

***Supplemental Handbook Material for "Voices"***

# Supplemental Handbook Material for "Voices"

---

[Author removed at request of original publisher]

*University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing*  
*Minneapolis, MN*



Supplemental Handbook Material for "Voices" by [\[Author removed at request of original publisher\]](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

# Contents

## Chapter 1: Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?

|                                              |    |
|----------------------------------------------|----|
| 1.1 Sentence Writing                         | 2  |
| 1.2 Subject-Verb Agreement                   | 21 |
| 1.3 Verb Tense                               | 33 |
| 1.4 Capitalization                           | 40 |
| 1.5 Pronouns                                 | 45 |
| 1.6 Adjectives and Adverbs                   | 54 |
| 1.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers         | 61 |
| 1.8 Writing Basics: End-of-Chapter Exercises | 66 |

## Chapter 2: Punctuation

|                                           |    |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| 2.1 Commas                                | 71 |
| 2.2 Semicolons                            | 79 |
| 2.3 Colons                                | 81 |
| 2.4 Quotes                                | 85 |
| 2.5 Apostrophes                           | 89 |
| 2.6 Parentheses                           | 92 |
| 2.7 Dashes                                | 93 |
| 2.8 Hyphens                               | 94 |
| 2.9 Punctuation: End-of-Chapter Exercises | 95 |

## Chapter 3: Working with Words: Which Word Is Right?

|                                                  |     |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 3.1 Commonly Confused Words                      | 99  |
| 3.2 Spelling                                     | 109 |
| 3.3 Word Choice                                  | 119 |
| 3.4 Prefixes and Suffixes                        | 126 |
| 3.5 Synonyms and Antonyms                        | 132 |
| 3.6 Using Context Clues                          | 138 |
| 3.7 Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises | 142 |

## Chapter 4: Help for English Language Learners

|                                           |     |
|-------------------------------------------|-----|
| 4.1 Word Order                            | 145 |
| 4.2 Negative Statements                   | 151 |
| 4.3 Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles | 156 |
| 4.4 Pronouns                              | 160 |
| 4.5 Verb Tenses                           | 166 |
| 4.6 Modal Auxiliaries                     | 182 |



|                                                                  |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 4.7 Prepositions                                                 | 188 |
| 4.8 Slang and Idioms                                             | 194 |
| 4.9 Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises | 198 |
| Acknowledgements                                                 | 200 |

## ***Chapter 1: Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?***

- 1.1 Sentence Writing
- 1.2 Subject-Verb Agreement
- 1.3 Verb Tense
- 1.4 Capitalization
- 1.5 Pronouns
- 1.6 Adjectives and Adverbs
- 1.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers
- 1.8 Writing Basics: End-of-Chapter Exercises

## 1.1 Sentence Writing

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the components of a basic sentence.
2. Identify the four most serious writing errors.

Imagine you are reading a book for school. You need to find important details that you can use for an assignment. However, when you begin to read, you notice that the book has very little punctuation. Sentences fail to form complete paragraphs and instead form one block of text without clear organization. Most likely, this book would frustrate and confuse you. Without clear and concise sentences, it is difficult to find the information you need.

For both students and professionals, clear communication is important. Whether you are typing an e-mail or writing a report, it is your responsibility to present your thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely. Writing in complete sentences is one way to ensure that you communicate well. This section covers how to recognize and write basic sentence structures and how to avoid some common writing errors.

### *Components of a Sentence*

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A **clause** is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An **independent clause** is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentences show independent clauses.

|                           |                                          |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Independent Clause</b> | <b>Independent Clause</b>                |
| {We went to the store.}   | {We bought the ingredients on our list}, |
| <b>Independent Clause</b> |                                          |
| and then {we went home.}  |                                          |

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

### *Subjects*

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the **subject**, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a **noun** or a **pronoun**. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A

pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I, he, she, it, you, they*, and *we*. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

Malik is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

### *Tip*

In this chapter, please refer to the following grammar key:

Subjects are underlined once.

Verbs are underlined twice.

LV means linking verb, HV means helping verb, and V means action verb.

## *Compound Subjects*

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called **compound subjects**. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once.

Desmond and Maria have been working on that design for almost a year.

Books, magazines, and online articles are all good resources.

### Prepositional Phrases

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a **preposition** with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include *in, on, under, near, by, with, and about*. A group of words that begin with a preposition is called a **prepositional phrase**. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following circled phrases are examples of prepositional phrases.

We went on a business trip. That restaurant with the famous pizza was on the way. We stopped for lunch.

### Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

### Verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the **verb**. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

### Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an **action verb**. An action verb answers the question *what is the subject doing?* In the following sentences, the words underlined twice are action verbs.

The dog barked at the jogger.  
He gave a short speech before we ate.

### *Linking Verbs*

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a **linking verb** because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the words underlined twice are linking verbs.

The coat was old and dirty.  
The clock seemed broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

**Action Verb:** The boy looked for his glove.  
**Linking Verb:** The boy looked tired.

Although both sentences use the same verb, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

### *Helping Verbs*

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a **helping verb**. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of *be*, *do*, or *have*. The word *can* is also used as a helping verb.

HV V

The restaurant is known for its variety of dishes.

HV V

She does speak up when prompted in class.

HV V

We have seen that movie three times.

HV V

She can tell when someone walks on her lawn.

*Tip*

Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:

**Subject:** Who or what is the sentence about?

**Verb:** Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

*Exercise 2*

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. \_\_\_\_\_
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. \_\_\_\_\_
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The book was filled with notes from class. \_\_\_\_\_
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Sentence Structure, Including Fragments and Run-ons*

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence—a subject and a verb—you can use other parts of speech to build

on this basic structure. Good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting. This section covers different sentence structures that you can use to make longer, more complex sentences.

### *Sentence Patterns*

Six basic subject-verb patterns can enhance your writing. A sample sentence is provided for each pattern. As you read each sentence, take note of where each part of the sentence falls. Notice that some sentence patterns use action verbs and others use linking verbs.

#### *Subject-Verb*

S      V  
Computers hum.

#### *Subject-Linking Verb-Noun*

S      LV   N  
Computers are tools.

#### *Subject-Linking Verb-Adjective*

S      LV    ADJ  
Computers are expensive.

#### *Subject-Verb-Adverb*

S      V      ADV  
Computers calculate quickly.



**Subject–Verb–Direct Object**

When you write a sentence with a direct object (DO), make sure that the DO receives the action of the verb.

S      V      DO  
Sally rides a motorcycle.

**Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object**

In this sentence structure, an **indirect object** explains *to whom* or *to what* the action is being done. The indirect object is a noun or pronoun, and it comes before the direct object in a sentence.

S              V    IO      DO  
My coworker gave me the reports.

**Exercise 3**

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use the following lines or your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Collaboration**

Find an article in a newspaper, a magazine, or online that interests you. Bring it to class or post it online. Then, looking at a classmate's article, identify one example of each part of a sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO). Please share or post your results.

**Fragments**

The sentences you have encountered so far have been independent clauses. As you look more closely at your past writing assignments, you may notice that some of your sentences are not complete. A sentence that is missing a subject or a

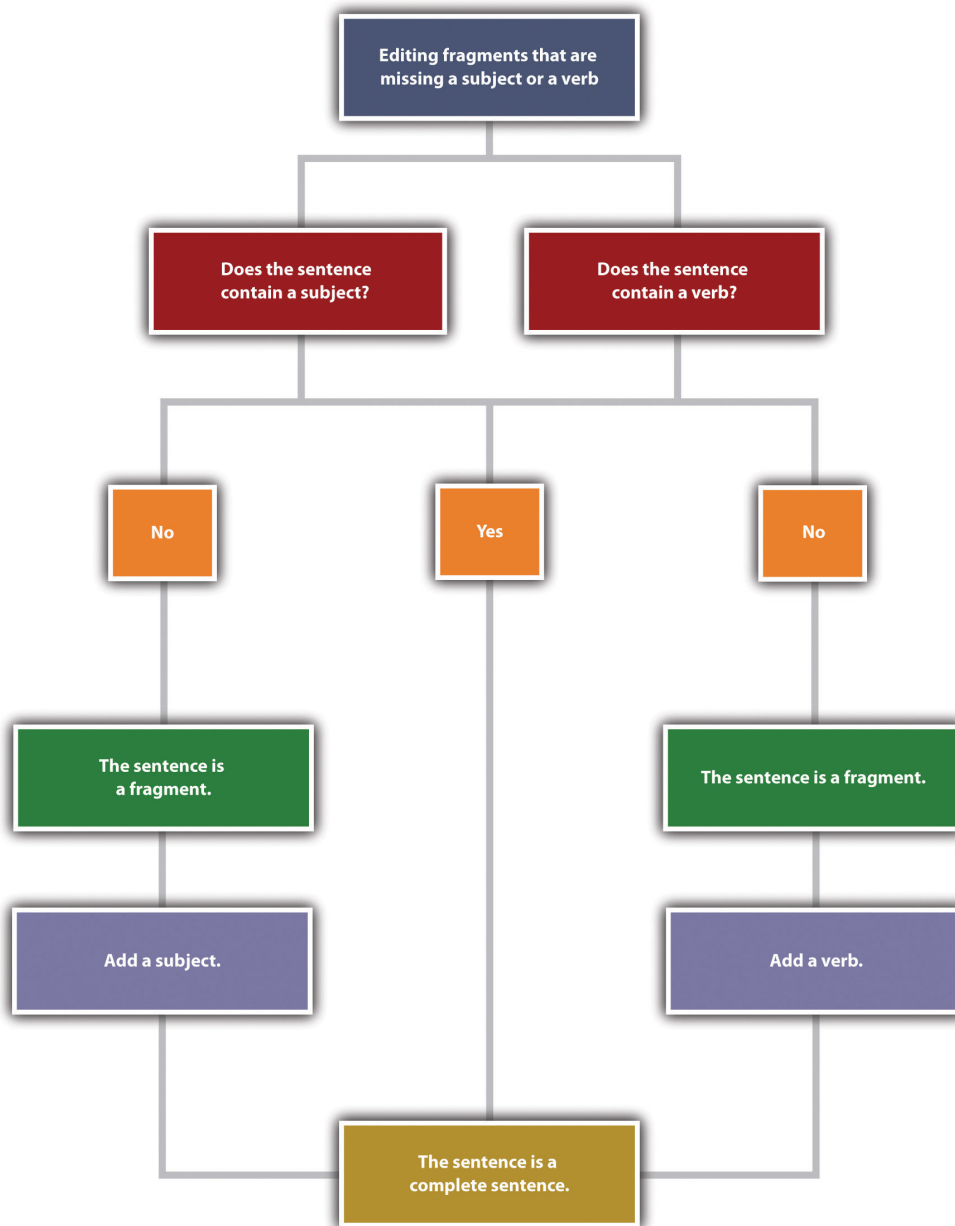
verb is called a **fragment**. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

**Fragment:** Children helping in the kitchen.

**Complete sentence:** Children helping in the kitchen **often make a mess**.

You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding *often make a mess* creates an S-V-N sentence structure.

Figure 2.1 Editing Fragments That Are Missing a Subject or a Verb



See whether you can identify what is missing in the following fragments.

**Fragment:** Told her about the broken vase.

**Complete sentence:** I told her about the broken vase.

**Fragment:** The store down on Main Street.

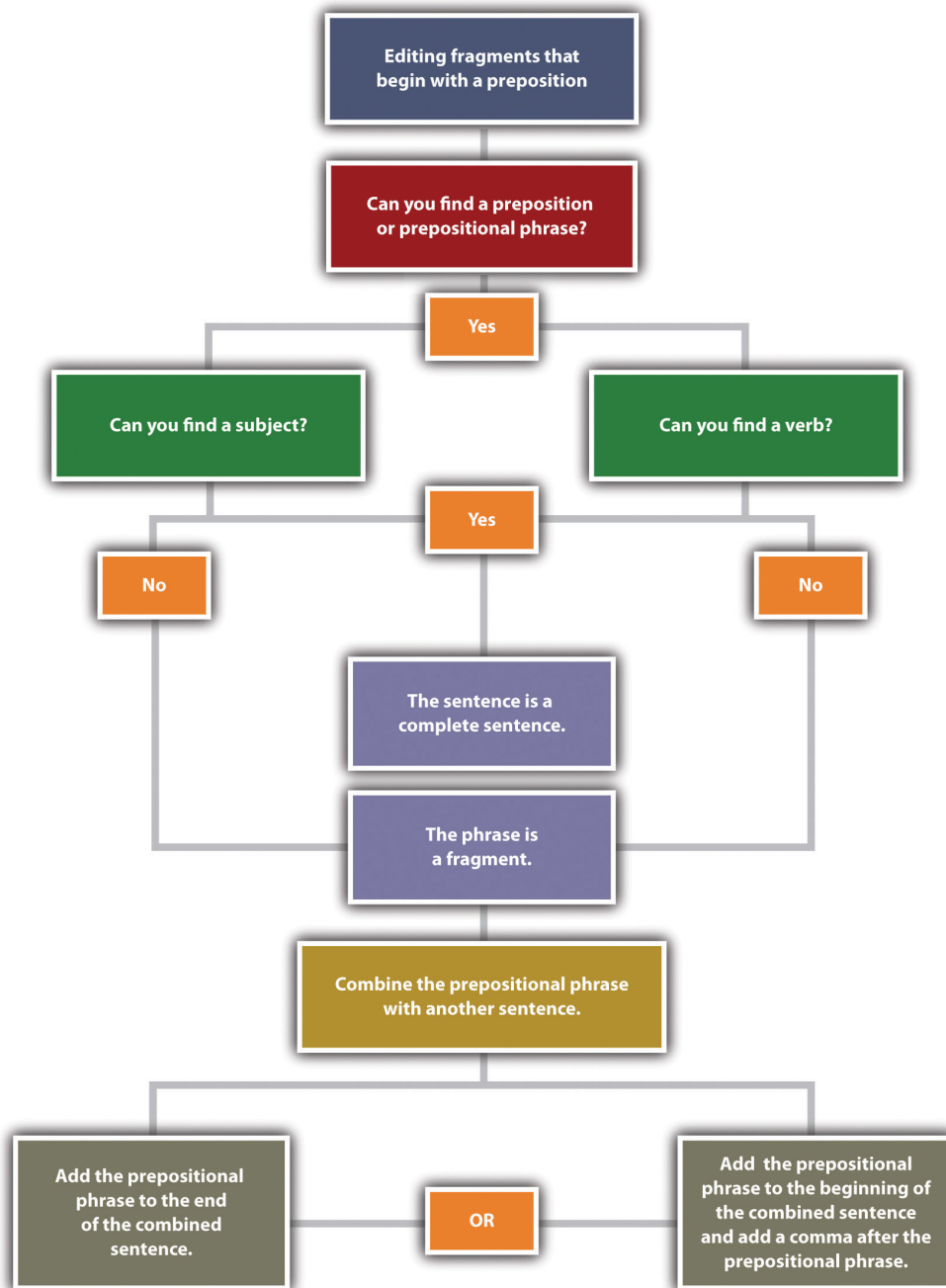
**Complete sentence:** The store down on Main Street **sells music**.

### *Common Sentence Errors*

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an **infinitive**, or a **gerund**. If you use the six basic sentence patterns when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments.

When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.

Figure 2.2 Editing Fragments That Begin with a Preposition



Example A

**Incorrect:** After walking over two miles. John remembered his wallet.

**Correct:** After walking over two miles, John remembered his wallet.

**Correct:** John remembered his wallet ~~After~~ after walking over two miles.

#### Example B

**Incorrect:** The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner. When it was switched on.

**Correct:** When the vacuum cleaner was switched on, the dog growled.

**Correct:** The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner ~~When~~ when it was switched on.

Clauses that start with a **dependent word**—such as *since*, *because*, *without*, or *unless*—are similar to prepositional phrases. Like prepositional phrases, these clauses can be fragments if they are not connected to an independent clause containing a subject and a verb. To fix the problem, you can add such a fragment to the beginning or end of a sentence. If the fragment is added at the beginning of a sentence, add a comma.

**Incorrect:** Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.

**Correct:** Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.

**Correct:** The entire family overslept ~~Because~~ because we lost power.

**Incorrect:** He has been seeing a physical therapist. Since his accident.

**Correct:** Since his accident, he has been seeing a physical therapist.

**Correct:** He has been seeing a physical therapist ~~Since~~ since his accident.

When you encounter a word ending in *-ing* in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is used as a verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the *-ing* verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An *-ing* verb form used as a noun is called a gerund.

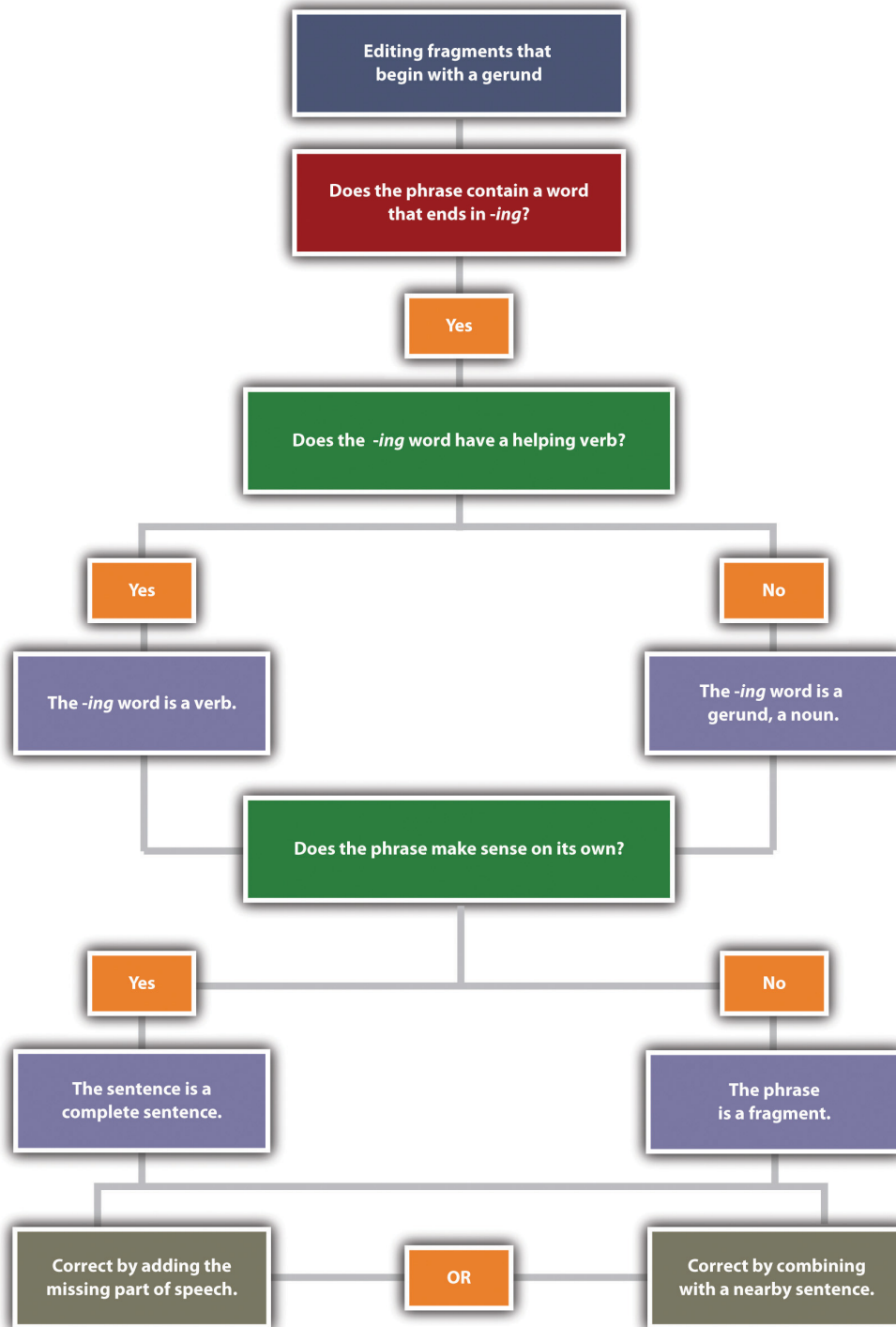
HV    V

**Verb:** I was working on homework until midnight.

**Noun:** Working until midnight makes me tired the next morning.

Once you know whether the *-ing* word is acting as a noun or a verb, look at the rest of the sentence. Does the entire sentence make sense on its own? If not, what you are looking at is a fragment. You will need to either add the parts of speech that are missing or combine the fragment with a nearby sentence.

Figure 2.3 Editing Fragments That Begin with Gerunds



**Incorrect:** Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.

**Correct:** Taking deep breaths, Saul prepared for his presentation.

**Correct:** Saul prepared for his presentation. He **was taking** deep breaths.

**Incorrect:** Congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

**Correct:** **She was** congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

**Correct:** Congratulating the entire team, Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Another error in sentence construction is a fragment that begins with an infinitive. An infinitive is a verb paired with the word *to*; for example, *to run*, *to write*, or *to reach*. Although infinitives are verbs, they can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. You can correct a fragment that begins with an infinitive by either combining it with another sentence or adding the parts of speech that are missing.

**Incorrect:** We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.

**Correct:** We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes **to** reach the one thousand mark.

**Correct:** We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. **We wanted to** reach the one thousand mark.

#### Exercise 4

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and circle the fragments. Then combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence.

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won't be planting any tulips this year.
4. Turning the lights off after he was done in the kitchen. Robert tries to conserve energy whenever possible.
5. You'll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.
6. To find the perfect apartment. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.

#### Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or



more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as [run-on sentences](#). A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

**Fused sentence:** A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

**Comma splice:** We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a [fused sentence](#). When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a [comma splice](#). Both errors can easily be fixed.

### *Punctuation*

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.

**Run-on:** There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.

**Correct:** There were no seats left. ~~we~~ We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses. For more information on semicolons, see [Section 2.4.2 “Capitalize Proper Nouns”](#).

**Run-on:** The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

**Complete sentence:** The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma. For more information on transition words, see [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#).

**Run-on:** The project was put on hold we didn’t have time to slow down, so we kept working.

**Complete sentence:** The project was put on hold; **however**, we didn’t have time to slow down, so we kept working.

### *Coordinating Conjunctions*

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a [coordinating conjunction](#). A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

*Tip*

These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so*. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym *FANBOYS* will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.

**Run-on:** The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

**Complete sentence:** The new printer was installed, **but** no one knew how to use it.

*Dependent Words*

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

**Run-on:** We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

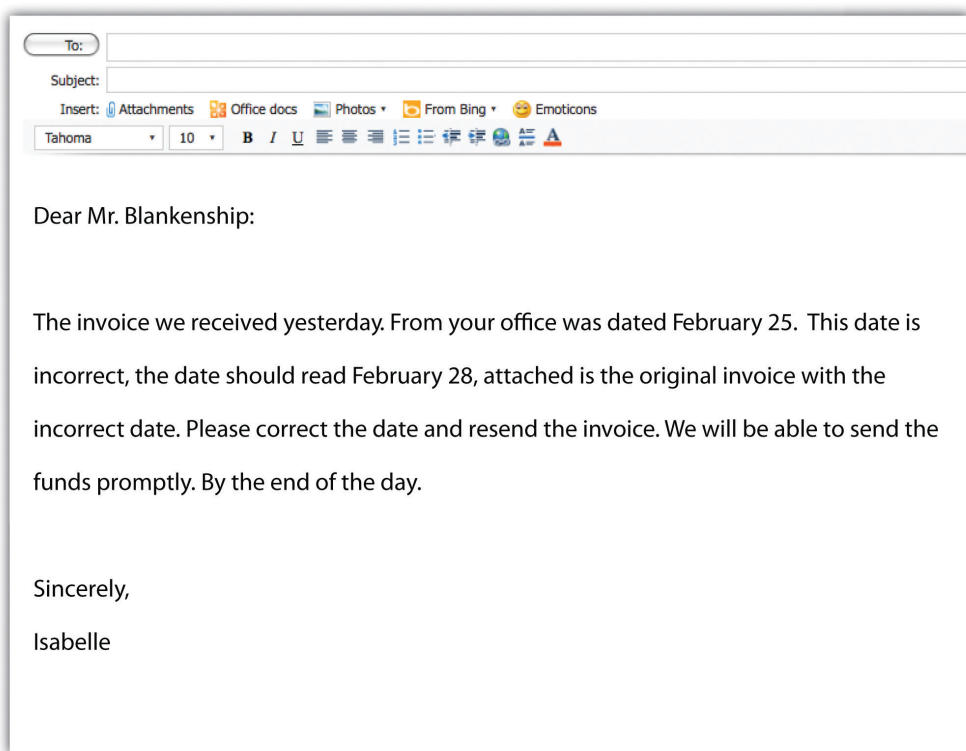
**Complete sentence:** **Although** we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

**Run-on:** Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn't been used in years.

**Complete sentence:** Cobwebs covered the furniture **because** the room hadn't been used in years.

*Writing at Work*

Figure 2.4 Sample e-mail



Isabelle's e-mail opens with two fragments and two run-on sentences containing comma splices. The e-mail ends with another fragment. What effect would this e-mail have on Mr. Blankenship or other readers? Mr. Blankenship or other readers may not think highly of Isabelle's communication skills or—worse—may not understand the message at all! Communications written in precise, complete sentences are not only more professional but also easier to understand. Before you hit the “send” button, read your e-mail carefully to make sure that the sentences are complete, are not run together, and are correctly punctuated.

### Exercise 5

A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. Use what you have learned about run-on sentences to correct the following passages:

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.
2. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a

waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.

3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

### *Key Takeaways*

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb. A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- A compound subject contains more than one noun.
- A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.
- Variety in sentence structure and length improves writing by making it more interesting and more complex.
- Focusing on the six basic sentence patterns will enhance your writing.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb. Fragments that begin with a preposition or a dependent word can be corrected by combining the fragment with another sentence.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or adding a coordinating conjunction.

### *Writing Application*

Using the six basic sentence structures, write one of the following:

1. A work e-mail to a coworker about a presentation.
2. A business letter to a potential employer.

3. A status report about your current project.
4. A job description for your résumé.

## 1.2 Subject-Verb Agreement

### Learning Objectives

1. Define subject-verb agreement.
2. Identify common errors in subject-verb agreement.

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

### Agreement

**Agreement** in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must **agree**, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person.** All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he, she, it, they*) forms.
- **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*), objective (*me, her, him, them, us*), or possessive (*my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours*) forms. For more information on pronoun case agreement, see [Section 2.5.1 “Pronoun Agreement”](#).
- **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form. For more information on subjects and verbs, see [Section 2.1 “Sentence Writing”](#).

**Singular:** The cat jumps over the fence.

**Plural:** The cats jump over the fence.

### Regular Verbs

**Regular verbs** follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in *-s*. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in *-s*. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

|                      | Singular Form    | Plural Form |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>First Person</b>  | I live.          | We live.    |
| <b>Second Person</b> | You live.        | You live.   |
| <b>Third Person</b>  | He/She/It lives. | They live.  |

#### Tip

Add an *-es* to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in *-sh*, *-x*, *-ch*, and *-s*. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

**Singular:** I read every day.

**Plural:** We read every day.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the first person singular and the first person plural.

**Singular:** You stretch before you go to bed.

**Plural:** You stretch before every game.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the second person singular and the second person plural. In the singular form, the pronoun *you* refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun *you* refers to a group of people, such as a team.

**Singular:** My mother walks to work every morning.

In this sentence, the subject is *mother*. Because the sentence only refers to one mother, the subject is singular. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person singular form.

**Plural:** My friends like the same music as I do.

In this sentence, the subject is *friends*. Because this subject refers to more than one person, the subject is plural. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person plural form.

*Tip*

Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an -s. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an -s in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

**Singular subject, singular verb:** The cat races across the yard.

**Plural subject, plural verb:** The cats race across the yard.

### Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences.

1. I (brush/brushes) my teeth twice a day.
2. You (wear/wears) the same shoes every time we go out.
3. He (kick/kicks) the soccer ball into the goal.
4. She (watch/watches) foreign films.
5. Catherine (hide/hides) behind the door.
6. We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.
7. You (work/works) together to finish the project.
8. They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
9. It (eat/eats) four times a day.
10. David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

### Irregular Verbs

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called **irregular verbs**. Some of the most common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.



*Be*

Study the different forms of the verb *to be* in the present tense.

|                      | <b>Singular Form</b> | <b>Plural Form</b> |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>First Person</b>  | I am.                | We are.            |
| <b>Second Person</b> | You are.             | You are.           |
| <b>Third Person</b>  | He/She/It is.        | They are.          |

*Have*

Study the different forms of the verb *to have* in the present tense.

|                      | <b>Singular Form</b> | <b>Plural Form</b> |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>First Person</b>  | I have.              | We have.           |
| <b>Second Person</b> | You have.            | You have.          |
| <b>Third Person</b>  | He/She/It has.       | They have.         |

*Do*

Study the different forms of the verb *to do* in the present tense.

|                      | <b>Singular Form</b> | <b>Plural Form</b> |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>First Person</b>  | I do.                | We do.             |
| <b>Second Person</b> | You do.              | You do.            |
| <b>Third person</b>  | He/She/It does.      | They do.           |

*Exercise 2*

Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of *be*, *have*, or *do*. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ sure that you will succeed.
2. They \_\_\_\_\_ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He \_\_\_\_\_ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We \_\_\_\_\_ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She \_\_\_\_\_ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You \_\_\_\_\_ not know what you are talking about.
7. You \_\_\_\_\_ all going to pass this class.
8. She \_\_\_\_\_ not going to like that.
9. It \_\_\_\_\_ appear to be the right size.
10. They \_\_\_\_\_ ready to take this job seriously.

### *Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement*

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

### *Compound Subjects*

A **compound subject** is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form.

**Two singular subjects:** Alicia and Miguel ride their bikes to the beach.

**Two plural subjects:** The girls and the boys ride their bikes to the beach.

**Singular and plural subjects:** Alicia and the boys ride their bikes to the beach.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

**Two singular subjects:** Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna wants to eat at that restaurant.

**Two plural subjects:** Neither the kids nor the adults want to eat at that restaurant.

**Singular and plural subjects:** Neither Elizabeth nor the kids want to eat at that restaurant.

**Plural and singular subjects:** Neither the kids nor Elizabeth wants to eat at that restaurant.

**Two singular subjects:** Either you or Jason takes the furniture out of the garage.

**Two plural subjects:** Either you or the twins take the furniture out of the garage.

**Singular and plural subjects:** Either Jason or the twins take the furniture out of the garage.

**Plural and singular subjects:** Either the twins or Jason takes the furniture out of the garage.

### Tip

If you can substitute the word *they* for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

### Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

The students with the best grades win the academic awards.

The puppy under the table is my favorite.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:

The car that I bought has power steering and a sunroof.  
The representatives who are courteous sell the most tickets.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form.

However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

| Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb | Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| anybody, anyone, anything                            | All                                                         |
| each                                                 | Any                                                         |
| everybody, everyone, everything                      | None                                                        |
| much                                                 | Some                                                        |
| many                                                 |                                                             |
| nobody, no one, nothing                              |                                                             |
| somebody, someone, something                         |                                                             |

**Singular:** Everybody in the kitchen sings along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

**Plural:** All the people in the kitchen sing along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.

**Singular:** All the cake is on the floor.

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

### *Collective Nouns*

A **collective noun** is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things one singular unit. Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*.

**Singular:** The class is going on a field trip.

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

### *The Subject Follows the Verb*

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

### *Here or There*

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

Here is my wallet!

There are thirty dolphins in the water.

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with *here* or *there*; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

My wallet is here!

Thirty dolphins are in the water.

### Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Who are the people you are related to?

When am I going to go to the grocery store?

### Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

When am I going to the grocery store? I am going to the grocery store tonight!

### Exercise 3

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write *OK*. Copy the corrected sentence or the word *OK* on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1.

My dog and cats chases each other all the time.

\_\_\_\_\_

2.

The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.

\_\_\_\_\_

3.

Everyone are going to the concert except me.

\_\_\_\_\_

4.

My family are moving to California.

---

5.

Here is the lake I told you about.

---

6.

There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

---

7.

Which room is bigger?

---

8.

When are the movie going to start?

---

9.

My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

---

10.

Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

---

#### Exercise 4

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my

current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,  
Felicia Fellini

### *Writing at Work*

Figure 2.5 Advertisement



Terra Services are dedicated to serving our clients' needs. We settles for nothing less than high quality work, delivered on time. The next time you needs assistance getting your project off the ground, contact Terra Services, where everybody know how important it is that you get the job done right.

Imagine that you are a prospective client and that you saw this ad online. Would you call Terra Services to handle your next project? Probably not! Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cost a company business. Paying careful attention to grammatical details ensures professionalism that clients will recognize and respect.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.



- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words *and*, *or*, or *nor*.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Indefinite pronouns, such as *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *many*, *no one*, and *something*, refer to unspecified people or objects. Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and treats those people, places, or things one singular unit. Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with *here* and *there*, the subject follows the verb.
- In questions, the subject follows the verb.

### *Writing Application*

Use your knowledge of subject-verb agreement to write one of the following:

1. An advertisement for a potential company
2. A memo to all employees of a particular company
3. A cover letter describing your qualifications to a potential employer

Be sure to include at least the following:

- One collective noun
- One irregular verb
- One question

## 1.3 Verb Tense

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Use the correct regular verb tense in basic sentences.
2. Use the correct irregular verb tense in basic sentences.

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might judge you harshly. Mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression.

### *Regular Verbs*

Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. [Regular verbs](#) follow regular patterns when shifting from the present to past tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add *-ed* or *-d* to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

[Verb tense](#) identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have*, also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

**Present Tense:** Tim walks to the store. (Singular subject)

**Present Tense:** Sue and Kimmy walk to the store. (Plural subject)

**Past Tense:** Yesterday, they walked to the store for milk. (Plural subject)

**Future Tense:** Tomorrow, Kimmy will walk to the store to buy some bread.  
(Singular subject)

### Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses. Write the corrected sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.
6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

### Irregular Verbs

The past tense of **irregular verbs** is not formed using the patterns that regular verbs follow. Study [Table 2.1 “Irregular Verbs”](#), which lists the most common irregular verbs.

#### Tip

The best way to learn irregular verbs is to memorize them. With the help of a classmate, create flashcards of irregular verbs and test yourselves until you master them.

Table 2.1 Irregular Verbs

| Simple Present | Past         | Simple Present | Past            |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| be             | was, were    | lose           | lost            |
| become         | became       | make           | made            |
| begin          | began        | mean           | meant           |
| blow           | blew         | meet           | met             |
| break          | broke        | pay            | paid            |
| bring          | brought      | put            | put             |
| build          | built        | quit           | quit            |
| burst          | burst        | read           | read            |
| buy            | bought       | ride           | rode            |
| catch          | caught       | ring           | rang            |
| choose         | chose        | rise           | rose            |
| come           | came         | run            | ran             |
| cut            | cut          | say            | said            |
| dive           | dove (dived) | see            | saw             |
| do             | did          | seek           | sought          |
| draw           | drew         | sell           | sold            |
| drink          | drank        | send           | sent            |
| drive          | drove        | set            | set             |
| eat            | ate          | shake          | shook           |
| fall           | fell         | shine          | shone (shined)  |
| feed           | fed          | shrink         | shrank (shrunk) |

| Simple Present | Past    | Simple Present | Past       |
|----------------|---------|----------------|------------|
| feel           | felt    | sing           | sang       |
| fight          | fought  | sit            | sat        |
| find           | found   | sleep          | slept      |
| fly            | flew    | speak          | spoke      |
| forget         | forgot  | spend          | spent      |
| forgive        | forgave | spring         | sprang     |
| freeze         | froze   | stand          | stood      |
| get            | got     | steal          | stole      |
| give           | gave    | strike         | struck     |
| go             | went    | swim           | swam       |
| grow           | grew    | swing          | swung      |
| have           | had     | take           | took       |
| hear           | heard   | teach          | taught     |
| hide           | hid     | tear           | tore       |
| hold           | held    | tell           | told       |
| hurt           | hurt    | think          | thought    |
| keep           | kept    | throw          | threw      |
| know           | knew    | understand     | understood |
| lay            | laid    | wake           | woke       |
| lead           | led     | wear           | wore       |
| leave          | left    | win            | won        |

| Simple Present | Past | Simple Present | Past  |
|----------------|------|----------------|-------|
| let            | let  | wind           | wound |

Here we consider using irregular verbs.

**Present Tense:** Lauren keeps all her letters.

**Past Tense:** Lauren kept all her letters.

**Future Tense:** Lauren will keep all her letters.

### Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shook, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (bought, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (laid, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
6. Mr. Batista (taught, taught, taught) the class how to use correct punctuation.
7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (grewed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with their catchy songs.

### Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)

### Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

**Consistent verb tense** means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

**Inconsistent tense:**

The crowd starts cheering as Melina approached the finish line.

**Consistent tense:**

The crowd started cheering as Melina approached the finish line.

**Consistent tense:**

The crowd starts cheering as Melina approaches the finish line.

*Tip*

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

When I was a teenager, I wanted to be a fire fighter, but now I am studying computer science.

If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

### Exercise 4

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a “lord,” and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants’ families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant’s day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

*Writing at Work*

Read the following excerpt from a work e-mail:

I would like to highlight an important concern that comes up after our meeting last week. During the meeting, we agree to conduct a series of interviews over the next several months in which we hired new customer service representatives. Before we do that, however, I would like to review your experiences with the Customer Relationship Management Program. Please suggest a convenient time next week for us to meet so that we can discuss this important matter.

The inconsistent tense in the e-mail will very likely distract the reader from its overall point. Most likely, your coworkers will not correct your verb tenses or call attention to grammatical errors, but it is important to keep in mind that errors such as these do have a subtle negative impact in the workplace.

*Key Takeaways*

- Verb tense helps you express when an event takes place.
- Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Irregular verbs do not follow regular, predictable patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Using consistent verb tense is a key element to effective writing.

*Writing Application*

Tell a family story. You likely have several family stories to choose from, but pick the one that you find most interesting to write about. Use as many details as you can in the telling. As you write and proofread, make sure your all your verbs are correct and the tenses are consistent.



## 1.4 Capitalization

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Learn the basic rules of capitalization.
2. Identify common capitalization errors.

Text messages, casual e-mails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of [capitalization](#). In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

### *Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence*

**Incorrect:** the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

**Correct:** The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

**Incorrect:** cooking can be therapeutic.

**Correct:** Cooking can be therapeutic.

### *Capitalize Proper Nouns*

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

**Incorrect:** He grew up in harlem, new york.

**Correct:** He grew up in Harlem, New York.

**Incorrect:** The sears tower in chicago has a new name.

**Correct:** The Sears Tower in Chicago has a new name.

*Tip*

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

| Common Noun      | Proper Noun                  |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| museum           | The Art Institute of Chicago |
| theater          | Apollo Theater               |
| country          | Malaysia                     |
| uncle            | Uncle Javier                 |
| doctor           | Dr. Jackson                  |
| book             | <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>   |
| college          | Smith College                |
| war              | the Spanish-American War     |
| historical event | The Renaissance              |

*Exercise 1*

On your own sheet of paper, write five proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first one has been done for you.

Common noun: river

1. Nile River
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Common noun: musician

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Common noun: magazine

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### *Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays*

**Incorrect:** On wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

**Correct:** On Wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

**Incorrect:** The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.

**Correct:** The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.

### *Capitalize Titles*

**Incorrect:** The play, fences, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

**Correct:** The play, Fences, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

**Incorrect:** The president of the united states will be speaking at my university.

**Correct:** The President of the United States will be speaking at my university.

*Tip*

Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “e-mail” and “online” are never capitalized.

*Exercise 2*

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names.

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.
2. “Ode to a nightingale” is a sad poem.
3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. *The house on Mango street* is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

*Exercise 3*

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization.

david grann's *the lost City of Z* mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett's voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch's expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.

The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, david grann, is lost in the amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because it's thrilling but also because this is a true account of grann's experience. grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. the suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself A Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

*Writing at Work*

Did you know that, if you use all capital letters to convey a message, the capital letters come across like shouting? In addition, all capital letters are actually more difficult to read and may annoy the reader. To avoid “shouting” at or annoying your reader, follow the rules of capitalization and find other ways to emphasize your point.

*Key Takeaways*

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
- Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

*Writing Application*

Write a one-page biography. Make sure to identify people, places, and dates and use capitalization correctly.

## 1.5 Pronouns

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify pronouns and their antecedents.
2. Use pronouns and their antecedents correctly.

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A*. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

### Pronoun Agreement

A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the **antecedent** of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.
  - *She* refers to *Lani*.
  - *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.
2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.
  - *Him* refers to *Jeremy*.
  - *Jeremy* is the antecedent of *him*.
3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.
  - *They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie*.
  - *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they*.

**Pronoun agreement** errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

### Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

sing.

plur.

**Incorrect:** If a *student* wants to return a book to the bookstore, *they* must have a receipt.

sing.

sing.

**Correct:** If a *student* wants to return a book to the bookstore, *he or she* must have a receipt.

\*If it seems too wordy to use *he or she*, change the antecedent to a plural noun.

plur.

plur.

**Correct:** If *students* want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* must have a receipt.

### Agreement in Person

|                      | Singular Pronouns |              |               | Plural Pronouns |      |                |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|------|----------------|
| <b>First Person</b>  | I                 | me           | my (mine)     | we              | us   | our (ours)     |
| <b>Second Person</b> | you               | you          | your (yours)  | you             | you  | your (your)    |
| <b>Third Person</b>  | he, she, it       | him, her, it | his, her, its | they            | them | their (theirs) |

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

3rd

2nd

**Incorrect:** When a *person* goes to a restaurant, *you* should leave a tip.

3rd

3rd

**Correct:** When a *person* goes to a restaurant, *he or she* should leave a tip.

1st

1st

**Correct:** When *we* go to a restaurant, *I* should leave a tip.

### Exercise 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a

butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

*Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement*

**Indefinite pronouns** do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

| Common Indefinite Pronouns |            |         |             |           |
|----------------------------|------------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| all                        | each one   | few     | nothing     | several   |
| any                        | each other | many    | one         | some      |
| anybody                    | either     | neither | one another | somebody  |
| anything                   | everybody  | nobody  | oneself     | someone   |
| both                       | everyone   | none    | other       | something |
| each                       | everything | no one  | others      | anyone    |

**Indefinite pronoun agreement**

sing. plur.

**Incorrect:** *Everyone* should do what *they* can to help.

sing. sing.

**Correct:** *Everyone* should do what *he or she* can to help.

sing. plur.

**Incorrect:** *Someone* left *their* backpack in the library.

sing. sing.

**Correct:** *Someone* left *his or her* backpack in the library.



### Collective Nouns

**Collective nouns** suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

| Common Collective Nouns |            |         |
|-------------------------|------------|---------|
| audience                | faculty    | public  |
| band                    | family     | school  |
| class                   | government | society |
| committee               | group      | team    |
| company                 | jury       | tribe   |

#### Collective noun agreement

sing.

plur.

**Incorrect:** Lara's *company* will have *their* annual picnic next week.

sing.

sing.

**Correct:** Lara's *company* will have *its* annual picnic next week.

### Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste \_\_\_\_\_ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, \_\_\_\_\_ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did \_\_\_\_\_ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving \_\_\_\_\_ a smile in return.
5. My family has \_\_\_\_\_ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train \_\_\_\_\_ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward \_\_\_\_\_.
8. My mother's singing group has \_\_\_\_\_ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.

9. No one should suffer \_\_\_\_\_ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost \_\_\_\_\_ way in the storm.

*Subject and Object Pronouns*

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

| Singular Pronouns |              | Plural Pronouns |        |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------|
| Subject           | Object       | Subject         | Object |
| I                 | me           | we              | us     |
| you               | you          | you             | you    |
| he, she, it       | him, her, it | they            | them   |

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Jane moved *it* to the corner.

*Tip*

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition.

Near *them*, the children played.

My mother stood between *us*.

The pronouns *us* and *them* are objects of the prepositions *near* and *between*. They answer the questions *near* whom? And *between* whom?

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

**Incorrect:** *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

**Correct:** *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

**Correct:** Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

### Tip

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, *Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.

**Compound object pronouns** are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

**Incorrect:** I have a good feeling about *Janice and I*.

**Correct:** I have a good feeling about *Janice and me*.

### Tip

It is correct to write *Janice and me*, as opposed to *me and Janice*. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

### Writing at Work

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

## Exercise 3

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1.

Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.

---

2.

She and him have decided to sell their house.

---

3.

Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.

---

4.

Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.

---

5.

They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.

---

6.

Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.

---

7.

New Year's Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.

---

8.

You exercise much more often than me.

---

9.

I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.

---

10.

The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

### Who versus Whom

*Who* or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

*Who* won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

*Whom* did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

#### Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

*Who/Whom* do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head, using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

I consider *him* my best friend.

I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use *whom*.

### Exercise 4

Complete the following sentences by adding *who* or *whom*. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ hit the home run?
2. I remember \_\_\_\_\_ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To \_\_\_\_\_ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea \_\_\_\_\_ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With \_\_\_\_\_ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew \_\_\_\_\_ the famous actor was.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From \_\_\_\_\_ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew \_\_\_\_\_ ate the cake mom was saving.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- Collective nouns are usually singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- *Who* serves as a subject of a verb.
- *Whom* serves as an object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.

### *Writing Application*

Write about what makes an ideal marriage or long-term relationship. Provide specific details to back up your assertions. After you have written a few paragraphs, go back and proofread your paper for correct pronoun usage.

## 1.6 Adjectives and Adverbs

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify adjectives and adverbs.
2. Use adjectives and adverbs correctly.

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life.

### Adjectives and Adverbs

An **adjective** is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many*?

1. The *green* sweater belongs to Iris.

2. She looks *beautiful*.

- In sentence 1, the adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater*.
- In sentence 2, the adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.

An **adverb** is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in *-ly*. They answer questions such as *how*, *to what extent*, *why*, *when*, and *where*.

3. Bertrand sings *horribly*.

4. My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise.

5. He threw the ball *very* accurately.

- In sentence 3, *horribly* describes the verb *sings*. How does Bertrand sing? He sings *horribly*.
- In sentence 4, *extremely* describes the adjective *wise*. How *wise* is the instructor? *Extremely* wise.
- In sentence 5, *very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.

### Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by adding the correct adjective or adverb from the list in the previous section. Identify the word as an adjective or an adverb (Adj, Adv).

1. Frederick \_\_\_\_\_ choked on the piece of chicken when he saw Margaret walk through the door.
2. His \_\_\_\_\_ eyes looked at everyone and everything as if they were specimens in a biology lab.
3. Despite her pessimistic views on life, Lauren believes that most people have \_\_\_\_\_ hearts.
4. Although Stefan took the criticism \_\_\_\_\_, he remained calm.
5. The child developed a \_\_\_\_\_ imagination because he read a lot of books.
6. Madeleine spoke \_\_\_\_\_ while she was visiting her grandmother in the hospital.
7. Hector's most \_\_\_\_\_ possession was his father's bass guitar from the 1970s.
8. My definition of a \_\_\_\_\_ afternoon is walking to the park on a beautiful day, spreading out my blanket, and losing myself in a good book.
9. She \_\_\_\_\_ eyed her new coworker and wondered if he was single.
10. At the party, Denise \_\_\_\_\_ devoured two pieces of pepperoni pizza and a several slices of ripe watermelon.

### Comparative versus Superlative

**Comparative** adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is *thin*.
2. Steven is *thinner* than Jorge.
  - Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective *thin*.
  - Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is *thinner*. So *thinner* is the comparative form of *thin*.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one syllable word, add *-er* to it to form the comparative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *bigger*, *faster*, and *shorter* in the comparative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *more* in front of it to form the comparative. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *more happily*, *more comfortable*, and *more jealous* in the comparative.

**Superlative** adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

1. Jackie is the *loudest* cheerleader on the squad.
2. Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student by her graduating class.
  - Sentence 1 shows that Jackie is not just *louder* than one other person, but she is the *loudest* of all the cheerleaders on the squad.
  - Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student of all the students in her class.



Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add *-est* to form the superlative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *biggest*, *fastest*, and *shortest* in the superlative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *most* in front of it. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *most happily*, *most comfortable*, and *most jealous* in the superlative form.

### Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in *-y*, change the *-y* to an *-i* and add *-est*. For example, *happy* would change to *happiest* in the superlative form; *healthy* would change to *healthiest*.

## Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Max and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Max that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Max insulted Jacko too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Max and brought Merlin some of Jacko's treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Collaboration

Share and compare your answers with a classmate.

### Irregular Words: Good, Well, Bad, and Badly

*Good*, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often used incorrectly. Study the following chart to learn the correct usage of these words and their comparative and superlative forms.

|           |       | Comparative | Superlative |
|-----------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| Adjective | good  | better      | best        |
| Adverb    | well  | better      | best        |
| Adjective | bad   | worse       | worst       |
| Adverb    | badly | worse       | worst       |

### *Good versus Well*

*Good* is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

**Incorrect:** Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.

**Correct:** Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

*Well* is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

**Incorrect:** Cecilia's team received a *well* score.

**Correct:** Cecilia's team received a *good* score.

### *Bad versus Badly*

*Bad* is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

**Incorrect:** I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

**Correct:** I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

*Badly* is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

**Incorrect:** The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.

**Correct:** The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.

### *Better and Worse*

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long distance running.

The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

### *Best and Worst*

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors.

Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

### *Tip*

Remember *better* and *worse* compare two persons or things. *Best* and *worst* compare three or more persons or things.

## Exercise 3

Write *good*, *well*, *bad*, or *badly* to complete each sentence. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Donna always felt \_\_\_\_\_ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a \_\_\_\_\_ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves \_\_\_\_\_ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was \_\_\_\_\_ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Steve was shaking \_\_\_\_\_ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very \_\_\_\_\_ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.

7. The meeting with my son's math teacher went very \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Juan has a \_\_\_\_\_ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a \_\_\_\_\_ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

### Exercise 4

Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. This research paper is \_\_\_\_\_ (good) than my last one.
2. Tanaya likes country music \_\_\_\_\_ (well) of all.
3. My motorcycle rides \_\_\_\_\_ (bad) than it did last summer.
4. That is the \_\_\_\_\_ (bad) joke my father ever told.
5. The hockey team played \_\_\_\_\_ (badly) than it did last season.
6. Tracey plays guitar \_\_\_\_\_ (well) than she plays the piano.
7. It will go down as one of the \_\_\_\_\_ (bad) movies I have ever seen.
8. The deforestation in the Amazon is \_\_\_\_\_ (bad) than it was last year.
9. Movie ticket sales are \_\_\_\_\_ (good) this year than last.
10. My husband says mystery novels are the \_\_\_\_\_ (good) types of books.

### Writing at Work

The irregular words *good*, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms *better*, *best*, *worse*, and *worst*. You may not hear the difference between *worse* and *worst*, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

### Key Takeaways

- Adjectives describe a noun or a pronoun.
- Adverbs describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb.
- Most adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective.
- Comparative adjectives and adverbs compare two persons or things.
- Superlative adjectives or adverbs compare more than two persons or things.

- The adjectives *good* and *bad* and the adverbs *well* and *badly* are unique in their comparative and superlative forms and require special attention.

### *Writing Application*

Using the exercises as a guide, write your own ten-sentence quiz for your classmate(s) using the concepts covered in this section. Try to include two questions from each subsection in your quiz. Exchange papers and see whether you can get a perfect score.

## 1.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify modifiers.
2. Learn how to correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

A **modifier** is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out *what* the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome.

### *Misplaced Modifiers*

A **misplaced modifier** is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

**Incorrect:** She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.

**Correct:** She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

- Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

**Incorrect:** They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

**Correct:** They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

- In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

**Incorrect:** The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

**Correct:** The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

- The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

### Tip

Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

**Confusing:** Tyler *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

**Repaired:** Tyler found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

## Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

### Dangling Modifiers

A **dangling modifier** is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

**Incorrect:** *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

**Correct:** As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

- In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

**Incorrect:** *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

**Correct:** As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

**Correct:** The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

- In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

**Incorrect:** To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

**Correct:** If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

- In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

### *Tip*

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:

1.

Look for an *-ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:

*Painting for three hours at night*, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the *-ing* modifier.)

2.

Underline the first noun that follows it:

*Painting for three hours at night*, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3.

Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.



After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

*Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.*

### Exercise 2

Rewrite the following the sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

### Exercise 3

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store.  
 Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread.  
 Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the  
 sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich,  
 my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my  
 sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but  
 next time I will add cheese.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
- There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

### *Writing Application*

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

## 1.8 Writing Basics: End-of-Chapter Exercises

### Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

### Exercises

1.

On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct (no error). Then rewrite the paragraph by correcting the sentence fragments and run-ons.

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 \_\_\_\_\_. Written in 1931 \_\_\_\_\_. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes \_\_\_\_\_. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point \_\_\_\_\_. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this “hypnopedia” \_\_\_\_\_. Everyone is kept “happy” in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma \_\_\_\_\_. because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living \_\_\_\_\_. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there \_\_\_\_\_. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out \_\_\_\_\_. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read \_\_\_\_\_.

2.

Each sentence contains an error in subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, or consistent verb tense. Identify the type of error. Then, on your own sheet of paper, rewrite the sentence correctly.

a. Maria and Ty meets me at the community center for cooking classes on Tuesdays.

---

b. John's ability to laugh at almost anything amaze me.

---

c. Samantha and I were walking near the lake when the large, colorful bird appears.

---

d. I builded my own telescope using materials I bought at the hardware store.

---

e. My mother freezed the remaining tomatoes from her garden so that she could use them during the winter.

---

f. Bernard asked the stranger sitting next to him for the time, and she says it was past midnight.

---

g. My mother and brother wears glasses, but my father and sister do not.

---

h. We held our noses as the skunk runs away.

---

i. Neither Soren nor Andrew are excited about the early morning swim meet.

---

j. My hands hurted at the thought of transcribing all those notes.

---

k. The police questioned the suspect for hours but she gives them no useful information.

---

l. Terry takes short weekend trips because her job as a therapist was very emotionally draining.

---

m. She criticize delicately, making sure not to hurt anyone's feelings.

-----

n. Davis winded the old clock and set it atop his nightstand.

-----

o. Cherie losed four poker hands in a row before realizing that she was playing against professionals.

-----

p. Janis and Joan describes their trip to the Amazon in vivid detail.

-----

q. You should decides for yourself whether or not to reduce the amount of processed foods in your diet.

-----

r. The oil rig exploded and spills millions of gallons of oil into the ocean.

-----

s. The handsome vampire appeared out of nowhere and smiles at the smitten woman.

-----

t. The batter swunged at the ball several times but never hit it.

-----

3.

Correct the capitalization errors in the following fictional story. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

lance worthington signed a Recording Contract with Capitol records on june 15, 2007. Despite selling two million copies of his Debut Album, nothing to lose, lance lost quite a bit as his tax returns from the irs revealed. lance did not think it was fair that the Record Company kept so much of his earnings, so he decided to hire robert bergman, a prominent music Attorney with a Shark-like reputation. bergman represented lance all the way to the supreme court, where lance won the case against capitol records. Lance worthington was instrumental in changing intellectual property rights and long standing Record Company practices. All artists and musicians can thank him for his brave stance against record companies. Lance subsequently formed his own independent record label called worthy records. worthy is now a

successful Label based out of Chicago, Illinois, and its Artists have appeared on well known shows such as The Tonight Show and Saturday Night Live. Lance Worthington is a model for success in the do-it-yourself World that has become the Music Industry.

#### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

4.

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Then copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

- a. Denise has a (cheerful) \_\_\_\_\_ outlook on life than her husband.
- b. I don't mean to brag, but I think I am the (good) \_\_\_\_\_ cook in my family.
- c. Lydia is the (thoughtful) \_\_\_\_\_ person I know.
- d. Italy experienced the (bad) \_\_\_\_\_ heat wave in its history last year.
- e. My teacher, Ms. Beckett, is the (strange) \_\_\_\_\_ person I know, and I like that.
- f. Dorian's drawing skills are (good) \_\_\_\_\_ this semester than last.
- g. My handwriting is the (sloppy) \_\_\_\_\_ of all my classmates.
- h. Melvin's soccer team played (badly) \_\_\_\_\_ than it did last season.
- i. Josie's pen writes (smooth) \_\_\_\_\_ than mine.
- j. I felt (lucky) \_\_\_\_\_ than my sister because I got in to the college of my choice.

## ***Chapter 2: Punctuation***

- 2.1 Commas
- 2.2 Semicolons
- 2.3 Colons
- 2.4 Quotes
- 2.5 Apostrophes
- 2.6 Parentheses
- 2.7 Dashes
- 2.8 Hyphens
- 2.9 Punctuation: End-of-Chapter Exercises

## 2.1 Commas

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the uses of commas.
2. Correctly use commas in sentences.

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the [comma](#). The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

### *Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase*

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

Ironically, she already had plans for that day.



### Exercise 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

### *Commas in a List of Items*

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

### *Commas and Coordinating Adjectives*

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called [coordinating adjectives](#). These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

### Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

### Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*. For a full list of conjunctions, see [Chapter 2 "Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?"](#).

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

### Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1.

The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.

\_\_\_\_\_

2.

He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.

\_\_\_\_\_

3.

The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.

4.

We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.

5.

I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.

6.

I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.

7.

Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.

8.

I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.

9.

The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

10.

I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

### *Commas before and after Interrupting Words*

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called **interrupting words**. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

#### *Exercise 4*

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

#### *Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters*

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an e-mail or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,

I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,

Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,

Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.

Sincerely,

Jack Fromont

### Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010

Alexa Marché

14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6

New Castle Maine 90342

Dear Mr. Timmons

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you

Alexa

### *Exercise 6*

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

#### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.
- Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.

- A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word *and* is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.
- A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
- Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

## 2.2 Semicolons

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the uses of semicolons.
2. Properly use semicolons in sentences.

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the [semicolon \(;\)](#). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

### *Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses*

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

**Correct:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

**Choppy:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

**Incorrect:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

### *Semicolons to Join Items in a List*

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

**Correct:** The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

**Incorrect:** The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.



By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

*Tip*

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *or*, and *but*.

*Exercise 1*

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

*Key Takeaways*

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

## 2.3 Colons

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the uses of colons.
2. Properly use colons in sentences.

The **colon (:)** is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Dear Hiring Manager:

To: Human Resources

From: Deanna Dean

### *Colons to Introduce a List*

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

### *Colons to Introduce a Quote*

You can use a colon to introduce a quote.

Mark Twain said it best: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

If a quote is longer than forty words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because quotations longer than forty words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

My father always loved Mark Twain's words:

There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

*Tip*

Long quotations, which are forty words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers. For more information about block quotations, see [Chapter 11 "Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?"](#).

### *Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations*

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like *such as* or *for example*.

**Correct:** Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

**Incorrect:** Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

*Tip*

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

**Proper noun:** We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

**Beginning of a quote:** My mother loved this line from *Hamlet*: "To thine own self be true."

**Two independent clauses:** There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

**Incorrect:** The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

*Exercise 1*

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write *OK*.

1.

Don't give up you never know what tomorrow brings.

\_\_\_\_\_

2.

Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_

3.

Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

\_\_\_\_\_

4.

Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

\_\_\_\_\_

5.

Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

\_\_\_\_\_

6.

I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

\_\_\_\_\_

7.

The boss's message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.

\_\_\_\_\_

8.

Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.

\_\_\_\_\_

9.

My little sister said what we were all thinking “We should have stayed home.”

-----  
10.

Trust me I have done this before.

-----

### *Key Takeaways*

- Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

## 2.4 Quotes

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the uses of quotes.
2. Correctly use quotes in sentences.

**Quotation marks** (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

### *Direct Quotations*

A **direct quotation** is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An **indirect quotation** is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

**Direct quotation:** Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

**Indirect quotation:** Carly said that she would never go back there.

### *Writing at Work*

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

- The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
- The client said, “He thought our manuscript was garbage.”

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word “garbage”? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client’s words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is “he” in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However,

the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

### *Punctuating Direct Quotations*

Quotation marks show readers another person's exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

**Beginning:** Madison said, "Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

**Middle:** "Let's stop at the farmers market," Madison said, "to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

**End:** "Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner," Madison said.

**Speaker not identified:** "Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after* commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

**Question is part of quoted text:** The new employee asked, "When is lunch?"

**Question is not part of quoted text:** Did you hear her say you were "the next Picasso"?

**Exclamation is part of quoted text:** My supervisor beamed, "Thanks for all of your hard work!"

**Exclamation is not part of quoted text:** He said I "single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars"!

### *Quotations within Quotations*

Use **single quotation marks** ( ' ') to show a quotation within in a quotation.

Theresa said, "I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, 'No dogs allowed.'"

"When you say, 'I can't help it,' what exactly does that mean?"

"The instructions say, 'Tighten the screws one at a time.'"

### *Titles*

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized.

“Annabelle Lee” is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The *New York Times* has been in publication since 1851.

### *Writing at Work*

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

### *Exercise 1*

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write *OK*.

1.

Yasmin said, I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.

2.

Where should we go? said Russell.

3.

Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.

4.

I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.



5.

Perfect! said Yasmin.

---

6.

Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.

---

7.

I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?

---

8.

The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.

---

9.

Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?

---

10.

That's the one said Russell.

---

### *Key Takeaways*

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

## 2.5 Apostrophes

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the uses of apostrophes.
2. Correctly use apostrophes in sentences.

An **apostrophe (')** is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

### *Possession*

An apostrophe and the letter *s* indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add *'s*.

Jen's dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog's leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess's sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in *s* still take the apostrophe *s* (*'s*) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in *s*, just add an apostrophe (*'*). If the plural noun does not end in *s*, add an apostrophe and an *s* (*'s*).

**Plural noun that ends in *s*:** The drummers' sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

**Plural noun that does not end in *s*:** The people's votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

### *Contractions*

A **contraction** is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

I do not like ice cream.

I **don't** like ice cream.

Notice how the words *do* and *not* have been combined to form the contraction *don't*. The apostrophe shows where the *o* in *not* has been left out.

We will see you later.

**We'll** see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

|         |                     |
|---------|---------------------|
| aren't  | are not             |
| can't   | cannot              |
| doesn't | does not            |
| don't   | do not              |
| isn't   | is not              |
| he'll   | he will             |
| I'll    | I will              |
| she'll  | she will            |
| they'll | they will           |
| you'll  | you will            |
| it's    | it is, it has       |
| let's   | let us              |
| she's   | she is, she has     |
| there's | there is, there has |
| who's   | who is, who has     |

*Tip*

Be careful not to confuse *it's* with *its*. *It's* is a contraction of the words *it* and *is*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun.

It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.

*Exercise 1*

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

*Key Takeaways*

- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add *'s* to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in *s*. Add *'* to plural nouns that end in *s*.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

## 2.6 Parentheses

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the uses of parentheses.
2. Properly use parentheses in sentences.

**Parentheses ( )** are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

*Attack of the Killer Potatoes* has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

### *Exercise 1*

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write *OK*.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Parentheses enclose information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.
- Parentheses are always used in pairs.

## 2.7 Dashes

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the uses of dashes.
2. Correctly use dashes in sentences.

A **dash (—)** is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

### *Exercise 1*

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write *OK*.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Dashes indicate a pause in text.
- Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

## 2.8 Hyphens

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the uses of hyphens.
2. Properly use hyphens in sentences.

A **hyphen (-)** looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

### *Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One*

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.

My study group focused on preparing for the midyear review.

### *Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line*

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet-  
ing would conflict with the client meeting.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

## 2.9 Punctuation: End-of-Chapter Exercises

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Use the skills you have learned in this chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

### *Exercises*

1.

Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write *OK*.

#### **Commas**

- a. The wedding will be July 13 2012.
- b. The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.
- c. The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.
- d. Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
- e. The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.
- f. The photography the catering and the music will all be friends.

#### **Semicolons**

- a. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.
- b. The flowers will be either roses, daisies, and snapdragons orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies.

#### **Colons**

- a. There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.
- b. They've finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.
- c. Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable.

#### **Quotes**



- a. The invitations said that the wedding would be “outdoor casual.”
- b. “What exactly does ‘outdoor casual’ mean?” I asked the bride.
- c. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

### **Apostrophes**

- a. On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.
- b. My brothers wife will make the arrangements.
- c. Shes a great party organizer.

### **Parentheses**

- a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I’ve known her for fifteen years.
- b. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

### **Dashes**

- a. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.
- b. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

### **Hyphens**

- a. The groom danced with his new mother in law.
- b. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.
- 2.

Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.

- a. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.
- b. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.
- c. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.
- d. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!
- e. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.
- f. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.
- g. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.
- h. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.
- i. Arent gardens wonderful?
- j. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?
- 3.

The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

May 18 2011

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don't have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. You're welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

4.

Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence.

I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an e-mail to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### *Writing Application*

Review some of the recent or current assignments you have completed for school or work. Look through recent business and personal e-mails. Does your work contain any errors in punctuation? Correct the errors and compile a list of the types of errors you are correcting (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, etc.). Use this list as a reference for the types of punctuation marks that you should review and practice.

If you do not find many errors—great! You can still look for ways to add interest to your writing by using dashes, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to create a variety of sentence lengths and structures.

## ***Chapter 3: Working with Words: Which Word Is Right?***

3.1 Commonly Confused Words

3.2 Spelling

3.3 Word Choice

3.4 Prefixes and Suffixes

3.5 Synonyms and Antonyms

3.6 Using Context Clues

3.7 Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises

## 3.1 Commonly Confused Words

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify commonly confused words.
2. Use strategies to avoid commonly confused words.

Just as a mason uses bricks to build sturdy homes, writers use words to build successful documents. Consider the construction of a building. Builders need to use tough, reliable materials to build a solid and structurally sound skyscraper. From the foundation to the roof and every floor in between, every part is necessary. Writers need to use strong, meaningful words from the first sentence to the last and in every sentence in between.

You already know many words that you use everyday as part of your writing and speaking [vocabulary](#). You probably also know that certain words fit better in certain situations. Letters, e-mails, and even quickly jotted grocery lists require the proper selection of vocabulary. Imagine you are writing a grocery list to purchase the ingredients for a recipe but accidentally write down cilantro when the recipe calls for parsley. Even though cilantro and parsley look remarkably alike, each produces a very different effect in food. This seemingly small error could radically alter the flavor of your dish!

Having a solid everyday vocabulary will help you while writing, but learning new words and avoiding common word errors will make a real impression on your readers. Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection and usage can lead to more polished, more meaningful work. This chapter covers word choice and vocabulary-building strategies that will improve your writing.

### Commonly Confused Words

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called [commonly confused words](#). For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words *new* and *knew*:

I liked her *new* sweater.

I *knew* she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. *New* is an adjective that describes the sweater, and *knew* is the past tense of the verb *to know*. To read more about adjectives, verbs, and other parts of speech see [Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#).

### *Recognizing Commonly Confused Words*

*New* and *knew* are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities. Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word.

#### *Commonly Confused Words*

##### A, An, And

- *A* (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.  
**a** key, **a** mouse, **a** screen
- *An* (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.  
**an** airplane, **an** ocean, **an** igloo
- *And* (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.  
peanut butter **and** jelly, pen **and** pencil, jump **and** shout

##### Accept, Except

- *Accept* (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.  
They **accepted** our proposal for the conference.
- *Except* (conjunction). Means only or but.  
We could fly there **except** the tickets cost too much.

##### Affect, Effect

- *Affect* (verb). Means to create a change.  
Hurricane winds **affect** the amount of rainfall.
- *Effect* (noun). Means an outcome or result.  
The heavy rains will have an **effect** on the crop growth.

##### Are, Our

- *Are* (verb). A conjugated form of the verb *to be*.

My cousins **are** all tall and blonde.

- *Our* (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun *we*.

We will bring **our** cameras to take pictures.

By, Buy

- *By* (preposition). Means next to.

My glasses are **by** the bed.

- *Buy* (verb). Means to purchase.

I will **buy** new glasses after the doctor's appointment.

Its, It's

- *Its* (pronoun). A form of *it* that shows possession.

The butterfly flapped **its** wings.

- *It's* (contraction). Joins the words *it* and *is*.

**It's** the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.

Know, No

- *Know* (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.

I **know** the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.

- *No*. Used to make a negative.

I have **no** time to visit the zoo this weekend.

Loose, Lose

- *Loose* (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.

Without a belt, her pants are **loose** on her waist.

- *Lose* (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.

She will **lose** even more weight after finishing the marathon training.

Of, Have

- *Of* (preposition). Means *from* or *about*.

I studied maps **of** the city to know where to rent a new apartment.

- *Have* (verb). Means to possess something.

I **have** many friends to help me move.

- *Have* (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.

I should **have** helped her with that heavy box.

#### Quite, Quiet, Quit

- *Quite* (adverb). Means *really* or *truly*.

My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.

- *Quiet* (adjective). Means not loud.

I need a **quiet** room to complete the assignments.

- *Quit* (verb). Means to stop or to end.

I will **quit** when I am hungry for dinner.

#### Right, Write

- *Right* (adjective). Means proper or correct.

When bowling, she practices the **right** form.

- *Right* (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.

The ball curved to the **right** and hit the last pin.

- *Write* (verb). Means to communicate on paper.

After the team members bowl, I will **write** down their scores.

#### Set, Sit

- *Set* (verb). Means to put an item down.

She **set** the mug on the saucer.

- *Set* (noun). Means a group of similar objects.

All the mugs and saucers belonged in a **set**.

- *Sit* (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place

I'll **sit** on the sofa while she brews the tea.

#### Suppose, Supposed

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to think or to consider

I **suppose** I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to suggest.

**Suppose** we all split the cost of the dinner.

- *Supposed* (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed.

She was **supposed** to create the menu.

#### Than, Then

- *Than* (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing

Registered nurses require less schooling **than** doctors.

- *Then* (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.

Doctors first complete medical school and **then** obtain a residency.

#### Their, They're, There

- *Their* (pronoun). A form of *they* that shows possession.

The dog walker feeds **their** dogs everyday at two o'clock.

- *They're* (contraction). Joins the words *they* and *are*.

**They're** the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.

- *There* (adverb). Indicates a particular place.

The dogs' bowls are over **there**, next to the pantry.

- *There* (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something

**There** are more treats if the dogs behave.



## To, Two, Too

- *To* (preposition). Indicates movement.

Let's go **to** the circus.

- *To*. A word that completes an infinitive verb.

**to** play, **to** ride, **to** watch.

- *Two*. The number after one. It describes how many.

**Two** clowns squirted the elephants with water.

- *Too* (adverb). Means *also* or *very*.

The tents were **too** loud, and we left.

## Use, Used

- *Use* (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.

We **use** a weed whacker to trim the hedges.

- *Used*. The past tense form of the verb *to use*

He **used** the lawnmower last night before it rained.

- *Used to*. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present

He **used to** hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

## Who's, Whose

- *Who's* (contraction). Joins the words *who* and either *is* or *has*.

**Who's** the new student? **Who's** met him?

- *Whose* (pronoun). A form of *who* that shows possession.

**Whose** schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

## Your, You're

- *Your* (pronoun). A form of *you* that shows possession.

**Your** book bag is unzipped.

- *You're* (contraction). Joins the words *you* and *are*.

**You're** the girl with the unzipped book bag.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

### Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns \_\_\_\_\_(to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbor's dog is \_\_\_\_\_(quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.
3. \_\_\_\_\_(Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake \_\_\_\_\_(than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.
5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee and \_\_\_\_\_(than, then) brushed his teeth.
6. Do you have any \_\_\_\_\_(loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?
7. Father must \_\_\_\_\_(have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
8. Before playing ice hockey, I was \_\_\_\_\_(suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may \_\_\_\_\_(affect, effect) my understanding of the rules.
9. Tonight she will \_\_\_\_\_(set, sit) down and \_\_\_\_\_(right, write) a cover letter to accompany her résumé and job application.
10. It must be fall, because the leaves \_\_\_\_\_(are, our) changing, and \_\_\_\_\_(it's, its) getting darker earlier.

### Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

1. **Use a dictionary.** Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are

uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet's easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.

2. **Keep a list of words you commonly confuse.** Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.

3. **Study the list of commonly confused words.** You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

### *Tip*

Figure 4.1 A Commonly Misused Word on a Public Sign



Commonly confused words appear in many locations, not just at work or at school. Be on the lookout for misused words wherever you find yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note of the error and remember its correction for your own pieces of writing.

### *Writing at Work*

All employers value effective communication. From an application to an interview to the first month on the job,

employers pay attention to your vocabulary. You do not need a large vocabulary to succeed, but you do need to be able to express yourself clearly and avoid commonly misused words.

When giving an important presentation on the effect of inflation on profit margins, you must know the difference between *effect* and *affect* and choose the correct word. When writing an e-mail to confirm deliveries, you must know if the shipment will arrive in *to* days, *too* days, or *two* days. Confusion may arise if you choose the wrong word.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your boss and colleagues.

### Exercise 2

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding the proper word.

The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a photograph to capture they're experience. Although signs state, "No Flash Photography," forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives administrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: "No Photography." Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators' compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### Key Takeaways

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.
- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing.

You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write or study the chart in this book.

- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

### *Writing Application*

Review the latest assignment you completed for school or for work. Does it contain any commonly confused words? Circle each example and use the circled words to begin your own checklist of commonly confused words. Continue to add to your checklist each time you complete an assignment and find a misused word.

## 3.2 Spelling

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify common spelling rules.
2. Identify commonly misused homonyms.
3. Identify commonly misspelled words.

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Writers are still responsible for the errors that remain.

For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

### *Common Spelling Rules*

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

- achieve, niece, alien
- receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + er = happier
- cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- delay + ed = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: *day, lay, say, pay* = *daily, laid, said, paid*

When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as *-able, -ence, -ing, or -ity*, drop the last *e* in a word.

- write + ing = writing
- pure + ity = purity

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as *-less, -ment, or -ly*, keep the last *e* in a word.

- hope + less = hopeless
- advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add *-s* when using the plural form.

- photo + s = photos
- soprano + s = sopranos

Add *-es* to words that end in *s, ch, sh, and x*.

- church + es = churches
- fax + es = faxes

### Exercise 1

Identify and correct the nine misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian and an American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likly suffer long-term brain damage and possibly mental

retardation. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilities, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagued him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Raised on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt alienated from his peers due to his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializing with his peers on the reservation. The reading skills he displayed at such a young age foreshadowed what he would later become. Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologies to his credit, notably *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by pop culture and pow wows and everything in between. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of richness and depth. Alexie also writes poetry, novels, and screenplays. His latest collection of stories is called *War Dances*, which came out in 2009.

#### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

#### Tip

#### Eight Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. **Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page.** Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. **Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words.** Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out" may help you remember that *beautiful* begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word *Wednesday* Wednesday may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.
3. **Use a dictionary.** Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. **Use your computer's spell checker.** The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.



**5. Keep a list of frequently misspelled words.** You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.

**6. Look over corrected papers for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.

**7. Test yourself with flashcards.** Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.

**8. Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter.** Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

### *Tip*

Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important—details like spelling and punctuation. To read more about the writing process and editing and revising, see [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#).

## *Homonyms*

**Homonyms** are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

### *Commonly Misused Homonyms*

Principle, Principal

- **Principle (noun).** A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.

The **principle** of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.

- **Principal (noun).** The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.

The payment plan allows me to pay back only the **principal** amount, not any compounded interest.

- **Principal (noun).** A person who is the main authority of a school.

The **principal** held a conference for both parents and teachers.

Where, Wear, Ware

- **Where (adverb).** The place in which something happens.

**Where** is the restaurant?

- **Wear (verb).** To carry or have on the body.

I will **wear** my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.

- **Ware (noun).** Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, *wares*).

When I return from shopping, I will show you my **wares**.

Lead, Led

- **Lead (noun).** A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.

The **lead** pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.

- **Led (verb).** The past tense of the verb *lead*.

After the garden, she **led** the patrons through the museum.

Which, Witch

- **Which (pronoun).** Replaces one out of a group.

**Which** apartment is yours?

- **Witch (noun).** A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.

She thinks she is a **witch**, but she does not seem to have any powers.

Peace, Piece

- **Peace (noun).** A state of tranquility or quiet.

For once, there was **peace** between the argumentative brothers.

- **Piece (noun).** A part of a whole.

I would like a large **piece** of cake, thank you.

Passed, Past

- **Passed (verb).** To go away or move.

He **passed** the slower cars on the road using the left lane.

- **Past (noun).** Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.

The argument happened in the **past**, so there is no use in dwelling on it.

#### Lessen, Lesson

- **Lessen (verb).** To reduce in number, size, or degree.

My dentist gave me medicine to **lessen** the pain of my aching tooth.

- **Lesson (noun).** A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.

Today's **lesson** was about mortgage interest rates.

#### Patience, Patients

- **Patience (noun).** The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).

The novice teacher's **patience** with the unruly class was astounding.

- **Patients (plural noun).** Individuals under medical care.

The **patients** were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.

#### Sees, Seas, Seize

- **Sees (verb).** To perceive with the eye.

He **sees** a whale through his binoculars.

- **Seas (plural noun).** The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.

The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and **seas** are influenced by the moon.

- **Seize (verb).** To possess or take by force.

The king plans to **seize** all the peasants' land.

#### Threw, Through

- **Threw (verb).** The past tense of *throw*.

She **threw** the football with perfect form.

- **Through (preposition).** A word that indicates movement.

She walked **through** the door and out of his life.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct homonym.

- 1. Do you agree with the underlying \_\_\_\_\_(principle, principal) that ensures copyrights are protected in the digital age?
- 2. I like to \_\_\_\_\_(where, wear, ware) unique clothing from thrift stores that do not have company logos on them.
- 3. Marjorie felt like she was being \_\_\_\_\_(led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
- 4. Serina described \_\_\_\_\_(witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look the same.
- 5. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a \_\_\_\_\_(peace, piece) of his apple.
- 6. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the \_\_\_\_\_(passed, past) all the time?
- 7. Eating healthier foods will \_\_\_\_\_(lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.
- 8. I know it sounds cliché, but my father had the \_\_\_\_\_(patients, patience) of a saint.
- 9. Daniela \_\_\_\_\_(sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that it is why she is successful.
- 10. Everyone goes \_\_\_\_\_(through, threw) hardships in life regardless of who they are.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Below is a list of commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Tip

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

- 1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
- 2. Copy the words onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Table 4.1 Commonly Misspelled Words

|                    |                       |                      |                     |                      |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| across             | dis <b>app</b> oint   | int <b>egr</b> ation | partic <b>ular</b>  | separ <b>ate</b>     |
| add <b>ress</b>    | dis <b>app</b> rove   | int <b>ellig</b> ent | <b>per</b> form     | sim <b>ilar</b>      |
| ans <b>wer</b>     | does <b>n't</b>       | int <b>er</b> est    | <b>per</b> haps     | <b>sin</b> ce        |
| arg <b>ument</b>   | eigh <b>th</b>        | int <b>er</b> fere   | pers <b>onn</b> el  | spee <b>ch</b>       |
| ath <b>lete</b>    | embarr <b>ass</b>     | jew <b>el</b> ry     | poss <b>ess</b>     | streng <b>th</b>     |
| beg <b>inn</b> ing | enviro <b>nn</b> ment | judg <b>ment</b>     | poss <b>ible</b>    | succ <b>ess</b>      |
| behav <b>ior</b>   | exag <b>ger</b> ate   | know <b>ledg</b> e   | <b>pre</b> fer      | <b>sur</b> prise     |
| calen <b>dar</b>   | fami <b>liar</b>      | maint <b>ain</b>     | pre <b>jud</b> ice  | <b>taught</b>        |
| care <b>er</b>     | fin <b>ally</b>       | math <b>emat</b> ics | priv <b>ileg</b> e  | temper <b>atur</b> e |
| consc <b>ience</b> | govern <b>ment</b>    | meant                | prob <b>ably</b>    | thor <b>ough</b>     |
| crow <b>ded</b>    | gram <b>mar</b>       | necess <b>ary</b>    | <b>psy</b> chology  | thoug <b>ht</b>      |
| def <b>inite</b>   | heigh <b>t</b>        | nerv <b>ous</b>      | purs <b>ue</b>      | tir <b>ed</b>        |
| descri <b>be</b>   | il <b>leg</b> al      | occ <b>as</b> ion    | refer <b>ence</b>   | un <b>til</b>        |
| desper <b>ate</b>  | immedi <b>ately</b>   | opin <b>ion</b>      | <b>rhy</b> thm      | weig <b>ht</b>       |
| diff <b>erent</b>  | import <b>ant</b>     | optim <b>ist</b>     | ridic <b>ul</b> ous | writt <b>en</b>      |

### Exercise 3

Identify and correct the ten commonly misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it "Breuckelen."

Immedietely after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule.

However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn's first inhabitants.

When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finally they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British. In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first important battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all. By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an occasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its separate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people's opinion, the integration into New York City should have never happened; they thought Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### *Writing at Work*

In today's job market, writing e-mails has become a means by which many people find employment. E-mails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers' inboxes are inundated with countless e-mails daily. If even the subject line of an e-mail contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked and someone else's e-mail will take priority.

The best thing to do after you proofread an e-mail to an employer and run the spell checker is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the e-mail and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing centers, which may also be able to assist you.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.

- Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
- Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
- Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.

### *Writing Application*

What is your definition of a successful person? Is it based on a person's profession or is it based on his or her character? Perhaps success means a combination of both. In one paragraph, describe in detail what you think makes a person successful. When you are finished, proofread your work for spelling errors. Exchange papers with a partner and read each other's work. See if you catch any spelling errors that your partner missed.

## 3.3 Word Choice

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the reasons why using a dictionary and thesaurus is important when writing.
2. Identify how to use proper connotations.
3. Identify how to avoid using slang, clichés, and overly general words in your writing.

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

### *Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus*

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling.** How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation.** How to say the word.
- **Part of speech.** The function of the word.
- **Definition.** The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms.** Words that have similar meanings.
- **Etymology.** The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceeding information you can identify:



**myth**, mith, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth • ic, myth • i • cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms, words that have the same (or very close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms, words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly.

**precocious** *adj.* *She's such a precocious little girl!*: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

*Ant.* slow, backward, stupid.

### Using Proper Connotations

A **denotation** is the dictionary definition of a word. A **connotation**, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word.

#### Scrawny

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a **scrawny** child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (Negative) In this sentence the word *scrawny* may have a negative connotation in the readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

#### Skinny

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.
- **Word used in a sentence:** **Skinny** jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation:** (Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive connotations of the word *skinny*.

#### Lean

- **Denotation:** Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.
- **Word used in a sentence:** My brother has a **lean** figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.

- **Connotation:** (Neutral) In this sentence, *lean* has a neutral connotation. It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word *scrawny*, nor does imply the positive cultural impressions of the word *skinny*. It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ.

### Exercise 1

In each of the following items, you will find words with similar denotations. Identify the words' connotations as positive, negative, or neutral by writing the word in the appropriate box. Copy the chart onto your own piece of paper.

1. curious, nosy, interested
2. lazy, relaxed, slow
3. courageous, foolhardy, assured
4. new, newfangled, modern
5. mansion, shack, residence
6. spinster, unmarried woman, career woman
7. giggle, laugh, cackle
8. boring, routine, prosaic
9. noted, notorious, famous
10. assertive, confident, pushy

| Positive | Negative | Neutral |
|----------|----------|---------|
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |
|          |          |         |

### *Avoiding Slang*

**Slang** describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

### *Writing at Work*

Frequent exposure to media and popular culture has desensitized many of us to slang. In certain situations, using slang at work may not be problematic, but keep in mind that words can have a powerful effect. Slang in professional e-mails or during meetings may convey the wrong message or even mistakenly offend someone.

### *Exercise 2*

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying “like” and “um,” and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I’ve been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don’t enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I’m surprised that people didn’t boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### *Avoiding Clichés*

**Clichés** are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

- **Clichéd:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my **blood boil**.
- **Plain:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- **Original:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

### *Tip*

Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

### Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.
2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
3. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.
8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, "Time sure does fly when you are having fun!"
9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

### Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring your words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

- **General:** My new puppy is cute.
- **Specific:** My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.
- **General:** My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.
- **Specific:** My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

### Exercise 4

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.

3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Milo's essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.
9. The goalie blocked the shot.
10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Using a dictionary and thesaurus as you write will improve your writing by improving your word choice.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.

### *Writing Application*

Review a piece of writing that you have completed for school. Circle any sentences with slang, clichés, or overly general words and rewrite them using stronger language.

## 3.4 Prefixes and Suffixes

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the meanings of common prefixes.
2. Become familiar with common suffix rules.

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words.

Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

### *Prefixes*

A [prefix](#) is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning. Study the common prefixes in [Table 4.2 “Common Prefixes”](#).

### *Tip*

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is **not** to add letters or leave out any letters. See [Table 4.2 “Common Prefixes”](#) for examples of this rule.

Table 4.2 Common Prefixes

| Prefix | Meaning           | Example                          |
|--------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| dis    | not, opposite of  | dis + satisfied = dissatisfied   |
| mis    | wrongly           | mis + spell = misspell           |
| un     | not               | un + acceptable = unacceptable   |
| re     | again             | re + election = reelection       |
| inter  | between           | inter + related = interrelated   |
| pre    | before            | pre + pay = prepay               |
| non    | not               | non + sense = nonsense           |
| super  | above             | super + script = superscript     |
| sub    | under             | sub + merge = submerge           |
| anti   | against, opposing | anti + bacterial = antibacterial |

### Exercise 1

Identify the five words with prefixes in the following paragraph, and write their meanings on a separate sheet of paper.

At first, I thought one of my fuzzy, orange socks disappeared in the dryer, but I could not find it in there. Because it was my favorite pair, nothing was going to prevent me from finding that sock. I looked all around my bedroom, under the bed, on top of the bed, and in my closet, but I still could not find it. I did not know that I would discover the answer just as I gave up my search. As I sat down on the couch in the family room, my Dad was reclining on his chair. I laughed when I saw that one of his feet was orange and the other blue! I forgot that he was color-blind. Next time he does laundry I will have to supervise him while he folds the socks so that he does not accidentally take one of mine!

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.



### Exercise 2

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach \_\_\_\_\_comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his \_\_\_\_\_matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt \_\_\_\_\_glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those \_\_\_\_\_aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's \_\_\_\_\_standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a \_\_\_\_\_natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to \_\_\_\_\_locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to \_\_\_\_\_act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the \_\_\_\_\_cautions about watching my step.
10. A \_\_\_\_\_combatant is another word for civilian.

### Suffixes

A **suffix** is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

#### Rule 1

When adding the suffixes *-ness* and *-ly* to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

#### Examples:

- dark + ness = darkness
- scholar + ly = scholarly

#### Exceptions to Rule 1

When the word ends in *y*, change the *y* to *i* before adding *-ness* and *-ly*.

#### Examples:

- ready + ly = readily
- happy + ness = happiness

## Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent *e* in the root word.

**Examples:**

- care + ing = caring
- use + able = usable

## Exceptions to Rule 2

When the word ends in *ce* or *ge*, keep the silent *e* if the suffix begins with *a* or *o*.

**Examples:**

- replace + able = replaceable
- courage + ous = courageous

## Rule 3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent *e* in the original word.

**Examples:**

- care + ful = careful
- care + less = careless

## Exceptions to Rule 3

**Examples:**

- true + ly = truly
- argue + ment = argument

## Rule 4

When the word ends in a consonant plus *y*, change the *y* to *i* before any suffix not beginning with *i*.

**Examples:**

- sunny + er = sunnier
- hurry + ing = hurrying

## Rule 5

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

**Examples:**

- tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)
- regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)
- cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)
- prefer + ed = preferred

*Exercise 3*

On your own sheet of paper, write correctly the forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

*Key Takeaways*

- A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your writing.

*Writing Application*

Write a paragraph describing one of your life goals. Include five words with prefixes and five words with suffixes. Exchange papers with a classmate and circle the prefixes and suffixes in your classmate's paper. Correct each prefix or suffix that is spelled incorrectly.

## 3.5 Synonyms and Antonyms

### Learning Objectives

1. Recognize how synonyms improve writing.
2. Identify common antonyms to increase your vocabulary.

As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

### Synonyms

**Synonyms** are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an “easy task” or a “simple task” because *easy* and *simple* are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a “large city” or a “metropolis” because *city* and *metropolis* are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words *boring* and *insipid* may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word *insipid* evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than *boring*.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

### Writing at Work

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word *pay*, *salary*, or hourly *wage*. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

*Exercise 1*

Replace the underlined words in the paragraph with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of the very important figures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi.

Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered the very best architect and engineer of the Renaissance. His impressive accomplishments are a testament to following one's dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one's vision.

The most difficult undertaking of Brunelleschi's career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. A major blow to the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be the most inexpensive way to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi was really sad. Nevertheless, he did not give up. He held true to his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike was felt strongly during his lifetime and can still be felt in this day and age.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

*Exercise 2*

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon
2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful
6. riot, revolt

7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### *Antonyms*

**Antonyms** are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. [Table 4.3 “Common Antonyms”](#) lists common words and their antonyms.

Table 4.3 Common Antonyms

| Word       | Antonym           |  | Word         | Antonym        |
|------------|-------------------|--|--------------|----------------|
| absence    | presence          |  | frequent     | seldom         |
| accept     | refuse            |  | harmful      | harmless       |
| accurate   | inaccurate        |  | horizontal   | vertical       |
| advantage  | disadvantage      |  | imitation    | genuine        |
| ancient    | modern            |  | inhabited    | uninhabited    |
| abundant   | scarce            |  | inferior     | superior       |
| artificial | natural           |  | intentional  | accidental     |
| attractive | repulsive         |  | justice      | injustice      |
| borrow     | lend              |  | knowledge    | ignorance      |
| bravery    | cowardice         |  | landlord     | tenant         |
| create     | destroy, demolish |  | likely       | unlikely       |
| bold       | timid, meek       |  | minority     | majority       |
| capable    | incapable         |  | miser        | spendthrift    |
| combine    | separate          |  | obedient     | disobedient    |
| conceal    | reveal            |  | optimist     | pessimist      |
| common     | rare              |  | permanent    | temporary      |
| decrease   | increase          |  | plentiful    | scarce         |
| definite   | indefinite        |  | private      | public         |
| despair    | hope              |  | prudent      | imprudent      |
| discourage | encourage         |  | qualified    | unqualified    |
| employer   | employee          |  | satisfactory | unsatisfactory |



| Word   | Antonym  |  | Word   | Antonym  |
|--------|----------|--|--------|----------|
| expand | contract |  | tame   | wild     |
| forget | remember |  | vacant | occupied |

*Tip*

Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

*Exercise 3*

Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.
4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students' minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

*Key Takeaways*

- Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word.
- Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of another word.
- Choosing the right synonym refines your writing.
- Learning common antonyms sharpens your sense of language and expands your vocabulary.

*Writing Application*

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.

## 3.6 Using Context Clues

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the different types of context clues.
2. Practice using context clues while reading.

**Context clues** are bits of information within a text that will assist you in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. Since most of your knowledge of vocabulary comes from reading, it is important that you recognize context clues. By becoming more aware of particular words and phrases surrounding a difficult word, you can make logical guesses about its meaning. The following are the different types of context clues:

- Brief definition or restatement
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Examples

### *Brief Definition or Restatement*

Sometimes a text directly states the definition or a restatement of the unknown word. The brief definition or restatement is signaled by a word or a punctuation mark. Consider the following example:

If you visit Alaska, you will likely see many glaciers, or slow moving masses of ice.

In this sentence, the word *glaciers* is defined by the phrase that follows the signal word *or*, which is *slow moving masses of ice*.

In other instances, the text may restate the meaning of the word in a different way, by using punctuation as a signal. Look at the following example:

Marina was indignant—fuming mad—when she discovered her brother had left for the party without her.

Although *fuming mad* is not a formal definition of the word *indignant*, it does serve to define it. These two examples use signals—the word *or* and the punctuation dashes—to indicate the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Other signals to look for are the words *is*, *as*, *means*, *known as*, and *refers to*.

### Synonyms and Antonyms

Sometimes a text gives a synonym of the unknown word to signal the meaning of the unfamiliar word:

When you interpret an image, you actively question and examine what the image connotes and suggests.

In this sentence the word *suggests* is a synonym of the word *connotes*. The word *and* sometimes signals synonyms.

Likewise, the word *but* may signal a contrast, which can help you define a word by its antonym.

I abhor clothes shopping, but I adore grocery shopping.

The word *abhor* is contrasted with its opposite: *adore*. From this context, the reader can guess that *abhor* means to dislike greatly.

### Examples

Sometimes a text will give you an example of the word that sheds light on its meaning:

I knew Mark's ailurophobia was in full force because he began trembling and stuttering when he saw my cat, Ludwig, slink out from under the bed.

Although *ailurophobia* is an unknown word, the sentence gives an example of its effects. Based on this example, a reader could confidently surmise that the word means a fear of cats.

### Tip

Look for signal words like *such as*, *for instance*, and *for example*. These words signal that a word's meaning may be revealed through an example.

## Exercise 1

Identify the context clue that helps define the underlined words in each of the following sentences. Write the context clue on your own sheet of paper.

1. Lucinda is very adroit on the balance beam, but Constance is rather clumsy.
2. I saw the entomologist, a scientist who studies insects, cradle the giant dung beetle in her palm.

3. Lance's comments about politics were irrelevant and meaningless to the botanist's lecture on plant reproduction.
4. Before I left for my trip to the Czech Republic, I listened to my mother's sage advice and made a copy of my passport.
5. His rancor, or hatred, for socializing resulted in a life of loneliness and boredom.
6. Martin was mortified, way beyond embarrassment, when his friends teamed up to shove him into the pool.
7. The petulant four-year-old had a baby sister who was, on the contrary, not grouchy at all.
8. The philosophy teacher presented the students with several conundrums, or riddles, to solve.
9. Most Americans are omnivores, people that eat both plants and animals.
10. Elena is effervescent, as excited as a cheerleader, for example, when she meets someone for the first time.

### Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, write the name of the context clue that helps to define the underlined words.

Maggie was a precocious child to say the least. She produced brilliant watercolor paintings by the age of three. At first, her parents were flabbergasted—utterly blown away—by their daughter's ability, but soon they got used to their little painter. Her preschool teacher said that Maggie's dexterity, or ease with which she used her hands, was something she had never before seen in such a young child. Little Maggie never gloated or took pride in her paintings; she just smiled contentedly when she finished one and requested her parents give it to someone as a gift. Whenever people met Maggie for the first time they often watched her paint with their mouths agape, but her parents always kept their mouths closed and simply smiled over their "little Monet."

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

#### Tip

In addition to context clues to help you figure out the meaning of a word, examine the following word parts: prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

*Writing at Work*

Jargon is a type of shorthand communication often used in the workplace. It is the technical language of a special field. Imagine it is your first time working as a server in a restaurant and your manager tells you he is going to “eighty-six” the roasted chicken. If you do not realize that “eighty-six” means to remove an item from the menu, you could be confused.

When you first start a job, no matter where it may be, you will encounter jargon that will likely be foreign to you. Perhaps after working the job for a short time, you too will feel comfortable enough to use it. When you are first hired, however, jargon can be baffling and make you feel like an outsider. If you cannot decipher the jargon based on the context, it is always a good policy to ask.

*Key Takeaways*

- Context clues are words or phrases within a text that help clarify vocabulary that is unknown to you.
- There are several types of context clues including brief definition and restatement, synonyms and antonyms, and example.

*Writing Application*

Write a paragraph describing your first job. In the paragraph, use five words previously unknown to you. These words could be jargon words or you may consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find a new word. Make sure to provide a specific context clue for understanding each word. Exchange papers with a classmate and try to decipher the meaning of the words in each other's paragraphs based on the context clues.

## 3.7 Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

### *Exercises*

1.

Proofread the paragraph and correct any commonly confused words and misspelled words.

Grunge, or the Seattle sound, is a type of rock music that became quite popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Seattle, Washington. Grunge musicians rejected the dramatic and expensive stage productions that were trendy at the time. Their music was stripped down with an emphasis on distorted electric guitars. Grunge musicians did not wear makeup or sport extravagant hairstyles like many of the day's rock musicians and bands. Many grunge musicians would buy their clothes from secondhand stores. The lyrics too, grunge songs were also quite different compared to what was popular at the time. Grunge lyrics are characterized by dark or socially conscience themes. Grunge music is still admired today by music lovers of all ages.

2.

Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank line with the correct homonym or frequently misspelled word.

- a. Kevin asked me a serious question and \_\_\_\_\_(then, than) interrupted me when I attempted to answer.
- b. A hot compress will \_\_\_\_\_(lessen, lesson) the pain of muscle cramps.
- c. Jason was not a graceful \_\_\_\_\_(looser, loser) because he knocked his chair over and stormed off the basketball court.

- d. Please consider the \_\_\_\_\_(effects, affects) of not getting enough green vegetables in your diet.
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_(Except, Accept) for Ajay, we all had our tickets to the play.
  - f. I am \_\_\_\_\_(threw, through) with this magazine, so you can read it if you like.
  - g. I don't care \_\_\_\_\_(whose, who's) coming to the party and \_\_\_\_\_(whose, who's) not.
  - h. Crystal could \_\_\_\_\_(sea, see) the soaring hawk through her binoculars.
  - i. The \_\_\_\_\_(principal, principle) gave the students a very long lecture about peer pressure.
  - j. Dr. Frankl nearly lost his \_\_\_\_\_(patience, patients) with one of his \_\_\_\_\_(patience, patients).
- 3.

Rewrite the following personal essay by replacing the slang, clichés, and overly general language with stronger, more precise language.

My biggest regret happened in high school. I had always felt like a fish out of water, so during my sophomore year I was determined to fit in with the cool people. Man, was that an uphill battle. I don't even know why I tried, but hindsight is 20/20 I guess. The first thing I did was change the way I dressed. I went from wearing clothes I was comfortable in to wearing stuff that was so not me. Then I started wearing a ton of makeup, and my brother was all like, "What happened to your face?" Not only did my looks change, my personality changed a lot too. I started to act all stuck up and bossy with my friends, and they didn't know how to respond to this person that used to be me. Luckily, this phase didn't last more than a couple of months. I decided it was more fun to be me than to try to be someone else. I guess you can't fit a square peg in a round hole after all.

4.

Write the correct synonym for each word.

- a. lenient \_\_\_\_\_(relaxed, callous)
- b. abandon \_\_\_\_\_(vacate, deceive)
- c. berate \_\_\_\_\_(criticize, encourage)
- d. experienced \_\_\_\_\_(callow, matured)
- e. spiteful \_\_\_\_\_(malevolent, mellow)
- f. tame \_\_\_\_\_(subdued, wild)
- g. tasty \_\_\_\_\_(savory, bland)
- h. banal \_\_\_\_\_(common, interesting)
- i. contradict \_\_\_\_\_(deny, revolt)
- j. vain \_\_\_\_\_(boastful, simple)



## ***Chapter 4: Help for English Language Learners***

- 4.1 Word Order
- 4.2 Negative Statements
- 4.3 Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles
- 4.4 Pronouns
- 4.5 Verb Tenses
- 4.6 Modal Auxiliaries
- 4.7 Prepositions
- 4.8 Slang and Idioms
- 4.9 Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises

## 4.1 Word Order

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify the basic structures of sentences.
2. Determine ways to turn sentences into questions.
3. Define adjectives and how they are used.

If your first language is not English, you will most likely need some extra help when writing in Standard, or formal, English. New students of Standard English often make similar kinds of errors. Even if you have been speaking English for a long time, you may not feel as confident in your written English skills. This chapter covers the most common errors made by English language learners and helps you avoid similar mistakes in your writing.

### *Basic Sentence Structures*

The most basic sentence structure in English is a **subject** plus a **verb**. A subject performs the action in the sentence, and the verb identifies the action. Keep in mind that in some languages, such as Spanish and Italian, an obvious subject does not always perform the action in a sentence; the subject is often implied by the verb. However, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb to express a complete thought.

subject + verb

Samantha sleeps.

Not all sentences are as simple as a subject plus a verb. To form more complex sentences, writers build upon this basic structure. Adding a prepositional phrase to the basic sentence creates a more complex sentence. A **preposition** is a part of speech that relates a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. It also introduces a **prepositional phrase**. If you can identify a preposition, you will be able to identify a prepositional phrase.

subject + verb + prepositional phrase

Samantha sleeps on the couch.

*On* is the preposition. *On the couch* is the prepositional phrase.

| Common Prepositions |         |         |
|---------------------|---------|---------|
| about               | beside  | off     |
| above               | between | on      |
| across              | by      | over    |
| after               | during  | through |
| against             | except  | to      |
| along               | for     | toward  |
| among               | from    | under   |
| around              | in      | until   |
| at                  | into    | up      |
| before              | like    | with    |
| behind              | of      | without |

### Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and underline the prepositional phrases.

1. Linda and Javier danced under the stars.
2. Each person has an opinion about the topic.
3. The fans walked through the gates.
4. Jamyra ran around the track.
5. Maria celebrated her birthday in January.

Another sentence structure that is important to understand is subject + verb + object. There are two types of objects: **direct objects** and **indirect objects**.

A direct object receives the action of the verb.

subject + verb + direct object

Janice writes a letter.

The letter directly receives the action of the verb *writes*.

*Tip*

A quick way to find the direct object is to ask *what?* or *who?*

**Sentence:** Maurice kicked the ball.

*What* did Maurice kick? The direct object, *ball*.

**Sentence:** Maurice kicked Tom by accident.

*Who* did Maurice kick? The direct object, *Tom*.

An indirect object does not receive the action of the verb.

subject + verb + indirect object

Janice writes me a letter.

The action (*writes*) is performed for or to the indirect object (*me*).

*Tip*

Even though the indirect object is not found after a preposition in English, it can be discovered by asking *to whom?* or *for whom?* after the verb.

**Sentence:** Dad baked the children some cookies.

For whom did Dad bake the cookies? The indirect object, *children*.

## Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, identify the subject, verb, direct object, and indirect object in the following sentences.

1. Captain Kirk told the crew a story.
2. Jermaine gave his girlfriend a dozen yellow tulips.
3. That hospital offers nurses better pay.
4. Dad served Grandma a delicious dinner.
5. Mom bought herself a new car.

### Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the sentences in the correct order. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. The pizza Jeannine burnt.
2. To the Mexican restaurant we had to go for dinner.
3. Jeannine loved the food.
4. So full were we during the walk home.
5. I will make the pizza next time.

### Questions

English speakers rely on the following two common ways to turn sentences into questions:

1. Move the helping verb and add a question mark.
2. Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did* and add a question mark.

Move the helping verb and add a question mark.

**Sentence:** Sierra can pack these boxes.

**Question:** **Can** Sierra pack these boxes?

Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did*, and add a question mark:

**Sentence:** Jolene skated across the pond.

**Question:** **Did** Jolene skate across the pond?

### Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.

1. *Slumdog Millionaire* is a film directed by Danny Boyle.
2. The story centers on a character named Jamal Malik.
3. He and his older brother find different ways to escape the slums.
4. His brother, Salim, pursues a life of crime.
5. Jamal ends up on the game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*?

### Adjectives

An **adjective** is a kind of descriptive word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It tells *which one*, *what kind*, and *how many*. Adjectives make your writing more lively and interesting. Keep in mind, a common error that English language learners make is misplacing the adjectives in a sentence. It is important to know where to place the adjective in a sentence so that readers are not confused.

If you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun, place the adjectives in the following order before the noun:

1. **Opinion:** an interesting book, a boring movie, a fun ride
2. **Size:** a large box, a tiny turtle, a tall woman
3. **Shape:** a round ball, a long hose, a square field
4. **Age:** a new day, an old horse, a modern building
5. **Color:** an orange sunset, a green jacket, a red bug
6. **Ethnicity:** Italian cheese, French wine, Chinese tea
7. **Material:** silk shirt, wool socks, a cotton dress

### Tip

Adjectives can also be placed at the end of a sentence if they describe the subject of a sentence and appear after the verb.

**Sentence:** My English teacher is excellent.

### Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun. The first one has been done for you.

1.

book: old, small, Spanish

a small old Spanish book (age, size, ethnicity)

2. photograph: new, strange

3. suit: wool, green, funny

4. opinion: refreshing, new

5. dress: fashionable, purple

### Key Takeaways

- The most basic sentence structure is a subject plus a verb that expresses a complete thought.
- Adding a prepositional phrase or a direct or indirect object to a sentence makes it more complex.
- English speakers change a sentence into a question in one of the following two ways: moving the helping verb and adding a question mark or adding the verb *do*, *does*, or *did* and adding a question mark.
- Adjectives follow a particular order before the noun they describe. The order is opinion, size, shape, age, color, ethnicity, and material.

### Writing Application

Write a paragraph about a memorable family trip. Use at least two adjectives to describe each noun in your paragraph. Proofread your paragraph, and then exchange papers with a classmate. Check your classmate's use of adjectives to make sure they are correct.

## 4.2 Negative Statements

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Identify a negative statement.
2. Write negative statements.

**Negative** statements are the opposite of positive statements and are necessary to express an opposing idea. The following charts list negative words and **helping verbs** that can be combined to form a negative statement.

| Negative Words       |          |          |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| never                | no       | hardly   |
| nobody               | none     | scarcely |
| no one               | not      | barely   |
| nowhere              |          | rarely   |
| Common Helping Verbs |          |          |
| am                   | is       | are      |
| was                  | were     | be       |
| being                | been     | have     |
| has                  | had      | do       |
| does                 | did      | can      |
| could                | may      | might    |
| must                 | will     | should   |
| would                | ought to | used to  |

The following examples show several ways to make a sentence negative in the present tense.



1.

A helping verb used with the negative word *not*.

**Sentence:** My guests are arriving now.

**Negative:** My guests **are not** arriving now.

2.

The negative word *no*.

**Sentence:** Jennie has money.

**Negative:** Jennie **has no** money.

3.

The contraction *n't*.

**Sentence:** Janetta does miss her mom.

**Negative:** Janetta **doesn't** miss her mom.

4.

The negative adverb *rarely*.

**Sentence:** I always go to the gym after work.

**Negative:** I **rarely** go to the gym after work.

5.

The negative subject *nobody*.

**Sentence:** Everybody gets the day off.

**Negative:** **Nobody** gets the day off.

### Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

1. Everybody is happy about the mandatory lunch.
2. Deborah likes to visit online dating sites.

3. Jordan donates blood every six months.
4. Our writing instructor is very effective.
5. That beautiful papaya is cheap.

The following sentences show you the ways to make a sentence negative in the past tense.

**Sentence:** Paul called me yesterday.

**Negative:** Paul **did not** call me yesterday.

**Sentence:** Jamilee went to the grocery store.

**Negative:** Jamilee **never went** to the grocery store.

**Sentence:** Gina laughed when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

**Negative:** Gina **did not laugh** when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Notice that when forming a negative in the past tense, the helping verb *did* is what signals the past tense, and the main verb *laugh* does not have an *-ed* ending.

## Exercise 2

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the errors in the past-tense negative sentences.

Celeste no did call me when she reached North Carolina. I was worried because she not drove alone before. She was going to meet her friend, Terry, who lived in a town called Asheville, North Carolina. I did never want to worry, but she said she was going to call when she reached there. Finally, four hours later, she called and said, "Mom, I'm sorry I did not call. I lost track of time because I was so happy to see Terry!" I was relieved.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

**Double negatives** are two negatives used in the same phrase or sentence. They are considered incorrect in Standard English. You should avoid using double negatives in all formal writing. If you want to say something negative, use only

one negative word in the sentence. Return to the beginning of this section for a list of negative words, and then study the following examples.

| Double negative (incorrect)              | Single negative (correct)          |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| neg. + neg.<br>I couldn't find no paper. | neg.<br>I couldn't find any paper. |
| neg. + neg.<br>I don't want nothing.     | neg.<br>I don't want anything.     |

### Tip

*Ain't* is considered a contraction of *am not*. Although some may use it in everyday speech, it is considered incorrect in Standard English. Avoid using it when speaking and writing in formal contexts.

### Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, correct the double negatives and rewrite the following sentences.

1. Jose didn't like none of the choices on the menu.
2. Brittany can't make no friends with nobody.
3. The Southwest hardly had no rain last summer.
4. My kids never get into no trouble.
5. I could not do nothing about the past.

### Key Takeaways

- Negatives are usually formed using a negative word plus a helping verb.
- Double negatives are considered incorrect in Standard English.
- Only one negative word is used to express a negative statement.

### Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing your favorite meal. Use rich, colorful language to describe the meal. Exchange

papers with a classmate and read his or her paragraph. Then rewrite each sentence of your classmate's paragraph using negatives. Be sure to avoid double negatives. Share your negative paragraphs with each other.

## 4.3 Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Define and use count and noncount nouns.
2. Recognize and use definite and indefinite articles.

**Nouns** are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called **count nouns** because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.

On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called **noncount nouns**. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of *money* or *furniture* and simply add *-s* to the end of the noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

**Incorrect:** five moneys, two furnitures

**Correct:** some money, two pieces of furniture

By the end of [Section 5.3.1 “Count and Noncount Nouns”](#), you will grasp the difference between the two types of nouns and be able to use them confidently in speaking and writing.

### *Count and Noncount Nouns*

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding *-s*.

Table 5.1 Count Nouns

| Count Noun | Sentence                                               |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Quarter    | It takes six quarters to do my laundry.                |
| Chair      | Make sure to push in your chairs before leaving class. |
| Candidate  | The two candidates debated the issue.                  |
| Adult      | The three adults in the room acted like children.      |
| Comedian   | The two comedians made the audience laugh.             |

A noncount noun identifies a whole object that cannot separate and count individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A **concrete noun** identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An **abstract noun** identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.

Table 5.2 Types of Noncount Nouns

| Type of Noncount Noun | Examples                                | Sentence                                            |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Food                  | sugar, salt, pepper, lettuce, rice      | Add more sugar to my coffee, please.                |
| Solids                | concrete, chocolate, silver, soap       | The ice cream was covered in creamy chocolate.      |
| Abstract Nouns        | peace, warmth, hospitality, information | I need more information about the insurance policy. |

### Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, label each of the following nouns as count or noncount.

1. Electricity \_\_\_\_\_
2. Water \_\_\_\_\_
3. Book \_\_\_\_\_
4. Sculpture \_\_\_\_\_
5. Advice \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or noncount noun by writing **C** or **NC** above the noun.

1. The amount of *traffic* on the way home was terrible.
2. *Forgiveness* is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic *apples* I bought.
4. I prefer film *cameras* instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is *history*.

### Definite and Indefinite Articles

The word *the* is a **definite article**. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, *the woman* refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article *the* is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words *a* and *an* are **indefinite articles**. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, *a woman* refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular count noun.

Definite Articles (*The*) and Indefinite Articles (*A/An*) with Count Nouns

I saw **the** concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **the** concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)

I saw **the** U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **a** concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)

### Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write **OK** if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. \_\_\_\_\_
3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor's performance in the play. \_\_\_\_\_

5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Exercise 4

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

#### Key Takeaways

- You can make count nouns plural by adding -s.
- Count nouns are individual people, places, or things that can be counted, such as politicians, deserts, or candles.
- Noncount nouns refer to whole things that cannot be made plural, such as salt, peace, or happiness.
- *The* is a definite article and is used to refer to a specific person, place, or thing, such as **the** Queen of England.
- *A* and *an* are indefinite articles, and they refer to nonspecific people, places, or things, such as **an** apple or **a** bicycle.

#### Writing Application

Write five sentences using the definite article *the*. Write five sentences using the indefinite article *a* or *an*. Exchange papers with a classmate and check each other's work.



## 4.4 Pronouns

### Learning Objectives

1. Recognize subject and object pronouns.
2. Identify possessive pronouns.
3. Determine common pronoun errors.

A **pronoun** is a word that can be used in place of the noun. We use pronouns so we do not have to repeat words. For example, imagine writing the following sentence: Afrah put her scarf on because Afrah was cold. The sentence sounds a bit strange because *Afrah* is named twice; however, if you use a pronoun, the sentence will be shorter and less repetitive. You might rewrite the sentence to something similar to the following: Afrah put her scarf on because she was cold. *She* refers to Afrah, so you do not have to write the name twice.

### Types of Pronouns

**Subject pronouns** are often the subject of a sentence—“who” and “what” the sentence is about.

**Sentence:** **She** loves the desserts in France.

*She* is the subject.

**Sentence:** By lunch time, **they** were hungry.

*They* is the subject.

**Object pronouns** are often the object of the verb—“who” or “what” was acted upon.

**Sentence:** Melanie’s thoughtfulness touched **him**.

*Him* is the object of the verb *touched*.

**Sentence:** We lifted **it**.

*It* is the object of the verb *lifted*.

Tip

The masculine subject pronoun is *he*, and the masculine object pronoun is *him*. The feminine subject pronoun is *she*, and the feminine object pronoun is *her*.

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a **possessive pronoun**.

**Sentence:** The teacher took **her** apple and left.

The pronoun *her* shows the teacher owns the apple.

**Sentence:** The hikers spotted **their** guide on the trail.

The pronoun *their* shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.

Table 5.3 Pronouns

|                     |                                                      |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Subject Pronouns    | I, you, he, she, it, we, they                        |
| Object Pronouns     | me, you, him, her, it, us, them                      |
| Possessive Pronouns | my (mine), your(s), his, hers, its, our(s), their(s) |

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct pronoun.

1. Unfortunately, the house was too expensive for (we, us, they).
2. I completed (mine, my, your) research paper, and she completed (his, hers, theirs).
3. My dog Buster is old, but (he, it, them) is very playful.
4. That ring belongs to my father, so it is (hers, his, theirs).
5. I cannot find my textbook, so I think (they, it, he) is lost.

Common Pronoun Errors

English language learners often make the same errors when using pronouns. The following examples illustrate common errors.

**Incorrect:** **Me** and Daniela went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is incorrect because an object pronoun (*me*) is used instead of a subject pronoun.

**Correct:** Daniela and **I** went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is now correct because a subject pronoun (*I*) is used.

**Incorrect:** Mark put her grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun *her* refers to a female, and Mark is a male.

**Correct:** Mark put **his** grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is now correct because the male pronoun *his* refers to the male person, *Mark*.

**Incorrect:** The woman she went to work earlier than usual.

This sentence is incorrect because the subject *the woman* is repeated by the pronoun *she*.

**Correct:** **The woman** went to work earlier than usual.

**Correct:** **She** went to work earlier than usual.

These sentences are now correct because the unnecessary repeated subject has been removed.

## Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, correct the following sentences that have pronoun errors. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. Us are going to the county fair this weekend.
2. Steven did not want to see a movie because she had a headache.
3. The teacher congratulated Maria and me.
4. The eighth grade students they were all behaving mysteriously well.
5. Derrick and he received the best grade on the grammar test.

## Relative Pronouns

A **relative pronoun** is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may often combine two shorter sentences. The relative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which* or *that*.

**Sentence:** A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun.

The subject of this sentence is *a relative pronoun*. The clause *is a type of pronoun* gives some information about the subject.

The relative pronoun *that* may be added to give more details to the subject.

**Sentence using a relative pronoun:** A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun **that** helps connect details to the subject of the sentence.

*Tip*

Remember the following uses of relative pronouns:

- *Who, whom, and whose* refer only to people.
- *Which* refers to things.
- *That* refers to people or things.

The following examples show how a relative pronoun may be used to connect two sentences and to connect details to the subject.

**Sentence 1:** Gossip is a form of communication.

**Sentence 2:** It is a waste of time and energy.

**Combination of 1 and 2:** Gossip is a form of communication **that** is a waste of time and energy.

Notice how the relative pronoun *that* replaces the subject *it* in sentence 2.

*That* is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (*is a waste of time and energy*) to the subject (*Gossip*).

**Sentence 1:** My grandmother is eighty years old.

**Sentence 2:** She collects seashells.

**Combination of 1 and 2:** My grandmother, **who** is eighty years old, collects seashells.

Notice how the relative pronoun *who* replaces the subject *she* in sentence 2.

*Who* is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (*is eighty years old*) to the subject (*My grandmother*).

### Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by selecting the correct relative pronoun.

1. He showed me a photo (who, that) upset me.
2. Soccer is a fast moving game (who, that) has many fans worldwide.
3. Juan is a man (which, who) has high standards for everything.
4. Jamaica is a beautiful country (that, who) I would like to visit next year.
5. My mother only eats bananas (who, that) are green.

### Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, combine the two sentences into one sentence using a relative pronoun.

1. Jeff is a dependable person. He will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster. It was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand. It protects them from the hot sun.
4. Jackie is trying not to use so many plastic products. They are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Sherry is teaching me how to drive. She has never been in accident or gotten a ticket.

### Key Takeaways

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun.
- There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Subject pronouns are the “who” and “what” the sentence is about.
- Object pronouns are the “who” and “what” that receives the action.
- A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun.
- Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

*Writing Application*

Proofread a piece of your writing for the types of pronoun errors discussed in this section. Correct any errors you come across.

## 4.5 Verb Tenses

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify simple verb tenses.
2. Recognize *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* verbs.
3. Use perfect verb tenses.
4. Apply progressive verb tenses.
5. Define gerunds and infinitives.

You must always use a **verb** in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb.

### Simple Verb Tenses

**Verb tenses** tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future.

| Past                        | ← Present →           | Future                        |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Yesterday I <b>jumped</b> . | Today I <b>jump</b> . | Tomorrow I <b>will jump</b> . |

**Simple present** verbs are used in the following situations:

1.

When the action takes place now

I **drink** the water greedily.

2.

When the action is something that happens regularly

I **always cross** my fingers for good luck.

3.

When describing things that are generally true

College tuition **is** very costly.

Table 5.4 Regular Simple Present Tense Verbs

| Verb  | I     | He/She/It | You   | We    | They  |
|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| ask   | ask   | asks      | ask   | ask   | ask   |
| bake  | bake  | bakes     | bake  | bake  | bake  |
| cook  | cook  | cooks     | cook  | cook  | cook  |
| cough | cough | coughs    | cough | cough | cough |
| clap  | clap  | claps     | clap  | clap  | clap  |
| dance | dance | dances    | dance | dance | dance |
| erase | erase | erases    | erase | erase | erase |
| kiss  | kiss  | kisses    | kiss  | kiss  | kiss  |
| push  | push  | pushes    | push  | push  | push  |
| wash  | wash  | washes    | wash  | wash  | wash  |

When it is *he*, *she*, or *it* doing the present tense action, remember to add *-s*, or *-es* to the end of the verb or to change the *y* to *-ies*.

**Simple past** verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I **washed** my uniform last night.
- I **asked** for more pie.
- I **coughed** loudly last night.

Table 5.5 Regular Simple Past Tense Verbs



| Verb  | I       | He/She/It | You     | We      | They    |
|-------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|
| ask   | asked   | asked     | asked   | asked   | asked   |
| bake  | baked   | baked     | baked   | baked   | baked   |
| cook  | cooked  | cooked    | cooked  | cooked  | cooked  |
| cough | coughed | coughed   | coughed | coughed | coughed |
| clap  | clapped | clapped   | clapped | clapped | clapped |
| dance | danced  | danced    | danced  | danced  | danced  |
| erase | erased  | erased    | erased  | erased  | erased  |
| kiss  | kissed  | kissed    | kissed  | kissed  | kissed  |
| push  | pushed  | pushed    | pushed  | pushed  | pushed  |
| wash  | washed  | washed    | washed  | washed  | washed  |

When *he*, *she*, or *it* is doing the action in the past tense, remember to add *-d* or *-ed* to the end of regular verbs.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I **will work** late tomorrow.
- I **will kiss** my boyfriend when I see him.
- I **will erase** the board after class.

Table 5.6 Regular Simple Future Tense Verbs

| Verb  | I          | He/She/It  | You        | We         | They       |
|-------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| ask   | will ask   | will ask   | will ask   | will ask   | will ask   |
| bake  | will bake  | will bake  | will bake  | will bake  | will bake  |
| cook  | will cook  | will cook  | will cook  | will cook  | will cook  |
| cough | will cough | will cough | will cough | will cough | will cough |
| clap  | will clap  | will clap  | will clap  | will clap  | will clap  |
| dance | will dance | will dance | will dance | will dance | will dance |
| erase | will erase | will erase | will erase | will erase | will erase |
| kiss  | will kiss  | will kiss  | will kiss  | will kiss  | will kiss  |
| push  | will push  | will push  | will push  | will push  | will push  |
| wash  | will wash  | will wash  | will wash  | will wash  | will wash  |

*Going to* can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense:

- I am **going to** go to work tomorrow.

### Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense.

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.
3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow's bake sale.

### Exercise 2

Correct the verb tense mistakes in the following paragraph.

Last summer, I walk around Walden Pond. Walden Pond is in Concord, Massachusetts. It is where the philosopher Henry David Thoreau will live during the mid-nineteenth century. During his time there, he wrote a book called *Walden*. *Walden* is a book of Thoreau's reflections on the natural environment. It will be consider a classic in American literature. I did not know that Walden Pond is consider the birthplace of the environmental movement. It was very relaxing there. I will listen to birds, frogs, and crickets, not to mention the peaceful sound of the pond itself.

#### Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

### *To Be, To Do, and To Have*

There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these are the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.

Table 5.7 Verb Forms of *To Be*, *To Do*, and *To Have*

| Base Form | Present Tense Form | Past Tense Form | Future Tense Form |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| be        | am/is/are          | was/were        | will be           |
| do        | do/does            | did             | will do           |
| have      | have/has           | had             | will have         |

#### *Tip*

Memorize the present tense forms of *to be*, *to do*, and *to have*. A song or rhythmic pattern will make them easier to memorize.

Review these examples of *to be*, *to do*, and *to have* used in sentences.

| Past                                | ← Present →                      | Future                                   |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>To Be</b>                        |                                  |                                          |
| Yesterday I <b>was</b> angry.       | Today I <b>am</b> not angry.     | Tomorrow I <b>will be</b> angry.         |
| <b>To Do</b>                        |                                  |                                          |
| I <b>did</b> my best yesterday.     | I <b>do</b> my best every day.   | Tomorrow I <b>will do</b> my best.       |
| <b>To Have</b>                      |                                  |                                          |
| Yesterday I <b>had</b> ten dollars. | Today I <b>have</b> ten dollars. | Tomorrow I <b>will have</b> ten dollars. |

Remember the following uses of *to be*, *to have* and *to do*:

To Be

- I → am/was/will be
- you/we/they → are/were/will be
- he/she/it → is/was/will be

To Have

- I/you/we/they → have/had/will have
- he/she/it → has/had/will have

To Do

- I/you/we/they → do/did/will do
- he/she/it → does/did/will do

### *Tip*

Remember, if you have a compound subject like *Marie and Jennifer*, think of the subject as *they* to determine the correct verb form.

- Marie and Jennifer (*they*) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as *he*, *she*, or *it*.

- LeBron (*he*) has scored thirty points so far.

### Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct form of the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* in the three simple tenses.

1. Stefan always (do, does, will do) his taxes the day before they are due.
2. We (are, is, was) planning a surprise birthday party for my mother.
3. Turtles (have, had, has) the most beautiful patterns on their shells.
4. I always (do, did, will do) my homework before dinner, so I can eat in peace.
5. You (is, are, was) so much smarter than you think!

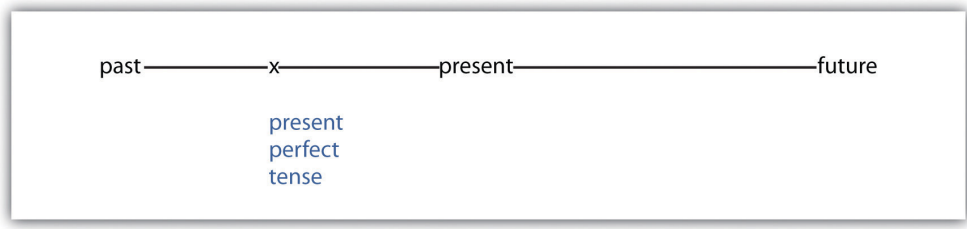
### Perfect Verb Tenses

Up to this point, we have studied the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They are **present perfect**, **past perfect**, and **future perfect**. These are the three basic tenses of English. A **past participle** is often called the *-ed* form of a verb because it is formed by adding *-d* or *-ed* to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in *-t* or *-en*. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

| Subject | + | has or have | + | past participle |
|---------|---|-------------|---|-----------------|
| I       |   | have        |   | helped          |

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.



Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- I **have worked** as a caretaker since June.

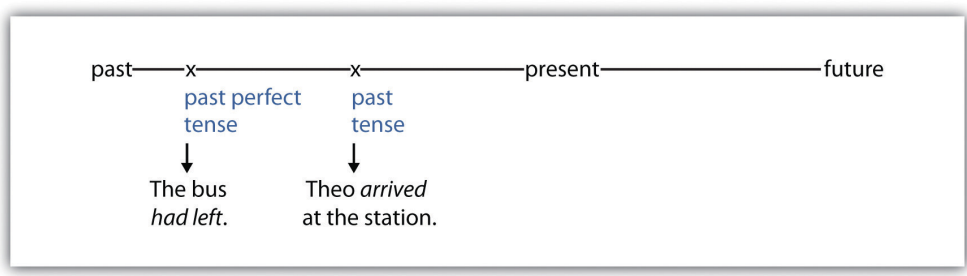
This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

- Dmitri **has** just **received** an award from the Dean of Students.

This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award. The word *just* emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

| Subject | + | had or have | + | past participle |
|---------|---|-------------|---|-----------------|
| I       |   | had         |   | listened        |

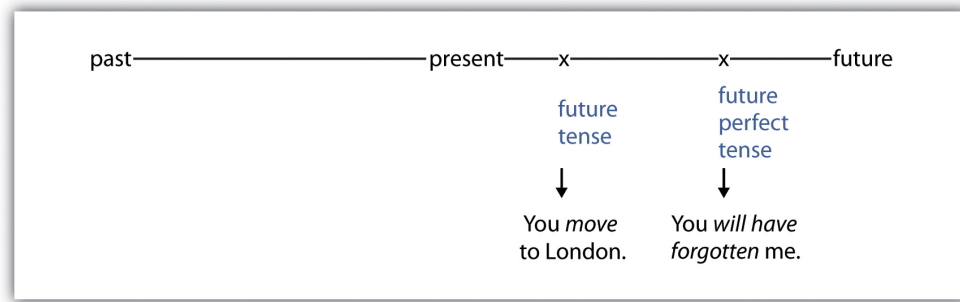


- The bus **had left** by the time Theo **arrived** at the station.

Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo *arrived* (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus *had left* (past perfect).

Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

| Subject | + | will have | + | past participle |
|---------|---|-----------|---|-----------------|
| I       |   | will have |   | graduated       |



The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You **will have forgotten** me after you **move** to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (*you*) *will move* (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject *will have forgotten* (future perfect tense) the speaker, *me*.

#### Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses.

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I \_\_\_\_\_ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he \_\_\_\_\_ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun \_\_\_\_\_ (to set).
4. Denise \_\_\_\_\_ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother \_\_\_\_\_ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.

#### Progressive Verb Tenses

**Progressive verb tenses** describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as *I am going*, *I was going*, or *I will be going*.

The present progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

| Present tense form of <i>to be</i> | +    | -ing (present participle) |
|------------------------------------|------|---------------------------|
| am/is/are                          | help | helping                   |

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress, although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

- Preeti **is starting** school on Tuesday.

This sentence describes a planned activity.

- Janetta **is getting** her teeth cleaned right now.

This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

- I **am studying** ballet at school.

This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

| Past tense form of <i>to be</i> | + | -ing (present participle) |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| was/were                        |   | helping                   |

You should use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the past, to describe a past activity in progress while another activity occurred, or to describe two past activities in progress at the same time:

- Ella and I **were planning** a vacation.

This sentence describes a continuous action in the past.

- I **was helping** a customer when I smelled delicious fried chicken.

This sentence describes a past activity in progress while another activity occurred.

- While I **was finishing** my homework, my wife **was talking** on the phone.

This sentence describes two past activities in progress at the same time.



The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment.

To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts:

| Future tense form of <i>to be</i> | + | -ing (present participle) |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| will be                           |   | helping                   |

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

- Samantha and I **will be dancing** in the school play next week.
- Tomorrow Agnes **will be reading** two of her poems.

### Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)
5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive)
6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing.

To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

| Present tense form of <i>to have</i> | + | Been | + | -ing (present participle) |
|--------------------------------------|---|------|---|---------------------------|
| has or have                          |   | been |   | helping                   |

- She **has been talking** for the last hour.

This sentence indicates that *she* started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

- I **have been feeling** tired lately.

This sentence indicates that *I* started feeling tired in the past, and *I* continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb *lately*. You can also use the adverb *recently* when using the present perfect progressive tense.

Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past.

To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

| Past tense form of <i>to have</i> | + | been | + | -ing (present participle) |
|-----------------------------------|---|------|---|---------------------------|
| had                               |   | been |   | helping                   |

- The employees **had been talking** until their boss arrived.

This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

- I **had been working** all day.

This sentence implies that *I* was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.

The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future.

To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

| Future tense form of <i>to have</i> | + | been | + | -ing (present participle) |
|-------------------------------------|---|------|---|---------------------------|
| will have                           |   | Been |   | helping                   |

- By the end of the meeting, I **will have been hearing** about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

This sentence indicates that in the future *I* will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it

has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of *hearing* will continue until *the end of the meeting*, something that is also in the future.

### Gerunds

A **gerund** is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in *-ing*. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition.

You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1.

As a **subject**

**Traveling** is Cynthia's favorite pastime.

2.

As a **direct object**

I enjoy **jogging**.

3.

As an **object of a preposition**

The librarian scolded me for **laughing**.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Study [Table 5.8 “Gerunds and Verbs”](#) for examples.

Table 5.8 Gerunds and Verbs

| Gerund   | Verb Followed by a Gerund                      |
|----------|------------------------------------------------|
| moving   | Denise <b>considered moving</b> to Paris.      |
| cleaning | I <b>hate cleaning</b> the bathroom.           |
| winning  | Nate <b>imagines winning</b> an Oscar one day. |
| worrying | Mom says she <b>has stopped worrying</b> .     |
| taking   | She <b>admitted taking</b> the pumpkin.        |

*Infinitives*

An **infinitive** is a form of a verb that comes after the word *to* and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

*to* + verb = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often verbs are followed by infinitives. Study [Table 5.9 “Infinitives and Verbs”](#) for examples.

Table 5.9 Infinitives and Verbs

| Infinitive | Verb Followed by Infinitive                     |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| to help    | Jessica <b>offered to help</b> her move.        |
| to arrive  | Mick <b>expects to arrive</b> early.            |
| to win     | Sunita <b>wants to win</b> the writing contest. |
| to close   | He <b>forgot to close</b> the curtains.         |
| to eat     | She <b>likes to eat</b> late.                   |

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table 5.10 Infinitives and Gerunds Verbs

| Base Form of Verb | Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds <i>and</i> Infinitives |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| begin             | 1. John <b>began crying</b> .                                   |
|                   | 2. John <b>began to cry</b> .                                   |
| hate              | 1. Marie <b>hated talking</b> on the phone.                     |
|                   | 2. Marie <b>hated to talk</b> on the phone.                     |
| forget            | 1. Wendell <b>forgot paying</b> the bills.                      |
|                   | 2. Wendell <b>forgot to pay</b> the bills.                      |
| like              | 1. I <b>liked leaving</b> messages.                             |
|                   | 2. I <b>liked to leave</b> messages.                            |
| continue          | 1. He <b>continued listening</b> to the news.                   |
|                   | 2. He <b>continued to listen</b> to the news.                   |
| start             | 1. I <b>will start recycling</b> immediately.                   |
|                   | 2. I <b>will start to recycle</b> immediately.                  |
| try               | 1. Mikhail <b>will try climbing</b> the tree.                   |
|                   | 2. Mikhail <b>will try to climb</b> the tree.                   |
| prefer            | 1. I <b>prefer baking</b> .                                     |
|                   | 2. I <b>prefer to bake</b> .                                    |
| love              | 1. Josh <b>loves diving</b> .                                   |
|                   | 2. Josh <b>loves to dive</b> .                                  |

### Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund.

1. I meant \_\_\_\_\_ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend \_\_\_\_\_ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed \_\_\_\_\_ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish \_\_\_\_\_ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

### Key Takeaways

- Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
- Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these irregular verbs are the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.
- There are six main verb tenses in English: *simple present*, *simple past*, *simple future*, *present perfect*, *past perfect*, and *future perfect*.
- Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.

### Writing Application

Write about a lively event that is either remembered or imagined. Ask yourself the following three questions: What happened during the event? What happened after the event? Looking back, what do you think of the event now? Answer each question in a separate paragraph to keep the present, past, and future tense verbs separate.

## 4.6 Modal Auxiliaries

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Define and identify modal auxiliaries.
2. Learn how and when to use modal auxiliaries.

We all need to express our moods and emotions, both in writing and in our everyday life. We do this by using [modal auxiliaries](#).

### *Modal Auxiliaries*

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that are used only with a main verb to help express its mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

| <b>Subject</b> | <b>+</b> | <b>modal auxiliary</b> | <b>+</b> | <b>main verb</b> |
|----------------|----------|------------------------|----------|------------------|
| James          |          | may                    |          | call             |

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

Table 5.11 Modal Auxiliaries

| Modal Auxiliary | Use                                                                                  | Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb                                                     |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| can             | Expresses an ability or possibility                                                  | I <b>can lift</b> this forty-pound box. (ability)                               |
|                 |                                                                                      | We <b>can embrace</b> green sources of energy. (possibility)                    |
| could           | Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission | I <b>could beat</b> you at chess when we were kids. (past ability)              |
|                 |                                                                                      | We <b>could bake</b> a pie! (present possibility)                               |
|                 |                                                                                      | <b>Could</b> we <b>pick</b> some flowers from the garden? (future permission)   |
| may             | Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question                 | I <b>may attend</b> the concert. (uncertain future action)                      |
|                 |                                                                                      | You <b>may begin</b> the exam. (permission)                                     |
|                 |                                                                                      | <b>May</b> I <b>attend</b> the concert? (yes-no questions)                      |
| might           | Expresses uncertain future action                                                    | I <b>might attend</b> the concert (uncertain future action—same as <i>may</i> ) |
| shall           | Expresses intended future action                                                     | I <b>shall</b> go to the opera. (intended future action)                        |
| should          | Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists                                    | I <b>should mail</b> my RSVP. (obligation, same as <i>ought to</i> )            |
|                 |                                                                                      | <b>Should</b> I <b>call</b> my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)         |
| will            | Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information                   | I <b>will get</b> an A in this class. (intended future action)                  |
|                 |                                                                                      | <b>Will</b> you <b>buy</b> me some chocolate? (favor)                           |



| Modal Auxiliary | Use                                                                                                | Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb                                                         |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                 |                                                                                                    | <b>Will</b> you <b>be finished</b> soon? (information)                              |
| would           | States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions | I <b>would like</b> the steak, please. (preference)                                 |
|                 |                                                                                                    | <b>Would</b> you <b>like</b> to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely)  |
|                 |                                                                                                    | I <b>would go</b> with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action) |
|                 |                                                                                                    | He <b>would write</b> to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)  |
| must            | Expresses obligation                                                                               | We <b>must be</b> on time for class.                                                |
| ought to        | Expresses obligation                                                                               | I <b>ought to mail</b> my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)                           |

*Tip*

Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

| Modal auxiliary | + | subject | + | main verb |
|-----------------|---|---------|---|-----------|
| Should          |   | I       |   | drive?    |

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1.

Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal

**Incorrect:** I can to move this heavy table.

**Correct:** I **can move** this heavy table.

2.

Using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal

**Incorrect:** I could moving to the United States.

**Correct:** I **could move** to the United States.

3.

Using two modals in a row

**Incorrect:** I should must *renew* my passport.

**Correct:** I **must renew** my passport.

**Correct:** I **should renew** my passport.

4.

Leaving out a modal

**Incorrect:** I renew my passport.

**Correct:** I **must renew** my passport.

### Exercise 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I would to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not move to France because my family should miss me very much.

### Modals and Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened.

**subject + has or have + past participle**

|    |      |        |
|----|------|--------|
| ↓  | ↓    | ↓      |
| I  | have | helped |
| He | has  | helped |

Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.

**subject + modal auxiliary+ have + past participle**

| ↓  | ↓      | ↓    | ↓      |
|----|--------|------|--------|
| I  | could  | have | helped |
| He | could  | have | helped |
| He | might  | have | helped |
| He | may    | have | helped |
| He | should | have | helped |

Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in the present perfect tense:

1.

Using *had* instead of *have*

**Incorrect:** Jamie would *had* attended the party, but he was sick.

**Correct:** Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

2.

Leaving out *have*

**Incorrect:** Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

**Correct:** Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

### Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by changing the given verb form to a modal auxiliary in present perfect tense.

1. The man \_\_\_\_\_ (laugh).
2. The frogs \_\_\_\_\_ (croak).
3. My writing teacher \_\_\_\_\_ (smile).
4. The audience \_\_\_\_\_ (cheer) all night.
5. My best friend \_\_\_\_\_ (giggled).

### Key Takeaways

- The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is

|         |   |                 |   |           |
|---------|---|-----------------|---|-----------|
| subject | + | modal auxiliary | + | main verb |
|---------|---|-----------------|---|-----------|

- There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: *can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, and ought to*.
- The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.
- In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.
- The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using *had* instead of *have* and leaving out *have*.

### *Writing Application*

On a separate sheet of paper, write ten original sentences using modal auxiliaries.

## 4.7 Prepositions

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify prepositions.
2. Learn how and when to use prepositions.

A **preposition** is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Most prepositions such as *above*, *below*, and *behind* usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as *during*, *after*, and *until* show location in time.

### *In, At, and On*

The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways. Study [Table 5.12](#), [Table 5.13](#), and [Table 5.14](#) to learn when to use each one.

Table 5.12 *In*

| Preposition | Time                                 | Example          | Place   | Example       |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------------|
| in          | year                                 | in 1942          | country | in Zimbabwe   |
|             | month                                | in August        | state   | in California |
|             | season                               | in the summer    | city    | in Chicago    |
|             | time of day (not with <i>night</i> ) | in the afternoon |         |               |

Table 5.13 *On*

| Preposition | Time                | Example   | Place                   | Example         |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| on          | day                 | on Monday | surfaces                | on the table    |
|             | date                | on May 23 | streets                 | on 124th Street |
|             | specific days/dates | on Monday | modes of transportation | on the bus      |

Table 5.14 *At*

| Preposition | Time              | Example         | Place     | Example                     |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| at          | time              | at five o'clock | addresses | at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue |
|             | with <i>night</i> | at night        | location  | at Rooney's Grill           |

*Exercise 1*

Edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors with *in*, *at*, and *on*.

Dear Mrs. Salazar,  
I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now.  
Sincerely,  
Milani Davis

*Prepositions after Verbs*

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Table 5.15 Verbs + Prepositions

| Verb +<br>Preposition | Meaning                                                                          | Example                                                   |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| agree with            | to agree with something or someone                                               | My husband always <b>agrees with</b> me.                  |
| apologize for         | to express regret for something, to say sorry about something                    | I <b>apologize for</b> being late.                        |
| apply for             | to ask for something formally                                                    | I will <b>apply for</b> that job.                         |
| believe in            | to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something | I <b>believe in</b> educating the world's women.          |
| care about            | to think that someone or something is important                                  | I <b>care about</b> the health of our oceans.             |
| hear about            | to be told about something or someone                                            | I <b>heard about</b> the teachers' strike.                |
| look after            | to watch or to protect someone or something                                      | Will you <b>look after</b> my dog while I am on vacation? |
| talk about            | to discuss something                                                             | We will <b>talk about</b> the importance of recycling.    |
| speak to, with        | to talk to/with someone                                                          | I will <b>speak to</b> his teacher tomorrow.              |
| wait for              | to await the arrival of someone or something                                     | I will <b>wait for</b> my package to arrive.              |

*Tip*

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

*Exercise 2*

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Charlotte does not \_\_\_\_\_ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
2. It is impolite to \_\_\_\_\_ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.

3. Herman said he was going to \_\_\_\_\_ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
4. Jonas would not \_\_\_\_\_ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.
5. I \_\_\_\_\_ (care about, agree with) the environment very much.

### *Prepositions after Adjectives*

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

Table 5.16 Adjectives + Prepositions

| Adjective +<br>Preposition | Meaning                                                                                                    | Example                                                                      |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| angry at,<br>about         | to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something                                               | I am <b>angry about</b> the oil spill in the ocean.                          |
| confused<br>about          | to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.                                             | Shawn was <b>confused about</b> the concepts presented at the meeting.       |
| disappointed<br>in, with   | to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something                                                          | I was <b>disappointed in</b> my husband because he voted for that candidate. |
| dressed in                 | to clothe the body                                                                                         | He was <b>dressed in</b> a pin-striped suit.                                 |
| happy for                  | to show happiness for someone or something                                                                 | I was <b>happy for</b> my sister who graduated from college.                 |
| interested in              | giving attention to something, expressing interest                                                         | I am <b>interested in</b> musical theater.                                   |
| jealous of                 | to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability) | I was <b>jealous of</b> her because she always went on vacation.             |
| thankful for               | to express thanks for something                                                                            | I am <b>thankful for</b> my wonderful friends.                               |
| tired of                   | to be disgusted with, have a distaste for                                                                  | I was <b>tired of</b> driving for hours without end.                         |
| worried<br>about           | to express anxiety or worry about something                                                                | I am <b>worried about</b> my father's health.                                |



### Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Meera was deeply \_\_\_\_\_ (interested in, thankful for) marine biology.
2. I was \_\_\_\_\_ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am \_\_\_\_\_ (happy for, interested in) him.
4. The lawyer was \_\_\_\_\_ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was \_\_\_\_\_ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.

#### Tip

The following adjectives are always followed by the preposition *at*:

- Good

She is really **good at** chess.

- Excellent

Henry is **excellent at** drawing.

- Brilliant

Mary Anne is **brilliant at** playing the violin.

### Key Takeaways

- The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways.
- The preposition *in* is used when expressing the following: year, month, season, time of day (not with *night*), country, state, and city.
- The preposition *on* is used to express day, date, and specific days or dates and surfaces, streets, and transportation modes.
- The preposition *at* is used for expressions of time, with *night*, and with addresses and locations.
- Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.

- Prepositions also follow adjectives to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.

*Writing Application*

Write about a happy childhood memory using as many prepositions followed by verbs and adjectives as you can. Use at least ten. When you are finished, exchange papers with a classmate and correct any preposition errors you find.

## 4.8 Slang and Idioms

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Recognize slang and idioms.
2. Learn to avoid using slang and idioms in formal writing.

Words are the basis of how a reader or listener judges you, the writer and speaker. When you write an academic paper or speak in a business interview, you want to be sure to choose your words carefully. In our casual, everyday talk, we often use a lot of “ums,” “likes,” “yeahs,” and so on. This everyday language is not appropriate for formal contexts, such as academic papers and business interviews. You should switch between different ways of speaking and writing depending on whether the context is formal or informal.

### *Slang*

Hey guys, let's learn about slang and other cool stuff like that! It will be awesome, trust me. This section is off the hook!

What do you notice about the previous paragraph? You might notice that the language sounds informal, or casual, like someone might talk with a friend or family member. The paragraph also uses a lot of [slang](#). Slang is a type of language that is informal and playful. It often changes over time. The slang of the past is different than the slang of today, but some slang has carried over into the present. Slang also varies by region and culture. The important thing to understand is that slang is casual talk, and you should avoid using it in formal contexts. There are literally thousands of slang words and expressions. [Table 5.17 “Slang Expressions”](#) explains just a few of the more common terms.

Table 5.17 Slang Expressions

| Slang Word or Phrase                                  | Meaning                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| check it out, check this out                          | v. look at, watch, examine                                    |
| chocoholic, workaholic, shopaholic                    | n. a person who loves, is addicted to chocolate/work/shopping |
| stuff                                                 | n. things (used as a singular, noncount noun)                 |
| taking care of business                               | doing things that need to be done                             |
| pro                                                   | n. a person who is a professional                             |
| crack up                                              | v. to laugh uncontrollably                                    |
| veg (sounds like the <i>veg</i> in <i>vegetable</i> ) | v. relax and do nothing                                       |
| dude, man                                             | n. person, man                                                |
| all-nighter                                           | n. studying all night                                         |
| cool                                                  | adj. good, fashionable                                        |
| gross, nasty                                          | adj. disgusting                                               |
| pig out                                               | v. eat a lot, overeat                                         |
| screw up                                              | v. make a mistake                                             |
| awesome                                               | adj. great                                                    |

### Exercise 1

Edit the business e-mail by replacing any slang words and phrases with more formal language.

Dear Ms. O'Connor:

I am writing to follow up on my interview from last week. First of all, it was awesome to meet you. You are a really cool lady. I believe I would be a pro at all the stuff you mentioned that would be required of me in this job. I am not a workaholic, but I do work hard and "take care of business." Haha. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,  
M. Ernest Anderson

### Idioms

**Idioms** are expressions that have a meaning different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words in the expression. Because English contains many idioms, nonnative English speakers have difficulties making logical sense of idioms and idiomatic expressions. The more you are exposed to English, however, the more idioms you will come to understand. Until then, memorizing the more common idioms may be of some help.

Table 5.18 Idioms

| Idiom                  | Definition                                        |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| a blessing in disguise | a good thing you do not recognize at first        |
| a piece of cake        | easy to do                                        |
| better late than never | it is better to do something late than not at all |
| get over it            | recover from something (like a perceived insult)  |
| I have no idea         | I don't know                                      |
| not a chance           | it will definitely not happen                     |
| on pins and needles    | very nervous about something that is happening    |
| on top of the world    | feeling great                                     |
| pulling your leg       | making a joke by tricking another person          |
| the sky is the limit   | the possibilities are endless                     |

What if you come across an idiom that you do not understand? There are clues that can help you. They are called **context clues**. Context clues are words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase that may help you decipher its meaning.

1.

**Definition or explanation clue.** An idiom may be explained immediately after its use.

**Sentence:** I felt like I was sitting *on pins and needles* **I was so nervous.**

2.

**Restatement or synonym clues.** An idiom may be simplified or restated.

**Sentence:** The young girl felt as though she had been *sent to the dog house* when her mother **punished her** for fighting in school.

3.

**Contrast or Antonym clues.** An idiom may be clarified by a contrasting phrase or antonym that is near it.

**Sentence:** Chynna thought the 5k marathon would be *a piece of cake*, **but it turned out to be very difficult**.

Pay attention to the signal word *but*, which tells the reader that an opposite thought or concept is occurring.

### *Key Takeaways*

- Informal language is not appropriate in formal writing or speaking contexts.
- Slang and idioms might not make logical sense to nonnative speakers of English.
- It is good to be aware of slang and idioms so they do not appear in your formal writing.

### *Writing Application*

Write a short paragraph about yourself to a friend. Write another paragraph about yourself to an employer. Examine and discuss the differences in language between the two paragraphs.

## 4.9 Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

### *Exercises*

1.

On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.

- a. My daughter will have to think about her college options.
- b. Otto is waiting in the car for his girlfriend.
- c. The article talks about conserving energy.
- d. We need to reduce our needs.
- e. Rusha is always complaining about her work.

2.

Underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.

- a. Monica told us about her trip.
- b. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.
- c. The panther climbed up the tree.
- d. The little boy was standing behind his mother's legs.
- e. We stayed awake until dawn.

3.

Place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.

- a. eyes: black, mesmerizing
- b. jacket: vintage, orange, suede
- c. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet
- d. vacation: fun, skiing
- e. movie: hilarious, independent

4.

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

- a. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.
- b. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.
- c. He breathes loudly at night.
- d. I chew on blades of grass in the summer time.
- e. I communicate well with my husband.
- 5.

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot Forrest felt like he couldn't hardly breathe. Ain't nothing would get him out the door into that scorching heat. Then he remembered his dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Forrest didn't have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn't do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Forrest was sweating in the sun holding the leash. He couldn't not wait for winter to come.

#### Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.



## Acknowledgements

Cover photo credit: [john\\_a\\_ward](#) – Keyboard / [CC BY](#)

*Supplemental Handbook Material for Voices* is adapted from a work produced and distributed under a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA) in 2010 by a publisher who has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution. This adapted edition is produced by the [University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing](#) through the [eLearning Support Initiative](#).