What, Why, and How?



GRAMMAR

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Grammar chapter overview:

Adjectives and Adverbs: These are words you can use to modify—to describe or add meaning to—other words. Adjectives modify nouns or pronouns. Examples: young, small, loud, short, fat, pretty. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and even whole clauses. Examples: really, quickly, especially, early, well.

Appositives: Appositives modify nouns for the purpose of offering details or being specific. Appositives begin with a noun or an article (a, an, the), they don't have their own subject and verb, and they are usually set off with a comma. Example: The car, an antique Stingray, cost ten thousand dollars.

Articles: The English language has definite ("*the*") and indefinite articles ("*a*" and "*an*"). The use depends on whether you are referring a specific member of a group (definite) or to any member of a group (indefinite).

Commas: Commas have many uses in the English language. They are responsible for everything from setting apart items in a series to making your writing clearer and preventing misreading.

Contractions: Apostrophes can show possession (the girl's hamster is strange), and also can show the omission of one or more letters when words are combined into contractions (do not = don't).

Coordinators: Coordinators are words you can use to join simple sentences to equally stress both ideas you are connecting. You can easily remember the seven coordinators if you keep in mind the word FANBOYS (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So).

Dangling Modifiers: All modifiers, words that add clarity, describe, or add detail to other words in a sentence, must be clearly and logically connected to their implied subjects, the grammatical subject of the clause nearest to the modifier. When they are not logically connected, they are called dangling modifiers.

Fragments: A sentence must contain a subject-verb unit; a fragment is a group of words that pretends to be a sentence but doesn't actually have a valid subject-verb unit. Example: Since they broke up.

Possessives: To show ownership of things, people or concepts, we use possessives. A common way to form the possessive is to add apostrophe + s. Example: the books of the student → the student's books.

Run-Together Sentences: Run-together sentences are the result of combining two or more complete sentences together without an acceptable joiner. Acceptable joiners for connecting independent clauses include: coordinators, subordinators, and semi-colons (**;**).

Subject & Verb Identification: Two of the most important parts of speech are subjects and verbs. Verbs are words that indicate action or a state of being, words like: write, run, tell, have, be, look, feel. The subject of a sentence performs the action(s) indicated by the main verb; that is, the subject is the doer of the action.

Subject-Verb Agreement: In the present tense verbs must agree with their subjects: both must be singular, or both must be plural. Examples: I breathe the air. He breathes the air. You must add an –s or –es at the end of the verb when the subject is a singular third person (he, she, it).

Subordinators: Like coordinators, subordinators can join simple sentences but they de-emphasize one of the ideas. Sentences with a subordinator (words such as *although, since, when, even though, because)* need to be connected to an independent sentence. Example: *Since she studied*, she got an A.

Verb Tenses: Tense refers to the form a verb takes in a sentence, whether to express the present, past or future.

Adjectives & Adverbs

Connections
See also "Commas" and "Dangling Modifiers."

What are they?

Adjectives and adverbs are words you can use to modify—to describe or add meaning to—other words.

Adjectives modify nouns or pronouns. Examples of some common adjectives are: young, small, loud, short, fat, pretty. You can also identify many adjectives by the following common endings.

- ***-able*****:** honorable, useable
- ***-al*****:** parental, economical
- ***-ful*****:** forgetful, soulful
- ***-ic*****:** frantic, scientific
- ***-ive*****:** festive, disruptive
- ***-ish*****:** selfish, boyish
- ***-less*****:** ruthless, careless
- ***-ous*****:** joyous, rebellious

Adverbs, on the other hand, modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and even whole clauses. Adverbs can tell us *how* something is done, *when* it is done, and *where* it is done. Examples of some common adverbs are: really, quickly, especially, early, well, immediately, yesterday.

While many adverbs do end with *"–ly",* don't take this for granted: some adverbs, like "almost" and "very" do not end this way, and some words that do end in *"–ly",* like "lively," are actually adjectives.

Comparatives and Superlatives
Many adverbs and most adjectives generally have three forms: the normal form; the comparative form, which you can use to compare two things; and the superlative form, which you can use to compare three or more things. The following chart gives you some guidelines for forming the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs.

Rules	Examples		
	Normal	Comparative	Superlative
Short adjectives & adverbs: • Add –er for comparative • Add –est for superlative	Green Big Hungry	Greener Bigger Hungrier	Greenest Biggest Hungriest
	Soon Late	Sooner Later	Soonest Latest

Rules	Examples		
	Normal	Comparative	Superlative
Longer adjectives & most longer adverbs ending in -ly: • Add "more" + adjective/adverb for comparative • Add "most" +adjective/adverb for superlative	Delicious Incredible	More delicious More incredible	Most delicious Most incredible
	Slowly Easily Brightly	More slowly More easily More brightly	Most slowly Most easily Most brightly
Irregular adjectives and adverbs have special forms	Good Bad Little (amount) Many	Better Worse Less More	Best Worst Least Most
	Well Badly	Better Worse	Best Worst

When using comparative and superlative forms, keep the following in mind:

- Many adverbs indicating time, place, and degree (i.e. tomorrow, here, totally) do not have comparative or superlative forms.

- Adjectives and adverbs that indicate an absolute or unchangeable quality should not be used with comparative and superlative constructions. Such absolute modifiers include words like final, main, impossible, perfect, unavoidable, unique.

Placement of Adjectives & Adverbs

Misplaced adjective or adverbs can cause confusion, as in the following example:

- Shaken not stirred, James Bond drank his martinis.

The writer is probably referring to the martinis, but the way this sentence is written, it implies that James Bond himself is shaken and not stirred.

For more information about misplaced adjectives and adverbs, see “Dangling Modifiers.”

Adjectives

In order to avoid confusion, try to place adjectives as close as possible to the nouns or pronouns they modify. Most one-word adjectives come right before the nouns they modify. In the examples below, the adjectives are double-underlined and the nouns they modify are in italics.

- He made a delicious *dinner*.
- The hungry *girls* devoured it quickly.
- Their full *stomachs* pushed against their jeans.
- But they couldn’t resist the incredible *dessert.*

One major exception to this rule is when an adjective follows a linking verb (i.e. is/are, was/were, feel, smell, taste, look, believe). For example:

- *Dinner* was delicious.
- The *girls* were hungry.
- Their *stomachs* felt full.
- *Dessert* looked incredible.

Be careful. Sometimes writers will use adverbs with a linking verb when what they really want is an adjective, or vice-versa. Choosing the adjective versus the adverb form of the same word has big implications for the meaning of a sentence. For example:

Adjective	Adverb
I feel bad. (I feel ill, depressed, apologetic)	I feel badly (I’m bad at feeling)

Multiple-word adjective phrases generally follow the noun or pronoun they modify, but occasionally can come before.

- The *girl* snoring in the next room woke up her roommate.
- The *customer* annoyed with the slow service complained to the manager.
- Proud of her youngest son, his *mother* showed his picture to strangers on the bus.

Adjective clauses—easy to identify because they start with the words “who,” “whom,” “whose,” “which,” “that,” “when,” and ”where”— follow the noun they modify. For example:

- She had a *goat* that she loved very much.
- His favorite *girlfriend*, who he thought was coming over later that evening, had just received an anonymous phone call.

Adverbs

As with adjectives, adverbs need to be placed where the reader can clearly understand the meaning you intend. Adverbs are a bit more flexible, however. Both single-word and multiple-word adverb phrases can generally be placed either before or after the words they modify. In the examples below, the adverbs and adverb phrases are underlined and the words they modify are in italics. For example:

- The lion *jumped* skillfully through the flaming hoop.
- The lion skillfully *jumped* through the flaming hoop.
- Before next Wednesday, *she* needed to cash her paycheck.
- *She* needed to cash her paycheck before next Wednesday.

Punctuating Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives

To help you decide whether or not you should use a comma when separating two or more adjectives, ask yourself the following two questions:

- Can the order of the two adjectives be reversed?
- Can the word "and" be put between the adjectives?

If either answer is yes, then the adjectives are coordinate, and you should use a comma. For example:

- Jessica is an ambitious, intelligent woman.
- Jessica is an intelligent, ambitious woman. [order reversed] ☺
- Jessica is an intelligent and ambitious woman. [added "and"] ☺

If you cannot reverse the order of the adjectives or add "and" to the adjectives, then they are cumulative, and do not require a comma. For example:

- Roger has fourteen silver horns.
- Roger has silver fourteen horns. [The reversed order does not work.] ⊗
- Roger has fourteen and silver horns. [The added "and" does not work.] ⊗

Adverbs

Place a comma at the end of an adverb phrase when it comes at the beginning of the sentence. For example:

- After some thought, she decided to buy her cousin's used car.

For more detailed information on when to use commas with adjectives and adverbs, please see the "Commas."

PRACTICE

A) Identify the adjectives and adverbs in the following sentences by underlining the adjectives twice and the adverbs once. .

For example: The one-eyed green aliens stepped cautiously out of their spaceship.

1. Their timid leader tentatively put one fat, calloused foot on the grass.

2. She then gingerly placed the other foot down.

3. She paused, thoughtfully scratched her forehead, and then started to waddle quite gracelessly toward a dim light.

4. Soon the braver aliens followed her but the more cowardly aliens hung back inside the door of the silver spaceship.

5. Suddenly, they heard a short, high-pitched yelp.

6. The youngest alien had stepped accidentally on the tail of a small furry creature, and both of them cried out instinctively.

7. The little alien regained his composure right away and, curious about the strange creature, he carefully reached down to pick up the frightened mouse.

8. The mouse, still terrified, dashed away.

9. It ran over the sensitive toes of several aliens who squealed loudly

10. The resulting commotion distracted the group, and they didn't notice the two young children slowly riding up on their creaky three-speed bicycles.

B) Create more detailed sentences by adding your own adjectives and adverbs to modify the words in italics. For example:

- The *star punched* the *photographer*.

The reclusive movie star violently punched the pushy photographer.

1. The *island* was populated by *birds* that *soared* over the trees.

2. It was also populated by *tourists* who stayed at the *resort* and *sat* by the *pool*.

3. The *man* in a *suit* was *reading* a *magazine* on his morning commute to work.

4. The *woman* next to him *sighed* as the train *stopped* in a tunnel.

5. The neighbors *gossiped* about the *people* who lived in the *house* on the corner.

6. UPS delivered *packages* to the back door and *strangers* in *cars* visited.

7. The students in the computer lab *talked* to each other and *worked* on their *essays*.

8. The *tutor helped* the *boy* with his *homework*.

9. The *children ate* the *ice cream*.

10. A *bully grabbed* one of the cones and *stuffed* it in his *mouth*.

Appositives

What are they?

In your essays, you often want to use long, complex sentences to draw your reader in, to avoid the choppiness that comes from a series of short sentences, and to provide clear and vivid detail. While adjectives can modify nouns (the *blue* car), sometimes nouns themselves—appositives—also modify nouns for the purpose of offering details or being specific. Sometimes these appositives will be called noun phrase appositives (or NPAs).

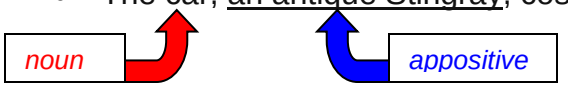
Connections
For more help combining sentences, see "Adjectives and Adverbs."

What does an appositive look like?

- It will begin with a noun or an article (a, an, the).
- As a phrase, it will not have its own subject *and* verb.
- It will be usually set off with a comma, but occasionally is separated with a colon (:) or dash (—).

Examples:

- The car, an antique Stingray, cost ten thousand dollars.



- Martha, Beth's older sister, came to the open-mic night with her guitar.
- To the baseball game Roger brought all his goodies: balls, a glove, a hat and a sign.
- She took her medication—pain killers and cold medicine—and hid them in her suitcase.

Create Your Own Appositives

Because you may be writing a whole new sentence to give just a little piece of information to your reader, try to make your writing less choppy and repetitive by using an appositive to combine the ideas.

You might have:

- I wanted to give Droopy to the SPCA before she attacked.
- Droopy is my sister's ferocious pit bull.

These sentences could easily be combined:

- I wanted to give Droopy, my sister's ferocious pit bull, to the SPCA before she attacked.

What happened to create the appositive? The writer noticed that the second sentence, "Droopy is my sister's ferocious pit bull" only gave more information about Droopy, who had already been introduced in the previous sentence. That additional information is dropped into the first sentence after the noun it modifies. Remember to use commas to set off the NPA.

A Note on Colons and Dashes

You may be wondering when a colon or dash is appropriate to set off an NPA. Most of the time a comma will do just fine. Sometimes, though, you will wish to call more attention to the information in apposition—draw the reader's eyes to it—and in those instances, a dash (which is made with *two* hyphens "—") may do the trick. A colon is usually used when the NPA is a series or list of items ("I brought her favorite fruit: apples, oranges and peaches.")



Exercise 1 – Noun Phrase Appositives – Sentence Combining

Combine the following sentences using NPAs.

Example: I want to take the painting to the museum for donation. The painting is a Van Gogh.

CORRECT: I want to take the painting, a Van Gogh, to the museum for donation.

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1. The lunch was cheap, served cold, and brought an hour late. The lunch was a bowl of soup.

2. Maxwell's car topped fifty miles per hour—but barely. His car was a sleek Corvair.

3. The student body voted "no" on the resolution even though it would have benefited them explicitly. The student body is a confused group of adults whose only interest in common was the college's location.

4. The pilot was stranded for twelve hours inside of his jet. The pilot was a former Air Force mechanic. His jet was a Cessna Skylane.

5. I want to speak on the important subjects. The important subjects are philosophy, linguistics and chemistry.

6. After six long years Alec finally achieved his lifelong goal. The goal was a scholarship to a good college.

7. Even though you're willing to forfeit the prize, I think you should wait a week or two—until you know you won't need the money. The prize would be my salary for a whole year.

8. The bear came to our tent, peeked in, and went on his merry way. The bear was a sleepy grizzly.

9. Camped around the fire, each of us stared at the night sky. The fire was a glowing source of warmth. The night sky was a bowl full of sparkling stars.

10. Mrs. Peterson warned us that we would have only one more day to hand in the assignment. Mrs. Peterson is my least favorite teacher.

Exercise 2 – NPAs – Sentence Combining

For each of the following sentences, add one or more NPA to give the reader additional information. Make up whatever you like! (Hint: find the noun(s) in the sentence to look to see what can take an NPA.)

Example:

- The textbook fell from my desk.

CORRECT: *The textbook, a giant collection of poetry, fell from my desk.*

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1. My best friend lost the race.
2. Bill Clinton took first prize for his book.
3. Joanne told Larry to go for a ride on his boat.
4. Napoleon discovered the “trapple.”
5. My binder contains one hundred papers and two pamphlets.
6. The dog bit Bill in the leg before he could run into a house.
7. Her shirt nearly blinded me.
8. Abe Lincoln probably didn’t use Log Cabin syrup.
9. I like the school’s newest building.
10. Cindy took the money to the bank.

Articles

What are they?

The English language has definite ("*the*") and indefinite articles ("*a*" and "*an*"). The use depends on whether you are referring to a specific member of a group (definite) or to any member of a group (indefinite).

Indefinite Articles: "*a*" and "*an*"	**Definite Article: "*the*"**
You will use an indefinite article when referring to any member of a group or one your readers are not yet familiar with.	You will use the definite article when referring to a specific member of a group.
The indefinite article "*a*" is used when the word following it (which may be a noun or an adjective) begins with a consonant or with a consonant sound. ○ a dog ○ a computer ○ a onetime sale The indefinite article "*an*" is used when the word following it begins with a vowel (*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, or *u*). ○ an apple ○ an ellipsis ○ an umbrella	The consonant and vowel rules that apply to "*a*" and "*an*" do not apply to the use of "*the*." ○ the neighbor's dog ○ the nice nephew ○ the mooing cows ○ the building ○ the red hairdryer ○ the airplane
If you were to say, "Juan set his keys on *a* table," it would tell the reader that Juan chose any table, an unspecific table, one of many. If you were to say, "Marcus goes swimming in *a* lake on Fridays," the reader understands that *which* lake Marcus chose really isn't important, and might even change from week to week.	If you were to say, "Juan set his keys on *the* table," it would tell the reader that Juan chose a specific table, one you may have already mentioned. If you were to say, "Marcus goes swimming in *the* lake on Fridays," the reader understands that it is a specific lake, and that he goes to the same place each week.

Plural Indefinite Article - *some*

*You will use the word "*some*" before a plural noun (or its modifying adjective):*

- some hairs
- some boxes

The singular: I put all of my clothes in *a* box I found in the basement.
The plural: I put all of my clothes in *some* boxes I found in the basement.

Plural Nouns
Plural nouns do not require an indefinite article: "I love apples," instead of "I love an apples." (You must use the definite article if you have already introduced the idea or are referring to a specific member of a group: "I love *the* apples grown across the street.")

Non-count Nouns
Non-count nouns, which include concepts and ideas that cannot be counted in number, may or may not require an article: no one hard and fast rule applies. You can write "Kindness spreads like wildfire," instead of "A kindness spreads like wildfire," or "The kindness spreads like wildfire" (unless you are referring to a specific kindness mentioned elsewhere in your writing, as in "the kindness you showed me").

Proper Nouns
Proper nouns, which name a particular person, place or thing, sometimes take the article "*the*" and sometimes do not.

- Soda is damaging to your teeth, but everyone still drinks it.
- *The* soda in my cup is flat, so I think I will throw it out.
- We are going to meet at *the* White House.

Do not use "*the*" before:

- names of countries (except *the* Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates, and *the* United States)
- names of cities, towns or states
- names of streets
- names of lakes and bays (except a group of lakes—*the* Great lakes)
- names of mountains (except mountain ranges—*the* Rockies)
- names of continents
- names of islands (except island chains—*the* Canary islands)

Do use "*the*" before:

- names of rivers, oceans and seas
- points on the globe
- geographical areas
- deserts, forests, gulfs and peninsulas

Adapted from:
http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/eslart.html 3/14/06 – 10:00AM &
The Brief Holt Handbook, Fourth Edition, Kirszner & Mandell, 2004

PRACTICE

Exercise 1 – Definite and Indefinite Articles

Fill in the blank for each sentence using either *a*, *an*, or *the*, or leave the space blank if none is needed.

Example:
I was going to __*the*__ beach where my cousin Willie lost his board in the waves.

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1. Last week _____ seagull dropped his fish onto my car.
2. Maria took out _____ garbage before reading.
3. _____ surfboard cut through the waves as she sped toward the beach.
4. Sculpture is _____ interesting art form, whether in metal, clay or uranium.
5. I love picnics—especially when I remember _____ food.
6. My house is falling apart, _____ shutters are in disrepair, and _____ windows are broken.
7. The brothers met to discuss _____ possible solution.
8. I went to the lab to work on _____ computer, but they were all taken.
9. Well, professor, _____ alien came and stole my gray matter before I could finish my homework.
10. This semester _____ same student violated his restraining order.
11. She passed him to avoid _____ confrontation involving _____ police.
12. I want to go to _____ part of Ukraine where they speak _____ Russian dialect.
13. The assistants found _____ theme that meant the most to them, and they wove it carefully into _____ handbook they could be proud of.
14. _____ airplane's tires skidded down _____ Los Angeles Airport's main runway before knocking out _____ baggage cart and _____ fuel truck.
15. I am studying _____ American history in school, but only after I pass my Biology class and ace _____ final exam.

Commas

What are they?

Commas have many uses in the English language. They are responsible for everything from setting apart items in a series to making your writing clearer and preventing misreading. Correct comma use is a difficult skill to master since it requires a combination of grammar knowledge and independent stylistic judgment.

> ***Connections***
> For more help understanding sentence combining, turn to "Coordinators" and "Subordinators."

Sentence Combining

When you are joining ideas, phrases or clauses within a sentence, you often will use a comma for punctuation.

An **independent clause**, also known as a simple sentence, is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb AND can stand alone as a sentence. For example

- The child went to the dentist.
- His girlfriend is angry.
- She will buy a new pair of shoes.

You can join an independent clause with another independent clause using a coordinator (FANBOYS) and a comma:

- Angelo rides his bike, and Mary takes the bus.
- Marguerite grabbed the diamonds, but Oliver sold them on the black market.

> You can easily remember the seven coordinators by keeping in mind the word **"FANBOYS" :**
>
> For And Nor
>
> But Or Yet So

A dependent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb BUT it cannot stand alone because it starts with a subordinator, words like although, while, since, because, if, until, after. For example:

- When the child went to the dentist
- Because his girlfriend is angry
- Although she will buy new shoes

You will use a comma after a dependent clause to join it to the independent clause that finishes the thought:

- Even though Michael was allowed to go to the concert, his mother made sure he had completed all his homework.

However, if you reverse the order and put the independent clause first and the dependent clause second, you do not need a comma:

- His mother made sure he had completed all his homework even though Michael was allowed to go to the game.

Series

You will use commas to separate items in a series containing three or more coordinate elements.

- Ron, Maria, and Jessica play soccer every day after school.
- My favorite vegetables are Brussels sprouts, spinach, and cauliflower.
- I want either fettuccini alfredo, eggplant parmesan, or the linguine with clams in a white sauce.

You will use commas to separate items in a series of two or more coordinate adjectives—adjectives modifying the same idea independent of each other.

- It should be a *slow*, *lazy* day.
- Seven years passed in a *destructive*, *whirling* blur.
- He brought his *sleek*, *shiny* bicycle.

Commas are <u>not</u> required when the adjectives are cumulative, or when they describe different aspects of the same noun.

- Donnie sold me *ten gold* bowling balls.
- My favorites are the *lazy white* clouds.
- He ordered a *delicious chocolate* cake for the party.

Comma-Adjective Rule

To help you decide whether or not you should use a comma when separating two or more adjectives, ask yourself the following two questions:

- Can the order of the two adjectives be reversed?
- Can the word "*and*" be put between the adjectives?

If either answer is yes, then the adjectives are coordinate, and you should **use** a comma.

- Jessica is an ambitious, intelligent woman.
  - Jessica is an intelligent, ambitious woman. [order reversed] ☺
  - Jessica is an intelligent *and* ambitious woman. [added "*and*"] ☺

If you cannot reverse the order of or add "*and*" to the adjectives, then they are cumulative, and **do not** require a comma.

- Roger has fourteen silver horns.
  - Roger has silver fourteen horns. [The reversed order does not work.] ⊗
  - Roger has fourteen *and* silver horns. [The added "and" does not work.] ⊗

Setting off Nonessential Elements

Some modifying elements of a sentence are essential, restricting the meaning of a modified term, while others are nonessential and do not restrict the modified term's meaning. These nonessential elements, which can be words, phrases, or clauses, are set off with commas.

	Nonessential (Nonrestrictive)	**Essential** (Restrictive)
Adjective Clause	Students, *who use the majority of the Health Center's services*, claim to be especially sick this year. All students claim to be sick this year.	Students *who play any school sport* will receive free tickets to final game. Only students who play a school sport receive the tickets, not all students.
Prepositional Phrase	The professor, *with a wink*, dismissed her class early. Removing the phrase "with a wink" doesn't change the meaning of the sentence.	The professor *with no students* is good for very little. The prepositional phrase "with no students" tells what kind of professor is good for very little; it is essential.
Verbal Phrase	Popular politicians, campaigning in every small town in America, wave the American flag and kiss babies.	The politician campaigning for president has no time for a meaningful personal life.
Appositives	*The Big Lebowski*, a 1997 Coen Brothers film, is a modern mystery and a Western rolled into one.	The great American movie *The Big Lebowski* popularized the nickname "Dude."

When deciding whether information is nonessential or essential, ask yourself this question:

- Is the modifier essential to the meaning of the noun or subject it modifies?

  NO: Nonrestrictive (use commas)
  YES: Restrictive (no commas)

Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitional words and phrases qualify, clarify, and make connections between ideas. They are usually set off with commas when they introduce, interrupt, or come at the end of a clause.

Transitions	
however	for example
therefore	on the other hand
thus	typically speaking
nevertheless	as a result
furthermore	alternatively

- Nevertheless, she took the bus knowing it would be late.
- On the other hand, money is money and I have to pay my rent.
- Rare horses, however, are something I would consider buying.

Note: When you use a transitional word to combine two independent clauses, you must use a semicolon or punctuate them as two separate sentences.

- Diamonds are rare; however, the coal that makes them is abundant.
- The best dogs raced first; therefore, the spectators all went home before it rained.
- Laughter is the best medicine; of course, penicillin also comes in handy sometimes.
- I wanted to finish quickly. Unfortunately, I still had three exams afterward.

Quotations

In most cases, use commas to set off a direct quotation from the identifying tag (*he said*, *she screamed*, *I wrote* and so on).

- Thoreau said, “To be awake is to be alive.”
- “To be awake is to be alive,” Thoreau said.
- “To be awake,” Thoreau said, “is to be alive.”
- “To be awake is to be alive,” Thoreau said. “I have never yet met a man who was quite awake.”

If the quoted text contains an exclamation point or a question mark, do not use a comma in addition:

- “Should we bring the casserole tonight?” he asked.
- “I love those children!” the father screamed.

Adapted from:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_commaess.html 3/23/06 – 1:00PM &
The Brief Holt Handbook, Fourth Edition, Kirszner & Mandell, 2004

PRACTICE

Exercise 1 – Commas – Dependent & Independent Clauses

Add commas where necessary in the sentences below. Some sentences will not require one.

Examples:

Although my mother told me not to get her a gift, I decided to make her a scrapbook.

I want to give more money to her charity, but I think the IRS already took too much of my salary.

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1. Lately Katherine has wanted more companionship even though she rather likes to be alone.
2. Jerry vies for her attention but she has so much on her own mind as she suffers through this ordeal.
3. But whereas Alec acts like a friend he also wants Katherine's admiration.
4. So that she will be found innocent Miss Smatter will write another's confession.
5. Jerry eats his sandwich as coolly as the others do yet he can't shake the feeling of deception and mistrust.
6. Sabrina thinks that the apartment's rent is trivial while Kelly thinks it crucial.
7. Although Rachel has little say in the matter her friends could use the advice.
8. Because her dog was hit by a car he walks with a substantial limp.
9. The doctor set it with pins and even though he didn't scratch at it he was still forced to wear a giant collar.
10. Either the bill is paid within the month or the doctor will send a collection agency for the money.

Exercise 2 – Commas – Series and Adjectives

Add commas where necessary in the sentences below. Some sentences will not require one.

Example:

I want to pick fragrant, colorful daffodils, roses, and lilies for my sister's birthday party.

---

1. Lately Martin has been picking giant swollen mushrooms from his yard.
2. Sue won the "Vegetable Prize of the Day" that included carrots turnips and leeks.
3. Most people don't know that their favorite chips contain preservatives artificial flavors and MSG.
4. The three tall brothers took the brilliant shining vitamins before playing sports.
5. Watching movies reading books sleeping and exercising are my favorite weekend activities.

Exercise 3 – Commas – Essential and Nonessential Items

Add commas where necessary in the sentences below. Some sentences will not require one.

Example:

- The racing fans, who rarely wave pennants, showed up in full force on Sunday.

---

1. Shelly my mother's step-sister gave me thirty dollars last week.
2. The campus police who rarely arrest any faculty members are responsible for patrolling all night long.
3. The man walking his dog down the street looks like my great-uncle Ted.
4. My grandmother with a terrible scream alerted me to the fire in her closet.
5. Doug gave me three helpings of dessert which was a crème brûlée.
6. Speaking as if he was consumed with fury Louis yelled to the audience.
7. The actor with no siblings starred in the blockbuster movie *Grammar Cop*.
8. The helicopter a Grasker A-7 flew over the vast and empty desert.
9. His wife the fifth one before Jane and after Cecilia always worried their marriage wouldn't last.
10. "Sonny's Blues" the famous story by Baldwin contains rich allegory that weaves along with fascinating symbolism a rich fabric of text accessible to most readers.

Exercise 4 – Commas – Transitions

Add commas and/or semicolons where necessary in the sentences below.

Example:

- Nevertheless, I wanted to go to the farm to see the llamas.

---

1. I didn't want to see the whole country however I did want to visit the biggest states and prettiest parks.
2. On the other hand Martin said that Oklahoma is worth skipping.
3. Alternatively I dream about the open road even if it is scary sometimes.
4. My car takes five quarts of oil typically speaking.
5. I made the motel reservations already therefore I should leave next week.
6. Pharmaceuticals as a result are becoming more and more expensive.
7. Thus I will need to buy a new car before I set off on Sunday.

Exercise 5 – Commas – Quotations

Add commas where necessary in the sentences below.

1. "Imagination is more important than knowledge" Albert Einstein wisely once asserted.
2. Walt Disney offered excellent advice when he said "The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."
3. Do you agree with the assertion made by Socrates "An unexamined life is not worth living"?
4. "To be or not to be?" is one of the most quoted phrases from Shakespeare's plays.
5. "Live as if you were to die tomorrow" Gandhi advised. "Learn as if you were to live forever."
6. In *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley puts a forth a shocking assertion "Most men and women will grow up to love their servitude and will never dream of revolution."

Contractions

What are they?

Apostrophes can show possession (*the girl's hamster is strange*), and also can show the omission of one or more letters when words are combined into contractions. You would use a contraction to shorten and combine words. This is a list of the most common contractions.

Connections
For more help with contractions, see "Possessives."

Long Form	Contraction
I am	I'm
I had	I'd
I have	I've
it is	it's
we will	we'll
they will	they'll
we are	we're
they are	they're
do not	don't
does not	doesn't
did not	didn't
let us	let's
is not	isn't
are not	aren't
should not	shouldn't
will not	won't
cannot	can't
would not	wouldn't
could not	couldn't
you would	you'd
who is	who's

In formal writing, contractions are not used as frequently (if at all). Some instructors allow contractions in assignments, and some do not. You should check with them about their policy if it is not clear from the syllabus. If you do use contractions, however, be sure to include the apostrophe in place of the letters you omit.

PRACTICE

Exercise 1 – Contractions

In each of the sentences below, combine the words in long form into contractions.

Example: When John returns, he (will not) _____ want to eat dinner.

Correct: When John returns, he won't want to eat dinner.

---

1. The team is busy typing at the desk, but (they are) _____ not going to stay long.
2. It (is not) _____ that their parents are mean, but they (do not) _____ spend any time with them.
3. (You would) _____ have to be crazy to eat that fast food.
4. Paragraphs (are not) _____ my favorite thing to study, but they beat spelling.
5. In two more days (we will) _____ be sailing around the world.
6. The second student from the left (would not) _____turn in his test on time.
7. (Let us) _____ see what (I am) _____ doing next week so I (do not) _____ double-book.
8. (Who is) _____ coming to the party tomorrow?
9. This really (is not) _____ what I envisioned when I agreed to get paid.
10. The co-op (does not) _____ have any cereal unless (you are) _____ buying it in bulk.
11. In fact, (it is) _____ cheaper, healthier, and (should not) _____ be any less fresh.
12. (I have) _____ had a good experience at that store.
13. The food I brought home (would not) _____ ever go to waste.
14. (They will) _____ bag it for you and (will not) _____ drop anything.
15. (I am) _____ a fan of going to a co-op like this instead of the large chain stores.

Adapted from Fog City Fundamentals, Fourth Edition, Altman & Deicke, 1998

Coordinators

What are they?

Coordinators are words you can use to join simple sentences (aka independent clauses) and show the logical connections between ideas.

Use coordinators when you want to equally stress both ideas you are connecting; if instead you want to de-emphasize one of the ideas, use a subordinator.

Connections
See also the "Subordinators" and "Commas."

You can easily remember the seven coordinators if you keep in mind the word FANBOYS:

	Coordinators	Logical Relationship	Sample sentences
F	**FOR**	Cause/Effect	I expect to see lots of green on Friday, *for* it is St.Patrick's Day.
A	**AND**	Addition	The Irish bars will be packed, *and* the beer will be flowing.
N	**NOR**	Addition of negatives	I won't drink green beer, *nor* will I drink a Shamrock Shake.
B	**BUT**	Contrast	I like the color green, *but* I don't think it's an appetizing color for a beverage.
O	**OR**	Alternative	Guinness is always a good choice, *or* if you're driving, water is a better choice.
Y	**YET**	Condition	I have to wake up early the next morning, *yet* I don't want to be anti-social.
S	**SO**	Cause/Effect	One of my friends is having a party, *so* I will probably drop by for a while.

Punctuation

Unless the clauses are quite short, put a comma before the conjunction when it joins two independent clauses.

- She brought home a big bag of Halloween candy that should have lasted weeks, but by the next day her little brother had eaten it all.
- He's tall but she's short.



Join the following sentences with the coordinator that most clearly expresses the logical relationship between the two ideas being connected. Hint: you should use each coordinator only once.

, but he

For Example: Calvin had his heart set on being a physics major. ~~He~~ was horrible at math.

1. He could not understand geometry. He could not understand physics.
2. He took extra classes. The tutor couldn't seem to help.
3. He worked incredibly hard. Everyone in the math department was willing to help him.
4. He realized he would have to improve. He was going to have to give up his ambition to become a great physicist.
5. The other students could build catapults out of popsicle sticks and rubber bands. Calvin's catapult couldn't even launch a pebble.
6. Calvin's experiments were always unique. They proved that some basic law of nature no longer existed.
7. Calvin finally realized that he did not have it in him to be the next Stephen Hawking. He changed his major to English.

Dangling Modifiers

What are they?

Connections
See also the "Identifying Verbs & Subjects" and "Adjectives & Adverbs."

All **modifiers**, words that add clarity, describe, or add detail to other words in a sentence, must be clearly and logically connected to their **implied subjects**, the grammatical subject of the clause nearest to the modifier. For example, in the following sentences we can easily connect the underlined modifiers with their implied subjects, which are underlined twice.

- Happy with her new hula hoop, the young girl skipped down the street.
- Invigorated by the sunny weather, we decided to go on a picnic in Golden Gate Park.
- Before buying a hybrid car, my brother used to ride a motorcycle.

But sometimes, when writers use modifiers carelessly, their implied subjects are illogical. For example:

- In examining his argument closely, the point at which he went wrong can be seen.
- To network more effectively, Scientology is practiced by many actors.
- Polite and respectful, the visiting teacher was impressed with the children's manners.

The way the first two sentences are written, they imply that the point somehow examined his argument and that Scientology is trying to network more effectively— neither of these ideas make any sense. The third sentence, while not as obviously illogical, suggests that the visiting teacher was polite and respectful, not the children—almost certainly not what the writer intends.

Misleading or illogical constructions like these are called dangling modifiers. Dangling modifiers most often come at the beginning of a sentence, as in the examples above, but they can also come at the end of a sentence.

- In my English class, attendance was stressed, taking off points for late arrivals and early departures.

The way this sentence is written, it implies that attendance takes points off for late arrivals and early departures—an illogical statement.

Fixing Dangling Modifiers

In order to fix a dangling modifier, you need to revise your sentence so that the implied subject makes sense. You can do this by asking yourself *"who is logically doing the action of the modifier*"? For example:

Original Sentence	Revised Sentence
In examining his argument closely, the point at which he went wrong can be seen.	*Who is examining his argument?* we In examining his argument closely, we can see the point at which he went wrong.
To network more effectively, Scientology is practiced by many actors.	*Who is trying to network more effectively?* actors To network more effectively, many actors practice Scientology.
Polite and respectful, the visiting teacher was impressed with the children's manners.	*Who is polite and respectful?* the children Polite and respectful, the children impressed the visiting teacher with their manners.
In my English class, attendance was stressed, taking off points for late arrivals and early departures.	*Who stresses attendance?* the teacher In my English class, the teacher stressed attendance, taking off points for late arrivals and early departures.

PRACTICE

Read each sentence, underlining the introductory modifier and double-underlining the implied subject. Does the modifier logically connect with the implied subject? If the implied subject does not make sense, revise the sentence.

For example: Thought to have originated in the Indian Subcontinent, Eastern Europe is now home to many Roma, better known as gypsies.

(Is Eastern Europe thought to have originated in India? No, the Roma are, so we need to revise this sentence.)

Revised: Thought to have originated in the Indian Subcontinent, many Roma, better known as gypsies, now live in Eastern Europe.

1. Reacting with suspicion and hostility to the Roma's distinct culture and nomadic lifestyles, they have historically been discriminated against by some native Europeans.

2. Taken to the extreme, persecution included enslavement and executions.

3. Known as the *Porajmos*, or the "devouring," in World War II, the Nazis carried out an attempted genocide that killed between 200,000 and 800,000 Roma.

4. Derogatory stereotypes are still perpetuated, characterizing the Roma as tramps and thieves.

5. Both embodying and transcending the sadness of this history, an important expression of traditional Rom culture is music.

6. Developed in Spanish Roma communities, the outside world is probably most familiar with flamenco music.

7. Brought to the Americas, Roma music has contributed to Cuban salsa, mambo, rumba and guajira music: Mexican mariachi music; and even American country music.

8. A celebration of the range and vitality of gypsy music, the Roma director Tony Gatlif made the excellent documentary Latcho Drom.

Fragments

Connections
For a more detailed discussion of these terms, see the "Subjects & Verbs" and "Subordinators."

What are they?

In English, a sentence must contain a subject-verb unit; a fragment is a group of words that *pretends* to be a sentence but doesn't actually have a valid subject-verb unit.

Common Sources of Fragments

1. The fragment is a **dependent clause**, a group of words that contains a subject-verb unit but cannot stand alone because it begins with a **subordinator**. For example:

   - *Since* they broke up
   - *Although* I am her cousin
   - *Unless* you stop doing that
   - *Because* he was tired

   Other common subordinators include: though, even though, while, whereas before, after, if, when, as soon as.

2. The fragment is a **phrase**, a group of words that does not contain a subject-verb unit. Many times, phrases are easy to identify. For example:

   - A long, strange trip
   - Lost in the supermarket
   - Jenny from the block
   - The richest man in Babylon

   Two types of phrases can be a bit trickier to spot, however, because they contain words that *look* like verbs but aren't acting as part of a valid subject-verb unit:

   A. ***-ing clauses***: Without a form of the verb "to be," **–ing** words cannot be part of main the subject-verb unit. For example:

   - The man eating a fig
   - The coyote howling at the moon

   B. ***"Who, whom etc." clauses***: Verbs that are separated from the subject by the words "who," "whom," "whose," "when," "where," "that," and "which" cannot be part of the main subject-verb unit. For example:

   - The woman *who* disobeyed and got a ticket
   - The apple *that* she ate
   - The garden *which* she had to leave

Strategies for Fixing Fragments

In order to turn a fragment into a complete sentence, you have a couple of options.

1. Often you simply need to combine a fragment with a neighboring sentence to produce a grammatically complete sentence. For example:

Fragment (in italics)	Complete sentence
Rocio made that mistake too. *But only when she wasn't paying attention.*	Rocio made that mistake too, but only when she wasn't paying attention.
Daydreaming about the weekend. I missed my exit.	Daydreaming about the weekend, I missed my exit.
My chatty next door neighbor. She loves to gossip.	My chatty next door neighbor loves to gossip.
I've never been back to El Salvador. *Since I left ten years ago.*	I've never been back to El Salvador since I left ten years ago.

2. Other times, you'll need to complete the sentence by supplying the missing subject or verb, or by attaching an independent clause

Fragment (in italics)	Complete sentence
A laboratory for the study of animal life in the South Pacific.	A laboratory for the study of animal life is situated in the South Pacific.
The girl who wanted an 'A' in her English class.	The girl who wanted an 'A' in her English class re-wrote each essay three times.
The man thoughtfully scratching his beard.	The man was thoughtfully scratching his beard.
Since I only had a cookie for breakfast.	Since I only had a cookie for breakfast, I was starving by lunchtime.

PRACTICE

A) Read the following groups of words and determine if they are grammatically complete sentences or if they are fragments.

For example: Going to community college *fragment*

1. A noticeable mistake which was on the flyer.
2. Whenever I get tired of doing my math homework.
3. The building across from the library is condemned.
4. My roommate who intends to finish college in four years.
5. My other roommate has been in college seven years.
6. Before the semester began.
7. The teacher who liked to listen to the sound of his own voice.
8. Because mid-terms are just about to start.
9. If I could be left alone to do my homework.
10. Although I don't usually enjoy hard work, I love studying Japanese.
11. Listening to tapes in the language lab is really time consuming.
12. The boy typed on the Mac in the computer lab.
13. The essay that I have to write.
14. While I was eating my lunch at the campus center.

B) Read the following sentences and fix any fragments you find.

For example: Sometimes, life is like a movie. A cheesy romantic comedy to be exact.
Sometimes, life is like a movie, a cheesy romance comedy to be exact.

1. Anxious about his love life. He decided to visit a fortune-teller.

2. The fortune-teller asked for fifty dollars. And the names of his favorite movie stars.

3. Consulted her astrology charts and closely examined his palms.

4. She predicted someone important would soon come into his life. A tall, dark stranger.

5. While he was skeptical that such a clichéd prediction could come true.

6. The day that he would meet the stranger was cold and foggy. He was sipping hot chocolate at his favorite café.

7. The stranger who would change his life. She walked in the door and ordered a hot chai.

8. She asked if she could share his table. Because the other tables were full of students studying for their midterms.

9. Looking up from his crossword. He smiled and said yes.

10. As she sat down in the table across from him.

C) Now, read the following paragraph and a) underline any sentence fragments that you find b) fix these fragments by combining them with adjacent sentences or supplying missing words.

In “The Lottery,” author Shirley Jackson implies that human beings are mindless, static creatures. Who cannot or will not free themselves from the domination of tradition. Even when a ritual has lost all purpose or value. This theme is dramatized in her own tale of a town’s annual selection of one of its residents. For sacrifice at the hands of his or her neighbors. On June 27th of every year, the head of each household draws a lot from an old black box. To see whether someone in the household is the fated one.

On the day of the story’s action, the proceedings are supervised by Joe Summers. An old-timer who oversees square dances, the teenager’s club, and the Halloween program. The townsfolk are in a festive mood. Approaching the oncoming massacre of a neighbor with no more concern than they give to the milking of a cow. They are not troubled that they no longer know the reason for the ritual. The purpose that prompted their forebears to initiate the proceedings. They simply consider the drawing a necessity. One of the town’s vital activities. Old Man Warner exemplifies the majority of the villagers. Sheep-like, he follows the dictates of tradition unquestioningly. “There’s always been a lottery,” he says. And, by implication, always will be.

Possessives

What are they?

Connections
For additional apostrophe-related material, see "Contractions."

To show ownership of things, people or concepts, we use possessives. The possessive form looks like this:

- The dog belonging to the boy shed hair on the floor.
- The talent of the singer is apparent after seeing her show.

But a simpler, more common and concise way, is to change the noun that does the possessing:

- The *boy's* dog shed hair on the floor.
- The *singer's* talent is apparent after seeing her show.

With a few exceptions, the following two rules cover nearly all you need to know about forming possessives:

1. To form the possessive of a noun, add apostrophe + *s*.
    - the books of the *student* → the *student's* books
    - the toys of the *girl* → the *girl's* toys
2. If the noun already ends in *s*, just add an apostrophe at the end of the word.
    - the books of the *students* → the students' books
    - the toys of the *girls* → the *girls'* toys

If a proper noun (a name) ends in *-s*, you may choose to add either apostrophe + *s*, or just the apostrophe alone, depending on whether you would pronounce the extra *-s*.

Moses' followers OR *Moses's* followers

Remember: Do not use *-'s* when you are simply showing the plural form:

CORRECT: Charbroiled eggplants are served here.

INCORRECT: Charbroiled eggplant's are served here.

Adapted from Fog City Fundamentals, Fourth Edition, Altman & Deicke, 1998

PRACTICE

Exercise 1 – Possessives

Rewrite each underlined group of words, using apostrophes to show possession.

Examples: Nancy liked the shape of the laptop.

the laptop's shape

Jo often borrowed the comb belonging to Nancy.

Nancy's comb

---

1. Nancy was driving along with Jo in the car owned by Beth.
2. The tires of the car screeched to a halt after a confession.
3. Not even the defroster could fight the fog of the windows.
4. The two avoided the snow by walking underneath the leaves of the trees.
5. The hands of Jo were cold; warming them wasn't entirely out of the question.
6. "The attitudes of people just aren't ready for this," Nancy said.
7. The two looked to the snowflakes of the sky and saw white dusty stars floating by.
8. "We should go home and sit before the heat of the fireplace," Jo said.
9. "The mugs that belong to Beth should hold enough hot chocolate to warm us up."

Other Forms of Possessives

Joint Possession: The following pairs of nouns show joint ownership; two or more people own the same thing.

the string belonging to Rich and Eddie ⇨ Rich and Eddie's duck

the children of Bob and Edward ⇨ Bob and Edward's children

Rule: Nouns showing joint ownership have apostrophe + *s* added to the noun nearest the thing possessed.

Individual Possession: The following pairs of nouns show individual ownership. (Rich and Eddie probably do not own the same socks, nor do Bob and Edward use the same toothbrush.)

the socks belonging to Rich and Eddie ⇨ Rich's and Eddie's socks

the toothbrushes of Bob and Edward ⇨ Bob's and Edward's toothbrush

Rule: Nouns showing individual ownership have apostrophe + *s* added to each noun.

When NOT to use apostrophe + *s*:
Do not use 's to form possessive pronouns:

Pronouns	Adjective Possessive Pronoun (requires a subject to modify)	Possessive Pronoun
he	his	his
she	her	hers
it	its	n/a
we	our	ours
you	your	yours
they	their	theirs
I	my	mine

Which possessive pronouns belong in the following examples?

This is Kimberly's handbook. This is __her__ handbook. The handbook is __hers__.

Those are Jessie's records. Those are _____ records. The records are _____.

That is Frank and Todd's car. That is _____ car. The car is _____.

The tall vase belongs to you. The tall one is _____ vase. The vase is _____.

Exercise 2 – Possessives

Rewrite each underlined group of words, using apostrophes to show possession.

Examples:

- The flavor of the coffee was unusual. ⇨ the coffee's flavor
- I live in the home of my parents. ⇨ my parents' home
- We went to the wedding of Joe and Kay. ⇨ Joe and Kay's wedding
- He ironed the clothes of Pete and May. ⇨ Pete's and May's clothing.

---

1. The combined losses of the North and South were the greatest in any American war.
2. The president took away some of the responsibilities of the chief-of-staff.
3. We loved the shoes of George and Sara.
4. She was insulted by the rude remarks of her sister-in-law.
5. I couldn't stand the behavior of Alan and Jennifer.
6. The information of the ambassador was mostly incorrect.
7. The voyages of Magellan and Columbus were controversial.
8. The novels of Fitzgerald and Nabokov are among the most admired in modern literature.
9. One of the most famous events in American history is the journey west of Lewis and Clark.
10. Don't forget the birthday of your mother-in-law.

Adapted from Fog City Fundamentals, Fourth Edition, Altman & Deicke, 1998.

Run-Together Sentences (RTS)

What are they?

Connections
See also the "Subject & Verb Identification," "Coordination," and "Subordination."

Contrary to popular belief, run-together sentences are not simply sentences that are too long. Instead, run-together sentences are the result of combining two or more **complete sentences** together without an **acceptable joiner**.

A **complete sentence**, also known as an **independent clause**, contains a subject-verb unit and can stand alone.

Acceptable joiners for connecting independent clauses include:

- Coordinators (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
- Subordinators (words such as although, since, when, even though, if)
- Semi-colons (**;**)

We'll look at these acceptable joiners more closely in a moment, but first let's take a look at what CANNOT connect complete sentences. In the example sentences below, subjects are underlined once and verbs underlined twice so you can see the different independent clauses.

Problem	**RTS example:**
Commas cannot connect two complete sentences—this type of RTS also referred to as a *comma splice*	His older sister hit him, the boy started to cry.
Transition words, with or without a comma, cannot connect two complete sentences—this can be another type of *comma splice*	He took four ibuprofen, then his headache faded away.
Not using anything to connect complete sentences is also incorrect—this is also known as a *run-on sentence*	My teacher writes RTS in the margins of my essay I do not know what she means.

Since it is easy to confuse transition words with coordinators and subordinators, we've included a chart on the next page to help you out.

Logical Relationship	Coordinators (CAN join sentences)	Subordinators (CAN join sentences)	**Transition Words** (CANNOT join sentences)
Addition	and		also, further, additionally, furthermore, moreover, similarly
Contrast	but, yet	although, while, even though, even if, whereas, though	however, still, nevertheless, otherwise, on the other hand, instead, nonetheless, alternatively
Cause	for	because, since	
Effect	so	so that, in that, in order that	therefore, thus, consequently, hence, as a result
Choice/ Alternative	or, nor		on the other hand, conversely
Condition		if, unless, provided that	otherwise
Time		after, before, as soon as, since, when, while, until, as	then, next, previously, subsequently, afterwards

How to Fix Run-Together Sentences

Use a coordinator (also known as a conjunction)

One way to fix a run-together sentence is to insert a comma and a coordinator to join the two independent clauses. For example:

Original RTS	Grammatically Correct Sentence
Her older sister hit him, the boy started to cry.	His older sister hit him, **so** the boy started to cry.

When you use a coordinator to fix a run-together sentence, make sure that you choose one that indicates the correct logical relationship between the two ideas you are connecting; the chart on the previous page can help you figure this out.

Use a subordinator

Another way to fix a run-together sentence is to use a subordinator to join the two independent clauses. For example:

Original RTS	Grammatically Correct Sentence
He took four ibuprofen, his headache faded away.	His headache faded away **as soon as** he took four ibuprofen. **As soon as** he took four ibuprofen, his headache faded away.

As you can see from the examples above, subordinators don't always need to be placed in the middle of sentence; they can also come at the beginning. When you do place the subordinator at the beginning of a sentence, you need to put a comma after the end of the first clause.

As with coordinators, when you use a subordinator to fix a run-together sentence, you need to make sure that you choose one that indicates the correct logical relationship between the two ideas you are connecting.

Use a semi-colon
A third way fix run-together sentences is by joining the two independent clauses with a semi-colon.

Original RTS	Grammatically Correct Sentence
My teacher writes RTS in the margins of my essay I do not know what she means.	My teacher writes RTS in the margins of my essay***; (however)*** I don't know what she means.

You can pair a semi-colon with a transition word, but remember that transition words alone *cannot* join sentences. If you do use a transition word, be sure that it is one that indicates the correct logical relationship between the ideas you are connecting.

Split the RTS into two sentences
One final way to fix a run-together sentence is to spit it up into two independent clauses. For example:

Original RTS	Grammatically Correct Sentence
My teacher writes RTS in the margins of my essay I do not know what she means.	My teacher writes RTS in the margins of my essay**. I** don't know what she means.

When you fix run-together sentences in this way, just be careful that you don't end up with a series of short, choppy sentences.

PRACTICE

A) Fix the following run-together sentences using one of the seven coordinators (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

yet

For example: I don't usually watch reality TV, ^ I do love a show called *Project Runway*.

1. At the beginning of the season there are fourteen aspiring fashion designers, in the end only three people get to show at Olympus Fashion Week in New York.

2. The supermodel Heidi Klum hosts, famous designers serve as guest judges.

3. The contestants must take the design challenges seriously every week the loser goes home.

4. Some of the contestants have huge egos, they are unnecessarily competitive.

5. I don't have TiVo I am going to my friend's house to watch the season finale.

B) Fix the following run-together sentences using a **subordinator**.

since

For example: ^ Many students have to cover their own living expenses, they work full-time.

1. She needed a part-time job, books and tuition were expensive this year.

2. She would have preferred not to have to work retail, the only job she could find was at a shoe store in the mall.

3. The customers were frequently demanding and rude, she liked her co-workers.

4. She had been working for a month, her employee discount kicked in.

5. She paid off her credit card bill, she was planning to buy a new pair of shoes.

C) Fix the following run-together sentences using a semi-colon; you can also include an appropriate transition word.

For example: As people get older they tend to get wiser**;** sometimes they also get fatter.

1. Orville was almost thirty-five his tummy had started to stick out.

2. His wife worried that his eating habits were unhealthy, she tried to encourage him to eat more fruits and vegetables.

3. Orville was not as concerned he would eat six cookies a meal without feeling guilty.

4. On the radio, Orville had heard that drinking green tea could help you lose weight he decided to stop drinking coffee that very day and put his coffee machine away.

5. Only he didn't really stop drinking coffee, he just stopped making it at home and went to the neighborhood café instead.

D) The following sentences are taken from actual student essays. Fix the RTS errors using an appropriate strategy; remember to think about the logical relationship between ideas when choosing a strategy.

1. The legalization of prostitution would actually help reduce crime, the prostitute wouldn't be a victim of extortion or beatings.

2. Police could stake out a street crime area instead of a brothel the effect would be safer streets and more efficient use of the police.

3. Not everybody is going to be so ambitious and work many will probably do nothing.

4. At one time people had responsibilities to their families and communities, now you only have to answer to yourself and no one else.

5. To some, divorce provides an easy out to their problems of getting along together, therefore they dissolve the marriage rather than work it out.

E) Now that you've had a chance to correct isolated sentences, try to find and fix the run-together sentences in the following paragraph.

Sleep is a subject we should all know a lot about, we spend one third of our lives sleeping. Even though everyone sleeps, scientists have only recently begun to understand what goes on when we sleep. They used to believe that the body repairs itself while asleep, there is some truth to this but the body also does this while awake. The brain does not simply shut itself off at night, it goes through a complicated series of chemical changes. Scientists have begun to chart these changes, working with complex instruments that measure brain-wave patterns. They have found that we do not move smoothly from being awake to being asleep, we pass through a cycle of four sleep stages. At each stage blood pressure and pulse rate drop, the body temperature also goes down. In the second stage the number and length of brain waves go up, while the sleeper's eyes begin to move rapidly back and forth behind their lids. Scientists call this activity rapid eye movements, or REMs, the activity that accompanies most of our dreaming. If a person is deprived of REM sleep, that person will soon become bad-tempered and irritable. A full night's sleep is not a single, unbroken state but consists of four or five of these multi-stage sleep cycles.[1]

[1] Altman, Pam and Doreen Deicke, Eds. Fog City Fundamentals, 4th ed. Pearson Custom Publishing: Boston. 1998 p. 19. Sill need to correctly format citation.

F) One more time! Some of the sentences in the following paragraph are run-together; find these sentences and fix them using the most appropriate strategy.

In 1867, a chef at a hotel in Saratoga Springs accidentally dropped some thinly sliced potatoes into hot cooking oil, instantly the world found a new delicacy: the potato chip. At the time, Saratoga Springs was America's most fashionable resort, fads that started there usually found immediate success. Almost overnight, the potato chip became Saratoga's hottest item. The wide, tree-lined avenues were filled with people eating potato chips, the huge veranda of the United States Hotel was no different; it was filled with chip-eaters too. Some of the richest, most powerful people in the world consumed them regularly, for instance, the Vanderbilts could often be seen daintily plucking chips from paper cups on their stroll back to their mansion. The elegant "Saratoga chips" remained the delicacy of the wealthy until 1925, when the first chip factory was constructed in Albany, New York. The potato chip was no longer the snack of only the rich and famous, it became a common household item. Of course potato chips have changed a great deal in the last hundred years, now they come in various textures and flavors, some even stacked in paper tubes. Still, the next time you grab a handful of greasy, flavor-dusted chips, you might pause to remember the noble origins of that humble food.

Subject & Verb Identification

What are they?

Connections
See also the "Verb Tenses."

Two of the most important parts of a sentence are subjects and verbs. Being able to identify subjects and verbs will allow you to create complete and clear sentences; it will also help you understand other grammatical concepts like fragments and run-together sentences.

Identifying Verbs
Verbs are easy to identify because they are words that indicate action or a state of being, words like: write, run, tell, have, be, look, feel. Verbs are the only part of speech that gets **conjugated**, that is, that changes tense in order to indicate a particular time frame. This chart contains examples of some of the more common verb tenses:

Present (today)	**Past** (yesterday)	**Future** (tomorrow)	**Present Progressive**	**Present Perfect**	**Past Perfect**
I learn	I learned	I will learn	I am learning	I have learned	I had learned
I swim.	I swam.	I will swim.	I am swimming.	I have swum.	I had swum.

For more a comprehensive description of verb tenses and guidelines for using them correctly, see "Verb Tenses."

Sentences can contain several types of verbs and verb-like words; what we're interested in is finding the **main verbs**, the words that drive the action of a sentence. While all verbs *can* be conjugated, main verbs are the ones that actually *do* change when the entire sentence changes tense. To find which words are acting as the main verbs in a sentence, then, try changing the tense. For example:

Original sentence:	**New tense:**
Running a marathon is not fun.	Running a marathon will not be fun.
Hoping to build up her portfolio, the supermodel is going to Paris.	Hoping to build up her portfolio, the supermodel went to Paris.
To escape their stress, Liz and Ryan have been watching bad reality TV.	To escape their stress, Liz and Ryan will be watching bad reality TV.
The bicycle had been left in the rain.	The bicycle was left in the rain.

Identifying Subjects

The **subject** of a sentence performs the action(s) indicated by the main verb; that is, the subject is the *doer* of the action: the diva was singing (the diva is doing the action of "singing"), the glass broke (the glass is doing the action of "breaking"), the audience started to applaud (the audience is doing the action of "applauding).

To identify the subject of the sentence, you can ask yourself "who or what is (verb)?"

In the following examples, the subjects have been underlined once and the verbs underlined twice.

Sentence	**Question➔ Subject**
Running a marathon is not fun.	***What** is not fun?* running
The supermodel is going to Paris.	***Who** is going to Paris?* the supermodel
Liz and Ryan have been watching bad reality TV.	***Who** is watching TV?* Liz and Ryan
The bicycle had been left in the rain.	***What** had been left in the rain?* the bicycle

As you might have noticed, words that end in **–ing** can are sometimes act like subjects:

- Running a marathon is not fun.

and sometimes they act as verbs:

- Liz and Ryan are watching bad reality TV.

As a general guideline, when an **-ing** word is preceded by a form of "be" (i.e. is, are, was, were), it is acting as a verb.

PRACTICE

Find the subjects and main verbs in the following sentences. Underline the subject(s) once and the main verb(s) twice.

For example: To cheer himself up, he watched old detective movies and ate ice cream.

1. After a long, rainy winter, the woman and her husband had become tired of their small apartment, so they decided to drive to a seedy part of town in search of excitement.

2. The couple had been cruising slowly down a side street, looking for some local nightlife, when they heard music coming from a small bar on the corner.

3. They had just left their car when some stray cats started fighting in a side alley.

4. When the couple walked in and sat down at the bar, nobody bothered to look up.

5. At one end of the bar, a tired-looking woman was languidly smoking her cigarette and expertly blowing out smoke rings.

6. The bartender was wiping down the counter and softly whistling to himself.

7. Hunched over a table in the back corner, four men were enjoying a friendly game of cards.

8. A sad Billie Holiday tune had been playing softly from an old jukebox, but once the song was over, the room went silent.

9. Suddenly, a man in the back stood and threw his cards down on the table, cursing loudly.

10. When he began to reach into his pocket, the couple looked at each other anxiously and then hurriedly backed out the door.

Subject-Verb Agreement

What are they?

In the present tense verbs must agree with their subjects: both must be singular, or both must be plural.

I	breathe the air.	He	breathe**s** the air.
You	breathe the air.	She	breathe**s** the air.
They	breathe the air.	It	breathe**s** the air.

> ***Connections***
> For more help identifying subjects and verbs see, "Subject & Verb Identification."

You must add an **–s** or **–es** at the end of the verb when the subject (or the entity performing the action) is a singular third person: **he**, **she**, **it**, or words for which these pronouns could substitute.

Examples

He, She, It	All others
Roberto eats all of the oranges.	They eat everything but the rind.
She wonders which constellations are hidden.	I wonder if Leo has already passed.
It lasts for another three hours or until they score.	Veronica and Kevin last as long as they can.

To Create the plural/singular

To make a noun plural, we usually add an **–s** or **–es**, as in the case of *jar* to *jar**s*** or *box* to *box**es***.

A verb is singular, by contrast, when it is matched with a singular subject. A singular verb, then, usually has an **–s** or **–es** ending, as in the case of *talk**s*** and *fix**es***.

Finding the subject and verb

To successfully determine whether or not your subjects and verbs agree, you need to be able to locate them in your writing. The subject in a sentence is the agent that is doing whatever is done in the sentence. The verb is the action--what is actually done. Look at this example:

- The zebra runs down the street.

  "The zebra" is the subject of this sentence, and "runs" is the verb.

Use Pronouns to Help

When the **pronouns** *he*, *she* or *it* are used as a subject in a sentence, the verb is always singular, and therefore will contain an –**s** or –**es** ending.

- He takes the money.
- She stacks the papers.
- It chimes hourly.

All other pronouns (I, you, we, they) require a plural verb (one without an –**s** or –**es** ending).

- They skate until March if the ice holds.
- We borrow money to pay our loans.

You can use these pronoun rules to determine whether your verb should be plural or singular. Let's look at a variety of subjects, and see which pronouns can replace them.

Subject	Pronoun substitute	Verb
John, Marion and Isaac	They…	grow.
The community forest	It…	grows.
The leading investigator	She…	
The Leaning Tower of Pisa	It…	

So, if you can substitute *he*, *she* or *it* for the subject, your verb ought to be singular (with an –**s** or –**es**).

Practice Exercises

Circle the correct verb for each sentence.
Tip: write the pronoun above the subject to help you identify whether the verb should be singular or plural.

(He)
1. Jordan (hang / hangs) the picture upside down above his futon.

( )
2. *Starry Night* (contain / contains) eleven stars and one swirling moon.

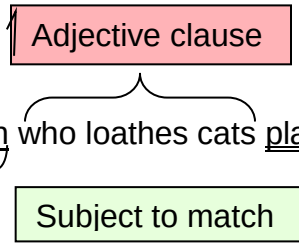
( )
3. The hammers (pound / pounds) the nails until each corner is flush against the wall.

( )
4. Van Gogh's sister (take / takes) most of the credit for his genius.

( )
5. The yellows in the painting (swirl / swirls) around the blue sky rather than the other way around.

Complicated subjects

Some subjects include phrases that might confuse you into choosing the wrong verb. The verb agrees with the subject, not the noun or pronoun in the phrase.



- The person who loathes cats plays only with their tails.
- One of the brothers is missing.
- The computer building, including all of the labs, closes its doors promptly at seven.

Subjects connected by "*and*" require a plural verb. Subjects connected by "*or*" or "*nor*" require a singular.

- John and Jeff drive downtown.
- A sandwich or muffin is fine.
- Neither rain nor shine helps the soccer field.

If a compound subject has both plural and singular nouns, follow the pronoun rule for the noun *closest* to the verb.



- One walnut or two acorns fill a squirrel for a day.

PRACTICE

Fill in the verb for each sentence.

Subject	Verb	
Martin and his mother	*play* [to play]	backgammon every day after work.
The junior or senior	[to march]	in the Homecoming parade.
A plum, and not the carrots,	[to provide]	valuable nutrients to the body.
Martha or Dan's children	[to scribble]	on the wall to create their art.
The banana's peel	[to stretch]	across the floor to make them trip.
Saving of electricity	[to take]	strong initiative, but benefits all of us.
The group of friends	[to call]	each card aloud to win the game.

Agreement Practice Paragraph: The Supreme Court

Underline each subject once, each verb twice, and fix any incorrect verbs. The first sentence is done for you.

The Supreme Court Justices rejoices after a particularly difficult decision. Though they usually lean on the chief justice to announce the ruling (unless he is in the minority) each celebrate in his or her own way. A reporter, speaking on the condition of anonymity, tells that in each session, the justices bickers back and forth even when they seem to agree. One or two bicker more than the others, but no one keep silent for long. All this bickering produces so much tension that when they finish a case, they all must go their separate ways until at least the following week when they repeat the whole process.

Subordinators

What are they?

Connections
See also the "Coordinators" and "Fragments."

Like coordinators (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so), **subordinators** (see chart below) can join **independent clauses**, *aka* simple sentences, and can help you:

- Make your writing more fluid by connecting short sentences
- Make your writing more precise by showing your reader the logical relationships between ideas.

Let's take a look at some of the most common subordinators. As you can see from the sample sentences below, subordinators can appear either at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence.

Logical Relationship	Subordinators	Sample Sentence
Contrast/ Concession	although, while, even though, even if, whereas, though	***Although*** the young blond heiress was often in the news, she had no talent.
Cause	because, since	He started to worry about finding a job ***because*** he was almost finished with his last semester of college.
Effect/ Result	so that, in that, in order that	She enrolled in cooking school ***so that*** she could become a pastry chef.
Condition	if, unless, provided that	***If*** it is sunny this weekend, they are planning to have a barbeque.
Time	after, before, as soon as, since, when, while, until, as	***Until*** my brother pays me back for last time, I am not lending him any more money.

Subordinators & Dependent Clauses (aka Subordinate Clauses)

Joining two independent clauses with a subordinator transforms one of them—the one which begins with the subordinator—into a dependent clause. Even though this clause will still contain a subject-verb unit, it cannot stand alone as a sentence.

Independent Clause (a complete sentence)	**Dependent clause** (no longer a complete sentence)
The young blond heiress was often in the news.	*Although* the young blond heiress was often in the news
He was almost finished with his last semester of college.	*Because* he was almost finished with his last semester of college

Dependent clauses pretending to be sentences are actually **fragments**, a grammar error you can read more about the "Fragments" section.

Subordinators & Emphasis

Unlike coordinators, subordinators do not give equal emphasis to the ideas they connect; instead, the clause that begins with a subordinator—the dependent clause— receives less emphasis. Compare the following two sentences:

- Although he wanted to see the movie, Guillermo did not want to spend ten dollars.
- Although he did not want to spend ten dollars, Guillermo wanted to see the movie.

In the first sentence, the subordinator "although" de-emphasizes Guillermo's desire to see the movie; his reluctance to spend the money seems more important. In the second sentence, however, the subordinator "although" de-emphasizes Guillermo's reluctance to spend the money, and his desire to see the movie seems more important.

Be careful, then, when deciding where to place the subordinator—this placement can change the meaning of your sentence.

Punctuation

When a subordinator introduces a sentence, put a comma after the first clause.

- *After* she went to bed**,** she started to hear noises downstairs.

But if the subordinator comes in the middle of a clause, you don't need to set it off with a comma.

- She started to hear noises downstairs *after* she went to bed.

PRACTICE

A) Join the following sentences using an appropriate subordinator. For the first four sets of sentences, you'll see a hint about the logical relationship you should show.

For example: Some rodents and birds prey on cockroaches.
Man is their biggest foe. [CONTRAST]
While some rodents and birds prey on cockroaches, man is their biggest foe.

1. Cockroaches are a health menace to humans.
   They carry viruses and bacteria that result in diseases from hepatitis to salmonella. [CAUSE]

2. Humans try to defeat cockroaches.
   Cockroaches are very successful at surviving our attacks. [CAUSE]

3. Cockroaches are smaller than the humans who chase them.
   They have extremely fast responses and sensitive receptors. [CONTRAST/CONCESSION]

4. There is no food.
   Cockroaches subsist on glue, paper, and soap. [TIME]

5. They can't find glue, paper or soap.
   They can draw on their body stores for three months.

6. Cockroaches are really desperate.
   They will turn into cannibals.

7. Female Suriname cockroaches produce generation after generation of identical females.
   They are able to clone themselves.

B) Join the following sentences with subordinators, making sure the word you choose indicates the appropriate logical connection between ideas.

1. They sat down with Red Cloud to discuss the purchase of the Black Hills. Whatever calmness the government commissioners still possessed must have been shaken.

2. Red Cloud calmly proposed that $600 million seemed like a fair price. The region was so valuable to the Native Americans and appeared even more valuable to the commissioners.

3. The Native Americans had reconsidered their price tag. They suggested that $6 million would be a reasonable offer.

4. The commissioners were too intimidated to negotiate. They returned to Washington and angrily recommended teaching the Native Americans a lesson.

5. The government immediately ordered all Native Americans to come onto the reservation at once. The demand was both illegal and impossible to comply with.

6. Most of the Native Americans could never know about the order. They were spread out all over the Black Hills.

7. The deadline came. Only one small band of Native Americans had come in.

8. The other Native Americans were now assumed at war with the government. The Indian Bureau turned the matter over to General Philip Sheridan.

9. It was a totally unprovoked war. No Sioux or Cheyenne had ever violated a treaty or actually attacked a U.S. citizen.

Verb Tenses

Connections
For more help identifying subjects and verbs, turn to "Subject & Verb Identification."

What are they?

Tense refers to the form a verb takes in a sentence, whether to express the present, past or future.

Examples

Simple Tenses		**Perfect Tenses**	
Present:	I *learn*.	Present perfect:	I *have learned*.
Past:	I *learned*.	Past perfect:	I *had learned*.
Future:	I *will learn*.	Future perfect:	I *will have learned*.

Progressive Tenses	
Present progressive:	I *am learning*.
Past progressive:	I *was learning*.
Future progressive:	I *will be learning*.
Present perfect progressive:	I *have been learning*.
Past perfect progressive:	I *had been learning*.
Future perfect progressive:	I *will have been learning*.

Simple Tenses

Present

The present tense indicates that an action is taking place at the time you express it, or an action that occurs regularly.

- We *wear* organic cotton shirts [an action taking place when it is expressed].
- I *watch* the documentary on PBS each Sunday night [an action that occurs regularly].

Past

The past tense indicates that an action is completed and has already taken place.

- Martin Luther King, Jr. *gave* his most famous speech in 1963 [an action completed in the past].
- As a girl, she *wondered* how her college degree would help her career [an action that occurred once or many times in the past but did not extend to the present].

Future

The future tense indicates that an action will or is likely to take place.

- Later today I *will rinse* the dishes [a future action that will definitely occur].
    - The defendant probably *will plead* innocent [a future action that is likely to occur].

Perfect Tenses

Perfect tenses designate actions that were or will be completed before other actions. You can form the perfect tenses with the appropriate tense form of the helping, or auxiliary, verb *have* plus the past participle.

Present perfect

The present tense indicates that an action is taking place at the time you express it, or an action that occurs regularly.

- We *have worn* organic cotton shirts [an action that began in the past and is finished at the present].
- She *has donated* extensively to UNICEF [an action that began in the past and extends into the present].

Past perfect

The past perfect tense indicates an action occurring before a certain time in the past.

- By 1995, Doctor Harvey *had built* the first artificial brain.

Future perfect

The future perfect tense indicates that an action will be finished by a certain time.

- By Thursday, the President *will have apologized* for his mistake.

Progressive Tenses

The progressive tenses express continuing action. You can form them with the appropriate tense of the verb *be* plus the present participle.

Present progressive
The present progressive tense indicates that something is happening at the time you express it.

- The worker *is hammering*, and her foreman *is watching* lazily.

Past progressive
The past progressive tense indicates two kinds of past action.

- Poe's writing *was becoming* increasingly bizarre and dark [a continuing action in the past].
- The mob tackled Jean-Luc Goddard while he *was introducing* the film [an action occurring at the same time in the past as another action].

Future progressive
The future progressive tense indicates a continuing action in the future.

- The government *will be monitoring* the phones in the lab.

Present perfect progressive
The present perfect progressive tense indicates action continuing from the past into the present and possibly into the future.

- The teacher *has been grading* since yesterday afternoon.

Past perfect progressive
The past perfect progressive tense indicates that a past action went on until another occurred.

- Before her promotion, Nico *had been working* on restoring open space on campus.

Future perfect progressive
The future perfect progressive tense indicates that an action will continue until a certain future time.

- On Tuesday I *will have been working* on this paper for six weeks.

Adapted from The Brief Holt Handbook, Fourth Edition, Kirsner & Mandell, 2004.

PRACTICE

Exercise 1 – Simple Past Tense

Fill in each blank with the correct past tense form of the verb provided.

Example:
PLAY We __played__ dodge ball all afternoon.

FRY 1. We _____ the fish we caught in the lake.

STUDY 2. All of us _____ hard for the physics exam.

CRY 3. Mary _____ on his shoulder all through the movie.

MARRY 4. She _____ him on Tuesday and played slots that night.

TRY 5. Fred _____ to get in the concert by posing as a security guard.

SHOP 6. I _____ for all of my birthday presents at the art fair.

ADMIT 7. No one _____ that he was tired.

PLAN 8. Marty and Isabel _____ their marriage simply and loosely.

TERRIFY 9. The fireworks _____ the younger children.

Exercise 2 – Simple Past Tense

In each of the following sentences, underline any verbs that should have –ed or –d endings and supply the missing letters. Watch for time expressions (last week, yesterday, years ago) that indicate past time.

incorrect: The committee vote to adjourn yesterday.
correct: The committee voted to adjourn yesterday.

1. The driver ask for the exact fare last week.
2. Oliver use to live in Berkeley when he was a college student.
3. Katerina studied all the time and so she graduate from college last year.
4. College students are suppose to attend every class meeting.
5. Last Sunday, Laura listen to the drummers in the park.
6. Until I started school, I work twenty hours per week and study the rest of the time.
7. Finally Gayle's cat return home.
8. Several years ago I witness a crime and identify the criminal.

Exercise 3 – Perfect Tenses

Use the perfect tense to fill in the blank using the same time period (past, present, future) as the sample.

Example: Joan licks the popsicle. (present tense)

Joan *has licked* the popsicle. (present perfect tense)

(Remember: Perfect tenses for the verb *to run* are:
Present: she *has run*
Past: she *had run*
Future: she *will have run*)

1. Eric took piano lessons.

   Eric _____ piano lessons since he was ten years old.

2. Tara raises as many children as she can.

   Tara _____ as many children as she can.

3. Bill, on the other hand, will join the Coast Guard.

   Bill, on the other hand, _____ the Coast Guard.

4. Alyssa gives a drawing to each of her friends.

   Alyssa _____ a drawing to each of her friends.

5. Chickens pecked at bugs and fruit in the garden.

   Chickens _____ at bugs and fruit in the garden.

6. Each egg will travel a thousand miles before it lands on her lap.

   Each egg _____ a thousand miles before it lands on her lap.

7. The wings had plenty of room to spread.

   The wings _____ plenty of room to spread.

8. Madison collects the hay in the morning after breakfast.

   Madison _____ the hay in the morning after breakfast.

Exercise 4 – Progressive Tenses

In the following sentences, change the simple tense verbs to progressive tense verbs using the same time period (present, past, future). Avoid the perfect tense for this exercise.

Example: Martians land on the planet Earth. (present)

Martians *are landing* on the planet Earth. (present progressive)

(Remember: Progresssive tenses for the verb *to run* are:
Present: she *is running*
Past: she *was running*
Future: she *will be running*)

1. Ferdinand scoffed when his friends all left for college.

   Ferdinand _____ when his friends all left for college.

2. He enjoys his flowers, vegetables and herbs.

   He _____ his flowers, vegetables and herbs.

3. The pumpkins ripened too long last year.

   The pumpkins _____ too long last year.

4. His friends will call at the next holiday or break.

   His friends _____ at the next holiday or break.

5. Ferdinand answers the phone saying “What?”

   Ferdinand _____ the phone saying “What?”

6. He screened his calls last week to avoid bill collectors.

   He _____ his calls last week to avoid bill collectors.

7. His money goes under his mattress until he needs it.

   His money _____ under his mattress until he needs it.

8. He will go fishing next week if he gets his license.

   He _____ next week if he gets his license.

ANSWERS

The Grammar answer key is ordered alphabetically by grammar title:

Adjectives & Adverbs Answer Key

Exercise A

1. Their timid leader tentatively put one fat, calloused foot on the grass.

2. She then gingerly placed the other foot down.

3. She paused, thoughtfully scratched her forehead, and then started to waddle quite gracelessly toward a dim light.

4. Soon the braver aliens followed her but the more cowardly aliens hung back inside the door of the silver spaceship.

5. Suddenly, they heard a short, high-pitched yelp.

6. The youngest alien had stepped accidentally on the tail of a small furry creature, and both of them cried out instinctively.

7. The little alien regained his composure right away and, curious about the *strange* creature, he carefully reached down to pick up the frightened mouse.

   ["Curious about the strange creature" is an adjective phrase that modifies "he", and "strange" is an adjective that modifies "creature"]

8. The mouse, still terrified, dashed away.

9. It ran over the sensitive toes of several aliens who squealed *loudly*

   ["Who squealed loudly" is an adjective clause modifying "aliens"; within that clause, "loudly" is an adverb modifying "squealed"]

10. The resulting commotion distracted the group, and they didn't notice the two young children slowly riding up on their creaky three-speed bicycles.

Exercise B: Individual answers will vary.

Appositives Answer Key

ANSWERS

Exercise 1 – Noun Phrase Appositives – Sentence Combining

Combine the following sentences using NPAs.

1. The lunch was cheap, served cold, and brought an hour late. The lunch was a bowl of soup.

   The lunch, a bowl of soup, was cheap, served cold, and brought an hour late.

2. Maxwell's car topped fifty miles per hour—but barely. His car was a sleek Corvair.

   Maxwell's car, a sleek Corvair, topped fifty miles per hour—but barely.

3. The student body voted "no" on the resolution even though it would have benefited them explicitly. The student body is a confused group of adults whose only interest in common was the college's location.

   The student body, a confused group of adults whose only interest in common was the college's location, voted "no" on the resolution even though it would have benefited them explicitly.

4. The pilot was stranded for twelve hours inside of his jet. The pilot was a former Air Force mechanic. His jet was a Cessna Skylane.

   The pilot, a former Air Force mechanic, was stranded for twelve hours inside of his jet, a Cessna Skylane.

5. I want to speak on the important subjects. The important subjects are philosophy, linguistics and chemistry.

   I want to speak on the important subjects: philosophy, linguistics and chemistry.

6. After six long years Alec finally achieved his lifelong goal. The goal was a scholarship to a good college.

   After six long years Alec finally achieved his lifelong goal : a scholarship to a good college.

7. Even though you're willing to forfeit the prize, I think you should wait a week or two—until you know you won't need the money. The prize would be my salary for a whole year.

   Even though you're willing to forfeit the prize—my salary for a whole year—I think you should wait a week or two—until you know you won't need the money.

8. The bear came to our tent, peeked in, and went on his merry way. The bear was a sleepy grizzly.

   The bear, a sleepy grizzly, came to our tent, peeked in, and went on his merry way.

ANSWERS

9. Camped around the fire, each of us stared at the night sky. The fire was a glowing source of warmth. The night sky was a bowl full of sparkling stars.

   Camped around the fire, a glowing source of warmth, each of us stared at the night sky, a bowl full of sparkling stars.

10. Mrs. Peterson warned us that we would have only one more day to hand in the assignment. Mrs. Peterson is my least favorite teacher.

    Mrs. Peterson, my least favorite teacher, warned us that we would have only one more day to hand in the assignment.

Exercise 2 – NPAs – Sentence Combining

For each of the following sentences, add one or more NPAs to give the reader additional information. Make up whatever you like! (Hint: find the noun(s) in the sentence to see what can take an NPA.)

NOTE: Answers will vary but one of the underlined nouns must be modified in each sentence.

1. My best friend lost the race.

2. Bill Clinton took first prize for his book.

3. Joanne told Larry to go for a ride on his boat.

4. Napoleon discovered the "trapple."

5. My binder contains one hundred papers and two pamphlets.

6. The dog bit Bill in the leg before he could run into a house.

7. Her shirt nearly blinded me.

8. Abe Lincoln probably didn't use Log Cabin syrup.

9. I like the school's newest building.

10. Cindy took the money to the bank.

Articles Answer Key



Exercise 1 – Definite and Indefinite Articles

Fill in the blank for each sentence using either *a*, *an*, or *the*, or leave the space blank if none is needed.

---

1. Last week ___a___ seagull dropped his fish onto my car.

2. Maria took out ___the___ garbage before reading.

3. ___The___ surfboard cut through the waves as she sped toward the beach.

4. Sculpture is ___an___ interesting art form, whether in metal, clay or uranium.

5. I love picnics—especially when I remember ___the___ food.

6. My house is falling apart, ___the___ shutters are in disrepair, and ___the___ windows are broken.

7. The brothers met to discuss ___a___ possible solution.

8. I went to the lab to work on ___a___ computer, but they were all taken.

9. Well, professor, ___an___ alien came and stole my gray matter before I could finish my homework.

10. This semester ___the___ same student violated his restraining order.

11. She passed him to avoid ___a___ confrontation involving ___the___ police.

12. I want to go to ___the___ part of Ukraine where they speak ___a___ Russian dialect.

13. The assistants found ___the___ theme that meant the most to them, and they wove it carefully into ___a___ handbook they could be proud of.

14. ___The___ airplane's tires skidded down ___X___ Los Angeles Airport's main runway before knocking out ___a___ baggage cart and ___a___ fuel truck.

15. I am studying ___X___ American history in school, but only after I pass my Biology class and ace ___the___ final exam.

Commas Answer Key

Exercise 1 – Commas – Dependent & Independent Clauses



Add commas where necessary in the sentences below. Some sentences will not require one.

1. Lately Katherine has wanted more companionship even though she rather likes to be alone.
2. Jerry vies for her attention, but she has so much on her own mind as she suffers through this ordeal.
3. But whereas Alec acts like a friend, he also wants Katherine's admiration.
4. So that she will be found innocent, Miss Smatter will write another's confession.
5. Jerry eats his sandwich as coolly as the others do, yet he can't shake the feeling of deception and mistrust.
6. Sabrina thinks that the apartment's rent is trivial while Kelly thinks it crucial.
7. Although Rachel has little say in the matter, her friends could use the advice.
8. Because her dog was hit by a car, he walks with a substantial limp.
9. The doctor set it with pins, and even though he didn't scratch at it, he was still forced to wear a giant collar.
10. Either the bill is paid within the month, or the doctor will send a collection agency for the money.

ANSWERS

Exercise 2 – Commas – Series and Adjectives

Add commas where necessary in the sentences below. Some sentences will not require one.

1. Lately Martin has been picking giant, swollen mushrooms from his yard.
2. Sue won the "Vegetable Prize of the Day" that included carrots, turnips, and leeks.
3. Most people don't know that their favorite chips contain preservatives, artificial flavors, and MSG.
4. The three tall brothers took the brilliant, shining vitamins before playing sports.
5. Watching movies, reading books, sleeping, and exercising are my favorite weekend activities.

Exercise 3 – Commas – Essential and Nonessential Items

Add commas where necessary in the sentences below. Some sentences will not require one.

1. Shelly, my mother's step-sister, gave me thirty dollars last week.
2. The campus police, who rarely arrest any faculty members, are responsible for patrolling all night long.
3. The man walking his dog down the street looks like my great-uncle Ted.
4. My grandmother, with a terrible scream, alerted me to the fire in her closet.
5. Doug gave me three helpings of dessert, which was a crème brûlée.
6. Speaking as if he was consumed with fury, Louis yelled to the audience.
7. The actor with no siblings starred in the blockbuster movie *Grammar Cop*.
8. The helicopter, a Grasker A-7, flew over the vast and empty desert.

11. His wife, the fifth one before Jane and after Cecilia, always worried their marriage wouldn't last.

9. "Sonny's Blues," the famous story by Baldwin, contains rich allegory that weaves, along with fascinating symbolism, a rich fabric of text accessible to most readers.

Exercise 4 – Commas – Transitions

ANSWERS

Add commas and/or semicolons where necessary in the sentences below.

Example:

- Nevertheless, I wanted to go to the farm to see the llamas.

---

1. I didn't want to see the whole country; however, I did want to visit the biggest states and prettiest parks.
2. On the other hand, Martin said that Oklahoma is worth skipping.
3. Alternatively, I dream about the open road even if it is scary sometimes.
4. My car takes five quarts of oil, typically speaking.
5. I made the motel reservations already; therefore I should leave next week.
6. Pharmaceuticals, as a result, are becoming more and more expensive.
7. Thus, I will need to buy a new car before I set off on Sunday.

Exercise 5 – Commas – Quotations

Add commas where necessary in the sentences below.

1. "Imagination is more important than knowledge," Albert Einstein wisely once asserted.
2. Walt Disney offered excellent advice when he said, "The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."
3. Do you agree with the assertion made by Socrates, "An unexamined life is not worth living"?
4. "To be or not to be?" is one of the most quoted phrases from Shakespeare's plays. (no added comma)
5. "Live as if you were to die tomorrow," Gandhi advised. "Learn as if you were to live forever."
6. In *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley puts a forth a shocking assertion, "Most men and women will grow up to love their servitude and will never dream of revolution."



Contractions Answer Key

Exercise 1 – Contractions

1. The team is busy typing at the desk, but they're not going to stay long.
2. It isn't that their parents are mean, but they don't spend any time with them.
3. You'd have to be crazy to eat that fast food.
4. Paragraphs aren't my favorite thing to study, but they beat spelling.
5. In two more days we'll be sailing around the world.
6. The second student from the left wouldn't turn in his test on time.
7. Let's see what I'm doing next week so I don't double-book.
8. Who's coming to the party tomorrow?
9. This really isn't what I envisioned when I agreed to get paid.
10. The co-op doesn't have any cereal unless you're buying it in bulk.
11. In fact, it's cheaper, healthier, and shouldn't be any less fresh.
12. I've had a good experience at that store.
13. The food I brought home wouldn't ever go to waste.
14. They'll bag it for you and won't drop anything.
15. I'm a fan of going to a co-op like this instead of the large chain stores.

Adapted from Fog City Fundamentals, Fourth Edition, Altman & Deicke, 1998

Coordinators Answer Key



1. He could not understand geometry, *nor* could he understand physics.

2. He took extra classes, *but/yet* the tutor couldn't seem to help.

3. He worked incredibly hard, *and* everyone in the math department was willing to help him.

4. He realized he would have to improve, *or* he was going to have to give up his ambition to become a great physicist.

5. The other students could build catapults out of popsicle sticks and rubber bands, *but/yet* Calvin's catapult couldn't even launch a pebble.

6. Calvin's experiments were always unique, *for* they proved that some basic law of nature no longer existed.

7. Calvin finally realized that he did not have it in him to be the next Stephen Hawking, *so* he changed his major to English.

Dangling Modifiers Answer Key



1. Reacting with suspicion and hostility to the Roma's distinct culture and nomadic lifestyles, some native Europeans have historically discriminated against them.

2. No corrections needed.

3. In World War II, the Nazis carried out an attempted genocide known as the *Porajmos*, or the "devouring," that killed between 200,000 and 800,000 Roma.

4. Some people continue to perpetuate derogatory stereotypes, characterizing the Roma as tramps and thieves.

5. Both embodying and transcending the sadness of this history, music is an important expression of traditional Rom culture.

6. Developed in Spanish Roma communities, flamenco is probably the style of Roma music most familiar to the outside world.

7. No corrections needed.

8. A celebration of the range and vitality of gypsy music, Latcho Drom, is an excellent documentary by the Roma director Tony Gatlif.

   OR

   The Roma director Tony Gatlif made the excellent documentary Latcho Drom, a celebration of the range and vitality of gypsy music.

Fragments Answer Key

ANSWERS

Exercise A

1. A noticeable mistake which was on the flyer--*fragment*
2. Whenever I get tired of doing my math homework--*fragment*
3. The building across from the library is condemned. –*sentence*
4. My roommate who intends to finish college in four years--*fragment*
5. My other roommate has been in college seven years--*sentence*
6. Before the semester began--*fragment*
7. The teacher who liked to listen to the sound of his own voice--*fragment*
8. Because mid-terms are just about to start--*fragment*
9. If I could be left alone to do my homework--*fragment*
10. Although I don't usually enjoy hard work, I love studying Japanese. --*sentence*
11. Listening to tapes in the language lab is really time consuming--*sentence*
12. The boy typed on the Mac in the computer lab--*sentence*
13. The essay that I have to write—*fragment*
14. While I was eating my lunch at the campus center—*fragment*

Exercise B

ANSWERS

1. Anxious about his love life, he decided to visit a fortune-teller.

2. The fortune-teller asked for fifty dollars and the names of his favorite movie stars.

3. *She* consulted her astrology charts and closely examined his palms.

   OR

   Consulting her astrology charts, *she* closely examined his palms.

4. She predicted someone important, *a tall, dark stranger*, would soon come into his life.

5. *He* was skeptical that such a clichéd prediction could come true.

   OR

   While he was skeptical that such a clichéd prediction could come true, *he was secretly hoping it would.*

   [Any independent clause that would complete the sentence is acceptable.]

6. No revisions necessary.

7. The stranger who would change his life walked in the door and ordered a hot chai.

8. She asked if she could share his table because the other tables were full of students studying for their midterms.

9. Looking up from his crossword puzzle, he smiled and said yes.

10. As she sat down in the table across from him, *she helped him find the answer to seven across*.

    [Any independent clause that would complete the sentence is acceptable.]

ANSWERS

Exercise C

In “The Lottery,” author Shirley Jackson implies that human beings are mindless, static creatures who cannot or will not free themselves from the domination of tradition, even when a ritual has lost all purpose or value. This theme is dramatized in her own tale of a town’s annual selection of one of its residents for sacrifice at the hands of his or her neighbors. On June 27th of every year, the head of each household draws a lot from an old black box to see whether someone in the household is the fated one.

On the day of the story’s action, the proceedings are supervised by Joe Summers, an old-timer who oversees square dances, the teenager’s club, and the Halloween program. The townsfolk are in a festive mood, approaching the oncoming massacre of a neighbor with no more concern than they give to the milking of a cow. They are not troubled that they no longer know the reason for the ritual, the purpose that prompted their forebears to initiate the proceedings. They simply consider the drawing a necessity, one of the town’s vital activities. Old Man Warner exemplifies the majority of the villagers. Sheep-like, he follows the dictates of tradition unquestioningly. “There’s always been a lottery,” he says. And, by implication, there always will be.

Possessives Answer Key



Exercise 1 – Possessives

Rewrite each underlined group of words, using apostrophes to show possession.

1. Nancy was driving along with Jo in the car owned by Beth.
   Beth's car
2. The tires of the car screeched to a halt after a confession.
   The car's tires
3. Not even the defroster could fight the fog of the windows.
   the windows' fog
4. The two avoided the snow by walking underneath the leaves of the trees.
   the trees' leaves.
5. The hands of Jo were cold; warming them wasn't entirely out of the question.
   Jo's hands
6. "The attitudes of people just aren't ready for this," Nancy said.
   People's attitudes
7. The two looked to the snowflakes of the sky and saw white dusty stars floating by.
   the sky's snowflakes
8. "We should go home and sit before the heat of the fireplace," Jo said.
   the fireplace's heat
9. "The mugs that belong to Beth should hold enough hot chocolate to warm us up."
   Beth's mugs

Which possessive pronouns belong in the following examples?

This is Kimberly's handbook.

This is __*her*__ handbook. The handbook is __*hers*__.

Those are Jessie's records.

Those are __*her*__ records. The records are __*hers*__ .

That is Frank and Todd's car.

That is __*his*__ car. The car is __*his*__ .

The tall vase belongs to you.

The tall one is __*your*__ vase. The vase is __*yours*__.

Exercise 2 – Possessives

ANSWERS

Rewrite each underlined group of words, using apostrophes to show possession.

Examples:

- The flavor of the coffee was unusual. ⇨ the coffee's flavor
- I live in the home of my parents. ⇨ my parents' home

---

1. The combined losses of the North and South were the greatest in any American war.
   The North's and South's combined losses
2. The president took away some of the responsibilities of the chief-of-staff.
   the chief-of-staff's responsibilities.
3. We loved the shoes of George and Sara.
   George's and Sara's shoes.
4. She was insulted by the rude remarks of her sister-in-law.
   her sister-in-law's rude remarks.
5. I couldn't stand the behavior of Alan and Jennifer.
   Alan and Jennifer's behavior.
6. The information of the ambassador was mostly incorrect.
   The ambassador's information
7. The voyages of Magellan and Columbus were controversial.
   Magellan's and Columbus's voyages
8. The novels of Fitzgerald and Nabokov are among the most admired in modern literature.
   Fitzgerald's and Nabokov's novels
9. One of the most famous events in American history is the journey west of Lewis and Clark.
   Lewis and Clark's journey west
10. Don't forget the birthday of your mother-in-law.
    your mother-in-law's birthday.

Adapted from Fog City Fundamentals, Fourth Edition, Altman & Deicke, 1998.

Run-Together Sentences Answer Key



Note that in correcting RTS errors, you will often have had a choice between two or more equally logical coordinators or subordinators; therefore, where appropriate, several possibilities are given for each sentence.

Exercise A

1. At the beginning of the season there are fourteen aspiring fashion designers, *but/yet* in the end only three people get to show at Olympus Fashion Week in New York.

2. The supermodel Heidi Klum hosts, *and* famous designers serve as guest judges.

3. The contestants must take the design challenges seriously every week, *for* the loser goes home.

4. Some of the contestants have huge egos, *so* they are unnecessarily competitive.

5. I don't have TiVo, *so* I am going to my friend's house to watch the season finale.

Exercise B

Although the original order of sentences has been retained in this answer key, you could also reasonably switch the order of ideas, so that the subordinate clause comes first, or vise-versa. This is demonstrated with the first sentence.

1. She needed a part-time job *because* books and tuition were expensive this year.

OR

Because books and tuition were expensive this year, she needed a part-time job.

2. *Although/even though/though/while* she would have preferred not to have to work retail, the only job she could find was at a shoe store in the mall.

3. *Although/even though/though/while* the customers were frequently demanding and rude, she liked her co-workers.

4. *When/after/as soon as* she had been working for a month, her employee discount kicked in.

5. *When/after/as soon as* she paid off her credit card bill, she was planning to buy a new pair of shoes.

ANSWERS

Exercise C

In the following sentences, using a transition word—the words in brackets—is optional.

1. Orville was almost thirty-five**;** his tummy had started to stick out.

2. His wife worried that his eating habits were unhealthy**;** *[therefore]* she tried to encourage him to eat more fruits and vegetables.

3. Orville was not as concerned**;** he would eat six cookies a meal without feeling guilty.

4. On the radio, Orville had heard that drinking green tea could help you lose weight**;** he decided to stop drinking coffee that very day and put his coffee machine away.

5. Only he didn't really stop drinking coffee**;** *[instead]* he just stopped making it at home and went to the neighborhood café instead.

Exercise D

1. The legalization of prostitution would actually help reduce crime *because* the prostitute wouldn't be a victim of extortion or beatings.

   OR

   The legalization of prostitution would actually help reduce crime, *for* the prostitute wouldn't be a victim of extortion or beatings.

2. *If* police could stake out a street crime area instead of a brothel, the effect would be safer streets and more efficient use of the police.

3. Not everybody is going to be so ambitious and work**;** many will probably do nothing.

4. *Although/even though/though/while* at one time people had responsibilities to their families and communities, now you only have to answer to yourself and no one else.

   OR

   At one time people had responsibilities to their families and communities, *but/yet* now you only have to answer to yourself and no one else.

5. To some, divorce provides an easy out to their problems of getting along together**;** therefore they dissolve the marriage rather than work it out.

ANSWERS

Exercise E

Only the run-together sentences from the original paragraph have been reproduced below.

1. Sleep is a subject we should all know a lot about, *for* we spend one third of our lives sleeping.

   OR

   Sleep is a subject we should all know a lot about *because* we spend one third of our lives sleeping.

2. They used to believe that the body repairs itself while asleep; there is some truth to this, but the body also does this while awake.

3. The brain does not simply shut itself off at night, *but* it goes through a complicated series of chemical changes.

   OR

   The brain does not simply shut itself off at night; it goes through a complicated series of chemical changes.

4. They have found that we do not move smoothly from being awake to being asleep, *but* we pass through a cycle of four sleep stages.

   OR

   They have found that we do not move smoothly from being awake to being asleep; [instead,] we pass through a cycle of four sleep stages.

5. At each stage blood pressure and pulse rate drop, *and* the body temperature also goes down.

   OR

   At each stage blood pressure and pulse rate drop; the body temperature also goes down.[2]

[2] Altman, Pam and Doreen Deicke, Eds. Fog City Fundamentals, 4th ed. Pearson Custom Publishing: Boston, 1998.

Exercise F



1. In 1867, *when* a chef at a hotel in Saratoga Springs accidentally dropped some thinly sliced potatoes into hot cooking oil, instantly the world found a new delicacy: the potato chip.

   OR

   In 1867, a chef at a hotel in Saratoga Springs accidentally dropped some thinly sliced potatoes into hot cooking oil; instantly the world found a new delicacy: the potato chip.

2. At the time, Saratoga Springs was America's most fashionable resort, *and* fads that started there usually found immediate success.

   OR

   At the time, Saratoga Springs was America's most fashionable resort, *so* fads that started there usually found immediate success.

3. The wide, tree-lined avenues were filled with people eating potato chips, *and* the huge veranda of the United States Hotel was no different; it was filled with chip-eaters too.

   OR

   The wide, tree-lined avenues were filled with people eating potato chips. The huge veranda of the United States Hotel was no different; it was filled with chip-eaters too.

4. Some of the richest, most powerful people in the world consumed them regularly; for instance, the Vanderbilts could often be seen daintily plucking chips from paper cups on their stroll back to their mansion.

5. The potato chip was no longer the snack of only the rich and famous, *for* it became a common household item.

6. Of course potato chips have changed a great deal in the last hundred years; now they come in various textures and flavors, some even stacked in paper tubes.[3]

[3] Ibid.

ANSWERS

Subject & Verb Identification Answer Key

1. After a long, rainy winter, the woman and her husband had become tired of their small apartment, so they decided to drive to a seedy part of town in search of excitement.

2. The couple had been cruising slowly down a side street, looking for some local nightlife, when they heard music coming from a small bar on the corner.

3. They had just left their car when some stray cats started fighting in a side alley.

4. When the couple walked in and sat down at the bar, nobody bothered to look up.

5. At one end of the bar, a tired-looking woman was languidly smoking her cigarette and expertly blowing out smoke rings.

6. The bartender was wiping down the counter and softly whistling to himself.

7. Hunched over a table in the back corner, four men were enjoying a friendly game of cards.

8. A sad Billie Holiday tune had been playing softly from an old jukebox, but once the song was over, the room went silent.

9. Suddenly, a man in the back stood and threw his cards down on the table, cursing loudly.

10. When he began to reach into his pocket, the couple looked at each other anxiously and then hurriedly backed out the door.

ANSWERS

Subject-Verb Agreement Answer Key

Practice Exercises

Circle the correct verb for each sentence.
Tip: write the pronoun above the subject to help you identify whether the verb should be singular or plural.

(He)
1. Jordan (hang / hangs) the picture upside down above his futon.

(It)
2. *Starry Night* (contain / contains) eleven stars and one swirling moon.

(They)
3. The hammers (pound / pounds) the nails until each corner is flush against the wall.

(She)
4. Van Gogh's sister (take / takes) most of the credit for his genius.

(They)
5. The yellows in the painting (swirl / swirls) around the blue sky rather than the other way around.

Agreement Exercise

Fill in the verb for each sentence.

Subject	Verb		
Martin and his mother	play	[to play]	backgammon every day after work.
The junior or senior	marches	[to march]	in the Homecoming parade.
A plum, and not the carrots,	provides	[to provide]	valuable nutrients to the body.
Martha or Dan's children	scribble	[to scribble]	on the wall to create their art.
The banana's peel	stretches	[to stretch]	across the floor to make them trip.
Saving of electricity	takes	[to take]	strong initiative, but benefits all of us.
The group of friends	calls	[to call]	each card aloud to win the game.

ANSWERS

Agreement Practice Paragraph: The Supreme Court

Underline each subject once, each verb twice, and fix any incorrect verbs. The first sentence is done for you.

The Supreme Court Justices rejoices ~~s~~ after a particularly difficult decision. Though they usually lean on the chief justice to announce the ruling (unless he is in the minority), each celebrate s in his or her own way. A reporter, speaking on the condition of anonymity, tells that in each session, the justices bickers ~~s~~ back and forth even when they seem to agree. One or two bicker more than the others, but no one keep s silent for long. All this bickering produces so much tension that when they finish a case, they all must go their separate ways until at least the following week when they repeat the whole process.

Subordinators Answer Key

ANSWERS

Note that in joining the two sentences, you will often have had a choice between two or more equally logical subordinators; therefore, several possibilities are given for each sentence. Note too that although the original order of sentences has been retained in this answer key, you could also reasonably switch the order of ideas, so that the subordinate clause comes first, or vise-versa. This is demonstrated with the first example in exercise A.

Exercise A:

1. Cockroaches are a health menace to humans *because/since* they carry viruses and bacteria that cause diseases from hepatitis to salmonella.

   OR

   Because/since they carry viruses and bacteria that cause diseases from hepatitis to salmonella, cockroaches are a health menace to humans.

2. *Even though/although/though* humans try to defeat cockroaches, they are very successful at surviving our attacks.

3. *Although/even though/though* cockroaches are smaller than the humans who chase them, they have extremely fast responses and sensitive receptors.

4. *If/when* there is no food, cockroaches subsist on glue, paper, and soap.

5. *If/when* they can't find glue, paper or soap, they can draw on their body stores for three months.

6. *If/when* cockroaches are really desperate, they will turn into cannibals.

7. Female Suriname cockroaches can produce generation after generation of identical females *because/since* they are able to clone themselves.

ANSWERS

Exercise B:

1. *When* they sat down with Red Cloud to discuss the purchase of the Black Hills, whatever calmness the government commissioners still possessed must have been shaken.

2. *Because/since* the region was so valuable to the Native Americans, Red Cloud calmly proposed that $600 million seemed like a fair price.

3. *After* the Native Americans had reconsidered their price tag, they suggested that $6 million would be a reasonable offer.

4. *Because/since* commissioners were too intimidated to negotiate, they returned to Washington and angrily recommended teaching the Native Americans a lesson.

5. The government immediately ordered all Native Americans to come onto the reservation at once *even though/although/though* the demand was both illegal and impossible to comply with.

6. Most of the Native Americans could never know about the order *because/since* they were spread out all over the Black Hills.

7. *When* the deadline came, only one small band of Native Americans had come in.

8. *Because/since* the other Native Americans were now assumed at war with the government, the Indian Bureau turned the matter over to General Philip Sheridan.

9. It was a totally unprovoked war *because/since* no Sioux or Cheyenne had ever violated a treaty or actually attacked a U.S. citizen.

Verb Tenses Answer Key



Exercise 1 – Simple Past Tense

Fill in each blank with the correct past tense form of the verb provided.

Example:

PLAY We __played__ dodge ball all afternoon.

FRY 1. We __fried__ the fish we caught in the lake.

STUDY 2. All of us __studied__ hard for the physics exam.

CRY 3. Mary __cried__ on his shoulder all through the movie.

MARRY 4. She __married__ him on Tuesday and played slots that night.

TRY 5. Fred __tried__ to get in the concert by posing as a security guard.

SHOP 6. I __shopped__ for all of my birthday presents at the art fair.

ADMIT 7. No one __admitted__ that he was tired.

PLAN 8. Marty and Isabel __planned__ their marriage simply and loosely.

TERRIFY 9. The fireworks __terrified__ the younger children.

COMPILE 10. The assistants __compiled__ the materials into a great handbook.

ANSWERS

Exercise 2 – Simple Past Tense

In each of the following sentences, underline any verbs that should have –ed or –d endings and supply the missing letters. Watch for time expressions (last week, yesterday, years ago) that indicate past time.

incorrect: The committee vote to adjourn yesterday.
correct: The committee voted to adjourn yesterday.

1. The driver asked for the exact fare last week.
2. Oliver used to live in Berkeley when he was a college student.
3. Katerina studied all the time and so she graduated from college last year.
4. College students are supposed to attend every class meeting.
5. Last Sunday, Laura listened to the drummers in the park.
6. Until I started school, I worked twenty hours per week and study the rest of the time.
7. Finally Gayle's cat returned home.
8. Several years ago I witnessed a crime and identify the criminal.

Adapted from Fog City Fundamentals, Fourth Edition, Altman & Deicke, 1998.

ANSWERS

Exercise 3 – Perfect Tenses

Use the perfect tense to fill in the blank using the same time period (past, present, future) as the sample.

Example: Joan licks the popsicle. (present tense)

Joan *has licked* the popsicle. (present perfect tense)

(Remember: Perfect tenses for the verb *to run* are:
Present: she *has run*
Past: she *had run*
Future: she *will have run*)

1. Eric took piano lessons.

   Eric *had taken* piano lessons since he was ten years old.

2. Tara raises as many children as she can.

   Tara *has raised* as many children as she can.

3. Bill, on the other hand, will join the Coast Guard.

   Bill, on the other hand, *will have joined* the Coast Guard.

4. Alyssa gives a drawing to each of her friends.

   Alyssa *has given* a drawing to each of her friends.

5. Chickens pecked at bugs and fruit in the garden.

   Chickens *had pecked* at bugs and fruit in the garden.

6. Each egg will travel a thousand miles before it lands on her lap.

   Each egg *will have traveled* a thousand miles before it lands on her lap.

7. The wings had plenty of room to spread.

   The wings *had had* plenty of room to spread.

8. Madison collects the hay in the morning after breakfast.

   Madison *has collected* the hay in the morning after breakfast.

ANSWERS

Exercise 4 – Progressive Tenses

In the following sentences, change the simple tense verbs to progressive tense verbs using the same time period (present, past, future). Avoid the perfect tense for this exercise.

1. Ferdinand scoffed when his friends all left for college.

   Ferdinand ___was scoffing___ when his friends all left for college.

2. He enjoys his flowers, vegetables and herbs.

   He ___is enjoying___ his flowers, vegetables and herbs.

3. The pumpkins ripened too long last year.

   The pumpkins ___were ripening___ too long last year.

4. His friends will call at the next holiday or break.

   His friends ___will be calling___ at the next holiday or break.

5. Ferdinand answers the phone saying “What?”

   Ferdinand ___is answering___ the phone saying “What?”

6. He screened his calls last week to avoid bill collectors.

   He ___was screening___ his calls last week to avoid bill collectors.

7. His money goes under his mattress until he needs it.

   His money ___is going___ under his mattress until he needs it.

8. He will go fishing next week if he gets his license.

   He ___will be going fishing___ next week if he gets his license.