



Grammar Brush-Up

For Orange County Government

Facilitated by Chris Friend
The John Scott Dailey
Florida Institute of Government
at the University of Central Florida



Meet Your Facilitator

Christopher R. Friend is an adjunct composition instructor and PhD candidate at the University of Central Florida. He has over a decade of teaching experience, both in-class and online, with Oviedo High School, Seminole County Virtual School, and UCF. His research explores how composition teachers, students, and curriculum adapt to new (online or hybrid) delivery modes.

His interests in technology and education have involved him in several massive open online courses (MOOCs) and work with the online journal *Hybrid Pedagogy*, where he has written about the implications of networked learning on first-year writing courses.

No matter how he teaches, Chris thrives on a personal connection with his students. While in a physical classroom, he is often caught laughing, most often at himself. (With a last name like “Friend”, it’s hard for him to take himself seriously.) He is typically found using some kind of technology; he experiences withdrawal pains when more than thirty feet from his Mac.

Credentials/Awards

- Professional Equity Project Grant recipient | CCCC 2013
- CCCC Travel Grant recipient | WPA-GO 2013
- Graduate Student Award nominee | UCF CAH 2012
- Trustees Doctoral Fellow | UCF 2009
- MEd—Curriculum & Instruction (Gifted Ed) | UCF 2006
- BA—English (Creative Writing) | UCF 2000
- Secondary English Education Certification | FLDOE 2000
- Computer Science K–12 Certification | FLDOE 2008
- Gifted Endorsement | FLDOE 2008
- UCF Trustees Doctoral Fellow, 2009
- Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers, 2004 & 2005

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government (IOG) at the University of Central Florida is one of six university locations of the statewide institute. The IOG mission is to provide training and technical assistance to local governments, state agencies, and non-profit organizations.

Located in Research Park in East Orlando, the Institute of Government is administered in the UCF College of Health and Public Affairs. The UCF IOG has served Central Florida government and non-profit agencies since 1982, and has been directed by Marilyn Crotty since 1990.

Contact us at by phone at 407–882–3960 and by email at iog@mail.ucf.edu, or visit us online at www.iog.ucf.edu.

Services offered to government and non-profit agencies include:

- Training Programs
- Technical Assistance
- Organizational Development
- F.A.C.E.

Popular workshop topics include:

- 21 Laws of Leadership
- Supervisory Skills Series
- Leading Change
- Emotional Intelligence
- Self-Awareness with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- Conflict Resolution with the Thomas Kilmann Instrument
- Written Communication Series
- Emerging Leader
- Strategic Planning & Visioning
- Business/Office Etiquette

Today's Goals

- ▶ Explore how rules enhance the clarity of writing.
- ▶ Discuss how most “rules” you know aren’t actually rules at all.
- ▶ Be aware of the pitfalls of language so you can avoid them.
- ▶ Develop strategies for catching common errors.

Today's Agenda

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ **Sentences:** The structure of written language
- ▶ **Spelling:** The slips, the trips, and the quick fix
- ▶ **Punctuation:** The details that make or break clarity

Breaking the Ice

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He could lead if he would get the lead out.
6. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
7. Since there is no time like the present, I thought it time to present the present.
8. A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
9. When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
10. I did not object to the object.
11. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
12. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
13. They were too close to the door to close it.
14. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
15. A seamstress and her sewer fell down into a sewer line.
16. To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
17. The wind was too strong to wind the soil.
18. After a number of injections my jaw got number.
19. Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
20. I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
21. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

Part I: Sentences

Fragments (Incomplete Sentences)¹

The sentences below appeared in papers written by students. Act as their editor, marking a C if the sentences in the group are all complete and an F if any of the sentences in the group is a fragment. Could you tell these writers why the fragments are incomplete sentences?

1. Then I attended Morris Junior High. A junior high that was a bad experience.
2. The scene was filled with beauty. Such as the sun sending its brilliant rays to the earth and the leaves of various shades of red, yellow, and brown moving slowly in the wind.
3. He talked for fifty minutes without taking his eyes off his notes. Like other teachers in that department, he did not encourage students' questions.
4. Within each group, a wide range of features to choose from. It was difficult to distinguish between them.
5. A few of the less serious fellows would go into a bar for a steak dinner and a few glasses of beer. After this meal, they were ready for anything.
6. It can be really embarrassing to be so emotional. Especially when you are on your first date, you feel that you should be in control.
7. The magazine has a reputation for a sophisticated, prestigious, and elite group of readers. Although that is a value judgment and in circumstances not a true premise.
8. In the seventh grade every young boy goes out for football. To prove to himself and his parents that he is a man.
9. She opened the door and let us into her home. Not realizing at the time that we would never enter that door in her home again.
10. As Christmas grows near, I find myself looking back into my childhood days at fun-filled times of snowball fights. To think about this makes me happy.
11. Making up his mind quickly. Jim ordered two dozen red roses for his wife. Hoping she would accept his apology.
12. They were all having a good time. Until one of Joe's oldest and best friends had a little too much to drink.
13. Although it only attained a speed of about twelve miles an hour. My old rowboat with its three-horsepower motor seemed like a high-speed job to me.
14. With my brother standing by my side, I reached for the pot handle. Tilting the pot way too much caused the boiling water to spill.
15. The small, one-story houses are all the same size and style. With no difference except the color.
16. Being a friend of mine like he was when we first joined the soccer team. Together we learned a lot.

¹ Material taken from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/print/5/18/38/>

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Subject-Verb Agreement²

This handout gives you several guidelines to help your subjects and verbs agree.

- 1. When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by *and*, use a plural verb.**
 - ▶ She **and** her friends are at the fair.
- 2. When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb.**
 - ▶ The book **or** the pen is in the drawer.
- 3. When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is nearer the verb.**
 - ▶ The boy **or** his friends run every day.
 - ▶ His friends **or** the boy runs every day.
- 4. *Doesn't* is a contraction of *does not* and should be used only with a singular subject. *Don't* is a contraction of *do not* and should be used only with a plural subject. The exception to this rule appears in the case of the first- and second-person pronouns *I* and *you*. With these pronouns, the contraction *don't* should be used.**
 - ▶ He doesn't like it.
 - ▶ They don't like it.
- 5. Do not be misled by a phrase that comes between the subject and the verb. The verb agrees with the subject, not with a noun or pronoun in the phrase.**
 - ▶ One of the boxes is open
 - ▶ The people who listen to that music are few.
 - ▶ The team captain, as well as his players, is anxious.
 - ▶ The book, including all the chapters in the first section, is boring.
 - ▶ The woman with all the dogs walks down my street.
- 6. The words *each*, *each one*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *someone*, and *no one* are singular and require a singular verb.**
 - ▶ Each of these hot dogs is juicy.
 - ▶ Everybody knows Mr. Jones.
 - ▶ Either is correct.

² Material taken from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/599/01/>

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7. Nouns such as *civics, mathematics, dollars, measles, and news* require singular verbs.

- ▶ The news is on at six.

Note: the word *dollars* is a special case. When talking about an amount of money, it requires a singular verb, but when referring to the dollars themselves, a plural verb is required.

- ▶ Five dollars is a lot of money.
- ▶ Dollars are often used instead of rubles in Russia.

8. Nouns such as *scissors, tweezers, trousers, and shears* require plural verbs. (There are two parts to these things.)

- ▶ These scissors are dull.
- ▶ Those trousers are made of wool.

9. In sentences beginning with *there is* or *there are*, the subject follows the verb. Since *there is* not the subject, the verb agrees with what follows.

- ▶ There are many questions.
- ▶ There is a question.

10. Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person but that are considered singular and take a singular verb, such as: *group, team, committee, class, and family*.

- ▶ The team runs during practice.
- ▶ The committee decides how to proceed.
- ▶ My family has never been able to agree.

In some rare cases in American English, a sentence may call for the use of a plural verb when using a collective noun. This is the norm, not the exception, in British English.

- ▶ The crew are preparing to dock the ship.

This sentence is referring to the individual efforts of each crew member. *The Gregg Reference Manual* provides excellent explanations of subject-verb agreement (section 10: 1001).

11. Expressions such as *with, together with, including, accompanied by, in addition to, or as well* do not change the number of the subject. If the subject is singular, the verb is too.

- ▶ The President, accompanied by his wife, is traveling to India.
- ▶ All of the books, including yours, are in that box.

Conjugation of the Verb *To Be*

Past Tense		Present Tense	
I am	we are	I was	we were
you are	you are	you were	you were
he/she/it is	they are	he/she/it was	they were

Making Subjects and Verbs Agree³

Choose the correct form of each verb so that it agrees with the subject.

1. Annie and her brothers (is, are) at school.
2. Either my mother or my father (is, are) coming to the meeting.
3. The dog or the cats (is, are) outside.
4. Either my shoes or your coat (is, are) always on the floor.
5. George and Tamara (doesn't, don't) want to see that movie.
6. Benito (doesn't, don't) know the answer.
7. One of my sisters (is, are) going on a trip to France.
8. The man with all the birds (live, lives) on my street.
9. The movie, including all the previews, (take, takes) about two hours to watch.
10. The players, as well as the captain, (want, wants) to win.
11. Either answer (is, are) acceptable.
12. Every one of those books (is, are) fiction.
13. Nobody (know, knows) the trouble I've seen.
14. (Is, Are) the news on at five or six?
15. Mathematics (is, are) John's favorite subject, while Civics (is, are) Andrea's favorite subject.
16. Eight dollars (is, are) the price of a movie these days.
17. (Is, Are) the tweezers in this drawer?
18. Your pants (is, are) at the cleaner's.
19. There (was, were) fifteen candies in that bag. Now there (is, are) only one left!
20. The committee (debates, debate) these questions carefully.
21. The committee (leads, lead) very different lives in private.
22. The Prime Minister, together with his wife, (greet, greets) the press cordially.
23. All of the CDs, even the scratched one, (is, are) in this case.

³ Material taken from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/38/>

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Dangling Modifiers⁴

Conventionally, a participial phrase, prepositional phrase, infinitive phrase, or an appositive phrase modifies the nearest word in the same sentence. The same is true for adjectival or adverbial phrases. If that noun appears in an earlier sentence, or doesn't appear at all in the paper, the reader will become confused. This situation is called a dangling modifier. In the case of adverbs, adverbs should modify the nearest verb or the subsequent adverb or adjective in the same sentence. If not, it also is a dangling modifier.

Examples of Dangling Modifiers:

Any short descriptive phrase in a sentence conventionally modifies the closest noun in that sentence. Your writing will confuse the reader if that phrase is positioned unclearly--even if the right word does appear in the same sentence. This is a subtype of the dangling modifier called a misplaced modifier.

- ▶ I was late for the school bus again. Running for the bus, my book fell in the mud.
(Was the book running for the school bus? It's the only nearby noun beside mud.)
- ▶ Deciding to join the navy, the recruiter enthusiastically pumped Joe's hand.
(Was the recruiter deciding to join the navy? The only other option is Joe's hand.)
- ▶ Upon entering the doctor's office, a skeleton caught my attention.
(Was the skeleton entering the doctor's office? The only other option is my attention.)

Examples of Confusing Misplaced Modifiers:

If a phrase is describing, renaming, or elaborating upon a specific word, good writers do two things: a) They place this modifier immediately beside the word it modifies, and b) They make sure the word being modified actually appears in the sentence. The most dangerous misplaced one-word modifiers are these examples: almost, even, hardly, just, merely, nearly, only, and simply. Usually present participles (-ing words that describe a noun) are the culprit in dangling modifiers.

- ▶ She claimed yesterday she saw a UFO.
(Did she see the UFO yesterday? Or did she make the claim yesterday? To be clear, we must rewrite the sentence.)
- ▶ The assembly line workers were told they had been fired by the personnel director.
(Did the personnel director tell the workers they had been fired? Or was he the one who actually fired them, and somebody else told them? It's not at all clear.)

Groucho Marx frequently used this technique for many of his jokes: "The other day, I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got in my pajamas, I'll never know."

⁴ Material taken from http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/gram_dangling_mod.html

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Dangling Modifier Exercise

All these sentences have at least one dangling modifier. Find and fix them.

1. To please the neighbors, some fireworks were set off a day early.
2. Though only sixteen years old, the college accepted Martha's application.
3. Climbing up the ladder carefully, the frightened cat was brought down from the tree.
4. After a quick change into my hospital gown, the nurse told me to relax.
5. Before replacing any wall outlet, the electricity should be turned off.
6. Vegetables are an important part of your culinary repertoire. To be cooked well, you must steam vegetables.
7. As a long sturdy rod, I know the Bassmaster 2000 is the best fishing pole available for fly-fishing.
8. I have many fond memories of my Aunt Judy. While still a boy, my Aunt Judy and I went to the Dallas Cup Rodeo. For something so rustic, the event was quite exciting.
9. Dentists provide many useful tips for your health. For instance, flossing your teeth daily, gum disease can be prevented.
10. Before engaging in strenuous aerobic exercise, warm-up activities are necessary.

Active vs. Passive Voice

Definition and rule of thumb:

Determine whether each sentence below needs to be revised to avoid the passive voice. Make any necessary changes or explain why the sentence works best as-is.

1. Before the semester was over, the new nursing program had been approved by the Curriculum Committee and the Board of Trustees.

2. With five seconds left in the game, an illegal time-out was called by one of the players.

3. Later in the day, the employees were informed of their loss of benefits by the boss herself.

4. The major points of the lesson were quickly learned by the class, but they were also quickly forgotten by them.

5. For several years, Chauncey was raised by his elderly grandmother.

6. An unexpected tornado smashed several homes and uprooted trees in a suburb of Knoxville.

7. I was surprised by the teacher's lack of sympathy.

8. "The Yellow Wallpaper" was written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

9. Participants in the survey were asked about their changes in political affiliation.

10. Tall buildings and mountain roads were avoided by Raoul because he had a fear of heights.

Parallelism⁵

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance or at least closely relate. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions such as *and* or *or*.

Creating Parallel Words and Phrases (Good)

1. With the **-ing (gerund) form of words:**

▶ Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and bicycling.

2. With **infinitive phrases:**

▶ Parallel: Mary likes to hike, to swim, and to ride a bicycle.

▶ Also Parallel: Mary likes to hike, swim, and ride a bicycle.

Note: You can use “to” before all the verbs in a sentence or before only the first one.

Mixing Forms (Bad)

• Example 1

▶ Not Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and to ride a bicycle.

▶ Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and riding bicycles.

• Example 2

▶ Not Parallel:

The production manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and in a detailed manner.

▶ Parallel:

The production manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and thoroughly.

• Example 3

▶ Not Parallel:

The teacher said that he was a poor student because he waited until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and his motivation was low.

▶ Parallel:

The teacher said that he was a poor student because he waited until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and lacked motivation.

⁵ Material taken from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/623/01/>

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Creating Parallel Clauses

A parallel structure that begins with clauses must keep on with clauses. Changing to another pattern or changing the voice of the verb (from active to passive or vice versa) will break the parallelism.

- **Example 1**

- ▶ Not Parallel:

The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, that they should not eat too much, and to do some warm-up exercises before the game.

- ▶ Parallel:

The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, that they should not eat too much, and that they should do some warm-up exercises before the game.

- ▶ Also parallel:

The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, not eat too much, and do some warm-up exercises before the game.

- **Example 2**

- ▶ Not Parallel:

The salesman expected that he would present his product at the meeting, that there would be time for him to show his slide presentation, and that questions would be asked by prospective buyers. (active vs. passive voice)

- ▶ Parallel:

The salesman expected that he would present his product at the meeting, that there would be time for him to show his slide presentation, and that prospective buyers would ask him questions.

Creating Parallel Lists

Be sure to keep all the elements in a list in the same form.

- ▶ Not Parallel:

The dictionary can be used for these purposes: to find word meanings, pronunciations, correct spellings, and looking up irregular verbs.

- ▶ Parallel:

The dictionary can be used to find word meanings, common pronunciations, correct spellings, and irregular verbs.

Proofreading Strategies to Try

- ▶ Skim your paper, pausing at the words *and* and *or*. Check on each side of these words to see whether the items joined are parallel. If not, make them parallel.
- ▶ If you have several items in a list, put them in a column to see if they are parallel.
- ▶ Listen to the sound of the items in a list or the items being compared. Do you hear the same kinds of sounds? For example, is there a series of “-ing” words beginning each item? Or do you hear a rhythm being repeated? If something is breaking that rhythm or repetition of sound, check to see if it needs to be made parallel.

Sentence Correction⁶

Rewrite each of the sentences below to correct errors in parallelism.

1. An actor knows how to memorize his lines and getting into character.
2. Tell me where you were, what you were doing, and your reasons for doing it.
3. Clark's daily exercises include running, swimming, and to lift weights.
4. To donate money to the homeless shelter is helping people stay warm in the winter.
5. Jim not only likes working outside but also getting dirty.
6. We followed the path through the forest, over the hill, and we went across the river.
7. The writer was brilliant but a recluse.
8. After the party, we want to either go to a movie or the diner.

⁶ Material taken from <http://www.towson.edu/ows/exerciseparal.htm>

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9. She told Jake to take out the trash, to mow the lawn, and be listening for the phone call.
10. Marcie studied for the test by reviewing her class notes and she read her textbook.
11. It is easier to tell the truth than lying to people you love.
12. For her birthday, Marsha received a cake, some clothes, and she got a new CD player.
13. Jim wanted to scare us by telling us a ghost story and he showed us a horror movie.
14. The witness described the suspect as tall, light-skinned, and with a beard.
15. Spending the day with you is better than if we were apart.
16. Brian disliked not only playing baseball but also to run long distances.
17. The new house has a large porch, an eat-in kitchen, and the floors are carpeted.
18. This plan is creative but a risk.
19. I want neither your sympathy nor do I want your pity.
20. Managing your money well is to be prepared for the future.
21. Susie not only needs attention but also many compliments.

22. The kindergartners are learning to read and writing.
23. Doug taught his children the importance of knowledge, virtue, and working hard.
24. To apologize is showing courtesy towards another's feelings.
25. Studying for the big exam is more important than if I watch that movie.
26. He wants neither to work nor does he want to pay the monthly bills.
27. The restaurant has a large menu, delicious spaghetti, and the prices are low.
28. To save gasoline is acting responsibly about the environment.
29. The light is bright but a bother.
30. Hiking stresses your body but is enriching for your health.

Part II: Spelling

Breaking the Ice...Again

There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? One goose, two geese. So one moose, two meese...? One mouse, two mice; so one blouse, two blice?

Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend, that you comb through annals of history but not a single annal? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it? If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? If you wrote a letter, perhaps you bote your tongue?

In what language do people recite at a play, and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? Park on driveways and drive on parkways? How can a "slim chance" and a "fat chance" be the same, while a "wise man" and a "wise guy" are opposites? How can overlook and oversee be opposites, while "quite a lot" and "quite a few" are alike? How can the weather be "hot as hell" one day and "cold as hell" another?

Have you noticed that we talk about certain things only when they are absent? Have you ever seen a horseful carriage or a strapful gown? Met a sung hero or experienced requited love? Have you ever run into someone who was combobulated, gruntled, ruly or peccable? And where are all those people who *are* spring chickens or who *would* actually hurt a fly? You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out, and in which an alarm clock goes off by turning on.

English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race (which, of course, isn't a race at all). That is why, when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible. And why, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up this essay, I end it.

Sometimes I think all English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.

Spell Check Cannot Be Trusted

One little typo that's not caught in time can turn:

- ▶ Friend into Fiend
- ▶ Lots of talent into a loss of talent
- ▶ Hire into Fire
- ▶ United into Untied
- ▶ Million into Billion
- ▶ An engaged girl into an enraged girl

Advice and Advise⁷

Rule of thumb:

Choose *advice* or *advise*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. Adele is always happy to offer [advice/advise] if you ask her for it.
2. The lawyer [advised/advise] him to plead guilty.
3. If you want to go on the senior trip, I would strongly [advice/advise] you to start saving your money.
4. Our new members are impressed with the level of [advice/advise] they received from the leadership group.
5. Sara always takes my [advice/advise] to heart.
6. I'd like to ask an engineer to [advice/advise] us on the design.
7. We [advice/advise] the city council that the deadline was tentative and might need to be extended.
8. Lakeisha knows she can always go to her best friend for [advice/advise].
9. Don't give [advice/advise] that you're not willing to follow yourself.
10. Randall has a bad habit of offering unsolicited [advice/advise].

⁷ Material taken from http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar_quiz/advice_vs_advise_1.asp
Created by Jane Straus and Co. © Jane Straus.

Affect and Effect⁸

Rule of thumb:

Choose *affect* or *effect*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. The applause showed how deeply the presentation had [affect/effect] the audience.
2. His attitude was [affect/effect] by his upbringing.
3. What [affect/effect] do you think the news will have on her?
4. No matter what he does, it will have no [affect/effect] on me.
5. No matter what he does, it will not [affect/effect] me.
6. What do you think the [affect/effect] of the decision will be?
7. How did her son's departure [affect/effect] Mrs. Sanago?
8. How was the team [affect/effect] by the loss of their coach?
9. I was impressed by the [affect/effect] of Churchill's words on Britain during that time.
10. Do you know what [affect/effect] that medicine will have on you?

Allot, a Lot, and Alot⁹

Rule of thumb:

Choose *allot* or "*a lot*", as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. It took [a lot/allot] of courage to go back to my boss and apologize for losing my temper.
2. Theresa pleaded with her sister to [a lot/allot] her more space in the room they shared.
3. The newlyweds decided to buy [a lot/allot] near the wife's parents' home.
4. The hotel could not [a lot/allot] more rooms to the families hosting the wedding.
5. It took [a lot/allot] of time and energy to redo my paper, but I am glad that I did.

⁸ Material taken from <http://www.lessonstutor.com/eeseffect.html> ©2000 Elaine Ernst Schneider at Lesson Tutor. All rights reserved.

⁹ Material taken from http://homepage.smc.edu/quizzes/chene_joyce/allotalot.html, created by Joyce Cheney at Santa Monica College.

Fewer and Less¹⁰

Rule of thumb:

Choose *fewer* or *less*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. A lighter car will use [fewer/less] gas.
2. There are [fewer/less] bugs in the updated software than in the original version.
3. You'll make [fewer/less] errors when you take more time.
4. This job is [fewer/less] difficult than I imagined.
5. I would have ordered [fewer/less] alligator nuggets if I had noticed the price.
6. His speech could have had [fewer/less] words!
7. I'll have a little [fewer/less] water in my cup, please.
8. Which candidate would spend [fewer/less] money on ineffective programs?
9. Which candidate would spend [fewer/less] dollars on ineffective programs?
10. There are [fewer/less] worms in my cream pie than in Angela's.

Farther and Further¹¹

Rule of thumb:

Choose *farther* or *further*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. How much [farther/further] do you plan to drive tonight?
2. I've reached the end of my rope with this behavior. I can't go any [farther/further].
3. Do you have any [farther/further] plans for adding on to the building?

¹⁰ Material taken from <http://www.rhlschool.com/eng4n30.htm>

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¹¹ Material taken from <http://www.lessonstutor.com/eesfarther.html>

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4. That's a lot [farther/further] than I want to carry this machine and tripod!
5. The [farther/further] that I travel down this road, the [farther/further] behind schedule I get.
6. How much [farther/further] do you intend to take this legal matter?
7. I want to [farther/further] my career by taking some management courses.
8. It's not that much [farther/further] to the gas station.
9. How much [farther/further] do I have to read in this text?
10. How much [farther/further] do I have to run, Coach?

I, Me, Myself, etc.

Rule of thumb:

Its and It's¹²

Rule of thumb:

Choose *its* or *it's*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. He knows that [its/it's] a mistake.
2. The ship and [its/it's] cargo were damaged.
3. The shop closed [its/it's] doors at six o' clock.
4. [Its/It's] a small world.
5. I'm afraid [its/it's] going to be a very long lesson.
6. The cat licks [its/it's] paws.
7. She knows [its/it's] wrong to do that.
8. [Its/It's] a pity you can't come to my party.
9. The dog pulled hard on [its/it's] lead.
10. The school is celebrating [its/it's] 10th anniversary today.

¹² Material by Madeline Hickey and taken from <http://www.teachnet.ie/mhickey/2003/itsandit's.html>

Lay and Lie¹³

Using the Word *Lay*

To lay is an act that is done to something else. Lay must have a direct object. One lays something down. (Hint: substitute the word “put”. If “put” works then “lay” is also correct.)

Conjugation of *to lay*:

- ▶ I lay the book down. (present tense)
I laid it down yesterday. (past tense)
- ▶ I will lay it down there again tomorrow. (future tense)
- ▶ I have laid it here many times before. (use perfect tense with have, had, has)

Using the Word *Lie*

To lie down is an act that can be attributed to the subject. There is no object of this verb, as the subject is doing the action without a receiver.

Conjugation of *to lie*:

- ▶ I lie down today. (present tense)
- ▶ The money lay there yesterday. (past tense)
- ▶ Sarah will lie there tomorrow. (future tense)
- ▶ The book has lain here many times before. (use perfect tense with have, had, has)

Rule of thumb:

¹³ Material taken from <http://www.lesstutor.com/eeslay.html>

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Write the correct form of *lay* or *lie*, as appropriate, in each blank. Watch your tense!

1. He _____ on the hard pavement this morning, gasping for breath.
2. How long did he _____ there?
3. I don't know how long he had _____ there.
4. He picked up the wounded bird and _____ it gently on the table.
5. She _____ her sewing aside and went to the door.
6. Are you going to _____ there all day?
7. The three puppies _____ in the basket.
8. Linda _____ her coat on the couch.
9. Not feeling well, he _____ in his bed all day.
10. He decided to just _____ around the house all summer.
11. Someone _____ the dictionary on my glasses.
12. The money _____ there all day in plain sight.
13. She had _____ the book on the ground under the tree.
14. Ginny _____ down on a beach towel.
15. I saw the hat that you _____ on the hall table.
16. She had just _____ down for a nap when the phone rang.
17. The two teenagers _____ in the sun all day.
18. Have they _____ the cornerstone of the building yet?
19. She had _____ the coverlet over the child at midnight.
20. He should not _____ the blame for the accident on the other driver.

Loose and Lose¹⁴

Rule of thumb:

Choose *loose* or *lose*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. When Jim stopped eating desserts and snacks for two weeks, he began to [loose/lose] weight.
2. Did you [loose/lose] something?
3. I was afraid that I would [loose/lose] my place in line.
4. Today's fashions call for [loose/lose] clothing.
5. Whenever I read a good book, I almost [loose/lose] myself in its drama.
6. The screws were [loose/lose] so the chair fell apart when Humpty Dumpty sat on it.
7. What happened? Did you [loose/lose] your mind?
8. Their clothes are [loose/lose].
9. Lock your car or [loose/lose] it!
10. What are you looking for? Did you [loose/lose] something?

Passed and Past

Rule of thumb:

Choose *pass* or *past*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. She rapidly walked (past, passed) the other people on the boardwalk.
2. In the (past, passed), we often worked until midnight or after.
3. The teacher (passed, past) out the corrected tests.
4. Do you know if they (passed, past) that senate bill yet?
5. Our manager (passed, past) right by us without giving us more work to do. Phew!

¹⁴ Material taken from <http://tx.english-ch.com/teacher/abby/level-b/loose-vs-lose/>
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Than and Then¹⁵

Rule of thumb:

Choose *than* or *then*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. My jack-o-lantern is far better [than/then] any other jack-o-lantern.
2. First, we study the homework; [than/then] we take the test.
3. If you come with me, [than/then] you want to live.
4. This class scores higher [than/then] any other class.
5. He leapt on the thief, tied him up, and [than/then] called the police.
6. This test seems to be easier [than/then] the last one.
7. It is understood [than/then] that there will be no class next week.
8. That cat is much bigger [than/then] that dog.
9. His appearance is more [than/then] I can stand.
10. The storm poured down, but [than/then] it ended.

They're, Their, and There¹⁶

Rule of thumb:

Choose the correct word from the sets in each sentence.

1. They went to visit [they're/their/there] aunt.
2. Please put your coats [they're/their/there].
3. Kim likes eggs only when [they're/their/there] hard-boiled.
4. [They're/Their/There] house is almost one hundred years old!

¹⁵ Material taken from <http://www.towson.edu/ows/exercisethen.htm>

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¹⁶ Material taken from <http://www.education.com/worksheet/article/there-their-theyre-third>, ©2006 Education.com

5. Have you been [they're/their/there] yet?
6. [They're/Their/There] looking for [they're/their/there] lost cat over [they're/their/there].
7. Tomorrow, [they're/their/there] throwing a graduation party.
8. [they're/their/there] is no more milk left.
9. On Sunday, [they're/their/there] family plays tennis.
10. Eva played with [they're/their/there] new puppy.

To, Too, and Two

Rule of thumb:

Write *to*, *too* or *two*, as appropriate, in each blank.

1. Many students read _____ quickly and _____ carelessly.
2. I was _____ scared _____ say a word to her!
3. I am going _____ the store now.
4. They are building _____ new houses on our block.
5. May I go _____?
6. Do you think it is _____ late _____ do that now?
7. I have _____ new shirts that I can't wait _____ wear.
8. My dental appointment lasted _____ hours and that was _____ long!
9. This room is _____ cold _____ stay in very much longer.
10. After I played ball for _____ hours, I was _____ tired _____ walk home.
11. It is not good _____ put _____ much salt on your food.
12. My next dental appointment is for tomorrow at _____ o'clock.
13. I am not _____ excited about going _____ the dentist again.
14. My brother flew _____ Alabama earlier this week.
15. We have planted _____ rose bushes in pots on the patio.

Well and Good¹⁷

Rule of thumb:

Choose *good* or *well*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. How [good/well] do you know that strange-looking character?
2. The director thought that our performance was [good/well].
3. The director thought that our performance went [good/well].
4. Does Marie play the guitar [good/well] enough to be in the band?
5. Yes, she is a very [good/well] guitar player.
6. It's not a [good/well] idea to eat too many bugs.
7. I'm very careful to chew the insects [good/well].
8. The old car's engine still runs [good/well].
9. That's because we took [good/well] care of it.
10. David plays [good/well] with all the other kids.

Who and Whom

Rule of thumb:

Choose *who* or *whom*, as appropriate, for each sentence.

1. [Who/Whom] attended the high school graduation ceremony with Rhonda?
2. The chef asked [who/whom] had ordered only thirty pounds of chicken for the month.
3. The principal demanded to know [who/whom] the class leaders had contacted.
4. The teacher decided [who/whom] should be the moderator of the classroom panel.
5. [Who/Whom] will the attorney call to testify?

¹⁷ Material taken from <http://www.rhlschool.com/eng3n36.htm>, ©1999 by RHL School — Free Workseets and More at www.rhlschool.com

Part III: Punctuation

The Importance of Correct Punctuation

Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy—will you let me be yours?

Gloria

Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be?

Yours,

Gloria

When to Use a Comma

- 1. Use a comma after an introductory element- a word, a phrase, or a clause that comes before the main clause. To test whether you need a comma, simply cover up what you consider to be the introductory element. Below are some examples.**
 - ▶ Introductory Words:
 - ▶ Yes, she is my sister.
 - ▶ However, he tells a good story.
 - ▶ *Note: "However" can be an introductory word, but "although" cannot.*
 - ▶ Introductory Phrases:
 - ▶ To tell the truth, I once believed what he said.
 - ▶ In just a minute, I will return your papers.
 - ▶ As a matter of fact, I am sometimes gullible.
 - ▶ Introductory Clauses:
 - ▶ If you will listen, I will explain the situation.
 - ▶ Although she is short, she appears tall.
 - ▶ Unless I am mistaken, that man was here yesterday.

2. **Use a comma before a conjunction (a word used to join two thoughts) if it has a sentence before and after it.**
 - ▶ I understand the material, yet I failed the test.
 - ▶ The boy is a thief, and his sister is a prostitute.
 - ▶ She will not attend class, nor will she study.
3. **Use a comma to set off an interrupting element—one that you can leave out of the sentence without changing the meaning. However, do not abuse this rule. Make sure the element is not just a modifier.**
 - ▶ John, who is my cousin, won the race.
 - ▶ He has, in fact, won several races.
 - ▶ My favorite teacher, a woman named Mrs. Smith, died.
4. **Use a comma to join three or more items in a series.**
 - ▶ We bought milk, bread and eggs.
 - ▶ She wants to fish, to swim, and to relax.
 - ▶ I locked the door, shut the window, and went to bed.
 - ▶ I washed the windows, the pots and pans and the dog.
 - ▶ *Hint: The use of the comma before the conjunction is often considered optional, but including it is rarely confusing; in cases like the last example, adding it would improve clarity.*
5. **Use a comma to join coordinate adjectives that come before and describe a noun. There are two hints for this rule:**
 - ▶ To determine whether the comma is necessary, simply place and between the two adjectives. If the and fits, you need the comma.
 - ▶ You can also try changing the order of the adjectives. If the order can be changed, and the sentence is still correct, you need the comma.
 - ▶ Her exciting, handsome brother escorted me.
 - ▶ Her exciting and handsome brother escorted me
 - ▶ Her handsome, exciting brother escorted me.
 - ▶ Notice that these adjectives would not require a comma to join them.
 - ▶ There were seven stormy nights.
 - ▶ He wore a blue suit.
6. **Use a comma to set off the year in a three-item date within a sentence.**
 - ▶ We met on May 3, 2003, in Reno.
 - ▶ We met in May 2003 in Reno. (No commas in a two-item date.)

Comma Exercise¹⁸

Insert commas in the following sentences, as needed:

1. Janet will graduate from high school on June 3 2008.
2. The weather man Mr. Barker said we would have snow today or tomorrow.
3. "Ask not what your country can do for you" President Kennedy explained "but rather ask what you can do for your country."
4. Where are Jonathan Jeff and Tim going after work?
5. Michael Bolton is a great singer isn't he?
6. Nancy can as far as I know finish the project without any help.
7. Pretzels my favorite snack make me thirsty.
8. No there is not enough time to play a game of Monopoly before we leave.
9. I have been working all day so I really could use a break.
10. The document looks professional but the contents are juvenile.
11. Looking for the lost car keys we searched under the car in the house on the porch and among the weeds.
12. Well I guess that staff likes dates not prunes.
13. Among the synonyms are *humor wit sarcasm* and *irony*.
14. After we had placed an advertisement in the evening paper we found the owner of the puppy.
15. When Mr. Charles Chatham Jr. my geography teacher visited West Lafayette Indiana he toured the campus of Purdue University.
16. Oh didn't you know that on March 5 1964 my family left Reidsville North Carolina and moved to Highland Park a suburb of Chicago Illinois.
17. Richie leave the room shut the door and be quiet.
18. Michael you know of course that Archie hates teas receptions and formal dinners.
19. We left Moravia which is a resort town in New York and drove on to Owasco Lake which is near Syracuse.
20. Wanting to be noticed the baby jumped up and down in his crib shook the railings and whimpered piteously.

¹⁸ Most content from *Warriner's English Grammar and Composition 9, Revised Edition*, © 1965 Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc.

When to Use a Semicolon

- ▶ Combine two complete sentences using a semicolon *without* a conjunction.
 - ▶ I really enjoyed the book; however, it was difficult.
 - ▶ Adam isn't simply a good man; he is a saint.
 - ▶ I have to attend a lecture tonight; therefore, I must leave early.
 - ▶ She was speeding on a wet road; as a result, she had a serious accident.
- ▶ Separate list items when the items themselves contain commas.
 - ▶ He has lived in Orlando, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; and Washington, D.C.

Semicolons Exercise¹⁹

Insert semicolons *and* commas in the following sentences, as needed:

1. Traveling through the countryside last summer we decided not to follow any schedule for example we took side roads if we found any that looked interesting.
2. One quiet road many miles from the main highway wound narrowly through the hills at times it seems to disappear altogether under the bushes growing along it.
3. As dad steered the car carefully the conversation that mother and I have been having died out impressed by the stillness of our surroundings we became strangely silent.
4. There were no houses nearby seeing the remains of a few old rock chimneys we knew that someone must have lived there many years ago.
5. After traveling about 10 miles along this road we noticed a small square area fenced around with iron rails inside the fence all overgrown with grass and wildflowers were old grades.
6. A few of the graves dating back to the early 1800s had crude stone monuments with traces of names that the elements had not yet scratched out others having only to stones marking the site had no names.
7. As we looked at the little cemetery we wondered what stories these people could have told about early settlements about the hardships of pioneers or about the terrors of the wilderness perhaps they had lived through famines blizzards and raids.
8. Many cultural superstitions are not dead they survived in our conversations and sometimes influence modern behavior.
9. Our conversations frequently mirror old superstitions we “interpret” ordinary events strangely and a lot play almost every day.
10. Long ago people believed that demons were continually trying to put spells on us however when a person sneezed, the curse was shaken off and the person deserved a blessing.

¹⁹ Exercise taken from *Warriner's English Grammar and Composition 9, Revised Edition*, © 1965 Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc.

When to Use an Apostrophe²⁰

- 1. Use an apostrophe to show the omission of letters or numbers, a contraction.**
 - ▶ It's a shame. (Stands for: It is a shame.)
 - ▶ That happened in '80. (Stands for: That happened in 1980.)
- 2. Use an apostrophe to show the plural form of lowercase letters and numbers.**
 - ▶ There are two s's in that word.
 - ▶ She dots all her i's and crosses all her t's.
 - ▶ My son can say his 1's, 2's, and 3's in five different languages.
- 3. Use an apostrophe to show the plural form of a few unusual words.**
 - ▶ She mailed all the thank-you's so late that we were embarrassed.
 - ▶ The contract had so many "that's" in it, that we felt uncomfortable about signing it.
- 4. For the most part, you do not use the apostrophe to show plural form.**
 - ▶ There were many heroes in my hometown.
 - ▶ Victories for the enemy numbered in the hundreds.
- 5. Use an apostrophe to show possession.**

Note: You usually have a noun after the word that shows possession. When using an apostrophe, be sure the next word belongs to the word getting the apostrophe. (The book belongs to Sandra.)

 - ▶ That is Sandra's book.
- 6. Do not use an apostrophe to show possession with pronouns.**

"Its" is often confusing to writers. Its is possessive, just like his, hers, and ours. None of the other possessive pronouns have apostrophes, so that is a good way to remember that its doesn't have one either. ("It's" can only mean one thing: it is.)

 - ▶ The bridge was elegant—a symbol of its own strength and beauty.
 - ▶ The victory was ours.
- 7. Use an apostrophe after the s when the word is plural, possessive, and regular.**

Note: The noun following a plural possessive is usually—although not always, as evidenced in the first example—plural also, i.e. two girls, two stories and two families of Joneses and two cars.

 - ▶ Our creditors gave us two weeks' notice.
 - ▶ The Joneses' cars were all stolen.
 - ▶ You have heard both the girls' stories.

²⁰ Material taken from <http://www.lesstutor.com/eesapostrophe.html>

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8. Use an apostrophe before the s when the word is plural and possessive but its plural form is irregular.

- ▶ The children's recess is about to start.
- ▶ The women's cries were heard.

9. Use an apostrophe only after the second name when the possession belongs to two people and they are mentioned in the sentence at the same time.

Note: In the example below, we're talking about one computer program belonging to two people, i.e. joint ownership.

- ▶ That computer program is Jane and Sam's.

Apostrophe Activity

1. That's too bad.
2. He graduated high school in '82.
3. She dots all her i's and crosses all her t's.
4. I paid him with 10's and 20's.
5. I haven't written my thank-yous.
6. The other team's losses were in the hundreds.
7. That is Susan's desk.
8. The citizen's mother was also present for the meeting.
9. The witness's memories were vague on that point.
10. Our department gave you three weeks' notice.
11. You have heard both the builders' stories.
12. That property is John and Michelle's.
13. Everyone loves the 80's, don't they?
14. The children's things were all over our neighbor's lawn.
15. It's only a matter of time before the bird returns to its nest.

Practice Punctuation Proficiency

Punctuate these sentences correctly. Do not change the words.

1. My birthday will fall on Thanksgiving in November 2015.
2. I hit delete by mistake all my work disappeared.
3. He bought a fast powerful expensive computer.
4. The Winter Park Spring Art Festival which occurs every March attracts thousands
5. Order stamps pens and paperclips from Office Depot.
6. The Mayor will dedicate the building on August 3 2008 at 4 p.m.
7. The City backed the tax but the County opposed it.
8. She was born in Greenville Iowa but grew up in Apopka Florida.

Additional Resources

Books

- ▶ Lindsell-Roberts, Sheryl. *Business Writing for Dummies*. Foster City, CA: IDG Books, 1999.
- ▶ Sabin, William A. *The Gregg Reference Manual*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001.
- ▶ Straus, Jane. *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- ▶ Swick, Edward. *English Grammar for ESL Learners*. Chicago, IL: McGraw-Hill, 2005.
- ▶ Swick, Edward. *Writing Better English: An ESL Workbook*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.
- ▶ Woods, Geraldine. *English Grammar for Dummies*. New York: Hungry Minds, 2001.

Websites

- ▶ English as 2nd Language (esl.about.com)—Collection of language/grammar/pronunciation tips
- ▶ Grammar and Punctuation (grammarbook.com)—The Blue Book online rule reference
- ▶ Merriam-Webster Online (m-w.com)—Dictionary & Thesaurus
- ▶ Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (owl.english.purdue.edu/owl)
 - ▶ Job Search Writing
 - ▶ English as a Second Language
- ▶ UCF's University Writing Center (uwc.ucf.edu/grammar.php)—Grammar, punctuation, and ESL links and resources