

Writing Workshop: Grammar

Office of Graduate Studies

MISSOURI
S&T



Today's Topics

- Nouns
- Articles
- Pronouns
- Subject/Verb Agreement
- Verb Tense
- Sentence Fragments
- Fused Sentences
- Comma Splices
- Compound Words
- Grammatical Mood
- Idiomatic Expressions
- False Grammar Rules

Nouns: Count

- Things that exist as separate and distinct individual units. They usually refer to what can be perceived by the senses.
- Can take a plural form
- Examples:
 - season → seasons
 - method → methods
 - study → studies

Nouns: Noncount

- Things that can't be counted because they are thought of as wholes that can't be cut into parts. They often refer to abstractions and occasionally have a collective meaning.
- Cannot take a plural form (usually)
- Examples:
 - milk
 - air
 - research
 - equipment

Nouns: Using Adjectives

Certain adjectives can only be used with count or noncount nouns

Count	Noncount	Both
many	much	enough
few	little	a lot of/lots of
fewer (number)	less (amount)	plenty of
	a little bit of	some/any
		no

Nouns: Using Determiners

	a, an	the	this, that	these, those	no article
Count singular	X	X	X		
Count plural		X		X	X
Noncount		X	X		X

Count Singular:

I ate an orange.

I drove the car.

Do you live in this house?

No, I live in that house over there.

Count Plural:

I like to feed the birds.

Does she want these shoes?

No, she wants those shoes over there.

Cats are interesting pets.

Noncount:

The soup is hot.

This milk is going sour.

Music helps me relax.

Articles: A/An or The?

A/An: Indefinite Article	The: Definite Article
<p>When writing about something that is not specific or not known by both the speaker and the reader</p> <p><i>I need to buy <u>a</u> new wide-angle lens for my camera. (any wide-angle lens)</i></p>	<p>When writing about something that is specific or known by both the speaker and the reader</p> <p><i>Did you understand <u>the</u> art history lecture? (this specific lecture)</i></p>

Articles: A or An?

Once you've determined that you need an indefinite article, look at the word that follows to determine if you should use a or an. The key in deciding is not the word's spelling but its pronunciation

Use a when the word immediately after begins with a consonant sound
a UFO

Use an when the word immediately after begins with a vowel sound
an umbrella

Pronouns: General Rules

Pronouns should agree in number

- Every one should complete his or her report by Monday. ✓
- Neither of the options is satisfactory. ✓

Pronoun case should correspond to its role in the sentence

- The coach picked he and I. ✗
- The coach picked him and me. ✓

A pronoun must refer clearly to the noun it represents

- Take the radio out of the car and fix it. ✗
- Fix the radio after taking it out of the car. ✓

Pronouns: That or Which?

Restrictive Clauses → that

- Contain essential information and are introduced with that
- Are not set off by commas
- *The class that I want has a waitlist.*

Nonrestrictive Clauses → which

- Contain extra information that can be omitted from a complete sentence
- Are set off by commas
- *Lab experiments, which can be dangerous, often lead to breakthroughs.*

Pronouns: When to Omit That

English has a zero relative pronoun (marked by \emptyset), meaning that the relative pronoun **that** (also who, whom, etc.) can be omitted in restrictive relative clauses when it is the object of the clause.

Jack built the house that I was born in. ✓

Jack built the house \emptyset I was born in. ✓

Pronouns: When to Omit That

Subject of the clause (that needed):

The woman that moved to Rolla was enrolling for classes. ✓

The woman moved to Rolla was enrolling for classes. ✗

Object of the clause (that can be omitted):

The woman that we spoke to yesterday was moving to Rolla. ✓

The woman we spoke to yesterday was moving to Rolla. ✓

Pronouns: When to Omit That

If the clause is in passive voice, remember to remove that AND the auxiliary verb:

The method that was used in this study resulted in higher voltage-gain ratio. ✓

The method used in this study resulted in higher voltage-gain ratio. ✓

The method was used in this study resulted in higher voltage-gain ratio. ✗

Relative Clauses: Center Embedding

The rat the cat the dog chased killed ate the malt.

The rat _____ ate the malt.

The rat (that) the cat _____ killed ate the malt.

The rat the cat (that)the dog chased killed ate the malt.

Subject/Verb Agreement

The subject of a sentence does not agree with the verb when they do not match in terms of the number.

If the subject is singular, the verb must also be singular.

The book (singular subject) contains (singular verb) many chapters.

If the subject is plural, the verb must also be plural.

The particles (plural subject) are (plural verb) suspended in the solution.

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 1 & 2

If you have two or more subjects joined by **and**, use a plural verb.

She **and** her friends **are** at the movies.

If you have two or more subjects joined by **or** or **nor**, use a singular verb.

The dog **or** the cat **is** in the bedroom.

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 3

If your subject contains **both a singular and a plural subject** joined by **or** or **nor**, your verb should agree with the part of the subject that is **closest to the verb**.

My brother **or** my parents **are** picking me up from the airport.

My parents **or** my brother **is** picking me up from the airport.

Note: it is more common to use *either...or* in constructions like this, in which case the verb will always be singular (see Rule 6)

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 4

Doesn't: a contraction of *does not* (singular)

She **doesn't** remember.

Don't: a contraction of *do not* (plural). Used with I and you.

They **don't** remember.

I **don't** remember

You **don't** remember.

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 5

Your verb might not agree with the noun that is closest to it. Sometimes phrases come between your subject and verb, but the phrase does not contain the subject of the sentence.

One of the eggs **is** hatching.

The people who go to the park **are** many.

The manager, as well as the employees, **is** at a conference.

The show, including the first few episodes, **is** boring.

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 6

The following words are singular and require a **singular** verb.

each	anybody
each one	anyone
either	nobody
neither	no one
everyone	somebody
everybody	someone

Examples:

Each of the muffins **is** burned.

Everybody **is** already there.

Either choice **is** correct.

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 6 (cont.)

Note: The word none is an exception to this rule. It is often assumed that *none* can only take a singular verb, but it can be singular or plural depending on the sentence.

None of the cookie is eaten.

None of the apples are eaten

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 7

Some nouns that look like plurals will actually take **singular** verbs. Examples include civics, mathematics, dollars, measles, and news.

The news **is** on at 7:00.

Measles **is** a highly contagious infection.

Mathematics **is** subdivided into the study of quantity, structure, space, and change.

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 8

Some nouns that make up a single object will take a **plural** verb because there are two parts to them. Examples include scissors, tweezers, pants, and shears.

The scissors are sharp.

These pants are made of polyester.

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 9

Sentences beginning with there might be **singular or plural** depending on the subject that follows the verb.

There **are** many questions.

There **is** one question

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 10

Collective nouns imply a group of individuals and usually take a **singular** verb. Examples include family, team, staff, people, and herd.

(Note: American English tends to prefer singular verbs for collective nouns, while British English prefers plural.)

The committee **meets** every Thursday.

My family **is** visiting this weekend.

The staff **is** trying to meet the deadline.

Subject/Verb Agreement: Rule 11

The following expressions do not affect the number of the subject.

with	accompanied by
together with	in addition to
including	as well as

Examples:

The professor, accompanied by his wife, **is** traveling to India.

My book, in addition to yours, **is** on that shelf.

Trial 1, as well as Trial 2, **is** shown in Figure 11.

Verb Tense

In most cases, do not switch verb tense within a sentence. If the time frame for each action or state is the same, then keep the verb tense the same

Yesterday they walked to campus, but today they drove to campus.

However, if there is a change in the time frame from one action or state to another, then it is necessary to change the verb tense in the sentence

Yesterday they walked to campus, but today they will drive to campus.

Incomplete Sentences: Terminology

Sentence fragment: a sentence that lacks a clear subject or verb

Comma splice: two independent clauses joined by a comma without a conjunction

Fused sentence: two independent clauses joined without clear punctuation or conjunctions

Run-on sentence: when two independent clauses are connected improperly (either by a comma splice or a fused sentence)

Incomplete Sentences: Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences that lack a verb or an independent clause. Sentence fragments should be avoided in formal writing.

The drivers were annoyed. Because the streets were closed. ❌

The drivers were annoyed because the streets were closed. ✅

Sentence Fragments: Examples

Since velocity is used to generate the stacked section.

The time, as shown in the figure, indicates that the wellbore storage region.

The size of the particle of the distributions, when the electron microscope remains accurate.

Incomplete Sentences: Fused Sentences

A fused sentence is a grammatical error that joins two independent clauses without adding proper punctuation.

Fused sentences can be corrected by adding a coordinating conjunction

He ran to campus he made it to class in time. ❌

He ran to campus, but he made it to class in time. ✅

Incomplete Sentences: Fused Sentences (cont.)

Fused sentences can also be corrected by adding in a period or semicolon between the two independent clauses

He ran to campus. He made it to class on time. ✓

He ran to campus; he made it class on time. ✓

Fused Sentences: Example

Using VMC with the conventional boost converter increases the voltage gain and improves the performance of the total indirect power is reduced.

Incomplete Sentences: Comma Splices

Comma splices are also grammatical errors that join two independent clauses with just a comma. Comma splices can be corrected using the same techniques to fix a fused sentence..

Jack looked through the microscope, his eyes were getting tired. ❌

Jack looked through the microscope, but his eyes were getting tired. ✅

Jane is an aspiring artist, she creates beautiful paintings. ❌

Jane is an aspiring artist, and she creates beautiful paintings. ✅

Grammatical Mood

The grammatical mood of a sentence can differ depending on whether the verb expresses a fact (indicative mood), a command (imperative mood), a question (interrogative mood), a condition (conditional mood), or a possibility (subjunctive mood).

Indicative: There are 24 hours in a day.

Imperative: Take your seat.

Interrogative: Are we finishing the project next week?

Conditional: I would like to go to the library if we have enough time.

Subjunctive: If I were more athletic, I would probably play baseball.

Compound Words

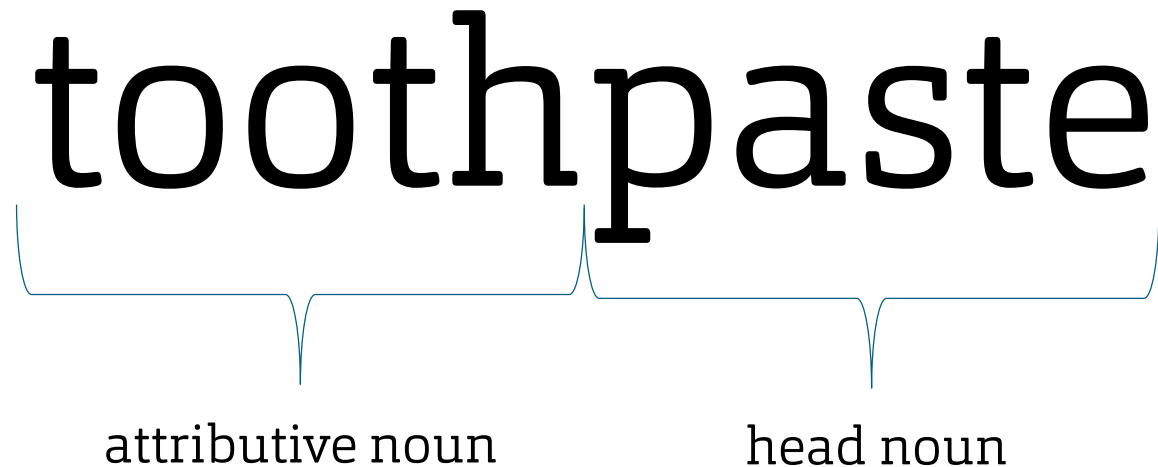
- A compound word is a combination of multiple words to form a single meaning.
- Compound words can be used as nouns, adjectives, verbs, or adverbs.
- Compound words can be open (with a space), closed (as a joined word), or hyphenated.
- Depending on how the compound is used in a sentence, it might be written in different ways. It can also be written in different ways depending on which dictionary or style guide you are using.

Compound Words

Verbs	Nouns
back up	backup
break through	breakthrough
build up	buildup
set up	setup

Compound Words: Dropping Plurals with Nouns

Note that in compound nouns, the attributive noun will often drop the plural. This is true even if there is a space between the two nouns.



Compound Words: Dropping Plurals with Nouns

Some compound nouns are exceptions to the singular rule, either for clarity or because the noun only exists in the plural

Thanksgiving

economics textbooks

arms race

Some compound nouns can be written as possessives

women's restroom

Idiomatic Expressions

An idiomatic expression is a group of words with an established meaning that is not always discernable from the denotations of the individual words. Avoid these expressions in technical papers because they can be confusing to multicultural audiences and are difficult to translate.

Examples:

fine tune

out of the blue

in the long run

Idiomatic Expressions

A phrasal verb is a certain type of idiom that consists of a verb followed by an adverb or preposition. The adverb or preposition can change the meaning.

look forward to, look down on, look in on, look out for, look up to

Other English expressions use particular English prepositions that cannot be explained by any governing rule. These idioms are simply learned over time.

able to

bored with it

forget about

agree with

by accident

on Tuesday

arrive at

concerned by

on purpose

at 1:00

excited about

sick of

False Grammar Rules

“Don’t split infinitives”


To boldly go where no one has gone before – Star Trek 

to better understand 

the population is expected to more than double 

“Don’t end a sentence with a preposition”

I wish you would cheer up. 

Where did you come from? 

Where are you at? 

False Grammar Rules

“A double negative is incorrect”

In English, two negatives are understood to make a positive. If used in this way, it is correct. It can be problematic if a negative is used when a positive is meant, or when so many negatives are used that your sentence becomes unclear.

I don't disagree. 

I didn't go nowhere today. 

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