

# GRAMMAR RULES SUMMARY (GRS)

(rev. 9/26/09)

**NOTE:** Sources for this GRS are *English Writing Skills*, the 7th edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, the *Holt Handbook (third course 2003)*, and English teachers at Eden Prairie High School.

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## CAPITALIZATION RULES

### Rule #

1. Capitalize the **first word** in sentences, interjections, and incomplete questions. **{The trees whispered.}** Also, capitalize the first word in a quotation if the quotation is a complete sentence. **{Still holding the letter, he said to her, "Where do you live?"}**
2. Capitalize all **proper nouns** **{Shakespeare}** and **proper adjectives**. **{the Canadian actress}**  
**NOTE:** Capitalize the names of compass directions only if they refer to a specific region or are part of an address. **{Don't visit the Southwest in August. If the museum is located at 75 East Huron, it is not on the northwest side of the city.}**
3. Capitalize the first word, the last word, and all other important words in **titles** of any works of art. Words usually not capitalized are articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions: **a, an, the, of, to, in, for, from, with, and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so**. The words **a, an,** and **the** must be capitalized when they are the first words of the title. They are usually not capitalized, however, at the beginning of the names of most magazines and newspapers and are often left out of such titles.

**NOTE:** There are specific rules for why some titles are italicized and some titles are in quotation marks. The rules for italicizing vs. quotation marks are found later in this packet.

**Examples:** books *Great Expectations*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Out of Africa*, periodicals *Newsweek*, poems "The Raven," short stories "The Scarlet Ibis," plays *Hamlet*, paintings *Mona Lisa*, movies *Driving Miss Daisy*, TV shows *Saturday Night Live* and other works of art

## FRAGMENTS and RUN-ONS

4. A group of words that does not have a complete thought is called a **fragment**. As a general rule, do **not** use fragments in formal writing. A fragment may have a subject and a verb, but sometimes even with a subject and a verb, the sentence may not make sense.

**FRAGMENT Examples:** **After the rain.** (no verb) **Applauded the performer.** (no subject).  
**When the boy finished.** (has a subject and verb but doesn't make sense alone)

**NOTE:** In an imperative sentence (a command), the subject of the sentence is understood to be YOU even if the word YOU is not in the sentence. An imperative sentence is not considered a fragment. For example: Take seven pieces of candy.

5. A **run-on** sentence consists of two or more sentences (independent clauses) joined by a comma (also called a “comma splice”) or no mark of punctuation. Run-on sentences should not be used in formal writing. Two independent clauses must be **separated into two sentences** or may be joined together with a **semi-colon** (if the two independent clauses are closely related) or **by a comma followed by a conjunction**.

**RUN-ON Examples:** **The zoo keeper fed the lions, there were ten of them. He took the exam last week he passed.**

## END MARK RULES

6. Use a period to end a declarative sentence. {This tale is true.}
7. Use a period after most abbreviations. {Mr. Dickens wrote that novel.}
8. Use a question mark to end an interrogative sentence. {Were you nervous?}
9. Use an exclamation mark after an exclamatory sentence. {Open the door!}
10. **MLA FORMATTING RULE:** When typing, always space once or twice (depending on instructor preference) after any sentence end mark (period, question mark, or exclamation mark). However, after abbreviations, only space once.

# COMMA RULES

**NOTE:** To understand several of the comma rules, you have to know the difference between a phrase and a clause. Here is the difference:

a **phrase** is a group of words that hang together without BOTH a subject and a verb.

**EXAMPLES OF PHRASES:** in the early morning **OR** after the creative writing class **OR** of the many senior captains **OR** shattering into many fragments **OR** in Tennyson's beautiful poetry

a **clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb (predicate) and that functions as part of a sentence. There are two types of clauses: **independent** (a clause that can stand on its own as a sentence) and **dependent** or subordinate (a clause that cannot stand on its own as a sentence).

**EXAMPLES OF INDEPENDENT CLAUSES IN COMPLEX SENTENCES:** **She didn't drive** because the streets were frozen. **OR Those were the houses** that the tornado damaged. **OR The coach planned to go on vacation** although the game was on Friday. **OR I will drive to New York** if gasoline prices go down.

**EXAMPLES OF DEPENDENT (SUBORDINATE) CLAUSES IN THE ABOVE SENTENCES:** because the streets were frozen **OR** that the tornado damaged **OR** although the game was on Friday **OR** if gasoline prices go down

11. **SERIES** Use a comma to separate a series (3 or more items). Use one less comma than the total number of items. **{She wrote novels, short stories, plays, and poems.}**
12. **2+ADJ** Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives when the word "and" can be used in place of the comma. **{We were being followed by a tall, mysterious stranger.}**
13. **CC** Use a comma to separate two **independent clauses** connected with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so) **{Jamie doesn't care for sports, and he doesn't like art. I love warm weather, so I moved to Hawaii. The tickets are inexpensive, but I have no money. Pablo eats neither fish nor meat, nor will he even kill an insect. She eats healthily, for she believes it will help her energy level.}**
14. **INTRO WORD or "IW"** Use a comma to separate an introductory word from the rest of the sentence. **{Oh, it wasn't that important to me.}**

15. **INTRO PHRASE or "IP"** Use a comma to separate **a rather long phrase** (4+ words) from the rest of the sentence. {**In Tennyson's beautiful poetry**, I admire the imagery.} Some two or three word phrases require a comma if they are **transitional phrases**: **By contrast**, several painters use more shadows. **After further thought**, the coach decided to call another practice. **By the way**, your paper is due on Tuesday. **In fact**, seventeen people were convicted.
- NOTE:** If there is a **verb** in the phrase, no matter how short it is, use a comma. {**Working rapidly**, he tried to meet the last deadline. **Batting third in the order**, he waited in the dugout.}
16. **INTRO DEPENDENT CLAUSE or "IDC"** Use a comma to separate **a dependent clause** (or subordinate) clause (a clause which cannot stand alone) from **an independent clause** (a clause which can stand alone) when the dependent clause comes first.
- {**When her book was finished**, **Kate Mansfield was rather pleased**.}  
 IDC = intro dependent clause                      IC = independent clause
- {**If gasoline prices go down**, **people will begin to travel more**.}  
 IDC = intro dependent clause                      IC = independent clause
17. **DIR** When a noun that is used to **directly** address someone begins a sentence, use a comma after it. {**Jill, please do your beam routine one more time**.}
- When you address someone directly using a noun at the end of a sentence, put a comma before it. {**Do one hundred more push-ups, Arnold**.}
- When you address someone directly using a noun in the middle of a sentence, put a comma before and after it. {**I think, Rolf, that you should teach college courses**.}
18. **NOT** Use comma to separate contrasting words, phrases, and clauses introduced by the word "not." {**This carton must be opened from the top, not from the bottom**.}
19. **DQ** Use a comma to introduce a **direct quotation** and to separate it from the rest of the sentence. {**Dan said, "The soup is boiling." OR "Turn off the stove," said William**.}
20. **DATES/ADDRESSES or "D/A"** Use a comma to separate the day of the week, the day of the month, and the year in a date. Use a comma to separate parts of geographical names and to separate the name of a street, city, and state in an address. {**On Thursday, December 10, 1953, we moved to 3319 Simpson Street, Evanston, Illinois**.}
- NOTE:** A comma is used to separate the last part of a geographical name, an address, or a date from the rest of the sentence. Notice the comma after Minnesota in the following example: {**We sent the letter to Eden Prairie, Minnesota, early this morning**.}

21. **TITLE** Use a comma to separate a person's name (or a company's name) from a degree, a title, or an affiliation that follows it. **{I'd like you to meet Lieutenant Mary Woodard, USMC.}**  
If the degree, title, or affiliation comes in the middle of the sentence, put commas before and after it. **{Melissa Krull, PhD, gave an award to Karen Anderson, MD.}**

22. **NONESSENTIAL** Use a comma (or a pair of commas if the nonessential phrases or clauses come in the middle of a sentence) to separate nonessential phrases or clauses from the rest of the sentence. **{My brother, of course, is the only one who knows how to fix things like that.}**  
If the element in question appears at the end of the sentence, be sure that it is truly non-essential before using a comma to separate the element from the rest of the sentence. See the two examples below. **{Nancy gave one hundred dollars to Glenda, who had just arrived from Chicago.}**  
**{Nancy gave one hundred dollars to the woman who had just arrived from Chicago.}**

**NOTE:** Deciding whether to use the word "which" or "that" can be tricky. If you can drop the phrase or clause and not lose the point of the sentence, use "which." If you can't, use "that."

Commas, which cut out the fat, go with **which** but never with **that**.

**Example 1:** **Buster's bulldog, which had one white ear, won first prize.**

In example 1, the "which had one white ear" is disposable or nonessential to the writer's purpose.

**Example 2:** **The dog that won first prize was Buster's bulldog.**

In example 2, "that won first prize" is essential, so it has no commas surrounding it. This sentence misses the point without the dependent clause, "that won first prize."

**NOTE:** Be sure to use paired commas with **transitional or parenthetical expressions** that interrupt the sentence. **{We stayed, nevertheless, until the game had ended. The painter Georgia O'Keeffe, by the way, took up pottery late in life. The Nile, I think, is the longest river in the world.}**

23. **APP** An appositive is a particular type of "nonessential." An appositive is a noun or pronoun placed beside another noun or pronoun to identify or explain it. Use a comma (or a pair of commas if the appositive comes in the middle of the sentence) to separate the appositive from the rest of the sentence. An appositive might appear in any position in the sentence. **{Jim Steeger, a friend of mine, volunteers whenever he is in town. OR The award was given to the volunteer, a friend of mine}**

However, there are times you do not enclose appositives within commas. If the appositive is a single word closely related to the preceding noun or pronoun or if you must have the appositive's information to differentiate the first noun from other nouns like it, do not enclose the appositive within commas.

**Example:** **Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* will be performed at the Guthrie.**

(Because Shakespeare wrote over thirty-six plays, the title of the particular play in question is essential information. However, a comma would be needed in the following sentence because the play's title is not essential to the meaning. **My favorite play, *Romeo and Juliet*, is about two star-crossed lovers.**)

24. **MLA FORMATTING RULE:** Always space once after a comma when typing.

## APOSTROPHES

25. Use an apostrophe in a **contraction** to indicate the position of missing letter(s). {**You'd better study. Can't you fix it? 'Tis the season to be jolly. I am a member of the class of '12.**}

**NOTE:** As a rule, avoid using contractions in formal writing such as academic writing and business communication.

26. Add an apostrophe and an **s** to show **the possessive case of a singular noun**. {**Bruce's attitude was philosophical. I stepped on the cat's tail. The dress's lower half was ruined.**}

For a singular proper name ending in **s**, add only an apostrophe (dropping the additional **s**) if the name has two or more syllables and if the addition of **s** would make the name awkward to pronounce. {**Ulysses' plan, Laertes' sword, Ms. Rawlings' car**}

For a singular common noun ending in **s**, add both an apostrophe and an **s** if the added **s** is pronounced as a separate syllable. {**the actress's costumes, the platypus's tail**}

27. If the **noun is plural and doesn't end in s**, add an apostrophe and an **s** to show the possessive case. {**The children's menu was limited, and the men's room was filthy.**}
28. If the **noun is plural and ends in s**, add just the apostrophe to show the possessive case. {**The Willises' car was stolen by the parking attendant. Sally's parents' anger was obvious.**}
29. If **two people possess something in common**, consider them a single unit. Put a single apostrophe and an **s** at the end. {**Sam and Janet's evening was ruined. Sam and Janet's car was stolen.**}
30. If **two people possess something (or some things) individually**, rather than jointly, each name gets an apostrophe and an **s**. {**Sam's and Janet's cars came from the same dealer.**}
31. Use an apostrophe and an **s** to write the **plurals of numbers, symbols, letters, and words** used to name themselves. {**She is in her early 20's. The star player got hundreds of high 5's after the game. Your last sentence had too many that's in it. She got five B's. I saw the Oakland A's play. Make sure you dot all your i's and cross all your t's.**}

**NOTE:** Writing “twenties” {**She is in her early twenties.**}

and “fives” {**The star player got hundreds of high fives.**}

is better in formal writing.

## SEMICOLONS

32. Use a semicolon to join independent clauses that are not already joined by a conjunction. **{Some of the fans went home; others stayed until the bitter end.}**
33. Use a semicolon to join independent clauses separated by either a conjunctive adverb or a transitional expression. **{The tickets were just too expensive; however, we borrowed the money.}**
34. Use semicolons to avoid confusion when independent clauses or items in a series already contain commas. **{The winners are from Gary, Indiana; Chicago, Illinois; and Florence, Wisconsin.}**
35. **MLA FORMATTING RULE:** When typing, space once after a semicolon.

## COLONS

36. Use a colon to separate a list of items from an introductory statement that contains a specific number or the words “AS FOLLOWS,” “THE FOLLOWING,” or “THESE.” **{There were three things to consider: weather, terrain, and equipment.}** **{Do not bring the following items to class: cell phones, food, or dogs.}**

**NOTE:** A colon is generally not used after the words “FOR EXAMPLE,” “THAT IS,” “SUCH AS,” “NAMELY,” or “FOR INSTANCE.” Do not place a colon between a verb and its direct object or after a preposition.

**ERROR Example:** The winner is: Laurie.

37. Use a colon to introduce a formal or lengthy quotation. **{On the pedestal these words appear: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings."}**
38. Use a colon to introduce a statement that summarizes or explains the sentence before it. **{The officers thought his excuse was valid: self-defense.}**

**NOTE:** If what comes after the colon is a complete sentence, start it with a capital letter. **{My advice was this: Bring only one next time.}**

39. Use a colon to separate a salutation from the body of a business (formal) letter. **{Dear Sir:}**
40. Use a colon to separate the hour and minutes in expressions of time. Do not space before or after the colon. **{11:45}**
41. Use a colon to separate chapter numbers from verse numbers in references to passages from the Bible. Do not space before or after the colon. **{Genesis 6:10}**
42. **MLA FORMATTING RULE:** Usually space once after a colon when typing.

## DASHES

43. Use paired dashes to indicate
- an interruption in thought or speech **{I agree—but let me stress one other point. The party—I forgot to tell you—was not changed.}**
  - an unfinished statement, question, or sudden break in dialogue. **{"What I meant was—," Kim began as the doorbell rang. "But how will I ev—?" he began.}**
44. Use a dash to mean "namely," "that is," "in other words," and other similar expressions that come before an explanation. **{The bush—the one in the front yard—needs to be trimmed.}**
45. Use paired dashes to enclose nonessential or parenthetical phrases that contain commas. **{Some primitive tools—the knife, for example—have changed little over the centuries. Five states—California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii—border the Pacific Ocean.}**

**NOTE:** Parentheses may also be used for nonessential information.

46. **MLA FORMATTING RULE:** A dash is typed as two hyphens. Some word processing programs fuse the two hyphens to make a dash {—} and some don't {--}.

## HYPHENS

47. **USE A HYPHEN**
- a. with certain numbers **{twenty-nine, forty-seven days}**
  - b. after certain prefixes **{pre-Romantic, anti-American, pro-American}**
  - c. with two or more words used as one word **{brother-in-law, jack-in-the-box}**
  - d. with a compound modifier preceding a noun **{once-in-a-lifetime experience, an up-and-down relationship, a well-educated woman, a muscle-building routine, a works-cited list, two-thirds majority, three-fourths empty}**

**NOTE:** When the compound modifier follows the noun, no hyphen is used **{The woman was well educated.}**

**NOTE:** If the noun doesn't immediately follow, use no hyphen **{three fourths of a cup}**.

- e. within a word when a combination of letters might otherwise be confusing **{re-create}** and between syllables when a word is begun on one line and finished on the next.

**NOTE:** When using a hyphen to divide words at the end of a line, place the hyphen only between syllables. Do not hyphenate words if doing so would leave just one letter on either line. If a word already contains a hyphen **{self-control}**, divide it only at the hyphen.

**{The library books were mistakenly placed in my bookcase. The items I was look-ing for fell in back of my old chapter books.**



## PARENTHESES

48. Use parentheses to set off asides and explanations only when the material is not essential or when it consists of one or more sentences. {**My eyes were filled with tears (I could not tell why), and at times a flood seemed to pour from my heart.**}

## QUOTATION MARKS and ITALICS, TITLES, etc.

49. The **titles of short works are put in quotation marks**.  
 short stories {We read "The Most Dangerous Game."}  
 essays {We studied Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience."}  
 encyclopedia articles {"Trampoline"}  
 songs {"America the Beautiful"}  
 short poems generally published in anthologies {"The Raven"}  
 episodes of television shows {"The Trouble with Tribbles" (an episode of *Star Trek*)}  
 magazine articles {"Sources of Energy"}  
 newspaper articles {Did you read "Eagles Win Again" in today's newspaper?}  
 lectures {"Preparing for a Successful Interview" was a helpful lecture.}  
 and chapters of a book. {We read chapter three, "Building A Nation," for homework.}
50. The **titles of long works are put in italics**. When you hand write, underline titles that should be placed in italics when typing.  
 books {*Great Expectations*},  
 pamphlets {*Minnesota Drivers' Manual*}  
 plays {*Romeo and Juliet*}  
 book-length poems {*Rime of the Ancient Mariner*}  
 newspaper titles {*Eden Prairie News*}  
 magazine titles {*Time*}  
 movies {*The Shawshank Redemption*}  
 television and radio shows {*Gilligan's Island*}  
 lengthy works of music {*1812 Overture*}  
 compact disk or audiocassette or record album {*Abbey Road* }  
 paintings {*Mona Lisa*}  
 sculptures {*Venus de Milo*}  
 ballets {*Swan Lake*}  
 operas {*Madame Butterfly*}  
 musicals {*West Side Story*}  
 ships {*Queen Elizabeth 2*}  
 aircraft {*Air Force One*}  
 spacecraft {*Mariner*}

- 50a. **CITING SACRED WORKS:** Sacred works are an exception to some of the rules for formatting titles. Do not use italics or quotation marks for the books of the Bible, the word Bible, or titles of other sacred writings (Old Testament, Genesis, Talmud, Koran, etc.)  
**{In our class, we read excerpts from the Bible. I especially liked the one from the book of Exodus.}**
- 50b. **TITLES WITHIN TITLES:** Italicize a title normally indicated by italicizing when it appears within a title enclosed in quotation marks. **{“*Romeo and Juliet and Renaissance Politics*” (an article about a play)}**. Use quotation marks around a title normally indicated by quotation marks when it appears within an italicized title. **{“*The Lottery and Other Stories*” (a book of short stories)}**
- 50c. **SPECIAL USES FOR ITALICS** Identify foreign words not commonly used in English by putting these words in italics. **{The Renaissance courtier was expected to display *sprezzatura*, or nonchalance, in the face of adversity.}**  
Identify words you wish to stress by putting these words in italics. **{I am *really* tired.}**

## PUNCTUATING DIALOGUE and DIRECT QUOTATIONS

### 51. MLA FORMATTING RULES FOR PUNCTUATION MARKS:

51a. Periods and commas ALWAYS go inside quotation marks.

"I think you're wrong," Dan said.

51b. Colons and semicolons ALWAYS go outside quotation marks.

Dan said, "I think you're wrong"; he was asking us to re-examine our information.

51c. Question marks and exclamation marks go EITHER inside or outside the quotation mark depending on the situation. They go inside when the question or exclamation is part of what is quoted.

She asked, "Who did it?" OR Did she say, "I'm quitting"?

51d. When the sentence, as well as the quotation at the end of the sentence, needs a question mark (or an exclamation point), use only ONE question mark (or exclamation point), and place it inside the closing quotation marks.

Did she ask, "Is this fair?"

If you are questioning an exclamation, do it like this:

Is it true he yelled, "No!"?

52. Use quotation marks to begin and end a direct quotation. Separate the quoted material from the dialogue tag by commas. Do not use quotation marks to set off an indirect quotation.

DIRECT: I said, "The fable by James Thurber will surprise you."

INDIRECT: I said that the fable by James Thurber would surprise you.

53. If a question mark or an exclamation point occurs where one of the separating commas should be used, omit the comma and use the question mark or exclamation point to separate the quoted material.

"Don't be late!" Bill warned.

54. The speaker's words are set off from the rest of the sentence with quotation marks, and the first word of the quotation is capitalized. When the end of the quotation is also the end of the sentence, the period falls inside the quotation marks.

He said, "We'll discuss the fable in one hour."

**55. Both parts of a divided quotation are enclosed in quotation marks. The first word of the second part is not capitalized unless it begins a new sentence.**

"This fable," our teacher said, "is a twist of an old tale."

**56. Quotes within quotes: If you need to have one character directly quoting another character, then use double quotes for your main dialogue and single quotes for the quote-within-a-quote.**

"And then he said, 'Mind your own business.' The nerve!" she said.

**57. When you write dialogue, begin a new paragraph whenever the speaker changes.**

"Videotaping would be a great idea for our project," declared Clarissa. "Not only is it a popular medium for today's artists, but it has practical applications as well."

"You're right," Angela agreed. "Videotaping was helpful to us on the swimming team."

"I work with teacher training," mused Carmen, "and perhaps videotaping teachers at work would be helpful."

"Well, I guess we should all try it," Clarissa said. "Let's meet next week and compare our projects."

**58. Use a pair of dashes to indicate an abrupt break in thought or speech or an unfinished statement or question.**

"First of all," he said, "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—"

"Sir?"

"—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

**59. If you have the same speaker saying things that are separated by descriptive passages, you may choose to keep everything in one paragraph or separate parts into their own paragraphs. Make this decision using the same criteria you would use in deciding to start a new paragraph without dialogue. In other words, if you have more than one topic, give each its own paragraph. Just make sure it is clear that the dialogue belongs to the same speaker.**

"If I didn't go to school tomorrow, you'd force me to."

"Let us leave it at this," said Atticus dryly. "You, Miss Scout Finch, are of the common folk. You must obey the law." He said that the Ewells were members of an exclusive society made up of Ewells. In certain circumstances the common folk judiciously allowed them certain privileges by the simple method of becoming blind to

some of the Ewells' activities. They didn't have to go to school, for one thing. Another thing, Mr. Bob Ewell, Burris's father, was permitted to hunt and trap out of season.

"Atticus, that's bad," I said. In Maycomb County, hunting out of season was a misdemeanor at law, a capital felony in the eyes of the populace.

**60. Sometimes, one speaker's words run for more than one paragraph. When this happens, use quotation marks at the beginning of the quotation, at the beginning of each subsequent paragraph, and at the end of the whole quotation.**

"I read a spell-binding mystery yesterday," Agnes said. "It gripped me on the first page, and I couldn't put the book down until I had finished. \*

"The plot is simple, almost classic. Five people are sitting in a room watching home movies. When the lights come on, one of the people is dead. Who did it? How was it done? \*

"Of course, no one has entered or left the room during the movies; thus, one of the other four people in the room has done it. I, of course, thought of poison—but that was wrong. \*

"Well, the detective arrives, and the questioning begins. As the story unfolds, you learn that everyone has a motive. The plot thickens. The mystery isn't solved until the last page, and it had me fooled. Whew! I'm exhausted from the suspense!" \*\*

"Wow, Agnus, you surely spoiled the book for me," said Pam.

\*There are no closing quotation marks here because Agnus continues.

\*\*There is a closing quotation mark here because Agnus is finished speaking.

**61. ELLIPSIS POINTS: Use three spaced ellipsis points (. . .) to indicate a pause in written dialogue.**

**Ex.** "Well, . . . I don't know," Sarah answered. When someone's words "trail off," you also use 3 ellipsis points. (Be sure to space between each one.) If the ellipsis points appear at the end of a sentence, you will need a fourth "dot" for the sentence period.

"Mr. Ewell shouldn't do that—"

"Of course, he shouldn't, but he'll never change his ways. Are you going to take out your disapproval on his children?"

"No, sir," I murmured and made a final stand: "But if I keep on goin' to school, we can't ever read any more. . . ."

"That's really bothering you, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

When Atticus looked down at me, I saw the expression on his face that always made me expect something. "Do you know what a compromise is?" he asked.

## SPELLING AND WORD CHOICE

62. **Regular Spelling and No-excuse Spelling Words** You have spelled a word incorrectly.

**NOTE:** Typos (typographical errors) count as spelling errors!

**NOTE:** See the EPHS English Department for a complete list of the “No-excuse Spelling Words.” These words are generally penalized more than regular spelling words.

**Incorrect:** Although it was **hte** best **thingg** I heard **al** year, her **advize** came as a **suprise**.

**Correct:** Although it was **the** best **thing** I heard **all** year, her **advice** came as a **surprise**.

63. **HOMONYMS and HOMOPHONES**

**HOMONYMS** are words that are spelled the same but mean something different.

**Example:** Orange means a color, and orange means a piece of fruit.

**HOMOPHONES** are words that sound the same but are spelled differently.

**Example:** She was too tired to eat two hamburgers.

64. **EXACT WORD (ew) or WORD CHOICE:** Be certain to select the exact word for the intended meaning.

64a. **FREQUENTLY CONFUSED WORDS:** Some words can be confusing and should be considered carefully. {Affect is a verb which means to influence, but effect is most often used as a noun meaning the result of a process. Ramla hoped to affect the outcome of the discussion. She did not know what the effects of the decision would be.}

64b. **MISUNDERSTOOD OR MISUSED WORDS:** Some “EW” errors are marked when you have misunderstood or misused a word.

**ERROR Example:** She was impressed with Gatsby's **lucrative** appearance.

The word “lucrative” means “producing money; profitable.” The writer probably chose the word “lucrative” to say that Gatsby appeared rich, but the word doesn’t really fit because Gatsby’s appearance indicates wealth but does not produce it.

### 64c. **CONFUSING VERB RULES:**

#### **TRANSITIVE vs. INTRANSITIVE VERBS:**

Use the intransitive verb when there isn't an object. Use the transitive verb when there is an object.

	<b>Intransitive</b> = no object			<b>Transitive</b> = takes object		
	<u>to lie</u>	<u>to sit</u>	<u>to rise</u>	<u>to lay</u>	<u>to set</u>	<u>to raise</u>
present tense	lie	sit	rise	lay	set	raise
past	lay	sat	rose	laid	set	raised
past partic.	lain	sat	risen	laid	set	raised
w/ ing	lying	sitting	rising	laying	setting	raising

{Robert lies on the mat to rest.  
Yesterday, Robert lay on the mat for hours.  
Susan sits on the chair in the hallway.  
Maria rises every morning at seven.}

{Robert lay the book on the piano.  
Yesterday, Robert laid the book on the piano.  
Susan sets the table every evening.  
Maria raises the flag at camp.}

### 64d. **CHOOSING BETWEEN ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS:**

#### **ADJECTIVE FORM vs. ADVERB FORM?**

Use the **adjective form** when the word is being used to modify a **noun or pronoun**.

Use the **adverb form** when the word is being used to modify a **verb, adjective, or another adverb**.

#### **Example adjectives**

good  
well (meaning health)  
bad  
safe  
real  
sure  
careful  
slow

#### **Example adverbs**

well (meaning how positively something is done)  
badly  
safely  
really  
surely  
carefully  
slowly

**Example 1:** How did you do in the game last night? Did you do well?  
adv.

**Example 2:** I feel bad about missing your concert.  
adj.

**Example 3:** I did badly on the geometry quiz last hour.  
adv.

## ABBREVIATIONS

65. As a rule, do **not** use abbreviations in formal and academic writing.  
**ERROR Example:** Jill missed the **info** because of her **unex.** absence.

**CORRECTED Example:** Jill missed the **information** because of her **unexcused** absence.

When you are allowed to use an abbreviation with a period, space once.

**{Mr. Adams will be home at 7:00 a.m. Dr. Carter and Mrs. Clark both worked for Elizabeth Jackson, PhD.}**

66. **PUNCTUATING COMMON ABBREVIATIONS:** Some abbreviations are not followed by a period: metric units {10 ml, 2 kg}, postal abbreviations for states in addresses {MN, NY, NJ}, most government agencies {NASA, FBI}, many large corporations {CBS, IBM}, and some common abbreviations {TV, AM, FM, mph, CD}. **{Did you watch last night's TV special on NBC? Does Ms. Sanchez work for NATO?}**

## NUMBERS

67a. **Spell out numbers that can be written in one or two words** and represent other numbers by numerals. **{We drove four hundred miles in seven hours. There were 175 guests at the party. She was thirty-six years old. They sold fifteen hundred raffle tickets. That house costs three million dollars. I took 2½ hours to complete the assignment. Her 101 dalmations were used in a famous movie.}**

67b. **Do not begin a sentence with a numeral.** **{Nineteen ninety-two began with a bang.}**

67c. **Except at the beginning of a sentence, always use numerals in the following instances:** with abbreviations (if allowed) or symbols {6 lbs., 4:20 p.m., 3%, \$9, 8KB, 2"}  

- in addresses {4401 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue}
- in dates {April 1, 2006}
- in decimal fractions {8.3}
- in page references {page 7}
- for large numbers, you may use a combination of numerals and words {4.5 million}

67d. Express **related numbers** in the same style. **{Only 5 of the 250 delegates voted. Exactly 3 automobiles and 129 trucks were recalled last year. From 1 billion to 1.3 billion shares were sold.}**



- 67e. Treat **percentages and amounts of money** like other numbers: use numerals with the appropriate symbols. {1%, \$5.35, 45%, \$3,000, 68¢, 100%} In discussions involving infrequent use of numbers, you may spell out a percentage or an amount of money if you can do so in three words or fewer {**five dollars, forty-five percent, two thousand dollars, sixty-eight cents**}  
Do not combine spelled forms of numbers with symbols.
- 67f. **Dates and Times of the Day:** Be consistent in writing dates. If you begin with the month, be sure to add a comma after the day and also after the year, unless another punctuation mark goes there, such as a period or a question mark {**July 22, 1999**}. Do not use a comma between the month and year {**August 2005**}. Spell out centuries in lower case *letters* {**the twentieth century**}. Decades are usually written out without capitalization {**the eighties**}, but it is acceptable to express them in figures {**the 1990s, the '60s**}. Numerals are used to indicate most times of the day {**2:00 p.m., the 6:20 flight**}. Exceptions include time expressed in quarter and half hour and in hours followed by “o'clock” {**a quarter to twelve, half past ten, seven o'clock**}.
- 67g. **Inclusive Numbers:** In a range of numbers, give the second number in full for numbers through ninety-nine {**2-3, 10-12, 89-99**}. For larger numbers, give only the last two digits of the second number, unless more are necessary {**96-101 or 103-4 or 923-1,003 or 1,608-774**}. In a range of years beginning in AD 1000 or later, omit the first two digits of the second year if they are the same as the first two digits of the first year. Otherwise, write both years in full {**2000-05, 1898-1901**}.

## AGREEMENT RULES (agr.)

### 68. **BASIC SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT:**

**Singular** subjects take singular verb forms. {Adam drives a car.}

sing.    sing.

**Plural** subjects take plural verb forms. {Teachers drive me crazy.}

pl.        pl.

### 69. **BASIC PRONOUN AGREEMENT:** A pronoun must agree **in number and gender** with its antecedent (the word(s) to which a pronoun refers).

When an antecedent is singular, a singular pronoun is used to refer to it.

{The lady was a true magician, and she knew it.}

sing.

sing.

When the antecedent is plural, a plural pronoun is used to refer to it.

{The boys fill their knapsacks with food.}

pl.

pl.

Of course, the verb used must also agree in number.

{The lady was a true magician, and she knew it.    They fill their knapsacks with food.}

sing.sing.

sing.sing.

pl. pl. pl.

### 70. **SINGULAR INDEFINITE PRONOUNS:** Some INDEFINITE PRONOUNS are ALWAYS SINGULAR—**each, one, either, neither, much, everyone, everybody, anyone, anybody, someone, somebody, no one, nobody**—and, therefore, they take singular verb forms and use singular pronouns to agree with them.

{Everybody wants his or her coach to win the award.    Each of the twins has her own distinct ways.}

sing.    sing.    sing.

sing.

sing.sing.

**NOTE:** When gender is unspecified and a singular possessive pronoun is needed, you must use **his or her**, not **their**.

**ERROR Example:**

An athlete must buy their own equipment.

**CORRECTED Example:**

An athlete must buy his or her own equipment.

**EVEN BETTER CORRECTED Example:**

Athletes must buy their own equipment.





80. **TENSE AGREEMENT** Be consistent with verb tense. Do not shift from one tense to another if the time frame for each action or state is the same.

**ERROR Example:** At the reunion, the kids ate ice cream while the adults are sitting and talking.

Below are two correction options depending on the context of the rest of the passage in which the sentence appears.

**CORRECTED Example Option 1:** At the reunion, the kids ate ice cream while the adults sat and talked.

**CORRECTED Example Option 2:** At the reunion, the kids are eating ice cream while the adults are sitting and talking.

## PRONOUN CASE RULES

To understand the concept of "pronoun case," you need to know the difference between a subject pronoun and an object pronoun.

**SUBJECT PRONOUNS** do action and fit in this blank. → \_\_\_\_\_ swam in the swamp.

SUBJECT PRONOUNS			
SINGULAR		PLURAL	
1st	I	1st	We
2nd	you	2nd	you (all)
3rd	he	3rd	they
	she		
	it		

Use the subject form of the pronoun when the following rules apply:

81. **USE A SUBJECT PRONOUN WHEN THE PRONOUN IS DOING THE ACTION (rule S1)** Use a subject pronoun when the pronoun is doing the action (AV) or subject of the "to be" linking verb (LV) or "sensory" linking verb (LV).

### ACTION VERBS

<p><u>physical</u></p> <p>to jump to talk to dunk to smile</p>	<p><u>mental</u></p> <p>to think to remember to dream to understand</p>
--	---

### LINKING VERBS

<p><u>to be (8 total)</u></p> <p>am is are was were be being been</p>	<p><u>sensory (12 total)</u></p> <p>taste    grow smell    appear sound    remain seem    turn look feel become stay</p>
---	--

**ERROR Examples:** Her jumps high. Me and him are going scuba diving.

**CORRECTED Examples:** She jumps high. He and I are going scuba diving.



**Example 1:**

( in + the early + morning )  
 a preposition                      any modifiers                      a **noun** or pronoun acting as the  
 “OBJECT of the PREPOSTION”

**Example 2:**

( to + \_\_\_\_\_ + him )  
 a preposition                      any modifiers                      a noun or **pronoun** acting as the  
 “OBJECT of the PREPOSTION”

So, **PRONOUN CASE RULE O2** says that when a pronoun acts as the **OBJECT** in a prepositional phrase, that pronoun must be in the **OBJECT FORM**. The prepositional phrases are placed in parentheses below.

**ERROR Example:**

She gave a test (to he). Mr. Olson gave keys (to Sam and she).

**CORRECTED Example:**

She gave a test (to him). Mr. Olson gave keys (to Sam and her).

**ERROR Example:**

(Between you and I), I can't stand his tie.

**CORRECTED Example:**

(Between you and me), I can't stand his tie.

## 86. **WHO vs. WHOM?**

**Who** and **whom** are used to introduce adjective clauses and noun clauses.

**Who** is always used as the **subject** of the clause.

**Example:**

The woman (**who** came to the door) was Ms. Anderson.  
 (Who is the subject of the adjective clause.)

**Whom** functions as an **object**, usually either a direct object or an object of a preposition.

**Example 1:**

Chris is the person (**whom** I'd recommend for the job.)  
 (Whom is the direct object in the adjective clause.)

**Example 2:**

Do not ask (for **whom** the bell tolls.)  
 (Whom is the object of the preposition for the noun clause.)

**Example 3:**

(**Whom** the police suspect) has not yet been announced.  
 (Whom is receiving the action of being suspected in the noun clause which acts as the subject of the main clause.)

**NOTE:** You must determine the use of **who** or **whom** as it functions within the clause; avoid being distracted by the sentence as a whole.

Use **whoever** as the subject of the clause.

**Example:** (**Whoever** passed the test) must have been a genius.  
(Whoever is DOING the action of passing in the noun clause which acts as the subject of the main clause.)

**Example:** The prize is given (to **whoever** wins the most points.)  
(Whoever is DOING the action of winning in the noun clause. The entire noun clause is the object of the preposition.)

Use **whomever** for an object within the clause.

**Example:** The honor is given (to **whomever** the coach recommends.)  
(Whomever is RECEIVING the action of being recommended in the noun clause of which “coach” is the subject. The entire noun clause is the object of the preposition.)

87. **REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS** (myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves) are used only for two purposes:

- **to emphasize** {I did all by **myself**. I can't believe the detective **himself** was the murderer.}
- **to refer to the subject** {He calls **himself** a fool. They consider **themselves** lucky.}

**ERROR Example:** Bill cut him while shaving this morning. (Bill was the only one shaving. He was the one injured.)

**CORRECTED Example:** Bill cut **himself** while shaving this morning.

**ERROR Example:** Call Pam or myself this afternoon.

**CORRECTED Example:** Call Pam or **me** this afternoon. (Object pronoun needed)

**ERROR Example:** You will be helped by Susan or myself.

**CORRECTED Example:** You will be helped by Susan or **me**. (Object pronoun needed)



## Sentence Construction Errors

88. **AWKWARD (awk):** An error marked “awkward” means poor sentence construction has blurred the intended meaning of your sentence. The sentence must be rewritten to achieve clarity.

Some "awkward" errors probably result from sloppy cutting and pasting of text in your paper.

**ERROR Example:** In the Middle Ages, peasants and serfs the bottom of the social order around the time of the Middle Ages suffered at the bottom of the social order.

Excessively wordy or imprecise constructions can obscure the focus of the sentence.

**ERROR Example:** The id can be seen or is revealed when Hamlet acts to seek immediate gratification when it comes to his secret desires, wishes, and fears that are most on his mind because he is an id-driven character.

89. **Missing Word(s):** The error of an omitted word is indicated by a caret mark <sup>^</sup>.

**ERROR Example:** When she was a child, she lived <sup>^</sup> China.

**CORRECT Example:** When she was a child, she lived in China.

90. **Parallelism:** Lack of parallelism is indicated by marking the error ||. Parallel structure means using the same phrasing, verb construction, etc., to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance or are similar in content and function.

Faulty parallelism occurs most often with items or clauses in a series as in the following example:

**ERROR Example 1:** When my grandmother's bowling team gets together, they love eating pizza, watching ESPN, and to play Guitar Hero.

The above sentence needs to be revised so that all elements in the list have the same form.

**CORRECTED Example 1:** When my grandmother's bowling team gets together, they love eating pizza, watching ESPN, and playing Guitar Hero.

**ERROR Example 2:** A good auto mechanic can help you with all areas of car care: regular oil changes, routine system checks, periodic safety inspections, and doing the scheduled maintenance.

The above sentence needs to be revised so that all elements in the list have the same form.

**CORRECTED Example 2:** A good auto mechanic can help you with all areas of car care: regular oil changes, routine system checks, periodic safety inspections, and scheduled maintenance.

Some parallelism errors require reworking the sentence.

**ERROR Example:** His friends were loud, rude, and caused extensive damage to the library.

**CORRECTED Example:** His friends were loud and rude, and they caused extensive damage to the library.

**EVEN BETTER CORRECTED Example:**

His loud, rude friends caused extensive damage to the library.

91. **Misplaced Modifier (mm):** Make sure that modifiers are placed closest to the word(s) they modify.

A modifier is **misplaced** when it seems to modify a noun or pronoun other than the one it was meant to modify.

**MISPLACED ERROR Example 1:** I found a note stating that Marvin was planning on breaking up with Matilda in the lunchroom.

*Question? Where does the prepositional phrase "in the lunchroom" really belong?*

**CORRECTED Example 1:** I found a note in the lunchroom stating that Marvin was planning on breaking up with Matilda.

**MISPLACED ERROR Example 2:**

Pam and her family saw the majestic Rocky Mountains flying to Utah.

**CORRECTED Example 2:**

Flying to Utah, Pam and her family saw the majestic Rocky Mountains.

92. **Dangling Modifier:** A modifier is called **dangling** when the sentence contains no word or words for it to modify.

**DANGLING ERROR Example:** Listening to the news flash, it was hard to believe the story was possible.

*Question? Who was "listening to the news flash"?*

**CORRECTED Example:** Listening to the news flash, we found it hard to believe the story.

**EVEN BETTER CORRECTED Example:** As we listened to the news flash, we found it hard to believe the story.

93. **TABOO WORDS and PHRASES:** Unless you are writing a personal narrative, a work of fiction, or some other assignment for which your teacher has given alternative style guidelines, you must adhere to the conventions of **formal** academic writing.

93a. In a formal essay, NEVER address the reader as “you.” Do not use “your” or “yours” or “yourself” or the “understood you” either.

**ERROR Example:** In *Of Mice and Men*, you can see Steinbeck's theme of loneliness.

**CORRECTED Example:** In *Of Mice and Men*, one can see Steinbeck's theme of loneliness.

**EVEN BETTER CORRECTED Example:** Steinbeck weaves the theme of loneliness throughout *Of Mice and Men*.

**ERROR Example 2:** Just imagine sitting in Hamlet's living room.  
(The subject is still understood to be “you” even if the word “you” is not physically present!)

**CORRECTED Example:** It would be very difficult for someone to imagine sitting in Hamlet's living room.

93b. In a formal essay or research paper, NEVER use the first person (I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours) except in direct quotes.

93c. In a formal essay or research paper, avoid using contractions, colloquialisms, clichés, and slang.

**ERROR Example:** For some strange reason, the guy in *Of Mice and Men* wasn't totally freaked out when he had to knock off his buddy, or whatever.

**MISCELLANEOUS ERRORS**

- 94. \_\_\_\_\_
- 95. \_\_\_\_\_
- 96. \_\_\_\_\_
- 97. \_\_\_\_\_
- 98. \_\_\_\_\_
- 99. \_\_\_\_\_
- 100. \_\_\_\_\_