteously. ^{even} ~~Even~~ if they are extremely rude.

31.4 ques

End Marks

For more on sentence fragments, [see chapter 19](#).

2. Do not use a period after another period or other end mark:

- ▶ To please our customers, we have ordered scarce materials from Home Supplies Company, Inc./
- ▶ We don't want customers saying, "Why don't you have what I want?"/

31.3 USING THE QUESTION MARK

Use a question mark—

1. To mark the end of a direct question:

Must the problems of farmers be ignored?

To what agency can they go for legal aid?

2. To indicate uncertainty within a statement:

Some exotic dish—pheasant under glass?—was served at the banquet.

The host must have paid a lot of money (fifty dollars?) for each meal.

31.4 MISUSING THE QUESTION MARK

Do not use a question mark at the end of a question reported indirectly:

- ▶ I wonder who wrote this song?.
- ▶ She asked if I wanted more cheese?.

For more on this topic, [see 26.4](#).

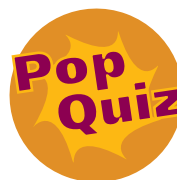
31.5 USING THE EXCLAMATION POINT

Use the exclamation point to mark an expression of strong feeling:

What a spectacular view!

Impossible!

Because exclamation points make a special appeal to the reader, you should use them sparingly.



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32

Quotation Marks and Quoting

32.1 QUOTING WORDS, PHRASES, AND SHORT PASSAGES OF PROSE

Use double quotation marks (“ ”) to enclose any words, phrases, or short passages quoted from speech, writing, or printed matter:

After the murder of the old king in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth imagines there is blood on her hand and cries, “Out, damned spot!”

“Look before you leap” is particularly good advice for divers.

“An agnostic,” writes Clarence Darrow, “is a doubter.”

Quoted passages must normally be accompanied by tags identifying the speaker or writer; [see 26.1](#).

32.2 USING DOUBLE AND SINGLE QUOTATION MARKS

1. Use double quotation marks to enclose the words of speakers engaged in dialogue (conversation), and start a new paragraph each time the speaker changes:

“How did the interview go?” Bob asked.

“It’s hard to say,” said Helen. “At first I was nervous. Then I relaxed and spoke clearly. I began to enjoy myself.”

“Well, it sounds as if you might get the job. If you do, let’s celebrate.”

2. Use single quotation marks (' ') to enclose a quotation within a quotation:

At the beginning of the class, the teacher asked, "Where does Thoreau speak of 'quiet desperation,' and what does he mean by this phrase?"

32.3 USING QUOTATION MARKS WITH OTHER PUNCTUATION

1. To introduce a quoted sentence with a phrase, use a comma:
According to G. B. Shaw, "Economy is the art of making the most of life."
2. To introduce a quoted sentence with a clause, use a comma or colon:

Winston Churchill said, "To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war."

In his first Inaugural Address, Lincoln asked: "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people?"

June Callwood writes, "Canadians are not Americans who live in a colder climate; they are different people."

Some writers use a comma after a short introductory clause and a colon after a long one. Other writers use a comma before quoting informal speech and a colon before quoting formal speech or writing.

3. Use quotation marks alone to introduce a quoted word or phrase or any quoted words introduced by *that*:

According to Jung, the "something greater" is the unconscious, which he defines as "a natural phenomenon producing symbols that prove to be meaningful."

The professor said Jung's theories have been "seminal."

Margaret Atwood writes that "in fact, a character in a book who is consistently well-behaved probably spells disaster for the book."

4. To end a quoted statement that is followed by a tag, use a comma:

"It's time for you to leave," said Mimi.

But do not use the comma if the quoted sentence ends in a question mark or an exclamation point:

32.3 other

Quotation Marks and Quoting

“What’s your problem?” John asked.

“Get out!” she yelled.

The tag begins with a lowercase letter unless its first word is a proper name.

5. To set off an interruptive tag, use a pair of commas:

“Ideas,” writes Carl Jung, “spring from something greater than the personal human being.”

The word “spring” is lowercased because it simply continues the quoted sentence.

6. To end a quoted statement that ends a sentence, use a period:

The governor stated, “I will not seek reelection.”

7. A closing comma or period goes inside the closing quotation mark:

“High school,” writes Ellen Willis, “permanently damaged my self-esteem.”

8. A closing semicolon or colon goes outside the closing quotation mark:

The head of the union announced, “The new contract is a good one for management and labor”; then she left the room. Later she told reporters that the new contract “has major benefits for women”: payment for overtime, maternity leave, and seniority privileges.

9. A quotation mark or an exclamation point that belongs to the quotation goes inside the closing quotation mark:

Who wrote, “What’s in a name?”

A new idea about the universe always prompts the scientist to ask, “What’s the evidence for it?”

Suddenly he bellowed, “Get out!”

10. A question mark or exclamation point that does not belong to the quotation goes outside the closing quotation mark:

Should a 1 percent drop in unemployment be called “a decisive sign of recovery”?

Though two hundred thousand workers have lost their jobs in the past year, one congressman calls the economy “robust”!

For advice on fitting quotations smoothly into your own sentences, [see 26.6](#).

32.4 QUOTING LONG PROSE PASSAGES

To quote more than four lines of prose, use indentation instead of quotation marks, and follow the format shown here:

Vicki Hearne invokes the idea of artistry to explain why a horse is willing to jump a high fence:

There are various ways to talk about what could possibly motivate a horse, or any animal, to such an effort. Fear certainly does not do it. Courage, joy, exaltation are more like it, but beyond that horses have, some of the time, a strong sense of artistry. . . . When I say artistry, I mean that the movements of a developed horse, the figures and leaps, mean something, and an artistic horse is one who is capable of wanting to mean the movements and the jump perfectly.
(43)

Keep the punctuation of the original. For use of the ellipsis dots, [see 32.6](#). On citing sources at the end of quotations, [see 39.1](#).

32.5 verse

Quotation Marks and Quoting

When quoting one or more paragraphs, follow this format:

At the end of his Inaugural Address, John F. Kennedy declared:

Indent ———→ And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your
thirteen
spaces. country can do for you, ask what you can do for your

Indent ———→ country.
ten
spaces. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what
America will do for you, but what together we can do
for the freedom of man.

32.5 QUOTING VERSE

1. Quotations of verse must look like verse, not prose. Keep all capital letters that you find at the beginning of lines, and if you quote more than a line, use a slash (/), with a space on each side, to show where one line ends and another begins:

Elsewhere, Sylvia Plath writes: "Mother to myself, I wake swad-
dled in gauze, / Pink and smooth as a baby." This
preoccupation with herself and her own baby . . .

2. To quote more than three lines of verse, double-space them and indent each line ten spaces from the left margin:

William Blake's "The Tyger" begins with the lines:

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

If the lines are long, you may indent fewer than ten spaces. If a single line is long, let it run to the right-hand margin and put the overflow under the right-hand side:

Ruefully alluding to his own ill-fated marriage, Byron rhetorically asks,

I don't choose much to say upon this head
I'm a plain man, and in a single station,
But--Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd
you all?

For more on quoting verse, [see 39.2, items 26–27](#).

32.6 change

Quotation Marks and Quoting

32.6 USING BRACKETS AND ELLIPSIS DOTS TO MARK CHANGES IN A QUOTATION

To quote effectively, you must quote accurately, keeping every word of the original or plainly indicating any changes you have made. Use brackets to mark any words you have added and ellipsis dots to show where you have left words out.

USING BRACKETS TO MARK WORDS ADDED TO A QUOTATION

1. Use brackets to insert a clarifying detail, comment, or correction of your own into a quotation:

“In the presidential election of 1993 [1992], Bill Clinton defeated George Bush.”

“When we last see Lady Macbeth [in the sleepwalking scene], she is obviously distraught.”

“Most remarkably, the Motherhood Myth [the notion that having babies is instructive and enjoyable] persists in the face of the most overwhelming maternal unhappiness and incompetence.”

—Betty Rollin

2. Use brackets to note a misspelling with the Latin word *sic* (“thus”) or to correct the misspelling:

“There were no pieces of strong [sic] around the boxes,” one witness wrote.

[or] “There were no pieces of strong [string] around the boxes,” one witness wrote.

3. Do not use brackets when inserting comments into your own writing. Use parentheses or dashes. ([See 33.1–33.3.](#))

USING ELLIPSIS DOTS (. . .) TO MARK WORDS LEFT OUT OF A QUOTATION

1. Use three spaced dots to signal the omission of a word or words from the middle of a quoted sentence:

It matters not where or how far you travel . . . but how much alive you are.
—Henry David Thoreau

In all cases, the material left out should be nonessential to the meaning of what is quoted. Here, for example, the words omitted are “—the farther commonly the worse—.”

In typing, leave one space before the first dot, between each pair of dots, and after the last one.

2. Use a period and three spaced dots:

a. To show that you are omitting the end of a quoted sentence:

Thoreau wrote: “We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn. . . .”

The period follows the last quoted word without a space, and the fourth dot comes before the closing quotation mark. Normally you may cut off the end of a quoted sentence in this way only if what remains makes a complete sentence.

b. To show that you have omitted one or more whole sentences:

“In other words,” as Percy Marks says, “the spirit of football is wrong. ‘Win at any cost’ is the slogan of most teams, and the methods used to win are often abominable. . . . In nearly every scrimmage the roughest kind of unsportsmanlike play is indulged in, and the broken arms and ankles are often intentional rather than accidental.”

3. Use an entire line of spaced dots to signal that a line (or more) of poetry has been omitted:

Under the cooling shadow of a stately elm
Close sat I by a goodly river's side,
Where gliding streams the rocks did overwhelm;
.....
I once that loved the shady woods so well,
Now thought the rivers did the trees excel.
And if the sun would ever shine, there would I dwell.

—Anne Bradstreet,
“Contemplations,” no. 21

32.8 misus

Quotation Marks and Quoting

32.7 SPECIAL USES OF QUOTATION MARKS

1. Use quotation marks to enclose certain titles, as explained in [35.3](#).

2. Use quotation marks to define words:

As a verb, *censure* generally means “find fault with” or “reprimand.”

3. Use quotation marks to set off common words and phrases that you don’t take at face value:

When a man and woman decide to live together without being married, are they “living in sin”?

4. Use quotation marks to identify a word that you are treating as a word:

In the America of the 1990s the word “liberal” became a political insult.

You may also use italics or underlining for this purpose, as explained in [35.2](#), [item 2](#), and as shown in item 2, above.

32.8 MISUSING QUOTATION MARKS

1. Do not use quotation marks in the indirect reporting of discourse:

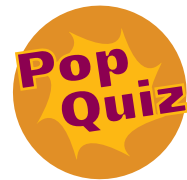
- ▶ The lieutenant said that /her platoon had finished ahead of schedule./
- ▶ Clients are asking /when the rates will go down./

For more on the indirect reporting of discourse, [see 26.2](#) and [26.4](#).

2. Do not use quotation marks for emphasis:

*Joe’s restaurant serves “fresh” seafood.

Quotation marks used in this way cast doubt on the truth of the word or words they enclose.



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The Dash, Parentheses, the Slash

33

33.1 USING THE DASH

1. Use a dash to introduce a word, phrase, or clause that summarizes or restates what comes just before:

Terns, geese, and warblers—all migratory birds—fly hundreds of miles each year.

But ideas—that is, opinions backed with genuine reasoning—are extremely difficult to develop.

—Wayne Booth

2. Use a dash to set off an interruption that is important to the meaning of the sentence but not grammatically part of it:

It matters not where or how far you travel—the farther commonly the worse—but how much alive you are.

—Henry David Thoreau

Less important interruptions may be set off by parentheses (as explained in [33.3](#)).

3. Use dashes to set off a series of specific items:

The wings of the natural extant flying vertebrates—the birds and the bats—are direct modifications of the preexisting front limbs.

—Michael J. Katz

4. Use a dash in dialogue to indicate an unfinished remark:

“You wouldn’t dare to—” Mabel gasped in disbelief.

33.3 paren

The Dash, Parentheses, the Slash

“But I would,” he said. “In fact, I—”

“No!” she screamed.

When the dash is used to indicate an unfinished remark, it should be followed only by quotation marks, not by a comma or period.

5. If dashes set off a parenthetical remark that asks a question or makes an exclamation, put the question mark or the exclamation point before the second dash:

During the American bicentennial of 1976, Canada’s gift to the United States was a book of superb photographs of—what else?—scenery.

—June Callwood

6. In typing, make a dash with two hyphens (--) and leave no space on either side.

33.2 MISUSING THE DASH

The main misuse is overuse. Too many dashes can make your writing seem breathless or fragmented:

The new baseball stadium—with its luxury boxes, shopping malls, and restaurants—went seriously over budget—straining the local economy and threatening to alienate the city’s residents. The mayor—criticized in the local media—tried to convince her constituents that the stadium would stimulate the economy—bringing in tourists from a three-state region. But local citizens—disappointed in the cost overruns and the tax breaks given to the team’s owners—remained skeptical about—even resentful of—the stadium, the mayor, and their hometown team.

33.3 USING PARENTHESES

1. Use parentheses to enclose words, phrases, or complete sentences that offer a side comment or help to clarify a point:

All this does not mean, what I should be the last man in the world to mean, that revolutionists should be ashamed of being revolutionists or (still more disgusting thought) that artists should be content with being artists.

—G. K. Chesterton

Why would parents want to go to such expense (treatment with bio-synthetic hGH costs roughly \$10,000 a year), cause their children pain (the shots hurt a bit), and risk unknown long-term side effects?

—Thomas Murray

Parentheses placed *within* a sentence do not change any other punctuation, and a parenthesized sentence within a sentence (such as *the shots hurt a bit*) does not need a capital or a period. But a freestanding parenthetical sentence needs both:

No Allied leader would have flinched at assassinating Hitler, had that been possible. (The Allies did assassinate Heydrich.)

—Michael Levin

2. Use parentheses to enclose numerals or letters introducing the items of a list:

Motherhood is in trouble, and it ought to be. A rude question is long overdue: Who needs it? The answer used to be (1) society and (2) women.

—Betty Rollin

3. Use parentheses to enclose numerals clarifying or confirming a spelled-out number:

The law permits individuals to give no more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) to any one candidate in a campaign.

Like material put between dashes, a parenthetical insertion interrupts the flow of a sentence. Parentheses make the interruption less emphatic than dashes do, but since they do in fact break up the sentence, you should use them sparingly.

33.4 USING THE SLASH

1. Use a slash, or virgule, to indicate alternative items:

Every writer needs to know at least something about his/her audience.

Leave no space before or after a slash used in this way.

2. Use a slash to mark off lines of poetry when you run them on as if they were prose:

33.4 slash

The Dash, Parentheses, the Slash

Coleridge introduces the mariner in the very first stanza: "It is an ancient Mariner, / And he stoppeth one of three."

Leave one space before and after a slash used in this way.

3. Use a slash in typing a fraction that is not on the keyboard of your typewriter or computer:

2 1/2 5 7/8 15/16



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34

Spelling, Hyphen, Apostrophe

34.1 CHECKING YOUR SPELLING WITH A COMPUTER PROGRAM

If you're writing with a computer and have access to a spell-check program, use it. The program will check every word in your essay against the words in its own dictionary; it will list or "flag" every word of yours that its dictionary doesn't have; and in some cases, it will tell you which words in its dictionary resemble yours. If you've written *complament*, for instance, the program will furnish two correctly spelled alternatives: *compliment* and *complement*.

Spell checkers, however, will not proofread your essay or correct your misspellings for you. The programs can merely tell you which of your words does not appear in the program dictionary, and suggest one or more similar words that do. Also, spell checkers can seldom identify a word misspelled for its context. If you write a *peace of pie*, most programs will accept the phrase—simply because each of its words appears in the program dictionary. Likewise, when the program suggests *compliment* and *complement* as correctly spelled alternatives to *complament*, you must still choose between these alternatives. If you don't know what each means, you will need to consult a printed dictionary or perhaps our Glossary of Usage.

Spell checkers can save you time and help you spot misspellings that you might have overlooked. But since no such program is foolproof, you should keep a good dictionary within easy reach of the computer screen. And to improve your spelling generally, you may also want to use one or more of the pre-electronic methods explained below.

34.2 LISTING YOUR SPELLING DEMONS

Keep an analytical list of your **spelling demons**—words you have trouble spelling. Beside each of the words, write out the correct spelling, as shown in your dictionary. Then, beside the correct spelling of the word, write the letter or letters involved in the error. Your list will look like this:

MISSPELLED	CORRECTLY SPELLED	ERROR
alot	a lot	al / a l
goverment	government	erm / ern
defensable	defensible	able / ible
imovable	immovable	im / imm
defenite	definite	en / in

34.3 LEARNING HOW TO ADD SUFFIXES

Learn how to add **suffixes**—extra letters at the end of a word.

1. Change final *y* to *i* before adding a suffix:

beauty + ful = beautiful

bury + ed = buried

tricky + est = trickiest

carry + es = carries

EXCEPTION: If *y* follows a vowel or if the suffix is *-ing*, keep the *y*:

joy + ful = joyful

carry + ing = carrying

bury + ing = burying

2. Drop silent *e* before adding *-able* or *-ing*:

love + able = lovable

34.4 prefix

Spelling, Hyphen, Apostrophe

care + ing = caring

restore + ing = restoring

If any other suffix is added, keep the *e*:

care + ful = careful

aware + ness = awareness

EXCEPTION: If the silent *e* follows *c* or *g*, keep the *e* before *-able*:

change + able = changeable

peace + able = peaceable

3. If the word ends in a single consonant after a single vowel (*forget*) and the accent is on the last syllable (*for get'*), double the consonant before adding *-ing*, *-ed*, *-or*, or *-er*:

for get' + ing = forgetting

re fer' + ed = referred

bet' + or = bettor

If the accent is not on the last syllable, do not double the consonant:

ham' mer + ing = hammering

a ban' don + ed = abandoned

al' ter + ing = altering

34.4 LEARNING HOW TO ADD PREFIXES

Learn how to add **prefixes**—extra letters at the beginning of a word. When adding a prefix, be careful to add all of its letters, and only those:

dis + satisfaction = dissatisfaction

mis + fire = misfire

mis + spell = misspell

un + necessary = unnecessary

34.5 RECOGNIZING HOMONYMS

1. Distinguish between **homonyms**—words that sound alike but have different meanings and different spellings, such as these:

bare	bear	
brake	break	
capital	capitol	
cite	site	sight
peace	piece	
principal	principle	
right	write	rite
there	their	they're

If you aren't sure how to spell a homonym, see your dictionary.

2. Distinguish between **partial homonyms**—words with syllables that sound alike but are spelled differently, such as these:

tolerate	separate	
supersede	exceed	concede
dominance (think of dominate)	existence (think of existential)	
incredible (think of credit)	irritable (think of irritate)	

34.6 PLURALIZING SIMPLE NOUNS

1. Form the **plural** of most nouns by adding -s:
- book, books
2. Form the plural of nouns ending in *ch*, *s*, *sh*, *x*, and *z* by adding -es (pronounced as a syllable):

church, churches business, businesses tax, taxes

EXCEPTIONS: crisis, crises; basis, bases; ox, oxen

34.6 nouns

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3. Form the plural of nouns ending in *fe* by changing *f* to *v* before adding *-es*:

wife, wives life, lives

4. Form the plural of nouns ending in *f* by changing the *f* to *v* and then adding *-es*:

leaf, leaves thief, thieves

EXCEPTION: Some nouns ending in *f* need only *-s* to become plural:

chief, chiefs belief, beliefs proof, proofs

5. Form the plural of some nouns ending in *o* by adding *-es*:

hero, heroes

Most nouns ending in *o* need only an *-s* to become plural:

piano, pianos solo, solos

mosquito, mosquitos (*or* mosquitoes) banjo, banjos (*or* banjoes)

6. Form the plural of words ending in a consonant plus *y* by changing the *y* to *-ies*:

vacancy, vacancies authority, authorities

Words ending in a vowel plus *y* need only an *-s* to become plural:

day, days attorney, attorneys

7. Form the plural of some nouns in special ways:

datum, data criterion, criteria woman, women

The forms *data* and *criteria* reflect the derivation of the words from Latin and Greek respectively.

8. Form the plural of figures, numbers written as words, capitalized letters, undotted abbreviations, and isolated words by adding *-s* or an apostrophe plus *-s*:

the 1990s / the 1990's

three YMCAs / three YMCA's

twos and threes / two's and three's

four Cs / four C's

no *ifs* or *buts* / no *if's* or *but's*

9. Form the plural of lowercase letters and dotted abbreviations by adding an apostrophe and -s:

six s's and five m's three M.A.'s two c.o.d.'s

10. Some nouns are spelled the same in the plural as in the singular:

deer, deer fish, fish barracks, barracks

34.7 PLURALIZING COMPOUND NOUNS

Compound nouns are written as separate words (*master chef*), as words linked by a hyphen (*self-esteem*), or as one word (*notebook*). Here are guidelines.

1. If the compound is written as one word, pluralize the final word:

notebook notebooks

blueberry blueberries

EXCEPTION: passerby, passersby

2. If the compound is hyphenated or written as separate words, pluralize the major word:

mother-in-law mothers-in-law

editor in chief editors in chief

A few compounds have alternative plurals: *attorney general*, for instance, may be pluralized as *attorneys general* or *attorney generals*.

3. If the compound has no noun within it, pluralize the final word:

also-ran also-rans

4. If the compound ends in *-ful*, add s:

mouthful mouthfuls

34.8 hyph

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34.8 USING THE HYPHEN

1. Use a hyphen to divide a long word at the end of a line:

The long black centipede walked across the sand with an enormous limp.

Normally you divide a word at the end of a syllable. But do not put syllables of one or two letters on either side of a hyphen, as in **i-tem* and **end-ed*. If you aren't sure what the syllables of a word are, see your dictionary.

2. Use a hyphen to form a compound of three or more words:

The older citizens don't want a Johnny-come-lately for mayor.

But they don't want a stick-in-the-mud either.

3. Use a hyphen to form a compound adjective:

Enrico Caruso was a world-famous tenor.

I wouldn't touch cocaine with a ten-foot pole.

Spike Lee is a well-known movie director.

Twentieth-century writers include Faulkner and Hemingway.

4. Do not use a hyphen:

- a. Between an adjective and a noun in a noun phrase:

The twentieth century will soon come to an end.

- b. In a compound predicate adjective:

Spike Lee is *well known*.

- c. In compounds made with an adverb ending in *-ly*, such as *widely held*.

FORMING COMPOUND NOUNS

Generally, use a hyphen in a compound noun when both items serve as nouns:

city-state

poet-critic

teacher-scholar

Generally, use no hyphen when the first noun serves as an adjective modifying the second:

stone wall

city hall

master chef

police officer

34.8 hyph

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EXCEPTIONS: Some compound nouns are made with neither a hyphen nor a space (*paintbrush, notebook*), and some make it hard to tell whether the first item is serving as an adjective or not (*beer drinker, cattle prod*). If in doubt about hyphenating a particular noun compound, see your dictionary.

ATTACHING PREFIXES

Use a hyphen to join a prefix to a *capitalized* word:

un-American

post-Renaissance

pre-Reformation

Generally, use no hyphen to join a prefix to an *uncapitalized* word:

deemphasize

nonprofit

antibodies

EXCEPTIONS: Some words made with prefixes may be written with or without hyphens, but the choice of one or the other affects the meaning of the word; *re-cover*, for instance, does not mean the same as *recover*. For words such as this, see your dictionary.

WRITING OUT NUMBERS

Use a hyphen in a number written as two words, provided it is below one hundred:

Twenty-five applicants have requested interviews.

Two-thirds of the trees had been cut.

One-half of the design is complete.

Do not attach a hyphen to the word for any number over ninety-nine:

Some cars can run over three hundred miles on a tank of gas.

One speaker earned eight thousand dollars for a single lecture.

Thirty-five thousand spectators watched the game.

Thirty-five, which is below one hundred, is hyphenated, but no hyphen is attached to *thousand*.



34.9 USING THE APOSTROPHE

1. To form the possessive of nouns and abbreviations that do not end in *s*, use an apostrophe plus *-s*:

a girl's hat	Bill's car	a team's mascot
NATO's future	the C.O.'s orders	Dr. T.'s patients
men's activities	children's toys	someone's coat

If a singular noun ends in *s* (as in *James*) you may form the possessive by adding an apostrophe plus *-s* (James's apartment) or by adding just the apostrophe (James' apartment). Custom calls for the latter form with Zeus, Moses, Jesus, and ancient Greek names ending in *es*: Zeus' thunderbolts, Moses' staff, Jesus' teachings, Sophocles' plays.

34.9 apos

Spelling, Hyphen, Apostrophe

2. To form the possessive of plural nouns ending in *s*, add just an apostrophe:

players	players' uniforms
animals	animals' eating habits
the Joneses	the Joneses' car

3. To indicate that two people possess something jointly, add an apostrophe, and *-s* if necessary, to the second of the two nouns:

Ann and James' apartment
Tim and Susan's wedding album

To indicate that two people possess two or more things separately, use the apostrophe, and *-s* if necessary, with both of the nouns:

Paul's and Marysa's cars
Kitty's and James' tests

4. To form the possessive with singular compound nouns, add an apostrophe plus *-s* to the last word:

my sister-in-law's career the editor in chief's policy

5. To form the possessive of certain indefinite pronouns, add an apostrophe plus *-s*:

someone's coat no one's fault everybody else's jokes

With indefinite pronouns that do not take the apostrophe, form the possessive with *of*: *the plans of most, the hopes of many, the triumphs of few*.

6. Use the possessive case with nouns or pronouns followed by gerunds:

The *crowd's cheering* could be heard a mile away.
Everyone who hears the young violinist admires *her playing*.

For more on this point, [see 13.11](#).

7. Use an apostrophe, and *-s* when necessary, in common phrases of time and measurement:

four o'clock five dollars' worth

two weeks' notice	a day's work
our money's worth	a stone's throw

8. Use an apostrophe plus -s to form the plurals shown above in [34.6, items 8 and 9](#).

9. Use an apostrophe to mark the omission of a letter or letters in a contraction:

I have finished.	I've finished.
He is not here.	He's not here.
This does not work.	This doesn't work.
They will not stop.	They won't stop.
You should have written.	You should've written.

10. Use an apostrophe to mark the omission of numbers in dates:

the election of '92 the Great Crash of '29

34.10 MISUSING THE APOSTROPHE

1. Do not use an apostrophe to form the plural of nouns:

- ▶ Five girl's went swimming.
- ▶ Two houses' need paint.

2. Do not use an apostrophe with the possessive forms of the personal pronouns:

- ▶ This is our thermos; that one is their's.
- ▶ Ben's notes are incomplete; your's are thorough.

3. Do not confuse the possessive pronoun *its* with the contraction *it's* (for *it is*). Use *its* as you use *his*; use *it's* as you use *he's*:

his success	he's successful
its success	it's successful

34.10 misus

Spelling, Hyphen, Apostrophe

4. Do not confuse the possessive *whose* with the contraction *who's* (for *who is*):

Whose notebook is this?

No one knows whose painting this is.

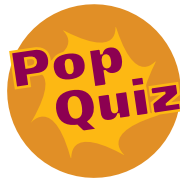
Who's going to the concert?

No one has heard of the pianist who's scheduled to play.

5. Do not use the apostrophe and -s to form a possessive when the construction would be cumbersome:

WEAK: Questions about the candidate's husband's financial dealings hurt her campaign.

EDITED: Questions about the financial dealings of the candidate's husband hurt her campaign.



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Mechanics are conventional rules such as the one requiring capitalization for the first word of a sentence. You need to follow the conventions so that your writing will look the way formal writing is expected to look.

35.1 USING CAPITAL LETTERS

1. Capitalize the first word of a sentence:

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Where do bears hibernate in the winter?

Here and elsewhere in the chapter, to **capitalize** a word means to capitalize its first letter.

2. Capitalize proper nouns and proper adjectives. Unlike a common noun, which names one or more in a class or group, a proper noun names a *particular* person, place, thing, or event. Proper adjectives are based on common nouns. Here are examples:

COMMON NOUNS	PROPER NOUNS	PROPER ADJECTIVES (also serve as proper nouns)
country	Canada	Canadian
person	Jefferson	Jeffersonian
state	Texas	Texan
river	Mississippi River	
revolution	the French Revolution	
party	the Republican Party	

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east (direction)	the East (particular region)
corporation	the Rand Corporation
economics	Economics 101
day	Wednesday

Do not capitalize words such as *a* and *the* when used with proper nouns, and do not capitalize the names of the seasons (*fall*, *winter*, *spring*, *summer*).

3. Capitalize a personal title when it is used before a name or when it denotes a particular position of high rank:

the president	President Clinton
	the President of the United States
	the Pope
the senator	Senator Mosely-Braun
the mayor	Mayor Bradley
the colonel	Colonel Templeton

4. Capitalize a term denoting kinship when it is used before a name:

my uncle Uncle Bob

5. Capitalize titles as explained in [35.3](#).

6. Always capitalize the pronoun *I*:

When I heard the news, I laughed.





35.2 USING ITALICS OR UNDERLINING

Use **italics or underlining** as explained below. (If you're writing with a typewriter or word processor that can print *italic type like this*, use italics. Otherwise use underlining.)

1. Use italics or underlining to emphasize a word or phrase in a statement:

If an inspired guess turns out to be correct, it is not
reported as an inspired guess.

--Isaac Asimov

Use this kind of emphasis sparingly. When overused, it loses its punch. (If you add your own emphasis to any word in a passage you are quoting, you must say so.)

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2. Use italics or underlining to identify a letter or a word treated as a word:

Neither the term sexism nor the term racism existed fifty years ago.
--Casey Miller and Kate Swift

You may also use quotation marks to identify a word as such; [see 32.7, no. 4](#).

3. Use italics or underlining to identify a foreign word or phrase not absorbed into English:

omerta jouissance dumkopf a la page

4. Use italics or underlining to identify the name of a ship, an airplane, or the like:

Queen Elizabeth II [ship]
Spirit of St. Louis [airplane]
Apollo 2 [spaceship]

5. Use italics or underlining for titles as explained in [35.3](#).



35.3 USING TITLES

1. Capitalize the first and last word of a title, whatever they are. Also capitalize all the words in between except articles (such as *a* and *the*), prepositions (such as *for*, *among*, *between*, and *to*), and coordinating conjunctions (such as *and*, *but*, and *or*):

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance [book]

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" [poem]

2. Use italics or underlining for the titles of books, scholarly journals, magazines, newspapers, government reports, plays, musicals, operas or other long musical compositions, films, television shows, radio programs, or long poems:

The Grapes of Wrath [book]

The American Scholar [journal]

Newsweek [magazine]

New York Times [newspaper]

Uniform Crime Reports for the United States

[government publication]

Hamlet [play]

Oklahoma [musical]

The Barber of Seville [opera]

Star Wars [film]

Friends [television show]

Morning Pro Musica [radio program]

Song of Myself [long poem]

3. Use double quotation marks for titles of works like these:

"Seal Hunting in Alaska" [magazine article]

"Bullfighting in Hemingway's Fiction" [essay]

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- "The Tell-Tale Heart" [short story]
- "Mending Wall" [short poem]
- "Burn, Don't Freeze" [song]
- "The American Scholar" [speech]
- "Winning the West" [chapter in a book]

4. Change double to single quotation marks when the title appears within another title that needs quotation marks, or is mentioned within a quotation:

"Fences and Neighbors in Frost's 'Mending Wall' " [title of an essay on the poem]

"Frost's 'Mending Wall,' " said Professor Ainsley, "is a gently disarming poem."

5. Do not use both underlining and quotation marks unless the title *includes* an underlined title:

"Experience" [essay]

Gone with the Wind [novel]

"On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Again" [poem]

6. Do not use italics or quotation marks in a title of your own unless it includes a reference to another title:

What to Do with Nuclear Waste

Bullfighting in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*

Art and Sex in Pope's "Rape of the Lock"



35.4 USING ABBREVIATIONS

Writers differ about how they use **abbreviations**, but we recommend the following procedures:

1. Abbreviate most titles accompanying a name:

Dr. Martha Peters

Martha Peters, Ph.D.

Robert Greene Jr.

Ms. Elizabeth Fish

Joseph Stevens, M.D.

But do not abbreviate when referring to people with religious, governmental, academic, and military titles:

the Reverend Leonard Flischer

Senator Nancy Kassebaum

the Honorable George Pataki, governor of New York

Professor Pamela Pinckney

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

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2. Abbreviate terms that help to specify a date or a time of day:

350 B.C. 12 B.C.E. 8:30 A.M.
A.D. 1776 186 C.E. 2:15 P.M.

Note that A.D. precedes the date. (Also note that MLA recommends not using periods in abbreviations that include capital letters.)

3. Abbreviate the *United States of America* as “U.S.A.”

- a. When abbreviating *United States* as an adjective, write “U.S.” alone:

the U.S. Supreme Court
U.S. elections

- b. In writing to a U.S. address from outside the country, or in writing your own return address on a letter going to another country, write “USA” (undotted) on a separate line:

28 Foster Street
Cambridge MA 02138
USA

4. Abbreviate the name of a state, province, or district when it forms part of an address:

Austin TX
Long Beach CA
Washington DC
Sherbrooke Que.

Abbreviate names of U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico with just two capital letters and no periods. Here are standard abbreviations:

Alabama	AL	Kentucky	KY	North Dakota	ND
Alaska	AK	Louisiana	LA	Ohio	OH
Arizona	AZ	Maine	ME	Oklahoma	OK
Arkansas	AR	Maryland	MD	Oregon	OR

California	CA	Massachusetts	MA	Pennsylvania	PA
Colorado	CO	Michigan	MI	Puerto Rico	PR
Connecticut	CT	Minnesota	MN	Rhode Island	RI
Delaware	DE	Mississippi	MS	South Carolina	SC
District of Columbia	DC	Missouri	MO	South Dakota	SD
Florida	FL	Montana	MT	Tennessee	TN
Georgia	GA	Nebraska	NE	Texas	TX
Hawaii	HI	Nevada	NV	Utah	UT
Idaho	ID	New Hampshire	NH	Vermont	VT
Illinois	IL	New Jersey	NJ	Virginia	VA
Indiana	IN	New Mexico	NM	Washington	WA
Iowa	IA	New York	NY	West Virginia	WV
Kansas	KS	North Carolina	NC	Wisconsin	WI
				Wyoming	WY

5. You may use undotted abbreviations in referring to well-known firms and other organizations:

NBC YMCA
IBM NAACP

6. If an abbreviation comes at the end of a declarative sentence, use the period marking the abbreviation as the period for the sentence:

The rocket was launched at 11:30 P.M.

If an abbreviation ends a question, add a question mark:

Was the rocket launched at 11:30 P.M.?

7. Most abbreviations must be marked by periods, but you need no periods to abbreviate the names of U.S. states and of well-known organizations, as shown above, or to abbreviate well-known phrases:

mph
mpg

35.5 MISUSING ABBREVIATIONS

1. In formal writing, avoid using abbreviations for the days of the week and the months of the year:

Sunday August

2. Avoid using abbreviations for the names of most geographical entities when they are not part of an address:

New England the Snake River Lake Avenue Canada

You may, however, use *Mt.* before the name of a mountain, as in *Mt. McKinley*, and *St.* in the name of a place, as in *St. Louis*.

3. Avoid using abbreviations for the names of academic subjects and the subdivision of books:

French 205 biology chapter 10 page 45

EXCEPTION: In parenthetical citations of books and articles, “page” is commonly abbreviated as “p.” and “pages” as “pp.”

4. Avoid using abbreviations for units of measurement (such as size and weight) unless the accompanying amounts are given in figures:

The new guard is six feet seven inches tall.

This box must weigh over fifty pounds.

A 50 lb. bag of fertilizer costs \$24.50.

5. Avoid using any abbreviation that is not widely known without first explaining its meaning:

* The MISAA was passed in 1978.

EDITED: The Middle Income Student Assistance Act (MISAA) was passed in 1978.

After you have explained its meaning, you may use the abbreviation on its own. But beware of crowding too many abbreviations into a sentence or passage. If you don’t keep them under control, your reader may end up drowning in alphabet soup:

* In 1971 Congress established the BEOG program, and the EOGs were renamed SEOGs.

EDITED: In 1971 Congress established the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (BEOG) program, and the Educational Opportunity Grants (EOG) were renamed Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG).

If you aren't sure how to abbreviate a particular term, see your dictionary. If you don't know whether you should abbreviate a term at all, don't. In formal writing, most terms should be spelled out in full.

35.6 USING NUMBERS

When you refer to a **number** in your writing, you have to decide whether to use a figure or to spell it out as a word. In much scientific and technical writing, figures predominate; in magazines and books of general interest, words are common, though figures are also used. In this section, we offer some guidelines for nontechnical writing.

1. Spell out a number when it begins a sentence:

Eighty-five dignitaries attended the opening ceremony.

Two hundred dignitaries had been invited.

Rearrange the sentence if spelling out the number would require more than two words:

The opening ceremony was attended by 157 dignitaries.

Invitations were sent to 218 dignitaries.

2. Spell out a number that can be written in one or two words, except as noted in item 4, below:

A batter is out after three strikes.

The firefighters worked without relief for twenty-two hours.

She owns seven hundred rare books.

Twenty-five thousand people were evacuated.

A hyphenated number may be counted as one word.

35.6 num

Mechanics

3. Use numerals if spelling out a number would require more than two words:

The stadium can hold 85,600 spectators.

Attendance at last Saturday's game was 79,500.

4. Use numerals for addresses, dates, exact times of day, exact sums of money, and exact measurements such as miles per hour, scores of games, mathematical ratios, fractions, and page numbers:

22 East Main Street

October 7, 2001

44 B.C.

11:15 A.M.

\$4.36

65 mph

a ratio of 2 to 1

$5\frac{7}{8}$

page 102

However, when a time of day or a sum of money is given as a round figure, spell it out:

Uncle Ben always gets up at six.

I reached the border at around eight o'clock.

He used to earn two dollars for ten hours of work.

It's hard to believe that fifty cents can no longer buy a cup of coffee.

