

Grammar

10 Make subjects and verbs agree.

In the present tense, verbs agree with their subjects in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second, or third). The present-tense ending *-s* is used on a verb if its subject is third-person singular; otherwise the verb takes no ending. Consider, for example, the present-tense forms of the verb *give*:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
FIRST PERSON	I give	we give
SECOND PERSON	you give	you give
THIRD PERSON	he/she/it gives Yolanda gives	they give parents give

The verb *be* varies from this pattern, and unlike any other verb it has special forms in *both* the present and the past tense.

PRESENT-TENSE FORMS OF <i>BE</i>		PAST-TENSE FORMS OF <i>BE</i>	
I am	we are	I was	we were
you are	you are	you were	you were
he/she/it is	they are	he/she/it was	they were

Problems with subject-verb agreement tend to arise in certain tricky contexts, which are detailed in this section.

10a Words between subject and verb

Word groups often come between the subject and the verb. Such word groups, usually modifying the subject, may contain a noun that at first appears to be the subject. By mentally stripping away such modifiers, you can isolate the noun that is in fact the subject.

The *samples* on the tray in the lab *need* testing.

- ▶ High levels of air pollution ~~damages~~ the respiratory tract.

The subject is *levels*, not *pollution*.

- ▶ The slaughter of pandas for their pelts ~~have~~^{has} caused the panda population to decline drastically.

The subject is *slaughter*, not *pandas* or *pelts*.

NOTE: Phrases beginning with the prepositions *as well as*, *in addition to*, *accompanied by*, *together with*, and *along with* do not make a singular subject plural: *The governor, as well as his aide, was [not were] indicted.*

10b Subjects joined by *and*

Compound subjects joined by *and* are nearly always plural.

- ▶ Jill's natural ability and her desire to help others ~~has~~^{have} led to a career in the ministry.

EXCEPTION: If the parts of the subject form a single unit, however, you may treat the subject as singular: *Bacon and eggs is my favorite breakfast.*

10c Subjects joined by *or* or *nor*

With compound subjects connected by *or* or *nor*, make the verb agree with the part of the subject nearer to the verb.

- ▶ If a relative or neighbor ~~are~~^{is} abusing a child, notify the police.
- ▶ Neither the lab assistant nor the students ~~was~~^{were} able to download the program.

10d Indefinite pronouns such as *someone*

Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things. Even though the following indefinite pronouns may seem to have plural meanings, treat them as singular in formal English: *anybody*, *anyone*, *each*, *either*, *everybody*, *everyone*, *everything*, *neither*, *no one*, *somebody*, *someone*, *something*.

- ▶ Nearly everyone on the panel ~~favor~~^{favours} the new budget.
- ▶ Each of the furrows ~~have~~^{has} been seeded.

A few indefinite pronouns (*all, any, none, some*) may be singular or plural depending on the noun or pronoun they refer to: *Some of the lemonade has disappeared. Some of the rocks were slippery. None of his advice makes sense. None of the eggs were broken.*

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10e Collective nouns such as *jury*

Collective nouns such as *jury, committee, club, audience, crowd, class, troop, family, and couple* name a class or a group. In American English, collective nouns are usually treated as singular: They emphasize the group as a unit.

- ▶ The board of trustees ~~meet~~^{meets} in Denver on the first Tuesday of each month.

Occasionally, when there is some reason to draw attention to the individual members of the group, a collective noun may be treated as plural: *A young couple were arguing about politics while holding hands.* (Only individuals can argue and hold hands.)

NOTE: When units of measurement are used collectively, treat them as singular: *Three-fourths of the pie has been eaten.* When they refer to individual persons or things, treat them as plural: *One-fourth of the children were labeled “talented and gifted.”*

10f Subject after verb

Verbs ordinarily follow subjects. When this normal order is reversed, it is easy to become confused.

- ▶ Of particular concern ^{are} ~~is~~ penicillin and tetracycline, antibiotics used to make animals more resistant to disease.

The subject *penicillin and tetracycline* is plural.

The subject always follows the verb in sentences beginning with *There is* or *There are* (or *There was* or *There were*).

- ▶ There ^{are} ~~is~~ a small aquarium and an enormous terrarium in our biology lab.

The subject *aquarium and terrarium* is plural.

10g *who, which, and that*

Like most pronouns, the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that* have antecedents, nouns or pronouns to which they refer. Relative pronouns used as subjects take verbs that agree with their antecedents.

Pick a stock ^{that} pays good dividends.

Constructions such as *one of the students who* [or *one of the things that*] cause problems for writers. Do not assume that the antecedent must be *one*. Instead, you should consider the logic of the sentence.

- ▶ Our ability to use language is one of the things ^{set} that ~~sets~~ us apart from animals.

The antecedent of *that* is *things*, not *one*. Several things set us apart from animals.

When the word *only* comes before *one*, you are safe in assuming that *one* is the antecedent of the relative pronoun.

- ▶ SEACON is the only one of our war games that ^{emphasizes} ~~emphasize~~ scientific and technical issues.

The antecedent of *that* is *one*, not *games*. Only one game emphasizes scientific and technical issues.

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 - ▶ *one of those who* (or *that*)

10h Plural form, singular meaning

Words such as *athletics*, *economics*, *mathematics*, *physics*, *statistics*, *measles*, and *news* are usually singular, despite their plural form.

- ▶ Statistics ^{is} ~~are~~ among the most difficult courses in our program.

EXCEPTION: When they describe separate items rather than a collective body of knowledge, words such as *athletics*, *mathematics*, and *statistics* are plural: *The statistics on school retention rates are impressive.*

10i Titles, company names, and words mentioned as words

Titles, company names, and words mentioned as words are singular.

- ▶ *Lost Cities* ^{describes} ~~describe~~ the discoveries of many ancient civilizations.
- ▶ Delmonico Brothers ^{specializes} ~~specialize~~ in organic produce and additive-free meats.
- ▶ *Controlled substances* ^{is} ~~are~~ a euphemism for illegal drugs.

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11

Be alert to other problems with verbs.

The verb is the heart of the sentence, so it is important to get it right. Section 10 deals with the problem of subject-verb agreement. This section describes a few other potential problems with verbs.

11a Irregular verbs

For all regular verbs, the past-tense and past-participle forms are the same, ending in *-ed* or *-d*, so there is no danger of confusion. This is not true, however, for irregular verbs such as the following.

BASE FORM	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE
begin	began	begun
fly	flew	flown
ride	rode	ridden

The past-tense form, which never has a helping verb, expresses action that occurred entirely in the past. The past participle is used with a helping verb—either with *has*, *have*, or *had* to form one of the perfect tenses or with *be*, *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *being*, or *been* to form the passive voice.

PAST TENSE Last July, we *went* to Paris.

PAST PARTICIPLE We have *gone* to Paris twice.

When you aren't sure which verb form to choose (*went* or *gone*, *began* or *begun*, and so on), consult the list that begins on page 30. Choose the past-tense form if your sentence doesn't have a helping verb; choose the past-participle form if it does.

- ▶ Yesterday we ^{*saw*} ~~seen~~ an unidentified flying object.
^

Because there is no helping verb, the past-tense form *saw* is required.

- ▶ By the end of the day, the stock market had ^{*fallen*} ~~fell~~ two hundred points.
^

Because of the helping verb *had*, the past-participle form *fallen* is required.

Distinguishing between lie and lay. Writers often confuse the forms of *lie* (meaning “to recline or rest on a surface”) with *lay* (meaning “to put or place something”). The intransitive verb *lie* does not take a direct object: *The tax forms are lying on the coffee table.* The transitive verb *lay* takes a direct object: *Please lay the tax forms on the coffee table.*

In addition to confusing the meanings of *lie* and *lay*, writers are often unfamiliar with the standard English forms of these verbs. Their past-tense and past-participle forms are given in the list of common irregular verbs that begins on this page. The present participle of *lie* is *lying*; the present participle of *lay* is *laying*.

- ▶ Elizabeth was so exhausted that she ^{lay} ~~laid~~ down for a nap.

The past-tense form of *lie* (“to recline”) is *lay*.

- ▶ The prosecutor ^{laid} ~~lay~~ the pistol on a table close to the jurors.

The past-tense form of *lay* (“to place”) is *laid*.

- ▶ Letters dating from the Civil War were ^{lying} ~~laying~~ in the corner of the chest.

The present participle of *lie* (“to rest on a surface”) is *lying*.

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▶ *lie* versus *lay*

Common irregular verbs

BASE FORM	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE
arise	arose	arisen
awake	awoke, awaked	awaked, awoke
be	was, were	been
beat	beat	beaten, beat
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent

BASE FORM	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE
bite	bit	bitten, bit
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
build	built	built
burst	burst	burst
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
cling	clung	clung
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
deal	dealt	dealt
dig	dug	dug
dive	dived, dove	dived
do	did	done
drag	dragged	dragged
draw	drew	drawn
dream	dreamed, dreamt	dreamed, dreamt
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
fly	flew	flown
forget	forgot	forgotten, forgot
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	gotten, got
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grow	grew	grown
hang (suspend)	hung	hung
hang (execute)	hanged	hanged
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
hide	hid	hidden
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept
know	knew	known
lay (put)	laid	laid

BASE FORM	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE
lead	led	led
lend	lent	lent
let (allow)	let	let
lie (recline)	lay	lain
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
prove	proved	proved, proven
read	read	read
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise (get up)	rose	risen
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
send	sent	sent
set (place)	set	set
shake	shook	shaken
shoot	shot	shot
shrink	shrank	shrunk, shrunken
sing	sang	sung
sink	sank	sunk
sit (be seated)	sat	sat
slay	slew	slain
sleep	slept	slept
speak	spoke	spoken
spin	spun	spun
spring	sprang	sprung
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
sting	stung	stung
strike	struck	struck, stricken
swear	swore	sworn
swim	swam	swum
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
throw	threw	thrown
wake	woke, waked	waked, woken
wear	wore	worn
wring	wrung	wrung
write	wrote	written

11b Tense

Tenses indicate the time of an action in relation to the time of the speaking or writing about that action. The most common problem with tenses—shifting from one tense to another—is discussed in 5b. Other problems with tenses are detailed in this section, after the following survey of tenses.

Survey of tenses. Tenses are classified as present, past, and future, with simple, perfect, and progressive forms for each.

The simple tenses indicate relatively simple time relations. The present tense is used primarily for actions occurring at the time of the speaking or for actions occurring regularly. The past tense is used for actions completed in the past. The future tense is used for actions that will occur in the future. In the following table, the simple tenses are given for the regular verb *walk*, the irregular verb *ride*, and the highly irregular verb *be*.

PRESENT TENSE SINGULAR		PLURAL	
I	walk, ride, am	we	walk, ride, are
you	walk, ride, are	you	walk, ride, are
he/she/it	walks, rides, is	they	walk, ride, are

PAST TENSE SINGULAR		PLURAL	
I	walked, rode, was	we	walked, rode, were
you	walked, rode, were	you	walked, rode, were
he/she/it	walked, rode, was	they	walked, rode, were

FUTURE TENSE	
I, you, he/she/it, we, they	will walk, ride, be

More complex time relations are indicated by the perfect tenses. A verb in one of the perfect tenses (a form of *have* plus the past participle) expresses an action that was or will be completed at the time of another action.

PRESENT PERFECT

I, you, we, they	have walked, ridden, been
he/she/it	has walked, ridden, been

PAST PERFECT

I, you, he/she/it, we, they	had walked, ridden, been
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FUTURE PERFECT

I, you, he/she/it, we, they	will have walked, ridden, been
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Each of the six tenses just mentioned has a progressive form used to express a continuing action. A progressive verb consists of a form of *be* followed by the present participle.

PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

I	am walking, riding, being
he/she/it	is walking, riding, being
you, we, they	are walking, riding, being

PAST PROGRESSIVE

I, he/she/it	was walking, riding, being
you, we, they	were walking, riding, being

FUTURE PROGRESSIVE

I, you, he/she/it, we, they	will be walking, riding, being
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PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

I, you, we, they	have been walking, riding, being
he/she/it	has been walking, riding, being

PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

I, you, he/she/it, we, they	had been walking, riding, being
-----------------------------	---------------------------------

FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

I, you, he/she/it, we, they	will have been walking, riding, being
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Special uses of the present tense. Use the present tense when writing about literature or when expressing general truths.

- ▶ Don Quixote, in Cervantes's novel, ^{is} ~~was~~ an idealist ill suited for life in the real world.
- ▶ Galileo taught that the earth ^{orbits} ~~orbited~~ the sun.

The past perfect tense. The past perfect tense is used for an action already completed by the time of another past action. This tense consists of a past participle preceded by *had* (*had worked*, *had gone*).

- ▶ We built our cabin forty feet above an abandoned quarry that ^{had been} ~~was~~ flooded in 1920 to create a lake.
- ▶ When Hitler planned the Holocaust in 1941, did he know that Himmler and the SS ^{had} ~~had~~ mass murder in mind since 1938?

11c Mood

There are three moods in English: the *indicative*, used for facts, opinions, and questions; the *imperative*, used for orders or advice; and the *subjunctive*, used for wishes, conditions contrary to fact, and requests or recommendations. Of these three moods, the subjunctive is most likely to cause problems.

Use the subjunctive mood for wishes and in *if* clauses expressing conditions contrary to fact. The subjunctive in such cases is the past tense form of the verb; in the case of *be*, it is always *were* (not *was*), even if the subject is singular.

I wish that Jamal *drove* more slowly late at night.

If I *were* a member of Congress, I would vote for the bill.

Use the subjunctive mood in *that* clauses following verbs such as *ask*, *insist*, *recommend*, and *request*. The subjunctive in such cases is the base (or dictionary) form of the verb.

Dr. Chung insists that her students *be* on time.

We recommend that Dawson *file* form 1050 soon.

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12 Use pronouns with care.

Pronouns are words that substitute for nouns: *he, it, them, her, me*, and so on. Four frequently encountered problems with pronouns are discussed in this section:

- a. pronoun-antecedent agreement (singular vs. plural)
- b. pronoun reference (clarity)
- c. case of personal pronouns (*I* vs. *me*, etc.)
- d. *who* vs. *whom*

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 - ▶ Pronoun case
 - ▶ *who* vs. *whom*

12a Pronoun-antecedent agreement

The antecedent of a pronoun is the word the pronoun refers to. A pronoun and its antecedent agree when they are both singular or both plural.

SINGULAR The *doctor* finished *her* rounds.

PLURAL The *doctors* finished *their* rounds.

Writers are sometimes tempted to choose the plural pronoun *they* (or *their*) to refer to a singular antecedent. The temptation is greatest when the singular antecedent is an indefinite pronoun, a generic noun, or a collective noun.

Indefinite pronouns. Indefinite pronouns refer to non-specific persons or things. Even though some of the following indefinite pronouns may seem to have plural meanings, treat them as singular in formal English: *anybody, anyone, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, no one, someone, something*.

In this class *everyone* performs at *his or her* [not *their*] fitness level.

When *they* or *their* refers mistakenly to a singular antecedent such as *everyone*, you will usually have three options for revision:

1. Replace *they* with *he or she* (or *their* with *his or her*).
2. Make the singular antecedent plural.
3. Rewrite the sentence.

Because the *he or she* construction is wordy, often the second or third revision strategy is more effective.

- ▶ When someone has been drinking, ~~they are~~ ^{he or she is} more likely to speed.
- ▶ When ~~someone has~~ ^{drivers have} been drinking, they are more likely to speed.
- ▶ ~~When someone~~ ^{Someone who} has been drinking, ~~they are~~ ^{is} more likely to speed.

NOTE: The traditional use of *he* (or *his*) to refer to persons of either sex is now widely considered sexist. (See p. 21.)

Generic nouns. A generic noun represents a typical member of a group, such as a student, or any member

of a group, such as any musician. Although generic nouns may seem to have plural meanings, they are singular.

Every *runner* must train rigorously if *he or she* wants [not *they* want] to excel.

When *they* or *their* refers mistakenly to a generic noun, you will usually have the same three revision options as for indefinite pronouns.

- ▶ A medical student must study hard if ~~they want~~ to succeed. he or she wants
^
- ▶ ~~A medical student~~ must study hard if they want to succeed. Medical students
^
- ▶ A medical student must study hard if ~~they want~~ to succeed.

Collective nouns. Collective nouns such as *jury*, *committee*, *audience*, *crowd*, *family*, and *team* name a class or group. In American English, collective nouns are usually singular because they emphasize the group functioning as a unit.

The planning *committee* granted *its* [not *their*] permission to build.

If the members of the group function individually, however, you may treat the noun as plural: *The family put their signatures on the document.* Or you might add a plural antecedent such as *members* to the sentence: *The members of the family put their signatures on the document.*

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Indefinite reference of they, it, or you. The pronoun *they* should refer to a specific antecedent. Do not use *they* to refer indefinitely to persons who have not been specifically mentioned.

Congress

- ▶ ~~They~~ shut down all government agencies for more than a month until the budget crisis was resolved.

The word *it* should not be used indefinitely in constructions such as “In the article it says that. . . .”

The

- ▶ ~~In the~~ encyclopedia ~~it~~ states that male moths can smell female moths from several miles away.

The pronoun *you* is appropriate when the writer is addressing the reader directly: *Once you have kneaded the dough, let it rise in a warm place.* Except in informal contexts, however, the indefinite *you* (meaning “anyone in general”) is inappropriate.

- ▶ Ms. Pickersgill’s *Guide to Etiquette* stipulates that ~~you~~ *guests* should not arrive at a party too early or leave too late.

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12c Case of personal pronouns (*I* vs. *me*, etc.)

The personal pronouns in the following list change what is known as case form according to their grammatical function in a sentence. Pronouns functioning as subjects or subject complements appear in the *subjective* case; those functioning as objects appear in the *objective* case; and those functioning as possessives appear in the *possessive* case.

SUBJECTIVE CASE	OBJECTIVE CASE	POSSESSIVE CASE
I	me	my
we	us	our
you	you	your
he/she/it	him/her/it	his/her/its
they	them	their

For the most part, you know how to use these forms correctly, but certain structures may tempt you to choose the wrong pronoun.

Compound word groups. When a subject or object appears as part of a compound structure, you may occasionally become confused. To test for the correct pronoun, mentally strip away all of the compound structure except the pronoun in question.

- ▶ While diving for pearls, Ikiko and ^{she}~~her~~ found a treasure chest full of gold bars.

Ikiko and she is the subject of the verb *found*. Strip away the words *Ikiko and* to test for the correct pronoun: *she found* [not *her found*].

- ▶ The most traumatic experience for her father and ^{me}~~I~~ occurred long after her operation.

Her father and me is the object of the preposition *for*. Strip away the words *her father and* to test for the correct pronoun: *for me* [not *for I*].

When in doubt about the correct pronoun, some writers try to evade the choice by using a reflexive pronoun such as *myself*. Such evasions are nonstandard, even though they are used by some educated persons.

- ▶ The Egyptian cab driver gave my husband and ^{me}~~myself~~ some good tips on traveling in North Africa.

My husband and me is the indirect object of the verb *gave*.

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▶ *myself*

Subject complements. Use subjective-case pronouns for subject complements, which rename or describe the subject and usually follow *be*, *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *being*, or *been*.

- ▶ During the Lindbergh trial, Bruno Hauptmann repeatedly denied that the kidnapper was ~~him~~.
he.
^

If *kidnapper was he* seems too stilted, rewrite the sentence: *During the Lindbergh trial, Bruno Hauptmann repeatedly denied that he was the kidnapper.*

Appositives. Appositives, noun phrases that rename nouns or pronouns, have the same function as the words they rename. To test for the correct pronoun, mentally strip away the words that the appositive renames.

- ▶ The chief strategists, Dr. Bell and ~~me~~, could not agree on a plan.
I,
^

The appositive *Dr. Bell and I* renames the subject, *strategists*. Test: *I could not agree on a plan* [not *me could not agree on a plan*].

- ▶ The reporter interviewed only two witnesses, the shopkeeper and ~~I~~.
me.
^

The appositive *the shopkeeper and me* renames the direct object, *witnesses*. Test: *interviewed me* [not *interviewed I*].

We or us before a noun. When deciding whether *we* or *us* should precede a noun, choose the pronoun that would be appropriate if the noun were omitted.

- ▶ ~~Us~~ tenants would rather fight than move.
We
^

Test: *We would rather fight* [not *Us would rather fight*].

- ▶ Management is short-changing ~~we~~ tenants.
us
^

Test: *Management is short-changing us* [not *Management is short-changing we*].

Pronoun after than or as. Sentence parts, usually verbs, are often omitted in comparisons beginning with *than* or *as*. To test for the correct pronoun, finish the sentence.

- ▶ My husband is six years older than ~~me~~.
^{I.}
 ^

Test: *than I [am]*.

- ▶ We respected no other candidate in the election as much as ~~she~~.
^{her.}
 ^

Test: *as [we respected] her*.

Pronoun before or after an infinitive. An infinitive is the word *to* followed by a verb. Both subjects and objects of infinitives take the objective case.

- ▶ Ms. Wilson asked John and ~~I~~ to drive the senator
^{me}
 ^
^{her}
 and ~~she~~ to the airport.
 ^

John and me is the subject and *senator and her* is the object of the infinitive *to drive*.

Pronoun or noun before a gerund. If a pronoun modifies a gerund, use the possessive case: *my, our, your, his/her/its, their*. A gerund is a verb form ending in *-ing* that functions as a noun.

- ▶ The chances against ~~you~~ being hit by lightning
^{your}
 ^
 are about two million to one.

Nouns as well as pronouns may modify gerunds. To form the possessive case of a noun, use an apostrophe and an *-s* (*a victim's suffering*) or just an apostrophe (*victims' suffering*). (See 19a.)

- ▶ The old order in France paid a high price for the ~~aristocracy~~
^{aristocracy's}
 ^
 exploiting the lower classes.

12d *who or whom*

Who, a subjective-case pronoun, can be used only for subjects and subject complements. *Whom*, an objective-case pronoun, can be used only for objects. The words *who* and *whom* appear primarily in subordinate clauses or in questions.

In subordinate clauses. When deciding whether to use *who* or *whom* in a subordinate clause, check for the word's function within the clause.

- ▶ He tells that story to ^{whoever}~~whomever~~ will listen.
 ^

Whoever is the subject of *will listen*. The entire subordinate clause *whoever will listen* is the object of the preposition *to*.

- ▶ You will work with our senior engineers, ^{whom}~~who~~ you
 ^
 will meet later.

Whom is the direct object of the verb *will meet*. This becomes clear if you restructure the clause: *you will meet whom later*.

In questions. When deciding whether to use *who* or *whom* in a question, check for the word's function within the question.

- ^{Who}
 ▶ ~~Whom~~ was accused of receiving money from
 ^
 the Mafia?

Who is the subject of the verb *was accused*.

- ^{Whom}
 ▶ ~~Who~~ did the Democratic Party nominate in 1976?
 ^

Whom is the direct object of the verb *did nominate*. This becomes clear if you restructure the question: *The Democratic Party did nominate whom in 1976?*

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13b Adjectives

Adjectives ordinarily precede nouns, but they can also function as subject complements following linking verbs (usually a form of *be*: *be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been*). When an adjective functions as a subject complement, it describes the subject.

Justice is *blind*.

Problems can arise with verbs such as *smell, taste, look, appear, grow, and feel*, which may or may not be linking. If the word following one of these verbs describes the subject, use an adjective; if the word modifies the verb, use an adverb.

ADJECTIVE The detective looked *cautious*.

ADVERB The detective looked *cautiously* for the fingerprints.

Linking verbs usually suggest states of being, not actions. For example, to look cautious suggests the state of being cautious, whereas to look cautiously is to perform an action in a cautious way.

- ▶ Lori looked ^{good} ~~well~~ in her new raincoat.
- ▶ All of us on the debate team felt ^{bad} ~~badly~~ about our performance.

The verbs *looked* and *felt* suggest states of being, not actions, so they should be followed by adjectives.

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 - ▶ *bad* versus *badly*

13c Comparatives and superlatives

Most adjectives and adverbs have three forms: the positive, the comparative, and the superlative.

POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
soft	softer	softest
fast	faster	fastest
careful	more careful	most careful
bad	worse	worst
good	better	best

Comparative vs. superlative. Use the comparative to compare two things, the superlative to compare three or more.

- ▶ Which of these two brands of toothpaste is ~~best?~~ ^{better?} [^]
- ▶ Hermos is the ~~more~~ ^{most} qualified of the three applicants. [^]

Form of comparatives and superlatives. To form comparatives and superlatives of most one- and two-syllable adjectives, use the endings *-er* and *-est*: *smooth*, *smoother*, *smoothest*. With longer adjectives, use *more* and *most* (or *less* and *least*): *exciting*, *more exciting*, *most exciting*.

Some one-syllable adverbs take the endings *-er* and *-est* (*fast*, *faster*, *fastest*), but longer adverbs and all of those ending in *-ly* use *more* and *most* (or *less* and *least*).

Double comparatives or superlatives. Do not use a double comparative (an *-er* ending and the word *more*) or a double superlative (an *-est* ending and the word *most*).

- ▶ All the polls indicated that Dewey was more ~~likelier~~ ^{likely} to win than Truman. [^]

Absolute concepts. Do not use comparatives or superlatives with absolute concepts such as *unique* or *perfect*. Either something is unique or it isn't. It is illogical to suggest that absolute concepts come in degrees.

- ▶ That is the most ~~unique~~ ^{unusual} wedding gown I have ever seen. [^]

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14 Repair sentence fragments.

As a rule, do not treat a piece of a sentence as if it were a sentence. To be a sentence, a word group must consist of at least one full independent clause. An independent clause has a subject and a verb, and it either stands alone as a sentence or could stand alone. Some fragments are clauses that contain a subject and a verb but begin with a subordinating word. Others are phrases that lack a subject, a verb, or both.

You can repair a fragment in one of two ways: Either pull the fragment into a nearby sentence, punctuating the new sentence correctly, or turn the fragment into a sentence.

14a Fragmented clauses

A subordinate clause is patterned like a sentence, with both a subject and a verb, but it begins with a word that tells readers it cannot stand alone—a word such as *after*, *although*, *because*, *before*, *if*, *so that*, *that*, *though*, *unless*, *until*, *when*, *where*, *who*, or *which*.

Most fragmented clauses beg to be pulled into a sentence nearby.

- ▶ Patricia arrived on the island of Malta, ^{where} ~~where~~ she was to spend the summer restoring frescoes.

If a fragmented clause cannot be gracefully combined with a nearby sentence, try rewriting it. The simplest way to turn a fragmented clause into a sentence is to delete the opening word or words that mark it as subordinate.

- ▶ Uncontrolled development is taking a deadly toll on the environment. ^{In} ~~So that in~~ many parts of the world, fragile ecosystems are collapsing.

14b Fragmented phrases

Like subordinate clauses, certain phrases are sometimes mistaken for sentences. Frequently a fragmented phrase may simply be attached to a nearby sentence.

- ▶ The archaeologists worked slowly, ^{examining} ~~Examining~~ and labeling every pottery shard they uncovered.

The word group beginning with *Examining* is a verbal phrase, not a sentence.

- ▶ Many adults suffer silently from agoraphobia, ^a ~~A~~ fear of the outside world.

A fear of the outside world is an appositive phrase, not a sentence.

- ▶ It has been said that there are only three indigenous American art forms: ^{jazz,} ~~Jazz,~~ musical comedy, and soap operas.

Clearly the list is not a sentence. Notice how easily a colon corrects the problem. (See p. 75.)

If the fragmented phrase cannot be attached to a nearby sentence, turn the phrase into a sentence. You may need to add a subject, a verb, or both.

- ▶ If Eric doesn't get his way, he goes into a fit of rage.

For example, ^{he lies} ~~lying~~ on the floor screaming or
^{opens} ~~opening~~ the cabinet doors and then ^{slams} ~~slamming~~
[^] [^] [^]
 them shut.

The writer corrected this fragment by adding a subject—*he*—and substituting verbs for the verbals *lying*, *opening*, and *slamming*.

14c Acceptable fragments

Skilled writers occasionally use sentence fragments for emphasis. In the following passage, Richard Rodriguez uses a fragment (italicized) to draw attention to his mother.

Following the dramatic Americanization of their children, even my parents grew more publicly confident. *Especially my mother.* She learned the names of all the people on our block.

—*Hunger of Memory*

Although fragments are sometimes appropriate, writers and readers do not always agree on when they are appropriate. Therefore, you will find it safer to write in complete sentences.

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15

Revise run-on sentences.

Run-on sentences are independent clauses that have not been joined correctly. An independent clause is a word group that does or could stand alone as a sentence. When two or more independent clauses appear in one sentence, they must be joined in one of these ways:

- with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*)
- with a semicolon (or occasionally a colon or a dash)

There are two types of run-on sentences. When a writer puts no mark of punctuation and no coordinating conjunction between independent clauses, the result is a fused sentence.

FUSED Gestures are a means of communication for everyone they are essential for the hearing-impaired.

A far more common type of run-on sentence is the comma splice—two or more independent clauses joined by a comma without a coordinating conjunction. In some comma splices, the comma appears alone.

COMMA SPLICE Gestures are a means of communication for everyone, they are essential for the hearing-impaired.

In other comma splices, the comma is accompanied by a joining word that is *not* a coordinating conjunction. There are only seven coordinating conjunctions in English: *and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*.

COMMA SPLICE Gestures are a means of communication for everyone, however, they are essential for the hearing-impaired.

The word *however* is a conjunctive adverb, not a coordinating conjunction. When a conjunctive adverb joins independent clauses, the clauses must be separated with a semicolon.

To correct a run-on sentence, you have four choices:

1. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.
2. Use a semicolon (or, if appropriate, a colon or a dash).
3. Make the clauses into separate sentences.
4. Restructure the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.

One of these revision techniques will usually work better than the others for a particular sentence. The fourth technique, the one requiring the most extensive revision, is frequently the most effective.

- ▶ Gestures are a means of communication for everyone, ^{but} they are essential for the hearing-impaired.
- ▶ Gestures are a means of communication for everyone; they are essential for the hearing-impaired.
- ▶ Gestures are a means of communication for everyone. ^T They are essential for the hearing-impaired.
- ▶ ~~Gestures~~ ^{Although gestures} are a means of communication for everyone, they are essential for the hearing-impaired.

15a Revision with a comma and a coordinating conjunction

When a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*) joins independent clauses, it is usually preceded by a comma.

- ▶ Most of his contemporaries had made plans for their retirement, ^{but} Tom had not.

15b Revision with a semicolon (or a colon or a dash)

When the independent clauses are closely related and their relation is clear without a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon is an acceptable method of revision.

- ▶ Tragedy depicts the individual confronted with the fact of death; [;] comedy depicts the adaptability and ongoing survival of human society.

A semicolon is required between independent clauses that have been linked with a conjunctive adverb such as *however* or *therefore* or a transitional phrase such as *in fact* or *of course*. (See p. 73 for a more complete list.)

- ▶ The timber wolf looks like a large German shepherd^{/;} however, the wolf has longer legs, larger feet, and a wider head.

If the first independent clause introduces a quoted sentence, use a colon.

- ▶ Carolyn Heilbrun says this about the future^{:/} “Today’s shocks are tomorrow’s conventions.”

Either a colon or a dash may be appropriate when the second clause summarizes or explains the first. (See also 18b and 21d.)

- ▶ Nuclear waste is hazardous^{: This} this is an indisputable fact.
- ▶ The female black widow spider is often a widow⁻⁻ of her own making[/] she has been known to eat her partner after mating.

15c Revision by separating sentences

If both independent clauses are long—or if one is a question and the other is not—consider making them separate sentences.

- ▶ Why should we spend money on expensive space exploration^{? We} we have enough underfunded programs here on earth.

NOTE: When two quoted independent clauses are divided by explanatory words, make each clause its own sentence.

- ▶ “It’s always smart to learn from your mistakes,” quipped my boss. ^{“It’s} ~~it’s~~ even smarter to learn from the mistakes of others.”

15d Revision by restructuring the sentence

For sentence variety, consider restructuring the sentence, perhaps by turning one of the independent clauses into a subordinate clause or phrase.

- Although many*
- ▶ ~~Many~~ scholars dismiss the abominable snowman of the Himalayas as a myth, others claim it may be a kind of ape.
- ▶ Of the many geysers in Yellowstone National Park, the most famous is Old Faithful, ^{which} ~~it~~ sometimes reaches 150 feet in height.
- ▶ Mary McLeod Bethune, ~~was~~ ^{she} the seventeenth child of former slaves, ~~she~~ founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935.

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16 If English is not your native language, check for common ESL problems.

This section of *A Pocket Style Manual* has a special audience: speakers of English as a second language (ESL) who have learned English but continue to have difficulty with a few troublesome features of the language.

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 - ▶ Articles
 - ▶ Helping verbs and main verbs
 - ▶ Omissions and repetitions

16a Articles

The definite article *the* and the indefinite articles *a* and *an* signal that a noun is about to appear. The noun may follow the article immediately or modifiers may intervene.

the cat, the black cat
a sunset, a spectacular sunset
an apple, an appetizing apple

When to use a (or an). Use *a* (or *an*) with singular count nouns whose specific identity is not known to the reader. Count nouns refer to persons, places, or things that can be counted: *one girl, two girls; one city, three cities.*

- ▶ Mary Beth arrived in ^{*a*} limousine.
- ▶ The biology student looked for ^{*an*} insect like the one
in his textbook.

A (or *an*) usually means “one among many” but can also mean “any one.”

NOTE: *A* is used before a consonant sound: *a banana, a happy child.* *An* is used before a vowel sound: *an egg-plant, an honorable person.* See the Glossary of Usage.

When not to use a (or an). A (or *an*) is not used to mark noncount nouns. Noncount nouns refer to entities or abstractions that cannot be counted: *water, silver, sugar, furniture, patience*. (See below for a fuller list.)

- Claudia asked her mother for ~~a~~ advice.

If you want to express an amount of something designated by a noncount noun, you can often add a quantifier in front of it: *a quart of milk, an ounce of gold, a piece of furniture*.

NOTE: A few noncount nouns may also be used as count nouns: *Bill loves coffee; Bill offered me a coffee*.

COMMONLY USED NONCOUNT NOUNS

Food and drink: bacon, beef, bread, broccoli, butter, cabbage, candy, cauliflower, celery, cereal, cheese, chicken, chocolate, coffee, corn, cream, fish, flour, fruit, ice cream, lettuce, meat, milk, oil, pasta, rice, salt, spinach, sugar, tea, water, wine, yogurt

Nonfood substances: air, cement, coal, dirt, gasoline, gold, paper, petroleum, plastic, rain, silver, snow, soap, steel, wood, wool

Abstract nouns: advice, anger, beauty, confidence, courage, employment, fun, happiness, health, honesty, information, intelligence, knowledge, love, poverty, satisfaction, truth, wealth

Other: biology (and other areas of study), clothing, equipment, furniture, homework, jewelry, luggage, lumber, machinery, mail, money, news, poetry, pollution, research, scenery, traffic, transportation, violence, weather, work

When to use the. Use the definite article *the* with most nouns whose specific identity is known to the reader. Usually the identity will be clear for one of these reasons:

1. The noun has been previously mentioned.
2. A word group following the noun restricts its identity.
3. The context or situation makes the noun's identity clear.

- ▶ A truck loaded with manure cut in front of our ^{the} van. When [^] truck skidded a few seconds later, we almost plowed into it.

The noun *truck* is preceded by *A* when it is first mentioned. When the noun is mentioned again, it is preceded by *the* since readers now know the specific truck being discussed.

- ▶ Bob warned me that ^{the} printer in the shipping [^] department was broken.

The phrase *in the shipping department* identifies the specific printer.

- ▶ Please don't slam ^{the} door when you leave. [^]

Both the speaker and the listener know which door is meant.

When not to use *the*. Do not use *the* with plural or non-count nouns meaning “all” or “in general.”

- ▶ ^F ~~The~~ fountains are an expensive element of landscape design.
- ▶ In some parts of the world, ~~the~~ rice is preferred to all other grains.

Although there are many exceptions, do not use *the* with most singular proper nouns: names of persons (Jessica Webner); names of streets, squares, parks, cities, and states (Prospect Street, Union Square, Denali National Park, Miami, Idaho); names of continents and most countries (South America, Italy); and names of bays and single lakes, mountains, and islands (Tampa Bay, Lake Geneva, Mount Everest, Crete).

Exceptions to this rule include names of large regions, deserts, and peninsulas (the East Coast, the Sahara, the Iberian Peninsula) and names of oceans, seas, gulfs, canals, and rivers (the Pacific, the Dead Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Panama Canal, the Amazon).

NOTE: *The* is used to mark plural proper nouns: the United Nations, the Finger Lakes, the Andes, the Bahamas.

16b Helping verbs and main verbs

Only certain combinations of helping verbs and main verbs make sense in English. The correct combinations are discussed in this section, after the following review of helping verbs and main verbs.

Review. Helping verbs always appear before main verbs.

HV MV HV MV
We *will leave* at noon. *Do you want* a ride?

Some helping verbs—*have*, *do*, and *be*—change form to indicate tenses; others, known as modals, do not.

FORMS OF HAVE, DO, AND BE

have, has, had

do, does, did

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

MODALS

can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would
(*also ought to*)

Every main verb has five forms (except *be*, which has eight). The following list shows these forms for the regular verb *help* and the irregular verb *give*. (See pp. 30–32 for a list of common irregular verbs.)

BASE FORM	help, give
-S FORM	helps, gives
PAST TENSE	helped, gave
PAST PARTICIPLE	helped, given
PRESENT PARTICIPLE	helping, giving

Modal + base form. After the modals *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, and *would*, use the base form of the verb.

- ▶ Geologists predicted that a minor earthquake would occur along the Santa Ana fault line.

- ▶ We could ^{spe}ak ~~s~~poke Spanish when we were young.
^

Do, does, or did + base form. After helping verbs that are a form of *do*, use the base form of the verb.

- ▶ Mariko does not want~~s~~ any more dessert.

- ▶ Did Janice ^{bu}y ~~h~~ought the gift for Katherine?
^

Have, has, or had + past participle. To form one of the perfect tenses, use *have*, *has*, or *had* followed by a past participle (usually ending in *-ed*, *-d*, *-en*, *-n*, or *-t*). (See perfect tenses, pp. 33–34.)

- ▶ Many churches have ^{offe}red ~~o~~ffer shelter to the homeless.
^

- ▶ An-Mei has not ^{sp}oken ~~s~~peaking Chinese since she was a child.
^

Form of be + present participle. To express an action in progress, use *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *be*, or *been* followed by a present participle (the *-ing* form of the verb).

- ▶ Because it is a clear night, I am ^{turn}ing ~~t~~urn my telescope to the constellation Cassiopeia.
^

- ▶ Uncle Roy was ^{dr}iving ~~d~~iven a brand-new red Corvette.
^

The helping verbs *be* and *been* must be preceded by other helping verbs. See the progressive forms listed on page 34.

CAUTION: Certain verbs are not normally used in the progressive sense in English. In general, these verbs express a state of being or mental activity, not a dynamic action. Common examples are *appear*, *believe*, *have*, *hear*, *know*, *like*, *need*, *see*, *seem*, *taste*, *think*, *understand*, and *want*.

- ^{want}
▶ I ~~am wanting~~ to see August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*
^
at Arena Stage.

Form of be + past participle. To form the passive voice, use *am, are, was, were, being, be,* or *been* followed by a past participle (usually ending in *-ed, -d, -en, -n,* or *-t*). When a sentence is written in the passive voice, the subject of the sentence receives the action instead of doing it. (See pp. 3–5.)

- ▶ *Bleak House* was ~~write~~^{written} by Charles Dickens.
^
- ▶ The scientists were ~~honor~~^{honored} for their work with
^
endangered species.

In the passive voice, the helping verb *be* must be preceded by a modal: *Senator Dixon will be defeated.* *Being* must be preceded by *am, is, are, was,* or *were*: *The child was being teased.* *Been* must be preceded by *have, has,* or *had*: *I have been invited to a party.*

CAUTION: Although they may seem to have passive meanings, verbs such as *occur, happen, sleep, die,* and *fall* may not be used to form the passive voice because they are intransitive. Only transitive verbs, those that take direct objects, may be used to form the passive voice.

- ▶ The earthquake ~~was~~ occurred last Friday.

16c Omitted subjects, expletives, or verbs

Some languages allow omission of subjects, expletives, or verbs in certain contexts. English does not.

English requires a subject for all sentences except imperatives, in which the subject *you* is understood (*Give to the poor*). If your native language allows the omission of an explicit subject, be especially alert to this requirement in English.

- ▶ ~~Have~~^{I have} a large collection of baseball cards.
^

- ▶ My brother is very bright; ^{he} could read a book
 before he started school.

When the subject has been moved from its normal position before the verb, English sometimes requires an expletive (*there* or *it*) at the beginning of the sentence or clause.

- ▶ As you know, ^{there} are many religious sects in India.
- ▶ ^{It is} ~~is~~ healthy to eat fruit and grains.

The subjects of these sentences are *sects* and *to eat fruit and grains*.

Although some languages allow the omission of the verb when the meaning is clear without it, English does not.

- ▶ Powell Street in San Francisco ^{is} very steep.

16d Repeated subjects or objects

English does not allow a subject to be repeated in its own clause. This is true even if a word group intervenes between the subject and the verb.

- ▶ The painting that had been stolen ~~it~~ was found.

The pronoun *it* repeats the subject *painting*.

In some languages an object is repeated later in the adjective clause in which it appears; in English, such repetitions are not allowed. Adjective clauses usually begin with *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, or *that*, and these relative pronouns always serve a grammatical function within the clauses they introduce. Another word in the clause cannot also serve that same function.

- ▶ The puppy ran after the taxi that we were riding
 in. ~~it.~~

The relative pronoun *that* is the object of the preposition *in*, so the object *it* is not allowed.

Even when the relative pronoun has been omitted, do not add another word with its same function.

- ▶ The puppy ran after the taxi we were riding in. ~~it.~~
^

The relative pronoun *that* is understood.