

Grammar Guide

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Parts of Speech

ADJECTIVES modify or describe nouns and pronouns.

- Ex: Good, happy, smart, young, green
- **(NOTE:** Keep the adjective close to the word it modifies.)

ADVERBS modify verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

- Ex: Always, slowly, well, really, never
- **(NOTE:** Keep the adverb close to the word it modifies.)

CONJUNCTIONS connect words, phrases or clauses.

- Coordinating: For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS)
- Subordinating: Unless, if, since, so that, while, because

INTERJECTIONS are power words that express strong feelings.

- Ex: Oh! Wow! Well, really!

NOUNS are the names of people, places, objects or qualities.

- Ex: Boat, tree, Tom, dog, playground, Florida, wisdom, mercy

PREPOSITIONS show relationships between words.

- Ex: For, from, to, on, through, by, with, of, before, under

PRONOUNS take the place of nouns. The replaced nouns are the pronouns' antecedents. The antecedent for each pronoun should be clear.

Subject	I, you, he, she, it, we, they, who
Object	me, you, him, her, it, us, them, whom
Possessive	my, your, his, her, its, our, their, whose
Indefinite Singular	everyone, each, someone
Indefinite Plural	both, many, some, any
Indefinite Singular/Plural	all, some, any (none – see stylebook)

VERBS express action, condition or state of being.

- Ex: Run, fly, work, is, are, was, were, appear

Combining Words

Sentence

- A sentence is a complete thought that includes a subject (what the sentence is about) and verb (what the subject is doing).

Phrase

- A phrase is one or more words that create a grammatical unit but do not include the subject-verb, and therefore cannot stand alone.

Clause

- A clause includes a subject and verb. There are four types of clauses:
 - Main/Independent Clause: The subject and verb in this clause form a complete thought.
 - Subordinate/Dependent Clause: The subject and verb in this clause combine with a subordinate conjunction, so they do not form a complete thought.
 - Relative Clause: This clause begins with a relative pronoun or adjective, so it does not make a complete thought.
 - Noun clause: This clause functions as a noun, and thus cannot form a complete thought.

Modifier

- A modifier is a word, phrase or clause that adds description in a sentence. Place a modifier next to the word it describes.

Modifier Error

- A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far away. A dangling modifier does not clearly describe any word in a sentence.

Fragment

- A fragment is an incomplete sentence. Although it is structured like a sentence, there is no main clause and no complete thought.

Basic Sentence Patterns

Simple Sentence

- A simple sentence includes one independent clause.

Subject ➡ (action) Verb ➡ Object

Subject ➡ (being) Verb ➡ Subject Complement

Compound Sentence

- A compound sentence contains two independent clauses joined together with punctuation.

Punctuation Options

- Comma + Coordinating Conjunction (Ex: For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
- Semicolon

Complex Sentence

- A complex sentence joins one dependent clause to an independent clause.
 - Fragment/dependent clause first + (,) + main sentence
 - Main sentence first + fragment (usually no comma)
- Set off nonessential phrases and clauses with commas.

Compound-Complex Sentence

- A compound-complex sentence joins two or more dependent clauses with two independent clauses.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Singular Subject – Singular Verb

- Wrong: The lone wolf howl at the moon.
- Right: The lone wolf howls at the moon.

Plural Subject – Plural Verb

- Wrong: The Canada geese stops at Fort Meade.
- Right: The Canada geese stop at Fort Meade.

NOTE: The object of a preposition in a prepositional phrase cannot be the subject of a sentence. When a prepositional phrase is between a subject and verb, ensure the verb number and subject number still match.

- Wrong: The class of rowdy students perform well on test.
- Right: The class of rowdy students performs well on tests.

The following are examples of singular indefinite pronouns:

anyone	anybody	somebody	anything
everyone	everybody	everything	nothing
something	someone	nobody	much
each	either	neither	
every	many a	another	

- Wrong: Everyone in this class know the stylebook.
- Right: Everyone in this class knows the stylebook.

The following are examples of indefinite pronouns:

both	few
others	many
several	

- Wrong: Both of the deer has been seen near the detachment.
- Right: Both of the deer have been seen near the detachment.

The following are examples of fraction words::

half	three-fourths
part	plenty
rest	any
some	all

When you combine “all,” “some,” “any” and fraction words with a whole bulk amount, they become singular.

- Wrong: All of the library were burned.
- Right: All of the library was burned.

When combined with a number of objects, they become plural.

- Wrong: All of the books in the library was burned.
- Right: All of the books in the library were burned.

Compound subjects joined by “and” are usually plural.

- Wrong: Paper and a pencil is required for class.
- Right: Paper and a pencil are required for class.

Compound subjects that are one item (e.g., macaroni and cheese) are singular.

- Wrong: Spaghetti and meatballs are one of my family’s favorites.
- Right: Spaghetti and meatballs is one of my family’s favorites.

The following are examples of collective noun subjects and organizations:

company	team	crowd	herd	collection	pair	committee
group	firm	family	battalion	corps	department	set
jury	faculty	board	class	school	society	audience

According to the stylebook, treat collective “group” nouns as singular. For plural individuals, add “members.”

- Wrong: The band play at the club each Friday night.
- Right: The band plays at the club each Friday night.

- Wrong: The band is responsible for their own instruments.
- Right: The band members are responsible for their own instruments.

A subject complement is a noun, pronoun or adjective following a linking verb (any form of “to be,” “to become” and “to seem,” as well as certain verbs that function as linking or action verbs). The verb should agree with the subject.

- Wrong: Man’s best friend are dogs.
- Right: Man’s best friend is dogs.

“The number” is singular.

- Wrong: The number of people who attended were outstanding.
- Right: The number of people who attended was outstanding.

“A number” (meaning “several”) is plural.

- Wrong: A number of people complains about the test each time.
- Right: A number of people complain about the test each time.

Money, measurements, time, organizations, food and diseases are singular.

- Wrong: Ten hours are a long time to spend in an airplane.
- Right: Ten hours is a long time to spend in an airplane.

Titles are singular.

- Wrong: “Mickey Mouse and His Friends” are playing Saturday night.
- Right: “Mickey Mouse and His Friends” is playing Saturday night.

For sentences with “here/there” construction, the subject comes after the verb.

- Wrong: There is several species of butterflies in their forest.
- Right: There are several species of butterflies in their forest.

Active-Passive Voice

In active voice, the actor of the action is the subject of the sentence.

- Ex: Sam baked the birthday cake.

In passive voice, the actor of the action becomes the object of the sentence, and the object becomes the subject.

- Ex: The birthday cake was baked by Sam.

(Use active voice unless you have a justifiable reason to use passive voice. Sentences written in active voice are clearer and shorter.)

Use passive voice to direct attention to the receiver of the action.

- Ex: Tom Smith was hit by a runaway vehicle.

Use passive voice when the actor is unknown or unimportant.

- Ex: The car was repaired.

To fix the passive voice:

1. Find the main verb in the sentence.
2. Ask “who” or “what” is doing the action.
3. Rewrite the sentence so the actor is the subject.

Passive: An innocent pedestrian was hit by a speeding driver.

1. Main verb: Hit
2. “Who” or “what” is doing the action: Driver

Active: The speeding driver hit the innocent pedestrian.

Passive: All of the questions were answered by a 5-year-old boy.

1. Main verb: Answered
2. “Who” or “what” is doing the action: Boy

Active: A 5-year-old boy answered all of the questions.

Capitalization

Proper nouns name specific persons, places and things. Proper nouns always begin with a capital letter. General, nonspecific nouns are common.

Proper adjectives are adjectives derived from proper nouns that name specific people,

Common Nouns

ocean street
city building
lake

Proper Nouns

Arctic Ocean
Main Street
Atlantic City Hoffman
Building
Lake Huron

places or things.

Proper Nouns

Spain
Catholic
Swiss
Ireland
Mars
*Luna

Proper Adjectives

Spanish onion
Catholic priest
Swiss watch
Irish setter
Martian spaceship
lunar eclipse

Capitalize the names of people and places.

George Washington	Mount Vernon
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Capitalize geographic names.

Mount Rushmore	Lake Superior	Ohio
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Capitalize names of specific bridges, buildings, monuments, parks, ships, forts, streets, railroads, etc.

National Park	Mapes Road	Hoffman Building	Everglades
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Capitalize names of definite regions.

Tourists flock to the South in winter.	She has a Midwestern accent.	The men hunt in West Virginia.
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Do not capitalize compass directions.

They drove east toward the coast.	Annapolis is south of Baltimore.	Snow-covered northern Virginia
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Capitalize names of historical events, periods and documents.

The colonists participated in the Boston Tea Party.
Knights fought during the Middle Ages.
John Hancock signed the Declaration of Independence.

Capitalize names of governmental bodies and departments.

He worked for the State Department.	She worked as an aide to Congress at the Capitol.
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Capitalize names of political parties and the word “party” when it is part of the organization’s proper name.

Gray is a Democrat.	He belongs to the Democratic Party.
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NOTE: Lowercase party words when they refer to a philosophy.

Our family operates like a democracy.

Capitalize rank titles when they appear directly before an individual’s name.

The hero shook President Wayne’s hand.
--

NOTE: Lowercase and spell out titles when you are not using them with an individual's name...

The major met with Gen. John J. Jones.

...and when they are in constructions that set them off from a name by commas.

John Smith, the president, met his wife in college.

Capitalize days of the week, months of the year, holidays and holy days.

Next year, Easter falls on a Sunday in April.

Do not capitalize names of seasons, unless part of a formal name.

Next summer, the Summer Olympics will be held in Atlanta.

Capitalize the proper names of planets.

- Lowercase "sun" and "moon," but capitalize their Greek or Latin names.
- Capitalize nouns and adjectives derived from proper names of planets.
- Lowercase nouns and adjectives derived from other heavenly bodies.

Helios	Luna	Mars	Martian	lunar	solar
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Capitalize service names when referring to the U.S. forces.

The Navy policy governs Navy personnel.

Capitalize brand names, but not the products.

Levi jeans	Kleenex tissues	Dial soap
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Capitalize proper nouns and adjectives in plant names.

California redwood	Douglas fir
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Capitalize words showing family relationships when using them with a name.

Aunt Bea	Granny Smith	Grandpa Roy
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NOTE: Do not capitalize relationship names when using them with possessive pronouns.

Her aunt likes to bowl with all the single moms.
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Capitalize all references to the international athletic contest held every four years.

an Olympic athlete

Capitalize formal names of specific courses. Do not capitalize course names used in a general sense, except when derived from a proper name.

a remedial English course	English 001	History 202
an algebra course	the Basic Public Affairs Specialist Course	

Punctuation

Punctuating Quotations

- Commas and periods go inside the end quotation marks.
- Question marks and exclamation points go inside the end quotation marks when the attribution is at the end of the sentence.
- When the attribution goes before a quotation that is a question, the question mark goes inside the end quotation marks.
- If the whole sentence is a question—not just the quotation—the question mark goes outside the end quotation marks.
- If only the quotation is a question, the question mark goes inside the end quotation marks.

Apostrophe

General Rules

- If the “owner word” ends with the letter “s,” add an apostrophe after the “s.”
- If the “owner word” ends with a letter other than “s,” add an apostrophe and an “s.”

Plural:

For plural nouns not ending with the letter “s,” add an apostrophe and an “s.”

men’s birthdays

For plural nouns ending with the letter “s,” add an apostrophe after the “s.”

two dogs’ masters

For nouns that are plural in form, but singular in meaning, add an apostrophe at the end.

news’ editorial tone

For nouns that are the same in singular and plural, use the plural apostrophe rules.

two deer’s tails

Singular:

For singular nouns not ending with the letter “s,” add an apostrophe and an “s.”

baby’s toys

For singular common nouns ending with the letter “s,” add an apostrophe and an “s.”

cross’s color / cross’s silver chain

For singular proper names ending with the letter “s,” add an apostrophe after the “s.”

James’ announcement

NOTE: The word “it’s” is the equivalent of “it is.” The word “its” indicates possession.

As a tip, cover everything to the right of the apostrophe with your thumb. The word that appears to the left of the apostrophe should be the owner/owners of the noun modified.

book’s title (one book)	students’ cars (many students)
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Commas

Commas as Separators

Compound sentences

- Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction when it connects two independent clauses.
 - Wrong: This restaurant serves the best hot wings and they cost very little.
 - Right: This restaurant serves the best hot wings, and they cost very little.

Compound verbs

- Do not use a comma before the coordinating conjunction if the conjunction is joining a fragment at the end of a main clause.
 - Wrong: The legal officer travels around to the ships, and helps sailors.
 - Right: The legal officer travels around to the ships and helps sailors.

Introductory fragments

- Use commas to set off introductory clauses and phrases.
 - Wrong: Because the weather is nice outside they will have a picnic.
 - Right: Because the weather is nice outside, they will have a picnic.

Simple series

- Do not use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a simple series of words.
 - Wrong: Tom collects cards, mugs, and coasters.
 - Right: Tom collects cards, mugs and coasters.

Complex series

- Use a comma before the concluding conjunction if the last two elements of the series require a conjunction.
 - Wrong: Her friend bought tickets for her sons and their wives, her daughter and her husband and her husband and her.
 - Right: Her friend bought tickets for her sons and their wives, her daughter and her husband, and her husband and her.

Complex series of phrases or clauses

- Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases or dependent clauses.
 - Wrong: The medicine must be taken in the morning, at lunchtime and before bedtime.
 - Right: The medicine must be taken in the morning, at lunchtime, and before bedtime.

Commas as Interrupters

Nonessential clauses

- If the clause states additional information that is not essential to give meaning to another word in the sentence, surround the clause with commas.
- **NOTE:** Use “who” and “whom” when the clause is about people.
 - Wrong: The DINFOS commandant who is an Army colonel walks to work.
 - Right: The DINFOS commandant, who is an Army colonel, walks to work.
- **NOTE:** Use “which” for things and animals.
 - Wrong: Strength training exercises which involve hand weights are usually not aerobic.
 - Right: Strength training exercises, which involve hand weights, are usually not aerobic.

Essential clauses

- If a clause describes the word preceding it, it is essential and must not be cut off by commas from the word it is describing.
- **NOTE:** Use “who” and “whom” for people.
 - Wrong: Older people, who lift weights, strengthen bones as well as muscle.
 - Right: Older people who lift weights strengthen bones as well as muscle.
- **NOTE:** Use “that” for things and animals.
 - Wrong: Weight training exercise, that is gentle, is good for older folks.
 - Right: Weight training exercise that is gentle is good for older folks.

Appositives

- An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that renames the noun immediately preceding it. Some appositives require commas, and others do not. If the appositive is nonessential, use commas.
- If the word preceding the appositive identifies the person or thing more precisely than the appositive, put commas around the appositive.
 - Wrong: Todd Rogers the catcher can really hit the ball.
 - Right: Todd Rogers, the catcher, can really hit the ball.
- If the information preceding the appositive identifies the appositive as one of a kind, put commas around the appositive.
 - Wrong: The fastest car the red Mustang will win the race.
 - Right: The fastest car, the red Mustang, will win the race.
- If the appositive is essential to identify the word preceding it, do not use commas.
 - Wrong: The class watched the movie, “The Great Escape.”
 - Right: The class watched the movie “The Great Escape.”
- Surround hometowns or ages with commas when they are appositives after a name.
 - Wrong: Bill Smith 14 won the Kentucky Derby.
 - Right: Bill Smith, 14, won the Kentucky Derby.

City, state and address rules

- When using the city and state, surround the state with two commas.
 - Wrong: Tom traveled through Lexington, Kentucky on the way to Texas.
 - Right: Tom traveled through Lexington, Kentucky, on the way to Texas.

Date rules

- When using the month, day and year, surround the year with two commas.
 - Wrong: The twins were born Aug. 10, 1976 in Germany.
 - Right: The twins were born Aug. 10, 1976, in Germany.

Parenthetical expressions

- Use commas to set off words, phrases or clauses that interrupt the flow of the sentence.
 - Wrong: The hardest part of the test I think is the punctuation.
 - Right: The hardest part of the test, I think, is the punctuation.

Contrasting elements

- Set off contrasting expressions with commas. They often begin with “but not,” “not” or “rather than.”
 - Wrong: They were concerned with the quality not the quantity of the work.
 - Right: They were concerned with the quality, not the quantity, of the work.

Transitions

- Use commas to set off transitions.
 - Wrong: He could do it on the other hand if he would put his mind to it.
 - Right: He could do it, on the other hand, if he would put his mind to it.

Conjunctive adverbs

- When the conjunctive adverb connects two complete sentences, use a period.
 - Wrong: These classrooms are adequate, however, the new rooms are fabulous.
 - Right: These classrooms are adequate. However, the new rooms are fabulous.
- When the conjunctive adverb interrupts a single sentence, use a comma.
 - Wrong: The program will therefore work smoothly.
 - Right: The program will, therefore, work smoothly. (one sentence)

Interjections

- Separate “YES” and “NO” interjections from the rest of the sentence with a comma.
 - Wrong: Yes I’m happy you won the game.
 - Right: Yes, I’m happy you won the game.

Addressing people

- Set off names when directly addressing someone.
 - Wrong: Sir everyone is accounted for.
 - Right: Sir, everyone is accounted for.

Similar words

- Use a comma to separate duplicate words that can confuse.
 - Wrong: What the answer is is beyond his knowledge.
 - Right: What the answer is, is beyond his knowledge.

Equal adjectives

- If you can join the adjectives by “and” and can switch them around, they are equal and do require a comma.
 - Wrong: The dog has a long shaggy tail.
 - Right: The dog has a long, shaggy tail.
- If adjectives before a noun are cumulative (in a specific order), do not use commas to separate them.
 - Wrong: They used the red, fire extinguisher in the hall.
 - Right: They used the red fire extinguisher in the hall.

Numbers above 999

- Use commas in numbers more than three digits long. Separate into groups of three, starting from the right.
 - Wrong: The children collected 1500 bottle caps.
 - Right: The children collected 1,500 bottle caps.

Commas in quotations

- Attribution credits a person with saying something.
 - In the sentence, “Shaw said, ‘Hard work really pays off,’” “Shaw said” is the attribution.
- A direct quotation reports what the person said exactly.
 - Ex: Thorn said, “The computers in my room need new keyboards.”
- An indirect quotation reports someone’s ideas without using that person’s exact words.
 - Ex: Thorn said the computers in his room need new keyboards.
- A partial quotation is a quotation of part of a sentence or phrase.
 - Ex: The offender will “face the music” sooner or later.

Direct quotations

- When attribution comes before a direct quotation, use a comma after the attribution.
 - Wrong: Dad said, the paper arrives on time each day.
 - Right: Dad said, “The paper arrives on time each day.”
 - Right: Dad said the paper arrives on time each day. (**NOTE:** Do not use a comma before an indirect quote.)
- Commas always go inside end quotation marks.
 - Wrong: “Follow the blue car”, Bill said.
 - Right: “Follow the blue car,” Bill said.
- When the attribution follows a direct quotation, the period in the statement

changes to a comma.

- Wrong: “The paper arrives on time each day” Dad said.
- Right: “The paper arrives on time each day,” Dad said.

Indirect quotations

- Do not use commas after the attribution and before an indirect quote.
 - Wrong: The driver said, she did not see the moose.
 - Right: The driver said she did not see the moose.
- Do use a comma when the attribution appears after an indirect quote.
 - Wrong: Everyone must be seated at 9 a.m. sharp the sergeant said.
 - Right: Everyone must be seated at 9 a.m. sharp, the sergeant said.

Partial quotations

- Do not use a comma before a partial quotation.
 - Wrong: The sergeant said everyone must be seated, “at 9 a.m. sharp.”
 - Right: The sergeant said everyone must be seated “at 9 a.m. sharp.”

Quotation Marks

Attribution interrupting a single sentence

- Attribution can go between sentences or words in a quotation, but must be separated from the quotation by commas. If the two sets of words surrounding the attribution are part of a single sentence, the second part does not usually begin with a capital letter.

“If I run,” Jim said, “you must vote for me.”

Attribution between two sentences

- If the attribution breaks up two complete sentences by the same speaker, a period goes after the attribution. Because the second sentence is complete and separate, it begins with a capital letter.

“The class starts Monday,” Jim said. “We are ready to begin.”

The 100 percent rule

- Commas and periods always go inside the end quotation marks.

“Rescued animals make great pets,” Al said.

The announcer said, “Tickets for next week’s game are sold out.”

Nicknames

- Use quotation marks to set off nicknames when used with the first and last names.

Quinn “the mighty” Norman won the tournament.

- Do not put quotation marks around nicknames that substitute for the real name.

Catfish Hunter made the last score.

Composition titles

- Use quotation marks for composition titles (as specified in the stylebook).

The book “Dracula” has been made into several movies.	Did you see the movie “The Great Escape”?
She saw the musical “The Phantom of the Opera.”	Irving Berlin wrote the song “Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning.”

Words used in an unusual way

- Use quotation marks when using words in irony or in an unusual way.

Their great “watchdog” held the flashlight for the burglar.

Unfamiliar words

- Use quotation marks to introduce unfamiliar words, technical terms or business jargon.

When his sister came home from boot camp, she said she needed to use the “head.”

- Define unfamiliar terms in the next sentence for clarity.

“Head” is military jargon for “bathroom.”

Quotations within quotations

- Use single quotation marks to show quotation marks within quotation marks.

The teacher said, “You must memorize ‘the Gettysburg address’ for class Monday.”	The lawyer said, “My client said, ‘I didn’t do it.’”
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Running quotation

- If a full paragraph of quoted material is followed by a paragraph that continues the quotation, do not put close-quote marks at the end of the first paragraph. Put open-quote marks at the beginning of the next paragraph. This is known as a “running quotation.”

Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions join words, phrases or clauses.

for	and	nor	but	or	yet	so	(FANBOYS)
-----	-----	-----	-----	----	-----	----	-----------

Subordinating conjunctions introduce dependent (subordinate) clauses.

The following are some subordinating conjunctions:		
after	although	as
as if	because	before
even though	if	in order that
rather than	since	so that
than	that	though
unless	until	when
where	whether	while

Relative pronouns introduce dependent clauses and are the subject of the clause.

who	whom	whose	which	that
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Conjunctive adverbs look like conjunctions.

therefore	moreover	consequently	however	nevertheless
otherwise	furthermore	as a result	meanwhile	thus

Correlative conjunctions come in pairs and join two things. Punctuation is not necessary.

both ____ and	whether ____ or	since ____ therefore
neither ____ nor	if ____ then	but ____ also
either ____ or	not so ____ as	

Pronouns

- Pronouns take the place of nouns.
- Pronouns must agree with their antecedent nouns.
- Use a subject nominative pronoun when the pronoun is the actor before the verb.
- Use an object pronoun when the pronoun is the object after the verb or preposition.
- Reflexive (self) pronouns need to reflect back to themselves.

Indefinite Pronouns

Some indefinite pronouns are always singular.

everyone	anyone	someone	no one
everybody	anybody	somebody	nobody
everything	anything	something	nothing
each	either	neither	

Some indefinite pronouns are always plural.

both	many	several	few
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Some indefinite pronouns can be either singular or plural.

all	some	any	none
-----	------	-----	------

Verbs

Verb Tense

PRESENT	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE	PRESENT PARTICIPLE
jump	jumped	have, has jumped	jumping
go	went	have, has gone	going
write	wrote	have, has written	writing

The following are tricky verbs:

1 lie (to rest)	and	2 lay (to place)
sit (to rest)	and	set (to place)
rise (to get up)	and	raise (to lift up)

NOTE: If you are unsure of which form to use, substitute the synonymous verb in parentheses. The first column of verbs is intransitive; those verbs do not act on some other object. The second column of verbs is transitive; those verbs do perform an action on some other object.

lie	lay	have lain	is lying
lay	laid	has laid	am laying
sit	sat	have sat	are sitting
set	set	has set	am setting
rise	rose	has risen	is rising
raise	raised	have raised	are raising

Common Grammar Errors

Wrong Tense or Verb Form

- Wrong: Tilson done them a favor.
- Right: Tilson did them a favor.

Run-on Sentence/Punctuation Error

- Wrong: Sawyer is a good tennis player he beats everyone.
- Right: Sawyer is a good tennis player. He beats everyone.
- Right: Sawyer is a good tennis player, and he beats everyone.
- Right: Sawyer is a good tennis player; he beats everyone.

Sentence Fragment

- Wrong: Peaches taste sweet. Because they contain sugar.
- Right: Peaches taste sweet because they contain sugar.
- Right: Because they contain sugar, peaches taste sweet.

Lack of Agreement Between Subject and Verb

- Wrong: The bag of chips are open.
- Right: The bag of chips is open.

Wrong Word Usage

- Wrong: The cookies were divided among the two children.
- Right: The cookies were divided between the two children.

Missing Commas with a Nonessential Element

- Wrong: Jay who is a mere baby salutes the flag correctly.
- Right: Jay, who is a mere baby, salutes the flag correctly.

Unnecessary Shift in Tense

- Wrong: The officer stopped the car and speaks to the driver.
- Right: The officer stopped the car and spoke to the driver.

Missing Commas in a Series

- Wrong: She invited Tom Jerry and me to go swimming.
- Right: She invited Tom, Jerry and me to go swimming.

Missing or Misplaced Possessive Apostrophe

- Wrong: Edisons inventions make life easier.
- Right: Edison's inventions make life easier.

Confusion of "its" and "it's"

- Wrong: Its not funny if its tail gets caught.
- Right: It's not funny if its tail gets caught.

Objective Case Pronouns Used as Subjects

- Wrong: You and me should go before the store closes.
- Right: You and I should go before the store closes.

Unnecessary Commas with an Essential Element

- Wrong: Men, who are shy, make bad detectives.
- Right: Men who are shy make bad detectives.

Dangling or Misplaced Modifier

- Wrong: Reading in the library, the fire alarm startled me.
- Right: While I was reading in the library, the fire alarm startled me.
- Right: While reading in the library, I was startled by the fire alarm.

Lack of Agreement Between Pronoun and Antecedent

- Wrong: Anyone can attend, but they must pay first.
- Right: Anyone can attend, but he or she must pay first.

Wrong or Missing Preposition

- Wrong: The new computer differs with the old one in style.
- Right: The new computer differs from the old one in style.

Vague Pronoun Reference

- Wrong: The teacher told her student that she needed a break from school.
- Right: The teacher told her student, "I need a break from school."

Unnecessary Shift in Pronoun

- Wrong: When we expect good results, you get them.
- Right: When we expect good results, we get them.

Comma Splice

- Wrong: The woman ran down the street, her daughter followed her.
- Right: The woman ran down the street. Her daughter followed her.
- Right: The woman ran down the street, and her daughter followed her.

Wrong or Missing Verb Ending

- Wrong: Friday, he bounce a check.
- Right: Friday, he bounced a check.

Missing Comma in a Compound Sentence

- Wrong: The piano plays well but it weighs a ton.
- Right: The piano plays well, but it weighs a ton.

Missing Comma After an Introductory Element

- Wrong: While the dogs ate the cat stayed away from its dish.
- Right: While the dogs ate, the cat stayed away from its dish.

Subjective Pronouns Used for Objects

- Wrong: The fire alarm startled my student and I.
- Right: The fire alarm startled my student and me.

Objective Pronouns Used for Subjects

- Wrong: Rosita and myself will present our findings.
- Right: Rosita and I will present our findings.

Lack of Parallelism

- Wrong: He liked singing, acting, and was a great dancer.
- Right: He liked singing, acting and dancing.

Spelling/Word Usage 1

Below is the first of three lists of commonly confused words for your reviewing pleasure.
Look them up for more details!

accepted	excepted	
advice	advise	
alters	altars	
assent	ascent	
aid	aide	
<hr/>		
isle	aisle	
ally	alley	
anecdote	antidote	
bale	bail	
bear	bare	
<hr/>		
fare	fair	
fainted	fainted	
envelop	envelope	
further	farther	
fazes	phases	
<hr/>		
flare	flair	
forbears	forebears	
palate	pallet	palette
guarantee	guaranty	
forego	forgo	
<hr/>		
lose	loose	
libel	liable	
morale	moral	
materiel	material	
miners	minors	
<hr/>		
naval	navel	
passed	past	
piece	peace	
peeked	peaked	piqued
peddle	pedal	
<hr/>		
reign	rain	rein
prophesy	prophecy	
raise	raze	
rapped	wrapped	rapt
respectively	respectfully	
<hr/>		
rout	route	
straight	strait	
seen	scene	

Spelling/Word Usage 2

stake	steak	
weather	whether	
whose	who's	
vale	veil	
yore	your	you're
vane	vain	vein
illicit	elicit	
excess	access	
affects	effects	
allude	elude	
grille	grill	
hear	here	
herd	heard	
whole	hole	
hair	hare	
its	it's	
idyll	idle	idol
instance	instant	
later	latter	
lesson	lessen	
choose	chose	
site	cite	sight
chaff	chafe	
cord	chord	
compliment	complement	
descent	decent	dissent
dessert	desert	
draft	draught	
duels	duals	
pair	pear	pare
patience	patients	
presents	presence	
principal	principle	
prosecute	persecute	
polls	poles	
poor	pour	pore
right	write	rite
quiet	quite	
serge	surge	

Spelling/Word Usage 3

sown	sewn
corps	corpse
sheer	shear
shone	shown
soars	sores
taut	taught
week	weak
waste	waist
stare	stair
apprised	appraised
berths	births
better	bettor
bored	board
break	brake
buy	by
foul	fowl
bolder	boulder
borne	born
beech	beach
scrip	script
vise	vice
threw	through
hoard	horde
coarse	course
conscience	conscious
clamber	clamor
gorilla	guerrilla
inhuman	inhumane
flaunt	flout
flack	flak
hanger	hangar
led	lead
mantle	mantel
pealed	peeled
pier	peer
proceeded	preceded

perpetuation	perpetration
road	rode
tracked	tract

Commonly Misspelled Words

Absence	Maintenance
Acceptable	Maneuver
Accommodate	Millennium
Acquire	Minuscule
Amateur	Misspell
Arctic	Noticeable
Buoy	Occurred/occurrence
Calendar	Omission
Camouflage	Parliament
Caribbean	Pastime
Cemetery	Perseverance
Changeable	Personnel
Conscientious	Plagiarize
Consensus	Possession
Definite	Prayers
Dependent	Precede
Dilemma	Privilege
Fluorescent	Pronunciation
Gauge	Queue
Government	Questionnaire
Grateful	Relevant
Harass	Repetition
Hierarchy	Secretary
Hygiene	Seize
Indict	Separate
Inoculate	Sergeant
Jewelry	Supersede
Judgment	Tomorrow
Leisure	Tyranny
Liaison	Usable
License	Vacuum
	Vicious