

# **Grammar Packet**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

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# Mechanics

## Commas

☞ Use a **comma** to separate adjectives that equally modify the same noun. (The comma takes the place of *and*.):

**A big, hairy monster ate my homework.**

☞ Use commas to separate words, phrases, or clauses in a series:



**I need to pack my stamps, rocks, camera, weights, hair dryer, and peanut butter.**

**I must remember to gas the car, check the map, and pack a sandwich.**

☞ Use a **comma** before the conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so*) when joining two independent clauses:

**I've never tried fried liver, and I never will.**

**Hint:** Do not confuse a sentence with a compound verb for a compound sentence:

**I also hate broccoli and despise lima beans. (no comma)**

☞ Use a **comma** after introductory words, a participial phrase, a series of prepositional phrases (or a single long one), or an adverb clause:

**Introductory word: No, you are not welcome to join us.**

**Participial phrase: Running late, I rushed out of the house without my shoes.**

**Prepositional phrase: Under the old refrigerator, the lively lizard lurked.**

**Adverb clause: As soon as we left the house, he poked out his head.**

☞ Use **commas** to enclose an explanatory word or a parenthetical expression. The following expressions are commonly used parenthetically: *I believe (think, know, hope, etc.), on the contrary, on the other hand, of course, naturally, in my opinion, for example, and however*:

**Explanatory phrase: My brother, four years younger than I, is a royal joke.**

**Parenthetical expression: He will, I am sure, end up in clown college someday.**

☞ Use **commas** to enclose nonessential phrases and clauses. Nonessential phrases or clauses are **not** necessary to the basic meaning of the sentence. Essential phrases or clauses—those necessary to the meaning of the sentence—are not set off with commas. (See page 16.)

**Nonessential:** The dragon, which has glimmering teeth, would like you to visit him.

**Essential:** Any athlete who wishes to join the gymnastics team will have to excel on the uneven parallel bars. (no commas)

**Nonessential:** The sports story was about the Green Bay Packers, my favorite team.

**Essential:** Anna is wearing a shirt that she received for her birthday. (no commas)

☞ Use commas to set off the exact words of the speaker from the rest of the sentence:

"Off with her head," the Queen of Hearts yodeled. "In fact," she bellowed on, "off with all their heads!"

☞ Use a **comma** to set off items in an address or a date: 1550 Hill Road, Poway, CA 92064  
Thursday, October 1968

## Semicolon

☞ Use a **semicolon** to join two or more independent clauses that are **not** connected with a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so*):

Nobody will ever win the battle of the sexes; there's too much fraternizing with the enemy.

One campaign consultant says he doesn't approve of political jokes; he's seen too many of them get elected.



**Hint:** Think of a semicolon as a *strong comma* or a *weak period*.

☞ Use a **semicolon** *before* a conjunctive adverb (i.e., an adverb that acts like a conjunction to join two independent clauses). Also place a comma after the adverb. Common conjunctive adverbs include *also, besides, for example, however, in addition, instead, moreover, meanwhile, nevertheless, similarly, then, therefore, thus*.

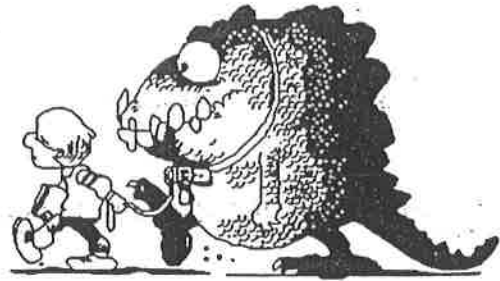
My brother was arrested at the zoo just for feeding the pigeons; however, he was feeding them to the lions.

My English teacher said that reading Hemingway was rather difficult; nonetheless, my brother did a great report on *The Old Man and the Sea* starring Spencer Tracy.

**Hint:** The clause on either side of the semicolon must be able to stand alone as a separate sentence.

☞ Use a **semicolon** to separate groups of words that already contain commas:

Winners in the competition were Egor, first place; Godzilla, second place; Quasimodo, third place; and my little brother, honorable mention.



## Colons

☞ Use a **colon** after the salutation of a business letter: **Dear Christopher Reeve:**  
**Dear President Clinton:**

☞ Use a **colon** to introduce a list, especially after expressions like *as follows* and *the following*:

**My brother got everything he wanted for his birthday: a giant bowling ball, a canary, and eyebrow tweezers.**

**I always have to be prepared to answer the following questions: Where were you? Who were you with? Why can't you be good like your brother?**

**Hint:** A colon in a sentence should only follow an independent clause.

**Wrong:** My little brother hates: spelling, math, history, and reading.

**Right:** My little brother hates all his subjects: spelling, math, history, and reading.

**Wrong:** He just looks at: his fingernails, the ceiling, the teacher, and girls.

**Right:** He just studies the following: his fingernails, the ceiling, the teacher, and girls.

☞ Use a **colon** after a complete sentence that introduces an illustration, explanation, or quotation:

**There are three ways to get something done: do it yourself, hire someone, or forbid your teenager to do it.**

**When all is said and done, only one person really loves my brother: his mother.**

**Home computers are being called upon to perform a new educational function: the consumption of homework formerly eaten by the dog.**

**Clarence Day offered an astute observation: "If your parents didn't have any children, there's a good chance that you won't have any."**

# Hyphen

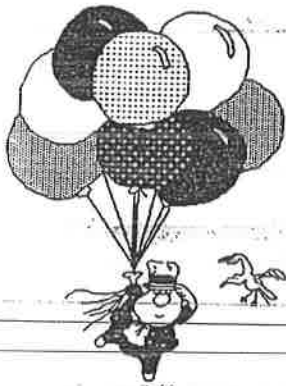
☞ Use a **hyphen** to make a compound word or to join coequal nouns:

**mother-in-law**    **three-year-old**    **scholar-athlete**    **player-coach**

☞ Use a **hyphen** to join words in compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and with fractions:

**twenty-nine**    **forty-seven**    **two-thirds**    **five-sixteenths**    **four-tenths**

☞ Use a **hyphen** to divide a word at the end of a line, but only between syllables:



**Wrong:** The bird peered at Mr. McGillacudy with a pu-  
zzled expression.

**Right:** The bird peered at Mr. McGillacudy with a puz-  
zled expression.

**Hint:** Words of one syllable may NEVER be divided, and multisyllable words may ONLY be divided between syllables.

☞ Use a **hyphen** to join a capital letter to a noun or participle:

**R-rated**    **T-bone steak**    **U-turn**    **Y-shaped**    **T-shirt**

☞ Use a **hyphen** to join two or more words that serve as a single adjective before a noun:

**best-known novel**    **two-story building**    **ill-informed ambassador**  
**sports-loving crowd**    **awe-inspiring speech**    **slow-moving book**

☞ In general, do not use a **hyphen** after standard prefixes (e.g., *anti-*, *co-*, *multi-*, *non-*, *over-*, *post-*, *pre-*, *re-*, *semi-*, *sub-*, *un-*, *under-*):

**multinational**    **postwar**    **antifreedom**    **underdeveloped**    **coworker**  
**nonjudgmental**    **semiliterate**    **reinvent**    **prescheduled**    **unrelated**

**Hint:** For other prefixes, or when in doubt, check your dictionary.

# Quotations

## Dialogue

☞ For **dialogue**, use quotation marks before and after the exact words of a speaker; place the comma inside the quotation marks when the speaker tag (attribution) follows the quotation:



"Your driver's license says you should be wearing glasses," said the traffic officer to the speeder.

☞ Begin a **direct quotation** with a capital letter; the comma precedes the quotation marks when the speaker tag is first:

The speeding driver explained, "I have contacts."

☞ When a **quoted sentence is divided** into two parts by an interrupting expression or speaker tag, begin the second part with a lower case letter:

"I don't care who you know," the cop replied, "because you're getting a ticket anyway."

☞ A **direct quotation** is set off from the rest of the sentence by commas unless an end mark (question mark or exclamation point) is used instead; place the end mark inside the quotation marks:

"Who comes up with these lame jokes, anyway?" asked the bewildered student.

☞ When you write dialogue with **two or more persons conversing**, begin a new paragraph every time the speaker changes:

"That guy is great on the field," said a college football scout to the player's coach. "But how's his scholastic work?"

"Why, he makes straight A's," replied the high school coach as they watched the player make tackle after tackle.


"Wonderful!" said the scout.


"Yes," agreed the coach, "but his B's are a little crooked."



# Using Quoted Material


 For a **short quotation**—one that is four lines or fewer—work it into the body of your paper and put quotation marks around it.


 For a **block quotation**—more than four typed lines on a page—indent one inch from the left margin only. Do not use quotation marks before or after the quoted material:

 Former First Lady Nancy Reagan expressed strong opinions about the movie industry:  
To be completely candid, I think most movies nowadays are trash, and many strike me as unhealthy. The explicit sex, pointless violence, and crude language appeal only to our lowest instincts. They have taken away our idealism, our sense of fun and joy. It's chic to be cynical and tear our heroes down. What has happened to us? And what are we doing to our young people? (qtd. in Baker 180)

(Cited as a *second-hand quote*; see page 32 for explanation)

 To omit words from a quotation, use an **ellipsis** ( . . . ) to signify the part left out. An ellipsis is three periods with a space before and after each one.

 Use brackets [like this] to enclose words you add to a quotation to help with clarification.

 To punctuate a **quote within a quote**, use single quotation marks:

"I'll always remember Marlon Brando in The Godfather for his line, 'I'll make you an offer you can't refuse.'"

**Hint:** Periods and commas are always placed inside quotation marks:

"Oh right," said Albert. "But that part with the horse's head turned me off."

An exclamation point or a question mark is placed inside quotation marks when it punctuates the quotation; it is placed outside when it punctuates the main sentence:

What do you suppose it means when a vampire says, "Well, of course, you're welcome to stay the night"?

I almost croaked when he asked, "That won't be a problem for you will it?"

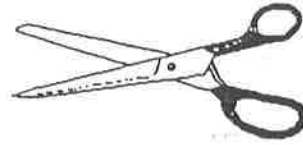
Semicolons or colons are placed outside quotation marks:

I wrote about Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"; "The Conqueror Worm" was too deep for me.



# Apostrophes

## Contractions



☞ Use an **apostrophe** to signify letter(s) left out of a word to form a contraction:

don't -o is left out of not    she'd -woul is left out of would    it's -i is left out of is

**Hint:** The most common contraction error is the confusion of *it's*, which means *it is*, with the possessive form *its* (*its* appearance).

☞ Use an **apostrophe** to signify one or more letters or numbers left out of numerals or words that are spelled as they are actually spoken:

class of '98 -19 is left out

good mornin' -g is left out

## Possessives

☞ Add an apostrophe and an *s* to form the **possessive of singular nouns**, even if the noun ends in *s*:

Forrest Gump's voice

the kiss's meaning

Dickens's novels

☞ For the **possessive form of plural nouns** ending in *s*, add just an apostrophe. For the few plural nouns not ending in *s*, an apostrophe and *s* must be added:

the Joneses' father

the Padres' last game

children's library

**Hint:** Remember that the word immediately before the apostrophe is the owner:  
parent's car (parent is the owner)    boss's desk (boss is the owner)  
parents' car (parents are the owners)    bosses' desk (bosses are the owners)

☞ For the possessive form of a **compound noun** or an **indefinite pronoun**, place the apostrophe and an *s* after the last word:

his mother-in-law's briefcase  
everybody's

anyone's

Black and Decker's tools  
someone else's

**Hint:** Remember that possessive personal pronouns (*his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs*, and the relative pronoun *whose*) do not require an apostrophe.

# Capitalization

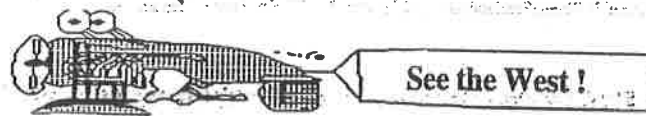
☞ Capitalize the first word of a sentence and a full-sentence direct quotation:

Matilda loves to slam dance.

When Joe made it to first, his coach screamed, "Run to second!"

☞ Capitalize the following geographical terms:

- sections of the country or a continent: **the South, the Northwest, the Middle East**
- towns, cities, states, capitals, countries, and continents: **Dallas, Australia, Russia**
- streets, roads, highways: **Interstate 5, Route 66, Park Avenue**
- land forms and bodies of water: **Lake Havasu, Iberian Peninsula, Sahara Desert**



☞ Capitalize names of people and formal titles written before a name without a comma separating them:

**Keanu Reeves, President John Kennedy, Alexander the Great, Senator McCarthy**

☞ Capitalize days of the week, months, holidays or holy days:

This year **Hanukkah** begins on **Friday, December 6**, and **Christmas** is on a **Monday**.

☞ Capitalize historical time periods, events in history, and special events:

**Renaissance, Vietnam War, Kentucky Derby, Senior Prom, Republican Convention**

## Titles of Materials

☞ **Underline or italicize** the titles of works that are published or released by themselves: movies, books, record albums, CDs, magazines, newspapers, full-length plays, operas, pamphlets, book-length poems, lengthy musical compositions, legal cases, and the names of ships and aircraft:

Romeo and Juliet (play)  
Independence Day (movie)  
L. A. Times (newspaper)

Star Trek Voyager (television program)  
Seventeen (magazine)  
Quit Smoking Now (pamphlet)

**Hint:** While it is correct to either italicize or underline titles, you should stick with one style in a piece of writing.



Use **quotation marks** around the titles of short works that are likely to be published or released as part of a larger work: chapters of books; short stories; poems; songs; articles in a magazine, newspaper, or encyclopedia; and episodes of radio or television programs:

- "To Build a Fire" (short story)
- "Partners in Crime" (episode from The Cosby Show)
- "Life on Mars" (magazine article)
- "Desperado" (song)

The National Inquirer article "Space Aliens Land in Graceland" amused me.

"Rocky Raccoon" is my favorite song on the Beatles' White Album.



## Dates and Time



Capitalize days of the week and months. Each of the following formats is acceptable for noting dates:

December 31, 1999



31 December 1999



When writing a date within a sentence, place a comma after the day of the week, after the date, and after the year:

On Wednesday, January 1, 2000, I will be eighteen years old!



**Hint:** When only the month and day or only the month and year are given, no punctuation is necessary:

We began rehearsals on December 10 but performed in January 1997.



When writing out times, use the numeral and a colon between the hour and minutes. Write only the hour if there are no minutes. Indicate morning or evening with the abbreviations *a.m.* and *p.m.* Note that both abbreviations are lower case and that a period is placed after each letter:


Meet me at the subway station at 7 p.m. because the movie starts at 8:10.

# Numbers

 Spell out numbers of **one or two words**; numbers of **more than two words** are usually written as numerals:

ten; twenty-five; fifty thousand

but 3 1/2; 101; and 2,020

 Use **numerals** to express numbers in the following forms: dates, pages, chapters, decimals, percents, addresses, time, identification numbers, and statistics:

June 8, 1996; 44 BC; AD 79  
pages 287-89; chapter 7  
27.6; 2 percent  
1388 Country Road

3:30 p.m.  
Interstate 5; Spanish 7  
a vote of 23 to 4  
34 mph; 5 milliliters

**Hint:** When numbers are used frequently in a piece of writing, such as in statistical and technical writing, you may express all measurements as numerals:

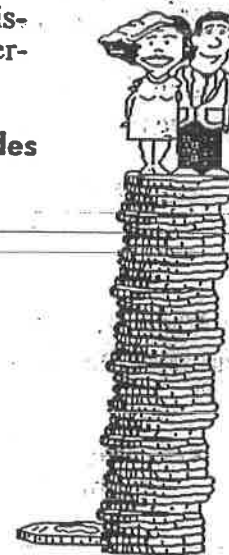
In 4 experiments of psychic phenomenon, 79 percent of the couples could predict the correct sum of money 2 out of 3 times.

When a mixture of numbers—some one or two words, some longer—are used together, they should be kept in the same style:

How could a team of 5 couples discover what an association of 2,250 scientists and economists could not?

You may use a combination of words and numbers for very large numbers:

1.5 million; 3 billion to 3.2 billion; 25 million dollars



 When a number begins a sentence, always spell it out:

Two hundred thirty people claimed to have seen UFOs in Alaska in 1996.  
Nineteen ninety-two was an incredible year for tracking para-normal behavior.

**Hint:** If this rule creates a clumsy sentence, change the sentence structure:

Clumsy: Eight hundred and ninety-five people say they have talked to aliens within the last five years.

Better: Within the last five years, 895 people say they have talked to aliens.

# Sentence Parts & Types

## Parts of Speech

☞ **Parts of speech** refer to the way words are used in sentences. There are eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

### Noun

☞ A **noun** is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea. Nouns may be common or proper; proper nouns are capitalized:

**Common:** *brother, newspaper, beach, democracy, baseball, campus, music*

**Proper:** *Grand Canyon Michael Johnson Sea World Super Bowl*

☞ Nouns may also be grouped as concrete, abstract, or collective:

**Concrete:** names a tangible thing (can be touched or seen):

*sportscar guitar White House soccer ice cream*

**Abstract:** names an idea, doctrine, thought, theory, concept, condition, or feeling (something that cannot be touched or seen):

*joy Christianity illness love euphoria excellence prejudice*

**Collective:** names a group or unit:

*faculty herd school audience San Diego Chargers*

**Hint:** Nouns may also be grouped by their function in a sentence: subject, object, complement, appositive, or modifier.

### Pronoun

☞ A **pronoun** is a word used in place of a noun. **Personal pronouns** change form to indicate case, gender, number, and person:

|                         | <u>Singular</u>          |                             |                                   | <u>Plural</u>             |                             |                               |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                         | 1st person               | 2nd person                  | 3rd person                        | 1st person                | 2nd person                  | 3rd person                    |
| <b>Nominative case:</b> | <i>I</i>                 | <i>you</i>                  | <i>he/she/it</i>                  | <i>we</i>                 | <i>you</i>                  | <i>they</i>                   |
| <b>Objective case:</b>  | <i>me</i>                | <i>you</i>                  | <i>him/her/it</i>                 | <i>us</i>                 | <i>you</i>                  | <i>them</i>                   |
| <b>Possessive case:</b> | <i>my</i><br><i>mine</i> | <i>your</i><br><i>yours</i> | <i>his/her</i><br><i>hers/its</i> | <i>our</i><br><i>ours</i> | <i>your</i><br><i>yours</i> | <i>their</i><br><i>theirs</i> |

☞ Other pronouns are reflexive, relative, indefinite, interrogative, and demonstrative:

Reflexive: myself, himself, herself, itself, yourself, themselves, ourselves  
Relative: who, whose, whom, which, what, that  
Indefinite: another, everything, many, nobody, several, someone, everybody  
Interrogative: who, whose, whom, which, what  
Demonstrative: this, that, these, those

**Hint:** All pronouns have antecedents. An antecedent is the noun or pronoun that the pronoun refers to or replaces. (See pages 21 and 22 for more about antecedents.)

## Adjective

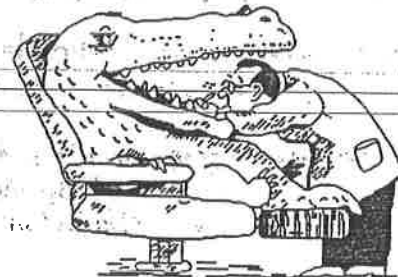
☞ An adjective is a word that modifies a noun or pronoun:

Little people peek through big steering wheels.

☞ An adjective does not always come before the word it modifies:

The dentist, daring and diligent, worked on his new patient's cavities.

**Hint:** The articles *a*, *an*, and *the* are also adjectives.



## Verb

☞ A verb is a word that expresses action or helps to make a statement.

☞ An action verb expresses mental or physical action:

speaking  
hoping

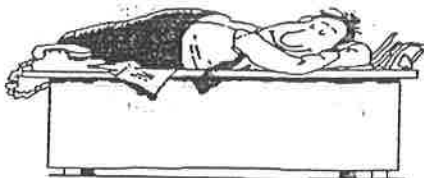
composing  
believing

driving  
approving

participating  
understanding

catching  
choosing

☞ A helping verb helps the main verb to express action or make a statement. The main verb plus the helping verb (italicized) together make a verb phrase:



My dad will work late one or two nights a week.

He should be sleeping in his bed.

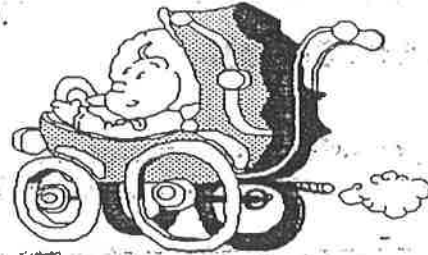
☞ Verbs of being include all the forms of the verb *be*:

**be am is are was were being been**

Verbs of being also include verb phrases ending in *be*, *being*, or *been*, such as *could be*, *was being*, and *could have been*.

☞ A **linking verb** connects the subject of the sentence with a word that describes or explains it. The most common linking verb is *be* and its forms (above). Other linking verbs include such verbs as *smell*, *look*, *taste*, *remain*, *appear*, *sound*, *seem*, *become*, and *grow*:

In his new carriage, the baby felt cool. He was a driver! He looked more mature.



## Verb Tenses

☞ Verb tenses indicate time: past, present, and future. The six tenses are formed from the principal parts of the verb:

**Infinitive**  
to march

**Present Participle**  
marching

**Past**  
marched

**Past Participle**  
marched

☞ **Regular verbs** follow rules when forming the six tenses. **Irregular verbs** follow no fixed rules; you simply have to memorize them or consult a dictionary. Regular verbs are formed as follows:

**Present tense** expresses action that is occurring at the present time or action that happens continually, regularly:

I watch

she talks

The band marches every day.

**Past tense** expresses action that was completed at a particular time in the past:

I watched

she talked

The band marched yesterday.

**Future tense** expresses action that will occur in the future:

I shall watch

she will talk

The band will march tomorrow.

**Present perfect tense** expresses action that began in the past but continues in the present:

I have watched

she has talked

The band has marched all fall.

**Past perfect tense** expresses action that began in the past and was completed in the past:

I had watched

she had talked

The band had marched on Labor Day.

**Future perfect tense** expresses action that will be completed in the future before some other future action or event:

I shall have watched she will have talked

The band will have marched 178 days by vacation.

# Adverb

☞ An **adverb** modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. An adverb tells *how, when, where, why, how often, to what extent, and how much*:

Yesterday a fire completely destroyed the home of a family on Hill Street.

Rarely does a fire last so long.

The family looked totally grungy after hauling out their valuables all day.

# Preposition

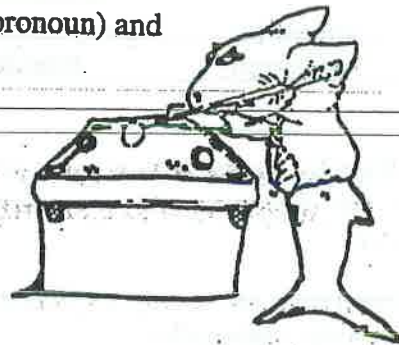
☞ A **preposition** is a word (or group of words) that shows the relationship between its object (a noun or a pronoun that follows the preposition) and another word in the sentence.

**Hint:** Prepositions may be **simple** (*at, in, of, to, for, with*), **compound** (*without, inside, alongside*), or **phrasal** (*in spite of, on top of, aside from, because of*).

☞ A **preposition** never stands alone in a sentence; it is always used in a **prepositional phrase** with the object of a preposition (a noun or pronoun) and the modifiers of the object:

The pool shark leaned over the ball with a confident smirk on his face.

Standing near the table, he consciously ignored the hisses of the crowd.



# Conjunction

☞ A **conjunction** connects individual words or groups of words:

A puffer fish is short and fat.

A tiny bird cannot fly, nor can it feed itself.

☞ There are three kinds of **conjunctions**:

**Coordinating conjunctions:** and but or nor for so yet

**Correlative conjunctions:** either . . . or                      neither . . . nor  
not only . . . but also                      both . . . and  
whether . . . or                                      just . . . as

**Subordinating conjunctions:** after, although, as, as much as, as though, because, before, if, in order that, provided that, since, than, though, unless, until, when, where, whereas, while



# Interjection

☞ An **interjection** is a word or group of words that expresses strong emotion or surprise. Punctuation (often a comma or exclamation point) is used to separate an interjection from the rest of the sentence:

Cool, the boat's leaking.

Oh, no! I can't swim.

# Clauses and Phrases

## Clauses

☞ A **clause** is a group of words that contains both a subject and a predicate:

My uncle looks and walks exactly like Groucho Marx.  
subject predicate



**Hint:** Some clauses can stand alone as sentences; others must be grouped with other clauses to create a complete sentence.

☞ An **independent clause** can stand alone as a sentence:

Because he looks like Groucho Marx, he won five hundred dollars in a contest.  
independent clause

☞ A **dependent clause** has a subject and predicate, but it would be an incomplete sentence by itself. A dependent clause contains a subordinating conjunction (e.g., *because*) and **must be joined** to an independent clause:

Because he looks like Groucho Marx, he won five hundred dollars in a contest.  
dependent clause



## Phrases

☞ A **phrase** is a group of related words that work together as a single part of speech. It is not a clause because it lacks a subject and/or predicate:

Under the old refrigerator, . . .

Running from the Energizer Bunny, . . .

# Essential and Nonessential Clauses and Phrases

☞ Essential or "restrictive" clauses and phrases cannot be removed from a sentence without changing its meaning. They usually begin with *that* or *who*:

Horses that are overly nervous are usually not good for trail riding.

Carla Davis is the only senior who won scholarships to four colleges.

☞ Nonessential or "nonrestrictive" clauses and phrases add information, but they are not necessary to the meaning of the sentence. They are set off by commas and usually begin with *which*, *whom*, or *whose*:

The new Stallone movie, which has a great soundtrack, starts this weekend.

Joe, whom I love like a brother, is moving tomorrow.

## Sentence Beginnings

☞ Vary your sentence beginnings to add style to your writing. Try writing some sentence beginning with each of the following:

**Adjective:** word(s) that describe a noun:

Small and green, the turtle stood looking at the audience.

Exhausted, the rabbit fell across the finish line thirty minutes after the turtle.

**Adverb:** word(s) that describe the verb:

Boisterously, the crowd yelled for David Bowie to get the show started.

Indignantly and arrogantly, the tabby cat turned her back on the cat show.

**Prepositional phrase:** a phrase that contains a preposition (*at*, *on*, *over*, *through*, *under*, *between*, etc.) and the object of the preposition:

During the summer my brother skateboards everyday.

In another nine months, the dude will get his driver's license.

**Hint:** Use a comma after a long introductory prepositional phrase (four or more words).



**Participial phrase:** Since a participle is a verb that can function as an adjective (e.g., *melting ice cream*), a participial phrase is one that consists of a participle and its modifiers and complements:

**Present:** Looking for his mother, the toddler scooted under the clothes rack.  
Remembering that she had a child, Bertha searched the store for her son.

**Past:** Exhausted from doing sit-ups, the flabby senior collapsed on the sofa.  
Purchased just a few days ago, his gold and ruby class ring flashed in the sun.

**Adverb clause:** a clause (subject and verb) that describes how, what, where, when or why. It always begins with a subordinating conjunction (*after, although, as before, when, where, while, etc.*):

Before she could give her speech, Clara fell off the stage.  
When the paramedics came, they resuscitated her.

**Appositive phrase:** a noun and its modifiers that stand beside another noun to explain or identify it:

An innocent bystander, Martin gasped at the crime he witnessed.

A classy, new, red Mustang, my sister's car was hit by a speeding vehicle of joy riders.



## Sentence Types

☞ Use a variety of sentence types to add style to your writing:

**Simple sentences** contain just one independent clause: **I hate spiders.**

**Compound sentences** contain two or more independent clauses that are joined by a semicolon or a comma and a coordinating conjunction like *and*:

**I hate spiders; tarantulas are the worst.**  
**I hate spiders, but I do not mind snakes.**

**Complex sentences** contain an independent clause (underlined) and one or more dependent clauses (italicized):

**Although I do not mind snakes, *I hate spiders.***

**Compound-complex sentences** contain two or more independent clauses (underlined) and one or more dependent clauses (italicized):

**Although I hate spiders, I do not mind snakes, and I like lizards.**

# Solving Writing Problems

## Run Ons and Fragments

☞ Avoid fragments and run ons, including comma splices.

☞ A fragment is a group of words written as a sentence but missing a subject, a verb, or some other essential part. The missing element causes it to be an incomplete thought:

**Fragment:** Mark Twain said that at the age of fourteen. He was convinced that his parents were among the stupidest people on the face of the earth. (Fragment followed by a sentence. Correct it by combining the fragment with the sentence.)

**Sentence:** Mark Twain said that at the age of fourteen he was convinced that his parents were among the stupidest people on the face of the earth.

**Fragment:** When he reached twenty-one. (This clause does not convey a complete thought. What happened?)

**Sentence:** When he reached twenty-one, he was amazed at how much they had learned in only seven short years.

☞ A run-on sentence is the result of two sentences run together without adequate punctuation or a connecting word:

**Run-on:** Smoke started billowing from under a Rolls Royce in Beverly Hills then the driver doused the flames with a bottle of Evian water.

**Correct:** Smoke started billowing from under a Rolls Royce in Beverly Hills; then the driver doused the flames with a bottle of Evian water. (Semicolon has been added.)

☞ A comma splice is a sophisticated kind of run-on sentence in which two sentences are connected ("spliced") with only a comma. A comma is not strong enough to connect two independent clauses; a period, semicolon, or conjunction is needed:

**Splice:** The two teams faced off, neither one could make any yardage.

**Correct:** The two teams faced off, but neither one could make any yardage. (Conjunction has been added.)





# Subject and Verb Agreement

☞ Make sure that a verb agrees with its subject (singular or plural):

A young woman lives next door.  
subject verb

Young women live next door.  
subject verb

**Hint:** Do not be confused by other words coming between the subject and the verb:

The student as well as her parents is invited to honors night.  
subject verb

☞ Use a plural verb with **compound subjects** connected with *and* :

Making the soccer team and keeping up my grades are my two highest priorities.  
compound subject verb

☞ Use a singular verb with these **singular indefinite pronouns**: *either, neither, one, everybody, another, anybody, everyone, nobody, everything, somebody, and someone*:



Everybody is going to the dance after the game.  
subject verb

Either Joe or Sal is giving me a ride home at 11 p.m.  
subject verb

**Hint:** Do not be confused by words coming between the pronoun and the verb:

Each of the girls is planning to buy a new outfit for the dance.  
subject verb

☞ Some other **indefinite pronouns** (*all, any, half, most, none, and some*) may be either **singular or plural** depending on the meaning of the sentence:


Some of the show was hilarious.  
All of the homework seems simple.  
Half of the popcorn was gone

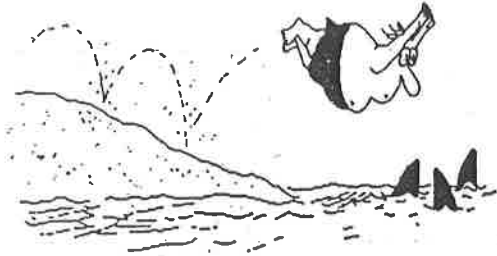
Some of the actors were hilarious.  
All of the exercises seem simple.  
Half of the cokes were gone.

☞ When the **subject follows the verb**, as in questions and in sentences beginning with *here* and *there*, be careful to find the **subject** and make sure that the verb agrees with it:

There are many hardworking students on the honor roll this semester.  
verb subject

# Active and Passive Voice

 For a stronger writing style, use **active verbs**, whenever you can, rather than **passive verbs**. With passive verbs, the subject of the sentence is the receiver of the action; passive verbs make writing slow moving and impersonal:



**Passive:** The island was deluged by a hurricane.

**Active:** A hurricane deluged the island.

**Passive:** A dangerous rescue was made by volunteers after dark, but no sharks were encountered.

**Active:** Volunteers made a dangerous rescue after dark but encountered no sharks.


- Hint:**
- Any form of the helping verb *be* (*be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been*) is a clue that your sentence may be written in passive voice.
  - To change to active voice, begin with the person or thing doing the action.

# Pronoun Problems

## Pronoun Agreement

 Make sure that a **pronoun agrees** with its antecedent. The antecedent is the noun (or pronoun) that the pronoun refers to or replaces:

When Matilda dances, she makes the whole dance floor sway and bounce.  
antecedent                      pronoun

 Use a **singular pronoun** to refer to such antecedents as *each, either, neither, one, anyone, anybody, everyone, everybody, somebody, another, and nobody*:

Everybody must learn how to turn his car alarm off.  
Either Sue or Jane needs to let me borrow her vocabulary book.

**Hint:** Often an error in pronoun agreement is made to avoid sexism: When pronouns such as *a person* or *everyone* are used to refer to both sexes or either sex, you should either offer optional pronouns or rewrite the sentence in the plural form:

Optional pronouns: Everybody must learn how to turn his or her car alarm off.  
Rewritten in plural form: People must learn how to turn their car alarms off.

# Nominative and Objective Cases of Pronouns

☞ Use the **nominative** case when a pronoun describes the subject of a clause. Usually the nominative pronoun describes who or what is doing the action. The following are nominative: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they, who, whoever.*

I wish that he had a new glove.

They need to get one for him before the next game.

Otherwise Steve and he are going to warm the bench.

Who can pick out one without a hole in it?



☞ Use the **objective** case when the pronoun describes the direct or indirect **object** of the sentence—in other words, when it describes who or what is taking the action. An objective pronoun should also be used within a prepositional phrase when the pronoun is the **object** of the preposition. The following are objective pronouns: *me, you, him, her, it, us, them, whom, whomever.*

Throw the ball to her; she's open. (*Her* is the indirect object of the verb *throw*.)

I gave the award to him because he deserved it. (*Him* is the indirect object of the verb *gave*.)

My dad is taking my brother and me to practice. (*Brother and me* are direct objects of the verb *is taking*.)

Dwayne sat behind Norman and us. (*Norman and us* are the objects of the preposition *behind*.)

We did not hear whom the coach had named. (*Whom* is the direct object of the verb *had named*.)

## Clear Pronoun Reference

☞ Avoid **ambiguous** reference that occurs when the pronoun could refer to more than one antecedent:

Joe is a big Bugs Bunny fan; he (?) taught me everything I know about comedy.  
(Which one taught me about comedy, Bugs Bunny or Joe?)

☞ Avoid **confusing** general references by always following such words as *this* or *that* with a noun:

**Confusing:** The Padres won their game last night even though Tony Gwynn struck out. That could be the turning point of the season.

**Clear:** That game could be the turning point of the season.  
noun



# Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

☞ Avoid **misplacing** modifiers by placing them next to the word they modify. Misplaced modifiers have been placed incorrectly, making the meaning of the sentence unclear:

**Misplaced:** They sold an assortment of exercise equipment for active people with a lifetime guarantee.

**Correct:** For active people, they sold an assortment of exercise equipment with a lifetime guarantee.

**Misplaced:** The thief decided to run when he saw the police officer abandoning the stolen vehicle and dashing into the woods.

**Correct:** When he saw the police officer, the thief decided to run, abandoning the stolen vehicle and dashing into the woods.

☞ Avoid **dangling** modifiers that appear to modify a word that isn't in the sentence:

**Dangling:** Carrying a heavy stack of trays, her foot caught in the doorway.

**Correct:** Carrying a heavy stack of trays, Jenny caught her foot in the doorway.

**Dangling:** Adjusting the binoculars, a dizzy-headed jay was finally spotted.

**Correct:** Adjusting the binoculars, Audrey finally spotted a dizzy-headed jay.



# Parallel Structure

☞ Maintain **parallel structure** by expressing parallel ideas with the same tense or structure of words or phrases in a sentence:

**Wrong:** We learned how to change a tire, shift sixteen gears, and once almost ran the truck off the road.

**Right:** We learned how to change a tire, shift sixteen gears, and keep the truck from running off the road.


**Wrong:** I have mowed the lawn, washed the dog, rescued our hamster, and went to the store all in one day.

**Right:** I mowed the lawn, washed the dog, rescued our hamster, and went to the store all in one day.

**Wrong:** Water skiing no longer interests me as much as to go scuba diving.

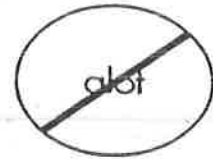
**Right:** Water skiing no longer interests me as much as scuba diving.

# Using the Right Word

 **a lot:** *A lot* is always two words; however, *a lot* is a vague descriptive phrase that should be avoided in formal writing:

Informal: I have a lot of jelly beans in my lunch.


Formal: I have many jelly beans in my lunch.



 **accept/except:** *Accept* means "to receive or take"; *except* means "to leave out":

I will happily accept your offer of a free lunch.

Except for Joe, everyone has really cool purple shoes.

 **affect/effect:** *Affect* is a verb that means "to influence"; *effect* is most commonly seen as a noun that means "result," but it is also used as a verb that means "to bring about":

The movie affected me so much that I cried.

The love potion had a strange effect on Rosie.

I ran for office to effect change in our school.

 **all right:** *All right* is always two words; there is no such word as *alright*.


I'll be all right once I catch my breath.



 **among/between:** *Among* refers to three or more persons or things; *between* refers to only two persons or things:

Among the three of us, we could not produce a single good idea.

However, between you and me, we have enough money for lunch.

 **amount/number:** *Amount* refers to a quantity that cannot be counted; *number* refers to a quantity that can be counted:

A great amount of water flooded my bathroom when I left the tap on.

A large number of people showed up to hear Hootie and the Blowfish.


 **bad/badly:** *Bad* is always an adjective; *badly* is always an adverb:

The bad child was sent to his room.

There he practiced badly on his tuba.

I feel bad (ill).

I feel badly (have an inferior tactile sense).

 **beside/besides:** *Beside* means "next to"; *besides* means "in addition to":

Besides Newt, everyone on the team got cool, new high tops.

I stood beside Newt when he got the first shot.

☞ **can/may:** *Can* indicates ability; *may* indicates permission:

I can solve algebra problems . . . eventually.

You may go to the restroom . . . now!

☞ **fewer/less:** *Fewer* refers to quantities that can be counted; *less* refers to quantities that cannot be counted:

Since she lost her marbles, she has fewer than I do.

Whah! I got less ice cream than she did.

☞ **further/farther:** *Further* refers to a greater extent, time or degree; *farther* refers to a greater distance:

We will discuss post modernism further tomorrow.

I plan to go several inches farther on my next long-jump attempt.

☞ **goes/went:** Do not use *go* or *went* when you mean *say* or *said*:

Then she said (not goes), "No way!"

☞ **hanged/hung:** A person is *hanged*; everything else is *hung*.

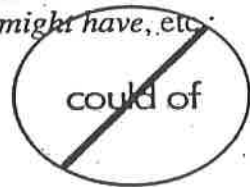
The outlaw was hanged at high noon in the sycamore gulch.

The velvet Elvis' painting hung prominently in the bathroom.

☞ **have (not of):** Write *could have*, *should have*, *would have*, *might have*, etc.:

Wrong: I could of won.

Right: I could have won; I just didn't feel like it.



☞ **i.e./e.g.:** The Latin abbreviation *i.e.* means "that is." The abbreviation *e.g.* means "for example":

The country's leader (i.e., the president) declared war.

I love candy (e.g., chocolate truffles).

☞ **its/it's:** When speaking of something that *it* possesses, use *its*; *it's* is the contraction of *it is*:

Without its mother, the monster felt lonely and scared.

It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game.