

Dr. Mack Gipson, Jr., Tutorial and Enrichment Center

WORKING ON WRITING: Grammar, Punctuation, and Other Tidbits



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PARTS OF SPEECH

NOUN	PRONOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB	CONJUNCTION	PREPOSITION	INTERJECTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person • place • thing • idea • quality • activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • replaces noun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows action • shows state of being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what kind? • which one? • how many? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when? • where? • why? • how? • in what manner? • to what extent? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connects: words phrases clauses • FANBOYS: for and nor but or yet so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows emotion

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Sentence Structure: Subjects

The **subject** of a sentence tells you WHO or WHAT the sentence is about. It is usually a **noun** or **pronoun** that tells who or what is performing the action mentioned by the verb of the sentence. It is important to be able to identify the subject so that you can make sure you have **subject-verb agreement**. (In other words, the verb must be in the right format to match the subject. You have to find the subject so you can match the verb to it.)

There are several steps that you can take to help you find the subject of the sentence:

1. The subject of your sentence will be one of the following:
 - a noun (a person, place, or thing)
 - » girl, cow, Ms. Franklin, trees, cats and dogs
 - a pronoun (a word that is substituted for a noun so the noun does not have to be repeated a lot). For example, look at these two versions of the same sentence:
 - » John and Mary went to John's and Mary's school with John's books so John could give the books to John's teacher.
 - » John and Mary went to their school with John's books so he could give the books to his teacher.

The second sentence is much easier to read and has much less repetition because pronouns have been used to replace the nouns.

There are several pronouns that can be used as the subject of a sentence. Each one has a definite purpose. Pronouns must be used properly, so pay attention to the *person* and to the designation of *singular* or *plural*:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1st person	I	we
2nd person	you	you
3rd person	he she it	they

2. Nouns are usually easy to identify: They are often introduced by an **article** (*the, a, an*).
 - » the cat, an automobile, a supermarket

3. A noun is often found in a prepositional phrase. This means the noun is part of a group of words that starts with a preposition and ends with the noun. A preposition is a function word (it has a use or function in the sentence). A preposition shows a relationship of time, location, direction, or association between the word or phrase that follows it (its object) and another element in the sentence. When you are looking for the subject of a sentence, it is important to identify the prepositional phrase because **the subject of a sentence will never be found in a prepositional phrase.**

In order to help identify the subject of a sentence, you should find all of the prepositional phrases and cross them out. Then, look at the remaining words to find the nouns that are left. One of those nouns will be the subject of the sentence.

Examples:

- » The car ~~with the racing stripes~~ has four new tires. [the subject is **car**]
- » ~~Before the bell rang, eight students ran between the buildings, underneath the bridge, and over the hill to the parking lot.~~ [the subject is **students**]

PREPOSITIONS					
about	as for	beyond	inside (of)	onto	toward
above	at	by	in spite of	on top of	under
across	because of	by means of	instead of	out (of)	underneath
after	before	despite	into	outside	until
against	behind	down	like	over	up
along	below	during	near	past	upon
alongside (of)	beneath	except	of	since	with
along with	beside	for	off	through	within
around	besides	from	on	throughout	without
as	between	in	on account of	to ****	

**** Be careful when you see the word **to** in a sentence. It can be used in several different ways: Sometimes it is a preposition, but at other times it may be part of the infinitive form of the verb (for example, I am going **to eat**.) The word *to* does not act as a preposition if it is part of the infinitive.

4. Sometimes a sentence starts with the phrase “There is” or “There are.” In these cases, the subject of the sentence will actually be found after the phrase; the word *there* is **not** the subject of the sentence.

- » There are three cars in the parking lot. [the subject is **cars**]
- » There is a large spider on the wall in the living room. [the subject is **spider**]

Pronouns

Pronouns are used for several different purposes. Each purpose requires its own set of pronouns. Here are some useful charts to help you understand the differences:

SUBJECT PRONOUNS

(Subjective Case)

The following pronouns must be used when the pronoun acts as the subject of the sentence:

	<u>Singular</u>	Plural
1 st person	I	we
2 nd person	you	you
3 rd person	he she it	they

Examples: **We** went to the store.
(Who went to the store? **We** went.)

John and **I** did our math homework.
(Who did homework? John and **I** did.)

OBJECT PRONOUNS

(Objective Case)

The following pronouns must be used when the pronoun acts as the object of an action (the person or thing receiving the action or receiving the item):

	<u>Singular</u>	Plural
1 st person	me	us
2 nd person	you	you
3 rd person	him her it	them

Examples: Sam gave **me** the newspaper.
(To whom did Sam give the paper? He gave it **to me**.)

Mrs. Smith bought him a present.
(For whom did Mrs. Smith buy a present? She bought it **for him**.)

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

(Possessive Case)

The following pronouns must be used when the pronoun is used in a situation that shows possession. Note that 2 sets of pronouns are given, depending on the situation:

	<u>Singular</u>		Plural	
	pronoun + noun	pronoun only	pronoun + noun	pronoun only
1 st person	my	mine	our	ours
2 nd person	your	yours	your	yours
3 rd person	his her its	his hers its	their	theirs

Examples:

The words in the columns labeled “*pronoun + noun*” must be used when the item (usually a noun) that is owned is given in the sentence:

The teacher liked **my poster**.

Mr. Nelson gave the students **their tests** at 1:00, but he gave Jane **her test** at 3:30.

The words in the columns labeled “pronoun only” must be used when the item that is owned is not given in the sentence:

The teacher liked **mine**.

Mr. Nelson gave **theirs** at 1:00, but he gave **hers** at 3:30.

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Agreement of Nouns and Pronouns

1. Pronouns must always agree with their **antecedents** (the nouns or pronouns they are referring to). They must agree in **number** and **person**.

- » When **Tom** can not find **his** pen, **he** wants to borrow mine.
- » The four **dogs** drag **their** bones down the street every afternoon.
- » Many **students** have to pay **their** bills before **they** can register for classes.
- » The **girl** has to pay **her** bills before **she** can register for classes.

2. Some words are always considered to be **singular**. Any pronoun that refers to one of them must also be singular. These words are:

anybody	nobody	someone	every	another
anyone	no one	anything	everything	
everybody	one	each	something	
everyone	somebody	each one	nothing	

- » **Everybody** who has a book can do **his** or **her** homework.
- » **Anyone** can come to the party if **he** or **she** wants to come.

3. Some words may be either singular or plural, depending on the noun they refer to.

all	any	more
none	some	most

- » **Some** students **have** taken their tests.
- » **Some** of the chapter **is** easy to read.

4. The verbs used with the terms **either . . . or** and **neither . . . nor** may be either singular or plural. The rule is: The verb must agree with the noun that is closer to it in the sentence.

- » **Either** my sisters or my brother **has** the tickets to the game.
[verb must be singular to match *brother*]
- » **Neither** the girl nor the boys **live** in Augusta.
[verb must be plural to match *boys*]

PRONOUN CHART		
	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1 st person	I	we
2 nd person	you	you
3 rd person	he she it	they

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Sentence Structure: Verbs

A **verb** expresses action, a state of being, or a condition. It changes its form to match its subject and changes its form to show the time period (present, past, future, etc.). It is important to locate the subject(s) and verb(s) in your sentence in order to make sure they match up. It is also important to use the right form of the verb to indicate the time period you are using.

There are several steps that you will need to take in order to make sure you are using the correct form of the verb:

5. Locate the subject(s) and verb(s) of the sentence.
6. Decide on the “person” you need to use (first person singular, second person singular, third person singular, first person plural, second person plural, third person plural). Review your rules for forming verbs and select the form of the verb that matches your subject.

» We _____ to the store. [We is the subject: first person plural]

7. At the same time, you have to figure out what verb tense you need. Remember, the form of the verb depends on the tense as well as the “person.”

» We go to the store. [present tense]

» We went to the store. [past tense]

» We will go to the store. [future tense]

8. One way to make this process easier is to try to learn the verb forms. Remember that some verbs are called “regular” verbs because they follow a pattern. Once you learn the pattern, you can apply it to many verbs. Other verbs are called “irregular” verbs because each of them has its own format; you will have to memorize each of these individually.

<u>COMMON REGULAR VERBS: PRESENT TENSE</u>						
	to walk	to jump	to talk	to hope	to make	to think
I						
you						
he						
she						
it						
we						
you						
they						

<u>COMMON IRREGULAR VERBS: PRESENT TENSE</u>				
	to be	to have	to do	to go
I				
you				
he				
she				
it				
we				
you				
they				

9. Some verbs are fairly easy to spot: They are called **action** verbs because they express the action that the subject is taking.

- » John **dropped** the shoe. [the verb is *dropped*]
- » Marie **works** as a carpenter. [the verb is *works*]

10. Other verbs are more difficult to pick out. They are called **linking** verbs because they link the subject to the words that describe or identify the subject. (These verbs act as **equal signs** in the sentence.)

- » Don **is** a great musician. [the verb is *is*]
[Don = great musician]
- » This fabric **feels** rough and scratchy. [the verb is *feels*]
[Fabric = rough and scratchy]

<u>COMMON LINKING VERBS: PRESENT TENSE</u>						
	to appear	to be	to become	to feel	to look	to seem
I						
you						
he						
she						
it						
we						
you						
they						

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Commas and Semicolons: Some Basic Rules

5. Essential vs. non-essential

- An **essential** phrase or clause involves words, phrases, and clauses that are necessary for the meaning or the structural completeness of the sentence. **Do not use commas.**
 - » There is **no doubt** about her honesty.
- A **non-essential** phrase or clause involves words, phrases, and clauses that are not necessary for the meaning or the structural completeness of the sentence. **Use commas** to separate these phrases or clauses from the rest of the sentence.
 - » There is, **no doubt**, a good reason why the fee is so high.

6. Interrupting elements

- **Use commas** to set off words, phrases, and clauses when they interrupt the flow of the sentence from subject to verb or from verb to object or complement.
 - » Mr. Johnson, **my English teacher**, assigned a research paper this week.
 - » We are determined, **nevertheless**, to finish this project.

7. Dates

- **Use commas** to separate the parts of a date: Write the day, put a **comma**, write the month and date, put a **comma**, and then write the year. Put another **comma** after the year if your sentence continues after the year.
 - » We went to the seminar on **Monday, April 8, 2007**.
 - » I went to their wedding on **Saturday, January 12, 2007**, in Boston.
 - » My appointment is at 10:00 on **January 12**, at the Red Cross.

8. Cities/states

- **Use commas** to separate the parts of an address: Put a **comma** between the city and the state, even if the state is abbreviated. Put another **comma** after the state if your sentence continues after the state.
 - » He has lived in **Augusta, Georgia**, all of his life.
 - » He has always lived in **Augusta, GA**.

- » I visited my friends in **Boston, MA**, many years ago.

9. Introductory phrases and dependent-independent sentence structure

- **Use commas** after an introductory word or phrase. These words or phrases introduce the sentence but are not part of the main sentence. Sometimes, the introductory phrase or clause is actually a dependent phrase or clause before the independent clause that forms the main sentence.
 - » **In the beginning**, we thought the contract would be signed quickly.
 - » **Although my sister wanted to go to the movies on Wednesday night**, she stayed home and studied for her biology test.
 - » **Yesterday**, I went to the library to look for books to read.

10. Contrasting expressions

- **Use commas** to set off contrasting expressions (such as expressions beginning with **but**, **not**, or **rather than**).
 - » Alex, **rather than Marty**, will be the new leader of the group.
 - » He changed his teaching methods, **not his manner of grading**, this semester.

11. Separate items in a series

- **Use commas** between items in a list. (See EXCEPTION listed below).
 - » I bought **milk, eggs, cream, cereal, and paper towels** when I went to the grocery store.
- NOTE: The last comma in the above series (the comma after *cereal*, the next-to-last item in the list) is now considered to be optional and may be left off.

- EXCEPTION: Use **semicolons** between the items in a list if there are commas in one or more items. If you have to use a semicolon for one item in the list, you must use semicolons for every item.
 - » I asked my boss to order **more pencils; paper for the copier, printer, and fax machines; staples; and scotch tape.**

Note that semicolons are needed to separate the groups of items because the group that starts with *paper* has commas in it:

pencils
 paper for the copier, printer, and fax machines
 staples
 scotch tape

12. Complex sentences: use a **semicolon**

- **Use a semicolon** to join two independent clauses (sentences that could stand alone) without using any connecting words. The two clauses should be closely related to each other; otherwise, do not use this method of joining them.
 - » John had to go to work today; he had already used up his sick days.

RUN-ON SENTENCES/COMMA SPLICES
Methods of Correction

There are 5 ways to correct run-on sentences and comma splices:

1. Use two separate sentences.

EXAMPLE: My books are heavy. I will put them down.

2. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

and	for	or	yet
but	nor	so	

EXAMPLE: My books are heavy, so I will put them down.

3. Use a subordinating conjunction. Put a comma between the clauses if you put the subordinating conjunction at the beginning of the sentence.

after	because	in order that	until	whereas
although	before	since	when	while
as	even though	though	whenever	
as if	if	unless	where	

EXAMPLE: Since my books are heavy, I will put them down.

EXAMPLE: I will put my books down since they are heavy.

4. Use a semicolon.

EXAMPLE: My books are heavy; I will put them down.

5. Use a semicolon, a conjunctive adverb, and a comma.

accordingly	however	on the contrary
besides	in fact	otherwise
consequently	indeed	that is
for example	moreover	then
furthermore	namely	therefore
hence	nevertheless	thus

EXAMPLE: My books are heavy; therefore, I will put them down.



Transitions

SEQUENCE/PROCESS	ADDITION	ILLUSTRATION	CAUSE/EFFECT	PLACE/POSITION
first of all to begin with first/second, etc. at first next subsequently then finally last more importantly most importantly the most important prior to before afterwards after today yesterday for now immediately later on recently since still while at the same time simultaneously concurrently meanwhile in turn eventually in time	and also besides in addition furthermore another further besides that moreover too what is more as well as again additionally not only...but also	for example for instance in this case to demonstrate to clarify for one thing in other words such as	so for because since as a result thus therefore due to it follows that... accordingly as a result consequently hence then	above/below on top adjacent/next to beyond here/there in front/in back behind beside nearby further back in the distance close by/far away among/ between in(side) out(side) right/left within over/under
	COMPARISON	CONTRAST	SUMMARY	
	likewise in the same way in comparison similarly by the same token along with { comparatively speaking	but yet however by contrast instead on the other hand rather than nevertheless even so otherwise although even though on the contrary unless despite in spite of as opposed to counter to conversely contrarily neither...nor	all together finally in closing to sum up on the whole in brief in summary in conclusion to conclude therefore consequently thus as a result as shown as mentioned earlier... as we have seen...	
ALTERNATIVE	CONCESSION	INTENSIFICATION	GENERALIZATION	RESTATEMENT
or nor while whether besides on the other hand	admittedly although granted naturally of course certainly { although it is true that... it may appear that...	indeed in fact that is simply stated simply put after all in particular specifically	as a rule for the most part generally in general usually ordinarily	in essence in other words namely that is that is to say in short in effect
Argumentative essays				