

**Quick Learning  
Reference for  
Professional  
Communication**

# **G R A M M A R**

**New Voice Training  
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# Grammar Quick Reference

## Sentence Structure

**There are three main sentence types. By knowing the types and their rules, we can punctuate every sentence correctly every time, avoiding run-ons and fragments.**

**Simple Sentences** have at least a subject and a verb. They express one complete thought.  
The motor is running. Finally, the motor is running. The motor we just bought is running, isn't it?

**Compound Sentences** have two complete thoughts; each half could stand alone as a sentence.  
The motor is running; we're ready to go. The motor is running, and it is starting to overheat.

**Rule:** Between the two thoughts, you need either a semi-colon or a comma and a conjunction.

**Coordinating Conjunctions:** For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So

**Memory Hook:** Two complete thoughts, two things in the middle: first a comma, then a dot above it or a conjunction after it.

**Run-on Rap: Two Thoughts, Two Things; Comma with a Dot, Comma with a FANBOYS!**

**Complex Sentences** express the relationship of two thoughts. Half of the sentence is not a complete thought, so the most common source of sentence fragments is using that half without the other.

The motor is running because the battery needs recharging. If the motor is running, turn it off.

**Rule:** If the conjunction is in the middle, no comma is needed. If the conjunction is at the beginning, put a comma in the middle. The half that contains the conjunction cannot stand alone as a sentence.

**Memory Hook:** One thought, one thing in the middle: either the conjunction or a comma.

**Note:** Sentence fragments also come from that or which clauses: "The class which I took. A tool that I use."

## Subject/Verb Agreement

- The subject of a sentence must agree in number with the verb. A singular subject needs a singular verb; a plural subject needs a plural verb.
- Words that come between the subject and verb can be confusing.  
The basket with all the prizes in it is (singular) for our raffle.  
The training director, along with the instructors, is (singular) coming to the next session.
- Two or more subjects joined by **and** take a plural verb. Salt and pepper are (plural) on the table.
- Rule with **or**: The verb must agree with the subject closest to it. **Peer Pressure**  
His twin daughters or her son is going to stay with us this afternoon.
- Subjects that take a singular verb include *each, every, one, anyone, anybody, anything, everybody, everyone, everything, someone, somebody, something, noone, nobody, nothing, much* (and words you can have much of), and *either, neither* (where there is no **or**). Plural verbs go with *both, few, many, several, and others*.
- Collective nouns—refer to many as one unit. They take a singular.  
This group is rowdy. Group members are fidgeting and whispering.

## Pronoun Agreement

- Pronouns take the place of nouns. Pronouns and nouns must agree in person, case, and number.

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Possessive (before nouns)</b>	<b>Possessive (alone after verbs)</b>	<b>Reflexive</b>
s i n g u l a r	I	me	my	mine	myself
	you	you	your	yours	yourself
	he	him	his	his	himself
	she	her	her	hers	herself
	it	it	its	its	itself
p l u r a l	we	us	our	ours	ourselves
	you	you	your	yours	yourselves
	they	them	their	theirs	themselves
	who	whom	whose		

- It is politically correct to avoid use of the masculine pronoun to refer to both men and women.  
**Instead of:** Each seminar attendee should take his workbook home with him.  
Seminar attendees should take their workbooks. Attendees should take attendee workbooks home.  
Each seminar attendee should take the workbook home. Please take your workbooks home.
- The reflexive pronoun requires a previous reference to the pronoun.  
I hurt myself. I'll do it myself. **NOT** Feel free to call Jane or myself.

## Who and Whom

- Who is a subject pronoun and should be used where other subject pronouns are used (I, he, she, we, they). Whom is an object pronoun and should be used in place of the object (me, him, her, us, them).

**who=he    whom=him**

- Substitution only works when who or whom is at the beginning of a sentence.
- When who or whom is in the middle of a sentence, cover all the words before it, then substitute he or him.

**Don't forget to chop off its head!**

## Commas

- **Items in a series**  
They collected luxury tax on chocolate, champagne, Russian caviar, and vodka.
- **After introductory elements and before afterthoughts**  
Before we can make a final decision, we will need to meet again, won't we?
- **Around interrupters and non-essential elements**  
The dog, a stray, is there every afternoon.
- **Dates—use two commas to set off the year when it follows the month and day. The month and year or month and day require no commas.**  
The May 4, 2000, issue of *Time* quoted him. Our July 2001 meeting was postponed. Her April 3 party went well. The 6 June 2002 deadline has expired.

## **Parentheses** Set apart and de-emphasize non-essential elements in a sentence

- (If an entire sentence falls within the parentheses, keep punctuation inside.)
- Punctuate sentences as you would (without the parentheses); marks go after the close parenthesis.
- When ending a sentence in parentheses, the period goes outside (like this).
- When the last word has a period, close the sentence with another (with lists, examples, etc.).

**Hyphens** Link two or more words that work together as an adjective before the noun; you cannot separate them without changing the meaning: Her state-of-the-art tools are more up to date than ours.

**Apostrophes** lady's lunch, ladie's lunch, or ladies' lunch/childrens' church or children's church

### **Three step system for possessives:**

1. Write the word.                      child                      children                      women                      boss
2. Add the apostrophe.                      child'                      children'                      women'                      boss'
3. If there is no **s**, add one.                      child's                      children's                      women's                      boss' or boss's

bosses'      James'      James Smith's      The Smiths'      Cameron Diaz's      The Diazes'      The Joneses

Watch confusing possessives with plurals and contractions. Most words that end in **s**, **sh**, **ch**, **x** or **z** form the plural by adding **es** instead of **s**. With contractions, see if you could form two words, it's = it is.

## **Quotation Marks** Indicate direct speech, coined phrases, or emphasis

- , or . always inside the closing quote  
"I wanted," he said, "to go home."
- : or ; always outside closing quote  
The following animals are considered "marsupials": kangaroo and koala.
- ? or ! inside, if part of the quote; otherwise, outside.  
"How are you?" I asked. Have you read the report "Single-Parent Families"?  
Sherry said, "There is no use in trying to 'keep up with the Joneses.'"

## **Bulleted Lists** We used to punctuate vertical lists the same as lists within a sentence

Here is our plan for the day:

- arrival at the site;
- half-hour, guided tour;
- ice cream break; and
- afternoon departure.

Here is our plan for the day:

- Arrival at the site
- Guided tour
- Ice cream break
- Afternoon departure

## **Parallelism**—Make sentences parallel by using the same type of preliminary word in lists

- Her husband was the housekeeper, dishwasher, babysitter, and he even cooked most of the meals.
- He gets his information reading books and by talking to people.
- Many investors would rather save their money rather than risking it in the stock market.
- The children learned to clean up, make their own meals, and the value of independence.
- We hired ten civil engineering majors, eight who majored in electrical engineering, and chemical engineering majors made up the other four.

**Modifiers**—should be placed as close as possible to the words they modify without being between them. Also remember modifiers must have something to modify; don't leave them hanging.

## Proofreading for Professionals

Set the work aside, and do something else between writing and proofreading to give yourself fresh eyes. Another way is to print two copies that look different, proofread each one separately, then compare the two. Change the font size and style, line spacing, and number of columns.

Proofread at least twice separating big-picture, creative right-brain from analytical left-brain tasks:

Do a **right-brain edit** where you look for content, clarity, flow, and format. Read parts out loud to detect omissions and tone. Have someone else read important documents aloud to you. Download free text-to-speech software.

Do a **left-brain proofreading** for errors. Look through a checklist of the common errors before you begin. Scan backwards, then forward, then show someone else. More errors occur at word endings as we tend to sound out words as we read without looking to the end. Scanning backward, following along with your finger for focus works best.

## Tricky Word Usage

farther/further	After making a point he went _____ into the topic.
than/then	Back _____, a dollar could buy more _____ it can now.
affect/effect	The weather _____ed her performance. Did it have an _____ on yours?
assure/ensure/insure	I _____ you I will personally _____ your car is _____ed by Progressive.
continually/continuously	I couldn't sleep last night; the thunder went on _____.
that/which	The car _____ my dad bought is the one I drove, _____ is fine with me.
good/well	She is a _____ student. She does _____ in school.
its/it's/its'	_____ so hot today my dog escaped _____ pen and jumped into the pool.
fewer/less	Although there were _____ people there, it seems like we had _____ time.
lay/lie	I often _____ in bed too long, good thing I _____ out my clothes in advance.
principal/principle	In _____, the _____ reason I am here shouldn't be to make money.

This Grammar Quick Reference is intended to improve common mistakes proficient speakers of English make. For tools in teaching English as a Second Language start somewhere like: <http://esl.about.com/>

The lessons here answer the Most Common Grammar Issues; detailed lessons are in the accompanying audio learning program.

To bring a keynote, half-, one-, or two-day seminar to your organization, please hire Sherry through her training company, New Voice Training [www.NewVoiceTraining.com](http://www.NewVoiceTraining.com) 817 657-5301.

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## Practice Subject/Verb Agreement

1. The keys and money is/are in here.
2. Miss Scarlet or Professor Plum have/has the knife in the lounge.
3. Either the students or the teacher have/has to push the button.
4. Is this/are these envelopes or paper?
5. Either of the cars is/are fine with me.
6. The staff is/are skilled.

## Practice Pronoun Agreement

1. It's up to you and I/me to do it.
2. This is just between you and I/me.
3. They asked he/him and I/me to come.

## Practice Who and Whom

1. Who/Whom is the one you met last week?
2. Who/whom is standing in the way of your success?
3. Is she the one who/whom wrote the award-winning essay?
4. I am the one who said I would be here for whoever/whomever needed me.
5. Try to figure out who/whom the keys belong to; then tell me who/whom it is.

**Don't forget to chop off its head!**

## Computer Tips

**Tools>AutoCorrect** turn off automatic capitalization, capitalize FRO and expletives, replace “pubic” with “public”  
**Tools>Options>Spelling and Grammar** check last box, “show readability statistics,” go to **Settings . . .** to set number of commas in a list and spacing after a period.

### Tricky Word Usage Answers p. 5:

After making a point he went further into the topic. (farther is physical distance)

Back then, a dollar could buy more than it can now.

The weather affected (verb) her performance. Did it have an effect (noun) on yours?

I assure you I will personally ensure your car is insured by Progressive.

I couldn't sleep last night; the thunder went on continually. (continuous means non-stop, which thunder cannot be)

The car that my dad bought is the one I drove, which is fine with me.

She is a good student. She does well in school.

It's so hot today my dog escaped its pen and jumped into the pool.

Although there were fewer people there, it seems like we had less time.

I often lie in bed too long, good thing I lay out my clothes in advance.

In principle, the principal reason I am here shouldn't be to make money.

**Subject/Verb Answers:** 1. are 2. has 3. has 4. Are these 5. is 6. is

**Pronoun Answers:** 1. me 2. me 3. him and me

**Who/Whom Answers:** 1. Whom 2. Who 3. who 4. whoever 5. whom, who