

Grammar Workshop

Sentence Structure Pt. 2



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Content



- Verb-subject agreement
- Apostrophes
- Common preposition errors
- Using transitions

Subject-Verb Agreement



The verb should agree with the subject in **number** and **person**.

- Basic Rules

1. When two or more singular subjects are connected by 'and', the verb is plural: He and his wife HAVE arrived.
2. If two singular nouns refer to the same person, the verb must be singular in number: My uncle and guardian HAS GIVEN me the permission to go abroad.
 - ✧ Note that the article is used only once when the two nouns refer to the same person. If we are referring to different persons, we should use the article before each noun.

Subject-Verb Agreement



- Basic Rules (cont..)

3. When two singular subjects preceded by “each” or “every” are connected by ‘and’, the verb should be singular: Each man and each woman HAS a vote.
4. Two or more singular subjects connected by “or”, “nor”, “either...or” or “neither...nor” take a singular verb: Either Harry or Tom HAS stolen the money.
5. When subjects joined by “or” or “nor” are of different numbers, the verb must be plural and the plural subject should be placed close to the verb: Neither James nor his friends were invited to the party.
6. When the subjects joined by “or” or “nor” are of different persons, the verb should agree in person with the subject nearest to it: Either you or he has to finish the job.
 - ✦ Here the verb ‘has’ agrees with the third person singular pronoun ‘he’.

Subject-Verb Agreement



Most common mistakes:

- **Collective nouns**
 - Collective nouns are usually treated as singular and take singular verbs. However, they may take a plural verb when we are talking about the individual members within the group: An unruly **mob was** gathering outside.
- **A number of**
 - The phrase **a number of** should be followed by a plural noun and a plural verb: **A number of issues still need** to be resolved.
 - However, when the sentence begins with '**The number of**', the verb should be singular: **The number of** available jobs **is** shrinking rapidly. (Here the subject is 'number', not 'jobs'.)
- **A half of, a part of**
 - Fractional expressions such as **a half of, a part of** and **a majority of** can be followed by a singular or a plural verb. It depends on the meaning: **A large percentage of** the population **is** angry with the ruling party /// Nearly **60 percent of** the members **are** in favor of the new policy.

Subject-Verb Agreement



Most common mistakes:

- **More than one**
 - The expression 'more than one' takes a singular verb: More than one student **has** tried to cheat on the exam.
- **A positive and a negative subject together**
 - When you put a positive and a negative subject together, the verb must agree with the positive subject: The **members**, but not the chairman, **have** decided to vote against the proposal. (Here the plural verb have agrees with the positive subject 'the members'.)
- **A plural noun that names a single subject**
 - When a group of words containing a plural noun represents a single object, you must use a singular verb: Gulliver's Travels was written by Jonathan Swift.
- **None**
 - None should be used with a singular verb. But a plural verb is also possible in a less formal style: None of his friends **was** (were) there to help him. (Formal vs informal)

Using Apostrophes



The apostrophe (') has two main uses:

- To form possessives of nouns – Use “of the” to check if you need a possessive!
- To show the omission of letters – Contractions (usually not appropriate in formal writing)
 - Don't = do not
 - I'm = I am
 - who's = who is
 - '60s = 1960s

An apostrophe is also used to form the plurals of letters and digits. This is particularly common when the letters are written in the small case: p's, q's..

Using Apostrophes



- Rules for possessives:
 1. add **'s** to the singular form of the word (even if it ends in -s):
 - the owner's car
 - James's hat (James' hat is also acceptable)
 2. add **'s** to the plural forms that do not end in -s:
 - the children's game
 3. add **'** to the end of plural nouns that end in -s:
 - two friends' letters
 - the countries' laws
 4. add **'s** to the end of compound words:
 - my brother-in-law's money
 5. add **'s** to the last noun to show joint possession of an object:
 - Todd and Anne's apartment

Using Apostrophes



- Common mistakes:

1. Its and it's

- Its is a possessive word: The dog wags its tail.
- It's is the contraction for it is: It's getting late.

2. They're and their

1. Their is a possessive word: Their apartment is beautiful.
2. They're is the contraction for they are: They're waiting for us.

3. Whose and who's

1. Whose pencil is this?
2. Who's coming to the party?

Prepositions



- Prepositions are words used to describe a relationship between other words in a sentence.
- Prepositions are always followed by a noun, never a verb
- If a verb follows, the verb needs the –ing suffix.
Example: Do you object to working late?
- Note: When the term “to” is followed by a verb without the ing-suffix, it is because that is the infinitive (or base form) and therefore “to” is part of the verb and is not considered a preposition. Example: HE wanted to go home.

Prepositions



- Common mistakes:

1. Since and for

- **Since** is used to reckon from a particular date. **For** is used for a period.
 - Incorrect: I am ill since three months.
 - Correct: I have been ill for three months.
 - Correct: I have been ill since May.
- When since / for indicates time, the verb in the main clause should be in the present perfect or past perfect tense.
 - Incorrect: This is my first time to play tennis since a long time.
 - Correct: I have not played tennis for a long time

2. The adjectives inferior, superior, prior etc

- The adjectives inferior, superior, senior, junior, prior etc. take the preposition **to**, not **than**.
 - Incorrect: She always felt inferior than her younger sister.
 - Correct: She always felt **inferior to** her younger sister.

3. The verbs resemble, enter, discuss, marry etc.

- The verbs resemble, enter, discuss, lack, approach and marry are followed by direct objects without prepositions.
 - Incorrect: This resembles to that.
 - Correct: This resembles that.
 - Incorrect: She married to/with her boss.
 - Correct: She married her boss.

Using Transitions



- Transitions connect paragraphs and turn disconnected writing into a unified whole.
- They can help readers understand how paragraphs work together, reference one another (connections), and build to a larger point.

Using Transitions



- **Transitional Adverbs:**

1. **To add**

- Also, again, and, and then, equally important, besides, first, further, in addition, furthermore, moreover, finally, last, in the first place, next, second, too

2. **To compare**

- Also, similarly, likewise, in the same way

3. **To contrast or to show exception**

- Although, at the same time, yet, but, even so, despite that, even though, however, for all that, in contrast, instead, in spite of, nevertheless, notwithstanding, on the other hand, on the contrary, otherwise, still, regardless, though

4. **To Prove:**

- because, for, since, for the same reason, obviously, evidently, furthermore, moreover, besides, indeed, in fact, in addition, in any case, that is

5. **To Repeat:**

- in brief, as I have said, as I have noted, as has been noted

6. **To Emphasize:**

- definitely, extremely, obviously, in fact, indeed, in any case, absolutely, positively, naturally, surprisingly, always, forever, perennially, eternally, never, emphatically, unquestionably, without a doubt, certainly, undeniably, without reservation

7. **To Give an Example:**

- for example, for instance, in this case, in another case, on this occasion, in this situation, take the case of, to demonstrate, to illustrate, as an illustration, to illustrate

8. **To Summarize or Conclude:**

- in brief, on the whole, summing up, to conclude, in conclusion, as I have shown, as I have said, hence, therefore, accordingly, thus, as a result, consequently

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<http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/Writing-Lab-Writing-Tips.cfm>
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (Owl): owl.english.purdue.edu
- UNC Writing Center: writingcenter.unc.edu
- The George Mason University Writing Center:
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>
- Grammarly Handbook: [Grammarly online handbook](#)