
*Some examples created by Mia Chism

Grammar Basics
Noun = person, place or thing
Pronoun = replacement for nouns; refers to the noun without renaming it
Verb = what a noun does, an action
Adjective = describes a noun (or a pronoun); answers the questions: which one, what kind, or how many
Adverb = describes verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, clauses; answers the questions: where, when and how (how often and how much)

Simple Subject = tells who or what the sentence is about; the noun nugget of the complete subject
   Ex. The *joke* flopped.
Simple Predicate = tells what is happening to the subject.
   Ex. Squiggly ran.
Direct Object = direct recipient of the verb’s actions
   Ex. Squiggly bought rocks. [rocks is the DO]
Indirect Object = is the person or thing that receives the direct object
   Ex. Squiggly gave me rocks. [me is the IO, while rocks is the DO]
   Ex. She threw him a kiss. [him is the IO, while kiss is the DO]
Object of a preposition = Prepositions often begin prepositional phrases. To complete the phrase, the preposition usually teams up with a noun, pronoun, or gerund, or the object of the preposition.
   Ex. At noon [At = preposition; noon = noun or the object of the preposition.]
   Ex. Behind them [Behind = preposition; them = pronoun or the object of the preposition.]
   Ex. At the kitchen counter [At = preposition; the, kitchen = modifiers; counter = noun or the object of the preposition]
Nominative v. Objective Case Pronouns

Nominative case is used when the pronoun is the subject, predicated nominative or noun of the direct address.

VS.

Objective case is used when the pronoun is the direct object; the indirect object; the object of a preposition, participle, gerund or infinitive; or the subject of an infinitive.

Nominative Case – I, you, he, she, it, we, they, one, who

Objective Case – me, you, him, her, it, us, them, one, whom

Examples of Nominative Case:

1. Right → Jamie and I patted the baby hippo.
   Wrong → Jamie and me patted the baby hippo.
   WHY? “Jamie and I” is a compound subject, which means it is still the main subject. Compound subjects are all in the **nominative** case.

2. Right → That photographer, as well as we two reporters, was in France to cover the summit.
   Wrong → That photographer, as well as us two reporters, was in France to cover the summit.
   The pronoun *we* is still part of the complete subject, so it is in the nominative case.

Examples of Objective Case:

1. Right → Rescuers couldn’t reach them in time. (Direct object)
2. Right → David Beckham kicked him the ball. (Indirect object)
3. Right → His brother borrowed the bike from him. (Object of the preposition ‘from’)
4. Right → Missing him, she wrote a letter. (object of the participle ‘missing’)
5. Right → Cleaning it proved difficult. (object of the gerund ‘cleaning’)
6. Right → They took him to be me. (subject of the infinitive ‘to be’)

Other pronoun examples:

As/Like Pronoun agreement:

Wrong → He did it the same as her.
Right → He did it the same as she [did it].

As/Than Pronoun agreement:

Wrong → She’s faster than him.
Right → She’s faster than he [is].

“Me” as a pronoun:

Wrong → Give the report to the committee and I.
Right → Give the report to the committee and me.
“Myself” as a pronoun:
** Use only in a sentence in which I has been used earlier.
Wrong → You can give it to myself of Christine.
Right → You can it to Christine or me.

Right → I hurt myself.
Right → I, myself, believe otherwise.

Possessive Pronouns v. Contractions

It’s = It is. 
Ex.) It’s sunny outside today. / It is sunny outside today.

Its = possessive of pronoun
Ex.) Its whereabouts were unknown.

Their
Ex.) Their car was in the garage.

Theirs
Ex.) The car is theirs.

They’re = They are
Ex.) They’re going out tonight. / They are going out tonight.

There = location
Ex.) The book is over there in the corner.

Who’s = Who is
Ex.) Who’s going out tonight? / Who is going out tonight?

Whose = possessive
Ex.) Whose textbook is this?

Yours = possessive
Ex.) This textbook is yours.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Just like verbs agree with their subjects, (Ex.) Jim sings in class. / Jim and Tina sing in class., pronouns have to agree with their antecedents, which basically a fancy term for renaming the noun. Antecedents must agree in number, gender and person.

Examples of agreement in number:

Right → The City Council gave its approval.
Wrong → The City Council gave their approval.
Why? City Council is a single thing; it is a collective noun. Collective nouns take the antecedent it or its (possessive).

Other common collective nouns:

Audience, cast, choir, class, club, crew, crowd, department, faculty, family, gang, group, herd, jury, mob, orchestra, press, public, staff, team
Examples of agreement in gender and number:

Wrong → A reporter should check their facts.
Better → A reporter should check his or her facts. (The subject is singular, so the antecedent must be singular.)
Best → Reporters should check their facts. (The subject is plural, so the antecedent is plural.)

Examples of agreement with Who & That:

Wrong → She was the kind of person that disliked their own handwriting.
Right → She was the kind of person who disliked her own handwriting.
Why?? The subject of the sentence is a person (she), which correlates with the antecedent who.

Wrong → Each [student] was responsible for their backpack.
Right → Each [student] was responsible for his or her backpack.
Why?? The subject is each, and each is a singular verb.

Other common singular pronouns:
Another, anybody, anyone, anything, each one, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, somebody, someone and something

**All, any, each, more, none, plenty, some and such can be either singular or plural depending on the context.**

→ All are here. All is lost.
   Some are coming. Some is left.

Essential v. Non-essential/Restrictive Clauses
Use that to introduce restrictive (essential) clauses that do not require commas.
Use which to introduce nonrestrictive (nonessential) clauses that require commas.

Examples:
1. Nonrestrictive → The Nile, which flows into the Mediterranean, gives Egypt life.
   Why?? You can remove this clause, and what is left is a complete thought/sentence.
   **Hint: nonrestrictive will use commas.**

   Restrictive → The Nile is the river that gives Egypt life.
   Why?? Using that restricts the clause from being removed. You cannot remove this clause or else it would be an incomplete thought.

2. Nonrestrictive → The policy, which critics charged was flawed from the beginning, was amended.

   Restrictive → The policy that critics charged was flawed from the beginning was amended.
3. Nonrestrictive → The corner house, which had a brick front, was theirs.

   Restrictive → The house that had a brick front was theirs.

Who, Whoever v. Whom, Whomever

Use *who* or *whoever* when the clause calls for the nominative case.  
**TIPS** **1. Nominative Case** – I, you, he, she, it, we, they, one, who

   2. If you can use *he, she or they*: *who* or *whoever* is the correct choice.

*Examples:*

1. *Who* did you say wrote the Miss Minimalist blog?
   Why?? *Who* is the subject of the clause, so nominative case: “Did you say she wrote the Miss Minimalist blog?”

2. *Whoever* is going had better get ready.
   Why?? *Whoever* is the subject of the clause, so nominative case: “He is singing.”

Use *whom* or *whomever* when the clause calls for the objective case.  
**TIPS** **2. Objective Case** – me, you, him, her, it, us, them, one, whom

   3. If you can use *him, her or them*: *whom* or *whomever* is the correct choice.

*Examples:*

1. To *whom* are you speaking?
   Why?? *Whom* is the object of preposition *to*, so objective case: “Are you speaking to them?”

2. Talk with *whomever* you like, and you’ll get the same answer.
   Why?? *Whomever* is the object of preposition *with*, so objective case: “You like her.”

To decide when *who* or *whom* needs *ever* at the end, remember that *whoever* is used in place of *anyone* or *anyone who* and *whomever* is used in place of *anyone whom.*

*Examples:*

1. *Whoever* [*Anyone who*] was interested could pick up a brochure at the fair.
2. *Whomever* [*Anyone whom*] you want to invite may come.
Interrogative and Reciprocal Pronouns

Whose = possessive form of who
Who’s = Who is OR Who has

Examples:
Wrong → Whose going to see the new Will Ferrell movie?
Right → Who’s [Who is] going to see the new Will Ferrell movie?

Wrong → She said she didn’t care who’s feelings were hurt.
Right → She said she didn’t care whose feelings were hurt.

Reciprocal pronouns:
There are 2! They express mutual action, effect or relationship.

Each other = involving two people or things
One another = involving more than two people or things

Examples:
1. Andrew and Kate are going to help each other make dinner tonight. (two people)
2. The librarians looked at one another in disbelief. (more than two people)

Demonstrative Pronouns
There are only 4!

This and That, which are singular
AND
These and Those, which are plural

This and These are used to identify and point out people, places and things nearby.

Examples:
1. This is my favorite newspaper.
2. These are my awards.

That and Those are used to identify and point out people, places, and things more distant.

Examples:
1. That is where my office is located.
2. Those are the lamps I’ll place on my desk.
Reflexive Pronouns
These pronouns come after the verb and refer to the subject. They serve as either the direct object or the predicate complement.

Singular “self” pronouns: herself, himself, itself, **myself and yourself**
** Use only in a sentence in which I has been used earlier.
Plural “self” pronouns: themselves, yourselves and ourselves
DO NOT USE: hisself, theirself, ourself or theirselves

Examples:
1. The reporter hurt himself when he dropped the camera on his foot.
2. The editor promised herself that she would never make the same grammar mistake again.
3. I, myself, will do it.

Subject-verb agreement with/ Collective and uncountable nouns
Examples with conjunctions:
1. Larson and Smith oppose the bill. [Plural subject, plural verb]
2. Pork and beans is not the chef’s favorite dish. [Pork and beans is one dish, so singular verb.]
3. Mary or Phil is answering calls today. [When using ‘Or’ the verb agrees with the nearest noun or pronoun.]
4. Mary or her colleagues are answering the calls today. [Nearest noun is plural, so plural verb.]
5. Carrie, as well as they, is voting in the primary election. [Parenthetical words or phrases do not affect the number of the subject.]

Collective Nouns:
What are these? They are nouns in singular form but plural in meaning. These take SINGULAR verbs and antecedents (its, it). They count as one thing.

Army, assembly, audience, board, breed, cast, choir, class, club, commission, committee, community, company, corporation, council, couple, covey, crew, crowd, department, faculty, family, firm, flock, furniture, gang, gossip, group, herd, jury, mob, orchestra, panel, press, public, **remainder, staff, team, union and U.S.

Note: ‘Couple’ can take both a singular or plural verb.
Examples:
Singular ➔ A married couple often pays more under U.S. tax law than two people living together but filing separately.
Why?? The couple here is two people acting as a unit, filing jointly.
Plural ➔ A couple were holding hands in the park.
Why?? The couple here refers to two people acting as individuals, holding each other’s hands.
Uncountable Nouns:
What are these? They are nouns that have no plural, although they look plural already. Some take a singular verb, while some take a plural.

Uncountable nouns that take a SINGULAR verb:
Advice, apparatus, athletics, civics, courage, economics, fun, health, information, jazz, kudos, linguistics, mathematics, measles, mumps, news, remainder, shambles, summons and whereabouts

Uncountable nouns that take a PLURAL verb:
Assets, barracks, earnings, goods, odds, pants, pliers, proceeds, remains, riches, scissors, shears, tactics, tanks, tongs and wages

Uncountable nouns that can take SINGULAR or PLURAL (depending on the context):
Ethics, gross, headquarters, mechanics, politics, savings, series, species and statistics.
Examples:
1. Politics is her favorite subject.
2. Her politics are socialistic.

Irregular verbs
Common irregular verbs and their tenses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>bore</td>
<td>borne</td>
<td>bearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drink</strong></td>
<td>drank</td>
<td>drunk</td>
<td>drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive</td>
<td>drove</td>
<td>driven</td>
<td>driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fly</td>
<td>flew</td>
<td>flown</td>
<td>flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay (to set down)</td>
<td>laid</td>
<td>laid</td>
<td>laying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lie (to recline)</td>
<td>lay</td>
<td>lain</td>
<td>lying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring</td>
<td>rang</td>
<td>rung</td>
<td>ringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swim</td>
<td>swam</td>
<td>swum</td>
<td>swimming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:**
I drink coffee. (Present)
I drank coffee. (Past)
I have never drunk coffee. / I had never drunk coffee. (Past Participle)
**Subjunctive mood**
This mood should be used to talk about any condition contrary to fact, or to express a wish, doubt, prayer, desire, request, hypothetical situation or hope.

Note: The **subjunctive** is often used after *if* in sentences in which the verb in the main clause is in the conditional.

**Subjunctive Forms of To Be:**
*Present Tense* → *I be, you be, he/she/it be, we be, they be*
*Past Tense* → *I were, you were, he/she/it were, we were, they were*

**Examples:**
1. The bill would close tax loopholes if *it were* [not was] passed into law.  
   Why?? The *were* is in the subjunctive mood because it’s proposing a hypothetical situation.
2. If *I were* you, I’d quit. [I cannot be you, so it is hypothetical, which calls for subjunctive.]  
3. I wish I *were* a cowboy.  
4. The hijackers demanded that 17 terrorists *be* set free. [They have not yet been freed.]  
5. He asked that the editor *edit* [not *edits*] his story carefully for potential libel.  
6. I *could* do it *were* I *given* the proper tools. [*Could* is conditional; *were given* is a passive-voice form of subjunctive.]

**Apostrophes**
Rule 1: **Add an ’s** to make possessive both singular and plural common nouns and indefinite pronouns whose spelling does not end with an s.

**Examples:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular nouns</th>
<th>Plural nouns</th>
<th>Indefinite pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child’s</td>
<td>children’s</td>
<td>anyone’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man’s</td>
<td>men’s</td>
<td>another’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman’s</td>
<td>women’s</td>
<td>everyone’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumna’s</td>
<td>alumnae’s</td>
<td>other’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>someone’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>everyone else’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>one’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>neither’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rule 2: Add an apostrophe to make possessive a plural noun ending in s, es or ies.

**Examples:**
- Boys’ actresses’ agencies’
- Girls’ Joneses’ companies’
- Players’ witnesses’ properties’

Rule 3: In journalistic uses, add an apostrophe to make possessive singular proper nouns whose spelling ends in s.

**Examples:**
- Hayes’
- Jones’
- Lucas’
- Sias’
- Willis’
Rule 3.5: In formal writing, add an ‘s to make possessive singular proper nouns whose spelling ends in s.

Examples:
Hayes’s Jones’s Lucas’s Sias’s Willis’s

Rule 4: Add an ‘s to a singular common noun ending in s. HOWEVER, if the next word starts with an s, add only an apostrophe.

Examples:
Actress’s best role actress’ stand-in
Compass’s great value compass’ steel case
Boss’s biggest gripe boss’ secret

Rule 5: Add an ‘s to the last word to make compound nouns possessive.

Examples:
Brother-in-law’s father-in-law’s secretary of state’s
Sister-in-law’s mother-in-law’s attorney general’s

Rule 6 and 6.5: Add an ‘s to the last noun to indicate joint ownership OR to EACH name to indicate separate ownership.

Examples:
Pete and Bob’s Drive –In
Ed and Wilma’s coffee shop

OR

Pete’s and Bob’s cars
Ed’s and Wilma’s computers

Rule 7: Use an apostrophe to replace a letter or a figure omitted on purpose.

Examples:
‘37 flood (1937) summer of ’83 (1983)
the ‘40s (the 1940s) singin’ (singing)

NEVER USE APOSTROPHE’S to form the possessive of relative and personal pronouns:
Examples: our’s, it’s, who’s your’s, their’s
⇒ ours, its, whose, yours, theirs
Commas, colons, and semicolons

Commas:
Rule 1: Use a comma after said when introducing a direct quotation that is at least one sentence long.

Examples:
Cooper said, “I don’t feel like going to work today.”

Rule 2: Use a comma after words in a series but not before the conjunction unless the meaning would be unclear. Meaning, NO oxford comma.

Examples:
The new budget proposals would cut spending for student loans, building repairs, road improvements and farm subsidies.

Rule 3: Use a comma between two independent clauses joined by a conjunction to form a single sentence.

Examples:
COMMA NEEDED → A dentist and her assistant discussed tooth care with the students, and they used Mr. Gross Mouth to illustrate their points.

NO comma needed → A dentist and her assistant discussed tooth care with the students and used Mr. Gross Mouth to illustrate their points.

Rule 4: Use commas around nonrestrictive (nonessential) words, phrases or clauses.

Example:
The yellow car, which was in the driveway, belongs to Jim.

Rule 5: Use a comma after a dependent clause at the start of a sentence. (Sentences beginning with although, because, if or since)

Examples:
1. Although the police were criticized for the arrest, the chief defended it.
2. Because clouds covered the sky, it was difficult to see the comet last night.
**Semicolons:**

Rule 1: Use a semicolon between items in a series that has commas within the items. Remember to put a semicolon before the final conjunction.

*Examples:*

1. The American flag is red, white and blue, the Canadian flag is red and white; and the German flag is red, gold and black.

2. Their diet consists of juice, toast and coffee for breakfast; fruit with yogurt, cottage cheese or tofu for lunch; and lean meat, vegetables and a starch for dinner.

Rule 2: A semicolon may be used between independent clauses when a conjunction is absent.

Example:
The Padres are weak this year; they have the worst record in the league.

Rule 3: A semicolon can be used before a conjunctive adverb connecting two independent clauses.

*Example:*
Smith’s lawyer contended he was mentally incompetent; however, the jury decided the evidence was not so clear.

**Colons:**

Colons are used before a list.

*Example:*
Last year Rachel bought shirts from 7 states: Florida, Missouri, Nebraska, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, California.

**Adjective/adverb recognition**

For most short adjectives, to make the comparative form, add *–er* the end of the positive form. To make a superlative form, add *–est* to the end of the positive form.

Examples:
Tall [Positive]
Taller [Comparative]
Tallest [Superlative]

Note**
Don’t say someone is “the oldest of the two brothers.” If there are only two, he’s the *older.*
To form most adverbs, add \(-ly\) to the end of the positive form of an adjective. This \(-ly\) form is then the positive form of the adverb. You can add more or less in from of the positive form, and the superlative by putting the word most or least in front of the positive form.

Examples:
Quick [adjective]
Quickly [positive form of the adverb]
More quickly or less quickly [comparative form of the adverb]
Most quickly or least quickly [superlative form of the adverb]

Some intransitive verbs in some uses may be linking verbs and take a predicate adjective, but in other uses may be complete verbs or transitive verbs and be followed by an adverb.

Examples:
He says it feels good to be alive.
The sculptor said her hands cannot feel the clay well with heavy gloves on.
The patient feels well enough to be discharged.

Sentence fragment v. complete sentence
Fragments: A fragment is a word or group of words that isn’t a complete sentence. Either it lacks a subject or verb, or it’s a dependent clause.

Examples:
A team for all seasons.
Takes the guesswork out of the game.
Because he was sick.

Active v. passive voice
All verbs are in either the active voice or the passive voice, but it may be easier to think of all sentences as being either active or passive.

Examples:
ACTIVE VOICE, PRESENT TENSE \(\rightarrow\) The printer publishes the magazine.
ACTIVE VOICE, PAST TENSE \(\rightarrow\) The printer published the magazine.

Passive-voice sentences stress the receiver of an action by making the receiver the subject of the sentence and having the subject acted upon:
Examples:

PASSIVE VOICE, PRESENT TENSE → The magazine is published by the printer.
PASSIVE VOICE, PAST TENSE → The magazine was published by the printer.

PASSIVE VOICE, EXPRESSED → The magazine was published by the printer.
PASSIVE VOICE, IMPLIED → The magazine was published.

ACTIVE VOICE → The military interrogated the prisoners.
PASSIVE VOICE, EXPRESSED → The prisoners were interrogated by the military.
PASSIVE VOICE, IMPLIED → The prisoners were interrogated.

ACTIVE VOICE → The City Council voted to censure the mayor.
[The City Council took action.]
PASSIVE VOICE → The mayor was censured by the City Council. [The mayor was acted upon by the City Council.]
PASSIVE VOICE → The mayor was censured. [The mayor was acted upon by someone or something else.]
(EXTREME) PASSIVE VOICE → Censure was effectuated by the City Council. [The subject has been turned into a thing being acted upon.]

Frequently Misspelled Words

accessible  battalion  caffeine  defendant
accidentally  believable  calendar  definite
accommodate  bookkeeper  canceled  definitely
acquaint    cemetery  descendant
correct     changeable  despair  develop
aggressive  committee  disappoint
tag         conscious
criticism   correspondence
courageous  critic
annual      critic
arctic      critic
ascend      critic
athlete

eligible  feasible  gauge  harass
embarrass  fiery  grammar  hemorrhage
**Frequently confused words**

Accept— to receive
Except — but for; to exclude

All right — everyone prepared
Alright — by now

Affect — verb; to influence or produce a change in
Effect — noun; result OR verb; to cause or accomplish

A lot — an abundance of
Alot — *not a word*

Anyone — any person at all
Any one — any single person or thing

Altogether — thoroughly
All together — everyone grouped

Principle — basic rule or guide
Principal — noun; someone or something first in rank OR adj.; most important

Marshall — word as a name only
Marshal — verb; to direct OR noun; title of an office in the military or in police department

Are — To be
Our — Possessive
Hour — Time

Advice — noun
Advise — verb
Advize — *not a word*

Elusion — an escape
Allusion — casual mention
Illusion — erroneous perception or belief

Desert — noun; barren region OR verb; to abandon
Dessert — noun; sweet course in a meal
Lead — noun; metal OR verb; present tense of lead
Led — past tense of lead

Council — deliberative body; assembly of advisers
Counsel — noun; legal adviser OR verb; to advise
Counsul — diplomat

Their — possessive
They’re — contraction of they are
There — placement, location

Its — possessive
It’s — contraction of it is
Its’ — not a word, not appropriate usage

Whose — possessive
Who’s — contraction of who is
Whos’ — not a word, not appropriate usage

Yours — possessive
Yours’ — not a word, not appropriate usage
Your’s — not a word, not appropriate usage

Your — possessive
You’re — contraction of you are

Let’s — contraction for let us
Lets — allows
Lets’ — not a word, not appropriate usage