

GRAMMAR: USAGE AND COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

Pronoun/antecedent: (adapted from http://aliscot.com/bigdog/agreement_pa.htm)

Just like subjects must match their verbs (singular nouns must have singular verbs and plural nouns must have plural verbs, pronouns must match their antecedents. But what is a pronoun? What about an antecedent?

A **pronoun** renames (takes the place of) a noun that comes before it. (see above) Examples: he, she, it, they, their, theirs, us, we, him, her, yours, mine, ours, its, etc.

An **antecedent** is what we call the noun that comes before the pronoun.
Two examples should be enough:

1. I get scared when my **brother** lets **his** pet tarantula out.
2. The **cat** goes wild, and **he** always messes up my homework.

In number 1, **brother** is the antecedent; **his** is the pronoun. They agree because **both are plural**. In number 2, **cat** is the antecedent, and **he** is the pronoun. They agree since **both are singular**. If you are still having problems with pronoun-antecedent agreement, underline all your pronouns; then, locate the antecedent for each. Make sure that both are the same in number. That's all you have to do.

Parts of Speech:

There are eight parts of speech in the English language. Every word is assigned one of these parts. In turn, each part of speech has a role to play in a sentence.

Nouns: Nouns name persons, place, things, and ideas. Here are a few examples of each.

<u>Persons</u>	<u>Places</u>	<u>Things</u>	<u>Ideas</u>
Ms. Strong	South County	apples	happiness
actor	Hawaii	winter	wisdom
Melanie	basements	brain	peace

Nouns can be plural: apples, bananas, deer, mice
Or singular: apple, banana, deer, mouse

Nouns can be concrete (meaning you can touch them): water, brick, t-shirt
Or abstract (can't be touched): unity, wisdom, simplicity

Verbs: Verbs name actions or state of being. Without verbs we couldn't have a sentence. They provide the "be" and "do" of the sentence.

Action verbs: eating, ran, swims, hung, studied

State of being verbs: being, is, am, does, might, should, can, could, etc.

Some of these verbs can also be used as linking words. A linking word is like an equal sign. The cat is red/The cat=red. It's easy to find the verb when it's an action one, but try this trick when looking for linking verbs.

There are also helping verbs. The main job of these verbs is to help action verbs do their job better.
Examples: could have, will not, been, did, was, should could, etc. When you add a linking verb to a regular verb, you get a verb phrase.

Adjectives: Adjectives are words used to describe nouns. (Don't confuse these with adverbs). Adjectives tell us how many, what kind, and which one.

Ex: *four* books, *spicy* salsa, *that* dog

Adjectives can also be proper (similar to proper nouns).

Here are some instances in which we would capitalize the first letter of our adjective because it is plural:

Buddhist temple, Crayola markers, Halloween mask, Thai food
(religious descriptions, brand names, holidays, and ethnicities/nationalities)

Articles: Finally, here are three words that have their own category: they are called articles. They are considered adjectives and are always used with and give some information about a noun.

a, an, the

Adverbs: Adverbs are similar to adjectives in that they describe. However, instead of describing nouns, adverbs describe verbs, adjectives, and OTHER adverbs. Here are examples of each:

1. Adverb describing a verb: He ran *quickly*.
2. Adverb describing an adjective: The cake was baked *very* well. (describing the word "well")
3. Adverb describing another adverb: He ran *so* quickly.

Pronouns: Pronouns replace the nouns that come before them. This avoids repetition. Check out these examples:

- When **Katie** snuck into the house, **Katie** ran to the kitchen.
- When **Katie** snuck into the house, **she** ran to the kitchen.

The second sentence sounds right. If we didn't have pronouns, our sentences would sound odd. Here are some common examples of pronouns: he, she, it, its, their, theirs, us, we, them, your, yours, me, her, him, etc.

Prepositions: A preposition joins a noun or a pronoun to the rest of the sentence. A preposition shows a relationship between IT and another part of the sentence.

A common way to find a preposition is to use the old memory-aiding device of the rabbit and the tree, although to make it easier, we will use a squirrel here.

The squirrel is _____ the tree.

Pretty much any word you can fill in that blank, is a preposition. (in, beside, above, under, below, around, beneath, within, inside, out of, about, etc.)

Conjunctions: Conjunctions are words or groups of words that JOIN words or groups of words. Here are some conjunctions that join words:

Trees AND plants, paper OR plastic, sad BUT true

Here are some conjunctions that join phrases:

Go for a swim OR a hike

After lunch BUT before dinner

Saving the planet AND having fun

Here are some conjunctions that join sentences:

I wanted to call BUT it was too late.

It was freezing AND snowing.

I love the snow BECAUSE it makes me think of winter break!

Here are some common conjunctions.

After, before, unless, although, until, and, or, but, because, neither, nor, either, as, if, then, while)

Interjections: Perhaps the most exciting of the parts of speech, interjections are words used to express emotion. They have no grammatical link to the rest of the sentence and are usually followed by an exclamation point.

Oh! I had no idea you were throwing me a surprise party!

Wow! It's a miracle you survived the avalanche!

Oops, I spilled the milk again.

Sorry, I didn't mean to step on your foot.

So he has a new car, *eh?*

Capitalization: (adapted from <http://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/capital.asp>)

Rule 1 Capitalize the first word of a quoted sentence.

Examples *He said, "It looks like it might rain today."*

"Hey you!" she yelled. "You forgot your purse."

Rule 2 Capitalize a proper noun.

Example *South County Secondary School*

Rule 3 Capitalize a person's title when it precedes the name. Do not capitalize when the title is acting as a description following the name.

Examples *Principal Rumberger*

Mr. Rumberger, the principal of the school, will address us at noon.

Rule 4 Capitalize when the person's title follows the name on the address or signature line.

Examples *Sincerely,*

Ms. Lipp, Associate Principal

Rule 5 Capitalize the titles of high-ranking government officials when used with or before their names. Do not capitalize the civil title if it is used instead of the name.

Examples *The president will address Congress.*

All senators are expected to attend.

The governors and lieutenant governors called for a special task force.

Governor Fortinbrass, Lieutenant Governor Poppins, Attorney General Dalloway, and Senators James and Twain will attend.

Rule 6 Capitalize any title when used as a direct address.

Example *Will you check my pulse, Doctor?*

Rule 7 Capitalize points of the compass only when they refer to specific regions, not directional descriptions.

Examples *My cousins are from the South.*

Go east three blocks and then turn left.

We live in the northwest section of town.

The word *northwest* is just an adjective here describing section, so it should not be capitalized.

Rule 8 Always capitalize the first and last words of titles of publications regardless of their parts of speech. Always capitalize other words within titles, including the short verb forms *Is, Are, and Be*.

Exception Do not capitalize little words within titles such as *a, an, the, but, as, if, and, or, nor*, or prepositions, regardless of their length.

Examples *The Day of the Jackal*

What Color Is Your Parachute?

A Tale of Two Cities

Rule 9 Capitalize *federal* or *state* when used as part of an official agency name or in government documents where these terms represent an official name. If they are being used as general terms, you may use lower-case letters.

Examples *The state has evidence to the contrary.*

That is a federal offense.

The State Board of Equalization collects sales taxes.

We will visit three states during our summer vacation.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has been subject to much scrutiny and criticism lately.

Her business must comply with all county, state, and federal laws.

Rule 10 You may capitalize words such as *department*, *bureau*, and *office* if you have prepared your text in the following way:

Example *The Bureau of Land Management (Bureau) has some jurisdiction over Indian lands. The Bureau is finding its administrative role to be challenging.*

Rule 11 Do not capitalize names of seasons.

Example *I love autumn colors and spring flowers.*

Rule 12 Capitalize the first word of a salutation and the first word of a complimentary close.

Examples *Dear Ms. Mohamed:*

My dear Mr. Sanchez:

Very truly yours,

Rule 13 Capitalize words derived from proper nouns.

Example *I must take English and math.*
English is capitalized because it comes from the proper noun *England* but *math* does not come from *mathland*.

Rule 14 Capitalize the names of specific course titles.

Example *I must take history and Algebra 2.*

IM vs. formal English: It is important to remember that writing an essay and typing to a friend online are two VERY different things. It's okay to type a quick, informal message to your friends via text or IM, but these abbreviations are considered slang and inappropriate for school assignments. Remember that way you write an email to your teacher should be very different than the way you may email a friend. Here are some specifics to avoid.

Incorrect: How do u like this story?
Correct: How do you like this story?

Incorrect: Sometimes i think this character is 2 emotional.
Correct: Sometimes I think this character is too emotional.

Types of Sentences

A sentence is a group of words that contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought. There are three types you need to know:

1. Simple: A simple sentence, also known as an independent clause, contains a subject and a verb.

Example: Carlos and Lisa went to the store.

2. Compound: A compound sentence contains two independent clauses joined by for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so.

Example: Kristina went shopping, so I decided to see a movie.

3. Complex: A complex sentence has an independent clause joined by one or more dependent clauses. A complex sentence always has a subordinator such as *because*, *since*, *after*, *although*, or *when* or a relative pronoun such as *that*, *who*, or *which*.

Example: The students are studying because they have a Spanish test tomorrow.

Commas, Semi-Colons and Colons:

Commas:

Commas can be used to separate items in the series.

Example: I saw Jerry, Sarah, and Johnny at the mall on Saturday.

Commas can also be used to separate two or more adjectives that precede a noun.

Example: Casey is the sweetest, cutest dog that ever lived.

Commas also join clauses.

Example: I really like chocolate ice cream, but I also enjoy vanilla.

Semi-Colons:

Semi-colons are used between independent clauses in a sentence if the sentences are not joined by and, but, or, nor, so, or yet.

Example: Raise your hand if you like cheese; I can't tell by seeing your reactions.

Semi-colons are also used between short sentences.

Example: We all had to be warned about the test; few of us felt prepared.

Colons:

Use a colon before a list of items.

Example: Three students earned A's on the test: the valedictorian, Kendra, and Michael.

Use a colon before a long, formal statement or quotation.

Example: Martin Luther King offered these words of motivation: "I have a dream."

Subject verb agreement:

A verb should always agree with the subject in number. Singular subjects take singular verbs, and plural subjects take plural verbs.

Incorrect Example: He *love* his dog and *take* the dog on walks three times a day.

Correct Example: He *loves* his dog and *takes* the dog on walks three times a day.

In this example, the s added to love refers to the singular subject whereas love without an s refers to the plural subject. Let's look at another example:

Incorrect Example: We *wishes* that we could go to the concert, but it's on a Monday.

Correct Example: We *wish* that we could go to the concert, but it's on a Monday.

“Wishes” would be the correct verb for a singular subject. He wishes that we could go to the concert. “We” doesn't need the s for the plural verb.

Commonly Confused Words:

Who vs. Whom

Whom is not to be used with the verb “to be” except where that verb is in the infinitive. Whom is in the objective case.

Example: Did you see *whom* Mrs. Johnson selected as captain?

(Whom is the direct object of the verb selected in the clause whom Mrs. Johnson selected.)

Example: The person *who* recited the poem at the play was phenomenal.

(Who is the subject of the verb recited in the clause who recited the poem.)

To, Two, Too

To is a preposition or part of a verb.

Example: Let's go to the mall after school (preposition)

Example: I love to swim. (infinitive of a verb)

Two is a number-one plus one.

Example: I have two dogs and one cat.

Too is an adverb that means excessively.

Example: There were too many people at the concert, so they shut it down.

Accept vs. Except

Accept is a verb that means to receive, admit, regard as true, and as an affirmation.

Example: I was immediately accepted into the Key Club after I completed my service hours.

Except is a preposition that means excluding.

Example: I want all flavors of ice cream in my sundae except strawberry.

Affect vs. Effect

Affect is a verb meaning to influence.

Example: We were deeply *affected* by the loss of our favorite coach to the rival team.

Effect is a noun that means result, but also can be used as a verb, meaning to accomplish.

Example: Our votes may *effect* a change in this year's election. (verb)

Example: The depleting ozone layer has a negative *effect* on our planet. (noun)

Passed vs. Past

Passed is a verb signifying the past tense of pass.

Example: We passed by your house yesterday after soccer practice.

Past is a noun referring to history, an adjective meaning former and also a preposition meaning farther on than.

Example: Learning about England's past helps us understand United States history. (noun)

Example: He's the past president of the Key Club. (adjective)

Example: I drove past Dairy Queen on the way home from school. (preposition)

Their, They're, There

Their is possessive pronoun that is plural.

Example: We went to their barbeque for the fourth of July.

They're is a combination of they and are.

Example: They're planning a trip to Europe over the summer.

There is an adjective that signifies location.

Example: Over there you will find the blankets you need for the sleepover.

Its vs. It's

Its is the possessive form of the word "it."

Example: The dog hurt its legs running behind the truck.

It's is the contraction of "it is".

Example: It's time to go the doctor so I can get my annual physical check-up.

Your vs. You're

Your is the second person possessive adjective, used to describe something as belong to you. *Your* is always followed by a noun.

Example: Is this your dog, or your neighbors?

You're is the contraction of "you are" and is often followed by the present participle (verb form ending in -ing).

Example: You're going to be late to the show if you don't hurry up.

Then vs. Than

Then is another word for next.

Example: After you add sugar then you must add eggs to your cake batter.

Than is a conjunction that is used to compare one thing to another.

Example: Mary is much taller than Sarah.

Lose vs. Loose

Lose means to suffer a loss.

Example: We were upset to lose to our rival swim team.

Loose is a noun that means free or unconnected.

Example: I need to tighten my loose shoe laces.

Weather vs. Whether

Weather refers to outdoor conditions.

Example: The weather outside today was very hot.

Whether is a subordinating conjunction that is used when discussing options.

Example: I'm not sure whether I want chicken or steak for dinner.

Lay vs. Lie

Lay is a transitive verb, which means that it must be used with a direct object. The past tense of *lay* is *laid*.

Example: Please lay the books on the table when you get home from school.

Lie is an intransitive verb, which means it cannot have a direct object. The past tense of *lie* is *lay*.

Example: Lie down next to me if you are tired.