Grammar Slammer!

Welcome to **Grammar Slammer**, the help file that goes **beyond** a grammar checker.   Use it as you would any help file.

For more on how to use **Grammar Slammer**, click on the Right Arrow button above (>>), press the right arrow key, or click the "How To" on the contents below.   For grammar help, click on one of the topics below or use the **Search** button above for a more specific grammar topic.

> **How to Use Grammar Slammer**
> **Style and Usage**
> **Capitalizing**
> **Abbreviations**
> **Punctuation**
> **Letter Writing**
> **Common Mistakes and Choices**
> **Other Information**

This is a Demo Copy of
Grammar Slammer

Answer those questions that the Grammar Checkers don't...

This copy of **Grammar Slammer** is for purposes of evaluation.

If you use this evaluation copy of **Grammar Slammer** for a month and decide to keep the program, you should order the program. You may click on the **"Order"** button at the top at any time for the order form, which you may then print.

Obtaining a registered copy will insure that you get the latest edition of **Grammar Slammer**, that you will continue to get quality software supported, and that you will have the opportunity to get the even bigger **Spelling Slammer** to take care of all those problems that a Spell Checker does not handle.

Except for this notice and the ordering information, this demo has all the features of the registered version.

PopUp Box
This is a **"PopUp Box."**   Click anywhere to return.

Welcome to *Grammar Slammer!*

Looking for a specific rule to help you in your writing?   Trying to decide between two similar words?   A grammar checker helps you, but does not tell you why.   Grammar checkers also miss many errors, especially those having to do with names, punctuation, sounds, and style.

Some of you may have a full grammar textbook stored on your disk somewhere, but it is a nuisance to access and use.

Grammar Slammer takes care of **both** problems in an easy-to-use format.   **Grammar Slammer** contains the rules and tips you need to write your best and make yourself clear. **Grammar Slammer** uses the familiar Windows® Help file format to make it easy to find what you are looking for.   It even has a an easy-to-use glossary to help with those grammatical terms you can't remember. It will truly **Slam your Grammar Agony!**

Click on the Right Arrow **(>>)** button above or press the Right Arrow key for instructions on How To Use Grammar Slammer.

How to Use *Grammar Slammer!*

This program works like any other Windows® Help File.   If you can use a Windows® Help File, you can use **Grammar Slammer**.

Underlined Words
Click on any **Underlined** word or words and you will go to that topic.
(See the underlined word *Contents* below.)

Click on any **Dotted Underlined** word or words and more information in a <u>PopUp Box</u> will appear.

Buttons
You may   **Browse** or go page by page by clicking on the **Arrow (>>or <<)** buttons or the arrow keys on your keyboard.

For **main topics,** choose from the <u>Contents</u> on the opening screen, which you may go to by clicking on the **"Contents"** button above or pressing the **C** key.

Click on the **"Search"** button above or press the **S** key and then follow directions by entering the name of the grammar topic you are looking for help on.   Click on "Show Topic" and then "Go To" and you will go to information that will help express yourself clearly and without error.

Click on the **"Back"** button or press the **B** key to take you to the previous page you were reading.

Click on the **"History"** button or press the **H** key to give you a list   of all the topics you have already viewed.   You may then choose one to go back to reread that topic.

The **"Glossary"** button or **G** key will take you to a index of grammatical terms which **Grammar Slammer** uses.   You then may click on the letter and then the underlined term for a definition of the term you are looking up.

The **"Close"** button or **L** key will close **Grammar Slammer.**

Click on the **"Order"** button for information on how to order your own copy of **Grammar Slammer.**

The Window Menu Line
Click on **"Help"** on the Menu line above, for complete information on how to use help files, search for topics, add your own comments, or make bookmarks (or press Alt-H, then H).

To exit, you may click on **"File"** on the Menu line above, and then choose **"Exit"** from the Menu box that appears (or press Alt-F, then X).

If you find that you refer to a certain section frequently, place a **"Bookmark"** there so you can return to it quickly.   With the Help file **"Edit"** function, you can add material which is helpful to you or which reflects your organization's procedures.   With the **"Print"** function in the **"File"** Menu, you can even print information from **Grammar Slammer** on your printer.

Sometimes you may switch back and forth between files or programs and you see that **Grammar Slammer** is no longer the top file. (Sometimes the launcher buttons may slide on

top.) Click on the **"Options"** menu and then on **"Help on Top,"** and **Grammar Slammer** will return to its topmost position. (In Windows 95 there is a third menu, "On Top.")

A good way to become familiar with **Grammar Slammer** is to **browse** through some of the pages or take a look at some of the **"Search"** topics.

Style and Usage Contents

Click on the topic you seek. Click on a button above to take you to the opening screen or to a previous screen.

Sentence Fragments (Incomplete Sentences)

1. A sentence must have a <u>subject</u> and a <u>verb</u> if it is to make sense.
Incorrect: John, being a friendly computer salesman
            and baseball fan.   (No verb)
Correct: John, being a friendly computer salesman
            and baseball fan, refused to argue.
            (John--the subject--is doing something, namely, refusing.)

2.   A <u>subordinate clause</u> (also sometimes called a dependent <u>clause</u>) is not a complete sentence if it does not have a <u>main clause</u> even though it may have a <u>subject</u> and <u>verb.</u>
Incorrect: Because we are baseball fans.
Correct: We watched the All-Star Game because
            we are baseball fans.
There is nothing wrong with beginning a sentence with the word *because* as long as the clause with *because* is followed by a <u>main clause</u>.
Correct: Because we are baseball fans, we
            watched the All-Star Game.

3.   Sometimes **in conversation only** sentence fragments make sense.
OK, if you are recording a conversation, otherwise incorrect:
            She asked, "Why did you watch that
            baseball game?"
            "Because we are baseball fans."

Subject

The **_subject_** of a sentence or clause is the part of the sentence or clause about which _something_ is being said.   _It_ is usually the doer of the action.   _It_ is a noun or a pronoun.   _All_ of the subjects in this box are italicized.

Verb or Simple Predicate

The **verb** or **simple predicate** *is* the word or words that *expresses* action or *says* something about the condition of the subject.   All the verbs in this box *have been italicized*.

Clause

A **clause** is a group of words containing a subject and verb which forms part of a sentence. The first sentence in this box is made up of two clauses: the first clause from "A clause" to "verb," the second from "which" to the end.

Main or Independent Clause

A ***main clause*** *is a clause* that is not introduced by a subordinating term.   *It does not modify anything*, *and it can stand alone as a complete sentence*.

The main clauses in the first two sentences of this box are italicized.   The second sentence has two main clauses, one before the comma and one after.   Main clauses are sometimes called **principal** or **independent clauses.**

Subordinate Clause

A **subordinate clause** is usually introduced by a subordinating element such as a subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun.   It depends on the rest of the sentence for its meaning.   It does not express a complete thought, so it does not stand alone.   It must always be attached to a main clause *that completes the meaning*.

Subordinate clauses normally act as single part of speech.   They can be either **noun clauses, adjective clauses,** or **adverb clauses.**

They are sometimes called **dependent clauses** *because they "depend" on a main clause to give them meaning*.

The italicized clauses in this box are subordinate clauses.   The first one is an adjective clause *because it describes a noun* (the word *clause*).   The second one is an adverb clause *which describes a verb* (the word **called**).

Run-On Sentences

A **run-on sentence** consists of two or more <u>main clauses</u> that are run together without proper punctuation.   Sometimes even sentences which are technically correct are easier to read if they are made into shorter sentences.   We often **speak** in run-on sentences, but we make pauses and change our tone so people can understand us.   But when we write, no one can hear us, so sometimes we must break our sentences into shorter units so that they do not sound run-on.

Incorrect: The boy showed us his tickets someone
          gave them to him.

Correct: The boy showed us his tickets.   Someone
          gave them to him.

Incorrect: We often speak in run-on sentences,
          but we make pauses and change our tone so people can understand us, but when
          we write, no one can hear us, so sometimes we must break our sentences into
          shorter units so that they do not sound run-on.

(Technically punctuated OK, but too long to be easily understood.   See better sentence structure above.)

Dangling Modifiers

A **dangling modifier** is a <u>phrase</u> or <u>clause</u> which says something different than what is meant because words are left out.   The meaning of the sentence, therefore, is left "dangling."

Incorrect: While driving on Greenwood Avenue
yesterday afternoon, a tree began to fall toward Wendy H's car.
(It sounds like the tree was driving!   This actually appeared in a newspaper article.   An alert reader wrote, "Is the Department of Motor Vehicles branching out and issuing licenses to hardwoods?   Have they taken leaf of their senses?")

Adding a word or two makes the sentence clear.
Correct: While Wendy H was driving on Greenwood
Avenue yesterday afternoon, a tree began to fall toward her car.
When a modifier "dangles" so that the sentence is meaningless (or means something other than your intent), restate it and add the words it needs in order to make sense.

Misplaced Modifiers

This is a common problem in American speech.   Writing has to be more precise than speaking, or it will be misunderstood.

A **misplaced modifier** is simply a word or phrase describing something but not placed near enough the word it is supposed to modify.   The modifying word or phrase is not <u>dangling</u>; no extra words are needed; the modifier is just in the wrong place.

Incorrect: I had to take down the shutters painting
           the house yesterday.

It sounds like the shutters painted the house!   Place the modifying phrase *painting the house* near or next to the word it is meant to modify.

Correct: Painting the house yesterday, I had to take
           down the shutters.

Phrase
A **phrase** is a group *of words acting as a single part of speech and not containing both a subject and a verb.* It is a part *of a sentence,* and does not express a complete thought. The phrases in the first two sentences of this box are italicized.
The first sentence contains five phrases: "of words," "acting as a single part of speech," "as a single part," "of speech," and "not containing both a subject and a verb." Except for the phrase beginning with *as,* all the phrases in those sentences are acting as adjectives. The phrase beginning with *as* is adverbial.

Noun or Pronoun Case
The **case** of a noun or pronoun in English is that form of a word which shows its relationship to other words in the sentence.   The three cases in English are **nominative** (for subjects and predicate nominatives), **objective** (for direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions, object complements, and subjects of infinitives), and **possessive.**   In all English nouns and indefinite pronouns, there is no difference between the nominative and objective.

Predicate Nominative

A **predicate nominative** is a *noun* or *pronoun* which follows the verb and describes or renames the subject.   It is another *way* of naming the subject.   It follows a linking verb. The predicate nominatives in this box have been italicized.

Direct Object
A **direct object** is a noun or pronoun that receives the *action* of a verb or shows the *result* of the action.   It answers the *question* "What?" or "Whom?" after an action verb.   An action verb with a direct object is called a **transitive verb**.   The direct objects in this box are italicized.
Notice each *question* being answered: "Receives *what?*"   "The action"; "Shows *what?*"   "The question," etc.

Indirect Object

An **indirect object** precedes the direct object and tells **to whom** or **for whom** the action of the verb is done and who is receiving the direct object.   There must be a direct object to have an indirect object.   Indirect objects are usually found with verbs of giving or communicating like *give, bring, tell, show, take,* or *offer*.   An indirect object is always a noun or pronoun which is not part of a prepositional phrase.

Example: She gave **me** the report.

Who received the report? Me.

Prepositional Phrase

A **prepositional phrase** is a phrase beginning <u>with a</u> <u>*preposition*</u> and ending <u>with a</u> <u>*noun*</u> <u>or</u> <u>*pronoun*</u>.   The phrase relates the noun or pronoun <u>to the</u> <u>*rest*</u> <u>of the</u> <u>*sentence*</u>.   The noun or pronoun being related <u>by the</u> <u>*preposition*</u> is called the **object** <u>**of the**</u> <u>***preposition.***</u>   <u>In this</u> <u>*box*</u> the prepositional phrases are underlined.   The objects <u>of the</u> <u>*prepositions*</u> are italicized.

Object Complement
An **object complement** is an noun, pronoun, or adjective which follows a direct object and renames it or tells what the direct object has become.   It is most often used with verbs of creating or nominating such as **make, name, elect, paint, call,** etc.
We know there is a difference between calling Mayor Williams and calling Williams *mayor* or painting a red door and painting a door *red*.   When the word follows the direct object and it tells what the direct object has become, it is the object complement.   Sometimes people call it an ***objective complement***.   The italicized words in this box are object complements.

Pronoun Case

Pronouns are words that American often carelessly use in their speech.   The problem is that the use of pronouns must be very clear when we write.   Many times the writing will be misunderstood; at best, the writer will appear uneducated.

A major problem with pronouns is the use of the wrong case.   In English   certain pronouns are meant to be the subject or predicate nominative of a sentence.   Other words are meant to be the objects--whether direct, indirect, objects of prepositions, or object complements.
Pronouns used as subjects or predicate nominatives (nominative case):
> **I, you, he, she, it, we, they, who**
Pronouns used as objects:
> **me, you, him, her, it, us, them, whom**

Some things are really obvious.   All English speakers know we say "I like him," not "Me like he."   But there are four common problem areas with pronoun case: compounds, appositives, predicate nominatives, and who/whom.

Compound Subjects and Objects with Pronouns

If we know that "Me like him" is incorrect, then that also means that "Katy and me like him" is incorrect. The word **I** belongs in the **subject**.   The sentence should read "Katy and I like him."   Similarly, the subject in "Katy and we like him" is correct.
Politeness says that the **I, we, me** or **us** comes last.
If the sentence had some kind of compound object the sentence would read: "Katy likes Joe and me," **not** "Katy likes Joe and I."
After all, we would say "Katy likes me," not "Katy likes I."   Similarly the object in "Katy likes the Johnsons and us" is correct.

Pronouns with Appositives

Sometimes a descriptive noun phrase called an appositive will follow a personal pronoun.
Keep the proper case of the pronoun.
We do not say: "Us want ease of use."
We say: "We want ease of use."
Therefore we do **not** say: "Us computer users want ease of use."
Instead, we should say: "**We** computer users want ease of use."
The Chronicles of Narnia says: "Come in front with **us lions.**"   That is correct.   We say "with us," not "with we," so we should say "with us lions."

Pronouns in the Predicate Nominative

In **standard written English,** the personal pronouns in the predicate nominative are the same as they would be in the subject.   Most Americans do not speak this way, but it is grammatically correct.
The **nominative case** follows a linking verb to rename the subject.
Incorrect: The winner was her.   (Objective case)
Correct: The winner was she.   (Nominative case)
She is a predicate nominative.   It uses the same case as the   subject since it simply **renames** the subject.
Even though we may often say, "It's me"; the grammatically correct way is "It's I."

Who and Whom

Who and **whom** correspond to **he** and **him**.   **Who** is the <u>subject</u> or <u>predicate nominative</u>.
Whom is the object.
Correct: Who are you? (Subject)
Correct: Whom do you see? (<u>Direct object</u>)
Correct: Whom did you give it to?
          (Object of <u>preposition</u> *to*)
Correct: Who did that? (Subject)

It may help you to recall that **who** follows the same pattern as **he** and **they.**   When all three
are in the **objective** <u>case</u>, they **end** with **m: whom, him, them.**
This same pattern applies when you add the suffix -ever or -soever:
Correct: Whoever dies with the most toys wins.
          (<u>Subject</u>)
Correct: He gave that ticket to whoever asked for one.
          (Subject of *asked*)
Correct: Pick whomever I tell you to.   (<u>Direct object</u>)

Appositive

An **appositive** is a noun, noun phrase, or noun clause which follows a noun or pronoun and renames or describes the noun or pronoun.   A simple appositive is an epithet like Alexander the Great.   Appositives are often set off by commas.

Example: We visited the home of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
The underlined portion is the appositive.

Possessive Pronouns

Certain pronouns called **possessive pronouns** show **ownership.**   Some are used alone; some describe a noun.
Used alone: **mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs, whose**
Correct: That computer is hers.
Modify noun: **my, your, his, her, its, our, their, whose**
Correct: That is her computer.

Please note that **none** of the possessive pronouns are spelled with an apostrophe.   See Apostrophes with Pronouns for more on this.

Possessive Pronouns with Gerunds

Possessive pronouns are used to describe gerunds.   Using the objective case confuses the reader.
Incorrect: You winning in spite of the odds
          inspired us all.
          (Ambiguous and awkward.   Do you inspire or does the winning inspire?)
Correct: Your winning in spite of the odds
          inspired us all.
Incorrect: We could not stand him whining
          about everything.
          (Which could you not stand?   Him? or His whining?)
Because of the possible confusion, use possessive pronouns with gerunds.
Correct: We could not stand his whining about
          everything.

Gerund

A **gerund** is a verb ending in **-ing** *and* acting as a **noun.**

Example: *Skiing* is my favorite sport.

(*Skiing* ends in *-ing* and is a noun--it is a thing and it is the subject of the sentence.)

Pronouns with *Than* or *As*

When you use a pronoun in a <u>comparison</u> using the words **than** or **as**, use the proper pronouns as if all the words were being said.
Most of the time when we use a comparison using **than** or **as**, we leave words out.   This is technically called an **elliptical clause**--a <u>clause</u> with an ellipsis.   An ellipsis is words left out.

Look at it this way.   There is a difference between the two following sentences.   Both are grammatically correct; they just mean two different things.
      He likes you more than me.
      He likes you more than I.
Think of what words are left out:
      He likes you more than I *do.*
      (**I** is the <u>subject</u>)
      He likes you more than *he likes* me.
      (**Me** is the <u>direct object</u>)

When a pronouns follows **than** or **as** in a comparison, make sure you understand what words are missing and then use the correct pronoun.
Incorrect: He is taller than her.
      (i.e., than **her is?**)
Correct: He is taller than she.
      (i.e., than **she is.**   Much better!)
Incorrect: He is as happy as them.
      (i.e., as happy as **them are?**)
Correct: He is as happy as they.
      (i.e., as happy as **they are.**)
Correct with one meaning:
      He sees you more often than I.   (i.e., than **I see you.**)
Correct with another meaning:
      He sees you more often than me.   (i.e., than **he sees me.**)
The <u>case</u> of the pronoun makes the difference!

For more, see <u>Pronoun Case</u>.

Subject Agreement with the Verb

It is usually pretty easy to match the <u>verb</u> with the <u>subject</u> in English.   Only in the present tense does the verb have more than one form.   And except for one verb, only the third person singular is different.   Besides, the third person singular present tense always ends in an **s.**   We understand this most of the time.

Verb: To speak
        I, you, we, they   **speak**
        he, she, it   **speaks**
Verb: To do
        I, you, we, they   **do**
        he, she, it   **does**
Verb: To be (the only exception)
        I   **am**
        you, we, they   **are**
        he, she, it   **is**

The verb **to be** is also the **only** verb with more than one form in the past tense.   See also the <u>subjunctive mood</u>.
Verb: To be, past
        I, he, she, it   **was**
        you, we, they   **were**
Normally, none of this is a problem.   However, there are a few cases that confuse writers and speakers.

Separated Subjects and Verbs

A phrase or clause often separates the <u>subject</u> and the <u>verb</u>.   The verb must still agree with the subject.
Incorrect: The climate in both places are mild.
Correct: The climate in both places is mild.
(**Climate** is the subject, not **places**.   It takes the verb **is.**)

Keep track of the subject, especially when there is a singular pronoun or collective noun for the subject and a plural element in the phrase that separates the subject and verb.

Collective noun: A group of senators was
        calling for an investigation.
Singular pronoun: One of the many galaxies
        was proven to be near a black hole.

Compound Subjects

Two or more **singular** <u>subjects</u> joined by **or** or **nor** take a singular verb.
Correct: Neither John nor Mary knows what happened.

Two or more **plural** subjects joined by any conjunction (including and, or, but, or nor) take a plural verb.
Correct: Both men and women are allowed to enter.

If one or more **singular** subject is joined to one or more **plural** subject by **or** or **nor,** the verb agrees with the subject closest to the verb.
Incorrect: Neither Mary nor her brothers knows
        what happened. (**Brothers** is closer to the verb and is plural; the verb should

agree with **brothers**.
Correct: Neither Mary nor her brothers know what
   happened.
Correct: Neither her brothers nor Mary knows what
   happened.

A compound subject whose parts are joined by **and** normally takes a plural verb.
Correct: Joe and his brother know what happened.

A compound subject whose parts are joined by **and** takes a singular verb in two special instances.
1. When the parts of the subject combine to form a single item.
Correct: One and one equals two.
Correct: Cookies and cream is my favorite flavor.

2. When the compound subject is modified by the words **each** or **every.**
Correct: Every boy and girl has to participate.

Using Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns are words which replace nouns without specifying which noun they replace.

Singular: another, anybody, anyone, anything, each,
   either, everybody, everyone, everything, little, much, neither, nobody, no one,
   nothing, one, other, somebody, someone, something

Plural: both, few, many, others, several

Singular or Plural: all, any, more, most, none,
   some

Singular indefinite pronouns take singular verbs or singular personal pronouns.

Correct: Each of the members has one vote.
   (The subject, **each**, is singular.   Use **has**.)

Incorrect: One of the girls gave up their seat.

Correct: One of the girls gave up her seat.
   (**Her** refers to **one**, which is singular.)

Plural indefinite pronouns take plural verbs or plural personal pronouns.

Correct: A few of the justices were voicing their
   opposition.
(**Few** is plural, so are **were** and **their**.)

For indefinite pronouns that can be singular **or** plural, it depends on what the indefinite pronoun refers to.

Correct: All of the people clapped their hands.
(**All** refers to **people**, which is plural.)

Correct: All of the newspaper was soaked.
(Here **all** refers to **newspaper**, which is singular.)

A Gender-Sensitive Case

The pronouns ending with **-body** or **-one** such as **anybody, somebody, no one,** or **anyone** are singular.   So are pronouns like **each** and **every**.   Words like **all** or **some** *may* be singular.   That means that a possessive pronoun referring to these singular words must also be singular.   In standard written English the possessive pronoun **his** is used to refer to a singular indefinite pronoun unless the group referred to is known to be all female.

Incorrect: Is everyone happy with their gift?

Correct: Is everyone happy with his gift?
(**Everyone** and **is** are singular.   The possessive pronoun must be singular, too)

Most languages, including English, observe the standard of using the masculine pronoun in situations like this.   However, in some circles today the idea of choosing the masculine pronoun sounds discriminatory against women.   If this usage bothers you, or if you think it may bother your audience, there are two possible ways to work around this and still use standard English.

1. Use the phrase **his or her.**   It is a little awkward, but OK.

Correct: Is everyone happy with his or her gift?

2. Rewrite the sentence using a **plural** pronoun or antecedent. Plural personal pronouns in English no longer distinguish between masculine and feminine.

Correct: Are all the people happy with their gifts?

Use of Pronouns Ending in *-self*

Words ending in **-self** or **-selves** are called **reflexive** or **intensive pronouns.** They should always refer to another word that has already been named.   In grammatical terms, they need an <u>antecedent</u>.

Incorrect: The president named myself to the
         committee.   (**Myself** is not previously named)
Correct: The president named me to the committee.
Correct: I did it all by myself.
         (**Myself** refers to I)
Correct: John talks to himself when he is nervous.
         (**Himself** refers to John)

Antecedent

The **antecedent** of a pronoun is the word which the pronoun stands for. In the first sentence in this box the pronoun **which** is taking the place of **word**. Therefore, **word** is the antecedent.

General Antecedent Agreement

The <u>antecedent</u> of a pronoun is the word the pronoun refers to.   There are several style problems which writers and speakers sometimes have when they do not match the pronoun and the noun it replaces correctly.

Missing or Mismatched Antecedent

A pronoun, unless it is an <u>indefinite pronoun</u>, must have an <u>antecedent</u>, a word it refers to. The pronoun must match the word it replaces--singular or plural, and, sometimes, masculine or feminine.
Incorrect: Every student must have their pencils.
(Both **every** and **student** are singular; therefore, **his, her** or **his or her** must be used. **Their** is plural and cannot refer to a singular noun.)

Unclear Antecedent

A pronoun's antecedent must be clear.
Incorrect: I never go to that place because
          they have stale bread.
(What does **they** refer to?   Both I and **place** are singular.)
Correct: I never go to that place because it
          has stale bread.

Ambiguous Antecedent

A pronoun's <u>antecedent</u> must be unambiguous.   Sometimes there may be more than one word the pronoun could refer to.   In a case like that, it may be better not to use the pronoun.
Incorrect: The suitcase was on the plane, but now
          it's gone. (What is gone?   The suitcase or the plane?)
Correct: The suitcase was on the plane, but now
          the suitcase is gone.   OR
          The suitcase was on the plane, but now the
          plane is gone.   (Depends on which you mean...)

Faraway Antecedent

The pronoun must be close enough to the word it is replacing so that your reader knows whom or what you are talking about.
Unclear: Buford saw Longstreet's division
          coming toward his men.   Reynold's troops responded quickly to the calls for
          assistance, and soon **he** found himself in the midst of a deadly battle.
(Who is **he**?   Buford, Reynolds, or Longstreet?)
Clear: Buford saw Longstreet's division
          coming toward his men.   Reynolds' troops responded quickly to the calls for
          assistance, and soon Buford found himself in the midst of a deadly battle.

See also <u>Using Indefinite Pronouns.</u>

The Subjunctive Mood

A verb is in the **subjunctive mood** when it expresses a condition which is doubtful or not factual.   It is most often found in a <u>clause</u> beginning with the word **if.**   It is also found in <u>clauses</u> following a verb that expresses a doubt, a wish, regret, request, demand, or proposal.
These are verbs typically followed by clauses that take the subjunctive:
ask, demand, determine, insist, move, order, pray, prefer, recommend, regret, request, require, suggest, and **wish.**

In English there is no difference between the subjunctive and normal, or indicative, form of the verb **except** for the present tense third person singular **and** for the verb to be.
The subjunctive for the present tense third person singular drops the **-s** or **-es** so that it looks and sounds like the present tense for everything else.
The subjunctive mood of the verb **to be** is **be** in the present tense and **were** in the past tense, regardless of what the subject is.

Incorrect: If I was you, I would run.
Correct: If I were you, I would run.
       (The verb follows **if** and expresses a non-factual condition.)
Incorrect: I wish he was able to type faster.
Correct: I wish he were able to type faster.
       (The second verb is in a clause following a verb expressing a wish.   It also
       suggests a non-factual or doubtful condition.)
Incorrect: His requirement is that everyone is computer
       literate.
Correct: His requirement is that everyone be computer
       literate.
       (Subordinate clause follows main clause with a demand.)
Incorrect: He recommended that each driver reports his
       tips.
Correct: He recommended that each driver report his tips.

Sometimes we may use the **conditional** auxiliary verbs of **could, should,** or **would** to express the same sense.
Subjunctive: I wish he were kinder to me.
Conditional: I wish he would be kinder to me.
Note: In modern English, the subjunctive is only found in <u>subordinate clauses</u>.

Comparatives and Superlatives

Use words ending in **-er** or modified by the word **more** to compare two items.   This is known as the **<u>comparative</u> degree.**
Use words ending in **-est** or modified by the word **most** to compare three or more items. This is known as the **<u>superlative</u> degree.**
Correct: K2 is taller than Annapurna.
Incorrect: Annapurna is the taller of the three
       peaks.   (Three or more requires superlative.)
Correct: Annapurna is the tallest of the three
       peaks.

Normally, **-er** and **-est** are added to one-syllable words.
-er and **-est** are added to two-syllable words unless the new word sounds awkward.
Correct: fairer   prettier   handsomest
Awkward: famousest   readier
Correct: most famous   more ready
Use the modifiers **more** or **most** with all root words longer than two syllables as well as with two syllable words that sound awkward.   Always use **more** or **most** with adverbs that end in **-ly**.
Incorrect: beautifuller   beastliest
Correct: more beautiful   most beastly

Less and **least** form comparisons of a lesser degree in a similar manner.   **Less** is used when comparing two items, **least** with three or more.

See also <u>Irregular Comparisons</u> and <u>Comparison Problems</u>.

Irregular Comparisons

A few of the comparatives and superlatives in English do not follow the usual pattern.   Here is a list of common exceptions.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
bad	worse	worst
badly	worse	worst
far (distance)	farther	farthest
far (extent)	further	furthest
good	better	best
ill	worse	worst
late	later	latest or last
less	lesser	least
little (amount)		less least
many	more	most
much	more	most
well	more	most

The comparisons for **well** apply to both the adjective meaning "healthy" and the adverb meaning "in a good manner."

For more on how to use some of these see the Common Mistakes section on good/well and bad/badly.   Also see Common Mistakes section for the difference between further and farther and between littlest and least.

Positive Degree

The **positive degree** of a modifier simply means that there is no comparison being made.

Comparative Degree

Adjectives and adverbs ending in **-er** or modified by the word **more** compare two   items.
This is known as the **comparative degree.**

Superlative Degree

Adjectives or adverbs ending in **-est** or modified by the word **most**   compare three or more items.   This is known as the **superlative degree.**

Comparison Problems

There are three problems writers sometimes have with comparisons.

1. Make sure you are comparing **similar items.**
Incorrect: The tusk of a mastodon is bigger than
an elephant.
(It sounds as if the writer is comparing the *tusk* with an elephant.)
Correct: The tusk of a mastodon is bigger than the
tusk of an elephant.

2. Make sure your comparison is **balanced.**   Use the same pattern on   both sides of the comparison to make it readable and clear.
Unbalanced: The tusk of a mastodon is bigger than
an elephant's.
Correct: The tusk of a mastodon is bigger than
that of an elephant.
(Or "than the tusk of an elephant" ; either choice keeps the pattern of using the
prepositional phrase.)
Correct: A mastodon's tusk is bigger than an
elephant's.
(Or "than an elephant's tusk" ; either choice keeps the pattern of using the possessive noun.)

3. When comparing people or items that are grouped together, it may be necessary to use the word **other** or **else** to make the meaning clear.
Incorrect: The X-15 was faster than any airplane.
(The X-15 is an airplane.   The sentence makes it sound as though it were some other kind of aircraft.)
Correct: The X-15 was faster than any other
airplane.
Incorrect: Manute was taller than anyone on the team.
(This suggests that he either was not on the team or that he is being compared   to himself.)
Correct: Manute was taller than anyone else on
the team.

Using Negatives

There are a few rules to keep in mind when making a sentence say "No."

1. **Double negatives** are **nonstandard.**   Avoid two negative words in the same <u>clause</u>.
Incorrect: I don't want no seconds.
(Both *don't* and *no* are negatives.)
Correct: I don't want any seconds.
Correct: I want no seconds.
This rule does not include negative interjections at the beginning of a sentence or clause, since those are grammatically separate.
Correct: No, I don't want any seconds.

2. Do not use **but** in a negative sense with another negative.
Incorrect: He didn't want but one good manuscript.
Correct: He wanted but one good manuscript.
Correct: He wanted only one good manuscript.

3. Words like **barely, hardly,** and **scarcely** have a negative sense and should not be used with another negative.   In effect, this creates a double negative.
Incorrect: He couldn't hardly speak.
Correct: He could hardly speak.
Incorrect: We were not barely able to see the stage.
Correct: We were barely able to see the stage.

Tricky Plurals

There are four groups of words which some speakers and writers have difficulty with.   In each case it has to do with the <u>agreement</u> of plurals or plural-looking words with the verbs or other words they go with.

Plural-looking Nouns

Some nouns that end in **-s** look like they are plural, but they really are singular.   This is particularly true of branches of knowledge, certain foods or dishes, and certain diseases. Branches of knowledge like **mathematics, physics, ethics, politics,** or **social studies** are singular.
Names of foods, while plural, are treated singularly when they are treated as   a single dish.
Some diseases, while plural in origin, are treated singularly because just one disease is discussed: **measles, mumps, rickets,** or **pox.**
Examples: Politics is a rough life.
          Baked beans is one of my favorite dishes.
          Mumps has been nearly eradicated in the U.S.

A few words, though singular in nature, are made of paired items and generally treated as plural: **scissors, pants, trousers, glasses, pliers, tongs, tweezers,** and the like.   Many are often used with the word **pair** as in **pair of pants** or **pair of scissors.**
Example: These scissors are too dull to cut with.

Nouns Expressing Measurement

A noun expressing an amount or **measurement** is normally singular.
If the unit of measurement refers to a number of **individual** items, then it treated as a plural.
Examples: Two spoons of sugar is too much for me.
          (A single measurement)
          Twelve dollars is less that what I want to sell it for.
          (A single sum of money)
          Four-fifths of the country is satisfied with its
          health insurance.
          (One part of a whole)
          Four-fifths of the people are satisfied with their
          health insurance.
          (*Four-fifths* refers to many individuals.)

Titles

Titles of books and other works of art are always considered singular even if the title sounds plural.
The Alfred Hitchcock film **The Birds** was successfully advertised with a campaign that said, "**The Birds** is coming!" Unlike so many ads, that one was grammatically correct.

Plurals That Do Not End in -s

A number of plurals, mostly derived from Latin, do not end in **-s.**   Nevertheless, they are plural and should be treated as such.   Words such as **criteria, phenomena,** and **media** are plural.
The word **data** is also technically plural, but the singular form, **datum,** is rare in English, so using **data** as singular is tolerated, but not precisely correct.   Say "a piece of data" of "item of data" for the singular if **datum** sounds too affected.

The Verb *To Be*

The verb **to be** is the most irregular verb in the English language.   It is normally a linking verb showing existence or condition of the subject.   It can also be used as an auxiliary verb when forming the passive voice.

The forms of the verb **to be** in English are as follows:

Infinitive	to be
Present	am, is, are
Past	was, were
Present Participle	being
Past Participle	been
Present Subjunctive	be
Past Subjunctive	were
Imperative	be

For more on this see <u>The Subjunctive Mood</u> and <u>Subject-Verb Agreement.</u>

Rules for Capitalization Contents

Click on the topic you seek.   Click on a button above to take you to the opening screen or to a previous screen.

Capitalizing Sentences

The first letter of the first word in a sentence is capitalized.
Correct: The first word in a sentence is capitalized.

The first word of an interjection, an incomplete question, or <u>fragmentary response</u> is capitalized.
Correct: "Did you do it?"
"No."
"Why not?"
"Because."

Capitalizing Quotations

Capitalize the first word in a quotation if the quotation is a complete sentence or if it is an interjection, an incomplete question, or <u>fragmentary response</u>.
Correct: He said, "Why did you come back?"
       (Quotation is a sentence by itself.)
Incorrect: She replied, "you wanted me to."
       (A fragmentary response, *you* needs a capital.)

A quotation is not capitalized if it is not a complete sentence **and** is part of the larger sentence.
Correct: I believe it was a "far, far better thing"
       to have confessed the crime.
(This quotation from Dickens is part of the larger sentence and is not a complete sentence in itself.)

Special Cases for Capitals

Sentence after a Colon
The first word of sentence following a **colon** is capitalized.
Correct: Apples were not squeezed for cider**:** Pomace
      was pressed.
(A complete sentence follows the colon.)
Incorrect: Please bring the following items to work
      tomorrow**:** A grab-bag gift, a goofy hat, and a smile.
(A list follows the colon, not a sentence.   No capital is needed.)

Poetry
The first word in each **line** of most poetry is capitalized.

The Words I and O
The single-letter words **I** and **O** are **always** capitalized.
Note: The word **O** is used in direct addresses (as in "O Tannenbaum" or "O Pioneers!")   The word **oh** is an interjection expression surprise (as in "Oh, look, Jane!")

Capitalizing Proper Nouns

A **proper noun** is a noun which names a specific person, place, or thing.
Proper nouns are capitalized.   That includes the following categories of names:
Each part of a person's name:
      James A. Garfield   Chester Alan Arthur
Given or pet names of animals:
      Lassie   Trigger   Secretariat
Geographical and celestial names:
      Red Sea   Alpha Centauri   Lake Havasu City
Monuments, buildings, meeting rooms:
      the Taj Mahal   Grant's Tomb   Room 222
Historical events, documents, laws, and periods:
      the Civil War   the Hatch Act   the Reformation
Months, days of the week, holidays:
      Monday   Easter   December
Groups and languages:
      Myopia Hunt Club   the Republicans   Israeli
      French   National Football League
Religions, deities, scriptures:
      God   Christ   the Bible   the Torah   Islam
Awards, vehicles, vehicle models, brand names:
      the Nobel Peace Prize   Eagle Scout
      Ford Escort   the Bismarck   Kleenex

Some parts of last names **may** not be capitalized.
Sometimes the part of the last name following Mac (but never Mc or M') may not be capitalized.   For example, Prime Minister J. R. MacDonald, but author George Macdonald.   There is no rule, just learn the name.

Sometimes the part of the last name following the particles de, du, d', den, der, des, la, le, l', ten, ter, van, or von (and similar particles) may or may not be capitalized.   The particles themselves may or may not be capitalized.   Check to see how the person prefers it.

The spelling rule in Europe, where such particles are commoner, is **not** to capitalize the particle when the first name is being used with it, but to capitalize the part that follows the particle.   The particle is capitalized if the last name with the particle is used by itself.
Correct: Ludwig van Beethoven
Correct: Cornelia ten Boom (First name being used)
Correct: Miss Ten Boom (First name not used)

See Names Not Capitalized for certain names which are **not** capitalized.

Names Not Capitalized

The earth, moon, and sun are not capitalized unless in a list of celestial objects or part of another name.
Correct: I was born on the earth.
Correct: The first three planets from the Sun
          are Mercury, Venus, and Earth.   (In a list)

Seasons are not capitalized unless part of another name. Correct: This summer was very hot.

When discussing mythological deities, the word **god** or **goddess** is not capitalized.   Their names are capitalized.
Correct: The Romans were careful not to offend
          any god.
Correct: The Egyptians considered their pharaoh
          a god, an incarnation of the god Osiris.
          (Osiris, the name, is capitalized.)

Scientific Nomenclature

The Latin-derived **scientific names** are **capitalized except** for the specific and subspecific names.   The generic, specific, and subspecific names are **underlined** or **italicized.**

The names of the following are capitalized: kingdom, phylum, subphylum, class, subclass, superorder, order, suborder, superfamily, family, subfamily, tribe, genus, subgenus.
The names of the following are not capitalized: superspecies, species, subspecies.
Names of superspecies, species, and subspecies **always** appear with the name of the genus (or at least the genus abbreviated) so that the full specific name begins with a capital letter.

The **full specific name,** genus plus species (and superspecies and subspecies, if used), is italicized or underlined.

Examples: Birds are in the class Aves, subphylum
Vertebrata, and phylum Chordata.
The American Robin is in the family Turdidae,
superfamily Muscicapidae, suborder Oscines, and order Passeriformes.
The American Robin is *Turdus migratorius.*
The Dark-Backed Robin, a northern-nesting
subspecies, is known as *T. m. nigrideus.*
(Note the use of capitalization and italics.)

The genus or species name is only abbreviated when the name has already been used, and it is clear what the letters stand for.   The last word in a species name is never abbreviated. So if we were to once again refer to the Robin species, we could write *Turdus migratorius* or *T. migratorius* but never simply *T.m.* unless it were followed by a subspecific name as was done above.

Capitalizing Proper Adjectives

A <u>proper noun</u> used as an adjective or an adjective formed from a <u>proper noun</u> is called a **proper adjective.**

Proper adjectives are normally capitalized.   This includes brand names.
Correct: Syrian food   a Kodak® camera

Some proper adjectives may not be capitalized because the association with a particular name is gone.
Correct: Teddy bear or teddy bear
Other words this has happened to are *bourbon* whiskey and *venetian* blinds.

Prefixes attached to a proper adjective are **not** capitalized unless the prefixes themselves are formed from a <u>proper noun</u>.
Correct: pro-Communist   pre-Raphaelite   Afro-Asian
(The prefix *Afro-* is formed from *Africa*.)

In a hyphenated word, only the proper adjective is capitalized.
Correct: Flemish-speaking Belgians

Capitalizing Titles of People

Capitalize a person's title when used with the person's name or as a direct address.   The title is not capitalized when used generally.
Correct: the Duke of Edinburgh   Dr. Fleming
        Lieutenant Horatio Hornblower
        Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.
Incorrect: The Duke sends his regards.
          (Used as a general word, not personal title.)
Correct: The duke sends his regards.
Incorrect: Thanks for calling, pastor.
          (Title is implied because of direct address.)
Correct: Thanks for calling, Pastor.

Government officials' titles are capitalized when followed by a name or used in direct address.
Incorrect: We tried to get a glimpse of president
          Clinton.   (Title is used with name.)
Correct: We tried to get a glimpse of President
        Clinton.
Incorrect: What do you think of the situation
          in Rwanda, secretary?   (Title in direct address)
Correct: What do you think of the situation
        in Rwanda, Secretary?

Certain **very** high ranking government officials' titles are capitalized even when not followed by a name or used in a direct address when a specific individual is being referred to.
Correct: the President (e.g., of the USA or France)
        the Chief Justice
        the Queen (e.g., of England or the Netherlands)
Incorrect: The Constitution says the President must be at least 35.
          (Not a specific individual being referred to.)
Correct: The Constitution says the president must be at least 35.
Correct: What do you think of the President's trip to Japan?
          (A specific person is referred to here.)   Important words in compound titles are
          capitalized, but not prefixes or suffixes added to the titles.
Correct: the Under Secretary of the Interior
        President-elect Clinton   ex-Governor Meskill

Capitalize titles showing **family relationship** when they refer to a specific person, **unless** they are modified by a personal pronoun.
Incorrect: I can't wait to see cousin Angie.
Correct: I can't wait to see Cousin Angie.
Correct: Please let me go, Mom.
Incorrect: My Mom won't let us go. (Modified by *my*)
Correct: My mom won't let us go.

Capitals in Titles of Things

Always capitalize the first and last word in a title.   Capitalize all the other words except for **a, an, the,** and conjunctions and prepositions of four letters or less.
This applies to titles of books, chapters, periodicals, poems, stories, plays paintings, musical compositions, and subtitles.
Examples: *The Chronicles of Narnia*
(*The* is the first word, so it is capitalized; *of* is not.)
　　　Six Characters in Search of a Plot
(*In, of,* and *a* are short words.)
　　　Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ
(Capitalize *A* because it is first word in subtitle.)

Capitalize the titles of courses when the course is a language course or when the title refers to a specific class.   (In most schools the course would be followed by a number.)
Language courses: Latin   English   Ancient Uighur
Incorrect: Math   Economics   Physical Education
　　　(Not language, not specific classes)
Correct: math   economics   physical education
Specific classes: Physical Education 215
　　　Introduction to Applied Mathematics   Economics 101

Capital Letters in Letters

There are two additional rules for capitalizing when writing letters.

1. Capitalize the first word and all nouns in the salutation (or greeting).
Correct: Dear Sir:
      My dearest Aunt,
      Greetings!

2. Capitalize the first word in the complimentary closing.
Correct: Sincerely,
      Truly yours,
      With best wishes,

For more, see Letter Writing topic in <u>Contents.</u>

Rules for Abbreviations Contents

Click on the topic you seek.   Click on a button above to take you to the opening screen or to a previous screen.

Abbreviations with Names and Titles of People

Use the **full name** in standard writing unless the person uses an initial as part of his or her name.   Initials may be used in lists and addresses if appropriate.
Correct: George Smith
Correct, only in list or address: G. Smith
Correct: Robert E. Lee
(The initial is fine here because that is the name he went by.)

Social titles before a proper name are capitalized.   All but **Miss** and **Master** are abbreviated and end with a period.
Social titles: Mr.   Master Mrs.   Miss   Ms.
         Mlle.   Mme.   M.   Messrs. (Plural of Mr. or M.)
         Mmes. (Plural of Mrs., Ms., Mme.)

Those social titles that are abbreviated are only abbreviated in front of names.
Correct: Mr. Smith is not at home.
Incorrect: You'd better listen, Mr.
(*Mr.* is not in front of name; do not abbreviate.)
Correct: You'd better listen, Mister.

Abbreviations of Position or Rank

There are a number of common titles of position and rank which are abbreviated.   Except for **Dr.**, they are only used before a person's full name (i.e., at least first and last names); otherwise, the title is spelled out.
Correct: Sgt. Alvin York   Fr. Robert Drinan
        Prof. William Alfred   Dr. Milton Friedman
Incorrect: Sgt. York   Fr. Drinan   Prof. Alfred
(Abbreviated without first name or initial.)
Correct: Sergeant York   Father Drinan
        Professor Alfred   Dr. Friedman
(*Dr.* is OK to abbreviate with a last name only.)

Practice for internal correspondence within military commands may differ.

Abbreviations of position and rank include the following.
Professional: Dr.   Atty.   Prof.   Hon.
Religious: Rev.   Fr.   Msgr.   Sr.(Sister)   Br.(Brother)   St.
Political: Pres.   Supt.   Rep.   Sen.   Gov.   Amb.   Treas.
        Sec.
Military: Pvt.   Cpl.   Spec.   Sgt.   Ens.   Adm.   Maj.   Capt.
        Cmdr. (or Cdr.)   Lt.   Lt. Col.   Col.   Gen.

Abbreviations After a Name

Abbreviations after a name--such as **Jr.**, **Sr.**, and academic titles--are set off by commas.
They begin with a capital letter and end with   a period.
Do not use the abbreviations unless they follow the name.
Correct: William F. Buckley, Jr.   Walter Judd, M.D.
Incorrect: The average M.D. sees forty patients day.
          (Does not follow name)
Correct: The average medical doctor sees forty
          patients a day.

In a full sentence, each abbreviation after a name is set off by a comma both before and
after.   No comma is needed at the end if the sentence ends with the abbreviation.
Correct: The Hon. Rep. Walter Judd, M.D., represented
          a Minnesota district in the U.S. Congress.

See also <u>Commas with Titles</u>

Abbreviations for Geographical Terms

Abbreviations for geographical terms **before or after a <u>proper noun</u>** begin with a capital letter and end with a period.
Abbreviations for geographical terms are only used in addresses, lists, charts, and maps. They should be spelled out in standard and formal writing.

Common geographical abbreviations:

Ave.	Is.	Prov.	
Apt.	L. (Lake)	Rd.	
Blvd.	Mt.	Rt. or Rte.	
Bldg.	Nat. or Natl.	Sq.	
Co. (County)		Pk.	St. (Street)
Dr. (Drive)	Pt.	Terr.	
Ft.	Pen. (Peninsula)		

Click on forward arrow **(>>)** key above for <u>state and province</u> abbreviations.

Abbreviations for States and Provinces

Traditional abbreviations for states and provinces begin with a capital letter and end with a period.

Except for the abbreviation **D.C.** when it follows **Washington**, which may be used at any time, use the abbreviations for states and provinces only in lists, maps, charts, addresses, and informal writing.
Avoid abbreviations   for states, provinces, and countries in formal writing--the exceptions are the relatively long **U.S., U.S.A., U.S.S.R.,** and **C.I.S.** which may be used at any time.

The two-letter postal service abbreviations are all capitals with no periods.   They are not set apart by commas.   They are only used with addresses on letters, envelopes, and packages to be mailed.
Correct: P.O. Box 203
        Shelton, Conn., 06484   (In an address)
Correct: P.O. Box 203
        Shelton   CT   06484   (In an address)
Incorrect: He works in Shelton, Conn.
        (Standard sentence, do not abbreviate.)
Correct: He works in Shelton, Connecticut.
Correct only because it is informal: Was it really the
        O'Leary's cow that made Chicago, Ill.?

U.S. State Abbreviations
(Canadian provinces follow this list.)

State/Territory	Traditional	Postal
Alabama	Ala.	AL
Alaska	Alaska	AK
Arizona	Ariz.	AZ
Arkansas	Ark.	AR
California	Cal., Calif.	CA
Colorado	Col., Colo.	CO
Delaware	Del.	DE
District of Columbia	D.C.	DC
Florida	Fla.	FL
Georgia	Ga.	GA
Guam	Guam	GU
Hawaii	Hawaii, H.I.	HI
Idaho	Ida., Id., I.	ID
Illinois	Ill.	IL
Indiana	Ind.	IN
Iowa	Iowa, Ia.	IA
Kansas	Kan., Kans.	KS
Kentucky	Ken., Ky.	KY
Louisiana	La.	LA
Maine	Me.	ME
Maryland	Md.	MD
Michigan	Mich.	MI
Minnesota	Minn.	MN
Mississippi	Miss.	MS
Missouri	Mo.	MO
Montana	Mont.	MT
Nebraska	Neb., Nebr.	NB
Nevada	Nev.	NV

New Hampshire	N.H.	NH
New Jersey	N.J.	NJ
New Mexico	N.M., N.Mex.	NM
North Carolina	N.C.	NC
North Dakota	N.D., N.Dak	ND
Ohio	Ohio, O.	OH
Oklahoma	Okla., Ok.	OK
Oregon	Ore.	OR
Pennsylvania	Penna., Penn., Pa.	PA
Puerto Rico	P.R.	PR
Rhode Island	R.I.	RI
South Carolina	S.C.	SC
South Dakota	S.D., S.Dak.	SD
Tennessee	Tenn.	TN
Texas	Tex.	TX
Utah	Utah, Ut.	UT
Vermont	Vt.	VT
Virginia	Va.	VA
(U.S.) Virgin Islands	U.S.V.I., V.I.	VI
Washington	Wash.	WA
West Virginia	W.Va.	WV
Wisconsin	Wis., Wisc.	WI
Wyoming	Wyo.	WY

Canadian Provinces

Province	Abbr.
Alberta	Alta.
British Columbia	B.C.
Manitoba	Man.
New Brunswick	N.B.
Newfoundland	N.F.
Nova Scotia	N.S.
Ontario	Ont.
Prince Edward Island	P.E.I.
Québec	P.Q., Qué.
Sakatchewan	Sask.

See also <u>Commas with Addresses</u>

Abbreviations of Units of Measurement

Abbreviations for most **units of measurements** use small letters and periods.   The few exceptions that use capital letters are noted below.   Temperature abbreviations use capitals because they come from proper nouns.   Measures of mass or weight of types of tons are usually capitalized when abbreviated.

Abbreviations for **metric** units, including temperatures (Kelvin or Celsius), do **not** end with periods.   Non-metric units with "per" (such as "miles per hour") usually do not take periods, either.

Temperature abbreviations are used in all types of writing.   Other abbreviations of measurements are limited to lists, charts, technical writing, and informal writing.   In standard formal English, they are spelled out.

If you spell out the number, spell out the unit of measurement.

There is no need to add an **s** to an abbreviation to show a plural.   This is sometimes done in advertising ("3 lbs. for a dollar"), but it is not necessary.

English Unit Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Unit of Measurement
bbl.	barrel
cu.	cubic
doz.	dozen
F.	Fahrenheit
fl. oz.	fluid ounce
ft.	foot
gal.	gallon
gr.	grain
gr., gro.	gross
in.	inch
k., kt.	karat
k., kt.	knot
lb.	pound
LT, L.T.	long ton
mi.	mile
mph	miles per hour
n.m.	nautical miles
oz.	ounce
pt.	pint
qt.	quart
sq.	square
rpm	revolutions per minute
T.	ton
T.	tablespoon in some cookbooks
t.	teaspoon in some cookbooks
tbsp.	tablespoon
tsp.	teaspoon
yd.	yard

The single hatch mark **'** can stand for **foot** or a **geographical minute** (a minute of longitude or latitude).   The double hatch mark **"** can stand for **inch** or **geographical second** (a second of longitude or latitude).   So **5'6"** would mean **five feet, six inches. 42°24'54" N.** would mean **42 degrees, 24 minutes, 54 seconds north.**

Metric Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Unit of Measurement
b	byte
C	Celsius, Centigrade
cc	cubic centimeter
cm	centimeter
G,Gb	gigabyte
g, gr	gram
ha	hectare
K	Kelvin
K, Kb	kilobyte
kg	kilogram
kl	kiloliter
km	kilometer
l	liter
m	meter
M, Mb	megabyte
mcg	microgram
mg	milligram
ml	milliliter
mm	millimeter
MT	metric ton
t, T	metric ton
w	watt
kw	kilowatt
kwh	kilowatt-hour

Since the metric system uses standard prefixes, you can easily figure out most other metric abbreviations; for example, **cl** would be centiliter.

The Greek letter **µ** (mu) is often used to show the prefix **micro,** especially in scientific publications. For example, **µg** would be the same as **mcg**, and **µl** would be **microliter.** When by itself, **µ** stands for **micron.** **mµ** means **millimicron**, and **µµ** means **micromicron** (a millionth of a micron).

To abbreviate most square and cubic units in the metric system, add the exponent ^{2} for **square** and the exponent ^{3} for **cubic.** For example, **m²** means **square meter**, and **mm³** means **cubic millimeter.** If you use this notation, use it consistently: Use **cm³** rather than **cc** for cubic centimeter.

Abbreviations of Time References

Abbreviations for time read **from a clock** begin with small letters.   Those for **months** and **days of the week** begin with capital letters.   They all end with a period.

These abbreviations are used in charts, calendars, lists, informal writing, and the like.   Spell the words out in standard formal writing.

Clock time: sec.   min.   hr. (sometimes h.)

Days of the Week: Mon.   Tue. (Tues.)   Wed.
          Thu. (Thurs.)   Fri.   Sat.   Sun.

Months: Jan.   Feb.   Mar.   Apr.   Aug.   Sep. (Sept.)   Oct.
          Nov.   Dec.

May, June, and **July** are not normally abbreviated, though sometimes **Jun.** and **Jul.** are used when space is limited to three letters.

A.M. and **P.M.** may either be written in all capital letters or all lower case, but choose one style and stick with it.   **B.C, B.C.E.,** and **A.D.** are always capitalized.   Each letter in all five abbreviations is followed by a period.

These abbreviations may be used in all types of writing but **only** with numbers or a numerical reference.

If you wish to use **B.C., B.C.E.,** or **A.D.** in a sentence referring to a **century**, the abbreviation follows the century.

B.C. and **B.C.E.** always follow the date; **A.D.** may either precede or follow a numerical date. None of these abbreviations are separated by commas.

Incorrect: We will meet in the p.m.
          (OK informally; not standard use, no number.)

Correct: We will meet at 1:15 p.m.

Correct: Alexander ruled in the fourth century B.C.
          (Abbreviation always follows century reference.)

Correct: Charlemagne was crowned in A.D. 800.

Correct: Charlemagne was crowned in 800 A.D.
          (Either way is OK for *A.D.* and a *number.*)

Since **a.m.** means "before noon" and **p.m.** means "after noon," use no other expression of time of day with them.

Incorrect: He arrived at 10 p.m. in the evening.
          (*In the evening* is redundant)

Correct: He arrived at 10 p.m.

Correct: He arrived at 10 in the evening.

Abbreviations of Latin Expressions

Use small letters and periods for most abbreviations of **Latin** terms.   Common   Latin expression like those listed here are not normally underlined or italicized.   They are usually used in bibliographies, footnotes, lists, and references.
In standard writing, use the English equivalent or write out the whole word.
They are usually underlined or italicized in formal references, notes, and bibliographies.

Abbreviation	Equivalent
c., ca.	*circa,* about, around
e.g.	for example
et al.	*et alii,* and the others
etc.	and so on, *note spelling*
et seq.	and the following (usually pages)
f.	and the next page
ff.	and the following pages
i.e.	*id est,* that is
N.B.	*Nota Bene,* note well (capitalize)
op.	*opus,* work (of art)
q.v.	which see
v.	see
v., vs.	*versus*
viz.	*vidilicet,* namely

Correct: William Chaucer (c. 1343-1399)
Incorrect: William Chaucer was born c. 1343.
(Standard sentence, not a reference--write out the word or use the   English equivalent.)
Correct: William Chaucer was born *circa* 1343.
Correct: William Chaucer was born about 1343.

Business Abbreviations

Abbreviations in **business names** begin with a capital letter and end with a period except for the ampersand (**&**).

In formal writing, write out the full name of the business.
The legal abbreviations **Inc.** and **Ltd.** may be abbreviated.

Pronounced Abbreviations

Use all capitals and no periods to abbreviate names and titles when the abbreviations are **pronounced letter by letter.**
Examples: NFL   NEA   AFL-CIO   CBS   IRS   IRA   TV

Use all capitals and no periods for **acronyms.**   Acronyms are abbreviations which have been made into pronounced words.
Examples: OPEC   NAFTA   NATO   BASIC   SCUBA

Using abbreviations such as these is fine in standard writing, but it is a good idea to identify the acronym or abbreviation for your audience the first time word by word so that there is no misunderstanding.
Example: He got into trouble because of his
        involvement in an Individual Retirement Account at work.   His IRA went over the
        limit, and he owed some back taxes.
(This helps just in case, for example, someone were thinking of the Irish Republican Army!)

Punctuation Rules

Click on the topic you seek.   Click on a button above to take you to the   opening screen or to a previous screen.

See also Abbreviations for periods with abbreviations.

Using Periods

Periods end <u>declarative sentences</u> and requests or   mild commands.
Declarative: His name is Joshua.
Request or Mild Command: Please be sure to tell her I am coming.

Periods are used to end most **abbreviations** except for <u>acronyms</u> and   abbreviations which are pronounced.   See <u>Abbreviations Contents</u> for   more information.

If a sentence **ends** with an **abbreviation,** no additional period is needed.   If   the sentence requires a question mark or exclamation point, one may be added   after the period.
Incorrect: Please make the check out to Roland N. Payne,
          D.D.S..
          (Second period at end not needed)
Correct: Please make the check out to Roland N. Payne,
          D.D.S.
Correct: Do I make the check out to Roland N. Payne,
          D.D.S.?

A period is used after numbers and letters in outlines.
Outline: I. Punctuation
          A. Periods
                1. End sentences
                2. Abbreviations
                3. Outlines

A period always comes **before** a **closing quotation mark.**
Incorrect: George said, "I don't get it".
Correct: George said, "I don't get it."

Question Marks

Question marks end all **direct questions.** This includes incomplete   questions and statements intended as questions.
Direct Question: What is your name?
Incomplete Question: Really?   When?   No kidding?
Statement Intended as Question: Your name is Fred?

Sentences which **describe** a question but do not **directly** ask a   question are called **indirect questions.** They do not take a question   mark.
Incorrect: He asked if he could leave early?
        (Describes but does not ask a question)
Correct: He asked if he could leave early.
Correct: He asked, "May I leave early?"
        (In the last one, the question is directly quoted.)

Use a **question mark in parentheses** after a point of fact to show   uncertainty about it. Use **sparingly** and only for items impossible to   verify.
Example: His great-great-grandfather (Nelson
        Bridger?) supposedly fought in the Black Hawk War.
Example: Chaucer was born in 1343 (?).
        (Note that a question mark used this way in not an end mark.   A period is needed.)

See also Question Marks in Quotations

Exclamation Points

Sometimes called the exclamation mark, the **exclamation point** is used at   the end of a sentence or after an interjection to show strong emotion or   emphasis.
Exclamatory sentence: The rain did not stop for four days!
Strong command: Be back at ten o'clock or else!
Interjection: Wow!

When an emphatic interjection or direct address begins a sentence, you may use   an exclamation point or a comma, depending on how much you want to show the   strong emotion.
Correct: No, I don't want to go there.
Correct, more emotion: No, I don't want to go there!
Correct, even more emphasis: No! I don't want to go there!

Beware of overusing exclamation points.   Using them too frequently makes them   less meaningful.

Use of an **exclamation point inside parentheses** is used by some to show   **irony.** Usually, the ironic tone should be clear from the words, but sometimes this special punctuation is added for emphasis.   Some authorities do not consider this construction necessary, and it is of very limited use in most standard English writing.
OK, informal: That butcher (!) is a vegetarian.
       (The punctuation is probably not necessary, but it was placed there to emphasize the irony.)

Commas

Commas are the most frequently used punctuation mark in English.   Originally used to show a pause, they are used nowadays in a variety of   situations to make writing clearer. Click on the topic below for more specific comma rules.

The Three Most Common Comma Rules

While there are **many** specific uses for commas, nearly **eighty-five percent** of the commas used in written English are used in a mere **three** situations.
If you know the basic rule for these three cases, you can use commas in over four-fifths of the times you need to use commas.

1.   Put a comma before a coordinating conjunction that separates two independent clauses.
For more on this, see Commas in Compound Sentences.

2. Put a comma after introductory words, phrases, or clauses in a   sentence.
For more on this, see Commas and Introductory Words, Commas After Introductory Phrases, and Commas After Introductory Clauses.

3. Use commas to set off elements that interrupt or add information in a sentence.
For more on this, see Commas with Interrupting Expressions and Commas with Nonrestrictive Modifiers.

Commas in Compound Sentences

Use a **comma** to separate <u>independent clauses</u> in a   <u>compound sentence</u> when they are separated by a conjunction.
The comma goes after the first clause and before the coordinating conjunction   that separates the clauses.

Make sure they are independent clauses and not some other construction where   commas are not required.

Correct: We washed the dog, and then we cleaned up the
           mess that he made.
(This contains two independent clauses with their own <u>subject</u> and   <u>verb</u>: *We washed* and *we cleaned.*   The third   <u>clause</u>, *that he made,* is a   <u>subordinate clause</u>, so the rule does not apply.)

Incorrect: We washed the dog, and then cleaned up his
           mess.
(There is only one subject.   This is a single clause, not two independent   clauses.   The subject *we* has a compound verb.)
Correct: We washed the dog and then cleaned up his mess.

Commas in a Series

Use commas to separate **three or more** words, <u>phrases,</u> or   <u>clauses</u> in a series.
A **conjunction** goes between the last two items of the series.
While some authorities say that the comma before the conjunction is optional,   leaving it out may cause confusion, so it is better to include it.

Words: Use commas to separate three or more words,
          phrases, or clauses.
Phrases: This morning I woke up, got dressed, brushed
          my teeth, and ate breakfast.
Clauses: In fact, the bus was full of people who got
          dressed, who brushed their teeth, and who ate breakfast this morning.

Incorrect: The street was filled with angry
          protestors, shouting spectators and police.
          (Leaving out the last comma makes it look like the police were   shouting, too.)
Correct: The street was filled with angry
          protestors, shouting spectators, and police.
          (Makes it clearer.)

See also <u>Semicolons in a Series.</u>

Declarative Sentence

A **declarative sentence** states an idea.   It does not give a command or   request, nor does it ask a question.   The sentences in this box are all   declarative sentences.   A declarative sentence usually ends in a period,   though it may end in an exclamation point.

Commas with Paired Adjectives

Coordinate Adjectives
If two adjectives modify a noun **in the same way**, place a comma between   the two adjectives.   These are called **coordinate adjectives.**
There is a two-part test for coordinate adjectives:
(1) Can you replace the comma with the word **and**?
(2) Can you reverse the order of the adjectives and keep the same meaning?
If you can do both, then you have coordinate adjectives.   Correct: Did you read about Macomber's short, happy
life?
Test for Correctness: Did you read about Macomber's
short and happy life?
Did you read about Macomber's happy, short life?
(All three sentences say the same thing, so the adjectives are coordinate   adjectives and separated by commas in the original.)

Cumulative Adjectives
If the paired adjectives fail the two-part test, then no comma is used.   This   shows that they must remain in a certain order to make sense.   These are   called **cumulative adjectives.**

Incorrect: The former, overweight woman told us
how she lost fifty-five pounds.
Test for Correctness: The former and overweight woman...
(Makes no sense)
The overweight, former woman...
(A former woman? At best the meaning is changed.)

Clearly, no comma is needed for these cumulative adjectives.
Correct: The former overweight woman told us how
she lost fifty-five pounds.

A device to help remember this punctuation rule is to keep in mind a common   expression like *Christmas tree* or *fire truck.* We say, "green Christmas tree,"   but not "Christmas green tree."   We say, "red fire truck," but not "fire red   truck."   Such cumulative expressions take no comma.

Commas and Introductory Words or Phrases

Commas are used to set off certain items that often begin a sentence **and** have no grammatical connection with the rest of the sentence. These items include certain common expressions, unemphatic interjections, and direct addresses.

Common Expression: But of course, we have mustard in
      the car.

Unemphatic Interjection: Yes, we have no bananas.

Direct Address: Robert, please hand the man some
      mustard.

All three of these items are set off by commas no matter where they appear in the sentence. If they are not used at the beginning, the sentence often sounds more awkward.

Correct: Please, Robert, hand the gentleman some
      mustard.

Correct: We have mustard in our car, of course.

Introductory adverbs are normally set off by a comma **unless** they are followed directly by the word they modify.

Correct: Clearly, one and one make two.

Incorrect: Clearly, mistaken was the witness.
      (*Clearly* modifies *mistaken* which directly
      follows it because of a change in the word order.)

Correct: Clearly mistaken was the witness.

See also Commas After <u>Introductory Phrases</u> and <u>Introductory Clauses</u>.

Commas After Introductory Phrases

Prepositional Phrases
Use a comma to separate a group of <u>prepositional phrases</u> of   more than four words when the <u>phrases</u> come at the beginning of a sentence.
Do not use a comma between separate phrases unless they are in a <u>series</u>.
A comma may also set off a single prepositional phrase at the beginning to   make the sentence clear.   A comma is recommended after any introductory prepositional phrase of more than four words.
Correct: Under the kitchen table the dog cowered.
          (Single short, clear phrase.   No comma needed.)
Correct: Under the spreading chestnut tree, the
          village smithy stands.
          (Comma optional, but helpful due to length of phrase)
Correct: Under the pile of clothes, we found his wallet.
          (Two prepositional phrases, not in a series)
Incorrect: On the sand, of the beach, by the
          inlet, we relaxed in the sun.
          (Do not separate the phrases since they are not in a series.)
Correct: On the sand of the beach by the inlet, we
          relaxed in the sun.
Correct: Over hill, over dale, we hit the dusty trail.
          (The two phrases are in series here.)

Introductory Participial and Infinitive Phrases
Use a comma to separate introductory <u>participial phrases</u> and <u>infinitive phrases</u> used as modifiers.
Correct: Looking for help, the man fell on his knees
          to beg.   (Participial phrase)
Correct: To raise enough money in time, Mary had to
          issue stock in her business.
          (The infinitive phrase is used as a modifier)
Incorrect: To ski, is exhilarating.
          (The infinitive is used as a noun, not a modifier.)
Correct: To ski is exhilarating.

Participle and Participial Phrase

A **participle** is a verb _used_ as an adjective. The are two kinds of participles. The **past participle** has the past form of the verb which would go with the verb **have** and would usually end in **-ed.** The **present participle** ends in **-ing.**

A **participial phrase** is the participle plus any complements and modifiers of the participle and complements. In this box the participle is italicized and the participial phrase is underlined.

Complement

The word **complement** has the same root as the word **complete.**

A **complement** is a word that follows a verb and completes the meaning of the sentence or verbal phrase. In English, the complements are <u>direct object</u>, <u>indirect object</u>, <u>predicate nominative</u>, <u>predicate adjective</u>, and <u>object complement</u>.

Predicate Adjective

A **predicate adjective** is an adjective which follows the verb and   describes or renames the subject.   It is another way of modifying the subject. It follows a linking verb.

The sea is *calm* tonight.

Infinitive

An **infinitive** is the simple present form of a verb used as either a **noun, adjective,** or **adverb.** The verb of the infinitive is normally preceded by the word **to.** When the infinitive follows some verbs as the <u>direct object</u>, the **to** may be dropped.

An **infinitive phrase** is the infinitive plus any <u>complements</u> and any modifiers of the infinitive and complements.

As a Noun: He helped <u>*to write* the program.</u>

As an Adjective: Lydia was looking for a way <u>*to earn* money.</u>

As an Adverb: He shouted <u>*to get* our attention.</u>

To Dropped: He helped <u>*write* the program.</u>

In the above examples, the infinitive is italicized and the infinitive phrase is underlined.

Commas After Introductory Clauses

Place a comma after an **introductory adverb clause.**
An adverb <u>clause</u> shows **time, place, degree, extent, cause,** or **condition.**   It is a
<u>subordinate clause</u> which begins with a subordinating conjunction.
Correct: Before the curtain fell, the actors bowed.
Correct: If the next two nights are sellouts, the play
          will be extended.

Note that if a sentence **ends** with an adverb clause, no comma is used.   The subordinating
conjunction is enough of a separation.
Incorrect: The play's run will be extended, if the
          next two nights are sellouts.
(No comma needed with adverb clause at end of sentence.) Correct: The play's run will be
extended if the
          next two nights are sellouts.

Commas with Interrupting and Parenthetical Expressions

In addition to the items covered in <u>Commas with Introductory Words</u>, **conjunctive adverbs** are   also set off by commas.

Conjunctive Adverbs are adverbs which join sentence parts.   The following words are the most common conjunctive adverbs:

> **also   besides   furthermore   however   indeed   instead   moreover   nevertheless   otherwise   therefore   thus**

Correct: John headed this way; however, he did not see me.
Correct: John headed this way; he did not see me, however.

Some adverbs which are used conjunctively may at times be used as a simple   adverb. They are only set off by commas when used conjunctively or when some   other comma rule applies.

Correct: John saw Kate; also, he saw Jean.
> (*Also* here is joining the sentence parts.)

Incorrect: John saw Kate; he, also, saw Jean.
> (*Also* here is simply modifying *saw.*)

Correct: John saw Kate; he also saw Jean.

Commas also set off **contrasting expressions** beginning with **not.**

Correct: I wanted this one, not that one.
Correct: We went to New Hampshire, not New Jersey, for our vacation.

Commas with Nonrestrictive Modifiers

A modifying word, <u>phrase</u>, or <u>clause</u> following a **noun** is set off by commas **if** it presents information which is **not**   essential to identify the noun or the meaning of the sentence. This is called a **nonrestrictive modifier,** i.e., it does not restrict   the meaning of the noun or sentence.

Example: Any student not sitting down will get detention.
   (This takes no comma because the phrase **not sitting down** is necessary to identify the noun.   Remove it, and you get something very different.)
   Any student will get a detention.

Example: Marcia Gomes, who was not sitting down, just got a   detention.
   (Here the person is named specifically.   We know whom the sentence is about. The clause **who was not sitting down** does add information, but it is not necessary to identify the noun it   modifies.   Drop the clause and we still know who got the punishment.)
   Marcia Gomes just got a detention.

Sometimes, the punctuation may depend on the situation.   For example, **if** I   have just **one** sister, or the reader already knows who I am talking about, this   sentence is correct:
   My sister, Martha, is a nurse.
However, **if** I have more than one sister and it is not otherwise clear who I am   talking about, her name is **essential** to identify the sister.
   My sister Martha is a nurse.
Or perhaps to make it clearer:
   My sister Martha is a nurse; my sister Marianne is a teacher.

See also <u>Dashes with Nonrestrictive Modifiers.</u>

Commas with Geographical Names

When a geographical name or location has two or more parts to it, use a comma after each different type of part.   A second comma follows the last item, unless it comes at the end of the sentence.

Incorrect: I meant Pittsburg Kansas instead of Pittsburgh
        Pennsylvania.
        (Commas needed to separate city and state)

Incorrect: I meant Pittsburg, Kansas instead of Pittsburgh,
        Pennsylvania.
        (Comma needed after last item, *Kansas*)

Correct: I meant Pittsburg, Kansas, instead of Pittsburgh,
        Pennsylvania.

If the parts are joined by a preposition, no comma is needed.

Incorrect: I meant Pittsburg, in Kansas, instead of
        Pittsburgh, in Pennsylvania.

Correct: I meant Pittsburg in Kansas instead of Pittsburgh
        in Pennsylvania.

Commas with Dates

When a date is made up of two or more parts, use a comma to separate the parts **when** the parts **both** are words or **both** are numbers.   A second   comma follows the last item unless it is at the end of a list or sentence.

Incorrect: We will meet Friday July 15.
            (Word *Friday* followed by another word,
            July--comma needed)
Correct: We will meet Friday, July 15.
Incorrect: October 31, 1517 is one of the most significant
            dates in history.
            (The comma between the two numbers is OK, but a second comma is needed
            after the last item, *1517*.)
Correct: October 31, 1517, is one of the most significant
            dates in history.
Incorrect: October, 1517, was a watershed month in history.
            (No commas needed because word *October* is followed by a number, *1517*.)
Correct: October 1517 was a watershed month in history.

If the parts of the date are connected by a <u>preposition</u>, no comma is needed.
Incorrect: On a Sunday, in December 1941, the U.S. found
            itself in World War II.
            (No comma needed since the preposition *in* is there.)
Correct: On a Sunday in December 1941, the U.S. found
            itself in World War II.

Commas with Titles that Follow Names

Each title that follows a name is set off by commas.
Incorrect: Kenneth Griffey Jr. could have broken Maris'
       record.
Correct: Kenneth Griffey, Jr., could have broken Maris'
       record.
Correct, if pompous: The book was written by John Kenneth
       Galbraith, A.B., M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., Litt.D.
       (Note that each title is set off by commas.)

Numerical titles following a name are **not** set off by commas.
Incorrect: Aloysius Otto Culp, III, is better known as "Buzz."
Correct: Aloysius Otto Culp III is better known as "Buzz."

See also <u>Abbreviations after Names</u>

Commas in Addresses

Use a comma to separate each part of an address that has two or more parts.   This follows the same pattern as <u>geographical names</u>.
Commas are not needed if prepositions join the address parts.
Incorrect: Write me in care of Post Office Box 203 Shelton
        Connecticut 06484.
        (Commas needed)
Correct: Write me in care of Post Office Box 203, Shelton,
        Connecticut 06484.
        (Comma after state or province and before postal code is optional.)

If the address is on an envelope or is otherwise written out line by line, no   comma is needed when a new line begins.
Incorrect: P.O. Box 203,
      Shelton, Conn. 06484
      (Comma after first line not necessary)
Correct: P.O. Box 203
      Shelton, Conn. 06484

See <u>Abbreviations for States and Provinces</u> for abbreviations and   rules on using two-letter postal service abbreviations.

Commas in Letter Writing

Use commas after the **salutation (**also called the **greeting)** in a **personal** letter and after the **complimentary closing** in all letters.

Salutation: Dear Fred,
           My dearest Emmeline,
Closing: Sincerely,
       Truly yours,

See also Letter Writing topic in <u>Contents</u>, <u>Capitalization in Letters</u>, and <u>Colons in Special Cases</u>

Commas in Numbers

In numbers of more than three digits, use a comma after every third digit from   right to left.
Incorrect: The area of North America is approximately
9435000 square miles.
Correct: The area of North America is approximately
9,435,000 square miles.
(This is much easier to read.)

Numbers which normally do **not** take commas are ZIP codes,   phone numbers, page numbers, serial numbers, house numbers, and dates of   years.

Many **European** countries use a comma in place of the   decimal point and use periods or blank spaces to separate every third digit.
United States: 2,367.48 francs
France: 2.367,48 francs or 2 367,48 francs

Commas with Certain Words Omitted

Words intentionally left out of clauses may be shown by a comma.   A comma is   used when the missing words are clearly understood.

Incorrect: George liked the color green; John red.
          (Confusing)
Correct: George liked the color green; John, red.
          (Now missing words are understood.)

See Pronouns with Elliptical Clauses for clauses with missing   words where a comma to show missing words is not used.

Commas with Quotations

Commas are used to set off the **"he said/she said" clause.** The comma always goes **before** the quotation marks.
Incorrect: Henrietta asked "Do you want to go with me?"
      (Comma must set off "she said" clause.)
Incorrect: Henrietta asked",Do you want to go with me?"
      (Comma must go before quotation mark.)
Correct: Henrietta asked,"Do you want to go with me?"
Incorrect: "I will go with you",Jane replied.
      (Comma must go before quotation mark.)
Correct: "I will go with you,"Jane replied.
Correct: "Anyway," she said, "I have to go."
      (Note the pattern when the clause is in the middle.)

A comma is **not** used to set off a "he said/she said" clause if the part of the quotation preceding the clause ends with a question mark or exclamation point.
Incorrect: "Why did you do that?," he asked.
      (Comma not necessary)
Correct: "Why did you do that?" he asked.
Correct: "Hey!" he screamed. "Come back here!"
      (Note that the question mark or exclamation
      point goes with the quotation, not with the "he said/she said" clause.)

Adding Commas for Clarity

Sometimes it is necessary to add a comma to make a sentence clear.

Unclear: In the kitchen cupboards were empty.
          (Make it clear that the phrase is "in the kitchen,"
          not "in the kitchen cupboards.")
Clear: In the kitchen, cupboards were empty.

Unclear: The room was full of crying babies and mothers.
          (Were the mothers crying, too?)
Clear: The room was full of crying babies, and mothers.
Clear: The room was full of mothers and crying babies.

Commas with Adjectives Following Nouns

Sometimes for emphasis adjectives or paired adjectives **follow** the noun they modify. The adjective or adjective pair is then set off by commas.

Correct: The car, bright red, stood out in the parking lot.

The adjective pair, if coordinate adjectives, must use the word **and** to separate the two adjectives.

Correct: The dessert, sweet and rich, was delightful.

For more on cumulative and coordinate adjectives, see Paired Adjectives.

When *Not* to Use Commas

With Compound Verbs
Do not use a comma to separate the paired parts in paired compound <u>subjects</u> or compound <u>verbs.</u>
Incorrect: She lets me watch her mom, and pop fight.
       (Compound subject.   No need for comma
       with the word *and* already there.
Correct: She lets me watch her mom and pop fight.
Incorrect: They would argue over money, and scream
       about his late nights.
       (Compound verb.   No need for comma
       to separate the words *fight* and *scream.*)
Correct: They would argue over money and scream
       about his late nights.

With Subordinate Clauses
Commas do **not** set off <u>subordinate clauses</u> unless some specific comma rule applies, namely they are clauses in a <u>series</u>, or the clauses are functioning as <u>appositives</u>, <u>nonrestrictive modifiers</u>, or <u>introductory adverb clauses</u>.
Incorrect: He told me that I had better come, or
       else something terrible would happen.
       (Not a series. Not an appositive, nonrestrictive
       modifier, or introductory adverb clause.)
Correct: He told me that I had better come or
       else something terrible would happen.

With Nouns and Modifying Adjectives
Do not use commas to separate a noun and its modifying adjectives when the adjectives come before the noun.
Incorrect: The bright red, car was a Corvette.
Correct: The bright red car was a Corvette.

For more on punctuation of modifying adjectives see <u>Nonrestrictive Modifiers</u>, <u>Paired Adjectives</u>,
and <u>Adjectives Following Nouns</u>.

Semicolons and Colons

Semicolons and colons were originally used to designate pauses shorter than a   period and longer than a comma.   Now they are used to show certain grammatical   relationships with the colon the more emphatic of the two.

Semicolons with Clauses

Semicolons are used to **separate** <u>independent clauses</u> in   three different cases.

1. When there are **no conjunctions** separating the clauses.
Incorrect: I like you, John likes you, too.
          (Semicolon needed)
Correct: I like you; John likes you, too.

2. When the clauses are separated by a conjunctive adverb or   other <u>parenthetical expression set off by commas.</u>
Correct: I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless,
          I live.--Galatians 2:20.
          (*Nevertheless* is a conjunctive adverb.)
Correct: Hector was a Trojan; Achilles, on the
          hand, was an Achaean.

3. When the <u>clauses</u> themselves contain commas.
Incorrect: He wears shoes with kilties, a leather
          fringe, but I prefer penny loafers myself.
          (Since clause already has comma, semicolon
          separating the clauses is needed to make sentence clear.)
Correct: He wears shoes with kilties, a leather
          fringe; but I prefer penny loafers myself.

Semicolons in a Series

When the items in a **series** themselves contain commas, separate the items   with semicolons.

Incorrect: We visited Erie, Pennsylvania, Buffalo,
            New York, and Toronto, Ontario.
            (Confusing.   Semicolons needed to make clear
            distinctions.)
Correct: We visited Erie, Pennsylvania; Buffalo,
            New York; and Toronto, Ontario.

See also <u>Commas in a Series</u>.

Colons with Lists

Use a colon **before a list** when the list is preceded by a <u>complete independent clause</u>.
Never use a colon to separate a <u>preposition</u> from its   objects or a verb from its <u>complements</u>.
Some form of the word **follow** usually indicates a colon before the list.

Correct: John has all the ingredients: minced clams, milk, potatoes, and onions.
(The list is preceded by a complete independent clause.)

Incorrect: For their anniversary they went to: Aruba St. Martin, Jamaica, and the Bahamas.
(The colon separates the preposition *to* from its objects.)

Correct: For their anniversary they went to Aruba St. Martin, Jamaica, and the Bahamas.
(No colon needed)

Incorrect: To make clam chowder you need: minced clams, milk, potatoes, and onions.
(The colon separates the verb *need* from its complements.)

Correct: To make <u>clam chowder</u> you need minced clams milk, potatoes, and onions.
(No colon needed)

Either incorrect sentence above could also be corrected by adding a form of   the verb **follow.**

Correct: For their anniversary they went to the following places: Aruba, St. Martin, Jamaica, and the Bahamas.
(Now the word *places* is the object of the preposition *to,* and the colon follows a complete independent clause.

Correct: To make clam chowder you need the following: minced clams, milk, potatoes, and onions.
(Now *the following* is the object of the the verb, and the list follows a complete clause.)

Colons Before Quotations

Colons introduce quotations that are formal or lengthy.

Correct: Dickens wrote: "It was the best of times, it was
the worst of times."
(Formal quotation)

Colons introduce quotations that do **not** begin with a "he said/she said" <u>clause.</u>

Correct: Alexandra took the microphone: "Your honor,
I object."
(Clause preceding quotation does not have
a verb which denotes speaking.)

In all cases, the colon **precedes** the quotation marks.

Colons Separating Independent Clauses

Colons **may** be used to separate <u>independent clauses</u> that   are not separated by a conjunction or any other connecting word or phrase.

Semicolons are normally used, but the colon adds emphasis, especially if the   first clause leads into the second clause or has a parallel construction.

The second clause begins with a capital letter.

Correct: Apples are not squeezed: Pomace is pressed.

See also <u>Semicolons with Clauses</u> and <u>Special Capitalizing Cases.</u>

New England Clam Chowder

2 to 4 c. drained, chopped clams (reserve broth)
4 oz. diced salt pork or bacon
2 small onions chopped fine
2 medium potatoes, chopped
2 c. light cream (or cream/milk mixture)
Salt and Pepper (white pepper preferred)

Fry salt pork till crisp.   Remove meat with slotted spoon.   Add onion to remaining fat in pan and cook three minutes.   Add potatoes.   Add enough clam broth and/or water to almost cover potatoes.   Cook over low heat till potatoes are tender.   Add clams and cook for just two minutes after water returns to boil.   Add heated, not boiled, cream.   Season to taste. Stir, let stand a few minutes and serve in heated bowls.   May be frozen or reheated, but do not boil.

Colons with Formal Appositives

Use a colon instead of a comma to introduce an <u>appositive</u> at **the end of a sentence** for emphasis.
Appositives may be words, <u>phrases</u>, or <u>clauses</u>.   If it is   an <u>independent clause</u>, that clause begins with a capital   letter.

Correct: He was watching his favorite type of
          television show: a baseball game.
          (A comma is fine, but a colon here provides
          emphasis and/or formality.)
Correct: He learned a valuable lesson: Never argue
          with a woman.
          (The appositive here is an independent clause,
          so it is capitalized.   See <u>Special Capitalizing Cases.</u>)

Colons in Special Cases

There are half a dozen special uses for the colon.

1. Numerical expressions of time.
Example: 5:31 p.m.
The colon goes between the hour and minute.   If seconds are noted, a colon goes between the minute and second.
Example: He ran the marathon in 2:14:33.2.
          (Two hours, fourteen minutes, and thirty-three point two seconds.)
Example: He ran the mile in 4:12.
          (Four minutes and twelve seconds)

2. Periodical references in a bibliography or formal reference.
This may vary slightly depending on the form followed.   Most frequently the reference is Volume:Issue Number or Volume:Page Number.

3. Bible references, Chapter:Verse.
Example: John 3:16
          ("The book of John, chapter 3, verse 16.")

4. Subtitles for books, periodicals, and articles are preceded by a colon.
Example: *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*
See also Capitalizing Titles of Things.

5. Salutations in **business letters** are followed by a colon.
Example: Dear Sir:
          Dear Ms. Hathaway:
See also Capitalizing in Letters, Commas in Letters, and the "Letters Writing" heading in the Table of Contents.

6. Colons follow labels that identify important ideas meant to get attention.
          Warning: To be opened by authorized personnel only.
          Notice: Do not used before October 15.
This is actually the rule that **Grammar Slammer** follows for   displaying "Correct," "Incorrect," and the like for pointing   out its examples.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks normally come in pairs to set off a portion of text for a   variety of purposes.   Paired single quotation marks are sometimes used as   well.

Quotations Marks in Direct Quotations

When a person or work is quoted **directly** and **word for word,** the   quotation is placed in **quotation marks.**
An **indirect quotation** in which the substance but **not** exact wording   is used does **not** take quotations marks.

Correct: Macbeth said, "All our yesterdays have lighted
       fools the way to dusty death."
       (A direct quotation)
Incorrect: Macbeth said that, "Their past actions lead fools
       to death."
       (Contains the substance, but not exact words.
       Quotation marks are not used.)
Correct: Macbeth said that their past actions lead fools
       to death.

See Quotation Marks Index for more on quotation marks.

Question Marks or Exclamation Points in Quotations

If a **question** or **exclamation** is quoted **directly,** the quotation contains the   question mark or exclamation point.
If the question or exclamation is at the end of the quotation, the question mark or exclamation point comes **before** the closing quotation mark.
Incorrect: "Look at that"! he exclaimed. "Did you see
        that"?
Correct: "Look at that!" he exclaimed. "Did you see that?"
        (Question mark or exclamation point comes
        before quotation mark.)

A question mark can be found outside the quotation mark **if** the sentence   is asking **about** a quotation, but the quotation itself is not a question.
Incorrect: Did Mark Antony say, "Friends, Romans,
        countrymen?"
        (A question is not being quoted.   The speaker
        is **asking** about a quotation.
Correct: Did Mark Antony say, "Friends, Romans,
        countrymen"?

In the rare case where the question is about a quotation ending in a question, the sentence ends with a single question mark before the quotation mark.
Incorrect: Who said,"*Et tu, Bruté?*"?
        (Second question mark redundant)
Correct: Who said,"*Et tu, Bruté?*"

See also Question Marks and Quotations with Other Punctuation Marks.

Other Punctuation Marks with Quotation Marks

Always place a comma or period before beginning or ending quotation marks.
Incorrect: "Ned", he requested", please take this to
        Mr. Green".
Correct: "Ned," he requested,"please take this to
        Mr. Green."

Always place a colon or semicolon **after** ending quotation marks.   (This is relatively rare.)
Correct: George claimed,"I have twenty points"; Bill
        said he only had twelve.

See also Question Marks and Exclamation Points in Quotations, Colons with Quotations, and Commas with Quotations.

Quotation Marks in Dialogue

Begin a **new paragraph** with **every** change of speaker.
Incorrect: "Hello, Mary," Jeffrey stammered.   "Hi,
          Jeffrey, how are you?" "Uh, fine.   What have you been doing lately?"
Correct: "Hello, Mary," Jeffrey stammered.
          "Hi, Jeffrey, how are you?"
          "Uh, fine.   What have you been doing lately?"

For quotations **longer** than a single paragraph, put quotation marks at the   **beginning** of each paragraph but **only** at the end of the **final**   quoted word.
This is the only case in which an opening quotation mark may not have a   matching closing quotation mark.
Example:
          Carton continued: "I see that child who lay upon
her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning his way up in that path of life which once was mine.   I see him winning it so well, that my name is made illustrious there by the bright light of his.   I see the blots I threw upon it faded away.   I see him, foremost of thee just judges and honored men, bringing a boy of my name, with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place--then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement--and I hear him tell the child my story, with a tender and faltering voice.
          "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I
have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."
          (Because the quotation is longer than a paragraph, note that the first paragraph
          has no closing quotation marks.   Quotation marks do open the next paragraph to
          show that the quotation continues.)

Quotation Marks in Titles

Use quotation marks to set off the title of a **short** written work or **parts** of a longer work. Short works include short stories, chapters from a book, one-act plays, short   poems, essays, songs, and articles.
Parts of a longer work include episodes in a series, songs, parts of a longer   music composition, or an item named as part of a collection.
Examples:

"The Highwayman"	(poem)
"The Star-Spangled Banner"	(song)
"The Dead" by James Joyce	(short story)
"Dan Quayle Was Right"	(article)
"The Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy"	(part of longer work)

See also <u>Titles with Italics.</u>

Quotation Marks with Slang

Nonstandard or unusual **slang** terms are normally put in quotation marks.

Keep in mind what is slang today may be widely used tomorrow.   For example, when people first started getting arrested for using crack cocaine when it was a   new product in the 1980's, news reports usually put the word "crack" in quotation   marks.   It was a slang term that many readers did not recognize.   Now the term is widely used and   the quotation marks are no longer used.

Example: He got in trouble with the gang for
         "dropping dimes."
         ("Dropping dimes" is a slang term for *informing.*)

Definitions in Quotation Marks

Explicit **definitions** of words or terms are put in quotation marks.

Such definitions may or may not be direct quotations from a dictionary or   similar source.
Definitions that follow such expressions as **means, defines,** or **is defined as** are normally put in quotation marks.   This highlights or   emphasizes the definition.
Definitions that follow the verb **to be** normally are not put in quotation   marks since such definitions are seen as the same as a <u>predicate nominative.</u>.

Examples: A *kiltie* is a fringed leather flap found
on some shoes.
(The verb *to be* is used.)
Kiltie means "a fringed leather flap found on some shoes."
Kiltie is defined as "a fringed leather flap found on some shoes."

Single Quotation Marks

Use single quotation marks for a quotation or title using quotation marks   **inside** another quotation or title which uses quotation marks.
Incorrect: She asked, "How many of you have read
          "The Lady of Shallott"?"
          ("The Lady of Shallott" is a poem.   Same kind
          of quotation mark confuses reader.)
Correct: She asked, "How many of you have read
          'The Lady of Shallott'?"

For titles or quotations within quotations within quotations (and so *ad infinitum*), **alternate** double and single quotation marks.
Example: Helen said,"She asked us,'How many of you
          have read "The Lady of Shallott"?'   I had."
          (The most the author has seen is **five** levels of quotations in *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and *The Metamorphoses* by Ovid.)

Note: In the British Isles the **use** of the single and double quotation marks is **reversed** from the way they are used in the United States.   There the normal quotations and short titles are within single quotation marks.   Double quotation marks are used for titles or quotations within quotation marks.

Underlining and Italicizing

Underlining words and ***Italicizing*** words in standard written English   mean **the same thing.**
Handwriting and typing normally show underlining.   Typesetting for print   usually uses italics.   Most computers can go either way.
Whichever way is chosen, be consistent and keep the same style throughout.
Grammar Slammer normally uses *italics* because of the Help   file convention of using underlining to show a jump spot or popup box.

Underlining Titles
Underlining Names
Underlining Foreign Words or Abbreviations
Underlining Words for Emphasis
Underlining Items Which Name Themselves
Titles Which Take No Punctuation
Scientific Nomenclature

Underlining or Italicizing Titles

Titles of **longer** written works are underlined or italicized.
Longer written works include books, full-length plays, films, longer musical   compositions, and periodicals.
Incorrect (speaking of the musical): I like Oklahoma.
      (The state?)
Incorrect: I like "Oklahoma."
      (The song?)
Correct: I like *Oklahoma.*   OR
      I like <u>Oklahoma.</u>
      (The title of a longer work is italicized or underlined.)
Correct: I liked *Macbeth,* but not Macbeth.
      (I liked the **play** Macbeth, but not the character of that name.)
Correct: *Time* magazine carried a review of
    Blade Runner, the film based on the novel *Do Androids Dream   of Mechanical Sheep?*
    (The periodical, film, and book title are all italicized or underlined.   Note that   the question mark is italicized also because it is part of the title.)

Titles of radio and television **series** as well as **works of art** are underlined.
Correct: Rodin's *The Thinker*
Correct: We used to watch reruns of *Gilligan's Island.*
Correct: My favorite *Star Trek* episode is "The
      Trouble with Tribbles."
      (Note the last one--the series is italicized; the episode is in   quotation marks.)

See also <u>Underlining and Italicizing</u>, <u>Italicized Names</u>, and <u>Titles with Quotation Marks</u>.

If an italicized or underlined name or title appears in the title of a work or some   other writing which is otherwise italicized or underlined, the writer has a   **choice:**
1. Normally the specific item reverts to standard type.   This is always done   in bibliographies and formal references.
Example: *A Commentary on* Piers Plowman
      (Book title contains name of another book)
2. Or you may italicize or underline the title or otherwise italicized or   underlined writing without regard to the further italicized words.   This may   be necessary to avoid confusion.
Example: *A Commentary on Piers Plowman* helped me
      understand that medieval work.
      (Using the style of #1 for this would be more
      likely to confuse the reader.)

Underlining or Italicizing Names

Underline the specific name of **individual** air, sea, space, and land   craft.
Examples:
  Challenger   (space)
  Captain Bligh commanded the *Bounty*   (sea)
  He called the Chevy *Greased Lightning.*   (land)

If an italicized or underlined name appears in the title of a work or some   other writing which is otherwise italicized or underlined, the writer has a   **choice:**
1. Normally the specific item reverts to standard type.   This is always done   in bibliographies and formal references.
Example: *Mutiny on the* Bounty by Nordhoff and Hall
       (Book title contains name of ship)
2. Or you may italicize or underline the title or otherwise italicized or   underlined writing without regard to the further italicized words.   This may   be necessary to avoid confusion.
Example: The *Mutiny on the Bounty* film starred
       Marlon Brando.
       (Using the style of #1 for this would be more
       likely to confuse the reader.)

Underlining or Italicizing Foreign Words or Abbreviations

Underline or italicize **foreign** words or abbreviations unless they are   regularly used in English.

Because the English language is very flexible, it may sometimes be hard to   tell whether some words are widely used.   Check any word or phrase you have a   question about in a dictionary.

Clearly words like **champagne** or **chimpanzee** or an abbreviation like **etc.** are not native English words, but they are   widely used so underlining words like them is not necessary.

Incorrect: That was a pro bono legal brief.

Correct: That was a *pro bono* legal brief.

(Legal term from Latin, used by lawyers but otherwise not common.)

Underlining or Italicizing Words for Emphasis

Underline or italicize words which you want to emphasize.   In printing and on   many computers this may also be accomplished by **bolder print.**

The emphasis either is because of special information the writer to wants to   call to the reader's attention or because the word or words are meant be stressed in speech.

Examples: He insists that *two* men saw him.
          (Information the writer wants to call attention to)
          You said *what* to Mr. Blank?
          (Word meant to be stressed in speech)

Underlining or Italicizing Items Which Name Themselves

Underline or italicize numbers, symbols, letters, and words which name   themselves (or which are used as the figure or word).

Incorrect: "Give me a C!" the cheerleader shouted.
       (The letter is used as a letter, it names itself.)
Correct: "Give me a *C*!" the cheerleader shouted.

Incorrect: His 2's look like 7's.
       (The numbers are being referred to as figures; they are not numbering   anything.)
Correct: His *2*'s look like *7*'s.

Incorrect: How do you spell shepherd?
       (The sentence is not about shepherds but about the **word** *shepherd.*)
Correct: How do you spell *shepherd*?

Titles with No Punctuation

Do **not** underline, italicize, or place in quotation marks the name of the   Bible, its books, divisions, or version, or other religious Scriptures and   their divisions or versions.
In I Corinthians the Bible says that the
         greatest eternal value is love.
         (The Bible and its book take no special punctuation.)
The Talmud's tractate Sanhedrin discusses the
         laws and history of Jewish religious leadership.
         (The scriptural Talmud and its division,
         Sanhedrin, take no special punctuation.)

Do **not** underline, italicize, or place in quotation marks the title of any government document including charters, treaties, acts, statutes, or reports.
The Declaration of Independence
         The North American Free Trade Agreement
         The Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972

See also Capitalization Rules for capitalizing names and titles.

Dashes and Parentheses

Dashes and Parentheses are both used to show an interruption in thought or   some kind of aside.   Dashes are more emphatic.   Parentheses are normally   paired.   Both should be used sparingly or they become a distraction.   Parentheses also have a few special uses.

Dashes

A **dash** is a **long** horizontal mark twice the length of a hyphen.   On   most typewriters and computers dashes are represented by typing two hyphens.
Dashes are **emphatic.**   They are nearly like emphatic parentheses.
To be effective, dashes, like exclamation points, should not be overused.

Dashes indicate an **abrupt change of thought.**
Sometimes they set off a clause or phrase for emphasis or dramatic effect.
Change of thought: I loved the dinner last night--have you
          you ever been to Chez Louis?
Set off statement for emphasis: Punctuation marks can be
          confusing--commas, dashes, hyphens, colons!

See also <u>Parentheses</u> and <u>Dashes with Nonrestrictive Modifiers</u>.

Dashes with Nonrestrictive Modifiers

Commas are normally used to set off <u>nonrestrictive modifiers</u>.
However, nonrestrictive modifiers can be set off by **dashes** for **emphasis** or if the modifiers contain commas or other punctuation that   could confuse the reader.

Incorrect: Some expensive films, *Heaven's Gate,* for
           example, have been big flops.
           (Relationships not clear)
Correct: Some expensive films--*Heaven's Gate,* for
           example--have been big flops.
           (Modifier itself has a comma.)

See also <u>Commas with Nonrestrictive Modifiers</u>.

Parentheses

Parentheses set off material not essential to the meaning of the text.
They are used for asides and explanations when the material is not essential   or if it is made up of more than one sentence.
Parentheses may contain a complete sentence or sentences.
Example: He had to go through the usual process to get his bus driver's license (police and FBI check, reference   check, motor vehicle check, written exam, mechanical test, and driving test).
> (This could be set off by a colon for more emphasis since it is a list   or by a dash for strong emphasis.   But since the sentence says "the usual   process," there is no need to emphasize anything.)

See also <u>Dashes</u> and <u>Capitalizing and Punctuation in Parentheses.</u>

Parentheses with Certain Numbers or Letters

Parentheses are used **around** numbers showing dates (usually dates of birth   and/or death), inserted figures, or numbers or letters in an itemized series (such as a series of steps).

Date: Joshua Chamberlain (1829-1914) received the
Congressional Medal of Honor for his role at Gettysburg.

Inserted figures: The Senate vote was very close (50-48).

Numbers in a series: To make New England Clam
<u>Chowder</u> get the following items: (1) quahogs, (2) cream, (3) potatoes, and (4) onions.

Letters in a series: What was Hamlet's mother's name?
(a) Ophelia   (b) Beatrice   (c) Gertrude
(d) Helena

A **single closing parenthesis** follows the number or letter in specific   divisions of a formal outline.

Example:
 I. Grammar
    A. Punctuation
        1. Parentheses
            a. Parentheses with interrupting elements
            b. Parentheses with certain numbers or letters
                1) Dates
                2) Inserted figures
                3) Itemized series
                    a) Numbers
                    b) Letters

Capitalizing and Punctuating Inside Parentheses

When a parenthetical phrase or sentence interrupts the middle of a sentence,   do **not** capitalize the first letter inside the parentheses unless, of   course, the word is a proper noun or proper adjective.
Example: We saw Roseate Spoonbills (they have an
        exquisite pink color) on our trip to Texas.

The first letter in a parenthetical **question** or **exclamation** is   always capitalized.
Incorrect: We saw Brown Pelicans (have you ever seen
        one?) along the shore there.
Correct: We saw Brown Pelicans (Have you ever seen
        one?) along the shore there.

A parenthetical **sentence** that goes **between** two sentences of text uses **both** an initial capital letter and an end mark (period, question   mark, or exclamation point) **inside** the parentheses.
Incorrect: We took a trip to Texas. (it is a big state)!
        There we saw many Brown Pelicans.
Correct: We took a trip to Texas. (It is a big state!)
        There we saw many Brown Pelicans.

In a sentence containing a parenthetical expression, any punctuation belonging   to the main sentence goes **outside** the parentheses.
Incorrect: It was a real heat wave (five days over 100°!)
Correct: It was a real heat wave (five days over 100°)!
Correct: We saw Jerry, Ed (Tom's brother), and
        Julius there last night.

Hyphens

A **hyphen** is a short horizontal line used **within** words.   (The longer   **dash** is used **between** words.)
Hyphens are used in a variety of situations.

[Numbers Written Out with Hyphens](#)
[Hyphenated Prefixes and Suffixes](#)
[Hyphenated Compound Words](#)
[Hyphens for Clarity](#)
[Dividing at the End of a Line](#)

Numbers Written Out Using Hyphens

Use a hyphen between the **tens** and **units** number when writing out the   numbers twenty-one to ninety-nine in words.   Just like that!
Do **not** use hyphens for other numbers.
Incorrect: Two-hundred-fifty-six
Correct: Two hundred fifty-six
          (Hyphen between tens and units only)

Use a hyphen between the numerator and denominator when a fraction is written   out in words **and** the fraction is an **adjective.**
Incorrect: Two-thirds of the Senate overrode the veto.
          (Here *two thirds* is a noun, not an adjective.)
Correct: Two thirds of the Senate overrode the veto.
Incorrect: A two thirds majority overrode the veto.
          (Here *two thirds* is an adjective modifying *majority.*)
Correct: A two-thirds majority overrode the veto.

Hyphenated Prefixes and Suffixes

Use a hyphen after a prefix followed by a <u>proper noun</u> or <u>proper adjective</u>.
Examples: mid-June   pre-Columbian   Afro-American

Use a hyphen in words beginning with the prefixes **all-**, **ex-** (meaning   "former"), and **self-** and in words ending with the suffix **-elect.**
Incorrect: selfpropelled   ex-treme
          (Prefix *self-* needs hyphen.   The prefix in *extreme* does not   mean "former.")
Correct: all-knowing   ex-wife   self-propelled
          mayor-elect   extreme   exacting

Hyphenated Compound Words

Hyphens are used internally in **some** compound words to separate the words   forming the compound word.

Examples: merry-go-round   editor-in-chief

When unsure of the hyphenation of such words, check a dictionary.   Usage may   vary.   As some words are more widely used, the hyphen in dropped.   For   example, in the early 1800's the word blackbird was usually spelled black-bird.   Now the hyphen has been dropped.

Hyphens connect the words of a **compound modifier** that comes **before**   the word being modified.   Hyphens are **not** used this way with compound parts ending in **-ly** or made up of <u>proper nouns</u> or <u>proper adjectives</u>.

Incorrect: He is a well respected man.
Correct: He is a well-respected man.
        (A compound modifier before the noun.)
Incorrect: That man is well-respected.
Correct: That man is well respected.
        (The modifier follows the noun, no hyphen.)
Incorrect: That was a badly-punctuated sentence.
Correct: That was a badly punctuated sentence.
        (Modifier ends in *-ly,* no hyphen.)
Incorrect: The South-American rain forest is home to
        hundreds of species of hummingbirds.
Correct: The South American rain forest is home to
        hundreds of species of hummingbirds.
        (Modifier is proper, no hyphen.)

Hyphens in Words for Clarity

Hyphens within a word can make some words clearer.
They are frequently used with prefixes ending with the same vowel as the root begins   with to show pronunciation or emphasize meaning.   They are also frequently   used to distinguish between words.
Examples: co-op (instead of *coop,* also prefix ending with
    same vowel as root beginning)
    re-elect (prefix ending with same vowel as root beginning)
    Re-form the clay pot (instead of *reform,* which has a different meaning)
    Re-sign a contract (instead of *resign,* which could mean nearly the opposite.)

Sometimes words may be combined mistakenly.   A hyphen can   help the reader understand what is meant.
Incorrect: The guard captured five foot soldiers.
    (Is it five-foot soldiers, or five foot-soldiers?)
Correct: The guard captured five foot-soldiers.

According to author Vince Emery, a message posted on the Internet almost started a "flame war" because it said, "I *resent* your message."   It was **supposed** to say, " I *re-sent* your message."

Dividing Words at End of Line

Hyphens are used to divide words at the end of a line when the word cannot fit   on the remainder of the line.
It is best **not** to divide a word this way.   If necessary for   considerations of space or format, there are seven rules to follow.

1. Divide the word between syllables.   This means, of course, that one- syllable words are **never** divided.

Incorrect:	Incorrect:	Correct:
sp-	su-	sup-
orts	pport	port

2. The hyphen goes at the end of the first line.

Incorrect:	Correct:
sup	sup-
-port	port

3. Prefixes and suffixes make natural divisions.

Incorrect:	Correct:
in-	inter-
ternational	national

(The prefix is *inter.*)

4. There should be at least **two letters plus the hyphen** on the first   line and **three letters** on the second.

Incorrect:	Incorrect:	Correct:
e-	supposed-	sup-
lect	ly	possedly

5. Do not divide <u>proper nouns</u> or <u>proper adjectives</u>.

Incorrect:	Correct:
Wash-	Washington
ington	

6. Divide hyphenated word using the hyphen already in the word.

Incorrect:	Correct:
moth-	mother-
er-in-law	in-law

7. Do not divide a word at the end of a line if the parts of the word   will be on two separate pages.   This is hard for the reader to follow.

Apostrophes

The apostrophe is generally used with the letter **s** to indicate   possession.   It is also used in various ways to show letters have been left out of a word.

Apostrophes Showing Possession

An **apostrophe** is normally used with the letter **s** to show ownership   or possession. With most singular nouns, simply add an apostrophe plus the letter **s** to   do this. An apostrophe plus **s** is **never** added to make a noun plural--even a   <u>proper noun.</u>
Incorrect: This is Joans jacket.
       (Possessive form needs the apostrophe)
Correct: This is Joan's jacket.
Incorrect: He ate four hot dog's at the picnic.
       (Not possessive; use no apostrophe to make a noun plural.)
Correct: He ate four hot dogs at the picnic.
Incorrect: We saw the Smith's at the picnic.
       (Not possessive; use no apostrophe to make a name plural.)
Correct: We saw the Smiths at the picnic.

If the singular noun **ends** with an **s,** add **apostrophe s** if the   extra syllable is pronounced. If the extra syllable is not pronounced (or if it otherwise looks confusing to add **apostrophe s**), simply add an apostrophe.
Examples: the dress's hem
       (Added syllable is pronounced.)
       Lloyd Bridges' son
       (Added syllable is not pronounced.)

See also <u>Plural Possessives</u>, <u>Apostrophes with Possessives of More than One Owner</u>, <u>Apostrophes with Italicized and Underlined Items</u>, and <u>Apostrophes with Pronouns.</u>

Plural Possessives

To make most nouns plural, add an **-s** or **-es.**   The **-es** is added   to words that end in an **s** or **z** sound.
Do **not** use an apostrophe.
Examples: lands   dresses   taxes   quizzes
Incorrect: Twenty dog's were in the pack.
Correct: Twenty dogs were in the pack.

To make a **plural** noun **possessive,** simply add an **apostrophe** to the   word.   If the plural does not end in an **s,** then add an apostrophe plus   **s.**
Examples: The girls' dresses
          (The dresses belonging to the girls.)
          The Wilsons' house
          (The Wilsons live in the house.)
          The men's room
          (Plural does not end in **s.**)

Apostrophes with Possessives of More than One Owner

To show that more than one person **share** the **same** item together, make   **only** the **last** owner in the series possessive.
Examples: Ken and Larry's ice cream
                    (They share the same ice cream.)
                    John and Mary's pet cats
                    (They share the same cats.)

To show that there are similar items which are owned **individually** by   different owners, make **each** owner in the series possessive.
Example: John's and Mary's pet cats.
          (They each have their own pet cat or cats.)

Apostrophes with Pronouns

To make a possessive of an <u>indefinite pronoun</u>, add an apostrophe   plus **s,** just as you would for a noun.
Examples: somebody's child
            another's idea

<u>Personal pronouns</u>, including **it**, do **not** have any   apostrophes for their possessives.
Incorrect: her's   their's   your's
Correct: his   hers   its   ours   yours   theirs   whose

If it helps, remember that **his** takes no apostrophe.   Neither do any of   the other forms. The words **it's** and **who's** do exist, but they are <u>contractions.</u> **It's** means **it is** or **it has; who's** means **who is** or **who has.**

Apostrophes with Italicized or Underlined Items

Letters, numbers, symbols, and words used as themselves are italicized or   underlined. See <u>Underlining or Italicizing Items that Name Themselves</u> for more   on this.

When these items are made **plural,** the plural is shown by adding   **apostrophe s** to the underlined or italicized item.   The apostrophe and   **s** are not italicized or underlined.   This is the **only** time in English when adding an apostrophe plus **s** makes something plural.
Examples: Don't forget to dot your *i*'s.
     (Letter as a letter)
     His *7*'s look like *2*'s.
     (Number as number)
     His *&*'s look like *8*'s.
     (Symbol as symbol)
     I find the *thee*'s and *thou*'s in older
     writing hard to follow.
     (Words as words)

Apostrophes with Verb Contractions

Apostrophes generally show missing letters in contractions.
In most formal writing such contractions should be avoided.
The most common contractions involve **verbs** in **five** situations.

1. Verbs with **not** contracted, or shortened.
Examples: aren't   don't   isn't   wasn't   can't   weren't
            weren't   wouldn't   doesn't   hasn't   haven't   couldn't
Note: The word **won't** is a contraction of **will not.**   The word **shan't** for **shall not** is seldom
used in the United States.   The word **ain't** is considered nonstandard.

2. Pronouns with **will.**
Examples: I'll   you'll   he'll   she'll   they'll
Note: In conversation the word **will** is often slurred and may show up in   dialogue as **'ll** after
most nouns, e.g., "John'll come home soon."

3. Pronouns and nouns with the verb **to be.**
Examples: I'm   you're   who's (i.e., *who is*)
            he's   she's   it's   we're   they're
Note: In conversation the word **is** is often contracted with   nouns, e.g. "Martha's here."   See
also Other Contractions.

Please note four confusing contractions:
            who's   it's   you're   they're
Remember, the apostrophe indicates that letters have been left out.
            who's = who is or who has   you're = you are
            it's = it is or it has   they're = they are
The possessive of **who** is **whose.**
Correct: Who's coming with me? (Contraction)
Correct: Whose book is this? (Possessive)

4. Pronouns with the verb **to have.**
Examples: I've   he's   you've   we've   they've
            (Note that the **'s** could stand for **is** or **has.**)
            See below for the contractions with **had.**
Note: Sometimes the word **have** is slurred, especially after verbs like **would, could,** and
should.   In dialogue this can be shown as **'ve,** but **never** as **of.**
Incorrect: We would of like to have gone.
Correct: We would've liked to have gone.
            (To show contraction in speaking)
Correct: We would have liked to have gone.
            (In more formal writing)

5. Pronouns with **would** or **had** contracted.
Examples: I'd   he'd   she'd   you'd   we'd   they'd
            I'd better go. (*I had* better go.)
            He'd want to go. (*He would* want to go.)
In everyday conversation the word **would** is often slurred and may be shown   as **'d**
following a noun in dialogue, e.g. "John'd be upset if he found   out."

Apostrophes with Other Contractions

When writing about **years,** insert an apostrophe where numbers are   dropped.
Examples: The winter of '65   the '96 Olympics

In a few words and some names, **o', d', l',** and **t'** indicate   abbreviated forms of **the** or **of** in various languages.
Examples: o'clock   L'Enfant Plaza   P.J. O'Rourke

Sometimes to show pronunciation in dialogue, the word is contracted to show   missing letters.   Avoid this in formal writing except in quotations, even when   the contraction is a more accurate representation.
Examples: C'mon for "come on"
          L'il Abner for "Little Abner"
          fo'c's'le or fo'csle for "forecastle"
          gun'le for "gunwale"
Even though **forecastle** sounds like "folks'll," and **gunwale** rhymes   with "funnel," these words should not be contracted except in dialogue.

The Ellipsis

The **ellipsis** is three periods in a row.   It signifies that words or   figures are missing. Most frequently an ellipsis is used with quotations.   It   may come at the middle or end of a quotation.   It may be used at the beginning of a quotation if the quotation begins mid-sentence and there is an   appropriate lead-in.
In mathematics an ellipsis shows that numbers have been left out.   This is   usually used in decimals, series, and matrices.

Quotation: "Sometimes I'm ancient.   I'm afraid of
children my own age.   They kill each other.   Did it always use to be   that way? My uncle says no.   Six of my friends have been shot in the last   year alone.   Ten of them died in car wrecks.   I'm afraid of them and they   don't like me because I'm afraid.   My uncle says his grandfather remembered   when children didn't kill each other.   But that was a long time ago when they   had things different.   They believed in responsibility, my uncle says."

Ellipsis in middle: "I'm afraid of children my own age.
They kill each other.   Did it always use to be that way?   My uncle says no...My uncle says his grandfather remembered when children didn't kill each other.   But that was a long time ago when they had things different.   They believed in responsibility, my uncle says."

Ellipsis at end: "My uncle says his grandfather
remembered when children didn't kill each other.   But that was a long time ago..." (Some authorities use **four** periods instead of three when the   ellipsis is at the end.)

Ellipsis at beginning: Clarisse said her uncle's
grandfather "...remembered when children did not kill each other."

Mathematical: 3.14159...

Quotation from Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451,* (New York: Ballantine, 1979) 32.

Brackets

Brackets, or crotchets, are always used in pairs to mark off material inserted into a quotation which is not part of the original quotation.   The use of brackets should be limited, but may include short references, short definitions, a   short piece of information which clarifies the quotation, or an editorial   comment.

The Latin word **sic,** which means "thus" or "so," is often put into   brackets to indicate a misspelling or some other misuse of language in the   original quotation.

Brackets are also used in dictionaries, glossaries, and word lists to show word origins and etymologies.

Brackets may be used to show parenthetical information for material already inside parentheses.

Editorial insertion:
> Then Ceres asked: Tell me, heavenly bow,
> If Venus or her son [Cupid], as thou dost know,
> Do now attend the queen.
> (Clarifies the meaning)

Misspelling in original quotation:
> "Mi dere Jo I hope u r qwrite [sic] well."

Word origin:
> Brackets [L.]
> (The word *brackets* comes from Latin.)

Parentheses within parentheses:
> (Charles Dickens [1812-1870] had been trained as a stenographer.)

The Virgule

The **virgule,** often called the "slant bar" by computer users, has four   specific uses in punctuation.

A virgule separates parts of an extended date.
Example: The 1994/95 basketball season.

A virgule represents the word **per** in measurements:
Example: 186,000 mi./sec. (miles per second)

A virgule stands for the word **or** in the expression **and/or.**

A virgule separates lines of poetry that are quoted in run-on fashion in the   text.   (For readability, avoid this with more than four lines.)
Example: Ann continued,"And up and down the people
go,/ Gazing where the lilies blow/ Round an island there below,/ The island of Shalott."

Letter Writing Rules

Business Letters
Business Letter Styles
Friendly Letters
Friendly Letter Format
Envelopes
Envelope Format
Folding a Standard Letter

Click on the topic you seek.   Click on a button above to take you to the   opening screen or to a previous screen.

Friendly or Personal Letters

Personal letters, also known as **friendly** letters, and social notes   normally have five parts.

1. The Heading.   This includes the address, line by line,   with the last   line being the date.   Skip a line after the heading.   The heading is indented   to the middle of the page.   If using preaddressed stationery, just add the   date.

2. The Greeting.   The greeting always ends with a comma.   The greeting   may be formal, beginning with the word "dear" and using the person's given   name or relationship, or it may be informal if appropriate.
Formal: Dear Uncle Jim,   Dear Mr. Wilkins,
Informal: Hi Joe,   Greetings,
          (Occasionally very personal greetings may end with an exclamation   point for
          emphasis.)

3. The body.   Also known as the main text.   This includes the message   you want to write. Normally in a friendly letter, the beginning of paragraphs is indented.   If not indented, be sure to skip a space between paragraphs.   Skip a line after the greeting and before the close.

4. The complimentary close.   This short expression is always a few words   on a single line.   It ends in a comma.   It should be indented to the same   column as the heading.   Skip one to three spaces (two is usual) for the   signature line.

5. The signature line.   Type or print your name.   The handwritten   signature goes above this line and below the close.   The signature line and   the handwritten signature are indented to the same column as the close.   The   signature should be written in blue or black ink.   If the letter is quite   informal, you may omit the signature line as long as you sign the letter.

Postscript.   If your letter contains a postscript, begin it with **P.S.** and end it with your initials.   Skip a line after the signature   line to begin the postscript.

Click on the Right Arrow Button **(>>)** above for the <u>layout of a friendly letter.</u>

See also <u>Commas in Letters</u> and <u>Capitalization in Letters</u>

Format for a Friendly or Personal Letter

The following picture shows what a one-page friendly or personal letter should   look like. The horizontal lines represent lines of type.   Click your mouse   pointer on any part of the picture for a description and example of that   part.

Click on the Left Double Arrow **(<<)** Button for more on Personal Letters.

The Heading
The heading of a friendly letter should contain the return address (usually two lines) followed by a third line with the date.
In a friendly letter the heading is always indented to the middle of the page.
If the correspondents are familiar enough and the recipient knows the writer's address, or if the stationery is imprinted with the return address, then the return address may be omitted. (Although another reason for the return address is a backup in case the envelope gets damaged...)
Always include the date.
Example: 123 Main St.
              West Newfield   CT   06123
              December 14, 1997

The Greeting

The greeting in a friendly letter capitalizes the first word and any noun.   It   normally ends with a comma, though it might be all right to end with an   exclamation point when writing to someone with whom you are very familiar and   the emphasis is appropriate.

Dear Aunt Miriam,

The Body

The body of the letter contains the main text.   The block style (no indented   paragraphs) is considered too formal for a friendly letter, so each new   paragraph should be indented. Skipping a line between paragraphs, especially   in typed or printed copy, also helps the reader.

The Complimentary Close and Signature Line
The left edge of the close and signature line in a friendly letter begin in   the center, at the same column as the heading.
The complimentary close begins with a capital letter and ends with a comma.
Skip from one to three spaces (two on a typewriter), and type in the signature   line, the printed name of the person signing the letter.   If the writer and   reader are very friendly, or if the letter is handwritten in the same script   as the signature, the signature line or the last name in the signature line   may be omitted.
Sign the name in the space between the close and the signature line, starting   at the left edge of the signature line.
Unless there is great familiarity between the correspondents, the signature   should be in blue or black ink.
Example: Truly yours,
          (Signature goes here)
        Margaret Fong

Business Letters

A **business letter** is more formal than a personal letter.   It should have   a margin of at least one inch on all four edges.   It is always written on 8½"x11" (or metric equivalent) unlined stationery.   There are **six** parts to   a business letter.

1. The Heading.   This contains the return address (usually two or three   lines) with the date on the last line.
Sometimes it may be necessary to   include a line after the address and before the date for a phone number, fax   number, E-mail address, or something similar.
Often a line is skipped between the address and date.   That should always be   done if the heading is next to the left margin.   (See <u>Business Letter Styles</u>.)
It is not necessary to type the return address if you are using stationery   with the return address already imprinted.   Always include the date.

2. The Inside Address.   This is the address you are sending your letter   to.   Make it as complete as possible.   Include titles and names if you know   them.
This is always on the left margin.   If an 8½" x 11" paper is folded in   thirds to fit in a standard 9" business envelope, the inside address can appear   through the window in the envelope.
An inside address also helps the recipient route the letter properly and can   help should the envelope be damaged and the address become unreadable.
Skip a line after the heading before the inside address.   Skip another line   after the inside address before the greeting.

3. The Greeting.   Also called the salutation.   The greeting in a business letter is always formal.   It normally begins with the word "Dear" and always includes the person's last name.
It normally has a title.   Use a first name only if the title is   unclear--for example, you are writing to someone named "Leslie," but do not   know whether the person is male or female. For more on the form of titles,   see <u>Titles with Names.</u>
The greeting in a business letter always ends in a colon.   (You know you are   in trouble if you get a letter from a boyfriend or girlfriend and the greeting   ends in a colon--it is not going to be friendly.)

4. The Body.   The body is written as text.   A business letter is never   hand written.
Depending on the letter style you choose, paragraphs may be   indented.   Regardless of format, skip a line between paragraphs.
Skip a line between the greeting and the body.   Skip a line between the body and the close.

5. The Complimentary Close.   This short, polite closing ends with a   comma.   It is either at the left margin or its left edge is in the center,   depending on the <u>Business Letter Style</u> that you use.   It begins   at the same column the heading does.
The block style is becoming more widely used because there is no   indenting to bother with in the whole letter.

6. The Signature Line.   Skip two lines (unless you have unusually wide or   narrow lines) and type out the name to be signed.   This customarily includes a middle initial, but does not have to.   Women may indicate how they wish to   be addressed by placing **Miss, Mrs., Ms.** or similar title in parentheses before their name.
The signature line may include a second line for a title, if appropriate.   The   term "By direction" in the second line means that a superior is authorizing   the signer.
The signature should start directly above the first letter of the signature   line in the space between the close and the signature line.   Use blue or   black ink.
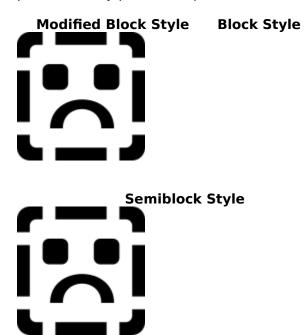Business letters should not contain postscripts.

Some organization and companies may have formats that vary slightly.
Use the "Edit" function in the Help Menu above if you need to make additions   to the information on this page.

Click on the Right Arrow **(>>)** Button above or Right Arrow Key to see some   <u>Business Letter Styles.</u>

See also <u>Commas in Letters</u>, <u>Special Colon Uses</u>, and <u>Capitalization in Letters</u>

Business Letter Styles

The following pictures show what a one-page business letter should   look like.   There are three accepted styles.   The horizontal lines represent lines of type.   Click your mouse pointer on any part of the picture for a description and example of that   part.

Modified Block Style   Block Style

Semiblock Style

Click on the Left Double Arrow **(<<)** Button for more on Business Letters.

The Heading
The heading of a business letter should contain the return address (usually two or three lines) followed by a line with the date.
The heading is indented to the middle of the page in the modified block and   semiblock styles.   It begins at the left margin in the block style.
If the stationery is imprinted with the return address, then the return address may be omitted.
Sometimes a line after the address and before the date may include a phone   number, a fax number, an E-mail address, or the like.
Particularly if the address uses three or more lines, it is good to skip a   line before the date. When using the block style, always skip a line before   the date.
Always include the date.
Example: Acme Explosives, Inc.
          100-B Dry Gulch Alley
          Lonesome Coyote   AZ   85789
          (602) 555-5555

          July 14, 1997

The Inside Address
This is the address you are sending your letter   to.   Make it as complete as possible.
Include titles, names, and routing   information if you know them.
This is always on the left margin.
Skip a line after the heading before the inside address.   Skip another line   after the inside
address before the greeting.
Example: Dr. Calvin Carson
                Cross Country Coach
                Dept. of Athletics
                Colorado Community College at Cripple Creek
                Cripple Creek   CO   80678

The Greeting

The greeting in a business letter is always formal.   It normally begins with the word "Dear" and always includes the person's last name.

It normally has a title such as **Mr., Mrs., Dr.,** or a political title.

The greeting in a business letter always ends in a colon.

The Body
The first line of a new paragraph is indented in the semiblock style.   The   block and modified block style have all lines of the body to the left margin.
Regardless of style, skip a line between paragraphs.
Skip a line between the greeting and the body.   Skip a line between the body and the close.

The Complimentary Close and Signature Line
The left edge of the close and signature line in the semiblock and modified block begin in the center, at the same column as the heading.
The close and signature of the block letter begins at the left margin.
The complimentary close begins with a capital letter and ends with a comma.
Skip from one to three spaces (two on a typewriter), and type in the signature   line, the printed name of the person signing the letter.
Sign the name in the space between the close and the signature line, starting   at the left edge of the signature line.
Women may indicate how they wish to be addressed by placing **Miss, Mrs., Ms.** or similar title in parentheses before their name.
The signature line may include a second line for a title, if appropriate.
The signature should start directly above the first letter of the signature   line in the space between the close and the signature line.   Use blue or   black ink.
Example: Sincerely,
           (Signature goes here)
           (Mrs.) Elisabeth Jackson
           Director of Acquisitions

Envelopes

The **envelope** should be a standard size that matches the stationery (approximately 4"x9½" for standard 8½"x11" stationery).   Fold the letter twice   so that it is creased to make thirds. This will fit easily in a standard   envelope, and it is easy to unfold.

The **address** of the recipient is in the middle of the envelope, beginning   approximately halfway down.   (Be sure it is mostly below the stamp, or it may get covered over by the cancellation.)
The **return address** is in the upper left hand corner.   This is not necessary to   type in if the stationery is preprinted with the return address.
If you are using business envelopes with a window, fold the letter so that the   inside address shows through the window.
Use the block style letter if the envelope has a double window. This will make the return address appear in the upper window of the envelope.

Some correspondents include an **attention line** near the lower left corner for   routing purposes.   This is normally part of the main address unless space is a   factor.   It may be a department or a person's name.
Example: Attn: Returns Dept.

Due to variations in stationery size, it may be necessary to fold a personal   letter differently to fit in the envelope that matches the stationery.
If the personal letter is in a small envelope, the return address may be   written on the envelope flap after the envelope is sealed.

Click on the Right Arrow Button **(>>)** above or Right Arrow Key for   an illustration of Envelope Format.
See also Folding a Standard Letter.

Envelope format

The following picture shows what an addressed envelope should look like. The horizontal lines represent lines of type.   Click your mouse   pointer on any part of the picture for a description and example of that   part.
Follow this format regardless of letter style you used.

Click on the Left Double Arrow **(<<)** Button for more on Envelopes

Return Address
This goes in the upper left hand corner of the front of the envelope.   It   should include a complete address so that the letter can be returned if   necessary.
You do not have to type this in if you are using stationery preprinted with the return address. Stickers or rubber stamps may be used, although a   sticker with a return address usually is reserved for personal letters.
If using an envelope with a double window, make sure the letter is folded and   inserted so that the return address shows through the upper window.
With some personal letters written on stationery with a small envelope, it may   be necessary to put the return address on the envelope flap after sealing the   envelope.

Address
The name and address of the recipient should be centered on the envelope.   Make sure the address begins far enough down on the face of the envelope so   that it will not be covered by the cancellation.
If you are using envelopes with windows, make sure the address appears clearly   through the window.
An "Attention Line" for routing normally appears on the main address, but if   there is a space limitation, it may appear in the lower left hand corner of   the envelope.
Addresses on envelopes are normally single-spaced.
Example: Miss Abigail Beecher
              Department of History
              Klondike Regional High School
              Yellowknife, Yukon   EFG 123   Canada
With Attention Line:
              Department of History
              Attention: Miss Abigail Beecher
              Klondike Regional High School
              Yellowknife, Yukon   EFG 123   Canada

Postage

The postage (stamp, meter imprint, or prepaid imprint) goes in the upper   right hand corner of the envelope.

Do not cover a stamp with adhesive tape.

Make sure the stamp is positioned so that its cancellation will not affect   the addresses.

Be sure there is enough postage.   Always check letters of more than three   pages, letters with inserts, or letters to foreign countries for correct   postage.   There are few   things that will annoy a correspondent more than having to pick up and pay for a postage due letter.

How to Fold a Standard Letter

As stated in the section on <u>Envelopes</u> a letter, especially a business letter, is folded twice into horizontal thirds and placed into an envelope.
This insures a little privacy in the letter.   The letter is also easy to unfold after opening the envelope.
The following diagram shows how a letter is normally folded.   Click on each picture for more.
This type of fold is used regardless of letter style.
If the letter needs to have the address face out an envelope window, make the second fold in the same location but opposite direction.   The letter will then be folded in a **Z** shape and the address can be positioned to face out the   window of the envelope.

Unfolded First Fold Second Fold

See <u>Envelopes</u> for more on putting letters in envelopes.

First Fold

Crease the letter along a fold one third from the bottom.   Fold the letter up   to a point one third from the top, covering the writing on the letter.

Unfolded
Begin with the first page of the letter facing towards you.

Second Fold

Make a second horizontal crease one third from the top of the letter where the bottom of the letter had been folded to.

Tuck the bottom into this crease and fold the top over it.   The letter will be   folded into thirds.   It will fit any standard envelope.

If you are folding the letter so the address faces out the envelope window,   fold the letter toward the back instead of the front.   The letter   address will appear through the envelope window, but it will still be folded   in thirds.

How to Use this Index

Click on the letter for the index of words and terms beginning with that   letter.

Then click on the specific underlined word or term you want to check.

Click on the **"Up"** button to get back to the top of this index page.

Common Mistakes and Tricky Choices

Sometimes we need to make word choices. Sometimes we misuse words or phrases in standard English. This section includes many of the most common problems.

Click here for directions

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A or *An* ?

The article **a** is used before consonant sounds; **an** is used before   vowel sounds.

Words beginning with **h, o** and **u** sometimes begin with a vowel sound,   sometimes a consonant sound.

Consonant Sound: a heroic couplet   (**h** sound)
                              a once-happy lover   (**w** sound)
                              a universal problem   (**y** sound)

Vowel Sound: an honest man   (no **h** sound)
                              an only child   (**o** sound)
                              an unusual insect   (**u** sound)

Accept or *Except* ?

Accept means "to receive."

Except is usually a <u>preposition</u> meaning "but" or "leaving out."   However, **except** can also be a **verb** meaning "to leave   out."

As verbs, **accept** and **except** are nearly **antonyms,** so the difference   is important!

Examples: He accepted the gift.   (He received it.)
He excepted the twins.   (He did not include them.)
Everyone except Bill.   (All but Bill.)

Accuse or *Allege* ?

Accuse means "to blame" or "charge with wrongdoing."

Allege means "to claim something not yet proven."

Examples: He accused the pitcher of throwing spitballs.
His alleged spitball did not curve.

Across, Acrossed, and *Cross*

Across is a <u>preposition.</u> It describes the relationship between two persons, places, or things. It is sometimes used with the preposition **from.**
Example: That house is *across* the street.

Cross is most commonly a <u>verb</u> or <u>noun.</u> As a verb, it means "to go or place across." As a noun, it means "an object made of two intersecting segments."
Crossed is the past tense or past participle of the verb **to cross.**
Examples: Will you *cross* the street with me? (Verb)
         Jesus, Peter, and Andrew each died on a *cross.* (Noun)
         He *crossed* the street with me. (Past tense)
         Their trademark is a pair of *crossed* swords. (Past participle)

Cross can sometimes be an <u>adjective</u> meaning "opposing," "placed across," or "angry."
Examples: They were working at *cross* purposes.
         He was counting the *cross* ties on the track.
         Please don't look so *cross.*

Across occasionally is used as an <u>adverb.</u>
Example: She ran *across* to say hello.

Do **not** use **acrossed, crossed,** or **acrost** as a preposition or adverb.
(The words **acrossed** and **acrost** are strictly nonstandard. They are sometimes used by writers to show dialect.)
Incorrect: He stared *acrossed* the aisle at me.
Correct: He stared *across* the aisle at me.

Adapt or *Adopt* ?

Adapt means "to change."   Usually we adapt **to** someone or something.

Adopt means "to take as one's own."

Examples: They adapted to the hot weather.
            Marc and Judy adopted two orphans.

Administer or *Administrate*?

Administer is the <u>verb</u> form for **administration** or **administrator.**

The word **administrate** is an incorrect form of the verb created by some who drop the *-ion* suffix of **administration.**

Incorrect: He did a great job of administrating the estate.
Correct: He did a great job of administering the estate.

Be careful when forming verbs from nouns that end in *-ation,* as the correct verb form may not end in *-ate.*

See also <u>Orient or Orientate?</u>

Ain't

Ain't, in some dialects **amn't,** an apparent contraction of **am not,** is considered nonstandard.

See also <u>Verb Contractions</u>.

A Hold or *Ahold*?

A hold is standard English. It is the noun **hold** with the article **a.**

Ahold does not exist as a word in standard English.

Incorrect: You've really got ahold on me.
Correct: You've really got a hold on me.

A Lot or *Allot* ?

A lot (two words) is an informal phrase meaning "many." It can take an   adjective, for example, "a sizeable lot."

Example: Karl needed a lot of time for the job.

Allot means "to distribute between or among." It has the same root as   **lottery.**

Example: He allotted three breaks a day to everyone
          in the department.

Alot does **not exist** as a word.

All Ready or *Already* ?

All ready (two words) means "ready," with the word **all.**

Already, an adverb, means "by now," "even now," or "by then."

Examples: We were all ready to study grammar.
             The plane had already left when we arrived.

All Right or *Alright* ?

Alright is a **nonstandard** abbreviation.

Spelling **all right** as **two words** is **all right.**

All Together or *Altogether* ?

All together means "together in a single group."

Altogether means "completely" or "in all."

Examples: We were able to walk all together.
            There were ten of us altogether, counting Mr. Bemis.
            He was altogether baffled by the question.

All Ways or *Always* ?

All ways means "total number of methods."

Always means "at all times" or "constantly."

Examples: He tried all ways to fix the leak.
                 The clock always chimes on the hour.
                 "I will always love you," she sang.

Using *Between* Properly

Between is with **two** people or things.   Note the combination *tw* in a number of words meaning "two" such as **two, twice,** and **twin.**

Among is used when discussing **three or more** people or things.

Examples: She had to choose between licorice and cherry.
     She had to choose among licorice, cherry, and lime.

Between is used with **and.   From** is used with **to.**
Never use **to** with **between.**

Incorrect: We shuttled between New York to Chicago.
Correct: We shuttled between New York and Chicago.
     We shuttled from New York to Chicago.

Ante- or *Anti-*?

The prefix **ante-** means "before."

The prefix **anti-** means "opposing" or "against."

Examples: Antiaircraft guns (opposing aircraft)
          Dred Scott antedates the Civil War.
          (His case is dated before)

Note: The grammar term, <u>antecedent</u>, literally means "going   before."   The antecedent goes before the pronoun.

Anxious or *Eager*?

Anxious, like *anxiety,* implies **worrying,** or being afraid about   something.   It means "uneasy" or "apprehensive."

Eager means "enthusiastic."

Examples: I am eager to see Uncle George again.
            (I am enthusiastic, positive about it.)
            I am anxious about the upcoming layoffs.
            (I am uneasy, negative about them.)

Certain Adverbs Ending in *-S*

The adverbs **anyway, anywhere, everywhere, nowhere,** and **somewhere** do **not** end with an **-s.**

Incorrect: I put the pen somewheres around here.
Correct: I put the pen somewhere around here.

See also Anyway or Any Way.

As To

As to is a nonstandard, awkward expression.   Replace it with the word **about,** or rewrite
the sentence.

At after *Where*

Do **not** use **at** after **where.**   Drop the **at.**

Incorrect : That is where I am at right now.
Correct: That is where I am right now.

Anymore

Anymore is properly used in a statement about a **change** in a previous condition or activity. It is often spelled as a two words, **any more,** but most authorities accept it as a compound word today.

Example: I guess it does not matter anymore.
(Previous condition.   It no longer matters.)

Do **not** use **anymore** as a synonym for **nowadays, today,** or **lately.**

Incorrect: Dad has been getting tired anymore.
Correct: Dad has been getting tired lately.

Awhile or *A While*?

Awhile is an adverb which means "for a while."

A while is **two words**, the article plus a noun, usually used after the <u>preposition</u> **for.**

Examples: I thought awhile before I answered.
I thought for a while before I answered.

Because after *the Reason*

Do **not** use **because** after **the reason.**   Use **the reason** plus **that,** or else rewrite the sentence.

The word **because** starts <u>adverb clauses</u>, but the noun **reason** needs an adjective modifier. The word **that** introduces <u>adjective clauses</u> which modify nouns.

Incorrect: The reason he left is because he was frustrated.
Correct: The reason he left is that he was frustrated.

Being As and *Being That*

Being As and **Being That** are both **nonstandard** expressions.

Use **because** or **since** instead.

Beside or *Besides*?

Beside means "close to" or "by the side of."

Besides means "in addition to."

Examples: Come, sit beside me.   (Next to me)
Besides me, Fran and Millie will be there.
(In addition to me)

Using *Bring* Properly

Bring means "to carry to a nearer place from a more distant one."

Take means the opposite: "To carry to a more distant place from a nearer one."

Examples: Bring that file over here.
          Take this package to the post office.

The **past** and the **past participle** of **bring** is **brought.**
Brang is nonstandard and considered uneducated.

Examples: He brought me that file. (past)
          Hilda has brought me dinner all week. (past participle)

Burst, Bust, or *Busted*?

Bust, meaning "burst or explode," and **busted** are nonstandard.   Use   **burst** instead.

Burst is the same in the present, past, and past participle.

Examples: I am so full that my stomach is about
to burst. (present)
We burst a dozen water balloons at the party yesterday. (past)
They said he had a burst appendix. (past participle)

Aggravate or *Irritate*?

Aggravate mean "to make worse."   The root is   *grave,* in the sense of   "serious."

Irritate means "to exasperate" or "to inflame."

Incorrect: His teasing aggravated me.
Correct: His teasing irritated me.

Incorrect: That meal irritated my condition.
Correct: That meal aggravated my condition.

Bad or *Badly*?

Bad is an **adjective.**   It describes nouns or pronouns.   It is   often used with descriptive linking verbs like **look, feel, sound,** or   **to be.**

Incorrect: She felt badly about missing the date.
Correct: She felt bad about missing the date.
        (*Bad* describes the pronoun *she.*)
Incorrect: Things looked badly for the Mudville nine.
Correct: Things looked bad for the Mudville nine.
        (*Bad* describes the noun *Things.*)

Badly is an **adverb** (like *well*).   It describes **verbs** and   should be used with all verbs other than linking verbs.
As many adverbs do, it usually answers the question "How?"

Incorrect: Mudville played bad last night.
Correct: Mudville played badly last night.
        (*Badly* describes the verb *played.*)

See also Irregular Comparisons

Can't Help But

Can't help but is a nonstandard phrase.

Use **can't** or **cannot help** plus a **<u>gerund</u>** (verb form plus **-ing.**)

Incorrect: I can't help but fall in love with you.
Correct: I can't help falling in love with you.

Can or *May*?

Can as an auxiliary verb means "to be able to."

May as an auxiliary verb means "to be permitted to."

Incorrect: Can we talk?
                (Well, if you can say it, you are able to talk!)
Correct: May we talk?
Correct: We may talk if you can listen to my side.

Comprise or *Compose*?

Comprise means "is made up of" or "consists of."   The whole **comprises** the parts.

Compose means "make up" or "make."   The parts **compose** the whole.

Incorrect: The rock is comprised of three minerals.
Correct: The rock is composed of three minerals.
Correct: The rock comprises three minerals.
Correct: Three minerals compose the rock.

If you are confused, just say, "The rock is made up of three minerals," or   "Three minerals make up the rock."

Different From or *Different Than*?

Different from is standard English.

Different than is nonstandard.

Than is used with the <u>comparative</u> or <u>superlative</u> degrees.

See also <u>Comparisons.</u>

Doesn't or *Don't*?

Doesn't, does not, or **does** is used with the **third person   singular**--words like **he, she,** and **it.**

Don't, do not, or **do** is used for other subjects.

Incorrect: It don't matter anymore.
Correct: It doesn't matter anymore.

Incorrect: Grandfather don't see too well.
Correct: Grandfather doesn't see too well.
Correct: His glasses don't help him much.

Could Of or *Could Have*?

Could of does **not** exist.   Neither do **should of, will of,** or **would of** as verbs.

Write **could have, should have, will have,** or **would have.**

If you want to emphasize the pronunciation, write it as a <u>verb contraction:</u> **could've, should've, will've,** or **would've.**

See also <u>Verb Contractions.</u>

Done as a Verb

Done should not be used alone as the <u>verb</u> of a sentence.   It is a **past participle.**

It must **always** follow an auxiliary verb like **has, have, am, is, are, was, were,** or one of their <u>contractions.</u>

Incorrect: I done what I was supposed to do.
Correct: I have done what I was supposed to do.
Correct (with contraction): I've done what I was
   supposed to do.

Disinterested or *Uninterested*?

Disinterested means "impartial" or "not taking sides."   (In other words, not having a personal interest at stake.)

Uninterested means "not interested."   (In other words, not showing any interest.)

Correct: A good referee should be disinterested.
　　　　(He does not take sides.)
Incorrect: He was disinterested in Jill's hobby.
Correct: He was uninterested in Jill's hobby.
　　　　(He shows no interest.)

Using *Due To*

Due to means "caused by."   It should only be used if it can be   substituted with "caused by."

It does not mean the same as "because of."

Incorrect: The game was postponed due to rain.
Correct: The game was postponed because of rain.
Correct: The game's postponement was due to rain.

The wordy expression **due to the fact that** should be replaced by **because** or **since.**

For Free

Free is an adjective.   The expression **for free** is nonstandard.

Use **free** or something like **for nothing** instead.

Incorrect: We got it for free.
Correct: We got it free.
Correct: We got it for nothing.

Emigrate or *Immigrate*?

The prefix **e-** (or **ex-**) usually means "out of" or "from."   The prefix **im-** (or **in-**) often means "in" or "into."

Therefore, **emigrate** means "to move **out of**" and **immigrate** means "to move **into.**"

Correct: They emigrated from Rwanda and immigrated to
          Gabon.

Note: The prefix **e-** comes from the Latin word **e,** such as we see in   the motto of the United States: "*E pluribus unum*" (Out of many, one).

Enthused or *Enthusiastic*?

Enthused is nonstandard.

Replace it with **enthusiastic.**

Exalt or *Exult*?

Exalt means "to raise up," "to esteem greatly," or "to glorify."
Note that it has the same root as **altitude.**   The root **alt-** means "high."

Exult means "to rejoice" or "to be openly happy about."

There is a sentence in the Bible which, in one translation, uses both words.
Example: And Mary said, "My soul exalts the Lord,
            and my spirit has exulted in God my Savior." --Luke 1:46,47

Farther or *Further*?

Farther refers to **length** or **distance.**   It is the <u>comparative</u> form of the word **far** when referring to distance.

Further means "to a greater degree," "additional," or "additionally." It refers to **time** or **amount.**   It is the <u>comparative</u> form of the word **far** when meaning "much."

Correct: London is farther north than Juneau.
        (Refers to distance)
Correct: This plan requires further study.
        (Meaning "additional study," refers to amount)
Correct: According to my timetable, we should be further
        along.
        (Refers to time)

See also <u>Irregular Comparisons.</u>

Fewer or *Less*?

Use **fewer** with objects that can be counted one-by-one.

Use **less** with qualities or quantities that cannot be individually   counted.

Incorrect: There were less days below freezing last winter.
Correct: There were fewer days below freezing last winter.
         (Days can be counted.)
Correct: I drank less water than she did.
         (Water cannot be counted individually here.)

When referring to **time** or **money, less** is normally used even with   numbers.   Specific **units** of time or money use **fewer** only in cases where individual items are referred to.
Examples: I have less than an hour to do this work.
         I have less time to this work.
         I have less money than I need.
         I have less than twenty dollars.
         He worked fewer hours than I did.

The only occasion in which you might say, "I have fewer than twenty dollars," would be when you were talking about specific dollar bills or coins, such as "I have fewer than twenty silver dollars in my collection."

See also <u>Irregular comparisons.</u>

Number or *Amount*?

Use the word **amount** with quantities that **cannot** be counted and **number** with quantities that could be counted one-by-one.

Examples: He had a small amount of ammunition left.
He had a small number of bullets left.

This follows a pattern similar to **fewer** and **less.**

Fortuitous or *Fortunate*?

Fortuitous means "happening by chance."

Fortunate means "lucky" or "beneficial."

Finding the lost coin was strictly fortuitous; I just
stumbled upon it.
I was fortunate to find that coin because I needed the money.

Gone or *Went*?

Gone is the past participle of **to go.** Used as the <u>verb</u> of a sentence, it must always be preceded by an auxiliary verb such as **has, have, had, is, am, are, was, were, be,** or one of their <u>contractions.</u>

Went is the past tense of **to go.** It never takes an auxiliary verb.

Incorrect: They gone to the movies.
    (*Gone* needs an auxiliary verb.)
Correct: They have gone to the movies.
Correct: They are gone to the movies.
Correct: They went to the movies.

Incorrect: You could have went with them.
    (*Went* takes no auxiliary verb.)
Correct: You could have gone with them.

Good or *Well*?

Good is an adjective.   It describes nouns or pronouns.   It may be used   with descriptive linking verbs like **look, feel, sound, taste,** or **be** to describe the <u>subject.</u>

Incorrect: The coffee tasted well this morning.
Correct: The coffee tasted good this morning.
Correct: The pitcher is looking good today.

Well is normally an adverb.   It describes verbs (sometimes adjectives)   and is used with most other verbs.
Well as an adjective means "healthy."

Incorrect: He pitches good.
Correct: He pitches well.
Incorrect: I do not feel very good.
Correct: I do not feel very well. (healthy)

See also <u>Irregular Comparisons.</u>

Healthy or *Healthful*?

In formal English, **things** are **healthful** (i.e., good for one's   health).   **People** or other creatures are **healthy** (i.e., in a state of   good health).

Incorrect: Eat a healthy breakfast.
Correct: Eat a healthful breakfast.
Correct: You look healthy today.

Hers or *Her's*?

Her's does not exist.

Hers is the correct spelling.

Example: That scarf is hers.

See also Possessive Pronouns and Apostrophes with Pronouns.

Hyper- or *Hypo-*?

The prefix **hyper-** means "above," "beyond," or "excessively."

The prefix **hypo-** means "under" or "below normal."

Examples: Hypodermic needle (under the dermis)
               Hyperactive child (excessively active)

See, for example, <u>Hypercritical or Hypocritical?</u>

Hypercritical or *Hypocritical*?

Hypercritical means "excessively critical."

Hypocritical means "two-faced" or "characterized by hypocrisy."   It literally means "critical underneath."

Note also the spelling of the nouns **hypocrisy** and **hypocrite.**

See also Hyper- or Hypo-.

Hopefully or *I Hope*?

Hopefully is an adverb which means what it ought to--"full of hope" or "characterized by hope." It normally modifies verbs.

Nonstandard English sometimes substitutes the word **hopefully** for **I hope** (or some other subject with the verb **hope**).

Correct: They listened hopefully for the sound of
 the rescue party.
 (They listened with hope)
Incorrect: Hopefully, they will come in time.
Correct: I hope they will come in time.

Regardless or *Irregardless*?

If you think about it, the word **irregardless** is a <u>double negative.</u>   It does not exist in standard English.

Use **regardless** instead.   That is what is meant.

Incredible or *Incredulous*?

Incredible means "hard to believe," literally "not able to be believed."

Incredulous means "skeptical" or "unbelieving."   It refers to a person's   response.

The noun form of **incredulous** is **incredulity.**   The opposite is **credulous,** or "gullible, believes anything."

Examples: Kim's story was incredible.
          Arthur was incredulous as he listened to the story.

Indeterminate or *Indeterminable*?

Indeterminate means "vague" or "unclear."

Indeterminable means "unable to find out or decide."

Both adjectives have similar roots, but the difference is in the suffix **-able.**

Its or *It's?*

Its is the <u>possessive pronoun</u>; it modifies a noun.

It's is a <u>contraction</u> of **it is** or **it has.**

Incorrect: The mother cat carried it's kitten in it's mouth.
       (Possessive pronoun, no apostrophe)
Correct: The mother cat carried its kitten in its mouth.
Correct: I think it's going to rain today.
       (Contraction of *it is*)
Correct: It's been a very long time.
       (Contraction of *it has*)

See also <u>Apostrophes with Pronouns.</u>

Jiggle, Joggle, or *Juggle*?

Jiggle means "rock or jerk lightly."

Joggle means "to shake slightly" or "move by light jerks."

Juggle means "to catch and toss a number of objects with skill."

Examples: The aftershock made the table jiggle.
The movers had to joggle the couch into position.
He could juggle ten Indian clubs at a time.

Judicious, Judicial, **or** *Juridical***?**

All three words have similar roots, but **judicious** applies to human   character in general. **Judicial** and **juridical** are more specifically   connected with matters of law.

Judicious means "wise, showing good judgment."

Judicial means "relating to courts of law or judges."

Juridical means, more specifically, "relating to the administration of justice."

Examples: He judiciously invested in mutual funds.
           (Showing good judgment)
           The case is going to judicial review.
           (Review by a court of law)
           Some laws make specific juridical requirements for sentencing.
           (Requirements for administering or dispensing justice)

Using *Just* and *Only*

When using the word **just** as an adverb meaning "no more than," place it   directly in front of the word it modifies.

Similarly, place the word **only** directly in front of the word it modifies.

Vague: Just give me three more days.
Correct: Give me just three more days.

Vague: I only have three dollars.
Correct: I have only three dollars.

Using *Kind Of* and *Sort Of*

The expressions **kind of** or **sort of** to mean "rather," "partially," or "somewhat" are nonstandard.

Both expressions literally mean "type of" or "variety of."

Incorrect: The child felt kind of lonely.
Correct: The child felt somewhat (or rather) lonely.
Correct: The kestrel is a kind of falcon.
             (A type or variety of falcon)

When using **kind of** or **sort of** always use a **singular** object of the <u>preposition</u> **of.** If the object is **plural,** then use **kinds of** or **sorts of.**

Examples: What kind of salad is this?
         (*Kind* and *salad* are both singular.)
         There are all sorts of fruits in this salad.
         (*Sorts* and *fruits* are both plural.)

Imply or *Infer*?

Imply means "to state indirectly."

Infer means "to draw a conclusion."

You may infer something from an implication, but you would not imply something   from an inference.

Incorrect: She implied that he was from Canada by his
       accent.
Correct: She inferred that he was from Canada by his accent.

Incorrect: The poem inferred that the lover was unfaithful.
Correct: The poem implied that the lover was unfaithful.
Correct: He inferred from the poem that the lover was
       unfaithful.

Lay or *Lie*?

Lay means "to place something down."   It is something you do to **something else.**   It is a transitive verb.
Incorrect: Lie the book on the table.
Correct: Lay the book on the table.
          (It is being done to something else.)

Lie means "to recline" or "be placed."   It does **not** act on anything or anyone else.   It is an intransitive verb.
Incorrect: Lay down on the couch.
Correct: Lie down on the couch.
          (It is not being done to anything else.)

The reason **lay** and **lie** are confusing is their **past tenses.**
The past tense of **lay** is **laid.**
The past tense of **lie** is **lay.**
Incorrect: I lay it down here yesterday.
Correct: I laid it down here yesterday.
          (It is being done to something else.)
Incorrect: Last night I laid awake in bed.
Correct: Last night I lay awake in bed.
          (It is not being done to anything else.)

The **past participle** of **lie** is **lain.**   The **past participle** of **lay** is like the past tense, **laid.**
Examples: I could have lain in bed all day.
          They have laid an average of 500 feet of sewer line a day.

Layed is a misspelling and does not exist.   Use **laid.**

Leave or *Let*?

Leave means "to allow to remain."

Let simply means "to allow" or "to permit."

Incorrect: Let him alone!
Correct: Leave him alone!
       (Allow him to remain alone.)

Incorrect: Leave me do it again.
Correct: Let me do it again.
       (Allow me to do it.)

Lend or *Loan*?

In standard English **lend** is a **verb,** and **loan** is a **noun.**

Incorrect: Please loan us a hundred dollars.
Correct: Please lend us a hundred dollars.

Like or *As*?

Like is a preposition.   It should be followed by an object to make a <u>prepositional phrase.</u>

As is a conjunction.   It should be followed by a <u>clause</u> containing a <u>subject</u> and a <u>verb.</u>

Incorrect: He runs like a gazelle does.
            (*Like* is followed by a clause.)
Correct: He runs like a gazelle.
Correct: He runs as a gazelle does.

This is sometimes confusing because **as** occasionally is used with <u>elliptical clauses</u> which may resemble prepositional phrases.
Like is never used with clauses in standard English.

Using*Of*

Do **not** use **of** to replace the verb **have.**
See <u>Could Of or Could Have?</u> for examples.

The word **of** following the <u>prepositions</u> **outside, inside, off,** or **atop** is nonstandard.
Simply drop the word **of.**

Incorrect: He looked inside of the box.
Correct: He looked inside the box.

Loath or *Loathe*?

Loath is an adjective meaning "unwilling."   It ends with a hard *th* and rhymes with **growth** or **both.**

Loathe is a verb meaning "to hate intensely."   It ends with a soft *th* like the sound in **smooth** or **breathe.**

Examples: He was loath to admit that he was included in
the deal.
(He was unwilling)
Alex loathes spiders.
(Hates them intensely)

Luxuriant or *Luxurious*?

Luxuriant means "characterized by thick or abundant growth."   It is usually applies to the growth of plants, fur, or hair.

Luxurious means "characterized by wealth and comfort," more directly from our modern word **luxury.**

Examples: Captain Cook named the place Botany Bay
because of the luxuriant jungle vegetation surrounding it.
They checked into the most luxurious suite in the hotel.

Macro- or *Micro-*?

The prefix **macr-** or **macro-** means "large" or "long."

The prefix **micr-** or **micro-** means "small" or "tiny."

Examples: macroeconomics--the study of economic
　　　　　systems.
　　　　　microeconomics--the study of a specific transaction or market.

The prefix **micr-** or **micro-** in the metric system means "millionth," so a **microliter** is a millionth of a liter.   For more on this see <u>Abbreviations of Measurements.</u>

Magnificent or *Munificent*?

Magnificent means "grand," literally "made great" or "doing great   things."   Its root is **magn-** which means "great" or "large."

Munificent means "lavish" or "very generous," literally "making gifts." The root **muni-** means "gift."

Manic or *Maniac*?

Manic, an adjective, is a clinical term having to do with a psychological affliction.

Maniac, a noun, is a crazy person.   The adjective form is **maniacal,** with the accent on the second syllable.

Examples: He takes lithium for manic depression.
         She started acting like a maniac when she heard the news.

Moral or *Morale*?

Morale, accent on second syllable, is a noun meaning "a person's mental   or emotional state."

Moral, accent on first syllable, is either a noun meaning "the lesson   from a story" or an adjective meaning "virtuous, behaving according to high   standards."

Examples: Team morale rose after the no-hitter.
The moral of the story is "Never tell a lie."
She made a point with her moral and ethical actions.

Quote, Quotation, or *Quotation Mark*?

Quote is a verb.   It means "to repeat the words of a writer or speaker."

Quotation is a noun.   It means "words quoted" or "the act of quoting."

<u>Quotation marks</u> are punctuation marks used to highlight a written   quotation.

Correct: He quoted Shakespeare frequently.
Incorrect: We listened to a long quote from the
          government report.
Correct: We listened to a long quotation from the
          government report.
Incorrect: You need to put this part in quotes.
Correct: You need to put this part in quotation marks.

Orient or *Orientate*?

The word **orient** as a noun means "east."   It may be capitalized when   referring to the geographical location of the Far East.

Hongkong is located in the Orient.

Orient as a verb means to "find direction" or "give direction."   The noun form of this kind of orienting is **orientation.**
Sometimes people in their speech will form an imagined verb from **orientation** and say **orientate.**   There is no such word as **orientate.**   The correct word is the verb **orient.**

Incorrect: Melanie is helping me get orientated
            to the new job.
Correct: Melanie is helping me get oriented to
          the new job.

Quash or *Squash*?

Quash usually applies to government or government authority.   It means "to annul" or "legally invalidate."

Squash means "to squeeze" or "crush."

Examples: The "fairness doctrine" quashed media debates.
        The army squashed the demonstration in the capital.

Raise or *Rise*?

Raise means "to make higher," "build," or "nurture and cause to grow." It is normally transitive, that is, the action is done **to something or someone else.**

Rise means "to get up" or "become elevated." It is **never** transitive.   The past tense is **rose;** the past participle, **risen.**

Examples: They raised the barn in two days.
          The sun rises and sets every day.

Real or *Really*?

Real is an <u>adjective.</u>   It only modifies nouns or pronouns.

Really is an <u>adverb.</u>   It modifies verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

Correct: He stayed at hotels with real class.
       (*Class* is a noun. The adjective modifies it.)
Incorrect: He stayed at a real classy hotel.
       (*Classy* is an adjective. It should be modified by an adverb.)
Correct: He stayed at a really classy hotel.
       (The adjective *classy* is modified by the adverb.)

See also <u>Sure or Surely?</u>

Using *Seen*

Seen is a **past participle.**   It must be used with an auxiliary verb   such as **has, have, had, am, is, are, was, were, be** or their <u>contractions.</u>

Often **saw** works better.   No auxiliary verb is used with **saw.**

Incorrect: We seen all three of them.
Correct: We saw all three of them.
Correct: We have seen all three of them.

Set or *Sit*?

Set means to "put in a certain place."   It is normally followed by a <u>direct object</u>, that is, it acts upon **something else.**   It is transitive.

Sit means "to be seated."   It is always intransitive.

Incorrect: Set down on this chair.
Correct: Sit down on this chair.
Incorrect: Sit the money on the counter.
Correct: Set the money on the counter.

Set or **sit** plus a <u>reflexive pronoun</u>--"Set yourself down" or "Sit yourself down"--is nonstandard.

Set does not always take a direct object; for example, we speak of a hen or the sun setting.

Renown or *Reknown*?

Renown means "fame."   **Renowned** is the adjective form meaning   "famous."

Reknown does not exist in English.   Apparently it is drawn from confusion with **known.**

Than or *Then*?

Than is a conjunction used with <u>comparisons.</u>   It rhymes with **pan.**

Then is an adverb that refers to time.   It rhymes with **pen.**

Examples: He likes you more than me.
          First you take a cup of flour, and then you sift it.

Try And or *Try To*?

The expression **try and** followed by a verb is nonstandard.

Use **try to** instead.

Incorrect: Try and do it again.
Correct: Try to do it again.

That There and *This Here*

The expression **that there** and **this here** are nonstandard and   redundant.

Drop the **there** and **here.**   Use just **that** and **this.**

Using *That, Which,* and *Who* as Relative Pronouns

That, which, and **who** when used as relative pronouns each have a   distinct function.

In modern speech, **which** refers only to **things.**   **Who** (or its forms **whom** and **whose**) refers only ot **people.**   **That** normally refers to **things** but it may refer to a class of type or person.

Examples: These are the books which I need for the class.
These are the books that I need for the class.
He is the man who will be teaching the class.
They are the type of people who would lie to their mothers.
They are the type of people that would lie to their mothers.
(*That* is OK here because it is a class or type.)

Their, There, or *They're*?

Their is a <u>possessive pronoun.</u>   It always describes a noun.
Note the spelling of **their.**   It comes from the word **they,** so the *e* comes before the *i.*

There is an adverb meaning "that location."   It is sometimes used with the verb **to be** as an idiom.   It is spelled like **here** which means "this location."

They're is a <u>contraction</u> of **they are.**   Note the spelling: The *a* from **are** is replaced by an apostrophe.

Examples: Their dog has fleas. (possessive of *they*)
       I put the collar right there. (that location)
       There are five prime numbers less than ten.
       (with *to be*)
       They're 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7. (contraction of *they are*)

See also <u>Possessive Pronouns</u> and <u>Verb Contractions.</u>

Them or *Those*?

Them is **not** a replacement for **those.**

Incorrect: I like them apples.
Correct: I like those apples.

To, Too, or *Two*?

To is a <u>preposition</u> which begins a prepositional phrase   or an <u>infinitive.</u>

Too is an adverb meaning "excessively" or "also."

Two is a number.   Many other words in English which reflect the number **two** are spelled with **tw:** *twin, twice, between, tweezers,* etc.

Examples: We went to a baseball game. (preposition)
We like to watch a good ball game. (infinitive)
We ate too much. (meaning "excessively")
I like baseball, too. (meaning "also")
Six divided by three is two. (number)
They own two Brittany spaniels. (number)

Sensual or *Sensuous*?

In modern usage, **sensual** means "physical, gratifying the body or its senses."

Sensuous means "appealing to the senses, especially by beauty or flavor."

Solid or *Stolid*?

Solid means "firm" or "not liquid or gas."   When applied to a person's   character it implies reliability.

Stolid normally refers to character and means "stoic, unemotional."

Sure or *Surely*?

Sure is an <u>adjective.</u> It modifies nouns or pronouns.
Surely is an <u>adverb.</u> It modifies verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.

Correct: It is a sure thing.
       (*Thing* is a noun. An adjective modifies it.)
Incorrect: It is sure hot outside.
       (*Hot* is an adjective. It should be modified by an adverb.)
Correct: It is surely hot outside.
       (*Hot* is an adjective. An adverb modifies it.)

See also <u>Real or Really?</u>

There's, Theirs, or *Their's*?

Theirs is a <u>possessive pronoun.</u>

There's is a <u>contraction</u> for **there is.**   Note the apostrophe replacing the letter *i.*

Their's does not exist.

Examples: That painting is theirs.
          (possessive pronoun)
          There's more to this than meets the eye.
          (contraction of *there is*)

See also <u>Possessive Pronouns</u>, <u>Verb Contractions</u>, and <u>There, Their, or They're.</u>

Tenet or *Tenant*?

A **tenet** is a belief or doctrine considered true.

A **tenant** is a renter or occupant.

Tortuous, Torturous, or *Tortured*?

Tortuous means "winding, crooked" or "tricky to handle."

Torturous means "causing torture" or "painful in a cruel way."

Tortured as an adjective means "receiving torture" or "pained."

Examples: He had to take a tortuous route through
the Alps.
He survived the torturous existence of the
concentration camp.
The beggar gave a tortured look to the passers-by.

Turbid or *Turgid*?

Turbid means "muddy" or "hazy."   It is often applied to water or speech.

Turgid means "swollen, overflowing" or "pompous."   It also is usually applied to water, speech, or writing.

Unequivocal or *Unequivocable*?

Unequivocal means "leaving no doubt."

Unequivocable does not exist.

Equivocal, equivocally, and **unequivocally** are all legitimate words with the same root.

Similarly, **equivocable, equivocably,** and **unequivocable** do not   exist.

Warranty or *Warrantee*?

A **warranty** (accent on first syllable) is a guarantee.

A **warrantee** (accent on last syllable) is a person or party who is   guaranteed something.

Neither word is used as a verb.   The verb form is **warrant.**

Whose or *Who's*?

Whose is the <u>possessive</u> form of **who** (or, occasionally, **which**). It means "belonging to whom or which."

Who's is a <u>contraction</u> of **who is** or **who has.** Notice the apostrophe replacing the missing letters.

Incorrect: Who's department do you work for?
Correct: Whose department do you work for?
Correct: Who's coming to visit tomorrow?

Unique and Other Absolute Modifiers

Unique means "one of a kind."   Therefore, words like **very, so,** or **extremely** or <u>comparatives</u> or <u>superlatives</u> should   not used to modify it.   If it is one of a kind, it cannot be compared!
Incorrect: He is a very unique personality.
Correct: He is a unique personality.

This same logic applies to other words which reflect some kind of absolute: **absolute, overwhelmed, straight, opposite, right, dead, entirely, eternal, fatal, final, identical, infinite, mortal, opposite, perfect, immortal, finite, or irrevocable.**
In most cases they cannot be modified by **very** and similar words, nor can they be used in comparisons.
Many times there is a similar word which is not absolute.   For example,   instead of using the word **unique** in the above example use a similar word that is not absolute.
Incorrect: He has a more unique personality than Marie.
Correct: He has a more distinctive personality than Marie.

A Ways

Ways is plural.   The article **a** is singular.   They do **not** belong together.

Incorrect: The truck stop is a little ways down the road.
Correct: The truck stop is a little way down the road.

Where or *That*?

Do not use **where** to replace **that.**

This mistake is common with verbs like **read** or **see.**

Incorrect: Joanna saw where the president was coming
to town.
(Unless you mean she saw *the place* he was coming to!)
Correct: Joanna saw that the president was coming to town.

-Wise as a Suffix

Coining new words with the suffix **-wise** may be clever, but it is   nonstandard.

Incorrect: He did well this quarter saleswise.
Correct: He did well in sales this quarter.

Defuse or *Diffuse*?

Defuse literally means "to remove the fuse."   It has come to mean   generally "to disarm" or "pacify."

Diffuse is normally used as an adjective meaning "spread out,"   "extended," or "verbose." As a verb it means "to spread out in all   directions."

Incorrect: Diffusing Family Arguments
        (A title.   Spreading them out?)
Correct: Defusing Family Arguments
        (Ah!   Unfortunately, the first example is a published title.)

Anyone and *Everyone* or *Any One* and *Every One*?

The compound pronouns **anyone** or **everyone** mean "any person" and "all the people," respectively.

The non-compound modified pronoun **any one** or **every one** put a greater   emphasis on the word **one** and mean "any single person or thing" and "every single person or thing." They are usually followed by a <u>prepositional phrase</u> beginning with the word **of.**

Examples: Did anyone see the eclipse last night?
        (any person)
        Did you send for any one of the free samples?
        (any single thing)
        Is everyone ready to begin?   (all the people)
        The raccoon ate every one of the ears of corn.
        (every single thing)

See also <u>Indefinite Pronouns.</u>

Blond or *Blonde*?

The words **blond** and **blonde** come from the French and follow somewhat   the French pattern. **Blond** (without the *e*) is used to describe males, mixed gender, or uncertain gender. **Blonde** refers to women or   female gender.

In modern use, **blond** is sometimes used for female as well as male, but **blonde** is preferred for female.

Clipped Words

Clipped words are words that are shortened forms of longer words. Common clipped words are **gym** for "gymnasium," **phone** for "telephone," **auto** for "automobile," and **photo** for "photograph."

Avoid clipped words in formal English.

Continual or *Continuous*?

Continual means "repeated again and again."

Continuous means "uninterrupted."

Examples: I was continually interrupted by the telephone.
        It rained continuously for forty-eight hours.

Hanged or *Hung*?

Hanged means "executed by hanging."

Hung means "suspended" otherwise.

Both are past tenses or past participles of the verb **to hang,** but each   applies to specific cases.

Examples: The five plotters in the Lincoln assassination
              were hanged.
              We hung the towels out on the clothesline to dry.

Maybe or *May Be*?

Maybe, the compound word, is an **adverb** meaning "perhaps" or "possibly."

May be is a verb phrase meaning "might be" or "could be."

Examples: Maybe I will go out tonight.
I may be going out tonight.

To Have Plus *Ought*

The expressions **have ought, has ought,** and **had ought** are   nonstandard.

To correct it, simply remove the **have, has,** or **had.**

Incorrect: You had ought to have been there.
Correct: You ought to have been there.

Says or *Said*?

The word **says** is strictly **present tense.** It should not be used to take the place of the word **said** which is **past tense.**

Incorrect: Before that, he says to me, "Keep still."
         (Past tense needed; use *said*)
Correct: Before that, he said to me, "Keep still."

Want Plus Directional Adverbs or Prepositions

The verb **want** is not supposed to be followed by an adverb or <u>preposition</u> indicating direction such as **in, out, up, off** or **down.**

When using standard English, complete the sentence by including the words left   out of such expressions as **want in** or **want down.**

Incorrect: He wants out of the contract.
Correct: He wants to get out of the contract.

Incorrect: The cat wants in.
Correct: The cats wants to come in.

Anyway or *Any Way*?

The compound word **anyway** is an **adverb** meaning "regardless."

Any way is simply the word **way** modified by the word **any.** It means "any manner" or "any method."

Examples: We're going to do it anyway!
(regardless)
I do not know any way to fix it.
(any manner or any method)

See also <u>Certain Adverbs Ending in -S.</u>

Using *Little, Littlest,* and *Least*

The word **little** can be used in two different senses--meaning "small in size" or "small amount of."

Examples: He was still a little boy. (small in size)
          Please give me a little milk. (small amount of)

This becomes trickier in the <u>comparative</u> and   <u>superlative</u> because **little** has two different forms.
If **little** means "small in size," the comparative is **littler** or **more little,** and the superlative is **littlest.**
If **little** means "small amount of," the comparative is **less,** and the superlative is **least.**

Examples: He was the littlest boy in the class.
          Please give me less milk than he has.
          He drank the least amount of milk of anyone there.

See also <u>Irregular Comparisons.</u>

Height or *Heighth*?

The noun form of **broad** is **breadth,** the noun form of **long** is **length,** and the noun form of **wide** is **width.**

Because of this, some people follow the pattern and say **heighth,** with a *th* at the end of the word **high.**   That is not standard English.   The correct form is **height.**

Notice the vowel change with an *ei.*   It is **not *ie*** because   it does not make the long *e* sound.

Incorrect: What is your heighth above sea level?
Correct: What is your height above sea level?

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Glossary of Grammatical Terms

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Click on the letter for the index of words and terms beginning with that letter. Then click on the word or term for the definition you need.

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Accented Syllables

In all dialects of English, the pattern of pronunciation depends not only on the sounds of the vowels and consonants, but on the stress each syllable receives when pronounced.   A syllable that is stressed in pronunciation is called an **accented syllable.**

The accent often changes the meaning of words which otherwise would be pronounced or even spelled alike. The word *object* when accented on the first syllable is a noun; when accented on the second syllable it is a verb.
Here is another subtle example:
> A crow is a black bird.
> (Accent both *black* and *bird.*)
> A crow is not a blackbird.
> (That is, a species of bird called *blackbird.* Accent *black.*)

All English dictionaries show the accented syllables in their pronunciation keys, usually with an acute accent mark (**'**).   See also Syllable.

Basic Tenses

The **basic** or **simple tenses** are the three tenses which are the simplest in the English language--past, present, future, without any other condition or character.

The basic **present tense** uses the same verb as the verb part of the infinitive. In the third person singular an **-s** or **-es** is added. There are a number of irregular verbs, but they all have an *s* or *z* sound at the end of the third person singular.

The basic **past tense** is a single word. Usually a **-d** or **-ed** is added to the root verb to put it in the past. However, there are many irregular verbs. All persons, singular and plural are the same except for the verb **to be** in which all persons are **were** but first and third person singular are **was.**

The **future tense** is formed by adding the present form to the auxiliary verb **will** or **shall.** All persons, singular and plural, are the same.

	Present	**Past**	**Future**
Regular:	I like	I liked	I will like
	he likes	he liked	he will like
Irregular:	I have	I had	I will go
	he has	he had	he will have

Abbreviation
An **abbreviation** is a shortened form of a word or expression.
CT and **Conn.** are abbreviations for Connecticut.
See the **Abbreviations** topic in the main Contents for rules on making and using abbreviations.

Active Voice
The **voice** of a verb refers to the form of the verb used in relation to what the subject is doing.   In English there are only **two** voices-- passive and active.
The **active voice** of a verb simply means the form of the verb used when the subject is the doer of the action.
In most writing, use the active voice.   It is more direct and less ambiguous.
Passive Voice: The project was reviewed by the committee.
Active Voice: The committee reviewed the project.

An **adjective** is a word that modifies a noun or pronoun.

Examples: The big dog barked loudly.

(*The* and *big* modify the noun *dog.*   They are adjectives.)

The dog was big and loud.

(The adjectives *The, big,* and *loud* modify the noun *dog.*)

The dog was a big one.

(The adjective *the* modifies *dog;* the adjective *big* modifies the pronoun *one.*)

Adjective Clause

An **adjective clause** is a <u>subordinate clause</u> *that modifies a noun or pronoun.*

The italicized clause in the first sentence is an adjective clause because it modifies the noun *clause.*

Most of the time adjective clauses begin with the relative pronouns **that, which, who, whom,** or **whose.**

See also <u>That, Which, and Who.</u>

Adverb
An **adverb** is a word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.   Adverbs generally answer one of four questions: how, when, where, or to what extent. Adding the suffix **-ly** to an adjective *commonly* turns the word into an adverb.
Examples: He ran *fast.* (how)
            He responded *immediately.* (when)
            He put it *there.* (where)
            He became *extremely* happy. (to what extent, modifies adjective)

Adverb Clause

An **adverb clause** is a <u>subordinate clause</u> that modifies a verb, adjective, or adverb.   It answers one of four questions: how, when, where, and why.

An adverb clause always begins with a subordinating conjunction.

Article

In grammar, an **article** is a type of adjective which makes a noun specific or indefinite.   In English there are three articles: the definite article **the** and the two indefinite articles **<u>a and an.</u>**

In writing, an **article** is a brief nonfiction composition such as is commonly found in periodicals.
See <u>Titles of Things</u> and <u>Quotation Marks with Titles</u> for information on   punctuating the titles of articles.

Auxiliary Verb

An **auxiliary verb** combines with another verb to help form the tense, mood, voice, or condition of the verb it combines with.

The verbs **to have, to be, to do, will, shall, would, should,** and **could** are the common auxiliary verbs in English.

Auxiliary verbs are sometimes called **helping verbs.**

In the last sentence, *are* is the auxiliary verb in the passive verb phrase *are called.*

Ambiguous

When something is **ambiguous** it has more than one possible meaning.

Writing should strive to be clear.   Avoid ambiguity if you want your reader to be sure of what you are saying.

Capital Letters and Capitalizing

Capital Letters are the larger letters used at the beginning of sentences and names.   They are the letters made on a typewriter when the "Shift" key is pressed.

To **capitalize** a word means "to make the first letter of the word a capital letter."   See the Capitalization Rules topic in the <u>Contents</u> for more on when to capitalize.

Capital letters are sometimes called **Upper Case** letters.

For a list of the capital letters, see the letters in the Glossary Index Box.

Compound Constructions
The term **compound** is used to describe the combining of similar grammatical units in a number of circumstances.

A <u>compound sentence</u> is a sentence made up of two or more <u>independent clauses.</u>   The clauses are joined by conjunctions and/or distinctive punctuation marks.

A **compound subject** is a <u>subject</u> made up of two or more different subjects acting on the same <u>predicate.</u>

A **compound verb** is a simple predicate with two or more different verbs showing different actions or conditions.

Both compound subjects and compound verbs are joined by conjunctions, sometimes with additional punctuation.

A **compound modifier** is two or more adjectives or adverbs modifying a single word or phrase.   They are normally joined by conjunctions or punctuation marks.

A **compound word** is a single word made up of two or more distinct words combined into that single word.   The word *blackbird* is a compound word   made up of the words *black* and *bird.*

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that **join** words, phrases, or sentence parts.
In English there are three kinds of conjunctions.

1. Coordinate conjunctions join similar words, <u>phrases</u>, or <u>clauses</u> to each other.   In English the main coordinate conjunctions are **and, or, for, but, nor, so** and **yet.**
(Note the use of **or** and **and** in the last two sentences.

2. Correlative conjunctions also join similar words, phrases, or clauses, but act in **pairs.**
In modern English the main correlative conjunctions are **either/or, neither/nor, both/and, whether/or, not/but** and **not only/but also.**

3. Subordinating conjunctions join a <u>subordinate clause</u> to a <u>main clause.</u>
For a listing see the Glossary entry on Subordinating Conjunctions.

Contraction

A **contraction** is a word shortened by leaving out some letters.   The missing letters are indicated by an apostrophe.

See, for example, <u>Verb Contractions</u> and <u>Other Contractions.</u>

Complex and Compound-Complex Sentences

A **complex sentence** is a sentence made up of **one** main clause and at least one subordinate clause.

A **compound-complex sentence** is a sentence made up of **more than one** main clause and at least one subordinate clause. It is the combining of a compound sentence with a complex sentence.

Compound Sentence

A **compound sentence** is a sentence made up of two or more <u>independent clauses</u> but no <u>subordinate clauses.</u>

The <u>clauses</u> in a compound sentence are usually joined by conjunctions and/or some kind of punctuation.

Conjunctive Adverbs

Conjunctive adverbs are adverbs that act as a transition between complete ideas.   They normally show comparison, contrast, cause-effect, sequence, or other relationships.   They usually occur between <u>independent clauses</u> or sentences.

The following words are common conjunctive adverbs:
accordingly, again, also, <u>besides</u> consequently, finally, furthermore, however, indeed, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, then, therefore, and **thus.**

See <u>Commas with Interrupting Expressions</u> and <u>Semicolons with Clauses</u> for information on punctuating and using conjunctive adverbs.

Emphatic Tenses

The two **emphatic** tenses receive their name because they are used for emphasis.   More commonly, however, they are used with the negative **not** and with questions when the normal order is inverted and part of the verb comes before the subject.

The **present emphatic** tense is formed by adding the basic present form of the verb to the present tense of the verb **to do** *(do* or *does).*

The **past emphatic** tense is formed by adding the basic present form of the verb to the past tense of the verb **to do** *(did).*

Present emphatic: Does he run fast?
        He does run fast.
        He does not run slowly.
Past emphatic: He did come to work today.
        Didn't he stay home?
        He did not stay home today.

Demonstratives

A **demonstrative** is a pronoun or adjective which **points out** which item is being referred to.

In English there are only **four** demonstratives: **this, that, these,** and **those.**

A **demonstrative pronoun** is a demonstrative used in the place of a noun.

A **demonstrative adjective** is a demonstrative used to modify a noun.

Demonstrative pronoun: May I see that?

Demonstrative adjective: May I see that book?

Direct Address

A **direct address** is the name of the person (normally) who is being directly spoken to. It is always a proper noun.   It does not have any grammatical relationship to any part of the sentence.   It is set off by commas.

Example: What do you think of this, Georgia?

Elliptical Clause
An **elliptical clause** is a clause in which some words have been left out. Because of the pattern or logic of the entire sentence, it is clear what the missing words are.
An elliptical clause may be either independent or subordinate.
Example: Jessica had five dollars; Monica, three.
       (The verb *had* was dropped from the second clause, but the meaning is still clear.)

For more on using elliptical clauses see <u>Pronouns in Elliptical Clauses</u> and <u>Commas with Elliptical Clauses</u>

Exclamation

An **exclamation** is a word, phrase, or sentence spoken with great emotion or intensity.
An exclamation is normally punctuated with an exclamation point at the end.

Formal Language

Formal language or style is what is used in most writing and business situations.   It does not presume there is a personal or intimate relationship.

For example, while there is nothing grammatically incorrect about most verb contractions, they should be avoided in formal writing unless a personal statement is being directly quoted.   They would be a sign of either a more casual attitude towards the reader or a close personal relationship with the reader.

One simple guideline that helps many times--if you ought to type it, it's formal.

Fragments and Fragmentary Responses

A **sentence fragment** is a group of words which sounds like a sentence but does not express a complete thought. Sometimes it has a subject or verb missing. Sometimes it is a phrase or subordinate clause instead of a complete sentence.

Sentence fragments are normally not only grammatically incorrect but also difficult to understand.

The one type of fragment which may be acceptable at least in conversation is a **fragmentary response.** This is a sentence fragment which answers a question or otherwise responds to a situation in such a way that its meaning is understood even though it is not a complete sentence.

Fragmentary responses should be avoided except in dialogue or very casual writing.

Example: "Who was that woman with you last night?"
"Sandy."
(The response is not a complete sentence, but it is understood because it is responding to a specific question.)

Gerund
A **gerund** is a verb **ending in -ing** and **used as a noun.**
Sports are often referred to in gerund form.
Examples: I like *playing* baseball.
       Doing the audit is duty, not pleasure.

A **gerund phrase** is a noun phrase made up of a gerund plus any complements of the gerund plus any modifiers of either the complement or the gerund.
In the first example, *playing baseball* is the gerund phrase (the gerund, *baseball* plus its direct object *baseball.*)
In the second example, the gerund phrase is *doing the audit* (the gerund *doing*, its direct object *audit,* and *the,* which modifies the direct object).

He Said/She Said Clause
A **he said/she said clause** is simply a clause which tells who is speaking. It is either introducing, in the middle of, or ending a direct quotation .

It normally has a subject, the speaker of the quotation, and a verb like *said* which tells what specific act of speaking was made.

Examples (he said/she said clause in italics):

Jonah said,"Why don't we go out tonight?"

"I don't know," *Mindy replied.*"I have a lot of
work to do."

"Maybe I can help you with the work," *he
suggested.*

Imperative Sentence

An **imperative sentence** asks, requests, or commands someone to do something.   An imperative sentence drops the subject.

Sometimes when simply the verb of an imperative sentence is referred to, it is said to be in the **imperative mood.**

Examples: Go away!

Please go away.

John, come here please.

(*John* is not the subject but a direct address.)

Indirect Quotation

An **indirect quotation** is when the meaning but **not the exact words** of something someone spoke is referred to.

Quotation marks are **not** used with indirect quotations.

Indirect quotations frequently begin with **that** or **if.** They may have no relative pronoun or subordinating conjunction introducing them.

Direct Quotation: Mike said, "I am hungry."

Indirect Quotation: Mike said that he was hungry.

Mike said he was hungry.

Direct Quotation: "Are you coming?" she asked me.

Indirect Quotation: She asked me if I were coming.

Informal Language

Informal language or style is what is used in casual conversation. It is used in writing only when there is a personal or intimate relationship.

Virtually all business writing is formal, not informal.

Informal writing still must be grammatically correct.

One simple guideline that helps many times--if you ought to type it, it's **not** informal.

Intensive Pronoun

An **intensive pronoun** re-emphasizes a noun or pronoun by taking the place of its antecedent to avoid repeating the same word.

In English intensive pronouns are formed just like reflexive pronouns--by adding **-self** or **-selves** to the root pronoun.

Examples: We did it all by ourselves.

The admiral himself inspected the boat.

The **only** intensive pronouns in modern English are the following:

myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, and **themselves.**

The words **hisself** and **theirselves** do not exist.

Interjection

An **interjection** is a word or phrase showing emotion or surprise which has no grammatical relationship to any other words or part of a sentence.

They are often punctuated by exclamation points and are used infrequently.

It is best to avoid the use of them in formal writing other than direct quotations.

In most dictionaries the abbreviation **interj.** means "interjection."

Examples: Ouch, Hey, Oh my, Wow

Interrogative Pronoun

An **interrogative pronoun** is a pronoun used in order to ask a **question.**
Often it has no antecedent because the antecedent is unknown.   That is why the question is being asked!
In modern English there are five interrogative pronouns:
what, which, who, whom, and **whose.**
Note that all five words may also be used as relative pronouns.   A relative pronoun **may** be found in a question; an interrogative pronoun is **only** found in a question.
In addition, these pronouns may take the suffixes **-ever** and **-soever.**
Examples (interrogative pronoun in italics):
>   *What* did you say?
>   *Who* said that?

Interrogative Sentence
An **interrogative sentence** is a sentence that asks a **direct question.**
It is punctuated with a question mark at the end.
In English an interrogative sentence normally changes the word order so that the verb or part of the verb comes before the subject.
Example: Do you like this?

Intransitive Verb

An **intransitive verb** is an action verb (that is, it is neither a linking verb nor an auxiliary verb) which does not have a direct object.

The action is still being done, but it is not being done to anything or anyone else.

Most verbs can be both intransitive and transitive depending on the sentence. The verb *to go,* however, is **always** intransitive.

In most dictionaries the abbreviation **v.i.** means "verb, intransitive."

Transitive: He runs a large corporation.

         (The verb *runs* has a direct object, *corporation.*)

Intransitive: He runs around the block daily.

         (There is no direct object.)

Irony

Irony is the state that occurs when what happens or what exists is the opposite of what is expected.

Verbal irony is specifically when a person says something that is contrary to fact in order to make a point rather than to deceive.   Sarcasm is a type of verbal irony.

Linking Verb

A **linking verb** is a verb which links or establishes a relationship between the subject and a term in the predicate which describes or renames the subject.

It does not show action, but, rather, it links.

The common linking verbs are **be, appear, become, feel, seem, smell, taste,** and **sound.**

Please note that **be** may also be an auxiliary verb.   All the others except for **seem** can be transitive or intransitive action verbs.

One way of testing for a linking verb is to replace the verb with the appropriate   form of **seem.**   If the sentence is still saying pretty much the same thing, the verb is a linking verb.

Action Verb: He tasted the ice cream. (action)

Linking Verb: The ice cream tasted good.

(*Tasted* is used to help *good* describe the subject.)

Mood

The **mood** of a verb is the manner in which the action or condition is conceived or intended. In English there are three verb moods.

1. Indicative, a verb stating an apparent fact or asking a question. This is the way verbs are normally used in English.

2. Imperative, a verb stating a command or request.

3. Subjunctive, a verb expressing a doubt, desire, supposition, or condition contrary to fact.

Modifier
Modifiers describe a word or make the meaning of the word more specific.   They are said to **modify** the word.
In English there are two parts of speech which are modifiers--adjectives and adverbs. Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns.   Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

Negative

In grammar a **negative** is a modifying word or expression used to contradict or deny the truth of a statement.

In English common negatives are **no, never,** and **not.**   Other words which have negative sense are words like **hardly** and **scarcely.**

Nomenclature

Nomenclature means "a system of naming something."

Scientific nomenclature is the system first developed by Carolus Linnaeus to name species using two Latin-rooted words and classify them according to perceived genetic similarity.

Nominative Case

The **nominative case** is the form of a noun or pronoun used in the <u>subject</u> or <u>predicate nominative.</u>

In English this is only significant with **personal pronouns** and the forms of **who.**

Personal pronouns in the nominative case in modern English are **I, you, he, she, it, we, and they.**

The word **who** is also in the nominative case.

Objective Case

The **objective case** is the form of a noun or pronoun used in the <u>direct object</u>, <u>indirect object</u>, <u>object of preposition</u>, <u>object complement</u>, and <u>subject of an infinitive.</u>

In English this is only significant with **personal pronouns** and the forms of **who.**

Personal pronouns in the objective case in modern English are **me, you, him, her, it, us,** and **them.**

The word **whom** is also in the objective case.

Nonstandard

Nonstandard language or style does not follow the rules of standard language. Nonstandard language is never appropriate in writing unless it is a deliberate direct quotation of a nonstandard speaker.   It usually reflects poorly on the speaker when spoken.

Noun

A **noun** is a *word* that signifies a *person, place, thing, idea, action, condition,* or *quality.*
The *nouns* in these two *sentences* are in *italics.*

Parenthetical Expression

A **parenthetical expression** is an expression which is inserted into the flow of thought.   It may be in the middle of a sentence or between sentences, but it does not deal directly with the topic at hand.

Some short parenthetical expressions like **of course** are set off by commas, but parenthetical expressions may also be set off by parentheses and dashes.

Predicate

The **predicate** of a sentence is that part of the sentence which says something about the subject.   It expresses the action of the sentence or the condition of the subject.

The **complete predicate** contains the <u>verb</u> with its modifiers plus any <u>complements</u> and their modifiers.

The verb is sometimes referred to as the **simple predicate.**

The Parts of Speech

The **part of speech** is the term used to describe how a particular word is used.   In English there are eight ways a word can be used--there are eight parts of speech.

1. Nouns name anything.
2. Verbs express action or state of being.
3. Pronouns replace nouns.
4. Adjectives modify nouns or pronouns.
5. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.
6. Prepositions show the relationship between a noun or
       pronoun and another word in the sentence.
7. Conjunctions connect words and sentence parts.
8. Interjections express strong feeling.

For more specific details on the individual parts of speech, see the specific entry for each part of speech.

Passive Voice

The **voice** of a verb refers to the form of the verb used in relation to what the subject is doing.   In English there are only **two** voices-- passive and <u>active.</u>
The **passive voice** of a verb simply means the form of the verb used when the subject is **being acted upon** rather than doing something.

The passive voice is formed by taking the appropriate tense of the verb <u>to be</u> and adding the past participle.
Active Voice: The committee reviewed the project.
Passive Voice: The project was reviewed by the
        committee.

In most writing, use the active voice.   It is more direct and less ambiguous.
The passive should only be used if the doer is unknown or unimportant, or if more emphasis is put on the receiver of the action than the doer.
Doer unknown: The Jones' car was stolen last week.
Doer unimportant: The bells were rung to announce
        the wedding.
Emphasize receiver: Tony was hit by a fastball.

Prepositions

Prepositions are words which relate a noun or pronoun (called the **object of the preposition**) to another word in the sentence.
The preposition and the object of the preposition together with any modifiers of the object is known as a prepositional phrase.

The following is a list of most of the prepositions used in English today. Note that many of the words may also function as other parts of speech.   Also note that some prepositions are compound, made up of more than one word.

aboard	beyond	on account of
about	but	onto
above	by means of	on top of
according to	concerning	opposite
across from	considering	out
across	despite	out of
after	down	outside
against	during	owing to
ahead of	except¹	over
along	for	past
alongside	from	prior to
along with	in	regarding
amid	in addition to	round
among	in back of	since
apart from	in front of	through
around	in lieu of	throughout
aside from	in place of	till
as of	in regard to²	to
at	inside	together with
atop	in spite of	toward
barring	instead of	under
because of	into	underneath
before	in view of	until
behind	like	unto
below	near	up
beneath	nearby	upon
beside	next to	with
besides	of	within
between	off	without
by	on	per

Notes: ¹*Except* may be paired with other prepositions.
        ²"In regard<u>s</u> to" is nonstandard.

Perfect Tenses

The three **perfect tenses** in English are the three verb tenses which show action already completed.   (The word *perfect* literally means "made complete" or "completely done.")

They are formed by the appropriate tense of the verb **to have** plus the **past participle** of the verb.

Present Perfect: I have seen it.
   (Present tense of *to have* plus participle. Action is completed with respect to the present.)
Past Perfect: I had seen it.
   (Past tense of *to have* plus participle. Action is completed with respect to the past.)
Future Perfect: I will have seen it.
   (Future tense of *to have* plus participle. Action is completed with respect to the future.)

Person

Person refers to the form of a word as it relates to the subject.   In English, the form of the word can change with the subject in the present verbs, the past of *to be,* and with personal pronouns.   In English there are three persons.

1. First person refers to the speaker.   The pronouns **I, me, myself,   my, mine, we, us, ourselves, our,** and **ours** are first person.

2. Second person refers to the one being spoken to.   The pronouns **you, yourself, your,** and **yours** are second person.

3. Third person refers to the one being spoken about.   The pronouns **he, she, it, him, her, himself, herself, himself, his, her, hers, its, they, them, themselves, their,** and **theirs** are third person.

Example: The first person singular present of *to be* is *I am.*

Plural

In simplest terms **plural** means "more than one."
To show that a noun is plural, we normally add an **-s** or **-es** to the word.
Example: one dog   two dogs
          one bus   two buses
Sometimes the spelling rule requires that the consonant be doubled before adding the **-es.**
Example: one quiz   two quizzes

There are a few **irregular plurals** such as **men, children, women, oxen,** and a number of words taken directly from foreign languages such as **alumni** (plural of *alumnus*) or **media** (plural of *medium*).

We also speak of the plural form of **pronouns**--that is, pronouns that take the place of plural nouns like **we, you,** and **they.**

We also speak of the plural form of **verbs**--that is, verbs that go with a plural subject.   In English this is only significant in the present tense and the past tense of the verb *to be.*
For example, the third person plural past tense of the verb *to be* is **we were.**

For the formation of the plural of letters, symbols, and words as words, see <u>Apostrophes with Plurals of Underlined Items.</u>

Possessive Case

The **possessive case** of a noun or pronoun shows ownership or association.

Nearly all nouns and indefinite pronouns show possession by ending with the **s** sound.   This is spelled with and **apostrophe** plus an **s.**
For the rules on this see the "Apostrophes" heading in the <u>Punctuation Contents.</u>
Examples: Francine's sweater
            (The sweater owned by Francine.)
            George's grandfather
            (The grandfather associated with George.)

Possessives normally modify nouns as in the examples above, but sometimes they stand by themselves as a noun rather than as a modifier.
Example: That sweater is Francine's.

The possessive case of **personal pronouns** is irregular.   Some possessive pronouns like **my** and **your** modify nouns.   Others, like **mine** and **yours** stand alone and do not act as modifiers.
For more on this, see <u>Possessive Pronouns.</u>

Progressive Tenses

The **progressive tenses** are the six tenses in English which show **continuous** or **repeated** actions.   Sometimes the past progressive is called the **imperfect.**

The six progressive tenses correspond to the three basic and three perfect tenses.   They are formed by the appropriate basic or perfect tense of the verb   **to be** followed by the **present participle.**

Present Progressive: I am coming.
Past Progressive: I was coming.
Future Progressive: I will be coming.

Present Perfect Progressive: I have been coming.
Past Perfect Progressive: I had been coming.
Future Perfect Progressive: I will have been coming.

Pronoun

A **pronoun** takes the place of a noun in a sentence.

In English there are seven different kinds of pronouns.
1. The personal pronoun takes the place of a specific
   or named person or thing.   Personal pronouns come in three different cases:
      nominative, objective, and **possessive.**
2. The reflexive pronoun adds information by pointing
   back to a noun or another pronoun.
3. The intensive pronoun adds emphasis to a noun or
   pronoun.
4. The demonstrative pronoun points out a specific
   person, place, or thing.
5. The relative pronoun begins a subordinate clause
   and relates the clause to a word in the main clause.
6. The interrogative pronoun is used to ask a
   question.   The personal interrogative pronouns come in the same three   cases as
   the personal pronouns.
7. Indefinite pronouns refer to persons, places, or
   things without specifying for certain which one.

For more on each type of pronoun, see the glossary entry for that type.

Punctuation

Punctuation is the visual sign which helps a reader distinguish between words and sentences and helps the reader understand the relationships between words. Technically, capitalizing, spaces between words, and indentations at the start of paragraphs are all forms of punctuation.   But usually when we speak of punctuation, we speak of the symbols we use to mark sentences--the **punctuation marks.**   They help the reader understand exactly what the   writer's intentions are.

In English the following punctuation marks are normally used: **period, question mark, exclamation point, comma, semicolon, colon, quotation marks, single quotation marks, italics, underlining, dash, hyphen, parentheses, brackets, ellipsis,** and **virgule.**

Redundant

Redundant means "needlessly repetitive."
Redundancy is the noun form of the word.

Reflexive Pronoun

An **reflexive pronoun** "reflects" a noun or pronoun by taking the place of its antecedent when the noun or pronoun is doing something to itself.

In English reflexive pronouns are formed just like intensive pronouns--by adding **-self** or **-selves** to the root pronoun.

Examples: We underrated ourselves before the race.

The cat washed herself carefully with her tongue.

The **only** reflexive pronouns in modern English are the following:

myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, and **themselves.**

The words **hisself** and **theirselves** do not exist.

Relative Pronoun

A **relative pronoun** "relates" a subordinate clause to the rest of the sentence.   It may be found in adjective and noun clauses.

A relative pronoun is only found in sentences with more than one clause.

In modern English there are **five** relative pronouns: **that, which, who, whom,** and **whose.**

All but **that** can also be interrogative pronouns.   **That** may also be a demonstrative pronoun.

In addition, these pronouns may take the suffixes **-ever** and **-soever.**

Examples (relative pronouns italicized):

He *who* laughs last laughs best. (Adjective clause)

I cannot believe *that* he said it. (Noun clause)

Sentence

A **sentence** is a group of words communicating a complete thought.
A sentence always contains a subject and a predicate.

Singular

In grammar, the word **singular** means "the form of a word representing or associated with one person, place, or thing."

The term is normally used in contrast to <u>plural.</u>

A singular noun or pronoun represents one person, place, or thing.
Examples: dog   child   I   he

The singular form of a verb goes with a singular subject.
Example: He is coming here very soon.
          (The verb is said to be "in the third person
          singular.")

Syllable

A **syllable** is a word or part of a word that can be pronounced with one impulse from the voice.   A syllable always contains a vowel sound, and most syllables have consonants associated with the vowel.

In English, some syllables in words or sentences are stressed with more force from the voice than others.   Those stressed syllables are called **accented syllables.**

Examples of words divided into syllables:

Ex-am-ples of words di-vi-ded in-to syl-la-bles.

Examples of words divided into syllables with accents:

Ex-am´ples of words´ di-vi´ded in´to syl´la-bles with ac´cents.

Standard English

Standard English, also known as **Standard Written English** or **SWE,** is the form of English most widely accepted as being clear and proper.

Publishers, writers, educators, and others have over the years developed a consensus of what standard English consists of.   It includes word choice, word order, punctuation, and spelling.

Standard English is especially helpful when writing because it maintains a fairly uniform standard of   communication which can be understood by all speakers and users of English regardless of differences in dialect, pronunciation, and usage. This is why it is sometimes called Standard *Written* English.

There are a few minor differences between standard usage in England and the United States, but these differences do not significantly affect communication in the English language.

Series

In grammar, a **series** is a group of three or more words, phrases, or clauses in a row.

Subject of an Infinitive

While the word **subject** in grammar normally applies to a sentence, it is possible for an **infinitive** to have a subject.
When an infinitive or an infinitive phrase follows certain verbs, the action   of the infinitive may be done by a different person or thing than the subject of the sentence.   This doer of the infinitive's action follows the verb and comes before the infinitive.   This is known as the **subject of the infinitive.**

Keep in mind that when an infinitive follows a verb, sometimes the word **to** is dropped from the infinitive.
A personal pronoun is in the objective case when it is a subject of the infinitive.

Examples: We wanted **Bill** to go to the airport.
Simon helped **me** to record the data.
No one saw **the prisoner** escape.
Simon helped **me** record the data.
(In the last two examples, the word *to* has been dropped.)

Subordinating Conjunction

A **subordinating conjunction** joins a <u>subordinate clause</u> to a <u>main clause.</u>

The following is a list of the most common subordinating conjunctions.

after	how	till (or **'til)**
although	if	unless
<u>as</u>	inasmuch	until
as if	in order that	when
as long as	lest	whenever
as much as	now that	where
as soon as	provided (that)	wherever
as though	since	while
<u>because</u>	so that	
before	<u>than</u>	
even if	that	
even though	though	

An adverb clause is always introduced by a subordinating conjunction. A noun clause and adjective clause sometimes are.
Adverb clause: Before you go, sign the log book.
Noun clause: He asked if he could leave early.
Adjective clause: That is the place where he was last seen.

A subordinating conjunction is always followed by a clause. Many subordinating conjunctions can be other parts of speech.
Adverb: Jill came tumbling after.
Preposition: Jill came tumbling after Jack.
Subordinating Conjunction: Jill came tumbling after Jack had fallen.

Tense of Verbs

The word **tense** comes from the Latin word, *tempus,* which means "time."   The **tense** of a verb shows the time when an action or condition occurred.   In English the tense also may provide emphasis and may determine whether or not an action or condition was continuous or repetitive.

There are fourteen tenses in modern English.
There are three <u>basic tenses</u>: **past, present,** and **future.**   They show whether a simple action or condition *occurred, occurs,* or *will occur* in the past, present, or future.
There are three <u>perfect tenses</u>: **past perfect, present perfect,** and **future perfect.**
They show whether an action or condition *had occurred* relative to the past, *has occurred* relative to the present, or *will have occurred* relative to the future.
There are six <u>progressive tenses</u>: **past progressive, present progressive, future progressive, past perfect progressive, present perfect progressive,** and **future perfect progressive.**   They show a continuous action or condition that *was occurring* in the past, *is occurring* in the present, *will be occurring* in the future, *had been occurring* relative to the past, *has been   occurring* relative to the present, or *will have been occurring* relative to the future.
There are two <u>emphatic tenses</u>: **past emphatic** and **present emphatic.** They provide emphasis especially in questions and negatives for actions or conditions that *did occur* in the past or that *do occur* in the present.

In the above explanations the verb **to occur** was conjugated in each of the fourteen tenses respectively.
For more on each type of tense, see the individual entry in the glossary.

Some authorities consider verbs formed with the conditional <u>auxiliary verbs</u> as one or several **conditional tenses** to show actions that *could occur, might occur, should occur, would occur, could have occurred, might have occurred, should have occurred,* and *would have occurred.* These are generally considered simply the past or perfect forms of the verbs can, may, shall, and will.

Transitive Verb
An **transitive verb** is an action or linking verb that has a complement.
Dictionaries consider all linking verbs transitive.   An action verb which is transitive has a
direct object.   The action is being done **to** something or someone.

In most dictionaries the abbreviation **v.t.** means "verb, transitive."
Most verbs can be both intransitive and transitive depending on the sentence.
Intransitive: He runs around the block daily.
            (There is no direct object.)
Transitive: He runs a large corporation.
            (The verb *runs* has a direct object, *corporation.*)

Verb

A **verb** is a word expressing an action or a condition of a subject.

There are three **properties** which characterize verbs in English--tense, voice, and mood.
In English the fourteen verb **tenses** express the time or relative time in which an action or condition occurs.
The **voice** of a verb, passive or active, expresses whether the action is being received by the subject or being done by the subject.   The two voices may occur in any tense.
The **mood** of a verb expresses the conditions under which an action or condition is taking place.   In English there are three moods--indicative, subjunctive, or imperative.   Indicative and subjunctive can be in any tense, imperative only in the present tense.

Verbs are also classified according to function.   **Action verbs** show action or possession. Action verbs are either **transitive** or **intransitive.   Linking verbs** show the condition of the subject. **Auxiliary verbs,** also called **helping verbs,** are used with other verbs to change the tense, voice, or condition of the verb.

Conditional verbs are verbs conjugated with **could, would,** or **should** to show a possible condition.   They may be in any tense.

The **principal parts** of a verb are the four forms of the verb from which all forms of the verb can be made.   In English the four principal parts are the present (or infinitive), the past tense, the past participle, and the present participle.   Since the present participle is always formed the same way (add **-ing**), some lists of principal parts omit it.

For more on most of these forms, see the specific entries in the glossary.

Verbals

A **verbal** is the form of a verb that is used as a different part of speech.

In English there are three verbals--participles, gerunds, and infinitives.

Participles can either be past participles or present participles and they act as an **adjective.**

Gerunds always act as a **noun.**

Infinitives in a sentence may act as a **noun,** an **adjective,** or an **adverb.**

A **verbal phrase** is a phrase consisting of a verbal plus any complements or the verbal plus any modifiers to the verbal or the complement.

For more see the glossary entry on each individual verbal type.