



Subject-Verb Agreement & Pronoun Usage

Subject-Verb Agreement

Singular Subjects:	Use a singular verb. Example: <i>He runs.</i>
Plural Subjects:	Use a plural verb. Example: <i>They run.</i>
Compound Subjects (and):	Usually plural. Example: <i>John and Mary run.</i>
Compound Subjects (or/nor):	Agree with the subject closest to the verb. Example: <i>Neither John nor his brothers run.</i>
Indefinite Pronouns (singular):	Each, either, neither, everyone, someone, nobody, etc. Example: <i>Everyone runs.</i>
Indefinite Pronouns (plural):	Several, few, both, many. Example: <i>Many run.</i>
Collective Nouns:	Can be singular or plural depending on context. Example: <i>The team is winning.</i> (singular, acting as a unit). <i>The team are arguing.</i> (plural, individual members).

Verb Tense Consistency & Voice

Verb Tense Consistency

Maintaining Tense:	Keep verb tenses consistent within a sentence and paragraph unless there's a logical reason to change. Example: <i>I went to the store and bought milk.</i> (past tense consistent).
Sequence of Tenses:	Use the correct sequence of tenses to show relationships between events. Example: <i>I had finished my work before he arrived.</i> (past perfect + past simple).
Avoiding Unnecessary Shifts:	Avoid shifting tenses without a clear reason. Example: <i>I went to the park, and I see many ducks.</i> (incorrect). Corrected: <i>I went to the park, and I saw many ducks.</i>

Punctuation Essentials

Commas

Commas in Lists:	Use commas to separate items in a list. Example: <i>I need milk, bread, and eggs.</i> (Oxford comma optional but recommended).
Commas with Coordinating Conjunctions:	Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) that joins two independent clauses. Example: <i>I wanted to go, but I was too tired.</i>
Commas after Introductory Elements:	Use a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or clause. Example: <i>However, I decided to stay home.</i>
Commas with Nonessential Information:	Use commas to set off nonessential (nonrestrictive) phrases or clauses. Example: <i>My brother, who lives in Chicago, is a doctor.</i>
Comma Splices:	Avoid joining two independent clauses with only a comma. Use a semicolon, a coordinating conjunction, or separate the clauses into two sentences. Incorrect: <i>I went to the store, it was closed.</i>

Semicolons & Colons

Semicolons:	Join two closely related independent clauses. Example: <i>The sun was shining; the birds were singing.</i>
Colons:	Introduce a list, explanation, or example. Example: <i>I need three things: milk, bread, and eggs.</i>
Semicolons vs. Commas:	Use semicolons when the clauses are closely related and a coordinating conjunction isn't used. Use commas with coordinating conjunctions.
Colons for Emphasis:	Can emphasize the information that follows. Example: <i>There was only one thing to do: run!</i>

Apostrophes

Possession:	Show possession. Example: <i>John's car, the dog's bone.</i>
Contractions:	Indicate missing letters in contractions. Example: <i>can't, don't, it's.</i>
Plural Possessive:	Show possession for plural nouns. Example: <i>the students' desks.</i>
Its vs. It's:	<i>Its</i> is possessive, <i>it's</i> is a contraction of <i>it is</i> . Example: <i>The dog wagged its tail. It's a beautiful day.</i>

Common Usage Errors

Pronoun Agreement and Reference

Pronoun Agreement:	Pronouns must agree in number and gender with their antecedents. Example: <i>The dog wagged its tail.</i> (singular, neuter).
Clear Pronoun Reference:	Ensure each pronoun clearly refers to its intended antecedent. Avoid ambiguity. Example: <i>John told Bill that he was wrong.</i> (ambiguous). Better: <i>John told Bill, 'You are wrong.'</i>
Pronoun Case:	Use the correct case (subjective, objective, possessive). Example: <i>I went to the store.</i> (subjective). <i>The store gave the book to me.</i> (objective). <i>That is my book.</i> (possessive).
Who vs. Whom:	<i>Who</i> is subjective, <i>whom</i> is objective. Example: <i>Who is at the door?</i> <i>To whom did you give the book?</i>
Reflexive Pronouns:	Use only when the pronoun refers back to the subject. Example: <i>I hurt myself.</i> (correct). <i>Give the book to myself.</i> (incorrect, use <i>me</i>).

Active vs. Passive Voice

Active Voice:	The subject performs the action. Clear and direct. Example: <i>The dog chased the ball.</i>
Passive Voice:	The subject receives the action. Can be used to de-emphasize the actor or emphasize the action. Example: <i>The ball was chased by the dog.</i>
When to Use Passive:	When the actor is unknown or unimportant. Example: <i>The window was broken.</i> (actor unknown).
Avoiding Overuse of Passive:	Overuse can make writing weak and indirect. Prefer active voice when possible. Example: <i>Mistakes were made.</i> (passive, vague). Better: <i>We made mistakes.</i> (active, direct).

Affect vs. Effect

Affect: Usually a verb, meaning to influence. *Example: The weather will affect our plans.*

Effect: Usually a noun, meaning a result. Can also be a verb meaning to bring about. *Example: The effect of the rain was flooding. He will effect change.*

Then vs. Than

Then: Indicates time or sequence. *Example: I went to the store, then I went home.*

Than: Used for comparisons. *Example: I am taller than you.*

There, Their, & They're

There: Indicates a place or existence. *Example: The book is over there. There are many stars in the sky.*

Their: Possessive pronoun. *Example: Their car is red.*

They're: Contraction of *they are*. *Example: They're going to the party.*

To, Too, & Two

To: Preposition indicating direction or purpose. *Example: I am going to the store.*

Too: Means *also* or *excessively*. *Example: I am going too. It is too hot.*

Two: The number 2. *Example: I have two cats.*

Your vs. You're

Your: Possessive pronoun. *Example: Your book is on the table.*

You're: Contraction of *you are*. *Example: You're going to be late.*