Grammar

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Repair sentence fragments.

A sentence fragment is a word group that pretends to be a sentence. Sentence fragments are easy to recognize when they appear out of context, like these:

When the cat leaped onto the table.

Running for the bus.

And immediately popped their flares and life vests.

When fragments appear next to related sentences, however, they are harder to spot.

We had just sat down to dinner. When the cat leaped onto the table.

I tripped and twisted my ankle. Running for the bus.

The pilots ejected from the burning plane, landing in the water not far from the ship. And immediately popped their flares and life vests.

Recognizing sentence fragments

To be a sentence, a word group must consist of at least one full independent clause. An independent clause has a subject and a verb, and it either stands alone or could stand alone.

To test whether a word group is a complete sentence or a fragment, use the flowchart on page 149. By using the flowchart, you can see exactly why When the cat leaped onto the table is a fragment: It has a subject (cat) and a verb (leaped), but it begins with a subordinating word (When). Running for the bus is a fragment because it lacks a subject and a verb (Running is a verbal, not a verb). And immediately popped their flares and life vests is a fragment because it lacks a subject. (See also 64b and 64c.)
**Test for fragments**

Is there a verb?*  
- NO → It is a fragment.  
- YES  
  
  Is there a subject?**  
  - NO → It is a fragment.  
  - YES  
    
    Is the word group merely a subordinate clause (because it begins with a word such as because or when)?***  
    - YES → It is a fragment.  
    - NO → It is a sentence.

* Do not mistake verbals for verbs. A verbal is a verb form (such as walking, to act) that does not function as a verb of a clause. (See 64c.)  
** The subject of a sentence may be you, understood. (See 63a.)  
*** A sentence may open with a subordinate clause, but the sentence must also include an independent clause. (See 19a and 65a.)

**If you find any fragments, try one of these methods of revision:**

1. Attach the fragment to a nearby sentence.  
2. Turn the fragment into a sentence.
Unlike some other languages, English requires a subject and a verb in every sentence (except in commands, where the subject you is understood but not present: Sit down). See 30a and 30b.

> It is
> - often hot and humid during the summer.
> - Students usually very busy at the end of the semester.

GRAMMAR CHECKERS can flag as many as half of the sentence fragments in a sample; but that means, of course, that they miss half or more of them. If fragments are a serious problem for you, you will still need to proofread for them.

Sometimes the grammar checker will identify “false positives,” sentences that it flags but that are not fragments. For example, a grammar checker flagged this complete sentence as a possible fragment: *I bent down to crawl into the bunker.* When a program spots a possible fragment, you should check to see if it is really a fragment by using the flowchart on page 149.

**Repairing sentence fragments**

You can repair most fragments in one of two ways: Either pull the fragment into a nearby sentence or turn the fragment into a sentence.

> We had just sat down to dinner/When the cat leaped onto the table.

*Running for the bus,*


> The pilots ejected from the burning plane, landing in the water not far from the ship. *And* immediately popped their flares and life vests.
19a Attach fragmented subordinate clauses or turn them into sentences.

A subordinate clause is patterned like a sentence, with both a subject and a verb, but it begins with a word that marks it as subordinate. The following words commonly introduce subordinate clauses.

- after
- although
- as
- because
- before
- even though
- how
- if
- in order that
- rather than
- since
- so that
- than
- that
- though
- unless
- until
- when
- whose
- whom
- whether
- which
- why

Subordinate clauses function within sentences as adjectives, as adverbs, or as nouns. They cannot stand alone. (See 64b.)

Most fragmented clauses beg to be pulled into a sentence nearby.

- Americans have come to fear the West Nile virus because it is transmitted by the common mosquito.

Because introduces a subordinate clause. (For punctuation of a subordinate clause appearing at the end of a sentence, see 33f.)

- Although we seldom get to see wildlife in the city, at the zoo we can still find some of our favorites.

Although introduces a subordinate clause. (For punctuation of subordinate clauses appearing at the beginning of a sentence, see 32b.)

If a fragmented clause cannot be attached to a nearby sentence or if you feel that attaching it would be awkward, try turning the clause into a sentence. The simplest way to do this is to delete the opening word or words that mark it as subordinate.

- Population increases and uncontrolled development are taking a deadly toll on the environment, so that in many parts of the world, fragile ecosystems are collapsing.
19b Attach fragmented phrases or turn them into sentences.

Like subordinate clauses, phrases function within sentences as adjectives, as adverbs, or as nouns. They cannot stand alone. Fragmented phrases are often prepositional or verbal phrases; sometimes they are appositives, words or word groups that rename nouns or pronouns. (See 64a, 64c, and 64d.)

Often a fragmented phrase may simply be pulled into a nearby sentence.

- The archaeologists worked slowly, examining and labeling every pottery shard they uncovered.
  
  The word group beginning with *Examining* is a verbal phrase.

- Mary is suffering from agoraphobia, a fear of the outside world.
  
  *A fear of the outside world* is an appositive renaming the noun *agoraphobia*. (For punctuation of appositives, see 32e.)

  If a fragmented phrase cannot be pulled into a nearby sentence effectively, turn the phrase into a sentence. You may need to add a subject, a verb, or both.

- In the training session, Jamie explained how to access our new database. She also taught us how to submit expense reports and request vendor payments.
  
  The revision turns the fragmented phrase into a sentence by adding a subject and a verb.

19c Attach other fragmented word groups or turn them into sentences.

Other word groups that are commonly fragmented include parts of compound predicates, lists, and examples introduced by *such as, for example*, or similar expressions.
**Parts of compound predicates**

A predicate consists of a verb and its objects, complements, and modifiers (see 63b). A compound predicate includes two or more predicates joined by a coordinating conjunction such as *and, but, or or*. Because the parts of a compound predicate have the same subject, they should appear in the same sentence.

▶ The woodpecker finch of the Galápagos Islands carefully selects a twig of a certain size and shape, and then uses this tool to pry out grubs from trees.

Notice that no comma appears between the parts of a compound predicate. (See 33a.)

**Lists**

When a list is mistakenly fragmented, it can often be attached to a nearby sentence with a colon or a dash. (See 35a and 39a.)

▶ It has been said that there are only three indigenous musical American art forms, comedy, jazz, and soap opera.

Sometimes terms like *especially, namely, like, and such as* introduce fragmented lists. Such fragments can usually be attached to the preceding sentence.

▶ In the twentieth century, the South produced some great American writers, such as Flannery O’Connor, William Faulkner, Alice Walker, Tennessee Williams, and Thomas Wolfe.
Examples introduced by for example, in addition, or similar expressions

Other expressions that introduce examples or explanations can lead to unintentional fragments. Although you may begin a sentence with some of the following words or phrases, make sure that what follows has a subject and a verb.

also for example mainly
and for instance or
but in addition that is

The easiest solution is often to turn the fragment into a sentence.

If Eric doesn’t get his way, he goes into a fit of rage. For example, on the floor screaming or the cabinet doors and then slamming them shut.

The writer corrected this fragment by adding a subject — he — and substituting verbs for the verbals lying, opening, and slamming.

Janine shoveled her elderly neighbors’ driveway. Also brought in their mail and shopped for groceries.

19d Exception: Occasionally a fragment may be used deliberately, for effect.

Skilled writers occasionally use sentence fragments for the following special purposes.

FOR EMPHASIS Following the dramatic Americanization of their children, even my parents grew more publicly confident. Especially my mother.

— Richard Rodriguez

TO ANSWER A QUESTION Are these new drug tests 100 percent reliable?

Not in the opinion of most experts.

AS TRANSITION And now the opposing arguments.
EXCLAMATIONS  Not again!

IN ADVERTISING  Fewer carbs. Improved taste.

Although fragments are sometimes appropriate, writers and readers do not always agree on when they are appropriate. That’s why you will find it safer to write in complete sentences.

EXERCISE 19–1  Repair any fragment by attaching it to a nearby sentence or by rewriting it as a complete sentence. If a word group is correct, write “correct” after it. Revisions of lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

One Greek island that should not be missed is Mykonos, a vacation spot for Europeans and a playground for the rich and famous.

a. Listening to the CD her sister had sent, Mia was overcome with a mix of emotions. Happiness, homesickness, nostalgia.

b. Cortés and his soldiers were astonished when they looked down from the mountains and saw Tenochtitlán. The magnificent capital of the Aztecs.

c. Although my spoken Spanish is not very good. I can read the language with ease.

d. There are several reasons for not eating meat. One reason being that dangerous chemicals are used throughout the various stages of meat production.

e. To learn how to sculpt beauty from everyday life. This is my intention in studying art and archaeology.

1. The panther lay motionless behind the rock. Waiting silently for its prey.

2. Mother loved to play all our favorite games. Canasta, Monopoly, hide-and-seek, and even kick-the-can.

3. With machetes, the explorers cut their way through the tall grasses to the edge of the canyon. Then they began to lay out the tapes for the survey.

4. The owners of the online grocery store rented a warehouse in the Market district. An area catering to small businesses.

5. If a woman from the desert tribe showed anger toward her husband, she was whipped in front of the whole village. And shunned by the rest of the women.
EXERCISE 19–2  Repair each fragment in the following passage by attaching it to a sentence nearby or by rewriting it as a complete sentence.

Browsing the Web has become a way of life, but some people think it is destroying a way of life. That we will never recover. Our grandparents and parents feared that the age of television — starting with Howdy Doody and progressing through MTV and America’s Next Top Model — would create generations of viewers who were content to sit for hours and hours. Passively watching images flit before their eyes. Cable television now offers far more passive entertainment than previous generations could ever have imagined. Hundreds of channels and an endless supply of round-the-clock programming. The World Wide Web has the potential to top even cable television’s reach. Making access to information easy and available to people anywhere in the world at any time.

One major risk that our grandparents and parents feared is still an issue today. In a culture based on images, the written word may become an endangered species. As our brains eventually adapt to greater and greater levels of stimulation. Will we continue to be able to focus on a page of print? Before we send out too many alarms, however, we should remember that the World Wide Web is based more on words than television ever was. There is some evidence that those who spend time browsing the Web are doing more, not less, reading. Unlike TV viewers. Some Web surfers prefer to run their eyes over the words on the screen. An activity that is, after all, reading. Others download information and read the printouts. While it is true that television has reduced our nation’s level of literacy, the World Wide Web could well advance it. Only the future will tell.

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Revise run-on sentences.

Run-on sentences are independent clauses that have not been joined correctly. An independent clause is a word group that can stand alone as a sentence. (See 65a.) When two independent clauses appear in one sentence, they must be joined in one of these ways:
Recognizing run-on sentences

There are two types of 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.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be

FUSED
deadly for asthma sufferers.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
Air pollution poses risks to all humans, it can be

COMMA SPLICE
deadly for asthma sufferers.

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. In some comma splices, the comma appears alone.

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

In other comma splices, the comma is accompanied by a joining word that is not a coordinating conjunction. There are only seven coordinating conjunctions in English: and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet. Notice that all of these words are short — only two or three letters long.

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

However is a transitional expression, not a coordinating conjunction (see 20b).

To review your writing for possible run-on sentences, use the flowchart on page 158.
**Recognizing run-on sentences**

Does the sentence contain two independent clauses (word groups that can be punctuated as sentences)?

- **NO**: No problem
- **YES**: Continue

Are the clauses joined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction *(and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet)*?

- **YES**: No problem
- **NO**: Continue

Are the clauses joined with a semicolon?

- **YES**: No problem
- **NO**: Revise. It is a run-on sentence.

If you find an error, choose an effective method of revision. See 20a–20d for revision strategies.

**GRAMMAR CHECKERS** flag fewer than half the run-on sentences in a sample. They usually suggest a semicolon as a method of revision, but you can consult 20a–20d for other revision strategies that might be more suitable in a particular situation. If you have repeated problems with run-ons, the flowchart on this page will help you identify them.
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.

2. Use a semicolon (or, if appropriate, a colon or a dash). A semicolon may be used alone; it can also be accompanied by a transitional expression.

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

3. Make the clauses into separate sentences.

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

4. Restructure the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.

   Although air

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

One of these revision techniques usually works better than the others for a particular sentence. The fourth technique, the one requiring the most extensive revision, is often the most effective.
20a Consider separating the clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English: and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet. When a coordinating conjunction joins independent clauses, it is usually preceded by a comma. (See 32a.)

▶ The paramedic asked where I was hurt, as soon as I told him, he cut up the leg of my favorite pair of jeans.

▶ Many government officials privately admit that the polygraph is unreliable, however, they continue to use it as a security measure.

*However* is a transitional expression, not a coordinating conjunction, so it cannot be used with only a comma to join independent clauses. (See also 20b.)

20b Consider separating the clauses with a semicolon (or, if appropriate, with a colon or a dash).

When the independent clauses are closely related and their relation is clear without a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon is an acceptable method of revision. (See 34a.)

▶ Tragedy depicts the individual confronted with the fact of death; comedy depicts the adaptability of human society.

A semicolon is required between independent clauses that have been linked with a transitional expression (such as however, therefore, moreover, in fact, or for example). For a longer list, see 34b.
Handheld PDAs are gaining in popularity; however, they are not nearly as popular as cell phones.

Everyone in my outfit had a specific job; as a matter of fact, most of the officers had three or four duties.

If the first independent clause introduces the second or if the second clause summarizes or explains the first, a colon or a dash may be an appropriate method of revision. (See 35b and 39a.) In formal writing, the colon is usually preferred to the dash.

Nuclear waste is hazardous; this is an indisputable fact.

The female black widow spider is often a widow of her own making; she has been known to eat her partner after mating.

If the first independent clause introduces a quoted sentence, a colon is an appropriate method of revision.

Feminist writer and scholar Carolyn Heilbrun has this to say about the future: “Today’s shocks are tomorrow’s conventions.”

Consider making the clauses into separate sentences.

Why should we spend money on expensive space exploration? We have enough underfunded programs here on Earth.

Since one independent clause is a question and the other is a statement, they should be separate sentences.
I gave the necessary papers to the police officer. Then he said I would have to accompany him to the police station, where a counselor would talk with me and call my parents.

Because the second independent clause is quite long, a sensible revision is to use separate sentences.

**NOTE:** When two quoted independent clauses are divided by explanatory words, make each clause its own sentence.

“It’s always smart to learn from your mistakes,” quipped my supervisor, “it’s even smarter to learn from the mistakes of others.”

20d Consider restructuring the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.

If one of the independent clauses is less important than the other, turn it into a subordinate clause or phrase. (For more about subordination, see 14, especially the chart on p. 113.)

One of the most famous advertising slogans is Wheaties cereal’s “Breakfast of Champions,” which it was penned in 1933.

Although many scholars dismiss the abominable snowman of the Himalayas as a myth, others claim it may be a kind of ape.

Mary McLeod Bethune, the seventeenth child of former slaves, founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935.

Minor ideas in these sentences are now expressed in subordinate clauses or phrases.
EXERCISE 20–1  Revise any run-on sentences using the method of revision suggested in brackets. Revisions of lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

Because
Orville had been obsessed with his weight as a teenager, he rarely ate anything sweet. [Restructure the sentence.]

a. The city had one public swimming pool, it stayed packed with children all summer long. [Restructure the sentence.]
b. The building is being renovated, therefore at times we have no heat, water, or electricity. [Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.]
c. The view was not what the travel agent had described, where were the rolling hills, the fields of poppies, and the shimmering rivers? [Make two sentences.]
d. All those gnarled equations looked like toxic insects, maybe I was going to have to rethink my major. [Use a semicolon.]
e. City officials told FEMA they had good reason to fear a major earthquake, most of the business district was built on landfill. [Use a colon.]

1. The car was hardly worth trading, the frame was twisted and the block was warped. [Restructure the sentence.]
2. The next time an event is canceled because of bad weather, don’t blame the meteorologist, blame nature. [Make two sentences.]
3. Ray was fluent in American Sign Language he could sign as easily as he could speak. [Restructure the sentence.]
4. Susanna arrived with a stack of her latest hats she hoped the gift shop would place a big winter order. [Restructure the sentence.]
5. There was one major reason for John’s wealth, his grandfather had been a multimillionaire. [Use a colon.]

EXERCISE 20–2  Revise any run-on sentences using a technique that you find effective. If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Revisions of lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

Crossing so many time zones on an eight-hour flight, I knew but
I would be tired when I arrived, however, I was too excited

to sleep on the plane.

a. Wind power for the home is a supplementary source of energy, it can be combined with electricity, gas, or solar energy.
b. Aidan viewed Sofia Coppola’s *Lost in Translation* three times, then he wrote a paper describing the film as the work of a mysterious modern painter.

c. In the Middle Ages, the streets of London were dangerous places; it was safer to travel by boat along the Thames.

d. “He’s not drunk,” I said, “he’s in a state of diabetic shock.”

e. Are you able to endure boredom, isolation, and potential violence, then the army may well be the adventure for you.

1. Death Valley National Monument, located in southern California and Nevada, is one of the hottest places on Earth, temperatures there have soared as high as 134 degrees Fahrenheit.

2. Anamaria opened the boxes crammed with toys, out sprang griffins, dragons, and phoenixes.

3. Subatomic physics is filled with strange and marvelous particles, tiny bodies of matter that shiver, wobble, pulse, and flatten to no thickness at all.

4. As his first major project, Frederick Law Olmsted designed New York City’s Central Park, one of the most beautiful urban spaces in the United States.

5. The neurosurgeon explained that the medication could have one side effect, it might cause me to experience temporary memory loss.

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21

Make subjects and verbs agree.

Native speakers of standard English know by ear that *he* talks, *she* has, and *it* doesn’t (not *he* talk, *she* have, and *it* don’t) are standard subject-verb combinations. For such speakers, problems with subject-verb agreement arise only in certain tricky situations, which are detailed in 21b–21k.

If you don’t trust your ear—perhaps because you speak English as a second language or because you speak or hear nonstandard English in your community—you will need to learn the standard forms explained in 21a. Even if you do trust your ear, take a look at 21a to see what “subject-verb agreement” means.
21a Consult this section for standard subject-verb combinations.

In the present tense, verbs agree with their subjects in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second, or third). The present-tense ending -s (or -es) is used on a verb if its subject is third-person singular; otherwise the verb takes no ending. Consider, for example, the present-tense forms of the verbs *love* and *try*, given at the beginning of the following chart.

### Subject-verb agreement at a glance

#### Present-tense forms of *love* and *try* (typical verbs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIRST PERSON</strong></td>
<td>I love</td>
<td>we love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECOND PERSON</strong></td>
<td>you love</td>
<td>you love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THIRD PERSON</strong></td>
<td>he/she/it loves</td>
<td>they love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIRST PERSON</strong></td>
<td>I try</td>
<td>we try</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECOND PERSON</strong></td>
<td>you try</td>
<td>you try</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THIRD PERSON</strong></td>
<td>he/she/it tries</td>
<td>they try</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Present-tense forms of *have*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIRST PERSON</strong></td>
<td>I have</td>
<td>we have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECOND PERSON</strong></td>
<td>you have</td>
<td>you have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THIRD PERSON</strong></td>
<td>he/she/it has</td>
<td>they have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Present-tense forms of *do*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIRST PERSON</strong></td>
<td>I do/don’t</td>
<td>we do/don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECOND PERSON</strong></td>
<td>you do/don’t</td>
<td>you do/don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THIRD PERSON</strong></td>
<td>he/she/it does/doesn’t</td>
<td>they do/don’t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Present-tense and past-tense forms of *be*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIRST PERSON</strong></td>
<td>I am/was</td>
<td>we are/were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECOND PERSON</strong></td>
<td>you are/were</td>
<td>you are/were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THIRD PERSON</strong></td>
<td>he/she/it is/was</td>
<td>they are/were</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The verb *be* varies from this pattern; unlike any other verb, it has special forms in *both* the present and the past tense. These forms appear at the end of the chart.

If you aren’t confident that you know the standard forms, use the charts on page 165 and this page as you proofread for subject-verb agreement. Also see 27c on *-s* endings.

### When to use the *-s* (or *-es*) form of a present-tense verb

- **Is the verb’s subject he, she, it, or one?**
  - YES: Use the *-s* form (*loves, tries, has, does*).
  - NO: Use the *-s* form.

- **Is the subject a singular noun (such as *parent*)?**
  - YES: Use the *-s* form.
  - NO: Use the base form of the verb (*such as love, try, have, do*).

- **Is the subject a singular indefinite pronoun — anybody, anyone, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, no one, someone, or something?**
  - YES: Use the *-s* form.
  - NO: Use the base form of the verb (*such as love, try, have, do*).

**EXCEPTION:** Choosing the correct present-tense form of *be* (*am, is, or are*) is not quite so simple. See the chart on the previous page for both present- and past-tense forms of *be*.

**ESL TIP:** Do not use the *-s* form of a verb that follows a modal or another helping verb such as *can, must, or should*. (See 28b.)
GRAMMAR CHECKERS are fairly good at flagging subject-verb agreement problems. They occasionally flag a correct sentence, usually because they misidentify the subject, the verb, or both. Sometimes they miss an agreement problem because they don’t recognize a pronoun’s antecedent. In the following sentence, for example, the grammar checker did not detect that *eggs* is the antecedent of *which*: *Some animal rights groups oppose eating eggs, which comes from animals.* Because *eggs* is plural, the correct verb is *come*.

21b Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a word that comes between.

Word groups often come between the subject and the verb. Such word groups, usually modifying the subject, may contain a noun that at first appears to be the subject. By mentally stripping away such modifiers, you can isolate the noun that is in fact the subject.

The *samples* on the tray in the lab *need* testing.

▶ High levels of air pollution *cause* 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*.

▶ The slaughter of pandas for their pelts *have caused the* panda population to decline drastically.

The subject is *slaughter*, not *pandas* or *pelts*.

NOTE: Phrases beginning with the prepositions *as well as*, *in addition to*, *accompanied by*, *together with*, and *along with* do not make a singular subject plural.

▶ The governor *as well as his press secretary* were shot.

To emphasize that two people were shot, the writer could use *and* instead: *The governor and his press secretary were shot.*
21c Treat most subjects joined with and as plural.

A subject with two or more parts is said to be compound. If the parts are connected by and, the subject is nearly always plural.

Leon and Jan often jog together.

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

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

EXCEPTIONS: When the parts of the subject form a single unit or when they refer to the same person or thing, treat the subject as singular.

Strawberries and cream was a last-minute addition to the menu.

Sue’s friend and adviser was surprised by her decision.

When a compound subject is preceded by each or every, treat it as singular.

Each tree, shrub, and vine needs to be sprayed.

Every car, truck, and van is required to pass inspection.

This exception does not apply when a compound subject is followed by each: Alan and Marcia each have different ideas.

21d With subjects joined with or or nor (or with either ... or or neither ... nor), make the verb agree with the part of the subject nearer to the verb.

A driver’s license or credit card is required.

A driver’s license or two credit cards are required.

If an infant or a child are having difficulty breathing, seek medical attention immediately.
Neither the lab assistant nor the students was able to download the information.

The verb must be matched with the part of the subject closer to it: child is in the first sentence, students were in the second.

**NOTE:** If one part of the subject is singular and the other is plural, put the plural one last to avoid awkwardness.

### 21e Treat most indefinite pronouns as singular.

Indefinite pronouns are pronouns that do not refer to specific persons or things. The following commonly used indefinite pronouns are singular.

- anybody
- each
- everyone
- nobody
- somebody
- anyone
- either
- everything
- no one
- someone
- anything
- everybody
- neither
- nothing
- something

Many of these words appear to have plural meanings, and they are often treated as plural in casual speech. In formal written English, however, they are nearly always treated as singular.

- *Everyone on the team supports the coach.*
- *Each of the furrows have been seeded.*
- *Everybody who signed up for the snowboarding trip were taking lessons.*

The subjects of these sentences are *Each* and *Everybody*. These indefinite pronouns are third-person singular, so the verbs must be *has* and *was*.

A few indefinite pronouns (*all, any, none, some*) may be singular or plural depending on the noun or pronoun they refer to.

- *Some of our luggage was lost. None of his advice makes sense.*
- *Some of the rocks are slippery. None of the eggs were broken.*
NOTE: When the meaning of none is emphatically “not one,” none may be treated as singular: None [meaning “Not one”] of the eggs was broken. However, some experts advise using not one instead: Not one of the eggs was broken.

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Language Debates > none

21f Treat collective nouns as singular unless the meaning is clearly plural.

Collective nouns such as jury, committee, audience, crowd, class, troop, family, and couple name a class or a group. In American English, collective nouns are nearly always treated as singular: They emphasize the group as a unit. Occasionally, when there is some reason to draw attention to the individual members of the group, a collective noun may be treated as plural. (Also see 22b.)

SINGULAR
The class respects the teacher.

PLURAL
The class are debating among themselves.

To underscore the notion of individuality in the second sentence, many writers would add a clearly plural noun such as members: The class members are debating among themselves.

meets
The board of trustees meet in Denver twice a year.

^ The board as a whole meets; there is no reason to draw attention to its individual members.

were
A young couple were arguing about politics while holding hands.

^ The meaning is clearly plural. Only individuals can argue and hold hands.

NOTE: The phrase the number is treated as singular, a number as plural.

SINGULAR
The number of school-age children is declining.

PLURAL
A number of children are attending the wedding.
NOTE: In general, when fractions or units of measurement are used with a singular noun, treat them as singular; when they are used with a plural noun, treat them as plural.

**SINGULAR**

Three-fourths of the pie has been eaten.

**SINGULAR**

Twenty inches of wallboard was covered with mud.

**PLURAL**

One-fourth of the drivers were drunk.

**PLURAL**

Five pounds of ostrich feathers were used to make the scarf.

---

### 21g Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb.

Verbs ordinarily follow subjects. When this normal order is reversed, it is easy to become confused. Sentences beginning with there is or there are (or there was or there were) are inverted; the subject follows the verb.

There are surprisingly few children in our neighborhood.

There was 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.

Occasionally you may decide to invert a sentence for variety or effect. When you do so, check to make sure that your subject and verb agree.

At the back of the room is a small aquarium and an enormous terrarium.

The subject, aquarium and terrarium, is plural, so the verb must be are. If the correct sentence seems awkward, begin with the subject: A small aquarium and an enormous terrarium are at the back of the room.
21h Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a subject complement.

One basic sentence pattern in English consists of a subject, a linking verb, and a subject complement: Jack is a securities lawyer. Because the subject complement names or describes the subject, it is sometimes mistaken for the subject. (See 63b on subject complements.)

- A tent and a sleeping bag are the required equipment for all campers.
  
  Tent and bag is the subject, not equipment.

- A major force in today’s economy is women — as earners, consumers, and investors.
  
  Force is the subject, not women. If the corrected version seems awkward, make women the subject: Women are a major force in today’s economy — as earners, consumers, and investors.

21i Who, which, and that take verbs that agree with their antecedents.

Like most pronouns, the relative pronouns who, which, and that have antecedents, nouns or pronouns to which they refer. Relative pronouns used as subjects of subordinate clauses take verbs that agree with their antecedents. (See 64b.)

- Take a suit that travels well.

  Constructions such as one of the students who (or one of the things that) cause problems for writers. Do not assume that the antecedent must be one. Instead, consider the logic of the sentence.

- Our ability to use language is one of the things that sets us apart from animals.
The antecedent of *that* is *things*, not *one*. Several things set us apart from animals.

When the word *only* comes before *one*, you are safe in assuming that *one* is the antecedent of the relative pronoun.

Veronica was the only one of the first-year Spanish students who were fluent enough to apply for the exchange program.

The antecedent of *who* is *one*, not *students*. Only one student was fluent enough.

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Language Debates > *one of those who (or that)*

**21j** Words such as *athletics, economics, mathematics, physics, politics, statistics, measles, and news* are usually singular, despite their plural form.

Politics are among my mother's favorite pastimes.

**EXCEPTION:** Occasionally some of these words, especially *economics, mathematics, politics, and statistics*, have plural meanings: *Office politics often sway decisions about hiring and promotion. The economics of the building plan are prohibitive.*

**21k** Titles of works, company names, words mentioned as words, and gerund phrases are singular.

*Lost Cities* describes the discoveries of many ancient civilizations.

*Delmonico Brothers* specializes in organic produce and additive-free meats.
Controlled substances are a euphemism for illegal drugs.

A gerund phrase consists of an -ing verb form followed by any objects, complements, or modifiers (see 64c). Treat gerund phrases as singular.

Encountering busy signals are troublesome to our clients, so we have hired two new switchboard operators.

EXERCISE 21–1 Underline the subject (or compound subject) and then select the verb that agrees with it. (If you have difficulty identifying the subject, consult 63a.) Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

Everyone in the telecom focus group (has/have) experienced problems with cell phones.

a. Your friendship over the years and your support (has/have) meant a great deal to us.
b. Shelters for teenage runaways (offers/offer) a wide variety of services.
c. The main source of income for Trinidad (is/are) oil and pitch.
d. The chances of your being promoted (is/are) excellent.
e. There (was/were) a Yu-Gi-Oh! card and a quirky haiku stuck to the refrigerator.

1. Neither the professor nor his assistants (was/were) able to solve the mystery of the eerie glow in the laboratory.
2. Many hours at the driving range (has/have) led us to design golf balls with GPS locators in them.
3. Discovered in the soil of our city garden (was/were) a button dating from the Civil War and three marbles dating from the turn of the twentieth century.
4. Every year, during the midsummer festival, the smoke of village bonfires (fills/fill) the sky.
5. The story performers (was/were) surrounded by children and adults eager to see magical tales.

EXERCISE 21–2 Edit the following sentences to eliminate problems with subject-verb agreement. If a sentence is correct, write “correct”
after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

were

Jack’s first days in the infantry was grueling.

a. One of the main reasons for elephant poaching are the profits received from selling the ivory tusks.
b. Not until my interview with Dr. Hwang were other possibilities opened to me.
c. A number of students in the seminar was aware of the importance of joining the discussion.
d. Batik cloth from Bali, blue and white ceramics from Delft, and a bocce ball from Turin has made Angelie’s room the talk of the dorm.
e. The board of directors, ignoring the wishes of the neighborhood, has voted to allow further development.

1. Measles is a contagious childhood disease.
2. Adorning a shelf in the lab is a Vietnamese figurine, a set of Korean clay gods, and an American plastic village.
3. The presence of certain bacteria in our bodies is one of the factors that determines our overall health.
4. Sheila is the only one of the many applicants who has the ability to step into this job.
5. Neither the explorer nor his companions was ever seen again.

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Grammar exercises > Grammar > E-ex 21–1 to 21–3

Make pronouns and antecedents agree.

A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun. (See 62b.) Many pronouns have antecedents, nouns or pronouns to which they refer. A pronoun and its antecedent agree when they are both singular or both plural.
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SINGULAR

Dr. Ava Berto finished her rounds.

PLURAL

The hospital interns finished their rounds.

The pronouns *he, his, she, her, it, and its* must agree in gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter) with their antecedents, not with the words they modify.

*Steve visited his [not her] sister in Seattle.*

**GRAMMAR CHECKERS** do not flag problems with pronoun-antecedent agreement. It takes a human eye to see that a plural pronoun, such as *their*, does not agree with a singular noun, such as *logger*, in a sentence like this: *The logger in the Northwest relies on the old forest growth for their living.*

When grammar checkers do flag agreement problems, they often suggest (correctly) substituting the singular phrase *his or her* for the plural pronoun *their*. For other revision strategies that avoid the wordy *his or her* construction, see the chart on page 178.

**22a Do not use plural pronouns to refer to singular antecedents.**

Writers are frequently tempted to use plural pronouns to refer to two kinds of singular antecedents: indefinite pronouns and generic nouns.

**Indefinite pronouns**

Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things. Even though some of the following indefinite pronouns may seem to have plural meanings, treat them as singular in informal English.

- anybody
- each
- everyone
- nobody
- somebody
- anyone
- either
- everything
- no one
- someone
- anything
- everybody
- neither
- nothing
- something
In class everyone performs at his or her [not their] own fitness level.

When a plural pronoun refers mistakenly to a singular indefinite pronoun, you can usually choose one of three options for revision:

1. Replace the plural pronoun with he or she (or his or her).
2. Make the antecedent plural.
3. Rewrite the sentence so that no agreement problem exists.

► When someone has been drinking, they are likely to speed.
► Drivers have
► A driver who has been drinking, they are likely to speed.

Because the he or she construction is wordy, often the second or third revision strategy is more effective. Be aware that the traditional use of he (or his) to refer to persons of either sex is widely considered sexist. (See 17f.)

**Generic nouns**

A generic noun represents a typical member of a group, such as a typical student, or any member of a group, such as any lawyer. Although generic nouns may seem to have plural meanings, they are singular.

► Every runner must train rigorously if he or she wants [not they want] to excel.

When a plural pronoun refers mistakenly to a generic noun, you will usually have the same three revision options as mentioned at the top of this page for indefinite pronouns.

► A medical student must study hard if they want to succeed.
Medical students

A medical student must study hard if they want to succeed.

A medical student must study hard if they want to succeed.

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Language Debates > Pronoun-antecedent agreement

Choosing a revision strategy that avoids sexist language

Because many readers object to sexist language, avoid the use of he, him, and his to refer to both men and women. Also try to be sparing in your use of the wordy expressions he or she and his or her. Where possible, seek out more graceful alternatives.

Use an occasional he or she (or his or her).

his or her

In our office, everyone works at their own pace.

Make the antecedent plural.

Employees

An employee on extended leave may continue their life insurance.

Recast the sentence.

The amount of annual leave a federal worker may accrue depends on their length of service.

If a child is born to parents who are both bipolar, they have a high chance of being bipolar.
22b Treat collective nouns as singular unless the meaning is clearly plural.

Collective nouns such as jury, committee, audience, crowd, class, troop, family, team, and couple name a class or a group. Ordinarily the group functions as a unit, so the noun should be treated as singular; if the members of the group function as individuals, however, the noun should be treated as plural. (See also 21f.)

**AS A UNIT**
The committee granted its permission to build.

**AS INDIVIDUALS**
The committee put their signatures on the document.

When treating a collective noun as plural, many writers prefer to add a clearly plural antecedent such as members to the sentence: The members of the committee put their signatures on the document.

*The jury has reached their decision.*

There is no reason to draw attention to the individual members of the jury, so jury should be treated as singular. Notice also that the writer treated the noun as singular when choosing the verb has, so for consistency the pronoun must be its.

22c Treat most compound antecedents connected by and as plural.

Jill and John moved to Luray, where they built a cabin.

22d With compound antecedents connected by or or nor (or by either ... or or neither ... nor), make the pronoun agree with the nearer antecedent.

Either Bruce or Tom should receive first prize for his poem.

Neither the mouse nor the rats could find their way through the maze.
NOTE: If one of the antecedents is singular and the other plural, as in the second example, put the plural one last to avoid awkwardness.

EXCEPTION: If one antecedent is male and the other female, do not follow the traditional rule. The sentence *Either Bruce or Elizabeth should receive first prize for her short story* makes no sense. The best solution is to recast the sentence: *The prize for best short story should go to Bruce or Elizabeth.*

**EXERCISE 22-1** Edit the following sentences to eliminate problems with pronoun-antecedent agreement. Most of the sentences can be revised in more than one way, so experiment before choosing a solution. If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Revisions of lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

Recruiters may tell the truth, but there is much that they choose not to tell.

a. Every presidential candidate must appeal to a wide variety of ethnic and social groups if they want to win the election.

b. David lent his motorcycle to someone who allowed their friend to use it.

c. The aerobics teacher motioned for everyone to move their arms in wide, slow circles.

d. The parade committee was unanimous in its decision to allow all groups and organizations to join the festivities.

e. The applicant should be bilingual if they want to qualify for this position.

1. If a driver refuses to take a blood or breath test, he or she will have their licenses suspended for six months.

2. Why should anyone learn a second language? One reason is to sharpen their minds.

3. The Department of Education issued new guidelines for school security. They were trying to anticipate problems and avert disaster.

4. Seven qualified Hispanic agents applied, each hoping for a career move that would let them use their language and cultural training on more than just translations.

5. If anyone notices any suspicious activity, they should report it to the police.
EXERCISE 22–2 Edit the following paragraph to eliminate problems with pronoun-antecedent agreement or sexist language.

A common practice in businesses is to put each employee in their own cubicle. A typical cubicle resembles an office, but their walls don’t reach the ceiling. Many office managers feel that a cubicle floor plan has its advantages. Cubicles make a large area feel spacious. In addition, they can be moved around so that each new employee can be accommodated in his own work area. Of course, the cubicle model also has problems. The typical employee is not as happy with a cubicle as they would be with a traditional office. Also, productivity can suffer. Neither a manager nor a frontline worker can ordinarily do their best work in a cubicle because of noise and lack of privacy. Each worker can hear his neighbors tapping on computer keyboards, making telephone calls, and muttering under their breath.

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Grammar exercises > Grammar > E-ex 22–1 to 22–3

23

Make pronoun references clear.

Pronouns substitute for nouns; they are a kind of shorthand. In a sentence like After Andrew intercepted the ball, he kicked it as hard as he could, the pronouns he and it substitute for the nouns Andrew and ball. The word a pronoun refers to is called its antecedent.

GRAMMAR CHECKERS do not flag problems with faulty pronoun reference. Although a computer program can identify pronouns, it has no way of knowing which words, if any, they refer to. For example, grammar checkers miss the fact that the pronoun it has an ambiguous reference in the following sentence: The thief stole the woman’s purse and her car and then destroyed it. Did the thief destroy the purse or the car? It takes human judgment to realize that readers might be confused.
23a Avoid ambiguous or remote pronoun reference.

Ambiguous pronoun reference occurs when a pronoun could refer to two possible antecedents.

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

> "You have told James, that he had won the lottery."

What broke — the table or the pitcher? Who won the lottery — Tom or James? The revisions eliminate the ambiguity.

Remote pronoun reference occurs when a pronoun is too far away from its antecedent for easy reading.

> After the court ordered my ex-husband to pay child support, he refused. Approximately eight months later, we were back in court. This time the judge ordered him to make payments directly to the Support and Collections Unit, which would in turn pay me. For the first six months I received regular payments, but then they stopped. Again he was summoned to appear in court; he did not respond.

The pronoun *he* was too distant from its antecedent, *ex-husband*, which appeared several sentences earlier.

23b Generally, avoid broad reference of *this, that, which, and it*.

For clarity, the pronouns *this, that, which, and it* should ordinarily refer to specific antecedents rather than to whole ideas or sentences. When a pronoun’s reference is needlessly broad,
either replace the pronoun with a noun or supply an antecedent to which the pronoun clearly refers.

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

  For clarity the writer substituted a noun (*fate*) for the pronoun *this*, which referred broadly to the idea expressed in the preceding sentence.

- Romeo and Juliet were both too young to have acquired *a fact* much wisdom, which accounts for their rash actions.

  The writer added an antecedent (*fact*) that the pronoun *which* clearly refers to.

**23c** Do not use a pronoun to refer to an implied antecedent.

A pronoun should refer to a specific antecedent, not to a word that is implied but not present in the sentence.

- After braiding Ann’s hair, Sue decorated *them* with ribbons.

  The pronoun *them* referred to Ann’s braids (implied by the term *braiding*), but the word *braids* did not appear in the sentence.

Modifiers, such as possessives, cannot serve as antecedents. A modifier may strongly imply the noun that the pronoun might logically refer to, but it is not itself that noun.

- In Mary Gordon’s *The Shadow Man*, *she* writes about her father’s mysterious and startling past.

  The pronoun *she* cannot refer logically to the possessive modifier *Mary Gordon’s*. The revision substitutes the noun *Mary Gordon* for the pronoun *she*, thereby eliminating the problem.
23d Avoid the indefinite use of they, it, and you.

Do not use the pronoun they to refer indefinitely to persons who have not been specifically mentioned. They should always refer to a specific antecedent. If no antecedent appears in the sentence, you may need to substitute a noun for the pronoun.

In 2001, they shut down all government agencies for more than a month until the budget crisis was finally resolved.

The word it should not be used indefinitely in constructions such as It is said on television . . . or In the article it says that . . .

The encyclopedia states that male moths can smell female moths from several miles away.

The pronoun you is appropriate when the writer is addressing the reader directly: Once you have kneaded the dough, let it rise in a warm place. Except in informal contexts, however, the indefinite you (meaning “anyone in general”) is inappropriate.

Ms. Pickersgill’s Guide to Etiquette stipulates that you should not arrive at a party too early, leave too late, or drink too much wine.

The writer could have replaced you with one, but in American English the pronoun one can seem stilted.
To refer to persons, use who, whom, or whose, not which or that.

In most contexts, use who, whom, or whose to refer to persons, which or that to refer to animals or things. Which is reserved only for animals or things, so it is impolite to use it to refer to persons.

All thirty-two women in the study, half of whom were unemployed for more than six months, reported higher self-esteem after job training.

Although that is sometimes used to refer to persons, many readers will find such references dehumanizing. It is more polite to use a form of who—a word reserved only for people.

Fans wondered how an out-of-shape old man that walked with a limp could play football.

NOTE: Occasionally whose may be used to refer to animals and things to avoid the awkward of which construction.

A local school, the name of which will be in tomorrow’s paper, has received the Governor’s Gold Medal for outstanding community service.

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Language Debates > who versus which or that

EXERCISE 23–1 Edit the following sentences to correct errors in pronoun reference. In some cases you will need to decide on an antecedent that the pronoun might logically refer to. Revisions of lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:
Following the breakup of AT&T, many other companies began to offer long-distance phone service. This has led to lower long-distance rates.

a. They say that an engineering student should have hands-on experience with dismantling and reassembling machines.

b. She had decorated her living room with posters from chamber music festivals. This led her date to believe that she was interested in classical music. Actually she preferred rock.

c. In Ethiopia, you don't need much property to be considered well-off.

d. Marianne told Jenny that she was worried about her mother's illness.

e. Though Lewis cried for several minutes after scraping his knee, eventually it subsided.

1. Our German conversation group is made up of six people, three of which I had never met before.

2. Many people believe that the polygraph test is highly reliable if you employ a licensed examiner.

3. Parent involvement is high at Mission San Jose High School. They participate in many committees and activities that affect all aspects of school life.

4. Because of Paul Robeson’s outspoken attitude toward fascism, he was labeled a Communist.

5. In the report it points out that lifting the ban on Compound 1080 would prove detrimental, possibly even fatal, to the bald eagle.

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Distinguish between pronouns such as I and me.

The personal pronouns in the following chart change what is known as case form according to their grammatical function in a sentence. Pronouns functioning as subjects (or subject
complements) appear in the subjective case; those functioning as objects appear in the objective case; and those showing ownership appear in the possessive case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECTIVE CASE</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE CASE</th>
<th>POSSESSIVE CASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SINGULAR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>my</td>
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<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she/it</td>
<td>him/her/it</td>
<td>his/her/its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLURAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>our</td>
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<tr>
<td>you</td>
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<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pronouns in the subjective and objective cases are frequently confused. Most of the rules in this section specify when to use one or the other of these cases (I or me, he or him, and so on). Section 24g explains a special use of pronouns and nouns in the possessive case.

**GRAMMAR CHECKERS** sometimes flag incorrect pronouns and suggest using the correct form: I or me, he or him, she or her, we or us, they or them. A grammar checker correctly flagged *we* in the following sentence and advised using *us* instead: *I say it is about time for we parents to revolt*. Grammar checkers miss more incorrect pronouns than they catch, however, and their suggestions for revision are sometimes off the mark. A grammar checker caught the error in the following sentence: *I am a little jealous that my dog likes my neighbor more than I*. But instead of suggesting changing the final *I* to *me* ( . . . more than *me*), it suggested adding *do* ( . . . more than *I do*), which does not fit the meaning of the sentence.

**24a Use the subjective case (I, you, he, she, it, we, they) for subjects and subject complements.**

When personal pronouns are used as subjects, ordinarily your ear will tell you the correct pronoun. Problems sometimes arise, however, with compound word groups containing a pronoun, so it is not always safe to trust your ear.
Joel ran away from home because his stepfather and him had argued.

His stepfather and he is the subject of the verb had argued. If we strip away the words his stepfather and, the correct pronoun becomes clear: he had argued (not him had argued).

When a pronoun is used as a subject complement (a word following a linking verb), your ear may mislead you, since the incorrect form is frequently heard in casual speech. (See “subject complement,” 63b.)

During the Lindbergh trial, Bruno Hauptmann repeatedly denied that the kidnapper was he.

If kidnapper was he seems too stilted, rewrite the sentence: During the Lindbergh trial, Bruno Hauptmann repeatedly denied that he was the kidnapper.

24b Use the objective case (me, you, him, her, it, us, them) for all objects.

When a personal pronoun is used as a direct object, an indirect object, or the object of a preposition, ordinarily your ear will lead you to the correct pronoun. When an object is compound, however, you may occasionally become confused.

Janice was indignant when she realized that the salesclerk was insulting her mother and she.

Her mother and her is the direct object of the verb was insulting. Strip away the words her mother and to hear the correct pronoun: was insulting her (not was insulting she).

The most traumatic experience for her father and me occurred long after her operation.

Her father and me is the object of the preposition for. Strip away the words her father and to test for the correct pronoun: for me (not for I).
When in doubt about the correct pronoun, some writers try to avoid making the choice by using a reflexive pronoun such as *myself*. Such evasions are nonstandard, even though they are used by some educated persons.

The Indian cab driver gave my husband and some good tips on traveling in New Delhi.

*My husband and me* is the indirect object of the verb *gave*. For correct uses of *myself*, see the Glossary of Usage.

---

**24c** Put an appositive and the word to which it refers in the same case.

Appositives are noun phrases that rename nouns or pronouns. A pronoun used as an appositive has the same function (usually subject or object) as the word(s) it renames.

- The top strategists, Dr. Bell and *me*, could not agree on a plan.

  The appositive *Dr. Bell and I* renames the subject, *strategists*. Test: *I could not agree* (not *me could not agree*).

- The reporter interviewed only two witnesses, the bicyclist *me* and *I*.

  The appositive *the bicyclist and me* renames the direct object, *witnesses*. Test: *interviewed me* (not *interviewed I*).

---

**24d** Following *than* or *as*, choose the pronoun that expresses your meaning.

When a comparison begins with *than* or *as*, your choice of a pronoun will depend on your intended meaning. Consider the difference in meaning between the following sentences.
My husband likes football more than I.
My husband likes football more than me.

Finish each sentence mentally and its meaning becomes clear: *My husband likes football more than I* [do]. *My husband likes football more than* [he likes] *me.*

Even though he is sometimes ridiculed by the other boys, they.

Nathan is much better off than they.

They is the subject of the verb are, which is understood: *Nathan is much better off than they* [are]. If the correct English seems too formal, you can always add the verb.

We respected no other candidate for the city council as much as she.

This sentence means that we respected no other candidate as much as *we respected her.* Her is the direct object of the understood verb respected.

24e For *we* or *us* before a noun, choose the pronoun that would be appropriate if the noun were omitted.

We

*Us* tenants would rather fight than move.

*Management is short-changing* we tenants.

No one would say *Us would rather fight than move* or *Management is short-changing we.*

24f Use the objective case for subjects and objects of infinitives.

An infinitive is the word to followed by the base form of a verb. (See 64c.) Subjects of infinitives are an exception to the rule that subjects must be in the subjective case. Whenever an infinitive has a subject, it must be in the objective case. Objects of infinitives also are in the objective case.
Ms. Wilson asked John and I to drive the senator and her to the airport.

*John and me* is the subject of the infinitive *to drive*; *senator and her* is the direct object of the infinitive.

### 24g Use the possessive case to modify a gerund.

A pronoun that modifies a gerund or a gerund phrase should appear in the possessive case (*my, our, your, his, her, its, their*). A gerund is a verb form ending in *-ing* that functions as a noun. Gerunds frequently appear in phrases, in which case the whole gerund phrase functions as a noun. (See 64c.)

- The chances of *you* being hit by lightning are about two million to one.

*Your* modifies the gerund phrase *being hit by lightning.*

Nouns as well as pronouns may modify gerunds. To form the possessive case of a noun, use an apostrophe and an *-s* (*victim’s*) or just an apostrophe (*victims’*). (See 36a.)

- The old order in France paid a high price for the *aristocracy’s* exploiting the lower classes.

The possessive noun *aristocracy’s* modifies the gerund phrase *exploiting the lower classes.*

Gerund phrases should not be confused with participial phrases, which function as adjectives, not as nouns: *We saw Brenda driving a yellow convertible.* Here *driving a yellow convertible* is a participial phrase modifying the noun *Brenda.* (See 64c.) Sometimes the choice between the objective or the possessive case conveys a subtle difference in meaning:

- We watched *them* dancing.
- We watched *their* dancing.
In the first sentence the emphasis is on the people; *dancing* is a participle modifying the pronoun *them*. In the second sentence the emphasis is on the dancing; *dancing* is a gerund, and *their* is a possessive pronoun modifying the gerund.

**NOTE:** Do not use the possessive if it creates an awkward effect. Try to reword the sentence instead.

**AWKWARD**  The president agreed to the applications’ being reviewed by a faculty committee.

**REVISED**  The president agreed that the applications could be reviewed by a faculty committee.

**REVISED**  The president agreed that a faculty committee could review the applications.

**ON THE WEB > dianahacker.com/rules**
Language Debates > Possessive before a gerund

**EXERCISE 24–1**  Edit the following sentences to eliminate errors in case. If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

Grandfather cuts down trees for neighbors much younger

a. Rick applied for the job even though he heard that other candidates were more experienced than he.

b. The volleyball team could not believe that the coach was she.

c. She appreciated him telling the truth in such a difficult situation.

d. The director has asked you and I to draft a proposal for a new recycling plan.

e. Five close friends and myself rented a station wagon, packed it with food, and drove two hundred miles to Mardi Gras.

1. The squawk of the brass horns nearly overwhelmed us oboe and bassoon players.

2. Ushio, the last rock climber up the wall, tossed Teri and she the remaining pitons and carabiners.

3. The programmer realized that her and the interface designers were creating an entirely new Web application.

4. My desire to understand classical music was aided by me working as an usher at Symphony Hall.
5. The shower of sinking bricks caused he and his diving partner to race away from the collapsing seawall.

EXERCISE 24–2  Choose the correct pronoun in each set of parentheses.

We may blame television for the number of products based on characters in children’s TV shows — from Big Bird to Sponge-Bob — but in fact merchandising that capitalizes on a character’s popularity started long before television. Raggedy Ann began as a child’s rag doll, and a few years later books about (she / her) and her brother, Raggedy Andy, were published. A cartoonist named Johnny Gruelle painted a cloth face on a family doll and applied for a patent in 1915. Later Gruelle began writing and illustrating stories about Raggedy Ann, and in 1918 (he / him) and a publisher teamed up to publish the books and sell the dolls. He was not the only one to try to sell products linked to children’s stories. Beatrix Potter published the first of many Peter Rabbit picture books in 1902, and no one was better than (she / her) at making a living from spin-offs. After Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny became popular, Potter began putting pictures of (they / them) and their little animal friends on merchandise. Potter had fans all over the world, and she understood (them / their) wanting to see Peter Rabbit not only in books but also on teapots and plates and lamps and other furnishings for the nursery. Potter and Gruelle, like countless others before and since, knew that entertaining children could be a profitable business.

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Grammar exercises > Grammar > E-ex 24–1 and 24–2

25

Distinguish between who and whom.

The choice between who and whom (or whoever and whomever) occurs primarily in subordinate clauses and in questions. Who and whoever, subjective-case pronouns, are used for subjects and subject complements. Whom and whomever, objective-case pronouns, are used for objects.

An exception to this general rule occurs when the pronoun functions as the subject of an infinitive (see 25c). See also 24f.
GRAMMAR CHECKERS catch misuses of who and whom (whoever and whomever) only about half the time. A grammar checker flagged the incorrect use of whomever in the sentence Daniel donates money to whomever needs it, recognizing that whoever is required as the subject of the verb needs. But it did not flag the incorrect use of who in this sentence: My cousin Sylvie, who I am teaching to fly a kite, watches us every time we compete.

25a In subordinate clauses, use who and whoever for subjects or subject complements, whom and whomever for all objects.

When who and whom (or whoever and whomever) introduce subordinate clauses, their case is determined by their function within the clause they introduce. To choose the correct pronoun, isolate the subordinate clause and then decide how the pronoun functions within it. (See “subordinate clauses,” 64b.)

In the following two examples, the pronouns who and whoever function as the subjects of the clauses they introduce.

First prize goes to the runner whom collects the most points.

The subordinate clause is who collects the most points. The verb of the clause is collects, and its subject is who.

He tells the story of his narrow escape to whomever will listen.

The writer selected the pronoun whomever, thinking that it was the object of the preposition to. However, the object of the preposition is the entire subordinate clause whoever will listen. The verb of the clause is will listen, and the subject of the verb is whoever.

Who occasionally functions as a subject complement in a subordinate clause. Subject complements occur with linking verbs (usually be, am, is, are, was, were, being, and been). (See 63b.)
From your social security number, anyone can find out who you are. The subordinate clause is *who you are*. Its subject is *you*, and its subject complement is *who*.

When functioning as an object in a subordinate clause, *whom* (or *whomever*) appears out of order, before both the subject and the verb. To choose the correct pronoun, you must mentally restructure the clause:

You will work with our senior traders, whom you will meet later.

The subordinate clause is *whom you will meet later*. The subject of the clause is *you* and the verb is *will meet*. *Whom* is the direct object of the verb. The correct choice becomes clear if you mentally restructure the clause: *you will meet whom*.

When functioning as the object of a preposition in a subordinate clause, *whom* is often separated from its preposition.

The tutor whom I was assigned to was very supportive.

*Whom* is the object of the preposition *to*. In this sentence, the writer might choose to drop *whom*: *The tutor I was assigned to was very supportive*.

**NOTE:** Inserted expressions such as *they know, I think*, and *she says* should be ignored in determining whether to use *who* or *whom*.

All of the show-offs, bullies, and tough guys in school who want to take on a big guy they know will not hurt them.

*Who* is the subject of *will hurt*, not the object of *know*.
25b In questions, use who and whoever for subjects, whom and whomever for all objects.

When who and whom (or whoever and whomever) are used to open questions, their case is determined by their function within the question. In the following example, who functions as the subject of the question.

Who

Who was responsible for creating that computer virus?

> Who is the subject of the verb was.

When whom functions as the object of a verb or the object of a preposition in a question, it appears out of normal order. To choose the correct pronoun, you must mentally restructure the question.

Whom

Whom did the Democratic Party nominate in 1992?

> Whom is the direct object of the verb did nominate. This becomes clear if you restructure the question: The Democratic Party did nominate whom in 1992?

Whom

Whom did you enter into the contract with?

> Whom is the object of the preposition with, as is clear if you recast the question: You did enter into the contract with whom?

25c Use whom for subjects or objects of infinitives.

An infinitive is the word to followed by the base form of a verb. (See 64c.) Subjects of infinitives are an exception to the rule that subjects must be in the subjective case. Whenever an infinitive has a subject, it must be in the objective case. Objects of infinitives also are in the objective case.

Whom

On the subject of health care, I don’t know whom to believe.

NOTE: In spoken English, who is frequently used when the correct whom sounds too stuffy. Even educated speakers are likely to say Who [not Whom] did Joe replace? Although some readers
will accept such constructions in informal written English, it is safer to use *whom* in formal English: *Whom did Joe replace?*

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Language Debates > *who* versus *whom*

**EXERCISE 25–1** Edit the following sentences to eliminate errors in the use of *who* and *whom* (or *whoever* and *whomever*). If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

What is the address of the artist whom Antonio hired?

a. The roundtable featured scholars who I had never heard of.
b. Arriving late for rehearsal, we had no idea who was supposed to dance with whom.
c. Whom did you support in the last presidential election?
d. Daniel donates money to whomever needs it.
e. So many singers came to the audition that Natalia had trouble deciding who to select for the choir.

1. My cousin Sylvie, who I am teaching to fly a kite, watches us every time we compete.
2. Who decided to research the history of Hungarians in New Brunswick?
3. According to the Greek myth, the Sphinx devoured those who could not answer her riddles.
4. The people who ordered their medications from Canada were retirees whom don’t have health insurance.
5. Who did the committee select?

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Grammar exercises > Grammar > E-ex 25–1 and 25–2

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**Choose adjectives and adverbs with care.**

Adjectives ordinarily modify nouns or pronouns; occasionally they function as subject complements following linking verbs. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. (See 62d and 62e.)
Many adverbs are formed by adding -ly to adjectives (normal, normally; smooth, smoothly). But don’t assume that all words ending in -ly are adverbs or that all adverbs end in -ly. Some adjectives end in -ly (lovely, friendly) and some adverbs don’t (always, here, there). When in doubt, consult a dictionary.

In English, adjectives are not pluralized to agree with the words they modify: The red [not reds] roses were a wonderful surprise.

GRAMMAR CHECKERS can flag a number of problems with adjectives and adverbs: some misuses of bad or badly and good or well; some double comparisons, such as more meaner; some absolute comparisons, such as most unique; and some double negatives, such as can’t hardly. However, the programs miss more problems than they find. Programs ignored errors like these: could have been handled more professional and hadn’t been bathed regular.

26a Use adverbs, not adjectives, to modify verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

When adverbs modify verbs (or verbals), they nearly always answer the question When? Where? How? Why? Under what conditions? How often? or To what degree? When adverbs modify adjectives or other adverbs, they usually qualify or intensify the meaning of the word they modify. (See 62e.)

Adjectives are often used incorrectly in place of adverbs in casual or nonstandard speech.

► The arrangement worked out perfectly for everyone.

► The manager must see that the office runs smoothly and efficiently.

The adverb perfectly modifies the verb worked out; the adverbs smoothly and efficiently modify the verb runs.
In the early 1970s, chances for survival of the bald eagle really looked real slim.

Only adverbs can be used to modify adjectives or other adverbs. Really intensifies the meaning of the adjective slim.

**NOTE:** The incorrect use of the adjective *good* in place of the adverb *well* to modify a verb is especially common in casual and nonstandard speech. Use *well*, not *good*, to modify a verb in your writing.

We were glad that Sanya had done good on the CPA exam.

The adverb *well* should be used to modify the verb *had done*.

The word *well* is an adjective, however, when it means “healthy,” “satisfactory,” or “fortunate.”

I feel very well today.
All is well.
It is just as well.

The placement of adverbs varies from language to language. Unlike some languages, English does not allow an adverb between a verb (*poured*) and its direct object (*the liquid*). See 30f.

In the last stage of our experiment, we poured slowly the liquid into the container.

**26b Use adjectives, not adverbs, as subject complements.**

A subject complement follows a linking verb and completes the meaning of the subject. (See 63b.) When an adjective functions as a subject complement, it describes the subject.

*Justice is blind.*
Problems can arise with verbs such as *smell, taste, look,* and *feel,* which sometimes, but not always, function as linking verbs. If the word following one of these verbs describes the subject, use an adjective; if it modifies the verb, use an adverb.

**ADJECTIVE**

*The detective looked *cautious.*

**ADVERB**

*The detective looked *cautiously* for fingerprints.*

The adjective *cautious* describes the detective; the adverb *cautiously* modifies the verb *looked.*

Linking verbs suggest states of being, not actions. Notice, for example, the different meanings of *looked* in the preceding examples. To look cautious suggests the state of being cautious; to look cautiously is to perform an action in a cautious way.

*The lilacs in our backyard smell especially sweetly this year.*

*Lori looked well in her new go-go boots.*

The verbs *smell* and *looked* suggest states of being, not actions. Therefore, they should be followed by adjectives, not adverbs. (Contrast with action verbs: *We smelled the flowers. Lori looked for her go-go boots.*)

When the verb *feel* refers to the state of a person’s health or emotions, it is a linking verb and should be followed by an adjective.

*We felt badly upon hearing of your grandmother’s death.*

Another adjective, such as *saddened,* could be used in place of *bad.*

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Language Debates > *bad versus badly*

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**26c Use comparatives and superlatives with care.**

Most adjectives and adverbs have three forms: the positive, the comparative, and the superlative.
### Comparative versus superlative

Use the comparative to compare two things, the superlative to compare three or more.

- Which of these two low-carb drinks is **better**?
- Though Shaw and Jackson are impressive, Hobbs is the **most** qualified of the three candidates running for mayor.

### Form of comparatives and superlatives

To form comparatives and superlatives of most one- and two-syllable adjectives, use the endings *-er* and *-est*: smooth, smoother, smoothest; easy, easier, easiest. With longer adjectives, use *more* and *most* (or *less* and *least* for downward comparisons): exciting, more exciting, most exciting; helpful, less helpful, least helpful.

Some one-syllable adverbs take the endings *-er* and *-est* (fast, faster, fastest), but longer adverbs and all of those ending in *-ly* form the comparative and superlative with *more* and *most* (or *less* and *least*).

The comparative and superlative forms of the following adjectives and adverbs are irregular: good, better, best; well, better, best; bad, worse, worst; badly, worse, worst.

- The Kirov is the **most talented** ballet company we have seen.
- Lloyd’s luck couldn’t have been **worse** than David’s.

### Double comparatives or superlatives

Do not use double comparatives or superlatives. When you have added *-er* or *-est* to an adjective or adverb, do not also use *more* or *most* (or *less* or *least*).

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<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Of all her family, Julia is the **most** happiest about the move.

All the polls indicated that Gore was more **likely**er to win than Bush.

### Absolute concepts

Avoid expressions such as *more straight, less perfect, very round,* and *most unique.* Either something is unique or it isn’t. It is illogical to suggest that absolute concepts come in degrees.

- That is the most **unique** wedding gown I have ever seen.
- The painting would have been even more **priceless** had it **been** signed.

**ON THE WEB > dianahacker.com/rules**

Language Debates > Absolute concepts such as **unique**

### 26d Avoid double negatives.

Standard English allows two negatives only if a positive meaning is intended: *The orchestra was not unhappy with its performance.* Double negatives used to emphasize negation are nonstandard.

Negative modifiers such as *never, no,* and *not* should not be paired with other negative modifiers or with negative words such as *neither, none, no one, nobody,* and *nothing.*

- Management is not doing **nothing** to see that the trash is **picked up.**

  The double negative *not . . . nothing* is nonstandard.

  The modifiers *hardly, barely,* and *scarcely* are considered negatives in standard English, so they should not be used with negatives such as *not, no one,* or *never.*

- Maxine is so weak she can’t hardly climb stairs.
EXERCISE 26–1 Edit the following sentences to eliminate errors in the use of adjectives and adverbs. If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

We weren’t surprised by how good the sidecar racing team flowed through the tricky course.

a. Did you do good on last week’s chemistry exam?
b. With the budget deadline approaching, our office hasn’t hardly had time to handle routine correspondence.
c. Some flowers smell surprisingly bad.
d. The customer complained that he hadn’t been treated nice.
e. Of all my relatives, Uncle Roberto is the most cleverest.

1. When you answer the phone, speak clear and courteous.
2. Who was more upset about the loss? Was it the coach or the quarterback or the owner of the team?
3. To a novice skateboarder, even a basic move like the ollie seems real challenging.
4. After checking how bad I had been hurt, my sister dialed 911.
5. If the college’s Web page had been updated more regular, students would have learned about the new course offerings.

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Grammar exercises > Grammar > E-ex 26–1 and 26–2

Choose appropriate verb forms, tenses, and moods in standard English.

In nonstandard English, spoken by those who share a regional or cultural heritage, verb forms sometimes differ from those of standard English. In writing, use standard English verb forms unless you are quoting nonstandard speech or using nonstandard forms for literary effect. (See 17d.)
Except for the verb *be*, all verbs in English have five forms. The following list shows the five forms and provides a sample sentence in which each might appear.

**BASE FORM**
Usually I *(walk, ride)*.

**PAST TENSE**
Yesterday I *(walked, rode)*.

**PAST PARTICIPLE**
I have *(walked, ridden)* many times before.

**PRESENT PARTICIPLE**
I am *(walking, riding)* right now.

**-S FORM**
He/she/it *(walks, rides)* regularly.

Both the past-tense and past-participle forms of regular verbs end in *-ed* *(walked, walked)*. Irregular verbs form the past tense and past participle in other ways *(rode, ridden)*.

The verb *be* has eight forms instead of the usual five: *be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been*.

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**GRAMMAR CHECKERS**
Sometimes flag misused irregular verbs in sentences, such as *I had drove the car to school* and *Lucia seen the movie already*. But you cannot rely on grammar checkers to identify problems with irregular verbs — they miss about twice as many errors as they find.

---

**27a Choose standard English forms of irregular verbs.**

For all regular verbs, the past-tense and past-participle forms are the same (ending in *-ed or -d*), so there is no danger of confusion. This is not true, however, for irregular verbs, such as the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM</th>
<th>PAST TENSE</th>
<th>PAST PARTICIPLE</th>
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The past-tense form always occurs alone, without a helping verb. It expresses action that occurred entirely in the past: *I rode to work yesterday. I walked to work last Tuesday*. The past participle is used with a helping verb. It forms the perfect tenses with *has, have, or had*; it forms the passive voice with *be, am, is, are, was, were, being, or been*. (See 62c for a complete list of helping verbs and 27f for a survey of tenses.)
Last July, we went to Paris.

We have gone to Paris twice.

The list of common irregular verbs beginning at the bottom of this page will help you distinguish between past tense and past participle. Choose the past-participle form if the verb in your sentence requires a helping verb; choose the past-tense form if the verb does not require a helping verb.

saw

Yesterday we seen an unidentified flying object.

The past-tense form saw is required because there is no helping verb.

stolen

The truck was apparently stole while the driver ate lunch.

fallen

By Friday, the stock market had fell two hundred points.

Because of the helping verbs, the past-participle forms are required: was stolen, had fallen.

When in doubt about the standard English forms of irregular verbs, consult the following list or look up the base form of the verb in the dictionary, which also lists any irregular forms. (If no additional forms are listed in the dictionary, the verb is regular, not irregular.)

**Common irregular verbs**

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<tr>
<td>let (allow)</td>
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<tr>
<td>lie (recline)</td>
<td>lay</td>
<td>lain</td>
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<td>lose</td>
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<td>make</td>
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<td>prove</td>
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<td>proved, proven</td>
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<td>read</td>
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<td>ride</td>
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<tr>
<td>ring</td>
<td>rang</td>
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<tr>
<td>rise (get up)</td>
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<td>risen</td>
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<td>run</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASE FORM</td>
<td>PAST TENSE</td>
<td>PAST PARTICIPLE</td>
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<td>set (place)</td>
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<td>shake</td>
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<td>sink</td>
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<td>sunk</td>
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<td>sit (be seated)</td>
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<td>slay</td>
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<td>slain</td>
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<td>struck, stricken</td>
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<td>swear</td>
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<td>wring</td>
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<tr>
<td>write</td>
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<td>written</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27b Distinguish among the forms of *lie* and *lay*.

Writers and speakers frequently confuse the various forms of *lie* (meaning “to recline or rest on a surface”) and *lay* (meaning “to put or place something”). *Lie* is an intransitive verb; it does not take a direct object: *The tax forms lie on the table.* The verb *lay* is transitive; it takes a direct object: *Please lay the tax forms on the table.* (See 63b.)

In addition to confusing the meaning of *lie* and *lay*, writers and speakers are often unfamiliar with the standard English forms of these verbs.
Sue was so exhausted that she laid down for a nap. The past-tense form of lie ("to recline") is lay.

The patient had laid in an uncomfortable position all night. The past-participle form of lie ("to recline") is lain. If the correct English seems too stilted, recast the sentence: The patient had been lying in an uncomfortable position all night.

The prosecutor lay the pistol on a table close to the jurors. The past-tense form of lay ("to place") is laid.  

Letters dating from the Civil War were laying in the corner of the chest. The present participle of lie ("to rest on a surface") is lying.

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Language Debates > lie versus lay

EXERCISE 27-1 Edit the following sentences to eliminate problems with irregular verbs. If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

saw  
Was it you I seen last night at the concert?

correct

a. When I get the urge to exercise, I lay down until it passes.  
b. Grandmother had drove our new SUV to the sunrise church service on Savage Mountain, so we were left with the station wagon.  
c. A pile of dirty rags was laying at the bottom of the stairs.  
d. How did the computer know that the gamer had went from the room with the blue ogre to the hall where the gold was heaped?  
e. Abraham Lincoln took good care of his legal clients; the contracts he drew for the Illinois Central Railroad could never be broke.  
1. The burglar must have gone immediately upstairs, grabbed what looked good, and took off.  
2. Have you ever dreamed that you were falling from a cliff or flying through the air?
3. Tomás reached for the pen, signed the title page of his novel, and then laid the book on the table for the first customer in line.

4. In her junior year, Cindy run the 440-yard dash in 51.1 seconds.

5. Larry claimed that he had drank a bad soda, but Esther suspected the truth.

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Grammar exercises > Grammar > E-ex 27–1

27c Use -s (or -es) endings on present-tense verbs that have third-person singular subjects.

All singular nouns (child, tree) and the pronouns he, she, and it are third-person singular; indefinite pronouns such as everyone and neither are also third-person singular. When the subject of a sentence is third-person singular, its verb takes an -s or -es ending in the present tense. (See also 21.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>know</td>
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<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>he/she/it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>knows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>knows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>everyone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In nonstandard speech, the -s ending required by standard English is sometimes omitted.

- drives
  - My cousin drive to Cape Cod every weekend in the summer.

- turns
dissolves
- eats

- Sulfur dioxide turn leaves yellow, dissolve marble, and eat away iron and steel.

The subjects cousin and sulfur dioxide are third-person singular, so the verbs must end in -s.

TIP: Do not add the -s ending to the verb if the subject is not third-person singular.

The writers of the following sentences, knowing they sometimes dropped -s endings from verbs, overcorrected by adding the endings where they don’t belong.
I prepare program specifications and logic diagrams.

The writer mistakenly concluded that the -s ending belongs on present-tense verbs used with all singular subjects, not just third-person singular subjects. The pronoun I is first-person singular, so its verb does not require the -s.

The dirt floors require continual sweeping.

The writer mistakenly thought that the -s ending on the verb indicated plurality. The -s goes on present-tense verbs used with third-person singular subjects.

**Has versus have**

In the present tense, use has with third-person singular subjects; all other subjects require have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>you</td>
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<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>he/she/it</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In some dialects, have is used with all subjects. But standard English requires has for third-person singular subjects.

This respected musician almost always has a message to convey in his work.

As for the retirement income program, it has finally been established.

The subjects musician and it are third-person singular, so the verb should be has in each case.

**TIP:** Do not use has if the subject is not third-person singular. The writers of the following sentences were aware that they often wrote have when standard English requires has. Here they are using what appears to them to be the “more correct” form, but in an inappropriate context.
My business law classes have helped me to understand more about contracts.

I have much to be thankful for.

The subjects of these sentences—classes and I—are third-person plural and first-person singular, so standard English requires have. Has is used with third-person singular subjects only.

**Does versus do and doesn't versus don't**

In the present tense, use does and doesn't with third-person singular subjects; all other subjects require do and don't.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>he/she/it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grandfather really doesn't have a place to call home.

Do she know the correct procedure for setting up the experiment?

Grandfather and she are third-person singular, so the verbs should be doesn't and does.

**Am, is, and are; was and were**

The verb be has three forms in the present tense (am, is, are) and two in the past tense (was, were). Use am and was with first-person singular subjects; use is and was with third-person singular subjects. With all other subjects, use are and were.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>he/she/it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Judy wanted to borrow Tim’s notes, but she was too shy to ask for them.

The subject she is third-person singular, so the verb should be was.

Did you think you were going to drown?

The subject you is second-person singular, so the verb should be were.

**GRAMMAR CHECKERS** are fairly good at catching missing -s endings on verbs and some misused -s forms of the verb, consistently flagging errors such as The training session take place later today and The careful camper learn to feel the signs of a coming storm. (See the grammar checker advice on p. 167 for more information about subject-verb agreement.)

### 27d Do not omit -ed endings on verbs.

Speakers who do not fully pronounce -ed endings sometimes omit them unintentionally in writing. Failure to pronounce -ed endings is common in many dialects and in informal speech even in standard English. In the following frequently used words and phrases, for example, the -ed ending is not always fully pronounced.

- advised
- developed
- prejudiced
- supposed to
- asked
- fixed
- pronounced
- used to
- concerned
- frightened
- stereotyped

When a verb is regular, both the past tense and the past participle are formed by adding -ed to the base form of the verb.

**Past tense**

Use an -ed or -d ending to express the past tense of regular verbs. The past tense is used when the action occurred entirely in the past.
Over the weekend, Ed fixed his brother’s skateboard and tuned up his mother’s 1977 Cougar.

Last summer, my counselor advised me to ask my chemistry instructor for help.

Past participles

Past participles are used in three ways: (1) following have, has, or had to form one of the perfect tenses; (2) following be, am, is, are, was, were, being, or been to form the passive voice; and (3) as adjectives modifying nouns or pronouns. The perfect tenses are listed on page 216, and the passive voice is discussed in 8a. For a discussion of participles functioning as adjectives, see 64c.

Robin has asked me to go to California with her.

Has asked is present perfect tense (have or has followed by a past participle).

Though it is not a new phenomenon, domestic violence is publicized more frequently than before.

Is publicized is a verb in the passive voice (a form of be followed by a past participle).

All aerobics classes end in a cool-down period to stretch tightened muscles.

The past participle tightened functions as an adjective modifying the noun muscles.

GRAMMAR CHECKERS flag missing -ed endings on verbs more often than not. Unfortunately, they often suggest an -ing ending (passing) rather than the missing -ed ending (passed), as in the following sentence: The law was pass last week.
27e  Do not omit needed verbs.

Although standard English allows some linking verbs and helping verbs to be contracted, at least in informal contexts, it does not allow them to be omitted.

Linking verbs, used to link subjects to subject complements, are frequently a form of be: be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been. (See 62c.) Some of these forms may be contracted (I’m, she’s, we’re, you’re, they’re), but they should not be omitted altogether.

\[ \text{are} \]
When we quiet in the evening, we can hear crickets in the woods.

\[ \text{is} \]
Alvin a man who can defend himself.

Helping verbs, used with main verbs, include forms of be, do, and have or the words can, will, shall, could, would, should, may, might, and must. (See 62c.) Some helping verbs may be contracted (he’s leaving, we’ll celebrate, they’ve been told), but they should not be omitted altogether.

\[ \text{have} \]
We been in Chicago since last Thursday.

\[ \text{would} \]
Do you know someone who be good for the job?

Some languages do not require a linking verb between a subject and its complement. English, however, requires a verb in every sentence. See 30a.

\[ \text{am} \]
Every night, I read a short book to my daughter. When I too busy, my husband reads to her.

**GRAMMAR CHECKERS** flag omitted verbs about half the time — but they often miss needed helping verbs. For example, a grammar checker caught the missing verb in this sentence: *We seen the sequel three times already*. However, this sentence went unflagged: *The plot built around a family reunion.*
EXERCISE 27–2  Edit the following sentences to eliminate problems with -s and -ed verb forms and with omitted verbs. If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

The Pell Grant sometimes covers the student’s full tuition.

a. The glass sculptures of the Swan Boats was prominent in the brightly lit lobby.
b. Visitors to the glass museum were not suppose to touch the exhibits.
c. Our church has all the latest technology, even a close-circuit television.
d. Christos didn’t know about Marlo’s promotion because he never listens. He always talking.
e. Most psychologists agree that no one performs well under stress.

1. Have there ever been a time in your life when you were too depressed to get out of bed?
2. My days in this department have taught me to do what I’m told without asking questions.
3. We have change our plan and are waiting out the storm before leaving.
4. Winter training for search-and-rescue divers consist of building up a tolerance to icy water temperatures.
5. How would you feel if a love one had been a victim of a crime like this?

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Grammar exercises > Grammar > E-ex 27–2

27f  Choose the appropriate verb tense.

Tenses indicate the time of an action in relation to the time of the speaking or writing about that action.

The most common problem with tenses — shifting confusingly from one tense to another — is discussed in 13. Other problems with tenses are detailed in this section, after the following survey of tenses.

GRAMMAR CHECKERS do not flag most problems with tense discussed in this section: special uses of the present tense, use of past versus past perfect, and sequence of tenses.
Survey of tenses

Tenses are classified as present, past, and future, with simple, perfect, and progressive forms for each.

The simple tenses indicate relatively simple time relations. The simple present tense is used primarily for actions occurring at the time of the speaking or for actions occurring regularly. The simple past tense is used for actions completed in the past. The simple future tense is used for actions that will occur in the future.

In the following table, the simple tenses are given for the regular verb *walk*, the irregular verb *ride*, and the highly irregular verb *be*.

**SIMPLE PRESENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>walk, ride, am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>walk, ride, are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she/it</td>
<td>walks, rides, is</td>
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</table>

**SIMPLE PAST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>walked, rode, was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>walked, rode, were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she/it</td>
<td>walked, rode, was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SIMPLE FUTURE**

I, you, he/she/it, we, they will walk, ride, be

More complex time relations are indicated by the perfect tenses. A verb in one of the perfect tenses (a form of *have* plus the past participle) expresses an action that was or will be completed at the time of another action.

**PRESENT PERFECT**

I, you, we, they have walked, ridden, been

**PAST PERFECT**

I, you, he/she/it, we, they had walked, ridden, been

**FUTURE PERFECT**

I, you, he/she/it, we, they will have walked, ridden, been
The simple and perfect tenses just discussed have progressive forms that describe actions in progress. A progressive verb consists of a form of be followed by a present participle. The progressive forms are not normally used with mental activity verbs such as believe, know, and think.

**PRESENT PROGRESSIVE**

I am walking, riding, being  
he/she/it is walking, riding, being  
you, we, they are walking, riding, being

**PAST PROGRESSIVE**

I, he/she/it was walking, riding, being  
you, we, they were walking, riding, being

**FUTURE PROGRESSIVE**

I, you, he/she/it, we, they will be walking, riding, being

**PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE**

I, you, we, they have been walking, riding, being  
he/she/it has been walking, riding, being

**PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE**

I, you, he/she/it, we, they had been walking, riding, being

**FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE**

I, you, he/she/it, we, they will have been walking, riding, being

**Special uses of the present tense**

Use the present tense when expressing general truths, when writing about literature, and when quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing an author’s views.

General truths or scientific principles should appear in the present tense, unless such principles have been disproved.

**Galileo taught that the earth revolves around the sun.**

Since Galileo’s teaching has not been discredited, the verb should be in the present tense. The following sentence, however, is acceptable: *Ptolemy taught that the sun revolved around the earth.*
When writing about a work of literature, you may be tempted to use the past tense. The convention, however, is to describe fictional events in the present tense.

In Masuji Ibuse’s *Black Rain*, a child *reached* for a pomegranate in his mother’s garden, and a moment later he *was* dead, killed by the blast of the atomic bomb.

When you are quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing the author of a nonliterary work, use present-tense verbs such as *writes, reports, asserts,* and so on. This convention is usually followed even when the author is dead (unless a date or the context specifies the time of writing).

Baron Bowan of Colwood *wrote* that “a metaphysician is one who goes into a dark cellar at midnight without a light, looking for a black cat that is not there.”

**EXCEPTION:** When you are documenting a paper with the APA (American Psychological Association) style of in-text citations, use past-tense verbs such as *reported* or *demonstrated* or present perfect verbs such as *has reported* or *has demonstrated.*

E. Wilson (1994) *reported* that positive reinforcement alone was a less effective teaching technique than a mixture of positive reinforcement and constructive criticism.

**The past perfect tense**

The past perfect tense consists of a past participle preceded by *had (had worked, had gone).* This tense is used for an action already completed by the time of another past action or for an action already completed at some specific past time.

Everyone *had spoken* by the time I arrived.

Everyone *had spoken* by 10:00 a.m.

Writers sometimes use the simple past tense when they should use the past perfect.
We built our cabin high on a pine knoll, forty feet above an abandoned quarry that had been flooded in 1920 to create a lake.

The building of the cabin and the flooding of the quarry both occurred in the past, but the flooding was completed before the time of building.

By the time dinner was served, the guest of honor left.

The past perfect tense is needed because the action of leaving was already completed at a specific past time (when dinner was served).

Some writers tend to overuse the past perfect tense. Do not use the past perfect if two past actions occurred at the same time.

When we arrived in Paris, Pauline had met us at the train station.

Sequence of tenses with infinitives and participles

An infinitive is the base form of a verb preceded by to. (See 64c.) Use the present infinitive to show action at the same time as or later than the action of the verb in the sentence.

The club had hoped to have raised a thousand dollars by April 1.

The action expressed in the infinitive (to raise) occurred later than the action of the sentence’s verb (had hoped).

Use the perfect form of an infinitive (to have followed by the past participle) for an action occurring earlier than that of the verb in the sentence.

Dan would like to have joined the navy, but he did not pass the physical.

The liking occurs in the present; the joining would have occurred in the past.

Like the tense of an infinitive, the tense of a participle is governed by the tense of the sentence’s verb. Use the present...
participle (ending in -ing) for an action occurring at the same time as that of the sentence’s verb.

Hiking the Appalachian Trail in early spring, we spotted many wildflowers.

Use the past participle (such as given or helped) or the present perfect participle (having plus the past participle) for an action occurring before that of the verb.

Discovered off the coast of Florida, the Atocha yielded many treasures.

Having worked her way through college, Lee graduated debt-free.

27g Use the subjunctive mood in the few contexts that require it.

There are three moods in English: the indicative, used for facts, opinions, and questions; the imperative, used for orders or advice; and the subjunctive, used in certain contexts to express wishes, requests, or conditions contrary to fact. Of these moods, only the subjunctive causes problems for writers.

Forms of the subjunctive

In the subjunctive mood, present-tense verbs do not change form to indicate the number and person of the subject (see 21). Instead, the subjunctive uses the base form of the verb (be, drive, employ) with all subjects.

It is important that you be [not are] prepared for the interview.

We asked that she drive [not drives] more slowly.

Also, in the subjunctive mood, there is only one past-tense form of be: were (never was).

If I were [not was] you, I’d proceed more cautiously.

Uses of the subjunctive

The subjunctive mood appears only in a few contexts: in contrary-to-fact clauses beginning with if or expressing a wish; in that clauses following verbs such as ask, insist, recommend, request, and suggest; and in certain set expressions.
IN CONTRARY-TO-FACT CLAUSES BEGINNING WITH IF When a subordinate clause beginning with if expresses a condition contrary to fact, use the subjunctive mood.

- If I were a member of Congress, I would vote for that bill.

- We could be less cautious if Jake were more trustworthy.

The verbs in these sentences express conditions that do not exist: The writer is not a member of Congress, and Jake is not trustworthy.

Do not use the subjunctive mood in if clauses expressing conditions that exist or may exist.

If Dana wins the contest, she will leave for Barcelona in June.

IN CONTRARY-TO-FACT CLAUSES EXPRESSING A WISH In formal English, the subjunctive is used in clauses expressing a wish or desire; in informal speech, however, the indicative is more common.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMAL</th>
<th>I wish that Dr. Vaughn were my professor.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INFORMAL</td>
<td>I wish that Dr. Vaughn was my professor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IN THAT CLAUSES FOLLOWING VERBS SUCH AS ASK, INSIST, REQUEST, AND SUGGEST Because requests have not yet become reality, they are expressed in the subjunctive mood.

- Professor Moore insists that her students be on time.

- We recommend that Lambert file form 1050 soon.

IN CERTAIN SET EXPRESSIONS The subjunctive mood, once more widely used, remains in certain set expressions: Be that as it may, as it were, far be it from me, and so on.

GRAMMAR CHECKERS only sometimes flag problems with the subjunctive mood. What they catch is very spotty, so you must be alert to the correct uses of the subjunctive in your own writing.
EXERCISE 27–3  Edit the following sentences to eliminate errors in verb tense or mood. If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Answers to lettered sentences appear in the back of the book. Example:

had been

After the path was plowed, we were able to walk through the park.

a. The palace of Knossos in Crete is believed to have been destroyed by fire around 1375 BCE.
b. Watson and Crick discovered the mechanism that controlled inheritance in all life: the workings of the DNA molecule.
c. When Hitler decided to kill the Jews in 1941, did he know that Himmler and his SS had mass murder in mind since 1938?
d. Tonight’s concert begins at 9:30. If it were earlier, I’d consider going.
e. As soon as my aunt applied for the position of pastor, the post was filled by an inexperienced seminary graduate who had been so hastily snatched that his mortarboard was still in midair.

1. Don Quixote, in Cervantes’s novel, was an idealist ill suited for life in the real world.
2. Visiting the technology museum inspired the high school seniors and had reminded them that science could be fun.
3. I would like to have been on the Mayflower but not to have lived through the first winter.
4. When the director yelled “Action!” I forgot my lines, even though I practiced my part every waking hour for three days.
5. If midday naps were a regular practice in American workplaces, employees would be far more productive.

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