A Guide to Parts Of Speech

WITH DIAGRAMMING AND SELECTED GRAMMAR TOPICS

Instructor Karl Sherlock
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction**  
2

**Rules of Diagramming**  
5

**Conceptualizing Grammar**  
11

**Nouns**  
13  
- Common Nouns  
15  
- Proper Nouns  
16  
- Collective Nouns  
18  
- Noun Phrases and Clauses  
20

**Pronouns**  
24  
- Personal Pronouns  
27  
- Indefinite Pronouns  
30  
- Reciprocal Pronouns  
32  
- Interrogative Pronouns  
35  
- Relative Pronouns  
37  
- Demonstrative Pronouns  
41  
- Reflexive Pronouns  
43  
- Intensive Pronouns  
43

**Verbs**  
45  
- Transitive Verbs  
48  
- Intransitive  
51  
- Linking Verbs  
53  
- Causative Verbs  
56  
- Factitive Verbs  
58  
- Auxiliary Verbs  
59  
- Phrasal Verbs  
60

**Verbals**  
61  
- Gerunds  
62  
- Participles  
65  
- Infinitives  
69

**Conjunctions**  
73  
- Coordinating  
75  
- Subordinating  
79  
- Correlative  
81

**Adjectives**  
83

**Adverbs**  
88  
- Single-Word Adverbs  
89  
- Conjunctive Verbs  
92  
- Adverb Phrases and Clauses  
94

**Prepositions**  
96

**Interjections**  
98

**Grammar Errors**  
99  
- Noun Errors  
100  
- Pronoun Errors  
103  
- Verb (Subject/Verb) Errors  
107  
- Modifier Errors  
108  
- Conjunction Errors  
113

**Sentences**  
117  
- Sentence Moods  
118  
- Sentence Types  
124  
- Run-On Sentences  
129  
- Fragments  
137
WHO WHAT WHERE

This Parts of Speech handbook is an extension of the materials used for sections of English 098: English Fundamentals, a remedial English course at Grossmont College, taught by Karl Sherlock. All content, including written materials, diagram illustrations, examples, and art work, are copyrighted and may not be copied, reprinted or distributed without written permission.

This site has several objectives.

- to introduce basic concepts in grammar
- to introduce techniques for sentence diagramming
- to provide instruction for common problems in grammar

GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AGAIN?!

What does the word "tuition" mean? Do you "pay tuition" or "pay for tuition"? Is "tuition" a count noun or noncount noun? Do you give it or get it in college? Does tuition come with a price or a cost? Is the phrase "in tuition" the same as the word "intuition"? If "intuit" is a verb, is there also a verb "tuit" and, whatever it is, can you tuit--tuit till you're satisfied?

I forget which comedian said it in the 1980s, but over the years I've come to realize its enduring truth: "Everything you really need to know in life, you learn by the fourth grade." The zillion things we want to learn, or the myriad things others want us to learn, are not the same as the few major things we need to learn in order to raise us above the abject life of animals. Those formative years in education teach us how to think, communicate, and express our humanity. The rest of it we pick up as we go along.

This may be why the common culture seems stuck at the third and fourth grade. Newspapers articles tend to be written at a fourth grade level. Television news, at a third grade level. Reality television programs--I shudder to think. And, regardless of how "smart" smartphones are supposed to make us feel, thanks to texting and Tweeting, verbal skills are trending dumber, not smarter. AAMOF. SRSLY. TMI? An entire generation of young people who have invested heavily into the technology of smartphones seem also to have bought the propaganda, lock stock and barrel, that they lead busier lives than previous generations, and that they need a method of education, and a style of communication, that can somehow "keep up with them" as they are constantly on the go, dividing their attention among many activities and multi-tasking their way through their day. In fact, this latest generation of college students not only believes it is superior at multi-tasking, but it believes a superior ability to multi-task means superior intellectual capacity as well. A Washington Post article in 2010 reported the unpleasant truth of it: college students are actually somewhat worse at basic components of cognitive control because of their culture of multitasking. Chief among these basic components: switching and paying attention.

PAY ATTENTION

Like a facility with grammar, the ability to pay attention is one of those basic skills you needed to have learned in life by the fourth grade. Attention means focus, and focus means slowing down
to appreciate and understand. So it is with a college course like English 098 that's trying to teach second, third and fourth grade concepts of grammar and sentence construction. Understanding English grammar isn't going to "just come to you." You can't pick up a musical instrument for the first time and start playing the song that's in your head. It's not the way learning works. The brain has to do two things: first, understand; then, trick itself into remembering that it understands. This is the one-two punch of study and rote memorization. Making it happen, though, means you have to slow down and focus, not hurry up and finish. And nagging your friends in a text, about how nagged you feel by your English homework, won't help one whit.

Learning English isn't unique. The same principles of patience and focus hold true for other subjects, including learning a second language: no matter how much we imagine ourselves as fluid speakers, the reality of fluency takes a longer course of real study and lots of flash cards. Some parts of it are boring and repetitive, and others are inspiring and creative. Unfortunately, you don't get to choose one and not the other; they come as a package. The other factor that all learners of a second language need is immersion: an environment in which they are forced to "sink or swim" by communicating with fluent speakers.

SECOND LANGUAGE, SECOND CHANCE

In a way, whether you are a fluent or native speaker of English, studying English grammar in a college course like this one is a lot like studying a second language. Stop assuming you already know how to use the language, or that learning how to communicate better than you already do is pointless and unnecessary. It's not, and it won't be later on, either. The quintessentially immature and cocky opinion of a remedial college writing course is that it won't have anything to do with your job once you graduate. The first mistake here is in thinking that a college education is strictly about getting a job, and believing that we teach writing strictly as a vocational skill set. It doesn't matter what career or job you eventually take up, your ability to use language with sophistication and complex expression will affect every part of your life as a literate member of twenty-first century civilization.

Students who tend to do well in this course start it with the right attitude: that they need to understand grammar and writing better than they do, and that this is a second chance to accomplish that. They also believe they're capable of learning it. The sooner you adopt this attitude and begin looking at grammar as a challenging puzzle to solve, the sooner you will acquire the skills that make you eligible for less remedial writing courses.

One important way to examine grammar and writing as a puzzle is sentence diagramming.

PAINT 1,000 WORDS

Every semester, I poll my students about their familiarity with diagramming. The average response is, 1 in 100 students have done it or know about it, and usually it's the one older returning student--the one who also remembers when teachers kept something in their top desk drawer called "The Board of Education."

There was a time in American education when diagramming and corporal punishment were as fundamental to learning how to write as phonics are to learning how to read. We may be well rid of corporal punishment, but diagramming is still an elegant tool for discussing the sometimes baffling nature of grammar and semantics, and it should never have been abandoned.
Why? Because, without it, students of writing and grammar learn how to compose sentences in a very two-dimensional way: as a sequence of ideas properly arranged. I don't argue that this isn't important. However, as writers enter college with this understanding of the sentence, their education begins to fail them. They've developed more sophisticated verbal skills, but they hold themselves back from expressing themselves in complex and compound-complex sentences because--well, to be blunt, it's just too damned complex! The sequence and arrangement of words in a longer and more complex expression is more difficult to manage. However, if writers looked at sentences, not just as a sequence, but as architecture--a construction with its own infrastructure of ideas and details--then they would become mindful of the architecture of their own thoughts. And, beautiful prose would bespeak a beautiful mind.

Fortunately, simplistic prose does not automatically imply a simple mind. However, it does hold back a complex mind from expressing itself as clearly and completely as it wants. For that reason, I strongly encourage remedial writers to remedy their writing through a reacquaintance with diagramming. Sure, like grammar, itself, there are a few rules about diagramming that may seem a little arbitrary. However, for the most part diagramming is an elegant and balanced architecture of the semantics of a sentence. It helps to demonstrate how different parts of speech distribute ideas and information across a sentence, and how the ideas in a sentence relate to each other. Diagramming reveals the "mind" of a sentence.

This last point is perhaps singularly the most egregious problem of beginning college writers: they know what they want to say, but they can't make their sentences say it. They and their writing are of two minds, so learning to write means learning to translate what's in their heads into what's on the page. Again, I strongly feel that if students learned how sentences "think," they would learn to compose their thoughts more like sentences. Then, they wouldn't have to translate their thoughts into the kind of writing that seems relevant only to professors. Their minds would be in harmony with their writing. Beautiful writing, beautiful mind.
RULES OF DIAGRAMMING

Just as humans use the speech centers of the brain to form ideas into an arrangement of words, a sentence has a brain with a speech center. A sentence diagram maps the "brain" of a sentence: once you can identify the parts of that brain (that is, its parts of speech), a sentence diagram maps the relationship of those parts.

Another way to think of sentence diagramming is as a map. When we draw a map, we start as all cartographers do: drawing lines--and, a sentence diagram uses a lot of lines. Different lines serve different purposes, just as they do on any blueprint or map. Thankfully, no matter how complex a sentence diagram may be, it depends on a simple set of lines.

HORIZONTAL LINES

SOLID HORIZONTALS
Solid horizontal lines in a sentence diagram are exactly what they sound like: they're horizons on which to view the main parts of speech.

Only main parts of speech go on them:
verbs
nouns, both subjects or objects, including
   pronouns (but not possessive adjectives)
   verbals that act like nouns
   phrases and clauses that act like nouns (appositives, noun clauses, etc.)

DASHED HORIZONTALS
Dashed horizontal lines are used infrequently in sentence diagramming, but when they are, it's usually to connect compound adjectives and adverbs.

Compound modifiers are stock adjective or adverb phrases, sometimes joined by hyphens (e.g., "near or far," "well and true," "clear and present," "far and wide," "noble and brave," and so on). In this sense, it's not really so much a horizontal line as it is dashed vertical line placed on its side, then used to connect diagonal elements together as compound modifiers. (See "Dashed Verticals" below.)
VERTICAL LINES

SOLID VERTICALS
Solid vertical lines ordinarily serve as dividers to separate main elements on the horizontal lines. 
**bisecting,** to separate subject from predicate verb
**intersecting,** to separate predicate verb or verbal from direct object

LEFT ANGLE VERTICALS
A "bent" vertical line sounds a lot like a diagonal line used for modifiers (see below), but it's really just angled. It's used with linking verbs to separate, not objects, but complements. The left-angled line "points" back to (or, rather leans at) the subject that it complements.

This is a special exception to the rules of vertical lines, but since complements are kind of a cross between modifiers and object nouns, you can see the logic in using a line that blends the two techniques. Once you begin examining real sentence diagrams using linking verbs, you'll clearly see the distinctions in the use of these angled lines.
DASHED VERTICALS

Dashed vertical lines serve the exactly opposite purpose of solid vertical lines: while solid vertical lines are separators, dashed verticals are connectors, including:
- coordinating conjunctions
- correlative conjunctions

DIAGONAL LINES

SOLID DIAGONAL LINES
All solid diagonal lines are modifiers within a single clause (even when they're only implied in the sentence). Some modifying phrases have objects that go on horizontal lines, but all modifiers, when single-word or phrasal, start with diagonal solid lines.

These include:
- **adjectives**, and anything that acts like an adjective
  - determiners
  - articles
  - participles
  - adjective phrases
- **adverbs**, and anything that acts like an adverb
  - conjunctive adverbs
  - adverb phrases
DASHED DIAGONAL LINES
A dashed diagonal connects subordinate clauses. They're diagonals, just like modifiers, because subordinate clauses support and modify as well. Dashed diagonal lines can connect clauses to one another in a general way.

However, they can also connect a subordinate clause to a specific part of speech in another clause.

There's no rule about whether they should lean left or right, and they're used with the following:
- **subordinating conjunction**, which is also named on the diagonal
- **relative pronoun**, which, like all pronouns, stays on the horizontal line
SPLITTERS

Splitters are used with compound elements within a clause or a phrase. When a verb takes two or more objects, for instance, a splitter is needed to stack those objects horizontally, one over the other, in an organized way that allows for modifiers to go under them diagonally.

Splitters generally occur with the dashed vertical lines used for conjunctions, since compound elements depend on them. They can be used anywhere parts of speech would go on horizontal lines:

- subjects
- predicate verbs
- predicate objects
- prepositional objects
- verbals and/or their objects
A verbal phrase or a noun clause is a system within a system: a set of gears moving together inside the clockwork. Because an entire phrase or clause can sometimes fill the same role that, in another sentence, would be filled by a single word, sometimes diagramming gets a little crowded and complex. In real estate, when you don't have room to build outward, you always build upward. A tripod is a way to build the sentence diagram upward, elevating these systems of verbal phrases and noun clauses over their position on the horizontal line so that there's room to expand.

Tripods are used for the following:
- **noun infinitives** and infinitive phrases
- **gerunds** and gerundial phrases
- noun clauses
- **adjective complements** (used with linking verbs) comprised of
  - adjectival infinitives and their phrases
  - participles and participial phrases
CONCEPTUALIZING GRAMMAR

Sometimes sentence diagramming can be a frustrating process, especially when you're struggling to identify the parts of speech involved. If, in your mind, you can "see" words as their parts of speech, you may have an easier time relating those parts together. This section offers some pictographic suggestions for conceptualizing parts of speech, which you can then compose into an overall illustration of a sentence as you would in a sentence diagram.

NOUNS

Because nouns are, ostensibly, things—whether subjects or objects—a good, solid cube or a 3-D box is a nice way to represent them. Cubes also have six sides, to represent six "things" that nouns can be: persons, places, animate objects, inanimate objects, concepts, and systems. Cubes are simple to draw, but you can also write "N" on it for yourself to remind you it represents a noun.

PRONOUNS

Because pronouns are words that stand in for nouns, a square is an apt symbol for them: a "flatter" version of a noun. You can write the letter "P" inside a square, if it helps to remind you to think "Pronouns."

VERBS

Verbs imply action, even though not all verbs are active. No matter. Choosing a symbol that represents a sense of action is all that's needed, and a ball does a good job of that. A sphere is easily put into motion as a ball. So, drawing a ball to represent verbs works well enough.

VERBALS

Verbals don't communicate action so much as activity, whether as a thing or as a modifier. That's why a snapshot of a ball is a good choice to represent a verbal. The simplest way to draw it is to put a circle in a box, to suggest a photo of a ball in motion.

ADJECTIVES

Adjectives modify nouns and add descriptive detail, so an artist's paintbrush seems to capture the spirit of what an adjective does. If a picture paints a thousand words, than a paintbrush provides a good many of the adjectives among those words. You can draw a paintbrush any way you like, but, if it's easier for you, you might just draw the bristles. Or, if you're not comfortable drawing paintbrushes, a puzzle-piece captures the same idea: one detail in a complete picture.
ADVERBS
Adverbs modify actions, activities, and other modifiers. That's why something that "follows the action," whatever that is, provides the best kind of icon to represent adverbs. An eyewitness, for instance, is someone who reports the action, the way that an adverb commentates or reports on an activity.

CONJUNCTIONS
It doesn't matter what kind of conjunction it is, every conjunction joins two or more things, so a plus symbol is a straightforward representation of that. If you prefer something like a paperclip, though, or some other fastener, go with your instinct.

PREPOSITIONS
These little words are difficult to describe sometimes. In just about any language, a good many idioms depend on them. However, prepositions do have some common denominators: many of them orient one thing to another in a spatial or time-related direction. That's why a compass needle or a weather vane does a good job of depicting the concept.

INTERJECTIONS
Interjections are not always exclamations, but exclamatory shouts are frequently interjections. That's why an exclamation point does a good job of expressing the spirit of an interjection.

ADAPTING CONCEPTS
Once you're comfortable conceptualizing the main parts of speech, you can then begin imagining the way that these concepts come together to form individual parts of speech. For instance, a Conjunctive Adverb introduces a new sentence in the mood of a conjunction, but it is an adverb commenting on the action. Therefore, a combination of a conjunction and an adverb might help you to "see" the concept of a Conjunctive Adverb. Subordinating Conjunctions and Correlative Conjunctions might be distinguished from each other with the addition of some common mathematical signs. A participle might combine a puzzle-piece with a ball, to suggest an adjective that forms from a verb.

You can't go wrong if you try to be creative, because imagining how these different concepts can be depicted makes you do the work of defining them and understanding them for yourself.
Nouns

Nouns are categorized as one of the eight main parts of speech. Nouns answer the questions, "What (or who) is it?" and "What's its name?"

Words that serve to answer such questions are only part of the story. Nouns can take the shape of hyphenated terms, multi-word titles, and whole phrases such as appositive phrases. Other parts of speech also behave like nouns. Pronouns are an obvious example, but gerund phrases and one variety of infinitive phrases, also serve the same role as nouns do in a clause or phrase.

Modern advertising sometimes seems to work overtime to make the distinction as confusing as possible. What, for example, are the nouns in the following commercial announcement?

Steven Spielberg Presents Taken is brought to you by the makers of Nike: Just Do It, and by Just fifteen minutes could save you fifteen percent or more on car insurance.

Regardless of how convoluted nouns can sound, knowing them is useful on many levels, the most basic of which is to diagram the subject of a clause. The major categories of nouns are

- Common Nouns
- Proper Nouns
- Collective Nouns

Noun Phrases and Clauses
DIAGRAMMING NOUNS

Nouns are the most basic unit of speech, so their placement on a diagram receives more attention and importance than other parts of speech, excepting verbs. All nouns, regardless of type, are either subjects or objects and are placed on horizontal lines. (Appositive phrases are an exception.)

In the example below, every highlighted word on a horizontal line is a noun. In the case of "collecting pollen in sacs on its legs," this entire gerund phrase is the object of the preposition "by," so the entire phrase, start to finish, is categorized as a noun phrase, even though some of its constituent parts are clearly modifiers. For more information about this, see Verbals: Gerunds and Verbals: Infinitives.
Common Nouns

A common noun is, simply, any noun that is not a formal name or title. Common nouns fall into two general categories: count nouns and mass nouns.

Count Nouns
As the name implies, count nouns are countable by a specific number, whether definite or indefinite:
- many plates
- two ideas
- some spaces
- five fingers
- all customers

Mass Nouns
Mass nouns are also called "non-count nouns." They should NOT be confused with Collective Nouns. Rather, they refer to nouns that can only be measured in general amounts, never in specific numbers. Abstract nouns are a ready example:
- democracy
- curiosity
- happiness

None of these can be counted specifically: one would not usually say, "Two happinesses," for instance. However, plenty of non-abstract (concrete) nouns are also uncountable. Some examples:
- water
- money
- homework
- peanut butter
- hair
- salt

As with abstract nouns, none of these would ever be enumerated; you wouldn't say, for instance, "two peanut butters." However, each can be paired with a countable unit of measurement. Those units of measurement are count nouns:
- four ounces of water
- thirty dollars in money
- six hours of homework
- one spoonful of peanut butter
- several varieties of salt
Proper Nouns

Any formal name or formal title is considered a proper noun and virtually always capitalized. With the exception of compound-nouns and hyphenated words, most common nouns are single words. With proper nouns, the full name or full title constitutes a single noun. Proper nouns can be classified in several ways: entities; physical or metaphysical locations; and, trademarked or published names and titles.

Entities:
If it is identified by a living or corporate entity, whether real or fictional, then that name is a proper noun. Furthermore, if there is a title associated with the name, then that is also part of the proper noun. Entities include

people
Albert Einstein
Superman
Gary Numan
Queen of Sheba
Dr. Who

groups
Wu-Tang Clan
The Jackson Five
Veteran Writers of San Diego County
St. Sebastian Madrigal Choir

corporations and clubs
McDonald's
Microsoft
Shriners
the Roman Catholic Church
the Democratic Party

companion animals
Trigger
Mr. Sparkles-Fantastic
Old Yeller
Bubo

Physical or Metaphysical Locations:
Place names don't always have to be real to be acknowledged by name. Sometimes, "place" is also a broader location or direction, and not a specific coordinate. Regardless, if they are identified by name, then that name is a proper noun.

regions
Mozambique
Asia
the West Coast
North Park
Pacific Ocean
The South

celestial identities
Pluto
Andromeda
the Moon
Earth
Mars
Betelgeuse

afterlife and spiritual realms
Valhalla
Grey Havens
Tir’n Nog
Hades
Limbo
the Underworld
Trademarked or Copyrighted Names

Trademarked or copyrighted identities are a matter of how they will be cited or catalogued. Even if a work is not technically copyrighted, but rather a simple title of an essay, or even a recipe, it is still referenced by some formal name, which is considered a proper noun.

**published titles** (which require the use of markers--italics or quotation marks--in addition to capital letters)

"How Do I Love Thee?"
*Avatar*
*English Skills With Readings*
"The Man In the Mirror"
*The Betty Crocker Cookbook*

**course titles and presentations** (but not course *subjects*); these do NOT require special markers

English 098: English Fundamentals, about fundamentals in English
Introduction to Psychology, a course about psychology
Shower Singers Workshop, a workshop for singers who only sing in the shower
Money Management Seminar, a seminar about money management

**product names and brands** (which do NOT require special markers)

I Can't Believe It's Not Butter
Kellogg's
The Country's Best Yogurt (T.C.B.Y.)

You should also be aware of words like "A" and "The" in trademarked and copyrighted names. Dwayne Johnson's trademarked name, for instance was "The Rock" and *not* "Rock," whereas Roy Harold Fitzgerald's professional name was "Rock Hudson" and not "The Rock Hudson." This issue is of special concern to periodical titles. San Diego's major newspaper is the *San Diego Union Tribune*; "the" is not in the title and isn't capitalized. With *The Wall Street Journal*, on the other hand, "The" is the first word in the name of the newspaper and must be capitalized (as well as marked in italics).
Collective Nouns

Collective nouns take a singular form but are composed of more than one individual person or item (group, jury, team, class, committee, herd). Often, they are followed by a prepositional phrase specifying what they are composed of: a group of pebbles; a herd of animals.

Collective nouns should not be confused with Mass Nouns.

Terms of Venery

A large subset of collective nouns are specific to certain kinds of animals. These are called "nouns of assembly" (also known as terms of venery); For example, "pride" as a term of venery refers to lions, but not to dogs. "An exaltation" is used specifically to describe a flock of larks, but not a flock of geese or a group of cats.

| Army of frogs, a colony of frogs | Herd of cattle |
| Badling, raft, or dinner of ducks | Herd of cranes |
| Bevy of quail | Herd of curlew |
| Box social of eagles | Herd of elephants |
| Brood of chickens, a flock of chickens | Herd of horses, a team of horses (in harness), a string of horses (for racing) |
| Building of rooks | Herd of oxen, a drove of oxen (when driven in a group), a team of oxen (in harness) |
| Cast of hawks (tame) | Herd of pigs, a flock of pigs |
| Charm of goldfinches | Herd of wrens |
| Clattering of choughs | Hive of bees, a swarm of bees |
| Cloud of bats, a colony of bats | Host of sparrows |
| Clutter of cats | Kit of pigeons (flying together) |
| Cohort of zebra, a herd of zebra | Lease of hawks (tame) |
| Colony of ants, an army of ants | Mob of kangaroos, a troop of kangaroos |
| Colony of penguins | Murder of crows |
| Colony of rabbits, a nest of rabbits, a warren of rabbits (strictly, where they live) | Murmuration of starlings |
| Congregation of plovers | Muster of peacocks |
| Covert of coots | Nide of pheasants |
| Covey of partridges | Nye of pheasants |
| Crowd of people | Pack of dogs |
| Deceit of lapwings | Pack of wolves, a herd of wolves |
| Desert of lapwings | Pandemonium of parrots |
| Dissimulation of birds (small) | Parliament of owls |
| Dole/dule of (turtle) doves | Parliament of owls |
| Drift of quail | Parliament of rooks |
| Exaltation of larks | Peep/brood of chickens |
| Fall of woodcocks | Pride of lions |
| Flight of doves | Raft of ducks |
| Flight of goshawks | Rasp of guineafowl |
| Flight of swallows | School of dolphins |
| Flock of birds | School of fish |
| Flock of birds, a flight of birds (in the air) | School of whales, a shoal of whales, a pod of whales (smaller groups) |
| Flock of geese, a gaggle of geese | Sedge of cranes |
| Flock of goats, a herd of goats | Siege/sedge of bitterns |
| Flock of sheep | Siege/sedge of herons |
| Gaggle of geese (on the ground) | Skein of geese (in flight) |
| Game of swans | |
sleuth of bears, a sloth of bears
sord of mallards
spring of teal
streak of tigers, an ambush of tigers (fanciful*)
suit/sute of mallards
tidings of magpies
train of jackdaws

trip of dotterel
troop of foxes, an earth of foxes
troop of monkeys
unkindness of ravens
walk, or wisp of snipe
watch of nightingales
wedge of swans (in flight)
Noun Phrases and Clauses

Appositives and Appositive Phrases
The word "apposite" means "side-by-side" or "alongside." When you use one noun or noun phrase to rename another, it's called an appositive. To "rename" simply means to re-identify, always with more specific detail or information. When an appositive noun and its corresponding modifiers come together, it's called an "appositive phrase." In the following example, all the appositive phrases are underlined, and the appositives, themselves, are in bold:

The man who discovered Pluto, American astronomer Clyde Taunbaugh, named the planet after Pluto the dog, his daughter's favorite Disney character.

A noun usually isn't a modifier, but given the descriptive nature of renaming, you might think of appositives as modifiers in disguise. In most cases (but not all), appositives are set off by commas.

Nouns In Apposition (Compound Nouns)
A closely related concept to appositive phrases is the use of nouns in apposition: two nouns that are bound together in a single concept and always appear together. We also call these "compound nouns," but "compound" could also refer to the way two or more sentence elements are conjoined (as in compound subjects, or compound sentences), so "nouns in apposition" is a better descriptor even though it's a more complicated term.

Nouns in apposition can be open, hyphenated, or combined in their form:

**open**
- car parts
- hand movement
- recognition award

**hyphenated**
- brother-in-law
- changing-room
- witness-box

**combined**
- backyard
- congresswoman
- riverboat

In the development of any language's common usage, the above is a progression: open nouns in apposition eventually become hyphenated, then closed. Words such as "leather jacket" will eventually be spelled "leather-jacket" and then, ultimately, "leatherjacket" (though the latter is already used as a name for a kind of fish).
Direct Address

A special kind of appositive in English is the direct address, in which the implied "You there" of imperative and other sentences is renamed. Consider these examples:

Charlie, what's our destination?
Professor, please help me with this problem.
Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.
Welcome, delegates, to the 2012 National Democratic Convention.

DIAGRAMMING SECONDARY NOUNS

Secondary nouns are fairly simple to diagram. If they are in appositives, then they go in parentheses right next to the nouns they rename, and their modifiers go right underneath them. If they are nouns in apposition (compound nouns), then they stay together as one concept. If they are a direct address, they "lurk" just outside the diagram. Here's a sentence that includes all three:

Professor, I think that Harold, the student in the cotton shirt, is confused by the assignment.

Noun Clauses

So far, the other sections under "Nouns" have all focused on how individual words, names and titles fill the role of a noun. However, sometimes entire clauses answer the question "What?" or "Who?" In the following sentence, WHAT is the object of the action?

I want only what I'm owed.

If we use this sentence to pose the question, "What do I want?" then the answer is "what I am owed"--the very "thing" wanted. Since a noun is a person, place, thing or concept, then "what I am owed" must, in its entirety, be a well-and-true noun.

Noun clauses are, by nature, subordinate clauses: they cannot stand on their own as independent clauses do. They begin with noun clause markers, subordinators that include
many of the same words that serve as Interrogative and Relative Pronouns. The noun clause markers are as follows:

that, what and which; who, whom, and whose
if; whether; how; when; where; why
however, whatever, whenever, wherever, whichever, whoever, whomever

Quite often, noun clauses don't have to begin with any markers. Rather, a noun marker is implied. For instance,

I know **you mean well**.

The sentence above has an implied noun clause marker, "that":

I know **that you mean well**.

**DIAGRAMMING NOUN CLAUSES**

Just like any other noun, a noun clause can fill the role of a subject, an object, or a complement. However, it's easy to confuse a noun clause with a relative clause or an adverb clause because they all can begin with the same set of words. Remember, however, what questions a noun asks and you will have an easier time recognizing the difference. Consider the following:

A. ADVERB CLAUSE: **Wherever** you go, there you are.
B. RELATIVE CLAUSE: I pity the man **who** doesn't know love.
C. NOUN CLAUSE: He believes **that** the world will end in 2012.

The three sentences above may sound alike in some ways, but when you diagram them, their differences become clearer. Diagramming a noun clause is as simple as putting, both, the subject and predicate in the same spot a noun or pronoun would go; however, in order to economize the use of space, it is elevated. Furthermore, whether or not the noun marker is used in the sentence, it should be included on the diagram above the noun clause, and connected by a dashed line, as shown below in Example C:
PRONOUNS

Pronouns are categorized as one of the eight main parts of speech. When students hear mention of "pronouns," their first reaction is often, "I already know this: Pronouns substitute for nouns, blah, blah, blah." True enough. A pronoun stands in for a noun; that's why it's called a "pro + noun." But, there's a lot more to the topic of pronouns than just their definition--starting with the nouns they stand in for, called "antecedents."

Antecedents
The word "antecedent" derives from the verb "antecede": to go or occur before, in time or place; to precede. In grammar, the nouns or noun phrases for which pronouns substitute are their "antecedents." Ostensibly, an antecedent comes before the pronoun is used but, where word order in a sentence is concerned, it isn't always what happens. For instance:

Before she went on vacation for three weeks, Virginia shut off the gas and electricity to her house.

In the example above, the subordinate clause "Before she went..." has been placed in front of, not after, the main clause, causing the pronoun antecedent "Virginia" to show up after, not before, the pronoun "she." This is irrelevant. Antecedent nouns may not literally antecede their pronouns on the page, but in concept they always do, since we could just as easily place the subordinate clause after the main clause:

Virginia shut off the gas and electricity to her house before she went on vacation for three weeks.

Declension
The variety of pronouns used in English is determined in part by how they are declined—i.e., their declension. Pronoun "declension" is related to the verb "decline," but not "decline" in the sense of refusal; rather, "decline" in the sense of an angling, a leaning or a sloping downward (as in, the opposite of "incline"). Grammarians listing the order of pronouns also use the word "inflected" as a synonym for "declined." All of this is unnecessarily complicated, though, because "declined" in this sense is used here more figuratively than literally. In plain talk, pronoun declension simply means that a pronoun "leans" differently according to its number and its case. In fact, number, case, and person are the three main criteria by which pronouns are identified.

Pronouns Are Identified By Their Number

Pronouns are characterized as either singular or plural in number: "Singular" means one and only one; "Plural" means two or more. The number of a pronoun is determined by whether its antecedent is singular or plural.

Every dog staying at the kennel had its own dish it shared with no one. Because dogs are territorial, they might try to keep other dogs from common access to food and water.
Pronouns Are Identified By Their Person

Personhood in pronoun use is a matter of perspective in an intimate dialogue between writer and reader (or, speaker and listener). Using the image at right, pretend that you're the woman who has something to say to the guy in the middle, about the man with his back to them. In her body, you grab his arm and say, "I want to tell you something about him." In that brief statement, you've established all three points of view: you're the first person (the "I"); the guy who has your attention is the second person (the "you"); and the man you're gossiping about is the third person (the "him"). This helps to illustrate the concept of "point of view" in pronouns as “Observer,” “Audience,” and “Topic”:

1st Person: Observer. The primary perspective is always that of the "I" or “We” point of view; the person speaking or writing.

2nd Person: Audience. The secondary perspective is always of the "you"--the individual(s) to whom the "I" or “we” is speaking or writing; the person(s) addressed.

3rd Person: Topic. The remaining perspective is always of the “he,” “she,” “it,” or “they”--anyone or anything else not included in that relationship; a "subject" about which the "I" speaks or writes to the "you"; the person, thing or subject referenced.

Example:
I will remind you next time not to invite them to our party.

Pronouns Are Identified By Their Case

Using a pronoun is a case of substitution. The word "case," then, has the same meaning as in the common expression, "Just in case . . . "; it refers to a set of circumstances or a situation. The circumstances of how a pronoun is used in a sentence determine its case. In most "cases," a pronoun serves either as subject or as object (of a verb or preposition); however, other cases provide more complex substitutions and relationships with antecedents.

Many students neglect to look at the issue of case in their native languages until they study a foreign language. Understanding the differences among languages often comes down to reviewing how different cases are identified by word endings. English rarely uses different word endings, so selecting pronouns appropriate for the case genuinely demands an understanding of the grammar. However, since pronouns substitute for nouns, it is helpful to note first (and memorize) how nouns can fall into four different cases:
SUBJECTIVE = in the role of the subject (a.k.a. nominative; predicate nominative)
   e.g. 1: "Cabbage stinks."
   e.g. 2: "Swing is a style of dance." ("style" is the predicate nominative)

ACCUSATIVE = in the role of the direct object of a transitive verb or a preposition
   e.g.: "The chef made a soufflé for our guests."

DATIVE = in the role of an indirect object (often implying the preposition "to" or "for")
   e.g. 1: "Derek's cologne gave me a headache."
   e.g. 2: "The chef made our guests a soufflé."

GENITIVE = the possessive relationship; indicating belonging (marked by an apostrophe
         or preposition "of")
   e.g. 1: "Mary Ann grasped the broom's handle."
   e.g. 2: "The handle of the broom was broken."

Prepositions create more complex cases in English--the locative (movement from), ablative
(indicating an addressee), and instrumental (indicating an object used to perform or accomplish
an action)--but these do not require any special change of pronoun: they all take the same
"object" case.

The main cases and varieties of pronouns students should be able to identify are the following:

- Personal Pronouns
- Indefinite Pronouns
- Reciprocal Pronouns
- Interrogative Pronouns
- Demonstrative Pronouns
- Intensive Pronouns
- Reflexive Pronouns
PERSONAL PRONOUNS
The personal pronouns are the most readily named set of pronouns. Most everyone remembers what pronouns are by the eight little subjective case pronouns. They’re called “subject pronouns” because they occupy only the subject of a clause. You should take note, however, that linking verbs create the "predicate nominative," which is another way of saying that they link back to the subject. Therefore, when a pronoun is used after a linking verb, it should be a subject pronoun. For instance, "It is she," not "It is her."

SUBJECT PRONOUNS
(including Nominative and Predicate Nominative Cases)

I  
you  
he, she, it  
we  
you  
they

Example:
If they take any longer, I will have to ask that we postpone the meeting you scheduled until Friday.

What are the subject pronouns in the following sentence?
When you say it takes a village to raise children, it doesn't mean that we aren't all individually responsible for being good parents to them.

OBJECT PRONOUNS
The object pronouns are used as the objects of prepositions, and as the predicate objects of verbs and verbals, whether direct or indirect objects.

Objective Pronouns (a.k.a., Accusative and Dative Cases)

me  
you  
him, her, it  
us  
you  
them

Example:
The manager gave me an application, which required me to complete it right there and return it to her before the interview.

What are the object pronouns in the following sentence?
Whenever Roger invites her to spend time with him, he always has tiger lilies waiting for her, even though he is allergic to them.
DIAGRAMMING SUBJECT AND OBJECT PRONOUNS

Since the meeting is taking too long, we will have to finish it later.

PERSONAL POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

The personal possessive pronouns can be used either as subjects or as objects, direct or indirect. They function primarily to express the sense of the antecedent's ownership. With the exception of "mine" they all end in "-s".

Possessive Personal Pronouns (has aspect of the Genitive Case, but is used as, either, Subject or Object)
- mine
- yours
- his, hers, its
- ours
- yours
- theirs

Example:

These suitcases are my husband’s and mine, not yours, because all of ours have leather ID tags, and, if you study those suitcases closely, their tags are clearly plastic.

*Note: The italicized word "their" is not a Possessive Personal Pronoun in this sentence. Why?

What are the possessive personal pronouns in the following sentence?
Theirs was an easy enough divorce: she demanded all of what was hers in the first place, and he agreed to give her half of what was never his to begin with.
POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES
Possessive adjectives are *not* pronouns, but they are bound by many of the same rules of agreement. With the exception of "my" and "his" they're identical to personal possessive pronouns, except that they drop the "-s" ending and, of course, are always followed by a noun they modify. The possessive adjectives are:

- my
- your
- his, her, its
- our
- your
- their

Other possessive adjectives, such as "whose," are derived from other types of pronouns, such as interrogative and relative pronouns, but the possessive adjectives listed above are derived specifically from personal possessive pronouns.

DIAGRAMMING PERSONAL POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS AND POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES
Just like any other pronoun, personal possessive pronouns go on horizontal lines and serve as subjects and objects. Possessive adjectives, like any other single-word modifier, go on diagonal lines under the nouns they modify.

We compared the fuel efficiency of our pick-up trucks, and mine bested his by an order of magnitude.
Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns are derived from adjectives describing indefinite numbers or amounts; when the nouns they describe are dropped and only the adjectives remain, these become substitutions for their nouns, which by definition makes them pronouns: "Each toy is handmade" becomes "Each is handmade."

Because they form from indefinite articles and other adjectives, some of them can also take comparative and superlative forms:

Among the elderly, even though some are experienced with text-messaging, and more are becoming comfortable with e-mail, most still prefer the personal touch that a phone call offers.

Subject/verb agreement errors commonly occur as a result of the confusion over whether certain indefinite pronouns, when used as subjects, take singular forms or plural forms frequently causes errors. (See Verbs for more information.) Indefinite pronouns such as "all," "any," "more/most," and "some" can swing either way, depending on whether the implied antecedent is singular or plural: when the implied antecedent is a non-count noun (i.e., "mass noun" or "abstract noun" such as "water," "diplomacy," "stress") or a collective noun (i.e., a "group noun" or a "noun of assembly" such as "jury," "company" or "gaggle of geese"), the indefinite pronoun is singular; when the implied antecedent is a plural count noun, the indefinite pronoun is plural.

NON-COUNT NOUN SINGULAR ANTECEDENT:
In this example, "prayer" is used as a generalized concept: the idea of prayer.
"Most prayer is done in private"; therefore, "Concerning prayer, most is done in private."

COUNT-NOUN PLURAL ANTECEDENT:
In this example, "prayer" is used in place of "poem" or "meditative passage": a thing, rather than an idea.
"Most prayers are recited silently"; therefore, "Concerning prayers, most are recited silently."

Not all indefinite pronouns have given up their antecedent nouns, either. Instead of implying their antecedents, these indefinite pronouns have become contractions or compound forms, containing "-one," "-thing" or "-body". They are still treated as indefinite pronouns, however.

In the list below, related indefinite pronouns are grouped together and marked as follows:
unmarked pronouns are always singular;
(*) asterisked pronouns are always plural;
(*) pronouns marked by this sign can be either singular or plural, depending on their implied antecedents;
(‡) double-plus signs indicate a pronoun with a contracted or compound form.

all° ("All of it is up for grabs"; "All of us are on vacation this week.")
any° ("Any of these is a good choice"; "I apologize if any are offended by my comments.")
anybody‡
anyone‡
anything‡
each
everybody‡
everyone‡
everything‡
few*
fewer*
fewest*
more°  ("More of you are improving basic skills in college because more is being given to fund programs like this.")
most°  ("Most of this project was a waste of time; of the thirty-some hours I spent on it, most were unproductive.")
much
many*  ("Much of this subject confuses students, many of whom are studying grammar for the first time in many years.")
one
no one‡
none‡ [a contraction of "not one"]
nothing‡
other
others*
another‡
several*
some°  ("Some of this class has been remedial because some of our students have forgotten these rules of grammar.")
somebody‡
someone‡
something‡

A Note About "One"
Those who comprehend the meaning of "indefinite" as "an uncertain number or amount" may understandably object to "one" being included here; after all, "one" seems pretty darn definite. All of this is true. "One" is an exception to the rules of indefinite pronouns, but it nevertheless is formed by dropping a noun and leaving the quantifier (a type of adjective) to stand in for it, which is why it is considered a pronoun. Other numbers enjoy this same distinction: "For a quorum to be official, three must be present." "Three" what? The antecedent is missing, but assumed, just like any other indefinite pronoun. So it is with "one." Furthermore, accepted formal convention sometimes requires that "one" can be used as a genderless pronoun (e.g., "As a guest, one should always know when one's welcome has been overstayed."). For these reasons, "one" takes its place in English grammar alongside other indefinite pronouns.

MODIFYING INDEFINITE PRONOUNS
Indefinite pronouns and verbals are similar in some ways in that they are both one part of speech transformed into another. Because verbals are verbs transformed into nouns and modifiers, they can act like this new part of speech and, at the same time, still retain all the properties of the verbs from which they originate: they can take direct or indirect objects (if their original verbs could) and they can be modified by adverbial words, phrases, and clauses. Similarly, quantifier adjectives that become indefinite pronouns can fill the same role as any noun, just as a pronoun should, and in so doing be modified by adjectives; however, indefinite pronouns can sometimes be modified by adverbs of degree and intensity, as well—just the same as they would have been in their original form as quantifier adjectives. Consider the following example:

Very few were entrusted with the details of this case, even though increasingly more have surfaced since the newspapers published the story. While some precious few actually read the original police report, even fewer knew the suspect was left-handed.

All of the emboldened phrases in the example above contain indefinite pronouns, and the underlined words are their modifiers: most of these are adverbs, but one of them is adjective. Which one, and why? (Hint: Most answer the questions "How?" or "To what degree?" but only one of them answers the questions "Which?" or "What kind?")
DIAGRAMMING INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

The following examples show how indefinite pronouns occupy horizontal lines and fill the role of subjects and objects, just like other nouns and pronouns. In the phrase "for so few rewards," the word "few" modifies "rewards" and is, therefore, an adjective; however, the next occurrence of "few" is as an indefinite pronoun in its comparative form and serves as the subject of a clause.

Not many would do anything for so few rewards, but even fewer will do something for nothing.

RECIPROCAL PRONOUNS

Certain combinations of indefinite pronouns create a condition of reciprocity (a reciprocal relationship) expressed either as a pair or as a group. Fortunately, there are only two Reciprocal Pronouns you'll have to memorize, and they always occur as objects, never subjects:

- each other = between just two
- one another = among three or more

There's no trick to placing a reciprocal pronoun on a diagram. Like any other pronoun, it goes on a horizontal line as either a direct object or an indirect object.

My two parrots sometimes talk to each other.
The five committee members still respect **one another**, even though they have frequent disagreements.
Interrogative Pronouns

Questions (i.e., interrogative sentences) frequently begin with one of the following question pronouns:

- which, whichever
- what, whatever
- who, whom
- whoever, whomever

These same pronouns sometimes cause an inverted sentence order, in which the subject of the clause (underlined) comes after the verb:

Which [X] is the correct window to enquire, and what [Y] should I ask?

To answer "Which" [X] and "what" [Y] above, you'd restore the sentence order, putting subjects "window" and "I" before their predicates:

The correct window to enquire is X, and I should ask Y.

Because of this, an interrogative pronoun should be placed on a sentence diagram wherever its antecedent would go in the response to the question. You just need to rephrase the interrogative sentence as though it were declarative. If the interrogative pronoun is being used for the subject of the sentence, you won't see too much difference, but if it's used as an object of a verb or preposition, then you'll notice its position is inside the sentence:

As a Subject
Which makes better sense? That makes better sense.
Whoever said money can't buy happiness? He said [that] money can't buy happiness.

As an Object
Whomever will he invite to his party? (Declarative Form: "He will invite whomever to his party?") He will invite them to his party.
According to Consumer's Reports, what is the best coffee-maker to buy? (Declarative Form: "The best coffee-maker to buy is what?") The best coffee-maker to buy is Krupps.
WHO or WHOM?
The pronouns "who" and "whoever" follow the same rules of declension as "he" and "they." "He" and "they" change to "him" and "them" in the object case (especially after a preposition). Likewise, "who" and "whoever" are strictly subject (and predicate nominative) pronouns that change to "whom" and "whomever" in the object case. When you diagram these words, "who" and "whoever" should occur only in the role of the subject, never in the role of an object. If you're uncertain, try substituting pronouns "he" or "they." Take, for example the following three questions:

Who do you know?
Whoever will she hire?
To who does this belong?

It would sound intuitively wrong to rephrase them, "Do you know he?" and "Does she mean they?" and "Does this belong to he?" because the subject pronouns in these sentences, "he" and "they," should really be the object pronouns "him" and "them." For this reason, we know that "who" and "whoever" in these examples are also wrong and should be object pronouns: "whom" and "whomever."

Whom do you know?
Whomever will she hire?
To whom does this belong?
Relative Pronouns

The relative pronouns are
- that*
- who, whom (for whom, with whom, by whom, etc.)
- what, whatever
- which*, whichever
- whoever, whomever

You'll note these are exactly the same as the Interrogative Pronouns with the exception of the pronoun "that." Relative Pronouns set themselves apart from Interrogative Pronouns in that they don't create questions. Rather, a relative pronoun begins a relative clause, a kind of subordinate adjective clause that relates to an antecedent noun by identifying it with more detail, sometimes even renaming it. In this regard, relative clauses are a lot like a long form of an appositive. Consider the two following sentences:

Candice, a dental technician by day, volunteers at night at a shelter for homeless youth.  
Candice, who is a dental technician by day, volunteers at night at a shelter for homeless youth.

In the first sentence, "a dental technician by day" is an appositive phrase renaming "Candice" and would sit side-by-side with the subject on the diagram (but in parentheses). In the second sentence, "who is a dental technician" is a full relative clause: "who" is the subject, and "is" provides the verb (a linking verb, in this case). The pronoun "who" connects to, or relates to, the word "Candice"; hence, it is a relative clause. This is how the sentence would look diagrammed:

Be careful not to confuse relative clauses with noun clauses. Relative clauses always have an antecedent somewhere in the sentence, regardless of whether it's a subject or an object. Noun clauses are the antecedents. Consider, for instance, the following sentences:

A. Candice believes [that] volunteerism feeds her spirit.  
B. Candice believes an ethical principle that feeds her spirit.  
C. Candice believes volunteerism is an ethical principle that feeds her spirit.

In the Sentence A, "[that] volunteerism feeds the spirit" is a noun clause. ("That" is an implied demonstrative pronoun; the demonstrative pronouns are "this/that" and "these/those"). We know it's a noun clause because it points us to an answer to the question, "WHAT does Candice believe?": "Candice believes that." In Sentence B, a relative clause begins with the word "that," a relative pronoun standing in for the noun "principle." It answers the question "WHICH principle?"--exactly the way an appositive would rename another noun. Sentence C combines A and B, making the antecedent noun "principle" the predicate nominative of a noun clause using the linking verb "is." The difference in how these three are diagrammed helps to explain how they are conceptually different:
Candice believes that volunteerism feeds her spirit.

A Guide To Parts Of Speech
Now, *that* gets confusing . . .

Be aware the word "that" has many meanings *and serves as different parts of speech*, including:
- **demonstrative adjective:** that/this [e.g. "it's *that* important person you know"]
- **demonstrative pronoun:** this, that; these, those (E.g., "... even if *that* means"; "*That* means ...")
- **adverb:** so, this, that, very (e.g., "it's *that* important to any person you know")
- **subordinating conjunction:** when, if, as, while, though, that, etc. (e.g., "in hopes *that* you become an important person . . .")

. . . *which* makes it complex.

You've probably debated as to whether or not "*that*" and "*which*" are interchangeable, or you've heard teachers argue the issue. You may have tried it, yourself, and become confused when your word processor's grammar-check underlines the word "*which*" for no apparent reason. There *is*, indeed, a good reason. "*That*" and "*which*" are *not* always interchangeable. As **relative pronouns**, "*that*" is used when the antecedent is a single noun or noun phrase, and "*which*" is used when the antecedent is an entire clause:

These next two sentences are identical except for "*which*" and "*that*"; however, the difference in meaning is radical.

A.
Candice volunteers at a shelter that helps a group of homeless youth *that feeds her spirit*.

B.
Candice volunteers at a shelter that helps a group of homeless youth, *which feeds her spirit*.

Sentence A states that the *group* of homeless youth feeds Candice's spirit. Sentence B states that the *activity* of volunteering at a shelter feeds Candice's spirit. **Notice the comma comes before the pronoun "*which*" but not before the pronoun "*that*."** Diagramming the two should help to demonstrate the difference in semantic meaning:
Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish “that” from “which” when they are used as relative pronouns is to examine what questions they answer within the sentence.

Because “that” further describes a noun, it answers the question “Which?” or “What kind?”

Because “which” further describes a clause, it answers the question “To what outcome?” or “For what purpose?” “Which” here actually means "all of which." It’s frequently used in the following ways to introduce a logical premise or to summarize an outcome:

the effect of which
the result of which
the cause of which
the ramifications of which
the implications of which
the importance of which
the suggestion of which
the conclusions from which
etc.
Demonstrative Pronouns

The word "demonstrative" comes from the verb "demonstrate." A demonstrative person demonstrates his feelings openly, even conspicuously. A pronoun that holds up something or someone as an example is a demonstrative pronoun. The simplest way to imagine a demonstrative pronoun is that it is being pointed at, or pointed out. Note that the demonstrative pronouns decline in slightly different ways than other pronouns: in number and in proximity, instead of number and person.

**NEARBY**

- **singular** this
- **plural** these

**AWAY FROM**

- **singular** that
- **plural** those

In the same way indefinite quantifiers become indefinite pronouns, a demonstrative pronoun is born when a **demonstrative adjective** stands in for its own antecedent noun. (The same is true of Interrogative Pronouns.) In the following examples, some uses of the words above are demonstrative pronouns while others are determiner adjectives modifying nouns. The corresponding diagrams make the distinction very clear: pronouns go on horizontal lines, while adjectives show up diagonally under nouns.

*This* letter has no return address, and *this* makes it suspicious.

These grapes are seedless, but I don't like grapes like *these*.

![Diagram showing the distinction between demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative adjectives.](image)
I have blown that fuse, so that means my doorbell doesn't work.

I'm sick of those telemarketers who call during dinner hours, because those are reserved strictly for my family.

Note: Take care not to confuse the demonstrative pronoun "that" with the relative pronoun "that" or the adjective "that."
Reflexive Pronouns

Object pronouns ending in "-self" that "reflect" the action back to the subject are called "reflexive pronouns." They also "reflect" the declension of subject in number and person.

- myself
- yourself
- himself*, herself, itself, oneself
- ourselves*
- yourselves
- themselves*

A barber rarely gives himself a haircut.

Reflexive pronouns are never, ever the subject of a clause! You would never write, for example, "My best friend and myself went fishing." They are strictly used after verbs ("I doubt myself"), verbals ("to love oneself"), and prepositions ("by themselves").

Intensive Pronouns

Pronouns that in every way are identical to the reflexive pronouns, but which emphasize and rename more like an appositive, are called intensive pronouns. Ordinarily they are set apart by commas, just like appositives, and their chief purpose is to create a rhetorical effect. It should come as no surprise, then, that in a sentence diagram they are placed in parentheses alongside the nouns they intensify--just like appositives. Remember, though, that some words ending in -self are reflexive, object pronouns that deserve their own placement.

I taught myself to drive, though I, myself, don't think I drive well.

Reflexive and Intensive Pronoun Errors

The following pronouns don't really exist. They all have errors of declension. Except for "hisself" which, like the pronoun "who," declines differently from other pronouns, they all suffer from a number agreement error ("our" is plural and "self" is singular, for instance.) Therefore, these pronouns should never be used:

- hisself
- ourself
- theirselves
VERBS

Verbs are categorized as one of the eight main parts of speech. Verbs answer the question, "What action is happening?" "Happening" can be generally interpreted in one of four ways: doing; being; sensing; causing. Any one of these can be used instead for the question (e.g., "What action is [he/she/it] sensing?").

VERB TYPES

Verbs are as basic to a sentence as nouns, but action is more complex, so there are more varieties of verbs. Students should familiarize themselves with all of them. They are:

- Transitive Verbs
- Intransitive
- Linking
- Causative
- Factitive
- Auxiliary
- Phrasal

Choosing the right verb tense depends upon two factors, time and duration. "Time" refers to when an action occurs: in the present; in the past; or, in the future. "Duration" refers to how an action is perceived: as completed; in progress; or, as a recurrent phenomenon or habit. Time and duration, therefore, create six different "coordinates," and the different combinations of these coordinates create the variety in verb tense. Some combinations are simple and straightforward, while other combinations create subtle distinctions. Special conditions and moods can also add other factors to the equation (for example, "fantasy versus reality"). Every writer needs to master these distinctions in order to write clearly and to avoid grammatical errors.

VERB TENSES

Simple
The simple verb tense is the most straightforward and obvious conveyance of action; it describes what is simply done. The simple present tense, however, can be used to suggest a tendency or habit (we live; we breathe; we eat; we work; etc.) Simple present tense uses no auxiliary verb.

SIMPLE PRESENT:
What occurs?
[base verb form]

Example:
I record my thoughts in my journal each day.
SIMPLE PAST:
What occurred?
[verb + ed, or irregular verb past-tense form]

Example:
Last month, I wrote in my journal each day to record my thoughts.

SIMPLE FUTURE:
What will occur? / What's going to occur?
1. informal [am / is / are] + [going to] + [verb];
2. formal [will] + [verb]

Example:
When this course is over, I promise I will write in my journal each day, and I am going to keep a separate journal just for my writing ideas.

Continuous
This verb tense suggests an action that is ongoing or in progress, whether in the now, in the past, or in the future; it uses the auxiliary verb "be" and a present participle form of the verb.

CONTINUOUS PRESENT:
What is occurring?
[am / is / are] + [verb + ing]

Example:
I am reading an article right now about cloning.

CONTINUOUS PAST:
What was occurring?
[was / were] + [verb + ing]

Example:
When you called me, I was finishing my report for History class.

CONTINUOUS FUTURE:
What will be occurring? / What's going to be occurring?
[will / is going to] + [be] + [verb + ing]

Example:
Next summer, I will be enrolling in an Advanced Calculus course.

Perfect
The perfect tense suggests an action completed (i.e., perfected), whether in the now, in the past, or in the future; it uses the auxiliary verb "have" and a past participle form of the verb.

PERFECT PRESENT:
What has occurred until now?
[has / have] + [past participle]

Example:
I have completed the first draft of the assignment.
PERFECT PAST:
What had occurred by then or at that time?
[had] + [past participle]

Example:
I had finished the major portion of the assignment by the end of week.

PERFECT FUTURE:
What is going to have occurred when time's up?
[will / is going to] + [have] + [past participle]

Example:
By this time next week, I am going to have finished at least two more rewrites of the assignment in hopes of perfecting it.

Perfect Continuous
The perfect continuous tense suggests a continuous action completed (i.e., perfected), up until now, up to a time in the past, or up until a time in the future; it uses the auxiliary verb "have been" and a present participle form of the verb.

PERFECT CONTINUOUS PRESENT:
What has been occurring till now?
[has / have] + [been] + [verb + ing]

Example:
Ms. Foster has been serving as a substitute teacher for eleven months.

PERFECT CONTINUOUS PAST:
What had been occurring at or during that time?
[had been] + [verb + ing]

Example:
Professor Milton had been taking maternity leave during that year.

PERFECT CONTINUOUS FUTURE:
What is going to have been occurring when time is up?
[will / is going to] + [have been] + [verb + ing]

Example:
By the time Professor Milton returns, the students will have been studying with Ms. Foster long enough to imagine her as their regular teacher.

CONDITIONAL VERBS
A conditional verb form is used when the writer expresses an action or an idea that is dependent on a condition or premise--on something imagined or speculated in the present, past or future. It comes in two varieties, "real" or "unreal."

REAL CONDITIONS are expressed as an "if . . . then" statement when the actual circumstances for them are real or possible. The simplest way to test whether a condition is real is to substitute "if" with "when."
Present Real Conditional
When this condition is met, this result occurs.

Example:
If [or When] I have money, I travel.
(I don't always have the means, but when I do, I travel.)

Past Real Conditional
When this condition was met, this result occurred.

Example:
If [or When] I had the time on weekends, I worked on my novel.
(Sometimes I did have the time, so I worked on my novel.)

Future Real Conditional
When this condition will be met, this result will occur.

Example:
If [or When] I marry one day, I'm going to be a more patient mate than my parents.
(Sometime in the future I am likely to marry, so at that time I will become a better mate.)

UNREAL CONDITIONS are expressed as an "if . . . then" statement when the actual circumstances for them are fantasy or cannot occur. The simplest way to test for an unreal condition is to use the word only with it.

Present Unreal Conditional
If only this condition can be met right now, this result would occur [or would have occurred].

Example:
If [only] I could have money (right now), I would travel.
(I don't really have money, but if I did I would use it to travel.)

Past Unreal Conditional
If only this condition had been met in the past, this result would occur [or would have occurred].

Example:
If [only] I had had the time on weekends, I would have worked on my novel.
(I never really did have the time, so I never really worked on my novel.)

Future Unreal Conditional
If only this condition could be met one day, this result would occur [or this cause would have already occurred].

Example:
If [only] I could marry one day, I would be a more patient mate than my parents.
(I'm probably not really going to marry, but if such a thing were possible, gosh, I just know I would become a better mate than my parents were.)
The word “subjunctive” derives from the Latin *subjungere*, meaning “to bring under,” or “to subjugate.” The best way to think of the subjunctive mood, then, is that it’s moody: it has a buried subtext—an underlying mood of insistence—expressed in the manner that passive-aggressive people often use. The subjunctive mood is used in dependent clauses that do the following:

1) express wishful thinking;
2) begin with “If” and express a condition that does not exist (is contrary to fact);
3) begin with "as if" or "as though" when such clauses describe a speculation or condition contrary to fact; and
4) begin with "that" and express a demand, requirement, request, or suggestion.

**EXAMPLES**

**Conditional (Not Subjunctive)**

Uses "if" and a regular verb form + auxiliary verb.

We would have passed the exam if we had studied harder. Next time, if our study group gets together again, it should actually prepare for the exam instead of playing cards.

**Subjunctive**

Uses an irregular verb form (with no auxiliary verb).

[One could speculate that] Were we to have studied harder, we might have passed the exam. Next time, it’s important [strongly recommended] that our study group actually prepare for the exam instead of playing cards.

In the two sentences of the Subjunctive example, the verbs don’t use the normal tense nor pose overt conditions, the way they do in the Conditional example. You wouldn’t normally write “our study group prepare for the exam”; in ordinary verb tense, “prepare” needs a present, past, or future tense ending of some sort, and in conditional verbs, you need an “if” or “when” to frame the condition logically. That isn’t the case here. These statements subjunctively express two kinds of moods: speculations and demands.

**A SPECULATIVE STATEMENT**

Speculations are guesses or imaginings. When expressed in the subjective mood, they use "were" regardless of the number of the subject, and

1.) expresses wishful thinking, or,
2.) expresses an imagined condition or comparison with "if," "as if," or "as though."

*If Juan were more aggressive, he'd be a better hockey player [yet this is contrary to fact].*
*She wishes her boyfriend were here [even though this is not the reality].*
*He acted as if he were guilty [regardless of the truth of the matter].*
*If I were seven feet tall, I'd be a great basketball player.*
*Clarence practices the violin as though his life were dependent on it [even though it really isn't].*

**A REQUEST OR A DEMAND**

The simplest way to understand subjunctive requests and demands is that they are declarative versions of imperative sentences. (See “Sentence Types” for more information.) However, they start with "that" and use "be" or the base form of the verb (no verb ending):

*I requested that he be present at the hearing [for that was the request].*
*He recommended that his pupil attend the workshop [since that was his wish].*
*She suggested that we be on time tomorrow [because that was her demand].*

Many countries insist that a newly naturalized citizen renounce all previous citizenship [as that is the requirement].
TRANSITIVE VERBS
Late Latin *transitivus*, from Latin *transitus* (past participle of *transire* to cross over, pass) + -ivus -ive

A verb that answers the question "What's being done to it?"

Transitive verbs that carry over action onto an object in one of two ways: direct objects; indirect objects. The latter is always done in *addition* to a direct object.

**Direct Objects**
Direct object verbs are "directly" affected by the action of a transitive verb:

On the weekends, Michael works the projector at a local independent cinema.

The action "works," in this case meaning "operates," carries over from "Michael" onto the object "projector."
Indirect Objects

Some transitive verbs take indirect objects as well as direct ones, creating the dative case. These verbs convey one or more things to another. Here are the most common verbs with indirect objects:

- assign
- award
- bring
- fax
- feed
- give
- grant
- hand
- lend
- mail
- offer
- owe
- pass
- promise
- pay
- read
- serve
- show
- sing
- take
- tell
- throw
- write
- sell
- teach
- spend
- spend

Spending hours in the projection booth gives me the time needed to complete my homework.

In this example, "the time" is the direct object of the verb "give," while "me" is the indirect object. However, an indirect object is, in reality, simply the object of the preposition "to," which has been dropped to create the effect of an indirect object. If indirect objects confuse you, you can always restore the preposition "to" if you desire:

Spending hours in the projection booth gives to me the time needed to complete my homework.
Regardless, in diagramming a clause with a transitive verb taking a direct object and an indirect object, you still treat the indirect object as though it is the object of a preposition. It does **not** belong on the horizontal line with the direct object:
INTRANSITIVE VERBS

Late Latin *intransitivus*, from Latin *in-* (in-) + Late Latin *transitivus* (transitive)

A verb that answers the question "What action does the subject do?"

Intransitive verbs **DO NOT** carry over action onto an object, but rather showcase their own action.

In the illustration above, there is no object to receive the action of the hand. The action does not "transit" or carry over onto another thing or person, but rather it is, itself, the focus.

"On weekends, Michael works."
The action "works," in this case meaning "be employed," doesn't carry over onto anything. Instead, this verb answers the question, "What activity does Michael do?" Following is how this sentence would be diagrammed. (Note: The prepositional phrase "on the weekends" answers the question "When does he work?" so it behaves as an adverb modifying the verb "works.")
LINKING VERBS

Late Latin *intransitivus*, from Latin *in-* (in-) + Late Latin *transitivus* (transitive)

A verb that answers the question "Who [or What] does it seem to be?"

A Linking Verb (a.k.a., Copulative Verb) doesn't connect a subject to an object the way transitive verbs do, but instead couple the subject to a noun complement (sometimes called the "predicate nominative" because the complement can also be switched with the subject), or to an adjective complement. Because of this, we think of a linking verb bouncing back to the subject, instead of forward to an object.

Linking verbs take the following forms:

**forms of the verb "be":**

**Noun complement:**
"Those people are all professors"

**Adjective complement:**
"Those professors are truly brilliant."

1. People — are — professors.
2. Professors — are — brilliant.
verbs related to the five senses: *look, sound, smell, feel, taste*

**NOUN COMPLEMENT**

"He looks a fool, dancing in public"

**ADJECTIVE COMPLEMENT**

"This coffee tastes bitter."

[Note: Noun complements after sensory linking verbs are less common than adjective complements and are often associated with the Subjunctive Mood. Furthermore, one should be careful not to confuse the transitive versions of these verbs with the linking verb versions. Transitive verbs are used actively and take objects: "He smells the cheese." Linking verbs are used to indicate a sensory impression: "He smells" or "He smells like cheese."]

verbs that reflect a state of being: *appear, seem, become, grow, turn, prove, remain*

"L.A. proved too much for the man."
"This weather seems unusual."
"He remains faithful to his old friends."
"Albus grew weary of Harry's questions."

[Note: As with sensory linking verbs, several of these linking verbs can also be transitive verbs that actively take objects, or intransitive verbs: "Beverly grows orchids"; "He remained at home"; "Casey proved his point."
Diagramming a clause with a linking verb is similar to diagramming transitive and intransitive verbs. The only difference is that there's no object. Instead, there's a complement that renames or describes the subject. To indicate this, instead of a vertical line to separate verb from object, a diagonal line is used to slant the complement back in the direction of the subject:

**ADJECTIVE COMPLEMENT**
- Michael seems **nice**.

**NOUN COMPLEMENT**
- Michael seems **a nice guy**.
CAUSATIVE VERBS

Late Latin *intransitivus*, from Latin *in-* (in-) + Late Latin *transitivus* (transitive)

A verb that answers the question "What does doing this cause or motivate?"

Causative verbs designate the action necessary to cause another action to happen:
- let, allow, permit, have
- make, require, force, compel, get
- motivate, convince, encourage
- help, assist
- hire, employ

Another way of looking at causative verbs is that they are an action that brings about another activity by way of an indirect object: a verb that causes a verbal. Note in the following sentence how the verb "made" causes the verb "do" to happen, by way of "her":

Her evil stepsisters made her do the laundry twice a day.

Most are followed by an object (noun or pronoun) followed by an infinitive (see "Verbals"):

She allows her pet cockatiel to perch on the windowsill.
She hired a carpenter to build a new birdcage.
Diagramming a causative verb is no different from diagramming any other verb with an indirect object: the indirect object where an implied prepositional object would ordinarily go under the verb (but without any preposition, of course). The noun infinitive phrase, regardless if the infinitive particle is included, goes where the direct object would go, elevated as noun verbal phrases are:

Candice helps her father renovate cars.

![Diagram of sentence structure]
FACTITIVE VERBS

New Latin factitivus, irregular from Latin factus (past participle of facere to make, do) + -ivus -ive

A verb that answers the question "It designated it what?"

Causative verbs are transitive and make or designate one thing or person as another. Consequently, factitive verbs seem to take two related objects: a direct object and an indirect object (a.k.a. second complement):

"U.S. News and World Report named our college the best in the northeast."

In this sentence, "our college" is the direct object and "the best" is the indirect object. In reality, the indirect object is the object of the preposition "as," which has been dropped in the same fashion as the preposition "to" is dropped from the indirect object of verbs like "give" that create the dative case. (See "transitive verbs." However, you can always add the preposition back into the construction if you are ever confused about what type of verb it is:

"U.S. News and World Report named our college as the best in the northeast."

(Beware: The word "as" has different meanings and different parts of speech, including adverb, conjunction, and even pronoun.) The factitive verbs include:

appoint, choose, designate, elect, judge, make, name, and select

They are diagrammed a little differently from other verbs in that they are somewhat like a combination of linking verbs and transitive verbs: the object complement is put on the same line as the object, and placed after a diagonal line slanting toward the direct object:

If you prefer, though, you can always diagram it by including the missing preposition "as", and by placing the complement where the object of that preposition would go:
AUXILIARY VERBS

Auxiliary verbs are used in conjunction with main verbs to express shades of time (i.e., verb tense) and mood:

- will, shall, may, might, can, could, must,
- ought to, have to, should, would, used to, need

The combination of helping verbs with main verbs creates what are called verb phrases or verb strings. In the following sentence, the words "will have been" are helping or auxiliary verbs and "studying" is the main verb; the whole verb string is underlined:

As of next August, I will have been studying chemistry for ten years.

MODAL

Other helping verbs, called modal auxiliaries or modals, are used to add conditions or meaning to verbs and are always followed by the base verb form. The modal verbs include:

- can, could, may, might, must, ought to, shall, should, will, and would.

She can write well.

In this example, the word "can" adds the meaning that she is capable of writing well.

DIAGRAMMING AUXILIARY

When diagramming helping verbs, whether modals or auxiliary, they are kept together with the base verb:

```
Votes | may submit | ballots
      |            | electronically

Subject | helper + main verb | direct object
        | adverb
```
PHRASAL VERBS

**phrasal:** expressed as a phrase  
**combinative:** tending to combine with other elements

A phrasal verb is also called a “combinative verb.” It consists of a verb and at least one other word, typically prepositions:

- **pick up; take up with; throw out; go up against:**  
- **enter into; play out; walk on through:** etc.

The words combined with the base verbs are referred to as the "particle." (Note: "referred to" is another example of a phrasal verb.) Each of the underline words in the examples on this page is a particle in a phrasal verb.

- Our boss **called off** the meeting.  
- She **looked up** her old boyfriend.  
- We all **took up** a collection for our friend’s expensive surgery.

In the examples above, the phrasal verbs are transitive: they all take a direct object. Phrasal verbs, however, can also be intransitive:

- The children were **sitting around**, doing nothing.  
- The witness **broke down** on the stand.

**TONE**

Phrasal verbs are considered to be informal, and in formal writing they should be strictly avoided:

- We all contributed funds to a collection for our friend’s expensive surgery.

Diagramming phrasal verbs is no different from diagramming any other verb: the base verb and its preposition(s) are kept together:
VERBALS

Verbals aren't really considered one of the eight traditional parts of speech, but they are pretty major. They're words formed from verbs, but they are not verbs--ever! If verbs are actions, then nouns and adjectives formed from those actions are verbals. Verbals are either Nouns or Modifiers: they either describe how things are acting, or they describe whole activities. (A good way to remember this is that the word "verbal," itself, is not a verb, but instead can either be a noun, as in "I'm using a verbal," or it can be an adjective, as in "I communicate with verbal expression."

Therefore, verbals are verb-like (hence "verb-al"), but they transform into other parts of speech. A useful way to conceptualize the verbal is as a snapshot of an action. When people say, "Take a picture; it will last longer," they mean that, while a real-time image is fleeting, a still image is something one can look at time and time again. Verbals turn actions into fixed concepts--images of actions, in a manner of speaking.

Verbals answer the question, "What activity is it doing, being, sensing or causing?" Even though they may not be real verbs anymore, because they are still like verbs they can assume all the properties of the verbs from which they are derived, whether transitive, intransitive, linking, factitive or causative: some verbals take objects, while others won't, and some will have complements or indirect objects. All of them can be modified in exactly the same way verbs are modified: by adverbs or adverbial expressions. As a result, most verbals are used in verbal phrases in one of three ways:

Gerunds
Participles
Infinitives
GERUNDS

No matter how active or passive, or how abstract or real, a verb "performs" some action. That's why verbs are characterized by tense and duration.

A gerund, on the other hand, is a kind of snapshot of that action in progress. In capturing an action in progress, a gerund borrows from a verb's progressive tense (a.k.a., its continuous tense) and turns it into an activity—something that can be discussed as a subject or object and modified. For these two simple reasons, all gerunds are nouns and all gerunds end in the same "-ing" ending that continuous verbs end in. Consider, for instance, the difference between the two following sentences:

"Charles runs five miles every morning before breakfast."
"Every morning before breakfast, Charles insists on running five miles."

In the first example, "runs" is clearly a verb. The emphasis is on the action of it in the simple present tense, and the sentence answers the question, "What does Charles do?" (Charles runs.) In he second example, however, "running" is a gerund. The emphasis is on the activity of it without tense, and the sentence answers the question, "On what does Charles insist?" (Charles insists on the activity of running.) The difference between them is simple: an action is performed in time and duration, whereas an activity is an idea without concern for time.

Modifying gerunds is tricky. (By the way, the phrase "modifying gerunds," itself, is a gerund phrase!) Because they're like verbs, sometimes a gerund is modified adverbially, just the way their root verbs would be: "Fastidiously farming one's crops takes patience" (or, as a verb, "When one farms fastidiously..."); "Farming without pesticides today takes a lost skill" (or, as a verb, "When one farms without pesticides..."). At other times, because a gerund is a noun, it can be modified adjectivally, the way nouns are: "Natural farming may be a lost art"; "Modern farming relies a great deal on technology."

Furthermore, gerunds can keep the same characteristics as the type of verb from which they are derived and build into what may seem like predicates, but which are in fact gerund phrases:

**Intransitive Gerunds**

Sweating excessively during sleep can be a sign of a serious illness.
Transitive Verb Gerunds
He enjoys \textit{babysitting} his nephews and nieces.

Linking Verb Gerunds
\textit{Being liked} factors prominently among the goals of a high school teen.
Factitive Gerunds

By appointing Chris team captain, the forensics coach hoped to build his confidence.

Causative Gerunds

Requiring students to wear uniforms may improve discipline in the classroom.
PARTICIPLES

A PARTICIPLE is a verbal modifier ending in "-ing" or "-ed," depending on whether it is a PRESENT PARTICIPLE or a PAST PARTICIPLE. The "-ing" ending is also an ending used in the continuous tense form of verbs, and an "-ed" ending is used with the perfect tense form of verbs. This provides a clue as to the role of a participle: it describes something involved in an ongoing or completed activity. For example, "a rolling barrel" or "a tuned piano" use the verbs "roll" and "tune," respectively, to describe the active state of a barrel and a piano.

Because a participle "describes a person, place, thing, or concept," it is by definition a kind of ADJECTIVE.

Additionally, a participle is grouped with any objects or complements that might follow it (if it isn't derived from an intransitive verb, that is). When this happens, it becomes a PARTICIPIAL PHRASE.

PRESENT PARTICIPLES versus GERUNDS

Novices in the concept of verbals find it difficult to distinguish a present participle from a gerund because both of them use the continuous tense ending "-ing." (See below for more about the verb tense.) This is understandable, and the more students practice recognizing nouns and adjectives in their reading and in their own writing, the more easily they may distinguish participles from gerunds. The simplest way to determine the difference is to apply the basic questions that identify nouns and adjectives:

If it answers the question "What?" or "Who?" then it's a noun, and all gerunds are nouns.

Formal dancing is making a comeback.

**What** is making a comeback? Dancing is. "Dancing" is a gerund.

If it answers the question "What's it like?" "Which?" or "What kind?" then it's an adjective, and all participles are adjectives.

That formally dancing couple are ballroom competition champions.

**Which** couple? The dancing couple, so "dancing" is a participle.

PRESENT PARTICIPLES versus CONTINUOUS TENSE VERBS

Truthfully, all continuous (or, progressive) tense verbs in the English language are a combination of the linking verb "be" and a present participle serving as the adjective complement:

"I am writing a movie script."

It's a matter of accepted convention that the progressive form of a verb is treated as a verb tense. However, all grammar is a matter of accepted convention, and you simply have to make yourself used to it through memorization and practice.

That being said, not all participles are continuous tense verbs. Remember, participles are not actions; rather, they describe the active quality of something. Therefore, as with gerunds and participles, you can use question words to make the distinction:

If it answers the question "What action is occurring (happening, doing, being, etc.)?" then it's a verb.

That waltzing couple will be competing in a ballroom dance competition.

What will the couple be **doing**? They will be competing, so "competing" is the base verb in the progressive tense (and "will be" is an auxiliary verb indicating its future tense).
If it answers the question "What's it like?" "Which?" or "What kind?" then it's an adjective, and all participles are adjectives.

That waltzing couple will be competing in a ballroom dance competition. Which couple? What kind of couple? A waltzing couple. Therefore, "waltzing" is a participle, not a verb in the progressive tense.

**PAST PARTICIPLES**

Past participles are blessedly simple in comparison to present participles. They are derived from the perfect verb tense, which answers the question, "What has occurred?" and always starts with a form of the auxiliary verb "have" then finishes with a past tense form of the base verb.

I have completed the assignment.

A past participle verbal will utilize only the perfect tense base verb, not its auxiliary, and it does so in a way that describes in answer to the question, "Which?" or "What kind?"

I submitted the completed assignment at the start of the next class period.

In this example "completed" is not part of the action of the clause; rather, "submitted" is. Instead, "completed" describes which assignment, or what kind of assignment was submitted. As with all participles, this past participle modifies a noun ("assignment") instead of conveying action or carrying over onto an object. Diagramming the placement of a past participle will help to demonstrate its modifying role more clearly.

**DIAGRAMMING PARTICIPLES**

As with gerunds, a participle is represented on a sentence diagram, both, as a modifier and as a verb-like part of speech: it's placed under the noun or noun phrase it modifies, starting with a diagonal line; however, because the verbal modifier also derives from a verb, it's placed on a straight horizontal line the way other verbs are. Here are some illustrations. (Underlined and bolded words are participles. Other words in bold are part of the participial phrase.)

**PRESENT PARTICIPLES [NO PHRASE]**

On rare occasions, expecting fathers sometimes sympathetically experience symptoms of pregnancy.
PRESENT PARTICIPIAL PHRASES
A woman expecting a child for the second time often experiences fewer complications.

PAST PARTICIPLES and PAST PARTICIPIAL PHRASES
Compared to infants fed formula, breastfed infants grow more rapidly.
Midwifing is making a startling, unexpected comeback in recent years.
INFINITIVES

Infinitives can assume the role of three different parts of speech: nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Additionally, infinitives can take an object or a complement if they are not derived from intransitive verbs.

WHAT'S AN INFINITIVE?

An infinitive consists of the root of a verb plus the word "to" (called an "infinitive particle"). Beginners confuse the infinitive particle "to" (which should always precede an infinitive) with the preposition "to." The bad news is that they are not related, so writers simply need to make a mental note that there's another word out there spelled t-o, and it means something else. We manage this with plenty other words: fly; nail; lead; and so on.

As with other verbals, infinitives are like verbs in many ways, but they are not verbs as parts of speech. The first, and most important way, in which they are different from verbs is that they are not affected by tense. As the name implies, they exist outside of time and duration altogether, in an eternal "now"--infinitely, as it were. The following familiar quote is from William Shakespeare's Hamlet (Act III, Scene i). All of its infinitive phrases have been emboldened, while all of the infinitive verbals have additionally been underlined:

"To be, or not to be: that is the question:
   Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
   The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
   Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
   And by opposing [to] end them? To die: to sleep:
   No more; and by a sleep to say we end
   The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
   That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
   Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep:
   To sleep: perchance to dream.

Shakespeare's tragic hero is here caught in a moment of existential crisis over fate and eternity. Here, the infinite that the character ponders is aptly shown through Shakespeare's use of the infinitive verbal form: taking Hamlet and the audience "outside of time" for just a while. This is exactly the effect that the infinitive verbal form creates. In this way, it very closely resembles the gerund in that it's a way of being, rather than an action. However, infinitives do not imply an activity in progress the way that gerunds do. (And, this is logical because infinitives do not draw from any progressive verb tense the way gerunds do.) In fact, if we extend the photo "snapshot" analogy to gerunds and infinitives, a gerund freezes the action in time whereas an infinitive shows a still-life; a gerund captures an activity in progress while an infinitive abstracts from it a concept. A gerund captures a behavior while an infinitive conveys a principle. No wonder Shakespeare paired infinitive verbs with one of the most philosophically important soliloquies in his collected dramatic works!
DIAGRAMMING INFINITIVES

Infinitive phrases are not difficult to diagram, but they can be a little tricky because you have to identify first which part of speech they're playing. Also, because they can take predicates and complements, they have to be set up like clauses without subjects, and too many horizontal lines can make for what seems to be a lot of clutter in a diagram.

Don't worry. With a little bit of practice and diligence, you'll get the hang of them before long. Following are examples and discussions of three different kinds of infinitive phrases:

Noun Infinitive Phrases

The way to determine if an infinitive is behaving as a noun is to ask the basic questions "What? or "Who?" because, if a noun is a person, place, thing, or concept, then an infinitive phrase behaving as a noun can also be any one of these:

To excel as a writer requires patience and practice.

What requires patience and practice? To excel requires these. "To excel as a writer" answers the question "What?" and is therefore a noun infinitive phrase. Furthermore, "to excel" is derived from an intransitive verb, so, in this case, it doesn't take a predicate object. However, it still is modified in the way that intransitive verbs are, so "as a writer" is an adverbial phrase answering the question, "How to excel?" This makes "as a writer" bound to the infinitive "to excel" as a modifying phrase, and all of it comes together to creates one single infinitive phrase: "To excel as a writer..."

Because an infinitive noun phrase comes with an entourage of modifiers and sometimes predicate objects and complements, it can take up so much real estate on a horizontal line that the "raised platform" method is needed (the same one used for gerund phrases). Think of it as a car mechanic lifting up a car so that it can be worked on from underneath.
Adjective Infinitive Phrases

The way to identify if an infinitive is behaving as an adjective is to determine whether it answers the adjective questions "Which? or "What's it like?" because, if an adjective modifies a noun, then an infinitive phrase behaving as an adjective must also modify one or more of these in a sentence:

The urge to produce offspring in a safe environment leads many species to migrate large distances.

There are two infinitives in the sentence above. Only one of them is an adjective. First, the verb in the main clause, "leads," is causative: one action causes another by way of an indirect object. If "many species" is the indirect object, then the infinitive phrase "to migrate large distances" is the direct object. By nature, all objects are nouns or words acting like nouns, so, in this case, "to migrate" is a noun infinitive. The remaining infinitive, "to produce offspring in a safe environment" answers the question "Which urge?" The answer is "The urge to reproduce" so this infinitive and its predicate object are all part of a single adjective infinitive phrase.

Because an infinitive adjective phrase doesn't need to go on a horizontal line, it doesn't use the "raised platform" method that infinitive noun phrases use. Instead, they are placed under the nouns they modify, connected by diagonal lines the way other modifiers are. Your first instinct will be to say that "many species" is the direct object and "to migrate large distances" answers the question "How does it lead them." And you'd be right. The causative verbs can be thought of in this way as well, but, again, it's merely convention that they must be rendered with indirect objects and prepositional phrases as direct objects. Another way to think of the infinitive phrase "to migrate large distances" is that it answers the question, "What are many species lead to do?" Phrased this way, we expect the answer to be a noun, and that's what we get:
Adverb Infinitive Phrases

Adverb infinitives are the most difficult to classify, even though they're not difficult to recognize. This is because the common adverb has, not one, but three modifying functions. It can modify verbs, as in "walks further"; it can modify adjectives, as in "takes a slightly inconvenient route"; and it can modify other adverbs, as in "walks even further." The way to identify if an infinitive is behaving as an adverb is to determine if, in the sentence, it answers the adverb questions "How?", "How much?" or "When?"

MODIFYING A VERB

Emergency Room physicians struggle to prevent their own depression and burnout.

The infinitive phrase, "to prevent their own depression and burnout" answers the question "Struggle how?" "Struggle" is an intransitive verb, so a word modifying a verb is always going to be an adverb. The infinitive "to prevent" is derived, not from an intransitive verb, but a transitive one, so it takes a predicate object, "depression and burnout." The entire infinitive phrase, then, modifies the verb "struggle" and is therefore adverbal.

MODIFYING AN ADJECTIVE

Forced to make difficult life-and-death decisions, an E.R. physician is more prone to depression.

The infinitive phrase, "to make difficult life-and-death decisions" answers the question "Forced how?" "Forced" is a past participle modifying "E.R. physician." A past participle is a kind of adjective, so a word modifying an adjective is always going to be an adverb. The infinitive "to make" clearly modifies an adjective and is therefore an adverbial infinitive phrase.
For a change, the rules for diagramming an adverbial infinitive modifying an adjective are simple and intuitive. No, really. Just extend a zig-zag line from the diagonal line containing the adjective, and "hang" the infinitive phrase from it as you would a bird-feeder. Then, sit back and enjoy whatever wisdom the birds start bringing.

MODIFYING AN ADVERB

Just as an adverb modifying an adverb is far less common, an adverbial infinitive modifying an adverb is less common, but it happens enough to warrant mention. In fact, the sentence I just wrote contains an adverbial infinitive phrase modifying an adverb: "it happens enough to warrant mention." The word "enough" is an adverb modifying "happens," and "to warrant mention" modifies the degree of "enough." Any word modifying an adverb must, itself, be an adverb, so an infinitive phrase modifying one must be an adverbial infinitive. Here's another example:

Many progressive social programs aren't funded sufficiently to make any real difference.

As can be seen from the example, the infinitive phrase "to make any real difference" follows on the heels of the adverb "sufficiently." It answers the question "How sufficiently?" which is typical of most adverbs modifying other adverbs: they describe degree or intensity. Words like "more," "less," "enough," "adequately" and, yes, "sufficiently" are the most commonly occurring of these.

The rules for diagramming an adverbial infinitive phrase that modifies an adverb are virtually no different from those governing an adverbial infinitive modifying an adjective.
CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions are categorized as one of the eight main parts of speech.

Conjunctions help to answer questions like "How else?" or "What else?"

Many conjunctions are little words, but they serve a big function: they fasten together, or *conjoin*, words, phrases, and clauses into complex and compound relationships. They accomplish this in three ways:

- **Coordinating Conjunctions**
- **Subordinating Conjunctions**
- **Correlative Conjunctions**

**Important issues**

Some kinds of sentences depend on the effective use of conjunctions:

When conjunctions are used to coordinate two or more independent clauses, they create compound sentences.

When conjunctions are used to subordinate one or more clauses to another, they create complex sentences.

When conjunctions are used to correlate two or more expressions, they create parallel structures.

When conjunctions are used in combination to coordinate and subordinate, they create compound-complex sentences.
COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

"Conjunctions" conjoin--or, link together--compound elements; when coordinating conjunctions are used to link two or more independent clauses, they create compound sentences.

F.A.N.B.O.Y.S.

"Coordinating" compound elements with a conjunction means showing the relationship between or among them, and it indicates how the weight of importance should be distributed. Seven conjunctions accomplish this, easily remembered by the anagram F.A.N.B.O.Y.S.:

For  
And  
Nor  
But  
Or  
Yet  
So

AND, BUT, YET

AND = equal coordination, simple addition

"He grudgingly visits a psychotherapist weekly, and he continues to show no improvement."

Both independent clauses have equal distribution of focus and importance; they are presented side-by-side without bias to one or the other. In the example, a patient both visits a therapist regularly and shows no signs of improving. No judgment or inference is made. Instead, both data are offered with equal importance: this, and also that.

BUT = equal coordination, simple contrast

"He grudgingly visits a psychotherapist weekly, but he continues to show no improvement."

Both independent clauses have equal distribution of importance, but in contrast to each other. Using "but" in the example above, a straightforward contrast is offered, again without any inference or underlying agenda. It's simply a factual contrast: this is what's happening, but also that is what's happening.

YET = equal coordination, unexpected contrast (irony)

"He continues to show no improvement, yet he grudgingly visits a psychotherapist weekly."

Both independent clauses have equal distribution of importance; they are two main ideas contrasted with each other in a strange or surprising way--a twist. In the example, a hidden bias is being stated, that the contrast isn't logical. Why, we ask, does he continue to visit his therapist if he still shows no improvement? His action is unexpected--even ironic: this, yet, in spite of it, that as well!
OR, NOR

OR = choice

"Either he will visit a psychotherapist weekly, or he will continue to show no improvement."

Each independent clause competes for greater importance because each is an option or a proposition. In the example above, the two options are presented without any subtext implied. They are merely two realistic propositions. Readers may feel strongly that they're aren't so much propositions as they are a dilemma, but this is merely because we are used to hearing passive-aggressive arguments being made in this manner: we assume the statement is suggesting, if he doesn't visit a psychotherapist weekly then he won't show any improvement. At face value, however, the example offers a literal proposition only: either this scenario may be chosen, or that scenario may be chosen.

NOR = the removal of choice

"He takes no interest in his own psychotherapy, nor does his psychotherapist take an interest in him."

There is virtually no different between "nor" and "or." "Nor" is simply the negation of two (or more) options: neither this is an option, nor that.

FOR, SO

FOR = cause

"He continues to show no improvement, for he grudgingly visits a psychotherapist weekly."

With "for," distribution is not equal. One of the independent clauses expresses a condition, while the other draws attention to its underlying cause: this, because of that; that as the cause of this. In the example, more attention is brought to his pattern of grudgingly visiting his psychotherapist weekly because it's the reason for his spotty improvement. (In another interpretation, one could surmise that his psychotherapist is so bad that weekly visits are the reason he continues to show no improvement.)

SO = effect

"He continues to show no improvement, so he grudgingly visits a psychotherapist weekly."

With "so," distribution is not equal. One of the independent clauses expresses a condition or a premise, while the other draws attention to an effect or a result of it: that, because of this; this leads to that. In the example, focus is placed on his grudging decision to visit the therapist weekly in response to the lack of improvement. (In another interpretation, it can be suggested that he grudgingly acquiesced to further visits with his psychotherapist simply because he's not showing any improvement otherwise.)
**SEMI-COLONS [:;]**

A semi-colon is a form of punctuation, not a part of speech. However, it can be used sparingly as a form of generic coordinating conjunction. When two independent clauses are significantly related to each other, coordinating can sometimes be left implied rather than stated directly. Used in this way, semi-colons create a rhetorical effect as well as a semantic one. For this reason, they should be used as sparingly as a you would a rhetorical question.

"Some writers use semi-colons as freely and frequently as they use coordinating conjunctions; this is careless and ill-advised."

The example above could easily use a comma and the coordinating conjunction "but." However, the contrast is implicitly understood in the second independent clause, so a semi-colon is acceptable.
There are two ways to diagram coordinating conjunctions: as connectors between compound parts of speech and phrases; as connectors between clauses in compound sentences. Consider how and where in the following diagrams this quote from Benjamin Franklin uses coordinating conjunctions in both ways:

Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death or taxes.
SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

A subordinating conjunction conjoins a dependent clause to a main clause (or to another dependent clause). In doing so, it turns a dependent clause into a modifier of part or all of the other clause.

**Although the play was publicized weeks in advance**, opening night was poorly attended.

In the example above, the subordinate clause joins a dependent idea (the play being publicized well in advance) in contrast to the main clause. Because the subordinate clause explains the reason opening night was poorly attended, it therefore modifies the entire main clause in answer to the question "Why?" This makes it an **Adverbial Clause**.

Here's a useful list of subordinating conjunction. Take note, however, that some of these can be used as other parts of speech as well:

- after
- although
- as
- as if
- as long as
- as much as
- as soon as
- as though
- because
- before
- even if
- even though
- how
- if
- in order that
- inasmuch
- lest
- now that
- provided (that)
- since
- so that
- than
- that
- though
- till (or 'til)
- unless
- until
- when
- whenever
- where
- wherever
- while
DIAGRAMMING SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

To diagram a subordinating conjunction, a long, dashed diagonal line connects the two clauses and demonstrates where and how they connect.

*Even though* nobody came, the cast performed the entire play.

A subordinating conjunctions should not be confused with a **Conjunctive Adverb**, which is a special adverb that starts a sentence in the manner of a transitional word.

A subordinating conjunction should not be misidentified as a **Relative Pronoun**, either. Both create dependent clauses, but in radically different ways.
CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Some conjunctions combine with other words to form what are called correlative conjunctions. They always occur as a pair of phrases, joining various sentence elements that should be treated as grammatically equal and given parallel structure. The most familiar of these is the "either - or (neither - nor)" phrase because it includes common coordinating conjunctions as well. Other correlative conjunctions, however, are frequently relied upon to coordinate complex ideas with parallel structure:

both ... and
"It is difficult to produce a television documentary that is **both** incisive **and** probing. . ." (Rod Serling)

(n)either ... (n)or
"In Hamlet, Polonius said, 'Neither a borrower **nor** a lender be' "

as much ... as / [not so] much ... as
"It's **as much** a problem of skill **as** a matter of confidence."

whether ... or

**Whether** you win this race **or** you lose it doesn't matter.

not only ... but (also)
She led the team **not only** in number of wins **but also** by virtue of her enthusiasm.

**DIAGRAMMING CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS**
Diagramming a correlative conjunction is really no different from diagramming a coordinating conjunction. It all depends on whether they are being used to juxtapose two or more clauses, or two or more compound elements in a sentence.

Not only did they repair the cracked windshield, but also they replaced the door panel, which was not so much inconvenient as costly.

![Diagram of correlative conjunctions]
Diagramming a sentence using correlative conjunctions allows you to see where parallel structure is needed, because both halves of the correlative conjunction must use the same parts of speech in the same order if they are to present a balanced correlation.

Not only did they repair the cracked windshield, but also the door panel, which was not so much inconvenient as costly.

In this version of the example, "[they did] repair the cracked windshield" is not parallel in structure with "the door panel," for the obvious reason that one is a clause and the other is a noun phrase. This can be resolved either by building the noun phrase into a full clause, or by moving the correlative conjunction so that it correlates two noun phrases that are parallel to each other:

They repaired not only the cracked windshield, but also the door panel, which was not so much inconvenient as costly.

Correlative conjunctions are not the only circumstances in which parallel structure should be a concern. Parallel structure is also required in comparisons and in a series of phrases.
ADJECTIVES

Adjectives are categorized as one of the eight main parts of speech.

They are words, phrases, or clauses that modify nouns or words and phrases behaving like nouns, such as Gerunds. By adding pieces of description, they are an important tool to completing a picture for readers and listeners. The job can be done with different adjectives, some as basic as a cursor and some as complex as a clause, itself.

One broader category of adjectives is called "Determiners" and includes a host of practical adjectives that help us "determine" other moods, senses, and attitudes about nouns.

DETERMINERS

ARTICLES

Articles are little words that pose as cursors, pointing us to nouns. The articles are blessedly few in number, and the easiest category of grammar to memorize in the English language:

- Indefinite Article: a (an)
- Definite: the

QUANTIFIERS

The source of the Indefinite Pronoun is an adjective that quantifies--or, counts--an indefinite number of things or persons:

- some, all, any, several, many, fewer, etc.

DEMONSTRATIVE and INTERROGATIVE ADJECTIVES

Demonstrative adjectives are like Definite Articles. In fact, some grammarians identify them as such. They, too, point to nouns, but in a more demonstrative way. To be "demonstrative" means to have a penchant for demonstrating or showing. So, not only do demonstrative adjectives point to something or someone, they do so with the intent to show something. They are

- that, this, these, those.

The corresponding question words that ask for someone or something to be pointed out are

- which, what; whose.

The word "whose" is also a possessive adjective. (See below.) The interrogative and demonstrative adjectives, when they drop the nouns they modify, become Interrogative Pronouns and Demonstrative Pronouns, respectively.
POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES
These are words that look like Personal Possessive Pronouns but are actually modifiers, not pronouns (e.g., "my prerogative" or "whose idea?"):

my
your
his / her / its
our
your
their
whose

OTHER ADJECTIVES

ORDINALS ADJECTIVES
The word "ordinal" simply means "in order." Cardinal numbers--one, two, three, twenty-one, one million, etc.--become ordinal adjectives when they are used to describe an order or a succession:

first, second, third, twenty-first, one-millionth, etc.

Calendar dates are an example of ordinal adjectives becoming a kind of pronoun because they drop the the word "day" and stand on their own:

"the fifth day of November"
becomes, for example,"the Fifth of November"; "November, the Fifth"; or, "November 5th."

DEGREES
Words that express the positive, the comparative (-er, more), and the superlative (-est, most) are adjectives.

POST-POSITIVE ADJECTIVES
Placing the positive form of an adjective (see Degrees, above) after the noun it modifies is rarely done in English except when you want to achieve an elevated style. In many instances, this technique creates a compound word, sometimes hyphenated (as with the word "a" in front of it): "We've got beer a-plenty at this party"; "He's just the next johnny-come-lately."

Most of the time, though, it's a simple matter of putting the separate descriptor right after the noun it modifies. The following list is far from comprehensive, but it contains some common examples of post-positive adjectives found in English. The post-positive adjective in each phrase has been underlined:
Some noun forms are more prone to post-positive adjectives than others, because they express an added element of power, dominance, or supremacy. Probably the most common occurrence of this is in the phrase "best [noun] possible," though, in advertising you quite often hear "best [noun] available" just as frequently. This is basically a literal translation of the French adjective "deluxe," and quite often you'll see product names that have the word "deluxe" in them to create this elite effect. Advertisers are prone hyperbole, but you can substitute "best" and the post-positive adjective with superlatives and adjectives ("the lowest prices imaginable," for instance.) The same elite attitude advertisers try to encourage is expressed in traditional arenas of power and class, especially if it involves lineage or political and military positions.

**in heraldic attitudes** (the position of the creature or animal on the crest):
- a serpent **rampant**
- a lion **dormant**
- a pelican, her wings **displayed** (the modifier here is a past participle)

**in titles of leadership and honorary titles**
- [position] **apparent**
- [position] **elect**
- [position] **emeritus** (largely an academic position)
- [position] **General**
- [position] **presumptive**
in last names (surnames)
Family names are, on rare occasions, presented as post-positive adjectives after common nouns. What makes these different from any titles of respect ("Professor Sherlock," for example) is that the definite article "the" comes before them:

- The Brothers Grimm
- The Brothers Gibb
- The Emperor Jones
- The Sisters Sledge
- Sly and the Family Stone

Restaurant menus are a good place to find post-positive adjectives, because they give food dishes an air of lux cuisine:

- beef Wellington
- beef Carpaccio
- cherries jubilee
- chicken Tetrazzini
- eggs Benedict
- oysters Rockefeller
- pears flambé

**DIAGRAMMING POST-POSITIVE ADJECTIVES**
Placing a Post-Positive Adjective on a sentence diagram really depends on whether the adjective is part of a compound word, or whether it’s just another modifier used with inverted word order. Consider the following two sentences:

- Our current Poet Laureate is Natasha Tretheway.
- Some Poets Laureate in times past have been Philip Levine and Rita Dove.

"Poet Laureate" is not only a compound word, its one of those irregularly pluralized compound nouns in which the "-s" stays with "Poets." Because it's treated as a single concept, the modifier "Laureate" remains with it as part of the noun. In the prepositional phrase, "in times past," however, "past" pretty much retains its character as a modifier.

This sort of distinction, though, splits hairs, and few would quibble with you if you decided to put "times past" on the horizontal line as one concept.
ADJECTIVE PHRASES AND CLAUSES

If an adjective clause is stripped of its subject and verb, the resulting modifier becomes an Adjective Phrase:

He is the man keeping my family in the poorhouse.

Note how the entire phrase, "keeping my family in the poorhouse," works as an adjective, in this case a Participial Phrase. A Participle is a kind of Verbal that modifies nouns and noun-like words.

If a group of words containing a subject and verb acts as an adjective, it is called an Adjective Clause: My sister, who is much older than I am, is an engineer. Note how the entire clause works as an adjective but begins with a relative pronoun. Relative pronouns begin adjective clauses called, rather unimaginatively, Relative Clauses.
ADVERBS

Adverbs are categorized as one of the eight main parts of speech and, as the name implies, modify verbs and verbals, by commentating on the action, describing how it is, where it's going, why it's happening, or when it's occurring. An adverb brings that same attitude of reconnaissance to adjectives and other adverbs, by commenting on degree and intensity. For that reason, it's good to think of adverbs as the paparazzi of the eight parts of speech: "spying and reporting" on verbs, adjectives and other adverbs.

Because adverbs serve so many functions, they are one of the most common modifiers in the English language. They can be classified in one of three ways:

Single-Word Adverbs
Conjunctive Verbs
Adverb Phrases and Clauses
ADVERBS

Many single-word adverbs end in -ly: happily; truthfully; etc. However, there are enough adjectives also ending in -ly to confuse and confound: unseemly; motherly; comely; silly; etc. A better way to identify an adverb is to test if it answers questions such as "How?", "How much?", "When?" or "In what direction?" Then, double-check to make sure that the word is actually modifying something that adverbs modify. The common adverb has three modifying functions:

1. It modifies verbs and verbals, as in "walks further" or "living frugally."
2. It modifies adjectives, as in "a slightly inconvenient route" or "a less ordinary life."
3. It modifies other adverbs, as in "walks even further" or "news travels quite fast."

DIAGRAMMING ADVERBS

Placing a single-word adverb on a sentence diagram is only as difficult as determining which of the three modifying functions it serves.

ADVERBS MODIFYING VERBS AND (VERBAL) GERUNDS

If an adverb modifies a verb or a noun verbal (such as a gerund), it's simply placed on a diagonal line underneath it:

The senator frequently decries political corruption, and he enjoys aggressively campaigning about it.

In the compound sentence above, the first main clause contains an adverb modifying a verb, while the second main clause possesses a gerund (a verbal) modified by an adverb. Even though a gerund is a noun, the adverb still goes under it, just as it would go under a regular verb:
ADVERBS MODIFYING ADJECTIVES AND (VERBAL) PARTICIPLES
If an adverb modifies an adjective, or another part of speech acting like an adjective (such as a participle), then it is placed on a diagonal line and appended to the word it modifies. The exception is the adjective complements that follow linking verbs. In this case, the adverb is placed under the adjective complement on a diagonal line, just as it would if it were under a verb:

The senator’s speeches are **tediously boring**, regardless of his **perfectly well-meaning** rhetoric.

ADVERBS MODIFYING ADVERBS
If an adverb modifies another adverb, then it is placed on a diagonal line and appended to the word it's modifying:

Far too many young voters do **not** know the basics of the political process **nearly well enough**.

In the example above, all the adverbs are in bold, but only those modifying other adverbs are underlined. The word "not" is one of those adverbs that can be moved around for rhetorical emphasis, but this makes it more susceptible to becoming a misplaced modifier, one of the major errors that occur with adverbs. The sentence doesn't really mean that young voters do not know the basics of the political process, but rather that they know them **not nearly well enough**. Here's another example of an egregious modifier error:

All twins are **not alike**.

As you can see in the example above, pairing the adverb "not" with the adjective "alike" is illogical. It belongs with the word "All":

**Not** all twins are alike.

See "Modifier Errors" for more information.
A conjunctive adverb--sometimes referred to as an adverbial conjunct, but let's not go there--is an adverb that creates a mood of transition. In fact, many of the transitional expressions you learn in writing coherent paragraphs and essays depend on conjunctive adverbs:

Participation in primary elections has dropped off in recent years. **Moreover**, greater numbers of youth voters are not voting out of protest.

In the example above, "Moreover" is, both, an adverb modifying the progressive (a.k.a. continuous) present tense verb "are not voting," and a transitional word suggesting something is being added to the observations of the previous sentence. Typically, a conjunctive adverb and a subsequent comma come at the start of an independent clause; however, it can also join two independent clauses into a compound sentence as long as the conjunctive adverb is preceded by a semi-colon (or by a comma + coordinating conjunction, but this can also seem redundant).

Participation in primary elections has dropped off in recent years; **moreover**, greater numbers of youth voters are not voting out of protest.

Like many other ordinary adverbs, conjunctive adverbs can be moved from the beginning to another location in the sentence without losing their intended effect. They are normally set apart by commas, though this rule is not absolute and is not always applied to very short clauses:

Greater numbers of youth voters, **moreover**, are not voting out of protest.
Greater numbers of youth voters are not voting, **moreover**, out of protest.

Remember that punctuation is not represented on a diagram, so you wouldn't ever place a semi-colon where a conjunction would otherwise go. Instead, put nothing. More importantly, whether or not it's part of a compound sentence, and regardless of where you place the conjunctive adverb in the sentence, when you diagram it the conjunctive adverb must go under the verb it properly modifies.

![Diagram of sentence structure](image-url)
Here's a helpful list of commonly used conjunctive adverbs that can also be used to write transitions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accordingly</th>
<th>More importantly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also</td>
<td>Moreover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyway</td>
<td>Namely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides</td>
<td>Nevertheless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainly</td>
<td>Next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequently</td>
<td>Nonetheless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further</td>
<td>Otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore</td>
<td>Similarly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hence</td>
<td>Still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However</td>
<td>Then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidentally</td>
<td>Thereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeed</td>
<td>Therefore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instead</td>
<td>Thus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likewise</td>
<td>Undoubtedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meanwhile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADVERB PHRASE AND CLAUSES

Adverb phrases and clauses answer the same questions that Adverbs do: "How?" "When?" "Where?"

Adverbial Phrase

When a group of words NOT containing a subject and verb acts as an adverb, it is considered an adverbial phrase:

- He calls his mother **as often as possible**.
- Take two capsule **every four hours when needed**.

**Correlative Conjunctions, Prepositional Phrases, and certain Infinitive Phrases** all have the potential to be adverbial phrases. An adverbial phrase, therefore, should not be thought of as a particular part of speech but, rather, as the collective function of a group of words composed of other parts of speech. That function would be shown in a sentence diagram by placing the phrase diagonally under the word or words it modifies.

- Budgets have changed in recent years **not only** to accommodate financial shortfalls **but also** to anticipate an even worse economy.

In the diagram above, note how all of the phrases are in service to the idea that budgets “**have changed**.” Consequently, they all come under that one verb, in some fashion, and are therefore adverbial.
**Adverbial Clause**

In similar fashion, an entire clause--a group of words containing a subject and verb--can begin with a *Subordinating Conjunction* and modify *Verbs* and *Verbals* in other clauses. These are adverbial clauses. The subordinators tend to indicate how, when, where, and sometimes why.

There's no trick to diagramming them. The subordinating conjunction goes on a dashed diagonal line connecting the verb or verbal to the subordinate adverbial clause:

- He travels *where the surfing is good*.
- *When this class is over*, we're going to the movies.
Prepositions are categorized as one of the eight main parts of speech.

Prepositions help to answer all manner of questions because they describe a temporal, spatial or logical relationship to other words in the sentence. As such, they are a kind of modifier, acting as an adjective or an adverb, locating something in time and space, modifying a noun, or telling when or where or under what conditions something happened. Prepositions are combined with their objects to build prepositional phrases; objects are always nouns or words and phrases behaving like nouns (pronouns, gerunds and gerund phrases; certain infinitives and infinitive phrases).

**temporal prepositions** ("How is it progressing?"):
after, after, before, by, during, since, throughout, till, until, upon

**spatial prepositions** ("How is it situated?"):
against, among, at, beside, between, by, in, near, next to, off, on, over, over, under, underneath, with

**directional prepositions** ("How is it moving?"):
about, across, along, around, beyond, down, from, in, inside, into, out, outside, through, to, toward, up, within

**logical and instrumental prepositions** ("By what means is it happening?"):
about, against, but, by, despite, except, for, from, like, since, with

[Note that some of these words have counterparts as other parts of speech: "for" and "but," for instance, are coordinating conjunctions; "before" is also a subordinating conjunction. Understanding the function of these is more important than memorizing just the words.]
DIAGRAMMING PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES
Because prepositional phrases are modifiers, in a sentence diagram they come underneath the words they modify: the prepositions are put on diagonal lines, like other one-word modifiers are, and they connect to their objects, placed on a horizontal line like other nouns and noun phrases are.

We all took a boat ride on a lake in a sailboat with a bright red markings on its sails.
INTERJECTIONS

Interjections are categorized as one of the eight main parts of speech.

To interject means to interrupt by putting oneself or something else in the way; to come between.

Interjections are interruptive words or phrases used to exclaim or protest or command. They sometimes stand by themselves, but they are often contained within larger structures.

Wow! I won the lottery!
Oh, I don't know about that.
I don't know what the heck you're talking about.
No, you shouldn't have done that.

Virtually none of them have any place in formal tone and academic writing. Get used to recognizing them and editing them out of your writing.

DIAGRAMMING INTERJECTIONS

Reinforcing the notion that interjections have no place in formal writing, the method used to diagram them is to isolate them and leave them outside the structure of the diagram, exactly as you would a Direct Address in a Noun Phrase:

Ah hell, who doesn’t want to be millionaire?
Grammar Errors

Whether remedial or advanced, college composition typically suffers from a garden variety of grammar ailments that occur because of a writers' confusion about parts of speech, or because the rules applied to some parts of speech aren't always consistent.

This section looks at a variety of common grammar errors based upon their main part of speech:

- Noun Errors
- Pronoun Errors
- Verb Errors
- Modifier Errors
- Conjunction Errors
NOUN ERRORS

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION
Irregular Plurals
Plural-Form Singulars

The most common error afflicting nouns involves an error of pluralization. Though most nouns are made plural by the addition of "-s," a minuscule list of nouns (compared to the tens of thousands of nouns in the English language) form plurals irregularly, for various reasons.

IRREGULAR PLURALS
Some nouns have unusual plural forms, often because they are of direct Latin, Greek, or French origin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alumnus / alumna</td>
<td>alumni / alumnae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analysis</td>
<td>analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antenna</td>
<td>antennae / antennas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appendix</td>
<td>appendices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>axis</td>
<td>axes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bacterium</td>
<td>bacteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basis</td>
<td>bases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beau</td>
<td>beaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bureau</td>
<td>bureaux / bureaus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cactus</td>
<td>cacti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corpus</td>
<td>corpora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crisis</td>
<td>crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criterion</td>
<td>criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curriculum</td>
<td>curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>datum</td>
<td>data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deer</td>
<td>deer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diagnosis</td>
<td>diagnoses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ellipsis</td>
<td>ellipses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus</td>
<td>foci / focuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formula</td>
<td>formulae / formulas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fungus</td>
<td>fungi / funguses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genus</td>
<td>genera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goose</td>
<td>geese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graffito</td>
<td>graffiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hypothesis</td>
<td>hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>index</td>
<td>indices / indexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>louse</td>
<td>lice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matrix</td>
<td>matrices / matrixes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLURAL-FORM SINGULARS

Certain plural nouns have come to be used as single concepts or things. Some agree with singular verb forms (e.g., "The news just repeats itself" or "This television series is awful"), but most do not.

- barracks
- belongings
- effects (e.g., "gather up your effects")
- forceps
- furnishings
- headquarters
- means (e.g., "a means to the an end")
- news
- outskirts
- pliers
- scissors
- series
- species
- tongs
- trappings (e.g., "the trappings of success")

CERTAIN ARTICLES OF CLOTHING

Probably because they are made for body parts that come in pairs (arms and legs, ears), certain articles of clothing have come to be thought of as one thing acting like two. They nevertheless agree with a plural verb form (e.g., "Suspenders for men's trousers are coming back in style").

- braces
- earmuffs
- jeans
- pajamas
- pants
- trousers
- shorts
- suspenders

OPTICAL DEVICES

As with certain articles of clothing, most optical devices are made with a pair in mind--a pair of eyes, that is, so they have come to be thought of as one thing acting like two. They nevertheless agree with a plural verb form.

- eyeglasses
- bifocals
- spectacles
- binoculars
- goggles

GAMES

Certain games with multiple iterations of the same game pieces fall into the category of plural form / singular verb ("Billiards is an enjoyable pastime").

- billiards
- dominoes
- cards
- darts
- dice
- jacks
- checkers
- tiddlywinks
- nine-pins
CERTAIN SUBJECTS
Subjects with plural endings also agree with singular verbs ("The physics of the subatomic world is a mystery to many"). The exception on the following list is "politics," which can take a singular or a plural verb.

physics  economics
linguistics  mathematics
phonetics  gymnastics
politics

CERTAIN DISEASES AND ILLNESSES
The "folk" use of English has shown a tendency to call maladies by plural nouns beginning with the definite article "the"; diarrhea, for instance is pejoratively called "the squirts," and a runny nose is called "the sniffles"; a bout of depression is "the blues," and so on. This same tendency is observed in some formally recognized illnesses, but they can take either singular or plural verb forms ("measles are" or "measles is").

delirium tremens  shingles
measles  shivers
mumps  tremors
rickets

PLURAL COMPOUNDS
Compound nouns present their own special problems for plurals, especially if they're hyphenated. To be fair, most compound nouns follow the rules and add "-s," but a few rare compound nouns are also formed out of nouns that already have irregular plurals. What makes the plural forms of these compound nouns somewhat odd is that they don't obey even their own irregular rules. Some examples:

clubfoots (even though "foot" should pluralize into "feet")
pussyfoots
hotfoots
sabertooths (even though "tooth" should pluralize into "teeth")

Other plural compound nouns move the plural "-s" internally, to one of the words not on the end. Many of these are highly specialized and include diplomatic and military titles: "Knights-errant," for instance, or "Quartermasters General." These are a matter of protocol more than anything. The more common variety of plural compounds that cause writers difficulty are listed here below:

attorneys-at-law  training  lately  sisters-in-law
bills-of-goods  fathers-in-law  lookers-on  sons-in-law
brothers-in-law  fees simple  Macbooks Pro  sons-of-a-bitches
court-martial  absolute  menfolk  surges
culs-de-sac  goings-on  menservant (or manservants)  general
daughters-in-law  governors  mothers-in-law  womenfolk
directors  in-laws  nomes de plume  works-in-progress
general  jacks-in-the-box  passers-by
employees-in-johnnies-come-

A Guide To Parts Of Speech
REGULAR PLURALS OF SINGULAR WORDS AND NAMES ENDING IN SINGLE "S"

Singular nouns ending with double-s are fairly common in the English language: pass; countess; boss; less; etc. However, students are suddenly undone by words in the English language that end in single "s," especially when it comes time to pluralizing them--and for good reason, for there are enough illogical irregularities in the spelling rules of such words to make even jaded English professors say, "Well, huh." Take, for instance, the word "bus": no satisfying reason exists to explain why "buses" should be one of its two acceptable plural spellings (the other, of course, being the very rationale and rule-obedient "busses"--double "s"). If all the practical rules of pronunciation were to apply, "buses" would have the same pronunciation as "abuses," rather than rhyme with "fusses." Mind you, this same quirk of spelling shows up in other parts of speech, too. For example, the past tense of the verb "travel" can be spelled either "traveled" or "travelled"; the latter dutifully obeys the rules of spelling transformation, while the former is just a cheap way for travel agencies to save some money advertising in the Classifieds. Still, pluralizing words already ending in "s" so flummoxes students these days that it may seem as if rote memorization is their only recourse.

Truthfully, in the vast majority of cases, singular nouns ending in single "s" are also irregular nouns of foreign origin: abacus; hubris; anaphylaxis; incubus; etc. (See "Irregular Plurals" above.) However, here are some less exotic nouns in their singular form that end in single "s" and may cause you confusion when you have to pluralize them:

COMMON NOUNS WITH SINGLE "S" ENDINGS
alias —es (aliases)
basis —es (bases: pronounced bay-seez)
bias —es (biases)
bus —es (buses); -ses (busses)
cutlas —ses (cutlasses)
dais —es (daises; be careful not to write "daisies"!)
ibis —es (ibises)
gas —es (gases); -ses (gasses)
pus —es (puses)
tennis —es (tennises)

PROPER NOUNS WITH "S" ENDINGS
The following are examples of proper nouns that may look plural because they end in -s, but which are not. If pluralized, they follow the same rules as common nouns.

Places Names
Mars
Venus
Hades
Texas
Illinois
Caracas
Alice Springs
Memphis
First Names and Nicknames
Agnes
Bojangles
Charles
Dolores
Elvis
Gus
James
Jonas
Lois
Lucas
Marcus
Moses
Phyllis
Silas
Snookums
Sparkles-Fantastic
Travis

Family Names
James (e.g., Henry James)
Johns (e.g., Johns Hopkins University)
Jones (e.g., Grace Jones)
Stevens (e.g., Wallace Stevens)
Stephens (e.g., Stephens County, Texas)
Williams (e.g., Vanessa Williams)

POSSESSIVES

ORDINARY POSSESSIVES
The rules of changing ordinary nouns from singular into plural don't trouble students much until they have to consider their possessive forms as well. The possessive form in English grammar is the genitive case (see "Pronouns"), which is indicated in one of two ways:

1. Preposition "Of": placed before the object noun or pronoun to which belonging is attributed
   - Fifty Shades Of Grey
   - the Fifth (day) of July
   - the bow of the ship
   - the workload of Mark and other students

2. Possessive Apostrophes: used instead of the preposition "of" (never in addition to it)
   - Grey's Anatomy
   - July's long, summer days
   - the ship's cargo
   - Mark and other students' workloads
SINGULAR POSSESSIVE versus PLURAL POSSESSIVE

If you choose to use the preposition "of" to indicate possession, nothing additional need be done
if the noun is irregular or plural; the same rules of plural endings apply. However, if you use an
apostrophe, some minor distinction must be made to indicate where the noun* is singular
possessive or plural possessive.

The singular possessive form of a noun always is *apostrophe + "s."

- the team's record of winning
- a man's shaving kit
- a mother's intuition

The plural possessive form of a noun in most cases is "s" + apostrophe.

- The two teams' uniforms were very similar
- The three-year-olds' incessant screaming have us a headache
- The other mothers' first response was to comfort their children.

*Note: When apostrophes are used to denote possession, the noun transforms into a modifier, describing
what or who is possessed or own. As such, it answers the same questions other modifiers answer, which?
and whose? For example: Bob's car" (Which car? Bob's); winter's approach (Which approach? Winter's).
On a sentence diagram, possessive nouns would occupy the same position as Possessive Adjectives,
which may help you to remember this point. In fact, just as possessive adjectives are really modifiers
derived from pronouns, possessive nouns are modifiers that once were real nouns.

POSSESSIVES AND IRREGULAR PLURALS

The irregular plural possessive form of some nouns is "apostrophe + "s." These should be
memorized.

- men's (not mens')
- children's (not childrens')
- women's (not womens')
- feet's (not feets')
- sheep's (not sheep's')
- fish's (not fishes') [Note: poetical or scriptural use of the word "fish" sometimes plural it as
"fishes", as in "loaves and fishes."]

Some clumsy exceptions formed from well-meaning attempts to make words more easily
pronounced are

- series' (not series's)
- means' (not means's)

"Persons" versus "People": While most writers write "people" to pluralize "person", "person" is
not an irregular noun requiring "people" as its plural form. Rather, it's a matter of convention to
do so. The evidence for this lies in the fact that both words, "person" and "people," have their
own regular singular and plural forms.

- A person came into the police station today to report that persons unknown broke into her house
  and stole all of her Taylor Swift posters.
- Because they were taught from biased history book, people overlook the truth that the ancient
  Egyptians were one of the peoples of Africa.
POSSESSIVE NOUNS ENDING IN "S"
Nowhere does the issue of possessive case become more flummoxing than when nouns ending in "s" are involved, because it seems redundant and clumsy. Regardless, this is only a prejudice of students who, after a lifetime of rules and their exceptions having been drilled into them, now nervously believe something special should be done to accommodate the weirdness of so many esses piled up. Confused advice on the internet and elsewhere does little to disabuse them of their prejudice, too. However, the matter is really as simple as the rules of pluralizing nouns that end in "s": they're exactly the same as any other noun, and their possessive forms follow the same rules. Here are some examples.

Common Nouns ending in "-S"

gas:
The gas's strong odor alerted them as to the source of the leak.

alias:
The alias's similarity to his legal name made it easy for the FBI to find him.

mass; masses:
The gelatinous mass's shape changed from one minute to the next.
When the sirens sounded, the masses' panic could be heard throughout the stadium.

synopsis:
She carefully checked the story synopsis's spelling before turning in the assignment.

compass; compasses:
The Golden Compass's plot was changed slightly for the movie version.
Our compasses' accuracy came into doubt when they started pointing in different directions.

Proper Nouns (Names and Nicknames) ending in "-S"

Charles:
After the devastation of the hurricane, we all helped to rebuild Charles's house.

Williams:
I discovered a rare disco version of John Williams's score for Close Encounters Of the Third Kind.

Texas:
Texas's economy is one of the largest and most rapidly growing in the U.S.

Jiggles:
She brushed Jiggles's coat once a day, but lavished him with treats all day long.

Other Proper Nouns ending in palatal digraphs (-ch; -th; -tch; -zh; -sh; etc.)

Bush; Bushes:
George W. Bush's father, former President George Bush, Sr., never returned to the White House to visit his son while he was in office.
The Bushes' tenure in the Whitehouse lasted eight years.

Radowitz; Radowitzes
Historically, Joseph Von Radowitz's greatest accomplishment was his proposal to unify Germany under Prussian leadership.
Maximillian, King of Bavaria, had the greatest respect for the Radowitzes' political advice.
PRONOUN ERRORS

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION
Pop Quiz: Worst "Case" Scenario
Selfsame Errors: Intensive and Reflexive Pronoun Errors
Pronoun Agreement Errors
  Case Error
  Number Agreement Error
  Person Agreement
  Linking Verbs
Pronoun Reference Errors
  Ambiguity
  Vagueness

WORST "CASE" SCENARIOS
What errors, if any, can you identify in the following paragraph?
There has been a long-standing feud between her and I that, even though we live together,
everyone has learned to accept. When me and her first met, we had an instant attraction to
each other. Unfortunately, we sometimes let the heart choose whoever it wants, and worry
about the consequences later. Over time, she and myself started to become more aware of
one another's little habits. We stopped ourself from going to parties together, because we
knew we would kill other people's fun. One friend even withdrew hisself from us
altogether. However, eventually he started separately inviting us to his dinner parties and it
inspired our other friends to follow suit. Now, I hold myself dinner parties where she
remains upstairs, alone, while we dine together, and she will do the same on other days.
Some have asked, "Why don't they separate and live by theirselves?" I have no answer,
except I've become used to it. As the saying goes, "Sometimes living with the enemy you
know is better than sleeping with the lover you don't."

When we speak casually among ourselves, we're not really judging one another that much on
how correct our grammar is. Pronouns, probably more than any other parts of speech, seem to
"get a pass" in everyday, colloquial communication because the give-and-take of casual
conversation has a way of calibrating the context as we go along, which corrects or forgives any
errors that might have been made. In writing, though, when we're not there to stick up for our
writing or adjust the context for our readers, pronouns have to be precise all on their own.

This page examines a number of typical pronoun errors that fall into three categories: pronoun
malapropisms; agreement mistakes; and, reference errors.

SELFSA ME ERRORS
The following Reflexive and Intensive pronouns don't really exist. They are all mistakes of
decension. Except for "hisself" (whose base personal pronoun "he" follows the same rules of
decension as "who"), they all suffer from a number agreement error ("our" is plural and "self" is
singular, for instance.) Therefore, these pronouns are malapropisms and should never be used:
  hisself
  ourself
  theirself
  itselfs
PRONOUN AGREEMENT ERRORS

Pronoun errors—pronouns that don't represent their antecedents correctly—are among the most common errors of grammar in college level writing. There are three ways in which pronouns may be incorrect, and they correspond to the three ways in which pronouns are identified: in number, in person, and in case.

Pronoun Case Errors

Conversational English makes many allowances for pronoun case errors because, in the spontaneous flow of dialogue and everyday interaction, no one stops to demand correct grammar. Writing, on the other hand, is not spontaneous; it can be reread or read slowly, and these mistakes are more glaring indications of the writer's poor command of English. The most common pronoun case errors confuse the subject case with object case, or misuse the reflexive case.

Subject-Object Case Error

I made him promise to keep this delicate matter between him and I.
Me and Terrence camped in Yosemite over the weekend.
Yours and your friend's ties are exactly alike.

Reflexive Case Error

This application should be filled out by yourself only.
Samantha, Peter and myself are now roommates.
Her friends respect herself more than she does.

Number Agreement

When a plural pronoun does not agree with its singular antecedent, most often it is because the writer is trying to avoid sexism. The English language has only awkward solutions for pronouns whose antecedents are of an unknown gender, but pairing a plural third-person pronoun with a singular antecedent is not one of them.

Incorrect

If a student parks a car on campus, they have to buy a parking sticker.

Correction

If a student parks a car on campus, she has to buy a parking sticker.

OR

Whenever students park their cars on campus, they have to buy parking stickers.

Note: Plural pronouns very often demand that other nouns in the sentence, whether subjective or objective, also be plural.

*Even though “their” is a possessive adjective, it conjugates the way other personal pronouns do. Therefore, it is subject to the rules of number agreement.

Person Agreement

(Related Grammar: Pronoun Shift)
When the person of the pronoun (first-, second-, or third-person) is inconsistent with its antecedent, or shifts arbitrarily, this is an error of Pronoun Person Agreement:

**Example**

When a student comes to class late, you should at least have your homework ready.  
When a student comes to class late, he should at least have his homework ready.  
When students come to class, they should at least have their homework ready.

**Example**

Over the course of your life, we can expect our hearts to beat 2.6 billion times.  
Over the course of our life, we can expect our hearts to beat 2.6 billion times.

**Linking Verbs**  
*(a.k.a. Iterative Verbs, Copulative Verbs; Related Grammar: Predicate Nominative Case)*

Unlike most other verbs, linking verbs reiterate the subject of the clause with another noun (as in the case of appositive phrases; see above) or with a modifier. When pronouns are used with linking verbs, they must use the subject case, *not* the object case.

**Example**

I thought they were speaking about my friend, but, in truth, it was me.  
I thought they were speaking about my friend, but, in truth, the subject of their conversation was I.  
When the switchboard operator asked to speak to Mary Donaldson, I said, *This is she.*

**PRONOUN REFERENCE ERRORS**

**Ambiguity**

The prefix "ambi-" means "both" in Latin. Ambiguity occurs when there are two or more possible meanings. When a pronoun has two or more possible antecedents, but it is unclear which is the right one, this causes a Pronoun Reference Error. Ambiguous pronoun references are very similar to misplaced modifiers.

**Multiple Antecedents**

**Incorrect**

When a president carefully selects a Supreme Court Justice, he is sworn to impartiality in his judgment.

**Correction**

When carefully selected by a president, a Supreme Court Justice is sworn to impartiality in his judgment.  
Sworn to impartiality in his judgment, a president carefully selects a Supreme Court Justice.

**Ambiguity and Possessive Adjectives**

**Incorrect**

Average citizens have made great strides toward maintaining democracy in their own way.

**Correction**

Average citizens in their own way have made great strides toward maintaining democracy.  
Average citizens have made great strides in their own way toward maintaining democracy.
Vagueness
Vagueness occurs when the antecedent of a pronoun cannot be found in the same sentence. Vague pronoun references are very similar to dangling modifiers.

**Pronouns Missing Antecedents**

*Incorrect*
In the Judicial branch of government, they should be selected for their impartiality.

*Correction*
When judges are appointed the Judicial branch of government, they should be selected for their impartiality.

*Incorrect*
Advertising is when they try to make us want products and services we do not necessarily need.

*Correction*
Advertisers succeed when they try to make us want products and services we do not necessarily need.

**Pronoun Vagueness in Quoted Sources**
In quotations, sometimes pronoun vagueness occurs when the original antecedent is not part of your quote. In these cases, *for the sake of clarity only*, you are expected to identify the antecedent in brackets next to the relevant pronoun (as you would an appositive noun), or replace the pronoun altogether with its antecedent in brackets:

**Examples:**
In the introduction to his biography of James Joyce, Richard Ellmann states that he followed the controversial modernist author’s own “prescription of total candor, with the knowledge that his [Joyce’s] life, like Rousseau’s, can bear others’ scrutiny as it bore his own."

Ellmann goes onto state that, by revising his definitive biography of James Joyce, he felt his “affection for [Joyce] renewed.”

In the first example, the second occurrence of the pronoun “his” (“it bore his own”) does not require clarification, since its antecedent is now understood by virtue of the precedent set earlier in the sentence.

**MORE EXAMPLES OF Pronoun Reference Errors**

When Lady Caruthers smashed the traditional bottle of champagne against the hull of the giant tanker, she slipped down the runway, gained speed, rocketed into the water with a gigantic spray, and continued unchecked toward Prince’s Island.

If a pitcher wins 20 games, will their value to the team increase?

Both Isabel and Barbara loved her children.
A new student checking out a large number of books in the Grossmont College library might not realize how many full text sources they can access in the on-line databases.

Here's how the first of these would look if diagrammed.
SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION
Distance
Questions
Indefinite Pronouns
Compound Subjects

When verb case does not agree with the subject of its clause, this is considered an error of grammar. Subject/Verb Agreement Errors (marked "s/v agr" on your assignments) occur most often for the following reasons:

Distance
Distance between the subject and the verb: a string of modifying phrases that include other nouns or pronouns comes between the subject and verb, and this makes the writer lose track of the real subject of the clause.

Example:
The house on this street with the canopy of shady trees are too expensive.

Questions
Questions or clauses in which the verb comes before the subject: inverted word order put an object noun in front of the verb, making the writer think it is the subject.

Example:
Hovering over the basket of apples were a swarm of bees.

Indefinite Pronouns
The number (singular or plural) of an indefinite pronoun used as the subject of a clause is confused with the number of some other noun.

Example:
Each of my friends who smoke already have grave health problems.

Compound Subjects
A writer loses sight of the conjunction used to join two or more subject nouns (or pronouns); this occurs most often with "(n)either . . . (n)or . . . ."

Examples:
Either my aunt or my cousin have the cookbook my grandmother wrote. Both my aunt and my cousin for many years has fought to keep that cookbook for herself.
MODIFIER ERRORS

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION
Dangling Modifiers
Misplaced Modifiers
Squinting Modifiers
Adverb / Adjective Errors
Examples and Exercises

POP QUIZ

1. The following famous phrase spoken by Neil Armstrong taking his first steps on the moon contains a modifier error. True or false?
   "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

2. Which interpretation of the following sentence is its likeliest intended meaning:
   "Free writers workshop for newbies looking to explore the craft of writing and veterans, alike."
   a. an inexperienced writers' writing workshop whose organizers are looking to explore the craft of,
      both, writing and veterans
   b. a workshop, free of charge, for new writers or experienced writers alike, who are looking to
      explore the craft of writing
   c. workshop for not-for-pay writers who are new to writing and who are looking to explore the
      writing craft as well as explore issues of interest to veterans
   d. rescued P.O.W.s conduct a workshop on behalf of new writers, all in hopes of exploring how
      to write about being ex-military
   e. all of the above
   f. none of the above

3. The following statement means that some dentists differ from others. True or false?
   "All dentists are not alike."

4. What, if anything, is wrong with the following statement? (Select all that apply.)
   "Without a syllabus and a textbook, it was difficult to keep up with the reading assignments."
   a. Nothing. The sentence is well written, as is.
   b. It has a modifying phrase that should be moved to a better place in the sentence.
   c. It has a modifying phrase that doesn't clearly modify anything in the sentence.
   d. It has a pronoun reference error, due to vagueness.
   e. It has a pronoun reference error, due to ambiguity.

5. Whoever wrote the road sign at right
   a. has written it perfectly as is.
   b. has accidentally omitted the word "Please".
   c. has misplaced the modifying word "Airport".
   d. has neglected to use the preposition "For."
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE SENTENCES ABOVE?
They all have problem modifiers. Modifiers are words that describe and change your impression of something. That is, they modify the way other words are perceived or understood by adding more descriptive information. Modifiers include the following parts of speech:

- **adjectives** (including adjective phrases and clauses)
- **articles** (definite and indefinite): a (an), the; this, that, these, those
- **adverbs** (including adverbial phrases and clauses)
- **other descriptive phrases** (prepositional phrases, and certain verbal phrases)

Just as pronouns and possessive adjectives have antecedents to which they must clearly point "back", modifiers must also clearly point to one or more words to which they're giving additional information. On a sentence diagram, if a word or phrase on a diagonal line cannot be placed under a word on a horizontal line, or if it's placed under the wrong word, problems will occur, sometimes to hilarious or confusing effect. These kinds of mistakes occur in two major ways: as **dangling** modifiers, or as **misplaced** modifiers.

### Dangling Modifiers
Just as the word "dangling" implies, a modifier with no apparent reference in its sentence is said not to hang on anything, and therefore dangle in the sentence. On a sentence diagram, a dangling modifier has nowhere to go. Although individual modifiers--adjectives and adverbs--can certainly dangle, the most common way in which dangling modifiers occur is as a phrase with no apparent reference:

- **Hoping to find a better job by August**, 2010 turned out to be a much harder year than anticipated.
- **With little else to report**, it was difficult to keep the meeting going.
- **To give an example**, unemployment rates increased slightly in the second quarter even though the number of jobs increased.

In each of the sentences above, the underlined phrase **should** modify a noun or verb in the main clause, but there is no logical choice of modified word(s) in the sentence to be found. Like a pronoun reference error's vague antecedent, a dangling modifier may refer back to one or more words in a previous sentence, but this can lead to confusion. To fix it, one must add whatever seems missing, sometimes requiring a little rewriting of the entire sentence.

- **Hoping to find a better job by August**, many job hunters discovered that 2010 turned out to be a much harder year than anticipated.
- **With little else to report**, the committee chair found it difficult to keep the meeting going.
- **Unemployment rates, for example**, increased slightly in the second quarter even though the number of jobs increased.

[*In this version of the sentence, "for example" is an apt replacement for "to give an example" because it does not require that anyone be responsible for giving the example; it is, instead, a more neutral expression.]*

### Misplaced Modifiers
Unlike a dangling modifier, a modifier with two or more references can cause confusion in the same way that some pronoun reference errors can. In most cases, the answer is simply to move the modifier closer to the antecedent:

- **Running for the bus**, the rain started coming down in buckets and I got all wet.
- **The couch was kind of ugly in the furniture store.**
The underlined phrases in the sentences above should be moved elsewhere in the sentence to bring them closer to their antecedents, or their antecedents should be moved closer to them:

Running for the bus, I got all wet when the rain started coming down in buckets.
The couch in the furniture store was kind of ugly.

**Squinting Modifiers**

When a modifier is not so much misplaced, but rather is located oddly in the sentence so that it unintentionally suggests two possible meanings, this is called a "squinting modifier." Frequently squinting modifiers are adverbial. (*Errrr. Rather, squinting modifiers are *frequently* adverbial.*)

Employees who experience stress on their jobs **often** are encouraged to take more vacations.  
[Do they experience stress often, or are they often encouraged to take vacations?]

Adding sums in your head **quickly** can lead to sloppy mistakes.  
[Does quickly adding sums lead to mistakes, or does adding sums lead quickly to mistakes?]

The company's president announced **at the end of the day** many workers would be laid off.  
[Did the president make the announcement at the end of the day, or were workers laid off at the end of the day?]

As with all misplaced modifiers, moving the squinting modifier closer to the word(s) it meant to modify helps to clear up the confusion.

Employees who experience stress on their jobs are often encouraged to take more vacations.  
Quickly adding sums in your head can lead to sloppy mistakes.  
The company's president announced many workers would be laid off at the end of the day.

**Adverb / Adjective Errors**

A common mistake in the use of modifiers is to confuse adjectives with adverbs. A lot of informal and idiomatic usage permits certain substitutions between adjectives and adverbs, but in formal and academic writing, this is strictly forbidden. The following are examples of frequently confused parts of speech.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADJ</th>
<th>ADV</th>
<th>EXAMPLES . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>healthy</td>
<td>healthily</td>
<td>I eat healthily. I eat healthy food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nice</td>
<td>nicely</td>
<td>He seems nice. He dresses nicely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right</td>
<td>correctly</td>
<td>I live correctly. I make the right choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fast</td>
<td>quickly</td>
<td>I move quickly. I drive a fast car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>badly</td>
<td>I feel bad. I feel unwell. She sings badly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terrible</td>
<td>terribly</td>
<td>It feels terrible. It hurts terribly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>well</td>
<td>I did good.* I did well. I feel good. I feel well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This means, "I made a positive impact," not "I performed well."
Answers to the Pop Quiz

1. True.
This statement was supposed to be, "One small step for a man; one giant leap for mankind." The missing indefinite article ("a") makes the statement contradictory, because, without it, "for man" and "for mankind" mean exactly the same thing: "for humankind." A step for humankind cannot be, both, small and gigantic.

2. B.
Technically speaking, all the answers are possible, even if some leap to creative connotations with words like "free" and "veterans." The most likely meaning, however, is to be found in B, despite the confusing placement of the word "veterans" in the long modifying prepositional phrase with its compound object. The best ways to correct the sentence to resolve this confusion are as follows:
   "Free writers workshop for veterans or newbies who are looking to explore the craft of writing."
   "Free writers workshop for newbies looking to explore the craft of writing, and for veterans."
   "Free writers workshop for newbies and veterans, alike, looking to explore the craft of writing."

3. False.
The statement should read, "Not all dentists are alike" or "Dentists are not all alike." Why? Because "some" and "all" are contradictory ideas, while "some" and "not all" are not).

4. D.
It contains, both, a vague pronoun reference ("it") and a dangling modifier ("Without a syllabus and a textbook"). The sentence must state who is without a syllabus and textbook: "Without a syllabus and a textbook, I found it difficult to keep up with the reading assignments" or "Because I was without a syllabus and a textbook, it was difficult to keep up with the reading assignments.")

5. D.
The sign is missing a preposition, "For Cruise Ships, use airport exit." Sign writers are traditionally forced to use minimalism in signage: the fewest words to convey the most information in one glance, so this sign writer does not deserve our insults. However, a simple preposition in this case would have made sure the object of the preposition ("cruise ships") is not confused with the subject of the imperative sentence ("you").

MORE EXAMPLES OF MODIFIER ERRORS

Misplaced Modifiers
The patient was referred to a psychologist with several emotional problems.
Sam found a letter in the mailbox that doesn't belong to her.
Two cars were reported stolen by the Farmingdale police yesterday.
Please take time to look over the brochure that is enclosed with your family.
Luis had driven over with his wife, Chris, from their home in a Chevy for the basketball game.
In "Spontaneous Human Combustion: A Brief History," the author writes that a man was found burned to death in bed by his wife in 1613.
Dangling Modifiers
Slowly turning the key, the lock gave a sudden snap and the door pushed open onto the dark attic.

Hopefully, the renovation will be completed in time for the open house.

Pleased by what her children had done for her, her smile widened and her face warmed with pride.

The financial future looks grim and, to conclude, we must act now if we wish to save our economy.

Just like many people's jobs, there's a concern at work about downsizing and layoffs.

Exercises

1. The writer read from his new book wearing glasses.

2. You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian composers, artists, and writers are buried daily except Thursday.

3. As we begin, I must ask you to banish all information about the case from your mind, if you have any.

4. A superb and inexpensive restaurant; fine food expertly served by waitresses in appetizing forms.

5. Many of the trustees congratulated him for his speech at the end of the meeting and promised their support.

6. For sale: An antique desk suitable for a lady with thick legs and large drawers.

7. For sale: Several very old dresses from grandmother in beautiful condition.

8. Wanted: Man to take care of cow that does not smoke or drink.

9. For sale: Mixing bowl set designed to please a cook with a round bottom for efficient beating.

10. We almost made a profit of $10.
CONJUNCTIONS

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION
Coordinating Conjunctions: "But" or "Yet"
Coordinating Conjunctions: "But Yet"  
Coordinating Conjunctions versus Conjunctive Adverbs
Conjunctive Adverbs: "But Still" and "Yet Still"
Semi-Colons
Correlative Conjunctions and Parallelism

With three major varieties of conjunctions to have to memorize and juggle, we're all bound to get them confused from time to time. This page covers the most common mistakes writers at any skills level tend to make.

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating Conjunctions: "But" or "Yet"?

Coordinating Conjunctions fall into three types: additive ("and"); selective ("or"); or, causal "for"). Each of these has an "anti-matter" counterpart that distributes the coordination in another direction: the selective "or" becomes "nor" to show the removal of choice; the causal "for" becomes "so" to show the effect of cause. The exception lies with the additive coordinating conjunctions, which have, not one, but two variations on the word "and." The conjunctions "but" and "yet" are closely related, and for that reason many writers treat them as if they're interchangeable—which they are not.

Consider the difference in the two sentences that follow:

He believes skydiving makes an enjoyable hobby, **but** it's very expensive.
He believes skydiving makes an enjoyable hobby, **yet** it's very expensive.

In the first sentence, the use of the word "but" allows us to assume a great deal about what the sentence overall should mean. First, he believes that skydiving is a fun hobby, and he has accepted that it's an expensive hobby. From this, we might infer one of two conclusions: 1) he's not going to take up skydiving because it's too expensive; 2) he's going to take up skydiving fully capable of accommodating its expenses. There's no inherent conflict in either of these: one completely rejects the idea, while the other totally accepts the idea.

In the second sentence, the use of the word "yet" injects a degree of conflict into the sentence: he believes skydiving is a fun hobby, but he has **not** reconciled that it's an expensive hobby. From this, we can infer one of two conclusions: 1) he's not going to take up skydiving, upset by the fact that it's expensive; 2) he's going to take up skydiving, despite the fact that it's too expensive for him. An inherent conflict is at the heart of either of these: in one scenario, he feels bad that he can't take up the hobby; in the other, he feels bad that he can't afford the hobby he's already taken up.

When inherent conflicts like this occur in coordination, they create irony. Irony is an unexpected contrast or outcome. The coordinating conjunction "yet" should only ever be used to indicate this kind of irony. It **cannot** be used as a synonym for the word "but"!
"But" and "yet" have their counterparts as adverbs:

- but = however; in contrast; dissimilarly
- yet = regardless; in spite of this; unexpectedly

If you're ever confused about whether to use "but" or "yet," sometimes substituting these conjunctive adverbs helps to distinguish when one is more appropriate over the other. Confusing coordinating conjunctions with conjunctive adverbs, however, leads to another more serious error of grammar: sentence boundary errors.

**Coordinating Conjunctions: "But Yet"**

To make matters even more confusing, the word "yet" is also an adverb when used in another context:

- He took the full course of antibiotics, but yet again the infection took hold.

In this example, you could easily be fooled into thinking that "but yet" are two coordinating conjunctions used side-by-side. They aren't. The word "yet" is an adverb modifying another adverb, "again." You can determine this by moving the adverbs further into the sentence:

- He took the full course of antibiotics, but the infection took hold yet again.

Because coincidental pairings of coordinating conjunctions and the adverb "yet" confuse people, some take it to mean that the two coordinating conjunctions "but" and "yet" can be paired, as they coupling them intensifies the coordination.

- He took the full course of antibiotics, but yet the infection took hold again.

This is *not* grammatically correct and should be avoided.

**Conjunctive Adverbs**

**Coordinating Conjunctions versus Conjunctive Adverbs**

In compound sentences, coordinating conjunction distribute—or, coordinate—the relationship between or among independent clauses. A conjunctive adverb, on the other hand, creates a mood of transition at the start of an independent clause. You can see how closely related these two ideas are. However, that does not make them interchangeable. In fact, many transitional expressions are conjunctive adverbs.

The error occurs when writers treat conjunctive adverbs as though they're coordinating conjunctions, and use them with commas to splice together independent clauses. When that happens, a comma-spliced sentence occurs. To borrow a conjunctive adverb from above:

- You can see how closely related these two ideas are, however, that does not make them interchangeable.

The word "however" in this sentence may transition to another clause with a mood of contrast, but it isn't a coordinating conjunction, so it shouldn't be preceded by a comma and treated as one. If we want a coordinating conjunction here, then the word "but" will do perfectly well enough:

- You can see how closely related these two ideas are, but that does not make them interchangeable.
If we want to retain the transitional tone of "however," then we'll either need to start a new sentence, or we'll have to change the comma to a semi-colon:

You can see how closely related these two ideas are. However, that does not make them interchangeable. You can see how closely related these two ideas are; however, that does not make them interchangeable.

There remains yet one more grammatically correct solution to this problem: combining a coordinating conjunction with a conjunctive adverb:

You can see how closely related these two ideas are, but, however, that does not make them interchangeable.

This sometimes risks redundancy, especially if the conjunctive adverb and the coordinating conjunction mean the same thing. Redundancy can be mitigated if the conjunctive adverb is moved further into the sentence:

You can see how closely related these two ideas are, but that does not, however, make them interchangeable.

**Conjunctive Adverbs: "But Still" and "Yet Still"**

One of the most frequent examples of this sort of redundancy is the conjunctive adverb "still" paired with the coordinating conjunctions "but" and "yet," in which the pairing, itself, is treated as a single conjunctive adverb, or as a single coordinating conjunction--neither of which is permitted:

You can see how closely related these two ideas are, yet still that does not make them interchangeable. You can see how closely related these two ideas are. But still, that does not make them interchangeable.

In the first example, "yet" and "still" mean precisely the same thing, so they are redundant. In the second example, a sentence fragment is the result, because the compound sentence has been broken at the conjunction. Either way you look at it, it's bad writing.

**Semi-Colons**

Semi-colons are a form of punctuation, not a part of speech. However, they do serve as a kind of implicit coordinating conjunction, since they join together three or more items in a series. "Series" in this case can be anything from clauses, to phrases, to individual words. Ordinarily, though, when phrases and words are joined together in a series, that series follows a colon [:].

When semi-colons join together two or more independent clauses, they create compound sentences. This is where the errors begin, because the semi-colon can be used only between independent clauses. Subordinate clauses, on the other hand, must be joined to their main clauses by a comma, never a semi-colon. Writers who have difficulty distinguishing between independent and dependent clauses will invariably stumble into this pitfall. For example:

I won't set the table until the guests arrive; whenever that happens to be.

In the example above, "whenever" is a subordinating conjunction and begins a subordinate clause. Since the semi-colon should join together only independent clauses, the result is a fragmented compound sentence.
And, a fragment is a major sentence boundary error. Either the semi-colon must be switched to a comma, or the subordinate clause must be built up into an independent one:

I won't set the table until the guests arrive, **whenever** that happens to be.
I won't set the table until the guests arrive; **whenever** that happens to be is anyone's guess.

Furthermore, semi-colons should be used sparingly, when the coordinated relationship between two clauses is implicitly understood to the reader. This is as much a rhetorical effects as it is a semantic one, so overused semi-colons are as much an abuse of punctuation and rhetorical effect as the overuse of the exclamation point. When too many semi-colons are used to connect together different main ideas, the sentence becomes rambling:

I won't set the table until the guests arrive; **whenever** that happens to be is anyone's guess; they've been late so many times before; however, who's counting?

**Correlative Conjunctions and Parallelism**

Correlative Conjunctions always travel in pairs of phrases or clauses in parallel structures: structures that correlate, or "mirror," each other with equivalent parts of speech and word order. Therefore, both halves of a correlative conjunction must be balanced by the use of identical parts of speech in general word order. When they aren't balanced, we refer to that as "faulty parallelism."

**Neither did he know about the announcement, nor care about it.**

The sentence above does not distribute equivalent parts of speech across the two halves of the correlative conjunction. If you removed the conjunction and let the two objects of it stand on their own, they are "He did know about the announcement" and "care about it," respectively. The first is a clause complete with subject and predicate, while the second is just a verb and its modifier. They don't mirror each other, then, in parts of speech and word order--by definition, faulty parallelism.

The faulty parallelism can be fixed in several ways, depending on how you want to distribute the objects of the conjunction into equivalent parts:

A. He **neither knew, nor cared**, about the announcement.
   past tense verbs only, separated by commas:
   neither "knew" / nor "cared"

B. He **neither knew about the announcement nor cared about it**.
   predicates only:
   neither "knew about [it]" / nor "cared about it"

C. **Neither did he know about the announcement, nor did he care about it.**
   full clauses comprised of subject + verb + adverb prepositional phrase:
   neither "he [did] know about [it]" / nor "he [did] care about it"

D. He **neither knew about, nor cared about**, the announcement.
   verbs only + prepositions, separated by commas:
   neither "knew about" / nor "cared about"
SENTENCES

With a review of parts of speech comes the inevitable discussion of sentences.

Parts of speech organize themselves into units of expression, and some of those units create systems we call sentences. Sentences organize into paragraphs, paragraphs into essays, and so on. Understanding how the basics of grammar relate to the basics of sentence structure is like knowing how a gear works to turn an engine, so it seems fitting that we should review some sentence basics along with parts of speech.

The four topics covered in this section:

- Sentence Moods
- Sentence Types
- Run-On Sentences
- Fragments
SENTENCE MOODS

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION

Sentence Moods: Classifications
  - Declarative
  - Imperative
  - Interrogative
  - Exclamatory

Mixed Moods
  - Ironic Tone
  - Quoted Sentences

SENTENCE MOODS: CLASSIFICATIONS

Sentence Mood is one of two ways to classify sentences. (The other is by Sentence Type.)

Your mood is a state of mind affecting your actions and expressed by your tone. Since sentences are expressed on behalf of your state of mind, they, too, are determined by their underlying motive and their inflection. There are four different mood classifications. (if you’re a card player, you can think of sentence moods as suits, some of which have more power and importance than others, depending on the game.)

DECLARATIVE

The most prolific sentence mood in English is the Declarative.

Its name comes from the verb "declare," which means "to make explicitly known." It shares a derivation with the word "clarify", and "declare" originally meant "to make clear or bright." So, a Declarative Sentence is any sentence that wishes to state something explicitly to make it clearly known.

This food could use some salt.

The motivation to declare something be known blankets a lot of different sentences, especially when you take into account that a Declarative Sentence doesn't have to be true, or even a statement of fact, in order to be declarative. Opinions are just as declarative. When you say, "I believe it's going to rain today," it doesn't matter whether or not it actually rains. You've clarified your belief sufficiently to have made a declaration.

Although declarative sentences with mixed moods change the rules a bit (see below), generally speaking, almost all Declarative Sentences are punctuated by a period [.].
IMPERATIVE

Now, read this next bit carefully. I mean, *please* read this next bit carefully. Many students are surprised to find that the words "imperative" and "emperor" are related, but it's true. At one time, being born into the role of emperor gave these leaders an imperious authority to impel the lowly subjects of their empires to do whatever they wanted them to. Before you judge, though, consider that the rulers of old bore the great burden of being their people's cultural and spiritual identities. They were a direct connection to the gods, whose attention lowly mortals could never hope to sway.

Because emperors and empresses were the godhead, they were not "of the people." They commanded authority from a single, infallible point of view: the "I"; consequently, they did not acknowledge that the "you" existed. Such was their imperious privilege. The Imperative Sentence mood, therefore, assumes that one doesn't need to acknowledge a "you," but rather command the you from a position of authority. And the consequence is, the Imperative Sentence is a command that assumes the pronoun "you," but doesn't ever directly state it.

Pass the salt.

The imperious attitude of yore may have worked for many cultures, but in most English-speaking cultures today it isn't always appropriate or polite to assert your dominance when you address friends, family, and strangers whose authority you don't know. When you ordered your mother on the other side of the table to give you the salt shaker, she was quick to remind you of the magic word: "please." "Please" is the polite form of the imperative; it gives us a way to express commands without copping an imperious attitude:

Please, pass the salt.
Pass the salt, please.

*Imperative Sentences end in a period [*].
Related Parts of Speech
Nouns: Noun Phrases and Clauses: Direct Address
Pronouns: Personal Pronouns

INTERROGATIVE

To "interrogate" means to ask questions. In an era of extreme rendition and moral debates over physical and psychological abuse of some forms of interrogation, the word "interrogate" has acquired an unpleasant connotation. However, it originally came from the Latin past participle of interrogare: inter- + rogare, ask; request.

Simply put, then, when you're in the mood to ask a question, you pose an Interrogative Sentence that starts with either an Interrogative adjective, pronoun, or adverb—in short, a question word. An interrogative sentence has a tendency to be inverted in structure or use questions words at the beginning of the sentence so that its inflected mood is announced right away:

Would you pass the salt, please?
Where can I find salt?
What's in this dish?

*Interrogative Sentences end in a question mark [*?].
Related Parts of Speech
Pronouns: Pronouns: Interrogative
Adjectives: Interrogative
Verbs: Conditionals
The origins of the word "exclaim" are the Latin *ex clamare*: to call or cry out. It shares a derivation with other words such as "proclaim" and "acclaim," "disclaim," "reclaim" and even "quitclaim," all of which have something to do with lifting one's voice in order to be heard. An exclamation is expressed in a mood of urgency. In other words, it's a "Holla!"

As such, an Exclamatory Sentence is inherently louder and more insistent than other sentences, which is not always compatible with formal and academic tone, especially when you're writing to create an impression of objectivity and a rhetorical appeal of logos.

The food is bland!

Writers should bear in mind that "mood" does not always indicate *which* emotion. In the example above, is the speaker angry, surprised, or relieved? The exclamation tells us only that he's excited for one reason or another.

That predominant excitement also gives a writer permission not to use complete sentences--or, rather, to let some parts of the sentence go assumed, in the interest of showcasing the emotional intensity of the exclamation:

Bland!
Salt, now!

Both of these examples are, technically speaking, complete sentences. We assume the speaker was too overcome with emotion to get out all the words, but they're in there, nevertheless: hidden below, like an iceberg. The exclamation gives writers the power to give emotion more importance than the grammar, and for this reason the power Exclamatory Sentences wield should not be abused in academic or formal writing.

*Exclamatory Sentences end in an exclamation point [!].*

Related Parts of Speech
Interjections
MIXED MOODS

IRONIC TONE
You might think an Interrogative Exclamation and an Exclamatory Question should be one in the same thing, but they are not. True, the difference is subtle; however, moods are quite often subtle yet ultimately important—as anyone who is in a relationship should be able to attest.

The main difference lies in their inflection. Human beings are, if nothing else, creatures of irony. We say one thing but mean another. We inflect a sentence one way but construct it in another way. When you make a recommendation for a movie that leaves your friends incredulous, one of them will turn to you, raise an eyebrow, and say,

You're telling me you want to go see that!?  

The statement above is phrased in the mood of an exclamation, but it's posed in the tone (the inflection) of a question. Therefore, it's an interrogative exclamation. In this case, we punctuate the mood of the sentence first, then the inflection of it second. Conversely, questions can be barked, screamed, laughed, or bawled. We can ask a question in an interrogative mood, but we can still inflect it as a shout.

Are you telling me you want to go see that!!

This ironic mood also turns up as an Interrogative Declaration and as a Declarative Question, but the end punctuation doesn't change as it did in the examples above. This is because question marks and exclamation points are considered strong inflections, whereas periods signal the absence of inflection.

It didn't get very good reviews, did it.
In fact, it got terrible reviews, didn't it?

QUOTED SENTENCES
What happens when the sentences we quote have starkly different moods and end punctuation to our own? Most of the time their moods are in harmony with ours, but sometimes situations occur in which these moods conflict. Explaining the phenomenon and the rules needed to manage it is tediously complex, as you'll see. In fact, earlier in this section, I compared sentence moods to card suits. Whether or not you know how to play card games, you can appreciate that all games have a consistent set of rules. Though quotes allow for many different combinations of moods, you can at least remain grounded by three steadfast rules about sentence moods and punctuating quotations:

Grammar abhors redundancy.
The stronger mood always sets the tone.
Two strong moods in competition must both be heard.

Host Sentences and Guest Sentences
A quotation is a guest voice that you host inside your own sentence. Think of it exactly as you would any guest you've invited to a dinner party. You want to make guests feel welcome, but at the same time you want to respect and acknowledge their relationship to you.
Declarative Hosts and Declarative or Imperative Guests

When your good friends come over, everyone's an equal, and moods are in harmony. That's analogous to inviting a declarative or imperative quotation into your own declarative or Imperative Sentence. Everyone's "on the same page," so one period is all you need:

Early twentieth century French author Marcel Proust humorously suggests that a fashionable milieu is determined by whether "everybody's opinion is made up of the opinion of all the others."

In this example, Proust's quote is a Declarative Sentence, and so is the sentence that introduces the Proust quote. They both conclude at the same time, so we need only one period that, in the sentence, binds them. Right now, however, you're hearing the voice of Gollum in your head, tempting you to take all that power for yourself: "If one period is all I need," you're saying, "why not put it outside the quotation? Why not punctuate my sentence with it, instead of the quotation?" Short answer: because you're the host, and it's polite.

If the Proust quote did not coincide with the end of the sentence, nothing would change: one period would still be all that's necessary because the sentence introducing the quote is still Declarative. However, we would need another weak-force punctuation, a comma, to separate the Proust quote from the sentence introducing it:

Early twentieth century French author Marcel Proust humorously suggests that when "everybody's opinion is made up of the opinion of all the others," a fashionable milieu is born.

Declarative Hosts and Interrogative Guests

Not every houseguest, however, is necessarily on an equal footing. Sometimes you invite your grandparents or your in-laws—people who have a more powerful mood, for good or for bad, than your home normally has. They, too, have to be honored and respected, but no matter what mood they bring to your dinner party, you defer to it because you're compelled to respect them. This is what happens when you quote a sentence that has a stronger mood than the one you've written to introduce it. When questions or exclamations are quoted inside declarative statements, you defer to their end punctuation:

Early twentieth century French author Marcel Proust humorously suggests that when "everybody's opinion is made up of the opinion of all the others," a fashionable milieu is born.

In the example above, the quote ends on an interrogative note, a strong mood, whereas the sentence that introduces the quote is still declarative (as is the sentence following the quote). Where, then, is the period needed to punctuate the Declarative Sentence? It defers to the mood of the quotation and does not assert itself. It keeps quiet and lets the interrogative mood express itself.

If, however, that quoted question did not coincide with the end of the sentence, then the moody guest has left before the party ends, and the period can express itself freely:

Early twentieth century French author Marcel Proust humorously suggests that a fashionable milieu is determined by whether "everybody's opinion is made up of the opinion of all the others. Has everybody a different opinion?" However, the result then is a literary milieu.

It may seem counterintuitive at first to leave that question mark in the quote when the sentence you're writing continues on, but that's the rule. The strong mood of our guest sentences must be acknowledged, no matter what, whether interrogative or exclamatory.
Interrogative Hosts and Interrogative Guests
Sometimes, though, dinner parties are not informal affairs. Sometimes they are diplomatic events in which the host has a strong mood, and the invited guests bring their strong mood to the same table. The situation is similar to inviting laid-back friends in that everyone's equal, except that everyone is also formal and powerful. Strong voices, of course, can be allied:

How did early twentieth century French author Marcel Proust, finish the following question: "A fashionable milieu is one in which everybody's opinion is made up of the opinion of all the others. Has everybody a different opinion?"

In this example, both the quotation and the sentence that introduces it are interrogative. Grammar abhors redundancy, so only one question mark is needed to end both. The host politely gives the guest the privilege of wearing the badge of punctuation. If, however, the quotation hadn't coincided with the end of the sentence, another question mark would have been necessary.

When early twentieth century French author Marcel Proust quipped, "A fashionable milieu is one in which everybody's opinion is made up of the opinion of all the others. Has everybody a different opinion?" what answer does he give to his own question?

Exclamatory or Interrogative Hosts, and Declarative Guests
There's always that one clashing mood, though. Sometimes, a guest is in a bad mood or an irritatingly good mood when you're not. Sometimes you're in a bad mood when your guests are just laid-back. In writing sentences with quotations, when the mood of your host sentence clashes with, or is stronger than, the mood of the guest sentence, the punctuation outside the quote has to reflect that. When the mood of the quotation is weaker, nothing goes inside the quote:

Proust's elitist and priggish attitude is detestable, especially when he says things like, "A fashionable milieu is one in which everybody's opinion is made up of the opinion of all the others. Has everybody a different opinion? Then it is a literary milieu!"

That exclamation point at the end sets the tone of the host sentence, not the guest quotation, which is a Declarative Sentence. Declaratives are weaker than exclamations, so the period keeps quiet and defers to the host's stronger voice.

Exclamatory Hosts and Interrogative Guests
However, if the guest and the host both have strong, conflicting moods, then it's the clash of the Titans. Both voices must be acknowledged and punctuated accordingly:

Don't ever ask me, "Are you a fan of Proust?!" Wouldn't it be far better to say, "Proust is the most irritating French writer of his time!?"

For the record, Marcel Proust is a sublime writer with an understated wit. His book, Remembrance of Things Past, is groundbreaking in its narrative technique and set the tone for the way contemporary creative nonfiction is written.

So, in honor of Proust, celebrate a “remembrance” of at least these three rules about sentence moods and punctuating quotations:

Grammar abhors redundancy.
The stronger mood sets the tone.
Two strong moods in competition must both be heard.
SENTENCE TYPES

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION

Moods and Types: What’s the Difference?
Simple Sentences
Complex Sentences
Compound Sentences
Compound-Complex Sentences
Quotations

MOODS AND TYPES: WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

While sentence moods identify motive and tone, Sentence Types classify the overall system that a sentence represents. Parts of speech have a direct relationship to how those systems form, how they compound, and how they complicate sentence structure.

By "systems," we mean the way you gather sentence elements into phrases and clauses, but only clauses determine the sentence type because they contain subjects and predicates. Phrases have no bearing on the matter at all, nor does length have any influence on Sentence Type.

SIMPLE SENTENCES

The most basic form of sentence is the simple sentence, containing one, and only one, main clause (an independent clause):

The responsibilities of a beekeeper can sometimes be heavy.

Conjunctions do occur in simple sentence, but only to connect compound elements (e.g., compound modifiers or compound predicate objects). Some students misidentify long simple sentences as complex, or even compound, because they have a succession of phrases. However, always be aware that prepositional phrases, adverb phrases, and noun phrases do not determine a sentence’s degree of complexity; only clauses do.
NOUN CLAUSES IN SIMPLE SENTENCES

The exception to this rule is a noun clause, with which the entire clause serves the role of a single subject or object:

That beekeepers have grave responsibilities doesn't often occur to many of us.
Beekeepers understand bees do more than make honey.

Both of these examples have one main verb but, in each, an entire clause serves the role of a noun. In the first, the noun clause is the subject of the sentence: the clause in its entirety answers the question, "WHAT doesn't occur to us?" In the second example, the noun clause is the object of the transitive verb "understand": the clause in its entirety answers the question, "WHAT do beekeepers understand?" These questions prove that the clauses are nouns, because a noun always answers the question "What?" However, neither of these noun clauses makes the sentence any more complex than an appositive phrase would, and this is why noun clauses are the exception to the rule of simple sentences.

Related Parts of Speech

Nouns: Noun Clauses
Adjectives: Adjective Phrases
Adverbs: Adverb Phrases
Conjunctive Adverbs
COMPLEX SENTENCES

Simple sentence "complicate" with the addition of one or more subordinate (dependent) clauses.

The responsibilities of a beekeeper, which are too numerous to list, can sometimes be heavy.

COMPLEX SENTENCE

Subordinate clauses either modify, as in adjective and adverb clauses, or they relate to a part or the whole of a main clause, as in relative clauses.

Related Parts of Speech

Conjunctions: Subordinating
Pronouns: Relative Pronouns
Adjectives: Adjective Clauses
Adverbs: Phrases and Clauses

COMPOUND SENTENCES

When two or more main clauses are connected by a coordinating conjunction or a semi-colon, the sentence becomes compounded. Compound sentences contain NO subordinate clauses--only independent clauses.

The responsibilities of a beekeeper can sometimes be heavy, but the rewards of raising bees are too great to list.

COMPOUND SENTENCE

Related Parts of Speech

Adverbs: Conjunctive Adverbs
Conjunctions: Conjunctions: Coordinating
Conjunctions: Conjunctions: Correlative
COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES

When a compound sentence is complicated by the addition of one or more subordinate clauses, it becomes a Compound-Complex Sentence. This can happen by the joining of a Complex Sentence with one or more Simple Sentences, or by the conjoining of two or more Complex Sentences.

The responsibilities of a beekeeper, which are too numerous to list, can sometimes be heavy, but the rewards of raising bees are great if you respect these industrious and important little insects.

The greatest challenge of writing larger compound-complex sentences is maintaining coherency, so that the sentence doesn't become convoluted or begin to ramble.

Related Parts of Speech
Conjunctions: Conjunctions: Coordinating
Conjunctions: Conjunctions: Correlative
Conjunctions: Conjunctions: Subordinating
Pronouns: Pronouns: Relative Pronouns
Adjectives: Adjective Clauses
Adverbs: Adverb Phrases and Clauses
QUOTATIONS

Quotations are borrowed into sentences either as phrases or as clauses. When they are phrases, of course, they don't change the complexity of the sentence. However, when they are clauses, what then?

In the vast majority of cases, quotations are Noun Clauses.

Reminding us of the respect owed to the humble honeybee, Albert Einstein once said, “If the bee disappears from the surface of the Earth, man would have no more than four years left to live.”

The entire statement appearing between quotation marks answers the question, “What did Einstein say?” Answers to the question "What?" are nouns. This noun has, both, a subject and a predicate, which makes it, by definition, a clause; hence, it is a noun clause posing as the object of the transitive verb "say." That's not the same as a subordinate clause, though. In fact, the example above rightly characterized as a simple sentence: one, and only one, main clause.

This isn't to say that other sentence types can't contain quotations like this. Of course they can. The point is merely this: a quotation is a sentence element, hosted inside a clause, regardless of whether the quote is a phrase or a clause, itself.

Related Parts of Speech
Nouns: Noun Clauses
Sentences: Sentence Moods: Mixed Moods: Quotations
RUN-ON SENTENCES

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION
Pop Quiz: What's NOT a Run-On Sentence?
Rambling or Run-On?
Fused and Comma Spliced Sentences
   Editing Marks and Notations
   Methods of Correction
Semi-Colons, Colons and Dashes
   Semi-Colons
   Colons
   Dashes
Pop Quiz Answers

What’s NOT a Run-On Sentence?
Determine whether each of the following sentences is, or is not, a Run-On.

1. I don't follow politics very closely I especially don't trust many of the claims campaigning politicians make.

2. When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

3. In modern day society, human beings these days express many different interests in many different types of activities, such as working, watching TV, cooking, or dancing, and one of these activities that is very interesting is traveling, which can take them to a variety of destinations to sightsee and experience so many different forms of cultures and societies that differ from their own.

4. I took a political science class last fall, it taught me about several different types of government, however, we closely examined how democracy and capitalism are sometimes at war with each other in the administration of government in the U.S.

Rambling or Run-On?
Long is Not Wrong
Students unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the concept of Run-On sentences will sometimes mistake any long sentence for an error of grammar or sentence structure. However, sentence length has nothing to do with whether or not a sentence is right or wrong. The following, for instance (#2 in the Pop Quiz above), is the preamble to the U.S. Constitution:

   When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
It may, at first, seem like a big, long compound sentence, but in truth it contains only one independent clause: "respect . . . requires that." The rest of the sentence contains one subordinate clause beginning with the word "When"; one noun clause beginning with the words "they should declare"; several infinitive phrases; and, lots of prepositional phrases. In short, this example is a pretty basic complex sentence. It's only difference from most is that it's long and involved. Involved and complex ideas require an involved and complex sentence structure to contain them. That's why complex and compound-complex sentences exist. Never assume that a long sentence is incorrectly written until you examine the actual grammar of it.

Ramblin' Prose
The other mistake students frequently make is in confusing a rambling sentence with a Run-On sentence. A lot of sloppily written explanations on-line add to the confusion. While it is possible for a rambling sentence to be a Run-On sentence as well, these are distinctly different issues. "Rambling" is always a matter of composition, while "Run-On" is, without exception, an error of grammar. "Rambling" is sometimes open to interpretation, while "Run-On" is not. The following is a rambling sentence, but its grammar is beyond reproach:

I was relieved the professor didn't drop me from the class when I was late, but I was surprised how many people were still trying to add the class because, even though I hadn't yet purchased my textbooks and was waiting for my paycheck to come in at the end of the month, so many other students were just lazy and didn't register early enough, or at least that's my opinion, but in some cases students find out that they don't like the section they registered for, so they try to get into other classes, but they discover that they're already filled up, so, when I register for a class, I try my best to stay in it and learn to like it, even when I sometimes show up late or without my books, which may someday get me in trouble.

This meandering sentence belies a wandering mind, not a poor command of grammar. Every subordinating and coordinating conjunction in it is where it's supposed to be. The issue is merely one of style: we don't like compound-complex sentences to be this compounded. There are seven independent clauses conjoined in the sentence, and within those are subordinate clauses and even noun clauses. On top of everything, the sentence takes you on a circular journey: it ends where it starts, on the matter of showing up late, but it strikes out on a number of tangents in the middle. This is what teachers mean by "convoluted" writing: writing that twists and tangles, and as a result becomes awkward in content (but not necessarily awkward in grammar).

Running-On
A sentence that runs on does so by running together two or more independent clauses without proper coordination. To put it succinctly, a Run-On sentence is a failed compound sentence because it's missing an important part of speech and/or its corresponding punctuation. There are three types of Run-On sentences.

**FUSED SENTENCE:** 2 or more independent clauses strung together without a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

**COMMA SPLICED SENTENCE:** 2 or more main clauses strung together WITH a comma, but WITHOUT a coordinating conjunction.

**GRAMMICALLY ENTANGLED RUN-ON:** 2 or more main clauses sharing one or more parts of speech.
Fused and Comma-Spliced Sentences

Editing Marks and Notations

\[\text{fused}\]
\[\text{c.s. (comma spliced); c.f. (comma fault)}\]
\[\text{R-O}\]

For Grammatically Entangled Run-Ons

- Syntax
- Awk
- Mixed constr. (mixed)

Correction Method: Untangle

When a sentence "doubles-up" the grammatical role of a word or phrase, it causes grammatical entanglement, which is the most awkward variety of Run-On sentence. Use one of the following techniques to untangle this grammatical "knot":

- Repeat the errant part of speech and make two separate sentences
- Convert and add parts of speech, and make a complex sentence.
- Recast the sentence by changing and reorganizing.

Example:

On Monday, I left extra early to cash the check at the bank was closed for a federal holiday.
Correction Method: Separation or Coordination

Use one of the following techniques to fix the Run-On while keeping both clauses independent:
- Period + New Sentence
- Semi-Colon + Conjunctive Adverb
- Comma + Coordinating Conjunction

Examples:
My grandfather always wears a suit and tie on election day however he doesn't always cast a ballot.
My grandfather always wears a suit and tie on election day, however he doesn't always cast a ballot.
Correction Method: Subordination

Use one of the following techniques to make one clause dependent, while keeping the other independent:
- Comma + Subordinating Conjunction
- Comma + Relative Pronoun

Example:
Our economy will improve one day, therefore that should now make us frugal and optimistic.
**Correction Method: Recast**

When a Run-on sentence is also convoluted or awkward, start over by recasting the sentence using the following techniques:
- Reorganize
- Change language and parts of speech.

**Example**

We have tried discipline and tough love, regardless, nothing worked, now we'll try patience and understanding.
SEMI-COLONS, COLONS and DASHES

SEMI-COLONS

The word "colon" derives from the Latin word classifying a part of a poem, called a "strophe." (Yes, it's related to the word "apostrophe.") A strophe is a unit measuring structure in Greek poetry. The equivalent of this in grammar is the sentence clause. The connection between colons and semi-colons, therefore, is that colons measure the clause, while semi-colons measure the elements within that clause (such as words and phrases). Knowing this may help you to understand why colons and semi-colons are used to measure the boundaries of a sentence.

A note of caution: even though a semi-colon [;] is one technique for fixing a Run-On sentence, it is not interchangeable with a comma and should never be used arbitrarily. The primary job of a semi-colon is to coordinate elements in a series, whether those elements are independent clauses, phrases, or individual words. If semi-colons are a new form of punctuation for you, or you're not well practiced in using them, here are a few rules that may help:

IN COMPOUND SENTENCES,
a semi-colon can be used to conjoin a minimum of two independent clauses. Example:

Many believe the color green to be a primary color; this is a mistaken assumption.

a. Semi-colons are not used with a coordinating conjunction; if you want to use a coordinating conjunction, change the semi-colon to a comma. Example:

Many believe the color green to be a primary color, but this is a mistaken assumption.

b. Most of the time, when semi-colons are used to conjoin compound sentences, they are followed immediately by a conjunctive adverb. Example:

Many believe the color green to be a primary color; however, this is a mistaken assumption.

c. Semi-colons should be used in this way sparingly.

IN SIMPLE AND COMPLEX SENTENCES,
one colon, along with semi-colons, is used to introduce a series. Example:

According to RuPaul, internationally renown gender-bending performer, in order to become a successful drag entertainer in the twenty-first century, one must possess four main traits: charisma, that enthusiastic mass appeal; uniqueness, that certain something others haven't seen before; nerve, the courage to be who you are; and talent, the indispensable ability to do more than look pretty in drag.

a. "Series" means three or more words or phrases; fewer than three is not a series.

b. A series is introduced by an independent clause that ends, not in a period, but a colon. Then, the series follows.

c. With exactly three, you may use commas instead of semi-colons to separate the elements, but the last element should be prefaced by a coordinating conjunction ("and" or "or").

d. Four or more elements in a series must be separated by semi-colons, not commas; you have the option to preface the last element of the series with a conjunction:

Contrasting colors are a combination of one the three primary colors and the blend of the remaining two: yellow and purple; red and green; or, blue and orange.
COLONS
Just as semi-colons are not interchangeable with commas, colons [:] are not interchangeable with semi-colons. Rather, colons are used strictly to introduce other clauses and phrases, such as a quotation or elements in a series (semi-colons are used to separate these elements; see above). Frequently, they follow an independent clause (a clause that reads as if it were a complete sentence):

Colons, however, are sometimes used after salutations and other notations in formal and business-style letters, but even in this case the purpose is to introduce.

Attn: Selection Committee
Re: mergers and acquisitions
To Whom It May Concern:
Hello:
cc:

DASHES
Just as colons are not interchangeable with semi-colons, dashes are not interchangeable with colons.

Dashes may be unfamiliar to you, but you should get to know them because, like commas and semi-colons, they showcase phrases and clauses, not in a way that coordinates them, but rather in a manner that segregates them.

Dashes [--, —] are twice the length of a hyphen. In the world of editing and publishing, a hyphen is called an “en” dash because it’s the width of the letter “n,” so a dash is written either as two en-dashes or one, longer em-dash (a dash the width of the letter “m”). Dashes create the effect of digression, interruption, or emphasis. Example:

To be a pop icon in today's world--though, pop culture values unpopularity as much as popularity these days--one has to do more than show up to media events; Twitter, YouTube, paparazzi, and scandal--these all play a vital role in maintaining one's pop status.

Dashes are also commonly used for attribution of authorship in inscriptions (those quotations sometimes placed at the beginning of an essay, chapter, or book). Example:

"Every time I feel the urge to exercise, I sit down until it goes away."--Mark Twain

Dashes, however, should never replace MLA style parenthetical citations used in the body of an essay.

ANSWERS TO POP QUIZ
(at the beginning of this section)

1. Yes. This is a fused sentence.
2. No. This is a complex sentence.
3. No. This is a rambling and wordy sentence.
4. Yes. This is a comma spliced sentence.
SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION

Six Ways to Fix Fragments
Understanding Fragments
Proofreading For Fragments

Six Ways to Fix Fragments
There are six tried and true techniques for repairing a sentence fragment. Three of them involve moving and rearranging sentence elements, and three of them involve the more complex job of inventing and changing sentence elements. Some techniques are more appropriate than others for fixing certain types of fragments, but all six should be memorized and practiced. They are:

REATTACH
Some fragmented phrases and subordinate clauses can be joined to a sentence before or after them, whichever is more appropriate.

INCORPORATE
Reattachment works only if the fragment follows from, or transitions into, one of the surrounding sentences, but in some instances you need to pick up the fragment and drop it inside one of these sentences. This means a process of reincorporating a lost phrase or subordinate clause.

PARSE
The verb "parse" literally means to identify and name the parts of speech and syntactical relationship of each word used in a sentence. The word is also used figuratively to describe a process of "picking and choosing" according to what each thing contributes to the whole. Sometimes parsing a fragment's key words, and then incorporating those words into one of the surrounding sentences, is a better solution than merely re-incorporating a fragment as it's written.

BUILD
Fragments sometimes are held back from being full sentences because, as clauses, they're missing one or more important parts of speech. To add what's missing takes a degree of creativity and invention, which then builds up the fragment so that it can stand on its own as an independent clause. This technique is different from "Changing."

CHANGE
Some fragments are also mixed constructions: one part of speech inappropriately serving another, which hurts the grammar and, ultimately, the boundaries of a sentence. If you can correctly change the problem part of speech, you can convert the grammar so that it reflects a proper sentence.

RECAST
The verb "cast" has many meanings, but most of them involve a process of scatter and collect: you can cast a fishing net; cast the dice; cast a mold. The cast of a play, for instance, is a collection of characters. When you "recast," then you "scatter and collect" again. In other words, you start over. If you can't make the grammar work for the collection of words you've cast into your sentence, then start over with a different collection of words and parts of speech. Recast.
Understanding Fragments

Simply stated, fragments are incomplete sentences, either because they are not finished with proper predication, or because they lack the basic grammatical components that form independent clauses (SUBJECT + VERB). Why do fragments occur?

PARTS OF SPEECH ERRORS

When you use one part of speech to serve the role of another in a sentence, it's like trying to hit the hammer with the nail. The function served by any part of speech has limitations and conditions, and when those are broken, the "bad" grammar damages the sentence structure by displacing good grammar. This type of error is also called a Mixed Construction.

Example

By pushing the button for the insert mode opens the computer's memory.
CONFUSING A PHRASE FOR A CLAUSE
A clause must have a subject and a predicate. Without these, it is a phrase (excepting Noun Clauses). When a phrase acts like a clause, it causes a fragment:

**Example**
We packed everything we needed for a three-week vacation on the beaches of the Bahamas. Except for our swimsuits.

---

**Diagram**

**FRAGMENT B**
PHRASES POSING AS CLAUSES

```
We packed everything.
That we needed for a three-week vacation on the beaches of the Bahamas. Except for our swimsuits.
```

**CORRECTIONS**
ATTACH OR INCORPORATE INTO A CLAUSE

```
We packed everything except for our swimsuits.
That we needed for a three-week vacation on the beaches of the Bahamas.
```
CONFUSING A SUBORDINATE CLAUSE FOR AN INDEPENDENT ONE
When you overlook subordinating words and relative pronouns, this could lead you to mistake a dependent clause as an independent one:

Example
Before they decided to replace all the wiring for safety's sake.
They made several attempts to locate the source of the high EMF readings.
FAULTY OR INCOMPLETE COORDINATION IN COMPOUND SENTENCES
There's an old expression: one bad apple spoils the bushel. So it is in compound sentences. When a phrase or a subordinate clauses poses as a main clauses in a compound sentence, the entire compound sentence is labeled as a fragment:

**Example**
EMF shielding reduced the effects of the problem; unfortunately, not the cause of the problem.
Proofreading For Fragments

Proofreading techniques are never fool-proof, and strategies for finding fragments are no exception. Sentence boundary errors (fragments, comma splices, fused and Run-On sentences) are often a matter of not hearing properly where one sentence should end and another should begin. Therefore, proofreading for these errors is a matter of retraining one's ear to listen for problematic grammar and sentence construction.

Always devote a single proofreading session exclusively for the purpose of detecting fragments. (Do not multi-task.)
Always use a hard copy of your document.
Always read the sentences in backward order.
Diagram sentences you suspect have flawed sentence structure.
Dependent clauses are easier to see on a diagram because they often begin with subordinating words.
Phrases will be missing a subject or a predicate if you try to put them on a horizontal line (as you would a clause)

EXERCISE
Correct the following using the method in brackets.

[reattaching one or more fragments to a sentence before or after it]
Since the car is in the shop. We took a bus into town. It rained the entire time.

[incorporating the fragment into another sentence]
Most car accidents occur within one mile from the driver’s home. But not all. More serious accidents happen on open interstate highways.

[parsing the fragment of its key words and deleting it]
Authorities pursued the vehicle until it crashed into the pylons. Speeding and weaving through traffic during the entire pursuit.

[building a fragment into an independent clause]
You may take a break. No more than five minutes maximum, though.

[changing parts of speech to create a subject for the main clause]
By handwriting invitations personally takes considerably more time but is worthwhile.

[recasting and combining the fragment and one or more sentences around it]
Live at the Coliseum! Legendary rock artist Bruce Springsteen performing. Including memorable hits like “Born to Run.”
## INDEX

### Adjectives
- Adjective Clauses and Phrases: 85
- Adjective Phrases and Clauses: 85
- Determiners: 81
  - Articles: 81
  - Degrees: 82
  - Demonstrative and Interrogative: 81
  - Interrogative and Demonstrative: 81
  - Ordinal: 82
  - Possessive: 82
  - Post-Positive: 82
  - Quantifiers: 81

### Adverbs
- Adverb Clauses and Phrases: 82
- Adverb Clauses and Phrases:
  - Adverbial Clause: 93
  - Adverbial Phrase: 92
- Adverb Phrases and Clauses: 92
- Adverb Phrases and Clauses:
  - Adverbial Clause: 93
  - Adverbial Phrase: 92
- Conjunctive Adverbs: 90
- Single-Word Adverbs: 87
  - Single-Word Adverbs:
    - Modifying Adjectives and Participles: 88
    - Modifying Adverbs: 88
    - Modifying Nouns and Gerunds: 87

### Conceptualizing Grammar
- 11

### Conjunctions
- Coordinating: 73
  - And, But, Yet: 73
  - For, So: 74
  - Or, Nor: 74
- Semi-Colons: 75
- Correlative: 79
  - Correlative:
    - Parallelism: 79
- Subordinating: 77
Diagramming, Rules of

Diagonal Lines
Diagonal Lines: Dashed 8
Diagonal Lines: Solid 7

Horizontal Lines
Horizontal Lines: Dashed 5
Horizontal Lines: Solid 5

Splitters
Splitters 9

Tripods
Tripods 10

Vertical Lines
Vertical Lines: Dashed 7
Vertical Lines: Left Angle 6
Vertical Lines: Solid 6

Errors of Grammar

Conjunctions
Conjunctions: Conjunctive Adverb 112
Conjunctions: Coordinating Conjunctions 111
Conjunctions: Correlative Conjunctions and Parallelism 114
Conjunctions: Parallelism and Correlative Conjunctions 114
Conjunctions: Semi-Colons 113

Modifier Errors
Modifier Errors: Adjective/Adverb Errors 108
Modifier Errors: Adverb/Adjective Errors 108
Modifier Errors: Dangling 107
Modifier Errors: Misplaced 107
Modifier Errors: Squinting 108

Noun Errors
Noun Errors: Irregular Plurals 98
Noun Errors: Plural-Form Singulars 99

Pronoun Errors
Pronoun Errors: Agreement Errors 102
Pronoun Errors: Reference Errors 103
Pronoun Errors: Selfsame Errors 101

Subject-Verb Agr.
Subject-Verb Agr.: Compound Nouns (Nouns In Apposition) 105
Subject-Verb Agr.: Distance 105
Subject-Verb Agr.: Indefinite Pronouns 105
Subject-Verb Agr.: Questions 105

Verb Agreement
Verb Agreement: Distance 105
Verb Agreement: Indefinite Pronouns 105
Verb Agreement: Nouns In Apposition (Compound Nouns) 105
Verb Agreement: Questions 105
Interjections

Nouns

Collective Nouns
Collective Nouns: Terms of Venery
Common Nouns
Common Nouns: Count Nouns
Mass Nouns

Diagramming Nouns
Noun Phrases and Clauses
Noun Phrases and Clauses: Compound Nouns (Nouns in Apposition)
Direct Address
Noun Clauses
Nouns in Apposition (Compound Nouns)

Proper Nouns
Proper Nouns: Entities
Physical and Metaphysical Locations
Trademarked and Copyrighted Names

Prepositions

Directional
Instrumental and Logical
Logical and Instrumental
Spatial
Temporal

Pronouns

Antecedents
Declension
Declension: Case
Declension: Number
Declension: Persons
Demonstrative Pronouns
Indefinite Pronouns
Intensive Pronouns
Intensive Pronouns: Intensive and Reflexive Errors
Interrogative Pronouns
Interrogative Pronouns: "Who" and "Whom"
Personal Pronouns
Personal Pronouns: Object
Personal Possessive Pronouns
Possessive Adjectives
Subject
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Types:</th>
<th>Complex Sentences</th>
<th>124</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complex-Compound Sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound Sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound-Complex Sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moods versus Types</td>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun Clauses and Simple Sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotations</td>
<td></td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Sentences and Noun Clauses</td>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types versus Moods</td>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Verbals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbals</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gerunds</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerunds:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causative</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intransitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Infinitives            |                             | 67  |
| Infinitives:           |                             |     |
| Adjective Infinitive Phrases |                         | 69  |
| Adverb Infinitive Phrases  |                         | 70  |
| Noun Infinitive Phrases |                             | 68  |

| Participles            |                             | 63  |
| Participles:           |                             |     |
| Continuous Tense versus Present Participles |                       | 63  |
| Gerunds versus Present Participles |                       | 63  |
| Past Participles       |                             | 64  |
| Present Participles v. Continuous Tense Verbs |                       | 63  |
| Present Participles versus Gerunds |                       | 63  |

**Verbs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th></th>
<th>42</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary (Helping) Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary (Helping) Verbs:</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causative Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Verbs:</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreal Conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factitive Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping (Auxiliary) Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping (Auxiliary) Verbs:</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intransitive Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrasal Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrasal Verbs:</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive Mood</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Subjunctive Mood:
- Requests or Demands
  - Speculative Statements

### Transitive Verbs
- Direct Objects
- Indirect Objects

### Verb Tenses
- Continuous
- Perfect
- Perfect Continuous
- Simple

### Verb Types

---

**SENTENCE DIAGRAMS**

*Illustrating Parts of Speech, Sentence Types, and Sentence Errors*

### Nouns
- Subjects and Objects
- Nouns Phrases and Secondary Nous: Appositive and Direct Address
- Noun Clauses

### Pronouns
- Subject and Object Pronouns
- Personal Possessive Pronouns and Possessive Adjectives
- Indefinite Pronouns
- Reciprocal Pronouns
- Interrogative Pronouns
- "Who" and "Whom"
- Relative Pronouns
- "That" and "Which"
- Demonstrative
- Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns

### Verbs
- Transitive: Direct and Indirect Objects
- Intransitive Verbs
- Linking Verbs
- Causative Verbs
- Factitive Verbs
- Auxiliary (Helping) Verbs
- Phrasal Verbs

### Verbals
- Gerunds: Intransitive
- Gerunds: Transitive
- Gerunds: Linking
- Gerunds: Factitive
Gerunds: Causative 62
Participles (Not Phrases): Present 64
Participial Phrases: Present 65
Participles and Participial Phrases: Past 65
Present Participles, Progressive Verb Ten, and Gerunds: A Comparison 66
Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases: Nouns 68
Infinitive Phrases: Adjectives 69
Adverbial Infinitive Phrases: Modifying Verbs and Verbals 70
Adverbial Infinitive Phrases: Modifying Adjectives 71
Adverbial Infinitive Phrases: Modifying Adverbs 71

Conjunctions
Coordinating Conjunctions 76
Subordinating Conjunctions 78
Correlative Conjunctions 80

Adjectives
Post-Positive Adjectives 84

Adverbs
Modifying Verbs and Verbals 87
Modifying Adjectives and Participles 88
Modifying Adverbs 88
Conjunctive Adverbs 90
Adverbial Phrases: 92
Adverbial Clauses and Phrases: A Comparison 93

Prepositions
Prepositional Phrases 95

Interjections
96

Sentences
Sentence Types: Simple 122
Sentence Types: Simple, with Noun Clause 123
Sentence Types: Complex 124
Sentence Types: Compound 124
Sentence Types: Compound-Complex 125
Sentence Types: Quotations 126
Run-Ons: Grammatically Entangled 129
Run-Ons: Conjunctive Adverbs Used as Coordinating Conjunctions 130
Run-Ons: Conjunctive Adverbs Used as Subordinating Conjunctions 131
Run-Ons: Misplaced Conjunctive Adverbs and Missing Coordinating Conjunctions 132
Fragments: Parts Of Speech Error (Mixed Constructions) 136
Fragments: Using a Phrase as a Clause 137
Fragments: Using a Dependent Clause as a Main Clause 138
Fragments: Faulty or Incomplete Coordination in Compound Sentences 139