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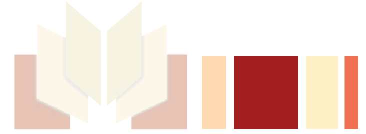
PART VI

A CONCISE HANDBOOK



Opening Comments

Many students consider grammar a nuisance. Taking the easy way out, they cross their fingers and hope they haven't made too many mistakes. They assume that their meaning will come across, even if their writing contains some errors—perhaps a misplaced comma here or a dangling modifier there. Not so. Surface errors annoy readers and may confuse meaning. Such errors also weaken a writer's credibility because they defy language conventions—customs that readers expect writers to honor. By mastering grammar, punctuation, and spelling conventions, you increase your power and versatility as a writer. When you know the rules, you have the option of breaking them, occasionally, for *stylistic* effect. Sentence fragments serve as a good example. Used well, fragments can add dramatic emphasis. (Consider "Not so" a few sentences back.) If, however, fragments appear frequently in your writing because you can't distinguish them from full sentences, they'll only detract from your message.

This concise Handbook will help you brush up on the rules and conventions of writing. It's organized according to the broad skill areas that give writers the most trouble. (The areas are identified in the list on the next two pages.) Throughout the Handbook, grammatical terminology is kept to a minimum. Although we assume you know the major parts of speech (noun, verb, pronoun, and so on), we *do*, when appropriate, provide on-the-spot definitions of more technical grammatical terms.

Consult the Handbook whenever your instructor points out that you're on shaky ground about some aspect of grammar or punctuation. Certainly, use it also whenever you feel unsure about the correctness of what you've written. Most instructors won't devote much class time to grammar and punctuation, so it's your responsibility to take the steps needed to sharpen your skills.

Here's how the Handbook is arranged:

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There are a few other things you should know about the Handbook:

- Each problem area is treated separately. This means that you don't have to study earlier skills before reviewing one that comes later.
- In the margin beside each problem area is a symbol or abbreviation that your instructor may use in marking your papers. A list of these symbols and the page locations where the corresponding skills are discussed in the Handbook can be found on the inside front cover of this book.
- On the whole, we've adopted a "do this—don't do this" approach. However, because things aren't always so simple, we also explain when you may break grammatical convention to achieve a specific effect.

Once you get used to looking up items in the Handbook, you'll find it's like any other tool—the more you use it, the more proficient you become. If you refer to the Handbook often, you can uncross your fingers and feel confident that your work is polished and correct.

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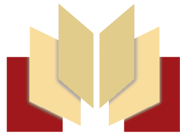

Sentence Faults

frag

FRAGMENTS

A full **sentence** satisfies two conditions: (1) it has a subject and a verb, and (2) it can stand alone as a complete thought. Although a **fragment** is punctuated like a full sentence—with a capital letter at the beginning and a period at the end—it doesn't satisfy these two requirements.[1] There are two kinds of fragments: phrase fragments and dependent clause fragments.

Phrase Fragments

A group of words missing either a subject or a verb is only a phrase, not a complete sentence. If you punctuate a phrase as if it were a sentence, the result is a **phrase fragment.** We illustrate here five kinds of phrase fragments (identified by italics in the examples). Then we present ways to correct such fragments.

Noun Phrase Fragment

I was afraid of my wrestling coach. *A harsh and sarcastic man.* He was never satisfied with my performance.

Added-Detail Phrase Fragment

Many people have difficulty getting up in the morning. *Especially on Mondays after a hectic weekend.* They wish they had one more day to relax.

Prepositional Phrase Fragment

After a long day at work. I drove to the bank that opened last week. *On the corner of Holly Avenue and Red Oak Lane. Next to the discount supermarket*.

Every summer millions of Americans burn themselves to a crisp. *Despite warnings about the sun's dangers.* They spend hours at the beach, often without applying any protective lotion.

Present Participle, Past Participle, or Infinitive Phrase Fragment

Waiting [present participle] *to buy tickets for the concert.* The crowd stood quietly in line. No one cared that the box office would be closed until the morning.

[1]For information on the way an occasional fragment may be used for emphasis, see pages 122–123 in Chapter 8.

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The children presented the social worker with a present. *Wrapped* [past participle] *in gold aluminum foil*.

After years of negotiating, several nations signed a treaty. *To ban* [infinitive] *the sale of ivory in their countries*.

Missing-Subject Phrase Fragment

Every weekend, the fraternities sponsored a joint open-house party. *And blared music all night long.* Not surprisingly, neighbors became furious.

How to Correct Phrase Fragments

There are four strategies for eliminating phrase fragments from your writing. When using these strategies, you may need to reword sentences slightly to maintain smoothness.

1. Attach the fragment to the preceding or following sentence, changing punctuation and capitalization as needed. When attaching a phrase fragment to the *beginning of a preceding sentence,* place a comma between the fragment and the start of the original sentence:

Fragment Environmentalists predict a drought this summer. *In spite of heavy spring rains.* Everyone hopes the predictions are wrong.
Correct In spite of heavy spring rains, environmentalists predict a drought this summer. Everyone hopes the predictions are wrong.

To attach a phrase fragment to the *end of a preceding sentence,* change the period at the end of the preceding sentence to a comma and change the first letter of the fragment to lowercase:

Fragment I spent several hours in the college's Career Services Office. *Trying to find an interesting summer job.* Nothing looked promising.
Correct I spent several hours in the college's Career Services Office, trying to find an interesting summer job. Nothing looked promising.

To attach a phrase fragment to the *beginning of a full sentence that follows it,* change the period at the end of the fragment to a comma and make the capital letter at the start of the full sentence lowercase:

Fragment *Overwhelmed by school pressures and family demands.* She decided to postpone her education. That was a mistake.
Correct Overwhelmed by school pressures and family demands, she decided to postpone her education. That was a mistake.

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2. Insert the fragment into the preceding or following sentence, adding commas as needed:

Fragment	The tests were easy. *Especially the essay questions.* We felt confident that we had done well.
Correct	The tests, especially the essay questions, were easy. We felt confident that we had done well. [fragment inserted into preceding sentence]
Fragment	*A robust girl who loved physical activity from the time she was a baby.* My sister qualified for the Olympics when she was seventeen.
Correct	My sister, a robust girl who loved physical activity from the time she was a baby, qualified for the Olympics when she was seventeen. [fragment inserted into following sentence]

3. Attach the fragment to a newly created sentence:

Fragment	Although I proudly call it mine, my apartment does have some problems. *For example, very little heat in the winter.*
Correct	Although I proudly call it mine, my apartment does have some problems. For example, *it has* very little heat in the winter.

4. Supply the missing subject:

Fragment	Although they argued frequently, my grandparents doted on each other. *And held hands wherever they went.*
Correct	Although they argued frequently, my grandparents doted on each other. *They* held hands wherever they went.
or	
Correct	Although they argued frequently, my grandparents doted on each other *and* held hands wherever they went.

Dependent Clause Fragments

Unlike phrases, which lack either a subject or a full verb, **clauses** contain both a subject and a full verb. Clauses may be **independent** (expressing a complete thought and able to stand alone as a sentence) or **dependent** (not expressing a complete thought and, therefore, not able to stand alone). A dependent clause (often called a **subordinate clause**) begins with a word that signals the clause's reliance on something more for completion. Such introductory words may take the form of **subordinating conjunctions** or **relative pronouns:**[2]

Subordinating Conjunctions

after	once	even though	when
although	since	if	while
as	so that	in order that	
because	unless	until	

[2]Dependent clauses introduced by relative pronouns are often referred to as *relative clauses*.

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Relative Pronouns

that	whoever
what	whom
which	whose
who	

If you punctuate a dependent clause as though it were a complete sentence, the result is a **dependent clause fragment** (identified by italics in the examples):

Fragment *Because my parents wanted to be with their children at bedtime.* They arranged to leave their late-shift jobs a few minutes early.

Fragment The mayor, after months of deliberation, proposed a housing ordinance. *Which antagonized almost everyone in town.*

How to Correct Dependent Clause Fragments

There are two main ways to correct dependent clause fragments. When using the strategies, you may need to reword sentences slightly to maintain smoothness.

1. Connect the fragment to the preceding or following full sentence, adding a comma if needed:

Fragment I thought both my car and I would be demolished. *When the motorcycle hit me from behind.*

Correct When the motorcycle hit me from behind, I thought both my car and I would be demolished. [fragment attached, with a comma, to beginning of preceding sentence]

or

Correct I thought both my car and I would be demolished when the motorcycle hit me from behind. [fragment attached, without a comma, to end of preceding sentence]

Fragment *Although the clean-up crews tried to scrub the oil-coated rocks thoroughly.* Many birds nesting on the rocky shore are bound to die.

Correct Although the clean-up crews tried to scrub the oil-coated rocks thoroughly, many birds nesting on the rocky shore are bound to die. [fragment attached, with a comma, to beginning of following sentence]

or

Correct Many birds nesting on the rocky shore are bound to die, although the clean-up crews tried to scrub the oil-coated rocks thoroughly. [fragment attached, with a comma, to end of following sentence]

When you connect a dependent clause to a full sentence, you need to decide whether to insert a comma. Consider the following:

Guidelines for Using Commas with Dependent Clauses

- If a dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction (like *when* or *although*) precedes the full sentence, the dependent clause is followed by a comma (as in the first and third corrected sentences above).

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- If a dependent clause follows the full sentence, it isn't preceded by a comma (as in the second corrected sentence on page 671).
- The exception is dependent clauses beginning with such words as *although* and *though*—words that show contrast. When such clauses follow a full sentence, they are preceded by a comma (as in the fourth corrected sentence on page 671).

When connecting a relative clause to a full sentence, you set *off* the *relative clause* with a comma if the clause is **nonrestrictive** (that is, if it is *not essential* to the sentence's meaning):

Fragment As a child, I went to the mountains with my parents. *Who never relaxed long enough to enjoy the lazy times there.*

Correct As a child, I went to the mountains with my parents, who never relaxed long enough to enjoy the lazy times there.

Note that in the corrected version there's a comma between the independent and relative clauses because the relative clause (*who never relaxed long enough to enjoy the lazy times there*) is nonrestrictive. In other words, it isn't needed to identify the writer's parents.

Take a look, though, at the following:

Fragment As a child, I went to the mountains with the family. *Who lived next door.*

Correct As a child, I went to the mountains with the family who lived next door.

In this case, the relative clause (*who lived next door*) is needed to identify which family is being referred to; that is, the clause is **restrictive** (*essential*) and, therefore, is *not* set off with a comma. (For information on punctuating restrictive and non-restrictive phrases, see pages 697–698.)

When a relative clause beginning with *that* is attached to a nearby sentence, no comma is used between the relative and independent clauses:

Fragment My uncle got down on his hands and knees to rake away the dry leaves. *That he felt spoiled the beauty of his flower beds.*

Correct My uncle got down on his hands and knees to rake away the dry leaves that he felt spoiled the beauty of his flower beds.

2. Remove or replace the dependent clause's first word:

Fragment The typical family-run farm is up for sale these days. *Because few small farmers can compete with agricultural conglomerates.*

Correct The typical family-run farm is up for sale these days. Few small farmers can compete with agricultural conglomerates.

Practice: Correcting Sentence Fragments

Correct any phrase and dependent clause fragments that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some of the sentences may not contain fragments, and others may contain more than one.

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1. Even though there must be millions of pigeons in the city. You never see a baby pigeon. It makes you wonder where they're hiding.
2. Children between the ages of eight and twelve often follow teenagers' trends. And look up to teens as role models. Mimicking their behavior in frequently disconcerting ways.
3. The least expensive remote-control toy car costs over fifty dollars. Which is more than many budget-conscious parents want to pay. Such high costs are typical in the toy industry.
4. The student's dorm room looked like a disaster area. Heaps of dirty clothes, crumpled papers, and half-eaten snacks were strewn everywhere. Keeping the room neat was obviously not a priority.
5. Because they feel urban schools are second-rate. Many parents hope to move their families to the suburbs. Even though they plan to continue working in the city.
6. Pulling the too-short hospital gown around his wasted body, the patient wandered down the hospital corridor. Unaware of the stares of the healthy people streaming by.
7. Last year, the student government overhauled its charter and created chaos. A confusing set of guidelines that muddled already contradictory policies. This year's senate has to find a way to remedy the situation.
8. Out of all the listed apartments we looked at that dreary week. Only one was affordable. And suitable for human habitation.
9. My grandfather likes to send off-beat greeting cards. Like the one with a picture of a lion holding on to a parachute. The card reads, "Just wanted to drop you a lion."
10. About a year ago, my mother was unexpectedly laid off by the restaurant. Where she had been hired five years earlier as head chef. The experience made her realize that she wanted to go into business for herself.
11. Occasionally looking up to see if anyone interesting had entered the room, the students sat hunched over their desks in the study carrels. Cramming for final exams. Scheduled to start the next day.
12. As prices have come down, DVD players have gained great popularity. With the development of these sophisticated viewing systems, watching movies is more enjoyable than ever. Indeed, nearly as pleasurable as being in the theater itself.
13. Through the local adult education program, my parents took a course in electrical wiring last spring. They plan to enroll in a plumbing course this winter. Their goal is to save money on household repairs. Which cost them hundreds of dollars last year.
14. For breakfast, my health-conscious roommate drinks a strange concoction. That consists of soybean extract, wheat germ, and sunflower meal. It doesn't look very appealing.
15. Last night, I went to the hospital to visit my uncle. Who had been hospitalized four days earlier with a heart attack. I was relieved to see how healthy he looked.

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16. The BB gun has changed dramatically. Over the last few years. Today's top-of-the-line gun can fire BBs or pellets 800 feet per second. Almost as fast as some handguns.
17. The hyacinths and daffodils in the garden were blooming beautifully. Until a freakish spring storm blasted their growth. Within hours, they shriveled up. And lay flat on the ground.
18. During last week's heated town meeting, several municipal officials urged the town council to adopt a controversial zoning ordinance. A proposal that had already been rejected by the town residents.
19. Strategically placed pine trees concealed the junkyard from nearby residents. Who otherwise would have protested its presence in the neighborhood. Well known for its lush lawns and colorful gardens.
20. In an effort to cover his bald spot. Al combs long strands of hair over the top of his head. Unfortunately, no one is fooled by his strategy. Especially not his wife. Who wishes her husband would accept the fact that he's getting older.

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r-o

COMMA SPLICES AND RUN-ON SENTENCES

Consider the following faulty sentences:

Almost everyone in the office smokes, cigarette breaks are more important than coffee breaks.

My grades are good too bad my social life isn't.

The first example is a **comma splice:** A comma is used to join, or splice together, two complete thoughts, even though a comma alone is not strong enough to connect the two independent clauses. The second example is a **run-on,** or **fused, sentence:** Two sentences are connected, or run together, without any punctuation at all to indicate where the first sentence ends and the second begins.

Three Common Pitfalls

Here we describe three situations that often lead to comma splices or run-on sentences. Then we present ways to correct these sentence errors.

1. When the second sentence starts with a personal or demonstrative pronoun: The following are **personal pronouns:** *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *we*, and *they*. *This*, *that*, *these*, and *those* are **demonstrative pronouns**.

Comma Splice The college's computerized billing system needs to be overhauled, *it billed more than a dozen students twice for tuition.*

Run-on Lobsters are cannibalistic and will feed on each other *this is one reason they are difficult to raise in captivity.*

2. When the second sentence starts with a transition: Some common **transitions** include the words *finally, next, second,* and *then*.

Comma Splice	You start by buttering the baking dish, *next you pour in milk and mix it well with the butter.*
Run-on	The dentist studied my X rays *then she let out an ominous sigh.*

3. When two sentences are connected by a transitional adverb: Here are some of the most common **transitional adverbs:**

Transitional Adverbs

accordingly	furthermore	meanwhile	still
also	however	moreover	therefore
anyway	indeed	nevertheless	thus
besides	instead	nonetheless	
consequently	likewise	otherwise	

Comma Splice	We figured the movie tickets would cost about five dollars, *however, we forgot to calculate the cost of all the junk food we would eat.*
Run-on	Fish in a backyard pond will thrive simply by eating the bugs, larvae, and algae in the pond *nevertheless, many people enjoy feeding fish by hand.*

How to Correct Comma Splices and Run-on Sentences

There are four strategies for eliminating comma splices and run-on sentences from your writing.

1. Place a period, question mark, or exclamation point at the end of the first sentence and capitalize the first letter of the second sentence:

Comma Splice	Our team played badly, *we deserved to lose by the wide margin we did.*
Correct	Our team played badly. We deserved to lose by the wide margin we did.
Run-on	Which computer do experts recommend for the average college student *which system do experts consider most all-purpose?* They seldom agree.
Correct	Which computer do experts recommend for the average college student? Which system do experts consider most all-purpose? They seldom agree.

2. Use a semicolon (;) to mark where the first sentence ends and the second begins:

Comma Splice	In the eighteenth century, beauty marks were considered fashionable, *people even glued black paper dots to their faces.*
Correct	In the eighteenth century, beauty marks were considered fashionable; people even glued black paper dots to their faces.
Run-on	Many men use hairstyling products, facial scrubs, and cologne *however, most draw the line at powder and eye makeup.*
Correct	Many men use hairstyling products, facial scrubs, and cologne; however, most draw the line at powder and eye makeup.

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Note that when the second sentence starts with a transitional adverb (such as *however* in the last corrected sentence above), a *comma* is placed *after* the transition.[3]

3. Turn one of the sentences into a dependent clause:[4]

Comma Splice	The camping grounds have no electricity, *however, people flock there anyway*.
Correct	*Although* the camping grounds have no electricity, people flock there anyway.
Run-on	The highway was impassable *it had snowed all night and most of the morning*.
Correct	The highway was impassable *because* it had snowed all night and most of the morning.

When using this strategy, refer to the list of guidelines on pages 671–672 to help you decide whether you should (as in the first corrected example) or shouldn't (as in the second corrected example) use a comma between the independent and dependent clauses.

4. Keep or add a comma at the end of the first sentence, but follow the comma with a coordinating conjunction. The following words are **coordinating conjunctions:** *and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*.

Comma Splice	Well-prepared and confident, I expected the exam to be easy, *it turned out to be a harrowing experience*.
Correct	Well-prepared and confident, I expected the exam to be easy, but it turned out to be a harrowing experience.
Run-on	Last election we campaigned enthusiastically *this year we expect to be equally involved*.
Correct	Last election we campaigned enthusiastically, *and* this year we expect to be equally involved.

Practice: Correcting Comma Splices and Run-on Sentences

Correct any comma splices and run-ons that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some commas belong just where they are.

1. Since the town appeared to be nearby, they left the car on the side of the road and started walking toward the village, they soon regretted their decision.
2. As we rounded the bend, we saw hundreds of crushed cars piled in neat stacks, the rusted hulks resembled flattened tin cans.
3. With unexpected intensity, the rain hit the pavement, plumes of heat rose from the blacktop, making it difficult to drive safely.

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[3]For information on punctuating transitional adverbs when they appear midsentence, see pages 698–699.

[4]See pages 670–671 for a list of words that introduce dependent clauses.

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4. According to all reports, the day after Thanksgiving is the worst day of the year to shop, the stores are jammed with people, all looking for bargains.
5. Plants should be treated regularly with an organic insecticide, otherwise, spider mites and mealy bugs can destroy new growth.
6. Have you ever looked closely at a penny, do you know whether Lincoln faces right or left?
7. As we set up the tent, flies swarmed around our heads, we felt like day-old garbage.
8. If the phone rings when my parents are eating dinner, they don't answer it, they assume that, if the person wants to reach them, he or she will call back.
9. The library's security system needs improving, it allows too many people to sneak away, with books and magazines hidden in their pockets, purses, or briefcases.
10. Ocean air is always bracing, it makes everyone feel relaxed and carefree, as though the world of work is far away.
11. In the last few years, many prestigious art museums have developed plans to add on to buildings designed by such legendary architects as Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Kahn, however, many irate museum-goers want the buildings to stay just as they are.
12. The salesperson stapled my bag in six places I must have looked like a shoplifter.
13. Throughout the last decade, publishing companies doled out huge advances to lure big-time authors, now many publishers, struggling with massive losses, regret the strategy.
14. Several communities in the country sponsor odd food festivals, in fact, one of the strangest takes place in Vineland, New Jersey, this small rural community celebrates spring with a dandelion-eating contest.
15. Only the female mosquito drinks blood the males live on plant juices.
16. Every Friday evening, my parents go out to eat, by themselves, at the local diner, then they do their food-shopping for the week.
17. Television commercials are valuable they give everyone a chance to stretch, visit the bathroom, and get a snack.
18. I start by wetting my feet in the lake's cold water then I wade up to my knees before plunging in, shivering all the while.
19. In this country, roughly three hundred new pizza parlors open every week, this shows that pizza has become a staple in the American diet, exceeding even hamburgers and hot dogs in popularity.
20. The first wave of crack babies has reached school age, and health and social workers are discovering a whole new set of drug-related problems.

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FAULTY PARALLELISM

Words in a pair or in a series should be placed in parallel (matching) grammatical structures. If they're not, the result is **faulty parallelism**:

Faulty Parallelism After the exam, we were *exhausted, hungry,* and *experienced depression*.

In the preceding sentence, three items make up the series. However, the first two items are adjectives (*exhausted* and *hungry*), while the last one is a verb plus a noun (*experienced depression*).

Words that follow correlative conjunctions (*either . . . or, neither . . . nor, both . . . and, not only . . . but also*) should also be parallel:

Faulty Parallelism Every road into the city is either *jammed* or *is closed* for repairs.

Here, *either* is followed by an adjective (*jammed*), but *or* is followed by a verb (*is*).

How to Correct Faulty Parallelism

To correct faulty parallelism, *place words in a pair or in a series in the same grammatical structure*:

Faulty Parallelism	*After the car baked in the sun for hours, the steering wheel was hot, the seats were sticky, and there was stuffiness in the air.*
Correct	After the car baked in the sun for hours, the steering wheel was hot, the seats were sticky, and the air was stuffy.
or	
Correct	After the car baked in the sun for hours, the steering wheel was hot, the seats sticky, and the air stuffy.
Faulty Parallelism	*Parents are either too permissive or they are too strict.*
Correct	Parents are either too permissive or too strict.
or	
Correct	Parents either are too permissive or are too strict.
or	
Correct	Either parents are too permissive, or they are too strict.

(For more on parallelism, see pages 121–122 in Chapter 8.)

Practice: Correcting Faulty Parallelism

Correct any faulty parallelism that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; not every sentence contains an error.

1. The professor's tests were long, difficult, and produced anxiety.
2. Medical tests showed that neither being allergic to dust nor seasonal hay fever caused the child's coughing fits.

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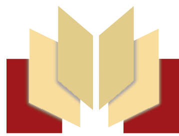
3. One option that employees had was to accept a pay cut; the other was working longer hours.
4. The hairstylist warned her customers, "I'm a beautician, not a magician. This is a comb; it's not a wand."
5. The renovated concert hall is both beautiful and it is spacious.
6. My roommates and I are not only learning Japanese but also Russian.
7. The game-show contestants were told they had to be quick-witted, friendly, and demonstrate enthusiasm.
8. Having good rapport, being open to ideas, and believing strongly in a common goal can help group members complete a project.
9. While waiting in line at the supermarket, people often flip through the tabloids to read about celebrities, the latest scandals, and how to lose weight.
10. Smoking either will be eventually made illegal or people will give it up on their own.



Verbs

Problems with Subject-Verb Agreement

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A **verb** should *match its subject in number.* If the subject is singular (one person, place, or thing), the verb should have a singular form. If the subject is plural (two or more persons, places, or things), the verb should have a plural form.

How to Correct Faulty Subject-Verb Agreement

The six situations described here often lead to problems with subject-verb agreement. To deal with each of these problems, you must determine the *verb's subject* and make sure the *verb agrees with it,* rather than with some other word in the sentence.

1. When there are two or more subjects: When the word *and* joins two or more subjects in a sentence, use a plural verb.

Correct A beautiful maple *and* a straggly oak *flank* [not *flanks*] the building.

However, when the word *or* joins the subjects, use a singular verb:

Correct A maple *or* an oak *offers* [not *offer*] good shade in the summer.

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2. When the subject and verb are separated by a prepositional phrase: Be sure to match the verb to its subject—not to a word in a prepositional phrase that comes between the subject and the verb.

Correct
One of the desserts *was* [not *were*] too sweet even for me.
To pass inspection, the *plumbing* in all the apartments *needs* [not *need*] to be repaired.

3. When the words *either* . . . *or* or *neither* . . . *nor* connect subjects: When *either* . . . *or* or *neither* . . . *nor* link two subjects, use the verb form (singular or plural) that agrees with the subject *closer* to the verb.

Correct
Neither the students *nor* the *professor likes* [not *like*] the textbook.
Neither the professor *nor* the *students like* [not *likes*] the textbook.

4. When the subject is an indefinite pronoun: Some **indefinite pronouns** (such as *anyone, anything, each, either, every, everyone, everybody, everything, neither,* and *nobody*) take a *singular verb*—whether they act as a pronoun subject (as in the first sentence that follows) or as an adjective in front of a noun subject (as in the second sentence).

Correct
Neither of the libraries *was* [not *were*] open.
Neither library *was* [not *were*] open.

Other indefinite pronouns (such as *all, any, most, none,* and *some*) take a *singular or a plural verb,* depending on whether they refer to one thing or to a number of things. In the following sentence, *some* refers to a single tutoring session, so the verb is singular:

Correct The student reported that only *some* of her tutoring *session was* helpful.

In this next sentence, however, *some* refers to multiple sessions, so the verb is plural:

Correct The student reported that only *some* of her tutoring *sessions were* helpful.

5. When there is a group subject: When the subject of a sentence refers to a group acting in unison, or as a unit, use a singular verb.

Correct The debate *club* is [not *are*] on a winning streak.

However, when the subject is a group whose members are acting individually, rather than as a unit, use a plural verb:

Correct The *debate club argue* [not *argues*] among themselves constantly.

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If, in this case, the plural verb sounds awkward, reword the sentence so that the group's individual members are referred to directly:

Correct The debate club *members argue* among themselves constantly.

6. When the verb comes before the subject: Words such as *here, there, how, what, when, where, which, who,* and *why,* as well as *prepositional phrases,* are apt to invert normal sentence order, causing the verb to precede the subject. In such cases, look ahead for the subject and make sure it and the verb agree in number.

Correct

There *is* [not *are*] always a long *line* of students at the library's duplicating machine.
What *are* [not *is*] the *reasons* for consumers' complaints about the car?
Near the lifeguard station, looking for us everywhere, *were* [not *was*] our *parents*.

Practice: Correcting Problems with Subject-Verb Agreement

Correct any errors in subject-verb agreement that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some sentences may not contain any errors.

1. There is many secretaries who do their bosses' jobs, as well as their own.
2. At the back of the closet, behind all the clothes, are some old records.
3. Each of the children wear a name tag when the play group takes a field trip.
4. Next week, the faculty committee on academic standards plans to pass a controversial resolution, one that the student body have rejected in the past.
5. In the garage, leaning against the back wall, are a rusty sled and a broken tricycle.
6. Neither the sales representative nor the customers were happy with the price increase, which is scheduled to go into effect next month.
7. The human spinal column, with its circular discs, resemble a stack of wobbly poker chips.
8. Both the students and the instructor dislikes experimental music.
9. In most schools, either the college president or the provost is responsible for presenting the budget to the board of trustees. The board of trustees, in turn, are responsible for cutting costs whenever possible.
10. Nobody in the two classes think that the exam, which lasted three hours, was fair.
11. Chipped ceramic pots and half-empty bags of fertilizer lines the shelves of my grandparents' storage shed.
12. In the middle of the campus, near the two new dorms, are a row of spindly elms. The trees, especially the one at the end, were badly damaged in last week's storm.

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13. A strong, secure bond between parent and child are formed when parents responds quickly and consistently to their babies' needs.
14. The crowd, consisting of irate teachers and parents, were quiet, but the police were alerted anyway.
15. The guidelines issued by the supervisor states that personal calls made during the business day violate company policy.

vt

PROBLEMS WITH VERB TENSE

A **verb's tense** indicates the time—*past, present,* or *future*—of an event. Here we show how to correct two common problems with verb tense: (1) inappropriate shifts in tense, and (2) faulty use of past tense.

How to Correct Inappropriate Shifts in Verb Tense

The first sentence that follows switches from the past tense (*bought*) to the present (*breaks*), even though both events took place in the same (past) period of time. The second sentence switches from the present tense (*is*) to the past (*was*). To avoid such inappropriate shifts, *use the same verb tense to relate all events occurring in the same time period*:

Inappropriate Tense Shift	The township *bought* a powerful new lawn mower, which *breaks* down after two weeks.
Correct	The township *bought* a powerful new lawn mower, which *broke* down after two weeks.
Inappropriate Tense Shift	The restaurant's homemade bread *is* thick and crunchy. It *was* a meal in itself.
Correct	The restaurant's homemade bread *was* thick and crunchy. It *was* a meal in itself.

When writing, decide which verb tense will be most effective; then use that tense throughout—unless you need to change tenses to indicate a different time period.

Much of the writing you do in college will use the past tense:

Changes in the tax law *created* chaos for accounting firms.

However, when writing about literature, you generally use the present tense:

Twain *examines* the conflict between humane impulses and society's prejudices.

How to Correct Faulty Use of Past Tense

The following sentence uses the **simple past tense** (*finished, burst*) for both verbs, even though one event ("the plane finished rolling down the runway") *preceded* the other (the plane "burst into flames"). To distinguish one past event

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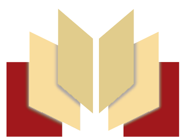
from an earlier one, use the **past perfect tense** ("*had* washed," "*had* gone," "*had* finished") for the earlier event:

Faulty Past Tense	The plane already *finished* rolling down the runway when it *burst* into flames.
Correct	The plane *had* already *finished* [past perfect] rolling down the runway when it *burst* [simple past] into flames.

Practice: Correcting Problems with Verb Tense

Correct any errors in verb tense that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some tenses shouldn't be changed.

1. I parked illegally, so my car is towed and gets dented in the process.
2. We had already ordered a truckload of lumber when we decided not to build a deck after all.
3. Although the union leaders called a strike, the union members voted not to stop working.
4. Dr. Alice Chase wrote a number of books on healthy eating. In 1974, she dies of malnutrition.
5. By the time we hiked back to the campsite, the rest of the group collected their gear to go home.
6. In her poetry, Marge Piercy often pays tribute to women's strength and resilience.
7. As a boy, Thomas Edison was told he will never succeed at anything.
8. The Museum of Modern Art once hung a painting upside down. The mistake goes unnoticed for more than a month.
9. When doctors in Los Angeles went on strike in 1976, the death rate drops 18 percent.
10. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* conveyed the horrors of poverty.
11. The championship players slapped each other's backs, hooted and hollered, and poured champagne all over the coach.
12. The aspiring comic walked to the front of the small stage. As he looked out at the audience, a wave of nausea sweeps over him.



Pronouns

PROBLEMS WITH PRONOUN USE

Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns (persons, places, things, and concepts). Indeed, the word *pronoun* means "for a noun." As the

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following sentences show, pronouns keep you from repeating words unnecessarily:

> After I fertilized the plant, *it* began to flourish. [*it* takes the place of *plant*]
> When the students went to register *their* complaint, *they* were told to come back later. [*their* and *they* replace *students*]

When using pronouns, you need to be careful not to run into problems with case, agreement, and reference.

case

Pronoun Case

A pronoun's correct form, or **case,** depends on the way the pronoun is used in the sentence. A pronoun acting as a *subject* requires the **nominative case.** One acting as a *direct object* (receiving a verb's action), an *indirect object* (indicating to or for whom the action is performed), or an *object of a preposition* (following a preposition such as *at*, *near*, or *to*) requires the **objective case.** And a pronoun indicating *possession* takes the **possessive case.** The list below classifies pronouns by case:

Nominative Case	Objective Case	Possessive Case	
I	me	my	mine
we	us	our	ours
you	you	your	yours
he	him	his	his
she	her	her	hers
it	it	its	its
they	them	their	theirs
who	whom	whose	

How to Correct Faulty Pronoun Case

The five situations described here often lead to errors in pronoun case. To correct any of these problems, *determine whether the pronoun is used as object or subject; then put the pronoun in the appropriate case.*

1. Pronoun pairs or a pronoun and a noun: Use the nominative case when two pronouns act as subjects.

Correct *He* and *I* [not *Him* and *me*] are different ages, but we have several traits in common.

Also use the nominative case when a pronoun and noun serve as subjects:

Correct *She* [not *Her*] and *several transfer students* enrolled in the new course.

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Conversely, use the objective case when a pronoun pair acts as direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition:

Correct (Direct Objects) My parents sent *her* [not *she*] and *me* [not *I*] to the store to buy decorations for the holiday.

Correct (Indirect Objects) The committee presented *him* [not *he*] and *me* [not *I*] with the award.

Similarly, use the objective case when a pronoun and noun function as direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition:

Correct (Object of Preposition) The doctor gave the pills to the three other patients and *me* [not *I*].

A hint: When a pronoun is paired with another pronoun or with a noun, and you're not sure which case to use, imagine the sentence with only one pronoun. For example, perhaps you wonder whether it's correct to write, "The student senate commended my roommates and *I* for our actions." "The student senate commended *I*" doesn't sound right, so you know *me* is the correct form.

2. A pronoun-noun pair acting together as subject or object: If a pronoun-noun pair acts as the subject, use the nominative case.

Correct *We* [not *Us*] *dorm residents* plan to protest the ruling.

If the pronoun-noun pair serves as an object, use the objective case:

Correct The dropout rate among *us* [not *we*] *commuting students* is high.

3. Pronouns following forms of the verb *to be*: In formal English, use the nominative case in constructions like the following.

Correct
It is *I* [not *me*].
This is *she* [not *her*].

In such constructions, the objective case (*me* and *her,* for example) is so common that the formally correct nominative case may sound strange. However, before using the more colloquial objective case, check with your instructor to make sure such informality will be acceptable.

4. Pronouns following the comparative *than*: Comparisons using the word *than* tend to imply, rather than state directly, the sentence's final word (placed in brackets in the following sentence).

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The other employees are more willing to negotiate *than we* [are].

To determine the appropriate case for the pronoun in a sentence with a *than* comparison, simply add the implied word. For example, maybe you're not sure whether *we* or *us* is correct in the preceding sentence. As soon as you supply the implied word (*are*), it becomes clear that *we*, not *us*, is correct.

5. *Who* and *whom:* When, as in the first example that follows, a pronoun acts as the subject of a sentence or clause, use *who* (the nominative case). When, as in the second example, the pronoun acts as the object of a verb or preposition, use *whom* (the objective case). You can test whether *who* or *whom* is correct by answering the question stated or implied in the *who/whom* portion of the sentence. The pronoun that answers *who/whom* will reveal which case to use.

"*Who/Whom* did you meet at the jazz festival"? → "I met *him* at the festival." → Since *him* is the objective case, use *whom*.

"The employees want to know *who/whom* will supervise the project." → "*She* will supervise the project." → Since *she* is the nominative case, use *who*.

Practice: Correcting Problems with Pronoun Case

Correct any problems with pronoun case that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some pronouns are used correctly.

1. At this college, neither the president nor the dean automatically assumes that, on every issue, the faculty is better informed than us students.
2. Between you and I, each of the dorms should have their security systems replaced.
3. The theater critic, whom slipped into her seat right before the curtain went up, gave him and the other actors favorable reviews.
4. Neither of the boys impressed she or me with their musical ability.
5. The salesperson explained to my husband and I that each of the laptop computers had its drawbacks.
6. My grandfather, who found knitting relaxing, made me and my brother beautiful scarves and sweaters.
7. After enjoying prosperity through most of the 1980s, she and him were unprepared for the rigors of the next decade.
8. To whom did the theater manager give the free passes?
9. Many of us baby boomers came of age in an era of social activism.
10. The people who lived next door, me and my roommates concluded, had no intention of being neighborly.
11. The director of housing, whom we had contacted two months ago, finally asked us dorm residents to itemize our complaints.
12. The plot twisted and turned so much it was difficult for my sister and I to keep track of who cheated on who.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun must **agree in number** with its **antecedent—**the noun or pronoun it replaces or refers to. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must be plural.

How to Correct Faulty Pronoun Agreement

The four situations described here often lead to problems with pronoun agreement. To deal with these problems, either *change the pronoun so it agrees in number and person with its antecedent* or *change the noun to agree with the pronoun you have used*.

1. Compound subject: A compound subject (two or more nouns joined by *and*) requires plural pronouns.

Correct Both the oak *tree* and the rose *bush* had trouble regaining *their* strength after the storm.

However, when the nouns are joined by *or* or *nor*, whichever noun is closer to the verb determines whether the pronoun should be singular or plural:

Faulty Pronoun Agreement	Neither the oak tree nor the rose *bushes* regained *its* strength after the storm.
Correct	Neither the oak tree nor the rose *bushes* regained *their* strength after the storm.
Correct	Neither the rose bushes nor the oak *tree* regained *its* strength after the storm.

2. Collective nouns: Collective nouns represent a collection of people or things. Some examples are *company*, *university*, *team*, and *committee*, If the collective noun refers to a group or entity that acts as one unit, use the singular pronoun.

Faulty Pronoun Agreement	The *band* showed *their* appreciation by playing several encores.
Correct	The *band* showed *its* appreciation by playing several encores.

If, in this case, the singular pronoun form sounds awkward, simply make the antecedent plural. Then use the plural pronoun:

Correct The band *members* showed *their* appreciation by playing several encores.

When the collective noun refers to members of a group who act individually, use a plural pronoun:

Correct *The band* disagreed among *themselves* about the songs to be played.

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3. Indefinite pronouns: Here is a list of singular indefinite pronouns.

Indefinite Pronoun	Possessive Form		Reflexive Form
anybody	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
everybody	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
nobody	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
somebody	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
anyone	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
everyone	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
no one	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
someone	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
either	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
neither	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
each	his, her	his, hers	himself, herself
one	one's		oneself

In everyday speech, we often use plural pronouns (*their* and *themselves*) because such pronouns cause us to picture more than one person. For example, we may say "*Everyone* should bring *their* own computer disks." In formal writing, though, these indefinite pronouns are considered singular and thus take singular pronouns:

Correct

Each of the buildings had *its* [not *their*] lobby redecorated.
Neither of the ballerinas was pleased with *her* [not *their*] performance.

Using the singular form with indefinite pronouns may mean that you find yourself in the awkward situation of having to choose between *his* or *her* or between *himself* and *herself*. As a result, you may end up writing sentences that exclude either males or females: "Everybody in the mall seemed lost in *his* own thoughts." (Surely some of the shoppers were female.) To avoid this problem, you may make the antecedent plural and use the plural pronoun:

The *shoppers* in the mall seemed lost in *their* own thoughts.

(See pages 132–134 in Chapter 8 for other ways to avoid language that excludes one sex or the other.)

4. A shift in person: Within a sentence, pronouns shouldn't—as in the following sentences—disrupt pronoun-antecedent agreement by shifting person (point of view).

Faulty Pronoun Agreement

To drop a course, *students* [third person] should go to the registrar's office, where *you* [second person] obtain a course-change card.

Most of *us* [first person] enjoy eating out, but *you* [second person] can never be sure that a favorite restaurant won't lower its standards.

Such shifts are most often from the third or first person to the second person (*you*). In the first example, *you* should be *they;* in the second example, *you* should be *we*.

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Practice: Correcting Problems with Pronoun Agreement

Correct any problems with pronoun agreement that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some pronouns are used correctly.

1. We proponents of the recycling plan challenged everyone on the town council to express their objections.
2. Officials have asked every man competing in the weight-lifting event to sign a statement saying that he has never used steroids.
3. All job applicants must call for an appointment, so that the personnel office can interview you.
4. The committee passed their resolution that each of the apartments was to be free of asbestos before occupancy.
5. Typically, one of the girls loses their schedule of upcoming games, so the coach always reminds the team of its next event at the start of each competition.
6. I like living in a small town because there's always someone who remembers you as a child.
7. The instructor reminded everyone in class to pick up their term papers before they left for the semester break.
8. Neither the bank manager nor the bank officers admitted to their error in approving the risky loan.
9. Despite poor attendance last year, the library staff decided once again to hold their annual party at the Elmhurst Inn.
10. Many amateur photographers like to use one-step cameras that you don't have to focus.

Pronoun Reference

Besides agreeing with its antecedent in number and person, a pronoun must have a *clear antecedent.* A sentence that lacks clear **pronoun reference** is vague and ambiguous.

How to Correct Unclear Pronoun Reference

To make sure that each pronoun has an unmistakable antecedent, use the four strategies described here.

1. Leave no ambiguity about the noun to which a pronoun refers:

Unclear Antecedent	The newcomer battled the longtime champion for the tennis prize. In the end, she won. [Who won? The newcomer or the longtime champion?]
Correct	The newcomer battled the longtime champion for the tennis prize. In the end, *the newcomer* won.

2. Replace a pronoun that lacks an antecedent with the appropriate noun:

Omitted Antecedent	In his talk on child abuse, the caseworker pointed out the number of *them* mistreated by day-care employees. [*Them* is meant to refer to *children,* but this word doesn't appear in the sentence.]
Correct	In his talk on child abuse, the caseworker pointed out the number of *children* mistreated by day-care employees.

3. Make sure a pronoun doesn't refer to the possessive form of a noun or to an adjective:

Omitted Antecedent	In *journalists' articles, they* often quote unidentified sources. [*They* refers to *journalists,* which is in the possessive case.]
Correct	*Journalists* often quote unidentified sources in *their* articles.

4. Place pronouns near their antecedents:

Unclear Antecedent	The *dancers,* performing almost daily, traveled by bus and train. The trip spanned several states. *They* returned exhausted and out of debt.
Correct	Performing almost daily, traveling by bus and train on a trip that spanned several states, the *dancers* returned exhausted. *They* were also out of debt.

Practice: Correcting Problems with Pronoun Reference

Correct any problems with pronoun reference that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some pronouns are used correctly.

1. In Anne Tyler's novels, she gives us a picture of family life—at its best and at its worst.
2. To keep children away from dangerous chemicals, lock them in a storage closet.
3. The student sat down glumly as soon as the professor began to criticize his research paper. After a few moments, though, he turned away in frustration, trying to collect his thoughts.
4. Many patients' lawsuits against doctors end when they receive an out-of-court settlement.
5. All too often, arguments between a big and a little sister are ended by the younger one, when she threatens to blackmail her sister with some violation of household rules.
6. In Ibsen's *A Doll's House,* he dramatizes the story of a woman treated as a plaything.
7. The swirling of the magician's cape distracted the audience as he opened the trap door slowly.
8. Since the old man's morning was planned around reading the newspaper, he became upset when it was delivered late.

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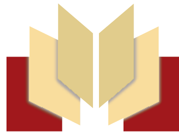
9. The supervisor explained to the employee that he would be transferred soon.
10. Although the school board members talked far into the night, they couldn't reach an agreement. Opinions on the principal's performance were mixed, with some highly positive and others sharply critical. They decided to continue the discussion the following week.



Modifiers

mm

PROBLEMS WITH MODIFICATION

Misplaced and Ambiguous Modifiers

A **modifier** is a word or group of words that describes something else. Sometimes sentences are written in such a way that modifiers are **misplaced** or **ambiguous.** Here are examples of misplaced and ambiguous modifiers:

Misplaced Modifier Television stations carried the story of the disastrous fire *in every part of the nation.* [The fire was in every part of the nation?]

Ambiguous Modifier Singers who don't warm up *gradually* lose their voices. [What does the sentence mean: that singers who don't warm up will lose their voices gradually or that singers who don't gradually warm up will lose their voices?]

How to Correct Misplaced or Ambiguous Modifiers

We describe here two strategies for correcting misplaced or ambiguous modifiers.

1. Place the modifier next to the word(s) it describes:

Misplaced Modifier We scanned the menu *with hungry eyes.* [The menu had hungry eyes?]

Correct With hungry eyes, we scanned the menu.

Misplaced Modifier The paramedics covered the boy's forehead with a cold compress, *which was bruised and swollen.* [The cold compress was bruised and swollen?]

Correct The paramedics covered the boy's forehead, which was bruised and swollen, with a cold compress.

Misplaced Modifier They *only* studied a few minutes for the exam. [Doesn't the word *only* describe a few minutes, not *studied?*]

Correct They studied *only* a few minutes for the exam.

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2. Rewrite the sentence to eliminate ambiguity:

Ambiguous Modifier Giving money *frequently* relieves people's guilt about living well.

Writing the sentence this way could mean *either* that the frequent giving of money relieves guilt or that giving money relieves guilt frequently. Moving the modifier to the front of the sentence conveys the first meaning.

Frequently, giving money relieves people's guilt about living well.

The second meaning, however, can be conveyed only by rewriting the sentence:

Giving money *on a frequent basis* relieves people's guilt about living well.

dg1

Dangling Modifiers

An introductory modifier must modify the subject of the sentence. If it doesn't, the result is a **dangling modifier.** Here's an example of a dangling modifier:

Dangling Modifier *Driving along the highway,* the blinding sun obscured our view of the oncoming car. [The sentence says that the sun was driving along the highway.]

How to Correct Dangling Modifiers

To eliminate a dangling modifier, you may *rewrite the sentence by adding to the modifying phrase the word being described* (as in the first corrected example that follows). Or you may *rewrite the sentence so that the word being modified becomes the sentence's subject* (as in the second corrected example):

Dangling Modifier *While relaxing in my backyard hammock,* a neighbor's basketball hit me on the head. [The basketball was relaxing in the backyard?]

Correct While *I* was relaxing in my backyard hammock, a neighbor's basketball hit me on the head.

or

Correct While relaxing in my backyard hammock, *I* was hit on the head by my neighbor's basketball.

Practice: Correcting Problems with Modification

Correct any misplaced, ambiguous, or dangling modifiers that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; not every sentence is incorrect.

1. While cooking dinner, the baby began to howl.
2. Swaying from the boughs of a tall tree, the children were intrigued by the ape's agility and grace.

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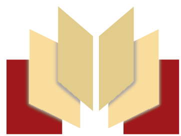
3. When pondering her problems, it finally struck Laura that her life was filled with many pleasures.
4. At the end of the semester, I realized that I only needed tutoring in one course.
5. While waiting for the plumber, the hot-water tank began to leak all over the basement floor.
6. After swimming the entire length of the lake, the coach, much to his embarrassment, passed out.
7. Dogs and cats can scare small children wandering loose.
8. Faded and brittle with age, we read the old newspaper clipping with difficulty.
9. The reporters indicated that they only wanted a few minutes of the candidate's time.
10. With disgust, I threw the greasy hamburger into the trash can that had been dripping all over me.
11. Investigating the crime scene, the detectives made a surprising discovery.
12. An outfit that can only be worn once or twice a year isn't a practical investment.
13. Spinning wildly on the barn roof, the boys noticed an old copper weathervane.
14. We bought our dining room table at a discount store which cost less than one hundred dollars.
15. Pushing a shopping cart and muttering to herself, the homeless woman approached me warily.



Punctuation

Correct **punctuation** is no trivial matter. Notice how a single comma alters the meaning of this sentence:

> Their uncle would be the only visitor they feared.
>
> Their uncle would be the only visitor, they feared.

The first sentence suggests that the uncle's visit is a source of anxiety; the second sentence suggests that the uncle is, unfortunately, the only person to pay a visit. So choose your punctuation carefully. Skillful punctuation helps you get your message across; careless punctuation can undermine your credibility and spoil an otherwise effective piece of writing.

In the pages ahead, we discuss, first, end punctuation (the period, question mark, and exclamation point) and then other punctuation marks (such as the comma, semicolon, and colon).

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PERIOD (.)

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The most frequent misuse of the **period** is at the end of a *fragment*—a word or group of words that doesn't constitute a full sentence, only part of one. (For more on sentence fragments, see pages 668–672 of the Handbook.) The correct uses of the period are outlined here.

1. At the end of full statements: A period correctly completes any full sentence not worded as a question or exclamation.

The dognappers were caught with three pets that they planned to sell to a medical laboratory.

The campus senators asked when the college administrators would approve the new plan.

Although the second sentence reports that a question was asked, the sentence itself is a statement. For this reason, it ends with a period, not with a question mark.

2. With some abbreviations: A period is also used to indicate a shortened form of a word; that is, an abbreviation.

Prof. (Professor) Dec. (December)

Rev. (Reverend) p.m. (*post meridiem*, Latin phrase meaning "after noon")

When an abbreviation ends a sentence, only one period is needed at the sentence's close:

They didn't place the order until 3 a.m.

Some abbreviations, though, have no period at all. These include the abbreviated titles of organizations and government agencies, as well as the official U.S. Postal Service abbreviations for state names:

NFL (National Football League)

FDA (Food and Drug Administration)

ME (Maine)

In addition, it is becoming increasingly acceptable to omit the periods in frequently used abbreviations—for example, *MTV* (Music Television) and *mph* (miles per hour). If you're in doubt whether to include a period in an abbreviation, consult a recent dictionary. Many dictionaries have a separate section that lists abbreviations.

3. In decimal numbers: A period precedes the fractional portion of a decimal number.

5.38 (five and thirty-eight hundredths)

Since money is counted according to the decimal system, a period occurs between dollars and cents:

$10.35

(For more information on writing numerals, see pages 716–717 of the Handbook.)

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QUESTION MARK (?)

?

1. At the end of direct questions: Just as a period concludes a statement, a **question mark** concludes a question.

Where can a dorm resident find peace and solitude**?**

The panelists debated the question, "Should drugs be legalized**?**"

Did the consultants name their report "The Recycling Crisis"**?**

Notice that in the second example above, the actual question occurs only within the quotation marks. Therefore, the question mark is placed *before* the final quotation marks (and no final period is necessary). In the third example, though, the whole sentence is a question, so the question mark goes *after* the final quotation marks.

2. In parentheses, following an item of questionable accuracy: Whenever you're unable to confirm the accuracy of a name, date, or other item, indicate your uncertainty by following the item with a question mark enclosed in parentheses.

The fraud, begun in 1977 **(?)**, was discovered only this year.

EXCLAMATION POINT (!)

!

At the end of emphatic sentences: An **exclamation point** is placed at the end of a sentence to indicate strong emotion.

That's the worst meal I've ever eaten**!**

Use exclamation points sparingly; otherwise, they lose their effectiveness.

COMMA (,)

,

The **comma** is so frequent in writing that mastering its use is essential. By dividing a sentence into its parts, commas clarify meaning. Compare the following:

As soon as we had won the contest was declared illegal.

As soon as we had won, the contest was declared illegal.

The comma shows the reader where to pause in order to make sense of the sentence. The following pages discuss the correct use of the comma.

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1. Between sentences joined by a coordinating conjunction: When joining two complete sentences with a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*), place a comma *before* the coordinating conjunction.

My father loves dining out, *but* he is fussy about food.

It's permissible to omit the comma, though, if the two complete sentences are very short:

They lied *yet* they won the case.

TWO CAUTIONS

☐ Don't, as in the sentences that follow, use a comma when the coordinating conjunction serves as the link between two verbs or nouns of equal weight.

Incorrect We *visit* the boardwalk, *and picnic* on the beach every summer. [delete comma between the verbs]

Incorrect The public *schools, and* the *banks* will be closed tomorrow. [delete comma between the nouns used as subjects]

Incorrect I gave him a *book, and* a *tie* for his birthday. [delete comma between the nouns used as direct objects]

☐ Don't, as in the following sentences, use a comma when a coordinating conjunction links words or phrases that cannot stand alone as sentences:

Incorrect Many people believe that herbal teas are medicinal, *and that drinking them will cure disease.* [delete comma]

Incorrect The summer house is beautiful, *but far from the beach.* [delete comma]

Incorrect We planned to paint the house white, *or beige.* [delete comma]

2. Between items in a series: As the examples in the preceding box show, you do *not* use a comma between *two* items in a series. However, you *do* use a comma to separate *three or more* items in a series.

Bicycle racing requires practice, stamina, and determination.

It was a long, lonely, frightening drive to the cabin.

Notice that in both examples a comma appears before the last item in the series, whether or not this last item is preceded by *and* or *or.* (Although journalists and popular writers often omit the last comma in a series, its inclusion is expected in most other writing.)

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However, if each item in the series is joined by *and* or *or,* do not place commas between them:

We didn't applaud *or* support *or* encourage the protesters.

3. Between adjectives of equal weight: A comma can substitute for the word *and* between adjectives of *equal weight* that describe the same noun.

Collecting exotic, colorful plants is one of my grandparents' hobbies.

In this sentence, the adjectives *exotic* and *colorful* contribute equally to the description of the noun *plants.* To test whether two adjectives have equal weight, reverse them or imagine the word *and* between them. If the sentence sounds fine, the adjectives have equal weight; thus, there should be a comma between them.

CAUTION

- Don't, as in the sentence that follows, use a comma between adjectives of *unequal weight*:

  Incorrect We bought a new, American-made stereo.

- The fact that the stereo is *American-made* has more weight than the fact that it is *new.* Moreover, the sentence would sound strange if the adjectives were reversed or if *and* appeared between them. For these reasons, there should be no comma between *new* and *American-made*.

4. Setting off nonrestrictive word groups: When a word, phrase, or clause describes a noun but isn't crucial for identifying that noun, it is *set off* from the rest of the sentence *with a comma*. Such a word or group of words is considered **nonrestrictive,** or **nonessential.**

Here's an example:

The professor asked the class to read Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, a novel both droll and dark.

Because *Pudd'nhead Wilson* identifies the novel sufficiently, the phrase *a novel both droll and dark* is nonrestrictive and, thus, set off with a comma. If the nonrestrictive phrase appears midsentence, it is preceded and followed by commas:

The professor asked the class to read Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, a novel both droll and dark, by the end of the week.

In the next sentence, however, the book's title is *not set off by a comma* because the word group making up the title is **restrictive,** or **essential;** that is, it is needed for identification (Twain wrote more than one novel):

The professor asked the class to read Twain's droll and dark novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.

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(For a discussion of restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses, turn to page 672 in the Handbook.)

5. Setting off words that precede the main body of the sentence: When introductory material precedes the sentence's main subject and verb, such material is usually followed by a comma.

Yes, I'll be happy to read the report.

Like most children, my little sister loves animals.

Because English Composition is a required course, sections are always filled.

If, however, the introductory material is very brief, you may often omit the comma:

Surely everyone has an urge to see exotic places.

6. Setting off words that follow the main body of the sentence: Material attached to the end of a sentence—after the main subject and verb—is preceded by a comma.

Many people think a walk is a waste of time, *like napping or daydreaming*.

You should start any new exercise program slowly, *making sure not to push yourself*.

7. Setting off interrupting words and phrases: Some words and phrases inserted into the body of a sentence can be removed without significant loss of meaning. Such *interrupting* elements are preceded and followed by commas when they occur midsentence.

Dr. Helen Rafton, *standing by the door and chatting with reporters*, is a celebrated botanist.

I told him, *when he mentioned the accident*, my version of what had happened.

The snowfall was heavy; classes, *however*, were held as usual.

CAUTION

☐ Note that a *pair of commas* must be used to set off interrupting words or phrases that occur midsentence. A single comma, as in the following sentences, is *not* enough to set off interrupting elements:

Incorrect The high school reunion, scheduled for Memorial Day weekend should be well attended. [comma needed after *weekend*]

Incorrect They reported with considerable anxiety, the results of the test. [comma needed before *with*]

Incorrect The autumn day was surprisingly warm; we therefore, decided to go on a picnic. [comma needed before *therefore*]

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In the last sentence, the transitional adverb *therefore* should be flanked by commas because it occurs *within* an independent clause. But when a transitional adverb comes *between* two independent clauses, it is preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma (see pages 675–676 in the Handbook).

8. Setting off words in direct address: Use a comma before and/or after the name of a person or group being addressed directly:

Ladies and gentlemen, the meeting is about to begin.

"Remember, Janet, to turn the thermostat down," my father always warned.

9. Between a short quotation and the phrase that indicates the quotation's source: Use a comma between a short quotation and a reference to its source or speaker:

My roommate remarked, "You remind me of a hungry bulldog."

"You can't block access to the building," the police informed the striking employees.

(For more on punctuating quotations, see pages 703–705 of the Handbook.)

10. Between the elements of a date or place: Use a comma to separate the non-numerical portions of a mailing address, as well as the numbers in a date:

The witness testified that the package was delivered to 102 Glendale Road, Kirkwood, New Jersey 08043 on January 23, 2005.

Also, place a comma after the year if the date appears before the end of the sentence:

They were married on June 28, 1974, in New York City.

When you reverse the day and month in a date or give only the month and year or the month and day, do not use commas. Also, don't put a comma between a state and a ZIP code:

February 14, 2005
14 February 2005
February 2005
February 14
New York, NY 10022

Practice: Correcting Comma Errors

Where appropriate, provide or eliminate commas in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some of the commas belong just where they are.

1. The local movie theater, despite efforts to attract customers finally closed its doors, and was purchased by a supermarket chain.

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2. As a little boy, I dreamed about wearing a plaid flannel shirt and, like Paul Bunyan, camping out underneath towering trees.
3. Their parents, always risk takers divorced in August and remarried in February just six months later.
4. Shaken by the threat of a hostile takeover, the board of directors, and the stockholders voted to sell the retail division which had been losing money for years.
5. Despite my parents' objections I read Stephen King's novels *The Shining*, and *Carrie* when I was in junior high. The books terrified me; nevertheless, I couldn't put them down.
6. We skimmed the chapter, looked quickly at the tables, and charts, realized we didn't know enough to pass the exam, and began to panic.
7. After years of saving his money my brother bought a used car and then his problems started.
8. I discovered last week, that my neighbors, whose friendship I had always treasured, intend to sue me.
9. Late yesterday afternoon, I realized that Dan was lying, and had driven my car without permission.
10. Although it can be annoying, and frustrating, forgetting things usually isn't an early sign of Alzheimer's disease, as many people think.
11. "Going to New York" Maria said, "was like walking onto a movie set."
12. The long, pretentious report issued on May 11, 2004 neither analyzed the problem adequately, nor proposed reasonable solutions.
13. By going to a party alone a single person stands a better chance of meeting someone, and of having a good time.
14. Janet and Sandy her younger sister run three miles each day even in the winter.
15. Al pleaded "Let me borrow your notes and I'll never ask for anything again. I promise."
16. Mumbling under his breath, the man picked over the tomatoes, and cucumbers in the market's produce department.
17. All too often these days people assume that a bank statement is correct, and that there's no need to open the envelope, and examine the statement closely.
18. In the last two seconds of the game the quarterback seized the ball, and plunged across the goal line, scoring the game's winning point.
19. After the uprising was quelled, numerous dissidents were imprisoned but an unknown number remained at large, waiting for the right moment to stage a revolution.
20. Our psychology professor, who has an active, clinical practice, talked about the pressures, and rewards of being in a helping profession.

SEMICOLON (;)

1. Between independent clauses closely related in meaning: You may connect two independent clauses with a **semicolon,** rather than writing them as separate sentences. When you do, though, the clauses should be closely related in meaning. They might, for example, *reinforce* each other.

> Making spaghetti sauce is easy; most people can do it after only a few tries.

Or the clauses might *contrast* with each other:

> Many homebuyers harbor suspicious feelings about the real estate industry; most realtors, however, are honest and law-abiding.

Use of the semicolon is especially common when the *clauses* are *short*:

> Smile when you are introduced; nod or bow slightly to acknowledge applause; wait for silence; pause a second; then begin your speech.

You may also use a semicolon (instead of a period) between independent clauses linked by *transitions* (like *then* and *next*) or by *transitional adverbs* (such as *moreover* and *however*):

> We continually lost track of our sales; *finally,* a friend showed us a good accounting system.

> Customers kept requesting food items other than produce; *therefore,* the owners expanded their fruit and vegetable market into a general convenience store.

Note that when the second independent clause starts with a transitional expression, a comma is placed *after* the transition. However, if a comma is placed *before* the transition, a *comma splice* results (see pages 675–676 of the Handbook on ways to avoid comma splices).

2. Between items in a series, when any of the items contains a comma: When individual items in a series have internal commas, another form of punctuation is needed to signal clearly where one item ends and another begins. For this purpose, use the semicolon.

> After dinner, we had to choose between seeing a movie classic, like *Casablanca, Rear Window,* or *It's a Wonderful Life*; playing Clue, Scrabble, or Monopoly; or working out at the gym.

3. Before coordinating conjunctions used to join independent clauses, when any of the clauses contains a comma: Ordinarily, independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*) have a comma, not a semicolon, between them. However, when any such clause has internal commas, a semicolon is needed between the clauses.

> The mist settled in the valley, hiding the fields, the foliage, and the farms**;** and the pleasant road became a menace.

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COLON (:)

1. To introduce an illustrative statement or list of examples: Use a **colon** to introduce lengthy illustrative material—either a full statement or a number of examples—whenever that material is preceded by a full sentence.

> In the spring, the city has a special magic: Street musicians, jugglers, and ethnic festivals enthrall tourist and resident alike.
>
> Having nine brothers and sisters determined a number of my character traits: my love of solitude, my craving for attention, my resentment of anything secondhand.

As the first example shows, when the material following the colon can stand alone as a complete sentence, it begins with a capital letter (*Street*). Otherwise, as in the second example, the material after the colon starts with a lowercase letter (*my*).

2. To introduce a long quotation: Use a colon when a complete sentence introduces a long quotation (five or more lines) that is set off in block (indented) form without quotation marks.

> The witness to the accident told the police:
>
>> I was walking to my car in the parking lot when I glanced over at the other side of the street. I saw the traffic light turn yellow, and a silver convertible started to slow down. Just then, a red station wagon came racing down the street. When the convertible stopped for the light, the station wagon kept going—right into the convertible's rear fender.

(See pages 587–589 in Chapter 20 for more information on the format for long and short quotations.)

3. After the opening of a business letter: Follow the opening of a business letter with a colon.

> Dear Ms. Goldwin:

Use a comma, however, in the salutation of a personal letter.

4. Between parts of certain conventional notations: A number of standard notations include colons. One example is time notation, with hours and minutes separated by a colon.

> 4:52 p.m.

In a ratio, a colon substitutes for the word *to*:

> By a ratio of 3:2, Americans prefer Glocko cleanser.

In a reference to the Bible, the colon separates chapter and verse numbers:

> Genesis 2:14

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Titles and subtitles (of books, journal articles, short stories, works of art, films, and so on) are also separated by a colon:

Election Handbook: *A Participant's Guide*

QUOTATION MARKS (" ")

" "

1. Direct quotations: A *direct quotation* reproduces exactly the wording, punctuation, and spelling of the source. It is also enclosed in *double* **quotation marks.**

"Youngsters in elementary school should learn the importance of budgeting money," the psychologist said.

A quotation within a quotation is enclosed in *single* (' ') quotation marks.

The psychologist said, "It was gratifying when my children told me, 'We're glad you taught us how to spend money sensibly.'"

CAUTION

Indirect Quotations

- *Indirect quotations*—those referred to or paraphrased rather than reproduced word for word—*don't* get quotation marks:

  Correct The psychologist said that even young children should be taught how to manage money wisely.

- As in the preceding sentence, the word *that* is often used to introduce an indirect quotation. There is *no comma* before or after *that* in this case.

Use a comma between a short quotation and an identifying phrase like *they commented* or *he said*. Such phrases may be placed before, after, or within the quotation:

She argued, "They won't reject the plan."

"They won't reject the plan," *she argued*.

"They won't reject the plan," *she argued*, "if they understand its purpose."

When, as in the last example, the identifier interrupts the quotation midsentence, commas flank both sides of the identifier. But if the identifier comes between two quoted sentences, it is followed by a period:

"They won't reject the plan," *she argued*. "They understand its purpose."

CAUTION

More on Punctuating Direct Quotations:

☐ Always place a period or comma *inside* the closing quotation marks:

Correct "You know what you meant to say," the instructor remarked, "but the reader doesn't."

☐ Always place a colon or semicolon *outside* the closing quotation marks:

Correct The article stated, "Rice is the major foodstuff of all Asian peoples"; in particular, the Japanese eat ten times more rice than Americans.

☐ Place question marks and exclamation points according to their context. If a quotation is itself a question or exclamation, the question mark or exclamation point goes *inside* the closing quotation marks. No other end punctuation is used:

Correct

"Who's responsible for this decision?" the chief executive demanded.

Each department head responded, "Not me!"

As the first sentence here shows, no comma is used when an identifying phrase follows a quoted question or exclamation.

If the entire sentence, not just the quotation, is a question or an exclamation, the question or exclamation mark goes *outside* the quotation marks, at the end of the entire sentence:

Correct

Who taught you to ask for things by saying "Gimme"?

I eagerly await the day when people will again say "Please" and "Thank you"!

☐ Use no punctuation other than quotation marks when a quotation is blended (with or without the word *that*) into the rest of a sentence:

Correct

People who believe that "rules are made to be broken" only substitute their own rules.

People who believe "rules are made to be broken" only substitute their own rules.

Capitalization in Direct Quotations

☐ Start a quotation with a capital letter if it is a full sentence:

Correct

The author admitted, "The classy-sounding pseudonym was a marketing strategy."

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☐ Start a quotation with a lowercase letter if it is not a complete sentence, or if it is blended (with or without the word *that*) into the rest of your sentence:

Correct

Using a "**c**lassy-sounding pseudonym" was, the author admitted, "**a** marketing strategy."

The author admitted that "the classy-sounding pseudonym was a marketing strategy."

(For information on adding to or deleting from quotations, see page 567 in Chapter 19.)

2. Titles of short works: Put quotation marks around the titles of short works—book chapters, poems, stories, articles, editorials, essays, individual episodes of a television or radio program—that are part of a larger work or series.

The business professor spent almost two weeks discussing the chapter "Ethics in the Workplace."

Kenneth Koch's poem "Mending Sump" parodies Robert Frost's "Mending Wall."

Titles of longer works are underlined or italicized (see pages 714–715 of the Handbook).

3. Calling attention to a word's use: To focus attention on a particular word or term, you may enclose it in quotation marks.

The report started with a discussion of just what "sex education" signifies.

People frequently say "between" when they should say "among."

Quotation marks also enclose words being used humorously or ironically:

To celebrate their victory, the team members indulged in such "adult" behavior as pouring champagne over each other's heads.

(See pages 714–715 of the Handbook on highlighting words with italics.)

ELLIPSIS (. . .)

. . .

An **ellipsis,** consisting of three spaced periods (. . .), indicates that *words* have been *omitted from quoted material.* To use the ellipsis correctly, follow the guidelines presented here.

1. When to use the ellipsis: You may use an ellipsis to shorten a quotation, as long as you don't distort its meaning.

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Original

The judge commented, "It won't surprise you to learn that this has been the most disturbing and the most draining case I have tried in all my years on the bench."

With Ellipsis

The judge commented, "It won't surprise you to learn that this has been the most disturbing . . . case I have tried in all my years on the bench."

When you drop words from the end of a sentence or omit an entire sentence, the period that ends the sentence appears in its usual place, followed by the three spaced periods that signal the omission:

The judge commented, "It won't surprise you to learn that this has been the most disturbing and the most draining case I have tried. . . . "

Notice that in this case, there is no space between the last word in the sentence and the sentence's period.

2. When *not* to use the ellipsis: When you omit words from the beginning of a quotation, do not use an ellipsis; just begin your quotation at the point you've selected.

The judge commented, "This has been the most disturbing and the most draining case I have tried in all my years on the bench."

(For more on using the ellipsis, see page 567 and 583.)

’

APOSTROPHE (’)

1. In place of omitted letters: In standard contractions, an **apostrophe** replaces any omitted letters.

can't, don't, I'm, it's, she's, we've

Apostrophes also replace any letters dropped for the purpose of reproducing casual speech or slang:

"Keep singin' an' marchin'!" he shouted.

2. To indicate possession: To show the possessive form of most *singular nouns*, add *'s*:

The singer**'s** debut was a disaster.

Several of Salinger**'s** books have been banned from high school libraries.

The boss**'s** office was small and poorly lit.

For *plural nouns* ending in *s*, add only an apostrophe to show possession:

Students' grades improved after computer-assisted instruction.

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Plural nouns that do *not* end in *s* need both an apostrophe and an *s* to show possession:

The children**'s** school was set on fire.

To show *joint possession* (two or more owners of the same thing), make only the last noun possessive:

Lubin and Wachinsky's firm handled the defense.

To show *individual possession* of more than one thing, make each noun possessive:

The girl**'s** and the boy**'s** parents urged them to date other people.

CAUTION

- The possessive forms of personal pronouns do *not* include an apostrophe. Here are the correct forms:

  mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs

- Note that *its* (*without* an apostrophe) is the *possessive* form of *it*:

  Correct

  The theater closed *its* [not *it's*] doors last week.

- The word *it's* means "it is" or "it has" (the apostrophe takes the place of the omitted letters):

  Correct

  It's [meaning "it is"] cold today.
  It's [meaning "it has"] been a difficult time for us.

- Similarly, *whose* (*without* an apostrophe) is the possessive form of *who*:

  Correct

  Whose [not *who's*] coat is on the table?

- The word *who's* means "who is" or "who has" (the apostrophe takes the place of the omitted letters):

  Correct

  We wonder *who's* [meaning "who is"] going to take her place.
  They want to know *who's* [meaning "who has"] been tabulating the results.

Amounts (of time, money, weight, and so on) should also be written in possessive form when appropriate:

Employees can accumulate a maximum of a month's sick leave.

We could buy only five dollars' worth of gas.

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3. To indicate some plurals: When a letter, symbol, or word treated as a word is made plural, an apostrophe often precedes the final *s*.

> I got mostly C**'s** my first semester of college.
>
> Her letters seem to shout; they contain so many !**'s**.
>
> He uses too many *and***'s** to connect one thought to another.

However, common abbreviations such as *DVR*, *ESP*, and *SAT* don't take the apostrophe in the plural:

> The local television station reported that residents sighted three *UFO***s** last summer.

When you refer to a decade, you may omit the apostrophe:

> The 1960**s** were turbulent and exciting.

An apostrophe is required only to replace omitted numerals that indicate the century:

> The '60s were turbulent and exciting.

CAUTION

☐ Don't, as in the following sentences, use an apostrophe when forming the simple plural of a noun:

Incorrect	The *plant's* (or *plants'*) need to be watered. [delete apostrophe]
Incorrect	The young people played three *radio's* (or *radios'*) at the same time. [delete apostrophe]

☐ This kind of error is most likely to occur with a noun that is short (*plant*) or that ends in a vowel (*radio*). The preceding sentences should read:

Correct	The *plants* need to be watered.
Correct	The young people played three *radios* at the same time.

☐ Don't, as in the following sentence, use an apostrophe when forming the third-person singular form of the verb:

Incorrect	The television *blare's* all day in many homes.
Correct	The television *blares* all day in many homes.

( )

PARENTHESES ( )

Parentheses enclose subordinate but related ideas, facts, or comments—items that would unnecessarily interrupt the sentence if set off by commas. A parenthetic remark may be located anywhere in a sentence except at the beginning, but

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it should immediately follow the item to which it refers. The presence of parentheses does not otherwise affect a sentence's punctuation. Here are some guidelines to follow when using parentheses.

1. A parenthetic sentence between two other sentences or at the end of a paragraph: If you place a parenthetic sentence between two other sentences or at the end of a paragraph, simply write the parenthetic sentence as you normally would; then enclose it in parentheses. The sentence in parentheses should begin with a capital letter and end with a period or other end punctuation.

> Writing home from summer camp is a chore most youngsters avoid. (**S**ome camps have children write home once a week.) Most parents, though, eagerly await letters from their kids.

2. At the end of a sentence: Material that extends or illustrates a sentence should be inserted in parentheses at the end of the sentence *before* the closing period. Such parenthetic material shouldn't start with a capital letter. Also, the parenthetic material doesn't have its own period.

> It is a cruel irony that everything I am allergic to is wonderful (like chocolate, roses, and dogs).

> It is a cruel irony that everything I am allergic to is wonderful (for example, I can't get enough of chocolate, roses, and dogs).

3. A parenthetic sentence inside another sentence: When parenthetic material that can stand alone as a full statement occurs within another sentence, the parenthetic material should *not* begin with a capital letter or end with a period.

> Watering a garden the right way (yes, there's a wrong way) is important.

If, however, the parenthetic material is a question, do end it with a question mark:

> Watering a garden the right way (you didn't think there was a wrong way?) is important.

4. After a word that would be followed by a comma: When you insert a parenthetic comment after a word that would otherwise be followed by a comma, move the comma to the end of the parenthetic element.

Original	Without sufficient water, the trees started to lose their leaves in July.
Parenthetic	Without sufficient water (only half an inch the whole month), the trees started to lose their leaves in July.

5. Enclosing numbers or letters assigned to items in a series: Use parentheses to enclose the numbers or letters assigned to items in a series. The items in a series are followed by commas.

> Before making a drastic change in your life, you should (1) discuss it with friends, (2) seek the advice of people who have had a similar change, and (3) determine whether a less dramatic change would be sufficient.

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Research indicates that (a) 58% of hospitalized patients improve, (b) 20% stay the same, and (c) 22% get worse.

6. Enclosing inserted dates and organizations' abbreviations: When you add information such as dates and abbreviations to an otherwise complete sentence, enclose this information in parentheses.

Frank Lloyd Wright (1869–1959) was one of America's foremost architects.

Angry commuters founded Students for the Abolition of Privileged Parking (SAPP) and vowed to eliminate faculty-only lots.

[ ]

BRACKETS [ ]

1. To clarify a quotation: When, for the purpose of clarification or correction, you insert your own words into a quotation, enclose them within **brackets.**

"In its entire history, the mining company [founded 1858] has never experienced a strike," the owner said.

"Research done at that laboratory [Sci-Tech] is suspect," the physician testified.

Use parentheses, not brackets, to insert a comment within your *own* sentence or paragraph.

2. To signal a linguistic irregularity within a quotation: Quotations sometimes contain linguistic irregularities—such as colloquialisms or errors in spelling, grammar, or usage. In such cases, you may want to follow the irregularity with the Latin term *sic* in brackets, thus indicating that the questionable word or expression appears exactly as used by the quoted writer or speaker.

"None of the tenents [sic] complained about the building," the landlord wrote in a letter to the housing authority.

Note: When omitting words from a quotation, you should insert an ellipsis enclosed within brackets to indicate that *you*, rather than the original author, are inserting the ellipsis. (For information about the use of brackets when quoting material in a research paper, see page 567. For more on quotations, see pages 566–567, 583–585 and 587–589.)

-

HYPHEN (-)

A **hyphen** consists of one short line (and should not be confused with the dash—see page 712).

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1. To break a word: A word that is too long to fit at the end of a typed line may be divided between two syllables, with a hyphen indicating the break. (Check the dictionary if you're uncertain where the syllables begin and end.)

> Once a clear contest between good and evil, between right and wrong, television wrestling now features stereotype-defying and ambiguous protagonists.

Most word-processing programs automatically either break long words at the end of lines or move them to the next line (called "word wrapping").

2. To combine words into an adjective or noun: When you combine two or more words to form a new adjective or noun, use hyphens between the original words.

> The question is whether this country should maintain first-strike capability.

The only exception is a compound adjective that contains an adverb ending in *ly.* In this case, don't place a hyphen after the *ly*:

> The poorly constructed DVD player jammed within the week.

In a series of hyphenated compound adjectives or nouns all having the same final word, write that word only at the end of the series:

> First-, second-, and third-year students must take one semester of gym.

3. Between a combined number and word: Hyphenate a numeral combined with a word:

> The new car has a 2.6-liter engine.

4. After certain prefixes: Compound words beginning with *self* or *ex* take a hyphen after the prefix.

> My ex-roommate is self-employed as a computer consultant.

Words that without the hyphen would be misread as other words also take a hyphen.

> A growing number of young professionals live in co-ops.

5. To write certain numbers: Use a hyphen when writing most numbers composed of two words.

> The zoning ordinance outlines twenty-one restrictions.

Note, however, that two-word numbers like *one hundred* and *two thousand* don't take a hyphen.

A hyphen is required when a fraction is used as a compound modifier:

> The class was almost one-half empty.

(For more on writing numbers, see pages 716–717 of the Handbook.)

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DASH (–)

A **dash** (—) is composed of two (or three) typed hyphens (--or ---). Don't leave a space between the hyphens or between the words that precede or follow the dash.

To highlight a thought or idea: A dash *signals* an *added* or *interrupting thought* and, unlike parentheses, highlights that thought. When the added thought occurs at the sentence's end, it is preceded by a single dash.

> The package finally arrived—badly damaged.

When the added thought occurs midsentence, it receives two sets of two dashes, one set before the added thought and another after:

> The ambassador—after serving for more than two decades—suddenly resigned her post.

Practice: Correcting Problems with Punctuation

Correct any punctuation problems that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; some of the punctuation marks belong just where they are.

1. The New Madrid fault, which lies in the central part of the country will be the site of a major earthquake within the next thirty years.
2. In the children's story, the hero carries a fresh, yellow rose rather than a sword.
3. I asked "Wasn't Grandpa Pete drafted into the army in 1943?"
4. "Branch offices, and drive-in windows," the bank president announced, "will be closed January 4, the day of the governors funeral".
5. Some people avoid physical work; others seek out, and enjoy it. But, probably no one likes it all the time.
6. The scientists said that "they wondered how anyone could believe stories of outer-space visitors."
7. On one of the office's paneled wall's the executive had a framed copy of the poem, *If*.
8. Many children collect stamps according to a theme, like wildlife, aeronautics, or sports, but adults usually prefer to collect on the basis of stamps' rarity.
9. Shoplifters often believe they are doing no harm; nevertheless shoplifting is stealing and therefore, illegal.
10. The young people fell in love with the house, that stood next to a clear cold stream.
11. The kennel owner sent birthday cards' and small gifts to all the dog's she had boarded during the year.
12. The polished floor in the hallway, and dining room lost it's sheen after only a week.

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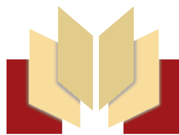
13. According to the lawyer, the property is clearly ours' and not the other family's.
14. The celebration was loud, and unruly; finally police arrived at the scene around 11:00 p.m.
15. The parents know it's too early to tell whose children will need tutoring.
16. Did the visiting journalist make her speech, "Preserving a Source's Confidentiality?"
17. In the student handbook, the Dean wrote, "A student may be suspended for any of the following; using drugs, plagiarizing papers, cheating on exams, vandalizing college property . . ."
18. They asked us what courses we planned to take during the summer?
19. In the closet, (which hadn't been opened for years) we found three baseball bats, and half a dozen badminton sets.
20. Who's notes will you borrow to study for tomorrows exam.



Mechanics

CAPITALIZATION

cap

Always capitalize the pronoun *I* and the first word of a sentence. Following are other **capitalization** guidelines.

1. Proper names: Whether they appear in noun, adjective, or possessive form, proper names are always capitalized. **Proper names** include the following: names of individuals; countries, states, regions, and cities; political, racial, and religious groups; languages; institutions and organizations; days, months, and holidays; historical periods; product brand names; fully specified academic degrees (Master of Science in Chemistry); and particular academic courses. Here are some examples:

> *Representative O'Dwyer,* a *Democrat from the Midwest,* introduced several bills in *Congress* last *March.*
>
> According to my *Marketing 101* professor, *Cuddles Cat Chow* set new sales records in the *Southwest.*
>
> All *Buddhists* are vegetarians.
>
> *Latin* and *Greek* regained widespread popularity during the *Renaissance.*

Do not capitalize the names of ideologies and philosophies, such as *communism* and *idealism* (unless the name is derived from that of an individual—for example, *Marxism*). Similarly, avoid capitalizing compass directions, unless

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the direction serves as the name of a region (the *West*, the *Northeast*) or is attached to the name of a continent, country, or city (*North America, South Angola, West Philadelphia*).

Finally, don't capitalize the following: seasons; animal breeds (unless part of the name is derived from that of a place—such as *French poodle* and *Labrador retriever*); types of academic degrees (*bachelor's, master's, doctorate*); or academic subjects and areas (*sociology, mathematics*), unless they're part of a course title or department name (*Sociology I, Mathematics Department*). Here are some more examples:

On one side of the Continental Divide, rivers flow *east;* on the other, they flow *west*.

In San Francisco, there is little temperature variation between *spring* and *summer*.

Only one professor in the Psychology Department doesn't have a *doctorate*.

2. Titles of literary and other artistic works: When writing a title, capitalize the first word and all other words, except articles (*a, an, the*), conjunctions (*and, but*), and prepositions (*on, to*) of fewer than five letters.

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Thomas Kuhn discusses the way the scientific establishment resists innovation. However, Anna Stahl disputes Kuhn's argument in *The Controversy Over Scientific Conservatism*.

3. Official and personal titles: Capitalize official and personal titles when they precede a name or are used in place of the name of a specific person:

Only *Reverend* Zager could stretch a sermon to an hour and a half.

President Bush met with the Japanese delegation.

Weeks before Father's Day, the stores start featuring gifts for *Dad*.

Do not capitalize such titles otherwise:

The *reverend* encouraged the congregation to donate food and clothing to the poor.

Citizens elect the *president* of the United States every four years.

His *dad* writes for the local paper.

ital

UNDERLINING AND ITALICS

In machine-printed text, ***italicizing*** (*slanted type*) serves the same purposes as **underlining.**

1. Titles of individual works: Underline or italicize the titles of works that are published individually—not as part of a magazine, anthology, or other collection. Such works are often lengthy—entire books, magazines, journals, newspapers,

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movies, television programs, musical recordings, plays, and so on. They may, however, also be works of visual art, such as paintings and sculptures. Here are some examples:

When I was a child, my favorite book was *At the Back of the North Wind*.

The movie critic panned *Friday the 13th, Part 83*.

Titled *The Lost*, the sculpture looks like a giant staple.

However, titles of certain historical documents and major religious writings, such as the books of the Bible, are neither italicized nor enclosed in quotation marks, but important words begin with a capital letter:

Bhagavad Gita	the Koran
the book of Genesis	Declaration of Independence
the Bible	Bill of Rights
Song of Solomon	U.S. Constitution
Old Testament	Monroe Doctrine

(See page 705 of the Handbook for ways to designate the titles of short works like poems and short stories.)

2. Foreign terms: Foreign words not fully incorporated into mainstream English should be underlined or italicized.

Before protesters knew what was happening the legislation was a *fait accompli*.

3. For emphasis: Underline or italicize words you wish to stress, but do so sparingly because too many italicized words actually weaken emphasis.

The campaign staff will *never* allow the candidate to appear in an open forum.

4. Letters and numbers referred to as words: Underline or italicize letters or numbers when they function as words.

In the local high school, teachers give *A*'s and *B*'s only to outstanding students.

5. Calling attention to a word's use: To call attention to the way a word is being used, you may underline or italicize it.

Why use *conflagration* when a simple word like *fire* will do?

The most common prepositions are *at*, *for* and *to*.

(See page 705 of the Handbook for another way to highlight words.)

6. Vehicles of transportation: Underline or italicize the names of ships, planes, trains, and spacecraft.

A design flaw led to the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*.

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num

Numbers

1. When to use words: Generally, *words* instead of numerals are used for **numbers** that can be written out in *one* or *two words.* When written out, numbers between 21 and 99 (except round numbers) are hyphenated (*twenty-one; ninety-nine*). If the number requires *three or more words,* use *numerals;* a hyphenated number counts as one word. Also use words for any number that occurs at the start of a sentence.

The store manager came up with *three* fresh ideas for attracting more customers.

They retired when they were only *forty-five*.

The paper reported that more than *six hundred* birds died in the forest fire.

Two hundred forty-eight people were on the hijacked plane.

You may prefer to rephrase a sentence that begins with a long number, so that you can use numerals instead of words:

The hijacked plane had *248* people on board.

2. When to use numerals: Numerals are generally used to indicate measurements.

The office was approximately *10 feet, 8 inches* wide.

Dates, times, addresses, page numbers, decimals, and percentages are also usually given as numerals. When a date includes the day as well as the month and year, give only the numeral to identify the day (for example, write *March 4*, not *March 4th; May 2*, not *May 2nd*):

The builder claims that the wood delivered on *August 3, 2007,* was defective.

Use numerals when a time reference contains *a.m.* or *p.m.* or specifies the minutes as well as the hour:

We set the alarm for *5 a.m.* and left the house by *5:45*.

However, use words with *o'clock*:

My roommate has trouble getting up before *eleven o'clock* in the morning.

In addresses, the house or building number is always given in numerals:

Last weekend, I visited my childhood home at *80 Manemet Road*.

For a numbered street, use numerals unless the number is less than ten or the building and street numbers would be written next to each other—a potential source of confusion:

The shelter moved from 890 East 47th Street to *56 Second Avenue*.

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Always give page numbers as numerals. It's also standard to give percentages and decimal amounts in numerals:

Sales increased *5%* last year.

More than *2.5 million* boxes of oat bran were sold last year.

He lost *0.007 pound* on the supposedly miraculous new diet.

ABBREVIATIONS

ab

1. Personal and professional titles: The **abbreviations** for some personal titles appear *before* the person's name.

Dr. Tony Michelin   *Ms.* Carla Schim

Others come *after*:

Houston J. Marshall, *Esq.*   Nora Rubin, *MD*

Professional titles such as *Professor, Senator,* and *Governor* may be abbreviated only before a full name:

Prof. Eleanor Cross	Rep. George M. Dolby
Professor Cross	Representative Dolby

2. Common terms and organizations: Use the standard initials for common terms and widely known organizations.

VCR	MTV	AIDS
CIA	UFO	ESP
FBI	NATO	AT&T

Notice that these abbreviations do not include periods.

The first time you refer to a less familiar organization, give its full name, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Thereafter, you may refer to the organization with only the abbreviation. If the organization uses an ampersand (&) for *and* or abbreviations for terms such as *Incorporated* (Inc.) and *Company* (Co.), you may use them as well.

3. Time: Use the Latin abbreviations *a.m.* (*ante meridiem*) and *p.m.* (*post meridiem*) for time of day.

They started work at *4 a.m.* and got home at *6:15 p.m.*

Use numerals with the abbreviations *AD* (*anno Domini*—"in the year of the Lord"), *BC* ("before Christ"), *CE* (the common era), and *BCE* (before the common era), unless

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you refer to centuries rather than specific years. In that case, write out the century before the abbreviation:

The pottery was made around *AD 56*, but the tools date back to the *third century BC*.

Note that the year precedes BC (*684 BC*) but follows AD (*AD 1991*).

4. Latin terms: If you use the Latin abbreviations *i.e.* (for "that is") and *e.g.* (for "for example"), remember that they should be followed by a comma and used parenthetically.

Employees are enthusiastic about recent trends in the business world (**e.g.,** the establishment of on-site day-care programs and fitness centers).

Whenever possible, however, replace these abbreviations with their English equivalents.

In addition, try to avoid *etc.* ("and so on") by citing all examples you have in mind, instead of leaving them up to the reader's imagination.

5. Names of regions: Except in addresses, don't abbreviate geographic regions.

With a student rail pass, you can tour *Great Britain* [not *G.B.*] at discount rates.

Exceptions to this rule include *Washington, D.C.*, and *U.S.* when it is used as a modifier (*U.S. policy*, for example).

In addresses, states' names are abbreviated according to the postal designations—with two capital letters and no periods:

NY RI NJ

6. Units of measure: Don't abbreviate common units of measure.

The bedroom was *15 feet, 9 1/2 inches* wide.

Among other extravagances, the couple offered guests *ten pounds* of imported caviar.

However, do abbreviate such technical units of measure as millimeters (*mm.*) and revolutions per minute (*rpm*).

(Turn to page 721 for a practice exercise on mechanics.)

Spelling

sp

SPELLING

Spelling need not be a mystery. For reference, always have on hand a current standard dictionary or a spelling dictionary. If you use a word processor, an automatic "spell check" program may be valuable (though not always foolproof).

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Another strategy is to keep a personal inventory of the words you misspell or need to look up repeatedly (see pages 140–141 for instructions). Finally, knowing about basic spelling rules and commonly misspelled words can help you minimize spelling errors. Here are some guidelines you should find helpful.

1. When *i* and *e* are adjacent: Do you remember the rhyme for spelling a word with an adjacent *i* and *e*?

i before e	***except after* c**	**or when pronounced like *a* as in *neighbor* and *weigh***
ach**ie**ve	c**ei**ling	b**ei**ge
p**ie**ce	conc**ei**ted	fr**ei**ght
th**ie**f	dec**ei**ve	r**ei**gn
y**ie**ld	rec**ei**ve	th**ei**r

The rule does *not* apply if the *i* and *e* are in separate syllables: *science, society.* It also does not apply to the following exceptions:

caff**ei**ne	inv**ei**gle	s**ei**ze
either	l**ei**sure	sl**ei**ght
financ**ie**r	n**ei**ther	spec**ie**s
for**ei**gn	prot**ei**n	w**ei**rd

2. Doubling the final consonant: This rule applies to words that satisfy the following conditions.

- The word's last three letters must be consonant, vowel, consonant, *and*
- The word must be either one syllable (*plan*) or accented on the final syllable (*control*).

In such cases, double the final consonant before adding an ending that begins with a vowel (such as *-ed, -er, -al,* and *-ing*):

plan/plan**ned**	control/control**ler**
refer/refer**ral**	begin/begin**ning**

However, do *not* double the final consonant in the following cases:

- Words that end in a silent *e* (*pave/paved, mope/moping*)[5]
- Words ending in two vowels and a consonant or in two consonants (*appear/appearance*, *talk/talking*)
- Words whose accent is not on the final syllable (*develop/developing*)

[5]An exception is *write/written*. Note, however, that the *-ing* form of *write* is *writing*, not *writting*.

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- Words that no longer are accented on the final syllable when the ending is added (*refer/reference, prefer/preferable*). An exception is the word *questionnaire,* which does contain a double *n*.

3. Dropping the final silent *e*: For a word that ends in a silent (not pronounced separately) *e,* drop the *e* before adding an ending that begins with a vowel.

cope/cop**ing** receive/receiv**able**

cute/cut**est** guide/guid**ance**

But keep the *e* before an ending beginning with a consonant:

sincere/sincer**ely** base/bas**ement**

definite/definit**ely** nine/nin**ety**

Exceptions include the following: *truly, awful, argument; dyeing* and *singeing* (to avoid confusion with *dying* and *singing*); *changeable, courageous, manageable, noticeable,* and similar words where the final *e* is needed to keep the sound of the *g* or *c* soft.

4. Adding to words that end in *y*: For most words ending in *y,* change the *y* to *ie* before adding an *s*:

city/cit**ies** study/stud**ies** story/stor**ies**

Change the *y* to *i* before all other endings, except *-ing*:

copy/cop**ies** cry/cr**ies** study/stud**ies**

The *y* remains when the ending is *-ing*:

copy**ing** cry**ing** study**ing**

The *y* also stays when it is preceded by a vowel:

delay/dela**ys**/dela**yed**/dela**ying**

5. Words ending in *-f* and *-fe*: Words ending in *-f* and *-fe* normally change to *-ves* in the plural.

leaf/lea**ves** life/li**ves**

knife/kni**ves** wife/wi**ves**

An exception is *roof,* whose plural simply adds an *-s*.

6. Common spelling errors: **Homonyms** are words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings. (A spelling dictionary will provide a complete list of homonyms and other commonly confused words.) If you're not sure of the differences in meaning between any of the homonym pairs listed, check your dictionary. Here are a few of the most troublesome:

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accept/except	knew/new	their/there/they're
affect/effect	lose/loose	to/too/two
complement/compliment	principal/principle	whose/who's
its/it's	than/then	your/you're

Cognates are words with the same root. However, they may not always have the same spelling:

curious/curiosity	disaster/disastrous
generous/generosity	four/forty

Some words contain *silent* (or nearly silent) *letters* that are often erroneously omitted when the word is spelled:

enviro**n**ment	suppose**d** to
Feb**r**uary	soph**o**more
gover**n**ment	use**d** to

Finally, avoid *nonexistent forms* of words. For example, there is no such word as *its'*; *a lot* is two words, not one; and few instructors consider *alright* an acceptable variant of *all right*.

Practice: Correcting Problems with Mechanics and Spelling

Correct any mechanics or spelling problems that you find in the following sentences. Be careful, though; not every sentence contains an error, and some sentences may contain more than one.

1. "Emerging Nations in today's World," one of the supplementary texts in Modern History I, is on reserve at the libary.
2. Last year, while visiting my parents in central Florida, I took a disastrous coarse in Sociology.
3. The analysts of the election-eve pole concluded, "Its a toss-up."
4. For some reason, Spring tends to have a depressing affect on me.
5. Rev. Astor's teeth chattered at my brother's outdoor wedding, held in March in Northern Massachusetts.
6. Weighing in at 182 lbs. was Tim Fox, a sophmore from a community college in Ala.
7. In the fall, when the foliage is at it's peek, many people pack their hiking gear and head for the country.
8. 300 students signed up for the experimental seminar that Prof. Julia Cruz plans to offer through the Business Department. The class is scheduled to meet at eight a.m. on Monday.

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9. Senator Miller, who was suppose to end the press conference once the subject of the enviroment came up, got embroiled in an arguement with several reporters.
10. Listen to nutritionists; many of them contend that their are advantages to limiting the amount of protein in you're diet.
11. My roommate, who's native language is French, recieved an award for writting a provocative series of articles on student pressures.
12. The President of the company distributed to key management 30 copies of the book How To win in Business. Many employees, though, are offended by the books emphasis on what it calls economic opportunism.
13. My parents always reminded me to watch my p's and q's. Not surprisingly, they were frequently complemented on my good behavior.
14. In the South during the summer months, it is light well after nine o'clock in the evening.
15. Prof. Mohr excepts no if's, and's, or but's when a student tries to hand in a paper past it's due date.