

ENGLISH GRAMMAR RULES & MISTAKES

LEARN WRITING, SPEAKING, LITERATURE AND
PUNCTUATION RULES COMPLETE WITH 10 KEY SKILLS
AND OVER 200 COMMON ERROR EXAMPLES



M E L O N Y J A C O B S

English Grammar Rules & Mistakes

***Learn Writing, Speaking, Literature and Punctuation
Rules Complete with 10 Key Skills and Over 200
Common Error Examples***

MELONY JACOBS

English Grammar Rules 101

10 Essential Rules to Improve Your Writing, Speaking and Literature Skills for Students and Beginners

MELONY JACOBS

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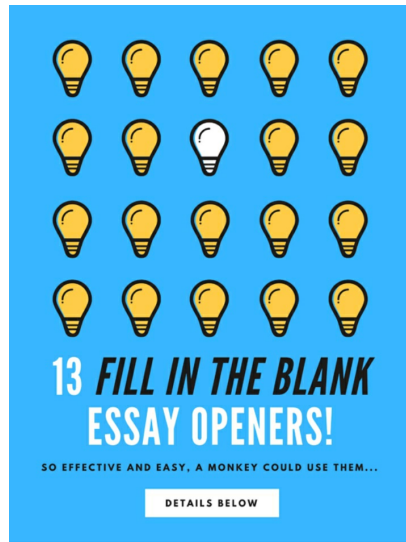
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INTRODUCTION

Writing is something many of us do on a daily basis. Yet few of us feel truly confident to say we are a great writer. When you read something that is written well, it can be very powerful. Good writing can inspire people to get up and act, make them feel incredibly moved, or make them really mad. This is because the best writing transports you to a place where you see and feel what you are reading as if it were really happening to you.

It is fair to say that we can all recognize the difference between good and bad writing and that we can acknowledge how important it is to write well. However, when office employees were asked whether they prioritized improving their writing skills over other professional skills, the answer was almost always no.

We all learned how to read and write in school. For most of us, that is where our writing education ended. The main problem with this is that the quality of education on English grammar varies so much depending on when and where you went to school. Not to mention, for a long time, English language education adopted an intuitive approach that saw students gaining grammatical knowledge through reading rather than rote learning. This method of learning has a lot to be responsible for when it comes to a whole generation not being able to tell the difference between there and their.

The result of not knowing your way around English grammar can often turn into a source of embarrassment for many of us. It might even have led to you being publicly outed by a coworker for your repeated misuse of you're. What is worse, because we have been making the same grammatical mistakes for years, it is almost impossible to spot on your own that you are making them. I am certain that what led you to pick up this book was some incident or other that involved being shamed for making an obvious grammatical mistake. Don't fear, we are all grammatical offenders here and what matters most is that you have recognized the need to do something about it!

In all truthfulness, nearly all of us make repeated grammatical mistakes and we all need to take the time to polish up on our writing skills. The impact of taking a really small amount of time out of your day to improve your English grammar knowledge will be massive. In no time at all, you can use the super simple tips in this book to power up your writing and impress your boss with the strength of your well-written proposals or whatever it is you need to write.

This book is supercharged with all the essential knowledge you need to know to improve your use of English grammar. How long will it take you to get through this book? It will take you a little more than a month to read and practice the tips and techniques presented in this book. You will quickly progress from zero to grammatical hero by simply following this book step by step.

As a way of a quick intro on me, I am Melody Jacobs, a 52 year old avid book reader and expert grammar corrector. As a professional editor and proofreader, it is my job to fix people's grammatical mistakes. So in truth, I don't want the whole country to all of a sudden become grammatical experts, or I would be out of a job! What my experience has taught me is most errors that people make in their writing are about grammar and that they repeat these errors over and over, most likely as they don't realize they are making them. It isn't just in the texts I am proofing that I see errors, they also appear in the many published novels that I consume weekly. The reality is we are a nation of grammar offenders and mistakes are so common we are starting to think they are correct.

So, with this, I decided that rather than quietly complaining to my husband and friends about the raft of grammatical mistakes I see on a daily basis, I thought I would take my knowledge of the most common errors and set out to write this book. The main aim of the book is to provide an incredibly practical and quick way to improve your English grammar. You can take advantage of my extensive experience with understanding why people make mistakes. You can save yourself a lot of time and pain by spending this short time learning about grammar. After that, you can rest assured that what you

learn in this book will massively impact your writing almost immediately.

In the end, grammar is something that is right or wrong. There is no gray area. This is something which you can be happy about as once you have it down, you are good. However, I am fairly certain that you will have probably picked up this book because your grammar is holding you back and you have decided it is time to fix it. Poor grammar really does stand in your way of achieving the highest grades at school, being thought of as an outstanding employee, and ultimately being able to express yourself correctly whenever you speak or write.

That is why I give you my word that with this simple and quick to read guide on English grammar rules, you will be fully equipped to manage any grammatical situation. I promise you that you won't feel like a floundering fish when you are put on the spot to produce a grammatically correct sentence structure. Instead, the grammar rules will be instilled within you so that you can respond with confidence and ease. On your end, a level of commitment is needed in order to practice what is outlined within this book. If you only read through this book once and do not practice the grammar rules, you will soon forget them and return to your bad habits. It is essential that you dedicate yourself to making a lasting change within this area. You only need to input a very small amount of effort to see a massive return. It is like riding a bike, once learned, it is not easily forgotten.

With this guide in hand and by using the personalized techniques described within, you will be on the road to English grammar perfection faster than you could ever have imagined. My previous students have all raved about how quickly they mastered the techniques and how stepping up their English grammar game has massively helped them in all areas of life. Now, I hope that with this book I can combine all of my knowledge on the most effective way to teach grammar and encourage a much larger amount of people to improve their grammar than I am able to with just my one to one lessons.

So, come on! Jump in and start practicing. Tomorrow you will already be better than today with your use of English grammar. Good things are waiting

for you, just as soon as you can express yourself effectively and are able to show the world that you are an English grammar aficionado.

BACKGROUND – THE ORIGINS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

There is no denying the importance of English as a language, with over 2 billion speakers worldwide. English is the lingua franca of the world, meaning it is the language used for communication between speakers of other languages. Its dominance as a language came to force largely in the last few centuries because it was the language spoken in the British Empire who spread the language to over ⅓ of the world's population including the USA, Canada, and Australia. The cultural production that then came out of the USA in the 20th century, and continues to this day, saw a worldwide audience consume English language media in the form of popular music and blockbuster movies. Particularly amongst the younger generations across the world, you are very likely to find that even if they don't speak English, they are aware of it and can understand some of it. English is significant enough that the majority of countries across the world use it as a second language on signs, menus in restaurants and anything that might be read by a non-native language speaker for that area. Given the continued prominence of USA made music, movies, and tv shows, it doesn't seem that English will be giving up its place of prominence anytime soon.

English is a Western Germanic language that was first spoken around the 5th CE when settlers from the areas around Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands first came to the British Isles. These people were known as the Anglo-Saxons, hence where the Anglo bit of English comes from. The Anglo-Saxons were called Anglo because they came from an area of land that looked a bit like a fish hook. The Proto-Indo-European root of a fish hook came from the world angle, meaning it was bent. The modern English word angling, meaning fishing, also comes from this root. One theory is that the word Anglo is meant to mean fishermen and that English is the language of the fishermen, a theory that fits with both the fact that the Anglo-Saxons came from an area of low lying sea and that the British Isles were mainly full of fishermen and their families.

Previous to speaking English, the people of the British Isles spoke different

native Celtic language dialects that were mainly influenced by Norse, a Nordic language brought to the area by Vikings in the centuries before this. Some influences of these Viking invaders still linger on in the English language, such as Thursday whose original meaning is Thor's day, the day to celebrate the Viking god Thor. In the United Kingdom today, the people in Wales, Scotland and Ireland still speak the Celtic languages which are distinctly different from English.

The first form of English was Old English. To a speaker of Modern English, this version is almost unintelligible. For example, the famous Beowulf poem written in Old English starts off with the following, "H ƿ æt! ƿ ē Gār-Dena in ġeār-dagum, þēod-cyninga, þrym ġefrūnon, hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon," which in Modern English translates to "Lo! We have heard of the majesty of the Spear-Danes, of those nation-kings in the days of yore, and how those noblemen promoted zeal." As is clear to see, it is no small feat to read and understand Old English. The alphabet is extended to include extra letters and the words themselves are much closer to Modern German than Modern English. The grammar is also much closer to Modern German, something which is important to understand later when trying to get your head around Modern English grammar. The truth is, Modern German grammar is considerably more logical than English. If we had stuck with the grammar system we inherited with Old English, then I am certain that our modern grammar would be much easier to understand. However, as you will see next, the evolution of the English language jumped into the much more complicated and exception filled pool of the French language. Blame William the Conqueror.

1066, the Battle of Hastings sees the English King Harold killed by an arrow shot through his eye and William the Conqueror from Normandy, France, takes over the English throne. Over the next 100 years, a distinct shift can be seen on the British Isles with an old version of French becoming the language of the court and Old English being relegated to the language of the poor. Slowly but surely, a combined language starts to emerge, known as Middle English, which was still distinctly Western Germanic but which was now undeniably influenced by Franco grammar and Latin vocabulary. This form of English does have some resemblance to Modern English and when read it

is a little bit intelligible. For example, the first line of the Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer reads in the original language as, “Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote. The droȝte of March hath perced to the roote. And bathed every veyne in swich licour, Of which vertu engendred is the flour;” which transcribes as, “When [that] April with his showers sweet. The drought of March has pierced to the root. And bathed every vein in such liquor, Of which virtue engendered is the flower;” Now we begin to see the emergence of Modern English as it is not such a great leap from Middle English to what we speak now.

Starting from the 15th century, English started to really take form. Three major things happened in the 17th century that have had a lasting impact on the language until today. The first event was the Bible being translated from Latin to English for the first time. This meant that common people who were able to read had greater access to the religion than before and could read the Bible even if they didn’t speak Latin. The King James Bible is considered to be one of the earliest texts written in Modern English and as it was such an important text it found its way into many homes across England, leading to a standardization of the language that had not been seen before.

Next came William Shakespeare. As a playwright, Shakespeare is responsible for shaping the way we speak English today. He invented hundreds of words that we still use, such as critic, lonely, and swagger. What is more, he also heavily influenced the use of grammar and sentence structure. Previous to the emergence of Modern English, which Shakespeare is attributed to as writing in, the language was not standardized and the use of phrases was very rare. Due to the love of Shakespeare’s plays throughout England, the phrases he invented became commonplace, such as ‘with bated breath’ and ‘a foregone conclusion’. Not only were his phrases commonly used but the idea of phrases became the norm with more and more invented by writers and poets being used by the common people.

The last event that took place during this period is the Great Vowel Shift. This is an event that changed forever the way that we pronounce English words, specifically the way we pronounce vowels. Before the shift, lots of

English words had long vowel sounds and the spelling of them reflected this. However, after the shift, the vowel sounds were shortened and the use of silent consonants became common, such as in the word thumb where you do not pronounce the b. From this time onwards, approximately the middle to late 17th century, English spelling was standardized further and these standardizations are still in place today.

Does that mean that the English language has not changed since William Shakespeare? No, of course, it has changed. Every language evolves over time, as can be seen by the different stages of the language that have just been described. What is important to know is that even though we may not speak like Shakespeare, for example in his play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* his character Lysander declares, "Ay me! for aught that I could ever read, Could ever hear by tale or history, The course of true love never did run smooth;" it is still intelligible, the vocabulary is still used today, and the grammar structure is correct.

Since William Shakespeare, English has gone on a real journey of discovery which has twisted its fate towards a number of different paths. English has traveled the world, been part of the history of the empire and is now spoken by millions of people as a first language and even more as a second language. The English spoken today is still considered Modern English but it has morphed into different dialects, for example, British English is a distinct dialect, as is American English. A dialect is different than a language. When you speak a different language to another person, you should expect that you will not understand most of it. You may understand some of the vocabulary, for example, if the language comes from the same family of languages such as French and Spanish. With a dialect, you should expect to understand most of the vocabulary, but the grammar can be different and there will certainly be a lot of regional vocabulary that will differ, usually the names of items. So, a British person can easily understand an American, but they definitely had some humorous moments discovering the different meanings they have for common words. Such as, a rubber is an eraser to a British person, where it is a condom to an American!

More important than the difference between dialects, is the way that English is now written. Until around 150 years ago, the majority of people who spoke English could not read or write it. What this meant is that there existed a huge variance in the way that people from different areas would speak English. If you were living in Northern England, you would certainly use a lot of words and phrases that would be foreign to someone living in London. The same goes if you talk about someone living in Toronto 100 years ago, they would not be able to fully understand what someone was saying in Vancouver. Regional variances were very common in the spoken language. However, as the only people to read and write were of the educated classes and represented a small percentage of the English speaking population, the variance amongst the written language was restricted. More than that, large amounts of control were placed upon the way people wrote English. Grammar was thought of as something that must be used correctly and if you did not you would be strictly reprimanded. To write anything in informal English was considered very bad practice and therefore the written form of English did not see much alteration for hundreds of years after Shakespeare, that was until the contemporary period we are in now.

The big shift came when education was opened up to the masses. In the 20th century, being able to read and write was no longer a privilege of the upper classes. As free education for children was provided in many English speaking countries, this also meant a much larger percentage of the population being able to read and write. This was an education revolution and English speaking countries became the first to reach almost complete literacy in their population. As much as this was incredibly important for opening up education for all, the formalization of the English language did take a bit of a hit. Now a much larger number of people could read and write and this meant that there was no way to control how English was written in any way the same way it was before. During the first waves of literacy, regional words were the first to be introduced to written English. Phrases and words from the different parts of the English speaking world were written down for the very first time. People were slow to standardize the spelling and grammatical use of these phrases and so until the Oxford Dictionary was able to categorize them correctly, the written language became a bit of a mess. In particular, people started to use grammar very informally and in large parts, wrongly.

For example, a very common phrase that came out of North West England was, “I didn’t do nothing wrong.” In this phrase, the grammar is incorrect as you can’t have a double negative. Didn’t is negative and nothing is negative. Essentially, they should cancel each other out and should be understood as ‘I did something.’ However, as this phrase was known widely in this area and they accepted it to mean, “I didn’t do anything wrong,” it was written down by a lot of people from this area. Does that mean that the grammar changed because of these new additions? No, the grammar rules still remain the same and this is not considered strictly correct. What it did do is bring about the difference between formal written English and informal written English.

As we entered the last decade of the 20th century, we saw a massive acceleration of the informalization of written English. Firstly, slang became more widely used in written English. Slang has always been around whenever English has been spoken. People like to make up their own words, they like to associate words with their hobbies, people they are friends with, or perhaps a subculture they are part of. What happened in the 1990s is that these subcultures started to go mainstream, with the music, movies and tv-shows that were produced about them being accessible to large parts of the English speaking population. Hip-hop is a strong example of a subculture from the USA that through the power of media, affected the way an English speaking person in Manchester, England spoke. Young people started to say phrases such as, “you are da bomb,” and “why you got beef?” After a while, the more that young people say these phrases, the more they start to write them down. This understandably, affects the way that grammar is understood and used as neither of the above examples are grammatically correct, but people start to think they are correct as they become common and this, in turn, challenges how they think of grammar. Unfortunately, the result is usually negative as they start to apply grammar rules incorrectly and make grammar mistakes such as saying, “why you here?” rather than, “why are you here?”

Secondly, came the cell phone with the ability to send SMS messages to your friends and family. As some of you may remember, the qwerty keyboard did not exist on the first phones. Instead, you texted by pressing the numbers 1-9 for different letters. The process could be quite long, so the result was people

throwing grammar rules out of the window and inventing shorthand ways to say sentences. For example, “I am going to be late tonight,” was transcribed to text speak as, “I’m gonna be L8 tonite.” This style of written English became commonplace for users of cell phones and they continued to shorten phrases to the bare minimum, such as LOL standing for laughing out loud and BRB meaning be right back. The impact of this was massive upon the way that the younger generations started to use written English. Teachers throughout the English speaking world come to massively resent the coming of cell phones, as they now spent large amounts of time correcting their students written and spoken English.

Finally, the internet came and established the use of informal written English as the norm. By the beginning of the 21st century, a large majority now had access to the internet and were able to communicate with people across the world in English. With the advent of social media, sending quick messages to your friends was very normal, as was posting a status about what you were doing. Trends in language use would vary over the next ten years with different words being fashionable at different times, such as swag, binge-watch, and woke. These words aren’t really massively significant as, throughout the history of language, they have always adapted and added in new vocabulary. What is significant, is the confirmation that informal written English was here to stay.

The importance of seeing how the written form of English has transformed over the last century is that it has made us all really bad at grammar. On a daily basis, we consume large amounts of written language that is predominantly written in informal English with grammar rules being loosely applied. People continue to use text speak regularly, with speed being seen as a quality more desirable over the accuracy of grammar. Yes, it is true that a lot of people who you are around on a daily basis probably understand how you speak and how you write, even if you use informal language. However, a person in Australia may not understand an American when they write online that they, “are totally shook by finding out the tea.” Nor would that American understand when the Australian said, “whack a snag on the barbie.”

The consequences, therefore, of informal language being so commonplace and how it has transferred into the written form, is that we have lost clarity across the English language. It is completely fine to speak and write in different ways depending on who you are talking to. You can use informal language with your friends and family as it feels natural and comfortable. But, when you use this same language with people you don't know, who may not be from the same area, or even the same country as you, you risk them not understanding. That is why formal English exists, it allows all speakers of English to understand each other, independent of where they come from. What is more, as the grammar rules are standardized, it also allows you to be certain that what you are saying will be understood and not misinterpreted. So when you say, "I am very shocked by what I heard about Sally," rather than "I am totally shook by finding out the tea," nothing will be misunderstood.

Don't underestimate how important being understood is. As you have seen throughout this chapter, the English language has taken many forms and has shifted over time into what it is today. However, nothing has prepared us for the assault upon the formal language that is happening now. So, when you do make the effort to learn how to apply grammar correctly and write in formal English when at school and at work, you will be marked out quickly as above your peers for the quality of your written work. It is still a very much admired quality in an employee and further than that, if you do want to progress to the higher levels of your chosen career, it is considered unacceptable to use anything other than formal English. What is more, when you use formal English and correct grammar, you can be assured that your million-dollar ideas are understood clearly, and may even make you that million dollars! Take this time to focus on your grammar, think of it as an investment for your future and a stepping stone to where it is you want to be in life.

RULE 1 – MASTER THE BASICS

First things first, whenever you write anything, you use the building blocks of the English language. Without them, we wouldn't have a language, just a collection of words that people would say.

The funny thing is though, most of us can't identify a verb from a noun or an adjective from an adverb. And the truth is, this really isn't your fault. Yes, you may have seen them written up on a board somewhere back in your school days, but rarely would any teacher have spent much longer than an afternoon teaching you exactly the meaning of each different building block.

That is because, when you are teaching a first language, you don't start from the beginning and ensure that your students really know what each part is. Instead, you skip ahead to reading longer texts to develop their level of the language quickly. However, as a student, when you miss these building blocks and don't understand them fully, you can carry that misunderstanding through to adulthood and repeatedly make the same grammar mistakes.

So when you are in a tangle over your adverbs and adjectives, stop blaming yourself. Rather, you must recognize that now is the time to detangle the mess and to build up correctly the way you write and speak.

The doing block: understanding verbs

Without a verb, you don't have a language, just a collection of words that can't be understood. That is because a verb is any word that describes what someone or something is doing. You can also think of it as an action word to help you remember that a verb is always about performing an action.

I **run** every day by the lake.

In this example, **run** is the verb because it clearly expresses that the person is performing an action, in this case, that action is running.

I **love** Jessica because she is funny and sweet.

In this example, **love** is the verb because it shows what someone is doing. Don't get confused that verbs can only be a visible action such as walking or talking. That is why it is much better to think of them as a doing word. To love someone is to do something. That is how we can clearly identify that this word is a verb.

Pretty much every time we speak or write, we need to express that we are doing something. That is why verbs are so important. If we try now to write a sentence without a verb, it doesn't turn out very well!

I to the cinema with friends.

Perhaps, you might be able to guess the meaning of this sentence, but it is obvious to everyone that it doesn't actually make sense. Being clear with your use of language is the ultimate goal. That is why, no matter what you write or speak about, you must include a verb.

It can be a little bit tricky to figure out what is a verb and what is not. That is why I want you to always remember it as something that you or someone else is doing. Keep this in mind, particularly when you look to the next description of a certain type of verbs called helper verbs.

Helping verbs are, as the name goes, incredibly helpful! They appear in many of the sentences that we write, so it is essential to identify them correctly as verbs.

I **will play** football later.

In this sentence, the action verb is **play**. It is easy to identify it as a verb as someone is doing something, which in this case is to play football. On top of this, there is another verb in this sentence and that is **will**. This is a helping verb as it is helping you understand the correct meaning of the other verb in the sentence.

If we remove the helping verb and the **later** at the end of the sentence, it now reads:

I **play** football.

This sentence has a different meaning to the previous sentence. As you can see, a helping verb can dramatically change the meaning of the sentence, so using them correctly is a must. What you have to remember is that a helping verb is usually not an obvious action, which is why people often dismiss them as not being a verb. Yet, if we look at other examples of helping verbs, you can see that they are about someone doing something.

I **am** Jessica.

In this example, the only verb in the sentence is a helping verb. This person is saying that they are Jessica. In being Jessica, they are doing something. What is more, in this example, the helping verb isn't actually helping anything. That is because not all helping verbs have to be written next to another verb for them to make sense.

What is important for you to remember is that 99% of the time, your sentence must include a verb. It can be a verb by itself, a verb with a helping verb, or perhaps a helping verb hanging out all alone. There is such a thing called a nominal sentence where you don't include a verb, but unless you are desperate to sound like an 18th-century English philosopher, I doubt you will ever have cause to use it.

The naming block: understanding nouns

Everyone deserves a name and boy do we have a lot of them! In fact, humankind is rather obsessed with naming everything! We have named the furthest star and the smallest of creatures found at the bottom of the ocean.

As names are so very important to us, you will see them coming up in nearly all the sentences that you write. The naming building block of language is called a noun. We will take a look at how nouns are identified now. What is key to keep in mind is that nouns can name anything including people, animals, places, things, and ideas.

My **dog** is small.

In this example, the noun is a **dog** who happens to be small. It is easy to find the noun is the case.

My **dog** is a **Chihuahua**.

However, in this example, there are two nouns. The first one is the **dog** and the second one is the **Chihuahua**. Very often, there is more than one noun in a sentence, remember what I said about our love of naming things.

You might notice that on one of the nouns there is no capitalization, whereas on the other there is. We will go into capitalization in detail further on in this book. For now, what I want you to know is that the reason **dog** is not capitalized is because it is considered a common noun. Common nouns are the names we give to everyday things that we talk about all the time. They might be cats, cars, cauliflowers, croissants, but they are not Christmas. That is because like **Chihuahua**, Christmas is a proper noun. These types of nouns have capital letters because they are not considered common and are talking about a specific thing. Remember it this way, a dog can be lots of different types of dogs but a Chihuahua can only ever be a Chihuahua. That is what is

meant to be specific.

What is more, the two different nouns have two different functions in the sentence. Firstly, the noun **dog** is acting as the subject in the sentence. What this means is that the sentence is about the dog being a Chihuahua. It is not about any dog or any Chihuahua. It is specifically about it being that dog.

Secondly, the noun **Chihuahua** is acting as the object in the sentence. This is because the dog being talked about in the sentence is not just any dog, it is specifically a Chihuahua.

We just learned about verbs, and in this sentence, the verb is the helping verb **is**. If we then analyze the whole sentence, we can see that it is broken down into three main parts.

Subject + Verb + Object

My dog + is + a Chihuahua

This structure is a very common sentence structure that we use in English. However, I must admit that it can become a bit complicated to start to think about writing in terms of structure as well as having to consider using the different building blocks such as verbs and nouns. What is most important is to recognize how the majority of sentences should be written without worrying too much about what the different parts are called.

When writing, you have to write about something, this is what we call the subject. This something has to be doing something, this is what we call the verb. Then, the something doing something is probably doing something that has a name as well, this is what we call the object. So the something being talked about in this sentence is the dog. The dog is doing something and that is being something. What that dog is being is a Chihuahua.

You can apply this to lots of sentences you write to be able to understand if you are using your nouns correctly. Just check that you understand who is being talked about, that you know what they are doing and what the name is of what they are doing. Sounds simple, hey!

The replacing block: understanding pronouns

We just learned about how much we love naming things and what a noun is. So, what if I were to tell you that actually sometimes we don't want to name things and instead replace the actual name of something with a generic term that isn't at all descriptive or creative? Well, the answer is yes. Sometimes, we get a bit lazy. Scratch that, we often get pretty lazy and want to shorten our language so that we can quickly deliver the message of what we want to say.

Jessica and **Juan** walked across the road.

In this sentence, we can clearly see two proper nouns, **Jessica** and **Juan**, just as we have learned in the noun section of this book. Now, if we want to say this sentence more quickly, what would we write?

They walked across the road.

Very easily, we have replaced **Jessica** and **Juan** with **they**. By doing this, we have replaced the nouns with a pronoun.

Pronouns act just like nouns, they are a naming word. However, pronouns are a shortened version of a noun and replace the name. You will see pronouns in many sentences and we particularly use them when speaking. Pronouns include I, me, she, he, it, they, us, them, that, this and these. You can always spot a pronoun because it is not a specific name but if you wanted to you could replace it with a specific name.

She loves running.

Jessica loves running.

As you can see, **she** is easily replaced by **Jessica**. This shows you that it is a pronoun. The same goes if you are trying to work out whether you can replace a noun with a pronoun.

The **dog** is a **Chihuahua**.

It is a **Chihuahua**.

Returning to the example from before, the noun **dog** is easily replaced with the pronoun **it**. Yet, the proper noun **Chihuahua** can't be replaced with a pronoun as it would not make any sense.

It is an **it**.

As we love to speed up everything we do, you will come across pronouns very regularly. Feel free to use them to replace nouns. A word to the wise though, make sure that your reader knows what noun you are replacing it with. If you talk only about **it** and not the **dog**, the reader may never know you are talking about a dog. The best way is to mention the actual noun at the beginning of each new paragraph to make sure everyone understands what is going on.

The describing block: understanding adjectives

Life would be nothing if we couldn't say how much we love it or hate it! We are expressive creatives and we want to shout out to the world what we really think about something. To do this, we need to use the describing building blocks of the English language which are called adjectives.

Adjectives add depth and richness to your language. They are very important in transforming what you are writing from a simple non-descriptive sentence to one that packs a real punch! Adjectives are words used to describe both a noun and a pronoun.

The music is **loud**.

In this example, the adjective is **loud** because it is describing how the music is, which is a noun. We could also change the word **loud** and replace it with many other adjectives, such as melodic, beautiful, irritating, etc.

An adjective is put in a sentence when we want to answer a question about a noun. These questions are:

1. Which one?
2. What kind?
3. How many?
4. Whose?

Using the above example, if we were to ask the question of what kind of music is it? We would get the response, the music is **loud**. In this case, the kind of music being played is loud music. By being able to answer the above questions is what makes a word an adjective.

Something which can cause confusion when it comes to adjectives is that a noun can actually be an adjective in some cases.

Jessica's music is **enchanting**.

With this example, we are talking about music again and it is easy to identify that **enchanting** is an adjective as it answers the question of what kind of music? As well as **enchanting** being an adjective, so also is **Jessica's**. You

might be thinking, hang on a second, the word Jessica is clearly a noun as it is naming a person. You are not wrong. However, with the addition of 's, Jessica becomes Jessica's which changes it to an adjective. This is because when you ask one of the adjective questions, whose? Jessica's is the answer to whose music it is?

Articles are the final piece of the adjective puzzle and something that quite a few people trip up over. Not to worry, follow the advice below and you will always be able to tell your a from your an. The good news is, though they are often misused, there are not very many of them to misuse. In English, there are three articles, the, a and an.

I want to eat **an** apple.

In this sentence, the person wants to eat **an** apple and it doesn't matter which one it is. This is because the person has not specified that they want to eat a specific apple. The word **an** is an adjective because it is describing the apple. It is also an indefinite article because it is not describing a specific apple.

I want to eat **the** apple.

In this example, you can see that the person is saying that they want to eat **the** apple and that apple is a very specific one. They won't eat just any old apple, it has to be the one they are talking about. Once again, the word **the** is an adjective because it is describing which apple. As well, it is also a definite article as it describes exactly which apple the person wants to eat.

As you can see, adjectives can take a few different forms. It can start to get a bit confusing so you must always remember that an adjective can only ever be describing a noun. Keep this in mind and you won't see yourself fall over by using them incorrectly.

The modifying block: understanding adverbs

Remember, when I said we love describing things, and when I said we love naming things, well we also love to go into lots of detail to make sure that we are absolutely understood. This is where adverbs come in. Adverbs are words that describe verbs, adjectives, and even other adverbs. Yes, it is true, when you thought an adjective was enough to describe something, you were wrong! In all seriousness, adverbs are super helpful building blocks that modify the words we are using to describe a situation so that understanding is clear.

My daughter is **extremely** polite.

As you can see, the sentence above demonstrates that the person has a daughter who is **extremely** polite. The word polite is an adjective and already describes the daughter as being polite. Yet, the word **extremely** describes how polite the daughter is, making it an adverb. The impact of the adverb upon the sentence becomes much clearer when you change the adverb for something else.

My daughter is **not** polite.

Now the situation being described has been reversed. Even though the adjective polite is still present in the sentence, the meaning is now changed to show that the daughter is anything but polite. The word **not** is an adverb and an important one to remember. That is because you are able to recognize adverbs easily because they almost all end in ly. However, one of the most commonly used adverbs is **not** and this doesn't follow the above rule.

Trying to identify adverbs is fairly simple as all you need to do is ask yourself the following questions about the verbs in your sentence:

1. How?
2. Where?
3. Why?
4. When?
5. To what extent?

These questions are crucial in sussing out what is an adverb as well as

allowing you to understand how to add an adverb to a sentence.

We should eat dinner.

This example does not contain an adverb. It is currently demonstrating that a group of people should eat dinner. What dinner that is or where they will eat is unknown. However, if we do ask the question where they should eat, we can insert an adverb to make the sentence clearer.

We should eat dinner **there**.

The word **there** is clarifying exactly where they should eat dinner and this is what makes it an adverb. It describes the verb to eat as it is not just eating, it is eating **there**.

Finally, a really common way of using adverbs is to describe the different degrees of something. This misuse of this concept, called comparatives and superlatives, is hands down the most frequent mistake I see English speakers make. Let's dig into it to understand it further and help you to correct this mistake, fast!

That horse can run **quickly**.

In this example, the word **quickly** is an adverb describing the verb to run. If we change it a bit we can make it a comparative adverb.

That horse can run **more quickly** than other horses.

By adding **more** we have suggested that the horse can do something to a greater degree than other horses. It is called a comparative adverb as we are comparing one thing to another, in this case, horses.

That horse can run the **most quickly** out of all horses.

Now we are saying that this horse can run quicker than any other horse. In this instance, the adverb is a superlative and it is stating that the thing we are talking about can do something to the highest degree possible.

Hang on a second, can't we also say:

That horse can run **quicker** than other horses.

Not to mention:

That horse can run the **quickest** out of all horses.

Yes, you are not wrong. The two examples above are both grammatically correct and do convey the same meaning as the other examples we have just gone through. However, they are not adverbs they are adjectives. This is something that people routinely forget.

How do you tell the difference? Well, a super quick way is to see if the word ends in ly or not. If it ends in ly then it is definitely an adverb. However, as we mentioned you can't always rely on all adverbs ending in ly. A better way to see what is what is to try and replace the verb in the sentence with **is**.

The horse is **more quickly**.

The horse is **quicker**.

If the sentence turns out grammatically correct, then you can be certain you are dealing with an adjective. Adverbs don't pair with the verb to be.

What is more, learn this quick trick to stop messing up your comparative and superlative adjectives. If the adjective has less than two beats to it, then you don't add the word more. If it has more than three, then you do.

1

Quick

This has one beat so to turn it into a comparative you add 'er' and to a superlative, you add 'est'.

Quicker and Quickest

But if it has three or more beats you can't do this.

1 - 2 - 3

Beau - ti - ful

In this case, you have to add 'more' to turn it into a comparative and 'most' to turn it into a superlative.

More beautiful and most beautiful

And with that, I think you should be there. You have just successfully navigated your way through all the essential building blocks of the English language. I have a lot more to teach you when it comes to truly master grammar, but even if you were to stop here and do nothing further, you would find that you are now far ahead of the rest of your peers in understanding how to use grammar correctly.

Don't stop here! We are going to move on now to understand even more

grammatical concepts and work towards leveling up the way you write and speak. Remember to review this chapter a few times though. Even if you don't read it all, go through the examples and write your own. Pick up something you have recently written and check whether you put a verb in every sentence and if you correctly used nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. I am sure it will be illuminating as to your actual level of English grammar. Don't worry if you don't like what you find. We are going to be working on a significant improvement in every aspect of the way you use grammar going forward.

RULE 2 – FAMILIARIZE WITH KEY GRAMMAR COMPONENTS

How are you feeling? You have made it through rule number 1 (good job) and now we are striving towards rule number 2. Just a few things to remember before we proceed. This process of becoming a grammar genius is a quick one. The book is short for a reason so that you only have to learn exactly what you need to know to write flawlessly. We have made it accessible but that doesn't mean that you are going to absorb this information by osmosis. You need to work on it a little bit. Go through the examples as much as you can and understand each key component before moving onto the next.

If you think you have mastered your verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, well then come on in. Now we are going to talk about all the little words that go in between the important building block words we learned in the previous chapter. Like with most of the other grammatical rules that we have gone through so far, without these little words, we wouldn't have a language and we wouldn't be able to communicate. Which would be terrible. So let's make sure we know them.

Making connections: understanding conjunctions

Having words that show what we are doing, what we are feeling and what we have named something are all very well and good except when we can't join them up into actual sentences. This is why we need conjunctions.

These little wonder words glue our words and phrases together into sentences that show meaning. When we start off simple, we might only have one conjunction in a sentence. As we progress further, you will find yourself using multiple conjunctions in one sentence to produce complex sentence structures. That is why we need to make sure we understand how to use them properly from the very beginning.

Today, I went swimming **and** running.

The word **and** is the most common conjunction in the English language and

you can probably understand why. We very rarely want to say just one thing. More often than not, we want to say lots of things. To do this we need to have a word that connects one thing we want to say with another thing we want to say that is related to the first thing. How we do that is by using **and**.

There are a ton of different conjunctions that we can use to bring meaning to our sentences by connecting information together, but there are only three main types.

The first type is conjoining conjunctions. The best way to remember these ones is that they glue together words that are related together.

I want to buy a dress **or** a coat.

The conjunction here is **or** because it is connecting two similar parts together, one part about wanting to buy a dress and one about wanting to buy a coat. What is important is that this conjunction specifies that I want to buy only one, not both. If we changed the conjunction to another conjoining conjunction it would change the meaning of the sentence.

I want to buy a dress **and** a coat.

This sentence shows that I want to buy both items. By simply changing the conjunction in this sentence, I have completely changed the meaning. This shows you the power of conjunctions.

The next type of conjunctions are subordinating conjunctions. These words also help to show a connection between two different phrases but they are different in that they connect two phrases, one that can stand alone as a sentence and one that can't.

I want to go to Spain **because** of the weather.

Because is the most common subordinating conjunction and clearly shows that you want to do something because of something else. Also, as you can see, I want to go to Spain is a complete sentence but of the weather is not. The conjunction **because** is essential in establishing meaning in this case.

Since I was a child, I have wanted to go to Spain.

Subordinating conjunctions can also appear at the beginning of sentences. What is more, they are very often about time. In this sentence, the conjunction **since** indicates that you have wanted to go to Spain since childhood. Without it there, the sentence would not have any meaning.

The last type of conjunction is correlative conjunctions. These are different because they always come in pairs. They are also very useful to use and can raise your writing level. They act in the same way as conjoining conjunctions in that they add words and phrases together.

Both Jessica **and** Juan crossed the road.

This example clearly demonstrates that two people crossed the road with the use of the conjunction **both** and the conjunction **and** in a pair. It is a useful device to use correlative conjunctions as it makes certain that no other meaning could be understood from this sentence. When we write anything, having another person understand exactly what we mean is the ultimate goal.

It is clear that we can't do without conjunctions when we speak. They are the literal glue of the English language and allow us to be really clear in what we are saying.

Making relationships: understanding prepositions

When we have a group of words that might be a combination of verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, they are trying to form some sort of meaning together but to do this they need a little help. What these types of words lack is the ability to show how they relate to other words or phrases properly. This is where prepositions come in. A preposition is usually a small word that is inserted into the sentence to demonstrate a relationship between a noun and some other word in the sentence.

Jessica crossed the road **with** Juan.

In this example, the word **with** is the preposition as it demonstrates the relationship between Jessica and Juan in that they crossed the road together.

The horse ran the race **despite** having an injury.

This is another example to show that there is a range of different prepositions and that the placing of them in the sentence is really important. In this sentence, the meaning is demonstrating that the horse did something **despite** something else. The first thing, running the race, has a direct relationship to the second thing, having an injury, because of the preposition **despite**.

You could write this example as two different sentences but the relationship between the two phrases would not be made clear.

The horse ran the race. The horse has an injury.

As you can see, the impact and meaning have been lost. This shows the importance of prepositions in establishing an understanding of what is really trying to be said.

Another important thing to understand about prepositions is that they don't always appear where you expect them to be, yet this does not affect the sentence's meaning.

The dog is **behind** the chair.

Behind the chair is the dog.

These two sentences mean exactly the same thing and are both grammatically correct. However, I would suggest that to make certain your intended meaning is conveyed correctly, that you try to insert prepositions in the middle of a sentence. Think about what thing you want to relate to another thing and write two simple sentences about them. Now take a preposition and try to insert it in the middle to make a complex sentence.

I studied math. I went to high school.

I studied math **throughout** high school.

These two sentences have been combined to show that you not only studied maths but that you studied it **throughout** your time at high school.

There is quite a large list of prepositions and sometimes people forget which is one and which isn't one. The number one rule to remember, if you can't connect two simple sentences together with the word then it won't be a

preposition. All prepositions show a relationship between the words and phrases.

Making it shorter: understanding abbreviations

So far in this chapter, we have gone through a whole bunch of little words that literally help us to make sense of our language and communicate clearly. We really couldn't do without them. However, there does exist a whole category of tiny words that are not the result of wanting to be clearer in our language, rather they have come from the desire to be faster. These are abbreviations which are shortened versions of words that we commonly use.

As I have previously said, the way we use the English language can sometimes be a bit contradictory. Sometimes, we are obsessed with making certain that the meaning of what we are trying to say is translated correctly. This leads us to use grammatical rules to ensure clarity. Then, on the other hand, we also like to speak quickly but still convey meaning. The truth is, there is a time and place for both styles of English language use. For example, being grammatically correct and using well thought out sentence structures is essential for the formal use of the English language. Whereas, using devices such as abbreviations where we shorten words despite compromising understanding, is much more suited to informal language use. So, before I demonstrate abbreviations, just remember that if you are trying to up your formal language game, then you should use them lightly, particularly in written work.

That being said, abbreviations can be really useful in quickly conveying a message. Many of them have also become so common that we are much more accustomed to hearing the abbreviation than we are the full version of the word or phrase.

Dr. Ramirez is ready to see you.

The word doctor, in this case, is very commonly abbreviated to **Dr.** with a period placed after the abbreviation. It would be odd for us to see it written out as Doctor Ramirez as this abbreviation is now the accepted norm.

FYI there is a letter for you at reception.

This abbreviation is an acronym, meaning it has taken the first letter of each word in the phrase to form it. **FYI** means for your information. It is frequently seen in emails between staff members and on social media messaging sites. However, it is also a clear example of informal language and therefore must only be used informally. Writing it in a memo to your boss is certainly not the best way to impress.

N.B. classes will start at 10 am next week.

The final group of acronyms that do make their way into formal language are those which have come from Latin, then abbreviated and subsequently used by a majority of those in academia, which in turn have made them common in all formal writing. **N.B.** means *nota bene* which translates as take note. **E.g.** means *exempli gratia* which translates as for example. Finally, **etc.** means *et cetera* which translates as so on. All of these examples, you will have come across and will continue to see. My advice is to use them sparingly to avoid any confusion. It is simple enough to say for example so why use e.g.?

As I have made obvious, abbreviations can be a bit of a double-edged sword. Yes, they may save you time and lots of people may be familiar with them. However, on the whole, writing out the words in full or using a comparable phrase is preferable. Being clear and concise so someone else can understand should always be favored over speed.

Making it obvious: understanding interjections

Oh! Are you paying attention? Wow! I thought you had fallen asleep there for a minute. Hang on! Let's turn this up a notch.

Are you wondering what is going on? Well, what is going on is that I had a sudden rush of strong emotions and wanted to convey this to you through the written word. To do this, I used a little word that makes a big impact called an interjection.

Yikes! I am going to be late.

In this example, **yikes** is an example of an interjection as it is a word that is

usually only spoken but has been written down to maximize the impact upon the reader. Saying I am going to be late only shows to the reader that you are late. Whereas with the addition of **yikes**, you have made it clear that you are worried that you are going to be late and feel strongly about it.

It is obvious that, as with abbreviations, interjections live mainly in the world of informal language. That being said, they can be useful when writing creatively as they certainly pack a punch and convey a meaning that you wouldn't get if you didn't use one.

Wow! I didn't expect to get an A on my English paper.

Strong, emotive words are almost all interjections, including **wow, ouch, aww, eww, help!** It also follows, because of the strength of the words, that they also include an exclamation mark after them. They are certainly useful for getting over the right impact but as with abbreviations, it is certainly wise to use them sparingly in your written work. Save the strong emotions for your friends and family. It is always best to impress your literature professor with the elegance of your language rather than the force of it.

Bravo! You have made it to the end of rule 2. Not only have you conquered verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, but you also know how to put them together with useful little connecting words that are essential for structuring a grammatically correct sentence. Don't forget to check out the examples a few more times to check that you really do know your stuff.

RULE 3 – THE FOUR H’S: HOMONYMS, HOMPHONES, HOMOGRAPHIS AND HETERONYMS

It is great to see you here at rule 3! We have made it this far together already. Now is the time to dig deep and push through the rest of the chapters. Believe me, this is where it gets exciting.

Before we start, I think I should let you in on a little secret. Well, less of a secret and more of a confession. So here goes. English isn’t actually a very logical language and it does its best at all times to confuse and terrify speakers of it! The truth is, as it has developed over time, and incorporated rules from German, French, and other languages, it has managed to confuse itself. English has often been called the language of exception because it can feel as if it has more exceptions to the rules than instances of actually following that rule. To be fair, that isn’t actually true. Lots of the English language is logical. It is just here and there, there exist some rather infuriating diversions away from the central rules.

So, when we go through the rest of this book together, and you feel a burning desire to question me on why what I am explaining is not always logical, well it isn’t. However, it is the way that it is. What I mean, is despite the confusing nature of English grammar, it has been standardized and therefore we are able to learn how to use it correctly. Don’t sweat it too much, if you can enjoy the uneven path of English grammar, you will then certainly become a master of it.

This brings me swiftly on to the 4 H’s which are homonyms, homophones, homographs, and heteronyms. The 4 H’s are tricky little beasts but also very enjoyable to learn. So let’s dive in.

Homonyms - the same sound and the same spelling

The group of words called homonyms is defined as words that sound the same and are spelled the same but have different meanings. You might think about why we couldn't just come up with new spellings or different words entirely to describe them. Well, we didn't and that is why you need to learn how to correctly interpret the meaning of the sentence.

I went to the country **fair** to meet a **fair** maiden with **fair** skin where we enjoyed the rides for a very **fair** price.

When you read the word **fair** in this sentence you should pronounce it exactly the same way each time. As you can see, the spelling is also identical each time. This means that **fair** is a homonym. Each example of the word **fair** used in the sentence has a different meaning. A country **fair** is a type of festival. A **fair** maiden is a beautiful woman. **Fair** skin means light skin and a **fair** price means reasonably priced.

Let's try another example. These are fun!

Well, now that you are **well** I can fetch water from the **well**.

Once again, we have three different versions of a word, with the same spelling and same sound that all mean different things. **Well** at the beginning of the sentence is an exclamation showing that something is about to happen. Now that you are **well** means now that you are feeling better. Fetch water from the **well** is a location where water can be found.

When you see homonyms in a sentence you need to pay attention to the other words around it to be certain that you understand it. If you get confused with its meaning, work out whether it is a noun or an adjective, or perhaps something else. This will give you clues to what it really means.

When it comes to writing yourself, think about how you use homonyms in a sentence. Having a clear meaning is essential when writing. So, if too many

homonyms are going to confuse your reader, try and swap one of them out for a different word that means the same thing.

Homophones - the same sound with a different spelling

There is only really one example that we need to talk about when we go through what a homophone is (don't worry, we will actually go through three!) As soon as I mention it, you will know what I am referring to. A homophone is a group of words that all sound the same but have a different spelling. They also represent the most repeated mistake that a native speaker of English will make when writing. Let's see that first example now so we can all get on the same page.

You're behaving exactly like **your** brother, naughty and rude!

The misuse of **your** and **you're** is widespread among all native speakers of English. Are you guilty of it? Don't worry if you are, we will fix it now. So to be very clear, **you're** is a contracted version of the two words 'you are'. **Your** is a possessive word that means something belongs to you, in this case, it is your brother.

What most people do who confuse the meaning of these two homophones, is use only **your** in all circumstances.

Your very welcome!

I am sure you have seen this common mistake, perhaps someone has ridiculed you for making it yourself. To make sure that you don't make it again when writing, slow down a bit and think about what it is you are trying to say. You are very welcome is the correct and full version of this sentence. If you want to shorten it, you can to **you're**. My advice though, if you don't want to mess up while writing, use the full version every time.

Their new house is over **there** and **they're** really pleased to be in this neighborhood.

Very similarly to the previous example, many people trip up over this homophone. Let's clear it up together. **Their** is a possessive word and means that something is theirs. It will always have a noun after it, in this case, it is their new house. **There** is a location word meaning that over there. **They're** is a contracted word meaning they are. Just like before, if you don't know which version to use, slow down and think of the meaning. If you can avoid using they're you will also find that you don't fall in the trap that it has laid for you.

Homographs - the same spelling and the same sound

Yes, you may be thinking what is the difference between a homograph which has the same spelling and the same sound and a homonym that has the same sound and the same spelling? Your question is very valid. The truth is, there is not much of a difference between them other than what is considered important to a homonym is that they sound the same. But with a homograph what is considered important is that it has the same spelling. If after this chapter, you are still not sure about the difference between them, don't worry about it. Instead, focus on practicing the examples because they are what will show you how to use each word correctly.

Your **lie** has upset me so much, I have to go **lie** down.

In this example, the spelling is the same and the words sound the same but both have very different meanings. The first **lie** means to be deceived by someone and it is a noun. The second **lie** means to lay down on the bed, and this is a verb. When you see these words, you can figure out which one is which by recognizing which one is the noun and which one is the verb.

Heteronyms - the same spelling with a different sound

The final one of our 4 H's is the mighty heteronym. This group of words all have the same spelling but have a different sound. As a native English speaker, you have a bit of an advantage that you intuitively know how to pronounce these words. You can imagine that if you are approaching English as a second or third language, it can be pretty tricky to explain that they are spelled the same but are not spoken in the same way. They are absolutely one of the many exceptions that we have in the English language, in this case, they are an exception based on what is considered a standardized vowel sound. You should be able to approach any language and given that you understand the way the vowels are pronounced in combination with other letters, work out how to pronounce it. English just doesn't work this way. Unless someone shows you the different pronunciations, you could continue to say it incorrectly until someone does.

Luckily, when it comes to writing, you don't need to worry about how a word is pronounced, you only need to worry about using it correctly.

I put down my **bow** and took a **bow**.

In this example, to identify what is what with these two homographs, you need to see which word is the noun and which word is the verb. The first **bow** is a noun, which we can see because it has the possessive word *my* before it. This **bow** means a violin bow that is used to play the instrument. It could also be a bow and arrow but because the rest of the sentence is about **bowing** to an audience, you can assume it is talking about the instrument and not a weapon! The second **bow** is about bending your back to accept congratulations from an audience.

When I **graduate** I will become a **graduate**.

This example is very useful as it demonstrates how a verb and a noun of the

same word route are pronounced differently. In this sentence, the first **graduate** is a verb meaning when you matriculate from college. The second **graduate** is a noun meaning you will be a person with a degree. These two words are heteronyms of each other because they are spelled the same but sound different. This is very common with lots of verb/noun combinations of the same word route. For example, insult, abuse, contest, permit, etc.

A really helpful way to remember how to pronounce these words is to learn the correct intonation for both the verb and the noun. When it is the verb version of the word the intonation is placed on the second beat of the word. In **graduate**, this means that 'duate is emphasized. Whereas, with the noun version, the first beat is emphasized, which in this case is gra'. Try this out with the different words listed above and you will see that this formula works every time!

So there we go, you have just had your first introduction into the wonderful world of the exceptions of the English language. If you are anything like me, you will enjoy these little idiosyncrasies. If you are not, don't worry, just set about learning them thoroughly so you're not laughed out of the board meeting for putting 'your welcome' in your Powerpoint presentation!

RULE 4 – BECOME A PUNCTUATION PRO

I want to write a really clear chapter for you that explains exactly why punctuation is key because without punctuation we would be faced with incredibly long sentences that never seem to end or have any direction to them instead they simply continue onwards until some cataclysmic event stops them or perhaps the cat comes to sit on the laptop forcing the writer to pay attention to the cat wanting to have dinner rather than focusing on how to form a punchy punctuation chapter that inspires people to use punctuation correctly which whilst the writer pauses to think about the cat at that moment fortunately puts its tail on the period button.

Wow! That was uncomfortable, wasn't it? That is because life without punctuation is uncomfortable as it simply loses meaning and we are unable to communicate effectively.

Think of punctuation as the conductor in an orchestra. As part of an orchestra, you have the strings section, the brass section, the percussion section, and the wind section. These represent our verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. If all of these sections were to play at once, or in an unorganized way, the sound they would make would be terrible. Enter center stage, the conductor. The function of this person is to manage all of the different sections and organize them so they play at different times and for different reasons. The result is a beautiful, melodic piece of music.

The same goes for punctuation. It serves as a way to organize our written language so that the reader knows where one sentence starts and where another one begins. As well as this, different forms of punctuation can be used to emphasize certain parts of the sentence, such as an exclamation mark which indicates surprise or shock to the reader.

So rather than having long, rambling sentences about your cat, learn how to become a punctuation pro and you will certainly impress with your writing skills.

Know when to end it: understanding periods, question marks and exclamation marks

All great things must come to an end, even your new and improved written work. However, finishing sentences off correctly is something that English speakers are not particularly good at. If you don't pay attention to grammar, you will easily find yourself writing as if you are speaking. The result of this is you often sound like you are babbling. You must be concise with your written language and this is why punctuation is your savior.

That being said, before we start on this punctuation journey, I want to make a suggestion that you learn how to use punctuation sparingly. Don't stuff your sentences full with punctuation just because you know how to use it. Short, well-written sentences always beat long, convoluted structures. Keep it simple and you can't go wrong.

I went to the shop.

This sentence is as simple as it gets. We have a pronoun, a verb, and a noun followed by a period. As is with all sentences, the period is placed at the very end to suggest to the reader that we have finished explaining one piece of information.

I went to the shop. I wanted to buy some bread.

I went to the shop as I wanted to buy some bread.

These two examples have exactly the same meaning, yet one is said in two sentences and the other in one. When using a period, you can join two related sentences together with a conjunction followed by placing a period at the end of both now newly joined sentences. We will go further into detail later on about phrases and clauses, but what is important to understand at this stage is that you can join up similar information into one sentence. If it isn't similar or related, then put it in two.

How much does the bread cost?

Another way to end a sentence is with a question mark. As the name suggests, you use a question mark when you are asking a question. Remember, to ask a question, you also have to use one of the question words, which are how, why, what, when, where, and who.

We have an incredible offer on bread today!

This is an example of using an exclamation mark. It is used this way to draw the reader's attention towards an exciting offer on bread. If you were to say this sentence, you would almost certainly put a lot of energy into it. You would probably raise your voice a bit and open your mouth wide. This is because you want to make an impact with the sentence as most likely you want people to be excited and come and buy your bread. When it comes to writing, you can't guarantee that a reader will understand the emotion you intend behind a sentence, so putting an exclamation mark at the end can indicate that this sentence has a strong meaning and conveys your intended emotion.

Get away from my house, now!

As you can see in this example, an exclamation mark can show more than one emotion. It is not limited to showing a happy emotion. In this case, the sentence is demonstrating anger and fear. By placing the exclamation mark at the end, it allows the reader to feel the urgency of what is being said.

You know I like to throw in a caveat or two. Well, there is a caveat with exclamation marks that is you don't want to overuse them. Though they are excellent at conveying emotion, outside of the world of creative writing and sales, they can make your writing seem immature. Used sparingly, they are much more impactful than packing every other sentence with them.

Know when to take a break: understanding commas

Where a period is a definite end to a sentence, a comma is more like taking a break. You never know you might get back together after it. In all seriousness, commas are very useful for breaking up your written language and emphasizing meaning. You can look at a comma as a small pause between related information in a sentence. Some people equate it to taking a breath while speaking. I prefer to see it as a device for making the meaning of the sentence clearer.

However, the misuse of commas is an epidemic among English speakers. The reason is, as I said above, people believe that commas act in the same way as pausing while speaking. The problem with this is that people speak in largely different ways. Some people speak really quickly, going through tons of information in a very short time. Then you find people who speak very slowly, gently meandering through what they are trying to say. It often follows, that if you are a faster talker then you will tend to use very few commas and instead pack your sentences with conjunctions. On the other side of the spectrum, slow speakers stuff their sentences with commas rather than ending them and starting a new sentence. Either way, both strategies result in comma abuse.

You saw at the start of this chapter an example of not using a comma correctly. The result was a very long and uncomfortable to read sentence that has no place in being in a grammar book. That being said, if we had broken that sentence up with commas only, it still would have been far too long. The number one rule of commas is to join up similar pieces of information. If it is not related, start a new sentence. Don't worry if you are unsure at this point in time about how to tell what is and isn't related. We are going to run through all the different ways of using a comma to make it really clear.

After school, I am going to meet my friend Jessica.

This is an example of using a comma after an introductory phrase. **After**

school is the introductory phrase and can't be a sentence by itself because it doesn't have a verb. By placing a comma after the phrase, it allows the reader to be certain that the person is going to meet their friend Jessica after school rather than just in general.

My mother, I was happy to see, was feeling much better.

Commas can also be used to break up sentences that contain information that is non-essential but placed within the sentence to show emotion. This method uses commas as interpreters in the sentence by surrounding the non-essential information. In this example, **I was happy to see** is considered non-essential information but something that adds value to the sentence. Therefore it has a comma placed before it and after it.

That was really scary, wasn't it?

Another way of using a comma is to place it just before asking a question. In this example, the comma is placed before asking, **wasn't it?** The question at the end is called a question tag. It is a fairly informal way of asking a question so it is best restricted to informal written work. To change it to be formal, write it as **do you agree that it was really scary?**

Adam, there is a person waiting for you at reception.

Whenever you address a person directly in a sentence, you need to include a comma directly after their name. More often than not, you will place the name at the beginning of the sentence as you are usually giving them some sort of direction.

My father, Juan, is an incredible singer.

This is an example of a nonessential appositive where you use commas to

separate similar information. What this means in lay terms is that **my father** and **Juan** represent the same information told differently as it is talking about the same person but using a different name to describe them. It is a nonessential appositive because you could remove either **my father** or **Juan** from the sentence and it would still make sense.

William Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a fine example of classical theatre.

This sentence contains an essential appositive which is not separated by commas. That is because the title of the play is essential information. If you removed it from the sentence, you would not be able to understand which of William Shakespeare's plays is being talked about. So the trick to knowing whether you use commas is to see what happens when you take out one of the nouns which refer to the same thing. Does the sentence still make sense? Great, use commas to separate that word out from the rest of the sentence.

March 3, 2009, is an important day in the history of the company as we won our first major client.

When it comes to putting commas around dates, we are a bunch of very confused writers! Do we put the comma before the day, the month, the year? What if we change the format of the date, does that affect it? I think we need to clear this up once and for all.

When you write the date in month-day-year format, like the example above, you need to use commas after the day and the year. If you are writing it in day-month-year format then commas are not necessary. It can be a bit tricky to remember this rule, so my suggestion is that you say the date out loud. When you say March 3, 2009, out loud you automatically pause between the day and the year. If you say 3 March 2009 out loud you will notice that you don't pause. Therein lies the trick.

That woman is an aggressive, self-righteous, offensive hypocrite.

Now we come on to the good stuff. We love to list all of the ways that people both delight and annoy us in equal measures. Listing is something that most people are aware of as needing commas to separate out the different items. However, when it comes to adjectives, you must be careful to not put a comma in where it shouldn't be. In the above example, all of the adjectives being used could be said in any order and still make sense. Therefore, you use commas to split them up.

The charming little girl came by the house again.

Whereas, in this example, you can't interchange the words charming and little. Therefore, this means that you don't need to use any commas but the word order must remain the same.

Jessica could have been an actress, but she didn't want to leave home.

Another way to use a comma is before the word **but**. Be careful with this one though, it feels natural to pause before saying the word but. However, you only add a comma before it when the phrase after it is an independent clause, meaning it could be a sentence all by itself.

I love oranges but hate lemons.

This is an example of when the phrase after the **but** couldn't be a sentence by itself. Therefore, you don't need to use a comma.

One more common mistake with commas is using the word **and**. In American English, people frequently place a comma before the word **and** mistakenly. The only instance that you use a comma with **and** is in a list. Take a look at this example for the correct use.

I went to the shop and bought bread, cheese, and chocolate.

If you notice in this example there are three items listed. That is why we have put a comma before the **and**. If there are only two items in a list, you don't need to use a comma. In fact, using a comma before an **and** in a list is entirely optional. So don't worry if you don't use one. The important thing is to not put in a comma when it shouldn't be there.

“It is fantastic to see you here!” said Juan.

“I like to eat jam on my toast,” said Jessica.

These two examples show you when you should use a comma in quotation marks. The first example ends in an exclamation mark and is an instance in which you don't use a comma inside the quotation mark. The exclamation is important in the reader's understanding of the emphasis of this sentence which is why it is there and not replaced with a comma. The second example, however, does use a comma because this sentence would normally end with a period. You simply replace it the period with a comma and end the entire sentence with the period instead.

After buying the candy (and promptly eating a few on the way over here), I gave them to my delighted grandmother.

In our final example of using commas correctly (yes, there are a lot), we can see how to use a comma correctly with parentheses. Whatever the situation, you don't use a comma before opening parenthesis, but you do use one after closing parenthesis before carrying on with the rest of the sentence.

So, there you have it! If you take a moment to learn how to use commas in different situations I can guarantee that you will be miles ahead of your colleagues when it comes to writing skills. They are so often misused that by doing it right you will shine bright!

Know when to separate: understanding colons, semicolons, hyphens, and dashes

We are going to move on to a group of punctuation now that in the 21st century have run away with themselves a little bit. This group of punctuation, which includes colons, semicolons, hyphens, and dashes, mainly live in the realm of informal language. That being said, they did start off their lives as formal punctuation and if we try really hard collectively, we may be able to restore them to their former glory.

Colons, semicolons, hyphens, and dashes are predominantly about emphasis. Their purpose is to amplify the meaning of what is about to be said. Nowadays, we write in very different ways depending on the context. If we are at work or college using emails and writing papers, we write very formally. If we are speaking with our friends and family over social media or through SMS, we tend to write informally. In the latter, we love to imbue what we are writing with the emotions we are feeling. Emotive language and informal grammatical structures have become very common because of the frequency with which we are using social media and SMS. This, in turn, has transferred to our formal written language, and in particular, we now regularly use colons and dashes, whereas in different eras they didn't see the light of day.

There are three different types of birds living by the lake: heron, starling, and blackbird.

Starting with colons, the main purpose of a colon is to alert the reader to important information in the sentence. In this case, the names of the birds are the essential information in the sentence. The colon is placed right before the list of birds and importantly it does not have a verb before it.

The three different types of birds living by the lake are heron, starling, and blackbird.

This example means exactly the same as above but it is written without a colon. That is because the word **are** has been placed before the list of bids and that is a verb. When you use a colon instead of a verb, in the mind of the reader they assume that you are saying the verb which is why it isn't needed.

You have two choices here: blonde and curly, or brunette and straight.

What comes after a colon doesn't have to be a list. It simply has to be related information. In this example, two choices are presented to the reader with the inference being that they must choose one option.

A bat is not a bird: it is a small mammal.

As you can see with this example, a colon has been placed between two pieces of related information. Each of these bits of information could be a separate sentence by themselves. By using a colon, the emphasis is placed on the bat being a mammal rather than a bird, for which it is commonly mistaken. The colon draws additional attention to this fact as if it is a big arrow pointing towards the second phrase that says don't forget this!

Keep this image of a big arrow with flashy lights in your head when you are using a colon. If the information that comes after a colon is not worthy of such attention, simply put a period and start a new sentence. 99% of the time, you should use a period over a colon. The 1% normally comes in titles as a colon can be a good way to create a catchy title that also includes an understandable explanation about what the reader is about to read.

I ordered an extra-large portion of fries; life is too short for counting calories.

Now we move on to the younger brother of the colon: the semicolon. Never has a punctuation mark been as controversial as the semicolon. The reason is that it has a reputation for being unnecessary and only used by those in high

levels of academia. Neither is strictly true. There are plenty of legitimate reasons to use a semicolon over other punctuation. Nonetheless, if you use it incorrectly (or maybe even when you use it correctly), you may face a bit of stick for it. Unfairly so, but you have been given fair warning.

In the example above (and also a life mantra), you can see that a semicolon has been used to separate two complete sentences that are related to each other. A simple way to use a semicolon is to take two sentences and see if you can join them with a conjunction. If you can, whip that conjunction out of there and replace it with a semicolon.

I need to order the following items: extra-large leggings; a dress with a zipper down the side; two pairs of size 8 red shoes; and a cheeseburger because I am still hungry!

Another useful way to use semicolons is when you are writing a list of items that have more than one word. The semicolon helps to pause the reader and identify which parts of the sentence belong to each list item. For example, a dress with a zip down the side is a long description. Having a semicolon after it rather than a comma serves to slow the reader down and ensure they understand exactly what the list item was before moving on.

What is her problem with me; moreover, why does she continue to insult me?

You can also use a semicolon to connect two sentences in which the second sentence starts with a conjunctive adverb such as more moreover, however, finally, likewise, etc. This is actually a pretty nifty way to punctuate such sentences as using such adverbs as above usually indicates that you are writing something emotional. Therefore, using a semicolon to emphasize the second part of the sentence is a great way to really assert the meaning.

This is a child-friendly restaurant.

Welcome to the world of hyphens, designed to trip you up! Don't worry it isn't that much to get your head around, it is just that we so commonly use the hyphen incorrectly that you will probably think the incorrect use is actually the right way to do it. The best thing to do is to clear your mind of everything you know about hyphens and let's start again with them from the beginning.

In the example above, a hyphen has been placed between the two words child and friendly to emphasize that they are connected in meaning. This is important as you must not understand the sentence as it being anything other than child-friendly. If these two words are separated you run the risk of the sentence being misinterpreted.

Juan has become a highly respected professor.

In contrast to the other example, this one does not use a hyphen. This is because even though highly and respected must be said in that order to preserve the correct meaning and that they are connected together, you do not use a hyphen when the first word is an adverb. How do you remember what is and isn't an adverb? If you recall, most adverbs end in 'ly. If you place a hyphen between these two words you will fall into the trap that many of us have before. Keep in mind, noun + adverb = hyphen, adverb + noun = no-hyphen. The reason behind this is that you could remove highly from the sentence without much impact on the meaning as adverbs are about a degree of something. So Juan would still be respected regardless. However, if you removed child from the other example, the restaurant would just be friendly, which is a bit weird; not to mention, it totally changes the meaning.

All students must read pages 10-19 of the coursebook.

When is a hyphen not a hyphen? Well, when it is a dash. Yes, they may look the same but they have very subtle differences in size and more importantly, they function differently. Have you ever experienced your word processor acting a little bit strange when you enter a hyphen between two words and all

of a sudden the size of the hyphen gets bigger? Well, that is because your computer knows a thing or two about grammar and has actually inserted either an em dash or an en dash rather than a hyphen.

The example of the student's reading homework contains an en dash. It is a fairly simple device that places a dash instead of saying to or through. You can use this for numbers or time. It is very common to see it used as a shorthand. Just make sure you are using it for a range of numbers or a span of time. It is not for connecting random numbers together.

The Grammy Award-winning singer Jessica will be with us here tonight!

Another use of the en dash is to join together a two-word compound noun with an adjective to create a compound adjective. Jessica is not just a singer, she is a Grammy Award-winning singer. The en dash provides added emphasis to this in the sentence.

I always loved Dolly Parton - or rather, I was obsessed with her.

The dash in this sentence is different. It is called an em dash and can be used for emphasis as well. Notice that it has spaces either side of it, this is one way to tell what it is. In this sentence, the em dash is replacing parentheses. The reason is to exaggerate the information in the second part of the sentence, rather than side-lining it by placing it in parentheses. Once again though, this grammatical tactic can make your written work look a little bit immature and informal. One or two em dashes can be impressive. Yet, a whole bunch of them looks like you are screaming all over the page!

He has always been allergic to two things: tomatoes and dairy.

He has always been allergic to two things - tomatoes and dairy.

In our final example of dashes, this is another em dash. It works in exactly

the same way as a colon with the added oomph that an em dash provides. As with all our previous examples of separating out words using colons, semicolons, hyphens, and dashes, it is to be used lightly. Sprinkle a few into your work but don't overdo it. That way you can show that you really are a punctuation pro.

Know when to divide and conquer: understanding apostrophes

The apostrophe is a multitalented punctuation mark. It can own everything and cut you out of the deal in an instant. Confused, don't worry. I will explain what I mean right now.

I am very excited for my sister's wedding.

First off let's talk about owning it all. To do that you need an apostrophe as it is the most common method to show possession, meaning that you or someone else owns something. In the example above, the person is excited about going to their sister's wedding. We know it is the wedding of their sister because there is an 's after the word sister.

You will be pleased to know that in English, there is only one way to show that something is possessive and that is to add an 's. So as long as you add this, you won't go too wrong.

I am very excited about my sister Jessica's wedding.

That being said, you may falter off track when trying to position the possessive when a few more words are added to the mix. In the above example, the possessive apostrophe has switched to the word Jessica and is no longer on the word sister. That is because it wouldn't make sense to stay on the word sister as it would suggest that the sister owns Jessica rather than Jessica owning her wedding. If you get confused, say it out loud and you will probably catch the mistake. Concentrate on who owns who.

This isn't anything to do with you.

Now comes the taking everything away from you part - or rather, taking everything away from the words. The above example showcases apostrophes being used in contractions. As you have heard me say before, we love to speed up our language. This has resulted in us shortening two words into one and using a contraction apostrophe to fill in the gaps. The word isn't is a contraction of is not.

There are lots of examples of contractions that we use regularly, such as don't, you're, hasn't, I'd, etc. Despite using them frequently, we all have a tendency to mess them up a bit and put the apostrophe in the wrong place. More often than not the apostrophe is placed before the last letter replacing vowel sounds in the second word. Commonly, people place it between the two contracted words, for example, do'nt and would'nt. Remember, the apostrophe is meant to replace missing letters so in the case of don't it is replacing the o in not.

There we are, it's finally time to leave.

The dog thinks its bed is the sofa.

As we wrap up apostrophes, it's about time we solved the ultimate apostrophe mystery: what is the difference between **it's** and **its**. You know that English is the language of exception and this is no exception, well, except it is an exception! When coming to deciding how to deal with the case of **it's** and **its**, it was a bit tricky for grammar theorists. The words it is had long been shortened to **it's** and so was already in common usage. However, **it** is a pronoun that can have a possessive and if it followed the possessive rule should add 's to the end of it. However, **it's** was already taken as a contraction so it was finally settled that **its** was to be used as the possessive. To work out which to use, ask yourself does the sentence say it is something or is it talking about owning something. Once you answer this, you will know the correct form to use.

Know when to wrap it up: understanding quotation marks and parentheses

As we come to the end of our journey through punctuation we are going to finish off with two superstars! First, let's discuss how we use quotation marks correctly. Second, we will wrap up the whole chapter with a how-to-guide on parentheses.

“The weather is going to be perfect in Marbella,” Jessica said.

Quotation marks don't take much explaining. They are used whenever you insert someone else's words into your writing. The absolute rule of quotation marks is that when you open a set, you also have to close them. So, if you want to quote someone, you start with one set of quotation marks that point towards the right followed by the other person's words ending with a punctuation mark such as a comma and a second set of quotation marks that point towards the left.

Juan contradicted Jessica, “They told me at the airport there would be a big storm in Marbella.”

Another thing to keep in mind when using quotation marks is the position they come in the sentence. It is easier with the first example as it comes at the beginning. However, if it comes in the middle or end of a sentence you must remember to capitalize the first word in the quote.

“I think you will find I am right,” said Jessica, “after all, I am the meteorologist.”

That being said, if you decide to split your quote into two parts, you only capitalize the first letter of the first word in the first section of the quote, ending that section with a comma. When you add the second section of the quote, you don't need to capitalize it. When you are using this type of

construction, think of it as one long quote that if written as a whole wouldn't have a random capital letter in the middle. That way you won't forget about the capitalization rule.

At this time of year, you can hear recitations of Charles Dickens's 'A Christmas Carol' all across the city.

We can also use quotation marks to highlight the name of a short story, chapter or article in text. To do this, you can use only one quotation mark rather than two to indicate that it is not a direct quote. Be careful with this though as it is commonly misused. Using double quotation marks around the word or phrase is bad practice. It is called air quotes and is only used in media for emphasis. On the whole, it is better to italicize names and translations to highlight them. Any name of a book, film or famous person should never be put in quotes. However, if you stick to the italic format in your word processor, you can't go wrong.

"'A Christmas Carol' is my favorite of all Dickens's short stories," said the professor.

Sometimes, we like to try and play with the mind of our computer and see if it can keep up with the strength of our punctuation knowledge! One such example is when we need to put quotation marks within a quotation mark. It can send your computer a little bit haywire if you are not careful. When quoting the name of a short story, poem or article when also quoting what someone else has written, use only one quotation mark. As you can see in the above example, the name of the short story comes at the beginning of the sentence, which means you have three quotation marks in a row. It is strictly correct, however, if you can restructure the sentence to avoid this, it is much more pleasing to the eye and won't send your computer into a download spiral of grammar confusion!

The end is now in sight, you have almost earned your badge for being a punctuation pro. Let's wrap it up with parentheses. A very useful punctuation

mark, mainly because of our love of embellishing our sentences with additional information, the parenthesis is used to denote additional information within a sentence.

While climbing the stairs (paying more attention to his phone than his feet), Juan tripped and fell.

The main test for using parentheses is does the sentence make sense without the additional information? If it does, then you have a good case to use parentheses. Make sure that you always use them in pairs to surround the additional information and add a punctuation mark such as a comma, colon, or period, directly after the last parenthesis. In this example, the additional information is not needed for the meaning to remain the same, that Juan tripped on the stairs. Yet, its addition adds useful insight into why he fell.

My assignment is to write about the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with my classmate (Jessica).

This example is a test. Can you see which word is correctly put in parentheses and which one is not? Let me help you out. NATO has been placed correctly in parentheses because it is an acronym of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It is more commonly known by its acronym so its addition to the sentence adds clarity for the reader. You will notice that you don't include punctuation after an acronym in parentheses. I must warn you though that our use of acronyms has gotten wildly out of control. We use acronyms for everything, particularly in the corporate business world. Don't just stick in an acronym for every long name or concept, only use the ones that are widely known by the general public. I do know that when you are fighting for word space in your papers at college, you want to use an acronym to save on space and time. However, have mercy on your professor who just doesn't want to read that the FTA has commissioned the HRH to work on behalf of the NWRA in partnership with the SPRCAN. Stuffing sentences with acronyms is painful and to be avoided.

The mistake in the example is that Jessica, the name of the person's classmate, should not be in parentheses. Even though it is additional information and the sentence makes sense with or without its inclusion, you simply add a comma and then place the name.

Lastly, let's talk about square brackets. These super helpful guys are a form of parentheses that you can use to add clarity to quotes. You can insert words into quotes to make them easier to read.

It was written in the monthly report that, "The desired effect [of the presentation] was achieved, everyone clapped and cheered."

As you can see in the example, square brackets have been used to ensure that the reader knows that what is being talked about is the presentation. It is a small addition to the quote to ensure the meaning is translated correctly. Keep in mind that when using square brackets, the additional information should be very brief and concise. One of the main purposes of square brackets is for quoting the work of other people. So, if you add information into their quote that manipulates the meaning to something it is not meant to be, you are headed for trouble.

And there you have it, folks! We have come to the end of our sojourn through essential English language punctuation. I am certain by now that you will have a much more thorough understanding of when and when not to use the different punctuation marks. You know what I am going to say, practice makes perfect, so go through the examples as much as you can. That way, you can proudly show off your pro skills, with newfound confidence born from finally knowing what a semicolon actually is.

RULE 5 – PERFECT PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE TENSE

One thing you can guarantee in life is that the seconds turn into minutes, minutes to hours, hours to days, and days to years. Time keeps marching on, whether or not we like it. What that means for our use of English grammar is that we have to be able to capture the fact that some things are happening now, some things have already happened, and some things are going to happen. To be able to cope with our time organized existence, the English language is written in tenses: present, past, and future.

In short, the present tense expresses what is happening right now, or something which is ongoing. The past tense expresses something that has already happened. The future tense expresses what might happen in the future. It sounds simple enough, doesn't it?

Well, the truth is, as is with lots of English grammar, there are a couple of different ways to use each tense correctly. What is more, a very common trait when writing in English is for writers to switch between tenses incorrectly. The reason is that, as with lots of English, you can use the tenses in exceptional ways whereby you may use a past tense verb to actually talk about the present. We do this an awful lot when speaking and the result is that we have transferred this trait to our written word. The best advice is to keep it simple and stick to the rules. There is never a justified reason to create overly complicated grammatical structures. Learn now which tense is which and focus on sticking to the right tense for the situation you are writing about.

Live in the present: understanding the present tense

With all the tenses we will go through, there is a simple version, a not so simple version, and a slightly more not so simple version. I wish it was all just one easy to understand concept but unfortunately, it is not. Not to fear, I am going to break down each variety so you can see how to use it correctly.

Simple present

I **am** happy to learn grammar, as I **write** every day.

This is an example of the simple present tense. It is used to describe what you are doing right now, such as right now I **am** happy to learn grammar. It is also used to describe a habitual activity that you do regularly. In this case, I **write** every day.

The simple present tense is not difficult to conjugate as the majority of verbs for all pronouns use the root form of the verb, or add s or es to it.

First-person singular	I write
Second-person singular	You write
Third-person singular	He/She/It writes
First-person plural	We write
Second-person plural	You write
Third-person plural	They write

The notable exception to the simple conjugation of the simple present tense is the verb to be. It doesn't follow the above rule and just needs to be learned.

First-person singular	I am
Second-person singular	You are
Third-person singular	He/She/It is
First-person plural	We are
Second-person plural	You are
Third-person plural	They are

I **do not** want to go to the park.

To make a simple present tense verb negative, you can add the words do not (or shorten it to don't), before the verb.

I am **not** happy.

For the verb to be, you add **not** after the verb to make it negative.

I **have traveled** to China before.

Present perfect

The present perfect tense is the next version of the present tense and one which can trip people. The reason is that it is used to describe something that has happened in the past but without giving a definite time period or it can be used to show something that started in the past and continues to the present. In this example, the word **have** is added before a past tense verb to show that this person has traveled to China but it is not known when they did.

The present perfect tense is easy to conjugate by adding either have or has before a past tense verb.

First-person singular	I have traveled
Second-person singular	You have traveled
Third-person singular	He/She/It has traveled
First-person plural	We have traveled
Second-person plural	You have traveled
Third-person plural	They have traveled

To make a present perfect tense verb negative, you can add the words **not** after the word **have or has**.

I have **not** traveled to China before.

Present continuous

The present continuous tense is the final version of the present tense which we will talk about. It is used to describe a situation happening right now or in the very near future.

The taxi **is waiting** outside for you.

In this example, you can see that the action is happening right at that moment and is continuing to happen. It is a really useful way to conjugate a verb in the present tense. The verb is **waiting** and it is made continuous by adding the word **is** before it.

The present continuous tense is easy to conjugate by adding the verb to be to the present participle (meaning it has **ing** at the end of the verb).

First-person singular	I am waiting
Second-person singular	You are waiting
Third-person singular	He/She/It is waiting
First-person plural	We are waiting
Second-person plural	You are waiting
Third-person plural	They are waiting

To make a present continuous tense verb negative, you can add the words **not** after the verb to be.

I am **not** waiting any longer.

Looking to the past: understanding the past tense

As you can see by its name, the past tense is all about actions that took place already. Even though this seems easy to navigate, it can be tricky as we commonly misuse the past tense by mixing it up with the present tense in

sentences. Just check through your work, paying close attention to your tenses, to ensure you have conjugated the verbs consistently in the same tense.

Simple past

I **learned** a lot from my English professor.

This is an example of the simple past tense. It simply describes an action that takes place in the past.

The simple past tense is not difficult to conjugate as long as the verb is regular. You mainly add *ed* to the end of the root verb.

First-person singular	I learned
Second-person singular	You learned
Third-person singular	He/She/It learned
First-person plural	We learned
Second-person plural	You learned
Third-person plural	They learned

When it comes to irregular verbs, however, it is a bit rockier. Below is a common example, but for most you must learn them by heart.

First-person singular	I was
Second-person singular	You were
Third-person singular	He/She/It was
First-person plural	We were
Second-person plural	You were

Third-person plural	They were
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That is strange, I **did not** learn anything from that professor.

When it comes to making a simple past verb negative, it is not quite as simple. You must add the words **did not** before a root verb. This can trip you up as it looks like a present tense sentence.

I **was not** happy.

For the verb to be, you add **was not or were not** after the verb to make it negative.

Past perfect

I was shocked to discover that my dog **had eaten** the entire birthday cake.

The past perfect tense is an interesting tense used to describe a sequence of events that took place in the past. It is not used as commonly as the simple past tense, which does lead to common misunderstandings on how to use it. If you remember it as a way to recount actions that have taken place in a certain order in the past, you will find no problem with it.

In the above example, the simple past tense is first used to explain that the person was shocked. Why was the person shocked? It is because the dog **had eaten** the entire birthday cake. The **had eaten** is written in past perfect tense and is part of a sequence of events. First the person expressed they were shocked and then they said why.

Luckily, the past perfect tense is simpler to conjugate than to understand. To conjugate it you only have to add **had** before a past participle.

First-person singular	I had eaten
Second-person singular	You had eaten
Third-person singular	He/She/It had eaten

First-person plural	We had eaten
Second-person plural	You had eaten
Third-person plural	They had eaten

To make a past perfect tense verb negative, you add the words **not** after the word **had**.

They demanded I leave the restaurant even though I **had not** eaten yet.

Past continuous

The past continuous tense is the final version of the past tense which I will mention. It is used to describe a situation that happened in the past over a period of time.

Even though the sun **was shining** all summer, I could not find happiness in it.

In this example, you can see that the action of the sun shining happened in the past over a period of time which is defined as the summer. As I have mentioned before, this is one tense that people mix with the present tense when writing, so keep in mind the purpose of it.

The past continuous tense is conjugated by adding **was** or **were** to the present participle (meaning it has **ing** at the end of the verb).

First-person singular	I was waiting
Second-person singular	You were waiting
Third-person singular	He/She/It was waiting
First-person plural	We were waiting
Second-person plural	You were waiting

Third-person plural	They were waiting
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To make a past continuous tense verb negative, you can add the words **not** after the verb to be.

Don't worry, I was **not** waiting for too long.

Dreaming of the future: understanding the future tense

Finally, we will take a look at the future tense. Arguably it's the most exciting tense, as who doesn't like dreaming of future plans. This tense is all about things that have not happened yet but that we want to talk about anyway. This might be so you can make future plans with your friends or predict the score of the footie game.

Simple future

By the end of the year, I **will learn** a new language.

This is an example of the simple future tense that talks of learning a new language in the future.

The simple future tense is not difficult to conjugate as you either add **will** before a root verb or you add **am/is/are going to** plus the root verb.

First-person singular	I will learn
Second-person singular	You will learn
Third-person singular	He/She/It will learn
First-person plural	We will learn
Second-person plural	You will learn
Third-person plural	They will learn

Even though it is easy to conjugate, the simple future can be confusing as you can have two ways to say the same thing.

First-person singular	I am going to learn
Second-person singular	You are going to learn
Third-person singular	He/She/It is going to learn
First-person plural	We are going to learn
Second-person plural	You are going to learn
Third-person plural	They are going to learn

As you can see, I will learn and I am going to learn are both in the simple future tense and both mean the same thing. The difference is that using **will** is considered formal and using **going to** is considered informal.

You **will not** learn anything if you don't stop talking over the class.

To make a simple future tense negative that uses **will**, simply add **not** after it.

This year will be not be any different, I am **not going to** learn French no matter what I promised myself on New Years' Eve.

To make a simple future tense negative that uses **going to**, add **not** before it.

Future perfect

By the time I arrive, **he will have** left.

The future perfect tense may look like it has been designed to catch you out but it isn't as nonsensical as it appears. Okay, yes you do use a past tense verb to describe something that has not happened yet. However, when you think about it, there is no other way to describe it. As you can see in this example, the future perfect tense is for describing something happening in the future that is dependent upon something else happening first. By the time the person arrives, which is the first part in a sequence of events, the other person

will have left. The latter part is the future perfect tense.

The good news is that the future perfect tense is easy to conjugate. Add **will have** to a past tense verb to show that this has yet to happen.

First-person singular	I will have left
Second-person singular	You will have left
Third-person singular	He/She/It will have left
First-person plural	We will have left
Second-person plural	You will have left
Third-person plural	They will have left

To make a future perfect tense verb negative, you add the words **not** before the word **have**.

If you are lucky, they will **not** have left yet.

Future continuous

The future continuous tense is the final version of the future tense which we will cover. Its function is to describe something that will happen in the future over a period of time.

I am very proud to announce that my sister **will be running** the marathon this year.

In this example, you can see that her sister **will be running** the marathon. It is a great way to conjugate in the future as it emphasises the continuous nature of the action that will take place over a period of time. Something to note, you can only use the future continuous for action verbs such as running, walking, swimming, etc. If you try and conjugate it using a verb that doesn't describe an active action, it will appear ironic and odd to the reader. Just stick to the simple future tense for those verbs.

The future continuous tense is conjugated by adding **will be** to a present participle verb (meaning it has **ing** at the end of the verb).

First-person singular	I will be running
Second-person singular	You will be running
Third-person singular	He/She/It will be running
First-person plural	We will be running
Second-person plural	You will be running
Third-person plural	They will be running

To make a future continuous tense verb negative, you can add the word **not** in between will and be.

Due to an injury, Jessica will **not** be running today.

That is everything you are going to get from me in terms of tenses. There are a few extra tenses that you can use. However, my advice is that the tenses described above are by far the most commonly used and have you covered for whichever situation you wish to describe. Approach cautiously when starting to use tenses. Question your old habits as much as you can and ask yourself if you have broken away from mixing up the tenses. Don't worry, run through the examples a few more times to get more familiar and you will be just fine!

RULE 6 – STRUCTURING SENTENCES WITH EASE

We have learned about a wide variety of different grammar rules including, different tenses, punctuation and the basic building blocks. Yet, these rules don't mean anything by themselves. To actually write, we have to take everything that we have learned so far and put it into a sentence. This is what we are going to achieve in this chapter. It is not a difficult task by any means. What we must keep in mind is the basics of the rules we have learned so far and use them in an uncomplicated manner to form simple but effective sentences. I will cover a range of different sentence structures. By the end of this chapter you will have strong repertoire of writing structures that you can roll in any situation.

I could never have imagined that when I turned thirty I would have the opportunity to become the one thing I had always wanted to be. This was something I had dreamed about for a long time, finally it was here, finally I was a mother.

I wanted to show you this example to demonstrate what I mean by overly complicated sentence structure. It takes a long time to get to the point that the writer is trying to make. It also contains a lot of redundant information that adds very little to the meaning of the two sentences.

When I turned thirty I fulfilled a lifelong dream of becoming a mother.

When we rewrite the information to form a concise and well formed sentence, we get the impact of the meaning immediately, with all redundant information removed. Many people feel that they want to pack their sentences with as much emotion as possible, yet this often leads to long and

confusing sentences. Don't underestimate the power of a small well-formed sentence. Always aim to write in this way.

Before we get to sentences, we must look to phrases and clauses first. This is going to be a quick overview as I don't want to weigh you down with the technical side of sentence structure. You must be aware of the following but the structuring of sentences is much more important, especially knowing how to keep them concise and meaningful.

Phrases

A phrase is a group of related words that function together to represent something. There are different types of phrases which you can identify by what type of building block word they are using.

Noun phrase	Verb phrase	Adjective phrase	Adverb phrase	Prepositional phrase
the tiny baby	was playing	very small	truly beautiful	beside the bed

Phrases as you can see are collections of words. What is important to remember is that they can't be a complete sentence by themselves. Clauses on the other hand, though they look a lot like phrases, can stand alone more times than not and that is because they contain a verb.

Clauses

There are two main types of clauses, independent and dependent.

The art of Shiatsu massage was unknown in the Western World.

In this example, you can see an independent clause. If we analyze the

sentence, there are several phrases within it. **The art of Shiatsu massage** is a noun phrase and **was unknown** is a verb phrase. We can identify it as an independent clause as it has a verb and the sentence is complete and understandable.

An independent clause is made up of a subject and a verb, also called a predicate. It stands alone as a sentence as it expresses a complete thought. When examining a sentence, if it is a simple case of a subject plus a verb with a period at the end, then this is an independent clause.

Until Jessica returned

In contrast, this example represents a dependent clause. It is clear it is not a full sentence as it does not have any punctuation mark at the end. What is more, even if it did have a period at the end, it can't be complete. That is because the adverb **until** needs to be completed, you must ask yourself until what? On top of this, you must not confuse a dependent clause with a phrase. This is not a verb phrase as it contains more than just a noun and a verb, it also has an adverb in it.

Until Jessica returned, her dog would sit looking out of the window waiting for her.

Dependent clauses provide additional information to independent clauses as they can't stand alone by themselves. In this example, you can see that the dependent clause has been added to an independent clause to show what was happening until Jessica returned.

Sentences

Now we get to the good stuff, sentences. We are going to go through the four main types of sentence structure which are simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences.

Simple Sentences

A simple sentence has one independent clause with one subject and one verb. As well as the subject and verb, a simple sentence can also have adjectives and adverbs. What a simple sentence can't have is another independent clause or dependent clause within it.

Jessica returned from work at six each day.

In this example, you can see that there is one subject, **Jessica**, and one verb, **returned**. Nothing has been added to the sentence other than nouns and adverbs. This is the trick to check whether it is a simple sentence or not.

Juan married within a year.

One subject and one verb can be seen again in this example. It is a powerful example as it demonstrates how to deliver a sentence concisely and with oomph! Simple sentences are a great tool to have in your bag. They can be used to deliver poignant messages. You often see them used in literature and other creative writing. That is because a good author knows that you don't need to fluff out your sentences to deliver the message effectively.

Compound sentences

As much as I am a fan of short, concise sentences, I'll admit that there is a need to say a little bit more sometimes. Enter center stage the compound sentence. A compound sentence combines two or more independent clauses to make a complete sentence. The independent clauses are connected with a conjunction such as for, and, but, or, etc. If you are really brave, you could also use a semicolon to connect them together.

We traveled all day to get here and now you want me to leave?

Remember that a compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses. In this example it is clear that there are two separate parts. First we

talk about travelling all day. This clause is independent as it has a subject and a verb. Second we talk about being told to leave. This clause is also independent because it too has a subject and a verb. You could, in theory, place a period after the first clause and not use a conjunction. However, the reason a conjunction is used and a compound sentence is necessary is that these two bits of information directly relate to each other. The use of a compound sentence emphasizes that despite traveling all day they are being told to leave. How rude!

Complex sentences

Don't worry, these aren't actually complicated. A complex sentence joins one independent clause with at least one dependent clause. The independent clause is called the main clause and is linked to the dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction. This type of conjunction includes the adverbs until, while, and even though.

Jessica's dog would not rest until she returned.

This example shows you that complex sentences don't have to be long. The first part of the sentence about Jessica's dog represents the main clause as it is an independent clause. We can tell this because it has a subject, **Jessica's dog**, and it has a verb, **would not rest**. We also know it is an independent clause because it could be a complete sentence by itself. To make this a complex sentence, a dependent clause has been attached using a subordinating conjunction. This is the **until she returned** part. Despite having a subject and a verb in this clause, as it has **until** at the start of the sentence, it can't stand alone as a complete sentence.

While I cooked dinner, Jessica took the dog out for a walk.

Complex sentences can also start with the dependent clause that is joined to the main clause by a comma. Remember though that the dependent clause must start with a subordinating conjunction. This structure works well with

while and **even though**.

Compound-Complex Sentences

Finally, we come to our fourth type of sentence structure, the ultimate compound-complex sentence structure. A compound-complex sentence has at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. Yes, it may sound like a recipe for a long and convoluted sentence, and it is. Pay attention when using this structure to adding in unnecessary information. Keep it neat and concise. If you do this, you can impress with this type of structure. Fail at it and your page turns into a mess of confusion. No pressure then!

I planned to go to the mall, but I couldn't until the postman delivered the post.

Let's break up the sentence to see the different parts. The first part, **I planned to go to the mall**, is an independent clause. It has a subject and a verb. It can also be a complete sentence. The second part, **but I couldn't until**, is a dependent clause that uses a subordinating conjunction. The third part, **the postman delivered the post**, is also an independent clause. It too has a subject and a verb. It could be a complete sentence by itself but importantly it would have a different meaning if it did stand alone. All together, the sum of these parts qualifies this sentence to be a compound-complex sentence.

You now know the four different types of sentences and you should be confident in using them correctly. Whenever you are faced with deciding which type of sentence structure to use, keep in mind that it should be short and to the point.

There are a few additional bits of advice I can offer you to keep you from forming sloppy sentences. Firstly, never join the two independent clauses in a compound sentence with a comma, potentially also adding a third or fourth independent clause this way. This I call comma splicing and it results in a

long sentence with unrelated information grouped together.

Secondly, your choice of sentence structure should depend upon who you are talking to. If your audience is children then using compound-complex sentences is inappropriate. Likewise, when trying to impress your boss, relying only on simple sentences can make your writing appear childlike. There is a fine balance to strike.

Lastly, as you develop your style, you will come to favor certain sentence structures. This is a good thing as it designates your writing as yours. Often, the sentence structures you come to use mirror the way you speak. Be mindful of this and be careful not to waffle. However, if complex sentences become your go-to sentence structure, then that is just fine. Keep them concise and full of rhythm. That way your writing style will be well pronounced on the page.

Now you have learned your sentence structures and can tell your way around an independent clause or dependent clause, it is time to practice. Go through each type of sentence structure and write out 4 or 5 examples of your own. Once you have done this, leave them for a while and return to check them later. When you check them, did you only put related information into each sentence? Did you correctly form a compound sentence rather than mixing it with a complex sentence? Be critical of what you have written. You are looking for bad habits that you may have developed. I am trying to break you of those habits so you can go forward from now only using correct sentence structure.

RULE 7 – CONQUER CAPITALIZATION

It is fair to say, we have a problem with capitalization. This problem has developed so much that we now frantically place capital letters on everything. My advice, calm down. We are going to clear up this mess once and for all. By the end of this chapter you will be confidently placing capital letters only where needed. Let's go through them one by one.

The first word of a sentence begins with a capital letter.

My mother is coming to visit us. **W**e need to clean the entire house. **N**ow!

The names of the days of the week, and of the months of the year, are written with a capital letter.

Next **F**riday, **T**uesday, 21 **J**anuary, there will be no classes.

The names of historical eras are capitalized.

Today, we will study the **I**ron **A**ge.

The names of holy festivals and holidays should be capitalized.

The children were so excited they stayed awake until **C**hristmas morning.

The names of languages are written with a capital letter.

I am studying **E**nglish literature, geography, and math.

Words that are related to a particular place must be written with a capital letter.

I am meeting with the **F**rench ambassador.

However, if a word related to a particular place is part of a phrase, you do not capitalize it.

I could eat a danish pastry every morning, but I shouldn't.

Proper nouns should have a capital letter. Be careful not to capitalize words that look like they could be a proper noun but are in fact just a common noun. Normally, these are the names of professions, such as doctor, president, manager, etc.

Jessica is our new student body president.

You will find that religious names and terms are often capitalized. These may be names of different religions, gods, important figures, and holy books.

The **Q**uran is a holy book for **M**uslims.

The name of a book, play, poem, film, magazine, newspaper or piece of music should be capitalized. Remember that whenever you have a conjunction or article in the title, these should not be capitalized.

Harry **P**otter and the **S**orcerer's **S**tone is the favorite book of many children.

The brand names of manufacturers and any of their products are always capitalized.

Ever since I was a young man, my dream has been to buy a **F**errari.

When quoting someone directly, the first letter in the quote should be capitalized only when what is quoted is a complete sentence. Luckily, this is most of the time.

The French philosopher Descartes is the author of “**I** think, therefore I am.”

Keep in mind, some brand names have become so popular that they are now used to describe the entire product category. In this case they are no longer capitalized.

I would like to buy some scotch tape.

The pronoun I is always capitalized but other pronouns are not.

I am going into the city today.

A notable exception to this is when talking about God in various religions. In this case, the pronoun he/him is capitalized. This is to show respect.

It is by the grace of God that **H**e will decide whether or not I will be forgiven.

When writing a title there are two different ways to capitalize. The first style is to capitalize all principle words. What this means is anything that is not a conjunction or an article.

The **E**ssential **G**uide to **L**earning **F**rench

The second style is to only capitalize the first letter of the title. This is called sentence style. It does not matter which you choose, what is important is that you are consistent.

The essential guide to learning French

It is now important to talk about examples where capitalization is often used incorrectly. The mistake usually occurs when people feel that a word should be emphasized.

Smoking is STRICTLY forbidden.

Instead of capitalizing the word, if you want to stress the word use italics.

Capitalizing a word because it is preceded by **the** is also a common mistake. It may appear that the word is a proper noun because there is an article before it, however, only proper nouns should be capitalized.

He was the first person to reach the South Pole.

This example is incorrect. Rather, it should be the south pole.

When writing about a concept this should not be capitalized.

I was inspired by Psychoanalysis and the work of Sigmund Freud.

The correct version is to not capitalize psychoanalysis.

Finally, don't capitalize everything just because it is a name. We have spoken about our love of names, so there are a lot of them. When you want to talk about a name, focus on the correct rule. If it is a proper noun, use a capital letter. If it is commonly used then don't use a capital letter.

I went to see the Doctor today but I couldn't see my Doctor.
Instead they sent me to see Doctor Singh.

In this example, only one use of the word doctor is correctly capitalized. The version that should have a capital letter is Doctor Singh as it is a title of a person.

Overall, there are quite a few different rules for capitalization. The thing to keep in mind is that you likely have a bad habit of excessive capitalization. We panic when we write and stick a capital letter on everything. Take control of this bad habit and instead focus on what it is you are talking about. On the

whole, if it is a specific thing you capitalize it. If it is a general thing, you don't capitalize it.

RULE 8 – SPELL CORRECTLY AND FORMAT EFFICIENTLY

Spelling correctly terrifies most adults. We are held captive by our spell checkers to ensure we don't embarrass ourselves with our poor spelling. Often, we are scarred by years of English teachers telling us our spelling is terrible. This has to stop. Once and for all, we as functioning adults need to take control of our bad spelling and learn how to spell.

Learned bad behavior is a difficult habit to break. When you write anything, I am certain that you make the same five to ten spelling errors each time. I know this is true, because we all do it. That is because when you first learned English as a child you will have incorrectly memorized spellings of commonly misspelled words. Rather than correcting the mistake then, this error has haunted your writing ever since. For me, it is the word separate. Every time I am typing quickly on the laptop, I write it as seperate. When I make this error, the red line of my spell checker shows up and I right click it to correct the spelling. This is an incredibly bad habit as I don't always have my trusty spell checker on hand.

Spelling common words incorrectly is glaringly obvious when people read through your work. That is why relearning spelling as an adult is vital. Don't let the quality of your work be jeopardized by poor spelling. Instead, let us now both embark on breaking our bad habits and start to relearn how to spell correctly.

Let us go through the five top rules for spelling better, starting with I before E except after C unless it sounds like an A.

A **pie**ce of cake

In this example, I goes before E because the letter before it is a P.

He dece**iv**ed me.

But when the letter before it is a C, you switch the letters.

How much do you we**igh**?

As well, if the combination of E and I sounds like an A, you also write it ei and not ie.

The next spelling tip is about adding suffixes. You tend to do this when you are trying to make a word a superlative or comparative.

He was the ugl**iest** baby I had ever seen.

The mistake people make is trying to add er to words that end in Y. They might try and say uglyer rather than uglier. The rule to remember is that if the word ends in Y it is most likely irregular in the way you conjugate the superlative or comparative. Most of the time you remove the Y and add something there to make the suffix correct.

I will happ**ily** attend your party.

The same rule applies for words ending in y when you are trying to form an adverb. Always replace the Y with an I and add the standard ly ending.

When to add an E or not is also something that often confuses us. This is because the E when coming at the end of a word is often not pronounced.

“I **bit** off more than I can chew with this one,” said Jessica.

“No, not at all. Her bark is worse than her **bite**, trust me,” said Juan.

The words bit and bite are commonly misspelled even though when you pronounce them they do sound different. On the whole remember verbs tend to not end in E and nouns do. This should help you to remember which is the correct spelling for each case.

Words containing double consonants, sometimes two or more sets of them, are difficult to spell correctly. That is because when we sound them out it is difficult to distinguish whether there is one consonant sound or two.

I am looking for some **accommodation**.

To overcome these spelling errors, slow down and sound out the word beat by beat. Ac-com-mo-dation. As you can see, by doing this, we can identify that there are double consonants being used.

Our last spelling rule is knowing how to make a word plural. We often trip up over whether to put an s or es on the end or even not add anything. The rule goes that if the word ends in either -s, -sh, -ch, -x, or -z, then you add -es.

In the morning I only have to take two trains but my sister has to take three **buses**.

There is also the classic example of how many sheep are in the field?

Farmer John has one **sheep** but Farmer Tom has three **sheep**.

With the common words sheep and fish, there is no difference between the singular and plural form. There are just sheep and never sheeps.

I appreciate that going through the rules of spelling probably feels like you are back in the classroom again. I am certain that you know the I before E except after C rule. Yet, I am also certain you commonly misspell words with ie in them. So, what do we do about this? It is time to put effort behind

breaking this habit.

Firstly, try to read more. Grab an article each day and sit for ten minutes to read it. This will expose your eyes to correct spelling for a variety of words that you are probably misspelling.

Next, write a list of the words you commonly misspell. Every time a word is highlighted by your spell checker as incorrect, jot it down somewhere. If you are active in alerting your brain to the mistake, next time you come to spell it you will pause for a moment and think about the correct spelling.

Lastly, try and go through the rules above and memorise the rules through a little poem or rhyme. I before E except after C is memorable because it rhymes. This is called a mnemonic. Try and make more for other spelling errors you make. This type of memory technique is easily memorable as it breaks through walls you put up about certain issues and brings the correct information to the front of your mind.

Spelling incorrectly is one very noticeable trait. The other is not formatting your work in a consistent way. Having different font sizes, excessive amounts of space and incorrect paragraph spacing can make your work look amateurish. As with spelling, don't let a poorly formatted document keep you from making the best impression. Let's run through the top tips for formatting efficiently.

The first tip is to insert only one space after a period and not two. The idea of placing two spaces after a period comes from the need of typesetters with printing presses to clearly identify each sentence. With modern word processors, this is no longer necessary. What is more it can mess up your formatting, particular the margin indent when you justify your text if you continue this old fashioned method.

The second tip is to know how to get an em-Dash to appear on your page

without sending your computer into a spin. Just hit alt/option + shift + dash (-) at the same time and you'll get the long em-dash. If you want an en-Dash rather than em-Dash, use the shortcut alt/option + dash (-).

The third tip is for using an ellipse, which is when you want to end your sentences dramatically with . . . If you simply add in three periods, with or without spacing, it can confuse the formatting machine in your word processor. Make sure it is understood as an ellipse by using the shortcut alt/option + semicolon (;).

The fourth tip is for spelling out numbers. There is a difference in opinion of how to write numbers in your work. In all correctness, you should write out numbers from one to ninety-nine, placing a hyphen between any that are two words. However, it has become acceptable to only spell out numbers one through nine and then use numerals for the rest of the numbers.

At **one** in the morning, the temperature was minus **17** degrees.

The fifth tip is when you talk about a percentage that you write the word out in full rather than using the symbol.

There is a 20 **percent** discount.

The sixth tip is to use only three sizes of fonts throughout your document. The header should be around 18 pts, subheaders should be around 14 pts and the body text should be around 12 pts. Make sure that the font you use is the same throughout the document. The same goes for the color of the text.

The last tip is to keep your paragraphs short. The best size to stick to is around five to six lines. This makes it much easier for a reader to read as well as keeping their attention for longer. When a paragraph is too long, readers have a tendency to skip to the end of the paragraph as they assume that is where the important information is.

In sum, spelling and formatting may seem like the icing on the cake. However, they can make or break your work. I know personally that some people will not hire someone who has a spelling error in their resume. Don't let something that is easily correctable stand in the way of getting your dream job or opportunity. Learn the advice given in this chapter and you will quickly mark yourself out against your competitors as someone with excellent writing skills.

RULE 9 – CREATE KILLER COMPOSITIONS

You have almost made it, you have made it through the essential building blocks of the English language, how to use punctuation and write different sentence structures. Now is the time to use everything you have learned and write.

In whichever situation you find yourself in, whether you are working in an office or a student at college, you will have to write long essays or reports. These essays will typically be over 500 words. Even though you understand how to form perfect sentences, you now need to know how to form these into a well structured essay. This is where having killer composition skills is essential.

There is nothing worse than having to battle your way through long and unstructured written work. If someone is waffling, going off point, and not being concise, it makes the reading experience unpleasant. What is more, the reader can't focus on the important information and loses concentration.

All of these things are avoidable by learning how to structure your essay correctly. So first let's talk about different types of essays and then move on to creating a killer composition that will never bore your readers.

There are four types of essays that you can write. Firstly, there is a narrative essay. This is when the writer describes an incident or story written in the first person. You might do this when reporting upon your own findings or when writing a creative piece. The aim when writing narrative essays is to make the reader feel that they are right there with you in the story. Make the essay as dynamic as possible.

The next essay type is a descriptive essay. This is where the writer describes something usually from memory. The aim is to paint a picture with your words. One clever way to do that is to evoke the senses of the reader by talking about what you can see, smell, touch, hear, etc. You must appeal to the emotions of the reader and get them to empathize with what you are writing.

An expository essay presents a balanced study of a topic and is most

commonly used when writing college essays. The essay should be well researched and show a balanced argument of the topic. The writing is not emotional and should be fact based. This includes using references to others work and things such as statistics, graphs, etc.

The last essay type is a persuasive essay. The purpose of this type of essay is to get the reader to see your side of the argument. It is most commonly used in work when you are asked to present a proposal of your ideas for the business. A persuasive essay is not just a presentation of facts but an attempt to convince the reader of the writer's point of view. The essay must present both sides of the argument but ultimately persuade the reader to agree with your side of the argument.

Once you know the type of essay that you want to write, it is then best to follow a few key rules for the layout of the essay. You can still be creative within these boundaries, but if you follow what is suggested you will avoid going off track. Focus on delivering the main message of the essay. Do not overcomplicate it with unnecessary information. Keep it concise and well formatted and you can't go wrong. Knock the socks off your college professor or boss by presenting them with your next essay written with a killer composition.

First off, all essays should start with an introduction. This is the first paragraph of your essay where you introduce your topic. It needs to include a brief overview of what you will write about. You can also include your main message in the introduction, this could be what you have found out. If you include this in your introduction it helps the reader focus throughout the rest of the paper as you explain how you came to this conclusion. This is called a hook message and works well when using all of the essays types that we went through. Just remember to keep everything short. You should not write an essay within an essay by spelling everything out in your introduction. On the whole, limit it to around five to six lines. Use impactful words to entice your reader to read on.

Then you must write the body of your essay. This is the main part of your essay. No matter the type of essay you are writing, the body should include more than one paragraph. Keep your paragraphs short. Move through your arguments logically, presenting them one by one and providing evidence for

each of them. If you have separate topics that you want to mention, consider using subheadings to ensure that the reader understand what each section is. Build up the pressure within your essay, pulling your reader along with you, towards the peak of the overall argument that you are looking to make. Finish the body section with the main statement that you are looking to present.

Finally, always end all essays with a conclusion. Without it, it feels like a body without feet. Use your conclusion to sum up your story or argument. Make sure that you don't include any new information in your conclusion. Everything that you conclude must have been mentioned before. If you don't it can make your argument appear weak. Make sure to reiterate the overall message of the essay. Wrap up all the loose threads of the work and make sure to leave the reader with a punchy takeaway that will keep them thinking about your essay once they have put it down.

In sum, an essay is always something you find yourself being asked to write. It is important to make sure you are well practiced on the best way to structure your essay. The key thing is to ensure you deliver the message you want to make clearly. This doesn't mean you have to write pages after pages, going into excessive detail. Instead, keep it neat and tight. Write an introduction, body and conclusion that clearly demonstrates your argument.

RULE 10 – ADD YOUR PERSONAL TOUCH

Now that you are a writer it is time to develop your writing style. Also called your personal touch, your writing [style](#) is the way in which you express yourself and it naturally evolves over time. It changes as you age as you go through different stages of life, develop your own personality, change the activities you are involved in, and change what you are reading, along with many other factors. So, what can you do to develop your own writing style? Well, the truth is that a writing style depends upon life experience as well as the situation you are writing in. You may start off at college writing formally. Yet as you age, you become more informal in your style. What matters most is that you are consistent in your style. If you like to use emotive words, don't all of a sudden switch to being very clinical and cold.

There are many ways to develop your style and discover new ways to write. Read regularly and broadly. Aim to read a few full books a year. Articles are much quicker to read so skim through a few each week. Avoid anything that is not written in formal language. The aim here is to develop your writing style, not to pick up bad habits.

Don't avoid writing. I know that it might seem that presenting your great idea is quicker and more efficient. However, there is something incredibly powerful about a well written proposal. Take the time to write as much as you can. Also, focus on writing whatever you do write correctly. Don't allow yourself to continue bad habits just because it is a quick email or SMS. What about writing creatively as well? Not everything you write has to be for work or college. You might discover you have a talent for writing emotionally, something which suits poetry and short stories. This will help to develop your overall writing style and might make that next proposal a little less dry.

Use words that come naturally to you rather than trying to stuff your work with complicated terminology. Nobody likes a show-off, not to mention it risks the reader not being able to understand you. Instead focus on acquiring a variety of well known words. When you are writing, don't use the same

word or phrase repeatedly. Try to learn synonyms for your regular words to broaden your vocabulary range.

Be as clear as you can. Remember that your main goal is communication. I have said it a million times but it does need repeating: make sure each sentence is as direct and simple as possible. At the same time, don't be overly clinical. If you are trying to convey emotions, you may need to pack your sentences with a few more adjectives and adverbs. Make your writing easy for your readers, so it is a pleasure to read. Awkward writing can make it painful and provoke your readers into putting down your work.

It is tough to do, but you really have to steer clear of clichés as much as possible. They can make your writing sound unoriginal. Sometimes you can use them for effect, especially if you are trying to evoke an emotion that only that cliché will deliver. Instead think of crafting your own descriptions, use metaphors and expressions. This will make what you write look original and stand out from the crowd.

When you are using different sentence structures, make sure that you are concise. Change the word order in your sentences to see if they can be rephrased using fewer words. Focus on being as concise as possible. At all costs, avoid long sentences with unrelated information contained within them. Don't comma-splice your way to drab, unreadable work.

Clear, detailed writing makes your work come to life. If you are struggling to find the right words for your descriptions, do a little research. It is easy to access a thesaurus online. The English language has over 250,000 words, so you have no excuse for not being able to find the perfect word for the situation you are trying to describe.

Finally, develop your style by using certain literary devices that come to define your work. If you like using metaphors or similes, this will provide a certain style to your writing. If you prefer technical writing, this will also define how you write.

In this essay, I will demonstrate exactly why copper is an excellent insulator. To arrive at this conclusion, I undertook extensive research. My main research was conducted in the laboratory. I

wanted to test my hypothesis that copper can be used in wires as an insulator. What is more, I wanted to prove that copper is the most suitable choice for this purpose over other metals. Overall, my hypothesis was proven correct.

As an example of a writing style, this represents a concise and well written introduction for a technical essay. It is clear that the writer prefers short clear sentences that deliver the meaning quickly.

It is clear to me that the best course of action is to abandon this job contract. Though it distresses me to say so, we will not gain anything further from this partnership. I am truly grateful for the hard work of all our colleagues. Their dedication shines through in everything they undertake.

This second example demonstrates that you can use more emotional language even when writing a professional piece of work. The message being delivered is clear but what is stronger still is the emotion of disappointment. This style of writing is an excellent way to convey emotion.

We are excited to announce the launch of our new product. Built by a team of world class engineers, this product will revolutionize the way that you wash your clothes. You no longer have to deal with holes in your favorite jumper or rips in your faded jeans. Get in touch with us today to find out how to get yours!

In this final example, you can see a mix of formal sentence structures with a more informal tone. This writing style is an excellent method for selling products. It demonstrates how you can write engaging content without having to compromise on your grammatical structures.

Overall, the thing about writing styles is that it is down to you. The best writing styles are developed naturally and reflect your personality. Keep in mind that just because something should be written formally, it doesn't mean it has to be bland. Write clearly but add flavor to what you write by using a mix of words and devices such as metaphors. Over time you will become comfortable with your style, being able to easily adapt it based on the situation.

BONUS RULE – NEVER NEGLECT COMMON GRAMMAR MISTAKES

Congratulations, you have made it through all of the steps in becoming an English grammar pro! We have covered everything from nouns and verbs to semicolons and the perfect future tense. By now you will have a thorough understanding of how to create incredible and accurate written work.

As you have been successful in completing all of the rules, here is a bonus rule to seal the deal! I am going to run through the top ten grammar mistakes so that you can learn to avoid discrediting your work by making one of them.

Finally, I have come to the conclusion, that I am ready, to take on the role of head teacher.

The number one mistake of all time is the misuse of commas. It is so rampant that we have come to see it as normal to have huge amounts of commas in a sentence. I am sure you have paused once or twice when writing to debate whether or not you should be using a comma. The problem is that people associate commas with a pause in speaking. This then translates to the page and ends up in a comma misuse. You can see in the above example that the person is clearly trying to emphasize the importance of the decision to become a teacher. However, by using commas in this way they have split clauses apart and rendered the sentence incorrect. The best advice is to lower your use of commas, not increase it.

At the mall I am going to buy: socks; shoes; makeup; and a bag.

Next to the comma, the semicolon is the most abused punctuation mark. As you can see in the above example, it is often used incorrectly and unnecessarily. The word unnecessary is the right word as the truth is the semicolon is largely unnecessary. What is more, it can make your writing appear pompous. I know it is a legitimate punctuation mark and people are desperate to not have it disappear into obscurity. However, if you have just recovered from being a grammar offender, steer clear of it and use a comma instead.

Rugby, which was first played in England in the early 18th century, is one of Australia's most popular sports.

This example may look harmless. However, the problem comes with two sets of unrelated information being contained in one sentence. What is trying to be achieved is a concept called parallelism. This concept aims to show information about a topic at the same time as delivering a different message about the same topic. It is meant to enhance your knowledge of the topic. However, what happens often is that the sentence structure gets confused. It is acceptable to have two sentences next to each other talking about rugby. Yet, combining them is incorrect. You might think it is fine because they are both about rugby, however they are not actually related as one sentence should be just about it being first played in England and the other about it being Australia's most popular sport. Remember the number one tip of this book, keep it simple, keep it short.

The business was founded by Ewan Evans.

This sentence is something that you will commonly see and it is written in what is called the passive voice. This example is not strictly a grammar mistake. Instead it is a writing style suggestion that you avoid using the passive voice wherever. It used to be considered a formal way of writing. The truth is that it leads to drab sentences that lack energy. Change the passive voice to the active voice by switching the word order to Ewan Evans founded the business. This way of writing is just as formal but more dynamic.

I was waiting their for over an hour.

Don't fall into the trap laid out for you by homophones. We went through them in detail in rule 3 so you should be well versed in how to recognize them. You know you will only incite ridicule if you make a silly mistake like using their instead of there.

The content was good.

If you were worried about homophones, wait till you see what homographs have in store for you! These words are spelled the same but have a different meaning. For example, the content was good has two different meanings. It could mean that a piece of content was good. In this case, the accent would

go on the first beat. Rather, the sentence could refer to a feeling of satisfaction. In this case, the accent would go on the second beat. You have to be certain that the context of your sentence is clear if you are using a homograph. If not, change the word.

He went rapidly to the store.

Adverbs are not your friend. I know it might seem like they are but trust me they are not. Writers have a tendency to use an adverb which results in the death of description. This sentence should instead say he went to the store in a rush. It is much more descriptive and also gives the sense of urgency needed. However, the adverb doesn't do this, it simply says he went to the store with speed. The meaning is not as significant. Next time you place an adverb in a sentence, see if you can switch it out with a better description.

It is easy to forget what all this hard work is for.

Stop! Don't do it! I know we end our sentences in speaking with prepositions but you can never do this in written work. Change the sentence around so that it reads what all this hard work is for is easy to forget. Better still, rewrite the sentence so it is not so awkward. If you don't you risk your work looking informal and poorly formed. Stick to formal writing as much as you can and don't repeat this grammar mistake.

This is why I don't go to nightclubs, I easily get tired.

In this example, the mistake lies in the use of **this**. What is wrong is that it is not clear what the **this** is referring to. This mistake is called a dangling modifier. It is a mistake that lots of people make. The reason is that we assume that the reader is following our train of thought. Whereas in truth, the reader can easily get lost in your words and forget previous information they have been told. Even though in this example, you can make a reasonable assumption that the reason they don't go to nightclubs is because they easily get tired, this meaning is not guaranteed. You might have before it the sentence, I hate music. Then the reader might wonder whether they are not going to nightclubs because they hate music or because they easily get tired? As you can see, the meaning is hazy. Clear this up for your reader by not using the modifier. Change the sentence to I don't go to nightclubs because I

easily get tired.

You can either have chocolate, strawberry, or vanilla ice cream.

In our final grammar mistake you are faced with an incorrect use of a conjunction. It is commonly done, particular with **either**. The mistake is that three nouns have been described after using the word **either**. The correct way to use this conjunction is only ever with two nouns. It is talking about an either/or situation so will only ever contain two items. We have gone through the use of every conjunction in detail in rule 4. Don't be caught out making a simple error like this. Go through all of the examples again and learn what is the right way to use each conjunction.

So there you have it, the top ten grammar mistakes made by our fellow grammar offenders. However, as you have now made it to the end of the book, officially, you are no longer a grammar offender. Rise up, oh learned person who has made it through the book, and take up your hallowed position as an English grammar aficionado!

CONCLUSION

I have always wanted to write this book because I know that there are so many people out there that struggle with the basics of grammar. I also know that this really isn't their fault. Due to a lack of schooling on English grammar and the rise of informal language that has edged its way into our written work, we have all suffered as a result.

My goal was to create a book that was accessible to all who see themselves as grammar offenders. I can imagine that you have earned this title because of a public shaming about your persistent grammatical mistakes. It might have been because of a harmless group email you sent out saying that your all welcome. Or perhaps your boss has pulled you up on your poorly formatted work. Whatever way it came about, I know it upset you enough to do something about it. I bet you are glad you finally have done something about it.

Now that you have reached the end of the book, you have covered everything you need to know to survive in the world of English grammar. More than that, you now have the tools to truly develop yourself as a writer. I have mentioned in the book that you really can't get away from having to do written work, well unless you are a farmer I guess. Even if you avoid writing reports in your job right now, in the future you will have to submit a resume and a cover letter. This requires a whole host of writing skills to complete. Doesn't it feel great that you now have them?

We started the book discussing the building blocks of the English language, covering the differences between verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Next, we moved on to understanding how to connect these words together with conjunctions and prepositions. We then looked at the confusing world of words that look and sound the same, so that you don't mistakenly use one incorrectly. Onwards, we spent a good time on punctuation, arguably the most difficult part of grammar. We then looked at the differences between the present, past and future tense. Next, was structuring sentences. This was where it all started to come together. We took a moment to conquer capitalization once and for all before moving on to learning how to spell and

format correctly. Then we worked on how to write killer compositions before ending up with working on how to develop your own writing style.

As we have taken this journey through English grammar, my aim has always been to show you how to keep things simple. By not over complicating grammar and the way you write, the result is beautifully written concise work. If you focus only on this, you will always produce clear and understandable sentences. Over time, if you also read more and practice your spelling, you will soon develop advanced writing skills. Once you are at that level, grammar mistakes will be kept to a minimum and you can then focus on developing your own writing style.

I made you a promise at the start of this book that you would no longer feel lost and confused with grammar. Instead you rise as a grammar phoenix, strong enough to tackle even the most complex of grammar situations. If you have read through all of the rules and practiced the examples, then you will have significantly improved your knowledge of English grammar. You can now stand tall as a person who knows what is what in the world of grammar and can easily roll out a perfect composition, or two.

I leave you with this one parting remark, the crux of this book: keep it simple to not mess it up. If there is anything you take from this book, that is it. Grammar might seem like an untamable beast but if you don't get yourself involved with its unnecessary complexity then you won't make silly mistakes.

Write simply, with passion, and you can't go wrong.

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200 English Grammar Mistakes!

***A Workbook of Common Grammar and Punctuation
Errors with Examples, Exercises and Solutions So
You Never Make Them Again***

MELONY JACOBS

INTRODUCTION

The English language has its grammar outline. This outline is all about medium and convention that determines and guides how to speak and write. In grammar, this outline includes word spelling, word inflection, and word arrangement in sentence making. More importantly, the English language is not static; rather, it is dynamic. The language has gone through much evolution from the days of retaining German forms of the plural of some words until now. Therefore, communication requires adequate and proper understanding of grammar.

I am Melony Jacobs, a 52-year-old professional editor and proofreader. I studied writing and the English language in university. Hence, you can count on my experience and expertise to help you to be more effective as a speaker and writer of one of the most popular languages in the world. I am committed to learning and that is why I read at least a book every week. I have come across many common mistakes people make when they speak and write. Therefore, I have decided to do my share to help others by putting this material together.

I am on a personal quest to help people improve their English grammar skills. This book came about because I believe a book is the best way to put all the information together in a coherent manner. English grammar simply means how the English language is structured. It is a ‘system’ of how the English language hangs together. It is really necessary that you develop a good grammar structure for many reasons, as stated below:

- **To have clear communication:** Clear communication is fundamental for any individual. The biggest problem that arises from poor grammar is unclear communication. People tend to have incoherence in speeches simply because of grammatical blunder. If you make a mistake of including a singular verb where inappropriate, you may communicate a wrong message.

For example, if you are just deplaned and you say; “Our flight time **is** approximately forty-two minutes,” “The person you’re talking to may think you haven’t boarded the plane at all. However, the correct thing to say is: “Our flight time **was** approximately forty-two minutes.” (past tense)

- **Wrong impression:** Psychologists say, “first impressions are lasting.” If you are a job applicant, the first thing you may want to take care of is your cover letter and curriculum vitae. For example, if the cover letter is an embodiment of grammatical mistakes, you may have practically created a wrong impression of yourself irrespective of how qualified you are for the job. Also, if you are preparing or presenting a proposal for a project, you need to have a good command of the English language to make sense to your audience.

Sometimes, there may be disagreements about what correct or incorrect English is. Incorrect grammar is commonly used in informal communication or speech. But does that make it correct and appropriate? Correct grammar remains correct irrespective of where and how it is used (whether formally or informally), likewise, incorrect grammar. Therefore, it is important that you strive to learn and be effective in the way you handle the English language. You should not stop learning. Hence, leveraging the guidelines in a book like this will expose you to a whole range of grammar mistakes and thereby sharpen your knowledge.

In this book, the errors are discussed by providing you with examples. The correct versions are shown thereafter. It is important that you are able to consolidate what you are learning. Learning cannot be said to have taken place when you cannot recall the information. Any information that cannot be recalled is useless to you and others. To help you consolidate your learning so that you won't make the same errors again, there are multiple-choice quiz questions for you in this book. After the correct versions have been highlighted, you will have multiple-choice questions to answer to help you recall.

Foundational English grammar mistakes in various parts of speech are discussed in this book. In other words, you will learn to avoid basic mistakes when using verbs, nouns, adverbs, pronouns, and adjectives. There are also common mistakes people make when using grammar components like heteronyms, homographs, and homophones. You will get to know the correct way to go about the use of these grammar components, as well and much more.

In the social media era, it has become much more important to be careful

about the way you speak and write. Your mistakes can go viral in no time. It is not right to bully people and I will never advocate that. However, the reality is that there are unscrupulous people in this world who will pounce on the errors of others mercilessly. Hence, you need to protect yourself from being a prey to such malicious people. Thankfully, you don't need any sophisticated weapon to protect yourself but adequate and constant learning.

Therefore, I encourage you to read this book with the desire to improve your grammar skills. When you improve your communication and writing skills, you are adding more value to yourself. So don't read this book just because you're not so busy and can't find something else to do with your time. Study it to get better and become more effective. I have done my part to put together accurate information in a coherent way to boost your effectiveness. The ball is in your court now to study the playbook with the right attitude. I know you will be off and running. Let's get started!

FOUNDATIONAL/BASIC ENGLISH GRAMMAR MISTAKES

Not one grammatical blunder in the English language can be overlooked, because they can be misleading. In this chapter, we will explore basic English grammar mistakes and their correct versions. These errors have to do with wrong usage of different parts of speech such as verbs, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Unlike other grammatical gaffes, these mistakes are often obvious. People make such mistakes due to ignorance or negligence. However, mistakes remain what they are regardless of the reasons they occur.

Verbs

Verbs are simply action words that make your sentences meaningful. When using verbs, there are various forms to take note of.

Verb forms

Base form	S-form	Past form	ing-form	Past/passive participle
Play	Plays	Played	Playing	Played
Join Find	Joins Finds	Joined Found	Joining Finding	Joined Found
Think Discuss	Thinks Discusses	Thought Discussed	Thinking Discussing	Thought Discussed

Let's look at the following sentences with wrong usage, then correct form:

Incorrect: He **play** table tennis.

He **steal** the bread.

He **find** it difficult to solve.

Correct: he **plays** table tennis.

He **stole** the bread.

He **found** it difficult to solve.

Remember: use an “e” in the –ed (past simple and “–ed” form) of regular verbs. And, when you have regular verbs where the vowel changes from “I” to “a” to “u,” use “a” in the past simple and “u” in the “–ed” form.

Incorrect: She **enjoy** the movie.

I was very thirsty so I **drunk** water.

Correct: She **enjoyed** the movie. (past simple)

I was very thirsty so I **drank** water. (past simple)

MCQs: Choose the appropriate option from the following past simple forms:

1. The ship _____ before we got there. (A. had sink B. had sank C. had sunk)

Answer: C

2. The film _____ at 3 p.m. (A. began B. begun)

Answer: A

When using verbs, some forms may be used in more than one case:

a) Imperative use case, when it begins a sentence such as “Play football with me.” This makes a complete meaning on its own.

b) Present-tense use case, such as “You play very well.” **NOT** “You plays very well.”

c) Infinitive use case, such as “He’d like to play.” **NOT** “He’d like playing.”

In the above listed use cases, any attempt to change the form of verb in the order of the sentences will render the sentence incorrect.

Watch out for irregular verbs that have base form “-d” and past tense “-t” such as:

Incorrect: He **spend** millions of dollars on the surgery.

Correct: He **spent** millions of dollars on the surgery.

Do not use regular past simple “-ed” form for irregular verbs.

Incorrect: He **spended** weeks before coming.

Correct: He **spent** weeks before coming.

Some prepositional words (e.g., about, for, and in) are not used with some verbs used in certain forms.

Incorrect: The school board **discussed about** expelling the student.

Correct: The school board **discussed** expelling the student.

There are prepositional words that fit with prepositional verbs, e.g., lie under, listen to, depend on, wait on, etc.

Incorrect: I like to **listen** him speak.

Correct: I like to **listen to** him speak.

Incorrect: He loves to **wait upon** his parents.

Correct: He loves to **wait on** his parents.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

1. _____ along with me. (A. Read B. Reading C. Is reading)

Answer: A

2. He likes _____. (A. dancing B. dance)

Answer: A

3. You should _____ the floor. (A. scrubs B. scrub)

Answer: B

4. I ____ he was coming yesterday. (A. learned B. learnt C. was learning)

Answer: A

5. She _____ my assistance on her assignment. (A. request B. requested C. requested for)

Answer: B

6. We _____ his appearance in court last week. (A. demanded B. demanded for C. demand)

Answer: A

7. We _____ God. (A. depend B. depending on C. depend on)

Answer: C

Adverbs

Adverbs are words that modify verbs, other adverbs or adjectives. An adverb usually answers questions of: **what way**, **why**, **where** and **when**. Some students often make mistakes when using adverbial words in statements. The study below important adverbial rules to follow when making sentences.

Adverbial use of: **very**, **much**, **so**, and **too**

“Much” is a comparative word and should be used in comparative degree and past participle tense.

Incorrect: Joe is **more** taller than his sister.

Correct: Joe is **much** taller than his sister.

Use adverb clause **that** with **so**, and **too** with the infinitive **to**.

Incorrect: The lion is tough, other animals tremble at its roar.

Correct: The lion is **so** tough **that** other animals tremble at its roar.

Incorrect: The candidate is **too** good for the job.

Correct: The candidate is **too** good **to** do the job.

Using a second negative word with words such as: **seldom, barely, never, often, merely, rarely**, etc., should be avoided. Any of the categories can stand alone.

Incorrect: Lisa **barely never** comes to class.

Correct: Lisa **barely** comes to class.

Incorrect: I **hardly don't** know anyone in the church.

Correct: I **hardly** know anyone in the church.

Remember: don't use any of the words with their negative-meaning words.

When using **as**: use the adverb **as** when introducing predicative verb words like **know, describe, regard**, etc. Also, avoid using the adverb **as** when introducing predicative verb words such as **choose, make, call**, etc.

Incorrect: He was described a bully.

Correct: He was described **as** a bully.

Incorrect: Albert Einstein is called **as** genius.

Correct: Albert Einstein is called genius.

When answering questions, **yes** must go with affirmative responses, while **no** must go with negative answers.

Incorrect: Have you eaten today?

No, I have eaten.

Correct: Have you eaten today?

No, I have **not** eaten.

Do not place adverbs of manner before intransitive verbs.

Incorrect: The lady **confidently** spoke to the tough guy.

Correct: The lady spoke **confidently** to the tough guy.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Australia is a _____ beautiful country. (A. so B. very C. much)

Answer: B

I was forbidden _____. (A. not to go B. to go C. never to go)

Answer: B

It appears this house is _____ bigger than the former house. (A. more B. much C. very)

Answer: B

Cow milk is _____ nutritious. (A. too B. very C. much)

Answer: B

The student is _____ brilliant _____ his teachers were proud of him. (A. very, that B. so, that)

Answer: B

He _____ comes late to meetings. (A. often B. often always C. barely never)

Answer: A

“Are you coming for the test?” (A. “Yes, I am not coming.” B. “Yes, I am coming.”)

Answer: B

She _____. (A. beautifully sang B. sang beautifully)

Answer: B

Adjectives

As a noun defines or names something, an adjective gives more information

about a noun or pronoun. It can appear in regular, comparative or superlative forms. When qualifying, they come directly before the noun or pronoun being qualified, e.g., He is a **big** man. The word **big** here, gives additional information about the noun **man**.

Below are rules to pay rapt attention to, to avoid mistakes in adjective usage when making sentences:

Avoid using double comparatives in sentences.

Incorrect: James is **more bigger** than Joseph.

Correct: James is **bigger than** Joseph.

The adjective **many** goes with countable nouns (e.g.: miles, books, cars, etc.) While, the adjective **much** goes with uncountable nouns (water, air). Also, **less** is used with uncountable nouns, and **fewer** is used with countable nouns.

Incorrect: There are **much** miles to cover in the race.

Correct: There are **many** miles to cover in the race.

Incorrect: The soup has **many** water.

Correct: The soup has **much** water.

Incorrect: I have **less** questions to answer.

Correct: I have **fewer** questions to answer.

Simply add "-er" as a comparative to words like strong, fat, tall, etc.

Incorrect: And the boy grew **strong** and **strong**.

Correct: And the boy grew **stronger** and **stronger**.

Qualifiers such as "both," and "all" must go before possessive words.

Incorrect: He lost **his all** investment.

Correct: He lost **all his** investment.

Avoid the mistakes of using **farther** and **further** in comparing distance.

Incorrect: Which of the following places is **further**?

Correct: Which of the following places is **farther**?

The use of **prefer**:

Incorrect: I prefer biking **from** skating.

Correct: I prefer biking **to** skating.

Use the superlative adjective (e.g., most) in the latter part of sentences.

Incorrect: My brother is the **most** enterprising and ablest man I have seen.

Correct: My brother is the ablest and **most** enterprising man I have seen.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

1. Are your dresses _____ shorter these days? (A. More
B. much)

Answer: B

A

2. There is too _____ noise in the air. (A. much B.
many)

Answer: A

3. I have ____ worries than you do. (A. less B. fewer)

Answer: B

4. We will go out _____. (A. next Friday B. Friday
next)

Answer: A

5. ____ question in the script carries equal marks. (A.

Every B. Each)

Answer: B

6. Dad gave me _____ money to spend at school. (A. little B. a little C. few D. small)

Answer: B

7. Tell me the ____ news. (A. last B. latest)

Answer: B

8. The _____ of the story was emphasized. (A. important B. importance)

Answer: B

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words used to join a word to another word, a sentence to another sentence, and a word to a clause. For example: He was playing music, yet I studied. Here, "He was playing music" is a sentence, and "I studied" is another sentence. Word "yet" is simply joining the two sentences together to convey key information in the compound sentence. There are several conjoining words that students commonly misuse in sentences. The following important rules are to be followed when using conjunctions:

Use **not only** followed by **but also**.

Incorrect: She did **not only** hug him, she kissed him.

Correct: Not **only did** she hug him, **but also** kissed him.

The use of **though** instead of **although**:

Incorrect: You look as **although** you have seen a monster!

Correct: You look as **though** you have seen a monster!

Avoid using **not** with **lest**, because **lest** is a negative word. When used, **should** must follow.

Incorrect: You had better work hard **lest not** you become poor.

Correct: You had better work hard **lest** you **should** become poor/lest you become poor.

In the absence of **should** or **shall**, "else" is appropriate. In essence, when you have will, would, or may instead of should or shall, "else" will replace "**lest**."

Incorrect: Drive fast to the airport **else**, you will miss your flight.

Correct: Drive fast to the airport, **or else** you will miss your flight.

Both must accompany **and**.

Incorrect: Both Jackson, Julian are together.

Correct: **Both** Jackson **and** Julian are together.

The use of **other**, **rather** and **than**:

Incorrect: I would leave **than** sit here with you.

Correct: I would **rather** leave **than** sit here with you.

Incorrect: **Than** sleeping late, I love studying.

Correct: **Other than** sleeping late, I love studying.

The use of the conditional **if** is different from **whether**. This is because **if** has a conditional connotation, while **whether** connotes uncertainty.

Incorrect: He doesn't come early, he will not be allowed entry.

Correct: **If** he doesn't come early, he will not be allowed entry.
(conditional)

Incorrect: She likes it or not, she will be punished

Correct: **Whether** she likes it or not, she will be punished.
(certainty)

Either or and **neither nor**:

Incorrect: We came to the spa but we didn't meet Jane and John.

Correct: We came to the spa but we met **neither** Jane nor John/we met **neither** of them.

Incorrect: My client is not mad and not crazy, the lawyer said.
Correct: My client is **neither** mad **nor** crazy, the lawyer said.

Incorrect: I love pigging out on ice-cream **or** yogurt.
Correct: I love pigging out on **either** ice-cream **or** yogurt.

Incorrect: It is clear; you are telling a lie **or** saying the truth.
Correct: It is clear; you are **either** telling a lie **or** saying the truth.

Incorrect: **Neither** would he eat the food or let us eat it.
Correct: **Neither** would he eat the food **nor** let us eat it.

The use of **such** and **that**: usually, **such that** is used when stating the extent or degree of something.

Incorrect: The rubber stretched that it broke.
Correct: The rubber was stretched **such that** it broke.

Incorrect: The stock market became flooded that it crashed.
Correct: The stock market became flooded **such that** it crashed.

Like is used to explain similarity and should be followed by a pronoun. Using **as**, it should be followed by a clause.

Incorrect: She sang alike **as** my sister.
Correct: She sang **like** my sister.

Incorrect: He was as bold **like** a lion.
Correct: He was **as** bold **as** a lion.

Incorrect: He ate like he was walking.
Correct: He ate as he was walking.

One conjoining word is enough to join two clauses successfully.

Incorrect: The director asked **that** what was his grade.

Correct: The director asked **what his grade was**.

Incorrect: He's often scared **that** he might repeat the course.

Correct: He's often scared he **might repeat the course**.

Incorrect: **Because** he wasn't quick enough, **therefore** we finished before him.

Correct: **Because**he wasn't quick enough, we finished before him.

Incorrect: He was angry. He slapped him.

Correct: He was angry, **so** he slapped him.

Incorrect: **Since** he is smart, **so** he always has his way.

Correct: **Since**he is smart, he always has his way / He is smart, so he always has his way.

The use of **so as** in a sentence is usually to indicate a purpose. When **so as**, be sure of the phrase that follows.

Incorrect: He attended the gathering **so that** he can catch the perpetrators.

Correct: He attended the gathering **so as** to catch the perpetrators.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

1. He had scarcely eaten___. (A. that his friend came B. when his friend came)

Answer: B

2. ___ did he help the poor kid, ___ he took him home.
(A. Not only/neither B. Neither/nor B. Not only/but also)

Answer: C

3. Read up _____ you should forget. (A. or else B. lest

C. else)

Answer: B

4. Bring me the report ___ I forget. (A. lest B. else)

Answer: A

5. She walked hurriedly ___ she would miss the bus. (A. or else B. lest C. else)

Answer: B

6. ___ Jude ___ Martin are good English students. (A. either/or B. both/and C. both/or)

Answer: B

Prepositions

To put in a simple way, prepositions serve as links within sentences. A preposition is used to indicate a relationship between nouns, phrases and/or pronouns. They are mostly very short words that stand in front of nouns. Also, they connect time, location, people, and objects when used in a sentence. Some of the examples are **of, to, under, in, into, with**, etc. Prepositions may be cumbersome to deal with in sentences. However, there are a few highlighted facts applicable that students may study as a guide to acclimatizing themselves with prepositional words.

- In the English language, there are more than one hundred prepositions.
- Prepositions are generally followed by nouns and pronouns.
- In making clear sentences, specific prepositions are required. this means some prepositions are not always substitutable. E.g., the use of the preposition "in" may not work in place of the preposition "on" in all cases.

Grammatical errors occur in the basic three types of preposition: preposition of time, place, and direction.

Preposition of Time

Prepositions in this category help to state when something had happened, has happened, or will happen. Examples of preposition of time are: **at**, **on**, **in**, **before** and **after**.

Abide by the following rules when using the preposition of time.
Use preposition **on** for days and dates of the month.

Incorrect: School resumes **in** Monday.

Correct: School resumes **on** Monday.

Incorrect: Christmas is **in** December 25th.

Correct: Christmas is **on** December 25th.

Incorrect: I got my birthday present **in** my birthday.

Correct: I got my birthday present **on** my birthday.

Use the preposition "in" when stating years, months, seasons, centuries and times of day.

Incorrect: My wife and I got married **on** 2002.

Correct: My wife and I got married **in** 2002.

Incorrect: Every year, my family vacation falls **on** spring.

Correct: Every year, my family vacation falls **in** spring.

Incorrect: Salvation came to us **on** the twentieth century.

Correct: Salvation came to us **in** the twentieth century.

Use **at** with **night**, **noon**, or a **festive occasion**.

Incorrect: We have our moments **in** the night.

Correct: We have our moments **at** night.

Incorrect: I go hiking **in** Christmastime.

Correct: I go hiking **at** Christmastime.

Incorrect: I will see you **in** noon.

Correct: I will see you **at** noon.

Use **at** when you indicate exactness/accuracy.

Incorrect: The lines met **in** exactly 90 degrees.

Correct: The lines met **at** exactly 90 degrees.

Incorrect: We will see each other **in** 4 p.m.

Correct: We will see each other **at** 4 p.m.

Incorrect: His shift is **in** 3 p.m.

Correct: His shift is **at** 3 p.m.

Incorrect: We eat dinner **in** 7 p.m. every night.

Correct: We eat dinner **at** 7 p.m. every night.

Avoid wrong usage of other time prepositions such as: **during**, **until**, **throughout**, **around**, and **about**.

Incorrect: The politician held the rally **around** the month.

Correct: The politician held the rally **throughout** the month.

Incorrect: The sun comes out **around** 6 a.m. every morning.

Correct: The sun comes out **about** 6 a.m. every morning.

Incorrect: She waited **till** she heard you had gone.

Correct: She waited **until** she heard you had gone.

Incorrect: He ran **round about** the circle.

Correct: He ran **around** the circle.

Incorrect: I met my wife **in** the holiday.

Correct: I met my wife **during** the holiday.

Preposition of Place

These are prepositions that indicate position. Avoid the errors shown in the following examples:

Incorrect: There is something hanging **in** the wall.

Correct: There is something hanging **on** the wall.

Incorrect: There are images **in** the page.

Correct: There are images **on** the page.

Incorrect: Maxwell is **at** Dubai, visiting his niece **at** the hospital.

Correct: Maxwell is **in** Dubai, visiting his niece **in** the hospital.

Incorrect: I am **on** the crossroads.

Correct: I am **at** the crossroads.

Incorrect: Let us meet **in** the airport.

Correct: Let us meet **at** the airport.

Use "inside" to indicate nonabstract positions and "in" for abstract positions.

Incorrect: The manual is locked **in** the car.

Correct: The manual is locked **inside** the car.

Incorrect: The fish is **in** the refrigerator.

Correct: The fish is **inside** the refrigerator.

Incorrect: I am living **inside** a province of Canada.

Correct: I am living **in** a province of Canada.

Preposition of Direction

Avoid mixing prepositions such as: **over**, **around**, and **past**.

Incorrect: Our horses run **across** the ranch every morning.

Correct: Our horses run **around** the ranch every morning.

Incorrect: That vehicle zoomed **passed** the truck.

Correct: That vehicle zoomed **past** the truck.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

He stepped _____ the house. (A. out B. outside C. in)

Answer: B

He flew _____ of town. (A. out B. outside C. away)

Answer: A

_____ 30th of January marks our wedding anniversary. (A. The B. In C. At)

Answer: A

We shall hang out _____ 6 o'clock tomorrow. (A. on B. at C. in)

Answer: B

They'll meet _____ five minutes. (A. at B. in)

Answer: B

Nouns

When you come in contact with the names of people, things (living or nonliving things), countable and uncountable, then, you are talking about nouns.

Avoid the following fundamental and likely errors in nouns:

Words like **furniture**, **luggage**, **baggage**, **information**, **news**, and **advice** are naturally singular.

Incorrect: Please pack your **baggages**.

Correct: Please pack your **baggage**.

Incorrect: We are ready to receive **informations** on the product.

Correct: We are ready to receive **information** on the product.

Incorrect: **These are the news** I love to hear.

Correct: **This is the news** I love to hear.

Incorrect: We are buying some **furnitures**.

Correct: We are buying some **furniture**.

Incorrect: Our government needs to care for the **poors**.
Correct: Our government needs to care for the **poor**.

Incorrect: Jesus provided food for the **blinds**.
Correct: Jesus provided food for the **blind**.

Incorrect: He said his **need** are numerous.
Correct: He said his **needs** are numerous.

Incorrect: Is there **bread**s on the table?
Correct: Is there **bread** on the table?

Do not use **brother** with **cousin**.

Incorrect: He's my **cousin brother**.
Correct: He's my **cousin**. (cousin is either male or female. "He" already states the sex)

Incorrect: My friends **has** arrived.
Correct: My friends **have** arrived.

Incorrect: The counselor gave me some **advise**.
Correct: The counselor gave me some **advice**.

Incorrect: I've got **five dollars** note in my wallet.
Correct: I've got a **five dollar** note in my wallet.

Incorrect: I have two dozens apple.
Correct: I have two dozen apples.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Kindly put your ____ here. (A. signature B. sign)

Answer: A

She is my _____. (A. cousin sister B. cousin)

Answer: B

He was my captain when I was in _____. (A. boarding B. the boarding house C. board)

Answer: B

God can heal the _____. (A. deafs B. deaf)

Answer: B

The ____ here is not pretty enough. (A. sceneries B. scenery)

Answer: B

Pronouns

Words used to avoid repetition of nouns are called pronouns.

Errors in pronouns may not appear common among English speakers, but the fact cannot be ruled out that for efficient communication, the pronoun is a fundamental part of speech that gets misused among students and other learners.

Pronoun errors occur in English when there is a disagreement between the pronouns and the number of nouns. If noun is singular, the pronoun has to be singular and vice versa. Another way errors occur in pronouns is when the verb does not agree with the subject of the sentence. However, these two errors are intertwined.

The following are examples of common pronoun errors in grammar. The use of **one of**, **some of**, and **none of** must be written so that the verb agrees with the subject. Below, singular verbs **eats**, and **was** agree with singular subjects.

Incorrect: **One of** my classmates **eat** a lot.

Correct: **One of** my classmates **eats** a lot.

Incorrect: **Some of** the king's servant **is** here.

Correct: **Some of** the king's servants **are** here.

Incorrect: **None of** the athlete **were** around.

Correct: **None of** the athletes **was** around.

Incorrect: **Each boy** and each girl **were** given an exercise book.

Correct: **Each boy** and each girl **was** given an exercise book.

If the word **one** is used in a sentence, you should use it throughout.

Incorrect: **Someone** needs to work hard so that **someone** can make ends meet in life.

Correct: **One** needs to work hard so that **one** can make ends meet in life.

Incorrect: **One** must take care of **himself**.

Correct: **One** must take care of **oneself**.

To avoid errors in using pronouns, all transitive verbs such as: **fill, enjoy, lend, give**, etc., must have an expressed subject in a sentence.

Incorrect: Elizabeth asked for her pen but she didn't give her.

Correct: Elizabeth asked for her pen but she didn't give **it** to her.

Incorrect: She drove the car to the gas station but the attendant refused to fill up.

Correct: She drove the car to the gas station but the attendant refused to fill **it** up.

Avoid errors in using an object in place of subject.

Incorrect: In few weeks to come, my friend and **me** will be discussing the investment platform.

Correct: In few weeks to come, my friend and **I** will be discussing the investment platform.

Here are some other common erroneous examples:

Incorrect: It feels good spending time with **they** and their family.

Correct: It feels good spending time with **them** and their family.

Incorrect: Jane announced **she** and **her** son's plans to leave the neighborhood next year.

Correct: Jane announced **her** and **her** son's plans to leave the neighborhood next year.

Incorrect: Both my wife and **myself** felt so embarrassed at the situation we found them in.

Correct: Both my wife and **I** felt so embarrassed at the situation we found them in.

Incorrect: It was **me** who robbed the bank last week.

Correct: It was **I** who robbed the bank week.

Incorrect: Who is there?

It is **me**.

Correct: Who is there?

It is **I**.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

1. Mr. Lin followed ___ and ___ son out of the grocery store. (A. him, his B. he, his)

Answer: A

2. Alan then chased ___ and ___ daughter out of his house. (A. her, her B. she, her C. he, him)

Answer: A

3. He gave ___ a good handshake after the presentation. (A. he B. his C. him)

Answer: C

4. The man confessed it was ___ who robbed the lady. (A. him B. he C. his)

Answer: B

5. I have told ___ to move out. (A. they B. them)

Answer: B

Interjections

Though not common in most academic writing, the interjection has its significance in several other forms of writing such as novels, fictional, emails and some other informal communication texts. Interjections are words used to indicate emotions such as surprise, love, hatred, anger, etc., when used in sentences. They may appear either at the beginning, middle or end of a sentence conveying emotion.

The fact about interjections is that, even though they show emotions, *they are not grammatically related to the sentence*. Because interjections are expressed independently, serving an emotive purpose and followed by a sentence, there are usually no associated errors with them. However, interjections must agree with the purpose of sentences they are used for.

Avoid contradiction between your sentence and the interjectory word.

Incorrect: **hooray!** He broke his jaw.

Correct: **What a shame!** He broke his jaw.

Incorrect: **Bravo!** I'm not finished.

Correct: **Alas!** I'm not finished.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate interjections from the statements below:

_____ You completed the task (A. Continue! B. Good work!)

Answer: B

We made it. ____ (A. What a pity! B. Wow!)

Answer: B

GRAMMAR COMPONENTS AND WORDS

As English language learners, there are basic and complex English grammar errors made when communicating. To juggle your memory a bit, language use refers to your ability to effectively comprehend (when spoken or written to), and produce (communicate) both spoken and written words. So the understanding of how the English language works is confined in thorough appropriation of English grammar rules which the English language lives by. As described in chapter one, there are basic English grammar rules to abide by in order to communicate well. Any attempt to do otherwise would lead to a colossal grammatical error. In the same instance, other complex English grammar components and words also have specific rules to pay due respect to when being used, be it formally or informally. All said, let us go through the components and words.

Abbreviations

In a short sentence, an abbreviation (abbr.) is a chunk of lengthy phrases or words. As a user of the English language, you can use an abbreviation when you need to reduce a large number of words in a sentence to a single reduced sequence of letters, or to chunk an extensively long sentence into fewer letters to make your statement/sentence more interesting to read. For example, if you have to use North Atlantic Treaty Organization for every place you need to simply use NATO (an abbreviation), you'll realize how boring your writing can be to your audience. A more important fact associated with abbreviations is that they make communication easy for us. in this case, you don't have to write or speak every word for every statement you mean. For example, "I am the CEO/CFO/MD of that company" looks cool right?

To clarify the concept of abbreviation; there are forms of abbreviation which are called **acronym** and **initialism**. An acronym is derived from the initial letters of a long word or phrase. When National Aeronautic Space Administration is reduced to NASA, it's simply an acronym. In an acronym, you do not pronounce the acronym letter for letter; rather, you take it as a single word.

NB. Acronyms are pronounced as a word, e.g., NATO (nay tow), NASA (na sa).

Initialism is another version or form of abbreviation and it is derived when a phrase is reduced to initial letters. In this regard, initialized words are pronounced as individual letters. When you reduce National Football Academy to NFA, initialism is at work. Hence, initialized words are taken letter for letter.

NB. Initialisms are pronounced letter for letter, e.g., Personal Computer PC (peecee), NFA (en ef ay) Alternative Dispute Resolution (ay dee ar).

Whether you initialize or use acronym, abbreviating words can be erroneous if you do not acclimatize yourself to them.

Now that you know what abbreviation means and the varieties of abbreviation in English grammar, let's go through common abbreviations and rules that need to be taken care of in order to avoid unnecessary errors.

You can abbreviate a word by omitting one or more syllables.

examination	exam
memorandum	memo
decapitation	decap
recapitulate	recap
advertisement	advert

In the case of names, you can also omit one or more syllables.

Fredrick	Fred
Jackson	Jack
Timothy	Tim
Rajji	Raj

Use cases of common written sentential abbreviations, pay attention to the following:

If in a sentence you mean to say **for example**, simply use **e.g.** E.g. is initialized from the Latin phrase *exempli gratia*, which in English is translated as **for example**.

Also, do not confuse **e.g.** with **i.e.**

So **e.g.** means for example, and it is used for sentence clarification by giving instances. **I.e.** is from the Latin phrase *id est*, which translates to **that is** or **such that** in English. It is used to give more information or elaborate a sentence. However, these two (i.e., and e.g.) may be used to clarify a sentence, **i.e.**, by explaining the sentence more or by illustration, and **e.g.** explaining by citing examples. Note the following differences:

Drinking and driving is dangerous, **i.e.**, the eyes become blurry, and the cognitive orientation is affected too.

Drinking and driving is dangerous; it can cause a lot of damage, **e.g.**, damage to you and damage to the environment where it happens.

To say **take note**, or when you want to draw readers' attention to an important aspect of your writing, use **P.S.** Although commonly used in corporate organizations in memos and other messages, when used in noncorporate writing, **P.S.**, from the words **post script**, is an effective abbreviation tool for communicating.

Do not confuse the abbreviations for these three words: **they're**, **their**, and **there**.

Many a student makes the error of using **they're** to mean **they are**, in English grammar. While that may look fancy or interesting, it is nonstandard to use. Desist from saying "they're coming;" rather, use "they are coming."

Another error students make is deriving the abbreviation **ther're** from **there are**. Think about this: can "ther're" be substituted for "there are?" the answer is no. It is nonstandard to use it in English grammar. If at all you wish to make an abbreviation from the word "there," a standard acceptable way is to shorten "is."

So instead of having **there is**, you can actually have **there's**.

To avoid abbreviation errors when you are either writing or speaking, *you need to pay attention to the following commonly used abbreviations in English grammar:*

Use **Mr./Mr** and **Mrs./Mrs/Ms.** when you mean **Mister** or **Missus**, respectively.

The idea behind abbreviated Mister/Missus with or without the "dot" connotation is that; "Mr/Mrs" without the dot is acceptable in British English grammar, while Mr./Mrs. Is acceptable in American English grammar.

Abbreviate the word **appointment** as **appt.**, and never mistake it for **apt.**, used for the word **apartment**"

When you see **misc.**, it means **miscellaneous**.

Tel. implies **telephone**.

Est. implies **established**.

Stop writing **RSVP** squashed together; rather, you separate the letters with a dot such as **R.S.V.P**. The popular initialism R.S.V.P is from the French phrase *Repondez, s'ilvous plait* used in inviting guest to occasions such as birthday parties and it simply to means "please reply or kindly reply" if you'll be present.

When you see **Ave.** certainly, **Avenue** is implied and it is similar to having **Cyn.** as **Canyon**.

Avoid writing **BSC** as the abbreviation for **Bachelor of Science**. This is absolutely wrong. The only appropriate way to go about a standard abbreviation of this is by using **BSc/BS**. Whichever you use here is simply perfect.

MCQs: Find the appropriate abbreviations for the following:

1. And so on/and lots more

- A. etc.
- B. id est

Answer: A

2. Take note/please note

- A. e.g.

B. N.B

Answer: B

3. Abbreviation to mean "namely" is

A. vice versa

B. viz

Answer: B

4. Page thirteen means

A. P38

B. p.13

Answer: B

5. Compact disc read only memory

A. CD ROM

B. CD-ROM

Answer: B

6. Universal Serial Bus

A. UnSB

B. U.S.B

C. USB

Answer: C

Homonyms, Homophones, Homographs and Heteronyms

The joy of every communicator in the English language lies in getting the

right information to the audience with the use of the appropriate words and true intention. To be an effective communicator, you must have a solid command of words to use in various contexts. You must acclimatize yourself with a variety of word meaning, spelling and how they can function effectively in sentences. This idea of knowing the means and spelling of words and what they mean in sentences brings us to the topic of homonyms.

Homonyms

Homonyms refer to those words that are spelled differently but sound similar and have different meanings. Even native English language speakers agree that the English language has a lot of confusing words with similar sound when heard or pronounced. However, it is interesting to know that many of those words have different spellings. You should avoid the error of confusing words to mean distinctive meanings in your sentences, so pay attention to these grammatical errors that students and writers often make when using homonyms in the English language.

Confusion with the use of Loose/Lose

This is one of the most commonly confused homonyms among English speakers. **Loose** simply means not bound together. It can also mean not firm or tightly fitted to something. **Lose**, meanwhile, means to be without, deprived of, or stop having.

Incorrect: I am afraid I might **loose** you.

His pants are **lose**.

Correct: I am afraid I might **lose** you.

His pants are **loose**.

Confusion with Their/There

Another mistake common to students lies in this category. It is almost difficult to identify in speech, but the error is always exposed when discovered as written statements.

Their is used as a possessive word. It means belonging to someone or to them. On the other hand, **there** is used to mean position, state, etc.

Example

Incorrect: The man was killed over **their**.

These are **there** books.

Correct: The man was killed over **there**.

These are **their** books.

Confusion with Your/You're

The same error happens as for their/there explained earlier. Just like “their,” **your** is used as a possessive word, while **you're** is simply derived from **you are** (like an abbreviation).

Incorrect: **Your** at the top of **you're** career today because you have worked hard in the past.

Your innocent, and I know that.

Correct: **You're** at the top of **your** career today because you have worked hard in the past.

You're innocent, and I know that.

*Remember: To know if you are making the right sentences with the words, ensure you cross-check by replacing the words alternatively. To a large extent, by alternating the words, you're good to go. Whether you want to use **their**, **there**, **your** or **you're**, an alternation of the polar word (e.g., your for you're) will be good for you to determine which is correct to use.*

Confusion with Raw/Roar

These two words are very identical in pronunciation just like others. The distinctive difference is that **raw** refers to the unprocessed state of something, i.e., uncooked. It may also mean “not organized or something new.” **Roar** is referred to as a loud noise made by a lion or a machine engine.

Incorrect: The statistical table was made using **roar** data.

The guy could **raw** to make the room shake.

Correct: The statistical table was made using **raw** data.

The guy could **roar** to make the room shake.

Confusion with Dearth/Death

Dearth simply means the scarcity of something. It can also mean insufficient. A dearth of something means that thing is not enough. **Death** is entirely different and it means loss of life.

Incorrect: The prosecutor dropped the charges because there was a death of evidence.

He was put to **dearth** by hanging.

Correct: The prosecutor dropped the charges because there was a dearth of evidence.

He was put to **death** by hanging.

Confusion with Bare/Bear

Bare simply means without something appropriate. “I killed the lion with my **bare** hands” means: *killed the lion without using anything like a gun or other objects.*

Bear can mean an animal. It can also mean to “carry something” or “tolerate something or someone.” Its past tense is **bore**. The food in the barn belongs to the “bear” (talking about the animal). “He asked her to bear with him” (meaning tolerate).

Incorrect: The man can walk on hot coals **bear**foot.

It’s really hard to **bare** the burden of four kids alone.

Correct: The man can walk on hot coals **bare**foot.

It’s really hard to **bear** the burden of raising four kids alone.

The confusion with Dare/Dear

Dear is used regarding affection or to mean intimacy. In contrast, **dare** can be used in the form of a challenge.

Incorrect: My ex-boyfriend was so **dare** to me that I felt disappointed when he cheated on me.

He **deared** me to slap the soldier's face, and I did it gladly.

Correct: My ex-boyfriend was so **dear** to me that I felt disappointed when he cheated on me.

He **dared** me to slap the soldier's face, and I did it gladly.

Avoid the error of One's/Once

One's and **Once** are similarly interesting words among users in this present age, and a lot of writers find it difficult to use them appropriately because of lack of knowledge to distinguish between the two.

By simple analogy, **one's** is used as a possessive word. Just like you say the book is "his," "one's" can also be used in the same context. Further, when you use **one's** in a sentence, you are using it in a non-directional manner. For example, you can say, "It's good to take care of one's health," instead of saying "It is good to take care of your health." In this way, you are saying people or humans should take care of their health, not necessarily referring to a specific individual.

Once is another case word and it means "a single time," "on a one-time occasion" or "formerly." When you are using this word as compared to its counterpart, you are mentioning a single event of occurrence or a former event that had occurred.

Incorrect: He was **one's** an elementary school teacher before he realized politics was his true dream.

The apartment mates saw each other **one's** every three months, yet they quarreled like cat and mouse.

It is more important to pursue **once** dream in life, lest one end up unsatisfied.

I believe **once** family is more important than the billions of dollars to be made from business trips.

Correct: He was **once** an elementary school teacher before he realized politics was his true dream.

The apartment mates saw each other **once** every three months, yet they quarreled like cat and mouse.

It is important that one pursue **one's** dream in life, lest one end up unsatisfied.

I believe **one's** family is more important than the billions of dollars to be made from business trips.

Avoid the error of Too/Two

This basically is an example of homophone. As a learner, it is useful to get used to word inflections such as knowing that the word **too** is used in a sentence to emphasize a point. It can also be used instead of words like “very” and “also.” For example: “We walked too/very slowly and missed the bus.” Another case would be to say, “I’d like to shake hands with the governor too/also.”

The word **two** is separate. Two is a number or a figure expressed in words. You should never substitute “too” for “two” in a sentence.

Incorrect: Mark my words, the **too** men are to blame if he doesn’t come.
It is uncertain if I’ll want to go **two**.

Correct: Mark my words; the **two** men are to blame if he doesn’t come.

It is uncertain if I’ll want to go **too**.

Confusion with Through/Threw

This can be confusing at times if you don’t know which word is appropriate for a particular sentence. Actually, where confusion lies in these two words is in the “-th” pronunciation, and this shouldn’t be a problem anymore once you can familiarize yourself with the words right here and now.

Incorrect: The dog went **threw** the doorway and attacked the old man.
He couldn’t bear the pain any longer, so he **through** the

Infinity Stone away.

I thank God for all he has seen me **threw**.

Correct: The dog went **through** the doorway and attacked the old man.

He couldn't bear the pain any longer, so he **threw** the Infinity Stone away.

I thank God for all he has seen me **through**.

Avoid errors in using Waist/Waste

Waist is simply located below your ribs, and **waste** means to be extravagant, or squander something whether you are accountable for it or not.

Incorrect: He didn't know swinging with the **waste** was a bad idea for male participants in the competition.

It was futile chasing the thief since we knew we would **waist** our bullets.

Correct: He didn't know swinging with the **waist** was a bad idea for male participants in the competition.

It was futile chasing the thief since we knew we would **waste** our bullets.

Avoid the error of Toe/Tow

The **toe** is a member of your foot, and **tow** is to use a vehicle, helicopter, or boat to pull another boat, or vehicle or helicopter along.

Incorrect: There is a perfect way to **toe** your vehicle, in case you didn't know.

Dermatologists often say you should care for your **townails** nearly as much as you care for your face.

Correct: There is a perfect way to **tow** your vehicle, in case you didn't know.

Dermatologists often say you should care for your **toenails** nearly as much as you care for your face.

The confusion of Tail/Tale

Tail is usually a word related to animals or coins, and the word **tale** is a story that is imagined or true.

Incorrect: When you flip a coin, you'll get either heads or **tales**.

Have you read the book called *The **Tail** of Lady Bug?*

Correct: When you flip a coin, you'll get either heads or **tails**.

Have you read the book called *The **Tale** of Lady Bug?*

Avoid the mistakes of Red/Read

The word **read** retains its spelling in present tense and past tense. But **red** is primarily a color, and it may connote danger. In this case, the past tense of read is compared to red because of the pronunciation.

Incorrect: On Tuesday afternoon, an accident occurred because it was difficult to detect if the **read** light was damaged or working.

Daniel **red** the inscription aloud.

Correct: On Tuesday afternoon, an accident occurred because it was difficult to detect if the **red** light was damaged or working.

Daniel **read** the inscription aloud. (past tense)

MCQs: Find the appropriate answer to the following questions:

1. You ____ should come along.

- A. too/two
- B. too/many
- C. two/much

Answer: A

2. I told him to _____ me a letter.

- A. write
- B. right
- C. wright

Answer: A

3. I love to _____ him speak.

- A. hear
- B. here

Answer: A

4. Villagers declared war on the _____.

- A. which
- B. witch

Answer: B

5. That is the _____ we use in making bread.

- A. flour
- B. flower

Answer: A

Homographs

Among the varieties of homonyms is the homograph. By definition, homographs are words with the same spelling but have different meaning. Homographic words are mostly not pronounced the same way. Pay rapt attention to the following words and study their other meanings extensively. By doing that, you will be able to appropriate the “right” not “write” usage of these words when you intend to use them again.

Tear /Tear

The word **tear** can mean water droplets from the eyes when crying. It can also mean to rip a piece of paper into pieces. However, how the word is used in sentences and the appropriateness of the word in sentences is important for learners to know. You know which “tear” to refer to when writing sentences. You should also remember that “tear” meaning water drops from the eye when crying is a noun, while the second “tear” meaning ripping paper into pieces is used as a verb. So, when they are used, you’ve got to be careful how noun words and verb words are put to use.

Examples: 1. He keeps shedding **tears** because his heart is broken.
2. I’ll watch on YouTube how to **tear** the robot apart without damaging its engine.

Bow/Bow

When you hear, “Give me the bow” or “Give a tai chi bow to the master,” what comes to your mind? The first statement is meaningful based on the fact that “Give me the bow” sounds like you are being told to hand over an object: **bow**, a weapon for shooting an arrow. The second statement, “Give a tai chi bow to the master,” is also meaningful in the context that you are to demonstrate something: **bow meaning** bend forward at the waist to show respect to the master. Either way, messages are being sent. This requires the noun and verb practice as well as how they are pronounced, which shows in the noun and verb forms as well.

Examples: 1. The three Hebrew men refused to **bow** to the gods of the land (verb – action).
2. The archery company that specializes in making **bows** is in Los Angeles (noun – bow as something made).

Capital/Capital

This homographic word should not scare you as a learner who’s ready to gain knowledge in English grammar skills. One, **capital** can be a federal city. Two, **capital** can be used as a legal term to mean punishment. In these cases, the word is serving the noun function which may be confusing to you, but

you have to understand the context of the word usage.

Illustrations:

1. His crime was so great that his retribution was **capital**. NB: retribution means punishment for a criminal act, and the word “capital” there means “punishment by death.”
2. Death by lethal injection should be the **capital** punishment for rape around the globe.
3. Did you know Atlanta is the **capital** of Georgia?
4. I doubt Mexico is the **capital** of all drug cartels in the world.

Paste/Paste

Paste is a mixture of content or a processed content, e.g., tomato paste. In contrast, paste can mean to stick an object on another.

Examples:

1. Kindly pass me the **paste** to add to the sauce.
2. Melissa was bitter because the art design she **pasted** on the school board was removed by an arrogant classmate or hers.

Lead/Lead

Lead is a metallic material and also can mean to show someone a destination. However, the past tense of lead is **led**. Therefore, do not make the mistake of misrepresentation when using the word “lead” in sentences.

Examples:

1. The engineer could not use the **lead** due to

- the fault detected when he test-ran it.
2. He asked if the idea would not **lead** them into temptation.

Rose/Rose

Rose can either be the name of a person, color, or the name of type of flower. Also, it can serve as the past tense of rise.

Examples:

1. He **rose** in the morning and began to shout as he jumped and smiled.
2. Every name does not appeal to me, but when I hear **Rose**, my soul is lifted.

Canvass/Canvas

Let's get a mix of art terminology and regular English grammar using canvass and canvas. These can be very confusing as homographic words in English grammar. Simply put, **canvass** is verb, and it means to seek support or help or agreement on something. **Canvas** on the other hand, is a kind of cotton or linen clothing material.

Examples:

1. This is what most politicians do when it's time to campaign; they **canvass** for support.
2. Most artworks I love most are made on **canvas**.

MCQs: Find the appropriate answer for the following:

1. Votes are gotten based on how you can _____.
A. canvas

- B. canvass
- C. converse

Answer: B

2. It is hard to determine if the price of goods is ____.

- A. fare
- B. fair
- C. fear

Answer: B

3. Can you please tell the names of the ____ coming through the door?

- A. pear
- B. pair
- C. pare

Answer: B

4. We are not sure he will ____ them there.

- A. leed
- B. lead
- C. led

Answer: B

5. it is difficult for saints to ____.

- A. lye
- B. lie

Answer: B

PUNCTUATION MARKS

Among common grammatical errors in the English language, punctuation errors are the most common. If you are not a good reader, you might not be able to detect the blunders. Punctuation implies using spacing, signs, and some other symbols with the intention of making readers understand either spoken or written texts. When you communicate, punctuation marks enable you to appear like an expert. Whether you are speaking or writing, there is always a need to punctuate. In fact, English grammar isn't complete without punctuation marks. Let's look at some simple illustrations:

1. Since the launch of Ruger 57 other critical reviews have it that Ruger 57 Company has not only fulfilled its mission but has also overtaken its competitors in the handguns market thanks to its outstanding innovation and development invested.
2. "Since the launch of Ruger 57, other critical reviews have it that Ruger 57 Company has not only fulfilled its mission, but has also overtaken its competitors in the handguns market – thanks to its outstanding innovation and development invested."
3. "In the beginning was the word the word was with God and the word was God."
4. "In the beginning was the word; the word was with God, and the word was God."

If you are not a good reader, you might not be able to make sense of what is written in the first and third paragraphs. And now, when you read the second and fourth paragraphs, you'd realize that you could decipher the paragraphs easily and make sense of what is written. Your ability to do this is credited to punctuation at work in the paragraphs.

Another fact about punctuation is that it helps you to make diverse meanings from a sentence. A popular example will give you a clear meaning here:

A plain text without punctuation

Given the statement, “Woman without her man is nothing,” this appears ambiguous, right? Let’s look at the punctuated texts below:

“Woman without her man, is nothing.” (meaning that men are important to women)

“Woman, without her, man is nothing.” (meaning that women are important to men)

The above mentioned illustration simply helps to know that punctuation can help to differentiate meanings from words joined together to make sentences. Without punctuation, you won’t know exactly what the statement is talking about.

All told, there are several punctuation marks commonly used in English grammar. The commonly used ones are explained in this chapter.

- a. Period (also known as a full stop)
- b. Semicolon
- c. Colon
- d. Dash
- e. Hyphen
- f. Exclamation marks
- g. Quotation marks
- h. Apostrophe
- i. Ellipsis
- j. Comma
- k. Question mark

Simply following the correct and appropriate use of these punctuation marks will enable you to make good sentences and communicate effectively when writing.

Period (.)

A period can also be called a “full stop.” After you are done writing a complete statement or sentence, it should end with a period. Also, period one of the three punctuation marks used in ending sentences. An important thing you should know about the period is that irrespective of the number of abbreviations used in a sentence, a period must always come last, being the final stop. There are a few rules to follow so as to avoid errors when using a period.

Do not add another period to a sentence which already ends with a period. If you have an abbreviation as the last word in a sentence, an additional period will make the sentence erroneous. This is because, initialized words, e.g., O.C.P.D., are already making use of periods (dots) to separate the letters standing for each initial of each word. So, you must avoid adding an extra period when the last letter is already accompanied by one.

Incorrect: Kindly wait for him. He’ll catch up with you..

I am the new C.M.D..

Correct: Kindly wait for him. He’ll catch up with you.

I am the new C.M.D.

A period is meant to be added after a complete sentence has been made. This rule is also important if you want to appear proficient in writing. Imagine you are talking, and you do not complete a sentence before progressing to another; that will make your listeners think something is wrong or you probably don’t know what you want to say exactly. By not adding an ending punctuation mark simply makes it incomplete. Never leave out a period to conclude your sentence.

Incorrect: Nothing is as sweet as eating candy

Correct: Nothing is as sweet as eating candy.

For indirect questions, ensure you apply a period.

People often omit the period to end indirect questions. Indirect questions are statements made by third persons. For example:

[illegible]

Jade: Where was the money?

(direct question)

Joan >>>>>>>>>>>>>>> → John

Jade asked Jude where the money was. (indirect question)

In this case, avoid using any contradictory punctuation mark; rather, use a period to end the statement.

Exclamation (!)

This is mostly used in storybooks, novels and other literary texts. It's rare to find exclamation marks in formal texts, publications, reports and some others. However, *exclamation marks are part of the verbal statements we make daily*. When you, out of surprise, say "Wow," what you have done simply shows an exclamation (i.e., how surprised or flabbergasted you are). So, by definition, exclamation marks are used to indicate surprise and emphasis in sentences. Also, Exclamations points are those marks that conclude interjectory words in English grammar. Check out the illustrations below:

I am so disappointed in your attitude!

Yeah, we won!

You went? Wow!

I am simply the best!

I repeat; it's my time to reign!

Never use exclamation marks in formal writing. Don't forget this have been mentioned earlier; exclamation marks mostly appear in informal or conversational writing.

Ellipsis (...)

The ellipsis is used by prolific English language writers. It is a special kind of punctuation because of the beauty it adds to sentences and paragraphs as a whole. If you desire to omit a word, short paragraph, phrase or line of statement from a passage, ellipsis is the right punctuation mark for such purpose. Another interesting fact about ellipses is that they make your readers

inquisitive toward your paragraph. Readers become more interested in finding out more about the omitted part of the sentence or paragraph you are talking about.

Popularly, the ellipsis uses just three dots (three periods). Although, some other scholarly books may use more than three dots, the most appropriate number of dots applied in creating an ellipsis is three. Take note of the errors to avoid when using the ellipsis in the below illustrations:

If you are omitting sentences or words in the middle of, or between sentences, use an ellipsis.

Full statement:

“I am a man of virtue leaving no stone unturned, lest I lose my heritage.”

Ellipsis rewritten:

“I am a man of virtue leaving no stone unturned...”

When applying the appropriate ellipsis, you should leave out punctuation marks like commas.

Let’s evaluate this rule using the excerpt from Abraham Lincoln’s address to the Americans during the period of mass protests and upheaval of racism and discrimination in America.

The full text says,

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

Ellipsis rewritten:

“...our fathers brought forth...a new nation...dedicated to the proposition...”

Comma (,)

A comma is simply a pause in a sentence. It is also used to join words or sentences together. You should also know that a comma can sometimes serve

the function of the conjunction “and” in a sentence. Many ways to avoid comma errors will be shown you as you read further. Also, the use cases to perfectly punctuate your writing with the comma will be explained and detailed as you read on.

Ensure to use commas to make your statement clearer.

Perhaps you have groups and different categories of words; use commas for separation in order to avoid confusing the readers.

Incorrect: The money was shared among his wife mother children company staff and other relatives.

Correct: The money was shared among his wife, mother, children, company staff, and other relatives.

Simply use a comma instead of the conjunction “and” between **two** adjectives.

Using “and” isn’t a bad idea, but applying a comma makes your writing eloquent and intelligent.

Incorrect: On my way to the grocery store yesterday, I met a **tattered** and **grievous** man.

Julius Caesar was a **mighty** and **influential** man in his time.

Correct: On my way to the grocery store yesterday, I met **a tattered, grievous** man.

Julius Caesar was a **mighty, influential** man in his time.

If you have the name or title of a person in a sentence, use commas before and after the name or title.

Incorrect: Do you Dan think he will come?

Will he the CEO appear in court tomorrow?

Would you pass me the salt? Yes Uncle, I will.

Correct: Do you, Dan, think he will come?

Will he, the CEO, appear in court tomorrow?

Would you pass me the salt? Yes, Uncle, I will.

Looking at the sentences above, you'll discover that the comma in "do you, Dan..." helps to make a clear, direct question to Dan specifically, if "he thinks he will come." Likewise the second statement, "Will he, the CEO..." helps to let the listener know that the person to "appear in court tomorrow," is the CEO.

Avoid making comma errors when separating the calendar days, months and years, and location.

Incorrect: My girlfriend and I met on July 15 1980 at the train station.

My mom and I are going to have our vacation on May 15th 2020 in Dubai UAE.

Correct: My girlfriend and I met on July 15, 1980, at the train station.

My mom and I are going to have our vacation on May 15th, 2020, in Dubai, U.A.E.

Avoid using a comma if you are omitting any part of the date in a sentence.

Incorrect: My grandpa died in October, last year.

They should travel in November, 2020.

Correct: My grandpa died in October last year.

They should travel in November 2020.

If you have compound sentences, use commas to separate each sentence to have a clearer meaning.

Incorrect: Although he was not in class he did his best in the classwork.

He was even though you didn't notice the best candidate for the job.

Correct: Although he was not in class, he did his best in the classwork.

He was, even though you didn't notice, the best candidate for the job.

Use a comma when you have two or more independent clauses.

Incorrect: He quarreled with his wife before leaving home drove to his friend's house and went to the club.

Correct: He quarreled with his wife before leaving home, drove to his friend's house, and went to the club.

Avoid using a comma when you have "and" conjoining only two words or entities.

Incorrect: You may share the fruits between her, and him.

Correct: You may share the fruits between her and him.

The only situation you may use a comma before "and" is in a compound independent sentence of at least three clauses.

Incorrect: Barrister Mike was a great man he was a magician a father of three kids and was loved by many.

Correct: Barrister Mike was a great man, he was a magician, a father of three kids, **and** was loved by many.

Use a comma when giving more details about someone or something. Please pay attention to the errors students make, and learn the appropriate way in the sentences below.

Incorrect: John the beloved who followed his master everywhere is in our midst.

Mr. James the ruthless soldier was assassinated during the coup d'état.

Apostle Paul who persecuted the Christians eventually became a hardened preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Correct: John, the beloved, who followed his master everywhere, is in our midst.

Mr. James, the ruthless soldier, was assassinated during the coup d'état.

Apostle Paul, who persecuted the Christians, eventually became a hardened preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Apply a comma to separate a question from a statement referring to the same thing. Many students often commit this error as well. Rather than including a comma, they use a period instead, and that is erroneous.

Incorrect: He couldn't go. Could he?

I can eat my cake now. Can I?

You can't eat your cake and have it at the same time. Can you?

Correct: He couldn't go, could he?

I can eat my cake now, can I?

You can't eat your cake and have it at the same time, can you?

Use a comma immediately after words such as **therefore**, **so**, **however**, **moreover**, **hence**, **thereafter**, etc. when used in sentences.

Incorrect: I will not pursue him for the money, moreover I still have his car with me.

He observed for several hours and thereafter began to dance.

She'd been smiling at me for about forty-five minutes;
so I approached her to know if we had met before.

Correct: I will not pursue him for the money; moreover, I still have his car with me.

He observed for several hours, and thereafter, began to dance.

She'd been smiling at me for about forty-five minutes; so, I approached her to know if we had met before.

Colon (:)

The colon is another kind of punctuation mark that many learners and writers leave out when writing in the English language. It is not so uncommon that some articles have elements of punctuation marks like the colon, and that is why you need to learn how it functions and also learn the errors to avoid when using colons in sentences. Technically, the colon is used to explain or give a list in the same way that “e.g.,” “i.e.,” and namely are used in sentences. So, pay attention to the illustrations in the rules below.

For official letter writing, *use a colon following the salutation even if you are addressing the letter to the person by their first name.* This is in contrast to writing an informal letter where a comma is used because the person being addressed is familiar. Although many writers are often confused about making distinctions between using a colon or a comma, that doesn't mean it is appropriate to keep the confusion going. Now that you are informed about the differences, ensure you make use of it.

For example: Dear Mr. Matthew:
Distinguished Senator:
Dear Ms. Melissa:

In the absence of introductory words like “for example,” and so on, use colon.

Correct: Three things can make a man happy: good job, good wife, and amazing children.

We need a candidate with the qualities of: knowledge of Microsoft Office Access, programming software, and critical reasoning skills.

Do not use a colon if it does not follow a complete statement.

For example:

Incorrect: If you want your readers to understand your content, and ensure your supervisor awards you a good grade, you should : (1) write legibly, (2) support your points with facts, and (3) cite relevant examples.

Correct: If you want your readers to understand your content, and ensure your supervisor awards you a good grade, you should (1) write legibly, (2) support your points with facts, and (3) cite relevant examples.

You can use a colon to replace a semicolon when you have two clauses with one clause explaining the other without the use of the conjunction “and.”

I love vacations: traveling to Paris in France is my favorite.

In a sentence, *if just a clause follows the colon, do not capitalize the first letter immediately after the colon.* But if there are more than two sentences still explaining the same point and not joined with a conjunction, you should capitalize the first letter immediately after the colon and also capitalize the sentence next. Check the examples below;

He just realized after a decade, how bad he is at mathematics: **he** doesn't know what one plus one is equal to.

He just realized after a decade, how bad his spoken English had been: **He** doesn't understand why “give him him book” is wrong and “give her her book” is right. **He** also doesn't know the rules guiding the use of a period in English grammar.

Semicolon (;)

It is similar in usage to the colon to a large extent, but the use cases of the semicolon are limited. Read on to learn the errors.

Use the semicolon before words like **for example**, **therefore**, **i.e.**, and **however**, when they are about to make a complete statement.

I am sure the newly passed economic bill will favor us; **for example**, allowing foreign investors, releasing bonds to citizens in diaspora, investing in infrastructure and encouraging exportation of local products will return our economy back to the seat of glory.

I have told you before; **i.e.**, drinking and driving will truncate his life.

Where you do not have conjunction words such as “and,” a semicolon is good to apply.

Incorrect: Let’s meet at the bar I have good news for you.

Can you come to my office I have a job for you.

Correct: Let’s meet at the bar; I have good news for you.

Can you come to my office; I have a job for you.

Quotation Marks (“”)

To write intelligently in the English language, the quotation mark is a member of a punctuation marks category you cannot do without. Whether you are writing formally or informally, you must use quotation marks in a sentence, word or phrase. When you put quotation marks around a word, phrase or clause, or in a sentence, these instances become “quoted.” What are the rules to follow in avoiding quotation marks errors in English grammar? Read on!

If you need to quote a question statement, ensure to put quotation marks after the question mark. Quotation marks, when they are needed, always carry the larger power above other punctuation in a sentence.

Incorrect: “After doing that, what next”? He asked.

He said to her, “Do you think we can have a kiss”?

She said, “He said, are you finished with the homework”?

Correct: “After doing that, what next?” he asked.

He said to her, “Do you think we can have a kiss after the class?”

She said, “He said, are you finished with the homework?”

Punctuation marks like the comma, ellipsis, and period used in sentences remain inside the quotation marks. Irrespective of the number of other kinds of punctuation marks in a sentence, once you need to quote, you must quote the whole sentence.

Incorrect: “A real soldier, who is not afraid of death, should be loyal, and fight for his country”...

“I am going to be the best version of myself; a man of virtue, optimistic, careful and always looking to make use of every opportunity even when everything appears difficult.”

Melissa said, “James said, ‘Put my phone on silence’”.

Correct: “A real soldier, who is not afraid of death, should be loyal, and fight for his country...”

“I am going to be the best version of myself; a man of virtue, optimistic, careful and always looking to make use of every opportunity even when everything appears difficult.”

Melissa said, “James said, ‘Put my phone on silence.’”

Apostrophe (’)

For possessive words, use an apostrophe.

Look at Abraham's curvy head.
That is the man's son.
Behind John is Dave's belt.
That backpack is his sister's, not his.

For names ending with "-s," use an apostrophe to show possession.

Incorrect: In Jesus' name we pray.

Those materials are Mr. Rawlings'.

Lees's car is the best I've ever seen in my entire life.

Twenty miles from here, is my brother-in-laws' apartment.

Correct: In Jesus's name we pray.

Those materials are Mr. Rawlings's.

Lee's car is the best I've ever seen in my entire life.

Twenty miles from here, is my brother-in-law's apartment.

For word contraction, use an apostrophe where the letter omitted is removed:

	you are	you're
I am	I'm	
they are		they're
he is	he's	
where is		where's
that is		that's
it is	it's	

When using an apostrophe for plural nouns to show possession, ensure the

noun is pluralized first, then add the apostrophe.

Incorrect: We are in the mens' world.

 There is the womens' locker.

 The actresses's costume is here.

 That is the Jones's residence.

Correct: We are in the men's world.

 There is the women's locker.

 The actresses' costume is here.

 That is the Jones' residence.

Avoid forming plurals for numbers and capital letters by using an apostrophe.

Incorrect: I was born in the **90's**.

 She got married in the **1880's**.

 She's a good learner as she has learned the
ABC's of common errors in English
grammar.

Correct: I was born in the **90s**.

 She got married in the **1880s**.

 She's a good learner as she has learned the
ABCs of common errors in English
grammar.

Avoid using an apostrophe with possessive words like **his**, **hers**, **theirs**, etc.

Incorrect: Although he believed the grade was his's, she had always
known it's hers's.

 The idea behind the innovation was theirs's.

Those cupcakes belong to my brother, not your's.

Correct: Although he believed the grade was his, she had always known it's hers.

The idea behind the innovation was theirs.

Those cupcakes belong to my brother, not yours.

Hyphens (-)

Hyphens are used to showcase compound words. These compound words may come as two, three, or four words to refer to a single thing. Before studying the rules attached to learning how the hyphen is used, look at the examples below:

Eye-opening (meaning that an unexpected revelation is being revealed)

Mother-in-law (the mother of your wife)

Door-in-the-face (using a big request as a means to get other smaller requests)

Foot-in-the-door (the opposite of the Door-in-the-face)

Now, let's check out the rules you must not break in using hyphenation.

The first rule in hyphenation is: *before you think of hyphenating two unfamiliar words, make sure you check them in your dictionary*. This will enable you to be sure that you are not making a mistake. Most times, the major mistakes students make is that they use unfamiliar words and hyphenate them before taking time to find out. For example, "eyewitness" must never be hyphenated, but "eye-opener" exists in the dictionary hyphenated, and not joined together. This makes the rule valid that your dictionary must be your closest pal if you desire to be excellent at hyphenating words.

Use hyphens when you have two or more adjectival words appearing before a noun and serving as a single meaning.

Before she met me, little did she know that I was such a

handsome-looking man.

It was a **record-breaking** experience in my family to be the first to meet the president.

Hyphenate when you have adverbs used as compound sentences in front of a noun.

Incorrect: A **well known** record about the indicted artist was banned last week.

The **long awaited** engagement took place last week.

Correct: A **well-known** record about the indicted artist was banned last week.

The **long-awaited** engagement took place last week.

Ensure you hyphenate words that state fractions of numbers and compound numbers like twenty-one and so on.

Incorrect: To bake a cake, you need **one fifth** of a tin of milk.

I will be **twenty four** on July fourth.

Correct: To bake a cake, you need **one-fifth** of a tin of milk.

I will be twenty-four on July fourth.

Dash (–)

Dashes are interesting and rare punctuation marks in English grammar. The difference between a dash and hyphen is in the “length.” A dash is typically longer than hyphen. And another outstanding difference is that, while a hyphen helps separate compound words, a dash is mostly used to complement an already existing sentence with another related sentence.

For example, *using a dash for open compound words*, you can have, “a primary school – secondary debate competition.”

You can use a dash to state the time frame of an event, e.g., “The historic incident occurred during the years 1990 – 2030.”

Also, use a dash to elaborate more on your sentence only in a conversational style of writing, e.g., “The Ruger 57 pistol has the fantastic features of the 5.7 round such as flat shooting and soft clicking – enabling you to shoot multiple rounds at targeted positions.”

Remember; consistency is the key to remembering the rules and how to avoid errors in punctuation marks. Keep studying and practicing – that’s the path to expertise.

General MCQs on Punctuation marks — Find the appropriate answer to the following:

1. She’s at the ____ office.

- A. M.D.’s
- B. M.D.s

Answer: A

2. How many dots should a standard ellipsis have?

- A. 2
- B. 3
- C. 4

Answer: B

3. I love my _____.

- A. wife daughter and son
- B. wife, daughter, and son
- C. wife, daughter and son

Answer: B

4. Will you kiss the bride?__

- A. Yes pastor I will.
- B. Yes, Pastor, I will.
- C. Yes, Pastor I will.

Answer: B

5. They met on the 3rd of _____ 2019.

- A. May
- B. May,
- C. ,May

Answer: B

6. He needed to travel ____ he phoned his wife.

- A. ,so,
- B. so,
- C. so

Answer: A

7. I wish to speak with you(_) can we talk later?

- A. :**
- B. ;**
- C. ,**

Answer: B

8. Come with the following materials(_) glue, crayons, and pencils.

- A. :
- B. ;
- C. ,

Answer: A

9. _____ he asked.

- A. "How do I go about this"?
- B. "How do I go about this?"
- C. How do I go about this?"

Answer: B

10. She shouted, _____

- A. "Get away from me."
- B. "Get away from me".

Answer: A

11. I really don't know _____ heart I might have broken in the past year.

- A. whose
- B. who's
- C. what's

Answer: A

12. ____ at the door?

- A. Whose
- B. Whos
- C. Who's

Answer: C

13. Do you know if the company is _____
or _____?

- A. task oriented, employee oriented
- B. task-oriented, employee-oriented
- C. task – oriented, employee – oriented

Answer: B

14. We need to have a _____
association this session.

- A. parent-teacher
- B. parent – teacher
- C. parent teacher

Answer: B

SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

A sentence is a statement that makes a complete thought. Sentence structure is composed of many parts with the subject and predicate being the foundation of every sentence structure. In this chapter, we will explore errors that can arise from the wrong usage of various parts of a sentence.

Present Tense

A present tense describes an event that is currently taking place or a state of being. For example, “I am glad” is a present tense. Present tenses are considered to be easy to master. However, people still make mistakes despite their simplicity. Here are some common mistakes that are often made with the use of present tense:

Don’t forget to add “s” to the end of the third-person singular in the present sample.

Incorrect: Kid’s health **depend** on eating enough vegetables.

Correct: Kids’ health **depends** on eating enough vegetables.

Don’t use the present simple instead of present continuous for actions that are happening at the moment.

Incorrect: He **walks** so slowly.

Correct: He is **walking** so slowly.

Don’t use **will** instead of the present simple to express a future action after words such as **whether, if, as soon as, and before**.

Incorrect: If the weather **will be** bad, we will not go to the mall.

Correct: If the weather **is** bad, we will not go to the mall.

Don’t use the present continuous instead of present simple when talking about well-known facts.

Incorrect: The earth **is revolving** around the sun.

Correct: The earth **revolves** around the sun.

Don't use the present continuous after words that express emotions.

Incorrect: Father **is loving** you to the moon and back.

Correct: Father **loves** you to the moon and back.

Use the present perfect when talking about something that was not completed until the moment of speaking.

Incorrect: I **am waiting** for you since 7 o'clock.

Correct: I **have been waiting** for you since 7 o'clock.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Whatever _____ up comes down. (A. is going B. goes)

Answer: B

He _____ vibrantly and passionately. (A. speak B. speaks)

Answer: B

Past Tense

The past tense shows that an action occurred in the past. An example of the past tense is, "I ate rice last week." Below are common errors in the use of the past tense and how to use them appropriately:

Do not use the past continuous, but past simple to talk about past habits.

Incorrect: I **was walking** to church every day when I was young.

Correct: I **walked** to church every day when I was young.

Don't use the continuous to emphasize completed events at a particular time in the past, but past simple.

Incorrect: I **was calling** his office at 5 o'clock yesterday evening.

Correct: I **called** his office at 5 o'clock yesterday evening.

Do not use present perfect or past perfect, but past simple when referring to a

definite time in the past.

Incorrect: I **have woken up** at 6 o'clock this morning.

Correct: I **woke up** at 6 o'clock this morning.

Don't use the past simple, but present perfect to refer to time up to now.

Incorrect: I **didn't pay** my electricity bill yet.

Correct: I **haven't paid** my electricity bill yet.

Don't use the past continuous, but the past simple to repeat main events.

Incorrect: She **was cycling** to Ben's house last night.

Correct: She **cycled** to Ben's house last night.

Don't use the past continuous in the same way as "used to" when talking about things that used to happen but are no longer true.

Incorrect: We **were** playing games in the park in the summer.

Correct: We **used to** play games in the park in the summer.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Ben _____ swept the room yet. (A. didn't B. hasn't)

Answer: B

David _____ to the governor's house yesterday. (A. walked B. was walking)

Answer: A

Future Tense

The future tense in grammar reflects that the event described by the verb will happen in the future. Future tense can be in the form of simple future tense, future continuous tense, future perfect tense, or future perfect continuous tense.

Example:

I will pay you a visit as soon as possible.

The most common future tense mistakes are depicted and corrected below:

Don't miss out on **is**, **am**, or **are** when using the "going to" form.

Incorrect: I **going to** wash the clothes tomorrow.

Correct: I **am going to** wash the clothes tomorrow.

Don't miss out on **to** when you are using the "going to" form.

Incorrect: He is **going** eat that fruit again.

Correct: He is **going to** eat that fruit again.

Don't add **to** when using "will."

Incorrect: She **will to** be sorry.

Correct: She **will** be sorry.

Don't use the "-ing" form of the verb instead of the base form with "will" or "going to."

Incorrect: She **will winning** the match.

Incorrect: She is **going to winning** the match.

Correct: She **will win** the match.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

He _____ angry. (A. will be B. will to be)

Answer: A

She is ____ dance again. (A. going B. going to)

Answer: B

First Person

By taking note of the pronouns in a sentence, you will be able to know whether it's the first, second, or third grammatical person. Pronouns such as **I** and **my** show that an individual is writing in first person. First-person pronouns can also be in plural forms such as **we**, **our**, and **us**.

Examples:

I am not oblivious to that fact.

We can stay at home if you allow **us** to.

It can be tricky to write in first person as it can be easy to make mistakes. Below are common mistakes associated with writing in first person:

Don't end a sentence with "I."

Incorrect: Jackson talked with **I**.

Correct: Jackson talked with **me**.

Don't start a sentence with "me."

Incorrect: **Me** and Ben went to the market yesterday.

Correct: Ben and **I** went to the market yesterday.

Don't say, "between you and I," say, "between you and me."

Incorrect: Let's keep this **between you and I**.

Correct: Let's keep this **between you and me**.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

David and _____ will be coming to your house. (A. I B. me)

Answer: A

The feud between you and _____ will never end. (A. I B. me)

Answer: B

Second Person

Just like their first-person counterparts, it can be tricky to use second-person pronouns. The second person refers to the audience of the speaker. Pronouns such as **you** and **your** depict the second person. It is the context of the statement that decides whether it is a singular or plural form of the second

person that is being used.

Examples:

You have to be careful.

Your dog is cute.

Here are some common errors people make when speaking or writing second-person pronouns:

Avoid shifting from second person to first or third person in a sentence.

Incorrect: We wanted to learn swimming from a coach but we found out that **you** can learn online.

Correct: We wanted to learn swimming from a coach but we found out that **we** can learn online.

Incorrect: If you are focused, **most people** will be able to achieve **their** dreams.

Correct: If you are focused, **you** will be able to achieve **your** dreams.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

If most people eat healthily, _____ will live longer. (A. I B. they)

Answer: B

We will work hard because that is how _____ can become wealthy. (A. we B. you)

Answer: A

Third Person

Third person is a form of pronoun or verb which reflects that you are talking about someone or something other than yourself or your direct audience. It distances the writer or speaker from the character it presents in a sentence.

Examples:

He is an exemplary leader.

They have a knack for producing good music.

Students and speakers of the English language are susceptible to using the third person in the wrong way. Below are some common errors and the appropriate usage:

Ensure you add “s” to the verb form when writing about the habit of a singular subject.

Incorrect: He **become** annoyed when told to keep quiet.

Correct: He **becomes** annoyed when told to keep quiet.

Don’t add “s” to the verb form when writing about the habit of plural subjects.

Incorrect: They **becomes** sad when told to keep quiet.

Correct: They **become** sad when told to keep quiet.

Third-person plural should take singular verb forms and vice versa.

Incorrect: She **have** a car.

Correct: She **has** a car.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Superman _____ his energy from the sun. (A. derives B. derive)

Answer: A

Ben and John _____ the license to roam freely in this compound. (A. has B. have)

Answer: B

Subject

In English Grammar, the subject refers to the part of a sentence that indicates what or who performed or performs an action. The subject is usually a noun. However, there are also subject pronouns. In declarative statements, subjects usually come after the verb.

Examples:

The lion roars.

My sister's bag looks nice.

Typical errors associated with the usage of subject include the following:

Don't use present continuous to express possession; use present simple tense.

Incorrect: I **am having** four cars.

Correct: I **have** four cars.

Avoid using "do not" after subject pronouns such as **he, it,** and.

Incorrect: She **do not** possess a mobile phone.

Correct: She **does not** possess a mobile phone.

When using "cope," don't add "up to it" to describe the coping ability of the subject.

Incorrect: Jackson struggled to **cope up** with the pressure.

Correct: Jackson struggled to **cope** with the pressure.

When comparing two individuals items, "than" should be followed by "that."

Incorrect: The quantity of his rice is **higher than** yours.

Correct: The quantity of his rice is **higher than that** of yours.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

He _____ possess leadership qualities. (A. do not B. does not)

Answer: B

Poor people _____ the tendency to blame others for their predicaments. (A. has B. have)

Answer: B

Predicate

The predicate is the part of a clause or sentence that reveals the action of the subject. The predicate also tells us what the subject is. It is every other thing in a sentence that is not the subject.

Examples:

I **sing**.

He **was cooking** dinner when I came in.

There are many errors students and professionals make due to the wrong usage of predicates. Some of them are covered here:

When you start a statement with “once upon a time,” you have to use past tense all through.

Incorrect: Once upon a time, there **is** a dog named Elvis.

Correct: Once upon a time, there **was** a dog named Elvis.

“Did” should be followed by present tense.

Incorrect: Philip did not **trained** with the first team yesterday.

Correct: Philip did not **train** with the first team yesterday.

Pronouns must agree with the nouns they are replacing.

Incorrect: Bob and **her** friend were not around when we got there.

Correct: Bob and **his** friend were not around when we got there.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Once upon a time, a village chief _____ a magic box. (A. was given B. is given)

Answer: A

Fernandez and Ricardo did not _____ until our arrival. (A. leave B. left)

Answer: A

Direct Objects

In English grammar, direct objects follow intransitive verbs. Direct objects can be a noun, pronoun, phrase or verb. They identify who or what receives the action of a transitive verb in a sentence or clause. The action of the subject is felt by the direct object. For example, in the statement, "Craig baked a cake," the direct object is "a cake." Here are some common errors writers and speakers of the English language commit when using direct objects:

Don't add "s" to "furniture."

Incorrect: My father bought some **furnitures** yesterday.

Correct: My father bought some **furniture** yesterday.

Don't add "s" to "information."

Incorrect: Have you got any **informations** on the whereabouts of Lucinda?

Correct: Have you got any **information** on the whereabouts of Lucinda?

Don't add "s" to "luggage."

Incorrect: When will you pack your **luggages**?

Correct: When will you pack your **luggage**?

Don't add "s" to the noun after "any."

Incorrect: Is there any **bread**s at home?

Correct: Is there any **bread** at home?

Avoid using "these" before "news."

Incorrect: She told me **these** news this morning.

Correct: She told me **this** news this morning.

Don't add "s" to expressions like "the blind," "the poor," "the dead" or "the unemployed."

Incorrect: It is high time the American Government started paying attention

to **the poors**.

Correct: It is high time the American Government started paying attention to **the poor**.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

I have some vital _____ for you as regards the case. (A. information B. informations)

Answer: A

The _____ I saw at the king's palace was nothing short of amazing! (A. furnitures B. furniture)

Answer: B

Indirect Objects

Indirect objects receive the action of the subject after the action has first affected the direct object. They are not the direct recipients of the action but they are affected too. It is important to note that it is not all sentences that have a direct object which also have indirect objects. For instance, in the sentence, "I threw the ball but Andrew got it," Andrew is an indirect object. Below are some common errors associated with indirect objects:

Put the indirect object at the end of the sentence when using "to."

Incorrect: She gave **to** John her pencil.

Correct: She gave her pencil **to** John.

You cannot have an indirect object for intransitive verbs.

Incorrect: Henry is snoring **drugs** heavily.

Correct: Henry is **snoring** heavily.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Please send _____. (A. to me the report B. the report to me)

Answer: B

Jonathan _____ on the ice. (A. skidded B. skidded the ball)

Answer: A

Clauses

A clause refers to a group of words that has both a subject and a predicate. However, a clause cannot always be regarded as a full grammatical sentence. A clause can either be dependent or independent. An independent clause can stand alone and contains both a predicate and a subject. For example, “We visited Luxemburg last October” is an independent clause.

A dependent clause is also called a subordinate clause. It contains a subject and predicate but cannot stand alone as a sentence. In the sentence, “**Even though he made \$400 million**, he remains grounded,” the highlighted part is the dependent clause. Below are some common errors associated with clauses:

A defining subordinate clause should be introduced with “that,” not “which.”

Incorrect: The river **which** flows through Lisbon is murky.

Correct: The river **that** flows through Lisbon is murky.

A non-defining subordinate clause should be introduced with “which” not “that” while being separated with two commas.

Incorrect: The Nigerian river Benue, **that** flows through Niger, is murky and turbid.

Correct: The Nigerian river Benue, **which** flows through Niger, is murky and turbid.

A defining subordinate clause should be introduced with “who,” not “whose.”

Incorrect: The American military officer **whose** defeated the Italians became the president.

Correct: The American military officer **who** defeated the Italians became the president.

A non-defining subordinate clause should be introduced with “whose,” not “who” while being separated with two commas.

Incorrect: The King of England, **who** kingship was the reward for his heroics, was an unusual man.

Correct: The King of England, **whose** kingship was the reward for his heroics, was an unusual man.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

The Duke of Wellington, _____ peerage was the reward for his patriotism, was a great man. (A. who B. whose)

Answer: B

The teacher _____ came yesterday is my friend. (A. that B. which)

Answer: A

Run-Ons

A run-on sentence is a common error as a result of merging two sentences together without the right punctuation. The comma splice or comma fault is the most common run-on sentence. A comma splice occurs when a comma is used to separate two sentences in an inappropriate manner.

Examples:

Craig is a brilliant soccer player, he dances in an amazing way.

My mom is such a good cook, she gets angry at the slightest provocation.

To avoid these kinds of errors, do the following:

Use a semicolon.

Incorrect: Racism is not exclusive to any **culture**, it is a demon we all have to resist.

Correct: Racism is not exclusive to any **culture**; it is a demon we all have to resist.

Use three dots (ellipsis).

Incorrect: I could not have been acting **funny**, I am a poor comedian.

Correct: I could not have been acting **funny...** I am a poor comedian.

Use a colon.

Incorrect: I have a **confession**, I don't like making confessions!

Correct: I have a **confession:** I don't like making confessions!

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

I don't care about your welfare_____ it is all you care about. (A. , B. ;)

Answer: B

The teacher _____ came yesterday is my friend. (A. that B. which)

Answer: A

Subordinators

Subordinators are not relative or subordinate clauses; they introduce them and join them to a main clause. A subordinator can be a relative noun that introduces an adjective clause, adverb clause, or noun clause in a sentence.

Examples:

Whoever claimed **that the sun revolves around the earth** was dead wrong.

My mother enjoyed **where my father selected** for their honeymoon.

Common errors related to subordinators are as follows:

Thinking that a dependent clause makes a complete sentence.

Incorrect: Because we love Kobe Bryant.

Correct: **We are here** because we love Kobe Bryant.

Use a comma when you start a sentence with a subordinator.

Incorrect: Because we love Kobe **Brant we** are here.

Correct: Because we love Kobe **Brant, we** are here.

The subordinator should come before a verb.

Incorrect: I went to the market after, I stopped at the bank.

Correct: After I went to the market, I stopped at the bank.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

She sold the food before, she persuaded the buyer. B. Before she sold the food, she persuaded the buyer.)

Answer: B

Due to _____ she could not make it. (A. technical reasons, B. technical reasons)

Answer: A

Phrases

A phrase is a group of words used within a sentence as a unit to express a concept. Types of phrases include noun, gerund, appositive, infinitive, absolute, prepositional, participial, and verb.

Examples:

Sunday became **a cool, wet afternoon**.

She **might enjoy a massage**.

Do you know your phrases? Let's see:

It is "one and the same" and not "one in the same."

Incorrect: The two balls are **one in the same**.

Correct: The two balls are **one and the same**.

It is “each one worse than the last” and not “each one worse than the next.”

Incorrect: The disasters kept coming, **each one worse than the next**.

Correct: The disasters kept coming, **each one worse than the last**.

It is “by accident” and not “on accident.”

Incorrect: The truck crushed the ball **on** accident.

Correct: The truck crushed the ball **by** accident.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Dan slapped him to ____ revenge on him. (A. exact B. extract)

Answer: A

I am giving you ____ to make your choice. (A. leadway B. leeway)

Answer: B

Noun/Verb Phrases

A noun phrase is also referred to a nominal phrase. These phrases have a noun as their head. They are very common and arguably the most common of all the types of phrases.

Examples:

Those apparels are very expensive

I possess **a lot of money**.

A verb phrase, on the other hand, is a part of a sentence structure that contains both the verb as well as an indirect or direct object. Verb phrases are upgrades on verbs because they contain both the verb as well as the complement.

Examples:

Mike **was walking** quickly to the market.

Our maid **is fixing** us dinner.

Common errors people make when they use noun and verb phrases are displayed below:

Don't use a past participle instead of a continuous tense to express an ongoing action.

Incorrect: The teacher **is written** a report.

Correct: The teacher **is writing** a report.

Never forget to add an "e" in the "-ed" form of regular verbs.

Incorrect: Kate and Vanessa **joind** the team last year.

Correct: Kate and Vanessa **joined** the team last year.

The plural form of "scenery" is not "sceneries."

Incorrect: The **sceneries** here **are** not pleasant.

Correct: The **scenery** here **is** not pleasant.

Don't add "brother" to "cousin."

Incorrect: Bob is my **cousin brother**.

Correct: Bob is my **cousin**.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

One of my ____ will be coming for the party. (A. friends B. friend)

Answer: A

I am learning a new _____. (A. poetry B. poem)

Answer: B

Prepositional/Absolute

Prepositional phrases act as indirect objects in a sentence. Prepositions are used to specify why, how, where, and when. Hence, a prepositional phrase has a preposition and its object. A prepositional phrase can be a group of words or a single word expressing an idea.

Examples:

Yesterday was the first day **of the month**.

Last week, we met **in the auditorium**.

Absolute phrases tell more about a circumstance or situation in the main clause of a sentence. They are also known as nominative absolute because they contain a noun and its modifiers. They can be placed at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence.

Examples:

The night beginning to turn cold, we made a fire to keep us warm.

The birds circled high above us, **their tiny frames sleek and brown against the blue sky**.

Common errors both students and professionals alike make when using absolutes and prepositional phrases are explored below:

When describing a request, “for” should follow “ask.”

Incorrect: She **asked** a drink.

Correct: She **asked for** a drink.

Don’t add “with” to “met” or “meet.”

Incorrect: I **met with** your mom last month at a party.

Correct: I **met** your mom last month at a party.

“Insist” should be followed by “on,” and not “to.”

Incorrect: My father insisted **to** seeing my report card.

Correct: My father insisted **on** seeing my report card.

Don't fail to separate the absolute phrase with a comma.

Incorrect: **Weather permitting** we shall meet tomorrow.

Correct: **Weather permitting,** we shall meet tomorrow.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

The sun having _____, we set out on our journey. (A. rose B. risen)

Answer: B

He will insist _____ speaking with you. (A. on B. to)

Answer: A

Appositives

Appositives are nouns or pronouns that identify or rename another noun or pronoun in some certain ways. A typical appositive phrase consists of an appositive and its modifiers. An appositive phrase can either be restrictive (essential) or nonrestrictive (nonessential).

Examples:

Author **Oscar Wilde** wrote several books over the course of his career.

William Shakespeare's novel, **Macbeth**, remains one of the best literary works ever.

While writing and speaking, the following error is often committed when using appositives:

Separate with commas where and when necessary.

Incorrect: Bruno **Fernandes a former Sporting Lisbon player** has just signed with Manchester United.

Correct: Bruno **Fernandes, a former Sporting Lisbon player,** has just signed with Manchester United.

MCQs: Select the underlined word or phrase that needs to be changed to

make the sentence accurate:

Merlin, the Wizard of Oz, has summoned every wizard in the world to a meeting at Old Trafford. (A. the Wizard of Oz, B. No error C. wizard in the world)

Answer: B

The dogs, who were basset hounds, were never in doubt to win the race. (A. The dogs, who B. basset hounds were C. No error)

Answer: C

Introductions

An introduction is the beginning section of a book or article. It is the first few paragraphs that state out the goals of the writing and what readers can expect as they read on. Check the introductory part of this book for further reference on what an introduction looks like. It does not necessarily have to be lengthy. Really, it's a brief summary or explanation of a document.

A good introduction will achieve the following:

- It will answer the question of “why should I read this?”
- It engages the audience
- It gives the readers a preview of the material

There is a good and bad way to write an introduction. When writing an introduction, you should avoid the following things:

- **Wasting words:** Don't just write to fill a blank space. You should be deliberate and intentional with every sentence.
- **Using long sentences:** It becomes difficult and boring when you have close to 40 to 50 words in a sentence. It is pardonable in academic writing but not good for

articles or blog posts.

- **Making promises you cannot fulfill:** You should not tell your readers that they will find what is not obtainable in the article in your introduction. Encourage your audience to read on without being dishonest.
- **Explaining concepts you will explain later in the book or article:** It becomes monotonous and repetitive when, in the introductory part, you explain a concept you will be explaining later in the book.

Note: You can work on the body of the article or book first before writing the introduction. This is not a rule you have to follow. However, it will help you to write a better introduction. You already have the content of the book. Hence, you will be able to tell the readers what to expect with a greater level of precision and accuracy.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

A good paragraph is _____. (A. precise and concise B. unnecessarily detailed)

Answer: A

Several long sentences in a paragraph are a feature of _____. (A. a good introduction B. a bad introduction)

Answer: B

Body Paragraphs

A body paragraph is a group or collection of related sentences about a particular idea. The writer achieves his or her objectives with the body paragraphs as stated out in the introduction. Essays and articles contain several body paragraphs. Hence, the main errors committed as regards body paragraphs, apart from grammatical errors, have to do with organization. It is vital that a writer is able to arrange his or her thoughts in such a way that he or she will be able to drive home their points.

Common Mistakes in Writing a Paragraph

Below are 5 common mistakes that are made in writing paragraphs:

- **Absence of a topic sentence:** A good paragraph must have a topic sentence. The topic sentence carries the main idea you are trying to convey to your readers. Subsequent sentences in the paragraph are meant to support the topic sentence.
- **Too-long paragraphs:** When a paragraph is too long, it frustrates readers. You should never forget that there are people who will read what you are writing. Hence, avoid writing more than 8 sentences in a paragraph.
- **Too-short paragraphs:** Some students are fond of writing two to three sentences in a paragraph. A paragraph should be detailed and concise about the central idea you are conveying.
- **Multiple ideas:** A paragraph should only explain one particular line of thought or idea. You should avoid cramming several ideas into one paragraph.
- **Poor structure:** Poor structure in writing a paragraph can be related to the arrangement or focus of the paragraphs. Every paragraph should have a focus. It is better to start with a topic sentence first before writing the subordinate sentences.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

A good paragraph should start with _____. (A. a topic sentence B. an explanation)

Answer: A

Multiple ideas in a body paragraph should be _____. (A. embraced B. avoided)

Answer: B

Conclusions

A conclusion is the closing part of a document or write-up. When you write an article, paper, or book, the conclusion is the part where you sum up your arguments and points. It is a summary of everything you have been trying to discuss and put across to your audience. You have to think about the main points of the book to be able to write a good conclusion.

Common Errors You Should Avoid When Writing a Conclusion

You should avoid the following mistakes when writing a conclusion:

- **Introducing new information:** Your conclusion should not contain any information that you have not mentioned previously.
- **Stuffing too much information into a paragraph:** In the case of a book or an academic writing, you may have a reasonable number of things you want to mention in the introduction. However, you must avoid stuffing a lot of information in a paragraph. Break things up to make it easier and organized for smooth reading.
- **Not including a topic sentence:** The rule of topic sentence for a body paragraph also applies to a conclusion. The paragraphs of your conclusion should have a topic sentence in the first or second statement.
- **Lack of cohesion:** Your words and sentences should transition smoothly. Avoid writing dissimilar sentences together in a paragraph, to make your writing cohesive and coherent.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

When writing a conclusion, you should _____. (A. introduce a new concept B. reiterate previous ideas)

Answer: B

A good conclusion should _____. (A. lack cohesion B. be summative)

Answer: B

Thesis

A thesis is also called a dissertation. It is a document that contains your research and findings you submit to show that you are qualified to possess a professional certification or academic degree. A good thesis contains what you intend to argue and how you intend to argue it. A thesis statement often appears at the latter part of the introductory paragraph of the paper. It offers the readers a concise summary of the claim of a research paper.

Common Errors In Thesis Statement

The following mistakes in thesis statement can embarrass you:

Fragmented statement: A thesis must make a complete thought. You cannot have fragmented statements as a thesis statement. For example:

Incorrect: The food in the UK is unhealthy and expensive; so we should all consider not eating it anymore.

Correct: Due to the prevalence of obesity in the UK, lawmakers should look into creating a plan to reduce the price of healthier foods to help everyone to be able to afford high-quality foods.

Wordiness: Your thesis statement should not be too wordy. You will confuse your readers when your thesis statement is too long. Make it as short, detailed, and precise as possible.

Incorrect: Most athletes, such as those who play for organizations like the NCAA or colleges, do not earn enough money, which is terrible because they deserve to earn more for their hard work due to the fact that colleges take advantage of the sports these athletes pay by earning profits.

Correct: NCAA athletes should be given payment that is commensurate to

their efforts because they are generating revenue for universities by putting their bodies and health on the line.

Too obvious or basic: It is expected that your writing should mature as you move through school. Hence, an obvious or basic thesis statement is not accepted.

Incorrect: In this paper, I will be discussing the importance of getting enough sleep every day.

Correct: Getting adequate sleep is good for your health as it helps your body recover quickly and have enough energy required for optimal performance in your daily tasks.

Lack of purpose: Your thesis statement should be addressing a particular thing. It should not just be a random cluster of words.

Incorrect: As far as I am concerned, these blue socks are the prettiest ones in the drawer.

Correct: Students should be given the liberty to express themselves as unique individuals by selecting any type of socks and shoes they want to wear to school.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

An excellent thesis statement should be _____. (A. basic and obvious B. purposeful and concise)

Answer: B

A wordy thesis statement is _____. (A. confusing B. the best)

Answer: A

SPELLING AND FORMATTING

Words are the foundation of English grammar. Once you spell a word wrongly, you will either create a new word and alter the meaning of the word or create a meaningless word. Therefore, it is imperative that you pay attention to the spelling of words. You have to spell words correctly consistently as a good writer of the English language. In this chapter, we will explore common spelling errors as well as the wrong usage of some other important components of English grammar.

Common Spelling Mistakes

It is important that you spell words correctly to convey the right message. Spelling errors lead to an embarrassing mutation of words. Hence, you have to be at the top of your game all the time. A list of common spelling mistakes will be endless. Below are some most common spelling mistakes you need to avoid:

Incorrect: acceptable

Correct: acceptable

Incorrect: absense, absance

Correct: absence

Incorrect: accomodate

Correct: accommodate

Incorrect: acknowlege, aknowledge

Correct: acknowledge

Incorrect: acquaintence, aquaintance

Correct: acquaintance

Incorrect: aquire

Correct: acquire

Incorrect: adultary

Correct: adultery

Incorrect: adress

Correct: address

Incorrect: accidentally

Correct: accidentally

Incorrect: adviseable, advizable

Correct: advisable

Incorrect: aquit

Correct: acquit

Incorrect: agression

Correct: aggression

Incorrect: allegaince

Correct: allegiance

Incorrect: allmost

Correct: almost

Incorrect: amatuer

Correct: amateur

Incorrect: anually

Correct: annually

Incorrect: aparent, aparent

Correct: apparent

Incorrect: awfull

Correct: awful

Incorrect: begining

Correct: beginning

Incorrect: buisness

Correct: business

Incorrect: colum

Correct: column

Incorrect: cauhgt, caught

Correct: caught

Incorrect: congradulate

Correct: congratulate

Incorrect: concencus

Correct: consensus

Incorrect: cooly

Correct: coolly

Incorrect: contraversy

Correct: controversy

Incorrect: dilema

Correct: dilemma

Incorrect: embarass

Correct: embarrass

Incorrect: facinating

Correct: fascinating

Incorrect: immitate

Correct: imitate

Incorrect: inoculate

Correct: inoculate

Incorrect: writting

Correct: writing

Incorrect: visious

Correct: vicious

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

It is ____ to know that you will be coming around. (A. facinating B. fascinating C. fasinating)

Answer: B

I will not be able to ____ you in my house. (A. accommodate B. acomodate C. accomodate)

Answer: A

This hand sanitizer is no longer _____. (A. usable B. usable C. ucible)

Answer: A

The ____ of the president is no longer acceptable to the citizens of the nation. (A. tyranny B. tyrany C. tiranny)

Answer: A

Vowels

In the above examples, I deliberately did not include common spelling errors that have to do with the misplacement or elimination of vowels. There are some common mistakes people make when writing some words due to either a removal or misplacement of vowels. Such mistakes are seen below:

Incorrect: upholstery

Correct: upholstery

Incorrect: tomatos

Correct: tomatoes

Incorrect: then

Correct: than

Incorrect: speache, speech

Correct: speech

Incorrect: similer

Correct: similar

Incorrect: sargent

Correct: sergeant

Incorrect: seperate

Correct: separate

Incorrect: secretery, secratary

Correct: secretary

Incorrect: rime

Correct: rhyme

Incorrect: restarant, restaraunt

Correct: restaurant

Incorrect: religous, religius

Correct: religious

Incorrect: realy

Correct: really

Incorrect: readable

Correct: readable

Incorrect: quarentine

Correct: quarantine

Incorrect: prufe

Correct: proof

Incorrect: professor

Correct: professor

Incorrect: parliment

Correct: parliament

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

I must confess that some of your claims are _____. (A. outrageous B. outragous C. outrageos)

Answer: A

My father has the _____ that Mr. Ben is a philanderer. (A. prufe B. proof C. prove)

Answer: B

There is a need for a thorough ____ of foreigners due to the outbreak of the Corona Virus. (A. quarantine B. quaranteine C. quarentine)

Answer: A

I am an ____; I am not _____. (A. atheist, religious B. athiest, religious C. athiest, religous)

Answer: A

“I Before E”

There are spelling errors that are peculiar to placing “I” before “e” and vice versa. These errors are also numerous. Below are some common examples:

Incorrect: percieve

Correct: perceive

Incorrect: acheive

Correct: achieve

Incorrect: athiest

Correct: atheist

Incorrect: beleive

Correct: believe

Incorrect: cheif

Correct: chief

Incorrect: decieve

Correct: deceive

Incorrect: foriegn

Correct: foreign

Incorrect: freind

Correct: friend

Incorrect: heirarchy

Correct: hierarchy

Incorrect: hygine, hygeine

Correct: hygiene

Incorrect: liesure

Correct: leisure

Incorrect: neice

Correct: niece

Incorrect: niegbour

Correct: neighbor

Incorrect: recieve

Correct: receive

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

My ____ and I ____ a gift from my uncle. (A. niece, received B. niece, recieved C. neice, received)

Answer: A

I need to read a book to improve my English during my ____ time. (A. liesure B. leisure C. lecture)

Answer: B

The ____ of leadership in my country does not permit ____ to rule. (A. hierarchy, foreigners B. heirarchy, forigners C. hierarchy, foriegners)

Answer: A

Suffixes

Suffixes are a group of letters that are added to the ending part of words to alter their meaning or function. A suffix can also be just a letter. Suffixes alter the grammatical function of the root word.

Examples:

The highlighted letters below are examples of suffixes.

Fond**est**

Art**ist**

Read**er**

Read**able**

Tast**y**

Common Suffix Errors

There are mistakes people make when spelling words by getting the suffix wrong. Below are some common examples:

Incorrect: faithfull

Correct: faithful

Incorrect: accidentally, accidently

Correct: accidentally

Incorrect: bellweather

Correct: bellwether

Incorrect: dumbell

Correct: dumbbell

Incorrect: drunkenness

Correct: drunkenness

Incorrect: equiptment

Correct: equipment

Incorrect: gratefull, greatful

Correct: grateful

Incorrect: misspell, misspel

Correct: misspell

Incorrect: skillfull

Correct: skilful

Incorrect: successfull

Correct: successful

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

The president says he is ____ to the good people of America for their indefatigable support. (A. grateful B. greatfull C. greatfool)

Answer: A

Stamford Bridge is a world-class stadium with state-of-the-art ____ and facilities. (A. equiptment B. equipment C. equiupment)

Answer: B

____ is fast becoming a prevalent social ill that has to be tackled quickly by the government of America. (A. Drunkenness B. Drunkeness C. Drunkeeness)

Answer: A

Infixes

Infixes are word elements that can be added within the base form of a word to

create a new word or alter the meaning the base word. Unlike prefixes or suffixes, infixes are not added to the beginning or end of the base form of a word. It is important to note that infixes are rarely used in formal writing.

The infixes are highlighted in the words below:

Halle**bloody**lujah

Edum**ma**cation

sophistim**ma**cated

Common Mistakes When Writing Infixes

Unlike prefixes and suffixes, infixes are very rare. However, there are spelling mistakes people make when writing them. Here are some of them:

The plural form of “cupful” is not “cupfuls” but “cupsful.”

Incorrect: cupfuls

Correct: cupsful

The plural form of “passerby” is not “passerbies” but “passersby.”

Incorrect: passerbies

Correct: passersby

The plural form of “spoonful” is not “spoonfuls” but “spoonsful.”

Incorrect: spoonfuls

Correct: spoonsful

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

An infix is an affix that can be inserted to the beginning or end of the base form of a word. (A. True B. false C. I don't care)

Answer: B

During the encounter between the cops and MS-13 gang at Los Angeles, innocent ____ were not spared by the deadly gang. (A. passerbies B.

passersby C. passers by)

Answer: B

Prefixes

Prefixes are syllables or a group of syllables that are added to the beginning of a word that alters the meaning or grammatical function of that word. With prefixes, it is possible to create different words that can be easily understood by writers and speakers everywhere.

The prefixes are highlighted in the examples below:

Disbelieve

Reevaluate

Deactivate

Illegal

Impermeable

Common Errors In Writing And Using Prefixes

Errors in adding prefixes often lead to creating words that do not exist. Below are some common errors people make when writing or using infixes:

It should be “incorrect” and not “misincorrect” or “disincorrect.”

Incorrect: **mi**sincorrect

Incorrect: **di**sincorrect

Correct: **i**nincorrect

It should be “terror” or “counterterrorism” and not “noerror” or “counterterror.”

Incorrect: **no**error

Incorrect: **count**error

Correct: **t**error, counter**ter**rism

It should be “discontented” and not “uncontented.”

Incorrect: **un**contented

Correct: **dis**contented

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

My failure to comply with the new policy was not out of defiance but because I was ____ of it. (A. misaware B. unaware C. disaware)

Answer: B

Today,s protest is a product of ____ due to the way the workers were being treated by the manager recently. (A. discontentment B. discontented C. discontentment)

Answer: C

Contradictions

A contradiction is as simple as your mom telling you two years ago that you were born in 1980 only for her to show up today to say that your birth date is 1981. The two statements are **contradicting**. In English grammar, a contradiction is a statement that does not make sense because some part of it suggests the opposite of the others.

Example:

Larry is such an honest thief; he only steals cows.

The above statement is a contradiction because the fact that Larry is a thief means that there is nothing honest about him. Besides, stealing only cows does not make anyone honest!

Contradictions You Need to Watch Out For

English grammar has express rules. However, some of the rules have exceptions that lead to contradictions. Below are some rules in English grammar with contradictions:

I before E

English students are often told to put “I” before “e” when spelling except after “c.” The following words follow that rule:

- believe
- brief
- receive

Note: “e” came before “I” in “receive” because it was after the letter “c.”

However, there are contradictions to this rule with words such as:

- prote**i**n
- he**i**rloom
- le**i**sure
- we**i**rd

Therefore, your spelling guide is your best bet to ensure that you are not running afoul of spelling words correctly.

Starting a Statement with “Because”

English students are also often told that “because” should not start a statement because it is a subordinate conjunction. It is often said that it needs a clause before it can relate to the one after. However, you can reverse the position of the clause and you will still be fine.

For example:

We did not visit the cinema yesterday because we were grounded.

Because we were grounded, we did not visit the cinema yesterday.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

It felt so ____ to be sharing the same stage with my idol. (A. wird B. weird C. wierd)

Answer: B

The new ____ teacher is just too hostile. (A. sceince B. sciene C. science)

Answer: C

Writing/Saying Dates

Dates specify the specific, day, month, and year that an event took place. Dates are vital because they serve historical and reference purposes. There are rules that guide the way dates are to be written in English. Below are some wrong ways people write dates and the appropriate way to go about them:

You should always write years in numerals except at the beginning of a sentence.

Incorrect: The year **nineteen ninety-four** was indeed a memorable year for football lovers.

Correct: The year **1994** was indeed a memorable year for football lovers.

Correct: **Nineteen ninety-four** was indeed a memorable year for football lovers.

Use cardinal numbers (one, two, three) and not ordinal numbers (first, second, third) when referring to a specific date in the month-day date format.

Incorrect: Benjamin Burton was born on **May 13th**.

Correct: Benjamin Burton was born on **May 13**.

When using the month-day-year format, place commas after the day and the year.

Incorrect: On October **1st, 1960** King Joe was born.

Correct: On October **1st, 1960**, King Joe was born.

Correct: On October 1, 1960, King Joe was born.

Alternatively, don't use commas at all when using the day-month-year

format.

Incorrect: On 12 **October**, 1960 King Joe was born.

Correct: On 12 **October** 1960 King Joe was born.

You can use an ordinal number when you are referring to a specific day of the month without mentioning the year.

Incorrect: Benjamin Burton was born **on the 13 of May**.

Correct: Benjamin Burton was born **on the 13th of May**.

Correct: Benjamin Burton was born **on May the thirteenth**.

Correct punctuation when writing days of the week:

Incorrect: **Saturday May 7** is my last day of work.

Correct: Saturday, May 7, is my last day of work.

Avoid apostrophes when writing centuries.

Incorrect: **In the 1800's**, men were more literate than in modern times.

Correct: **In the 1800s**, men were more literate than in modern times.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

The Titanic sank on _____. (A. 13 December 1914 B. 13 December, 1914 C. 13th December, 1914)

Answer: A

Women in the _____ were more courteous than today. (A. 1970s B. 1970's C. 1970s')

Answer: A

Numbers

It is always better to write out numbers zero to one hundred in nontechnical

writing. Generally, it is preferable to write out numbers under ten. However, you have to be consistent. Below are common errors you need to avoid when writing numbers in a sentence:

Write numbers below 101 fully.

Incorrect: Ben said there are **40** reasons she likes rice, and not twenty.

Correct: Ben said there are **forty** reasons she likes rice, and not twenty.

Write numbers above 101 numerically.

Incorrect: In 2010, there were seventy-eight thousand, nine hundred thirty-nine people living in Rio de Janeiro.

Correct: In 2010, there were **78,939** people living in Rio de Janeiro.

It is “ninety” and not “ninty.”

Incorrect: Ben said there are **ninty** reasons she likes rice, and not twenty.

Correct: Ben said there are **ninety** reasons she likes rice, and not twenty.

It is “forty” and not “fourty.”

Incorrect: Ben said there are **fourty** reasons she likes rice, and not twenty.

Correct: Ben said there are **forty** reasons she likes rice, and not twenty.

Always spell out a word that is starting a sentence.

Incorrect: **127** boys showed interest in the show.

Correct: **One hundred twenty-seven** boys showed interest in the show.

Spell out round figures even when they are more than 101.

Incorrect: There were **5000** people in attendance during the show.

Correct: There were **five thousand** people in attendance during the show.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

My mom gave me ____ mangoes before I left home. (A. ten B. 10)

Answer: A

I could not control my tears when I found out that ____ out of the ____ are dead. (A. 14, 403 B. fourteen C. 403)

Answer: B

Times and Clocks

It is inevitable to express time when writing once in a while. There are guidelines regarding how to show time when writing in the English language. However, some people flout these rules either due to ignorance or negligence. Below are simple rules that will help you avoid making mistakes when telling the time in written form:

Write times in numerical form except for midnight and noon.

Incorrect: The match will take place from **eight a.m. to ten p.m.**

Correct: The match will take place from **8 a.m. to 10 p.m.**

Correct: The match will take place from **8 a.m. to noon.**

Don't write "12" after writing "noon" or midnight.

Incorrect: The workshop will begin by **12 noon.**

Incorrect: The workshop will end by **12 midnight.**

Correct: The workshop will begin by **noon.**

Correct: The workshop will end by **midnight.**

The lowercase "a.m." and "p.m." should include periods.

Incorrect: The workshop will end by **5 am.**

Correct: The workshop will end by **5 a.m.**

Don't use a dash with days of the week.

Incorrect: The workshop will be from **8-11 a.m.** on Mondays through Thursdays every month.

Correct: The workshop will be from **8 a.m. until 11 a.m.** on Mondays through Thursdays every month.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

My favorite TV show begins by ____ today. (A. 10 p.m. B. Ten p.m.)

Answer: A

I have to wake up by ____ to read. (A. 12 midnight B. midnight)

Answer: B

ADVANCED WRITING MISTAKES

Whatever is worth doing at all should be done with the whole of your strength. It is good to be able to speak at least basic English language for your daily needs. However, there is no reason why you should not aim at becoming an excellent writer and speaker of the language. It is important to note that you don't have to have a degree in the English language to be able to speak fluently or write excellently in it. All you need is the drive to learn and acquire grammatical and writing skills.

In this last chapter, we will explore advanced mistakes that even professional writers make when writing. The beautiful thing about knowing what not to do is that it will enable you to know what to do. Hence, knowing these mistakes will not only help you avoid them but write standard articles. If you have a dream to be an author or writer, this chapter is very critical for you. It is one thing to be able to spot spelling errors; it is quite another to spot issues that have to do with grammatical constructions.

General Advanced Writing Mistakes

Below are some general advanced writing mistakes you need to avoid to move from being a mediocre to an excellent writer:

Not Defining The Goal Of Your Writing

The first thing you need to ask yourself when you want to write is why you are writing. The purpose you have in mind will determine the tone of the writing. If you are writing an academic article, you know that you have to be formal all the way through. You cannot make random and careless statements in academic writing. You will have to get enough sources for the article before you start. Every claim in academic writing will have to be backed up by relevant studies. For example:

Incorrect: We all know that students of Harvard University are better than students of Yale when it comes to academic performance.

Correct: According to Steve and Maloney (2012), the academic performance of Harvard University students is better than that of students of Yale in the last five years.

For blog posts, you can be a little bit relaxed. It is required of you to add relevant studies to increase the veracity of your claims. However, it is not as stringent as when you are writing an academic paper. Hence, you need to be able to discern whether you are writing to entertain or to present facts for educational purposes.

The Right Content For the Wrong Audience and Vice Versa

It is not good enough to know the reason for your writing; you have to also know your audience. If your audiences are young people seeking fun, you have to write in such a way that will tickle their fancy. You will have to deliberately write to pique their interest. If your audience is people in the academic setting, you will have to be very careful to present facts in a logical manner. They will scrutinize your arrangement of points and how you arrived at your conclusion.

In the same way, if you are writing an article that will be read by kids, you have to make it as simple as possible. You will have to be deliberate about writing short, simple sentences that they can understand. You will have to use illustrations and bullet points to aid their comprehension. For example:

Incorrect: Snails are aquatic and terrestrial animals that hibernate during winter due to their ineptitude to withstand volatile conditions.

Correct: Snails are animals that can live on both water and land. They go into hiding during winter to be able to survive harsh weather conditions.

Fluff

Fluff in writing is unnecessary words that are redundant. They are often added just to fill up blank pages. Fluff shows that the writer is bereft of ideas. It is easy to detect fluff because of its tendency to make a piece of writing boring and ridiculous. For example:

Incorrect: It is not good to treat women in an awful manner. Treating

women in an awful manner is just not right. It is just not the right thing to do to treat women wrongly.

Correct: It is not good to treat women in an awful manner. Treating women awfully is a sign of lack of respect. It shows that such a person does not understand the value of a woman.

How To Avoid Fluff In Writing

The following tips should help you avoid fluff in writing:

- Have a plan to write first and edit later
- Trim paragraphs to be short and concise

Specific Advanced Writing Mistakes

Below are specific advance writing mistakes that are difficult to spot:

American and British English

It is important to know your audience. There are some crucial differences in American and British English. You need to know these differences to be able to provide the right content for the right audience. Below are crucial differences in American and British English you need to notice:

Spellings

American: holiday

British: vacation

American: (car) hood

British: (car) bonnet

American: apartment

British: flat

Collective Nouns

In American English, collective nouns are singular, while they can be

singular or plural in British English.

American: The band is playing tonight.

British: The band are playing tonight.

Past Tense

American: learned

British: learned or learnt

American: dreamed

British: dreamed or dreamt

American: burned

British: burned or burnt

Order of Adjectives

The right order of adjectives in the English language is quantity, quality, size, age, shape, color, proper adjective, and qualifier.

Incorrect: I am impressed by that **really new, large black antique** car at the end of the road.

Correct: I am impressed by that **really large, new black antique** car at the end of the road.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

I would like to purchase those ____ dresses. (A. four big yellow B. big four yellow)

Answer: A

She is a ____ girl. (A. big tall B. tall big)

Answer: B

Further versus Farther

These two words are often used interchangeably. However, they are not the same and cannot be used as such. “Further” has to do with a figurative

distance while “farther” describes a physical distance. Below are the wrong and proper usages of these two words:

Incorrect: To move **farther** in life, you need to maintain your focus.

Correct: To move **further** in life, you need to maintain your focus.

Incorrect: The captain told me that we could not move **further** than the short fence due to security reasons.

Correct: The captain told me that we could not move **farther** than the short fence due to security reasons.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

If you complain ____, I am going to shoot you. (A. farther B. further)

Answer: B

Kingsley asked his father how much ____ he had to walk. (A. farther B. further)

Answer: A

Clichés

A cliché is an expression that has lost its original meaning or novelty due to being overused. Such expressions once held sway but started becoming boring and irritating because they have been used severely and extensively. Below are examples of clichés and expressions you can use instead of them:

Cliché: only time will tell

Replacement: to be unveiled over time

Cliché: in the nick of time

Replacement: to take place just in time

Cliché: lost track of time

Replacement: to stop paying attention to the time

Number Agreement

Since pronouns are used in place of a noun, there must be an agreement between the number of the noun and the pronoun that is replacing it. A singular pronoun has to replace a singular noun and vice versa. Below are statements that do not show number agreement, and their corrections:

Incorrect: The cat climbed the tree but **they** stopped at the top of the branch.

Correct: The cat climbed the tree but **it** stopped at the top of the branch.

Incorrect: Everyone **are** trying to do what is best for **them**.

Correct: Everyone **is** trying to do what is best for **him or her**.

Incorrect: Dan and John are here to defend **himself**.

Correct: Dan and John are here to defend **themselves**.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

John and Billy were so unruly that no one wanted to be ____ friend. (A. her
B. their)

Answer: B

Soldiers sacrifice a lot to keep ____ in a good physical condition. (A.
themselves B. itself)

Answer: A

Feel Good versus Feel Well

“Feel well” and “feel good” are often mistaken to mean the same thing. However, they are not the same. “Feel well” has to do with the state of your health while “feel good” has to do with your state of mind. When you are feeling well, you are physically healthy. However, when you are feeling good, you are happy. Below are some wrong and proper usages of these two phrases:

Incorrect: I went to see my doctor this morning because I was not **feeling good**.

Correct: I went to see my doctor this morning because I was not **feeling well**.

Incorrect: I **feel well** this morning after enjoying myself at the party last night.

Correct: I **feel good** this morning after enjoying myself at the party last night.

MCQs: Choose the appropriate options from the statements below:

Samantha was apparently ____ this morning after she was discharged from the clinic yesterday. (A. feeling well B. feeling good)

Answer: A

The new coach has improved the mood in the dressing room as the players claimed that they are now _____. (A. feeling good B. feeling well)

Answer: A

Active Voice versus Passive Voices

In an active voice, the subject acts upon the verb. However, in a passive voice, the subject receives the action of the verb. When the passive voice is used properly, it is correct. However, when it is not used in moderation, it becomes weak and incorrect.

Examples of Active Voice:

Monkeys love bananas.

The dog tossed the bone away.

Examples of Passive Voice:

Bananas are loved by monkeys.

The bone was tossed away by the dog.

Wrong usages of Active and Passive Voices

Below are some examples of the incorrect usage of active and passive voices and how to remedy them:

Don't use the passive voice when you should take responsibility for your actions.

Incorrect: An error occurred on your account, but **several attempts were made** to remedy it.

Correct: We made an error on your account, but **we have made every attempt** to remedy it.

Make sure to identify the subjects in the following clauses:

Incorrect: **If there are any suggestions**, I can be reached at the number below.

Correct: **If you have any suggestions**, call me at the number below.

MCQs: Change the following passive voices to active voices:

Was a zoo visited by you? (A. Have you been visiting a zoo? by B. Was you visit a zoo? C. Did you visit a zoo?)

Answer: C

He will be praised very much by you. (A. You will praise him very much B. You will be praising him very much C. You will have to praise him very much)

Answer: A

Except versus Accept

Students are often guilty of using "accept" when "except" would be more

appropriate and vice versa. “Accept” means to receive something offered or agree with something or someone. On the other hand, “except” means excluding something or someone. Hence, the two words are not synonymous.

Here are some common wrong usages of these words and the appropriate way to use them:

Incorrect: My mother can tolerate any other behavior from me **accept** stealing from others.

Correct: My mother can tolerate any other behavior from me **except** stealing from others.

Incorrect: I have no doubt that Bob will **except** this beautiful gift.

Correct: I have no doubt that Bob will **accept** this beautiful gift.

MCQs: Change the following passive voices to active voices:

Please, will you ____ my gift? (A. except B. accept)

Answer: B

Every member of the crew were all smiles ____ Harry. (A. except B. accept)

Answer: A

CONCLUSION

The attitude to learn is an attribute that you must never lose. I believe you have learned a lot of important things that will help you speak and write English more effectively. However, learning must never end here. As much as this book covered a wide range of grammatical and spelling errors, it does not cover every error in the English language. Hence, it is imperative that you continue to seek avenues to learn more and continue to improve.

You don't have to be a native speaker before you can write and communicate effectively in the English language. There have been people who have won awards for literary works in the English language who were not native speakers. Hence, the only limitation to your efficiency in English grammar is the one you place on yourself. You will only be as good as you want to be.

However, desire is not enough. You have to take deliberate steps to improve yourself every day. Buy books and read quality material that can improve your speaking and writing. The quality of your life is equivalent to what you do with your resources. Your money and time are two vital resources you have to utilize judiciously. Invest your time and money in activities that will improve your life!

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