

Grammar, Usage, and Style Cheat Sheet

Parts of Speech

Noun: Names a person, place, or thing-either abstract (*Love* is wonderful.) or concrete (The *flower* bloomed.)

Verb: Expresses action (He *jumped*.) or state of being (She *will be* late.)

Pronoun: Replaces a noun or pronoun (Tom found *his* watch.)

Adjective: Describes or limits nouns or pronouns (She is a *pretty* girl).

Adverb: Describes or limits verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs (He runs *quickly*.)

Preposition: Shows relationships between a noun or pronoun and another noun or pronoun (The towel was *on* the floor.)

Conjunction: Links words, phrases, or clauses (Mary *and* I went home.)

Tips For Using the Parts of Speech

- Capitalize proper nouns: My uncle was in *Desert Storm*.
- Make nouns plural by adding -s or -es in most cases: The bears *awoke*.
- Make nouns possessive by adding -'s to singular nouns (*dog's* bone) or the apostrophe alone if the noun is plural (the *Smiths'* home).
- Singular nouns require singular verbs: My sister *laughs* often.
- Plural nouns require plural verbs: My *sisters* laugh often.
- A verb tense indicates the action of the verb.

Six Most Common Verb Tenses

Present (I walk.)	Present Perfect (I have walked.)
Past (I walked.)	Past Perfect (I had walked.)
Future (I will walk.)	Future Perfect (I will have walked.)

Sentence Review

A **predicate** is the part of a sentence that tells what the subject does or is, or what is done to the subject.

Phrases are groups of related words that are missing either a subject or a predicate.

Clauses are groups of related words, with a subject or predicate, that are part of a longer sentence.

Sentences express a complete thought and have a subject and predicate.

Tips for Writing Good Sentences

- Fix **run-on sentences** by rewriting the sentence or adding punctuation between two independent clauses.

- Correct **sentence fragments** by adding the missing subject or predicate to phrases or subordinate clauses.
- Eliminate **faulty agreement** by making subjects and predicates agree in person and number.
- Avoid **misplaced modifiers** by keeping them near the word they modify.
- Prevent **faulty parallelism** by matching grammatical structures in a sentence.
- Combine short, choppy sentences and vary word order for a **smooth style**.
- **Commas** should be used to join introductory clauses, after introductory clauses and phrases, to set off interrupting elements, with restrictive and nonrestrictive elements, with appositives, and between items or modifiers in a series.
- **Semicolons** are used to join closely connected independent clauses and between items in a series.
- **Colons** are used to introduce a list, formal statement, or restatement in a sentence.
- The **dash**, used to add interrupting phrases or clauses, and the parentheses, which sets off incidental information, should be used sparingly.
- Use **quotation marks** to identify quotes.
- **Punctuation** usually belongs inside the quotation marks.
- Watch out for frequently confused words.
- Hyphenate most compound adjectives that appear before a noun.
- Generally, spell compound adjectives that follow a noun and words with prefixes or suffixes as one word.
- Most compound adverbs are spelled as two words.
- Experience and a dictionary can help you choose the correct idiom when writing.
- Eliminate cliches, jargon, faddish words, and slang in your writing.
- Avoid redundant expressions and wordiness in writing.

Improving the Writing Process

- Be aware of your audience.
- Choose a topic that is narrowly defined and interesting to you.
- Begin by writing a thesis, an assertion about your topic.
- Develop several logical main ideas to support your thesis statements.
- Avoid plagiarism by identifying other writers' research and words with citations.
- Paraphrase long passages or main ideas in your own words.
- Organize your main ideas and outline them in writing before you begin drafting.
- Introductions should catch the reader's attention and provide a general orientation.
- Paragraphs should be unified around a central idea and connected to one another and to other paragraphs through transitional devices.
- Conclusions should bring all your main ideas together and leave the reader thinking.
- Never bring up new points or apologize in the conclusion.
- Always carefully edit and revise your drafts.

Don't Play with Plagiarism

When you write your paper, you must cite any sources you use. As you research and take notes, write down the information you'll need for footnotes. Check a style guide for the right way to style your footnotes and prepare a bibliography. You'll be guilty of plagiarism if you don't give credit for words or ideas that you borrow from others. Deciding what to footnote is sometimes a tough call, but play it safe. If you have doubts, cite your source.

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