

GRAMMAR and LANGUAGE

PARTS OF THE SENTENCE

Subject: the topic of the sentence.
The subject is usually a noun or pronoun.

The chairman has arrived.

The car was totaled.

The president relies on his Cabinet's advice.

However, the governor and the Legislature can't agree on how to allocate the funds.

Predicate verb: the action or state of being of the subject
The predicate is the sentence's verb.

The chairman has arrived.

The car was totaled.

The president relies on his Cabinet's advice.

The governor wants to increase funding for higher education.

However, the governor and the Legislature can't agree on how to allocate the funds.

Phrase: a group of words that does not contain both subject and predicate.

California State University Fullerton

baked potato with sour cream and chives

221B Baker St.

would have been going

Prepositional phrase

The bird flew into the forest.

The bird flew over the forest.

The bird flew around the forest.

The bird flew through the forest.

I'm voting for the candidate with the cleverest slogan.

The man beside Gina is her husband.

The coffee shop on Pine Street has excellent croissants.

Clause: a group of words with both a subject and predicate

We are going to the fair.

I have two black cats.

...that it is the right thing to do.

...who was my best friend in college, ...

Independent clause

We are going to the fair.

I have two black cats.

Dependent clause:

The senator denied that his vote had been influenced by the lobby's campaign contributions.

I give to charities because I believe that it is the right thing to do.

Jack, who was my best friend in college, now lives in Europe.

The lost patrol kept marching until it was too dark to see where they were going.

I will clean the garage as soon as I can find the time.

Note: Dependent clauses usually have an introductory word or phrase that indicates they are incomplete sentences:

as soon as who when

that until after

because as a result of

Review

She sells sea shells by the sea shore.

She:

sells:

sea shells:

by:

sea shore:

While traveling to St. Ives, I met a man who had seven wives.

While:

St. Ives:

I:

met:

man:

who:

had:

wives:

who had seven wives:

SOME COMMON GRAMMAR PROBLEMS

Subject-verb agreement

Angela runs a hair salon.

Angela and Christie run a hair salon.

phrases set off by commas:

Tiger Woods, accompanied by his usual large entourage, is staying at the Ritz Carlton Hotel.

Senate Republicans, as well as some dissident Democrats, plan to filibuster the bill.

Subject-verb agreement**prepositional phrases**

The board of directors is meeting tonight.

(The board is meeting tonight.)

A compromise between the Democratic and GOP tax bills appears unlikely at this time.

(A compromise appears unlikely at this time.)

Subject-verb agreement**prepositional phrases with fractions**

Use plural verb form if the object of the preposition can be broken into individual parts

Two-thirds of the Assembly rejects any kind of tax increase.

Assembly is one entity; the parts cannot be counted

(...Assembly rejects...)

Some of the students are boycotting classes today.

Students are individuals and can be counted

(...students are boycotting...)

Some of the money is counterfeit.

(...money is counterfeit.)

Part of the evidence is missing.

(...evidence is missing.)

Money and evidence are considered a single units

Part of the spacecraft's engine and right wing were damaged during re-entry.

(...engine and right wing were damaged...)

Subject-verb agreement
units of time and money usually have single verb forms

Six months is a long time to wait for a response.

An estimated \$450,000 was raised at the charity auction.

Subject-verb agreement
“a number vs. “the number”

“a number” means “many” and uses a plural verb:

A number of dolphins have been found dead on the beach.

“the number” refers to a specific amount uses a singular verb:

The number of dead dolphins is expected to rise next year.

Subject-verb agreement
words ending in “ics”

use single verb form when the ending in ics is the name of a subject.

Good ethics is important in journalism.

Politics often is a messy business.

Use the plural verb form in other uses, especially if the word is preceded by a determiner such as *his, the, such* etc.

Her ethics are questionable.

His ethics are above reproach.

The acoustics are horrible.

The antibiotics are starting to take effect.

Text Exercise 5: Verb agreement

SOME COMMON GRAMMAR PROBLEMS

Verb forms

linking verbs

transitive verbs

intransitive verbs

Linking verbs:

Subject – predicate – adjective

I am tired.

The beer is flat.

The pizza is cold.

Transitive verbs:

Subject – predicate – direct object

The action is carried from the subject through the verb to another noun, called the **direct object**.

Transitive verbs:

Clark is reading "Stranger in a Strange Land."

Officers fired four shots at the fleeing suspects.

I called Jack for directions to the restaurant.

Intransitive verbs:

subject – verb

Sentences with intransitive verbs do not have an object after the verb:

Clark is reading.

Officers fired at the fleeing suspects.

I called for directions to the restaurant.



Lie means "to recline" and is an intransitive verb.
Lay means "to put" or "to place" and is a transitive verb.

Present tense	Past tense	Past participle	Present participle
lie	lay	lain	lying
lay	laid	laid	laying

I think I will lie down before dinner.
 Robert Dole has lain low since the election.
 Bill lay his head on my shoulder.
 Dick Cheney has laid plans for a political comeback.

Rise means "to ascend" and is an intransitive verb.
Raise means "to elevate" and is a transitive verb.

Present tense	Past tense	Past participle	Present participle
rise	rose	risen	rising
raise	raised	raised	raising

We will rise at dawn.
 We will raise the flag at dawn.
 The band was loud enough to raise the dead.
 The dead rose at midnight.

Text Exercises 4: Problems with verbs

SOME COMMON GRAMMAR PROBLEMS

Pronouns and Nouns

Pronouns

Subjective case:

before the verb or after a linking verb

Objective case:

after non-linking verbs and prepositions

Subjective case: Objective case:

I	me
we	us
you	you
he	him
she	her
they	them
who	whom

I am going to the fair Friday.

Give the ball to me.

We will all ride together.

The patrol officer wouldn't let us through the road block.

They left together around midnight.

Lorna said she would meet us at noon in the University Center.

Pronouns at the end of prepositional phrases are in the objective case rather than the subjective case:

Barbara is going with me.

To whom do you wish to speak?

Clara saved some dessert for her.

Clarence was with them all night.

Use the pronoun *that* with *said* only when there is a time element in the sentence:

President Nixon said Thursday he will go to China.

President Nixon said Thursday that he will go to China.

President Nixon said that Thursday he will go to China.

Detective Joe Friday said Tuesday that he plans to go over the evidence with the district attorney.

Detective Joe Friday said that Tuesday he plans to go over the evidence with the district attorney.

The time element can also frequently go at the end of the sentence:
President Nixon said that he will go to China on Thursday.

Detective Joe Friday said he plans to go over the evidence with the district attorney Tuesday.

Nouns and the pronouns that refer to them must agree in number:

incorrect:
Adelsman said employers respect someone who can recognize their own weaknesses.

correct:
Adelsman said employers respect someone who can recognize his own weaknesses.

Adelsman said employers respect people who can recognize their weaknesses

incorrect:
Cover letters give a job applicant the opportunity to introduce themselves exactly the way they want.

correct:
Cover letters give job applicants the opportunity to introduce themselves exactly the way they want.

correct:
Cover letters give a job applicant the opportunity to introduce himself exactly the way he wants.

Use singular pronouns to refer to government bodies, businesses and organizations:

incorrect:

The city council fired their legal counsel.

correct:

The city council fired its legal counsel.

incorrect:

Apple has lowered the price of their iPods.

correct:

Apple has lowered the price of its iPods.

incorrect:

The United States wants to punish businesses who deal with Iran.

correct:

The United States wants to punish businesses that deal with Iran.

incorrect:

The Boy Scouts said they would re-examine their policy against gays.

correct:

The Boy Scouts said it would re-examine its policy against gays.

Refer to animals by “that” or “which” unless the animal has a pet name (Lassie, Babe, Willie, Barney etc.).

incorrect:

My cat Fergie spent the summer convalescing from injuries it sustained in a fight with a dog.

correct:

My cat Fergie spent the summer convalescing from injuries she sustained in a fight with a dog

incorrect:

We never found the dog who mauled Fergie.

correct:

We never found the dog that mauled Fergie.

Horton Hears Whom?

who is the nominative form; whom is the objective form.

I will vote for who/whomever I like.

Use the phrase after who/whom and rework the sentence using he/him:

I like him.

Therefore:

I will vote for whomever I like.

Union soldiers gunned down the man who/whom killed the Lincoln.

He killed Lincoln.

Union soldiers gunned down the man who killed the Lincoln.

Who/Whom did Horton hear?

Horton heard him.

Whom did Horton hear?

Don't be fooled by prepositions

They could not agree on who/whom should lead the parade.

The clause "who/whom should lead the parade" is the object of the preposition "on."

He should lead the parade.

They could not agree on who should lead the parade.

He hates the Angels so much that he will root for whoever/whomever they happen to play.

"whoever/whomever they happen to play" is the object of the preposition "for."

They happen to play him.

He hates the Angels so much that he will root for whomever they happen to play.

Text Exercise 2: Problems with pronouns**SOME COMMON GRAMMAR PROBLEMS****Essential and Nonessential words, phrases and clauses**

Essential and nonessential words etc. offer additional information in a sentence.

An essential phrase etc. is vital to understanding the sentence.

The man is up for parole.

The man who killed three people while driving drunk is up for parole.

Nonessential words etc. are not vital to understanding the meaning of the sentence.

John Kennedy was the nation's youngest president.

John Kennedy, who was elected in 1960, was the nation's youngest president.

Always set off nonessential words etc. with commas.

Reporters who do not read their stylebooks should not criticize their editors.

Reporters should not criticize their editors.

Only reporters who do not read their stylebooks should not criticize their editors.

Reporters, who do not read their stylebooks, should not criticize their editors.

Baboons that live in game preserves are not afraid of people

Baboons, which are mostly found in game preserves these days, are not afraid of people.

Diego Lopez, a building inspector for the county, said the warehouse posed a serious fire danger.

A building inspector for the county, Diego Lopez, said the warehouse posed a serious fire danger.

Jimmy Jones, a first-grader at Evergreen School, won the spelling bee.

Jimmy, who is 6, correctly spelled "accommodate."

Jacqueline Onassis' son, John, was at her side when she died.

Richard Nixon's daughter Julie was at his side when he died.

(Nixon had two daughters.)

Use **that** or **who** to introduce essential clauses and phrases, which are never set off by commas.

The historic movie that I rented last night had some factual errors.

The man who directed "Nixon" used creative license in telling the story.

You can also sometimes eliminate *that* without causing the reader any confusion:

The historic movie [that] I rented last night had some factual errors.

Disney's amusement park [that is] in Anaheim is a popular tourist attraction.

Use **which** or **who** to introduce nonessential clauses and phrases, which are always set off by commas.

The movie "Nixon," which I rented last night, has some factual errors.

Oliver Stone, who directed "Nixon," used creative license in telling the story.

Flipper, who lives in the sea, is a very intelligent mammal.

Dolphins, which live in the sea, are very intelligent mammals.

Remember:

☞ Which or who must introduce **nonessential** phrases and clauses, and nonessential phrases and clauses are always set off by commas.

☞ That or who introduce **essential** phrases and clauses, and essential phrases and clauses are never set off by commas.

Be on the alert for misplaced modifiers

Modifying phrases and clauses must immediately precede and follow the words they are modifying

LA Times' review of "Roommates" starring Peter Falk

Based on a newspaper story and subsequent book by Max Apple, Falk shines as Rocky, a hard-working curmudgeonly Polish baker...

Falk shines as Rocky, a hard-working curmudgeonly Polish baker who is based on a newspaper story and subsequent book by Max Apple

Orange County Register

Walking out of her kitchen, the heels of Brown's suede boots sank inches into the cold swamp that used to be her living room carpet.

As Brown walked out of her kitchen, the heels of her suede boots sank inches into the cold swamp that used to be her living room carpet.

Los Angeles Times, Sept. 13, 1996
Study Calls Poor Teacher Training a 'National Shame'

Perhaps the biggest problem, in the commission's view, is "our schools' most closely held secret": the widespread practice of putting instructors in classrooms who have not been trained as teachers and have not completed the requirements for a teaching license.

Perhaps the biggest problem, in the commission's view, is "our schools' most closely held secret": the widespread practice of <hiring> instructors who have not been trained as teachers and have not completed the requirements for a teaching license.