

*Writing that is full of mistakes can confuse or even annoy a reader. Punctuation errors in a letter might lead to a miscommunication and delay a reply. Sentence fragments 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 19, 19A–C, 20, 20A–B, 21

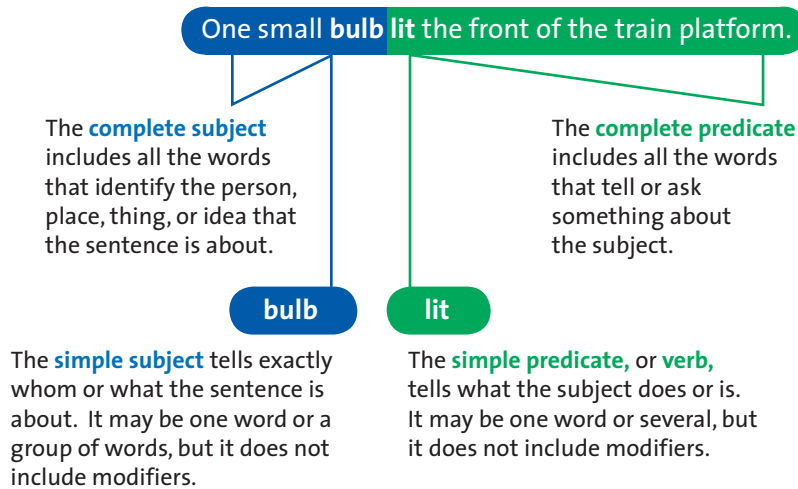
## Quick Reference: Parts of Speech

PART OF SPEECH	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Noun</b>	names a person, a place, a thing, an idea, a quality, or an action	
<b>Common</b>	serves as a general name, or a name common to an entire group	shadow, harmonica, paw, mistake
<b>Proper</b>	names a specific, one-of-a-kind person, place, or thing	Chinatown, Switzerland, Jupiter, Herbert
<b>Singular</b>	refers to a single person, place, thing, or idea	earthquake, laboratory, medication, outcome
<b>Plural</b>	refers to more than one person, place, thing, or idea	chemicals, splinters, geniuses, soldiers
<b>Concrete</b>	names something that can be perceived by the senses	calendar, basketball, ocean, snow
<b>Abstract</b>	names something that cannot be perceived by the senses	democracy, authority, beauty, fame
<b>Compound</b>	expresses a single idea through a combination of two or more words	self-esteem, mountaintop, firefighters, light bulb
<b>Collective</b>	refers to a group of people or things	team, family, class, choir
<b>Possessive</b>	shows who or what owns something	Pandora’s, Strauss’s, Franks’, women’s
<b>Pronoun</b>	takes the place of a noun or another pronoun	
<b>Personal</b>	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
<b>Reflexive</b>	follows a verb or preposition and refers to a preceding noun or pronoun	myself, yourself, herself, himself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves
<b>Intensive</b>	emphasizes a noun or another pronoun	(same as reflexives)
<b>Demonstrative</b>	points to one or more specific persons or things	this, that, these, those
<b>Interrogative</b>	signals a question	who, whom, whose, which, what
<b>Indefinite</b>	refers to one or more persons or things not specifically mentioned	both, all, most, many, anyone, everybody, several, none, some
<b>Relative</b>	introduces an adjective clause by relating it to a word in the clause	who, whom, whose, which, that

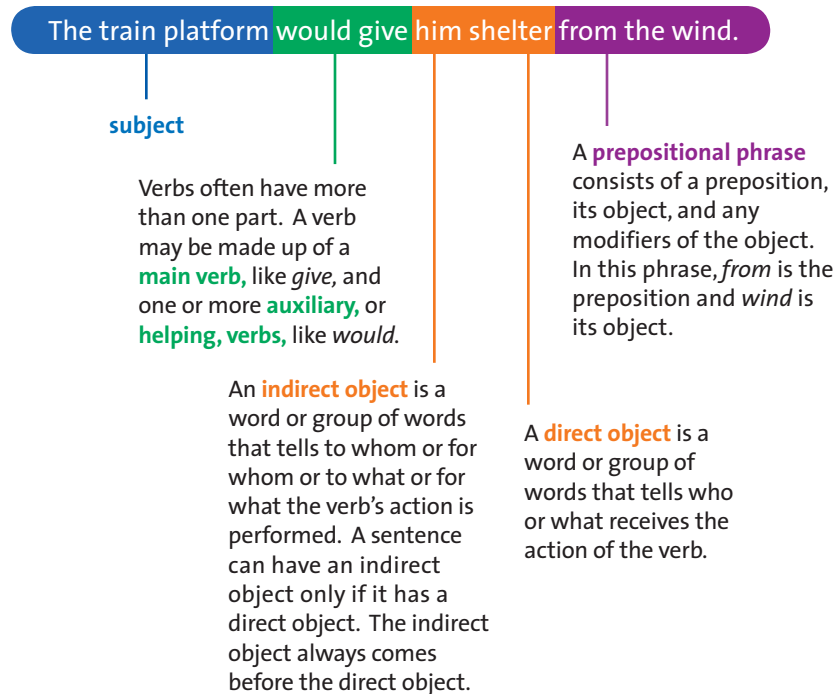
PART OF SPEECH	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Verb</b>	Expresses an action, a condition, or a state of being	
<b>Action</b>	tells what the subject does or did, physically or mentally	find, know, clings, displayed, rises, crave
<b>Linking</b>	connects the subject to something that identifies or describes it	am, is, are, was, were, sound, taste, appear, feel, become, remain, seem
<b>Auxiliary</b>	precedes the main verb in a verb phrase	Be, have, can, do, could, will, would, may, might
<b>Transitive</b>	directs the action toward someone or something; always has an object	She <u>opened</u> the door.
<b>Intransitive</b>	does not direct the action toward someone or something; does not have an object	The door <b>opened</b> .
<b>Adjective</b>	modifies a noun or pronoun	<b>slight</b> groan, <b>dying</b> gladiators, <b>ancient</b> sea, <b>two</b> pigtailed
<b>Adverb</b>	modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb	<b>always</b> closed, <b>very</b> patiently, <b>more</b> pleasant, ran <b>quickly</b>
<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	wow, ouch, hooray

# 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	We can start now. When would you like to leave? What a fantastic hit!	
	period	follows an initial or abbreviation  <b>Exception:</b> postal abbreviations of states	Mrs. Dorothy Parker, McDougal Littell Inc., C. P. Cavafy, P.M., A.D., lb., oz., Blvd., Dr. NE (Nebraska), NV (Nevada)
	period	follows a number or letter in an outline	I. Volcanoes A. Central-vent 1. Shield
<b>Comma</b>	separates part of a compound sentence	I had never disliked poetry, but now I really love it.	
	separates items in a series	Her humor, grace, and kindness served her well.	
	separates adjectives of equal rank that modify the same noun	The slow, easy route is best.	
	sets off a term of address	Maria, how can I help you? You must do something, soldier.	
	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	Mail it by May 14, 2010, to the Hauptman Company, 321 Market Street, Memphis, Tennessee.	
	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 that contain commas	We spent the first week of summer vacation in Chicago, Illinois; the second week in St. Louis, Missouri; and the third week in Albany, New York.	
	separates parts of a compound sentence that are not joined by a coordinating conjunction	The last shall be first; the first shall be last. I read the Bible; however, I have not memorized it.	
	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 to were the following: Dana, John, and Will.
	introduces a long quotation	Abraham Lincoln wrote: “Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation . . .”
	follows the salutation of a business letter	To Whom It May Concern: Dear Leonard Atole:
	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	It was so unlike him (John is always on time) that I began to worry. The last World Series game (did you see it?) was fun.
Hyphen	joins parts of a compound adjective before a noun	The not-so-rich taxpayer won’t stand for this!
	joins parts of a compound with <i>all-</i> , <i>ex-</i> , <i>self-</i> , or <i>-elect</i>	The ex-firefighter helped rescue him. Our president-elect is self-conscious.
	joins parts of a compound number (to ninety-nine)	Today is the twenty-fifth of November.
	joins parts of a fraction	My cup is one-third full.
	joins a prefix to a word beginning with a capital letter	I’m studying the U.S. presidents pre-1900. It snowed in mid-October.
	indicates that a word is divided at the end of a line	How could you have any reasonable expectations of getting a new computer?
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	“That, I’ll do,” Lemon said. “That,” Lemon said, “I’ll do.” Did Lemon say, “That I’ll do”? Lemon said, “That I’ll do!”
	set off the title of a story, an article, a short poem, an essay, a song, or a chapter	I recited Alice Walker’s “We Alone” at the assembly. Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” and Stockton’s “The Lady or the Tiger?” held my interest. I enjoyed Bob Dylan’s “Boots of Spanish Leather.”
Ellipses	replace material omitted from a quotation	“Her diary tells us that she . . . thought of ordinary things, such as going to school with other kids . . .”
Italics	indicate the title of a book, a play, a magazine, a long poem, an opera, a film, or a TV series, or the name of a ship	<i>Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad</i> , <i>The Hitchhiker</i> , <i>TIME</i> , <i>The Magic Flute</i> , the <i>Iliad</i> , <i>Star Wars</i> , <i>60 Minutes</i> , the <i>Mayflower</i>

# Quick Reference: Capitalization

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
<b>People and Titles</b>	
Names and initials of people	Jack London, T.S. Eliot
Titles used before a name	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	Philadelphia, Kansas, Japan, Europe
Regions, bodies of water, mountains	the South, Lake Baikal, Mount Everest
Geographic features, parks	Great Basin, Yellowstone National Park
Streets and roads, planets	318 East Sutton Drive, Charles Court, Jupiter, Mars
<b>Organizations, Events, Etc.</b>	
Companies, organizations, teams	Ford Motor Company, Boy Scouts of America, St. Louis Cardinals
Buildings, bridges, monuments	Empire State Building, Eads Bridge, Washington Monument
Documents, awards	Declaration of Independence, Stanley Cup
Special named events	Mardi Gras, World Series
Government bodies, historical periods and events	U.S. Senate, House of Representatives, Middle Ages, Vietnam War
Days and months, holidays	Thursday, March, Thanksgiving, Labor Day
Specific cars, boats, trains, planes	Porsche, Carpathia, Southwest Chief, Concorde
<b>Proper Adjectives</b>	
Adjectives formed from proper nouns	French cooking, Spanish omelet, Edwardian age, Western movie
<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	"The Ransom of Red Chief," "Rules of the Game," <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</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 R46.

## 1.1 COMMON NOUNS

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

## 1.2 PROPER NOUNS

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

Common	Proper
legend, canyon, girl, city	Pecos Bill, Canyon de Chelly, Anne, Amsterdam

For more information, see **Quick Reference: Capitalization**, page R51.

## 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
diary, valley, revolution, calf	diaries, valleys, revolutions, calves

For more information, see **Forming Plural Nouns**, page R76.

## 1.4 POSSESSIVE NOUNS

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

For more information, see **Forming Possessives**, page R76.

# 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: *Rachel wrote a **detective story**. **It** has a surprise ending.*

If an antecedent is plural, use a plural pronoun.

EXAMPLES: *The **characters** have **their** motives for murder.*

*Javier loves **mysteries** and reads **them** all the time.*

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

EXAMPLE: *The **man** has to use all **his** wits to stay alive and solve the crime.*

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-person, second-person, or third-person form.

EXAMPLE: ***You** want a story to grab **your** attention.*

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

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

1. Lawrence Yep, author of “The Great Rat Hunt,” had asthma when it was young.
2. The story’s suspense keeps readers interested in them.
3. Yep and his father put out rat traps and place bait on it.
4. When the rat shows their teeth, Yep panics.
5. You and her friends should read the story sometime.

## 2.3 PRONOUN FORMS

Personal pronouns change form to show how they function in sentences. The three forms are the subject form, the object form, and the possessive form. For examples of these pronouns, see the chart in Section 2.1.

A **subject pronoun** is used as a subject in a sentence.

EXAMPLE: *The poem “Mi Madre” compares the desert to a mother. **It** was written by Pat Mora.*

Also use the subject form when the pronoun follows a linking verb.

EXAMPLE: *The person healed by the desert is **she**.*

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

SUBJECT      OBJECT  
*We will give **them** to **her**.*  
 OBJECT OF PREPOSITION

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

EXAMPLE: *The desert’s gifts are **hers**.*

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

EXAMPLE: *The poem changed **my** view of the desert.*

**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

Write the correct pronoun form to complete each sentence.

1. The thunder and lightning frightens (her, she).
2. Has (him, he) ever eaten prickly pear?
3. The desert sings, but (its, it) songs are mysterious.
4. Raindrops in the desert would surprise (me, I).
5. The desert has lessons for all of (we, us).

## 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 preposition and reflects back on an earlier noun or pronoun.

EXAMPLES: *He likes **himself** too much.*

*She is now **herself** again.*

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

EXAMPLES: *They **themselves** will educate their children.*

*You did it **yourself**.*



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

**NONSTANDARD:** *Colorful desert flowers offer **theirselves** to the poem's speaker.*

**STANDARD:** *Colorful desert flowers offer **themselves** to the poem's speaker.*

## 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			

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

**INCORRECT:** *Did **everybody** play **their** part well?*

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.

**CORRECT:** *Did **everybody** play **his or her** part well?*  
*Did all the students play **their** parts well?*

## 2.7 INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

An **interrogative pronoun** tells a reader or listener that a question is coming. The interrogative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, and *what*.

**EXAMPLES:** ***Who** is going to rehearse with you?*  
*From **whom** did you receive the script?*

**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 think will win?*

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

## 2.8 RELATIVE PRONOUNS

**Relative pronouns** relate, or connect, adjective clauses to the words they modify in sentences. The noun or pronoun that a relative clause modifies is the antecedent of the relative pronoun. Here are the relative pronouns and their uses.

	Subject	Object	Possessive
Person	who	whom	whose
Thing	which	which	whose
Thing/Person	that	that	whose

Often, short sentences with related ideas can be combined by using a relative pronoun to create a more effective sentence.

**SHORT SENTENCE:** *Louisa May Alcott wrote Hospital Sketches*

**RELATED SENTENCE:** *Hospital Sketches describes Alcott's experiences as a volunteer nurse.*

**COMBINED SENTENCE:** *Louisa May Alcott wrote Hospital Sketches, which describes her experiences as a volunteer nurse.*

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Write the correct form of each incorrect pronoun.

1. Few would have volunteered her services like Alcott did.
2. For who did she risk her own life?
3. Everyone received their care from Alcott.
4. A wounded soldier proved hisself to be respectful.
5. Whom can read her diary without being moved?

## 2.9 PRONOUN REFERENCE PROBLEMS

The referent of a pronoun should always be clear. Avoid problems by rewriting sentences.

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

UNCLEAR: *People appreciate it when they learn from an author's experiences.*

CLEAR: *People appreciate learning from an author's experiences.*

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: *I picture myself in the author's situation. This helps me understand her reactions.*

CLEAR: *I picture myself in the author's situation. Putting myself in her position helps me understand her reactions.*

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

UNCLEAR: *Manuel urged Simon to edit his new film review.*

CLEAR: *Manuel urged Simon to edit Manuel's new film review.*

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

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

1. Adams kept seeing the hitchhiker as he walked down the road.
2. Adams didn't pick the hitchhiker up, but it made him feel like a fool.
3. The car stalled on the railroad tracks with a train coming. That almost got Adams killed.
4. When Adams tells his story, they think he's crazy.

## 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 R47.

## 3.1 ACTION VERBS

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

EXAMPLE: *Otto Frank comforted his family.*

## 3.2 LINKING VERBS

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

EXAMPLE: *They were in hiding during the war.*

## 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
jump	(is) jumping	jumped	(has) jumped
solve	(is) solving	solved	(has) solved
grab	(is) grabbing	grabbed	(has) grabbed
carry	(is) carrying	carried	(has) carried

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
begin	(is) beginning	began	(has) begun
break	(is) breaking	broke	(has) broken
go	(is) going	went	(has) gone

### 3.4 VERB TENSE

The **tense** of a verb indicates the time of the action or the 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 participle.

NOW: *That snow **looks** deep.*

REGULAR: *It **snows** every day.*

GENERAL: *Snow **falls**.*

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

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

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

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** many readers.*

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: *He **had built** a fire before the dog ran away.*

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 read** the novel before they see the movie version of the tale.*

**TIP** A past-tense form of an irregular verb is not used with an auxiliary verb, but a past-participle main irregular verb is always used with an auxiliary verb.

INCORRECT: *I have saw her somewhere before. (Saw is the past-tense form of an irregular verb and shouldn't be used with have.)*

CORRECT: *I have seen her somewhere before.*

INCORRECT: *I seen her somewhere before. (Seen is the past participle of an irregular verb and shouldn't be used without an auxiliary verb.)*

### 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: *Anne **is arguing** her case.*

PAST PROGRESSIVE: *Anne **was arguing** her case.*

FUTURE PROGRESSIVE: *Anne **will be arguing** her case.*

PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE: *Anne **has been arguing** her case.*

PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE: *Anne **had been arguing** her case.*

FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE: *Anne **will have been arguing** her case.*

**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: *She defied him, and he scolds her.*

CORRECT: *She defied him, and he scolded her.*

- If one past action happens before another, do shift tenses.

INCORRECT: *They wished they started earlier.*

CORRECT: *They wished they had started earlier.*

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Rewrite each sentence, using a form of the verb in parentheses. Identify each form that you use.

1. Frederick Douglass (write) a letter to Harriet Tubman in which he (praise) her.
2. He (say) that she (do) much to benefit enslaved people.
3. People (remember) her work with the Underground Railroad forever.
4. Both Douglass and Tubman (appear) in the history books that kids study.
5. They (inspire) seekers of justice for many years to come.

Rewrite each sentence to correct an error in tense.

1. When she went to the plantations, Tubman's signal has been the spiritual "Go Down Moses."
2. She is leading the slaves all the way from Maryland to Canada, and brought them to freedom.
3. Although she never will have been to Canada, she went bravely on.
4. They arrived safe and sound, but Tubman leaves for the South again.
5. Her life's work for the next six years had began.

## 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: Anton Chekhov wrote "The Bet."

PASSIVE: "The Bet" was written by Anton Chekhov.

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:** "The Bet" is a short story that was written by Anton Chekhov.

**BETTER:** Anton Chekhov wrote the short story "The Bet."

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.*

## 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:** *This poem uses no capital letters.*

**WHAT KIND:** *electric, bright, small, open*

**EXAMPLE:** *An open flame would kill the moth.*

**HOW MANY:** *one, several, both, none, each*

**EXAMPLE:** *The moth wants one moment of beauty.*

**HOW MUCH:** *more, less, enough, as much*

**EXAMPLE:** *I think the cockroach has more sense than the moth.*

## 4.2 PREDICATE ADJECTIVES

Most adjectives come before the nouns they modify, as in the examples above. 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 bread smells wonderful.*

### 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 **comparative** and **superlative** forms.

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

EXAMPLES: *His father's hands were **stronger** than his own.*

*My father was **more courageous** than I am.*

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

EXAMPLES: *His father's hands were the **strongest** in the family.*

*My father was the **most courageous** of us all.*

### 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
small	smaller	smallest
thin	thinner	thinnest
sleepy	sleepier	sleepiest
useless	more useless	most useless
precisely	more precisely	most precisely

**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 chart. You may wish to memorize them.

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 when comparing an individual member to the rest of a group.

**ILLOGICAL:** *The cockroach is smarter than any insect.* (implies that the cockroach isn't an insect)

**LOGICAL:** *The cockroach is smarter than any **other** insect.* (identifies that the cockroach is an insect)

**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:** *We haven't seen **nobody**.*

**CORRECT:** *We haven't seen **anybody**.*

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:** *We found the child in the park who was missing.*

**CLEARER:** *We found the child who was missing in the park.* (The child was missing, not the park.)

**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:** *Looking out the window, his brother was seen driving by.*

**CLEARER:** *Looking out the window, Josh saw his brother driving by.*

### GRAMMAR PRACTICE

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

1. Mark Twain's attempt at studying the law did not go (good, well).
2. That wasn't the (worse, worst) of his many occupations, however.
3. He actually wasn't a (bad, badly) riverboat pilot.
4. He didn't have (no, any) confidence as a newspaper editor.
5. Still, that turned out to be the (more, most) satisfying job he ever had.

### GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Rewrite each sentence that contains a misplaced or dangling modifier. Write “correct” if the sentence is written correctly.

1. Mark Twain discovered that he was a good storyteller working as an editor.
2. Twain often added exciting details to his stories.
3. It didn't matter to Twain whether all of the details were true in his articles.
4. He wrote sixteen different articles about a single hay wagon in the paper.
5. When all else failed, he made up events.



## 5 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 R48.

### 5.1 KINDS OF SENTENCES

There are four basic types of sentences.

Type	Definition	Example
Declarative	states a fact, a wish, an intent, or a feeling	This poem is about Abraham Lincoln.
Interrogative	asks a question	Did you understand the metaphor?
Imperative	gives a command or direction	Read it more closely.
Exclamatory	expresses strong feeling or excitement	Whitman really admired Lincoln!

### 5.2 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: *A short story or novel will keep you engaged.*

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

EXAMPLE: *The class finished all the poetry but did not read the short stories.*

### 5.3 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: *Ellis recited the poem.* (Recited what?)  
*His performance entertained the class.* (Entertained 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 following examples, the indirect objects are highlighted.

EXAMPLES: *The teacher gave the speech a good grade.* (Gave to what?)  
*He showed his father the teacher's comments.* (Showed to whom?)

**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.*

## 6 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.

### 6.1 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.*

## 6.2 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 usually follows the noun or pronoun it identifies.

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: *This Greek myth is about the gifted woman **Pandora**.*

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 story, **a myth**, describes how evil came into the world.*

## 7 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**.

### 7.1 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.

NOUN: ***To keep a promise** is difficult.* (subject)  
*Pandora tried **to obey the gods**.* (direct object)  
*Her chief mistake was **to become too curious**.*  
 (predicate nominative)

ADJECTIVE: *That was an error **to regret**.* (adjective modifying *error*)

ADVERB: *She opened the box **to satisfy her curiosity**.*  
 (adverb modifying *opened*)

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

EXAMPLE: *Her husband helped her **[to] forgive herself**.*

### 7.2 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 below, the participles are highlighted.

MODIFYING A NOUN: *The **dying** man had a smile on his face.*

MODIFYING A PRONOUN: ***Frustrated**, everyone abandoned the cause.*

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

MODIFYING A NOUN: *The dogs **searching for survivors** are well trained.*

MODIFYING A PRONOUN: ***Having approved your proposal**, we are ready to act.*

### 7.3 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.*

### 7.4 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: ***Jogging** is my favorite exercise.*

DIRECT OBJECT: *My sister loves **jogging**.*



INDIRECT OBJECT: *She gave **jogging** a try last year.*  
SUBJECT COMPLEMENT: *Their real passion is **jogging**.*  
OBJECT OF PREPOSITION: *The effects of **jogging**.*

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

SUBJECT: ***Creating Pandora** was Zeus' idea.*  
OBJECT OF PREPOSITION: *She suffered greatly after **defying the gods**.*  
APPOSITIVE: *Her husband, **remembering his brother Prometheus' fate**, forgave her.*

### GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Rewrite each sentence, adding the type of phrase shown in parentheses.

1. I read an excerpt from Anne Frank's diary. (infinitive phrase)
2. Anne was able to maintain her faith in other people. (gerund phrase)
3. Peter Van Daan eventually became Anne's good friend. (appositive phrase)
4. The Nazis found the Franks' hiding place. (prepositional phrase)
5. I know more about World War II. (participial phrase)

## 8 Clauses

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

### 8.1 MAIN AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

A **main (independent) clause** can stand alone as a sentence.

MAIN CLAUSE: *I enjoyed "Pecos Bill."*

A sentence may contain more than one main clause.

EXAMPLE: *I read it twice, and I gave it to a friend.*

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

For more coordinating conjunctions, see **Quick Reference: Parts of Speech**, page R47.

A **subordinate (dependent) clause** cannot stand alone as a sentence. It is subordinate to, or dependent on, a main clause.

EXAMPLE: ***After I read it**, I recommended it to my friends.*

The highlighted clause cannot stand by itself.

### 8.2 ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

An **adjective clause** is a subordinate clause used as an adjective. It usually follows the noun or pronoun it modifies.

EXAMPLE: *The legend **that the story retells** is about a cowboy.*

Adjective clauses are typically introduced by the relative pronouns *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, and *that*.

For more information, see **Relative Pronouns**, page R54.

EXAMPLE: *Pecos Bill, **who was raised by coyotes**, lived with them for seventeen years.*

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: *He needed to find people **who could appreciate him**.*

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: *He carried his horse, **which had broken its ankle**, around his neck.*

### 8.3 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 examples of subordinating conjunctions, see **Noun Clauses**, page R63.

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

MODIFYING A VERB: *When he got bored, Nick told stories.*

MODIFYING AN ADVERB: *Most people study more than Bob does.*

MODIFYING AN ADJECTIVE: *He was excited because a cyclone was forming.*

**TIP** An adverb clause should be followed by a comma when it comes before a main clause. When an adverb clause comes after a main clause, a comma may not be needed.

#### 8.4 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 the 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 subordinating conjunctions, see **Quick Reference: Parts of Speech**, page R47.

**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 know whose woods these are.*

(“I know *something*.” The clause is a noun clause, direct object of the verb *know*.)

*Give a copy to whoever wants one.* (“Give a copy to *someone*.” The clause is a noun clause, object of the preposition *to*.)

## 9 The Structure of Sentences

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

### 9.1 SIMPLE SENTENCES

A **simple sentence** is a sentence that has one main clause and no subordinate clauses.

EXAMPLES: *Sam ran to the theater.*

*Max waited in front of the theater.*

A simple sentence may contain a compound subject or a compound verb.

EXAMPLES: *Sam and Max went to the movie.*  
(compound subject)

*They clapped and cheered at their favorite parts.*  
(compound verb)

### 9.2 COMPOUND SENTENCES

A **compound sentence** consists of two or more main 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: *Sam likes action movies, but Max prefers comedies.*

*The actor jumped from one building to another; he barely made the final leap.*

### 9.3 COMPLEX SENTENCES

A **complex sentence** consists of one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses.

EXAMPLES: *One should not complain unless one has a better solution.*

*Mr. Neiman, who is an artist, sketched pictures until the sun went down.*

### 9.4 COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES

A **compound-complex sentence** contains two or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses. Compound-complex sentences are both compound and complex.

COMPOUND: *All the students knew the answer, yet they were too shy to volunteer.*

COMPOUND-COMPLEX: *All the students knew the answer that their teacher expected, yet they were too shy to volunteer.*

## 9.5 PARALLEL STRUCTURE

When you write sentences, make sure that coordinate parts are equivalent, or **parallel**, in structure. For instance, be sure items you list in a series or contrast for emphasis are parallel.

**NOT PARALLEL:** *I want to lose weight, becoming a musician, and good grades.* (To *lose weight* is an infinitive phrase, *becoming a musician* is a gerund phrase, and *grades* is a noun.)

**PARALLEL:** *I want to lose weight, to become a musician, and to get good grades.* (To *lose*, to *become*, and to *get* are all infinitives.)

**NOT PARALLEL:** *I not only want to lose weight, I'm keeping it off, too.* (To *lose weight* is an infinitive phrase; *keeping it off* is a gerund phrase.)

**PARALLEL:** *I not only want to lose weight, I want to keep it off, too.* (To *lose weight* and to *keep it off* are both infinitive phrases. To make them both infinitive, it is necessary to change *am* to an action verb. Now the contrast set up by *not only* adds emphasis to the second part of the statement.)

### Grammar Practice

Revise each sentence to make its parts parallel.

1. Jewell Parker Rhodes wrote “Block Party” about her old neighborhood and to publish a memoir of it.
2. In the story, she mentions many colorful characters, riding her bike with her sister, and watching the world from her front stoop.
3. With her friends, Rhodes played hide and seek in the laundry hanging out to dry, would slide down the banisters in the house, and rode a red tricycle through the kitchen.
4. A block party is when the street is closed off to traffic, hydrants were turned on by the fire department, and the neighbors gather for a picnic.
5. Rhodes went on to earn degrees in drama criticism, English, and a third degree in creative writing.
6. She now writes novels, nonfiction, and even for magazines!

## 10 Writing Complete Sentences

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

### 10.1 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:** *Worried about not doing well.* (no subject)

**CORRECTED:** *Laura worried about not doing well.*

**FRAGMENT:** *Her mother and father.* (no predicate)

**CORRECTED:** *Her mother and father were both highly successful.*

**FRAGMENT:** *In a gentle way.* (neither subject nor predicate)

**CORRECTED:** *They tried to encourage her in a gentle way.*

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:** *Laura did her best. But never felt satisfied.*

**CORRECTED:** *Laura did her best but never felt satisfied.*

### 10.2 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 change a run-on to 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:** *She joined more clubs her friendships suffered.*

**MAKE TWO SENTENCES:** *She joined more clubs. Her friendships suffered.*

**RUN-ON:** *She joined more clubs they took up all her time.*

**USE A SEMICOLON:** *She joined more clubs; they took up all her time.*

**ADD A CONJUNCTION:** *She joined more clubs, but they took up all her time.*

**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 job, he left the village.*

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

## 11 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.

### 11.1 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 sleep	we sleep
you sleep	you sleep
she he it sleeps	they sleep

### 11.2 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

### 11.3 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:** *Whipped cream served with berries is my favorite sweet.*

*A study by scientists recommends eating berries.*

### 11.4 AGREEMENT WITH COMPOUND SUBJECTS

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

**EXAMPLE:** *My father and his friends play chess every day.*

To confirm that you need a plural verb, you could substitute the plural pronoun *they* for *my father and his friends*.

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

**EXAMPLE:** *Peanut butter and jelly [it] is my brother's favorite sandwich.*

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

EXAMPLE: *Each novel and short story seems grounded in personal experience.*

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: *Cookies or ice cream is my favorite dessert.*

*Either Cheryl or her friends are being invited.*

*Neither ice storms nor snow is predicted today.*

### 11.5 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 11.2.) 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 was a good student.*

CORRECT: *You were a good student.*

INCORRECT: *They was starting a new school.*

CORRECT: *They were starting a new school.*

### 11.6 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 provide a clue.

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

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

### 11.7 INVERTED SENTENCES

A sentence in which the subject follows the verb is called an **inverted sentence**. A subject can follow a verb or part of a verb phrase in a question, a sentence beginning with *here* or *there*, or a sentence in which an adjective, an adverb, or a phrase is placed first.

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

*What is the correct ingredient for this stew?*

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



**TIP** To check subject-verb agreement in some inverted sentences, place the subject before the verb. For example, change *There are many people* to *Many people are there*.

### 11.8 SENTENCES WITH PREDICATE NOMINATIVES

In a sentence containing a predicate noun (nominative), the verb should agree with the subject, not the predicate noun.

EXAMPLES: *The poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow are a unique record of U.S. history.* (*Poems* is the subject—not *record*—and it takes the plural verb *are*.)

*One unique record of U.S. history is the poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.* (The subject is *record*—not *poems*—and it takes the singular verb *is*.)

### 11.9 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: *Doesn't the poem "Paul Revere's Ride" sound almost like a news report?*

*It doesn't sound like a poem, even though it rhymes.*

PLURAL: *People don't know enough about history.*

*Don't they think history is important?*

### 11.10 COLLECTIVE NOUNS AS SUBJECTS

**Collective nouns** are singular nouns that name groups of persons or things. *Team*, 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: *Our team usually wins.* (The team as a whole wins.)

*The faculty vote differently on most issues.* (The individual members of the faculty vote.)

### 11.11 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 poem that affects me most is "Mother to Son."*

The antecedent of the relative pronoun *that* is the singular *poem*; therefore, *that* is singular and must take the singular verb *affects*.

PLURAL: *Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks are African-American poets who write about overcoming life's problems.*

The antecedent of the relative pronoun *who* is the plural compound subject *Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks*. Therefore *who* is plural, and it takes the plural verb *write*.

#### GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Locate the subject in each sentence below. Then choose the correct verb form.

- Daniel Keyes's story "Flowers for Algernon" (describes, describe) a mentally challenged man who takes part in a scientific experiment.
- (Doesn't, Don't) the doctors treat him like a laboratory mouse?
- Nobody (realizes, realize) the danger in this experiment.
- The development of his mental abilities (become, becomes) clear in his growing language skills.
- His perceptions, as well as his intelligence, (becomes, become) extremely sharp.
- There (is, are) moments of joy when he falls in love with Miss Kinnian.
- Everything (progresses, progress) well until he is fired from his job.
- All of his insights just (makes, make) people withdraw from him.
- Even the doctors who work with him (treat, treats) him poorly.
- Neither Algernon's death nor Charlie's own mental failings (seems, seem) sadder than his awareness of what's happening to him.