

Writing that has a lot of mistakes can confuse or even annoy a reader. A business letter with a punctuation error might lead to a miscommunication and delay a reply. A sentence fragment might lower your grade on an essay. Paying attention to grammar, punctuation, and capitalization rules can make your writing clearer and easier to read.



Included in this handbook:  
TEKS 17A, 17B, 18

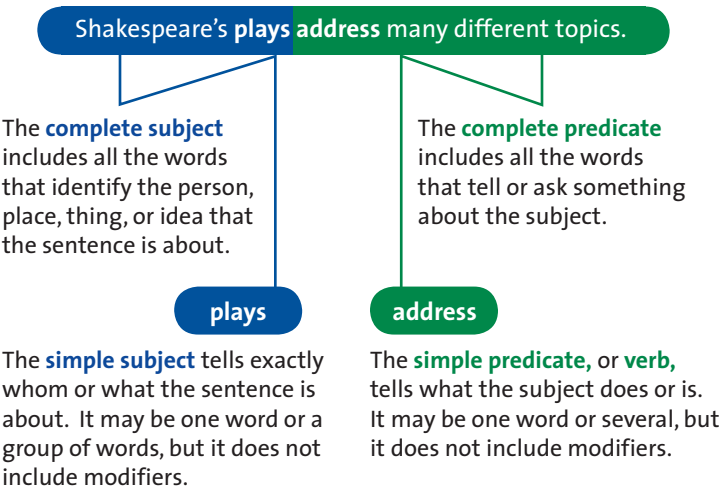
# Quick Reference: Parts of Speech

Part of Speech	Function	Examples
<b>Noun</b>	names a person, a place, a thing, an idea, a quality, or an action	
Common	serves as a general name, or a name common to an entire group	king, monster, ship, ocean
Proper	names a specific, one-of-a-kind person, place, or thing	Chaucer, London, Thames River
Singular	refers to a single person, place, thing, or idea	woman, river, leaf, flame
Plural	refers to more than one person, place, thing, or idea	women, rivers, leaves, flames
Concrete	names something that can be perceived by the senses	rose, church, bell, sky
Abstract	names something that cannot be perceived by the senses	contentment, honor, faith, trust
Compound	expresses a single idea through a combination of two or more words	sunshine, middle class, mother-in-law
Collective	refers to a group of people or things	crop, crew, family
Possessive	shows who or what owns something	Burns’s, mice’s, nature’s, fields’
<b>Pronoun</b>	takes the place of a noun or another pronoun	
Personal	refers to the person making a statement, the person(s) being addressed, or the person(s) or thing(s) the statement is about	I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours, you, your, yours, she, he, it, her, him, hers, his, its, they, them, their, theirs
Reflexive	follows a verb or preposition and refers to a preceding noun or pronoun	myself, yourself, herself, himself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves
Intensive	emphasizes a noun or another pronoun	(same as reflexives)
Demonstrative	points to one or more specific persons or things	this, that, these, those
Interrogative	signals a question	who, whom, whose, which, what
Indefinite	refers to one or more persons or things not specifically mentioned	both, all, most, many, anyone, everybody, several, none, some
Relative	introduces an adjective clause by relating it to a word in the clause	who, whom, whose, which, that

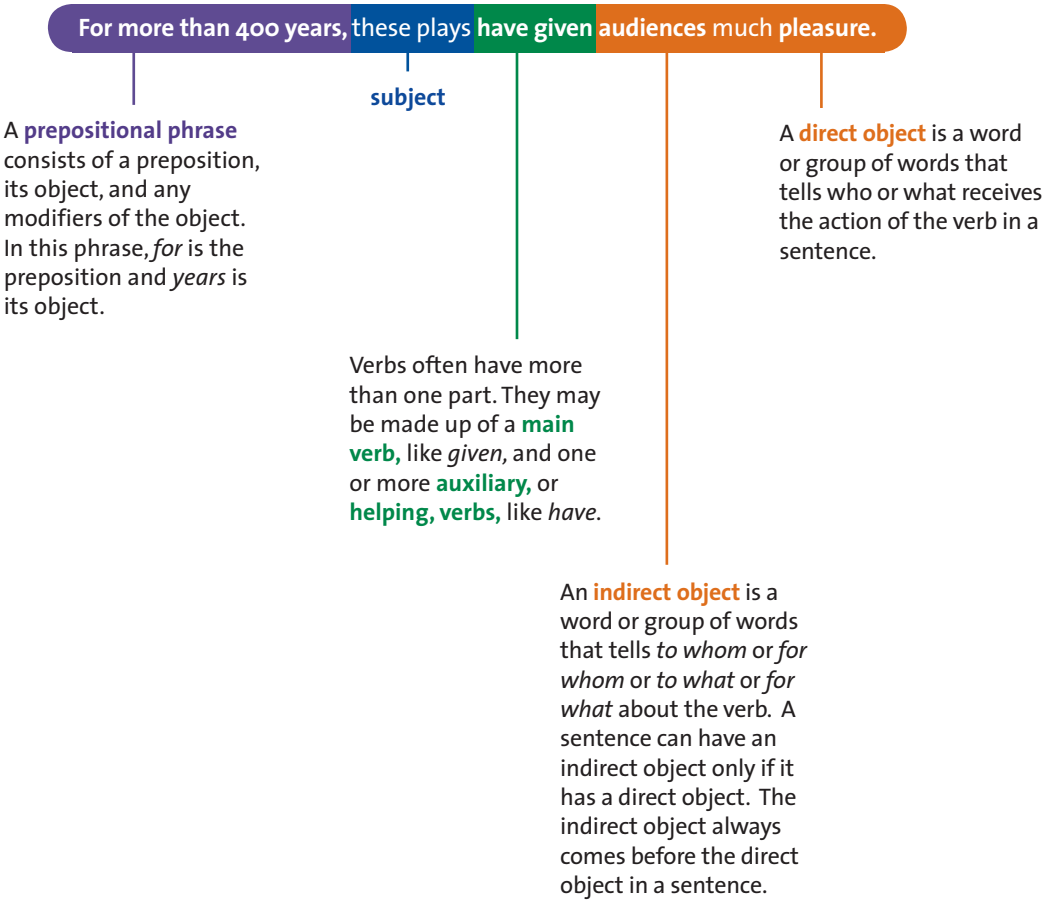
PART OF SPEECH	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Verb</b>	expresses an action, a condition, or a state of being	
<b>Action</b>	tells what the subject does or did, physically or mentally	run, reaches, listened, consider, decides, dreamed
<b>Linking</b>	connects the subject to something that identifies or describes it	am, is, are, was, were, sound, taste, appear, feel, become, remain, seem
<b>Auxiliary</b>	precedes the main verb in a verb phrase	be, have, do, can, could, will, would, may, might
<b>Transitive</b>	directs the action toward someone or something; always has an object	The wind <b>snapped</b> the young tree in half.
<b>Intransitive</b>	does not direct the action toward someone or something; does not have an object	The young tree <b>snapped</b> .
<b>Adjective</b>	modifies a noun or pronoun	<b>frightened</b> man, <b>two</b> epics, <b>enough</b> time
<b>Adverb</b>	modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb	walked <b>out</b> , <b>really</b> funny, <b>far</b> away
<b>Preposition</b>	relates one word to another word	at, by, for, from, in, of, on, to, with
<b>Conjunction</b>	joins words or word groups	
<b>Coordinating</b>	joins words or word groups used the same way	and, but, or, for, so, yet, nor
<b>Correlative</b>	used as a pair to join words or word groups used the same way	both ... and, either ... or, neither ... nor
<b>Subordinating</b>	introduces a clause that cannot stand by itself as a complete sentence	although, after, as, before, because, when, if, unless
<b>Interjection</b>	expresses emotion	whew, yikes, uh-oh

# Quick Reference: The Sentence and Its Parts

The diagrams that follow will give you a brief review of the essentials of a sentence and some of its parts.



Every word in a sentence is part of a complete subject or a complete predicate.



# Quick Reference: Punctuation

MARK	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
<b>End Marks</b> period, question mark, exclamation point	ends a sentence	The games begin today. Who is your favorite contestant? What a play Jamie made!
period	follows an initial or abbreviation  <b>Exception:</b> postal abbreviations of states	Prof. Ted Bakerman, D. H. Lawrence, Houghton Mifflin Co., P.M., A.D., oz., ft., Blvd., St. NE (Nebraska), NV (Nevada)
period	follows a number or letter in an outline	I. Volcanoes A. Central-vent 1. Shield
<b>Comma</b>	separates parts of a compound sentence	I have never disliked poetry, but now I really love it.
	separates items in a series	She is brave, loyal, and kind.
	separates adjectives of equal rank that modify the same noun	The slow, easy route is best.
	sets off a term of address	O wind, if winter comes . . . Come to the front, children.
	sets off a parenthetical expression	Hard workers, as you know, don't quit. I'm not a quitter, believe me.
	sets off an introductory word, phrase, or dependent clause	Yes, I forgot my key. At the beginning of the day, I feel fresh. While she was out, I was here. Having finished my chores, I went out.
	sets off a nonessential phrase or clause	Ed Pawn, the captain of the chess team, won. Ed Pawn, who is the captain, won. The two leading runners, sprinting toward the finish line, finished in a tie.
	sets off parts of dates and addresses	Send it by August 18, 2010, to Cherry Jubilee, Inc., 21 Vernona St., Oakland, Minnesota.
	follows the salutation and closing of a letter	Dear Jim, Sincerely yours,
	separates words to avoid confusion	By noon, time had run out. What the minister does, does matter. While cooking, Jim burned his hand.
<b>Semicolon</b>	separates items in a series if one or more items contain commas	We invited my sister, Jan; her friend, Don; my uncle Jack; and Mary Dodd.
	separates parts of a compound sentence that are not joined by a coordinating conjunction	The small books are on the top shelves; the large books are below. I dusted the books; however, I didn't wipe the shelves.
	separates parts of a compound sentence when the parts contain commas	After I ran out of money, I called my parents; but only my sister was home, unfortunately.

MARK	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
Colon	introduces a list	Those we wrote were the following: Dana, John, and Will.
	introduces a long quotation	Mary Wollstonecraft wrote: “It appears to me necessary to dwell on these obvious truths, because females have been insulted. . . .”
	follows the salutation of a business letter	Dear Ms. Williams: Dear Senator Wiley:
	separates certain numbers	1:28 P.M., Genesis 2:5
Dash	indicates an abrupt break in thought	I was thinking of my mother—who is arriving tomorrow—just as you walked in.
Parentheses	enclose less important material	Throughout her life (though some might think otherwise), she worked hard. The temperature on this July day (would you believe it?) is 65 degrees!
Hyphen	joins parts of a compound adjective before a noun	She lives in a first-floor apartment.
	joins part of a compound with <i>all-</i> , <i>ex-</i> , <i>self-</i> , or <i>-elect</i>	The president-elect is a well-respected woman.
	joins parts of a compound number (to ninety-nine)	Today, I turn twenty-one.
	joins parts of a fraction	My cup is one-third full.
	joins a prefix to a word beginning with a capital letter	The post-Victorian era was marked by great technological advancements.
	indicates that a word is divided at the end of a line	Yeats was a friend of Lady Gregory, an Irish gentlewoman.
Apostrophe	used with <i>s</i> to form the possessive of a noun or an indefinite pronoun	my friend’s book, my friends’ books, anyone’s guess, somebody else’s problem
	replaces one or more omitted letters in a contraction or numbers in a date	don’t (omitted <i>o</i> ), he’d (omitted <i>woul</i> ), the class of ’99 (omitted <i>19</i> )
	used with <i>s</i> to form the plural of a letter	I had two A’s on my report card.
Quotation Marks	set off a speaker’s exact words	Sara said, “I’m finally ready.” “I’m ready,” Sara said, “finally.” Did Sara say, “I’m ready”? Sara said, “I’m ready!”
	set off the title of a story, an article, a short poem, an essay, a song, or a chapter	So far, we’ve read Swift’s essay “A Modest Proposal,” Eliot’s poem “Preludes,” and Joyce’s short story “Araby.”
Ellipses	replace material omitted from a quotation	“Candide listened attentively . . . for he thought Miss Cunegund excessively handsome. . . .”
Italics	indicate the title of a book, a play, a magazine, a long poem, an opera, a film, or a TV series, or the names of ships, trains, or spacecraft	<i>The Canterbury Tales</i> , <i>The Tragedy of Macbeth</i> , <i>Rolling Stone</i> , <i>Beowulf</i> , <i>Aida</i> , <i>Shakespeare in Love</i> , <i>The Office</i> , <i>Titanic</i>

# Quick Reference: Capitalization

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
<b>People and Titles</b>	
Names and initials of people	Samuel Johnson, E. M. Forster
Titles used before or in place of names	Professor Holmes, Senator Long
Deities and members of religious groups	Jesus, Allah, Buddha, Zeus, Baptists, Roman Catholics
Names of ethnic and national groups	Hispanics, Jews, African Americans
<b>Geographical Names</b>	
Cities, states, countries, continents	New York, Maine, Haiti, Africa
Regions, bodies of water, mountains	the South, Lake Erie, Mount Katahdin
Geographic features, parks	Continental Divide, Everglades, Yellowstone
Streets and roads, planets	55 East Ninety-fifth Street, Maple Lane, Venus, Jupiter
<b>Organizations, Events, Etc.</b>	
Companies, organizations, teams	General Motors, Lions Club, Utah Jazz
Buildings, bridges, monuments	the Alamo, Golden Gate Bridge, Lincoln Memorial
Documents, awards	the Constitution, World Cup
Special named events	Super Bowl, World Series
Government bodies, historical periods and events	the Supreme Court, the U.S. Senate, Harlem Renaissance, World War II
Days and months, holidays	Friday, May, Easter, Memorial Day
Specific cars, boats, trains, planes	Mustang, Titanic, California Zephyr
<b>Proper Adjectives</b>	
Adjectives formed from proper nouns	American League, French cooking, Dickensian period, Arctic waters
<b>First Words and the Pronoun I</b>	
First word in a sentence or quotation	This is it. He said, "Let's go."
First word of sentence in parentheses that is not within another sentence	The spelling rules are covered in another section. (Consult that section for more information.)
First words in the salutation and closing of a letter	Dear Madam, Very truly yours,
First word in each line of most poetry Personal pronoun I	Then am I A happy fly If I live Or if I die.
First word, last word, and all important words in a title	"A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," <i>Waiting for Godot</i>

# 1 Nouns

A **noun** is a word used to name a person, a place, a thing, an idea, a quality, or an action. Nouns can be classified in several ways.

For more information on different types of nouns, see *Quick Reference: Parts of Speech*, page R50.

## 1.1 COMMON NOUNS

**Common nouns** are general names, common to entire groups.

EXAMPLES: *mountain, country, lake*

## 1.2 PROPER NOUNS

**Proper nouns** name specific, one-of-a-kind things.

Common	Proper
mountain, country, lake	Mt. Everest, Italy, Lake Michigan

For more information, see *Quick Reference: Capitalization*, page R55.

## 1.3 SINGULAR AND PLURAL NOUNS

A noun may take a singular or a plural form, depending on whether it names a single person, place, thing, or idea or more than one. Make sure you use appropriate spellings when forming plurals.

Singular	Plural
church, lily, wife	churches, lilies, wives

For more information, see *Forming Plural Nouns*, page R78.

## 1.4 COMPOUND AND COLLECTIVE NOUNS

**Compound nouns** are formed from two or more words but express a single idea. They are written as single words, as separate words, or with hyphens. Use a dictionary to check the correct spelling of a compound noun.

EXAMPLES: *sunshine, middle class, mother-in-law*

**Collective nouns** are singular nouns that refer to groups of people or things.

EXAMPLES: *army, flock, class, species*

## 1.5 POSSESSIVE NOUNS

A **possessive noun** shows who or what owns something.

EXAMPLES: *Conrad's, jury's, children's*

For more information, see *Forming Possessives*, page R78.

# 2 Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that is used in place of a noun or another pronoun. The word or word group to which the pronoun refers is called its **antecedent**.

## 2.1 PERSONAL PRONOUNS

**Personal pronouns** change their form to express person, number, gender, and case. The forms of these pronouns are shown in the following chart.

	Nominative	Objective	Possessive
<b>Singular</b>			
First person	I	me	my, mine
Second person	you	you	your, yours
Third person	she, he, it	her, him, it	her, hers, his, its
<b>Plural</b>			
First person	we	us	our, ours
Second person	you	you	your, yours
Third person	they	them	their, theirs

## 2.2 AGREEMENT WITH ANTECEDENT

Pronouns should agree with their antecedents in number, gender, and person.

If an antecedent is singular, use a singular pronoun.

EXAMPLE: *Gulliver reaches Lilliput after **his** ship breaks apart.*

If an antecedent is plural, use a plural pronoun.

EXAMPLES:  
*The Lilliputians shoot **their** arrows into Gulliver.*  
*Gulliver cuts the **flies** into pieces as **they** fly through the air.*

The gender of a pronoun must be the same as the gender of its antecedent.

EXAMPLES:  
*The **king** enjoys spending **his** time with Gulliver.*  
*The **queen** places Gulliver in **her** hand.*

The person of the pronoun must be the same as the person of its antecedent. As the chart in Section 2.1 shows, a pronoun can be in first-, second-, or third-person form.

EXAMPLE:  
***They** invite Gulliver into **their** home.*

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Rewrite each sentence so that the underlined pronoun agrees with its antecedent.

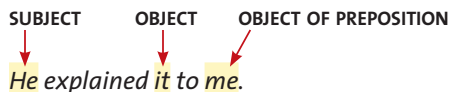
1. The readers of *Gulliver's Travels* love the book as an adventure story, but you like the humor too.
2. In the book, Gulliver travels to strange lands that she never could have imagined.
3. You would be surprised, too, to find their arms and legs suddenly tied down.
4. At first, the Lilliputians fear for its lives.

## 2.3 PRONOUN CASE

Personal pronouns change form to show how they function in sentences. Different functions are shown by different **cases**. The three cases are **nominative**, **objective**, and **possessive**. For examples of these pronouns, see the chart in Section 2.1 on page R56.

A **nominative pronoun** is used as a subject or a predicate nominative in a sentence.

An **objective pronoun** is used as a direct object, an indirect object, or the object of a preposition.

SUBJECT      OBJECT      OBJECT OF PREPOSITION  
  
*He explained it to me.*

A **possessive pronoun** shows ownership. The pronouns *mine*, *yours*, *hers*, *his*, *its*, *ours*, and *theirs* can be used in place of nouns.

EXAMPLE: *These letters are yours.*

The pronouns *my*, *your*, *her*, *his*, *its*, *our*, and *their* are used before nouns.

EXAMPLE: *These are your letters.*

**WATCH OUT!** Many spelling errors can be avoided if you watch out for *its* and *their*. Don't confuse the possessive pronoun *its* with the contraction *it's*, meaning "it is" or "it has." The homonyms *they're* (a contraction of *they are*) and *there* ("in that place") are often mistakenly used for *their*.

**TIP** To decide which pronoun to use in a comparison, such as "He tells better tales than (I or me)," fill in the missing word(s): *He tells better tales than I tell.*

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Replace the underlined words in each sentence with an appropriate pronoun and identify the pronoun as a nominative, objective, or possessive pronoun.

1. Percy Bysshe Shelley was a romantic poet.
2. Percy Bysshe Shelley's friend Lord Byron was also a well-known poet.
3. The writer Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was Shelley's wife.
4. Mary's novel *Frankenstein* has entertained readers for nearly 200 years.
5. Many film versions of *Frankenstein* exist.

## 2.4 REFLEXIVE AND INTENSIVE PRONOUNS

These pronouns are formed by adding *-self* or *-selves* to certain personal pronouns. Their forms are the same, and they differ only in how they are used.

A **reflexive pronoun** follows a verb or a preposition and reflects back on an earlier noun or pronoun.

EXAMPLES:

*He threw himself forward.*

*Danielle mailed herself the package.*

**Intensive pronouns** intensify or emphasize the nouns or pronouns to which they refer.

EXAMPLES:

*The queen herself would have been amused.*

*I saw it myself.*

**WATCH OUT!** Avoid using *hissself* or *theirselves*. Standard English does not include these forms.

NONSTANDARD: *He had painted hissself into a corner.*

STANDARD: *He had painted himself into a corner.*

## 2.5 DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

**Demonstrative pronouns** point out things and persons near and far.

	Singular	Plural
Near	this	these
Far	that	those



2.6 INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

**Indefinite pronouns** do not refer to specific persons or things and usually have no antecedents. The chart shows some commonly used indefinite pronouns.

Singular	Plural	Singular or Plural	
another	both	all	none
anybody	few	any	some
no one	many	more	most
neither	several		

**TIP** Indefinite pronouns that end in *one, body, or thing* are always singular.

**INCORRECT:** *Anyone who wants their research report can pick it up later today.*

**CORRECT:** *Anyone who wants his or her research report can pick it up later today.*

If the indefinite pronoun might refer to either a male or a female, *his or her* may be used to refer to it, or the sentence may be rewritten.

**EXAMPLES:** *Everybody wants his or her report back.*  
*All the students want their reports back.*

2.7 INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

An **interrogative pronoun** is used to ask a question. The interrogative pronouns are *who, whom, whose, which,* and *what*.

**EXAMPLES:** *Who is going to the store?*  
*What time are we leaving?*

**TIP** *Who* is used as a subject, *whom* as an object. To find out which pronoun you need to use in a question, change the question to a statement.

**QUESTION:** *(Who/Whom) did you meet there?*

**STATEMENT:** *You met (?) there.*

Since the verb has a subject (*you*), the needed word must be the object form, *whom*.

**EXAMPLE:** *Whom did you meet there?*

**WATCH OUT!** A special problem arises when you use an interrupter, such as *do you think*, within a question.

**EXAMPLE:** *(Who/Whom) do you believe is the more influential musician?*

If you eliminate the interrupter, it is clear that the word you need is *who*.

2.8 RELATIVE PRONOUNS

**Relative pronouns** relate, or connect, dependent (or subordinate) clauses to the words they modify in sentences. The relative pronouns are *that, what, whatever, which, whichever, who, whoever, whom, whomever,* and *whose*.

Sometimes short sentences with related ideas can be combined by using a relative pronoun.

**SHORT SENTENCE:** *William Blake was underappreciated by his contemporaries.*

**RELATED SENTENCE:** *William Blake was both an artist and a poet.*

**COMBINED SENTENCE:** *William Blake, who was both an artist and a poet, was underappreciated by his contemporaries.*

GRAMMAR PRACTICE

- Choose the appropriate interrogative or relative pronoun from the words in parentheses.
- 1. William Blake wrote *Songs of Innocence*, (who, which) was a collection of poems.
  - 2. (Who, Whom) or what was the inspiration for these poems?
  - 3. Blake based the poems on street ballads and rhymes (that, what) children sang.
  - 4. Blake was a visionary (whom, who) was ahead of his time.

2.9 PRONOUN REFERENCE PROBLEMS

The referent of a pronoun should always be clear.

An **indefinite reference** occurs when the pronoun *it, you,* or *they* does not clearly refer to a specific antecedent.

**UNCLEAR:** *When making bread, they must not overknead the dough.*

**CLEAR:** *When making bread, a baker must not overknead the dough.*

A **general reference** occurs when the pronoun *it, this, that, which,* or *such* is used to refer to a general idea rather than a specific antecedent.

**UNCLEAR:** *Jamie practices piano every day. This has made her an accomplished musician.*

**CLEAR:** *Jamie practices piano every day. Practicing has made her an accomplished musician.*

*Ambiguous* means “having more than one possible meaning.” An **ambiguous reference** occurs when a pronoun could refer to two or more antecedents.

UNCLEAR: Sarah talked to Beth while **she** folded laundry.

CLEAR: While **Sarah** folded laundry, she talked to Beth.

### GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Rewrite the following sentences to correct indefinite, ambiguous, and general pronoun references.

1. In “The Wife of Bath’s Tale,” it tells about a knight who is sent on a quest to find out what women most desire.
2. The knight is given the choice of either accepting the quest or being put to death. This makes him sorrowful.
3. An old woman provides the knight with the correct answer. This saves his life.
4. The queen agrees to the old woman’s request that she marry the knight as a reward.

## 3 Verbs

A **verb** is a word that expresses an action, a condition, or a state of being.

For more information, see **Quick Reference: Parts of Speech**, page R50.

### 3.1 ACTION VERBS

**Action verbs** express mental or physical activity.

EXAMPLE: I **walked** to the store.

### 3.2 LINKING VERBS

**Linking verbs** join subjects with words or phrases that rename or describe them.

EXAMPLE: You **are** my friend.

### 3.3 PRINCIPAL PARTS

Action and linking verbs typically have four principal parts, which are used to form verb tenses. The principal parts are the **present**, the **present participle**, the **past**, and the **past participle**.

Action verbs and some linking verbs also fall into two categories: regular and irregular. A **regular verb** is a verb that forms its past and past participle by adding *-ed* or *-d* to the present form.

Present	Present Participle	Past	Past Participle
perform	(is) performing	performed	(has) performed
hope	(is) hoping	hoped	(has) hoped
stop	(is) stopping	stopped	(has) stopped
marry	(is) marrying	married	(has) married

An **irregular verb** is a verb that forms its past and past participle in some other way than by adding *-ed* or *-d* to the present form.

Present	Present Participle	Past	Past Participle
bring	(is) bringing	brought	(has) brought
swim	(is) swimming	swam	(has) swum
steal	(is) stealing	stole	(has) stolen
grow	(is) growing	grew	(has) grown

## 3.4 VERB TENSE

The **tense** of a verb indicates the time of the action or state of being. An action or state of being can occur in the present, the past, or the future. There are six tenses, each expressing a different range of time.

The **present tense** expresses an action or state that is happening at the present time, occurs regularly, or is constant or generally true. Use the present part.

NOW: That ballad **sounds** great.

REGULAR: I **read** every day.

GENERAL: The sun **rises** in the east.

The **past tense** expresses an action that began and ended in the past. Use the past part.

EXAMPLE: The storyteller **finished** his tale.

The **future tense** expresses an action or state that will occur. Use *shall* or *will* with the present part.

EXAMPLE: They **will attend** the next festival.

The **present perfect tense** expresses an action or state that (1) was completed at an indefinite time in the past or (2) began in the past and continues into the present. Use *have* or *has* with the past participle.

EXAMPLE: Poetry **has inspired** readers throughout the ages.

The **past perfect tense** expresses an action in the past that came before another action in the past. Use *had* with the past participle.

EXAMPLE: *The messenger **had traveled** for days before he delivered his knight's response.*

The **future perfect tense** expresses an action in the future that will be completed before another action in the future. Use *shall have* or *will have* with the past participle.

EXAMPLE: *They **will have finished** the novel before seeing the movie version of the tale.*

**TIP** The past-tense form of an irregular verb is not paired with an auxiliary verb, but the past-perfect-tense form of an irregular verb is always paired with an auxiliary verb.

INCORRECT: *I **have went** to that restaurant before.*

INCORRECT: *I **gone** to that restaurant before.*

CORRECT: *I **have gone** to that restaurant before.*

### 3.5 PROGRESSIVE FORMS

The progressive forms of the six tenses show ongoing actions. Use forms of *be* with the present participles of verbs.

PRESENT PROGRESSIVE: *She **is rehearsing** her lines.*

PAST PROGRESSIVE: *She **was rehearsing** her lines.*

FUTURE PROGRESSIVE: *She **will be rehearsing** her lines.*

PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE: *She **has been rehearsing** her lines.*

PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE: *She **had been rehearsing** her lines.*

FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE: *She **will have been rehearsing** her lines.*

**WATCH OUT!** Do not shift from tense to tense needlessly. Watch out for these special cases:

- In most compound sentences and in sentences with compound predicates, keep the tenses the same.

INCORRECT: *We **work hard**, and they **paid** us well.*

CORRECT: *We **work hard**, and they **pay** us well.*

- If one past action happens before another, indicate this with a shift in tense.

INCORRECT: *They **wished** they **started** earlier.*

CORRECT: *They **wished** they **had started** earlier.*

### GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Identify the tense of the verb(s) in each of the following sentences. If you find an unnecessary tense shift, correct it.

1. The tales of King Arthur and his knights were popular in the Middle Ages, and they continue to be popular today.
2. Gawain, Arthur's nephew, bravely accepts the Green Knight's challenge and will agree to the pact proposed by the Green Knight.
3. After Gawain cuts off the Green Knight's head, the Green Knight remained alive.
4. Gawain meets the Green Knight again, just as the Green Knight had instructed him to do the year before.
5. This time Gawain receives the blow of the Green Knight's ax, but he did not die.

### 3.6 ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

The voice of a verb tells whether its subject performs or receives the action expressed by the verb. When the subject performs the action, the verb is in the **active voice**. When the subject is the receiver of the action, the verb is in the **passive voice**.

Compare these two sentences:

ACTIVE: *Gawain and the Green Knight make a pact with each other.*

PASSIVE: *A pact is made between Gawain and the Green Knight.*

To form the passive voice, use a form of *be* with the past participle of the verb.

**WATCH OUT!** Use the passive voice sparingly. It can make writing awkward and less direct.

AWKWARD: *A meeting between the two knights is arranged.*

BETTER: *The two knights arrange a meeting.*

There are occasions when you will choose to use the passive voice because

- you want to emphasize the receiver: *The king was shot.*
- the doer is unknown: *My books were stolen.*
- the doer is unimportant: *French is spoken here.*

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

For the four items below, identify the boldfaced verb phrase as active or passive.

1. King Arthur **was confronted** by the Green Knight.
2. The Green Knight **had been searching** for someone brave enough to meet his challenge.
3. Gawain **did not want** King Arthur to subject himself to the challenge.
4. The Green Knight **was struck** by the ax.

## 4 Modifiers

Modifiers are words or groups of words that change or limit the meanings of other words. Adjectives and adverbs are common modifiers.

### 4.1 ADJECTIVES

**Adjectives** modify nouns and pronouns by telling which one, what kind, how many, or how much.

WHICH ONE: *this, that, these, those*

EXAMPLE: *That girl used to live in my neighborhood.*

WHAT KIND: *large, unique, anxious, moldy*

EXAMPLE: *I bought a unique lamp at the yard sale.*

HOW MANY: *ten, many, several, every, each*

EXAMPLE: *I wake up at the same time every day.*

HOW MUCH: *more, less, little, barely*

EXAMPLE: *We bought more food than we could possibly eat.*

### 4.2 PREDICATE ADJECTIVES

Most adjectives come before the nouns they modify, as in the preview examples. A **predicate adjective**, however, follows a linking verb and describes the subject.

EXAMPLE: *My friends are very intelligent.*

Be especially careful to use adjectives (not adverbs) after such linking verbs as *look, feel, grow, taste, and smell*.

EXAMPLE: *The weather grows cold.*

### 4.3 ADVERBS

**Adverbs** modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs by telling where, when, how, or to what extent.

WHERE: *The children played outside.*

WHEN: *The author spoke yesterday.*

HOW: *We walked slowly behind the leader.*

TO WHAT EXTENT: *He worked very hard.*

Adverbs may occur in many places in sentences, both before and after the words they modify.

EXAMPLES: *Suddenly the wind shifted.*

*The wind suddenly shifted.*

*The wind shifted suddenly.*

### 4.4 ADJECTIVE OR ADVERB?

Many adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to adjectives.

EXAMPLES: *sweet, sweetly; gentle, gently*

However, *-ly* added to a noun will usually yield an adjective.

EXAMPLES: *friend, friendly; woman, womanly*

### 4.5 COMPARISON OF MODIFIERS

Modifiers can be used to compare two or more things. The form of a modifier shows the degree of comparison. Both adjectives and adverbs have three forms: the **positive**, the **comparative**, and the **superlative**.

The **positive form** is used to describe individual things, groups, or actions.

EXAMPLES:

*Jonathan Swift was a great satirist.*

*He had a savage wit.*

The **comparative form** is used to compare two things, groups, or actions.

EXAMPLES:

*I think Jonathan Swift was a greater satirist than Voltaire.*

*Swift had a more savage wit.*

The **superlative form** is used to compare more than two things, groups, or actions.

EXAMPLES:

*I think Jonathan Swift was the greatest satirist who ever lived.*

*Swift had the most savage wit of any writer.*

4.6 REGULAR COMPARISONS

Most one-syllable and some two-syllable adjectives and adverbs have comparatives and superlatives formed by adding *-er* and *-est*. All three-syllable and most two-syllable modifiers have comparatives and superlatives formed with *more* or *most*.

Modifier	Comparative	Superlative
tall	taller	tallest
kind	kinder	kindest
droopy	droopier	droopiest
expensive	more expensive	most expensive
wasteful	more wasteful	most wasteful

**WATCH OUT!** Note that spelling changes must sometimes be made to form the comparatives and superlatives of modifiers.

**EXAMPLES:**  
*friendly, friendlier* (Change *y* to *i* and add the ending.)  
*sad, sadder* (Double the final consonant and add the ending.)

4.7 IRREGULAR COMPARISONS

Some commonly used modifiers have irregular comparative and superlative forms. They are listed in the following chart.

Modifier	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
far	farther <i>or</i> further	farthest <i>or</i> furthest
little	less <i>or</i> lesser	least
many	more	most
well	better	best
much	more	most

4.8 PROBLEMS WITH MODIFIERS

Study the tips that follow to avoid common mistakes:  
**Farther and Further** Use *farther* for distances; use *further* for everything else.

**Double Comparisons** Make a comparison by using *-er/-est* or by using *more/most*. Using *-er* with *more* or using *-est* with *most* is incorrect.

**INCORRECT:** *I like her more better than she likes me.*  
**CORRECT:** *I like her better than she likes me.*

**Illogical Comparisons** An illogical or confusing comparison results when two unrelated things are compared or when something is compared with itself. The word *other* or the word *else* should be used in a comparison of an individual member to the rest of a group.

**ILLOGICAL:** *I think the orchid is more beautiful than any flower.* (implies that the orchid isn't a flower)  
**LOGICAL:** *I think the orchid is more beautiful than any other flower.* (identifies that the orchid is a flower)

**Bad vs. Badly** *Bad*, always an adjective, is used before a noun or after a linking verb. *Badly*, always an adverb, never modifies a noun. Be sure to use the right form after a linking verb.

**INCORRECT:** *Ed felt badly after his team lost.*  
**CORRECT:** *Ed felt bad after his team lost.*

**Good vs. Well** *Good* is always an adjective. It is used before a noun or after a linking verb. *Well* is often an adverb meaning “expertly” or “properly.” *Well* can also be used as an adjective after a linking verb when it means “in good health.”

**INCORRECT:** *Helen writes very good.*  
**CORRECT:** *Helen writes very well.*  
**CORRECT:** *Yesterday I felt bad; today I feel well.*

**Double Negatives** If you add a negative word to a sentence that is already negative, the result will be an error known as a double negative. When using *not* or *-n't* with a verb, use *any-* words, such as *anybody* or *anything*, rather than *no-* words, such as *nobody* or *nothing*, later in the sentence.

**INCORRECT:** *I don't have no money.*  
**CORRECT:** *I don't have any money.*

Using *hardly*, *barely*, or *scarcely* after a negative word is also incorrect.

**INCORRECT:** *They couldn't barely see two feet ahead.*  
**CORRECT:** *They could barely see two feet ahead.*



**Misplaced Modifiers** Sometimes a modifier is placed so far away from the word it modifies that the intended meaning of the sentence is unclear. Prepositional phrases and participial phrases are often misplaced. Place modifiers as close as possible to the words they modify.

**MISPLACED:** *The ranger explained how to find ducks in her office.* (The ducks were not in the ranger's office.)

**CLEARER:** *In her office, the ranger explained how to find ducks.*

**Dangling Modifiers** Sometimes a modifier doesn't appear to modify any word in a sentence. Most dangling modifiers are participial phrases or infinitive phrases.

**DANGLING:** *Coming home with groceries, our parrot said, "Hello!"*

**CLEARER:** *Coming home with groceries, we heard our parrot say, "Hello!"*

### GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Choose the correct word or words from each pair in parentheses.

1. Sir Launcelot was King Arthur's (most favorite, favoritest) knight.
2. Launcelot, however, (wasn't, was) hardly loyal to Arthur.
3. He made the (most gravest, gravest) mistake when he fell in love with Gwynevere, the king's wife.
4. King Arthur felt (bad, badly) about their friendship coming to an end, but what could he do?
5. Launcelot tried to make peace with the king, but Sir Gawain, the king's nephew, didn't want (nothing, anything) to do with Launcelot.
6. Gawain challenged Launcelot to a battle, and Gawain initially fought very (good, well).
7. After three hours of battle, however, Launcelot became the (stronger, more strong) of the two men.
8. Though Gawain was injured in the battle, he wouldn't let (anything, nothing) stop him from fighting Launcelot again.
9. Launcelot felt (badly, bad) about having to fight Gawain once more, but he knew he had to do it.
10. Once again, Launcelot spared Gawain's life, proving himself to be the (nobler, noblest) of all knights.

## 5 Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections

### 5.1 PREPOSITIONS

A preposition is a word used to show the relationship between a noun or a pronoun and another word in the sentence.

#### Commonly Used Prepositions

above	down	near	through
at	for	of	to
before	from	on	up
below	in	out	with
by	into	over	without

A preposition is always followed by a word or group of words that serves as its object. The preposition, its object, and modifiers of the object are called the **prepositional phrase**. In each example below, the prepositional phrase is highlighted, and the object of the preposition is in boldface type.

#### EXAMPLES

*The future of the entire kingdom is uncertain.*

*We searched through the deepest woods.*

Prepositional phrases may be used as adjectives or as adverbs. The phrase in the first example is used as an adjective modifying the noun *future*. In the second example, the phrase is used as an adverb modifying the verb *searched*.

**WATCH OUT!** Prepositional phrases must be as close as possible to the word they modify.

**MISPLACED:** *We have clothes for leisurewear of many colors.*

**CLEARER:** *We have clothes of many colors for leisurewear.*

### 5.2 CONJUNCTIONS

A conjunction is a word used to connect words, phrases, or sentences. There are three kinds of conjunctions: **coordinating conjunctions**, **correlative conjunctions**, and **subordinating conjunctions**.

**Coordinating conjunctions** connect words or word groups that have the same function in a sentence. Such conjunctions include *and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, *so*, *yet*, and *nor*.

Coordinating conjunctions can join nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases, and clauses in a sentence.

These examples show coordinating conjunctions joining words that have the same function:

#### EXAMPLES

*I have many friends **but** few enemies.* (two noun objects)

*We ran out the door **and** into the street.* (two prepositional phrases)

*They are pleasant **yet** seem aloof.* (two predicates)

*We have to go now, **or** we will be late.* (two clauses)

**Correlative conjunctions** are similar to coordinating conjunctions. However, correlative conjunctions are always used in pairs.

#### Correlative Conjunctions

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

**Subordinating conjunctions** introduce subordinate clauses—clauses that cannot stand by themselves as complete sentences. The subordinating conjunction shows how the subordinate clause relates to the rest of the sentence. The relationships include time, manner, place, cause, comparison, condition, and purpose.

#### Subordinating Conjunctions

<b>Time</b>	after, as, as long as, as soon as, before, since, until, when, whenever, while
<b>Manner</b>	as, as if
<b>Place</b>	where, wherever
<b>Cause</b>	because, since
<b>Comparison</b>	as, as much as, than
<b>Condition</b>	although, as long as, even if, even though, if provided that, though, unless, while
<b>Purpose</b>	in order that, so that, that

In the example below, the boldface word is the subordinating conjunction, and the highlighted words are the subordinate clause:

EXAMPLE: **Though** *Grendel is a loathsome beast*, *Beowulf does not fear him.*

*Beowulf does not fear him* is an independent clause because it can stand alone as a complete sentence. *Though Grendel is a loathsome beast* cannot stand alone as a complete sentence; it is a subordinate clause.

**Conjunctive adverbs** are used to connect clauses that can stand by themselves as sentences. Conjunctive adverbs include *also*, *besides*, *finally*, *however*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*, *otherwise*, and *then*.

EXAMPLE: *She loved the fall; **however**, she also enjoyed winter.*

## 5.3 INTERJECTIONS

Interjections are words used to show strong emotion, such as *wow* and *cool*. Often followed by an exclamation point, they have no grammatical relationship to any other part of a sentence.

EXAMPLE: *Beowulf seizes Grendel, grasping the monster in his fists. **Unbelievable!***

# 6 The Sentence and Its Parts

A **sentence** is a group of words used to express a complete thought. A complete sentence has a subject and a predicate.

For more information, see **Quick Reference: The Sentence and Its Parts**, page R52.

## 6.1 KINDS OF SENTENCES

There are four basic types of sentences.

Type	Definition	Example
<b>Declarative</b>	states a fact, wish, intent, or feeling	I just finished reading <i>Macbeth</i> .
<b>Interrogative</b>	asks a question	Have you ever read it?
<b>Imperative</b>	gives a command or direction	You must read it sometime.
<b>Exclamatory</b>	expresses strong feeling or excitement	It's so compelling!

## 6.2 COMPOUND SUBJECTS AND PREDICATES

A compound subject consists of two or more subjects that share the same verb. They are typically joined by the coordinating conjunction *and* or *or*.

EXAMPLE: *The knight and his horse rode into the forest.*

A compound predicate consists of two or more predicates that share the same subject. They too are typically joined by a coordinating conjunction, usually *and*, *but*, or *or*.

EXAMPLE: *Sir Gawain beheaded the Green Knight but did not kill him.*

### 6.3 COMPLEMENTS

A **complement** is a word or group of words that completes the meaning of the sentence. Some sentences contain only a subject and a verb. Most sentences, however, require additional words placed after the verb to complete the meaning of the sentence. There are three kinds of complements: direct objects, indirect objects, and subject complements.

**Direct objects** are words or word groups that receive the action of action verbs. A direct object answers the question *what* or *whom*.

**EXAMPLES:**

*The students asked many questions.* (Asked what?)

*The teacher quickly answered the students.*  
(Answered whom?)

**Indirect objects** tell to whom or what or for whom or what the actions of verbs are performed. Indirect objects come before direct objects. In the examples that follow, the indirect objects are highlighted.

**EXAMPLES:**

*My sister usually gave her friends good advice.*  
(Gave to whom?)

*Her brother sent the store a heavy package.*  
(Sent to what?)

**Subject complements** come after linking verbs and identify or describe the subjects. A subject complement that names or identifies a subject is called a **predicate nominative**. Predicate nominatives include **predicate nouns** and **predicate pronouns**.

**EXAMPLES:**

*My friends are very hard workers.*

*The best writer in the class is she.*

A subject complement that describes a subject is called a **predicate adjective**.

**EXAMPLE:** *The pianist appeared very energetic.*

## 7 Phrases

A **phrase** is a group of related words that does not contain a subject and a predicate but functions in a sentence as a single part of speech.

### 7.1 PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

A **prepositional phrase** is a phrase that consists of a preposition, its object, and any modifiers of the object. Prepositional phrases that modify nouns or pronouns are called **adjective phrases**. Prepositional phrases that modify verbs, adjectives, or adverbs are **adverb phrases**.

**ADJECTIVE PHRASE:** *The central character of the story is a villain.*

**ADVERB PHRASE:** *He reveals his nature in the first scene.*

### 7.2 APPOSITIVES AND APPOSITIVE PHRASES

An **appositive** is a noun or pronoun that identifies or renames another noun or pronoun. An **appositive phrase** includes an appositive and modifiers of it.

An appositive can be either **essential** or **nonessential**. An **essential appositive** provides information that is needed to identify what is referred to by the preceding noun or pronoun.

**EXAMPLE:** *The poet Percy Bysshe Shelley frequently used nature as the subject of his poems.*

A **nonessential appositive** adds extra information about a noun or pronoun whose meaning is already clear. Nonessential appositives and appositive phrases are set off with commas.

**EXAMPLE:** *The skylark, a bird noted for its melodious song, is the subject of one of Shelley's poems.*

## 8 Verbals and Verbal Phrases

A **verbal** is a verb form that is used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. A **verbal phrase** consists of a verbal along with its modifiers and complements. There are three kinds of verbals: **infinitives**, **participles**, and **gerunds**.

### 8.1 INFINITIVES AND INFINITIVE PHRASES

An **infinitive** is a verb form that usually begins with *to* and functions as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. An **infinitive phrase** consists of an infinitive plus its modifiers and complements. The examples that follow show several uses of infinitive phrases.

**NOUN:** *To travel the world is my long-term plan.*  
(subject)

*I'm trying to find a solution.* (direct object)

*Her greatest wish was to return to her native country.*  
(predicate nominative)

**ADJECTIVE:** *We supported his goal to become a pilot.*  
(adjective modifying goal)

**ADVERB:** *To prepare for the marathon, Julie maintained a strict exercise regimen.* (adverb modifying maintained)

Because infinitives often begin with *to*, it is usually easy to recognize them. However, sometimes *to* may be omitted.

**EXAMPLE:** *Should you dare [to] speak these forbidden words, a curse will fall upon you.*



## 8.2 PARTICIPLES AND PARTICIPIAL PHRASES

A **participle** is a verb form that functions as an adjective. Like adjectives, participles modify nouns and pronouns. Most participles are present-participle forms, ending in *-ing*, or past-participle forms ending in *-ed* or *-en*. In the examples that follow, the participles are highlighted.

**MODIFYING A NOUN:** *The crying baby needed a nap.*

**MODIFYING A PRONOUN:** *Scared, she decided not to walk home alone.*

**Participial phrases** are participles with all their modifiers and complements.

**MODIFYING A NOUN:** *The light streaming in through the window woke up the boy.*

**MODIFYING A PRONOUN:** *Walking across the field, she thought she saw a fox.*

## 8.3 DANGLING AND MISPLACED PARTICIPLES

A participle or participial phrase should be placed as close as possible to the word that it modifies. Otherwise the meaning of the sentence may not be clear.

**MISPLACED:** *The boys were looking for squirrels searching the trees.*

**CLEARER:** *The boys searching the trees were looking for squirrels.*

A participle or participial phrase that does not clearly modify anything in a sentence is called a **dangling participle**. A dangling participle causes confusion because it appears to modify a word that it cannot sensibly modify. Correct a dangling participle by providing a word for the participle to modify.

**DANGLING:** *Running like the wind, my hat fell off. (The hat wasn't running.)*

**CLEARER:** *Running like the wind, I lost my hat.*

## 8.4 GERUNDS AND GERUND PHRASES

A **gerund** is a verb form ending in *-ing* that functions as a noun. Gerunds may perform any function nouns perform.

**SUBJECT:** *Running is my favorite pastime.*

**DIRECT OBJECT:** *I truly love running.*

**INDIRECT OBJECT:** *You should give running a try.*

**SUBJECT COMPLEMENT:** *My deepest passion is running.*

**OBJECT OF PREPOSITION:** *Her love of running keeps her strong.*

**Gerund phrases** are gerunds with all their modifiers and complements.

**SUBJECT:** *Wishing on a star never got me far.*

**OBJECT OF PREPOSITION:** *I will finish before leaving the office.*

**APPOSITIVE:** *Her avocation, flying airplanes, finally led to full-time employment.*

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Identify the underlined phrases as appositive phrases, infinitive phrases, participial phrases, or gerund phrases.

1. In D. H. Lawrence's story "The Rocking-Horse Winner," the protagonist becomes obsessed with betting on horses.
2. The protagonist, a young boy, starts to win a lot of money from the races.
3. Feeling unbeatable, the boy continues to bet more and more money.
4. He wants to win as much as possible but makes himself sick in the process.
5. After the boy dies of his illness, the mother discovers that having a lot of money isn't so important after all.

## 9 Clauses

A **clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb. There are two kinds of clauses: independent clauses and subordinate clauses.

### 9.1 INDEPENDENT AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

An **independent clause** can stand alone as a sentence, as the word *independent* suggests.

**INDEPENDENT CLAUSE:** *T. S. Eliot wrote a poem called "The Naming of Cats."*

A sentence may contain more than one independent clause.

**EXAMPLE:** *T. S. Eliot wrote a poem called "The Naming of Cats," and he also wrote a poem called "The Hollow Men."*

In the preceding example, the coordinating conjunction *and* joins two independent clauses.

For more information, see **Coordinating Conjunctions**, page R63.

A **subordinate clause** cannot stand alone as a sentence. It is subordinate to, or dependent on, an independent clause.

EXAMPLE: *Although Eliot was born in America, he later moved to England.*

The highlighted clause cannot stand by itself; it must be joined with an independent clause to form a complete sentence.

## 9.2 ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

An **adjective clause** is a subordinate clause used as an adjective. It usually follows the noun or pronoun it modifies. Adjective clauses are typically introduced by the relative pronoun *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, or *that*.

EXAMPLES: *"The Naming of Cats" is the poem that I like best.*

*The poem, which is very humorous, discusses the difficulty of naming cats.*

*I think the people who enjoy the poem most are cat lovers.*

For more information, see **Relative Pronouns**, page R58.

An adjective clause can be either essential or nonessential. An **essential adjective clause** provides information that is necessary to identify the preceding noun or pronoun.

EXAMPLE: *Eliot was a poet who wrote about many different topics.*

A **nonessential adjective clause** adds additional information about a noun or pronoun whose meaning is already clear. Nonessential clauses are set off with commas.

EXAMPLE: *Eliot, who was always fond of Lewis Carroll, decided to try his hand at humor.*

**TIP** The relative pronouns *whom*, *which*, and *that* may sometimes be omitted when they are objects in adjective clauses.

EXAMPLE: *The names [that] I like best are Augustus and Demeter.*

## 9.3 ADVERB CLAUSES

An **adverb clause** is a subordinate clause that is used to modify a verb, an adjective, or an adverb. It is introduced by a subordinating conjunction.

For more information, see **Subordinating Conjunctions**, page R64.

Adverb clauses typically occur at the beginning or end of sentences.

MODIFYING A VERB: *When we need you, we will call.*

MODIFYING AN ADVERB: *I'll stay here where there is shelter from the rain.*

MODIFYING AN ADJECTIVE: *Roman felt as good as he had ever felt.*

## 9.4 NOUN CLAUSES

A **noun clause** is a subordinate clause that is used as a noun. A noun clause may be used as a subject, a direct object, an indirect object, a predicate nominative, or an object of a preposition. Noun clauses are introduced either by pronouns, such as *that*, *what*, *who*, *whoever*, *which*, and *whose*, or by subordinating conjunctions, such as *how*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *whether*.

For more information, see **Subordinating Conjunctions**, page R64.

**TIP** Because the same words may introduce adjective and noun clauses, you need to consider how a clause functions within its sentence. To determine if a clause is a noun clause, try substituting *something* or *someone* for the clause. If you can do it, it is probably a noun clause.

EXAMPLES: *I asked her when I should leave.*

(*"I asked her something."* The clause is a noun clause, direct object of the verb *asked*.)

*Whoever decides to go can get a ride with me.*

(*"Someone can get a ride with me."* The clause is a noun clause, functioning as the subject of the sentence.)

# 10 The Structure of Sentences

When classified by their structure, there are four kinds of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

## 10.1 SIMPLE SENTENCES

A **simple sentence** is a sentence that has one independent clause and no subordinate clauses. Various parts of simple sentences may be compound, and simple sentences may contain grammatical structures such as appositive and verbal phrases.

EXAMPLES:

*William Blake, a rare talent, wrote poetry and created art.* (an appositive phrase and a compound predicate)

*Inspired by both the human and the divine, Blake wanted to share his unique vision with the world.* (a participial phrase and an infinitive phrase)

## 10.2 COMPOUND SENTENCES

A **compound sentence** consists of two or more independent clauses. The clauses in compound sentences are joined with commas and coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, nor, yet, for, so*) or with semicolons. Like simple sentences, compound sentences do not contain any subordinate clauses.

### EXAMPLES:

*I like to exercise, but it can be difficult to find the time. I went to the store first; then I went to the bank.*

**WATCH OUT!** Do not confuse compound sentences with simple sentences that have compound parts.

**EXAMPLE:** *He vacuumed the floor and shook out the rugs.* (Here *and* joins parts of a compound predicate, not a compound sentence.)

## 10.3 COMPLEX SENTENCES

A **complex sentence** consists of one independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses. Each subordinate clause can be used as a noun or as a modifier. If it is used as a modifier, a subordinate clause usually modifies a word in the independent clause, and the independent clause can stand alone. However, when a subordinate clause is a noun clause, it is a part of the independent clause; the two cannot be separated.

**MODIFIER:** *As soon as I am finished with this, I will move on to the next project.*

**NOUN CLAUSE:** *We're going to the park with whoever else wants to come along.* (The noun clause is the object of the preposition *with* and cannot be separated from the rest of the sentence.)

## 10.4 COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES

A **compound-complex sentence** contains two or more independent clauses and one or more subordinate clauses. Compound-complex sentences are, simply, both compound and complex. If you start with a compound sentence, all you need to do to form a compound-complex sentence is add a subordinate clause.

**COMPOUND:** *We're going to the baseball game, and then we're going to get some ice cream.*

**COMPOUND-COMPLEX:** *We're going to the baseball game that begins at six o'clock, and then we're going to get some ice cream.*

## 10.5 PARALLEL STRUCTURE

When you write sentences, make sure that coordinate parts are equivalent, or **parallel**, in structure.

**NOT PARALLEL:** *I am going to hike and swimming.* (*To hike* is an infinitive; *swimming* is a gerund.)

**PARALLEL:** *I am going hiking and swimming.* (*Hiking* and *swimming* are both gerunds.)

**NOT PARALLEL:** *I like steak and to eat potatoes.* (*Steak* is a noun; *to eat potatoes* is a phrase.)

**PARALLEL:** *I like steak and potatoes.* (*Steak* and *potatoes* are both nouns.)

# 11 Writing Complete Sentences

Remember, a sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. In formal writing, try to avoid both sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

## 11.1 CORRECTING FRAGMENTS

A **sentence fragment** is a group of words that is only part of a sentence. It does not express a complete thought and may be confusing to a reader or listener. A sentence fragment may be lacking a subject, a predicate, or both.

**FRAGMENT:** *Went for a boat ride.* (no subject)

**CORRECTED:** *We went for a boat ride.*

**FRAGMENT:** *People of all ages.* (no predicate)

**CORRECTED:** *People of all ages tried to water ski.*

**FRAGMENT:** *After the boat ride.* (neither subject nor predicate)

**CORRECTED:** *We dried off by the fire after the boat ride.*

In your writing, fragments may be a result of haste or incorrect punctuation. Sometimes fixing a fragment will be a matter of attaching it to a preceding or following sentence.

**FRAGMENT:** *We saw the two girls. Waiting for the bus to arrive.*

**CORRECTED:** *We saw the two girls waiting for the bus to arrive.*

## 11.2 CORRECTING RUN-ON SENTENCES

A **run-on sentence** is made up of two or more sentences written as though they were one. Some run-ons have no punctuation within them. Others may have only commas where conjunctions or stronger punctuation marks are necessary. Use your judgment in correcting run-on sentences, as you have choices. You can make a run-on two sentences if the thoughts are not closely connected. If the thoughts are closely related, you can keep the run-on as one sentence by adding a semicolon or a conjunction.

**RUN-ON:** *We found a place for the picnic by a small pond it was three miles from the village.*

**MAKE TWO SENTENCES:** *We found a place for the picnic by a small pond. It was three miles from the village.*

**RUN-ON:** *We found a place for the picnic by a small pond it was perfect.*

**USE A SEMICOLON:** *We found a place for the picnic by a small pond; it was perfect.*

**ADD A CONJUNCTION:** *We found a place for the picnic by a small pond, and it was perfect.*

**WATCH OUT!** When you form compound sentences, make sure you use appropriate punctuation: a comma before a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon when there is no coordinating conjunction. A very common mistake is to use a comma alone instead of a comma and a conjunction. This error is called a **comma splice**.

**INCORRECT:** *He finished the apprenticeship, he left the village.*

**CORRECT:** *He finished the apprenticeship, and he left the village.*

### GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Rewrite the following paragraph, correcting all fragments and run-ons.

The *Book of Margery Kempe* details the tremendous difficulties that Kempe experiences. After the birth of her first child. She sees demons and fears for her own life, her keepers restrain her so that she cannot do harm to herself. She says that one day she is visited by Jesus. And that, afterwards, she becomes calm and rational again. After this transformative experience, Kempe goes on to become a preacher. And a religious visionary.

## 12 Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject and verb in a clause must agree in number. Agreement means that if the subject is singular, the verb is also singular, and if the subject is plural, the verb is also plural.

### 12.1 BASIC AGREEMENT

Fortunately, agreement between subjects and verbs in English is simple. Most verbs show the difference between singular and plural only in the third person of the present tense. In the present tense, the third-person singular form ends in *-s*.

#### Present-Tense Verb Forms

Singular	Plural
I eat	we eat
you eat	you eat
she, he, it eats	they eat

### 12.2 AGREEMENT WITH *BE*

The verb *be* presents special problems in agreement, because this verb does not follow the usual verb patterns.

#### Forms of *Be*

Present Tense		Past Tense	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
I am	we are	I was	we were
you are	you are	you were	you were
she, he, it is	they are	she, he, it was	they were

### 12.3 WORDS BETWEEN SUBJECT AND VERB

A verb agrees only with its subject. When words come between a subject and a verb, ignore them when considering proper agreement. Identify the subject and make sure the verb agrees with it.

#### EXAMPLES:

*Several **items** in the storage unit **need** to be thrown out.*

***Many** of the puppies in the litter **are** smaller than others.*

### 12.4 AGREEMENT WITH COMPOUND SUBJECTS

Use plural verbs with most compound subjects joined by the word *and*.

**EXAMPLE:** *My mother and her sisters call each other every Sunday.*

To confirm that you need a plural verb, you could substitute the plural pronoun *they* for *my mother and her sisters*.

If a compound subject is thought of as a unit, use a singular verb. Test this by substituting the singular pronoun *it*.

**EXAMPLE:** *Liver and onions **[it]** is Robert's least favorite dish.*

Use a singular verb with a compound subject that is preceded by *each*, *every*, or *many* *a*.

EXAMPLE: *Every man, woman, and child is being ordered off the ship.*

When the parts of a compound subject are joined by *or*, *nor*, or the correlative conjunctions *either . . . or* or *neither . . . nor*, make the verb agree with the noun or pronoun nearest the verb.

EXAMPLES:

*Cheddar or Swiss is my favorite cheese.*

*Either my brother or my sisters are coming to pick me up.*

*Neither I nor my two friends were here at the time of the accident.*

12.5 PERSONAL PRONOUNS AS SUBJECTS

When using a personal pronoun as a subject, make sure to match it with the correct form of the verb *be*. (See the chart in Section 12.2.) Note especially that the pronoun *you* takes the forms *are* and *were*, regardless of whether it is singular or plural.

**WATCH OUT!** *You is* and *you was* are nonstandard forms and should be avoided in writing and speaking. *We was* and *they was* are also forms to be avoided.

INCORRECT: *You is facing the wrong direction.*

CORRECT: *You are facing the wrong direction.*

INCORRECT: *We was telling ghost stories.*

CORRECT: *We were telling ghost stories.*

12.6 INDEFINITE PRONOUNS AS SUBJECTS

Some indefinite pronouns are always singular; some are always plural.

Singular Indefinite Pronouns			
another	either	neither	one
anybody	everybody	nobody	somebody
anyone	everyone	no one	someone
anything	everything	nothing	something
each	much		

EXAMPLES:

*Each of the writers was given an award.*

*Somebody in the room upstairs is sleeping.*

Plural Indefinite Pronouns

both	few	many	several
------	-----	------	---------

EXAMPLES:

*Many of the books in our library are not in circulation.*

*Few have been returned recently.*

Still other indefinite pronouns may be either singular or plural.

Singular or Plural Indefinite Pronouns

all	more	none
any	most	some

The number of the indefinite pronoun *any* or *none* often depends on the intended meaning.

EXAMPLES:

*Any of these topics has potential for a good article.*  
(any one topic)

*Any of these topics have potential for good articles.*  
(all of the many topics)

The indefinite pronouns *all*, *some*, *more*, *most*, and *none* are singular when they refer to quantities or parts of things. They are plural when they refer to numbers of individual things. Context will usually give a clue.

EXAMPLES:

*All of the flour is gone.* (referring to a quantity)

*All of the flowers are gone.* (referring to individual items)

12.7 INVERTED SENTENCES

Problems in agreement often occur in inverted sentences beginning with *here* or *there*; in questions beginning with *how*, *when*, *why*, *where*, or *what*; and in inverted sentences beginning with phrases. Identify the subject—wherever it is—before deciding on the verb.

EXAMPLES:

*There clearly are far too many cooks in this kitchen.*

*What is the correct ingredient for this stew?*

*Far from the embroiled cooks stands the master chef.*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Locate the subject of each clause in the sentences below. Then choose the correct verb.

1. The work *A History of the English Church and People* (contain, contains) important historical information.
2. Few books (is, are) as valuable for researching early British history.
3. Many stories in the book (discuss, discusses) the spread of Christianity in England.
4. During the fifth century, both the pagan faith and the Christian faith (were, was) present in Britain.
5. Each of King Edwin's counselors (was, were) in agreement that the king should convert to Christianity.
6. Neither the counselors nor the king (were, was) convinced that he should continue to follow the pagan faith.
7. In the end, none of the pagan temples and altars (was, were) left standing.

## 12.8 SENTENCES WITH PREDICATE NOMINATIVES

When a predicate nominative serves as a complement in a sentence, use a verb that agrees with the subject, not the complement.

## EXAMPLES:

The *poems* of John Keats *are* one component of this book. (The subject is the plural noun *poems*, not *component*, and it takes the plural verb *are*.)

One *component* of this book *is* the poems of John Keats. (The subject is the singular noun *component*, and it takes the singular verb *is*.)

## 12.9 DON'T AND DOESN'T AS AUXILIARY VERBS

The auxiliary verb *doesn't* is used with singular subjects and with the personal pronouns *she*, *he*, and *it*. The auxiliary verb *don't* is used with plural subjects and with the personal pronouns *I*, *we*, *you*, and *they*.

SINGULAR: *He doesn't* have time to wait any longer.

*Doesn't Emily* know where to meet us?

PLURAL: *We don't* think we can make it to the party.

The *campers don't* have enough wood to build a fire.

## 12.10 COLLECTIVE NOUNS AS SUBJECTS

**Collective nouns** are singular nouns that name groups of persons or things. *Family*, for example, is the collective name of a group of individuals. A collective noun takes a singular verb when the group acts as a single unit. It takes a plural verb when the members of the group act separately.

## EXAMPLES:

*Her family is moving to another state.* (The family as a whole is moving.)

*Her family are carrying furniture out to the truck.* (The individual members are carrying furniture.)

## 12.11 RELATIVE PRONOUNS AS SUBJECTS

When the relative pronoun *who*, *which*, or *that* is used as a subject in an adjective clause, the verb in the clause must agree in number with the antecedent of the pronoun.

SINGULAR: The *scent* that *wafts* through the air is *jasmine*.

The antecedent of the relative pronoun *that* is the singular *scent*. Therefore, *that* is singular and must take the singular verb *wafts*.

PLURAL: The *muffins*, which *are* an old family recipe, get eaten quickly.

The antecedent of the relative pronoun *which* is the plural *muffins*. Therefore, *which* is plural, and it takes the plural verb *are*.