

# GRAMMAR & GOODIES

OTHER

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Parts of speech



# **BASIC GRAMMAR**

# Parts of speech

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Pronouns: A pronoun substitutes for a noun.



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Verbs: The verb in the sentence usually expresses action (jump, think) or being (is, become).



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Adjective: An adjective modifies a noun or pronoun, usually answering one of these questions: Which one? What kind of? How many? The articles *a*, *an*, and *the* are also adjectives.



The lame elephant  
Valuable old stamps

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The *lame* elephant (Which elephant?)

*Valuable old* stamps (what kind of stamps?)

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Adverbs: An adverb is a word used to modify, or qualify, a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. It usually answers one of these questions: When? Where? How? Why?



Pull gently at a weak rope.  
Read the best books first.

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Pull *gently* at a weak rope. (Pull how?)

Read the best books *first*. (Read when?)

# Parts of speech

Prepositions: The preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence.



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Conjunctions: A conjunction joins words, phrases, or clauses, and they indicate the relation between the elements joined.

A **coordinating conjunction** is used to connect grammatically equal elements. The coordinating conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*.



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*either...or; neither...nor; not only...but also;*  
*whether...or; both...and.*



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Sentence patterns



# **BASIC GRAMMAR**

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The **subject** of a sentence names who or what the sentence is about.

**The complete subject:** To find the complete subject, ask Who? Or What?, insert the verb, and finish the question. The answer is the complete subject.



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 **Complete subject**  
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The ***subject*** of a sentence names who or what the sentence is about.

**The simple subject:** To find the simple subject, strip away all modifiers in the complete sentence.



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Revise Run-on Sentences



# **RUN-ON SENTENCES**



# Recognizing run-on sentences

When a writer puts no mark of punctuation and no coordinating conjunction between independent clauses, the result is called a *fused sentence*.



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Independent Clause



Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be

Independent Clause

deadly for asthma sufferers.

# Recognizing run-on sentences

A far more common type of run-on sentence is the *comma splice* – two or more independent clauses joined with a comma but without a coordinating conjunction.



Air pollution poses risks to all humans, it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

# Revising run-on sentences

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices: 1) Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet).



Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

# Revising run-on sentences

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices: 1) Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet).



Air pollution poses risks to all humans, **but** it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

# Revising run-on sentences

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices: 2) Use a semicolon.



Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

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To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices: 2) Use a semicolon.



Air pollution poses risks to all humans; it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

# Revising run-on sentences

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices: 3) Make the clauses into separate sentences.



Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.



# Revising run-on sentences

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices: 3) Make the clauses into separate sentences.



Air pollution poses risks to all humans. **I**t can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

# Revising run-on sentences

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices: 4) Restructure the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.



Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

# Revising run-on sentences

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices: 4) Restructure the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.



**Although** air pollution poses risks to all humans, it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.



Make subjects and verbs agree.

# **SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT**

# Make subjects and verbs agree

Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a word that comes between.



High levels of air pollution causes damage to the respiratory tract.

# Make subjects and verbs agree

Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a word that comes between.



High levels of air pollution ~~causes~~ damage to the respiratory tract.

**Tip**

The subject is *levels*, not *pollution*. Strip away the phrase *of air pollution* to hear the correct verb: levels cause.

# Make subjects and verbs agree

Treat most subjects joined with *and* as plural.



Jill's natural ability and her desire to help others  
has led to a career in the ministry.

# Make subjects and verbs agree

Treat most subjects joined with *and* as plural.



Jill's natural ability and her desire to help others  
has **have** led to a career in the ministry.

**Tip**

*Ability and desire* is a plural subject, so its verb should be *have*.



# Make subjects and verbs agree

Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb.



There was a social worker and a crew of twenty volunteers at the scene of the accident.

# Make subjects and verbs agree

Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb.



There ~~was~~ **were** a social worker and a crew of twenty volunteers at the scene of the accident.

**Tip**

The subject, *worker and crew*, is plural, so the verb must be *were*.



Make pronoun references clear.



# PRONOUN REFERENCE

# Make pronoun references clear

Avoid ambiguous or remote pronoun reference.



When Gloria set the pitcher on the glass-topped table, it broke.

What broke – the pitcher or the table?

# Make pronoun references clear

Avoid ambiguous or remote pronoun reference.



~~When Gloria set the pitcher~~ **The pitcher broke**  
**when Gloria set it** on the glass-topped table., ~~it~~  
~~broke.~~

# Make pronoun references clear

Generally, avoid broad reference of *this*, *that*, *which*, and *it*.



More and more often, especially in large cities, we are finding ourselves victims of serious crimes. We learn to accept **this** with minor grips and groans.

# Make pronoun references clear

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More and more often, especially in large cities, we are finding ourselves victims of serious crimes. We learn to accept ~~this~~ *our fate* with minor grips and groans.

**Tip**

For clarity, substitute a noun (*our fate*) for the pronoun *this*.



Active Verbs/wordy sentences/balance parallel ideas



# CLARITY



# Prefer active verbs

Active verbs express meaning more emphatically and vigorously than their weaker counterparts – forms of the verb *be* or verbs in the passive voice.



**Passive:** The pumps ***were destroyed*** by a surge of power.



**Be verb:** The surge of power ***was*** responsible for the destruction of the pumps.




**Active:** The surge of power ***destroyed*** the pumps.

# Revise dull and wordy sentences

If using a *be* verb makes a sentence needlessly dull and wordy, consider replacing it.

- *The forms of be: be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been.*



When Rosa Parks was resistant to giving up her seat on the bus, she became a civil rights hero.

# Revise dull and wordy sentences

If using a *be* verb makes a sentence needlessly dull and wordy, consider replacing it.


- The forms of be: *be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been.*

→ When Rosa Parks ~~was resistant to~~ **resisted** giving up her seat on the bus, she became a civil rights hero.

**Tip** **Resisted** is stronger than **was resistant to**.

# Balance parallel ideas

Readers expect items in a series to appear in parallel grammatical form. When one or more of the items violate readers' expectations, a sentence will be needlessly awkward.



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→ Children who study music also learn confidence, coordination, and **creativity**.  
~~they are creative.~~

**Tip**

*The revision presents all of the items as nouns.*

# Balance parallel ideas

Coordinating conjunctions link ideas of equal importance. When those ideas are closely parallel in content, they should be expressed in parallel grammatical form.



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Many states are reducing property taxes for home owners and ~~extend~~ **extending** financial aid in the form of tax credits.

**Tip**

*The revision balances the verb **reducing** with the verb **extending**.*

# Balance parallel ideas

Correlative conjunctions come in pairs. Make sure that the grammatical structure following the second half of the pair is the same as that following the first half.



The clerk told me either to change my flight or take the train.



# Balance parallel ideas

Correlative conjunctions come in pairs. Make sure that the grammatical structure following the second half of the pair is the same as that following the first half.




The clerk told me either to change my flight or **to** take the train.

**Tip**


To change my flight, which follows either, should be balanced with to take the train, which follows or.

# Placement of phrases & clauses

When phrases and clauses are oddly placed, absurd misreading can result.




**Misplaced:** The soccer player returned to the clinic where he had undergone emergency surgery in 2009 in a limousine sent by Nike.



**Revised:** Traveling in a limousine sent by Nike, the soccer player returned to the clinic where he had undergone emergency surgery in 2009.

# Maintain consistent verb tenses

When a passage begins in one tense and then shifts without warning and for no reason to another, readers are distracted and confused.



There was no way I could fight the current and win. Just as I was losing hope, a stranger jumps off a passing boat and swims toward me.

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*All information and examples  
taken from:*

**Diana Hacker, *Rules for  
Writers*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston, Ma:  
Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.**

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