Grammar Handbook

Part 1: Grammar

Words, Word Groups, and Sentences

Words: Parts of Speech

Part of Speech	Function	Examples
Noun	names a person, place, thing, or idea	Taylor, mayor, ship, Missouri River, log, happiness
Pronoun	takes the place of a noun or other pronoun	I, you, she, us, they, himself, this, who, whom, that, which, each, none
Verb	expresses an action or state of being	go, be, startle, break, feel, do
Adjective	modifies a noun or pronoun	green, large, English, two
Adverb	modifies a verb, adjective, or other adverb	suddenly, awhile, yesterday, really
Preposition	relates one word to another word	in, on, to, above, before, with, between
Conjunction	joins words or word groups	and, or, but, so, either … or, because
Interjection	expresses emotion	ow, whew, uh-oh, hooray

Word Groups: Phrases

A **phrase** is a word group that functions as a specific part of speech and does NOT contain both a subject and its verb.

Kind of Phrase	Description	Examples
noun phrase	functions as a noun (names a person, place, thing, or idea)	**The cold, dark woods** looked like **a forbidding place to be**.
verb phrase	functions as a verb (expresses an action or state of being)	We **were looking** for his house, where the old parrot cage **was stored**.
adjective phrase	functions as an adjective (modifies a noun or pronoun)	The book **on the left** is the one **to read** if you are working on the report **assigned in class**.
adverb phrase	functions as an adverb (modifies a verb, adjective, or other adverb)	He turned **to the left** when he was ready **to leave**.
participial phrase	begins with a past or present participle and functions as an adjective (modifies a noun or pronoun)	The book **sitting on the shelf** is the one **given by Uncle Dan**; you can use it for the report **assigned in class**.
infinitive phrase	begins with an infinitive verb form (to + base form) and functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb	He wants **to leave the theater** whenever you are ready **to go home**.
gerund phrase	begins with an *–ing* verb form and functions as a noun	**Leaving the theater early** and **going home** are our next steps.
prepositional phrase	introduced by a preposition and usually acts as an adjective or adverb	The book **on the left** is the one to read if you are working **on the report** assigned **in class**.

appositive phrase	renames or identifies another noun or pronoun	My best friends, **Meredith and Emily,** say that they are going to New Orleans, **my favorite city**.
absolute phrase	consists of a noun and its modifiers and functions as a modifier of a verb or whole clause.	**The sunset waning,** we decided to head back to camp. There, we found our friend Jackson, **his backpack leaning against the picnic table**.

Word Groups: Clauses

A **clause** is a word group that contains both a subject and its verb. An **independent clause** can stand alone as a sentence and expresses a complete thought. A **dependent clause**, or **subordinate clause**, does not express a complete thought and cannot stand alone as a sentence.

Independent clause: **The pear tree grows.**
Dependent clause: The pear tree **that Aunt Kim gave us** grows well.

Dependent clauses can function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

Noun clause: Do you know **who planted the tree**?
Adjective clause: Do you see the birds **that are nesting**?
Adverb clause: We'll start the mosaic **after Eric arrives**.

A **noun clause** functions as a noun does—for example, as the subject of a sentence or as a direct or indirect object.

Whoever wants a copy should send me a message.

An **adjective clause,** or **relative clause,** modifies a noun or pronoun. Adjective clauses can be **restrictive** (essential to a sentence's meaning) or **nonrestrictive** (nonessential to the sentence's meaning). Nonrestrictive clauses are set off by commas.

Restrictive: The boys **who want a copy** have added their names to the list.
Nonrestrictive: The four broken containers, **which are stacked in the corner**, need to be returned.

Sentences

A **sentence** is a word group that has both a subject and a verb and that expresses a complete thought. Sentences are made of words, phrases, and clauses. A **phrase** is a word group that functions as a specific part of speech and does NOT contain both a subject and its verb. A **clause** is a word group that contains both a subject and its verb and that may act as a part of speech.

A **simple sentence** is made of one independent clause and no dependent clauses. It may contain any number of phrases.

The pear tree grows.
The pear tree given to us by Aunt Kim grows very well in that corner of the yard.

A **compound sentence** is made of two or more independent clauses and no dependent clauses. It may contain any number of phrases.

The sun shines, and the pear tree grows.
The pear tree given to us by Aunt Kim grows very well in that corner of the yard, and we may plant another one near it in the fall.

A **complex sentence** is made of one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. It may contain any number of phrases.

The pear tree that we planted last season grows well.
The pear tree that we planted last season and that Aunt Kim gave us grows well.

A **compound-complex sentence** is made of two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. It may contain any number of phrases.

The pear tree that we planted last season grows well, and so does the apple tree.
The pear tree that we planted last season and that Aunt Kim gave us grows well, and so does the apple tree.

Part 2: Usage

Subject-Verb Agreement

Compound Subjects

When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by *and*, use a plural verb.

Sara and **her sisters are** at the movie theater.

When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb.

Clive or **Penny is** in the yard.

When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb should agree with the noun or pronoun that is nearer the verb.

George or **his teammates practice** daily.

Other Problems in Agreement

Doesn't is a contraction of *does not* and should be used with a singular subject. *Don't* is a contraction of *do not* and should be used with a plural subject. Exception: With the pronouns *I* and *you*, the contraction *don't* should be used.

He doesn't **like** it.
They don't **like** it.

Do not be misled by a phrase that comes between the subject and the verb. The verb agrees with the subject, not with a noun or pronoun in the interrupting phrase.

One of the stores **is** closed.
The people who love that band **are** many.
The captain of the team, as well as his rivals, **is** ready.
The movie, including all the trailers that come before, **is** very long.
A teenager with a skateboard and basketball **walks** past this bus stop each day.

The terms *each*, *each one*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *someone*, and *no one* are singular and require a singular verb.

Each of these platters **is** full.
Everybody knows the answer.
Either is fine with me.

Some nouns that are plural in form, such as *civics*, *mathematics*, *measles*, and *news,* require singular verbs.

> **Measles is** a serious illness.

Some nouns, such as *scissors*, *tweezers*, *pants*, and *shears*, identify singular objects but name things that have two parts. These nouns take plural verbs.

> These **scissors are** sharp.
> Those **pants are** made of heavy fabric.

In sentences beginning with *there is* or *there are*, the subject follows the verb, but the verb must still agree with the subject.

> There **are** many **owls** in the woods.
> There **is** a **question**.

Collective nouns are words that can take a singular or plural verb, depending on if they refer to the group as a whole or to the group as a collection of different members or elements. Examples include *group*, *team*, *committee*, *class*, and *family*.

> The **family has** a long history.
> My **family have** never been able to agree.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

When a pronoun takes the place of a singular noun, use a singular pronoun.

> **Incorrect:** If a student parks a car on campus, they have to buy a parking sticker.
> **Correct:** If a **student** parks a car on campus, **he or she** has to buy a parking sticker.

If using *he or she* sounds wordy, you can revise a sentence to use a plural form instead:

> **Students** who park on campus have to buy parking stickers for **their** cars.

The pronouns *each*, *each one*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *someone*, and *no one* require a singular verb.

> **Everybody** ought to do **his or her** job.
> **Neither** of the girls brought **her** backpack.

Other Problems in Agreement

Agreement in Person

Pronouns should agree in person with their antecedents. Do not switch between first, second, and third person without reason.

> **Incorrect:** When a person comes to class, you should have your homework ready.
> **Correct:** A **person** arriving in class should have **his or her** homework ready.

Clear Reference

Pronouns should refer specifically and clearly to their antecedents. In some cases, you may need to reword or reorganize a sentence to make it clearer.

> **Ambiguous:** Although the car hit the building, it was not damaged. [Is *it* the car or the building?]
> **Revised:** Although it hit the building, the car was not damaged.
> **Ambiguous:** Stella told Kathryn that she ought to help build the set. [Does *she* refer to Stella or Kathryn?]
> **Revised:** According to Stella, Kathryn ought to help build the set.

Unclear: In the newspaper they say that the drought will last all summer. [Who are "they"?]
Revised: An article in the newspaper says that the drought will last all summer.
Unclear: Armand had a job as a ranger in a state forest last summer. This may be his life's work. [What word does this refer to?]
Revised: Armand had a job as a ranger in a state forest last summer. Protecting nature may be his life's work.

Pronoun Case

Pronouns have three cases.

- **Subjective (nominative) case:** pronouns used as subjects or predicate nominatives
- **Objective case:** pronouns used as objects of verbs or prepositions
- **Possessive case:** pronouns that express ownership

Subjective Case	Objective Case	Possessive Case
I	me	my (mine)
you	you	your (yours)
he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her (hers), it (its)
we	us	our (ours)
they	them	their (theirs)
who	whom	whose

Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
First person	myself	ourselves
Second person	yourself	yourselves
Third person	himself, herself, itself	themselves

A **reflexive pronoun** refers back to the subject of a clause or sentence. It functions as a complement or as the object of a preposition.

I told myself to be brave. [The reflexive pronoun is the indirect object of *told*.]

An **intensive pronoun** emphasizes the word it refers to.

I myself led the team to safety. [The reflexive pronoun emphasizes the subject.]

Compound Structures

In compound structures that include two pronouns or a noun and a pronoun, pay attention to pronoun case. Hint: If you're not sure which form to use, try each pronoun on its own in the sentence.

Incorrect: Dylan and me play soccer. [Would you say, "me play"?]
Correct: Dylan and I play soccer.

Incorrect: He gave the message to the faculty and I. [Would you say, "he gave the message to I"?]
Correct: He gave the message to the faculty and me.

Incorrect: Us musicians like the conductor. [Would you say, "us like the conductor"?]
Correct: We musicians like the conductor.

Comparisons

In comparisons, pay attention to pronoun case. Hint: You can finish the comparison, as shown below, to determine which case to use.

Connor is more talented **than I** (am).
This helps Eliot **as much as** (it helps) **me**.

Who and *Whom*

In formal writing, use *whom* and its related forms as an object of a verb or of a preposition.

Informal: Who am I talking to?
Formal: To **whom** am I talking?
Informal: I will be sitting next to whoever Senator Gorm invites.
Formal: I will be sitting next to **whomever** Senator Gorm invites.

Appositives

An **appositive** is a noun or pronoun that identifies or explains another noun or pronoun.

Your friend **Bill** is in Dr. Levine's AP class.
My sister's cat, **Chimmy**, doesn't like your dog.

An **appositive phrase** usually follows the word it explains or identifies, but it may also precede it.

A state known for its cold climate, Alaska is closer to the North Pole than to Texas.

Some appositives are **restrictive**, or essential to a sentence's meaning. Restrictive appositives are not set off by punctuation.

The civil rights leader **Martin Luther King, Jr.** is often quoted. [Without the appositive, we would not know who is often quoted.]

If the appositive is **nonrestrictive**, or not essential to a sentence's meaning, it is set off with commas.

Martin Luther King, Jr. **a famous civil rights leader**, is often quoted. [Without the appositive, we would still know who is often quoted.]

Verbals

Gerunds and Gerund Phrases

A **gerund** is a verbal that ends in *–ing* and functions as a noun. Since a gerund functions as a noun, it can be used as a subject, direct object, subject complement, or object of preposition.

Traveling might satisfy your desire for new experiences.
Are you excited about **arriving**?

Gerund phrases include a gerund and any modifiers or complements of the gerund. A gerund phrase functions as a noun.

Traveling to Asia might satisfy your desire for new experiences.
Are you excited about **arriving tomorrow**?

Participles and Participial Phrases

A **participle** is a verbal that is used as an adjective and most often ends in *–ing* or *–ed*. Participles modify nouns or pronouns. Present participles end in *–ing*. Past participles end in *–ed*, *–d*, *–en*, *–t*, or *–n*, as in the words *used, beaten, dealt*, and *seen*.

The **dangling** toy caught the kitten's attention.
The **broken** shutter banged in the wind.

A **participial phrase** includes the participle and any modifiers or complements of the participle. A participial phrase modifies a noun or pronoun.

The toy **dangling off the sofa** caught the kitten's attention.
The shutter **broken in the winter storm** banged in the wind.

A participial phrase should clearly modify a word in the sentence and should be placed near the word it modifies.

Incorrect: Carrying a stack of plates, his foot caught on a step. [His foot was not carrying plates. This participial phrase is a **dangling modifier**; it does not clearly modify any word in the sentence.]
Correct: Carrying a stack of plates, he caught his foot on a step.
Incorrect: Flying across the sky, Eugene saw a huge flock of gorgeous birds. [Eugene was not flying. This participial phrase is a **misplaced modifier**; it appears to modify *Eugene* rather than *flock*.]
Correct: Eugene saw a huge flock of gorgeous birds **flying across the sky.**

Punctuating Participial Phrases

When a participial phrase begins a sentence, a comma should be placed after the phrase.

Arriving at the park, Tara found that it had just closed.
Exercising regularly, Miguel found that his health and his attitude both improved.

When a participial phrase comes in the middle of a sentence, it should be set off with commas only if the information in the phrase is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Gricelda, **performing in the play**, found that she enjoyed being onstage. [not essential]
The teenager **performing in the play** was very talented. [essential]

When a participial phrase comes at the end of a sentence, a comma usually precedes the phrase if it modifies an earlier word in the sentence but not if the phrase directly follows the word it modifies.

The rangers watched the caribou **heading toward the stream**. [The phrase modifies *caribou*.]
The rangers watched the caribou, **admiring the animals' beauty and strength**. [The phrase modifies *rangers*, not *caribou*.]

Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases

An infinitive is a verbal consisting of the word *to* and the base form of a verb. It can function as a noun, adjective, or adverb. The infinitive may function as a subject, direct object, subject complement, adjective, or adverb in a sentence.

To stay seemed rude. [subject]
Jerome wanted **to go**. [direct object]
Her preference was **to delay**. [predicate nominative]
He lacked the willingness **to insist**. [adjective]
They finally were ready **to depart**. [adverb]

Don't confuse an infinitive—a verbal consisting of *to* plus a verb—with a prepositional phrase beginning with *to*.

Infinitives: to paint, to become, to exit, to sit, to throw
Prepositional phrases: to Jason, to the field, to all of us, to the hour

An **infinitive phrase** includes an infinitive and its modifiers or complements.

> **To stay past 10:00 p.m.** seemed rude. [subject]
> Jerome wanted **to go right away.** [direct object]
> Her preference was **to delay till her aunt arrived**. [predicate nominative]
> He lacked the willingness **to insist that they say good night**. [adjective]
> They finally were ready **to depart around midnight**. [adverb]

Punctuating Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases

If an infinitive or infinitive phrase is used as an adverb and begins a sentence, it should be set off with a comma; otherwise, no punctuation is needed.

> **To convince me to read the book**, Jacob read me his favorite passages. [adverb]
> **To plant a garden** is my next goal. [noun]

Split Infinitives

Split infinitives occur when words come between *to* and the verb in an infinitive. Although splitting infinitives is sometimes acceptable, it is often awkward, and some readers find split infinitives overly informal. You may wish to avoid splitting infinitives in formal writing.

> **Awkward:** He began **to**, all of a sudden, **talk** excitedly about his new job.
> **Revised:** He began, all of a sudden, **to talk** excitedly about his new job.

Prepositions

Preposition Use: Expressions of Time

On is used with days:

> I will see Tim on Wednesday.

At is used with *noon, night, midnight,* and with the time of day:

> The movie is **at** noon.

In is used with other parts of the day, with months, with years, with seasons:

> We will gather **in** the afternoon.
> **In** the spring, we can visit Kansas.

To express continuing action, English uses the following prepositions: *since*, *for*, *by*, *from … to*, *from … until*, *during*, *(with)in*.

> The visitors have been here **since** yesterday.
> I'm going to Atlanta **for** two weeks.
> Mike's cousins were in Austin **from** August **to** October.

Preposition Use: Expressions of Place

English uses the following prepositions:

- to talk about a specific point or place: *in*
  There is an egg **in** the nest.
- to express something contained: *inside*
  What is **inside** that blue box?
- to talk about the surface: *on*
  What is **on** the counter?
- to talk about a general vicinity: *at*
  We left him **at** Antietam.

Preposition Use: Objects of Verbs

English uses the following prepositions to introduce objects of the following verbs.

At: *glance, laugh, look, rejoice, smile, stare*

> I'm laughing **at** the puppets' antics.
> The toddler smiled **at** you.

Of: *approve, consist, smell*

> Aunt Irene approves **of** your career choice.
> That smells **of** mildew.

Of (or about): *dream, think*

> Zac dreams **of** starting anew.
> Zeb thinks **about** leaving for Seattle.

For: *call, hope, look, wait, watch, wish*

> Caroline hopes **for** success.
> The stranded sailor waits and watches **for** rescue.

Sentence Construction: Connecting Clauses

Coordinating conjunctions and **conjunctive adverbs** can be used to connect independent clauses.

Coordinating Conjunctions: The coordinating conjunctions used to join independent clauses are *and, but, or, for, nor, so,* and *yet.* When the second independent clause in a sentence begins with a coordinating conjunction, a comma is needed before the coordinating conjunction:

> Ben wanted to play soccer, **but** Miles wanted to run track.

Conjunctive Adverbs: Some common conjunctive adverbs are *also, consequently, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless,* and *therefore.* A conjunctive adverb can begin an independent clause or can be used to join independent clauses. When the second independent clause in a sentence has a conjunctive adverb, a semicolon is needed before it.

> Ben wanted to play soccer; **however**, Miles wanted to run track.

Subordinating conjunctions can connect dependent clauses to independent clauses. Common subordinating conjunctions include *after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, in order to, since, though, unless, until, when, whenever, whether,* and *while.*

> **Even if** she does prefer vanilla, I think she will enjoy the coconut cake.
> I will help you with the dishes **whenever** you are ready.
> The chicken likes to roost outside **unless** it is raining.

Common Sentence Construction Errors

Comma Splices: A comma splice is the use of a comma to join two independent clauses. You can usually fix the error in one of these ways:

- changing the comma to a period and turning the two clauses into separate sentences
- changing the comma to a semicolon
- making one clause dependent by inserting a subordinating conjunction
- adding a coordinating conjunction after the comma

Incorrect:
I love that movie, I have watched it 10 times.
Correct:
I love that movie. I have watched it 10 times.
I love that movie; I have watched it 10 times.
Because I love that movie, I have watched it 10 times.
I love that movie, and I have watched it 10 times.

Fused Sentences: A fused sentence is two or more independent clauses run together with no punctuation. This error is also known as a run-on sentence. The error can sometimes be corrected by adding a period, semicolon, or colon between the clauses.

Incorrect: I love that movie I have watched it 10 times.
Correct: I love that movie. I have watched it 10 times.
Correct: I love that movie; I have watched it 10 times.
Correct: I love that movie: I have watched it 10 times.

Sentence Fragments: A sentence fragment is a word group that does not express a complete thought and cannot stand alone as a sentence. You can usually fix a fragment by combining it with another sentence to make a complete thought or by removing a subordinating conjunction.

Incorrect: Because today I have band practice.
Correct: Because today I have band practice, I won't be riding the bus.
Correct: Today I have band practice.

Using Verbs Correctly

Verbs express different times through tenses. Do not change tenses unnecessarily. Use tenses consistently unless you are deliberately expressing differences in time or sequence.

Inconsistent: I **was talking** to Roseanne, and I **say**, "Will you be in Florida in June?"
Consistent: I **was talking** to Roseanne, and I **said**, "Will you be in Florida in June?"

Sequence of Tenses

Present Perfect: They have walked.
Present: They walk.
Past Perfect: They had walked.
Past: They walked.
Future Perfect: They will have walked.
Future: They will walk.

Problems in sequencing tenses usually occur with the perfect tenses, which are formed by adding an auxiliary or auxiliaries to the past participle.

Verb	Past Form	Perfect Tenses
ring	rang	has/have/had rung; will have rung
walk	walked	has/have/had walked; will have walked

The most common auxiliaries are *can*, *do*, *may*, *must*, *ought*, *shall*, *will*, *has*, *have*, *had*, and forms of *be*.

Present Perfect: The present perfect consists of a past participle preceded by has or have. It expresses action that began in the past and that continues into the present.

Past: Ms. Gage **taught** for 10 years. [She no longer teaches.]
Present Perfect: Ms. Gage **has taught** for 10 years. [She is still teaching.]

Past Perfect: The past perfect tense expresses action in the past that is completed before another past action.

Past: Mr. Geiser played in a band for years.
Past Perfect: Mr. Geiser had played in a band for years before he went solo.

Future Perfect: The future perfect tense expresses action that will have been completed at a specified time in the future.

Future: Mr. Catalano will teach for 17 years.
Future Perfect: Mr. Catalano will have taught for 17 years this November.

Mood and Modal Forms

Mood refers to the form the verb takes to indicate the speaker's attitude. Avoid unnecessary shifts in mood.

Indicative mood expresses a fact or opinion. It is used in declarative sentences.

The Rogers family **raises** chickens.

Imperative mood expresses a command or request.

Bring me the eggs, please.

Subjunctive mood expresses a suggestion, necessity, condition contrary to fact, or a wish.

I recommend that you **be seated** now.
It is necessary that you **be seated**.
If I **were** you, I would be seated.
I wish I **were** seated already.

Interrogative sentences express a question.

Did you **go** to the farm?
Are they **raising** chickens?

Conditional verbs express actions or states of being that depend on other conditions.

If the sun had already set, we **would have gone** home.

Irregular Verbs

In English, verbs have a base form (the present), a past form, and a past participle. Regular verbs add –ed to the base form to make both the past form and past participle. Irregular verbs do not follow this pattern.

Present	Past	Past Participle
be	was, were	been
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
build	built	built

(continued)

burst	burst	burst
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
cut	cut	cut
deal	dealt	dealt
do	did	done
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feed	fed	fed
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
fly	flew	flown
forbid	forbade	forbidden
forget	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgave	forgiven
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	gotten
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grow	grew	grown
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
hide	hid	hidden
hold	held	held
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept
know	knew	known
lay	laid	laid
lead	led	led
leave	left	left
let	let	let
lie	lay	lain
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
meet	met	met
pay	paid	paid

quit	quit	quit
read	read	read
ride	rode	ridden
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
seek	sought	sought
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
shake	shook	shaken
shine	shone	shone
sing	sang	sung
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
speak	spoke	spoken
spend	spent	spent
spring	sprang	sprung
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
swim	swam	swum
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
tell	told	told
think	thought	thought
throw	threw	thrown
understand	understood	understood
wake	woke (waked)	woken (waked)
wear	wore	worn
win	won	won
write	wrote	written

Commonly Confused Verbs

Lie vs. Lay		
Present	**Past**	**Past Participle**
lie, lying (to tell a falsehood)	I lied to no one.	I have lied to no one.
lie, lying (to recline)	I lay in bed because I was tired.	He has lain in bed all morning.
lay, laying (to put, place)	I laid the doll in the cradle.	We have laid the doll in the cradle.

Sit vs. Set		
Present	**Past**	**Past Participle**
sit (to be seated or come to a resting position)	I sat on the curb to wait.	You have sat on the curb all afternoon.
set (to put or place)	I set my dish in the sink.	She has set her dishes in the sink.

Rise vs. Raise		
Present	**Past**	**Past Participle**
rise (steady or customary upward movement)	The helicopter rose into the air.	The helicopter has risen into the air.
raise (to cause to rise)	They raised their hands to give the answer.	I have raised my hands in class many times.

Part 3: Style

Parallel Structure

Parallel structure is the use of similar grammatical structures to show that two or more ideas are similar in importance or meaning or to provide emphasis. Words, phrases, and clauses can be parallel.

Words and Phrases

Not Parallel: Carla likes hik**ing**, swimm**ing**, and **to ride** a bicycle.
Parallel: Carla likes hik**ing**, swimm**ing**, and rid**ing** a bicycle.

Not Parallel: The manager wrote his report quick**ly**, accurate**ly**, and **in a detailed manner**.
Parallel: The manager wrote his report quick**ly**, accurate**ly**, and thorough**ly**.

Not Parallel: He wait**ed** until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and **his motivation was** low.
Parallel: He wait**ed** until the last minute to study for the exam, complet**ed** his lab problems in a careless manner, and lack**ed** motivation.

Clauses

Not Parallel: The teacher told the students **that they should get** a lot of sleep, **that they should not worry** too much, and **to go over their notes**.
Parallel: The teacher told the students **that they should get** a lot of sleep, **that they should not worry** too much, and **that they should go over their notes**.

Not Parallel: I asked **when the order would be ready, where the package should be delivered**, and **the name of the recipient**.
Parallel: I asked **when the order would be ready, where the package should be delivered**, and **who would receive the package**.

Lists

Be sure to keep the elements in a list parallel.

Not Parallel: The tutorial covers how to **identify clauses**, **correct common errors**, and **proofreading for errors**.

Parallel: The tutorial covers how to **identify clauses**, **correct common errors**, and **proofread for errors**.

Bulleted items should be parallel.

Not Parallel:
The master gardener talked about these topics:
- compost
- wildflowers
- eradicating pests
- irrigation

Parallel:
The master gardener talked about these topics:
- compost
- wildflowers
- pests
- irrigation

Using Active Voice

In a sentence using **active voice,** the subject of the sentence performs the action expressed by the verb.

The girl **threw** the ball.
I **ate** three apples yesterday.

In a sentence using **passive voice,** the subject of the sentence receives the action expressed by the verb.

The ball **was thrown**.
Three apples **were eaten** yesterday.

	Active	Passive
Simple Present	Acme **ships** the widgets to many clients.	Widgets **are shipped** to many clients.
Present Progressive	The chef **is cooking** the beets.	The beets **are being cooked**.
Simple Past	I **mailed** a letter last Friday.	A letter **was mailed** last Friday.
Past Progressive	The principal **was making** announcements at the assembly.	Announcements **were being made** at the assembly.
Future	The president **will make** decisions.	Decisions **will be made** by the president.
Present Perfect	Kelli **has made** the appointment.	The appointment **has been made**.
Past Perfect	They **had baked** muffins for us.	Muffins **had been baked** for us.
Future Perfect	By Tuesday, we **will have completed** this project.	By Tuesday, this project **will have been completed**.

The active voice is more vigorous and direct. There are times when passive voice is useful or appropriate—for instance, when you want to be diplomatic and avoid naming names, or when you want to emphasize the recipient of the action. However, generally, you should use active voice most of the time. Avoid unnecessary shifts in voice.

Part 4: Mechanics

Capitalization

Capitalize the first word of a sentence.

> Do you have my schedule?

Capitalize the pronoun _I_.

> When I sneeze, I try not to do so loudly.

Capitalize proper nouns (the names of specific people, places, organizations, and things).

> Dreiser Company   Brooklyn Bridge
> Supreme Court   Cleveland, Ohio
> Indian Ocean   Federal Trade Commission

Capitalize proper names of family members.

> I sent cookies to Grandma but not to Uncle Joe.
> What did Father say?

Lowercase words for family members when they are preceded by _a_, _an_, _the_, or a possessive pronoun.

> Carina is an aunt now.
> I sent cookies to our grandmothers but not our uncles.
> What did your father say?

Capitalize the names of specific deities, religious figures, and holy books.

> God   Abraham
> the Virgin Mary   Shiva
> the Bible   Buddha
> Mercury   Zeus
> the Torah   the Koran

Exception: Do not capitalize the nonspecific use of the word _god_.

> The Greek gods seem almost human at times.

Capitalize titles preceding names but not titles that follow names.

> What do you think of Mayor Nagin?
> I voted for Cecilia Guerra, the mayor of Nettontown.

Capitalize directions that are used as names of parts of the country.

> The Rogers family has lived in the South for several generations.

Note: Do not capitalize directions when they are not used as names.

> We are heading south next week.

Capitalize days of the week, months of the year, and holidays.

> Easter   Monday
> January   September
> Friday   Thanksgiving

Capitalize the names of seasons only when they are part of a proper noun.

Brentwood Fall Festival
2016 Summer Olympics

Capitalize the names of countries, nationalities, and specific languages.

Paraguay	Russia
Spanish	Russian

Capitalize the first word in a sentence that is a direct quotation.

George Saunders said, "Grief is the bill that comes due for love."

Capitalize the first, last, and all important words in titles of literary and artistic works. Do not capitalize short prepositions or the articles *a*, *an*, and *the* unless used as the first word of the title.

The Catcher in the Rye
"Nothing Gold Can Stay"
Starry Night

Capitalize the names of members of national, political, racial, social, civic, and athletic groups.

New Orleans Saints	Republicans
African Americans	Phi Beta Kappa
Golden State Warriors	Japanese

Capitalize historical periods and major events.

Edwardian Era	Boston Tea Party
Great Depression	Louisiana World Exposition

Note: Do not capitalize names of centuries.

sixteenth century
first century

Capitalize trademarked brand names.

Pepsi	IBM
Toyota	Nintendo

Punctuating Sentences
Here are basic sentence patterns and how they are punctuated.

Simple Sentence
This pattern is an example of a simple sentence.

Independent clause [.]
We went on an urban hike downtown.

Compound Sentence with a Comma and Coordinating Conjunction

This pattern is an example of a compound sentence with a coordinating conjunction.

Independent clause [,] **coordinating conjunction** *independent clause* [.]

These are the coordinating conjunctions: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet.* Note that *then* is not a coordinating conjunction and cannot be used with a comma to separate independent clauses.

We went on an urban hike downtown, and we took notes on the world around us.

Compound Sentence with a Semicolon

This pattern is an example of a compound sentence with a semicolon.

Independent clause [;] *independent clause* [.]

We went on an urban hike downtown; we took notes on the world around us.

Compound Sentence with a Conjunctive Adverb

This pattern is an example of a compound sentence with a conjunctive adverb.

Independent clause [;] *conjunctive adverb* [,] *independent clause* [.]

These are examples of conjunctive adverbs: *also, consequently, however, moreover, therefore, thus.*

We went on an urban hike downtown; also, we took notes on the world around us.

Complex Sentence Beginning with a Dependent Clause

This pattern is an example of a complex sentence. It begins with a subordinating conjunction and a subordinate (dependent) clause.

Subordinating conjunction dependent clause [,] *independent clause* [.]

These are examples of subordinating conjunctions: *after, although, as, as if, because, before, if, since, until, when, while.*

When we went on an urban hike downtown, we took notes on the world around us.

Complex Sentence Beginning with an Independent Clause

This pattern is an example of a complex sentence beginning with an independent clause.

Independent clause subordinating conjunction dependent clause [.]
We took notes on the world around us while we were on an urban hike downtown.

Independent Clause with an Embedded Nonessential Phrase or Clause

This pattern includes an independent clause with an embedded nonessential clause or phrase. A nonessential clause or phrase can be removed without changing the basic meaning of the sentence or making it ungrammatical. The nonessential clause or phrase provides extra information, but the sentence can stand alone without it.

First part of independent clause [,] *nonessential clause or phrase* [,] *rest of the independent clause* [.]
We took notes, some serious and some humorous, on the world around us.
We took notes, which we used later in reports, on the world around us.

Independent Clause with an Embedded Essential Phrase or Clause

This pattern includes an independent clause with an embedded essential clause or phrase. An essential clause or phrase cannot be removed without changing the basic meaning of the sentence.

> *First part of an independent clause* **essential clause or phrase** *rest of the independent clause* [.]
> The next hike that we will take will go along Main Street.
> The next hike through downtown will go along Main Street.

Commas

Commas are often used between grammatical elements and have many conventional uses. Here are essential rules for comma use.

Use a comma with a coordinating conjunction **to join two independent clauses** (*and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet*).

> Rain fell last weekend, but this weekend should be sunny.

Use a comma after an **introductory verbal phrase or an introductory adverb clause**.

> To see the meteors, you should go where there is less light pollution.
> Watching the meteors, we felt both excited and sleepy.
> Before we left, we packed extra snacks.

Use a comma after a long **introductory prepositional phrase** or after more than one prepositional phrase.

> By one o'clock in the morning, we were getting cold.

Use a comma after one short **introductory prepositional phrase** if needed for clarity or readability.

> In December, 17 meteors streaked above me as I watched. [Without the comma, it looks at first as if the sentence contains the date *December 17*.]

Use a comma to separate **items in a series**. For logic and consistency, it is helpful to include a final comma (called the serial comma, or Oxford comma) before the conjunction; however, it is usually not incorrect to omit it.

> The trail was long, dusty, and arduous.
> I like to read novels by George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and E. M. Forster.
> They invited my parents, Frank, and Peggy. [Note that without the serial comma, it would be unclear whether two or four people were invited.]

Use a comma to set off **nonessential phrases and clauses**.

> My hen, a Rhode Island Red, lays several eggs each week.
> Russell Hoban's novel *Riddley Walker*, which I am reading, is fascinating.

Use a comma between **coordinate adjectives** (adjectives that have equal weight and that can be reordered in the sentence).

> He turned in a concise, well-written essay.

If you cannot change the order of the adjectives without making the sentence sound awkward or unidiomatic, you may not need commas.

> His skateboard is the big green one. [You wouldn't say "green big one."]
> The routine involves an easy high kick. [You wouldn't say "high easy kick."]

Use a comma after a **transitional word or phrase**, such as *however, therefore, nonetheless, also, otherwise, finally, instead, thus, of course, above all, for example, in other words, as a result, on the other hand, in conclusion, in addition*.

> Nonetheless, we will proceed as planned.
> Otherwise, we will be stranded here without our phones.

Use a comma to set off **direct quotations and speech tags**.

> "Hey," Roy said, "I will be taking photos at the gallery reception."
> Emily replied, "I hope you get good pictures of Katherine and Alan."

Use commas to set off **items in a date**.

> She was born on October 27, 1962.
> That was due on Friday, April 12, 2013, but was turned in late.

Use commas to set off **thousands, millions, billions,** and so on.

> 27,000,000

Use commas to set off **personal titles and suffixes**. Note that in running text, a comma follows the title or suffix.

> Please welcome Michael Davidson, M.D., to the stage.
> The next speaker was Monica Sanchez, attorney at law, who once attended our school.

Use a comma to separate a **city name** from a state or country name. In running text, a comma follows the state or country name.

> I am from Salisbury, England, and she is from Edinburgh, Scotland.
> I ordered copies from a bookstore in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but they haven't arrived.

Semicolons

Use a semicolon to **join two independent clauses** when the second clause restates the first or when the two clauses are closely related.

> If you can arrive early, I will appreciate it; we'll have to set up the sound system.

Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb, such as *however, therefore, moreover, furthermore, thus, meanwhile, nonetheless,* or *otherwise,* or a transition, such as *in fact, for example, that is, for instance, in addition, in other words, on the other hand,* or *even so*.

> The technician has already left; however, I think I have her cell number.

Use a semicolon to join items in a series when the items themselves include commas.

> My favorite cities are London, England; Dublin, Ireland; and Chicago, Illinois.

Colons

Use a colon to join two independent clauses when you want to emphasize the second clause.

> I'll ask you again: Would you please return the shirt you borrowed?

Use a colon after an independent clause when it introduces a list, a quotation, an appositive, or other idea directly related to the independent clause.

We need supplies for the party: ice, beverages, cups, and snacks.
This is Nelson's favorite quotation by George Eliot: "What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?"
Tasha has an idea for the perfect classroom pet: a turtle.

Use a colon after the greeting of a business letter.

To Whom It May Concern:

Use a colon to separate hours and minutes.

12:00 p.m.

Use a colon to separate the chapter and verse in a biblical reference.

1 John 4:7

Parentheses

Parentheses are used to set off explanatory content, especially if it is tangential.
Use parentheses to set off nonessential, or nonrestrictive, information such as dates, clarifying information, or sources, from a sentence.

David Foster Wallace (1962–2008) wrote both fiction and nonfiction.
You can find us at 1802 Quentin Street (just behind Compson Middle School).

Use parentheses to enclose literary citations or explanations of acronyms.

The Wired Northwest (Hirt, 2012) details the electrification of the Northwest.
The scientists at NIH (National Institutes of Health) will issue a report.

Brackets

Brackets are used to clarify the meaning of quoted material.

The biologist explained, "We were dismayed to find that it [the mantis shrimp] was capable of breaking the glass of the aquarium."
Dr. Carlisle replied, "The reform bill of the [eighteen-]thirties was in some ways problematic."

Quotation Marks

Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotations. Note that commas and periods are placed inside closing quotation marks, while colons and semicolons are placed outside. The placement of question and exclamation marks depends on meaning.

Monique asked, "What time does the plane land?" and Jay replied, "Right at noon."
Monique said, "I'll bring the car"; Jay replied, "Great!"
Did Jay really say, "I'm sure the plane will be late"?

Use quotation marks to indicate that a word is jargon, slang, or a new word, or is used ironically.

That's what is known as a "culture capture."
She raised an eyebrow at this "fair" decision but did not object.

Use quotation marks around the titles of short poems, songs, short stories, magazine or newspaper articles, essays, speeches, chapters, short films, and episodes of television or radio programs.

"Nothing Gold Can Stay," by Robert Frost
"Dizzy," by Tommy Roe
"City Council to Reconsider Redevelopment Plan," an article in the newspaper

Italics

Italicize the titles of magazines, books, newspapers, films, television programs, long poems, plays, operas, music albums, works of art, and individual spacecraft, trains, planes, or ships.

TIME
Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare
Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh
Enterprise (space shuttle)

Italicize foreign words and phrases.

C'est la vie means, "That's life."

Italicize a word or phrase to add emphasis. (This should be done sparingly.)

I said we'd be there *late*, not *at eight*.

Italicize words referred to as words, letters referred to as letters, or numbers referred to as numbers.

The word *curfew* comes from the French. It means "cover fire" and refers to the time of day when medieval families would bank their fires and go to bed.

Are those *0*'s, *8*'s, or *o*'s?

Hyphens

Use a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line, if necessary. Break words only between syllables.

splen-did
heart-felt
class-i-fi-ca-tion

For line breaks, divide already hyphenated words only at the hyphen.

half-
dollar
many-
sided

Use a hyphen to join two or more words serving as a single adjective before a noun.

hand-dipped chocolates
well-loved book

However, when compound modifiers come after a noun, they are often not hyphenated.

The chocolates were hand dipped.
The book was well loved.

Use a hyphen between tens and ones in compound numbers.

twenty-seven
one hundred forty-four

Use a hyphen with the prefixes *ex-* (meaning former), *self-*, *all-*, and *half-*, and with the suffix *-elect*.

ex-wife
self-critical
all-inclusive

half-life
president-elect

Use a hyphen between a prefix and a capitalized word.

mid-October
anti-American
pre-Reformation

Use a hyphen between figures and letters.

T-shirt
mid-1900s

Dashes

En dashes (–) are used between sequential numbers, such as page ranges and date ranges.

Chapters 1–3 are due tomorrow.
The show is onstage September 20–27.

Em dashes (—) are used to set off nonrestrictive or parenthetical information or to emphasize text. Dashes can be used to show pauses or breaks in thought. They are more emphatic than commas or parentheses.

Two of the plays—*Macbeth* and *Guest by Courtesy*—are Jamie's favorites.
If you peek over the edge—watch your footing—you can see far into the canyon.
There is room in the van for six people—not 16.

Use a dash to set off an appositive phrase that already includes commas.

Three cats—Penny, Clytie, and Penguin—are in the front room.

Apostrophes

The apostrophe is used to:

- form possessives of nouns
- show the omission of letters in contractions
- indicate plurals of certain lowercase letters

Possessives of Nouns

There are several rules for making the possessive forms of nouns.

Add an apostrophe and –*s* to:

- the singular form of a word (even if it already ends in –*s*)
  a dog**'s** collar
  Mr. Rogers**'s** pocket watch
- plural forms that do not end in –*s*
  those women**'s** books
  these sheep**'s** vaccinations
- the end of compound words
  attorney-general**'s** money
  president-elect**'s** agenda
- the last name of two in a pair to show joint possession
  Ben and Max**'s** wagon
- both names in a pair to show individual possession
  Ben**'s** and Max**'s** backpacks

Add just an apostrophe to plural nouns that end in *–s.*

> four trees' leaves
> the Smiths' new house

Don't use apostrophes to make pronouns possessive or to make nouns plural.

> **Possessive pronouns:** *his, her, hers, its, my, your, yours, our, ours, their, theirs*
> **Incorrect:** That book is her's.
> **Correct:** That book is **hers**.
> **Incorrect:** Is that it's box?
> **Correct:** Is that **its** box?
> **Incorrect:** That book is your's.
> **Correct:** That book is **yours**.

Contractions

Apostrophes are used in contractions to show where one or more letters or numbers have been omitted.

> doesn't = does not
> we're = we are
> should've = should have
> '70s = 1970s

Ellipses

Use ellipses, three spaced periods (…), to show where text is left out of a quoted passage.

> "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation … dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Use ellipses to show a pause or break in thought.

> It's just that … I don't know … maybe you're right.