

Review of English Usage

PUNCTUATION

Apostrophe

1. Use an apostrophe to indicate possession. Place the apostrophe according to this rule: "The apostrophe, when used to indicate possession, means *belonging to everything to the left of the apostrophe.*"
Examples: lady's = belonging to the lady
ladies' = belonging to the ladies
children's = belonging to the children
Note: To test for correct placement of the apostrophes, read *of the*.
Example: childrens' = of the childrens (obviously incorrect)
The placement rule applies at all times, even with regard to compound nouns separated by hyphens and with regard to entities made up of two or more names.
Example: father-in-law's = belonging to a father-in-law
Example: Lansdale, Jackson, and Roosevelt's law firm = the law firm belonging to Lansdale, Jackson, and Roosevelt
Example: Brown and Son's delivery truck = the delivery truck of Brown and Son
2. Use an apostrophe in a contraction in place of the omitted letter or letters.
Examples: haven't = have not
we're = we are
let's = let us
o'clock = of the clock
class of '90 = class of 1990
Note: Do NOT begin a paragraph with a contraction.
3. Use an apostrophe to form plurals of numbers, letters, and phrases referred to as words.
Example: The Japanese child pronounced his *l's and r's*.
Example: Solution of the puzzle involves crossing out all the *3's and 9's*.
Example: His speech was studded with *you know's*.

Colon

1. Use a colon after the salutation in a business letter.
Example: Dear Board Member:
2. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes.
Example: The eclipse occurred at 10:36 A.M.
3. Use a colon after a complete statement in order to introduce one or more directly related ideas:
Hint: make sure that what comes before the colon is a complete sentence
Example: The daily newspaper contains four sections: news, sports, entertainment, and classified ads.
4. Use a colon to introduce a list, especially after an expression such as "as follows"
Hint: use colons to set up lists or series of items when we want to emphasize the list or series.
Example: Susan plans on bringing several crucial items to the picnic: cokes, napkins, plates and forks.
Example: The sequence in which the colors were assigned is as follows: blue, green, red, yellow, black.
5. Use a colon to introduce a long quotation
Example: In *The Power of Myth*, a conversation about mythology, Joseph Campbell enlightens Bill Moyers about how a dream differs from a myth: "Oh, because a dream is a personal experience of that deep, dark ground that is the support of our conscious lives, and a myth is society's dream" (40).
6. Use a colon to introduce a question
Hint: The first part of the sentence creates an expectation in the reader that the second sentence fulfills.
Example: My question is this: Are you willing to punch a time clock?

Comma

1. Use a comma after the salutation of a personal letter.
Example: Dear Mary,
2. Use a comma after the complimentary close of a letter.
Example: Cordially yours,

3. Use a comma or pair of commas to set off a noun of address.
Example: When you finish your homework, Jeff, please take out the garbage.
4. Use a pair of commas to set off parenthetical expressions, words that interrupt the flow of the sentence, such as **however, though, for instance, by the way.**
Example: We could not, however, get him to agree.
Example: **This book**, I believe, **is the best of its kind.**
NOTE: Neither the part before the comma nor the part after the comma expresses a complete thought, but when the parenthetical expression is removed the two parts make a complete sentence.
5. Use a comma between two or more adjectives that modify a noun equally.
Example: The jolly, fat, ruddy man stood at the top of the stairs.
Hint: If two adjectives modify a noun **in the same way**, place a comma between the two adjectives. These are called **coordinate adjectives**. There is a two-part test for coordinate adjectives:
(1) Can you replace the comma with the word **and**?
(2) Can you reverse the order of the adjectives and keep the same meaning?
If you can do both, then you have coordinate adjectives.

Caution: If the paired adjectives fail the two-part test, then no comma is used. This shows that they must remain in a certain order to make sense. These are called **cumulative adjectives**.

Incorrect: The former, overweight woman told us how she lost fifty-five pounds.

Test for Correctness: The former and overweight woman...(Makes no sense)

The overweight, former woman...(A former woman? At best the meaning is changed.)

Clearly, no comma is needed for these cumulative adjectives.

Correct: The former overweight woman told us how she lost fifty-five pounds.

Hint: A device to help remember this punctuation rule is to keep in mind a common expression like *Christmas tree* or *fire truck*. We say, "green Christmas tree," but not "Christmas green tree." We say, "red fire truck," but not "fire red truck." Such cumulative expressions take no comma.

6. Use a comma to separate words, phrases, or clauses in a series. The use of a comma before *and* is optional. If the series ends in *etc.*, use a comma before *etc.* Do not use a comma after *etc.* in a series, even if the sentence continues.
Example: Coats, umbrellas, and boots should be placed in the closet at the end of the hall.
Example: Pencils, scissors, paper clips, etc. belong in your top desk drawer.
7. Use a comma to separate a short direct quotation from the speaker.
Example: She said, "I must leave work on time today."
Example: "Tomorrow I begin my summer job," he told us.
8. Use a comma after an introductory clause or phrase of five or more words.
Example: Because the prisoner had a history of attempted jailbreaks, he was put under heavy guard.
9. Use a comma after a short introductory phrase whenever the comma would aid clarity.
Example: As a child she was a tomboy. (comma unnecessary)
Example: To Dan, Phil was friend as well as brother. (comma clarifies)
Example: In 1978, 300 people lost their lives in one air disaster. (comma clarifies)
NOTE: A comma is not generally used before a subordinate clause that ends a sentence, though in long, unwieldy sentences like this one, use of such comma is optional.
10. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction unless the two clauses are very short.
Example: The boy wanted to borrow a book from the library, but the librarian would not allow him to take it until he had paid his fines.
Example: Roy washed the dishes and Helen dried.
11. Use a pair of commas to set off a nonrestrictive adjective phrase or clause. A nonrestrictive phrase or clause is one that can be omitted without essentially changing the meaning of the sentence.
Example: Our new sailboat, which has bright orange sails, is very seaworthy.
*A restrictive phrase or clause is vital to the meaning of a sentence and cannot be omitted. Do NOT set it off with commas.
Example: A sailboat without sails is useless.
12. Use a comma if the sentence might be subject to different interpretations without it.
Example: The banks that closed yesterday are in serious financial difficulty.
[Some banks closed yesterday and those banks are in trouble.]
Example: The banks, which closed yesterday, are in serious financial difficulty.
[All banks closed yesterday and all are in trouble.]
Example: My brother Bill is getting married.
[The implication is that I have more than one brother.]

My brother, Bill, is getting married.

[Here *Bill* is an appositive. Presumably he is the only brother.]

13. Use a comma if a pause would make the sentence clearer and easier to read.

Example: Inside the people were dancing. (confusing)

Inside, the people were dancing. (clearer)

Example: After all crime must be punished. (confusing)

After all, crime must be punished. (clearer)

14. Use a comma near the end of a sentence to separate contrasted coordinate elements or to indicate a distinct pause or shift.

Example: He was merely ignorant, not stupid.

Example: The chimpanzee seemed reflective, almost human.

Example: You're one of the senator's close friends, aren't you?

Example: The speaker seemed innocent, even gullible.

Dash

1. Use a dash—or parentheses—for emphasis or to set off an explanatory group of words.

Example: The tools of his trade—probe, mirror, cotton swabs—were neatly arranged on the dentist's ray.

NOTE: Unless the set-off expression ends a sentence, dashes, like parentheses, must be used in pairs.

2. Use a dash to break up a thought.

Example: There are five—remember I said five—good reasons to refuse their demands.

3. Use a dash to mark a sudden break in thought that leaves a sentence unfinished.

Example: He opened the door a crack and saw—

Exclamation Mark

1. Use an exclamation mark only to express strong feeling or emotion, or to imply urgency.

Example: Congratulations! You broke the record.

Example: Rush! Perishable contents.

Hyphen

1. Use a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line. Always divide words between syllables.

2. Use a hyphen in numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.

3. Use a hyphen to join two words serving together as a single adjective before a noun.

Example: We left the highway and proceeded on a well-paved road.

Example: That baby-faced man is considerable older than he appears to be.

4. Use a hyphen with the prefixes ex-, self-, all-, and the suffix -elect.

Example: ex-Senator, self-appointed, all-state, Governor-elect

5. Use a hyphen to avoid ambiguity.

Example: After the custodian recovered the use of his right arm, he re-covered the office chairs.

6. Use a hyphen to avoid an awkward union of letters.

Examples: semi-independent, shell-like

Period

1. Use a period at the end of a sentence that makes a statement, gives a command, or makes a "polite request" in

the form of a question which does not require an answer.

Example: I am preparing for my exam.

Example: Proofread everything you type.

Example: Would you please hold the script so that I may see if I have memorized my lines.

2. Use a period after the initial in a person's name.

Example: Gen. Robert E. Lee led the Confederate forces.

3. Use periods after abbreviations.

Examples: A.M., P.M., Mr., Mrs., Ms., A.D.

NOTE: Do NOT use a period after postal service state name abbreviations such as AZ (for Arizona) or MI (for Michigan).

Question Mark

1. Use a question mark after a request for information.

Example: At what time does the last bus leave?

NOTE: A question must end with a question mark even if the question does not encompass the entire sentence.

Example: "Daddy, are we there yet?" the child asked.

Quotation Marks

1. Use quotation marks to enclose all directly quoted material. Words not quoted must remain outside the quotation marks
Example: "If it is hot on Sunday," she said, "we will go to the beach."
NOTE: Do NOT enclose an indirect quote in quotation marks.
Example: She said that we might go to the beach on Sunday.
2. Use quotation marks around words used in an unusual way.
Example: A surfer who "hangs ten" is performing a tricky maneuver on a surfboard, not staging a mass execution.
3. Use quotation marks to enclose the title of a short story, essay, short poem, song, article, or chapter titles of books.
Example: Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a plaintive poem called "Bed in Summer."
NOTE: Titles of books and plays are NOT enclosed in quotation marks. They are printed in italics. In handwritten or typed manuscript, underscore titles of books and plays.
Example: The song, "Tradition," is from *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Placement of Quotation Marks

1. A period ALWAYS goes inside the quotation marks, whether the quotation marks are used to denote quoted material, to set off titles, or to isolate words used in a special sense.
Example: The principal said, "Cars parked in the fire lane will be ticketed."
Example: The first chapter of *The Andromeda Strain* is entitled "The Country of Lost Borders."
Example: Pornography is sold under the euphemism "adult books."
2. A comma ALWAYS goes inside the quotation marks.
Example: "We really must go home," said the dinner guests.
Example: If your skills become "rusty," you must study before you take the exam.
Example: Three stories in Kurt Vonnegut's *Welcome to the Monkey House* are "Harrison Bergeron," "Next Door," and "Epicac."
3. A question mark goes inside the quotation marks if it is part of the quotation. If the whole sentence containing the quotation is a question, the question mark goes outside the quotation marks.
Example: He asked, "Was the airplane on time?"
Example: What did you really mean when you said "I do"?
4. An exclamation mark goes inside the quotation marks if the quoted words are an exclamation, outside if the entire sentence including the quoted words is an exclamation.
Example: The sentry shouted, "Drop your gun!"
Example: Save us from our "friends"!
5. A colon and a semicolon ALWAYS go outside the quotation marks.
Example: He said, War is destructive"; she added, "Peace is constructive."
6. When a multiple-paragraph passage is quoted, each paragraph of the quotation must begin with quotation marks, but ending quotation marks are used only at the end of the last quoted paragraph.

Brackets

1. For parentheses within parentheses.
Example: (That was the color [red] he preferred.)
2. To correct a mistake in a direct quote.
Example: "The artist Le[o]nardo painted it"
3. To indicate explanations or your own comments within quotations.
Example: He replied, "That's [Cleveland] where I was born."
4. To indicate stage and acting directions.
Example: CHARLES [waving his arms] Away with you!

Ellipses

1. Within a quotation to indicate places where a word or words have been omitted.
Example: The house...was built in 1935."
For: "The house on Elm Street was built in 1935."

2. At the end of a quotation to indicate words omitted before the period. Be sure to include the period.

Example: "He was a giant of a man...."

For: "He was a giant of a man and was highly respected."

Parentheses

1. Around explanatory material in a sentence when this material has no essential connection with the rest of the sentence.

Example: To make holes, use an awl (a sharp, pointed tool).

2. To enclose sources of information within a sentence.

Example: The population of Boise is 74,990 (1970 census).

3. Around numbers or letters that indicate subdivisions of a sentence.

Example: This committee has three duties: (a) to solicit members, (b) to collect dues, and (c) to send receipts.

4. Around figures which repeat a number written out.

Example: Enclosed is five dollars (\$5.00).

Put marks of punctuation inside the parentheses when they belong with the parenthetical matter.

Carol's question ("Whom did you take to the dance?") produced a chill in the air.

John walked to the store in all that snow (even though I asked him not to).

Underlining

In manuscript, for words that should appear in italics when set in type, underline:

1. The name of any book or complete volume.

Example: Tom Sawyer describes boyhood near the Mississippi River.

2. The name of a magazine or periodical.

Example: There are amusing cartoons in The New Yorker.

3. Any foreign word that is not commonly used in English. These words have such labels as *Latin*, *French* or *Italian* in the dictionary.

Example: The treasurer made an ad interim report.

4. The names of ships, paintings, and works of art.

Examples: Titanic, The Last Supper, Rodin's sculpture The Thinker

5. Any words considered not for their grammatical meaning but as words.

Examples: But, for, and or are all conjunctions

Virgule

1. Between two words to indicate that the meaning of either word pertains.

Example: The man and/or his wife may cash the check.

2. As a dividing line in dates, fractions, and abbreviations.

Example: 4/4/76

$\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$

C/O

B/L

3. When recording bibliographical information to indicate the ends of lines in a title or subtitle.

Example: The/ World Book/ Encyclopedia /A /Volume 1

4. With a run-in passage of poetry to indicate where one line ends and another begins.

Example: "This above all: to thine own self be true./ And it must follow, as the night the day,/ Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Semicolon

1. Use a semicolon to separate a series of phrases or clauses each of which contains commas.

Example: The old gentleman's heirs were Margaret Whitlock, his half-sister; James Bagley, the butler; William Frame, companion to his late cousin, Robert Bone; and his favorite charity, the Salvation Army.

2. Use a semicolon to avoid confusion with numbers.

Example: Add the following: \$1.25; \$7.50; and \$12.89.

3. You may use a semicolon to join two short, related independent clauses.

Example: Anne is working at the front desk on Monday; Ernie will take over on Tuesday.

NOTE: Two main clauses must be separated by a conjunction or by a semicolon or they must be written as two sentences. A semicolon never precedes a coordinating conjunction. The same two clauses may be written in any one of three ways:

Autumn had come and the trees were almost bare.
Autumn had come; the trees were almost bare.
Autumn had come. The trees were almost bare.

4. You may use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses which are joined by an adverb. The adverb is called a conjunctive adverb. **Conjunctive adverbs** are adverbs that act as a transition between complete ideas. They normally show comparison, contrast, cause-effect, sequence, or other relationships. They usually occur between independent clauses or sentences.

The following words are common conjunctive adverbs:

accordingly, again, also, besides consequently, finally, furthermore, however, indeed, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, then, therefore, and thus. The adverb must be followed by a comma.

Example: You may use a semicolon to separate this clause from the next; however, you will not be incorrect if you choose to write two separate sentences.

NOTE: If you are uncertain about how to use the semicolon to connect independent clauses, write two sentences instead.

CAPITALIZATION

1. Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
Example: With cooperation, a depression can be avoided.
2. Capitalize all proper nouns.
Examples: America, Santa Fe Chief, General Motors, Abraham Lincoln
3. Capitalize the days of the week and months.
Example: The check was mailed on Thursday.
Note: The seasons are not capitalized.
Example: In Florida, *winter* is mild.
4. Capitalize the word dear when it is the first word in the salutation of a letter.
Examples: *Dear* Mr. Jones:
My dear Mr. Jones:
5. Capitalize the first word of the complimentary close of a letter.
Examples: Truly yours,
Very truly yours,
6. Capitalize the first and all other important words in a title.
Example: *The Art of Salesmanship*
7. Capitalize a word used as part of a proper noun.
Example: Elm *Street* (but – That *street* is narrow.)
Morningside *Terrace* (but – We have a *terrace* apartment.)
8. Capitalize titles, when they refer to a particular official or family member.
Example: The report was read by *Secretary* Marshall. (but – Miss Shaw, our *secretary*, is ill.)
Example: Let's visit *Uncle* Harry. (but – I have three *uncles*.)
9. Capitalize points of a compass when they refer to particular regions of the country.
Example: We're going *South* next week. (but – New York is south of Albany.)
Note: Write: the Far West, the Pacific Coast, the Middle East, etc.
10. Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation.
Example: It was Alexander Pope who wrote, "A little learning is a dangerous thing."
NOTE: When a direct quotation sentence is broken, the *first* word of the *second half* of the sentence is not capitalized.
Example: "Don't phone," Lily told me, "*because* they're not in yet."

GRAMMAR AND RHETORIC/DICTION

Parts of Speech

A **noun** is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea:

teacher city desk democracy

Pronouns substitute for nouns:

he they ours those

An **adjective** describes a noun:

warm quick tall blue

An **adverb** modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb:

fast slowly friendlywell

Conjunctions join words, sentences, and phrases:

F	A	N	B	O	Y	S
for	and	nor	but	or	yet	so

A **preposition** shows position in time or space:

about	behind	from	on	toward
above	below	in	on top of	under
across	beneath	in front of	onto	underneath
after	beside	inside	out of	until
against	between	instead of	outside	up
along	by	into	over	upon
among	down	like	past	with
around	during	near	since	within
at	except	of	through	without
before	for	off	to	

Nouns

There are different kinds of nouns.

Common nouns are general:

house girl street city

Proper nouns are specific:

White House Jane Main Street New York

Collective nouns name groups:

Team jury class Congress

Nouns have *cases*:

Nominative: the subject, noun of address, or predicate noun

Objective: the direct object, indirect object, or object of the preposition

Possessive: the form that shows possession

Pronouns

A **pronoun must** agree with its antecedent (the noun to which it refers) in gender, person, and number.

Examples: The *girls* handed in *their* assignments.

The *boy* left *his* jacket at school.

There are several kinds of pronouns. (Pronouns also have cases.)

Demonstrative pronoun: this, that, these, those

Indefinite pronoun: all, any, nobody

Interrogative pronoun: who, which, what

Personal pronoun:

		Nominative Case	Objective	Possessive
Singular	1st person	I	me	my, mine
	2nd person	you	you	Your, yours
	3rd person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, hers
Plural	1st person	we	us	our, ours
	2nd person	you	you	your, yours
	3rd person	they	them	their, theirs

Adjectives

Adjectives answer the questions “Which one,” “What kind,” and “How many.” There are three uses of adjectives:

- A **noun modifier** is usually placed directly before the noun it describes:
Example: He is a *tall* man.
- A **predicate adjective** follows an inactive verb and modifies the subject:
Examples: He is happy. I feel terrible.
- **Article** and **noun marker** are other names for these adjectives: *the, a, an*.

Degrees of Adjectives

The degrees of comparison are known as the **positive**, the **comparative**, and the **superlative**. (Actually, only the comparative and superlative show degrees.) We use the comparative for comparing two things and the superlative for comparing three or more things. Notice that the word *than* frequently accompanies the comparative and the word **the** precedes the superlative. The inflected suffixes *-er* and *-est* suffice to form most comparatives and superlatives, although we need *-ier* and *-iest* when a two-syllable adjective ends in “**y**” (happier and happiest); otherwise we use *more* and *most* when an adjective has more than one syllable.

Ex.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
rich	richer	richest
lovely	lovelier	loveliest
beautiful	more beautiful	most beautiful

Adverbs

Adverbs answer the questions “Why,” “How,” “Where,” “When,” and “To what degree.”

Adverbs are used to modify:

verbs: He walked *quickly*.

adjectives: The water was *extremely* cold.

other adverbs: She whispered *very* softly.

Adverbs should *not* be used to modify nouns.

Verbs

A **verb** expresses action or state of being:

In English, there are three basic tenses: present, past, and future. Each has a perfect form, indicating completed action; each has a progressive form, indicating ongoing action; and each has a perfect progressive form, indicating ongoing action that will be completed at some definite time. Here is a list of examples of these tenses and their definitions:

	Simple Forms	Progressive Forms	Perfect Forms	Perfect Progressive Forms
Present	<u>take/s</u>	<u>am/is/are taking</u>	<u>have/has taken</u>	<u>have/has been taking</u>
Past	<u>took</u>	<u>was/were taking</u>	<u>had taken</u>	<u>had been taking</u>
Future	<u>will/shall take</u>	<u>will be taking</u>	<u>will have taken</u>	<u>will have been taking</u>

Simple Forms

Present Tense

Present tense expresses an unchanging, repeated, or reoccurring action or situation that exists only now. It can also represent a widespread truth.

Past Tense

Past tense expresses an action or situation that was started and finished in the past. Most past tense verbs end in **-ed**. The irregular verbs have **special past tense forms** which must be memorized.

Example	Form
W.W.II <u>ended</u> in 1945.	Regular -ed past
Ernest Hemmingway <u>wrote</u> "The Old Man and the Sea."	Irregular form

Future Tense

Future tense expresses an action or situation that will occur in the future. This tense is formed by using **will/shall** with the **simple form** of the verb.

Example: The speaker of the House will finish her term in May of 1998.

Progressive Forms

Present Progressive Tense

Present progressive tense describes an ongoing action that is happening at the same time the statement is written. This tense is formed by using **am/is/are** with the verb form ending in **-ing**.

Example: The sociologist is examining the effects that racial discrimination has on society.

Past Progressive Tense

Past progressive tense describes a past action which was happening when another action occurred. This tense is formed by using **was/were** with the verb form ending in **-ing**.

Example: The explorer was explaining the latest discovery in Egypt when protests began on the streets.

Future Progressive Tense

Future progressive tense describes an ongoing or continuous action that will take place in the future. This tense is formed by using **will be** or **shall be** with the verb form ending in **-ing**.

Example: Dr. Jones will be presenting ongoing research on sexist language next week.

Perfect Forms

Present Perfect Tense

Present perfect tense describes an action that happened at an indefinite time in the past or that began in the past and continues in the present. This tense is formed by using **has/have** with the **past participle** of the verb. Most past participles end in **-ed**. Irregular verbs have **special past participles** that must be memorized.

Example	Meaning
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The researchers <u>have traveled</u> to many countries in order to collect more significant data.	At an indefinite time
Women <u>have voted</u> in presidential elections since 1921.	Continues in the present

Past Perfect Tense

Past perfect tense describes an action that took place in the past before another past action. This tense is formed by using **had** with the **past participle** of the verb.

Example: By the time the troops arrived, the war had ended.

Future Perfect Tense

Future perfect tense describes an action that will occur in the future before some other action. This tense is formed by using **will have** with the **past participle** of the verb.

Example: By the time the troops arrive, the combat group will have spent several weeks waiting.

Perfect Progressive Forms

Present Perfect Progressive

Present perfect progressive tense describes an action that began in the past, continues in the present, and may continue into the future. This tense is formed by using **has/have been** and the **present participle** of the verb (the verb form ending in **-ing**).

Example: The CEO has been considering a transfer to the state of Texas where profits would be larger.

Past Perfect Progressive

Past perfect progressive tense describes a past, ongoing action that was completed before some other past action. This tense is formed by using **had been** and the **present perfect** of the verb (the verb form ending in **-ing**).

Example: Before the budget cuts, the students had been participating in many extracurricular activities.

Future Perfect Progressive

Future perfect progressive tense describes a future, ongoing action that will occur before some specified future time. This tense is formed by using **will have been** and the **present participle** of the verb (the verb form ending in **-ing**).

Example: By the year 2020, linguists will have been studying and defining the Indo-European language family for more than 200 years.

Roundup of Grammar Rules

Case of Nouns and Pronouns

1. The subject of a verb is in the nominative case even if the verb is understood and not expressed.

Example: They are as old as *we*. (as we are)

Who/whom/whoever/whomever

When trying to determine when to use *who*, *whom*, *whoever*, or *whomever* apply two basic rules: a) the case of the pronoun is determined by its function in its own clause, and b) an appositive is in the same case as the word with which it is in apposition. (Apposition is a construction in which a noun or noun phrase is placed with another as an explanatory equivalent.)

2. The word *who* is in the nominative case. *Whom* is in the objective case.

Example: The trapeze artist *who* ran away with the clown broke the lion tamer's heart. (In the clause, *who ran away*, "who" is the subject and "ran" is the verb. The clause *who ran away* is in apposition with trapeze artist. *Who ran away* further explains or describes the trapeze artist.)

Example: The trapeze artist *whom* he loved ran away with the circus clown. (In the clause *whom he loved*, the subject is he and the verb is loved. *Whom* is a direct object.)

STRATEGY: Isolate the clause

Determine how the word *who*, *whom*, *whoever*, or *whomever* functions in the clause
Apply the rules above

3. The word *whoever* is in the nominative case. *Whomever* is in the objective case.
Example: Whoever comes to the door is welcome to join in the party. (*Whoever* is the subject of the verb *comes*.)
Example: Invite whomever you wish to accompany you. (*Whomever* is the object of the verb *invite*.)
 In the sentence above, “you” is understood. The sentence is understood to mean *you invite whomever...* If we isolate the clause, we would see that the understood subject is “you” and the verb is “invite.” *Whomever* is the direct object. Some of you may have inadvertently isolated the clause, *whomever you wish to accompany you*. In the event that you did, let’s look at that clause and determine how “whomever” functions. The word “you” is the subject and “wish” is the verb. *Whomever* is the object of the verb *wish*.
4. Nouns or pronouns connected by a form of the verb *to be* should always be in the nominative case.
Example: It is *I*. (Not *me*)
5. The object of a preposition or of a transitive verb should use a pronoun in the objective case.
Example: It would be impossible for *me* to do that job alone. (*Me* is the object of the preposition *for*.)
Example: The attendant gave *me* the keys to the locker. (*Me* is the indirect object of the verb *gave*.)
NOTE: When the first person pronoun (*I* or *me*) is used in conjunction with one or more proper names, you may confirm the choice of *I* or *me* by eliminating the proper names and reading the sentence with the pronoun alone.
Example: John, George, Marylou, and (me or I) went to the movies last night. (By eliminating the names you can readily choose that *I went to the movies* is correct.)
Example: It would be very difficult for Mae and (I or me) to attend the wedding. (Without *Mae* it is clear that it is *difficult for me* to attend.)
6. A noun or pronoun modifying a gerund should be in the possessive case.
Example: Is there any criticism of *Arthur’s* going? (*Going* is a gerund. It must be modified by *Arthur’s*, not by *Arthur*.)
Example: I hope that you appreciate my offering you this opportunity.
7. Do *not* use the possessive case when referring to an inanimate object.
Not: He had difficulty with the *store’s* management. (WRONG)
But: He had difficulty with the management of the store.

Agreement

1. *Each, either, neither, anyone, anybody, somebody, someone, every, everyone, one, no one, and nobody* are singular pronouns. Each of these words takes a singular verb and a singular pronoun.
Example: *Neither* likes the pets of the other.
Example: *Everyone* must wait *his* turn.
Example: *Each* of the patients *carries* insurance.
Example: *Neither* of the women *has* completed *her* assignment.
2. When the correlative conjunctions *either/or, neither/nor, both/and, and not only/but also* are used, the number of the verb agrees with the number of the last subject.
Example: *Neither* John nor *Greg* *eats* meat.
Example: *Either* the cat or the *mice* *take* charge in the barn.
3. A subject consisting of two or more nouns joined by a coordinating conjunction takes a plural verb.
Example: Paul *and* Sue *were* the last to arrive.
4. The number of the verb is not affected by the addition to the subject of words introduced by *with, together with, no less than, as well as, etc.*
Example: The *captain*, together with the rest of the team, *was* *delighted* by the victory celebration.
5. **A verb agrees in number with its subject.** A verb should not be made to agree with a noun that is part of a phrase following the subject.
Example: *Mount Snow*, one of my favorite ski areas, *is* in Vermont.
Example: The *mountains* of Colorado, like those of Switzerland, *offer* excellent skiing.
6. A verb should agree in number with the subject, not with the predicate noun or pronoun.
Example: Poor study *habits* are the leading cause of unsatisfactory achievement in school.
Example: The leading *cause* of unsatisfactory achievement in school *is* poor study habits.

7. A pronoun agrees with its antecedent in person, number, and gender.
Example: Since you were absent on Tuesday, you will have to ask Mary or Beth for *her* notes on the lecture. (Use *her*, not *their*, because two singular antecedents joined by **or** take a singular pronoun.)
8. In sentences beginning with *there is* and *there are*, the verb should agree in number with the noun that follows it.
Example: There *isn't* an unbroken *bone* in her body. (The singular subject *bone* takes the singular verb *is*.)
Example: There *are* many *choices* to be made. (The plural subject *choices* takes the plural verb *are*.)

Double Negatives

1. *Hardly*, *scarcely*, *barely*, *only*, and *but* (when it means *only*) are negative words. Do NOT use another negative in conjunction with any of these words.
Not: He *didn't have but* one hat (WRONG)
But: He had *but* one hat. OR He had *only* one hat.
Nor: I *can't hardly* read the small print, (WRONG)
But: I *can hardly* read the small print. OR I *can't* read the small print.

Like and As

1. *As* is a conjunction introducing a subordinate clause. *Like* is a preposition. The object of a preposition is a noun or phrase.
Example: The infant was wrinkled and red *as* newborns usually are. (*Newborns* is the subject of the clause; *are* is its verb.)
Example: He behaves *like* a fool.
Example: The gambler accepts only hard currency *like* gold coins.

Subjunctive

1. When expressing a condition contrary to fact or a wish, use the subjunctive form *were*.
Example: I wish I *were* a movie star.

WORDS COMMONLY CONFUSED

accede—means to agree with.

concede—means to yield, but not necessarily in agreement.

exceed—means to be more than.

We shall *accede* to your request for more evidence.

To avoid delay, we shall *concede* that more evidence is necessary.

Federal expenditures now *exceed* federal income.

accept—means to take when offered.

except—means excluding. (preposition)

except—means to leave out. (verb)

We *accept* your invitation to the Halloween party.

The entire class will be there *except* Bill and me.

The coach refused to *except* any student from the eligibility requirements.

access—means availability.

excess—means too much.

The lawyer was given *access* to the grand jury records.

The expenditures this month are far in *excess* of income.

adapt—means to adjust or change.

adopt—means to take as one's own.

adept—means skillful.

Children can *adapt* to changing conditions very easily.

The half-starved stray cat was *adopted* by the kindly woman.

Proper instruction makes children *adept* in various games.

NOTE: adapt to, adopt by, adept in, or adept at.

agree—with a person
to a plan
in an opinion

adapted for—implies created suitability.

Atomic energy is constantly being *adapted for* new uses.

adapted from—implies changed to be made suitable.

Many of Richard Wagner's opera librettos were *adapted from* old Norse sagas.

benefit—means a favor conferred or earned (as a profit).

He had an *advantage* in experience over his opponent.

The rules were changed for his *benefit*.

NOTE: to take advantage of, to have an advantage over.

adverse—(pronounced AD-verse) means unfavorable.

averse—(pronounced a-VERSE) means disliking.

He took the *adverse* decision poorly. Many students are *averse* to criticism by their classmates.

advise—means to give advice. Advise is losing favor as a synonym for notify.

Acceptable: The teacher will *advise* the student in habits of study.

Unacceptable: We are advising you of a delivery under separate cover. (SAY: notifying)

affect—means to influence. (verb)

effect—means an influence. (noun)

effect—means to bring about. (verb)

Your education must *affect* your future. The *effect* of the last war is still being felt.

Adiploma *effected* a tremendous change in his attitude.

NOTE: Affect also has a meaning of pretend. She had an *affected* manner.

after—is unnecessary with the past participle.

Correct: *After* checking the timetable, I left for the station.

Incorrect: *After* having checked (omit after) the timetable, I left for the station.

allusion—means a reference.

illusion—means a deception of the eye or mind.

The student made *allusions* to his teacher's

ain't—is an unacceptable contraction for am not, are not, or is not.

aisle—is a passageway between seats.

isle—is a small island. (Both words rhyme with pile.)

all ready—means everybody or everything ready.

already—means previously.

They were *all ready* to write when the teacher arrived.

They had *already* begun writing when the teacher arrived.

alright—is unacceptable.

all right—is acceptable.

all-round—means versatile or general.

all around—means all over a given area.

Rafer Johnson, decathlon champion, is an *all-round* athlete.

The police were lined up for miles *all around*.

all together—means everybody or everything together.

altogether—means completely.

The boys and girls sang *all together*.

This was *altogether* strange for a person of his type.

all ways—means in every possible way.

always—means at all times.

He was in *all ways* acceptable to the voters.

His reputation had *always* been spotless.

allude—means to make a reference to.

elude—means to escape from.

Only incidentally does Coleridge *allude* to Shakespeare's puns.

It is almost impossible for one to *elude* tax collectors.

aren't I—is colloquial. Its use is to be discouraged.

SAY: AM I not entitled to an explanation?
(preferred to Aren't I...)

as—(used as a conjunction) is followed by a verb.

like—(used as a preposition) is NOT followed by a

habits.

Illusions of the mind, unlike those of the eye, cannot be corrected with glasses.

alongside of—means side by side with.

Bill stood *alongside of* Henry.

alongside—means parallel to the side.

Park the car *alongside* the curb.

alot—is unacceptable.

It should always be written as two words: a lot.

among—is used with more than two persons or things.

NOTE: Amongst should be avoided

between—is used with two persons or things.

The inheritance was equally divided *among* the four children.

The business, however, was divided *between* the oldest and the youngest one.

amount—applies to quantities that cannot be counted one by one.

number—applies to quantities that can be counted one by one.

A large *amount* of grain was delivered to the storehouse.

A large *number* of bags of grain was delivered.

angry—*with* a person

at a thing or an animal

about a situation

annual—means yearly.

biannual—means twice a year. (Semiannual means the same.)

biennial—means once in two years or every two years.

anywheres—is unacceptable.

anywhere—is acceptable.

SAY: We can't find it anywhere.

ALSO SAY: nowhere (NOT nowheres),
somewhere (NOT somewheres)

essay—means an effort or the result of an effort.

We shall *assay* the ascent of the mountain tomorrow.

The candidate's views were expressed in a well-written *essay*.

verb.

Do as I do, not as I say.

Try not to behave *like* a child.

Unacceptable: He acts like I do.

as far as—expresses distance.

so far as—indicates a limitation.

We hiked *as far as* the next guest house.

So far as we know, the barn was adequate for a night's stay.

as good as—should be used for comparisons only.

This motel is *as good as* the next one.

NOTE: As good as does NOT mean practically.

Unacceptable: They as good as promised us a place in the hall.

Acceptable: They practically promised us a place in the hall.

as if—is correctly used in the expression, "He talked *as if* his jaw hurt him."

Unacceptable: "he talked like his jaw hurt him."

as...as—used for comparison in *positive* statements.

not so...as—used for comparison in *negative* statements.

Correct: She was *as* clever *as* her sister.

Correct: He was *not so* deft *as* his father.

ascent—is the act of rising.

assent—means approval.

The *ascent* to the top of the mountain was perilous.

Congress gave its *assent* to the President's emergency directive.

assay—means to try or experiment.

besides—refers to something that has been added. He lived *beside* the stream.

He found wild flowers and weeds *besides*.

better—means recovering.

Well—means completely recovered.

He is *better* now than he was a week ago. In a few more weeks, he will be *well*.

blame—should NOT be used with *on*

Correct: Don't *blame* her for the accident.

Incorrect: Don't blame the accident on her.

attend to—means to take care of.

tend to—means to be inclined to.

One of the clerks will *attend to* mail in my absence.

Inactive people *tend to* gain weight. **back**—should NOT be used with such words as *refer* and *return* since the prefix *re* means back.

Unacceptable: Refer back to the text, if you have difficulty recalling the facts.

backward

backwards—both are acceptable and may be used interchangeably as adverbs.

We tried to run *backward* (or *backwards*).

Backward as an adjective means slow in learning.

(DON'T use backwards in this case.) A *backward* pupil should be given every encouragement.

badly—an adverb meaning unfavorably.

It should NOT be used synonymously with *very much*.

Correct: Joshua hurt himself *badly*.

incorrect: Pearl wanted to go to the play badly. (Use very much instead.)

being as

being that—both expressions are nonstandard.

Since or *because* should be used in their place.

Correct: Since Harold was here first, he got **the best** seats.

Wrong: Being that Dawn was in his class, the teacher recognized her.

berth—is a resting place.

birth—means the beginning of life.

The new liner was given a wide *berth* in the harbor.

He was a fortunate man from *birth*.

beside—means close to.

group—refers to persons or things.

This looks like a delicious *bunch* of bananas. What a well-behaved *group* of children!

NOTE: The colloquial use of bunch applied to persons is to be discouraged.

A bunch of boys were whooping it up. (Number is preferable.)

calendar—is a system of time.

calender—is a smoothing and glazing machine.

both—means two considered together.

each—means one of two or more.

Both of the applicants qualified for the position.

Each applicant was given a generous reference.

NOTE: Avoid using expressions such as:
Both girls had a new typewriter. (Use *each* girl instead.)

Both girls tried to outdo the other. (Use *each* girl instead.)

They are *both* alike. (Omit *both*.)

breath—means an intake of air.

breathe—means to draw air in and give it out.

breadth—means width.

Before you dive in, take a very deep *breath*.

It is difficult to *breathe* under water.

In a square, the *breadth* should be equal to the length.

bring—means to carry toward the person who is speaking.

take—means to carry away from the speaker.

Bring the books here.

Take your raincoat with you when you go out.

broke—is the past tense of break.

broke—is unacceptable for without money.

He *broke* his arm.

for broke" is a slang expression widely used in gambling circles.

bunch—refers to things.

cent—means a coin.

scent—means an odor.

sent—is the past tense of send.

The *one-cent* postal card is a thing of the past.

The *scent* of roses is pleasing.

We were *sent* to the rear of the balcony.

certainly—(and surely) is an adverb.

sure—is an adjective.

He was *certainly* learning fast.

Unacceptable: He sure was learning fast.

colander—is a kind of sieve. In this part of the world, most people prefer the twelve-month *calendar*.

In ceramic work, the potting wheel and the *calender* are indispensable.

Garden-picked vegetables should be washed in a *colander* before cooking.

can—means physically able.

may—implies permission.

I *can* lift this chair over my head.

You *may* leave after you finish your work.

cannot help—must be followed by an -ing form.

We *cannot help* feeling (NOT feel) distressed about this.

NOTE: *cannot help but* is unacceptable.

can't hardly

can't scarcely—are double negatives. They are unacceptable.

SAY: The child *can hardly* (or *can scarcely*) walk in those shoes.

capital—is the city.

capitol—is the building.

Paris is the *capital* of France.

The *Capitol* in Washington is occupied by the Congress.

(The Washington Capitol is capitalized.)

NOTE: Capital also means wealth.

ease—means to end.

seize—means to take hold of.

Will you please *cease* making those sounds?

Seize him by the collar as he comes around the corner.

come to be—should NOT be replaced with the expression *become to be*, since *become* means *come to be*.

True freedom will *come to be* when all tyrants have been overthrown.

comic—means intentionally funny.

comical—means unintentionally funny.

A clown is a *comic* figure.

The peculiar hat she wore gave her a *comical* appearance.

cite—means to quote.

sight—means seeing.

site—means a place for a building.
He was fond of *citing* from the Scriptures.
The *sight* of the wreck was appalling.
The Board of Education is seeking a *site* for the new school.

coarse—means vulgar or harsh.

course—means a path or a study.
He was shunned because of his *coarse* behavior.
The ship took its usual *course*.
Which history *course* are you taking?

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considerable—is properly used only as an adjective, NOT as a noun.

consul—means a government representative.

council—means an assembly that meets for deliberation.

counsel—means advice.
Americans abroad should keep in touch with their *consuls*.
The City *Council* enacts local laws and regulations.
The defendant heeded the *counsel* of his friends.

convenient to—should be followed by a person.

convenient for—should be followed by a purpose.
Will these plans be *convenient to* you?
You must agree that they are *convenient for* the occasion.

compare to—means to liken to something which has a different form.

compare with—means to compare persons or things of the same kind.

contrast with—means to show the difference between two things.
A minister is sometimes *compared to* a shepherd.
Shakespeare's plays are often *compared with* those of Marlowe.
The writer *contrasted* the sensitivity of the dancer with the grossness of the pugilist.

complement—means a completing part.

compliment—is an expression of admiration.
His wit was a *complement* to her beauty.
He *complimented* her attractive hairstyle.

concur in—an opinion.

concur with—a person.

conscience—means sense of right.

conscientious—means showing care and precision.

conscious—means aware of one's self. Man's *conscience* prevents him from becoming completely selfish.
He is *conscientious* about getting his work done on time.
The injured man was completely *conscious*.

consensus of opinion—of *opinion* is redundant.

induction—means reasoning from the particular (facts) to the general (laws or principles).
AU men are mortal. Since Brad is a man, he is mortal (*deduction*).
There are 10,000 oranges in this truckload. I have examined 100 from various parts of the load and find them all of the same quality. I conclude that the 10,000 oranges are of this quality (*induction*).

delusion—means a wrong idea that probably will influence action.

illusion—means a wrong idea that probably will not influence action.
People were under the *delusion* that the earth was flat.
It is just an *illusion* that the earth is fiat.

copy—is an imitation of an original work (not necessarily an exact imitation).

facsimile—is an exact imitation of an original work.

The counterfeiters made a crude *copy* of the hundred-dollar bill.

The official government engraver, however, prepared a *facsimile* of the bill.

could of—is unacceptable. (*Should of* is also unacceptable.)

could have—is acceptable. (*Should have* is acceptable.)

Acceptable: You *could have* done better with more care.

Unacceptable: I *could of* won. *Also avoid:* must of, would of.

decent—means suitable. **descent**—means going down. **dissent**—means disagreement.

The *decent* thing to do is to admit your fault.

The *descent* into the cave was treacherous.

Two of the nine justices filed a *dissenting* opinion.

deduction—means reasoning from the general (laws or principles) to the particular (facts).

dual—means relating to two.

desert—(pronounced DEZZ-ert) means an arid area.

desert—(pronounced di-ZERT) means to abandon; also a reward or punishment. **dessert**—(pronounced di-ZERT) means the final course of a meal.

The Sahara is the world's most famous *desert*.
A true friend will not *desert* you in times of trouble.

Imprisonment was a just *desert* for his crime.

We had chocolate cake for *dessert*.

differ—with a person.

different—from a thing.

DO NOT use *different* than.

Jessica *differed with* her mother on the importance of homework.

Norm's interpretation *was different from* that of his colleague.

doubt that—is acceptable.

doubt whether—is unacceptable.

Acceptable: I *doubt that* you will pass this term.

Unacceptable: We *doubt whether* you will succeed.

duel—means a contest between two persons.
Dr. Jekyll had a *dual* personality.
Alexander Hamilton was fatally injured in a *duel* with Aaron Burr.

due to—is unacceptable at the beginning of a sentence. Use because of, on account of, or some similar expression instead.

Unacceptable: Due to the rain, the game was postponed.

Acceptable: Because of the rain, the game was postponed.

Acceptable: The postponement was *due to* the rain.

each other—refers to two persons.

one another—refers to more than two persons.
The two girls have known *each other* for many years.
Several of the girls have known *one another* for many years.

either . . . or—is used when referring to choices.

Neither . . . nor—is the negative form.
Either you or I will win the election.
Neither Eric nor Alex is expected to have a chance.

eliminate—means to get rid of.

illuminate—means to supply with light.
Let us try to *eliminate* the unnecessary steps.
Several lamps were needed to *illuminate* the corridor.

emerge—means to rise out of.

immerge—means to sink into. (also immerse)
The swimmer *emerged* from the pool.
She *immerged* the dress in the hot, soapy water.

emigrate—means to leave one's country for another.

immigrate—means to enter another country.
The Norwegians *emigrated* to America in the mid-1860's.
Many of the Norwegian *immigrants* settled in the Middle West.

endorse on the back of—*on the back of* is redundant.

enthused—unacceptable diction.
USE: enthusiastic.

equally as—as is unnecessary.
My assignment is *equally good*.

everyone—is written as one word when it is a pronoun.

every one—(two words) is used when each individual is stressed.

Everyone present voted for the proposal.

Every one of the voters accepted the proposal.

NOTE: Everybody is written as one word.

everywheres—is unacceptable.

everywhere—is acceptable.
We searched *everywhere* for the missing book.
NOTE: Everyplace (one word) is likewise unacceptable.

feel bad—means to feel ill.

feel badly—means to have a poor sense of touch.
I *feel bad* about the accident I saw.
The numbness in his fingers caused him to *feel badly*.

feel good—means to be happy.

feel well—means to be in good health.
I *feel very good* about my recent promotion.
Spring weather always made him *feel well*.

flout—means to insult.

flaunt—means to make a display of.
He *flouted* the authority of the principal.
Hester Prynne *flaunted* her scarlet "A."

formally—means in a formal way.

formerly—means at an earlier time.
The letter of reference was *formally* written.
He was *formerly* a delegate to the convention.

former—means the first of two.

latter—means the second of two.
The *former* half of the book was prose.
The *latter* half of the book was poetry.

forth—means forward.

fourth—comes after third.

They went *forth* like warriors of old.

The *Fourth* of July is our Independence Day.

NOTE: spelling of forty (40) and fourteen (14).

get—is a verb that strictly means to obtain. Please *get* my bag.

There are many slang forms of GET that should be avoided.

Avoid: Do you get me? (SAY: Do you understand me?)

Avoid: You can't get away with it. (SAY: You won't avoid punishment if you do it.)

Avoid: Get wise to yourself. (SAY: Use common sense.)

Avoid: We didn't get to go. (SAY: We didn't manage to go.)

got—means obtained.

HE got the tickets yesterday.

Avoid: You've got to do it. (SAY: You have to do it.)

Avoid: We have got no sympathy for them. (SAY: We have no sympathy for them.)

Avoid: They have got a great deal of property. (SAY: They have a great deal of property.)

hanged—is used in reference to a person.

hung—is used in reference to a thing.

The prisoner was *hanged* at dawn.

The picture was *hung* above the fireplace.

however—means nevertheless.

however—means in what possible way.

We are certain, *however*, that you will like this class.

We are certain that, *how ever* you decide to study, you will succeed.

humans—is unacceptable usage.

Human beings is the noun.

Human is the adjective.

Barney treated his antiques as if they were *human beings*.

The malfunction was traced to *human* error.

if—introduces a condition.

Whether-introduces a choice.

I shall go to Europe *if* I win the prize.

He asked me *whether* I intended to go to Europe (not if).

in—usually refers to a state of being. (no motion) into—

is used for motion from one place to another.

The records are *in* that drawer.

I put the records *into* that drawer.

in regards to—is unacceptable usage.

USE: in regard to or regarding.

Regarding your letter, I responded to it immediately.

irregardless—is unacceptable.

regardless—is acceptable.

Unacceptable: Irregardless of the weather, I am

going to the game.

Acceptable: *Regardless* of his ability, he is not likely to win.

its—means belonging to it.

it's—means it is.

The house lost *irs* roof.

It's an exposed house now.

kind of

sort of—are unacceptable expressions for *rather*.

SAY: We are *rather* disappointed in you.

last—refers to the final member in a series.

latest—refers to the most recent in time.

latter—refers to the second of two.

This is the *last* bulletin. There won't be any other bulletins.

This is the *latest* bulletin. There will be other bulletins.

Of the two most recent bulletins, the *latter* is more encouraging.

lay—means to place. **lie**—means to recline.

Note the forms of each verb:

Tense	Lay (Place)
Present	She <i>lays</i> the book on the desk.
Past	She <i>laid</i> the book on the desk.
Present Perfect	She <i>has laid</i> the book on the desk.
Tense	Lie (Recline)
Present	The child <i>lies</i> down.
Past	The child <i>lay</i> down. The child <i>has lain</i> down.
Present Perfect	

lightening—is the present participle of to lighten.

lightning—means the flashes of light accompanied by thunder.

Leaving the extra food behind resulted in *lightening* the backpack.
Summer thunderstorms produce startling *lightning* bolts.

lose out, win out—are unacceptable usage.

USE: lose or win.

If you cheat on the examination, you will certainly *lose* in the future.

many—refers to a number.

much—refers to a quantity in bulk. How *many* inches of rain fell last night?

I don't know, but I would say *much* rain fell last night.

may—is used in the present tense.

might—is used in the past tense.

We are hoping that he *may* come today.
He *might* have done it if you had encouraged him.

noplace—as a solid word, is unacceptable for no place or nowhere.

Acceptable: You now have *nowhere* to go.

number—is singular when the total is intended.
The *number* (of pages in the book) is 50.

number—is plural when the individual units are referred to.

A number of pages (in the book) were printed in italic type.

precede—means to come before. **proceed**—means to go ahead. (Procedure is the noun.)

of any—(and of anyone) is unacceptable for all.

SAY: His was the highest mark of all. (NOT of any or of anyone)

off **of**—is unacceptable.

SAY: He took the book off the table.

out loud—is unacceptable for aloud.

SAY: He read aloud to his family every evening.

outdoor—(and out-of-door) is an adjective.

outdoors—is an adverb.

We spent most of the summer at an outdoor music camp.

Most of the time we played string quartets outdoors.

NOTE: Out-of-doors is acceptable in either case.

people—comprise a united or collective group of individuals.

persons—are individuals that are separate and unrelated.

The *people* of New York City have enthusiastically accepted "Shakespeare-in-thePark" productions.

Only five *persons* remained in the theater after the first act.

persecute—means to make life miserable for someone. (Persecution is illegal.) **prosecute**—means to conduct a criminal investigation. (Prosecution is legal.)

Some racial groups insist upon *persecuting* other groups.

The District Attorney *is prosecuting* the racketeers.

Some time—means a portion of time **Sometime**—means at an indefinite time in the future

supersede—means to replace.
 What were the circumstances that *preceded* the attack?
 We can *proceed* with our plan for resisting a second attack.
 It is then possible that Plan B will *supersede* Plan A.

principal—means chief **or** main (as an adjective); **a leader (as a noun).**

principle—means a fundamental truth **or** belief.
 His *principal* supporters came from among the peasants.
 The *principal* of the school asked for cooperation from the staff.
 Humility was the guiding *principle* of Buddha's life.
 NOTE: Principal may also mean a sum placed at interest.
 Part of his monthly payment was applied as interest on the *principal*.

reason is because— *is because* is unnecessary.
 USE: reason that.
 The *reason* for Shirley's lateness is *that* the bus broke down.

repeat again—is unnecessary
 USE: repeat.

seldom ever—incorrect usage.
 USE: seldom if ever.

sit—means take a seat (intransitive verb).
set—means place (transitive verb).

Note the forms of each verb:

Tense	Sit (Take a seat)
Present	He <i>sits</i> on a chair.
Past	He <i>sat</i> on the chair.
Present Perfect	He <i>has sat</i> on the chair.
Tense	Set (Place)
Present	He <i>sets</i> the lamp on the table.
Past	He <i>set</i> the lamp on the table.
Present Perfect	He <i>has set</i> the lamp on the table.

through—meaning finished or completed is unacceptable.
 SAY: We'll finish (**NOT be** through with) the work by five o'clock.

try to—is acceptable.

try and—is unacceptable.
 Try **to** come (**NOT try and come**).

Sometimes—means occasionally
 I'll need *some time* to make a decision.
 Let us meet *sometime* after 12 noon.
Sometimes it is better to hesitate before signing a contract.

Somewheres Someplace—

are unacceptable

Somewhere—is acceptable

Stationary—means standing still

Stationery—means writing materials
 In ancient times people thought the earth was *stationary*.
 We bought writing paper at the *stationery* store.

Stayed—means remained Stood—

means remained upright or erect.
 The army stayed in the trenches for five days.
 The soldiers stood at attention for one hour.

Sure—for surely is unacceptable

Take in—is unacceptable in the sense of deceive or

attend.
 SAY: We were deceived (NOT taken in) by his oily manner.
 We should like to attend (NOT take in) a few plays during our vacation.

Their—means belonging to them

There—means in that place

They're—means they are

themselves—is unacceptable for themselves.
 SAY: Most children of school age are able to care for themselves in many ways.

these kind—is unacceptable.

this kind—is acceptable.
 I am fond of *this kind* of apples.
 NOTE: These kinds would also be acceptable.

whereabouts—is unacceptable for where.
 SAY: Where (NOT whereabouts) do you live?
 Molt: Whereabouts as a noun meaning a place is acceptable.
 Do you know his *whereabouts*?

NOTE: Plan on going is unacceptable. Plan to go is acceptable.

two—is the numeral 2.

to—means in the direction of.

too—means more than or also.

There are *two* sides to every story.

Three *two*'s (or 2's) equal six.

We shall go *to* school.

We shall go, *too*.

The weather is *too* hot for school.

wait on—is incorrect usage.

USE: wait for.

Sharon could not *wait for* her husband a moment longer.

was

were—If something is contrary to fact (not a fact), use *were* in every instance.

I wish I *were* in Bermuda.

Unacceptable: If he **was** sensible, he wouldn't act like that.

(**SAY:** If he *were*...)

ways—is unacceptable for way.

SAY: We climbed a little **way** (NOT **ways**) **up the hill**.

went and took—(went and stole, etc.) is unacceptable.

SAY: They *stole* (NOT went and stole) our **tools**.

when—(and where) should NOT be used to introduce a definition of a **noun**.

SAY: A tornado is a twisting, high wind on **land**.

(NOT: is when a twisting, high wind is on land.)

A pool is a place for swimming. (NOT: is where people swim.)

THEREFORE: "Tell me who you think should represent our company?" is correct.

would of—is incorrect usage.

USE: would have.

If I had known the answer, I would have responded.

you all—is unacceptable for you (plural).

SAY: We welcome you, the delegates from Ethiopia.

You are all welcome, delegates of Ethiopia.

whether—should NOT be preceded by *of* or *as to*.

SAY: The president will consider the question

whether (NOT of whether) it is better to ask for or demand higher taxes now.

He inquired *whether* (NOT as to whether) we were going or not.

which—is used incorrectly in the following expressions:

He asked me to stay, which I did. (*Correct:*

He asked me to stay and I did.)

it has been a severe winter, which is unfortunate. (*Correct:* Unfortunately, it has been a severe winter.)

You did not write; besides which you have not telephoned. (*Correct:* Omit which.)

Which must be preceded by a noun that it modifies.

SAY: Jessica said that I was always late, a statement *which is not* true.

while—is unacceptable for *and* or *though*.

SAY: The library is situated on the south side; (OMIT while) the laboratory is on the north side.

Though (NOT while) I disagree with you, I shall not interfere with your right to express your opinion.

Though (NOT while) I am in my office every day, you do not attempt to see me.

who

whom—The following is a method (without going into grammar rules) for determining when to use who or whom.

"Tell me (who, whom) you think should represent our company?"

STEP ONE: Change the who-whom part of the sentence to its natural order.

"You think (who, whom) should represent our company?"

STEP TWO: Substitute he for who, him for whom.

"You think (he, him) should represent our company?" You would say he in this case.

who is

who am—Note these constructions:

It is I whom am the most experienced.

It is he who is.

It is he or I who am... it is I or he who is. It is he and I who are...

whose—means of whom.

who's—means who is.

Whose notebook is this? *Who's* in the next office?

Good versus well

In many cases when we use "good" as an adjective, it is modifying a noun that it precedes.

Examples: *I have **good** news.* ("Good" modifies the noun *news*.)

We can also use "good" as a predicate adjective with a linking verb.

Examples: *This mystery movie is **good**.* ("Good" modifies the noun *movie*.)

It is common to use "well" as an adverb which modifies a verb.

Examples: *Dave speaks Spanish **well**.* ("Well" modifies the verb *speaks*.)

In most cases, we use the word "well" as an adverb, but in other instances, we can use "well" as an adjective referring to health, in most cases with an intransitive or linking verb.

*John looks **well**.*

(Referring to his health use "well".)

*John looks **good**.*

(Referring to his physical appearance use "good".)

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Subjects

1. Every sentence must have a subject. The subject may be a noun, a pronoun, or a word or group of words functioning as a noun.

Examples: *Fish swim.* (noun)

Boats are sailed. (noun)

She is young. (pronoun)

Running is good exercise. (gerund)

To argue is pointless. (infinitive)

That he was tired was evident. (noun clause)

In commands, the subject is usually not expressed but is understood to be *you*.

Example: Mind your own business.

Verbs

2. Every sentence must contain a verb. A group of words, no matter how long, without a verb is a sentence fragment, not a sentence. A verb may consist of one, two, three, or four words.

Examples: The boy *studies* hard.

The boy *will study* hard.

The boy *has been studying* hard.

The boy *should have been studying* hard. The words that make up a single verb may be separated.

Examples: It *is* not *snowing*.

It *will* almost certainly *snow* tomorrow.

Phrases and Clauses

1. A phrase cannot stand by itself as a sentence. A phrase is any group of related words which has no subject or predicate and which is used as a single part of speech. Phrases may be built around prepositions, participles, gerunds, or infinitives.

Example: The boy *with curly hair* is my brother.

(Prepositional phrase used as an adjective modifying *boy*)

Example: My favorite cousin lives *on a farm*. (Prepositional phrase used as an adverb modifying *lives*)

Example: *Beyond the double white line* is out of bounds. (Prepositional phrase used as a noun, the subject of the sentence)

Example: A thunderstorm *preceding a cold front* is often welcome. (Participial phrase used as an adjective modifying *thunderstorm*)

Example: We eagerly awaited the pay envelopes *brought by the messenger*. (Participial phrase used as an adjective modifying *envelopes*)

Example: *Running a day camp* is an exhausting job. (Gerund phrase used as a noun, subject of the sentence)

Example: The director is paid well for *running the day camp*. (Gerund phrase used as a noun, the object of the preposition *for*)

Example: *To breathe unpolluted air* should be every person's birthright. (Infinitive phrase used as a noun, the subject of the sentence)

Example: The child began *to unwrap his gift*. (Infinitive phrase used as a noun, the object of the verb *began*)

Example: The boy ran away from home *to become a marine*. (Infinitive phrase used as an adverb modifying *ran away*)

2. A **main, independent, or principal clause** can stand alone as a **complete sentence**. A main clause has a subject and a verb. It may stand by itself or be introduced by a coordinating conjunction.

Example: The sky darkened ominously, and rain began to fall. (Two independent clauses joined by coordinating conjunction)

3. A **subordinate or dependent clause** must never stand alone. It is **not a complete sentence**, only a sentence **fragment**, despite the fact that it has a subject and a verb. A subordinate clause usually is introduced by a subordinating conjunction. Subordinated clauses may act as adverbs, adjectives, or nouns.

Hint: Subordinate adverbial clauses are generally introduced by the subordinating conjunctions **when, while, because, as soon as, if, after, although, as before, since, than, though, until, and unless**.

*Examples: While we were waiting for the local, the express roared past.
The woman applied for a new job because she wanted to earn more money.
Although a subordinate clause contains both subject and verb, it cannot stand alone because it is introduced by a subordinating word.*

Subordinate adjective clauses may be introduced by the pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that*.

Examples: The play that he liked best was a mystery. I have a neighbor who served in the Peace Corps.

Subordinate noun clauses may be introduced by *who*, *what*, or *that*.

*Examples: The station master says that the train will be late. I asked the waiter what the stew contained.
I wish I knew who backed into my car.*

4. Two independent clauses cannot share one sentence without some form of connective. If they do, they form a **run-on sentence**.
Example: A college education has never been more important than it is today it has never cost more. (WRONG—run-on sentence)
Example: A college education has never been more important than it is today, it has never cost more. (WRONG—comma splice)
A run-on sentence may be corrected in the following ways:
 - a. Divide it into two separate sentences, adding a transitional word if necessary.
Example: A college education has never been more important than it is today. Also, it has never cost more.
 - b. Join the two independent clauses with a comma and a conjunction.
Example: A college education has never been more important than it is today, and it has never cost more.
 - c. Join the dependent clauses with a semicolon.
Example: A college education has never been more important than it is today; it has never cost more.
 - d. Make one clause subordinate to the other.
Example: While a college education has never been more important than it is today, it has also never cost
 - e. Add a conjunctive adverb + a semicolon + a comma
6. Phrases should be placed near the words they modify.
Nor: We need someone to keep the records with bookkeeping experience. (The records cannot have bookkeeping experience.)
But: We need someone with bookkeeping experience to keep the records.
7. Relative clauses should be placed immediately after the words they modify.
Not: The report must be typewritten which is due tomorrow.
But: The report, which is due tomorrow, must be typewritten.

Modifiers

8. Adjectives modify only nouns and pronouns. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.
Example: One can swim in a lake as easy as in a pool. (WRONG)
One can swim in a lake as easily as in a pool. (The adverb easily must modify the verb can swim.)
Example: I was real happy. (WRONG)
I was really happy. (The adverb really must be used to modify the adjective happy.)
Sometimes context determines the use of adjective or adverb.
Example: The old man looked angry. (Angry is an adjective describing the old man [angry old man].)
The old man looked angrily out the window. (Angrily is an adverb describing the man's manner of looking out the window.)
9. Adverbs should be placed near the words they modify.
Not: The man was only willing to contribute one dollar.
But: The man was willing to contribute only one dollar.
10. A modifier must modify something.
Not: Running for the bus, her shoe fell off. (The phrase running for the bus has nothing to modify. Obviously a shoe cannot run.)
But: Running for the bus, she lost her shoe.
Or: As she was running for the bus her shoe fell off. (Either way, the addition of the pronoun she tells who did the running.)

Dangling and Squinting Modifiers

A **dangling modifier** is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence. A modifier describes, clarifies, or gives more detail about a concept.

Not: Having finished the assignment, the TV was turned on.

But: Having finished the assignment, Jill turned on the TV.

Squinting modifiers occur when the word modified is not clear or could be more than one word. These problems can usually be solved by rearranging the elements already present in the sentence.

Not: *The mystery has been solved after ten years of the missing portrait.*

But: *After ten years, the mystery of the missing portrait has been solved.*

Pronoun Antecedents

11. The antecedent of a pronoun must be a specific word, not an idea expressed in a phrase or clause.

Nor: Although the doctor operated at once, *it* was not a success and the patient died. (There is no specific noun to which *it* can refer.)

But: Although the doctor performed the operation at once, *it* was not a success and the patient died. (*It* correctly refers to the nearest noun *operation*.)

Parallelism

12. Express ideas that balance each other in the same grammatical structure.

Not: *Skiing* and *to skate* are both winter sports.

But: *Skiing* and *skating* are both winter sports.

Not: She spends all her time *eating, asleep, and on her studies*.

But: She spends all her time *eating, sleeping and studying*

Not: The work is neither *difficult* nor *do I find it interesting*.

But: The work is neither *difficult* nor *interesting*.

Notes about verbals

A **gerund** is a verbal that ends in *-ing* and functions as a noun.

A **participle** is a verbal that is used as an adjective and most often ends in *-ing* or *-ed*.

An **infinitive** is a verbal consisting of the word *to* plus a verb (in its simplest "stem" form) and functioning as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

Point of View

13. Avoid needless shifts in point of view. A change from one tense or mood to another, from one subject or voice to another, or from one person to another destroys parallelism within the sentence.

Not: After he *rescued* the kitten, he *rushes* down the ladder to find its owner. (Shift from past tense to present tense)

But: After he *rescued* the kitten, he *rushed* down the ladder to find its owner.

Nor: *Mary* especially likes math, but *history* is also enjoyed by her. (Shift from active to passive voice)

But: *Mary* especially likes math, but *she* also enjoys history.

Not: First *stand* at attention and then *you should* salute the flag. (Shift from imperative to indicative mood)

But: First *stand* at attention and then *salute* the flag.

Nor: *One* should listen to the weather forecast so that they may anticipate a hurricane. (Shift from singular to plural subject)

But: *One* should listen to the weather forecast so that *one* (or *he*) may anticipate a hurricane.

Wordiness

14. Avoid unnecessary repetition and superfluous words.

Not: She *began to get started* knitting the sweater.

But: She *began* knitting the sweater.

Nor: This skirt is *longer in length* than that one.

But: This skirt is *longer* than that one.

Comparisons

15. Make comparisons logical and complete.

Not: Wilmington is larger than any city in Delaware. (Not logical since Wilmington is a city in Delaware)

But: Wilmington is larger than any *other* city in Delaware.

Not: **He** is as fat, if not fatter, than his uncle. (Not complete since *as fat* is completed by *as*, not *than*)

But: He is as fat *as*, if not fatter than, his uncle.