

Grammar Handbook

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Introduction

Many types of languages are used throughout the world to communicate daily our countless ideas, beliefs, intentions, actions and feelings. And with mass media and the Internet, this interaction is occurring faster and more frequently with every passing second. Even specialized languages, such as mathematics and computer programming, are being used more often in an effort to create much desired and needed new processes and systems and to educate people.

Therefore, as members of a growing global village encompassed by our dynamic information age, good language expression, usage, and comprehension are vital not only for accurately communicating with each other in many different ways and on many different levels, but also for correctly communicating with and managing our machines, structures and other synthetic systems as well as the organic systems we've inherited.

Like most of the systems in the world and universe in which we live, languages are organic and continuously evolving systems within larger changing systems, such as our local, national and international communities. Within all languages, cultural traditions and conventions have shaped, organized, re-organized and normalized language subsystems, thereby, structuring overall language systems. So like culture, itself, language is ever-developing as conventions and traditional systems are forever challenged and language structure is permanently altered.

Besides the inherent ever-evolving nature of languages, in a global information age much can be lost in translation between different languages and in the inevitable meshing of cultures. Therefore, information dissemination and comprehension can be a challenge. However, as with many organic systems and their subsystems, chaos is a natural part of cycles, and in an all-encompassing global and ever-changing technological environment, as cultures and languages collide, they also merge to become one.

Sentence Basics

Parts of Speech

Parts of speech are sentence elements that work together to make up a sentence. Just as a car is not a functioning car without all of its synchronized parts working together, a sentence is not a functioning sentence without the correct usage and combination of its essential parts of speech. The difference is that not all basic sentence parts—or parts of speech—have to be included all of the time to actually make up a complete and functioning sentence, but its parts do have to work together accurately for a writer to convey his or her intended ideas. The basic parts of speech include: Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Preposition, and Article.

Nouns

- A noun is a word describing *who* or *what* in a sentence—it can be a person, place or thing. Remember, a “thing” can be anything—an animal, a device, a point, an object, an event, and so on. A noun is usually an essential part of any basic sentence. It’s typically who or what the sentence is about, but other nouns are often also included in longer or more complex sentences.

Noun Examples:

- **Larry** smiled.
 - **Larry** smiled at **Isabel**, **Kevin**, and their two **dogs**, **Trevor** and **Lance**.
 - **Trevor** and **Lance** were watching a **show** on **Animal Planet**.
 - **Alaska** is home to many interesting **creatures**.
 - That plain red wooden **chair** in the **corner** is a priceless **antique**.
 - The **iceberg** was massive underneath the **water**.
 - **Austin, Texas** is known as the “**Live Music Capital of the World**,”ⁱ but the **New York Times** created controversy when it referred to it as the “**Live Music Capital of the South**.”ⁱⁱ
- A proper noun names a particular person, place or thing, and the first letter of a proper noun is always capitalized. From the examples listed above, **Larry**, **Isabel**, **Kevin**, **Trevor**, **Lance**, **Animal Planet**, **Alaska**, **Austin, Texas**, “**Live Music Capital of the World**,” **New York Times**, and “**Live Music Capital of the South**” are all proper nouns.
 - Common nouns are not specific and don’t require capitalization. From the examples listed above, **dogs**, **show**, **creatures**, **chair**, **corner**, **antique**, **iceberg**, and **water** are all common nouns.

Pronouns

- Pronouns can be used in place of nouns (when appropriate), and a pronoun operates just like a noun in a sentence. It's important to remember, however, to use pronouns carefully. Often times, writers make the mistake of referring to a noun with a pronoun without first providing and introducing the actual noun a pronoun is replacing. This creates confusion for readers since it's then not clear *who* or *what* a pronoun is referring to. Also, once introduced, nouns should be mentioned again here and there throughout a paragraph to remind readers of the name or title of a noun (or noun phrase) even if it's only a common noun, such as "philosophy student" or "kitten."

Nouns should be renamed even more often when many different nouns are being talked about in the same paragraph, especially when writers are describing interaction between characters or objects...e.g., *He swore to her he would never deceive her again even though she was the one who had first lied to him about it after he told her what the other man told him she said.* How many people are being referred to in the previous sentence? When starting a new paragraph, it's also a good idea to re-introduce a noun in the first sentence since readers typically look for a change in thought or direction in a new paragraph.

On the other hand, it is a good idea to use plenty of pronouns intermittently throughout paragraphs to replace nouns (once they've been introduced) so that all sentences don't begin exactly the same or follow the exact same pattern each time. Sentences may start to sound redundant or choppy (and sometimes boring) when they're all the same and become very predictable to readers. Without sacrificing meaning and direction in your paragraphs, it's good to mix it up a bit with sentences.

- Personal pronouns tend to come to mind first when we think about pronouns. It's because most people use them a lot in their writing, and most writers instinctively know to use personal pronouns when referring to people or things even if they're not always sure when or how often to use them. The main thing to remember about personal pronoun usage is that it is based on *number, person and gender*.

However, with the factor, *gender*, a lot has changed over the years in English language usage when it comes to the political correctness (PC) of referring to a person by their gender. It's something to keep in mind when writing since the main change has to do with writers no longer automatically referring to an anonymous someone as "he" or "him." For instance: "A baseball pitcher must work constantly on the accuracy of **his** pitch." How do we know the pitcher isn't female? So, it's better to replace the word "his" with either "his or her" or with the word "their." Even though "their" is typically known as a plural

personal pronoun, it has now become an acceptable and gender-neutral way to refer to someone: “A baseball pitcher must work constantly on **their** pitch.” (More information on gender can be found in the Sexist Language section under **Word Choice** in this handbook.)

Another thing to remember about personal pronouns is that when writers use certain statements or commands, such as “Stop!” or “Listen to me!” the personal pronoun “**you**” is implied... “You stop!” or “You listen to me!”

Personal Pronouns

Person	Number	
	Singular	Plural
1st Person	I (my, me)	we (our, us)
2nd Person	you (your, you)	you (your, you)
3rd Person	he (his, him)	
	she (her, her)	they (their, them)
	it (its, it)	

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Personal Pronoun Examples:

- o **He** smiled at **them**, but **I** wish **he** would also smile at **me**.
- o **You** gave **me** your new recipe, so of course **my** lasagna tastes great.
- o Today, **they** watched **it** until **she** arrived; **you** will have to watch **it** all day tomorrow.
- o A philosophy student spends a lot of time writing papers for **his or her** courses.
- o A law student spends hours studying **their** law books. (gender-neutral)
- o **They** gave **him** to **us** yesterday, and **we** are really enjoying **our** new kitten.
- o **Its** name is Sunflower.

Note: In most of the examples above, it’s not always clear who or what the sentence is about (besides a pronoun of some type). That’s why it’s important for a writer to make sure readers always know who or what is being referred to before using a huge splattering of personal pronouns to replace nouns in a paragraph.

- Personal pronouns and slang go together like...well, a lot of people use slang pronouns. And in common everyday conversation, it’s usually very acceptable; however, as most academic writers probably know, words like “**y’all**” aren’t used in scholarly writing unless a writer is directly quoting someone else using such a word. Depending on various cultures and regions, different versions of the plural form of the pronoun “**you**” are used. Other slang personal pronouns include but are not limited to “**you guys**” (referring to males and females), or “**yous guys**” and “**yous**.” It’s only

necessary, however, to use **“you”** when addressing more than one person. (The word “dude”^{iv} or “dudes” has been used as a personal pronoun recently too, but it’s also slang and shouldn’t be used in academic, business or formal writing.)

- Pronoun confusion is common with certain personal pronouns:

“I” versus “me”	“we” versus “us”	“it” versus “they”
“I” is used as the subject noun in a sentence (person, place, or thing a sentence is about), whereas “me” is used as the object noun.	“We” is used as a subject noun in a sentence (person, place, or thing a sentence is about), whereas “us” is used as an object noun.	Use the pronoun “it” when referring to a singular <i>non-human</i> noun, but use “they” when referring to more than one of anything.
<u>Examples:</u>	<u>Examples:</u>	<u>Examples:</u>
I went fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. (“I” = who the sentence is about.)	We are vacationing in France next year. (“We” = who the sentence is about.)	The lion pride was an amazing site to see on the Serengeti even though it was from a distance. (“pride” = “it.”)
Gina and I will scuba dive in Puget Sound. (“Gina and I” = who the sentence is about.)	We , including several other people from another club, are participating in the race. (“We” = who the sentence is about.)	The corporation was very generous with its donations. (A corporation or any other type of organization is a single entity.)
Sherry called me last night from London. (“Sherry” = who the sentence is about.)	I’m surprised you asked us to do the research. (“I” = who the sentence is about.)	All of the people working for the small corporation were well educated, and they had all received their degrees from Capella University. (People in an organization = “they.”)
You will give all of the candy to Jimmy and me . (“You” = who the sentence is about because “You” is the noun performing the action, “give,” even though it’s in the possible future.)	We heard you were excited to help us with the marketing project. (The sentence is about “We” first because it is the noun performing the very first action, “heard.”)	The data is organized by division, but it is not alphabetized or categorized by department. (“Data” can be used as a singular or plural noun.) ^v

Note: Confusion often occurs also around the words “**your**” and “**you’re**.”

The word “**your**” is a personal pronoun (refer to the Personal Pronouns chart in this section), and the word “**you’re**” is the contraction for the words “**you are**.” Unfortunately, technology and computers have not helped us any with word confusion. Many a person has recently sent an email or instant message (IM) reply to someone across the Internet cloud saying, “Your welcome!” *Whose* welcome?

- The possessive form of a personal pronoun is not punctuated with an apostrophe. For instance, many people get the words “**its**” and “**it’s**” mixed up. However, the word “**its**” is the possessive form of the pronoun “**it**,” whereas the word “**it’s**” is a contraction for the words “**it is**.”

Possessive Personal Pronoun Examples:

- Is that hamburger **yours**? (NOT: “your’s”)
 - Where is **hers**? (NOT: “her’s”)
 - **Theirs** was the first to compete in the race. (NOT: Their’s)
 - **His** is the book next to **hers**. (NOT: “her’s”)
 - **Its** characteristics are similar to the other dated sample’s characteristics.
(NOT: “It’s”)
 - **Ours** is much bigger than **yours**. (NOT: “your’s”)
 - **It’s** sad that Harry’s transferring to another university.
(CONTRACTION)
- Reflexive pronouns are used only to *reflect* or refer back to the main noun of a sentence or the subject—*who* or *what* the sentence is about.

Reflexive Pronoun Examples:

Jerome hurt **himself** playing tennis. (Jerome)

- Michelle struggled with **herself** over the issue. (Michelle)
 - I said to **myself** I would never get behind on my studies. (I)
 - The couple enjoyed **themselves** on vacation in Norway. (The couple)
 - We set **ourselves** on the right course and never looked back. (We)
 - You should prepare **yourselves** for a wonderful experience at the restaurant. (You)
 - It duplicated **itself** after a massive exposure to radiation and chemicals. (It)
- NOT: The meeting will be attended by Miguel and **myself**. (The meeting?)
 - NOT: It’s only Cecilia and **myself** going. (It’s?)

Reflexive Pronouns

Person	Number	
	Singular	Plural
1st Person	myself	ourselves
2nd Person	yourself	yourselves
3rd Person	himself	
	herself itself	themselves

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- Intensive reflexive pronouns are used to emphasize the subject of a sentence.

Examples:

- He **himself** will be the first to admit he was wrong.
 - I like chocolate cake with chocolate icing **myself**!
- Reciprocal pronouns include “**each other**,” which refers to two nouns, and “**one another**,” which refers to more than two nouns.

Examples:

- Trevor and Rover always hurt **each other** when they play too rough.
 - Participants in the group support **one another**.
- Demonstrative pronouns are used to determine “number” and proximity.”^{vii}

Examples:

- **This** latte’ is yours, and **that** one is mine.
 - **These** shoes will be okay for hiking the low trail today, but you will need **those** boots for hiking the higher trail tomorrow.

Demonstrative Pronouns

Proximity	Number	
	Singular	Plural
Near	This	These
Distant	That	Those

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Demonstrative pronouns may also be used to *replace* a common noun (or noun phrase) in a sentence as long as it’s first clear to readers who or what the pronoun is referring to. It’s not accurate to refer to a human as “that” or “this”

unless it precedes a noun: “That belongs to **“this”** man.” However, it is okay to refer to a group of humans as “those” or “these.”

Examples:

- o The fast roller coaster caused my stomach to ache.
That caused my stomach to ache.
 - o Which kids knocked over the table?
Oh, **those**.
- Indefinite pronouns are used to replace universal groups and general quantities or parts of groups or things. (They are also used as adjectives, which *describe* nouns.)

Examples:

- o **Many** people joined the organization after the meeting.
- o **One** will know when it's the right time.

Indefinite Pronouns

Quantifiers	enough, few, fewer, less, little, many, much, several, more, most
Universals	all, both, each, every (everybody, everything, everyone), one (two, three....)
Partitives	any (anybody, anything, anyone), either, neither, none (nobody, nothing, no one), one (two, three....), some (somebody, something, someone)

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Verbs

- A verb is a word used in a sentence to explain what a noun—a person, place, or thing—is doing or to explain what's being done to a noun. It's usually an *action* word, but a verb or set of verbs can also explain an *emotional/physiological response or action*, (like “feel”) or a *mental action or state*, (like “think”) or a *state of being*, which may not typically be noticed or seen by others.

For instance, the word “exist”^x is a verb that can be used to explain what a person, place, or thing is doing even though such a word might not automatically come to mind when trying to think of a true action word. However, “exist” can be used to explain the *state of being* of a noun or noun phrase—even though it's not necessarily an obvious or observable action.

What about the verb “mad?”—Is it always apparent when someone is mad? (And that could apply to both meanings of the verb “mad.”^{xi}) Yet, “mad” is a commonly used verb, but it’s not truly an action word. It’s more of a state of being or state of mind or emotion type of word. The verb “mad” is typically paired with some form of the verb “be.” For instance: “Gary **was** always **mad** at Katrina.” or “I **am mad** at you.”

Therefore, even though verbs may not always be apparent action words, a verb of some sort (or set of verbs) is usually an essential element in any basic sentence. So, when in doubt about whether or not a word is a verb, check its meaning; usually, dictionaries list a word’s part of speech next to it. (Several online dictionaries are available, too, such as webster.com and dictionary.com.)

Verb Examples:

- o Larry **exists**—his spirit **haunts** the motel every night.
 - o Boris **practices** everyday in preparation for the tour.
 - o Shots **hurt**. / Loss **hurts**. / Rover **hurt** the kitten when he **licked** its little ear.
 - o When Katya first **arrived** in Roswell, **New Mexico**, she **noticed** a shooting star in the sky.
 - o I **produce** short training films for my organization.
 - o Sonja says she **transcends** her physical being during yoga.
 - o The television **exploded** while we **were** on vacation—I **thought** I **had switched** it off right before we **left**!
- Verb Forms – Five factors come into play when determining what form a verb should take in a sentence: person, number, voice, mood, and tense. These are known as verb properties.

Verb Properties

Person	Verbs are in the same person as the subject or noun/noun phrase.
	<u>Examples:</u> - o I am planning to go to the museum. (First Person) - o <u>You</u> are planning to go to the museum as well. (Second Person) - o <u>Jeffrey</u> is planning to go with us to the museum. (Third Person)
Number	Verb forms match subject numbers/quantities.
	<u>Examples:</u> - o The <u>trip</u> to Rome was planned in advance. - o The <u>trips</u> to Rome were planned in advance.
Voice	Verbs explain either what a noun is doing or what’s being done to a noun—active voice versus passive voice. Verb forms change accordingly.
	<u>Examples:</u>

	◦ <u>Selma</u> ate all of the raspberries. (Active Voice) ◦ All of the <u>raspberries</u> were eaten by Selma. (Passive Voice)
Mood	Verb forms are sentence-type appropriate.
	<u>Examples:</u> ◦ Listen! ◦ Has he shopped at that store before? ◦ I wish I had won the lottery last night. ◦ If I knew how to tell him, I would.
Tense	Verbs indicate past, present, and future tense.
	<u>Examples:</u> ◦ I do study. ◦ I did practice yesterday. ◦ I have done that once before myself.

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- **Verb Expansion** – Writers frequently use a combination of verbs, auxiliary or helping verbs.^{xiii} One or more of these words are used before the main verb in a sentence to alter a verb's meaning to better fit the context of the intended message as it relates to the overall story. Auxiliary or helping verbs provide “variations in meaning related to tense (time) and such conditions as probability, possibility, obligation, and necessity (mood).”^{xiv} Sometimes authors automatically use these verb phrases in their writing without even being aware of it.

However, a writer may often find himself or herself stuck just trying to figure out a certain verb problem in a sentence because even though they may instinctively *know* something's just not right, they're not exactly sure what it is or how to fix it. This is often especially true when it comes to the use of auxiliary or helping verbs in sentences.

Primary Auxiliary words include:

Forms of “be”	be, am, is, are, was, were, been, being
Forms of “have”	have, has, had
Modals	can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, ought to
Special auxiliary, “do”	do, does, did ^{xv}

Auxiliary/Helping Verbs Examples:

- Larry **will have existed** for twenty years.
- I **do not want to go** with you to Antarctica!
- I **should have studied** more before the final exam.
- We **are inviting** the entire class to New York.

- o I **am finishing** my delicious pizza before I eat my chocolate cookie ice cream.
- o You **could have told** me to meet you right in front of the café; next time, you **ought to let** me know exactly where you'll be.
- o Nancy **can fly** non-stop to Rome from New York.

In the last example, the verbs “**can fly**” are used to show that “**Nancy**” has some options for flying to “**Rome**.” Because of the verb choices and sentence structure, we see that Nancy is not actually flying yet. What happens if the word “**can**” is left out? How would that change the meaning of the sentence? What form would the verb “fly” then need to take? Would that then deliver the same message as before?—not if Nancy hasn’t bought her airline ticket yet.

- Proper tense and subject–verb agreement usage are crucial for conveying a writer’s intended message. Therefore, it’s not just about understanding verbs and/or groups of verbs that work together to form a verb phrase in a sentence (as demonstrated in the examples above), but more importantly, it’s about determining when to use a certain form of a verb(s) dependent upon the subject or noun/noun phrase of a sentence. Similarly, the beauty of music isn’t simply determined by its individual music notes, but what form they take and how the notes are put together and arranged to deliver a musician’s overall message. When music is composed in a logical and meaningful way, it is understood and felt by listeners.

Overall, when selecting a verb(s) and determining its form, first, ask yourself a couple of questions: “Who or what is my sentence about?” and “What is the subject (person, place, or thing) of my sentence *doing* or trying *to do*, *when* and under *what conditions/circumstances*?” Second, think about your overall intended message in the essay, manuscript or report you’re writing, and make sure your verb(s) works to enhance that message on the sentence level. (For more information on choosing words, see the **Word Choice** section in this handbook.)

- Showing versus telling – You might remember in elementary school (depending on where you attended), your teacher asking you and your classmates to bring something in for a Show and Tell assignment. Kids would bring in to school a pet turtle or something else to show the class, and then they’d tell a story about it. Now, many higher learning English teachers encourage writers with the phrase: “Show—don’t tell.”^{xvi} What does it mean? And how are the two above ideas about “showing” and “telling” or “not telling” related?

For adult learners, essays, manuscripts and reports, in most cases, aren’t accompanied by an object like a pet turtle of course; however, they may be accompanied by charts, graphs or pictures. These may *help* to tell a story.

Objects may, indeed, be demonstrated alongside presentations, but they don't tell the whole story either. The main idea behind "Show—don't tell" is for a writer to present a story in such a way that readers fully grasp his or her intended message and meaning. Readers can "see" and "feel" it. Writers want readers to experience what they read as in the following poem by American poet, Dunbar.

DAWN

An angel, robed in spotless white,
Bent down and kissed the sleeping
Night.
Night woke to blush; the sprite was
gone.
Men saw the blush and called it Dawn

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)^{xvii}

Adjectives

- Adjectives are descriptive words used in sentences to modify or describe nouns or pronouns, and they typically (but not always) precede them. Adjectives help add meaning to messages delivered in sentences by helping readers to better visualize or understand specifics about the nouns or pronouns they modify. They add richness to a sentence.

Adjective Examples:

- The **famous** musician had a **guitar-shaped swimming** pool behind his **huge** but **gaudy Hollywood** mansion. (WITH ADJECTIVES)
The musician had a pool behind his mansion. (WITHOUT)
- The **sad, brown willow** tree swayed gently in the wind. (WITH ADJECTIVES)
The tree swayed in the wind (WITHOUT)
- **Many** people are afraid of basements because they are often **dark** and **cold**. (WITH ADJECTIVES)
People are afraid of basements. (WITHOUT)
- We stayed on a **remote, tropical South Pacific** island surrounded by **shimmering blue-green** water that kissed **pristine, white sandy** beaches. (WITH ADJECTIVES)
We stayed on an island surrounded by water that kissed beaches. (WITHOUT)

Adverbs

- Adverbs are modifiers of verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or sentences. They are used to enhance one of these types of words or a sentence. For instance, adverbs modifying verbs often answer questions, such as: How? When? Where? Why? To what degree?^{xviii} Or to what extent of quality/quantity?^{xix}

Adverb Examples:

- Helen shouted **loudly**.
 - Sara's plane flew **faster** than Camille's plane.
 - **Honestly**, I cannot attend the wedding.
 - The meeting went **very** badly.
 - The bridge was **pretty** wide. (not formal)
 - **Tomorrow**, I'll talk to our instructor about the project, or you can talk to her **today**.
- Adverb clauses modify verbs and also answer questions, such as: How? When? Where? And Why? (For more information on these types of clauses, see the section on **Sentence Subordination** under **Sentence Expansion**.)

Adverb Clause Examples:

- **When you knocked at the front door**, I must've been in the shower. I must've been in the shower **when you knocked at the front door**.
- **After you find the keys**, we can go for a drive. We can go for a drive **after you find the keys**.

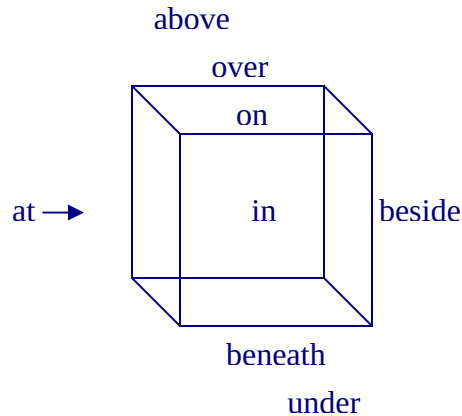
Prepositions

- Prepositions join parts of sentences. For instance the sentence, "I found my keys **on** the car," is linked by the preposition "**on**" and would not make sense without it. Prepositions act as a bridge between two parts of a sentence and provide readers with information, such as location and time.

Location – Preposition Examples:

- Connie and Roger drove **from** Tucson **to** Atlanta **in** just four days.
- The disease had spread **throughout** the village.

- o The object is _____? the box.



Time – Preposition Examples:

- o Jedd has been waiting for his test results **since** last week.
- o The dictator ruled the small country **throughout** the last century.
- o He will continue working **until** his replacement is found.

Defining – Preposition Examples:

- o Henry took his son to see a movie **despite** his son's behavior earlier that day.
- o Cassandra made cookies **for** her classmates.
- o Mohammed was happy **about** the upcoming camping trip.

Common Prepositions

about	behind	for	onto	toward
above	below	from	out	under
across	beneath	in	outside	underneath
after	beside	inside	over	until
against	between	into	past	up
along	beyond	like	since	upon
among	by	near	through	with
around	despite	of	throughout	within
at	down	off	till	without
before	except	on	to	

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Articles

- An article always precedes a singular noun unless a noun is universal or all-encompassing. In some cases, plural forms of nouns are also preceded by an article. This occurs when plural nouns are specific.

Articles

nonspecific nouns	a, an
specific noun	the

Examples:

- o **A** party was planned in his honor.
- o **The** party went well last weekend.
- o Jim was made **an** honorary member of the yacht club.
- o **The** boys were found fishing near the bridge.
- o **Culture** affects individuals.
- o **The** culture and history of **the** Mississippi River is quite fascinating.
- o **The** data will be evaluated. / **Data** will be evaluated.

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Sentence Structure

Sentence Construction

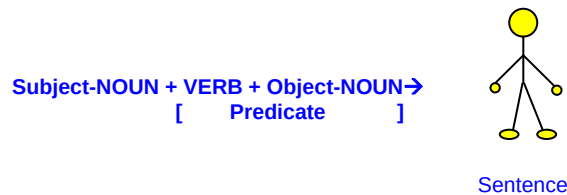
Basic sentence construction is something learned in beginning English language courses; however, as life happens and time goes by, many of these first learned English fundamentals begin to elude us. After a quick review, though, it usually all comes back, and good sentence construction becomes a bit easier to put into practice on a daily basis.

What is a Sentence?

- A basic sentence is a complete thought or idea—*subject* + *predicate*. It's also known as a simple sentence.

✚ Subject (*Noun Phrase*) – One of two main parts of a sentence containing the *subject* noun or a pronoun—a person, place or thing—often accompanied by modifiers. Therefore, the noun or pronoun is who or what the sentence is about.

✚ Predicate – One of two main parts of a sentence containing the verb, objects, or phrases governed by the verb.



- We first learn that a “basic” sentence is made up of a noun and a verb.

Example: **She jumped.**

However, after our first English lessons, we learn to construct more sophisticated sentences.

Example: **Henry plays video games too much.**

—where “**Henry**” = *subject* noun, “**plays**” = verb, and “**video games**” is the object noun. Therefore, the words, “**plays video games too much,**” make up the predicate. The object of a sentence is the noun or pronoun directly related to and affected by the *subject*’s action (verb). The object is NOT who or what a sentence is mainly about; it’s not the focus of the sentence.

Sentence Building Blocks

- A phrase is a cluster of connected words that do not form a complete idea or sentence.
- A clause consists of a subject (noun/noun phrase) and a predicate (verb/verb phrase). It can either be an independent clause (simple sentence), or it can be a dependent clause that relies on an independent clause to form a complete sentence. (For more information on dependent/independent clauses, see **Sentence Expansion**.)
- A simple sentence contains a subject (noun/noun phrase) and a predicate (verb/verb phrase). It communicates one complete idea as an independent clause. It's a complete sentence.
- A compound sentence is the logical combination of two complete thoughts or independent clauses to form one sentence. It is usually linked by a coordinating conjunction or a semicolon, but subordinating conjunctions used in a complex sentence can be used as coordinators as well to form a compound sentence as it were. (For more information, see **Sentence Coordination/Subordination** under **Sentence Construction**.)
- A complex sentence includes a dependent clause linked to an independent clause by a subordinating conjunction of some kind to form a complete sentence.

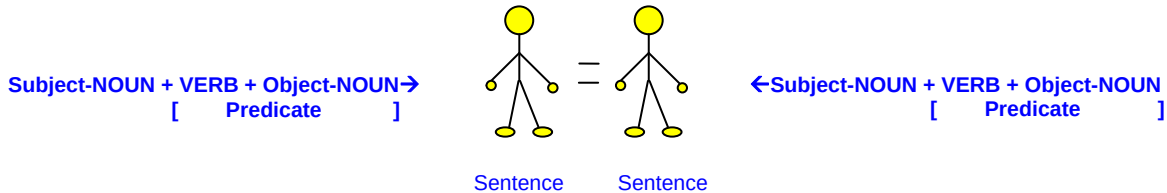
Sentence Types

- Declarative sentences state a fact.
Example: **Rene' loves playing football.**
- Imperative sentences give an order.
Example: **Trevor, fetch the ball.**
- Interrogative sentences ask questions.
Example: **Which countries did you visit while in Europe?**
- Exclamatory sentences exclaim.
Example: **Help me!**

Sentence Expansion

Combining Sentences

What if you want to combine two (or more) complete thoughts or sentences to create a compound sentence or a complex sentence? Joining related ideas allows writers to avoid “choppiness” caused from overuse of short or blunt sentences. There is more than one way to unite two (or more) sentences. However, two complete sentences (independent clauses) may only be joined by a conjunction of some type or a semicolon, whereas dependent clauses connected to independent clauses use subordinating conjunctions.



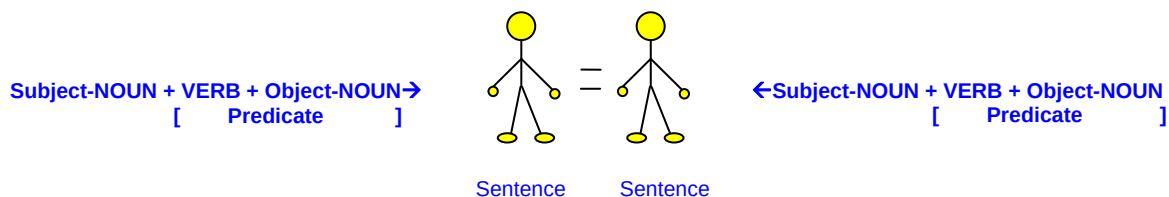
Equal/complete sentences must be joined correctly, or run-ons and comma splices will occur and become a problem in writing.

- Run-on sentences and comma splices occur when two complete thoughts are combined incorrectly. Examples of what NOT to do are as follows:
NOT: Kerry loves to play the guitar she is a wonderful musician. (RUN-ON)
NOT: Jeff likes sports, he coaches soccer in his spare time. (COMMA SPLICE)

The first sentence is incorrect because it's a run-on sentence; it needs a comma and a conjunction, or it needs a semicolon. The second sentence is incorrect because of a comma splice—a coordinating conjunction is needed after the existing comma, or the comma should be changed to a semicolon. In both sentences, two or more complete thoughts are joined without proper punctuation/coordination or subordination.

Sentence Coordination

- Coordination—two or more complete ideas or thoughts are combined that *could* each stand alone as independent clauses (or simple sentences) (each containing a *subject + predicate*).



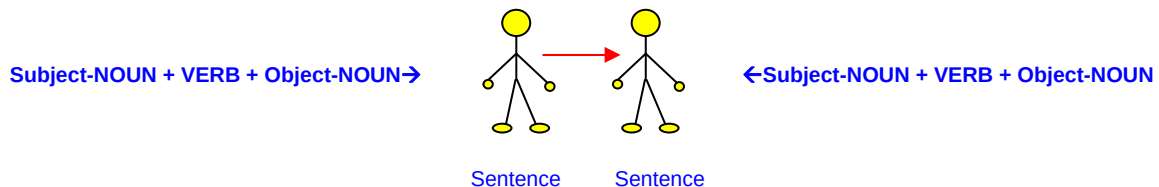
Use one of the seven coordinating conjunctions—**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so** (a.k.a. FANBOYS)—with a comma included beforehand to combine sentences.

Sentence Coordination Examples:

- o Rene' missed Alaska, **for** he longed for its beauty and tranquility.
- o Javier prepared a great Italian dinner, **and** he served expensive Italian red wine.
- o Rachel was not ready for marriage, **nor** was she ready for a real commitment of any type.
- o You may not have French fries, **but** you may have salad.
- o Helen may visit her grandmother for Thanksgiving, **or** she might wait until winter break.
- o Keith worried about the wounded bird, **yet** he didn't want to be responsible for it.
- o We will be in Sweden for three weeks, **so** we'll have plenty of time to soak up the culture.

Sentence Subordination

- Subordination—two or more ideas or thoughts are combined that could NOT stand alone as independent clauses (if the subordinating conjunction begins the first clause). Sometimes sentences are combined so that one clause is dependent upon another clause or phrase. In other words, because of its structure and correlation to another sentence, a dependent sentence cannot stand alone.



- Below is a list of words commonly used to set up a dependent clause combined with an independent clause to form a complex sentence. Notice that some of the subordinating conjunctions in the table below are prepositions.

Subordinating Conjunctions

after	as long as	even	if only	rather	that	until	whereas
although	as though	even if	in order	since	though	when	wherever
as	because	even though	now that	so that	till	whenever	while

as if	before	if	once	than	unless	where	

Sentence Subordination Examples:

- o **So that** it can be used in a study next year, the specimen will be frozen now.
 - o **As long as** Mr. Wei goes to China, I will volunteer to go as well.
 - o **Now that** the quarter is over, I can take a break from school.
 - o **Once** you find your soul mate, never take them for granted.
 - o **Whenever** we visit Orlando, Florida, my family always enjoys Disneyworld the most.
 - o **While** it might seem like a case study about corporate leadership, it is really a case study about teamwork.
 - o **Now that** the oven is hot, Jack can bake chicken parmesan.
- Changing complex sentences to compound sentences mostly involves flipping complex sentences around. The following examples combine two *equal* sentences, but instead of using coordinating conjunctions with a comma to join the two independent clauses, a subordinating conjunction is used to combine them instead in each example. When a subordinating conjunction is used in this manner, there is no subordinate clause. Just like with coordinating conjunctions, then, each sentence *could* stand alone as an independent clause. A comma is not needed when subordinating conjunctions are used to join independent clauses.

Examples:

- o The specimen will be frozen now **so that** it can be used in a study next year.
- o I will volunteer to go as well **as long as** Mr. Wei goes to China.
- o I can take a break from school **now that** the quarter is over.
- o Never take them for granted **once** you find your soul mate.
- o My family always enjoys Disneyworld the most **whenever** we visit Orlando, Florida.
- o It is really a case study about teamwork **while** it might seem like a case study about corporate leadership.
- o Jack can bake chicken parmesan **now that** the oven is hot.

Note: There's another type of conjunction that has not been covered here so far; however, it is NOT used to combine complete sentences, NOR does it usually require commas. It's worth mentioning, though, because correlative conjunctions can easily be confused with other types of conjunctions (listed above), especially since correlative conjunctions include some of the words used as coordinating conjunctions (e.g., "or" and "nor"). However, correlative conjunctions come in

pairs and link similar kinds of words and/or sentences. Some of the most commonly used correlative conjunctions are included in the following table:

Correlative Conjunctions

either/or	<u>Example:</u> We can see either a play or a movie.
neither/nor	<u>Example:</u> He was neither saint nor sinner in my eyes.
not only/but also	<u>Example:</u> Your instructor is not only flexible but also fair.
whether/or	<u>Example:</u> I don't know whether to visit Africa or China next year.
both/and	<u>Example:</u> Both my best friend and my fiancée will attend graduation.
as/as	<u>Example:</u> Your dog isn't as big as my dog.

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Paragraph Structure

Paragraph Elements

Paragraphs can be viewed as groups of mini papers that make up larger papers (e.g., essay, manuscript or report). Just as a paper is made up of certain elements—an introduction, a body and a conclusion—so is each paragraph but on a smaller scale. The table below compares the two.

Elements of a Paper compared with Elements of a Paragraph

Paper	Paragraph
Introduction (with main idea/thesis statement)	Introductory/Topic Sentence (I/T) (provides main idea of paragraph)
Body (with paragraphs)	Body (with points, evidence and synthesis)
Conclusion (restates main idea/thesis statement)	Concluding Sentence (restates idea in I/T sentence and “hints” at what’s coming in the next paragraph)

Another way to think about paragraphs in a paper is to imagine a court case or trial. Attorneys present a case to a judge or jury for a client. They then attempt to prove their case with evidence. The goal of an attorney, of course, is to persuade the judge or jury to believe what they present so that their client will receive the best possible outcome. Like an attorney, a writer can view his or her audience as the judge or jury. Paragraphs in a paper are small units of information that hold points and evidence. Each point and evidence set works together to prove the overall idea or thesis statement of a paper.

Introductory/Topic Sentences

- Introductory sentences in a paragraph inform readers of the paragraph topic; hence, introductory sentences are also called topic sentences. Each paragraph should only have one topic or main idea; otherwise, paragraphs will be confusing and readers won’t be able to follow a writer’s train of thought. An introductory/topic sentence is usually the very first sentence of a paragraph, but it doesn’t have to be. Sometimes it can be even the second sentence in a paragraph...maybe even the third. However, if placed much further away from the beginning of a paragraph, there is a good chance readers will be lost and have no idea what the paragraph is supposed to be about. Introductory/Topic Sentences can be categorized into types:

Intro/Topic Sentence Types

Type	Function	
Direct	Purpose announcement.	Now, I will tell you why we should support the Daffy Duck presidential campaign.
Question	Purpose in the form of a question.	Why Should we support the Daffy Duck presidential campaign?
Nutshell (most common)	Overall idea—mini/partial version of thesis.	The third reason Daffy Duck should be president is....
Address the Reader	Confronts reader about what they are thinking/wondering.	You might be wondering why we should support the Daffy Duck presidential campaign.
Connect to Previous Paragraph	Goes back to the last paragraph's idea.	An example of a good campaign supporter....
Alert	Shows paragraph's importance or calls attention to an upcoming paragraph point.	Everyone will regret it if they don't support the Daffy Duck presidential campaign....

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Note: Normally, personal pronouns like “I” or “you” are not used in academic or professional papers. Be sure to ask your instructor if these personal pronouns are acceptable in a particular assignment.

Points

- In the first part of a paragraph body, specific points should be made relating to the intro/topic sentence. (Sometimes a point can even be made within the intro/topic sentence.) These points express a writer's explicit opinions about the main idea of the paragraph. After all, the whole purpose of writing a paper is to express one's own opinion (i.e., thesis statement) and ideas on a matter. Therefore, it makes sense that each paragraph produces one's own detailed ideas or points relating to his or her entire opinion on an issue. As such, each intro/topic sentence ties back to the thesis statement or overall idea of a paper.

For example, upon examining any textbook readers will notice the same to be true in paragraphs within chapters of a textbook. Each intro/topic sentence

reflects the overarching idea of the textbook, and each point made in each paragraph breaks down the main idea of the intro/topic sentence. Are textbooks based on opinion though? Use critical thinking skills to determine the answer to the previous question.

Another example is a newspaper article—is it based on opinion? Theoretically, it's not supposed to be. Are its points based on the reporter's *take* on the story? Reporters are supposed to be non-biased in their writing. However, opinion affects *all* writing—no matter what type of writing it is. Reporters must be especially careful about the points they make. Example: "A man was shot today by a police officer." versus "A man was murdered today by a police officer." Yet, in both sentences an opinion is expressed than must be proven with evidence.

How a writer feels about something always comes across in his or her text. This is how the phrase, "read between the lines," came to be. Likewise, even the academic paper based on peer reviewed scientific research and study, and written with austere analytical and logical prowess and supported with solid facts/evidence, is influenced in some way by the writer's opinions or how they see things. For instance, does the author write about flaws in a study that was conducted? This is when critical thinking techniques come into play. Your job as a learner is to question everything—then compare it, dissect it, judge it and write about it. Next, your job is to provide evidence to back up what you're saying and to prove it. That's the purpose of research, experimentation and learning and writing about it.

Evidence & Supporting Details

- Evidence/Supporting Details—In order to prove points made in a paragraph, one must show that his or her points are valid and based on facts and/or experiences. Here is where a writer leaves out their opinions. Although, your opinion on something may, indeed, influence the research or experiences you've chosen to use as evidence, you only want to provide facts to back up your points (opinions) in this part of the paragraph.

What may be used as evidence or supporting detail? Going back to the court case example in the beginning of this section, think of the things an attorney might use as evidence. Your evidence will be similar except that instead of providing objects that can be seen and examined as in many court cases or trials, you will provide evidence from your references and source material. Your evidence is seen and examined by your readers through words.

Example:

Attorney (addressing the jury):

Clearly, Mr. Jones couldn't have stolen his neighbor's lawn mower on

June 2nd because he was out of town that day. (OPINION POINT—UNTIL PROVEN)

Attorney continues:

How do we know that Mr. Jones was out of town? Well, Mr. Jones was in Las Vegas on June 2nd, and I have in my hand a copy of his airline ticket and itinerary with the departure and arrival dates listed. He was in Las Vegas from June 1st until June 4th according to airline records. Also, I have a copy of his hotel bill from the Las Vegas Starstruck Hotel listing corresponding dates. (EVIDENCE)

Therefore, as a learner, you must prove what you say in your papers. Some of the things writers can use as evidence and supporting detail are: reasons, examples, names, numbers and senses.^{xxii}

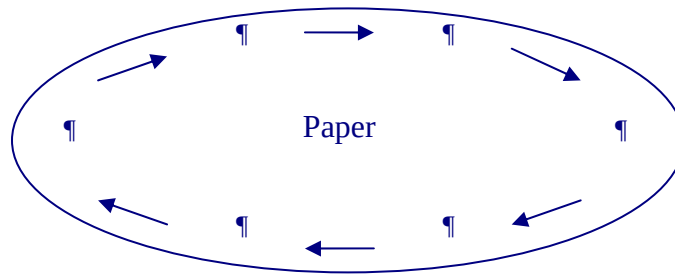
Syntheses

- Synthesizing in paragraph making is often a step left out by writers because it is either too confusing or is unknown. The word itself seems to confuse people. Basically, the word, synthesis, means to combine things.^{xxiii} Creating syntheses is also a key part of critical thinking—meshing your points and evidence into logical and convincing sentences. This is usually one sentence in a paragraph, but it can be more than one. This is where you tell readers why and how your evidence backs up your points. It takes some thought, but practice will make it easier, if not perfect.

Concluding Sentences

- Concluding Sentences wrap up and logically conclude what's been said in a paragraph. Ideally, a concluding sentence points back to the main idea of a paragraph's intro/topic sentence to complete a full circle of thought and exploration on a paragraph idea. At the same time, a concluding sentence should "hint" at ideas in the following paragraph to help set up smooth transition between paragraphs.

For example, think of music played by a professional DJ and how one song blends in with the next song in a music set. In media production (e.g., music, film, and etc.), these smooth transitions between scenes or songs or other artistic pieces are called segues. Likewise, writers should segue between paragraphs so that paragraphs flow enhancing the overall development of an essay, manuscript, report, or any form of writing.



Focus

Focus is the glue that holds a paragraph together. The overall idea announced in the intro/topic sentence resonates in every paragraph sentence as every sentence bonds to the next. A reader should be able to look at an intro/topic sentence of any paragraph and instantly “get” what a paragraph is about—paragraph sentences have an obligation to hold up an intro/topic sentence. Hence, intro/topic sentences represent subtopics of a paper’s overarching idea or thesis statement. This can be reflected in a table of contents or an outline. If a writer uses a reverse outline to go through their rough draft, they should see something very similar to their first outline, and it should match the table of contents as well if used.

Development

The quickest way to see if a paragraph is fully developed is to check its length and sentence count.^{xxiv} If it has just a few sentences or more than a few that are blunt or choppy, the paragraph probably needs more development. Another sign of an underdeveloped paragraph is that it begins or ends with a quote or paraphrase. So instead of a writer introducing a paragraph, providing his or her opinion, backing it up with evidence, supplying a synthesis, and giving a conclusion, it looks more like one of the following examples:

NOT a Paragraph

Sentence	Sentence Type	Example
1 st Sentence	Evidence Sentence (quote or paraphrase)	According to Gentry (1999), experiments performed during nuclear testing in Nevada were never recorded.
2 nd Sentence	Summary Sentence (of evidence)	Therefore, government officials never kept records of individuals exposed to radiation during nuclear testing.

3 rd Sentence	Another Summary Sentence (of evidence)	Participants were in the dark about the lack of records.
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In the first **NOT** box, the writer is not actually expressing their own opinions or ideas about a topic, nor do they have an intro/topic sentence, a synthesis or a concluding sentence. Rather, the writer is letting someone else (in a sense) write the paper for them by simply copying down quoted material or paraphrasing it and then summarizing it. As long as the information has in text citation information (author/date), it is not a form of plagiarism. However, this way of delivering paragraphs is not considered academic or scholarly writing. It is not really writing at all—it's restating and summarizing.

NOT a Paragraph

Sentence	Sentence Type	Example
1 st Sentence	Point (your opinion)	Although, many people developed health problems after being exposed to radiation during nuclear testing in Nevada, they had no legal recourse since officials kept the experiments a secret.
2 nd Sentence	Evidence Sentence (quote or paraphrase)	According to Gentry (1999), experiments performed in Nevada during nuclear testing were never recorded.

In the second **NOT** box, the writer does manage to give an opinion and even evidence to back up his or her opinion. Other important paragraph elements are missing though, i.e., intro/topic sentence, a synthesis sentence, and a concluding sentence. Also, the first sentence might have more than one point in it. Does it require more evidence?

Unity

Every sentence in a paragraph should add to its development. Paragraph unity happens when all of the sentences are working together to support the intro/topic sentence. Sometimes a paragraph loses its unity due to a rogue sentence or, or because of a sentence (or two) that only partly relates to the overall idea of a paragraph. The paragraph is not unified because it has lost focus with these sentences.

Following is an example:

NOT a Unified/Focused Paragraph

It seemed like a perfect day for a drive. The sun was shining brightly and the air was cool and clear. I knew I needed to have my tires changed, but I didn't care. Plus, I knew I didn't have extra money for new tires. I was too happy about my promotion, and the entire world seemed right. I was going for a drive!

At least the previous paragraph ends where it began. The concluding sentence refers back to the intro/topic sentence. However, the paragraph body is not developed properly because the sentences don't work together to maintain focus. Therefore, it is not a unified paragraph. Writers definitely should avoid using non sequiturs such as these in their paragraphs. Make sure each sentence develops the main idea of a paragraph.

Organization

Paragraph organization can be described in various ways, but the basic pattern is always the same. This is because certain elements are always required, and they are usually ordered the same. One way of visualizing a paragraph and remembering what goes where is to think of its elements as steps:

1. Intro/topic sentence (main idea)
2. Points (writer's opinion)
3. Evidence (backs up points)
4. Synthesis (tells why evidence backs up points)
5. Concluding Sentence (concludes/restates main idea/"hints" at next paragraph)

Other ways of describing a paragraph might be easier to remember. For instance, the MEAL Plan is another way to remember how to organize a paragraph.

Coherence

For a paper to be coherent paragraphs should be relatively easy to follow—sentences should be parallel^{xxv}, should each make sense and be arranged logically, and should flow without skipping a beat. If readers have to stop because they're suddenly lost or confused, paragraphs themselves may not be coherent, which may make the entire paper seem specious.

Compose positive sentences and deliver strong declarations. Authors must sound sure of themselves. "Avoid tame, colorless, hesitating, non-committal language."^{xxvi} Avoid the word "not" unless it's absolutely necessary (e.g., to show contrast). It can also seem as though a writer is trying to be evasive when using the word.

Avoid the Word “Not”

Negative/Evasive/Not Sure	Positive/Confident
He was not very often on time.	He usually came late.
He did not think that studying Latin was much use.	He thought the study of Latin useless.
The Taming of the Shrew is rather weak in spots. Shakespeare does not portray Katharine as a very admirable character, nor does Bianca remain long in memory as an important character in Shakespeare's works.	The women in The Taming of the Shrew are unattractive. Katharine is disagreeable, Bianca insignificant.

APA Information

The APA manual emphasizes the following writing guidelines: ^{xxvii}

Orderly Presentation of Ideas—Aim for continuity in words, concepts, and thematic development from the beginning to the end of a paper (and paragraphs).

Smoothness of Expression—Try to avoid ambiguity, the unexpected, omitting the expected, and suddenly shifting topic, tense, or person; aim for clear and logical communication.

Economy of Expression—Only say what's necessary.

Precision and Clarity—Make sure each word means precisely what you think it means (check the dictionary often).

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Word Choice

Word choice is a big topic for discussion. Just thinking about choosing and using the right words for an essay, manuscript or report can be as overwhelming as reading the dictionary itself. For as many words as there are in a dictionary, that's how many word choices a writer has. And dictionaries don't include all slang or colloquial words (which we typically don't use in academic writing anyway). Further, modern dictionaries change every day as new words or new forms of words are added. Some words are promoted from slang or are added due to technological influences that have become a major part of our everyday lives. For instance, it wasn't long ago when the verb "google" didn't exist. Hang on...just let me google the word "google" to double check that.^{xxviii}

Glossary of Correct Usage

First, are a few word choice topics listed worth pointing out since they include common word choice issues that come up for writers. If you recognize a few incorrect word choices from the list below that you often use in your own writing, don't worry—you're not alone. Even avid writers, have to stop and think about some of these choices.

Word Choice Confusion

- Below are words that are commonly (but incorrectly) used in place of each other. Some sound similar or are spelled "almost" alike, but each word has a unique meaning.

Commonly Confused Words

WORD	PART OF SPEECH	versus	WORD	PART OF SPEECH
accept	(verb)	↔	except	(preposition)
def: acknowledge; agree to; receive			def: exclude; apart from	
advice	(noun)	↔	advise	(verb)
def: recommendation; suggestion			def: counsel; give advice; warn	
affect	(verb/noun)	↔	effect	(verb/noun)
def: to influence; to act upon/observable manifestations			def: to cause to come into being; to bring about/result	
aggravate	(verb)	↔	irritate	(verb)
def: make worse; exacerbate			def: bother; annoy	
almost	(adverb)	↔	most	(pronoun/adverb)

def: approximately; nearly			def: the majority; a large amount/mainly; on the whole
already (adverb)	↔	all ready (adjective)	
def: by now; previously		def: ready to go; prepared	
altogether (adverb)	↔	all together (adverb/adjective)	
def: overall; in total		def: jointly; simultaneously/calm; cool	
can (verb)	↔	may (verb)	
def: be able to; be capable of		def: might; could	
continual (adjective)	↔	continuous (verb)	
def: recurrent; repetitive		def: incessant; nonstop	
disinterested (adjective)	↔	uninterested (adjective)	
def: neutral; fair-minded		def: not interested ^{xxxix} ; indifferent	
e.g. (adverb)	↔	i.e. (adverb)	
def: for example/Latin: <i>exempli gratia</i> ^{xxx}		def: that is/Latin: <i>id est</i> ^{xxxi}	
farther (preposition)	↔	further (adjective/verb)	
def: beyond; past		def: additional; more/advance; promote	
imply (verb)	↔	infer (verb)	
def: involve; entail		def: deduce; assume; surmise	
lay (verb/adjective)	↔	lie (verb)	
def: put down; set/unqualified; amateur		def: recline; sit	
set (verb/noun)	↔	sit (verb)	
def: place; put/collection; arrangement		def: be seated; lie	
who (pronoun)	↔	whom (pronoun)	
substitute for “he” or “she” or “they”		substitute for “him” or “her” or “them”	

Verb Choices

- **Tense**—The need to describe events in time determines a writer’s verb choices. First, a verb is chosen for meaning and context. Second a verb/its verb form is chosen to indicate “when the action in a sentence occurred.”^{xxxii} Thus, without tense in a writer’s storyline, readers do not know when events: take place, took place, have taken place, had taken place, will take place, or will have taken place, nor do readers understand the order in which they’ve occurred.

Present tense is most commonly used to provide information and give generalizations^{xxxiii}, whereas **past tense** is used to recount past events. Not

only should verbs agree with subjects (nouns), but also subject/verb combinations should be parallel, or match, in sentences and sentence combinations.

Examples:

- o Lars **drives** his older truck whenever he **goes** to the ranch.
(Lars/drives = he/goes)
- o Javier **prepared** a great Italian dinner, and he **served** expensive Italian red wine. (Javier/prepared = he/served)
- o Donald **shopped** at the Bourse when he **visited** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Donald shopped = he visited)
- o Jeffrey **likes to eat** cheese and croissants daily whenever he **travels** to Paris. (Jeffrey likes to eat = he travels)
- o When we **went** camping, we **made** hotdogs and smores and **drank** beer.
- o When we **go** camping, we **make** hotdogs and smores and **drink** beer too.

Perfect and progressive tenses are used when some event is continuous or repetitive, or when needing to describe a past event that came before another past event. Think of perfect tense as not so perfect because it needs extra verbs to help main verbs—i.e., helping verbs. Perfect tense takes some form of the helping verb “have.” Writers often get past tense mixed up with perfect tense. Next, progressive tense uses some form of the verb “be” as a helping verb for main verbs. Notice also how with progressive tense the main verbs change form—they always have an “ing” ending.^{xxxiv}

Examples:

- o Karen **has felt** much more confident about her studies ever since she **hired** a tutor.
 - o Butch **had visited** his grandfather right before his grandfather **died**.
 - o The Philippines **had been governed** by the United States before it **became** independent.
 - o You **will have eaten** the most cake by the party’s end.
 - o I **have** always **regretted** not **finishing** my degree.
 - o I **am working out** a lot. / You **are working out** some. / He **is working out** the most.
 - o Kevin **was working out**. / They **were working out** together.
 - o They **will be working out** more often.
- Passive voice versus active voice—Verbs are used in the same way for both active and passive voice, and it’s not incorrect to use one over the other. The difference is that with active voice, the subject/noun is “doing” the action/verb, whereas with passive voice the subject/noun is not directly performing the

action/verb. Verbs tend to be action words anyway, so active voice is preferred in most writing. It sounds more alive and engaging. In some cases, a writer should choose passive voice if they want to take the emphasis off of the subject/noun, or if they want to be polite^{xxxv} (like in an email message).

Examples:

- Coffee **was spilled** in the break room.
You **spilled** the coffee in the break room.
 - The experiment **was completed**, and it **was determined** that eagles do fly higher than hawks.
I **completed** the experiment, and I **determined** that eagles do fly higher than hawks.
 - The car **is totaled**.
Harry **totaled** the car.
- Separable two-word verbs are combinations of verbs and adverbs. They can be pulled apart, and the two words can then be used separately in different parts of a sentence in relation to the object while still maintaining the same meaning. Inseparable two-word verbs are combinations of verbs and prepositions, which must stay together, or the combos will sound awkward or lose meaning. (Keep in mind that some words like “up” are both adverbs and prepositions.)

Examples:

- Jenny wanted to **drop off** the documents today.
Jenny wanted to **drop** the documents **off** today.
 - James **pulled off** the business deal.
James **pulled** the business deal **off**.
 - Gabriel **made up** her face.
Gabriel **made** her face **up**.
 - Constance **turned in** her final draft yesterday.
Constance **turned** her final draft **in** yesterday.
 - The pirates **turned against** their captain.
 - Hazel **spelled out** her complaints and requirements.
 - They **thought up** a new arrangement.
 - Rachel shouldn't **pass up** the opportunity.
- Sometimes verbs are used as adjectives (a.k.a. participles). It might be second nature for many writers to use these verb forms as adjectives. However, it's probably a good idea to know how and why verbs are used in this manner. You never know when you'll need to explain where/why you used a certain verb/adjective...even if it's just an explanation to yourself. Keep in mind that depending on what form of a verb you use—“ing” ending or

“ed” ending—the meaning will be different.

Examples:

- o Cassandra is a **troubled** woman. / Cassandra is a **troubling** woman.
- o Kim was an **uninterested** socialite. / Kim was an **uninteresting** socialite.
- o The **tired** dogs slept all day. / The **tiring** dogs slept all day.
- o The **bored** dancers couldn’t wait until rehearsal ended. / The **boring** dancers couldn’t wait until rehearsal ended.

Pronoun Choices

- The pronouns, “who,” “whom,” and “that,” are often confusing for writers because they’re not sure of which one to use and when. Also, many writers use “that” when referring to a person when only “who” and “whom” should be used when referring to an individual or people. Just remember that “who” refers to the subject/noun of a sentence while “whom” refers to an object/noun in a sentence. One way to remember is to associate or temporarily replace “who” and “whom” with other pronouns.

Note: Some people find it acceptable to use the word “that” when referring to any plural noun, human or nonhuman.

Substitute Pronouns

Pronoun	Replacement
who	he, she, they
whom	him, her, them
that	it (inanimate objects/nonhuman things)

Examples:

- o Sherry gave the box to **whom**? / She gave the box to him.
- o The boys **who** found the frog took it to the pet store.
- o Many books **that** used to be in the library are no longer there.
- o Sally rented the truck. / **Who** rented **that**? (or “it”)
- o I used to have fire ants in my backyard **that** kept me from going outside.
- o I had my head examined by someone **whom** I could trust.

Note: See the **Parts of Speech** section under **Sentence Basics** for more information on pronouns.

Article Choices

- Choosing articles can be tricky, especially for non-native English writers, whose first language doesn't include similar articles. English language articles are divided into two groups: definite and indefinite. Choosing which article to use, or knowing when not to use an article depends on the type of noun used.

Proper nouns name specific people, places or organizations, whereas common nouns are nonspecific. Most of the time, proper nouns don't require the article "the" beforehand; however, some proper nouns do, and it's just a matter of learning them. Common nouns are usually preceded by "the" as well as "a" or "an" depending on whether or not they are specific or not. Also, certain common nouns that are general in nature do not need an article preceding them. For instance, the noun, "culture" doesn't normally have an article before it unless a writer is talking about a specific culture—"the culture of Rome...." Plural forms of nouns, like general nouns, usually don't need an article beforehand unless being referred to specifically.

Articles and Noun Types

Article	Word	Noun
definite	the	specific common nouns (singular) /specific plural or general nouns
indefinite	a, an (some)	non-specific common nouns

Examples:

- Ababuo was thrilled when he first saw **the** Rocky Mountains.
- Kerry found **a** fishing pond near **the** campsite.
- Eat **an** egg for breakfast if you're hungry.
- The** men at **the** club voted for change.
- Society dictates law. (no article)
- The** university is **a** society of learners.
- Capella University is **a** great school for learners who must work full-time.
- Some** banker called you today.

Note: See more information on nouns and articles in the **Parts of Speech** section under **Sentence Basics**.

Modifier Choices

- Adjective and adverbs are important because they modify other words and help add more meaning and description to sentences. It's not only important for a writer to choose the right adjectives and adverbs to use in their

sentences, but also it's important, perhaps even more so, for a writer to place modifiers appropriately. Groups of words can also modify, and these types of modifiers can include certain verb forms. For instance, "Suddenly feeling sick, Barry went home."^{xxxvi} A modifier's purpose is to add value to another word or set of words in a sentence.

You may have heard English teachers lecture about "dangling modifiers" or "misplaced modifiers," and these phrases might've sounded scary. A lot of ordinary people don't understand what these phrases even mean, let alone know where to put modifiers in their sentences. So what are "dangling modifiers" or "misplaced modifiers" anyway?

When someone says you have a "dangling modifier," it means simply that your modifier is not inserted by or near the words it is supposed to be modifying. Or it can mean you don't actually have anything in your sentence for the modifier to modify. So, your modifier is just hanging out in your sentence with nothing to do. Modifiers can either be one word or a set of words called complex modifiers, but each type of modifier must be placed close enough to whatever it's modifying for a sentence to make sense. In the following examples examine the out of place modifier or complex modifier in the first sentences and the correctly placed modifier in the second sentences.

Examples:

- o Sherry said that she would like to attend the gala **enthusiastically**. [X]
Sherry said **enthusiastically** that she would like to attend the gala.
- o Kyle started to grow weary **waiting for hours**. [X]
Waiting for hours, Kyle started to grow weary.
- o We've seen thirty planes **almost** take off since we've been waiting. [X]
We've seen **almost** thirty planes take off since we've been waiting.
- o My brother informed me he would travel to Europe **today**. [X]
My brother **today** informed me he would travel to Europe.^{xxxvii}
- o **While still a student**, Microsoft recruited my sister for a job as a programmer. [X]
While my sister was still a student, Microsoft recruited her for a job as a programmer.^{xxxviii}
- o **Being able to take care of themselves now**, I decided to go back to school. [X]
Since my children are able to take care of themselves now, I decided to go back to school.^{xxxix}

Wordiness & Preciseness

For some writers it's a challenge to come up with enough wordage for an essay, manuscript or report. On the other hand, for other writers words flow too easily, perhaps, and at some point these writers suddenly find themselves overwhelmed

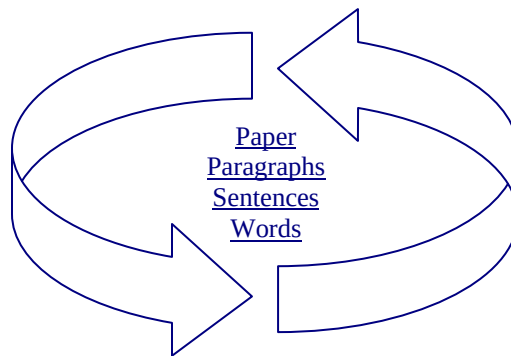
and adrift in their own compositions. Editing then becomes a problem while lost in a sea of words. Luckily, a few remedies exist for this type of writing problem. Further, some of the following solutions also help writers who have difficulty finding enough words.

Outlining

- First of all, a good outline (as tedious as it may seem to put one together) makes all of the difference when starting out to write just about anything. It helps a writer stay focused and limit what they will say on paper, and at the same time, it helps a writer develop enough topics and ideas to talk about in a composition. Outline topics and subtopics easily translate to paragraphs in essays, manuscripts or reports.

Paragraphing

- Maintaining solid structure at the paragraph level, in and of itself, will help keep a writer from drifting off topic and/or help a writer to remember what needs to be included. If you make sure that each and every paragraph has proper elements—an introductory/topic sentence, your points backed up with evidence, and a synthesis and concluding sentence—chances are you will automatically have a better organized paper. Every level of a paper relates to and affects the next level, and the affect is not only sequential or linear.



Reverse Outlining

- Just as outlining helps a writer streamline his or her paper as it is being written, reverse outlining helps a writer take inventory of what he or she has written so far before final editing and revision phases. Without looking at the original outline, a writer can start with a blank piece of paper and outline in reverse. There, he or she can make a short list of what's actually in the rough draft version of his or her paper—existing topics/paragraphs and points made.

The list starts with the paper's introduction, including the thesis statement or main idea, and ends with the conclusion and its points. It will look like any other outline except that it's a result of post writing.

After this exercise, a few things will quickly become apparent. First, if the paper has lost focus or has drifted off on a tangent somewhere, it will be revealed. Second, it's interesting to compare the reverse outline with the original outline to see how they differ. Sometimes it ends up being a good thing if the two outlines differ as long as what's in the reverse outline seems logical, flows and supports your overall idea. Best of all, a reverse outline can help a writer recognize and cut down on extra wording. At the same time, it can help a writer recognize where wording needs to be added. At this point, a writer can make final structural revisions to his or her paragraphs and paper if needed.

Omitting & Adding

- After a writer has completed a few of the above steps, they can then comb through their paper at the word and sentence level to search for repetitive or unnecessary words and phrases. Begin by eliminating extra words that aren't value-added words. In other words, if you find too many empty or meaningless words that seem to fill up space more than anything, get rid of them. Obviously, a few frivolous words here and there sometimes help to spice up a paper and add style/tone, but remember, for academic writing learners don't want to be too spicy. The goal is to find one's voice while maintaining scholarly writing. Academic writing is usually not written in an editorial, a commentary or a blog style, nor is it a comedy, a drama or a poem (unless you're asked by your instructor to write a play or a poem.)

Omit meaningless words, such as: "actually," "certainly," "kind of," "basically," "indeed," "fundamentally" and others. These types of words might seem as though they make sentences sound more important or serious, but "actually" too many of these types of words end up making sentences sound "kind of" pretentious or too casual. You may know of someone who starts just about every sentence with "actually" or "basically." Doesn't that automatically make you wonder if that person is telling the truth or if they "indeed" know what they're talking about? "Certainly," a person using too many of these words can sound arrogant, especially in academic writing.

Examples:

- **Actually**, my investor gave me a valuable tip, and I **certainly** took his advice, indeed.
- Karen **kind of** wanted to attend the meeting; she was **sort of** hoping to lead the project.
- **Basically**, you start by turning your computer on.

- **Fundamentally**, you have not shown that you are management material, Bob.
- **Assuredly**, the study was flawed and the data was **definitely** bogus.

Instead, a writer must add robust and value-added words, especially verbs, to sentences. Use a thesaurus to discover new words and try and use more than one word that has the same meaning to avoid repetitiveness. Word and sentence variety makes for easier reading, but don't over do it. Sacrificing logical and parallel words/phrases, sentences and paragraphs for the sake of variety is never a good idea. Start with replacing verbs and adding strong adjectives and adverbs. Avoid verb ruts, such as using a form of the verb "get" in too many sentences. Plenty of other verbs will work to replace a form of "get" and can pump up sentences.

Example:

- Jimmy **got** a bank loan on Monday.
Jimmy **received** a bank loan on Monday.
Jimmy **obtained** a bank loan on Monday.
Jimmy **acquired** a bank loan on Monday.

Redundancy

Redundancy can be best described as redundant—it's very redundant to repeat oneself or to say the same thing over but in a different way just to say the same thing over again. Every new sentence in an essay, manuscript, report or any kind of paper should add value to the theme and advance the overall direction of the paper. For instance, at the paragraph level, merely restating a point already made is not a valid way to provide evidence for that point.

Jargon, Slang & Euphemisms

Jargon and slang pose similar problems in academic writing. First, they both include words that your readers may or may not be familiar with or understand. Second, slang and jargon are considered informal and are not usually accepted in scholarly writing, which is considered formal.

Granted, in professional business reports, presentations or proposals, jargon is often used depending on readers/audience. Even within academic disciplines, certain jargon is admissible. Nevertheless, it's not good practice to fill up a paper with jargon. Like using other unnecessary or frivolous words, it can make a writer sound pompous or arrogant.

Within many groups, organizations or cultures, there's a fine line between jargon and slang. For instance, in the rap music industry, a music reviewer/writer might want to include some words specific to that industry/culture in their article. In fact, it would seem almost necessary because of the likelihood of a certain type

of reader. Although, for academic writing, that sort of jargon/slang would not be appropriate even if a writer wanted to research and write about the rap music industry. Any type of colloquial or slang language is usually not permissible in academic writing. If a word or phrase is specific to a certain crowd or geographic region, it's better to omit it from scholarly writing.

The same is true for clichés or euphemisms. Academic papers are meant to demonstrate a learner's educational progress and intellectual prowess. Regurgitated phrases do not express a writer's point of view or his or her knowledge on a subject. Such phrases aren't fact based either and can't be used as evidence.

Examples:

- o The research subject was “**ungoogleable**.”^{xi}
- o Even though most sales executives at the company were “**hypermilers**,”^{xli} travel expenses continued to increase due to rising gas prices.
- o “Still, automakers should be worried. The latest sales figures from Britain—Europe's largest SUV market—show demand down 6 percent over the past year. Soaring petrol prices offer some explanation, but the true cause has more to do with the vehicle's questionable image in an age of deepening **eco-anxiety**. —William Underhill, “When Is Big Too Big?,” *Newsweek*, December 18, 2006”^{xlii}
- o Josh, that's **phat** that you recorded that **tight** song.
- o Darin was always a **big-boned** boy.
- o Participants in the study kept leaving to **visit the ladies room**.
- o The board members finally realized that **a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush**.

Sexist Language

Now days, most writers realize that using sexist language is passé. Though correct reference can be difficult to keep up with due to constant indecision and change over what's acceptable. When in doubt, ask an instructor or educator.

Whereas it used to be considered gender-neutral to refer to an anonymous person as “he” or “him” (and other similar forms, e.g., “his”), now most writers use “he or she” or “him or her” instead. Further, it is also acceptable to use the plural pronoun “they” or “them” (as well as “their”) when referring to an unidentified person.

Also, when referring to society or a person's profession, try to think of the word that best describes it which doesn't end in “man.” (The word “woman” ends in “man,” but so far there's no replacement for that word.) It might be easy to think of words that end in “man,” but then it might be a little more difficult to think of replacement words. Try and think of words for professions, for instance, that end

in “person” first, such as “businessperson” or “salesperson.” After that, come up with different words that mean the same thing: “firefighter” versus “fireman.” For generic words used to describe history or modern society, it might be best to try and memorize a few or to have a thesaurus handy.

Examples:

- Mankind → people, humans, humanity
- Mailman → mail carrier
- Policeman → police officer

APA

When it comes to writing and producing a manuscript or journal using the *American Psychological Association* style, the APA manual emphasizes quality of content over anything else and insists that research be well designed and managed. All documented research/study and sources must be critically reviewed and evaluated for importance, relevance and soundness. Therefore, word choice ultimately revolves around such guidelines. Further, words or phrases that distract from scientific ideas, research and study must be eliminated, and metaphors and figurative expressions must be avoided. According to the manual, “APA accepts authors’ word choices unless those choices are inaccurate, unclear, or ungrammatical.”^{xliii}

Whenever referring to individuals or groups, APA guidelines instruct writers to “choose words that are accurate, clear and free from bias.”^{xliv} Specifically, APA encourages writers to be sensitive to labels, gender, sexual orientation, racial and ethnic identity, disabilities and age and to positively acknowledge participation in research.

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Punctuation

Why punctuate?

In all languages, punctuation is derived from unique cultural and language conventions. Although many languages may have similarities, each language has its own set of punctuation rules. Punctuation was not always a part of languages, but now it is fundamental.^{xlv} It helps to better organize and define language communication. Without punctuation, sentences would be confusing, and meaning would be misconstrued. It gives structure and foundation to language. For instance in many languages, leaving out just one comma can change the entire meaning of a sentence. Even in the language of mathematics, a misplaced comma can cause calculation errors; computer programming languages utilize punctuation marks as well, and without certain marks and syntax, a program will not run.

Common Punctuation Marks

Punctuation is an important aspect of the English language. It's the adhesive that holds English words, sentences, and paragraphs together, and meaning can be completely altered based on punctuation changes. The following covers basic English punctuation rules, including some APA guidelines for Capella University learners.

“Punctuation is a code to help readers ride smoothly through writing.”^{xlvi}

One way to perceive punctuation is to think of the most commonly used punctuation marks as traffic signals.^{xlvii}

Punctuation as Traffic Signals		
.		Periods = Stop Sign
?		Question Marks = Stop Sign
!		Exclamation Points = Stop Sign
<i>Come to a full stop. Then go on—no sliding through.</i>		
,		Commas = Flashing Yellow Light

		<i>Slow down, look left and right, and then continue.</i>
;		Semicolons = Flashing Red Light
		<i>Stop briefly; forge ahead.</i>
:		Colons = Arrow or Road Sign
		<i>Listen up! What follows explains or adds information.</i>
()		Parentheses = Detour
—		Dashes = Detour
		<i>Take a quick detour—then proceed.</i>

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These commonly used punctuation marks as well as others are described in more detail below. Also included, where appropriate, are punctuation guidelines from the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*^{xlix} (APA), “APA Editorial Style.”

Periods

Full Stop

- A period simply ends a complete thought or sentence (*subject + predicate*). It tells a reader to stop after one idea before moving on to the next idea. Granted, with any type of writing ideas should flow in a connected and logical way; however, a period is never used to directly connect two or more thoughts or sentences.

Examples:

- The wagon stopped.
- Their ship sailed yesterday.

Note: According to APA¹ guidelines, periods should be placed outside of in text parenthetical citations that come at the end of sentences. (In text parenthetical citations include information about the author and the publication.) For more, check out the APA manual section on quotations (sections 3.36-3.39). How to properly punctuate and format related reference/bibliography lists is also covered in the manual—Chapter 4.

Examples:

- “If there is a growing need for projects, then there is ever increasing need for people who understand how to run them effectively” (Verzuh, 1999, p. 6).^{li}
- Verzuh (1999) explains that “when many people are working on similar tasks, standards create uniformity among all of their outputs” (p. 196).^{lii}

Lists

- Use periods after list numbers or letters.

Example:

- List of Presidential Candidates:
 1. Donald Duck
 2. Scooby Doo
 3. Betty Boop

Abbreviations

- Periods are usually used with abbreviations.

Examples:

- **Ms.** Barrymore
- **Dr.** Jekyll
- **Rev.** Al Sharpton
- I love movie theatre snack foods, **e.g.**, popcorn, candy, and hotdogs.

Note: The abbreviation “e.g.” is a Latin expression meaning “for example.” The abbreviation “i.e.” is also a Latin expression, but it stands for “that is,” or “in other words.” Therefore, even though they have different meanings, they are often confused.^{liii}

Question Marks

When does one use a question mark?

Direct Questions

- When asking a direct question.

Example:

- Who won the Grammy?
- How will he survive?

Series

- With a sentence that contains a series of questions.

Example:

- What kind of egg dishes do you like? omelet? quiche? soufflé?
- What shall we eat for dinner?—pasta?

Exclamation Marks

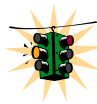
Exclamatory Words & Phrases

- An exclamation point is a more forceful version of a period, but is not typically used in academic writing unless it is part of a direct quote.

Example:

- Jerry exclaimed, “Stop! That hurts!”
- The learner shouted, “This class is fun!”

Commas



Commas indicate a pause within a sentence and/or are used with a conjunctive word or phrase to unite sentences. They are also used in various other ways—for separating words in a list, between phrases, or within sentences. Knowing how and when exactly to use commas can be challenging, especially since there are many uses for commas. However, several basic rules dictate comma usage, and once a writer becomes familiar enough with them, comma usage becomes much easier to grasp.

Sentence Coordination & Subordination

There is more than one way to unite two (or more) sentences, but the only time a comma is used to join sentences (or independent clauses) is when it is used with a coordinating or subordinating conjunction.

- When using one of the seven coordinating conjunctions or FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) to combine sentences, add a comma before it.

Sentence Coordination Examples:

- Most of the visitors were happy just sitting around in the shade, **for** it had been a long, dusty journey on the train.
 - I will shop at the Galleria this afternoon, **and** I will use my new credit card.
 - That is not what I meant to say, **nor** should you interpret my statement as an admission of guilt.
 - I was scheduled to leave London last night, **but** the flight was cancelled.
 - The game will be rescheduled, **or** it resume after the rain has stopped.
 - The sun is shining brightly, **yet** raindrops are starting to fall.
 - You finished your work early, **so** you can go home now.
- When using a subordinating conjunction, a comma is placed just after the first clause. These clauses are similar to introductory phrases or clauses and begin with subordinating conjunctions or word(s).

Sentence Subordination Examples:

- **Because** she has saved money, Betty will fly to the Bahamas this weekend.
- **Since** Harry met Sally, he no longer wants to date others.
- **Although** he spent many years saving money, Jim does not have enough for retirement.
- **After** Jim retires, he will get a part-time job.
- **Because** he loved surfing, he refused to give up his dream of moving to Hawaii.
- **Unless** we take action now, all is lost.

In the first example, without the word **because**, the sentence *could* stand alone—“**She has saved money.**” However, the two sentences are joined because they are related, and with the word “**because**” added to the beginning of the first sentence, a dependency is created between the two clauses. “**Because she has saved money**”...would definitely not be complete on its own, and a reader or listener seeing/hearing just that phrase alone would naturally wonder what follows.

Further, the sentence examples from above could just as easily be switched around with the subordinating conjunction placed instead in the middle joining the two clauses, and a comma would then NOT be necessary.

Subordination as Coordination Examples:

- Betty will go to the Bahamas this weekend **because** she has saved money.

- He no longer wants to date others **since** Harry met Sally.
- Jim does not have enough for retirement **although** he spent many years saving money.
- Jim will get a part-time job **after** he retires.
- He refused to give up his dream of moving to Hawaii **because** he loved surfing.
- All is lost **unless** we take action now.

The meaning or emphasis changes just slightly when the above sentences are switched around. Therefore, how a writer chooses to combine phrases—either with *coordinating conjunctions* or *subordinating conjunctions* or with some other method (i.e., semicolon, dash)—will bring about different sentence results in connotation and style.

Introductory Words & Phrases

- Very similar to the comma usage in sentence subordination (see above), most introductory words and phrases are set off by commas.

Examples:

- **To achieve the promotion she desired**, Sarah found it necessary to complete her doctoral degree.
- **Afterwards**, James found his keys under the table.
- **On the other hand**, you will arrive early.

A good way to test for introductory words and phrases is to first identify the *subject* and *predicate*, which make up a complete sentence. For instance in the first example above, the word **Sarah** is the subject noun in the sentence, and the word **found** is the verb; therefore, by identifying the *subject* and *predicate*, the basic structure of a complete sentence is revealed. In other words, without the introductory phrase, “**To achieve the promotion she desired**,” the sentence could stand alone. However, the introductory phrase provides more meaning and better emphasizes why Sarah finds it necessary to complete her doctoral degree. Readers understand more her sense of urgency.

When the phrase is moved to the end of the sentence instead, the description is provided, but the sense of urgency is weakened.

Example:

- Sarah found it necessary to complete her doctoral degree **to achieve the promotion she desired**.

Therefore, by adding introductory words and phrases, authors can enhance their writing with better descriptions and smoother transitions. Avoiding numerous short or blunt sentences in this way allows a writer to present ideas that flow like a meandering stream.

Note: For more information on introductory words, see some commonly used adverbs listed under Transitional Words.

Descriptive Words & Phrases

- Non-restrictive:

Use commas to set off elements that do not restrict the meaning of the word or words to which they apply. *Non-restrictive* words and phrases in sentences do NOT change the meaning of the word/words they describe. These include appositives, which are nouns or pronouns, often accompanied by modifiers, that describe another noun or pronoun.

Examples:

- The three year old, **with a mischievous look in his eye**, had to be watched at all times.
- Hats, **which come in all shapes and colors**, are great for blocking the sun.
- My coworker, **Ophelia**, will attend the luncheon with me.
(APPOSITIVE)
- Her new outfit, **a navy blue suit with white stripes**, will surely impress them. (APPOSITIVE)
- **A talented programmer**, Sandra is the new CEO of GameSoft.
(APPOSITIVE)

In each of the sentences above, the phrase set off by a comma(s) is descriptive of the subject of the sentence but does not change the subject's meaning.

Note: In the second example, the word **which** is used with a comma placed before it, but it can be substituted with **that** (no comma needed).

- Restrictive elements are never set apart by punctuation.

Example:

- Employees **who work hard** are rewarded with significant raises.

The element—**who work hard**—restricts (or is tied to) the meaning of **Employees**. Without the phrase, a reader is left wondering why or what kind of employees are rewarded with significant raises.

Interjections

- Also, use commas to set off parenthetical expressions—explanatory, supplementary or transitional words or phrases. A parenthetical expression adds extraneous information to a sentence, and it can be located anywhere appropriate in the sentence. Commas are used to let the reader know that such a word or phrase interrupts the *subject + predicate* pattern of a sentence.

Examples:

- The play was one of Neil Simon's best, **according to the New York critics**.
- Scuba diving, **I understand**, is an exhilarating activity.
- The race was, **indeed**, a magnificent one.
- The flowers were, **consequently**, wilted.

Note: All of the following sentences using parenthetical expressions are punctuated correctly.

Only one person—the president—can authorize such activity.

Only one person, the president, can authorize such activity.

Only one person (the president) can authorize such activity.

Question: Which sentence best emphasizes the importance and power of the president?

The following list includes many adverbs that are not only used as interjections but are also used frequently as introductory/transition words at the beginning of sentences (see Introductory Words and Phrases above). They are also often used with a semicolon when joining two complete sentences (see the **Semicolon** section below).

Transitional Words:

afterwards
also
accordingly
consequently
finally
furthermore
hence
however
incidentally
indeed
instead

likewise
meanwhile
moreover
nevertheless
next
nonetheless
otherwise
*so
similarly
still
then

therefore
thus

(*also a coordinating conjunction)

Elements in a List or Series

- Use commas between words, phrases, or clauses forming a series (a.k.a. serial commas). This helps list/series items or elements stand out.

Examples:

- This job involves **jumping, climbing, and running**.
- On route to New Zealand, we **slept in a hut in Fiji, stayed in a posh hotel in Tahiti, and camped out in the Cook Islands**.

Note: Using a comma between the second to last item in a list or series and the word **and** or the word **or** is usually optional, so check the conventions of your field or publisher and be consistent with your usage.

APA: "Use a comma between elements (including before *and* and *or*) in a series of three or more items."^{liv}

Examples:

- the color, shape, or size
- in a study by Marx, Chaplin, and Abbott

Names, Titles, Places, Dates & Numbers

- Separate names and titles and places with commas.

Examples:

- Mr. S. Stallone, CEO, will attend the banquet.
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Vancouver, BC, Canada
- Casablanca, Morocco
- Following APA^{lv} standards, Commas are required within parenthetical in text citations to separate items.

Examples:

- (Mathews, 1997)
- Santana (1993) explored
- Use a comma when addressing someone directly.

Examples:

- Jim, sing louder.
- She's calling for you, Rachel.
- Commas are used for casual greetings in informal letters.

Examples:

- Dear John,
- My sweetest Darling,
- Commas are inserted "between groups of three digits"^{lvi} (APA) in large numbers starting with 1,000.

Example:

3,000,000,000

However, also according the APA^{lvii} guidelines, do NOT use commas in the following: page numbers, binary digits, serial numbers, degrees of temperature, acoustic frequency designations, degrees of freedom, numbers to the right of a decimal point.^{lviii}

Example:

Page 1034
1000 °F

Semicolons



Another way to join sentences is with a semicolon. Stronger than a comma but not as strong as a period, semicolons are used to link two or more related ideas. A semicolon should NOT be used to unite unequal sentence elements, but it can be used to separate items in a long list within a sentence, especially when the list calls for a list within a list (see below).

Related Independent Clauses

- Use a semicolon to join two (or more) independent but closely related clauses NOT already joined by a conjunction.

Examples:

- The psychologist used qualitative analysis; the economist used quantitative analysis.
- Class was cancelled; you can meet with the instructor during her office hours tomorrow.

Choosing to use a semicolon to combine sentences will affect meaning and emphasis. Therefore, the way in which a writer combines sentences helps

determine how the intended message will be received. For instance, pretending the following is an excerpt from a romance novel, notice how the meaning changes slightly each time.

He loved her; he hated her.

He loved her, **but** he hated her.

He hated her **because** he loved her.

Because he loved her, he hated her.

He loved her; **therefore**, he hated her.

Note: When using a semicolon and including a transition word (or conjunctive adverb), such as, therefore, however, etc., don't forget to place a comma after the word. See the Transitional Words list in the section, **Interjections**.

Example:

- The psychologist used qualitative analysis; **however**, the economist used quantitative analysis.
- Class was cancelled; **incidentally**, you can meet with the instructor during her office hours tomorrow.

List Items

- Use semicolons to separate items in a list when those items are themselves divided by commas (or are very long).

Example:

- For the holiday, we gave toys, clothes, and savings bonds to our children; toys and savings bonds to our nieces and nephews; and clothes to each other.

Colons

In general, colons are more formal. A colon indicates and emphasizes that a list or an explanation is coming up next, or that a long quote will follow. Also, a colon is used with ratios/proportions and between publication place and publisher in APA^{lix} reference lists.

List Introduction

- Use a colon to introduce a list.

Examples:

- Nostalgia night on the cruise ship included the following: Reviving the Roaring Twenties, Disco Down on the '70s Dance Floor, and Hoedown on the Ranch.
- The following course supplies are required: an acrylic paint set, five easels, a smock, and a \$20.00 fee for models.

Note: No capitalization is required when delivering a list after a colon unless formal titles or names are a part of the list.

Explanations, Direct Quotes or Complete Sentences

- Explanations are emphasized by and follow a colon. Also, direct quotes or complete sentences may follow colons—be sure to use capital letters on the first letter of the first word after the colon.

Examples:

- Like love, war is difficult to understand: “All’s fair in love and war.”
- A decision has been made: We will buy chocolate before we make any other decisions.

Letter Greetings

- Colons are used for business or formal letters.

Example:

- Dear Mr. Hitachi:

Ratios and Proportions

- Colons are used with ratios and proportions.

Example:

- The ratio was 2:1.

Publication & Publisher

- Colons in APA^{lx} references are required when formatting place of publication and publisher information.

Example:

- Seattle, WA: Royal Pacifica.

Note: In some writing style guide reference/bibliography lists, it is duly noted that a colon is also used to separate parts of long titles (e.g., book, article, web site titles).

Example:

Fine, E.H. & Josephson, J.P. (1998). *Nitty-Gritty Grammar: A Not-So-Serious Guide to Clear Communication*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

In this example, a colon is used to separate the two parts of the book title; however, in the actual title printed on the book cover face, a colon is not used.

Parentheses & Dashes

Parentheses

- Parentheses are used to add nonessential information to a sentence. A sentence will still make sense without the extraneous bit and is a complete sentence without it.

Example:

- All of the dogs arrived with their toys (balls, chew sticks, and stuffed animals) at Doggie Daycare.

Note: Instead of parentheses, commas as well as dashes can be used to offset parenthetical information, but if the extraneous information is a list with existing commas, a reader might be confused by the use of additional commas to set it off.

APA^{lxi} parentheses guidelines:

- When using parentheses to offset extraneous information in sentences, punctuation for complete sentences is placed inside of the parentheses; otherwise, punctuation is placed on the outside.

Examples:

- (Due to this year's drought, the lake's level is low.)
 - Due to this year's drought, the lake's level is low (even lower than last year).
 - The results of the study were conclusive (see Figure 3).
- Use parentheses for all APA style in text reference citations. Parentheses enclose citations or page numbers of direct quotes.

Examples:

- Jacks and Carter (1999) demonstrated

- will be fully explained in the report (Winter & Shultz, 2001)
- The author found that, “The effect continued” (Lopez, 1993, p. 311), but she did not indicate how long it lasted.
- Also use parentheses to introduce abbreviations.

Examples:

- The University of Texas at Austin (UT)
- Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)
- Letters/numbers used to identify items in a series within sentences/paragraphs are enclosed in parentheses.

Example:

- “The subject areas included (a) synonyms associated with cultural interactions, (b) descriptions for ethnic group membership...”^{lxii}
- Parentheses are also used when grouping mathematical expressions, enclosing identified numbers for formulas and equations, enclosing statistical values, or enclosing degrees of freedom.

Examples:

- $(g - 1)/(k - 2)$
- $F(2, 116) = 3.71$

Dashes

- Dashes are used for emphasis, to show informality, or to highlight a sharp turn in thought or abruptness. They can also replace other types of punctuation used for linking, separating and enclosing. (According to APA^{lxiii} standards, a writer should avoid using dashes too often since overuse can weaken a paper.)

Example:

- The kitchen was hot—steaming hot!

Note: All of the following are correct. However, punctuation choice affects meaning.

Example:

- Only one person—the winner—will receive the grand prize.
- Only one person, the winner, will receive the grand prize.
- Only one person (the winner) will receive the grand prize.

Hyphens

The main thing to remember about hyphens is that hyphens are not dashes. One is visibly longer than the other, and as explained in the previous section, a dash is used in various ways to punctuate and emphasize phrases and looks like this: — On the other hand, a hyphen is shorter in length and is never used in the same way a dash is used; it looks like this: –

Prefixes

- Hyphens are used with prefixes.

Examples:

- Ex-girlfriend
- Self-service
- Mid-August

Names

- Some names are hyphenated.

Example:

- Courtney Thorne-Smith

Numbers

- Some compound numbers (21-99) and written out fractions use hyphens.

Examples:

- Ninety-seven
- Three-fourths
- Four and one-quarter

Age Description

- Use hyphens for age descriptions

Examples:

- Nine-year-old boy
- 35-to 50-year-old alumni participants

Compound Adjectives

- Compound adjectives are two or more words joined by a hyphen that are used to describe a noun.

Examples:

- Well-meaning coworkers
- Fun-loving friends

Note: The APA guide suggests leaving hyphens out if meaning/definition is well-established for certain terminology found in specific disciplines/fields, such as psychology.

Examples:

- "grade point average"
- "health care reform"
- "day treatment program"^{lxiv}

Ellipses

- Ellipses are used to signify a pause in speech . . . or a lead into silence. Also they are used to indicate when words are deliberately left out, especially when separate parts of direct quotes are used.

Example:

- Lincoln said, "Fourscore and seven years ago...shall not perish from this earth."
- Simmons (1999) explains that free choice often leads to teens making "poor choices...which then leads to problems at home and in school."

Quotation Marks

Nicknames, Titles, Poems & Quotes

- In general, double quotation marks are used primarily to set off direct quotes, and they are often used to emphasize certain words, expressions and slang. Poem, song, story, chapter, radio/TV episode, and article titles are set off by quotation marks as well.

Examples:

- o “Kites rise highest against the wind—not with it,” said Winston Churchill.
- o “My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose” by Robert Burns
- o “Pure Intuition” by Shakira
- o “Skippy” Jones

Note: Typically, periods and commas are placed “inside” of closing quotation marks, but other types of punctuation are placed outside of the quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted piece.

Quotes with Parenthetical Citations

- The APA^{lxv} manual has specific guidelines regarding how to punctuate when using double quotation marks along with in text parenthetical citations. When a parenthetical citation follows a direct quote at the end of a sentence, the punctuation is placed outside of the citation.

Examples:

- o “If there is a growing need for projects, then there is ever increasing need for people who understand how to run them effectively” (Verzuh, 1999, p. 6).^{lxvi}
- o Verzuh (1999) explains that “when many people are working on similar tasks, standards create uniformity among all of their outputs” (p. 196).^{lxvii}

On the other hand, a quotation of 40 or more words should be set up as a block quote, which is not enclosed in quotation marks.

Example:

He unlocked the door, and I cleared out up the river-bank. I noticed some pieces of limbs and such things floating down, and a sprinkling of bark; so I knowed the river had begun to rise. I reckoned I would have great times now if I was over at the town. (Twain, 1884/1981, p. 30)^{lxviii}

Ironic Comment, Slang, Invented/Coined Expressions

- Also, according to APA^{lxix} certain words or phrases, such as an ironic comment, slang, or invented or coined expression, should be set off by quotation marks (only when first introduced). However, other emphasized words or phrases, such as labels and technical and key terms are *italicized* instead.

Examples:

- o She was “happy” to volunteer for the project.
(Quotation marks used.)
- o It was not considered “normal” behavior.
(Quotation marks used.)
- o It’s the box labeled *ship*.
(Italics used—label.)
- o Individuals in the *small* group will be interviewed first.
(Italics used—the word does not indicate size but group designation.)
- o “Bible Belt”
(Slang/Coined Expression.)
- o “celeblog”^{lxx}
(Slang/Coined Expression. It means: a celebrity-written Blog.)
- o “hyper-evolution”^{lxxi}
(Slang/Coined Expression. It means: “Extremely rapid evolution, particularly as a result of man-made factors; extremely rapid change.”)

Note: Since the use of *italics* is not a punctuation topic (e.g., periods, commas, etc.), its usage is not fully explained here. For more information on when to *italicize* words, see pages 100-103, Section 3.19 in the APA manual.^{lxxii}

Apostrophes

Contractions & Omitted Letters

- Apostrophes are used in contractions or to replace letters that are purposely omitted from words.

Examples:

- o Here is = **here’s**
- o They are = **they’re**
- o Rosalie is going. = **Rosalie’s** going.
- o Cannot = **can’t**
- o Do not = **don’t**
- o Singing = **Singin’**
- o 1970 = **’70** (NOT the ‘70’s when referring to a decade but **’70s**)

Note: Do not confuse contractions with the possessive forms of words.

Example:

- o **it’s** versus **its** (**its** is possessive)
- o **you’re** versus **your** (**your** is possessive)

Possessive Form

- Apostrophes also indicate possession.

Examples:

- That's Jerome's book.
- We will go to Mary Jones's party.
- It is the learners' responsibility.
- Those are the sons-in-law's. (plural possessive)

Brackets & Slashes

Brackets and slash marks are seldom used; however, according to the APA^{lxxiii} manual, both types of punctuation are each used in specific ways for academic writing.

Brackets

- Brackets are used to enclose parenthetical information inserted into phrases set off parentheses. Also, they are used to enclose descriptive/explanatory information inserted by the author of the paper or manuscript into a direct quote (adding information not found in the quote).

Examples:

- (The final results of the test [Test B] are presented in Chart 5.)
- "The city [New York] is now divided on the issue" (Hale, 2002, p. 15).

Slashes

- Slash marks (a.k.a. *virgule*) are used with hyphenated compounds for clarification and to offset English phonemes. They are used also with numbers and measurements and to cite republished work.^{lxxiv}

Examples:

- People living in this densely-populated/confined section of the community suffer from poverty and disease. (hyphenated compound)
- mg/kg (measurement)
- X/Y^{lxxv} (separate numerator from denominator)
- Smith (1864/1973) (republished work)

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Mechanics

Most of the topics covered in this section focus on APA¹ guidelines for spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, numbers and italics usage. With some exception, most of the APA mechanics related guidelines can be applied to any type of academic writing, especially for Capella University assignments and papers. However, if in doubt about what punctuation and mechanics rules to follow, always check with your instructor.

Spelling

Besides studying a book on how to recognize and break down words by their roots and endings, a writer must rely on his or her own memory for spelling words correctly. Either that or he or she must be really good at using a dictionary. It's difficult for most people to remember how to spell words, and once a word is memorized, it is often soon forgotten, especially when it hasn't been used in a while. Below is a list of words that are commonly misspelled, which can be kept nearby for quick reference.

Commonly Misspelled Words

accidentally	formerly	privilege
advice	humorous	pursue
affect	hypocrisy	repetition
beginning	immediately	rhyme
believe	incidentally	rhythm
benefit	latter	ridiculous
challenge	led	sacrilegious
criticize	lose	seize
deceive	marriage	separate
definite	mischievous	shepherd
describe	murmur	siege
despise	necessary	similar
develop	occurred	simile
disappoint	parallel	too
duel	Philip	tragedy
ecstasy	playwright	tries
effect	preceding	undoubtedly
existence	prejudice	until
fiery	principal	

1

According to the APA manual, the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* or the more comprehensive *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* are official spelling references for manuscripts, journals and books. Writers must remember to use the first spelling listed when given choices. Below is an APA list of commonly confused or misspelled singular/plural words used in manuscript or journal writing.¹

Commonly Misspelled/Confused Singular/Plural Words

Singular	Plural
appendix	appendixes
cannula	cannulas
datum	data
matrix	matrices
phenomenon	phenomena
schema	schemas

1

Capitalization

- Capitalize the first letter of words that begin a sentence and that follow a colon.

Example:

- The first step used in the process was recorded.
- The second step in the process was more difficult: Release the mouse in an open environment and time how long it takes for it to find an exit.¹

- Capitalize major words in titles and articles. Do not capitalize articles, prepositions or conjunctions unless they are over four letters long. Do capitalize verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns.

Also, capitalize both words in a hyphenated word. Words that follow a dash or a colon are also capitalized.

Examples:

- The failure of Internet companies at the turn of the century is the focus of the article, “Boom or Bust.”
- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*
- “Ultrasonic Vocalizations Are Elicited From Rat Pups”
- “Memory in Hearing-Impaired Children: Implications for Vocabulary Development”¹

Note: Only the first word of a title, the first word after a colon or dash and proper nouns are capitalized in reference lists.

Example:

- Hanson, R.K., Steffy, R.A., & Gauthier, R. (1993). Long-term recidivism of child molesters.¹

- Proper nouns and trade names must be capitalized.

Example:

- Greco-Latin Square
 - Department of Sociology, University of Washington
 - Purina Monkey Chow¹
- Capitalize test titles.

Example:

- Advanced Vocabulary Test
- Capitalize names of conditions, factors, variables and effects.

Example:

- Condition A and B
 - Mealtime Behavior (Factor 4)¹

Italics

The APA manual gives specific guidelines for the use of italics in writing; however, they should not be used often—only when necessary. People who use typewriters instead of computers and word processing software can underline in lieu of italicizing. Below is a limited list of when to use italics in APA style manuscripts, journals and etc. For specific information, please refer to the APA manual (3.19).

Italicize the following:

- Titles of books, periodicals, and microfilm publications.

Examples:

- *The Elements of Style*
 - *American Psychologist*
- Genera, species, and varieties.

Example:

- *Macaca mulatta*
- Introductions of new, technical, or key terms or labels (after a term has been used once, do not italicize it).

Examples:

- *Backward masking* (term)

- *Empty* (box)¹

Abbreviations

Like the use of italics, APA encourages writers not to use an overabundance of abbreviations in their papers. Readers won't always know what you're referring to, especially if you have a paper full of abbreviations. When introducing an abbreviation for the first time, be sure and spell out the name, title or word first and follow it with its abbreviation in parenthesis. From that point on it's okay to use the abbreviation only. However, in major section changes, it's a good idea to remind readers by giving the full name, title or word again. Keep in mind, too, that readers may at first skip over previous sections, so it may be the first time they're seeing it.

- Some abbreviations don't have to be named or explained because readers generally know what they stand for.

Examples:

- IQ
 - REM
 - ESP
 - AIDS
 - HIV
 - NADP
 - ACTH
- Abbreviations appearing often in APA journals may not be found in dictionaries. Even though they are used often in APA style papers, they should still be explained first.

Examples:

- conditioned stimulus (CS)
 - short-term memory (STM)
 - reaction time (RT)
 - consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC)
- Latin Abbreviations used in parenthetical material:

Examples:

- e.g. → for example
 - i.e. → that is
 - etc. → and so forth
- Scientific abbreviations include units of measurement and time.

Examples:

- do not abbreviate → day, week, month, year
- AC → alternating current¹

Numbers

- Use figures for numbers 10 and above.

Examples:

- 12 cm wide
 - The remaining 10%
 - 25 years old
- Use combinations of figures and words to express rounded large numbers and back-to-back modifiers.

Examples:

- Almost 3 million people
- A budget of \$2.5 billion
- 2 two-way interactions
- Twenty 6-year-olds¹

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