



Subject-Verb Agreement

Basic Agreement

Singular subjects take singular verbs; plural subjects take plural verbs. Correct: <i>The dog barks.</i> Incorrect: <i>The dog bark.</i>
Compound subjects joined by 'and' usually take a plural verb. Correct: <i>John and Mary are going to the store.</i> Incorrect: <i>John and Mary is going to the store.</i>
When subjects are joined by 'or' or 'nor', the verb agrees with the subject closest to it. Correct: <i>Neither the students nor the teacher is here.</i> Correct: <i>Neither the teacher nor the students are here.</i>

Indefinite Pronouns

Singular indefinite pronouns (e.g., everyone, someone, nobody) take singular verbs. Correct: <i>Everyone is ready.</i> Incorrect: <i>Everyone are ready.</i>
Plural indefinite pronouns (e.g., several, few, both) take plural verbs. Correct: <i>Several are coming.</i> Incorrect: <i>Several is coming.</i>
Some indefinite pronouns (e.g., some, any, all, most) can be singular or plural, depending on the noun they refer to. Correct: <i>Some of the pie is gone. (singular)</i> Correct: <i>Some of the cookies are gone. (plural)</i>

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns (e.g., team, family, committee) can be singular or plural, depending on whether they are acting as a unit or as individuals. Acting as a unit (singular): <i>The team is playing well.</i> Acting as individuals (plural): <i>The team are arguing among themselves.</i>

Pronoun Agreement & Usage

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun must agree in number and gender with its antecedent. Correct: <i>The student finished his homework.</i> Incorrect: <i>The student finished their homework.</i>
Use singular pronouns with singular indefinite pronouns. Correct: <i>Everyone should bring his or her own lunch.</i> Correct (gender-neutral): <i>Everyone should bring their own lunch.</i>

Pronoun Case

Subjective pronouns (I, he, she, we, they) are used as subjects of verbs. Correct: <i>He and I went to the store.</i> Incorrect: <i>Him and me went to the store.</i>
Objective pronouns (me, him, her, us, them) are used as objects of verbs or prepositions. Correct: <i>The teacher gave the books to her and me.</i> Incorrect: <i>The teacher gave the books to she and I.</i>
Possessive pronouns (mine, his, hers, ours, theirs) show ownership. Correct: <i>The car is theirs.</i> Incorrect: <i>The car is their's.</i>

Who vs. Whom

'Who' is used as a subject; 'whom' is used as an object. Correct: <i>Who is at the door?</i> (subject) Correct: <i>To whom did you give the book?</i> (object) Tip: If you can replace 'who/whom' with 'he/him', use 'who' if 'he' works and 'whom' if 'him' works.
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Commonly Confused Words

Affect vs. Effect

'Affect' is usually a verb meaning to influence. Correct: <i>The weather affects my mood.</i>
'Effect' is usually a noun meaning a result or consequence. Correct: <i>The effect of the medicine was immediate.</i>
'Effect' can also be a verb, meaning to bring about or accomplish (less common). Correct: <i>The new policy effected positive change.</i>

Its vs. It's

'Its' is a possessive pronoun. Correct: <i>The dog wagged its tail.</i>
'It's' is a contraction of 'it is' or 'it has'. Correct: <i>It's raining outside.</i>

There, Their, and They're

'There' indicates a place or existence. Correct: <i>The book is over there.</i> Correct: <i>There are many stars in the sky.</i>
'Their' is a possessive pronoun. Correct: <i>They love their parents.</i>
'They're' is a contraction of 'they are'. Correct: <i>They're going to the park.</i>

Punctuation Pitfalls

Comma Splices

A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined only by a comma. Incorrect: <i>The sun was shining, the birds were singing.</i>
Correct by using a semicolon, a conjunction, or by making two separate sentences. Correct: <i>The sun was shining; the birds were singing.</i> Correct: <i>The sun was shining, and the birds were singing.</i> Correct: <i>The sun was shining. The birds were singing.</i>

Apostrophe Errors

Use apostrophes to indicate possession.	Correct: <i>The dog's bone.</i> Correct: <i>The students' books.</i>
Do not use apostrophes for simple plurals.	Incorrect: <i>The dog's are playing.</i> Correct: <i>The dogs are playing.</i>
Use apostrophes to indicate contractions.	Correct: <i>It's a beautiful day.</i> Correct: <i>They're going home.</i>

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a phrase or clause that does not clearly modify the word it is intended to modify.
Incorrect: <i>Walking down the street, the building was very tall. (Who was walking?)</i>
Correct: <i>Walking down the street, I noticed the building was very tall.</i>