



# Grammar and Style Guide

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## Main Parts of a Sentence

At its most basic level, a sentence is a sequence of words that conveys a complete thought. This is formed by a **subject** (what the sentence is about, generally the noun or pronoun that is the focus of the action in a sentence) and a **predicate** (the verb plus any other information).

### Subjects

The subject of a sentence is the sentence topic (what a sentence is about). Subjects come in five varieties

1. nouns,
2. pronouns,
3. noun clauses,
4. infinitives, and
5. gerunds,

- **Nouns**

*Nouns* are people, places, ideas, concepts, and things. Sentences can have multiple nouns, but the *subject noun* is the focus of the sentence. Essentially, it is the “star” of a sentence.

*For example: Islam is a world religion.*

*Islam, world, and religion* are all nouns, though only *Islam* is the subject of this sentence.

- **Pronouns**

A *pronoun* takes the place of a noun to simplify a sentence. Pronouns include words like *he, she, it, I, we, you, they, one, her, him, and them*.

*For example: Mohammed was a man. He was also recognized as a prophet.*

- **Noun clauses**

A noun clause is a group of words that acts as a noun. When used as the subject of a sentence, a noun clause usually begins with one of the following words: *that, how, when, what, where, why, and whether*.

*Consider the following examples:*

What the researcher said was controversial.

That the research was controversial is an understatement.

Note that the underlined noun clause is followed by a verb, which helps to complete the sentence.

- **Infinitives**

An infinitive is the *to* form of a verb. When placed at the beginning of a sentence, an infinitive is used as a subject.

*For example: To study is to be diligent.*

- **Gerunds**

A gerund is the *-ing* form of a verb, which may also be used as a subject. When used as a subject, a gerund is located at the beginning of a sentence.

*For example:* Fencing became a popular sport in fifteenth century Spain.

### **Predicates**

Predicates contain a verb, as well as any additional information used to describe a situation.

Consider the following examples:

This particular species thrives.

This particular species thrives in temperate, deciduous forests.

The underlined predicate in each example completes the sentence. The first example contains only a verb (thrives), and the second example contains a verb and additional information (where the species thrives).

### **The One (and only) exception to the rule**

The rule ‘a subject + a predicate = a sentence’ has one exception: Sentences in the command form do not require subjects.

*For example:* State your name for the record.

In commands (i.e., the imperative voice), the subject is hidden because it is implied, where the subject of a sentence is often hidden within the predicate. (The subject *you* is implied in the example above.)

### **Practice: Sentences**

Decide whether or not the following are complete sentences. Underline the subject once and circle the predicate.

1. The ITSS staff help fix computers.
2. What information we have is limited.
3. She ran away from home.
4. I have gained skills through my work experience.
5. To fish on a rainy day is a bad idea.
6. Swimming is very refreshing on a hot summer day.
7. My cat is black.
8. Stop right there.
9. When crossing the street remember to look both ways.
10. This fruit fly is buzzing around my face.

## Types of Clauses

A *clause* is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate (which contains a verb). A clause can make up part of a sentence, or it can be a sentence on its own

### Independent clauses

An *independent clause* (also called a principle or a main clause) contains a subject and a predicate that together form a complete thought.

For example:

After six weeks of data collection, the data was analyzed.

The Counseling Centre has many useful resources.

Shakespeare was a playwright whose work is now widely studied.

Note that an independent clause (underlined in each example) can stand alone as a complete sentence or represent only part of a sentence. In every case, however, an independent clause forms a complete thought.

### Dependent clauses

As with an independent clause, a *dependent clause* contains a subject and a predicate; however, a dependent clause does not form a complete thought. When dependent clauses are written as their own sentences, they are considered sentence fragments. This is because a dependent clause relies on an independent clause for its meaning and cannot stand alone as a sentence.

After we collected our survey results, the data was analyzed.

Shakespeare was an English playwright, though his actual identity is debated.

In the first example, the dependent clause “After we collected our survey results” cannot stand alone as a complete thought because it implies that something else happened but does not say what yet.

In the second example, the dependent clause “though his actual identity is debated” cannot stand alone as a complete thought because it implies a contrast with another idea.

### How to distinguish between types of clauses

Look for *subordinating words* and *phrases*: words and phrases (such as ‘whoever’ or ‘even though’) that create dependent relationships between two ideas in a sentence and are located at the beginning of a dependent clause.

The two main types of subordinating words are *subordinating conjunctions* and *relative pronouns*.

## Subordinating conjunctions

*Subordinating conjunctions* link two or more unequal ideas by indicating a relationship between the ideas, such as:

- a cause and effect relationship
- how the ideas contrast (are different)
- time sequence between ideas

The following table includes some common subordinating conjunctions:

Cause and effect	Contrast	Time sequence
because	although	before
since	rather than	after
if	even though	when
in order to	despite	once

For example:

Although many people believe that the concept of life beyond earth is impossible, many scientists and theorists have argued that extra-terrestrial life is a distinct possibility.

The audience was attentive because the speaker was a gifted speaker.

## Relative pronouns

A *relative pronoun* takes the place of a noun (person, place, or thing) in a dependent clause as the subject or object of the clause.

Following is a list of commonly used relative pronouns:

- those
- whose
- whoever
- whom
- that
- which

For example:

The United Nations is an inter-governmental organization whose goals are to create a better world.

Whoever oversees the experiment, they must use extreme caution.

**Practice: Independent and dependent clauses**

In the following sentences underline all independent clauses and circle dependent clauses.

1. Working while taking courses can be difficult, although it is worth avoiding student debt.
2. I can drive you to work, as long as you are ready to leave by 8 A.M..
3. Because this cat will not stop eating my plants, all my flowers keep dying.
4. Whichever you choose, we still need your decision by Friday.
5. You have to try this tea, as long as you are not allergic to bamboo.
6. You still need to take English 1205, despite being a Science student.
7. If Seth keeps throwing temper tantrums, I am not taking him to the pool party.
8. This test will be easy, provided that you have spent time studying.
9. She has not been the same, since the vending machine fell on her.
10. These children are skilled smore-makers, as they practice at the campfire every night.



## Sentence Fragments

Sentences without a subject and a verb, or that do not express a complete thought, are incomplete. These are referred to as sentence fragments. Sentence fragments can be avoided by checking to make sure that each sentence has a clear subject and predicate.

Common cases of fragments occur when sentences

- have no subject,  
Incorrect: *I walked to campus to hand in my essay. And put it in the drop box.*

In the above example, the writer assumes that the subject in the previous sentence will carry over, but every sentence must have its own subject and verb. To correct sentence fragments that have no subject, connect it to the previous sentence or add a subject.

Correct: *I walked to campus to hand in my essay, and put it in the drop box.*

- consist of added detail,  
Incorrect: *I have been to five countries in Europe. Including England, France, and Switzerland. I want to travel the world.*

‘Including’ is a key word that signals there is going to be added detail. This detail cannot stand on its own as a sentence since it lacks a subject and a verb.

To correct sentence fragments that consist of added detail, connect it to the previous sentence that is being elaborated on, or add a subject and a verb.

- begin with a dependent word,  
Incorrect: *Until class starts. I am going to sip on my coffee.*

‘Until’ is a dependent word and ‘Until class starts’ is a dependent statement. Dependent words and statements do not form complete thoughts.

To correct sentence fragments that begin with a dependent word, connect it to the following sentence to form a complete thought.

- start with an –ing word.
  - Incorrect: *I was at the grocery store yesterday. Trying to find fresh carrots in the produce section. In the end I went to the market.*
  - ‘Trying’ is an ‘–ing’ word that assumes the previous sentences’ subject. However, the subject ‘I’ does not work, or carry over into the next sentence. A subject or an implied subject needs to be present within the sentence.
  - To correct sentence fragments that begin with an ‘–ing’ word, connect the fragmented sentence to the previous or following sentence, or add a subject and change the verb from its ‘–ing’ form to its regular form.

### **Practice: Sentence Fragments**

In the following paragraphs underline all sentence fragments. Edit the paragraphs to ensure that there are no sentence fragments by connecting all dependent clauses to an independent clause.

Our beach day turned out to be a huge success. Although it did not seem that way at first. We planned to leave early in the morning. So that we could get the best spot on the beach. We forgot to set an alarm and nobody woke up until 10 A.M.. We all rushed to get ready. In order for us to still get to the beach before lunch. We were just out of the city when we had to turn around, as John forgot his bathing suit. As we were driving to the beach it started to rain. Since we had been planning this trip for months. The rain could not deter us from going to the beach.

Thankfully, it stopped raining just as we arrived at the beach. By this time it was 1 P.M. and I was really hungry. I went to get the cooler in the trunk where I had packed everybody's lunch. Except that I realized that I left the cooler on the kitchen counter. I went to the ice cream stand and they were all sold out of my favourite ice cream. To make matters even worse, I dropped my ice cream cone in the sand.

After finally eating. We started to enjoy our day at the beach. The beach was almost empty. Because it rained earlier. We made sand castles. We played lots of games in the water. Including Ultimate Frisbee and Marco Polo. I even went surfing. While John went to go tubing. After all the problems this morning. I am really happy with how today turned out. I cannot wait to have another beach day.

## Subject-Verb Agreement

The verb and the subject within a sentence must agree in number. Therefore, a singular subject (e.g., I, he, she, and it) takes a singular verb and a plural subject (e.g., we or they) takes a plural verb. In order to identify the subject and the verb to ensure that they agree in number, first find the verb. From there the subject will be whatever is doing the verb. Remember that the subject is never in the prepositional phrase.

Errors often occur when

- there are words in between the subject and the verb,
  - Incorrect: *The balls in the park seems to have disappeared.*
  - Correct: *The balls in the park seem to have disappeared.*

Words, such as prepositional phrases (*in the park*), that come in-between the subject (*balls*) and the verb phrase (*seems to have disappeared*) sometimes cause writers to choose the verb that agrees in number with the noun within the prepositional phrase (*park*) rather than the subject. Always choose the subject.

- the verb precedes the subject,
  - Incorrect: *There is a lot of places to shop.*
  - Correct: *There are a lot of places to shop.*

The verb (*is*) precedes the subject (*places*). When the verb precedes the subject go back and ensure that the verb agrees with the subject. Signaling words that the verb will precede the subject are found at the beginning of the sentence and include: here, there, who, what, where, and which.

- compound subjects are used,  
When subjects are joined by *and*, and a plural verb is used.
  - Incorrect: *I bet a hot dog and a hamburger tastes good off the barbeque.*
  - Correct: *I bet a hot dog and a hamburger taste good off the barbeque.*

When subjects are linked with conjunctions such as *either/or*, and *neither/nor* the verb (*like(s)*) has to agree in number with the nearest noun (*cat*).

- Incorrect: *Neither my dogs or cat likes the rain.*
  - Correct: *Neither my dogs or cat like the rain.*
- indefinite pronouns are used.
  - Incorrect: *Everybody at school are intelligent.*
  - Correct: *Everybody at school is intelligent.*

Indefinite pronouns always take a singular verb. The following are examples of indefinite pronouns: one, anyone, everyone, nobody, somebody, everybody, nothing, everything, something, each, either, neither.

**Practice: Subject-verb agreement**

Underline the verbs and circle the subjects in the following sentences. Then correct the sentences so that the subject and the verb agree in number.

1. The content of the two courses are similar.
2. Developing my organizational skills and improving my people skills is what I need to do to get a job.
3. These hobbies give you great joy and makes for a happy life.
4. One pair of brand name shoes I own are Nike.
5. I like the style of this shirt, but the arm length and the hem is too long.
6. The audience members already know what the author is trying to say and is not very interested.
7. Writing the first paragraph, including the topic sentence and the thesis statement, are the hardest things for me to do.
8. At the Tower, all forms of exercise takes place inside the gym
9. Being economical and environmentally friendly is important for a company today.
10. One of the most striking examples of poor workmanship and inferior materials are the new subdivision on Main Street.

## Capital Letters

In most cases, capital letters are used when the meaning is specific and lowercase letters are used when the meaning is general.

### Capitalize

- the first word in a sentence,
  - Always capitalize the first word in a sentence.
- names of specific people and places,
  - I am going shopping with **J**essica at **M**ic **M**ac **M**all.
- names of organizations,
  - The **M**aple **L**eaf meat company had a listeriosis outbreak.
- week days, months, and holidays,
  - **M**onday, **J**anuary, **C**hristmas
- countries, nationalities, and languages, and
  - **G**reece, **M**exican, **L**atin
- titles and headings.
  - This includes: titles of essays, films, books, newspapers, and poems.

### Also Capitalize

- specific school courses,
  - **T**he **M**odern **N**ovel is an excellent course.
- periods and events in history,
  - The **W**ar on **T**error began with the 9/11 attacks.
- opening and closing remarks of a letter,
  - **B**est, **S**incerely, **C**heers
- titles of people when their name is included, and
  - **P**ri~~m~~e **M**inister Stephen Harper enjoys kittens.
- geographic locations.
  - I live in the **M**aritime **P**rovinces.

### Practice: Capital Letters

Correct the capitalization in the following paragraph.

On march 5<sup>th</sup>, ryan and I attended a Seminar at Saint Mary's university. The Speaker, dr. tyron, presented his recent archeological finds from off the Coast of greece. He had a thick french accent so i found it hard to understand him, but i was able to make out his references to the greek islands: ios, santorini, and naxos. since he has returned he has been busy taking an Online Classics course: ancient greek mythology. I learned many new facts about Archeology from dr. Tyron and I look forward to buying his new novel, "The past digger," to learn even more.

## Plain English

Plain English creates simple, clear communication and helps to avoid unnecessary grammar errors. While it is often used in business writing, ordinary English can be used in any instance to convey a specific point.

### How to achieve plain English

Embellished language must be avoided to achieve ordinary English. Big, professional sounding words have a place, but they are not useful as these often distract readers from the point being made. To check for embellished language read for words that can be simplified. Sentences with lofty words may begin to sound awkward and will stand out, especially when read aloud.

- Example 1:  
Embellished: Upon John's arrival, I aided him in producing his bags from the Jetta.  
Ordinary: When John arrived, I helped him get his bags from the car.
- Example 2:  
Embellished: When conversing among your companions, utilize colloquial language.  
Ordinary: When talking with friends, use ordinary language.

### Practice: Plain English

Rewrite the following sentences in ordinary English:

1. Enclosed, please find a letter of reference for your perusal in selecting the appropriate candidate.

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2. As per your request, we will forward your mail to your most recent place of residence.

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3. I am cognizant of the fact that there will be a lecture with regard to grammar in my English class.

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4. These skills will aid me in performing the task of omitting verbose language from my end of term paper.

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5. Before physical education class commences, our teacher informs us that we have to provide her with the necessary currency for our class trip.

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6. Back in my youthful days, when I was roughly as many years old as you are now, we did not have any cellular devices to send these short text based messages to acquaintances.

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7. Superfluous and frivolous language can be too convoluted for your reader to comprehend.

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8. There are a plethora of easier methods to convey the connotation of an idea.

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9. I have been having these horrifying nighttime images appear to me in my sleep lately.

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10. The feline was frightened by the canine.

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## Concise Language

Concise language uses as few words as possible to present ideas clearly.

### How to achieve concise language

Word choice is crucial in achieving concise language. You want to choose effective words that get your point across economically to avoid wordiness and vagueness. Concise language will help prevent your reader from getting confused with the meaning of each sentence.

#### Wordy and unclear

During the month of April  
Despite the fact that  
At this point in time  
In advance of  
In the near future  
In the event that  
During that time  
In my opinion

#### Economic and concise

In April  
Although  
Now  
Before  
Soon  
If  
While  
I think

#### Vague words to be avoided

etc.  
a lot  
most  
many  
some  
everyone  
everything

#### Practice: Concise language

Rewrite the following paragraph using concise language:

I applied for a job during the month of October. I did this despite that fact that I am moving in the near future. In my opinion, I will be hired for the reason that I am a very hard worker. I have many skills which can benefit employers in the event that I was to be hired. I have submitted my résumé everywhere, hoping that a lot of people phone me for an interview. The last time I applied for jobs a lot of the people did not call me back. However, I have spent a lot of time updating my résumé. I have also worked on editing my cover letter despite the fact that not all places I have been applying to require a cover letter. At this point in time, I hope my luck has changed as I need a job which will start in the near future.



## Active Voice and Passive Voice

Verbs can be written in the active voice or the passive voice, despite the tense in which they are written.

### The difference between active voice and passive voice

- The active voice is direct and occurs when the subject is performing the verb.

I left a coffee cup on a table in the Atrium.  
(The subject, *I*, left a coffee cup on the table.)

- The passive voice often denotes the receiver of the verb rather than the subject performing the verb. Therefore, passive voice sentences do not provide as much information as active voice sentences.

Coffee cups were left on the tables in the Atrium.  
(Who left the coffee cups on the tables in the Atrium?)

### Three instances when passive voice is required

The active voice offers clarity and directness, so it is often preferred over the passive voice. However, there are four instances when the passive voice is required.

- To avoid blaming the subject.  
*Passive:* There has been a rumor spreading about you.  
*Instead of Active:* Melanie is spreading a rumor about you.
- To show that the subject is unknown.  
*Passive:* My money was stolen again.  
*Instead of Active:* Kyle stole my money again.
- To stress the receiver of the action.  
*Passive:* Jessica has been arrested.  
*Instead of Active:* The police arrested Jessica.
- In lab reports.  
*Passive:* The ethanol was poured into the solution.  
*Instead of Active:* We poured ethanol into the solution.

**Practice: Active voice and passive voice**

Underline the subjects, circle the verbs/verb phrases in the following sentences, and decide whether the sentence is in the passive voice or the active voice. Rewrite passive voice sentences in the active voice and active voice sentences in the passive voice.

1. Passive/Active     Matthew changed his login password.

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2. Passive/Active     I checked the mail when I got home.

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3. Passive/Active     The toys have been pulled out of the box.

---

4. Passive/Active     The professor gave Jamie his paper back.

---

5. Passive/Active     Posters were left here for you to hang up.

---

6. Passive/Active     I found this wallet on the ground.

---

7. Passive/Active     The elephant sneezed all over the audience.

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8. Passive/Active     An episode of Bill Nye the Science Guy was watched by the students.

---

9. Passive/Active     Gilbert the Goldfish was removed from his old tank

---

10. Passive/Active     This picture was painted by my three year old niece.

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## Pronouns

Pronouns take the place of nouns. They provide a shortcut to help you avoid repeating any persons, places, or things. Some examples of pronouns include his, her, she, he, their, and its.

- Example 1: Melina is writing a letter to *her* mother.
  - '*her*' is referring to Melina.
- Example 2: When Jack and Jill fell down *they* had to go to the hospital.
  - '*they*' is referring to Jack and Jill.

## Rules to follow when using pronouns

Pronoun must

- Agree in person, gender, and number with the noun it replaces.
  - Provide the *student* with *his or her* class schedule.  
(singular) (singular)
  - Provide the *students* with *their* class schedule.  
(plural) (plural)
- Come after the specific noun to which it is referring.
  - The car was damaged after it hit a pole.  
'it' is referring to the only noun present before the pronoun: 'car'.
  - After the car hit a pole it was damaged.  
'it' can be referring to either noun 'car' or 'pole'; it is unclear.

## Errors encountered when using pronouns

- When referring to a company or institution use the pronoun *it*
  - Incorrect: Saint Mary's University accepts letters of appeal from *their* students.
  - Correct: Saint Mary's University accepts letters of appeal from *its* students.
- Only use the pronoun *you* when referring to one specific person
  - Incorrect: In the 1900's, *you* were not able to vote.
  - Correct: In the 1900's *women* were not able to vote.
- Only use *myself* when *I* is also present within a sentence.
  - Incorrect: *Myself* and Adam are going to see a movie.
  - Correct: Adam and *I* are going to see a movie.

**Practice: Using pronouns**

Rewrite the following paragraph for correct pronoun usage. If you are unclear to who or what the pronoun is referring, replace it with a noun.

Me and Mary decided to volunteer to do research projects. Josh wanted to go along with us to do them but he was not a Saint Mary's student, and therefore, could not receive any bonus points. Her and me went to our first experiment where a person named Mike asked us to fill out a questionnaire. He explained what it was about; he was very informative and reassuring. He and his partner's experiment was well thought out and she enjoyed doing it. Mike wanted valid results for Mike's survey so he did not tell her the real purpose of it until after she completed it. It went well.

## Modifiers

Modifiers are describing words. Problems with modifiers occur when they are displaced or dangling. In order for a modifier to work, it should come directly after the word(s) it is describing.

It is extremely important for modifiers to be as close to whatever they are modifying. This is because the meaning of a sentence can differ greatly depending on where the modifier is placed.

For example:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • I told Mr. Jones what only I had done. | No one else did it.                      |
| • I told Mr. Jones only what I had done. | I did not tell him what anyone else did. |
| • I told only Mr. Jones what I had done. | I did not tell anybody else.             |
| • I only told Mr. Jones what I had done. | I did not show him.                      |
| • Only I told Mr. Jones what I had done. | Nobody else told Mr. Jones.              |

## Misplaced modifiers

When a modifier is misplaced, it does not describe the word it is intended to describe. To avoid misplaced modifiers, or to correct them, simply ensure that the modifier is as close as possible to the word it wishes to describe.

- Misplaced modifier: The man climbed a hill *with a backpack*.  
This sentence is saying that the hill has a backpack.
- Correct modifier: The man *with a backpack* climbed a hill.  
By moving the modifier, 'the man' now has a backpack rather than the hill.

## Dangling modifiers

Modifiers that come at the beginning of a sentence must follow directly the word it describes or your sentence will take on unintended meaning. To correct and/or avoid dangling modifiers, put the subject by the word being described directly after the modifier. You can also put the subject among the opening words.

- Dangling modifier: I bought a pair of pants at the store, which I found a hole in.  
This sentence is saying that there is a hole in the store.
- Correct modifier: I bought a pair of pants at the store and found a hole in them.  
In this sentence it is clear that the hole is in the pants.

**Practice: Misplaced and dangling modifiers**

Circle the modifiers and underline the words that they currently describe. Correct the sentences to rid of any misplaced or dangling modifiers. Then circle the corrected modifiers and underline the new words they describe.

1. I read that a girl was killed in the newspaper.

---

2. I almost ate the whole burger.

---

3. Standing on the sidewalk, the ice cream melted.

---

4. I heard that there was a war on the news.

---

5. I was caught by security in the process of superglueing a chair to the roof.

---

6. The jacket was just too small in the store.

---

7. The professor told us to expect to do a lot of work on the first day.

---

8. For my craft project, I need some superglue but the store is all sold out.

---

## Numbers

In writing, numbers are used to communicate a variety of information including currency, dates, percentages, and order of importance.

### Rules to Follow When Using Numbers

- **Spell out numbers and ordinals between zero and nine.**

*Only **eight** people attended the meeting today. I was the **first** person in line.*

- Exceptions to the rule  
Use numerals when grouping a number between zero and nine with a larger number.

*Example: Only **8** out of **40** people attended the meeting today.*

Use numerals when writing a precise measurement or mathematical function.

*Example: **4** cm wide; the remaining **7%**; the **9th** trial; a ratio of **16:1***

- **Use numerals for numbers 10 and up**

*The event was held **23** days ago. There were **542** people in attendance at the game.*

- Exception to the rule  
Spell out numbers that begin a sentence, title, or text heading

*Example: **Forty-eight** out of **70** people voted for the bylaw.*

Spell out numbers that can be expressed in one or two words for humanities and business letters.

- **Use numerals in the following situations:**

- decimals: ***5.33**; **10.25**;*
- divisions in books: ***Chapter 3**; pages **43-90**;*
- addresses: ***11** Maple Lane; and*
- specific dates: ***January 23, 2011**; the **21st** of May.*

- **Spell out numbers in the following situations**

- indefinite amounts: ***millions** of people; over **one billion**;*
- general time periods: *the **Sixties**; the **fifteenth** century;*
- common fractions: ***one-fifth** of the class; a **two-thirds** majority;*  
*and*
- universally accepted usage: *the **Twelve** Apostles; the **Five** Pillars of Islam.*

- **Either numerals or words can be used in the following situations**  
For fractions greater than one, use numerals; if they are less than one, spell each out.  
  
Example: **1 ½** and **2 ¾**; **two-thirds** and **nine-tenths**
- **Time of day**  
Use numbers for specific times of day. The exception is when it is on the hour and you would like to use the number with “o’clock”.  
  
Example: **6:00** A.M.; **5:30** P.M.; **six** o’clock;
- **Combinations of numerals and words may be used in the following situation**
  - Large numbers: **88** hundred; **7** thousand; **203** million; **5** dozens

**Practice: Numbers**

Correct the following sentences keeping the number rules in mind.

1. I do not get channel fifty-eight on my television.
2. When my 2 dogs went missing over 20 people went to look for them.
3. At 5 o’clock we served supper to 8 people.
4. She was born on January fourteenth, nineteen ninety one.
5. I have lived at fifteen Crescent Avenue for five years.
6. Only one and one-half hours remain.
7. Open your book to page four.
8. 23 days ago there was a ghost sighting in this courtyard.
9. There are one hundred twenty-five thousand, six hundred minutes in a year.
10. The sixth trial found that there was a nine percent success rate.



## Parallel Structure

Words in a pair or a list should be in a parallel structure so that the sentence or list flows clearly. *Parallel structure* is achieved by making sure the words have the same grammatical form; i.e., they all must be verbs, nouns, sentences, or fragments. Balance is the key to achieving parallelism.

- Nonparallel  
I enjoy music, writing, and to paint.
- Parallel  
I enjoy music, writing, and painting.

A common error encountered with parallelism occurs when essential words are missing. These essential words are prepositions or pronouns that convey the proper meaning of the sentence.

- Nonparallel  
I am a partner and donate to the golf club.
- Parallel  
I am a partner of and donate to the golf club

### Practice: Parallel structure

Put the following sentences into parallel structure.

1. Without proper seatbelts, shoes, or licensing you should not drive.
2. The following are chores that I did today:
  - sweeping the floor,
  - washing clothes, and
  - fed my fish.
3. Peggy likes candles, flowers, and going to restaurants.
4. I commented and critiqued your screenplay.
5. Ryan likes to play video games, cooking, and karate.
6. I hate bananas, mustard, and eating tomatoes.
7. Avery is skilled at painting, singing, and dance.
8. This weekend I plan to travel, shopping, and eat out.
9. Making your lunch, finish homework, and get enough sleep are good things to do on school nights.
10. I forgot to complete the application and bringing the homework.

## Commas

The comma is a punctuation mark used to separate information within a sentence. Commas are used to separate:

- three or more items in a list,
- complete thoughts joined by a coordinating conjunction,
- a complete thought from its introduction, and
- non-essential information.

### Lists of three or more items (Oxford comma)

- When making lists of *at least three* items, a comma should follow each item before the final item listed.

Note the following examples:

- add the second substance, stir, and record any observations.
- today's ceremonies will consist of a procession, a greeting, a keynote speech, and a reception.

When deciding whether or not to put a comma before the *and* that comes before the last item in a list the answer is one of preference: a comma may or may not be included.

Although the final comma is not always required, adding the final comma can be a helpful habit to develop. This is because there are situations where a final comma may be necessary to avoid confusing the reader.

For example: "I went to the beach with my parents, Bill and Marie." Without a comma before the *and* this sentence can be understood two ways. First, I could have gone to the beach with two people, my parents, whose names are Bill and Marie. Second, I could have gone to the beach with four people: both of my parents, a friend of mine named Bill, and another friend of mine named Marie. A comma before the *and* would have clarified to the reader that I actually went to the beach with four people instead of letting them guess.

### Separating independent clauses

- When a sentence contains two independent clauses that are linked by a coordinating conjunction, a comma is usually placed before the coordinating conjunction.
- The seven coordinating conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *nor*, *so*, and *yet*.
- An easy test to see if a comma is required is to count the subjects before and after the coordinating conjunction, as each independent clause includes its own subject.

Examples: *The article includes many examples and is well written.*

This sentence contains only one subject *article*, so it does not require a comma.

Example: The planter class did not want to lose its free source of labour, but the abolitionists were determined to demolish slavery.

There is a subject before and after the coordinating conjunction *but* (*planter class* and *abolitionists*), so a comma is required.

### **Separating introductory information**

- A comma is used to distinguish between the main idea in a sentence and words or phrases, which help to introduce the main idea. Introductory information includes transitional expressions (such as *in addition* or *consequently*) and dependent clauses, for example.

Example: There are flaws in postmodern discourse. However, elements of postmodernism could be used to help minority groups gain equal rights.

Example: Despite his regular absence from the domestic sphere, Ramsay is a continuous presence in the thoughts of his wife and children.

The comma in each example above clearly separates the main idea of the sentence (the independent clause) from its introduction (underlined).

### **Separating non-essential information**

- Sentences often include words or phrases with information that is not essential to a reader's understanding. Using commas is one way to separate this information from the rest of a sentence is by.

Examples: Philadelphia, an important landmark of American history, is also known as "The City of Brotherly Love."

Example: The irony of this, however, is that Mina acts with her own brand of vampirism.

As the examples demonstrate, two commas are used to indicate non-essential information (shown as underlined).

**Practice: Using commas**

Put commas where they are needed within the sentences.

1. You should bring a pen a notebook and your textbook to every class.
2. Mrs. Taylor my housekeeper comes on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
3. I attended the conference but I didn't lecture.
4. He is a knowledgeable informative professor.
5. If I decide to take that course I will have a heavy workload.
6. Therefore you should consider my proposal.
7. My parents Lindsey and Bob came to the wedding.
8. As difficult as it was getting the scuba diving license was very rewarding.
9. Please pick up some milk avocados and one peach on your way home.
10. Additionally we are running low on ketchup.

## Comma Splices

A *comma splice* is a common writing error that occurs when two or more independent clauses in a sentence are incorrectly connected by a comma (where the comma neither demonstrates a relationship nor provides a strong separation).

### Identifying a comma splice

- Locate all of the independent clauses in a sentence. An independent clause can be located by identifying subject-predicate pairs. Once the subjects (underlined) and predicates (italicized) in the following example are located the clauses are easier to identify:
  - The character *becomes anxious*, \* he *paces back and forth*.
- Each subject-predicate pair above could stand alone as a complete thought. Thus, the sentence contains two independent clauses. Because the clauses are connected by a comma that is not followed by a coordinating conjunction, the result is a comma splice (indicated above with the symbol \*).

### Correcting a comma splice

- **Change the comma into a period**
  - Enteric diseases are usually caused by infrequent hand washing, \* students can avoid getting sick by frequent hand washing.
  - Enteric diseases are usually caused by infrequent hand washing. Students can avoid getting sick by frequent hand washing.

Although this method is grammatically correct, its overuse can lead to short, choppy sentences.

- **Change the comma into a semicolon**
    - History often repeats itself, \* it is an important subject to study.
    - History often repeats itself; therefore, it is an important subject to study.
- When using a semicolon, a transitional word, such as *however* or *therefore* (a conjunctive adverb), needs to be added to indicate the nature of the relationship.

- **Add a coordinating conjunction**
    - The thickness, the distribution, and the geometry are shown in the diagram, \* the tectonic structure of the sediments and possible unconformities can also be seen.
    - The thickness, the distribution, and the geometry are shown in the diagram, and the tectonic structure of the sediments and possible unconformities can also be seen.
- When included after the comma, a coordinating conjunction corrects a comma splice by indicating a relationship between the two independent clauses. The seven coordinating conjunctions are: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet*.

- **Change one independent clauses into a dependent clause**
  - Computers are used from an early age, \* the art of penmanship is being lost.
  - Since computers are used from an early age, the art of penmanship is being lost.

If an independent clause can be made dependent on the other for its meaning, it can be rewritten using a subordinating conjunction, such as: *after, although, as, because, before, if, since, that, unless, until, when, where, or while.*

- **Change an independent clause into additional information (a phrase or appositive)**
  - Television is often criticized as low culture, \* it is an important part of the study of popular culture.
  - Television, often criticized as low culture, is an important part of the study of popular culture.

Often, it is possible to use the information presented in one of the independent clauses as an appositive. This simplifies the comma splice into one clear idea that includes additional information.

### **Practice: Comma splices**

Identify and correct the comma splices within the sentences using one of the five methods above.

1. The Writing Centre offers help to students, the tutors can teach you how to construct a thesis statement.
2. Desktop computers are not as popular anymore, people are investing in laptops.
3. The Registrar's office released the exam schedule, my first exam is on April 8<sup>th</sup>.
4. The painting is beautiful, it has an exquisite use of colour.
5. The library has books on reserve behind the circulation desk, many books on reserve have a time limit if they are borrowed.
6. A lot of people do enjoy tea, order both tea and coffee for the meeting.
7. The purpose of a conclusion is to wrap up your argument, there is no reason to introduce new information
8. I need some business clothes for this job interview, I am going to shop for some tonight.
9. New discoveries are constantly made in astrophysics, each new textbook you buy will become dated after a few months of purchase.
10. Lately I have been hard to reach, I have spent too long alone at the cottage.

## Semicolons

The semicolon (;) is a form of punctuation that may be used in several different ways.

### Primary rules for using semicolons

1. Semicolons can connect two complete sentences that are closely related
  - Example 1: I went to the campus bookstore; the security guard told me it had just closed.
  - Example 2: My roommate went to the market for me; he forgot to get the milk.
2. Semicolons can be used with a conjunctive adverb to explain the relationship between two complete sentences that are closely related. (Conjunctive adverbs include: *however*, *therefore*, *in addition*, *moreover*, *subsequently*, *consequently*, *instead*, and *additionally*)
  - Example 1: There was black mold found in the press box of Husky Stadium; consequently, university contractors are trying to eliminate the health and safety risk.
  - Example 2: The Psychology professor wants to create a comprehensive analysis of the study habits of residence students; therefore, she will create and distribute an optional survey to every student living on campus.
3. Semicolons can be used instead of a comma in a sentence where other types of punctuation are already being used. This is useful to differentiate items in a list.
  - Example 1: In the garage, there are eight 4-cylinder engines, all working; three 6-cylinder engines, of which only two work; and two 8-cylinder engines, none of which work.
  - Example 2: The society's executive council is composed of James Gowanlock, President; Courtney Purcell, Vice President; Adam Fournier, Secretary; William Novak, Treasurer; and Mariah Connor, Events Coordinator.

### Practice: Semicolons

Correct the punctuation and insert semicolons where they are needed.

1. Matthew wants to find out whether students prefer Tim Horton's or Just Us!. Therefore, he is gathering data to find out.
2. On eBay you can buy *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, first edition, *Jane Eyre*, second edition, and *Frankenstein*, third edition.
3. The beach is a perfect place to watch the sunset you can see the sun sink into the waves.
4. To make for a better experience in the cafeteria the school is allowing students to vote for what food they want in addition they are expanding their gluten free menu.
5. I forgot my umbrella this morning. When I got to school I was soaked.
6. In this essay you were supposed to answer the questions "What the main plot?", "What characters were involved?", and "What narrative devices are used in the work?"
7. I would enjoy going to the beach, however, I already have plans for this weekend.
8. We checked the price of flying to Montreal, the train is much cheaper.
9. This film has few redeeming qualities, in short, watching it was a waste of my time and money.
10. This gentleman starts school in September, he will be five years old by then.



## Colons

The colon is a punctuation (:) used at the end of a complete sentence to link information that follows. A colon is used only at the end of a complete sentence where words signal that a list will follow.

### Rules to follow when using colons

**1. Colons may be used to introduce a complete sentence or a series of words closely related to the preceding sentence.**

- Example 1: There are five universities I am considering for my Master's degree: Victoria, Alberta, Ottawa, Queen's, and Dalhousie.
- Example 2: I will never forget something my grandmother always told me: It doesn't matter if you screw up. What matters is that you learn and move on.

**2. Colons may be used to indicate emphasis and illustration.**

- Example 1: Ilsa's return to Casablanca could mean only one thing: trouble
- Example 2: There is one thing I can never get used to seeing on my front porch: a bear.

**3. Colons can be used to introduce a long quotation after a complete sentence.**

- Example: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime article on *Human Rights and Workers' Rights* (2011)\* describes the causes and consequences of human trafficking:

Inequalities in income, education and opportunities are major root causes of human trafficking, inducing many to migrate to seek for a better life. Thousands of migrants instead become victims of labour exploitation, a new form of slavery that occurs on a massive scale. Due to growing inequalities in destination countries, this exploitation is increasingly seen as 'normal'.

**4. Colons can be used to introduce a list when signaling words are present.**

- Example: Please do the following:
  - sweep,
  - wash the dishes,
  - water the plant, and
  - feed the fish.

Some signaling words include *these* and *the following*.

\* Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2011. *Protect human rights and workers' rights to end labour exploitation* Retrieved from: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2011/June/protect-human-rights-and-workers-rights-to-end-labour-exploitation.htm>

## Practice: Colons

Correct punctuation and insert colons where they are needed.

1. To make cookies you need the following flour, eggs, sugar, and butter.
2. There is only one thing left to do, pack.
3. Take these items with you to the beach a book, a hat, and sunscreen.
4. Matthew Brothers gathered data and found that the student population at Saint Mary's University prefers Tim Horton's over Just Us!.

The data shows that Tim Horton's is preferred because of its lower prices and variety of snacks. Although Just Us is fair trade its lack of selection outweighs the feel good vibe of omitting the middle man. The data also shows that Tim Horton's provides faster service which is important for students trying to get to class on time.

5. You taught me how to do the following swim, kayak, and fish.
6. To do,
  - clean clutter off desk,
  - sweep the kitchen, and
  - feed the cats.
7. There is only one thing you need to remember when considering wearing socks with sandals, no.
8. Pick one type of sushi to try out California roll, Philadelphia roll, or Dynamite roll.
9. Consider these alternatives steal the loaf of bread and feel guilty or starve.
10. It is too bad she is only interested in one thing, power.

## Apostrophes

The apostrophe is used:

- to form contractions,
- to show possession, and
- to make a noun ending in *s* plurals.

### 1. Apostrophes are used to show letters left out of contractions.

- Example 1: *Sam can't go to the mall because she didn't do her homework.*
- Example 2: *I would've done my homework, but I forgot my book at school.*

Remember, for academic or formal writing, do not use contractions. Use a full phrase:

- Informal: *The dendrite isn't a factor in this experiment.*
- Formal: *The dendrite is not a factor in this experiment.*

### 2. When to use *its* and *it's*.

The general rule is, to say *it is*, use the contraction *it's*.

If you do not mean *it is*, then use *its*.

- Example 1: *It's raining today.* This can also be written as *it is raining today.*
- Example 2: *The book's pages are falling out.* The form *its* can replace *the book's* in this sentence and can be written as *its pages are falling out.*

### 3. Using *whose* and *who's*.

The form *who's* is a contraction that means *who is*.

- Example 1: *Who's there?*

### 4. The form *whose* is a possessive.

- Example 1: *Whose dog is in my yard?*
- Example 2: *I don't know whose dog that is.*

### 5. Apostrophes are also used to display a single noun as possessive.

- Example 1: *The teacher's lesson plans were revised this year.*
- Example 2: *The book's pages are falling out.*

Remember, when using an apostrophe to show that something *belongs to* or is *owned by* something else, it is not meant in the actual sense of owning. The book mentioned in Example 2 does not actually *own* its pages, but the pages do belong to the book.

**Exception:** If a singular noun ends in *s*, do not add another *s* to show the possessive. Instead, add an apostrophe after the singular noun in order to show possession.

- Example 1: *The weather is too hot for the circus' animals to perform.*
- Example 2: *The octopus' tentacles are covered with tiny suction cups.*

The animals in Example 1 belong to that particular circus, so possession here is indicated by the apostrophe after the word. Similarly, Example 2 is describing the tentacles of a single octopus, so ownership is presented by the apostrophe after the singular noun.

**6. Apostrophes are also used to display a plural noun ending in 's' as possessive.**

- Example 1: *The circus performers' costumes were destroyed in the fire.*
- Example 2: *The trees' leaves are covering my entire lawn.*

Because these nouns are plural and already end in *s* do not add another apostrophe *s* to show possession. Because of this, do not make any changes to the word itself, but add an apostrophe after the *s* to signify the noun as possessive.

**Practice: Apostrophes**

Rewrite the sentences inserting and deleting apostrophes where needed.

1. (1) The boys books were left on the school stairs.
2. (2) Johns mothers' friend insists that I come to dinner.
3. (3) Were going to my dads favorite restaurant: Wendys.
4. (2) Its a shame that we don't make cookies at my grandmothers house.
5. (2) We we're in Montreal when Josies car broke down.
6. (1) My boss's daughter works here now.
7. (2) You shouldnt look through your sisters purse.
8. (1) Were going to the mall tomorrow
9. (2) There're many tree's in this forrest.
10. (3) Im suffering from writers block and cant think of any more appostrophie examples.

Source: Purdue Online Writing Lab, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/1/>

## Quotation Marks

### Single Quotation Marks:

**1) Single quotes are used to indicate key terms or concepts.**

Example 1: Sartre's treatment of 'being', as opposed to his treatment of 'non-being', has been thoroughly described in Kaufmann's book.

**2) Single quotes can also indicate a quotation within a quotation.**

Example 1: "I was leaving the room when I heard someone yell 'Look Out!'" explained Samantha.

### Double Quotation Marks:

**1) Double quotation marks are used to indicate speech or a quotation from a source.**

Example 1: "What are you doing?" Emily asked.

**2) Double quotation marks are used as *scare quotes*.**

Example 1: Politicians say that they "care" about post-secondary student debt.

This use of quotations indicates an alternate meaning than the word would normally imply. For instance, this author is suggesting that politicians *do not* care about post-secondary student debt.

**3) Double quotation marks are often used to indicate titles such as the name of a poem or a journal article.**

Example 1: "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is a poem by John Keats.

Example 2: "Modernism and Gender" is a journal article in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*.

Generally, the titles of articles, poems, songs, or chapters in a textbook would be enclosed by double quotation marks. Always double check what citation style is required, and adjust your quotation use accordingly.

**4) Double quotation marks are used in academic writing to indicate information that is from another source.**

Example 1: Rosemarie Morgan argues that "Hardy does appear to have had some faith in aesthetic distance" (Morgan 297).

Enclosing text within double quotations signals to the reader that that information is from another source and it has not been paraphrased or altered in any way by the author of the work that the quotation appears in

**Practice: Quotation marks**

Insert Quotation marks where they are needed.

1. In class, the professor told us that what we put into the class we get out of the class. My friend looked at me and said, that is completely true.
2. I overheard a professor saying my first year students are very bright. He had them read the article, Getting around transit strike, in the Chronicle Herald, and they had very optimistic, efficient ways of how to avoid this problem in the future.
3. James Joyce's novel, Ulysses, is often studied in English courses along with his poem, A Flower Given to my Daughter.
4. My favorite song is Mr. Jones by the Counting Crows. It is on their debut album, August and Everything After.
5. The traffic guard yelled stop when a person drove through the stop sign.
6. Don't ever confuse then with than.
7. Dangerous? yelled Kaitlyn. You told me this would be fun, not dangerous!
8. Politicians *worry* about your best interest.
9. Kristen told me he professor said hand in all assignments at the beginning of class.
10. All corporations *care* about the environment.

## Practice Answers

### Practice: Sentences

Decide whether or not the following are complete sentences. Underline the subject once and circle the predicate.

1. The ITSS staff help fix computers.
2. What information we have is limited.
3. She ran away from home.
4. I have gained skills through my work experience.
5. To fish on a rainy day is a bad idea.
6. Swimming is very refreshing on a hot summer day.
7. My cat is black.
8. Stop right there.
9. When crossing the street remember to look both ways.
10. This fruit fly is buzzing around my face.

### Practice: Independent and dependent clauses

In the following sentences underline all independent clauses and circle dependent clauses.

1. Working while taking courses can be difficult, although it is worth avoiding student debt.
2. I can drive you to work, as long as you are ready to leave by 8 A.M.
3. Because this cat will not stop eating my plants, all my flowers keep dying.
4. Whichever you choose, we still need your decision by Friday.
5. You have to try this tea, as long as you are not allergic to bamboo.
6. You still need to take English 1205, despite being a Science student.
7. If Seth keeps throwing temper tantrums, I am not taking him to the pool party.
8. This test will be easy, provided that you have spent time studying.
9. She has not been the same, since the vending machine fell on her.
10. These children are skilled smore makers, as they practice at the campfire every night.

### Practice: Sentence Fragments

In the following paragraphs underline all sentence fragments. Edit the paragraphs to ensure that there are no sentence fragments by connecting all dependent clauses to an independent clause.

Our beach day turned out to be a huge success, although it did not seem that way at first. We planned to leave early in the morning so that we could get the best spot on the beach. We forgot to set an alarm and nobody woke up until 10 A.M.. We all rushed to get ready, in order for us to still get to the beach before lunch. We were just out of the city when we had to turn around, as John forgot his bathing suit. As we were driving to the beach it started to rain. Since we had been planning this trip for months, the rain could not deter us from going to the beach.

Thankfully, it stopped raining just as we arrived at the beach. By this time it was 1 P.M. and I was really hungry. I went to get the cooler in the trunk where I had packed everybody's lunch, except that I realized that I left the cooler on the kitchen counter. I went to the ice cream stand and they were all sold out of my favourite ice cream. To make matters even worse, I dropped my ice cream cone in the sand.

After finally eating, we started to enjoy our day at the beach. The beach was almost empty because it rained earlier. We made sand castles. We played lots of games in the water, including Ultimate Frisbee and Marco Polo. I even went surfing while John went to go tubing. After all the problems this morning, I am really happy with how today turned out. I cannot wait to have another beach day.

### Practice: Subject-verb agreement

Underline the verbs and circle the subjects in the following sentences. Then correct the sentences so that the subject and the verb agree in number.

1. The content of the two courses are is similar.
2. Developing my organizational skills and improving my people skills is are what I need to do to get a job.
3. These hobbies give you great joy and makes make for a happy life.
4. One pair of brand name shoes I own are is Nike.
5. I like the style of this shirt, but the arm length and the hem is are too long.
6. The audience members already know what the author is trying to say and is are not very interested.
7. Writing the first paragraph, including the topic sentence and the thesis statement, are is the hardest things for me to do.
8. At the Tower, all forms of exercise takes take place inside the gym



9. Being economical and environmentally friendly is are important for a company today.
10. One of the most striking examples of poor workmanship and inferior materials are is the new subdivision on Main Street.

### Practice: Capital Letters

Correct the capitalization in the following paragraph.

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, Ryan and I attended a seminar at Saint Mary's University. The speaker, Dr. Tyron, presented his recent archeological finds from off the coast of Greece. He had a thick French accent so I found it hard to understand him, but I was able to make out his references to the Greek islands: Ios, Santorini, and Naxos. Since he has returned he has been busy taking an online Classics course: Ancient Greek Mythology. I learned many new facts about Archeology from Dr. Tyron and I look forward to buying his new novel, "The Past Digger," to learn even more.

### Practice: Plain English

Rewrite the following sentences in ordinary English:

1. Enclosed is a letter of reference for your perusal ~~in selecting the appropriate candidate.~~
2. As requested, we will forward your mail to your most recent address.
3. I am aware ~~of the fact~~ that there will be a lecture on grammar in my English class.
4. These skills will help me omit wordy language from my ~~end of~~ term paper.
5. Before gym class begins, our teacher informs us that we have to provide her with money for our class trip.
6. When I was your age, we did not have cellphones to send texts.
7. Complicated language can be too confusing for your reader to understand.
8. There are many methods to convey the meaning of an idea.
9. I have been having ~~these~~ horrifying nightmares ~~in my sleep~~ lately.
10. The dog scared the cat.

### Practice: Concise language

Rewrite the following paragraph using concise language:

I applied for a job in October although I am moving soon. I think I will be hired because I am a very hard worker. I have many skills which can benefit employers if I am hired. I have submitted my résumé everywhere, hoping that the managers phone me for an interview. The last time I applied for jobs half of employers did not call me back. However, I have spent this past week updating my résumé. I have also worked on editing my cover letter even though not all places I have been applying to require a cover letter. Currently, I hope my luck has changed as I need a job which starts soon.

### Practice: Active voice and passive voice

Underline the subjects, circle the verbs/verb phrases in the following sentences, and decide whether the sentence is in the passive voice or the active voice. Rewrite passive voice sentences in the active voice and active voice sentences in the passive voice.

1. Passive/**Active**     Matthew changed his login password.  
The password was changed by Matthew.
2. Passive/**Active**     I checked the mail when I got home.  
The mail was checked.
3. **Passive**/Active     The toys have been pulled out of the box.  
The teenagers pulled the toys out of the box.
4. Passive/**Active**     The professor gave Jamie his paper back.  
The paper was given back to Jamie.
5. **Passive**/Active     Posters were left here for you to hang up.  
She left posters here for you to hang up.
6. Passive/**Active**     I found this wallet on the ground.  
This wallet was found on the ground.
7. Passive/**Active**     The elephant sneezed all over the crowd.  
The crowd was sneezed on by the elephant.
8. **Passive**/Active     An episode of Bill Nye the Science Guy was watched by the students.  
The students watched an episode of Bill Nye.
9. **Passive**/Active     Gilbert the Goldfish was removed from his old tank.  
Jeffery removed Gilbert the Goldfish from his old tank.
10. **Passive**/Active     This picture was painted by my three year old niece.  
My three year old niece painted this picture.

### Practice: Using pronouns

Rewrite the following paragraph for correct pronoun usage. If you are unclear to who or what the pronoun is referring, replace it with a noun.

Mary and I decided to volunteer to do research projects. Josh wanted to go along with Mary and I to do the experiments but he was not a Saint Mary's student, and therefore, could not receive any bonus points. Mary and I went to our first experiment where a person named Mike asked us to fill out a questionnaire. Mike explained what the study was about; he was very informative and reassuring. Mike and his partner's experiment was well thought out and Mary

enjoyed doing the experiment. Mike wanted valid results for his survey so he did not tell Mary the real purpose of the experiment until after Mary completed it. The experiment went well.

### Practice: Misplaced and dangling modifiers

Circle the modifiers and underline the words that they currently describe. Correct the sentences to rid of any misplaced or dangling modifiers. Then circle the corrected modifiers and underline the new words they describe.

1. I read that a girl was killed in the newspaper.  
I read in the newspaper that a girl was killed.
2. I almost ate the whole burger.  
I ate almost the whole burger.
3. Standing on the sidewalk, the ice cream melted.  
The ice cream melted when I was standing on the sidewalk.
4. I heard that there was a war on the news.  
I heard on the news that there was a war.
5. I was caught by security in the process of superglueing a chair to the roof.  
In the process of superglueing a chair to the roof, I was caught by security.
6. The jacket was just too small in the store.  
The jacket in the store was just too small.
7. The professor told us to expect to do a lot of work on the first day.  
The professor told us on the first day to expect to do a lot of work.
8. For my craft project, I need some superglue but the store is all sold out.  
I need some superglue for my craft project but the store is all sold out.

### Practice: Numbers

Correct the following sentences keeping the number rules in mind.

1. I do not get channel **58** on my television.
2. When my **two** dogs went missing over 20 people went to look for them.
3. At **five** o'clock we served supper to **eight** people.
4. She was born on January **14, 1991**.
5. I have lived at **15** Crescent Avenue for five years.
6. Only **1 1/2** hours remain.
7. Open your book to page **4**.

8. **Twenty-three** days ago there was a ghost sighting in this courtyard.
9. There are **125,600** minutes in a year.
10. The **6<sup>th</sup>** trial found that there was a **9%** success rate.

### Practice: Parallel structure

Put the following sentences into parallel structure.

1. Without proper seatbelts, shoes, or **a license** you should not drive.
2. The following are chores that I did today:
  - **swept** the floor,
  - **washed** clothes, and
  - fed my fish.
3. Peggy likes candles, flowers, and **going to** restaurants.
4. I commented **on** and critiqued your screenplay.
5. Ryan likes **to play** video games, cooking, and karate.
6. I hate bananas, mustard, and **eating** tomatoes.
7. Avery is skilled at painting, singing, and **dancing**.
8. This weekend I plan to travel, **shop**, and eat out.
9. Making your lunch, **finishing** homework, and **getting** enough sleep are good things to do on school nights.
10. I forgot to complete the application and **to bring** the homework.

### Practice: Using commas

Put commas where they are needed within the sentences.

1. You should bring a pen, a notebook, and your textbook to every class.
2. Mrs. Taylor, my housekeeper, comes on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
3. I attended the conference, but I didn't lecture.
4. He is a knowledgeable, informative professor.
5. If I decide to take that course, I will have a heavy workload.
6. Therefore, you should consider my proposal.
7. My parents, Lindsey and Bob, came to the wedding.
8. As difficult as it was, getting the scuba diving license was very rewarding.
9. Please pick up some milk, avocados, and one peach on your way home.
10. Additionally, we are running low on ketchup.

### Practice: Comma splices

Identify and correct the comma splices within the sentences using one of the five methods above.

1. The Writing Centre offers help to students, The tutors can teach you how to construct a thesis statement.

2. Desktop computers are not as popular anymore **because** people are investing in laptops.
3. The Registrar's office released the exam schedule; my first exam is on April 8<sup>th</sup>.
4. The painting, **with** an exquisite use of colour, is beautiful.
5. The library has books on reserve behind the circulation desk. Many books on reserve have a time limit if they are borrowed.
6. A lot of people do enjoy tea. Order both tea and coffee for the meeting.
7. The purpose of a conclusion is to wrap up your argument; there is no reason to introduce new information
8. I need some business clothes for this job interview **so** I am going to shop for some tonight.
9. **As** new discoveries are constantly made in astrophysics, each new textbook you buy will become dated after a few months of purchase.
10. Lately I have been hard to reach, **since** I have spent too long alone at the cottage.

### Practice: Semicolons

Correct the punctuation and insert semicolons where they are needed.

1. Matthew wants to find out whether students prefer Tim Horton's or Just Us!; therefore, he is gathering data to find out.
2. On eBay you can buy *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, first edition; *Jane Eyre*, second edition; and *Frankenstein*, third edition.
3. The beach is a perfect place to watch the sunset; you can see the sun sink into the waves.
4. To make for a better experience in the cafeteria the school is allowing students to vote for what food they want; in addition they are expanding their gluten free menu.
5. I forgot my umbrella this morning; when I got to school I was soaked.
6. In this essay you were supposed to answer the questions "What the main plot?"; "What characters were involved?"; and "What narrative devices are used in the work?"
7. I would enjoy going to the beach; however, I already have plans for this weekend.
8. We checked the price of flying to Montreal; the train is much cheaper.
9. This film has few redeeming qualities; in short, watching it was a waste of my time and money.
10. This gentleman starts school in September; he will be five years old by then.

### Practice: Colons

Correct punctuation and insert colons where they are needed.

1. To make cookies you need the following: flour, eggs, sugar, and butter.
2. There is only one thing left to do: pack.
3. Take these items with you to the beach: a book, a hat, and sunscreen.
4. Matthew Brothers gathered data and found that the student population at Saint Mary's University prefers Tim Horton's over Just Us!

The data shows that Tim Horton's is preferred because of its lower prices and variety of snacks. Although Just Us is fair trade its lack of selection outweighs the feel good vibe of omitting the middle man. The data also shows that Tim Horton's provides faster service which is important for students trying to get to class on time.

5. You taught me how to do the following: swim, kayak, and fish.
6. To do:
  - clean clutter off desk,
  - sweep the kitchen, and
  - feed the cats.
7. There is only one thing you need to remember when considering wearing socks with sandals: no.
8. Pick one type of sushi to try out: California roll, Philadelphia roll, or Dynamite roll.
9. Consider these alternatives: steal the loaf of bread and feel guilty or starve.
10. It is too bad she is only interested in one thing: power.

### Practice: Apostrophes

Rewrite the sentences inserting and deleting apostrophes where needed.

1. (1) The boy's books were left on the school stairs.
2. (2) John's ~~mothers'~~ **mother's** friend insists that I come to dinner.
3. (3) We're going to my dad's favorite restaurant: Wendy's.
4. (2) It's a shame that we don't make cookies at my grandmother's house.
5. (2) We ~~we're~~ **were** in Montreal when Josie's car broke down.
6. (1) My ~~boss's~~ **boss'** daughter works here now.
7. (2) You shouldn't look through your sister's purse.
8. (1) We're going to the mall tomorrow
9. (2) ~~There're~~ **There are** many ~~tree's~~ **trees** in this forrest.
10. (3) I'm suffering from writer's block and can't think of any more apostrophe examples.

### Practice: Quotation marks

Insert Quotation marks where they are needed.

1. In class, the professor told us that what we put into the class we get out of the class. My friend looked at me and said "that is completely true".
2. I overheard a professor saying "my first year students are very bright". He had them read the article "Getting around transit strike" in the Chronicle Herald, and they had very optimistic, efficient ways of how to avoid this problem in the future.

3. James Joyce's novel Ulysses is often studied in English courses along with his poem "A Flower Given to my Daughter".
4. My favorite song is "Mr. Jones" by the Counting Crows. It is on their debut album, August and Everything After.
5. The traffic guard yelled "stop" when a person drove through the stop sign.
6. Don't ever confuse 'then' with 'than'.
7. "Dangerous?" yelled Kaitlyn. "You told me this would be fun, not dangerous!"
8. Politicians "worry" about your best interest.
9. Kristen told me "the professor said 'hand in all assignments at the beginning of class.'"
10. All corporations "care" about the environment.