

# LESSON-45

## Fundamentals of Grammar and Usage

Grammar is nothing more than the way words are combined into sentences, and usage is the way words are used by a network of people—in this case, the community of businesspeople who use English. You'll find it easier to get along in this community if you know the accepted standards of grammar and usage. What follows is a re-view of the basics of grammar and usage, things you've probably learned but may have forgotten. Without a firm grasp of these basics, you risk not only being misunderstood but also damaging your company's image, losing money for your company, and possibly even losing your job.

### **GRAMMAR**

The sentence below looks innocent, but is it really?

We sell tuxedos as well as rent.

You might sell rent, but it's highly unlikely. Whatever you're selling, some people will ignore your message because of a blunder like this. The following sentence has a similar problem:

Vice President Eldon Neale told his chief engineer that he would no longer be with Avix, Inc., as of June 30.

Is Eldon or the engineer leaving? No matter which side the facts are on, the sentence can be read the other way. You may have a hard time convincing either person that your simple mistake was not a move in a game of office politics. Now look at this sentence:

The year before we budgeted more for advertising sales were up.

Confused? Perhaps this is what you meant:

The year before, we budgeted more for advertising. Sales were up.

Maybe you meant this:

The year before we budgeted more for advertising, sales were up.

The meaning of language falls into bundles called sentences. A listener or reader can take only so much meaning before filing a sentence away and getting ready for the next one. So, as a writer, you have to know what a sentence is. You need to know where one ends and the next one begins.

If you want to know what a thing is, you have to find out what goes into it, what its ingredients are. Luckily, the basic ingredients of an English sentence are simple. They're called the parts of speech, and the content-bearing ones are nouns, pronouns, verbs,

adjectives, and adverbs. They combine with a few functional parts of speech to convey meaning. Meaning is also transmitted by punctuation, mechanics, and vocabulary.

## 1.1 Nouns

A noun names a person, place, or thing. Anything you can see or detect with one of your other senses has a noun to name it. Some things you can't see or sense are also nouns, for example, or space. So are things that exist as ideas, such as accuracy and height. (You can see that something is accurate or that a building is tall, but you can't see the idea of accuracy or the idea of height.) These names for ideas are known as abstract nouns. The simplest nouns are the names of things you can see or touch: car, building, cloud, and brick.

### 1.1.1 Proper Nouns and Common Nouns

So far, all the examples of nouns have been common nouns, referring to general classes of things. The word building refers to a whole class of structures. Common nouns such as building are not capitalized.

If you want to talk about one particular building, however, you might refer to the Glazier Building. The name is capitalized, indicating that Glazier Building is a proper noun.

Here are three sets of common and proper nouns for comparison:

#### *Common*

City  
Company  
Store

#### *PROPER*

Kansas City  
Blaisden Company  
Books Galore

### 1.1.2 Plural Nouns

Nouns can be either singular or plural. The usual way to make a plural noun is to add s to the singular form of the word:

#### *SINGULAR*

rock  
picture  
song

#### *PLURAL*

rocks  
pictures  
songs

Many nouns have other ways of forming the plural. Letters, numbers, and words used as words are sometimes made plural by adding an apostrophe and an s. Very often, 's is used with abbreviations that have periods, lowercase letters that stand alone, and capital letters that might be confused with words when made into plurals:

Spell out all *St.* 's and *Ave.* 's

He divided the page with a row of x's.

Sarah will register the A's through the I's at the convention.

In other cases, however, the apostrophe may be left out:

They'll review their *ABCs*.

The stock market climbed through most of the 1980s.

Circle all these in the paragraph.

In these examples, the letters used as letters and words used as words *are italicized* (discussed later in the chapter).

Other nouns, such as those below, are so-called irregular nouns; they form the plural in some way other than simply adding *s*:

***SINGULAR***

***PLURAL***

tax	specialty	cargo	shelf	child	woman	tooth	mouse	parenthesis	son-in-law	editor-in-chief	
								taxes	specialties	cargoes	shelves
children	women	teeth	mice	parentheses	sons-in-law	editors-	in	-chief			

Rather than memorize a lot of rules about forming plurals, use a dictionary. If the dictionary says nothing about the plural of a word, it's formed the usual way: by adding *s*. If the plural is formed in some irregular way, the dictionary shows the plural or has a note something like this: *ples*.

**1.1.3 Possessive Nouns**

A noun becomes possessive when it's used to show the ownership of something. Then you add 's to the word:

the man's car

the woman's apartment

However, ownership does not need to be legal:

the secretary's desk

the company's assets

Also, ownership may be nothing more than an automatic association:

a day's work

a job's prestige

An exception to the rule about adding 's to make a noun possessive occurs when the word is singular and already has two *s* sounds at the end. In cases like the following, an apostrophe is all that's needed:

crisis' dimensions

Mr. Moses' application

When the noun has only one *s* sound at the end, however, retain the 's:

Chris's book

Carolyn Nuss's office

With hyphenated nouns (compound nouns), add's to the last word:

**HYPHENATED NOUN**

**POSSESSIVE NOUN**

mother-in-law mayor-elect

mother-in-law's mayor-elect's

To form the possessive of plural nouns, just begin by following the same rule as with singular nouns: add's. However, if the plural noun already ends in an *s* (as most do), drop the one you've added, leaving only the apostrophe:

the clients complaints

employees benefits

## **1.2 Pronouns**

A pronoun is a word that stands for a noun; it saves repeating the noun:

*Drivers* have some choice of weeks for vacation, but *they* must notify this office of *their* preference by March 1.

The pronouns *they* and *their* stand in for the noun *drivers*. The noun that a pronoun stands for is called the antecedent of the pro-noun; *drivers* is the antecedent of *they* and *their*.

When the antecedent is plural, the pronoun that stands in for it has to be plural; *they* and *their* are plural pronouns because *drivers* is plural. Likewise, when the antecedent is singular, the pronoun has to be singular:

We thought the *contract* had been signed, but we soon learned that *it* had not been.

### **1.2.1 Multiple Antecedents**

Sometimes a pronoun has a double (or even a triple) antecedent:

Kathryn Boettcher and Luis Gutierrez went beyond *their* sales quotas for January.

*Kathryn Boettcher*, if taken alone, is a singular antecedent. So is *Luis Gutierrez*. However, when together they are the antecedent of a pronoun, they're plural and the pronoun has to be plural. Thus the pronoun is *their* instead of *her* or *his*.

### **1.2.2 (Unclear Antecedents)**

In some sentences the pronoun's antecedent is unclear:

Sandy Wright sent Jane Brougham *her* production figures for the previous year. *She* thought they were too low.

To which person does the pronoun *her* refer? Someone who knew Sandy and Jane and knew their business relationship might be able to figure out the antecedent for *her*. Even with such an advantage, however, a reader might receive the wrong meaning. Also, it would be nearly impossible for any reader to know which name is the antecedent of *she*.

The best way to clarify an ambiguous pronoun is usually to rewrite the sentence, repeating nouns when needed for clarity:

Sandy Wright sent her production figures for the previous year to Jane Brougham. *Jane* thought they were too low.

The noun needs to be repeated only when the antecedent is unclear.

### **1.2.3 Gender-Neutral Pronouns**

The pronouns that stand for males are *he*, *his*, and *him*. The pronouns that stand for females are *she*, *hers*, and *her*. However, you'll often be faced with the problem of choosing a pronoun for a noun that refers to both females and males:

Each manager must make up (*his*, *her*, *his or her*, *its*, *their*) own mind about stocking this item and about the quantity that (*he*, *she*, *he or she*, *it* *they*) can sell.

This sentence calls for a pronoun that's neither masculine nor feminine. The issue of gender-neutral pronouns responds to efforts to treat females and males evenhandedly. Here are some possible ways to deal with this issue:

Each manager must make up *his*. . .

(Not all managers are men.)

Each manager must make up *her*. . .

(Not all managers are women.)

Each manager must make up *his or her*. . .

(This solution is acceptable but becomes awkward when repeated more than once or twice in a document.)

Each manager must make up *her*. . . Every manager will receive *his*. . . A manager may send *her*. . .

(A manager's gender does not alternate like a windshield wiper!)

Each manager must make up *their*. . .

(The pronoun can't be plural when the antecedent is singular.)

Each manager must make up *its*. . .

(*It* never refers to people.)

The best solution is to make the noun plural or to revise the pas-sage altogether:

Managers must make up *their* minds. . .

Each manager must decide whether. . .

Be careful not to change the original meaning.

#### **1.2.4 Case of Pronouns**

The case of a pronoun tells whether it's acting or acted upon:

*She* sells an average of five packages each week.

In this sentence *she* is doing the selling. Because *she* is acting, *she* is said to be in the nominative case. Now consider what happens when the pronoun is acted upon:

After six months Ms. Browning promoted *her*.

In this sentence the pronoun *her* is acted upon. The pronoun *her* is thus said to be in the objective case.

Contrast the nominative and objective pronouns in this list:

#### ***NOMINATIVE***

I  
we  
he  
she  
they  
who  
whoever

#### ***OBJECTIVE***

me  
us  
him  
her  
them  
whom  
whomever

Objective pronouns may be used as either the object of a verb (such as *promoted*) or the object of a preposition (such as *with*):

Rob worked with *them* until the order was filled.

In this example *them* is the object of the preposition *with* because Rob acted upon-worked with them.

Here's a sample sentence with three pronouns, the first one nominative, the second the object of a verb, and the third the ob-ject of a preposition:

*He* paid us as soon as the check came from *them*.

*He* is nominative; *us* is objective because it's the object of the verb *paid*; *them* is objective because it's the object of the preposition *from*.

Every writer sometimes wonders whether to use *who* or *whom*:

(*Who* / *Whom*) will you hire?

Because this sentence is a question, it's difficult to see that *whom* is the object of the verb *hire*. You can figure out which pronoun to use if you rearrange the question and temporarily try *she* and *her* in place of *who* and *whom*: "Will you hire *she*?" or "Will you hire *her*?" *Her* and *whom* are both objective, so the correct choice is "*Whom* will you hire?" Here's a different example:

(*Who*, *Whom*) logged so much travel time?

Turning the question into a statement, you get:

*He* logged so much travel time.

Therefore, the correct statement is:

*Who* logged so much travel time?

### 1.2.5 Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are like possessive nouns in the way they work: They show ownership- or automatic association.

her job	their preferences
his account	its equipment

However, possessive pronouns are different from possessive nouns in the way they are written. That is, possessive pronouns never have an apostrophe.

POSSESSIVE NOUN	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN
the woman's estate	her estate
Roger Franklin's plans	his plans
the shareholders' feelings	their feelings
the vacuum cleaner's attachments	its attachments

The word *its* is the possessive of *it*. Like all other possessive pronouns, *its* doesn't have an apostrophe. Some people confuse *its* with *it's*, the contraction of *it is*. Contractions are discussed later.

## 1.3 Verbs

A verb describes an action:

They all *quit* in disgust.

It may also describe a state of being:

Working conditions *were* substandard.

The English language is full of action verbs. Here are a few you'll of-ten run across in the business world:

verify	perform	fulfill
hire	succeed	send
leave	improve	receive
accept	develop	pay

You could undoubtedly list many more.

The most common verb describing a state of being instead of an ac-tion is *to be* and all its forms:

I am, was, or will be; you are, were, or will be

Other verbs also describe a state of being:

It seemed a good plan at the time.

She sounds impressive at a meeting.

These verbs link what comes before them in the sentence with what comes after; no action is involved. (See Section 1.7.5 for a fuller dis-cussion of linking verbs.)

### 1.3.1 Verb Tenses

English has three simple verb tenses: present, past, and future.

**PRESENT: PAST:** Our branches in Hawaii stock other items. When we stocked Purquil pens, we received a great many complaints.

**FUTURE:** Rotex Tire Stores will stock your line of tires when you begin a program of effective national advertising.

With most verbs (the regular ones), the past tense ends in ed; the future tense always has will or shall in front of it. But the present tense is more complex:

#### ***SINGULAR***

I stock  
you stock

#### ***PLURAL***

we stock  
you stock



he, she, it stocks

they stock

The basic form, stock, takes an additional s when he, she, or it pre-cedes it. In addition to the three simple tenses, there are three perfect tenses using forms of the helping verb have. The present perfect tense uses the past participle (regularly the past tense) of the main verb, stocked, and adds the present-tense have or has to the front of it:

(I, we, you, they) have stocked.

(He, she, it) has stocked.

The past perfect tense uses the past participle of the main verb, stocked, and adds the past-tense had to the front of it:

(I, you, he, she, it, we, they) had stocked.

The future perfect tense also uses the past participle of the main verb, stocked, but adds the future-tense will have:

(I, you, he, she, it, we, they) will have stocked.

Keep verbs in the same tense when the actions occur at the same time:

When the payroll checks came in, everyone showed up for work.

We have found that everyone has pitched in to help.

Of course, when the actions occur at different times, you may change tense accordingly:

A shipment *came* last *WednesdaYI* so when another one *comes* in *todayI* please return it.

The new employee *had* been ill at *easel* but now she *has become* a full-fledged member of the team.

### 1.3.2 Irregular Verbs

Many verbs don't follow in every detail the patterns already de-scribed. The most irregular of these verbs is *to be*:

TENSE	SINGULAR	PLURAL
<b>PRESENT:</b>	<i>I am</i>	<i>we are</i>
	<i>you are</i>	<i>you are</i>
	<i>he, she, it is</i>	<i>they are</i>
<b>PAST:</b>	<i>I was</i>	<i>we were</i>
	<i>you were</i>	<i>you were</i>
	<i>he, she, it was</i>	<i>they were</i>

The future tense of *to be* is formed in the same way that the future tense of a regular verb is formed.

The perfect tenses of *to be* are also formed as they would be for a regular verb, except that the past participle is a special form, *been*, instead of just the past tense:

**PRESENT PERFECT:**     you *have been*  
**PAST PERFECT:**        you *had been*  
**FUTURE PERFECT:**    you *will have been*

Here's a sampling of other irregular verbs:

<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>PAST</b>	<b>PAST PARTICIPLE</b>	
begin	began	begun	
shrink	shrank	shrunk	
know	knew	known	
rise	rose	risen	
become	became	become	become
go	went	gone	
do	did	done	

Dictionaries list the various forms of other irregular verbs.

### **1.3.3 Transitive and Intransitive Verbs**

Many people are confused by three particular sets of verbs:

lie/lay                      sit/ set                      rise/raise

Using these verbs correctly is much easier when you learn the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs.

Transitive verbs convey their action to an object; they “transfer” their action to an object. Intransitive verbs do not. Here are some sample uses of transitive and intransitive verbs:

#### ***INTRANSITIVE***

We should include in our new offices a place to *lie* down for a nap.

#### ***TRANSITIVE***

The workers will be here on Monday to *lay* new carpeting.

Even the way an interviewee <i>sits</i> is important.	That crate is full of stemware, so <i>set</i> it down carefully.
Salaries at Compu-Link, Inc., <i>rise</i> swiftly.	They <i>raise</i> their level of production every year.

The workers *lay* carpeting, you *set* down the crate, they *raise* production; each action is transferred to something. In the intransitive sentences, one *lies* down, an interviewee *sits*, and salaries *rise* without (at least grammatically) affecting anything else. Intransitive

sentences are complete with only a subject and a verb; transitive sentences are not complete unless they also include an object, or something to transfer the action to.

Tenses are a confusing element of the *lie/lay* problem:

<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>PAST</b>	<b>PAST PARTICIPLE</b>
<i>I lie</i>	<i>I lay</i>	I have <i>lain</i>
<i>I lay</i> (some-thing down)	<i>I laid</i> (some-thing down)	I have <i>laid</i> (some-thing down)

The past tense of *lie* and the present tense of *lay* look and sound alike, even though they're different verbs.

### 1.3.4 *Voice of Verbs*

Verbs have two voices, active and passive:

**ACTIVE:** The buyer paid a large amount.

**PASSIVE:** A large amount was paid by the buyer.

The passive voice uses a form of the verb *to be*.

Also, the passive-voice sentence uses eight words, whereas the active-voice sentence uses only six words to say the same thing. The words *was* and *by* are unnecessary to convey the meaning of the sentence. In fact, extra words usually clog meaning. So be sure to opt for the active voice when you have a choice.

At times, however, you have no choice:

Several items *have been taken* but so far we don't know who took them.

The passive voice becomes necessary when you don't know (or don't want to say) who performed the action; the active voice is bolder and more direct.

### 1.3.5 *Mood of Verbs*

You have three moods to choose from, depending on your intentions. Most of the time you use the indicative mood to make a statement or to ask a question:

The secretary *mailed* a letter to each supplier.

Did the secretary *mail* a letter to each supplier?

When you wish to command or request, use the imperative mood:

Please mail a letter to each supplier.

Sometimes, especially in business, a courteous request is stated like a question; in that case, however, no question mark is required.

Would you *mail* a letter to each supplier.

The subjunctive mood, most often used in formal writing or in pre-senting bad news, expresses a possibility or a recommendation. The subjunctive is usually signaled by a word such as *if* or *that*. In these examples, the subjunctive mood uses special verb forms:

If the secretary were to *mail* a letter to each supplier, we might save some money.

I suggested that the secretary *mail* a letter to each supplier.

Although the subjunctive mood is not used as often as it once was, it's still found in such expressions as *Come what may* and *If I were you*. In general, it is used to convey an idea that is contrary to fact: If iron *were* lighter than air.

#### **1.4 Adjectives**

An adjective modifies (tells something about) a noun or pronoun:

an <i>efficient</i> staff	a <i>heavy</i> price
<i>brisk</i> trade	<i>poor</i> you

Each of these phrases says more about the noun or pronoun than the noun or pronoun would say alone.

Adjectives always tell us something we wouldn't know without them. So you don't need to use adjectives when the noun alone, or a different noun, will give the meaning:

a *company* employee

(An employee ordinarily works for a company.)

a crate-type container

(Crate gives the entire meaning.)

At times, adjectives pile up in a series:

It was a *long, hot, and active* workday.

Such strings of adjectives are acceptable as long as they all convey a different part of the phrase's meaning.

Verbs in the *ing* (present participle) form can be used as adjectives:

A *boring* job can sometimes turn into a *fascinating* career.

So can the past participle of verbs:

A freshly *painted* house is a *sold* house.

Adjectives modify nouns more often than they modify pro-nouns. When adjectives do modify pronouns, however, the sentence usually has a linking verb:

They were *attentive*.

It looked *appropriate*.

He seems *interested*.

You are *skillful*.

Most adjectives can take three forms: simple, comparative, and superlative. The simple form modifies a single noun or pronoun. Use the comparative form when comparing two items. When comparing three or more items, use the superlative form.

**SIMPLE      COMPARATIVE      SUPERLATIVE**

hard    harder    hardest

safe    safer    safest

dry    drier    driest

The comparative form adds *er* to the simple form, and the superlative form adds *est*. (The *y* at the end of a word changes to *i* before the *er* or *est* is added.)

A small number of adjectives are irregular, including these:

**SIMPLE      COMPARATIVE      SUPERLATIVE**

good    better    best

bad    worse    worst

little    less    least

When the simple form of an adjective is two or more syllables, you usually add *more* to form the comparative and *most* to form the superlative:

**SIMPLE      COMPARATIVE      SUPERLATIVE**

useful    more useful    most useful

exhausting    more exhausting    most exhausting

expensive    more expensive    most expensive

The most common exceptions are two-syllable adjectives that end in *y*:

**SIMPLE**

**COMPARATIVE**

**SUPERLATIVE**

happy

happier

happiest

costly

costlier

costliest

If you choose this option, change the *y* to *i*, and tack *er* or *est* onto the end.

## 1.5 Adverbs

An adverb modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb:

<b>MODIFYING A VERB:</b>	Our marketing department works <i>efficiently</i> .
<b>MODIFYING AN ADJECTIVE:</b>	She was not dependable, although she was <i>highly</i> intelligent.
<b>MODIFYING ANOTHER ADVERB:</b>	His territory was <i>too</i> broadly diversified, so he moved <i>extremely</i> cautiously.

Most of the adverbs mentioned are adjectives turned into adverbs by adding *ly*, which is how many adverbs are formed:

ADJECTIVE	ADVERB
efficient	efficiently
high	highly
extreme	extremely
special	specially
official	officially
separate	separately

Some adverbs are made by dropping or changing the final letter of the adjective and then adding *ly*:

ADJECTIVE	ADVERB
due	duly
busy	busily

Other adverbs don't end in *ly* at all. Here are a few examples of this type:

often	fast	too
soon	very	so

## 1.6 Other Parts of Speech

Nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs carry most of the meaning in a sentence. Four other parts of speech link them together in sentences: prepositions, conjunctions, articles, and interjections.

### 1.6.1 Prepositions

Prepositions are words like these:

of	to	for	with
at	by	from	about

They most often begin prepositional phrases, which function like adjectives and adverbs by telling more about a pronoun, noun, or verb:

*of* a type                      *by* Friday  
*to* the point                  *with* characteristic flair

**1.6.2 Conjunctions, Articles, and Interjections** Conjunctions are words that usually join parts of a sentence. Here are a few:

and     but                      because  
yet     although                if

Using conjunctions is discussed in sections 1.7.3 and 1.7.4.

Only three articles exist in English: *the*, *a*, and *an*. These words are used, like adjectives; to specify which item you are talking about.

Interjections are words that express no solid information, only emotion:

Wow!                          Well, well!  
Ohno!                         Good!

Such purely emotional language has its place in private life and advertising copy, but it only weakens the effect of most business writing.

### **1.7 Sentences**

Sentences are constructed with the major building blocks, the parts of speech.

Money talks.

This two-word sentence consists of a noun (*money*) and a verb (*talks*). When used in this way, the noun works as the first requirement for a sentence, the subject, and the verb works as the second requirement, the predicate. Now look at this sentence:

They merged.

The subject in this case is a pronoun (*they*), and the predicate is a verb (*merged*). This is a sentence because it has a subject and a predicate. Here is yet another kind of sentence:

The plans are ready.

This sentence has a more complicated subject the noun *plans* and the article *the*; the complete predicate is a state-of-being verb (*are*) and an adjective (*ready*).

Without these two parts, the subject (who or what does some-thing) and the predicate (the doing of it), no collection of words is a sentence.

### 1.7.1 Commands

In commands, the subject (always *you*) is only understood, not stated:

(You) Move your desk to the better office. (You) Please try to finish by six o'clock.

### 1.7.2 Longer Sentences

More complicated sentences have more complicated subjects and predicates, but they still have a simple subject and a predicate verb. In the following examples, the simple subject is underlined once, the predicate verb twice:

Marex and Contran envoy higher earnings each quarter.

(Marex [and] Contran did something; enjoy is what they did.)

My interview, coming minutes after my freeway accident did not impress or move anyone.

(Interview is what did something. What did it do? It did [not] impress [or] move.)

In terms of usable space, a steel warehouse, with its extremely long span of roof unsupported by pillars, makes more sense.

(Warehouse is what makes.)

These three sentences demonstrate several things. First, in all three sentences the simple subject and predicate verb are the “bare bones” of the sentence, the parts that carry the core idea of the sentence. When trying to find the simple subject and predicate verb, disregard all prepositional phrases, modifiers, conjunctions, and articles.

Second, in the third sentence the verb is singular (*makes*) because the subject is singular (*warehouse*). Even though the plural noun *pillars* is closer to the verb, *warehouse* is the subject. So *warehouse* determines whether the verb is singular or plural. Subject and predicate must agree.

Third, the subject in the first sentence is compound (*Marex* [and] *Contran*). A compound subject, when connected by *and*, requires a plural verb (*enjoy*). Also in the second sentence, compound predicates are possible (*did* [not] *impress* [or] *move*).

Fourth, the second sentence incorporates a group of words- *coming minutes after my freeway accident*-containing a form of a verb (*coming*) and a noun (*accident*). Yet this group of words is not a complete sentence for two reasons:

- ❖ Accident is not the subject of coming. Not all nouns are subjects.
- ❖ A verb that ends in *ing* can never be the predicate of a sentence (unless preceded by a form of *to be*, as in *was coming*). Not all verbs are predicates.

Because they don't contain a subject and a predicate, the words *coming minutes after my freeway accident* (called a phrase) can't be written as a sentence. That is, the phrase can't



stand-alone; it can't begin with a capital letter and end with a period. So a phrase must always be just one part of a sentence.

Sometimes a sentence incorporates two or more groups of words that do contain a subject and a predicate; these word groups are called clauses.

My interview, because it came minutes after my freeway accident, did not impress or move anyone.

The independent clause is the portion of the sentence that could stand alone without revision:

My interview did not impress or move anyone.

The other part of the sentence could stand-alone only by removing *because*:

(Because) I came minutes after my freeway accident.

This part of the sentence is known as a dependent clause; although it has a subject and a predicate (just as an independent clause does), it's linked to the main part of the sentence by a word (*because*) showing its dependence.

In summary, the two types of clauses—dependent and independent both have a subject and a predicate. Dependent clauses, however, do not bear the main meaning of the sentence and are therefore linked to an independent clause. Nor can phrases stand alone, because they lack both a subject and a predicate. Only independent clauses can be written as sentences without revision.

### **1.7.3 Sentence Fragments**

An incomplete sentence, (a phrase or a dependent clause) that is written as though it were a complete sentence is called a fragment. Consider the following sentence fragments:

Marilyn Sanders, having had pilferage problems in her store for the past year. Refuses to accept the results of our investigation.

This serious error can easily be corrected by putting the two fragments together:

Marilyn Sanders, having had pilferage problems in her store for the past year, refuses to accept the results of our investigation.

Not all fragments can be corrected so easily. Here's more information on Sanders's pilferage problem.

Employees a part of it. No authority or discipline.

Only the writer knows the intended meaning of these two phrases. Perhaps the employees are taking part in the pilferage. If so, the sentence should read:

Some employees are part of the pilferage problem.

On the other hand, it's possible that some employees are helping with the investigation. Then the sentence would read:

Some employees are taking part in our investigation.

It's just as likely, however, that the employees are not only taking part in the pilferage but are also being analyzed:

Those employees who are part of the pilferage problem will accept no authority or discipline.

In fact, even more meanings could be read into these fragments. Because fragments can mean so many things, they mean nothing. No well-written memo, letter, or report ever demands the reader to be an imaginative genius.

One more type of fragment exists, the kind represented by a dependent clause. Note what because does to change what was once a unified sentence:

Our stock of sprinklers is depleted.

Because our stock of sprinklers is depleted.

Although the second version contains a subject and a predicate, adding because makes it a fragment. Words such as because form a special group of words called subordinating conjunctions. Here's a partial list:

Since	though	whenever
Although	if	unless
While	even if	after

When a word of this type begins a clause, the clause is dependent and cannot stand alone as a sentence. However, if a dependent clause is combined with an independent clause, it can convey a complete meaning. The independent clause may come before or after the dependent clause:

We are unable to fill your order because our stock of sprinklers is depleted.

Because our stock of sprinklers is depleted, we are unable to fill your order.

Another remedy for a fragment that is a dependent clause is to remove the subordinating conjunction. That solution leaves a simple but complete sentence:

Our stock of sprinklers is depleted.

The actual details of a transaction will determine the best way to remedy a fragment problem.

The ban on fragments has one exception. Some advertising copy contains sentence fragments, written knowingly to convey a certain rhythm. However, advertising is the only area of business in which fragments are acceptable.

#### **1.7.4 Fused Sentences and Comma Splices**

Just as there can be too little in a group of words to make it a sentence, there can also be too much:

All our mail is run through a postage meter every after-noon someone picks it up.

This example contains two sentences, not one, but the two have been blended so that it's hard to tell where one ends and the next begins. Is the mail run through a meter every afternoon? If *so*, the sentences should read:

All our mail is run through a postage meter every after-noon. Someone picks it up. Perhaps the mail is run through a meter at some other time (morn-ing, for example) and is picked up every afternoon:

All our mail is run through a postage meter. Every after-noon someone picks it up. The order of words is the same in all three cases; sentence division makes all the difference. Either of the last two cases is grammati-cally correct. The choice depends on the facts of the situation.

Sometimes these so-called fused sentences have a more obvious point of separation: Several large orders arrived within a few days of one an-other, too many came in for us to process by the end of the month.

Here the comma has been put between two independent clauses in an attempt to link them. When a lowly comma separates two com-plete sentences, the result is called a comma splice. A comma splice can be remedied in one of three ways:

- ❖ Replace the comma with a period and capitalize the next word:  
“ . . . one another. Too many. . . “
- ❖ Replace the comma with a semicolon and do not capitalize the next word: “ . . . one another; too many. . . “ This remedy works only .when the two sentences have closely related meanings.
- ❖ Change one of the sentences so that it becomes a phrase or a de-pendent clause. This remedy often produces the best writing, but it takes more work.

The third alternative can be carried out in several ways. One is to begin the blended sentence with a subordinating conjunction:

Whenever several large orders arrived within a few days of one another, too many came in for us to process by the end of the month.

Another way is to remove part of the subject or the predicate verb from one of the independent clauses, thereby creating a phrase:

Several large orders arrived within a few days of one another, too many for us to process by the end of the month.

Finally, you can change one of the predicate verbs to its *ing* form:

Several large orders arrived within a few days of one another, too many coming in for us to process by the end of the month.

At other times a simple coordinating conjunction (such as *or*, *and*, or *but*) can separate fused sentences:

You can fire them, or you can make better use of their abilities.

Margaret drew up the designs, and Matt carried them out.

We will have three strong months, *but* after that sales will taper off.

Be careful using coordinating conjunctions: Use them only to join simple sentences that express similar ideas.

Also, because they say relatively little about the relationship between the two clauses they join, avoid using coordinating conjunctions too often: *and* is merely an addition sign; *but* is just a turn signal; *or* only points to an alternative. Subordinating conjunctions such as *because* and *whenever* tell the reader a lot more.

### **1.7.5 Sentences with Linking Verbs**

Linking verbs were discussed briefly in the section on verbs (Section 1.3). Here you can see more fully the way they function in a sentence. The following is a model of any sentence with a linking verb:

A (verb) B

Although words such as *seems* and *feels* can also be linking verbs, let's assume that the verb is a form of *to be*:

A *is* B.

In such a sentence, A and B are always nouns, pronouns, or adjectives. When one is a noun and the other is a pronoun, or when both are nouns, the sentence says that one is the same as the other:

She is president.

Rachel is president.

When one is an adjective, it modifies or describes the other:

She is forceful.

Remember that when one is an adjective, it modifies the other as any adjective modifies a noun or pronoun, except that a linking verb stands between the adjective and the word it modifies.

### **1.7.6 *Misplaced Modifiers***

The position of a modifier in a sentence is important. The movement of *only* changes the meaning in the following sentences:

*Only* we are obliged to supply those items specified in your contract.

We are obliged *only* to supply those items specified in your contract.

We are obliged to supply *only* those items specified in your contract.

We are obliged to supply those items specified *only* in your contract.

In any particular set of circumstances, only one of these sentences would be accurate. The others would very likely cause problems. To prevent misunderstanding, place modifiers such as *only* as close as possible to the noun or verb they modify.

For similar reasons, whole phrases that are modifiers must be placed near the right noun or verb. Mistakes in placement create ludicrous meanings:

Antia Information Systems has bough (new computer chairs for the programmers *with more comfortable seats*).

The anatomy of programmers is not normally a concern of busi-ness writers. Obviously, the comfort of the chairs was the issue:

Antia Information Systems has bought new computer chairs *with more comfortable seats* for the programmers.

Here is another example:

I asked him to file all the letters in the cabinet *that had been answered*.

In this ridiculous sentence the cabinet has been answered, even though no cabinet in history is known to have asked a question.

*That had been answered* is too far from *letters* and too close to *cab-inet*. Here's an improvement:

I asked him to file in the cabinet all the letters *that had been answered*.

In some cases, instead of moving the modifying phrase closer to the word it modifies, the best solution is to move the word closer to the modifying phrase.

## GRAMMAR EXERCISE

1. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. None of the students have submitted graduation applications.  
B. Either of the authors are willing to go on a book tour.  
C. Barnes and Noble are having a year-end inventory reduction sale.  
D. Neither the faculty nor the administration wants to start the semester earlier.
2. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. Mr. Cooper, along with his two partners, are representing the bar association at the annual meeting.  
B. Enclosed is a brochure and a reservation form for the conference center.  
C. Tim is one of those students who perform well in front of large groups.  
D. A series of articles on drug abuse have been published in the local newspaper.
3. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. Porgy and Bess is a well-known operetta.  
B. Thirty dollars don't buy many groceries these days.  
C. Only one of our suppliers offer a quantity discount.  
D. It don't matter whether we go to class or not.
4. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. Neither Frank nor the associates have responded.  
B. Janet Wilson or the two teachers generally prepares the lesson plan.  
C. Everyone in this organization volunteer time to the charity.  
D. Any of our employees may attend the national conference if he pays his own way.
5. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. Each man and woman have the opportunity to compete.  
B.  
The computer programmer, together with several computer technicians, is contracted to service this account.  
C. Located in the East Wing is the child care center and the manufacturing laboratories.  
D. A number of participants at the conference is being asked to present.

6. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. The most current life-saving device in new automobiles are the airbags.  
B. The danger of using narcotics are apparent to all teenagers.

C. The chances of winning the lottery are not very likely.  
D. The museum or the park make our community attractive to potential residents

7. PRONOUNS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Just between you and I, the funding will not be approved for this project.  
B. Who do you think we should nominate for the student senate?

C. Neither Eddie nor Tim can drive his grandmother to the doctor.  
D. Mrs. Dalton will give Jane and I the necessary forms before the meeting.

8. PRONOUNS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Whom do you suppose will accompany the students to the national conference?

B. The Ways and Means Committee will announce its proposed budget on January 5.  
C. The Wilsons and myself will coordinate the family reunion this year.  
D. When the client saw the attorney, he discussed the possible witnesses who could be called for the trial.

9. PRONOUNS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. During the workshop, the presenter asked each of the participants why they signed up for his session.  
B. A financial report on the computer-software industry was prepared by Evans and me.  
C. My father jogs more than others who are younger than him.

D. In his first game as quarterback for the team, who did Terry Bradshaw replace?

10. PRONOUNS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. The club will sponsor whomever wants to be a new member.  
B. Whom was the winner of the poetry contest?

C. The stockbroker and myself created a diversified portfolio.  
D. Because of the depressed economy, we are skeptical of his lavish spending.

11. PRONOUNS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. No one in our department makes as much commission as him.  
B. The best students in the class were you and him.  
C. We swimmers would like to compete at the regional competition.  
D. If anyone in our office gets promoted to the manager's position, it will be her.

12. PRONOUNS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Jason recognized her as the girl that had placed first in the 200-yard freestyle.

- B. The subjects of the labor dispute are us welders.
- C. Me and Kelly went to the mall.
- D. One of the students who John tutored was inducted into the honor society.

13. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Kim and Tim have signed up for the soccer camp but Jim and Kevin have signed up for band camp.

- B. Linda will speak at the conference, and provide feedback to the corporate executives.
- C. Paul Henry always submits documented, well-researched, reports.
- D. Our annual conference will be held in San Antonio, Texas, in October.

14. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. When I am on vacation I call the office a couple of times during the week.

- B. Sarah Robinson, a representative of the United Way, met with the community leaders on Friday.
- C. A plagiarized term paper, that the student copied from the Internet, was the reason she was expelled from the college.
- D. Fruitcakes, and Christmas cookies make terrific holiday gifts.

15. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Considering all aspects of the problem, we instituted a new policy.

- B. To receive your diploma you must apply for graduation before March 15.
- C. All the desks, which have been in storage for many years, will be sold at an auction late in the spring.
- D. The faculty however will be forced to communicate by electronically.

16. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. My boy friend thinks we should drive his car to California, I myself think we should take the train.

- B. The management consultants identified why the company is in crisis: we did not generate enough revenue.
- C. Our company has offices in the following locations: Gary, Indiana; Youngstown, Ohio; and Newark, New Jersey.
- D. Jane missed her flight, therefore, she was not available for the keynote address at the conference.

17. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Martha was amazed by the way Karen worked, she was the fastest technician that she had ever met.

- B. Thank you for the flowers I am still recovering from my surgery.
- C. We need only one more item to finish the grant application<sup>3/4</sup> the statement of eligibility.
- D. Dr. Sharon Robinson, head of the pediatric unit is retiring.

18. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Due to the current interest rates, it's impossible to qualify for a home loan.



- B. The Finance Committees' decision was rejected by the upper management of the company.
- C. Last years auction yielded \$2 million for the charity.
- D. The company is publishing a childrens' line of books.

19. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. The four coaches<sup>3/4</sup>Hines, Crawford, Thrasher, and Gilmore, went to the James Nelson High School to recruit team players.

- B. Social fraternities<sup>3/4</sup>Sigma Chi, for example<sup>3/4</sup>provide brotherhood for students on large campuses.
- C. The bricklayer's union contract is under negotiation.
- D. Molly and Sally went to the mall to buy a birthday present for a friend of theirs'.

20. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. We paid the bill for the two dogs grooming and boarding charges.

- B. The driver survived because of one reason, he was wearing his seat belt.
- C. Alyssa has three part-time jobs: beautician, waitress, and child-care provider.
- D. Among the flowers selected for the garden were: tulips, daffodils, daisies, and marigolds.

21. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. The tentative dates for the future antique shows are January 22, 2002; June 8, 2003; and November 22, 2004.

- B. Brooklyn is a burrow of New York, it has a famous bridge.
- C. When Bob Cox joined the firm; he took mainly criminal appointments and divorce cases.
- D. I bought a laptop computer knowing I would use it when I traveled, I now use it as my office computer.

22. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Please tell us Kelsey, if you want tickets for the concert.

- B. To the average consumer getting the lowest price is a priority.
- C. Since you requested the parking pass we have raised the parking fees.
- D. The administration has extended the application date because they had to reopen the position.

23. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. The movie received great reviews from the critics but no one in our group enjoyed it.

- B. Evan spent too many hours playing computer games, and he never got his assignments completed on time.
- C. Sara enjoyed many church activities, and traveled with her youth group to do missionary work.
- D. My career counselor has given me several suggestion for career choices, however, I am still convinced I want to be a network manager.

24. PUNCTUATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. The plastics degree program, which is now being developed, has great demand.  
B. Unless the management group can agree on adding the new product line there will not be a line item for it in the budget.  
C. On the official accident report the defendant made a statement that the oncoming vehicle was left of center.  
D. The decision, that the department would be downsized, was made by the president after he reviewed the sales figures.

25. CAPITALIZATION — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. My aunt is working on her Master's Degree in organizational management.  
B. The manager in accounting is opposed to casual Fridays.  
C. The President of Cook's Cookies has announced his resignation.  
D. Our law firm is considering hiring a Legal Assistant to do title searches.

26. NUMBERS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Ken and Barbie will be visiting 1 of their four children over the holidays.  
B. The Simpson's new motor home cost several \$1000 dollars more than they thought it would.  
C. The purchasing agent ordered 18 computer workstations, but there was only room for six in the facility.  
D. The menagerie consisted of 14 snakes, five ponies, and one parrot.

27. NUMBERS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. My parents' home is about 200 years old.  
B. The college gymnasium was packed for the basketball tournament on March 1st, 2001.  
C. Sixty patients out of 83 in the self-assisted unit receive some form of financial support.  
D. 22 vehicles in the parking lot did not display the current parking sticker.

28. NUMBERS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. The company will celebrate its 25th anniversary next month.  
B. Approximately eight to 15 volunteers will assist in the Special Olympics.  
C. Next year, tuition is expected to increase by three percent.  
D. In the classes at my son's military college, the men outnumber the women on a ratio of 20 to two.

29. Select the correct form for writing dates in business correspondence. A. 03/22/02

B. 22 March, 2002

C. June 3rd, 2004

D. August 22, 2003

30. Select the correct form for writing dates in business writing. A. Mrs. Johnson completed her sales training on the 7 of April.  
B. Checks are mailed out on the 15th of September.  
C.  
The tryouts are scheduled for the twelfth.  
D. None of the above.
31. Select the correct number usage in the following sentences. A. 75 workers petitioned for the day shift.  
B. At the six restaurants, there were 37 different types of pie.  
C. The client's file has been missing for thirteen days.  
D. Our taxes were increased by six percent.
32. SENTENCE STRUCTURE — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. The communities must support the schools by passing necessary levies. To be concerned and responsible neighbors reflecting all aspects of good citizenship.  
B. If necessary to offer programs whose primary objective is improving parenting skills.  
C. Because the shipment never arrived, we ordered from another source.  
D. The mattress sets were soiled and faded, we believe them to be damaged by water.
33. SENTENCE STRUCTURE — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. The college's goal is to increase student enrollment, raise tuition, and it wants to be a leader in technical studies.  
B. The company's goals this year are to increase last year's revenue, enhance its customer service, and reduce the turnover of personnel in the department.  
C. Providing samples for the customers may be more valuable than to show them photographs.  
D. On Friday evenings, I would rather call out for pizza and rent a movie than going out to dinner.
34. SENTENCE STRUCTURE — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. The employees gave the management team three suggestions: to consider outsourcing certain operations, reducing the amount of compulsory overtime, and increasing personal leave days.  
B. The survey inquires about the students' majors, travel time to campus, and if the they are working full time or part time.  
C. The band members performed at the football game, participated in the countywide contest, and marched in the Veterans' Day parade.  
D. To offer personal leave days to employees is better than having separate sick leave and personal days.
35. SENTENCE STRUCTURE — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.  
A. Because you are such an important customer to us.  
B. This is a one-time thing and we have talked to our supplier, and if anything like this ever occurs again.  
C. One of the great advantages of being a stockholder.

D. Because he proved to be so computer literate, Nick was hired before he completed his degree.

36. SENTENCE STRUCTURE — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly.

A. The year following our graduation, we traveled to France, visited the museums, and we made many new friends.

B. The lawn service was expected to kill all the weeds, trim the shrubbery, and plant the annual flowers.

C. The nurse familiarizes the new mother with proper bathing for the newborn and how to administer medication.

D. I dread cleaning the house, but to mow the yard is very relaxing.

37. MODIFIERS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. All 20 year employees will be honored at the dinner.

B. We manufacture state-of-the-art restaurant equipment.

C. Jason Myers is well-known for his animated graphics.

D. The student teacher did real well explaining fractions to the students.

38. MODIFIERS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Joan returned the customers inquiries quick.

B. Having studied biology, the assignment was not difficult for Susan.

C. By studying diligently, your grades will improve.

D. Nancy and Jean shopped continuously until their credit maximums were reached.

39. MODIFIERS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. Caitlin promised to always tell the truth at the principal's office.

B. Julia received an "A" from Professor Cain in World Religions.

C. Dustin, while waiting for his son, planned several recognition dinners in his car.

D. Each department will establish every month a program of rewarding conscientious employees.

40. MODIFIERS — Choose the sentence below that is written correctly. A. While eating in the cafeteria, I received news about the automobile accident.

B. While walking through the woods, several wild mushrooms were spotted.

C. Although more difficult than expected, Laura continued to try her best in the math course.

D. After returning to the pharmaceutical research, Dr. Hyde's practice was sold to a new physician.