

FORMING PLURALS

To form the plural of most nouns, simply add *s*:

pencil→pencils book→books file→files

But note these exceptions when you must add *es* to form a plural noun:

Add *es* to nouns that end in *s*, *z*, *x*, *sh*, or *ch*.

glass→glasses waltz→waltzes box→boxes brush→brushes
wrench→wrenches

For nouns that end in a consonant + *y*, change the *y* to *i* and add *es*.

hobby→hobbies lady→ladies ruby→rubies

For nouns that end in a vowel + *y*, the rule to add *s* applies.

tray→trays journey→journeys

Add *es* to nouns that end in a consonant + *o*.

potato→potatoes hero→heroes

If a noun ends in a vowel + *o*, the rule to add *s* applies.

zoo→zoos radio→radios

Warning there are exceptions to this exception!

piano→pianos taco→tacos

The rule and normal exceptions do not apply to IRREGULAR nouns.

child→children woman→women foot→feet mouse→mice
sheep→sheep goose→geese

There are two types of relative clauses using reflexive pronouns.

Non-Restrictive Clauses (*Non-Defining Clauses*)

For People

*The President of the United States, **who** is visiting Moscow, claimed that relations between the two countries were at their best for twenty years.*

NB - you cannot use **that** here (after a comma).

For Things

*The intermission, **which** lasts for fifteen minutes, comes halfway through the film.*

Notes about Non-Restrictive Clauses (Non-Defining Clauses)

In this type of relative clause, the information is not essential; it could be deleted without making the sentence ungrammatical and it would still be clear who or what we are talking about.

Restrictive Clauses (*Defining Clauses*)

For People

*The man **that** stole my car was fined. (this is used in American and British English)*

*The man **who** stole my car was fined. (this is used in British English)*

For Things

*The company **which** made it has gone bankrupt.*

*The company **that** made it has gone bankrupt.*

Notes about Restrictive Clauses (Defining Clauses)

In this type of relative clause, the information is essential; if it is deleted, then the sentence will no longer make sense as we will not understand who or what is being talked about.

Using Pronouns Clearly

Because a pronoun REFERS BACK to a noun or TAKES THE PLACE OF that noun, you have to use the correct pronoun so that your reader clearly understands which noun your pronoun is referring to.

Therefore, pronouns should:

1. AGREE in NUMBER

If the pronoun takes the place of a singular noun, you have to use a singular pronoun.

If a student parks a car on campus, he or she has to buy a parking sticker.

(NOT: If a student parks a car on campus, they have to buy a parking sticker.)

REMEMBER: The words EVERYBODY, ANYBODY, ANYONE, EACH, NEITHER, NOBODY, SOMEONE, A PERSON, etc. are singular and take singular pronouns.

Everybody ought to do his or her best. (NOT: their best)

Neither of the girls brought her umbrella. (NOT: their umbrellas)

NOTE: Many people find the construction "his or her" wordy, so if it is possible to use a plural noun as your antecedent so that you can use "they" as your pronoun, it may be wise to do so. If you do use a singular noun and the context makes the gender clear, then it is permissible to use just "his" or "her" rather than "his or her." See our handout on [Non-sexist Language](#) for more information.

2. AGREE in PERSON

If you are writing in the "first person" (I), don't confuse your reader by switching to the "second person" (you) or "third person" (he, she, they, it, etc.). Similarly, if you are using the "second person," don't switch to "first" or "third."

When a person comes to class, he or she should have his or her homework ready.

(NOT: When a person comes to class, you should have your homework ready.)

3. REFER CLEARLY to a specific noun.

Don't be vague or ambiguous.

NOT: Although the motorcycle hit the tree, it was not damaged. (Is "it" the motorcycle or the tree?)

NOT: I don't think they should show violence on TV. (Who are "they"?)

NOT: Vacation is coming soon, which is nice. (What is nice, the vacation or the fact that it is coming soon?)

NOT: George worked in a national forest last summer. This may be his life's work. (What word does "this" refer to?)

NOT: If you put this sheet in your notebook, you can refer to it. (What does "it" refer to, the sheet or your notebook?)

PLAGUE WORDS *STUDENT SUCCESS LAB HANDOUT* AND PHRASES

Avoid problems created by these words or phrases:

1. **And also** This is often redundant.
2. **And/or** Outside of the legal world, most of the time this construction is used, it is neither necessary nor logical. Try using one word or the other.
3. **As to whether** The single word *whether* will suffice.
4. **Basically, essentially, totally** These words seldom add anything useful to a sentence. Try the sentence without them and, almost always, you will see the sentence improve.
5. **Being that** or **being as** These words are a non-standard substitute for *because*. ~~Being that~~ Because I was the youngest child, I always wore hand-me-downs.
6. **Considered to be** Eliminate the *to be* and, unless it's important who's doing the considering, try to eliminate the entire phrase.
7. **Due to the fact that** Using this phrase is a sure sign that your sentence is in trouble. Did you mean *because*? *Due to* is acceptable after a linking verb (The team's failure was due to illness among the stars.); otherwise, avoid it.
8. **Each and every** One or the other, but not both.
9. **Equally as** Something can be *equally important* or *as important as*, but not *equally as important*.
10. **Etc.** This abbreviation often suggests a kind of laziness. It might be better to provide one more example, thereby suggesting that you could have written more, but chose not to.
11. **He/she** is a convention created to avoid gender bias in writing, but it doesn't work very well and it becomes downright obtrusive if it appears often. Use *he or she* or pluralize (where appropriate) so you can avoid the problem of the gender-specific pronoun altogether.
12. **Firstly, secondly, thirdly**, etc. Number things with *first, second, third*, etc. and not with these adverbial forms.
13. **Got** Many writers regard *got* as an ugly word, and they have a point. If you can avoid it in writing, do so. I ~~have got to~~ *must* begin studying right away. I have ~~got~~ two pairs of sneakers.
14. **Had ought** or **hadn't ought**. Eliminate the auxiliary *had*. You ~~hadn't~~ ought not to pester your sister that way.
15. **Interesting** One of the least interesting words in English, the word you use to describe an ugly baby. If you *show* us why something is interesting, you're doing your job.

16. **In terms of** See if you can eliminate this phrase.
17. **Irregardless** No one word will get you in trouble with the boss faster than this one.
18. **Kind of** or **sort of**. These are OK in informal situations, but in formal academic prose, substitute *somewhat*, *rather* or *slightly*. We were ~~kind of~~ rather pleased with the results.
19. **Literally** This word might be confused with *literarily*, a seldom used adverb relating to authors or scholars and their various professions. Usually, though, if you say it's "literally a jungle out there," you probably mean *figuratively*, but you're probably better off without either word.
20. **Lots** or **lots of** In academic prose, avoid these colloquialisms when you can use *many* or *much*. Remember, when you do use these words, that lots of something countable are plural. Remember, too, that **a lot of** requires three words: "He spent *a lot of* money" (not alot of).
21. **Just** Use only when you need it, as in *just* the right amount.
22. **Nature** See if you can get rid of this word. Movies of a violent nature are probably just violent movies.
23. **Necessitate** It's hard to imagine a situation that would necessitate the use of this word.
24. **Of** Don't write would **of**, should **of**, could **of** when you mean would **have**, should **have**, could **have**.
25. **On account of** Use *because* instead.
26. **Only** Look out for placement. Don't write "*He only kicked that ball ten yards*" when you mean "*He kicked that ball only ten yards.*"
27. **Orientate** The new students become *oriented*, not orientated. The same thing applies to **administrate** -- we *administer* a project.
28. **Per** Use *according to* instead. We did it *per* your instructions? Naah. (This word is used frequently in legal language and in technical specifications, where it seems to be necessary and acceptable.)
29. **Plus** Don't use this word as a conjunction. Use *and* instead.
30. **Point in time** Forget it! *At this time* or *at this point* or *now* will do the job.
31. **Previous** as in "our previous discussion." Use *earlier* or nothing at all.
32. **So as to** Usually, a simple *to* will do.
33. **Suppose to, use to.** The hard "d" sound in *supposed to* and *used to* disappears in pronunciation, but it shouldn't disappear in spelling. "We *used to* do that" or "We were *supposed to* do it this way."
34. **The reason why is because.** *Deja vu* all over again!
35. **Thru** This nonstandard spelling of *through* should not be used in academic prose.
36. **Til** Don't use this word instead of *until* or *till*, even in bad poetry.

37. **Try and** Don't try and do something. Try to do something.
38. **Thusly** Use *thus* or *therefore* instead.
39. **Utilize** Don't use this word where *use* would suffice. (Same goes for *utilization*.)
40. **Very, really, quite (and other intensifiers)** Like *basically*, these words seldom add anything useful. Try the sentence without them and see if it improves.

Predicate Nominative

A **predicate nominative** is a *noun* or *pronoun* which follows the verb and describes or renames the subject. It is another *way* of naming the subject. It follows a linking verb. The predicate nominatives on this page have been italicized.

PREDICATE NOMINATIVE

Sometimes called a predicate noun, a *predicate nominative* is a noun or pronoun that appears in the predicate of a sentence, following a linking verb and having the same referent as the subject of the sentence: *She is my **sister**. I was the **captain**.* Pronouns in this function are in the nominative case in Oratorical and Formal contexts, but Conversational levels can use objective case pronouns: *It's me* and *It was us* occur in Standard Conversational uses, alongside *This is she* and *It was we who were embarrassed*.

predicate nominative

A noun or pronoun that follows a linking verb and refers to the same person or thing as the subject, as *firefighter* in *Jim was a firefighter*.

The following is a list of verbs and prepositions which commonly appear together.

accuse (someone) of ([doing] something)
add (something) to (something else)
admire (someone) for ([doing] something)
agree on (topic)
agree with (someone)
apologize to (someone) for ([doing] something)
apply to (a place) for (something)
approve of (something)
argue with (someone) about (topic)
arrive at (a building, room, site, event)
arrive in (a city, country)
ask (someone) about (someone/topic)
ask (someone) for (something)

believe in (something)
belong to (someone)
blame (someone) for ([doing] something)
borrow (something) from (someone)

care about (someone/something/topic)
comment on (topic)
compare (something) to/with (something else)
complain to (someone) about (something)
concentrate on ([doing] something)
congratulate (someone) for/on ([doing] something)
consist of (some things)
consent to ([doing] something)
contribute to (something)
count on (someone) to (do something)
cover (something) with (something else)

decide on (topic)
depend on (someone) for (something)
discuss (something) with (someone)
distinguish (something) from (something else)
dream about/of (someone/something)

escape from (somewhere)
explain (topic) to (someone)
excuse (someone) for ([doing] something)

forgive (someone) for ([doing] something)

get rid of (something)
graduate from (a place)

happen to (someone)
help (someone) with (something)
hide (something) from (someone)

Prepositions of Time, of Place, and to Introduce Objects

One point in time

On is used with days:

- I will see you **on** Monday.
- The week begins **on** Sunday.

At is used with noon, night, midnight, and with the time of day:

- My plane leaves **at** noon.
- The movie starts **at** 6 p.m.

In is used with other parts of the day, with months, with years, with seasons:

- He likes to read **in** the afternoon.
- The days are long **in** August.
- The book was published **in** 1999.
- The flowers will bloom **in** spring.

Extended time

To express extended time, English uses the following prepositions: **since, for, by, from—to, from-until, during,(with)in**

- She has been gone **since** yesterday. (*She left yesterday and has not returned.*)
- I'm going to Paris **for** two weeks. (*I will spend two weeks there.*)
- The movie showed **from** August **to** October. (*Beginning in August and ending in October.*)
- The decorations were up **from** spring **until** fall. (*Beginning in spring and ending in fall.*)
- I watch TV **during** the evening. (*For some period of time in the evening.*)
- We must finish the project **within** a year. (*No longer than a year.*)

Place

To express notions of place, English uses the following prepositions: to talk about the point itself: **in**, to express something contained: **inside**, to talk about the surface: **on**, to talk about a general vicinity, **at**. For more detail, see our handouts on [Prepositions of Location](#) and [Prepositions of Direction](#).

- There is a wasp **in** the room.
- Put the present **inside** the box.
- I left your keys **on** the table.
- She was waiting **at** the corner.

Higher than a point

To express notions of an object being higher than a point, English uses the following prepositions: **over**, **above**. For more detail, see our handout on [Prepositions of Spatial Relationship](#).

- He threw the ball **over** the roof.
- Hang that picture **above** the couch.

Lower than a point

To express notions of an object being lower than a point, English uses the following prepositions: **under**, **underneath**, **beneath**, **below**. For more detail, see our handout on [Prepositions of Spatial Relationship](#).

- The rabbit burrowed **under** the ground.
- The child hid **underneath** the blanket.
- We relaxed in the shade **beneath** the branches.
- The valley is **below** sea-level.

Close to a point

To express notions of an object being close to a point, English uses the following prepositions: **near**, **by**, **next to**, **between**, **among**, **opposite**. For more detail, see our handout on [Prepositions of Spatial Relationship](#).

- She lives **near** the school.
- There is an ice cream shop **by** the store.
- An oak tree grows **next to** my house
- The house is **between** Elm Street and Maple Street.
- I found my pen lying **among** the books.
- The bathroom is **opposite** that room.

To introduce objects of verbs

English uses the following prepositions to introduce objects of the following verbs.

At: *glance, laugh, look, rejoice, smile, stare*

- She took a quick glance **at** her reflection.
(*exception with **mirror**: She took a quick glance **in** the mirror.*)
- You didn't laugh **at** his joke.

- I'm looking **at** the computer monitor.
- We rejoiced **at** his safe rescue.
- That pretty girl smiled **at** you.
- Stop staring **at** me.

Of: approve, consist, smell

- I don't approve **of** his speech.
- My contribution to the article consists **of** many pages.
- He came home smelling **of** alcohol.

Of (or about): dream, think

- I dream **of** finishing college in four years.
- Can you think **of** a number between one and ten?
- I am thinking **about** this problem.

For: call, hope, look, wait, watch, wish

- Did someone call **for** a taxi?
- He hopes **for** a raise in salary next year.
- I'm looking **for** my keys.
- We'll wait **for** her here.
- You go buy the tickets and I'll watch **for** the train.
- If you wish **for** an "A" in this class, you must work hard.



COMMA RULES



There are many more places a comma **DOES NOT** belong than places where it is needed, so remember, “**When in doubt, leave it out!**”

1. “Series of Three.” Use a comma to separate items in a series. These items may consist of words, phrases, or clauses.

I'd like a big bowl of fruit with apples, pears, peaches, and plums.

2. Use a comma to separate independent clauses joined by the coordinating conjunctions **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**.

Greene has washed his old car, and he hopes somebody will buy it.

3. When a sentence begins with a dependent clause, a comma goes at the end of the dependent clause, where it joins the independent clauses.

Although he had already eaten dinner, he ate a sandwich.

4. “Introductory and transitional elements.” These should be separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

Usually, he took a nap after dinner.

5. “Contrasting elements”. Use a comma to separate a contrasting element from the rest of the sentence, because the comma emphasizes the contrast.

He came to dance with me, and not with you.

6. “Additional information.” An element which is **not** essential to the meaning of the sentence but merely supplemental is set off by a comma after it if it occurs at the beginning of a sentence. If this element appears in the middle of the sentence, it has a comma before and one after.

Mr. Morris, the patient in room 950, had surgery this morning.

7. “Clarity.” Use a comma, even in places you wouldn’t ordinarily, if it is necessary to make the meaning of the sentence clear.

Whatever he did, did no good.

comma.doc

COMMA MISUSE

DO NOT put commas in these places:

1. Between a subject and a verb.

Our house, burned to the ground. (incorrect)
Our house burned to the ground. (correct)

2. Joining two independent clauses without a conjunction.

The telephone rang, Joe couldn’t go back to sleep. (incorrect)
The telephone rang. Joe couldn’t go back to sleep. (correct)

3. In a series of only two.

I need to buy a gray summer suit, and a pair of white linen pants. (incorrect)
I need to buy a gray summer suit and a pair of white linen pants. (correct)

4. Before a prepositional phrase.

The cat was hiding, under the pillow. (incorrect)

The cat was hiding under the pillow. (correct)

5. If an added element is essential to the meaning of the sentence.

People who are very poor drivers, should have their license revoked.
(incorrect)

People who are very poor drivers should have their license revoked.
(correct)

6. Before a zip code.

Bakersfield, CA, 93305 (incorrect)

Bakersfield, CA 93305 (correct)

7. If the sentence is really short.

I laughed, but he cried. (incorrect)

I laughed but he cried. (correct)

8. When the sentence begins with an independent clause and the subordinating conjunction comes before the dependent clause.

I was ready to go, even before they called me. (incorrect)

I was ready to go even before they called me. (correct)

Student Success Lab

Handout

Sentence Fragments

Fragments are incomplete sentences. Usually, fragments are pieces of sentences that have become disconnected from the main clause. One of the easiest ways to correct them is to remove the period between the fragment and the main clause.

Fragment

Purdue offers many majors in engineering. Such as electrical, chemical, and industrial engineering

I need to find a new roommate.
Because the one I have now isn't working out too well.

The current city policy on housing is incomplete as it stands. Which is why we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.

Possible Revision

Purdue offers many majors in engineering, such as electrical, chemical, and industrial engineering.

I need to find a new roommate because the one I have now isn't Working out too well.

Because the current city policy on housing is incomplete, we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.

Some fragments are not clearly pieces of sentences that have been left unattached to the main clause; they are written as main clauses but lack a subject or main verb.

Fragment

A story with deep thoughts and emotions.

Toys of all kinds thrown around.

With the ultimate effect of all advertising is to sell the product.

Possible Revisions

She told a story with deep thoughts and emotions.

Toys of all kinds were thrown around.
They found all kinds of toys thrown around.

The ultimate effect of all advertising is to sell the product.