GRAMMAR & GOODIES
PRESENTED BY ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES AND THE WRITING CENTER
Parts of speech

BASIC GRAMMAR
Parts of speech

Nouns: A noun names a person, place, thing, or concept

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Parts of speech

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Parts of speech

Pronouns: A pronoun substitutes for a noun.

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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?)
Parts of speech

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.
Parts of speech

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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.

A journey of a thousands miles begins with a single step.
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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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**Correlative conjunctions** come in pairs: either…or; neither…nor; not only…but also; whether…or; both…and.

Either Jack Sprat or His wife could eat no fat.
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Sentence patterns

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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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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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Recognizing run-on sentences

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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.
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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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.

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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.

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 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.

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.

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

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

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 our fate* with minor grips and groans.

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.
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- *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.

  *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.

Children who study music also learn confidence, coordination, and they are creative.
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Children who study music also learn confidence, coordination, and they are creative.  

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.

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

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

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.
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 \textit{jumped} win. Just as I was losing hope, a stranger \textit{jumps} off a passing boat and \textit{swam} toward me.
All information and examples taken from:

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