



Guide to Writing

Lumen Learning



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MODULE 1: GRAMMAR

WHY IS GRAMMAR IMPORTANT?

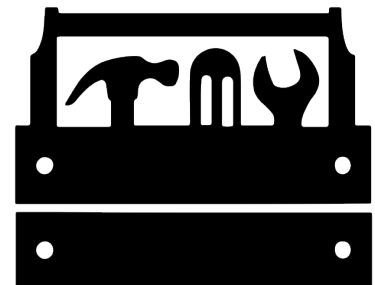
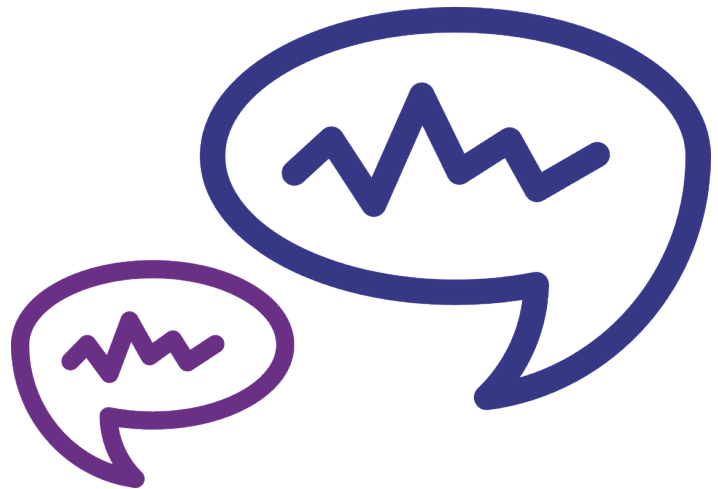
Take a moment and try to imagine a world without language: written, signed, or spoken. It's pretty hard to conceptualize, right? Language is a constant presence all around us. It's how we communicate with others; without language it would be incredibly difficult to connect people.

Many people are self-conscious of their speech and worry that the way they talk is incorrect: this simply isn't true. There are several different types of English—all of which are equally dynamic and complex. However, each variety is appropriate in different situations. When you're talking to your friends, you should use slang and cultural references—if you speak in formal language, you can easily come off as uptight or rude. If you're sending a quick casual message—via

social media or texting—you don't need to worry too much about capitalization or strict punctuation. Feel free to have five exclamation points standing alone, if that gets your point across.

However, there's this thing called Standard American English. This type of English exists the sake of communication across cultural lines, where standardized rules and conventions are necessary. How many times have you heard people of older generations ask just what *smh* or *rn* mean? This is where grammar comes in. Grammar is a set of rules and conventions that dictate how Standard American English works. These rules are simply tools that speakers of a language can use. When you learn how to use the language, you can craft your message to communicate exactly what you want to convey.

Additionally, when you speak or write with poor grammar, others will often make judgements about who you are as a person. As Williams and Colomb say, "Follow all the rules all the time because sometime, someone will criticize you for something." (Williams, Joseph M. and Gregory G. Colomb. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 3rd ed. Boston: Longman. 2012, p. 14.)



Code Switching

Code switching is the ability to use two different varieties (or dialects) of the same language. Most people do this instinctively. If you were writing a paper, you might say something like "The experiment requires not one but four different procedures" in order to emphasize number. In an informal online setting, on the other hand, you might say something like "I saw two (2) buses drive past."

The most important facet of code switching is knowing when to use which variety. In formal academic writing, standardized English is the correct variety to use. As you go through this module, remember that these are the rules for just one type of English.

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INTRODUCTION TO NOUNS

Nouns are a diverse group of words, and they are very common in English. Nouns are a category of words defining **things**—people, places, items, concepts. The video below is brief introduction to them and the role they play:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/UejW-WQpujs>

As we've just learned, a noun is the name of a person (Dr. Sanders), place (Lawrence, Kansas, factory, home), thing (scissors, saw, book), or idea (love, truth, beauty, intelligence).

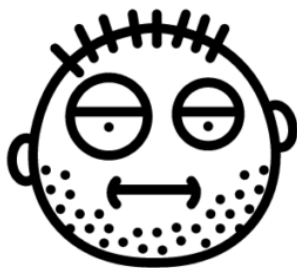
Let's look at the following examples to get a better idea of how nouns work in sentences. All of the nouns have been bolded:

- The one **experiment** that has been given the most **attention** in the **debate** on **saccharin** is the 1977 Canadian **study** done on **rats**.
- The multi-fuel **capacity** of the Stirling **engine** gives it a versatility not possible in the internal combustion **engine**.
- The regenerative cooling **cycle** in the **engines** of the Space **Shuttle** is made up of high pressure **hydrogen** that flows in **tubes** connecting the **nozzle** and the combustion **chamber**.

Types of Nouns

Of the many different categories of nouns, a couple deserve closer attention here.

Common vs. Proper Noun



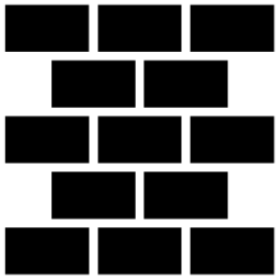
vs.



Common nouns are generic words, like *tissue*. They are lower-cased (unless they begin a sentence). A proper noun, on the other hand, is the name of a specific thing, like the brand name *Kleenex*. Proper nouns are always capitalized.

- common noun: name
- proper noun: Ester

Concrete vs. Abstract Noun



vs.

Concrete nouns are things you can hold, see, or otherwise sense, like *book*, *light*, or *warmth*.

Abstract nouns, on the other hand, are (as you might expect) abstract concepts, like *time* and *love*.

- concrete noun: rock
- abstract noun: justice

The rest of this section will dig into other types of nouns: count v. non-count nouns, compound nouns, and plural nouns.

Practice

Look at each of the following nouns and determine if they are common or proper and if they are concrete or abstract. For example:

- *justice* is a common abstract noun.

Buddhism	<input type="text"/>	Robert	<input type="text"/>
cathedral	<input type="text"/>	talent	<input type="text"/>

Answers

Buddhism	<i>Buddhism</i> is a proper abstract noun.	Robert	<i>Robert</i> is a proper concrete noun.
cathedral	<i>cathedral</i> is a common concrete noun.	talent	<i>talent</i> is a common abstract noun

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REGULAR PLURAL NOUNS

A plural noun indicates that there is more than one of that noun (while a singular noun indicates that there is just one of the noun). Most plural forms are created by simply adding an -s or -es to the end of the singular word. For example, there's one **dog** (singular), but three **dogs** (plural). However, English has both regular and irregular plural nouns. Regular plurals follow this rule (and other similar rules), but irregular plurals are, well, not regular and don't follow a "standard" rule.



Let's start with regular plurals: **regular plural nouns** use established patterns to indicate there is more than one of a thing.

Recognize nouns marked with plural form -s.

As was mentioned earlier, we add the plural suffix -s to most words:

- cat → cats
- bear → bears
- zebra → zebras

However, after sounds *s*, *z*, *sh*, *ch*, and *j*, we add the plural suffix -es:

- class → classes
- sash → sashes
- fox → foxes

Some words that end in *z* also double their ending consonant, like *quizzes*.

Practice

Do you know how to spell the plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
book	<input type="text"/>	peach	<input type="text"/>
chair	<input type="text"/>	buzz	<input type="text"/>
picture	<input type="text"/>	watch	<input type="text"/>

Answers

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
book	<i>books</i>	peach	<i>peaches</i>

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
chair	<i>chairs</i>	buzz	<i>buzzes</i>
picture	<i>pictures</i>	watch	<i>watches</i>

After the letter o.

We also add the plural suffix **–es** to most words that end in **o**:

- potato → potatoes
- hero → heroes
- mosquito → mosquitoes

However, when the words have a foreign origin (e.g., Latin, Greek, Spanish), we just add the plural suffix **–s**

- taco → tacos
- avocado → avocados
- maestro → maestros

Note: While you won't be expected to know which words have a foreign origin, being familiar with (or memorizing) some common words that use this plural can be really helpful. And remember, if you're ever in doubt, the dictionary is there for you!

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
solo	<input type="text"/>	portfolio	<input type="text"/>
veto	<input type="text"/>	memo	<input type="text"/>
echo	<input type="text"/>	radio	<input type="text"/>
avocado	<input type="text"/>	zero	<input type="text"/>
studio	<input type="text"/>	potato	<input type="text"/>

Answers

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
solo	<i>solos</i>	portfolio	<i>portfolios</i>
veto	<i>veto</i> es	memo	<i>memo</i> s
echo	<i>echo</i> es	radio	<i>radio</i> s
avocado	<i>avocado</i> s	zero	<i>zero</i> es
studio	<i>studio</i> s	potato	<i>potato</i> es

After *-y* and *-f*, *-fe*

When a word ends in *y* and there is a consonant before *y*, we change the *y* to *i* and add *-es*.

- sky → skies
- candy → candies
- lady → ladies

However, if the *y* follows another vowel, you simply add an *-s*.

- alloy → alloys
- donkey → donkeys
- day → days

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
supply	<input type="text"/>	key	<input type="text"/>
fly	<input type="text"/>	play	<input type="text"/>
ally	<input type="text"/>	boy	<input type="text"/>

Answers

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
supply	<i>supplies</i>	key	<i>keys</i>
flies	<i>fries</i>	play	<i>plays</i>
ally	<i>allies</i>	boy	<i>boys</i>

When a word ends in *-f* or *-fe*, we change the *f* to *v* and add *-es*.

- leaf → leaves
- life → lives
- calf → calves

However, if there are two terminal *fs* or if you still pronounce the *f* in the plural, then you simply add an *-s*:

- cliff → cliffs
- chief → chiefs
- reef → reefs

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
wolf	<input type="text"/>	self	<input type="text"/>
sheaf	<input type="text"/>	roof	<input type="text"/>
knife	<input type="text"/>	thief	<input type="text"/>

Answers

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
wolf	<i>wolves</i>	self	<i>selves</i>
sheaf	<i>sheaves</i>	roof	<i>roofs</i>
knife	<i>knives</i>	thief	<i>thieves</i>

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IRREGULAR PLURAL NOUNS

Irregular plurals, unlike regular plurals, don't necessarily follow any particular pattern—instead, they follow a lot of *different* patterns. Because of this, irregular plurals require a lot of memorization; you need to remember which nouns belong to which type of pluralization. Mastering irregulars uses a different region of your brain than regular pluralization: it's an entirely different skill set than regular pluralization. So don't get too frustrated if you can't remember the correct plural. If you're ever in doubt, the dictionary is there for you.



No Change (Base Plurals)

The first kind of irregular plural we'll talk about is the **no-change** or **base plural**. In these words, the singular noun has the exact same form as the plural. Most no-change plurals are types of animals:

- sheep
- fish
- deer
- moose

Mid-Word Vowel Change

In a few words, the mid-word vowels are changed to form the plural. This video lists all seven of these words and their plurals.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/VdLOP9teko4>

Note: The plural for a computer mouse (as opposed to the fuzzy animal) can either be *mice* or *mouses*. Some people prefer *mouses* as it creates some differentiation between the two words.

Plural *-en*

And last we have **plural *-en***. In these words *-en* is used as the plural ending instead of *-s* or *-es*.

- child → children
- ox → oxen
- brother → brethren
- sister → sistren

Note: *Brethren* and *sistren* are antiquated terms that you're unlikely to run into in your life; however, since these are the only four words in English that use this plural, all four have been included above.

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
goose	<input type="text"/>	moose	<input type="text"/>
fish	<input type="text"/>	child	<input type="text"/>
man	<input type="text"/>	tooth	<input type="text"/>

Answers

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
goose	<i>geese</i>	moose	<i>moose</i>
fish	<i>fish</i>	child	<i>children</i>
man	<i>men</i>	tooth	<i>teeth</i>

Borrowed Words *-i, -en, -a, -es, -ae*

The last category of irregular plurals is borrowed words. These words are native to other languages (e.g., Latin, Greek) and have retained the pluralization rules from their original tongue.

Singular *-us*; Plural *-i*

- cactus → cacti
- fungus → fungi
- syllabus → syllabi

In informal speech, *cactuses* and *funguses* are acceptable. *Octopuses* is preferred to *octopi*, but *octopi* is an accepted word.

Singular *-a*; Plural *-ae*

- formula → formulae (sometimes *formulas*)
- vertebra → vertebrae
- larva → larvae

Singular *-ix, -ex*; Plural *-ices, -es*

- appendix → appendices (sometimes *appendixes*)
- index → indices

Singular *-on, -um*; Plural *-a*

- criterion → criteria

- bacterium → bacteria
- medium → media

Singular *-is*; Plural *-es*

- analysis → analyses
- crisis → crises
- thesis → theses

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
memorandum	<input type="text"/>	emphasis	<input type="text"/>
focus	<input type="text"/>	basis	<input type="text"/>
nucleus	<input type="text"/>	phenomenon	<input type="text"/>
appendix	<input type="text"/>	curriculum	<input type="text"/>
parenthesis	<input type="text"/>	hypothesis	<input type="text"/>
stimulus	<input type="text"/>	vertebra	<input type="text"/>

Answers

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
memorandum	<i>memoranda</i>	emphasis	<i>emphases</i>
focus	<i>foci</i> (<i>focuses</i> is also acceptable)	basis	<i>bases</i>
nucleus	<i>nuclei</i>	phenomenon	<i>phenomena</i>
appendix	<i>appendices</i> (<i>appendixes</i> is also acceptable)	curriculum	<i>curricula</i>
parenthesis	<i>parentheses</i>	hypothesis	<i>hypotheses</i>
stimulus	<i>stimuli</i>	vertebra	<i>vertebrae</i>

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COUNT VS. NON-COUNT NOUNS

A **count noun** (also **countable noun**) is a noun that can be modified by a numeral (*three chairs*) and that occurs in both singular and plural forms (*chair, chairs*). The can also be preceded by words such as *a, an, or the* (*a chair*). Quite literally, count nouns are nouns which can be counted.

A **non-count noun** (also **mass noun**), on the other hand, has none of these properties. It can't be modified by a numeral (*three furniture* is incorrect), occur in singular/plural (*furnitures* is not a word), or co-occur with *a, an, or the* (*a furniture* is incorrect). Again, quite literally, non-count nouns are nouns which cannot be counted.

Example: Chair vs. Furniture

The sentence pairs below compare the count noun *chair* and the non-count noun *furniture*.

There are **chairs** in the room. (correct)
There are **furnitures** in the room. (incorrect)

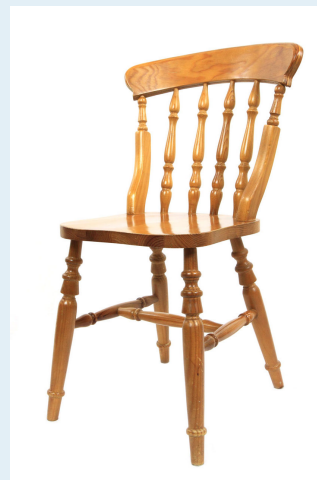
There is **a chair** in the room. (correct)
There is **a furniture** in the room. (incorrect)

There is **chair** in the room. (incorrect)
There is **furniture** in the room. (correct)

Every **chair** is man made. (correct)
Every **furniture** is man made. (incorrect)

All **chair** is man made. (incorrect)
All **furniture** is man made. (correct)

There are **several chairs** in the room. (correct)
There are **several furnitures** in the room. (incorrect)



Determining the Type of Noun

In general, a count noun is going to be something you can easily count—like *rock* or *dollar bill*. Non-count nouns, on the other hand, would be more difficult to count—like *sand* or *money*. If you ever want to identify a singular non-count noun, you need a phrase beforehand—like *a grain of sand* or *a sum of money*.

Practice

Select the correct word to complete each sentence. Determine whether the correct word is a count or a non-count noun.

1. The internet is contains a lot of (information / fact).
2. The internet contains a lot of (informations / facts).
3. We each have a (work / job) to do.
4. We each have (work / job) to do.

Answers

1. The internet is full of **information**. *Information* is a non-count noun.
2. The internet contains many **facts**. *Facts* is a count noun. The word “informations” is incorrect because *information* is non-count and doesn’t have a plural form.
3. We each have a **job** to do. *Job* is a count noun, so it needs an article (*a*).
4. We each have **work** to do. *Work* is a non-count noun.

Less, Fewer, Many, and Much

The adjectives *less* and *fewer* are both used to indicate a smaller amount of the noun they modify. *Many* and *much* are used to indicate a large amount of something. People often will use these pairs words interchangeably; however, the words *fewer* and *many* are used with count nouns, while *less* and *much* are used with non-count nouns:

- The pet day care has **fewer** dogs than cats this week.
- Next time you make these cookies, you should use **less** sugar.
- **Many** poets struggle when they try to determine if a poem is complete or not.
- There’s too **much** goodness in her heart for her own good.

You may have noticed that *much* has followed the adverb *too* in this example (*too much*). This is because you rarely find *much* by itself. You don’t really hear people say things like “Now please leave me alone; I have *much* research to do.” The phrase “a lot of” has taken its place in current English: “I have a lot of research to do.” *A lot of* can be used in the place of either *many* or *much*:

- **A lot of** poets struggle when they try to determine if a poem is complete or not.
- There’s **a lot of** goodness in her heart for her own good.

Practice

Read the following sentences. Decide if the bolded words have been treated correctly as count or non-count nouns.

1. Satya has a lot of **clothings**. Her mother has told her that before she can buy any more, she must get rid of five **shirts** and two **pants**.
2. There were much types of **food** at the event, including different **soups**, **salads**, and **desserts**.
3. Miguel loved studying **outer space**—especially the different **galaxy**.

Answers

1. No. All three nouns (*clothings*, *shirts*, and *pants*) have been treated as count nouns. However, only *shirts* is a count noun. The correct sentence would be “Satya has a lot of **clothing**. Her mother has told her that before she can buy any more, she must get rid of five shirts and two **pairs of pants**.”
 - Please not that even though the word *pants* ends in an s, it is not actually plural (or singular; it’s non-count!). The correct way to create a plural is *pairs of pants*.
2. No. *Food* is a non-count noun, so it takes *many* not *much*. However, *soups*, *salads*, and *desserts* are all plural count nouns and have been treated correctly. The correct sentence would be “There were **many** types of food at the event, including different soups, salads, and desserts.
3. No. *Outer space* is non-count, and has been treated as such, but *galaxy* is a count noun, and has been treated as a non-count. The correct sentence would be “Miguel loved studying outer space—especially the different **galaxies**.”

Choose the correct word to fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

1. You can only be in this line if you have fifteen items or ____.
2. Evelyn was disappointed in the weather forecast; there was ____ rain predicted. She preferred dry weather.
3. I had a lengthy list of my ____ ideas for the project.

Answers

1. You can only be in this line if you have fifteen items or **fewer**.
 - Because *items* is a count noun, *fewer* is required here. This may surprise you, since many stores have a “fifteen items or less” line, but, using *less* is grammatically incorrect. However, the prevalence of this phrase has made it so stores sound uppity if they use *fewer* instead of *less*. Some stores are avoiding this entire issue by saying “around fifteen items” instead.
2. Evelyn was disappointed in the weather forecast; there was a lot of rain predicted. She preferred dry weather.
 - While *much* would also fit in this blank, the phrase *a lot of* is much more common and more likely to be used.
3. I had a lengthy list of my **many** ideas for the project.
 - The adjective is modifying the count-noun *ideas*, so *many* is needed in this instance.

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COMPOUND NOUNS

A **compound noun** is a noun phrase made up of two nouns, e.g. *bus driver*, in which the first noun acts as a sort of adjective for the second one, but without really describing it. (For example, think about the difference between a *black bird* and a *blackbird*.)



Figure 1. A crow is a black bird, while a blackbird is a specific species of bird.

Compound nouns can be made up of two or more other words, but each compound has a single meaning. They may or may not be hyphenated, and they may be written with a space between words—especially if one of the words has more than one syllable, as in *living room*. In that regard, it’s necessary to avoid the over-

simplification of saying that two single-syllable words are written together as one word. Thus, *tablecloth* but *table mat*, *wine glass* but *wineglassful* or *key ring* but *keyholder*. Moreover, there are cases which some people/dictionaries will write one way while others write them another way. Until very recently we wrote *(the) week's end*, which later became *week-end* and then our beloved *weekend*.

Types of Compound Nouns

Short compounds may be written in three different ways:

- **The solid or closed forms** in which two usually moderately short words appear together as one. Solid compounds most likely consist of short units that often have been established in the language for a long time. Examples are *housewife*, *lawsuit*, *wallpaper*, *basketball*, etc.
- **The hyphenated form** in which two or more words are connected by a hyphen. This category includes compounds that contain suffixes, such as *house-build(er)* and *single-mind(ed)(ness)*. Compounds that contain articles, prepositions or conjunctions, such as *rent-a-cop* and *mother-of-pearl*, are also often hyphenated.
- **The open or spaced form** consisting of newer combinations of usually longer words, such as *distance learning*, *player piano*, *lawn tennis*, etc.

Hyphens are often considered a squishy part on language (we'll discuss this further in [Hyphens and Dashes](#)). Because of this, usage differs and often depends on the individual choice of the writer rather than on a hard-and-fast rule. This means open, hyphenated, and closed forms may be encountered for the same compound noun, such as the triplets *container ship/container-ship/containership* and *particle board/particle-board/particleboard*. If you're ever in doubt whether a compound should be closed, hyphenated, or open, dictionaries are your best reference.

Plurals

The process of making compound nouns plural has its own set of conventions to follow. In all forms of compound nouns, we pluralize the chief element of a compound word (i.e., we pluralize the primary noun of the compound).

- fisherman → fishermen
- black bird → black birds
- brother-in-law → brothers-in-law

The word *hand-me-down* doesn't have a distinct primary noun, so its plural is *hand-me-downs*.

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
do-it-yourself	<input type="text"/>	rabbit's foot	<input type="text"/>
have-not	<input type="text"/>	time-out	<input type="text"/>
spoonful	<input type="text"/>	lieutenant general	<input type="text"/>

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
runner-up		passerby	

Answers

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
do-it-yourself	<i>do-it-yourselves</i>	rabbit's foot	<i>rabbits' feet</i>
have-not	<i>have-nots</i>	time-out	<i>time-outs</i>
spoonful	<i>spoonfuls</i>	lieutenant general	<i>lieutenant generals</i>
runner-up	<i>runners-up</i>	passerby	<i>passersby</i>

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: NOUNS

Plural Nouns

Here are some additional exercises to practice using nouns:

Regular Plural Nouns

Look at each plural word in the table below. Write the singular version of the word and explain which rule the plural has used in its formation. For example:

- *vultures* is the plural of *vulture*. Despite *vultures* ending in *-es*, you simply add an *-s* to form the plural, as the *e* is a part of the singular word.
- *fries* is the plural of *fry*. To form the plural, the *y* was changed to an *i*, and we added *-es*.

trees		sopranos		watches	
tomatoes		waltzes		wrists	

reefs	<input type="text"/>	leaves	<input type="text"/>	flies	<input type="text"/>
cafes	<input type="text"/>	caves	<input type="text"/>	boys	<input type="text"/>

Answers

reefs	<i>reefs</i> is the plural of <i>reef</i> . –s is added. It is an exception to the rule.	leaves	<i>leaves</i> is the plural of <i>leaf</i> . the <i>f</i> is changed to a <i>v</i> , and –es is added	flies	<i>flies</i> is the plural of <i>fly</i> . the <i>y</i> is changed to an <i>i</i> , and –es is added
cafes	<i>cafes</i> is the plural of <i>cafe</i> . the –s is added (note that <i>cafe</i> is sometimes spelled with an accent mark: <i>café</i>)	caves	<i>caves</i> is the plural of <i>cave</i> . the –s is added	boys	<i>boys</i> is the plural of <i>boy</i> . –s is added because the <i>y</i> follows a vowel
trees	<i>trees</i> is the plural of <i>tree</i> . –s is added	sopranos	<i>sopranos</i> is the plural of <i>soprano</i> . –s is added despite the word ending in an <i>o</i> , because the word is borrowed from Italian	watches	<i>watches</i> is the plural of <i>watch</i> . –es is added because the word ends in <i>ch</i>
tomatoes	<i>tomatoes</i> is the plural of <i>tomato</i> . –es is added because it's a native English word	waltzes	<i>waltzes</i> is the plural of <i>waltz</i> . –es is added because the word ends in <i>z</i>	wrists	<i>wrists</i> is the plural of <i>wrist</i> . –s is added

Irregular Plural Nouns

Look at each plural word in the table below. Write the singular version of the word and explain which rule the plural has used in its formation. For example:

- *oxen* is the plural of *ox*. This is an –en noun. To form the plural, an –en was added.
- *stimuli* is the plural of *stimulus*. The singular ends with a –us, so the plural ends with an –i.

children	<input type="text"/>	moose	<input type="text"/>	teeth	<input type="text"/>
squid	<input type="text"/>	men	<input type="text"/>	lice	<input type="text"/>
memoranda	<input type="text"/>	hypotheses	<input type="text"/>	phenomena	<input type="text"/>
parentheses	<input type="text"/>	emphases	<input type="text"/>	nuclei	<input type="text"/>
foci	<input type="text"/>	vertebrae	<input type="text"/>	appendices	<input type="text"/>

Answers

children	<i>children</i> is the plural of <i>child</i> . This is an <i>-en</i> noun. To form the plural, an <i>-ren</i> was added.	moose	<i>moose</i> is the plural of <i>moose</i> . This is a no-change plural. The singular and plural have the same form.	teeth	<i>teeth</i> is the plural of <i>tooth</i> . This is a mid-word vowel change plural. The <i>oo</i> in <i>tooth</i> was changed to an <i>ee</i> .
squid	<i>squid</i> is the plural of <i>squid</i> . This is a no-change plural. The singular and plural have the same form.	men	<i>men</i> is the plural of <i>man</i> . This is a mid-word vowel change plural. The <i>a</i> in <i>man</i> was changed to an <i>e</i> .	lice	<i>lice</i> is the plural of <i>louse</i> . This is a mid-word vowel change plural. The <i>ouse</i> in <i>louse</i> was changed to an <i>ice</i> .
memoranda	<i>memoranda</i> is the plural of <i>memorandum</i> . The singular ends with <i>-um</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-a</i> .	hypotheses	<i>hypotheses</i> is the plural of <i>hypothesis</i> . The singular ends with <i>-is</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-es</i> .	phenomena	<i>phenomena</i> is the plural of <i>phenomenon</i> . The singular ends with <i>-on</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-a</i> .
parentheses	<i>parentheses</i> is the plural of <i>parenthesis</i> . The singular ends with <i>-is</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-es</i> .	emphases	<i>emphases</i> is the plural of <i>emphasis</i> . The singular ends with <i>-is</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-es</i> .	nuclei	<i>nuclei</i> is the plural of <i>nucleus</i> . The singular ends with <i>-us</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-i</i> .
foci	<i>foci</i> is the plural of <i>focus</i> . The singular ends with <i>-us</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-i</i> . <i>focuses</i> is also an acceptable plural	vertebrae	<i>vertebrae</i> is the plural of <i>vertebra</i> . The singular ends with <i>-a</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-ae</i> .	appendices	<i>appendices</i> is the plural of <i>appendix</i> . The singular ends with <i>-ix</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-ices</i> .

Regular and Irregular Plural Nouns

Look at each word in the table below. Identify if the words is singular or plural, then write the other version of the word and explain which rule the plural has used in its formation. For example:

- *stimuli* is the plural of *stimulus*. The singular ends with a *-us*, so the plural ends with an *-i*.
- *ox* is the singular of *oxen*. This is an *-en* noun. To form the plural, an *-en* was added.

chiefs	<input type="text"/>	toys	<input type="text"/>	quiz	<input type="text"/>
bacterium	<input type="text"/>	crisis	<input type="text"/>	criteria	<input type="text"/>
octopus	<input type="text"/>	larvae	<input type="text"/>	indices	<input type="text"/>

wolves		sheep		woman	
--------	--	-------	--	-------	--

Answers

chiefs	<i>chiefs</i> is the plural of <i>chief</i> . –s is added. It is an exception to the rule.	toys	<i>toys</i> is the plural of <i>toy</i> . –s is added because the y follows a vowel	quiz	<i>quiz</i> is the singular of <i>quizzes</i> . –es is added because the word ends in z. This word needs an additional z added to the plural
bacterium	<i>bacterium</i> is the singular of <i>bacteria</i> . The singular ends with –um, so the plural ends with –a.	crisis	<i>crisis</i> is the singular of <i>crises</i> . The singular ends with –is, so the plural ends with –es.	criteria	<i>criteria</i> is the plural of <i>criterion</i> . The singular ends with –on, so the plural ends with –a.
octopus	<i>octopus</i> is the singular of <i>octopuses</i> . Plural forms of singular words that ends with –us typically end with –i, but <i>octopuses</i> is the preferred plural (<i>octopi</i> is also accepted)	larvae	<i>larvae</i> is the plural of <i>larva</i> . The singular ends with –a, so the plural ends with –ae.	indices	<i>indices</i> is the plural of <i>index</i> . The singular ends with –ex, so the plural ends with –ices.
wolves	<i>wolves</i> is the plural of <i>wolf</i> . The noun ends with an f, so it is changed to a v, and –es is added.	sheep	This is a no-change plural. The singular and plural have the same form, so <i>sheep</i> could be singular or plural	woman	<i>woman</i> is the singular of <i>women</i> . This is a mid-word vowel change plural. The a in <i>woman</i> was changed to an e.

Count v. Non-Count Nouns

Many? Much? Fewer? Less?

Read the following sentences. Choose the correct words to complete each sentence.

- There was (many / much) food at the event. There were (less / fewer) soups than salads and even (less / fewer) desserts.
- As a geologist, Liam spends a lot of time around (rock / rocks) and (dirt / dirt).
- Arturo had too much (water / drinks) before his workout.

Answers

- There was **much** food at the event. There were **fewer** soups than salads and even (less / fewer) desserts.
 - Food* is non-count, so it takes *much* not *many*. *Soups* and *desserts* are both count, so they take *fewer* not *less*.
 - Even though *much* is technically correct, you may want to use *a lot* instead. It has a much less antiquated feel.
- As a geologist, Liam spends a lot of time around **rocks** and **dirt**.
 - Rocks* is count, so it does have a plural. Since we are talking about different items, there must be more than one, so *rocks* is correct.
 - Dirt* is non-count, so it does not have a plural.

3. Arturo had too much **water** before his workout.
 - *Much* must be followed by a non-count noun. Of the two options (*water* and *drinks*) *water* is the non-count noun. If *many* were used instead of *much*, the correct sentence would be “Arturo had too *many drinks* before his workout.”

Compound Nouns

Read the following sentence. Are the compound nouns in each being used correctly? How would you create the plural form of each compound noun?

1. Idrissa has two sister in laws and one brother in law.
2. High blood pressure can lead to multiple types of heart disease.
3. When I was four, I was determined to be an astronaut, a fire-fighter, and a sous chef.

Answers

1. Idrissa has two **sisters-in-law** and one **brother-in-law**.
 - Both compounds should be hyphenated, not compounds. *Sister* and *brother* are the main parts of each compound, so the correct pluralizations would be *sisters-in-law* not *sister-in-laws*.
2. High **blood pressure** can lead to multiple types of heart disease.
 - This sentence is correct. The compound should be open (no hyphenation). The correct plural would be *blood pressures*.
3. When I was four, I was determined to be an astronaut, a **firefighter**, and a **sous-chef**.
 - *Firefighter* compound should be closed (no space or hyphenation). The correct plural would be *firefighters*.
 - *Sous-chef* should be hyphenated. The correct plural would be *sous-chefs*.

Nouns

Identify errors in the following as you read the passage:

- pluralization
- count vs. non-count nouns
- common vs. proper nouns
- compound nouns

Explain why each error is incorrect, and explain how to correct the error. The sentences have been numbered to help you organize your comments.

(1) Marie Curie, who conducted pioneering research on radio-activity, was the first woman to win a nobel prize, the first person to win twice, and the only person to win twice in multiple sciencees (she won in physics and chemistries). (2) She was also the first woman to become a professor at the University of Paris.

(3) In 1910—four years after the death of her husband—Curie succeeded in isolating radium; she also defined an international standard for radioactive emissions that was eventually named for her and Pierre: the curie. (4) Her achievements included the development of the theory of radioactivity (a term that she coined), the creation of techniques to isolate radioactive isotopes, and the discovery of two elements: a polonium and a radium.

Answers

The list below identifies all of the errors in noun treatment. Any incorrect words have been enclosed in quotation marks.

1. The compound noun “radio-activity” should not have a hyphen; it is a closed compound: *radioactivity*. It has been treated correctly as a non-count noun, however. *Nobel Prize* should be capitalized because it is a proper noun. “Sciencees” has been pluralized incorrectly; the correct spelling is *sciences* since the word *science* takes regular pluralization. “Chemistries” is a non-count noun, so it does not have a plural form; the correct word is *chemistry*.
2. There are no errors in this sentence.
3. There are no errors in this sentence. You may want to capitalize the word *curie* in this sentence, since it is named after a person. However, this is not a literal use of the name. As a unit, the word has become a common noun instead of a proper noun.
4. “Achievementes” has been pluralized incorrectly; the correct spelling is *achievements* since the word *achievement* takes regular pluralization. The non-count noun *radioactivity* has been treated correctly; however, the non-count nouns *polonium* and *radium* have not. They should not have articles before them; thus, “the discovery of two new elements: polonium and radium” is correct.

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INTRODUCTION TO PRONOUNS

Anna decided at the beginning of Anna's first semester of college that Anna would run for thirty minutes every day. Anna knew that Anna would be taking a literature class with a lot of reading, so instead of buying print copies of all the novels Anna's teacher assigned, Anna bought the audiobooks. That way Anna could listen to the audiobooks as Anna ran.

Did this paragraph feel awkward to you? Let's try it again using pronouns:

Anna decided at the beginning of **her** first semester of college that **she** would run for thirty minutes every day. **She** knew that **she** would be taking a literature class with a lot of reading, so instead of buying hard copies of all the novels **her** teacher assigned, Anna bought the audiobooks. That way **she** could listen to **them** as **she** ran.

This second paragraph is much more natural. Instead of repeating nouns multiple times, we were able to use pronouns. You've likely hear the phrase "a pronoun replaces a noun"; this is *exactly* what a pronoun does. Because a pronoun is replacing a noun, its meaning is dependent on the noun that it is replacing. This noun is called the **antecedent**. Let's look at the two sentences we just read again:

- Because a pronoun is replacing a noun, **its** meaning is dependent on the noun that it is replacing. This noun is called an **antecedent**.

There are two pronouns here: *its* and *it*. *Its* and *it* both have the same antecedent: "a pronoun." Whenever you use a pronoun, you must also include its antecedent. Without the antecedent, your readers (or listeners) won't be able to figure out what the pronoun is referring to. Let's look at a couple of examples:

- Jason likes it when people look to him for leadership.
- Trini brushes her hair every morning.
- Billy often has to clean his glasses.
- Kimberly is a gymnast. She has earned several medals in different competitions.

So, what are the antecedents and pronouns in these sentences?

- *Jason* is the antecedent for the pronoun *him*.
- *Trini* is the antecedent for the pronoun *her*.
- *Billy* is the antecedent for the pronoun *his*.
- *Kimberly* is the antecedent for the pronoun *she*.



Practice

Identify the antecedent in the following examples:

1. The bus is twenty minutes late today, like it always is.
2. I would never be caught dead wearing boot sandals. They are an affront to nature.

Answers

1. **The bus** is the antecedent for the pronoun *it*.

2. **boot sandals** is the antecedent for the pronoun *they*.

There are several types of pronouns, including personal, demonstrative, indefinite, and relative pronouns. The next few pages will cover each of these.

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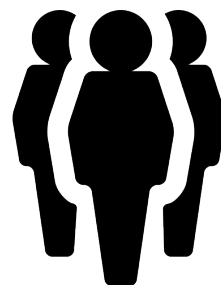
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PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Personal pronouns are what most people think of when they see the word *pronoun*. Personal pronouns include words like *he*, *she*, and *they*. The following sentences give examples of personal pronouns used with antecedents (remember, an antecedent is the noun that a pronoun refers to!):

- **That man** looks as if **he** needs a new coat. (the noun phrase *that man* is the antecedent of *he*)
- **Kat** arrived yesterday. I met **her** at the station. (*Kat* is the antecedent of *her*)
- When **they** saw us, **the lions** began roaring (*the lions* is the antecedent of *they*)
- **Adam and I** were hoping no one would find **us**. (*Adam and I* is the antecedent of *us*)



Note: Pronouns like *I*, *we*, and *you* don't always require an explicitly stated antecedent. When a speaker says something like "I told you the zoo was closed today," it's implied that the speaker is the antecedent for *I* and the listener is the antecedent for *you*.

Pronouns may be classified by three categories: person, number, and case.

Person

Person refers to the relationship that an author has with the text that he or she writes, and with the reader of that text. English has three persons (first, second, and third):

- **First-person** is the speaker or writer him- or herself. The first person is personal (*I*, *we*, etc.)
- **Second-person** is the person who is being directly addressed. The speaker or author is saying this is about you, the listener or reader.
- **Third-person** is the most common person used in academic writing. The author is saying this is about other people. In the third person singular there are distinct pronoun forms for male, female, and neutral gender.

Person	Pronouns
First	I, me, we, us
Second	you

Person		Pronouns
Third	Male	he, him
	Female	she, her
	Neutral	it, they, them

Practice

Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. Sandra often put other people's needs before her own. That's why people loved (her / me) so much.
2. Vindira and Frank always let us know when (he / they) were coming into town.
3. I told Bruno (he / it) will need three things in order to be successful: determination, discipline, and dexterity.

Answers

1. Sandra often put other people's needs before her own. That's why people loved **her** so much.
 - *Her* is the correct choice because it is a singular feminine third-person pronoun.
2. Vindira and Frank always let us know when **they** were coming into town.
 - *They* is the correct choice because it is a plural third-person pronoun.
3. I told Bruno **he** will need three things in order to be successful: determination, discipline, and dexterity.
 - *He* is the correct choice because it is a singular masculine third-person pronoun.

Number

There are two **numbers**: **singular** and **plural**. As we learned in nouns, singular words refer to only one a thing while plural words refer to more than one of a thing (*I* stood alone while *they* walked together).

Person	Number	Pronouns
First	Singular	I, me
	Plural	we, us
Second	Singular	you
	Plural	you
Third	Singular	he, him
		she, her
		it
	Plural	they, them

Case

English personal pronouns have two cases: **subject** and **object** (there are also possessive pronouns, which we'll discuss next). **Subject-case pronouns** are used when the pronoun is doing the action. (I like to eat chips, but she does not). **Object-case pronouns** are used when something is being done to the pronoun (John likes me but not her). This video will further clarify the difference between subject- and object-case:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/q5HmV3Czl6g>

Practice

Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. I don't know if I should talk to (he / him). (He / Him) looks really angry today.
2. Enrico and Brenna are coming over for dinner tomorrow night. (They / Them) will be here at 6:00.
3. Melissa loves music. (She / Her) listens to it when I drive (she / her) to work.

Answers

1. I don't know if I should talk to **him**. **He** looks really angry today.
2. Enrico and Brenna are coming over for dinner tomorrow night. **They** will be here at 6:00.
3. Melissa loves music. **She** listens to it when I drive **her** to work.

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are a kind of pronoun that are used when the subject and the object of the sentence are the same.

- **Jason** hurt **himself**. (*Jason* is the antecedent of *himself*)
- **We** were teasing **each other**. (*we* is the antecedent of *each other*)

This is true even if the subject is only implied, as in the sentence "Don't hurt yourself." *You* is the unstated subject of this sentence.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/Zoh8XpfcF-c>

Practice

Read at the following sentences. Should the reflexive pronoun be used? Why or why not?

1. Aisha let (her / herself) in when she arrived.
2. Feel free to let (you / yourself) in when you get here!
3. Andrés asked Jada if she would let (him / himself) in when (she / herself) arrived.

Answers

1. Aisha let **herself** in when she arrived.

- Aisha is the subject and object of the sentence.
- 2. Feel free to let **yourself** in when you get here!
 - *You* is the implied subject of the sentence, so the reflexive *yourself* is appropriate as the object of the sentence.
- 3. Andrés asked Jada if she would let **him** in when **she** arrived.
 - While *Andrés* is the subject of the sentence, *Andrés* is not the subject of the dependent clause that *him* appears in (if she would let him in). In this clause, *she* is the subject, so the reflexive pronoun cannot be used here.
 - *She* is the subject of the clause “when she arrived.” Since it’s a subject, the reflexive cannot be used.

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are used to indicate possession (in a broad sense). Some occur as independent phrases: *mine, yours, hers, ours, yours, theirs*. For example, “Those clothes are **mine**.” Others must be accompanied by a noun: *my, your, her, our, your, their*, as in “I lost **my** wallet.” *His* and *its* can fall into either category, although *its* is nearly always found in the second.

Both types replace possessive noun phrases. As an example, “Their crusade to capture our attention” could replace “The advertisers’ crusade to capture our attention.”

This video provides another explanation of possessive pronouns:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/bhzh8VDykc4>

Practice

Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. Hey, that’s (my / mine)!
2. Carla gave Peter (her / hers) phone number.
3. Remember to leave (their / theirs) papers on the table.

Answers

1. Hey, that’s **mine**!
2. Carla gave Peter **her** phone number.
3. Remember to leave **their** papers on the table.

Review

The table below includes all of the personal pronouns in the English language. They are organized by person, number, and case:

Person	Number	Subject	Object	Reflexive	Possessive	
First	Singular	I	me	myself	my	mine
	Plural	we	us	ourselves	our	ours
Second	Singular	you	you	yourself	your	yours

Person	Number	Subject	Object	Reflexive	Possessive	
	Plural	you	you	yourselves	your	yours
Third	Singular	he	him	himself	his	his
		she	her	herself	her	hers
		it	it	itself	its	its
	Plural	they	them	themselves	their	theirs

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Determining Person

In the following sentences, determine the person for each pronoun:

- Don't forget to give Marieke her keys.
- Itzel and Camila were the top ranking doubles team at OSU. They hadn't been defeated all year.
- You will need three things in order to be successful: determination, discipline, and dexterity.

Answers

- The pronoun is **her**. *Her* is a feminine third-person pronoun.
- The pronoun is **they**. *They* is a neutral third-person pronoun.
- The pronoun is **you**. *You* is a second-person pronoun

Classifying Pronouns

In the following sentences, identify the person, case, and number of each pronoun:

- Even though he knew he might regret it, Dirron decided to let himself ignore his responsibilities for a day.

- Elena knew she should have spent more time on homework this semester, but binge-watching TV had tripped her up again and again.
- Next Saturday, I have to take all three of my little sisters to the zoo. It's certainly going to be an ordeal.

Answers

- There are five pronouns: *he, he, it, himself, his*
 - He* is a subject case, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
 - He* is a subject case, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
 - It* is an object case, singular, neutral third-person pronoun.
 - Himself* is a reflexive, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
 - His* is a possessive, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
- There are two pronouns: *she* and *her*.
 - She* is a subject case, singular, feminine third-person pronoun.
 - Her* is an object case, singular, feminine third-person pronoun.
- There are three pronouns: *I, my, and it*.
 - I* is a subject case, singular, first-person pronoun.
 - My* is a possessive, singular, first-person pronoun.
 - It* is a subject case, singular, neutral third-person pronoun.

Possessive Forms

In each sentence, select the correct possessive pronoun. Identify why you selected the pronoun you did:

- Eloá was positive that it was (her / hers) pie that I was eating.
- I was sure it was (my/ mine).
- Jake and Suren refused to give (their / theirs) opinions on the subject.

Answers

- Eloá was positive that it was **her** pie that I was eating. The pronoun is followed by the noun *box of cereal*, so it should be the adjective form.
- I was sure it was **mine**. The pronoun stands on its own, so it should be the independent form.
- Jake and Suren refused to give **their** opinions on the subject. The pronoun is followed by the noun *opinions*, so it should be the adjective form.

Choosing the Right Pronoun

In each sentence, fill in the blank with the correct pronoun. Identify why you selected the pronoun you did:

- André told me that it was ____ box of cereal, but I couldn't remember having bought ____.
- Amelia and Ajani still haven't arrived. I should make sure ____ texted ____.
- You shouldn't be so worried about what other people think. The only person ____ need to please is ____.

4. George Washington was the first president of the United States. ____ set the standard of only serving two terms of office. However, ____ wasn't illegal to serve over two terms until 1951.

Answers

- The context of the sentence gives hints that André thinks the box of cereal belongs to the speaker of the sentence. The correct sentence would be "André told me that it was **my** box of cereal, but I couldn't remember having bought it."
 - My* is a possessive, singular, first-person pronoun. It is followed by the noun *box of cereal*, so it appears in its adjective form, rather than as *mine*.
 - It* is a subject case, singular, neutral third-person pronoun.
- There are two sentence that make sense here: "Amelia and Ajani still haven't arrived. I should make sure I texted **them**," or "Amelia and Ajani still haven't arrived. I should make sure **they** texted **me**." The correct sentence depends on who did (or didn't do) the texting.
 - I* is a subject case, singular, first-person pronoun.
 - They* is a subject case, plural, third-person pronoun.
 - Them* is a object case, plural, third-person pronoun.
 - Me* is a object case, singular, first-person pronoun.
- You shouldn't be so worried about what other people think. The only person **you** need to please is **you**.
 - You* is an subject case, singular, second-person pronoun.
 - You* is an object case, singular, second-person pronoun. *Yourself* would also be ok here, since the subject and object of the sentence are the same.
- George Washington was the first president of the United States. **He** set the standard of only serving two terms of office. However, **it** wasn't illegal to serve over two terms until 1951.
 - He* is a subject case, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
 - It* is a subject case, singular, neutral third-person pronoun.

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DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

Demonstrative pronouns substitute for things being pointed out. They include *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. *This* and *that* are singular; *these* and *those* are plural.

The difference between *this* and *that* and between *these* and *those* is a little more subtle. *This* and *these* refer to something that is "close" to the speaker, whether this closeness is physical, emotional, or temporal. *That* and *those* are the opposite: they refer to something that is "far."

- Do I actually have to read all of *this*?
 - The speaker is indicating a text that is close to her, by using "this."
- That* is not coming anywhere near me.
 - The speaker is distancing himself from the object in question, which he doesn't want to get any closer. The far pronoun helps indicate that.
- You're telling me you sewed all of *these*?



- The speaker and her audience are likely looking directly at the clothes in question, so the close pronoun is appropriate.
- *Those* are all gross.
 - The speaker wants to remain away from the gross items in question, by using the far “those.”

Note: these pronouns are often combined with a noun. When this happens, they act as a kind of adjective instead of as a pronoun.

- Do I actually have to read all of *this* contract?
- *That* thing is not coming anywhere near me.
- You’re telling me you sewed all of *these* dresses?
- *Those* recipes are all gross.

The antecedents of demonstrative pronouns (and sometimes the pronoun *it*) can be more complex than those of personal pronouns:

- **Animal Planet’s puppy cam has been taken down for maintenance.** I never wanted *this* to happen.
- I love Animal Planet’s panda cam. I **watched a panda eat bamboo for half an hour.** *It* was amazing.

In the first example, the antecedent for *this* is the concept of the puppy cam being taken down. In the second example, the antecedent for *it* in this sentence is the experience of watching the panda. That antecedent isn’t explicitly stated in the sentence, but comes through in the intention and meaning of the speaker.

Practice

In the following sentences, determine if *this*, *that*, *these*, or *those* should be used.

1. Lara looked at her meal in front of her. “_____ looks great!” she said.
2. Tyesha watched the ’67 Mustang drive down the street. “What I wouldn’t give for one of _____.”
3. “What do you think of _____?” Ashley asked, showing me the three paint samples she had picked out.

Answers

1. Lara looked at her meal in front of her. “**This** looks great!” she said.
 - The meal is right in front of Lara, and there is only one meal. *This* is the correct pronoun.
2. Tyesha watched the ’67 Mustang drive down the street. “What I wouldn’t give for one of **those**.”
 - The Mustang is far away (and getting further away as it drives off). The phrase “one of _____” requires a plural word in the blank. *Those* is the correct pronoun. A singular version of the sentence would be something like “What I wouldn’t give to own **that**.” *That* is the correct pronoun for singular things that are far away.
3. “What do you think of **these**?” Ashley asked, showing me the three paint samples she had picked out.
 - The paint samples are in immediate focus (whether Ashley is holding them or looking at them online), and there are three of them. *These* is the correct pronoun.

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INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

These pronouns can be used in a couple of different ways:

- They can refer to members of a group separately rather than collectively. (To **each** his or her own.)
- They can indicate the non-existence of people or things. (**Nobody** thinks that.)
- They can refer to a person, but are not specific as to first, second or third person in the way that the personal pronouns are. (**One** does not clean **one's** own windows.)



Please note that all of these pronouns are singular. The table below shows the most common indefinite pronouns:

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

Note: Sometimes third-person personal pronouns are sometimes used without antecedents—this applies to special uses such as dummy pronouns and generic *they*, as well as cases where the referent is implied by the context.

- You know what *they* say.
- *It's* a nice day today.

Please note that all of these pronouns are singular. Look back at the example “To **each** his or her own.” Saying “To each their own” would be incorrect, since *their* is a plural pronoun and *each* is singular. We'll discuss this in further depth in [Antecedent Agreement](#).

Practice

Identify the indefinite pronouns in the following sentences. Is the best indefinite used, or is there another indefinite that would fit better?

1. Everyone should take the time to critically think about what he or she wants out of life.
2. If I had to choose between singing in public and swimming with leeches, I would choose neither.
3. Yasmin knew everything was wrong, but she couldn't figure out what.
4. If nobody else enrolls in this class, it will be cancelled this semester.

Answers

1. **Everyone** is the indefinite pronoun. *He or she* is a pronoun with the antecedent *everyone*.
2. The indefinite pronoun **neither** is used in this sentence. It is likely being used correctly, indicating that the speaker does not want to complete the actions stated earlier in the sentence. However, if the speaker thought that both singing in public and swimming with leeches were fun, the indefinite pronoun *either* would be the appropriate word to use.

3. The indefinite pronoun **everything** is used in this sentence. However, based on the rest of the sentence, it doesn't quite fit. If everything is wrong, you wouldn't need to figure out exactly what's happening. The indefinite pronoun *something* would fit better here.
 - Yasmin knew **something** was wrong, but she couldn't figure out what.If everything is, in fact, wrong, perhaps the word *what* needs to be changed.
 - Yasmin knew everything was wrong, but she couldn't figure out **how it had happened**.
 - Yasmin knew everything was wrong, but she couldn't figure out **why**.
4. The indefinite pronoun **nobody else** is used in this sentence. If there are already some students enrolled in the class, then *nobody else* is being used correctly. If there aren't any students in the course, then *nobody* should be used instead.

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RELATIVE PRONOUNS

There are five relative pronouns in English: *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *that*, and *which*. These pronouns are used to connect different clauses together. For example:

- Belen, **who** had starred in six plays before she turned seventeen, knew that she wanted to act on Broadway someday.
 - The word *who* connects the phrase “had starred in six plays before she turned seventeen” to the rest of the sentence.
- My daughter wants to adopt the dog **that** doesn't have a tail.
 - The word *that* connects the phrase “doesn't have a tail” to the rest of the sentence.

These pronouns behave differently from the other categories we've seen. However, they are pronouns, and it's important to learn how they work.

Two of the biggest confusions with these pronouns are *that* vs. *which* and *who* vs. *whom*. The two following videos help with these:

That vs. Which

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/6Js8tBCfbWk>

Who vs. Whom

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/bPqMLKXoEac>

Practice

Does the following paragraph use relative pronouns correctly? Explain why or why not for each relative pronoun.

(1) Katerina, whom had taken biology once already, was still struggling to keep the steps of cellular respiration straight. (2) She knew the process took place in animals, which take in oxygen and put out carbon dioxide. (3) She also knew that plants underwent the process of photosynthesis. (4) However, the individual steps of the process seemed beyond her understanding.

Answers

There are three relative pronouns in this passage.

Sentence 1 has the relative pronoun *whom*. *Whom* is incorrect in this instance; the object case is not needed here. The sentence should start with “Katerina, who had taken biology once already. . . .”

In sentence 2, the relative pronoun *which* is used correctly. *Which* is appropriate to use with the noun *animals*, and the clause is set off with commas.

That is used correctly in sentence 3. It connects *knew* with what she knew.

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ANTECEDENT CLARITY

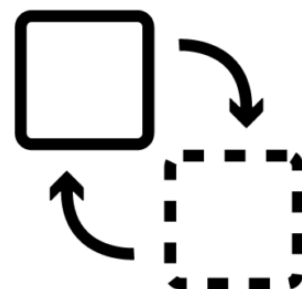
We’ve already defined an **antecedent** as the noun (or phrase) that a pronoun is replacing. The phrase “antecedent clarity” simply means that it should be clear who or what the pronoun is referring to. In other words, readers should be able to understand the sentence the first time they read it—not the third, fourth, or tenth. In this page, we’ll look at some examples of common mistakes that can cause confusion, as well as ways to fix each sentence.

Let’s take a look at our first sentence:

Rafael told Matt to stop eating his cereal.

When you first read this sentence, is it clear if the cereal Rafael’s or Matt’s? Is it clear when you read the sentence again? Not really, no. Since both Rafael and Matt are singular, third person, and masculine, it’s impossible to tell whose cereal is being eaten (at least from this sentence).

How would you best revise this sentence? Type your ideas in the text frame below, and then look at the suggested revisions.



Possible Revisions

Let's assume the cereal is Rafael's:

- Rafael told Matt to stop eating Rafael's cereal.
- Matt was eating Rafael's cereal. Rafael told him to stop it.

What if the cereal is Matt's?:

- Rafael told Matt to stop eating Matt's cereal.
- Matt was eating his own cereal when Rafael told him to stop.

These aren't the only ways to revise the sentence. However, each of these new sentences has made it clear whose cereal it is.

Were those revisions what you expected them to be?

Let's take a look at another example:

Zuly was really excited to try French cuisine on her semester abroad in Europe. They make all sorts of delicious things.

When you read this example, is it apparent who the pronoun *they* is referring to? You may guess that *they* is referring to the French—which is probably correct. However, this is not actually stated, which means that there isn't actually an antecedent. Since every pronoun needs an antecedent, the example needs to be revised to include one.

How would you best revise this sentence? Type your ideas in the text frame below, and then look at the suggested revisions.

Possible Revisions

Let's assume that is is the French who make great cuisine:

- Zuly was really excited to try French cuisine on her semester abroad in Europe. The French make all sorts of delicious things.
- Zuly was really excited to try the cuisine in France on her semester abroad in Europe. The French make all sorts of delicious things.
- Zuly was really excited to try French cuisine on her semester abroad in Europe. The people there make all sorts of delicious things.
- One of the things Zuly was really excited about on her semester abroad in Europe was trying French cuisine. It comprises all sorts of delicious things.

As you write, keep these two things in mind:

- Make sure your pronouns always have an antecedent.
- Make sure that it is clear what their antecedents are.

Practice

Use the context clues to figure out which pronoun to use to complete the sentences. Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. Pat is fifteen and Robin is thirteen. (Pat / he / she) likes swimming, but (Robin / he / she) doesn't know what he likes.
2. Because (Robin / he) can swim now, (Robin / he) can join the swim team.

Answer

1. Pat is fifteen and Robin is thirteen. **Pat** likes swimming, but **Robin** doesn't know what he likes. (We cannot use a pronoun until we know the person. In this case, repeat the name. Note the last *he* gives us the clue that Robin is male.)
2. Because **Robin** can swim now, **he** can join the swim team. (Mention noun before using the pronoun.)

Let's try a more complicated paragraph:

3. When my identical twin girls, Andrea and Renee, were about a month old, (she / Renee) developed a very high temperature, so I took her to the hospital where (she / Renee) spent the night. Meanwhile, at home, (she / Andrea) was twisting and turning; (she / Andrea) was unable to sleep. The next night, (she / Andrea) was the same.

Answer

3. When my identical twin girls, Andrea and Renee, were about a month old, **Renee** developed a very high temperature, so I took her to the hospital where **she** spent the night. Meanwhile, at home, **Andrea** was twisting and turning; **she** was unable to sleep. The next night, **she** was the same.

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ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT

As you write, make sure that you are using the correct pronouns. When a pronoun matches the person and number of its antecedent, we say that it **agrees** with its antecedent. Let's look at a couple of examples:

- I hate it when Zacharias tells me what to do. **He's** so full of **himself**.
- The Finnegans are shouting again. I swear you could hear **them** from across town!



In the first sentence, *Zacharias* is singular, third person, and masculine. The pronouns *he* and *himself* are also singular, third person, and masculine, so they agree. In the second sentence, *the Finnegans* is plural and third person. The pronoun *them* is also plural and third person.

When you select your pronoun, you also need to ensure you use the correct case of pronoun. Remember we learned about three cases: subject, object, and possessive. The case of your pronoun should match its role in the sentence. For example, if your pronoun is doing an action, it should be a subject:

- **He** runs every morning.
- I hate it when **she** does this.

However, when something is being done to your pronoun, it should be an object:

- Birds have always hated **me**.
- My boss wanted to talk to **him**.
- Give **her** the phone and walk away.

Practice

Replace each bolded word with the correct pronoun:

1. **Hannah** had always loved working with plants.
2. People often lost patience with **Colin**.
3. Justin was unsure how well **Justin** and Terry would together.
4. **Alicia and Katie** made a formidable team.

Answer

1. **She** had always loved working with plants.
2. People often lost patience with **him**.
3. Justin was unsure how well **he** and Terry would together.
4. **They** made a formidable team.

However, things aren't always this straightforward. Let's take a look at some examples where things are a little more confusing.

Person and Number

Some of the trickiest agreements are with indefinite pronouns:

- Every student should do his or her best on this assignment.
- If nobody lost his or her scarf, then where did this come from?

As we learned earlier in this outcome, words like *every* and *nobody* are singular, and demand singular pronouns. Here are some of the words that fall into this category:

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

Some of these may feel "more singular" than others, but they all are technically singular. Thus, using "he or she" is correct (while *they* is incorrect).

However, as you may have noticed, the phrase "he or she" (and its other forms) can often make your sentences clunky. When this happens, it may be best to revise your sentences to have plural antecedents. Because "he or she" is clunky, you'll often see issues like this:

The way each individual speaks can tell us so much about him or her. It tells us what groups they associate themselves with, both ethnically and socially.

As you can see, in the first sentence, *him or her* agrees with the indefinite pronoun *each*. However, in the second sentence, the writer has shifted to the plural *they*, even though the writer is talking about the same group of people. When you write, make sure your agreement is correct and **consistent**.

Practice

Here's a paragraph that uses "he or she" liberally:

Every writer will experience writer's block at some point in his or her career. He or she will suddenly be unable to move on in his or her work. A lot of people have written about writer's block, presenting different strategies to "beat the block." However, different methods work for different people. Each writer must find the solutions that work best for him or her.

How would you best revise this paragraph? Type your ideas in the text frame below, and then look at the suggested revisions.

Possible Revisions

There are a couple of different ways you could revise this paragraph:

- Writers will all experience writer's block at some point in their careers. They will suddenly be unable to move on in their work. A lot of people have written about writer's block, presenting different strategies to "beat the block." However, different methods work for different people. Writers must find the solutions that work best for them.
- As a writer, you will experience writer's block at some point in your career. You will suddenly be unable to move on in your work. A lot of people have written about writer's block, presenting different strategies to "beat the block." However, different methods work for different people. You must find the solutions that work best for you.

Were those revisions what you expected them to be?

Singular *They*

As we've just seen, indefinite pronouns demand singular pronouns, like in "To each his or her own." However, in informal speech, you'll often hear things like "To each their own" or "Someone is singing in the hallway. If they haven't stopped in five minutes, I'm going to have to take drastic measures." If you think about your own speech, it's very likely that you use *they* as a singular pronoun for someone whose gender you don't know. So why do people use *they* this way, even though it's a plural? It likely stems from the clunkiness of the phrase "he or she." It is also possible that *they* is following the same evolution as the word *you*. In Early Modern English, *you* was used as either a plural, second-person pronoun or as a polite form for the more common, singular *thee*. However, *you* eventually overtook almost all of the second-person pronouns, both singular and plural.

While this use of the singular *they* is still not "officially" correct—and you definitely shouldn't use this in your English papers—it's interesting to watch English change before our very eyes.

Case

Some of the most common pronoun mistakes occur with the decision between "you and I" and "you and me."

People will often say things like "You and me should go out for drinks." Or—thinking back on the rule that it should be "you and I"—they will say "Susan assigned the task to both you and I." However, both of these sentences are wrong. Remember that every time you use a pronoun you need to make sure that you're using the correct case.

Let's take a look at the first sentence: "You and me should go out for drinks." Both pronouns are the subject of the sentence, so they should be in subject case: "You and I should go out for drinks."

In the second sentence (Susan assigned the task to both you and I), both pronouns are the object of the sentence, so they should be in object case: “Susan assigned the task to both you and me.”

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: PRONOUNS

Identifying Pronouns

As you read the following passage, identify all of the pronouns, as well as what type of pronoun each is. Remember, there are four types of pronouns we learned about: personal, demonstrative, indefinite, and relative pronouns.

(1) Louis Charles Joseph Blériot (1872–1936) was a French aviator, inventor, and engineer. (2) In 1909, **he** became world famous for making the first flight across the English Channel in a heavier than air aircraft, winning a prize of £1,000 offered by the *Daily Mail* newspaper. (3) The prize was widely seen as a way to gain cheap publicity when it was first announced by the paper—**no one** thought **this** feat could actually be accomplished. (4) The Paris newspaper *Le Matin* commented that there was no chance of the prize being won. (5) Blériot would prove **everyone** wrong.

Answers

Here is a list of the pronouns in the passage:

1. There are no pronouns in this sentence.
2. This sentence contains the personal pronoun *he*. *He* is a singular, subject case, masculine third-person pronoun.
3. This sentence has two pronouns: *it*, *no one*, and *that*.
 - *It* is a singular, subject case, neutral third-person pronoun.
 - *No one* is an indefinite pronoun.
 - *This* is a demonstrative pronoun; in this instance it's being used like an adjective.
4. This sentence contains the relative pronoun *that*; it connects *commented* to the statement made by *Le Matin*.
5. This sentence contains the indefinite pronoun *everyone*.

Finding the Antecedent

Identify the antecedents and pronouns in the following examples:

1. Somebody must have found my cell phone. He or she has been using up all my data!
2. People asked Jorge to review their papers so often that he started a small editing business.
3. He's been talking for over two hours. This is unbearable.
4. Henry called his parents every week.

5. There are forty bracelets in this box. Are you telling me you made all of those?

Answers

1. Somebody is the antecedent for *He or she*. The pronoun *my* doesn't have an explicit antecedent, but it's assumed that the speaker or writer is the antecedent for *my*.
2. There are two pronoun/antecedent pairs in this sentence. People is the antecedent for *their*, and Jorge is the antecedent for *he*.
3. The experience of him talking for over two hours is the antecedent for *this*.
4. Henry is the antecedent for *his*.
5. Forty bracelets is the antecedent for *those*.

Antecedent Clarity

Read the following passage, then re-write it using as many pronouns as possible, while still retaining clarity.

Marina and Marina's twin sister Adriana often fought over small things. Marina frequently took Adriana's clothes without asking and never returned them. Adriana always ate the last piece of dessert, even if Mariana had saved it for Mariana. However, Mariana always made sure Adriana knew about the sales at Adriana's favorite stores, and Adriana baked Mariana's favorite cookies at least once a month.

Answers

Here is one possible solution:

Marina and **her** twin sister Adriana often fought over small things. Marina frequently took Adriana's clothes without asking and never returned them. Adriana always ate the last piece of dessert, even if Mariana had saved it for **herself**. However, Mariana always made sure Adriana knew about the sales at Adriana's favorite stores, and Adriana baked Mariana's favorite cookies at least once a month.

You could possibly say "Mariana made sure Adriana knew about the sales at her favorite stores," but there is still room for misinterpretation, so saying "Adriana's favorite stores" is more clear.

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INTRODUCTION TO VERBS

Identify Verb Types and Their Correct Conjugation

From 2002 to 2006, The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) ran a media campaign entitled "Verb: It's What You Do." This campaign was designed to help teens get and stay active, but it also provided a helpful soundbite for defining verbs: "It's what you do."

Verbs are often called the “action” words of language. As we discuss verbs, we will learn that this isn’t always the case, but it is a helpful phrase to remember just what verbs are.



Traditionally, verbs are divided into three groups: active verbs (these are “action” words), linking verbs, and helping verbs (these two types of verbs are *not* “action” words). In this outcome, we’ll discuss all three of these groups. We’ll also learn how verbs work and how they change to suit the needs of a speaker or writer.

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ACTIVE VERBS

Active verbs are the simplest type of verb: they simply express some sort of action. Watch this video introduction to verbs:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/OT9xMqvjdLk>

Let’s look at the example verbs from the video one more time:

- *contain*
- *roars*
- *runs*
- *sleeps*



All of these verbs are active verbs: they all express an action.

Practice

Identify the active verbs in the following sentences:

1. Dominic **paints** the best pictures of meerkats.
2. Sean’s hair **curled** really well today.
3. Elephants **roam** the savanna.
4. Billy **ate** an entire loaf of bread in one sitting.

Answers

1. Dominic **paints** the best pictures of meerkats.
2. Sean’s hair **curled** really well today.
3. Elephants **roam** the savanna.

4. Billy **ate** an entire loaf of bread in one sitting.

Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Active verbs can be divided into two categories: transitive and intransitive verbs. A **transitive verb** is a verb that requires one or more objects. This contrasts with intransitive verbs, which do not have objects.

It might be helpful to think of it this way: transitive verbs have to be *done to* something or someone in the sentence. Intransitive verbs only have to be done *by* someone.

Let's look at a few examples of transitive verbs:

- We are going to **need** a bigger boat.
 - The object in this sentence is the phrase "a bigger boat." Consider how incomplete the thought would be if the sentence only said "We are going to need." Despite having a subject and a verb, the sentence is meaningless without the object phrase.
- She hates **filling out** forms.
 - Again, leaving out the object would cripple the meaning of the sentence. We have to know that *forms* is what she hates filling out.
 - *Hates* is also a transitive verb. Without the phrase "filling out forms," the phrase "She hates" doesn't make any sense.
- Sean **hugged** his brother David.
 - You can see the pattern. . . . *Hugged* in this sentence is only useful if we know who Sean squeezed. David is the object of the transitive verb.

Intransitive verbs, on the other do not take an object.

- John **sneezed** loudly.
 - Even though there's another word after *sneezed*, the full meaning of the sentence is available with just the subject *John* and the verb *sneezed*: "John sneezed." Therefore, *sneezed* is an intransitive verb. It doesn't have to be done to something or someone.
- My computer completely **died**.
 - Again, *died* here is enough for the sentence to make sense. We know that the computer (the subject) is what died.

This video provides a more in-depth explanation of transitive and intransitive verbs and how they work:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/CFdl1oC1vtQ>

Note: there are some verbs that can act as both transitive and intransitive verbs (the video defined these as bitransitive verbs):

Intransitive	Transitive
The fire has burned for hundreds of years.	Miranda burned all of her old school papers.
Don't let the engine stop running !	Karl ran the best horse track this side of the river.
The vase broke .	She broke the toothpick.
Does your dog bite ?	The cat bit him.
Water evaporates when it's hot.	Heat evaporates water.

Practice

Read the following sentences. Are the verbs in each transitive or intransitive?

1. Liv fell out of the car.
2. Ian has written over four hundred articles on the subject.
3. Christopher sings really well.
4. Marton wondered about a lot of things.
5. Cate gave great gifts.

Answers

1. Alba **fell** out of the car. *Fell* is intransitive; it doesn't require an object.
2. Ian **has written** over four hundred articles on the subject. *Has written* is transitive; it has an object: *articles*.
3. Javier **sings** really well. *Sings* is intransitive; it doesn't require an object.
 - Note that *sings* can also be a transitive verb. In the sentence "Lorena sang three songs in the show last night," the verb *sing* has the object *songs*.
4. Marton **wondered** about a lot of things. *Wondered* is intransitive; it doesn't require an object.
5. Cate **gave** great gifts. *Gave* is transitive; it has an object: *gifts*.

Multi-Word Verbs

Multi-word verbs are a subclass of active verbs. They are made up of multiple words, as you might have guessed. They include things like *stir fry*, *kickstart*, and *turn in*. Multi-word verbs often have a slightly different meaning than their base parts. Take a look at the difference between the next two sentences:

- Ben carried the boxes out of the house.
- Ben carried out the task well.

The first sentence uses a single word verb (*carried*) and the preposition *out*. If you remove the preposition (and its object), you get "Ben carried the boxes," which makes perfect sense. In the second sentence, *carried out* acts as a single entity. If you remove *out*, the sentence has no meaning: "Ben carried the task well" doesn't make sense.

Let's look at another example:

- She's been shut up in there for years.
- Dude, shut up.

Can you see how the same principles apply here? Other multi-word verbs include *find out*, *make off with*, *turn in*, and *put up with*.

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LINKING VERBS

A linking verb is a verb that links a subject to the rest of the sentence. There isn't any "real" action happening in the sentence. Sentences with linking verbs become similar to math equations. The verb acts as an equal sign between the items it links.



Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/4dPbciiZSbo>

As the video establishes, *to be* verbs are the most common linking verbs (*is*, *was*, *were*, etc.). David and the bear establish that there are other linking verbs as well. Here are some illustrations of other common linking verbs:

- Over the past five days, Charles **has become** a new man.
 - It's easy to reimagine this sentence as "Over the past five days, Charles = a new man."
- Since the oil spill, the beach **has smelled** bad.
 - Similarly, one could also read this as "Since the oil spill, the beach = smelled bad."
- That word processing program **seems** adequate for our needs.
 - Here, the linking verb is slightly more nuanced than an equals sign, though the sentence construction overall is similar. (This is why we write in words, rather than math symbols, after all!)
- This calculus problem **looks** difficult.
- With every step Jake took, he could **feel** the weight on his shoulders growing.

Practice

Read each sentence and determine whether its verb is a linking verb or not:

1. Terry smelled his yogurt to see if it was still good.
2. Rosa looks intimidating.
3. Amy looked over at the clock to check the time.
4. Gina smelled like chrysanthemums and mystery.
5. Raymond is a fantastic boss.

Answers

1. Terry **smelled** his yogurt to see if it was still good. *Smelled* is an active verb in this sentence.
2. Rosa **looks** intimidating. *Looks* is a linking verb in this sentence.
3. Amy **looked** over at the clock to check the time. *Looked* is an active verb in this sentence.
4. Gina **smelled** like chrysanthemums and mystery. *Smelled* is a linking verb in this sentence.
5. Raymond **is** a fantastic boss. *Is* is a linking verb in this sentence.

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HELPING VERBS

Helping verbs (sometimes called *auxiliary verbs*) are, as the name suggests, verbs that help another verb. They provide support and add additional meaning. Here are some examples of helping verbs in sentences:

- Mariah **is** looking for her keys still.
- Kai **had** checked the weather three times already, but he looked one more time to see if the forecast **had** changed.
- What ever happens, **do not** let the water level drop below this line.



As you just saw, helping verbs are usually pretty short, and they include things like *is*, *had*, and *do* (we'll look at a more complete list later). Let's look at some more examples to examine exactly what these verbs do. Take a look at the sentence "I have finished my dinner." Here, the main verb is *finish*, and the helping verb *have* helps to express tense. Let's look at two more examples:

- By 1967, about 500 U.S. citizens **had** received heart transplants.
 - While *received* could function on its own as a complete thought here, the helping verb *had* emphasizes the distance in time of the date in the opening phrase.
- **Do** you want tea?
 - *Do* is a helping verb accompanying the main verb *want*, used here to form a question.
- Researchers **are** finding that propranolol is effective in the treatment of heartbeat irregularities.
 - The helping verb *are* indicates the present tense, and adds a sense of continuity to the verb *finding*.
- He **has** given his all.
 - *Has* is a helping verb used in expressing the tense of *given*.

The following table provides a short list of some verbs that can function as helping verbs, along with examples of the way they function. [A full list of helping verbs can be found here.](#)

Helping Verb	Function	Examples
be	Express tense (the tense depends on the conjugation of <i>to be</i> ; <i>is</i> is present, <i>was</i> is past, <i>will be</i> is future, etc.) and a sense of continuity.	He is sleeping.
	Express tense (the tense depends on the conjugation of <i>to be</i> ; <i>are</i> is present, <i>were</i> is past, <i>will be</i> is future, etc.) and indicate the passive voice	They were seen.
can	Express ability	I can swim. Such things can help.
could	Express possibility	That could help.
do	Express negation (requires the word <i>not</i>)	You do not understand.
	Ask a question	Do you want to go?
have	Express tense (the tense depends on the conjugation of <i>to be</i> ; <i>are</i> is present, <i>were</i> is past, <i>will be</i> is future, etc.) and indicate a sense of completion	They have understood.

might	Express possibility	We might give it a try.
must	Express confidence in a fact	It must have rained.
should	Express a request	You should listen.
	Express likelihood	That should help.
will	Express future tense	We will eat pie. The sun will rise tomorrow at 6:03.
would	Express future likelihood	Nothing would accomplish that.

The negative forms of these words (*can't*, *don't*, *won't*, etc.) are also helping verbs.

Note: The helping verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *would* are used to indicate tense. We'll discuss exactly how they function in more depth in [Text: Complex Verb Tenses](#).

Practice

Identify the helping verbs in the sentences below:

1. Damian **can't** work tonight. Do you want his shift?
2. Cassandra **couldn't** afford to give up.
3. Richard **was** exercising when Barbara finally found him.

Answers

1. Damian **can't** work tonight. Do you want his shift?
 - *Can't* helps *work*. In this sentence it is used to express ability (in this case, the not turns it into a lack of ability).
 - *Do* helps *want*. In this sentence, it is used to make a question.
2. Cassandra **couldn't** afford to give up.
 - *Couldn't* helps *afford*. In this sentence, it indicates how possible the verb *afford* is.
3. Richard **was** exercising when Barbara finally found him.
 - *Was* accompanies *exercising*. In this sentence, it is used to indicate the tense.

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SIMPLE VERB TENSES

What is tense? There are three standard tenses in English: past, present and future. All three of these tenses have simple and more complex forms. For now we'll just focus on the simple present (things happening now), the simple past (things that happened before), and the simple future (things that will happen later).

Tenses

Present Tense

Watch this quick introduction to the present tense:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/gRlrZrDL5QI>

Past Tense

Watch this quick introduction to the past tense:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/zS6N5EqXpCY>

Future Tense

Watch this quick introduction to the future tense:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/LvlpEPHPhpl>

Note: You may have noticed that in the present tense video David talked about “things that are happening right now” and that he mentioned there were other ways to create the past and future tense. We’ll discuss these in further depth in Advanced Verb Tenses.

Conjugation

Most verbs will follow the pattern that we just learned in the previous videos:

Person	Past	Present	Future
I	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb	will verb
We	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb	will verb
You	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb	will verb
He, She, It	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb + <i>s</i> (or <i>es</i>)	will verb
They	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb	will verb

To Walk

Let’s look at the verb *to walk* for an example:

Person	Past	Present	Future
I	walked	walk	will walk
We	walked	walk	will walk

You	walked	walk	will walk
He, She, It	walked	walks	will walk
They	walked	walk	will walk

Practice

Change the tense of each sentence as directed below. You can type your answers in the text field below:

1. Make this sentence present tense: Alejandra directed a play.
2. Make this sentence past tense: Lena will show me how to use a microscope.
3. Make this sentence future tense: Gabrielly eats a lot of hamburgers.

Answers

1. Alejandra **directs** a play.
2. Lena **showed** me how to use a microscope.
3. Gabrielly **will eat** a lot of hamburgers.

Irregular Verbs

There are a lot of irregular verbs. Unfortunately, there's a lot of memorization involved in keeping them straight. This video shows a few of the irregular verbs you'll have to use the most often (*to be*, *to have*, *to do*, and *to say*):

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/ZKr--3HpP_A

[Here's a list of several irregular past tense verbs.](#)

Practice

Change the tense of each sentence as directed below. You can type your answers in the text field below:

1. Make this sentence present tense: Ysabella was really good at getting others to open up.
2. Make this sentence past tense: Rodrigo will have a B+ in his math class.
3. Make this sentence future tense: Amanda said she didn't want to go to the party.
4. Make this sentence past tense: Jordan does five hundred sit-ups.
5. Make this sentence present tense: Marcela ran a car wash down the street from my house.

Answers

1. Ysabella **is** really good at getting others to open up.
2. Rodrigo **had** a B+ in his math class.
3. Amanda **will say** she **doesn't** want to go to the party.
 - Notice that when the tense of the first verb changed, the tense of the second verb did as well.
4. Jordan **did** five hundred sit-ups.
5. Marcela **runs** a car wash down the street from my house.

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SUBJECT & VERB AGREEMENT

The basic idea behind sentence agreement is pretty simple: all the parts of your sentence should match (or **agree**). Verbs need to agree with their subjects in **number** (singular or plural) and in **person** (first, second, or third). In order to check agreement, you simply need to find the verb and ask who or what is doing the action of that verb.



Person

Agreement based on grammatical person (first, second, or third person) is found mostly between verb and subject. For example, you can say “I am” or “he is,” but not “I is” or “he am.” This is because the grammar of the language requires that the verb and its subject agree in person. The pronouns *I* and *he* are first and third person respectively, as are the verb forms *am* and *is*. The verb form must be selected so that it has the same person as the subject.

Number

Agreement based on grammatical number can occur between verb and subject, as in the case of grammatical person discussed above. In fact the two categories are often conflated within verb conjugation patterns: there are specific verb forms for first person singular, second person plural and so on. Some examples:

- I really **am** (1st pers. singular) vs. **We** really **are** (1st pers. plural)
- The **boy** **sings** (3rd pers. singular) vs. The **boys** **sing** (3rd pers. plural)

More Examples

Compound subjects are plural, and their verbs should agree. Look at the following sentence for an example:

- A pencil, a backpack, and a notebook **were** issued to each student.

Verbs will never agree with nouns that are in prepositional phrases. To make verbs agree with their subjects, follow this example:

- The direction of the three plays is the topic of my talk.

The subject of “my talk” is *direction*, not *plays*, so the verb should be singular.

In the English language, verbs usually follow subjects. But when this order is reversed, the writer must make the verb agree with the subject, not with a noun that happens to precede it. For example:

- Beside the house **stand** sheds filled with tools.

The subject is *sheds*; it is plural, so the verb must be *stand*.

Agreement

All regular verbs (and nearly all irregular ones) in English agree in the third-person singular of the present indicative by adding a suffix of either -s or -es.

Look at the present tense of *to love*, for example:

Person	Number	
	Singular	Plural
First	<i>I love</i>	<i>we love</i>
Second	<i>you love</i>	<i>you love</i>
Third	<i>he/she/it loves</i>	<i>they love</i>

The highly irregular verb *to be* is the only verb with more agreement than this in the present tense:

Person	Number	
	Singular	Plural
First	<i>I am</i>	<i>we are</i>
Second	<i>you are</i>	<i>you are</i>
Third	<i>he/she/it is</i>	<i>they are</i>

Practice

Choose the correct verb to make the sentences agree:

1. Ann (walk / walks) really slowly.
2. You (is / am / are) dating Tom?
3. Donna and April (get / gets) along well.
4. Chris and Ben (is / am / are) the best duo this company has ever seen.

Answers

1. Ann **walks** really slowly.

- *Ann* is a singular, third-person subject.
- 2. You **are** dating Tom?
 - *You* is a singular, second-person subject.
- 3. Donna and April **get** along well.
 - *Donna and April* is a plural, third-person subject.
- 4. Chris and Ben **are** the best duo this company has ever seen.
 - *Chris and Ben* is a plural, third-person subject.

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VERB TENSE CONSISTENCY

One of the most common mistakes in writing is a lack of tense consistency. Writers often start a sentence in one tense but ended up in another. Look back at that sentence. Do you see the error? The first verb *start* is in the present tense, but *ended* is in the past tense. The correct version of the sentence would be “Writers often start a sentence in one tense but end up in another.”

These mistakes often occur when writers change their minds halfway through writing the sentence, or when they come back and make changes but only end up changing half the sentence. It is very important to maintain a consistent tense, not just in a sentence but across paragraphs and pages. Decide if something happened, is happening, or will happen and then stick with that choice.

Read through the following paragraphs. Can you spot the errors in tense?

If you want to pick up a new outdoor activity, hiking is a great option to consider. It's a sport that is suited for a beginner or an expert—it just depended on the difficulty hikes you choose. However, even the earliest beginners can complete difficult hikes if they pace themselves and were physically fit.

Not only is hiking an easy activity to pick up, it also will have some great payoffs. As you walked through canyons and climbed up mountains, you can see things that you wouldn't otherwise. The views are breathtaking, and you will get a great opportunity to meditate on the world and your role in it. The summit of a mountain is unlike any other place in the world.



What errors did you spot? Let's take another look at this passage. This time, the tense-shifted verbs have been bolded, and the phrases they belong to have been underlined:

If you want to pick up a new outdoor activity, hiking is a great option to consider. It's a sport that is suited for a beginner or an expert—it just **depended** on the difficulty hikes you choose. However, even the earliest beginners can complete difficult hikes if they **pace** themselves and **were** physically fit.

Not only is hiking an easy activity to pick up, it also **will have** some great payoffs. As you **walked** through canyons and **climbed** up mountains, you can see things that you wouldn't otherwise. The views **are** breathtaking, and you **will get** a great opportunity to meditate on the world and your role in it. The summit of a mountain is unlike any other place in the world.

As we mentioned earlier, you want to make sure your whole passage is consistent in its tense. You may have noticed that the most of the verbs in this passage are in present tense—this is especially apparent if you ignore those verbs that have been bolded. Now that we've established that this passage should be in the present tense, let's address each of the underlined segments:

- It's a sport that is suited for a beginner or an expert—it just **depended** on the difficulty hikes you choose.
 - *depended* should be the same tense as *is*; it just **depends** on the difficulty
- if they **pace** themselves and **were** physically fit.
 - *were* should be the same tense as *pace*; if they **pace** themselves and **are** physically fit.
- Not only is hiking an easy activity to pick up, it also **will have** some great payoffs.
 - *will have* should be the same tense as *is*; it also **has** some great pay offs
- As you **walked** through canyons and **climbed** up mountains
 - *walked* and *climbed* are both past tense, but this doesn't match the tense of the passage as a whole. They should both be changed to present tense: As you **walk** through canyons and **climb** up mountains.
- The views are breathtaking, and you **will get** a great opportunity to meditate on the world and your role in it.
 - *will get* should be the same tense as *are*; you **get** a great opportunity

Here's the corrected passage as a whole; all edited verbs have been bolded:

If you want to pick up a new outdoor activity, hiking is a great option to consider. It's a sport that can be suited for a beginner or an expert—it just **depends** on the difficulty hikes you choose. However, even the earliest beginners can complete difficult hikes if they **pace** themselves and **are** physically fit.

Not only is hiking an easy activity to pick up, it also **has** some great payoffs. As you **walk** through canyons and **climb** up mountains, you can see things that you wouldn't otherwise. The views are breathtaking, and you **get** a great opportunity to meditate on the world and your role in it. The summit of a mountain is unlike any other place in the world.

Practice

Read the following sentences and identify any errors in verb tense. Type your corrections in the text frame below:

1. Whenever Maudeline goes to the grocery store, she had made a list and stick to it.
2. This experiment turned out to be much more complicated than Felipe thought it would be. It ended up being a procedure that was seventeen steps long, instead of the original eight that he had planned.
3. I applied to some of the most prestigious medical schools. I hope the essays I write get me in!

Answers

1. *had made* and *stick* do not match the present tense that was set up by *goes*. The sentence should read, "Whenever Maudeline goes to the store, she **makes** a list and **sticks** to it."
2. This sentence is correct.
3. *applied* and *write* do not match tense. If you've already applied, hopefully you've already written your essays as well! The sentences should read, "I applied to some of the most prestigious medical schools. I hope the essays I **wrote** get me in!"

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INTRODUCTION TO NON-FINITE VERBS

Just when we thought we had verbs figured out, we're brought face-to-face with a new animal: the non-finite verbs. These words *look* similar to verbs we've already been talking about, but they *act* quite different than those other verbs.

By definition, a non-finite verb cannot serve as the root of an independent clause. In practical terms, this means that they don't serve as the action of a sentence. They also don't have a tense. While the sentence around them may be past, present, or future tense, the non-finite verbs themselves are neutral. There are three types of non-finite verbs: gerunds, participles, and infinitives.

- Gerunds all end in *-ing*: *skiing*, *reading*, *dancing*, *singing*, etc. Gerunds act like nouns and can serve as subjects or objects of sentences.
- A participle is used as an adjective or an adverb. There are two types of participle in English: the past and present participles.
 - The present participle also takes the *-ing* form: (e.g., *writing*, *singing*, and *raising*).
 - The past participle typically appears like the past tense, but some have different forms: (e.g., *written*, *sung* and *raised*).
- The infinitive is the basic dictionary form of a verb, usually preceded by *to*. Thus *to go* is an infinitive.

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GERUNDS

Gerunds all end in *-ing*: *skiing*, *reading*, *dancing*, *singing*, etc. Gerunds **act like nouns** and can serve as subjects or objects of sentences. Let's take a look at a few examples:

The following sentences illustrate some uses of gerunds:

- **Swimming** is fun.
 - Here, the subject is *swimming*, the gerund.
 - The verb is the linking verb *is*.

- I like **swimming**.
 - This time, the subject of this sentence is the pronoun *I*.
 - The verb is *like*.
 - The gerund *swimming* becomes the direct object.
- I never gave **swimming** all that much effort.
 - break these down too
- Do you fancy **going out**?
 - break these down too
- After **being elected president**, he moved with his family to the capital.
 - break these down too

Gerunds can be created using helping verbs as well:

- **Being deceived** can make someone feel angry.
- **Having read the book once before** makes me more prepared.

Often the “doer” of the gerund is clearly signaled:

- We enjoyed **singing** yesterday (we ourselves sang)
- The cat responded by **licking** the cream (the cat licked the cream)
- His heart is set on **being** awarded the prize (he hopes that he himself will be awarded the prize)
- Tomás likes **eating** apricots (Tomás himself eats apricots)

However, sometimes the “doer” must be overtly specified, typically in a position immediately before the non-finite verb:

- We enjoyed their **singing**.
- We were delighted at Bianca **being** awarded the prize.

Practice

Identify the gerunds and their roles in the following sentences:

1. Sam was really bad at gardening.
2. Studying is one of Jazz’s favorite things to do.
3. Danny just wanted to go skateboarding.

Answers

1. Sam was really bad at **gardening**.
 - *Gardening* is the object of the prepositional phrase “bad at gardening.”
2. **Studying** is one of Jazz’s favorite things to do.
 - *Studying* is the subject of the sentence.
3. Danny just wanted to go **skateboarding**.
 - *Skateboarding* is the direct object of the sentence.

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PARTICIPLES

A **participle** is a form of a verb that is used in a sentence to modify a noun, noun phrase, verb, or verb phrase, and then plays a role similar to an adjective or adverb. It is one of the types of nonfinite verb forms.

The two types of participle in English are traditionally called the **present participle** (forms such as *writing*, *singing* and *raising*) and the **past participle** (forms such as *written*, *sung* and *raised*).

The Present Participle

Even though they look exactly the same, gerunds and present participles do different things. As we just learned, the gerund acts as a noun: e.g., “I like *sleeping*”; “*Sleeping* is not allowed.” Present participles, on the other hand, act similarly to an adjective or adverb: e.g., “The *sleeping* girl over there is my sister”; “*Breathing* heavily, she finished the race in first place.”

The present participle, or participial phrases (clauses) formed from it, are used as follows:

- as an adjective phrase modifying a noun phrase: *The man **sitting** over there is my uncle.*
- adverbially, the subject being understood to be the same as that of the main clause: ***Looking at the plans**, I gradually came to see where the problem lay. He shot the man, **killing** him.*
- more generally as a clause or sentence modifier: *Broadly **speaking**, the project was successful.*

The present participle can also be used with the helping verb *to be* to form a type of present tense: *Marta was **sleeping**.* (We’ll discuss this further in [Advanced Verb Tenses](#).) This is something we learned a little bit about in helping verbs and tense.

The Past Participle

Past participles often look very similar to the simple past tense of a verb: *finished*, *danced*, etc. However, some verbs have different forms. Reference lists will be your best help in finding the correct past participle. [Here is one such list of participles](#). Here’s a short list of some of the most common irregular past participles you’ll use:

Verb	Simple Past	Past Participle
to be	was/were	been
to become	became	become
to come	came	come
to do	did	done
to give	gave	given
to go	went	gone
to know	knew	known
to run	ran	run
to see	saw	seen

Verb	Simple Past	Past Participle
to speak	spoke	spoken
to take	took	taken
to write	wrote	written

Note: Words like *bought* and *caught* are the correct past participles—not *boughten* or *caughten*.

Past participles are used in a couple of different ways:

- as an adjective phrase: *The chicken **eaten** by the children was contaminated.*
- adverbially: ***Seen** from this perspective, the problem presents no easy solution.*
- in a nominative absolute construction, with a subject: *The task **finished**, we returned home.*

The past participle can also be used with the helping verb *to have* to form a type of past tense (which we'll talk about in [Advanced Verb Tenses](#)): *The chicken has **eaten**.* It is also used to form the passive voice: *Tianna was **voted** as most likely to succeed.* When the passive voice is used following a relative pronoun (like *that* or *which*) we sometimes leave out parts of the phrase:

- He had three things **that were taken** away from him
- He had three things *taken* away from him

In the second sentence, we removed the words *that were*. However, we still use the past participle *taken*. The removal of these words is called *elision*. Elision is used with a lot of different constructions in English; we use it shorten sentences when things are understood. However, we can only use elision in certain situations, so be careful when removing words! (We'll discuss this further in [Using the Passive Voice](#).)

Practice

Identify the participles in the following sentences, as well as the functions they perform:

1. Tucker had always wanted a pet dog.
2. Having been born in the 1990s, Amber often found herself surrounded by nostalgia.
3. Rayssa was practicing her flute when everything suddenly went wrong.

Answers

1. The past participle is *wanted*. In this case, it is used alongside the helping verb *had* to form the past tense.
2. *Having been born in the 1990s* is a present participle phrase. It is used adverbially, and the subject is the same as the subject of the main phrase: Amber. Additionally, *been* is the past participle. It is used alongside the helping verb *having* to give a sense of the past tense.
3. *Practicing* is the present participle. It, along with the helping verb *was*, create a sense of continuity or process.

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INFINITIVES

To be or not to be, that is the question.

—Hamlet

The *to*-Infinitive

The infinitive is the basic dictionary form of a verb, usually preceded by *to* (when it's not, it's called the **bare infinitive**, which we'll discuss more later). Thus *to go* is an infinitive. There are several different uses of the infinitive. They can be used alongside verbs, as a noun phrase, as a modifier, or in a question.

With Other Verbs

The *to*-infinitive is used with other verbs (we'll discuss exceptions when we talk about the bare infinitive):

- I aim **to convince** him of our plan's ingenuity.
- You already know that he'll fail **to complete** the task.

You can also use multiple infinitives in a single sentence: "Today, I plan **to run** three miles, **to clean** my room, and **to update** my budget." All three of these infinitives follow the verb *plan*. Other verbs that often come before infinitives include *want*, *convince*, *try*, *able*, and *like*.

As a Noun Phrase

The infinitive can also be used to express an action in an abstract, general way: "**To err** is human"; "**To know** me is **to love** me." No one in particular is completing these actions. In these sentences, the infinitives act as the subjects.

Infinitives can also serve as the object of a sentence. One common construction involves a dummy subject (*it*): "It was nice **to meet** you."

As a Modifier

Infinitives can be used as an adjective (e.g., "A request **to see** someone" or "The man **to save** us") or as an adverb (e.g., "Keen **to get** on," "Nice **to listen** to," or "In order **to win**").

In Questions

Infinitives can be used in elliptical questions as well, as in "I don't know where **to go**."

Note: The infinitive is also the usual dictionary form or citation form of a verb. The form listed in dictionaries is the bare infinitive, although the *to*-infinitive is often used in referring to verbs or in defining other verbs: "The word *amble* means 'to walk slowly'"; "How do we conjugate the verb *to go*?"
Certain helping verbs do not have infinitives, such *will*, *can*, and *may*.

Split Infinitives?

One of the biggest controversies among grammarians and style writers has been the appropriateness of separating the two words of the *to*-infinitive as in “to *boldly* go.” Despite what a lot of people have declared over the years, there is absolutely nothing wrong with this construction. It is 100 percent grammatically sound.

Part of the reason so many authorities have been against this construction is likely the fact that in languages such as Latin, the infinitive is a single word, and cannot be split. However, in English the infinitive (or at least the *to*-infinitive) is two words, and a split infinitive is a perfectly natural construction.

Try to versus *Try and*

One common error people make is saying *try and* instead of *try to*, as in “I’ll try and be there by 10:00 tomorrow.” However, *try* requires a *to*-infinitive after it, so using *and* is incorrect. While this construction is acceptable in casual conversation, it is not grammatically correct and should not be used in formal situations.

Practice

Identify the infinitives in the following sentences:

1. Paulina is the girl to beat.
2. It was really nice to hear from you again.
3. It looks like Dash wants to fail.

Answers

1. The infinitive *to beat* is used in this instance. It acts as an adjective, describing what kind of girl Paulina is.
2. The infinitive *to hear* is used in this instance. It acts as the object of the sentence.
3. The infinitive *to fail* is used in this instance. It works along with the verb *want*.

The Bare Infinitive

As we mentioned previously, the infinitive can sometimes occur without the word *to*. The form without *to* is called the **bare infinitive** (the form with *to* is called the ***to*-infinitive**). In the following sentences both *sit* and *to sit* would each be considered an infinitive:

- I want **to sit** on the other chair.
- I can **sit** here all day.

Infinitives have a variety of uses in English. Certain contexts call for the *to*-infinitive form, and certain contexts call for the bare infinitive; they are not normally interchangeable, except in occasional instances like after the verb *help*, where either can be used.

As we mentioned earlier, some verbs require the bare infinitive instead of the *to*-infinitive:

- The helping verb *do*
 - Does she **dance**?
 - Zi doesn’t **sing**.
- Helping verbs that express tense, possibility, or ability like *will*, *can*, *could*, *should*, *would*, and *might*
 - The bears will **eat** you if they catch you.
 - Lucas and Gerardo might **go** to the dance.
 - You should **give** it a try.
- Verbs of perception, permission, or causation, such as *see*, *watch*, *hear*, *make*, *let*, and *have* (after a direct object)

- Look at Caroline **go**!
- You can't make me **talk**.
- It's so hard to let someone else **finish** my work.

The bare infinitive can be used as the object in such sentences like "What you should do is **make** a list." It can also be used after the word *why* to ask a question: "Why **reveal** it?"

The bare infinitive can be tricky, because it often looks exactly like the present tense of a verb. Look at the following sentences for an example:

- You **lose** things so often.
- You can **lose** things at the drop of a hat.

In both of these sentences, we have the word *lose*, but in the first sentence it's a present tense verb, while in the second it's a bare infinitive. So how can you tell which is which? The easiest way is to try changing the subject of the sentence and seeing if the verb should change:

- She **loses** things so often.
- She can **lose** things at the drop of a hat.

Practice

Identify the infinitives in the following sentences:

1. What you should do is stop talking for a moment and listen.
2. Oh, that must be Lebo at the door.
3. Why walk when I could run?

Answers

1. What you should do is **stop** talking for a moment and **listen**.
 - There are two infinitives in this sentence: *stop* and *listen*. They are both the objects of the sentence. This sentence also includes the gerund *talking*, which the object in the phrase "stop talking."
2. Oh, that must **be** Lebo at the door.
 - The infinitive *be* works with the helping verb *must*.
3. Why **walk** when I could **run**?
 - There are two infinitives in this sentence: *walk* and *run*. *Walk* follows the word *why*, and it is asking a question. *Run* works with the helping verb *could*.

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ADVANCED VERB TENSES

Now we've mastered the different pieces that we need to understand in order to discuss some more advanced tenses. These advanced tenses were mentioned briefly in [Helping Verbs](#), and they came up again in [Participles](#). These forms are created with different forms of *to be* and *to have*:

- He **had eaten** everything by the time we got there.
- She **is waiting** for us to get there!
- He **will have broken** it by next Thursday, you can be sure.

- She **was singing** for eight hours.

Was working	Is working	Will be working
WORKED	WORK	WILL WORK
Had been working	Has been working	Will have been working
Had worked	Has worked	Will have worked

When you combine a form of *to be* with the present participle, you create a **continuous tense**; these tenses indicate a sense of continuity. The subject of the sentence was (or is, or will be) doing that thing for awhile.

- **Present:** is working
- **Past:** was working
- **Future:** will be working (You can also say “is going to be working.”)

Practice

Convert these sentences from simple tenses to continuous tenses:

1. Ivone wrote a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vividas*.
2. As a pilot, Sara will fly a lot of cross-country flights.
3. Zachy reads all of the latest articles on archeology.

Answers

1. The past continuous is *was* + present participle, so the correct sentence is
 - Ivone **was writing** a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vividas*.
2. The future continuous is either *will be* + present participle or *is going to be* + present participle:
 - As a pilot, Sara **will be flying** a lot of cross-country flights.
 - As a pilot, Sara **is going to be flying** a lot of cross-country flights.
3. The present continuous is *is* + present participle, so the correct sentence is:
 - Zachy **is reading** all of the latest articles on archeology.

When you combine a form of *to have* with the past participle of a verb, you create a **perfect tense**; these tenses indicate a sense of completion. This thing had been done for a while (or has been, or will have been).

- **Present:** has worked
- **Past:** had worked
- **Future:** will have worked

Practice

Convert these sentences from simple tenses to perfect tenses:

1. Ivone wrote a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. As a pilot, Sara will fly a lot of cross-country flights.
3. Zachy reads all of the latest articles on archeology.

Answers

1. The past perfect is *had* + past participle:
 - Ivone **had written** a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. The future perfect is *will have* + past participle:
 - As a pilot, Sara **will have flown** a lot of cross-country flights.
3. The present perfect is *has* + past participle:
 - Zachy **has read** all of the latest articles on archeology.

You can also use these together. *To have* must always appear first, followed by the past participle *been*. The present participle of any verb can then follow. These **perfect continuous tenses** indicate that the verb started in the past, and is still continuing:

- **Present:** has been working
- **Past:** had been working
- **Future:** will have been working

Practice

Convert these sentences from simple tenses to perfect continuous tenses:

1. Ivone wrote a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. As a pilot, Sara will fly a lot of cross-country flights.
3. Zachy reads all of the latest articles on archeology.

Answers

1. The past perfect continuous is *had been* + present participle:
 - Ivone **had been writing** a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. The future perfect continuous is *will have been* + present participle:
 - As a pilot, Sara **will have been flying** a lot of cross-country flights.
3. The present perfect continuous is *has been* + present participle:

- Zach **has been reading** all of the latest articles on archeology.

Sometimes these verb tenses can be split by adverbs: “Zach has been **studiously** reading all of the latest articles on archeology.”

Now that we’ve learned about *how* we create each of these tenses, let’s practice using them. In this exercise, you will be asked to create some original writing. As you do so, use both simple and complex verb tenses.

Practice

Look at the following schedule for a Writer’s Workshop. Write a passage about the schedule as if it were Tuesday at 12:30.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
10:00	Check-In	Genre Speakers	Meet Editors/Agents
11:00	Group Orientation	Genre Speakers	
12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Check-Out
1:00	Peer-to-Peer Critique	Professional Critiques	
2:00			
3:00		Key-Note Speaker	

Answers

While there are an infinite number of passages you could write, compare the tenses in your passage to ours:

This Writer’s Workshop has been going since yesterday. This morning, several genre speakers talked about the quirks of their genres. By the time attendees heard these talks, they had completed their peer-to-peer critiques, and were ready to learn more specific things about the genre they aspire to write in. After lunch today, each attendee will meet with a professional for a critique of the work. When that has finished, the key-note speaker will give an address. Tomorrow there will be a meet and greet with editors and agents. By noon tomorrow, the workshop will have ended.

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: VERBS

Verb Types

Read the following sentences. In each sentence, identify the active, linking, and helping verbs.

1. Guilherme **should arrive** in the next three minutes.
2. The buffet **looked** delicious as we **walked** by.
3. Harper **couldn't afford** another missed assignment.
4. Pietra **has** an extensive rock collection. She **is** particularly proud of her obsidian samples.

Answers

1. Guilherme **should arrive** in the next three minutes.
 - *Should* is a helping verb. It expresses likelihood.
 - *Arrive* is the active (main) verb in this sentence. It is intransitive.
2. The buffet **looked** delicious as we **walked** by.
 - *Looked* is a linking verb; the buffet isn't actually completing any actions.
 - *Walked* is an active verb. It is intransitive.
3. Harper **couldn't afford** another missed assignment.
 - *Couldn't* helps *afford*. In this sentence, it indicates how possible the verb *afford* is.
 - *Afford* is an active verb. It is transitive: its object is "another missed assignment."
4. Pietra **has** an extensive rock collection. She **is** particularly proud of her obsidian samples.
 - *Has* is an active verb. It is transitive: its object is "an extensive rock collection."
 - *Is* is a linking verb: She = particularly proud

Non-Finite Verbs

As you read the following passage, identify the different non-finite verbs and their roles in the text.

The Australian magpie is a medium-size black and white bird native to Australia. Feeding magpies is a common practice among households around the country, and there generally is a peaceful co-existence. However, in the spring a small minority of breeding magpies (almost always males) become aggressive and swoop and attack passersby. Being unexpectedly swooped while cycling can result in loss of control of the bicycle, which may cause injury. Cyclists can deter attack by attaching a long pole with a flag to a bike. Using cable ties on helmets has become common as well, and it appears to be an effective deterrent.

Gerunds

Here is the passage with all the gerunds bolded:

The Australian magpie is a medium-size black and white bird native to Australia. **Feeding** magpies is a common practice among households around the country, and there generally is a peaceful co-existence. However, in the spring a small minority of breeding magpies (almost always males) become aggressive and swoop and attack passersby. **Being** unexpectedly swooped while **cycling** can result in loss of control of the bicycle, which may cause injury. Cyclists can deter attack by **attaching** a long pole with a flag to a bike. **Using** cable ties on helmets has become common as well, and it appears to be an effective deterrent.

1. *Feeding magpies* is the subject of this sentence.
2. *Being unexpectedly swooped* is the subject of this sentence.
3. *While cycling* is a prepositional phrase. *Cycling* is the object of this phrase.
4. *By attaching a long pole with a flag to a bike* is a prepositional phrase. *Attaching* is the object of this phrase.
5. *Using cable ties on helmets* is the subject of this sentence.

Participles

Here is the passage with all the participles bolded. Past particles have also been italicized.

The Australian magpie is a medium-size black and white bird native to Australia. Feeding magpies is a common practice among households around the country, and there generally is a peaceful co-existence. However, in the spring a small minority of **breeding** magpies (almost always males) become aggressive and swoop and attack passersby. Being unexpectedly **swooped** while cycling can result in loss of control of the bicycle, which may cause injury. Cyclists can deter attack by attaching a long pole with a flag to a bike. Using cable ties on helmets has become common as well, and it appears to be an effective deterrent.

1. *Breeding* is a present participle serving as an adjective. It modifies the noun *magpies*.
2. *Swooped* is a past participle. It works with the gerund *being* as a part of the subject of the sentence: *Being unexpectedly swooped while cycling*. "Being swooped" is a passive voice construction, so it requires the past participle.

Infinitives

Here is the passage with all the infinitives bolded:

The Australian magpie is a medium-size black and white bird native to Australia. Feeding magpies is a common practice among households around the country, and there generally is a peaceful co-existence. However, in the spring a small minority of breeding magpies (almost always males) become aggressive and swoop and attack passersby. Being unexpectedly swooped while cycling can **result** in loss of control of the bicycle, which may **cause** injury. Cyclists can **deter** attack by attaching a long pole with a flag to a bike. Using cable ties on helmets has become common as well, and it appears **to be** an effective deterrent.

1. *Result* is the bare-infinitive. It works with the verb *can*. *Can* indicates a possibility in this sentence.
2. *Cause* is the bare-infinitive. It works with the verb *may*. *May* indicates a possibility in this sentence.
3. *Deter* is the bare-infinitive. It works with the verb *can*. *Can* indicates a possibility in this sentence.
4. *To be* is the *to*-infinitive. It works with the verb *appears*.

Simple Tenses to Advanced Tenses

Follow the instructions in each item:

1. Convert this sentence from a simple tense to a continuous tense: Calebe will file a complaint against the city.
2. Convert this sentence from a simple tense to a perfect tense: Cecília swore to never again eat another slice of carrot cake.
3. Convert this sentence from a simple tense to a perfect continuous tenses: Avi sings with his friends at least once a week.

Answers

1. The future continuous is either *will be* + present participle or *is going to be* + present participle:
 - Calebe **will be filing** a complaint against the city.
 - Calebe **is going to be filing** a complaint against the city.
2. The past perfect is *had* + past participle:
 - Cecília **had sworn** to never again eat another slice of carrot cake.
3. The present continuous is *has been* + present participle:
 - Avi **has been singing** with his friends at least once a week.

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INTRODUCTION TO ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Adjectives and adverbs describe things. For example, compare the phrase “the bear” to “the harmless bear” or the phrase “run” to “run slowly.”

In both of these cases, the adjective (*harmless*) or adverb (*slowly*) changes how we understand the phrase. When you first read the word *bear*, you probably didn’t imagine a harmless bear. When you saw the word *run* you probably didn’t think of it as something done slowly.

Adjectives and adverbs modify other words: they change our understanding of things.

For a catchy introduction to these words in song, watch the following videos.

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/c_TmWCiYse0

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/FQPDk_fMcs0

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FUNCTIONS OF ADJECTIVES

An adjective modifies a noun; that is, it provides more detail about a noun. This can be anything from color to size to temperature to personality. Adjectives usually occur just before the nouns they modify. In the following examples, adjectives are in bold, while the nouns they modify are in italics (the **big** *bear*):

- The generator is used to convert **mechanical** *energy* into **electrical** *energy*.
- The **steel** *pipes* contain a **protective** *sacrificial anode* and are surrounded by **packing** *material*.

Adjectives can also follow a linking verb. In these instances, adjectives can modify pronouns as well. In the following examples, adjectives are still bold, while the linking verb is in italics this time (the sun *is* **yellow**):

- The schoolhouse *was* **red**.
- I *looked* **good** today.
- She *was* **funny**.

Numbers can also be adjectives in some cases. When you say “Seven is my lucky number,” *seven* is a noun, but when you say “There are seven cats in this painting,” *seven* is an adjective because it is modifying the noun *cats*.



Practice

Identify the adjectives in the following sentences:

1. Of the four seasons, fall is my favorite; I love the red leaves, the cool weather, and the brisk wind.
2. My roommate, on the other hand, thinks that summer is the best season.
3. I think she is crazy.
4. Fall is better than summer. Summer is too hot and muggy to be enjoyable.

Answers

The adjectives have been bolded in the sentences below:

1. Of the **four** seasons, fall is my **favorite**; I love the **red** leaves, the **cool** weather, and the **brisk** wind.
2. My roommate, on the other hand, thinks that summer is the **best** season.
3. I think she is **crazy**.
4. Fall is **better** than summer. Summer is too **hot** and **muggy** to be **enjoyable**. (All of these adjectives follow linking verbs.)

Comparable Adjectives

Some adjectives are **comparable**. For example, a person may be polite, but another person may be more polite, and a third person may be the most polite of the three. The word *more* here modifies the adjective *polite* to indicate a comparison is being made (a **comparative**), and *most* modifies the adjective to indicate an absolute comparison (a **superlative**).

There is another way to compare adjectives in English. Many adjectives can take the suffixes *-er* and *-est* (sometimes requiring additional letters before the suffix; see forms for *far* below) to indicate the comparative and superlative forms, respectively:

great, greater, greatest



deep, deeper, deepest

far, farther, farthest

Some adjectives are *irregular* in this sense:

good, better, best

bad, worse, worst

little, less, least

Another way to convey comparison is by incorporating the words *more* and *most*. There is no simple rule to decide which means is correct for any given adjective, however. The general tendency is for shorter adjectives to take the suffixes, while longer adjectives do not—but sometimes *sound* of the word is the deciding factor.

more beautiful not *beautifuller*

more pretentious not *pretentiouser*

While there is no perfect rule to determine which adjectives will or won't take *-er* and *-est* suffixes, this video lays out some "sound rules" that can serve as helpful guidelines:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/Mxblg8xKBoc>

A Note about *Fun*

The adjective *fun* is one of the most notable exceptions to the rules. If you follow the sound rules we just learned about, the comparative should be *funner* and the superlative *funnest*. However, for a long time, these words were considered non-standard, with *more fun* and *most fun* acting as the correct forms.

The reasoning behind this rule is now obsolete (it has a lot to do with the way *fun* became an adjective), but the stigma against *funner* and *funnest* remains. While the tides are beginning to change, it's safest to stick to *more fun* and *most fun* in formal situations (such as in academic writing or in professional correspondence).

Practice

What are the correct comparative and superlative forms for the adjectives below?

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
<i>fun</i>	<i>more fun</i> (or <i>funner</i> , conversationally)	<i>most fun</i> (or <i>funnest</i> , conversationally)
red	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
shimmery	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
fresh	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
popular	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
squishy	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
quiet	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
large	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Answers

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
<i>fun</i>	<i>more fun</i> (or <i>funner</i> , conversationally)	<i>most fun</i> (or <i>funnest</i> , conversationally)
red	redder	reddest
shimmery	more shimmery	most shimmery
fresh	fresher	freshest
popular	more popular	most popular
squishy	squishier	squishiest
quiet	quieter	quietest
large	larger	largest

Non-Comparable Adjectives

Many adjectives do not naturally lend themselves to comparison. For example, some English speakers would argue that it does not make sense to say that one thing is “more ultimate” than another, or that something is “most ultimate,” since the word *ultimate* is already an absolute. Such adjectives are called **non-comparable adjectives**. Other examples include *dead*, *true*, and *unique*.

Note: Native speakers will frequently play with non-comparable adjectives. Although *pregnant* is logically non-comparable (someone is pregnant or she is not), you may hear a sentence like “She looks more and more pregnant each day.” Likewise *extinct* and *equal* appear to be non-comparable, but one might say that a language about which nothing is known is “more extinct” than a well-documented language with surviving literature but no speakers, and George Orwell once wrote “All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.”

Practice

Look at the following list of adjectives. Are they comparable or non-comparable? Explain your reasoning why. If the adjective is comparable, list its comparative and superlative forms. For example:

- *Tall* is a comparable adjective. Height exists on a scale: there are many different heights. The comparative is *taller*, and the superlative is *tallest*.
- *Dead* is a non-comparable. You are either dead or alive. However, this concept is played with in the movie *The Princess Bride*. Miracle Max says Wesley is “only mostly dead.” Max is expressing the fact that Wesley is still alive, despite being very close to death’s door.

impossible	<input type="text"/>	large	<input type="text"/>
pretty	<input type="text"/>	nuclear	<input type="text"/>

Answers

impossible	<i>Impossible</i> is a non-comparable adjective. <i>Impossible</i> is defined as something that can’t happen; this can’t be graded on a scale. However, people will play on this for emphasis: “That’s the most impossible idea I’ve ever heard.”	large	<i>Large</i> is a comparable adjective. Size exists on a scale. The comparative is <i>larger</i> , and the superlative is <i>largest</i> .
pretty	<i>Pretty</i> is a comparable adjective. Attractiveness exists on a scale. The comparative is <i>prettier</i> , and the superlative is <i>prettiest</i> .	nuclear	<i>Nuclear</i> is a non-comparable adjective. It is a classification, not a gradable quality. In phrases like “the most nuclear weapons” <i>most</i> is referring to how many weapons there are, not “how nuclear” the weapons are.

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FUNCTIONS OF ADVERBS

Adverbs can perform a wide range of functions: they can modify verbs, adjectives, and even other adverbs. They can come either before or after the word they modify. In the following examples, adverbs are in bold, while the words they modify are in italics (the quite *handsome* man):

- The desk is made of an **especially** *corrosion-resistant industrial* steel.
- The power company uses huge generators which are **generally** *turned* by steam turbines.
- Jaime won the race, because he **ran** *quickly*.
- This fence was **installed** *sloppily*. It needs to be redone.



An adverb may provide information about the manner, place, time, frequency, certainty, or other circumstances of the activity indicated by the verb. Some examples, where again the adverb is in bold and the words modified are in italics:

- Suzanne sang **loudly** (*loudly* modifies the verb *sang*, indicating the manner of singing)
- We left it **here** (*here* modifies the verb phrase *left it*, indicating place)
- I worked **yesterday** (*yesterday* modifies the verb *worked*, indicating time)
- He **undoubtedly** did it (*undoubtedly* modifies the verb phrase *did it*, indicating certainty)
- You **often** make mistakes (*often* modifies the verb phrase *make mistakes*, indicating frequency)

They can also modify noun phrases, prepositional phrases, or whole clauses or sentences, as in the following examples. Once again the adverbs are in bold, while the words they modify are in italics.

- I bought **only** the fruit (*only* modifies the noun phrase *the fruit*)
- Roberto drove us **almost** to the station (*almost* modifies the prepositional phrase *to the station*)
- **Certainly** we need to act (*certainly* modifies the sentence as a whole)

Practice

Identify the adverbs in these paragraphs:

Mass extinctions are **insanely** catastrophic—but important—events that punctuate the history of life on Earth. The Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary was originally thought of to represent a mass extinction, but has subsequently been “downgraded” to a minor extinction event based on new discoveries. However, compared to other important stratigraphic boundaries, like the end-Triassic or the end-Cretaceous, the Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary remains really poorly understood.

Answers

There are five adverbs in the paragraphs:

insanely; originally; subsequently; really; poorly

Here the adverbs have been bolded:

Mass extinctions are **insanely** catastrophic—but important—events that punctuate the history of life on Earth. The Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary was **originally** thought of to represent a mass extinction, but has **subsequently** been “downgraded” to a minor extinction event based on new discoveries. However, compared to other important stratigraphic boundaries, like the end-Triassic or the end-Cretaceous, the Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary remains **really** **poorly** understood.

Intensifiers and Adverbs of Degree

Adverbs can also be used as modifiers of adjectives, and of other adverbs, often to indicate degree. Here are a few examples:

- You are **quite** right (the adverb *quite* modifies the adjective *right*)
- Milagros is **exceptionally** pretty (the adverb *exceptionally* modifies the adjective *pretty*)
- She sang **very** loudly (the adverb *very* modifies another adverb—*loudly*)
- Wow! You ran **really** quickly! (the adverb *really* modifies another adverb—*quickly*)

Other intensifiers include *mildly*, *pretty*, *slightly*, etc.

This video provides more discussion and examples of intensifiers:

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/_2htRrOPiDE

Adverbs may also undergo comparison, taking comparative and superlative forms. This is usually done by adding *more* and *most* before the adverb (*more slowly*, *most slowly*). However, there are a few adverbs that take non-standard forms, such as *well*, for which *better* and *best* are used (i.e., “He did **well**, she did **better**, and I did **best**”).

Note: When using intensifiers alongside the adverb *also*, *also* should always appear first: “He **also** really loved pie” is correct, while “He **really** **also** loved pie” is not.

Very

Some people are of the opinion that the words *very* and *really* indicate weak writing. You've probably seen lists of adjectives to use instead of these adverbs (along with an adjective). While this can be true in some cases (*enormous* or *gigantic* would probably serve better than "really big"), *very* and *really* aren't terrible words. As in most cases, you just need to be conscious of your choices. When you use these adverbs, pause and see if there's a better way to word what you're saying.

Relative Adverbs

Relative adverbs are a subclass of adverbs that deal with space, time, and reason. In this video, David gives a quick intro to the three most common relative adverbs: *when*, *where*, and *why*.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/5Ub0Qu4uxpc>

As we just learned, we can use these adverbs to connect ideas about where, when, and why things happen.

Practice

Read the following questions and turn them into statements using relative adverbs:

1. Where did Nina last see her keys?
2. When are the repairmen going to get here?
3. Why did the desk just collapse?

Answers

1. I don't know where Nina last saw her keys.
2. I don't know when the repairmen are going to get here.
3. I don't know why the desk just collapsed.

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

As we've learned, adjectives and adverbs act in similar but different roles. A lot of the time this difference can be seen in the structure of the words:

- A **clever** new idea.
- A **cleverly** developed idea.

Clever is an adjective, and *cleverly* is an adverb. This adjective + *ly* construction is a short-cut to identifying adverbs.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/b4KybdSi1Fc>

While *-ly* is helpful, it's not a universal rule. Not all words that end in *-ly* are adverbs: *lovely*, *costly*, *friendly*, etc. Additionally, not all adverbs end in *-ly*: *here*, *there*, *together*, *yesterday*, *aboard*, *very*, *almost*, etc.

Some words can function both as an adjective and as an adverb:

- *Fast* is an adjective in "a **fast** car" (where it qualifies the noun *car*), but an adverb in "he drove fast" (where it modifies the verb *drove*).
- *Likely* is an adjective in "a likely outcome" (where it modifies the noun *outcome*), but an adverb in "we will likely go" (where it modifies the verb *go*).

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COMMON MISTAKES WITH ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Adjectives

If you're a native English speaker, you may have noticed that "the big red house" sounds more natural than "the red big house." The video below explains the order in which adjectives occur in English:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/7sHbB9VQBgo>

Practice

Select the adjectives that are in a natural sounding word order for each sentence.

1. A(n) _____ sports car was parked in front of the restaurant.
 - a. beautiful, new, Italian
 - b. Italian, new, beautiful
 - c. Italian, beautiful, new
2. A _____ barber pole was next to the front door of the barber shop.
 - a. red and white, striped, big
 - b. big, red and white, striped
 - c. striped, red and white, big
3. We put an _____ tree in the corner of their office.
 - a. ugly, tiny, artificial
 - b. artificial, ugly, tiny
 - c. ugly, artificial, tiny
4. The elf lived in a _____ house in the forest.
 - a. little, charming, mushroom
 - b. mushroom, little, charming
 - c. charming, little, mushroom

Show Answers

1. a: beautiful, new, Italian
2. b: big, red and white, striped
3. a: ugly, tiny, artificial
4. c: charming, little, mushroom

Adverbs

Only

Have you ever noticed the effect the word *only* can have on a sentence, especially depending on where it's placed? Let's look at a simple sentence:

She loves horses.

Let's see how *only* can influence the meaning of this sentence:

- *Only* she loves horses.
 - No one loves horses but her.
- She *only* loves horses.
 - The one thing she does is love horses.
- She loves *only* horses.
 - She loves horses and nothing else.

Only modifies the word that directly follows it. Whenever you use the word *only* make sure you've placed it correctly in your sentence.

Literally

A linguistic phenomenon is sweeping the nation: people are using *literally* as an intensifier. How many times have you heard things like "It was literally the worst thing that has ever happened to me," or "His head literally exploded when I told him I was going to be late again"? Some people love this phrase while it makes other people want to pull their hair out.

So what's the problem with this? According to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, the actual definition of *literal* is as follows:

- involving the ordinary or usual meaning of a word

- giving the meaning of each individual word
- completely true and accurate : not exaggerated (Note: "[Literal](#)." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 20 June 2016.))

According to this definition, *literally* should be used only when something actually happened. Our cultural usage may be slowly shifting to allow *literally* as an intensifier, but it's best to avoid using *literally* in any way other than its dictionary definition, especially in formal writing.

Practice

Which of the following sentences use the adverb *literally* correctly?

1. A pirate only sails the seas.
2. Daveed often takes things too literally.
3. Tommy literally died when he heard the news.
4. In their vows, they promised to love only each other.
5. Teddy is literally the best person on the planet.

Answers

1. This sentence is probably not true. It implies that a pirate sails the seas, and does nothing else. It may be an acceptable sentence if you're exaggerating on purpose, but a more likely sentence would be "A pirate sails only the seas." (A pirate sails the seas, and nowhere else.)
2. This sentence is correct.
3. This sentence is incorrect (hopefully). Try replacing *literally* with *practically* or *nearly*.
4. This sentence is correct.
5. This sentence may or may not be true; it's something that would be very hard to verify. When you're being purposefully hyperbolic, this may be okay in a non-formal setting, but you may want to consider replacing *literally* with an intensifier like *actually* or omitting the adverb altogether, since *literally* has such a stigma around it.

Mistaking Adverbs and Adjectives

One common mistake with adjectives and adverbs is using one in the place of the other. For example:

- I wish I could write as neat as he can.
 - The word should be *neatly*, an adverb, since it's modifying a verb.
- Well, that's real nice of you.
 - Should be *really*, an adverb, since it's modifying an adjective

Remember, if you're modifying a noun or pronoun, you should use an adjective. If you're modifying anything else, you should use an adverb.

Good v. Well

One of the most commonly confused adjective/adverb pairs is *good* versus *well*. There isn't really a good way to remember this besides memorization. *Good* is an adjective. *Well* is an adverb. Let's look at a couple of sentence where people often confuse these two:

- She plays basketball good.
- I'm doing good.

In the first sentence, *good* is supposed to be modifying *plays*, a verb; therefore the use of *good*—an adjective—is incorrect. *Plays* should be modified by an adverb. The correct sentence would read "She plays basketball well."

In the second sentence, *good* is supposed to be modifying *doing*, a verb. Once again, this means that *well*—an adverb—should be used instead: "I'm doing well."

Note: The sentence “I’m doing good” can be grammatically correct, but only when it means “I’m doing good things,” rather than when it is describing how a person is feeling.

Practice

Select the correct modifier for each sentence:

1. Billy has to work (real / really) hard to be (healthy / healthily).
2. Kate is really (good / well) with bows. She shoots really (good / well).
3. Eli reads (quick / quickly), and he retains the information (good / well).

Answers

1. Billy has to work **really** hard to be **healthy**.
 - Remember that *to be* is a linking verb. Linking verbs often connect the subject of the sentence (Billy) to an adjective that describes it (*healthy*).
2. Kate is really **good** with bows. She shoots really **well**.
3. Eli reads **quickly**, and he retains the information **well**.

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Adjectives

Comparable or Non-Comparable?

Read the following passage. Identify the adjectives, and categorize them by comparable and non-comparable.

The Principality of Sealand has been described as the world’s smallest nation. However, it is more accurate to describe it as an unrecognized micronation. It claims Roughs Tower, an offshore platform located approximately 7.5 miles off the coast of Suffolk, England, as its territory. Roughs Tower is a disused Maunsell Sea Fort, originally called HM Fort Roughs, built as an anti-aircraft defensive gun platform by the British during World War II.

Since 1967, the decommissioned HM Fort Roughs has been occupied by family and associates of Paddy Roy Bates, who claim that it is an independent sovereign state. However, Sealand is not officially recognized by any established sovereign state. Bates moved to the mainland when he became elderly, naming his son Michael regent.

Answers

The adjectives are *smallest, accurate, unrecognized, Roughs, offshore, Roughs, disused, Maunsell Sea, anti-aircraft, defensive, gun, decommissioned, independent, sovereign, recognized, established, sovereign, elderly*

Here’s the passage again with all the adjectives bolded:

The Principality of Sealand has been described as the world’s **smallest** nation. However, it is **more accurate** to describe it as an **unrecognized** micronation. It claims **Roughs** Tower, an **offshore** platform located approximately 7.5 miles off the coast of Suffolk, England, as its territory. **Roughs** Tower is a **disused Maunsell Sea** Fort, originally called HM Fort Roughs, built as an **anti-aircraft defensive gun** platform by the British during World War II.

Since 1967, the **decommissioned** HM Fort Roughs has been occupied by family and associates of Paddy Roy Bates, who claim that it is an **independent sovereign** state. However, Sealand is not officially **recognized** by any **established sovereign** state. Bates moved to the mainland when he became **elderly**, naming his son Michael regent.

The comparable adjectives are *smallest, accurate, unrecognized, offshore, disused, defensive, independent, recognized, established, and elderly*.

The non-comparable adjectives are *Roughs, Maunsell Sea, anti-aircraft, gun, decommissioned, and sovereign*. As you can see, several of these non-comparable adjectives are places or things that have acted as adjectives in this passage (like *Maunsell Sea* and *gun*).

Now that you’ve identified the comparable adjectives, write their comparative and superlative forms in the text frame below:

Answers

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
small	smaller	smallest
accurate	more accurate	most accurate
unrecognized	more unrecognized	most unrecognized
offshore	more offshore	most offshore
disused	more disused	most disused
defensive	more defensive	most defensive

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
independent	more independent	most independent
recognized	more recognized	most recognized
established	more established	most established
elderly	more elderly	most elderly

Adjective Order

Read the following sentences. Are the adjectives in the correct order? Type any corrections in the text frame below:

1. Ramin was throwing a party out at his ancient stone big house.
2. Can you believe James lost his leather dumb Italian wallet?
3. Sofia was transfixed by that green big singing fish.
4. He bought a pink new nice bouquet of flowers.

Answers

1. *Ancient* describes age, *stone* describes material, and *big* describes size. The correct order would be size, age, material:
 - Ramin was throwing a party out at his big ancient stone house.
2. *Leather* describes material, *dumb* describes opinion, and *Italian* describes origin. The correct order would be opinion, origin, material:
 - Can you believe James lost his dumb Italian leather wallet?
3. *Green* describes color, *big* describes size, and *singing* describes purpose. The correct order would be size, color, purpose:
 - Sofia was transfixed by that big green singing fish.
4. *Pink* describes color, *new* describes age, *nice* describes opinion. The correct order would be opinion, age, color:
 - He bought a nice new pink bouquet of flowers.

Adverbs

Intensifiers and Adverbs of Degree

Read the following passage and identify the adverbs. Are the intensifiers and adverbs or degree being used well? Or would you suggest revision? The sentences have been numbered to aid you in your comments.

(1) Wojtek (usually spelled Voytek in English) was a Syrian brown bear found in Iran and literally adopted by soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company of the Polish II Corps. (2) Wojtek initially had problems swallowing and was fed with condensed milk from an old vodka bottle. (3) Later in life, he was oftenly rewarded with beer, which became his favorite drink. (4) He really also enjoyed smoking (or eating) cigarettes.

(5) To get him onto a British transport ship when the unit sailed from Egypt, Wojtek was officially drafted into the Polish Army as a Private and was listed among the soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company. (6) As an enlisted soldier of the company, with his own paybook, rank, and serial number, he lived either with the other soldiers in tents or by himself in a special wooden crate, which was transported by truck. (7) According to numerous accounts, Wojtek helped by carrying ammunition during the Battle of Monte Cassino—he never dropped a single crate. (8) In recognition of the bear’s immensely popularity, the HQ approved a depiction of a bear carrying an artillery shell as the official emblem of the 22nd Company.

Answers

1. The adverb *literally* is misused here. The soldiers did not actually adopt the bear (filling out papers), they simply took the bear in. The best solution is to omit the adverb entirely.
2. The adverb *initially* is used correctly.
3. The adverb *later* is correct; *oftenly* is not a word; the correct word is *often*.
4. Should be *also really*, not *really also*. *Also* is modifying the phrase “really enjoyed smoking,” so it should come before the phrase, not in the middle of it.
5. The adverb *officially* is used correctly.
6. There are no adverbs in this sentence.
7. The adverb *never* is used correctly.
8. *Immensely* should be the adjective *immense*. *Popularity* is a noun.

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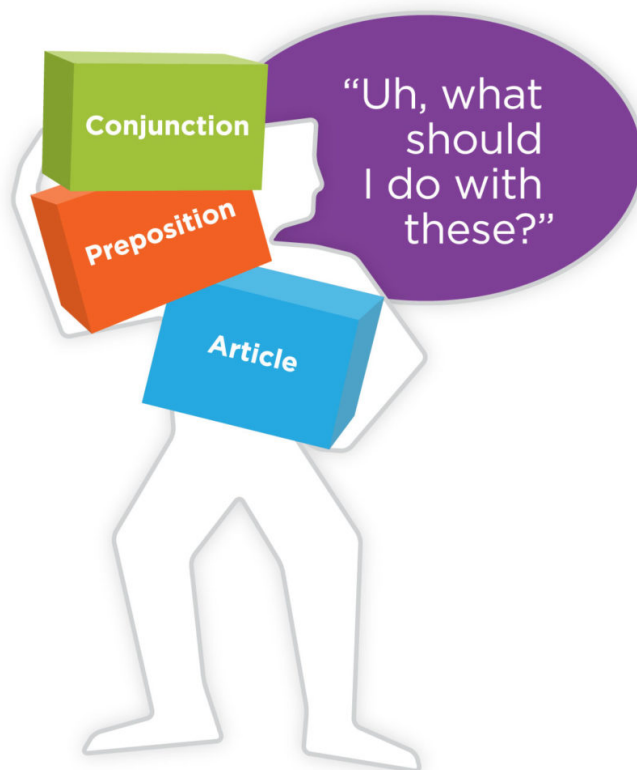
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INTRODUCTION TO OTHER PARTS OF SPEECH

We've covered the majority of parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. So, what's left?

What remains are the little connecting word categories: conjunctions, prepositions, and articles. These small words may not seem as important as verbs, nouns, and adjectives, but they are the backbone of English: these are the words that give our language structure.

- Conjunctions connect words and ideas together.
- Prepositions indicate relationships.
- Articles provide information about nouns.



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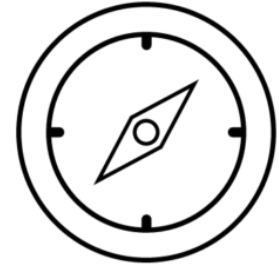
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CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions are the words that join sentences, phrases, and other words together. Conjunctions are divided into several categories, all of which follow different rules. We will discuss coordinating conjunctions, adverbial conjunctions, and correlative conjunctions.

Coordinating Conjunctions

The most common conjunctions are *and*, *or*, and *but*. These are all **coordinating conjunctions**. Coordinating conjunctions are conjunctions that join, or coordinate, two or more equivalent items (such as words, phrases, or sentences). The mnemonic acronym **FANBOYS** can be used to remember the most common coordinating conjunctions: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*.



- **For**: presents a reason (“They do not gamble or smoke, for they are ascetics.”)
- **And**: presents non-contrasting items or ideas (“They gamble, and they smoke.”)
- **Nor**: presents a non-contrasting negative idea (“They do not gamble, nor do they smoke.”)
- **But**: presents a contrast or exception (“They gamble, but they don’t smoke.”)
- **Or**: presents an alternative item or idea (“Every day they gamble, or they smoke.”)
- **Yet**: presents a contrast or exception (“They gamble, yet they don’t smoke.”)
- **So**: presents a consequence (“He gambled well last night, so he smoked a cigar to celebrate.”)

Here are some examples of these used in sentences:

- Nuclear-powered artificial hearts proved to be complicated, bulky, **and** expensive.
- In the 1960s, artificial heart devices did not fit well **and** tended to obstruct the flow of venous blood into the right atrium.
- The blood vessels leading to the device tended to kink, obstructing the filling of the chambers **and** resulting in inadequate output.
- Any external injury or internal injury put patients at risk of uncontrolled bleeding because the small clots that formed throughout the circulatory system used up so much of the clotting factor.
- The current from the storage batteries can power lights, **but** the current for appliances must be modified within an inverter.

Practice

Are the correct coordinating conjunctions being used in each of the following sentences? Explain your reasoning why or why not:

1. I love boxing or sewing. They’re both a lot of fun.
2. Martin is pretty good at writing, for Jaden is better.
3. Juana had to choose. Would she join the red team and the blue team?

Answers

1. The conjunction *or* presents an alternative. However, the second sentence indicates that the speaker enjoys both activities. The correct sentence would use *and*: “I love boxing **and** sewing. They’re both a lot of fun.”
2. The conjunction *for* presents a reason. It’s unlikely that Jaden being better is the reason Martin is pretty good at writing, so a different conjunction should be used. *But* would be a good fit here, since the ideas contrast: “Martin is pretty good at writing, **but** Jaden is better.”
3. The conjunction *and* presents non-contrasting items or ideas. Since the first sentence sets up a choice, we know that Juana can’t be on both teams. The conjunction *or* presents an alternative

and is the correct conjunction to use in this sentence: “Would she join the red team or the blue team?”

As you can see from the examples above, a comma only appears before these conjunctions sometimes. So how can you tell if you need a comma or not? There are three general rules to help you decide.

Rule 1: Joining Two Complete Ideas

Let’s look back at one of our example sentences:

The current from the storage batteries can power lights, but the current for appliances must be modified within an inverter.

There are two complete ideas in this sentence. A complete idea has both a subject (a noun or pronoun) and a verb. The subjects have been italicized, and the verbs bolded:

- the *current* from the storage batteries **can power** lights
- the *current* for appliances **must be modified** within an inverter.

Because each of these ideas could stand alone as a sentence, the coordinating conjunction that joins them must be preceded by a comma. Otherwise you’ll have a run-on sentence.

Run-on sentences are one of the most common errors in college-level writing. Mastering the partnership between commas and coordinating conjunctions will go a long way towards resolving many run-on sentence issues in your writing. We’ll talk more about run-ons and strategies to avoid them in [Run-on Sentences](#).

Rule 2: Joining Two Similar Items

So what if there’s only one complete idea, but two subjects or two verbs?

- Any external injury or internal injury put patients at risk of uncontrolled bleeding because the small clots that formed throughout the circulatory system used up so much of the clotting factor.
 - This sentence has two subjects: *external injury* and *internal injury*. They are joined with the conjunction *and*; we don’t need any additional punctuation here.
- In the 1960s, artificial heart devices did not fit well and tended to obstruct the flow of venous blood into the right atrium.
 - This sentence has two verbs: *did not fit well* and *tended to obstruct*. They are joined with the conjunction *and*; we don’t need any additional punctuation here.

Rule 3: Joining Three or More Similar Items

So what do you do if there are three or more items?

- Anna loves to run, David loves to hike, and Luz loves to dance.
- Fishing, hunting, and gathering were once the only ways for people to get food.
- Emanuel has a very careful schedule planned for tomorrow. He needs to work, study, exercise, eat, and clean.

As you can see in the examples above, there is a comma after each item, including the item just prior to the conjunction. There is a little bit of contention about this, but overall, most styles prefer to keep the additional comma (also called the serial comma). We discuss the serial comma in more depth in [Commas](#).

Starting a Sentence

Many students are taught—and some style guides maintain—that English sentences should not start with coordinating conjunctions.

This video shows that this idea is not actually a rule. And it provides some background for why so many people may have adopted this writing convention:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/r8KHlxscCkg>

Practice

Are the following sentences correctly punctuated?

1. Ricardo finished one song today and he wants to get three more done by the end of the week.
2. My sisters leave their shoes all over the house, and forget where they put them.
3. I wanted to call my friend, but she lost her phone a few days ago.
4. Vesna had already chosen the green car so I took the blue one.
5. Do you want to go to the planetarium or to the bowling alley?

Answers

1. Incorrect: a comma is required before *and*.
 - Ricardo finished one song today, and he wants to get three more done by the end of the week.
2. Incorrect: there is no comma required before *and*.
 - My sisters leave their shoes all over the house and forget where they put them.
3. Correct.
4. Incorrect: a comma is required before *so*.
 - Vesna had already chosen the green car, so I took the blue one.
5. Correct.

Adverbial Conjunctions

Adverbial conjunctions link two separate thoughts or sentences. When used to separate thoughts, as in the example below, a comma is required on either side of the conjunction.

The first artificial hearts were made of smooth silicone rubber, which apparently caused excessive clotting and, **therefore**, uncontrolled bleeding.

When used to separate sentences, as in the examples below, a semicolon is required before the conjunction and a comma after.

- The Kedeco produces 1200 watts in 17 mph winds using a 16-foot rotor; **on the other hand**, the Dunlite produces 2000 watts in 25 mph winds.
- For short periods, the fibers were beneficial; **however**, the eventual buildup of fibrin on the inner surface of the device would impair its function.
- The atria of the heart contribute a negligible amount of energy; **in fact**, the total power output of the heart is only about 2.5 watts.

Adverbial conjunctions include the following words; however, it is important to note that this is by no means a complete list.

therefore	however	in other words
-----------	---------	----------------



thus	then	otherwise
nevertheless	on the other hand	in fact

Practice

Fill in the missing punctuation marks for the sentences below. Type the corrected sentences in the text frame below:

1. My roommate decided to drive to work __ therefore __ I decided to get a ride with her.
2. We needed to turn left on 140th Street. That street __ however __ was under construction.
3. In other words __ we couldn't turn on the street we needed to.

Answers

1. My roommate decided to drive to work __;__ therefore __,__ I decided to get a ride with her.
 - There is a complete idea before and after *therefore*. Thus, this sentence needs a semicolon (or a period) before the conjunction and a comma afterward.
2. We needed to turn left on 140th Street. That street __,__ however __,__ was under construction.
 - *However* comes in the middle of a complete idea; it just needs commas on either side of it.
3. In other words __,__ we couldn't turn on the street we needed to.
 - *In other words* comes before a complete idea. We just need a comma at the end of the conjunction.

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are word pairs that work together to join words and groups of words of equal weight in a sentence. This video will define this types of conjunction before it goes through five of the most common correlative conjunctions:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/R74Ly00UygU>

The table below shows some examples of correlative conjunctions being used in a sentence:



Correlative Conjunction	Example
either...or	You either do your work or prepare for a trip to the office. (Either do, or prepare)
neither...nor	Neither the basketball team nor the football team is doing well.
not only...but (also)	He is not only handsome, but also brilliant. (Not only A, but also B)

Correlative Conjunction	Example
	Not only is he handsome, but also he is brilliant. (Not only is he A, but also he is B.)
both...and	Both the cross country team and the swimming team are doing well.
whether...or	You must decide whether you stay or you go. (It's up to you)
	Whether you stay or you go, the film must start at 8 pm. (It's not up to you)
just as...so	Just as many Americans love basketball, so many Canadians love ice hockey.
as much...as	Football is as much an addiction as it is a sport.
no sooner...than	No sooner did she learn to ski, than the snow began to thaw.
rather...than	I would rather swim than surf.
the...the	The more you practice dribbling, the better you will be at it.
as...as	Football is as fast as hockey (is (fast)).

Practice

Rewrite the following items. Your new sentences should use correlative conjunctions. Type your revisions in the text frame below:

1. She finished packing right when the moving truck showed up.
2. There are two shifts you can work: Thursday night or Saturday afternoon.
3. Chemistry and physics are both complex.

Answers

1. The only correlative conjunction that deals with time is *no sooner...than*. Your sentence should look something like “**No sooner** did she finish packing, **than** the moving truck showed up.”
2. There are two correlative conjunctions that involve a positive choice: *either...or* and *whether...or* (*Neither...nor* involves a negative choice). Your revision should look something like one of these:
 - You can work **either** Thursday night **or** Saturday afternoon.
 - You must choose **whether** you will work Thursday night **or** Saturday afternoon.
3. There are two correlative conjunctions that involve similar items: *as...as* and *just as...as*. Your revision should look something like one of these:
 - Chemistry is **as complex as** physics.
 - **Just as** chemistry is complex, **so** physics is complex.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions, are conjunctions that join an independent clause and a dependent clause. Here are some examples of subordinating conjunctions:

- The heart undergoes two cardiac cycle periods: diastole, **when** blood enters the ventricles, and systole, **when** the ventricles contract and blood is pumped out of the heart.
- **Whenever** an electron acquires enough energy to leave its orbit, the atom is positively charged.
- **If** the wire is broken, electrons will cease to flow and current is zero.
- I'll be here **as long as** it takes for you to finish.
- She did the favor **so that** he would owe her one.



Let's take a moment to look back at the previous examples. Can you see the pattern in comma usage? The commas aren't dependent on the presence subordinating conjunctions—they're dependent on the placement of clauses they're in. Let's revisit a couple examples and see if we can figure out the exact rules:

- The heart undergoes two cardiac cycle periods: diastole, **when** blood enters the ventricles, and systole, **when** the ventricles contract and blood is pumped out of the heart.
 - These clauses are both extra information: information that is good to know, but not necessary for the meaning of the sentence. This means they need commas on either side.
- **Whenever** an electron acquires enough energy to leave its orbit, the atom is positively charged.
 - In this sentence, the dependent clause comes before an independent clause. This means it should be followed by a comma.
- She did the favor **so that** he would owe her one.
 - In this sentence, the independent clause comes before an dependent clause. This means no comma is required.

The most common subordinating conjunctions in the English language are shown in the table below:

after	although	as	as far as	as if	as long as	as soon as
as though	because	before	even if	even though	every time	if
in order that	since	so	so that	than	though	unless
until	when	whenever	where	whereas	wherever	while

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/IKrRuDWEP68>

Practice

All of the commas have been removed from the following passage. Re-type the passage in the text frame below, adding in the correct punctuation. Identify all of the subordinating conjunctions as well.

Thales came to the silent auction in order to win the chance to be drawn by his favorite artist. Before anyone else could bid Thales went to the bidding sheet and placed an aggressive bid. He knew he would have to come back and check on it while the auction was still open but he felt confident in his ability to win. He was determined to win the auction even if it took all of his money to do so.

Answers

Here is the passage again. The subordinating conjunctions have been bolded, and the correct commas added:

Thales came to the silent auction **in order to** win the chance to be drawn by his favorite artist. **Before** anyone else could bid __, Thales went to the bidding sheet and placed an aggressive bid. He knew he would have to come back and check on it **while** the auction was still open __, but he felt confident in his ability to win. He was determined to win the auction **even if it took** all of his money to do so.

Note that the comma following the dependent clause “while the auction was still open” is because of the coordinating conjunction *but*, not because of the subordinate conjunction at the beginning of the clause.

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: CONJUNCTIONS

Coordinating Conjunctions

In this practice, you will combine multiple sentences into a single sentence. For example, look at the sentences “Clint was very skilled at his job. Wade was very skilled at his job.” You would combine these two sentences into something like this, using coordinating conjunctions:

- Clint and Wade were both very skilled at their jobs.
- Clint was very skilled at his job, and Wade was too.

When you combine sentences, you can remove repeated information. As you complete this exercise, type your answers in the text frame below.

1. Wade was really impressed by Clint. Wade was anxious about working with him.
2. Clint thought Wade was annoying. Clint thought Wade was unpredictable. Clint thought Wade was possibly dangerous.
3. In the end, Clint worked well with Wade. In the end, Wade worked well with Clint.

Answers

While there are several possible answers, let’s walk through a couple of options for each item.

1. In this first item, both sentences have the same subject: *Wade*. Since they have the same subject, we can turn these two sentences into a single sentence with two verbs. Since the ideas present a contrast, the conjunction *but* is a good choice for this sentence:

- Wade was really impressed by Clint but was anxious about working with him.
 - Wade was really impressed by Clint, but he was anxious about working with Clint.
2. All three of the sentences in this item have the same subject and verb. We can combine them together by joining these three similar items:
 - Clint thought Wade was annoying, unpredictable, and possibly dangerous.
 3. This last item is a little trickier. While the two sentences are very similar, they have different subjects and objects (the thing the sentence does something to or with). We could combine just the introductory phrase and then join the two sentences together, or we could change the wording of the sentence a little bit:
 - In the end, Clint worked well with Wade, and Wade worked well with Clint.
 - In the end, Clint and Wade worked well together.

Different Types of Conjunctions

All of the conjunctions have been removed from the following passage. Which conjunctions would best fill the gaps? Explain your reasoning why. The sentences have been numbered to aid you in your comments.

- (1) Karni's roommate, Joana, decided to drive to work; _____, Karni rode into the city with her.
- (2) They needed to turn left on 140th Street, _____ that street was under construction. (3) _____ Karni could say anything, _____, Joana had already found an alternate route.
- (4) _____ did Karni arrive at work, _____ her boss told her she would be working with her coworker Ian on her next project. (5) Karni was really impressed by Ian's professional accomplishments, _____ she was anxious about working with him. (6) Karni thought Ian was annoying, unpredictable, _____ reckless.
- (7) _____, Karni was willing to put aside her opinions to get the job done. (8) She knew Ian would put in his best effort _____ they worked together, _____ she felt she could do no less—_____ he frustrated her.
- (9) Personal relationships are often _____ important _____ professional skills.

Answers

Here are the sentences with suggested conjunctions. These are not the only possible solutions. If you answered something different, compare your reasoning with the reasoning provided below.

1. Karni's roommate, Joana, decided to drive to work; **therefore**, Karni rode into the city with her.
 - As the punctuation currently exists (a semicolon followed by a comma), the sentence needs an adverbial conjunction. However, using *therefore* here feels a little stuffy. If you change the semicolon to a comma and remove the second comma, you can then use the coordinating conjunction *so* instead, which feels more natural: ". . . , so Karni rode into the city with her."
2. They needed to turn left on 140th Street, **but** that street was under construction.
 - Since the blank is preceded only by a comma, a coordinating conjunction should go here. The conjunction *but* has the most appropriate meaning in this sentence.
3. **Before** Karni could say anything, **however**, Joana had already found an alternate route.
 - Since there is no comma after the first blank, we know we need a subordinating conjunction here. *Before* makes the most sense here.
 - Since this blank appears in the middle of an idea, we know we need an adverbial conjunction here. *However* makes the most sense here.
4. **No sooner** did Karni arrive at work, **than** her boss told her she would be working with her coworker Ian on her next project.
 - The two blanks in this sentence indicate a correlative conjunction. The sentence indicates the two things happened at the same time, so *no sooner . . . than* is the correct option here.
5. Karni was really impressed by Ian's professional accomplishments, **but** she was anxious about working with him.

- Since the blank is preceded only by a comma, a coordinating conjunction should go here. The conjunction *but* has the most appropriate meaning in this sentence.
- 6. Karni thought Ian was annoying, unpredictable, **and** reckless.
 - Since the blank is preceded only by a comma, a coordinating conjunction should go here. The conjunction *and* has the most appropriate meaning in this sentence.
- 7. **However**, Karni was willing to put aside her opinions to get the job done.
 - Since the blank is followed by a comma, we know we need an adverbial conjunction here. *However* makes the most sense here.
- 8. She knew Ian would put in his best effort **while** they worked together, **so** she felt she could do no less—**even** if he frustrated her.
 - Since there is no comma before or after the first blank, we know we need a subordinating conjunction here. *While* makes the most sense here, but *as long as* or *if* would also work.
 - Since the blank is preceded only by a comma, a coordinating conjunction should go here. The conjunction *so* has the most appropriate meaning in this sentence.
 - This blank is a little trickier; it is preceded by a dash, which can stand in for a lot of different punctuation marks. A subordinating conjunction is likely the best solution. We've used *even if* here, but there are a lot of possibilities, including *even though*.
- 9. Personal relationships are often **as** important **as** professional skills.
 - The two blanks in this sentence indicate a correlative conjunction. The sentence indicates the two things of equal importance, so *as . . . as* is the correct option here.

PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions are relation words; they can indicate location, time, or other more abstract relationships. Prepositions are noted in bold in these examples:

- The woods **behind** my house are super creepy **at** night.
- She sang **until** three in the morning.
- He was happy **for** them.

A preposition combines with another word (usually a noun or pronoun) called the complement. Prepositions are still in bold, and their complements are in italics:

- The woods **behind** *my house* are super creepy **at** *night*.
- She sang **until** *three in the morning*.
- He was happy **for** *them*.

Prepositions generally come before their complements (e.g., in England, **under** the table, **of** Jane). However, there are a small handful of exceptions, including **notwithstanding** and **ago**:

- *Financial limitations* **notwithstanding**, Phil paid back his debts.
- He was released *three days* **ago**.

Prepositions of location are pretty easily defined (*near*, *far*, *over*, *under*, etc.), and prepositions about time are as well (*before*, *after*, *at*, *during*, etc.). Prepositions of “more abstract relationships,” however, are a little more nebulous in their definition. The video below gives a good overview of this category of prepositions:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/RPiAT-Nm3JY>

Note: The video said that prepositions are a closed group, but it never actually explained what a closed group is. Perhaps the easiest way to define a closed group is to define its opposite: an open group. An open group is a part of speech allows new words to be added. For example, nouns are an open group; new nouns, like *selfie* and *blog*, enter the language all the time (verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are open groups as well). Thus a closed group simply refers to a part of speech that doesn't allow in new words. All of the word types in this section—prepositions, articles, and conjunctions—are closed groups.



So far, all of the prepositions we've looked at have been one word (and most of them have been one syllable). The most common prepositions are one-syllable words. According to one ranking, the most common English prepositions are *on, in, to, by, for, with, at, of, from, as*.

There are also some prepositions that have more than one word:

- in spite of (She made it to work in spite of the terrible traffic.)
- by means of (He traveled by means of boat.)
- except for (Joan invited everyone to her party except for Ben.)
- next to (Go ahead and sit down next to Jean-Claude.)

Practice

Identify the prepositions in the following sentences:

1. I love every painting by Vermeer except for *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*.
2. In spite of their fight, Beatriz wanted to know if she would still see Alexandre before lunch.
3. He only talks about two things: his band and his dogs.

Answers

The prepositions have been bolded in the sentences below:

1. I love every painting **by** Vermeer **except for** *The Girl **with** the Pearl Earring*.
2. **In spite of** their fight, Beatriz wanted to know if she would still see Alexandre **before** lunch.
3. He only talks **about** two things: his band and his dogs.

Using Prepositions

A lot of struggles with prepositions come from trying to use the correct preposition. Some verbs require specific prepositions. Here's a table of some of the most commonly misused preposition/verb pairs:

different from	comply with	dependent on	think of or about
need of	profit by	glad of	bestow upon

Some verbs take a different preposition, depending on the object of the sentence:

agree with a person	agree to a proposition	part from (a person)	part with (a thing)
differ from (person or thing)	differ from or with an opinion	confide in (to trust in)	confide to (to intrust to)
reconcile with (a person)	reconcile to (a statement or idea)	confer on (to give)	confer with (to talk with)
compare with (to determine value)	compare to (because of similarity)	convenient to (a place)	convenient for (a purpose)

When multiple objects take the same preposition, you don't need to repeat the preposition. For example, in the sentence "I'll read any book by J.K. Rowling or R. L. Stine," both *J. K. Rowling* and *R. L. Stine* are objects of the preposition *by*, so it only needs to appear once in the sentence. However, you can't do this when you have different prepositions. Let's look at this using a common phrase: "We fell out of the frying pan and into the fire." If you leave out one of the prepositions, as in "We fell out of the frying pan and the fire," the sentence is saying that we fell out of the frying pan *and* out of the fire, which would be preferable, but isn't the case in this idiom.

Prepositions in Sentences

You'll often hear about **prepositional phrases**. A prepositional phrase includes a preposition and its complement (e.g., "**behind the house**" or "**a long time ago**"). These phrases can appear at the beginning or end of sentences. When they appear at the beginning of a sentence, they typically need a comma afterwards:

- You can drop that off **behind the house**.
- A long time ago, dinosaurs roamed the earth.
- As the saying goes, hard work always pays off.

Ending a Sentence with a Preposition

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/NhGQYjXMgsY>

As we just learned, it is totally okay to end a sentence with a preposition. And, as we saw, it can often make your writing smoother and more concise to do so.

However, it's still best to avoid doing it unnecessarily. If your sentence ends with a preposition and would still mean the same thing without the preposition, take it out. For example:

- Where are you at?
- That's not what it's used for.

If you remove *at*, the sentence becomes "Where are you?" This means the same thing, so removing *at* is a good idea. However, if you remove *for*, the sentence becomes "That's not what it's used," which doesn't make sense.

Practice

Read each sentence and determine if the prepositions are being used correctly. If they are not, re-write the sentence.

1. Do you have any idea why Olivia keeps calling for?
2. You have no idea how much trouble you're in.
3. Luiz agreed with hand his credit card over to the cashier.
4. Last week Ngozi reconciled to the new prices and her new co-worker.

Answers

1. Incorrect. The preposition *for* does not work with the preposition *why*. There are two potential revisions for this sentence:
 - Do you have any idea *why* Olivia keeps calling?
 - Do you have any idea *what* Olivia keeps calling *for*?
2. Correct. The preposition *in* at the end of the sentence is necessary. "You have no idea how much trouble you are" means something different than the sentence's original intent.
3. Incorrect. The preposition is *with*. You agree with a person or an idea, but you agree to do something:
 - Luiz agreed *to* hand his credit card to the cashier.
 - Luiz agreed *with* handing his credit card to the cashier.
 - This sentence is still awkward; the first revision is the best choice.

4. Incorrect. There's a missing preposition in the sentence. It should read: "Last week Ngozi reconciled to the new prices and with her new co-worker." You reconcile *to* a fact and *with* a person.

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ARTICLES

There are three articles in the English language: *the*, *a*, and *an*. These are divided into two types of articles: definite (*the*) and indefinite (*a*, *an*). The definite article indicates a level of specificity that the indefinite does not. "An apple" could refer to any apple; however "the apple" is referring back to a specific apple.

Thus, when using the definite article, the speaker assumes the listener knows the identity of the noun's referent (because it is obvious, because it is common knowledge, or because it was mentioned in the same sentence or an earlier sentence). Use of an indefinite article implies that the speaker assumes the listener does not have to be told the identity of the referent.

There are also cases where no article is required:

- with generic nouns (plural or uncountable): *cars have accelerators*, *happiness is contagious*, referring to cars in general and happiness in general (compare *the happiness I felt yesterday*, specifying particular happiness);
- with many proper names: *Sabrina*, *France*, *London*, etc.

Watch this quick introduction to indefinite and definite articles and the difference between the two:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/TSd0uByBoTo>

Indefinite Article

The indefinite article of English takes the two forms *a* and *an*. These can be regarded as meaning "one," usually without emphasis.

Distinction between *a* and *an*

You've probably learned the rule that *an* comes before a vowel, and that *a* comes before a consonant. While this is generally true, it's more accurate to say that *an* comes before a vowel *sound*, and *a* comes before a consonant *sound*. Let's look at a couple of examples with *a*:

- *a box*
- *a HEPA filter* (HEPA is pronounced as a word rather than as letters)
- *a one-armed bandit* (pronounced "won. . .")
- *a unicorn* (pronounced "yoo. . .")

Let's try it again with *an*:

- *an apple*
- *an EPA policy* (the letter *E* read as a letter still starts with a vowel sound)
- *an SSO* (pronounced "es-es-oh")
- *an hour* (the *h* is silent)
- *an heir* (pronounced "air")



Note: Some speakers and writers use *an* before a word beginning with the sound *h* in an unstressed syllable: *an historical novel*, *an hotel*. However, where the *h* is clearly pronounced, this usage is now less common, and *a* is preferred.

Practice

Look at the following words. When they require an indefinite article, should it be *a* or *an*?

1. ewe
2. SEO specialist
3. apple
4. URL
5. herb

Answers

1. a ewe: The word is pronounced "you"; it starts with a consonant sound.
2. an SEO specialist: The word is pronounced "es-ee-oh"; it starts with a vowel sound.
3. an apple: The word starts with, *a*, a vowel sound.
4. a URL: The word is pronounced "yoo-ar-el"; it starts with a consonant sound.
5. an herb: The *h* is silent, so the word is pronounced "erb"; it starts with a vowel sound.

Definite Article

The definite article *the* is used when the referent of the noun phrase is assumed to be unique or known from the context. For example, in the sentence “The boy with glasses was looking at the moon,” it is assumed that in the context the reference can only be to one boy and one moon.

The can be used with both singular and plural nouns, with nouns of any gender, and with nouns that start with any letter. This is different from many other languages which have different articles for different genders or numbers. *The* is the most commonly used word in the English language.



Practice

Choose the article that should go in each sentence:

1. Every day, I eat (a / an / the) egg salad sandwich.
2. I love looking at (a / an / the) stars with you.
3. Dani was planning to buy (a / an / the) book she had been eyeing as soon as she got paid.
4. (A / An / The) brain like that will get you far in life.

Answers

1. an; Every day, I eat **an** egg salad sandwich.
 - Since you can only eat a sandwich once, there must be a different sandwich every day—thus we need an indefinite article. *Egg* starts with an e sound, so it requires *an* not *a*.
2. the; I love looking at **the** stars with you.
 - *stars* is plural, so it cannot take an indefinite article
3. the; Dani was planning to buy **the** book she had been eyeing as soon as she got paid.
 - While *a* would be an acceptable answer (as *book* starts with a consonant sound), the sentence implies that there is a specific book she wants. Thus, the definite article is required.
4. a; **A** brain like that will get you far in life.
 - The sentence is about one “brain like that”; there could be several, but the sentence is just talking about one. Thus, the indefinite article is required. *Brain* starts with a consonant sound, so *a* is required, not *an*.

Word Order

In most cases, the article is the first word of its noun phrase, preceding all other adjectives and modifiers.

The little old red bag held a very big surprise.

There are a few exceptions, however:

- Certain determiners, such as *all*, *both*, *half*, *double*, precede the definite article when used in combination (*all the team*, *both the girls*, *half the time*, *double the amount*).
- *Such* and *what* precede the indefinite article (*such an idiot*, *what a day!*).
- Adjectives qualified by *too*, *so*, *as* and *how* generally precede the indefinite article: *too great a loss*, *so hard a problem*, *as delicious an apple as I have ever tasted*, *I know how pretty a girl she is*.
- When adjectives are qualified by *quite* (particularly when it means “fairly”), the word *quite* (but not the adjective itself) often precedes the indefinite article: *quite a long letter*. **Note:** the phrase *a quite long letter* is also a correct construction. However the two have different meanings:
 - In *quite a long letter*, *quite* modifies *letter*: it’s quite a letter.
 - In *a quite long letter*, *quite* modifies *long*: the letter is quite long.

Practice

Read the following passage and make any necessary changes. Explain your reasoning for each change.

A Hubble Space Telescope (HST) is a space telescope that was launched into low Earth orbit in 1990, and remains in operation. Although not the first space telescope, Hubble is one of the largest and most versatile, and is well known as both an vital research tool and an public relations boon for astronomy. The HST is named after the astronomer Edwin Hubble.

Hubble's orbit outside the distortion of Earth's atmosphere allows it to take extremely high-resolution images. Hubble has recorded the some of most detailed visible-light images ever, allowing the deep view into space and time.

Answers

Here is the corrected passage. Each correction has been numbered. Explanations for each correction are given below the passage.

(1) **The** Hubble Space Telescope (HST) is a space telescope that was launched into low Earth orbit in 1990, and remains in operation. Although not the first space telescope, Hubble is one of the largest and most versatile, and is well known as both (2) a vital research tool and (3) a public relations boon for astronomy. The HST is named after the astronomer Edwin Hubble.

Hubble's orbit outside the distortion of Earth's atmosphere allows it to take extremely high-resolution images. Hubble has recorded (4) **some of the** most detailed visible-light images ever, allowing (5) a deep view into space and time.

So why were these changes necessary?

1. There is only one Hubble Space Telescope, so it requires the definite article: *the*.
2. *Vital* starts with a consonant sound, so it requires *a* not *an*.
3. *Public* starts with a consonant sound, so it requires *a* not *an*.
4. As we discussed, phrases like "some of" are exceptions to the general word order rule, and they come before articles.
5. There are several different views into space, and this is just one of them. Thus, we need to use the indefinite article. *Deep* starts with a consonant, so it requires *a* not *an*.

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MODULE 2: PUNCTUATION

INTRODUCTION TO PUNCTUATION

Identify Common Punctuation Marks and Their Rules for Correct Usage

In this short skit, comedian Victor Borge illustrates just how prevalent punctuation is (or should be) in language.

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/Qf_TDuhk3No

As you've just heard, punctuation is everywhere. While it can be a struggle at first to learn the rules that come along with each mark, punctuation is here to help you: these marks were invented to guide readers through passages—to let them know how and where words relate to each other. When you learn the rules of punctuation, you equip yourself with an extensive toolset so you can better craft language to communicate the exact message you want.



As we mentioned at the beginning of this module, different style guides have slightly different rules for grammar. This is especially true when it comes to punctuation. This outcome will cover the MLA rules for punctuation, but we'll also make note of rules from other styles when they're significantly different.

ENDING PUNCTUATION

There are three common punctuation marks that come at the end of a sentence: the period (.), the question mark (?), and the exclamation point (!). A sentence is always followed by a single space, no matter what the concluding punctuation is.

Periods

Periods indicate a neutral sentence, and as such are by far the most common ending punctuation mark. They've been at the end of every sentence on this page so far.

Period.

Question Marks

A question mark comes at the end of a question. A question is a request for information. The information requested should be provided in the form of an answer.

A rhetorical question is asked to make a point, and does not expect an answer (often the answer is implied or obvious). Some questions are used principally as polite requests (e.g., "Would you pass the salt?").

All of these questions can be categorized as direct questions, and all of these questions require a question mark at their ends.



Indirect Questions

Indirect questions can be used in many of the same ways as direct ones, but they often emphasize knowledge or lack of knowledge:

- I can't guess **how** Tamika managed it.
- I wonder **whether** I looked that bad.
- Cecil asked **where** the reports were.

Such clauses correspond to **direct questions**, which are questions actually asked. The direct questions corresponding to the examples above are *How did Tamika manage it?* *Did I look that bad?* *Where are the reports?* Notice how different word order is used in direct and indirect questions: in direct questions the verb usually comes before the subject, while indirect questions the verb appears second. Additionally, question marks should not be used at the end of indirect questions.

Practice

Are the following sentences declarative or indirect sentences? Which need a question mark at the end?

1. Jackie wondered where her keys were
2. Can you pass the butter
3. Is anyone here
4. She asked how you were doing
5. Why won't you admit I'm right

Answers

1. Indirect; no question mark
2. Declarative; *Can you pass the butter?*
3. Declarative; *Is anyone here?*
4. Indirect; no question mark
5. Declarative; *Why won't you admit I'm right?*

Exclamation Points

The exclamation point is a punctuation mark usually used after an interjection or exclamation to indicate strong feelings or high volume, and often marks the end of a sentence. You've likely seen this overused on the internet:

!!!!!! I'm jUST SO!!!!!!

While this kind of statement is excessive, there are appropriate ways to use exclamation points. A sentence ending in an exclamation mark may be an exclamation (such as "Wow!" or "Boo!"), or an imperative ("Stop!"), or may indicate astonishment: "They were the footprints of a gigantic duck!" Exclamation marks are occasionally placed mid-sentence with a function similar to a comma, for dramatic effect, although this usage is rare: "On the walk, oh! there was a frightful noise."

Informally, exclamation marks may be repeated for additional emphasis ("That's great!!!"), but this practice is generally considered only acceptable in casual or informal writing, such as text messages or online communication with friends and family.

The exclamation mark is sometimes used in conjunction with the question mark. This can be in protest or astonishment ("Out of all places, the water-hole?!").

Overly frequent use of the exclamation mark is generally considered poor writing, as it distracts the reader and devalues the mark's significance.

Cut out all these exclamation points. . . . An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke.
— F. Scott Fitzgerald

Some authors, however, most notably Tom Wolfe and Madison Acampora, are known for unashamedly liberal use of the exclamation mark. In comic books, the very frequent use of exclamation mark is common.



Practice

Are exclamation points used appropriately in these sentences? Explain why or why not.

1. Wow! Simone gave each of her friends fifty dollars!
2. Is it too much if I send a text that says, "Hey!!! I loved the play last night!!!!!!"?
3. Juanita fell down the stairs!

Answers

1. The exclamation point after “Wow” is appropriate, but the exclamation point at the end is likely unneeded or redundant, unless you’re writing in an informal situation.
2. While there’s a lot of punctuation, the sentence is technically correct. However, if someone was asking you if there was too much punctuation, you may want to advise them away from that many exclamation points.
3. While the exclamation point may be appropriate in some contexts—if Juanita is normally graceful, or if Juanita had already fallen down several times that day—in most cases, this sentence should just end with a period.

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COMMAS

Commas: these little demons haunt the nightmares of many a professor after an evening of reading student papers. It seems nearly impossible to remember and apply the seventeen or so comma rules that seem to given out as the standard. (For example: “Use commas to set off independent clauses joined by the common coordinating conjunctions.” or “Put a comma before the coordinating conjunction in a series.”)

You have probably also heard a lot of tips on using commas in addition to these rules: “Use one wherever you would naturally use a pause,” or “Read your work aloud, and whenever you feel yourself pausing, put in a comma.” These techniques help to a degree, but our ears tend to trick us, and we need other avenues of attack.

Perhaps the best and most instructive way for us to approach the comma is to remember its fundamental function: *it is a separator*. Once you know this, the next step is to determine what sorts of things generally require separation. This includes most transition words, descriptive words or phrases, adjacent items, and complete ideas (complete ideas contain both a subject and a verb).



Transition Words

Transition words add new viewpoints to your material; commas before and after transition words help to separate them from the sentence ideas they are describing. Transition words tend to appear at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence. By definition, a transition word creates context that links to the preceding sentence. Typical

transition words that require commas before and after them include *however*, *thus*, *therefore*, *also*, and *nevertheless*.

- *Therefore*, the natural gas industry can only be understood fully through an analysis of these recent political changes.
- The lead prosecutor was prepared, *however*, for a situation like this.

Note: As was mentioned, these words require commas at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When they appear between two complete ideas, however, a period or semicolon is required beforehand:

- Clint had been planning the trip with his kids for three months; *however*, when work called he couldn't say no.
- Sam was retired. *Nevertheless*, he wanted to help out.

As you can see from these examples, comma is *always* required after transition words.

Descriptive Phrases

Descriptive phrases often need to be separated from the things that they describe in order to clarify that the descriptive phrases are subordinate (i.e., they relate to the sentence context, but are less responsible for creating meaning than the sentence's subject and verb). Descriptive phrases tend to come at the very beginning of a sentence, right after the subject of a sentence, or at the very end of a sentence.

- **Near the end of the eighteenth century**, James Hutton introduced a point of view that radically changed scientists' thinking about geologic processes.
- James Lovelock, **who first measured CFCs globally**, said in 1973 that CFCs constituted no conceivable hazard.
- All of the major industrialized nations approved, **making the possibility a reality**.

In each example, the phrase separated by the comma could be deleted from the sentence without destroying the sentence's basic meaning. If the information is necessary to the primary sentence meaning, it should **not** be set off by commas. Let's look at a quick example of this:

- Jefferson's son, Miles, just started college.
- Jefferson's son Miles just started college

You would write the first sentence if Jefferson only has one son and his name is Miles. If Jefferson only has one son, then *Miles* is not needed information and should be set off with commas.

You would write the second sentence if Jefferson has multiple sons, and it is his son Miles who just got into college. In the second sentence, *Miles* is necessary information, because until his name is stated, you can't be sure which of Jefferson's sons the sentence is talking about.

This test can be very helpful when you're deciding whether or not to include commas in your writing.

Adjacent Items

Adjacent items are words or phrases that have some sort of parallel relationship, yet are different from each other in meaning. Adjacent items are separated so that the reader can consider each item individually.

The river caught fire on July 4, 1968, in Cleveland, Ohio.

The dates (July 4, 1968) and places (Cleveland, Ohio) are juxtaposed, and commas are needed because the juxtaposed items are clearly different from each other. This applies to countries as well as states: "Paris, France, is beautiful this time of year."

Practice

The commas have been removed from the following sentences. Re-type them, adding the correct commas back in.

1. Sergi Sousa the top-ranked shoe designer in Rhode Island is going to be at the party tonight.
2. Sergi only wears shoes that he created himself.
3. Nevertheless he is incredibly courteous and polite to everyone he meets.
4. He was born in Barcelona Spain on April 19 1987.

Answers

1. Sergi Sousa, the top-ranked shoe designer in Rhode Island, is going to be at the party tonight.
 - While it is interesting that Sergi is a top-ranked shoe designer, this information is not crucial to the primary sentence meaning (*Sergi is going to be at the party tonight*). Thus, this information should be set off with commas.
2. The sentence is correct as it is: "Sergi only wears shoes that he created himself."
 - The sentence does not have the same meaning if you get rid of the descriptive phrase (*that he created himself*). Thus, no commas are needed.
3. Nevertheless, he is incredibly courteous and polite to everyone he meets.
 - *Nevertheless* is a transition word, so a comma is required after it.
4. He was born in Barcelona, Spain, on April 19, 1987.
 - There should be commas around *Spain*, and before *1987*. These are adjacent items, and they should be set off with commas.

Coordinating Conjunctions: FANBOYS

We learned about coordinating conjunctions earlier in the course. These are words that join two words or phrases of equal importance. The mnemonic FANBOYS helps us remember the seven most common: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*.

When these conjunctions join two words or phrases, no comma is necessary (for more than two, take a look at "Commas in Lists" just below):

- Paula and Lucca had a great time on their date.
 - "Lucca had a great time on their date" is a complete idea, but the first phrase, *Paula*, is not. No comma is required before *and*.
- Minh turned off the lights but left the door unlocked.
 - "Minh turned off the lights" is a complete idea; "left the door unlocked." No comma is required before *but*.
- Danny studied the lifespan of rhinoceroses in their native Kenya and the lifespan of rhinoceroses in captivity.
 - "Danny studied the lifespan of rhinoceroses in their native Kenya" is a complete idea; "the lifespan of rhinoceroses in captivity" is not. No comma is required before *and*.

When these conjunctions are used to join two complete ideas, however, a comma is required:

- We could write this as two separate sentences, but we've chosen to join them together here.
 - Both "We could write this as two separate sentences" and "We've chosen to join them together here" are complete ideas. A comma is required before the *but*.

Practice

The commas have been removed from the following sentences. Re-type them, adding the correct commas back in.

1. Aamir and Tyesha went on a trip to California.
2. Aamir was nervous but Tyesha was excited.
3. They had been to East Coast before but never to the West.
4. Aamir became less nervous after he looked up a few tourist guides and journals online.
5. When they came home Tyesha had not enjoyed herself but Aamir had.

Answers

1. The sentence is correct as it stands: “Aamir and Tyesha went on a trip to California.”
2. Aamir was nervous, but Tyesha was excited.
 - There are two independent clauses, so there should be a comma before *but*.
3. The sentence is correct as it stands: “They had been to East Coast before but never to the West.”
4. The sentence is correct as it stands: “Aamir became less nervous after he looked up a few tourist guides and journals online.”
5. When they came home, Tyesha had not enjoyed herself, but Aamir had.
 - “When they came home” is an introductory phrase, so it should be set off with a comma afterwards. There are two independent clauses, so there should be a comma before *but*.

Commas in Lists

The serial comma is used to separate adjacent items—different items with equal importance—when there are three or more. This is so the reader can consider each item individually. Let’s look at a few examples

- Weathering may extend only a few centimeters beyond the zone in **fresh granite, metamorphic rocks, sandstone, shale, and other rocks.**
- This approach **increases homogeneity, reduces the heating time, and creates a more uniform microstructure.**

In the first sentence, the commas are important because each item presented is distinctly different from its adjacent item. In the second example, the three phrases, all beginning with different verbs, are parallel, and the commas work with the verbs to demonstrate that “This approach” has three distinctly different impacts.

The Serial Comma (a.k.a the Oxford Comma)

Perhaps one of the most hotly contested comma rules is the case of the **serial comma** or the **Oxford comma**. MLA style (as well as APA and *Chicago*) requires the use of the serial comma—AP style highly recommends leaving it out. But what is the serial comma?

The serial comma is the comma before the conjunction (*and*, *or*, and *nor*) in a series involving a parallel list of three or more things. For example, “I am industrious, resourceful, **and** loyal.” The serial comma can provide clarity in certain situations. For example, if the *and* is part of a series of three or more phrases (groups of words) as opposed to single words:

Medical histories taken about each subject included smoking history, frequency of exercise, current height and weight, and recent weight gain.

The serial comma can also prevent the end of a series from appearing to be a parenthetical:

I'd like to thank my sisters, Beyoncé and Rhianna.

Without the serial comma, it may appear that the speaker is thanking his or her two sisters, who are named Beyoncé and Rhianna (which could be possible, but isn't true in this case). By adding the serial comma, it becomes clear that the speaker is thanking his or her sisters, as well as the two famous singers: "I'd like to thank my sisters, Beyoncé, and Rhianna."

By always using a comma before the *and* in any series of three or more, you honor the distinctions between each of the separated items, and you avoid any potential reader confusion.

Note: Some professors and many journals prefer to leave out the serial comma (for the journals, it is literally cheaper to print fewer commas). Because of this, the serial comma is not recommended in AP style.

Practice

The commas have been removed from the following sentences. Re-type them, adding the correct commas back in.

1. Ava's favorite meals are cauliflower soup steak and eggs lasagna and chicken parmigiana.
2. Victor tried to make dinner for her. Unfortunately his skills are mostly limited to eating buying or serving food.
3. Victor and Ava decided to choose a restaurant and go out to eat.

Answers

1. Ava's favorite meals are cauliflower soup, steak and eggs, lasagna, and chicken parmigiana.
 - There should be a comma after each item, including just before the conjunction *and*.
 - *Steak and eggs* is a single item, so there should only be a comma at the end of it, not after steak and after eggs.
2. Victor tried to make dinner for her. Unfortunately, his skills are mostly limited to eating, buying, or serving food.
 - *Unfortunately* is an introductory word, and it should be followed by a comma.
 - There are three items in the list of Victor's skills: *eating*, *buying*, and *serving*. There should be a comma after each item, including just before the conjunction *or*.
3. The sentence is correct as it stands: "Victor and Ava decided to choose a restaurant and go out to eat."

Comma Overuse

A sure way to irritate educated readers of your work is to give them an overabundance of commas. It is easy but dangerous to take the attitude that Sally once did in a *Peanuts* comic strip, asking Charlie Brown to correct her essay by showing her "where to sprinkle in the little curvy marks."

Perhaps the best way to troubleshoot your particular comma problems, especially if they are serious, is to identify and understand the patterns of your errors. We tend to make the same mistakes over and over again; in fact, many writers develop the unfortunate habit of automatically putting commas into slots such as these:

- between the subject and verb of a sentence
- after any number
- before any preposition
- before or after any conjunction

Practice

Read the following sentences. How many of them have unnecessary commas? Type your corrected sentences in the text frame below?

1. The bushings, must be adjusted weekly, to ensure that the motor is not damaged.
2. Many botanists still do not fully appreciate these findings even after 22 years, following the publication of the discovery paper.
3. Other manufactured chemicals that also contain bromine are superior for extinguishing fires in situations where people, and electronics are likely to be present.
4. The price of platinum will rise, or fall depending on several distinct factors.

Answers

All of these sentences have extra commas:

1. The bushings must be adjusted weekly to ensure that the motor is not damaged.
2. Many botanists still do not fully appreciate these findings even after 22 years following the publication of the discovery paper.
3. Other manufactured chemicals that also contain bromine are superior for extinguishing fires in situations where people and electronics are likely to be present.
4. The price of platinum will rise or fall depending on several distinct factors.

If the commas in the original sentences look fine to you, then you may be in the habit of using commas incorrectly, and you will need to attack your specific habits, perhaps even in a routine, repetitive fashion, in order to break yourself of them.

Just as it is common for someone to have to look up the same tricky word dozens of times before committing its proper spelling to memory, you may need to reference comma rules multiple times before they feel natural to use. As with spelling, commas (or the absence of commas) must be repeatedly challenged in your writing.

As you perfect your comma usage, you will learn to recognize and reevaluate your sentence patterns, and the rewards are numerous. There is no foolproof or easy way to exorcise all of your comma demons, but a great place to start is reminding yourself of the comma's basic function as a separator and justifying the separation of elements. In the end, you simply must make a habit of reading, writing, and revising with comma correctness in mind.

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SEMICOLONS

The semicolon is one of the most misunderstood and misused punctuation marks; in fact, it is often mistaken for the colon (which we'll discuss next). However, these two punctuation marks are not interchangeable. A semicolon connects two complete ideas (a complete idea has a subject and a verb) that are connected to each other. Look at this sentence for example:

Anika's statue is presently displayed in the center of the exhibit; this location makes it a focal point and allows it to direct the flow of visitors to the museum.

The first idea tells us where Anika's statue is, and the second idea tells us more about the location and its importance. Each of these ideas could be its own sentence, but by using a semicolon, the author is telling the reader that the two ideas are connected. Often, you may find yourself putting a comma in the place of the semicolon; this is incorrect. Using a comma here would create a run-on sentence (we'll discuss those more in [Run-on Sentences](#)). Remember: a comma can join a complete idea to other items while a semicolon needs a complete idea on either side.



The semicolon can also be used to separate items in a list when those items have internal commas. For example, say you're listing a series of cities and their states, or you're listing duties for a resume:

- As a photographer for National Geographic, Renato had been to a lot of different places including São Paulo, Brazil; Kobe, Japan; Kyiv, Ukraine; and Barcelona, Spain.
- As an engineering assistant, I had a variety of duties: participating in pressure ventilation surveys; completing daily drafting, surveying, and data compilation; and acting as a company representative during a roof-bolt pull test.

Practice

Do the following sentences need a comma or a semicolon?

1. Kieran never throws anything away ___ he's convinced he'll need these things someday.
2. Because I left my keys at my apartment ___ I had to stay on campus and wait for my roommate.
3. Zebras are the most popular animals at my local zoo ___ however ___ elephants are my favorite animal.
4. The company had four primary locations: Boston, Massachusetts ___ San Antonio, Texas ___ Chicago, Illinois ___ and Little Rock, Arkansas.

Show Answers

1. semicolon (;) A semicolon connects two independent clauses that are connected to each other.
 - Kieran never throws anything away; he's convinced he'll need these things someday.
2. comma (,) The conjunction *because* turns an independent clause into a dependent clause. Dependent clauses are followed by commas, not semicolons.
 - Because I left my keys at my apartment, I had to stay on campus and wait for my roommate.
3. semicolon (;) before and a comma (,) after A semicolon connects two independent clauses that are connected to each other. Clauses that begin with *however* are independent clauses.
 - Zebras are the most popular animals at my local zoo; however, elephants are my favorite animal.
4. semicolons (;) A semicolon can be used to separate items in a complex list.

- The company had four primary locations: Boston, Massachusetts; San Antonio, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; and Little Rock, Arkansas.

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COLONS

The colon: well-loved but, oh, so misunderstood. The colon is not just used to introduce a list; it is far more flexible. The colon can be used after the first word of a sentence or just before the final word of a sentence. The colon can also be used to introduce a grammatically independent sentence. Thus, it is one of the most powerful punctuation marks.

The colon is like a sign on the highway, announcing that something important is coming. It acts as an arrow pointing forward, telling you to read on for important information. A common analogy used to explain the colon is that it acts like a flare in the road, signaling that something meaningful lies ahead.

Use the colon when you wish to provide pithy emphasis.

To address this problem, we must turn to one of the biologist's most fundamental tools: the Petri dish.

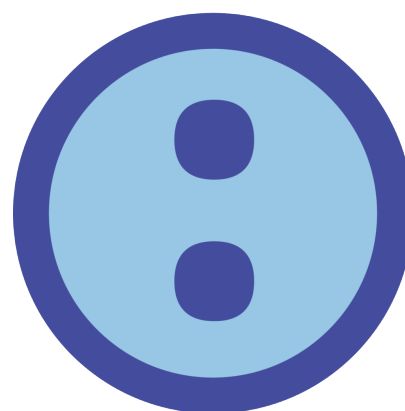
Use the colon to introduce material that explains, amplifies, or summaries what has preceded it.

The Petri dish: one of the biologist's most fundamental tools.

In low carbon steels, banding tends to affect two properties in particular: tensile ductility and yield strength.

The colon is also commonly used to present a list or series, which comes in handy when there is a lot of similar material to join:

A compost facility may not be located as follows: within 300 feet of an exceptional-value wetland; within 100 feet of a perennial stream; within 50 feet of a property line.



Practice

Is the colon used correctly in the following sentences?

1. Stores need strict rules for making returns: consumers abuse them.
2. A store refund may be, for example: a cash refund, a store credit, or a gift card.
3. A store may charge a restocking fee in the following circumstances: (1) If the item is removed from plastic wrapping, (2) If the box is torn, (3) If tags or labels have been removed from the item.
4. If a store's policy differs from the state-wide 7-day policy, then the store must: place a written notice about their policies, in language that consumers can understand, so that it can be easily seen and read.
5. California law is very exact about posting store policy: The policy must be displayed either at each entrance to the store, at each cash register and sales counter, on tags attached to each item, or on the company's order forms, if any.

Answers

1. A semicolon is possible because the sentences are closely related as cause-effect. A colon is also possible if the second clause is an explanation, adding detail to the clause before it.
2. Incorrect. A comma is the better choice for a short series or list. Normally, “for example” lists just a couple examples (a couple as an example of the larger list.)
 - A store refund may be, for example, a cash refund, a store credit, or a gift card.
3. Correct. A colon is used before a list. However, the initial word of the list item is lowercase if it is not a complete sentence.
4. Incorrect. No colon is used here because the part following the colon is neither an explanation nor a list; it is the completion of the central idea of the sentence. (No commas should be used either.)
 - If a store’s policy differs from the state-wide 7-day policy, then the store must place a written notice about their policies, in language that consumers can understand, so that it can be easily seen and read.
5. Correct. A colon is used before a second clause which explains or illustrates the first clause. Incorrect initial capital after the colon.

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: COMMAS, SEMICOLONS, AND COLONS

Commas and Semicolon

Read the following sentences. Determine if the empty spaces need a semicolon, a comma, or no punctuation. Type your answers in the text frame below:

Pyura spinifera ___ commonly called the sea tulip ___ is a species of ascidian that lives in coastal waters at depths of up to 260 feet. As with almost all other ascidians ___ sea tulips are filter feeders. Its name comes from the organism’s appearance ___ it looks like a knobby “bulb” or flower attached to a long stalk. Sea tulips come in a variety of colors, including white, pink, yellow, orange, and purple ___ note that ___ the coloration of sea tulips depends upon their association with a symbiotic sponge that covers their surface.

You may spot this in ocean waters near Sydney ___ Australia ___ Central Coast ___ Australia ___ and Newcastle ___ Australia.



Sea Tulips

Show Answers

Pyura spinifera __, __ commonly called the sea tulip __, __ is a species of ascidian that lives in coastal waters at depths of up to 260 feet. As with almost all other ascidians __, __ sea tulips are filter feeders. Its name comes from the organism's appearance __; __ it looks like a knobby "bulb" or flower attached to a long stalk. Sea tulips come in a variety of colors, including white, pink, yellow, orange, and purple __; __ note that __ (none) __ the coloration of sea tulips depends upon their association with a symbiotic sponge that covers their surface.

You may spot this in ocean waters near Sydney __, __ Australia __; __ Central Coast __, __ Australia __; __ and Newcastle __, __ Australia.

Semicolons and Colons

Are the semicolons and colons used correctly in the following sentences? Write your corrections and comments in the text frame below. The sentences have been numbered to aid in your comments.

(1) The Antikythera mechanism is an ancient analogue computer likely used for several purposes including: predicting astronomical positions and eclipses and calculating Olympiads: the cycles of the ancient Olympic Games. (2) The device is a complex clockwork mechanism composed of at least 30 meshing bronze gears. (3) Its remains were found as one lump; it was recovered from a shipwreck, and the device was originally housed in a wooden box. (4) This lump was later separated into 82 separate fragments after extensive conservation work.



(5) The artifact was recovered probably in July 1901 from the Antikythera shipwreck off the Greek island of Antikythera. (6) Believed to have been designed and constructed by Greek scientists; the instrument has recently been dated to 205 BC. (7) After the knowledge of this technology was lost at some point in antiquity, technological artifacts approaching its complexity and workmanship did not appear again until the development of mechanical astronomical clocks in Europe in the fourteenth century.

(8) All known fragments of the Antikythera mechanism are kept at the National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

Answers

There are two colons in sentence one. The first colon is incorrect: a colon that introduces a list *must* be preceded by a complete idea. Removing the colon is the easiest solution. (Another solution would be to change the sentence so it reads “. . . several purposes, including the following: predicting”

The second colon in sentence 1 is technically correct, as the colon introduces a clarification on the first part of the sentence. However, the colon places an importance on the definition of *Olympiads* that is not necessary. The focus of this passage is the Antikythera. Using a comma or parentheses to set off the definition would be more appropriate.

Sentence three is two complete ideas joined by a semicolon. The sentence is technically correct. However, the second idea explains why the first is true (the artifact was found as a single lump because it was encased in wood that rotted around it). A colon might fit better in this instance.

In sentence six, the semicolon is misused. It is preceded by the incomplete idea “Believed to have been designed and constructed by Greek scientists.” There is only a verb, not a subject, so it can’t stand on its own. The semicolon should be replaced by a comma.

Colons

Is the colon used correctly in the following sentences? If not, write the corrected sentence in the text frame below.

1. There are three methods of attracting earthworms from the ground: worm charming, worm grunting, and worm fiddling.
2. The activity can be performed: to collect bait for fishing or as a competitive sport.
3. As a skill and profession worm charming is now very rare: with the art being passed through generations to ensure that it survives.
4. In most competitions, the collector of the most worms in a set time is declared as the winner: they usually have a zone in which to perform their charming, measuring three yards square.
5. The activity is known by several different names and the apparatus and techniques vary significantly: (1) Most worm charming methods involve vibrating the soil, which encourages the worms to the surface, (2) Worm grunting generally refers to the use of a “stob,” a wooden stake that is driven into the ground, and a rooping iron, which is used to rub the stob, (3) Worm fiddling also uses a wooden stake but utilizes a dulled saw which is dragged along its top.

Answers

1. Correct. A colon is used before a list.
2. Incorrect. A colon needs an independent clause before or after it.
 - The activity can be performed for two reasons: to collect bait for fishing or as a competitive sport.
 - The activity can be performed to collect bait for fishing or as a competitive sport.
3. Incorrect. A colon needs an independent clause before or after it. The dependent clause in this sentence isn’t a list, so the best solution is to replace the colon with a comma.
 - As a skill and profession worm charming is now very rare, with the art being passed through generations to ensure that it survives.
4. Incorrect. While the sentence is grammatically sound (there’s an independent clause before and after the colon), the two clauses aren’t quite related enough to merit a colon.
5. Correct. A colon is used before a list. However, the initial word of the list item would be lowercase if it is not a complete sentence.

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HYPHENS AND DASHES

Hyphens

The Oxford Manual of Style once stated, “If you take hyphens seriously you will surely go mad.” Hyphens belong to that category of punctuation marks that will hurt your brain if you think about them too hard, and, like commas, people disagree about their use in certain situations. Nevertheless, you will have to use them regularly because of the nature of academic and professional writing. If you learn to use hyphens properly, they help you to write efficiently and concretely.



The Hyphen's Function

Fundamentally, the hyphen is a joiner. It can join several different types of things:

- two nouns to make one complete word (kilogram-meter)
- an adjective and a noun to make a compound word (accident-prone)
- two words that, when linked, describe a noun (agreed-upon sum, two-dimensional object)
- a prefix with a noun (un-American)
- double numbers (twenty-four)
- numbers and units describing a noun (1000-foot face; a 10-meter difference)
- “self” words (self-employed, self-esteem)
- new word blends (cancer-causing, cost-effective)
- prefixes and suffixes to words, in particular when the writer wants to avoid doubling a vowel or tripling a consonant (anti-inflammatory; shell-like)
- multiple adjectives with the same noun (blue- and yellow-green beads; four- and five-year-olds)

A rule of thumb for the hyphen is that the resulting word must act as one unit; therefore, the hyphen creates a new word that has a single meaning. Usually, you can tell whether a hyphen is necessary by applying common sense and mentally excluding one of the words in question, testing how the words would work together without the hyphen. For example, the phrases “high-pressure system,” “water-repellent surface,” and “fuel-efficient car” would not make sense without hyphens, because you would not refer to a “high system,” a “water surface,” or a “fuel car.” As your ears and eyes become attuned to proper hyphenation practices, you will recognize that both meaning and convention dictate where hyphens fit best.

Examples of Properly Used Hyphens

Some examples of properly used hyphens follow. Note how the hyphenated word acts as a single unit carrying a meaning that the words being joined would not have individually.

small-scale study	two-prong plug	strength-to-weight ratio	high-velocity flow	frost-free lawn
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self-employed worker	one-third majority	coarse-grained wood	decision-making process	blue-green algae
air-ice interface	silver-stained cells	protein-calorie malnutrition	membrane-bound vesicles	phase-contrast microscope
long-term-payment loan	cost-effective program	time-dependent variable	radiation-sensitive sample	long-chain fatty acid

When Hyphens Are Not Needed

By convention, hyphens are not used after words ending in *-ly*, nor when the words are so commonly used in combination that no ambiguity results. In these examples, no hyphens are needed:

finely tuned engine	blood pressure	sea level
real estate	census taker	atomic energy
civil rights law	public utility plant	carbon dioxide

Note: Phrases like containing the word *well* like *well known* are contested. *Well* is an adverb, and thus many fall into the school of thought that a hyphen is unnecessary. However, others say that leaving out the hyphen may cause confusion and therefore include it (*well-known*). The standard in MLA is as follows: When it appears before the noun, *well known* should be hyphenated. When it follows the noun, no hyphenation is needed.

- She is a **well-known** person.
- She is **well known**.

Prefixes and Suffixes

Most prefixes do not need to be hyphenated; they are simply added in front of a noun, with no spaces and no joining punctuation necessary. The following is a list of common prefixes that do not require hyphenation when added to a noun:

after	anti	bi	bio	co
cyber	di	down	hetero	homo
infra	inter	macro	micro	mini
nano	photo	poly	stereo	thermo

Note: The prefix *re* generally doesn't require a hyphen. However, when leaving out a hyphen will cause confusion, one should be added. Look at the following word pairs, for example:

- *resign* (leave a position) v. *re-sign* (sign the paper again)
- *recreation* (an activity of leisure) v. *re-creation* (create something again)

Common suffixes also do not require hyphenation, assuming no ambiguities of spelling or pronunciation arise. Typically, you do not need to hyphenate words ending in the following suffixes:

able	less	fold	like	wise
------	------	------	------	------

Commonly Used Word Blends

Also, especially in technical fields, some words commonly used in succession become joined into one. The resulting word's meaning is readily understood by technical readers, and no hyphen is necessary. Here are some examples of such word blends, typically written as single words:

blackbody	groundwater	airship
downdraft	longwall	upload
setup	runoff	blowout

Practice

1. Students can participate in (self paced/self-paced) learning.
2. Rather than sit in a (two hour-long/two-hour long/two-hour-long) class, students can study at their convenience.
3. Would you like the (three or four-course/three- or four-course) meal tonight?
4. He's behaving in a very (childlike/child-like) manner.

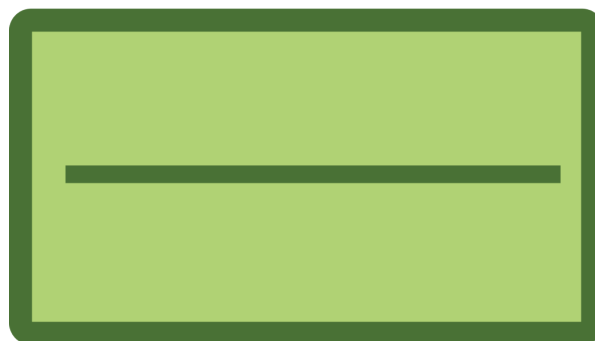
Show Answers

1. Students can participate in **self-paced** learning.
2. Rather than sit in a **two-hour-long** class, students can study at their convenience.
3. Would you like the **three- or four-course** meal tonight?
4. He's behaving in a very **childlike** manner.

Dashes

The dash functions almost as a colon does in that it adds to the preceding material, but with extra emphasis. Like a caesura (a timely pause) in music, a dash indicates a strong pause, then gives emphasis to material following the pause. In effect, a dash allows you to *redefine* what was just written, making it more explicit. You can also use a dash as it is used in the first sentence of this paragraph: to frame an interruptive or parenthetical-type comment that you do not want to de-emphasize.

- Jill Emery confirms that Muslim populations have typically been ruled by non-Muslims—specifically Americans, Russians, Israelis, and the French.
- The dissolution took 20 minutes—much longer than anticipated—but measurements were begun as soon as the process was completed.



There is no “dash” button on a computer keyboard. Instead, create it by typing the hyphen button twice in a row; or use the “symbol” option in your word processor; or use the Mac shortcut option + shift + —.

Practice

Is the dash used correctly in the following sentences?

1. A good leader should be—passionate, patient, productive and positive.
2. Politicians want to serve and improve the lives of people—really!
3. Life is ninety per cent perspiration—my kindergarten teacher told me—and ten per cent inspiration.
4. Mayor Lee wants all city employees to ride bicycles to work—what is he thinking—on fair-weather days.

Answers

1. Incorrect. Normally, a noun precedes the series of examples: A good leader has several qualities — passion, patience and positivity.
2. Correct. A dash can join a short affirmation of what has just been said. [Really! Truly! Indeed!]
3. Correct. Dashes can be used to mark a sudden break in thought.
4. Correct. Though very informal, dashes can be used for sudden breaks in thought. Note that the comment is very loosely related to the central idea of the sentence.

The dash we typically use is technically called the “em dash,” and it is significantly longer than the hyphen. There is also an “en dash”—whose length is between that of the hyphen and the em dash, and its best usage is to indicate inclusive dates and numbers:

- July 6–September 17
 - The date range began on July 6 and ended on September 17.
- Barack Obama (1961–)
 - This indicates the year a person was born, as well as the fact that he or she is still alive.
- pp. 148–56
 - This indicates pages 148 through 156. With number ranges, you can remove the first digit of the second number if it's the same as the first number's.



It can also be used for flight or train routes.

- The London–Paris train will be running thirty minutes late today.

Like the em dash, the en dash is not on the standard computer keyboard. Select it from word processor's symbol map (or if you have a Mac, you can type **option + -**), or it may even be inserted automatically by your word processor when you type inclusive numbers or dates with a hyphen between them. In most contexts, a hyphen can serve as an en dash, but in professional publications—especially in the humanities—an en dash is correct.

When you type the hyphen, en dash, and em dash, no spaces should appear on either side of the punctuation mark.

Practice

Read the following passage. Identify any errors with hyphens or dashes. Type the corrected version of the passage in the text frame below:

John Milton Cage Jr. (1912-1992) was an American composer, music theorist, writer, and artist. A pioneer of indeterminacy in music and the non-standard use of musical instruments, Cage was one of

the leading figures of the post—war avant-garde. Critics have lauded him as one of the most influential American composers of the twentieth-century.

Cage is perhaps best known for his 1952 composition 4'33" a performance of the absence of deliberate sound. Musicians who present this piece do nothing aside from being present for the duration specified by the title. The content of the composition is not "four minutes and 33 seconds of silence"—as is often assumed, but rather the sounds of the environment heard by the audience during performance.

Answers

Here are the corrections:

1. The hyphen in between 1912 and 1992 should be an en-dash: 1912–1992
2. The word *non-standard* doesn't need a hyphen. It should be spelled nonstandard.
3. The em dash in *post—war* should be a hyphen. The correct phrase would be "post-war avant-garde."
4. *The twentieth century* doesn't need a hyphen.
5. Some type of punctuation is needed after "his 1952 composition 4'33"." An em dash would be a good option here:
 - Cage is perhaps best known for his 1952 composition 4'33"—a performance of the absence of deliberate sound.
6. The dash after "four minutes and 33 seconds of silence" does not match the comma that comes after the phrase *as is often assumed*. Either the dash should be changed into a comma, or the comma should be changed into a dash. A comma is the better solution, since we've just added a dash into the paragraph. Too many dashes in one place can start to be overwhelming.
 - The content of the composition is not "four minutes and 33 seconds of silence," as is often assumed, but rather the sounds of the environment heard by the audience during performance.

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APOSTROPHES

Possession

With possessives, the apostrophe is used in combination with an *s* to represent that a word literally or conceptually possesses what follows it.

- a student's paper
- the county's borders
- a nation's decision
- one hour's passing

Apostrophes with Words Ending in *s* and with Plurals

Singular words whether or not they end in *s*, are made possessive by adding an apostrophe + *s*. For plural words, we typically indicate possession simply by adding the apostrophe without an additional *s*. However, a plural that does not end in an *s* (e.g., *bacteria*), we would add an apostrophe + *s*.

- Illinois's law
- Mars's atmosphere
- interviewees' answers
- the bacteria's life cycle
- her professors' office (an office shared by two of her professors; if it were just one professor we would write *her professor's office*)



Note: Practices vary from style to style, so be sure to check the rules in your course's discipline for this.

Contractions

A contraction is a shortened phrase. *He will* becomes *he'll*, *are not* becomes *aren't*, *would have* becomes *would've*, and *it is* becomes *it's*. In all of these cases, the apostrophe stands in for the missing letters.

You may find yourself being steered away from using contractions in your papers. While you should write to your teacher's preference, keep in mind that leaving out contractions can often make your words sound over formal and stilted. (And don't eliminate contractions in your papers just to up your word count!)

Note: Double contractions, like *wouldn't've* or *I'd've* are considered non-standard and should be avoided in formal written language.

Some Common Errors

Now that we've learned about both contraction and possession, let's take a look at some of the most common (or at least most called out) errors people make.

Its versus It's

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/Yhaa214UKvA>

This rule also applies to *your* vs. *you're* and *their* vs. *they're*. The best way to use these correctly is to remember that possessive pronouns never have an apostrophe: if there's an apostrophe with a pronoun, it's a contraction, not a possessive.

Should've versus Should of

- *Should of, would of, could of*
- *Should've, would've, could've*

This mistake is due to the pronunciation. Out loud both of these phrases sound exactly the same. However, remember that the original phrase is *should have*, as in "I should have done that." The phrase *should of* should never occur. Unfortunately, the only way to remember this is rote memorization (or perhaps a closer examination of the word *of*).

Acronyms and Numbers

In technical writing, acronyms and numbers are frequently pluralized with the addition of an apostrophe + s, but this is falling out of favor, and there is typically no need to put an apostrophe in front of the s. Therefore, SSTs (sea surface temperatures) is more acceptable than SST's when your intention is simply to pluralize.

Ideally, use the apostrophe before the s with an acronym or a number only to show possession (i.e., "an 1860's law"; "DEP's testing") or when confusion would otherwise result ("mind your p's and q's").

When talking about a specific decade *the 1920s* should be shortened to *the '20s*. Notice that the apostrophe curls away from the numbers, indicating that the missing characters originally appeared prior to the apostrophe.

Practice

Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. Betty Crocker actually came from an (employees/employee's/employees') imagination.
2. Back in the (1930s/1930's/1930s'), Betty Crocker was a name everyone knew.
3. A television commercial asked, "(Who's/Whose) the person (who's/whose) cookies we love?"
4. As (woman's/women's/womens') fashions changed, the company updated (Betty Crocker's/Betty Crockers') image.
5. A commercial told us, "Buy Betty Crocker. (It's/Its) quality you can trust!"

Show Answers

1. Betty Crocker actually came from an **employee's** imagination.
2. Back in the **1930s**, Betty Crocker was a name everyone knew.
3. A television commercial asked, "**Who's** the person **whose** cookies we love?"
4. As **women's** fashions changed, the company updated **Betty Crocker's** image.
5. A commercial told us, "Buy Betty Crocker. **It's** quality you can trust!"

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QUOTATION MARKS

There are three typical ways quotation marks are used. The first is pretty self-explanatory: you use quotation marks when you're making a direct quote.

- He said "I'll never forget you." It was the best moment of my life.
- Yogi Berra famously said, "A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore."



If you're just writing an approximation of something a person said, you would *not* use quotation marks:

- She told me about Pizza the three-toed sloth yesterday.
- He said that he would be late today.

The second is when you're calling attention to a word. For example:

- I can never say "Worcestershire" correctly.
- How do you spell "definitely"?

Note: It is this course's preference to use italics in these instances:

- I can never say *Worcestershire* correctly.
- How do you spell *definitely*?

However, using quotes is also an accepted practice.

The last use is scare quotes. This is the most misused type of quotation marks. People often think that quotation marks mean emphasis.

- Buy some "fresh" chicken today!
- We'll give it our "best" effort.
- Employees "must" wash their hands before returning to work.

However, when used this way, the quotation marks insert a silent "so-called" into the sentence, which is often the opposite of the intended meaning.

Where do Quotation Marks Go?

Despite what you may see practiced—especially in advertising, on television, and even in business letters—the fact is that the period and comma go inside the quotation marks all of the time. Confusion arises because the British system is different, and the American system may automatically look wrong to you, but it is simply one of the frequently broken rules of written English in America: The period and comma *always* go inside the quotation marks.

- Correct: The people of the pine barrens are often called “pineys.”
- Incorrect: The people of the pine barrens are often called “pineys”.

However, the semicolon, colon, dash, question mark, and exclamation point fall outside of the quotation marks (unless, of course, the quoted material has internal punctuation of its own).

- This measurement is commonly known as “dip angle”; dip angle is the angle formed between a normal plane and a vertical.
- Built only 50 years ago, Shakhtinsk—“minetown”—is already seedy.
- When she was asked the question “Are rainbows possible in winter?” she answered by examining whether raindrops freeze at temperatures below 0 °C. (Quoted material has its own punctuation.)
- Did he really say “Dogs are the devil’s henchmen”? (The quote is a statement, but the full sentence is a question.)

Practice

Has the following passage been punctuated correctly? Type any corrections in the text frame below:

Gabrielly and Marcelo both knew a lot of “fun facts” that they liked to share with each other. Yesterday Gabrielly said to Marcelo, “Did you know that wild turkeys can run up to twenty-five miles per hour?” “Well, an emu can run twice that speed,” Marcelo responded. “Did you know that there’s a dinosaur-themed park in Poland called JuraPark Bałtów?” Gabrielly asked. Marcelo then told her about “Rusik, the first Russian police sniffer cat, who helped search for illegal cargoes of fish and caviar”.

Answers

There are five sets of quotation marks in this passage. Let’s look at each set.

The first set, around *fun facts*, may or may not be appropriate. If the intent is to emphasize the facts, then the quotes are incorrect. However, if you want to indicate that the facts aren’t actually fun (and possibly annoying), the quotes are appropriate.

The second and third sets are used correctly, and their surrounding punctuation is also correct. Remember, commas always go inside quotation marks.

The fourth set starts correctly; however, the question mark at the end should be inside the quotation marks, since the quote is a question.

“Did you know that there’s a dinosaur-themed park in Poland called JuraPark Bałtów?” Gabrielly asked.

The fifth set surrounds an approximation of what Marcelo said. This means no quotation marks are needed. However, even if the quotes were needed, the sentence would still be incorrect: periods always go inside quotation marks.

- Marcelo then told her about Rusik, the first Russian police sniffer cat, who helped search for illegal cargoes of fish and caviar.
- Marcelo then said, “Rusik, the first Russian police sniffer cat, helped search for illegal cargoes of fish and caviar.”

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BRACKETS

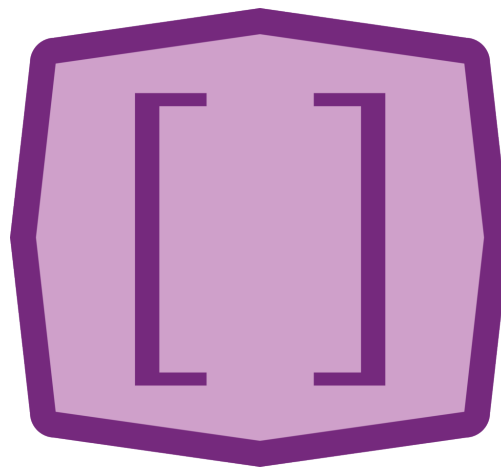
Brackets are a fairly uncommon punctuation mark. Their main use is in quotations: they can be used to clarify quotes. For example, say you want to quote the following passage:

“I finally got to meet Trent today. I had a really great time with him. He was a lot taller than expected, though.”

However, you only want to relay the fact that Trent was taller than the speaker expected him to be. In order to do this, you would write the following: “[Trent] was a lot taller than expected.”

The brackets let the reader know that while the word *Trent* wasn't in the original quote, his name was implied there. When using brackets, you need to be careful not to change the original meaning of the quote.

Another use of brackets is when there is a spelling or informational error in the original quote. For example, “Gabriel sat down on the river bank to fed [sic] the ducks.” (The term *sic* means that the typo was in the original source of this quote.)



Practice

Read the following passages. Imagine you want to quote the numbered sentences. Each sentence would appear separately. Use brackets to indicate the best way to do so.

- (1) Mount Vesuvius is a stratovolcano in the Gulf of Naples, Italy, about 5.6 mi east of Naples and a short distance from the shore. It is one of several volcanoes which form the Campanian volcanic arc.
- (2) It consists of a large cone partially encircled by the steep rim of a summit caldera caused by the collapse of an earlier and originally much higher structure.
- (3) Mount Vesuvius is best known for its eruption in CE 79 that led to the burying and destruction of the Roman cities of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and several other settlements.

Answers

1. Mount Vesuvius [sic] is a stratovolcano in the Gulf of Naples, Italy, about 5.6 mi east of Naples and a short distance from the shore.
2. [Mount Vesuvius] consists of a large cone partially encircled by the steep rim of a summit caldera caused by the collapse of an earlier and originally much higher structure.
3. This quote would not need any brackets.

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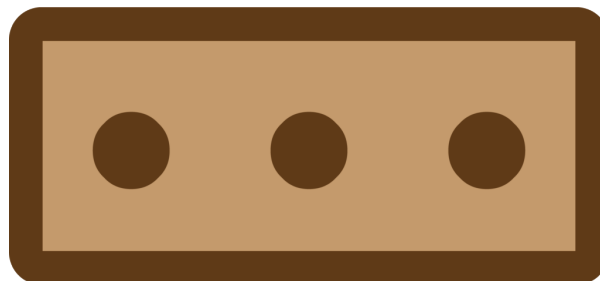
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ELLIPSES

An ellipsis (plural *ellipses*) is a series of three periods, as you can see in the icon to the right.

As with most punctuation marks, there is some contention about its usage. The main point of contention is whether or not there should be a space between the periods (. . .) or not (...). MLA, APA, and *Chicago*, the most common style guides for students, support having spaces between the periods. Others you may encounter, such as in journalism, may not.



Quotes

Like the brackets we just learned about, you will primarily see ellipses used in quotes. They indicate a missing portion in a quote. Look at the following quote for an example:

Sauropod dinosaurs are the biggest animals to have ever walked on land. They are instantly recognized by their long, sweeping necks and whiplashed tails, and nearly always portrayed moving in herds, being stalked by hungry predators.

In recent years, a huge amount of taxonomic effort from scientists has vastly increased the number of known species of sauropod. What we now know is that in many areas we had two or more species co-existing alongside each other.

A question that arises from this, is how did we have animals that seem so similar, and with such high energy and dietary requirements, living alongside one another? Was there some sort of spinach-like super plant that gave them all Popeye-like physical boosts, or something more subtle?

It's a lengthy quote, and it contains more information than you want to include. Here's how to cut it down:

Sauropod dinosaurs are the biggest animals to have ever walked on land. They are instantly recognized by their long, sweeping necks and whiplashed tails. . . .

In recent years . . . [research has shown] that in many areas we had two or more species co-existing alongside each other.

A question that arises from this, is how did we have animals that seem so similar, and with such high energy and dietary requirements, living alongside one another?

In the block quote above, you can see that the first ellipsis appears to have four dots. ("They are instantly recognized by their long, sweeping necks and whiplashed tails. . . .") However, this is just a period followed by an ellipsis. This is because ellipses **do not** remove punctuation marks when the original punctuation still is in use; they are instead used in conjunction with original punctuation. This is true for all punctuation marks, including periods, commas, semicolons, question marks, and exclamation points.

By looking at two sympatric species (those that lived together) from the fossil graveyards of the Late Jurassic of North America . . . , [David Button] tried to work out what the major dietary differences were between sauropod dinosaurs, based on their anatomy.

One of the best ways to check yourself is to take out the ellipsis. If the sentence or paragraph is still correctly punctuated, you've used the ellipsis correctly. (Just remember to put it back in!)

Practice

Read the paragraphs below:

Camarasaurus, with its more mechanically efficient skull, was capable of generating much stronger bite forces than *Diplodocus*. This suggests that *Camarasaurus* was capable of chomping through tougher plant material than *Diplodocus*, and was perhaps even capable of a greater degree of oral processing before digestion. This actually ties in nicely with previous hypotheses of different diets for each, which were based on apparent feeding heights and inferences made from wear marks on their fossilized teeth. *Diplodocus* seems to have been well-adapted, despite its weaker skull, to a form of feeding known as branch stripping, where leaves are plucked from branches as the teeth are dragged along them. The increased flexibility of the neck of *Diplodocus* compared to other sauropods seems to support this too. In terms of their morphological disparity (differences in mechanically-significant aspects of their anatomy), *Camarasaurus* and *Diplodocus* appear to vary more than almost any other sauropod taxa, representing extremes within a spectrum of biomechanical variation related to feeding style.

Do the following quotes use ellipses (and surrounding punctuation) correctly?

1. This suggests that *Camarasaurus* was capable of chomping through tougher plant material than *Diplodocus*. . . This actually ties in nicely with previous hypotheses of different diets foreach.
2. *Diplodocus* seems to have been well-adapted, . . . to a form of feeding known as branch stripping, where leaves are plucked from branches as the teeth are dragged along them

Answers

1. **No.** There should be for periods; the ending punctuation of the sentence and then the ellipsis. Even though we've cut off the end of the sentence, the next part is the beginning of a new sentence, and we need ending punctuation.
2. **No.** Since we took out the entire parenthetical phrase, the comma beforehand is unnecessary. It should be "*Diplodocus* seems to have been well-adapted . . . to a form of feeding known as branch stripping . . . "

Pauses

The ellipsis can also indicate . . . a pause. This use is typically informal, and is only be used in casual correspondence (e.g., emails to friends, posts on social media, texting) or in literature. Because this use occurs in literature, you may find yourself quoting a passage that already has an ellipsis in it. For example, look at this passage spoken by Lady Bracknell, in *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailment goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when every one has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

If you were to quote the passage, it may appear that something has been removed from the quote. So how can we indicate that this is not the case? If you think back to the bracket rules we just discussed, you may remember that [sic] can be used to show that an error was in the original. In a similar practice, we can enclose the ellipsis in brackets to show it appeared in the original work:

Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice [. . .] as far as any improvement in his ailment goes. I

should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when every one has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

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PARENTHESES

Parentheses are most often used to identify material that acts as an aside (such as this brief comment) or to add incidental information.

Other punctuation marks used alongside parentheses need to take into account their context. If the parentheses enclose a full sentence beginning with a capital letter, then the end punctuation for the sentence falls *inside* the parentheses. For example:

Typically, suppliers specify air to cloth ratios of 6:1 or higher.
(However, ratios of 4:1 should be used for applications involving silica or feldspathic minerals.)

If the parentheses indicate a citation at the end of a sentence, then the sentence's end punctuation comes after the parentheses are closed:

In a study comparing three different building types, respirable dust concentrations were significantly lower in the open-structure building (Hugh et al., 2005).

Finally, if the parentheses appear in the midst of a sentence (as in this example), then any necessary punctuation (such as the comma that appeared just a few words ago) is delayed until the parentheses are closed.

You can also use parentheses to provide acronyms (or full names for acronyms). For example, "We use the MLA (Modern Language Association) style guide here" or "The Modern Language Association (MLA) style guide is my favorite to use."

Remember, parentheses always appear in pairs. If you open a parenthesis, you need another to close it!

Note: In technical writing, there are additional rules for using parentheses, which can be more nuanced. While we won't discuss those rules here, it's important to bear their existence in mind, especially if you're considering going into a more technical field.

Practice

Have the parentheses been used correctly in the following sentences? Correct any errors you find.

1. (Escobar et al., 2014) wrote about this phenomenon in their most recent paper.

2. NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) just announced three new initiatives.
3. Michael lost the wrestling competition. (He also lost his temper).
4. Helena took the chocolate bars (her favorites) and gave Davi the sour candies.

Answers

1. No. Even parentheses are only used to cite information at the end of a sentence. A corrected version of the sentence would look something like these:
 - Escobar et al. wrote about this phenomenon in their most recent paper (2014).
 - A recent paper discussed this phenomenon (Escobar et al., 2014).
2. Yes. Parentheses can be used to enclose the full name of an acronym.
3. No. The second sentence is entirely in parentheses, so the period should be inside as well.
 - Michael lost the wrestling competition. (He also lost his temper.)
4. Yes. The phrase *her favorites* is a brief aside that can be enclosed by parentheses.

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: PUNCTUATING QUOTES

The speech below is given by Gwendolen in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Act 1, Scene 1). Imagine you want to quote this speech in a paper, leaving out the bolded portions. How would you insert this quote into your paper? Be sure to correctly cite the quotation as well.

Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. **It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain.** Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. **She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude.** The only really safe name is Ernest.



Answers

Here is an example of how this might be appropriately quoted:

The Importance of Being Earnest, despite its title, is not actually about being honest or sincere. Instead, it is about the importance of having the name Earnest. The main character, Jack, has romanced a woman, all the while calling himself Earnest. Near the beginning of the play, he asks if she would mind if his name were Jack. She responds, “Jack? [. . .] No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. . . . Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. . . . The only really safe name is Ernest” (Wilde 1.1).

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PUNCTUATION CLUSTERS

Occasionally, you’ll come across an instance that seems to require multiple punctuation marks right next to each other. Sometimes you need to keep all the marks, but other times, you should leave some out.

- You should never use more than one ending punctuation mark in a row (period, question mark, exclamation point). When quoting a question, you would end with a question mark, not a question mark and a period:
 - Carlos leaned forward and asked, “Did you get the answer to number six?”
- If an abbreviation, like *etc.*, ends a sentence, you should only use one period.
 - I think we’ll have enough food. Mary bought the whole store: chips, soda, candy, cereal, etc.
- However, you can place a comma immediately after a period, as you can see above with *etc.*
- Periods and parentheses can also appear right next to each other. Sometimes the period comes after the closing parenthesis (as you can see in the first bullet), but sometimes it appears inside the parentheses. (This is an example of a sentence where the period falls within the parentheses.) We talked about this in [Parentheses](#).

Practice

Identify punctuation errors in the following sentences. Type the corrected sentences in the text frame below:

1. Dana had a lot of skills: reading, writing, note-taking, listening, etc..
2. My sister looked over and asked, “Why do you have so many grapes in the shopping cart?.”
3. Lucinda was the reigning Spring Queen (i.e. she had won the student vote at the last spring dance).

Answers

1. Dana had a lot of skills: reading, writing, note-taking, listening, etc.
 - There should only be one period at the end of a sentence.
2. My sister looked over and asked, “Why do you have so many grapes in the shopping cart?”
 - Since a question mark can mark the end of a sentence, there is no need for a period here.
 - If you wanted to change this sentence to an indirect question, you could re-write it like this:
My sister looked over and asked why I had so many grapes in the shopping cart.
3. Lucinda was the reigning Spring Queen (i.e., she had won the student vote at the last spring dance).
 - There should be a comma following the second period of the abbreviation *i.e.*

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: PUNCTUATION

Ending Punctuation

Are ending punctuation marks used appropriately in these sentences? Explain why or why not. The sentences have been numbered to aid in your comments:

- (1) One famous eighteenth-century Thoroughbred racehorse was named Potooooooooo, or Pot-8-Os!
(2) He was a chestnut colt bred by Willoughby Bertie, 4th Earl of Abingdon, in 1773, and he was known for his defeat of some of the greatest racehorses of the time. (3) With a well-to-do background like this, where do you suppose his strange name came from.
(4) The horse once has a stable lad, who facetiously misspelled *Potatoes*. (5) Apparently, the owner thought the misspelling was funny enough to adopt it as the horse’s real name!

Answers

The exclamation point at the end of sentence 1 isn’t needed. While the name is strange, we haven’t yet discussed the horse enough to warrant an exclamation point.

Sentence 3 should end with a question mark: it’s a direct question.

Sentence 5 may or may not need an exclamation point. It depends on two different things: the context of the writing and the amount of emphasis you want to put on the sentence. How much emphasis you want is up to you: do you think the fact is amusing enough to have an exclamation point? The context you're writing in will be a more objective criterion to help you make your decision. In a formal academic setting, such as an English paper, the exclamation point would likely feel out of place. However, if you were writing on your personal semi-professional blog, the exclamation point would probably fit in just fine.

Hyphens

Identify the compounds in the following sentences. All compounds have been treated as open compounds. Correct any compounds that this is incorrect for:

1. Have you ever seen someone with such a stereo typical appearance?
2. This is all publicly available information.
3. I bought a new yellow orange skirt last week.
4. One half of participants failed to complete the study.

Answers

1. The compound should be a closed compound: **stereotypical**. *Stereo* is a prefix in this word.
2. The compound should be open: **publicly available**. Even though the compound comes before the noun it's modifying (*information*), we don't use hyphens with *-ly* adverbs.
3. The compound should be hyphenated **yellow-orange**. The compound adjective appears directly before the noun it modifies (*skirt*).
4. The compound should be open: **one half**. It comes before the noun (*participants*) so *one half* should be open.

Apostrophes

Read the following passage. Identify any errors with apostrophes. Type the corrected words in the text frame below:

Thanks to **NASAs'** team of sniffers, led by George Aldrich, astronauts can breathe a little bit easier. Aldrich is the "chief sniffer" at the White Sands Test Facility in New Mexico. **His's** job is to smell items before they can be flown in the space shuttle.

Aldrich explained that smells change in space and that once astronauts are up there, **their** stuck with whatever smells are onboard with them. In space, astronauts aren't able to open the window for extra ventilation. He also said that **its** important not to introduce substances that will change the delicate balance of the climate of the International Space Station and the space shuttle.

Answers

Here is the passage with the errors in bold:

Thanks to **NASAs'** team of sniffers, led by George Aldrich, astronauts can breathe a little bit easier. Aldrich is the "chief sniffer" at the White Sands Test Facility in New Mexico. **His's** job is to smell items before they can be flown in the space shuttle.

Aldrich explained that smells change in space and that once astronauts are up there, **their** stuck with whatever smells are onboard with them. In space, astronauts **aren't** able to open the window for extra ventilation. He also said that **its** important not to introduce substances that will change the delicate balance of the climate of the International Space Station and the space shuttle.

NASAs' should be **NASA's**. **His's** doesn't need the apostrophe-s. In fact, possessive pronouns don't require apostrophes at all. **His's** should be **His**. **Their** is a possessive pronoun; the correct word is **they're**, which is a contraction of the words *they are*. **Its** is a possessive pronoun; the correct word is **it's**, which is a contraction of the words *it is*.

The contraction *aren't* is used correctly in the passage.

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MODULE 3: USAGE

INTRODUCTION TO USAGE

Usage is similar to grammar: it helps determine how you should use a language and which words you should use in a specific context. However, usage focuses more on the meaning of words than on their mechanical function within the language. For example, if you're trying to decide if you should use the numeral 17 or spell out the word *seventeen*, that decision falls under usage. Usage also deals with commonly confused words, spelling, and capitalization.

Unfortunately, there aren't a lot of hard and fast rules when it comes to usage. Additionally, there aren't often reasons behind the correct answers either—especially when it comes to spelling. This section will provide you with resources to help guide your decisions as you write.

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COMMONLY MISUSED TERMS AND PHRASES

When I woke up this morning my girlfriend asked me, “Did you sleep good?” I said, “No, I made a few mistakes.”

—Steven Wright

Everyone struggles at one time or another with finding the right word to use. We've all sent out that email only to realize we typed *there* when we should have said *their*. How many times have you found yourself puzzling over the distinction between *affect* and *effect* or *lay* and *lie*? You can also find billboards, road signs, ads, and newspapers with usage errors such as these boldly printed for all to see:

- “Man Alright After Crocodile Attack” (*Alright* should be *All Right*)
- “This Line Ten Items or Less” (*Less* should be *Fewer*)
- “Auction at This Sight: One Week” (*Sight* should be *Site*)
- “Violent Storm Effects Thousands” (*Effects* should be *Affects*)

Perhaps there is little need here to preach about the value of understanding how to correctly use words. Quite simply, in formal writing, conventions have been established to aid us in choosing the best term for the circumstances, and you must make it your business to learn the rules regarding the trickiest and most misused terms.

[This PDF contains a list of several commonly confused words](#)—as well as how to tell which word you should use.

You can also dig up style handbooks with recommendations on using tricky terminology within your discipline. For instance, *Geowriting: A Guide to Writing, Editing, and Printing in Earth Science*, by Robert Bates explains terms

commonly used in the field; medical students can turn to *The Aspen Guide to Effective Health Care Correspondence or Writing, Speaking, and Communication Skills for Health Professionals*.

The Chicago Manual of Style answers almost every conceivable style question—it is essentially a bible for book publishers. Never hesitate to look up a term for its proper usage if you are uncertain—there is a lot to be said for being correct.

On the Web

For a searchable and comprehensive list of commonly misused words and phrases and some practice quizzes, visit these sites:

- [Common errors in English usage page from Washington State University](#)
- [“Notorious Confusables” page from Capital Community College](#)

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviations (the shortened form of a word or phrase) and acronyms (words formed from the initial letters of a phrase) are commonly used in technical writing. In some fields, including chemistry, medicine, computer science, and geographic information systems, acronyms are used so frequently that the reader can feel lost in an alphabet soup. However, the proper use of these devices enhances the reading process, fostering fluid readability and efficient comprehension.

Some style manuals devote entire chapters to the subject of abbreviations and acronyms, and your college library no doubt contains volumes that you can consult when needed. Here, we provide just a few principles you can apply in using abbreviations and acronyms.

Abbreviations

- Typically, we abbreviate social titles (like *Ms.* and *Mr.*) and professional titles (like *Dr.*, *Rev.*).
- Titles of degrees should be abbreviated when following someone's name. However, in resumes and cover letters, you should avoid abbreviations
 - Gloria Morales-Myers, PhD
 - I received a *Bachelor of Arts* in 2014.
- Most abbreviations should be followed with a period (*Mar.* for March), except those representing units of measure (*mm* for millimeter).
- Typically, do not abbreviate geographic names and countries in text (i.e., write *Saint Cloud* rather than *St. Cloud*). However, these names are usually abbreviated when presented in “tight text” where space can be at a premium, as in tables and figures.
- Use the ampersand symbol (&) in company names if the companies themselves do so in their literature, but avoid using the symbol as a narrative substitute for the word *and* in your text.
- In text, spell out addresses (Third Avenue; the Chrysler Building) but abbreviate city addresses that are part of street names (Central Street SW).
- Try to avoid opening a sentence with an abbreviation; instead, write the word out.

Acronyms

- With few exceptions, present acronyms in full capital letters (FORTRAN; NIOSH). Some acronyms, such as *scuba* and *radar*, are so commonly used that they are not capitalized.
- Unless they appear at the end of a sentence, do not follow acronyms with a period.
 - NOAA is a really great organization.
 - I want to work for the USGS.
- Acronyms can be pluralized with the addition of a lowercase s
 - Please choose between these three URLs.
- Acronyms can be made possessive with an apostrophe followed by a lowercase s:
 - The DOD's mandate will be published today.
- As subjects, acronyms should be treated as singulars, even when they stand for plurals; therefore, they require a singular verb
 - NASA is committed to . . .
- Always write out the first in-text reference to an acronym, followed by the acronym itself written in capital letters and enclosed by parentheses. Subsequent references to the acronym can be made just by the capital letters alone. For example:
 - Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a rapidly expanding field. GIS technology . . .
- The acronym *US* can be used as an adjective (US citizen), but *United States* should be used when you are using it as a noun.

Spelling, Capitalization, and Punctuation

Different abbreviations and acronyms are treated differently. You can review [this PDF to check the proper treatment of some commonly used abbreviations and acronyms](#). For a much more detailed listing of abbreviations and acronyms, you can check in the back pages of many dictionaries, or consult the free online version of the [United States Government Printing Office Style Manual](#).

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WRITING WITH NUMBERS

The General Rule

The rules for expressing numbers are relatively simple and straightforward. When you're writing in a nontechnical subject (like English or art), numbers ninety-nine and below should be written out with letters, not numerals:

- There were **sixty** dogs in the competition.
- I don't think it's possible to get **264** bracelets made in **one** week.

In technical fields (like math or science), you spell out numbers ten and below. Numbers above this should be written as numerals:

- This study is based on **three** different ideas
- In this treatment, the steel was heated **18** different times.



Other Rules

If a sentence begins with a number, the number should be written out:

- **Fourteen** of the participants could not tell the difference between samples A and B.
- **Eighteen hundred and eighty-eight** was a very difficult year.
 - You may want to revise sentences like this so the number does not come first: “The year **1888** was quite difficult.”

You should treat similar numbers in grammatically connected groups alike:

- **Two** dramatic changes followed: **four** samples exploded and **thirteen** lab technicians resigned.
- **Sixteen** people got **15** points on the test, **thirty** people got **10** points, and **three** people got **5** points.
 - In this sentence, there are two different “categories” of numbers: those that modify the noun *people* and those that modify the noun *points*. You can see that one category is spelled out (*people*) and the other is in numerals (*points*). This division helps the reader immediately spot which category the numbers belong to.

When you write a percentage the number should always be written numerically (even if its ten or under). If you’re writing in a technical field, you should use the percentage symbol (%):

- This procedure has a **7%** failure rate.

If you’re writing in a nontechnical field, you should spell out the word percent:

- The judges have to give prizes to at least **25 percent** of competitors.

All important measured quantities—particularly those involving decimal points, dimensions, degrees, distances, weights, measures, and sums of money—should be expressed in numeral form:

- The metal should then be submerged for precisely **1.3** seconds.
- On average, the procedure costs **\$25,000**.
- The depth to the water at the time of testing was **16.16** feet.

In technical settings, degree measures of temperature are normally expressed with the ° symbol rather than by the written word, with a space after the number but not between the symbol and the temperature scale:

- The sample was heated to **80 °C**.

Unlike the abbreviations for Fahrenheit and Celsius, the abbreviation for Kelvin (which refers to an absolute scale of temperature) is not preceded by the degree symbol (i.e., **12 K** is correct).

On the Web

Check out these handy resources related to expressing numbers and numerals in text:

- [Technical writing tips for using numbers from a company president offering online technical writing courses](#)
- [“Using Numbers, Writing Lists” advice from Capital Community College website](#)

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CAPITALIZATION

Capitalization Rules

Writers often refer to geographic locations, company names, temperature scales, and processes or apparatuses named after people: you must learn how to capitalize these items. There are ten fundamental rules for capitalization:

1. Capitalize the names of major portions of your paper and all references to figures and tables. Note: Some journals and publications do not follow this rule, but most do.
 - Table 1
 - Appendix A
 - see Figure 4
2. Capitalize the names of established regions, localities, and political divisions.
 - the French Republic
 - Lancaster County
 - the Arctic Circle
3. Capitalize the names of highways, routes, bridges, buildings, monuments, parks, ships, automobiles, hotels, forts, dams, railroads, and major coal and mineral deposits.
 - the White House
 - Highway 13
 - Alton Railroad
4. Capitalize the proper names of persons, places and their derivatives, and geographic names (continents, countries, states, cities, oceans, rivers, mountains, lakes, harbors, and valleys).
 - British
 - Rocky Mountains
 - Chicago
 - Howard Pickering
5. Capitalize the names of historic events and documents, government units, political parties, business and fraternal organizations, clubs and societies, companies, and institutions.
 - the Civil War
 - Congress
 - Ministry of Energy
6. Capitalize titles of rank when they are joined to a person's name, and the names of stars and planets. Note: The names earth, sun, and moon are not normally capitalized, although they may be capitalized when used in connection with other bodies of the solar system.
 - Venus
 - Professor Walker
 - Milky Way
7. Capitalize words named after geographic locations, the names of major historical or geological time frames, and most words derived from proper names.
 - Middle Jurassic Period
 - the Industrial Revolution
 - Petri dish
 - Coriolis force
 - Planck's constant

Note: The only way to be sure if a word derived from a person's name should be capitalized is to look it up in the dictionary. For example, "Bunsen burner" (after Robert Bunsen) is capitalized, while "diesel engine" (after Rudolph Diesel) is not. Also, referring to specific geologic time frames, the *Chicago Manual of Style* says not to capitalize the words "era," "period," and "epoch," but the American Association of Petroleum Geologists says that these words should be capitalized. I choose to capitalize them, as those who write in the geological sciences should by convention.

8. Capitalize references to temperature scales, whether written out or abbreviated.
 1. 10 °F

2. Celsius degrees
9. Capitalize references to major sections of a country or the world.
 1. the Near East
 2. the South
10. Capitalize the names of specific courses, the names of languages, and the names of semesters.
 - Anatomy 200
 - Spring semester 2016
 - Russian

Common Capitalization Errors

Just as important as knowing when to capitalize is knowing when not to. Below, I set forth a few instances where capital letters are commonly used when they should not be. Please review this advice carefully, in that we all have made such capitalization errors. When in doubt, simply consult a print dictionary.

1. Do not capitalize the names of the seasons, unless the seasons are personified, as in poetry (“Spring’s breath”):
 - spring
 - winter
2. Do not capitalize the words north, south, east, and west when they refer to directions, in that their meaning becomes generalized rather than site-specific.
 - We traveled west.
 - The sun rises in the east.
3. In general, do not capitalize commonly used words that have come to have specialized meaning, even though their origins are in words that are capitalized.
 - india ink
 - pasteurization
 - biblical
4. Do not capitalize the names of elements. Note: This is a common capitalization error, and can often be found in published work. Confusion no doubt arises because the symbols for elements are capitalized.
 - oxygen
 - californium
 - nitrogen
5. Do not capitalize words that are used so frequently and informally that they have come to have highly generalized meaning.
 - north pole
 - midwesterner
 - big bang theory
 - arctic climate

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SPELLING

Far too many of us use spell checkers as proofreaders, and we ultimately use them to justify our own laziness. I once received a complaint from an outraged professor that a student had continually misspelled *miscellaneous* as *mescaline* (a hallucinogenic drug). The student’s spell checker did not pick up the error, but the professor certainly did.

So proceed with caution when using spell checkers. They are not gods, and they do not substitute for meticulous proofreading and clear thinking. There is an instructive moment in a M*A*S*H episode, when Father Mulcahy complains to Colonel Potter about a typo in a new set of Bibles—one of the commandments reads “thou shalt

commit adultery.” Father sheepishly worries aloud that “These lads are taught to follow orders.” For want of a single word the intended meaning is lost. Always proofread a hard copy, with your own two eyes.

Six Rules for Spelling

I have a crusty old copy of a book called *Instant Spelling Dictionary*, now in its third edition but first published in 1964, that I still use frequently. I adapted the six basic spelling rules that appear below from that dictionary. Even without memorizing the rules, you can improve your spelling simply by reviewing them and scanning the examples and exceptions until the fundamental concepts begin to sink in. When in doubt, always look up the word. And do not forget that desktop dictionaries work just as well as electronic ones.

Rule 1

In words ending with a silent *e*, you usually drop the *e* when you add a suffix that begins with a vowel:

- *survive* + *al* = *survival*
- *divide* + *ing* = *dividing*
- *fortune* + *ate* = *fortunate*

Here are a few common exceptions:

manageable	singeing	mileage
advantageous	dyeing	acreage
peaceable	canoeing	lineage

Rule 2

In words ending with a silent *e*, you usually retain the *e* before a suffix than begins with a consonant.

- *arrange* + *ment* = *arrangement*
- *forgive* + *ness* = *forgiveness*
- *safe* + *ty* = *safety*

Here are a few common exceptions:

- *ninth* (from *nine*)
- *argument* (from *argue*)
- *wisdom* (from *wise*)
- *wholly* (from *whole*)

Rule 3

In words of two or more syllables that are accented on the final syllable and end in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, you double the final consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel.

- *refer* + *ing* = *referring*
- *regret* + *able* = *regrettable*

However, if the accent is not on the last syllable, the final consonant is not doubled.

- *benefit* + *ed* = *benefited*
- *audit* + *ed* = *audited*

Rule 4

In words of one syllable ending in a single consonant that is preceded by a single vowel, you double the final consonant before a suffix that begins with a vowel. (It sounds more complex than it is; just look at the examples.)

- *big + est = biggest*
- *hot + er = hotter*
- *bag + age = baggage*

Rule 5

In words ending in *y* preceded by a consonant, you usually change the *y* to *i* before any suffix that does not begin with an *i*.

- *beauty + ful = beautiful*
- *accompany + ment = accompaniment*
- *accompany + ing = accompanying* (suffix begins with *i*)

If the final *y* is preceded by a vowel, however, the rule does not apply.

- journeys
- obeying
- essays
- buys
- repaying
- attorneys

Rule 6

Use *i* before *e* except when the two letters follow *c* and have an *e* sound, or when they have an *a* sound as in *neighbor* and *weigh*.

<i>i</i> before <i>e</i> (<i>e</i> sound)	<i>e</i> before <i>i</i> (<i>a</i> sound)
shield	vein
believe	weight
grieve	veil
mischievous	neighbor

Here are a few common exceptions:

- weird
- either
- seize
- foreign
- ancient
- forfeit
- height

Everyday Words that are Commonly Misspelled

If you find yourself over-relying on spell checkers or misspelling the same word for the seventeenth time this year, it would be to your advantage to improve your spelling. One shortcut to doing this is to consult [this list of words that are frequently used and misspelled](#).

Many smart writers even put a mark next to a word whenever they have to look it up, thereby helping themselves identify those fiendish words that give them the most trouble. To improve your spelling, you must commit the words you frequently misspell to memory, and physically looking them up until you do so is an effective path to spelling perfection.

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MODULE 4: SENTENCE STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION TO SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Language is made up of words, which work together to form sentences, which work together to form paragraphs. In this section, we'll be focusing on sentences: how they're made and how they behave. Sentences help us to organize our ideas—to identify which items belong together and which should be separated.

So just what is a sentence? Sentences are simply collections of words. Each sentence has a subject, an action, and punctuation. These basic building blocks work together to create endless amounts and varieties of sentences.

It's important to have variety in your sentence length and structure. This quote from Gary Provost illustrates why:

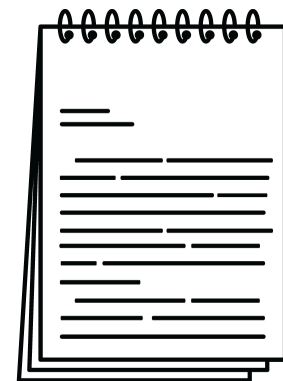
This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety. Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't just write words. Write music. (Note: Provost, Gary. *100 Ways to Improve Your Writing*, Signet:1985, pp. 60–61.)

You can also listen to the difference in the video below:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/k7ccnFw84cQ>

In order to create this variety, you need to know how sentences work and how to create them. In this section we will identify the parts of sentences and learn how they fit together to create music in writing.



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BASIC PARTS OF A SENTENCE

I like the construction of sentences and the juxtaposition of words—not just how they sound or what they mean, but even what they look like.

—author Don DeLillo

Subject and Predicate

Every sentence has a subject and a predicate. The subject of a sentence is the noun, pronoun, or phrase or clause the sentence is about:

- Einstein’s general **theory** of relativity has been subjected to many tests of validity over the years.
- Although a majority of caffeine drinkers think of it as a stimulant, heavy **users** of caffeine say the substance relaxes them.
 - Notice that the introductory phrase, “Although a majority of caffeine drinkers think of it as a stimulant,” is not a part of the subject or the predicate.
- In a secure landfill, the **soil** on top and the **cover** block storm water intrusion into the landfill. (*compound subject*)
 - There are two subjects in this sentence: *soil* and *cover*.
- Surrounding the secure landfill on all sides are impermeable barrier **walls**. (*inverted sentence pattern*)
 - In an inverted sentence, the predicate comes before the subject. You won’t run into this sentence structure very often as it is pretty rare.

The predicate is the rest of the sentence after the subject:

- The pressure in a pressured water reactor **varies from system to system**.
- In contrast, a boiling water reactor **operates at constant pressure**.
- The pressure **is maintained at about 2250 pounds per square inch then lowered to form steam at about 600 pounds per square inch**. (*compound predicate*)
 - There are two predicates in this sentence: “is maintained at about 2250 pounds per square inch” and “lowered to form steam at about 600 pounds per square inch”

Practice

Identify the subject and predicate of each sentence:

1. Daniel and I are going to go to Hawaii for three weeks.
2. Raquel will watch the dogs while we’re on vacation.
3. She will feed the dogs and will make sure they get enough exercise.

Answers

1. “Daniel and I” is the subject. The rest of the sentence, “are going to go to Hawaii for three weeks,” is the predicate.

2. “Raquel” is the subject. The rest of the sentence, “will watch the dogs while we’re on vacation,” is the predicate.
3. “She” is the subject. The rest of the sentence, “will feed the dogs and will make sure they get enough exercise,” is the predicate. This is a compound predicate: it has two different actions in it.
 - will feed the dogs
 - will make sure they get enough exercise

A predicate can include the verb, a direct object, and an indirect object.

Direct Object

A direct object—a noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause acting as a noun—takes the action of the main verb. A direct object can be identified by putting *what?*, *which?*, or *whom?* in its place.

- The housing assembly of a mechanical pencil contains the mechanical **workings** of the pencil.
 - The action (*contains*) is directly happening to the object (*workings*).
- Lavoisier used curved glass **discs** fastened together at their rims, with wine filling the space between, to focus the sun’s rays to attain temperatures of 3000° F.
 - The action (*used*) is directly happening to the object (*discs*).
- A 20 percent fluctuation in average global temperature could reduce biological **activity**, shift weather **patterns**, and ruin **agriculture**. (*compound direct object*)
 - The actions are directly happening to multiple objects: *reduce activity*, *shift patterns*, and *ruin agriculture*.
- On Mariners 6 and 7, the two-axis scan platforms provided much more **capability** and **flexibility** for the scientific payload than those of Mariner 4. (*compound direct object*)
 - The action (*provided*) is directly happening to multiple objects (*capability* and *flexibility*).

Indirect Object

An indirect object—a noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause acting as a noun—receives the action expressed in the sentence. It can be identified by inserting *to* or *for*.

- The company is designing senior **citizens** a new walkway to the park area.
 - The company is not designing new models of senior citizens; they are designing a new walkway *for* senior citizens. Thus, senior citizens is the indirect object of this sentence.
 - *Walkway* is the direct object of this sentence, since it is the thing being designed.
- Please send the personnel **office** a resume so we can further review your candidacy.
 - You are not being asked to send the office somewhere; you’re being asked to send a resume *to* the office. Thus, the personnel office is the indirect object of this sentence.
 - *Resume* is the direct object of this sentence, since it is the thing you should send.

Note: Objects can belong to any verb in a sentence, even if the verbs aren’t in the main clause. For example, let’s look at the sentence “When you give your teacher your assignment, be sure to include your name and your class number.”

- *Your teacher* is the indirect object of the verb *give*.
- *Your assignment* is the direct object of the verb *give*.
- *Your name* and *your class number* are the direct objects of the verb *include*.

Practice

Identify the objects in the following sentences. Are they direct or indirect objects?

1. The cooler temperatures brought about by nuclear war might end all life on earth.
2. On Mariners 6 and 7, the two-axis scan platforms provided much more capability and flexibility for the scientific payload than those of Mariner 4.
3. In your application letter, tell the potential employer that a resume accompanies the letter.

Answers

1. The cooler temperatures brought about by nuclear war might end **all life** on earth.
 - *All life* is the direct object of the verb *might end*.
2. On Mariners 6 and 7, the two-axis scan platforms provided much more **capability and flexibility** for the **scientific payload** than those of Mariner 4.
 - *Capability and flexibility* are the direct objects of the verb *provided*.
 - *The scientific payload* is the indirect object of the verb *provided*.
3. In your application letter, tell the **potential employer** that a resume accompanies **the letter**.
 - *Potential employer* is the indirect object of *tell*.
 - *The letter* is the direct object of the verb *accompanies*.

Phrases and Clauses

Phrases and clauses are groups of words that act as a unit and perform a single function within a sentence. A phrase may have a partial subject or verb but not both; a dependent clause has both a subject and a verb (but is not a complete sentence). Here are a few examples (not all phrases are highlighted because some are embedded in others):

Phrases	Clauses
Electricity has to do with those physical phenomena involving electrical charges and their effects when in motion and when at rest . (<i>involving electrical charges and their effects</i> is also a phrase.)	Electricity manifests itself as a force of attraction, independent of gravitational and short-range nuclear attraction, when two oppositely charged bodies are brought close to one another .
In 1833 , Faraday's experimentation with electrolysis indicated a natural unit of electrical charge , thus pointing to a discrete rather than continuous charge . (<i>to a discrete rather than continuous charge</i> is also a phrase.)	Since the frequency is the speed of sound divided by the wavelength , a shorter wavelength means a higher wavelength.
The symbol that denotes a connection to the grounding conductor is three parallel horizontal lines, each of the lower ones being shorter than the one above it .	Nuclear units planned or in construction have a total capacity of 186,998 KW, which, if current plans hold, will bring nuclear capacity to about 22% of all electrical capacity by 1995 . (<i>if current plans hold</i> is a clause within a clause)

There are two types of clauses: dependent and independent. A dependent clause is dependent on something else: it cannot stand on its own. An independent clause, on the other hand, is free to stand by itself.

So how can you tell if a clause is dependent or independent? Let's take a look at the clauses from the table above:

- when two oppositely charged bodies are brought close to one another
- Since the frequency is the speed of sound divided by the wavelength

All of these clauses are dependent clauses. As we learned in [Conjunctions](#), any clause with a subordinating conjunction is a dependent clause. For example “I was a little girl in 1995” is an independent clause, but “Because I was a little girl in 1995” is a dependent clause. Subordinating conjunctions include the following:

after	although	as	as far as	as if	as long as	as soon as
as though	because	before	even if	even though	every time	if
in order that	since	so	so that	than	though	unless
until	when	whenever	where	whereas	wherever	while

Let’s look at the other clause from our examples:

- which, if current plans hold, will bring nuclear capacity to about 22% of all electrical capacity by 1995

This clause starts with the relative pronoun *which* (see [Relative Pronouns](#) for more information on these). Any clause prefaced with a relative pronoun becomes a dependent clause.

Practice

In each of the following sentences, identify their phrases, dependent clauses, and independent clauses:

1. Because Dante won the steamboat competition, he let Maxwell win the rowing race.
2. That truck with the missing tires looks really old.
3. Why can’t I read *The Martian*?
4. Swimming across the English Channel in nearly twenty-three hours, Laís set a new personal record.
5. Whenever I see Alice and Armando’s Instagram account, *The Two of Us*, I’m overwhelmed with feelings.

Answers

1. This sentence is made up of a dependent clause and an independent clause. There are two phrases within the sentence.
 - “Because Dante won the steamboat competition” is a dependent clause; the conjunction *because* turns an independent clause into a dependent.
 - “He let Maxwell win the rowing race” is an independent clause.
 - Here are the phrases:
 - “the steamboat competition”
 - “win the rowing race”
2. This sentence is made up of a single independent clause. “That truck with the missing tires” is a phrase.
3. This sentence is made up of a single independent clause.
4. This sentence is made up of a phrase and an independent clause:

- “Swimming across the English Channel in nearly twenty-three hours” is a phrase; there is only a subject, not a verb. (Remember, *swimming* in this phrase is a gerund, which acts as a noun, not a verb!)
 - “Laís set a new personal record” is an independent clause.
5. This sentence is made up of a dependent clause and an independent clause. There are also three phrases within the sentence.
- “Whenever I see Alice and Armando’s Instagram account, *The Two of Us*” is a dependent clause; the conjunction *whenever* turns an independent clause into a dependent.
 - “I’m overwhelmed with feelings” is an independent clause
 - Here are the phrases:
 - “Alice and Armando’s Instagram account, *The Two of Us*”
 - “*The Two of Us*”
 - “overwhelmed with feelings”

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COMMON SENTENCE STRUCTURES

Basic Sentence Patterns

Subject + verb

The simplest of sentence patterns is composed of a **subject** and **verb** without a direct object or subject complement. It uses an **intransitive verb**, that is, a verb requiring no direct object:

- Control **rods remain** inside the fuel assembly of the reactor.
- The **development** of wind power practically **ceased** until the early 1970s.
- The **cross-member** exposed to abnormal stress eventually **broke**.
- Only two **types** of charge **exist** in nature.

Subject + verb + direct object

Another common sentence pattern uses the **direct object**:

- **Silicon conducts electricity** in an unusual way.
- The anti-reflective **coating** on the the silicon cell **reduces reflection** from 32 to 22 percent.

Subject + verb + indirect object + direct object

The sentence pattern with the **indirect object** and **direct object** is similar to the preceding pattern:

- **I am writing her** about a number of **problems** that I have had with my computer.
- **Austin, Texas, has** recently **built** its **citizens** a **system** of bike lanes.

Practice

Identify the basic sentence pattern of the sentences below:

1. All amplitude-modulation (AM) receivers work in the same way.
2. The supervisor mailed the applicant a description of the job.
3. We have mailed the balance of the payment in this letter.

Answers

1. This is a subject + verb sentence:
 - All amplitude-modulation (AM) **receivers work** in the same way.
2. This is a subject + verb + indirect object + direct object sentence:
 - The **supervisor mailed** the **applicant** a **description** of the job.
3. This is a subject + verb + direct object sentence:
 - **We have mailed** the **balance** of the payment in this letter.

Sentence Types

Simple Sentences

A simple sentence is one that contains a **subject** and a **verb** and no other independent or dependent clause.

- **One** of the tubes **is attached** to the manometer part of the instrument indicating the pressure of the air within the cuff.
- There **are** basically two **types** of stethoscopes.
 - In this sentence, the subject and verb are inverted; that is, the verb comes before the subject. However, it is still classified as a simple sentence.
- To measure blood pressure, a **sphygmomanometer** and a **stethoscope are needed**.
 - This sentence has a compound subject—that is, there are two subjects—but it is still classified as a simple sentence.

Command sentences are a subtype of simple sentences. These sentences are unique because they don't actually have a subject:

- **Clean** the dishes.
- **Make** sure to take good notes today.
- After completing the reading, **answer** the following questions.

In each of these sentences, there is an implied subject: *you*. These sentences are instructing the reader to complete a task. Command sentences are the only sentences in English that are complete without a subject.

Compound Predicates

A **predicate** is everything in the verb part of the sentence after the subject (unless the sentence uses inverted word order). A *compound predicate* is two or more predicates joined by a coordinating conjunction. Traditionally, the conjunction in a sentence consisting of just two compound predicates is not punctuated.

- Another library media specialist **has been using Accelerated Reader for ten years** and **has seen great results**.
- This cell phone app lets users **share pictures instantly with followers** and **categorize photos with hashtags**.

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence is made up of two or more *independent clauses* joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, but, yet, for) and a comma, an adverbial conjunction and a semicolon, or just a semicolon.

- In sphygmomanometers, too narrow a cuff can result in erroneously high readings, and too wide a cuff can result in erroneously low readings.
- Some cuff hook together; others wrap or snap into place.

Practice

Identify the type of each sentence below:

1. The sphygmomanometer is usually covered with cloth and has two rubber tubes attached to it.
2. There are several types of sentences; using different types can keep your writing lively.
3. Words, sentences, and paragraphs are all combined to create a book.
4. Before giving up, take a deep breath and look at things from a different perspective.

Answers

Put Answer Here

1. This sentence has a compound predicate—that is, there are two predicates, joined with the conjunction *and*:
 - is usually covered with cloth
 - has two rubber tubes attached to it
2. This is a compound sentence. There are two independent clauses joined together by a semicolon.
3. This is a simple sentence with a compound subject.
 - Subject: Words, sentences, and paragraphs
 - Predicate: are all combined to create a book
4. This is a command sentence with a compound predicate—that is, there are two predicates, joined with the conjunction *and*:
 - take a deep breath
 - look at things from a different perspective.

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SENTENCE PUNCTUATION PATTERNS

While there are infinite possibilities for sentence construction, let's take a look at some of the most common punctuation patterns in sentences. In order to do this, let's first look at this passage about Queen Elizabeth I. You don't need to pay attention to the words: just look at the punctuation.

Elizabeth I was Queen of England and Ireland from 17 November 1558 until her death on March 24, 1603. Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, his second wife, who was executed two and a half years after Elizabeth's birth. Sometimes called The Virgin Queen, the childless Elizabeth was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty.

Elizabeth's reign is known as the Elizabethan era. The period is famous for the flourishing of English drama, led by playwrights (such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe) and for the seafaring prowess of English adventurers (such as Francis Drake). Towards the end of her reign, a series of economic and military problems weakened her popularity. Elizabeth is acknowledged as a charismatic performer and a dogged survivor in an era when government was ramshackle and limited, and when monarchs in neighboring countries faced internal problems that jeopardized their thrones. After the short reigns of Elizabeth's half-siblings, her 44 years on the throne provided welcome stability for the kingdom and helped forge a sense of national identity.



The "Darnley Portrait" of Elizabeth I of England

Now let's look at the passage with the words removed:

_____, _____.
 _____, _____, _____.
 _____, _____.
 _____.
 _____ (_____) _____
 (_____). _____, _____.
 _____,
 _____.

As you can see, this passage has a fairly simple punctuation structure. It simply uses periods, commas, and parentheses. These three marks are the most common punctuation you will see. Some other common sentence patterns include the following:

- _____; _____.
 ◦ Elizabeth was baptized on 10 September; Archbishop Thomas Cranmer stood as one of her godparents.
- _____; however, _____.
 ◦ The English took the defeat of the armada as a symbol of God's favor; however, this victory was not a turning point in the war.
- _____: _____, _____, and _____.
 ◦ The period is famous for the flourishing of English drama, led by several well-known playwrights: William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Francis Beaumont.

While your sentence's punctuation will always depend on the content of your writing, there are a few common punctuation patterns you should be aware of.

- Simple sentences have these punctuation patterns:
 ◦ _____.
- Compound predicate sentences have this punctuation pattern:
 ◦ _____ and _____.
- Compound Sentences have these punctuation patterns:
 ◦ _____, and _____.

◦ _____; _____.

As you can see from these common patterns, periods, commas, and semicolons are the punctuation marks you will use the most in your writing. As you write, it's best to use a variety of these patterns. If you use the same pattern repeatedly, your writing can easily become boring and drab.

Practice

The sentences in this passage follow a single punctuation pattern: _____.

Revise the passage to create variety.

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote six Cello Suites. The Cello Suites are suites for unaccompanied cello. They are some of the most frequently performed and recognizable solo compositions ever written for cello. Each movement is based around a baroque dance type. This basis is standard for a Baroque musical suite. The cello suites are structured in six movements each. Each includes a prelude; an allemande; a courante; a sarabande; two minuets, two bourrées, or two gavottes; and a final gigue. The Bach cello suites are considered to be among the most profound of all classical music works.

Answers

There are an infinite number of revisions for this passage. As you compare your work with ours, keep these things in mind:

1. When combining sentences into complex or compound sentence, make sure you use punctuation and conjunctions correctly.
2. When there is redundant information, you can easily remove it and combine the other parts of a sentence together.

Johann Sebastian Bach's six Cello Suites, written for unaccompanied cello, are some of the most frequently performed and recognizable solo compositions ever written for cello. As is standard for a Baroque musical suite, each movement is based around a baroque dance type. The cello suites are structured in six movements each: a prelude; an allemande; a courante; a sarabande; two minuets, two bourrées, or two gavottes; and a final gigue. The Bach cello suites are considered to be among the most profound of all classical music works.

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RUN-ON SENTENCES

A *run-on* sentence is a sentence that goes on and on and needs to be broken up. Run-on sentences occur when two or more independent clauses are improperly joined. (We talked about clauses in [Parts of a Sentence](#).) One type of run-on that you've probably heard of is the *comma splice*, in which two independent clauses are joined by a comma without a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *or*, *but*, etc.).

Let's look at a few examples of run-on sentences:

- Often, choosing a topic for a paper is the hardest part it's a lot easier after that.
- Sometimes, books do not have the most complete information, it is a good idea then to look for articles in specialized periodicals.
- She loves skiing but he doesn't.

All three of these have two independent clauses. Each clause should be separated from another with a period, a semicolon, or a comma and a coordinating conjunction:

- Often, choosing a topic for a paper is the hardest part. It's a lot easier after that.
- Sometimes, books do not have the most complete information; it is a good idea then to look for articles in specialized periodicals.
- She loves skiing, but he doesn't.

Note: Caution should be exercised when defining a run-on sentence as a sentence that just goes on and on. A run-on sentence is a sentence that goes on and on **and** isn't correctly punctuated. Not every long sentence is a run-on sentence. For example, look at this quote from *The Great Gatsby*:

Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

If you look at the punctuation, you'll see that this quote is a single sentence. F. Scott Fitzgerald used commas and semicolons in such a way that, despite its great length, it's grammatically sound, as well. Length is no guarantee of a run-on sentence.

Common Causes of Run-Ons

We often write run-on sentences because we sense that the sentences involved are closely related and dividing them with a period just doesn't seem right. We may also write them because the parts seem too short to need any division, like in "She loves skiing but he doesn't." However, "She loves skiing" and "he doesn't" are both independent clauses, so they need to be divided by a comma and a coordinating conjunction—not just a coordinating conjunction by itself.

Another common cause of run-on sentences is mistaking adverbial conjunctions for coordinating conjunctions. For example if we were to write, "She loved skiing, however he didn't," we would have produced a comma splice. The correct sentence would be "She loved skiing; however, he didn't."

Fixing Run-On Sentences

Before you can fix a run-on sentence, you'll need to identify the problem. When you write, carefully look at each part of every sentence. Are the parts independent clauses, or are they dependent clauses or phrases? Remember, only independent clauses can stand on their own. This also means they have to stand on their own; they can't run together without correct punctuation.

Let's take a look at a few run-on sentences and their revisions:

1. Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer, however, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.
2. The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel they tend to be more susceptible to rust.
3. Some people were highly educated professionals, others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.

Let's start with the first sentence. This is a comma-splice sentence. The adverbial conjunction *however* is being treated like a coordinating conjunction. There are two easy fixes to this problem. The first is to turn the comma before *however* into a period. If this feels like too hard of a stop between ideas, you can change the comma into a semicolon instead.

- Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer. However, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.
- Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer; however, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.

The second sentence is a run-on as well. "The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel" and "they tend to be more susceptible to rust." are both independent clauses. The two clauses are very closely related, and the second clarifies the information provided in the first. The best solution is to insert a colon between the two clauses:

The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel: they tend to be more susceptible to rust.

What about the last example? Once again we have two independent clauses. The two clauses provide contrasting information. Adding a conjunction could help the reader move from one kind of information to another. However, you may want that sharp contrast. Here are two revision options:

- Some people were highly educated professionals, while others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.
- Some people were highly educated professionals. Others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.

Practice

Identify the run-on sentences in the following paragraph:

I had the craziest dream the other night. My cousin Jacob and I were on the run from the law. Apparently we were wizards and the law was cracking down on magic. So, we obviously had to go into hiding but I lost track of Jacob and then I got picked up by a cop. But I was able to convince him that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

Answers

The first two sentences are grammatically sound. The next sentence, however, is not.

Apparently we were wizards and the law was cracking down on magic.

This sentence just needs a comma inserted before the word *and*: Apparently we were wizards, and the law was cracking down on magic.

Let's look at the next sentence:

So, we obviously had to go into hiding but I lost track of Jacob and then I got picked up by a cop.

This is also a run-on sentence. While *So* at the beginning of the sentence is technically fine, it's unnecessary, and many teachers dislike it as a transition word. There are three clauses in this run-on sentence, so there are a few different ways you could rework it:

- We obviously had to go into hiding, but I lost track of Jacob. After that, I got picked up by a cop.
- We obviously had to go into hiding. Unfortunately, I had lost track of Jacob and had gotten picked up by a cop.

Let's look at the final sentence:

But I was able to convince him that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

This sentence is technically okay, but the *but* at the start of the sentence is unnecessary, and it could be removed without affecting the meaning of the sentence. Additionally, it may be helpful to clarify who *he* is:

I was able to convince the cop that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

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SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Fragments are simply grammatically incomplete sentences—they are phrases and dependent clauses. We talked about phrases and clauses a bit in [Basic Parts of a Sentence](#). These are grammatical structures that cannot stand on their own: they need to be connected to an independent clause to work in writing. So how can we tell the difference between a sentence and a sentence fragment? And how can we fix fragments when they already exist?

Common Causes of Fragments

Part of the reason we write in fragments is because we often speak that way. However, there is a difference between writing and speech, and it is important to write in full sentences. Additionally, fragments often come about in writing because a fragment may already seem too long.

Non-finite verbs (gerunds, participles, and infinitives) can often trip people up as well. Since non-finite verbs don't act like verbs, we don't count them as verbs when we're deciding if we have a phrase or a clause. Let's look at a few examples of these:

- Running away from my mother.
- To ensure your safety and security.
- Beaten down since day one.

Even though all of the above have non-finite verbs, they're phrases, not clauses. In order for these to be clauses, they would need an additional verb that acts as a verb in the sentence.

Words like *since*, *when*, and *because* turn an independent clause into a dependent clause. For example "I was a little girl in 1995" is an independent clause, but "Because I was a little girl in 1995" is a dependent clause. This class of word includes the following:

after	although	as	as far as	as if	as long as	as soon as
as though	because	before	even if	even though	every time	if
in order that	since	so	so that	than	though	unless
until	when	whenever	where	whereas	wherever	while

Relative pronouns, like *that* and *which*, do the same type of thing as those listed above.

Coordinating conjunctions (our FANBOYS) can also cause problems. If you start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction, make sure that it is followed a complete clause, not just a phrase!

As you're identifying fragments, keep in mind that command sentences are *not* fragments, despite not having a subject. Commands are the only grammatically correct sentences that lack a subject:

- Drop and give me fifty!
- Count how many times the word *fragrant* is used during commercial breaks.

Fixing Sentence Fragments

Let's take a look at a couple of examples:

1. Ivana appeared at the committee meeting last week. And made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product.
2. The committee considered her ideas for a new marketing strategy quite powerful. The best ideas that they had heard in years.
3. She spent a full month evaluating his computer-based instructional materials. Which she eventually sent to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.

Let's look at the phrase "And made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product" in example one. It's just that: a phrase. There is no subject in this phrase, so the easiest fix is to simply delete the period and combine the two statements:

Ivana appeared at the committee meeting last week and made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product.

Let's look at example two. The phrase "the best ideas they had heard in years" is simply a phrase—there is no verb contained in the phrase. By adding "they were" to the beginning of this phrase, we have turned the fragment into an independent clause, which can now stand on its own:

The committee considered her ideas for a new marketing strategy quite powerful; they were the best ideas that they had heard in years.

What about example three? Let's look at the clause "Which she eventually sent to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations." This is a dependent clause; the word *which* signals this fact. If we change "which she eventually" to "eventually, she," we also turn the dependent clause into an independent clause.

She spent a full month evaluating his computer-based instructional materials. Eventually, she sent the evaluation to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.

Practice

Identify the fragments in the sentences below. Why are they fragments? What are some possible solutions?

1. The corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software. Although, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical.
2. Include several different sections in your proposal. For example, a discussion of your personnel and their qualifications, your expectations concerning the schedule of the project, and a cost breakdown.
3. The research team has completely reorganized the workload. Making sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.

Answers

Here are some possible revisions for the sentences. Remember, there are multiple solutions. Pay attention to the principles used to create the revised sentence.

1. In the fragment "Although, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical," the subordinating conjunction *although* is being used as an adverbial conjunction in this sentence. There are two simple revision to resolve the fragment.
 - Change *although* to be an adverbial conjunction: "The corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software. However, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical."

- Move the fragment to the beginning of the sentence and link it to the independent clause with a comma after it: “Although the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical, the corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software.”
- 2. The first sentence is a command; it is a correct sentence. The second sentence is a fragment, however. The simplest change is to switch the period before “for example” out for a colon. Colons can be followed by a phrase or dependent clause.
 - Include several different sections in your proposal: for example, a discussion of your personnel and their qualifications, your expectations concerning the schedule of the project, and a cost breakdown.
- 3. The second sentence is a fragment. You can either change *making* to “they made” and have two sentences, or you can change *making* to “in order to make sure.” *In order to* is a subordinating conjunction, so it does not require a comma beforehand:
 - The research team has completely reorganized the workload. They made sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.
 - The research team has completely reorganized the workload in order to make sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.

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PARALLEL STRUCTURE

What exactly is parallel structure? It’s simply the practice of using the same structures or forms multiple times: making sure the parts are parallel to each other. Parallel structure can be applied to a single sentence, a paragraph, or even multiple paragraphs. Compare the two following sentences:

- Yara loves running, to swim, and biking.
- Yara loves running, swimming, and biking.

Was the second sentence easier to comprehend than the first? The second sentence uses parallelism—all three verbs are gerunds, whereas in the first sentence two are gerunds and one is an infinitive. While the first sentence is technically correct, it’s easy to trip up over the mismatching items. The application of parallelism improves writing style and readability, and it makes sentences easier to process.

Compare the following examples:

- Lacking parallelism: “She likes cooking, jogging, and *to read*.”
 - Parallel: “She likes cooking, jogging, and reading.”
 - Parallel: “She likes to cook, jog, and read.”
- Lacking parallelism: “He likes to swim and *running*.”
 - Parallel: “He likes to swim and to run.”
 - Parallel: “He likes swimming and running.”

Once again, the examples above combine gerunds and infinitives. To make them parallel, the sentences should be rewritten with just gerunds or just infinitives. Note that the first nonparallel example, while inelegantly worded, is grammatically correct: “cooking,” “jogging,” and “to read” are all grammatically valid conclusions to “She likes.”

- Lacking parallelism: “The dog ran across the yard, jumped over the fence, and *down the alley sprinted*.”

- Grammatical but not employing parallelism: “The dog ran across the yard and jumped over the fence, and **down the alley he sprinted.**”
- Parallel: “The dog ran across the yard, jumped over the fence, and **sprinted down the alley.**”

The nonparallel example above is *not* grammatically correct: “down the alley sprinted” is not a grammatically valid conclusion to “The dog.” The second example, which does not attempt to employ parallelism in its conclusion, is grammatically valid; “down the alley he sprinted” is an entirely separate clause.

Parallelism can also apply to names. If you’re writing a research paper that includes references to several different authors, you should be consistent in your references. For example, if you talk about Jane Goodall and Henry Harlow, you should say “Goodall and Harlow,” not “Jane and Harlow” or “Goodall and Henry.” This is something that would carry on through your entire paper: you should use the same mode of address for every person you mention.

You can also apply parallelism across a passage:

Manuel painted eight paintings in the last week. Jennifer sculpted five statues in the last month.
Zama wrote fifteen songs in the last two months.

Each of the sentences in the preceding paragraph has the same structure: Name + *-ed* verb + number of things + *in the* past time period. When using parallelism across multiple sentences, be sure that you’re using it well. If you aren’t careful, you can stray into being repetitive. Unfortunately, really the only way to test this is by re-reading the passage and seeing if it “feels right.” While this test doesn’t have any rules to it, it can often help.

Practice

Do the following sentences correctly employ parallelism? If not, revise the sentences in the text frame below.

1. Kya is really good at writing poems and making pottery. Atswei is a good singer and a good dancer.
2. Don’t forget to let the dog out or to feed the cats.
3. In this paper, we will reference the works of Walton and Sir John Cockcroft.
4. Whenever he drives, Reza pays attention to what he’s doing and is watching the drivers around him.

Answers

1. No. While the both sentences are internally parallel, they are not parallel with each other. Here are two possible revisions to improve parallelism:
 - Kya is really good at writing poems and making sculptures. Atswei is really good at singing and dancing.
 - Kya is a good poet and sculptor. Atswei is a good singer and a good dancer.
2. Yes. This sentence is parallel. The two phrases “to let the dog out” and “to feed the cats” are both infinitives.
3. No. While the sentence is grammatically correct, it is not parallel. The two following revisions are parallel versions of this sentence:
 - In this paper, we will reference the works of Dr. Ernest Walton and Sir John Cockcroft.
 - In this paper, we will reference the works of Walton and Cockcroft.
4. No. While the sentence is grammatically correct, it is not parallel. The two following revisions are parallel versions of this sentence:
 - Whenever he drives, Reza pays attention to what he’s doing and watches the drivers around him.

- Whenever he drives, Reza is paying attention to what he’s doing and watching the drivers around him.

Rhetoric and Parallelism

Parallelism can also involve repeated words or repeated phrases. These uses are part of “rhetoric” (a field that focuses on persuading readers) Here are a few examples of repetition:

- “**The inherent vice** of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; **the inherent virtue** of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.” —Winston Churchill
- “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall **pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe** to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” —John F. Kennedy
- “And that government **of the people, by the people, for the people**, shall not perish from the earth.” —Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*

When used this way, parallelism makes your writing or speaking much stronger. These repeated phrases seem to bind the work together and make it more powerful—and more inspiring. This use of parallelism can be especially useful in writing conclusions of academic papers or in persuasive writing.

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Parallelism

Read the following passage. Correct any errors in parallelism that you find. Remember, non-parallel things are typically grammatically correct, but making things parallel will improve your writing style. Type your correct answer in the text frame below:

“The Bone Wars” refers to a period of intense fossil speculation and discovery in American history (1872–1892). The wars were marked by a heated rivalry between Edward Drinker Cope and Othniel Charles Marsh. At one time, Edward and Marsh were amicable: they even named species after each other. Over time, however, their relationship soured, likely due in part to their strong personalities. Cope was known to be pugnacious and possessed a quick temper. Marsh was slower, more methodical, and introverted. Eventually, each of the two paleontologists would resort to underhanded methods to try to out-compete the other in the field, resorting to bribery, theft, and destroying bones.

By the end of the Bone Wars, both Cope and Marsh were financially and socially ruined by their attempts to disgrace each other, but their contributions to science and the field of paleontology were massive. Several of Cope’s and Marsh’s discoveries are the most well-known of dinosaurs: Triceratops, Allosaurus, Diplodocus, and Stegosaurus. Their cumulative discoveries defined the then-emerging field of paleontology. Before Cope’s and Marsh’s discoveries, there were only nine named species of dinosaur in North America. Judging by pure numbers, Marsh “won” the Bone Wars: Cope discovered a total of 56 new dinosaur species, but Marsh had found 80.

Answers

Here are the sentences that have issues with parallelism, as well as suggestions for their revision.

1. At one time, **Edward** and **Marsh** were amicable: they even named species after each other.
 - In this sentence, there is both a first name and a last name used to identify different people. Unless one person commonly goes by their last name while the other goes by their first, you should use first or last names; not a mix of the two: “Cope and Marsh were. . .”
2. Cope was known to **be pugnacious** and **possessed** a quick temper.
 - “Was known to be” and “possessed” are both past-tense verbs, but one is a perfect tense (known) while the other isn’t. To make the sentence more parallel, you would change it to something like “Cope was known to be pugnacious and to possess a quick temper” or “Cope was pugnacious and possessed a quick temper.”
3. Marsh was **slower**, **more methodical**, and **introverted**.
 - The first two adjectives are comparatives, while *introverted* is not. A more parallel version of the sentence would read: “Marsh was slower, more methodical, and more introverted.”
4. Eventually, each of the two paleontologists would resort to underhanded methods to try to out-compete the other in the field, resorting to **bribery**, **theft**, and **destroying** bones.
 - *Bribery* and *theft* are both nouns, while *destroying* is a gerund. Changing *destroying* to a noun will make the sentence more parallel: “bribery, theft, and the destruction of bones.”
5. Judging by pure numbers, Marsh “won” the Bone Wars: Cope **discovered** a total of 56 new dinosaur species, but Marsh **had found** 80.
 - Saying “Marsh discovered 80” instead of using *had found* is a better fit for parallel structure.

Academic Sentences

Look at the following items. Identify and address any issues with parallelism.

1. Low self-esteem can manifest itself in various behaviors. Some individuals may become paralyzed at the prospect of making a decision. Other individuals may bend their wills to others’ in order to keep the peace. Yet another symptom is the retreat from society as a whole—to become isolated.
2. The influence of genetics on human behavior has been shown through studies of twins who were separated at birth. Not only do these sets of individuals share many physical characteristics, but they also tend to have the same sort of interests and biases and utilize similar mental processes.
3. *Nocturne in Black and Gold (The Falling Rocket)* by James Abbott McNeil Whistler is very emblematic of the impressionist movement: its dark colors, contrast, and lack of definite form reflect the attitudes of the day.

Answers

1. The first two sentences that identify behaviors of low self-esteem both start with the construction adjective + *individuals* + *may* verb. Changing the third sentence to match this construction will create a stronger introduction to the paper:
 - Low self-esteem can manifest itself in various behaviors. Some individuals may become paralyzed at the prospect of making a decision. Other individuals may bend their wills to others’

in order to keep the peace. Yet other individuals may retreat from society as a whole and become isolated.

2. The ending clause “they also tend to have the same sort of interests and biases and utilize similar mental processes” could be more parallel (and more succinct) than it currently is. You could revise it to something like these:
 - they also tend to have the same sort of interests, biases, and mental processes
 - they also tend to have similar interests, biases, and mental processes

If you wanted to make the whole sentence more parallel, you may want to adjust the sentence to match the structure of the phrase “Not only do these sets of individuals share many physical characteristics”:

- Not only do these sets of individuals share many physical characteristics, but they also share similar interests, biases, and mental processes.
3. The items in “its dark colors, contrast, and lack of definite form” don’t quite match up. While they are all nouns, each item has a different structure (adjective noun, noun, noun + *of* + adjective noun). Here are a couple suggestions for more parallel items:
 - Its depth of color, intensity of contrast, and lack of form reflect the attitudes of the day.
 - Its dark colors, intense contrast, and lax forms reflect the attitudes of the day.

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ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Voice is a nebulous term in writing. It can refer to the general “feel” of the writing, or it can be used in a more technical sense. In this section, we will focus on the latter sense as we discuss active and passive voice.

You’ve probably heard of the passive voice—perhaps in a comment from an English teacher or in the grammar checker of a word processor. In both of these instances, you were (likely) guided away from the passive voice. Why is this the case? Why is the passive voice so hated? After all, it’s been used twice on this page already (three times now). When the passive voice is used too frequently, it can make your writing seem flat and drab. However, there are some instances where the passive voice is a better choice than the active.

So just what is the difference between these two voices? In the simplest terms, an active voice sentence is written in the form of “A does B.” (For example, “Carmen sings the song.”) A passive voice sentence is written in the form of “B is done by A.” (For example, “The song is sung by Carmen.”) Both constructions are grammatically sound and correct.

Let’s look at a couple more examples of the passive voice:

- I’ve been hit! (or, I have been hit!)
- Jasper was thrown from the car when it was struck from behind.

You may have noticed something unique about the previous two sentences: the subject of the sentence is not the person (or thing) performing the action. The passive voice “hides” who does the action. Despite these sentences being completely grammatically sound, we don’t know who hit “me” or what struck the car.

The passive is created using the verb *to be* (e.g., the song is sung; it was struck from behind). Remember that *to be* conjugates irregularly. Its forms include *am*, *are*, *is*, *was*, *were*, and *will be*, which we learned about earlier in the course.

Remember, *to be* also has more complex forms like *had been*, *is being*, and *was being*.

- Mirella **is being** pulled away from everything she loves.
- Pietro **had been** pushed; I knew it.
- Unfortunately, my car **was being** towed away by the time I got to it.

Because *to be* has other uses than just creating the passive voice, we need to be careful when we identify passive sentences. It's easy to mistake a sentence like "She was falling." or "He is short." for a passive sentence. However, in "She was falling," *was* simply indicates that the sentence takes place in the past. In "He is short," *is* is a linking verb. If there is no "real" action taking place, *is* is simply acting as a linking verb.

There are two key features that will help you identify a passive sentence:

1. Something is happening (the sentence has a verb that is not a linking verb).
2. The subject of the sentence is not doing that thing.

Usage

As you read at the two sentences below, think about the how the different voice may affect the meaning or implications of the sentence:

- **Passive voice:** The rate of evaporation is controlled by the size of an opening.
- **Active voice:** The size of an opening controls the rate of evaporation.

The passive choice slightly emphasizes "the rate of evaporation," while the active choice emphasizes "the size of an opening." Simple. So why all the fuss? Because passive constructions can produce grammatically tangled sentences such as this:

Groundwater flow is influenced by zones of fracture concentration, as can be recognized by the two model simulations (see Figures 1 and 2), by which one can see . . .

The sentence is becoming a burden for the reader, and probably for the writer too. As often happens, the passive voice here has smothered potential verbs and kicked off a runaway train of prepositions. But the reader's task gets much easier in the revised version below:

Two model simulations (Figures 1 and 2) illustrate how zones of fracture concentration influence groundwater flow. These simulations show . . .

To revise the above, all I did was look for the two buried things (simulations and zones) in the original version that could actually *do* something, and I made the sentence clearly about these two nouns by placing them in front of active verbs. This is the general principle to follow as you compose in the active voice: Place concrete nouns that can perform work in front of active verbs.

Practice

Are the following sentences in the active or passive voice?

1. Jayden drank more sodas than anyone else at the party.
2. The samples were prepared in a clean room before being sent out for further examination.
3. Karen was dancing with Joshua when she suddenly realized she needed to leave.
4. Carlos was a very serious scientist with unique interests.
5. When I returned to my room, my luggage had been stolen.

Answers

1. This sentence uses the active voice. **Jayden** does the action (**drank**) to the object (**more sodas**). If this sentence were written in the passive it would read “More sodas were drunk by Jayden than by anyone else at the party.”
2. This sentence uses the passive voice. The action (**prepared**) was done to the subject of the sentence (**samples**). If this sentence were written in the active it would be something like this: “[Actor] prepared the samples in a clean room before sending them out for further examination.” Since we do not know who prepared the samples, the active sentence is incomplete.
3. This sentence uses the active voice. In this case *was* indicates that the sentence happened in the past; it does not indicate the passive voice in this instance.
4. This sentence uses the active voice. In this case *was* is acting as a linking verb. It links **Carlos** with the phrase *very serious scientist*.
5. The introductory phrase to the sentence (When I returned to my room) is in the active voice. The second phrase (my luggage had been stolen) uses the passive voice.

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REVISING WEAK PASSIVE-VOICE SENTENCES

As we’ve mentioned, the passive voice can be a shifty operator—it can cover up its source, that is, who’s doing the acting, as this example shows:

- **Passive:** The papers **will be graded** according to the criteria stated in the syllabus.
 - *Graded by whom though?*
- **Active:** The teacher will grade the papers according to the criteria stated in the syllabus.

It’s this ability to cover the actor or agent of the sentence that makes the passive voice a favorite of people in authority—policemen, city officials, and, yes, teachers. At any rate, you can see how the passive voice can cause wordiness, indirectness, and comprehension problems.

Passive	Question	Active
Your figures have been reanalyzed in order to determine the coefficient of error. The results will be announced when the situation is judged appropriate.	Who analyzes, and who will announce?	We have reanalyzed your figures in order to determine the range of error. We will announce the results when the time is right.
With the price of housing at such inflated levels, those loans cannot be paid off in any shorter period of time.	Who can’t pay the loans off?	With the price of housing at such inflated levels, homeowners cannot pay off those loans in any shorter period of time.
After the arm of the hand-held stapler is pushed down, the blade from the magazine is raised by the top-leaf spring, and the magazine and base.	Who pushes it down, and who or what raises it?	After you push down on the arm of the hand-held stapler, the top-leaf spring raises the blade from the magazine, and the magazine and base move apart.
However, market share is being lost by 5.25-inch diskettes as is shown in the graph in Figure 2.	Who or what is losing market share,	However, 5.25-inch diskettes are losing market share as the graph in Figure 2 shows.

Passive	Question	Active
	who or what shows it?	
For many years, federal regulations concerning the use of wire-tapping have been ignored . Only recently have tighter restrictions been imposed on the circumstances that warrant it.	Who has ignored the regulations, and who is now imposing them?	For many years, government officials have ignored federal regulations concerning the use of wire-tapping. Only recently has the federal government imposed tighter restrictions on the circumstances that warrant it.

Practice

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active voice. Why is the active voice a better choice for each of these sentences?

1. The process, which was essential for the experiment's success, was completed by Enzo.
2. The cake that I worked on all day long is being eaten by Justin.
3. After the pattern has been applied to the fabric, work on the embroidery can be started.

Answers

1. Enzo completed the process, which was essential for the experiment's success.
 - In the passive sentence, the *which*-clause makes the subject of the sentence excessively long. By converting the sentence to the active voice, the clause is moved to the predicate, which makes the sentence easier to understand.
2. Justin is eating the cake that I worked on all day long.
 - The active voice works better in this sentence for the same reasons as sentence one. It is also likely that you would want to put emphasis on Justin in this sentence. After all, he's doing something that is (most likely) inconsiderate.
3. After you apply the pattern to the fabric, you can start working on the embroidery.
 - This sentence is likely found in a set of instructions, which are usually written directly to the reader. Addressing "you" and avoiding the passive voice will make the instructions feel more natural and accessible.

Don't get the idea that the passive voice is always wrong and should never be used. It is a good writing technique when we don't want to be bothered with an obvious or too-often-repeated subject and when we need to rearrange words in a sentence for emphasis. The next page will focus more on how and why to use the passive voice.

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USING THE PASSIVE VOICE

There are several different situations where the passive voice is more useful than the active voice.

- When you don't know who did the action: *The paper had been moved.*
 - The active voice would be something like this: "Someone had moved the paper." While this sentence is technically fine, the passive voice sentence has a more subtle element of mystery, which can be especially helpful in creating a mood in fiction.
- When you want to hide who did the action: *The window had been broken.*
 - The sentence is either hiding who broke the window or they do not know. Again, the sentence can be reformed to say "Someone had broken the window," but using the word *someone* clearly indicates that someone (though we may not know who) is at fault here. Using the passive puts the focus on the window rather than on the person who broke it, as he or she is completely left out of the sentence.
- When you want to emphasize the person or thing the action was done to: *Caroline was hurt when Kent broke up with her.*
 - We automatically focus on the subject of the sentence. If the sentence were to say "Kent hurt Caroline when he broke up with her," then our focus would be drawn to Kent rather than Caroline.
- A subject that can't actually *do* anything: *Caroline was hurt when she fell into the trees.*
 - While the trees hurt Caroline, they didn't actually do anything. Thus, it makes more sense to have Caroline as the subject rather than saying "The trees hurt Caroline when she fell into them."

Note: It's often against convention in scholarly writing to use *I*. While this may seem like a forced rule, it also stems from the fact that scholars want to emphasize the science or research as opposed to the author of the paper. This often results in the passive voice being the best choice. This is not the case in other formal settings, such as in resumes and in cover letters.

Practice

Consider the following instances. In each case, determine why the writers might want to use active or passive voice. Write an example sentence based on their circumstances.

1. Antonella made an error in her calculations that ruined an experiment. This error ended up costing both time and materials. She has to write a report to her boss. What might she say about the experiment?
2. Isabel is writing a supernatural thriller. Her main character, Liam, notices that his keys aren't where he left them. How might Isabel word this realization?
3. Thiago is writing a cover letter to apply for a new job. He is listing out tasks that he does at his current job. How would he want to word these items?

Answers

1. Antonella would likely want to write in the passive voice. Even if her boss knows she made the error, writing in the passive will draw attention away from that fact. She might say something like this:
 - An error was made that ended up costing time and resources. The experiment will have to be repeated with new materials.
2. Isabel could use either the passive or the active. It depends on the emphasis she wants. The passive voice subtly hints at a mysterious actor. The active voice blatantly states it:
 - Liam's keys had been moved when he wasn't looking.
 - Something—or someone—had moved Liam's keys when he wasn't looking.
3. Thiago would want to use the active voice. Since he's apply for a job, he would want to emphasize the fact that he is accomplishing the tasks: the fact that he's doing them is more important than the simple fact that the things were done. He might write something like the following:
 - I currently work as a teaching assistant for a linguistics professor. I organize her mail, flagging important items so she knows what needs immediate attention; I aid her in her research, finding interesting articles and studies; and I often help her students when her attention is needed elsewhere.

Using the Passive

Now that we know there are some instances where passive voice is the best choice, how do we use the passive voice to it fullest? The answer lies in writing direct sentences—in passive voice—that have simple subjects and verbs. Compare the two sentences below:

- Photomicrographs were taken to facilitate easy comparison of the samples.
- Easy comparison of the samples was facilitated by the taking of photomicrographs.

Both sentences are written in the passive voice, but for most ears the first sentence is more direct and understandable, and therefore preferable. Depending on the context, it does a clearer job of telling us what was done and why it was done. Especially if this sentence appears in the “Experimental” section of a report (and thus readers already know that the authors of the report took the photomicrographs), the first sentence neatly represents what the authors actually did—took photomicrographs—and why they did it—to facilitate easy comparison.

Practice

Read the following sentences. Are they using the passive effectively? If there are any errors, rewrite the sentences accordingly.

1. The machine needs to be reset at 10:23, 11:12, and 11:56 every night.
2. The final steps, which need to be finished before the sun sets over the mountains, are going to be completed by Kajuna.
3. The difficult task of measuring minute fluctuations in weight was made easier by the use of a new digital scale.

Answers

1. Yes. In this case, it doesn't matter who accomplishes the action; it simply needs to be done. If this sentence appears in an academic article, the passive may be even more appropriate, as that style often demands the actor be left out of the sentence.
2. No. This would be better in the active voice. There are a lot of different parts to the sentence, and by converting the sentence to the active voice, they come in a more logical order that is easier to understand:
 - Kajuana is going to complete the final steps, which need to be finished before the sun sets over the mountains.
3. No. This passive construction is very convoluted. An active sentence would serve well here:
 - A new digital scale made it easier to measure minute fluctuations in weight.

As we mentioned in [Participles](#), the passive voice can also be used following relative pronouns like *that* and *which*.

- I moved into the house **that was built** for me.
- Adrián's dog loves the treats **that are given** to him.
- Brihanna has an album **that was signed** by the Beastie Boys.

In each of these sentences, it is grammatically sound to omit (or *elide*) the pronoun and *to be*. Elision is used with a lot of different constructions in English; we use it shorten sentences when things are understood. However, we can only use elision in certain situations, so be careful when removing words! You may find these elided sentences more natural:

- I moved into the house **built** for me.
- Adrián's dog loves the treats **given** to him.
- Brihanna has an album **signed** by the Beastie Boys

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PRACTICE ACTIVITIES: ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Passive to Active

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active voice:

1. Alana's toes were crushed by the garage door.
2. The passive voice has likely been heard of by you.
3. Rebeca's favorite spot in the lecture hall had been taken by the time she got to class.
4. When the passive voice is overused, you often end up with flat writing.

Answers

1. The garage door crushed Alana's toes.
2. You've likely heard of the passive voice.
3. Because there's a descriptive phrase, there are a few options when revising this sentence:
 - Someone had taken Rebeca's favorite spot in the lecture hall by the time she got to class.
 - By the time Rebeca got to class, someone had taken her favorite spot in the lecture hall.
4. When you overuse the passive voice, you often end up with flat writing.

Active or Passive

Read the following sentences. Are they using the passive effectively? Or should they be rewritten as active sentences?

1. Maren was hit by several branches as she slid down the hill.
2. A lot of discussion about whether technology is hurting or helping our ability to communicate has been inspired by this increase in technology.
3. Listeners are encouraged by the lyrics to cast aside their fear and be themselves.

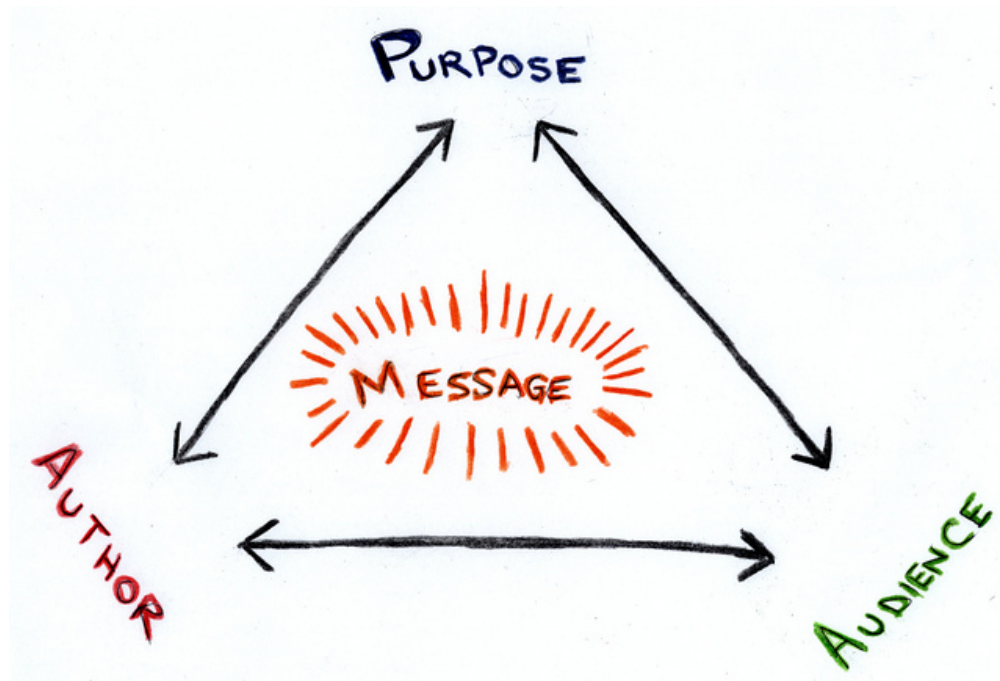
Answers

1. Yes, this sentence uses the passive effectively. Since the subject of this sentence—*several branches*—can't actually do anything, it's best to put the emphasis on *Maren*, the person the actions were done to.
2. This sentence does not use the passive well. The passive voice has made the sentence a lot more complicated than it needs to be. The active would read something like this:
 - This increase of technology has inspired a lot of discussion about whether technology is hurting or helping our ability to communicate.
3. Either voice could be appropriate here. If you want to focus on the listeners, the passive voice is correct. If you want to focus on the lyrics, the sentence should be changed to the active voice.
 - **Passive:** Listeners are encouraged by the lyrics to cast aside their fear and be themselves.
 - **Active:** The lyrics encourage listeners to cast aside their fear and be themselves.

MODULE 5: WRITING PROCESS

RHETORICAL CONTEXT

Any piece of writing is shaped by external factors before the first word is ever set down on the page. These factors are referred to as the **rhetorical situation**, or **rhetorical context**, and are often presented in the form of a pyramid.



The three key factors—purpose, author, and audience—all work together to influence what the text itself says, and how it says it. Let's examine each of the three in more detail.

Purpose

Any time you are preparing to write, you should first ask yourself, “Why am I writing?” All writing, no matter the type, has a purpose. Purpose will sometimes be given to you (by a teacher, for example), while other times, you will decide for yourself. As the author, it's up to you to make sure that purpose is clear not only for yourself, but also—especially—for your audience. If your purpose is not clear, your audience is not likely to receive your intended message.

There are, of course, many different reasons to write (e.g., to inform, to entertain, to persuade, to ask questions), and you may find that some writing has more than one purpose. When this happens, be sure to consider any conflict between purposes, and remember that you will usually focus on one main purpose as primary.

Bottom line: Thinking about your purpose before you begin to write can help you create a more effective piece of writing.

Why Purpose Matters

- If you've ever listened to a lecture or read an essay and wondered "so what" or "what is this person talking about," then you know how frustrating it can be when an author's purpose is not clear. By clearly defining your purpose before you begin writing, it's less likely you'll be that author who leaves the audience wondering.
- If readers can't identify the purpose in a text, they usually quit reading. You can't deliver a message to an audience who quits reading.
- If a teacher can't identify the purpose in your text, they will likely assume you didn't understand the assignment and, chances are, you won't receive a good grade.

Useful Questions

Consider how the answers to the following questions may affect your writing:

- What is my primary purpose for writing? How do I want my audience to think, feel, or respond after they read my writing?
- Do my audience's expectations affect my purpose? Should they?
- How can I best get my point across (e.g., tell a story, argue, cite other sources)?
- Do I have any secondary or tertiary purposes? Do any of these purposes conflict with one another or with my primary purpose?

Audience

In order for your writing to be maximally effective, you have to think about the audience you're writing for and adapt your writing approach to their needs, expectations, backgrounds, and interests. Being aware of your audience helps you make better decisions about what to say and how to say it. For example, you have a better idea if you will need to define or explain any terms, and you can make a more conscious effort not to say or do anything that would offend your audience.

Sometimes you know who will read your writing – for example, if you are writing an email to your boss. Other times you will have to guess who is likely to read your writing – for example, if you are writing a newspaper editorial. You will often write with a primary audience in mind, but there may be secondary and tertiary audiences to consider as well.

What to Think About

When analyzing your audience, consider these points. Doing this should make it easier to create a profile of your audience, which can help guide your writing choices.

Background-knowledge or Experience — In general, you don't want to merely repeat what your audience already knows about the topic you're writing about; you want to build on it. On the other hand, you don't want to talk over their heads. Anticipate their amount of previous knowledge or experience based on elements like their age, profession, or level of education.

Expectations and Interests — Your audience may expect to find specific points or writing approaches, especially if you are writing for a teacher or a boss. Consider not only what they *do* want to read about, but also what they *do not* want to read about.

Attitudes and Biases — Your audience may have predetermined feelings about you or your topic, which can affect how hard you have to work to win them over or appeal to them. The audience's attitudes and biases also affect their expectations – for example, if they expect to disagree with you, they will likely look for evidence that you have considered their side as well as your own.

Demographics — Consider what else you know about your audience, such as their age, gender, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, political preferences, religious affiliations, job or professional background, and area of residence. Think about how these demographics may affect how much background your audience has about your topic, what types of expectations or interests they have, and what attitudes or biases they may have.

Applying Your Analysis to Your Writing

Here are some general rules about writing, each followed by an explanation of how audience might affect it. Consider how you might adapt these guidelines to your specific situation and audience. (Note: This is not an exhaustive list. Furthermore, you need not follow the order set up here, and you likely will not address all of these approaches.)((Note: (Rules adapted from David McMurrey's online text, *Power Tools for Technical Communication*)))

Add information readers need to understand your document / omit information readers don't need. Part of your audience may know a lot about your topic, while others don't know much at all. When this happens, you have to decide if you should provide explanation or not. If you don't offer explanation, you risk alienating or confusing those who lack the information. If you offer explanation, you create more work for yourself and you risk boring those who already know the information, which may negatively affect the larger view those readers have of you and your work. In the end, you may want to consider how many people need an explanation, whether those people are in your primary audience (rather than a secondary audience), how much time you have to complete your writing, and any length limitations placed on you.

Change the level of the information you currently have. Even if you have the right information, you might be explaining it in a way that doesn't make sense to your audience. For example, you wouldn't want to use highly advanced or technical vocabulary in a document for first-grade students or even in a document for a general audience, such as the audience of a daily newspaper, because most likely some (or even all) of the audience wouldn't understand you.

Add examples to help readers understand. Sometimes just changing the level of information you have isn't enough to get your point across, so you might try adding an example. If you are trying to explain a complex or abstract issue to an audience with a low education level, you might offer a metaphor or an analogy to something they are more familiar with to help them understand. Or, if you are writing for an audience that disagrees with your stance, you might offer examples that create common ground and/or help them see your perspective.

Change the level of your examples. Once you've decided to include examples, you should make sure you aren't offering examples your audience finds unacceptable or confusing. For example, some teachers find personal stories unacceptable in academic writing, so you might use a metaphor instead.

Change the organization of your information. Again, you might have the correct information, but you might be presenting it in a confusing or illogical order. If you are writing a paper about physics for a physics professor who has his or her PhD, chances are you won't need to begin your paper with a lot of background. However, you probably would want to include background information in the beginning of your paper if you were writing for a fellow student in an introductory physics class.

Strengthen transitions. You might make decisions about transitions based on your audience's expectations. For example, most teachers expect to find topic sentences, which serve as transitions between paragraphs. In a shorter piece of writing such as a memo to co-workers, however, you would probably be less concerned with topic sentences and more concerned with transition words. In general, if you feel your readers may have a hard time making connections, providing transition words (e.g., "therefore" or "on the other hand") can help lead them.

Write stronger introductions – both for the whole document and for major sections. In general, readers like to get the big picture up front. You can offer this in your introduction and thesis statement, or in smaller introductions to major sections within your document. However, you should also consider how much time your audience will have to read your document. If you are writing for a boss who already works long hours and has little or no free time, you wouldn't want to write an introduction that rambles on for two and a half pages before getting into the information your boss is looking for.

Create topic sentences for paragraphs and paragraph groups. A topic sentence (the first sentence of a paragraph) functions much the same way an introduction does – it offers readers a preview of what’s coming and how that information relates to the overall document or your overall purpose. As mentioned earlier, some readers will expect topic sentences. However, even if your audience isn’t expecting them, topic sentences can make it easier for readers to skim your document while still getting the main idea and the connections between smaller ideas.

Change sentence style and length. Using the same types and lengths of sentences can become boring after awhile. If you already worry that your audience may lose interest in your issue, you might want to work on varying the types of sentences you use.

Use graphics, or use different graphics. Graphics can be another way to help your audience visualize an abstract or complex topic. Sometimes a graphic might be more effective than a metaphor or step-by-step explanation. Graphics may also be an effective choice if you know your audience is going to skim your writing quickly; a graphic can be used to draw the reader’s eye to information you want to highlight. However, keep in mind that some audiences may see graphics as inappropriate.

Author

The final unique aspect of anything written down is who it is, exactly, that does the writing. In some sense, this is the part you have the most control over—it’s you who’s writing, after all! You can harness the aspects of yourself that will make the text most effective to its audience, for its purpose.

Analyzing yourself as an author allows you to make explicit why your audience should pay attention to what you have to say, and why they should listen to you on the particular subject at hand.

Questions for Consideration

- What personal motivations do you have for writing about this topic?
- What background knowledge do you have on this subject matter?
- What personal experiences directly relate to this subject? How do those personal experiences influence your perspectives on the issue?
- What formal training or professional experience do you have related to this subject?
- What skills do you have as a communicator? How can you harness those in this project?
- What should audience members know about you, in order to trust what you have to tell them? How will you convey that in your writing?

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HOW TO WRITE A THESIS STATEMENT

Whether you are writing a short essay or a doctoral dissertation, your thesis statement will arguably be the most difficult sentence to formulate. An effective thesis statement states the purpose of the paper and, therefore, functions to control, assert and structure your entire argument. Without a sound thesis, your argument may sound weak, lacking in direction, and uninteresting to the reader.

Start with a question — then make the answer your thesis

Regardless of how complicated the subject is, almost any thesis can be constructed by answering a question.

- **Question:** “What are the benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade classroom?”
 - **Thesis:** “Computers allow fourth graders an early advantage in technological and scientific education.”
- **Question:** “Why is the Mississippi River so important in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*?”
 - **Thesis:** “The river comes to symbolize both division and progress, as it separates our characters and country while still providing the best chance for Huck and Jim to get to know one another.”
- **Question:** “Why do people seem to get angry at vegans, feminists, and other ‘morally righteous’ subgroups?”
 - **Thesis:** “Through careful sociological study, we’ve found that people naturally assume that ‘morally righteous’ people look down on them as ‘inferior,’ causing anger and conflict where there generally is none.”



Tailor your thesis to the type of paper you’re writing

Not all essays persuade, and not all essays teach. The goals of your paper will help you find the best thesis.

- **Analytical:** Breaks down something to better examine and understand it.
 - Ex. “This dynamic between different generations sparks much of the play’s tension, as age becomes a motive for the violence and unrest that rocks King Lear.”
- **Expository:** Teaches or illuminates a point.
 - Ex. “The explosion of 1800’s philosophies like Positivism, Marxism, and Darwinism undermined and refuted Christianity to instead focus on the real, tangible world.”
- **Argumentative:** Makes a claim, or backs up an opinion, to change other peoples’ minds.
 - Ex. “Without the steady hand and specific decisions of Barack Obama, America would never have recovered from the hole it entered in the early 2000’s.”

Ensure your thesis is provable

Do not come up with your thesis and then look it up later. The thesis is the end point of your research, not the beginning. You need to use a thesis you can actually back up with evidence.

Good Theses Examples:

- “By owning up to the impossible contradictions, embracing them and questioning them, Blake forges his own faith, and is stronger for it. Ultimately, the only way for his poems to have faith is to temporarily lose it.”
- “According to its well-documented beliefs and philosophies, an existential society with no notion of either past or future cannot help but become stagnant.”



- “By reading “Ode to a Nightingale” through a modern deconstructionist lens, we can see how Keats viewed poetry as shifting and subjective, not some rigid form.”

Bad Theses Examples:

- “The wrong people won the American Revolution.” While striking and unique, who is “right” and who is “wrong” is exceptionally hard to prove, and very subjective.
- “The theory of genetic inheritance is the binding theory of every human interaction.” Too complicated and overzealous. The scope of “every human interaction” is just too big
- “Paul Harding’s novel *Tinkers* is ultimately a cry for help from a clearly depressed author.” Unless you interviewed Harding extensively, or had a lot of real-life sources, you have no way of proving what is fact and what is fiction.”

Get the sound right

You want your thesis statement to be identifiable as a thesis statement. You do this by taking a very particular tone and using specific kinds of phrasing and words. Use words like “because” and language which is firm and definitive.

Example thesis statements with good statement language include:

- “Because of William the Conqueror’s campaign into England, that nation developed the strength and culture it would need to eventually build the British Empire.”
- “Hemingway significantly changed literature by normalizing simplistic writing and frank tone.”



Know where to place a thesis statement

Because of the role thesis statements play, they appear at the beginning of the paper, usually at the end of the first paragraph or somewhere in the introduction. Although most people look for the thesis at the end of the first paragraph, its location can depend on a number of factors such as how lengthy of an introduction you need before you can introduce your thesis or the length of your paper.

Limit a thesis statement to one or two sentences in length

Thesis statements are clear and to the point, which helps the reader identify the topic and direction of the paper, as well as your position towards the subject.

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THE PERFECT PARAGRAPH

As Michael Harvey writes, paragraphs are “in essence—a form of punctuation, and like other forms of punctuation they are meant to make written material easy to read.” (Note: Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College*

Writing, Second Edition (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2013), 70.) Effective paragraphs are the fundamental units of academic writing; consequently, the thoughtful, multifaceted arguments that your professors expect depend on them. Without good paragraphs, you simply cannot clearly convey sequential points and their relationships to one another.

Many novice writers tend to make a sharp distinction between content and style, thinking that a paper can be strong in one and weak in the other, but focusing on organization shows how content and style converge in deliberative academic writing. Your professors will view even the most elegant prose as rambling and tedious if there isn't a careful, coherent argument to give the text meaning. Paragraphs are the "stuff" of academic writing and, thus, worth our attention here.

Key Sentences (a.k.a. Topic Sentences)

In academic writing, readers expect each paragraph to have a sentence or two that captures its main point. They're often called "topic sentences," though many writing instructors prefer to call them "key sentences." There are at least two downsides of the phrase "topic sentence." First, it makes it seem like the paramount job of that sentence is simply to announce the topic of the paragraph. Second, it makes it seem like the topic sentence must always be a single grammatical sentence. Calling it a "key sentence" reminds us that it expresses the central *idea* of the paragraph. And sometimes a question or a two-sentence construction functions as the key.



Key sentences in academic writing do two things. First, they establish the main point that the rest of the paragraph supports. Second, they situate each paragraph within the sequence of the argument, a task that requires transitioning from the prior paragraph. Consider these two examples: (Note: Etiology is the cause of a disease—what's actually happening in cells and tissues—while epidemiology is the incidence of a disease in a population.)

Version A:

Now we turn to the epidemiological evidence.

Version B:

The epidemiological evidence provides compelling support for the hypothesis emerging from etiological studies.

Both versions convey a topic; it's pretty easy to predict that the paragraph will be about epidemiological evidence, but only the second version establishes an argumentative point and puts it in context. The paragraph doesn't just describe the epidemiological evidence; it shows how epidemiology is telling the same story as etiology. Similarly, while Version A doesn't relate to anything in particular, Version B immediately suggests that the prior paragraph addresses the biological pathway (i.e. etiology) of a disease and that the new paragraph will bolster the emerging hypothesis with a different kind of evidence. As a reader, it's easy to keep track of how the paragraph about cells and chemicals and such relates to the paragraph about populations in different places.

A last thing to note about key sentences is that academic readers expect them to be at the beginning of the paragraph. (The first sentence this paragraph is a good example of this in action!) This placement helps readers comprehend your argument. To see how, try this: find an academic piece (such as a textbook or scholarly article) that strikes you as well written and go through part of it reading just the first sentence of each paragraph. You should be able to easily follow the sequence of logic. When you're writing for professors, it is especially effective to put your key sentences first because they usually convey your own original thinking. It's a very good sign when your paragraphs are typically composed of a telling key sentence followed by evidence and explanation.

Knowing this convention of academic writing can help you both read and write more effectively. When you're reading a complicated academic piece for the first time, you might want to go through reading only the first

sentence or two of each paragraph to get the overall outline of the argument. Then you can go back and read all of it with a clearer picture of how each of the details fit in. And when you're writing, you may also find it useful to write the first sentence of each paragraph (instead of a topic-based outline) to map out a thorough argument before getting immersed in sentence-level wordsmithing.

Cohesion and Coherence

With a key sentence established, the next task is to shape the body of your paragraph to be both cohesive and coherent. As Williams and Bizup (Note: Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2014), 68. Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2014), 68.)) explain, cohesion is about the "sense of flow" (how each sentence fits with the next), while coherence is about the "sense of the whole." (Note: Ibid., 71.)

For the most part, a text reads smoothly when it conveys a thoughtful and well organized argument or analysis. Focus first and most on your ideas, on crafting an ambitious analysis. The most useful guides advise you to first focus on getting your ideas on paper and then revising for organization and word choice later, refining the analysis as you go. Thus, consider the advice here as if you already have some rough text written and are in the process of smoothing out your prose to clarify your argument for both your reader and yourself.

Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the flow from sentence to sentence. For example, compare these passages:

Version A:

Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. If an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other, according to balance theory (1973:1363). (Note: The quote uses a version of an ASA-style in-text citation for Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360-80.) Bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties, Granovetter argues (1973:1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. If two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. Only weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends" can connect people in different cliques.

Version B:

Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. In brief, balance theory tells us that if an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other (1973:1363). Granovetter argues that because of this, bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties (1973:1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. This is because if two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. The only way, therefore, that people in different cliques can be connected is through weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends." (Note: Guiffre. *Communities and Networks*, 98.)

Version A has the exact same information as version B, but it is harder to read because it is less cohesive. Each sentence in version B begins with old information and bridges to new information.

The first sentence establishes the key idea of balance theory. The next sentence begins with balance theory and ends with social ties, which is the focus of the third sentence. The concept of weak ties connects the third and fourth sentences and concept of cliques the fifth and sixth sentences. In Version A, in contrast, the first sentence focuses on balance theory, but then the second sentence makes a new point about social ties *before* telling the reader that the point comes from balance theory. The reader has to take in a lot of unfamiliar information before learning how it fits in with familiar concepts. Version A is coherent, but the lack of cohesion makes it tedious to read.



The lesson is this: if you or others perceive a passage you've written to be awkward or choppy, even though the topic is consistent, try rewriting it to ensure that each sentence begins with a familiar term or concept. If your points don't naturally daisy-chain together like the examples given here, consider numbering them. For example, you may choose to write, "Proponents of the legislation point to four major benefits." Then you could discuss four loosely related ideas without leaving your reader wondering how they relate.

Coherence

While cohesion is about the sense of flow, coherence is about the sense of the whole. For example, here's a passage that is cohesive (from sentence to sentence) but lacks coherence:

Your social networks and your location within them shape the kinds and amount of information that you have access to. Information is distinct from data, in that makes some kind of generalization about a person, thing, or population. Defensible generalizations about society can be either probabilities (i.e., statistics) or patterns (often from qualitative analysis). Such probabilities and patterns can be temporal, spatial, or simultaneous.

Each sentence in the above passage starts with a familiar idea and progresses to a new one, but it lacks coherence—a sense of being about one thing. Good writers often write passages like that when they're free-writing or using the drafting stage to cast a wide net for ideas. A writer weighing the power and limits of social network analysis may free-write something like that example and, from there, develop a more specific plan for summarizing key insights about social networks and then discussing them with reference to the core tenets of social science. As a draft, an incoherent paragraph often points to a productive line of reasoning; one just has to continue thinking it through in order to identify a clear argumentative purpose for each paragraph. With its purpose defined, each paragraph, then, becomes a lot easier to write. Coherent paragraphs aren't just about style; they are a sign of a thoughtful, well developed analysis.



The Wind-Up

Some guides advise you to end each paragraph with a specific concluding sentence, in a sense, to treat each paragraph as a kind of mini-essay. But that's not a widely held convention. Most well written academic pieces don't adhere to that structure. The last sentence of the paragraph should certainly be in your own words (as in, not a quote), but as long as the paragraph succeeds in carrying out the task that it has been assigned by its key sentence, you don't need to worry about whether that last sentence has an air of conclusiveness. For example, consider these paragraphs about the cold fusion controversy of the 1980s that appeared in a best-selling textbook: (Note: Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch, *The Golem: What You Should Know About Science* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Canto, 1998), 58.)

The experiment seemed straightforward and there were plenty of scientists willing to try it. Many did. It was wonderful to have a simple laboratory experiment on fusion to try after the decades of embarrassing attempts to control hot fusion. This effort required multi-billion dollar machines whose every success seemed to be capped with an unanticipated failure. ‘Cold fusion’ seemed to provide, as Martin Fleischmann said during the course of that famous Utah press conference, ‘another route’—the route of little science.

In that example, the first and last sentences in the paragraph are somewhat symmetrical: the authors introduce the idea of accessible science, contrast it with big science, and bring it back to the phrase “little science.” Here’s an example from the same chapter of the same book that does not have any particular symmetry: ((Note: Ibid., 74.))

The struggle between proponents and critics in a scientific controversy is always a struggle for credibility. When scientists make claims which are literally ‘incredible’, as in the cold fusion case, they face an uphill struggle. The problem Pons and Fleischmann had to overcome was that they had credibility as electrochemists but not as nuclear physicists. And it was nuclear physics where their work was likely to have its main impact.

The last sentence of the paragraph doesn’t mirror the first, but the paragraph still works just fine. In general, every sentence of academic writing should add some unique content. Don’t trouble yourself with having the last sentence in every paragraph serve as a mini-conclusion. Instead, worry about developing each point sufficiently and making your logical sequence clear.

Conclusion: Paragraphs as Punctuation

To reiterate the initial point, it is useful to think of paragraphs as punctuation that organize your ideas in a readable way. Each paragraph should be an irreplaceable node within a coherent sequence of logic. Thinking of paragraphs as “building blocks” evokes the “five-paragraph theme” structure explained earlier: if you have identical stone blocks, it hardly matters what order they’re in. In the successful organically structured college paper, the structure and tone of each paragraph reflects its indispensable role within the overall piece. Make every bit count and have each part situated within the whole.

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INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

A key piece of advice many writers either do not ever get or don’t believe is that **it’s not necessary to write introductions first or to write conclusions last**. Just because the introduction appears first and the conclusion appears last doesn’t mean they have to be written that way. Here’s a really tired metaphor to help explain: just because you walk into a building through the door doesn’t mean the door was built first. The foundation went in first, even though you rarely if ever see that part. And lots of imperfections in the foundation and the walls were covered up before you even moved in, so you can’t see those either unless you look closely.

Introductions

Even though a nearly infinite number of topics and arrangements is possible in English prose, introductions generally follow one of several patterns. If you’re writing a children’s story, you’d probably start with “once upon a

time” or something similar. If you’re writing a research article in biomechanical engineering, you’d probably start with a statement about how previous research has examined the problem of loading soldiers with daypacks on various surfaces, including sand, concrete, and railroad ballast. These examples are poles apart, but their introductions share very similar purposes: they orient their imagined readers to the topic, time, and place.

In working toward the overall goal of orienting readers, introductions may

- Provide background about a topic.
- Locate readers in a specific time and/or place.
- Start with a compelling quotation or statistic—something concrete.
- Include an ethical appeal, with which you (explicitly or implicitly) show that you’ve done your homework and are credible.
- Articulate a main claim/thesis.
- Lay out the stakes for the piece of writing—that is, why the reader should bother reading on.

The following video addresses how to do several of these things, starting with the very first sentence of your introduction.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/Rkefst9D6n0>

Conclusions

Conclusions usually

- Summarize the argument (especially in longer pieces of writing)
- “Bookend” a story that started in the introduction
- Include an emotional appeal, with which you (explicitly or implicitly) connect the “logic” of the argument to a more passionate reason intended to sway the reader
- Issue a call to action

Ideally, a conclusion will work in tandem with an introduction, having some kind of “call back” element to remind your reader of the powerful opening you provided. Additional advice for conclusions is found in the following video.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/2L7aeO9fBzE>

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HIGHER ORDER CONCERNS FOR EDITING

Introduction

Regardless of writers’ levels of experience or areas of expertise, many struggle with revision, a component of the writing process that encompasses everything from transformative changes in content and argumentation to minor corrections in grammar and punctuation. Perhaps because revision involves so many forms of modification, it is the focus of most scientific writing guides and handbooks. Revision can be daunting; how does one progress from initial drafts (called “rough drafts” for good reason) to a polished piece of scholarly writing?

Developing a process for revision can help writers produce thoughtful, polished texts and grow their written communication skills. Consider, then, a systematic approach to revision, including strategies to employ at every step of the process.

A System for Approaching Revision

Generally, revision should be approached in a top-down manner by addressing **higher-order concerns (HOCs)** before moving on to **lower-order concerns (LOCs)**. In writing studies, the term “higher order” is used to denote major or global issues such as thesis, argumentation, and organization, whereas “lower order” is used to denote minor or local issues such as grammar and mechanics. (Note: McAndrew DA, Regstad TJ. *Tutoring writing: a practical guide for conferences*. Portsmouth (NH): Boynton/Cook; 2001.) The more analytical work of revising HOCs often has ramifications for the entire piece. Perhaps in refining the argument, a writer will realize that the discussion section does not fully consider the study’s implications. Or, a writer will try a new organizational scheme and find that a paragraph no longer fits and should be cut. Such revisions may have far-reaching implications for the text.

Dedicating time to tweaking wording or correcting grammatical errors is unproductive if the sentence will be changed or deleted. Focusing on HOCs before LOCs allows writers to revise more effectively and efficiently.

Revision Strategies

Bearing in mind the general system of revising from HOCs to LOCs, you can employ several revision strategies.

- **Begin by evaluating how your argument addresses your rhetorical situation**—that is, the specific context surrounding your writing, including the audience, exigence, and constraints. (Note: Bitzer L. "The rhetorical situation." *Philos Rhetoric* 1968; 1 (1): 1-14.)
 - For example, you may write an article describing a new treatment. If the target journal's audience comes from a variety of disciplines, you may need to include substantial background explanation, consider the implications for practitioners and scholars in multiple fields, and define technical terms. By contrast, if you are addressing a highly specialized audience, you may be able to dispense with many of the background explanations and definitions because of your shared knowledge base. You may consider the implications only for specialists, as they are your primary audience. Because this sort of revision affects the entire text, beginning by analyzing your rhetorical situation is effective.
- **Analyze your thesis or main argument for clarity.**
- **Evaluate the global organization of your text by writing a reverse outline.** Unlike traditional outlines, which are written before drafting, reverse outlines reflect the content of written drafts.
 - In a separate document or in your text's margins, record the main idea of each paragraph. Then, consider whether the order of your ideas is logical. This method also will help you identify ideas that are out of place or digressive. You may also evaluate organization by printing the text and cutting it up so that each paragraph appears on a separate piece of paper. You may then easily reorder the paragraphs to test different organizational schemes.

Completing a Post-Draft Outline

The reverse outline mentioned above is also known as a **post-draft outline**. Guidance for how to complete one for an entire essay draft, as well as for an individual problematic paragraph, are found in this presentation.

Watch this presentation online: <https://prezi.com/embed/ilic1tcomvne/>



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LOWER ORDER CONCERNS FOR PROOFREADING

Previously we examined higher order concerns (HOCs) as part of the revision stage of the writing process. Once we move to the proofreading stage, it's time to consider the lower order concerns (LOCs). The difference is simple: HOCs are global issues, or issues that affect how a reader understands the entire paper; LOCs are issues that don't *necessarily* interrupt understanding of the writing by themselves.

HOCs	LOCs
Audience	Grammar
Thesis statement	Punctuation
Organization	Citation
Focus	Spelling
Development of ideas	Sentence structure

You may find yourself thinking, “Well, it depends,” or, “But what if...?” You’re absolutely right to think so. These lists are just guidelines; every writer will have a different hierarchy of concerns. Always try to think in terms of, “Does this affect my understanding of the writing?”

Are HOCs More Important than LOCs?

No, not necessarily. HOCs tend to interrupt a reader’s understanding of the writing, and that’s why they need to be addressed first. However, if a LOC becomes a major obstacle, then it naturally becomes a higher priority.

Think of an example of how a Lower Order Concern could become a Higher Order Concern.

Here are some other issues you might face. These may be more difficult to categorize, and they may largely depend on the writing. If you think, “It depends,” make notes about the circumstances under which these issues could be a HOC or a LOC.

- Evaluating sources
- citation method
- style
- paragraph structure
- active vs. passive voice
- format

How to Address LOCs

Analyze your use of source material. Check any paraphrases and quotations against the original texts. Quotations should replicate the original author's words, while paraphrases should maintain the original author's meaning but have altered language and sentence structures. For each source, confirm that you have adhered to the preferred style guide for the target journal or other venue.

Consider individual sentences in terms of grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. Many LOCs can be revised by isolating and examining different elements of the text. Read the text sentence by sentence, considering the grammar and sentence structure. Remember, a sentence may be

grammatically correct and still confuse readers. If you notice a pattern—say, a tendency to misplace modifiers or add unnecessary commas—read the paper looking only for that error. Read the document backwards, word for word, looking for spelling errors. Throughout the writing process and especially at this stage of revision, keep a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a writing handbook nearby.

Strategies such as reading aloud and seeking feedback are useful at all points in the revision process. Reading aloud will give you distance from the text and prevent you from skimming over what is actually written on the page. This strategy will help you to identify both HOCs, such as missing concepts, and LOCs, such as typos. Additionally, seeking feedback will allow you to test your ideas and writing on real readers. Seek feedback from readers both inside and outside of your target audience in order to gain different perspectives.



Proofreading Advice

The following video features two student tutors from the Writing and Reading Center at Fresno City College. In addition to great guidance about proofreading strategies, they also offer insights about what to expect when working with Writing Center tutors.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/STa5W4gm2qY>

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SPELLING

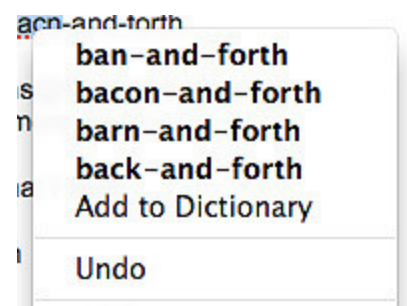
Word-processing programs usually have a spell-checker, but you should still carefully check for correct changes in your words. This is because automatic spell-checkers may not always understand the **context** of a word.

Misspelling a word might seem like a minor mistake, but it can reflect very poorly on a writer. It suggests one of two things: either the writer does not care enough about his work to proofread it, or he does not know his topic

well enough to properly spell words related to it. Either way, spelling errors will make a reader less likely to trust a writer's authority.

The best way to ensure that a paper has no spelling errors is to look for them during the proofreading stage of the writing process. Being familiar with the most common errors will help you find (and fix) them during the writing and proofreading stage.

Sometimes, a writer just doesn't know how to spell the word she wants to use. This may be because the word is technical jargon or comes from a language other than her own. Other times, it may be a proper name that she has not encountered before. Anytime you want to use a word but are unsure of how to spell it, do not guess. Instead, check a dictionary or other reference work to find its proper spelling.



Common Spelling Errors

Phonetic Errors

Phonetics is a field that studies the sounds of a language. However, English phonetics can be tricky: In English, the pronunciation of a word does not always relate to the way it is spelled. This can make spelling a challenge. Here are some common phonetic irregularities:

- A word can sound like it could be spelled multiple ways. For example: "concede" and "conceed" are the same phonetically, but only "concede" is the proper spelling.
- A word has silent letters that the writer may forget to include. You cannot hear the "a" in "realize," but you need it to spell the word correctly.
- A word has double letters that the writer may forget to include. "Accommodate," for example, is frequently misspelled as "acommodate" or "accomodate."
- The writer may use double letters when they are not needed. The word "amend" has only one "m," but it is commonly misspelled with two.

Sometimes, words just aren't spelled the way they sound. "Right," for example, does not resemble its phonetic spelling whatsoever. Try to become familiar with words that have unusual or non-phonetic spellings so you can be on the lookout for them in your writing. But again, the best way to avoid these misspellings is to consult a dictionary whenever you're unsure of the correct spelling.

Homophones

"Bread" and "bred" sound the same, but they are spelled differently, and they mean completely different things. Two words with different meanings but the same pronunciation are homophones. If you don't know which homophone is the right one to use, look both up in the dictionary to see which meaning (and spelling) you want. Common homophones include:

- right, rite, wright, and write
- read (most tenses of the verb) and reed
- read (past, past participle) and red
- rose (flower) and rose (past tense of rise)
- carat, caret, and carrot
- to, two, and too
- there, their, and they're
- its and it's

Typographical Errors

Some spelling errors are caused by the writer accidentally typing the wrong thing. Common typos include:

- Omitting letters from a word (typing "brthday" instead of "birthday," for example)

- Adding extra letters (typing “birthday”)
- Transposing two letters in a word (typing “brithday”)
- Spacing words improperly (such as “myb irthday” instead of “my birthday”)

Being aware of these common mistakes when writing will help you avoid spelling errors.

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REVISING WITH STYLE IN MIND



A writer’s style is what sets his or her writing apart. Style is the way writing is dressed up (or down) to fit the specific context, purpose, or audience. Word choice, sentence fluency, and the writer’s voice — all contribute to the style of a piece of writing. How a writer chooses words and structures sentences to achieve a certain effect is also an element of style. When Thomas Paine wrote “These are the times that try men’s souls,” he arranged his words to convey a sense of urgency and desperation. Had he written “These are bad times,” it’s likely he wouldn’t have made such an impact!

Style is usually considered to be the province of literary writers. Novelists such as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner and poets such as Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are well known for their distinctive literary styles. But journalists, scientists, historians, and mathematicians also have distinctive styles, and they need to know how to vary their styles to fit different audiences. For example, the first-person narrative style of a popular magazine like *National Geographic* is quite different from the objective, third-person expository style of a research journal like *Scientific American*, even though both are written for informational purposes.

Not just right and wrong

Style is not a matter of right and wrong but of what is appropriate for a particular setting and audience. Consider the following two passages, which were written by the same author on the same topic with the same main idea, yet have very different styles:

“Experiments show that *Heliconius* butterflies are less likely to oviposit on host plants that possess eggs or egg-like structures. These egg mimics are an unambiguous example of a plant trait evolved in response to a host-restricted group of insect herbivores.”

“*Heliconius* butterflies lay their eggs on *Passiflora* vines. In defense the vines seem to have evolved fake eggs that make it look to the butterflies as if eggs have already been laid on them.” (Example from Myers, G. (1992). *Writing biology: Texts in the social construction of scientific knowledge*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. p. 150.)

What changed was the audience. The first passage was written for a professional journal read by other biologists, so the style is authoritative and impersonal, using technical terminology suited to a professional audience. The second passage, written for a popular science magazine, uses a more dramatic style, setting up a conflict between the butterflies and the vines, and using familiar words to help readers from non-scientific backgrounds visualize the scientific concept being described. Each style is appropriate for the particular audience.

Elements of style

Many elements of writing contribute to an author's style, but three of the most important are word choice, sentence fluency, and voice.

Word Choice

relationship failure having failed me in the past but it won't stop me from my things I description and I talking **Inspiration** discover other strategies, but it can also be used to be the most exciting practice world and an individual has attention to this things and sh

Good writers are concise and precise, weeding out unnecessary words and choosing the exact word to convey meaning. Precise words—active verbs, concrete nouns, specific adjectives—help the reader visualize the sentence. Good writers use adjectives sparingly and adverbs rarely, letting their nouns and verbs do the work.

Good writers also choose words that contribute to the flow of a sentence. Polysyllabic words, alliteration, and consonance can be used to create sentences that roll off the tongue. Onomatopoeia and short, staccato words can be used to break up the rhythm of a sentence.

Sentence Fluency

different lengths and rhythms to achieve different effects. They use parallel structures within sentences and paragraphs to reflect parallel ideas, but also know how to avoid monotony by varying their sentence structures.

Sentence fluency is the flow and rhythm of phrases and sentences. Good writers use a variety of sentences with

Good writers also arrange their ideas within a sentence for greatest effect. They avoid loose sentences, deleting extraneous words and rearranging their ideas for effect. Many students initially write with a looser oral style, adding words on to the end of a sentence in the order they come to mind. This rambling style is often described as a “word dump” where everything in a student's mind is dumped onto the paper in no particular order. There is nothing wrong with a word dump as a starting point: the advantage of writing over speaking is that writers can return to their words, rethink them, and revise them for effect. Tighter, more readable style results when writers choose their words carefully, delete redundancies, make vague words more specific, and use subordinate clauses and phrases to rearrange their ideas for the greatest effect.

Voice

Because voice is difficult to measure reliably, it is often left out of scoring formulas for writing tests. Yet voice is an essential element of style that reveals the writer's personality. A writer's voice can be impersonal or chatty, authoritative or reflective, objective or passionate, serious or funny.

Strategies to Revise for Style

Read an essay draft out loud, preferably to another person. Better yet, have another person read your draft to you. Note how that person interprets your words. Does it come across as you had meant it originally? If not, revise.

Adopt a persona that's related to your topic. Write from the perspective of this person you create: what language would a young woman who'd just spent two years in the peace corps use, for instance, if the essay were about the value of volunteer work? How would the words on the page of a project about gun control look coming from the perspective of a very conservative gun owner?

Combine (some) short sentences, or break apart (some) long sentences. Sentence length variety is an asset to your readers, as noted above. If you find a stretch of your essay that uses many sentences of approximately the same length close together, focus on combining or breaking apart there.

Punch up the word choice. Not every word in an essay can be a “special” word, nor should they be. But if your writing in an area feels a little flat, the injection of a livelier word can have strong rhetorical and emotional impact on your reader. Think of these words as jewels in the right setting. Often swapping out “to be” verbs (is, was, were, etc.) with more action-packed verbs has immediate, positive impact. Adjectives are also good candidates for updating—look for “things” and “stuff,” or “very” and “many,” to replace with more precise terminology.

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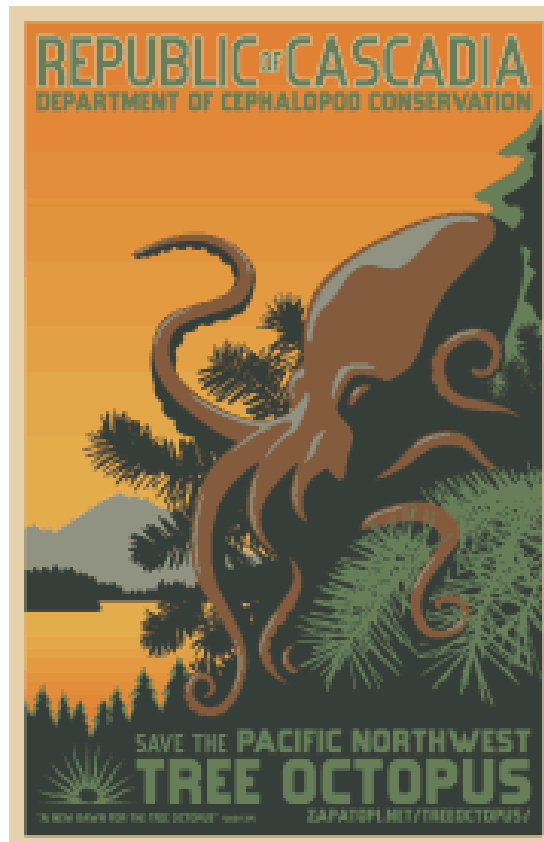
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MODULE 6: RESEARCH

WHY IS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

The Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus



A few years ago a little-known animal species suddenly made headlines. The charming but elusive Tree Octopus became the focal point of internet scrutiny.

If you've never heard of the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus, take a few minutes to learn more about it [on this website, devoted to saving the endangered species](#).

You can also watch this brief video for more about the creatures:

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/SU-yq_IJhtU

Source Reliability

If you're starting to get the feeling that something's not quite right here, you're on the right track. The Tree Octopus website is a hoax, although a beautifully done one. There is no such creature, unfortunately.

Many of us feel that “digital natives”—people who have grown up using the internet—are naturally web-savvy. However, a 2011 U.S. Department of Education study that used the Tree Octopus website as a focal point revealed that students who encountered this website completely fell for it. According to an NBC news story by Scott Beaulieu, “In fact, not only did the students believe that the tree octopus was real, they actually refused to believe researchers when they told them the creature was fake.” (Note: <http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/An-Octopus-in-a-Tree-Seems-Real-115497484.html>))

While this is a relatively harmless example of a joke website, it helps to demonstrate that anyone can say anything they want on the internet. A good-looking website can be very convincing, regardless of what it says. The more you research, the more you'll see that sometimes the least-professional-looking websites offer the most credible information, and the most-professional-looking websites can be full of biased, misleading, or outright wrong information.

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to resource reliability. Each new source has to be evaluated on its own merit, and this module will offer you a set of tools to help you do just that.

USING SOURCES IN RESEARCH

In this module, you'll learn about tips and techniques to enable you to find, analyze, integrate, and document sources in your research.



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PRELIMINARY RESEARCH STRATEGIES

THE RESEARCH PROCESS



The first step towards writing a research paper is pretty obvious: find sources. Not everything that you find will be good, and those that are good are not always easily found. Having an idea of what you're looking for—what will most help you develop your essay and enforce your thesis—will help guide your process.

Example of a Research Process

A good research process should go through these steps:

1. Decide on the topic.
2. Narrow the topic in order to narrow search parameters.
3. Create a question that your research will address.
4. Generate sub-questions from your main question.
5. Determine what kind of sources are best for your argument.
6. Create a bibliography as you gather and reference sources.

Each of these is described in greater detail below.

Preliminary Research Strategies

A research plan should begin after you can clearly identify the focus of your argument. First, inform yourself about the basics of your topic (Wikipedia and general online searches are great starting points). Be sure you've read all the assigned texts and carefully read the prompt as you gather preliminary information. This stage is sometimes called **pre-research**.

A broad online search will yield thousands of sources, which no one could be expected to read through. To make it easier on yourself, the next step is to narrow your focus. Think about what kind of position or

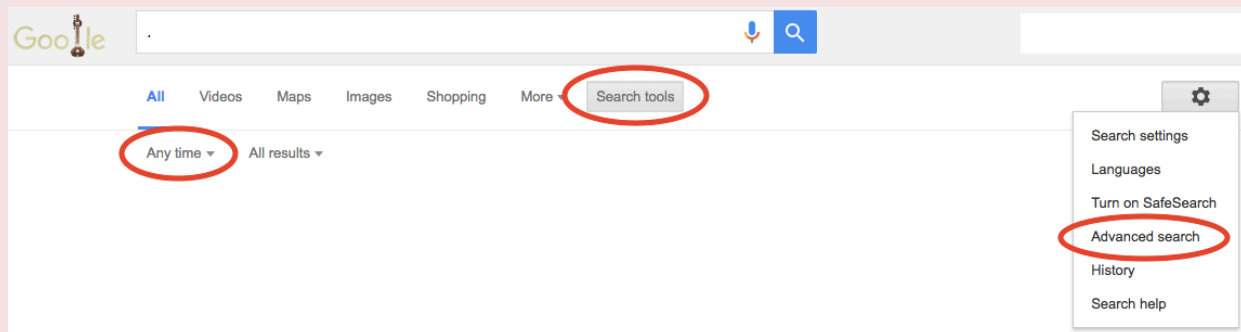


Books, books, books ...Do not start research haphazardly—come up with a plan first.

stance you can take on the topic. What about it strikes you as most interesting? Refer back to the prewriting stage of the writing process, which will come in handy here.

Preliminary Search Tips

1. It is okay to start with [Wikipedia](#) as a reference, but do not use it as an official source. Look at the links and references at the bottom of the page for more ideas.
2. Use “Ctrl+F” to find certain words within a webpage in order to jump to the sections of the article that interest you.
3. Use [Google Advanced Search](#) to be more specific in your search. You can also use tricks to be more specific within the main [Google Search Engine](#):
 1. Use quotation marks to narrow your search from just tanks in WWII to “Tanks in WWII” or “Tanks” in “WWII”.
 2. Find specific types of websites by adding “site:.gov” or “site:.edu” or “site:.org”. You can also search for specific file types like “filetype:.pdf”.
4. Click on “Search Tools” under the search bar in Google and select “Any time” to see a list of options for time periods to help limit your search. You can find information just in the past month or year, or even for a custom range.



Use features already available through Google Search like Search Tools and Advanced Search to narrow and refine your results.

As you narrow your focus, create a list of questions that you’ll need to answer in order to write a good essay on the topic. The research process will help you answer these questions.

Another part of your research plan should include the type of sources you want to gather. Keep track of these sources in a bibliography and jot down notes about the book, article, or document and how it will be useful to your essay. This will save you a lot of time later in the essay process—you’ll thank yourself!

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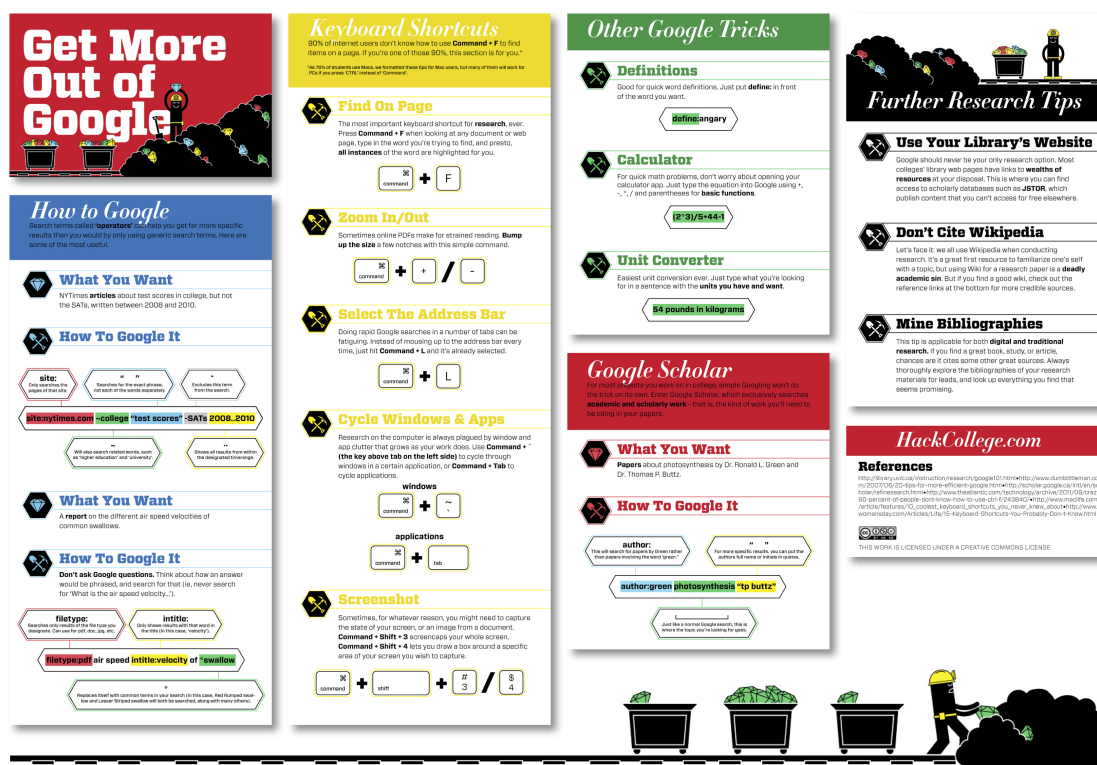
LEVEL UP YOUR GOOGLE GAME

10 Google Quick Tips

We all know how to Google...but we may not be getting as much out of it as we'd like. The following video walks through ten easy tips for getting you closer to what you're looking for.

Getting More Out of Google

For a visual representation of additional online search tips, click the image below.



Click on this Infographic to open it and learn tricks for getting more out of Google.

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INTERMEDIATE RESEARCH STRATEGIES

“Popular” vs. “Scholarly” Sources

Research-based writing assignments in college will often require that you use **scholarly sources** in the essay. Different from the types of articles found in newspapers or general-interest magazines, scholarly sources have a few distinguishing characteristics.

	Popular Source	Scholarly Source
Intended Audience	Broad: readers are not expected to know much about the topic already	Narrow: readers are expected to be familiar with the topic before-hand
Author	Journalist: may have a broad area of specialization (war correspondent, media critic)	Subject Matter Expert: often has a degree in the subject and/or extensive experience on the topic
Research	Includes quotes from interviews. No bibliography.	Includes summaries, paraphrases, and quotations from previous writing done on the subject. Footnotes and citations. Ends with bibliography.
Publication Standards	Article is reviewed by editor and proofreader	Article has gone through a peer-review process, where experts on the field have given input before publication

Where to Find Scholarly Sources

The first step in finding scholarly resources is to look in the right place. Sites like Google, Yahoo, and Wikipedia may be good for popular sources, but if you want something you can cite in a scholarly paper, you need to find it from a scholarly database.

Two common scholarly databases are **Academic Search Premier** and **ProQuest**, though many others are also available that focus on specific topics. Your school library pays to subscribe to these databases, to make them available for you to use as a student.

You have another incredible resource at your fingertips: your college’s librarians! For help locating resources, you will find that librarians are extremely knowledgeable and may help you uncover sources you would never have found on your own—maybe your school has a microfilm collection, an extensive genealogy database, or access to another library’s catalog. You will not know unless you utilize the valuable skills available to you, so be sure to find out how to get in touch with a research librarian for support!

FIND

- Begin with background research
- Narrow the search terms
- Look for scholarly information
- Search libraries and databases

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GOOGLE SCHOLAR

An increasingly popular article database is [Google Scholar](#). It looks like a regular Google search, and it aims to include the vast majority of scholarly resources available. While it has some limitations (like not including a list of which journals they include), it's a very useful tool if you want to cast a wide net.

Here are three tips for using Google Scholar effectively:

1. **Add your topic field (economics, psychology, French, etc.) as one of your keywords.** If you just put in “crime,” for example, Google Scholar will return all sorts of stuff from sociology, psychology, geography, and history. If your paper is on crime in French literature, your best sources may be buried under thousands of papers from other disciplines. A set of search terms like “crime French literature modern” will get you to relevant sources much faster.
2. **Don't ever pay for an article.** When you click on links to articles in Google Scholar, you may end up on a publisher's site that tells you that you can download the article for \$20 or \$30. Don't do it! You probably have access to virtually all the published academic literature through your library resources. Write down the key information (authors' names, title, journal title, volume, issue number, year, page numbers) and go find the article through your library website. If you don't have immediate full-text access, you may be able to get it through inter-library loan.
3. **Use the “cited by” feature.** If you get one great hit on Google Scholar, you can quickly see a list of other papers that cited it. For example, the search terms “crime economics” yielded this hit for a 1988 paper that appeared in a journal called *Kyklos*:

The **economics** of crime deterrence: a survey of theory and evidence

S Cameron - *Kyklos*, 1988 - Wiley Online Library

Since BECKER [1968] economists have generated a large literature on **crime**. Deterrence effects have figured prominently; few papers [eg HOCH, 1974] omit consideration of these. There are two reasons why a survey of the **economics** of deterrence is timely. Firstly, there ...

[Cited by 392](#) [Related articles](#) [All 5 versions](#) [Cite](#) [Save](#)

Google Scholar search results.

Using Google Scholar

Watch this video to get a better idea of how to utilize Google Scholar for finding articles. While this video shows specifics for setting up an account with Eastern Michigan University, the same principles apply to other colleges and universities. Ask your librarian if you have more questions.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/oqnjhjISHFk>

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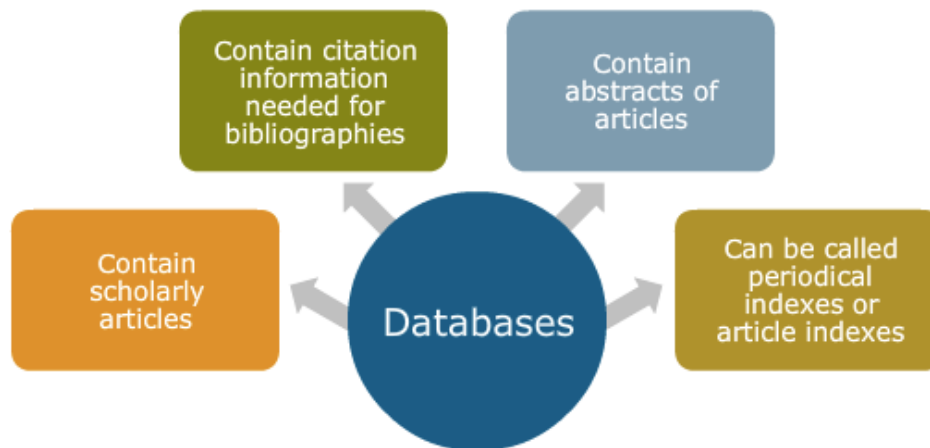
ADVANCED SEARCH STRATEGIES

As we learned earlier, the strongest articles to support your academic writing projects will come from scholarly sources. Finding exactly what you need becomes specialized at this point, and requires a new set of searching strategies beyond even Google Scholar.

For this kind of research, you'll want to utilize library databases, as this video explains.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/phUqd8nlO5Q>

Many journals are sponsored by academic associations. Most of your professors belong to some big, general one (such as the [Modern Language Association](#), the [American Psychological Association](#), or the [American Physical Society](#)) and one or more smaller ones organized around particular areas of interest and expertise (such as the [Association for the Study of Food and Society](#) and the [International Association for Statistical Computing](#)).



Finding articles in databases

Your campus library invests a lot of time and care into making sure you have access to the sources you need for your writing projects. Many libraries have online research guides that point you to the best databases for the specific discipline and, perhaps, the specific course. Librarians are eager to help you succeed with your research—it's their job and they love it!—so don't be shy about asking.

The following video demonstrates how to search within a library database. While the examples are specific to Northern Virginia Community College, the same general search tips apply to nearly all academic databases. On your school's library homepage, you should be able to find a general search button and an alphabetized list of databases. Get familiar with your own school's library homepage to identify the general search features, find databases, and practice searching for specific articles.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/phUqd8nlO5Q>

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HOW TO SEARCH IN A LIBRARY DATABASE

Scholarly databases like the ones your library subscribes to work differently than search engines like Google and Yahoo because they offer sophisticated tools and techniques for searching that can improve your results.

Databases may look different but they can all be used in similar ways. Most databases can be searched using **keywords** or **fields**. In a keyword search, you want to search for the main concepts or synonyms of your keywords. A field is a specific part of a record in a database. Common fields that can be searched are author, title, subject, or abstract. If you already know the author of a specific article, entering their “Last Name, First Name” in the author field will pull more relevant records than a keyword search. This will ensure all results are articles written by the author and not articles about that author or with that author’s name. For example, a keyword search for “Albert Einstein” will search anywhere in the record for Albert Einstein and reveal 12, 719 results. Instead, a field search for Author: “Einstein, Albert” will show 54 results, all written by Albert Einstein.

Learn More

[This short video](#) demonstrates how to perform a title search within the popular EBSCO database, *Academic Search Complete*.

Practice: Keyword Search

1. Identify the keywords in the following research question: “How does repeated pesticide use in agriculture impact soil and groundwater pollution?”

Answers

Pesticide, agriculture, soil, groundwater, pollution. You want to focus on the main idea and can ignore common words that don’t have any meaning.

2. When you search, it’s helpful to think of synonyms for your keywords to examine various results. What synonyms can you think of for the keywords identified in the question above?

Answers

Pesticide: agrochemicals, pest management, weed management, diazinan, malathion. **Agriculture:** farming, food crops, specific types of crops. **Soil:** earth, clay, organic components. **Groundwater:** watershed, water resources, water table, aquatics, rivers, lakes. **Pollution:** environmental impact, degradation, exposure, acid rain

Sometimes you already have a citation (maybe you found it on Google Scholar or saw it linked through another source), but want to find the article. Everything you need to locate your article is already found in the citation.



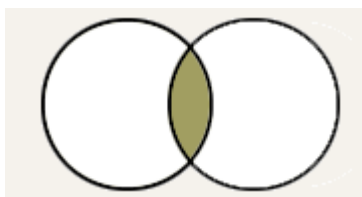
CC-BY-NC-SA image from [UCI Libraries Begin Research Online Workshop Tutorial](#).

Many databases, including the library catalog, offer tools to help you narrow or expand your search. Take advantage of these. The most common tools are Boolean searching and truncation.

Boolean Searching

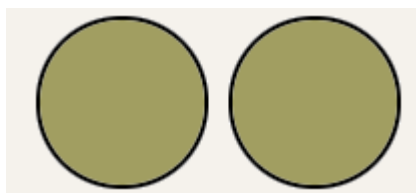
Boolean searching allows you to use AND, OR, and NOT to combine your search terms. Here are some examples:

1. **“Endangered Species” AND “Global Warming”** When you combine search terms with AND, you’ll get results in which BOTH terms are present. Using AND limits the number of results because all search terms must appear in your results.



“Endangered Species” AND “Global Warming” will narrow your search results to where the two concepts overlap.

2. **“Arizona Prisons” OR “Rhode Island Prisons”** When you use OR, you’ll get results with EITHER search term. Using OR increases the number of results because either search term can appear in your results.



“Arizona Prisons” OR “Rhode Island Prisons” will increase your search results.

3. **“Miami Dolphins” NOT “Football”** When you use NOT, you’ll get results that exclude a search term. Using NOT limits the number of results.



*“Miami Dolphins” NOT
“Football” removes the
white circle (football)
from the green search
results (Miami
Dolphins).*

Truncation

Truncation allows you to search different forms of the same word at the same time. Use the root of a word and add an asterisk (*) as a substitute for the word’s ending. It can save time and increase your search to include related words. For example, a search for “Psycho*” would pull results on psychology, psychological, psychologist, psychosis, and psychoanalyst.

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PRIMARY, SECONDARY, AND TERTIARY SOURCES

When searching for information on a topic, it is important to understand the value of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

Primary sources allow researchers to get as close as possible to original ideas, events, and empirical research as possible. Such sources may include creative works, first hand or contemporary accounts of events, and the publication of the results of empirical observations or research.

Secondary sources analyze, review, or summarize information in primary resources or other secondary resources. Even sources presenting facts or descriptions about events are secondary unless they are based on direct participation or observation. Moreover, secondary sources often rely on other secondary sources and standard disciplinary methods to reach results, and they provide the principle sources of analysis about primary sources.

Tertiary sources provide overviews of topics by synthesizing information gathered from other resources. Tertiary resources often provide data in a convenient form or provide information with context by which to interpret it.

The distinctions between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources can be ambiguous. An individual document may be a primary source in one context and a secondary source in another. Encyclopedias are typically considered tertiary sources, but a study of how encyclopedias have changed on the Internet would use them as primary sources. Time is a defining element.

While these definitions are clear, the lines begin to blur in the different discipline areas.

In the Humanities & Social Sciences

In the humanities and social sciences, primary sources are the direct evidence or first-hand accounts of events without secondary analysis or interpretation. A primary source is a work that was created or written contemporary with the period or subject being studied. Secondary sources analyze or interpret historical events or creative works.

Primary sources

- Diaries
- Interviews
- Letters
- Original works of art
- Photographs
- Speeches
- Works of literature

A **primary source** is an *original* document containing firsthand information about a topic. Different fields of study may use different types of primary sources.

Secondary sources

- Biographies
- Dissertations
- Indexes, abstracts, bibliographies (used to locate a secondary source)
- Journal articles
- Monographs

A **secondary source** contains commentary on or discussion about a primary source. The most important feature of secondary sources is that they offer an *interpretation* of information gathered from primary sources.

Tertiary sources

- Dictionaries
- Encyclopedias
- Handbooks

A **tertiary source** presents summaries or condensed versions of materials, usually with references back to the primary and/or secondary sources. They can be a good place to look up facts or get a general overview of a subject, but they rarely contain original material.

Examples

Subject	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Art	Painting	Critical review of the painting	Encyclopedia article on the artist
History	Civil War diary	Book on a Civil War Battle	List of battle sites
Literature	Novel or poem	Essay about themes in the work	Biography of the author
Political science	Geneva Convention	Article about prisoners of war	Chronology of treaties

In the Sciences

In the sciences, primary sources are documents that provide full description of the original research. For example, a primary source would be a journal article where scientists describe their research on the genetics of tobacco plants. A secondary source would be an article commenting or analyzing the scientists' research on tobacco.

Primary sources

- Conference proceedings
- Interviews
- Journals
- Lab notebooks
- Patents
- Preprints
- Technical reports
- Theses and dissertations

These are where the results of original research are usually first published in the sciences. This makes them the best source of information on cutting edge topics. However the new ideas presented may not be fully refined or validated yet.

Secondary sources

- Monographs
- Reviews
- Textbooks
- Treatises

These tend to summarize the existing state of knowledge in a field at the time of publication. Secondary sources are good to find comparisons of different ideas and theories and to see how they may have changed over time.

Tertiary sources

- Compilations
- Dictionaries
- Encyclopedias
- Handbooks
- Tables

These types of sources present condensed material, generally with references back to the primary and/or secondary literature. They can be a good place to look up data or to get an overview of a subject, but they rarely contain original material.

Examples

Subjects	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Agriculture	Conference paper on tobacco genetics	Review article on the current state of tobacco research	Encyclopedia article on tobacco
Chemistry	Chemical patent	Book on chemical reactions	Table of related reactions
Physics	Einstein's diary	Biography on Einstein	Dictionary of relativity

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EVALUATING SOURCES

You will need to evaluate each source you consider using by asking two questions:

- Is this source trustworthy?
- Is this source suitable?

Not every suitable source is trustworthy, and not every trustworthy source is suitable.

Determining Suitability

Your task as a researcher is to determine the appropriateness of the information your source contains, for your particular research project. It is a simple question, really: will this source help me answer the research questions that I am posing in my project? Will it help me learn as much as I can about my topic? Will it help me write an interesting, convincing essay for my readers?

Determining Trustworthiness

Click through the slideshow to read about techniques for analyzing sources and differentiating between popular and scholarly sources.

Watch this presentation online: <https://docs.google.com/a/lumenlearning.com/presentation/d/1ltJqsbFj7KK9sic0DxZmr3uBMqjchADkH8jZuXAjW1U/>

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TOOLS FOR EVALUATING SOURCES

Need a good way to evaluate a source? Take a look at its “craap”!

The C.R.A.A.P. method is a way to determine the validity and relevance of a source. C.R.A.A.P. stands for

- **C:** Currency. When was the information published?
- **R:** Relevance. How relevant to your goals is the information?
- **A:** Authority. How well does the author of the information know the information?
- **A:** Accuracy. How reliable is the information?
- **P:** Purpose. Why does this information exist in this way?

If the source you're looking at is fairly current, relevant, and accurate, it's probably a good source to use. Depending on the aim of your paper, you'll be looking for an authority and purpose that are unbiased and informative.

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/_M1-aMCJHFg

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USING SOURCES IN YOUR PAPER

Within the pages of your research essay, it is important to properly reference and cite your sources to avoid plagiarism and to give credit for original ideas.

There are three main ways to put a source to use in your essay: you can quote it, you can summarize it, and you can paraphrase it.

Quoting



Direct quotations are words and phrases that are taken directly from another source, and then used word-for-word in your paper. If you incorporate a direct quotation from another author's text, you must put that quotation or phrase in quotation marks to indicate that it is not your language.

When writing direct quotations, you can use the source author's name in the same sentence as the quotation to introduce the quoted text and to indicate the source in which you found the text. You should then include the page number or other relevant information in parentheses at the end of the phrase (the exact format will depend on the formatting style of your essay).

Summarizing

Summarizing involves condensing the main idea of a source into a much shorter overview. A summary outlines a source's most important points and general position. When summarizing a source, it is still necessary to use a citation to give credit to the original author. You must reference the author or source in the appropriate citation method at the end of the summary.

Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing, you may put any part of a source (such as a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or chapter) into your own words. You may find that the original source uses language that is more clear, concise, or specific than your own language, in which case you should use a direct quotation, putting quotation marks around those unique words or phrases you don't change.

It is common to use a mixture of paraphrased text and quoted words or phrases, as long as the direct quotations are inside of quotation marks.

Providing Context for Your Sources

Whether you use a direct quotation, a summary, or a paraphrase, it is important to distinguish the original source from your ideas, and to explain how the cited source fits into your argument. While the use of quotation marks or parenthetical citations tells your reader that these are not your own words or ideas, you should follow the quote with a description, in your own terms, of what the quote says and why it is relevant to the purpose of your paper. You should not let quoted or paraphrased text stand alone in your paper, but rather, should integrate the sources into your argument by providing context and explanations about how each source supports your argument. (Note: [Smith, Matt. "Putting It All Together: Thesis Synthesis." Web log post. Walden University Writing Center, 12 Apr. 2013. Web. 04 Apr. 2016.](#)))



Sources that are not properly integrated into your paper are like "bricks without mortar: you have the essential substance, but there's nothing to hold it together, rendering the whole thing formless" (Smith).

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USING MULTIPLE SOURCES

Sources are a great help for understanding a topic more deeply. But what about when sources don't quite agree with one another, or challenge what you have experienced yourself?

This is where your skill of **synthesis** comes into play, as a writer. Synthesizing includes comparison and contrast, but also allows you to combine multiple perspectives on a topic to reach a deeper understanding.

This video explains the process of synthesis in action.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/7dEGoJdb6O0>

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ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty or **academic misconduct** is any type of cheating that occurs in relation to a formal academic exercise. It can include

- **Plagiarism:** The adoption or reproduction of original creations of another author (person, collective, organization, community or other type of author, including anonymous authors) without due acknowledgment.
- **Fabrication:** The falsification of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise.
- **Deception:** Providing false information to an instructor concerning a formal academic exercise—e.g., giving a false excuse for missing a deadline or falsely claiming to have submitted work.
- **Cheating:** Any attempt to obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise (like an examination) without due acknowledgment.
- **Bribery** or paid services: Giving assignment answers or test answers for money.
- **Sabotage:** Acting to prevent others from completing their work. This includes cutting pages out of library books or willfully disrupting the experiments of others.
- **Professorial misconduct:** Professorial acts that are academically fraudulent equate to academic fraud and/or grade fraud.
- **Impersonation:** assuming a student's identity with intent to provide an advantage for the student.

Watch this video to deepen your understanding about the importance of practicing academic honesty.

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/JylxFnk7btU>

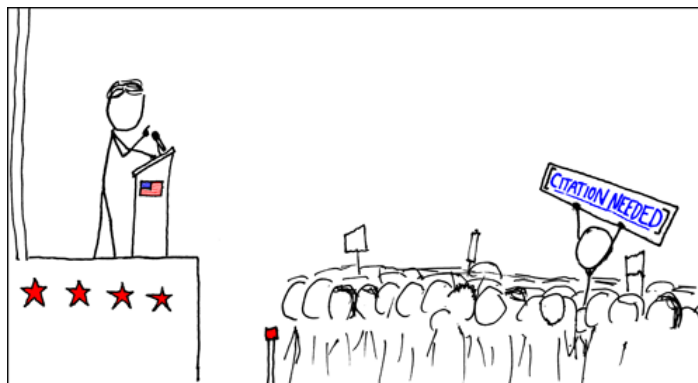
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DEFINING PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or uncredited use of the writings or ideas of another in your writing. While it might not be as tangible as auto theft or burglary, plagiarism is still a form of theft.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- Turning in someone else's paper as your own
- Using the exact words of a source without quotation marks and/or a citation
- Taking an image, chart, or statistic from a source without telling where it originated
- Copying and pasting material from the internet without quotation marks and/or a citation
- Including another person's idea without crediting the author



In the academic world, plagiarism is a serious matter because ideas in the forms of research, creative work, and original thought are highly valued. Chances are, your school has strict rules about what happens when someone

is caught plagiarizing. The penalty for plagiarism is severe, everything from a failing grade for the plagiarized work, a failing grade for the class, or expulsion from the institution.

You might not be aware that plagiarism can take several different forms. The most well known, **intentional or purposeful plagiarism**, is handing in an essay written by someone else and representing it as your own, copying your essay word for word from a magazine or journal, or downloading an essay from the Internet.

A much more common and less understood phenomenon is **unintentional or accidental plagiarism**. Accidental plagiarism is the result of improperly paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, or citing your evidence in your academic writing. Generally, writers accidentally plagiarize because they simply don't know or they fail to follow the rules for giving credit to the ideas of others in their writing.

Both intentional and unintentional plagiarism are wrong, against the rules, and can result in harsh punishments. Ignoring or not knowing the rules of how to not plagiarize and properly cite evidence might be an *explanation*, but it is not an excuse.

A GENERAL GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING WRITTEN PLAGIARISM



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AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

How to Avoid Plagiarizing

Tip #1: Make Sure You Are Very Certain about What Is and is Not Plagiarism

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/t5dRz6ZEKj8>

Tip #2: Give Yourself Plenty of Time to Complete an Assignment

Running out of time on an assignment is a main cause of plagiarism. Rushing to meet a deadline can result in carelessness (leading to unintentional plagiarism – see the next tip) and the desire to find a quick, easy solution such as copying someone else's work. Don't give in to that temptation! Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and the chance of being caught (which is likely) is not worth it.

Avoid this situation entirely by starting your assignment far ahead of time and planning out when you will complete each phase of the writing process. Even if your teacher does not require you to turn in materials for each stage of the [writing process](#) (i.e. brainstorming, creating a thesis statement, outlining, drafting, revising, etc.), set your own personal deadlines for each step along the way and make sure to give yourself more than enough time to finish everything.

Tip #3: Document Everything

Plagiarism isn't always a conscious choice. Sometimes it can be unintentional, typically resulting from poor documentation of one's sources during the research phase. For example, sometimes students will write down an idea from a source using words identical to or very close to those in the original, but then when they go to write their paper forget that the material was not already in their own words. Adopting good research habits can prevent this type of plagiarism.

Print, photocopy, or scan the relevant pages of every source you are using (including the title and copyright pages, since they have the information you need for a bibliographic citation). When taking notes by hand (or typed into a file), list the bibliographic information for each source you use. Make sure to put quotation marks around any wordings taken directly from the source (and note the page where you found it), and remember to put everything else into your own words right away, so there is no danger of forgetting something is a quote.

Documenting where all of your ideas, information, quotations, and so on come from is an important step in avoiding plagiarism.

Tip #4: Don't Include Too Much Material Taken from Other Sources



Writing assignments are about your ideas, your interpretations, and your ability to synthesize information. You should use relevant sources to support your ideas using evidence such as quotes, paraphrases, and summaries, as well as statistics and other data. But don't lose sight of the fact that your argument is central! Including too much material from other sources can result in a paper that feels like it has been pasted together from a variety of authors, rather than a cohesive essay. Such papers also run a much higher risk of setting off plagiarism warnings in SafeAssign or other plagiarism-detecting software. Try to find a balance: use enough evidence from credible sources to prove your points but don't let the ideas of others take the place of your own thoughts.

Tip #5: When in Doubt, Give a Citation

Tips for integrating sources into your research.

when you include them in your writing. These are facts that are widely known and can be easily found in a number of sources. They are not ideas that originated with one particular source. Examples include scientific facts (for example, that solid, liquid, and gas are three states of matter), general historical information (for example, that George Washington was the first US president), or even information commonly known to certain groups of people but not others (for example, most musicians know that a C major triad includes the notes C, E, and G, even though many non-musicians would have no idea what a C major triad is).

There are certain types of information – typically referred to as common knowledge – that don't require a citation

For everything else, you need to include a citation, regardless of whether you are quoting directly from the source, paraphrasing it, or giving a summary. If you are at all unsure whether something qualifies as common knowledge or not, give a citation. You can also consult a more experienced figure in your field, such as your instructor, to find out if something counts as common knowledge or not.

In academic writing, the **"Quote Sandwich" approach** is useful for incorporating other writers' voices into your essays. It gives meaning and context to a quote, and helps you avoid plagiarism. This 3-step approach offers your readers a deeper understanding of what the quote is and how it relates to your essay's goals.

1. **Step 1:** Provide context for the source. If you haven't used it yet in the essay, tell us the source's title and author (if known), and any other information that's relevant, like the purpose of the organization that published it, for instance.
2. **Step 2:** Provide the quote itself. Be sure to format correctly and use quotation marks around exact language.
3. **Step 3:** Provide a summary and/or analysis of what the quote says, and how it relates to the subject matter of your essay and your thesis.

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MODULE 7: MLA CITATIONS

WHY IS MLA DOCUMENTATION IMPORTANT?



“MLA” stands for Modern Language Association. This is a professional organization for scholars of language and literature.

But why does this group of people have so much influence on the appearance of papers you write in college?

The MLA, like many other academic organizations, publishes a scholarly journal and has done so for decades. In years before computers were common, the editors of this journal required typed submissions for publication to follow a common formatting template.

Professors who were following this format to write their own work recognized the value of having some standard of uniform appearance. They started asking their students to follow the same format when they typed essays for class projects.

Fast forward to now, and we have a thick set of guidelines for how the first page of an essay should look, what margins and font are appropriate, and what a Works Cited entry for a blog post should look like.

The ultimate goal for MLA formatting and citation standards is so that everyone has a common template to draw from. While they may feel like unbreakable rules, it’s helpful to remember that they were created to serve a common need, with your interests in mind.



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INTRODUCTION TO MLA DOCUMENTATION

MLA style is one of the most common citation and formatting styles you will encounter in your academic career. Any piece of academic writing can use MLA style, from a one-page paper to a full-length book. It is widely used by in many high school and introductory college English classes, as well as scholarly books and professional journals. If you are writing a paper for a literature or media studies class, it is likely your professor will ask you to write in MLA style.

The importance of using citations is explained in the following video:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/IMhMuVvXCVw>

The Purpose of MLA Style

The MLA style guide aims to accomplish several goals:

1. to ensure consistent use of the English language in academic writing;
2. to ensure consistent formatting and presentation of information, for the sake of clarity and ease of navigation; and
3. to ensure proper attribution of ideas to their original sources, for the sake of intellectual integrity.

Citation Resources

There are many fantastic resources out there that can make the formatting and citation process easier. Some common style guides are found at:

- [The Purdue Online Writing Lab](#): this is a popular resource that concisely explains how to properly format and cite in various academic styles.
- [EasyBib](#): in addition to having a style guide, this website allows you to paste in information from your research and will create and save citations for you.

Reference management websites and applications can also assist you in tracking and recording your research. Most of these websites will even create the works cited page for you! Some of the most popular citation tools are:

- [Zotero](#)
- [RefME](#)
- [BibMe](#)

The New Edition

The newest edition of the MLA Handbook, the 8th Edition, was released in April 2016. This text will focus on the newest changes, but you should be aware that some institutions or instructors may still utilize the previous 7th edition of the handbook. While the overall principles of creating a works cited page and using in-text citations remains the same, there are a few key changes and updates that make the citation process easier for our modern uses. For example, the guidelines now state that you should always include a URL of an internet source, you can use alternative author names, such as Twitter handles, and you no longer need to include the publisher (in some instances), and you don't need to include the city where a source was published. These new changes are less nit-picky and allow for a more streamlined citation process that will work with the wide variety of source locations (i.e., YouTube videos, songs, clips from TV episodes, websites, periodicals, books, academic journals, poems, interviews, etc.).

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MLA DOCUMENT FORMATTING

Overall Structure of an MLA Paper

Your MLA paper should include the following basic elements:

1. Body
2. Works Cited

Sample Paper

Visit the [Modern Language Association website](#) to see an example of a student paper following MLA guidelines.

General MLA Formatting Rules

- **Font:** Your paper should be written in 12-point text. Whichever font you choose, MLA requires that regular and italicized text be easily distinguishable from each other. Times and Times New Roman are often recommended.
- **Line Spacing:** All text in your paper should be double-spaced.
- **Margins:** All page margins (top, bottom, left, and right) should be 1 inch. All text should be left-justified.
- **Indentation:** The first line of every paragraph should be indented 0.5 inches.
- **Page Numbers:** Create a right-justified header 0.5 inches from the top edge of every page. This header should include your last name, followed by a space and the page number. Your pages should be numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3...) and should start with the number 1 on your title page. Most word-processing programs have the ability to automatically add the correct page number to each page so you don't have to do this by hand.
- **Use of Italics:** In MLA style, you should italicize (rather than underline) the titles of books, plays, or other standalone works. You should also italicize (rather than underline) words or phrases you want to lend particular emphasis—though you should do this rarely.
- **Sentence Spacing:** Include just one single space after a period before the next sentence: “Mary went to the store. She bought some milk. Then she went home.”
- **The first page:** Like the rest of your paper, everything on your first page, even the headers, should be double-spaced. The following information should be left-justified in regular font at the top of the first page (in the main part of the page, not the header):
 - on the first line, your first and last name
 - on the second line, your instructor's name
 - on the third line, the name of the class
 - on the fourth line, the date
- **The title:** After the header, the next double-spaced line should include the title of your paper. This should be centered and in title case, and it should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized (unless it includes the name of a book, in which case just the book title should be italicized).
- **The Oxford Comma:** The Oxford comma (also called the serial comma) is the comma that comes after the second-to-last item in a series or list. For example: *The UK includes the countries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.* In the previous sentence, the comma immediately after “Wales” is the Oxford comma. In general writing conventions, whether the Oxford comma should be used is actually a point of fervent debate among passionate grammarians. However, it's a requirement in MLA style, so double-check all your lists and series to make sure you include it!

MLA Formatting

Watch this video to review all of the basic formatting recommendations:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/4edLWc-elyQ>

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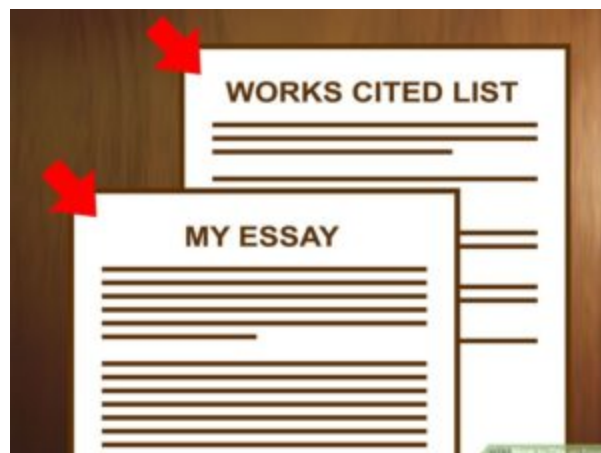
MLA WORKS CITED PAGE FORMATTING

In MLA style, all the sources you cite throughout the text of your paper are listed together in full in the Works Cited section, which comes after the main text of your paper.

Formatting the Works Cited Section

In MLA style, all the sources you cite throughout the text of your paper are listed together in full in the Works Cited section, which comes after the main text of your paper.

- **Page numbers:** Just as the rest of your paper, the top of the page should retain the right-justified header with your last name and the page number.
- **Title:** On the first line, the title of the page—"Works Cited"—should appear centered, and not italicized or bolded.
- **Spacing:** Like the rest of your paper, this page should be double-spaced and have 1-inch margins (don't skip an extra line between citations).
- **Alphabetical order:** Starting on the next line after the page title, your references should be listed in alphabetical order by author. Multiple sources by the same author should be listed chronologically by year within the same group.
- **Hanging indents:** Each reference should be formatted with what is called a hanging indent. This means the first line of each reference should be flush with the left margin (i.e., not indented), but the rest of that reference should be indented 0.5 inches further. Any word-processing program will let you format this automatically so you don't have to do it by hand. (In Microsoft Word, for example, you simply highlight your citations, click on the small arrow right next to the word "Paragraph" on the home tab, and in the popup box choose "hanging indent" under the "Special" section. Click OK, and you're done.)



When citing an essay, you include information in two places: in the body of your paper and in the Works Cited that comes after it. The Works Cited is just a bibliography: you list all the sources you used to write the paper. The citation information you include in the body of the paper itself is called the "in-text citation."

Works Cited

- Buchanan, Wyatt. "More Same-Sex Couples Want Kids: Survey Looks at Trends among Homosexuals." *SF Gate*, Hearst Communications, 25 Apr. 2006, www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/NATION-More-same-sex-couples-want-kids-Survey-2499131.php.
- Coontz, Stephanie. "Not Much Sense in Those Census Numbers." *Uncommon Threads: Reading and Writing about Contemporary America*, edited by Robert D. Newman et al., Longman, 2003, pp. 146-48.
- "Developments in the Law: The Law of Marriage and Family." *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 116, no. 7, 2003, pp. 1996-2122. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1342754.
- Hymowitz, Kay S. "The Incredible Shrinking Father." *City Journal*, Spring 2007, www.city-journal.org/html/17_2_artificial_insemination.html.
- Marcotty, Josephine, and Chen May Yee. "New World of Fertility Medicine Is a Big-Money Marketplace." *Seacoastonline.com*, Local Media Group, 30 Oct. 2007, www.seacoastonline.com/article/20071030/PARENTS/71029007.

A correctly formatted Works Cited page, according to the MLA handbook.

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CREATING MLA WORKS CITED ENTRIES

Because of the wide variety of source formats, MLA 8 now requires that researchers follow a simple set of guidelines to create appropriate citations (instead of looking up one of the fifty-nine types of sources inside the previous handbook and following the instructions). Although there are still distinct rules you need to follow to create a citation, the rules are less rigid and allow for you to look for the main components of a citation and construct it yourself. This means you will need to think about the source and its information, select the appropriate components, and organize it in a logical and useful manner.

Regardless of the source type, you are now asked to locate the same “core elements” from your sources and place them in a standard order in order to create citations. These core elements are explained in detail below. **Note that you do not need to memorize every step of this process**, but should take this opportunity to understand how citations are created. You can always return to this page, to the MLA handbook, the [MLA Style Center](#), or to other online resources to help you create the citations you need for your paper. Click through the following slides to learn more about each component and to see examples of MLA citations.

Watch this presentation online: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1rIF0VdjKopeQV4CIq8Wa-4BsDL2tkOX9SsFXRarj3B4>

You can also [download the presentation here](#).

Watch this video to see examples of how to identify the core elements needed in a citation:

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/ISekgYAdQcU>

Practice

Practice your mastery of MLA documentation by correctly ordering the following citations from the [Santa Fe College library](#):

- Book – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Chapter in an Edited Book – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Article from a Print Journal – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Journal Article from a Library Database – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Web Page – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Video – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)

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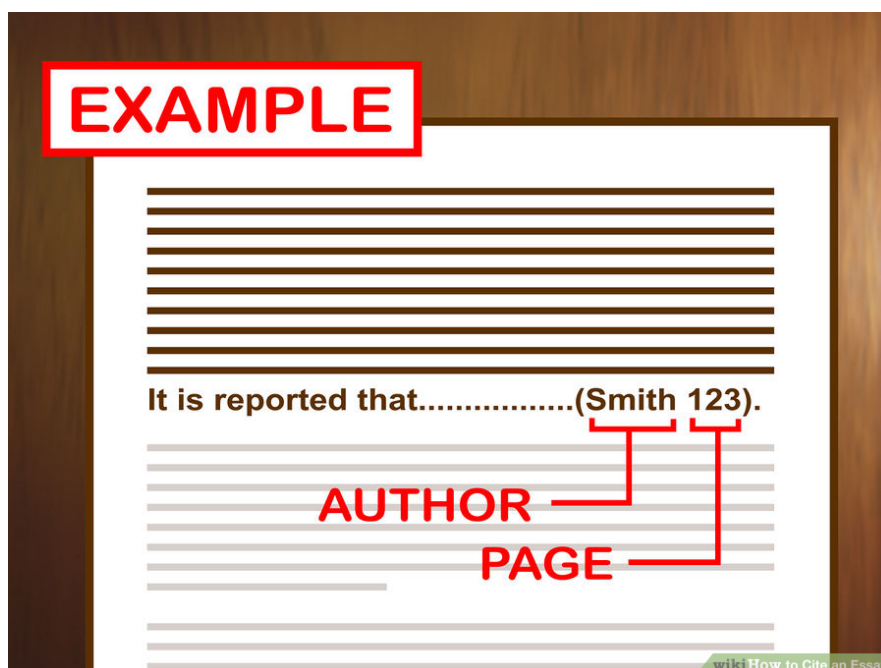
MLA IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Because the use of in-text citations will be so integral to your writing processes, being able to instantly craft correct citations and identify incorrect citations will save you time during writing and will help you avoid having unnecessary points taken off for citation errors.

Here is the standard correct in-text citation style according to MLA guidelines:

“Quotation” (Author’s Last Name Page Number).

Take a moment to carefully consider the placement of the parts and punctuation of this in-text citation. Note that there is no punctuation indicating the end of a sentence inside of the quotation marks—closing punctuation should instead follow the parentheses. There is also no punctuation between the author’s last name and the page number inside of the parentheses. The misplacement of these simple punctuation marks is one of the most common errors students make when crafting in-text citations.



Include the right information in the in-text citation. Every time you reference material in your paper, you must tell the reader the name of the author whose information you are citing. You must include a page number that tells the reader where, in the source, they can find this information. The most basic structure for an in-text citation looks like this: (Smith 123).

So, let's say we have the following quote, which comes from page 100 of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*: "Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it." (Note: Gaskell, Elizabeth. *North and South*. Oxford UP, 1973.)

The following examples show **incorrect** MLA formatting:

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it." (Gaskell 100)	<i>Incorrect because the period falls within the quotation marks</i>
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Gaskell, 100).	<i>Incorrect because of the comma separating the author's last name and the page number</i>
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Elizabeth Gaskell 100).	<i>Incorrect because the author's full name is used instead of just her last name</i>
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (<i>North and South</i> 100).	<i>Incorrect because the title of the work appears, rather than the author's last name; the title should only be used if no author name is provided</i>

The following example shows **correct** MLA formatting:

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Gaskell 100).
--

However, there are exceptions to the above citation guideline. Consider the following format of an in-text citation, which is also formed correctly.

Elizabeth Gaskell's narrator makes it clear that "Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (100).

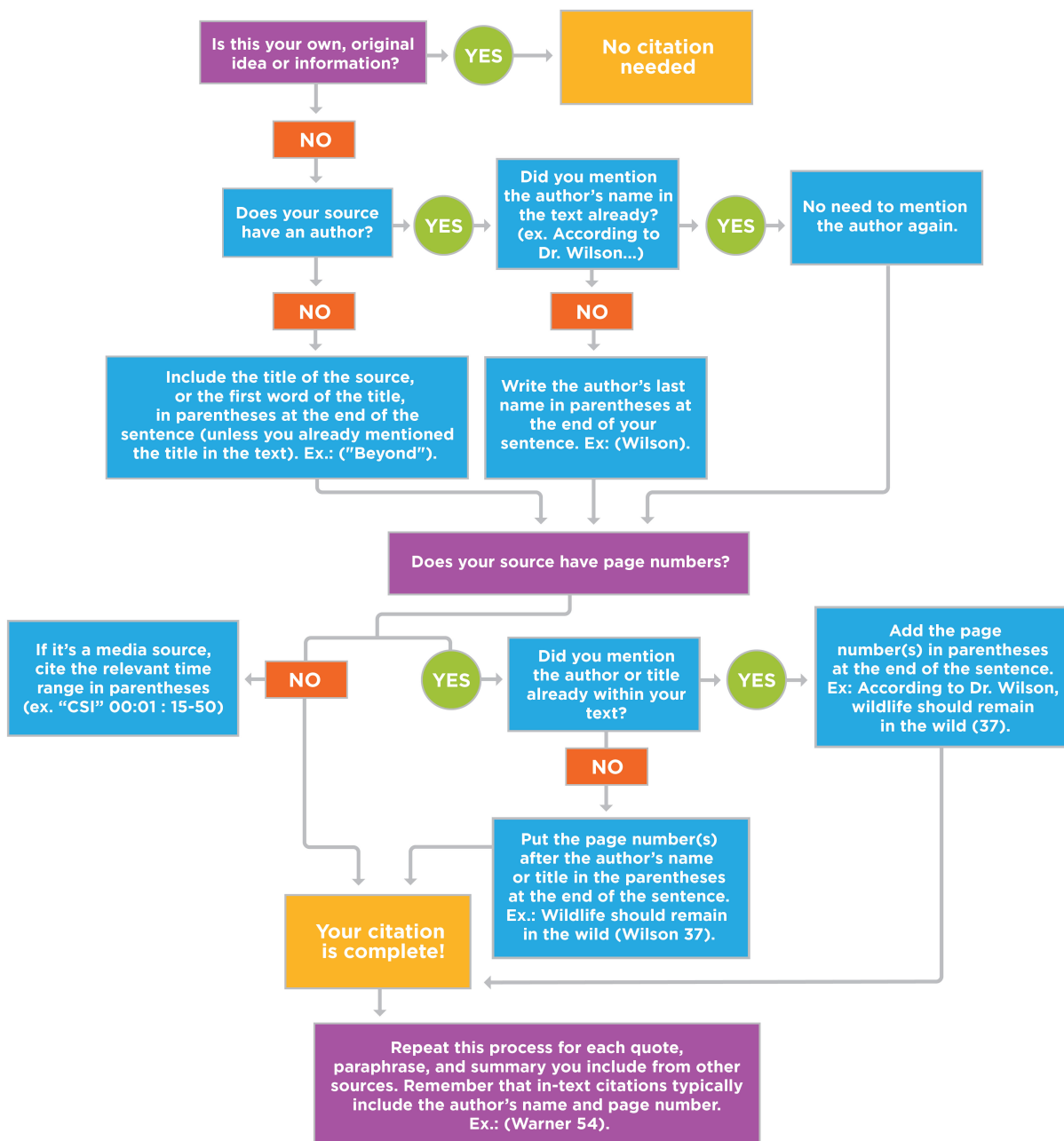
Do you notice the difference between this citation format and the format of the first example? Unlike the first example, this citation does not list the author's last name inside the parentheses. This is because the last name is included in quotation's introduction, which makes the identity of the author clear to the reader. Including the author's last name again inside of the parenthesis would be thus redundant and is not required for MLA citation.

The same rule about inclusion of the author's last name applies for paraphrased information, as well, as shown in the following example:

Elizabeth Gaskell's narrator makes it clear that her protagonist does not speak of her home once she is in Milton (100).

In this paraphrase, the author's last name precedes the paraphrased material, but as in the case of quotation integration, if the author's last name is not described in the paraphrase then it is required inside of the parentheses before the page number.

When and How to Create MLA In-Text Citations



Being more compliant with MLA in-text citation guidelines will become easier if you review these examples and the citation rules on which they rely.

EXAMPLE

A recent study determined that Himalayan brown bears eat both plants and animals (Rathore and Chauhan 6652).



Rathore and Chauhan determined that Himalayan brown bears eat both plants and animals (6652).



Rathore and Chauhan determined that Himalayan brown bears eat both plants and animals (Rathore and Chauhan 6652).



A recent study determined that Himalayan brown bears eat both plants and animals.



wikiHow to Cite an Essay

In-text citations are often parenthetical, meaning you add information to the end of a sentence in parentheses. But if you include that necessary information in the language of the sentence itself, you should not include the parenthetical citation. This example shows you proper uses of in-text citations.

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MLA BLOCK QUOTATIONS

When to Use a Block Quotation

A typical quotation is enclosed in double quotation marks and is part of a sentence within a paragraph of your paper. However, if you want to quote more than four lines of prose (or three lines of verse) from a source, you should format the excerpt as a block quotation, rather than as a regular quotation within the text of a paragraph. Most of the standard rules for quotations still apply, with the following exceptions: a block quotation will begin on its own line, it will not be enclosed in quotation marks, and its in-text citation will come after the ending punctuation, not before it.

For example, if you wanted to quote the entire first paragraph of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, you would begin that quotation on its own line and format it as follows:

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, 'and what is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?' (Carroll 98)

The full reference for this source would then be included in your Works Cited section at the end of your paper.

Formatting Block Quotations

The entire block quotation should be indented one inch from the left margin. The first line of the excerpt should not be further indented, unless you are quoting multiple paragraphs—in which case the first line of each quoted paragraph should be further indented 0.25 inches. As should the rest of your paper, a block quotation in MLA style should be double-spaced.

Block Quotations

Watch [this video](#) from Imagine Easy Solutions for more information on formatting block quotations.

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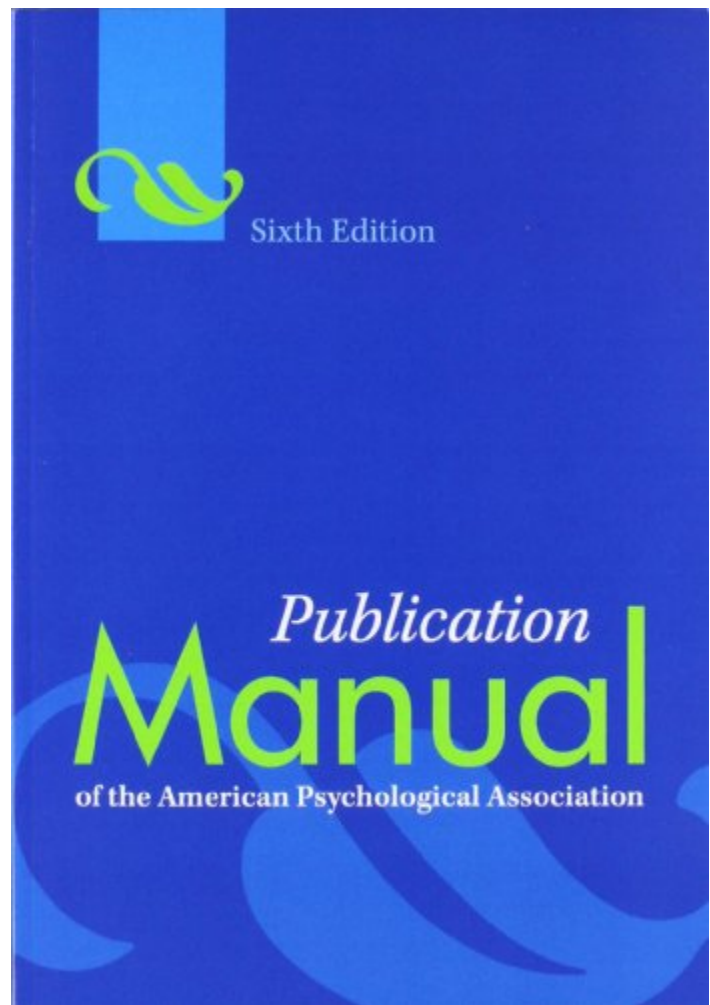
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MODULE 8: APA CITATIONS

WHY IS APA DOCUMENTATION IMPORTANT?

American Psychological Association (APA) Style is a method of formatting and referencing works in research papers and manuscripts. This style is most commonly practiced by academics within the social sciences, including the fields of nursing, psychology, and political science, and economics. APA style provides writers with a consistent formula for acknowledging the works of others using parenthetical in-text citations and a page listing all references. Additionally, APA style makes use of specific guidelines concerning the structure, content, and order of each page of a research paper or manuscript. Adhering to the uniform standards of APA style will enhance your paper's organization and allow readers to review your work with greater clarity.

The APA articles and templates on this website were developed in accordance with the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Consult the *Publication Manual* (6th ed.) for more details about formatting and organizing your document.



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APA ORDER OF MAJOR SECTIONS

Careful adherence to these conventions is likely to make a good initial impression on the reader, while carelessness may have the opposite effect. When the major sections of a paper are carefully arranged in the appropriate order, the reader may be more inclined to show an interest in the paper's ideas.

How should the major sections of an APA-style paper be arranged?

- **Title Page:** acts as the first major section of the document
 - Presents a running head and begins the document's pagination
 - Includes the paper's full title centered in the upper half of the page
 - Contains the name(s) of the writer(s) and their institutional affiliation
- **Abstract:** acts as the second major section of the document
 - Presents a single-paragraph summary of the paper's contents
 - Contains approximately 150 to 250 words
 - Includes select keywords for easy access by researchers
- **Main Body:** acts as the third major section of the document
 - Presents a report of the writer(s)' research and findings
 - Includes four sections (typically): the introduction, method, results, and discussion
 - Provides the reader with pertinent information about the paper's topic
- **References page:** acts as the fourth major section of the document
 - Presents a compilation of the sources cited in the paper
 - Provides a comprehensive list of works that appear as in-text citations in the paper
 - Details the full source information for each entry

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APA TITLE PAGE FORMATTING

Placement

As the first major section of the document, the title page appears at the top of the first page.

Components

The title page is comprised of a few key elements:

- Running head (or shortened title) and label
- Page number
- Full title of the paper
- Author byline: first name(s), middle initial(s), and last name(s)
- Affiliated Institution(s) or Organization(s)
- Author note (optional)

Follow your instructor's directives regarding additional lines on the title page. Some professors require further information, including the date of submission, course number or title, or name of the professor.

General Format

Like the rest of the paper, the title page should be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The margins are set at 1" on all sides.

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How should the running head be formatted on the title page?

The running head and label is flush with the upper left-hand corner of the title page, while the page number is flush with the upper right-hand corner of the page. The label "Running head" should only appear on the title page; on all other pages, simply include the shortened title of the paper. All letters of the running head should be capitalized and should not exceed 50 characters, including punctuation, letters, and spaces.

Example of a correctly formatted running head on the title page:

Running head: EFFECTS OF NUTRITION ON MEMORY

*Note: The title page is distinct in that the shortened title of this page is preceded by the label "Running head" followed by a colon; **no other page** of the document features this label.*

How should the full title of the paper be formatted?

The full title of the paper is centered in the upper half of the page, and the first letter of each major word is capitalized. The paper's title should be a maximum of 12 words and fill one or two lines; avoid using abbreviations and unnecessary words. Do not format the title with bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks.

How should the author byline be formatted?

The author byline is comprised of the author(s)' first name(s), middle initial(s), and last name(s); this line follows after the full title of the research paper. Note that two authors are separated by the word and, but more than two authors' names are separated by commas.

What should the institutional affiliation include?

Following the author byline is the institutional affiliation of the author(s) involved with the research paper. Include the name of the college or university you attend, or the name of the organization(s) that provided support for your research.

Any additional lines of information requested by your professor may be situated after the institutional affiliation. If your instructor requires you to include an author's note, position it in the lower half of the title page.

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APA ABSTRACT PAGE

Placement

The abstract acts as the second major section of the document and typically begins on the second page of the paper. It follows directly after the title page and precedes the main body of the paper.

The abstract is a succinct, single-paragraph summary of your paper's purpose, main points, method, findings, and conclusions, and is often recommended to be written after the rest of your paper has been completed.

General Format

How should the abstract page be formatted?

The abstract's length should be a minimum of 150 words and a maximum of 250 words; it should be confined within a single paragraph. Unlike in other paragraphs in the paper, the first line of the abstract should not be indented five spaces from the left margin.

Like the rest of the paper, the pages of the abstract should be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The margins are set at 1" on all sides. While the running head is flush with the upper left-hand corner of every page, the page number is flush with the upper right-hand corner of every page. Note that all letters of the running head should be capitalized and should not exceed 50 characters, including punctuation, letters, and spaces.

The title of the abstract is centered at the top of the page; there is no extra space between the title and the paragraph. Avoid formatting the title with bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks, or mislabeling the abstract with the title of the research paper.

When writing the abstract, note that the APA recommends using two spaces after sentences that end in a period; however, sentences that end in other punctuation marks may be followed by a single space. Additionally, the APA recommends using the active voice and past tense in the abstract, but the present tense may be used to describe conclusions and implications. Acronyms or abbreviated words should be defined in the abstract.

How should the list of keywords be formatted?

According to your professor's directives, you may be required to include a short list of keywords to enable researchers and databases to locate your paper more effectively. The list of keywords should follow after the abstract paragraph, and the word *Keywords* should be italicized, indented five spaces from the left margin, and followed by a colon. There is no period at the end of the list of keywords.

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APA FIRST MAIN BODY PAGE FORMATTING

Beginning at the top of a new page, the main body of the research paper follows the abstract and precedes the References page. Comprised of the introduction, method, results, and discussion subsections, the main body acts as the third major section of the document and typically begins on the third page of the paper.

General Format

Like the rest of the paper, the pages of the main body should be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The margins are set at 1" on all sides. While the running head is flush with the upper left-hand corner of every page, the page number is flush with the upper right-hand corner of every page. Note that all letters of the running head should be capitalized and should not exceed 50 characters, including punctuation, letters, and spaces.

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The full title of the paper is centered directly above the introduction with no extra space between the title and the first paragraph. Avoid formatting the title with bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks. The first letter of each major word in the title should be capitalized. Unlike other sections of the main body, the introduction does not require a heading or label.

When writing each paragraph, note that the APA recommends using two spaces after sentences that end in a period; however, sentences that end in other punctuation marks may be followed by a single space.

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APA HEADINGS AND SUBHEADINGS

How should section and subsection headings be formatted in APA style?

A research paper written in APA style should be organized into sections and subsections using the five levels of APA headings. APA recommends using subheadings **only when the paper has at least two subsections within a larger section**. Notice how sections contain at least two smaller subsections in the example below:

Method

Design

Participants

Demographic.

Characteristics.

Limitations

Watch this video online: <https://youtu.be/1gLkPSEBmc>

Starting with the first level of heading, the subsections of the paper should progressively use the next level(s) of heading without skipping any levels. Major sections of the paper's main body, including the Method, Results, and Discussion sections, should always be formatted with the first level of heading. However, keep in mind that the Introduction section, which is preceded by the full title of the paper, should be presented in plain type. Any subsections that fall under the major sections are formatted with the next level of heading.

Note that all paragraphs of the main body, including those that fall under subsections of a larger section, still maintain the pattern of indentation, use Times New Roman font, 12 pt., and are double-spaced. There are no extra lines or spaces between paragraphs and headings.

How are the five levels of APA-style headings formatted?

Format each of the five levels of APA-style headings as demonstrated in the example below. Note that while the example features headings titled "First Level," "Second Level," and so on, each heading in your paper should be named according to the section it describes.

First Level

The first level of heading is bolded and centered, and the first letter of each word in the heading is capitalized. The paragraph text should be typed on the following line and indented five spaces from the left.

Second Level

The second level of heading is bolded and situated flush left, and the first letter of each word in the heading is capitalized. The paragraph text should be typed on the following line and indented five spaces from the left.

Third level

The third level of heading is bolded, indented five spaces from the left, and followed by a period. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word in the heading and of proper nouns. The first paragraph following this heading should be typed on the same line as the heading.

Fourth level

The fourth level of heading is bolded, italicized, indented five spaces from the left, and followed by a period. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word in the heading and of proper nouns. The first paragraph following this heading should be typed on the same line as the heading.

Fifth level

The fifth level of heading is italicized, indented five spaces from the left, and followed by a period. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word in the heading and of proper nouns. The first paragraph following this heading should be typed on the same line as the heading.

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- APA Levels. **Authored by:** UCCSWritingCenter. **Located at:** <https://youtu.be/1gkPSEBmc>. **License:** All Rights Reserved. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License

APA IN-TEXT CITATIONS

An essential component of a research paper, in-text citations are a way of acknowledging the ideas of the author(s) of a particular work.

Each source that appears as an in-text citation should have a corresponding detailed entry in the References list at the end of the paper. Including the required elements in every citation allows other researchers to easily track the references used in a paper and locate those resources themselves.

There are three pieces of information that should be included in a citation after quoting another writer's work: the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number(s) of the quoted material, all of which are separated by commas. The page number should follow a lower-case letter 'p' and a period.

- Basic structure: (Author, Year of Publication, p. 142)
 - **Example:** (Kutner, 2003, p. 451) [1]

If the quoted material was taken from more than one page, use two lower-case letter 'p' s.

- Basic structure: (Author, Year, of Publication, pp. 194-196)
 - **Example:** (Kutner, 2003, pp. 451-452) [1]

How should multiple authors of a single source be cited?

There are a few guidelines to follow when citing multiple authors for a single source. Separate the names of the source's authors by using commas. Depending on the location and instance of the citation, an ampersand(&), the word *and*, or the term *et al.* may also need to be used.

When should an ampersand be used?

Ampersands (&) should only be used in parenthetical in-text citations. An ampersand separates the last and second to last author of a cited work.

- **Example:** Research has demonstrated that "synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences" (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81). [1]

When should the word *and* be used?

The word *and* should only be used in a sentence or paragraph; do not use it in a parenthetical in-text citation. The last and second to last author of a cited work are separated by the word *and*.

- **Example:** Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, and Van Leeuwen (2012) observed that "synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences" (p. 81). [1]

When should the term *et al.* be used?

When citing a single work with many authors, you may need to substitute some of the authors' names with the term *et al.* The term *et al.* should not be italicized in your paper, and a period should be placed after the word *al* as it is an abbreviated term. Follow these guidelines regarding the usage of *et al.*:

Use *et al.*:

- The first time and every time you cite a source with at least six authors.
 - **Example:** The in-text citation of *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans*, a book authored by Krauss, Weber, Appel, Enders, Isenberg, Schiefer, Slenczka, von Graevenitz, and Zahner, would appear as follows: [2]
 - (Krauss et al., 2003, p. 91)
 - As Krauss et al. (2003) observed, ...
- Every following time (after the first instance) that you cite a source with at least three authors.
 - **Example:** Citing the article "Modality and variability of synesthetic experience" by Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen would appear as follows: [1]
 - The first instance: (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81)
 - Every following instance: (Niccolai et al., 2012)

Avoid using *et al.*:

- The first time you cite a source with up to five authors.
 - Instead, list all of the authors at their first mentioning.
- To cite a work that only has two authors.
 - Instead, always list the two authors' names in every citation (separated by either an ampersand or the word and, depending on the location)

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APA REFERENCES PAGE FORMATTING

Placement

The References page is located at the end of the main body of the paper and begins at the top of a new page. Appendices, footnotes, and additional materials should follow after the References page.

General Format

Like the rest of the paper, the References page should be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The running head should appear flush with the upper left-hand corner of the page, and the page number should appear at the upper right-hand corner of the page.

The title of the References page is capitalized and centered at the top of the page without any formatting, including bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks. Avoid mislabeling the References page as "Works Cited," "Sources," or "Bibliography."

Entries

Each entry should be formatted as a hanging indentation: the first line of each citation should be flush with the left margin while each subsequent line of the citation is indented five spaces from the left margin. Alphabetize the entries in the References page based on the authors' last names (or the first word of a work's title, if a work does not name any authors). Though it will vary from source to source, the general structure of a print book citation is as follows:

Author Last Name, Initials. (Year of publication). *Title of the work*. Publication city: Publishing Company.

Electronic sources generally require more information than print sources, such as a uniform resource locator (URL), a digital object identifier (DOI), or the date the source material was accessed.

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CREATING APA REFERENCES ENTRIES

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Following is a list of sample citations for commonly used sources. Consult the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) for a complete list of guidelines for formatting entries on the references page.

Print Examples

Single-Authored Book

Hoppensteadt, F. C. (1997). *An introduction to the mathematics of neurons: Modeling in the frequency domain*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Book with Multiple Authors

Two or more authors

Pandi-Perumal, S. R., Cardinali, D. P., & Chrousos, G. (2007). *Neuroimmunology of sleep*. New York, NY: Springer.

Seven or more authors

Krauss, H., Weber, A., Appel, M., Enders, B., Isenberg, H. D., Schiefer, H. G., . . . Zahner, H. (2003). *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans*. Washington, DC: ASM Press.

Book by an Association or Organization

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Article or Chapter in an Edited Collection

Riding, R. (2001). The nature and effects of cognitive style. In Sternberg, R. J., & Zhang, L.-F. (Eds.), *Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles* (pp. 47-72). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Collected Content in an Edited Book

Single editor

Gray, W. D. (Ed.). (2007). *Integrated models of cognition systems*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Multiple editors

Reynolds, W. M., & Johnston, H. F. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of depression in children and adolescents*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Article in Print Periodical

With DOI

Marsh, J. K., & Ahn, W. (2012). Memory for patient information as a function of experience in mental health. *Journal of Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 26(3), 462-474. doi:10.1002/acp.2832

Without DOI

Murphy, V. M. (1960). Anxiety: Common ground for psychology and sociology. *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, 21(3), 213-220.

Electronic Examples

Book in Electronic Form

Levitin, D. J. (2002). *Foundations of cognitive psychology: Core readings*. Retrieved from <http://ehis.ebscohost.com>

Article in Online Periodical

With DOI

Oruç, I., Krigolson, O., Dalrymple, K., Nagamatsu, L. S., Handy, T. C., & Barton, J. S. (2011). Bootstrap analysis of the single subject with event related potentials. *Journal of Cognitive Neuropsychology*, 28(5), 322-337. doi:10.1080/02643294.2011.648176

Without DOI

Niccolai, V., Jennes, J., Stoerig, P., & Van Leeuwen, T. M. (2012). Modality and variability of synesthetic experience. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 125(1), 81-94. Retrieved from JSTOR database at <http://www.jstor.org/>

Article from a Webpage

By Multiple Authors

Vorvick, L. J., Longstreth, G. F., & Zieve, D. (2011, January 10). E. coli enteritis. Retrieved from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000296.htm>

By an Organization/Group

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Lead. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/>

Unknown Author, Unknown Date

Water, carbon and nitrogen cycle. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.etap.org/demo/biology_files/lesson6/instruction4tutor.html

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APA BLOCK QUOTATIONS

When should a block quotation be used?

A block quotation is an extract consisting of more than 40 words from another author's work. Block quotations should be used in moderation, typically when using another writer's words is a more effective way of illustrating an idea. Avoid using block quotations excessively as this practice gives the reader the impression that you are inexperienced in the subject or are simply filling pages to meet a word count requirement.

How should a block quotation be formatted?

While a short quotation is enclosed in quotation marks and integrated into the surrounding paragraph, a block quotation is an independent paragraph that is indented five spaces from the left margin. This type of quotation should be double-spaced like the rest of the paper, but it should not be enclosed in quotation marks. In a block quotation, the parenthetical in-text citation should follow directly after the end punctuation of the final sentence. Note the placement order of the quotation marks, parentheses, and period.

Let's look at two examples:

One researcher outlines the viewpoints of both parties:

Freedom of research is undoubtedly a cherished ideal in our society. In that respect research has an interest in being free, independent and unrestricted. Such interests weigh against regulations. On the other hand, research should also be valid, verifiable, and unbiased, to attain the overarching goal of gaining obtaining [sic] generalisable knowledge. (Simonsen, 2012, p. 46)

Note that although the block quotation is formatted as a separate block of text, it is preceded by an introductory phrase or sentence(s) followed by a colon. If the author's name and the year of publication appear in the introductory sentence, the parenthetical in-text citation at the end of the paragraph should simply include the page number(s) of the original text, as shown in this example:

Simonsen (2012) outlines the two opposing viewpoints:

Freedom of research is undoubtedly a cherished ideal in our society. In that respect research has an interest in being free, independent and unrestricted. Such interests weigh against regulations. On the other hand, research should also be valid, verifiable, and unbiased, to attain the overarching goal of gaining obtaining [sic] generalisable knowledge. (p. 46)

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