Essentials of English Grammar

The QUICK GUIDE to GOOD ENGLISH

YOUR EASY-TO-USE, RELIABLE SOURCE ON:

★ Proper punctuation and sentence construction
★ When to capitalize and how to abbreviate
★ Always writing clearly and concisely

L. Sue Baugh
Contents

Preface xi

Acknowledgments xv

PART I Essentials of Grammar 1

1 Parts of Speech 3

Nouns 4

   Proper, Common, and Collective Nouns 4
   Functions of Nouns 4
   Plural Nouns 5
   Possessive Nouns 5

Pronouns 7

   Personal Pronouns 7
   Case of Personal Pronouns 8
   Indefinite Pronouns 8
   Possessive Pronouns 9
   Relative Pronouns 10
   Interrogative Pronouns 11
   Demonstrative Pronouns 11
   Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement 11
   Who or Whom? 13

Verbs 14

   Basic Verb Forms 15
   Auxiliary Verbs 15
   Verb Tenses 16
   Regular Verbs 16
Contents

Functions of the Six Tenses   18
Irregular Verbs   21
Common Errors in Using Verb Tenses   21
Mood   24
Active and Passive Voices   25
Subject-Verb Agreement   26
Special Subject-Verb Agreement Cases   27

Adjectives   29
Demonstrative Adjectives   30
Limiting Adjectives   30
Comparisons   31
Compound Adjectives   32
Predicate Adjectives   32

Adverbs   32
Forming Adverbs   32
Types of Adverbs   33
Comparisons   34
Adverb Position and Meaning   34
Adjective or Adverb?   35

Prepositions   36
Phrasal Prepositions   37
Common Errors to Avoid   37
Prepositions Used with Verbs   38

Conjunctions   39
Coordinating Conjunctions   39
Correlative Conjunctions   39
Subordinating Conjunctions   40
Linking Adverbs   41

Interjections   42
Common Interjections   42
Punctuation   43

2 Punctuation and Punctuation Style   45

End Marks: Period, Question Mark, Exclamation Point   45

Period   45
Question Mark   46
Exclamation Point   47
Contents

Comma 47
  Series Comma 48
  Independent Clauses 48
  Introductory Clauses, Phrases, Expressions 49
  Nonrestrictive Clauses and Nonessential Material 49
  Direct Address 49
  Commas and Clarity 50
  Traditional Comma Uses 50
  Comma Faults 51
Semicolon 51
  Independent Clauses 52
  Series 53
Colon 53
  Before a Series or List 53
  Between Independent Clauses 54
  Time 54
  Formal and Business Communications 54
Quotation Marks 54
  Punctuation with Quotation Marks 55
  Brief and Long Quotations 56
  Single Quotation Marks 56
  Titles 56
  Terms and Expressions 57
Apostrophe 57
  Possessive of Singular Nouns 57
  Possessive of Plural Nouns 58
  Possessive of Indefinite and Personal Pronouns 58
  Individual and Joint Possession 58
  Units of Measure as Possessive Adjectives 59
  Plural Forms of Symbols 59
  Contractions 59
Hyphen 60
  Compound Numbers and Fractions 60
  Continuous Numbers 60
  Prefixes and Suffixes 61
  Compound Adjectives 61
Contents

Word Division 61
Hyphenated Names 62
To Avoid Confusion 62

Dash 62
Parentheses 63
Brackets 63
Ellipses 63
Italics 64

Emphasis 64
Foreign Words and Phrases 64
Titles 65
Vehicles 65

3 Sentences and Sentence Patterns 67

Sentences, Fragments, and Run-Ons 67

Phrases and Clauses 68

Phrases 69
Clauses 69

Subject and Predicate 70

Forms of the Subject 70
Forms of the Predicate 72

Sentence Constructions 74

Simple Sentence 74
Compound Sentence 74
Complex Sentence 75
Compound-Complex Sentence 75
Modifiers in Sentences 75

4 Capitalization, Abbreviations, and Numbers 77

Capitalization 77

Proper Nouns and Adjectives 77
Hyphenated Names and Prefixes 78
Family Relationships 78
Nationalities and Races 79
Languages and School Subjects 79
Religious Names and Terms 79
Academic Degrees and Personal Titles 81
Historic Events, Special Events, and Holidays 81
### Historical Monuments, Places, and Buildings

### Calendar Days, Months, and Seasons

### Documents

### Titles of Publications

### Compass Points

### Geographic Names and Regions

### Scientific Terms

### Capitals with Numbers

### Abbreviations

### General Guidelines

### Personal Names and Titles

### Company Names

### Agencies and Organizations

### Geographic Terms

### Time

### Scholarly Abbreviations

### Measures

### Science and Technology

### Commercial Abbreviations

### Numbers

#### Arabic Numbers and Roman Numerals

#### Figures or Words

#### Ages

#### Names

#### Governmental Designations

#### Organizations

#### Addresses and Thoroughfares

#### Time of Day

#### Dates

#### Money

#### Percentages

#### Fractions and Decimals

#### Measures

#### Temperature

#### Parts of a Book

#### Inclusive Numbers
## Part II Style Considerations 137

### 6 Sentences 139

Use Clarity and Meaning as the Criteria for Good Sentences 139
Include Only One to Two Ideas in Each Sentence 140
Vary Sentence Patterns to Avoid Monotonous Use of Any Particular Construction 141

### 7 Brevity 145

Avoid the Phrases *There Is* and *There Are* 145
Condense Clauses Beginning with *Which*, *That*, or *Who* into Fewer Words 145
Strike Out the Article *the* Wherever Possible 146
Eliminate Wordy and Redundant Phrases and Expressions 146

### 8 Clarity 149

Keep Words Fresh 149
*Jargon* 149
*Buzzwords* 150
*Clichés* 151

Keep Words Specific and Concrete 151
Keep References Clear 152
*Keep Modifiers Close to Words They Modify* 153
*Place Adverbs Close to Words They Modify* 153
### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep Subject and Verb Together</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Sure That Antecedents Are Clear</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep Structures Parallel</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-Check Figures, Dates, Specifications, and Other Details</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Sure That All Names, Titles, and Abbreviations Are Spelled Properly</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verify the Accuracy of Direct Quotations</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Sure That Ideas Are Presented Clearly</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Sure Your Work Is Neat and Legible</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 Gender-Inclusive Language</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouns and Pronouns</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Noun Forms</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffixes <em>ess, ette, ix,</em> and <em>ienne/ine</em></td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Titles</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutations</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Titles</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Principal Parts of Irregular Verbs</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Verb-Preposition Combinations</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Frequently Confused Words</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Frequently Misspelled Words</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Preface

Essentials of English Grammar is a concise guide to the basic rules of English grammar, usage, and style. It is designed to serve as a handy reference both to people who have only an occasional language question and to people who are developing the use of English as another language. It offers quick and convenient guidance to the fundamentals of the English language.


Part I: Essentials of Grammar
Chapter 1, “Parts of Speech,” emphasizes the building blocks of language and their grammatical functions. Examples show proper usage of each part of speech as well as common grammatical errors to avoid. This chapter gives special attention to verb forms and tenses, a subject that is often confusing. The six basic tenses used in English are discussed, accompanied by a complete conjugation of a regular verb.

Chapter 2, “Punctuation and Punctuation Style,” discusses how to punctuate sentences for clarity and meaning. Specific guidelines show the proper usage of each punctuation mark in a variety of situations.

Chapter 3, “Sentences and Sentence Patterns,” describes the components that make up the English sentence and the four sentence patterns that can
be used to add variety and liveliness to writing. This chapter should be par-
ticularly helpful to those who wish to develop a more expressive style.

Chapter 4, “Capitalization, Abbreviations, and Numbers,” is a thorough
coverage of these three subjects, including attention to scientific and schol-
arily terms not ordinarily included in a brief reference text.

Chapter 5, “Spelling and Word Division,” addresses another topic that
baffles many writers—how to spell and divide words correctly when
English seems a maze of exceptions to the rules. Spelling and word divi-
sion guidelines are arranged into clear, simple rules and are accompanied
by examples. A special feature of this chapter is an abundant listing of com-
mon prefixes and suffixes used in English, including their origins, mean-
ings, and proper spellings when joined to root words.

Part II: Style Considerations
Chapter 6, “Sentences,” contains guidelines on how to compose and com-
bine clear, interesting, and varied sentences.

Chapter 7, “Brevity,” includes rules for the elimination of wordy and
redundant language.

Chapter 8, “Clarity,” presents guidelines to support the choice of the
best words to convey meaning. It focuses on the use of specific language,
parallel structures, and correct references and on eliminating or reducing
jargon.

Chapter 9, “Accuracy,” offers suggestions to help writers check facts and
other details in their writing to ensure accurate communication.

Chapter 10, “Gender-Inclusive Language,” offers guidelines for use of
nonsexist terms, social titles, salutations, and occupational titles.

End Matter
Four appendixes are included for the writer’s convenience:

• Appendix A presents a list of the principal parts of the most
  commonly used irregular verbs.

• Appendix B clarifies many verb-preposition combinations.
• Appendix C provides a list of commonly confused words that sound similar but have different meanings.

• Appendix D is a list of commonly misspelled words, presented in the correct form.

For ease of reference, Essentials of English Grammar includes a detailed table of contents, a glossary, and a carefully constructed index.
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people for their valuable assistance in the development of this book. Barrett Anders, Woodlands Academy of the Sacred Heart, and Dr. Robert Hausman, University of Montana, reviewed the manuscript and made many suggestions that improved the text. A special thanks to the editors at McGraw-Hill Trade for their help in developing the outline and content of the book and for shepherding the project through production. I would also like to thank Vilma Peña and Nicole Chaparro for their assistance in the preparation of this third edition.
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Whether you’re a native speaker of English or learning English as another language, grammar can be a confusing subject. The rules and guidelines in Part I will quickly and easily help you find what you need to know. In particular, the sections on verbs will help you learn how to use the often bewildering number of verb tenses in English.
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Parts of Speech

Parts of speech are the basic building blocks of language. They include nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. In this chapter, each part of speech is defined, and its function in a sentence is discussed.

A good dictionary is an invaluable aid in understanding the pronunciation, grammatical function, spelling, and various meanings of different parts of speech. Figure 1.1 highlights the information that a dictionary offers.

An up-to-date dictionary should be part of any reference library. Consult it often for answers to questions about spelling, grammar, or usage.

**Figure 1.1 Sample Dictionary Entry**

Nouns
A noun refers to a person, place, or thing (objects, concepts, ideas, or events).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Thing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ballplayer</td>
<td>stadium</td>
<td>glove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>school</td>
<td>education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conductor</td>
<td>theater</td>
<td>performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manager</td>
<td>company</td>
<td>excellence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Proper, Common, and Collective Nouns**
Proper nouns are capitalized and name specific persons, places, or things. Common nouns identify general categories and are not capitalized, even when used with proper nouns (IBM machines, Minolta cameras). Collective nouns refer to a group of people, animals, objects, or other units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proper</th>
<th>Common</th>
<th>Collective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M</td>
<td>university</td>
<td>trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>company</td>
<td>management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Roberts</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>movie cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nemo</td>
<td>fish</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S. Enterprise</td>
<td>ship</td>
<td>fleet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Functions of Nouns**
Nouns can be used as the subject, direct object, and indirect object of a verb; as the object of a preposition; and as an adverb or adjective. Nouns can also show possession.

**Subject:**
The mail carrier always rings twice. Violets are spring flowers. (tells who or what does or is something)

**Direct object:**
I finally sold my car. (tells what is sold)

**Indirect object:**
Harold fed the cat another olive. (tells to whom he fed the olive)
Object of preposition: She gave directions over the phone. (tells what is the object of the preposition over)

Adverb: The train leaves today. (tells when)

Adjective: The office building faces the mall. (tells what kind, which one)

Possession: The parrot’s cage needs cleaning. My father’s brother is my uncle. (shows ownership or relationship)

Plural Nouns
Most nouns can be made plural by adding s to the singular form. For other plural forms such as es and ies, see the section on Plurals on page 126.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>highway</td>
<td>highways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bagel</td>
<td>bagels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base</td>
<td>bases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collective Nouns. Collective nouns can be singular or plural depending on how they are used. When the group acts as a unit, the noun is considered singular. When the group acts as individual members, the noun is plural.

Singular: The management agrees with the new president.
Plural: The management have expressed different views.
Singular: The family is celebrating three birthdays this month.
Plural: The family are taking separate vacations.

For a more complete treatment of plural nouns, including compound and hyphenated nouns, see the section on Plurals on page 126.

Possessive Nouns
Possessive nouns are used to indicate ownership or relationship.
**Singular Possessive.** To form the possessive of singular nouns, add ’s to all nouns. (For a complete discussion of the apostrophe used to indicate possession, see page 57.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Singular Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boy</td>
<td>the boy’s iPod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hurricane</td>
<td>the hurricane’s path</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Plural Possessive.** To form the possessive of a plural noun that ends in *s* or *es*, add an apostrophe to the end of the word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Plural Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sons</td>
<td>my sons’ children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ships</td>
<td>the ships’ escorts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For nouns that form the plural any other way, add ’s to the end of the word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Plural Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>children’s toys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>women’s shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>men’s suits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Singular or Plural?** To decide whether to place the apostrophe before or after the *s*, follow this simple rule: rephrase the sentence substituting an *of phrase* for the possessive noun to determine if the noun is singular or plural.

The (team’s, teams’) colors were on display.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of Phrase</th>
<th>Possessive Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>colors of the team (singular)</td>
<td>team’s colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colors of the teams (plural)</td>
<td>teams’ colors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Individual and Joint Ownership.** To show individual ownership, make both nouns in the sentence possessive. To show joint ownership, make only the *final* noun possessive.
Individual ownership: Mark’s and Arlene’s cell phones were stolen. (Each person had a cell phone that was stolen.)

Joint ownership: Mark and Arlene’s cell phone was stolen. (The cell phone belonged to both Mark and Arlene.)

In individual ownership, the noun following the possessive is generally plural (cell phones). In joint ownership, the noun is usually singular (cell phone). Look for this clue when deciding whether to use joint or individual possessive forms.

Pronouns
Pronouns take the place of one or more nouns or a group of words in a sentence. Like nouns, they can be used to refer to a person, place, or thing.

The coach described several key plays. He wanted the team to memorize them. (He replaces coach; them replaces several key plays.)

My car, which is in the garage, is getting too old for these winters. I should sell it. (It replaces my car, which is in the garage.)

The word or phrase that the pronoun replaces is called the antecedent of the pronoun. In the previous sentences, coach is the antecedent of he, while my car, which is in the garage, is the antecedent of it. (See more about antecedents on page 11.)

Pronouns are classified as personal, intensive/reflexive, indefinite, possessive, relative, interrogative, and demonstrative.

Personal Pronouns
Personal pronouns can be used in a variety of ways. They serve as the subject of a sentence, as the object of a verb or preposition, to show possession, to provide emphasis (called intensive pronouns), or to refer action back to the subject (called reflexive pronouns).
Subject: She is simply too good to be true.
Object: Tell him the parakeet died. (object of verb)
Break the news to him gently. (object of a preposition)
Possessive: Your hands are warm. Where did my glasses go?
Intensive: The quarterback himself changed the call. (The pronoun himself emphasizes the subject quarterback.)
Reflexive: Jane taught herself to use the scanner. We made the reservations ourselves. (The pronouns herself and ourselves refer the action back to the subjects.)

Case of Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns have three cases: nominative (subject), possessive, and objective (object of verb or preposition). The following table shows the personal pronouns in all their case forms—including the intensive/reflexive forms—for the first person (I, we), second person (you), and third person (he, she, it, they).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>nominative</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>possessive</td>
<td>my/mine</td>
<td>our/ours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>objective</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intensive/reflexive</td>
<td>myself</td>
<td>ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>nominative</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>possessive</td>
<td>your/yours</td>
<td>your/yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>objective</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intensive/reflexive</td>
<td>yourself</td>
<td>yourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>nominative</td>
<td>he/she/it</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>possessive</td>
<td>his/her, hers/its</td>
<td>their/theirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>objective</td>
<td>him/her/it</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intensive/reflexive</td>
<td>himself/herself/it</td>
<td>themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to unspecified people or things. Many indefinite pronouns express some idea of quantity: all, several, few, none. Following is a list of the most commonly used indefinite pronouns.
The board of directors needed a new president for the company. They appointed someone from outside the firm. (Someone replaces new president.)

Do you have any fantasy novels in your library? Yes, we have a few. (Few replaces fantasy novels.)

**Possessive Pronouns**

Possessive pronouns, unlike possessive nouns, never take an apostrophe. As shown in the table on page 8, the possessive forms are *my/mine, our/ours, your/yours, his/her, hers/its, their/ theirs*. The pronoun *who* also has a possessive form, *whose*.

**Whose** gym shoes are on the floor?
I thought my wallet was lost, but the one Jameel found was mine. **Our** vacation starts next week.
Those four suitcases are ours.
How can we get your dog to obey?
Is this yours?
Jerry Seinfeld never seems to lose his timing.
You have to take either her car or theirs. Hers is better.
The lawyers knew their client was probably guilty.

**Possessive Pronouns vs. Contractions.** People often confuse possessive pronouns with pronoun-verb forms that sound exactly like them (*its/it’s, whose/who’s, your/you’re, their/they’re*). To keep the possessive forms straight, remember this easy rule: possessive pronouns never take an apostrophe.
Pronouns that do take an apostrophe are contractions formed by the pronoun and a verb (it’s = it is; they’re = they are).

its The shuttle fired its engines. (possessive)
it’s It’s (it is) an awesome sight. (contraction)
whose Whose video game is this? (possessive)
who’s We need to know who’s (who is) coming. (contraction)
Who’s Who’s (who has) been eating my fudge? (contraction)
your Can I use your fax machine? (possessive)
you’re You’re (you are) welcome to try it. (contraction)
their The Jaguar is their best car. (possessive)
they’re They’re (they are) the top racing team. (contraction)

Possessive Pronouns and Gerunds. Gerunds are verb forms ending in ing that are used as nouns. In the sentence Skiing is a wonderful sport, skiing is a gerund used as the subject. If a pronoun precedes the gerund, the pronoun is generally in the possessive form.

Bill told me about his snowboarding down a mountainside.
She liked my calling her before I came over.
Her winning the lottery stunned us all.

The exception to this rule occurs when the pronoun follows verbs such as see, hear, and watch. In that case, use the objective form of the pronoun.

We didn’t see him leaving the house.
The whole neighborhood heard us playing Nirvana.

Relative Pronouns
Relative pronouns can be used to avoid repeating the noun within a sentence. They are particularly helpful when one clause is embedded in another, because they keep both clauses grammatical.

The relative pronouns who, whom, and whose refer to people and animals, while which and of which refer to things. That can refer to people or things.
This violin, **which** he learned to play as a child, is a valuable instrument. (Using *which* avoids repeating the noun—*This violin, the violin he learned to play.*)

The woman **who** bought the suit returned it the next day. (*The woman *she* would be ungrammatical.)*

**Interrogative Pronouns**

The interrogative pronouns *who, whom, whose, what,* and *which* introduce questions. *Who, whom,* and *whose* indicate that the question refers to a person or animal; *what* refers to an object, idea, or event; and *which* can indicate either a person or thing.

- *Who* called last night?
- *What* is your earliest memory?
- You can have a latte or a café mocha. *Which* do you want?

**Demonstrative Pronouns**

*Demonstrative pronouns* generally indicate nearness to or distance from the speaker, either literally or symbolically. *This, these, that,* and *those* usually refer to a specific noun, pronoun, or clause. However, sometimes the reference is to a general class of people or objects rather than to a specific antecedent.

- *This* is my driver’s license, and *that* is my credit card. (The driver’s license is closer at hand.)
- I don’t envy *those* stuck at the airport tonight. (*Those* has no specific antecedent but refers to a general class of people: anyone stuck at the airport.)

**Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement**

The antecedent, as mentioned previously, is the word or phrase to which a pronoun refers. Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person, case, and number.
Agreement in Person
**Incorrect:** The designer should know Quark thoroughly. Otherwise, **you** will have trouble creating book pages.
(The pronoun *you* is in the second person, while its antecedent *designer* is in the third person. Therefore the correct pronoun is the third person *he* or *she*.)
**Correct:** The designer should know Quark thoroughly. Otherwise, **he** or **she** will have trouble creating book pages.

Agreement in Case
**Incorrect:** Is that Shaneel and Donna over there? Yes, it’s **them**.
(The objective case *them* is incorrect. The nominative case *they* is the correct form, even though it may sound strange to your ears.)
**Correct:** Is that Shaneel and Donna over there? Yes, it’s **they**.

Agreement in Number
**Incorrect:** The data are obsolete and should be replaced. We can’t use **it** any longer. (The plural noun *data* is the antecedent and requires the plural pronoun *them*.)
**Correct:** The data are obsolete and should be replaced. We can’t use **them** any longer.

Imprecise Use of Pronouns. Pronouns should refer to a specific antecedent. Many writers misuse the pronouns *this, that, which, it*, and *they* by making them refer to entire sentences or ideas. Such errors can confuse the reader and must be avoided.

**Vague:** He wanted to raise the walls, put on the roof, and hang the doors all in one day. **This** was unrealistic. (The pronoun *this* refers to the sentence and not to any specific antecedent.)

**Precise:** His schedule was to raise the walls, put on the roof, and hang the doors all in one day. **This** was unrealistic. (The pronoun now refers to the antecedent *schedule*.)
Vague: The engineer asked for a meeting to discuss the new contract. I told her we couldn’t do that. (The antecedent for the pronoun that is unclear. Is it the meeting or the discussion that the speaker is declining?)

Precise: The engineer asked if we could meet at her office. I told her we couldn’t do that. (In this sentence that refers to the clause meet at her office.)

Double Antecedents. When and joins two antecedents, use a plural pronoun. If the antecedents are joined by nor or or, or when they form a unit (ham and eggs), use a singular pronoun.

An elm and a maple tree cast their shadows across the lawn. Neither Harriet nor Claire has her keycard today. Research and Development had its budget slashed this year.

Who or Whom?
The confusion over when to use who or whom has bothered writers for many years. In modern usage, the trend has been to drop the more formal-sounding whom and to use who in all cases. Following are the rules for using these two pronouns.

1. Who is used as the subject of a sentence or a clause (group of words containing a subject and verb) and never as an object.

   Who said we wouldn’t make a profit? (Who is the subject of the sentence.)

   Can you tell who is talking right now? (Who is the subject of the clause.)

   The job goes to whoever answers the ad first. (Whoever is the subject of the clause.)

2. Whom is always used in the objective case as the object of a verb or preposition. It is never used as the subject.
Address the letter “To Whom It May Concern.” (Whom is the object of the preposition to.)

**Whom** did you see at the opera? (Whom is the object of the verb see.)

Are there any singers **whom** you would recommend? (You is the subject of the verb recommend; whom is the object of that verb.)

The job goes to **whomever** you call first. (Whomever is the object of the verb call. You is the subject. Compare this sentence with the one using whoever.)

**Verbs**

Verbs are words or groups of words that express action or a state of being or condition. They provide the power or drive for sentences.

- They smashed through the door. (action)
- The ambassador filed a formal protest. (action)
- Shawn seems unhappy today. (state of being)
- The truck looks almost new. (condition)

Verbs that express a state of being or condition are called **linking verbs**. These verbs link the subject with a noun, pronoun, or adjective that describes or identifies it. The word or words linked to the subject are referred to as a **subject complement**. In general, a verb is a linking verb if it can be substituted for some form of the verb **seem**.

- You look (seem) calm enough—are you?
- She felt (seemed) ill at ease in the doctor’s office.

The most common linking verb is **be** and its forms am, is, are, was, were, being, and been. Other common linking verbs include the following.

**Common Linking Verbs**

- appear
- grow
- remain
- sound
- become
- hear
- seem
- stay
- feel
- look
- smell
- taste
Basic Verb Forms

A few verb forms are the basis for all verb tenses and phrases. These forms are as follows:

- **Base form:** Children *play* in the park.
- **Infinitive:** Tell them *to play* here.
- **Past tense:** They *played* all day yesterday.
- **Past participle:** He has *played* too long.
- **Present participle:** I am *playing* with her today.
- **Gerund (noun form):** Playing is children’s “work.”

Auxiliary Verbs

The past and present participles of the verb are also part of a word group that comprises a complete verb form: *has played, am playing*. The verbs used with these participles are called *auxiliary verbs* (also known as *helping verbs*). They signal a change in tense (*he walked, he has walked*) or a change in voice (*we told, we were told*). Following is a list of the most commonly used auxiliary verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary</th>
<th>Auxiliary + Main Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>has/have</td>
<td>The jury <em>has rendered</em> a verdict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The defendants <em>have heard</em> the sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is/are</td>
<td>The satellite <em>is boosting</em> the signal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They <em>are receiving</em> it in Hawaii.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can/could</td>
<td>He <em>can operate</em> in the morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The patient <em>could come</em> home in a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should/would</td>
<td>The flight <em>should land</em> in New Jersey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We <em>would like</em> to arrive in New York.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do/did</td>
<td>I <em>do remember</em> you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We <em>did meet</em> last week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will/shall</td>
<td>I <em>will tell</em> them to take the furniture away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Shall</strong> we <em>buy</em> the stuffed moose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must/ought</td>
<td>They <em>must report</em> any suspicious activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She <em>ought to call</em> the security guard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verb Tenses

Verb tenses allow us to talk about time, to place an action or state of being in the past, present, or future (I called, I call/I am calling, I will call). They also allow us to talk about intention, what would, could, or should be done (I would have called, I can call, I will have called).

Learning to use the right verb tense is important to convey intentions and the time of an action or state of being accurately and clearly. The various tenses in English are formed using the basic elements of the verb.

| Base form:       | march        |
| Past tense:      | marched      |
| Present participle: | marching     |
| Past participle: | marched      |
| Auxiliary verbs: | am (was) marching, have (had) marched, will march |

English has regular and irregular verbs. Learn the basic verb forms of these words to create the proper tenses and to avoid mixing tenses in writing.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow the same pattern when moving from one tense to another. English has six basic tenses: present, past, future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. In addition, the progressive and conditional forms are used for special functions. The progressive form (I am singing, I was singing, I will be singing) is used to indicate continuity of action rather than its completion. For example, compare I wrote a letter with I was writing a letter. The first sentence simply states that an action was completed in the past, while the second sentence implies that the action is connected to another event. Adverbs are often used with progressive forms to stress the continuous nature of the action or state of being (He is always singing in the shower). Progressive forms can be used with all six tenses. The conditional form (I can sing, I could sing, I could have sung) conveys intention to do or be something.

Following is a complete conjugation of the verb to watch. The function of each tense is discussed following the conjugation.
### Present Tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person:</td>
<td>I watch</td>
<td>we watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person:</td>
<td>you watch</td>
<td>you watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person:</td>
<td>he/she/it watches</td>
<td>they watch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present progressive form:** I am (you are) watching, etc.

**Present conditional form:** I can (I could) watch, etc.

### Past Tense (Base Form of the Verb + d or ed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person:</td>
<td>I watched</td>
<td>we watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person:</td>
<td>you watched</td>
<td>you watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person:</td>
<td>he/she/it watched</td>
<td>they watched</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Past progressive form:** I was watching, etc.

**Past conditional form:** I could have watched, etc.

I could have been watching, etc.

### Future Tense (Will or Shall + the Base Form of the Verb)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person:</td>
<td>I will (shall) watch</td>
<td>we will (shall) watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person:</td>
<td>you will watch</td>
<td>you will watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person:</td>
<td>he/she/it will watch</td>
<td>they will watch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Future progressive form:** I will (shall) be watching, etc.

### Present Perfect Tense (Have or Has + the Past Participle)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person:</td>
<td>I have watched</td>
<td>we have watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person:</td>
<td>you have watched</td>
<td>you have watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person:</td>
<td>he/she/it has watched</td>
<td>they have watched</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Progressive form:** I have been watching, etc.
**Past Perfect Tense (Had + the Past Participle)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First person:</strong></td>
<td>I had watched</td>
<td>we had watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second person:</strong></td>
<td>you had watched</td>
<td>you had watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third person:</strong></td>
<td>he/she/it had watched</td>
<td>they had watched</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Progressive form:** I had been watching, etc.

**Future Perfect Tense (Will Have or Shall Have + the Past Participle)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First person:</strong></td>
<td>I will (shall) have watched</td>
<td>we will (shall) have watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second person:</strong></td>
<td>you will have watched</td>
<td>you will have watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third person:</strong></td>
<td>he/she/it will have watched</td>
<td>they will have watched</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Progressive form:** I will have been watching, etc.

*Functions of the Six Tenses*

The six tenses show differences in the time of an action or a state of being, and using different tenses changes the meaning of a sentence.

**Present Tense.** The present tense is used to express an action or to state a fact that is occurring at the present time. The present tense also can be formed using auxiliary verbs for emphasis or to express intention.

I live here.
I am living here. (progressive)
I do live here. (emphatic)
I can live here. (conditional)

The present tense also is used to indicate habitual action or something that is true at all times.
She goes out every evening.
My grandfather believed that silence is (instead of was) golden.

Writers occasionally use the present tense when reviewing the contents of a book or describing past events to bring them vividly to life for the reader. This form of the present tense is known as the **literary or historical present**.

In his book on Alexander the Great, the Greek historian Arrian **dismisses** romantic legend and **concentrates** on sifting truth from fiction.

**Past Tense.** The past tense is used to express action or to help make a statement about something that occurred in the past and has not continued into the present.

- I **lived** there.
- I **was living** there while I was in school. (progressive)
- I **did live** there. (emphatic)

**Future Tense.** The future tense is used to express an action or to help make a statement about something that will occur in the future.

- I **will** (shall) live there.
- I **will be living** there. (progressive)
- I **am going to be living** there. (progressive)
- I **can be living** there. (conditional)

The distinction between **will** and **shall** is no longer observed by most people. The two verbs can be used interchangeably for the simple future tense in the first person. However, in some cases, such as when asking for permission or consent, **shall** is the only form used.

*Shall* we go to the movie?
*Shall* I put the box here?
To use *will* in these sentences would change the meaning. However, except for such special uses, *will* and *shall* are equally correct.

I *shall* call him.
I *will* call him.

**Perfect Tenses.** Perfect tenses describe actions or states of being that happened at one time but are seen in relation to another time. For example, *I gave a donation to the Girl Scouts* is a simple statement about a past event and would be used to tell someone what happened in the past. *I have given a donation to the Girl Scouts* connects the past event to the present and can be used to imply a habitual or continuous action.

**Present Perfect Tense.** The present perfect tense is used to express an action or to help make a statement about something occurring at an indefinite time in the past or something that has occurred in the past and continues into the present.

I *have lived* here for a long time.
I *have lived* here for three months. (The speaker is still living there.)
I *have been living* here for three months. (progressive)
I *could have been living* here instead of where I am now. (conditional)

**Past Perfect Tense.** The past perfect tense is used to express an action or to help make a statement about something completed in the past before some other past action or event.

After I *had lived* here for three months, they raised the rent.
After I *had been living* here for three months, they raised the rent. (progressive)

**Future Perfect Tense.** The future perfect tense is used to express an action or to help make a statement about something that will be completed in the future before some other future action or event.
By this October, I **will have lived** here for six months.
By this October, I **will have been living** here for six months.

*(progressive)*

**Irregular Verbs**

*Irregular verbs* follow no fixed rules for forming the various past, present, and future tenses. You simply have to memorize them or consult your dictionary. Some of the most commonly used irregular verbs are listed in Appendix A. Here are a few examples of common irregular verbs that show the variety of their forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base Form</th>
<th>Past Tense</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>break</td>
<td>broke</td>
<td>broken</td>
<td>breaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly</td>
<td>flew</td>
<td>flown</td>
<td>flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lie (as in recline)</td>
<td>lay</td>
<td>lain</td>
<td>lying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ring</td>
<td>rang</td>
<td>rung</td>
<td>ringing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Common Errors in Using Verb Tenses**

People often mix their tenses or use the wrong verb form when speaking. Although these errors may be overlooked in conversation, they are painfully evident in written communication. They often confuse the reader and affect the tone of the message. Study the following incorrect and correct sentences:

1. Use the correct verb form with each tense.

   **Incorrect:** He checked on the order and **has went** to pick it up.
   **Correct:** He checked on the order and **has gone** to pick it up.

   *(Gone is the past participle of the verb to go and is the correct form to use with the auxiliary verb has. Went is the past tense form and is incorrect.)*
Incorrect: I done the work last night and handed it in this morning.
Correct: I did the work last night and handed it in this morning. (*Done*, the past participle, is incorrect—the verb should be in the simple past tense *did*.)

Incorrect: Barb and Louise have ordered the tickets, wrote their friends about the concert, and gave away pictures of the band.
Correct: Barb and Louise have ordered the tickets, written their friends about the concert, and given away pictures of the band. (*Wrote* and *gave* are past tense forms of the verbs and are incorrect.)

Incorrect: The book is fascinating reading. It provided a detailed study of how cultures were created.
Correct: The book is fascinating reading. It provides a detailed study of how cultures are created. (*Wrote* and *gave* are past tense forms of the verbs and are incorrect.)

2. When describing two events in the past that did not occur at the same time, use the past perfect tense to refer to the event or action in the more distant past.

Incorrect: I suddenly remembered (past) that I left (more distant past) my purse at the office.
Correct: I suddenly remembered (past) that I had left (past perfect) my purse at the office. (Because leaving the purse at the office preceded remembering the fact, the past perfect form of *had left* should be used.)

Incorrect: Apartments now existed (past) where a city dump was (more distant past). (Using the past tense for both verbs suggests that the apartments and city dump are there together.)
Correct: Apartments **now existed** (past) where a city dump **had been** (past perfect). (The past perfect makes it clear that the city dump preceded the apartments.)

3. Do not use *would have* in “if clauses” that express the earlier of two past actions. Use the past perfect.

**Incorrect:** If he *would have thought* of it, he would have asked you to ride with us.

**Correct:** If he *had thought* of it, he would have asked you to ride with us.

**Incorrect:** If I *would have studied* harder, I’d have passed the course.

**Correct:** If I *had studied* harder, I’d have passed the course.

4. Use the present infinitive (*to play, to see*, etc.) to express action following another action.

**Incorrect:** I was disappointed because I had hoped *to have gone* with you. (Did the speaker hope *to have gone* or *to go*?)

**Correct:** I was disappointed because I had hoped *to go* with you. (The present infinitive *to go* is the correct form because the action it expresses follows the verb *had hoped.*)

**Incorrect:** She intended *to have visited* all her relatives. (Did she intend *to have visited* or *to visit*)?

**Correct:** She intended *to visit* all her relatives.

5. Use the perfect infinitive (*to have written, to have seen*, etc.) to express action before another action.

**Correct:** He was happy *to have seen* Ralph. (The speaker saw Ralph first; then he was happy about seeing him. Therefore the perfect infinitive *to have seen* is the proper form to use.)
6. In participial phrases, use *having* with the past participle to express action before another action.

**Incorrect:** Giving my bike to Angela, I couldn’t ride to the beach later that day. (The present participle *giving* is incorrectly used to express an action completed before the second action in the sentence.)

**Correct:** Having given my bike to Angela, I couldn’t ride to the beach later that day.

**Incorrect:** Painting the front porch, he slept the rest of the day.

**Correct:** Having painted the front porch, he slept the rest of the day. (He had to paint the porch before he could go to sleep. This could also be expressed by saying *After painting the front porch, he slept all day.*)

**Mood**

Verbs can be used to express differences in the intention or *mood* of the speaker or writer. There are three moods in English: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive. Each has a specific function.

The *indicative mood* is used when the speaker or writer wishes to make a statement or ask a question.

He is leaving tomorrow.

*Does* this plane fly to London?

The *imperative mood* is used for commands or requests.

*Call* Fredericks and *cancel* that shipment.

*Please return* the book to the library.

*Turn* right at the corner, and then *go* left.

The *subjunctive mood* uses a different form of the past and present to express matters of urgency, formality, possibility, or speculation.
**Urgency:** I demanded that she see me immediately. (The indicative mood would use the form sees or can see—for example, I want to know if she can see me immediately.)

**Formality:** He recommended that the zoning law be adopted. (The indicative mood would use is adopted—for example, the vote is 44 to 3; the law is adopted.)

**Possibility:** If I were to sign the contract, we could not sell our own CDs. (The phrase If I were to sign expresses a future possibility. It has no reference to the past, even though were is a past tense verb form. Compare this sentence to Because I signed the contract, we could not sell our own CDs. In this sentence, the indicative mood describes an action that took place in the past.)

**Speculation:** If he were king, he would make football the national pastime. (The subjunctive mood expresses something that is not true, a statement contrary to fact. The indicative mood, on the other hand, simply states a fact—for example, If he was the king, then his brother was a prince.)

---

**Active and Passive Voices**

If the subject of a sentence performs an action, the verb is in the active voice. If the subject receives the action, the verb is in the passive voice.

**Active voice:** She sold a box of candy. (The subject she performs the action.)

**Passive voice:** She was sold a box of candy. (The subject she receives the action.)

**Active voice:** We have delivered the mail. (The subject we performs the action.)

**Passive voice:** The mail was delivered by us. (Mail is now the subject and receives the action.)
The active voice adds interest and liveliness to a message. In general, use the active voice. Avoid weak and awkward passive verb constructions or long passages in which all the verbs are passive.

The passive voice, however, does have its contribution to make. It can be used to express an action in which the actor is unknown, when a more objective or diplomatic tone is required, or when it is desirable not to disclose the actor.

**Active voice:** Jim locked the front door before we left home.

**Passive voice:** The front door had been locked before we left home.

**Active voice:** Our sales manager made a mistake in completing your order.

**Passive voice:** A mistake was made in completing your order.

**Active voice:** We have examined your application and must decline your request for credit.

**Passive voice:** Your application has been reviewed and at this time your request for credit must be declined.

In the final example, the passive voice emphasizes the recipient of the action and minimizes the writer’s role. Using the passive voice can make the decision seem less personally directed toward the reader. The speaker can then discuss the reasons for declining the application.

**Subject-Verb Agreement**

Just as pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person, case, and number, verbs also must agree with their subjects in person and in number.

The **first person subject** is the person or persons speaking in a sentence (I, we). The **second person subject** is the person or persons addressed (you, you). The **third person subject** refers to the person or thing spoken about and may be any noun or third-person pronoun (he, she, it, they).

**Agreement in Person**

**First:** I am hot. We are cold.

**Second:** You look fantastic.

**Third:** The car rusts. She drives fast. They laugh a lot.
Verbs must agree with their subjects in number. Therefore, a singular subject takes a singular verb; a plural subject takes a plural verb.

**Agreement in Number**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The window is open.</td>
<td>The windows are open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She walks quickly.</td>
<td>They walk quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going home.</td>
<td>We are going home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can come along.</td>
<td>All of you can come along.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Subject-Verb Agreement Cases**

Compound subjects, collective nouns, and plural nouns used as titles of courses or subject areas can create confusion regarding subject-verb agreement. Following are guidelines for using a singular or plural verb in such cases.

**Compound Subjects Joined by and—Singular Verb.** Use the singular verb for compound subjects joined by and (1) when the subject is considered a unit (research and development) and (2) when both parts of the subject are modified by each or every.

- The secretary and treasurer has filed the minutes. (The secretary and treasurer is one person.)
- Each player and every team receives a prize for competing in the games.

**Compound Subjects Joined by and—Plural Verb.** Except for the cases already noted, compound subjects joined by and take a plural verb.

- Rain and snow were falling at the same time.
- Tom and Samira have resigned as coleaders.
- There are one book and two paintings on the floor.
- Are the computer and the printer compatible?
Compound Subjects Joined by or or nor—Singular Verb. Use the singular verb (1) if the subject next to the verb is considered singular or (2) if both parts of the subject are singular.

The drawers or the closet is the place to look.
Is the cat or the ferret in the garage?
Neither Alan nor Julie remembers seeing my PalmPilot.

Compound Subjects Joined by or or nor—Plural Verb. The plural verb is used if the subject nearest the verb is plural or if both parts of the subject are plural.

The closet or the drawers are the place to look.
The directors or the producers receive all the credit.
Neither the girls nor their teachers were aware of the approaching high tide.

Plural Nouns—Singular Verbs. Plural nouns used as the titles of courses or subject areas or as measurements or units of quantity (dollars, pounds, inches) take a singular verb.

Humanities has a long reading list.
I weighed myself, and twelve pounds has to go!
Five hundred miles seems a long way to drive in one day.
Is $2,500 too much for this rug?

Collective Nouns—Singular or Plural Verbs. To emphasize the collective noun as a unit, use the singular verb. To refer to individuals within the group, use the plural verb.

The fleet sails tomorrow at 4:30.
The Seventh Fleet have three days to repair their vessels.
Everyone knows how hard the council works.
The council are divided about the tax-reform issue.
When is the team going to play its next home game?
The team need to recuperate from their injuries.
Prepositional Phrases and Other Matters Set Off from the Subject.
Prepositional phrases following the subject or material set off from the subject by commas generally does not influence subject-verb agreement. To decide whether to use a singular or plural verb form, simply block out the prepositional phrase or additional material and look only at the subject and verb.

None of the facts has been proved true. (None of the facts has.
Any of these students writes well. (Any [one] of these students writes.)
Many flowers, such as the tulip, grow in northern climates. (Many flowers, such as the tulip, grow.)
My house, unlike those houses, looks brand new. (My house, unlike those houses, looks.)

The exception to this rule occurs when the word all is followed by a singular or plural noun or pronoun. In this case, the prepositional phrase or material following all will determine whether to use a singular or plural verb.

All of my apple pie was eaten. (Singular pie takes the singular verb was eaten.)
All of my apple pies were eaten. (Plural pies take the plural verb were eaten.)

Adjectives
Adjectives modify nouns, pronouns, and other adjectives. They provide pertinent information about the words they modify by answering the questions What kind? How many? Which one? How much? Adjectives can add precision, color, and a dash of originality to writing.

The zoo has a two-year-old male leopard. (What kind?)
There may be ten planets in our solar system. (How many?)
He gave her that hat over there. (Which one?)
I have a bigger TV than he does. (How much?)
Demonstrative Adjectives
The demonstrative adjectives *which, what, this, these, that,* and *those* are used to emphasize which items are being singled out and their distance from the speaker. Unlike the pronoun forms of these words, demonstrative adjectives are never used alone.

I feel sorry for *those* people caught in the flood. (Pronoun form: I feel sorry for *those* caught in the flood.)
Take *this* car here and *that* car over by the driveway and park them both in the lot.
I don’t understand *which* person you’re talking about.
He doesn’t know *what* schedule the driver is using this week.

Limiting Adjectives
Many adjectives are used to identify or number the nouns they modify. In nearly all cases, the limiting adjective comes before the noun. Following is a list of some of the more common of these adjectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limiting Adjective</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a/an</td>
<td>a mango, an orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the</td>
<td>the hammer, the screwdrivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>few</td>
<td>few ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>many</td>
<td>many calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every</td>
<td>every week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each</td>
<td>each person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td>both lights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>several</td>
<td>several cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some</td>
<td>some cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any</td>
<td>any window</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most</td>
<td>most people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one</td>
<td>one country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limiting adjectives *a, an,* and *the* are also known as *articles.* *A* and *an* are *indefinite articles* and refer to an unspecified item in a class (*a box, an apple*). *The* is a *definite article* and refers to one or more specific items in a class (*the box, the apples*).
Comparisons
Adjectives also are used to show comparisons between or among persons, places, or things. The positive, comparative, and superlative forms represent different degrees of a quality or characteristic.

The positive form is the base word (low, cautious). The comparative is formed by adding the suffix er or the word more (lower, more cautious). The superlative requires the suffix est or the word most (lowest, most cautious).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>careful</td>
<td>more careful</td>
<td>most careful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incredible</td>
<td>more incredible</td>
<td>most incredible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proud</td>
<td>prouder</td>
<td>proudest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fast</td>
<td>faster</td>
<td>fastest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>few</td>
<td>fewer</td>
<td>fewest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are several irregular comparative forms as well.

bad       worse       worst
far       farther      farthest
good      better      best
less      lesser       least

When comparing two items, use the positive and comparative forms. For more than two items, use the superlative.

The black puppy is smaller than its brother. (comparative)
The brown puppy is the smallest of the eight. (superlative)
Jan has a good grade point average, Brian has a better one, while Joan has the best average of all. (positive, comparative, superlative)
That movie was more boring than a test pattern. (comparative)
He has the most expensive satellite dish on the block. (superlative)
Compound Adjectives

*Compound adjectives* generally are hyphenated when they precede the noun they modify. When they follow the noun, they are not hyphenated.

She wanted a **blue-gray** living room.
She even dyed the curtains **blue gray**.
That is a **past-due** bill.
The bill is **past due**.

Predicate Adjectives

When an adjective follows a linking verb such as *feel, become, seem, get, is, look,* and *smell,* the word complements the verb and is known as a *predicate adjective.* The adjective does not modify the verb but refers to the condition of the subject.

She looks **beautiful**.
He seems **unhappy**. Is he **all right**?
The water is getting **hot**.

Adverbs

*Adverbs* modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. They answer the questions *When? Where? How?* or *How much?* Adverbs describe an action or state of being in greater detail and can provide a more vivid picture of what is happening.

She **always** signs her name with “Ms.” *(When?)*
They carried the chair **downstairs**.* *(Where?)*
Read it again **slowly**. *(How?)*
He objected **strongly** to the judge’s ruling. *(How much?)*

Forming Adverbs

Most adverbs end in *ly* and can be formed from the adjective. In some cases, however, the adjective and adverb both end in *ly.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>care</td>
<td>careful</td>
<td>carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collect</td>
<td>collective</td>
<td>collectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coward</td>
<td>cowardly</td>
<td>cowardly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hour</td>
<td>hourly</td>
<td>hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thought</td>
<td>thoughtful</td>
<td>thoughtfully</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Types of Adverbs**

Adverbs indicating time, direction, place, or degree may look the same as nouns, prepositions, or adjectives. Following are examples of these types of adverbs, including some that end in *ly*.

**Adverbs of Time/Frequency (When?)**

- always
- before
- eventually
- forever
- frequently
- never
- now
- Monday
- occasionally
- often
- once
- seldom

**Adverbs of Place/Direction (Where?)**

- across
- around
- backward
- here
- in
- out
- over
- sideways
- there
- through
- under
- upstairs

**Adverbs of Degree (How Much?)**

- completely
- entirely
- excessively
- however
- less
- mildly
- most
- much
- nearly
- somewhat
- thoroughly

**Adverbs of Manner (How?)**

- beautifully
- carefully
- coldly
- earnestly
- equally
- handily
- hotly
- nicely
- thankfully
- quickly
- resentfully
- tirelessly
Comparisons

Adverbs—like adjectives—are used in comparisons. The positive is the base word (fast, softly). The comparative is formed by adding er or the word more (faster, more softly), and the superlative by adding est or the word most (fastest, most softly). A few adverbs have irregular forms (well, better, best).

He drives himself hard. (positive)
He drives himself harder than I think he should. (comparative)
He drives himself the hardest of anyone I know. (superlative)

I work well when I’m alone. (positive)
I work better when I’m with others. (comparative)
I work best late at night. (superlative)

The tiger moves quietly through the jungle. (positive)
The tiger moves more quietly than the deer. (comparative)
The tiger moves the most quietly of the three big cats. (superlative)

Adverb Position and Meaning

The position of the adverb can affect the meaning of the sentence. The most common error involves misplacing the adverb only. Make sure that the adverb position conveys what you intend to say.

Unclear: We only walked to the store and not the bank. (Did the speakers only walk and not run? Or did they walk only to the store and not elsewhere? The meaning is unclear.)

Clear: We walked only to the store and not to the bank.

Unclear: She frequently calls the magazine editor. (Does she call the magazine editor more frequently than she calls anyone else? Or does she simply call the editor many times [frequently]?)

Clear: She calls the magazine editor frequently.

In general, avoid splitting the verb phrase when using an adverb. While this rule is not carved in stone, it is a good one to keep in mind.
Avoid: I have also given the matter my attention.
Better: I also have given the matter my attention.
Avoid: He had accurately filled out the form.
Better: He had filled out the form accurately.

Adjective or Adverb?
Some words function as either adverbs or adjectives, and many writers may confuse them. Among the most troublesome words are good, well, badly, and bad.

Good is an adjective and is always used as an adjective. Never use good to modify a verb.

You’ve done a good job. (modifies job)
I feel good. (predicate adjective referring to the condition of the subject)

Well is both an adjective, meaning in good health, and an adverb of manner, answering the question how something is done.

I feel well. (predicate adjective referring to the condition of the subject)
The reporter handled that story well. (modifies the verb handled)
She writes well. (modifies the verb writes)
(“She writes good” is incorrect.)

The adverb badly is often mistaken for the adjective bad. Badly, an adverb of manner, indicates that something is done ineptly or poorly. It often follows an action verb.

He plays the piano badly. (modifies the verb plays and answers the question: How does he play the piano? Badly.)
They painted the room badly. (modifies the verb painted and answers the question: How did they paint the room? Badly.)
The adjective *bad* means “in poor spirits” or is used to describe the degree of something. When it follows a linking verb, it is a predicate adjective describing the condition of the subject.

She feels **bad**. (predicate adjective referring to the condition of the subject *she*)

That was a **bad** mistake. (adjective modifying *mistake*)

Never write *I feel badly* or *You look badly* when referring to the condition of the subject. These statements say that you feel (touch someone or something) poorly or that someone looks (sees things) poorly.

### Prepositions

*Prepositions* are connecting words that show the relationship among words in a sentence. Nouns, pronouns, gerund phrases, or noun clauses can be the objects of prepositions. Together with the preposition they form a *prepositional phrase*. These phrases serve as adjectives modifying nouns and pronouns or as adverbs modifying verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

Put it **in** the box. (The noun *box* is the object of *in*; the prepositional phrase serves as an adverb and modifies the verb *put.*)

Give this to the usher **on** the right. (The noun *right* is the object of *on*; the phrase is used as an adjective, modifying the noun *usher.*)

*After* telling them a story, he put the children to bed. (The gerund phrase *telling them a story* is the object of the preposition *after.*)

*Because of* what they told us, we cut our trip short. (The noun clause *what they told us* is the object of the preposition *because of.*)

Following is a list of some of the most commonly used prepositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>about</th>
<th>between</th>
<th>off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>above</td>
<td>beyond</td>
<td>on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>across</td>
<td>by</td>
<td>over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against</td>
<td>during</td>
<td>through</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
although most prepositions are one word, some consist of phrases and are called phrasal prepositions. They are used frequently in spoken and written communication.

Because of  in case of  instead of  
by way of  on behalf of  on account of  
in care of  in spite of  on the side of

*In care of* (c/o) is a common symbol used in correspondence. (*In care of* is a phrasal preposition that serves as the subject of the verb *is.*

They traveled *by way of* Vermont. (The phrasal preposition *by way of* modifies the verb *traveled.* The noun *Vermont* is the object of the phrase.)

**Common Errors to Avoid**

Prepositions are among the most overworked words in the English language. Use the following guidelines to avoid committing two of the more common errors.

1. Avoid putting unnecessary prepositions at the end of sentences.

   **Incorrect:** Where are my keys at?
   **Correct:** Where are my keys?
Incorrect: Can I go with?
Correct: Can I go? Can I go with you?
Incorrect: Where did that remote get to?
Correct: Where is that remote?

2. In formal writing and business communications, avoid putting the preposition at the end of a sentence. Rewrite the sentence so that it has a correct prepositional phrase.

Avoid: They were not sure which college they should apply to.
Better: They were not sure to which college they should apply.
(The preposition is now part of the phrase to which college.)

Avoid: Ask not whom the bell tolls for.
Better: Ask not for whom the bell tolls.

Prepositions Used with Verbs
These guidelines are not rigid. Winston Churchill once remarked, “This is the sort of English up with which I will not put.”

Obviously, there will be exceptions to the rule, particularly when prepositions are used with verbs. In the quote by Churchill, the verb-preposition form is to put up with. In writing, however, it is best to recast the sentence to read “I will not put up with this sort of English.”

Prepositions are used with verbs to change the meaning slightly or to distinguish between people and objects.

accompany by (a person)
accompany with (an object)
The president was accompanied by his wife.
The form was accompanied with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Knowing when to use the right preposition with a verb can be a challenge. Some of the most commonly confused verb-preposition combinations are listed in Appendix B at the end of this book.
Conjunctions

Conjunctions link words or groups of words to other parts of the sentence and show the relationship between them. The four basic conjunctions are coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, and linking adverbs.

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions and, but, or, and nor join two or more elements of equal rank. The conjunctions but and nor often are used with the adverbs never or not.

The elements joined by coordinating conjunctions can be single words—nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns—or phrases or clauses. (Clauses are groups of words with a subject-verb combination such as when she came to work or because they are sailing tomorrow.)

The telescope and its lens were repaired. (nouns)
We called and called, but no one answered. (verbs)
He is a sore but victorious player tonight. (adjectives)
You can have it done quickly or thoroughly. (adverbs)
She and I seldom agree on anything. (pronouns)
We can go over the river or through the woods. (prepositional phrases)
Did you know that he's never eaten a hot dog, had a real root beer, nor played miniature golf? (verb phrases)
She went home last night and found the jury summons waiting for her. (clauses)

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are coordinating conjunctions used in pairs, and they emphasize the elements being joined. Some of the most frequently used correlative conjunctions are as follows:

both ... and
either ... or
neither . . . nor
not only . . . but also

Correlative conjunctions also join elements of equal rank. Make sure that the elements following each part of the construction are truly equal.

E-mail either Judith or Andy about the party. (nouns)
It is both raining and snowing outside. (verb forms)
The trade talks were neither hostile nor overly friendly. (adjectives)
He not only installed a new DSL line but also added the latest CD burner. (verb phrases)

Subordinating Conjunctions
Unlike the conjunctions described in the preceding section, subordinating conjunctions join elements of unequal rank in a sentence. These elements are usually a subordinate clause (a group of words with a subject-verb combination that cannot stand alone) and an independent clause. Following is a list of commonly used subordinating conjunctions.

after  how  than  when
although  if  that  where
as  in order that  though  which
as much as  inasmuch as  unless  while
because  provided  until  who/whom
before  since  what  whoever/whomever

Subordinating conjunctions can be used to introduce a sentence as well as to join elements within it. When a subordinate clause comes at the beginning of a sentence, it is followed by a comma. No comma is used when the subordinate clause comes at the end of the sentence.

Before we left the theater, I had to dry my eyes.
I had to dry my eyes before we left the theater.
Provided the books arrive, we can start class Tuesday.
We can start class Tuesday provided the books arrive.
Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Clauses. Some clauses provide additional information about a person, place, or object within a sentence. When the clause is essential to the meaning of that sentence, it is known as a restrictice clause. When it is descriptive but not essential, it is called a nonrestrictive clause.

**Restrictive:** The city *that was built along the river* escaped the fire. (The clause *that was built along the river* distinguishes this city from all others in the area. The information is essential to the sentence.)

**Nonrestrictive:** The city, *which was built along the river*, escaped the fire. (In this sentence, the clause *which was built along the river* is simply descriptive information.)

Notice that the subordinating conjunction changes from *that* in a restrictive clause to *which* in a nonrestrictive clause. In general, *that* is used to indicate information essential to the meaning of the sentence. *Which* indicates information that is not essential.

To decide whether a clause is restrictive or nonrestrictive, eliminate the clause from the sentence and determine if doing so changes the meaning.

The accountant *who works for John* has been missing for three days. The accountant, *who works for John*, has been missing for three days.

In the first sentence, *who works for John* identifies which accountant among several is missing. The second sentence implies that the accountant, as opposed to the receptionist or some other individual, has been missing. The information *who works for John* can be eliminated without changing the meaning of the sentence.

**Linking Adverbs**

*Linking adverbs* are used to join two *independent clauses*, that is, clauses with a subject-verb combination that can stand alone. Linking adverbs
indicate the relationship between two ideas expressed in independent clauses. In general, linking adverbs reflect results, contrast, or continuation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Continuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accordingly</td>
<td>nevertheless</td>
<td>furthermore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a result</td>
<td>however</td>
<td>further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>nonetheless</td>
<td>in addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thus</td>
<td>conversely</td>
<td>also</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linking adverbs can come at the beginning of the second clause they are joining. In such cases, they are usually preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma. They also can stand within the second clause or sentence and often are set off by commas.

We arrived late at night; **however**, no one complained.
I fail to see your point; **furthermore**, your entire argument is off the subject.
The strike delayed shipment; **therefore**, your order will not be sent on the date we promised.
The storm ruined two speakers; the band, **however**, had spare ones in the van.

**Interjections**

*Interjections* are words used to express emotion or to catch the reader’s attention. Interjections are rarely used in formal or business writing but do appear in advertising and promotional material, fiction, informal writing, and personal letters.

**Common Interjections**

These are some of the most commonly used interjections:
ah       hey       no way
alas     hooray   oh
congratulations    hurry       ouch
good grief     my goodness outstanding
great        never       ugh
help          no         wow

**Punctuation**

Strong interjections are punctuated with an exclamation point (wow! ouch! hooray!). The first word following the exclamation point is capitalized because it is the first word in a new sentence.

Milder interjections are set off by commas and often introduce a sentence (indeed, yes, well). The word following the comma is not capitalized because it is a continuation of the same sentence.

**Strong interjections:** Excellent! That was a perfect dive.
You may be saying, “Hey! Why is the coffee cold?”

**Mild interjections:** No, we can’t visit you this summer.
Well, I just thought I’d ask.
Punctuation and Punctuation Style

Punctuation serves two important purposes in written communication. First, it helps present ideas clearly and accurately. It indicates where one thought ends and another begins, shows relationships among ideas, and separates items in a series. Second, punctuation is used in abbreviations and in figures expressing time, quantities, and measures.

This chapter covers proper usage of end marks, commas, semicolons, colons, quotation marks, apostrophes, hyphens, dashes, parentheses, brackets, and ellipses.

End Marks: Period, Question Mark, Exclamation Point

*End marks* usually come at the end of a sentence. However, they also can be used after single words or within a sentence.

*Period*

The *period* is used at the end of a complete sentence, which can be a statement, command, or request. It is a visual marker to the reader that one complete thought has ended and that another may follow. In informal writing, periods can be used with single words.
Statement: You shouldn’t drive and talk on the cell phone.
Request: Please hang up and drive.
Command: Get off the cell phone and drive.
Single words: Thanks. I feel much safer.

Periods are also used in many abbreviations. For a more complete discussion of abbreviations, see pages 86-100.

Saint St.
Avenue Ave.
American Bar Association A.B.A.

**Question Mark**
A question mark is used at the end of a sentence that asks a direct question. It is not used at the end of a statement that contains an indirect question. In informal writing, question marks also can be used with single words.

Direct question: Are you going to the preview tonight?
Indirect question: I asked them if they were going to the preview tonight.
Single words: What? I couldn’t hear you over the TV.
So? It’s no trouble to feed one more person.

**Polite Requests.** Many business letters contain requests for information, compliance, reply, or permission. These requests can be punctuated using either a period or a question mark.

Period: Would you please send me your company’s website address.
Question mark: Would you please send me your company’s website address?

**Series of Questions.** Question marks are used after each question in a sentence containing a series of questions.
How much are you willing to gamble on your future? your family’s health? your career?

**Quotation Marks.** Question marks are placed *inside* quotation marks when the quoted material is a question. Otherwise, they are placed *outside* quotation marks.

> “Are the sets ready?” the director asked.
> I just finished the short story “Where Is Paradise?”
> Have you read “The Scarlet Ibis”? (The quoted material is not a question. The entire sentence is the question.)
> Did he say “no vacation” or “no early vacation”?

**Exclamation Point**

*Exclamation points* add emphasis to sentences, phrases, or single words. They are like a red flag waved at the reader and as such should be used sparingly. Exclamation points are a familiar sight in advertising and promotional material.

> Wait! Don’t touch that wire!
> I can’t believe she said that!
> Don’t delay! Order your DVDs now!

**Comma**

The *comma* is the most commonly used and abused punctuation mark. People often insert commas between subject and verb or when they reach the end of a thought, without regard for the rules of comma usage.

Commas are used to separate words or groups of words in a list or parallel construction; to set off introductory elements, interruptions, and words moved from their usual position; and to coordinate such grammatical structures as compound predicates, coordinate adjectives, and descriptive appositives and modifiers. On the other hand, some comma uses have little to do with the meaning of a sentence and are inserted to prevent mis-
reading or to create emphasis. In a few cases, they simply represent traditional ways of punctuating various grammatical elements.

This section discusses some of the more common uses and abuses of this often troublesome punctuation mark.

**Series Comma**
Commas separate items in a series. The items can be single words, phrases, or clauses. Although current practice allows the final comma to be dropped before the final conjunction (or, but, nor, and and), including the comma can avoid possible confusion for the reader.

We brought sandwiches, wine, cold soup, and chocolate cake on the picnic.
The conductor set up his stand, took out the score, and lifted his baton. (verb phrases)
She is vice president of operations, sales and resources and personnel.
(Are the final categories sales and resources, and personnel or are they sales, and resources and personnel? A final comma would make the categories clear.)

**Independent Clauses**
When two independent clauses are joined by and, but, or, nor, or for, use a comma before the conjunction. However, no comma is needed if the clauses are very short.

Her gymnastics routine was brilliant, and the judges gave her a 99.46.
Yolanda knew we’d be late, but she left anyway.
He can play the guitar, or he can do his magic show.
Stir the batter and add the eggs slowly.
They came early and they stayed late.

A comma is not used when and, but, for, or, or nor joins two verbs that share the same subject.
Kerry Wood pitches with the best of them and bats better than most outfielders.
Shelly has never cooked a meal nor washed her own clothes.

**Introductory Clauses, Phrases, Expressions**
Use a comma after introductory phrases or clauses unless they are very short. When expressions such as no, yes, in addition, well, and thus begin a sentence, they are followed by a comma.

When Ansel Adams took a photograph, he knew exactly what would appear in the picture.
Speaking of food, isn’t anybody hungry?
In summer we always try to get outside more. (Short phrase in summer does not require a comma.)
Well, losing one game doesn’t ruin an entire season.
Thus, I feel your qualifications make you perfectly suited for this job.

**Nonrestrictive Clauses and Nonessential Material**
Commas set off nonrestrictive clauses and expressions that interrupt the sentence or that add incidental information or description.

The rodeo, always held in August, draws tourists from all over.
(Always held in August is a nonrestrictive clause.)
We wanted to finish, of course, but didn’t know how.
The new officer, I’m sure you remember him, locked himself out of his car.

**Direct Address**
Words used in direct address are set off by commas regardless of their position in the sentence.
Greg, can you fix my e-mail?
They heard about the trouble, Jean, and wanted to help.
Please sign this receipt, Ms. Liang.

Commas and Clarity
At times commas are used to avoid confusing the reader when a sentence can be read in more than one way.

In autumn nights grow steadily longer. (On first reading, *autumn* and *nights* appear to go together. It’s evident from the rest of the sentence, however, that they are separate. A comma after *autumn* would make the meaning clear immediately.)
In autumn, nights grow steadily longer.

Traditional Comma Uses
Commas are used in certain conventional situations including dates, addresses, the salutations and closings of informal letters, and certain forms of proper names or names followed by a title.

We were married June 22, 1941, in Los Angeles. (When only the day and month are used, no commas are necessary. *We were married on June 22 in Los Angeles.*)
Send your rebate coupon to Harvard House, Suite 2920, 467 West Rhine Street, Portland, Oregon.

Dear Harriet,
Sincerely yours,
Truly yours,
Samuel Stanislaw, Jr. (but Samuel Stanislaw III)
Judith Gallagher, PhD
Linda Marks, director
Comma Faults
Many people use commas incorrectly. The following guidelines point out common errors in style.

1. Never use commas to separate subject and verb.
   
   **Incorrect:** Finding a lead singer for the band, has been an ordeal. 
   (The noun phrase *Finding a lead singer for the band* is the subject and should not be separated from the verb *has been.*)
   
   **Correct:** Finding a lead singer for the band has been an ordeal.

2. Never use commas to separate two phrases or subordinate clauses joined by a conjunction.
   
   **Incorrect:** The waiter suggested that we order a white wine, and that we try the Cajun appetizers.
   
   **Correct:** The waiter suggested that we order a white wine and that we try the Cajun appetizers.

   **Incorrect:** Ming-Jie painted her room, but not the hallway.
   
   **Correct:** Ming-Jie painted her room but not the hallway.

   **Incorrect:** After the treaty was signed, both sides pulled back their troops, and reduced their armored divisions.
   
   **Correct:** After the treaty was signed, both sides pulled back their troops and reduced their armored divisions.

3. In a series, never use a comma to separate a modifier from the word it modifies.

   **Incorrect:** They drove through a damp, cold, eerie, fog.
   
   **Correct:** They drove through a damp, cold, eerie fog.

   **Incorrect:** That is a ridiculous, immature, wicked, suggestion.
   
   **Correct:** That is a ridiculous, immature, wicked suggestion.

Semicolon

A *semicolon* represents a stronger break than a comma but not as complete a stop as a period or colon. Semicolons are used to separate independent
clauses in a variety of special circumstances. They also serve to group items in a series when the items contain internal punctuation.

**Independent Clauses**

Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses that are similar in thought but are *not* joined by the coordinating conjunctions *and, but, or, nor, for,* or *yet.*

- The house stood empty for years; no one would buy it.
- The river raged through the gorge; her small tent was swept away in its path.

**Joined by a Linking Adverb.** When two independent clauses are joined by a linking adverb such as *accordingly, however, therefore,* or *thus,* use a semicolon at the end of the first clause. The linking adverb is usually followed by a comma or set off by commas if it falls within the second clause.

- The turtle survived its two-story fall; however, it was never quite the same again.
- The conference ended last Thursday; therefore, we can get back to business on Monday.
- Margaret told me not to stay in a motel; she suggested, instead, that I stay at her house.

**Clauses with Internal Punctuation.** A semicolon may be used to separate two independent clauses if one or both of the clauses contain internal punctuation. The clauses may or may not be joined by conjunctions or linking adverbs.

- She owns two dogs, a goat, and a llama; they stay outside all year.
- Walter, the one with the allergies, read his story in class; and everyone thought it was excellent.
- The dark, dusty street looked deserted; but I kept hearing footsteps behind me.
Series
Use semicolons to separate items in a series if the items contain internal punctuation.

The speakers included Jeff Hines, vice president; Alberta Corazon, director of finances; Edward Singh, human resources; and Nancy Meripol, assistant to the president.
We ordered five cartons of color-printer paper; six lined, medium-sized stationery pads; and nine boxes of assorted pens, pencils, and markers.

Colon
Colons represent a more complete break than semicolons but not as complete a stop as a period.

Before a Series or List
Colons are used to introduce a series or list only after a complete sentence. When the series immediately follows a verb or preposition, do not use a colon.

Incorrect: Our five travel choices are: the Bahamas, Hawaii, Mexico City, Acapulco, and Peoria.
Correct: We have five travel choices: the Bahamas, Hawaii, Mexico City, Acapulco, and Peoria.
Incorrect: They were interested in: one brass bed, two lace pillows, one afghan comforter, and a chamber pot.
Correct: They were interested in the following items: one brass bed, two lace pillows, one afghan comforter, and a chamber pot.
**Between Independent Clauses**

Use a colon to introduce a question or related statement following an independent clause. The second independent clause may or may not begin with a capital letter. Whichever way you choose, be consistent in your writing.

She had only one thought: What was she going to do now?
I know the answer: reverse the two equations.

**Time**

Colons are used to express time in figures. Do not use the words o’clock after the figures. However, expressions such as noon, in the afternoon, AM, PM, and midnight can be used.

10:30 AM  4:35 PM  
12:00 midnight  8:30 in the morning

**Formal and Business Communications**

Colons follow the salutation in a formal or business letter, report, memo, or other type of business communication.

Dear Mr. Winfield:        To the Research Staff:
Dear Buyer:                To All Managers:
Dear President West:       Attention Union Members:

**Quotation Marks**

*Quotation marks* enclose a direct quotation, that is, the repetition of someone’s exact words.

“Keep your head down and charge!” the coach said.
Her exact words were, “Bake the bread at 350 degrees.”
Indirect quotations do not take quotation marks.

The coach said to keep your head down and charge.
She told us to bake the bread at 350 degrees.

**Punctuation with Quotation Marks**

Commas and periods are always placed *inside* the quotation marks even if the quoted material is contained within the sentence.

She thinks we’re “off the wall,” but I think our idea will work.
We’ve heard him say a thousand times, “Waste not, want not.”
“Tell me something I’ll remember forever,” she said.
You’ve read the poem “Ash Wednesday” haven’t you?

Semicolons and colons are always placed *outside* the quotation marks.

Look up the title under “Animated Cartoons”; copy the cartoon features listed there.
The following animals are considered “marsupials”: kangaroo, wombat, koala.

Question marks and exclamation points are placed *inside* the quotation marks if they are part of the quoted material. Otherwise they are placed *outside* the quotation marks. Only one end mark is used at the end of a sentence containing quoted material.

Have you read the report “The Over-Scheduled Child”? (The entire sentence is the question; the end mark comes after the final quotation mark.)
He sent Irene the article “Why Can’t Ivan Compute?” (The title is a question; the end mark comes before the final quotation mark.)
“Dinner is ready!” he called.
I can’t believe they want us to increase sales “by 20 percent!”
**Brief and Long Quotations**

Quoted material that is only two or three lines long is enclosed in quotation marks and included as part of the regular text.

The movie critic was blunt about her reactions to the film. She stated that it “has the intelligence of a jellyfish and as much reality as a *Survivor* series.”

Longer quotations have no quotation marks and are set off from the rest of the text.

The movie critic was blunt about her reactions to the film. This movie should suffer an early and merciful death. It has the intelligence of a jellyfish and as much reality as a *Survivor* series. I don’t know what the director intended for this film; but unless it was to bore us to death, he has certainly failed.

**Single Quotation Marks**

Single quotation marks are used to set off a quote within a quote.

Carla said, “Every time I hear the song ‘Into the West’ I want to cry.”
“When I asked him what he needed, he replied, ‘A passport.’”

**Titles**

Quotation marks are used to enclose the titles of articles, chapters of books, poems, reports, many governmental publications, short stories, individual songs, workshop or conference titles, and titles of proceedings.

“*Ballad of the Sad Cafe*” is required reading in most college literature programs.
The song “Somewhere over the Rainbow” was almost left out of the classic movie *The Wizard of Oz.*
Read the chapter “How Diet Affects Immune Functions” before you change your eating habits too much.
The report “Equality in the Workplace: A Ten-Year Study” shows how much work still needs to be done.
Billy Collins’ poem “Study in Orange and White” appears in one of his recent collections.
The IEEE international conference focused on the theme “Nanotechnology: Practical Applications.”
Throughout the weekend, we will offer two workshops titled “Living with Stress” and “Getting Control of Your Finances.”

**Terms and Expressions**

Use quotation marks to enclose terms and expressions that are considered odd or unusual (slang terms in a formal report) or that are likely to be unknown to the reader (jargon, technical terms).

The President told reporters he regarded his opponent as a “flip-flopper.”
Not many people know the functions of “T cells” or “B cells” in the immune system.
Scott said he was as full as a “bug-eyed tick.”
The term “blog” should be defined in your book.

**Apostrophe**

The *apostrophe* is used to show possession and to form the plural of many nouns and symbols, as well as to indicate the omission of letters in contractions. (Possessive nouns and pronouns are also covered in Chapter 1 under Nouns and under Pronouns.)

**Possessive of Singular Nouns**

The possessive of a singular noun is formed by adding ’s. Names that end in a z sound often take only the apostrophe to avoid the awkwardness of too many s sounds.
the mechanic’s wrench  Gloria’s backpack
the tree’s leaves  Mr. Jones’ iPod
Moses’ tablets  Carlos’s notebook
Mrs. Gonzales’s maid  Ned Stanis’s boots

Possessive of Plural Nouns
The possessive of plural nouns ending in s is formed by adding only the apostrophe. All other plural nouns take ’s.

the Harlands’ trip  the trees’ leaves
children’s shoes  men’s sports wear
the teams’ scores  women’s networks

Possessive of Indefinite and Personal Pronouns
Indefinite pronouns (everyone, no one, anybody, everybody, someone, somebody, one) require an apostrophe to form the possessive. However, personal possessive pronouns (his, hers, theirs, your/yours, my/mine, our/ours) do not use an apostrophe.

Is this someone’s book?  Yes, the book is hers.
I’ll take anyone’s ideas.  Your ideas are great.

Individual and Joint Possession
To show joint possession by two or more organizations, companies, or individuals, only the last word takes ’s or an apostrophe. In cases of individual possession, both nouns and pronouns take ’s or the apostrophe only.

Joint possession:  Lin and Chan’s bicycle (The bicycle is owned by both Lin and Chan.)
the vice presidents’ office (The office is used by more than one vice president.)
IBM and Xerox’s new venture (The two companies are working together on one venture.)
Individual possession: Lin’s and Chan’s bicycles (Notice the plural noun after the names—a clue that each person owns a bicycle.) her father-in-law’s and brother’s golf scores Texaco’s and BP’s annual reports

Units of Measure as Possessive Adjectives
Units of measure such as day, week, yard, cent, and hour take ’s or an apostrophe when used as possessive adjectives.

- a moment’s peace
- a month’s pay
- a dollar’s worth
- ten minutes’ work
- three weeks’ pay
- two cents’ worth

Plural Forms of Symbols
The apostrophe or ’s is used to form the plural of letters, numbers, signs, symbols, and words referred to as words.

All the R’s in this article were printed backward.
Mark these items with X’s and those with O’s.
Your 3’s look like 8’s.
How many and’s can you put in one sentence?
The printer smudged all the g’s in my report.
We can use +’s and *’s in the chart.

Contractions
The apostrophe is also used to indicate letters that have been omitted to form contractions of verbs. Contractions are used in informal writing and conversation, but are generally avoided in formal writing.

She will come tomorrow.
She’ll come tomorrow. (wi in will omitted)
I have not heard from him.
I’ve not heard from him. (ha in have omitted)

Formal writing: Do not send the second shipment by UPS.
Informal writing: Don’t send the second shipment by UPS. (o in not omitted)

Hyphen
Hyphens are used to join two or more words that are used as a single unit, to join continuous numbers, to connect some prefixes and suffixes with their nouns, to divide words at the end of a line, to link two last names, and to avoid confusing or awkward word constructions.

Compound Numbers and Fractions
Hyphens are used with compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and with fractions used as adjectives. However, when fractions serve as nouns, no hyphen is used.

- twenty-one gun salute
- sixty-five and over
- a two-thirds majority
- a glass three-fifths full (But do not hyphenate three fifths when used as a noun, such as three fifths of the voters.)

Continuous Numbers
Hyphens are used to link dates of birth and death, pages of material, scores of games, and other instances in which the relationship between the numbers needs to be shown.

- Christopher Reeve, “Superman” (1952–2004)
- The Bears beat the Rams 21–0.
- All the children ages 8–12 are eligible for camp.
Prefixes and Suffixes
Prefixes *ex*, *self*, and *all* and the suffix *elect* always take a hyphen whether they are used as modifiers or as nouns. Hyphens also are used with all prefixes before proper nouns and adjectives.

- self-esteem  secretary-elect  all-Canadian team
- ex-director  all-encompassing  pro-French

Compound Adjectives
When compound adjectives are used before the noun, they are hyphenated. When they follow the noun, no hyphen is used. If one of the modifiers is an adverb ending in *ly*, do not use a hyphen in the compound adjective.

- a decision-making process  a process for decision making
- a well-run program  a program that is well run
- a city-owned business  a business that is city owned
- organically grown fruit  fruit that is organically grown
- publicly owned parks  parks that are publicly owned

Word Division
Hyphens are used to divide words at the end of a line as a reminder that the rest of the word is to follow. Words cannot be divided arbitrarily but only between syllables. See the section on Word Division in Chapter 5 for rules on dividing words at the end of a line.

We were almost in Niles Town-
ship when our car broke down.
Sam didn’t really want to con-
tinue the trip, but I did.
**Hyphenated Names**

Hyphens are used to join two last names.

- Karen Norridge-Adams
- Mr. Michael Harrington-Kelly
- the Henderson-Smythes
- Mr. and Mrs. Burns-Schroeder

**To Avoid Confusion**

Use hyphens to prevent confusion or awkwardness in sentences.

- re-creation (prevents confusion with recreation)
- anti-intellectual (avoids awkwardness of antiintellectual)
- sub-subentry (avoids confusion of subsubentry)

**Dash**

A *dash* indicates a break in thought or the addition of information within a sentence or at its end. A dash is typed using two hyphens (although most word-processing programs can be set up to automatically insert a dash when you type two hyphens). There is no space before or after the punctuation mark.

- The woman came running around the corner—I couldn’t see her face—and disappeared down the alley.
- This building—and every building on the street—will be torn down.
- Marsha Nagib—you know her, I think—told me we might close early today.

A dash can be used to mean *namely, that is, or in other words* to introduce additional information or an explanation.

- I thought about taking another route—the one through West Virginia. There’s only one way to win—don’t play the game.
Parentheses

*Parentheses* enclose material that is an interruption of the text but adds information.

The park (in Washington) is always crowded in summer.
I know the answer (I think) to the final question.

If the material enclosed falls at the end of a sentence, the end mark is placed *outside* the closing parenthesis. If the material is a complete sentence within itself, the end mark is placed *inside* the closing parenthesis.

We provide a complete list of stores (see our website).
We provide a complete list of stores. (See our website.)

Brackets

Use *brackets* to enclose additions to quoted material. These additions, made by editors or writers, usually clarify or comment on the material.

“Mark Twain said it [the river] taught him all he ever knew about life.”
“Virginia Woolf lived with him [Lytton Strachey] while recovering from her illness.”
“There were few Esquimouxs [sic] living in the region we explored.”

Brackets are also used to enclose material that falls within material already enclosed by parentheses.

The fall sales records are encouraging (see page 33, Monthly Sales [Table 2.1] for a detailed breakdown by product line).

Ellipses

*Ellipses* indicate that material has been omitted from a quotation or quoted material.
Original: This book describes the author’s visit to Nepal and renders scenes of the rugged, mountainous countryside that will remain in the reader’s mind forever.

Condensed: This book . . . renders scenes . . . that will remain in the reader’s mind forever.

When words are omitted at the end of a sentence, use an end mark plus the ellipses.

Condensed: This book . . . renders scenes of the rugged, mountainous countryside. . . .

Italics

Italics are used to indicate emphasis, to mark foreign terms and expressions not commonly used, and to highlight titles of publications and names of certain vehicles such as ships, spacecraft, and the like.

Emphasis

Occasionally, italics are used to stress certain words or phrases. This usage is more common in dialogue than in formal writing and should be kept to a minimum.

“I didn’t want blue paint; I wanted lavender paint!”

“Mr. Lloyd, you told the prosecutor that you didn’t meet Mrs. Young until last month. Is that right?”

On the basis of the field inspector’s report, I recommend that we shut down offshore drilling platform #45.

Foreign Words and Phrases

Foreign words and phrases that are not part of common usage are italicized.
The motto of the Marine Corps is *Semper Fidelis*—always faithful. As they say, *ende gut, alles gut*: all’s well that ends well.

However, many foreign words have been in common use long enough that they are no longer italicized. Check the dictionary for the latest usage.

Her paintings were very *avant-garde*. At one time the motto *caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware—was the rule in business. Her clothes are *chic*, her decor *passé*. The military *junta* declared a 7:00 PM curfew.

**Titles**
The titles of plays, books, magazines, newspapers, movies, and other types of periodicals and publications are italicized when they appear in print. If the first word of a title is *a, an, or the*, it is italicized only if it is part of the actual name.

- *The Wall Street Journal* (newspaper)
- the *Los Angeles Times* (newspaper)
- *Angels in America* (play)
- *The Insider* (corporate publication)
- *Editorial Eye* (newsletter)
- *Esquire* (magazine)
- *Spider-Man* (movie)
- *Redbook* (magazine)
- *The Da Vinci Code* (book)

**Vehicles**
Use italics for the names of ships, spacecraft, airplanes, and other well-known vehicles.

- the battleship *Excalibur*
- the spaceship *Enterprise*
- the shuttle *Columbia*
- the *Titanic*
- the President’s jet *Air Force One*
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Sentences and Sentence Patterns

The English language provides considerable flexibility in sentence construction. Using various sentence patterns produces speech and writing that are lively and interesting. Also, variety in sentence construction contributes to well-organized messages. (See Chapter 6 for more on sentence patterns.)

This chapter explains the building blocks of sentences—phrases and clauses, subjects and predicates—and the various ways sentences are constructed.

Sentences, Fragments, and Run-Ons
A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. It begins with a capital letter and closes with an end mark, either a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. Sentences are classified as declarative (a statement), interrogative (a question), imperative (command or request), or exclamatory (for emphasis).

Declarative: We reached the final level of Doom.
Interrogative: How did you get past the Valley of Fire?
Imperative: Click on the dragon. Watch out for the Black Guard.
Exclamatory: I’m in the Secret Chamber!

Not every group of words is a sentence. A fragment is a phrase or clause that looks like a sentence but does not express a complete thought.

Fragment: down by the river where the fish bite if he would just think
By themselves, fragments make little sense and leave important questions unanswered. Who or what is *down by the river where the fish bite*? What would happen *if he would just think*? Fragments must be joined with other sentence parts to form a complete thought.

**Sentence:**  
*We were* down by the river where the fish bite.  
*He could save himself so much trouble* if he would just think.

Unlike fragments, which haven’t enough parts to make a complete sentence, *run-ons* have too many parts. They are two or more complete thoughts—at times only vaguely related—strung together without punctuation.

**Run-On:**  
We have only three days until the trip starts I don’t have my jacket repaired yet and that will take at least a day or so to do don’t you think?

Run-on sentences can be corrected in a number of ways: by inserting the proper punctuation, by breaking the sentence into two or more smaller sentences, or by rewriting the sentence to eliminate the run-on.

**Revised:**  
We have only three days until the trip starts, and I forgot to have my jacket repaired. Do you think the repairs will take more than a day or so?  
We have only three days to get ready for the trip. I forgot to have my jacket repaired. Do you think the repairs will take more than a day or so?

**Phrases and Clauses**  
The various parts of speech are grouped into phrases and clauses, which make up the basic sentence.
**Phrases**

*Phrases* are groups of related words that do not contain a subject-verb combination or express a complete thought. There are noun, prepositional, participial, verb, and infinitive phrases.

- **Noun:** my widescreen TV, the tired old man
- **Prepositional:** over the wall, around the block
- **Participial:** playing the fool, running the program
- **Verb:** will be given, is coming
- **Infinitive:** to think, to draw

**Clauses**

*Clauses* are groups of related words that contain a subject-verb combination. *Independent clauses* express a complete thought and can stand by themselves as sentences. *Subordinate clauses* serve as part of a sentence but do not express a complete thought and cannot stand by themselves. They are subordinate to independent clauses.

- **Independent clauses:**
  - the floodplain was completely underwater
  - John got us jobs as stagehands
  - they took the off-road trail
- **Subordinate clauses:**
  - by the time June arrived
  - because he works at the theater
  - when they came to the turn
- **Complete sentences:**
  - By the time June arrived, the floodplain was completely underwater.
  - John got us jobs as stagehands, because he works at the theater.
  - When they came to the turn, they took the off-road trail.
Subject and Predicate

The *subject* is the person, place, or thing that is the topic of the sentence. The *predicate* is what is said about the subject.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Predicate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The balloon</td>
<td>floated up through the trees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>is a major cultural center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The zoo worker</td>
<td>was attacked by a tiger.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In most cases, as in the preceding examples, the subject of a sentence comes first, followed by the predicate. However, there are instances when the subject is placed after the predicate, omitted from the sentence, or placed inside the verb.

Into the valley of death rode the six hundred. (subject follows the predicate)
Wash the car by tonight. (subject you is understood)
Are your parents coming tomorrow? (subject is placed inside the verb)
There are three ships coming into the bay. (There occupies the place of the subject, but three ships is still the subject of the sentence.)

*Forms of the Subject*

The most common forms of the subject are nouns, pronouns, and proper nouns.

The *stock market* is strong right now.
Why don’t you pick up some lettuce for tonight?
*Carol* almost flunked algebra this semester.

At times, noun phrases and clauses, gerunds and gerund phrases, and infinitive phrases can also function as the subject.

* Noun phrase: The *girl on the swing* is my niece.
* Noun clause: What *they said* isn’t true.
Gerund: Swimming is a major Olympic sport.
Gerund phrase: Playing chess kept him occupied for hours.
Infinitive phrase: To see clearly is an artist’s greatest task.

Complete Subject. The noun or pronoun and all its modifiers are known as the complete subject.

The ship in the harbor seemed small and frail.
What he said in the car surprised us all.
The trees, which had been damaged in the storm, were cut down the next day.

Simple and Compound Subjects. The noun or pronoun is known as the simple subject. It is important to identify the subject because it controls the form of the verb used in the sentence.

The ship in the harbor seemed small and frail.
Daffodils open in early spring.
The trees, which had been damaged in the storm, were cut down the next day.

The compound subject is composed of two or more nouns, pronouns, or phrases or clauses to express the topic of a sentence.

Nouns: The Democrats and Republicans fought a bitter campaign.
Pronouns: She and I used to be best friends.
Noun clauses: What he wanted and what he got were two different things.
Gerund phrases: Working at home and commuting electronically are more popular now.
Forms of the Predicate

The predicate always contains a verb. An action verb generally will have an object as well as various verb modifiers. A linking verb will have a complement along with its verb modifiers. Thus, the predicate usually is composed of a verb, object or complement, and verb modifiers.

Predicate with Action Verbs. The most common form of predicate is one in which the verb describes some sort of action. The verb is followed by a direct object (DO) and, in some cases, by an indirect object (IO).

IO        DO
Indiana Jones sent his partner the secret code.

DO        DO
I brought four sandwiches and one pizza.

DO
Michael Phelps won six gold medals in the 2004 summer Olympics.

IO        DO
She gave him a rose.

Note: the object of a preposition is never an indirect object.

DO    O OF PREP
She gave a rose to him.

Some action verbs can drop their objects and still make sense. The predicate then consists of the verb only.

They have been practicing.
We were reading.
The reporter disappeared.
The weather changed.
Action verbs can also take complements. Nouns, pronouns, prepositional phrases, adjectives, and verb phrases can serve as complements in the predicate.

He taught the dog to roll over. (The infinitive phrase to roll over is the complement.)
I called him a prince. (The noun prince is the complement.)
They made camp on the hill. (The prepositional phrase on the hill is the complement.)
She acted her part beautifully. (The adverb beautifully is the complement.)
We saw the tornado heading this way. (The participial phrase heading this way is the complement.)
She lay down in the tall grass. (The adverb down and the prepositional phrase in the tall grass are the complement and indicate direction and location.)

Predicate with Linking Verbs. Linking verbs that express being, seeming, or becoming need a predicate adjective or verb complement to complete them. The more common of these verbs include seem, become, grow, taste, smell, appear, look, feel, and sound.

He seems nervous. (He seems is incomplete. The adjective nervous acts as the predicate adjective.)
I feel that you should apologize for your outburst. (The noun clause that you should apologize for your outburst is the verb complement.)

Compound Predicate. At times a sentence will contain more than one verb, object, or complement. These structures are known as compound verbs, compound objects, and compound complements.

The rookie hits and fields like Ichiro Suzuki. (Two verbs function as the compound verb.)
I gave away my coat and boots. (The two nouns coat and boots serve as the compound direct object of the verb gave.)
Mark’s first week abroad was long and lonely. (The two adjectives long and lonely are the compound complement.)
Sentence Constructions

English has four basic sentence constructions: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. Each construction uses the same basic elements of sentence structure—parts of speech, phrases, and clauses.

Simple Sentence

The *simple sentence* is an independent clause with no subordinate clauses. It begins with a capital letter and closes with an end mark. Simple sentences can vary considerably in length.

I bought four apples at the farmers’ market.
I bought four apples, a basket of tomatoes, a bag of green beans, and three squashes at the farmers’ market.
The farmers’ market is a classic example of producers selling directly to consumers and avoiding the attempts of agents to control the supply or to manipulate the price.

Compound Sentence

The *compound sentence* contains two or more independent clauses but no subordinate clauses. The two independent clauses usually are joined by a comma followed by a conjunction (*and, but, nor, yet*). They may also be joined by a semicolon, a semicolon followed by a linking adverb (*therefore, however, because, since*), or a colon.

- **Conjunction:** I don’t know where he went, and no one has seen him since this afternoon.
- **Semicolon:** Harold the First fought in northern Ireland; his campaigns generally were successful.
- **Linking adverb:** Vivian wanted to stay another week in Ashville; however, her parents refused to send her more money.
- **Colon:** You must have heard the news: we’re all getting bonuses this year!
**Complex Sentence**
The complex sentence is made up of an independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses. When a subordinate clause introduces the sentence, it is usually followed by a comma unless it is very short. In the following examples, the subordinate clauses are printed in bold type.

The library closes early in summer when the students are out of school.

*After the clear days of Indian summer,* the autumn skies grow heavy and dark.

Linda told us on the phone that they had had a flat tire last night and that the car wouldn’t start this morning.

*When you come in the front door,* make sure you push it shut, because the lock doesn’t always catch.

**Compound-Complex Sentence**
The compound-complex sentence is composed of two or more independent clauses and one or more subordinate clauses. In the examples, the subordinate clauses are printed in bold type.

John Lennon wrote many ballads, and he recorded them while he was in England.

The letter carrier, who is always punctual, didn’t come today; I wonder if she is ill.

He should call you as soon as he arrives; but if you don’t hear from him, let me know.

**Modifiers in Sentences**
A modifier is any word or group of words that limits or qualifies the meaning of other parts of the sentence. Be sure that your modifiers are clearly joined to the word or words they qualify. Descriptive phrases or clauses joined to the wrong words are known as dangling modifiers.
You can correct dangling modifiers by making the doer of the action the subject of the sentence, by adding omitted words, or by changing the phrase to a subordinate clause.

Incorrect: Coming over the hill, the blueberries were seen in the valley below.
Correct: As we came over the hill, we saw the blueberries in the valley below.

Incorrect: Referring to your request of April 12, the matter is being reviewed by our board.
Correct: Our board is reviewing your request of April 12.

Incorrect: When she was four years old, her mother died. (Was her mother four years old?)
Correct: She was four years old when her mother died.

Incorrect: Exhausted and bleary-eyed, the report was finished by the team in the morning. (Was the report exhausted and bleary-eyed?)
Correct: The team, exhausted and bleary-eyed, finished the report in the morning.
Capitalization, Abbreviations, and Numbers

Rules for capitalization, abbreviations, and numbers can be confusing. Not all grammar books agree on the same style. The guidelines in this book are based on the latest accepted usage for business and personal writing.

Capitalization
Capitalize the first word in any sentence, the personal pronoun I, and the first word of a direct quotation if it is a complete statement.

_Night falls quickly in the mountains._
_The door was open when I arrived home._
_He looked at the cake and said, “Diets, like pie crust, are made to be broken.”_

Proper Nouns and Adjectives
Capitalize all proper nouns and adjectives such as the names of persons, business firms, business products, institutions, government bodies and agencies, and public and private organizations.

**Personal names:** Lance Armstrong, Barbara Walters
**Business firm:** Wal-Mart, Mrs. Field’s Cookies
**Business products:** Honda Civic, Downy, Dr Pepper
**Institutions:**
- Adler Planetarium, Stanford University

**Government bodies and agencies:**
- Internal Revenue Service, Civil Rights Commission, Office of Homeland Security

**Public organizations:**
- Junior Chamber of Commerce, Girl Scouts of America

**Private organizations:**
- Midwest Authors Guild, JoAnn Kilmer Foundation

**Proper adjectives:**
- Canadian beer, American flag, Australian kangaroo

---

**Hyphenated Names and Prefixes**
Capitalize all hyphenated names and hyphenated proper nouns. Also capitalize all proper nouns and adjectives used with a prefix, but do not capitalize the prefix.

Send the bill to Mrs. Simon-Allen.
The Minneapolis-St. Paul project has been approved.
I am neither anti-British nor pro-French; I happen to enjoy both countries equally well.
He will always be a pro-Chicago politician.

---

**Family Relationships**
Capitalize words describing family relationships only when they substitute for a proper noun or are used with the person’s name. Do not capitalize the words if they are used with a possessive pronoun.

I told Aunt Julia that my sister would be late.
She described her father to me perfectly.
Granny Winters and Grampa McDonough live in the same neighborhood.
We got a letter from Aunt Helen and Uncle Bill.
Do you know her cousin Lucia?
Nationalities and Races
Capitalize the names of nationalities. Racial groups may be lowercased or capitalized. The only firm rule is be consistent. If you capitalize one racial group, capitalize the others as well.

Nationalities           Racial Groups
  Australian            Black or black
  Chinese               White or white
  Indian
  Thai

Languages and School Subjects
Capitalize languages and those school subjects followed by a number. Do not capitalize general school subjects unless the subject is a language.

Languages           School Subjects
  Arabic              Biology 403
  English             French
  Korean              history
  Polish              literature
                      Social Science 202
                      conversational Spanish
                      statistics

Religious Names and Terms
The names of all religions, denominations, and local groups are capitalized.

Religions
  Buddhism           Islam          Shintoism
  Christianity       Judaism        Taoism
  Hinduism
## Denominations and Movements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jehovah’s Witnesses</th>
<th>Mormonism</th>
<th>Theosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodism</td>
<td>Sufism</td>
<td>Zen Buddhism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Local Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church of the Redeemer</th>
<th>Saint Leonard’s House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midwest Baptist Conference</td>
<td>Temple Shalom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Capitalize the names of deities and revered persons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the Almighty</th>
<th>Child of God</th>
<th>the Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allah</td>
<td>Jehovah</td>
<td>Logos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb of God</td>
<td>Holy Ghost</td>
<td>Mother of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan</td>
<td>Shiva</td>
<td>Kwan Yin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kali</td>
<td>Egun-gun</td>
<td>Astarte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Capitalize the names of sacred works or highly revered works and their individual parts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the Bible</th>
<th>the Koran</th>
<th>the Book of David</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the Talmud</td>
<td>the Vedas</td>
<td>the Tripitaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>the Beatitudes</td>
<td>the Diamond Sutra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostles’ Creed</td>
<td>Epistles</td>
<td>Sermon on the Mount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Decalogue</td>
<td>Book of Job</td>
<td>Acts of the Apostles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Capitalize religious holidays and terms relating to the Eucharistic sacrament.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ascension of the Virgin</th>
<th>High Mass</th>
<th>Passover</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>Holy Communion</td>
<td>Ramadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>Lent</td>
<td>Yom Kippur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Names of other rites and services are not capitalized in a text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>baptism</th>
<th>confirmation</th>
<th>seder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bar (bas) mitzvah</td>
<td>evening prayer</td>
<td>vesper service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confession</td>
<td>matins</td>
<td>worship service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Academic Degrees and Personal Titles**

Capitalize academic degrees and personal titles used as part of people’s names or as a substitute for their names. Titles used after a person’s name or by themselves generally are not capitalized.

The exception to the rule occurs when the title refers to the highest national, state, or church offices, such as the President of the United States. In such cases, the title may be capitalized.

- Professor Louise Sasaki
- Dr. Bernard Stone
- President Don Roth
- Director Ellen Tate
- Vice President Johnson
- Cardinal Cody
- Pope Benedict XVI
- Reverend Alice Milano
- General George Custer
- Admiral Patricia Tracey
- Queen Elizabeth
- Count von Moltke

- Louise Sasaki, PhD
- Bernard Stone, MD
- Don Roth, president
- Ellen Tate, director
- the Vice President (of the United States)
- the Cardinal
- the Pope
- the reverend
- the general
- the admiral
- the Queen
- the count

**Historic Events, Special Events, and Holidays**

Capitalize the names of historic events and periods, special events, holidays, and other publicly recognized special days.

- Battle of Midway
- Black History Month
- Columbus Day
- Elizabethan Age
- Han Dynasty
- Hundred Years’ War
- Labor Day
- Live Aid Africa

- Miami Book Fair
- Mother’s Day
- National Pickle Week
- New Year’s Day
- Nicene Council
- Presidents’ Day
- Thanksgiving
- World War II
**Historical Monuments, Places, and Buildings**

Capitalize the names of all historical monuments, places, and buildings.

- Arlington National Cemetery
- the Prudential Building
- the Chicago Loop
- Times Square
- the Latin Quarter
- Washington Monument

**Calendar Days, Months, and Seasons**

Capitalize the names of all days of the week and months of the year. Seasons of the year are lowercase unless they are personified.

- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Friday
- November
- June
- April
- fall
- winter
- summer

*But:* Have we not seen, Summer, your jeweled nights, your days young and fair?

**Documents**

Capitalize the first word and all other words except articles (*a, an, the*) and prepositions under five letters (*in, to, out*) in charters, treaties, declarations, laws, and other official documents. However, when the words *charter, act, treaty,* and *law* are used alone, they generally are not capitalized.

- Articles of Incorporation
- Treaty of Orleans
- Declaration of Independence
- Uniform Commercial Code
- Magna Carta
- Wanger Act

**Titles of Publications**

Capitalize the first word and all other words except articles and prepositions under five letters in the titles of books, chapters, magazines, articles, newspapers, musical compositions, and other publications.
Compass Points
Points of the compass are not capitalized when they refer simply to direction or are used as adjectives. They are capitalized when they refer to regions of the country.

- east
- north
- southwest
- eastern
- west
- south
- northwest
- western
- the South
- the East
- the Southwest
- the Northeast
- the North Central states

Geographic Names and Regions
Capitalize all geographic names and regions of a country, continent, or hemisphere.

Cities, Townships, Countries, States, Continents
- California
- New York
- South America
- India
- Niles Township
- Western Hemisphere

Islands, Peninsulas, Straits, Beaches
- Baja Peninsula
- Strait of Magellan
- Myrtle Beach
- Canary Islands
- Strait of Malacca
- Padre Island

Bodies of Water
- Aegean Sea
- Nile River
- Victoria Falls
- Lake Tahoe
- Tinker Creek
- Walden Pond

Mountains and Mountain Chains
- the Andes
- Kilimanjaro
- Mount Fuji
- Cascade Mountains
- Mount Everest
- Pikes Peak
Parks, Forests, Canyons, Dams
Aswan Dam Humboldt Redwoods Forest
Bright Angel Canyon Serengeti National Preserve
Three Gorges Dam Yosemite National Park

Scientific Terms
The rules for capitalizing scientific terms, particularly the division of plants and animals, can be complex and bewildering. This section presents some general rules for capitalizing the more common terms that are likely to be used.

Common Names of Plants and Animals. Usually, lowercase the name of plants and animals, capitalizing only proper nouns and adjectives used with the names. Check a dictionary to be sure of accuracy.

black-eyed Susan rhesus monkey
Cooper’s hawk Rhode Island red
border collie Rocky Mountain sheep
golden retriever rose of Sharon
jack-in-the-pulpit Thomson’s gazelle
mustang thoroughbred
Persian cat white leghorn fowl

Geological Terms. Capitalize the names of eras, periods, epochs, and episodes but not the words era, period, and so on used with the term.

Ice Age (reference to Pleistocene glacial epoch)
Lower Jurassic period Pliocene epoch
Paleozoic era Cambrian period

Astronomical Terms. Capitalize all proper names of asteroids, planets and their satellites, constellations, and other astronomical phenomena. In many cases, earth, sun, and moon are lowercased unless used with other planets in a sentence.
Alpha Centauri  the Crab Nebula  Milky Way
Andromeda Galaxy  Demos  North Star
Arcturus  Halley’s Comet  Orion
Big Dipper  the Leonids  Pleiades
Cassiopeia  Mercury  Saturn

Descriptive terms that apply to astronomical or meteorological phenomena are not capitalized.

aurora borealis  meteor shower
blizzard  sun dogs
hurricane  tornado
the rings of Jupiter  the moons of Uranus

Medical Terms. Lowercase the names of diseases, syndromes, symptoms, tests, drugs, and the like. Capitalize only proper nouns and adjectives or trade names used with these terms.

aspirin  Parkinson’s disease
finger-nose test  poliomyelitis
Guillain-Barré syndrome  Salk vaccine
infectious granuloma  tetracycline
acetaminophen  Tylenol

Physical and Chemical Terms. Lowercase laws, theorems, principles, and the like, capitalizing only proper nouns and adjectives used with these terms. Chemical symbols are also capitalized and set without periods.

Boyle’s law  Maxwell’s equations
C¹⁴ or C-14  Newton’s second law
carbon 14  Planck’s constant
general theory of relativity  sulfuric acid
H₂SO₄  U²³⁸ or U-238
Lorenz transformations  uranium 238
Capitals with Numbers
Capitalize a noun or abbreviation before a number when it designates a formal part of a written work.

- Act V, Scene 3
- Book IV
- Chapter 14 or Chap. 14
- Paragraph 3 or Para. 3
- Section 44 or Sec. 44
- Unit 3

Abbreviations
The style for abbreviations has gone through a series of changes in the past few decades. The trend today is to drop the periods from most abbreviations used in writing. Within a document, however, periods may be used or omitted if the writer is consistent. For example, if AM appears without periods in one sentence, do not use A.M. in another.

General Guidelines
Here are some general guidelines for using abbreviations.

1. For formal and business writing, internal periods are omitted for most abbreviations related to time, academic degrees, metric measures, organizations, institutions, and government agencies.

2. Except for personal names and titles, abbreviations with internal periods (e.g., N.W.) should not have a space after the first period.

3. For abbreviations of personal names and titles, insert a space after the first period. (H. G. Wells, Lt. Col. Brice)

4. When in doubt about how to style abbreviations of personal or company names, always check with the individual or firm to see how they prefer the abbreviation to be written.
**Personal Names and Titles**

This section presents some general rules for the abbreviation of personal names and titles.

**Personal Names.** Avoid using abbreviations for given names except when transcribing a signature.

Dorothy Brandt *not* Dor. Brandt
Charles Villiard *not* Chas. Villiard

If the signature is written with abbreviations, follow the style of the author.

Yours truly, Geo. C. Kelly
Sincerely yours, L. K. Geng

Some publications and business writers omit the periods following initials. However, for convenience and clarity it is usually good practice to use periods with all initials given with names.

Caroline S. Wilson    Robert J. Edwards
T. J. Warshell        A. Teresa Valdez

If the person is referred to by initials only, no periods are used.

FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt)
LBJ (Lyndon Baines Johnson)
HD (Hilda Doolittle)

**Titles Before Names.** Social titles are always abbreviated whether used with the surname only or the full name. Notice which titles are used with or without periods. If you are in doubt about when to use periods with a social title, consult an up-to-date dictionary.
Mrs. Gloria Greenberg    Mr. Valentine Cancilleri
Ms. Barbara Walnum      M. Tricia (Thomas) Benton
Mme Cecilia Payne       Mlle Jane Tild
Messrs. Paul Mori and Norman Zuefle  Dr. Evelyn Veach

When a civil or military title is used with the surname alone, it is spelled out. When the full name is used, the title is abbreviated.

Senator Obama    Sen. Barack Obama
Alderperson Abuelos  Ald. Yvonne Abuelos
Representative Rush  Rep. Carlton J. Rush

The military now uses all capitals and no periods to abbreviate titles. However, the conventional spelling of military titles is still used in most forms of civilian writing. Notice that there is a space after the first period in an abbreviated title.

Lieutenant Colonel Claire  LT COL Ruth Claire or Lt. Col. Ruth Claire
Staff Sergeant Oltman  SSG Frank Oltman or S. Sgt. Frank Oltman

The titles Reverend and Honorable are spelled out if they are preceded by the. They may also be used with social titles. Reverend is never used with the surname alone, but the title may be abbreviated when used with the person’s full name.

the Reverend Betty J. Dell  Rev. Betty J. Dell
the Honorable Wilson O. Justman  Hon. Wilson O. Justman

Titles After Names. Titles, degrees, affiliations, or the designation Jr. (junior), Sr. (senior), or II, III (or 2d, 3d) following a person’s name are considered part of that name. While the abbreviations Jr. and Sr. are set
off from the name by commas, the designations II, III, 2d, or 3d are not set off by commas. These abbreviations are used only with the full name, never just the surname (Mr. Gregory Young, Jr., not Mr. Young, Jr.).

Njoki Salumbe, PhD Richard Butzen, LLD
Daniel Cronon III, MA Whitney Rune, Sr.

The abbreviation Esq. (esquire) refers to someone who is a lawyer and is never used when another title is given, whether before or after the name.

Sue Allen, Esq. not Ms. Sue Allen, Esq.
Carl Hanson, Esq. not Carl Hanson, Esq, PhD

Social titles are also dropped if another title is used following the name.

Harriet Long, MFA not Miss Harriet Long, MFA

Names with Saint. When Saint precedes the person’s name, it is often abbreviated St., although many prefer to spell the word out.

St. Catherine de Sienna or Saint Catherine de Sienna

Saint is generally omitted before the names of apostles, evangelists, and church founders.

Matthew John Luke Mark
Paul John the Baptist Augustine Jerome

When Saint is used as part of a personal name, follow the style preferred by the individual.

Ruth St. Denis
Adele St. Claire Hutchins
Alfred George Saint-Augustine
Company Names
The following abbreviations are commonly used as part of firm names.

& (and)  Inc. (incorporated)
Assoc. (association, associates, associated)  Ltd. (limited)
Bro., Bros. (brothers)  Mfg. (manufacturing)
Co. (company)  RR, Ry (railroad)
Corp. (corporation)

Abbreviations of company names may or may not use periods. Make sure you determine how the company itself prefers to spell its name. Some of the more common abbreviations include the following:

IBM  Gor-Tex, Inc.
Ford Motor Co.  ATT
Warner Bros.  AOL
MCI  Canada NewsWire Ltd.

Agencies and Organizations
The names of government agencies, network broadcasting companies, associations, fraternal and service organizations, unions, and other groups are usually abbreviated without periods. However, some publications such as *The New York Times* still print them with periods. Whichever style you use, be sure you are consistent.

Unions
AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations)
UMW (United Mine Workers)
UAW (United Auto Workers)

Government Agencies
HHS (Department of Health and Human Services)
DOT (Department of Transportation)
CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)
Social Organizations
BSA (Boy Scouts of America)
YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association)
DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution)
VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars)

Professional Organizations
PEN (Poets, Editors, and Novelists)
AMA (American Medical Association)

Geographic Terms
In some cases geographic terms may be abbreviated in more than one way. As always, the key is to be consistent.

Address and State Abbreviations. Address abbreviations may be used with or without periods and may be set in all capitals or in initial capitals only. The U.S. Postal Service recommends using all capitals without periods for address abbreviations. Following is a list of the most common abbreviations used in addresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avenue</th>
<th>AVE, Ave.</th>
<th>Point</th>
<th>PT, Pt.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressway</td>
<td>EXPY, Expy.</td>
<td>Ridge</td>
<td>RDG, Rdg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>HOSP, Hosp.</td>
<td>River</td>
<td>RV, Rv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heights</td>
<td>HTS, Hts.</td>
<td>Road</td>
<td>RD, Rd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>INST, Inst.</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>R, R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junction</td>
<td>JCT, Jct.</td>
<td>Shore</td>
<td>SH, Sh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>LK, Lk.</td>
<td>Square</td>
<td>SQ, Sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakes</td>
<td>LKS, Lks.</td>
<td>Station</td>
<td>STA, Sta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane</td>
<td>LN, Ln.</td>
<td>Terrace</td>
<td>TER, Ter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadows</td>
<td>MDWS, Mdws.</td>
<td>Turnpike</td>
<td>TPKE, Tpke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>MT, Mt.</td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>UN, Un.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palms</td>
<td>PLMS, Plms.</td>
<td>View</td>
<td>VW, Vw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>PK, Pk.</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>VLG, Vlg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkway</td>
<td>PKY, Pky.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Points of the compass following a street name are used without periods. If they precede the name, periods are used.

147 Eastwood NW 1737 Fifth Street SE
6 N. Michigan 2320 E. Grand

Use the postal zip code abbreviations for states, territories, and the Canadian provinces. The abbreviations are capitalized and contain no punctuation.

**STATE ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>AK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>HI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>IN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>KY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
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<td>Maine</td>
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<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<td>Missouri</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
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<td>New Hampshire</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td>North Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>WV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>DC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOREIGN ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign Country</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Foreign Country</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Guam</td>
<td>GU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Virgin Islands</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>MB</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>NF</td>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>NB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>PQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labrador</td>
<td>LB</td>
<td>Yukon Territory</td>
<td>YT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Names of Countries. The names of countries should be spelled out whenever possible. When abbreviated, however, periods should be used after each part of the name. There is generally no space after the first period.

- England
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Russia
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- United States

For the correct abbreviations for other countries, consult a good dictionary or world atlas.

Place Names. Prefixes such as Fort, Mount, Point, and the like used with geographic names should not be abbreviated unless space must be saved in the text.

- Fort Wayne
- Mount Everest
- Point Townsend
- South Orange
Many grammarians make an exception for names beginning with *Saint* and abbreviate the prefix in all cases. However, the prefixes *San* and *Santa* are not abbreviated.

San Cristobal St. Lawrence Seaway
Santa Barbara St. Louis

**Points of the Compass.** The following symbols are used to abbreviate points of the compass.

N, S, E, W NE, SE, NW, SW
S by SE N by NW

*Latitude* and *longitude* are never abbreviated when used alone or in non-technical text. In technical notation, the terms are abbreviated without periods and the compass symbols inserted following the degrees of latitude and longitude.

the equatorial latitudes
longitude 22° west
lat 42°57′3″ N
long 90°27′5″ W

**Time**
Time designations may be abbreviated in more than one way. Remember to be consistent.

**Time of Day.** Abbreviations that indicate time of day or night may be set in all capitals or lowercase (or as small capitals).

AM, am, AM (ante meridiem) before noon
M, M (meridian) noon
PM, pm, PM (post meridiem) after noon
### Days of the Week, Months of the Year

The names of the days of the week can be abbreviated in the following ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Abbreviation(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Mon. or M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Tues. or Tu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Wed. or W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Thurs. or Th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Fri. or F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Sat. or Sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Sun. or Su</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Months of the year are abbreviated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Abbreviation(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Jan. or Jan or Ja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Feb. or Feb or F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Mar. or Mar or Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Apr. or Apr or Ap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>May or My</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>June or Jun or Je</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>July or Jul or Jl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Aug. or Aug or Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Sept. or Sept or S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Oct. or Oct or O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Nov. or Nov or N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Dec. or Dec or D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Years

Accepted abbreviations mark the years before and after the birth of Christ.

The abbreviation *AD* (*anno Domini*—means in the year of the Lord) precedes the year.

William the Conqueror landed on British shores in **AD 1066**.

**BC** (before Christ) follows the year.

Alexander the Great died in the summer of **323 BC**.
Scholarly Abbreviations

The rules for use of abbreviations in scholarship are widely agreed upon and include the following:

1. Abbreviations should be kept out of the body of the text as much as possible, except in technical matters.

2. Abbreviations such as *e.g.*, *i.e.*, and *etc.* should be used primarily in parenthetical material.

3. Scholarly abbreviations such as *ibid.*, *cf.*, *s.v.*, and *op. cit.* should be used only in footnotes, bibliographical material, and general notes to the text.

Following is a partial list of some of the more familiar scholarly abbreviations. For a complete list, consult a dictionary, scholarly handbook, or more detailed grammar text.

- **anon.** anonymous
- **biog.** biography
- **cf.** *confer*, compare
- **cont.** continued
- **def.** definition, definite
- **div.** division
- **e.g.** *exempli gratia*, for example
- **esp.** especially
- **hdqrs.** headquarters
- **i.e.** *id est*, that is
- **lit.** literally
- **mgr.** manager
- **ms.** manuscript
- **n.a.** not applicable, not available
- **pp.** pages
- **rev.** review, revised, revision
- **subj.** subject
- **trans.** translation, translated
- **vol.** volume
- **yr.** your, year
Measures
Abbreviations for units of measure are the same whether the unit is singular or plural.

**English Measure.** The abbreviations for length, area, and volume are followed by periods in nonscientific writing. The abbreviations are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in. inch</td>
<td>sq. in. square inch</td>
<td>cu. in. cubic inch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ft. foot, feet</td>
<td>sq. ft. square foot</td>
<td>cu. ft. cubic foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yd. yard</td>
<td>sq. yd. square yard</td>
<td>cu. yd. cubic yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rd. rod</td>
<td>sq. rd. square rod</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mi. mile</td>
<td>sq. mi. square mile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. acre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations for weight and capacity reflect the complicated English system of measures. There are three systems in use: avoirdupois, the common system; troy, used by jewelers; and apothecaries’ measure. Although the metric system is being adopted in the United States, these other systems are still in use. The abbreviations are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Dry Measure</th>
<th>Liquid Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gr. grain</td>
<td>pt. pint</td>
<td>min. minim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. scruple</td>
<td>qt. quart</td>
<td>fl. dr. fluid dram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dr. dram</td>
<td>pk. peck</td>
<td>fl. oz. fluid ounce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dwt. pennyweight</td>
<td>bu. bushel</td>
<td>gi. gill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oz. ounce</td>
<td>c. cup</td>
<td>pt. pint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lb. pound</td>
<td>tsp. teaspoon</td>
<td>qt. quart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cwt. hundredweight</td>
<td>tbl. tablespoon</td>
<td>gal. gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tn. ton</td>
<td>bbl. barrel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English abbreviations for the standard units of time are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sec. second</th>
<th>h., hr. hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>min. minute</td>
<td>d. day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mo. month</td>
<td>yr. year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Metric System.** The metric system, long used in scientific publications, is gradually becoming the national system of weights and measures. The basic units of measure are the liter, gram, and meter. The following abbreviations are used with metric measurements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mm</td>
<td>sq. mm</td>
<td>mm³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cm</td>
<td>sq. cm</td>
<td>cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dm</td>
<td>sq. dm</td>
<td>dm³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>sq. m</td>
<td>m³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dam</td>
<td>sq. dam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca</td>
<td>sq. ca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha</td>
<td>sq. ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>km</td>
<td>sq. km</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ml</td>
<td>mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cl</td>
<td>cg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dl</td>
<td>dg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dal</td>
<td>dag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hl</td>
<td>hg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kl</td>
<td>kg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Science and Technology**

The International System of Units (SI) is generally used by scientists around the world to label measurements. SI is roughly equivalent to the
metric system. In some cases, however, the method of forming abbreviations differs among the various disciplines of science. For a full listing of scientific abbreviations, consult a technical handbook or scientific style book.

Following are the seven fundamental SI units, termed base units, that serve as the foundation terms in science.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>length</td>
<td>meter</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mass</td>
<td>kilogram</td>
<td>kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>second</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electric current</td>
<td>ampere</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thermodynamic temperature</td>
<td>kelvin</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amount of substance</td>
<td>mole</td>
<td>mol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luminous intensity</td>
<td>candela</td>
<td>cd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The abbreviations used by various branches of science may or may not be related to the International System. Following is a partial list of the more commonly used abbreviations. Notice that they are set without periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>alternating current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>astronomic unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cal</td>
<td>calorie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>cycles per second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM</td>
<td>frequency modulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kw</td>
<td>kilowatt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pH</td>
<td>acidity of alkalinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>std</td>
<td>standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UT, UTC</td>
<td>universal time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>amplitude modulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>boiling point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>candle power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>direct current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>horsepower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPG</td>
<td>miles per gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPM</td>
<td>revolutions per minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temp</td>
<td>temperature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commercial Abbreviations**

Abbreviations used in business and commerce follow a varied style. The most commonly used abbreviations and their accepted styles are given here.
Acct. account Agt. agent
A/V Ad Valorem Bal. balance
Bbl. barrel Bdl. bundle
Bu. bushel C/l. carload
COD cash on delivery Cr. credit, creditor
Cwt. hundredweight Doz. dozen
Dr. debit, debitor Ea. each
F.O.B., FOB free on board Gro. gross

Numbers
As in the case with capitalization and abbreviations, the rules for handling numbers in text are complex and varied. In this book, we provide guidelines that are generally agreed upon by many experts.

Arabic Numbers and Roman Numerals
Most of the figures used today are expressed in Arabic numbers. However, Roman numerals are still used in names, documents, books, dates, and so on. Following is a list of Arabic numbers and their equivalents in Roman numerals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Roman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>XVI</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>XC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>XVIII</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>XIX</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>CCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>XXI</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>XXII</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>XXIII</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>DCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>IX</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>XXIV</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>DCCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>XXV</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>CM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>XXVI</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>XII</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>XXVII</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>MM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>XIII</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>XXVIII</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>MMM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>XXIX</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>MIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>XV</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures or Words
Whether numbers should be spelled out or written in figures depends on several factors. Among them are the size of the number, what it stands for, and what kind of text it appears in—business, personal, scientific, or scholarly.

In general, use the “rule of ten” in determining whether to spell out a number or express it in figures. Under the rule of ten, spell out numbers ten and under (two, five, seven) and any number that is divisible by ten (twenty, sixty, eighty). All other numbers over ten are written in figures.

Governors from six states urged passage of the water-rights bill.
I ordered three dozen boxes of mint candies.
Did you know this book has 1,345 pages?
She turned 39 last year but doesn’t look over 25.
Our flight will arrive in Hong Kong in 12 hours.
We now have a thirty-year mortgage to pay off.

Round Numbers. Numbers used as approximations in place of specific figures are often spelled out, even when expressed as hundreds of thousands.

The march drew an estimated thirty-one thousand people.
About three to four hundred thousand people were left homeless by the floods.
Some form of sun worship has existed in human culture for nearly twelve thousand years.

Very large numbers are usually expressed in figures followed by million, billion, trillion, and so on.

It would cost $3.5 billion to send a piloted probe to Jupiter.
The gross national product is nearly $257 trillion.
The greater metropolitan Chicago area contains more than 7.2 million people.
Ordinal Numbers. The same rule of ten holds for ordinal numbers (*first, second, third*) as well.

Luciano ranked **fifth** in a class of 356 students.
My two horses came in **first** and **ninth** in the afternoon race.
The **25th** article in the bylaws hasn’t been revised.
Bjorn was given the **232d** and **233d** numbers out of 655.

Notice that the form for **second** and **third** is *d* and not *nd* or *rd*.

Consistency. The exception to the rule of ten occurs when numbers under and over ten are used in a series or to refer to the same item in a sentence or paragraph. For the sake of consistency, numbers under ten are frequently expressed in figures.

Joan's family has **5** children, **11** cats, **3** turtles, **15** gerbils, and **2** canaries.
In **ten** years, the population has grown from about **8,000** to **154,567**.
(Ten is spelled out because it is not related to the population figures but stands by itself. Compare that sentence to *In the past 10 to 15 years, the population has grown from about 8,000 to 154,567*. In this case, the figure 10 is used because it is related to the same category—years—as the number 15.)
We climbed the **102**-story building all the way to the top, but **four** of us had trouble making the last **2 or 3** stories. (The figures 2 and 3 refer to the same item—the number of stories. *Four*, however, refers to a separate category, the number of people, and is therefore spelled out.)

Numbers Together. In some instances, numbers are used next to each other for more than one item in a sentence. Generally, to avoid confusion, the smaller of the two figures will be expressed in words.

We developed **twenty-five 35 mm** slides yesterday.
The stock cars will go **14 two-mile** laps.
I’d like 250 thirty-seven-cent stamps. He bought twelve 65-cent labels.

**First Word in Sentence.** Spell out numbers that begin a sentence, regardless of any inconsistency this may create in the rest of the sentence or paragraph. As a general rule, if the sentence contains more than one figure, or if the figure is large, try to rephrase the sentence so that the number does not come first.

Twenty-seven people attended the banquet. Fifteen cars piled up on the freeway, and 37 cars blocked the exit ramp.

**Avoid:** Twenty out of every 100 people interviewed preferred daytime baseball games.

**Better:** Daytime baseball games were preferred by 20 out of every 100 people interviewed.

*or*

We found that 20 out of every 100 people interviewed preferred daytime baseball games.

**Avoid:** Nineteen twenty-seven marked the first solo transatlantic flight in aviation history.

**Better:** The year 1927 marked the first solo transatlantic flight in aviation history.

**Ages**

Express exact ages in figures. Approximate ages can be expressed in words or figures, but be sure to use the same style throughout.

Theodore Roosevelt was elected Vice President when he was only 42. Andrea is 7 and Van is 14. The baby is 2 years and 6 months old. She was about sixty when she first traveled to Africa. My father is nearly ninety.
Names
Roman numerals are used to distinguish among members of the same family who have identical names. No comma is used between the name and Roman numerals.

John Ellis III    Bror von Blixen IV

Roman numerals are also used to differentiate sovereigns, emperors, and popes with the same name. Modern usage, however, permits Arabic numerals in some cases.

John XXIII or John 23d
Elizabeth II
Richard III

Vehicles such as ships, spacecraft, cars, and airplanes may also be given Roman numerals to distinguish them from previous models with the same name. Although earlier spacecraft in the NASA program carried Roman numerals, current practice is to use Arabic numbers.

America IV       Bluebird III
Mercury II       Apollo 12
Bell X-15        Saturn 2

Governmental Designations
Unlike with the “rule of ten,” whether numbers are spelled out in governmental designations often depends on whether they are less than one hundred.

Governments. Ordinal numbers are used to designate particular dynasties, governments, and governing bodies in a succession. The numbers are spelled out if they are less than one hundred and precede the noun. In most cases, they are capitalized.
The 102d Congress  Third Reich
First Continental Congress  Twelfth Dynasty
Eighty-sixth Congress  Fourth Republic

Political Divisions. Numbers one hundred or less indicating political divisions should be spelled out in ordinal form and capitalized.

Forty-second Ward  Thirty-fifth Precinct
123d Congressional District  Circuit Court of Appeals for the Sixth Court

Military Units. Spell out in ordinal form numbers one hundred or less that indicate military subdivision.

The 101st Airborne  Eighty-sixth Regiment
156th Fighter Wing  Seventh Fleet
Second Battalion  110th Artillery

Organizations
Here are guidelines for using numbers in the names of organizations.

Unions and Lodges. Use Arabic numbers to express figures designating local branches of labor unions and of fraternal lodges.

Masonic Lodge No. 335
Flight Attendants Union Local No. 127
American Legion Post No. 34

Churches. Spell out ordinal numbers used with religious organizations or houses of worship.

First United Methodist Church
Seventh-day Adventists
Twenty-second Church of Christ, Scientist
Second Baptist Church
Corporations and Civic Events. Numbers used in the names of companies or civic events may be spelled out or expressed in Arabic or Roman numerals. You will need to follow the particular organization’s style.

- **Fifth Third Bank**
- **1st Federal Savings & Loan**
- **3rd Annual Sport Jamboree**
- **XXIV Olympics**

Addresses and Thoroughfares
House numbers should be expressed in figures, except for the number one. Numbered streets one through ten are spelled out.

- **One** East Superior
- **354** Crain Street
- **1274 23d Street**
- **32 Second Avenue**

When the address is part of a building’s name, the number is usually spelled out.

- **One** Magnificent Mile
- **Thirty-three** Prudential Plaza

Use figures for all state and federal highways.

- U.S. Route **66** (U.S. 66)
- Interstate **294** (I-294)
- Arizona **103**
- County Line **24**

Time of Day
When time is expressed in even, half, or quarter hours, the numbers are generally spelled out.

- The movie starts at a **quarter past four**.
- I didn’t get home until **twelve o’clock** last night.
- The meeting is set for **two o’clock** this Thursday.
Figures are used when the exact time is given or in designations of time with AM or PM. Never use o’clock in either of these cases.

The train pulled into Lisbon at 12:33 in the morning.
The full report should be on the 6:30 news.
Precisely at 5:00, I saw him leave his apartment.
We’ll meet here again at 5:15 PM tomorrow.
He called at 12:20 AM to say he had locked himself out of his house.

In the 24-hour time system, figures are always used. There is no punctuation between the hour and minutes.

Our ship docks at 0615 on Wednesday.
Registration hours are from 0900 to 1130 and 1300 to 1530 every day except Sunday.

_Dates_
This section presents guidelines for the use of numbers in dates.

_Day and Month_. When writing dates, you can use either day/month/year or month/day/year.

On 7 _August_ 1975, we left for Egypt.
I sent the letter on _April 14, 1983_, but I never received a reply.

Notice that when the month/day/year form is used, the year is set off by commas before and after it.
When the day and month are used alone, references to another date in the same month are spelled out.

The order was dated _6 July_. We sent your package out on the _seventh_

You may use either words or figures for the day when it occurs alone or when the month is part of a prepositional phrase in a sentence; just be consistent.
Paychecks are issued on the 5th of each month.
Paychecks are issued on the fifth of each month.
On the 12th of April, I signed the contract.
On the twelfth of April, I signed the contract.

**Month and Year.** When dates are identified only by month and year, no internal punctuation is necessary.

She entered school in September 1979 when she turned 21.

**The Year Alone or Abbreviated.** Unless they begin a sentence, years are expressed in numbers no matter how large or small they may be. No commas are used in the figures.

The Egyptian Nile Valley was heavily populated by 3500 BC.
Early records indicate the settlement was occupied from 34 BC to AD 67.

Abbreviations of years drop the first two figures and substitute an apostrophe.

the class of ’69
the spirit of ’76
They were married in ’41.

**Centuries and Decades.** References to particular centuries and decades are spelled out in lowercase letters (as long as there is no confusion about what century is being referenced).

We are at the beginning of the twenty-first century.
Social upheaval during the sixties gave way to political conservatism in the eighties.

If decades are identified by century, be sure to use the same style throughout.
**Incorrect:** The 1880s and ’90s were a time of colonial expansion.
**Correct:** The 1880s and 1890s were a time of colonial expansion.

Notice that there is no apostrophe before the final s after the year.

**Eras.** Use figures to express dates and words to express centuries whether the era designation comes before or after the date involved. The most frequently used era designations are as follows (notice no periods are used):

- **BC** before Christ (twelfth century BC)
- **AD** (*anno Domini*) in the year of the Lord (AD 1940)
- **AH** (*anno Hegirae*) in the year of (Muhammad’s) Hegira (AH 736)
- **AH** (*anno Hebraico*) in the Hebrew year (AH 1426)
- **BCE** before the common era (2713 BCE)
- **BP** before the present (5892 BP)

The designations **AD** and **AH** precede the figures, while the other designations follow them. However, both **AD** and **AH** follow centuries expressed in words.

- 378 BC
- 13400 BP
- fourth century BC
- AD 1945
- AH 677
- fifteenth century AD

**Money**

Use figures to express sums of money whether foreign or U.S. currency. However, spell out small sums of money when the figure stands alone or serves as an adjective.

- The car cost $2,560.
- I changed $4 for £6.
- I remember when movies cost twenty-five cents.
- They charge a ten-dollar fee.
If an abbreviation rather than a symbol is used for foreign currency, leave a space between the abbreviation and the figure.

When two currencies share the same symbol (for example, the $ symbol in Canadian and U.S. money), use a prefix or suffix to distinguish between the two.

His hotel bill totaled $127.50 Canadian ($87.50 U.S.) for a three-day stay.

**Fractional and Large Amounts.** Fractional amounts over one dollar are expressed in figures. Very large amounts may be expressed in figures and units of million, billion, or trillion.

I bought this book for $12.00 and then saw the same item on sale for $3.50.

The clerk added up the charges of $66.21, $43.90, and $23.10.

A painting valued at $3.2 million was stolen from the gallery.

Notice that when whole numbers and fractional amounts are used together, ciphers are used after the whole number ($12.00, $3.50).

**Percentages**
In general, percentages are expressed in figures followed by the word *percent*. In scientific and statistical material, the symbol % is used.

Glenn’s NOW account earns 7 percent interest.
There is a 50 percent chance of snow tomorrow.
Only 25% of the blood samples tested yielded positive results.
Power outages rose by 15% during the summer months.

**Fractions and Decimals**
Mixed fractions and decimals are expressed in figures. For clarity, decimal fractions of less than 1.00 may be preceded by a zero.
24½ feet by 34¼ feet
up to 2.25 centimeters
a ration of 0.56 (or .56)
the CPI rose 1.5 percent

If several decimal fractions are used in a sentence or paragraph, make sure they have the same number of places to the right of the decimal point.

Incorrect: The variable rates for January were .75 percent, .4 percent, and .96 percent.
Correct: The variable rates for January were .75 percent, .40 percent, and .96 percent.

Simple fractions are expressed in words. If the fraction is used as an adjective, it is hyphenated. If it serves as a noun, it is two words.

one-fifth share of the market
two-thirds majority
one tenth of their income
one quarter of the workers

Measures
In scientific and many business texts, physical quantities such as distances, lengths, areas, volumes, pressures, weights, and the like are expressed in figures whether they are whole numbers or fractions.

125 miles 87 meters
450 volts 4 pounds 10 ounces
.32 centimeter 10° of arc
98.6° Fahrenheit 60 acres

In ordinary text matter, fractions may be written out. However, where fractions and whole numbers appear together, use figures to express both numbers.
The stadium is about three quarters of a mile from the highway.
Give me a sheet of paper 8½ by 11 inches.
She ordered another box of 3½-by-5½-inch cards.

If abbreviations or symbols are used for the unit of measure, the quantity should be expressed in figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3¾ mi.</th>
<th>6 V</th>
<th>35 mm film</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 MPH</td>
<td>32 g</td>
<td>30 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5&quot; by 7&quot;</td>
<td>10%-15%</td>
<td>36°30’ N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Temperature**
Temperature is expressed in figures with the degree sign plus the scale being used.

- 15° F (Fahrenheit)
- −20° C (Celsius or centigrade)
- 12° K (Kelvin)

**Parts of a Book**
Generally, major book divisions are expressed in Roman numerals and minor divisions in Arabic figures. However, follow the style used in each book.

The material in **Part I, Chapters 6 through 8** covers how to refinance your house.

Plates, figures, tables, pages, and so on are also set in Arabic figures. The only general exception to this rule occurs in the preliminary or introductory pages of a book, which are usually set in Roman numerals.

Be sure to read pages i-ix before starting Chapter 1.
Plate 7 in Chapter 23 provides an excellent illustration of a genetic sequence.
I don’t think figure 3.1 is accurate.
He has the final numbers for tables 2-4.

**Inclusive Numbers**
Use the following guidelines for inclusive numbers. (The examples are page numbers, which do not require commas.)

1. For numbers less than 100, use all digits.
   4-23  86-92

2. For 100 or multiples of 100, use all digits.
   500-563

3. For 101 through 109 (and multiples of 100), use only the changed digits.
   101-4  503-6  1006-9

4. For 110 through 199 (and multiples of 100), use two digits or more as needed.
   112-24  467-68  1389-91  14285-389

Continued numbers other than pages are written in the following style:

the winter of 1980-81, but the winter of 2000-2001 (when the century changes, use all four digits)
the years 1234-1345
fiscal year 1984-85
AD 712-14
243-221 BC (All digits are used with BC years.)

When an inclusive date is used in a title, all digits are usually repeated.

*Brian Gregory’s Journals: 1745-1789*
*World War II: 1939-1945*
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Spelling and Word Division

To many writers, the English language seems riddled with exceptions to spelling rules. Yet most words conform to specific guidelines, and even the exceptions can be categorized for easy reference. The guidelines in this section explain how to spell most regular and many troublesome words. Appendix D provides a list of frequently misspelled words. Remember that the best guide to correct spelling is an up-to-date dictionary.

Spelling Guidelines
This section presents information specifically about dealing with prefixes, suffixes, and plurals. It also covers the rules for use of $i$ and $e$ combinations.

Prefixes
A prefix added at the beginning of a word changes its meaning. However, the prefix does not change the spelling of that word. Most prefixes are added without using a hyphen.

mis + step = misstep
im + memorial = immemorial
un + burden = unburden
over + enthusiastic = overenthusiastic
pre + formed = preformed
in + tolerable = intolerable
non + food = nonfood
re + draw = redraw
Exceptions: the prefixes *ex*, *self*, and *all* are always used with a hyphen when they are joined to nouns.

- ex + prizefighter = ex-prizefighter
- self + awareness = self-awareness
- all + inclusive = all-inclusive

A hyphen is used when the prefix is joined to a proper noun or adjective.

- non + English = non-English
- pro + American = pro-American

A hyphen is used when the resulting word might be confused with a similar word of different meaning or when the word might be confusing to the eye.

- re + creation = re-creation (not recreation)
- re + emphasize = re-emphasize
- sub + subheading = sub-subheading

Prefixes let us see how many words and terms English has borrowed from Greek, Latin, and French. Following is a list of the common prefixes used in English along with their meanings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>in, on, of, up, to</td>
<td>arise, awake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>around, about, away</td>
<td>behead, bedevil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for, fore</td>
<td>away, off, from</td>
<td>forsake, forewarn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mis</td>
<td>badly, poorly, not</td>
<td>misspell, mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over</td>
<td>above, excessively</td>
<td>overextend, oversee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un</td>
<td>not, reverse of</td>
<td>untidy, unnatural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin/</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin-French</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefix</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab, a, abs</td>
<td>from, off, away</td>
<td>absent, abscond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ante</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>antechamber, anteroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bi</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>biweekly, bisect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circum</td>
<td>around</td>
<td>circumspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>col, com, con,</td>
<td>with, together</td>
<td>collide, companion,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co, cor</td>
<td></td>
<td>correlate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contra, contro</td>
<td>against</td>
<td>contradict, controversial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de</td>
<td>away, from, off, down</td>
<td>decline, depart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dif, dis</td>
<td>away, off, opposing</td>
<td>disagree, differ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e, ef, ex</td>
<td>away, from, out</td>
<td>efface, exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>im, in</td>
<td>in, into, within</td>
<td>immerse, include</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il, im, in, ir</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>illegal, immoral,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inter</td>
<td>among, between</td>
<td>inescapable, irreverent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intro, intra</td>
<td>inward, within</td>
<td>intercept, interstate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>nonclinical, nonessential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>after, following</td>
<td>postscript, postoperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>preceding, prevent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pro</td>
<td>forward, in place of, favoring</td>
<td>proceed, pronoun,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re</td>
<td>back, backward, again</td>
<td>recede, recur, reduce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retro</td>
<td>back, backward</td>
<td>retroactive, retrojets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semi</td>
<td>half</td>
<td>semicircle, semimonthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sub, suf, sum,</td>
<td>under, beneath</td>
<td>suburb, suffuse,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sup, sus</td>
<td></td>
<td>summon, support, suspicion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>super</td>
<td>over, above, extra</td>
<td>supervise, superfluous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trans</td>
<td>across, beyond</td>
<td>transport, transnational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ultra</td>
<td>beyond, excessively</td>
<td>ultraviolet, ultramodern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Prefix</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>lacking, without</td>
<td>amoral, atheist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anti</td>
<td>against, opposing</td>
<td>antismoking, antithesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apo</td>
<td>from, away</td>
<td>apology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cata</td>
<td>down, away, thoroughly</td>
<td>cataclysm, catacomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dia</td>
<td>through, across, apart</td>
<td>diameter, dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epi</td>
<td>at, on, over, among, beside</td>
<td>epidemic, epigraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eu</td>
<td>good, pleasant</td>
<td>euphoria, eulogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hemi</td>
<td>half</td>
<td>hemisphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hyper</td>
<td>excessive, over</td>
<td>hyperactive, hypertension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hypo</td>
<td>under, beneath</td>
<td>hypodermic, hypotension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>para</td>
<td>beside, beyond</td>
<td>parallel, paradox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peri</td>
<td>around</td>
<td>perimeter, peripheral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pro</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>prognosis, progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syl, sym,</td>
<td>together, with</td>
<td>syllable, sympathy,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syn, sys</td>
<td></td>
<td>synthesis, systematic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Suffixes**

A suffix is added to the end of the word. In many cases, the spelling of the word does not change.

- `sly + ly = slyly`
- `awkward + ness = awkwardness`
- `work + able = workable`

The suffix `elect`, however, is always used with a hyphen.

- `secretary + elect = secretary-elect`
- `president + elect = president-elect`

There are several instances in which the spelling of the root word does change when a suffix is added. The following guidelines categorize these changes.
Final $y$ as a Long $e$ Sound. If the final $y$ of a word represents a long $e$ sound, then the final $y$ changes to $i$ before adding the suffix $ness$ or $ly$.

- merry + $ly$ = merrily
- dizzy + ness = dizziness

Final $y$ Preceded by a Consonant. With words that end in $y$ and are preceded by a consonant, change the $y$ to $i$ before any suffix not beginning with $i$.

- sunny + er = sunnier
- happy + $ly$ = happily (but $hurry$ + $ing$ = $hurrying$)

Final $e$ Before a Suffix Beginning with a Vowel. The final $e$ is dropped before a suffix that begins with a vowel.

- dare + ing = daring
- sale + able = salable

The only exception to this rule is when the final $e$ must be retained to maintain a soft $c$ or $g$ sound in the word.

- notice + able = noticeable
- courage + ous = courageous

Final $e$ Before a Suffix Beginning with a Consonant. Keep the final $e$ when adding a suffix that begins with a consonant.

- use + ful = useful
- care + less = careless

There are a few exceptions to this rule:

- true + $ly$ = truly (but sincere + $ly$ = sincerely)
- argue + ment = argument

Final $e$ with the Suffix $ment$. When the final $e$ in a word is preceded by two consonants, drop the final $e$ and add the suffix.
acknowledge + ment = acknowledgment
judge + ment = judgment

When the final e in a word is preceded by a vowel and a consonant, keep the final e and add the suffix.

manage + ment = management

**Double Final Consonant Before a Suffix Beginning with a Vowel.**
The final consonant of a word is doubled when (1) the word has only one syllable, (2) the accent falls on the last syllable of the word (prefer), or (3) the word ends in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel.

drag + ed = dragged
sit + ing = sitting
omit + ing = omitting
ocCUR + ed = occurred
preFER + ing = preferring (but PREferable)
conTROL + able = controllable

**Single Final Consonant Before a Suffix.** The final consonant remains single if the word is accented on the first syllable; if the final consonant is already double it remains double.

TARget + ed = targeted
CANcel + ing = canceling
tell + ing = telling
pull + ed = pulled

**Words Ending in a Hard c Sound.** For words ending in a hard c sound, add k before suffixes in, ed, and y.

panic + y = panicky
picnic + ing = picnicking
traffic + ed = trafficked
mimic + ing = mimicking
Suffixes *sede*, *ceed*, and *cede*. Only one word in English ends in *sede*.

super + sede = supersede

Only three words in English end in *ceed*.

exceed  proceed  succeed

All other words with similar sounds end in *cede*.

precede  recede  secede  concede  accede

**Suffixes able and ible.** The suffixes *able* and *ible* sound alike and mean nearly the same things such as “capable of being” and “worthy of being.” They are added to verbs and nouns to form adjectives.

irritate + able = irritable
permission + ible = permissible

There is a handy rule of thumb for knowing when to use *able* or *ible* that works for most words. When a related word can be formed ending in *ation*, then *able* is the correct suffix. When a related word can be formed ending in *ion* or *ive*, then *ible* is correct.

duration = durable
irritation = irritable
repression = repressible
permissive = permissible

If a word is not in the dictionary, it is spelled with *able*.

When the suffix *able* is added to a word ending in *e*, the final *e* is dropped unless preceded by a *c* or *g*.

desire + able = desirable
use + able = usable
notice + able = noticeable
knowledge + able = knowledgeable
Suffixes ant and ent, ance and ence. The four suffixes ant, ent, ance, and ence are added to change verbs to nouns and adjectives.

- attend + ant = attendant
- insist + ent = insistent
- attend + ance = attendance
- insist + ence = insistence

Unfortunately, there is no rule for knowing when to use which suffix. Memorize the spellings of words with these endings. However, if the word you wish to spell is not in the dictionary, use ant or ance.

Suffixes er and or. The suffixes er and or sound alike and both mean one who. Some words are spelled with either ending.

- act + or = actor
- drive + er = driver
- visit + or = visitor
- advise + or = advisor
- advise + er = adviser
- speak + er = speaker

The suffix er is more common and is added to all new words in English. The suffix or occurs mainly with Latin root words, particularly legal terms, and is no longer added to words in English. If a word cannot be found in the dictionary, use the er suffix.

Suffixes ize and ise. The suffixes ize and ise are added to adjectives and nouns to make verbs. The suffix ize is used in American English while the suffix ise is British.

- legal + ize = legalize
- custom + ize = customize
- critic + ize = criticize
- legal + ise = legalize
- custom + ise = customize
- critic + ise = criticize

Some words use either suffix as an ending, while others are spelled only with ise.
mesmer + ise = mesmerise
mesmer + ize = mesmerize

advise exercise enterprise disguise chastise

If a word is not in the dictionary, use the *ize* suffix as the correct ending.

Suffixes, like prefixes, have been added to English from several sources. Following is a list of the most common suffixes for nouns, adjectives, and verbs from Old English, Greek, Latin, and French along with their meanings.

### Old English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Suffixes</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dom</td>
<td>state, rank, condition</td>
<td>kingdom, wisdom, martyrdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er</td>
<td>doer, maker</td>
<td>writer, teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hood</td>
<td>state, condition</td>
<td>statehood, brotherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ness</td>
<td>quality, state</td>
<td>hardness, likeness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Latin, French, Greek Noun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffixes</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>process, state, rank</td>
<td>peerage, passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ance, ancy</td>
<td>act, condition, fact</td>
<td>vigilance, vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ard, art</td>
<td>one that does (in excess)</td>
<td>coward, braggart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ate</td>
<td>office, rank</td>
<td>delegate, potentate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ation</td>
<td>action, state, result</td>
<td>occupation, starvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cy</td>
<td>state, condition</td>
<td>delinquency, accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ee</td>
<td>one receiving action</td>
<td>retiree, employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eer</td>
<td>doer, worker at</td>
<td>engineer, mountaineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ence</td>
<td>act, condition, fact</td>
<td>evidence, sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er</td>
<td>doer, native of</td>
<td>financier, baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ery</td>
<td>skill, action, collection</td>
<td>surgery, cookery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ess</td>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>princess, lioness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et, ette</td>
<td>little, feminine</td>
<td>islet, majorette</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Latin, French, Greek Noun Suffixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ion</td>
<td>action, result, state</td>
<td>union, conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ism</td>
<td>act, manner, doctrine</td>
<td>baptism, barbarism, feminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ist</td>
<td>doer, believer</td>
<td>plagiarist, socialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ition</td>
<td>action, state, result</td>
<td>sedition, expedition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ity</td>
<td>state, quality, condition</td>
<td>civility, rarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ment</td>
<td>means, result, action</td>
<td>embarrassment, fulfillment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>doer, office, action</td>
<td>actor, juror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ry</td>
<td>condition, practice, collection</td>
<td>archery, jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tion</td>
<td>action, condition</td>
<td>delegation, destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tude</td>
<td>quality, state, result</td>
<td>multitude, fortitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ty</td>
<td>quality, state</td>
<td>witty, beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ure</td>
<td>act, result, means</td>
<td>culture, ligature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>result, action, quality</td>
<td>arty, jealousy, handy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Old English Adjective Suffixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>en</td>
<td>made of, like</td>
<td>silken, golden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ful</td>
<td>full of, marked by</td>
<td>thoughtful, careful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ish</td>
<td>suggesting, like</td>
<td>prudish, childish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less</td>
<td>lacking, without</td>
<td>thankless, hopeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like</td>
<td>like, similar</td>
<td>catlike, dreamlike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ly</td>
<td>like, of the nature of</td>
<td>heavily, friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some</td>
<td>apt to, showing</td>
<td>worrisome, tiresome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ward</td>
<td>in the direction of</td>
<td>forward, downward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>showing, suggesting</td>
<td>heavy, wavy, rocky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Adjective Suffixes</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able</td>
<td>able, likely</td>
<td>workable, likeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ate</td>
<td>having, showing</td>
<td>animate, duplicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>escent</td>
<td>becoming, growing</td>
<td>obsolescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esque</td>
<td>in the style of, like</td>
<td>statuesque, picturesque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fic</td>
<td>making, causing</td>
<td>terrific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ible</td>
<td>able, likely, fit</td>
<td>producible, edible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ose</td>
<td>marked by, given to</td>
<td>bellicose, comatose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ous</td>
<td>marked by, given to</td>
<td>wondrous, religious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign Adjective/Noun Suffixes</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>al</td>
<td>doer, pertaining to</td>
<td>ritual, autumnal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an</td>
<td>one belonging to, pertaining to</td>
<td>American, human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ant</td>
<td>actor, agent, showing</td>
<td>servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ary</td>
<td>belonging to, one connected with</td>
<td>functionary, adversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ent</td>
<td>doing, showing, actor</td>
<td>agent, confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ese</td>
<td>of a place or style</td>
<td>Japanese, journalese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ian</td>
<td>pertaining to, one belonging to</td>
<td>reptilian, Sicilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ic</td>
<td>dealing with, caused by, person or thing</td>
<td>scientific, epidemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ile</td>
<td>marked by, one marked by</td>
<td>senile, juvenile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ine</td>
<td>marked by, dealing with, one marked by</td>
<td>divine, feline, marine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ite</td>
<td>formed, showing, one marked by</td>
<td>Muscovite, favorite, composite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ory</td>
<td>doing, pertaining to, place or thing for</td>
<td>accessory, observatory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Old English Verb Suffixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>en</td>
<td>cause to be, become</td>
<td>enliven, awaken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foreign Verb Suffixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ate</td>
<td>become, form, treat</td>
<td>formulate, agitate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esce</td>
<td>become, grow, continue</td>
<td>convalesce, acquiesce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fy</td>
<td>make, cause, cause to harm</td>
<td>fortify, glorify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ish</td>
<td>do, make, perform</td>
<td>finish, distinguish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ize</td>
<td>make, cause to be</td>
<td>mobilize, sterilize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plurals
We have already briefly touched on plurals of words; here is more detailed information.

Regular Nouns. The plural of most nouns is formed by adding s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eagle</td>
<td>eagles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minister</td>
<td>ministers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>record</td>
<td>records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irregular Nouns. For most irregular nouns, the spelling changes to form the plural. Because the spelling changes do not follow any general rule, the forms must be memorized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goose</td>
<td>geese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouse</td>
<td>mice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some irregular nouns keep the same form for both singular and plural.
Singular | Plural
--- | ---
deer | deer
sheep | sheep
species | species

**Nouns Ending in s, ss, z, sh, ch, and x.** For nouns ending in s, ss, z, sh, ch, and x, add *es* to form the plural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>address</td>
<td>addresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box</td>
<td>boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buzz</td>
<td>buzzes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dish</td>
<td>dishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fez</td>
<td>fezes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gas</td>
<td>gases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiss</td>
<td>kisses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watch</td>
<td>watches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nouns Ending in y.** For nouns ending in *y* preceded by a consonant, change the *y* to *i* and add *es*. For nouns ending in *y* preceded by a vowel, simply add *s*.

**NOUNS ENDING IN Y PRECEDED BY A CONSONANT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>category</td>
<td>categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>currency</td>
<td>currencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secretary</td>
<td>secretaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>territory</td>
<td>territories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOUNS ENDING IN Y PRECEDED BY A VOWEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>delay</td>
<td>delays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holiday</td>
<td>holidays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relay</td>
<td>relays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nouns Ending in o. For nouns ending in o preceded by a consonant, add s or es. If the o is preceded by a vowel, add s.

NOUNS ENDING IN O PRECEDED BY A CONSONANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hero</td>
<td>heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potato</td>
<td>potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solo</td>
<td>solos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tomato</td>
<td>tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td>zeroes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOUNS ENDING IN O PRECEDED BY A VOWEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>radio</td>
<td>radios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stereo</td>
<td>stereos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>studio</td>
<td>studios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All musical and literary terms ending in o add s to form the plural.

Singular | Plural
----------|--------
oratorio  | oratorios
piano     | pianos
rondo     | rondos
soprano   | sopranos

Nouns ending in f or fe. Many nouns ending in f or fe simply add s to form the plural. However, some nouns change the f to v and add es.

ADD S

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chief</td>
<td>chiefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dwarf</td>
<td>dwarfs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHANGE F OR FE TO V AND ADD ES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>half</td>
<td>halves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knife</td>
<td>knives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life</td>
<td>lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self</td>
<td>selves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife</td>
<td>wives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wolf</td>
<td>wolves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Compound Nouns as One Word.** Compound nouns written as one word and ending in s, sh, ch, or x form the plural by adding es. In all other cases, the plural is formed by simply adding s.

**COMPOUND NOUNS ADDING ES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lockbox</td>
<td>lockboxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toothbrush</td>
<td>toothbrushes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMPOUND NOUNS ADDING S**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>firefighter</td>
<td>firefighters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mainframe</td>
<td>mainframes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Compound Nouns as Two Words.** The plural of compound nouns written as two or more words is formed by making the main word plural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chairman of the board</td>
<td>chairmen of the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>editor in chief</td>
<td>editors in chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notary public</td>
<td>notary public or notaries public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vice president</td>
<td>vice presidents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hyphenated Compound Nouns. Hyphenated compound nouns are made plural either by adding *s* to the main word or, if there is no main word, adding *s* to the end of the compound.

### ADDING S TO THE MAIN WORD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ex-governor</td>
<td>ex-governors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passer-by</td>
<td>passers-by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>president-elect</td>
<td>presidents-elect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>son-in-law</td>
<td>sons-in-law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ADDING S TO THE END OF THE COMPOUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>grown-up</td>
<td>grown-ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>start-up</td>
<td>start-ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trade-in</td>
<td>trade-ins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write-in</td>
<td>write-ins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foreign Words. Some foreign words form plurals as they would in the original language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alumna (female)</td>
<td>alumnae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alumnus (male)</td>
<td>alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basis</td>
<td>bases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crisis</td>
<td>crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>datum</td>
<td>data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tableau</td>
<td>tableaux</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other foreign words form the plural either as they do in the original language or by adding *s* or *es* as in English. When in doubt about the preferred form, consult a dictionary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Foreign Plural</th>
<th>English Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>appendix</td>
<td>appendices</td>
<td>appendixes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formula</td>
<td>formulae</td>
<td>formulas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>index</td>
<td>indices</td>
<td>indexes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Numbers, Letters, Words, Symbols.** The plural of numbers, letters, words, and symbols is formed by adding ’s to the term.

- three 5’s  
  - two &’s and three #’s  
- use l’s and m’s  
  - yes’s and no’s

**The i and e Rules**

Use *i* before *e*, except after *c*, for the long *e* sound in a word.

- believe       | relieve       |
- grievance     | retrieve      |
- piece         | thief         |

The exceptions to this rule are the words *either, neither, leisure, seized, and weird*.

Use *e* before *i* after *c* for the long *e* sound in a word.

- ceiling       | receipt       |
- deceive       | receive       |

Use *e* before *i* when the sound in the word is not long *e*.

- eight         | neighbor      |
- freight       | weigh         |
- height        | weight        |
Word Division

Like spelling rules, the rules for word division may seem arbitrary. Actually, they follow specific guidelines. The following rules explain the basics of properly dividing words. A good dictionary is the best guide for dividing words correctly.

General Rules

Following are two general rules for word division.

1. Avoid dividing words at the end of more than three successive lines.

   **Avoid:** We came into the conference hall late but managed to find our seating arrangements before the first speaker began.

   **Better:** We came into the conference hall late but managed to find our seating arrangements before the first speaker began.

2. Avoid dividing a word at the end of a page or dividing the last word of a paragraph.

Syllables and Word Division

Words are divided only between syllables. As a result, one-syllable words such as trough, while, and there are never divided.

Each syllable in word division must contain a vowel; therefore, most contractions cannot be divided.

- con-trol (not con-tr-ol)
- couldn’t (not could-n’t)
- hy-drau-lic (not hy-dr-au-lic)
- isn’t (not is-n’t)
When a word is divided, there must be more than one letter on the first line and more than two letters on the second line.

Incorrect: He apologized to everyone most sincerely.
Correct: He apologized to everyone most sincerely.

Incorrect: She told reporters that all her jewelry had been stolen.
Correct: She told reporters that all her jewelry had been stolen.

Incorrect: “Look at this letter; it’s full of erasures.”
Correct: “Look at this letter; it’s full of erasures.”

Incorrect: He’s not sick. He’s suffering from apathy.
Correct: He’s not sick. He’s suffering from apathy.

Single-Letter Syllables
A single-letter syllable will always be a vowel. Generally, a single-letter syllable within a word should be left with the first part of the word and not carried over to the second line.

bus-i-ness = busi-ness (not bus-iness)
ox-y-gen = oxy-gen (not ox-ygen)
sep-a-rate = sepa-rate (not sep-arate)

When two single-letter syllables occur together in a word, divide the word between the single-letter syllables.

grad-u-a-tion = gradu-ation (not grad-uation)
in-sin-u-a-tion = insinu-ation (not insin-u-ation)
When the single-letter syllable *a*, *i*, or *u* is followed by the final syllable *ble*, *bly*, or *cal*, join the two end syllables and carry them over to the next line.

cler-i-cal = cler-ical (not cler-i-cal)  
de-pend-a-ble = depend-a-ble (not dependa-ble)

**Final and Double Consonants**  
If a final consonant preceded by a vowel is doubled before adding a suffix, divide the word between the two consonants.

plan + ing = planning = plan-ning  
set + ing = setting = set-ting  
win + ing = winning = win-ning

If the root word ends in a double consonant before the suffix is added, divide the word between the root word and the suffix.

assess + ing = assessing = assess-ing  
tell + ing = telling = tell-ing

A word should never be divided between two or three consonants pronounced as one.

catch-ing (not cat-ching)  
cush-ion (not cus-hion)  
leath-ery (not leat-ery)

**Hyphenated Words**  
Divide hyphenated words and compound hyphenated words only at the hyphen that connects them.
self-assessment = self-assessment (not self-assess-ment)
ex-husband = ex-husband (not ex-hus-band)
client-oriented approach = client-oriented approach (not client-or-iented approach)

Proper Names
Avoid dividing a person’s name or any proper name. Separate titles, initials, or degrees from names only when it is unavoidable.

Avoid: Mrs. Joan Cunningham
Better: Mrs. Joan Cunningham
Avoid: Ms. Angela Sortino
Better: Ms. Angela Sortino
Avoid: George Watson, PhD
Better: George Watson, PhD

Figures and Abbreviations
In general, avoid dividing figures and abbreviations. However, if parts of an address or date must be separated, use the following guidelines.

Dividing Addresses
Avoid: 15
Water Street
Better: 15 Water Street
Avoid: 557 West Lockport
Better: 557 West Lockport
Avoid: 1903
71st Avenue
Better: 1903 71st Avenue
Avoid: New York, New York
Better: New York, New York

Dividing Dates
Avoid: August 20, 1976
Better: August 20, 1976
Avoid: September 15, 19-55
Better: September 15, 1955
Although style in writing is a highly individual matter, some general rules and guidelines have been developed over the years to produce more precise, lively, and informative prose. This part discusses sentence structure and patterns; brevity, clarity, and accuracy; and gender-inclusive language.
In composing sentences, many writers end up with one of two extremes: short, choppy sentences or long, complex ones. Thoughts may be expressed in brief, staccato statements that leave the reader short of breath. Or a sentence may start out with one idea and add a qualifier here, a modifier there, and an incidental fact or two. By the time the sentence is finished, it has become a verbal maze for the reader.

Writing clear, informative sentences is as much art as it is the skilled use of grammatical rules. The guidelines presented in this section explain how to compose sentences that convey the intended meaning and capture the reader’s interest.

The following guidelines show how to use various sentence patterns to express ideas.

**Use Clarity and Meaning as the Criteria for Good Sentences**

Each sentence should say *something* about the central idea of its paragraph without saying *too much or too little*. Build the reader’s understanding key step by key step. In the following example, the writer has presented the facts in undersized bites, creating an awkward style.

**Choppy:** Hank sailed around the world. He did it alone in a thirty-foot sailboat. His radio was his only link with the outside world. He caught fish for his meals and trapped rainwater to drink. His solitary journey took 168 days.
In the second example, the writer has committed the opposite fault of trying to say everything in one sentence.

**Run-On:** Hank sailed around the world in 168 days in a thirty-foot sailboat with only a radio to connect him to the outside world and only fresh fish and rainwater to keep his provisions stocked.

Both examples express complete thoughts, but the clarity and meaning of the information is muddled by the way it is presented. What facts in the story are more important than the others? Is there some way of ordering the material so the reader has a sense of key facts versus merely interesting ones?

In the following revision, the writer has ordered the information and used clarity and meaning as the criteria for sentence construction.

**Revised:** Hank completed his record solo voyage around the world in a mere 168 days. He made the journey in a thirty-foot sailboat, whose shortwave radio served as his only link with the outside world. He kept his provisions stocked by catching fish and trapping rainwater to drink.

In the revised version, the reader is given not only the necessary information but also some idea of its importance and meaning.

**Include Only One to Two Ideas in Each Sentence**

Many times writers will trap themselves into long, involved sentences because they are free-associating rather than carefully constructing their thoughts. A series of ideas in one sentence rushes the reader too quickly through the material. Before one idea has time to settle, another crowds it out of the way. Such sentences can be separated into shorter, simpler constructions.
Conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, and *because* often signal where a new sentence can begin. The preceding paragraph can be rewritten as follows:

**Revised:** Our study on the impact of the Environmental Pollution Act revealed that water quality has improved by an average of 35 percent in 14 states. Toxic waste, however, is still a major concern among most residents. This issue has not been addressed systematically because the Environmental Protection Agency has not set guidelines on enforcing toxic waste regulations.

In the revision, each sentence contains only one or two ideas. The reader has time to absorb the information in each sentence before going on to the next one.

**Vary Sentence Patterns to Avoid Monotonous Use of Any Particular Construction**

A writer may unconsciously adopt one type of sentence pattern throughout a paragraph. A short, staccato pattern can mimic a cool, unemotional tone. On the other hand, if all the sentences begin with subordinate clauses, it may appear that the paragraph is taking a circular route to the main point.

The English sentence can be composed in a variety of ways to add interest and liveliness. The four basic sentence constructions—simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex—can be combined in paragraphs to help the reader move from one idea to the next.
Let’s review the four basic sentence patterns:

**Simple:** I would like to go home. (an independent clause with no subordinate clause)

**Compound:** I’m not feeling well, and I would like to go home. (two or more independent clauses but no subordinate clause)

**Complex:** Because I’m not feeling well, I would like to go home. (an independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses)

**Compound-complex:** I’m not feeling well because I ate six taffy apples, and I would like to go home. (two or more independent clauses and one or more subordinate clauses—underscored)

The following example is written exclusively in short, simple sentences. The revision uses complex and compound sentences to vary the constructions. Read the two versions aloud. Notice how the change in rhythm affects the reader’s perception and feelings about the material.

**Monotonous:** Bond entered Mecca through the south gate. The sun was high overhead. Its brutal heat struck him speechless. Pilgrims blocked the narrow streets and alleyways. His guide found him lodgings near the mosque. He would be contacted soon by the Mecca agent. He had only two days left to complete his mission.

**Varied:** Bond entered Mecca through the south gate. The sun was high overhead, and its brutal heat struck him speechless. In every section of the city, pilgrims blocked the narrow streets and alleyways. His guide found him lodgings near the mosque, and Bond settled in to wait for the Mecca agent. With only two days left to complete his mission, Bond hoped the man would arrive soon.
In the next example, the writer uses introductory subordinate clauses for all sentences. Read aloud the two versions and notice how varying the sentence structure changes the rhythm and tone of the text.

**Monotonous:** After waiting 24 hours, Bond knew that something was wrong. Because he had used only embassy couriers to carry his messages, he suspected a security leak among the embassy staff. Even if his suspicions were wrong, it was evident that somewhere along the line the message had been intercepted. Although his orders said to stay in Mecca, Bond left the city that night.

**Varied:** After waiting 24 hours, Bond knew that something was wrong. He had used only embassy couriers to carry his messages to the Mecca contact. Was there a security leak among the embassy staff? His suspicions might be groundless, but somewhere along the line the message had been intercepted. Although his orders said to stay in Mecca, Bond left the city that night.

Experiment with various sentence patterns by recasting sentences in the four basic forms. Use the following examples as guides for rewriting sentences. Notice that by altering the patterns, different facts in the sentence can be stressed.

**Simple:** He reached Akaba and learned the Mecca agent had disappeared.

**Compound:** He reached Akaba, and headquarters told him the Mecca agent had disappeared.

**Complex:** When he reached Akaba, headquarters told him the Mecca agent had disappeared.

**Compound-complex:** By the time Bond reached Akaba, the Mecca agent had disappeared, and all the agent’s contacts had been arrested.
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Brevity

*Brevity* means “brief” or “concise.” It has been said that “brevity is the soul of wit.” Many sentences are inflated with wordy phrases or expressions that add nothing to the meaning or impact of what is being said. The following guidelines explain how to make written messages more concise.

**Avoid the Phrases *There Is* and *There Are***

Rewrite sentences using more active verbs.

**Avoid:** There are three reasons for colonizing Mars.

**Better:** I can tell you three reasons for colonizing Mars.

Three reasons exist for colonizing Mars.

**Avoid:** Whenever it rains, there is water in our backyard.

**Better:** Whenever it rains, water collects in our backyard.

Whenever it rains, our backyard floods.

**Condense Clauses Beginning with *Which, That,*
*or Who* into Fewer Words**

Rewriting clauses beginning with *which, that,* or *who* will often eliminate wordy phrases.

**Poor:** The visitor, who was from England, brought us a package that looked mysterious.

**Better:** The English visitor brought us a mysterious package.
Poor: The building, which was 24 stories, collapsed during the earthquake that struck last night.
Better: The 24-story building collapsed during last night’s earthquake.

Strike Out the Article *the* Wherever Possible
Eliminating *the* will improve the flow and readability of sentences. The importance of *the* can be determined by crossing it out and reading the sentence for meaning. If the sentence is less clear, restore the article.

The shore lights reflected in Santiago Bay made the hotels and the casinos appear to float above the water.
The players compete in the spring for the starting positions that the management has posted.

Eliminate Wordy and Redundant Phrases and Expressions
Redundant words and expressions repeat or rephrase what has been said in a sentence. They occur frequently in writing and should be deleted. Here are a few examples.

Avoid: The blouse is bright yellow in color.
Better: The blouse is bright yellow.
Avoid: Of course, we’re only thinking on a theoretical basis.
Better: Of course, we’re only thinking theoretically.
Avoid: In the vast majority of cases, chicken pox is not fatal.
Better: In most cases, chicken pox is not fatal.
Avoid: The reason I don’t want you to go is that the Amazon is no place for a summer vacation.
Better: I don’t want you to go because the Amazon is no place for a summer vacation.
Following is a list of wordy phrases commonly used by many writers. Compare them with their more concise alternatives. Change the wordy phrases wherever they appear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wordy</th>
<th>Concise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at this point in time</td>
<td>at this time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consensus of opinion</td>
<td>consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet together</td>
<td>meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blend together</td>
<td>blend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during the course of</td>
<td>during</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>few in number</td>
<td>few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal in manner</td>
<td>personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on a weekly basis</td>
<td>weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refer back to</td>
<td>refer to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>square in shape</td>
<td>square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>until such time as</td>
<td>until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>due to the fact that</td>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very necessary</td>
<td>necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in spite of the fact that</td>
<td>although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engaged in a study of</td>
<td>studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depreciate in value</td>
<td>depreciate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opening gambit</td>
<td>gambit (a gambit is an opening move in chess)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this is a subject that</td>
<td>this subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the fact that she had come</td>
<td>her coming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a hasty manner</td>
<td>hastily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Redundant expressions are easy to spot once you learn how and where to look for them.

**Avoid:** To find his error, he had to retrace the steps he had taken before. *(Retrace means to go back over the steps or path taken before. The clause in boldface is unnecessary.)*

**Better:** To find his error, he had to retrace his steps.

**Avoid:** In the month of June, we traveled through the states of Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia.

**Better:** In June, we traveled through Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia.
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Clarity

Clear writing involves getting the words just right. Choose the best words to express your ideas in the best manner possible. Do not assume that written material is clear to the reader. This section presents guidelines for clear writing.

Keep Words Fresh
Writing should be free of jargon, buzzwords, and clichés. Such words and phrases come easily to mind yet convey little real information. Delete them and substitute more precise words.

**Jargon**
Jargon refers to specialized terms of a profession that the general reader probably would not understand. Rewrite sentences to eliminate jargon or make sure that all terms are defined.

**Avoid:** Doctors often order tests to check patients’ mineral **spectrums** and the **RBC counts** in their blood.

**Better:** Doctors often order tests to check patients’ **trace minerals**, **such as iron**, and the **number of red blood cells** in their blood.
Buzzwords

Buzzwords are terms that come into fashion for a time and find their way into everyone’s writing. They are often borrowed from various professions and adapted to general use. Eliminate buzzwords and choose better words. Some of today’s buzzwords include the following:

- amp it up
- interactive
- head honcho
- input
- bottom line
- parameter
- paradigm
- interface
- dicey
- scenario
- street smarts
- at this point in time
- viable
- taxwise (or anything wise)
- impact (as a verb)

**Avoid:**

I don’t know how well Greg is going to interface with Linda. They haven’t worked together before.

**Better:**

I don’t know how well Greg is going to get along with Linda. They haven’t worked together before.

Some words and phrases from the legal field have been appropriated for general use—often inappropriately. Avoid using the following terms for everyday writing:

- aforementioned
- per, as per
- duly
- pursuant to
- herein
- therein
- hereto
- therewith
- herewith
- whereas
- notwithstanding the above

**Avoid:**

Re your letter of the 25th, we are sending your five memo pads per your order and enclosing the invoice herein. (Not only do the “legal” terms add nothing to the sentence, but the writer misses a chance to communicate more precise details.)

**Better:**

We received your order, dated October 25, for five memo pads. Enclosed please find the memo pads and an invoice itemizing price and shipping costs.
Clichés

Clichés are trite, worn-out expressions. While they are acceptable in conversation, they should be avoided in writing. Following are some common clichés:

- stiff as a board
- slick as a whistle
- oldies but goodies
- keep your shirt on
- mind-blowing
- too good to be true
- crying over spilt milk
- getting in touch with
- on the warpath
- out of the frying pan
- up to your ears
- on the tip of my tongue
- deader than a doornail
- bigger than life
- neat as a pin
- needle in a haystack
- pearls of wisdom
- a stitch in time

**Avoid:** The boss is on the warpath about the new product failure. I thought the sales projections were too good to be true. Now we’re up to our ears in returned goods.

**Better:** The boss is demanding to know why the new product failed. I thought the sales projections were too optimistic. Now we have more than 100,000 units of returned goods.

Keep Words Specific and Concrete

The more abstract a word or phrase, the less people will understand exactly what is meant. Abstract terms are subject to considerable individual interpretation. For example, the terms national security, quality education, and consumer interests can mean widely different things to different people.

Concrete words, on the other hand, refer to something specific, often something that can be seen, heard, touched, tasted, or smelled. Their meaning is also more precise and less open to personal interpretation. Use concrete words as much as possible in writing. Although abstract words can be used for summarizing ideas and creating a framework for discussion, ground the framework in tangible, concrete details.
Abstract: I think this novel is overly dramatic.
Concrete: I think this novel relies too much on emotion, coincidence, and manipulation of characters.

Abstract: The company’s sales picture is gloomy this year.
Concrete: The 25 percent drop in sales means we will probably not meet our objectives this year.

Abstract: His tennis game is off.
Concrete: His backstroke is weak, and he can’t maintain his concentration.

Many people also try to make their writing sound more formal or official by using abstract words instead of concrete ones.

Avoid: Please refrain from discarding litter items on the company grounds or in the company buildings. Use the litter receptacles placed throughout the plant for such purposes. Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated.
Better: Please deposit all waste paper, aluminum cans, bottles, and other trash in the appropriate litter baskets. Help keep your grounds and building clean! We appreciate your cooperation.

Vague or abstract words leave unanswered such questions as What kind? How much? Which one? In what way? By using concrete words, readers’ questions are answered with specific information.

Keep References Clear
When words are used to modify or refer to other words, make sure the reader can follow the intended train of thought. If references are used carelessly, some unintended humor may be provided.

If you can’t hang the clothes yourself, ask for help in hanging them from your counselor.
Our camp leader is a stocky, red-haired man with a beach ball named Tom Robbins.
Such confusion can be avoided by following a few basic guidelines to keep references clear.

**Keep Modifiers Close to Words They Modify**

**Poor:** The band played three songs during their tour written by a 12-year-old girl.

**Better:** During their tour, the band played three songs written by a 12-year-old girl.

**Place Adverbs Close to Words They Modify**

Pay particular attention to placement of the adverb *only*. The reader should not have to guess at the sentence’s meaning.

**Incorrect:** I only wanted three lattes, not five.

**Correct:** I wanted only three lattes, not five.

**Poor:** The letter we received recently managed to upset everyone. (Is it received recently or recently managed?)

**Better:** The letter we recently received managed to upset everyone.

**Keep Subject and Verb Together**

This arrangement helps the reader follow the thought and understand the sentence more easily.

**Avoid:** The white-pebble beach, which in June 1944 had been the site of a bloody battle where the Allied forces landed and began their march to liberate Europe from German occupation, still bears the scars of a major military campaign.

**Better:** The white-pebble beach still bears the scars of a major military campaign. In June 1944 it was the site of a bloody battle where the Allied forces landed and began their march to liberate Europe from German occupation.
Often the solution to the problem of subject-verb placement is to break the sentence into two or more shorter sentences.

**Make Sure That Antecedents Are Clear**

Words such as this, that, who, what, which, and it refer to the preceding noun or pronoun in the sentence or previous sentence. If the antecedents are not clear, the sentences will confuse the reader and may provide some unexpected humor.

We will paint any car, any make, for only $59.95. Our offer is good for this week only. Have your car painted before it expires!

The antecedent for it is our offer, not your car. But the reader must look twice at the sentence to determine the writer’s true intention. Study the following examples.

**Poor:** I served avocados for lunch, which no one felt like eating. (Did no one feel like eating the avocados or the lunch?)

**Better:** I served avocados for lunch, but no one felt like eating them. No one felt like eating the avocados I served for lunch.

**Poor:** I dropped the jar and pickles rolled all over the floor, under the table, and out into the hallway. This was not going to please my mother! (To what does this refer? Avoid using words that refer to an entire sentence or idea.)

**Better:** I dropped the jar and pickles rolled all over the floor, under the table, and out into the hallway. This mess was not going to please my mother!

A variety of methods can be used to correct confusing references. These include breaking one sentence into two or more, rearranging word order, restating the sentence, or filling in the missing reference.
Keep Structures Parallel
Phrases and clauses in a series or within a sentence should be parallel; that is, they should have the same structure. In the following example, the writer begins with infinitive phrases and then changes to another structure at the end.

We learned how to change a tire, to shift 16 gears, and once stopped the truck from running off the road.

Once a parallel structure has been started, the reader expects it to continue. If the structure changes in midstream, readers will be confused. The preceding example should read as follows:

We learned how to change a tire, to shift 16 gears, and to stop the truck from running off the road.

Look over the following examples. In some cases, the violation of parallel structure is not obvious.

**Incorrect:** We sold jeans to the Spanish, the French, Italians, and Germans.

**Correct:** We sold jeans to the Spanish, the French, the Italians, and the Germans.
We sold jeans to the Spanish, French, Italians, and Germans.

An article or preposition used in a series of terms must be used with all the terms or only before the first term.

Correlative conjunctions—such as both, and; not, but; not only, but also; and either, or—should be followed by the same grammatical structure. This rule is also true for any series introduced by first, second, third, and so on. The sentence may need to be rearranged to correct the problem.

**Incorrect:** The lecture was both a tedious one and much too long.

**Correct:** The lecture was both tedious and long.
Incorrect: It’s not a time for emotion but clear thinking.
Correct: It’s not a time for emotion but for clear thinking.
Incorrect: My reasons are first, the expedition is too dangerous and second, that it is unnecessary.
Correct: My reasons are first, the expedition is too dangerous and second, it is unnecessary.

Writers also violate parallel structure when they mix verb forms within a sentence.

I have mowed the lawn, washed the dog, rescued our hamster, and went to the store all in one day.

The verb form went is incorrect with the auxiliary verb have. The sentence can be rewritten as follows:

I have mowed the lawn, washed the dog, rescued our hamster, and gone to the store all in one day.
I mowed the lawn, washed the dog, rescued our hamster, and went to the store all in one day.
Accuracy

Accuracy is essential to good writing, whether the writing is an essay, a business report, a term paper, or a news article. The following guidelines help ensure that facts are correct.

Double-Check Figures, Dates, Specifications, and Other Details
The motto is *When in doubt, check it out.* Make sure that any figures, dates, percentages, or other facts have been reported or copied accurately. Do not rely on memory.

Be Sure That All Names, Titles, and Abbreviations Are Spelled Properly
It can be considerably embarrassing to misspell proper names and titles of books, articles, plays, and the like. Find out whether abbreviations are spelled with periods, in all capitals, or with symbols such as ampersands.

Verify the Accuracy of Direct Quotations
Try to verify what people said and report their words accurately. In one instance, a reporter asked a political candidate the following question: “Do you believe that we should do away with price supports for farmers and import more foreign commodities?”

The candidate replied, “Yes,” and the reporter wrote in an article:
Candidate Brown said, “We should do away with price supports for farmers and import more foreign commodities.”

The candidate said nothing of the kind; he merely responded to a question. The reporter should have written the following:

When asked if he favors eliminating price supports and importing more foreign commodities, the candidate replied, “Yes.”

Make Sure That Ideas Are Presented Clearly
Clarity is essential to accuracy. Learn to spot muddled statements, abstract terms, nonparallel constructions, ambiguous expressions, and poor development of ideas.

Ask someone else to read what you have written. Chances are he or she will be able to point out weaknesses in your work that you cannot see.

Make Sure Your Work Is Neat and Legible
Sloppy handwriting, messy copy, or spelling and grammatical errors can affect the accuracy of your work. Someone’s name may be misspelled because you could not read your own handwriting. A key figure may be blurred by a coffee stain, and you will have to search through your notes to find the correct number. Carelessness not only threatens accuracy but also can cost you considerable time and effort.
Use of gender-biased language can create confusion. For example, the use of the word *man* sometimes refers only to men and other times refers to both men and women. The conversion from sexist to gender-inclusive language can be made naturally and gracefully. In the following sections, guidelines are provided for using gender-inclusive nouns, pronouns, titles, and expressions.

**Nouns and Pronouns**

Here are guidelines for the use of gender-inclusive and the avoidance of gender-specific nouns and pronouns.

1. Try to use female and male pronouns only when referring to specific males and females.

   **Avoid:** A good dentist reassures his patients.
   **Better:** Dr. Jacobs always reassures his patients.
   Dr. Jacobs always reassures her patients.

   **Avoid:** An elementary teacher has her hands full teaching today’s children.
   **Better:** Ms. Hutton has her hands full teaching today’s children.
   Mr. Hutton has his hands full teaching today’s children.

   *Note:* on occasion, use male and female paired pronouns *he or she*, *her or him*, *his or hers*, etc., instead of a male or female pronoun exclusively. This construction is particularly appropriate as a gentle reminder that both men and women make up the population that is being discussed.
Avoid: A good manager knows his staff.
Better: A good manager knows his or her staff.

2. Make the nouns and pronouns plural.

Avoid: The prudent executive should know where his money goes.
Better: Prudent executives should know where their money goes.
Avoid: The course is designed to help your child reach her full potential.
Better: The course is designed to help children reach their full potential.

Note: in informal writing and speech it is permissible to use the plural pronouns they, them, their, and theirs with a singular noun or indefinite pronoun. However, you can usually recast the sentence to avoid this construction.

Avoid: Each manager knows his staff.
(Sometimes) Better: Each manager knows their staff.

3. Use the first-person we, second-person you, or third-person one, each, those, and so on, where appropriate.

Avoid: Man’s desire for excitement drives him to seek ever more daring challenges.
Better: Our desire for excitement drives us to seek ever more daring challenges.
Avoid: The player cannot throw the dice until he has drawn one card from the Community Chest pile.
Better: You cannot throw the dice until you have drawn one card from the Community Chest pile.
Avoid: For the student to grasp basic physics, he must understand the principles of energy, light, and matter.
Better: To grasp basic physics, one must understand the principles of energy, light, and matter.
4. Reword sentences to eliminate the pronouns or replace them with gender-free words such as a, an, and the.

Avoid: Each evening, a night guard makes his rounds of the building.
Better: Each evening, a night guard patrols the building.
Avoid: The dietitian prepares her nutritional analysis once a day.
Better: The dietitian prepares a nutritional analysis once a day.

5. Use the passive voice occasionally instead of the active voice.

Active: Whenever an employee enters the building, he should wear his identification badge.
Passive: The identification badge should be worn whenever an employee enters the building.

6. To avoid sexist references, repeat the noun if it is separated from the second reference by a number of words.

Avoid: The announcer on a classical music station must know how to pronounce a wide range of foreign names and titles. He also must be able to read advertising and news copy.
Better: The announcer on a classical music station must know how to pronounce a wide range of foreign names and titles. The announcer also must be able to read advertising and news copy.

Alternative Noun Forms
English has accumulated many nouns that contain the word man as a suffix or prefix: businessman, chairman, congressman, man-hours. These words can no longer be used to refer to both men and women. The following guidelines give alternatives to these terms.

1. Avoid using man to refer to people as a group. Use the terms humanity, human beings, persons, human race, or people instead.
Avoid: Man (mankind) is at a critical point in his history.
Better: Humanity (the human race) is at a critical point in its history.
Avoid: Man is a gregarious creature.
Better: People are gregarious creatures.

2. Use person as the suffix or prefix instead of man where the usage would not create absurd constructions (for example, personhole cover for manhole cover; use sewer cover instead).

Avoid: A businessman can fly half fare.
Better: A businessperson can fly half fare.
Avoid: The chairman draws up the agenda.
Better: The chairperson draws up the agenda.

3. Use words other than person to replace man.

Avoid: The policeman gave me a ticket.
Better: The police officer gave me a ticket.
Avoid: Our mailman came early today.
Better: Our mail carrier came early today.
Avoid: This job will require 24 man-hours.
Better: This job will require 24 staff-hours.

4. Reword the sentence to avoid using man.

Avoid: Freshman students are always nervous.
Better: First-year students are always nervous.
Avoid: The team showed unusual gamesmanship.
Better: The team played the game shrewdly.

Suffixes ess, ette, ix, and ienne/ine
In modern usage, the trend is to drop the suffixes that denote female forms of nouns: poet, poetess; usher, usherette. However, three forms are still widely used—actress, hostess, and waitress. Use the masculine and feminine forms when referring to both men and women.
Incorrect: Alice and Jim served as hosts.
Correct: Alice and Jim served as hostess and host.

1. Omit the following suffixes, which denote female when added to words.

**ess Ending**

- Avoid: directress
- Better: director
- Avoid: authoress
- Better: author
- Avoid: sculptress
- Better: sculptor

**ette Ending**

- Avoid: usherette
- Better: usher
- Avoid: drum majorette
- Better: drum major
- Avoid: bachelorette
- Better: single

**ix Ending**

- Avoid: aviatrix
- Better: aviator
- Avoid: executrix
- Better: executor

**ienne/ine Ending**

- Avoid: comedienne
- Better: comedian

2. Do not mix gender-inclusive and gender-determined words when pairing men and women.

**Avoid:** He is chairman of the Elks and she is chairwoman of the Junior League. As chairman, they have little time at home.

**Better:** He is chairman of the Elks, and she is chairwoman of the Junior League. As chairpersons, they have little time at home.
Avoid: He is chairperson of the Elks, and she is chairwoman of the Junior League.
Better: He is chairperson of the Elks, and she is chairperson of the Junior League.
He is chairman of the Elks, and she is chairwoman of the Junior League.

Social Titles
The social titles Mr., Mrs., and Ms. can also be used in ways that do not perpetuate stereotypes. Following are some guidelines.

1. Use Mr. for all men.
2. Use Ms. for all women when you do not know how they prefer to be addressed or do not know their marital status.
3. Use Miss or Mrs. when the woman herself uses these titles with her name.
4. Use a married woman’s first name, not her husband’s. For example, use Mrs. Dorothy Brandt, not Mrs. Harold Brandt, unless the woman specifies that she would like to be addressed by her husband’s name.

Salutations
In writing business letters or direct mail messages, make sure the salutation includes all the readers who are likely to receive the message. Following are suggested ways to write gender-inclusive salutations.

1. Avoid using Dear Sir, Dear Gentlemen, or My Dear Sirs. Use the following variations.
   Ladies and Gentlemen:
   Gentlepersons:
   Dear Madames (Mesdames) and Sirs:
My Dear Sirs and Madames (Mesdames):
My Dear Sir or Madam (Madame or Sir):

2. Address individuals by title or group name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Group Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear Executive:</td>
<td>Dear Customer:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear Manager:</td>
<td>Dear Friend:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear Human Resources Director:</td>
<td>Dear Subscriber:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear Professor:</td>
<td>Dear Investor:</td>
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<td>Dear Medical Writer:</td>
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**Occupational Titles**

The U.S. Department of Labor in its *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* lists gender-inclusive titles for many occupations and positions. Here are some examples:

**Avoid**            **Revised**

salesman        salesperson
craftsman        craftworker
draftsman        drafter
fireman          firefighter
watchman         guard, security officer
newsman          reporter, newsperson
foreman           supervisor
repairman         repairer
mailman           mail carrier, letter carrier
policeman         police, police officer

See the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* for a complete listing of titles and other business-related terms.
Appendix A

Principal Parts of Irregular Verbs

There are no fixed rules for forming the past tense and past and present participle of irregular verbs. It is necessary to memorize the forms and to keep a good dictionary handy. For reference, some of the most commonly used irregular verbs are listed here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Form</th>
<th>Past Tense</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
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Appendix B

Verb-Preposition Combinations

Verb-preposition combinations often defy attempts to categorize them under any logical system. As a result, the only solution is to learn through practice which prepositions are used with which verbs under what circumstances. Some of the more troublesome ones are presented here.

**agree with, agree to**

*agree with*—concur in opinion (agree with a person)

I **agree with** Carl that we should operate tomorrow.

*agree to*—give assent (agree to an idea or thing)

I **agree to** an operation for my ulcer.

**angry with/at**

*angry with/at*—enraged; *angry at*—suggests a confrontation

She was **angry with** herself for sleeping late.

The president was **angry at** the board for turning down his five-year plan.

**answer to, answer for**

*answer to*—be accountable to a person; respond to

You’ll have to **answer to** the commission for your sales record.

The dog is four years old and **answers to** the name “Fred.”

*answer for*—be accountable for actions

You’ll have to **answer for** your decision to cancel the concert.
on behalf of, in behalf of
on behalf of—as someone’s representative
The lawyer acted on behalf of my brother to settle the estate.
in behalf of—in someone’s interest
I set up a trust fund in behalf of my nephew.

belong to, belong with
belong to—be a member of
They belong to the Secret Order of the Koala.
belong with—be classified or placed among
These flowers belong with the plants classified as grasses.

capacity to, capacity of
capacity to—capable of (used with a verb)
She has the capacity to break the world’s high-jump record.
capacity of—content or volume (used with a measure)
This silo has a capacity of 2,400 cubic feet.

compare to, compare with
compare to—liken
She compared my singing to Tina Turner’s.
“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”
compare with—contrast for similarities and differences
He compared the Russian military strength with that of the armed forces of the United States.

concur in, concur with
concur in—agree (in an opinion)
The three judges concurred in their settlement of the case.
concur with—agree (with another person)
I must concur with the judge that the settlement is fair.

connect to, connect with
connect to—join (one object to another)
The first step is to connect the positive wire to the positive pole.
connect with—make contact with (a person, group, idea)
If we drive overnight, we can connect with the first group by dawn.
correspond to, correspond with
*correspond to*—match
The handwriting on this letter *corresponds to* the handwriting on the earlier document.
*correspond with*—exchange messages
Janet has *corresponded with* a friend in Costa Rica for three years.

differ from, differ with
differ from—be unlike
The movie *differed from* the book in several ways.
differ with—disagree with
The figures in the government report *differ with* those in our study.

inside, inside of
*inside* (no preposition)—the part lying within
I damaged the *inside* door of our house.
*inside of*—within (also used with expressions of time)
The flower shop is *inside of* the building.
He will return *inside of* an hour.

in the market, on the market
*in the market*—looking to buy something
We’re *in the market* for a great chocolate dessert.
*on the market*—up for sale
Hal put his boat *on the market* yesterday and hopes to sell it soon.

name
*name* (no preposition)—to appoint
Paula was *named* editor in chief of the *Los Angeles Chronicle*. (never “named as” editor in chief)

outside, outside of
*outside* (no preposition)—the part lying without
I put the poster on the *outside* wall.
*outside of*—outside; except, other than
She went *outside of* the house.
I can’t think of anyone in the office, *outside of* Julio, who knows how to program this computer.
**promote, promote to**

*promote* (no preposition)—to increase in rank or status (use with a title)

She was **promoted** Lieutenant Commander.

*promote to*—to raise to a higher rank or status

She was **promoted to** the executive level in the sales department.

**reference to, reference on**

*reference to*—a pointing toward

The governor made a **reference to** the health-care legislation, calling it “long overdue.”

*reference on*—books or articles about

Tarn’s *Babylon* is a scholarly **reference on** the downfall of the Persian Empire.

**report of/on**

*report of/on*—a written or verbal description (prepositions used interchangeably)

He completed a 200-page **report on** why people prefer handheld toothbrushes to electric ones.

**separate from**

*separate from* (never **separate out**)—to divide; to distinguish

We’ll have to **separate** the damaged phones **from** the working ones. Jerilyn’s bank accounts are **separate from** her brother’s.

**sympathy with, sympathy for**

*sympathy with*—sharing another’s feelings

I can **sympathize with** Jack; he has to babysit tonight, and so do I.

*sympathy for*—having compassion for another

I feel **sympathy for** anyone who has lost a job.

**wait for, wait on, wait out**

*wait for*—to be ready or at hand for

The general **waited for** the signal to attack.
wait on—to serve
When my father was in school, he earned money waiting on tables.
wait out—colloquial expression meaning to remain inactive during the course of
The fans waited out the rainstorm by taking shelter under the bleachers.

write to
write to—send messages to (preposition always used when direct object is missing)
I will write to you when you get to Chicago. (Direct object is missing.)
I will write you a note when you get to Chicago. (Direct object “note” is present.)
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Appendix C

Frequently Confused Words

The meaning and spelling of the following words are commonly confused. Practice using them until the correct usage is familiar to you.

accept, except
accept—to take, agree
I accept the offer.
except—excluding, omitting
Everyone left except me.

advice, advise
advice—opinion, counsel
She needs your advice.
advise—to counsel
Please advise him of his rights.

affect, effect
affect—to influence, change
Inflation always affects our level of income.
effect—(n.) impression, results; (v.) to cause
The computer has had a profound effect on our everyday lives. It has effected a complete change in the way we do business.
already, all ready
already—even now
We already have a robot.
all ready—all prepared
They’re all ready to go.

assent, ascent
assent—(v.) to agree; (n.) permission
Did they assent to your request? The entire board gave its assent to the project.
ascend—advancement
On the third day, they made their ascent to the top of Mount Everest.

capital, capitol
capital—seat of government; wealth
The nation’s capital braced itself for the holiday weekend.
We need more capital to finance our new product line.
capitol—government building
They are putting a new roof on the capitol.

cite, site, sight
cite—refer to, state
I cited my reasons for disagreeing.
site—location
The site for our home is lovely.
sight—scene
The city at dawn is a beautiful sight.

cloths, clothes
cloths—pieces of cloth
Use soft cloths for polishing your silver.
clothes—wearing apparel
Every spring he buys new clothes and throws out the old ones.

complement, compliment
complement—something that completes
Her humor is the perfect complement to my seriousness.
compliment—to say something good about someone; a flattering remark
My father always compliments my mother on her painting.
The boss’s compliment meant a lot to Carl.

consul, council, counsel
consul—foreign embassy official
The Swedish consul threw a party for the President.
council—official body
The city council passed the ordinance by a three-to-one margin.
counsel—(v.) to advise; (n.) legal advisor
Find someone to counsel you about your accident. In fact, you should hire the company lawyer to act as counsel in this matter.

dissent, descent, descend
dissent—disagreement
Mine was the only vote in dissent of the proposed amendment.
descent—a decline, fall
The road made a sharp descent and then curved dangerously to the right.
descend—to come down
They had to descend from the mountaintop in darkness.

fewer, less
fewer—used for individual units, numbers
You will have to make fewer mistakes or order more erasers.
We have five fewer doughnuts than we had this morning.
less—used for general quantities
The amount of money in our bank account is less than it was last year.

formerly, formally
formerly—previously
I was formerly a recruiter.
formally—officially
She was sworn in formally as the fifth member of the panel.
**imply, infer**

*imply*—to suggest
Are you *implying* that I was at the scene of the crime?

*infer*—to deduce from evidence
Your gloves were found in the room; thus, we *infer* that you visited the deceased sometime last night.

**it’s, its**

*it’s*—contraction of *it is* or *it has*

It’s [it has] been a long day.
I’ve seen the play; it’s [it is] not very good.

*its*—possessive form of the pronoun *it*
When the ship fired its guns, the blast was deafening.

**later, latter**

*later*—after a time
They’ll mail it later today.

*latter*—last mentioned of the two
If it’s a choice between the beach and the mountains, I’ll take the latter.

**lead, led, lead**

*lead*—(v.) to go before; (adj.) first
The boys always lead the rush to the beach.
The lead singer seems off tonight.

*led*—(v., past tense of *lead*) went before
They led the parade playing their kazooos.

*lead*—(n.) heavy metal; graphite
This paperweight is made of lead.

**lie, lay**

*lie*—to rest or recline (lie, lay, lain)
The cat always lies down on my sweater. Yesterday he lay on it all day.

    I wish he had lain somewhere else.

*lay*—to put or place something (lay, laid, laid)
I will lay the sweater on the couch. Yesterday I laid it there without thinking about the cat. I have laid it there many times.
lose, loose, loss
lose—misplace
Don't lose the tickets.
loose—not fastened down; release
The screw is loose on the showerhead.
Turn the kids loose in the park.
loss—deprivation
His leaving was a loss to the company.

past, passed
past—(n., adj.) preceding
The past president gave the gavel to the new president.
passed—(v., past tense of pass) went by; gone by
We passed my cousin on the road.

personal, personnel
personal—individual
Can I ask you a personal question?
personnel—a department; workers
The human resources (personnel) office keeps records on all company personnel.

precede, proceed
precede—to come before
My older brother precedes me by one grade in school.
proceed—to go ahead
We can proceed with our game as soon as the weather clears.

principle, principal
principle—rule, standard
Sound principles can help you make good decisions.
principal—(adj.) main, chief; (n.) superintendent
She is the state's principal witness in this case.
I'll never forget my grade school principal, Mr. Harvey.
**quiet, quite**

*quiet*—silent

The valley is quiet at dusk.

*quite*—completely; to a considerable degree

He was quite upset with himself for losing the race.

I quite agree that the judge was unfair.

**rise, raise**

*rise*—(v.) to go up, to get up; (n.) reaction

The moon rises later each night.

Your statement to the governor certainly got a rise out of him.

*raise*—(v.) to lift, bring up; (n.) an increase

Raise the picture a little higher.

After four months, he finally got a raise in pay.

**sit, set**

*sit*—to rest in an upright position

We had to sit on the plane for three hours before we took off.

*set*—to put or place something

They set the coffee on the table.

She set the files in order.

**stationary, stationery**

*stationary*—still, fixed

The chair is stationary.

*stationery*—letter paper

He took out a sheet of stationery and wrote a letter.

**than, then**

*than*—after a comparison; when

Vivian is taller than Kelly.

I no sooner started talking than Kelly interrupted me.

*then*—next; in that case

She took Fred’s order and then mine.

If you want to skip the mashed potatoes, then have the waitress mark it on the order.
that, which

*that*—used to introduce a phrase or clause essential to the meaning of the sentence; not set off by commas

The shipment *that* arrived yesterday had to be returned. (*That arrived yesterday* identifies which shipment had to be returned and is essential information.)

We ate the 15 doughnuts *that* Jan brought to work this morning. *which*—used to refer to a specific noun or pronoun and to introduce a phrase or clause not essential to the meaning of the sentence; usually set off by commas

We ate 15 doughnuts, *which* was 15 too many. (*Which* refers to *doughnuts* and adds additional information—*which was 15 too many*—that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.)

The shipment, *which* arrived yesterday, had to be returned. (*Which arrived yesterday* is incidental information and is set off by commas.)

*Exception: that or which* can at times be used interchangeably to avoid too many repetitions of either word in a sentence.

there, their, they’re

*there*—a place

The book has to be on the table; I saw it *there* just a minute ago.

*their*—possessive form of *they*

Why don’t they take *their* skateboards and go home?

*they’re*—contraction of *they are*

*They’re* upset that the watermelon fell off the table.

weather, whether

*weather*—climate

The *weather* has been changing slowly over the past fifty years.

*whether*—if; regardless

They have to know *whether* you are going. You should tell them *whether* you feel like it or not.
who’s, whose

who’s—contraction of who is or who has

Do you know who’s [who is] coming to the party tonight? No, I don’t know who’s [who has] been invited.

whose—possessive form of who

Whose purple car is parked outside our house?

you’re, your

you’re—contraction of you are

You’re going to be late for dinner.

your—possessive form of you

Your dinner is cold.
Appendix D

Frequently Misspelled Words

The following list contains words that are frequently misspelled. Use this list as a quick reference in addition to consulting a good dictionary.

abbreviate  appreciate
absence     appropriate
abundant    argument
accessible  arrangement
accidentally arrears
accommodate ascertain
accompanies  association
accompaniment attendance
accumulate  authorize
accuracy    auxiliary
acknowledgment awfully
acquaintance
adequately   ballet
admission   bankruptcy
admittance  beneficial
adolescent  bibliography
advantageous bookkeeper
allege      boulevard
alliance    brochure
analysis    buffet
analyze     bulletin
anonymous   calculation
apologetically
aparatus    calendar
apparent    camouflage
canceled/cancelled
cancellation
catalog/catalogue
catastrophe
category
cellar
cemetery
changeable
choose
chose
colossal
column
commitment
committed
committee
comparative
competent
competition
competitor
complexion
comptroller
conceivable
concise
conscience
conscientious
consciousness
consensus
consistency
contingency
controlling
controversy
correspondence
correspondents
criticize
curriculum
debacle
debtor
decadent
deceitful
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dependent
depreciation
description
desirable
detrimental
dilemma
diligence
disastrous
disciple
discrimination
dissatisfied
division
economical
eckstasy
effect
efficiency
embarrassment
emphasize
endeavor
enforceable
enormous
enthusiastically
entrance
espionage
exaggerate
excel
exceptionally
exhaustion
exhibition
exhibitor
exhilaration
existence
exorbitant
expensive
extension
exuberant
facilitate
familiar
familiarize
fascination
<p>| feasible     | initiative    |
| femininest | innocent      |
| financier   | inoculate     |
| foreign     | institution   |
| forfeit     | intellectual  |
| franchise   | interference  |
| fraud       | interpretation|
| fraudulent  | interrupt     |
| freight     | invoice       |
| fulfill     | irrelevant    |
|             | irresistible  |
| gauge       | itemize       |
| grammar     | itinerary     |
| grievance   | jeopardize    |
| guarantee   | jeopardy      |
| guaranty    | judgment/judgement |
| guidance    |              |
| harassment  | kerosene      |
| hereditary  | knowledge     |
| hindrance   | knowledgeable |
| horizontal  |              |
| hygiene     | labeled       |
| hypocrisy   | laborious     |
| hypothetical| larynx        |
| ideally     | legitimate    |
| idiomatic   | leisurely     |
| ineligible  | liable        |
| immediately | license       |
| imperative  | likelihood    |
| implement   | livelihood    |
| incidentally| liquor        |
| inconvenience| livable      |
| indemnity   | loose         |
| independent | lose          |
| indispensable| lucrative    |
| inevitable  | luxurious     |
| inflationary| magistrate    |
| influential | magnificence  |
| ingenious   | maintenance   |
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psychoanalysis  
psychology  
pursue  
 
qualitative  
quality  
quantitative  
quantity  
questionnaire  
quietly  
quit  
quite  
rebellion  
receive  
recommend  
recommendation  
reconciliation  
recurrence  
reducible  
reference  
referred  
rehearsal  
reimburse  
relieve  
reminiscent  
remittance  
remitted  
repetition  
representative  
resource  
respectfully  
responsibility  
returnable  
reveal  
revenue  
routine  
 
salable/saleable  
schedule  
scientific  
scrutinize  
separation  
sergeant  
serviceable  
siege  
significant  
similar  
souvenir  
specifically  
specimen  
sponsor  
statistics  
strategic  
stubbornness  
substantial  
succeed  
succession  
superficial  
superfluous  
superintendent  
supersede  
supervisor  
suppress  
surroundings  
susceptible  
symbolic  
symmetrical  
synonymous  
tariff  
technician  
temperature  
tendency  
theoretical  
tolerance  
tomorrow  
traffic  
tragedy  
transcend  
transmit  
transmittal  
transparent  
tried
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Glossary

**Active voice:** the subject of a sentence performs an action (I delivered the book.)

**Adjective:** word used to modify a noun, pronoun, or another adjective; answers the questions What kind? How many? Which one? How much?

**Adverb:** word that modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb; answers the questions When? Where? How much? In what manner?

**Antecedent:** the word or words in a sentence to which a pronoun refers

**Apostrophe:** punctuation mark used to show possession, to form contractions, and to form the plural of many nouns and symbols (several 8’s in this sentence)

**Auxiliary verb:** a verb such as has, am, were used with a past or present participle to signal a change in verb tense or form (he walks; he is walking) or a change in voice (we told; we were told); also known as a helping verb

**Brackets:** a pair of punctuation marks used to enclose additions to quoted material or additions to material already enclosed in parentheses

**Buzzwords:** terms that come into fashion for a time, usually borrowed from various professions and adapted to general use (dicey, rip-off)

**Case:** the nominative, objective, and possessive forms of a personal pronoun (they, them, theirs)

**Clause:** a group of words that contain a subject-verb combination; independent clauses express a complete thought (he lifted the box), while subordinate clauses are incomplete thoughts (while he lifted the box)

**Cliché:** any trite, worn-out expression that should be avoided in writing (cold as ice)

**Collective noun:** a word that refers to a group of people, animals, objects, or other units (family)

**Colon:** a punctuation mark used to represent a more complete stop than a semicolon but not as complete a stop as a period; also used with the direct address in formal correspondence

**Comma:** a punctuation mark used to separate words or groups of words in a list or parallel construction, to separate elements in a sentence, or to punctuate direct address
Common noun: a word that refers to a general category and is not capitalized (machine)

Comparative form: adding the suffix *er* or the word *more* to show the difference between persons, places, or things (taller, more quietly)

Comparisons: adjectives and adverbs used to show degrees of difference among persons, places, or things; the forms are positive (tall, quietly), comparative (taller, more quietly), and superlative (tallest, most quietly)

Complete subject: a noun or pronoun and all its modifiers that serve as the topic of a sentence (*The rotting old willow finally split in two.*)

Complex sentence: a sentence that contains an independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses (*While giving her speech, [subordinate clause] she knocked over the microphone.*)

Compound adjective: two adjectives used to modify a noun (a lens with a *wide angle*); if they precede the noun, they are usually hyphenated (*wide-angle lens*)

Compound-complex sentence: a sentence that contains two or more independent clauses and one or more subordinate clauses (*She’s not coming, and I don’t know why even though we’re friends. [subordinate clause]*)

Compound predicate: two or more verbs, objects, or complements that are joined by a coordinating conjunction (*The runner started out in front but finished last.*)

Compound sentence: a sentence that contains two or more independent clauses but no subordinate clauses (*She’s not coming, and I don’t know why.*)

Compound subject: two subjects joined by *and, or, or nor* (*Pete and Vinnie drove home.*)

Conditional form: a verb phrase that uses *may, can, will, or shall* plus another verb to express intention to do or be something (*I could see it if I had my glasses on; I should get them.*); the conditional form can be used with all six tenses

Conjunction: links words or groups of words to other parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them; four types of conjunctions: coordinating, correlative, and subordinating, plus linking adverbs

Coordinating conjunction: a word such as *and, but, or, or nor* that joins two or more elements of equal rank in a sentence (*love and hate*)

Correlative conjunction: coordinating conjunctions used in pairs, such as *both-and, either-or,* and *neither-nor* that join two or more elements of equal rank in a sentence and emphasize the elements being joined (*neither fish nor fowl*)

Dangling modifiers: descriptive phrases or clauses joined to the wrong words in a sentence (*Holding hands, our dogs went with us as we walked to the park.*)

Dash: a punctuation mark longer than a hyphen used to indicate a break in thought or the addition of information

Declarative sentence: a sentence that makes a statement or asks a question

Definite article: limiting adjective *the* that refers to one or more specific items
Demonstrative adjective: a word such as which, what, this, these, that, or those used to emphasize which items are being singled out and their distance from the speaker (He gave us two boxes. This one is mine.)

Demonstrative pronoun: a pronoun such as here or there used to indicate nearness or distance from the speaker (He gave us two boxes. Mine is over here.)

Direct object: a word, phrase, or clause that receives the action of the verb (They mailed the package.)

Ellipses: a series of three periods used to indicate that material has been left out from a quotation or quoted material

Exclamation point: an end mark used to express strong emotion or to catch the reader’s attention

Fragment: a phrase or clause that does not express a complete thought and is missing either a subject or a verb (the shuttle on the launchpad—no verb)

Future perfect tense: a verb form used to express an action, state of being, or condition that will be completed in the future (I will have seen the movie by then.)

Future tense: a verb form used to express an action, state of being, or condition that will occur in the future (I will see it soon.)

Gender: the masculine or feminine forms of a noun (chairman, chairwoman) or a pronoun (he, she)

Gender-inclusive language: words and phrases used to create gender-neutral terms (fireman = firefighter) and to avoid reinforcing stereotypes of men and women in written work

Gerund: a verb form ending in ing that is used as a noun (Hiking is great exercise.)

Hyphen: a punctuation mark used to join two or more words, names, or numbers that are used as a single unit; to join some prefixes and suffixes to their nouns; and to divide words into syllables

Imperative mood: used for commands or requests, usually with the subject you understood (Give me that pencil. Ron, please hand me that pencil.)

Indefinite article: limiting adjectives a and an that refer to an unspecified item

Indefinite pronoun: a pronoun such as all, any, or some that refers to unspecified people or things (Any clue will do.)

Independent clause: a group of words that contains a subject-verb combination and expresses a complete thought (I gave at the office.)

Indicative mood: used when the speaker or writer wishes to make a statement or ask a question

Indirect object: a word or group of words that receives the action of the subject (Carl gave him the medals.)

Infinitive: verb form used with the preposition to (to think)

Infinitive phrase: a phrase that includes an infinitive and is used as a noun (To play with others is a child’s way of learning about the world.)
Interjection: a word used to express strong emotion or to catch the reader’s attention
Interrogative pronoun: a pronoun such as who, whom, whose, what, or which used
to introduce a question (What was I thinking?)
Irregular verb: a verb whose base form changes to form the past participle and/or
past tense (draw, drew, drawn)
Italics: a special form of type used to indicate emphasis; the names of ships, space-
craft, and other major vehicles; foreign terms and phrases not commonly used;
and the titles of novels, plays, movies, operas, and other major works
Jargon: specialized terms of a profession that the general reader probably doesn’t
understand
Limiting adjective: a word used to identify or number the noun it modifies (few
apples)
Linking adverb: an adverb used to join two independent clauses and to show the
relationship between the clauses (We didn’t like the show; however, we loved the
music.)
Modifier: any word or group of words used to limit, qualify, or add information to
the meaning of other words or other parts of a sentence
Mood: using a verb to express differences in the intention of the speaker or writer;
three moods in English: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive
Nonrestrictive clause: a clause that adds additional information about a person,
place, or object but is not essential to the meaning of the sentence; set off by com-
mas from the rest of the sentence (The soup, which is really spicy, is a good
appetizer.)
Noun: a word that refers to a person, place, or thing (wisdom)
Number: the singular or plural form of a noun, pronoun, or verb (car, cars; his,
theirs; she drives, we drive)
Parentheses: a pair of punctuation marks used to enclose material that is an inter-
ruption of the text but adds information
Passive voice: the subject of a sentence receives the action (I was given a book.)
Past participle: a verb form made by adding ed to the base of a regular verb (laugh,
laughed) or by using the special form of an irregular verb (do, done); used in verb
phrases (I have done nothing for several days.)
Past perfect tense: a verb form used to express an action, state of being, or condi-
tion that was completed in the past before another past action or event (I had seen
it twice before it disappeared.)
Past tense: verb form used to indicate actions or states of being or conditions that
have been completed in the past (I watched it.) formed by adding ed to the base
form or by using the special form of an irregular verb (It went away.)
Period: an end mark used at the end of a complete sentence, which can be a state-
ment, command, or request
Person: the pronoun form used to indicate the speaker (I, we), the person the speaker addresses (you), or the person or thing about whom the speaker is talking (he/him, she/her, it/they)

Personal pronoun: a word that takes the place of a noun and can express person, case, and gender (Glenda is a good witch, but she has an evil sister.)

Phrasal preposition: a preposition that consists of more than one word (because of, in spite of)

Phrase: group of related words that do not contain a subject-verb combination (on the sidewalk, going down the ramp)

Positive form of comparison: the base adjective or adverb used to indicate a degree or quality of something in a person, place, or thing (That boy is tall.)

Possessive noun: a word used to indicate ownership or relationship (company’s stock)

Predicate: a group of words that includes the verb and describes or explains the subject of a sentence (The first train came around the bend much too fast.)

Predicate adjective: adjective that follows a linking verb such as feel, become, seem, get, is, look, or smell that refers to the condition of the subject (He looks pale.)

Prefix: a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word’s meaning (pre + heat = preheat)

Preposition: connecting word that shows the relationship among words in a sentence

Prepositional phrase: a preposition plus the nouns, pronouns, gerund phrases, or noun clauses used as an adjective or adverb (That ball on the floor is glowing; set it on the counter.)

Present participle: a verb form made by adding ing to the base of a verb (do, doing); used in verb phrases (I am doing nothing right now.)

Present perfect tense: a verb form used to express an action, state of being, or condition occurring at an indefinite time in the past or that continues to the present (I have seen it many times now.)

Present tense: a verb used to express an action, state of being, or condition that occurs at the present time (I see it.)

Progressive form: a verb form that emphasizes the continuity of an action, state of being, or condition rather than its completion (I am seeing it right now.); progressive forms can be used with all six tenses

Pronoun: a word that takes the place of a noun or group of words acting as a noun (The garbage truck always arrives early. I never hear it.)

Proper noun: a capitalized word that refers to a specific person, place, or thing (John Wayne)

Question mark: an end mark used with a sentence that asks a direct question

Quotation marks: used to indicate the titles of poems, short stories, and musical pieces and to indicate someone’s exact words
Regular verb: a verb that keeps the same base regardless of changes in form or tense (work, working, worked, have been working, will work)

Relative pronoun: a pronoun such as who, whom, or whose that can be used to avoid repeating the noun

Restrictive clause: a clause that adds additional information about a person, place, or object and is essential to the meaning of the sentence; not set off by commas (The menu that we use on weekends has no breakfast items.)

Run-on sentence: two or more complete thoughts strung together without punctuation (The shuttle is lifting off I’m getting great pictures.)

Semicolon: a punctuation mark that represents a stronger break than a comma but not as complete a stop as a period or colon

Sentence: a group of words that begins with a capital letter, closes with an end mark, and expresses a complete thought (The shuttle will launch tomorrow.)

Simple sentence: an independent clause with no subordinate clauses; begins with a capital letter and ends with an end mark

Simple subject: a noun or pronoun that serves as the topic of a sentence (The young conductor is changing the sound of the orchestra.)

Subject: a noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause that is the topic of the sentence

Subject-verb agreement: a subject and its verb must agree in person and number (We are leaving; he is staying.)

Subjunctive mood: used with a different form of the present and past tense of a verb to express matters of urgency, formality, possibility, or speculation (If I were [not was] queen of the universe, things would be different.)

Subordinate clause: a group of words with a subject-verb combination that is not a complete thought (When dinosaurs traveled in herds . . .)

Subordinating conjunction: a word such as how, although, or until that joins elements of unequal rank in a sentence (We played indoors until the rain stopped and the sun came out.)

Suffix: a word part added to the end of a word that changes that word’s meaning (break + able = breakable)

Superlative form of comparison: adding the suffix est or the word most to show the differences between or among persons, places, or things (tallest, most quietly)

Tense: forms of verbs used to indicate whether an action or state of being occurs in the past, present, or future (was, is, will be)

Verb: a word or group of words used to express an action, a state of being, or a condition

Verb complement: a word or group of words used to complete the meaning of a sentence containing a linking verb. (They seem unhappy about the movie’s ending.)
Index

a/an, 30
Abbreviations
  agencies and organizations, 90-91
  commercial, 99-100
  company names, 90
  general guidelines, 86
  geographic terms, 91-94
  measures, 97-98
  names and titles, 87-90
  periods in, 86
  scholarly, 96
  science and technology, 98-99
  state, 92
  time, 94-95
  word division, 134-35
  years, 108
Abstract words, 151-52
accept/except, 175
Action verbs, 72-73
Addresses
  abbreviations, 91-93
  commas in, 50
  dividing, 135-36
  numbers in, 106
Adjectives
  bad, 35-36
  in comparisons, 31
  compound, 32
  defined, 29
  demonstrative, 30
  good, 35
  limiting, 30
  predicate, 32
  well, 35
Adverbs
  badly, 35-36
  in comparisons, 34
  defined, 32
  forming, 32-33
  linking, 41-42, 52
  only, 34, 153
  position and meaning, 34-35
  types of, 33
  well, 35
affect/effect, 175
Ages, numbers for, 103
already/all ready, 176
and
  commas before, 48-49
  compound subjects joined by, 27
  as coordinating conjunction, 39
angry with/at, 169
answer to/answer for, 169
Antecedents
  clear, 154
  defined, 7
  double, 13
  pronoun-antecedent agreement, 11-13
Apostrophes
  abbreviations of years, 108
  contractions, 9-10, 59-60
  defined, 57
  plural of symbols, 59, 131
  possessives, 57-59
  units of measure, 59
Articles, 30
assent/ascent, 176
Auxiliary verbs, 15
bad/badly, 35-36
be, as linking verb, 14
belong to/belong with, 170
Brackets, 63
Brevity, 145-47
Business abbreviations, 99-100
Business letters, 54
but, as coordinating conjunction, 39
Buzzwords, 150
capacity to/capacity of, 170
capital/capitol, 176
Capitalization
  academic degrees, 81
  astronomical terms, 84-85
  compass points, 83, 94
  days, months, and seasons, 82
  documents, 82
  family relationships, 78
complement/compliment, 176-77
Complete subjects, 71
Complex sentences, 75, 142, 143
Compound adjectives, 32, 61
Compound nouns, 129-30
Compound numbers, 60
Compound predicates, 73
Compound sentences, 74, 142, 143
Compound subjects, 27-28, 71
Compound-complex sentences, 75, 142, 143
Concrete words, 151-52
concur in/concur with, 170
Conjunctions
   coordinating, 39
   correlating, 39-40
   defined, 39
   linking adverbs, 41-42
   subordinating, 40-41
connect to/connect with, 170
correspond to/correspond with, 171
Dangling modifiers, 75-76
Dashes, 62
Dates
   commas in, 107
   dividing, 136
   double-checking, 157
   holidays and historic events, 81
   inclusive, 113
   numbers in, 107-9
Definite articles, 30
Demonstrative adjectives, 30
Demonstrative pronouns, 11
Dictionary use, 3
Direct address, 49-50
Direct object, 72
dissent/descent/descend, 177
each, 27, 30
effect/affect, 175
either . . . or, 39, 40
Ellipses, 63-64
End marks, 45-47, 63
every, 27, 30
except/accept, 175
Exclamation points
   defined, 47
   interjections and, 43
   quotation marks and, 55
Family relationships, 78

fewer/less, 177

Foreign words and expressions
   italics for, 64-65
   plurals of, 130-31

formerly/formally, 177

Fractions and decimals, 60, 110-11

Fragments, sentence, 67-68

Future perfect tense, 20-21

Future tense, 16, 17, 19-20

Gender-inclusive language
   nouns and pronouns, 159-62
   occupational titles, 165
   salutations, 164-65
   social titles, 164
   suffixes ess, ette, ix, ienne, 162-63

Geographical terms
   abbreviating, 91-94
   capitalizing, 83-84

Gerunds, 10, 15, 70-71

good/well, 35

Grammatical terms (parts of speech)
   adjectives, 29-32
   adverbs, 32-36
   conjunctions, 39-41
   interjections, 42-43
   linking adverbs, 41-42
   nouns, 4-7
   prepositions, 36-38
   pronouns, 7-14
   verbs, 14-29

Helping verbs, 15

Hyphens
   defined, 60
   compound adjectives, 61
   names, 62, 78
   numbers and fractions, 60
   prefixes, 61, 78, 115-16
   suffixes, 61
   word division, 61, 134-35

I, 8, 77

if clauses, 23

Imperative mood, 24

imply/infer, 178

Inclusive numbers, 113

Indefinite articles, 30

Indefinite pronouns
   defined, 8-9
   possessive of, 58

Independent clauses
   colons and, 54
   commas and, 48-49
   defined, 41, 69
   linking adverbs and, 41-42

   semicolons and, 52
   in sentence constructions, 74-75

Indicative mood, 24

Indirect object, 72

Individual possession, 6-7

Infinitive phrases, 69, 71

inside/inside of, 171

Intensive pronouns, 8

Interjections, 42-43

Interrogative pronouns, 11

in the market/on the market, 171

Irregular verbs, 21, 167-68

Italics, 64-65

its/it's, 9-10, 178

Jargon, 149

Joint possession, 58

Jr. (junior), 50, 88-89

later/latter, 178

lead/led/lead, 178

less/fewer, 177

lie/lay, 178

Limiting adjectives, 30

Linking adverbs
   defined, 41-42
   semicolons and, 52, 74

Linking verbs
   defined, 14
   predicate with, 72, 73

lose/loose/loss, 179

Manner, adverbs of, 33

Measure, units of
   abbreviations, 97-98
   as possessive adjectives, 59
   singular verbs with, 28

Medical terms, 85

Metric system, 98

Misspelled words, frequently, 183-88

Modifiers
   commas and, 51
   dangling, 75-76
   defined, 75
   placement of, 152-53

Money, 28, 59, 109-10

Months
   abbreviations, 95
   capitalization, 82
   numbers with, 107-8

Mood, verb, 24-25

Names of companies, 90

Names of people
   abbreviating, 87-89
   academic degrees and titles, 81
Index

capitalizing, 77, 78
commas in, 50
dividing, 135
hyphens in, 62, 78, 135
Roman numerals with, 104
social titles, 87-88, 164
Names of ships and spacecraft, 65, 104
Nationalities, capitalization of, 79
neither . . . nor, 28, 40
Nonrestrictive clauses, 41, 49
Nouns
  collective, 4, 5, 28
  common, 4
defined, 4-5
gender-inclusive, 159-62
plural, 5, 58, 126-31
possessive, 5-7
proper, 4, 77-78
Numbers
  addresses, 106
  ages, 103
  apostrophes with, 59, 131
Arabic numbers and Roman numerals,
  100, 104, 106, 112
  book parts, 86, 112-13
dates, 107-9
  figures or words, 101-3
fractions and decimals, 110-11
governmental designations, 104-5
hyphens with, 60
inclusive, 113
measures, 28, 111-12
money, 109-10
names and Roman numerals, 104
names of organizations, 105-6
ordinal, 102
percentages, 110
plural of, 59, 131
round, 101
rule of ten for, 101-2
temperature, 112
time of day, 106-7

Occupational titles, 165
  on behalf of/in behalf of, 170
only, 34, 153
or
  compound subjects joined by, 28
as coordinating conjunction, 39
Ordinal numbers, 102
outside/outside of, 171

Parallel structure, 155-56
Parentheses, 63
Parts of speech
  adjectives, 29-32
  adverbs, 32-36
  conjunctions, 39-41
  interjections, 42-43
  linking adverbs, 41-42, 52, 74
nouns, 4-7
prepositions, 36-38
pronouns, 7-14
verbs, 14-29
Passive voice, 25-26
past/passed, 179
Past perfect tense, 20
Past tense
  defined, 15, 17, 19
  of irregular verbs, 21, 167-68
  of regular verbs, 16, 17
Percentages, 110
Perfect infinitive, 23
Perfect tenses, 20-21
Periods
  defined, 45-46
  initials and, 87
  parentheses and, 63
  quotation marks and, 55
personal/personnel, 179
Personal pronouns
  defined, 7-8
  possessive of, 58
Phrasal prepositions, 37
Phrases
  defined, 69
  introductory, 49
  prepositional, 29, 36, 37
Plural nouns
  apostrophes for, 59, 131
  collective nouns, 4, 5, 28
  compound nouns, 129-30
  defined, 5
  foreign words, 130-31
  hyphenated compound nouns, 130
  irregular nouns, 126-27
  numbers, letters, and symbols, 59, 131
  possessive of, 58
  singular forms same as, 126-27
  singular verbs with, 28
Positive adjectives, 31
Positive adverbs, 34
Possessive adjectives, 59
Possessive nouns, 5-7
Possessive pronouns, 9-10
precede/proceed, 179
Predicate, 70, 72-73
Predicate adjectives, 32
Prefixes
  common, 116-18
  hyphens and, 61, 78, 115-16
  meanings of, 116-18
  spelling and, 115-16
Prepositional phrases, 29, 36, 37
Prepositions
  defined, 36-37
misure of, 37-38

with verbs, 38, 169-73

Present infinitive, 23

Present perfect tense, 16, 17, 20

Present tense, 16, 17, 18-19

principle/principal, 179

Progressive verb form, 16, 17, 18

promote/promote to, 172

Pronoun-antecedent agreement, 11-13

Pronouns

antecedent and, 7, 11-13

defined, 7

demonstrative, 11

gender-inclusive, 159-61

indefinite, 8-9, 58

interrogative, 11

personal, 7-8, 58

possessive, 9-10

relative, 10-11

Proper adjectives, 77-78

Proper nouns, 4, 77-78

Punctuation

apostrophe, 57-60

brackets, 63

colon, 53-54

comma, 47-51

dash, 62

ellipses, 63-64

end marks, 45-47

hyphen, 60-62

italics, 64-65

parentheses, 63

quotation marks, 54-57

semicolon, 51-53

Question marks

defined, 46

quotation marks and, 55

series of questions, 46-47

quiet/quite, 180

Quotation marks

defined, 47

punctuation with, 55

quotations, 54-55, 56

single, 56

terms and expressions, 57

titles, 56-57

Quotations

accuracy of, 157-58

brief and long, 56

direct, 54-55

Redundancy, 146-47

reference to/reference on, 172

Reflexive pronouns, 8

Relative pronouns, 10-11

Religious names and terms, 79-80

report of/report on, 172

Restrictive clauses, 41

rise/raise, 180

Roman numerals, 100, 104, 106, 112

Run-on sentences, 68, 140

Saint, names with, 89, 94

Salutations

colons in, 54

commas in, 50

gender-inclusive, 164-65

School subjects, 79

Scientific terms, 84-85

Seasons, 82

Semicolons

defined, 51-52

independent clauses, 52, 74

quotation marks and, 55

series of items, 53

Sentence constructions

complex sentence, 75, 142, 143

compound sentence, 74, 142, 143

compound-complex sentence, 75, 142, 143

simple sentence, 74, 142, 143

Sentences

clauses, 69

composing, 139-43

defined, 67-68

and fragments, 67-68

modifiers, 75-76, 152-53

patterns in, 67-76

phrases, 69

predicate, 70, 72-73

run-on, 68, 140

subject, 70-71

separate from, 172

Series

colons and, 53

commas in, 48

semicolons in, 53

shall/will, 15, 17, 19-20

sight/site/cite, 176

Simple sentences, 74, 142, 143

Simple subjects, 71

Single quotation marks, 56

sit/set, 180

Social titles, 87-88, 164

Spelling

accuracy, 157

dictionary use, 3

ei and ie, 131

frequently misspelled words, 183-88

plurals, 126-31

prefixes, 115-18

suffixes, 118-26

Sr. (senior), 88-89

State abbreviations, 92

stationary/stationery, 180
Units of measure
abbreviations, 97-98
as possessive adjectives, 59
singular verbs with, 28

Vague words, 151-52
Vehicle names, 65, 104

Verbs
action, 72-73
active voice, 25-26
auxiliary, 15, 16
basic verb forms, 15
defined, 14
irregular, 21, 167-68
linking, 14, 72, 73
mood, 24-25
passive voice, 25, 26
placement in sentence, 153-54
prepositions with, 38, 169-73
regular, 16-18
subject-verb agreement, 26-29
tenses, 16-24, 167-68

Voice of verb
active, 25-26
passive, 25, 26

wait for/on/out, 72-73
weather/whether, 181
well, 35
well/good, 35

which
as demonstrative adjective, 30
as interrogative pronoun, 11
as relative pronoun, 10-11
as subordinating conjunction, 40, 41
that vs., 181

who
that vs., 10, 11
whom vs., 13-14
whose/who’s, 9, 10, 182
will/shall, 15, 17, 19-20

Word division
figures and abbreviations, 135-36
final and double consonants, 134
general rules, 132
hyphens, 61, 134-35
proper names, 135
syllables, 61, 132-34

Wordiness, 146-47
would have, 23

write/write to, 173

Writing tips
accuracy, 157-58
brevity, 145-47
clarity, 50, 149-56
gender-inclusive language, 159-65
sentence composition, 139-43

your/you’re, 9, 10, 182