Guide to Editing Essentials

Prepared by

The Department of English and Literature

University of Northwestern

—

St. Paul
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ............................................................................................................. 2

**Section One: Punctuation** .................................................................................. 3

- *The Apostrophe* .................................................................................................. 3
- *Capitalization* ................................................................................................... 9
- *The Colon* .......................................................................................................... 10
- *The Semicolon* .................................................................................................. 13
- *The Comma* ....................................................................................................... 16
- *The Hyphen* ....................................................................................................... 27
- *The Dash* ........................................................................................................... 28
- *Parentheses* ........................................................................................................ 30
- *Underlining or Italicizing* ................................................................................ 32
- *Quotation Marks* ............................................................................................... 35

**Section Two: Sentence Correctness** ................................................................ 41

- *Agreement (Subject / Verb)* .............................................................................. 41
- *Agreement (Pronoun / Antecedent)* ................................................................. 45
- *Dangling, Misplaced, and Squinting Modifiers* ............................................... 46
- *Fragmentary Sentences* .................................................................................... 48
- *Run-on Sentences (also called “Fused Sentences”)* ....................................... 50
- *Adjectives* ......................................................................................................... 51
- *Adverbs* ............................................................................................................. 53
- *Case* .................................................................................................................. 58

**Section Three: Word Use** .................................................................................. 71

**Answer Sheets for Review Sections** .................................................................. 84

**Appendix: Parts of Speech** .................................................................................. 93

**Works Cited** ....................................................................................................... 98
**Introduction: What is a Sentence?**

In today’s new media, editing skills are essential whether it’s to make sure your résumé isn’t deleted or that your email requesting an interview isn’t ignored. *Guide to Editing Essentials* is filled with helpful explanations to help you learn these skills that will make your writing stand out.

To begin, we’ll start with “what is a sentence?” Having editing skills means that you know how to make a sentence following the structure and punctuation of what is called *standard written English* (not everyday speech).

If someone asks you, “What are you doing today?” you might answer, “I am going to a coffee shop.” This response is considered a complete sentence: it has a **noun** part—a person or thing that is doing the action—that acts as a **subject**; in this case, it is the pronoun “I.” It also has a **verb** part that is the action—“am going to a coffee shop.”

Sentences can get more complicated than this, and there is much more terminology. You will find some of that terminology at the end of this document version in an appendix called “Parts of Speech.” We’ll explain these and other terms as you go along.

Our hope is that in your work, school, and other settings, you will be recognized for your written presentation skills.
Section One: Punctuation

This first section focuses on punctuation, those marks other than letters and words that are so important to understanding standard written English.

The Apostrophe

Have you ever received instructions like these?

Nonstandard
Please put a cup of food in the cats bowl.

Without an apostrophe to indicate possession, the phrase “cats bowl” is confusing. Is there only one cat in the house? Or do many cats share the bowl? Without a properly placed apostrophe, this is not standard written English.

Standard
Please put a cup of food in the cat’s bowl.

Notice that the apostrophe is between the t and the s. With that apostrophe, we know that only one cat uses that bowl. Indicating possession is one of the uses of the apostrophe.

The apostrophe performs two functions.

1. It indicates a contraction, such as won’t in place of will not.

2. It indicates the possessive form of a noun, a noun being any word that you can put a, an, or the in front of or that is capitalized as a proper name. In traditional grammar, we say that it is a “person, place, thing, or idea.”
When the noun “cat” is plural (if there is more than one cat), the writer needs to add only an apostrophe. If many cats share a single bowl, we would be asked to place a cup of food in the cats’ bowl.

1. Use the apostrophe to indicate contractions.

Let’s first focus on contractions. When it appears in a pronoun, the apostrophe always indicates a contraction. **Pronouns** are words that can take the place of a noun in a sentence, such as *she, he, I, you,* and *we,* and even *who.* Compare the italicized words in the following three sentences.

   a. *Autumn* is in a good mood today. (noun plus verb)

   b. *She* is in a good mood today. (pronoun taking the place of the noun “Autumn” plus a verb)

   c. *She’s* in a good mood today. (pronoun and verb contracted)

For more examples of contractions, see the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contractions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contraction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m fine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’re all fine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve had worse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who’s in charge?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you remember that apostrophes in pronouns are always contractions and never indicate the possessive, you will be able to keep the following words straight:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confusing Contractions and Possessives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You’re | Contraction of *You are*
---|---
Your | The possessive form of *you*
Who’s | Contraction of *Who is*
Whose | The possessive form of *who*

2. **Use the apostrophe to indicate possession.**

With nouns, the apostrophe is used to indicate the possessive. Usually (but not always), the apostrophe is followed by the letter *s*.

*Standard*

The mail carrier’s bag

Nouns that are **singular** (indicating only one) work this way—with the exception of some names that end in *s*, as you’ll see momentarily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apostrophe + <em>S</em> for Singular Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where is the cat’s bowl?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The secret agent’s cover was blown by the silly spy’s nonsense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The curse’s effect was to prevent the team from winning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lady’s purse is small.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the noun you wish to make possessive is **plural** and **ends with an *s***, add the apostrophe without an additional *s*.

*Standard*

The mail carriers’ bags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apostrophe After the <em>S</em> for Plural Nouns Ending With <em>S</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are all the cats’ names?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who took these books’ covers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The seven curses’ effects kept the team in last place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ladies’ purses are all small.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The bosses’ cars are always green.

I wish that the hosts’ manners were better, but they’re all so rude!

All the actresses’ names are hard to remember.

There are some words that are plural without an s. When the noun you wish to put in the possessive case is **plural** but **does not end in s**, add an apostrophe and then the letter s. Common examples of these are the words *man, woman, and child*, which become *men, women, and children* in the plural.

*Standard*

The men’s bags and the man’s bag

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Apostrophe + S for Plural Nouns</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not Ending With S</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children’s garden is bigger than she thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s shoes are in aisle three.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The men’s soccer team is playing this weekend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Red Sox’s pitching has been good this year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When a name you wish to make possessive is **singular** and **ends with an s**, add the apostrophe but no additional s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Only Apostrophe for Names Ending in S</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ birthday is celebrated on December 25.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The commandments were held in Moses’ hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas’ basketball team didn’t do too well last year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elvis’ “Suspicious Minds” is a critical success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Jones’ grammar rules make sense.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the noun you wish to put in the possessive case is **singular** and **ends in s**, add an apostrophe and then the letter \textit{s}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Apostrophe + \textit{s} for Other Nouns Ending in \textit{s}</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The boss’s son drove the company car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The moss’s color is green.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hostess’s dress was beautiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The actress’s performance was not very good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One tricky instance of the use of the apostrophe in a possessive comes in writing about time. A journey that takes two days is a \textit{two days’} journey. The journey belongs to those two days; therefore, the possessive form is used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Apostrophe After \textit{s} for Plural Time Noun Indicating Possession</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It took me two years’ time to write my book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The three months’ delay was due to shipping problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She watched three years’ worth of films in one month.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avoid using apostrophes when making nouns plural. This is not usually troublesome in the case of simple nouns: one dog, two dogs; one chicken, two chickens. When nouns are numbers or abbreviations, things get a bit trickier, but simply treat them as you would any other noun, adding an \textit{s} without any apostrophe to make them plural.

\textit{Standard}

The St. Louis Cardinals dominated baseball in the 1940s.
Her tweets are so funny that I can’t count the LOLs she earns, not to mention the RTs she gets.

Note that apostrophes may still be used in the **possessive** forms of nouns that are numbers or abbreviations though they are not used in the **plural** forms of numbers or abbreviations. Thus, you might say the following:

\textit{Standard}

Although 1940’s Jack Benny differed from 1953’s, his radio program with roughly the same cast was broadcast throughout the 1940s and 1950s.
The possessive is formed in the same way whether you’re talking about 1953’s Jack Benny or Jack Benny’s violin or the violin’s case; the plural is formed in the same way whether you’re talking about the 1950s or the violins or the cases of the violins.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apostrophe With Numbers and Abbreviations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plural Nouns, No Possession</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball reached its heyday in the 1920s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He just downloaded four of my latest MP3s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are available at any one of a number of URLs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get some cash from two or three ATMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my day, we listened to LPs unceasingly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is one exception to this rule: an apostrophe may be used to indicate a plural in the case of lowercase letters. In such cases, the lowercase letters would usually be italicized as well.

*Standard*

She has three *n’s* in her name.
Capitalization

Here are two tricky capitalization rules you should know followed by two others you probably already know.

1. **Note that nicknames are proper nouns and should be capitalized while common nouns that refer to people are just common nouns and should not be capitalized.**

   *Standard Sentences*
   I said to Dad, “Shall I go?”
   I asked my mother, “Where is the dog, Mom?”
   If you have questions, ask the professor.
   When will Professor Jones be in?

2. **Note that directions are not proper nouns; however, regions described by directions are proper nouns.**

   *Standard Sentences*
   Go south five blocks.
   I went to school in the South.

3. **Capitalize the first word of a title or a subtitle and every other major word in it.**

   *Standard*
   *The Freedom of Life: Of Oxen, of Sheep, and of Cattle.*

4. **Capitalize proper nouns.**

   *Standard Sentences*
   Go to Egypt, France, and Italy, Mr. Rodagh.
   We should visit Annie, Sabia, and Klara.
   Will you take a class in English, Italian, Chinese, French, or Russian?
The Colon

The colon’s job is to introduce something: a list, a long quotation, an explanatory phrase, or a phrase (a group of words) to which you wish to draw attention.

*Standard Sentences*
I teach several Shakespeare-related classes: Shakespeare and Film, Shakespeare, and Modern Shakespearean Fiction.

Shakespeare coined one of my favorite expressions: “Sweet are the uses of adversity.”

When cooking biscuits, remember one thing above all: check the oven frequently.

I hope you share my opinion of the colon: it’s exciting!

None of the above may surprise you, but would you have considered the following use of the colon nonstandard?

*Nonstandard*
The objectives of this course include: organization and coherence in writing, advanced critical thinking skills, and mastery of editing skills.

It is not standard written English. You may be thinking, “But the colon precedes a list!” True, but take a look at the following three sentences that are standard written English.

*Standard Sentences*
a. The objectives of this course are organization and coherence in writing, advanced critical thinking skills, and mastery of editing skills.
b. The objectives of this course include organization and coherence in writing, advanced critical thinking skills, and mastery of editing skills.
c. The objectives of this course include the following: organization and coherence in writing, advanced critical thinking skills, and mastery of editing skills.

The reason the colon is standard in the last example is that the first chunk of the sentence (“The objectives of this course include the following”) could stand by itself as a sentence, whereas “The objectives of this course include” could not since we’re waiting for a noun to appear right away after the verb “include” so it cannot stand independently.

The chunk that could be a sentence (although after a pause we’d still expect some information of what “the following” is) is called an independent clause.

Here’s the rule: **A colon is always preceded by an independent clause.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Clauses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An independent clause contains a minimum of one noun (acting as a subject) and one verb. The exception to this is a command such as “Go!” where the subject is assumed to be “you.” It is a clause that can stand on its own. All of the following are independent clauses; each one expresses a complete thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She read the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found an interesting thing in the woods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should shovel the sidewalk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He passed!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They like Shakespeare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dependent Clauses

A dependent clause cannot stand on its own. Properly used, a dependent clause will always be a part of a sentence that possesses an independent clause. In the following sentences, the dependent clause is in bold; the independent clause is in italics.

Because she had time this afternoon, she read the book.
I found an interesting thing in the woods that are nearby.
You should shovel the sidewalk because someone might slip.
After studying for the exam, he passed!
They like Shakespeare even though they are not majoring in English.

Note that the dependent clauses either include connecting words at the beginning such as because and even though or lack a subject as in “After studying for the exam” or “that are nearby.”
Please note that a dependent clause cannot be treated as a sentence. Such an error is called a sentence fragment (another section in this work).

Because a colon is always preceded by an independent clause, a colon does not always precede a list. It only precedes a list if the colon is itself preceded by an independent clause. Thus, the following sentences require no colon.

Standard Sentences
In preparing to teach my course on Shakespeare and film, I watched Strange Brew, Strange Illusion, and A Midwinter’s Tale.
I studied many things, including Shakespeare’s comedies, his histories, and his tragedies.
The things I appreciate about Shakespeare are his intelligence, his swordsmanship, and his gigantic forehead.

In the sentences earlier, it would be incorrect to place a colon after “watched,” “including,” or “are” because what comes before those words could not have stood independently.
The Semicolon

Although the semicolon is used less frequently in journalistic writing, it is still common in standard written English. For example, the following is a sentence you read in the colon section.

*Standard*

The dependent clause is in **bold**; the independent clause is in *italics*.

You would be correct in arguing that you could also have used a period, but what’s helpful about a semicolon is that it connects two independent clauses that you want to show an equal relationship between as in the example above.

1. **The semicolon’s main job is to separate two equivalent, related independent clauses.**

If the clause that precedes the semicolon is independent but the clause that follows it is not, the semicolon is being used incorrectly for standard written English.

*Standard*

The semicolon is easy to use well; it’s easy to overuse.

*Nonstandard*

The semicolon is easy to use well; and easy to overuse.

For the second sentence, the last chunk of the sentence “and easy to overuse” is not an independent clause because there is no subject or verb such as *it is*.

A semicolon also helps out when you have two independent clauses that are joined by an **adverbial conjunction** (also known as a **conjunctive adverb**). Some of the most common adverbial conjunctions are in the following list.
### A Selection of Adverbial Conjunctions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>However</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonetheless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meanwhile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are some examples of a semicolon and an adverbial conjunction joining two independent clauses.

*Standard Sentences*

I wanted to eat a healthy meal; however, the cafeteria was celebrating National Unhealthy Meal Week.

I complained; therefore, the rule was changed.

I became known as a health nut; consequently, my fiancée broke off our engagement.

Although I was sad, I carried on; moreover, I became happier than ever.

2. **The second job of the semicolon is to make a list clear when the use of commas alone would not be able to do so. You do this if the list includes items in a series that have internal parts needing additional commas.**

For example, you could write the following:

*Standard*

I want to travel to Houston, Ashmore, and Chicago.

As you write it, though, you might consider that some of your readers would wonder where “Ashmore” was, so you decide to add the state and, to be consistent, add the states for the other cities as well. You might end up with the following, which is nonstandard:
Nonstandard
I want to travel to Houston, Texas, Ashmore, Vermont, and Chicago, Illinois.

The problem with the editing above is that all the cities (Houston, Ashmore, and Chicago) look as if they’re ranked with the states in equivalence (Texas, Vermont, and Chicago). For a reader who is not familiar with the U. S., this version of the sentence would be very confusing. Instead, you should show that each city and state is a unit to itself by separating those units with semicolons. The comma separating the city from the state indicates that the city is a part of the state.

Standard
I want to travel to Houston, Texas; Ashmore, Vermont; and Chicago, Illinois.

Here are some other examples of items in a series with internal parts needing additional commas.

Standard Sentences
I read Shakespeare, who loves words; Chaucer, who loves plots; and Milton, who loves both.

Your assignments are due on Wednesday, September 25; Friday, October 4; and Wednesday, October 16.

This final one is an example where one of the units has a comma within it so the rest of the units have to be separated by semicolons.

Standard
Allusions to Shakespeare may occur in sitcoms such as The Cosby Show; Good Luck, Charlie; M*A*S*H; or The Dick Van Dyke Show.
The Comma

It’s easy to understand why some people rely on the old adage “use a comma when you need to pause” because the comma has so many uses, but that so-called “rule” tends to be hit and miss.

For example, take a look at the following sentence.

*Standard*
The deplorable working conditions in all three of our branch offices must be changed immediately.

Since the sentence has such a long subject phrase (“The deplorable working conditions in all three of our branch offices”), the tendency is to pause before moving on to the verb phrase (“must be changed”), but there is no grammatical reason for putting a comma there.

By contrast, read this sentence:

*Standard*
Without bacon, even the best BLT isn’t the same.

Some readers will read that sentence with a pause after “bacon,” but others will not. Since different readers will feel the need to pause or to avoid pausing at different points in the same sentence, there can be no consistency to such a plan.

Although it would be nice to have only one rule to follow, the comma has too many functions and is too complex to be governed by one overarching rule. This guide, following the order and numbering system of *Guide to Rapid Revision* (Pearlman and Pearlman 40-46), contains six basic comma rules.

1. **The comma connects two independent clauses with the help of words called coordinating conjunctions.** *Conjunction* is just a fancy way to say “linking word” or “connecting word.” *Coordinating* is a fancy way of saying that this type of
connecting word connects equivalent things—in this case independent clauses, not dependent clauses. The **coordinating conjunctions** in English are *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so*. One way to remember these is the acronym FANBOYS.

Let’s take a look at this rule in general; after doing so, we’ll cover an example of each coordinating conjunction, one at a time, addressing the possible confusions that relate to each.

Look at the following three examples:

*Standard*

A. She went to the baseball game. It was cancelled because of rain.

B. She went to the baseball game; it was cancelled because of rain.

C. She went to the baseball game, but it was cancelled because of rain.

Each example shows a standard way to express the information. Each one consists of two independent clauses, but each one deals with the two in a different way. Example A presents the two independent clauses as two separate sentences. Example B connects the two independent clauses with a semi-colon; as we’ve seen, that is an appropriate use of the semi-colon. Example C connects the two independent clauses with both a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

Now look at the following nonstandard examples:

*Nonstandard*

A. She went to the baseball game it was cancelled because of rain.

B. She went to the baseball game; but it was cancelled because of rain.

C. She went to the baseball game, it was cancelled because of rain.

D. She went to the baseball game but it was cancelled because of rain.

All of these are nonstandard because they fail to follow our first comma rule. Example A provides nothing but a space between the two independent clauses. This is an error called a *fused sentence*, which is also known as a *run-on sentence*, and we’ll address it again in the section titled “Sentence Correctness.”
Example B connects the two independent clauses with a semi-colon and a coordinating conjunction, making it technically incorrect. Using a semi-colon, an adverbial (rather than coordinating) conjunction, and a comma (for example, “She went to the baseball game; however, it was cancelled because of rain”) would be standard, but using a semi-colon and a coordinating conjunction is not.

Example C connects the two independent clauses with a comma alone. This is an error known as a *comma splice*, and it will be addressed later in this section.

Example D connects the two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction alone.

In order to connect two independent clauses correctly, both a comma and a coordinating conjunction must be used.

Now let’s take a look at how this rule plays out in each of the coordinating conjunctions in English (the FANBOYS).

*For*

*Standard*

I would like to go to the party tonight, *for* I think Trevor is a nice guy.

Avoid confusing the use of *for* as a *preposition*, a word that can connect nouns to the rest of a sentence and *for* as a *coordinating conjunction*. In the following sentence, *for* is a preposition, and no comma is needed before it.

*Standard*

I would like to go to the party tonight *for* the good appetizers.

*And*

*Standard*

She was intelligent, and he was charming.

In the sentence above you see the more commonly used coordinating conjunction *and* between two independent clauses. However, what about the following nonstandard sentence?
Nonstandard
She was intelligent, and was impressed by his charm.

There should not be a comma before and in the nonstandard sentence because it is not linking two independent clauses with both a subject and a verb. There is no subject inserted after and. Instead, the conjunction and is being used to connect the two verb constructions “was intelligent” and “was impressed by his charm,” thus not requiring a comma.

Nor

Standard
I will not attend the performance on Thursday, nor will I attend the Saturday matinee.

Once again, we have a word that when used with independent clauses may have a formal-sounding sentence structure. The second independent clause has a structure where part of the verb (“will”) appears before the subject.

Where you’re more likely to use nor is in the following sentences when nouns instead of whole clauses are connected.

Standard
Neither Mackenzie nor Maria will attend the play.

But

Here’s a coordinating conjunction you use a lot.

Standard
I read Shakespeare’s Hamlet, but I enjoyed Macbeth more.

Be careful to avoid using a comma when it’s not separating two independent clauses as in the following nonstandard example.

Nonstandard
I read Shakespeare’s Hamlet, but enjoyed Macbeth more.

Standard
I read Shakespeare’s Hamlet but enjoyed Macbeth more.
You don’t need a comma since the subject “I” is not inserted again into the second potential clause before “enjoyed.”

Or

Another common coordinating conjunction is or.

Standard
Leave the building at once, or I will have to call security.

The comma is standard for the two independent clauses. You know that the first one is an independent clause because it is written like a command assuming the word you as the subject.

The comma is nonstandard in the following sentence since no second subject is inserted before the second verb.

Nonstandard
The preschooler would sometimes kick the ball, or miss it depending on her uncoordinated gait on the hill.

Yet

Standard
He was intrigued by the mysterious offer, yet he was wary.

As with the previous examples, avoid inserting a comma before yet when it’s not followed by another subject and verb (another independent clause, in other words).

Standard
He was intrigued yet wary about the mysterious offer.

So

Last but not least, we have so, which presents a new challenge. Examine the two sentences below.
Guide to Editing Essentials 21

Standard Sentences
Delaney eats protein every morning, so he buys eggs and low-carb granola bars.

Delaney woke up early every day to practice so he would make finals.

There are definitely two clauses in each sentence, the second clause in each beginning with “so” followed by the subject “he.” However, the second sentence is standard without a comma, unlike the first sentence. How can that be?

In the first sentence, “so” is a coordinating conjunction separating two independent clauses, but in the second sentence something has been omitted from the sentence. “So” stands for the subordinating conjunction so that.

If a coordinating conjunction connects equal parts of a sentence, a subordinating conjunction connects an independent clause with a dependent one, a subordinate one. In fact, what subordinates the clause is the subordinating conjunction. In the sentence below, so that makes “he would make finals” dependent on the clause before, not an equal clause.

Standard
Delaney woke up early every day to practice so that he would make finals.

When it comes to commas and two apparent independent clauses separated by a so, test to see if you can insert the word that after so. If you can, you do not need a comma.

2. The comma sets off an introductory phrase or clause from the rest of the sentence.

In the standard sentences below, you see one long phrase with a dependent clause inserted after “knowing” and you see another dependent clause, both beginning sentences and followed by commas.

Standard Sentences
Knowing that I needed to finish before dawn, I stayed up late writing this.

After I managed to finish, I headed for bed.
This rule also applies to **transitional words and phrases** such as those in the following list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some Transitional Words and Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To conclude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following this rule, the comma also sets off **opening interjections**, a short, usually emotion-laden word that frequently stands by itself.

*Standard Sentences*

Wow, that coffee is hot.

No, I didn’t bring enough coffee for the whole class.

Note: *The Chicago Manual of Style* says that “a single word or a very short introductory phrase does not require a comma except to avoid misreading” (246). If there is any doubt about whether your readers will understand you, use a comma after an introductory word or phrase.

**3. The comma sets off nonrestrictive phrases.**

Notice in the sentence below that you could easily cross out “the queen of Tennessee cities” and still understand the sentence well.

*Standard*

Chattanooga, the queen of Tennessee cities, has over 300,000 residents.

A **nonrestrictive phrase** (also known as a parenthetical phrase) can be removed from a sentence without changing the essential meaning of the sentence. In the rest
of the sentences below, the phrase that is set off by commas could be removed from the sentence without altering its essential meaning.

*Standard Sentences with Nonrestrictive Phrases*
Stealing a policeman’s helmet, a crime of which Wooster stands accused, is too common a misdemeanor.

The lake, which freezes over every January, is warm enough for swimming.

Note that commas do not set off *restrictive phrases*. A restrictive phrase cannot be removed from a sentence without changing its essential meaning. In the sentences below, the phrases “that is on the left,” “except Marlowe,” and “who is lecturing on Shakespeare” are not set off by commas because removing them would change the essential meaning of the sentence.

*Standard Sentences with Restrictive Phrases*
The lake that is on the left is warm enough for swimming.

Everyone except Marlowe was rewarded.

Of the two professors, the one who is lecturing on Shakespeare is seated.

Commas also precede *-ing phrases* (gerund phrases) that follow the main clause.

*Standard Sentences with Nonrestrictive -ing Phrases (Gerunds)*
Cassius begins the conversation, marveling at the fame that is now theirs for all time.

She has seen seventeen operas this year, not counting the ones she directed.

We rode in a one-horse open sleigh, dashing all the way.

4. **The comma separates items in a list.**

For most formal writing, it is always wiser to use the last comma in the series unless you’re writing something journalistic. Insert a comma after the second-to-last item in the list before the conjunction, usually *and.*
Standard Sentences
There are many examples above, below, and to the right of this sentence.

Please buy me some salt, some sugar, two lemons, and six limes.

Put away your cell phone, pager, and bagel.

5. The comma comes between coordinate adjectives that precede a noun.

Take a look at the sentence below.

Standard
It is a cold, gray day.

Remember that one way to identify most nouns is if they are preceded (or could be) by a, an, or the. In this case, the “a” precedes the noun “day” and two adjectives describing day: “cold” and “gray.” Remember that the word coordinate means equal in importance. When two adjectives like these before a noun are equal in importance, you insert a comma between them. There are a couple ways to test if they’re equal in importance.

A. The comma could be replaced with the word and without changing the meaning.

Standard
It is a cold and gray day.

B. The two words could be reversed without changing the meaning.

Standard
It is a gray, cold day.

You know that the two adjectives are not coordinate when neither of the tests works. Examine the sentence below.

Standard
She was an overworked administrative assistant.

Here “overworked” is describing not just “assistant” but “administrative assistant.” Thus, no commas are needed. The tests listed as A and B above confirm this:
Nonstandard
She was an overworked and administrative assistant.

Nonstandard
She was an administrative, overworked assistant.

In both these tests, the resulting sentence is unclear and awkward, showing that “overworked” and “administrative” are not equal in importance.

Here are other examples of coordinate adjectives italicized below.

Standard Sentences
My teacher was an eccentric, colorful lady.

He had a wild, haunted look.

6. The five rules above cover the primary uses of the comma. This rule addresses common misuses of the comma: avoid adding needless commas.

A comma does not separate a subject from its verb.

Nonstandard
The crazy relationship that they had, puzzled all onlookers.

Standard
The crazy relationship that they had puzzled all onlookers.

There’s an uninformed tendency to insert a comma if the subject is long.

A comma does not set off restrictive phrases.

Nonstandard
A man, who was having chest pains, was first priority at the Emergency Room.

Standard
A man who was having chest pains was first priority at the Emergency Room.
The phrase “who was having chest pains” is restrictive (thus, no comma) because it explains why he was first priority at the Emergency Room.

**A comma does not appear after the last item in a list unless some other grammatical reason compels it to do so.**

*Nonstandard*
The fight, the spat, and the scuffle, caused tension in their relationship.

*Standard*
The fight, the spat, and the scuffle caused tension in their relationship.

*Nonstandard*
She went to see the play, the opera, and the film, when she learned that there were three other versions of her favorite novel.

*Standard*
She went to see the play, the opera, and the film when she learned that there were three other versions of her favorite novel.

However, if the end phrase of the last nonstandard sentence started with –ing (if it were a gerund phrase following the main clause, in other words), a comma before it would be standard:

*Standard*
She went to see the play, the opera, and the film, having learned that there were three other versions of her favorite novel.

**A comma does not separate a dependent clause from an independent clause.**

*Nonstandard*
They went to the market, and found that they couldn’t buy anything.

*Standard*
They went to the market and found that they couldn’t buy anything.

For the second part of the sentence, you need to insert a subject before the verb “found” for the sentence to require a comma to separate two independent clauses.
Standard
They went to the market, and they found that they couldn’t buy anything.

A comma does not precede a subordinate phrase that comes after the sentence’s main phrase.

Nonstandard
She wanted to go to the baseball game, because he wanted to see a Shakespeare play.

Standard
She wanted to go to the baseball game because he wanted to see a Shakespeare play.

A comma does not join two independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction. Such an error is called the comma splice.

Nonstandard: Comma Splice
She wanted to go to the baseball game, he wanted to see a Shakespeare play.

Standard Sentences: Avoiding the Comma Splice
She wanted to go to the baseball game, **but** he wanted to see a Shakespeare play.

She wanted to go to the baseball game; he wanted to see a Shakespeare play.

She wanted to go to the baseball game. **He** wanted to see a Shakespeare play.

She wanted to go to the baseball game **even though** he wanted to see a Shakespeare play.

She wanted to go to the baseball game; **however**, he wanted to see a Shakespeare play.
The Hyphen

Examine the italicized words in the two sentences below.

"Standard Sentences"
My *thirteen-year-old* daughter enjoys playing soccer.

My daughter who plays soccer is *thirteen years old*.

Consider why there are hyphens in the first sentence but not the second. “Thirteen-year-old” and “thirteen years old” *both* describe the noun “daughter.” The difference (besides the *s* at the end of “years”) in the second sentence is that one group of words comes before the noun and the other does not. It comes after a form of the verb *to be*, such as *is, are, was, were, has been*.

1. The *hyphen is used to connect most compound adjectives that precede a noun.* “Compound” simply means combined. Study the examples below.

"Standard Sentences"
I study *sixteenth-century* literature.

My favorite literature to study is *sixteenth century*.

There was a *three-dollar* tie for sale.

The tie cost *three dollars*.

2. Hyphens are used when numbers are written out.

"Standard"
We need to buy twenty-four bagels to get a bargain.
Was your number twenty or twenty-one?
Find the seventy-seven gems before midnight tonight.
3. **Hyphens are also used to indicate ranges of numbers, as in the following sentence.**

   *Standard*
   Please read pages 148-288.

Be aware that this standard of using the hyphen or writing out the word *to* as in (“148 to 288”) may vary based on a text’s requirements.

4. **Finally, hyphens can be used to prevent misreading.**

   *Standard Sentences*
   Please re-read pages 148-288.

   You’ll need to re-sign your letter of resignation before you can resign from the company.

   She lived a semi-independent life.

   The upholstery is frayed; the chair needs to be re-covered.

Note that a hyphen, one stroke at the top right of your keyboard, is not a dash. See “The Dash” below.
The Dash

Take a look at the sentence with dashes below.

_Standard_

Dashes are—and I wish to emphasize this—not hyphens.

Whereas a hyphen _connects_ two words, a _dash sets off nonrestrictive groups of words for emphasis, often what sounds like an interruption in the sentence._

A dash is longer than a hyphen—it is composed of two hyphens or a long dash. Do not put a space before or after a dash.

Remember that nonrestrictive phrases can be removed from a sentence without changing the essential meaning of the sentence.

_Standard_

Shakespeare arrived in London—a town of moderate sophistication—in the late 1580s or early 1590s.
Parentheses

Parentheses are similar to dashes: you are setting off a nonrestrictive group of words, but you are not trying to emphasize them. You are including additional information for those readers who may be interested.

*Standard*
While on vacation, I read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (the first book in *The Chronicles of Narnia*).
Underlining or Italicizing

You may choose whether to use italics or underlining. Whichever you choose, be consistent. In other words, don’t underline some things and italicize others. This guide will italicize its examples.

What is usually tricky about underlining or italicizing is knowing when to italicize or underline and when to use quotation marks. Take a look at the following sentence.

*Standard*

“Edith’s Night Out” is an episode of the classic sitcom *All in the Family*.

Quotation marks appear around an episode, a part of the TV show series, and the name of the TV series is italicized.

1. **Underline or italicize the titles of major works.**

The following list is not exhaustive, but it provides a good sense of the kinds of titles that are italicized.

- books
- periodicals (both magazines and journals)
- newspapers
- plays
- television series
- movies
- paintings
- sculptures
- radio shows
- operas
- musicals
- ballets
long poems (usually those that were published as single units rather than as part of a collection)
names of long musical compositions but not their formal designations (i.e., Shubert’s Unfinished Symphony would be underlined or italicized, but Schubert’s Symphony No. 8 in B Minor would not be)
websites
search engines (e.g., JSTOR, Ebscohost)
names of ships and trains, including airships and spaceships (e.g., U.S.S. Enterprise, Hindenburg, Orient Express)
court cases (e.g., Marbury v. Madison, Miranda v. Arizona, Shakespeare v. Pasadena)

Titles of religious works are not underlined or italicized (e.g., the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Bhagavad Gita, the Qur’an [or Koran], Genesis, Exodus, Mark).

*Standard Sentences*
I read a review of Abbey Road in Time. I couldn’t find a review in the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

The Beatles read King Lear, saw West Side Story, and watched Star Trek.

She thinks Shakespeare Geek is the best Shakespeare blog on the Internet.

We study Rime of the Ancient Mariner in British Literature, and we also read passages from the King James Version of the Bible.

I grew up listening to The Jack Benny Program, but now I prefer to watch The Cosby Show.

2. Sparsely use underlining or italics to emphasize a point.

*Standard*
The production was really delightful.

3. Use underlining or italics for foreign words or phrases that are not yet considered English words. To determine whether a phrase is considered foreign or English, consult a recent dictionary.

*Standard Sentences*
I’ve just finished a fait accompli.
You might wish to sue *in forma pauperis*.

Perhaps *mañana* would be a better time to meet.

That actor has a certain *je ne sais quoi*.

4. Use underlining or italics for individual letters and for words used as terms. Words used as terms may also appropriately be placed in quotation marks.

*Standard Sentences*
Does your name have more than one *j*?

How many times does the letter *s* appear in Mississippi?

The term *iambic* refers to the rhythm of the poetry. (This sentence could also correctly be written in this way: The term “iambic” refers to the rhythm of the poetry.)
Quotation Marks

1. Use quotation marks around the titles of minor works. A minor work is often a part of a major work: one poem from a poetry collection, one song from an album, one article from a periodical, one chapter from a book, one article in an anthology, or one episode of a television series. The titles of essays, sermons, or lectures would also appear in quotation marks.

   Standard Sentences
   We just listened to “Here Comes the Sun” from Abbey Road by the Beatles.

   She was assigned an analytical paper on a poem by Robert Frost, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.”

   My favorite episode of The Cosby Show is called “Theo and Cockroach.”

   Professor Jones recently gave a lecture entitled “Elizabethan England (with an emphasis on William Shakespeare).”

2. Use quotation marks around quoted material.

   In American standard written English, punctuation marks—with two exceptions—appear within the ending quotation mark.

   Standard Sentences
   The storm caused him to say, “It always rains on Thursdays.”

   She said, “I’ve only been here since Tuesday,” but she had been here since Monday night.

   “Have you ever,” she said, slamming the door, “been so insulted?”

The next three sample sentence above demonstrate another rule about the use of punctuation with quotation marks. Notice how question marks and exclamation
points are used with quotation marks. Notice, too, that lowercase letters are used for the word that follows the closing quotation mark: “he,” “but,” “the,” and “she.” Those words are part of the sentence and do not start a sentence of their own; therefore, they are not capitalized.

*Standard Sentences*
When she asked, “Have you seen the show?” he answered, “No!”

We heard her shout, “I’ve won the lottery!” but was she serious or was she joking?

“Have you read my essay yet?” the student asked the professor.

“He lost my copy of *Hamlet!*” she yelled.

In each of the sentences above, a comma might be expected after the first quotation. For example, this would be correct: “She lost my copy of *Hamlet,*” he said. However, the question marks and exclamation points are punctuation enough—a question mark and a comma or an exclamation point and a comma would be incorrect, as in the sentences below:

*Nonstandard Sentences*
When she asked, “Have you seen the show?,” he answered, “No!”

We heard her shout, “I’ve won the lottery!”, but was she serious or was she joking?

“Have you read my essay yet?”, the student asked the professor.

“He lost my copy of *Hamlet,*”! she yelled.

The colon and the semicolon are the exception to the rule that punctuation marks appear within the ending quotation mark. They may appear outside the quotation marks.

*Standard Sentences*
Hamlet has three essential lines: “When the wind blows north-northwest, I know a hawk from a handsaw”; “Now I am alone”; and “The rest is silence.”
She’s always saying, “Now cracks a noble heart”: her dramatic nature demands it.

3. **If you are quoting someone who is quoting another person or another source, use single quotation marks inside double quotations marks.**

   *Standard*
   One of my professors said, “Jack Benny always used to start his shows by saying, ‘This is Jack Benny talking.’”

   Note that this is the only case in which single quotation marks are used. The following sentences show nonstandard use of single quotation marks.

   *Nonstandard*
   One of my professors said, ‘Jack Benny was my favorite comedian.’

   The one word I cannot spell is ‘recipe.’

4. **Avoid using quotation marks around matter that is paraphrased (not directly quoted). Such paraphrases are often introduced by *that*.**

   *Nonstandard*
   My roommate said that “she didn’t want to go to the play.”

   *Standard*
   My roommate said that she didn’t want to go to the play.

   *Standard*
   My roommate said, “I don’t want to go to the play.”
Review of Section One: Punctuation

Apostrophe

Circle the correct response in parentheses.

1. The seven (dwarfs / dwarf’s / dwarfs’) had (Snow Whites / Snow White’s / Snow Whites’) full attention.

2. The track meeting was held in the (girls / girl’s / girls’) locker room.

3. (Its / It’s / Its’) going to surprise everyone if you wear (your / you’re) wig to the party.

Capitalization

Mark the letters that need to be capitalized in each sentence.

1. are you going to take the course that integrates shakespeare with film with dr. jones next semester?

2. i went to the mall of america with grandma, maizie, and my mom.

Colon

Insert colons where needed. Delete unnecessary punctuation.

1. I have a word of advice run away!

2. The books that are her absolute favorites include: Gone with the Wind, Little Women, and Silas Marner.

3. The two sections that won the band scavenger hunt are: the flute section and the trombone section.

Comma

Insert commas where needed.

1. Blue my favorite color is the fifth color in the rainbow.

2. When I turned four I moved to Ohio.
3. Holding his hat Dr. Jones ran to the bus stop but he still arrived after it had pulled away.

4. The chicken relaxed in its coop not understanding that the fox was nearby.

5. The goofy carefree student collided with the professor in the coffee shop.

6. I enjoy drinking warm soothing tea.

7. Whew that was a close one!

**Hyphen**

*Insert hyphens where needed.*

1. In the course, he studied Victorian era architecture and visited a two story home.

2. The three year old girl was enrolled in a two year preschool program.

**Underlining (Italicizing)**

*Underline or remove underlining and add or remove quotation marks in the following sentences.*

1. The book Prince Caspian is quite a bit different from the new movie, especially in the chapter entitled The Lion Roars.

2. “Christmas at Plum Creek” is an especially good episode of the television show called “Little House on the Prairie.”

**Quotation Marks**

*Insert quotation marks and other necessary punctuation (including capitalization) in the following sentences.*

1. Tim said to his conducting class the most important aspect of good conducting is clarity.

2. May I borrow she wondered aloud a pencil?

3. To thine own self be true said Polonius hypocritically.
Semicolons
Insert semicolons and commas where needed.

1. I don’t care for mustard however I do like ketchup.

2. He wanted to tour three capital cities: Sydney Australia Tokyo Japan and Beijing China.
**Section Two: Sentence Correctness**

This section focuses on sentence correctness, which is another way to talk about written grammar or sentence structure.

**Agreement (Subject / Verb)**

Would you recognize the following sentence as nonstandard?

*Nonstandard*

The idea involving thirteen separate judging systems seem faulty.

When you are writing a sentence with a very long subject (“the idea involving thirteen separate judging systems”), it’s easy to make a **subject / verb agreement** mistake, putting a **plural** subject with a **singular** verb or vice versa.

When you see a long subject, you need to search for the core of it or what’s called the **simple subject**. The core of this long subject is the word “idea,” which is a singular noun, which takes a singular verb “seems” instead of the current **plural** verb “seem.” There are tips below to help you find the simple subject.

*Standard*

The idea involving thirteen separate judging systems seems faulty.

Subject / verb agreement errors are often made because the singular verb form adds *s* in the present tense for some subjects.

I read  
you read  
she reads, he reads, it reads  
we read  
you read  
they read

Some of your ideas may need complex sentence structures, so keep track of the subject as you write. Here are the rules to be aware of.

1. **The subject of the sentence will never be the object of a prepositional phrase. The verb must agree with the core or simple subject.**

Here’s a nonstandard sentence to examine.
Nonstandard
Only one of the dozens of great performances win the Oscar.

At first glance there doesn’t seem to be a subject / verb agreement problem in this sentence. Intuitively, it sounds okay because the noun before the plural verb “win” is a plural word “performances.”

What’s the problem? The subject part of the sentence is very long (“only one of the dozens of the great performances”). However, when you whittle the subject part of the sentence down to its core or simple subject, you actually have the word “one,” a singular noun.

The nouns “dozens” and “performances” are the objects of prepositional phrases: “of the dozens” and “of great performances.” Prepositions link noun objects to the rest of the sentence.

The following is a list of some common prepositions that you should know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Along</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard
A representative of the organization the First Peoples of Canadian Provinces is speaking today.

2. When you use or or nor or either . . . or or neither . . . nor, the verb should agree with the part of the subject nearest to it.

Would you have recognized the following as nonstandard?
Nonstandard
Either Tyrell’s parents or his grandma are attending his voice recital.

Because of the “either . . . or,” we treat the “the grandma,” which is closest to the verb, as the subject of the verb and must make it agree with the verb by making both singular.

Standard
Either Tyrell’s parents or his grandma is attending his voice recital.

Here are examples of standard sentences with either...or and neither...nor.

Standard
Either Rachel or a thousand clowns drop from the sky at this point.

Standard
Neither a thousand clowns nor Rachel wishes to drop from the sky.

Here are examples of standard sentences with or and nor.

Standard
All Mondays or this Thursday is a good time to meet.

Standard
Book nor bells prevents my studies.

3. Subjects that are singular indefinite pronouns (e.g., anybody, something) take singular verbs.

Note that, sometimes, the subject itself will be either either or neither. In such cases, use a singular verb with these singular subjects.

Standard
Neither of these concepts is hard to grasp.

Standard
Do I want the nails or the screws? Either does the job.
In the two sentences above, “either” and “neither” are singular indefinite pronouns. The list below contains other singular indefinite pronouns; each takes a singular verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular Indefinite Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somebody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whichever</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standard*

Everybody in the seven continents that make up the world is unique.

Plural indefinite pronouns, by contrast, take a plural verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural Indefinite Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standard*

Few of these concepts are hard to grasp.

*Standard*

Do I want the nails or the screws? Both do the job.

4. **Subjects that are collective nouns (e.g., group, team) are singular in number, even if they consist of many individual members, taking singular verbs.**

*Standard Sentences*

The crowd of seven billion spectators is going wild.

The team is doing well this year.
The study group has met three times this semester.

The Shakespeare Association of America is having its annual meeting in Boston.

5. In sentences that start with there, match the verb to the subject that follows it.

When you use the phrases there is or there are, the subject follows the verb. To test this, try reversing the sentence below.

Standard
There are two reasons to avoid procrastination.

Reversed, it would read as follows: “Two reasons to avoid procrastination are there.” The subject is “Two reasons to avoid procrastination.”

If the subject is singular, use “there is”; if it’s plural, use “there are.”

Standard
There is a simple solution to the difficulty.

Agreement (Pronoun / Antecedent)

You may be surprised to find that the following sentence is nonstandard in American written English.

Nonstandard
Every semester, a student leaves the class without their umbrella.

The most common error in pronoun / antecedent agreement is to use a plural pronoun (in this case, “their”) with the singular word it refers back to (“student”) in an attempt to avoid gender-specific language. Recall that pronouns are words such as she, their, her, or him that take the place of a noun in a sentence.

This nonstandard sentence can be fixed by substituting “his or her” for “their” or by making the word it refers to plural so that it agrees with the plural pronoun.

Standard
Every semester, a student leaves the class without his or her umbrella.
Every semester, students leave the class without their umbrellas.

**Dangling, Misplaced, and Squinting Modifiers**

Occasionally, you may inadvertently use a **dangling or misplaced modifier** in speech, and it might create a laugh. Examine the nonstandard sentence below.

*Nonstandard*

Covered with red and white tissue paper, Nura appreciated the homemade valentine.

What’s humorous about this sentence is that the descriptive phrase (the **modifier**) “covered with red and white tissue paper” is closer to the noun “Nura” rather than the “homemade valentine,” and thus it appears that Nura was the one decorated with colorful paper.

*Standard*

Nura appreciated the homemade valentine, which was covered with red and white tissue paper.

In this case to correct it, the modifier was moved to the end of the sentence, and to be especially clear, the words “which was” were added.

Here are some more examples.

*Nonstandard*

Being only three years old at the time, the car didn’t scare me too much.

What or who was “three years old at the time”? Probably not the car!

*Standard Sentences*

Because I was only three years old at the time, the car didn’t scare me too much.

Three years old at the time, I wasn’t scared too much of the car.
The first way to fix the dangling or misplaced modifier was adding a subject “I” to the modifier in the sentence. The second way was to add a nearby noun for the modifier to describe.

*Nonstandard*
Almost a hundred years after he died, Nicholas Rowe wrote one of the first biographies of Shakespeare.

It appears that Nicholas Rowe was a ghost when he wrote Shakespeare’s biography.

*Standard*
Almost a hundred years after Shakespeare died, Nicholas Rowe wrote one of his first biographies.

This last one was changed by replacing the pronoun in the modifier.

Squinting modifiers are ambiguous. Unlike dangling and misplaced modifiers, they are not obviously describing the wrong noun, but instead you as the reader see multiple options that they could be describing.

*Nonstandard: Ambiguous*
The car that was backfiring loudly crashed into a muddy ditch.

In this one, you “squint” to tell if the car’s backfiring was loud or if the crash was loud.

*Standard: Clear*
The car that was loudly backfiring crashed into a muddy ditch.

*Standard: Clear*
The car that was backfiring crashed loudly into a muddy ditch.
Fragmentary Sentences

Examine the sentence below.

**Nonstandard**

Biking to school is wonderful. Except when you forget your keys.

“Except when you forget your keys” is considered a fragment instead of a complete sentence. You occasionally see sentences like this in creative writing, but for academic and professional settings, you should avoid them.

In order to be acceptable, a sentence must be an independent clause. A dependent clause cannot serve as a sentence. In the example above, the first clause is a sentence, but the second is not.

Recall that all clauses have subjects and verbs, but what makes a dependent clause dependent is the connecting word called a subordinating conjunction. (Think about how bosses can call their employees “subordinates,” that is, not equal to them in independence on the job.)

In the sentence above, “except when” subordinates “you forget your keys” into a dependent clause.

The fragment can be fixed by incorporating it into the main clause or making it a sentence of its own.

**Standard**

Biking to school is wonderful, except when you forget your keys.

**Standard**

Biking to school is wonderful. The exception is when you forget your keys.

Fragments frequently occur with groups of words that begin with subordinating conjunctions. Be particularly wary with these.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Subordinating Conjunctions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nonstandard*
After I made three dozen Christmas cards.

*Standard*
I made three dozen Christmas cards.

*Standard*
After I made three dozen Christmas cards, I wrapped two gifts.

*Nonstandard*
Because you weren’t there.

*Standard*
You weren’t there.

*Standard*
Because you weren’t there, she headed for home.

*Standard*
The concert wasn’t enjoyable because you weren’t there.

*Nonstandard*
Even though nearly all the snow had melted.

*Standard*
Nearly all the snow had melted.

*Standard*
Even though nearly all the snow had melted, he still refused to swim in the lake.
**Run-on Sentences (also called “Fused Sentences”)**

Do you recognize the following sentence as nonstandard?

*Nonstandard*
I forgot my keys this morning I don’t know quite how it happened.

A run-on or fused sentence occurs when two independent clauses are fused without any intervening punctuation. There are a variety of ways to correct it.

*Standard Sentences*
I forgot my keys this morning. I don’t know quite how it happened.

I forgot my keys this morning; I don’t know quite how it happened.

I forgot my keys this morning, but I don’t know quite how it happened.

I forgot my keys this morning even though I don’t know quite how it happened.

I forgot my keys this morning; however, I don’t know quite how it happened.

Please note that a run-on sentence is not just a particularly long sentence; long sentences—even sentences in excess of a hundred words—can follow grammatical rules entirely properly: when they do so, they are merely long sentences. In order to be considered a run-on, a sentence must have two independent clauses that are fused without any intervening punctuation.
Adjectives

Does the sentence below sound nonstandard to you?

Nonstandard
She is the oldest of my two daughters.

In standard written English when comparing two items, we use “older” instead of “oldest” even though many of us don’t speak this way.

Standard
She is the older of my two daughters.

“Older” here is an adjective. Adjectives describe nouns. They tell something about people, places, things, and ideas. We use them to answer questions such as what kind, which one, and how many. In the sentence above, we assume that “older” is describing a noun that has been omitted such as “one”: “she is the older one of my two daughters.”

In the sentences below, the adjectives are in italics.

I like the blue ship. The boy wore a red sweater. He uses florid prose. We’ve had a bad day. We hope you have a good semester. Live your life by a tremendous philosophy.

In standard written English, we use the comparative degree of an adjective to compare two things. The comparative degree is created by adding an -er ending to most one-syllable words, adding the word more to most two-and-more syllable words, or changing good to better or bad to worse.

Of the two ships, that is the bluer. Which of these two sweaters is the redder? She uses more florid prose than he does. Between yesterday and today, today was worse. Lunch was better than breakfast.

We use the superlative degree of an adjective to compare more than two things. The superlative degree is created by adding an -est ending to most one-syllable words, adding the word most to most two-and-more syllable words, or changing good to best or bad to worst.
Of the three ships, that is the bluest. Which of these three sweaters is the reddest? She uses the most florid prose in the entire class. Among yesterday, today, and tomorrow, today was the worst. Dinner was the best of my three meals today.

Confusion sometimes arises in determining when to use more instead of most and when to use better instead of best.

The words more and better are comparative forms; the words most and best are superlative forms. When comparing two things, use more or better; when more than two things are involved, most or best is the word to use. Examine the italicized words in the standard sentences below.

Standard
One woman and one man were out driving. She was the more careful driver, so she was behind the wheel.

Standard
The cook had one croissant, and there were three customers in the restaurant. She had to determine who was the most deserving patron before she could let anyone eat it.

Standard
I was the better of the two guitar players on the night of the final competition.

Standard
I was the best of the three guitar players the night before.

Likewise, worse and worst can easily be misused. Use worse for comparing two things and worst for comparing more than two.

Standard
She tried both pizza places and found that the one on the left was worse.

Standard
He ate at seven pizza places; the closest one was also the worst of them all.


Adverbs

If someone greets you and asks you, “How are you?” you might be surprised to find that it is nonstandard to respond, “I’m doing good.”

The issue is choosing an adverb instead of an adjective. Here are three important things you should know about adverbs.

a. Adverbs describe verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.

b. The English language regularly forms adverbs by adding –ly to adjectives (although that’s not the only form in which adverbs appear).

c. We use them to answer the questions how, when, where, why, and to what extent.

In the sentences below, the adverbs are in italics.

I played noisily during the contest. I took the guitar and smashed it slowly into the amp. The amp crashed loudly into the curtain. The curtain quietly ripped and fell softly on my head. I cried unhappily.

Notice in the sentences that all the adverbs answer the question “how” about the verbs: how the individual “played”—“noisily,” how the guitar “smashed”—“slowly,” how the amp “crashed”—“loudly,” how the curtain “ripped”—“quietly,” how the curtain “fell”—“softly,” and how the individual “cried”—“unhappily.”

These examples lead us to a rule.

1. **Use adverbs, not adjectives, to describe action verbs.**

Writers are much less inclined to make mistakes when action verbs like those are described with adverbs. In such cases, writers rarely accidentally use an adjective instead of an adverb. One instance is the nonstandard sentence we started with.

*Nonstandard*

I am doing good.
I am doing well.

Because the word “doing” is an action verb, we use the adverb “well,” answering how the individual is doing, instead of using the adjective “good.”

There are appropriate circumstances when it appears as if an adjective is being used with another kind of verb, a state-of-being verb.

2. Use an adjective after a state-of-being verb, describing the noun subject.

The following sentence is standard.

Standard
The dog is good.

Here the word “is” is a state-of-being verb, a form of the verb to be.

State-of-being verbs (sometimes called linking verbs) include the following:

- to be (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been)
  (These can be tricky because they are also used as helping verbs for action verbs, such as “am doing well.”)

- became, appear, grow, keep, remain, seem, stay, loom, prove, turn

- sound, smell, look, feel, taste (These five can also be action verbs.)

When a state-of-being verb is involved, writers in standard written English use an adjective instead of an adverb. The adjective describes the noun that is usually the subject. Therefore, an adjective, rather than an adverb, should be used in such cases. Perhaps you’ve said the following nonstandard sentence.

Nonstandard
I feel badly.

Standard
I feel bad.

Examine these examples, comparing the use of adjectives and adverbs:
Standard Sentences
The quick fox jumped over the dogs.
(This sentence uses the adjective “quick,” but it does not concern itself with a state-of-being verb; this is not usually problematic.)

The fox jumped quickly over the dogs.
(The adverb “quickly” is describing how the fox “jumped”—the verb.)

The fox was quick.
(“Quick” is an adjective that is used to describe the subject of the sentence, not the state-of-being verb “was”—in this case, a form of the verb to be.)

The question of whether to use an adjective or an adverb is primary in the consideration of deciding whether to use the adverb well or the adjective good in any given situation.

In most cases, when well is used as an adverb, it is used to describe verbs. It does not follow a state-of-being verb. (Please note that to do and to go are not state-of-being verbs.)

Well describes ordinary verbs.
I sing good well, I teach good well, and I play the guitar good well.

Well does not describe state-of-being verbs.
I smell well good. My voice sounds well good. My shoes feel well good. With this tie, I look well good.

An exception to these is that well can be an adjective describing health: “After being ill for a week, I finally feel well.”

Returning to the examples above with “well” and “good” substituted for “quickly” and “quick” will enable us to see where an adjective is required and where an adverb is the correct option.

Standard Sentences
The good fox jumped over the dogs.
(This sentence uses the adjective “good,” but it does not concern itself with a state-of-being verb; this is not usually problematic.)
The fox jumped well.  
(The adverb “well” is describing the verb “jumped.”)

The fox was good.  
(“Good” is an adjective that is used to describe the subject of the sentence, not the state-of-being verb—in this case, a form of the verb to be.)

3. Use intensifying adverbs to describe adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs.

In another circumstance, writers occasionally use an adjective before another adjective when they should be using an adverb in standard written English.

Nonstandard
I am real sleepy today.

Standard
I am really sleepy today.

“Sleepy” acts as an adjective describing the subject “I,” connected by the state-of-being verb “am.”

“Really” is an adverb intensifying the adjective “sleepy.”

The adjective real means “genuine.” The adverb really is an intensifier. Real will describe a noun, but it will not describe any other part of speech. Really will describe an adjective, an adverb, or a verb, but it will not describe a noun. It answers the question to what extent.

In these sentences, the word real describes nouns.

Standard
Baseballs are made of real leather—of genuine leather.

Standard
I have a flute made of real oak.

Standard
She thanked him with real sincerity.
The adverb *really* is an intensifier used to describe adjectives in the following sentences.

*Standard*
I am really sick.

*Standard*
She did not think he was really sincere.

*Standard*
He thought she was really kind.

The adverb *really* can also be used to describe verbs.

*Standard*
She really went to the store.

*Standard*
He really climbed Mount Everest.

The adverb *really* also describes adverbs.

*Standard*
He snipped the wires really carefully.

*Standard*
Please shovel the driveway really thoroughly.
Case

Case is one of the most challenging areas of sentence correctness for writers of standard written English. Examine the nonstandard sentence below.

Nonstandard
She divided the chocolates between him and I.

The problem is that “I” in this situation should be “me” since it is part of the object of the preposition “between” (the other part of the object is “him”).

Standard
She divided the chocolates between him and me.

Pronouns appear in different forms or cases depending on their role in the sentence. The primary concern here is knowing how to distinguish between the subjective case, which is used for subjects, and the objective case, which is used for objects.

**Subjective Case**

_ I wrote a book._
_ You wrote a book._
_ She wrote a book._
_ He wrote a book._
_ It wrote a book._

_Who_ wrote this book? _Whoever_ wrote the book should be ashamed.

Note that for all the subjective examples the italicized word is the subject of the action of the verb “wrote”—the one or ones doing the writing.

**Objective Case**

The book belonged to _me._
The book belonged to _you._
The book belonged to _her._
The book belonged to _him._
The book belonged to _it._
The book belonged to _us._
The book belonged to _you._
The book belonged to _them._
The book impacted _him._
He gave _me_ the book.
The book belonged to whom?
Vote for whomever you want to win the election.

For the objective case examples, you can recognize that the pronouns are the objects of the prepositions “to” or “for” except for two of the sentences.

Standard
The book impacted him.

In this example, the word “him” is also an object, but instead of being an object of a preposition, it is the object of the verb called a direct object. You may have heard the traditional description of a verb’s object “receiving the action of the verb.”

Standard
He gave me the book.

In this example, “me” is an object of the verb called an indirect object. Indirect objects always occur with direct objects.

Although there are multiple kinds of objects—objects of a preposition, direct objects, and indirect objects—you don’t need to recognize the kind of objects to know how to use case in standard written English.

You need only to recognize when to label a pronoun more broadly as an object (objective). A way to do that is to recognize when a pronoun is not the subject of a verb. If there is no verb for the pronoun to do the action of as the subject, then you have an object instead.

Case and Complex Constructions
When our sentences become complex—when we use coordinating conjunctions such as and—we can lose track of what case we ought to be using.

Standard Subjective Case in Simple Sentences
I rode the bike. She rode the bike. He rode the bike.

Nonstandard Use of Objective Case as Subject in Complex Constructions
Gaia and me rode the bike.
(“I” is required as part of the subject for the verb “rode.”)

Him and Gaia rode the bike.
(“He” is required as part of the subject for the verb “rode.”)

He, Gaia, and her rode the bike.
(“She” is required as part of the subject for the verb “rode.”)

**Standard Use of Objective Case in Simple Sentences**
I wanted to go with her. Rachelle wanted to go with me. I wanted to go with him, too. But Rachelle wanted to go with them.

**Nonstandard Use of Subjective Case as Object in Complex Constructions**
I wanted to go with Rachelle and he.
(“Him” is required as part of the object of the preposition “with.”)

She wanted to go with him and I.
(“Me” is required as part of the object of the preposition “with.”)

He wanted to go with Rachelle and I.
(“Me” is required as part of the object of the preposition “with.”)

I wanted to go with him, Rachelle, and she.
(“Her” is required as part of the object of the preposition “with.”)

Me and her plan to go with they.
(“I” and “she” are required as the subject of the verb “plan.” “Them” is required as the object of the preposition “with.”)

**Case and Omitted Verbs**
Another tricky challenge occurs when we contrast two things and omit a verb.

**Standard Sentences with Explicit Verbs**
I have always been taller than he is.

I was three years older than she was.

I like you as much as I like her.

I like you as much as she likes you.
Nonstandard Sentences with Omitted Verbs
I have always been taller than him.
(Standard: I have always been taller than he [is].)

I was three years older than her.
(Standard: I was three years older than she [was].)

Ambiguity in Pronouns with Omitted Verbs
I like you as much as her.
I like you as much as [I like] her.

I like you as much as she.
I like you as much as she [likes you].

I think Babette likes anchovies more than me.
I think Babette likes anchovies more than [she likes] me.

I think Babette likes anchovies more than I.
I think Babette likes anchovies more than I [like anchovies].

Case: Who and Whom
Who is the subjective form; it will have a verb with which it goes. Whom is the objective form; it will be the object of something—a preposition or a verb (direct object or indirect object).

Standard Use of Who in Simple Sentences
Who wants an ice cream cone?

Who’s responsible for this mess?

Nonstandard Use of Whom as Subject in Complex Constructions
I gave the ball to the people whom, given the time, would make the most of the opportunity.
(“Who” is required to be the subject of the verb “would make.”)

When we went to the dance, I demanded whom was responsible.
(“Who” is required to be the subject of the verb “was.”)
Guide to Editing Essentials 62

**Standard Use of Whom in Simple Sentences**
To whom it may concern: have a nice day.

To whom did you give it?

You went with whom?

**Nonstandard Use of Who as Object in Complex Constructions**
Considering the presidential debate, I would be interested in knowing who you tend to agree with.
(Note that the verb “tend” already has the subject “you”; thus, you need an objective case “whom” for the preposition “with.”)

Who the gods destroy they first make mad.
(Note that the verb “destroy” already has the subject “the gods”; thus, you need an objective case “whom” as the object of the verb “destroy.”)

Have you decided who you are going to ask to lunch?
(Note that the verb “are going” already has the subject “you”; thus, you need “whom” to be the object of the verb “ask.”)

**Case: Whoever and Whomever**

*Whoever* is in the subjective case. When there’s a verb that needs a subject, the word *whoever* fills that role.

**Standard Use of Whoever in Simple Sentences**
Whoever is willing to fill that role please stand up.

Whoever wanted it got the ball.

Whoever threw that is in big trouble.

**Nonstandard Use of Whomever as the Subject in Complex Constructions**
I gave the ball to whomever wanted it.
(“Whoever” is required to be the subject of the verb “wanted.”)

You should not throw whomever offends you into the pool.
(“Whoever” is required to be the subject of the verb “offends.”)

Take whomever wants to have a swim to the pool.
(“Whoever” is required to be the subject of the verb “wants.”)

The money was intended for whoever had the best claim to it.
(“Whoever” is required to be the subject of the verb “had.”)

**Case and Accompanying Nouns (Appositives)**
Examine the following nonstandard sentence and the standard one afterwards.

**Nonstandard**
Us softball players were disappointed that we were rained out.

**Standard**
We softball players were disappointed that we were rained out.

The pronoun “us” should be the subjective case “we” for the verb “were disappointed.” Identifying the standard pronoun is difficult in this circumstance because there seems to be another subject, “softball players.” What is going on?

One way to think of it is that “we” and the “softball players” are both the subject. Since the sentence begins with a pronoun, the noun “softball players” is used to clarify the pronoun. (A noun that follows a pronoun in this way is called an appositive.)

Sometimes, an object in the sentence also may have a pronoun and accompanying noun.

**Nonstandard**
The coach took we softball players out for ice cream instead.

**Standard**
The coach took us softball players out for ice cream instead.

As above, the easiest way to determine that the pronoun should be “us” (followed by “softball players”) is to recognize that there is no verb afterwards to serve as the subject; thus, it must be an object (the direct object).

When the accompanying noun acts a subject, its accompanying pronoun should be in the subjective case. When that noun fills the role of an object, the pronoun should also be in the objective case.
Case and the Verb *To Be*

If you have ever made a phone call, asked for someone by name, and heard the response, “This is she [or he],” you’ve encountered another example of case in standard written English.

Imagine that the *to be* verb (*is, was, are, were, has been, have been*) is an equal sign. Even when a pronoun follows the subject, you use the subjective case for that pronoun.

*Standard Sentences*

Who is she?

It is I.

This is he.

The person who stole my wallet was she.

Don’t worry—it’s just you and I here.

It was he. He’s the one.

The person voted most likely to find a grammatical error was I.

Case and Noun-like *-ing* Phrases (Gerunds)

Once again in standard written English, we have a construction that may be different from your everyday speech. In this situation though, we are not dealing with subjective or objective pronouns but possessive ones. Would you have taken the first sentence below as nonstandard?

*Nonstandard*

The best part of Jamel’s wedding was him singing to his bride.

*Standard*

The best part of Jamel’s wedding was his singing to his bride.

The reason why the possessive “his” is used is that the *–ing* phrase “singing to his bride” acts as a noun. We often called this construction a *gerund*. One way to test to see if an *–ing* phrase is a noun is to replace it with another noun and try a
possessive pronoun before it: “The best part of Jamel’s wedding was his song to his bride.”

Below is a review of possessive pronouns.

**Possessive Case**

- *My* book is *mine.*
- *Your* book is *yours.*
- *Her* book is *hers.*
- *His* book is *his.*
- *Its* book is *its.*

- *Our* book is *ours.*
- *Your* book is *yours.*
- *Their* book is *theirs.*

*Whose* book is this?

Here are some sentences to show you common nonstandard examples.

**Nonstandard**

I was impressed by *him* cooking.

**Standard**

I was impressed by *his* cooking.

**Nonstandard**

I don’t worry about *you* skipping class.

**Standard**

I don’t worry about *your* skipping class.

**Nonstandard**

You’re worried about *me* being late for class?

**Standard**

You’re worried about *my* being late for class?

**Case: Pronouns Ending with -self**

Have you heard someone say a sentence like this example?

**Nonstandard**

Maria and myself are going to the store.
The problem with the sentence is the word “myself” should be replaced with “I” because “myself” is currently part of the subject doing the action of “going to the store,” so the subjective case should be used.

*Standard*

Maria and I are going to the store.

There are a couple rules you should know for using pronouns that end with –*self* (reflexive and intensive /emphatic pronouns).

1. A –*self* pronoun can be the object of a sentence where it *reflects* (as in reflexive) back to a subject that refers to the same person, people, or thing. It cannot stand as a subject as in the previous nonstandard example.

*Standard*

Maria fell and hurt herself.
She fell and hurt herself.

2. A –*self* pronoun can *emphasize* or *intensify* another noun or pronoun that refers to the same person, people, or thing.

*Standard Sentences*

Maria herself read the book.
She herself read the book.
Maria read the book herself.
She read the book herself.

*Reflexive or Emphatic / Intensive Case*

I read the book *myself.*
You read the book *yourself.*
She read the book *herself.*
He read the book *himself.*
It read the book *itself.*

We read the book *ourselves.*
You read the book *yourselves.*
They read the book *themselves.*
Review of Section Two: Sentence Correctness

**Agreement**

*Circle the correct word.*

1. Either Dr. Jones or his many talented TAs (remind / reminds) the students to turn in their papers online.

2. The group of students (was / were) relieved to finish the First Year Experience sessions.

3. There (is / are) a bucket of cookies waiting in your room for you.

4. None of the puppies (is / are) allowed to live on campus.

5. Everybody from the Bethel soccer team (is / are) welcome to attend our breakout chapel.

**Dangling, Misplaced, and Squinting Modifiers**

*Revise the following sentences so that the modifiers make sense and refer to the correct word or phrase.*

1. While walking to class, my homework sat forgotten on my bed.

2. The student who was talking quickly disappeared behind a book.

3. Scared to death, the mother’s bed was full of children and pets during the big thunderstorm.

4. The book was on the shelf that he needed to read for his presentation.

5. Totally thrilled, the Oscar was accepted by Will Smith.

**Fragmentary Sentences**

*Revise the following sentences so that there are no fragments among them.*

1. As many people walked to chapel. The people with the cameras took their picture.

2. Dr. Jones is an understanding teacher. Because he was once a student.
3. The group of friends drove to the restaurant. Time to eat.

4. Frodo stood up and volunteered to take the ring to Mordor. His voice small but determined.

5. The ice cream shop reopened. Now with more flavors.

Run-on Sentences
*Revise the following run-on (also known as “fused”) sentences.*

1. She has to buy a new computer her hard drive crashed with all of her files on it.

2. There are fruit flies everywhere please wash your dishes.

3. Aslan is not a tame lion he is good.

4. Dr. Jones’ TA took his humor lit class last spring his new TA was in that class as well.

5. Our teacher accidentally called Fall Break “Spring Break” in the syllabus I noticed it this afternoon when I was doing my homework.

Adjectives/Adverbs
*Circle the appropriate word in parentheses.*

1. I think that the essay test that Dr. Jones gave went (real / really) (good / well).

2. Of the two novels, I think that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is (better / best).

3. It is difficult to know which of the many college majors is the (better / best) choice.

4. It is (good / well) for students to decide on a major eventually.

5. Last week, the soup tasted (good / well).

6. The shaggy dog needed his furry coat trimmed (bad / badly).

7. The chemistry experiment to make artificial chocolate failed (bad / badly).
8. The artificial chocolate made by the chemistry experiment tasted (bad / badly).

9. Like a (real / really) bad dream come true, that embarrassing moment was (real / really).

10. The stew that boiled over onto the burner smelled (bad / badly) to the household.

Case
Circle the appropriate word in parentheses.

1. He gave the handouts to Tiffany, Sander, and (I / me).

2. (We / Us) Northwestern students must make a good impression on prospective students.

3. The detective couldn’t believe that the culprit was (he / him).

4. Who is James Galway? Three very talented flutists are Jean-Pierre Rampal, Emmanuel Pahud, and (he / him).

5. (Who / Whom) shall I call to tell the news?

6. The roommate (who / whom) was assigned to me my freshman year became one of my best friends.

7. During the oral history examination, the exasperated student said, “I don’t know of (who / whom) you’re speaking!”

8. (Whoever / Whomever) puts his or her mind to it can find the hidden medallion.

9. The prize is given to (whoever / whomever) finds the medallion.

10. This year, the prize was given to (us / we) juniors.

11. No one was more surprised than (I / me).

12. I am very grateful for (him / he / his) discovering the treasure.

13. Bethel students and (we / us) are competing in this weekend’s volleyball tournament.
14. (Us / Our / We) competing with one another in a friendly manner is always good fun.

15. My best friend never goes anywhere without (I / me / myself).
Section Three: Word Use

This section addresses the principle of using standard word choice. In some cases, nonstandard words have become commonly used; in other cases, similar words are frequently confused.

Nonstandard Words and Phrases

Some words and phrases are always unacceptable in standard written English.

Alright
Alot
Anyways
Irregardless
Should of
Could of
Would of
May of
Might of
Must of

Although some computer programs accept the first of these, alright is not an acceptable variant of all right in standard written English.

Alot is a fused word made up of the two-word phrase a lot.

Anyways should not be used in formal writing. Substitute the word anyway.

Irregardless seems to be an attempt to make the real word regardless seem fancier. It’s similar to a nonstandard double negative, such as “I do not need no backtalk from you” instead of the standard “I do not need backtalk from you.” Use regardless.

The last few items in the list—should of, could of, would of, may of, might of, and must of—are crossovers from oral communication to written. When I say “I should have mentioned this earlier,” it’s easy to hear “should of” if I don’t articulate adequately. This is particularly true if I use a contraction: “I would’ve avoided the contraction if I could’ve.” Therefore, these sound like they exist, but they don’t exist in the standard written language.
Confusion Between Possessive Forms and Contracted Forms of Pronouns

We’ve already dealt with one section of common word choice errors in the section about the Apostrophe. If you remember that apostrophes in pronouns are always contractions and never indicate the possessive, you will be able to keep the following problematic words straight:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confusing Contractions and Possessives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Awkward Replacements for *Because*

Because some of the following have other meanings or are awkward in their phrasing, you are advised to use *because* instead of them.

**As**

*As* can mean *because*, but it can also mean *while*, having to do with time rather than cause. When you use it to mean *because*, you may be being ambiguous. Use *because* when you mean *because* and use *while* when you mean *while*.

*Ambiguous Nonstandard Sentence*

*As* Rome burned, Nero fiddled.

That sentence is ambiguous. It may mean that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. But it may mean that Nero didn’t like Rome very much and that he
fiddled out of joy that it was burning. If you mean the former, you should write “While Rome burned, Nero fiddled.” If you mean the latter, write “Because Rome burned, Nero fiddled.”

**Being as**
**Being that**
These are both very rough approximations of *because*. Why not simply use the simpler word rather than a complex and awkward phrase? “Being as communication is quite important, we should simplify when possible” could very easily be changed to “Because communication is quite important, we should simplify when possible.”

**Confusion of Definition**

The following sets of words are often confused. Precision of definition is the way to avoid making errors with these.

- **Accept / Except**
- **Affect / Effect**
- **Beside / Besides**
- **Capitol / Capital**
- **Further / Farther**
- **Led / Lead**
- **Lose / Loose**
- **Principle / Principal**
- **Then / Than**
- **They’re / Their / There**
- **To / Too / Two**

*Accept* means to receive something. *Except* relates to something that is excluded.

*Standard Sentences*
She wouldn’t accept anything from us.
Everyone except Karl still owes me for the baseball tickets.

In nearly all cases, *affect* is a verb, while *effect* is a noun.
Standard Sentences
The effect of voting for me will be beneficial.
It will affect me positively; it will give me a positive effect.

The exception is that *effect* as a verb means “to produce a result” or “to create change,” while *affect* means “to influence.”

Standard
To effect a change in the population, vote for me.

*Beside* means “by the side of.” *Besides* means “in addition to.”

Standard Sentences
Beside the Jordon, John baptized.
Sit beside me to hear the story.
Besides Jesus, John baptized many others.
John baptized in other rivers besides the Jordan.

*Capitol* is the word reserved for the buildings where laws are made. *Capital* as an adjective means “chief” or “most prominent.” *Capital* as a noun has a monetary meaning.

Standard Sentences
I recently visited the Capitol building in Washington, D. C.
In downtown St. Paul, only one restaurant near the capitol shows British Premier League soccer matches.
Capital punishment used to be chopping off someone’s head.
The capital city of Minnesota—its chief city—is St. Paul.
Use a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence.
How can you need a loan when you’ve accumulated so much capital?

*Further* has to do with metaphorical distance while *farther* has to do with literal distance.

Standard Sentences
“If I go one mile, have I gone far enough?” “No, young man, you’ll have to go farther.”
“If I posit one mathematical claim, have I gone far enough?” “No, young woman, you’ll have to go further.”
He climbed halfway up Mount Everest, but she climbed farther.
Her thoughts led her further toward the goal than she imagined they would.

*Led* is the past tense of the verb “to lead.” *Lead* is not the past tense of that verb; it is a noun. Don’t use *lead* as the past tense of the verb *lead*.

*Standard Sentences*

I led a horse to water, but I couldn’t make it drink.
Alchemists attempt to turn lead into gold.

*Lose* is a verb that is the opposite of “to find.” *Loose* can be a verb or an adjective. As a verb, it means “to untie” or “to release.” As an adjective, it means the opposite of tight.

*Standard Sentences*

I always lose track of time.
You’ll lose the horse if you don’t tie it up.
There’s a burglar out back. Loose the dogs into the yard!
Make sure your necktie isn’t too loose.

*Principal* can be a noun or an adjective. It refers to the chief of anything. The principal of the school is its chief officer. You earn interest on your principal in the bank. The most important rule (the chief rule) is the principal rule.

*Standard Sentences*

Ben Franklin’s principal rule was “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
The principal thing to bring on a camping trip is a tent.

*Principle* is always a noun. It refers to a held belief or a tenet of a system of beliefs or of science; therefore, we speak of moral principles, scientific principles, and religious principles.

*Standard Sentences*

Lacking moral principles, the governor was thrown in prison.
Your writing will no longer suffer from a lack of grammatical principles.

*Then* refers to elements of time while *than* has to do with comparisons.
**Standard Sentences**
I told you that she was taller than I.
What did you do then?
She would always remember April 26. Shakespeare was baptized then.

*They’re* is a contraction of “they are.” *Their* is a possessive pronoun meaning “belonging to them.” *There* is a location indicator or an introductory word.

**Standard Sentences**
They’re going to the concert tonight.
They have their tickets.
I wish I could go there.
There are other concerts.

*To* is a preposition or an infinitive marker.

**Standard**
She loves to run, to jump, to climb, to dream about going to school, to work, and to the country.

*Too* means “also” or “exceptionally.”

**Standard Sentences**
The word is too long for my purposes.
The word is spelled wrong, too.

*Two* is a number.

**Standard**
The most common whole number that is greater than one and less than three is two.
Words Related to Numbers

To use some words correctly, you need to be aware of the numbers associated with them.

**Among / Between**

**Amount / Number**

**Fewer / Less**

*Among* and *between* are prepositions. *Between* is used when two items are in question; *among* is used when more than two things are involved.

*Standard Sentences*

A wide gulf stands between you and me.
Divide the prize money between the two winners.
Distribute the funds among all the professors at University of Northwestern.
The work should be shared among each of the seven members of the group.

*Amount* is used with non-count nouns; *number* is used with count nouns. Count nouns are those nouns that can be counted. For example, “gallon” is a count noun. You can count the number of gallons a given store sells in a day. Non-count nouns are those nouns to which a specific number cannot be fixed. “Milk” is a non-count noun. You cannot tally up the number of milk sold by the store. You can, however, find out the amount of milk the store sold.

---

**Examples of Count and Non-Count Nouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count Nouns</th>
<th>Non-Count Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gallon</td>
<td>Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard Sentences
We sold a large number of gallons of milk yesterday.
We sold a large amount of milk yesterday.
The doctor said to drink a larger number of glasses of water every day.
The doctor said to drink a larger amount of water every day.
There were a number of chairs in the entryway.
The amount of furniture she bought yesterday was excessive.
The soccer team scored a number of goals last season.
The soccer coach has a substantial amount of anger to lose.
I speak a considerable number of languages.
My class has given me a fair amount of Spanish I can use.
The number of days until the holidays allows me to do my shopping.
The amount of time until the holidays allows me to do my shopping.
Those students increase the amount of intelligence in the world.

Fewer and less operate on the same principle. Fewer is used with count nouns.

Standard Sentences
I gave away ten rulers; I have fewer rulers today than I did yesterday.
I wish I had fewer papers to grade.
If I have fewer than ten items, I’ll be able to get in the express lane.

Less is used with non-count nouns.

Standard Sentences
The coach has less anger this year than last.
It’s too crowded in here: you need less furniture.
The solution is not always to drink less water.
Commonly Misused Words and Phrases

The following are words and phrases that are frequently misused:

- **Enthused / Enthusiastic**
- **Try and / Try to**
- **Unique**
- **Where at**
- **Which, Who / That**

It is stylistically better to use the adjective *enthusiastic* rather than *enthused* and to avoid the verb *to enthuse* entirely.

*Nonstandard*

She is very enthused about Shakespeare.

*Standard*

She is very enthusiastic about Shakespeare.

*Nonstandard*

King Henry V attempted to enthuse the troops before the battle.

*Standard*

King Henry V attempted to make the troops enthusiastic before the battle.

Phrases including the expression *to try* usually require another *to* plus verb rather than *and* plus verb.

*Nonstandard*

We’d like to try and go to the store this afternoon.

*Standard*

We’d like to try to go to the store this afternoon.

*Nonstandard*

I wanted to try and see that movie, but the babysitting fee was too high.
Standard
I wanted to try to see that movie, but the babysitting fee was too high.

Unique is a word like no other. A thing cannot be described as more unique or the most unique. It’s simply unique.

Nonstandard
He was wearing the most unique tie.

Standard
He was wearing a unique tie.

The phrase **where at** is an unnecessary and ungrammatical expansion of the word **where**.

Nonstandard
I wish I knew where my homework was at.

Standard
I wish I knew where my homework was.

Which is occasionally erroneously used instead of the more appropriate **who** or **that**.

Nonstandard
I went to work with the scientists which invented the potato chip.

Standard
I went to work with the scientists who invented the potato chip.

Standard
I went to work with the scientists that invented the potato chip.
Lay versus Lie

The verb *to lay* means “to place or to put.” The verb *to lie* means “to recline.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lie (to recline)</th>
<th>Lay (to place or to put)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present</strong></td>
<td>Lie(s)</td>
<td>Lay(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past</strong></td>
<td>Lay</td>
<td>Laid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past participle</strong></td>
<td>(has, have, had) lain</td>
<td>(has, have, had) laid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gerund</strong></td>
<td>Lying</td>
<td>Laying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writers are often confused because the present tense of *to lay* is identical with the past tense of *to lie*. To avoid confusion, note the tense. Additionally, note that *to lay* will take an object and *to lie* will not.

*Standard Sentences*

He lies on the couch.
You lay on the couch last week.
We have lain on the couch during past illnesses.
I had lain on the couch, but I regained my health.
He lays his keys on the counter.
You laid your keys on the counter last week.
We have laid our keys on the counter every day this month.
I had laid my keys on the counter, but someone removed them.
Lying on the floor during class time is not permitted.
Laying your books on your desk is appropriate.
Review of Section Three: Word Use

1. I like to order my pizza with all the vegetables (except / accept) onions.
2. You should put your keys somewhere where you won’t (lose / loose) them.
3. That lazy cat (lays / lies) around all day.
4. Dr. Jones went (farther / further) today in his explanation of further vs. farther than he had done before.
5. These long, snowy days won’t have a negative (effect / affect) on me.
6. (Being that / Because) my favorite movie was sold out, I decided to rent a movie instead.
7. (Besides / Beside) being late to the movie, I also got a speeding ticket. What a terrible day!
8. Our class sang a song to welcome the new (principal / principle), Mrs. Wallace.
9. The (number / amount) of students late for class today gave Dr. Jones cause for alarm.
10. No one has (less / fewer) kindness than Ebenezer Scrooge.
11. My sister had (fewer / less) tokens than I did at Chuck E. Cheese, so I decided to share some of mine.
12. The (effect / affect) of the hurricane was disastrous.
13. I was late to class (as / because) my alarm clock didn’t go off this morning.
14. Let’s take a trip to the state (capital / capitol). No, I don’t mean the building—I mean the city.
15. You can never walk (further / farther) than halfway into the woods. After halfway, you’re walking out of the woods.
16. Your keys may be (besides / beside) that enormous pile of papers.
17. I’m sure I didn’t (lay / lie) my keys by that enormous pile of papers.
18. I had (laid / lain) my keys up on the shelf; I’m just sure of it.

19. Many times, I have (lain / laid) down to take a nap after a hard day’s work.

20. My friend always (lies / lays) her backpack in the entryway.

21. The (number / amount) of mystery in this haunted house would be enough to fill a book.

22. (There / Their / They’re / There are) just some things that those (to / too / two) are (to / too / two) young (to / too / two) do.

23. I’m so (enthused / enthusiastic) about learning all this fun stuff.

24. Please (try and / try to) behave yourselves.

25. (Alright / All right), I’ll go with you to the mall. Let’s just not buy (alot / a lot) of stuff.
Answer Sheets for Review Sections

Review of Section One: Punctuation.

Apostrophe
Circle the correct response in parentheses.

1. The seven (dwarfs / dwarf’s / dwarfs’) had (Snow Whites / Snow White’s / Snow Whites’) full attention.

2. The track meeting was held in the (girls / girl’s / girls’) locker room.

3. (Its / It’s / Its’) going to surprise everyone if you wear (your / you’re) wig to the party.

Capitalization
Mark the letters that need to be capitalized in each sentence.

1. Are you going to take the course that integrates Shakespeare with film with Dr. Jones next semester?

2. I went to the Mall of America with Grandma, Maizie, and my mom.

Colon
Insert colons where needed. Delete unnecessary punctuation.

1. I have a word of advice: run away!

2. The books that are her absolute favorites include Gone with the Wind, Little Women, and Silas Marner.

3. The two sections that won the band scavenger hunt are the flute section and the trombone section.

Comma
Insert commas where needed.

1. Blue, my favorite color, is the fifth color in the rainbow.
2. When I turned four, I moved to Ohio.

3. Holding his hat, Dr. Jones ran to the bus stop, but he still arrived after it had pulled away.

4. The chicken relaxed in its coop, not understanding that the fox was nearby.

5. The goofy, carefree student collided with the professor in the coffee shop.

6. I enjoy drinking warm, soothing tea.

7. Whew, that was a close one!

Hyphen
*Insert hyphens where needed.*

1. In the course, he studied Victorian-era architecture and visited a two-story home.

2. The three-year-old girl was enrolled in a two-year preschool program.

Underlining (Italicizing)

*Underline or remove underlining and add or remove quotation marks in the following sentences.*

1. The book *Prince Caspian* is quite a bit different from the new movie, especially in the chapter entitled “The Lion Roars.”

2. “Christmas at Plum Creek” is an especially good episode of the television show called *Little House on the Prairie*.

Quotation Marks
*Insert quotation marks and other necessary punctuation (including capitalization) in the following sentences.*

1. Tim Sawyer said to his conducting class, “The most important aspect of good conducting is clarity.”

2. “May I borrow,” she wondered aloud, “a pencil?”
3. “To thine own self be true,” said Polonius hypocritically.

Semicolons
*Insert semicolons and commas where needed.*

1. I don’t care for mustard; however, I do like ketchup.

2. He wanted to tour three capital cities: Sydney, Australia; Tokyo, Japan; and Beijing, China.
Review of Section Two: Sentence Correctness.

Agreement
_Circle the correct word._

1. Either Dr. Jones or his many talented TAs (remind / reminds) the students to turn in their papers online.

2. The group of students (was / were) relieved to finish the First Year Experience sessions.

3. There (is / are) a bucket of cookies waiting in your room for you.

4. None of the puppies (is / are) allowed to live on campus.

5. Everybody from the Bethel soccer team (is / are) welcome to attend our breakout chapel.

Dangling, Misplaced, and Squinting Modifiers
_Revise the following sentences so that the modifiers make sense and refer to the correct word or phrase._

1. While I walked to class, my homework sat forgotten on my bed.

2. The student who was talking disappeared quickly behind a book.

3. The mother’s bed was full of children and pets who were scared to death during the big thunderstorm.

4. The book that he needed to read for his presentation was on the shelf.

5. Totally thrilled, Will Smith accepted the Oscar.

Fragmentary Sentences
_Revise the following sentences so that there are no fragments among them._

1. As many people walked to chapel, the people with the cameras took their picture.

2. Dr. Jones is an understanding teacher because he was once a student.
3. The group of friends drove to the restaurant: time to eat.

4. Frodo stood up and volunteered to take the ring to Mordor, his voice small but determined.

5. The ice cream shop reopened. It now offers more flavors.

Run-on Sentences
Revise the following run-on (also known as “fused”) sentences.

1. She has to buy a new computer; her hard drive crashed with all of her files on it.

2. There are fruit flies everywhere. Please wash your dishes.

3. Aslan is not a tame lion, but he is good.

4. Dr. Jones’ TA took his humor lit class last spring. His new TA was in that class as well.

5. Our teacher accidentally called Fall Break “Spring Break” in the syllabus; I noticed it this afternoon when I was doing my homework.

Adjectives/Adverbs
Circle the appropriate word in parentheses.

1. I think that the essay test that Dr. Jones gave went (real / really) (good / well).

2. Of the two novels, I think that To Kill a Mockingbird is (better / best).

3. It is difficult to know which of the many college majors is the (better / best) choice.

4. It is (good / well) for students to decide on a major eventually.

5. Last week, the soup tasted (good / well).

6. The shaggy dog needed his furry coat trimmed (bad / badly).

7. The chemistry experiment to make artificial chocolate failed (bad / badly).
8. The artificial chocolate made by the chemistry experiment tasted (bad / badly).

9. Like a (real / really) bad dream come true, that embarrassing moment was (real / really).

10. The stew that boiled over onto the burner smelled (bad / badly) to the household.

Case

Circle the appropriate word in parentheses.

1. He gave the handouts to Tiffany, Sander, and (I / me).

2. (We / Us) Northwestern students must make a good impression on prospective students.

3. The detective couldn’t believe that the culprit was (he / him).

4. Who is James Galway? Three very talented flutists are Jean-Pierre Rampal, Emmanuel Pahud, and (he / him).

5. (Who / Whom) shall I call to tell the news?

6. The roommate (who / whom) was assigned to me my freshman year became one of my best friends.

7. During the oral history examination, the exasperated student said, “I don’t know of (who / whom) you’re speaking!”

8. (Whoever / Whomever) puts his or her mind to it can find the hidden medallion.

9. The prize is given to (whoever / whomever) finds the medallion.

10. This year, the prize was given to (us / we) juniors.

11. No one was more surprised than (I / me).

12. I am very grateful for (him / he / his) discovering the treasure.

13. Bethel students and (we / us) are competing in this weekend’s volleyball tournament.
14. (Us / Our / We) competing with one another in a friendly manner is always good fun.

15. My best friend never goes anywhere without (I / me / myself).
Review of Section Three: Word Use.

1. I like to order my pizza with all the vegetables (except / accept) onions.
2. You should put your keys somewhere where you won’t (lose / loose) them.
3. That lazy cat (lays / lies) around all day.
4. Dr. Jones went (further / farther) today in his explanation of further vs. farther than he had done before.
5. These long, snowy days won’t have a negative (effect / affect) on me.
6. (Being that / Because) my favorite movie was sold out, I decided to rent a movie instead.
7. (Besides / Beside) being late to the movie, I also got a speeding ticket. What a terrible day!
8. Our class sang a song to welcome the new (principle / principal), Mrs. Wallace.
9. The (number / amount) of students late for class today gave Dr. Jones cause for alarm.
10. No one has (less / fewer) kindness than Ebenezer Scrooge.
11. My sister had (fewer / less) tokens than I did at Chuck E. Cheese, so I decided to share some of mine.
12. The (effect / affect) of the hurricane was disastrous.
13. I was late to class (as / because) my alarm clock didn’t go off this morning.
14. Let’s take a trip to the state (capital / capitol). No, I don’t mean the building—I mean the city.
15. You can never walk (further / farther) than halfway into the woods. After halfway, you’re walking out of the woods.
16. Your keys may be (besides / beside) that enormous pile of papers.
17. I’m sure I didn’t (lay / lie) my keys by that enormous pile of papers.
18. I had (laid / lain) my keys up on the shelf; I’m just sure of it.

19. Many times, I have (lain / laid) down to take a nap after a hard day’s work.

20. My friend always (lies / lays) her backpack in the entryway.

21. The (number / amount) of mystery in this haunted house would be enough to fill a book.

22. (There / Their / They’re / There are) just some things that those (to / too / two) are (to / too / two) young (to / too / two) do.

23. I’m so (enthused / enthusiastic) about learning all this fun stuff.

24. Please (try and / try to) behave yourselves.

25. (Alright / All right), I’ll go with you to the mall. Let’s just not buy (alot / a lot) of stuff.
Appendix: Parts of Speech

The term *parts of speech* is used to describe all the categories into which each word of our language fits. This section will cover nine parts of speech that you will be expected to know.

1. Nouns
2. Pronouns
3. Verbs
4. Verb Helpers / Verb Parts
5. Prepositions
6. Conjunctions
7. Adjectives
8. Adverbs
9. Interjections

1. Nouns

A noun is a word that is a person, place, thing, idea, or event. You know that a word is a noun when you can put *a, an, or the* in front of it or when you capitalize it because it is a proper name.

Note the examples below.

| person:        | Melanie, the doctor, a machinist, Norwegians |
| place:         | Dallas, Disney Land, a mall, the neighborhood |
| thing:         | car, notebook, printer, flowers               |
| idea:          | success, Theory of Relativity, happiness      |
|                | (anything abstract)                           |
| event:         | Christmas, the Civil War                      |

The *senator* saluted the *flag* because he loves *America* and *freedom*, and then he went to the *luncheon* on *First Street*.

The words in italics in the sentence above are nouns.

2. Pronouns

A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun. Words such as *he, she, him, her, it,* and *they, we, them, us,* and even *who* and *whom* are pronouns.
Read the following sentence.

Terry would like Terry’s car keys returned to Terry by tomorrow.

It’s awkward and not the way we would talk. What we would say is the following:

Terry would like his car keys returned to him by tomorrow.

Pronouns make communication easier because we don’t have to repeat a name over and over again. The name or noun that the pronoun refers to (in this case Terry) is called the antecedent.

I went to the Walker Art Center, but it was closed on Mondays.

In the sentence above, it is the pronoun and Walker Art Center is the antecedent, the noun that the pronoun is standing in for.

3. Verbs

A verb is a word that expresses two things: 1) action or 2) state of being. 

Action verbs are words such as run, study, sleep, and think.

State-of-being verbs (sometimes called linking verbs) include the following:

- to be (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been)
- became, appear, grow, keep, remain, seem, stay, loom, prove, turn
- sound, smell, look, feel, taste (These five can also be action verbs.)

I was bored, so I walked to the park and saw a squirrel attack an old man.

The words in italics in the sentence above are verbs.

4. Verb Helpers / Verb Parts

Sometimes, verbs have what are called verb helpers or verb parts. These are words that complete the verb in certain sentences. Verb helpers are words such as the following:
shall, should
will, would
have (has, had)
may, might
can, could
do (does, did)

Here are some examples of sentences that contain a verb and a verb helper / part.

The baseball team *will win* the championship this year.

The book *could make* a lot of money for the author.

5. Prepositions

A preposition is a word that links an *object* (another word, usually a noun) to a word or groups of words. Prepositions can also help us understand relationships in time and space (such as the dog ran *around, under, through, between* the chairs).

The following is a list of some common prepositions that you should know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Along</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The words in italics in the sentences below are prepositions.

*In 1918, the last czar of Russia and his family were brutally murdered by the orders of Lenin.*
I went to the store about 5:00, walking between two cars from the state of Nebraska that sat with one wheel on the curb.

6. Conjunctions

A conjunction is a word that links words or parts of sentences together. There are two kinds of conjunctions.

*Coordinating conjunctions* link sentence parts that are equal in structure and importance. For example, they link together nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, and so forth.

Coordinating conjunctions can be remembered by using the mnemonic device “FANBOYS.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinating Conjunctions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Subordinating conjunctions* are the other type of conjunction. They link phrases together that are not equal in importance. There are many subordinating conjunctions, but these are some of the most common ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subordinating Conjunctions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note the italicized subordinating conjunctions in this sentence.
Although he was sick, he still got up and went to class because he was afraid of missing the lecture on parts of speech.

7. Adjectives

Adjectives describe nouns. They tell something about people, places, things, and ideas. In the phrases below, the adjectives are in italic type. We use them to answer questions such as what kind, which one, and how many.

The blue ship. The red sweater. The florid prose. The bad day. The good semester. The tremendous philosophy.

8. Adverbs

Adverbs describe verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. The English language regularly forms adverbs by adding –ly to adjectives (although that’s not the only form in which adverbs appear). We use them to answer the questions how, when, where, why, and to what extent. In the sentences below, the adverbs are in italics.

I played noisily during the contest. I took the guitar and smashed it slowly into the amp. The amp crashed loudly into the curtain. The curtain quietly ripped and fell softly on my head. I cried unhappily.

9. Interjections

An interjection is a short, usually emotion-laden word or phrase that frequently stands by itself.

Wow! The comma is amazing. Oh no! I forgot to proofread.
Works Cited
