



SKILL BUILDERS

# WRITING SKILLS

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WRITING POWER  
IN JUST 4 WEEKS!

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Tests

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## **An Important Note to Our Library Readers**

If you have checked this book out from your school or public library, please do not write in the book itself. Instead use a separate notepad to write down your answers, so that other readers in your library can reuse the material. Thank you for your help and for your consideration of others.



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## How to Use This Book

Writing is a lot like fishing. People who are good at fishing study and practice it. They learn which tools to use for catching the best fish in different types of water. No one is born with fishing talent. Some people enjoy it more than others, but everyone can do it if they want. The same goes for writing.

Since you bought this book, you

probably want or need to learn more about the process of writing and how to become a better writer. This book will help you acquire the mysterious and coveted power of the pen in 20 easy steps. This book covers the basics of writing: punctuation, usage, diction, and organization. You'll find no fluff in this book; it's for busy people who want to learn as much as they can as efficiently as possible. Each lesson contains enough illustrations for you to get the idea, opportunities to practice the skills, and suggestions for using them in your daily life.

Many people fear a blank sheet of paper or an empty computer screen. "I

just don't know what to write. Even when I know what I want to say, I'm afraid it will come out looking wrong or sounding stupid."

But that's one of the things to love about writing. Writing is a process. The first time you write a draft, it doesn't matter if your writing comes out wrong or sounds stupid to you because you can change it as often as you want. You can go over until you're completely satisfied, or until you need to shift gears. You can show your draft to your friends or family and get a response before you ever make it public.

Don't put pressure on yourself by thinking you ever to write a perfect first draft. No one can sit down and write polished memos, reports, or let-

# Writing Skills Pretest

Before you start your study of grammar and writing skills, you may want to get an idea of how much you already know and how much you need to learn. If that's the case, take the pretest that follows.

The pretest is 50 multiple-choice questions covering all the lessons in this book. Naturally, 50 questions can't cover every single concept or rule you

will learn by working through this book. So even if you get all of the questions on the pretest right, it's almost guaranteed that you will find a few ideas or rules in this book that you didn't already know. On the other hand, if you get a lot of the answers wrong on this pretest, don't despair. This book will show you how to get better at grammar and writing, step by step.

So use this pretest just to get a general idea of how much of what's in this book you already know. If you get a high score on this pretest, you may be able to spend less time with this book than you originally planned. If you get a low score, you may find that you will

need more than 20 minutes a day to get through each chapter and learn all the grammar and mechanics concepts you need.

There's an answer sheet you can use for filling in the correct answers on the next page. Or, if you prefer, simply circle the answer numbers in this book. If the book doesn't belong to you, write the numbers 1–50 on a piece of paper and record your answers there. Take as much time as you need to do this short test. When you finish, check your answers against the answer key that follows this test. Each answer tells you which lesson of this book teaches you about the

grammatical rule in that question.

## Pretest

1. Which version of the sentence is correctly capitalized?

a. Last Thursday, my Mother, my Aunt Sarah, and I went to the museum to see an exhibit of African art.

b. Last Thursday, my mother, my Aunt Sarah, and I went to the museum to see an exhibit of African art.

c. Last Thursday, my mother, my aunt Sarah, and I went to the Museum to see an exhibit of African art.

d. Last thursday, my mother, my aunt Sarah, and I went to the museum to see an exhibit of African Art.

2. Which of the underlined words in the following sentence should be capitalized?

The governor gave a speech at the fourth of July picnic, which was held at my cousin's farm five miles east of town.

- a. governor
- b. fourth
- c. cousin's
- d. east

**3.** Which of the underlined words in the following sentence should be capitalized?

"Last semester, I wrote my history report on the Korean war," my sister told me.

- a. semester
- b. history
- c. war
- d. sister

**4.** Which version uses periods correctly?

a. Dr Harrison will speak at a hotel in Chicago, Ill, on Thurs at 3:00 P.M.

b. Dr. Harrison will speak at a hotel in Chicago, Ill, on Thurs at 3:00 PM.

c. Dr Harrison will speak at a hotel in Chicago, Ill, on Thurs. at 3:00 P.M.

d. Dr. Harrison will speak at a hotel in Chicago, Ill., on Thurs. at 3:00 P.M.

**5.** Which version uses punctuation correctly?

- a. Watch out. The road is icy?
- b. Watch out! The road is icy.
- c. Watch out? The road is icy!
- d. Watch out, the road is icy?

**6.** Which one is a sentence fragment, that is, NOT a complete sentence?

- a. Hearing the thunder, the lifeguard ordered us out of the water.
- b. Turn off the lights.
- c. Sunday afternoon spent reading and playing computer games.
- d. I was surprised to see that my neighbor had written a letter to the editor.

7. Three of the following sentences are faulty. They are either run-ons or comma splices. Which one is NOT a faulty sentence?

- a. The newspapers are supposed to be delivered by 7:00, but I am usually finished before 6:45.
- b. I called the delivery service this morning, they told me the shipment would arrive on time.
- c. Look in the closet you should find it there.
- d. I was the first to sign the petition Harry was second.



## Answer Key

If you miss any of the answers, you can find help for that kind of question in the lesson shown to the right of the answer.

1. b. Lesson 1

2. b. Lesson 1

3. c. Lesson 1

**4. d. Lesson 2**

**5. b. Lesson 2**

**6. c. Lesson 3**

**7. a. Lesson 3**

**8. d. Lesson 4**

**9. b. Lesson 4**

**10. a. Lesson 4**

**11. b. Lessons 5, 6**

**12. d. Lesson 5**

**13. a. Lesson 5**

**14. c. Lesson 6**

**15. b. Lesson 6**

**16. b. Lesson 7**

**17. c. Lesson 7**

**18. a. Lesson 7**

**19. a. Lesson 8**

**20.** b. Lesson 8

**21.** c. Lesson 9

**22.** d. Lesson 9

**23.** a. Lesson 9

**24.** d. Lesson 10

**25.** b. Lesson 10

**26.** b. Lesson 10

**27.** c. Lesson 11

**28.** b. Lesson 12

**29.** d. Lesson 12

**30.** a. Lesson 12

**31.** d. Lesson 12

**32.** c. Lesson 12

**33.** a. Lesson 13

**34.** a. Lesson 13

**35.** d. Lesson 13

**36.** b. Lesson 14

**37.** c. Lesson 14

**38.** d. Lesson 14

**39.** c. Lesson 15

**40.** a. Lesson 15

**41.** d. Lesson 16

**42.** a. Lesson 16

**43.** d. Lesson 16

**44.** c. Lesson 17

**45.** c. Lesson 17

**46.** b. Lesson 17

**47.** c. Lesson 18

**48.** a. Lesson 18

**49.** c. Lesson 19

**50.** d. Lesson 19



# Lesson 1

## Capitalization

### Lesson Summary

Today you'll learn about the fine points of capitalization. The chapter divides capitalization rules into two kinds: general rules governing capitalization and specific rules regarding proper nouns and adjectives.

Start by seeing just how much you already know about the proper use of

capital letters. On the next page you see the same passage written twice. The first column, called **Problem**, contains no capitalization at all—definitely a problem in writing! Circle those letters you think should be capitalized in the **Problem** column, and then check yourself against the **Solution** column.

## General Capitalization Rules

The table below summarizes general capitalization rules with specific categories of proper nouns in this section.

### CAPITALIZATION

Rule	Example
Capitalize the first word of a sentence. If the first word is a	The sentence

number, write it as a word.

**Th**

Capitalize the pronoun *I* or the contraction *I'm*, and the abbreviations *B.C.* or *A.D.*

Th  
to  
Th  
**A.**

Capitalize the first word of a quotation.

Do not capitalize the first word of a partial quotation.

I s  
do  
He  
a s

Below is an example of a dialogue that illustrates the rules about paragraphing in dialogue: Each time a new speaker begins a paragraph.)

"Good morning," said the new superv

"Good morning!" I answered, somew  
Barnes. I'm Joshua Haines. It's a plea

"Tell me what you do, Joshua. I'm anxio  
operation."

"I smiled and said, "That doesn't surp  
'sieve for information.'"

## *Practice*

Check your ability to apply the rules abov  
below. Choose the correctly capitalized o  
below. Answers to each set of questions  
lesson.

1. a. the memo confused me at first. after  
understand it.

b. The memo confused me at first. after  
understand it.

c. The memo confused me at first. After  
understand it.

2. a. "where are you going?" my coworker

"to a meeting i'm not very excited about"

b. "Where are you going?" my coworker

"To a meeting I'm not very excited about"

c. "Where are you going?" My coworker

"To a meeting I'm not very excited about"

3. a. we read the poem written in 1493 .

b. We read the poem written in 1493

c. We read the poem written in 1493

4. a. When you return from your trip, I v  
activities.

b. when you return from your trip, I w  
activities.

c. When you return from your trip, i v

activities.

## **Proper Nouns and Proper Adjectives**

All proper nouns and proper adjectives—person, place or thing—must be capitalized. This section begins with a table that illustrates several practice exercises.

### **PROPER NOUNS,**

<b>Category of Proper Nouns</b>	<b>Example</b>
days of the week	Friday,

months

January

holidays

Christmas

historical events, periods,  
documents

Civil War  
Ages (18th  
of Independence)

special events, calendar  
events

Pebble  
Renaissance  
Days (Spring  
Father's Day)

names of people and places

John Deere  
Tower

## *Practice*

Using the rules above, choose the correct form for each of the following pairs.

**5.** a. Chaucer was one of the foremost p

b. Chaucer was one of the foremost p

**6.** a. The Olsons spend Labor Day and f  
their lakeside cottage.

b. The Olsons spend Labor day and f  
their Lakeside cottage.



7. a. We studied the declaration of indepe

b. We studied the Declaration of Inde

8. a. Judy has two Uncles who fought in v

b. Judy has two uncles who fought in

## PROPER NOUNS

### Category of Proper Nouns

names of structures and buildings

names of trains, ships, aircraft, and  
other modes of transportation

names of products

names of officials

works of art and literature

ethnic groups, races, languages,  
nationalities

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly capitalized version

9. a. I enjoyed *spoon river anthology* by

b. I enjoyed *Spoon River Anthology* by

10. a. We caught a Vanguard Airlines flight

b. We caught a Vanguard airlines flight

11. a. The Talmud is a guide to the teaching

b. The Talmud is a guide to the teaching

- 12.** a. Paul has an editing job with Mered  
b. Paul has an Editing job with Mere
- 13.** a. The university of iowa has an outst  
b. The University of Iowa has an outs
- 14.** a. Dr. Gallagher researched her book  
b. Dr. Gallagher researched her book

## PROPER NOUNS, I

### Category of Proper Nouns

Exa

cities, states, and governmental units

Des  
Rep

streets, highways, and roads

Gra  
Dea

landmarks and geographical locations

Cor

public areas and bodies of water

Sup

institutions, organizations, and  
businesses

Dar  
Doc

### *Practice*

Choose the correctly capitalized version

**15.** a. In Switzerland, some citizens speak German.

b. In switzerland, some citizens speak

**16.** a. Near a body of water called firth a

Scotland.

b. Near a body of water called Firth :  
Scotland.

**17. a.** We drove along the Mississippi riv

b. We drove along the Mississippi Ri

**18. a.** Mount Everest, which is in the mid  
highest mountain in the world.

b. Mount Everest, which is in the mid  
highest mountain in the World.

**19. a.** I have traveled on the Garden state  
Jersey.

b. I have traveled on the Garden State  
Jersey.

## *Proper Adjectives*

Proper adjectives are adjectives—that is, they are formed from a proper noun, often the name of a place. The proper noun *Canada* becomes the proper adjective *Canadian* when it modifies another noun, as in *Canadian bread*. Proper adjectives are capitalized unless they are used as a proper noun in their own right.

### **Examples:**

English **muffin**, Polish **sausage**, Japanese **tea**

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly capitalized version

**20.** a. Some residents of ireland still spea

b. Some residents of Ireland still spea

**21.** a. Cortez, a Spanish explorer, conquered the Aztecs.

b. Cortez, a spanish explorer, conquered the Aztecs.

**22.** a. The actress in the play tried to speak with a Scottish accent.

b. The Actress in the play tried to speak with a Scottish accent.

**23.** a. I will never attempt to swim the English channel.

b. I will never attempt to swim the English Channel.

**24.** a. I had never been to a Sri Lankan Restaurant before.

b. I had never been to a Sri Lankan restaurant before.

## **When NOT to Capitalize**

Putting in capital letters where they don't belong is as bad as leaving them out where they do belong. Watch for these capitalization traps.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing compass directions; however, direction words that refer to a specific area of the country should be capitalized.

### **Examples:**

We headed **w**est after the Depression.

The future of the country was cultivated in the **W**est.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing the words referring to family members. Capitalize them only when they are used as names. If a possessive pronoun

(*my, our, your, his, her, their*) comes before the word referring to a family member, the family word is not capitalized.

### **Examples:**

When **U**nCLE Harry visited last winter, none of my other **u**ncles came to see him.

After my **m**oTher called me for lunch, **F**ather served the entree.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing the seasons of the year or parts of the academic year.

## **Example:**

If the university offers History of Education 405 in the **spring** semester, Horace will be able to graduate in May.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing school subjects. They should be capitalized only if they are part of the name of a specific course.

## **Examples:**

I try to avoid **m**ath courses because I'm not very good at them.

Betsy is taking Algebra II and  
Trigonometry I next semester.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing words and adjectives.

### **Examples:**

Polish **s**ausage, not Polish Sausage

Mexican **r**estaurant, not Mexican Res

### ***Practice***

Choose the correctly capitalized version

**25.** a. Digging the Canal through Panama

b. Digging the canal through Panama

**26.** a. The Smoky Mountains are in the South

b. The Smoky Mountains are in the south

**27.** a. Nicholi Milani does more business

b. Nicholi Milani does more business

**28.** a. The Midwest had the coldest winter

b. The midwest had the coldest winter

**29.** a. Marianne had never been as far East

b. Marianne had never been as far east

## **Skill Building Until**

Find the obituaries in your local newspaper and identify the capitalization used in the writing. How many of these capitalizations today can you find represented in a single

## **Answers**

1. c.

2. b.

**3. c.**

**4. a.**

**5. b.**

**6. a.**

**7. b.**

**8. b.**

**9. b.**

**10. a.**

**11. b.**

**12. a.**

**13. b.**

**14. a.**

**15. a.**

**16. b.**

**17. b.**

**18. a.**

**19. b.**

**20. b.**

**21. a.**

**22. a.**

**23. b.**

**24. b.**

**25. b.**

**26. b.**

**27. a.**

**28. a.**

**29. b.**

## **Lesson 2— Periods, Question Marks, and Exclamation Points**

### **Lesson Summary**

This lesson shows you which punctuation marks to use to end sentences. These are sometimes referred to as "end marks." It also shows you other ways in which periods are used.

The exercise that follows reviews

Lesson 1, Capitalization, and gives you an opportunity to see what you already know about periods and endmarks. Correct the capitalization in the **Problem** column on the next page, adding periods, question marks, and exclamation points where you think they should go. Check yourself with the **Solution** column as you go.

## **Problem (continued)**

before henry became a man can you imagine that

In fact, henry was so inspired that he decided to pursue a Degree in philosophy at centerville community college he enrolled in history of Philosophy 203 during the Spring Semester by the end of may, henry was hooked on Education and has not missed a class nor a Day of Work

since

## Rules for Using Periods

- Use a period after an initial and after every abbreviation has become an acronym—a word, such as AIDS—or a widely recognized title. Titles—Mr., Ms., Dr., and so on—are also abbreviations. An abbreviation comes at the end of a sentence.

### Examples:

The tour leaves on **Mon., Jan. 1**, at 3 p.m.

The book was written by **C. S. Lewis**.

**A. J. Mandelli** researched brain function.

- Use a period before a decimal and betw

## **Examples:**

A gallon equals **3.875** liters.

The new textbook costs **\$54.75**.

Only **5.6** percent of our consumers si  
products.

- Use a period at the end of a sentence tha

## **Examples:**

Henry Kissinger served under two U

Wilson will lecture in the forum after

Many consider P. T. Barnum the best  
earth.

- Use a period at the end of a sentence that  
or states a command.

### **Examples:**

Empty the kitchen trash before you ta

Turn right at the first stop light, and t

- Use a period at the end of a sentence that

## Examples:

My neighbor asked if we had seen his cat. (The direct question was, "Have you seen my cat?")

Quentin wanted to know how we had arrived at that answer. (The direct question was, "How did you arrive at that answer?")

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly written version

from each of the following sets of sentences. You will find the answers to each set of questions at the end of the lesson.

1. a. The train passed through Rockford, Ill., on its way to St. Joseph, Mo.

b. The train passed through Rockford, Ill, on its way to St Joseph, Mo.

c. The train passed through Rockford, Ill, on its way to St. Joseph, Mo.

**2. a.** Ms Cory Ames, Dr Matthew Olson, and H. J. Lane went to Chicago, Ill..

**b.** Ms Cory Ames, Dr Matthew Olson, and HJ Lane went to Chicago, Ill.

**c.** Ms. Cory Ames, Dr. Matthew Olson, and H. J. Lane went to Chicago, Ill.

**3. a.** The bedrooms measured 12 ft. by 14 ft.

**b.** The bedrooms measured 12 ft by 14 ft.

c. The bedrooms measured 12 ft. by 14 ft..

**4.** a. Bob asked if the price of the CD was \$13.98?

b. Bob asked if the price of the CD was \$13.98.

c. Bob asked if the price of the CD was \$1398¢.

**5.** a. Tie your shoe. Before you trip and break a leg.

b. Tie your shoe before you trip

and break a leg.

c. Tie your shoe before you trip  
and break a leg

**6.** a. Mr and Mrs Fletcher visited 10  
cities in 20 days.

b. Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher visited 10  
cities in 20 days.

c. Mr and Mrs. Fletcher visited 10  
cities in 20 days.

**7.** a. Mayor and Mrs. Dorian will  
address the city council at 8:00 PM

b. Mayor and Mrs Dorian will address the city council at 8:00 P.M.

c. Mayor and Mrs. Dorian will address the city council at 8:00 P.M.

**8.** a. Oh, all right. Tell me your riddle.

b. Oh. all right. Tell me your riddle.

c. Oh, all right Tell me your riddle.

## **Rules for Using Question Marks and Exclamation Points**

- Use a question mark after a word or group of words that asks a question even if it is not a complete sentence.

## **Examples:**

What did you do last night?

Will you put out the trash?

Okay?

May we go to the movies after we've finished our homework?

Are we?

- Use an exclamation point after a sentence that expresses strong feeling.

### **Examples:**

Look out for that car!

I just can't stand the smell in here!

A word of caution about exclamation points to show strong feeling:  
Exclamation points are a little bit like salt on food. Most people like a little bit. Nobody likes too much.

- Use an exclamation point after an interjection-a word or phrase expressing strong feeling-when it is written as a single sentence.

### **Examples:**

Doggone it!

Yikes!

- Use an exclamation point after a sentence that begins with a question word but doesn't ask a question.

### **Examples:**

What a dunce I am!

How marvelous of you to come!

### ***Practice***

Choose the correctly written version of each of the following sets of sentences.

**9. a.** Help! I'm falling?

b. Help! I'm falling.

c. Help! I'm falling!

**10. a.** I can't believe how naive I was!

b. I can't believe how naive I was.

c. I can't believe how naive I was?

**11. a.** The auditor asked me why I didn't save the receipts?

b. The auditor asked me why I

didn't save the receipts.

c. The auditor asked me why I didn't save the receipts!

**12.** a. Can you tell me the seating capacity of this meeting room.

b. Can you tell me the seating capacity of this meeting room?

c. Can you tell me the seating capacity of this meeting room!

**13.** a. How utterly disgusting this movie is.

b. How utterly disgusting this movie is?

c. How utterly disgusting this movie is!

**14.** a. Was Alexander the Great born in 350 B.C.

b. Was Alexander the great born in 350 B.C.?

c. Was Alexander the Great born in 350 B.C.?



c. Is this sweater \$5995 or \$6995?

**17.** a. Wow. What a close call that was?

b. Wow! What a close call that was.

c. Wow! What a close call that was!

**18.** a. Those carpenters. Do you know ho

b. Those carpenters? Do you know ho

c. Those carpenters! Do you know ho

**Skill Building Until**

Take a few minutes to practice what you reading a book right now, look through a find at least three examples of each type today. Are the endmarks used according you're not currently reading a book, just home or at work.

## **Answers**

**1. a.**

**2. c.**

**3. a.**

**4. b.**

**5. b.**

**6. b.**

**7. c.**

**8. a.**

**9. c.**

**10. a.**

**11. b.**

**12. b.**

**13. c.**

**14. c.**

**15. a.**

**16. a.**

**17. c.**

**18. c.**

# Lesson 3— Avoiding Faulty Sentences

## Lesson Summary

This lesson will help you distinguish between complete sentences and faulty sentences so that you can avoid writing sentence fragments, run-on sentences and comma splices.

Begin your study of complete sentences by looking at the **Problem**

paragraph that appears on the next page. Underline the groups of words that form complete sentences. See if you can distinguish them from the fragments, run-ons, and comma splices included in the paragraph. Then check your work against the **Solution** paragraph, also on the next page, where the complete sentences are underlined.

## Problem

S

Just the other day I came home from work as excited as I had ever been. The night before someone from Publisher's Clearinghouse had called. To tell me that I would be receiving a prize package worth potentially millions of dollars. I was so excited because, unlike other offers, this really sounded legitimate, it sounded to me as though I might really win

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something this time. I hastily opened the mailbox. Hoping to find the promised envelope. There it was. Between the *Life* magazine and the Fingerhut catalog. The promised letter. When I finally finished reading the entire mailing. I realized my chances were really no better with this contest than they had been for any other contest I had entered in the past and I was disappointed that I had spent so much time reading all of the material then I threw it all in the recycling basket and went to bed. Dejected.

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# Complete Sentences

1. It has a verb (a word or phrase that expresses an action, such as *run*, *take*, *give*, or a state of being, such as *is*). Many sentences have more than one verb. The verbs in the sentences below are highlighted for you.

## Examples:

Bob and Alexandra both **want** a promotion.

Yurika **drafted** a memo and **sent** it to the board.  
(**wanted** and **drafted** are action verbs; **sent** is a linking verb)

Herbert and Tan **are** the chief operating officers.  
(**are** is a linking verb)



**2.** It has a subject (someone or something that performs the action or serves as the main focus of the sentence). As with verbs, many sentences have more than one subject.

### **Examples:**

**Bob** and **Alexandra** both want a promotion.

**Yurika** drafted a memo and sent it to the sales department.

**Herbert** and **Tan** are the chief operators in this department.

**3.** It expresses a complete thought. In other words, the group of words has a completed meaning. Sometimes a group of words has both a subject and a verb but still does not express a complete thought. Look at the following examples. The subjects and verbs are highlighted to make them easier to identify.

**Complete sentences (also called independent clauses):**

**I left** an hour earlier than usual.

Our **team finished** its year-end evaluation.

**Roger tried** to explain his position

**Sentence fragments (dependent clauses):**

If **I left** an hour earlier than usual.

When our **team finished** its year-end evaluation.

Whenever **Roger tried** to explain his position.

The next section explains why the groups of words in the second set are not complete sentences.

## **Sentence Fragments**

In the last set of examples above, you may have noticed that each fragment is longer than the similar complete sentence. The groups of words are otherwise the same, but the fragments have an extra word at the beginning. These words are called *subordinating conjunctions*. If a group of words that would normally be a complete sentence is preceded by a subordinating conjunction, something

more is needed to complete the thought. These *subordinate* or *dependent clauses* need something more to complete their meaning; therefore, they *depend* on an *independent clause*, a group of words that by itself could form a complete sentence. Examine how the fragments from above have been rewritten below to express a complete thought.

If I left an hour earlier than usual, I would be able to avoid rush hour.

When our team finished its year-end evaluation, we all took the next day off.

Whenever Roger tried to explain his position, he misquoted the facts.

Take a look at sentences 4, 8, and 10. In these sentences, the fragment is a verb (action) separated from the independent clause or the complete sentence. All that is required is to add the fragment to the sentence.

**4.** We went door to door and tried to sell popcorn and candy.

**8.** We read the morning paper and saw the picture of our company's new owner.

**10.** We walked all over downtown and applied for part-time jobs at theaters.

Finally, look at the remaining sentence, 6. In this sentence, extra words are needed to add the fragment to the sentence.

**6.** We couldn't make the deadline because of the icy roads and hazardous weather.

## **Run-On Sentences**

An *independent clause* is a group of words that could be a complete sentence all by itself. A *run-on*

*sentence* is one in which independent clauses have been run together without punctuation (a period, semicolon, or comma).

### **Examples:**

Lynn moved from Minneapolis  
her job was transferred.

The concert seemed unending it  
lasted almost until midnight.

We got some gas then we headed  
off to Omaha.

All three of these examples can

be corrected quite easily in one of three ways:

- By adding a period and a capital letter.

Lynn moved from Minneapolis.  
Her job was transferred.

The concert seemed unending. It lasted almost until midnight.

We got some gas. Then we headed off to Omaha.

- By adding a comma and a conjunction (*and, but, or, for, nor, yet,*

*so*). Sometimes you have to change the order of the words.

Lynn's job was transferred, and she moved from Minneapolis.

The concert seemed unending, for it lasted almost until midnight.

We got some gas, and then we headed off to Omaha.

- By turning one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause. To do this you need to add a subordinating conjunction where it fits in the sentence. This can usually be done in several different ways by rewording the clauses or by using different subordinating conjunctions. Remember the list of subordinating conjunction you saw earlier in this lesson?

Lynn moved from Minneapolis because her job was transferred.

When her job was transferred,

Lynn moved from Minneapolis.

Since the concert lasted almost until midnight, it seemed unending.

The concert seemed unending because it lasted until almost midnight.

After we got some gas, we headed off to Omaha.

We headed off to Omaha after we got some gas.

*Practice*

Choose the answers that include *only* complete sentences. Watch for fragments as well as run-ons. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

1. a. The huge northern pike snapped my line. And took my favorite lure.

b. The huge northern pike snapped my line and took my favorite lure.

2. a. Cathy is a good organizer. She chairs the newly formed committee.

b. Cathy is a good organizer she chairs the newly formed committee.

**3. a.** The lights were on in the house we assumed you were at home.

b. The lights were on in the house. We assumed you were at home.

**4. a.** Andy showed a great deal of promise. After only his first month of work.

b. Andy showed a great deal of promise after only his first month of work.

**5. a.** You will find the manual inside the right-hand drawer of my desk.

b. You will find the manual. Inside the right-hand drawer of my desk.

6. a. Sally needs additional time to complete the project it is more complicated than we thought.

b. Sally needs additional time to complete the project. It is more complicated than we thought.

7. a. After Mavis wrote the program, Sam edited it.

b. Mavis wrote the program Sam edited it.

**8.** a. Bob signed the application he gave it to the interviewer.

b. Bob signed the application, and he gave it to the interviewer.

**9. a.** Edsel was ready for the auditor his department's books were all in order.

b. Edsel was ready for the auditor since his department's books were all in order.

**10. a.** Alexis found a part-time job that supplemented her income.

b. Alexis found a part-time job. Supplemented her income.

## Comma Splices

A *comma splice* is the last kind of sentence fault you will study today. It is actually a special type of run-on sentence in which a comma is used in place of a semicolon to join two independent clauses without a conjunction. A comma splice can be corrected by putting a semicolon in place of the comma or by adding a conjunction after the comma.

### Wrong

Henry lives across the street, he has been there for 25 years.

## **Correct**

Henry lives across the street; he has been there for 25 years.

Henry lives across the street, and he has been there for 25 years.

## **Wrong**

Mary heads the search committee, John is the recorder.

## **Correct**

Mary heads the search committee;

John is the recorder.

Mary heads the search committee,  
and John is the recorder.

## **Wrong**

Sid gave demonstrations all summer  
long, he returned in the fall.

## **Correct**

Sid gave demonstrations all summer  
long; he returned in the fall.

Sid gave demonstrations all summer

long, but he returned in the fall.

## *Practice*

Here is an opportunity to apply what you have learned about complete sentences, fragments, run-ons, and comma splices. In each of the numbered items below, decide whether the group of words is a correctly written sentence or sentences (S), a fragment (F), a run-on sentence (ROS), or a comma splice (CS). Write the label next to each number, and then check your work against the answer key at the end of the lesson. You may recognize some of these sentences from the opening example paragraph.

By now, you know how to correct the ones that were not complete sentences.

## Answers

1. b.

2. a.

3. b.

4. b.

5. a.

6. b.

**7. a.**

**8. b.**

**9. b.**

**10. a.**

**11. F**

**12. F**

**13. CS**

**14. F**

**15. F**

**16. F**

**17. CS**

**18. ROS**

**19. S**

**20. F**

# Lesson 4— Commas and Sentence Parts

## Lesson Summary

This lesson and the next one deal with commas. Today's lesson is about how commas relate to the parts of sentences, such as clauses and phrases.

During this lesson you will learn how to use commas in relationship to

sentence parts. As you progress through this lesson, remember what you have learned about sentences and sentence faults in Lesson 3. Before you begin this lesson, see how much you already know about commas and sentence parts. Insert commas where you think they should be in the **Problem** version of the sentences that appear on the next page. Check yourself against the corrected version of the sentences in the **Solution** section that follows.

**Problem**

Startled I looked up to see a bird flying around the office.

After examining the report carefully Edith printed a final copy and mailed it.

As soon as we finish this last round we can quit for the day.

Thinking carefully about the needs of the customers Randall revised his sales plan.

Because production falls during the winter months we will cut one daily shift.

Like a confused duckling Richard waddled through the mound of paperwork.

She spends a great deal of time listening to the problems of her customers who have come to depend on her advice.

Zig Ziglar the last motivational speaker brought the convention crowd to their feet.

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The cable car which I am waiting for is already  
twenty minutes late.

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## **Commas Following Introductory Words**

Use a comma to set off introductory words from the main part of a sentence. The comma keeps the reader from attaching the introductory portion to the main part, thus having to go back and reread the sentence. The commas following introductory elements will save you the chances of misinterpreting what you write. Try writing the following to see how introductory words, phrases, and clauses use commas.

### **Words:**

Disappointed, we left the movie before

Annoyed, the manager stomped back

Amazed, Captain Holland dismissed

## Phrases:

Expecting the worst, we liquidated most of our inventory.

Badly injured in the accident, the president was gone for two months.

Reluctant to make matters any worse, the doctor called in a specialist.

## Clauses:

If we plan carefully for the grand opening, we can increase sales.

While we were eating lunch, an important fax came.

Because we left before the meeting ended, we were not eligible to win a door prize.

Remember the fragment section of Lesson 3? One part of it dealt with subordinate or dependent clauses. Subordinate or dependent clauses are what you see in the last set of examples above. The first part of each sentence, the subordinate or dependent

clause, is followed by a comma. The two parts of each of these sentences could very easily be reversed and the sentence would still make sense.

However, if you reverse the sentence parts, making the independent clause the first clause in the sentence, you would NOT need a comma.

### **Subordinate clauses *after* the independent clause:**

We can increase sales if we plan carefully for the grand opening.

An important fax came while we were eating lunch.

We were not eligible to win a door prize because we left before the meeting ended.

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly written sentence from each of the following pairs.

Answers are provided at the end of the lesson.

1. a. Content for the first time in his life, Bryce returned to school.

b. Content for the first time in his life Bryce returned to school.

**2. a.** As far as I'm concerned we can call this project a success.

b. As far as I'm concerned, we can call this project a success.

**3. a.** I will never forget this moment, as long as I live.

b. I will never forget this moment as long as I live.

**4. a.** By the time we finally made up our minds, the contract had been awarded to someone else.

b. By the time we finally made up

our minds the contract had been awarded to someone else.

**5. a.** Indignant, Mr. Caster left the restaurant without leaving a tip.

b. Indignant Mr. Caster left the restaurant without leaving a tip.

6. a. Wayne was delighted when he found out he'd been awarded the leading role in the show.

b. Wayne was delighted, when he found out he'd been awarded the leading role in the show.

7. a. By designing the program ourselves, we saved a great deal of expense.

b. By designing the program ourselves we saved a great deal of

expense.

**8. a.** I began working for this company, before I was sixteen.

b. Before I was sixteen, I began working for this company.

**9. a.** Dripping with water from head to toe, Angie climbed the bank of the river.

b. Dripping with water from head to toe Angie climbed the bank of the river.

**10. a.** The company honored its oldest

employee at the annual meeting.

b. The company honored its oldest employee, at the annual meeting.

Commas help a reader to know which words belong together. Add commas to the following sentences to help make their meaning clear.

**1.** Inside the house was clean and tastefully decorated.

**2.** After running the greyhounds settled back into their boxes.

**3.** Alone at night time seems endless.

**4.** As he watched the game slowly came to an end.

You should have marked the sentences like this:

**1.** Inside, the house was clean and tastefully decorated.

**2.** After running, the greyhounds settled back into their boxes.

**3.** Alone at night, time seems endless.

**4.** As he watched, the game slowly came to an end.

## Commas with Appositives

An *appositive* is a word or group of words that immediately follows a noun or pronoun. The appositive makes the noun or pronoun clearer or more definite by explaining or identifying it. Look at these examples. The appositives and appositive phrases have been highlighted.

## Commas and Nonrestrictive Clauses

Earlier in this lesson you learned that a *restrictive* clause at the beginning of a sentence is followed by a comma. A clause in any other place in the sentence is not set off by a comma if the clause is an *essential* clause. In some cases, a clause is omitted without changing the basic meaning of the sentence. Such a clause changes the meaning of the sentence. Such a clause is called an *essential* or *restrictive* clause.

### Example:

All drivers **who have had a drunk driving record** have had their licenses revoked.

All drivers should have their license

The highlighted clause is essential because it is changed drastically if the clause is removed. A restrictive clause is not set off with commas.

However, a *nonessential* or *nonrestrictive* clause is set off with commas. A clause is nonrestrictive if it is not essential to the basic meaning of the sentence. If the clause is removed, the basic meaning of the sentence remains the same.

### **Example:**

My father, **who is still farming**, is 74 years old.

My father is 74 years old.

The highlighted clause is nonrestrictive. In a sentence, the basic meaning of the sentence is usually conveyed by the main clause. Restrictive clauses usually begin with one of these subordinating conjunctions: *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, or *that*. (Technical grammar says that the correct conjunction for a restrictive clause is *that*, but in practice many writers use *which*, but in practice many writers use *which*.)

## *Practice*

Each of the sentences in the table below contains a highlighted clause. Write R in the box at the right if the clause is restrictive and N if the clause is nonessential. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**11. Matt who loves to play video games is my brother.**

computer science career.

**12.** My grandfather **who was born in Berlin** has a German accent.

**13.** James **who is very shy** had a great deal of confidence in his first speech.

**14.** The hotel pays the parking ramp fees for **registered guest**.

**15.** People **who are born on February 29** are rarer than the rest of us.

**16.** Animals **that have backbones** are called vertebrates.



**17. Nicotine which is present in tobacco is a powerful poison.**

**18. Many Scandinavian names end with -son, which mean son of.**

**19. We live on Fleur Drive which is right.**

**20. Mrs. Olson is not a teacher who takes.**

**Review**

This next exercise reviews everything you have learned so far to add capital letters and commas to make sense of the **Problem** version of the passage below. Compare your work against the **Solution** version of the passage.

## Problem

even though peter liked his job a great deal he always looked forward to his summer vacation it was the highlight of his year usually he spent two weeks in the middle of july at camp wi wi ta which was forty miles from his home he was responsible for six

## Solution

Even though Peter liked his job a great deal, he always looked forward to his summer vacation. It was the highlight of his year. Usually he spent two weeks in the middle of July at Camp Wi Wi Ta, which was forty miles from his home. He was responsible for six

physically challenged children for  
24 hrs a day for two wks how he  
loved camp

peter took the counseling job one  
he loved dearly very seriously  
each morning he rose before the  
first child awoke and never went  
to bed until the last of his kids  
went to sleep at night the best part  
of the job was challenging the  
kids to do things for themselves  
peter would insist that they comb  
their hair or cut their own food  
even if they begged for help the  
camp dean and some of the other  
counselors thought peter was  
slacking on the job but he didn't

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knowing that his kids left camp  
more capable and confident than  
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## Skill Building Until

As you've seen in this lesson, omitting commas or elements or wrongly placing commas are common errors that lead to humorous misreadings. Write some sentences that are hard to read without commas, like the ones that were moved closer." Then correct them by adding commas.

### Answers

1. a.

**2. b.**

**3. b.**

**4. a.**

**5. a.**

**6. a.**

**7. a.**

**8. b.**

**9. a.**

**10.** a.

**11.** N Matt, who loves to play video games, has a science career.

**12.** N My grandfather, who was born in England, has a British accent.

**13.** N James, who is very shy, had a great speech.

**14.** R No commas are needed.

**15.** R No commas are needed.

**16.** R No commas are needed.

**17. N** Nicotine, which is present in tobacco, is a poison.

**18. N** Many Scandinavian names end with *son* or *daughter*, which means *son of*.

**19. N** We live on Fleur Drive, which is a residential street.

**20. R** No commas are needed.

# Lesson 5— Commas that Separate

## Lesson Summary

Besides setting off sentence parts, commas are used in many other situations. This lesson reviews the many instances in which you should use commas to separate sentence elements.

Commas are used to separate or clarify relationships between sentence

parts in order to make the meaning of a sentence clear and easy to grasp. In this lesson you'll learn how to use commas to separate independent clauses, items in a series, items in a date or address, two or more adjectives preceding a noun, and contrasting elements and words that interrupt the flow of thought in a sentence. The last section of the lesson explains how to use commas in the greetings and closings of a friendly letter.

Begin by seeing how much you already know about commas that separate. Add commas where you think they are needed to the **Problem** column on the

next page. Check yourself against the corrected version in the **Solution** column. Try to identify the rules that apply to those you missed as you go through the lesson.

## Problem

Dear Aunt Jan

I hate to give you my whole life story so I'll start halfway through. When I began my first full-time job I was twenty-one years old a freshly scrubbed college graduate. I worked as an English teacher at Sioux Valley Schools 721 Straight Row Drive Linn Grove Iowa. My first day of teacher workshops was August 28 1976 and I

came armed with a nice clean notebook a pen a pencil and a new three-ring binder. I expected a day of meetings but I got nothing of the sort. The only time the entire staff got together was at noon when the principal announced that the parents group had set up a lunch for us in the cafeteria. What a feast: fresh sweet corn vine-ripened tomatoes new potatoes and grilled hamburgers. The president of the school board cooked the burgers nothing less than prime Iowa beef to perfection. It was a first day as you might imagine that I will never forget. I'm looking forward to your next letter.

Sincerely

## **Commas with Independent Clauses Joi**

As you may recall from Lesson 3, an *inde* that could stand alone as a complete sentence *and, but, or, for, nor, so, or yet*. Sometimes

more independent clauses to form a compound sentence. If a conjunction joins the clauses, place a comma after the first clause. The commas and conjunctions are highlighted in the following examples.

### **Examples:**

I went to bed early last night, **so** I felt rested this morning.

The city's economic situation has improved, **but** there are still

neighborhoods where many people depend on the generosity of others in order to live.

Susan worked through lunch, **and** now she is able to leave the office early.

If independent clauses are joined *without* conjunction, they are separated by a semicolon instead of a comma.

### **Examples:**

I went to bed early last night; I felt rested this morning.

The city's economic situation has improved; however, there are still neighborhoods where many people depend on the generosity of others in order to live.

Susan worked through lunch; now she is able to leave the office early.

### *Practice*

Use commas and semicolons to correctly punctuate the following sentences. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**1.** You can safely view an eclipse through the viewing glass of a welding helmet or you can look through a piece of overexposed film.

**2.** The prisoner showed no remorse as the guilty verdict was announced nor did the tears of the victim's family arouse any emotion.

**3.** The young calf put its head over the fence and it licked my hand and sucked on my fingers.

**4.** Icebergs in the Antarctic are flat and smooth but those in the Arctic are rough.

**5.** I understand your position on this issue I still believe you are dead wrong.

**6.** I like Sam he likes me for we are best of friends.

**7.** The inventory is valued at one million dollars but it's not enough to cover our debt.

**8.** If you know of anyone with data processing experience encourage him or her to apply for this new position.

## Commas to Separate Items in a Series

Commas are used to separate items in lists of similar words, phrases, or clauses in order to make the material easier for a reader to understand. The last item in a series is also usually preceded by a conjunction. Strictly speaking, no comma is needed before the conjunction. (However, many writers—some test writers included—prefer to use a comma before the final conjunction to avoid confusion.)

## **Examples:**

Al, Jane, Herbert, and Willis all applied for the promotion.

The old Tempo's engine squealed loudly, shook violently, and ground to a halt.

The instructions clearly showed how to assemble the equipment, how to load the software, and how to boot the system.

If each item in the series is separated by a conjunction, no commas are needed.

## **Example:**

Billie and Charles and Cameron  
performed at the company  
Christmas party.

## **Commas to Separate Items in a Date or an Address**

When giving a complete date in the format *month-day-year*, put a comma on either side of the year. When giving a date that is only a month and year, no comma is needed.

Use a comma to separate each element

of an address, such as the street address, city, state, and country. A comma is also used after the state or country if the sentence continues after the address.

### **Examples:**

We moved from Fayetteville,  
North Carolina, on May 16, 1993.

Since November 1994, Terry has  
lived at 654 36th Street, Lincoln,  
Nebraska.

Dwana attended Drake University,  
Des Moines, Iowa, both fall 1994

and spring 1995.

## *Practice*

Add commas and endmarks where they are needed to the following sentences. Use not only what you are learning in this lesson but also what you learned in Lesson 4. Answers appear at the end of the lesson.

**9.** After he ran into the mayor's car with his truck Adam used his cellular phone to call the police his doctor his lawyer and his insurance agent.

**10.** The homegrown philosopher who

lives next door at 251 Acorn Street  
Libertyville Kansas claims to know  
exactly who invented the wheel sliced  
bread and kissing.

**11.** Estelle was born on January 31 1953 and Arun was born on June 30 1960.

**12.** Looking for a solution to the printing problem Karissa asked an older employee questioned the supervisor and finally consulted the printer manual.

**13.** Baruch brought a jello salad to the potluck Shannon brought peanuts M & M's mints and pretzels.

## Commas to Separate Adjectives

Use commas to separate two or more equally important adjectives.

### Examples:

Alex avoided the **friendly, talkative, pleasant** boy sitting next to him at school.

The carpenter repaired the floor with **dark, aged, oak** flooring.

The reporter spoke with several **intense, talented** high school athletes.

Pay close attention to the last sentence above. You'll notice that the words *several*, *high*, and *school* are also adjectives modifying *athletes*. Not all adjectives modifying the same word are equally important. Only those of equal importance are separated with a comma. If you apply one or both of these tests, you can easily tell whether a comma is needed:

- Change the order of the adjectives. If the sentence reads just as clearly, separate the adjectives with a comma. If the sentence becomes unclear or sounds awkward, do not use a comma. The first two example sentences above make sense even if the position of the

adjectives is changed. The last example sentence makes no sense if you change the order of any of the adjectives other than *intense* and *talented*. Therefore, those are the only adjectives separated by a comma.

✓ Alex avoided the **talkative, friendly, pleasant** boy sitting next to him at school.

✓ The carpenter repaired the floor with **aged, dark, oak** flooring.

✗ The reporter spoke with **intense, several, high, talented,**

## **school** athletes.

•A second, equally effective test is to place *and* between the adjectives. If the sentence still reads well, then use commas between the adjectives. If the sentence sounds unclear or awkward, do not use commas. Again, this works with the first two example sentences, but in the last sentence, *and* makes sense only between *intense* and *talented*. Try these two tests with the following sentences. Where do commas go?

We bought an **antique wrought iron** daybed.

The envelope contained **three**  
**crisp clean brand new** hundred  
dollar bills.

You should have punctuated the sentences like this:

We bought an **antique, wrought iron** daybed.

The envelope contained **three crisp, clean, brand new** hundred dollar bills.

## **Commas to Separate Other Elements of a Sentence**

- Use commas to separate contrasting or opposing elements in a sentence. The comma functions as a signal to the reader: What follows is an opposite idea. It makes the idea easier for the reader to grasp.

## **Examples:**

We searched the entire house, **but found nothing.**

We need strong intellects, **not strong bodies,** to resolve this problem.

The racers ran slowly at first,

**quickly at the end.**

We expected to meet the President, **not a White House aide.**

- Use commas to separate words or phrases that interrupt the flow of thought in a sentence.

**Examples:**

The deadline, **it seemed clear,** simply could not be met.

We came to rely, **however,** on the kindness and generosity of the

neighbors.

The alternative route, **we discovered**, was faster than the original route.

- Whenever the name of the person being addressed is included in a sentence, it should be set off by commas.

## **Examples:**

**Dave**, we wanted you to look at this layout before we sent it to printing.

We wanted you to look at this layout, **Dave**, before we sent it to printing.

We wanted you to look at this layout before we sent it to printing, **Dave**.

- Mild exclamations included in a sentence are also set off with commas.

### **Examples:**

**Well**, that was certainly a pleasant surprise.

**Yes**, I'll call you as soon as we get

the information.

**Heavens**, that was a long-winded speaker.

- Use a comma after the greeting and closing of a friendly letter.

**Examples:**

Dear Uncle Jon,

Sincerely yours,

Yours truly,



## *Practice*

Choose the correctly punctuated version of each of the following sets of sentences. Keep in mind what you learned about commas in the previous lesson.

**14.** a. No, I haven't received a reply just yet, but I expect one any day.

b. No I haven't received a reply just yet, but I expect one any day.

c. No, I haven't received a reply just yet but I expect one any day.

**15.** a. My steak was burned to a crisp, the burger, on the other hand, was dripping with blood.

b. My steak was burned to a crisp; the burger, on the other hand, was dripping with blood.

c. My steak was burned to a crisp, the burger, on the other hand was dripping with blood.

**16.** a. Well, Sancha, I wonder if Mindy made it to her interview on time.

b. Well, Sancha I wonder if Mindy made it to her interview on time.

c. Well Sancha, I wonder if Mindy made it to her interview on time.

**17.** a. When we go on vacation, we need to remember our clothing fishing equipment and cameras.

b. When we go on vacation we need to remember our clothing, fishing equipment, and cameras.

c. When we go on vacation, we need to remember our clothing, fishing equipment, and cameras.

**18.** a. The correct address I believe is 215 North 34th, Streator, Illinois.

b. The correct address, I believe, is 215 North 34th, Streator, Illinois.

c. The correct address, I believe, is 215, North 34th, Streator, Illinois.

**19.** a. Our newest employee, a transfer from the home office, is the strong silent absent type, I think.

b. Our newest employee, a transfer from the home office is the strong, silent, absent type, I think.

c. Our newest employee, a transfer from the home office, is the strong, silent, absent type, I think.

**20.** a. I'm afraid, Mr. Dobbs, that you lack the qualifications for this job; but we have another that might interest you.

b. I'm afraid Mr. Dobbs, that you lack the qualifications for this job, but we have another that might interest you.

c. I'm afraid, Mr. Dobbs, that you lack the qualifications for this job, but we have another that might interest

you.

## Answers

1. You can safely view an eclipse through the viewing glass of a welding helmet, or you can look through a piece of overexposed film.

2. The prisoner showed no remorse as the guilty verdict was announced, nor did the tears of the victim's family arouse any emotion.

3. The young calf put its head over the fence, and it licked my hand and

sucked on my fingers.

**4.** Icebergs in the Antarctic are flat and smooth, but those in the Arctic are rough.

**5.** I understand your position on this issue; I still believe you are dead wrong.

**6.** I like Sam; he likes me, for we are best of friends.

**7.** The inventory is valued at one million dollars, but it's not enough to cover our debt.

**8.** If you know of anyone with data processing experience, encourage him or her to apply for this new position.

**9.** After he ran into the mayor's car with his truck, Adam used his cellular phone to call the police, his doctor, his lawyer, and his insurance agent.

**10.** The homegrown philosopher who lives next door at 251 Acorn Street, Libertyville, Kansas, claims to know exactly who invented the wheel, sliced bread, and kissing.

**11.** Estelle was born on January 31, 1953, and Arun was born on June 30, 1960.

**12.** Looking for a solution to the printing problem, Karissa asked an older employee, questioned the supervisor, and finally consulted the printer manual.

**13.** Baruch brought a jello salad to the potluck. Shannon brought peanuts, M & M's, mints, and pretzels.

**14. a.**

**15. b.**

**16. a.**

**17. c.**

**18. b.**

**19. c.**

**20. c.**

**21. c.**

**22. a.**

**23. c.**

# Lesson 6— Semicolons and Colons

## Lesson Summary

Many people are confused by semicolons (;) and colons (:), but after you work through this lesson, you'll know exactly what to do with both of them.

You learned to use semicolons to separate independent clauses in Lesson 3. In this lesson you'll review

that use of semicolons, as well as the use of some of the other punctuation marks you have studied so far. You will learn how to use semicolons with conjunctive adverbs and when to separate items in a series with semicolons. You will also learn to use colons in business communications and other settings.

Begin by seeing how much you know. Insert semicolons and colons where you think they are needed in the **Problem** column on the following page. Check yourself against the correct version in the **Solution** column on the right as you go.



## **Problem (continued)**

S

Delaware. Mr. Powell will respond within two days to remedy the alleged problem or to refund the amount in question."

D

re

re

re

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

W

at

Sincerely yours,

S



- To separate independent clauses that are joined by a conjunction. The semicolon indicates a break in thought occurs.

### **Example:**

The team needed new equipment, upon professional advice; but since none could be obtained, they performed as poorly as they had in the past.

- To separate independent clauses connected by a conjunctive adverb. Follow the adverb with a comma. A conjunctive adverb joins independent clauses. Conjunctive adverbs are stronger than regular conjunctions. The first independent clause is followed by a semicolon; the conjunctive adverb is followed by a comma.

### **Examples:**

Our copy of the central warehouse ca  
deadline; **consequently**, our requests

In the book *An American Childhood*,  
experiences as a child; **furthermore**  
about the meaning of life.

## *Practice*

Practice what you've learned by adding semicolons where they are needed in the following sentences. You will find the answers at the end of this lesson.

- 1.** I need a break I've been working for five hours straight.
- 2.** We have branch offices in Paris, France Berlin, Germany Stockholm, Sweden and Budapest, Hungary.

3. We had no problem meeting the deadline however, we were still able to find ways of streamlining production.

4. We ate swiss steak, riced potatoes, steamed broccoli and fresh bread for dinner but we still had room to eat apple pie for dessert.

5. Paige left some of the confidential documents sitting on her desk at work consequently, she worried about their safety all night long.

**Colons**

## *Colons that introduce*

- Use a colon to introduce a list of items, as long as the part before the colon is already a complete sentence.

### **Examples:**

These people were cast in the play: Andrea, Horatio, Thom, Alley and Benito.

We packed these items for the trip: cameras, dress clothes, scuba equipment, and beach wear.

- Do not use a colon if the list of items

complements a verb; in other words, if it completes the meaning begun by the verb. Look at the sample sentences from above rewritten in such a way that a colon is not necessary.

### **Examples:**

The people cast in the play were Kristin, Horatio, Thom, Alley, and Benito.

For our trip we packed cameras, dress clothes, scuba equipment, and beach wear.

- Use a colon to introduce a formal

quotation.

**Example:**

John F. Kennedy ended the speech with these notable words: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

- Use a colon to emphasize a word, phrase, or clause that adds particular emphasis to the main body of a sentence. Again, the part before the colon should already be a complete sentence.

### **Example:**

The financial problems our company has been experiencing have been caused by one thing: poor planning. We were missing a vital piece of information: how the basic product design differed from

last year's model.

## ***Colons that show a Subordinate Relationship***

Use a colon to show a subordinate relationship in the following cases:

- Between two sentences when the second explains the first.

### **Examples:**

Brenton shouted and threw his fists in the air: He had just set a new world's record.

Nicole put the check into her scrapbook rather than cashing it: It was the first check she had ever earned.

Scott ignored the phone: He knew it was a salesman for whom he had no time.

- Between the title and the subtitle of a book.

## **Examples:**

Internet Starter Kit: A Complete  
Guide to Cyberspace

# Beyond 2000: A Futuristic View of Time

## O Death, Where is Thy Sting: Tales from the Other Side

- Between volume and page number or between chapter and verse.

### **Examples:**

World Book Encyclopedia V: 128

*New Age Journal of Medicine* IX:  
23

John 3:16

Genesis 1:1

Psalms 23:2

- Between hour and minute.

### **Examples:**

12:53 A.M.

2:10 P.M.

- After the greeting of a business letter.  
You learned that commas are used after greetings in personal or friendly

letters. A colon signals the reader that what is to follow is a business matter, something to be taken seriously. This is particularly true if you include the position, but not the name of the person to whom the letter is addressed.

However, even in a business letter, the closing is followed by a comma.

## **Examples:**

Dear Mr. Strange:

Cordially yours,

Dear Operations Manager:

Respectfully submitted,

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly punctuated version in each of the following sets of sentences. You will find the correct answers at the end of the lesson.

**6. a.** I found an outline of the procedure in the policy manual, Volume 3:17.

b. I found an outline of the procedure, in the policy manual, Volume 3:17.

c. I found an outline of the procedure in the policy manual Volume 3,17.

7. a. The tornado destroyed most of the buildings on our farm, however the house was untouched by the violent storm.

b. The tornado destroyed most of the buildings on our farm; however the house was untouched by the violent storm.

c. The tornado destroyed most of the buildings on our farm; however, the house was untouched by the violent

storm.

**8. a.** After a week in the woods I need: a towel, a washcloth, a toothbrush, and a bar of soap.

**b.** After a week in the woods I need a towel, a washcloth, a toothbrush, and a bar of soap.

**c.** After a week in the woods I need; a towel, a washcloth, a toothbrush, and a bar of soap.

**9. a.** Dear Subscriber,

Please renew your subscription

by 12,00 A.M. on January 5, 1996, to receive the special bonus.

b. Dear Subscriber:

Please renew your subscription by 12:00 A.M. on January 5, 1996, to receive the special bonus.

c. Dear Subscriber;

Please renew your subscription by 12:00 A.M. on January 5, 1996 to receive the special bonus.

**10.** a. Each day a new shift begins at 8:00 A.M., 4:00 P.M., and 12:00 A.M.

b. Each day a new shift begins at 8:00 A.M.; 4:00 P.M., and 12:00 A.M.

c. Each day a new shift begins at 8:00, A.M.; 4:00, P.M.; and 12:00, A.M.

**11.** a. I like to play football, a physically challenging sport; chess, a game of logic and strategy; Super Mario World, a mindless Super Nintendo game; and the guitar, a relaxing instrument.

b. I like to play football, a physically challenging sport: chess, a game of logic and strategy: Super

Mario World, a mindless Super Nintendo game: and the guitar, a relaxing instrument.

c. I like to play football a physically challenging sport, chess a game of logic and strategy. Super Mario World a mindless Super Nintendo game, and the guitar a relaxing instrument.

**12. a.** They learned the following information:  
suspect's name; the suspect's home address;  
and the suspect's current employer.

b. They learned the following information:  
suspect's name, the suspect's home address;  
and the suspect's current employer.

c. They learned the following information:  
suspect's name, the suspect's home address;  
and the suspect's current employer.

Take a look at some of the letters or communications received or written recently. Examine them and use endmarks, commas, semicolons and correct them. It will be good practice.

## **Answers**

**1.** I need a break; I've been working for five

**2.** We have branch offices in Paris, France; Stockholm, Sweden; and Budapest, Hungary.

**3.** We had no problem meeting the deadline. I was able to find ways of streamlining product

**4.** We ate swiss steak, riced potatoes, steamed

for dinner; but we still had room to eat a

**5.** Paige left some of the confidential doc work; consequently, she worried about th

**6.** a.

**7.** c.

**8.** b.

**9.** b.

**10.** a.

**11.** a.

**12. c.**

# Lesson 7— Apostrophes and Dashes

## Lesson Summary

This lesson will put you in control of apostrophes (') and dashes (—), two of the most commonly misused marks of punctuation.

Apostrophes communicate important information in written language. Dashes, when used sparingly, add

emphasis. Before you begin the lesson, see how much you already know. Add apostrophes—and one pair of dashes—where you think they belong in the **Problem** column on the following page. Check yourself with the **Solution** column.

## Problem

My grandfather is quite fond of telling stories from the late 30s and early 40s. The Great Depressions effect was beginning to diminish in the small South Dakota town where he lived. He inherited a 160-acre farm after his father-in-laws death in 1938. Little of the farms cropland had produced anything in the years prior to 38. During his first two years as a landowner, he netted a small profit.

With the droughts end in 40 came the beginning of good crops. Even with the governments market quotas, he was able to make enough money to buy another quarter of land. He counted on his sons help to farm the addl land, but they went off to Europe when World War II broke out. He purchased a steam engine tractor one of John Deeres first and farmed the 320 acres by himself. That was the beginning of his most successful years as a farmer.

## **Apostrophes**

### ***To Show Possession***

Use an apostrophe to show possession. The examples are *possessive adjectives*: The

**Singular nouns (add 's)**

**Plural nouns (add 's)**

**boy's** toy (The toy is the **boy's**.)

**boys'** bicycles

**child's** play

**kids'** beds

**lady's** coat

**ladies'** shoes

**dentist's** aide

**players'** names



## *Practice*

From each set below, choose the option in which apostrophes are used correctly. You will find the answers to each set of questions at the end of the lesson.

1. a. An employee's motivation is different from an owner's.
  
- b. An employees' motivation is different from an owners'.

**2. a.** Employees reward's differ from an owners'.

b. Employees' rewards differ from an owner's.

**3. a.** Elaine has worked three years as a physicians assistant.

b. Elaine has worked three years as a physician's assistant.

**4. a.** The Mens' Issue's group meets every Saturday morning.

b. The Men's Issues group meets every Saturday morning.

**5.** a. The companies' sales force has doubled in recent years, and the credit is your's.

b. The company's sales force has doubled in recent years, and the credit is yours.

**6.** a. The most efficient method is her's.

b. The most efficient method is hers.

**7. a.** After five years' experience, we earn four weeks' paid vacation.

b. After five year's experience, we earn four week's paid vacation.

**8. a.** Pat and Janice's proposal requires a month's work.

b. Pat's and Janice's proposal requires a months' work.

**9. a.** The computer supply store's top-selling printer is Hewlett Packards latest model.

b. The computer supply store's top-

selling printer is Hewlett Packard's latest model.

**10.** a. Ms. Jones's boutique sells the same products as Mr. Smith's.

b. Ms. Jones' boutique sells the same products as Mr. Smiths'.

## *To Show Omission*

Use an apostrophe to show that letters or numbers have been omitted.

### **Examples:**

Morton **doesn't** (does not) live here anymore.

speeding ticket.

**Who's** (who is) on first?

I just **can't** (cannot) understand this memo.

The task force discussed the **nat'l** (national) debt.

My first car was a **'67** (1967) Chevy.

Grandpa tells stories about life in the **'40s** (1940s).

## **Dashes**

Remember to distinguish a dash from a hyphen when typing. A dash is

**two** hyphens.

- Use a dash to mark a sudden break in thought or to insert a comment.

### **Examples:**

Here is your sandwich and your  
—Look out for that bee!

I remember the day—what  
middle-aged person doesn't—that  
President Kennedy was shot.

John is sorry—we all are—  
about your unfortunate accident.

- Use a dash to emphasize explanatory material. You don't have to use a dash, but you may.

### **Examples:**

Knowing yourself—your thoughts, values, and dreams—is the most important knowledge.

"The writer is by nature a dreamer—a conscious dreamer."—*Carson McCullers*

We spend our summers in Canada—Ontario, to be precise.

- Use a dash to indicate omitted letters or words.

### **Examples:**

"Oh, sh—, I can't believe I forgot to mail that package!"

"Hello?—Yes, I can hear you just fine.—Of course—I think I can.—Good!—I'll see you later.—"

- Use a dash to connect a beginning phrase to the rest of the sentence.

### **Examples:**

Honesty, integrity, tenacity—these are marks of motivated salespeople.

Nashville, Tennessee; Olympia, Washington; Ocala, Iowa—these are the prospective locations.

## *Practice*

Choose the option in which dashes and other punctuation are used correctly in each of the following sets.

**11.** a. We have only one choice—to open a new branch office in the suburbs.

b. We have only one choice to open a new branch office—in the suburbs.

**12. a.** My suggestion—just in case you're interested, is to apply for a promotion.

b. My suggestion—just in case you're interested—is to apply for a promotion.

**13. a.** He is the most unreasonable, I guess I should keep my opinions to myself.

b. He is the most unreasonable—I guess I should keep my opinions to myself.

**14. a.** I can't find that d— pocket

organizer that I worked—Oh, here it is.

b. I can't find that d— pocket organizer that I worked, Oh, here it is.

**15.** a. Brains, brawn, determination—that's what I demand from my people.

b. Brains, brawn, determination: that's what I demand from my people.

## **Practice and Review**

Check yourself with these sample test questions. These extremely difficult questions cover much of what you

have learned about punctuation so far. Look at the items carefully. Which of the following options is punctuated correctly?

**16.** a. Although it may seem strange, my partners purpose in interviewing Dr. E. S. Sanders Jr., was to eliminate him as a suspect in the crime.

b. Although it may seem strange my partner's purpose in interviewing Dr. E. S. Sanders, Jr. was to eliminate him, as a suspect in the crime.

c. Although it may seem strange, my partner's purpose in interviewing Dr. E. S. Sanders, Jr., was to eliminate

him as a suspect in the crime.

d. Although it may seem strange, my partner's purpose in interviewing Dr. E. S. Sanders, Jr. was to eliminate him, as a suspect in the crime.

**20.** a. James Autry, Steven Covey, Madeli responsible for my management style, a c personnel philosophy, Covey's process fo organizational principles.

b. James Autry, Steven Covey, Madeli responsible for my management style, a personnel philosophy, Covey's process fo organizational principles.

c. James Autry, Steven Covey, Madeli responsible for my management style, a c personnel philosophy, Coveys process fo organizational principles.

d. James Autry, Steven Covey, Madeli responsible for my management style; a c personnel philosophy; Covey's process for organizational principles.

## **Skill Building Until**

Few people understand the rules of apostrophes. Advertisers are notorious for misusing them, giving special attention to billboards and advertisements in magazines. Look for places where apostrophes are used correctly. Notice places where they are used incorrectly. If your job produces promotional literature, check it for apostrophes. If you have your own literature to see if apostrophes are used correctly.

# Answers

1. a.

2. b.

3. b.

4. b.

5. b.

6. b.

7. a.

**8. a.**

**9. b.**

**10. a.**

**11. a.**

**12. b.**

**13. b.**

**14. a.**

**15. a.**

**16. c.**

**17. d.**

**18. b.**

**19. b.**

**20. a.**

# Lesson 8— Quotation Marks

## Lesson Summary

This lesson covers rules regarding the use of quotation marks, both double and single. Although these marks are most often found in dialogue, they are important in other writing situations as well.

Begin this lesson by seeing how much you already know about quotation

marks. Insert them where you think they belong in the sentences in the **Problem** column on the following page. Some sentences will also need endmarks and commas. Check yourself against the corrected versions of the sentences in the **Solution** column.

## Quotation Marks with Direct Quotations

- Use quotation marks to set off a direct quotation or thought within a sentence or paragraph. This includes quotations that are signed, etched, inscribed, carved, and so on.

### Examples:

Mr. Hurley called our prototype  
"a model of pure genius."

I was certain he said, "Campbells will accept delivery on Tuesday."

"When will help arrive?" I wondered.

The sign clearly read, "No trespassing or hunting."

"Happy and Fulfilled," the headstone read.

- Do *not* use quotation marks for paraphrases or indirect quotations.

## **Examples:**

I was sure Campbells wanted a Tuesday delivery.

I wondered when help would arrive.

The sign said that trespassing and hunting were not allowed.

- Use single quotation marks to set off a quotation within a quotation.

### **Examples:**

"I distinctly heard her say, 'The store opens at 9:00.'" said Gene.

The speaker continued, "I am ever mindful of Franklin Roosevelt's famous words, 'We have nothing to fear but fear itself.' But fear is a terrible thing."

My speech teacher asked, "Does anyone in this room remember the way Jim Nabors used to say, 'Golly'?"

### *A Word About Dialogue*

Correctly punctuating dialogue means understanding how to use quotation marks, commas, and endmarks. Take a close look at the sentences in the dialogue sample below. They include

the basic dialogue structures. The words quoted are called *quotations*, and the words explaining who said the quotations are called *tags*. In the sample below, the tags are highlighted.

1. "I'm really thirsty. Let's grab something to drink," **said Horace.**

2. **Nancy replied,** "I'm thirsty, but I don't have any cash. Do you have some?"

3. "I don't get it," **Horace answered.** "You're the manager with the high-paying job."

4. "Well," **Nancy replied**, "credit cards are all I ever use."

Quoted words are always surrounded by quotation marks. Place quotation marks before a group of quoted words and again at the end.

Tags are punctuated differently depending upon where they appear in the sentence. Whenever the tag follows a quotation, and the quotation is a sentence that would normally be punctuated with a period, use a comma

at the end of the quotation. The period comes at the end of the tag. However, if the quotation is a sentence that would normally be followed with a question mark or an exclamation point, insert the question mark or exclamation point at the end of the quotation. Place a period after the tag. (See sentence 1 on page 73.)

"I'm really thirsty. Let's grab something to drink," said Alvina.

"I'm really thirsty. Do you want to grab something to drink?" asked

Alvina.

"I'm really thirsty. Hold it—a Dairy Queen!" exclaimed Alvina.

Sometimes, the tag precedes the quotation. When this happens, place a comma after the tag. Put quotation marks around the quoted words, capitalize the first word of the quotation, and punctuate the sentence as you would normally. (See sentence 2 on page 73.)

Sometimes, the tag interrupts the quotation. If both the first and second parts of the quotation are complete sentences, the first part of the quotation

is punctuated in the same way as a quotation with the tag at the end. In other words, the period follows the tag. The rest of the quotation is punctuated in the same way as a quotation preceded by a tag. (See sentence 3 on page 73.)

When the tag interrupts the quotation and the sentence, the words preceding the tag begin the thought, and the words following the tag complete the thought. Place quotation marks around the quoted words and follow the first part of the quotation with a comma. Place a comma after the tag (not a period, since the sentence is not completed). Place quotation marks around the last part of the quotation,

but **do not** capitalize the first letter of the quotation. It is not the beginning of a sentence. Punctuate the rest of the sentence as you would normally. (See sentence 4 on page 73.)

**NOTICE:** All of the punctuation is **inside** the quotation marks except the punctuation marks following the tags.

## **Dialogue at a Glance**

- Tag following the quotation mark:

"\_\_\_\_\_, " said Rose.

"\_\_\_\_\_?" asked Rose.

"—————!" exclaimed Rose.

- Tag preceding quotation:

Iris said, "—————."

Iris asked, "—————?"

Iris exclaimed, "—————!"

- Tag between two sentences of a quotation:

"—————," said Lily.

"—————."

"\_\_\_\_\_?" asked Lily.

"\_\_\_\_\_?"

"\_\_\_\_\_!" exclaimed Lily.

"\_\_\_\_\_!"

- Tag interrupting a quotation and a sente

"\_\_\_\_\_, " said Daisy, "\_\_\_\_\_.

"\_\_\_\_\_, " asked Daisy, "\_\_\_\_\_

"\_\_\_\_\_, " exclaimed Daisy, "\_\_\_\_\_

## Other Uses of Quotation Marks

- Use quotation marks to set off unfamiliar words. Quotation marks are sometimes used to refer to words. You often see italics for words used as words.

## **Examples:**

None of us had heard of "chutney" be

He was dubbed "Sir Tagalong" by th

The Scrabble players disagreed over  
term *ptu.*")

- Use quotation marks to indicate irony c  
overusing quotation marks in this way; it

## **Examples:**

When we were camping, our "bathro

Our "guide" never mentioned the pre

The "fun" of surgery begins long befo

- Use quotation marks to set off titles of c  
underlined or italicized.

## **Enclose in quotation marks**

## **Und**

name of a short story or chapter  
of a book

title

name of a T.V. program

nam

title of a poem

title

poet

headline of an article or title of  
a report

name

title of a song

title  
composer

name

## **Punctuating within Quotation Marks**

Here are the rules regarding the use of other punctuation marks.

- Question marks, exclamation points, and

marks if they are part of the quotation. If quotation marks.

## Examples:

The doctor asked, "Can you feel any pain in this area?" [Part of the quotation]

Have you read Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark"? [Not part of the quotation]

"I wish I'd never heard of—" Karen stopped abruptly as Nick walked in the room. [Part of the quotation]

"Stage left," "stage right," "upstage, and "downstage"—I always confused these terms. [Not part of the quotation]

- Periods and commas go **inside** closing quotation marks.

"Let's wait a few minutes," suggested Doris, "before we leave."

- Colons and semicolons go **outside** closing quotation marks.

I can see only one challenge for the speaker of "The Road Less Traveled": ambivalence.

The critic called the latest sculpture an "abomination to sensitive eyes"; the artist was hurt.

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly punctuated version in each of the following sets of sentences. Check for punctuation other than quotation marks also.

1. a. "Have you ever read the story 'The Open Window' by O. Henry?" asked Martha.

b. "Have you ever read the story 'The Open Window' by O. Henry?"

asked Martha.

c. "Have you ever read the story "The Open Window" by O. Henry?" asked Martha.

2. a. Did you know it was Winston Churchill who called Russia "a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma"?

b. Did you know it was "Winston Churchill" who called Russia "a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma?"

c. Did you know it was Winston

Churchill who called Russia "a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma?"

3. a. After reading a review of Toy Story, I wanted to see the movie.

b. After reading a review of Toy Story, I wanted to see the movie.

c. After reading a review of "Toy Story," I wanted to see the movie.

4. a. Leaving five minutes early on Friday was our "reward."

b. Leaving five minutes early on

Friday was our "reward".

c. Leaving five minutes early on Friday was our 'reward.'

**5.** a. "Megabyte," "baud speed," "internal RAM"—these are all examples of technical terms.

b. "Megabyte," "baud speed," "internal RAM—" these are all examples of technical terms.

c. "Megabyte", "baud speed", "internal RAM"—these are all examples of technical terms.



## Answers

1. b.

2. a.

3. b.

4. a.

5. a.

6. c.

**7. a.**

**8. c.**

**9. a.**

**10. c.**

# Lesson 9— "Designer" Punctuation

## Lesson Summary

This lesson covers some of the less commonly used punctuation marks, including hyphens, parentheses, brackets, ellipses, and diagonal slashes. While these marks aren't necessary all that often, when they are necessary it's important to use them correctly.

The punctuation marks covered in this

lesson—hyphens, parentheses, brackets, ellipses, and diagonals—are not often used in regular writing. However, they serve very specific purposes. Knowing and understanding their functions gives a writer an advantage in communicating ideas. Since most of these rules are so specialized that few people know them, we'll begin immediately with the lesson rather than with an assessment of your current knowledge. The last part of the lesson discusses using numbers in written text.

## **Hyphens**

The main purpose of a hyphen (-) is to

join words in creating compound nouns or adjectives. Hyphens signal words that work together for a single purpose.

## Parentheses

- Use parentheses to enclose explanatory material that interrupts the normal flow of the sentences and is only marginally related to the text.

Thirty-sixth Street (a party street if there ever was one) is a fun place to live.

Our neighbors threw a huge party on New Year's Eve. (Fortunately, we were invited.)

Unfortunately, another set of neighbors (they were not invited) called the police to complain about the noise.

We party-goers (how were we to know?) were completely surprised by the officers.

Notice the last three sentences. Each set of parentheses contains a complete sentence. If the parenthetical construction comes at the end of a sentence, it is punctuated as its own sentence within the parentheses. On the other hand, if it comes within another sentence, no capital letters or periods

are necessary. However, if the parenthetical construction in the middle of another sentence is a sentence that would normally require a question mark or exclamation point, include that punctuation.

- Use parentheses to enclose information when accuracy is essential.

The two sons of Richard Hannika (Scott and William) are sole heirs to his fortune.

We hereby agree to sell the heirloom for sixty-three dollars (\$63.00).

- Use parentheses to enclose letters or numbers marking a division.

This lesson includes several little-used, often-misused punctuation marks: (a) hyphens, (b) parentheses, (c) brackets, (d) diagonals, and (e) ellipses.

Your task consists of three steps: (1) locating information, (2) writing a report, and (3) delivering a presentation about your findings.

## **Brackets**

- Use brackets to enclose parenthetical material within parentheses.

Brandi planned to work as an aeronautic engineer (she completed an internship at National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA]) as soon as she completed her doctoral work.

- Use brackets to enclose words inserted into a quotation.

"The next head nurse [Shawna DeWitt] will face the challenge of operating the floor with a reduced

staff."

- Use brackets around the word *sic* to show that an error in a quotation was made by the original writer or speaker.

"Unless we heel [sic] the nation's economic woes, social problems will continue to mount."

## Ellipses

Points of ellipsis look like periods, but they do not function as endmarks. Type three periods to form ellipses. These marks indicate omitted material or long pauses.

- Use ellipses to show that quoted material has been omitted. If the omission comes at the end of a sentence, follow the ellipses with a period.

"Four-score and seven years ago . . . equal."

"We hold these truths to be self-evident . . . ."

- Use ellipses to indicate a pause or hesitation.

And the winner for "Best Actor" is . . . Dustin Hoffman.

I think that adds up to . . . exactly eighty-three dollars.

## **Diagonals**

Much like the hyphen, a diagonal is a mark used to join words or numbers. The most frequent use of the diagonal is with the phrase *and/or*, which shows that the sentence refers to one or both of the words being joined.

For breakfast we can make bacon and/or French toast.

Vinegar and/or egg whites added to plain water will make an excellent hair rinse that leaves hair soft and silky.

- Use a diagonal to separate numbers in a fraction.

Normally, it takes us 3 1/2 hours to sort the bulk mail at the end of the week.

You'll need a 1 5/8-inch wrench for this nut.

- Use a diagonal to show line divisions in poetry.

"Goodnight, goodnight, parting is  
such sweet sorrow / That I shall  
say good night 'till it be morrow./

Sleep dwell upon thine eyes and  
peace in thy breast! / Would I  
were sleep and peace so sweet to

rest!"

- Use a diagonal to indicate *per* or *divided by*.

The cars in the new fleet average over 25 miles/gallon.

Shares are calculated in this way:  
net profit/number of shareholders.

## **Numbers**

A few rules guide the use of numbers in writing. In journalistic writing, numbers are preferable to words because they are easier to identify and

read. However, a number at the beginning of a sentence is always written as a word. In more formal writing, follow the conventions listed on the next page.

- Use Arabic rather than Roman numerals: *1, 2, 3, 4* rather than *I, II, III, IV*.
- If a number can be written as one or two words, write it as a word. Otherwise, write the numeral: 8, twenty-six, 124, three hundred, 8,549, five million.
- Always write a number at the beginning of sentence as a word even if it is more than two words.

## *Practice*

Add hyphens where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. According to your brain X rays, I see little justification for you to act like a know it all.
2. Father Tan, now an ex priest, reevaluated his theology and became a pro life activist.
3. Syheed's well grounded arguments impressed the crowd of forty five.
4. Ned's time in the four hundred meter freestyle was twenty seven

hundredths of a second off the world record time.

**5.** Following a two hour business venture involving a lemonade stand, the ten year old boy had made a five dollar and fifty cent profit.

Add hyphens, parentheses, brackets, ellipses, and diagonals where they are needed in the following sentences.

**6.** Muhammad Ali few people remember him as Cassius Clay wrote a poem describing himself as someone who could " . . . float like a butterfly sic, sting like a bee."

**7.** Year end bonuses will come in the form of dollars and or vacation days for about three fifths  $\frac{3}{5}$  of our staff.

**8.** Before leaving today, please 1 collect the latest sales data 2 add up all the figures and 3 leave them in my left hand drawer.

## Skill Building Until

Look for examples of the punctuation marks you read today. Since they are used less frequently, you probably won't see them as often. When you do, note how the mark is used. Be especially aware of parentheses, brackets, diagonals, and ellipses in advertisements. Make sure they have been used correctly.

## Answers

1. According to your brain X-rays, I see you're not like a know-it-all.

**2.** Father Tan, now an ex-priest, re-eval pro-life activist.

**3.** Syheed's well-grounded arguments in five.

**4.** Ned's time in the four-hundred-meter hundredths of a second off the world record.

**5.** Following a two-hour business venture the ten-year-old boy had made a five-dollar profit.

**6.** Muhammad Ali (few people remember a poem describing himself as someone who "flies like a butterfly [sic], sting like a bee.")

**7.** Year-end bonuses will come in the few days for about three-fifths ( $3/5$ ) of our staff.

**8.** Before leaving today, please (1) collect up all the figures, and (3) leave them in my office.

# Lesson 10— Verb Tense

## Lesson Summary

Verbs—words for actions or states of being—are what drive written language and give it life. Because verbs are so important, mistakes involving verbs really stand out. Those mistakes are also often tested on civil exams. This lesson and the next two will help you avoid some of the most common errors with verbs.

Writers use words to establish their credibility. Few things cast doubt on a writer's believability as much as misusing words—especially verbs. Incorrect verb forms call special attention to themselves and bring the writer's education and intelligence into question. Furthermore, civil service exams often test your knowledge of how to use verbs and avoid errors involving verbs.

This lesson explains how to use verbs correctly and highlights a few of the most common mistakes writers make. See how many of the seven errors in verb usage you can find in the **Problem** version of the passage on the

following page. In the **Solution** column, the paragraph is rewritten with the correct verb forms. As you go through the lesson, try to apply the rules you learn to these corrections.

## Problem

When I was sixteen, my grandmother gave me an heirloom ring that her grandmother had gave her. It was a polished garnet set in hammered silver with two rubies on either side of it. I could of sold it for a small fortune last week. An antique dealer come through town and heard about my ring. He asks to see it. His eyes nearly popped out of his head as he examined it. If I wasn't such a sentimental person, I might have parted with it. But a treasure like that

wasn't something you should sell.

## Principal Parts of Verbs

Verbs have three principal parts:

- **Present**—the form of the verb that would be used in the present tense.  
\_\_\_\_\_."
- **Past**—the form of the verb that would be used in the past tense.  
\_\_\_\_\_."
- **Past participle**—the form of the verb that would be used in the past perfect tense.  
"Often, I have \_\_\_\_\_."

For most verbs, it's easy to form the three form. Take the verb *look*, for example. *To* Often, *I have looked*. For regular verbs, add *-ed* to the present form. But English is past and past participle in some other wa parts of several often misused verbs.

## THREE PRINCIPAL PARTS OF

**Present**

**Past**

**Past**

do

did

done

go

went

gone

see

saw

seen

drink

drank

drunk

break

broke

broke

bring

brought

brought

choose

chose

chose

know

knew

know

wear

wore

worn

write

wrote

written

*\*Note: Past participles must be preceded by the auxiliary words have, has, or had.*

## *Practice*

Circle the correct form of the verb in each of the following sentences. The answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. The team has certainly (do, did, done) a good job on this presentation.
2. The sales clerk just (throw, threw, thrown) away the opportunity to make a huge commission.

**3.** The senator (speak, spoke, spoken) at the press conference last Monday.

**4.** The phone has (ring, rang, rung) only once today.

**5.** The speaker (come, came) to the point very early in the speech.

**6.** Harriet (see, saw, seen) the prototype for the new product at the convention.

**7.** The company has not yet (begin, began, begun) to manufacture its most current model.

**8.** Has the admitting staff (go, went, gone) to lunch?

**9.** Heather lost a filling when she (bite, bit, bitten) into the piece of hard candy.

**10.** Ben couldn't believe that someone had actually (steal, stole, stolen) his car from the ramp.

## **Consistent Verb Tense**

The tense of a verb tells when an action occurs, occurred, or will occur. Verbs have three basic tenses: present, past, and future. It's important to keep

verb tenses consistent as you write. A passage that begins in present tense should continue in present tense. If it begins in past tense, it should stay in past tense. Do not mix tenses.

### **Wrong:**

Dan **opened** the car door and **looks** for his briefcase.

### **Correct:**

Dan **opened** the car door and **looked** for his briefcase.

### **Wrong:**

When we **increase** maintenance services, we **reduced** repair costs.

**Correct:**

When we **increase** maintenance services, we **reduce** repair costs.

However, sometimes a writer must show another time regardless of the tense in which we allow this, each of these three tenses has progressive, perfect, and progressive perfect forms.

## *Present Tense Forms*

**Present tense** shows action that happens routinely. The **present progressive** tense shows action that is happening now. An auxiliary verb (*am, is, or are*) plus the **present participle** (progressive form) of the verb. The **present perfect** tense shows action that began in the past. An auxiliary verb (*has or have*) plus the **past participle** form of the verb. The **present perfect progressive** tense also shows action that began in the past and continues into the present. Auxiliary verbs (*have been or has been*) plus the **present participle** form of the verb.

written in its *-ing* form (progressive form

## PRESENT TENSE

### Present

### Progressive

### Perfect

shows action  
happening  
now

shows action  
continuing now

shows  
that the  
action  
has  
been  
comple  
the p  
conti

Activists  
*lobby* for  
change.

Activists *are*  
*lobbying* for  
change.

Activists  
*have*  
*lobbied*  
for  
chan

Sulfur  
*pollutes* the  
air.

Sulfur *is*  
*polluting* the  
air.

Sulfur  
*pollutes*  
air.

All the above present tense forms can be constituting a shift in tense. Look at the passage below. The verbs are highlighted, and the tenses are indicated in brackets.

I **am writing** [present progressive] to the EPA about the Mississippi River, from which our city gets its drinking water. For years industrial waste **has** [present perfect] polluted the river's waters, and officials **pay** [present] little attention to the problem. People who live near the river **have** [present perfect progressive] been lobbying for protective legislation. I **have** [present perfect] been waiting for the government [present perfect] to act. I **want** [present] to see the government [present perfect] take action.

## *Past Tense Forms*

**Past tense** shows action that happened in the past of the verb. The **past progressive** tense shows an action in progress in the past. An auxiliary verb (*was* or *were*) precedes the past progressive form of the verb. The **past perfect** tense shows an action completed before some other action in the past or completed before some other action in the past. The auxiliary verb *had* precedes the past participle form of the verb. The **past perfect progressive** tense shows continuing action in the past. The auxiliary verbs *had been* precede the past participle form of the verb.

## PAST TENSE

### Past

### Progressive

occurred in the  
past

continuing  
action in the past

Local officials  
*spoke* to the

Local officials  
*were speaking*  
to the

management.

management

The reporter  
*covered* the  
meetings.

The reporter  
*was covering*  
the meetings.

All of the above past tense forms can be used in a single passage without constituting a shift in tense. The following passage illustrates how this is done. The verbs are underlined and brackets identify the tense.

Last year, local officials **cited** [past] the county for improperly disposing of hazardous waste. They **ignored** [past] the action and **continued** [past] to do so. **They had been doing** [past perfect progressive] this for years. **They had** [past perfect] wasted the same way for

continue. Several months later the res  
drinking water supply. A local envirc  
**tracking** [past perfect progressive] th  
procedures, alerted local officials. Th  
damages, but the company **has** never ]

## *Future Tense Forms*

**Future tense** shows action that has yet to  
*will, would, or shall* precede the present  
**progressive** tense shows continuing actio  
verb phrases *will be, shall be, or would*  
of the verb. The **future perfect** tense sho  
completed at a certain time in the future.  
*have, would have, or will have been* prece  
the verb. The **future perfect progressive**  
that will be completed at a certain time in  
*will have been, would have been, or sha*  
progressive form of the verb.

All of the future tense forms on the table are used together in writing a paragraph. The following paragraph below illustrates how this is done for you, and the brackets identify the tense forms.

Starting next week, we **will reduce** [future] our waste disposal. We **will do** [future] the work because the costs have skyrocketed during the year. The city **will sell** [future] land to us to use for **relocating** [future progressive] in a new area.

# FUTU

## Future

## Progressive

action that will  
happen

continuing  
action that will  
happen

*We will begin a  
letterwriting*

*Everyone will  
be writing*

campaign.

letters.

Newspapers *will cover* this case.

Newspapers *will be covering* this case.

with a better business environment. T  
hundred employees out of work. It wo  
dollars spent at local businesses.

By this time next year, nearly one thou  
their jobs. Your business leaders **will**  
progressive] for ways to replace lost  
**meddling** [future progressive] in our  
**portrayed** [future perfect] us all as fo

## *How Verb Tenses Convey Meaning*

Managing verb tense carefully helps write thoughtful use. The examples below illustrate the meaning of a sentence.

### **Example:**

Beth discovered that Nick had left with *gone*.

Beth discovered that Nick had left with *went*.

In the first sentence, because *gone* is the second part of the sentence. So Nick is the subject of the sentence, *went* is in the simple past tense sentence. So this time it's Beth who *went*.

## Example:

Cory told the officer that she had ans

Cory told the officer that she had ans  
pop.

In the first sentence, *drank* is in the same  
Cory was drinking around the same time  
*drunk* matches *had answered*, so in this c  
answered the phone.

## *Have, Not Of*

When forming the various perfect tenses, people sometimes write *of* when they should write *have* probably because they are writing what they hear. *I should've* (*should've* is a contraction of *should have*) sounds a lot like *I should of*. But the proper form in writing is *have*, not *of*.

### **Wrong:**

**I could of** seen the difference if I

had looked more closely.

**Correct:**

I **could have** seen the difference if I had looked more closely.

**Wrong:**

The park ranger **should of** warned the campers about the bears.

**Correct:**

The park ranger **should have** warned the campers about the

bears.

## *Switching Verb Tenses*

Sometimes you have to switch from past tense to present to avoid implying an untruth.

### **Wrong:**

I met the new technician. He **was** very personable. [What happened? Did he die?]

### **Correct:**

I met the new technician. He **is** very personable.

## **Wrong:**

We went to the new Italian restaurant on Vine last night. The atmosphere **was** wonderful. [What happened? Did it burn down during the night?]

## **Correct:**

We went to the new Italian restaurant on Vine last night. The atmosphere **is** wonderful.

Even if a passage is written in past tense, a statement that continues to be true is written in present tense.

## **Examples:**

During Galileo's time few people **believed** [past] that the earth **revolves** [present] around the sun.

The building engineer **explained** [past] to the plumber that the pipes **run** [present] parallel to the longest hallway in the building.

## **Subjunctive Mood**

When Tevya in *Fiddler on the Roof* sings, "If I were a rich man . . . ," he uses the verb *were* to signal that he is, in fact, not a rich man. Normally, the verb *was* would be used with the subject *I*, but *were* serves a special purpose. This is called the subjunctive *were*. It indicates a condition that is contrary to fact.

## Examples:

If I **were** a cat, I could sleep all day about work.

If he **were** more attentive to details, ...

## *Practice*

Circle the correct verb form in each of th

11. Before I opened the door, I (ring, ran,

**12.** By the time I get to Phoenix, he will (letter).

**13.** The scientist explained why Saturn (i

**14.** I would ask for a transfer if I (was, w

**15.** The leaves on the trees have already

**16.** The doctor took my pulse and (measu  
pressure.

**17.** The president wishes he would (of, h  
than a salary increase.

**18.** Boswick wishes he would have orde  
his (is, was) too small.

**19.** Ms. Grey announced that the floor manager would change the work schedules.

**20.** We could cut transportation costs if the company moved the retail outlets.

## **Answers**

**1.** done

**2.** threw

**3.** spoke

**4.** rung

**5.** came

**6.** saw

**7.** begun

**8.** gone

**9.** bit

**10.** stolen

**11.** had rung

**12.** have read

**13. is**

**14. were**

**15. begun**

**16. measured**

**17. have**

**18. is**

**19. is**

20. were

## Skill Building Until

Listen carefully to people today. Do you  
*could of* gone out if I had done my work  
listen for verb choice errors, you'll reali  
them. Some mistakes are so accepted tha  
at first. The more sensitive you are to gr  
you'll be to make them yourself—in both

# Lesson 11— Using Verbs to Create Strong Writing

## Lesson Summary

If verbs drive meaning, lively verbs really make your writing accelerate. This lesson shows you how to use verbs to capture readers' interest.

Few people bother to read uninteresting writing. Even if they read

it, they may not absorb the message. This lesson discusses ways to use verbs that will make your writing lively and interesting for the reader. Read the two paragraphs on the next page. Which one seems livelier, more interesting? The paragraphs tell an identical story, but one of them uses verbs effectively to tell the story in such a way that it is more likely to be remembered. The sentences are presented one at a time, side by side so you can make the comparison more easily.

## **Problem**

When my brother was asked by the local Rotary Club to speak to them about computer programming, our entire family was amazed by the request.

A gasp was made by mother, a laugh was emitted by my father, and my head was shaken by me.

My brother is considered by us to be a shy, quiet computer nerd.

Since I am regarded by my family as the creative one, I was assigned by my brother the task of creating the visual aids.

The information was organized by my father.

Formal invitations were requested by my mother from the Rotary Club secretary and were sent by her to all of our friends.

Organizing and rehearsing of the presentation was worked on by my family until 10:00 P.M. the night before the presentation.

The fact that he was ready was known by us.  
That night three feet of snow was dumped by the skies.  
The city was paralyzed, and all work and activities were canceled, including the Rotary Club meeting and my brother's presentation.

## **Active vs. Passive Voice**

When the subject of a sentence performs the action, the sentence is active. Write using active voice. Active voice is conversational and interesting. In a sentence, the thing that performs the action is named by the subject of a sentence. This may sound

confusing, but the following examples illustrate how to use passive verbs to show who is performing the action. The u

## Passive Verbs

I was taken to my first horse show by my *grandfather*.

I was taught to fish by my *mother* almost before I was taught to walk.

In each of the active verb sentences, the p

If you look more closely at these examples, they are shorter and clearer. They sound more professional and authoritative. The following examples use the active voice and active voice in several of the verb tenses.

## Verb Tense

## Active Voice

**Present**

The *clerk* opens the mail.

**Past**

The *clerk* opened the mail.

**Future**

The *clerk* will open the mail.

**Present  
Perfect**

The *clerk* has opened the mail.

**Past  
Perfect**

The *clerk* had opened the  
mail.

**Future  
Perfect**

The *clerk* will have opene  
the mail.

Most writers prefer active voice to passive voice. Active voice is more direct, more active, more alive. Generally, readers find active sentences easier to read and remember. In both of the tables above, you can see that active sentences can be shorter than passive ones.

### *Practice*

Choose the sentence that is written in active voice.  
The answers to each set of questions can

1. a. Janice carefully packed the china.  
b. The china was carefully packed by
2. a. The CDs were purchased by my m  
b. My mother purchased the CDs.
3. a. Forty black candles were put on m  
b. Dad put forty black candles on my

**4. a.** The snow will be cleared by the plow.

b. The plow will clear the snow.

**5. a.** Citizens believe that judges do not hand out adequate penalties for drug dealers.

b. It is believed by the citizens that adequate penalties for drug dealers are not being handed out by judges.

**6. a.** Coins are often thrown in

fountains by tourists.

b. Tourists often throw coins in fountains.

7. a. Every Sunday morning millions of children watch TV.

b. Every Sunday morning TV is being watched by millions of children.

### ***When to use Passive Voice***

In addition to lacking life, the passive voice can also signal an unwillingness to take responsibility for actions or an intention to discourage questioning.

The following sentence illustrates this.

It has been recommended that twenty workers be laid off within the next three months.

The passive voice here is intended to make a definite statement of fact, one that will not be questioned. It leaves no loose ends. Dictators often write and speak in passive voice. A thoughtful person will see past the passive voice and ask questions anyway. Who is recommending this action? Why? Who will be doing the laying off? How will workers be chosen?

Passive voice is not always bad, however. Sometimes, though rarely, it actually works better than active voice. The situations when passive voice is preferable to active voice are outlined below.

**1. When the object is more important than the agent of action (the doer).**

Sometimes in scientific writing the object is the focus rather than the doer. The following paragraph is written in both passive and active voice, respectively. The first paragraph is more appropriate in this case because the operation, not the doctor, is the

focus of the action. The passage cannot be written in active voice without placing the emphasis on the doer, the doctor. Therefore, passive voice is the better choice in this instance.

## **Passive voice**

The three-inch incision is made right above the pubic bone. Plastic clips are used to clamp off blood vessels and minimize bleeding. The skin is folded back and secured with clamps. Next, the stomach muscle is cut at a fifteen-degree angle, right top to bottom left.

## Active voice

The doctor makes a three-inch incision in the skin, places plastic clips to clamp off the blood vessels, and then folds back the skin and secures it with clamps. The muscle at a fifteen-degree angle, right top

### 2. When the agent of action (doer) is

Sometimes a newswriter will protect a source by saying "that . . . ." In other instances, perhaps no one is the action: "First State Bank was robbed . . ."

### 3. When passive voice results in short

## from the meaning.

Generally, active voice is shorter and more direct. However, there are a few exceptions. Examples are shown below. If using passive voice saves time and does not result in a shorter sentence, use it.

### Active

The designers of the study told the interviewer to give interviewees an electric shock each time they smiled.

### Passive

The interviewer told the designers of the study to give interviewees an electric shock each time they smiled.

The police apprehended Axtell, the detectives interrogated him, and

Axtell was apprehended by the police, and he was interrogated by the detectives.

the grand jury indicted him.

## **Other Life-Draining Verb Constructions**

If thought is a train, then verbs are the wheels. The thought will move more quickly if it has more wheels. Here are some constructions to avoid and better verbs instead.

### *Using State-of-Being Verbs*

State-of-being verbs are all the forms of *is*, *are*, *was*, and *were*. State-of-being verbs don't do as much as action verbs. In our train-of-thought analogy, state-of-being verbs are incapable of moving big thoughts quickly. To say things, by all means, use state-of-being verbs. If the subject is complex or interesting, they will require

Look at the paragraph on the next page. If verbs are state-of-being verbs. In the second paragraph more interesting.

## **State-of-being verbs**

The class was outside during noon recess in the day there was rain, but later the weather was slight; the newly fallen leaves were scattered. At the school was an ice cream truck. It was longingly.

## **Action verbs**

The class played outside during noon recess. Earlier in the day, rain had fallen, but later a slight breeze blew the newly fallen leaves. The ice cream truck crossed the street.

## *Turning Verbs into Nouns*

Naturally, if you take the wheels off the train, the train will not move. If you load a flatbed as cargo, the train will not move either. Below are two examples of writing that is difficult to read. In the first one, several verbs have been turned into nouns to make the writing sound "intellectual." The second example makes the writing more difficult to read by turning nouns back into verbs. The verbs are highlighted to make them easier to identify.

The customer service division is now conducting a comprehensive system for the reaction to consumer concerns about our products.

The customer service division is assessing consumer concerns and developing new products.

## *Adding Unnecessary Auxiliary Verbs*

Generally, if you don't need an auxiliary verb (e.g., *were*, *will*, *would*, and so on) to carry meaning, you should omit it.

### **Unnecessary Auxiliary Verbs**

**Correct**

After lunch we *would meet* in the lounge.

**After**

The temperature *was rising* steadily.

**The**

Every morning the doors *will* open.

**Every**

## ***Starting with There or It***

Many sentences unnecessarily begin with *is/was*. Usually all those words do is pose a thought. The sentences on the next page if those words can be removed from your writing

## Unnecessary *There or It*

There are three people who are authorized to use this machinery.

There is one good way to handly this problem: to ignore it.

It was a perfect evening for a rocket launch.

There were several people

standing in line waiting for the bus. w

## Use Lively, Interesting Verbs

If you want to move thought efficiently, w verbs that create an image in the reader's below to see this principle in action.

### Dull

L

At my barbershop, someone does you nails and your shoes while your hair is being cut.

A  
n  
sl

Violent cartoons are harmful to children's emotional development

V  
e:

and sense of reality.

th

## *Practice*

Choose the best sentence from each set based on what you learned about verbs in this lesson.

**8.** a. Much concern is being voiced by the citizens about the budget.

b. Citizens are voicing much concern about the budget.

**9.** a. The game was played by three old men and a young boy.

b. Three old men and a young boy played the game.

**10. a.** Those who evaluate law enforcement avoid lawsuits more valuable than those

b. Those responsible for the evaluation a greater consideration for the discharge avoidance of lawsuits than those resulting laws.

**11.** a. There are many reasons that you sh

b. You should avoid high fat foods fo

**12.** a. After dinner every night we would

b. We made popcorn every night after

**13.** a. We gobbled up donuts every morni

b. We had donuts every morning befo

**14.** a. A computer technician must have s

b. It is necessary for a computer techni

## Skill Building U

As you read newspapers, magazines, text  
for examples of sentences in active voice  
some passive voice sentences into active  
is more effective?

## Answers

1. a.

2. b.

**3. b.**

**4. b.**

**5. a.**

**6. b.**

**7. a.**

**8. b.**

**9. b.**

**10. a.**

**11. b.**

**12. b.**

**13. a.**

**14. a.**

# Lesson 12— Subject-Verb Agreement

## Lesson Summary

Without thinking about it, you usually make sure your subjects and verbs agree, both in speaking and in writing. Only a few situations cause difficulty in subject-verb agreement. This lesson will show you how to deal with those few situations in your writing.

When a subject in a clause—the

person or thing doing the action— matches the verb in number, we say the subject and verb *agree*. Most native English speakers have little trouble matching subjects with the correct verbs. A few grammatical constructions pose most of the problems. This lesson explains the concept of subject-verb agreement and provides practice in those problem areas.

## **Agreement Between Noun Subjects and Verbs**

In written language, a subject must agree with its verb in number. In other words, if a subject is singular, the verb

must be singular. If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. If you are unsure whether a verb is singular or plural, apply this simple test. Fill in the blanks in the two sentences

below with the matching form of the verb completes the first sentence is singular. T completes the second sentence is plural.

## Singular

## Plural

One person \_\_\_\_\_.

Two people  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Look at these examples using the verbs *s/* yourself with any verb that confuses you. ending in *s* are usually singular.

## Singular

## Plural

One person speaks.

Two people speak.

One person does.

Two people do.

One person was.

Two people were.

## *Special Problems*

### *Doesn't/Don't and Wasn't/Weren't*

Some people have particular trouble with contractions for *does not* and *do not* and

(contractions for *was not* and *were not*).  
singular; *don't* and *weren't* are plural. If  
instead of the contraction, you'll usually get

## Phrases Following the Subject

Pay careful attention to the subject in a sentence  
phrase following it to mislead you into using  
agree with the subject. The subjects and verbs  
the following examples.

**One** of the print orders **is** missing.

The software **designs** by Liu Chen **are**

A **handbook** with thorough instructions  
product.

The **president**, along with her three employees  
**leaves** for the conference tomorrow.

## Special Singular Subjects

Some nouns are singular even though they have a plural form, they require a singular verb because they are used as a single thing. Most of the nouns in the list below are singular. Some can be either singular or plural depending on their use in the sentence.

kms

measles

physics

mumps

economics

news

mathematics

checkers

civics

marbles (the game)

athletics

Here are some examples of how these words work in sentences.

The **news is** on at 6:00.

**Checkers is** my favorite game.

**Sports is** a healthy way to reduce stress.

Low-impact **sports are** recommended for older adults.

Words stating a single amount or a time require a singular verb. Examine a sentence carefully to see if the amount or time is considered a single measure.

Two dollars **is** the price of that small replacement part. [single amount]

Two dollars **are** lying on my dresser.

Three hours **was** required to complete this simulation. [single measure]

Three hours of each day **were** spent rehearsing.

Three-quarters of her time **is** spent writing.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct verb in each of the

following sentences. The answers to each set of questions can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 1.** When the comedian (jokes, joke), the audience members (laughs, laugh).
- 2.** A single flower now (grows, grow) where the trees used to (grows, grow).
- 3.** Manuel (speaks, speak) English, but his parents (speaks, speak) Spanish.
- 4.** The clerk (rings, ring) up the sales while the customers (waits, wait) in line.

**5.** The sopranos (hums, hum) softly while the tenor soloist (sings, sing)

**6.** The new colors (doesn't, don't) look especially appealing.

**7.** The door to the building (wasn't, weren't) locked last night.

**8.** The drive-up teller line (doesn't, don't) open until 9:30 on Saturday mornings.

**9.** Marge didn't receive the message because the phones (wasn't, weren't) working.

**10.** He (doesn't, don't) remember if the ties (is, are) still on sale.

- 11.** One of the clerks (is, are) sorting the  
that (was, were) mislabeled.
- 12.** The petty cash box, along with the tic  
are) turned in at the end of the day.
- 13.** These statistics (is, are) the result of
- 14.** Statistics (was, were) my most diffic  
in high school.
- 15.** Half of the bagel (was, were) eaten.

**16.** Half of the bagels (was, were) eaten.

## **Agreement Between Pronoun Subjects**

Pronoun subjects present a problem for even sophisticated speakers of English. Some are always singular; others are always plural; some pronouns can be either singular or plural.

### *Singular Pronouns*

These pronouns are always singular.

each

anybody

everyone

either

anyone

no one

neither

everybody

nobody

The pronouns in the first column are the ones to be misused. You can avoid a mismatch by adding the word *one* after the pronoun and other words between the pronoun and the following examples to see how this is

Each of the men wants his own car.

Each *one* wants his own car.

Either of the salesclerks knows where the merchandise is located.

Either *one* knows where the sale merchandise is located.

These sentences may sound awkward because

speakers misuse these pronouns, and you become accustomed to hearing them used. Despite that, the substitution trick (*one for* following the pronoun) will help you avoid

## *Watch out for Questions*

With questions beginning with *has* or *have* while *have* is plural. Pay special attention to the combination in a question. In fact, the correct way you turn the question into a statement.

### **Question Form**

**S**

(Is, Are) some of the customers  
noticing the difference?

**S**  
no

(Has, Have) either of the shipments

**E**

arrived?

al

(Does, Do) each of the terminals  
have a printer?

E  
h:

## *Plural Pronouns*

These pronouns are always plural and re

both

many

few

several

## *Singular/Plural Pronouns*

The following pronouns can be either singular or plural. If the phrase following them determines the number of the verb, the verb must be singular or plural. If the phrase following them contains a singular noun or pronoun, the verb must be singular. If the phrase following them contains a plural noun or pronoun, the verb must be plural. See how this is done in the sentences following. Key words are highlighted.

all

none

any

some

most

**Singular**

**Plural**

**All** of the **work is** finished.

**All o**

**Is** any of the **pizza** left?

**Are :**  
left?

**Most** of the **grass has** turned brown.

**Most**  
turne

**None** of the **time was** wasted.

**None**  
waste

**Some** of the **fruit was** spoiled.

**Some**  
spoil



## *Practice*

Circle the correct verb in each of the following sentences. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**17.** Neither of these keys (unlocks, unlock) the back door.

**18.** Each of the community profiles (takes, take) a creative approach to advertising.

**19.** All of the tasks (has, have) been

assigned.

**20.** Some of the residents (was, were) pleased with the new development.

**21.** Either of these light fixtures (is, are) suitable for my office.

**22.** (Was, Were) any of the samples defective?

**23.** (Do, Does) each of the phones have multiple lines?

**24.** (Has, Have) either of the partners announced an intention to reorganize?

**25.** Neither of our largest accounts (needs, need) to be serviced at this time.

**26.** Both of the applicants (seems, seem) qualified.

**27.** A woman in one of my classes (works, work) at the Civic Center box office.

**28.** None of our resources (goes, go) to outside consultants.

**29.** A good knowledge of the rules (helps, help) you understand the game.

**30.** Each of these prescriptions (causes, cause) bloating and irritability.

**31.** (Have, Has) either of them ever arrived on time?

## Special Sentence Structures

### *Compound Subjects*

- If two nouns or pronouns are joined by

He and she **want** to buy a new house.

Jack and Jill **want** to buy a new house

- If two singular nouns or pronouns are joined by a singular verb. Think of them as two separate subjects. A common mistake in agreement.

Jack or Jill **wants** to buy a new house

Jack **wants** to buy a new house.

Jill **wants** to buy a new house.

- Singular and plural subjects joined by *or* with the subject closest to the verb.

Neither management nor the **employee**

Neither the employees nor the **manag**

***Make Sure You Find the Subject***

Verbs agree with the subject, not the complement. The form of *be*, links the subject and the complement. The subject comes first and the complement comes after the verb.

**Taxes were** the main challenge.  
The main **challenge** facing the country is taxes.  
A serious **problem** for most cities is traffic.  
**Traffic jams are** a serious problem for  
commuters.

## Questions and Sentences Beginning with Verbs

When a sentence asks a question or begins with a verb, the subject follows the verb. Locate the subject in the sentence. The verb matches it. In the examples below, the subject and verb are highlighted in the corrected forms.

## Wrong

What is the conditions of the contract?

Why is her reports always so disorganized?

Here's the records you requested.

There is four people seeking this promotion.

## Inverted Sentences

Inverted sentences also contain subjects that precede the verbs. Locate the subject in the verb agrees with it. In the example sentences, the verbs in the corrected sentences are highlighted.

### Wrong

Co

Beside the front desk stands three new vending machines.

Be  
ne

Suddenly, out of the thicket comes

Su

three large bucks.

thr

Along with our highest  
recommendation goes our best  
wishes in your new job.

Al  
rec  
wi

### *Practice*

Circle the correct verb in each of the foll  
at the end of the lesson.

**32.** Every other day either Bert or Ernie (

**33.** Neither the style nor the color (match  
have.

**34.** Either the associates or the manager ( merchandise).

**35.** Either the manager or the associates ( merchandise).

**36.** (Is, Are) the men's wear or the wome ground floor?

**37.** Mr. Jefson's passion (is, are) econon

**38.** (Was, Were) there any furniture sets l

**39.** There (isn't, aren't) many days left be

**40.** Here (is, are) the information you req

**41.** Off into the horizon (runs, run) the he:

## Skill Building Until

Listen to people s they speak. Do they use the correct tense? Do the subjects and verbs agree? Do you have a good idea to correct your family, friends or colleagues? You can give yourself some good practice by

### Answers

1. Jokes, laugh
2. grows, grow

**3.** speaks, speak

**4.** rings, wait

**5.** hum, sings

**6.** don't

**7.** wasn't

**8.** doesn't

**9.** weren't

**10.** doesn't, are

**11.** is, was

**12.** is

**13.** are

**14.** was

**15.** was

**16.** were

**17.** unlocks

**18.** takes

**19.** have

**20.** were

**21.** is

**22.** Were

**23.** Does

**24.** Has

**25.** needs

**26.** seem

**27.** works

**28.** go

**29.** helps

**30.** causes

**31.** Has

**32.** takes

**33.** matches

**34.** orders

**35.** order

**36.** Is

**37.** is

**38.** Were

**39.** aren't

**40.** is

**41.** runs



# Lesson 13— Using Pronouns

## Lesson Summary

Pronouns are so often *misused* in speech that many people don't really know how to avoid pronoun errors in writing. This lesson shows you how to avoid the most common pronoun errors.

A pronoun is a word that is used in place of a noun. Pronouns that are

misused call attention to themselves and detract from the message of a piece of writing. This lesson explains the basic principles of pronoun use and highlights the most common pronoun problems: agreement, case, noun-pronoun pairs, incomplete constructions, ambiguous pronoun references, and reflexive pronouns.

## **Pronouns and Antecedents**

The noun represented by a pronoun is called its *antecedent*. The prefix *ante* means *to come before*. Usually, the antecedent comes before the pronoun in a sentence. In the following example sentences, the pronouns are italicized

and the antecedents (the words they represent) are underlined.

The government workers  
received *their* paychecks.

Jane thought *she* saw the missing boy  
and reported *him* to the police.

The shift supervisor hates these  
accidents because *he* thinks *they* can  
be easily avoided.

A pronoun must match the number of its antecedent. In other words, if the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must be plural. Few people make mistakes when matching a pronoun to its noun antecedent. However, sometimes a pronoun is used for the antecedent for a another pronoun. Indefinite pronoun antecedents frequently result in a mismatch between pronoun and antecedent. In Lesson 12 you learned about singular pronouns. Here is the list again.

each

anybody

everyone

either                      anyone                      no one                      :

neither                      everybody                      nobody                      :

- A pronoun with one of the words from the list above and its antecedent must be singular.

Each (singular) of the men brought *his* (singular) favorite tool to the bachelor party.

Everyone (singular) who wants to be in the "Toughman" contest should pay up *his* (singular) life insurance.

Somebody left *her* purse underneath the door.

Neither of the occupants could locate *her*) key to the apartment.

- If two or more singular nouns or pronouns are joined by *and*, use a plural pronoun.

Buddha and Muhammad built religions based on *their* philosophies.

If he and she want to know where I was, you should ask me.

- If two or more singular nouns or pronouns are joined by *or*, use a singular pronoun.

Matthew or Jacob will loan you *his* car.

The elephant or the moose will furious  
*its* young.

- If a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by *or*, the pronoun agrees with the noun or pronoun it represents.

Neither the soldiers nor the sergeant was  
*his* location.

Neither the sergeant nor the soldiers was  
of *their* location.

## ***Practice***

Circle the correct pronoun in each of the sentences. The answers to each set of questions be found at the end of the lesson.

**1.** No one in (her, their) right mind would drive that contraption.

**2.** Neither the students nor the teacher brought (his, their) book to class.

**3.** Anyone who wants a ticket to the banquet should sign (his, their) name on this sheet.

**4.** Ask someone in this office where the instruction manual is, and (he, they) probably will tell you.

**5.** Neither Alexis nor Heidi will inconvenience themselves) to cover your mistake.

**6.** If you break a print head or a roller on them) is hard to replace.

**7.** I know of someone who might give you notes from the course.

**8.** Almost anybody can improve (his, the) using this book.

**9.** If you want to make a good impression don't talk down to (her, them).

## Pronoun Case

Most people have no trouble knowing when to use *me*, or when to use *my*. These three examples illustrate the three cases of the first person pronoun: nominative (*I*), objective (*me*), and possessive (*my*). The table below shows the cases of personal pronouns, both singular and plural.

### PERSONAL PRONOUN CASES

**Nominative**

**Objective**

I

me

we

us

you

you

he

him

she

her

they

them

it

it

**Nominative case pronouns** (those in the used as subjects or as complements follow verbs (*am, is, are, was, were*—any form

Nominative case pronouns following a linking verb sound strange to you because so few people use them correctly.

**They** left a few minutes early in order to pick up the package. [subject]

**I** looked all over town for the type of house you wanted. [subject]

The doctor who removed my appendix is Dr. Smith. [follows a linking verb]

"This is **she**, or it is **I**," said Barbara. [follows a linking verb]

The winners of the sales contest were Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

[follows a linking verb]

**Objective case pronouns** (those in the middle column in the table) are used as objects following an action verb or as objects of a preposition.

The help line representative gave **him** an answer over the phone.  
[follows an action verb]

Of all these samples, I prefer **them**. [follows an action verb]

We went to lunch with Sammy and **him**. [object of the preposition]

*with]*

We couldn't tell whether the package was for **them** or **us**.

[object(s) of the preposition *for*]

**Possessive case pronouns** (those in the third column in the table) show ownership. Few English speakers misuse the possessive case pronouns. Most pronoun problems occur with the nominative and objective cases.

### *Problems with Pronoun Case*

A single pronoun in a sentence is easy to use correctly. In fact, most English

speakers would readily identify the mistakes in the following sentences.

**Me** worked on the project with **he**.

My neighbor gave **she** a ride to work.

Most people know that **Me** in the first sentence should be **I** and that **he** should be **him**. They would also know that **she** in the second sentence should be **her**. Such errors are easy to spot when the pronouns are used alone in a sentence. The problem occurs when a pronoun is used with a noun or another pronoun. See if you can spot the errors

in the following sentences.

**Wrong:**

The grand marshall rode with  
Shane and I.

Donna and me are going to the  
Civic Center.

The stage manager spoke to my  
brother and I.

The errors in these sentences are  
harder to see than those in the  
sentences with a single pronoun. If you  
turn the sentence with two pronouns

into two separate sentences, the error becomes very obvious.

## **Correct:**

The grand marshal rode with Shane.

The grand marshal rode with **me** (not *I*).

Donna is going to the Civic Center. [Use the singular verb *is* in place of *are*.]

**I** (not *me*) am going to the Civic Center. [Use the verb *am* in place

of *are*.]

The stage manager spoke to my brother.

The stage manager spoke to **me** (not *I*).

Splitting a sentence in two does not work  
If you substitute *with* for *between*, then th

The problem is between (she, her) an

The problem is with **her**. (not *she*)

The problem is with **me**. (not *I*)

## *Practice*

Circle the correct pronouns in the follow  
of the lesson.

- 10.** Andy or Arvin will bring (his, their) of the party.
- 11.** Benny and (he, him) went to the movi
- 12.** Neither my cousins nor my uncle know
- 13.** Why must it always be (I, me) who cl
- 14.** The pilot let (he, him) and (I, me) loc
- 15.** Have you heard the latest news about
- 16.** My friend and (I, me) both want to m

## **Noun-Pronoun Pairs**

Sometimes a noun is immediately followed by a pronoun. To make certain you use the correct pronoun, look at the following examples to see how this is done.

### **PRONOUNS IN NOUN PHRASES**

#### **Which Pronoun?**

(We, Us) support personnel wish to lodge a complaint.

They gave the job to (we, us) inventory staffers.

The committee threw (we, us) retirees  
a huge end-of-the-year party.

## Incomplete Constructions

Sometimes a pronoun comes at the end of a sentence following a comparative word such as *than* or *as*.

Harold spent as much time on this project as (they, them).

Duane can build cabinets better than (I, me).

The long day exhausted us more than (they, them).

My youngest child is now taller than (I, me).

In each of these sentences part of the meaning is implied. To figure out which pronoun is correct, complete the sentence in your head and use the pronoun that makes more sense.

Harold spent as much time on this project as *they did*.

Harold spent as much time on this project as *he spent on them*.

The first sentence makes more sense,

so *they* would be the correct choice.

Duane can build cabinets better than *I can*.

Duane can build cabinets better than *he can build me*.

The first sentence makes more sense, so *I* is the correct pronoun.

The long day exhausted us more than *they did*.

The long day exhausted us more than *it did them*.

The second sentence makes more sense, so *them* is the correct choice.

My youngest child is now taller than *I am*.

There is no way to complete the sentence using the pronoun *me*, so *I* is the correct choice.

Pronoun choice is especially important if the sentence makes sense either way. The following sentence can be completed using both pronouns, either of which makes good sense. The pronoun choice controls the meaning. The writer must be careful to choose the correct pronoun if the meaning is to

be accurately portrayed.

I work with Assad more than (she, her).

I work with Assad more than *she does*.

I work with Assad more than *I work with her*.

Use the pronoun that portrays the intended meaning.

## Ambiguous Pronoun References

Sometimes a sentence is written in such a way that a pronoun can refer to more than one antecedent. When this happens, we say the meaning is *ambiguous*. In the following examples, the ambiguous pronouns are italicized, and the possible antecedents are underlined.

When Eric spoke to his girlfriend's father, *he* was very polite.

Remove the door from the frame and paint *it*.

Jamie told Linda *she* should be ready to go within an hour.

Pat told Craig *he* had been granted an interview.

See how the sentences are rewritten below to clarify the ambiguous references.

Eric was very polite when he spoke to his girlfriend's father.

Paint the door after removing it

from the frame.

Jamie told Linda to be ready to go within an hour.

Pat told Craig that Craig had been granted an interview.

## **Improper Reflexive Pronouns**

A reflexive pronoun is one that includes the word *self* or *selves*: *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *ourselves*, *themselves*. The following section explains ways in which reflexive pronouns are sometimes misused.

- The possessive pronouns *his* and *their* cannot be made reflexive.

### **Wrong:**

They decided to do the remodeling themselves.

Mark wanted to arrange the meeting himself.

### **Correct:**

They decided to do the remodeling *themselves*.

Mark wanted to arrange the meeting *himself*.

- Avoid using a reflexive pronoun when a personal pronoun works in the sentence.

### **Wrong:**

Three associates and myself chose the architect for the building.

The preliminary results of the poll were revealed only to ourselves.

### **Correct:**

Three associates and *I* chose the architect for the building.

The preliminary results of the poll were revealed only to *us*.

## Skill Building Until

Identify the pronoun mistake or two that conversation, make a conscious effort to least three times.

### Answers

1. her

2. his

**3.** his

**4.** he

**5.** herself

**6.** it

**7.** her

**8.** his

**9.** her

**10.** his, he

**11.** he, me

**12.** he

**13.** I

**14.** him, me

**15.** her, them

**16.** I

# Lesson 14— Problem Verbs and Pronouns

## Lesson Summary

*Sit or set? Your or you're? There or their?*  
Or is it *they're*? Knowing how to use such  
problem pairs is the mark of the educated  
writer. This lesson shows you how.

This lesson covers problem verbs such  
as *lie/lay*, *sit/set*, *rise/raise*, and their

various forms. It also covers problem pronouns such as *its/it's*, *your/you're*, *whose/who's*, *who/that/which*, and *there/they're/their*. You can distinguish yourself as an educated writer if you can use these verbs and pronouns correctly in formal writing situations.

## **Problem Verbs**

### ***Lie/Lay***

Few people use *lie* and *lay* and their principal parts correctly, perhaps because few people know the difference in meaning between the

two. The verb *lie* means *to rest or recline*. The verb *lay* means *to put or place*. The table on the next page shows the principal parts of each of these verbs. Their meanings, written in the correct form, appear in parentheses.

## *Practice*

Write the correct form of *lie* or *lay* in each sentence.  
Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. After the alarm sounded, I \_\_\_\_\_  
hour.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ the packages on the table.
3. The latest edition of the newspaper \_\_\_\_\_  
desk.

4. The paper carrier \_\_\_\_\_ the newspaper on the desk.

5. No one had any idea how long the sail \_\_\_\_\_ in the sun or who had \_\_\_\_\_ in the first place.

### *Sit/Set*

These two verbs are very similar to *lie* and *lay*. *Set* means "to put or place." The table below shows the parts of each of these verbs. Their meanings and forms, appear in parentheses.

## FORMS OF *SIT* AND *SET*



makes the most sense, and then choose the  
how this is done in the example sentences:

The speaker \_\_\_\_\_ the chair.

*Put* or *placed* makes more sense.

Choose *set*.

The speaker \_\_\_\_\_ in the chair.

*Rested* makes more sense than *sat*.

Choose *sat*.

## *Practice*

Write the correct form of *sit* or *set* in each sentence.  
Answers are at the end of the lesson.

6. The board of directors \_\_\_\_\_  
money for research and development.

7. My desk is the one \_\_\_\_\_ c

8. I can't remember where I \_\_\_\_\_

9. I \_\_\_\_\_ down next to Jill a

briefcase on the chair next to me.

10. We had \_\_\_\_\_ in the waiting hour before the doctor saw us.

### *Rise/Raise*

The verb *rise* means "to go up." The verb *raise* means "to lift something up." *Raise* requires an object. The object must receive the action of the verb *raise* (e.g., *raise the flag, raise the objection, raise children*). The following chart shows the principal parts of both verbs.

## FORMS OF *RISE* AND *RAISE*

**Present**

**Progressive**

**Participle**

rises, rise	rising	ros
(goes up, go up)	(going up)	(w
(comes up, come up)	(coming up)	(ca

raises, raise

raising

rais

(moves up,  
move up)

(moving up)

(m

*\*The past participle is the form used w*

Choose the correct form of *rise* or *raise* (the words in parentheses) in the sentence first makes the most sense, and choose the correct option that makes more sense than any of the other options. In the example sentences below, the words seem especially appropriate. No other option that makes more sense than any of the other options.

The sun \_\_\_\_\_ a little bit in the spring.

*Comes up* makes the most sense.

Choose *rises*.

Without realizing it, we began to  
\_\_\_\_\_ our voices.

*Move up* makes more sense than any of the other options.

Choose *raise*.

The river \_\_\_\_\_ over two feet in the last hour.

*Went up* makes the most sense.

Choose *rose*.

## ***Practice***

Write the correct form of *rise* or *raise* in each of the blanks below. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**11.** The guard \_\_\_\_\_ the flag every morning before the sun \_\_\_\_\_.

**12.** The couple \_\_\_\_\_ seven of their own children and adopted three more.

13. By late morning the fog had \_\_\_\_\_ enough for us to see the neighboring farm.

14. The stockholders \_\_\_\_\_ from their chairs to \_\_\_\_\_ an objection.

## Problem Pronouns

### *Its/It's*

*Its* is a possessive pronoun that means *belonging to it*. *It's* is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*. The only time you will ever use *it's* is when you can also substitute the words *it is*. Take time to

make this substitution, and you will never confuse these two words.

A doe will hide **its** [belonging to the it—the doe] fawn carefully before going out to graze.

It's [it is] time **we** packed up and moved to a new location.

The new computer system has proven **its** [belonging to it] value.

We'll leave the game as soon as **it's** [it is] over.

## *Your/You're*

*Your* is a possessive pronoun that means *belonging to you*. *You're* is a contraction for the words *you are*. The only time you will ever use *you're* is when you can also substitute the words *you are*. Take time to make this substitution, and you will never confuse these two words.

Is this **your** [belonging to you] idea of a joke?

As soon as **you're** [you are] finished, you may leave.



**Your** [belonging to you] friends are the people you most enjoy.

**You're** [you are] friends whom we value.

### *Whose/Who's*

*Whose* is a possessive pronoun that means *belonging to whom*. *Who's* is a contraction for the words *who is* or *who has*. Take time to make this substitution, and you will never confuse these two words.

**Who's** [Who is] in charge of the lighting for the show?

**Whose** [belonging to whom] car was that?

This is the nurse **who's** [who is] on duty until morning.

Here is the man **whose** [belonging to whom] car I ran into this morning.

### ***Who/That/Which***

*Who* refers to people. *That* refers to

things. *Which* is generally used to introduce nonrestrictive clauses that describe things. (See Lesson 4 for nonrestrictive clauses.) Look at the following sentences to see how each of these words is used.

There is the woman **who** helped me fix my flat tire.

The man **who** invented the polio vaccine died in 1995.

This is the house **that** Jack built.

The book **that** I wanted is no

longer in print.

Abigail, **who** rescued my cat from the neighbor's tree, lives across the street.

Yassir Arafat, **who** heads the PLO, met with Israeli leaders.

The teacher asked us to read *Lord of the Flies*, **which** is my favorite novel.

Mt. Massive, **which** is the tallest peak in the Rocky Mountains, looms above Leadville, Colorado.

## *There/Their/They're*

*There* is an adverb telling where an action or item is located. *Their* is a possessive pronoun that shows ownership. *They're* is a contraction for the words *they are*. Of all the confusing word groups, this one is misused most often. Here is an easy way to distinguish among these words.

- Take a close look at this version of the word: t**HERE**. You can see that *there* contains the word *here*.

Wherever you use the word *there*, you should be able to substitute the word *here*, and the sentence should still

make sense.

- *Their* means *belonging to them*. Of the three words, *their* can be most easily transformed into the word *them*. Try it. You'll discover that two short markings—connecting the *i* to the *r* and then drawing a line to make the *ir* into an *m*—will turn *their* into *them*. This clue will help you avoid misusing *their*.

- Finally, imagine that the apostrophe in *they're* is actually a very small letter *a*. If you change *they're* to *they are* in a sentence, you'll never misuse the word. Look over the example sentences on the next page.



**There** [here] is my paycheck.

The new chairs are in **there** [here].

**Their** [belonging to them] time has almost run out.

This is **their** [belonging to them] problem, not mine.

**They're** [they are] planning to finish early in the morning.

I wonder how **they're** [they are] going to work this out.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in each set of parentheses below. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**15.** Finally, the dog stopped (its, it's) barking.

**16.** Alert me when (its, it's) time to go.

**17.** (Its, It's) time to get a new clock when the old one stops (its, it's) chiming.

**18.** Take (your, you're) time with this decision.

**19.** Take (your, you're) samples with you if (your, you're) leaving.

**20.** (Your, You're) scheduled to work late this evening.

**21.** (Your, You're) schedule for this evening has changed.

**22.** My aunt Sophie is the one (who, which, that) travels for a living.

**23.** This is the book (who, which, that) I lost earlier this year.

**24.** Kirk Douglas, (who, which, that) is my favorite actor, finally received an Oscar nomination.

**25.** Redbird Creek, (who, which, that) runs through my back yard, floods every spring.

**26.** There's the person (who, which, that) gave me directions to the museum.

**27.** (Your, You're) likely to find the tapes in (there, their, they're).

**28.** (There, Their, They're) scheduled to begin construction next week.

**29.** (Its, It's) been over an hour since (the

**30.** The clerk (who, which, that) gave me  
they're).

**31.** (Who's, Whose) been opening the sto

**32.** (Who's, Whose) responsibility is it to

**33.** Hilda spoke to the person (who's, wh

**34.** (Who's, Whose) birthday is it?

---

## Skill Building Unit

Identify the special verb or pronoun problem in each sentence. Explain the correct way to use it. Make a conscious effort to use it correctly in your writing.

### Answers

1. lay

2. Lay

3. lay

4. laid

**5.** lain, laid

**6.** set

**7.** sitting

**8.** set

**9.** sat, set

**10.** sat

**11.** raised, rose *or* raises, rises

**12.** raised

**13.** risen

**14.** rose, raise

**15.** its

**16.** it's

**17.** It's its

**18.** your

**19.** your, you're

**20.** You're

**21.** Your

**22.** who

**23.** that

**24.** who

**25.** which

**26.** who

**27.** You're, there

**28.** They're

**29.** It's, their

**30.** who, there

**31.** Who's

**32.** Whose

**33.** who

**34.** Whose

# Lesson 15— Modifiers

## Lesson Summary

This lesson shows you how to avoid common problems with adjectives and adverbs.

Words and phrases that describe other words are called *modifiers*. Words that describe nouns and pronouns are called *adjectives*. Words that describe

verbs, adjectives, or adverbs are called *adverbs*. Entire phrases or groups of words can also function as modifiers. The English language is structured in such a way that modifiers play a vital part in communication. Using them correctly is an important skill.

## **Adjectives**

Adjectives describe a noun or pronoun in a sentence. Here is an easy way to tell if a word is an adjective.

Adjectives answer one of three questions about another word in the sentence: *which one?* *what kind?* and *how many?* The table on the next page

illustrates this. The adjectives are highlighted to make them easy to identify.

## ADJECTIVES

**Which One?**

**What Kind?**

**that** cubicle

**sports** car

the **other** arrangement

**red** stickers

our **first** project

**wise** mentor

Pay special attention to adjectives that follow a verb, but it describes the verb. The following sentences illustrate the use of the underlined nouns.

This cheesecake tastes *delicious*. [adjective]

Chris's change of heart seemed *apparent*. [adjective]

The room smelled *strange*. [adjective]

### ***Fewer/Less, Number/Amount***

Use the adjective *fewer* to modify plural nouns and *less* for singular nouns that represent a quantity. Nouns that end in *s* can be added and require the adjective *fewer*.

The promotional staff had **fewer** in marketing staff.

The marketing staff had **less** time [singular noun] promotional staff.

The same principle applies to the nouns *number* and *amount* when referring to things that can be counted. Use the noun *number* when referring to nouns that can be counted and the noun *amount* when referring to nouns that cannot be counted.

The **number** of hours [plural noun] reduced.

The **amount** of time [singular noun] reduced.

# Adverbs

Use adverbs to describe verbs, adjective way to tell if a word is an adverb. Adverb another word in the sentence: *where?* *wh* below illustrates this. The adverbs are hi

ADVI

**Where?**

**When?**

The line moved  
**forward.**

I saw him  
**yesterday.**

Store your gear

Come around

**below.**

Stand **here.**

**later.**

We'll talk  
**tonight.**

This next table show examples of adverb and other adverbs. The adverbs are highlighted and underlined.

## ADVERBS THAT

### Verbs

### Adjectives

Mail arrives **regularly**.

an **extremely** long  
time

Doves sing

a **hopelessly** dull

**mournfully.**

problem

I responded  
**immediately.**

an **unusually s**  
approach

## Adjective or Adverb?

Sometimes writers mistakenly use adjectives where adverbs are needed, as illustrated in the sentences below. The italicized words are incorrectly used in place of adverbs. The

Megan can think of answers very *quickly*.

Store these antiques very *careful*. [

Ernie whispered the news as *quiet*.

Take special care to choose the correct word with the senses: *feel, taste, look, smell, see*. A verb describes a noun or pronoun that comes before an adjective. On the other hand, if the word comes after a verb, use an adverb. In the table below, the words are highlighted and the nouns or verbs they modify are

## MODIFIERS WITH "A"

### Adjectives

The entire group felt **sick** after lunch.

The new keyboard looked **strange**

to me.

The explanation sounded **plausible** to us.

## *Good and Well*

*Good* is an adjective. *Well* is an adverb. Use *well* to describe a verb. Use *good* to describe a noun. *good* and *well* are underlined in the examples below.

Brenton did **well** on the test.

Raul felt **good** after the marathon.



The new marketing strategy way **w**

The lasagna smelled **good** when I v

## Comparisons

Adjectives and adverbs change form when used in comparisons. When you compare two items, you use the *comparative* form of the modifier. If you are comparing more than two items, you use the *superlative* form of the modifier.

The comparative form is created in one of two ways:

1. Add *-er* to the modifier if it is a short syllable.

2. Place the word *more* or the word *less* before a multisyllable word.

In addition, some modifiers change form. Examples are given in the table below. The first six are these special modifiers that change form. See the list above.

## MODIFIERS IN COMPARISON

<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Comparative (for two items)</b>

good

better

well

better

many

more

much

more

bad

worse

little

less or lesser

neat

neater

lovely

lovelier

funny

funnier

extreme

more [or less] extreme

intelligent

more [or less] intelligent

precisely

more [or less] precisely

When comparing items in a prepositional phrase, use *more* for two items, *among* for three or more. Look for *more* and superlative forms are used in the following examples.

Up is the **better** direction for the stairs.  
[comparing two directions]

Blue looks **better** than any other color  
[two colors many times]

The Buick Park Avenue is the **best**  
[comparing more than two cars]

The Mississippi is the **best** river for  
more than two rivers]

The first run model was **more thor**  
[comparing two things]

### ***Avoid Illogical or Unclear Comparison***

"Ellie is more disorganized than any woman" implies that Ellie, who is a woman, is more disorganized than any other woman. Always include the words *other* or *else* to clarify the comparison.

being illogical.

Ellie is more disorganized than any

Ted can concentrate better than any

### ***Avoid Double Comparisons***

A double comparison occurs when a writer uses *more* or *most*.

**DOUBLE COMPARISON**

**Wrong**

Diane is the most friendliest person I know.

Judi is less sleepier than I am.

The writing in this sample seems more plainer than the writing in the other sample.

## ***Avoid Double Negatives***

When a negative word is added to a state double negative results. Avoid double negative words *hardly* and *barely* can cause problems. In the example sentences below, the words are highlighted. Pay close attention to how they are rewritten to avoid the double negative.

## DOUBLE NEGAT

**Wrong**

C

The warehouse **doesn't** have **no** surplus stock at this time.

T

su

T

an

I **can't hardly** understand this financial report.

I

fi

I

The cash on hand **won't barely**  
cover this expense.

fi

T

co

T

co

## Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

### *Misplaced Modifiers*

Place words, phrases, or clauses that describe nouns and pronouns as closely as possible to the words they describe. Failure to do this often results in a misplaced modifier—and a sentence that means something other than what was intended.

### **Words**

For example, the words *only*, *almost*, and *just* should be placed as closely as possible to the word described. The best place is right before the words they describe. The placement of the word affects the meaning of the sentence.

The customers **only** looked at two samples.

The customers looked at **only** two samples.

In the first sentence above, the customers "only looked" at the samples; they didn't touch them. In the second sentence, the customers looked

at "only two," not three or four, samples. The placement of *only* changes the meaning.

Here's an example with *almost*:

Chad **almost** scored three touchdowns.

Chad scored **almost** three touchdowns.

In the first version, Chad "almost scored" three times—he must have come close to the goal line three times without actually crossing. In the second version, Chad scored "almost

three" touchdowns—maybe 2.2 touchdowns. How many points are awarded for that?

Here's how placing *just* can affect the meaning of a sentence:

The Hill family *just* leases a car.

The Hill family leases *just* a car.

In the first version, the Hill family "just leases" a car, so they don't own or buy a car. In the second, they lease "just a car," not a truck or a van or any other vehicle.



## Phrases and Clauses

Phrases and Clauses that describe nouns closely as possible to the words they describe are misplaced modifiers. Pay close attention to their meaning.

### MISPLACED

**Wrong**

**C**

The veterinarian explained how to vaccinate hogs in the community

**I**  
**v**

center basement. [Why would you want hogs in the community center?]

h  
c  
v

A big dog followed the old man that was barking loudly. [Why was the man barking?]

A  
f  
B  
o

## ***Dangling Modifiers***

Words, phrases, or clauses that begin a sentence sometimes mistakenly modify the wrong part of the sentence. These are called dangling modifiers. The following sentences are examples. Pay close attention to how the sentences are re-

---

## DANGLING M

### Wrong

C

Flat and useless, Jason removed the bicycle tire. [Why was Jason flat?]

Ja  
b  
b

Attached to an old stump, Janette saw a No Fishing sign. [Why was Janette attached to an old stump?]

Ja  
a  
T  
o

V

While cleaning up after dinner, the phone rang. [Don't you wish you had a phone that cleaned up after dinner?]

d

V

h

T

u

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in each of the following sentences. The answers to this set of questions can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. Greg assembled the desk (correct, correctly).
2. Charlotte seemed (tired, tiredly) after the long plane ride.
3. This drawer doesn't open as

(easy, easily) as it used to.

**4.** My new shoes feel more (comfortable, comfortably) than my old ones.

**5.** Make your request (polite, politely) if you want a positive response.

**6.** The workers walked (slow, slowly) back to the line after the break.

**7.** Our team leader seemed (unhappy, unhappily) about something.

**8.** The passenger on the other side of the bus looked (angry, angrily).

**9.** The night watchman felt (careful, carefully) for the switch.

**10.** We looked (thorough, thoroughly) in both locations.

**11.** You'll have (fewer, less) trouble with this component if you see (fewer, less) joints.

**12.** The (number, amount) of people we hire will depend on the (number, amount) of time we have to fill the order.

**13.** Spaghetti tastes especially (good, well) if the noodles are boiled (good, well).

**14.** Kelly is the (older, oldest) of the twins and the (taller, tallest) one in the whole family.

**15.** The receiving department hasn't heard (anything, nothing) about the delivery date of our order.

**16.** Divide these cookies (between, among) the twins, but split the cake (between, among) all the people who come to the party.



Choose the correctly written sentence from

- 17.** a. I like olives and pimentos boiled  
b. boiled in oil, I like olives and pimentos
- 18.** a. While speeding along a country road, a deer dashed across the road in front of our car.  
b. Two deer dashed across the road in front of our car while speeding along a country road.
- 19.** a. At the age of four, my grandmother

b. when I was four, my grandmother t

**20.** a. We heard about the bank robbers v  
news.

b. We heard on the evening news abo  
arrested.

## **Skill Building Unti**

Practice what you have learned in this le  
Many people make mistakes with modifi  
such a mistake, think about how you mig  
to make it correct. Once again, don't feel  
mistakes; just use them as opportunities  
will have the opportunity to correct you.

---

## **Answers**

**1. correctly**

**2. tired**

**3. easily**

**4. comfortable**

**5. politely**

**6. slowly**

**7.** unhappy

**8.** angry

**9.** carefully

**10.** thoroughly

**11.** less, fewer

**12.** number, amount

**13.** good, well

**14.** older, tallest

**15.** anything

**16.** between, among

**17.** a.

**18.** b.

**19.** b.

**20.** b.

# Lesson 16— Easily Confused Word Pairs

## Lesson Summary

*Threw or through? To, two, or too?  
Brake or break?* This lesson and the next one review a host of words that are often confused with other words and show you when to use them.

This lesson covers some of the most

commonly confused word pairs, those you are likely to use in your writing. If you learn to distinguish these words, you can avoid errors in your writing. These words are divided into three separate sections with practice exercises at the end of each section. The italicized words following some of the entries are synonyms, words that can be substituted in a sentence for the easily confused words.

## **Three-Way Confusion**

### ***Lead/Led/Lead***

- **Lead** as a verb means *guide, direct*.

As a noun, it means *front position*. It rhymes with *seed*.

- **Led** is a verb, the past tense of **lead**, meaning *guided, directed*. It rhymes with *red*.

- **Lead** is a noun that is *the name of a metal*. It rhymes with *red*.

### **Examples:**

Geronimo **led** (*guided*) the small band to safety.

We hope the next elected officials will **lead** (*guide*) us to economic

recovery.

A pound of styrofoam weighs as much as a pound of **lead** (*the metal*).

Jake took the **lead** (*front position*) as the group headed out of town.

### *Quite/Quit/Quiet*

- **Quite** is an adverb meaning *completely, very, entirely*. It rhymes with *fight*.
- **Quit** is a verb meaning *stop, cease*

or *stopped, ceased*. It rhymes with *sit*.

• **Quiet** as an adjective means *calm, silent, noiseless*. As a verb, it means *soothe, calm*. As a noun, it means *tranquility, peacefulness*. It almost rhymes with *riot*.

### **Example:**

The firm was **quite** (*very*) surprised when its most productive investment specialist **quit** (*stopped*) work and opted for the **quiet** (*calm*) life of a monk.

***Right/Write/Rite***

- **Right** is an adjective meaning *correct, proper, opposite of left*.
- **Write** is a verb meaning *record, inscribe*.
- **Rite** is a noun meaning *ceremony, ritual*.

### **Example:**

I will **write** (*record*) the exact procedures so you will be able to perform the **rite** (*ceremony*) in the **right** (*proper*) way.

## *Sent/Cent/Scent*

- **Sent** is a verb, the past tense of *send*. It means *dispatched, transmitted*.
- **Cent** is a noun meaning *one penny*, a coin worth .01 of a dollar.
- **Scent** is a noun meaning *odor, smell*.

### **Example:**

For a mere **cent** (*penny*) I bought an envelope perfumed with the **scent** (*odor*) of jasmine. I **sent** (*dispatched*) it to my grandmother.

## *Sight/Site/Cite*

- **Sight** as a noun means *ability to see*. As a verb, it means *see, spot*.
- **Site** is a noun meaning *location, position*.
- **Cite** is a verb meaning *quote, make reference to*.

### **Example:**

At ninety-five my grandmother's **sight** (*ability to see*) was acute enough to **sight** (*spot*) even the smallest error in a crocheted

doily.

This is the proposed **site**  
(*location*) for the new building.

You must **cite** (*make reference to*)  
the source of your information.

## ***To/Too/Two***

- **To** is a preposition or part of an infinitive. Use it only to introduce a prepositional phrase, which usually answers the question *where*, or before a verb. Use **to** for introducing a prepositional phrase: *to the store, to the top, to my home, to our garden, to his laboratory, to his castle, to our advantage, to an open door, to a song, to the science room*, etc. Use **to** as an infinitive (*to* followed by a verb, sometimes separated by adverbs): *to run, to jump, to want badly, to seek,*

*to propose, to write, to explode, to sorely need, to badly botch, to carefully examine, etc.*

- **Too** is an adverb meaning *also, very*.
- **Two** is an adjective, *the name of a number*, as in one, two, three.

### **Example:**

The couple went **to** (*preposition*) the deli **to** (*infinitive*) pick up **two** (*the number*) plate dinners because both of them were **too** (*very*) tired **to** (*infinitive*) cook dinner.

## *Where/Wear/Were*

- **Where** is an adverb referring to *place, location*.
- **Wear** as a verb means *put on, tire*.  
As a noun, it means *deterioration*.
- **Were** is a verb, the plural past tense of *be*.

### **Examples:**

The slacks **were** (*form of be*) too tight.

The tires showed excessive **wear** (*deterioration*)

They will **wear** (*tire*) out these shoes if they **wear** (*put on*) them too much.

**Where** (*location*) are the clothes you **were** (*form of be*) planning to **wear** (*put on*) tomorrow?

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

**1.** The package will be (sent, cent, scent) if you add another (sent, cent, scent) of postage.

**2.** We noticed the distinct (sent, cent, scent) of cat litter when we entered the door.

**3.** Was I (right, write, rite) in assuming I was to (right, write, rite) you a memo about this matter?

**4.** Who will be performing the (right, write, rite) of baptism at tomorrow's service?

**5.** If you will simply be (quite, quit,

quiet), I will be (quite, quit, quiet)  
happy to (quite, quit, quiet) annoying  
you with my constant request for a  
(quite, quit, quiet) atmosphere in  
which to work.

**6.** Our marching band (lead, led) the  
parade.

**7.** The drum major, carrying a baton made of (lead, led), will (lead, led) the band.

**8.** Over the next ridge we will be able to (sight, site, cite) the (sight, site, cite) we've chosen for our new home.

**9.** I would be honored to have you (sight, site, cite) me in your research.

**10.** Even though these trousers (where, wear, were) expensive, they are showing (where, wear, were) along

the seams.

**11.** (Where, wear, were) did you buy those earrings?

## **Easy Misses**

### ***Brake/Break***

• **Brake** as a verb means *slow, stop*. As a noun, it means *hindrance, drag*.

• **Break** as a verb means *separate, shatter, adjourn*. As a noun, it means *separation, crack, pause, opportunity*.

## Examples:

During our **break** (*pause*) we spotted a **break** (*crack*) in the pipeline.

**Brake** (*slow*) gently when driving on glare ice by applying slight pressure to the **brake** (*drag*).

## *Passed/Past*

- **Passed** is a verb, the past tense of *pass*, meaning *transferred, went ahead or by, elapsed, finished*.

- **Past** as a noun means *history*. As an adjective, it means *former*.

## **Examples:**

The first runner **passed** (*transferred*) the baton to the second just as she **passed** (*went by*) the stands. Three seconds **passed** (*elapsed*) before the next runner came by.

Harriet **passed** (*finished*) her bar exam on the first try.

I must have been a whale in a **past** (*former*) life.

Avoid digging up the **past** (*history*) if you can.

## *Peace/piece*

- **Peace** is a noun meaning *tranquility*.
- **Piece** as a noun means *division, creation*. As a verb, it means *patch, repair*.

## **Example:**

If you can **piece** (*patch*) together the **pieces** (*bits*) of this story, perhaps we can have some **peace**

(*tranquility*) around here.

## *Plain/Plane*

- **Plain** as an adjective means *ordinary, clear, simple*. As a noun, it refers to *flat country*, also sometimes written as **plains**.

- **Plane** is a noun meaning *airship* or *flat surface*. It is occasionally used as a verb or adjective meaning *level*.

### **Examples:**

They wore **plain** (*ordinary*)

clothes.

It was **plain** (*clear*) to see.

The meal we ate on the **plains** (*flat country*) was quite **plain** (*simple*).

It was **plain** (*clear*) to us that the enemy did not see our **plane** (*airship*) sitting on the open **plain** (*flat country*).

## *Scene/Seen*

- **Scene** is a noun meaning *view, site, commotion*.

- **Seen** is a verb, the past participle of *see*, meaning *observed, noticed*.

### **Example:**

We caused quite a **scene** (*commotion*) at the **scene** (*site*) of the accident. It was the worst we had ever **seen** (*observed*).

### ***Threw/Through***

- **Threw** is a verb, the past tense of *throw*, meaning *tossed*.

• **Through** is an adverb or a preposition meaning *in one side and out the other*. Use **through** to introduce a prepositional phrase: *through the door, through the lobby, though the mist*.

### **Example:**

Fred **threw** (*tossed*) the ball **through** (*in one side and out the other*) the hoop.

### ***Weak/Week***

• **Weak** is an adjective meaning *flimsy, frail, powerless*.

- **Week** is a noun meaning *a period of seven days*.

**Example:**

The patient's heartbeat was so **weak** (*frail*) that the doctor was certain he would be dead within a **week** (*seven days*).

## *Which/Witch*

- **Which** is a pronoun dealing with *choice*. As an adverb, it introduces a subordinate clause.
  
- **Witch** is a noun meaning *sorceress*, *enchantress*.

### **Examples:**

Which (*choice*) one do you want?

This car, **which** (*introduces subordinate clause*) I have never driven, is the one I'm thinking about buying.

I don't know **which** (*choice*) **witch** (*enchantress*) I should consult about my future.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

**12.** (Which, Witch) (which, witch) scares you the most?

**13.** Gerald (threw, through) away his opportunity when he walked (threw, through) the door.

**14.** Sally slammed on the (brake, break) when she saw the car ahead (brake, break) to avoid the (brake, break) in the concrete road.

**15.** Have you (scene, seen) that pathetic (scene, seen) in the movie?

**16.** The confused (which, witch) couldn't decide (which, witch) broomstick to use on Halloween.

**17.** The sales department has (passed, past) the record it had established in the (passed, past) year.

**18.** We'll need at least a (weak, week) to repair the (weak, week) linkage in this machine.

**19.** This (peace, piece) of news should give you some (peace, piece) of mind.

**20.** The (plain, plane) brown packages were loaded on the (plain, plane).

**To Split or Not to Split**

## *Already/All Ready*

- **Already** is an adverb meaning *as early as this, previously, by this time*.
- **All ready** means *completely ready, totally ready*.

### **Examples:**

At age four, Brigitta is reading **already** (*as early as this*).

We had **already** (*previously, by this time*) finished.

Are we **all ready** (*completely*)

*ready*) to go?

## *Altogether/All Together*

- **Altogether** is an adverb meaning *entirely, completely*.
- **All together** means *simultaneously*.

### **Examples:**

These claims are **altogether** (*entirely*) false.

The audience responded **all**

**together** (*simultaneously*).

## *Everyday/Every Day*

- **Everyday** is an adjective meaning *ordinary, usual*.
- **Every day** means *each day*.

## **Examples:**

These are our **everyday** (*usual*)  
low prices.

The associates sort the  
merchandise **everyday** (*each*

*day*).

## ***Maybe/May be***

- **Maybe** is an adverb meaning *perhaps*.
- **May be** is a verb phrase meaning *might be*.

### **Example:**

**Maybe** (*perhaps*) the next batch will be better than this one. On the other hand, it **may be** (*might be*) worse.

## *Always Split*

- **All right.** There's no such word as *alright*, though you will sometimes see it written this way.
- **A lot.** There's no such word as *alot*. There's a word *allot*, but it means *to portion out* something.

### **Example:**

I thought it was **all right** that we **allotted** tickets to **a lot** of our best customers.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below.

**21.** I (where, wear, were) my (everyday, every day) clothes almost (everyday, every day).

**22.** (Maybe, may be) we should design a new model. It (maybe, may be) just the thing to brighten our financial picture.

**23.** If you had been (already, all ready), we could have (already, all ready) begun.

**24.** You'll be (alright, all right) if you follow the instructions.

**25.** When the staff is (altogether, all together), we should have (altogether, all together) enough brainpower for this project.

## Skill Building Until

See how many of these easily confused words you can identify by reading. Try substituting the synonyms you know.

### Answers

1. sent, cent

2. scent

3. right, write

**4.** rite

**5.** quiet, quite, quit, quiet

**6.** led

**7.** lead, lead

**8.** sight, site

**9.** cite

**10.** were, wear

**11.** Where

**12.** Which, witch

**13.** threw, through

**14.** brake, brake, break

**15.** seen, scene

**16.** witch, which

**17.** passed, past

**18.** week, weak

**19.** piece, peace

**20.** plain, plane

**21.** wear, everyday, every day

**22.** Maybe, may be

**23.** all ready, already

**24.** all right

**25.** all together, altogether

# Lesson 17— More Easily Confused Words

## Lesson Summary

Some of the most commonly used words in the English language are easily confused with other equally common words. To avoid confusing readers, you need to know which ones are which.

This lesson covers more of the most

commonly confused words pairs, those you are likely to use in your writing. If you learn to distinguish these words, you can avoid errors. The words are divided into three separate sections with practice exercises at the end of each section. The words in italics following some of the entries are synonyms, words that can be substituted in a sentence for the easily confused words.

## **Small But Tricky**

### ***By/Buy***

- **By** is a preposition used to introduce

a phrase (by the book, by the time, by the way)

- **Buy** as a verb means *purchase*. As a noun, it means *bargain, deal*.

### **Examples:**

We stopped **by** (*preposition*) the store to **buy** (*purchase*) some groceries.

That car was a great **buy** (*deal*).

## *Dear/Deer*

- **Dear** is an adjective meaning *valued, loved*.
- **Deer** is a noun referring to an *animal*, a four-legged one that lives in the woods and looks like Bambi.

### **Example:**

The **dear** (*loved*) man died when his car struck a **deer** (*animal*).

## *Die/Dye*

- **Die** is a verb meaning *pass away, fade*.
  
- **Dye** as a verb means to *color, tint*.  
As a noun, it refers to *coloring, pigment*.

### **Example:**

We waited for the wind to **die** (*fade*) before we decided to **dye** (*color*) the sheets.

## *Hear/Here*

- **Hear** is a verb meaning *listen to*.
- **Here** is an adverb meaning *in this place, to this place*.

### **Example:**

Please come **here** (*to this place*)  
so you can **hear** (*listen to*) what I  
have to say.

### ***Hole/Whole***

- **Hole** is a noun meaning *opening, gap*.

• **Whole** as an adjective means *entire, intact*. As a noun, it means *entire part or amount*.

## **Examples:**

The **whole** (*entire*) group heard the message.

They patched the **hole** (*opening*) in the wall.

## ***Knew/New***

• **Knew** is a verb, the past tense of *know*. It means *understood, recognized*.

- **New** is an adjective meaning *fresh, different, current*.

### **Example:**

I **knew** (*understood*) they were planning to buy a **new** (*different*) car.

### ***Know/No***

- **Know** is a verb meaning *understand, recognize*.
- **No** as an adverb means *not so, not at*

*all*. As an adjective, it means *none*,  
*not one*.

## **Example:**

As far as I **know** (*understand*),  
we have **no** (*not one*) more of  
these shoes in stock.

## *Meat/Meet*

- **Meat** is a noun meaning *food, flesh, main part*.
- **Meet** as a verb means *assemble, greet, fulfill*. As a noun, it means *assembly*.

### **Examples:**

Before a track **meet** (*assembly*), it is better to eat foods high in carbohydrates rather than **meat**

*(flesh)*.

The **meat** (*main part*) of his message was that our efforts did not **meet** (*fulfill*) his standards.

## ***One/Won***

- **One** can be an adjective meaning *single*. It can also be a pronoun used to mean a single person or thing.

- **Won** is a verb, the past tense of *win*. It means *prevailed, achieved, acquired*.

**Example:**

Jacquez is the **one** (*pronoun referring to Jacquez*) who **won** (*achieved*) the most improved bowler trophy this year.

## *Seam/Seem*

- **Seam** is a noun meaning *joint, joining point*.
- **Seem** is a verb meaning *appear*.

## **Example:**

Does it **seem** (*appear*) to you as if

this **seam** (*joint*) is weakening?

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. If the copier isn't repaired (by, buy) noon, we'll need to (by, buy) a new one.

2. (By, Buy) this book that was written (by, buy) a well-known expert on the subject. It's a great (by, buy).

3. The (dear, deer) I had as a pet was

quite (dear, deer) to me.

**4.** The sound began to (die, dye) during the most exciting part of the movie.

**5.** How do I (die, dye) this shirt?

**6.** If you sit (hear, here), you'll be able to (hear, here) much better.

**7.** We can see the (hole, whole) field through this little (hole, whole).

**8.** I wish I (knew, new) how to operate this (knew, new) equipment.



**9.** You (know, no) we have (know, no) idea how to solve this problem.

**10.** After a kill, a pride of lions will (meat, meet) so each can get a share of the (meat, meet).

**11.** The Colts (one, won) the game by just (one, won) point.

**12.** I (seam, seem) to be unable to locate the (seam, seem) in this pipe.

**Often Used and Misused**

## *Choose/Chose*

- **Choose** is a verb meaning *select*. It rhymes with *bruise*.
- **Chose** is past tense of *choose*; it means *selected*. It rhymes with *hose*.

### **Example:**

Henry **chose** (*selected*) flex hours on Friday afternoons. I will **choose** (*select*) the same option.

## *Loose/Lose/Loss*

- **Loose** is an adjective meaning *free, unrestrained, not tight*. It rhymes with *goose*.
- **Lose** is a verb meaning *misplace, to be defeated, fail to keep*. It rhymes with *shoes*.
- **Loss** is a noun meaning *defeat, downturn, the opposite of victory or gain*. It rhymes with *toss*.

## Examples:

The chickens ran **loose** (*free*) in the yard.

The knot holding the boat to the dock was **loose** (*not tight*).

Where did you **lose** (*misplace*) your gloves?

The investors will **lose** (*fail to keep*) considerable capital if the market suffers a **loss** (*downturn*).

## ***Suppose/Supposed***

- **Suppose** is a verb meaning *assume, imagine*.
- **Supposed** as a verb is the past tense

of *suppose* and means *assumed*, *imagined*. As an adjective it means *expected*, *obligated*.

## **Examples:**

I **suppose** (*assume*) you'll be late, as usual.

We all **supposed** (*assumed*) you would be late.

You were **supposed** (*expected*) to have picked up the copies of the report before you came to the meeting.



## *Than/Then*

- **Than** is a conjunctive word used to make a comparison.
- **Then** is an adverb telling *when* or meaning *next*.

### **Example:**

Then (*next*), the group discussed the ways in which the new procedures worked better *than* (*conjunction making a*

*comparison*) the old.

## ***Use/Used***

- **Use** as a verb means *utilize, deplete*. It rhymes with *ooze*. As a noun, it rhymes with *goose* and means *purpose*.

- **Used** as a verb is the past tense of *use* and means *utilized, depleted*. As an adjective, it means *second-hand*.

- **Used to** can be used as an adjective, meaning *accustomed to*, or as an adverb meaning *formerly*. (Note that you never write *use to* when you mean

*accustomed to or formerly.)*

## **Examples:**

Just **use** (*utilize*) the same password we **used** (*utilized*) yesterday.

What's the **use** (*purpose*) in trying yet another time?

We should consider buying **used** (*second-hand*) equipment.

We **used to** (*formerly*) require(*d*) a second opinion.

Residents of Buffalo, New York, are **used to** (*accustomed to*) cold temperatures.

## *Weather/Whether*

- **Weather** is a noun referring to the *condition outside*.
- **Whether** is adverb used when referring to *a possibility*.

## **Examples:**

The **weather** (*condition outside*) took a turn for the worse.

Let me know **whether** (*a possibility*) you are interested in this new system.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. The answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

**13.** If you (choose, chose) your words carefully, you can avoid offending anyone else.

**14.** The committee (choose, chose) the model with the most special features.

**15.** The (loose, lose, loss) caused the stockholders to (loose, lose, loss) confidence in the company.

**16.** How could you (loose, lose, loss) your temper over such a trivial matter?

**17.** The paper tray seems (loose, lose, loss) to me.

**18.** I (suppose, supposed) you thought I was the one who was (suppose, supposed) to speak at the banquet.

**19.** Add even more sugar (than, then) you already have, and (than, then) stir the mixture thoroughly.

**20.** We found yet another (use, used) for the (use, used) tires that (use, used) to be stacked outside the building.

**21.** Do you know (weather, whether) this beautiful (weather, whether) is

(suppose, supposed) to continue into the weekend?

## **Killer a's and al's**

### *Accept/Except/Expect*

- **Accept** is a verb meaning *receive, bear*.
- **Except** is a preposition meaning *but, excluding*.
- **Expect** is a verb meaning *anticipate, demand, assume*.

## Examples:

This client **expects** (*demands*) nothing **except** (*but*) the most sophisticated options available.

Will you **accept** (*bear*) the responsibility for this decision?

We **expect** (*anticipate*) everyone to come **except** (*excluding*) John.

## *Advice/Advise*

- **Advice** is a noun meaning *suggestion, suggestions*. It rhymes with *ice*. (Hint: Think *advICE*.)

- **Advise** is a verb meaning *suggest to, warn*. It rhymes with *wise*.

## **Examples:**

We **advise** (*suggest to*) you to proceed carefully. That was the best **advice** (*suggestion*) I've received so far.

## ***Affect/Effect***

- **Affect** is a verb meaning *alter, inspire or move emotionally, imitate*. **Affected**, besides being the past tense of *affect*, can also be used as an

adjective meaning *imitated*,  
*pretentious*.

- **Effect** as a noun means *consequence*. As a verb, it means *cause*.

## **Examples:**

How will this plan **affect** (*alter*) our jobs? What **effect** (*consequence*) will this restructuring have on profits? Will it **effect** (*cause*) an increase?

The movie **affected** (*moved emotionally*) Marian.

He **affected** (*imitated*) an English accent.

The **affected** (*pretentious*) speech fooled no one.

## *Capital/Capitol*

- **Capital** as a noun means either *assets* or *the city that is the seat of government*. As an adjective, it means *main, very important, or deserving of death*.
  
- **Capitol** is a noun referring to *the building that houses the government*.

### **Examples:**

How much **capital** (*assets*) are you

willing to invest?

I think that's a **capital** (*main*)  
objective.

First degree murder is a **capital**  
(*deserving of death*) crime.

Albany is the **capital** (*city*) of New  
York.

No legislators were injured in the  
explosion in the **capitol** (*building*).

***Personal/Personnel***

- **Personal** is an adjective meaning *private*.

- **Personnel** is a noun meaning *staff, employees* or an adjective meaning *dealing with staff or employees*.

## **Examples:**

The director of **personnel** (*staff*) keeps all the **personnel** (*employee*) files in order and guards any **personal** (*private*) information they contain.

## ***Principal/Principle***

• **Principal** as a noun refers to the *head of a school* or an *investment*. As an adjective, it means *primary, major*.

• **Principle** is a noun meaning *rule, law, belief*.

## Examples:

The **principal** (*head*) of Calbert High School used the **principal** (*investment*) of an endowment fund to cover this month's salaries.

The **principal** (*primary*) objective is to make decisions that are in keeping with our **principles**

*(beliefs).*

## ***Practice***

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. The answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

**22.** Surely you didn't (accept, except, expect) Weldon to (accept, except, expect) responsibility for this decision when everyone (accept, except, expect) him was consulted.

**23.** We (accept, except, expect) the delivery to arrive early in the morning.

**24.** The soothsayer will (advise, advise) you to seek her (advise, advise) often.

**25.** The new work schedule (affected, effected) production in a positive way.

**26.** How will this new work schedule (af

**27.** What (affect, effect) will this new work  
production?

**28.** We plan to tour the (capital, capitol)  
state's (capital, capitol) city.

**29.** We never release (personal, personnel)  
(personal, personnel).

**30.** The employees' (principal, principle)

**31.** The new legislation violates the basic principles of justice which the country was founded.

### **Skill Building Until**

Make a conscious effort to use the correct words and avoid confused words in your writing. You may want to list words and their synonyms onto a separate sheet of paper to provide a good review and serve as a help sheet with you as you write.

### **Answers**

**1.** by, buy

**2.** Buy, by, buy

**3.** deer, dear

**4.** die

**5.** dye

**6.** here, hear

**7.** whole, hole

**8.** knew, new

**9.** know, no

**10.** meet, meat

**11.** won, one

**12.** seem, seam

**13.** choose

**14.** chose

**15.** loss, lose

**16.** lose

**17.** loose

**18.** suppose, supposed

**19.** than, then

**20.** use, used, used

**21.** whether, weather, supposed

**22.** expect, accept, except

**23.** expect

**24.** advise, advice

**25.** affected

**26.** affect

**27.** effect

**28.** capitol, capital

**29.** personal, personnel

**30.** principal

**31.** principles

# Lesson 18— Diction

## Lesson Summary

"Diction?" you might think. "In a book about writing?" While *diction* refers to how words are pronounced, it also refers to *which* words you choose. In order to use language effectively, writers have to write concisely and precisely. This lesson and Lesson 19 focus on how to choose the words that best communicate what you want to say.

A word is a terrible thing to waste. Or is it better to say, "It is a terrible thing to waste a word"? The difference between these two versions is a matter of *diction*, using appropriate words and combining them in the right way to communicate your message accurately. This lesson discusses ways to avoid some of the most common diction traps: wordiness, lack of precision, clichés, and jargon. Learning to recognize and avoid such writing weaknesses will turn a mediocre writer into a good one—this means expressing ideas in the *best* and *clearest* way possible.

## Wordiness

Excess words in communication waste space and they may also distort the message or make it difficult to understand. Get in the habit of streamlining your sentences as concise as possible. If you do, delete the extra words or structure you don't need. You can rewrite the sentences in the first place. Check yourself against the version in the sample.

## Wordy

It was a three-hour period after the

accident when the rescue squad that we knew was going to help us arrived. [21 words]

It was decided that the church would organize a committee for the purpose of conducting a search for a new pastor. [21 words]

The additional words in the first column do not take up space.

### ***Buzzwords and Fluffy Modifiers***

Buzzwords such as *aspect*, *element*, *fact*, *forms*, and so on sound important, but they often signal a writer who has little or not



The following table lists a host of phrase or two words.

<b>Wordy</b>	<b>Concise</b>	<b>Wo</b>
puzzling in nature	puzzling	at th time
of a peculiar kind	peculiar	at th time
regardless of the fact that	although	in o

due to the fact that	because	by r
of an indefinite nature	indefinite	exhi tend
concerning the matter of	about	in c with
in the event that	if	in re

### *Passive Voice*

Some wordiness is caused by using passive voice. You could use the active voice. (See Lesson 1 on passive voice.)

## Passive

A

It has been decided that your application for grant money is not in accordance with the constraints outlined by the committee in the application guidelines.

T  
g  
f  
g

The letter of resignation was accepted by the Board of Directors.

T  
a

*Intellectual-Ese*

The passive sentences above suffer not only from wordiness, but also from the writer's attempt to sound intellectual, to make the message more credible. Writers make this error in many ways, such as turning adjectives and verbs into nouns. This trait is called nominalization, that extra words are added to the sentence.

## Wordy

R

Water *pollution* [noun] is not as serious in the northern parts of Canada.

W  
[a  
C

Customer *demand* [noun] is reducing in the area of sales services.

C  
fe



Another way writers add words without a pretentious tone. Below is an actual memo from World War II. When it was sent to President Roosevelt for approval, he edited the memo before sending it. Roosevelt's edited versions are printed below.

### **Original pretentious memo:**

In the unlikely event of an attack by air, all necessary preparations shall be made as will cover all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings covered by the Act during an air raid for any period of time. This includes internal or external illumination.

## **Roosevelt's revised memo:**

If there is an air raid, put something a lights outside in buildings where we l

Here's another example of pretentious wri version.

## **Pompous memo:**

As per the most recent directive issued upon all employees and they are hence the paper used in the accomplishment marked increase in the cost of such st

## **Revised:**

Since paper costs have increased, em

**WORD ECC**

## **Stretched Sentence**

Cassandra seems to be content

We must know what it is that we are doing.

This is the book of which I have been speaking.

It is with pleasure that I announce the

winner.

The reason we were late was because of traffic.

These plans will be considered on an individual basis.

The caterer, who was distressed, left the party.

There are new shipments arriving daily.

Due to the fact that we were late, we missed the door prizes.

The consideration given in the latest promotion is an example of how I was treated unfairly.

Writers sometimes stretch their sentences with too many words, all in an effort to sound intelligent. The previous page illustrates stretched sentences, and the following page shows the same sentences rewritten more concisely.

## *Redundancy*

Another writing trap that takes up space is redundancy—repeating words that express the same idea. When meanings overlap. If you stop to think about the examples below—and many others—you'll see that redundancy is not only unnecessary but often just plain silly.

enclosed *with this letter*

(

(

remit *payment*

1

*absolutely* necessary

{

weather *outside*

(

1

postpone *until later*

1

s

refer *back*

1

1

*past history*

1

ask *the question*

*Enclosed* means it's in this letter, doesn't  
And how can something be more *necessa*  
The weather *outside* as opposed to the w  
history as opposed to . . . ? You see the p  
(Not *plain and simple*.)

## ***Practice***

Try rewriting the following sentences to :  
wording. Suggested revisions are at the e  
your versions may be different; there's m  
rewrite these sentences.

**1.** Stephanie is a very important employ significant role in the success of this com

**2.** Some educators hold with the opinion punishment should in fact be reinstated in a deterrent to those students who are con inappropriate behavior.

**3.** It is certainly a true statement that be over again that technological advancement can assist employees in performing in a v and that these self-same computers may i considerable savings over a period of tin

**4.** I arrived at a decision to allow the su department to achieve a higher golf score my opportunities for advancement in the c opportunities became available.



## Precise Language

Work to make your writing as precise as possible to communicate more meaning using fewer words. Try to make your writing more concise. Choose precise nouns to help you transmit an exact meaning.

### IMPRECISE VS. PRECISE

#### Verbs

Emilia participated in the protest.

En

the

Hannah won't deal with sales meetings

Ha  
me

Dick can relate to Jane.

Di

## Modifiers

These bad instructions confused me.

Th  
ins  
ho

*Toy Story* is a good movie with fun for all.

*To*  
fil  
roi

We had a nice time with you.

We  
dri  
sw

## Nouns

I always have trouble with this computer.

I c  
sav

I like to have fun when I take a vacation.

I li  
wh

Let me grab some things from my locker.

Le  
fro



## *Abstract vs. Concrete*

Abstract language refers to intangible ideas or objects rather than the people or things that are concrete ideas. Without a grasp of the concrete, it is expected to understand an abstract idea. Professionals are especially aware of the difference between the abstract and the concrete as they write. They strive to present facts that can draw conclusions. They avoid making assumptions, hoping the facts will speak for themselves. It takes time and thought to write, but it communicates more effectively. Additional words are an advantage if they increase the precision.

## **Abstract Assumption**

C

Strader was drunk.

S  
s  
a

The couple was in love.

T  
h  
a

Billie is reliable and responsible.

B  
c  
h

*Clichés*

A cliché is a tired, overworked phrase that has lost its original meaning. These are cliché phrases: *a needle in a haystack*, *dawn*, *tough as nails*, *naked truth*, *hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil*. Writers use clichés when they don't have the time or energy to think of a more precise or more meaningful phrase. Although clichés are "communication shorthand," they rely on the original meaning. A writer who uses clichés is rethinking patterns to carry a message. If the original language will make a stronger impression, use it. Original language stimulates thought and emotion. Moreover, a fresh image rewards a reader with what you have written.

Imagine that a writer wanted to explain the cause of a problem. Look at the two versions presented below. The first is a cliché to communicate the message; the second is a fresh approach. Which version is likely to make the message more effective?

Finding the source of this problem  
a haystack.

Finding the source of this problem  
political advertisement.

Here are two more examples contrasting clichés with fresher, more original language. When you check your writing, look for ways to replace frequently used words and phrases with something fresh and original.

We rose at the crack of dawn.

We rose with the roosters.

Having Sam at our negotiations meetings was like having a loose cannon on deck.

Having Sam at our negotiations meetings was like having a German shepherd's tail in your crystal closet.

## *Jargon*

Jargon is the technical, wordy language used by those associated with a trade or profession. Often it is full of passive voice, acronyms, technical terms, and abstract words. Writers use jargon in an attempt to sound educated, sophisticated, or knowledgeable. Actually, jargon muddies and even distorts the message. Compare the following two paragraphs.

Alex demonstrates a tendency to engage inappropriately in verbal social interaction during class time. His grades are deficient because he suffers from an unwillingness to complete supplementary assignments between class periods.

Alex talks in class when he isn't supposed to. He has low grades because he doesn't do his homework.

The first paragraph above leaves the impression that Alex is a sociopath with a serious problem. The second portrays him as a student who needs to

talk less and work more. When you write, strive for clear, plain language that communicates your message accurately. Clear communication leaves a better impression by far than pretentious, abstract, jargon-filled words.

### *Practice*

Choose the option that expresses the idea most clearly and concisely.

Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**5. a.** On June 17, Dr. Sam Boswell and Ms. Lorene Webb had an argument over a parking space in the Eagle Supermarket parking lot. Police

officers told them both to go home instead of arresting them.

b. On or about June 17, in the Eagle Supermarket parking lot, Dr. Sam Boswell and Ms. Lorene Webb were allegedly involved in an altercation over a parking space. The police were called. There were no arrests. Both parties were advised to go home by the police officers.

**6. a.** The most expeditious option in a situation is also the most advantageous option.

b. The fastest way is the best way.

**7. a.** Too many television viewers prefer thought-provoking programs.

b. Too many television viewers prefer "The MacNeil-Lehrer Report."

**8. a.** The research department found that our magazines are popular.

b. Consumer attitude studies by the re indicated an extremely low level of custc newsstand products.

## **Skill Building Unti**

Listen to public officials as they deliver speak clearly and plainly, or are they try competent, intelligent speaker or writer pretentious, abstract, sophisticated-soun

## **Answers**

1. Stephanie has contributed a lot to this

**2.** Some educators believe that unruly st

**3.** Using computers can save time and n

**4.** I let my supervisor beat me at golf so

**5.** a.

**6.** b.

**7.** b.

**8.** a.

# Lesson 19— More Diction

## Lesson Summary

This lesson continues the ideas presented in the last lesson: writing clearly and communicating accurately. It covers colloquialism, loaded language, consistent point of view, parallelism, and gender-neutral language.

Good writers know that communicating requires choosing

words carefully. Writing styles that are too formal or informal, inappropriate, or just plain emotional, turn readers off. You may have the best ideas in the world, but if you can't get them across in writing, no one will ever act on your great ideas. On the other hand, commonplace ideas that are well expressed are more likely to get attention. How you choose your words has everything to do with whether your writing gets the attention it deserves.

## **Colloquialism**

*Colloquialisms* are informal words and phrases such as *a lot*, *in a bind*, *pulled it off*, and so on. These words

and phrases are widely used in conversations between friends, but in written communication they portray an attitude of chumminess or close friendship that may cause your message to be taken

less seriously than you intended. You may write without meaning to. A friendly, colloquial letter; however, a more formal tone is better for business communications, which are meant to be taken seriously. The following paragraphs. If you received the letter from an employee, which would you take more seriously?

I think the way we promote people who aren't that good at their jobs get promoted around with the right people. That just doesn't matter how much time I put into my job I do; I won't get promoted unless I'm that kind of guy.

I think our promotion system is unfair.

employees receive promotions similar to those of their superiors. This practice leaves the impression that the quantity and quality of work are not considered. I discuss this with my supervisors, and I feel as though I am being taken for that reason alone.

The writer of the first paragraph sounds serious, but not that seriously. And yet he probably does; he uses a more formal diction to communicate his seriousness in writing but chooses a style that is more appropriate in a conversation with his supervisor. The writer of the second paragraph conveys his seriousness by using more formal diction without falling into the opposite trap, distorting his style by trying to sound *too* intelligent. He has used a more formal language.

The following sentences illustrate the difference between informal and formal diction. By substituting the highlighted words for the underlined words, the sentences become more formal.

becomes more formal rather than colloquial

## Colloquial

More

I have around three hours to finish this job.

I have  
this

The pasta was real good.

The

We got sick from the food.

We

It looks like we could win.

It l

I'm awful tired.

I'm  
tired

## **Tone**

*Tone* describes a writer's emotional attitude toward the audience. The more reasonable and objective the tone is, the more likely it is to be considered seriously. Rarely does anyone change an opinion, and they seldom change from undecided to decided. Persuasion requires clearly presented arguments. A reader or listener is more likely to accept an argument that seems fair and objective than one that lacks credibility. Use it carefully.

## *Avoid Anger*

Avoid accusatory, angry words that make demands. Consider the two paragraphs below. Which one is most likely to persuade the reader to take action?

I just got this stupid credit card bill in the mail. None of these outrageous charges are mine. I can't believe some big corporation like yours can't find a way to keep its records straight or keep its customers

from being cheated. If you can't do any better than that, why don't you just give it up? I reported my stolen credit card five days before any of these charges were made, and yet you idiots have charged me for these purchases. The fine print you guys are so fond of putting in all of your contracts says I am not (I'll say it again just to help you understand) **not** responsible for these charges. I want them removed immediately.

The credit card bill I received on April 25 contains several charges that need to be removed.

I reported my stolen credit card on April 20. When I called to make the report, the representative referred me the original contract that states, "No charges in excess of \$50.00 nor any made more than 24 hours after the card has been reported stolen shall be charged to the customer's account." Naturally, I was quite relieved. All of the charges on this account were made more than 24 hours after I reported the stolen card. Please remove the charges from my account. Thank you very much.

No matter how angry you might be, giving your reader the benefit of the

doubt is not only polite but also more likely to get results. (This principle is even more important when you're writing a supervisor, employee, or client than when you're writing a big credit card company.) The first letter is the one you might write in the heat of the moment when you first get your credit card bill. In fact, writing that letter might help you get the anger out of your system. Tearing it up will make you feel even better. *Then* you can sit down and write the letter you're actually going to send—the second version.

Use *sarcasm* (bitter, derisive language) and *irony* (saying the

opposite of what you actually mean) carefully in your writing. Like anger, sarcasm brings your credibility into question. Overusing sarcasm can make you seem childish or petty rather than reasonable and logical. Furthermore, in order for irony to be successful, the reader must immediately recognize it. Unless the reader fully understands, you risk confusing or distorting your message. A little well-placed irony or sarcasm may invigorate your writing, but it requires careful, skillful use.

### *Avoid Cuteness*

Avoid words that make your writing sound flippant, glib, or cute. Although

the writing may be entertaining to the reader, it might not be taken seriously. The paragraph below protests a decision, but fails to offer a single reason why the decision was wrong. It may get the attention of the reader, but it won't produce any results, except perhaps the dismissal of its author.

I'm just a li'l ol' girl, but it's clear to me that this decision is dead wrong. I'm afraid that the people who made it have a serious intelligence problem. If they took their two IQ points and rubbed them together, they probably couldn't start gasoline on fire. If you were one of those people . . . . Oh well, it's been

nice working for you.

The conclusion implied in this writer's last sentence—that she doesn't expect to work here much longer—is probably accurate.

### *Avoid Pompousness*

Avoid words that make your writing sound pompous or preachy. Few people respond positively to a condescending, patronizing tone.

Compare the two paragraphs below, both written by employees seeking a promotion. Which employee would you promote if they were both vying

for the same position and had nearly identical work records and qualifications?

If you examine my service and work record for the past two years, I believe you will find a dedicated, hardworking employee who is ideal for the floor manager position. I believe all employees should be on time for their jobs. You will see that my attendance record is impeccable, no absences and no tardies. You can see from my monthly evaluations that I was a high-quality employee when I was hired and that I have consistently maintained my high

standards. I strive to be the kind of employee all managers wish to hire, and I believe my record shows this. I am also extremely responsible. Again, my record will reflect that my supervisors have confidence in me and assign additional responsibility readily to me because I am someone who can handle it. I am a man of my word, and believe that responsibility is something to be treasured, not shirked. As you compare me with other employees, I feel confident that you will find I am the most competent person available.

Thank you for considering me for the position of floor manager. As you make your decision, I would like to highlight three items from my service and work record. First, in two years I have not missed work and have been tardy only once, as the result of an accident. Second, my supervisors have given me the highest ratings on each of the monthly evaluations. Finally, I was pleased to have been given additional responsibilities during my supervisors' vacation times, and I learned a great deal about managing sales and accounts as a result. I welcome

the challenge that would come with a promotion. Thank you again for your consideration.

Both writers highlight the same aspects of their employment records. Yet the first writer seems so full of himself that his superiors might wonder whether he has the people skills to be an effective supervisor. No one wants to work for a supervisor who is prone to such pronouncements as "responsibility is something to be treasured, not shirked." The other writer's just-the-facts approach is bound to make a better impression on the decision-makers.



## *Avoid Cheap Emotion*

Avoid language that is full of sentimental risk making your reader gag. The following error.

We were so deeply hurt by your cr  
failing to introduce us to Charlton I  
wonderful, talented, masculine act  
face of the earth. My friend Charlo  
have ever since we can remember.  
channeled river that will never stop  
imagine just how sorely disappoint  
were when we were not given the c  
shake the hand and hear the voice c

nor my dearest friend can seem to f  
sure we will remain scarred for ma

Are you gagging yet? Instead of regretting  
writer to the great Charlton Heston, the re  
congratulates himself on not having let th

## **Consistent Point of View**

Authors can write using the first person p  
*my, our*), second person point of view (y  
point of view (*she, he, one, they, her, hi*  
*theirs*). Avoid switching points of view v  
sentences. Keep the point of view consis

**Inconsistent**

**Co**

---

Citizens pay taxes, which entitle them [third person] to have some way in how their [third person] government is run. We [first person] have a right to insist on efficient use of four tax dollars.

We  
ent  
in  
We  
eff  
do

I [first person] enjoyed my trip to the park. You [second person] could see trees budding, flowers blooming, and baby animals running all over.

I e  
I s  
blo  
run

## Parallelism

Two or more equivalent ideas in a sentence should be presented in the same form. Using parallel sentence structures not only helps readers quickly recognize examples of parallel words, phrases, and

### Not Parallel

My roommate is miserly, sloppy,

and a bare.

My vaccum cleaner squealed loudly, shock violently, and dust filled the air.

We soon discovered that our plane tickets were invalid, that our cruise reservations had never been made, and our travel agent left town.

Pairs of ideas should always be presented following sentences present two or more forms.

The committee finds no original and  
What is original is not inspiring, and

We came, we saw, we conquered.

Belle was a timid, talented, and cre

Ask not what your country can do f  
country.

## **Using Gender-Neutral Language**

It may seem that language is neutral, simp  
Although this is partly true, our language  
communicates to others our social biases  
entire culture is gender-biased, the langua  
for expressing and perpetuating those bia

overcoming such a prejudice is to examine it so that it no longer perpetuates false stereotypes.

Some people resist changing the language, claiming it is harmless and that those who are offended are overreacting. It remains that many readers are sensitive to the use of masculine pronouns to refer to both sexes, which is not indicating gender. Saying, "Man must fulfill his duty" or "Man was a great poetess" strikes them as archaic and sexist.

Whenever emotionally charged words are used, the writer must be aware of the reader's perspective. A reader who is offended by the words will not read the work with an open mind.

## *Gender Traps*

Below are samples of the type of language that carries emotional charge that may sidetrack the ideas.

### **Masculine Nouns or Pronouns**

The most serious difficulty comes when the pronoun *he* is used to refer to an indefinite student, a postal carrier—the underlying problem comes up with words such as *so*, *everyone*, *no one*, or *nobody*. Below are traps in sentences and possible ways to r

## Poor

A presidential candidate must realize that his life is no longer his own.

## Better

Preside  
realize  
their ov

a) If a s  
his or h  
see his  
tell him  
[This se  
mismat  
using bo  
feminin  
Howerv  
awkwa

If a student wishes to change his schedule, he must see his advisor, who will tell him how to proceed.

b) If stu  
schedul  
advisor  
to proce  
making  
plural s  
pronou

c) If yo  
schedul  
will tel  
[This se  
person  
"your."

a) Anyo  
test sco

If anyone wants to improve his test scores, he should take good notes and study.

and stud  
sentenc  
referenc

b) Stud  
their tes  
notes an  
into the

c) Anyo  
his or h  
good no  
the mas  
singular

Note that you cannot simply change the w  
*theirs*. "If anyone wants to improve their  
take notes and study" is grammatically in  
*their* don't match their antecedent, anyone  
singular and *they* is plural.

## Women as Subordinate to Men

There are many subtle ways in which wri  
are always leaders and women are alway

**Poor**

**Be**

A principal and his staff need to establish good communication.

Th  
est

If you ask the nurse, she will summon the doctor if he is available.

If  
av

Bob took his wife and children to a movie.

Bo  
to

Emil asked his secretary to check the mail.

En  
the

Writers also fall into a similar kind of trap according to their abilities, while referring to appearance.

**Poor**

**Be**

Dr. Routmeir and his attractive, blond wife arrived at the party at 9:00 P.M.

a)  
arr  
P.M

b)  
Ro  
pa

The talented violinist and his beautiful accompanist took the stage.

Th  
acc

Note that in both sentences in the first col

to by his profession, while the woman is  
To avoid the appearance of assigning val  
accomplishments and to women because  
in the same context, either physical or pro  
first example the man is addressed by a f  
identified except as the wife belonging to  
appearance of referring to the woman stri  
man, refer to both by name.

## "Men's" Jobs and "Women's" Jobs

Avoid making special note of gender when referring to jobs traditionally done by men or women—the gender should not hold any more! The first sentence below makes gender assumptions, while the second does not.

When a man on board collapsed, a lady pilot came from the cockpit, and a male nurse offered assistance.

When a passenger collapsed, a pilot came from the cockpit, and a nurse offered assistance.

The references *lady pilot* and *male nurse* are unnecessary.

themselves because they assume that the 1 automatically assign a gender to the job. I not think in terms of the traditional stereo offended by the writer's assumption that t stereotypical thinking.

## *Avoiding Gender Traps*

As a writer, you must understand the effe references on readers. You can avoid off unintentionally with gender-specific lang using gender-neutral terms, using the plur sentences altogether to avoid a gender re these tactics have already been illustrate sentences above. More examples appear

## **Use Gender-Neutral Terms**

There are a lot of words in English that have taken different forms for male and female. These distinctions are becoming obsolete. Now we prefer one term to refer to both men and women in particular roles. And this change doesn't seem awkward, as you can see in the table below.

### **Gender-Specific**

### **Gender-Neutral**

waiter, waitress

server

stewardess, steward

flight attendant

policeman, policewoman

police officer

chairwoman, chairman

chairperson

man-made

synthetic

foreman

supervisor

manpower

employees

man, mankind

humanity

In the past, it was common to use the word man to refer to all humanity, both men and women. Now, using the word man will offend many readers. The sentence by the author is an example of this kind of usage while the second one offers an appropriate alternative.

If man wishes to improve his environment,  
he must first improve himself.

If humanity wishes to improve its environment,  
each individual must improve.

## Convert to the Plural

One of the stickiest gender-reference problems is a sentence such as, "A student must do *his* homework and succeed in *his* classes." The easiest way to fix *he* words is to turn the singular pronouns into the plural pronouns *they* and *their*. Consider revising the antecedents of those pronouns (see Lesson 13): "*Students* must do *their* homework in *their* classes." Here are some other ex

**Gender-Specific**

**Ge**

The doctor uses his best judgment.

Do  
jud

Every student must do his homework.

Stu  
ho

A company executive is wise to choose his words carefully.

Co  
wi  
ca

If a manager wants respect, he should behave respectably.

Ma  
res  
res

## **Restructure Sentences to Avoid Gender**

Finally, you can avoid gender references

your sentences. See how this is done in the

## Gender-Specific

Ge

Man has always turned to his intellect to solve problems.

Pe  
the  
pro

A company executive is wise to drive himself relentlessly.

Ar  
mu

A nurse must take her job seriously.

A  
ser

Someone left his umbrella in the cloakroom. He should call Last

Th  
un

and Found.

sho

The ladies enjoyed the shopping trip.

Th  
trip

## **Skill Building Until Ne**

Pay close attention to the tone and style of the text you read. Is the degree of formality appropriate for the audience? Do you sense emotional bias or a point of view consistent? Are equivalent ideas properly supported? Do the writing contain gender references? If so, do they offend the reader?



# Lesson 20— Communicating Yours Ideas

## Lesson Summary

The previous lessons have dealt with words and sentences. This final lesson is about the bigger issues involved in a piece of writing as a whole. By focusing on the purpose of your writing, you can develop your ideas in a logical, effective way to have the biggest possible impact on your readers.

Mastering writing detail is important, but the main purpose of writing is to communicate a message with a specific purpose to an audience. Most writing does one of three things: inform, explain, or present an argument. Writing effectively involves discovering what you want to say, organizing your ideas, and presenting them in the most logical, effective way. This lesson discusses all of these issues.

## **Writing to Inform**

Good, informational writing is clear, simple, and orderly. In business writing, it's important to get right to the

point. No one has time to spend reading your warm-ups, the words you write while you're trying to get to the point. The best communications state the point directly and present the information clearly.

## The Planning

**Main idea:** Mr. Lundskey requested information about the printers (models, date of purchase) used in our department and justification for the technology requests we made last year.

**Purpose:** Provide the information so the department can get what it requested

**Audience:** Mr. Lundskey, technology coordinator

# I. Data

## A. Current computers and memory

1. PS1, 4 mb RAM

2. PS2, 8 mb RAM

3. AST, 8 mb RAM

4. PS2, 8 mb RAM

5. Compaq Presario, 16 mb RAM

## B. Printers

1. NEC, 1991
2. Epson, 1992
3. HP Laserjet II, 1993
4. HP Deskjet 560, 1995

## II. Requests

### A. Additional printer

1. HP Deskjet 660C for Compaq Presario
2. Reason: newest, most powerful

computer needs color capability

## B. Memory upgrades

1. two 8 mb SIMMs for PS1
2. two 8 mb SIMMs for PS2s respectively
3. 8mb SIMMs for AST

## C. Justification for memory upgrades

1. Most recent programs require a minimum of 16 mb RAM

2. 8 mb SIMMs are the most cost effective

## The Memo

To: Mr. Lundsky

From: Allie McGinnis

Re: Technology assessment and needs of sociology department as requested

Date: May 9, 1996

I am providing the information you requested about equipment we

have in our department. I am also outlining our additional requests and the reasons for these requests.

These are the machines, memory capacity, and printers we have at this time:

- PS1, 4 mb RAM, NEC Silentwriter printer (purchased in 1991)
- PS2, 8 mb RAM, Epson LQ2 dot matrix printer (both purchased in 1992)
- AST, 8 mb RAM, no printer

(purchased in 1992)

- PS2, 8 mb RAM, Laserjet II printer (both purchased in 1993)

- Compaq Presario, 16 mb RAM, HP Deskjet 560 (purchased 1995)

We are requesting five 8-megabyte memory SIMMs to upgrade all of the computers to at least 16 mb of RAM. The most recent programs we have purchased require a minimum of 10 mb. Eight-mb SIMMS are the most cost-effective way to buy additional memory. A

single 8-mb SIMMs is \$95.00, while 4-mb SIMMs are \$72.00 and 2-mb SIMMs are \$59.00 each. We also need an HP Deskjet 660C. We plan to move the HP Deskjet 560 to the AST, which has no printer, and put the new printer with color capability on our newest, most powerful unit.

Thank you for considering our request.

## **Writing to Explain**

Another form of writing you're likely to use often is explanation. You may

need to provide reasons for an action or policy, or you may need to explain how a product is used.

For this type of writing, follow the same planning process as you would for a written communication designed to present information.

1. Summarize the main idea and purpose.
2. Determine the audience.
3. Brainstorm ideas.



### III. Reliability

A. Warranties

B. Weekly maintenance checks

C. Service

D. Two-hour replacement guarantee

**First paragraph:** Everyone in the promotional department at KCBD-TV will find this new Sharp copy machine

a huge improvement over the older model. You'll appreciate how easy it is to use this new copier for daily tasks, and anyone can perform the routine maintenance on the machine. This, our most reliable copier, is backed by a long-term warranty and a quick, efficient service plan.

## **Writing to Persuade**

The other most common type of writing involves presenting a clear, convincing argument. Your written communication may be a single message, or it may be the first in a series of exchanges that will eventually result in a compromise.

Each type of argument requires a different approach; however, both kinds of persuasive communications must have three common characteristics: logical order, solid support, and credibility.

### *Logical Order*

Even the brightest and best ideas make no impact if a reader cannot recognize or follow them. Arguments must be carefully organized to create the desired effect on the reader.

The strongest positions are the beginning and the ending of a communication. Place your strongest

argument in one position or the other and arrange the rest in such a way that they can be clearly stated and easily linked together.

### ***Solid Support***

Good persuasion not only makes a clear, strong claim but also proves the claim with solid support. Here are some ways to support your assertions:

- **Examples**, either personal or researched.
- **Objective evidence**, such as facts and statistics.

- **Citing an authority.** Use a qualified, timely authority whose opinions are applicable to your special situations. If the reader is not familiar with the authority, explain why the person is qualified.

- **Analogy.** If you can think of a clear comparison with which the reader is automatically familiar, present the comparison clearly. Carefully point out all of the similarities and explain why the comparison is useful and applicable.

If you are supporting a moral or emotional claim, use logic or emotional appeals made with vivid description and concrete language.

### ***Credibility***

A written communication is *credible* if the reader believes the writer or finds the writer trustworthy. Regardless of the history between the writer and reader, each communication provides a fresh opportunity to establish credibility.

In any communication, you can establish credibility in one of three ways:

- **Demonstrate your knowledge of the subject.** Show that you have personal experience that makes your perspective on the subject reliable. If you have no personal experience from which to draw, show that you have consulted a variety of reliable, neutral sources and that your views are based on your research.

- **Demonstrate fairness and objectivity.** Show that you have taken into account all of the significant viewpoints. Convince your reader that

you understand and value other perspectives on the subject and that you see their merit. Show that you have carefully considered all of the evidence, even that which does not support your point of view.

- **Seek areas of agreement.** This is especially valuable if your communication is the beginning of a process that will result in a compromise. Find out what the viewpoints have in common and begin building trust and credibility on common ground.

Use the same six steps outlined above to plan a persuasive communication.

Examine the following writer's plan for a written communication that argues in favor of a new scheduling policy.

**Claim:** store needs a better system for scheduling employees

**Audience:** store's general manager

**Purposes:** (1) point out problems inherent in the current policy, (2) outline the qualities a new scheduling policy should have, (3) point out the advantages of a scheduling policy with those qualities, (4)

show that customers will receive better service, (5) show that employees understand and are willing to share the burden of developing and implementing a new policy.

## I. Problems with current policy

A. Based solely upon seniority

B. Arbitrary within seniority brackets

C. Equal number for all shifts

1. Doesn't allow for

employees willing to be flexible

2. Not enough employees during peak sales times

3. Too many employees during off-peak sales times

4. Leads to minimal employee commitment

D. No incentive for good attendance

II. Qualities of an effective scheduling

policy

## Post-Test

Now that you've spent a good deal of time improving your grammar and writing skills, take this post-test to see how much you've learned. If you took the pretest at the beginning of this book, you have a good way to compare what you knew when you started the book with what you know now.

When you complete this test, grade yourself, and then compare your score

with your score on the pretest. If your score now is much greater than your pretest score, congratulations—you've profited noticeably from your hard work. If your score shows little improvement, perhaps there are certain chapters you need to review. Do you notice a pattern to the types of questions you got wrong? Whatever you score on this post-test, keep this book around for review and to refer to when you are unsure of a grammatical rule.

There's an answer sheet you can use for filling in the correct answers on the next page. Or, if you prefer, simply circle the answer numbers in this book. If the book doesn't belong to

you, write the numbers 1–50 on a piece of paper and record your answers there. Take as much time as you need to do this short test. When you finish, check your answers against the answer key that follows this test. Each answer tells you which lesson of this book teaches you about the grammatical rule in that question.

## Post-Test

1. Which of the following is a sentence fragment (not a complete sentence)?

- a. Property taxes rose by three percent.
- b. Although the mayor and three members of the city council were defeated.
- c. The voters were decidedly against building the new stadium.
- d. Be sure to vote in the next

election.

**2.** Which version is correctly capitalized?

a. After we headed west on interstate 70, my uncle Paul informed us that his Ford Taurus was almost out of gas.

b. After we headed west on Interstate 70, my Uncle Paul informed us that his Ford Taurus was almost out of gas.

c. After we headed West on Interstate 70, my Uncle Paul informed us that his Ford Taurus was almost out of gas.

d. After we headed West on

interstate 70, my Uncle Paul informed us that his Ford taurus was almost out of gas.

**3.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. That building, with the copper dome is our state capitol.
- b. That building with the copper dome, is our state capitol.
- c. That building, with the copper dome, is our state capitol.
- d. That building with the copper dome is our state capitol.

**4.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. The temperature was eighty degrees at noon; by 6:00 P.M. it had dropped to below forty.
- b. The temperature was eighty degrees at noon, by 6:00 P.M. it had dropped to below forty.
- c. The temperature was eighty degrees at noon by 6:00 P.M., it had dropped to below forty.
- d. The temperature was eighty degrees at noon by 6:00 P.M. it had dropped to below forty.

**5.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. It was one managers' idea to

give us a month's vacation.

b. It was one manager's idea to give us a months vacation.

c. It was one manager's idea to give us a month's vacation.

d. It was one managers idea to give us a month's vacation.

**6.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

a. "Look out! shouted Jake. There's a deer in the road."

b. "Look out!" shouted Jake. "There's a deer in the road."

c. "Look out"! shouted Jake. "There's a deer in the road."

d. "Look out! shouted Jake."

"There's a deer in the road."

## Answer Key

If you miss any of the answers, you can find help for that kind of question in the lesson shown to the right of the answer.

1. b. Lesson 3

2. b. Lesson 1

3. d. Lesson 4

**4. a. Lesson 5**

**5. c. Lesson 7**

**6. b. Lesson 9**

**7. a. Lesson 9**

**8. d. Lesson 12**

**9. c. Lesson 15**

**10. a. Lesson 11**

**11. c. Lesson 19**

**12. b. Lesson 2**

**13. c. Lesson 1**

**14. d. Lesson 10**

**15. a. Lesson 10**

**16. d. Lesson 13**

**17. b. Lesson 14**

**18. a. Lesson 15**

**19. c. Lesson 17**

**20.** d. Lesson 18

**21.** c. Lesson 19

**22.** a. Lesson 18

**23.** b. Lesson 2

**24.** d. Lesson 1

**25.** d. Lesson 3

**26.** a. Lesson 7

**27.** c. Lesson 6

**28.** c. Lesson 9

**29.** b. Lesson 4

**30.** a. Lesson 12

**31.** d. Lesson 13

**32.** a. Lesson 14

**33.** b. Lesson 17

**34.** d. Lesson 16

**35.** c. Lesson 6

**36.** c. Lesson 4

**37.** a. Lesson 5

**38.** c. Lesson 10

**39.** b. Lesson 6

**40.** b. Lesson 9

**41.** d. Lesson 12

**42.** a. Lesson 13

**43.** d. Lesson 7

**44.** c. Lesson 8

**45.** c. Lesson 11

**46.** b. Lesson 16

**47.** a. Lesson 15

**48.** d. Lesson 14

**49.** c. Lesson 17

**50.** d. Lesson 16

## **Appendix A— How To Prepare for a Test**

A standardized test is nothing to fear. Many people clutch and worry about a testing situation, but you're much better off taking that nervous energy and turning it into something positive that will help you do well on your test rather than inhibit your testing ability. The following pages include valuable tips for combating test anxiety, that sinking or blank feeling some people

get as they begin a test or encounter a difficult question. Next, you will find valuable tips for using your time wisely and for avoiding errors in a testing situation. Finally, you will find a plan for preparing for the test, a plan for the test day, and a great suggestion for an after-test activity.

## **Combating Test Anxiety**

Knowing what to expect and being prepared for it is the best defense against test anxiety, that worrisome feeling that keeps you from doing your best. Practice and preparation keeps you from succumbing to that feeling.

Nevertheless, even the brightest, most well-prepared test takers may suffer from occasional bouts of test anxiety. But don't worry; you can overcome it.

### *Take the Test One Question at a Time*

Focus all of your attention on the one question you're answering. Block out any thoughts about questions you've already read or concerns about what's coming next. Concentrate your thinking where it will do the most good—on the question you're answering.

## *Develop a Positive Attitude*

Keep reminding yourself that you're prepared. The fact that you have read this book means that you're better prepared than most others who are taking the test. Remember, it's only a test, and you're going to do your **best**. That's all anyone can ask of you. If that nagging drill sergeant voice inside your head starts sending negative messages, combat them with positive ones of your own.

- "I'm doing just fine."

- "I've prepared for this test."
- "I know exactly what to do."
- "I know I can get the score I'm shooting for."

You get the idea. Remember to drown out negative messages with positive ones of your own.

### ***If You Lose Your Concentration***

Don't worry about it! It's normal. During a long test it happens to everyone. When your mind is stressed

or overexerted, it takes a break whether you want it to or not. It's easy to get your concentration back if you simply acknowledge the fact that you've lost it and take a quick break. Your brain needs very little time (seconds really) to rest.

Put your pencil down and close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths and listen to the sound of your breathing. The ten seconds or so that this takes is really all the time your brain needs to relax and get ready to focus again.

Try this technique several times in the days before the test when you feel stressed. The more you practice, the

better it will work for you on the day of the test.

### *If you Freeze Before or During the Test*

Don't worry about a question that stumps you even though you're sure you know the answer. Mark it and go on to the next question. You can come back to the "stumper" later. Try to put it out of your mind completely until you come back to it. Just let your subconscious mind chew on the question while your conscious mind focuses on the other items (one at a time—of course). Chances are, the memory block will be gone by the time

you return to the question.

If you freeze before you ever begin the test, here's what to do.

- 1.** Take a little time to look over the test.
- 2.** Read a few of the questions.
- 3.** Decide which ones are the easiest and start there.
- 4.** Before long, you'll be "in the groove."



## Time Strategies

### *Pace Yourself*

The most important time strategy is pacing yourself. Before you begin, take just a few seconds to survey the test, making note of the number of questions and of the sections that look easier than the rest. Rough out a time schedule based upon the amount of time available to you. Mark the halfway point on your test and make a note beside that mark of what the time

will be when the testing period is half over.

## *Keep Moving*

Once you begin the test, keep moving. If you work slowly in an attempt to make fewer mistakes, your mind will become bored and begin to wander. You'll end up making far more mistakes if you're not concentrating.

As long as we're talking about mistakes, don't stop for difficult questions. Skip them and move on. You can come back to them later if you have time. A question that takes you five seconds to answer counts as much

as one that takes you several minutes, so pick up the easy points first. Besides, answering the easier questions first helps to build your confidence and gets you in the testing groove. Who knows? As you go through the test, you may even stumble across some relevant information to help you answer those tough questions.

### ***Don't Rush***

Keep moving, but don't rush. Think of your mind as a seesaw. On one side is your emotional energy. On the other side is your intellectual energy. When your emotional energy is high, your intellectual capacity is low.

Remember how difficult it is to reason with someone when you're angry? On the other hand, when your intellectual energy is high, your emotional energy is low. Rushing raises your emotional energy. Remember the last time you were late for work? All that rushing around causes you to forget important things—like your lunch. Move quickly to keep your mind from wandering, but don't rush and get yourself flustered.

### *Check Yourself*

Check yourself at the halfway mark. If you're a little ahead, you know you're on track and may even have a little time left to check your work. If you're

a little behind, you have several choices. You can pick up the pace a little, but do this only if you can do it comfortably. Remember—**don't rush!** You can also skip around in the remaining portion of the test to pick up as many easy points as possible. This strategy has one drawback, however. If you are marking a bubble-style answer sheet, and you put the right answers in the wrong bubbles—they're wrong. So pay close attention to the question numbers if you decide to do this.

## **Avoiding Errors**

When you take the test, you want to

make as few errors as possible in the questions you answer. Here are a few tactics to keep in mind.

## *Control Yourself*

Remember the comparison between your mind and a seesaw that you read about a few paragraphs ago? Keeping your emotional energy low and your intellectual energy high is the best way to avoid mistakes. If you feel stressed or worried, stop for a few seconds. Acknowledge the feeling (Hmmm! I'm feeling a little pressure here!), take a few deep breaths, and send yourself a few positive messages. This relieves your emotional anxiety and boosts your intellectual capacity.

## *Directions*

In many standardized testing situations a proctor reads the instructions aloud. Make certain you understand what is expected. If you don't, **ask**. Listen carefully for instructions about how to answer the questions and make certain you know how much time you have to complete the task. Write the time on your test if you don't already know how long you have to take the test. If you miss this vital information, **ask for it**. You need it to do well on your test.

## *Answers*

Place your answers in the right blanks or the corresponding ovals on the answer sheet. Right answers in the wrong place earn no points. It's a good idea to check every five to ten questions to make sure you're in the right spot. That way you won't need much time to correct your answer sheet if you have made an error.

## *Reading Long Passages*

Frequently, standardized tests are designed to test your reading comprehension. The reading sections often contain passages of a paragraph or more. Here are a few tactics for approaching these sections.

This may seem strange, but some questions can be answered without ever reading the passage. If the passage is short, a paragraph around four sentences or so, read the questions first. You may be able to answer them by using your common sense. You can check your answers later after you've actually read the passage. Even if you can't answer any of the questions, you know what to look for in the passage. This focuses your reading and makes it easier for you to retain important information. Most questions will deal with isolated details in the passage. If you know what to look for ahead of time, it's easier to find the information.

If a reading passage is long and is followed by more than ten questions, you may end up spending too much time reading the questions first. Even so, take a few seconds to skim the questions and read a few of the shorter ones. As you read, mark up the passage. If you find a sentence that seems to state the main idea of the passage, underline it. As you read through the rest of the passage, number the main points that support the main idea. Several questions will deal with this information. If it's underlined and numbered, you can locate it easily. Other questions will ask for specific details. **Circle** information that tells who, what, when, or where. The

circles will be easy to locate later if your run across a question that asks for specific information. Marking up a passage in this way also heightens your concentration and makes it more likely that you'll remember the information when you answer the questions following the passage.

## *Choosing the Right Answers*

Make sure you understand what the question is asking. If you're not sure of what's being asked, you'll never know whether you've chosen the right answer. So figure out what the question is asking. If the answer isn't readily apparent, look for clues in the answer choices. Notice the similarities and differences in the answer choices. Sometimes this helps to put the question in a new perspective and makes it easier to answer. If you're still not sure of the answer, use the

process of elimination. First, eliminate any answer choices that are obviously wrong. Then reason your way through the remaining choices. You may be able to use relevant information from other parts of the test. If you can't eliminate any of the answer choices, you might be better off to skip the question and come back to it later. If you can't eliminate any answer choices to improve your odds when you come back later, then make a guess and move on.

### *If you're Penalized for Wrong Answers*

You **must know** whether there's a

penalty for wrong answers before you begin the test. If you don't, ask the proctor before the test begins. Whether you make a guess or not depends upon the penalty. Some standardized tests are scored in such a way that every wrong answer reduces your score by one fourth or one half of a point. Whatever the penalty, if you can eliminate enough choices to make the odds of answering the question better than the penalty for getting it wrong, make a guess.

Let's imagine you are taking a test in which each answer has four choices and you are penalized one fourth of a point for each wrong answer. If you have no clue and cannot eliminate any

of the answer choices, you're better off leaving the question blank because the odds of answering correctly are one in four. This makes the penalty and the odds equal. However, if you can eliminate one of the choices, the odds are now in your favor. You have a one in three chance of answering the question correctly. Fortunately, few tests are scored using such elaborate means, but if your test is one of them, know the penalties and calculate your odds before you take a guess on a question.

### ***If you Finish Early***

Use any time you have left at the end of

the test or test section to check your work. First, make certain you've put the answers in the right places. As you're doing this, make sure you've answered each question only once. Most standardized tests are scored in such a way that questions with more than one answer are marked wrong. If you've erased an answer, make sure you've done a good job. Check for stray marks on your answer sheet that could distort your score.

After you've checked for these obvious errors, take a second look at the more difficult questions. You've probably heard the folk wisdom about never changing an answer. If you have a good reason for thinking a response is

wrong, change it.

## **The Days before the Test**

### *Physical Activity*

Get some exercise in the days preceding the test. You'll send some extra oxygen to your brain and allow your thinking performance to peak on the day you take the test. Moderation is the key here. You don't want to exercise so much that you feel exhausted, but a little physical activity will invigorate your body and brain.

## *Balanced Diet*

Like your body, your brain needs the proper nutrients to function well. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables in the days before the test. Foods that are high in lecithin, such as fish and beans, are especially good choices. Lecithin is a mineral your brain needs for peak performance. You may even consider a visit to your local pharmacy to buy a bottle of lecithin tablets several weeks before your test.

## *Rest*

Get plenty of sleep the nights before you take the test. Don't overdo it,

though, or you'll make yourself as groggy as if you were overtired. Go to bed at a reasonable time, early enough to get the number of hours you need to function **effectively**. You'll feel relaxed and rested if you've gotten plenty of sleep in the days before you take the test.

### ***Trial Run***

At some point before you take the test, make a trial run to the testing center to see how long it takes. Rushing raises your emotional energy and lowers your intellectual capacity, so you want to allow plenty of time on test day to get to the testing center. Arriving ten or

fifteen minutes early gives you time to relax and get situated.

## **Test Day**

It's finally here, the day of the big test. Set your alarm early enough to allow plenty of time. Eat a good breakfast. Avoid anything that's really high in sugar, such as donuts. A sugar high turns into a sugar low after an hour or so. Cereal and toast, or anything with complex carbohydrates is a good choice. Eat only moderate amounts. You don't want to take a test feeling stuffed!

Pack a high energy snack to take with you. You may have a break sometime during the test when you can grab a quick snack. Bananas are great. They have a moderate amount of sugar and plenty of brain nutrients, such as potassium. Most proctors won't allow you to eat a snack while you're testing, but a peppermint shouldn't pose a problem. Peppermints are like smelling salts for your brain. If you lose your concentration or suffer from a momentary mental block, a peppermint can get you back on track. Don't forget the earlier advice about relaxing and taking a few deep breaths.

Leave early enough so you have plenty of time to get to the test center. Allow a few minutes for unexpected traffic. When you arrive, locate the restroom and use it. Few things interfere with concentration as much as a full bladder. Then find your seat and make sure it's comfortable. If it isn't, tell the proctor and ask to change to something you find more suitable.

Now relax and think positively! Before you know it the test will be over, and you'll walk away knowing you've done as well as you can.

## **After the Test**

Two things:

- 1. Plan a little celebration.**
- 2. Go to it.**

If you have something to look forward to after the test is over, you may find it easier to prepare well for the test and to keep moving during the test. **Good luck!**

## **Appendix B— Additional Resources**

If using this book has whetted your appetite for learning to write better, you may want to continue your study. Many high schools and community colleges offer inexpensive writing courses for adults in their continuing education departments, or you may be able to find a teacher who is willing to tutor you for a modest fee. In addition, you might consult one of the following

books:

- *Better English* by Norman Lewis (Dell)

Useful for general information; suited to both native and nonnative speakers of English.

- *English Made Simple* by Arthur Waldhorn and Arthur Ziegler (Made Simple Books)

Designed for nonnative speakers of English; also good for native speakers with little training in grammar.

- *Errors in English and How to Correct Them* by Harry Shaw  
(HarperCollins)

Addresses specific problems in both writing and grammar; useful for nonnative speakers of English.

- *Grammar* by James R. Hurford  
(Cambridge University Press)

Thorough coverage of parts of speech, sentence structure, usage, punctuation, and mechanics; especially good for native speakers of English.

- *Grammar Essentials* by Judith Olson  
(LearningExpress)

All the rules of grammar  
explained in plain English;  
includes lots of exercises so you  
practice what you learn.

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exam, especially one that includes questions on grammar and word usage. You'll learn the most commonly tested grammatical rules and how to avoid the answers that "sound right" but aren't. The exercises are in test format to give you plenty of practice. So come exam day . . . you'll be prepared to score your best.

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## How to Use This Book

Writing is a lot like fishing. People who are good at fishing study and practice it. They learn which tools to use for catching the best fish in different types of water. No one is born with fishing talent. Some people enjoy it more than others, but everyone can do it if they want. The same goes for writing.

Since you bought this book, you

probably want or need to learn more about the process of writing and how to become a better writer. This book will help you acquire the mysterious and coveted power of the pen in 20 easy steps. This book covers the basics of writing: punctuation, usage, diction, and organization. You'll find no fluff in this book; it's for busy people who want to learn as much as they can as efficiently as possible. Each lesson contains enough illustrations for you to get the idea, opportunities to practice the skills, and suggestions for using them in your daily life.

Many people fear a blank sheet of paper or an empty computer screen. "I

just don't know what to write. Even when I know what I want to say, I'm afraid it will come out looking wrong or sounding stupid."

But that's one of the things to love about writing. Writing is a process. The first time you write a draft, it doesn't matter if your writing comes out wrong or sounds stupid to you because you can change it as often as you want. You can go over until you're completely satisfied, or until you need to shift gears. You can show your draft to your friends or family and get a response before you ever make it public.

Don't put pressure on yourself by thinking you ever to write a perfect first draft. No one can sit down and write polished memos, reports, or let-

# Writing Skills Pretest

Before you start your study of grammar and writing skills, you may want to get an idea of how much you already know and how much you need to learn. If that's the case, take the pretest that follows.

The pretest is 50 multiple-choice questions covering all the lessons in this book. Naturally, 50 questions can't cover every single concept or rule you

will learn by working through this book. So even if you get all of the questions on the pretest right, it's almost guaranteed that you will find a few ideas or rules in this book that you didn't already know. On the other hand, if you get a lot of the answers wrong on this pretest, don't despair. This book will show you how to get better at grammar and writing, step by step.

So use this pretest just to get a general idea of how much of what's in this book you already know. If you get a high score on this pretest, you may be able to spend less time with this book than you originally planned. If you get a low score, you may find that you will

need more than 20 minutes a day to get through each chapter and learn all the grammar and mechanics concepts you need.

There's an answer sheet you can use for filling in the correct answers on the next page. Or, if you prefer, simply circle the answer numbers in this book. If the book doesn't belong to you, write the numbers 1–50 on a piece of paper and record your answers there. Take as much time as you need to do this short test. When you finish, check your answers against the answer key that follows this test. Each answer tells you which lesson of this book teaches you about the

grammatical rule in that question.

# Lesson 1

## Capitalization

### Lesson Summary

Today you'll learn about the fine points of capitalization. The chapter divides capitalization rules into two kinds: general rules governing capitalization and specific rules regarding proper nouns and adjectives.

Start by seeing just how much you already know about the proper use of

capital letters. On the next page you see the same passage written twice. The first column, called **Problem**, contains no capitalization at all—definitely a problem in writing! Circle those letters you think should be capitalized in the **Problem** column, and then check yourself against the **Solution** column.

## **Lesson 2— Periods, Question Marks, and Exclamation Points**

### **Lesson Summary**

This lesson shows you which punctuation marks to use to end sentences. These are sometimes referred to as "end marks." It also shows you other ways in which periods are used.

The exercise that follows reviews

Lesson 1, Capitalization, and gives you an opportunity to see what you already know about periods and endmarks. Correct the capitalization in the **Problem** column on the next page, adding periods, question marks, and exclamation points where you think they should go. Check yourself with the **Solution** column as you go.

# Lesson 3— Avoiding Faulty Sentences

## Lesson Summary

This lesson will help you distinguish between complete sentences and faulty sentences so that you can avoid writing sentence fragments, run-on sentences and comma splices.

Begin your study of complete sentences by looking at the **Problem**

paragraph that appears on the next page. Underline the groups of words that form complete sentences. See if you can distinguish them from the fragments, run-ons, and comma splices included in the paragraph. Then check your work against the **Solution** paragraph, also on the next page, where the complete sentences are underlined.

# Lesson 4— Commas and Sentence Parts

## Lesson Summary

This lesson and the next one deal with commas. Today's lesson is about how commas relate to the parts of sentences, such as clauses and phrases.

During this lesson you will learn how to use commas in relationship to

sentence parts. As you progress through this lesson, remember what you have learned about sentences and sentence faults in Lesson 3. Before you begin this lesson, see how much you already know about commas and sentence parts. Insert commas where you think they should be in the **Problem** version of the sentences that appear on the next page. Check yourself against the corrected version of the sentences in the **Solution** section that follows.

# Lesson 5— Commas that Separate

## Lesson Summary

Besides setting off sentence parts, commas are used in many other situations. This lesson reviews the many instances in which you should use commas to separate sentence elements.

Commas are used to separate or clarify relationships between sentence

parts in order to make the meaning of a sentence clear and easy to grasp. In this lesson you'll learn how to use commas to separate independent clauses, items in a series, items in a date or address, two or more adjectives preceding a noun, and contrasting elements and words that interrupt the flow of thought in a sentence. The last section of the lesson explains how to use commas in the greetings and closings of a friendly letter.

Begin by seeing how much you already know about commas that separate. Add commas where you think they are needed to the **Problem** column on the

next page. Check yourself against the corrected version in the **Solution** column. Try to identify the rules that apply to those you missed as you go through the lesson.

# Lesson 6— Semicolons and Colons

## Lesson Summary

Many people are confused by semicolons (;) and colons (:), but after you work through this lesson, you'll know exactly what to do with both of them.

You learned to use semicolons to separate independent clauses in Lesson 3. In this lesson you'll review

that use of semicolons, as well as the use of some of the other punctuation marks you have studied so far. You will learn how to use semicolons with conjunctive adverbs and when to separate items in a series with semicolons. You will also learn to use colons in business communications and other settings.

Begin by seeing how much you know. Insert semicolons and colons where you think they are needed in the **Problem** column on the following page. Check yourself against the correct version in the **Solution** column on the right as you go.



# Lesson 7— Apostrophes and Dashes

## Lesson Summary

This lesson will put you in control of apostrophes (') and dashes (—), two of the most commonly misused marks of punctuation.

Apostrophes communicate important information in written language. Dashes, when used sparingly, add

emphasis. Before you begin the lesson, see how much you already know. Add apostrophes—and one pair of dashes—where you think they belong in the **Problem** column on the following page. Check yourself with the **Solution** column.

# Lesson 8— Quotation Marks

## Lesson Summary

This lesson covers rules regarding the use of quotation marks, both double and single. Although these marks are most often found in dialogue, they are important in other writing situations as well.

Begin this lesson by seeing how much you already know about quotation

marks. Insert them where you think they belong in the sentences in the **Problem** column on the following page. Some sentences will also need endmarks and commas. Check yourself against the corrected versions of the sentences in the **Solution** column.

# Lesson 9— "Designer" Punctuation

## Lesson Summary

This lesson covers some of the less commonly used punctuation marks, including hyphens, parentheses, brackets, ellipses, and diagonal slashes. While these marks aren't necessary all that often, when they are necessary it's important to use them correctly.

The punctuation marks covered in this

lesson—hyphens, parentheses, brackets, ellipses, and diagonals—are not often used in regular writing. However, they serve very specific purposes. Knowing and understanding their functions gives a writer an advantage in communicating ideas. Since most of these rules are so specialized that few people know them, we'll begin immediately with the lesson rather than with an assessment of your current knowledge. The last part of the lesson discusses using numbers in written text.

## **Hyphens**

The main purpose of a hyphen (-) is to

join words in creating compound nouns or adjectives. Hyphens signal words that work together for a single purpose.

# Lesson 10— Verb Tense

## Lesson Summary

Verbs—words for actions or states of being—are what drive written language and give it life. Because verbs are so important, mistakes involving verbs really stand out. Those mistakes are also often tested on civil exams. This lesson and the next two will help you avoid some of the most common errors with verbs.

Writers use words to establish their credibility. Few things cast doubt on a writer's believability as much as misusing words—especially verbs. Incorrect verb forms call special attention to themselves and bring the writer's education and intelligence into question. Furthermore, civil service exams often test your knowledge of how to use verbs and avoid errors involving verbs.

This lesson explains how to use verbs correctly and highlights a few of the most common mistakes writers make. See how many of the seven errors in verb usage you can find in the **Problem** version of the passage on the

following page. In the **Solution** column, the paragraph is rewritten with the correct verb forms. As you go through the lesson, try to apply the rules you learn to these corrections.

# Lesson 11— Using Verbs to Create Strong Writing

## Lesson Summary

If verbs drive meaning, lively verbs really make your writing accelerate. This lesson shows you how to use verbs to capture readers' interest.

Few people bother to read uninteresting writing. Even if they read

it, they may not absorb the message. This lesson discusses ways to use verbs that will make your writing lively and interesting for the reader. Read the two paragraphs on the next page. Which one seems livelier, more interesting? The paragraphs tell an identical story, but one of them uses verbs effectively to tell the story in such a way that it is more likely to be remembered. The sentences are presented one at a time, side by side so you can make the comparison more easily.

ters without changing (or revising) them at least a little bit. Even the pros have to revise anything. For instance, the writer Ernest Hemingway had to revise the last page of his famous novel *A Farewell to Arms* thirty-nine times before he was satisfied with it. You probably won't want to revise anything that many times before the final copy, but even if you write two or three drafts, you certainly aren't alone in your need for revision.

Writing has three distinct advantages over speaking:

**1.** In writing, you can take it back. The spoken word, however, cannot be revised. Once you make a statement verbally, it affects your listeners in a particular way and you can't "take it back" or rephrase it to the point that the first statement is forgotten.

However, if you write a statement down and, after looking at it, realize that it sounds offensive or incorrect, you can revise it before giving it to the intended audience. Writing is a careful, thoughtful way of communicating.

**2.** Writing forces you to clarify your thoughts. If you're having trouble writing, it's often because you're not

yet finished with the thinking part. Sometimes just sitting down and writing whatever is on your mind helps you discover and organize what you think.

**3.** Another advantage is permanence. Ideas presented in writing carry far more weight than spoken ideas. Additionally, they can be reviewed and referred to in their exact, original form. Spoken ideas rely upon the sometimes inaccurate memories of other people.

Writing is nothing more than thought on paper—considered, organized thought. Many people are protective of their

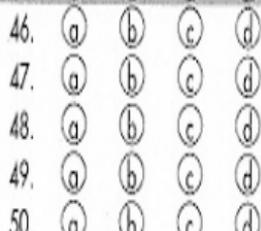
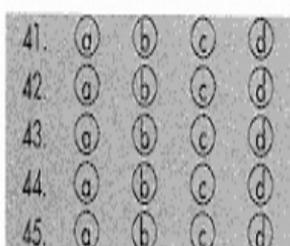
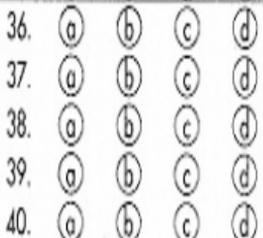
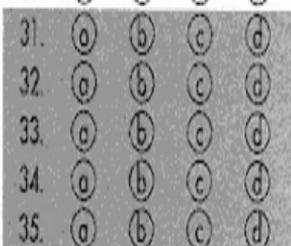
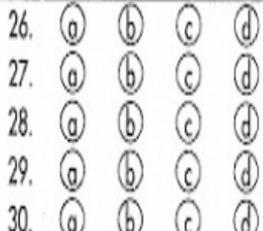
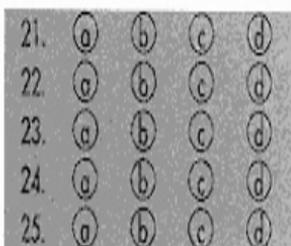
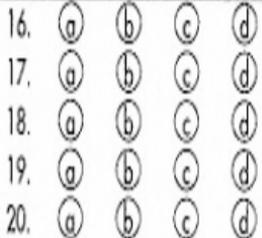
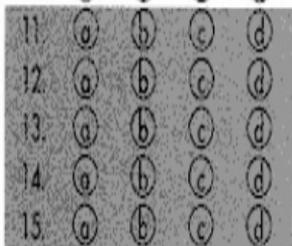
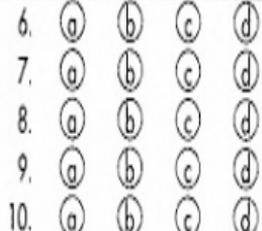
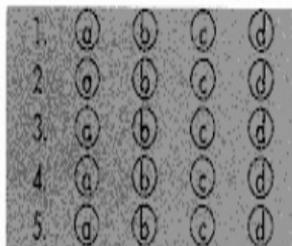
thoughts and, therefore, prefer to keep them hidden inside their heads. Some thoughts should be kept private, perhaps, but many great ideas and observations are never born because their creators won't express them. This book can help you express your ideas in a clear and grammatically correct way. After you learn how to insert commas and semicolons correctly, use verbs to create strong images in your writing, and the other basic skills taught in this book, you'll gain confidence in your writing ability. In fact, you'll be able to move forward and master more complex writing concerns after you get the basics down. More and more jobs these days require at least some writing, so the

skills you learn in this book will be put to good use.

The lessons in this book are designed to be completed in about 20 minutes apiece. If you do a lesson every weekday, you can finish the whole course in about a month. However, you may find another approach that works better for you. You'll find you make more progress, though, if you complete at least two lessons a week. If you leave too much time between lessons, you'll forget what you've learned. You may want to start with the pretest that begins on the next page. It will show you what you already know and what you need to learn about grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. Then,

when you've finished the book, you can take a post-test to see how much you've improved.

If you practice what you've learned in this book, it won't take long for other people to notice the new and improved you. That's what practice does—it helps you get better at whatever it is you're spending time doing, whether it's fishing or writing. So dive into the first lesson of this book and get ready to improve your writing skills. Good luck!





**8.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. Charlotte, who ran in the Boston Marathon last year will compete in this year's New York Marathon.
- b. Charlotte who ran in the Boston Marathon, last year, will compete in this year's New York Marathon.
- c. Charlotte who ran in the Boston Marathon last year, will compete in this year's New York Marathon.
- d. Charlotte, who ran in the Boston Marathon last year, will compete in this year's New York Marathon.

9. Which version is punctuated correctly?

a. The park service will not allow anyone, who does not have a camping permit, to use this campground.

b. The park service will not allow anyone who does not have a camping permit to use this campground.

c. The park service will not allow anyone, who does not have a camping permit to use this campground.

d. The park service will not allow anyone who does not have a camping permit, to use this

campground.

**10.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. As soon as he finished his homework, Rod, who is a member of the baseball team, went to batting practice.
- b. As soon as he finished his homework Rod, who is a member of the baseball team went to batting practice.
- c. As soon as he finished, his homework, Rod who is a member of the baseball team, went to batting practice.
- d. As soon as he finished his

homework, Rod who is a member of the baseball team went to batting practice.

**11.** Which of the underlined portions of the sentence below is punctuated INCORRECTLY?

My mother was born on (a) December 15, 1944, in Kingwood, West (b) Virginia, when she was (c) five, her family moved to (d) 347 Benton Street, Zanesville, Ohio.

**12.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. Yes I would like to see a copy of the report and please send it today by priority mail.
- b. Yes, I would like to see a copy of the report and please send it, today by priority mail.
- c. Yes, I would like to see a copy of the report and, please send it today by priority mail.
- d. Yes, I would like to see a copy of the report, and please send it today by priority mail.

**13.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. I'm sorry, Bart, that you cannot meet us for dinner tonight. We'll

phone you again next Friday.

b. I'm sorry, Bart that you cannot meet us for dinner tonight. We'll phone you again next Friday.

c. I'm sorry Bart that you cannot meet us for dinner tonight. We'll phone you again next Friday.

d. I'm sorry, Bart, that you cannot meet us for dinner tonight, we'll phone you again next Friday.

**46.** Do you \_\_\_\_\_ if the Giants \_\_\_\_\_ the game?

- a. know, one
- b. know, won
- c. no, one
- d. no, won

**47.** Which of the following phrases contains a redundancy; that is, it repeats words that express the same idea?

- a. I did not hear the phone ring.

- b. You always perform your job efficiently.
- c. The umpire has temporarily suspended the game until later.
- d. Jenna and Erin have both contributed greatly to our team's success.

**48.** Which of the following sentences contains a cliché?

- a. The room was so quiet, you could hear a pin drop.
- b. Your plan is not in accordance with the regulations set down by the review board.
- c. The stars were pinpricks in the tarpaper sky.

d. Due to the fact that it snowed, the trip was canceled.

**49.** Which version has a consistent point of view?

a. The history of English is divided into three periods. You could mark the earliest one at about the fifth century A.D.

b. You can say that the history of English could be divided into three periods, and I know the earliest one begins about the fifth century A.D.

c. The history of English is divided into three periods. The earliest one begins at about the fifth century

A.D.

d. I learned that the history of English is divided into three periods and that you begin the earliest one at about the fifth century A.D.

**50.** Which version has a parallel structure?

a. We write for a variety of purposes: in expressing our feelings, to convey information, to persuade, or to give pleasure.

b. We write for a variety of purposes: to express our feelings, convey information, persuasion, or giving pleasure.

c. We write for a variety of purposes: an expression of our feelings, conveying information, persuade, or to give pleasure.

d. We write for a variety of purposes: to express our feelings, to convey information, to persuade, or to give pleasure.

## Answer Key

If you miss any of the answers, you can find help for that kind of question in the lesson shown to the right of the answer.

1. b. Lesson 1

2. b. Lesson 1

3. c. Lesson 1

**4. d. Lesson 2**

**5. b. Lesson 2**

**6. c. Lesson 3**

**7. a. Lesson 3**

**8. d. Lesson 4**

**9. b. Lesson 4**

**10. a. Lesson 4**

**11. b. Lessons 5, 6**

**12. d. Lesson 5**

**13. a. Lesson 5**

**14. c. Lesson 6**

**15. b. Lesson 6**

**16. b. Lesson 7**

**17. c. Lesson 7**

**18. a. Lesson 7**

**19. a. Lesson 8**

**20.** b. Lesson 8

**21.** c. Lesson 9

**22.** d. Lesson 9

**23.** a. Lesson 9

**24.** d. Lesson 10

**25.** b. Lesson 10

**26.** b. Lesson 10

**27.** c. Lesson 11

**28.** b. Lesson 12

**29.** d. Lesson 12

**30.** a. Lesson 12

**31.** d. Lesson 12

**32.** c. Lesson 12

**33.** a. Lesson 13

**34.** a. Lesson 13

**35.** d. Lesson 13

**36.** b. Lesson 14

**37.** c. Lesson 14

**38.** d. Lesson 14

**39.** c. Lesson 15

**40.** a. Lesson 15

**41.** d. Lesson 16

**42.** a. Lesson 16

**43.** d. Lesson 16

**44.** c. Lesson 17

**45.** c. Lesson 17

**46.** b. Lesson 17

**47.** c. Lesson 18

**48.** a. Lesson 18

**49.** c. Lesson 19

**50.** d. Lesson 19



## Problem

when I first saw the black hills on january 2, 1995, i was shocked by their beauty. we had just spent new year's day in sioux falls, south dakota, and had headed west toward our home in denver, colorado. as we traveled along interstate 90, i could see the black hills rising slightly in the distance. after driving through the badlands and stopping at wall drug in wall, south dakota, the evergreen-

covered hills broke the barren monotony of the landscape. my oldest daughter said, "dad, look! there's something that's not all white." we saw mount rushmore and custer state park, the home of the largest herd of buffalo in north america. we also drove the treacherous spearfish canyon road. fortunately, our jeep cherokee had no trouble with the ice and snow on the winding road. we were unable to see needles national park because the needles highway was snowed shut. winter may not be the best time to see these sights, but we enjoyed them nonetheless.

How did you do? As you progress throug

rules that you missed.

3. a. we read the poem written in 1493 .

b. We read the poem written in 1493

c. We read the poem written in 1493

4. a. When you return from your trip, I v  
activities.

b. when you return from your trip, I w  
activities.

c. When you return from your trip, i v

activities.

## Proper Nouns and Proper Adjectives

All proper nouns and proper adjectives—person, place or thing—must be capitalized. Proper nouns and adjectives are proper can be divided into several categories. This section begins with a table that illustrates several practice exercises.

### PROPER NOUNS,

Category of Proper Nouns	Example
days of the week	Friday,

months

January

holidays

Christm

historical events, periods,  
documents

Civil W  
Ages (h  
of Inde

special events, calendar  
events

Pebble  
Renaiss  
Days (s  
Father's

names of people and places

John D  
Tower

## *Practice*

Using the rules above, choose the correct form for each of the following pairs.

**5.** a. Chaucer was one of the foremost p

b. Chaucer was one of the foremost p

**6.** a. The Olsons spend Labor Day and f  
their lakeside cottage.

b. The Olsons spend Labor day and f  
their Lakeside cottage.



## General Capitalization Rules

The table below summarizes general capitalization rules with specific categories of proper nouns in this section.

### CAPITALIZATION

Rule	Example
Capitalize the first word of a sentence. If the first word is a	The sentence

number, write it as a word.

**Th**

Capitalize the pronoun *I* or the contraction *I'm*, and the abbreviations *B.C.* or *A.D.*

Th  
to  
Th  
**A.**

Capitalize the first word of a quotation.

Do not capitalize the first word of a partial quotation.

I s  
do  
He  
a s

Below is an example of a dialogue that illustrates paragraphing in dialogue: Each time a new speaker begins a paragraph.)

"Good morning," said the new superv

"Good morning!" I answered, somew  
Barnes. I'm Joshua Haines. It's a plea

"Tell me what you do, Joshua. I'm anxio  
operation."

"I smiled and said, "That doesn't surp  
'sieve for information.'"

## *Practice*

Check your ability to apply the rules abov  
below. Choose the correctly capitalized o  
below. Answers to each set of questions  
lesson.

1. a. the memo confused me at first. after  
understand it.

b. The memo confused me at first. after  
understand it.

c. The memo confused me at first. After  
understand it.

2. a. "where are you going?" my coworker

"to a meeting i'm not very excited about"

b. "Where are you going?" my coworker

"To a meeting I'm not very excited about"

c. "Where are you going?" My coworker

"To a meeting I'm not very excited about"

7. a. We studied the declaration of indepe

b. We studied the Declaration of Inde

8. a. Judy has two Uncles who fought in v

b. Judy has two uncles who fought in

## PROPER NOUNS

### Category of Proper Nouns

names of structures and buildings

names of trains, ships, aircraft, and  
other modes of transportation

names of products

names of officials

works of art and literature

ethnic groups, races, languages,  
nationalities

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly capitalized version

9. a. I enjoyed *spoon river anthology* by

b. I enjoyed *Spoon River Anthology* by

10. a. We caught a Vanguard Airlines flight

b. We caught a Vanguard airlines flight

11. a. The Talmud is a guide to the teaching

b. The Talmud is a guide to the teaching

- 12.** a. Paul has an editing job with Mered  
b. Paul has an Editing job with Mere
- 13.** a. The university of iowa has an outst  
b. The University of Iowa has an outs
- 14.** a. Dr. Gallagher researched her book  
b. Dr. Gallagher researched her book

## PROPER NOUNS, I

### Category of Proper Nouns

Exa

cities, states, and governmental units

Des  
Rep

streets, highways, and roads

Gra  
Dea

landmarks and geographical locations

Cor

public areas and bodies of water

Sup

institutions, organizations, and  
businesses

Dar  
Doc

### *Practice*

Choose the correctly capitalized version

**15.** a. In Switzerland, some citizens speak German.

b. In switzerland, some citizens speak

**16.** a. Near a body of water called firth a

Scotland.

b. Near a body of water called Firth :  
Scotland.

**17.** a. We drove along the Mississippi riv

b. We drove along the Mississippi Ri

**18.** a. Mount Everest, which is in the mid  
highest mountain in the world.

b. Mount Everest, which is in the mid  
highest mountain in the World.

**19.** a. I have traveled on the Garden state  
Jersey.

b. I have traveled on the Garden State  
Jersey.

## *Proper Adjectives*

Proper adjectives are adjectives—that is, they are formed from a proper noun, often the name of a place. The proper noun *Canada* becomes the proper adjective *Canadian* when it modifies another noun, as in *Canadian baseball*. Proper adjectives are capitalized unless they are used as a proper noun in their own right.

### **Examples:**

English **muffin**, Polish **sausage**, Japanese **tea**

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly capitalized version

**20.** a. Some residents of ireland still spea

b. Some residents of Ireland still spea

**21.** a. Cortez, a Spanish explorer, conquered the Aztecs.

b. Cortez, a spanish explorer, conquered the Aztecs.

**22.** a. The actress in the play tried to speak with a Scottish accent.

b. The Actress in the play tried to speak with a Scottish accent.

**23.** a. I will never attempt to swim the English channel.

b. I will never attempt to swim the English Channel.

**24.** a. I had never been to a Sri Lankan Restaurant before.

b. I had never been to a Sri Lankan restaurant before.

## **When NOT to Capitalize**

Putting in capital letters where they don't belong is as bad as leaving them out where they do belong. Watch for these capitalization traps.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing compass directions; however, direction words that refer to a specific area of the country should be capitalized.

### **Examples:**

We headed **w**est after the Depression.

The future of the country was cultivated in the **W**est.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing the words referring to family members. Capitalize them only when they are used as names. If a possessive pronoun

(*my, our, your, his, her, their*) comes before the word referring to a family member, the family word is not capitalized.

### **Examples:**

When **U**nCLE Harry visited last winter, none of my other **u**ncles came to see him.

After my **m**other called me for lunch, **F**ather served the entree.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing the seasons of the year or parts of the academic year.

## **Example:**

If the university offers History of Education 405 in the **spring** semester, Horace will be able to graduate in May.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing school subjects. They should be capitalized only if they are part of the name of a specific course.

## **Examples:**

I try to avoid **m**ath courses because I'm not very good at them.

Betsy is taking Algebra II and  
Trigonometry I next semester.

- Avoid unnecessarily capitalizing words and adjectives.

### **Examples:**

Polish **s**ausage, not Polish Sausage

Mexican **r**estaurant, not Mexican Res

### *Practice*

Choose the correctly capitalized version

**25.** a. Digging the Canal through Panama

b. Digging the canal through Panama

**26.** a. The Smoky Mountains are in the South

b. The Smoky Mountains are in the south

**27.** a. Nicholi Milani does more business

b. Nicholi Milani does more business

**28.** a. The Midwest had the coldest winter

b. The midwest had the coldest winter

**29.** a. Marianne had never been as far East

b. Marianne had never been as far east

## **Skill Building Until**

Find the obituaries in your local newspaper and identify the capitalization used in the writing. How many of these capitalizations today can you find represented in a single

## **Answers**

1. c.

2. b.

**3. c.**

**4. a.**

**5. b.**

**6. a.**

**7. b.**

**8. b.**

**9. b.**

**10. a.**

**11. b.**

**12. a.**

**13. b.**

**14. a.**

**15. a.**

**16. b.**

**17. b.**

**18. a.**

**19. b.**

**20. b.**

**21. a.**

**22. a.**

**23. b.**

**24. b.**

**25. b.**

**26. b.**

**27. a.**

**28. a.**

**29. b.**

## Problem

The supervisors at Meredith industrial thought Henry Simmons, jr. was a less than Ideal employee if he was at work on monday, He would most likely be absent on Tuesday, and he had an annoying habit of extending his Holidays, such as christmas and thanksgiving, a few extra days so he could rest from all the activities What a problem he was

during one particular holiday, he had traveled East to be with his family he called his supervisor on the Day he was to return to work and explained that the Flight Schedule at the Airport had been altered and that he would not be able to catch another flight that he could afford until the weekend (Three days away) what do you suppose happened His supervisor suggested that he rent a car and drive the 600 miles from williamsborough, pennsylvania, to centerville, ohio he said that the drive would be less expensive than a Plane Fare and that henry might

be able to save his job if he were only one day late, rather than three

Henry decided to try the suggested plan he went to budget rental on Main street in Williamsborough and rented a Ford Tempo for the trip being a literary person, he also stopped at Banoff's bookstore to buy a Book on Tape by Garrison Keillor called *the book of guys* listening to it was a Life-Altering Experience for Henry because it taught him all the things his Father had forgotten to mention

*(Continued on next page)*

## Examples:

My neighbor asked if we had seen his cat. (The direct question was, "Have you seen my cat?")

Quentin wanted to know how we had arrived at that answer. (The direct question was, "How did you arrive at that answer?")

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly written version

from each of the following sets of sentences. You will find the answers to each set of questions at the end of the lesson.

1. a. The train passed through Rockford, Ill., on its way to St. Joseph, Mo.

b. The train passed through Rockford, Ill, on its way to St Joseph, Mo.

c. The train passed through Rockford, Ill, on its way to St. Joseph, Mo.

**2. a.** Ms Cory Ames, Dr Matthew Olson, and H. J. Lane went to Chicago, Ill..

**b.** Ms Cory Ames, Dr Matthew Olson, and HJ Lane went to Chicago, Ill.

**c.** Ms. Cory Ames, Dr. Matthew Olson, and H. J. Lane went to Chicago, Ill.

**3. a.** The bedrooms measured 12 ft. by 14 ft.

**b.** The bedrooms measured 12 ft by 14 ft.

c. The bedrooms measured 12 ft. by 14 ft..

**4.** a. Bob asked if the price of the CD was \$13.98?

b. Bob asked if the price of the CD was \$13.98.

c. Bob asked if the price of the CD was \$1398¢.

**5.** a. Tie your shoe. Before you trip and break a leg.

b. Tie your shoe before you trip

and break a leg.

c. Tie your shoe before you trip  
and break a leg

**6.** a. Mr and Mrs Fletcher visited 10  
cities in 20 days.

b. Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher visited 10  
cities in 20 days.

c. Mr and Mrs. Fletcher visited 10  
cities in 20 days.

**7.** a. Mayor and Mrs. Dorian will  
address the city council at 8:00 PM

b. Mayor and Mrs Dorian will address the city council at 8:00 P.M.

c. Mayor and Mrs. Dorian will address the city council at 8:00 P.M.

**8.** a. Oh, all right. Tell me your riddle.

b. Oh. all right. Tell me your riddle.

c. Oh, all right Tell me your riddle.

## **Rules for Using Question Marks and Exclamation Points**

- Use a question mark after a word or group of words that asks a question even if it is not a complete sentence.

### **Examples:**

What did you do last night?

Will you put out the trash?

Okay?

## **Problem (continued)**

before henry became a man can you imagine that

In fact, henry was so inspired that he decided to pursue a Degree in philosophy at centerville community college he enrolled in history of Philosophy 203 during the Spring Semester by the end of may, henry was hooked on Education and has not missed a class nor a Day of Work

since

## Rules for Using Periods

- Use a period after an initial and after every abbreviation has become an acronym—a word, such as AIDS—or a widely recognized title. Titles—Mr., Ms., Dr., and so on—are also abbreviations. An abbreviation comes at the end of a sentence.

### Examples:

The tour leaves on **Mon., Jan. 1**, at 3 p.m.

The book was written by **C. S. Lewis**.

**A. J. Mandelli** researched brain function.

- Use a period before a decimal and betw

## **Examples:**

A gallon equals **3.875** liters.

The new textbook costs **\$54.75**.

Only **5.6** percent of our consumers si  
products.

- Use a period at the end of a sentence tha

## **Examples:**

Henry Kissinger served under two U

Wilson will lecture in the forum after

Many consider P. T. Barnum the best  
earth.

- Use a period at the end of a sentence that  
or states a command.

### **Examples:**

Empty the kitchen trash before you ta

Turn right at the first stop light, and t

- Use a period at the end of a sentence that

May we go to the movies after we've finished our homework?

Are we?

- Use an exclamation point after a sentence that expresses strong feeling.

### **Examples:**

Look out for that car!

I just can't stand the smell in here!

A word of caution about exclamation points to show strong feeling:  
Exclamation points are a little bit like salt on food. Most people like a little bit. Nobody likes too much.

- Use an exclamation point after an interjection-a word or phrase expressing strong feeling-when it is written as a single sentence.

### **Examples:**

Doggone it!

Yikes!

- Use an exclamation point after a sentence that begins with a question word but doesn't ask a question.

### **Examples:**

What a dunce I am!

How marvelous of you to come!

### ***Practice***

Choose the correctly written version of each of the following sets of sentences.

**9. a.** Help! I'm falling?

b. Help! I'm falling.

c. Help! I'm falling!

**10. a.** I can't believe how naive I was!

b. I can't believe how naive I was.

c. I can't believe how naive I was?

**11. a.** The auditor asked me why I didn't save the receipts?

b. The auditor asked me why I

didn't save the receipts.

c. The auditor asked me why I didn't save the receipts!

**12.** a. Can you tell me the seating capacity of this meeting room.

b. Can you tell me the seating capacity of this meeting room?

c. Can you tell me the seating capacity of this meeting room!

**13.** a. How utterly disgusting this movie is.

b. How utterly disgusting this movie is?

c. How utterly disgusting this movie is!

**14.** a. Was Alexander the Great born in 350 B.C.

b. Was Alexander the great born in 350 B.C.?

c. Was Alexander the Great born in 350 B.C.?

**15. a.** Our group will meet at the library :  
Eliot.

b. Our group will meet at the library :  
Eliot.

c. Our group will meet at the library :  
Eliot.

**16. a.** Is this sweater \$59.95 or \$69.95?

b. Is this sweater \$59.95 or \$69.95.

c. Is this sweater \$5995 or \$6995?

**17.** a. Wow. What a close call that was?

b. Wow! What a close call that was.

c. Wow! What a close call that was!

**18.** a. Those carpenters. Do you know ho

b. Those carpenters? Do you know ho

c. Those carpenters! Do you know ho

**Skill Building Until**

Take a few minutes to practice what you reading a book right now, look through a find at least three examples of each type today. Are the endmarks used according you're not currently reading a book, just home or at work.

## **Answers**

**1. a.**

**2. c.**

**3. a.**

**4. b.**

**5. b.**

**6. b.**

**7. c.**

**8. a.**

**9. c.**

**10. a.**

**11. b.**

**12. b.**

**13. c.**

**14. c.**

**15. a.**

**16. a.**

**17. c.**

**18. c.**

## Problem

S

Just the other day I came home from work as excited as I had ever been. The night before someone from Publisher's Clearinghouse had called. To tell me that I would be receiving a prize package worth potentially millions of dollars. I was so excited because, unlike other offers, this really sounded legitimate, it sounded to me as though I might really win

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something this time. I hastily opened the mailbox. Hoping to find the promised envelope. There it was. Between the *Life* magazine and the Fingerhut catalog. The promised letter. When I finally finished reading the entire mailing. I realized my chances were really no better with this contest than they had been for any other contest I had entered in the past and I was disappointed that I had spent so much time reading all of the material then I threw it all in the recycling basket and went to bed. Dejected.

# Complete Sentences

1. It has a verb (a word or phrase that expresses an action, such as *run, take, give*, or a state of being, such as *is*). Many sentences have more than one verb. The verbs in the sentences below are highlighted for you.

## Examples:

Bob and Alexandra both **want** a promotion.

Yurika **drafted** a memo and **sent** it to the manager. (Both **drafted** and **sent** are verbs)

Herbert and Tan **are** the chief operating officers. (**are** is a being verb)



**2.** It has a subject (someone or something that performs the action or serves as the main focus of the sentence). As with verbs, many sentences have more than one subject.

### **Examples:**

**Bob** and **Alexandra** both want a promotion.

**Yurika** drafted a memo and sent it to the sales department.

**Herbert** and **Tan** are the chief operators in this department.

**3.** It expresses a complete thought. In other words, the group of words has a completed meaning. Sometimes a group of words has both a subject and a verb but still does not express a complete thought. Look at the following examples. The subjects and verbs are highlighted to make them easier to identify.

**Complete sentences (also called independent clauses):**

**I left** an hour earlier than usual.

Our **team finished** its year-end evaluation.

**Roger tried** to explain his position

**Sentence fragments (dependent clauses):**

If **I left** an hour earlier than usual.

When our **team finished** its year-end evaluation.

Whenever **Roger tried** to explain his position.

The next section explains why the groups of words in the second set are not complete sentences.

## **Sentence Fragments**

In the last set of examples above, you may have noticed that each fragment is longer than the similar complete sentence. The groups of words are otherwise the same, but the fragments have an extra word at the beginning. These words are called *subordinating conjunctions*. If a group of words that would normally be a complete sentence is preceded by a subordinating conjunction, something

more is needed to complete the thought. These *subordinate* or *dependent clauses* need something more to complete their meaning; therefore, they *depend* on an *independent clause*, a group of words that by itself could form a complete sentence. Examine how the fragments from above have been rewritten below to express a complete thought.

If I left an hour earlier than usual, I would be able to avoid rush hour.

When our team finished its year-end evaluation, we all took the next day off.

Whenever Roger tried to explain his position, he misquoted the facts.

These words can be used as subordinating conjunctions:

after

once

although

since

as

than

because

that

before

though

if

unless

Sometimes a subordinating conjunction word:

**as if** we didn't already know

**as though** she had always lived in the town

**as long as** they can still be heard

**as soon as** I can finish my work

**even though** you aren't quite ready

**in order that** we may proceed more care

**so that** all of us understand exactly

Subordinate clauses used as sentences are fragments. Look at the questions below. For each word group, write a complete sentence in the box at the right. See if you notice any words that are fragments.

### **Word Group A**

**W**

1.

We are ready for the next task.

**W**

2. Seeing the plane arriving. He gat

3. Broken down after years of use. Th  
nev

4. We saw Andrea sitting all Im  
in

The complete sentences are 1. A, 2. B, 3. simply phrases. They do not contain a subject and a verb. In the first two sets of words, both will be part of a sentence. In the third, the first word is done in the examples below. With some cases, a comma. With others, a few extra words are needed to turn the phrase into the rest of the sentence.

1. We are ready for the next task, which

2. Seeing the plane arriving, Heather's f
3. Since the phone was broken down aft  
finally got a new one.
4. We saw Andrea sitting all by herself,  
March.

Now look at the table below. In each set, sentence. The other is a fragment. Put the box at the far right. See if you notice any

**Word Group A****Word**

1. About the way he combs his hair.

I've

2. My aunt is a respiratory therapist.

A po  
their

Benjamin saw a piece of

3.	key lime pie.	His
----	---------------	-----

4.	And tried to sell popcorn and candy.	We
----	--------------------------------------	----

5.	During the rest of the afternoon.	Eve
----	-----------------------------------	-----

6.	Icy roads and hazardous weather.	We
----	----------------------------------	----

7.	In the parking ramp near our building.	I wa
----	----------------------------------------	------

8.	And saw the picture of our company's new	We
----	------------------------------------------	----

owner.

9.

We traveled through the desert all night.

With  
built

10.

We walked all over downtown.

And  
thea

The complete sentences are 1. B, 2. A, 3. 10. A.

Most of the fragments are phrases that can be turned into a complete sentence using the independent clause with you or yourself. Compare your sentences with the

Look at sentences 1, 5, 7, and 9. The fragments are more than phrases separated from the independent

add the fragment to the complete sentence or additional words are needed.

1. I've noticed something very strange and

5. Everything went smoothly during the

7. I was fortunate to find a spot in the park

9. We traveled through the desert all night  
building.

Now examine sentences 2 and 3. These fragments  
further identify something in the complete  
*appositive* phrases. All you need to do is  
explained or identified, and then add the

**2.** My aunt is a respiratory therapist, a p  
lungs and respiratory system.

**3.** Benjamin saw key lime pie, his favor

- By turning one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause. To do this you need to add a subordinating conjunction where it fits in the sentence. This can usually be done in several different ways by rewording the clauses or by using different subordinating conjunctions. Remember the list of subordinating conjunction you saw earlier in this lesson?

Lynn moved from Minneapolis because her job was transferred.

When her job was transferred,

Lynn moved from Minneapolis.

Since the concert lasted almost until midnight, it seemed unending.

The concert seemed unending because it lasted until almost midnight.

After we got some gas, we headed off to Omaha.

We headed off to Omaha after we got some gas.

*Practice*

Choose the answers that include *only* complete sentences. Watch for fragments as well as run-ons. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

1. a. The huge northern pike snapped my line. And took my favorite lure.

b. The huge northern pike snapped my line and took my favorite lure.

2. a. Cathy is a good organizer. She chairs the newly formed committee.

b. Cathy is a good organizer she chairs the newly formed committee.

**3. a.** The lights were on in the house we assumed you were at home.

b. The lights were on in the house. We assumed you were at home.

**4. a.** Andy showed a great deal of promise. After only his first month of work.

b. Andy showed a great deal of promise after only his first month of work.

**5. a.** You will find the manual inside the right-hand drawer of my desk.

b. You will find the manual. Inside the right-hand drawer of my desk.

6. a. Sally needs additional time to complete the project it is more complicated than we thought.

b. Sally needs additional time to complete the project. It is more complicated than we thought.

7. a. After Mavis wrote the program, Sam edited it.

b. Mavis wrote the program Sam edited it.

**8.** a. Bob signed the application he gave it to the interviewer.

b. Bob signed the application, and he gave it to the interviewer.

Take a look at sentences 4, 8, and 10. In these sentences, the fragment is a verb (action) separated from the independent clause or the complete sentence. All that is required is to add the fragment to the sentence.

**4.** We went door to door and tried to sell popcorn and candy.

**8.** We read the morning paper and saw the picture of our company's new owner.

**10.** We walked all over downtown and applied for part-time jobs at theaters.

Finally, look at the remaining sentence, 6. In this sentence, extra words are needed to add the fragment to the sentence.

**6.** We couldn't make the deadline because of the icy roads and hazardous weather.

## **Run-On Sentences**

An *independent clause* is a group of words that could be a complete sentence all by itself. A *run-on*

*sentence* is one in which independent clauses have been run together without punctuation (a period, semicolon, or comma).

### **Examples:**

Lynn moved from Minneapolis  
her job was transferred.

The concert seemed unending it  
lasted almost until midnight.

We got some gas then we headed  
off to Omaha.

All three of these examples can

be corrected quite easily in one of three ways:

- By adding a period and a capital letter.

Lynn moved from Minneapolis.  
Her job was transferred.

The concert seemed unending. It lasted almost until midnight.

We got some gas. Then we headed off to Omaha.

- By adding a comma and a conjunction (*and, but, or, for, nor, yet,*

*so*). Sometimes you have to change the order of the words.

Lynn's job was transferred, and she moved from Minneapolis.

The concert seemed unending, for it lasted almost until midnight.

We got some gas, and then we headed off to Omaha.

**9. a.** Edsel was ready for the auditor his department's books were all in order.

b. Edsel was ready for the auditor since his department's books were all in order.

**10. a.** Alexis found a part-time job that supplemented her income.

b. Alexis found a part-time job. Supplemented her income.

## Comma Splices

A *comma splice* is the last kind of sentence fault you will study today. It is actually a special type of run-on sentence in which a comma is used in place of a semicolon to join two independent clauses without a conjunction. A comma splice can be corrected by putting a semicolon in place of the comma or by adding a conjunction after the comma.

### Wrong

Henry lives across the street, he has been there for 25 years.

## **Correct**

Henry lives across the street; he has been there for 25 years.

Henry lives across the street, and he has been there for 25 years.

## **Wrong**

Mary heads the search committee, John is the recorder.

## **Correct**

Mary heads the search committee;

John is the recorder.

Mary heads the search committee,  
and John is the recorder.

## **Wrong**

Sid gave demonstrations all summer  
long, he returned in the fall.

## **Correct**

Sid gave demonstrations all summer  
long; he returned in the fall.

Sid gave demonstrations all summer

long, but he returned in the fall.

## *Practice*

Here is an opportunity to apply what you have learned about complete sentences, fragments, run-ons, and comma splices. In each of the numbered items below, decide whether the group of words is a correctly written sentence or sentences (S), a fragment (F), a run-on sentence (ROS), or a comma splice (CS). Write the label next to each number, and then check your work against the answer key at the end of the lesson. You may recognize some of these sentences from the opening example paragraph.

By now, you know how to correct the ones that were not complete sentences.

**11.** Dr. Anders left detailed care instructions for his friend of his.

**12.** The night before someone from Public Health called to tell me that I would be receiving a prize of millions of dollars.

**13.** I was so excited because unlike the other prizes, it sounded to me as though I had won in time.

**14.** I hastily opened the mailbox. Hoping

**15.** There it was. The promised letter.

**16.** When I finally finished reading the er

**17.** The officer responded to the call, he :

**18.** Emily posted the last transaction it w  
day.

**19.** Our new computer system is still not

**20.** Hanging over the doorway in the offic

Rewrite the fragments, run-ons, and c  
sentences in the space below.



## Skill Building Unit

Go back to the paragraph at the beginning and eliminate the sentence fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences. As you read the morning paper or write your own, look for sentence faults. If you find none, look for them to be combined. Chances are you'll find plenty of them. You can also find plenty of sentence faults, especially in newspaper advertisements. Practice writing complete sentences. Write the sentences you are assigned.

## Answers

1. b.

2. a.

3. b.

4. b.

5. a.

6. b.

**7. a.**

**8. b.**

**9. b.**

**10. a.**

**11. F**

**12. F**

**13. CS**

**14. F**

**15. F**

**16. F**

**17. CS**

**18. ROS**

**19. S**

**20. F**

**Problem**

Startled I looked up to see a bird flying around the office.

After examining the report carefully Edith printed a final copy and mailed it.

As soon as we finish this last round we can quit for the day.

Thinking carefully about the needs of the customers Randall revised his sales plan.

Because production falls during the winter months we will cut one daily shift.

Like a confused duckling Richard waddled through the mound of paperwork.

She spends a great deal of time listening to the problems of her customers who have come to depend on her advice.

Zig Ziglar the last motivational speaker brought the convention crowd to their feet.

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The cable car which I am waiting for is already  
twenty minutes late.

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## **Commas Following Introductory Words**

Use a comma to set off introductory words from the main part of a sentence. The comma keeps the reader from attaching the introductory portion to the main part, thus having to go back and reread the sentence. The commas following introductory elements will save you the chances of misinterpreting what you write. Try writing the following to see how introductory words, phrases, and clauses use commas.

### **Words:**

Disappointed, we left the movie before

Annoyed, the manager stomped back

Amazed, Captain Holland dismissed

## Phrases:

Expecting the worst, we liquidated most of our inventory.

Badly injured in the accident, the president was gone for two months.

Reluctant to make matters any worse, the doctor called in a specialist.

## Clauses:

If we plan carefully for the grand opening, we can increase sales.

While we were eating lunch, an important fax came.

Because we left before the meeting ended, we were not eligible to win a door prize.

Remember the fragment section of Lesson 3? One part of it dealt with subordinate or dependent clauses. Subordinate or dependent clauses are what you see in the last set of examples above. The first part of each sentence, the subordinate or dependent

clause, is followed by a comma. The two parts of each of these sentences could very easily be reversed and the sentence would still make sense.

However, if you reverse the sentence parts, making the independent clause the first clause in the sentence, you would NOT need a comma.

### **Subordinate clauses *after* the independent clause:**

We can increase sales if we plan carefully for the grand opening.

An important fax came while we were eating lunch.

We were not eligible to win a door prize because we left before the meeting ended.

### *Practice*

Choose the correctly written sentence from each of the following pairs.

Answers are provided at the end of the lesson.

1. a. Content for the first time in his life, Bryce returned to school.

b. Content for the first time in his life Bryce returned to school.

**2. a.** As far as I'm concerned we can call this project a success.

b. As far as I'm concerned, we can call this project a success.

**3. a.** I will never forget this moment, as long as I live.

b. I will never forget this moment as long as I live.

**4. a.** By the time we finally made up our minds, the contract had been awarded to someone else.

b. By the time we finally made up

our minds the contract had been awarded to someone else.

**5. a.** Indignant, Mr. Caster left the restaurant without leaving a tip.

**b.** Indignant Mr. Caster left the restaurant without leaving a tip.

6. a. Wayne was delighted when he found out he'd been awarded the leading role in the show.

b. Wayne was delighted, when he found out he'd been awarded the leading role in the show.

7. a. By designing the program ourselves, we saved a great deal of expense.

b. By designing the program ourselves we saved a great deal of

expense.

**8. a.** I began working for this company, before I was sixteen.

b. Before I was sixteen, I began working for this company.

**9. a.** Dripping with water from head to toe, Angie climbed the bank of the river.

b. Dripping with water from head to toe Angie climbed the bank of the river.

**10. a.** The company honored its oldest

employee at the annual meeting.

b. The company honored its oldest employee, at the annual meeting.

Commas help a reader to know which words belong together. Add commas to the following sentences to help make their meaning clear.

**1.** Inside the house was clean and tastefully decorated.

**2.** After running the greyhounds settled back into their boxes.

**3.** Alone at night time seems endless.

**4.** As he watched the game slowly came to an end.

You should have marked the sentences like this:

**1.** Inside, the house was clean and tastefully decorated.

**2.** After running, the greyhounds settled back into their boxes.

**3.** Alone at night, time seems endless.

**4.** As he watched, the game slowly came to an end.

## Commas with Appositives

An *appositive* is a word or group of words that immediately follows a noun or pronoun. The appositive makes the noun or pronoun clearer or more definite by explaining or identifying it. Look at these examples. The appositives and appositive phrases have been highlighted.

## Examples:

Rachel Stein won the first prize,  
**an expense-paid vacation to the  
Bahamas.**

New Orleans, **home of the  
Saints**, is one of my favorite  
cities.

One of the most inspiring  
motivators in college basketball is  
Dr. Tom Davis, **coach of the  
Iowa Hawkeyes.**

Sometimes a proper name that identifies or further explains will follow a noun or pronoun. Although this is also a type of appositive, it is not set off by commas.

### **Examples:**

My sister **Deb** lives four hours away.

The noted novelist **Barbara Kingsolver** writes about the South and Southwest.

The president **Manuel Diaz** will

visit this site tomorrow.

Place commas where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. *Megabyte*, a word virtually unheard of a decade ago is very common today.

2. Mrs. McCord the investment specialist left a message for you this afternoon.

3. Jane likes to spend Saturday mornings at the local farmer's market a feast for the senses.

4. Water purity a major concern for campers has steadily worsened over the years.

5. High heels were invented by Louis XIV a very short French king.

6. My aunt Marsha will visit later this month.

You should have marked the sentences like this:

1. *Megabyte*, a word virtually unheard of a decade ago, is very common today.

**2.** Mrs. McCord, the investment specialist, left a message for you this afternoon.

**3.** Jane likes to spend Saturday mornings at the local farmer's market, a feast for the senses.

**4.** Water purity, a major concern for campers, has steadily worsened over the years.

**5.** High heels were invented by Louis XIV, a very short French king.

**6.** My aunt Marsha will visit later this month. (no comma needed)



**17. Nicotine which is present in tobacco is a powerful poison.**

**18. Many Scandinavian names end with -son, which mean son of.**

**19. We live on Fleur Drive which is right.**

**20. Mrs. Olson is not a teacher who takes.**

**Review**

This next exercise reviews everything you have learned so far to add capital letters and commas to make sense of the **Problem** version of the passage below. Compare your work against the **Solution** version of the passage.

## Problem

even though peter liked his job a great deal he always looked forward to his summer vacation it was the highlight of his year usually he spent two weeks in the middle of july at camp wi wi ta which was forty miles from his home he was responsible for six

## Solution

Even though Peter liked his job a great deal, he always looked forward to his summer vacation. It was the highlight of his year. Usually he spent two weeks in the middle of July at Camp Wi Wi Ta, which was forty miles from his home. He was responsible for six

physically challenged children for  
24 hrs a day for two wks how he  
loved camp

peter took the counseling job one  
he loved dearly very seriously  
each morning he rose before the  
first child awoke and never went  
to bed until the last of his kids  
went to sleep at night the best part  
of the job was challenging the  
kids to do things for themselves  
peter would insist that they comb  
their hair or cut their own food  
even if they begged for help the  
camp dean and some of the other  
counselors thought peter was  
slacking on the job but he didn't

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see it that way he enjoyed  
knowing that his kids left camp  
more capable and confident than  
they had been when they arrived

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## Commas and Nonrestrictive Clauses

Earlier in this lesson you learned that a *restrictive* clause at the beginning of a sentence is followed by a comma. A clause in any other place in the sentence is not set off by a comma if the clause is an *essential* clause. In some cases, a clause is omitted without changing the basic meaning of the sentence. Such a clause changes the meaning of the sentence. Such a clause is called an *essential* or *restrictive* clause.

### Example:

All drivers **who have had a drunk driving record** have had their licenses revoked.

All drivers should have their license

The highlighted clause is essential because it is changed drastically if the clause is removed. A restrictive clause is not set off with commas.

However, a *nonessential* or *nonrestrictive* clause is set off with commas. A clause is nonrestrictive if it is not essential to the basic meaning of the sentence. If the clause is removed, the basic meaning of the sentence remains the same.

### **Example:**

My father, **who is still farming**, is 74 years old.

My father is 74 years old.

The highlighted clause is nonrestrictive. In a sentence, the basic meaning of the sentence is usually conveyed by the main clause. Restrictive clauses usually begin with one of these subordinating conjunctions: *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, or *that*. (Technical grammar says that the correct conjunction for a restrictive clause is *that*, but in practice many writers use *which*, but in practice many writers use *which*.)

## *Practice*

Each of the sentences in the table below contains a clause highlighted in yellow. Write R in the box at the right if the clause is restrictive and N if the clause is nonessential. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**11. Matt who loves to play video games lives in Chicago.**

computer science career.

**12.** My grandfather **who was born in Berlin** has a German accent.

**13.** James **who is very shy** had a great deal of confidence in his first speech.

**14.** The hotel pays the parking ramp fees for **registered guest**.

**15.** People **who are born on February 29** are rarer than the rest of us.

**16.** Animals **that have backbones** are called vertebrates.



## Skill Building Until

As you've seen in this lesson, omitting commas or elements or wrongly placing commas are common errors that lead to humorous misreadings. Write some sentences that are hard to read without commas, like the ones that were moved closer." Then correct them by adding commas.

### Answers

1. a.

**2. b.**

**3. b.**

**4. a.**

**5. a.**

**6. a.**

**7. a.**

**8. b.**

**9. a.**

**10.** a.

**11.** N Matt, who loves to play video games, has a science career.

**12.** N My grandfather, who was born in England, has a British accent.

**13.** N James, who is very shy, had a great speech.

**14.** R No commas are needed.

**15.** R No commas are needed.

**16.** R No commas are needed.

**17. N** Nicotine, which is present in tobacco, is a  
poison.

**18. N** Many Scandinavian names end with  
mean *son of*.

**19. N** We live on Fleur Drive, which is a  
residential street.

**20. R** No commas are needed.

## Problem

Dear Aunt Jan

I hate to give you my whole life story so I'll start halfway through. When I began my first full-time job I was twenty-one years old a freshly scrubbed college graduate. I worked as an English teacher at Sioux Valley Schools 721 Straight Row Drive Linn Grove Iowa. My first day of teacher workshops was August 28 1976 and I

came armed with a nice clean notebook a pen a pencil and a new three-ring binder. I expected a day of meetings but I got nothing of the sort. The only time the entire staff got together was at noon when the principal announced that the parents group had set up a lunch for us in the cafeteria. What a feast: fresh sweet corn vine-ripened tomatoes new potatoes and grilled hamburgers. The president of the school board cooked the burgers nothing less than prime Iowa beef to perfection. It was a first day as you might imagine that I will never forget. I'm looking forward to your next letter.

Sincerely

## **Commas with Independent Clauses Joi**

As you may recall from Lesson 3, an *inde* that could stand alone as a complete sentence *and, but, or, for, nor, so, or yet*. Sometimes

more independent clauses to form a compound sentence. If a conjunction joins the clauses, place a comma after the first clause. The commas and conjunctions are highlighted in the following examples.

### **Examples:**

I went to bed early last night, **so** I felt rested this morning.

The city's economic situation has improved, **but** there are still

neighborhoods where many people depend on the generosity of others in order to live.

Susan worked through lunch, **and** now she is able to leave the office early.

If independent clauses are joined *without* conjunction, they are separated by a semicolon instead of a comma.

## **Examples:**

I went to bed early last night; I felt rested this morning.

The city's economic situation has improved; however, there are still neighborhoods where many people depend on the generosity of others in order to live.

Susan worked through lunch; now she is able to leave the office early.

### *Practice*

Use commas and semicolons to correctly punctuate the following sentences. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**1.** You can safely view an eclipse through the viewing glass of a welding helmet or you can look through a piece of overexposed film.

**2.** The prisoner showed no remorse as the guilty verdict was announced nor did the tears of the victim's family arouse any emotion.

**3.** The young calf put its head over the fence and it licked my hand and sucked on my fingers.

**4.** Icebergs in the Antarctic are flat and smooth but those in the Arctic are rough.

**5.** I understand your position on this issue I still believe you are dead wrong.

**6.** I like Sam he likes me for we are best of friends.

**7.** The inventory is valued at one million dollars but it's not enough to cover our debt.

**8.** If you know of anyone with data processing experience encourage him or her to apply for this new position.

## Commas to Separate Items in a Series

Commas are used to separate items in lists of similar words, phrases, or clauses in order to make the material easier for a reader to understand. The last item in a series is also usually preceded by a conjunction. Strictly speaking, no comma is needed before the conjunction. (However, many writers—some test writers included—prefer to use a comma before the final conjunction to avoid confusion.)

## **Examples:**

Al, Jane, Herbert, and Willis all applied for the promotion.

The old Tempo's engine squealed loudly, shook violently, and ground to a halt.

The instructions clearly showed how to assemble the equipment, how to load the software, and how to boot the system.

If each item in the series is separated by a conjunction, no commas are needed.

## **Example:**

Billie and Charles and Cameron  
performed at the company  
Christmas party.

## **Commas to Separate Items in a Date or an Address**

When giving a complete date in the format *month-day-year*, put a comma on either side of the year. When giving a date that is only a month and year, no comma is needed.

Use a comma to separate each element

of an address, such as the street address, city, state, and country. A comma is also used after the state or country if the sentence continues after the address.

### **Examples:**

We moved from Fayetteville,  
North Carolina, on May 16, 1993.

Since November 1994, Terry has  
lived at 654 36th Street, Lincoln,  
Nebraska.

Dwana attended Drake University,  
Des Moines, Iowa, both fall 1994

and spring 1995.

## *Practice*

Add commas and endmarks where they are needed to the following sentences. Use not only what you are learning in this lesson but also what you learned in Lesson 4. Answers appear at the end of the lesson.

**9.** After he ran into the mayor's car with his truck Adam used his cellular phone to call the police his doctor his lawyer and his insurance agent.

**10.** The homegrown philosopher who

lives next door at 251 Acorn Street  
Libertyville Kansas claims to know  
exactly who invented the wheel sliced  
bread and kissing.

**11.** Estelle was born on January 31 1953 and Arun was born on June 30 1960.

**12.** Looking for a solution to the printing problem Karissa asked an older employee questioned the supervisor and finally consulted the printer manual.

**13.** Baruch brought a jello salad to the potluck Shannon brought peanuts M & M's mints and pretzels.

## Commas to Separate Adjectives

Use commas to separate two or more equally important adjectives.

### Examples:

Alex avoided the **friendly, talkative, pleasant** boy sitting next to him at school.

The carpenter repaired the floor with **dark, aged, oak** flooring.

The reporter spoke with several **intense, talented** high school athletes.

Pay close attention to the last sentence above. You'll notice that the words *several*, *high*, and *school* are also adjectives modifying *athletes*. Not all adjectives modifying the same word are equally important. Only those of equal importance are separated with a comma. If you apply one or both of these tests, you can easily tell whether a comma is needed:

- Change the order of the adjectives. If the sentence reads just as clearly, separate the adjectives with a comma. If the sentence becomes unclear or sounds awkward, do not use a comma. The first two example sentences above make sense even if the position of the

adjectives is changed. The last example sentence makes no sense if you change the order of any of the adjectives other than *intense* and *talented*. Therefore, those are the only adjectives separated by a comma.

✓ Alex avoided the **talkative, friendly, pleasant** boy sitting next to him at school.

✓ The carpenter repaired the floor with **aged, dark, oak** flooring.

✗ The reporter spoke with **intense, several, high, talented,**

**school** athletes.

•A second, equally effective test is to place *and* between the adjectives. If the sentence still reads well, then use commas between the adjectives. If the sentence sounds unclear or awkward, do not use commas. Again, this works with the first two example sentences, but in the last sentence, *and* makes sense only between *intense* and *talented*. Try these two tests with the following sentences. Where do commas go?

We bought an **antique wrought iron** daybed.

The envelope contained **three**  
**crisp clean brand new** hundred  
dollar bills.

You should have punctuated the sentences like this:

We bought an **antique, wrought iron** daybed.

The envelope contained **three crisp, clean, brand new** hundred dollar bills.

## **Commas to Separate Other Elements of a Sentence**

- Use commas to separate contrasting or opposing elements in a sentence. The comma functions as a signal to the reader: What follows is an opposite idea. It makes the idea easier for the reader to grasp.

## **Examples:**

We searched the entire house, **but found nothing.**

We need strong intellects, **not strong bodies**, to resolve this problem.

The racers ran slowly at first,

**quickly at the end.**

We expected to meet the President, **not a White House aide.**

- Use commas to separate words or phrases that interrupt the flow of thought in a sentence.

**Examples:**

The deadline, **it seemed clear,** simply could not be met.

We came to rely, **however,** on the kindness and generosity of the

neighbors.

The alternative route, **we discovered**, was faster than the original route.

- Whenever the name of the person being addressed is included in a sentence, it should be set off by commas.

## **Examples:**

**Dave**, we wanted you to look at this layout before we sent it to printing.

We wanted you to look at this layout, **Dave**, before we sent it to printing.

We wanted you to look at this layout before we sent it to printing, **Dave**.

- Mild exclamations included in a sentence are also set off with commas.

### **Examples:**

**Well**, that was certainly a pleasant surprise.

**Yes**, I'll call you as soon as we get

the information.

**Heavens**, that was a long-winded speaker.

- Use a comma after the greeting and closing of a friendly letter.

**Examples:**

Dear Uncle Jon,

Sincerely yours,

Yours truly,



## *Practice*

Choose the correctly punctuated version of each of the following sets of sentences. Keep in mind what you learned about commas in the previous lesson.

**14.** a. No, I haven't received a reply just yet, but I expect one any day.

b. No I haven't received a reply just yet, but I expect one any day.

c. No, I haven't received a reply just yet but I expect one any day.

**15.** a. My steak was burned to a crisp, the burger, on the other hand, was dripping with blood.

b. My steak was burned to a crisp; the burger, on the other hand, was dripping with blood.

c. My steak was burned to a crisp, the burger, on the other hand was dripping with blood.

**16.** a. Well, Sancha, I wonder if Mindy made it to her interview on time.

b. Well, Sancha I wonder if Mindy made it to her interview on time.

c. Well Sancha, I wonder if Mindy made it to her interview on time.

**17.** a. When we go on vacation, we need to remember our clothing fishing equipment and cameras.

b. When we go on vacation we need to remember our clothing, fishing equipment, and cameras.

c. When we go on vacation, we need to remember our clothing, fishing equipment, and cameras.

**18.** a. The correct address I believe is 215 North 34th, Streator, Illinois.

b. The correct address, I believe, is 215 North 34th, Streator, Illinois.

c. The correct address, I believe, is 215, North 34th, Streator, Illinois.

**19.** a. Our newest employee, a transfer from the home office, is the strong silent absent type, I think.

b. Our newest employee, a transfer from the home office is the strong, silent, absent type, I think.

c. Our newest employee, a transfer from the home office, is the strong, silent, absent type, I think.

**20.** a. I'm afraid, Mr. Dobbs, that you lack the qualifications for this job; but we have another that might interest you.

b. I'm afraid Mr. Dobbs, that you lack the qualifications for this job, but we have another that might interest you.

c. I'm afraid, Mr. Dobbs, that you lack the qualifications for this job, but we have another that might interest

you.

**21.** a. Usually, at the company picnic we play volleyball, and horseshoes.

b. Usually, at the company picnic, we play volleyball and horseshoes.

c. Usually, at the company picnic we play volleyball, and horseshoes.

**22.** a. We will advertise our biggest sale in 1997, the 25th anniversary of our Grand Opening.

b. We will advertise our biggest sale in 1997, the 25th anniversary of our Grand Opening.

c. We will advertise our biggest sale the 25th anniversary of our Grand Opening.

**23.** a. Exhausted by the heat, rather than the sun, he sat on the grass under a tall shady oak tree.

b. Exhausted by the heat rather than the sun, he sat on the grass under a tall, shady oak tree.

c. Exhausted by the heat, rather than the sun, he sat on the grass under a tall, shady oak tree.

## **Skill Building Until**

As you read the newspaper, a book, or watch

special note of the commas you see. Try  
might be used in each of the situations. S  
most frequently misused punctuation marks  
other writers have misused them.

## Answers

1. You can safely view an eclipse through the viewing glass of a welding helmet, or you can look through a piece of overexposed film.

2. The prisoner showed no remorse as the guilty verdict was announced, nor did the tears of the victim's family arouse any emotion.

3. The young calf put its head over the fence, and it licked my hand and

sucked on my fingers.

**4.** Icebergs in the Antarctic are flat and smooth, but those in the Arctic are rough.

**5.** I understand your position on this issue; I still believe you are dead wrong.

**6.** I like Sam; he likes me, for we are best of friends.

**7.** The inventory is valued at one million dollars, but it's not enough to cover our debt.

**8.** If you know of anyone with data processing experience, encourage him or her to apply for this new position.

**9.** After he ran into the mayor's car with his truck, Adam used his cellular phone to call the police, his doctor, his lawyer, and his insurance agent.

**10.** The homegrown philosopher who lives next door at 251 Acorn Street, Libertyville, Kansas, claims to know exactly who invented the wheel, sliced bread, and kissing.

**11.** Estelle was born on January 31, 1953, and Arun was born on June 30, 1960.

**12.** Looking for a solution to the printing problem, Karissa asked an older employee, questioned the supervisor, and finally consulted the printer manual.

**13.** Baruch brought a jello salad to the potluck. Shannon brought peanuts, M & M's, mints, and pretzels.

**14. a.**

**15. b.**

**16. a.**

**17. c.**

**18. b.**

**19. c.**

**20. c.**

**21. c.**

**22. a.**

**23. c.**

## Problem

S

Dear Mr. Powell

D

This letter is a formal complaint regarding service our company received from your representatives at 130 P.M. on January 26, 1996.

T

re

re

re

Ja

These are the procedures for which we were billed a complete scotomy, a procedure to rid the machinery of electrostatic material

p:

b:

p:

e]

a comprehensive assessment, a procedure for checking all mechanical and electronic parts in the machinery a thorough cleaning, a procedure necessary to keep the machine running efficiently.

This may be what the representative reported to have done however, only the first procedure in the list was finished. Only one of the three items was completed therefore, we should be refunded the amount charged for the other two services.

We are filing this complaint in

accordance with your technical manual *McDounah New Age Electronics A Complete Manual*. This information is found in Volume 2, page 27 "Customers dissatisfied with our service for any reason have the right to file a full complaint within 10 (ten) days from the date of service. Such a complaint must be addressed in writing to Mr. Douglas Powell, Service Manager McDounah New Age Electronics Demming,

*(continued on next page)*

Here is a complete list of words used as adverbs.

accordingly      furthermore      instead

besides      hence      moreover

consequently      however      nevertheless

Many people confuse subordinating conjunctions *because, though, until, and while*, with the adverbs listed above. The difference is in

beginning with a subordinating conjunction is a subordinate clause; it can't stand alone as a sentence. A clause with a conjunctive adverb is an *independent clause* which should be separated from another independent clause with a period and capital letter or with a semicolon.

Here's a trick for finding out whether the clause is a conjunctive adverb. If you can move the clause around within the sentence, it's a conjunctive adverb. If you can't, it's probably a subordinating conjunction. Here are two main clauses:

My paycheck was delayed. I couldn't find time.

Here are two ways of joining those two main clauses:

My paycheck was delayed; therefore, I couldn't find time.

rent on time.

I couldn't, pay my rent on time because delayed.

Check whether the first version uses a conjunction.  
Can you move *therefore* around in its clause? say, "I couldn't, therefore, pay my rent on time."  
is a conjunctive adverb.

Use the same test to see whether *because* is a conjunctive adverb that should come after a semicolon.  
*because* around in its clause? "My paycheck was delayed"? No. So *because* is a subordinating conjunction and the clause it introduces is not a main clause.

There's one more way a semicolon is used.

- Use a semicolon to separate items in a series.

contain commas. Unlike items in a series commas, a semicolon is used even when conjunction.

## **Examples:**

The dates we are considering for our Thursday, **June 5; Saturday, June 7 or Monday, June 9.**

When we go to the lake, I am sure to popcorn popper, and pancake **griddle** life jackets, and ski **equipment; and** board games, and my guitar.

The expansion committee is consider Columbus, **Ohio; Orange, Californi**

**Tennessee; and Jacksonville, Florid**

- Use a colon to emphasize a word, phrase, or clause that adds particular emphasis to the main body of a sentence. Again, the part before the colon should already be a complete sentence.

### **Example:**

The financial problems our company has been experiencing have been caused by one thing: poor planning. We were missing a vital piece of information: how the basic product design differed from

last year's model.

## ***Colons that show a Subordinate Relationship***

Use a colon to show a subordinate relationship in the following cases:

- Between two sentences when the second explains the first.

### **Examples:**

Brenton shouted and threw his fists in the air: He had just set a new world's record.

Nicole put the check into her scrapbook rather than cashing it: It was the first check she had ever earned.

Scott ignored the phone: He knew it was a salesman for whom he had no time.

- Between the title and the subtitle of a book.

## **Examples:**

Internet Starter Kit: A Complete Guide to Cyberspace

# Beyond 2000: A Futuristic View of Time

## O Death, Where is Thy Sting: Tales from the Other Side

- Between volume and page number or between chapter and verse.

### **Examples:**

World Book Encyclopedia V: 128

*New Age Journal of Medicine IX:*  
23

John 3:16

Genesis 1:1

Psalms 23:2

- Between hour and minute.

**Examples:**

12:53 A.M.

2:10 P.M.

- After the greeting of a business letter.  
You learned that commas are used after greetings in personal or friendly

letters. A colon signals the reader that what is to follow is a business matter, something to be taken seriously. This is particularly true if you include the position, but not the name of the person to whom the letter is addressed. However, even in a business letter, the closing is followed by a comma.

## **Examples:**

Dear Mr. Strange:

Cordially yours,

Dear Operations Manager:

Respectfully submitted,

## *Practice*

Practice what you've learned by adding semicolons where they are needed in the following sentences. You will find the answers at the end of this lesson.

- 1.** I need a break I've been working for five hours straight.
- 2.** We have branch offices in Paris, France Berlin, Germany Stockholm, Sweden and Budapest, Hungary.

3. We had no problem meeting the deadline however, we were still able to find ways of streamlining production.

4. We ate swiss steak, riced potatoes, steamed broccoli and fresh bread for dinner but we still had room to eat apple pie for dessert.

5. Paige left some of the confidential documents sitting on her desk at work consequently, she worried about their safety all night long.

**Colons**

## *Colons that introduce*

- Use a colon to introduce a list of items, as long as the part before the colon is already a complete sentence.

### **Examples:**

These people were cast in the play: Andrea, Horatio, Thom, Alley and Benito.

We packed these items for the trip: cameras, dress clothes, scuba equipment, and beach wear.

- Do not use a colon if the list of items

complements a verb; in other words, if it completes the meaning begun by the verb. Look at the sample sentences from above rewritten in such a way that a colon is not necessary.

### **Examples:**

The people cast in the play were Kristin, Horatio, Thom, Alley, and Benito.

For our trip we packed cameras, dress clothes, scuba equipment, and beach wear.

- Use a colon to introduce a formal

quotation.

**Example:**

John F. Kennedy ended the speech with these notable words: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly punctuated version in each of the following sets of sentences. You will find the correct answers at the end of the lesson.

**6. a.** I found an outline of the procedure in the policy manual, Volume 3:17.

b. I found an outline of the procedure, in the policy manual, Volume 3:17.

c. I found an outline of the procedure in the policy manual Volume 3,17.

7. a. The tornado destroyed most of the buildings on our farm, however the house was untouched by the violent storm.

b. The tornado destroyed most of the buildings on our farm; however the house was untouched by the violent storm.

c. The tornado destroyed most of the buildings on our farm; however, the house was untouched by the violent

storm.

**8. a.** After a week in the woods I need: a towel, a washcloth, a toothbrush, and a bar of soap.

**b.** After a week in the woods I need a towel, a washcloth, a toothbrush, and a bar of soap.

**c.** After a week in the woods I need; a towel, a washcloth, a toothbrush, and a bar of soap.

**9. a.** Dear Subscriber,

Please renew your subscription

by 12,00 A.M. on January 5, 1996, to receive the special bonus.

b. Dear Subscriber:

Please renew your subscription by 12:00 A.M. on January 5, 1996, to receive the special bonus.

c. Dear Subscriber;

Please renew your subscription by 12:00 A.M. on January 5, 1996 to receive the special bonus.

**10.** a. Each day a new shift begins at 8:00 A.M., 4:00 P.M., and 12:00 A.M.

b. Each day a new shift begins at 8:00 A.M.; 4:00 P.M., and 12:00 A.M.

c. Each day a new shift begins at 8:00, A.M.; 4:00, P.M.; and 12:00, A.M.

**11.** a. I like to play football, a physically challenging sport; chess, a game of logic and strategy; Super Mario World, a mindless Super Nintendo game; and the guitar, a relaxing instrument.

b. I like to play football, a physically challenging sport: chess, a game of logic and strategy: Super

Mario World, a mindless Super Nintendo game: and the guitar, a relaxing instrument.

c. I like to play football a physically challenging sport, chess a game of logic and strategy. Super Mario World a mindless Super Nintendo game, and the guitar a relaxing instrument.

**12. a.** They learned the following information: the suspect's name; the suspect's home address; and the suspect's current employer.

b. They learned the following information: the suspect's name; the suspect's home address; and the suspect's current employer.

c. They learned the following information: the suspect's name; the suspect's home address; and the suspect's current employer.

Take a look at some of the letters or communications received or written recently. Examine them and use endmarks, commas, semicolons and correct them. It will be good practice.

## **Answers**

**1.** I need a break; I've been working for five

**2.** We have branch offices in Paris, France; Stockholm, Sweden; and Budapest, Hungary.

**3.** We had no problem meeting the deadline. I was able to find ways of streamlining product

**4.** We ate swiss steak, riced potatoes, steamed

for dinner; but we still had room to eat a

**5.** Paige left some of the confidential doc work; consequently, she worried about th

**6.** a.

**7.** c.

**8.** b.

**9.** b.

**10.** a.

**11.** a.

**12. c.**

## Problem

My grandfather is quite fond of telling stories from the late 30s and early 40s. The Great Depressions effect was beginning to diminish in the small South Dakota town where he lived. He inherited a 160-acre farm after his father-in-laws death in 1938. Little of the farms cropland had produced anything in the years prior to 38. During his first two years as a landowner, he netted a small profit.

With the droughts end in 40 came the beginning of good crops. Even with the governments market quotas, he was able to make enough money to buy another quarter of land. He counted on his sons help to farm the addl land, but they went off to Europe when World War II broke out. He purchased a steam engine tractor one of John Deeres first and farmed the 320 acres by himself. That was the beginning of his most successful years as a farmer.

## **Apostrophes**

### ***To Show Possession***

Use an apostrophe to show possession. The examples are *possessive adjectives*: The

**Singular nouns (add 's)**

**Plural nouns (add 's)**

**boy's** toy (The toy is the **boy's**.)

**boys'** bicycles

**child's** play

**kids'** beds

**lady's** coat

**ladies'** shoes

**dentist's** aide

**players'** seats



Apostrophes are *not* used to form plurals. When you're thinking of putting an apostrophe in a noun that ends in *s*, ask yourself whether you're merely showing that there's more than one thing. If so, there's no apostrophe.

### **Examples:**

There are a lot of **potatoes** in the refrigerator.

Cut out the **potatoes'** eyes.

You can avoid putting apostrophes in words that are merely plurals by trying this formula: *the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_*, as in *the eyes of the potatoes*. If the words don't fit in that formula, the noun doesn't take an apostrophe.

Here are some special cases for the use of apostrophes to show possession.

- When there is more than one word in the possessive adjective—for example, with a compound noun, a business or institution, or jointly possessed items—add the apostrophe *s* to the last word of the compound.

## Examples:

someone **else's** problem

mother-in-**law's** visit

board of **directors'** policy

Pope John Paul **II's** illness

Proctor and **Gamble's** product

Wayne and **Judy's** log cabin

- Words showing periods of time or

amounts of money need apostrophes when they are used as possessive adjectives.

### **Examples:**

**day's** pay, **month's** vacation,  
**morning's** work

two **cents'** worth, **dollar's** worth

- A singular noun that ends in *s* still takes apostrophe *s*, though some writers omit the *s* and include only the apostrophe.

### **Examples:**

- When a possessive pronoun (*my, mine, our, ours, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs*) is used as an adjective, no apostrophe is needed.

### **Examples:**

This is **their** idea. The idea is **theirs**.

We filed **our** flight plan. The flight plan is **ours**.

This manual must be **yours**.



## *To Show Omission*

Use an apostrophe to show that letters or numbers have been omitted.

### **Examples:**

Morton **doesn't** (does not) live here anymore.

speeding ticket.

**Who's** (who is) on first?

I just **can't** (cannot) understand this memo.

The task force discussed the **nat'l** (national) debt.

My first car was a **'67** (1967) Chevy.

Grandpa tells stories about life in the **'40s** (1940s).

## **Dashes**

Remember to distinguish a dash from a hyphen when typing. A dash is

**two** hyphens.

- Use a dash to mark a sudden break in thought or to insert a comment.

### **Examples:**

Here is your sandwich and your  
—Look out for that bee!

I remember the day—what  
middle-aged person doesn't—that  
President Kennedy was shot.

John is sorry—we all are—  
about your unfortunate accident.

- Use a dash to emphasize explanatory material. You don't have to use a dash, but you may.

## **Examples:**

Knowing yourself—your thoughts, values, and dreams—is the most important knowledge.

"The writer is by nature a dreamer—a conscious dreamer."—*Carson McCullers*

We spend our summers in Canada—Ontario, to be precise.

- Use a dash to indicate omitted letters or words.

### **Examples:**

"Oh, sh—, I can't believe I forgot to mail that package!"

"Hello?—Yes, I can hear you just fine.—Of course—I think I can.—Good!—I'll see you later.—"

- Use a dash to connect a beginning phrase to the rest of the sentence.

### **Examples:**

Honesty, integrity, tenacity—these are marks of motivated salespeople.

Nashville, Tennessee; Olympia, Washington; Ocala, Iowa—these are the prospective locations.

## *Practice*

From each set below, choose the option in which apostrophes are used correctly. You will find the answers to each set of questions at the end of the lesson.

1. a. An employee's motivation is different from an owner's.  
  
b. An employees' motivation is different from an owners'.

**2. a.** Employees reward's differ from an owners'.

b. Employees' rewards differ from an owner's.

**3. a.** Elaine has worked three years as a physicians assistant.

b. Elaine has worked three years as a physician's assistant.

**4. a.** The Mens' Issue's group meets every Saturday morning.

b. The Men's Issues group meets every Saturday morning.

**5.** a. The companies' sales force has doubled in recent years, and the credit is your's.

b. The company's sales force has doubled in recent years, and the credit is yours.

**6.** a. The most efficient method is her's.

b. The most efficient method is hers.

**7. a.** After five years' experience, we earn four weeks' paid vacation.

b. After five year's experience, we earn four week's paid vacation.

**8. a.** Pat and Janice's proposal requires a month's work.

b. Pat's and Janice's proposal requires a months' work.

**9. a.** The computer supply store's top-selling printer is Hewlett Packards latest model.

b. The computer supply store's top-

selling printer is Hewlett Packard's latest model.

**10.** a. Ms. Jones's boutique sells the same products as Mr. Smith's.

b. Ms. Jones' boutique sells the same products as Mr. Smiths'.

## *Practice*

Choose the option in which dashes and other punctuation are used correctly in each of the following sets.

**11. a.** We have only one choice—to open a new branch office in the suburbs.

b. We have only one choice to open a new branch office—in the suburbs.

**12. a.** My suggestion—just in case you're interested, is to apply for a promotion.

b. My suggestion—just in case you're interested—is to apply for a promotion.

**13. a.** He is the most unreasonable, I guess I should keep my opinions to myself.

b. He is the most unreasonable—I guess I should keep my opinions to myself.

**14. a.** I can't find that d— pocket

organizer that I worked—Oh, here it is.

b. I can't find that d— pocket organizer that I worked, Oh, here it is.

**15.** a. Brains, brawn, determination—that's what I demand from my people.

b. Brains, brawn, determination: that's what I demand from my people.

## **Practice and Review**

Check yourself with these sample test questions. These extremely difficult questions cover much of what you

have learned about punctuation so far. Look at the items carefully. Which of the following options is punctuated correctly?

**16.** a. Although it may seem strange, my partners purpose in interviewing Dr. E. S. Sanders Jr., was to eliminate him as a suspect in the crime.

b. Although it may seem strange my partner's purpose in interviewing Dr. E. S. Sanders, Jr. was to eliminate him, as a suspect in the crime.

c. Although it may seem strange, my partner's purpose in interviewing Dr. E. S. Sanders, Jr., was to eliminate

him as a suspect in the crime.

d. Although it may seem strange, my partner's purpose in interviewing Dr. E. S. Sanders, Jr. was to eliminate him, as a suspect in the crime.

**17. a.** After colliding with a vehicle at the intersection of Grand, and Forest Ms. Anderson saw a dark hooded figure reach through the window, grab a small parcel and run north on Forest.

b. After colliding with a vehicle at the intersection of Grand, and Forest, Ms. Anderson saw a dark hooded figure reach through the window, grab a small parcel, and run north on Forest.

c. After colliding with a vehicle at

the intersection of Grand and Forest Ms. Anderson saw a dark, hooded figure reach through the window, grab a small parcel and run north on Forest.

d. After colliding with a vehicle at the intersection of Grand and Forest, Ms. Anderson saw a dark, hooded figure reach through the window, grab a small parcel, and run north on Forest.

**18.** a. When we interviewed each of the boys and the fathers, we determined that the men's stories did not match up with the boy's versions.

b. When we interviewed each of

the boys and the fathers, we determined that the men's stories did not match up with the boys' versions.

c. When we interviewed each of the boys and the fathers, we determined that the mens' stories did not match up with the boys' versions.

d. When we interviewed each of the boy's and the father's, we determined that the men's stories did not match up with the boys' versions.

a. Bring these items when you drive up here tomorrow—Bobbys sleeping bag, another can of insect repellent, the girls queen-sized air

mattress—they want to use it to sunbathe on the water, and my swimming trunks.

b. Bring these items when you drive up here tomorrow: Bobby's sleeping bag, another can of insect repellent, the girls' queen-sized air mattress—they want to use it to sunbathe on the water—and my swimming trunks.

c. Bring these items when you drive up here tomorrow: Bobby's sleeping bag, another can of insect repellent, the girl's queen-sized air mattress—they want to use it to sunbathe on the water, and my

swimming trunks.

d. Bring these items when you drive up here tomorrow. Bobby's sleeping bag, another can of insect repellent, the girls queen-sized air mattress, they want to use it to sunbathe on the water, and my swimming trunks.

**20.** a. James Autry, Steven Covey, Madeli responsible for my management style, a c personnel philosophy, Covey's process fo organizational principles.

b. James Autry, Steven Covey, Madeli responsible for my management style, a personnel philosophy, Covey's process fo organizational principles.

c. James Autry, Steven Covey, Madeli responsible for my management style, a c personnel philosophy, Coveys process fo organizational principles.

d. James Autry, Steven Covey, Madeli responsible for my management style; a c personnel philosophy; Covey's process for organizational principles.

## **Skill Building Until**

Few people understand the rules of apostrophes. Advertisers are notorious for misusing them. Pay special attention to billboards and advertisements in magazines. Look for places where apostrophes are used correctly. Notice places where they are used incorrectly. If your job produces promotional literature, check it for apostrophes. If you have time, check your own literature to see if apostrophes are used correctly.

# Answers

1. a.

2. b.

3. b.

4. b.

5. b.

6. b.

7. a.

**8. a.**

**9. b.**

**10. a.**

**11. a.**

**12. b.**

**13. b.**

**14. a.**

**15. a.**

**16. c.**

**17. d.**

**18. b.**

**19. b.**

**20. a.**

**Problem**

Into the shelter yelled the captain.

My first personal essay was called My Life and Death.

William Hickock richly deserved the name Wild Bill.

I wish that old fussybudget— Melanie stopped abruptly as Mr. Harris walked into the room.

None of us had heard of halupsi before.

If we don't hurry said Jack we'll be late for the show.

Why are you still here my supervisor asked. Everyone else went home an hour ago.

I read the editorial called Big Boys in Washington.

You've said actually twelve times in the past two minutes.

**Solution**

"Into the sl

My first pe  
Death."

William Hi  
Bill."

"I wish tha  
abruptly as

None of us

"If we don  
the show."

"Why are y  
"EvLeryon

I read the  
Washingto

You've sai  
two minute

David said The customer said No way  
before I ever had a chance to explain.  
We matted and framed a print of Woodland  
Tide and hung it on the office wall.  
Our Christmas bonus was a bag with a  
cookie and an orange.  
With his trady record, I can see why you  
refer to him as Punctual Paul.

David said  
before I ev  
We mattec  
Tide" and l  
Our Christ  
and an ora  
With his tr:  
him as "Pu

at the end of the quotation. The period comes at the end of the tag. However, if the quotation is a sentence that would normally be followed with a question mark or an exclamation point, insert the question mark or exclamation point at the end of the quotation. Place a period after the tag. (See sentence 1 on page 73.)

"I'm really thirsty. Let's grab something to drink," said Alvina.

"I'm really thirsty. Do you want to grab something to drink?" asked

Alvina.

"I'm really thirsty. Hold it—a Dairy Queen!" exclaimed Alvina.

Sometimes, the tag precedes the quotation. When this happens, place a comma after the tag. Put quotation marks around the quoted words, capitalize the first word of the quotation, and punctuate the sentence as you would normally. (See sentence 2 on page 73.)

Sometimes, the tag interrupts the quotation. If both the first and second parts of the quotation are complete sentences, the first part of the quotation

is punctuated in the same way as a quotation with the tag at the end. In other words, the period follows the tag. The rest of the quotation is punctuated in the same way as a quotation preceded by a tag. (See sentence 3 on page 73.)

When the tag interrupts the quotation and the sentence, the words preceding the tag begin the thought, and the words following the tag complete the thought. Place quotation marks around the quoted words and follow the first part of the quotation with a comma. Place a comma after the tag (not a period, since the sentence is not completed). Place quotation marks around the last part of the quotation,

but **do not** capitalize the first letter of the quotation. It is not the beginning of a sentence. Punctuate the rest of the sentence as you would normally. (See sentence 4 on page 73.)

**NOTICE:** All of the punctuation is **inside** the quotation marks except the punctuation marks following the tags.

## **Dialogue at a Glance**

- Tag following the quotation mark:

"\_\_\_\_\_, " said Rose.

"\_\_\_\_\_?" asked Rose.

"—————!" exclaimed Rose.

- Tag preceding quotation:

Iris said, "—————."

Iris asked, "—————?"

Iris exclaimed, "—————!"

- Tag between two sentences of a quotation:

"—————," said Lily.

"—————."

"\_\_\_\_\_?" asked Lily.

"\_\_\_\_\_?"

"\_\_\_\_\_!" exclaimed Lily.

"\_\_\_\_\_!"

## Quotation Marks with Direct Quotations

- Use quotation marks to set off a direct quotation or thought within a sentence or paragraph. This includes quotations that are signed, etched, inscribed, carved, and so on.

### Examples:

Mr. Hurley called our prototype  
"a model of pure genius."

I was certain he said, "Campbells will accept delivery on Tuesday."

"When will help arrive?" I wondered.

The sign clearly read, "No trespassing or hunting."

"Happy and Fulfilled," the headstone read.

- Do *not* use quotation marks for paraphrases or indirect quotations.

## **Examples:**

I was sure Campbells wanted a Tuesday delivery.

I wondered when help would arrive.

The sign said that trespassing and hunting were not allowed.

- Use single quotation marks to set off a quotation within a quotation.

### **Examples:**

"I distinctly heard her say, 'The store opens at 9:00.'" said Gene.

The speaker continued, "I am ever mindful of Franklin Roosevelt's famous words, 'We have nothing to fear but fear itself.' But fear is a terrible thing."

My speech teacher asked, "Does anyone in this room remember the way Jim Nabors used to say, 'Golly'?"

### *A Word About Dialogue*

Correctly punctuating dialogue means understanding how to use quotation marks, commas, and endmarks. Take a close look at the sentences in the dialogue sample below. They include

the basic dialogue structures. The words quoted are called *quotations*, and the words explaining who said the quotations are called *tags*. In the sample below, the tags are highlighted.

1. "I'm really thirsty. Let's grab something to drink," **said Horace.**

2. **Nancy replied,** "I'm thirsty, but I don't have any cash. Do you have some?"

3. "I don't get it," **Horace answered.** "You're the manager with the high-paying job."

4. "Well," **Nancy replied**, "credit cards are all I ever use."

Quoted words are always surrounded by quotation marks. Place quotation marks before a group of quoted words and again at the end.

Tags are punctuated differently depending upon where they appear in the sentence. Whenever the tag follows a quotation, and the quotation is a sentence that would normally be punctuated with a period, use a comma

- Tag interrupting a quotation and a sente

"\_\_\_\_\_, " said Daisy, "\_\_\_\_\_.

"\_\_\_\_\_, " asked Daisy, "\_\_\_\_\_

"\_\_\_\_\_, " exclaimed Daisy, "\_\_\_\_\_

## Other Uses of Quotation Marks

- Use quotation marks to set off unfamiliar words. Quotation marks are sometimes used to refer to words. You often see italics for words used as words.

## **Examples:**

None of us had heard of "chutney" be

He was dubbed "Sir Tagalong" by th

The Scrabble players disagreed over  
term *ptu.*")

- Use quotation marks to indicate irony c  
overusing quotation marks in this way; it

## **Examples:**

When we were camping, our "bathro

Our "guide" never mentioned the pre

The "fun" of surgery begins long befo

- Use quotation marks to set off titles of c  
underlined or italicized.

## **Enclose in quotation marks**

## **Und**

name of a short story or chapter  
of a book

title

name of a T.V. program

nam

title of a poem

title

poet

headline of an article or title of  
a report

name

title of a song

title  
composer

name

## **Punctuating within Quotation Marks**

Here are the rules regarding the use of other punctuation marks.

- Question marks, exclamation points, and

marks if they are part of the quotation. If quotation marks.

## Examples:

The doctor asked, "Can you feel any pain in this area?" [Part of the quotation]

Have you read Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark"? [Not part of the quotation]

"I wish I'd never heard of—" Karen stopped abruptly as Nick walked in the room. [Part of the quotation]

"Stage left," "stage right," "upstage, and "downstage"—I always confused these terms. [Not part of the quotation]

- Periods and commas go **inside** closing quotation marks.

"Let's wait a few minutes," suggested Doris, "before we leave."

- Colons and semicolons go **outside** closing quotation marks.

I can see only one challenge for the speaker of "The Road Less Traveled": ambivalence.

The critic called the latest sculpture an "abomination to sensitive eyes"; the artist was hurt.

## *Practice*

Choose the correctly punctuated version in each of the following sets of sentences. Check for punctuation other than quotation marks also.

1. a. "Have you ever read the story 'The Open Window' by O. Henry?" asked Martha.

b. "Have you ever read the story 'The Open Window' by O. Henry?"

asked Martha.

c. "Have you ever read the story "The Open Window" by O. Henry?" asked Martha.

2. a. Did you know it was Winston Churchill who called Russia "a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma"?

b. Did you know it was "Winston Churchill" who called Russia "a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma?"

c. Did you know it was Winston

Churchill who called Russia "a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma?"

3. a. After reading a review of Toy Story, I wanted to see the movie.

b. After reading a review of Toy Story, I wanted to see the movie.

c. After reading a review of "Toy Story," I wanted to see the movie.

4. a. Leaving five minutes early on Friday was our "reward."

b. Leaving five minutes early on

Friday was our "reward".

c. Leaving five minutes early on Friday was our 'reward.'

**5.** a. "Megabyte," "baud speed," "internal RAM"—these are all examples of technical terms.

b. "Megabyte," "baud speed," "internal RAM—" these are all examples of technical terms.

c. "Megabyte", "baud speed", "internal RAM"—these are all examples of technical terms.



6. a. If you read my article Budget Play you'll understand why I'm so cynical about

b. If you read my article "Budget Play you'll understand why I'm so cynical about

c. If you read my article "Budget Play you'll understand why I'm so cynical about

7. a. "The story 'What Does Anyone Real gave me something to think about," remark

b. 'The story "What Does Anyone Real gave me something to think about,' remark

c. "The story "What Does Anyone Re gave me something to think about," remar

8. a. "Do you name all your cats Howar

b. "Do you name all your cats Howar

c. "Do you name all your cats Howar

9. a. The officer asked us whether we h

b. The officer asked us whether we h

c. The officer asked us, "Whether we

10. a. "You would be better off not to off  
director advised, "I'm afraid that will onl

b. "You would be better off not to off  
director advised. "I'm afraid that will onl

c. "You would be better off not to off  
director advised. "I'm afraid that will onl

## **Skill Building Until**

Look for examples of quotation marks in  
find them, check to see if they've been us

## Answers

1. b.

2. a.

3. b.

4. a.

5. a.

6. c.

**7. a.**

**8. c.**

**9. a.**

**10. c.**

Compound nouns may be written as a single word, a hyphenated word, or two words. Whenever you are in a new language, the language changes constantly, and these words change. Two words may come to be written as a single word. For example, the word *semicolon*. In the late 1950s, dictionaries began to list it as *semicolon*. A recent dictionary will list it as a

**Single-word compound nouns**

tablecloth

**Two-word nouns**

parking lot

horsefly

couch pota

textbook

floppy disl

catwalk

bedroom

- Use a hyphen to join two coequal nouns

Shannon is a **teacher-poet**.

Pete Rose was a **player-coach** for th

Kevin Costner has joined the ranks of

- Use a hyphen to join multi-word compounds

fly-by-night, stick-in-the-mud, good-

- Use a hyphen to join two or more words *preceding* the noun.

The hikers saw a **run-down** cabin in

Much has been written about the **Kei**

An **ill-trained** police officer is more

The company employed a **high-powe**

A **soft-spoken** answer to the angry a

His **off-the-wall** remarks keep our n

The parties finally agreed after three

A **French-Canadian** bicyclist won th

- If the words functioning as a single adjective are hyphenated.

The cabin the hikers saw in the clear

A police officer who is **ill trained** is

The consultant employed by the company

The parties finally agreed after three  
**nosed.**

- Use a hyphen to join prefixes such as *se-* or the suffix *elect*, to words.

Harry Truman unleashed the **all-powerful**

Abraham Lincoln was a **self-made** man

Keep your **half-baked** ideas to yourself

Simone spotted her **ex-husband** walking into the grocery store.

My **great-grandfather** turns 102 next Wednesday.

Many remember the **post-WWII** years with great fondness.

Conservatives consider the front-runner to be a **pro-abortion** candidate.

The **secretary-elect** picked up all

the records from the presiding secretary.

- Use a hyphen to avoid confusing or awkward spellings.

The coach decided to **re-pair** [rather than repair] the debate partners.

The neighbors decided to **re-cover** [rather than recover] their old sofa.

The sculpture had a **bell-like** [rather than belllike] shape.

- Use a hyphen to join a capital letter to a word.

The **U-joint** went out in our second car.

The architect worked with nothing more than a **T-square**.

- Use a hyphen to write two-word numbers between 21 and 99 as words.

twenty-six, thirty-three, sixty-four,  
seventy-two, ninety-nine

- Use a hyphen to join fractions written as words.

three-fifths, five-sixteenths, five  
thirty-seconds

- Use a hyphen to join numbers to words used as a single adjective.

three-yard pass, eight-inch steel,  
two-word sentence, five-stroke  
lead

**NOTE:** When a series of similar number-word adjectives is written in a sentence, use a hyphen/comma combination with all but the last item in the series.

Precut particle board comes in **two-, four-, and six-foot** squares.

Andy scored three touchdowns on **eight-, fourteen-, and two-yard** runs.

- Use a hyphen to join numbers and adjectives.

fifty-four-year-old woman, ten-dollar profit, two-thousand-acre ranch, twenty-minute wait

- Use a hyphen to write the time of day as words.

twelve-thirty, four-o'clock  
appointment, six-fifteen A.M.,  
one-fifty-five in the morning

- Use a hyphen to join numbers indicating a life span, a score, or the duration of an event.

Abraham Lincoln (**1809–65**)  
served as the sixteenth President,  
**1861–65.**

The Cowboys beat the Eagles **21-3.**

- Use a hyphen to separate a word between syllables at the end of a line.

Here are a few guidelines for dividing words.

Never leave a single-letter syllable on a line.

Divide hyphenated words at the hyphen.

Never divide a one-syllable word.

Avoid dividing words that have fewer than six letters.

Avoid dividing the last word of a paragraph.

Avoid dividing a number.

ALWAYS CHECK A  
DICTIONARY IF YOU ARE IN  
DOUBT.

## Ellipses

Points of ellipsis look like periods, but they do not function as endmarks. Type three periods to form ellipses. These marks indicate omitted material or long pauses.

- Use ellipses to show that quoted material has been omitted. If the omission comes at the end of a sentence, follow the ellipses with a period.

"Four-score and seven years ago . . . equal."

"We hold these truths to be self-evident . . . ."

- Use ellipses to indicate a pause or hesitation.

And the winner for "Best Actor" is . . . Dustin Hoffman.

I think that adds up to . . . exactly eighty-three dollars.

## **Diagonals**

Much like the hyphen, a diagonal is a mark used to join words or numbers. The most frequent use of the diagonal is with the phrase *and/or*, which shows that the sentence refers to one or both of the words being joined.

For breakfast we can make bacon and/or French toast.

Vinegar and/or egg whites added to plain water will make an excellent hair rinse that leaves hair soft and silky.

- Use a diagonal to separate numbers in a fraction.

Normally, it takes us 3 1/2 hours to sort the bulk mail at the end of the week.

You'll need a 1 5/8-inch wrench for this nut.

- Use a diagonal to show line divisions in poetry.

"Goodnight, goodnight, parting is  
such sweet sorrow / That I shall  
say good night 'till it be morrow./

Sleep dwell upon thine eyes and  
peace in thy breast! / Would I  
were sleep and peace so sweet to

rest!"

- Use a diagonal to indicate *per* or *divided by*.

The cars in the new fleet average over 25 miles/gallon.

Shares are calculated in this way:  
net profit/number of shareholders.

## **Numbers**

A few rules guide the use of numbers in writing. In journalistic writing, numbers are preferable to words because they are easier to identify and

read. However, a number at the beginning of a sentence is always written as a word. In more formal writing, follow the conventions listed on the next page.

## Parentheses

- Use parentheses to enclose explanatory material that interrupts the normal flow of the sentences and is only marginally related to the text.

Thirty-sixth Street (a party street if there ever was one) is a fun place to live.

Our neighbors threw a huge party on New Year's Eve. (Fortunately, we were invited.)

Unfortunately, another set of neighbors (they were not invited) called the police to complain about the noise.

We party-goers (how were we to know?) were completely surprised by the officers.

Notice the last three sentences. Each set of parentheses contains a complete sentence. If the parenthetical construction comes at the end of a sentence, it is punctuated as its own sentence within the parentheses. On the other hand, if it comes within another sentence, no capital letters or periods

are necessary. However, if the parenthetical construction in the middle of another sentence is a sentence that would normally require a question mark or exclamation point, include that punctuation.

- Use parentheses to enclose information when accuracy is essential.

The two sons of Richard Hannika (Scott and William) are sole heirs to his fortune.

We hereby agree to sell the heirloom for sixty-three dollars (\$63.00).

- Use parentheses to enclose letters or numbers marking a division.

This lesson includes several little-used, often-misused punctuation marks: (a) hyphens, (b) parentheses, (c) brackets, (d) diagonals, and (e) ellipses.

Your task consists of three steps: (1) locating information, (2) writing a report, and (3) delivering a presentation about your findings.

## **Brackets**

- Use brackets to enclose parenthetical material within parentheses.

Brandi planned to work as an aeronautic engineer (she completed an internship at National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA]) as soon as she completed her doctoral work.

- Use brackets to enclose words inserted into a quotation.

"The next head nurse [Shawna DeWitt] will face the challenge of operating the floor with a reduced

staff."

- Use brackets around the word *sic* to show that an error in a quotation was made by the original writer or speaker.

"Unless we heel [sic] the nation's economic woes, social problems will continue to mount."

- Use Arabic rather than Roman numerals: *1, 2, 3, 4* rather than *I, II, III, IV*.
- If a number can be written as one or two words, write it as a word. Otherwise, write the numeral: 8, twenty-six, 124, three hundred, 8,549, five million.
- Always write a number at the beginning of sentence as a word even if it is more than two words.

## *Practice*

Add hyphens where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. According to your brain X rays, I see little justification for you to act like a know it all.
2. Father Tan, now an ex priest, reevaluated his theology and became a pro life activist.
3. Syheed's well grounded arguments impressed the crowd of forty five.
4. Ned's time in the four hundred meter freestyle was twenty seven

hundredths of a second off the world record time.

**5.** Following a two hour business venture involving a lemonade stand, the ten year old boy had made a five dollar and fifty cent profit.

Add hyphens, parentheses, brackets, ellipses, and diagonals where they are needed in the following sentences.

**6.** Muhammad Ali few people remember him as Cassius Clay wrote a poem describing himself as someone who could " . . . float like a butterfly sic, sting like a bee."

**7.** Year end bonuses will come in the form of dollars and or vacation days for about three fifths  $\frac{3}{5}$  of our staff.

**8.** Before leaving today, please 1 collect the latest sales data 2 add up all the figures and 3 leave them in my left hand drawer.

## Skill Building Until

Look for examples of the punctuation marks you read today. Since they are used less frequently, you probably won't see them as often. When you do, note how the mark is used. Be especially aware of parentheses, brackets, diagonals, and ellipses in advertisements. Make sure they have been used correctly.

## Answers

1. According to your brain X-rays, I see you're not so smart like a know-it-all.

**2.** Father Tan, now an ex-priest, re-eval pro-life activist.

**3.** Syheed's well-grounded arguments in five.

**4.** Ned's time in the four-hundred-meter hundredths of a second off the world record.

**5.** Following a two-hour business venture the ten-year-old boy had made a five-dollar profit.

**6.** Muhammad Ali (few people remember a poem describing himself as someone who "flies like a butterfly [sic], sting like a bee.")

**7.** Year-end bonuses will come in the few days for about three-fifths ( $3/5$ ) of our staff.

**8.** Before leaving today, please (1) collect up all the figures, and (3) leave them in my office.

## Problem

When I was sixteen, my grandmother gave me an heirloom ring that her grandmother had gave her. It was a polished garnet set in hammered silver with two rubies on either side of it. I could of sold it for a small fortune last week. An antique dealer come through town and heard about my ring. He asks to see it. His eyes nearly popped out of his head as he examined it. If I wasn't such a sentimental person, I might have parted with it. But a treasure like that

wasn't something you should sell.

## Principal Parts of Verbs

Verbs have three principal parts:

- **Present**—the form of the verb that would be used in the present tense.  
\_\_\_\_\_."
- **Past**—the form of the verb that would be used in the past tense.  
\_\_\_\_\_."
- **Past participle**—the form of the verb that would be used in the past perfect tense.  
"Often, I have \_\_\_\_\_."

For most verbs, it's easy to form the three form. Take the verb *look*, for example. *To* Often, *I have looked*. For regular verbs, add *-ed* to the present form. But English is past and past participle in some other wa parts of several often misused verbs.

## THREE PRINCIPAL PARTS OF

**Present**

**Past**

**Past**

do

did

done

go

went

gone

see

saw

seen

drink

drank

drunk

break

broke

broke

bring

brought

brought

choose

chose

chose

know

knew

known

wear

wore

worn

write

wrote

written

*\*Note: Past participles must be preceded by the auxiliary words have, has, or had.*

## *Practice*

Circle the correct form of the verb in each of the following sentences. The answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. The team has certainly (do, did, done) a good job on this presentation.
2. The sales clerk just (throw, threw, thrown) away the opportunity to make a huge commission.

**3.** The senator (speak, spoke, spoken) at the press conference last Monday.

**4.** The phone has (ring, rang, rung) only once today.

**5.** The speaker (come, came) to the point very early in the speech.

**6.** Harriet (see, saw, seen) the prototype for the new product at the convention.

**7.** The company has not yet (begin, began, begun) to manufacture its most current model.

**8.** Has the admitting staff (go, went, gone) to lunch?

**9.** Heather lost a filling when she (bite, bit, bitten) into the piece of hard candy.

**10.** Ben couldn't believe that someone had actually (steal, stole, stolen) his car from the ramp.

## **Consistent Verb Tense**

The tense of a verb tells when an action occurs, occurred, or will occur. Verbs have three basic tenses: present, past, and future. It's important to keep

verb tenses consistent as you write. A passage that begins in present tense should continue in present tense. If it begins in past tense, it should stay in past tense. Do not mix tenses.

### **Wrong:**

Dan **opened** the car door and **looks** for his briefcase.

### **Correct:**

Dan **opened** the car door and **looked** for his briefcase.

### **Wrong:**

When we **increase** maintenance services, we **reduced** repair costs.

**Correct:**

When we **increase** maintenance services, we **reduce** repair costs.

However, sometimes a writer must show another time regardless of the tense in which we allow this, each of these three tenses has progressive, perfect, and progressive perfect forms.

## *Present Tense Forms*

**Present tense** shows action that happens routinely. The **present progressive** tense shows action that is happening now. An auxiliary verb (*am, is, or are*) plus the **present participle** (progressive form) of the verb. The **present perfect** tense shows action that began in the past. An auxiliary verb (*has or have*) plus the **past participle** form of the verb. The **present perfect progressive** tense also shows action that began in the past and continues into the present. Auxiliary verbs (*have been or has been*) plus the **present participle** form of the verb.

written in its *-ing* form (progressive form

## PRESENT TENSE

### Present

### Progressive

### Perfect

shows action  
happening  
now

shows action  
continuing now

shows  
action that has  
been completed  
the present  
perfect  
continuous

Activists  
*lobby* for  
change.

Activists *are*  
*lobbying* for  
change.

Activists  
*have*  
*lobbied*  
for  
change.

Sulfur  
*pollutes* the  
air.

Sulfur *is*  
*polluting* the  
air.

Sulfur  
*pollutes*  
air.

All the above present tense forms can be constituting a shift in tense. Look at the passage below. The verbs are highlighted, and the tenses are indicated in brackets.

I **am writing** [present progressive] to the EPA about the Mississippi River, from which our city gets its drinking water. For years industrial waste **has** [present perfect] polluted the river's waters, and officials **pay** [present] little attention to the problem. People who live near the river **have** [present perfect progressive] been lobbying for protective legislation. I **have** [present perfect] been waiting for the government to act. I **want** [present] to see the river cleaned up.

## *Past Tense Forms*

**Past tense** shows action that happened in the past of the verb. The **past progressive** tense shows an action in progress in the past. An auxiliary verb (*was* or *were*) precedes the past progressive form of the verb. The **past perfect** tense shows an action completed before some other action in the past or completed before some other action in the past. The auxiliary verb *had* precedes the past participle form of the verb. The **past perfect progressive** tense shows continuing action in the past. The auxiliary verbs *had been* precede the past participle form of the verb.

## PAST TENSE

### Past

occurred in the  
past

Local officials  
*spoke* to the

### Progressive

continuing  
action in the past

Local officials  
*were speaking*  
to the

management.

management

The reporter  
*covered* the  
meetings.

The reporter  
*was covering*  
the meetings.

All of the above past tense forms can be used in a single passage without constituting a shift in tense. The following passage illustrates how this is done. The verbs are underlined and brackets identify the tense.

Last year, local officials **cited** [past] the county for improperly disposing of hazardous waste. The county **ignored** [past] the action and **continued** [past] to do so. **Continuing** [past perfect progressive] to do so, they **had been doing**. [past perfect progressive] This **had** [past perfect progressive] waste the same way for

continue. Several months later the res  
drinking water supply. A local envirc  
**tracking** [past perfect progressive] th  
procedures, alerted local officials. Th  
damages, but the company **has** never ]

## *Future Tense Forms*

**Future tense** shows action that has yet to  
*will, would, or shall* precede the present  
**progressive** tense shows continuing actio  
verb phrases *will be, shall be, or would*  
of the verb. The **future perfect** tense sho  
completed at a certain time in the future.  
*have, would have, or will have been* prece  
the verb. The **future perfect progressive**  
that will be completed at a certain time in  
*will have been, would have been, or sha*  
progressive form of the verb.

All of the future tense forms on the table are used together in writing a paragraph. The following paragraph below illustrates how this is done for you, and the brackets identify the tense forms.

Starting next week, we **will reduce** [future] our waste disposal. We **will do** [future] the work because the costs have skyrocketed during the year. The city **will sell** [future] land to us to use for **relocating** [future progressive] in a new area.

# FUTU

## Future

## Progressive

action that will  
happen

continuing  
action that will  
happen

*We will begin a  
letterwriting*

*Everyone will  
be writing*

campaign.

letters.

Newspapers *will cover* this case.

Newspapers *will be covering* this case.

with a better business environment. T  
hundred employees out of work. It wo  
dollars spent at local businesses.

By this time next year, nearly one thou  
their jobs. Your business leaders **will**  
progressive] for ways to replace lost  
**meddling** [future progressive] in our  
**portrayed** [future perfect] us all as fo

## *How Verb Tenses Convey Meaning*

Managing verb tense carefully helps write thoughtful prose. The examples below illustrate how verb tense affects the meaning of a sentence.

### **Example:**

Beth discovered that Nick had left work *gone*.

Beth discovered that Nick had left work *went*.

In the first sentence, because *gone* is the past participle, it is the second part of the sentence. So Nick is the subject of the second sentence, *went* is in the simple past tense. So this time it's Beth who *went*.

## Example:

Cory told the officer that she had ans

Cory told the officer that she had ans  
pop.

In the first sentence, *drank* is in the same  
Cory was drinking around the same time  
*drunk* matches *had answered*, so in this c  
answered the phone.

## *Have, Not Of*

When forming the various perfect tenses, people sometimes write *of* when they should write *have* probably because they are writing what they hear. *I should've* (*should've* is a contraction of *should have*) sounds a lot like *I should of*. But the proper form in writing is *have*, not *of*.

### **Wrong:**

**I could of** seen the difference if I

had looked more closely.

**Correct:**

I **could have** seen the difference if I had looked more closely.

**Wrong:**

The park ranger **should of** warned the campers about the bears.

**Correct:**

The park ranger **should have** warned the campers about the

bears.

## *Switching Verb Tenses*

Sometimes you have to switch from past tense to present to avoid implying an untruth.

### **Wrong:**

I met the new technician. He **was** very personable. [What happened? Did he die?]

### **Correct:**

I met the new technician. He **is** very personable.

## **Wrong:**

We went to the new Italian restaurant on Vine last night. The atmosphere **was** wonderful. [What happened? Did it burn down during the night?]

## **Correct:**

We went to the new Italian restaurant on Vine last night. The atmosphere **is** wonderful.

Even if a passage is written in past tense, a statement that continues to be true is written in present tense.

## **Examples:**

During Galileo's time few people **believed** [past] that the earth **revolves** [present] around the sun.

The building engineer **explained** [past] to the plumber that the pipes **run** [present] parallel to the longest hallway in the building.

## **Subjunctive Mood**

When Tevya in *Fiddler on the Roof* sings, "If I were a rich man . . . ," he uses the verb *were* to signal that he is, in fact, not a rich man. Normally, the verb *was* would be used with the subject *I*, but *were* serves a special purpose. This is called the subjunctive *were*. It indicates a condition that is contrary to fact.

## Examples:

If I **were** a cat, I could sleep all day about work.

If he **were** more attentive to details, ...

## *Practice*

Circle the correct verb form in each of th

11. Before I opened the door, I (ring, ran,

**12.** By the time I get to Phoenix, he will (letter).

**13.** The scientist explained why Saturn (i

**14.** I would ask for a transfer if I (was, w

**15.** The leaves on the trees have already

**16.** The doctor took my pulse and (measu  
pressure.

**17.** The president wishes he would (of, h  
than a salary increase.

**18.** Boswick wishes he would have orde  
his (is, was) too small.

**19.** Ms. Grey announced that the floor manager changed the work schedules.

**20.** We could cut transportation costs if the company closed the retail outlets.

## **Answers**

**1.** done

**2.** threw

**3.** spoke

**4.** rung

**5.** came

**6.** saw

**7.** begun

**8.** gone

**9.** bit

**10.** stolen

**11.** had rung

**12.** have read

**13. is**

**14. were**

**15. begun**

**16. measured**

**17. have**

**18. is**

**19. is**

20. were

## Skill Building Until

Listen carefully to people today. Do you  
*could of* gone out if I had done my work  
listen for verb choice errors, you'll reali  
them. Some mistakes are so accepted tha  
at first. The more sensitive you are to gr  
you'll be to make them yourself—in both

## **Problem**

When my brother was asked by the local Rotary Club to speak to them about computer programming, our entire family was amazed by the request.

A gasp was made by mother, a laugh was emitted by my father, and my head was shaken by me.

My brother is considered by us to be a shy, quiet computer nerd.

Since I am regarded by my family as the creative one, I was assigned by my brother the task of creating the visual aids.

The information was organized by my father.

Formal invitations were requested by my mother from the Rotary Club secretary and were sent by her to all of our friends.

Organizing and rehearsing of the presentation was worked on by my family until 10:00 P.M. the night before the presentation.

The fact that he was ready was known by us.  
That night three feet of snow was dumped by the skies.  
The city was paralyzed, and all work and activities were canceled, including the Rotary Club meeting and my brother's presentation.

## **Active vs. Passive Voice**

When the subject of a sentence performs the action, the sentence is active. Write using active voice. Active voice is conversational and interesting. In a sentence, the thing that performs the action is named before the action. This may sound

confusing, but the following examples illustrate how to use passive verbs to show who is performing the action. The u

## Passive Verbs

I was taken to my first horse show by my *grandfather*.

I was taught to fish by my *mother* almost before I was taught to walk.

In each of the active verb sentences, the p

If you look more closely at these examples, they are shorter and clearer. They sound more professional and authoritative. The following examples use the active voice and active voice in several of the verb tenses.

## Verb Tense

## Active Voice

**Present**

The *clerk* opens the mail.

**Past**

The *clerk* opened the mail.

**Future**

The *clerk* will open the mail.

**Present  
Perfect**

The *clerk* has opened the mail.

**Past  
Perfect**

The *clerk* had opened the  
mail.

**Future  
Perfect**

The *clerk* will have opene  
the mail.

Most writers prefer active voice to passive voice. Active voice is more direct, more active, more alive. Generally, readers find active sentences easier to read and remember. In both of the tables above, you can see that active sentences can be shorter than passive ones.

### ***Practice***

Choose the sentence that is written in active voice.  
The answers to each set of questions can

1. a. Janice carefully packed the china.  
b. The china was carefully packed by
2. a. The CDs were purchased by my m  
b. My mother purchased the CDs.
3. a. Forty black candles were put on m  
b. Dad put forty black candles on my

**4. a.** The snow will be cleared by the plow.

b. The plow will clear the snow.

**5. a.** Citizens believe that judges do not hand out adequate penalties for drug dealers.

b. It is believed by the citizens that adequate penalties for drug dealers are not being handed out by judges.

**6. a.** Coins are often thrown in

fountains by tourists.

b. Tourists often throw coins in fountains.

7. a. Every Sunday morning millions of children watch TV.

b. Every Sunday morning TV is being watched by millions of children.

### ***When to use Passive Voice***

In addition to lacking life, the passive voice can also signal an unwillingness to take responsibility for actions or an intention to discourage questioning.

The following sentence illustrates this.

It has been recommended that twenty workers be laid off within the next three months.

The passive voice here is intended to make a definite statement of fact, one that will not be questioned. It leaves no loose ends. Dictators often write and speak in passive voice. A thoughtful person will see past the passive voice and ask questions anyway. Who is recommending this action? Why? Who will be doing the laying off? How will workers be chosen?

Passive voice is not always bad, however. Sometimes, though rarely, it actually works better than active voice. The situations when passive voice is preferable to active voice are outlined below.

**1. When the object is more important than the agent of action (the doer).**

Sometimes in scientific writing the object is the focus rather than the doer. The following paragraph is written in both passive and active voice, respectively. The first paragraph is more appropriate in this case because the operation, not the doctor, is the

focus of the action. The passage cannot be written in active voice without placing the emphasis on the doer, the doctor. Therefore, passive voice is the better choice in this instance.

## **Passive voice**

The three-inch incision is made right above the pubic bone. Plastic clips are used to clamp off blood vessels and minimize bleeding. The skin is folded back and secured with clamps. Next, the stomach muscle is cut at a fifteen-degree angle, right top to bottom left.

## Active voice

The doctor makes a three-inch incision in the skin, places plastic clips to clamp off the blood vessels, and then folds back the skin and secures it with clamps. The muscle at a fifteen-degree angle, right top

### 2. When the agent of action (doer) is

Sometimes a newswriter will protect a source by saying "that . . . ." In other instances, perhaps no one is the action: "First State Bank was robbed . . ."

### 3. When passive voice results in short

## from the meaning.

Generally, active voice is shorter and more direct. However, there are a few exceptions. Examples are shown below. If using passive voice saves time and does not result in a shorter sentence, use it.

### Active

The designers of the study told the interviewer to give interviewees an electric shock each time they smiled.

### Passive

The interviewer told the designers of the study to give interviewees an electric shock each time they smiled.

The police apprehended Axtell, the detectives interrogated him, and

Axtell was apprehended by the police, and he was interrogated by the detectives.

the grand jury indicted him.

## **Other Life-Draining Verb Constructions**

If thought is a train, then verbs are the wheels. The thought will move more quickly if it has more wheels. Here are some constructions to avoid and better verbs instead.

### *Using State-of-Being Verbs*

State-of-being verbs are all the forms of *is*, *are*, *was*, and *were*. State-of-being verbs don't do as much as action verbs. In our train-of-thought analogy, state-of-being verbs are incapable of moving big thoughts quickly. To say things, by all means, use state-of-being verbs. If the subject is complex or interesting, they will require

Look at the paragraph on the next page. If verbs are state-of-being verbs. In the second paragraph more interesting.

## **State-of-being verbs**

The class was outside during noon recess in the day there was rain, but later the weather was slight; the newly fallen leaves were on the school was an ice cream truck. It was longingly.

## **Action verbs**

The class played outside during noon recess. Earlier in the day, rain had fallen, but later a slight breeze blew the newly fallen leaves across the ice cream truck across the street.

## *Turning Verbs into Nouns*

Naturally, if you take the wheels off the train, the train will not move. Similarly, if you take the wheels off the flatbed as cargo, the train will not move. Below are two examples of writing that is difficult to read. In the first one, several verbs have been turned into nouns. In the second one, several nouns have been turned into verbs. The verbs in the first example are highlighted to make them easier to identify.

The customer service division is now conducting a comprehensive system for the reaction to consumer concerns about our products.

The customer service division is assessing consumer concerns and developing new products.

## *Adding Unnecessary Auxiliary Verbs*

Generally, if you don't need an auxiliary verb (e.g., *were*, *will*, *would*, and so on) to carry meaning, you should omit it.

### **Unnecessary Auxiliary Verbs**

**Correct**

After lunch we *would meet* in the lounge.

**After**

The temperature *was rising* steadily.

**The**

Every morning the doors *will* open.

**Every**

## ***Starting with There or It***

Many sentences unnecessarily begin with *is/was*. Usually all those words do is pose a thought. The sentences on the next page if those words can be removed from your writing

## Unnecessary *There or It*

There are three people who are authorized to use this machinery.

There is one good way to handly this problem: to ignore it.

It was a perfect evening for a rocket launch.

There were several people

standing in line waiting for the bus. w

## Use Lively, Interesting Verbs

If you want to move thought efficiently, w  
verbs that create an image in the reader's  
below to see this principle in action.

### Dull

L

At my barbershop, someone does  
you nails and your shoes while  
your hair is being cut.

A  
n  
sl

Violent cartoons are harmful to  
children's emotional development

V  
e:

and sense of reality.

th

## *Practice*

Choose the best sentence from each set based on what you learned about verbs in this lesson.

**8.** a. Much concern is being voiced by the citizens about the budget.

b. Citizens are voicing much concern about the budget.

**9.** a. The game was played by three old men and a young boy.

b. Three old men and a young boy played the game.

**10. a.** Those who evaluate law enforcement avoid lawsuits more valuable than those

b. Those responsible for the evaluation a greater consideration for the discharge avoidance of lawsuits than those resulting laws.

**11.** a. There are many reasons that you sh

b. You should avoid high fat foods fo

**12.** a. After dinner every night we would

b. We made popcorn every night after

**13.** a. We gobbled up donuts every morni

b. We had donuts every morning befo

**14.** a. A computer technician must have s

b. It is necessary for a computer techni

## Skill Building U

As you read newspapers, magazines, text  
for examples of sentences in active voice  
some passive voice sentences into active  
is more effective?

## Answers

1. a.

2. b.

**3. b.**

**4. b.**

**5. a.**

**6. b.**

**7. a.**

**8. b.**

**9. b.**

**10. a.**

**11. b.**

**12. b.**

**13. a.**

**14. a.**

# Lesson 12— Subject-Verb Agreement

## Lesson Summary

Without thinking about it, you usually make sure your subjects and verbs agree, both in speaking and in writing. Only a few situations cause difficulty in subject-verb agreement. This lesson will show you how to deal with those few situations in your writing.

When a subject in a clause—the

person or thing doing the action— matches the verb in number, we say the subject and verb *agree*. Most native English speakers have little trouble matching subjects with the correct verbs. A few grammatical constructions pose most of the problems. This lesson explains the concept of subject-verb agreement and provides practice in those problem areas.

## **Agreement Between Noun Subjects and Verbs**

In written language, a subject must agree with its verb in number. In other words, if a subject is singular, the verb

must be singular. If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. If you are unsure whether a verb is singular or plural, apply this simple test. Fill in the blanks in the two sentences

below with the matching form of the verb completes the first sentence is singular. T completes the second sentence is plural.

## Singular

## Plural

One person \_\_\_\_\_.

Two people  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Look at these examples using the verbs *s/* yourself with any verb that confuses you. ending in *s* are usually singular.

## Singular

## Plural

One person speaks.

Two people speak.

One person does.

Two people do.

One person was.

Two people were.

## *Special Problems*

### *Doesn't/Don't and Wasn't/Weren't*

Some people have particular trouble with contractions for *does not* and *do not* and

(contractions for *was not* and *were not*).  
singular; *don't* and *weren't* are plural. If  
instead of the contraction, you'll usually get

## Phrases Following the Subject

Pay careful attention to the subject in a sentence  
phrase following it to mislead you into using  
agree with the subject. The subjects and verbs in  
the following examples.

**One** of the print orders **is** missing.

The software **designs** by Liu Chen **are**

A **handbook** with thorough instructions  
product.

The **president**, along with her three employees,  
**leaves** for the conference tomorrow.

## Special Singular Subjects

Some nouns are singular even though they have a plural form, they require a singular verb because they are used as a single thing. Most of the nouns in the list below are singular. Some can be either singular or plural depending on their use in the sentence.

kms

measles

physics

mumps

economics

news

mathematics

checkers

civics

marbles (the game)

athletics

Here are some examples of how these words work in sentences.

The **news is** on at 6:00.

**Checkers is** my favorite game.

**Sports is** a healthy way to reduce stress.

Low-impact **sports are** recommended for older adults.

Words stating a single amount or a time require a singular verb. Examine a sentence carefully to see if the amount or time is considered a single measure.

Two dollars **is** the price of that small replacement part. [single amount]

Two dollars **are** lying on my dresser.

Three hours **was** required to complete this simulation. [single measure]

Three hours of each day **were** spent rehearsing.

Three-quarters of her time **is** spent writing.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct verb in each of the

following sentences. The answers to each set of questions can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 1.** When the comedian (jokes, joke), the audience members (laughs, laugh).
- 2.** A single flower now (grows, grow) where the trees used to (grows, grow).
- 3.** Manuel (speaks, speak) English, but his parents (speaks, speak) Spanish.
- 4.** The clerk (rings, ring) up the sales while the customers (waits, wait) in line.

**5.** The sopranos (hums, hum) softly while the tenor soloist (sings, sing)

**6.** The new colors (doesn't, don't) look especially appealing.

**7.** The door to the building (wasn't, weren't) locked last night.

**8.** The drive-up teller line (doesn't, don't) open until 9:30 on Saturday mornings.

**9.** Marge didn't receive the message because the phones (wasn't, weren't) working.

**10.** He (doesn't, don't) remember if the ties (is, are) still on sale.

- 11.** One of the clerks (is, are) sorting the that (was, were) mislabeled.
  
- 12.** The petty cash box, along with the tic are) turned in at the end of the day.
  
- 13.** These statistics (is, are) the result of
  
- 14.** Statistics (was, were) my most diffic in high school.
  
- 15.** Half of the bagel (was, were) eaten.

**16.** Half of the bagels (was, were) eaten.

## **Agreement Between Pronoun Subjects**

Pronoun subjects present a problem for even sophisticated speakers of English. Some are always singular; others are always plural. Some pronouns can be either singular or plural.

### *Singular Pronouns*

These pronouns are always singular.

each

anybody

everyone

either

anyone

no one

neither

everybody

nobody

The pronouns in the first column are the ones to be misused. You can avoid a mismatch by adding the word *one* after the pronoun and other words between the pronoun and the following examples to see how this is

Each of the men wants his own car.

Each *one* wants his own car.

Either of the salesclerks knows where the merchandise is located.

Either *one* knows where the sale merchandise is located.

These sentences may sound awkward because

speakers misuse these pronouns, and you become accustomed to hearing them used. Despite that, the substitution trick (*one for* following the pronoun) will help you avoid

## *Watch out for Questions*

With questions beginning with *has* or *have* while *have* is plural. Pay special attention to the combination in a question. In fact, the correct way you turn the question into a statement.

### **Question Form**

**S**

(Is, Are) some of the customers  
noticing the difference?

**S**  
n

(Has, Have) either of the shipments

**E**

arrived?

al

(Does, Do) each of the terminals  
have a printer?

E  
h:

### *Plural Pronouns*

These pronouns are always plural and re

both

many

few

several

### *Singular/Plural Pronouns*

The following pronouns can be either singular or plural. If the phrase following them determines the number of the verb, the verb must be singular or plural. If the phrase following the pronoun contains a singular noun or pronoun, the verb must be singular. If the phrase contains a plural noun or pronoun, the verb must be plural. See how this is done in the sentences following. Key words are highlighted.

all

none

any

some

most

**Singular**

**Plural**

**All** of the **work is** finished.

**All o**

**Is** any of the **pizza** left?

**Are :**  
left?

**Most** of the **grass has** turned brown.

**Most**  
turne

**None** of the **time was** wasted.

**None**  
waste

**Some** of the **fruit was** spoiled.

**Some**  
spoil



## *Practice*

Circle the correct verb in each of the following sentences. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**17.** Neither of these keys (unlocks, unlock) the back door.

**18.** Each of the community profiles (takes, take) a creative approach to advertising.

**19.** All of the tasks (has, have) been

assigned.

**20.** Some of the residents (was, were) pleased with the new development.

**21.** Either of these light fixtures (is, are) suitable for my office.

**22.** (Was, Were) any of the samples defective?

**23.** (Do, Does) each of the phones have multiple lines?

**24.** (Has, Have) either of the partners announced an intention to reorganize?

**25.** Neither of our largest accounts (needs, need) to be serviced at this time.

**26.** Both of the applicants (seems, seem) qualified.

**27.** A woman in one of my classes (works, work) at the Civic Center box office.

**28.** None of our resources (goes, go) to outside consultants.

**29.** A good knowledge of the rules (helps, help) you understand the game.

**30.** Each of these prescriptions  
(causes, cause) bloating and  
irritability.

**31.** (Have, Has) either of them ever  
arrived on time?

## Special Sentence Structures

### *Compound Subjects*

- If two nouns or pronouns are joined by

He and she **want** to buy a new house.

Jack and Jill **want** to buy a new house

- If two singular nouns or pronouns are joined by a singular verb. Think of them as two separate subjects. This is a common mistake in agreement.

Jack or Jill **wants** to buy a new house

Jack **wants** to buy a new house.

Jill **wants** to buy a new house.

- Singular and plural subjects joined by *or* with the subject closest to the verb.

Neither management nor the **employee**

Neither the employees nor the **manag**

***Make Sure You Find the Subject***

Verbs agree with the subject, not the complement. The form of *be*, links the subject and the complement. The subject comes first and the complement comes after the verb.

**Taxes were** the main challenge.  
The main **challenge** facing the country is high taxes.  
A serious **problem** for most cities is traffic jams.  
**Traffic jams are** a serious problem for city commuters.

## Questions and Sentences Beginning with Verbs

When a sentence asks a question or begins with a verb, the subject follows the verb. Locate the subject in the sentence. The verb matches it. In the examples below, the subject and verb are highlighted in the corrected forms.

## Wrong

What is the conditions of the contract?

Why is her reports always so disorganized?

Here's the records you requested.

There is four people seeking this promotion.

## Inverted Sentences

Inverted sentences also contain subjects that precede the verbs. Locate the subject in the verb agrees with it. In the example sentences, the verbs in the corrected sentences are highlighted.

### Wrong

Co

Beside the front desk stands three new vending machines.

Be  
ne

Suddenly, out of the thicket comes

Su

three large bucks.

thr

Along with our highest  
recommendation goes our best  
wishes in your new job.

Al  
rec  
wi

### *Practice*

Circle the correct verb in each of the foll  
at the end of the lesson.

**32.** Every other day either Bert or Ernie (

**33.** Neither the style nor the color (match  
have.

**34.** Either the associates or the manager ( merchandise).

**35.** Either the manager or the associates ( merchandise).

**36.** (Is, Are) the men's wear or the wome ground floor?

**37.** Mr. Jefson's passion (is, are) econon

**38.** (Was, Were) there any furniture sets l

**39.** There (isn't, aren't) many days left be

**40.** Here (is, are) the information you req

**41.** Off into the horizon (runs, run) the he:

## Skill Building Until

Listen to people s they speak. Do they use the correct tense? Do the subjects and a good idea to correct your family, friend can give yourself some good practice by

### Answers

1. Jokes, laugh
2. grows, grow

**3.** speaks, speak

**4.** rings, wait

**5.** hum, sings

**6.** don't

**7.** wasn't

**8.** doesn't

**9.** weren't

**10.** doesn't, are

**11.** is, was

**12.** is

**13.** are

**14.** was

**15.** was

**16.** were

**17.** unlocks

**18.** takes

**19.** have

**20.** were

**21.** is

**22.** Were

**23.** Does

**24.** Has

**25.** needs

**26.** seem

**27.** works

**28.** go

**29.** helps

**30.** causes

**31.** Has

**32.** takes

**33.** matches

**34.** orders

**35.** order

**36.** Is

**37.** is

**38.** Were

**39.** aren't

**40.** is

**41.** runs



# Lesson 13— Using Pronouns

## Lesson Summary

Pronouns are so often *misused* in speech that many people don't really know how to avoid pronoun errors in writing. This lesson shows you how to avoid the most common pronoun errors.

A pronoun is a word that is used in place of a noun. Pronouns that are

misused call attention to themselves and detract from the message of a piece of writing. This lesson explains the basic principles of pronoun use and highlights the most common pronoun problems: agreement, case, noun-pronoun pairs, incomplete constructions, ambiguous pronoun references, and reflexive pronouns.

## **Pronouns and Antecedents**

The noun represented by a pronoun is called its *antecedent*. The prefix *ante* means *to come before*. Usually, the antecedent comes before the pronoun in a sentence. In the following example sentences, the pronouns are italicized

and the antecedents (the words they represent) are underlined.

The government workers  
received *their* paychecks.

Jane thought *she* saw the missing boy  
and reported *him* to the police.

The shift supervisor hates these  
accidents because *he* thinks *they* can  
be easily avoided.

A pronoun must match the number of its antecedent. In other words, if the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must be plural. Few people make mistakes when matching a pronoun with its noun antecedent. However, sometimes a pronoun is used for the antecedent for a another pronoun. Indefinite pronoun antecedents frequently result in a mismatch between pronoun and antecedent. In Lesson 12 you learned about singular pronouns. Here is the list again.

each

anybody

everyone

either                      anyone                      no one                      :

neither                      everybody                      nobody                      :

- A pronoun with one of the words from the list above and its antecedent must be singular.

Each (singular) of the men brought *his* (singular) favorite tool to the bachelors' party.

Everyone (singular) who wants to be in the "Toughman" contest should pay up *his* (singular) life insurance.

Somebody left *her* purse underneath the door.

Neither of the occupants could locate *her*) key to the apartment.

- If two or more singular nouns or pronouns are joined by *and*, use a plural pronoun.

Buddha and Muhammad built religions based on *their* philosophies.

If he and she want to know where I was, you should ask me.

- If two or more singular nouns or pronouns are joined by *or*, use a singular pronoun.

Matthew or Jacob will loan you *his* car.

The elephant or the moose will furious  
*its* young.

- If a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by *or*, the pronoun agrees with the noun or pronoun it represents.

Neither the soldiers nor the sergeant was  
*his* location.

Neither the sergeant nor the soldiers was  
of *their* location.

## ***Practice***

Circle the correct pronoun in each of the sentences. The answers to each set of questions be found at the end of the lesson.

**1.** No one in (her, their) right mind would drive that contraption.

**2.** Neither the students nor the teacher brought (his, their) book to class.

**3.** Anyone who wants a ticket to the banquet should sign (his, their) name on this sheet.

**4.** Ask someone in this office where the instruction manual is, and (he, they) probably will tell you.

**5.** Neither Alexis nor Heidi will inconvenience themselves) to cover your mistake.

**6.** If you break a print head or a roller on them) is hard to replace.

**7.** I know of someone who might give you notes from the course.

**8.** Almost anybody can improve (his, the) using this book.

**9.** If you want to make a good impression don't talk down to (her, them).

## Pronoun Case

Most people have no trouble knowing when to use *me*, or when to use *my*. These three examples illustrate the three cases of the first person pronoun: nominative (*I*), objective (*me*), and possessive (*my*). The table below shows the cases of personal pronouns, both singular and plural.

### PERSONAL PRONOUN CASES

#### Nominative

#### Objective

I

me

we

us

you

you

he

him

she

her

they

them

it

it

**Nominative case pronouns** (those in the used as subjects or as complements follow verbs (*am, is, are, was, were*—any form

Nominative case pronouns following a linking verb sound strange to you because so few people use them correctly.

**They** left a few minutes early in order to pick up the package. [subject]

**I** looked all over town for the type of house you wanted. [subject]

The doctor who removed my appendix is Dr. Smith. [follows a linking verb]

"This is **she**, or it is **I**," said Barbara. [follows a linking verb]

The winners of the sales contest were Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

[follows a linking verb]

**Objective case pronouns** (those in the middle column in the table) are used as objects following an action verb or as objects of a preposition.

The help line representative gave **him** an answer over the phone.  
[follows an action verb]

Of all these samples, I prefer **them**. [follows an action verb]

We went to lunch with Sammy and **him**. [object of the preposition]

*with]*

We couldn't tell whether the package was for **them** or **us**.

[object(s) of the preposition *for*]

**Possessive case pronouns** (those in the third column in the table) show ownership. Few English speakers misuse the possessive case pronouns. Most pronoun problems occur with the nominative and objective cases.

### *Problems with Pronoun Case*

A single pronoun in a sentence is easy to use correctly. In fact, most English

speakers would readily identify the mistakes in the following sentences.

**Me** worked on the project with **he**.

My neighbor gave **she** a ride to work.

Most people know that **Me** in the first sentence should be **I** and that **he** should be **him**. They would also know that **she** in the second sentence should be **her**. Such errors are easy to spot when the pronouns are used alone in a sentence. The problem occurs when a pronoun is used with a noun or another pronoun. See if you can spot the errors

in the following sentences.

**Wrong:**

The grand marshall rode with  
Shane and I.

Donna and me are going to the  
Civic Center.

The stage manager spoke to my  
brother and I.

The errors in these sentences are  
harder to see than those in the  
sentences with a single pronoun. If you  
turn the sentence with two pronouns

into two separate sentences, the error becomes very obvious.

## **Correct:**

The grand marshal rode with Shane.

The grand marshal rode with **me** (not *I*).

Donna is going to the Civic Center. [Use the singular verb *is* in place of *are*.]

**I** (not *me*) am going to the Civic Center. [Use the verb *am* in place

of *are*.]

The stage manager spoke to my brother.

The stage manager spoke to **me** (not *I*).

Splitting a sentence in two does not work  
If you substitute *with* for *between*, then th

The problem is between (she, her) an

The problem is with **her**. (not *she*)

The problem is with **me**. (not *I*)

## *Practice*

Circle the correct pronouns in the follow  
of the lesson.

- 10.** Andy or Arvin will bring (his, their) of the party.
- 11.** Benny and (he, him) went to the movi
- 12.** Neither my cousins nor my uncle know
- 13.** Why must it always be (I, me) who cl
- 14.** The pilot let (he, him) and (I, me) loc
- 15.** Have you heard the latest news about
- 16.** My friend and (I, me) both want to m

## **Noun-Pronoun Pairs**

Sometimes a noun is immediately followed by a pronoun. To make certain you use the correct pronoun, look at the following examples to see how this is done.

### **PRONOUNS IN NOUN PHRASES**

#### **Which Pronoun?**

(We, Us) support personnel wish to lodge a complaint.

They gave the job to (we, us) inventory staffers.

The committee threw (we, us) retirees  
a huge end-of-the-year party.

## Incomplete Constructions

Sometimes a pronoun comes at the end of a sentence following a comparative word such as *than* or *as*.

Harold spent as much time on this project as (they, them).

Duane can build cabinets better than (I, me).

The long day exhausted us more than (they, them).

My youngest child is now taller than (I, me).

In each of these sentences part of the meaning is implied. To figure out which pronoun is correct, complete the sentence in your head and use the pronoun that makes more sense.

Harold spent as much time on this project as *they did*.

Harold spent as much time on this project as *he spent on them*.

The first sentence makes more sense,

so *they* would be the correct choice.

Duane can build cabinets better than *I can*.

Duane can build cabinets better than *he can build me*.

The first sentence makes more sense, so *I* is the correct pronoun.

The long day exhausted us more than *they did*.

The long day exhausted us more than *it did them*.

The second sentence makes more sense, so *them* is the correct choice.

My youngest child is now taller than *I am*.

There is no way to complete the sentence using the pronoun *me*, so *I* is the correct choice.

Pronoun choice is especially important if the sentence makes sense either way. The following sentence can be completed using both pronouns, either of which makes good sense. The pronoun choice controls the meaning. The writer must be careful to choose the correct pronoun if the meaning is to

be accurately portrayed.

I work with Assad more than (she, her).

I work with Assad more than *she does*.

I work with Assad more than *I work with her*.

Use the pronoun that portrays the intended meaning.

## Ambiguous Pronoun References

Sometimes a sentence is written in such a way that a pronoun can refer to more than one antecedent. When this happens, we say the meaning is *ambiguous*. In the following examples, the ambiguous pronouns are italicized, and the possible antecedents are underlined.

When Eric spoke to his girlfriend's father, *he* was very polite.

Remove the door from the frame and paint *it*.

Jamie told Linda *she* should be ready to go within an hour.

Pat told Craig *he* had been granted an interview.

See how the sentences are rewritten below to clarify the ambiguous references.

Eric was very polite when he spoke to his girlfriend's father.

Paint the door after removing it

from the frame.

Jamie told Linda to be ready to go within an hour.

Pat told Craig that Craig had been granted an interview.

## **Improper Reflexive Pronouns**

A reflexive pronoun is one that includes the word *self* or *selves*: *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *ourselves*, *themselves*. The following section explains ways in which reflexive pronouns are sometimes misused.

- The possessive pronouns *his* and *their* cannot be made reflexive.

### **Wrong:**

They decided to do the remodeling themselves.

Mark wanted to arrange the meeting himself.

### **Correct:**

They decided to do the remodeling *themselves*.

Mark wanted to arrange the meeting *himself*.

- Avoid using a reflexive pronoun when a personal pronoun works in the sentence.

### **Wrong:**

Three associates and myself chose the architect for the building.

The preliminary results of the poll were revealed only to ourselves.

### **Correct:**

Three associates and *I* chose the architect for the building.

The preliminary results of the poll were revealed only to *us*.

## Skill Building Until

Identify the pronoun mistake or two that conversation, make a conscious effort to least three times.

### Answers

1. her

2. his

**3.** his

**4.** he

**5.** herself

**6.** it

**7.** her

**8.** his

**9.** her

**10.** his, he

**11.** he, me

**12.** he

**13.** I

**14.** him, me

**15.** her, them

**16.** I

# Lesson 14— Problem Verbs and Pronouns

## Lesson Summary

*Sit or set? Your or you're? There or their?*  
Or is it *they're*? Knowing how to use such  
problem pairs is the mark of the educated  
writer. This lesson shows you how.

This lesson covers problem verbs such  
as *lie/lay*, *sit/set*, *rise/raise*, and their

various forms. It also covers problem pronouns such as *its/it's*, *your/you're*, *whose/who's*, *who/that/which*, and *there/they're/their*. You can distinguish yourself as an educated writer if you can use these verbs and pronouns correctly in formal writing situations.

## **Problem Verbs**

### ***Lie/Lay***

Few people use *lie* and *lay* and their principal parts correctly, perhaps because few people know the difference in meaning between the

two. The verb *lie* means *to rest or recline*. The verb *lay* means *to put or place*. The table on the next page shows the principal parts of each of these verbs. Their meanings, written in the correct form, appear in parentheses.

## FORMS OF *LIE* AND

### Present

### Progressive

### Past

lie, lies

lying

lay

(rest, rests)

(resting)

(rest)

lay, lays

laying

laid

(place,

places)

(placing)

(pla

*\*The past participle is the form used w*

To choose the correct form of *lie* or *lay*, meanings in parentheses. Choose the word that makes the most sense and use the corresponding form. Sometimes none of the words seem appropriate. Nevertheless, choose the option that makes the most sense than any of the others. If a sentence is ungrammatical, mentally delete the word from the sentence. Choose the most appropriate verb more obvious. Examine the sentence to see how this is done.

The garbage cans are \_\_\_\_\_ in the  
street. [Requires progressive]

*Resting* makes better sense than

Choose *lying*.

Keith told Nan to \_\_\_\_\_ the main table. [Requires present]

*Place* makes better sense than

Choose *lay*.

The sandwiches \_\_\_\_\_ in the sun before we ate them. [Requires past]

*Rested* makes better sense than

Choose *lay*.

Yesterday afternoon, I \_\_\_\_\_ do  
[Requires past]

Remove the word *down*.

*Rested* makes better sense than

Choose *lay*.

Barry thought he had \_\_\_\_\_ the printer  
machine. [Requires past participle]

*Placed* makes better sense than

Choose *laid*.



## *Practice*

Write the correct form of *sit* or *set* in each sentence.  
Answers are at the end of the lesson.

6. The board of directors \_\_\_\_\_  
money for research and development.

7. My desk is the one \_\_\_\_\_ c

8. I can't remember where I \_\_\_\_\_

9. I \_\_\_\_\_ down next to Jill a

briefcase on the chair next to me.

10. We had \_\_\_\_\_ in the waiting hour before the doctor saw us.

### *Rise/Raise*

The verb *rise* means "to go up." The verb *raise* means "to lift or bring something up." *Raise* requires an object. The object must receive the action of the verb raise (e.g., *raise the flag, raise the objection, raise children*). The following chart shows the principal parts of both verbs.

## FORMS OF *RISE* AND *RAISE*

**Present**

**Progressive**

**Pa**

rises, rise	rising	ros
(goes up, go up)	(going up)	(w
(comes up, come up)	(coming up)	(ca

raises, raise

raising

rais

(moves up,  
move up)

(moving up)

(m

*\*The past participle is the form used w*

Choose the correct form of *rise* or *raise* (the words in parentheses) in the sentence first makes the most sense, and choose the correct option that makes more sense than any of the other options. In the example sentences below, the words seem especially appropriate. No other option that makes more sense than any of the other options.

The sun \_\_\_\_\_ a little bit in the spring.

*Comes up* makes the most sense.

Choose *rises*.

## *Practice*

Write the correct form of *lie* or *lay* in each sentence.  
Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. After the alarm sounded, I \_\_\_\_\_  
hour.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ the packages on the table.
3. The latest edition of the newspaper \_\_\_\_\_  
desk.

4. The paper carrier \_\_\_\_\_ the newspaper on the desk.

5. No one had any idea how long the sail \_\_\_\_\_ in the sun or who had \_\_\_\_\_ in the first place.

### *Sit/Set*

These two verbs are very similar to *lie* and *lay*. *Set* means "to put or place." The table below shows the parts of each of these verbs. Their meanings and forms, appear in parentheses.

## FORMS OF *SIT* AND *SET*



makes the most sense, and then choose the  
how this is done in the example sentences:

The speaker \_\_\_\_\_ the chair.

*Put* or *placed* makes more sense.

Choose *set*.

The speaker \_\_\_\_\_ in the chair.

*Rested* makes more sense than *sat*.

Choose *sat*.

Without realizing it, we began to  
\_\_\_\_\_ our voices.

*Move up* makes more sense than any of the other options.

Choose *raise*.

The river \_\_\_\_\_ over two feet in the last hour.

*Went up* makes the most sense.

Choose *rose*.

## ***Practice***

Write the correct form of *rise* or *raise* in each of the blanks below. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**11.** The guard \_\_\_\_\_ the flag every morning before the sun \_\_\_\_\_.

**12.** The couple \_\_\_\_\_ seven of their own children and adopted three more.

13. By late morning the fog had \_\_\_\_\_ enough for us to see the neighboring farm.

14. The stockholders \_\_\_\_\_ from their chairs to \_\_\_\_\_ an objection.

## Problem Pronouns

### *Its/It's*

*Its* is a possessive pronoun that means *belonging to it*. *It's* is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*. The only time you will ever use *it's* is when you can also substitute the words *it is*. Take time to

make this substitution, and you will never confuse these two words.

A doe will hide **its** [belonging to the it—the doe] fawn carefully before going out to graze.

It's [it is] time **we** packed up and moved to a new location.

The new computer system has proven **its** [belonging to it] value.

We'll leave the game as soon as **it's** [it is] over.

## *Your/You're*

*Your* is a possessive pronoun that means *belonging to you*. *You're* is a contraction for the words *you are*. The only time you will ever use *you're* is when you can also substitute the words *you are*. Take time to make this substitution, and you will never confuse these two words.

Is this **your** [belonging to you] idea of a joke?

As soon as **you're** [you are] finished, you may leave.



**Your** [belonging to you] friends are the people you most enjoy.

**You're** [you are] friends whom we value.

### *Whose/Who's*

*Whose* is a possessive pronoun that means *belonging to whom*. *Who's* is a contraction for the words *who is* or *who has*. Take time to make this substitution, and you will never confuse these two words.

**Who's** [Who is] in charge of the lighting for the show?

**Whose** [belonging to whom] car was that?

This is the nurse **who's** [who is] on duty until morning.

Here is the man **whose** [belonging to whom] car I ran into this morning.

### ***Who/That/Which***

*Who* refers to people. *That* refers to

things. *Which* is generally used to introduce nonrestrictive clauses that describe things. (See Lesson 4 for nonrestrictive clauses.) Look at the following sentences to see how each of these words is used.

There is the woman **who** helped me fix my flat tire.

The man **who** invented the polio vaccine died in 1995.

This is the house **that** Jack built.

The book **that** I wanted is no

longer in print.

Abigail, **who** rescued my cat from the neighbor's tree, lives across the street.

Yassir Arafat, **who** heads the PLO, met with Israeli leaders.

The teacher asked us to read *Lord of the Flies*, **which** is my favorite novel.

Mt. Massive, **which** is the tallest peak in the Rocky Mountains, looms above Leadville, Colorado.

## *There/Their/They're*

*There* is an adverb telling where an action or item is located. *Their* is a possessive pronoun that shows ownership. *They're* is a contraction for the words *they are*. Of all the confusing word groups, this one is misused most often. Here is an easy way to distinguish among these words.

- Take a close look at this version of the word: t**HERE**. You can see that *there* contains the word *here*.

Wherever you use the word *there*, you should be able to substitute the word *here*, and the sentence should still

make sense.

- *Their* means *belonging to them*. Of the three words, *their* can be most easily transformed into the word *them*. Try it. You'll discover that two short markings—connecting the *i* to the *r* and then drawing a line to make the *ir* into an *m*—will turn *their* into *them*. This clue will help you avoid misusing *their*.

- Finally, imagine that the apostrophe in *they're* is actually a very small letter *a*. If you change *they're* to *they are* in a sentence, you'll never misuse the word. Look over the example sentences on the next page.



**There** [here] is my paycheck.

The new chairs are in **there** [here].

**Their** [belonging to them] time has almost run out.

This is **their** [belonging to them] problem, not mine.

**They're** [they are] planning to finish early in the morning.

I wonder how **they're** [they are] going to work this out.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in each set of parentheses below. Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**15.** Finally, the dog stopped (its, it's) barking.

**16.** Alert me when (its, it's) time to go.

**17.** (Its, It's) time to get a new clock when the old one stops (its, it's) chiming.

**18.** Take (your, you're) time with this decision.

**19.** Take (your, you're) samples with you if (your, you're) leaving.

**20.** (Your, You're) scheduled to work late this evening.

**21.** (Your, You're) schedule for this evening has changed.

**22.** My aunt Sophie is the one (who, which, that) travels for a living.

**23.** This is the book (who, which, that) I lost earlier this year.

**24.** Kirk Douglas, (who, which, that) is my favorite actor, finally received an Oscar nomination.

**25.** Redbird Creek, (who, which, that) runs through my back yard, floods every spring.

**26.** There's the person (who, which, that) gave me directions to the museum.

**27.** (Your, You're) likely to find the tapes in (there, their, they're).

**28.** (There, Their, They're) scheduled to begin construction next week.

**29.** (Its, It's) been over an hour since (the

**30.** The clerk (who, which, that) gave me  
they're).

**31.** (Who's, Whose) been opening the sto

**32.** (Who's, Whose) responsibility is it to

**33.** Hilda spoke to the person (who's, wh

**34.** (Who's, Whose) birthday is it?

---

## Skill Building Unit

Identify the special verb or pronoun problem in each sentence. Explain the correct way to use it. Make a conscious effort to use it correctly in your writing.

### Answers

1. lay

2. Lay

3. lay

4. laid

**5.** lain, laid

**6.** set

**7.** sitting

**8.** set

**9.** sat, set

**10.** sat

**11.** raised, rose *or* raises, rises

**12.** raised

**13.** risen

**14.** rose, raise

**15.** its

**16.** it's

**17.** It's its

**18.** your

**19.** your, you're

**20.** You're

**21.** Your

**22.** who

**23.** that

**24.** who

**25.** which

**26.** who

**27.** You're, there

**28.** They're

**29.** It's, their

**30.** who, there

**31.** Who's

**32.** Whose

**33.** who

**34.** Whose

# Lesson 15— Modifiers

## Lesson Summary

This lesson shows you how to avoid common problems with adjectives and adverbs.

Words and phrases that describe other words are called *modifiers*. Words that describe nouns and pronouns are called *adjectives*. Words that describe

verbs, adjectives, or adverbs are called *adverbs*. Entire phrases or groups of words can also function as modifiers. The English language is structured in such a way that modifiers play a vital part in communication. Using them correctly is an important skill.

## **Adjectives**

Adjectives describe a noun or pronoun in a sentence. Here is an easy way to tell if a word is an adjective.

Adjectives answer one of three questions about another word in the sentence: *which one?* *what kind?* and *how many?* The table on the next page

illustrates this. The adjectives are highlighted to make them easy to identify.

## ADJECTIVES

**Which One?**

**What Kind?**

**that** cubicle

**sports** car

the **other** arrangement

**red** stickers

our **first** project

**wise** mentor

Pay special attention to adjectives that follow a verb, but it describes the verb. The following sentences illustrate the use of the underlined nouns.

This cheesecake tastes *delicious*. [adjective]

Chris's change of heart seemed *apparent*. [adjective]

The room smelled *strange*. [adjective]

### ***Fewer/Less, Number/Amount***

Use the adjective *fewer* to modify plural nouns and *less* for singular nouns that represent a quantity. Nouns that end in *s* can be added require the adjective *fewer*.

The promotional staff had **fewer** in marketing staff.

The marketing staff had **less** time [singular noun] promotional staff.

The same principle applies to the nouns *number* and *amount* when referring to things that can be counted. Use the noun *number* when referring to things that can be counted and the noun *amount* when referring to nouns that cannot be counted.

The **number** of hours [plural noun] reduced.

The **amount** of time [singular noun] reduced.

# Adverbs

Use adverbs to describe verbs, adjective way to tell if a word is an adverb. Adver another word in the sentence: *where?* *wh* below illustrates this. The adverbs are hi

ADVI

**Where?**

**When?**

The line moved  
**forward.**

I saw him  
**yesterday.**

Store your gear

Come around

**below.**

Stand **here.**

**later.**

We'll talk  
**tonight.**

This next table show examples of adverb and other adverbs. The adverbs are highlighted and underlined.

## ADVERBS THAT

### Verbs

### Adjectives

Mail arrives **regularly**.

an **extremely** long  
time

Doves sing

a **hopelessly** dull

**mournfully.**

problem

I responded  
**immediately.**

an **unusually** s  
approach

## Adjective or Adverb?

Sometimes writers mistakenly use adjectives where adverbs are needed, as illustrated in the sentences below. The italicized words are incorrectly used in place of adverbs. The

Megan can think of answers very *quickly*.

Store these antiques very *careful*. [

Ernie whispered the news as *quiet*.

Take special care to choose the correct word with the senses: *feel, taste, look, smell, say*. A verb describes a noun or pronoun that comes before an adjective. On the other hand, if the word describes a verb, use an adverb. In the table below, the words are highlighted and the nouns or verbs they modify are

## MODIFIERS WITH "A"

### Adjectives

The entire group felt **sick** after lunch.

The new keyboard looked **strange**

to me.

The explanation sounded **plausible** to us.

## *Good and Well*

*Good* is an adjective. *Well* is an adverb. Use *well* to describe a verb. Use *good* to describe a noun. In the examples below, *good* and *well* are underlined in the examples.

Brenton did **well** on the test.

Raul felt **good** after the marathon.



The new marketing strategy way **w**

The lasagna smelled **good** when I v

## Comparisons

Adjectives and adverbs change form when used in comparisons. When you compare two items, you use the *comparative* form of the modifier. If you are comparing more than two items, you use the *superlative* form of the modifier.

The comparative form is created in one of two ways:

1. Add *-er* to the modifier if it is a short syllable.

2. Place the word *more* or the word *less* before a multisyllable word.

In addition, some modifiers change form. Examples are given in the table below. The first six are these special modifiers that change form. See the list above.

## MODIFIERS IN COMPARISON

<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Comparative (for two items)</b>

good

better

well

better

many

more

much

more

bad

worse

little

less or lesser

neat

neater

lovely

lovelier

funny

funnier

extreme

more [or less] extreme

intelligent

more [or less] intelligent

precisely

more [or less] precisely

When comparing items in a prepositional phrase, use *than* for two items, *among* for three or more. Look for the comparative and superlative forms are used in the following examples.

Up is the **better** direction for the student.  
[comparing two directions]

Blue looks **better** than any other color  
[two colors many times]

The Buick Park Avenue is the **best**  
[comparing more than two cars]

The Mississippi is the **best** river for  
more than two rivers]

The first run model was **more thor**  
[comparing two things]

### ***Avoid Illogical or Unclear Comparison***

"Ellie is more disorganized than any woman" implies that Ellie, who is a woman, is more disorganized than any other woman. Always include the words *other* or *else* to clarify the comparison.

being illogical.

Ellie is more disorganized than any

Ted can concentrate better than any

### *Avoid Double Comparisons*

A double comparison occurs when a writer uses *more* or *most*.

**DOUBLE COMPARISON**

**Wrong**

Diane is the most friendliest person I know.

Judi is less sleepier than I am.

The writing in this sample seems more plainer than the writing in the other sample.

## ***Avoid Double Negatives***

When a negative word is added to a state double negative results. Avoid double negative words *hardly* and *barely* can cause problems. In the example sentences below, the words are highlighted. Pay close attention to how they are rewritten to avoid the double negative.

## DOUBLE NEGAT

**Wrong**

C

The warehouse **doesn't** have **no** surplus stock at this time.

T

su

T

an

I **can't hardly** understand this financial report.

I

fi

I

The cash on hand **won't barely**  
cover this expense.

fi

T

co

T

co

## Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

### *Misplaced Modifiers*

Place words, phrases, or clauses that describe nouns and pronouns as closely as possible to the words they describe. Failure to do this often results in a misplaced modifier—and a sentence that means something other than what was intended.

### **Words**

For example, the words *only*, *almost*, and *just* should be placed as closely as possible to the word described. The best place is right before the words they describe. The placement of the word affects the meaning of the sentence.

The customers **only** looked at two samples.

The customers looked at **only** two samples.

In the first sentence above, the customers "only looked" at the samples; they didn't touch them. In the second sentence, the customers looked

at "only two," not three or four, samples. The placement of *only* changes the meaning.

Here's an example with *almost*:

Chad **almost** scored three touchdowns.

Chad scored **almost** three touchdowns.

In the first version, Chad "almost scored" three times—he must have come close to the goal line three times without actually crossing. In the second version, Chad scored "almost

three" touchdowns—maybe 2.2 touchdowns. How many points are awarded for that?

Here's how placing *just* can affect the meaning of a sentence:

The Hill family *just* leases a car.

The Hill family leases *just* a car.

In the first version, the Hill family "just leases" a car, so they don't own or buy a car. In the second, they lease "just a car," not a truck or a van or any other vehicle.



## Phrases and Clauses

Phrases and Clauses that describe nouns closely as possible to the words they describe are misplaced modifiers. Pay close attention to their meaning.

### MISPLACED

**Wrong**

**C**

The veterinarian explained how to vaccinate hogs in the community

**I**  
**v**

center basement. [Why would you want hogs in the community center?]

h  
c  
v

A big dog followed the old man that was barking loudly. [Why was the man barking?]

A  
f  
B  
o

## ***Dangling Modifiers***

Words, phrases, or clauses that begin a sentence sometimes mistakenly modify the wrong part of the sentence. These are called dangling modifiers. The following sentences pay close attention to how the sentences are written.

---

## DANGLING M

### Wrong

C

Flat and useless, Jason removed the bicycle tire. [Why was Jason flat?]

Ja  
b  
b

Attached to an old stump, Janette saw a No Fishing sign. [Why was Janette attached to an old stump?]

Ja  
a  
T  
o

V

While cleaning up after dinner, the phone rang. [Don't you wish you had a phone that cleaned up after dinner?]

d

V

h

T

u

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in each of the following sentences. The answers to this set of questions can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. Greg assembled the desk (correct, correctly).
2. Charlotte seemed (tired, tiredly) after the long plane ride.
3. This drawer doesn't open as

(easy, easily) as it used to.

**4.** My new shoes feel more (comfortable, comfortably) than my old ones.

**5.** Make your request (polite, politely) if you want a positive response.

**6.** The workers walked (slow, slowly) back to the line after the break.

**7.** Our team leader seemed (unhappy, unhappily) about something.

**8.** The passenger on the other side of the bus looked (angry, angrily).

**9.** The night watchman felt (careful, carefully) for the switch.

**10.** We looked (thorough, thoroughly) in both locations.

**11.** You'll have (fewer, less) trouble with this component if you see (fewer, less) joints.

**12.** The (number, amount) of people we hire will depend on the (number, amount) of time we have to fill the order.

**13.** Spaghetti tastes especially (good, well) if the noodles are boiled (good, well).

**14.** Kelly is the (older, oldest) of the twins and the (taller, tallest) one in the whole family.

**15.** The receiving department hasn't heard (anything, nothing) about the delivery date of our order.

**16.** Divide these cookies (between, among) the twins, but split the cake (between, among) all the people who come to the party.



Choose the correctly written sentence from

- 17.** a. I like olives and pimentos boiled
- b. boiled in oil, I like olives and pimentos
- 18.** a. While speeding along a country road, a deer dashed across the road in front of our car.
- b. Two deer dashed across the road in front of our car while speeding along a country road.
- 19.** a. At the age of four, my grandmother

b. when I was four, my grandmother t

**20.** a. We heard about the bank robbers v  
news.

b. We heard on the evening news abo  
arrested.

## **Skill Building Unti**

Practice what you have learned in this le  
Many people make mistakes with modifi  
such a mistake, think about how you mig  
to make it correct. Once again, don't feel  
mistakes; just use them as opportunities  
will have the opportunity to correct you.

---

## **Answers**

**1. correctly**

**2. tired**

**3. easily**

**4. comfortable**

**5. politely**

**6. slowly**

**7.** unhappy

**8.** angry

**9.** carefully

**10.** thoroughly

**11.** less, fewer

**12.** number, amount

**13.** good, well

**14.** older, tallest

**15.** anything

**16.** between, among

**17.** a.

**18.** b.

**19.** b.

**20.** b.

# Lesson 16— Easily Confused Word Pairs

## Lesson Summary

*Threw or through? To, two, or too?  
Brake or break?* This lesson and the next one review a host of words that are often confused with other words and show you when to use them.

This lesson covers some of the most

commonly confused word pairs, those you are likely to use in your writing. If you learn to distinguish these words, you can avoid errors in your writing. These words are divided into three separate sections with practice exercises at the end of each section. The italicized words following some of the entries are synonyms, words that can be substituted in a sentence for the easily confused words.

## **Three-Way Confusion**

### ***Lead/Led/Lead***

- **Lead** as a verb means *guide, direct*.

As a noun, it means *front position*. It rhymes with *seed*.

- **Led** is a verb, the past tense of **lead**, meaning *guided, directed*. It rhymes with *red*.

- **Lead** is a noun that is *the name of a metal*. It rhymes with *red*.

### **Examples:**

Geronimo **led** (*guided*) the small band to safety.

We hope the next elected officials will **lead** (*guide*) us to economic

recovery.

A pound of styrofoam weighs as much as a pound of **lead** (*the metal*).

Jake took the **lead** (*front position*) as the group headed out of town.

### *Quite/Quit/Quiet*

- **Quite** is an adverb meaning *completely, very, entirely*. It rhymes with *fight*.
- **Quit** is a verb meaning *stop, cease*

or *stopped, ceased*. It rhymes with *sit*.

• **Quiet** as an adjective means *calm, silent, noiseless*. As a verb, it means *soothe, calm*. As a noun, it means *tranquility, peacefulness*. It almost rhymes with *riot*.

### **Example:**

The firm was **quite** (*very*) surprised when its most productive investment specialist **quit** (*stopped*) work and opted for the **quiet** (*calm*) life of a monk.

***Right/Write/Rite***

- **Right** is an adjective meaning *correct, proper, opposite of left*.
- **Write** is a verb meaning *record, inscribe*.
- **Rite** is a noun meaning *ceremony, ritual*.

### **Example:**

I will **write** (*record*) the exact procedures so you will be able to perform the **rite** (*ceremony*) in the **right** (*proper*) way.

## *Sent/Cent/Scent*

- **Sent** is a verb, the past tense of *send*. It means *dispatched, transmitted*.
- **Cent** is a noun meaning *one penny*, a coin worth .01 of a dollar.
- **Scent** is a noun meaning *odor, smell*.

### **Example:**

For a mere **cent** (*penny*) I bought an envelope perfumed with the **scent** (*odor*) of jasmine. I **sent** (*dispatched*) it to my grandmother.

## *Sight/Site/Cite*

- **Sight** as a noun means *ability to see*. As a verb, it means *see, spot*.
- **Site** is a noun meaning *location, position*.
- **Cite** is a verb meaning *quote, make reference to*.

### **Example:**

At ninety-five my grandmother's **sight** (*ability to see*) was acute enough to **sight** (*spot*) even the smallest error in a crocheted

doily.

This is the proposed **site**  
(*location*) for the new building.

You must **cite** (*make reference to*)  
the source of your information.

## ***To/Too/Two***

- **To** is a preposition or part of an infinitive. Use it only to introduce a prepositional phrase, which usually answers the question *where*, or before a verb. Use **to** for introducing a prepositional phrase: *to the store, to the top, to my home, to our garden, to his laboratory, to his castle, to our advantage, to an open door, to a song, to the science room*, etc. Use **to** as an infinitive (*to* followed by a verb, sometimes separated by adverbs): *to run, to jump, to want badly, to seek,*

*to propose, to write, to explode, to sorely need, to badly botch, to carefully examine, etc.*

- **Too** is an adverb meaning *also, very*.
- **Two** is an adjective, *the name of a number*, as in one, two, three.

### **Example:**

The couple went **to** (*preposition*) the deli **to** (*infinitive*) pick up **two** (*the number*) plate dinners because both of them were **too** (*very*) tired **to** (*infinitive*) cook dinner.

## *Where/Wear/Were*

- **Where** is an adverb referring to *place, location*.
- **Wear** as a verb means *put on, tire*.  
As a noun, it means *deterioration*.
- **Were** is a verb, the plural past tense of *be*.

### **Examples:**

The slacks **were** (*form of be*) too tight.

The tires showed excessive **wear** (*deterioration*)

They will **wear** (*tire*) out these shoes if they **wear** (*put on*) them too much.

**Where** (*location*) are the clothes you **were** (*form of be*) planning to **wear** (*put on*) tomorrow?

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

**1.** The package will be (sent, cent, scent) if you add another (sent, cent, scent) of postage.

**2.** We noticed the distinct (sent, cent, scent) of cat litter when we entered the door.

**3.** Was I (right, write, rite) in assuming I was to (right, write, rite) you a memo about this matter?

**4.** Who will be performing the (right, write, rite) of baptism at tomorrow's service?

**5.** If you will simply be (quite, quit,

quiet), I will be (quite, quit, quiet)  
happy to (quite, quit, quiet) annoying  
you with my constant request for a  
(quite, quit, quiet) atmosphere in  
which to work.

**6.** Our marching band (lead, led) the  
parade.

**7.** The drum major, carrying a baton made of (lead, led), will (lead, led) the band.

**8.** Over the next ridge we will be able to (sight, site, cite) the (sight, site, cite) we've chosen for our new home.

**9.** I would be honored to have you (sight, site, cite) me in your research.

**10.** Even though these trousers (where, wear, were) expensive, they are showing (where, wear, were) along

the seams.

**11.** (Where, wear, were) did you buy those earrings?

## **Easy Misses**

### ***Brake/Break***

• **Brake** as a verb means *slow, stop*. As a noun, it means *hindrance, drag*.

• **Break** as a verb means *separate, shatter, adjourn*. As a noun, it means *separation, crack, pause, opportunity*.

## Examples:

During our **break** (*pause*) we spotted a **break** (*crack*) in the pipeline.

**Brake** (*slow*) gently when driving on glare ice by applying slight pressure to the **brake** (*drag*).

## *Passed/Past*

- **Passed** is a verb, the past tense of *pass*, meaning *transferred, went ahead or by, elapsed, finished*.

- **Past** as a noun means *history*. As an adjective, it means *former*.

## Examples:

The first runner **passed** (*transferred*) the baton to the second just as she **passed** (*went by*) the stands. Three seconds **passed** (*elapsed*) before the next runner came by.

Harriet **passed** (*finished*) her bar exam on the first try.

I must have been a whale in a **past** (*former*) life.

Avoid digging up the **past** (*history*) if you can.

## *Peace/piece*

- **Peace** is a noun meaning *tranquility*.
- **Piece** as a noun means *division, creation*. As a verb, it means *patch, repair*.

## **Example:**

If you can **piece** (*patch*) together the **pieces** (*bits*) of this story, perhaps we can have some **peace**

(*tranquility*) around here.

## *Plain/Plane*

- **Plain** as an adjective means *ordinary, clear, simple*. As a noun, it refers to *flat country*, also sometimes written as **plains**.
- **Plane** is a noun meaning *airship* or *flat surface*. It is occasionally used as a verb or adjective meaning *level*.

### **Examples:**

They wore **plain** (*ordinary*)

clothes.

It was **plain** (*clear*) to see.

The meal we ate on the **plains** (*flat country*) was quite **plain** (*simple*).

It was **plain** (*clear*) to us that the enemy did not see our **plane** (*airship*) sitting on the open **plain** (*flat country*).

## *Scene/Seen*

- **Scene** is a noun meaning *view, site, commotion*.

- **Seen** is a verb, the past participle of *see*, meaning *observed, noticed*.

### **Example:**

We caused quite a **scene** (*commotion*) at the **scene** (*site*) of the accident. It was the worst we had ever **seen** (*observed*).

### ***Threw/Through***

- **Threw** is a verb, the past tense of *throw*, meaning *tossed*.

• **Through** is an adverb or a preposition meaning *in one side and out the other*. Use **through** to introduce a prepositional phrase: *through the door, through the lobby, though the mist*.

### **Example:**

Fred **threw** (*tossed*) the ball **through** (*in one side and out the other*) the hoop.

### ***Weak/Week***

• **Weak** is an adjective meaning *flimsy, frail, powerless*.

- **Week** is a noun meaning *a period of seven days*.

**Example:**

The patient's heartbeat was so **weak** (*frail*) that the doctor was certain he would be dead within a **week** (*seven days*).

## *Which/Witch*

- **Which** is a pronoun dealing with *choice*. As an adverb, it introduces a subordinate clause.
  
- **Witch** is a noun meaning *sorceress*, *enchantress*.

### **Examples:**

Which (*choice*) one do you want?

This car, **which** (*introduces subordinate clause*) I have never driven, is the one I'm thinking about buying.

I don't know **which** (*choice*) **witch** (*enchantress*) I should consult about my future.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

**12.** (Which, Witch) (which, witch) scares you the most?

**13.** Gerald (threw, through) away his opportunity when he walked (threw, through) the door.

**14.** Sally slammed on the (brake, break) when she saw the car ahead (brake, break) to avoid the (brake, break) in the concrete road.

**15.** Have you (scene, seen) that pathetic (scene, seen) in the movie?

**16.** The confused (which, witch) couldn't decide (which, witch) broomstick to use on Halloween.

**17.** The sales department has (passed, past) the record it had established in the (passed, past) year.

**18.** We'll need at least a (weak, week) to repair the (weak, week) linkage in this machine.

**19.** This (peace, piece) of news should give you some (peace, piece) of mind.

**20.** The (plain, plane) brown packages were loaded on the (plain, plane).

**To Split or Not to Split**

## *Already/All Ready*

- **Already** is an adverb meaning *as early as this, previously, by this time*.
- **All ready** means *completely ready, totally ready*.

### **Examples:**

At age four, Brigitta is reading **already** (*as early as this*).

We had **already** (*previously, by this time*) finished.

Are we **all ready** (*completely*)

*ready*) to go?

## *Altogether/All Together*

- **Altogether** is an adverb meaning *entirely, completely*.
- **All together** means *simultaneously*.

### **Examples:**

These claims are **altogether** (*entirely*) false.

The audience responded **all**

**together** (*simultaneously*).

## *Everyday/Every Day*

- **Everyday** is an adjective meaning *ordinary, usual*.
- **Every day** means *each day*.

## **Examples:**

These are our **everyday** (*usual*)  
low prices.

The associates sort the  
merchandise **everyday** (*each*

*day*).

## ***Maybe/May be***

- **Maybe** is an adverb meaning *perhaps*.
- **May be** is a verb phrase meaning *might be*.

### **Example:**

**Maybe** (*perhaps*) the next batch will be better than this one. On the other hand, it **may be** (*might be*) worse.

## *Always Split*

- **All right.** There's no such word as *alright*, though you will sometimes see it written this way.
- **A lot.** There's no such word as *alot*. There's a word *allot*, but it means *to portion out* something.

### **Example:**

I thought it was **all right** that we **allotted** tickets to **a lot** of our best customers.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below.

**21.** I (where, wear, were) my (everyday, every day) clothes almost (everyday, every day).

**22.** (Maybe, may be) we should design a new model. It (maybe, may be) just the thing to brighten our financial picture.

**23.** If you had been (already, all ready), we could have (already, all ready) begun.

**24.** You'll be (alright, all right) if you follow the instructions.

**25.** When the staff is (altogether, all together), we should have (altogether, all together) enough brainpower for this project.

## Skill Building Until

See how many of these easily confused words you can identify by reading. Try substituting the synonyms you know.

### Answers

1. sent, cent

2. scent

3. right, write

**4.** rite

**5.** quiet, quite, quit, quiet

**6.** led

**7.** lead, lead

**8.** sight, site

**9.** cite

**10.** were, wear

**11.** Where

**12.** Which, witch

**13.** threw, through

**14.** brake, brake, break

**15.** seen, scene

**16.** witch, which

**17.** passed, past

**18.** week, weak

**19.** piece, peace

**20.** plain, plane

**21.** wear, everyday, every day

**22.** Maybe, may be

**23.** all ready, already

**24.** all right

**25.** all together, altogether

# Lesson 17— More Easily Confused Words

## Lesson Summary

Some of the most commonly used words in the English language are easily confused with other equally common words. To avoid confusing readers, you need to know which ones are which.

This lesson covers more of the most

commonly confused words pairs, those you are likely to use in your writing. If you learn to distinguish these words, you can avoid errors. The words are divided into three separate sections with practice exercises at the end of each section. The words in italics following some of the entries are synonyms, words that can be substituted in a sentence for the easily confused words.

## **Small But Tricky**

### ***By/Buy***

- **By** is a preposition used to introduce

a phrase (by the book, by the time, by the way)

- **Buy** as a verb means *purchase*. As a noun, it means *bargain, deal*.

### **Examples:**

We stopped **by** (*preposition*) the store to **buy** (*purchase*) some groceries.

That car was a great **buy** (*deal*).

## *Dear/Deer*

- **Dear** is an adjective meaning *valued, loved*.
- **Deer** is a noun referring to an *animal*, a four-legged one that lives in the woods and looks like Bambi.

### **Example:**

The **dear** (*loved*) man died when his car struck a **deer** (*animal*).

## *Die/Dye*

- **Die** is a verb meaning *pass away, fade*.
- **Dye** as a verb means to *color, tint*.  
As a noun, it refers to *coloring, pigment*.

### **Example:**

We waited for the wind to **die** (*fade*) before we decided to **dye** (*color*) the sheets.

## *Hear/Here*

- **Hear** is a verb meaning *listen to*.
- **Here** is an adverb meaning *in this place, to this place*.

### **Example:**

Please come **here** (*to this place*)  
so you can **hear** (*listen to*) what I  
have to say.

### ***Hole/Whole***

- **Hole** is a noun meaning *opening, gap*.

• **Whole** as an adjective means *entire, intact*. As a noun, it means *entire part or amount*.

## **Examples:**

The **whole** (*entire*) group heard the message.

They patched the **hole** (*opening*) in the wall.

## ***Knew/New***

• **Knew** is a verb, the past tense of *know*. It means *understood, recognized*.

- **New** is an adjective meaning *fresh, different, current*.

### **Example:**

I **knew** (*understood*) they were planning to buy a **new** (*different*) car.

### ***Know/No***

- **Know** is a verb meaning *understand, recognize*.
- **No** as an adverb means *not so, not at*

*all*. As an adjective, it means *none*,  
*not one*.

## **Example:**

As far as I **know** (*understand*),  
we have **no** (*not one*) more of  
these shoes in stock.

## *Meat/Meet*

- **Meat** is a noun meaning *food, flesh, main part*.
- **Meet** as a verb means *assemble, greet, fulfill*. As a noun, it means *assembly*.

### **Examples:**

Before a track **meet** (*assembly*), it is better to eat foods high in carbohydrates rather than **meat**

*(flesh)*.

The **meat** (*main part*) of his message was that our efforts did not **meet** (*fulfill*) his standards.

## ***One/Won***

- **One** can be an adjective meaning *single*. It can also be a pronoun used to mean a single person or thing.

- **Won** is a verb, the past tense of *win*. It means *prevailed, achieved, acquired*.

**Example:**

Jacquez is the **one** (*pronoun referring to Jacquez*) who **won** (*achieved*) the most improved bowler trophy this year.

## *Seam/Seem*

- **Seam** is a noun meaning *joint, joining point*.
- **Seem** is a verb meaning *appear*.

## **Example:**

Does it **seem** (*appear*) to you as if

this **seam** (*joint*) is weakening?

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. If the copier isn't repaired (by, buy) noon, we'll need to (by, buy) a new one.

2. (By, Buy) this book that was written (by, buy) a well-known expert on the subject. It's a great (by, buy).

3. The (dear, deer) I had as a pet was

quite (dear, deer) to me.

**4.** The sound began to (die, dye) during the most exciting part of the movie.

**5.** How do I (die, dye) this shirt?

**6.** If you sit (hear, here), you'll be able to (hear, here) much better.

**7.** We can see the (hole, whole) field through this little (hole, whole).

**8.** I wish I (knew, new) how to operate this (knew, new) equipment.



**9.** You (know, no) we have (know, no) idea how to solve this problem.

**10.** After a kill, a pride of lions will (meat, meet) so each can get a share of the (meat, meet).

**11.** The Colts (one, won) the game by just (one, won) point.

**12.** I (seam, seem) to be unable to locate the (seam, seem) in this pipe.

**Often Used and Misused**

## *Choose/Chose*

- **Choose** is a verb meaning *select*. It rhymes with *bruise*.
- **Chose** is past tense of *choose*; it means *selected*. It rhymes with *hose*.

### **Example:**

Henry **chose** (*selected*) flex hours on Friday afternoons. I will **choose** (*select*) the same option.

## *Loose/Lose/Loss*

- **Loose** is an adjective meaning *free, unrestrained, not tight*. It rhymes with *goose*.
  
- **Lose** is a verb meaning *misplace, to be defeated, fail to keep*. It rhymes with *shoes*.
  
- **Loss** is a noun meaning *defeat, downturn, the opposite of victory or gain*. It rhymes with *toss*.

## **Examples:**

The chickens ran **loose** (*free*) in the yard.

The knot holding the boat to the dock was **loose** (*not tight*).

Where did you **lose** (*misplace*) your gloves?

The investors will **lose** (*fail to keep*) considerable capital if the market suffers a **loss** (*downturn*).

### ***Suppose/Supposed***

- **Suppose** is a verb meaning *assume, imagine*.
- **Supposed** as a verb is the past tense

of *suppose* and means *assumed*, *imagined*. As an adjective it means *expected*, *obligated*.

## **Examples:**

I **suppose** (*assume*) you'll be late, as usual.

We all **supposed** (*assumed*) you would be late.

You were **supposed** (*expected*) to have picked up the copies of the report before you came to the meeting.



## *Than/Then*

- **Than** is a conjunctive word used to make a comparison.
- **Then** is an adverb telling *when* or meaning *next*.

### **Example:**

Then (*next*), the group discussed the ways in which the new procedures worked better *than* (*conjunction making a*

*comparison*) the old.

## ***Use/Used***

- **Use** as a verb means *utilize, deplete*. It rhymes with *ooze*. As a noun, it rhymes with *goose* and means *purpose*.

- **Used** as a verb is the past tense of *use* and means *utilized, depleted*. As an adjective, it means *second-hand*.

- **Used to** can be used as an adjective, meaning *accustomed to*, or as an adverb meaning *formerly*. (Note that you never write *use to* when you mean

*accustomed to or formerly.)*

## **Examples:**

Just **use** (*utilize*) the same password we **used** (*utilized*) yesterday.

What's the **use** (*purpose*) in trying yet another time?

We should consider buying **used** (*second-hand*) equipment.

We **used to** (*formerly*) require(*d*) a second opinion.

Residents of Buffalo, New York, are **used to** (*accustomed to*) cold temperatures.

## *Weather/Whether*

- **Weather** is a noun referring to the *condition outside*.
- **Whether** is adverb used when referring to *a possibility*.

## **Examples:**

The **weather** (*condition outside*) took a turn for the worse.

Let me know **whether** (*a possibility*) you are interested in this new system.

## *Practice*

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. The answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

**13.** If you (choose, chose) your words carefully, you can avoid offending anyone else.

**14.** The committee (choose, chose) the model with the most special features.

**15.** The (loose, lose, loss) caused the stockholders to (loose, lose, loss) confidence in the company.

**16.** How could you (loose, lose, loss) your temper over such a trivial matter?

**17.** The paper tray seems (loose, lose, loss) to me.

**18.** I (suppose, supposed) you thought I was the one who was (suppose, supposed) to speak at the banquet.

**19.** Add even more sugar (than, then) you already have, and (than, then) stir the mixture thoroughly.

**20.** We found yet another (use, used) for the (use, used) tires that (use, used) to be stacked outside the building.

**21.** Do you know (weather, whether) this beautiful (weather, whether) is

(suppose, supposed) to continue into the weekend?

## **Killer a's and al's**

### *Accept/Except/Expect*

- **Accept** is a verb meaning *receive, bear*.
- **Except** is a preposition meaning *but, excluding*.
- **Expect** is a verb meaning *anticipate, demand, assume*.

## Examples:

This client **expects** (*demands*) nothing **except** (*but*) the most sophisticated options available.

Will you **accept** (*bear*) the responsibility for this decision?

We **expect** (*anticipate*) everyone to come **except** (*excluding*) John.

## *Advice/Advise*

- **Advice** is a noun meaning *suggestion, suggestions*. It rhymes with *ice*. (Hint: Think *advICE*.)

- **Advise** is a verb meaning *suggest to, warn*. It rhymes with *wise*.

## **Examples:**

We **advise** (*suggest to*) you to proceed carefully. That was the best **advice** (*suggestion*) I've received so far.

## ***Affect/Effect***

- **Affect** is a verb meaning *alter, inspire or move emotionally, imitate*. **Affected**, besides being the past tense of *affect*, can also be used as an

adjective meaning *imitated*,  
*pretentious*.

- **Effect** as a noun means *consequence*. As a verb, it means *cause*.

## **Examples:**

How will this plan **affect** (*alter*) our jobs? What **effect** (*consequence*) will this restructuring have on profits? Will it **effect** (*cause*) an increase?

The movie **affected** (*moved emotionally*) Marian.

He **affected** (*imitated*) an English accent.

The **affected** (*pretentious*) speech fooled no one.

## *Capital/Capitol*

- **Capital** as a noun means either *assets* or *the city that is the seat of government*. As an adjective, it means *main, very important, or deserving of death*.
  
- **Capitol** is a noun referring to *the building that houses the government*.

### **Examples:**

How much **capital** (*assets*) are you

willing to invest?

I think that's a **capital** (*main*) objective.

First degree murder is a **capital** (*deserving of death*) crime.

Albany is the **capital** (*city*) of New York.

No legislators were injured in the explosion in the **capitol** (*building*).

***Personal/Personnel***

- **Personal** is an adjective meaning *private*.

- **Personnel** is a noun meaning *staff, employees* or an adjective meaning *dealing with staff or employees*.

## **Examples:**

The director of **personnel** (*staff*) keeps all the **personnel** (*employee*) files in order and guards any **personal** (*private*) information they contain.

## ***Principal/Principle***

• **Principal** as a noun refers to the *head of a school* or an *investment*. As an adjective, it means *primary, major*.

• **Principle** is a noun meaning *rule, law, belief*.

## Examples:

The **principal** (*head*) of Calbert High School used the **principal** (*investment*) of an endowment fund to cover this month's salaries.

The **principal** (*primary*) objective is to make decisions that are in keeping with our **principles**

*(beliefs).*

## ***Practice***

Circle the correct word in the parentheses below. The answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

**22.** Surely you didn't (accept, except, expect) Weldon to (accept, except, expect) responsibility for this decision when everyone (accept, except, expect) him was consulted.

**23.** We (accept, except, expect) the delivery to arrive early in the morning.

**24.** The soothsayer will (advice, advise) you to seek her (advice, advise) often.

**25.** The new work schedule (affected, effected) production in a positive way.

**26.** How will this new work schedule (af

**27.** What (affect, effect) will this new wo  
production?

**28.** We plan to tour the (capital, capitol)  
state's (capital, capitol) city.

**29.** We never release (personal, personne  
(personal, personnel).

**30.** The employees' (principal, principle)

**31.** The new legislation violates the basic principles of justice which the country was founded.

### **Skill Building Until**

Make a conscious effort to use the correct words and avoid confused words in your writing. You may want to list words and their synonyms onto a separate sheet of paper to provide a good review and serve as a help sheet with you as you write.

### **Answers**

**1.** by, buy

**2.** Buy, by, buy

**3.** deer, dear

**4.** die

**5.** dye

**6.** here, hear

**7.** whole, hole

**8.** knew, new

**9.** know, no

**10.** meet, meat

**11.** won, one

**12.** seem, seam

**13.** choose

**14.** chose

**15.** loss, lose

**16.** lose

**17.** loose

**18.** suppose, supposed

**19.** than, then

**20.** use, used, used

**21.** whether, weather, supposed

**22.** expect, accept, except

**23.** expect

**24.** advise, advice

**25.** affected

**26.** affect

**27.** effect

**28.** capitol, capital

**29.** personal, personnel

**30.** principal

**31.** principles

# Lesson 18— Diction

## Lesson Summary

"Diction?" you might think. "In a book about writing?" While *diction* refers to how words are pronounced, it also refers to *which* words you choose. In order to use language effectively, writers have to write concisely and precisely. This lesson and Lesson 19 focus on how to choose the words that best communicate what you want to say.

A word is a terrible thing to waste. Or is it better to say, "It is a terrible thing to waste a word"? The difference between these two versions is a matter of *diction*, using appropriate words and combining them in the right way to communicate your message accurately. This lesson discusses ways to avoid some of the most common diction traps: wordiness, lack of precision, clichés, and jargon. Learning to recognize and avoid such writing weaknesses will turn a mediocre writer into a good one—this means expressing ideas in the *best* and *clearest* way possible.

## Wordiness

Excess words in communication waste space and they may also distort the message or make it difficult to understand. Get in the habit of streamlining your sentences as concise as possible. If you do, delete the extra words or structure you don't need. You can rewrite the sentences in the first place. Check yourself against the version in the sample.

## Wordy

It was a three-hour period after the

accident when the rescue squad that we knew was going to help us arrived. [21 words]

It was decided that the church would organize a committee for the purpose of conducting a search for a new pastor. [21 words]

The additional words in the first column do not take up space.

### ***Buzzwords and Fluffy Modifiers***

Buzzwords such as *aspect*, *element*, *fact*, *forms*, and so on sound important, but they often signal a writer who has little or not



The following table lists a host of phrase or two words.

<b>Wordy</b>	<b>Concise</b>	<b>Wo</b>
puzzling in nature	puzzling	at th time
of a peculiar kind	peculiar	at th time
regardless of the fact that	although	in o

due to the fact that	because	by r
of an indefinite nature	indefinite	exhi tend
concerning the matter of	about	in c with
in the event that	if	in re

### *Passive Voice*

Some wordiness is caused by using passive voice. You could use the active voice. (See Lesson 1 on passive voice.)

## Passive

A

It has been decided that your application for grant money is not in accordance with the constraints outlined by the committee in the application guidelines.

T  
g  
f  
g

The letter of resignation was accepted by the Board of Directors.

T  
a

*Intellectual-Ese*

The passive sentences above suffer not only from wordiness, but also from the writer's attempt to sound intellectual, to make the message more credible. Writers make this error in many ways, such as turning adjectives and verbs into nouns. This trait is called nominalization, that extra words are added to the sentence.

## Wordy

R

Water *pollution* [noun] is not as serious in the northern parts of Canada.

W  
[a  
C

Customer *demand* [noun] is reducing in the area of sales services.

C  
fe



Another way writers add words without a pretentious tone. Below is an actual memo from World War II. When it was sent to President Roosevelt for approval, he edited the memo before sending it. Roosevelt's edited versions are printed below.

### **Original pretentious memo:**

In the unlikely event of an attack by air, all necessary preparations shall be made as will cover all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings covered by the Act during an air raid for any period of time. This includes internal or external illumination.

## **Roosevelt's revised memo:**

If there is an air raid, put something a lights outside in buildings where we l

Here's another example of pretentious w version.

## **Pompous memo:**

As per the most recent directive issue upon all employees and they are henc the paper used in the accomplishment marked increase in the cost of such s

## **Revised:**

Since paper costs have increased, em

**WORD ECC**

## **Stretched Sentence**

Cassandra seems to be content

We must know what it is that we are  
doing.

This is the book of which I have been  
speaking.

It is with pleasure that I announce the

winner.

The reason we were late was because of traffic.

These plans will be considered on an individual basis.

The caterer, who was distressed, left the party.

There are new shipments arriving daily.

Due to the fact that we were late, we missed the door prizes.

The consideration given in the latest promotion is an example of how I was treated unfairly.

Writers sometimes stretch their sentences with too many words, all in an effort to sound intelligent. The previous page illustrates stretched sentences, and the following page shows the same sentences rewritten more concisely.

## *Redundancy*

Another writing trap that takes up space is redundancy—repeating words that express the same idea. In the examples below, the meanings overlap. If you stop to think about the examples below—and many others—you'll see that redundancy is not only unnecessary but often just plain silly.

enclosed *with this letter*

(

(

remit *payment*

1

*absolutely* necessary

{

weather *outside*

(

1

postpone *until later*

1

S

refer *back*

1

1

*past history*

1

ask *the question*

*Enclosed* means it's in this letter, doesn't  
And how can something be more *necessa*  
The weather *outside* as opposed to the w  
history as opposed to . . . ? You see the p  
(Not *plain and simple*.)

## ***Practice***

Try rewriting the following sentences to :  
wording. Suggested revisions are at the e  
your versions may be different; there's m  
rewrite these sentences.

**1.** Stephanie is a very important employ significant role in the success of this com

**2.** Some educators hold with the opinion punishment should in fact be reinstated in a deterrent to those students who are con inappropriate behavior.

**3.** It is certainly a true statement that be over again that technological advancement can assist employees in performing in a v and that these self-same computers may i considerable savings over a period of tin

**4.** I arrived at a decision to allow the su department to achieve a higher golf score my opportunities for advancement in the c opportunities became available.



## Precise Language

Work to make your writing as precise as possible to communicate more meaning using fewer words. Try to make your writing more concise. Choose precise nouns to help you transmit an exact meaning.

### IMPRECISE VS. PRECISE

#### Verbs

Emilia participated in the protest.

En

the

Hannah won't deal with sales meetings

Ha  
me

Dick can relate to Jane.

Di

## Modifiers

These bad instructions confused me.

Th  
ins  
ho

*Toy Story* is a good movie with fun for all.

*To*  
fil  
roi

We had a nice time with you.

We  
dri  
sw

## Nouns

I always have trouble with this computer.

I c  
sav

I like to have fun when I take a vacation.

I li  
wh

Let me grab some things from my locker.

Le  
fro



## *Abstract vs. Concrete*

Abstract language refers to intangible ideas or objects rather than the people or things that are concrete ideas. Without a grasp of the context, it is expected to understand an abstract idea. Professionals are especially aware of the difference between abstract and concrete as they write. They strive to present facts that can draw conclusions. They avoid making assumptions, hoping the facts will speak for themselves. It takes time and thought to write, but it communicates more effectively. Additional words are an advantage if they increase the precision.

## **Abstract Assumption**

C

Strader was drunk.

S  
s  
a

The couple was in love.

T  
h  
a

Billie is reliable and responsible.

B  
c  
h

***Clichés***

A cliché is a tired, overworked phrase that has lost its original meaning. These are cliché phrases: *a needle in a haystack*, *dawn*, *tough as nails*, *naked truth*, *hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil*. Writers use clichés when they don't have the time or energy to think of a more precise or more meaningful phrase. Although clichés are "communication shorthand," they rely on their original meaning. A writer who uses clichés is rethinking patterns to carry a message. If the original language will make a stronger impression, use it. Original language stimulates thought and emotion. Moreover, a fresh image rewards a reader for what you have written.

Imagine that a writer wanted to explain the cause of a problem. Look at the two versions presented below. The first is a cliché to communicate the message; the second is a fresh approach. Which version is likely to make the message more effective?

Finding the source of this problem  
a haystack.

Finding the source of this problem  
political advertisement.

Here are two more examples contrasting clichés with fresher, more original language. When you check your writing, look for ways to replace frequently used words and phrases with something fresh and original.

We rose at the crack of dawn.

We rose with the roosters.

Having Sam at our negotiations meetings was like having a loose cannon on deck.

Having Sam at our negotiations meetings was like having a German shepherd's tail in your crystal closet.

## *Jargon*

Jargon is the technical, wordy language used by those associated with a trade or profession. Often it is full of passive voice, acronyms, technical terms, and abstract words. Writers use jargon in an attempt to sound educated, sophisticated, or knowledgeable. Actually, jargon muddies and even distorts the message. Compare the following two paragraphs.

Alex demonstrates a tendency to engage inappropriately in verbal social interaction during class time. His grades are deficient because he suffers from an unwillingness to complete supplementary assignments between class periods.

Alex talks in class when he isn't supposed to. He has low grades because he doesn't do his homework.

The first paragraph above leaves the impression that Alex is a sociopath with a serious problem. The second portrays him as a student who needs to

talk less and work more. When you write, strive for clear, plain language that communicates your message accurately. Clear communication leaves a better impression by far than pretentious, abstract, jargon-filled words.

### *Practice*

Choose the option that expresses the idea most clearly and concisely.

Answers are at the end of the lesson.

**5. a.** On June 17, Dr. Sam Boswell and Ms. Lorene Webb had an argument over a parking space in the Eagle Supermarket parking lot. Police

officers told them both to go home instead of arresting them.

b. On or about June 17, in the Eagle Supermarket parking lot, Dr. Sam Boswell and Ms. Lorene Webb were allegedly involved in an altercation over a parking space. The police were called. There were no arrests. Both parties were advised to go home by the police officers.

**6. a.** The most expeditious option in a situation is also the most advantageous option.

b. The fastest way is the best way.

**7. a.** Too many television viewers prefer thought-provoking programs.

b. Too many television viewers prefer "The MacNeil-Lehrer Report."

**8. a.** The research department found that our magazines are popular.

b. Consumer attitude studies by the re indicated an extremely low level of custc newsstand products.

## **Skill Building Unti**

Listen to public officials as they deliver speak clearly and plainly, or are they try competent, intelligent speaker or writer pretentious, abstract, sophisticated-soun

## **Answers**

1. Stephanie has contributed a lot to this

**2.** Some educators believe that unruly st

**3.** Using computers can save time and n

**4.** I let my supervisor beat me at golf so

**5.** a.

**6.** b.

**7.** b.

**8.** a.

# Lesson 19— More Diction

## Lesson Summary

This lesson continues the ideas presented in the last lesson: writing clearly and communicating accurately. It covers colloquialism, loaded language, consistent point of view, parallelism, and gender-neutral language.

Good writers know that communicating requires choosing

words carefully. Writing styles that are too formal or informal, inappropriate, or just plain emotional, turn readers off. You may have the best ideas in the world, but if you can't get them across in writing, no one will ever act on your great ideas. On the other hand, commonplace ideas that are well expressed are more likely to get attention. How you choose your words has everything to do with whether your writing gets the attention it deserves.

## **Colloquialism**

*Colloquialisms* are informal words and phrases such as *a lot*, *in a bind*, *pulled it off*, and so on. These words

and phrases are widely used in conversations between friends, but in written communication they portray an attitude of chumminess or close friendship that may cause your message to be taken

less seriously than you intended. You may write without meaning to. A friendly, colloquial letter; however, a more formal tone is better for business communications, which are meant to be taken seriously in the following paragraphs. If you received the letter from an employee, which would you take more seriously?

I think the way we promote people who aren't that good at their jobs get promoted around with the right people. That just doesn't matter how much time I put into my job I do; I won't get promoted unless I'm that kind of guy.

I think our promotion system is unfair.

employees receive promotions similar to those of their superiors. This practice leaves the quantity and quality of work are not considered. I discuss this with my supervisors, and I feel as though I am not doing it for that reason alone.

The writer of the first paragraph sounds serious, but not that seriously. And yet he probably does; he communicates his seriousness in writing but in a way that is more appropriate in a conversation than in writing to his supervisor. The writer of the second paragraph conveys his seriousness by using more formal diction without falling into the opposite trap, distorting his meaning by trying to sound *too* intelligent. He has used a more formal language.

The following sentences illustrate the difference between informal and formal diction. By substituting the highlighted words for the underlined words, the sentences become more formal.

becomes more formal rather than colloquial

## Colloquial

More

I have around three hours to finish this job.

I have  
this

The pasta was real good.

The

We got sick from the food.

We

It looks like we could win.

It l

I'm awful tired.

I'm  
tired

## **Tone**

*Tone* describes a writer's emotional attitude toward the audience. The more reasonable and objective the tone, the more likely it is to be considered seriously. Rarely does anyone change an opinion, and they seldom change from undecided to persuaded. Persuasion requires clearly presented arguments. A reader or listener is more likely to accept an argument that seems fair and objective than one that lacks credibility. Use it carefully.

## *Avoid Anger*

Avoid accusatory, angry words that make demands. Consider the two paragraphs below. Which one is most likely to persuade the reader to take action?

I just got this stupid credit card bill in the mail. None of these outrageous charges are mine. I can't believe some big corporation like yours can't find a way to keep its records straight or keep its customers

from being cheated. If you can't do any better than that, why don't you just give it up? I reported my stolen credit card five days before any of these charges were made, and yet you idiots have charged me for these purchases. The fine print you guys are so fond of putting in all of your contracts says I am not (I'll say it again just to help you understand) **not** responsible for these charges. I want them removed immediately.

The credit card bill I received on April 25 contains several charges that need to be removed.

I reported my stolen credit card on April 20. When I called to make the report, the representative referred me the original contract that states, "No charges in excess of \$50.00 nor any made more than 24 hours after the card has been reported stolen shall be charged to the customer's account." Naturally, I was quite relieved. All of the charges on this account were made more than 24 hours after I reported the stolen card. Please remove the charges from my account. Thank you very much.

No matter how angry you might be, giving your reader the benefit of the

doubt is not only polite but also more likely to get results. (This principle is even more important when you're writing a supervisor, employee, or client than when you're writing a big credit card company.) The first letter is the one you might write in the heat of the moment when you first get your credit card bill. In fact, writing that letter might help you get the anger out of your system. Tearing it up will make you feel even better. *Then* you can sit down and write the letter you're actually going to send—the second version.

Use *sarcasm* (bitter, derisive language) and *irony* (saying the

opposite of what you actually mean) carefully in your writing. Like anger, sarcasm brings your credibility into question. Overusing sarcasm can make you seem childish or petty rather than reasonable and logical. Furthermore, in order for irony to be successful, the reader must immediately recognize it. Unless the reader fully understands, you risk confusing or distorting your message. A little well-placed irony or sarcasm may invigorate your writing, but it requires careful, skillful use.

### *Avoid Cuteness*

Avoid words that make your writing sound flippant, glib, or cute. Although

the writing may be entertaining to the reader, it might not be taken seriously. The paragraph below protests a decision, but fails to offer a single reason why the decision was wrong. It may get the attention of the reader, but it won't produce any results, except perhaps the dismissal of its author.

I'm just a li'l ol' girl, but it's clear to me that this decision is dead wrong. I'm afraid that the people who made it have a serious intelligence problem. If they took their two IQ points and rubbed them together, they probably couldn't start gasoline on fire. If you were one of those people . . . . Oh well, it's been

nice working for you.

The conclusion implied in this writer's last sentence—that she doesn't expect to work here much longer—is probably accurate.

### *Avoid Pompousness*

Avoid words that make your writing sound pompous or preachy. Few people respond positively to a condescending, patronizing tone.

Compare the two paragraphs below, both written by employees seeking a promotion. Which employee would you promote if they were both vying

for the same position and had nearly identical work records and qualifications?

If you examine my service and work record for the past two years, I believe you will find a dedicated, hardworking employee who is ideal for the floor manager position. I believe all employees should be on time for their jobs. You will see that my attendance record is impeccable, no absences and no tardies. You can see from my monthly evaluations that I was a high-quality employee when I was hired and that I have consistently maintained my high

standards. I strive to be the kind of employee all managers wish to hire, and I believe my record shows this. I am also extremely responsible. Again, my record will reflect that my supervisors have confidence in me and assign additional responsibility readily to me because I am someone who can handle it. I am a man of my word, and believe that responsibility is something to be treasured, not shirked. As you compare me with other employees, I feel confident that you will find I am the most competent person available.

Thank you for considering me for the position of floor manager. As you make your decision, I would like to highlight three items from my service and work record. First, in two years I have not missed work and have been tardy only once, as the result of an accident. Second, my supervisors have given me the highest ratings on each of the monthly evaluations. Finally, I was pleased to have been given additional responsibilities during my supervisors' vacation times, and I learned a great deal about managing sales and accounts as a result. I welcome

the challenge that would come with a promotion. Thank you again for your consideration.

Both writers highlight the same aspects of their employment records. Yet the first writer seems so full of himself that his superiors might wonder whether he has the people skills to be an effective supervisor. No one wants to work for a supervisor who is prone to such pronouncements as "responsibility is something to be treasured, not shirked." The other writer's just-the-facts approach is bound to make a better impression on the decision-makers.



## *Avoid Cheap Emotion*

Avoid language that is full of sentimental risk making your reader gag. The following error.

We were so deeply hurt by your cr  
failing to introduce us to Charlton I  
wonderful, talented, masculine act  
face of the earth. My friend Charlo  
have ever since we can remember.  
channeled river that will never stop  
imagine just how sorely disappoint  
were when we were not given the c  
shake the hand and hear the voice c

nor my dearest friend can seem to f  
sure we will remain scarred for ma

Are you gagging yet? Instead of regretting  
writer to the great Charlton Heston, the re  
congratulates himself on not having let th

## **Consistent Point of View**

Authors can write using the first person p  
*my, our*), second person point of view (y  
point of view (*she, he, one, they, her, hi*  
*theirs*). Avoid switching points of view v  
sentences. Keep the point of view consis

**Inconsistent**

**Co**

---

Citizens pay taxes, which entitle them [third person] to have some way in how their [third person] government is run. We [first person] have a right to insist on efficient use of four tax dollars.

We  
ent  
in  
We  
eff  
do

I [first person] enjoyed my trip to the park. You [second person] could see trees budding, flowers blooming, and baby animals running all over.

I e  
I s  
blo  
run

## Parallelism

Two or more equivalent ideas in a sentence should be presented in the same form. Using parallel sentence structures not only helps readers quickly recognize examples of parallel words, phrases, and

### Not Parallel

My roommate is miserly, sloppy,

and a bare.

My vaccum cleaner squealed loudly, shock violently, and dust filled the air.

We soon discovered that our plane tickets were invalid, that our cruise reservations had never been made, and our travel agent left town.

Pairs of ideas should always be presented following sentences present two or more forms.

The committee finds no original and  
What is original is not inspiring, and

We came, we saw, we conquered.

Belle was a timid, talented, and cre

Ask not what your country can do f  
country.

## **Using Gender-Neutral Language**

It may seem that language is neutral, simp  
Although this is partly true, our language  
communicates to others our social biases  
entire culture is gender-biased, the langua  
for expressing and perpetuating those bia

overcoming such a prejudice is to examine it so that it no longer perpetuates false stereotypes.

Some people resist changing the language, claiming it is harmless and that those who are offended are over-sensitive. It remains that many readers are sensitive to the use of masculine pronouns to refer to both sexes, and the lack of indicating gender. Saying, "Man must fulfill his duty" or "Man was a great poetess" strikes them as archaic and sexist.

Whenever emotionally charged words are used, the writer must be aware of the reader's perspective. A reader who is offended by the words will not read the work with an open mind.

## *Gender Traps*

Below are samples of the type of language that carries emotional charge that may sidetrack the ideas.

### **Masculine Nouns or Pronouns**

The most serious difficulty comes when the pronoun *he* is used to refer to an indefinite student, a postal carrier—the underlying problem comes up with words such as *so*, *everyone*, *no one*, or *nobody*. Below are traps in sentences and possible ways to r

## Poor

A presidential candidate must realize that his life is no longer his own.

## Better

Preside  
realize  
their ov

a) If a s  
his or h  
see his  
tell him  
[This se  
mismat  
using bo  
feminin  
Howerv  
awkwa

If a student wishes to change his schedule, he must see his advisor, who will tell him how to proceed.

b) If stu  
schedul  
advisor  
to proce  
making  
plural s  
pronou

c) If yo  
schedul  
will tel  
[This se  
person  
"your."

a) Anyo  
test sco

If anyone wants to improve his test scores, he should take good notes and study.

and stud  
sentenc  
referenc

b) Stud  
their tes  
notes an  
into the

c) Anyo  
his or h  
good no  
the mas  
singular

Note that you cannot simply change the w  
*theirs*. "If anyone wants to improve their  
take notes and study" is grammatically in  
*their* don't match their antecedent, anyone  
singular and *they* is plural.

## **Women as Subordinate to Men**

There are many subtle ways in which wri  
are always leaders and women are alway

**Poor**

**Be**

A principal and his staff need to establish good communication.

Th  
est

If you ask the nurse, she will summon the doctor if he is available.

If  
av

Bob took his wife and children to a movie.

Bo  
to

Emil asked his secretary to check the mail.

En  
the

Writers also fall into a similar kind of trap according to their abilities, while referring to appearance.

**Poor**

**Be**

Dr. Routmeir and his attractive, blond wife arrived at the party at 9:00 P.M.

a)  
arr  
P.M

b)  
Ro  
pa

The talented violinist and his beautiful accompanist took the stage.

Th  
acc

Note that in both sentences in the first col

to by his profession, while the woman is  
To avoid the appearance of assigning val  
accomplishments and to women because  
in the same context, either physical or pro  
first example the man is addressed by a f  
identified except as the wife belonging to  
appearance of referring to the woman stri  
man, refer to both by name.

## "Men's" Jobs and "Women's" Jobs

Avoid making special note of gender when referring to jobs traditionally done by men or women—the gender should not hold any more! The first sentence below makes gender assumptions, while the second does not.

When a man on board collapsed, a lady pilot came forward from the cockpit, and a male nurse offered assistance.

When a passenger collapsed, a pilot came forward from the cockpit, and a nurse offered assistance.

The references *lady pilot* and *male nurse* are unnecessary.

themselves because they assume that the 1 automatically assign a gender to the job. I not think in terms of the traditional stereo offended by the writer's assumption that t stereotypical thinking.

## *Avoiding Gender Traps*

As a writer, you must understand the effe references on readers. You can avoid off unintentionally with gender-specific lang using gender-neutral terms, using the plur sentences altogether to avoid a gender re these tactics have already been illustrate sentences above. More examples appear

## **Use Gender-Neutral Terms**

There are a lot of words in English that have taken different forms for male and female. These distinctions are becoming obsolete. Now we prefer one term to refer to both men and women in particular roles. And this change doesn't seem awkward, as you can see in the table below.

### **Gender-Specific**

### **Gender-Neutral**

waiter, waitress

server

stewardess, steward

flight attendant

policeman, policewoman

police officer

chairwoman, chairman

chairperson

man-made

synthetic

foreman

supervisor

manpower

employees

man, mankind

humanity

In the past, it was common to use the word man to refer to all humanity, both men and women. Now, using the word man will offend many readers. The sentence below illustrates this kind of usage while the second one offers an appropriate alternative.

If man wishes to improve his environment,  
he must first improve himself.

If humanity wishes to improve its environment,  
each individual must improve.

## Convert to the Plural

One of the stickiest gender-reference problems is a sentence such as, "A student must do *his* homework and succeed in *his* classes." The easiest way to fix *he* words is to turn the singular pronouns into the plural pronouns *they* and *their*. Consider revising the antecedents of those pronouns (see Lesson 13): "*Students* must do *their* homework in *their* classes." Here are some other ex

**Gender-Specific**

**Ge**

The doctor uses his best judgment.

Do  
jud

Every student must do his homework.

Stu  
ho

A company executive is wise to choose his words carefully.

Co  
wi  
ca

If a manager wants respect, he should behave respectably.

Ma  
res  
res

## **Restructure Sentences to Avoid Gender**

Finally, you can avoid gender references

your sentences. See how this is done in the

## Gender-Specific

Ge

Man has always turned to his intellect to solve problems.

Pe  
the  
pro

A company executive is wise to drive himself relentlessly.

Ar  
mu

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Someone left his umbrella in the cloakroom. He should call Last

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and Found.

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The ladies enjoyed the shopping trip.

Th  
trip

## **Skill Building Until Ne**

Pay close attention to the tone and style of the text you read. Is the degree of formality appropriate for the audience? Do you sense emotional bias or a point of view consistent? Are equivalent ideas properly supported? Do the writing contain gender references? If so, do they offend the reader?



# Lesson 20— Communicating Yours Ideas

## Lesson Summary

The previous lessons have dealt with words and sentences. This final lesson is about the bigger issues involved in a piece of writing as a whole. By focusing on the purpose of your writing, you can develop your ideas in a logical, effective way to have the biggest possible impact on your readers.

Mastering writing detail is important, but the main purpose of writing is to communicate a message with a specific purpose to an audience. Most writing does one of three things: inform, explain, or present an argument. Writing effectively involves discovering what you want to say, organizing your ideas, and presenting them in the most logical, effective way. This lesson discusses all of these issues.

## **Writing to Inform**

Good, informational writing is clear, simple, and orderly. In business writing, it's important to get right to the

point. No one has time to spend reading your warm-ups, the words you write while you're trying to get to the point. The best communications state the point directly and present the information clearly.

However, sometimes getting started is difficult. Asking yourself a few key questions will help you clarify your thoughts and get to the point.

1. Summarize the main idea of your communication in a single sentence. If you can do this, the rest of the writing will come more easily. State it as simply and clearly as possible. If your communication presents a list of information, facts, or statistics, try summarizing the purpose of the information. The sentence should answer the question: Why am I writing

this?

**2.** Next, think about your audience. Who will be reading your writing? What is your relationship with the audience: superior, colleague, customer? Thinking about the audience helps you to use an appropriate tone or attitude.

**3.** Brainstorm all the information that must be included in the communication. This can be in the form of a list or a piece of paper with words and pictures connected by lines; use whatever works best for you. Get all the information down on paper where you can look at it.

4. Once the information is all assembled, think about the most efficient way to organize it. Think about your message as a train of thought, one in which all the parts are connected. How can you organize the information in such a way that connections seem easy and natural? Consider these organizational patterns:

- **Spatial order:** the order in which items are arranged in relationship to each other
- **Chronological order:** time order
- **Logical order:** begin with the

most basic premise, follow with what can be derived from the premise

- **General to specific:** begin with a general statement, arrive at a specific fact
  
- **Specific to general:** arrive at a generalization from a series of specific facts

**5.** Now it's time to start writing. Begin with a sentence or short paragraph that states the purpose of the communication, revising what you came up with in Step 1 now that you know what your main points are.

**6.** Develop each of the ideas you identified in Steps 3 and 4 in a single paragraph. If the supporting ideas can be presented as effectively in list form as they can in sentence form, use a bulleted list similar to the one above that outlines organizational patterns. Stick to one idea in each paragraph and keep the paragraphs as short and concise as possible.

If you're writing for business, use numbered and bulleted lists like the ones on this page. Strive for a clear, logical presentation, one that is well organized and free of excess words that say nothing. Here's a map of one

writer's organizational process in responding to a request: the planning, the organization, the main idea, the audience, and the completed memo.

## The Memo

To: Mr. Lundsky

From: Allie McGinnis

Re: Technology assessment and needs of sociology department as requested

Date: May 9, 1996

I am providing the information you requested about equipment we

have in our department. I am also outlining our additional requests and the reasons for these requests.

These are the machines, memory capacity, and printers we have at this time:

- PS1, 4 mb RAM, NEC Silentwriter printer (purchased in 1991)
- PS2, 8 mb RAM, Epson LQ2 dot matrix printer (both purchased in 1992)
- AST, 8 mb RAM, no printer

(purchased in 1992)

- PS2, 8 mb RAM, Laserjet II printer (both purchased in 1993)

- Compaq Presario, 16 mb RAM, HP Deskjet 560 (purchased 1995)

We are requesting five 8-megabyte memory SIMMs to upgrade all of the computers to at least 16 mb of RAM. The most recent programs we have purchased require a minimum of 10 mb. Eight-mb SIMMS are the most cost-effective way to buy additional memory. A

single 8-mb SIMMs is \$95.00, while 4-mb SIMMs are \$72.00 and 2-mb SIMMs are \$59.00 each. We also need an HP Deskjet 660C. We plan to move the HP Deskjet 560 to the AST, which has no printer, and put the new printer with color capability on our newest, most powerful unit.

Thank you for considering our request.

## **Writing to Explain**

Another form of writing you're likely to use often is explanation. You may

need to provide reasons for an action or policy, or you may need to explain how a product is used.

For this type of writing, follow the same planning process as you would for a written communication designed to present information.

1. Summarize the main idea and purpose.
2. Determine the audience.
3. Brainstorm ideas.



## The Planning

**Main idea:** Mr. Lundskey requested information about the printers (models, date of purchase) used in our department and justification for the technology requests we made last year.

**Purpose:** Provide the information so the department can get what it requested

**Audience:** Mr. Lundskey, technology coordinator

# I. Data

## A. Current computers and memory

1. PS1, 4 mb RAM

2. PS2, 8 mb RAM

3. AST, 8 mb RAM

4. PS2, 8 mb RAM

5. Compaq Presario, 16 mb RAM

## B. Printers

1. NEC, 1991
2. Epson, 1992
3. HP Laserjet II, 1993
4. HP Deskjet 560, 1995

## II. Requests

### A. Additional printer

1. HP Deskjet 660C for Compaq Presario
2. Reason: newest, most powerful

computer needs color capability

## B. Memory upgrades

1. two 8 mb SIMMs for PS1
2. two 8 mb SIMMs for PS2s respectively
3. 8mb SIMMs for AST

## C. Justification for memory upgrades

1. Most recent programs require a minimum of 16 mb RAM

2. 8 mb SIMMs are the most cost effective

**4.** Organize the ideas.

**5.** Begin by stating the purpose.

**6.** Develop the ideas in paragraphs.  
Keep these tips in mind as you write.

- Present the steps in a logical order. Chronological order is usually best for a process.
- Be certain you've explained each step clearly, accurately, and thoroughly enough for a reader to be

able to understand.

- Use the facts and examples to support each of your points.

- Pay special attention to the introduction and conclusion. These two paragraphs lay the foundation for understanding and give the reader a quick review of the information you've just presented. Make the beginning and ending paragraphs work for you.

Here's a real-world example: the planning one writer did before drafting a letter to a customer explaining how to operate a new copy machine.

**Main idea:** explain to new customer how to use a new copy machine

**Audience:** members of promotional staff at KCBD-TV, all of whom use the copier

**Purposes:** (1) clearly explain use, (2) clearly outline maintenance procedures, (3) provide basic trouble-shooting suggestions, (4) assure them that the copier is reliable and that service is quick, should they need it.

I. Daily use

A. Copying

B. Enlarging/reducing

C. Handling multiple-page documents

## II. Maintenance

A. Routine

1. Loading paper

2. Adding toner

3. Clearing paper jams

## B. Troubleshooting

1. Electrical problems

2. Paper jams

3. Failure to copy

## C. Calling the technician

1. Business day number

2. Emergency service



If you are supporting a moral or emotional claim, use logic or emotional appeals made with vivid description and concrete language.

### ***Credibility***

A written communication is *credible* if the reader believes the writer or finds the writer trustworthy. Regardless of the history between the writer and reader, each communication provides a fresh opportunity to establish credibility.

In any communication, you can establish credibility in one of three ways:

- **Demonstrate your knowledge of the subject.** Show that you have personal experience that makes your perspective on the subject reliable. If you have no personal experience from which to draw, show that you have consulted a variety of reliable, neutral sources and that your views are based on your research.

- **Demonstrate fairness and objectivity.** Show that you have taken into account all of the significant viewpoints. Convince your reader that

you understand and value other perspectives on the subject and that you see their merit. Show that you have carefully considered all of the evidence, even that which does not support your point of view.

- **Seek areas of agreement.** This is especially valuable if your communication is the beginning of a process that will result in a compromise. Find out what the viewpoints have in common and begin building trust and credibility on common ground.

Use the same six steps outlined above to plan a persuasive communication.

Examine the following writer's plan for a written communication that argues in favor of a new scheduling policy.

**Claim:** store needs a better system for scheduling employees

**Audience:** store's general manager

**Purposes:** (1) point out problems inherent in the current policy, (2) outline the qualities a new scheduling policy should have, (3) point out the advantages of a scheduling policy with those qualities, (4)

show that customers will receive better service, (5) show that employees understand and are willing to share the burden of developing and implementing a new policy.

## I. Problems with current policy

A. Based solely upon seniority

B. Arbitrary within seniority brackets

C. Equal number for all shifts

1. Doesn't allow for

employees willing to be flexible

2. Not enough employees during peak sales times

3. Too many employees during off-peak sales times

4. Leads to minimal employee commitment

D. No incentive for good attendance

II. Qualities of an effective scheduling

policy

### III. Reliability

A. Warranties

B. Weekly maintenance checks

C. Service

D. Two-hour replacement guarantee

**First paragraph:** Everyone in the promotional department at KCBD-TV will find this new Sharp copy machine

a huge improvement over the older model. You'll appreciate how easy it is to use this new copier for daily tasks, and anyone can perform the routine maintenance on the machine. This, our most reliable copier, is backed by a long-term warranty and a quick, efficient service plan.

## **Writing to Persuade**

The other most common type of writing involves presenting a clear, convincing argument. Your written communication may be a single message, or it may be the first in a series of exchanges that will eventually result in a compromise.

Each type of argument requires a different approach; however, both kinds of persuasive communications must have three common characteristics: logical order, solid support, and credibility.

### *Logical Order*

Even the brightest and best ideas make no impact if a reader cannot recognize or follow them. Arguments must be carefully organized to create the desired effect on the reader.

The strongest positions are the beginning and the ending of a communication. Place your strongest

argument in one position or the other and arrange the rest in such a way that they can be clearly stated and easily linked together.

### ***Solid Support***

Good persuasion not only makes a clear, strong claim but also proves the claim with solid support. Here are some ways to support your assertions:

- **Examples**, either personal or researched.
- **Objective evidence**, such as facts and statistics.

- **Citing an authority.** Use a qualified, timely authority whose opinions are applicable to your special situations. If the reader is not familiar with the authority, explain why the person is qualified.

- **Analogy.** If you can think of a clear comparison with which the reader is automatically familiar, present the comparison clearly. Carefully point out all of the similarities and explain why the comparison is useful and applicable.

- A. Continues to take seniority into account
- B. Allows for individual preferences
- C. Allows for flex time
- D. Allows for increased numbers of employees during off times
- E. Provides an incentive for reliability
- F. Provides an incentive to work longer hours

### III. Advantages of a policy with these characteristics

#### A. Improved customer service

1. Better service during peak periods

2. Quality service during off-peak periods

#### B. Less absenteeism

#### C. Improved employee morale

#### D. Sense of ownership among employees

### IV. Development and implementation

A. Management responsibilities

B. Employee responsibilities

1. Committee willing to deve

2. Willing to assume some re

**First paragraph:** Since we value c  
to develop a scheduling system that  
service while at the same time fost  
commitment among employees.

Whenever you write, keep in mind that yo  
clearly and simply as possible. Write to c  
words should deliver the message, not ge

## Skill Building Unit

Write a memo asking for a raise. If you can't get it now, you've spent with this book has been worth it. The worst case scenario: Whoever reads it will come back and deny the request. Even if this happens, it has made an impression. If you presented a request in your supervisor's mind even if you don't get it, it will come sooner than it would have if you hadn't written the case scenario: You get a raise. How can you be sure the memo, write it. It will build your confidence to ask at a more opportune time. You can think about it, then send it.

Whenever you have an idea you want to write down, do it. It won't be long before people begin to read it. Get it off the pen. A word of caution: Some people are good at writing, and they may even try to discontinue it.

use softer words when you write, and w  
will come to appreciate your ideas and y

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49.  a  b  c  d
50.  a  b  c  d



7. Which version uses parentheses correctly?

a. On the first trip my family took to the amusement park (I was only five years old at the time), I got lost in an area known as Adventureland.

b. On the first trip (my family took to the amusement park) I was only five years old at the time, I got lost in an area known as Adventureland.

c. On the first trip my family took to the amusement park I was only

five years old at the time, (I got lost in an area known as Adventureland).

d. On the first trip my family took to the amusement park I was (only five years old) at the time, I got lost in an area known as Adventureland.

**8.** Choose the subject that agrees with the verb in the following sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ of the musicians have arrived at the concert.

- a. Each
- b. Neither
- c. One

d. Two

9. Which of the following sentences is most clearly and correctly written?

a. Bart told us all about the fish he caught while waiting in line at the movie theater.

b. At the movie theater, Bart told us about the fish he caught while we waited in line.

c. As we waited in line at the movie theater, Bart told us about the fish he caught.

d. As we waited in line, Bart told us about the fish he caught at the movie theater.

**10.** Which version is in the active voice?

- a. The president of the P.T.A. requested donations for the new auditorium.
- b. For the new auditorium, donations had been requested by the P.T.A. president.
- c. Donations for the new auditorium were requested by the president of the P.T.A.
- d. Donations were requested by the P.T.A. president for the new auditorium.

**11.** Which version has a consistent point of view?

- a. Last Sunday, we went canoeing on the Platte River. You could see bald eagles high in the trees above us.
- b. While we were canoeing last Sunday on the Platte River, high in the trees above us, you could see bald eagles.
- c. We went canoeing last Sunday on the Platte River, and high in the trees above us, we could see bald eagles.
- d. High in the trees above, the bald eagles were looking down at you, as we canoed on the Platte River last Sunday.

**12.** Which version uses punctuation

correctly?

- a. Yikes! Did you see that mouse run under the stove.
- b. Yikes! Did you see that mouse run under the stove?
- c. Yikes? Did you see that mouse run under the stove!
- d. Yikes: Did you see that mouse run under the stove?

**42.** In which of the following sentences is the underlined pronoun **INCORRECT**?

- a. The teacher who won the award was her.
- b. He and I plan to visit you tomorrow.
- c. When can she come over for dinner?
- d. Both Michael and Steven will finish their homework early.

**43.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. The hospital doesn't have Rebeccas' records.
- b. The hospital doesn't have Rebecca's records.
- c. The hospital doesn't have Rebecca's records'.
- d. The hospital doesn't have Rebecca's records.

**44.** Which version is written correctly?

- a. Cheers was one of the most popular shows ever on television.
- b. *Cheers* was one of the most popular shows ever on television.
- c. "Cheers" was one of the most

popular shows ever on television.  
d. CHEERS was one of the most popular shows ever on television.

**45.** Which of the following sentences is in the passive voice?

a. Every morning this week, Zeke brought bagels to work.

b. Each day, he selected several different kinds.

c. Generally, more than half of the bagels were eaten before 9:00.

d. We've asked him to stop because we've all gained a few pounds.

**46.** We noticed the \_\_\_\_\_ of his cologne when he \_\_\_\_\_ in

front of us.

- a. scent, past
- b. scent, passed
- c. sent, passed
- d. sent, past

**47.** Ian is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the triplets, but \_\_\_\_\_ all the members of his family, he is the only one with a talent for music.

- a. smallest among
- b. smallest, between
- c. smaller, between
- d. smaller, among

48. \_\_\_\_\_ the  
person \_\_\_\_\_ found my wallet.

- a. Your, who
- b. Your, which
- c. You're that
- d. You're, who

49. I \_\_\_\_\_ you thought he  
would be much older \_\_\_\_\_ I  
am.

- a. supposed, then
- b. suppose, then
- c. suppose, than
- d. supposed, than

**50.** Even doesn't like chocolate; he  
\_\_\_\_\_ away  
his \_\_\_\_\_ of cake.

- a. through, piece
- b. through, peace
- c. threw, peace
- d. threw, piece

## **Appendix A— How To Prepare for a Test**

A standardized test is nothing to fear. Many people clutch and worry about a testing situation, but you're much better off taking that nervous energy and turning it into something positive that will help you do well on your test rather than inhibit your testing ability. The following pages include valuable tips for combating test anxiety, that sinking or blank feeling some people

get as they begin a test or encounter a difficult question. Next, you will find valuable tips for using your time wisely and for avoiding errors in a testing situation. Finally, you will find a plan for preparing for the test, a plan for the test day, and a great suggestion for an after-test activity.

## **Combating Test Anxiety**

Knowing what to expect and being prepared for it is the best defense against test anxiety, that worrisome feeling that keeps you from doing your best. Practice and preparation keeps you from succumbing to that feeling.

Nevertheless, even the brightest, most well-prepared test takers may suffer from occasional bouts of test anxiety. But don't worry; you can overcome it.

### *Take the Test One Question at a Time*

Focus all of your attention on the one question you're answering. Block out any thoughts about questions you've already read or concerns about what's coming next. Concentrate your thinking where it will do the most good—on the question you're answering.

## Answer Key

If you miss any of the answers, you can find help for that kind of question in the lesson shown to the right of the answer.

1. b. Lesson 3

2. b. Lesson 1

3. d. Lesson 4

**4. a. Lesson 5**

**5. c. Lesson 7**

**6. b. Lesson 9**

**7. a. Lesson 9**

**8. d. Lesson 12**

**9. c. Lesson 15**

**10. a. Lesson 11**

**11. c. Lesson 19**

**12. b. Lesson 2**

**13. c. Lesson 1**

**14. d. Lesson 10**

**15. a. Lesson 10**

**16. d. Lesson 13**

**17. b. Lesson 14**

**18. a. Lesson 15**

**19. c. Lesson 17**

**20.** d. Lesson 18

**21.** c. Lesson 19

**22.** a. Lesson 18

**23.** b. Lesson 2

**24.** d. Lesson 1

**25.** d. Lesson 3

**26.** a. Lesson 7

**27.** c. Lesson 6

**28.** c. Lesson 9

**29.** b. Lesson 4

**30.** a. Lesson 12

**31.** d. Lesson 13

**32.** a. Lesson 14

**33.** b. Lesson 17

**34.** d. Lesson 16

**35.** c. Lesson 6

**36.** c. Lesson 4

**37.** a. Lesson 5

**38.** c. Lesson 10

**39.** b. Lesson 6

**40.** b. Lesson 9

**41.** d. Lesson 12

**42.** a. Lesson 13

**43.** d. Lesson 7

**44.** c. Lesson 8

**45.** c. Lesson 11

**46.** b. Lesson 16

**47.** a. Lesson 15

**48.** d. Lesson 14

**49.** c. Lesson 17

**50.** d. Lesson 16

## *Develop a Positive Attitude*

Keep reminding yourself that you're prepared. The fact that you have read this book means that you're better prepared than most others who are taking the test. Remember, it's only a test, and you're going to do your **best**. That's all anyone can ask of you. If that nagging drill sergeant voice inside your head starts sending negative messages, combat them with positive ones of your own.

- "I'm doing just fine."

- "I've prepared for this test."
- "I know exactly what to do."
- "I know I can get the score I'm shooting for."

You get the idea. Remember to drown out negative messages with positive ones of your own.

### ***If You Lose Your Concentration***

Don't worry about it! It's normal. During a long test it happens to everyone. When your mind is stressed

or overexerted, it takes a break whether you want it to or not. It's easy to get your concentration back if you simply acknowledge the fact that you've lost it and take a quick break. Your brain needs very little time (seconds really) to rest.

Put your pencil down and close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths and listen to the sound of your breathing. The ten seconds or so that this takes is really all the time your brain needs to relax and get ready to focus again.

Try this technique several times in the days before the test when you feel stressed. The more you practice, the

better it will work for you on the day of the test.

### *If you Freeze Before or During the Test*

Don't worry about a question that stumps you even though you're sure you know the answer. Mark it and go on to the next question. You can come back to the "stumper" later. Try to put it out of your mind completely until you come back to it. Just let your subconscious mind chew on the question while your conscious mind focuses on the other items (one at a time—of course). Chances are, the memory block will be gone by the time

you return to the question.

If you freeze before you ever begin the test, here's what to do.

- 1.** Take a little time to look over the test.
- 2.** Read a few of the questions.
- 3.** Decide which ones are the easiest and start there.
- 4.** Before long, you'll be "in the groove."



## Time Strategies

### *Pace Yourself*

The most important time strategy is pacing yourself. Before you begin, take just a few seconds to survey the test, making note of the number of questions and of the sections that look easier than the rest. Rough out a time schedule based upon the amount of time available to you. Mark the halfway point on your test and make a note beside that mark of what the time

will be when the testing period is half over.

## *Keep Moving*

Once you begin the test, keep moving. If you work slowly in an attempt to make fewer mistakes, your mind will become bored and begin to wander. You'll end up making far more mistakes if you're not concentrating.

As long as we're talking about mistakes, don't stop for difficult questions. Skip them and move on. You can come back to them later if you have time. A question that takes you five seconds to answer counts as much

as one that takes you several minutes, so pick up the easy points first. Besides, answering the easier questions first helps to build your confidence and gets you in the testing groove. Who knows? As you go through the test, you may even stumble across some relevant information to help you answer those tough questions.

### ***Don't Rush***

Keep moving, but don't rush. Think of your mind as a seesaw. On one side is your emotional energy. On the other side is your intellectual energy. When your emotional energy is high, your intellectual capacity is low.

Remember how difficult it is to reason with someone when you're angry? On the other hand, when your intellectual energy is high, your emotional energy is low. Rushing raises your emotional energy. Remember the last time you were late for work? All that rushing around causes you to forget important things—like your lunch. Move quickly to keep your mind from wandering, but don't rush and get yourself flustered.

### *Check Yourself*

Check yourself at the halfway mark. If you're a little ahead, you know you're on track and may even have a little time left to check your work. If you're

a little behind, you have several choices. You can pick up the pace a little, but do this only if you can do it comfortably. Remember—**don't rush!** You can also skip around in the remaining portion of the test to pick up as many easy points as possible. This strategy has one drawback, however. If you are marking a bubble-style answer sheet, and you put the right answers in the wrong bubbles—they're wrong. So pay close attention to the question numbers if you decide to do this.

## **Avoiding Errors**

When you take the test, you want to

make as few errors as possible in the questions you answer. Here are a few tactics to keep in mind.

## *Control Yourself*

Remember the comparison between your mind and a seesaw that you read about a few paragraphs ago? Keeping your emotional energy low and your intellectual energy high is the best way to avoid mistakes. If you feel stressed or worried, stop for a few seconds. Acknowledge the feeling (Hmmm! I'm feeling a little pressure here!), take a few deep breaths, and send yourself a few positive messages. This relieves your emotional anxiety and boosts your intellectual capacity.

## *Directions*

In many standardized testing situations a proctor reads the instructions aloud. Make certain you understand what is expected. If you don't, **ask**. Listen carefully for instructions about how to answer the questions and make certain you know how much time you have to complete the task. Write the time on your test if you don't already know how long you have to take the test. If you miss this vital information, **ask for it**. You need it to do well on your test.

## *Answers*

Place your answers in the right blanks or the corresponding ovals on the answer sheet. Right answers in the wrong place earn no points. It's a good idea to check every five to ten questions to make sure you're in the right spot. That way you won't need much time to correct your answer sheet if you have made an error.

## *Reading Long Passages*

Frequently, standardized tests are designed to test your reading comprehension. The reading sections often contain passages of a paragraph or more. Here are a few tactics for approaching these sections.

This may seem strange, but some questions can be answered without ever reading the passage. If the passage is short, a paragraph around four sentences or so, read the questions first. You may be able to answer them by using your common sense. You can check your answers later after you've actually read the passage. Even if you can't answer any of the questions, you know what to look for in the passage. This focuses your reading and makes it easier for you to retain important information. Most questions will deal with isolated details in the passage. If you know what to look for ahead of time, it's easier to find the information.

If a reading passage is long and is followed by more than ten questions, you may end up spending too much time reading the questions first. Even so, take a few seconds to skim the questions and read a few of the shorter ones. As you read, mark up the passage. If you find a sentence that seems to state the main idea of the passage, underline it. As you read through the rest of the passage, number the main points that support the main idea. Several questions will deal with this information. If it's underlined and numbered, you can locate it easily. Other questions will ask for specific details. **Circle** information that tells who, what, when, or where. The

circles will be easy to locate later if your run across a question that asks for specific information. Marking up a passage in this way also heightens your concentration and makes it more likely that you'll remember the information when you answer the questions following the passage.

## *Choosing the Right Answers*

Make sure you understand what the question is asking. If you're not sure of what's being asked, you'll never know whether you've chosen the right answer. So figure out what the question is asking. If the answer isn't readily apparent, look for clues in the answer choices. Notice the similarities and differences in the answer choices. Sometimes this helps to put the question in a new perspective and makes it easier to answer. If you're still not sure of the answer, use the

process of elimination. First, eliminate any answer choices that are obviously wrong. Then reason your way through the remaining choices. You may be able to use relevant information from other parts of the test. If you can't eliminate any of the answer choices, you might be better off to skip the question and come back to it later. If you can't eliminate any answer choices to improve your odds when you come back later, then make a guess and move on.

### ***If you're Penalized for Wrong Answers***

You **must know** whether there's a

penalty for wrong answers before you begin the test. If you don't, ask the proctor before the test begins. Whether you make a guess or not depends upon the penalty. Some standardized tests are scored in such a way that every wrong answer reduces your score by one fourth or one half of a point.

Whatever the penalty, if you can eliminate enough choices to make the odds of answering the question better than the penalty for getting it wrong, make a guess.

Let's imagine you are taking a test in which each answer has four choices and you are penalized one fourth of a point for each wrong answer. If you have no clue and cannot eliminate any

of the answer choices, you're better off leaving the question blank because the odds of answering correctly are one in four. This makes the penalty and the odds equal. However, if you can eliminate one of the choices, the odds are now in your favor. You have a one in three chance of answering the question correctly. Fortunately, few tests are scored using such elaborate means, but if your test is one of them, know the penalties and calculate your odds before you take a guess on a question.

### ***If you Finish Early***

Use any time you have left at the end of

the test or test section to check your work. First, make certain you've put the answers in the right places. As you're doing this, make sure you've answered each question only once. Most standardized tests are scored in such a way that questions with more than one answer are marked wrong. If you've erased an answer, make sure you've done a good job. Check for stray marks on your answer sheet that could distort your score.

After you've checked for these obvious errors, take a second look at the more difficult questions. You've probably heard the folk wisdom about never changing an answer. If you have a good reason for thinking a response is

wrong, change it.

## **The Days before the Test**

### *Physical Activity*

Get some exercise in the days preceding the test. You'll send some extra oxygen to your brain and allow your thinking performance to peak on the day you take the test. Moderation is the key here. You don't want to exercise so much that you feel exhausted, but a little physical activity will invigorate your body and brain.

## *Balanced Diet*

Like your body, your brain needs the proper nutrients to function well. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables in the days before the test. Foods that are high in lecithin, such as fish and beans, are especially good choices. Lecithin is a mineral your brain needs for peak performance. You may even consider a visit to your local pharmacy to buy a bottle of lecithin tablets several weeks before your test.

## *Rest*

Get plenty of sleep the nights before you take the test. Don't overdo it,

though, or you'll make yourself as groggy as if you were overtired. Go to bed at a reasonable time, early enough to get the number of hours you need to function **effectively**. You'll feel relaxed and rested if you've gotten plenty of sleep in the days before you take the test.

### ***Trial Run***

At some point before you take the test, make a trial run to the testing center to see how long it takes. Rushing raises your emotional energy and lowers your intellectual capacity, so you want to allow plenty of time on test day to get to the testing center. Arriving ten or

fifteen minutes early gives you time to relax and get situated.

## **Test Day**

It's finally here, the day of the big test. Set your alarm early enough to allow plenty of time. Eat a good breakfast. Avoid anything that's really high in sugar, such as donuts. A sugar high turns into a sugar low after an hour or so. Cereal and toast, or anything with complex carbohydrates is a good choice. Eat only moderate amounts. You don't want to take a test feeling stuffed!

Pack a high energy snack to take with you. You may have a break sometime during the test when you can grab a quick snack. Bananas are great. They have a moderate amount of sugar and plenty of brain nutrients, such as potassium. Most proctors won't allow you to eat a snack while you're testing, but a peppermint shouldn't pose a problem. Peppermints are like smelling salts for your brain. If you lose your concentration or suffer from a momentary mental block, a peppermint can get you back on track. Don't forget the earlier advice about relaxing and taking a few deep breaths.

Leave early enough so you have plenty of time to get to the test center. Allow a few minutes for unexpected traffic. When you arrive, locate the restroom and use it. Few things interfere with concentration as much as a full bladder. Then find your seat and make sure it's comfortable. If it isn't, tell the proctor and ask to change to something you find more suitable.

Now relax and think positively! Before you know it the test will be over, and you'll walk away knowing you've done as well as you can.

## **After the Test**

Two things:

- 1. Plan a little celebration.**
- 2. Go to it.**

If you have something to look forward to after the test is over, you may find it easier to prepare well for the test and to keep moving during the test. **Good luck!**

## **Appendix B— Additional Resources**

If using this book has whetted your appetite for learning to write better, you may want to continue your study. Many high schools and community colleges offer inexpensive writing courses for adults in their continuing education departments, or you may be able to find a teacher who is willing to tutor you for a modest fee. In addition, you might consult one of the following

books:

- *Better English* by Norman Lewis (Dell)

Useful for general information; suited to both native and nonnative speakers of English.

- *English Made Simple* by Arthur Waldhorn and Arthur Ziegler (Made Simple Books)

Designed for nonnative speakers of English; also good for native speakers with little training in grammar.

- *Errors in English and How to Correct Them* by Harry Shaw (HarperCollins)

Addresses specific problems in both writing and grammar; useful for nonnative speakers of English.

- *Grammar* by James R. Hurford (Cambridge University Press)

Thorough coverage of parts of speech, sentence structure, usage, punctuation, and mechanics; especially good for native speakers of English.

- *Grammar Essentials* by Judith Olson  
(LearningExpress)

All the rules of grammar  
explained in plain English;  
includes lots of exercises so you  
practice what you learn.

- *The Grammar Handbook* by Irwin L. Feigenbaum (Oxford University Press)

Huge, unfortunately expensive, book; very comprehensive and problem specific.

- *The Handbook of Good English* by Edward D. Johnson (Washington Square Press)

Well-organized, comprehensive handbook for both grammar and writing.

- *Improve Your Writing for Work* by Elizabeth Chesla (LearningExpress)

Great instruction on how to write in the business world, as well as tips on good writing in general.

- *Living in English* by Betsy J. Blusser (National Textbook Company)

Specially designed for nonnative speakers of English.

- *1001 Pitfalls in English Grammar* (Barron's)

Problem-solving approach to writing and grammar; very useful for nonnative speakers of English.

- *Practice with Idioms* by Ronald E. Feare (Oxford University Press)

For nonnative speakers of English.

- *Smart English* by Anne Francis (Signet)

Thorough general-purpose handbook for both writing and grammar; good for nonnative

speakers of English.

- *The Well-Tempered Sentence: A Punctuation Handbook for the Innocent, the Eager and the Doomed* by Karen Elizabeth Gordon (Ticknor and Field)

Interesting general information on punctuation; especially valuable for nonnative and confused native speakers.

- *Writing Smart* by Marcia Lerner (Princeton Review)

Good for general writing skills;

well-organized so information is  
easy to find.

# LEARNING EXPRESS SKILL BUILDERS

## **Writing Skills Success**

### **In 20 Minutes a Day**

Judith F. Olson



NEW YORK

## **An Important Note to Our Library Readers**

If you have checked this book out from your school or public library, please do not write in the book itself. Instead use a separate notepad to write down your answers, so that other readers in your library can reuse the material. Thank you for your help and for your consideration of others.



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## Post-Test

Now that you've spent a good deal of time improving your grammar and writing skills, take this post-test to see how much you've learned. If you took the pretest at the beginning of this book, you have a good way to compare what you knew when you started the book with what you know now.

When you complete this test, grade yourself, and then compare your score

with your score on the pretest. If your score now is much greater than your pretest score, congratulations—you've profited noticeably from your hard work. If your score shows little improvement, perhaps there are certain chapters you need to review. Do you notice a pattern to the types of questions you got wrong? Whatever you score on this post-test, keep this book around for review and to refer to when you are unsure of a grammatical rule.

There's an answer sheet you can use for filling in the correct answers on the next page. Or, if you prefer, simply circle the answer numbers in this book. If the book doesn't belong to

you, write the numbers 1–50 on a piece of paper and record your answers there. Take as much time as you need to do this short test. When you finish, check your answers against the answer key that follows this test. Each answer tells you which lesson of this book teaches you about the grammatical rule in that question.

## Pretest

1. Which version of the sentence is correctly capitalized?

a. Last Thursday, my Mother, my Aunt Sarah, and I went to the museum to see an exhibit of African art.

b. Last Thursday, my mother, my Aunt Sarah, and I went to the museum to see an exhibit of African art.

c. Last Thursday, my mother, my aunt Sarah, and I went to the Museum to see an exhibit of African art.

d. Last thursday, my mother, my aunt Sarah, and I went to the museum to see an exhibit of African Art.

2. Which of the underlined words in the following sentence should be capitalized?

The governor gave a speech at the fourth of July picnic, which was held at my cousin's farm five miles east of town.

- a. governor
- b. fourth
- c. cousin's
- d. east

**3.** Which of the underlined words in the following sentence should be capitalized?

"Last semester, I wrote my history report on the Korean war," my sister told me.

- a. semester
- b. history
- c. war
- d. sister

**4.** Which version uses periods correctly?

a. Dr Harrison will speak at a hotel in Chicago, Ill, on Thurs at 3:00 P.M.

b. Dr. Harrison will speak at a hotel in Chicago, Ill, on Thurs at 3:00 PM.

c. Dr Harrison will speak at a hotel in Chicago, Ill, on Thurs. at 3:00 P.M.

d. Dr. Harrison will speak at a hotel in Chicago, Ill., on Thurs. at 3:00 P.M.

**5.** Which version uses punctuation correctly?

- a. Watch out. The road is icy?
- b. Watch out! The road is icy.
- c. Watch out? The road is icy!
- d. Watch out, the road is icy?

**6.** Which one is a sentence fragment, that is, NOT a complete sentence?

- a. Hearing the thunder, the lifeguard ordered us out of the water.
- b. Turn off the lights.
- c. Sunday afternoon spent reading and playing computer games.
- d. I was surprised to see that my neighbor had written a letter to the editor.

7. Three of the following sentences are faulty. They are either run-ons or comma splices. Which one is NOT a faulty sentence?

- a. The newspapers are supposed to be delivered by 7:00, but I am usually finished before 6:45.
- b. I called the delivery service this morning, they told me the shipment would arrive on time.
- c. Look in the closet you should find it there.
- d. I was the first to sign the petition Harry was second.



**14.** Which is the correct punctuation for the underlined portion?

The weather forecasters are predicting ten inches of snow tonight therefore the annual chili supper will be rescheduled for next week.

- a. tonight, therefore
- b. tonight, therefore,
- c. tonight; therefore,
- d. tonight, therefore;

**15.** Which is the correct punctuation for the underlined portion?

You may choose to read any two of the following novels *The Great Gatsby*, *Song of Solomon*, *Sophie's Choice*, *The Color Purple*, *The Bell Jar*, and *The Invisible Man*.

- a. novels, *The*
- b. novels: *The*
- c. novels; *the*
- d. novels. *The*

**16.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

a. One of my concerns—if you really want to know is that the city council will vote against the new plan.

b. One of my concerns—if you really want to know—is that the city council will vote against the new plan.

c. One of my concerns, if you really want to know—is that the city council will vote against the new plan.

d. One of my concerns if you really want to know is that the city council will vote against the new plan.

**17.** Which version is punctuated

correctly?

- a. You will find boys' shirts in the childrens' department.
- b. You will find boy's shirts in the children's department.
- c. You will find boys' shirts in the children's department.
- d. You will find boy's shirts in the childrens' department.

**18.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. Whose coat is this? Is it yours or Eric's?
- b. Whose coat is this? Is it your's or Eric's?

- c. Who's coat is this? Is it your's or Eric's?
- d. Who's coat is this? Is it yours or Eric's?

**19.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. "May I ride with you?" asked Del. "I can't get my car started."
- b. May I ride with you? asked Del. "I can't get my car started."
- c. "May I ride with you? asked Del. I can't get my car started."
- d. "May I ride with you"? asked Del, "I can't get my car started."

**20.** Which of the following should be

placed in quotation marks and should NOT be italicized or underlined?

- a. the name of a ship
- b. the title of a poem
- c. the title of a novel
- d. the name of a newspaper

**37.** About five minutes after the sun \_\_\_\_\_, my alarm goes off, and \_\_\_\_\_ time to get up.

- a. raises, it's
- b. raises, its
- c. rises, it's
- d. rises, its

**38.** Paula did \_\_\_\_\_ on the test, but Georgia had the \_\_\_\_\_ score in the class.

- a. good, better

- b. good, best
- c. well, better
- d. well, best

**39.** Which of the sentences is clearly and correctly written?

- a. Driving along the country road, a deer ran in front of us.
- b. A deer ran in front of us while driving along the country road.
- c. As we were driving along the country road, a deer ran in front of us.
- d. Running in front of us, we saw the deer, driving along the country road.

**For questions 40–46, choose the option that correctly completes the sentence.**

**40.** If we divide this pizza \_\_\_\_\_ the five people here, there won't be \_\_\_\_\_ pieces left over.

- a. among, any
- b. among, no
- c. between, any
- d. between, no

**41.** Yesterday, I \_\_\_\_\_ the campers to the \_\_\_\_\_ we had chosen near the river.

- a. lead, cite
- b. lead, site
- c. led, cite
- d. led, site

**42.** As we have done in the \_\_\_\_\_, we will \_\_\_\_\_ at the coffee house at 10:00 A.M.

- a. past, meet
- b. past, meat
- c. passed, meet
- d. passed, meat

**43.** As you can \_\_\_\_\_ see, there has been a \_\_\_\_\_ in the water pipe.

- a. planely, brake
- b. planely, break
- c. plainly, brake
- d. plainly, break

**44.** Do you know \_\_\_\_\_ Teresa will \_\_\_\_\_ to join our organization?

- a. weather, choose
- b. weather, chose
- c. whether, choose
- d. whether, chose

**45.** \_\_\_\_\_ are the magazines that \_\_\_\_\_ to be stacked on this table?

- a. Wear, used
- b. Wear, use
- c. Where, used
- d. Where, use

## **Problem (continued)**

Delaware. Mr. Powell will respond within two days to remedy the alleged problem or to refund the amount in question."

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,

# Semicolons

There are three different cases in which a semicolon is used to separate independent clauses. (See Lesson 3 if you are unsure what an independent clause is.)

- To separate independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, so, yet) may seem familiar to you because it was

## Examples:

Three doctors began the research project; the results were surprising.

Discard the packaging; save the paper for recycling.

The hour is over; it's time to stop working.

- To separate independent clauses that are joined by a conjunction. The semicolon indicates a break in thought occurs.

### **Example:**

The team needed new equipment, upon professional advice; but since none could be obtained, they performed as poorly as they had in the past.

- To separate independent clauses connected by a conjunctive adverb. Follow the adverb with a comma. A conjunctive adverb joins independent clauses. Conjunctive adverbs are stronger than regular conjunctions. The first independent clause is followed by a semicolon; the conjunctive adverb is followed by a comma.

### **Examples:**

Our copy of the central warehouse ca  
deadline; **consequently**, our requests

In the book *An American Childhood*,  
experiences as a child; **furthermore**  
about the meaning of life.

## Post-Test

1. Which of the following is a sentence fragment (not a complete sentence)?

- a. Property taxes rose by three percent.
- b. Although the mayor and three members of the city council were defeated.
- c. The voters were decidedly against building the new stadium.
- d. Be sure to vote in the next

election.

**2.** Which version is correctly capitalized?

a. After we headed west on interstate 70, my uncle Paul informed us that his Ford Taurus was almost out of gas.

b. After we headed west on Interstate 70, my Uncle Paul informed us that his Ford Taurus was almost out of gas.

c. After we headed West on Interstate 70, my Uncle Paul informed us that his Ford Taurus was almost out of gas.

d. After we headed West on

interstate 70, my Uncle Paul informed us that his Ford taurus was almost out of gas.

**3.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. That building, with the copper dome is our state capitol.
- b. That building with the copper dome, is our state capitol.
- c. That building, with the copper dome, is our state capitol.
- d. That building with the copper dome is our state capitol.

**4.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. The temperature was eighty degrees at noon; by 6:00 P.M. it had dropped to below forty.
- b. The temperature was eighty degrees at noon, by 6:00 P.M. it had dropped to below forty.
- c. The temperature was eighty degrees at noon by 6:00 P.M., it had dropped to below forty.
- d. The temperature was eighty degrees at noon by 6:00 P.M. it had dropped to below forty.

**5.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. It was one managers' idea to

give us a month's vacation.

b. It was one manager's idea to give us a months vacation.

c. It was one manager's idea to give us a month's vacation.

d. It was one managers idea to give us a month's vacation.

**6.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

a. "Look out! shouted Jake. There's a deer in the road."

b. "Look out!" shouted Jake. "There's a deer in the road."

c. "Look out"! shouted Jake. "There's a deer in the road."

d. "Look out! shouted Jake."

"There's a deer in the road."

**13.** Which of the underlined words in the following sentence should be capitalized?

My sister has been studying biology at the university of Maryland since last fall.

- a. Sister
- b. Biology
- c. University
- d. Fall

For questions 14 and 15, choose the

correct verb form.

**14.** When he was asked to select a pair of mittens, Danny \_\_\_\_\_ the blue ones.

- a. has chosen
- b. choosed
- c. choose
- d. chose

**15.** The snow \_\_\_\_\_ to fall late yesterday afternoon.

- a. began
- b. begun
- c. had began

d. begins

**16.** Which version is most clearly and correctly written?

a. Jeff told Nathan that his car battery was dead.

b. When Jeff spoke to Nathan, he said his car battery was dead.

c. Jeff told Nathan about his dead car battery.

d. Jeff told Nathan that the battery in Nathan's car was dead.

For questions 17–19, choose the option that correctly completes the sentence.

**17.** The cat \_\_\_\_\_ in a patch of sun on the front porch.

- a. is laying
- b. is lying
- c. lays
- d. laid

**18.** When I heard the unusual sound, I \_\_\_\_\_ walked through the house and searched each room very \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. calmly, carefully
- b. calmly, careful
- c. calm, careful
- d. calm, carefully

**19.** I have \_\_\_\_\_ idea how these \_\_\_\_\_ got in my sweater.

- a. know, wholes
- b. know, holes
- c. no, holes
- d. no, wholes

**20.** Which of the following sentences contains a redundancy, that is, it repeats words that express the same idea?

- a. Del shouted as loudly as he could, but no one heard him.
- b. Twenty minutes had passed

before the fire trucks arrived.

c. Yesterday, the senator made the same speech at three different locations.

d. For a wide variety of different reasons, more people are using computers.

**35.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. The recreation center will show the following movies: *Charlotte's Web*, *Jungle Book*, and *Annie*, the cost will be \$2.50 per ticket.
- b. The recreation center will show the following movies; *Charlotte's Web*, *Jungle Book*, and *Annie*; the cost will be \$2,50 per ticket.
- c. The recreation center will show the following movies: *Charlotte's Web*, *Jungle Book*, and *Annie*. The cost will be \$2.50 per ticket.

d. The recreation center will show the following movies—*Charlotte's Web*, *Jungle Book*, and *Annie*. The cost will be \$2,50 per ticket.

**36.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

a. Disappointed by his loss in the tennis match Andrew stomped off the court.

b. Disappointed by his loss in the tennis match, Andrew, stomped off the court.

c. Disappointed by his loss in the tennis match, Andrew stomped off the court.

d. Disappointed by his loss in the

tennis match Andrew stomped, off the court.

**37.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

a. The woman who lives across the street was born on July 4, 1922, in Washington, D.C.

b. The woman, who lives across the street, was born on July 4, 1922, in Washington , D.C.

c. The woman who lives across the street, was born on July 4, 1922 in Washington, D.C.

d. The woman who lives across the street was born on July 4, 1922 in Washington D.C.

For question 38, choose the correct verb tense.

**38.** By next fall, I \_\_\_\_\_ to all fifty of the United States.

- a. would be
- b. should have been
- c. will have been
- d. had been

**39.** Three of the following sentences are punctuated correctly. Which one is punctuated INCORRECTLY?

- a. My son's baseball game was

postponed; it was raining too hard.

b. Because it was raining too hard; my son's baseball game was postponed.

c. My son's baseball game was postponed because it was raining too hard.

d. It was raining too hard, and my son's baseball game was postponed.

**40.** Which of the following should NOT be hyphenated?

a. one-fifteen in the morning

b. the sixteenth-president of the United States

c. a thirty-second commerical

d. a thousand-dollar profit

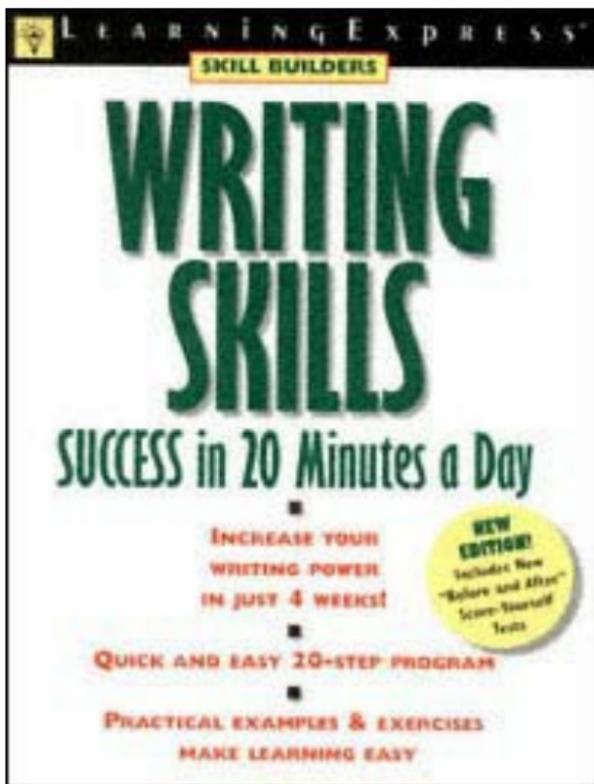
**41.** In which of the following sentences is the underlined verb NOT in agreement with the subject of the sentence?

a. Why are the books on your shelf always arranged this way?

b. There is only one more person waiting in line.

c. Here are the sunglasses you ordered.

d. What is the reasons for your late arrival?



**21.** Which version uses hyphens correctly?

- a. The well-known singer-songwriter gave a three hour concert.
- b. The well known singer songwriter gave a three-hour concert.
- c. The well-known singer-songwriter gave a three-hour concert.
- d. The well known singer-songwriter gave a three hour concert.

**22.** Which of the following should NOT be hyphenated?

- a. twenty-one students
- b. two-inch nails
- c. a thirty-minute interview
- d. ten-feet of rope

**23.** Which version uses parentheses correctly?

- a. I plan to do my geography report on the Central American country of Belize (formerly known as British Honduras).
- b. I plan to do my geography report on the (Central American country

of) Belize, formerly known as British Honduras.

c. I plan to do my (geography) report on the Central American country of Belize, formerly known as British Honduras.

d. I plan to do my geography report on the Central American country (of Belize) formerly known as British Honduras.

**For questions 24 and 25, choose the correct verb form.**

**24.** Last night, Rita \_\_\_\_\_ a standing ovation for her performance.

a. has gotten

- b. gotten
- c. will get
- d. got

**25.** Bart \_\_\_\_\_ cupcakes so we could all celebrate his birthday.

- a. brang
- b. brought
- c. bring
- d. had brung

**26.** Which of the following underlined verbs is NOT written in the correct tense?

Last week, we (a) went camping in

Zion National Park. We (b) hike several hours eachday. At night, I (c) climbed into my sleeping bag exhausted, but in the morning I (d) couldn't wait to get started again.

**27.** Choose the version that correctly rewrites the following sentence in the active voice.

I was taken to the public library by my sister before I was able to read.

a. Before I was able to read, I was taken to the public library by my sister.

b. Before learning to read, my sister took me to the public library.

- c. Before I was able to read, my sister took me to the public library.
- d. I was taken to the public library before I knew how to read, by my sister.

**28.** Which of the following sentences is in the passive voice?

- a. On Saturday nights, we made popcorn.
- b. Our bowls were filled and brought into the living room.
- c. We sat on the floor and watched the movie we had rented.
- d. One of us usually fell asleep before the movie was over.



**For questions 29 and 30, choose the verb that agrees with the subject of the sentence.**

**29.** Neither of the dogs \_\_\_\_\_ to obedience training.

- a. have been
- b. were
- c. is been
- d. has been

**30.** The art professor, along with several of her students, \_\_\_\_\_ to

attend the gallery opening tomorrow evening.

- a. is planning
- b. are planning
- c. plan
- d. have planned

**31.** Choose the subject that agrees with the verb in the following sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ of the customers have complained about poor service.

- a. One
- b. Neither
- c. Each

d. Some

**32.** In which of the following sentences is the underlined verb NOT in agreement with the subject of the sentence?

a. Where are the forms you want me to fill out?

b. Which is the correct form?

c. Here is the forms you need to complete.

d. There are two people who still need to complete the form.

**33.** In which of the following sentences is the underlined pronoun INCORRECT?

- a. Alicia and me want to spend Saturday at Six Flags Amusement Park.
- b. Either Sam or William will bring his CD player to the party.
- c. She and I will work together on the project.
- d. Why won't you let her come with us?

**34.** In which of the following sentences is the underlined pronoun INCORRECT?

- a. Francine can run much faster than me.
- b. Erin and Bob are painting the house themselves.

- c. Five members of the team and I will represent our school.
- d. Our neighbors gave us some tomatoes from their garden.

**For questions 35–38, choose the option that correctly completes the sentence.**

**35.** Four band members and \_\_\_\_\_ were chosen to attend the state competition. One of \_\_\_\_\_ will do the driving.

- a. me, we
- b. me, us
- c. I, we
- d. I, us

**36.** Marcus \_\_\_\_\_ the bags of groceries on the kitchen table fifteen minutes ago.

- a. had sat
- b. set
- c. sit
- d. sat

**21.** Which version has a parallel structure?

- a. He is a man of many talents. He repairs small machines, he cooks gourmet meals, and you should see his lilies and orchids.
- b. He is man of many talents. there's a talent for repairing small machines, he cooks gourmet meals, and then there are the lilies and orchids.
- c. He is a man of many talents. he repairs small machines, he cooks gourmet meals, and he grows lilies

and orchids.

d. He is a man of many talents: repairing small machines, cooking gourmet meals, and he grows lilies and orchids.

**22.** Which of the following sentences contains a cliché?

a. Looking for Harriet's ring was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

b. the reason I can't have lunch with you is because I have a dentist appointment.

c. The crooked fence looked like a row of teeth in need of braces.

d. As costs go up, so do prices.

**23.** Which version uses periods correctly?

a. A. J. Sullivan and Dr Henry Harris will return to the U.S. tomorrow at 4 PM.

b. A. J. Sullivan and Dr. Henry Harris will return to the U.S. tomorrow at 4 PM.

c. A. J. Sullivan and Dr. Henry Harris will return to the US tomorrow at 4 PM.

d. A J Sullivan and Dr Henry Harris will return to the U.S. tomorrow at 4 PM.

**24.** Which version is correctly

capitalized?

- a. Many Meteorologists are predicting that the West will have the wettest winter on record.
- b. Many meteorologists are predicting that the west will have the wettest winter on record.
- c. Many Meteorologists are predicting that the West will have the wettest Winter on record.
- d. Many meteorologists are predicting that the West will have the wettest winter on record.

**25.** Three of the following sentences are faulty. they are either run-ons or coma splices. Which one is NOT a

faulty sentence?

- a. A group of lions is called a pride  
a group of elephants is called a herd.
- b. Josh told me he would meet us at the zoo at noon, he never showed up.
- c. We waited three hours, finally, Karen decided to give him a call.
- d. A young sheep is known as a lamb, but a young goat is known as a kid.

**26.** Which version is punctuated correctly?

- a. There are many differences—

aside from the obvious ones—  
between a ten-year-old and an  
adolescent.

b. there are many differences: aside  
from the obvious ones—between a  
ten-year-old and an adolescent.

c. There are many differences—  
aside from the obvious ones,  
between a ten-year-old and an  
adolescent.

d. There are many differences aside  
from the obvious ones—between a  
ten-year-old and an adolescent.

**27.** Which is the correct punctuation for the underlined portion?

The explosion broke severral windows in the factory however no one was injured.

- a. factory, however
- b. factory however;
- c. factory; however,
- d. factory, however;

**28.** Which version uses hyphens correctly?

- a. My soft-spoken brother-in-law did not raise his voice when he saw that his car had been damaged in the parking-lot.
- b. My soft spoken brother-in-law did not raise his voice when he saw that his car had been damaged in the parking-lot.
- c. My soft-spoken brother-in-law did not raise his voice when he saw that his car had been damaged in the parking lot.
- d. My soft-spoken brother in-law did not raise his voice when he saw that his car had been damaged in the parking lot.

**29.** Which version is punctuated

correctly?

- a. Ms. Jeffers who is my physics teacher, coaches the girls' basketball team.
- b. Ms. Jeffers, who is my physics teacher, coaches the girls' basketball team.
- c. Ms. Jeffers who is my physics teacher coaches the girls' basketball team.
- d. Ms. Jeffers who, is my physics teacher, coaches the girls' basketball team.

For questions 30–34, choose the option that correctly completes the sentence.

**30.** Several manuals, each with detailed instructions, \_\_\_\_\_ with your new computer.

- a. were sent
- b. was sent
- c. has been sent
- d. sent

**31.** Jessica and \_\_\_\_\_ are looking in the grass for one of her of her earrings; \_\_\_\_\_ will be hard to find.

- a. me, it
- b. me, they

c. I, they

d. I, it

**32.** Yesterday, I \_\_\_\_\_ my watch on this table, but now \_\_\_\_\_ gone.

a. set, it's

b. set, its

c. sat, its

d. sat, it's

**33.** I took Jane's \_\_\_\_\_ and did not \_\_\_\_\_ the job.

a. advice, except

b. advice, accept

c. advise, accept

d. advise, except

**34.** Raul \_\_\_\_\_ attending the meetings because he had \_\_\_\_\_ many other commitments.

a. quite, too

b. quite, to

c. quit, to

d. quit, too