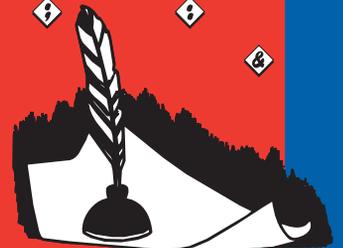
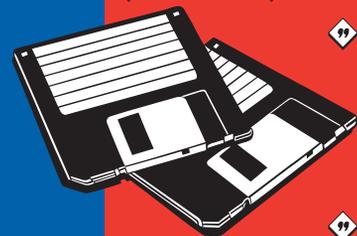
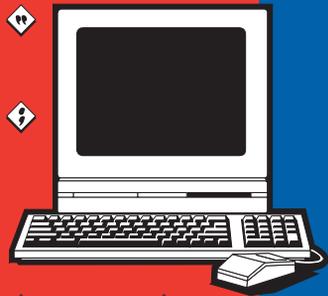


Take Command of Your Writing

A comprehensive guide to
more effective writing

Jill Meryl Levy
Firebelle Productions



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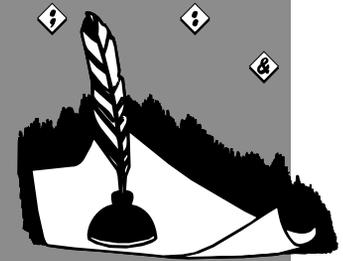
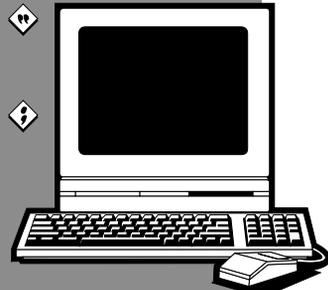
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**This book is dedicated to
emergency responders everywhere.**

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Preface

Take Command of Your Writing is a valuable resource for anyone who wants to write more effectively. It is a unique book, however, because all the examples are related to the emergency services field.

The book is a tribute to my “extended family.” There is a special bond between people who put their lives on the line to protect others. We never know for sure what to expect when the bell goes off. It might be another routine call, or it might be the last call we ever go on. We face dangers that other people run away from. And we do so knowing that we must depend on one another for our safety. Although this book may never make the difference between life and death for any of us, it may help my brothers and sisters be more successful in their jobs and in their personal lives.

Take Command of Your Writing is a very thorough book, more so than many other grammar books on the market. My goal was to answer as many questions as possible. I didn’t want to leave out details that might be important to someone or to mislead readers with oversimplifications. By the same token, I know that such a thorough reference can be intimidating. That’s why I chose a two-column format, using the sidebars to present a “Reader’s Digest version” of the rules. If you read only the sidebars, you would get a tremendous amount of information.

Sometimes there is no one universally accepted way to do things. In the areas where grammarians do not agree on the rules, I tried to present the various options and the philosophy behind those options. It will be up to you to pick the style that works for you and to use it consistently. Remember, too, that if you find yourself struggling with a question, such as how to punctuate a particular sentence, it may be because you are trying to save something that cannot be salvaged. Sometimes the best solution is to rewrite the sentence.

This book grew out of experiences I’ve had in working with peers on various different projects. Although I’ve always had a fairly good command of the English language, I was not an English major when I started the book. I simply wanted to do something to help my peers. I’ve learned a lot in the process.

Almost a year and a half of careful research went into making this book as comprehensive as it is. What makes a good book better, however, is the thoughtful input from readers. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

Jill Meryl Levy

About the Author

Jill Meryl Levy owns her own business—*Firebelle Productions*. Her primary service is producing safety publications for fire departments and industry. In 1996, she wrote and published her first book: *The First Responder's Pocket Guide to Hazardous Materials Emergency Response*. Jill has worked with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI) on recent revisions of their *Hazardous Materials Technician/Specialist* curriculum. She has also assisted the California State Fire Marshal's Office with curriculum revision projects.

Jill has worked in the field of safety education since 1981, when she was hired by the City of Santa Clara Fire Department. Later, during her employment at Hewlett-Packard Company in Cupertino, California, Jill began producing brochures, booklets, and newsletters as a means to communicate safety information to a large employee population. The publications became so popular that she was soon producing brochures and booklets on a corporate-wide basis.

Jill has been a volunteer firefighter for the Santa Clara County Fire Department since 1980.

Acknowledgments

To Those Who Helped Make the Book Possible

Special are those people who believe in the dreams of others and who help make those dreams come true.

- To my friends at the Santa Clara County Fire Department for their inspiration and encouragement.
- To Jim Smalley of the National Fire Protection Association for his careful editing, his thoughtful insight, and his friendship.
- To my father, Hank Levy, and to my friends Len Williams and Aidan Gough for reviewing drafts of the book.
- To fellow author Bill Sabin for answering so many questions and for writing *The Gregg Reference Manual*, the one reference that was most helpful to me in producing this book.
- To Jef Myers of Jostens for the suggestion that led to the format of this book.

Most of all, I wish to thank my parents, Hank and Elaine Levy, and my brother, Jack Levy, for their encouragement and support.

To Some Other Very Special People

I give special thanks to friends who permitted me to use their names in my book, as well as to my friends who may not appear by name, but who are there in spirit.

California Highway Patrol Officer Scott Greenly is remembered fondly with the kind permission of his family. The image of his CHP badge is used with permission from the California Highway Patrol.

The name of actress Melissa Gilbert is used with her permission and with the permission of More/Medavoy Management.

The name Reverend Robert Alden, from the NBC series *Little House on the Prairie*, is used with the permission of the National Broadcasting Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

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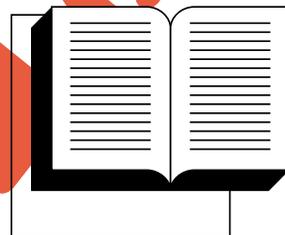
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Take Command of Your Writing is organized into 17 informative chapters.



The following pages provide a detailed breakdown of the contents of each chapter.

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**Chapter 1
addresses the
rules for using
commas.**



**Commas are
often used to
join main
clauses.**

**Commas are
used to set off
nonessential
elements.**

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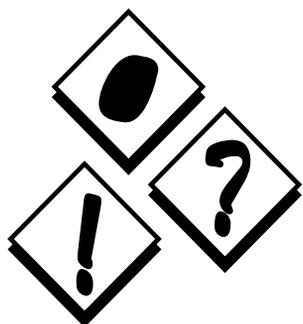
Commas are used to separate words for clarity.



Commas are used in several other specific situations.

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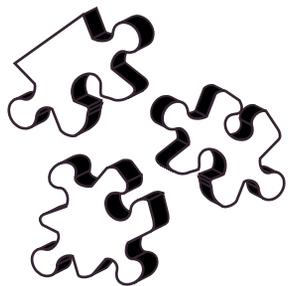
The chapter continues with other punctuation marks (like these) . . .



. . . that help guide readers through a sentence.

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There are two grammatical numbers (singular and plural) and three grammatical persons (first, second, and third).



Subjects and verbs must agree in number and person.

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Chapter 6
is about
adjectives and
adverbs—words
that modify or
describe other
words.



Adjectives
modify nouns
and pronouns.

Adverbs
modify verbs,
adjectives, and
other adverbs.

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is about the
correct use of
pronouns.**



**Pronouns are
words used in
place of nouns.**



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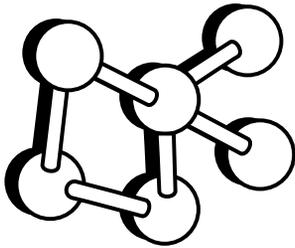
Chapter 8 starts with techniques you can use to improve your spelling.



The chapter continues with guidelines to help you determine how to spell specific words.

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The emphasis is on determining how compounds should be formed: open, closed, or hyphenated.

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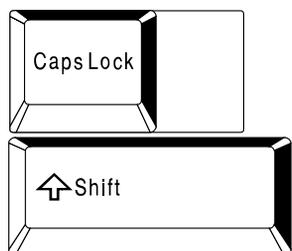
**Chapter 10
is called
"Finding the
Right Words."**



**This chapter
is designed
to help you
distinguish
between two
or more similar
words.**

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Chapter 11 addresses capitalization concerns.



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**Chapter 12
contains
guidelines
for using
abbreviations,
acronyms, and
symbols.**

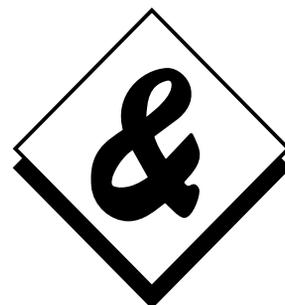


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**Chapter 14 is
about more
effective writing.**



**It begins
with simple
guidelines
related to
sentence
structure.**

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continues with
other guidelines
to help you
improve your
writing.



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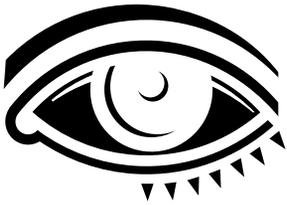
**Chapter 15
is about writing
for special
applications:
letters and
memos, reports,
tests, and lists.**



**It also
provides simple
guidelines for
writing as part
of a team.**

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Chapter 16 is called “In the Eye of the Beholder.”



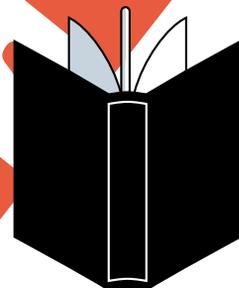
If your message is important enough to put in writing, it’s worth making it look good.

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Chapter 17
is a glossary of
grammatical
terms.



SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Chapter 1: Commas

SAMPLE



Commas

Use a comma between two independent clauses separated by a coordinating conjunction.

Bring me the first aid kit, and have someone call 911.



Use a comma after most introductory words, phrases, and clauses.

Luckily I've been trained in first aid and CPR.

Introduction

No other punctuation mark causes more confusion than the comma. This is partly because there are more rules about commas than about any other punctuation mark and partly because there are times when the use of commas is a matter of personal preference.

An Overview of the Rules

The following overview of the primary rules will give you a basic understanding of when to use or omit commas. Each of the rules is explained in greater detail on the pages indicated in parentheses.

Use a comma between two independent clauses separated by a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet*). Do not use a comma between parts of a compound predicate. (28-31)

Comma: I called 911, and Tim began evacuating the area.

No comma: I called 911 and began evacuating the area.

Use a comma after most introductory words, phrases, and clauses. However, commas are not necessary after ordinary adverbs that tell *when* or *how often*. Commas are optional after short prepositional phrases as long as the meaning remains clear. (32-37)

Comma: *Just as you thought,* it was a wildland fire.

No comma: *Sometimes* we have wildland fires.

Optional: *In the morning,* we had a wildland fire.

Use commas to set off transitional expressions and independent comments. (38-42)

Her injuries are not serious, *fortunately.*

Use commas to set off nonessential elements. Do not use commas with elements that are essential to the meaning or structural completeness of the sentence. (43-47)

Nonessential: We learned that Kim, *the woman who started the fire,* has a history of mental illness.

Essential: We learned that *the woman who started the fire* has a history of mental illness.

Use commas to set off additional considerations. Commas may be omitted, however, if the phrase flows smoothly into the sentence and the meaning remains clear. (48)

Commas

Comma: Everyone, *including the chief*, is worried
No comma: The chief is worried *along with the rest of us*.

Use commas to set off phrases that express contrast. However, commas can be omitted around a short contrasting phrase that fits smoothly into the sentence. (49-50)

Comma: The sooner we get her to the hospital, the better her chance of survival.
No comma: She is in *serious but stable* condition.

Use commas between three or more items in series. Omit commas when there are only two items. (51-53)

Three or more: He was shot in the head, chest, and arm.
Two: He was shot in the head and chest.

Use commas to set off nonessential examples. Omit commas when the examples are essential to the meaning of the sentence. (54-56)

Nonessential: I am allergic to shellfish, especially shrimp and crab.
Essential: I am allergic to foods such as shrimp and crab.

Use commas between adjectives that equally modify the same word (*coordinate adjectives*), but not between adjectives where the one closest to the noun or pronoun is more closely related to the noun or pronoun in meaning. (57-58)

Comma: Carter is an honest, thoughtful man.
No comma: Carter is a tall black man.

Use commas to indicate omitted words. (59)

Remember *[that]*, the suspect is armed and dangerous.

Use commas to separate words for drama or clarity. (60)

Your plan is dangerous, very dangerous.

Use commas to set aside names and other words used as a form of address. (61)

Name: Brad, what can I do to help?
Other word: Captain, what can I do to help?

Use commas to set off the salutation in an informal letter, as well as the closing in any letter, formal or informal. (62)

Use commas to set off nonessential elements.

We think that Robert, the director is having a heart attack.



Use commas between coordinate adjectives.

Robert is complaining of a dull, squeezing pressure in the chest.

Commas

Use commas to set off direct quotations used as dialogue.

“Someone is going to get killed,” she protested, “if the city doesn’t install a traffic light.



Use commas to prevent misreading.

Soon after, a child was killed by a hit-and-run driver.

Salutation: Dear Lori,

Closing: Sincerely,

Use commas to separate adjacent location elements, such as city and state or state and country. Omit the comma if location elements are separated by a preposition. (63)

Comma: She was kidnapped from a shopping center in Los Gatos, California.

No comma: She was kidnapped from Old Town in Los Gatos.

Use commas to set off dates written in order by month, day, and year. Omit the comma when only two date elements are provided. (64-65)

Comma: Officer Greenly was killed on January 7, 1998.

No comma: Officer Greenly was killed in January 1998.

Use commas to separate long numbers. However, the comma is optional if the number contains just four digits. (66)

Required: They stole \$50,000.

Optional: They stole \$5000. (or \$5,000)

Use commas to set off direct quotations used as dialogue. Do not use commas with indirect quotations. (67)

Direct: She said, “My neck hurts.”

Indirect: She said that her neck hurts.

Use commas to prevent misreading. (68)

Confusing: Not long after we left.

Clear: Not long after, we left.

When in Doubt: Guidelines to Fall Back On

Emergency responders like having fallback options they can count on when all else fails: *When in doubt, evacuate. When in doubt, provide oxygen.* The following are some simple guidelines to fall back on when the rules become too confusing. You will see examples of how to apply these guidelines throughout this chapter.

Examine the meaning of the sentence

Ask yourself whether the inclusion or omission of a comma changes the meaning of the sentence. If it does, you must then determine whether it makes more sense to use the comma or to leave it out.

Commas

Ensure clarity

Determine whether or not a comma is needed for clarity. If the sentence either is unclear without one or would be more clear if you added a comma, then you should use a comma.

Provide a pause if appropriate

Look to see if a comma is needed to provide a pause. When we speak, we use pauses to provide emphasis or clarity. Readers need pauses too. Consider, for example, the last time you read a sentence that was so long that you lost track of what it was saying before you reached the end. Sometimes commas can provide just enough of a pause to allow readers to gather their thoughts before moving on. Too many commas, on the other hand, make a sentence difficult to read. You must be able to strike a good balance.

Keep in mind that every comma signals a pause, but not every pause requires a comma. Putting a comma in the wrong location just to provide a pause can make your sentence unclear.

Read the sentence aloud and listen to your vocal inflection

Read the sentence aloud if you are still unclear about whether or not to use commas. This is particularly helpful when trying to distinguish between essential and nonessential elements. The inflection of your voice will often give away the answer. Let's look at two examples to see how this works:

Nonessential: This fire, *no doubt*, is the work of an arsonist.

Essential: This fire is *no doubt* the work of an arsonist.

Read each of the previous sentences aloud, and listen to your vocal inflection as you say the words *no doubt*. If the expression is non-essential, your voice will tend to *drop*. However, if the expression is essential, your voice will tend to *rise*. Notice that these two sentences are almost identical. The only difference, other than the commas, is the order in which the words are written.

If necessary, reword the sentence

Finally, if you are still having trouble, look to see if there might be a better way to write the sentence. There is a very appropriate quotation by Claire Kehrwald Cook: "*When you have trouble getting the commas right, chances are you're trying to patch up a poorly structured sentence.*" Sometimes it is easier to rewrite the sentence than it is to determine if and where to use commas.

**When in doubt,
ask yourself
the following
questions.**



**Does a comma
change the
meaning of the
sentence?**

**Is a comma
needed to ensure
clarity or to
provide a pause?**

**What happens
to your vocal
inflection?**

**Is there a better
way to write the
sentence?**

Commas

Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction to link sentences (main clauses).



We warned him that it was dangerous to go diving there, but he wouldn't listen to us.

Between Main Clauses

Commas may be used to join sentences if done properly.

Linking Main Clauses

Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet*) that joins *main clauses* (sentences). A *main* (or *independent*) *clause* has both a subject and a predicate and makes a complete statement.

Clause 1: The victim [subject] was not breathing. [predicate].

Clause 2: She [subject] still had a pulse. [predicate].

Joined: The victim was not breathing, *but* she still had a pulse.

Here are three more examples of clauses properly joined.

The fire raged out of control, *and* dozens of homes were damaged or destroyed.

The caller was unfamiliar with the area, *so* he was unable to give us the exact location of the accident.

Sergeant Allen was careful not to disturb the scene, *for* there were indications that foul play was involved.

If the clauses are imperative (they are in the form of a command or request) and the subject is implied (it is understood to be *you*), treat the sentence the same way—use a comma between clauses.

Please take this salvage cover inside to Captain Werner, *and* ask him if he still needs the smoke ejector.

Optional with short, closely related clauses

The comma may be omitted when one or both clauses are short and closely related in meaning. The important thing is to make sure the resulting sentence is clear. When in doubt, use a comma; you cannot go wrong.

The bomb exploded *but* no one was injured.

We can evacuate *or* we can shelter in place.

Let's see how bad the damage is *and* then we'll decide.

Positioning Commas Correctly

The comma almost always goes before the conjunction, not after.

Wrong: We managed to subdue the suspect *but*, it took all four of us to do it.

Right: We managed to subdue the suspect, *but* it took all four of us to do it.

However, when nonessential elements are incorporated into the sentence and are positioned between the two clauses, only one comma should be used next to the conjunction. An extra comma, as in the sentence below, is superfluous.

Wrong: Doug may bid Shannon Station, *or, quite possibly*, may stay at El Monte.

Placement of the comma depends on whether you have a *compound predicate* (no subject in the second part of the sentence) or a *compound sentence* (subjects in both parts). The following sentence contains a compound predicate; there is only one subject (*Doug*). The comma goes after the word *or*.

Right: Doug may bid Shannon Station *or, quite possibly*, may stay at El Monte.

The following example contains a compound sentence. Each clause includes a subject: *Doug* in the first, *he* in the second. The comma goes before the word *or*.

Right: Doug may bid Shannon Station, *or quite possibly*, he may stay at El Monte.

Avoid separating compound predicates

Do not use a comma if there is no full clause (subject + predicate) after the conjunction. In the following examples, two predicates share the same subject, forming a *compound predicate*. It is easy to recognize a compound predicate because the text that follows the conjunction cannot stand alone as a complete sentence.

Chris grabbed the nozzle and *proceeded up the stairs*.

Gary removed his SCBA and *placed it on the tailboard*.

The paramedics placed her on the gurney and *loaded her into the ambulance*.

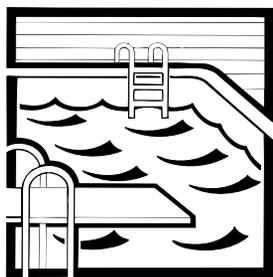
Do not use a comma when two predicates share the same subject.



We cuffed the suspect and read him his rights.

Commas

It is occasionally acceptable to start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction if it follows a related sentence.



*... under water for so long. **But the water was cold enough to prevent any brain damage.***

Avoid comma splices (or comma faults)

There are very few times when you can get away with using only a comma to separate short and closely related sentences: *Men sweat, women perspire*. Punctuating consecutive sentences with only a comma between them creates what is called a *comma splice* or *comma fault*. The comma splice is grammatically incorrect and can cause confusion for the reader. You can easily correct a comma splice by adding a coordinating conjunction, using a semicolon instead, or making one clause subordinate to the other.

- Wrong:* The baby stopped breathing, the parents were hysterical. (*comma splice*)
- Right:* The baby stopped breathing, and the parents were hysterical. (*comma and coordinating conjunction*)
- Right:* The baby stopped breathing; the parents were hysterical. (*semicolon*)
- Right:* The parents were hysterical because the baby stopped breathing. (*subordination*)

Beginning with a Coordinating Conjunction

For years, it was considered unacceptable to start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction. This is no longer the case. You can occasionally use a coordinating conjunction at the beginning of a sentence either for special emphasis or to provide a smoother transition in a series of sentences. However, make sure there is a logical connection between the sentences, and use this technique in moderation so that it doesn't become a distraction to your readers.

We'll let it go this time. *But* if I ever catch you shoplifting again, I will call the police.

Is there a chance they are still alive under all that rubble? *Or* is this just going to be a body recovery operation?

We expected the child would have serious brain damage after being submerged under water for so long. *But* the water was cold enough that it slowed his metabolism and prevented any brain damage.

Do not use a comma after the coordinating conjunction unless it is immediately followed by a nonessential (or parenthetical) element.

I was sure the computer was hopelessly damaged by the fire. *But, much to my surprise,* the technician was able to recover most of the files.

Using Semicolons in Place of Commas

If either of the independent clauses is long and already contains commas, it may be better to use a semicolon rather than a comma to separate the clauses. This can help eliminate confusion.

We searched under the bed, in the closet, behind the dresser, and any place else a child might hide; *yet* we were unable to locate the boy.

A person experiencing a heart attack will likely complain of chest pain, difficulty breathing, nausea, weakness, and a feeling of impending doom; *but* it is possible to have a heart attack without any of these symptoms.

Do not use a comma after the coordinating conjunction unless it is immediately followed by a nonessential (or parenthetical) element.

A person experiencing a heart attack will likely complain of chest pain, difficulty breathing, nausea, weakness, and a feeling of impending doom; *but, as you are probably aware,* it is possible to have a heart attack without any of these symptoms.

Note: Transitional expressions are preferred

Many experts frown on using the coordinating conjunctions *and* or *but* when joining two independent clauses with a semicolon, as in the last two examples above. Transitional expressions, such as *however*, are generally preferred. Alternately, you can write two separate sentences. This is often the best solution.

A person experiencing a heart attack . . . and a feeling of impending doom; *however*, it is possible to have a heart attack without any of these symptoms.

A person experiencing a heart attack . . . and a feeling of impending doom. *However*, it is possible to have a heart attack without any of these symptoms.

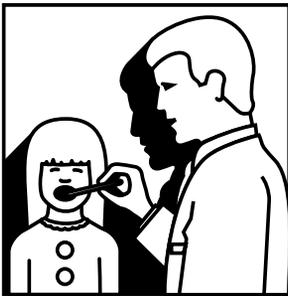
Long clauses that already contain commas may need to be separated by semicolons.



Commas

Most introductory words, phrases, and clauses are set off by commas.

Before we can properly treat her, we need to know what she ingested.



The comma signals readers that the introductory part is over and the main part of the sentence is about to begin.

After Introductory Words, Phrases, and Clauses

Most introductory words, phrases, and clauses are set off by commas. The comma signals readers that the introductory part is over and the main part of the sentence is about to begin. In each of the examples below, *you saved my life* is the main part of the sentence. Everything else is introductory matter.

Unafraid, you saved my life.

Two years ago, you saved my life.

In spite of everything, you saved my life.

Even though you didn't have to, you saved my life.

Not all introductory elements will be found at the beginning of the sentence. Some will be sandwiched between two independent clauses separated by a comma or a semicolon. Regardless of position, the introductory elements are usually set off by commas.

Paramedics responded quickly, but *knowing that the woman had been shot by her husband,* they staged a block away until Campbell police secured the scene.

She had the stove turned up too high; *consequently,* the oil ignited and started a kitchen fire.

We will start by looking at how to set off specific types of words, phrases, and clauses. Then we'll look at those situations where the comma is either optional or not appropriate.

Yes, No, and Mild Interjections

Use a comma after the words *yes* or *no* and after *mild* interjections at the beginning of a sentence.

Yes, I checked for a pulse before starting CPR.

Well, what did you expect?

Why, no one can survive a fall like that!

Transitional Expressions, Independent Comments

Use a comma after transitional expressions or independent comments that introduce a sentence. (Refer to pages 38-42 for more information.)

Fortunately, the gun wasn't loaded.

We believe the driver was intoxicated. *However*, we can't confirm it until we get the results of the blood test.

Introductory Phrases

There are several different types of introductory phrases. You do not need to remember the names. You need only to be able to recognize introductory phrases and punctuate them properly.

Participial (or participle) phrases

Participial (or *participle*) *phrases* are phrases that show continued or completed action. They are derived from verbs and are used as adjectives to provide information about a noun elsewhere in the sentence.

Hampered by gloves that didn't fit properly, Jill had trouble raising and lowering the ladder.

Knowing that my mother was afraid of hospitals, I was reluctant to suggest calling for an ambulance.

Infinitive phrases

Infinitive phrases are phrases that are introduced with the word *to* followed by a verb.

To ventilate the victim effectively, you need to pinch the nose.

To make sure we don't have a rekindle, we'll leave an engine here on fire watch throughout the night.

Prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases are phrases that are introduced by a preposition. Most introductory prepositional phrases are set off by commas.

After the fire, all I want is a hot shower and a warm bed.

There are several types of introductory phrases. Most are set off by commas.

Having heard about other children who were injured, I became concerned.
(participial phrase)



To be safe, you should inspect the candy before allowing your children to eat it.
(infinitive phrase)

Commas

Use a comma to set off introductory dependent clauses.



Before you put the chain saw away, make sure you check it for damage.

In response to our community's concern about the increase in gang violence, we are implementing several programs aimed at getting teenagers involved in after-school activities.

Absolute phrases

Absolute phrases are phrases that modify a whole sentence, rather than a particular word or group of words. Absolute phrases are set off by commas.

Our escape route cut off, we were forced to take refuge in our tent shelters.

Considering what the car looked like, it's amazing that anyone survived the crash.

Introductory Dependent (or Subordinate) Clauses

Use a comma to set off introductory dependent clauses. A *dependent* (or *subordinate*) *clause* provides information about *who, what, when, where, or how*.

Before we can stop CPR, we need to see a signed DNR form.

Although I can't prove it, I firmly believe that Sam is the arsonist.

Dependent clauses contain both a subject and a verb, but cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. Notice that the italicized clauses in the examples above are incomplete thoughts. They must be attached to main (or independent) clauses.

Dependent clauses with key words omitted

The following are also examples of dependent clauses, though some of the key words have been omitted. In the first example, the clause was shortened for simplicity; in the second, for effect. The dependent clause should be set off with a comma.

Whenever possible, we put all our equipment back in service before leaving the scene. (Whenever it is possible, . . .)

Desperate, he jumped from the third-story window to the alley below. (Because he was desperate, . . .)

Commas

Dependent clauses containing the word ~~that~~

The first example below begins with an infinitive phrase (*to get*). The revised version begins with a dependent clause containing the word *that*. Like any other introductory dependent clause, it must be set off with a comma.

Original: To get a Class 2 ISO rating, we must upgrade our communications system.

Revised: The chief believes that for us to get a Class 2 ISO rating, we must upgrade our communications system.

Exceptions and Special Circumstances

Although commas are used to set off most introductory words, phrases, and clauses, there are some exceptions and special circumstances. If you do not understand these concepts, you may find yourself either putting commas where they don't belong or omitting commas where they are needed.

Phrases used as the subject of the sentence

Watch out for phrases that look like introductory phrases, but which actually serve as the subject of the sentence. Do not use a comma in these situations. Compare the following examples.

Comma: Having been arrested twice before, you should be familiar with the process.

No comma: Having been arrested twice before is nothing to be proud of.

Comma: Knowing that the woman had been shot by her husband, the paramedics staged a block away until Campbell police secured the scene.

No comma: Knowing that the woman had been shot by her husband made the paramedics wary.

Ordinary introductory adverbs

Though some writers will use commas after ordinary introductory adverbs that tell *when* or *how often*, commas are not necessary.

Sometimes we have difficulty determining the origin of a fire.

Last week one of my neighbors was arrested.

Watch out for phrases that look like introductory phrases, but which actually serve as the subject of the sentence.



Don't use commas with these phrases.

To convince all twelve members of the jury is not going to be easy.

Commas

Commas are not necessary after ordinary introductory adverbs that tell *when* or *how often*

Recently I bought a gun for self-protection.



You can omit the comma after a short prepositional phrase if the meaning remains clear.

In the afternoon I want to go to the gun range.

Tomorrow we'll get a search warrant.

Occasionally I feel pain in my chest.

Short prepositional phrases

You can often omit the comma after a short prepositional phrase. However, you must make certain that doing so will not create confusion or be grammatically incorrect. When in doubt, use the comma; you cannot go wrong.

In July we start our new budget year.

In the morning we will transfer him to the county jail.

By nine o'clock we had already run three EMS calls.

A sentence must be easily understood *as the reader is reading it* (from left to right). In the following examples, a comma provides just enough of a pause to keep the readers from running words together when they shouldn't be run together. An alternate solution is to rewrite the sentence.

Unclear: *Inside* the smoke was thick.
(*What was inside the smoke?*)

Clear: *Inside*, the smoke was thick.

Clear: The smoke was thick inside.

Unclear: *After eating* the firefighters felt much better.
(*Who ate the firefighters?*)

Clear: *After eating*, the firefighters felt much better.

Clear: The firefighters felt much better after eating.

Unclear: *In 1996* 135 people were treated for bee stings.
(*When? How many people?*)

Clear: *In 1996*, 135 people were treated for bee stings.

Clear: One hundred and thirty five people were treated for bee stings in 1996.

Do not omit the comma if the prepositional phrase contains any form of a verb.

By backing out now, we stand a better chance of reaching the safety zone without having to deploy our fire shelters.

After working all day to rescue three children trapped inside the collapsed building, the USAR team was ready for a break.

Inverted sentences

Omit the comma if the normal word order is inverted.

From deep within the wreckage came a faint cry for help.
 (Normal word order: *A faint cry for help came from deep within the wreckage.*)

Compound-complex sentences

Compound-complex sentences are a little trickier to punctuate. These are sentences that contain two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

The examples below contain *one dependent clause* followed by *two independent clauses* that are joined by the coordinating conjunction *and*. (The dependent clause is in italics.) A comma is needed to set off the introductory clause. However, if the introductory dependent clause applies equally to both of the independent clauses, do not put a comma between the independent clauses.

After they've taken a break, Engine 7's crew will overhaul the second floor and Truck 1's crew will check the attic.

In an attempt to reduce the number of deaths caused by drunk drivers this holiday season, we are arranging for free taxi rides for anyone who needs them and we are increasing the number of sobriety checkpoints throughout the city.

The following sentence contains *two dependent clauses* and *two independent clauses*. (The dependent clauses are in italics.) Each introductory dependent clause is set off by a comma.

Before we lay a supply line, let's have Engine 9 check the attic, and *if the fire hasn't extended into the attic*, we should be able to handle it with tank water.

The easiest way to determine where the commas go is to break the sentence into two parts and consider each part separately.

Part 1: *Before we lay a supply line*, let's have Engine 9 check the attic.

Part 2: *If the fire hasn't extended into the attic*, we should be able to handle it with tank water.

When the two parts are combined once more, a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for example, *and*) are inserted between them, just as you saw in the original sentence.

If the introductory dependent clause applies equally to two independent clauses, do not put a comma between the independent clauses.



To reduce the number of accidents this holiday season, we are arranging for free taxi rides and we are increasing the number of sobriety checkpoints.

Commas

Transitional expressions introduce a sentence and help move the reader to a new idea.

Be that as it may, if you are riding on city streets, you need to be wearing a helmet.



After all we don't want you to be injured.

With Transitional Expressions and Independent Comments

Transitional Expressions Defined

Transitional expressions help move a reader from one idea to the next. The following are some transitional expressions:

accordingly
additionally
after all
afterward
all in all
all things considered
also
anyway
as a result
as a rule
as usual
at any rate
at first
at the same time
besides
be that as it may
briefly
by and large
by contrast
by the same token
by the way
consequently
conversely
even so
finally
first
first of all
for example
for instance
for now
for one thing
for the most part
for the time being
furthermore
generally
generally speaking
hence
however
in conclusion
in essence
in general
in other words
in short
instead
in summary
in the final analysis
in the first place
in the long run
in time
in turn
later on
likewise
meanwhile
moreover
namely
nevertheless
next
on one hand
on the contrary
on the other hand
on the whole
ordinarily
otherwise
rather
second
similarly
so
still
that is
that is to say
then
therefore
this fact notwithstanding
thus
to begin with
to sum up

Commas

in addition
in any case
in any event
in brief
incidentally

too
usually
what is more
yet

Sometimes the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but*, *or*, and *nor* are used as transitional expressions also.

Independent Comments Defined

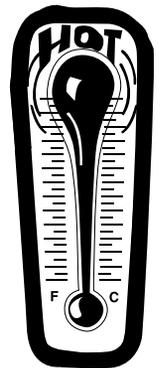
Independent comments are words added by the writer to qualify the sentence. These comments generally provide some insight as to the writer's attitude or feeling toward the meaning of the sentence. The following are some independent comments:

according to [. . .]
actually
alas
apparently
as a matter of fact
as I see it
as it happens
as you know
believe it or not
by all means
certainly
clearly
doubtless
fortunately
frankly
happily
hopefully
ideally
if necessary
if possible

indeed
in fact
in my opinion
in reality
literally
naturally
needless to say
obviously
of course
perhaps
personally
presumably
regrettably
strictly speaking
theoretically
to be honest
to say the least
to tell the truth
unfortunately
without doubt

Independent comments generally provide some insight as to the writer's attitude.

To tell the truth I'm surprised we didn't see more cases of heat exhaustion today.



Fortunately most people took it easy in the hot weather.

At the Beginning of a Sentence or Clause

In general, use a comma after transitional expressions and independent comments at the beginning of a sentence.

Nevertheless, we need to treat this like a crime scene.

In my opinion, the man should be charged with first-degree murder.

Commas

In general, use a comma after transitional expressions and independent comments at the beginning of a sentence or a clause.

Unfortunately Terry is in the hospital.



He didn't set the ladder on a solid surface; as a result the ladder slipped and Terry was injured.

Not all transitional expressions and independent comments will be found at the beginning of the sentence. Some will be sandwiched between two independent clauses that are separated by a comma and a coordinating conjunction. (Note: Place the first comma before the conjunction and the second comma after the transitional expression or independent comment. Do not use a comma both before and after the coordinating conjunction.)

Paramedic training was a lot of work, but *in the long run*, I'm glad I stuck with it. (not , but,)

He says he is innocent, but *to be honest with you*, I don't trust a word he says. (not , but,)

Other transitional expressions and independent comments will be sandwiched between two independent clauses separated by a semicolon.

The accident occurred because a drunk driver fell asleep at the wheel; *however*, a median barrier may have prevented him from crossing into oncoming traffic and killing two innocent people.

We were told there may be explosives on site; *therefore*, we evacuated the area for one-half mile in every direction and let the fire burn.

You can generally omit the comma after *hence*, *then*, *thus*, or *yet* if there is no risk of misreading the sentence or if no special pause is desired. This is true whether the word comes at the beginning of a sentence or it is sandwiched between two independent clauses.

Thus you should be using universal precautions any time there is a possibility of coming in contact with a victim's blood or bodily fluids.

Our witness was unable to identify the suspect; *hence* we had to let the suspect go.

Omit the comma after a transitional expression or independent comment incorporated into the flow of the sentence without pause.

Perhaps we should construct our fireline along the ridge.

No doubt she thought she could get away with it.

Commas

Do not confuse transitional expressions and independent comments with words or expressions that are essential to the meaning of the sentence. Commas are not used to set off essential elements.

Nonessential: *However*, they managed to break in without tripping the alarm.

Essential: *However* they broke in, they managed to do it without tripping the alarm.

Nonessential: *Obviously*, Tami was shaken by the threat and was afraid to talk to the police.

Essential: *Obviously* shaken by the threat, Tami was afraid to talk to the police. (*Obviously* modifies *shaken*, not the sentence as a whole).

At the End of a Sentence

Use commas to set off nonessential transitional expressions or independent comments at the end of a sentence.

Paramedics were unable to save the driver, *however*.

Our witness did not get a good look at the robber's face, *unfortunately*.

However, do not use a comma if the expression is essential to the meaning of the sentence.

We'll leave an engine company here all night *if necessary*.

I'd like to keep her in protective custody *for the time being*.

Within the Sentence

If a nonessential transitional expression or independent comment falls within the sentence, set it off with commas.

The passenger, *believe it or not*, only had minor injuries.

This fire, *on the other hand*, was definitely arson.

However, omit the commas with expressions that are essential to the meaning of the sentence.

We are counting on you *to tell the truth* in court tomorrow.

Paul did everything *according to* the book.

Use commas to set off nonessential expressions at the end of a sentence.

The cause of the fire was arson, after all



Use commas to set off nonessential expressions within a sentence.

The arsonist, as it turns out is one of their former employees.

Commas

It is generally not necessary to use a comma before the word *too* at the end of a clause or sentence.

There may be chemicals in the barn too.



If *too* is used elsewhere in the sentence, set it off with one comma before and another one after.

You, too, should be familiar with the hazards of these common agricultural chemicals.

If you are unsure whether an expression is essential or nonessential, read the sentence aloud and listen to your vocal inflection. If the expression functions as a nonessential element, your voice will tend to *drop*. On the other hand, if the expression functions as an essential element, your voice will tend to *rise*.

Nonessential: It is critical, *therefore*, that we monitor the atmosphere before sending anyone into the structure.

Essential: It is *therefore* critical that we monitor the atmosphere before sending anyone into the structure.

Nonessential: You are fortunate, *indeed*, that no one was injured.

Essential: You are *indeed* fortunate that no one was injured.

Notice that each pair in the previous examples is almost identical. The only difference is the order in which the words are written.

The Word *Too*

The word *too* deserves special mention because it can be confusing. When *too* is used to mean “excessive,” it never needs commas.

It is *too* dangerous to go in there.

Too is sometimes used to mean “also.” It is generally not necessary to use a comma *before* the word *too* at the end of a clause or the end of a sentence, though some experts prefer to do so. However, if *too* is used elsewhere in the sentence, set it off with a comma before and another one after.

If you think you have been exposed *too*, we need you to fill out an Injury/Exposure Report Form.

Mike is taking the Confined Space Rescue class *too*.

You, *too*, should be well-versed in the Incident Command System.

Note: Most of the time, the reader will understand what *too* refers to based on the context of the entire paragraph. However, if the meaning is not clear, you may need to rewrite your sentence: *Mike and I are both taking the Confined Space Rescue class* or *Mike is taking the Confined Space Rescue class in addition to this one.*

With Nonessential Elements

Being able to identify whether an element is essential or nonessential is the key to determining whether you need to use commas. A *nonessential* element is one that can be deleted without changing the meaning of the sentence or leaving the sentence structurally incomplete. A nonessential element is set off by commas. An *essential* element, on the other hand, cannot be deleted from the sentence. An essential element is not set off by commas.

The examples below illustrate the difference between essential and nonessential elements. In the first sentence, the clause *who was pregnant with twins* is necessary to identify which woman was killed in the accident. In the second sentence, although the clause *who was pregnant with twins* provides meaningful information about Barbara, it is not essential for identifying which woman was killed.

Essential: A woman *who was pregnant with twins* was killed in the accident.

Nonessential: Barbara, *who was pregnant with twins*, was killed in the accident.

Note: Other terms you may see are *restrictive* and *nonrestrictive*. A restrictive (essential) element restricts the meaning of the sentence. A nonrestrictive (nonessential) element does not.

Adjective Phrases and Clauses

Phrases and clauses used as adjectives modify a noun or pronoun by identifying *what kind*, *which one*, or *how many*. Nonessential phrases and clauses are set off by commas; essential ones are not.

You saw an example of an adjective clause above. Now let's look at an adjective phrase. The phrase *caught carry weapons* is essential in the first example below because it identifies which students. We are not going to suspend any student, just those caught carry weapons. In the second sentence, the words *these three* identify which students, so the phrase *caught carrying weapons* becomes nonessential.

Essential: Any students *caught carrying weapons* will be suspended from school.

Nonessential: These three students, *caught carrying weapons*, will be suspended from school.

A nonessential element is set off by commas.

Rebecca, who suffered major head trauma after colliding with a tree, died last night at the hospital.



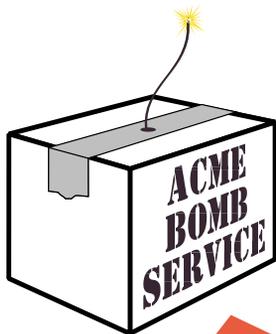
An essential element is not set off by commas.

The girl who suffered major head trauma after colliding with a tree died last night at the hospital.

Commas

Nonessential phrases need commas; essential ones do not.

We think the package delivered while you were at lunch contains a bomb. (essential)



We think this package, delivered while you were at lunch, contains a bomb. (nonessential)

Another way to determine if a phrase or clause is essential or non-essential is to separate the sentence into two independent clauses. A sentence containing an essential phrase or clause can't be split, whereas one with a nonessential phrase or clause can.

- Essential:* The man *who was accused of murder last week* has been released on bail.
- Nonessential:* Slade, *who was accused of murder last week*, has been released on bail.
- Test version:* Slade was accused of murder last week. He has been released on bail.

Usually the meaning of the sentence determines whether or not you need commas. However, sometimes it is the use of commas that determines the meaning of the sentence. Because it does not contain commas, the first sentence below implies that I wrote more than one book on the subject of hazardous materials emergency response. The commas in the second sentence, on the other hand, imply that my subsequent books were on other topics.

- Essential:* My first book *on hazardous materials emergency response* is in its third printing.
- Nonessential:* My first book, *on hazardous materials emergency response*, is in its third printing.

Adverb Phrases and Clauses

Phrases and clauses serving as adverbs modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. They answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, or *how*. Nonessential adverb phrases and clauses are set off by commas; essential ones are not.

The phrase *after the accident* is nonessential in the second example below because *last year* tells when Adam began wearing his seat belt.

- Essential:* Adam began wearing his seat belt *after the accident*.
- Nonessential:* Adam began wearing his seat belt last year, *after the accident*.

The clause *as though she is under the influence of drugs* is nonessential in the second example below because the word *irrationally* identifies how Jennifer is behaving.

- Essential:* Jennifer is behaving *as though she is under the influence of drugs*.
- Nonessential:* Jennifer is behaving irrationally, *as though she is under influence of drugs*.

Appositives

An *appositive* is a noun or noun phrase that defines, explains, or renames another noun before it. Nonessential appositives are set off with commas; essential ones are not.

Appositives that provide an alternate name for clarification purposes are nonessential. They are often introduced by the word *or* or the phrase *that is*. (Note: There is an extra comma after *that is*.)

Hypoglycemia, *that is, low blood sugar*, can sometimes be a life-threatening emergency.

Psychogenic shock, *or fainting*, is usually not serious.

In the first sentence below, the words *fireman* and *firefighter* are essential to the meaning of the sentence, so no commas are used. However, the word *firefighter* can be deleted from the second sentence; therefore, it is nonessential and must be set off with commas.

Essential: The word *fireman* is considered sexist. You should replace it with the word *firefighter*.

Nonessential: You misspelled my title, *firefighter*, on the business card.

In the first sentence below, the title of the book is essential to identify which book because I have published more than one. In the second sentence, the word *first* identifies which book, so the title is nonessential.

Essential: My book *The First Responder's Pocket Guide to Hazardous Materials Emergency Response* was published in 1996.

Nonessential: My first book, *The First Responder's Pocket Guide to Hazardous Materials Emergency Response*, was published in 1996.

Sometimes other punctuation marks are less confusing than commas. In the following example, does *my captain* refer to *Kyle*, or were there three people on the line? Parentheses work better than commas in this sentence.

Confusing: Kyle, my captain, and I took the first line through the front door.

Clear: Kyle (my captain) and I took the first line through the front door.

An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that defines, explains, or renames another noun before it.

Nonessential appositives are set off with commas.



All candidates, male and female, were given the same consideration.

Commas

Commas may or may not be needed around a person's name.

My brother, Jack, videotaped the incident.

(implies that I have only one brother)



My brother Jack videotaped the incident.

(implies that Jack is one of two or more brothers)

In the first sentence below, how many categories of neglect are there? It would be easy for a reader to miss the word *two*, but remember seeing the word *neglect* three times. A colon would be more effective than a comma in this sentence.

Confusing: California law on child abuse defines two categories of physical neglect, "severe neglect" and "general neglect."

Clear: California law on child abuse defines two categories of physical neglect: "severe neglect" and "general neglect."

Names used as appositives

Use commas to set off names that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Do not use commas if the name is essential.

Essential: The actress *Melissa Gilbert* once played the role of an attorney who had been sexually abused by her father when she was a baby.

Nonessential: My favorite actress, *Melissa Gilbert*, once played the role of an attorney who had been sexually abused by her father when she was a baby.

Names of family members may be considered either essential or nonessential. When first and last names are provided, the name is considered nonessential and must be set off with commas.

My brother, *Jack Levy*, videotaped the incident.

However, the experts do not agree on what to do when only the first name is provided. If I use commas, it implies I have only one brother. *My brother* identifies who; *Jack* is considered nonessential.

My brother, *Jack*, videotaped the incident.

If I do not use commas, it implies that I have more than one brother and that Jack is the brother I am referring to. In this case, *Jack* is essential to identify which brother.

My brother *Jack* videotaped the incident.

However, some experts believe it is acceptable to omit the commas even if Jack is my only brother because the entire expression (*my brother Jack*) is read as one unit.

Parenthetical Elements

Parenthetical elements are nonessential words or groups of words that either interrupt the flow of a sentence or have been added as afterthoughts. They are called *parenthetical* because they can (and sometimes do) appear in parentheses. However, you can set them off with commas or dashes instead.

Every fire essentially is, *or may be considered*, a haz mat incident.

Driving Code 3 can be dangerous, *particularly during peak traffic hours*.

Words or phrases that interrupt the flow of a sentence sometimes make the sentence choppy or hard to read. You may want to explore different options to see what flows smoothly, what is the clearest, and what provides the emphasis you want.

Option 1: Heavy drinking, *whether you realize it or not*, can cause permanent brain damage.

Option 2: Heavy drinking can cause permanent brain damage, *whether you realize it or not*.

Option 3: *Whether you realize it or not*, heavy drinking can cause permanent brain damage.

When punctuating sentences that have an interrupting expression in the middle, be sure to put your commas in the right places. When in doubt, try removing the words between the commas to see if the sentence makes sense. If it doesn't, you need to move a comma.

Wrong: It may be the safest, though not the fastest way, to stop the leak.

Wrong: It may be the safest to stop the leak.

Right: It may be the safest way to stop the leak.

Thus: It may be the safest, though not the fastest, way to stop the leak.

Absolute Phrases

Absolute phrases are phrases that modify the sentence as a whole. Absolute phrases need to be set off by commas.

The critical patients transported, we turned our attention to the walking wounded.

I had only about an hour's sleep last night, *the fire having come in a little before midnight*.

Use commas to set off parenthetical elements that interrupt the flow of the sentence.

We'll find a meth lab, if I'm not mistaken, when we search the house.



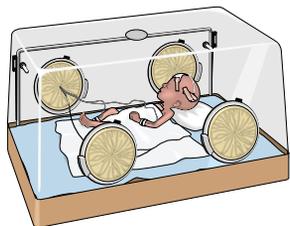
Use a comma to set off words added as afterthoughts.

There may be other illegal activities going on in that house, if you catch my drift.

Commas

Commas may or may not be required with additional considerations.

No one, including the doctor, expected him to survive.



We're grateful to the paramedics as well as the firefighters who kept our baby alive until we could get to the hospital.

With Additional Considerations

There may be times when you need to refer to additional people, things, or considerations. Some expressions that may be used to introduce these additional considerations include *accompanied by*, *along with*, *as well as*, *besides*, *in addition to*, *including*, *plus*, and *together with*.

Nonessential Phrases

Whether the phrase is essential or nonessential is a key factor in determining whether or not to use commas. If the phrase is essential to the meaning of the sentence, do not set it off with commas. However, if it is nonessential, commas may be appropriate.

The class *including recognition and treatment of shock* is the one I missed because of illness. (*essential*)

It's possible that you could have internal bleeding *in addition to* these injuries. (*essential*)

The chief, *accompanied by several members of his senior staff*, met with the city council to discuss building a new fire station. (*nonessential*)

Everyone, *including the architect who designed the building*, was surprised that the building held up so well after the bomb blast. (*nonessential*)

Phrases That Interrupt the Flow

You can often omit the commas if the phrase flows smoothly into the sentence or if it is closely related to the words that precede it.

The driver *as well as his passengers* should be subjected to a sobriety test.

The incident commander has ordered enough meals for all the firefighters *as well as the police officers*.

However, if the phrase does not flow smoothly into the sentence or if it is too far away from the words it relates to, use a comma.

I will be going to CSTI for a refresher class, *along with two other guys from our department*.

To Express Contrast

Phrases That Express Contrast

When the sentence contains a phrase that expresses contrast, the phrase is set off by a comma.

The more we practice, the less likely we are to make mistakes in the field.

They agreed to release one hostage, but not the other.

It is the vapors of the flammable liquid, not the liquid itself, that are burning.

It is his management skills, more so than his technical knowledge, that make him such a good officer.

The comma is usually omitted around a short contrasting phrase when it fits smoothly into the sentence.

The sooner the better.

A *slow but steady* trickle of fuel dripped from the damaged tanker.

We need to be concerned about smoke inhalation *more so than* his burn injury.

Not . . . but

The commas are usually omitted in sentences containing *not . . . but* before the verb, such as in the first two examples below. However, the comma is generally needed in other *not-but* constructions to help show the contrast.

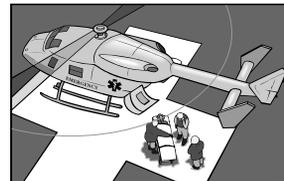
It is *not* the liquid *but* rather the vapors that *are burning*.

It was *not* Scott *but* Tim who *found* the murder weapon.

I don't like climbing our 100-foot aerial, *not* because I'm afraid of heights, *but* because I'm afraid of falling.

Commas are generally used to set off phrases that express contrast.

The sooner we get there, the greater the victim's chance of survival.



However, the comma is usually omitted around a short contrasting phrase.

The victim is in serious but stable condition.

Commas

Be careful when punctuating sentences that contain two or more contrasting phrases. Do not put the commas in the wrong place.

Your bold, though somewhat risky plan, may be our best option.
(incorrect)



Your bold, though somewhat risky, plan may be our best option.
(correct)

Not . . . but is different from *not only . . . but also*. The *not only-but also* construction is a connecting one, not a contrasting one. You can easily see this by replacing *not only . . . but also* with *and*. (Often your sentences will be clearer if you do use *and* instead.) Do not use a comma to separate *not only-but also* constructions.

I don't like climbing our 100-foot aerial *not only* because I'm afraid of heights *but also* because I'm afraid of falling.

I don't like climbing 100-foot aerial because I'm afraid of heights *and* I'm afraid of falling.

Where It Gets a Little Tricky

Be careful when punctuating sentences that contain two or more contrasting phrases used to describe the word(s) that follow.

Your *bold, though somewhat risky*, plan may be our best option.

The experts are divided on whether or not to use the second comma. In general, either the sentence above or the one below is considered acceptable.

Your *bold, though somewhat risky* plan may be our best option.

One mistake some writers make is to put the second comma where they would ordinarily pause to take a breath. This is wrong. When in doubt, try removing the words between the commas to see if the sentence still makes sense. If it does, you have the commas in the right place. If not, you need to move a comma.

Wrong: Your *bold, though somewhat risky* plan, may be our best option.

Wrong: Your bold may be our best option.

Right: Your bold plan may be our best option.

Thus: Your *bold, though somewhat risky*, plan may be our best option.

Between Items in a Series

The rules for handling items in a series depend on the number of items and the complexity of those items.

Two Items in a Series

Commas are not needed when there are only two items in a series.

I like driving with red lights and sirens.

He is wanted for assault and battery on a police officer.

One short item and one long item

If you have two items in the series, but one is significantly longer than the other, you may need to put the short item first for clarity.

Confusing: She had enough time to grab only a basket containing some vital medications for her heart condition and her purse.

Clear: She had enough time to grab only her purse and a basket containing some vital medications for her heart condition.

Three or More Items in a Series

Use commas between three or more words, phrases, or clauses in a series.

We dispatched fire, police, and ambulance.

I tipped the head, checked for breathing, and gave two breaths.

Thoughts on omitting the final comma

Some experts say it is permissible to omit the final comma in the series, providing it doesn't hurt the clarity of the sentence. They feel the comma is superfluous and that it merely adds clutter. However, most experts say that the comma should *not* be omitted. One such grammarian, Wilson Follett, points out that a conjunction, which connects, cannot do the job of a comma, which separates. Words joined by *and* may seem to form a compound if not separated by a comma. Whatever you do, be consistent.

Commas are not needed when there are only two items in a series.

I am trained in Rescue Breathing and CPR.



Use commas between three or more items in a series.

I tipped the head, checked for breathing, and gave two breaths.

Commas

Omitting the final comma in a series can cause misreading.



He was wearing a blue shirt, black pants and hiking boots.

What color are the boots?

Let's look at an example of how omitting the final comma can affect the clarity of a sentence: *She told us the suspect was wearing a blue shirt, black pants and hiking boots.* Without a comma after the word *pants*, readers may assume that both the pants and the boots are black. Putting a comma before the word *and* should prevent readers from making that assumption.

Here is another one: *The firefighters knew they needed police backup when they discovered the unique glassware, chemicals typically used to manufacture illegal drugs and a dead body.* Without a comma after the word *drugs*, the sentence sounds as if they found chemicals used to manufacture both illegal drugs and dead bodies. Even though logic tells us this isn't right, readers may have to reread the sentence to clear up the confusion it creates.

Here is one more: *Mike, Rick and I were injured.* This sentence has two possible meanings: I might be addressing Mike, informing him that Rick and I were injured. Or I might be documenting that the three of us—Mike, Rick, and I—were injured. If the latter scenario is correct, putting a comma after *Rick* would clarify it.

Interrupting nonessential elements

If a nonessential element follows the conjunction, interrupting the flow of the sentence, omit the comma before the conjunction. The extra comma is not necessary.

Wrong: I'd like to work Homicide, Vice, or, if possible, Arson.

Right: I'd like to work Homicide, Vice or, if possible, Arson.

When the series contains and so on etc.

When the series contains an expression such as *and so on* or *etc.*, use commas to set off the expression. (Note: The abbreviation *etc.* means "and so forth." Therefore, do not write *and etc.* It would be redundant.)

The latest series of floods, mud slides, *and so on*, has done a tremendous amount of damage.

You will find shovels, McLeods, hoes, *etc.*, in the jockey box.

He has received numerous tickets for speeding, running red lights, making illegal turns, *etc.*

Note: Experts recommend against using the abbreviation *etc.* in formal writing. They prefer either using expressions such as *and so forth* or rephrasing the sentence entirely.

Conjunctions Versus Commas

Commas are not needed when you repeat *and* or *or* between every item in the series.

We found a gun *and* a knife *and* a bag of heroin when we searched his car.

If we don't stop the release before it gets to the river, it will contaminate the waterway for *months or years or even decades to come*.

Writers will sometimes use both commas and conjunctions to put special emphasis on each item. However, this technique should be used sparingly.

If we don't stop the release before it gets to the river, it will contaminate the waterway for *months, or years, or even decades to come*.

Paired Items

Commas are not needed between items normally used together as a pair when they are joined by a coordinating conjunction.

With hypovolemic shock, the skin will be *cold and clammy and pale or cyanotic*.

The recruits still need to be tested on *search and rescue, ropes and knots*, and auto extrication.

Commas and Semicolons Combined

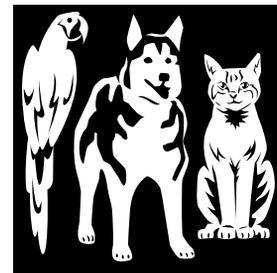
If the items in a series contain internal commas, make the items clear by separating them with semicolons.

Our company transports flammable solids, liquids, and gases; oxidizers; organic peroxides; and a variety of corrosive materials.

Today's class will focus on recognizing, responding to, and defusing domestic violence calls; knowing how to initiate a restraining order; and knowing how to properly question and care for the victims of domestic violence.

**Conjunctions
may replace
commas.**

***We rescued a
dog and a cat
and a parrot.
(no commas)***



***We rescued a
dog, a cat, and
a parrot.
(commas)***

Commas

Commas are often used to set off expressions that cite examples.

In particular we need to work on our ladder skills.



Hal thinks we still struggle too much with ladders, for example.

To Set Off Examples

Sometimes you will need to cite examples in a sentence. This is often done with expressions such as *for example*, *including*, *especially*, *particularly*, *namely*, *that is*, *like*, and *such as*. Knowing when and where to use commas in these sentences can be tricky.

Introductory Expressions

Use a comma after *for example* or similar expressions when used to introduce a sentence.

For example, if you see an orange placard, you should know right away that you are dealing with explosives.

Particularly on calls like this, you need to be extra careful.

Especially now, after the bad press we received on the last fire, we must appoint a public information officer at every major incident.

Closing Expressions

For example is sometimes placed at the end of a sentence. It still needs to be set aside with a comma.

Captain Rooney said we need to spend more time on our basic skills. He thinks we still struggle too much with ladders, *for example*.

Essential Examples

Do not use commas to set off examples that are essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Accidents *such as these* really get to me.

A blow to the head *like the one Lucy sustained* is often more severe than it initially appears.

The way sentences are written determines whether the examples are essential or nonessential. The previous examples were essential to the meaning of the sentences. It isn't *all accidents* that get to me, *just accidents like this one*. And while any blow to the head can be more severe than it initially appears, it is *blows like the one Lucy sustained* that we are concerned about.

The two sentences below are almost identical. However, one contains essential examples; the other, nonessential examples. The examples are essential in the first sentence because you cannot put a period after *behavior* and still have a complete sentence.

Essential: The factors that have a significant impact on wildland fire behavior *include weather, fuel, and topography*.

Nonessential: Many factors have a significant impact on wildland fire behavior, *including weather, fuel, and topography*.

Nonessential (Parenthetical) Examples

Nonessential (parenthetical) examples need to be set aside from the main part of the sentence. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. One way is with commas. Note: Some words (*for example, namely, and that is*) require an additional comma afterwards. Others (*especially, including, such as, like, and particularly*) should not have a comma after them.

Some of the risk factors for heart disease cannot be changed, *for example*, heredity, male gender, and age. However, you can control other risk factors, *such as* smoking, high blood pressure, blood cholesterol levels, and physical inactivity.

Oxygen-deficient atmospheres, *namely*, atmospheres where the oxygen level is below 19.5%, require the use of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).

We're seeing a significant drop in violent crime, *particularly* homicide and rape, as a result of the new public awareness programs we implemented last year.

Other ways of setting off nonessential examples

Other acceptable ways of punctuating sentences with nonessential examples include using colons, parentheses, or dashes.

Pesticide container labels must include an additional signal word: danger, warning, or caution.

Use commas to set off nonessential examples.

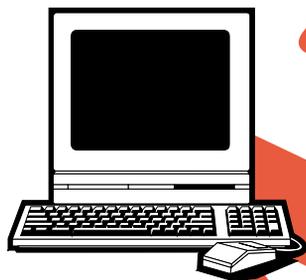


You can control some of the risk factors of heart disease, such as smoking and high blood pressure.

Commas

Sometimes dashes or parentheses provide more clarity than a comma.

We found several items—namely, computers, . . . and copiers—hidden in a storage locker.



We found several items (namely, computers, . . . and copiers) hidden in a storage locker.

Many women are starting to carry things (such as mace and pepper spray) for self-protection.

Some of these topics—for example, hazardous materials, bloodborne pathogens, and confined space rescue—require annual refresher training.

Sometimes using colons, parentheses, or dashes provides more clarity than using a comma. This is particularly true when using the word *namely*. Readers may not immediately recognize *namely* as a word that introduces examples and may end up having to reread the sentence to clear up the confusion it creates.

Confusing. We found several stolen items, namely, computers, monitors, printers, scanners, and personal copiers, hidden in a storage locker.

Clear. We found several stolen items—namely, computers, monitors, printers, scanners, and personal copiers—hidden in a storage locker.

Clear. We found several stolen items (namely, computers, monitors, printers, scanners, and personal copiers) hidden in a storage locker.

Elements Introduced by *e.g.* or *i.e.*

The abbreviation *e.g.* means *for example*. The abbreviation *i.e.* means *that is*. The two are not interchangeable. *For example* refers to a sampling of a larger group. *That is* identifies something specific; it is the only thing being included in the discussion. (Note: Experts recommend using the complete words rather than the abbreviations in formal writing.)

We prefer to consider another alternative, *e.g.*, community service, as opposed to sending him to jail. (*Community service is one option, but there may be others that would be acceptable as well. Therefore, use e.g.*)

You need to make sure the secondary exit, (*i.e.*, the fire escape), is clearly identified and easily accessible at all times. (*The fire escape is the only secondary exit available from the particular location. Therefore, use i.e.*)

Remember, these expressions are still parenthetical, even though they are abbreviated. Therefore, commas are required both before and after *e.g.* and *i.e.*

Between Adjectives

Whether commas are required between consecutive adjectives depends on their relation to the noun or pronoun they modify.

When to Use Commas Between Adjectives

Use commas between two or more adjectives that equally modify the same word. These are called *coordinate adjectives*.

Fire spread quickly through the *steep, treacherous* terrain.

We have a lot of *intelligent, creative* people on the force.

If Clark hadn't managed that incident in such a *calm, organized* manner, we could have had a real disaster on our hands.

Notice that the word *and* could have been used in place of the commas in the previous examples without changing the meaning of the sentences or making the sentences awkward: *steep and treacherous terrain, intelligent and creative people, a calm and organized manner*.

When to Omit Commas Between Adjectives

Adjectives are not coordinate—and should *not* be separated by commas—when the one closest to the noun or pronoun is more closely related to the noun or pronoun in meaning.

He had a *nasty knife* wound.

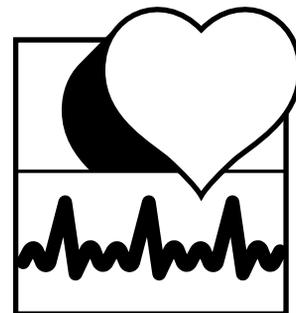
They were all wearing *dark blue* uniforms.

The adjectives in the two sentences above are not coordinate. You could not put the word *and* between them without it being awkward: *nasty and knife wound, dark and blue uniforms*. Neither could you reverse the order of the adjectives: *knife nasty wound, blue dark uniforms*.

In the examples above, the first adjective modifies, or describes, the combined idea of the second adjective and the noun. It is not just a knife wound; it is a *nasty* knife wound. They are not just blue uniforms; they are *dark* blue uniforms.

Use commas to separate adjectives that equally modify a noun.

She has a strong, healthy heartbeat.

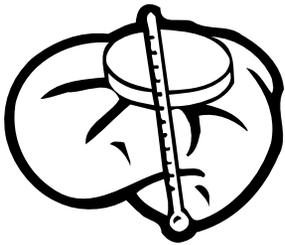


Do not use a comma to separate unequal adjectives.

She has a strong radial pulse.

Commas

Do not use a comma between an adverb and an adjective.



She has an extremely high temperature.

Sometimes the use or omission of a comma can change the meaning of a sentence. The first sentence below refers to a woman who is both pretty and slender. The second example implies that the woman is *fairly* slender and that *pretty* is being used as an adverb to modify the adjective *slender*.

Comma: The witness described her as a pretty, slender woman.

No comma: The witness described her as a pretty slender woman.

Realize that when you write sentences such as the one above, readers may question the meaning. Did you really mean *fairly slender*, or did you forget to include the comma? When the meaning of a word may be ambiguous, use a different word. When you cannot change a word because you are quoting someone else, as in the example above, you may want to put a clarification in brackets: *The witness described her as a pretty [fairly] slender woman.*

No comma before the noun

Do not put a comma between the final adjective and the noun.

Wrong: Searching the collapsed building for victims was a slow, tedious, process.

Right: Searching the collapsed building for victims was a slow, tedious process.

If you are unsure whether you need a comma, use the “*and* test.” If you put *and* between the words, will the sentence make sense?

Wrong: a slow and tedious and process

Right: a slow and tedious process

No comma after adverbs ending in y

Do not use a comma between an adverb and an adjective. Most words ending in *ly* are adverbs; some are adjectives, however. (Refer to pages 150-156 and 212-233 for information on adjectives and adverbs.)

No comma: He was a *surprisingly heavy* patient.

Comma: He was a *lonely, bitter* man.

Once again, if you are unsure whether you need a comma, use the “*and* test.”

Wrong: a surprisingly and heavy patient

Right: a lonely and bitter man

To Indicate Omitted Words

Some words can be omitted from a sentence if the meaning remains clear. A comma is used in place of the missing words to prevent misreading and to indicate that the words were omitted intentionally.

With Parallel Thoughts Joined by a Semicolon

Words are sometimes omitted in situations where two parallel thoughts are joined together with a semicolon. Use a comma to replace the missing words.

I dispatch fire; Bob, police.

Engine 11 took care of the patients; Engine 10, the car fire.

With the Omission of *that*

When you omit the word *that* from a sentence, it can disrupt the flow of the sentence. If it does, you must insert a comma to prevent misreading. If omitting the word *that* does not interrupt the flow of the sentence, as in the fourth example below, no comma is needed.

Chances are, we'll have another major earthquake before the end of the century.

Don't forget, you need to check for breathing first before attempting to ventilate the patient.

My concern is, the kidnapers may not release her if they suspect a trap.

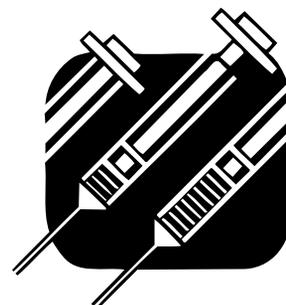
I think */that/* we should evacuate the areas downwind.

Notice how omitting a needed comma can cause confusion in the first example below. Without the comma, the readers see *My expectation is violent. . . .* The comma provides enough of a pause to help readers see that *violent* modifies *storms*, not *expectations*.

Confusing: My expectation is violent storms will hit the area by midnight.

Clear: My expectation is, violent storms will hit the area by midnight.

Commas are often needed to indicate omitted words.

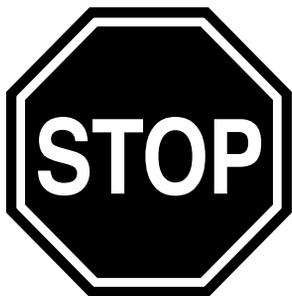


Remember, all syringes must be properly disposed of.

Commas

Commas may be used to interject a pause for emphasis or drama.

Running a stop sign was stupid, very stupid.



Commas are often needed to separate two identical or very similar words.

When it says "stop," stop.

To Separate Words for Drama or Clarity

To Create Drama

Commas may be used to interject a pause before an additional comment for emphasis or drama.

He was badly injured, very badly injured.

That was stupid, incredibly stupid.

I love fighting fire, especially when it's really ripping.

We warned them, numerous times, that we would shut them down if they continued to exceed the posted occupancy load.

A dash can be even more dramatic.

We warned them—numerous times—that we would shut them down if they continued to exceed the posted occupancy load.

To Separate Identical or Similar Words

A comma is often needed to separate two identical or very similar words.

Whatever you plan to *do*, *do* it quickly. He has already threatened to kill another hostage at midnight.

All he *is*, *is* a petty thief.

Never, *ever* let me catch you playing with guns again!

When it is not appropriate to use a comma between two identical words, but the two identical words together are awkward or confusing, try changing one of the words.

Awkward: She said *that that* man we have in custody is not the man who stole her purse.

Better: She said *that the* man we have in custody is not the man who stole her purse.

With Names and Titles

Names and Words of Address

Use commas to set aside names and other words used as a form of address.

Let me know, Howard, if you think we need another line for exposure protection.

That's why, ladies and gentlemen, we are encouraging you to establish your own Neighborhood Watch program.

No, Officer, we did not get a good look at him.

Please, ma'am, I need you to remain calm.

Professional and Job Titles

Use commas to set aside professional or job titles that follow a person's name.

Julie Thomas, our supervising administrative secretary, will schedule an appointment for you.

Dennis DeMelloPine, president of IAFF Local 1165, will be flying to Washington to meet with your committee.

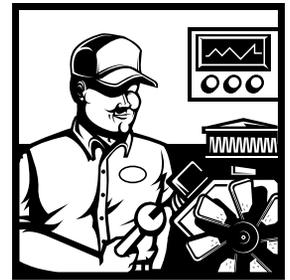
Individual and Company Names

The use of commas with individual and company names is a matter of personal preference. The rules permit both options. When in doubt, ask people how they prefer to have their names written.

Joe Viramontez Jr.	<i>or</i>	Joe Viramontez, Jr.
Ben Lopes III	<i>or</i>	Ben Lopes, III.
Firebelle Productions Inc.	<i>or</i>	Firebelle Productions, Inc.
Robinson, West and Smith	<i>or</i>	Robinson, West, and Smith

Use commas to set aside names or other words of address.

Do you think it can be fixed, Bill?



Use commas to set aside titles that follow a person's name.

Tony, our master mechanic, will have it fixed in no time.

Commas

Commas are often used to open and close a letter.

Dear Doug,



Sincerely,

To Open and Close a Letter

The Salutation

Commas may be used as part of the salutation in a personal or informal letter. However, a colon is more appropriate for a business letter or formal salutation.

Informal: Dear Doug,

Format: Dear Chief Sporleder:

The Closing

A comma is appropriate when closing a letter, either formal or informal.

Format: Sincerely,

Format: Yours truly,

Informal: Affectionately,

With Addresses and Locations

Commas are often needed to separate address or location elements.

Two or More Location Elements on the Same Line

When two or more location elements appear on the same line, punctuate them with commas. The only two elements not separated by a comma are state and zip code.

You can order additional copies of this book through Firebelle Productions, Post Office Box 110848, Campbell, CA 95011-0848.

The Fire Officer's Handbook on Wildland Firefighting is now available through Deer Valley Press, 5125 Deer Valley Road, Rescue, CA 95672.

Commas are not needed if the location elements are separated by a preposition.

The station is located on Shannon Road *in* Los Gatos.

Just city and state or state and country

When you use only a city and state or state and country, place commas before and after the second element.

Firebelle Productions has been located in *Campbell, California*, since 1987.

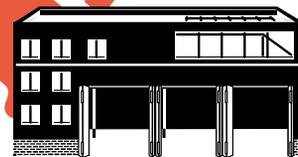
Our visitor is a firefighter from *Victoria, Canada*, who is touring fire stations across the United States.

Omit the second comma if the location is used in the possessive sense. However, be aware that these sentences can sometimes be awkward. It is often better to rewrite the sentence.

Awkward: Fire•Rescue West will be held in San Jose, *California's* convention center.

Better: Fire•Rescue West will be held at the convention center in San Jose, California.

When two or more location elements appear on the same line, punctuate them with commas.



I visited a few fire stations in Seattle, Washington, while on my vacation.

Commas

Commas are often needed to set off dates.

On November 12, 1980, I became the department's first female firefighter.



However, commas are not needed when only one or two date elements are provided.

I became the department's first female firefighter in November 1980.

With Dates

Commas may be needed to set off dates, depending on how they are used.

Three or More Date Elements

A date written in order by month, day, and year requires commas to prevent misreading the numbers.

On November 21, 1980, there was a major fire at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.

On Thursday, June 27, 1996, three men robbed the bank and killed one of the tellers.

The two departments will officially merge one minute past midnight on December 30, 1996.

Do not use commas if the date elements are written in inverted order. (This format is commonly used in military correspondence and in letters from foreign countries.)

The two departments will officially merge one minute past midnight on 30 December 1996.

One or Two Date Elements

Commas are not needed to prevent misreading when only one or two date elements are provided.

My recruit class graduated in May 1985.

He was released from prison on August 14.

We started the midnight basketball league in July as a way to keep these kids off the streets.

Dates as Introductory Elements

The comma is optional when a short date is used as an introductory element.

In 1981 (or *In 1981,*) we hired our first black firefighter.

On October 9 (or *On October 9,*) the trial was finally over.

Commas are needed, however, when the date is followed by non-essential information.

On Sunday, *three days after Art graduated from paramedic school*, he and his partner helped deliver a baby girl in the back of the ambulance.

We will start our first paramedic class in September 1994, *after Labor Day weekend*.

Commas are generally not necessary after ordinary adverbs that represent dates (for example, *today, yesterday, tomorrow, recently*).

Yesterday we had three accidents along that same stretch of highway.

Recently our shop mechanic did a brake inspection on every one of the patrol vehicles.

The comma is optional when a short date is an introductory element.

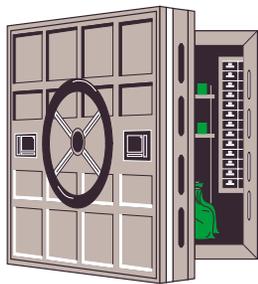


On Saturday (or On Saturday), we broke up an illegal gambling ring.

Commas

Commas separate long numbers to make them easier to read.

They stole over \$450,000 in cash.



The comma is optional if a number contains just four digits.

They stole \$2500 in cash. (or \$2,500)

With Long Numbers

When to Use Commas

Commas are used to separate long numbers so they are easy to read and understand. The numbers are separated in groups of three, counting from the right.

The new fire engine cost more than \$300,000.

A 1% concentration of gas by volume in air is equal to 10,000 parts per million (ppm).

The comma is optional if the number contains just four digits.

For fires involving explosives, NFPA recommends evacuating to a distance of at least 2000 (or 2,000) feet.

When to Omit Commas

Do not use commas in the following situations:

<u>Type Number</u>	<u>Example</u>
Years	1998
Street Addresses (Digits)	14700 Winchester Boulevard
Zip Codes	Campbell, CA 95008
Room Numbers	Room 2081
Page Numbers	Page 1260
Telephone Numbers	(408) 555-1212
Temperatures	1200°F
After Decimal Points	14,567.9856

Most serial numbers, invoice numbers, policy numbers, and so forth are also written without commas. However, they may include spaces, hyphens, or other means of separating the numbers. Follow the style used by the person or company that generated the number.

With Quotation Marks

Commas are often used to set off quotations. (The rules regarding quotations are covered in more detail on pages 104-107.)

To Set Off Direct Quotations

Commas are generally used to set off *direct* quotations—ones that quote the exact words that someone else has said or written. Do not use commas before *indirect* quotations—ones that merely report someone else’s words.

Direct: I asked the patient, “Can you tell me what the pain feels like?”

Indirect: I asked the patient if she could tell me what the pain felt like.

Direct: “It feels as if someone were standing on my chest,” she replied.

Indirect: She replied that it felt as if someone were standing on her chest.

No commas if the quotation is not dialogue

Commas are used to set off quotations used as dialogue. However, do not use commas to set off quotations that do not serve as dialogue or to set off short quotations that are merely one element in the sentence, not the substance of the sentence. The following examples illustrate the difference.

No comma: I left my house as soon as I heard Joe say “Smoke showing from the station.”

Comma: Joe said, “Smoke showing from the station.”

No comma: We heard the defendant say “You deserve to die” just before he killed her.

Comma: The defendant said, “You deserve to die.”

Do not use commas to set off a *direct* quotation if you introduce the quotation with the word *that*.

Hearing the dispatcher say *that* “A CHP officer has been injured in the accident” immediately triggered fear and concern among responding police, fire, and EMS personnel.

Commas are frequently used to set off direct quotations, but not indirect quotations.

“Can you tell me what happened,” I asked.
(direct)



I asked the victim to tell me what happened.
(indirect)

Commas

Commas are often needed for clarity.

A sentence must be easily understood *as the reader is reading it*.

***Soon after the fire was brought under control.*
(confusing)**



***Soon after, the fire was brought under control.*
(clear)**

Once Again, For Clarity

A sentence must be easily understood *as the reader is reading it*—that is, from left to right. If the reader has to reread the sentence to clarify what wasn't clear the first time, you have not done your job as a writer.

To Prevent Misreading

In the following examples, the comma is needed to provide a pause. Try reading the first sentence in each set without the pause, and you will see how it becomes confusing.

Confusing: Soon after the roof collapsed.

Clear: Soon after, the roof collapsed.

Confusing: To Glenn Michael was a hero.

Clear: To Glenn, Michael was a hero.

Confusing: Though tired firefighters continued to search through the debris.

Clear: Though tired, firefighters continued to search through the debris.

It is sometimes acceptable to omit the comma between two main clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet*) if the resulting sentence is clear. However, the comma is often needed to prevent misreading.

I photographed the crime scene, and Kevin dusted for prints.

Let's cut the seat belt, or the victim will have difficulty breathing.

We never searched the house, for the homeowner told us everyone was out.

Remember, the sentence must be clear *as the reader is reading it*—from left to right. Without the commas, readers may initially think that I photographed the crime scene *and Kevin*, that I'm willing to cut the seat belt *or the victim*, and that we never searched the house *for the homeowner*.

Where to Avoid Using Commas

Let's take a final look at where to avoid using commas.

Between Subject and Verb

Do not put a comma between subject and verb (or verb phrase).

Wrong: *Victims of a knife murder who attempt to fight off their attackers, will often have* defense wounds on their hands and wrists.

Right: *Victims of a knife murder who attempt to fight off their attackers will often have* defense wounds on their hands and wrists.

If you feel compelled to use a comma to provide a pause because the subject and verb are too far apart, rewrite the sentence.

Better: *Victims of a knife murder will often have* defense wounds on their hands and wrists if they attempted to fight off their attackers.

Between Verb and Object

Do not put a comma between verb and object. (The object is the person or thing that receives the action. It may be a word, a phrase, or a clause.)

Wrong: The district chief *revealed* during the post-fire analysis, *that cleanup crews discovered* asbestos in the building.

Right: The district chief *revealed* during the post-fire analysis *that cleanup crews discovered* asbestos in the building.

If you want to treat a phrase or clause as nonessential, set it off with a *pair* of commas.

Right: The district chief *revealed*, during the post-fire analysis, *that cleanup crews discovered* asbestos in the building.

Do not put a comma between subject and verb.

Victims of a knife murder who attempt to fight off their attackers, will often have defense wounds. . . .
(wrong)



If necessary, bring subject and verb closer together.

Victims of a knife murder will often have defense wounds. . . .
(right)

Commas

Do not separate parts of a compound object.

We seized a briefcase containing 50 dime bags of heroin, and a .357 Magnum revolver.
(wrong)



Remember, however, you must also be technically accurate.

Omitting the comma implies that both the gun and the drugs were contained within the briefcase.

Between Parts of a Compound Subject

Do not separate parts of a compound subject.

Wrong: The little *girl* who saved her mother by dialing 911, and the *dispatcher* who answered her call will have a chance to meet this afternoon at police headquarters.

Right: The little *girl* who saved her mother by dialing 911 and the *dispatcher* who answered her call will have a chance to meet this afternoon at police headquarters.

Between Parts of a Compound Object

Do not separate parts of a compound object.

Wrong: We seized a briefcase containing 50 dime bags of heroin, and a .357 Magnum revolver.

Although using a comma between parts of a compound object is grammatically incorrect, you can run into other problems if you simply remove the comma without considering the consequences. You can use the following sentence *if both the gun and the drugs were contained within the briefcase.*

Right: We seized a briefcase containing 50 dime bags of heroin and a .357 Magnum revolver.

If the gun was *not* inside the briefcase, use the sentence below. Both sentences are grammatically correct, but they mean different things. And, unfortunately, simple little errors like this can come back to haunt a police officer (or anyone in the emergency response field) years later in court. A clever defense attorney may attempt to undermine an officer's credibility by arguing that there are discrepancies between the report and the officer's testimony.

Right: We seized a .357 Magnum revolver and a briefcase containing 50 dime bags of heroin.

One more option is to repeat the subject and verb, resulting in two main clauses separated by a comma and a coordinating conjunction. This option is not as concise as the ones above, but it is grammatically correct.

Right: We seized a briefcase containing 50 dime bags of heroin, and we seized a .357 Magnum revolver.

Between Parts of a Compound Predicate

Do not separate parts of a compound predicate.

Wrong: We pulled the victim from his car, and started CPR after checking his pulse.

While some experts say it is permissible to put a comma between parts of a compound predicate to avoid misreading, most believe it is better to rewrite the sentence. If you want to make it clear that the phrase *after checking his pulse* applies only to starting CPR, you can substitute *then* for *and* to clarify the sequence of events.

Right: We pulled the victim from his car, then started CPR after checking his pulse.

You can also repeat the subject, resulting in two main clauses separated by a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

Right: We pulled the victim from his car, and we started CPR after checking his pulse.

Commas are acceptable in the following sentence because there are three predicates, not two. This is treated like items in a series.

Right: We pulled the victim from his car, checked his pulse, and started CPR.

Alternately, if the pulse was checked before the victim was removed from his car, use something like the following.

Right: After determining that the victim had no pulse, we pulled him from the car and started CPR.

After the Last Item in a Series

Do not use a comma after the last item in a series.

Wrong: I took a pike pole, an axe, and a salvage cover, from Engine 1.

Right: I took a pike pole, an axe, and a salvage cover from Engine 1.

Wrong: Look, listen, and feel for breathing, for five to ten seconds.

Right: Look, listen, and feel for breathing for five to ten seconds.

Do not separate parts of a compound predicate.

We pulled the victim from his car, and started CPR after checking his pulse. (wrong)



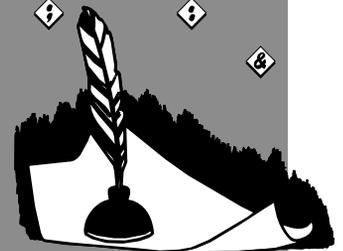
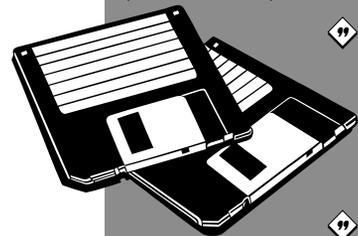
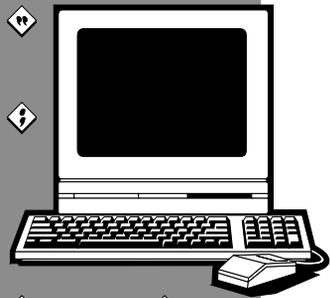
Try rewriting the sentence instead.

We pulled the victim from his car, then started CPR after checking his pulse. (right)

SAMPLE

Chapter 2: Other Marks of Punctuation

SAVED!



Other Marks of Punctuation

Use a period at the end of a sentence.

Smoking is not allowed in this area.



Use a period at the end of an indirect question.

He asked if he could smoke in the room.

Periods (.)

The primary use for a period is to provide a break at the end of a sentence. However, it has a few other uses too.

To End a Sentence

Use a period at the end of a *declarative sentence*—one that makes a statement.

We were able to confine the fire to the room of origin.

She may have a punctured lung.

Use a period at the end of an *imperative sentence*—one that directs someone to do something. Do not use an exclamation point unless there is a need for extra emphasis.

Grab the rescue rope and follow me.

Put the gun down, and nobody will get hurt.

To End an Indirect Question

Use a period at the end of an *indirect question*—one that reports a question instead of asking it directly.

She asked if the injuries were serious.

We want to know how someone could break in without being noticed.

To End a Polite Request

Use a period at the end of a request or command that is phrased like a question out of politeness. In the following examples, the reader is expected to act on the request, not respond with a yes-or-no answer. Therefore, the sentence is punctuated with a period.

Would you please forward a copy of my report to the chief.

Will you let me know when he regains consciousness.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Although this seems like a simple rule, it is often difficult to determine the correct way to punctuate sentences such as these. Are these truly requests or are they questions? Consider the reader's perspective as well: Am I expected to do something or do I have a choice to say no? If the intent is not clear, you may not get the results you want. When in doubt, rewrite the sentence so that it is clearly a question or a request.

As a question: May I ask a favor of you? Will you call me when he regains consciousness?

As a request: Please let me know when he regains consciousness.

To End Elliptical Expressions

Put a period at the end of an *elliptical expression*—a condensed expression representing a more complete statement or command.

Careful. (*Be careful in there.*)

Whatever you say. (*Whatever you say is fine by me.*)

Put a period at the end of an elliptical expression used in response to a question.

Did the victim make it? *Yes.*

Where do you want the ladder? *Over there, near the door.*

Put a period at the end of a simple greeting or mild exclamation.

Good morning.

Darn.

Note: An elliptical expression is different from a sentence fragment. A sentence fragment is a phrase or clause that has been incorrectly separated from another sentence. It is a grammatical error. Refer to pages 484-486 for more information.

Fragment: We'll be available on scene. *As soon as we finish loading the five-inch hose.*

Revised: We'll be available on scene *as soon as we finish loading the five-inch hose.*

In general, use a period at the end of a polite request phrased like a question.

Will you bring me the first aid kit.



Use a period at the end of an elliptical expression.

Thanks.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Use periods with abbreviations as appropriate.

See if you can raise Dr. Smith on the radio.



Use periods as decimal points in numbers.

Our radio frequency is 154.250 MHz.

To Punctuate Some Abbreviations

Periods are used with some abbreviations (for example, *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *a.m.*, and *p.m.*). However, there are a number of abbreviations that do not use periods. Refer to Chapter 12 for more information.

When an abbreviation comes at the end of a sentence, do not add an extra period. The final period in the abbreviation also serves as the period at the end of the sentence.

Wrong: The drill will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m..

Right: The drill will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m.

To Separate Initials in a Name

Periods are used after initials in a proper name, for example, *Jill M. Levy*. However, they are generally not used after initials that identify a prominent person, such as *JFK* and *FDR*.

To Separate Some Numbers

Periods are used as decimal points in numbers that are not whole. They are also used to separate dollars and cents.

The earthquake measured 7.1 on the Richter scale.

He stole a watch priced at \$89.95, then sold it to buy drugs.

To Punctuate an Outline or Displayed List

Periods are used after numbers and letters in an outline, unless those numbers and letters are enclosed in parentheses instead.

- I. Make Robbery Risky
 - A. The robbery problem in our community
 - B. Ways to discourage robbery
 - C. If a robbery happens
 - D. After a robbery

Refer to pages 549-556 for a more in-depth discussion of how to punctuate lists and outlines.

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Punctuate Run-In Headings

Periods may be used with run-in headings. These are headings that appear at the beginning of a paragraph and are immediately followed by other text. (Note: Dashes or colons are sometimes used instead of periods.)

Several environmental factors contribute to extreme fire behavior on a wildland fire:

- **Available fuel.** The fire needs fuel to generate the heat intensity. . . .
- **Wind.** Winds capable of producing extreme fire behavior can be the result. . . .
- **Low atmospheric moisture content.** Dry air means drier fuels. The drier the fuels. . . .

Do not use periods with main headings. However, do use question marks, exclamation points, and colons as appropriate.

Handling Pediatric Emergencies *(no punctuation required)*

Gang Violence in the '90s *(no punctuation required)*

Did Police Use Excessive Force? *(question mark required)*

Arsonist Strikes Again! *(exclamation point required)*

Anaphylactic Shock: A Life-Threatening Emergency *(colon required)*

Periods Used with Quotation Marks

In the United States, periods and commas go inside the quotation marks. (See pages 111-113 for more information on using quotation marks with other punctuation marks.)

"Well," he sighed, "Looks like the boys in Vice were right."

In general, do not use periods with headings.

Gang Violence in the '90s



However, do use other marks of punctuation in headings as appropriate.

When Will the Violence End?

Other Marks of Punctuation

Use a question mark after a *direct* question.

Is anybody injured?



However, use a period after an *indirect* question.

The dispatcher asked if anyone was injured.

Question Marks (?)

Question marks, as the name implies, are used to signify questions.

To End a Direct Question

Use a question mark after a *direct* question—one that asks a question directly. Do not use a question mark, however, after an *indirect* question—one that merely reports a question.

Direct: How many people are injured?

Indirect: The dispatcher asked how many people were injured.

Direct: Do they have him in custody yet?

Indirect: I asked if they had him in custody yet.

Direct: Why did they delay reporting the fire?

Indirect: We wondered why they delayed reporting the fire.

Note: A polite request phrased like a question is often punctuated with a period rather than a question mark. Refer to page 74 for more information.

To End a Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is one that does not require an answer. The reader is merely expected to agree with the idea. Rhetorical questions are usually punctuated with a question mark.

Who wouldn't be scared in a situation like that?

Why would anyone try to commit suicide that way?

Rhetorical questions are sometimes punctuated with an exclamation point instead of a question mark for emphasis.

Isn't it incredible that anyone could survive that crash!

Other Marks of Punctuation

To End a Sentence Spoken with Rising Intonation

A sentence phrased like a statement, but spoken with the rising intonation of a question, is punctuated with a question mark.

You think I killed her?

Angelo raised the 35-foot extension ladder by himself?

Use a question mark after a rhetorical question.

To End Elliptical Questions or Questions in Series

An *elliptical* (condensed) question is a word or phrase that is understood to represent a more complete question. Punctuate an elliptical question with a question mark.

The chief says you plan to retire. When? (*When do you plan to retire?*)

Was there really an earthquake this morning? What time? How strong? (*What time did it occur? How strong was it?*)

Who wouldn't be scared?

Questions in series are another form of elliptical question. However, unlike the examples given above, questions in series can be combined into one question. (Questions in series may start with either a capital letter or a lowercase letter. Many experts consider both options acceptable.)

A series: Is the pain sharp? dull? crushing?
One question: Is the pain sharp, dull, or crushing?



To Punctuate Questions Within Other Sentences

When questions are incorporated into other sentences, it can be a little more difficult to determine the appropriate punctuation.

Short direct questions

There are two scenarios we need to look at. The first scenario involves a short direct question that falls either *within the sentence* or *at the end of the sentence*. The question is set off from the rest of the sentence by commas. A question mark is placed at the end of the sentence, regardless of where the short question is positioned.

John is going to be all right, *isn't he?*

You do know who the killer is, *don't you?*

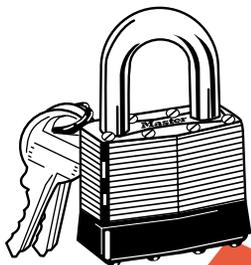
Use a question mark after a sentence spoken with the rising intonation of a question.

You know who the intruder is?

Other Marks of Punctuation

When short direct questions are incorporated into a sentence, punctuate the sentence with a question mark.

You did remember to lock up the evidence, didn't you?



When longer direct questions are incorporated into a sentence, there may be several ways to punctuate the sentence.

You are going to wait until Bill charges the line, *aren't you*, before you go in?

I'll have another chance to be tested on ladders, *won't I*, before the end of probation?

Longer direct questions

The second scenario involves a longer direct question incorporated into a sentence. Punctuation is more confusing with these types of sentences, so let's look at some examples first, then review the rules.

Version 1: The question is, How are we going to reach the victim?

Version 2: Here is the question: How are we going to reach the victim?

Version 3: We are faced with the question of how we are going to reach the victim.

In each of the three examples above, the question of reaching the victim is positioned at the *end* of the sentence. Yet, each example is punctuated differently. In version 1, a comma is used to set off the question because *The question is* does not form a complete sentence. Yet *Here is the question*, in version 2, does form a complete sentence, so it is set off with a colon. Both version 1 and version 2 end with a question mark because they are direct questions. Version 3 is an indirect question rather than a direct question, so the sentence is punctuated with a period instead. Note, also, the way the questions are capitalized in the first two examples.

Version 4: How are we going to reach the victim? is the question.

Version 5: How are we going to reach the victim, is the question.

Version 6: How we are going to reach the victim is the question.

In the last three versions, the question of reaching the victim is positioned at the beginning of the sentence. Most experts say it is acceptable to use either a question mark (version 4) or a comma (version 5) to set off the direct question in this position. Version 6 is an indirect question, so it is punctuated with a period.

If you look at all six versions, you can see that there is one factor that distinguishes the direct questions from the indirect questions. In the *direct* questions, the verb precedes the subject (*are we*). In the *indirect* questions, the subject precedes the verb (*we are*).

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Indicate Doubt or Uncertainty

Question marks are sometimes used to indicate doubt or uncertainty. When they are used in this capacity, they are enclosed in parentheses.

It was in 1980 (?) that we hired our first female firefighter.

The accident was in the southbound (?) lanes, about one block north of the freeway.

This technique should be used sparingly, particularly when writing reports or other documents that may be used in court someday. You need to be as accurate as possible in your writing. If you are truly uncertain about a particular detail, you may either need to leave it out of your document or rephrase the sentence: *I believe it was in 1980 that we hired our first female firefighter.* This sentence is far less likely to hurt your credibility than the previous version.

Question Marks with Quotation Marks

Placement of the question mark relative to quotation marks depends on how the question mark is used. If the question mark is part of the quoted material, it goes inside the quotation marks. If not, it goes outside.

“Do you remember what happened?” the paramedic asked.

She grabbed my hand and asked, “Am I going to die?”

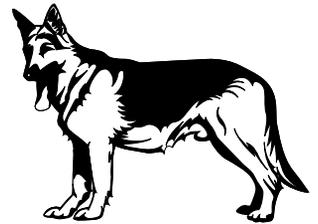
Did you hear who said, “I know who the rapist is”?

Is it true that she said, “I’m going to kill him”?

Refer to pages 111-113 for more information on how to use quotation marks with other punctuation marks.

If the question mark is part of the quoted material, it goes inside the quotation marks. If not, it goes outside.

*They asked,
“Do you have a
canine unit?”*



*Who said,
“I want to pet
the dog”?*

Other Marks of Punctuation

Use an exclamation point to express strong emotion, to indicate a cry of distress, or to give a forceful command.



***Please!
Somebody come
help me!***

Exclamation Points (!)

The exclamation point is used to express strong emotion, to indicate a cry of distress, or to give a forceful command.

To End Emphatic Interjections or Statements

Use an exclamation point to express strong emotions, such as surprise, disbelief, and anger, or to indicate a cry of distress.

We're going to crash!

No! Don't shoot!

Help!

Less emphatic statements or interjections should have commas or periods instead. Do not use an exclamation point when another punctuation mark will suffice. Use it when you need to show additional emphasis.

No, I didn't see any other victims.

It was a great rescue.

To End Emphatic Commands

Use an exclamation point after an emphatic command.

Stop, or I'll shoot!

Bring that backboard over here now!

Once again, use the exclamation point sparingly. If a period will do the trick, use a period instead. Reserve the exclamation point for times when you really want to show urgency or emphasis.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Exclamation Points in Place of Question Marks

An exclamation point may be used in place of a question mark depending on the degree of emotion you are trying to convey.

Did you see that!

How could you shoot him!

Exclamation Points with Quotation Marks

Placement of the exclamation point relative to quotation marks depends on how the exclamation point is used. If the exclamation point is part of the quoted material, it goes inside the quotation mark; if not, it goes outside.

"It's a bomb!" he shouted as he turned to run.

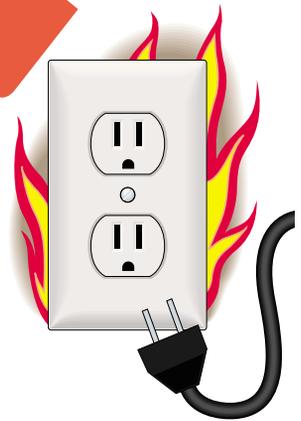
The box is labeled "ANFO"!

Exclamation Points in Moderation

Obviously, we see many strong emotions in the emergency response field. We also give and receive a good number of forceful commands. However, don't use these as excuses to put a flood of exclamation points into your writing. Think about the exclamation point as being like an emergency call. Used too often, the exclamation point becomes like repeated false alarms to the same occupancy. Used appropriately, it is like responding to a real emergency where someone definitely needs your help.

Do not use multiple exclamation points (!!!) to insist on greater emphasis. If you really need something to stand out more than it does with just a single exclamation point, try putting it in bold type instead. Or, if the sentence is weak to begin with, try rewriting it to make it more effective.

If the exclamation point is part of the quoted material, it goes inside the quotation marks.



"There's a fire behind the outlet!" Faith shouted.

Other Marks of Punctuation

You can use a semicolon to join two closely related sentences of equal importance.



He thought he could get away with it; he didn't realize that we were prepared for looters.

Semicolons (;)

The semicolon is used to signal a break in thought. It is stronger than a comma, but not as strong as a period. However, it is used more like a period than a comma in most situations.

To Join Two Closely Related Sentences

You can use a semicolon to join two closely related sentences of *equal* importance. (Do not capitalize the first word of the second sentence unless it is the pronoun *I*, a proper noun, or a proper adjective.)

As you read the examples in this section, keep in mind that you don't have to combine two sentences just because they are closely related. Too many semicolons are tedious for the reader. Semicolons are also more characteristic of formal or literary writing, which means that some readers may not be accustomed to them. If your readers don't understand the semicolon, it will be more of a distraction than an aid. The semicolon is a tool, but it is just one of many tools that are available to you. Use it accordingly.

Two sentences with only a semicolon between them

The following examples join two closely related sentences with only a semicolon. The semicolon takes the place of a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, or, nor, so, or yet*).

The driver thought he eluded our officers; he wasn't counting on the roadblock we had set up at the end of town.

The incident commander didn't want to take any chances; he ordered a defensive attack and pulled everyone out of the burning warehouse.

A decade ago, we didn't know much about hazardous materials; today it's a very specialized area in the fire service.

Two sentences joined by a coordinating conjunction

When a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, or, nor, so, or yet*) is used to join two sentences, the sentences are normally separated by a comma. Some experts say you can use a semicolon to provide a stronger pause, but others insist that a semicolon is incorrect. The bottom line is that you can't go wrong using a comma.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Questionable: We know there were witnesses to the hit-and-run accident; *but* we can't find anyone who can give us a good description of the vehicle.

Better: We know there were witnesses to the hit-and-run accident, *but* we can't find anyone who can give us a good description of the vehicle.

The experts are also divided regarding using a semicolon when one or both sentences contain internal commas. Some say the semicolon prevents misreading. Others say a semicolon is incorrect when the sentences are joined by a coordinating conjunction. Writing two separate sentences provides a less controversial solution.

Questionable: We'll need additional rope, webbing, carabiners, and other assorted hardware; *and* I need you to bring me an extra harness as well.

Better: We'll need additional rope, webbing, carabiners, and other assorted hardware. I need you to bring me an extra harness as well.

Two sentences with a transitional word between them

A semicolon can be used to join two sentences where the second one starts with a transitional word or expression. Examples of transitional expressions include *besides*, *consequently*, *furthermore*, *however*, *in addition*, *in fact*, *instead*, *likewise*, *meanwhile*, *nevertheless*, *otherwise*, *that is*, and *therefore*. Joining sentences in this manner helps show the relation between the sentences. It can also prevent a paragraph from becoming too choppy when there are several short sentences in a row.

The accident was not her fault; *however*, she will still be cited for driving with an expired license.

The jury unanimously agreed that he was guilty of murder in the first degree; *furthermore*, they recommended that he receive the death penalty.

Our pre-fire plan indicated that they kept water-reactive materials in the warehouse; *therefore*, we decided to let the building burn and protect the exposures instead.

Most of the time you should use a comma after the transitional word, as shown in the examples above. However, most experts agree that the comma may be omitted after *hence* or *thus*.

Larry was caught drinking and driving; *hence* his license was suspended.

A semicolon can be used to join two sentences where the second one starts with a transitional word or expression.



I don't like to use smoke grenades; however, we may not have much choice.

Other Marks of Punctuation

The semicolon can act as sort of a “super comma” when commas alone would be confusing.



We want to compare classes taught in San Luis Obispo, California; Pueblo, Colorado; and Emittsburg, Maryland.

Explosives contain both an oxidizer and a fuel component in the same formula; *thus* two sides of the fire triangle are already complete.

Two sentences with floating transitional words

A transitional word or expression does not have to be the first word of the second sentence; it may be moved elsewhere.

I took the information from the caller; Brandon, *meanwhile*, began dispatching the appropriate resources.

I'm almost through securing this patient; Kendall could probably use a hand, *however*.

Sentences with words that have been omitted

The following examples also show closely related sentences joined by a semicolon. The second sentence in each example is a little different, *however*, because some words have been intentionally omitted. Commas are used to replace the missing words.

I prefer working on the engine; Gil, on the truck.

Victim number one took a bullet in the chest; number two, in the head.

To Separate Items in a Series

Use a semicolon to separate items in a series if any of the items have commas in them; otherwise, your sentences may be very confusing. Think of the semicolon as sort of a “super comma” when used in this capacity.

We're sending three of our instructors to compare classes taught in San Luis Obispo, California; Pueblo, Colorado; and Emittsburg, Maryland.

Hazardous Materials Technician 1A will be taught by Ed Fleming, Orange County Fire Authority; Kevin Smith, Chino Valley Independent Fire District; and Walter Jukes, Aerojet Fire Service.

Colons (:)

The colon is a punctuation mark used primarily to introduce something. It may introduce a list, a long statement, a quotation, or an explanation. Think of it as sort of a “drumroll” that follows a formal announcement; it signals the reader that something else is coming. The colon is sometimes used to separate things as well.

To Introduce a List

Whether or not you need a colon to introduce a list depends on how that list is presented.

A list following a grammatically complete statement

Use a colon to introduce a list that follows a grammatically complete statement. Do not use a colon if an *incomplete* statement precedes the list.

Color: There are three units housed at this station: an engine, a truck, and a patrol.

No color: This station houses an engine, a truck, and a patrol.

Color: They are missing several things: a computer, a printer, a TV, a VCR, and a stereo system.

No color: They are missing a computer, a printer, a TV, a VCR, and a stereo system.

Color: We recommend smoke detectors for one reason: they save lives. (*a one-item list*)

No color: We recommend smoke detectors because they save lives.

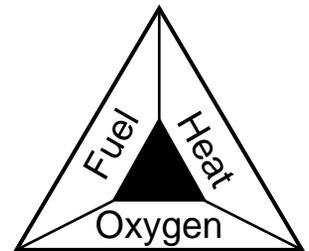
The colon essentially is a substitute for expressions such as *for example*, *namely*, and *that is*. *We recommend smoke detectors for one reason, namely, they save lives.*

Horizontal lists versus vertical lists

Do not place a colon after *to*, *with*, *on*, *by*, *includes*, *including*, *such as*, or similar expressions used in a horizontal list. A colon should only be used after a grammatically complete sentence that could stand alone.

Use a colon only if a complete statement precedes a horizontal list.

The fire triangle consists of three elements: fuel, heat, and oxygen.



Do not use a colon if an incomplete statement precedes the list.

The fire triangle consists of fuel, heat, and oxygen.

Other Marks of Punctuation

A colon may be used to prevent ambiguity.

Two factors impact the degree of risk, flash point and flammable range.
(ambiguous)



Two factors impact the degree of risk: flash point and flammable range.
(clear)

Our orders are *to* search the room, preserve any evidence that might prove useful, and secure the scene until Vince gets here.

However, a colon is appropriate if these same items are presented in a vertical list. The colon does not have to be preceded by a complete sentence. (Refer to pages 549-554 for more information on punctuating lists.)

Our orders are to:

- Search the room,
- Preserve any evidence that might prove useful, and
- Secure the scene until Vince gets here.

To prevent ambiguity

Colons are sometimes used to prevent ambiguity. The first example below can be misunderstood to mean that there are two factors, yet to be named, that affect degree of risk, flash point, and flammable range. In the second sentence, the colon makes it clear that flash point and flammable range *are* the two factors that play a big role in the degree of risk. (A dash could also be used for this purpose.)

Unclear. Two factors play a big role in the degree of risk, flash point and flammable range.

Clear. Two factors play a big role in the degree of risk: flash point and flammable range.

To Introduce Statements, Quotations, and So On

Colons are frequently used to introduce statements, quotations, questions, notes, warnings, and other announcements. There are, however, other punctuation marks that may sometimes be used for the same purpose. In some cases, the rules are clear; in others, they are not so clear.

(Note: Although the experts do not fully agree on whether or not to capitalize the first word after a colon, the majority of them do favor capitalization when the colon is followed by a complete statement, a quotation, a rule, or a principle.)

A long statement

Use a colon to introduce a long statement. A statement is a verbal or written declaration or assertion.

Other Marks of Punctuation

My feeling on the subject is this: Before firefighters go on the line, they must complete an eight-, ten-, or twelve-week academy, depending on where they are trained. In order to successfully complete the academy, they must be able to demonstrate proficiency in all the basic skills. On the other hand, we are certifying Hazardous Materials Technicians after only *four* weeks of training. At the end of those four weeks, all they have had is *an exposure* to the skills they may be required to perform in the field. They are not proficient in those skills. Yet, the risks at a haz mat incident may be just as great, if not more so, as they are at a fire. I believe that we must redesign the curriculum to include some means of evaluating students' proficiency in the basic skills.

A quotation

Both colons and commas may be used before quotations. (A quotation reports what someone else has said or written.) The trick is to determine which punctuation mark is more appropriate.

Many experts say that a colon should be used before long or formal quotations. Some define a long quotation as one that contains one or more *sentences*. Others define a long quotation as one that contains one or more *paragraphs*. However, what separates a *formal* quotation from an *informal* one is not clearly spelled out. Most experts avoid giving specific guidelines.

The following quotation comes from an OSHA regulation. Since OSHA regulations are rather formal by nature, it is apparent that a colon is more appropriate than a comma. A quotation from a policy manual is another example of something that warrants a colon.

29 CFR 1910.146 (Permit Required Confined Spaces), Section (k)(1)(iii) states: "Each member of the rescue service shall practice making permit space rescues at least once every 12 months. . . ."

The *quotation* above was enclosed in quotation marks, unlike the earlier *statement* regarding haz mat training. However, an alternate way of presenting the quotation is to indent the quoted material as shown below. Indenting takes the place of quotation marks.

29 CFR 1910.146 (Permit Required Confined Spaces), Section (k)(1)(iii) states:

Each member of the rescue service shall practice making permit space rescues at least once every 12 months. . . .

Use a colon to introduce a long statement—a verbal or written declaration or assertion.



My feeling on the subject is this: Before firefighters. . . .

Other Marks of Punctuation

The type and construction of the overall sentence determines whether you need a colon or a comma to introduce a question.

This is my concern: Is it something we can safely deal with, or do we need the Haz Mat Team?



The question is, How do we best keep the gasoline from running into the storm drain?

If you are quoting a *short* statement, the construction of the sentence will determine the appropriate punctuation. Use a colon if the quotation follows a grammatically complete statement. Otherwise, use a comma.

Colon: McGruff says this: "Take a bite out of crime."

Comma: McGruff says, "Take a bite out of crime."

Colon: The investigator issued the following statement: "We have confirmed the cause to be arson."

Comma: The investigator said, "We have confirmed the cause to be arson."

See pages 104-107 for more information on punctuating quotations.

Questions

Both colons and commas may be used to introduce questions. The dilemma is trying to determine which punctuation mark is most appropriate.

A colon is used after a grammatically complete introductory statement that announces the question to follow.

This is my concern: What are we going to do if we cannot evacuate everyone from the upper floors?

Here's the next question: What's going to happen if Shawn doesn't complete the drug rehab program?

However, if the introduction does not form a complete statement, use a comma instead.

The question is, What started the fire?

The problem is, How do we take him out without endangering any of the hostages?

Notes, warnings, and announcements

Use a colon to introduce notes, warnings, and announcements.

Note: Turn to page 73 for more information.

Caution: Eye protection needed beyond this point.

For Sale: 1949 Kenworth fire engine.

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Introduce an Explanation

A colon is occasionally used to separate one clause from another when the second clause explains or amplifies the first. Notice in the examples below how the second clause ties back to a particular word (the italicized word) in the first clause.

The paramedics had sound *justification* to hesitate: they had neither the training nor the protective equipment to effect a rescue from a toxic environment.

Our *goal* is a simple one: we want to protect lives, the environment, and property.

Jessica had good *reason* to be scared: her baby brother was choking and she didn't know what to do.

Use a semicolon rather than a colon when a transitional expression links the clauses or when the second clause does not explain or amplify the first one. Compare the three examples below.

Colon: Drew's *motive* for the shooting is clear: he was afraid his boss would find out he had been embezzling from the company.

Semicolon: Drew's *motive* for the shooting is clear; *in short*, he was afraid his boss would find out he had been embezzling from the company.

Semicolon: Drew's *motive* for the shooting is clear; we just need to be able to prove it in court.

Words of warning about this usage of the colon

Most readers are not accustomed to seeing colons used in this manner, so a colon can look awkward or grammatically incorrect to the readers. Many writers are also unaccustomed to using colons this way, so they may use colons where another mark of punctuation would be more appropriate.

When in doubt, find another way. Either write two separate sentences or combine the sentences, making one subordinate to the other: *Jessica was scared because her baby brother was choking and she didn't know what to do.*

Experts are sharply divided on the question of whether the first word of the second clause should be capitalized following this usage of the colon. The bottom line seems to be that you can follow your own preference as long as you are consistent.

A colon may be used to separate one sentence from another when the second sentence explains or amplifies the first.



Jessica had a good reason to be scared: her baby brother was choking and she didn't know what to do.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Colons are often used when reporting time.

The fire was discovered at 7:30 p.m.



Use colons to separate numbers and letters in extinguisher ratings.

Please install a 2-A:10-B:C extinguisher.

To Punctuate Elements In Correspondence

A colon is used as part of a formal salutation in a business letter.

Dear Chief Bristow:

To Whom It May Concern:

Colon are used in memos as well.

To: Jean Hardwicke

From: Linda Reinhardt

Colon are also used to identify carbon-copy recipients and to separating the initials of the person who wrote or dictated the letter from the initials of the person who typed the letter.

cc: Aidan Gough

JML:cdg

To Separate Other Items

Use colons to separate hours, minutes, and seconds when reporting time in the standard format. Do not use colons when using military time.

We received the first phone at 2:34 a.m. (or 0234 hours)

The earthquake struck at exactly 5:23:17 p.m.

Use a colon to separate numbers in a ratio.

Perform four cycles of compressions and breaths (15:2).

Liquid nitrogen has a vapor expansion ratio of 696:1.

The NFPA standard on portable fire extinguishers, *NFPA 10*, suggests using colons to separate numbers and letters in extinguisher ratings.

You need to install a 2-A:10-B:C extinguisher in the lobby.

Use a colon between titles and subtitles.

Hazardous Materials: Managing the Incident

Apostrophes (')

The apostrophe has three main functions: to indicate letters or numbers that have been omitted in the forming of contractions, to show possession, and to form some plurals.

To Form Contractions

Contractions may be used for ease of reading, for effect, or simply to squeeze more information into a limited space.

Contractions formed by condensing two words

Most contractions are formed by condensing two words into one. One or more letters are removed from the original words, and an apostrophe is added to take their place. The following are some common contractions.

I'd	you'd	they'd	he'd	here's	isn't	couldn't
I'll	you'll	they'll	he'll	there's	aren't	shouldn't
I'm	you're	they're	he's	where's	don't	wouldn't
I've	you've	they've	she'd	what's	doesn't	won't
it'll	we'd	we're	she'll	who'll	didn't	weren't
it's	we'll	we've	she's	who's	can't	let's

Many experts say contractions are appropriate only for informal writing and speech, not for formal writing. However, if words such as *it is*, *do not*, or *let us* make a sentence stiff, overly formal, or difficult to read, it may be appropriate to substitute *it's*, *don't*, or *let's*. Used in moderation, contractions can be an effective tool.

Avoid nonstandard contractions. The first example below is confusing because most readers will anticipate that *dog's* is being used in the possessive sense and will be expecting you to say something about the dog's injured nose, paw, or whatever.

Confusing. The *dog's* injured.

Clear. The *dog is* injured.

Do not confuse contractions and possessive pronouns.

<u>Contraction</u>	<u>Possessive Pronoun</u>
it's	its
they're	their
who's	whose
you're	your

Apostrophes are used to form contractions.

You've had too much to drink. You shouldn't be driving.



We'll take you home.

Other Marks of Punctuation

One of the most common mistakes writers make is to confuse *its* and *it's*

***Its* is the possessive form.**

The car landed on its roof.



It's* is the contraction of *it is

It's (it is) going to be difficult to extricate the victim.

Its and *it's* are often confusing because adding 's usually indicates the possessive form of a word. The opposite is true with the word *it*. *Its* is the possessive form of *it*, whereas *it's* is the contraction of *it is*. One of the most frequent mistakes made in writing is to confuse *its* for *it's* and vice versa. However, it's it's easy to determine which word is correct by substituting *it is* into your sentence. If *it is* makes sense, use *it's*. If not, use *its*.

Possessive: The car landed on *its* roof.

Contraction: *It's* (it is) going to be difficult to extricate her.

Contractions formed by condensing a single word

Sometimes contractions are formed by omitting a letter or letters from a single word. This may be done to indicate slang or dialect. Once again, the apostrophe takes the place of the missing letter(s).

Original Word	Contraction
Madam	Ma'am
never	ne'er
doing	doin'
because	'cause

Do not use an apostrophe with words that are in common use: *chute* (parachute), *con* (convict), *copter* (helicopter), *phone* (telephone), *photo* (photograph), *exam* (examination). These are considered words in their own right.

The word ain't

The word *ain't* is used most often to mean *am not*, *are not*, or *is not*. Nonstandard uses of the word also include *have not*, *has not*, *do not*, *does not*, and *did not*. Experts recommend against using the word *ain't* in formal writing. However, it's a colorful word that can sometimes add flavor or emphasis to informal writing.

Ain't that the truth!

Tell me it ain't so.

Contractions with numbers

Contractions are sometimes used with numbers (usually dates).

The Quake of '89 was centered less than 30 miles from here.

He was our chief from '80 to '92.

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Show Possession - Basic Principles

An apostrophe is used to show possession with all but the personal pronouns. The trick is determining whether to add just an apostrophe (') or an apostrophe plus s ('s).

Indefinite pronouns

Add an apostrophe plus s ('s) to indicate the possessive form of the indefinite pronouns.

Everyone's blood tests came back normal.

We need to look out for *each other's* safety.

Singular and plural nouns not ending in s

When singular or plural nouns (including acronyms) do not end in s, add an apostrophe plus s ('s).

The *man's* chest is bruised.

Adam's gun was stolen.

What is *OSHA's* phone number?

The *children's* father got them out of the house safely.

Exceptions are sometimes made for words ending in an s sound, particularly when followed by a word that begins with the letter s: *for convenience's sake, for appearance's sake*. These words are often written with an apostrophe only.

Plural nouns ending in s

Plural nouns ending in s require only an apostrophe (') at the end to indicate possession.

The jury was convinced by the *witnesses'* testimony.

We were able to revive the *Andersons'* baby.

The *girls'* parents have to be notified of the accident. (*refers to two or more girls*)

The *pilots'* quick thinking prevented a midair collision. (*refers to two pilots*)

Add an apostrophe plus s ('s) to indefinite pronouns and to singular or plural nouns that do not end in s.

Only one suspect's fingerprints were found on the murder weapon.



Add only an apostrophe to plural nouns ending in s.

Both suspects' fingerprints were found in the room.

Other Marks of Punctuation

The experts are divided on whether to use an apostrophe plus *s* ('s) or an apostrophe alone (') after singular nouns ending in *s*.

Pick the style that works best for you.

The bus's brakes failed.



The bus' brakes failed.

Singular nouns ending in

The experts are very much divided on whether to use an apostrophe plus *s* ('s) or an apostrophe alone (') after *singular* nouns that end in *s*.

The magnifying *glass's* (or *glass*) handle was broken.

The crashed occurred when the *bus's* (or *bus*) brakes failed.

Charles's (or *Charles*) breathing was very shallow.

There seem to be three *schools* of thought on this issue. Some experts prefer adding just an apostrophe (') to eliminate the awkward *s's* or *ss's* at the end of a word. Others insist that an apostrophe plus *s* ('s) is correct in all situations except when the addition of an 's produces an awkward sound or a visually odd spelling. Thus you would write *bus's brakes* and *Charles's breathing*, but *Achilles' heel* and *for old times' sake* (not *Achilles's* or *times's*).

Lastly, some experts say that you should punctuate the words the way you pronounce them. For example, if you were talking about the testimony provided by one witness, the possessive form of *witness* would be pronounced as three syllables; hence you would write *the witness's testimony* rather than *the witness' testimony*.

Once again, decide which system works for you and use it consistently. Remember that the bottom line is to make sure your readers will understand what you are trying to say.

Inanimate objects

Some experts insist that because inanimate objects can't possess anything, you should not use a possessive form when referring to inanimate objects. Most, however, argue that the alternative results in unnecessary wordiness. In reality, you need to determine what makes the most sense in any given sentence. It will vary depending on the situation.

Awkward: We need to reload *the hose of Engine 3*.

Better: We need to reload *Engine 3's hose*.

Awkward: It took several hours to rescue the child from *the well's bottom*.

Better: It took several hours to rescue the child from *the bottom of the well*.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Words expressing time and distance

Sometimes there is no actual possession or ownership involved, but the expression still requires the possessive form of a noun.

Try to keep him at *arm's length*.

We'll have this case wrapped up in *two week's time*.

He had *fifteen years' experience* as a captain. (or *fifteen years of experience*)

Compound words

When you have a compound word, add the apostrophe plus *s* (*'s*) to the last word only.

My *sister-in-law's* father is a police officer.

The *jack-o'-lantern's* candle nearly ignited her costume.

Two or more—individual ownership

When two or more people have individual ownership, add the apostrophe plus *s* (*'s*) to each name.

Carol's and *Sally's* condos were robbed by the same man.

The *driver's* and the *passenger's* injuries were not serious.

Two or more—joint ownership or association

When two or more people or things share ownership or association, add the apostrophe plus *s* (*'s*) to the last name only.

Brad and *Rick's* assignment was to search the remaining apartments for victims.

Drug and *alcohol's* effects can be quite deadly.

When you use a possessive expression, such as *your proposal*, add an apostrophe plus *s* to the noun (*chief's*) also. This construction can be awkward, however. It is often better to rewrite the sentence.

Awkward: The *chief's* and *your* proposal is a sound one.

Better: *Your* proposal is a sound one.

Or: The proposal I received from you and your chief is a sound one.

Individual ownership:
add *'s* to each name.

Stacy's and Bonnie's apartments were robbed last week.



Joint ownership:
add *'s* to the last name only.

Stacy and Bonnie's apartment was robbed last week.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Referring to the possessive of a possessive can create awkward sentences.

A friend of my brother's house burned down when we were younger.
(awkward)



My brother's friend's house burned down when we were younger.
(awkward)

My brother had a friend whose house burned down when we were younger.
(better)

Possessive Personal Pronouns: No Apostrophe

Do not use an apostrophe with the possessive form of personal pronouns. They already indicate possession.

Whose helmet is this?

This is *my* badge. *Yours* is in *your* locker.

Possessive Phrases with the Word *of*

Follow the guidelines already presented with possessive phrases formed with the word *of*.

The gun belongs to a friend of *Greg's*. (*apostrophe*)

The gun belongs to a friend of *his*. (*no apostrophe*)

Caution: Watch out for awkward sentences

When you refer to the possessive of a possessive, be careful not to create an awkward sentence. Look at the following example.

A friend of my brother's house burned down years ago.

One might misread this sentence to mean that my brother's house had a friend and it was the friend that burned down. Of course, that doesn't make sense. However, the sentence is awkward enough to momentarily confuse readers, forcing them to reread the sentence. Let's see what we can do to improve it.

My brother's friend's house burned down years ago.

This sentence is better, but experts frown on double possessives because they can also be confusing. Let's try something else.

The house of one of my brother's friends burned down years ago.

I don't care for that one either. Let's try one more.

My brother had a friend whose house burned down years ago.

Sometimes you need to rewrite a sentence several times before you find what works best.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Possessives Before *ing* Verbs Serving as Nouns

An *-ing* verb that serves as a noun is called a *gerund*. A possessive noun placed before a gerund should also be punctuated with an apostrophe.

The *child's crying* made the situation more tense.

Neil's report writing has improved over the last year.

Kim was concerned about her *husband's drinking*.

If this creates an awkward sentence, try rewording it.

Awkward: We just heard about Steve's having been arrested for stealing.

Better: We just heard that Steve had been arrested for stealing.

Don't confuse possessives with ordinary plurals. Possessive nouns need apostrophes; plural nouns do not.

Don't Confuse Possessives with Ordinary Plurals

Don't confuse the possessive form with ordinary plurals. Ordinary plurals do not have apostrophes.

Plural: The *Smiths* were not injured.

Possessive: The *Smiths'* car was damaged, however.

Plural: The *boys* were caught shoplifting.

Possessive: We found the stolen merchandise in the *boys'* backpacks.

The boys were stealing.
(plural)



We found the merchandise in the boys' backpacks.
(possessive)

Descriptive Versus Possessive: No Apostrophe

Do not use an apostrophe when a word is used in a descriptive sense rather than a possessive sense. Distinguishing between the two can be difficult, and even the experts do not always agree. However, the following are some guidelines that may help.

Descriptive words ending in s

Many words ending in *s* are adjectives, not possessives; they describe *what type*. A *news release* describes what kind of press release. A *savings account* describes what type of bank account.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Use an apostrophe if the word is used in the possessive sense.

***Sheriff's Department* is possessive.**



Do not use an apostrophe if the word is used in a descriptive sense.

***Ladies Auxiliary* is descriptive.**

Unfortunately, you cannot apply this logic to every situation. You may need a good dictionary to determine whether or not an apostrophe is required. Even then, conventions are constantly changing. For example, *traveler's checks* is commonly written with an apostrophe. Yet some people consider it to be descriptive because it describes what kind of check; therefore, they write it as *travelers checks* instead. When in doubt, check your dictionary.

Names of organizations

Names of organizations can also be confusing. If you are lucky, you may be able to find the answer in your dictionary. For example, a standard dictionary lists *Ladies Auxiliary*. Yet it has no listing for things like *County Chiefs Association* or *Battered Women's Shelter*.

In general, you should add an apostrophe plus *s* ('*s*) if the term is either a singular possessive noun or an irregular plural noun (one that is not formed by adding *s* or *es* as most plurals are).

State Fire *Marshal's* Office (*singular possessive*)
 County *Sheriff's* Department (*singular possessive*)
 Battered *Women's* Shelter (*irregular plural*)
Children's Hospital (*irregular plural*)

In general, you should *not* use an apostrophe if the term is a regular plural noun.

County *Chiefs* Association (*regular plural*)
Ladies Auxiliary (*regular plural*)

One way to help remember this is to reverse the order of the words. You would refer to a *shelter for battered women* (not *womens*), so when you do add the *s*, you need to add an apostrophe as well. On the other hand, an *association for county chiefs* already contains an *s*; therefore, it is used in the descriptive sense rather than the possessive sense. The apostrophe is not required.

Remember, however, that these are guidelines, not hard and fast rules. People do have some flexibility in determining how they will name their organizations or even the products that they produce. Some names will conform with the guidelines: *Chemical Manufacturers Association*, *Underwriters Laboratories Inc.*, *California Men's Colony*. Other names may not; I have seen *County Fire Chiefs' Association* before. Follow the organization's preference if you know it. When in doubt, ask.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Special Problems in Forming Possessives

This page addresses other special problems not yet covered.

Names

Be careful when forming the possessive of names ending in *s*. Make sure you place the apostrophe in the right location.

Captain *Winters'* badge belongs to Captain *Winters*.

Captain *Winter's* badge belongs to Captain *Winter*.

If a name ends with an abbreviation or a number, add the apostrophe plus *s* (*'s*) to the end of the complete name.

When is Howard Hoff Jr.'s retirement party?

What was Joe Williams III's hire date?

Abbreviations

The possessives of abbreviations are formed according to the same basic rules for forming the possessive of singular and plural nouns. Add an apostrophe plus *s* (*'s*) to singular abbreviations. Add only an apostrophe (*'*) to plural abbreviations.

We awaited the *M.D.'s diagnosis* / *M.D.s' diagnoses*.

Holidays

There is a lot of variety when it comes to holidays. Some are singular possessive, some are plural possessive, and others are merely plural. When in doubt, consult a good dictionary or calendar.

Mother's Day	Presidents' Day	Veterans Day
New Year's Day	April Fools' Day	Armed Forces Day

Words or phrases that are italicized or underlined

An apostrophe plus *s* (*'s*) is not considered part of a word or phrase that is italicized, underlined, or enclosed in quotation marks.

The *1996 North American Emergency Response Guidebook's* primary purpose. . . .

The 1996 North American Emergency Response Guidebook's primary purpose. . . .

**Be careful
when forming
the possessive of
names ending
in *s*.**

**Make sure
you place the
apostrophe in
the right
location.**

***Captain Winters'
badge belongs to
Captain Winters.***



***Captain Winter's
badge belongs to
Captain Winter.***

Other Marks of Punctuation

The experts are often divided on using apostrophes to form plurals of capital letters, acronyms, and abbreviations. However, the bottom line must be clarity.



Either EMTs or EMT's may be acceptable. However, EMT's may be confused with the possessive.

To Form Some Plurals

Unfortunately, there is considerable disagreement among the experts when it comes to using apostrophes to form the plurals of letters, numbers, and acronyms.

Plurals of individual letters and acronyms

Most experts agree that you should use an apostrophe plus *s* (*'s*) to form the plurals of uncapitalized letters and abbreviations.

We need to make sure we dot all our *i*'s and cross all our *t*'s on this contract.

You had better mind your *p*'s and *q*'s.

However, the experts do not agree on how to form the plurals of capital letters, acronyms, and abbreviations. Some maintain that you should always use an apostrophe to prevent misreading. Others say that the apostrophe is functionally unnecessary and that you should omit the apostrophe, except in situations that might otherwise be confusing.

He got *As* (or *A's*) on all his quizzes in the academy. (*Since the meaning is clear both with or without the apostrophe, you could choose either option.*)

If the victim is unconscious, check for *ABCs* (or *ABC's*). (*Since the meaning is clear both with or without the apostrophe, you could choose either option.*)

The Loma Prieta earthquake is the one that postponed Game 3 of the World Series between the San Francisco Giants and the Oakland *A's*. (*An apostrophe is needed in this situation because this is the team's name.*)

Realize that the apostrophe itself can sometimes cause confusion. An apostrophe generally signals the reader that the word is possessive (providing, of course, that it's not a contraction) and that the possession will be named next. By omitting the apostrophe from the plural form, you avoid giving the reader mixed signals.

Plural: The *EMTs* want more hands-on training.
Possessive: The *EMT's* quick thinking saved her life.

Plural: The *BLEVEs* occurred shortly after our arrival.
Possessive: The *BLEVE's* impact could be felt for miles.

Some abbreviations may be written either with or without periods

Other Marks of Punctuation

(for example, *M.D.* or *MD*). Given that the experts do not agree on the use of periods or apostrophes, you could conceivably write *M.D.s*, *M.D.'s*, *MDs* or *MD's*. Once again, be consistent which the style you choose.

Plurals of words and numbers

The experts also do not agree on whether apostrophes are needed to form the plurals of words and numbers. The majority favor omitting the apostrophe because it is functionally unnecessary. However, others insist on using apostrophes.

Count off by *threes* (or *three's*).

Let's evaluate the *pros and cons* (or *pro's and con's*) first.

I don't want to hear any *ifs, ands, or buts* (or *if's, and's, or but's*) about it.

Figure 8s (or *Figure 8's*) are strong knots.

We worked several protests in the *1960s* (or *1960's*).

Most experts agree that you should use an apostrophe if adding the *s* alone may cause misreading or create a word that is unfamiliar. However, if you have difficulty determining whether the word would be better understood with the apostrophe or without it, you should probably rewrite the sentence.

Acceptable: I keep getting my *whichs* and *thats* mixed up.

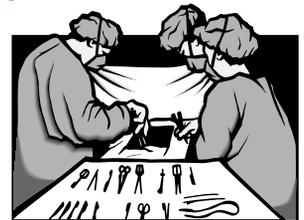
Acceptable: I keep getting my *which's* and *that's* mixed up.

Better: I have difficulty remembering when to use *which* and when to use *that*.

The plurals of do and don't

The plural of *don't* is *don'ts*; that one is easy. The plural of *do* can be written either as *do's* or as *dos*. Pick the form that works for you, and use it consistently.

Most experts favor omitting the apostrophe in plurals of words and numbers because the apostrophe is functionally unnecessary.



I weighed all the pros and cons before deciding on surgery.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Use quotation marks for a *direct* quotation, but not for an *indirect* one.

“The patient is a 36-year-old female who was beaten by her husband,” Michelle said. (direct quote)



The dispatcher warned us that the scene was not secure. (indirect quote)

Quotation Marks (“ ”) or (‘ ’)

Quotation marks are primarily used to enclose the exact words of a speaker or another writer. They are also used to enclose titles and words that are used in a special sense. The quotation marks may be double (“ ”) or single (‘ ’), depending on how they are used. And, with one exception, they are always used in pairs. Let’s start by looking at how quotation marks are used. Then we’ll take a closer look at how to use them with other punctuation marks.

To Enclose Quotations

While most quotations are enclosed in quotation marks, the rules vary, depending on the type of quotation.

Direct quotations versus indirect quotations

Use quotation marks around *direct* quotations—ones that quote the exact words that someone else has said or written. Do not use quotation marks around *indirect* quotations—ones that merely report someone else’s words.

Direct: The captain said, “Take another look in the attic to make sure the fire is completely out.”

Indirect: The captain said to take another look in the attic to make sure the fire is completely out.

Direct: “Lie down on the ground and put your hands over your head,” the officer ordered.

Indirect: The officer ordered him to lie down on the ground and put his hands over his head.

Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation, as in the examples above. However, if a sentence is divided into two parts by expressions such as *he said* or *she replied*, the second part of the divided sentence begins with a lowercase letter.

“Your husband is still alive,” the doctor told her, “*but* he is in serious condition.”

The second part of a divided sentence begins with a capital letter only if the first word is the pronoun *I*, a proper name, or a proper adjective.

“If he dies,” she sobbed, “*I* will never forgive myself.”

Other Marks of Punctuation

Occasionally the material you are quoting from may contain an error of some kind. Rather than correct the error, you can include it as is with the notation [*sic*]*—*in brackets*—*immediately afterwards. This signifies that you recognize it is an error, but you are quoting verbatim. Brackets are also used to insert an explanation directly into a quotation. (See pages 132-133 for more information.)

Unspoken thoughts

Unspoken thoughts written in quotation form should be enclosed in quotation marks, just as if they were stated.

“We’re in big trouble now,” she thought to herself as she saw the officers approaching.

“I can’t give up!” Ian told himself as he pushed further into the smoke and heat. “I’ve got to find that baby!”

Partial quotations

There are times you may need to quote individual words or phrases from another source rather than quote the entire text. The correct way to punctuate these partial quotes is to put the quotation marks around only the exact words being quoted. Do not put quotation marks around any rearrangement of the words.

Full quote. Jason said, “Dale is an accident waiting to happen.”

Partial quote. Jason described Dale as “an accident waiting to happen.”

Full quote. “Alex has been despondent since his wife’s death,” Diane revealed.

Partial quote. Alex’s sister described him as “despondent” since his wife’s death.

The words yes and no

The words *yes* and *no* are not enclosed in quotation marks unless they are (or will be) the exact words spoken.

If you suspect that a patient may have a cervical spine injury, avoid asking questions that require a yes-or-no answer. Patients will tend to nod or shake their heads in response.

You have the right to say no if you believe a superior officer is asking you to do something that is unsafe.

When quoting the entire text, use quotation marks around the full quote.

“Alex has been despondent since his wife’s death,” Diane revealed.



But enclose only the exact words being quoted in a partial quote.

Alex’s sister described him as “despondent” since his wife’s death.

Other Marks of Punctuation

When you have a quotation within a quotation, the inner set of quotation marks is single (' ').



“If you park in a spot marked ‘Handicapped,’ you are going to get a ticket,” Kurt warned him.

When I asked if she had been drinking before the accident, she suddenly looked away and said “No.”

You already asked me if I had a tetanus shot in the last five years and I said “Yes.”

Quotations within a quotation

When you have a quotation within a quotation, the outer set of quotation marks is double (“ ”), while the inner set of quotation marks is single (‘ ’).

Andy frowned at Rob in dismay. “Didn’t you see the sign that says ‘No Smoking’? The sign is there for a reason,” he scolded.

“You’ll never believe it!” Kathy smiled. “The chief said, ‘I want you to be our next training officer.’”

When single and double quotation marks are positioned next to each other, do not put a space between them. (Use ”, not ’ ”.)

In the rare event that you might have a quotation within a quotation within a quotation—three quotations—the innermost set is double again. However, this becomes confusing for readers. If possible, rephrase the sentence to avoid using three sets of quotation marks.

Acceptable. The witness said, “I overheard Mr. Burton say, ‘Cover up anything that says “toxic.””

Better. The witness said that she overheard Mr. Burton say, ‘Cover up anything that says ‘toxic.’”

Direct quotations of two or more paragraphs

If you have a quotation that spans more than one paragraph, the rules change a little. Each paragraph still *begins* with a quotation mark. However, only the *last* paragraph *ends* with a quotation mark. All the others in between do not. When you omit the quotation mark, you signal readers that the quotation continues to the next paragraph. This is the one exception to the rule that quotation marks always come in pairs.

“Flammable liquids are the most common type of hazardous material encountered by emergency response personnel,” Paul reminded the class. “It is important to understand the properties of flammable liquids because they can help you predict the degree of danger in a spill.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Flash point is the minimum temperature at which a liquid produces enough vapor to form an ignitable mixture in air. The flame does not continue to burn at the flash point when the source of ignition is removed; it only flashes.

Fire point is the temperature at which enough vapors are now given off to support continuous burning even after the source of ignition has been removed. The fire point is generally just a few degrees above the flash point.”

To Enclose Dialogue

Quotation marks are used to enclose the spoken word in dialogue. Start a new paragraph each time you have a new speaker.

“Can you tell me what happened?” Bruce asked her.

“I was playing basketball,” Jill replied. “I was driving to the basket when Melissa ran into me and knocked me over.”

“Did you lose consciousness?”

“I don’t think so.”

However, if your text contains random quotations from a group, those quotations may go in the same paragraph. Enclose each separate comment in its own set of quotation marks. Do not use one set of quotation marks to enclose all the comments, or it will appear that either one person said everything or that the entire group was talking in unison.

The crowd shouted angrily as the defendant was escorted into the courthouse: “Murderer!” “Animal!” “Give him the death penalty!”

To Emphasize Particular Words or Phrases

There are times when you may want to emphasize particular words or phrases. You can do so with quotation marks or with italics.

Words being defined

Words being defined or clarified are generally italicized; however, some writers prefer to enclose them in quotation marks instead. Technical terms that readers may not be familiar with, for example, should be highlighted and defined the first time they are used in a document. No emphasis is needed for subsequent uses.

When quoting dialogue, start a new paragraph each time you have a new speaker.



“Can you tell me what happened?” Bruce asked.

“I was knocked down while driving to the basket,” Jill replied.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Although terms being defined are generally italicized, they may be enclosed in quotation marks instead.



“Flash point” is the minimum temperature . . . to form an ignitable mixture in air.

Hazardous chemical reactions are often “exothermic,” meaning that they release heat. Exothermic reactions can be extremely dangerous to emergency response personnel.

“Anaphylactic shock” is a severe allergic reaction. Anaphylactic shock can be immediately life-threatening.

Foreign words or phrases

Foreign words or phrases being defined are generally italicized, with the definition set in quotation marks behind them.

The word *peligro* means “danger.”

In the next example, the technical term being used for the first time (*teratogen*) is italicized rather than enclosed in quotation marks, though either option is acceptable. (No emphasis is required for subsequent uses.) Then, the foreign word (*terat*) is italicized, and the definition is enclosed in quotation marks.

The word *teratogen* comes from the Greek word *terat*, meaning “monster.” Teratogens are agents that are capable of causing birth defects in a developing fetus.

Foreign words or phrases that have become an established part of the English language should not be italicized or set in quotation marks. A good dictionary can help you identify such words.

We suspect it’s the work of a serial killer because the modus operandi is very similar in all three cases. (*Modus operandi* comes from Latin.)

We were already en route to a smoke investigation when the dispatcher began receiving multiple calls for an explosion at the same facility. (*En route* comes from French.)

Words being introduced

If you are introducing a word or phrase with terms such as *classified*, *designated*, *endorsed*, *entitled*, *marked*, *labeled*, *named*, *signed*, *the term*, or *the word(s)*, the word or phrase being introduced needs to be identified in some manner. In general, quotation marks are used for this purpose.

Look for the words “UL Listed” on the package.

We called for the Haz Mat Team as soon as we saw that the container was labeled “Corrosive.”

Other Marks of Punctuation

However, if you are introducing the title of a book or magazine, italics may be more appropriate. (See pages 110-111 for more information on titles.)

My first book was entitled *The First Responder's Pocket Guide to Hazardous Materials Emergency Response*.

Words used for a special purpose

Quotation marks can also identify slang expressions, words used out of context, or words used to suggest irony.

They call him the "Candy Man." It means he's a drug dealer.

Cocaine is considered to be an "equal opportunity drug" because of its widespread use among people of all ages, races, and socioeconomic groups.

Casey wanted me to remind everyone that organic peroxides are "similar" to explosives because they can be highly unstable. (*The writer has drawn attention to the way Casey often mispronounces the word similar.*)

Individual letters

Sometimes individual letters are enclosed in quotation marks, though quotation marks are generally omitted where no confusion would result.

If you cover a tourniquet with a blanket, draw a "T" on the patient's forehead to ensure the tourniquet is not overlooked.

Once you have searched a room, draw a large "X" on the door so that others won't repeat your search.

You can often find the origin of a fire simply by looking for a V pattern on the wall.

The signature is a forgery. Look at the g's and k's.

Nicknames

Nicknames are generally set aside in quotation marks, although some writers may use parentheses instead.

Captain Richard "Dino" Tracy will conduct the drill on cliff rescue.

I'll be working with Steve "the Bloke" Franklin next shift.

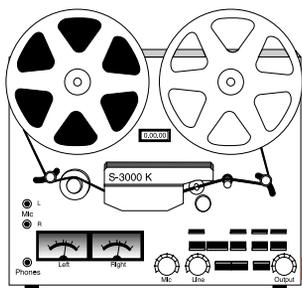
Foreign words that are an established part of the English language do not require special treatment.



We will be en route Code 3 to Valley Medical Center.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Do not use quotation marks around words that should be familiar to your readers when used in a known or normal context.



We planted a bug in his apartment.

Use quotation marks in moderation

Use quotation marks in moderation so they don't become a distraction for your readers. Do not use quotation marks around words or expressions that should be familiar to your readers when those words or expressions are used in a known or normal context. Although they may be slang terms or words of foreign origin, these words or expressions are well established in the English language.

The firebug has struck the same area three weeks in a row. (Firebug *is colloquial for "arsonist."*)

He is such a klutz that he is always getting injured. (Klutz *is slang for "a clumsy, awkward person."* *It is of Yiddish origin.*)

Don't think you can get away with exceeding the posted occupancy load for this building just because you have an in with the fire chief. (*Use of the word in in situations like this is well established and easily understood.*)

Most experts agree that if you use *so-called* before words used to suggest irony, you do not need quotation marks. The phrase *so-called* replaces the quotation marks.

Your *so-called miracle cure* almost killed him.

Her *so-called priceless diamond* was a fake.

To Enclose Titles

Quotation marks are generally used for titles representing *part* of a complete published work, whereas italics or underlining is used for titles of the complete published works themselves. So, for example, the titles of book *chapters* and magazine *articles* would be enclosed in quotation marks. (The titles *Preface*, *Contents*, *Appendix*, and *Index* are not set in quotation marks, however.) The titles of the books and magazines themselves would be italicized or underlined.

The answer can be found in Section 5, "Assessing the Hazards," in *The First Responder's Pocket Guide to Hazardous Materials Emergency Response*.

I found an interesting article entitled "Celebrity Fires" in the June 1981 issue of *Firehouse*.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Quotation marks are also used for titles of manuscripts, reports, essays, short stories, short poems, songs, lectures, and conference themes.

The names of television and radio programs are usually italicized, while the names of individual episodes are generally enclosed in quotation marks. The titles of movies can be either italicized or enclosed in quotation marks. The same is true for the names of plays, operas, symphonies, works of art, ships, and airplanes. The experts often disagree on which style is best, so pick the style that works for you and use it consistently.

Italics or underlining?

Years ago, all titles were identified by underlining. However, it is more common to use italics when working on a computer. Underlining can make type difficult to read. It also draws the reader's attention to the underlined material, away from other information. We don't have this problem when using italics. However, both italics and underlining are acceptable. Decide which style you prefer and use it consistently.

Quotation Marks with Other Punctuation Marks

Over the last few pages, you have seen several examples of how to use quotation marks with other marks of punctuation. However, this section will put all the rules together in one place.

Periods and commas

In the United States, periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks.

"Yes," Sam replied, "we had flames showing on our arrival."

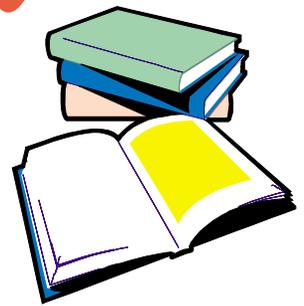
The terms "anhydrous," "glacial," and "fuming" all denote acids in high concentrations.

Your latest article, "Covering Up Police Brutality," contained numerous falsehoods.

The only exception is when a parenthetical source citation follows the quotation at the end of the sentence. In the following example, 163 refers to the page number from which the quote was taken.

In chapter 9, Bill Teie says, "Air tankers are most effective during initial attack" (163).

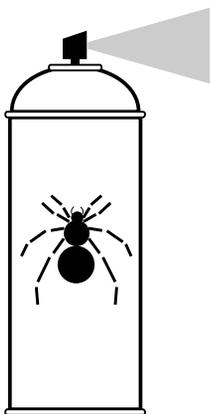
Use quotation marks for chapter titles . . .



. . . and italics or underlining for book titles.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Periods and commas go inside quotation marks.



The label should contain one of three signal words: "caution," "warning," or "danger."

If a sentence ends with an abbreviation that contains periods, the final period marks both the end of the abbreviation and the end of the sentence. However, if there would normally be a comma at the end of the quoted material, use both the period and the comma.

The coroner replied, "The time of death is estimated to be between midnight and 2:30 a.m."

"The call came in at 7:34 p.m.," the dispatcher confirmed.

The commas normally used to set off quoted matter may be omitted when a very short quotation is woven into the sentence or when a short quotation does not form a complete sentence.

He said "Not yet" and waived the officers back.

His coworkers regarded him as "a ticking time bomb" ever since that day.

Note: An apostrophe used to show possession looks the same as a single quotation mark. However, the comma or period always goes after the apostrophe: *This victim's injuries are more critical than any of the other victims'.* (not *victims.*)

Question marks and exclamation points

Question marks and exclamation points go inside quotation marks if they are part of the quoted material. Otherwise, they go outside.

The battalion chief asked, "Has anyone checked the attic?"

Did you say, "My neck hurts"?

"I'll never go to prison!" he shouted at the officers.

In general, you should use only one punctuation mark. If the same punctuation mark is called for to end both the quoted material and the sentence as a whole, put the punctuation mark within the quotation marks. For example, use "?", not "?"?.

Why did you ask her, "Is this your first vaginal delivery?"

If faced with a choice between two different punctuation marks, use the stronger of the two. The exclamation point is the strongest mark of punctuation, followed by the question mark and, finally, the period and the comma.

Can you believe he told his wife "I'll keep a loaded gun in the house if I want to"! (not !"?)

Other Marks of Punctuation

It is possible to have two punctuation marks together (one on either side of the closing quotation mark) if a question mark or an exclamation point is part of a title.

I am outraged by your article “Who’s Bribing Our Police Officers?”!

It is also possible to have two punctuation marks together if the quoted material ends with an abbreviation containing periods.

Did you hear one of the bystanders say, “I’m an M.D.”?

Colons and semicolons

Colons and semicolons go outside the quotation marks.

The captain shouted, “The roof’s about to collapse!”; then he pulled his crew out.

The FBI issued this statement: “We believe it was a terrorist attack. We have evidence to suggest this was the work of a militia group determined to embarrass the government.”

The following are commonly cited effects of “ice”: paranoia, depression, fatigue, seizures, strokes, and psychosis.

Dashes and parentheses

Dashes and parentheses go inside the quotation marks if they are part of the quoted material. Otherwise, they go outside.

The driver cried, “I can’t feel my legs. I can’t feel my—”
(The dash indicates an incomplete or interrupted sentence.)

If the label says “Danger”— *(This sentence breaks off after the quoted material.)*

He said, “If the label says ‘Danger’—” *(Placement of the dash indicates the writer is quoting an interrupted sentence.)*

There are very strict criteria for pronouncing someone “dead on arrival (DOA)” at an accident scene.

They found traces of cocaine (also known as “crack”) in his bloodstream.

Question marks and exclamation points go inside the quotation marks if they are part of the quoted material. Otherwise, they go outside.

***“Is the costume flame-resistant?”
Sheryl asked.***



Did you check the label to make sure it says “flame-resistant”?

Other Marks of Punctuation

The dash is a dramatic mark used to signify a sudden change in thought.

It is also an effective way to show an interrupted or incomplete sentence.



Why didn't you tell me my tail was on—!

Dashes (—)

The dash is used to signify a break or sudden change. It is sometimes used in place of other punctuation marks: commas, periods, parentheses, colons, or semicolons. However, the dash is a dramatic mark. Do not use it for an ordinary pause or stop. Too many dashes become tiresome and annoying for the reader. But, used wisely, the dash can add drama, flair, and interest to your writing.

To Show a Sudden Change in Thought or Tone

Use a dash to show a sudden change in thought or tone. The dash provides more emphasis than a period or semicolon might.

Three people were killed in the accident—of course, the drunk who caused it walked away without a scratch.

This is the third fire—things come in threes, you know—in less than a week.

To Show an Interrupted or Incomplete Sentence

Use a dash to show an interrupted or incomplete sentence. Although ellipses (. . .) are another option, most grammar experts prefer dashes, particularly in situations that are more dramatic. When you use a dash, omit the period, comma, colon, or semicolon that would normally be there.

He swore several times that he'd kill her if ever—it appears he finally made good on his threat.

However, do not omit exclamation points or question marks that would otherwise complete the sentence.

"Captain!" Bob shouted "It isn't safe to—!" Just then, the roof collapsed, and Captain McCluskey disappeared into the darkness.

"Do you want to tell her, or—?" Sarah glanced toward the young woman who was now a widow.

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Set Off Parenthetical Elements

Parenthetical elements are words or groups of words that interrupt the main flow of thought in a sentence, but are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. They are called *parenthetical* because they can (and sometimes do) appear in parentheses. Parenthetical elements are sometimes set off by commas instead, but dashes provide greater emphasis.

It took four of us to handcuff him—even though he wasn't a very big man—because he was so violent from the PCP.

It wasn't a large earthquake—only 5.3 on the Richter scale—but it did extensive damage because the buildings were old and not up to current earthquake codes.

Again, do not overdo the use of dashes. Use dashes when you need more emphasis or when commas or parentheses do not provide sufficient clarity.

To Set Off an Appositive

An *appositive* is a noun or phrase that describes, explains, or re-names another noun or phrase before it. Appositives are normally set off by commas. However, a dash provides more emphasis than a comma. It also provides more clarity in situations where the appositive contains additional commas.

We'll take the most critical victim—the head injury—in the first ambulance.

There was plenty of evidence—the chemicals, empty drums behind the house, stains on the walls and floor, the special glassware, the illegal wiring—to suggest that they may have been operating a clandestine drug lab.

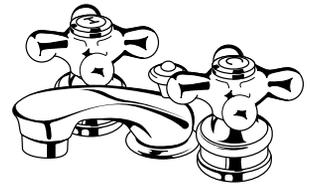
To Emphasize a Single Word

A dash may be used to set off a single word when special emphasis is desired.

Safety—that's our number one priority at any incident.

No matter how many times we conduct these county-wide disaster drills, we seem to have one consistent problem—communications.

Dashes can be used to set off parenthetical elements. Dashes provide more emphasis than commas or parentheses do.



It takes only a brief exposure—less than five seconds—to get a scald burn when the water is that hot.

Other Marks of Punctuation

The dash can be used to set off series (or lists) and explanations.



Armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, grand theft, smuggling—this guy has an arrest record as long as my arm.

To Replace Offensive Words

The dash may be used to replace all or part of an offensive word.

You know it's going to be a good fire when the captain begins his size-up with, "Oh s—! Give me a second alarm!"

"Let's get that son of a b— before he kills anyone else," the sergeant said as he drew his gun.

To Show Hesitation or Faltering Speech

A dash can be used as a pause to show hesitation or faltering speech. (Ellipses can also be used for this purpose.)

"Well—ah—what I'm trying to say is—you know how you told me to be careful when I pulled the monitor out of the compartment. Well—I dropped it."

To Set Off Series or Explanations

A dash can be used to set off an introductory or concluding series or list.

Severe chest pain, nausea, dizziness, an irregular pulse, pale skin color, restlessness, and a sense of impending doom—these are signs that the patient may be having a heart attack.

The entire intersection was filled with emergency vehicles—six fire engines, two aerial trucks, two battalion chiefs, an ambulance, and several police cars.

It can also be used to indicate a concluding explanation.

Several of the bystanders confirmed Mike's story—that the bicyclist was traveling the wrong direction and failed to yield the right-of-way.

To Identify the Source of a Quote

A dash is used after a quotation to identify the source of the quote.

If you ain't the lead dog, the scenery never changes.

—John G. Russell

Ellipses (. . .)

Ellipses are used to indicate omission or to leave something unfinished. Ellipses are formed by three periods (. . .).

To Indicate Omission

Ellipses are most often used to indicate omission of quoted material. The following paragraph is quoted from *NFPA 472: Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents, 1992 Edition*. It is the definition of a first responder at the operational level. We will use this paragraph to show the different ways ellipses might be used.

The original paragraph

“First responders at the operational level are those persons who respond to releases or potential releases of hazardous materials as part of the initial response to the incident for the purpose of protecting nearby persons, the environment, or property. They shall be trained to respond in a defensive fashion to control the release from a safe distance and keep it from spreading.”

The paragraph with omissions

When the ellipses are positioned either at the beginning of a paragraph or in the middle of a sentence, use three periods. Notice that there is one space between each period in the ellipses and one space between the period and any text before or after it. However, there is no space between the quotation mark and ellipses.

“. . . those persons who respond to releases or potential releases . . . for the purpose of protecting nearby persons, the environment, or property. They shall be trained to respond in a defensive fashion to control the release from a safe distance and keep it from spreading.”

When the ellipses complete the end of a sentence, use four periods. Essentially, you are retaining the period from the original sentence. That first period is placed right next to the text with no space. Two spaces are used between the final period of the ellipses and the text that follows. If the sentence comes at the end of a quotation, no space is used between the final period of the ellipses and the closing quotation mark.

Ellipses are used to indicate omission of quoted material.



“. . . those persons who respond to releases or potential releases. . . . They shall be trained to respond in a defensive fashion. . . .”

Other Marks of Punctuation

Ellipses are used to show a sentence or question that has been left unfinished.



“The last time I saw my son . . .”

“First responders at the operational level are those persons who respond to releases or potential releases of hazardous materials as part of the initial response. . . . They shall be trained to respond in a defensive fashion. . . .”

Note: Some experts omit the final period (using three periods instead of four) if the quoted material is intended to trail off. Since the meaning is clear in either case, whether you use three periods or four is not a major concern.

Do not omit critical words

Do not omit words that are crucial to the context of the sentence.

They shall be trained to . . . control the release . . . and keep it from spreading.

Omitting the key phrases *in a defensive fashion* and *from a safe distance* misrepresents the original text and can mislead the reader.

To Leave Something Unfinished

Ellipses are also used to show a sentence or question that has been left unfinished, perhaps due to an interruption or change in thought. It may be an emotional interruption, or the sentence may simply be left unfinished as the person’s thoughts trail off. Once again, many experts prefer using three periods if the sentence is meant to trail off, instead of using the four periods that normally end what would have been a complete sentence.

“The last time I saw my son, he was . . .” she sobbed. “He was only out of my sight for a minute.”

“The last time we had a major fire in that tenement building . . .” he said as he settled back into the recliner. The others stopped what they were doing and gathered close. They loved to hear Milton reminisce about the old days.

Dashes may be used in place of ellipses to show an incomplete or interrupted sentence, particularly in more dramatic situations. Refer to page 114 for more information.

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Show Faltering Speech

Ellipses are sometimes used to show faltering speech. (Dashes may also be used for this purpose.)

“I think . . . I think I killed him.”

“Well . . . you see . . . we’ve tried everything else. What do we have to lose?”

Ellipses with Other Punctuation Marks

Whenever the ellipses complete the end of a sentence or question, you need to retain the original end punctuation. The following examples illustrate the way to handle a sentence, an exclamation, and a question, respectively.

Original: “Install a peephole in your front door so that you can identify visitors without having to open the door.”

Omission: “Install a peephole in your front door. . . .”

Original: “Let’s get the victim out of here before it blows!”

Omission: “Let’s get the victim out of here . . . !”

Original: “Is there a chance for a successful rescue, or will this be a body recovery operation?”

Omission: “Is there a chance for a successful rescue . . . ?”

Alternative Ellipses Marks

Most word processing programs can produce an ellipses mark as one character, rather than three separate periods (... versus . . .). Computer-generated ellipses take up less room. And because this ellipses is a single character, you don’t have to worry that the three periods might become separated if they don’t all fit on one line. However, I found very little reference to this ellipses mark in my grammar books. It seems that most grammar experts prefer forming their ellipses the old-fashioned way.

When the ellipses complete the end of a sentence or question, you need to retain the original end punctuation.



“We had better get there before . . . !”

Other Marks of Punctuation

Hyphens are used to divide words that don't fit on one line. Hyphenation should be kept to a minimum for ease of reading.



Do not divide one-syllable words regardless of how long they are.

breathe

Hyphens (-)

The hyphen has two main functions: to join words for clarity and to divide words that start on one line and finish on the next. This section addresses word division, use of hyphens with numbers, and a few other minor uses. However, the use of hyphens to form compound words is covered in Chapter 9.

To Divide Words from One Line to the Next

Sometimes it's necessary to divide words from one line to the next. Most word processing programs do this automatically. However, there are guidelines you should be familiar with for those times when you have to hyphenate manually or when you need to correct the hyphenation done by your word processing program.

Some words should never be divided

Do not divide one-syllable words (for example, *breathe, through, drought, stopped, fenced*), regardless of how long they are. Do not divide contractions (such as *couldn't, weren't, o'clock*).

Do not divide acronyms (such as *BLEVE, CHEMTREC, OSHA*) or abbreviations (such as *irreg., offic., hdqrs.*). If possible, avoid dividing abbreviations that are already hyphenated or that contain a space (for example, *AFL-CIO, sq. ft., nt. wt.*) since dividing these abbreviations over two lines may make them difficult to recognize.

Divide words according to pronunciation

Divide words with two or more syllables between the syllables. Pay close attention to the way words are pronounced because some divisions can be tricky. If you are not sure how the word is supposed to be divided, consult a dictionary.

<u>Original Word</u>	<u>Correct Division</u>	<u>Incorrect Division</u>
atmosphere	atmos-phere	atmo-sphere
service	serv-ice	ser-vice
perilous	peril-ous <i>or</i> per-ilous	peri-lous

Some words are pronounced in different ways depending on the meaning of the word. *Project* (proj-ect) is a noun referring to some kind of undertaking. *Project* (pro-ject) is a verb meaning "to propose, contemplate, or plan." However, meaning and pronunciation do not affect the way such words are divided at the end of a line.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Do not leave a single letter by itself

Do not break a word in a place that would leave a single letter by itself at either the end or the beginning of a line. Short words, like the examples below, should not be divided.

<u>Correct</u>	<u>Incorrect</u>
able	a-ble
unit	u-nit
bloody	blood-y
ready	read-y

Do not leave a single letter by itself.

Do not put two letters alone at the beginning of a line

Do not break a word in a place that would leave two letters by themselves at the beginning of a line.

<u>Correct</u>	<u>Incorrect</u>
safety	safe-ty
panic	pan-ic
stretcher	stretch-er

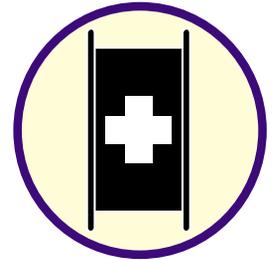
acute
(not *a-cutè*)

bloody
(not *blood-y*)

Divide compound words logically

Both solid and hyphenated compounds should be divided between the words from which they are formed.

<u>Original Word</u>	<u>Preferred Division</u>	<u>Not Recommended</u>
manslaughter	man-slaughter	manslaugh-ter
waterproof	water-proof	wa-terproof
fire-retardant	fire-retardant	fire-retar-dant
life-support	life-support	life-sup-port



Do not leave two letters by themselves at the beginning of a line.

Divide or retain double consonants as appropriate

If you have a word in which a final consonant was doubled in order to add a suffix, the word is divided *between* the double consonants. If the consonant was already double before the suffix was added, the word is divided *after* the double consonants.

<u>Base Word</u>	<u>Suffix Added</u>	<u>Correct Division</u>
hide	hidden	hid-den
omit	omitted	omit-ted
rob	robbing	rob-bing
tell	tellers	tell-ers
miss	missing	miss-ing

stretcher
(not *stretch-e*)

Other Marks of Punctuation

Both solid and hyphenated compounds should be divided between the words from which they are formed.

life-support



Divide words in a way that will not confuse the reader.

intra-venous

Avoid confusing word divisions

Whenever you have more than one option for dividing a word, divide the word in a way that will not confuse the reader. Make the word as easy to recognize as possible.

<u>Original Word</u>	<u>Preferred Division</u>	<u>Not Recommended</u>
heroism	hero-ism	her-oism
hypoglycemia	hypo-glycemia	hypogly-cemia
superheated	super-heated	su-perheated
reenact	re-enact	reen-act

Avoid dividing names if possible

Avoid dividing a person's first or last name if possible. If initials are used in place of a person's given name, try to keep the entire name together: *J. M. Levy*. If you must divide the name, it is better to keep the initials together (*J. M.-Levy*) than to break them apart (*J.-M. Levy*). You should also keep abbreviated titles (such as *Mr.*, *Ms.*, and *Dr.*) and other parts of a name (such as *Jr.* and *III*) together with the name itself.

Avoid dividing numbers if possible

Numbers should not be divided. However, if numbers are long and division is unavoidable, divide the number after a comma (for example, *10,420,-040,924*).

If possible, keep numbers on the same line with symbols (such as *89°F*) and with abbreviated units of measurement (such as *1200 Btu*).

Avoid breaks at the end of a paragraph or page

Do not divide the last word in a paragraph. It can look awkward to have part of a word hanging by itself. You can sometimes get away with dividing longer words if most of the letters are carried over onto the last line, but do not divide shorter words.

Do not divide the last word on a page. It is difficult for readers to keep track of the word as they turn from one page to the next.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Compensating for automatic hyphenation on your computer

Excessive hyphenation makes a paragraph difficult to read. Avoid having more than two consecutive lines that end with a hyphen.

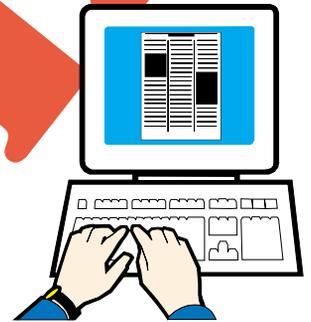
You can often eliminate unwanted hyphens simply by editing your text. Sometimes adding, deleting, or changing a single word solves the problem. Many word processing programs allow you to specify hyphenation limits either for the entire document or for a single paragraph. Some may even allow you to change or prevent hyphenation for *one* occurrence of a word, to change or eliminate hyphenation for *every* occurrence of the word, or to prevent any selected text from being divided over two lines. These options are particularly helpful in situations where you can't get rid of the hyphens simply by editing the paragraph.

A word of warning about the hyphens you insert

When your word processing program inserts hyphens, it does so temporarily. If you edit the paragraph such that it is no longer necessary to divide a word, the hyphen goes away. However, if you insert a hyphen manually, it remains in the document until you remove it. Therefore, if you edit the text, you may find an unwanted hyphen in the middle of your paragraph (like that). It is better to allow the computer to hyphenate your documents for you so that you don't run into this problem. But if you prefer to do your own hyphenation, proofread your document carefully.

(This is a common problem with people who are not familiar with text wrapping. Most word processing programs will automatically wrap text from one line to the next; you do not have to hit the return key to move to a new line. For more information on text wrapping, see page 608.)

**Avoid dividing
the last word of
the paragraph or
the last word on
the page.**



**There are
several ways
to minimize
hyphenation,
including editing
your text and
specifying
hyphenation
limits in your
software
program.**

Other Marks of Punctuation

Hyphens are used when spelling out compound numbers from 21 to 99.

She was burned over twenty-five percent of her body.



Hyphens are used when forming compound adjectives with numbers.

Cool a first-degree burn with water.

To Communicate Some Numbers

Numbers are covered in much more detail in Chapter 13. The following is a brief overview focusing on the use of hyphens.

Compound numbers from 21 to 99

Hyphens are used when spelling out compound numbers from 21 to 99. This includes both *cardinal numbers* (numbers that express amount) and *ordinal numbers* (those that express degree, quality, or position in a series).

Cardinal Numbers

twenty-one
thirty-two
eighty-three
ninety-nine

Ordinal Numbers

twenty-first
thirty-second
eighty-third
ninety-ninth

Numbers in compound adjectives

Compound adjectives containing a number need to be hyphenated. This is true whether you are using words or figures to represent the number. The hyphen makes it clear that the words are being used together to convey a single idea.

Words

a forty-hour class
a ten-year-old child
six-foot clearance
a third-degree burn

Figures

a 40-hour class
a 10-year-old child
6-foot clearance
a 3rd-degree burn

Numbers in series

Hyphens are sometimes used to show a range of numbers in a series. (On a computer, you can use an *en dash* [–] instead of a hyphen [-]. An en dash is longer than a hyphen, but shorter than a full dash, or *em dash* [—].)

We'll be presenting a drug awareness program in the schools during the week of February 10–14.

Do not use a hyphen or en dash, however, if the numbers are introduced by the words *from* or *between*.

We had a rash of arson fires in the foothills from 1985 to 1988. (not: *from 1985–1988*)

There were nine fatal accidents at that same intersection between 1987 and 1997. (not: *between 1987–1997*)

Other Marks of Punctuation

Other Numbers

Hyphens are sometimes used with other kinds of numbers, such as telephone numbers and social security numbers. They may also be used with model numbers and invoice numbers.

Some people use hyphens when referring to calling for help. Rather than write *911*, they write *9-1-1* to prevent people from saying “nine-eleven.” (There is no *eleven* on your telephone.) Either option is acceptable.

To Tie Elements Together (Suspending Hyphens)

Suspending hyphens are sometimes used to tie elements together. In the following examples, the hyphens show that each word or prefix with a hyphen behind it is related to the noun that follows.

By the time we got there, smoke was pouring out of the *first-, second-, and third-floor* windows.

Children born to drug addicts seldom receive adequate *pre- and postnatal* care.

The suspending hyphen is essentially a placeholder; it reduces the need to keep repeating terms (such as *first-floor, second-floor, and third-floor windows*). However, this technique should be used sparingly since it can be confusing to the reader. It is sometimes better to rewrite the sentence.

By the time we got there, smoke was pouring out of windows on the first, second, and third floors.

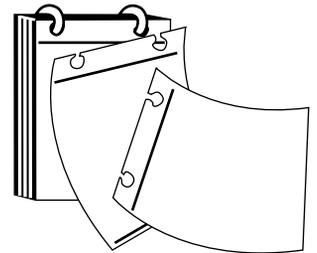
To Show Hesitation or Stuttering

Hyphens are also used occasionally to show hesitation or stuttering: *I'm s-s-scared, I'm c-c-cold*. Since you won't find these modifications in the dictionary, you can pretty much make up your own rules about how to use the hyphens. Just don't overdo this, or it will become tiresome for the reader.

To Identify Prefixes and Suffixes

Hyphens are often used to identify prefixes (such as *pre-, post-, non-*) and suffixes (such as *-ing, -ly, -less*) when they stand alone.

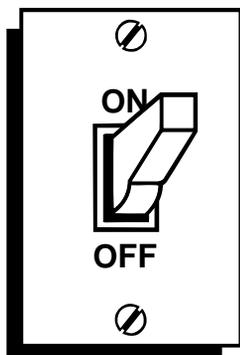
Suspending hyphens are sometimes used to tie elements together.



First they must go through a ten- or twelve-week academy.

Other Marks of Punctuation

A slash is often used to indicate two functions or components.



Where can I find the on/off switch?

Slashes (/)

A slash is most commonly used to represent missing word(s) or to separate elements of text.

To Indicate Options

A slash is used between words to indicate that both options are acceptable or possible.

The physical ability test will be pass/fail.

The quiz contains ten true/false questions.

Atmospheric pressure cargo tanks (MC-306/DOT-406) commonly transport flammable and combustible liquids.

Phrases such as *he/she* and *his/her* are considered awkward. It is better to rewrite the sentence.

Awkward: I want to make sure every officer is wearing his/her bulletproof vest.

Revised: I want to make sure all officers are wearing their bulletproof vests.

The phrase *and/or* can also be awkward and is sometimes used in error. *And/or* means that three options are possible (one or the other or both).

To Indicate Two Functions

The slash is used to indicate that someone or something has two functions or components. (A hyphen is sometimes used in place of a slash.)

Rick is a firefighter/paramedic.

Where is the on/off switch?

We need to implement a lockout/tagout program to safeguard employees from energized equipment.

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Report Numbers

The slash is used in several ways to report numbers. For example, it is used to separate systolic and diastolic readings when reporting blood pressure.

Her blood pressure was 80/56 mm Hg when we arrived.

A slash is often used when reporting ratios or units of measure.

He has a 50/50 chance of survival.

The reaction rate of a detonation is faster than the speed of sound (1142 ft./sec.).

Slashes are often used to separate numbers in dates.

The high school had several problems with gang activity during the 95/96 school year.

Date of birth: 6/25/60

Slashes are also used with fractions: $1/2$, $3/4$. When you have a number greater than one, either put a space between the whole number and the fraction ($1\ 1/2$, $2\ 3/4$) or put a hyphen between the two ($1-1/2$, $2-3/4$).

Some word processing programs are able to produce fractions with characters that are smaller than ordinary numbers: $1^{1/2}$, $2^{3/4}$. To determine whether or not your word processing program will produce fractions, check the instruction manual.

To Punctuate Some Abbreviations

Slashes are used to punctuate some abbreviations. Variations do exist, however. For example, *audiovisual* may be abbreviated as *A/V*, *A-V*, or *AV*. Some abbreviations can have more than one meaning. For example, *w/o* can be used to mean “without” or “week of.” If you are using abbreviations, make sure they will be understood by your readers.

Slashes may be used when reporting numbers or units of measure.

Even with prompt treatment, the patient has less than a 50/50 chance of survival.



The chemical is extremely toxic. The LD₅₀ is 5 mg/kg.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Use parentheses to set aside information.

The child (a six-month-old boy) was abducted by his father.



Parentheses tend to de-emphasize the information, whereas commas and dashes provide greater emphasis in comparison.

Parentheses ()

Parentheses are used to set aside supplemental information.

To Set Aside Parenthetical Elements

Parenthetical elements are words or groups of words that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence and that generally interrupt the main flow of thought. They may be set off in one of three ways. *Dashes* are used for maximum emphasis; they call attention to the parenthetical element more so than commas or parentheses do. *Commas* are used to set the information aside without emphasizing it. *Parentheses*, on the other hand, tend to de-emphasize the word or words they enclose.

Check the carotid pulse (at the neck) for five to ten seconds to determine if the victim has a pulse.

Our structural firefighting clothing is bulky and heavy (as one might expect).

When a parenthetical element contains one or more commas of its own, enclosing it in parentheses will be less confusing than setting it off with commas.

We found several chemicals (flammable and combustible liquids, corrosive liquids, oxidizers, and compressed gases) stored improperly in the warehouse.

To Introduce an Acronym or Abbreviation

Parentheses are used to either introduce or explain acronyms and abbreviations that readers might not be familiar with. Once an acronym or abbreviation is introduced this way, it can be written alone in subsequent uses.

Direct flame impingement on a pressure vessel may result in a Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosion (BLEVE).

Decontamination (decon) is done as needed to prevent the spread of contamination and to reduce the harmful effects of exposure to contaminated individuals.

Someone who is high on PCP (phencyclidine) is likely to be very combative.

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Introduce Another Name

Parentheses are used to introduce another name by which a person prefers to be called. Nicknames, on the other hand, are more commonly enclosed in quotation marks.

Leonard (Len) Williams owns several antique fire engines.

To Confirm a Number

Sometimes when numbers are spelled out in a document, they are immediately repeated in numeric form enclosed in parentheses. However, this format should be reserved for times when you need to draw attention to the numbers to prevent misreading.

The code requires you to maintain at least thirty-six (36) inches of clearance in front of the electrical panel.

To Identify Items in a Series

Using numbers or letters in parentheses helps distinguish items in a series better than using commas alone does. This format is sometimes used as an alternative to a vertical list when the list is short.

Before we can issue you an occupancy permit, you must (1) make sure every exit sign is properly lit, (2) install a fire extinguisher near the main exit, and (3) post evacuation maps in each of the locations specified on the attached map.

To Provide Reference or Direction

Parentheses are used to enclose directions that refer readers to an illustration, chart, or other supplemental information. The reference may be placed either within the sentence or after the sentence.

Use the acronym PQRST (see page 21) to help you assess the patient's complaint of pain.

MC-306 cargo tanks transport flammable and combustible liquids, such as gasoline and diesel fuel (Figure 4.24).

Never be fooled into thinking that a routine traffic stop can't escalate into a life-and-death situation. (Figure 6.1)

Numbers or letters in parentheses can help distinguish items in a series.



Please (1) make sure the exit sign is lit, (2) install an extinguisher, and (3) post evacuation maps.

Other Marks of Punctuation

While it is acceptable to put a complete sentence within another sentence, it is generally better to write two separate sentences.

The boy brought alcohol (can you believe it?) to school. (acceptable)



The boy brought alcohol to school. Can you believe it? (better)

To Clarify a Date or Location

Dates and locations are sometimes enclosed in parentheses to reference a specific event. In the example below, the year *1980* is set off in parentheses as if it were a nonessential element. However, it is included to provide clarification so that readers don't have to question whether the writer is referring to this fire or another fire.

It was the MGM Grand Hotel Fire in Las Vegas (1980) that inspired me to choose a career in fire safety education.

Parentheses with Other Punctuation Marks

How to punctuate sentences containing parentheses depends on how the parenthetical material is used.

With periods

A complete sentence that falls *between* other complete sentences is capitalized and punctuated like any ordinary sentence.

He wasn't out of prison for more than a week before he was back on the streets selling cocaine. (But we knew that would happen.) It was inevitable that he would be arrested again.

However, when any parenthetical element falls *within* a sentence, do not capitalize the first word unless it is a proper noun, a proper adjective, or the pronoun *I*. Do not use a period at the end of the parenthetical element unless needed for an abbreviation.

It turns out that the reason I've been so cranky lately is that I have hypoglycemia (low blood sugar).

According to the last fire weather report (given at 6:28 p.m.), the burn index is 37 and the dispatch level is medium.

Note: While it is acceptable to put a complete sentence within another sentence, it is generally better to write two separate sentences.

Acceptable: The stolen diamond (it was finally recovered, by the way) had been in their family for five generations.

Better: The stolen diamond had been in their family for five generations. The diamond was finally recovered, by the way.

Other Marks of Punctuation

With question marks and exclamation points

Question marks and exclamation points go inside parentheses if they apply solely to the parenthetical element. Otherwise, they go outside. (Note: While it is acceptable to put a sentence within another sentence, it is generally better to write two separate sentences.)

Acceptable: The fire escape (damn it!) was never designed to support the weight of that many people.

Better: Damn it! The fire escape was never designed to support the weight of that many people.

If a question mark or exclamation point is needed to end the sentence as a whole, omit it from the parenthetical element. Either put the punctuation mark at the end of the sentence or write two separate sentences.

Wrong: Do we need any more victims (and if so, how many?) for the mass casualty exercise?

Right: Do we need any more victims (and if so, how many) for the mass casualty exercise?

Better: Do we need any more victims for the mass casualty exercise? If so, how many?

With quotation marks

Quotation marks go inside the parentheses when the quoted words are part of the parenthetical element. Otherwise they go outside.

We know he was selling PCP (also known as “angel dust”).

Dieter reminded his students, “Gasoline vapors are heavier than air (meaning the specific gravity is greater than one).”

With commas

Do not put a comma *before the opening parenthesis*, even if a comma would have been appropriate in that location if the parentheses had not been there. The parenthesis bumps the comma out of its usual place.

We’ve seen an increase in violent crimes over the last twelve months (namely, homicide and rape).

Do, *however*, use commas, periods, colons, or semicolons *after the closing parenthesis* as appropriate to the context of the sentence.

This dispatcher has her act together (as we’ve seen many times); she consistently performs well under pressure.

Do not put a comma before the opening parenthesis.



During the winter months (December through February), we see an increase in fires due to heating equipment.

Other Marks of Punctuation

Use brackets to signify that you have interjected something into someone else's material.

The chief asked us to increase patrols in the [Sharmon Palms] neighborhood.



Use brackets to correct or acknowledge an error in quoted material.

"We've had alot [sic] of problems with gang violence," the mayor wrote.

Brackets []

Brackets, like parentheses, are designed to enclose something. However, parentheses are used to enclose parenthetical elements *in your own writing*, while brackets are used to insert information *into someone else's material* that you are quoting.

To Enclose a Notation or Explanation

You may find it necessary to interject a note or explanation into someone else's material. This is often done to clarify a point that might otherwise be unclear to readers who are unfamiliar with the details. These comments should be enclosed in brackets.

The CEO announced that the company finally repaired the last of the damage done by the [Northridge] earthquake.

Nancy said, "This is the first time since we were robbed [six months ago] that my daughter hasn't been awakened by nightmares."

To Acknowledge or Correct an Error

If the material you are quoting from contains an error, there are two ways you can handle it. One is to reprint the error as is with the notation [sic] behind it. *Sic* is Latin for "Thus it is." When you put [sic] behind the error, it signifies that you recognize it was an error, but that you are quoting from the original source verbatim.

"We've had alot [sic] of problems with gang violence in our schools," the mayor wrote in his report. (Indicates a spelling error: *alot* versus *a lot*.)

The second option is to make the correction and enclose the corrected text in brackets. The brackets signify that you have altered the original material.

"We've had [a lot] of problems with gang violence in our schools," the mayor wrote in his report.

Other Marks of Punctuation

To Identify Other Alterations

You can also use brackets to indicate that you have changed the original capitalization or the original typeface. Indicating that you have altered the capitalization in a quote is optional in most situations. However, it is good practice to do so in legal documents where absolute accuracy is important.

“[O]ne of the worst disasters in the history of our nation,” is how the President described it. (*The original quote was “This is one of the worst disasters in the history of our nation.”*)

The chief has assured us that he will do *everything in his power* [emphasis added] to improve the mutual aid agreement between our two cities. (*In this example, the author citing the chief has added the italics.*)

To Act as a Second Set of Parentheses

If you need to set off parenthetical elements inside another set of parentheses, it can be done by using brackets.

Universal precautions are essential for protecting all personnel from bloodborne pathogens (particularly Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome [AIDS] and hepatitis).

To Supplement Information in a Transcript

The written transcript of a speech, a debate, or testimony may contain other comments, responses, or observations. They are set off by brackets.

Mrs. Miller: That’s the man [*witness pointed at defendant*] I saw leaving his apartment.

Assemblyman Honda: We are here today to acknowledge the brave men and women who worked so hard to save our community from this devastating fire. [*applause*]

You can use brackets to indicate a change in capitalization or typeface.

Original quote:
“I truly believe that legalized gambling would improve our economy,” the mayor said.

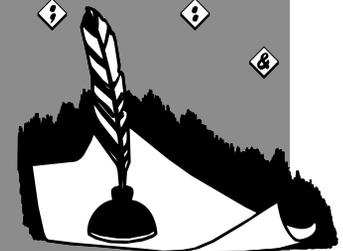
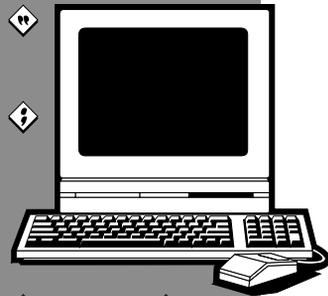


Altered quote:
He said, “[L]egalized gambling would improve our economy.”

SAMPLE

Chapter 3: Parts of Speech

SAMPLE



Parts of Speech

There are eight different parts of speech.

Many words can be used in more than one way.

to handcuff someone
(verb)



a set of handcuffs
(noun)

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the eight parts of speech and how they work with one another. Those eight parts of speech are as follows:

Nouns	Verbs	Adverbs	Prepositions
Pronouns	Adjectives	Conjunctions	Interjections

Keep in mind that many words can be used in more than one way. The following are two examples of words that can be used as nouns, verbs, or adjectives.

<u>As a Noun</u> a <i>fire</i> the <i>police</i>	<u>As a Verb</u> to <i>fire</i> someone to <i>police</i> something	<u>As an Adjective</u> a <i>fire</i> alarm * the <i>police</i> station *
--	--	--

* The words *fire* and *police* serve as adjectives because they modify *alarm* and *station*, respectively. The two-word expressions *fire alarm* and *police station* are considered compound nouns.

The following examples illustrate how some words can function as either adjectives or adverbs.

<u>As an Adjective</u> a <i>deep</i> breath a <i>fast</i> heartbeat	<u>As an Adverb</u> to breathe <i>deep</i> a heart beating <i>fast</i>
---	--

To take this discussion a step further, many parts of speech can fill different roles within a sentence. The following are three examples.

The *fire* was hot. (*as the subject of the sentence*)
We extinguished the *fire*. (*as the object of a verb*)
We responded to the *fire*. (*as the object of the preposition to*)

For More Information

The following chapters go into greater detail on the potential problems associated with various parts of speech.

Chapter 4	Subject-Verb Agreement
Chapter 5	More on Verbs
Chapter 6	Adjectives and Adverbs
Chapter 7	Pronouns and Antecedents

Nouns

What Is a Noun?

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, quality, or idea. This section covers the different types of nouns, additional clues for recognizing nouns, and the functions of a noun.

Types of Nouns

There are several different types of nouns.

Concrete and abstract nouns

A *concrete* noun names something tangible (something you can see, touch, taste, hear, or smell).

blood explosion jail syringe

An *abstract* noun names something intangible, such as an idea, quality, feeling, or emotion.

anger guilt illness truth

Although abstract nouns themselves are intangible, they are often measurable by tangible evidence. For example, we cannot see *illness*, per se, but we can see and feel abnormal skin signs. We can see and smell vomitus. We can hear abnormal breath sounds. We just can't reach out and touch "illness" itself.

Singular and plural nouns

A *singular* noun names one person, place, thing, quality, or idea. A *plural* noun names two or more.

<u>Singular</u> accident child	<u>Plural</u> accidents children
--------------------------------------	--

Collective nouns

A *collective* noun names a group or unit.

committee crowd jury team

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, quality or idea.

A concrete noun names something tangible.

jail, prison, prison bars



An abstract noun names something intangible.

guilt or innocence

Parts of Speech

An *-ing* verb that serves as a noun is called a *gerund*

Smoking is bad for your health.



Entire phrases can also serve as nouns.

Breathing secondhand smoke is unhealthy too.

Common and proper nouns

A *common* noun names a *general* person, place, thing, quality, or idea. A *proper* noun names a *specific* person, place, or thing.

Common Nouns

woman
city
holiday

Proper Nouns

Annie
Los Gatos
Fourth of July

Compound nouns

A *compound* noun is made up of two or more words. Some compound nouns are written as one solid word, some are written as two words, and some are hyphenated.

Solid

fingerprint
homeowner

Two Words

fire extinguisher
jail cell

Hyphenated

by-product
right-of-way

Possessive nouns

Possessive nouns indicate ownership or possession. They may be either singular or plural.

doctor's girl's Martin's victims'

Verbs as nouns (gerunds)

Verbs sometimes function as nouns. An *-ing* verb that serves as a noun is called a *gerund*.

Smoking is bad for your health.

Shoplifting is a crime.

Noun phrases

Entire phrases can also serve as nouns.

I love *being a volunteer firefighter*. (*gerund phrase as the object of the verb*)

"To protect and serve with integrity" is our motto. (*infinitive phrase as the subject of the sentence*)

Before midnight is no longer a realistic goal. (*prepositional phrase as the subject of the sentence*)

Parts of Speech

Additional Clues for Recognizing Nouns

Most nouns (or noun phrases) can follow an article (*a*, *an*, or *the*). (When an article precedes a noun in this way, the article serves as an adjective. The articles are underlined in the examples below.)

The *boy* stole a *car*.

The *growing of marijuana* is illegal.

Most nouns can follow a possessive noun or pronoun, an indefinite pronoun, or a demonstrative pronoun. (When a noun or pronoun precedes another noun in this way, it serves as an adjective. The adjectives preceding the nouns are underlined below.)

Tara's/her *integrity* is admirable.

Every *cylinder* exploded.

That *man* is guilty.

Nouns follow prepositions as the object of the preposition. (The prepositions are underlined in the examples below.)

We took him to the *hospital*. (*to where*)

The gurney is inside the *ambulance*. (*inside what*)

Nouns can occur before and after verbs. (The verbs are underlined in the examples below.)

His *guilt* was obvious to the *jury*.

Smoke filled the *room*.

Nouns or noun phrases can generally be replaced by pronouns (such as *it*, *his*, or *that*) if the meaning of the pronoun is clear.

Noun: We found *the knife* in the trash.

Pronoun: We found *it* in the trash.

Noun: I don't trust *the doctor's* opinion.

Pronoun: I don't trust *his* opinion.

Noun: *Driving under the influence* is against the law.

Pronoun: *That* is against the law.

Another way to identify a noun or noun phrase is to see if it can perform one of the functions listed on the following pages.

Nouns can occur before and after verbs, and nouns often follow prepositions.

Please post the sign in the stairwell



Nouns or noun phrases can generally be replaced by pronouns.

Post it where it will be clearly visible.

Parts of Speech

Nouns can function in a variety of ways.

As the subject of a sentence:

Your hands are dirty.



As the object of a verb:

Please wash your hands

Functions of a Noun

Nouns can function in a variety of ways.

Subject of the sentence

Nouns often serve as the subject of a sentence.

Your *shoulder* is dislocated.

Freelancing on the fireground can be dangerous.

Object of a verb (direct or indirect)

A noun can serve as either the *direct object* or the *indirect object* of a verb. In the examples that follow, *evidence bag* and *driver's license* are the *direct objects* because they are the things being handed over and shown, respectively; they are the things being acted upon. *Ed* and the *police officer* indirectly receive the action of the verb. That makes them *indirect objects*.

Mark handed *Ed* an *evidence bag*.

Please show the *police officer* your *driver's license*.

Subject complement (or predicate noun)

When a noun follows a form of the verb *be* and describes the subject, it serves as a *subject complement* (or *predicate noun*).

Jason is a *paramedic*.

The substance is *cocaine*.

One way to determine if a word is a subject complement is to switch it with the subject. If the sentence still makes sense, the word is a subject complement.

The paramedic is Jason.

Cocaine is the substance.

A subject complement can also follow other linking verbs, such as *become* and *remain*, because the meaning of the verb is "be."

Do you think Ben will become *chief* when Doug retires?

I will remain the *incident commander* until relieved by my battalion chief.

Parts of Speech

Object complement

A noun can follow a verb and its direct object, serving as an *object complement*—an expression that provides more information about the object. (The objects are underlined in the examples below.)

He called me a *thief*.

The public considers us *heroes*.

Object of a preposition

A noun follows a preposition as the *object of a preposition*. (The prepositions are underlined in the examples below.)

The victim was trapped under the *car*. (*under what*)

The bullet went straight through his *heart*. (*through what*)

An appositive

A noun can serve as an *appositive*—a word or phrase that defines, explains, or renames another noun before it.

This is anaphylactic shock, a severe *allergic reaction*.

We found the weapon, a *35-mm handgun*, in the glove compartment of his vehicle.

To show possession

Possessive nouns show possession.

The *boys'* mother was seriously injured in the accident.

I was just following the *sergeant's* orders.

As an adjective or adverb

Some nouns can modify other words. When a noun modifies another noun, it serves as an adjective. When a noun modifies an adjective or a verb, it serves as an adverb.

Smoke detectors save lives. (*modifies the noun* detector)

The warehouse stores *water*-reactive chemicals. (*modifies the adjective* reactive)

Our new truck will arrive *today*. (*modifies the verb* arrive)

As a subject complement:

This is a hospital

As the object of a preposition:

You should go to the hospital



As an adjective:

Many hospital personnel are working overtime because of the epidemic.

Parts of Speech

A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of a noun.



She [MaryAnn] was attacked last night in the carport of her [MaryAnn's] apartment complex.

Pronouns

What Is a Pronoun?

A pronoun is a word that in most cases can be used in place of a noun. This section covers the different types of pronouns and the functions of a pronoun.

Types of Pronouns

There are several different types of pronouns.

Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to specific people or objects.

- The *nominative* (or *subjective*) *case* refers to a pronoun used as a subject or a subject complement.
- The *objective case* refers to a pronoun used as a direct object, an indirect object, or the object of a preposition.
- The *possessive case* refers to a pronoun used to show possession.

The following is a list of the personal pronouns. The correct use of pronouns based on case is covered on pages 246-251.

<u>nominative case</u>	<u>objective case</u>	<u>possessive case</u>
I	me	my, mine
you	you	your, yours
he	him	his
she	her	her, hers
it	it	its
we	us	our, ours
they	them	their, theirs

Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to people or things that are not specific.

all	each one	much	several
another	either	neither	some
any	everybody	nobody	somebody
anybody	everyone	none	someone
anyone	everything	no one	something
anything	few	nothing	such
both	many	one	
each	most	other	

Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns are used to relate groups of words to nouns or pronouns.

that	which	whoever	whose
what	whichever	whom	whosever
whatever	who	whomever	

Interrogative pronouns

The same pronouns that are used as relative pronouns (with the exception of *that*) are also used as interrogative pronouns. *Interrogative pronouns* are used to introduce questions.

Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns point to a specific person, place, or thing.

this	that	these	those
------	------	-------	-------

Compound personal pronouns

Compound personal pronouns may be used to direct action back to the subject or to emphasize a noun or pronoun already mentioned. They are formed by adding *self* or *selves* to a personal pronoun.

herself	itself	ourselves	yourself
himself	myself	themselves	yourselves

Reciprocal pronouns

Reciprocal pronouns serve as objects of verbs when the subjects are plural.

each other	one another
------------	-------------

Functions of a Pronoun

Because most pronouns can be used in place of nouns, they can function in many of the same ways that nouns do. The following is a brief overview. Refer back to the section on nouns (pages 137-141) if any of the terms and definitions are unclear to you.

Pronouns are further classified by type.

The following sentence contains an indefinite pronoun, a relative pronoun, and a personal pronoun, respectively.



Someonesaid the man who attackedher lives in the neighborhood.

Parts of Speech

Because pronouns are words that can be used in place of nouns, they can function in many of the same ways.

As the subject of a sentence:

She was badly beaten.



As the object of a verb:

Paramedics transported her to the hospital.

Subject of the sentence

Pronouns can function as the subject of the sentence.

She had massive internal injuries.

We were devastated by the accident.

Object of a verb (direct or indirect)

A pronoun can function as a *direct* object—the person, place, thing, or idea that receives the action of the verb.

Paramedics transported *her* to the hospital.

Police kept *everyone* away from the crime scene.

A pronoun can also function as an *indirect* object—the person or thing that *indirectly* receives the action of the verb.

A neighbor gave *us* the lead that ultimately led to an arrest.

Please show *me* where the alarm panel is located.

Subject complement

When a pronoun follows a form of the verb *to be* and describes the subject, it serves as a *subject complement*. Subject complements may also be called *predicate pronouns* or *predicate nominatives*.

It is *I*. (not: *It is me*.)

The man confessed that the rapist was *he*. (not *him*)

Although many people use the objective case (*me* and *him*) in casual speech, the subjective case (*I* and *he*) is the correct form of pronoun when serving as the subject complement.

Object of a preposition

A pronoun can follow a preposition as the *object of a preposition*. (The prepositions are underlined in the examples below.)

The vehicles crashed into *each other*. (*into what*)

We need to get a backboard under *her*. (*under whom*)

Parts of Speech

An appositive

A pronoun can serve as an *appositive*—a word or phrase that defines, explains, or renames another noun before it.

The victims, *both of them*, suffered severe internal injuries.

The first officers on scene, Ken and *I*, immediately called for backup.

To show possession

Possessive pronouns show possession.

The gun is *hers*.

This house is *mine*.

Possessive pronouns that precede nouns are considered adjectives because they identify *which one*.

His leg was broken.

Did you lock *your* car?

As an adjective

When a pronoun modifies another noun to identify *which one* or *how many*, it serves as an adjective. Some possessive pronouns can serve as adjectives, as illustrated in the last two examples. The following examples contain a demonstrative pronoun and an indefinite pronoun, respectively.

The reporting party said he saw sparks coming from *this* power line. (modifies *power line*)

There were *several* spot fires. (modifies *spot fires*)

For More Information

Refer to Chapter 7 for more information on the potential problems associated with pronouns.

As the object of a preposition:

The doctor prescribed a sedative for her.



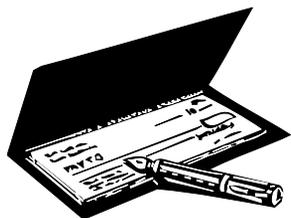
To show possession:

Her experience was a traumatic one.

Parts of Speech

Action verbs express action.

Philip forged the check.



Linking verbs express a state of being.

The signature looks like a forgery.

Verbs

What Is a Verb?

A verb is a word that expresses either an action or a state of being. Without a verb, you cannot have a sentence. This section provides an overview of types of verbs and verb tenses.

Types of Verbs

Action verbs and linking verbs

Action verbs, as the name implies, express action. It may be a physical action that can be observed visually, or it may be a mental action that others cannot see. Most verbs are action verbs.

Did he *escape* capture?

The patient *survived* the accident.

Police *arrested* the rapist.

Linking verbs express a state of being. They link the subject to other words in the sentence.

I *am* a volunteer firefighter.

Joe *appeared* scared.

It *smells* like chlorine.

The most common linking verb—as well as the most used verb in the English language—is the verb *be*. There are eight different forms of the verb *be*.

am	be	being	was
are	been	is	were

The following are some other common linking verbs.

appear	hear	prove	sound
become	keep	remain	stay
feel	look	seem	taste
grow	make	smell	turn

Parts of Speech

Some verbs can be either linking verbs or action verbs, depending on how they are used in the sentence. If it is used as a linking verb, you should be able to logically substitute some form of the verb *be*.

Linking verb: He *looks* suspicious.
(He *is* suspicious.)

Action verb: *Look* at him.

Linking verb: I *feel* hot.
(I *am* hot.)

Action verb: Will you *feel* my forehead?

Linking verb: That *sounds* like a fire alarm.
(That *is* a fire alarm.)

Action verb: *Sound* the fire alarm!

Helping (auxiliary) verbs

Many sentences contain verb phrases that consist of a helping (or auxiliary) verb and a main verb. Helping verbs modify the meaning of the main verbs they precede. The various forms of *be*, *have*, and *do* can function either as helping verbs or as main verbs.

am	been	do	has	is
are	being	does	have	was
be	did	had	having	were

The following verbs can function only as helping verbs. They can't function as main verbs.

can	may	must	shall	will
could	might	ought	should	would

There can be up to three helping verbs in front a main verb.

I *should* study for the promotional exam.

I *should be* studying for the promotional exam.

I *should have been* studying for the promotional exam.

Transitive verbs and intransitive verbs

A *transitive* verb requires an object to complete its meaning, whereas an *intransitive* verb does not. What we mean by “requires an object to complete its meaning” is that there must be an object—such as a person or thing—to receive the action of the verb. Some verbs, such as *lay* and *raise*, are always transitive. Others, such as *lie* and *rise*, are always intransitive.

Many sentences contain verb phrases that consist of a helping (or auxiliary) verb and a main verb.



He may have forged other checks as well.

Parts of Speech

A transitive verb is one that requires an object to complete its meaning.

Please call the police.



An intransitive verb does not require an object to complete its meaning.

If the phone rings, don't answer it.

Transitive: Please *lay* the knife on the counter.

Intransitive: Please *lie* down.

Transitive: I need help *raising* the ladder.

Intransitive: Let's wait until the sun *rises*.

Many verbs can be transitive or intransitive, depending on how they are used in the sentence.

Transitive: Try not to *break* the blister.

Intransitive: If the blister *breaks*, the wound may become contaminated.

Transitive: Try not to *breathe* the smoke.

Intransitive: You will be able to *breathe* easier if we prop you up.

Notice the objects that complete the transitive verbs in each of the examples above. What do I want you to *lay* on the counter? The *knife*. What do I need help *raising*? The *ladder*. What shouldn't you *break*? The *blister*. What shouldn't you *breathe*? The *smoke*.

Intransitive verbs sometimes use other words to help complete meaning. For example, there is a difference between saying *Please lie* and *Please lie down*. There is also a difference between saying *You will be able to breathe* and *You will be able to breathe easier*. However, *down* and *easier* are not things that receive the action. *Down* is an adverb that identifies *where*. *Easier* is an adverb that describes *how*.

Regular verbs and irregular verbs

A verb is either regular or irregular, depending on how the past tense and past participle forms are created.

Most verbs in the English language are *regular*. The past tense and the past participle are formed by adding either *d* or *ed* to the present tense (or plain form).

Present Tense (Now I . . .)	Past Tense (Yesterday I . . .)	Past Participle (I have or had . . .)
rescue	rescu <u>ed</u>	rescu <u>ed</u>
shout	shout <u>ed</u>	shout <u>ed</u>

Irregular verbs do not follow the normal pattern when forming the past tense and past participle. There are about 200 irregular verbs in the English language. Most of them are listed on pages 194 through 197.

Verb Tenses: An Overview

Verb tense tells when the action takes place. The following is an overview of each of the tenses. Chapter 5 provides more detailed information on how and when to use the various tenses.

There are three *primary tenses* that correspond to the three time divisions: *present*, *past*, and *future*.

Present: I *clean* the station.
Past: I *cleaned* the station.
Future: I *will clean* the station.

There are three *perfect tenses*. They are used to show more complex time relations than can be shown with the primary tenses. An action expressed in one of the perfect tenses is something that either was or will be completed at the time of another action.

Present perfect: I *have cleaned* the station.
Past perfect: I *had cleaned* the station before we ate dinner.
Future perfect: I *will have cleaned* the station by the time dinner is ready.

There are six *progressive tenses*, each corresponding to one of the previous tenses. The progressive tenses describe actions in progress.

Present progressive: I *am cleaning* the station.
Past progressive: I *was cleaning* the station.
Future progressive: I *will be cleaning* the station.
Present perfect progressive: I *have been cleaning* the station all afternoon.
Past perfect progressive: I *had been cleaning* the station before we ate dinner.
Future perfect progressive: I *will have been cleaning* the station for three hours by the time dinner is ready.

There are also two *emphatic tenses*.

Present emphatic: I *do clean* the station every day.
Past emphatic: I *did clean* the station today.

For More Information

There are two other chapters that address the correct use of verbs: Chapter 4, "Subject-Verb Agreement," and Chapter 5, "More on Verbs."

Verb tense tells when the action takes place.

There are three primary tenses.



Present tense:
I clean the station.

Past tense:
I cleaned the station.

Future tense:
I will clean the station.

Parts of Speech

An adjective modifies a noun or pronoun by identifying *what kind, which one, or how many*

Three undercover officers helped crack this case.



The women did an outstanding job.

Adjectives

What Is an Adjective?

An *adjective* is a word used to modify a noun or pronoun. An adjective identifies *what kind, which one, or how many*.

It was a *small* fire in the median strip. (*What kind of fire?*)

He used *this* knife to attack his brother. (*Which knife?*)

Three people died in the accident. (*How many people?*)

This section covers types of adjectives, how other parts of speech can serve as adjectives, placement of adjectives, and the proper order of adjectives when multiple adjectives modify the same noun or pronoun.

Types of Adjectives

Adjectives are generally put into one of two categories: *limiting or descriptive*.

Limiting adjectives (or noun determiners)

Limiting adjectives (or noun determiners) are adjectives that limit nouns or pronouns by identifying *how many, how much, which one, or whose*.

The jury consists of *eight* men and *four* women.

The *fifth* juror was dismissed for medical reasons.

We found cocaine in *Paul's* locker.

Those men are the ones who raped me.

The articles (*a, an, and the*) are adjectives. *A* and *an* are *indefinite* articles; they refer to an unspecified item. *The* is a *definite* article; it refers to one or more specific items.

She had *a* broken arm.

We splinted *the* broken arm.

Parts of Speech

Descriptive adjectives

Descriptive adjectives provide such information as *size, shape, age, color, origin, or material*. They can also convey the writer's subjective opinion or perception of the noun being modified.

It was a *daring* rescue.

They stole a *red* Mustang.

It is a *deep* laceration.

The fire was started by a *defective* heater.

Right now, all we have is *circumstantial* evidence.

Comparative and Superlative Adjectives

Comparative and superlative adjectives are special types of adjectives used to indicate degrees of comparison. (Comparative and superlative modifiers are covered in more detail in Chapter 6.)

The *younger* brother is frequently in trouble with the police. (*comparative*)

Their *youngest* child is likely to follow in her brother's footsteps if we don't do something to stop it. (*superlative*)

How Other Parts of Speech Serve as Adjectives

Nouns can serve as adjectives when they modify other nouns or pronouns. The following examples contain *common, proper, and compound* nouns, respectively. (Proper adjectives, which are formed from proper nouns, are always capitalized.)

He was hit over the head with a *baseball* bat. (modifies *bat*)

The *Hispanic* community is calling for more police protection after last night's shooting. (modifies *community*)

We responded to a *flammable liquid* spill on McGlincey Lane. (modifies *spill*)

Some pronouns can serve as adjectives. The following examples contain *indefinite, demonstrative, and possessive* pronouns, respectively.

Both patients refused transport. (modifies *patients*)

Other parts of speech can often serve as adjectives.

Jack sustained a painful injury while playing ice hockey.

(*Ice* modifies the noun *hockey*)



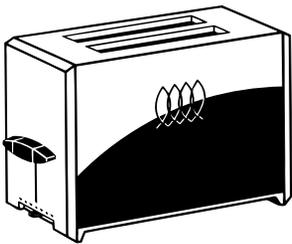
The player who was injured was transported to the hospital.

(A clause modifies the noun *player*)

Parts of Speech

Most adjectives are positioned before the nouns they describe.

The fire was started by a defective toaster.



Adjectives positioned after linking verbs are known as *predicate adjectives*.

The toaster was defective

We will have extra officers on duty *this* weekend. (modifies *weekend*)

His fingerprints were found on the murder weapon. (modifies *fingerprints*)

Some verb forms (the *present participle* and the *past participle*) can be used as adjectives.

The *drowning* victim was a three-year-old girl. (modifies *victim*)

A two-alarm fire at the *abandoned* greenhouse sent several firefighters to the hospital. (modifies *greenhouse*)

Phrases and clauses can also serve as adjectives.

Could you identify the man *holding the knife*? (modifies *man*)

The fire *we responded to last night* was deliberately set. (modifies *fire*)

Our ambulance, *which had been parked behind the accident*, was hit by another vehicle. (modifies *ambulance*)

Placement of Adjectives

Adjectives are often positioned before the nouns they describe.

The *thick* smoke made it difficult to see.

I'll take care of *this* patient.

Diana's death stunned the world.

However, adjectives can sometimes be positioned after nouns.

All victims, *dead* or *alive*, must be treated with respect.

The firefighters, *exhausted* and *discouraged*, returned to base camp for the night.

Adjectives positioned after linking verbs are known as *predicate adjectives*. You can tell these words are adjectives because they describe, limit, or qualify the noun or pronoun just as they would if they were positioned before the noun or pronoun.

The house is *destroyed*. (the *destroyed* house)

Parts of Speech

The driver appears *drunk*. (the *drunk* driver)

Sara's vital signs remained *stable* throughout the night.
(*stable* vital signs)

The Order of Adjectives

Adjectives are generally presented in the order indicated below.

1. Noun determiner (limiting adjectives)
2. Subjective description
3. Size
4. Shape
5. Age
6. Color
7. Origin
8. Material
9. Noun used as an adjective

Here are some examples of adjectives used in the order presented.
(Note: It is rare to have more than three adjectives together.)

Several angry protestors threatened to burn down the clinic.

The *valuable old* painting was destroyed by vandals.

Choking black smoke made the stairwells untenable.

Witnesses described him as an *elderly Japanese* man.

If two or more adjectives modify the same word equally, they are called *coordinate adjectives*. Coordinate adjectives are separated either by the word *and* or by a comma. Because coordinate adjectives are equal, they can change places with each other.

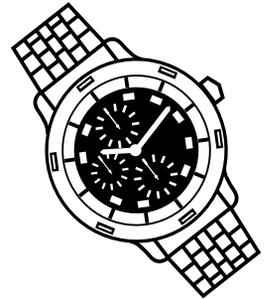
I filed a complaint against the attorney for her *unethical and illegal* conduct. (or *illegal and unethical* conduct)

A *rapid, weak* pulse is characteristic of shock. (or *weak, rapid* pulse)

For More Information

Refer to Chapter 6 for more information on the potential problems associated with both adjectives and adverbs.

Adjectives are generally presented in a specific order.



He stole an expensive gold wrist watch.

Parts of Speech

Adverbs usually identify *when, where, how, why, under what conditions, or to what degree.*



We quickly called for additional resources to help us contain the spill.

Adverbs

What Is an Adverb?

An *adverb* is a word used to modify a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or whole groups of words. Adverbs usually identify *when, where, how, why, under what conditions, or to what degree.* This section covers how adverbs modify other words, how other parts of speech can serve as adverbs, and where adverbs are positioned in a sentence.

How Adverbs Modify Other Words

When an adverb modifies a verb, it describes *how, when, where, or to what degree* the action is done.

Sal fingered the gun *nervously*. (tells *how*)

The extinguishers are serviced *annually*. (tells *when*)

I found the amputated finger *here*. (tells *where*)

Gina *nearly* died. (tells *to what degree or extent*)

Adverbs that modify adjectives or other adverbs are called *adverbs of degree* (or *intensifiers*). They indicate *intensity*.

She is listed in *very* serious condition at the trauma center. (modifies the adjective *serious*)

It was an *unusually* brutal attack. (modifies the adjective *brutal*)

We extricated the victim *very* quickly. (modifies the adverb *quickly*)

Adverbs can also modify groups of words. Adverbs that modify entire sentences often provide an insight as to the writer's opinion.

Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Sadly, there was nothing we could do to save her.

Comparative and Superlative Adverbs

Comparative or superlative adverbs are used to show degrees of comparison. (Comparative and superlative modifiers are covered in more detail in Chapter 6.)

We worked *harder* tonight than we have in a long time. (*comparative*)

The crews that worked the *hardest* need to go to rehab first. (*superlative*)

How Other Parts of Speech Serve as Adverbs

Nouns can serve as adverbs when they modify a verb.

Jane was driving *home*. (identifies *where* she was driving)

He was arrested *Sunday*. (identifies *when* he was arrested)

One characteristic of nouns is that they can be modified by adjectives. In the example below, while the word *night* serves as an adverb, it is further modified by the adjective *all*. We searched *all night*, as opposed to *half the night*.

We searched *all night*. (identifies *how long* we searched)

Prepositions serve as adverbs by identifying *where*.

The suspect went *inside*.

The smoke is thicker *upstairs*.

When prepositions such as *up*, *in*, *out*, *on*, and *off* are used to complete the meaning of the verb, they are considered adverbs. The following examples illustrate the difference between adverbs and prepositions.

Adverb: I need to *size up* the situation before I can accurately determine what resources are needed. (The verb phrase is *size up*.)

Preposition: Please bring the chain saw *up* to the roof.

Adverb: In a mass casualty incident, we may have to *write off* some victims that are severely injured. (The verb phrase is *write off*.)

Preposition: We need air bags to lift the car *off* the victim.

Other parts of speech can often serve as adverbs.



The baby was kidnapped at a local shopping mall.

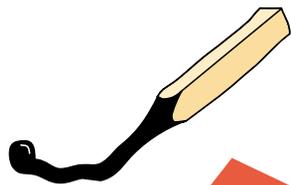
(A prepositional phrase serves as an adverb.)

Parts of Speech

Adverbs may be placed in several locations as long as the meaning of the sentence is clear.

Before the verb it modifies:

Bob carefully uncovered the burned match.



After the verb it modifies:

He examined the match closely before placing it in an evidence bag.

Phrases and clauses can often serve as adverbs.

We drove *by the accident*. (modifies *drove*)

Angela screamed *as loudly as she could*. (modifies *screamed*)

Mark called for the second alarm *after neighbors told him there were two children trapped inside the burning apartment*. (modifies *called for*)

Positioning Adverbs

Adverbs can be placed nearly anywhere in a sentence: before the words they modify, after the words they modify, at the beginning of the sentence, or at the end of the sentence.

Everyone is *very* upset about the news that a convicted sex offender will be allowed to move into the neighborhood.

Brenda shivered *uncontrollably* in the cold night air.

Luckily, Dave was able to reach the victim in time.

We need to evacuate the building *quickly*.

Adverbs are often positioned between a helping verb and a main verb.

Justice will *eventually* prevail.

Adverbs are sometimes placed in the middle of an infinitive, creating what is known as a *split infinitive*.

Parents should teach their children to *always* look both ways before crossing the street.

Having so much flexibility in positioning adverbs often creates other problems, such as misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. Even split infinitives are sometimes considered inappropriate. For a more in-depth discussion on placement of adverbs and some of the problems that may arise, refer to pages 222-232.

For More Information

Refer to Chapter 6 for more information on the potential problems associated with both adjectives and adverbs.

Prepositions

What Is a Preposition?

A preposition is a connecting word. It shows how a noun or pronoun relates to another part of the sentence. The most common prepositions consist of a single word.

aboard	beneath	inside	since
about	beside	into	through
above	besides	like	throughout
across	between	near	till
after	beyond	of	to
against	but	off	toward
along	by	on	under
alongside	concerning	onto	underneath
amid	despite	opposite	unlike
among	down	out	until
around	during	outside	up
as	except	over	upon
at	excepting	past	with
before	for	regarding	within
behind	from	round	without
below	in	save	

A preposition is a connecting word that shows how a noun or pronoun relates to another part of the sentence.

There is a fire burning in the pot.

Some prepositions are made up of multiple words. The following are just a few examples.

ahead of	in addition to	instead of	out of
along with	in case of	next to	prior to
except for	in spite of	on behalf of	up to



Object of the Preposition

The *object of the preposition* is the noun, noun phrase, or pronoun that follows the preposition. Every preposition has an object.

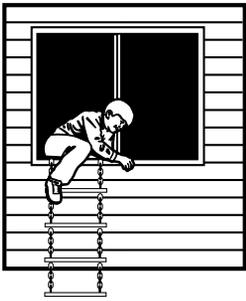
<u>Preposition</u>	<u>Object</u>
from	me
to	jail
with	your permission
prior to	being injured

Put a lid on grease fires.

Parts of Speech

The object of the preposition is the person or thing that receives the action of the verb.

Johnny escaped out the window



A prepositional phrase includes the preposition, its object, and any modifiers that come between.

He climbed down the escape ladder.

Prepositional Phrases

A *prepositional phrase* includes the preposition, its object, and any modifiers that come between.

We found the abandoned baby *in a dumpster*.

Firefighters worked to rescue the victim *throughout the long, cold night*.

Prepositional phrases can function as adjectives, modifying a noun or pronoun.

The jury found him innocent of all charges *except one*. (modifies the noun *charges*)

A career *in the fire service* can be very rewarding. (modifies the noun *career*)

Prepositional phrases can also serve as adverbs, modifying a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

We'll raid the place *at midnight*. (modifies the verb *raid*)

Clark has been blind *since birth*. (modifies the adjective *blind*)

Placement of Prepositions

Prepositions are commonly positioned between a related word and its object.

Simon is locked *in* his room.

Terry keeps a gun *under* her pillow.

Sometimes prepositions are found at the beginning of a sentence.

After the robbery, Lou decided to install an alarm system.

In case of fire, do not use the elevators.

Prepositions can also come at the end of a sentence.

There is nothing to worry *about*.

What are you looking *at*?

Parts of Speech

Ending a sentence with a preposition

Winston Churchill once poked fun at the old misconception that one shouldn't end a sentence with a preposition when he remarked, "This is the sort of English with which I will not put." Don't try so hard to avoid ending with a preposition that you end up with an awkward sentence instead.

Awkward: From where did the money come?

Better: Where did the money come *from*?

Awkward: It seemed to take a long time to determine *in* which rooms the victims were trapped.

Better: It seemed to take a long time to determine which rooms the victims were trapped *in*.

However, if you can find a better way to write the sentence, do so, particularly in formal writing. Either move the preposition or find a way to eliminate it.

Informal: Bill is the one I had submitted my proposal *to*.

Formal: Bill is the one *to* whom I had submitted my proposal.

Formal: I had submitted my proposal *to* Bill.

Informal: What was he arrested *for*?

Formal: Why was he arrested?

Unnecessary Prepositions

If a preposition does not add anything to the sentence, leave it out.

Wrong: Suzanne was injured when she fell off *of* the stage.

Right: Suzanne was injured when she fell off the stage.

Wrong: Where are the carabiners *at*?

Right: Where are the carabiners?

Wrong: Where is the ambulance going *to*?

Right: Where is the ambulance going?

Wrong: The fire started *at about* 4:00 p.m.

Right: The fire started *about* 4:00 p.m.

Right: The fire started *at* 3:53 p.m.

It is acceptable to end a sentence or a question with a preposition, particularly when the alternative would result in an awkward sentence.

What room did the fire start in?



However, in formal writing, it is often better to rewrite the sentence.

In what room did the fire start?

Parts of Speech

Coordinating and correlative conjunctions both connect like parts of speech.

Ethylene oxide is toxic and flammable.
(coordinating conjunction)



Ethylene oxide is both toxic and flammable.
(correlative conjunctions)

Conjunctions

What Is a Conjunction?

A conjunction is a connector that joins words, phrases, or clauses. This section covers the four types of conjunctions.

Types of Conjunctions

There are four types of conjunctions: *coordinating*, *correlative*, *subordinating*, and *adverbial*.

Coordinating conjunctions

There are seven coordinating conjunctions: *and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, and *yet*. Coordinating conjunctions connect like parts of speech, such as nouns to nouns, adjectives to adjectives, or clauses to clauses.

I'm not sure if this is considered a felony *or* a misdemeanor.
(*noun to noun*)

Her pupils are fixed *and* dilated. (*adjective to adjective*)

The fire in the warehouse was too intense, *so* we had to back out. (*clause to clause*)

Correlative conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions also connect like parts of speech. However, correlative conjunctions always come in pairs.

as . . . as

both . . . and

either . . . or

neither . . . nor

not . . . but

not only . . . but also

whether . . . or

whether . . . or not

With correlative conjunctions, the first conjunction emphasizes the meaning of the second.

I'm concerned *as* a firefighter and *as* a taxpayer.

We used *both* offensive *and* defensive attacks on this fire.

We have *neither* the time *nor* the resources to save this house.
Let's move on to one we can save.

Parts of Speech

What follows one correlative conjunction must be consistent with what follows the other in order to maintain parallel structure. The first example below is not parallel because the verb *is* appears after one of the conjunctions, but not the other. Positioning the verb *is* before the word *either* solves this problem.

Wrong. This either is a rescue or a body recovery operation.

Right. This is either a rescue or a body recovery operation.

For more information on parallel structure, refer to pages 478-481.

Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions join subordinate (or dependent) clauses with main (or independent) clauses. They allow you to de-emphasize less important ideas so that the more significant ones stand out. The following are some examples of subordinating conjunctions.

after	even if	provided that	unless
although	even though	rather than	until
as	if	since	when
as if	if only	so that	whenever
as long as	in order that	than	where
as though	now that	that	whereas
because	once	though	wherever
before	provided	till	while

If the subordinate clause comes at the beginning of the sentence, it is set off by a comma.

Even though I don't think your arm is broken, I suggest that we take an x-ray.

Before we leave, I want to take one more look at the roof.

Until the rapist is caught, we recommend that women take extra precautions to protect themselves.

Ordinarily if the subordinate clause comes at the end of the sentence, no comma is needed.

I suggest that we take an x-ray *even though I don't think your arm is broken.*

I want to take one more look at the roof *before we leave.*

We recommend that women take extra precautions to protect themselves *until the rapist is caught.*

Subordinating conjunctions join subordinate clauses with main clauses. They are used to de-emphasize less important ideas.



Because the cylinder was leaking, we decided to evacuate the area.

Parts of Speech

Conjunctive adverbs (or adverbial conjunctions) are transition words that link only main clauses together.



This is a construction zone; therefore hard hats are required in the area.

However, commas are required when the subordinate clause at the end of the sentence is nonessential or when it expresses contrast.

The driver's speech was slurred, as if he had been drinking.

Three innocent people were killed, whereas the drunk who caused the accident walked away with only minor injuries.

Conjunctive adverbs

Conjunctive adverbs (or adverbial conjunctions) are transition words that link only main clauses together. The following are examples.

accordingly	for example	likewise	specifically
also	further	meanwhile	still
anyhow	furthermore	moreover	subsequently
anyway	hence	namely	that is
as a result	however	nevertheless	then
besides	in addition	next	thereafter
certainly	incidentally	nonetheless	therefore
consequently	indeed	now	thus
conversely	in fact	otherwise	undoubtedly
finally	instead	similarly	unquestionably

When conjunctive adverbs are used, you must either join the two clauses by a semicolon or punctuate them as two separate sentences. You cannot join the clauses with a comma.

We had hoped for the death penalty. *However*, we are happy he received a life sentence, without the possibility of parole.

I wasn't able to shower soon enough; *consequently*, I ended up with poison oak from fighting that fire.

Lisa didn't take proper care of the wound. *As a result*, it became infected.

Unlike the other conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs can be moved to different locations within the clause.

Beginning: We found only a partial print; *however*, it was enough to identify the killer.

Middle: We found only a partial print; it was enough, *however*, to identify the killer.

End: We found only a partial print; it was enough to identify the killer, *however*.

Interjections

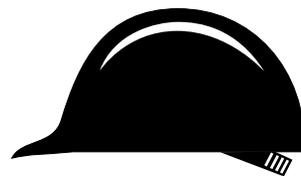
What Are Interjections?

Interjections are words or expressions designed to show surprise or emotion. They may also be used to catch a reader's attention.

ah	goodness	no	super
alas	gosh	no way	ugh
all right	great	nope	uh-huh
bah	heavens	oh	um
congratulations	help	oh my	well
darn	hey	oh no	whew
dear me	hmm	oops	wow
gee	hooray	ouch	yep
gee whiz	humph	pshaw	yes
golly	indeed	rats	yippee
good	my	right on	yo
good grief	my goodness	shoot	yuck

Interjections are words or expressions designed to show surprise or emotion.

Interjections are less common in formal and business writing than they are in other types of writing. However, interjections should be used sparingly in any application.



Strong Interjections Versus Mild Interjections

Strong interjections are punctuated with exclamation points.

Ouch! That hurt.

Darn! He got away.

Wow! Did you see that explosion?

Milder interjections are punctuated with commas or periods as appropriate.

Well, what do you think we should do?

No, I wasn't aware of the new regulation.

Oops. I forgot to lock the door.

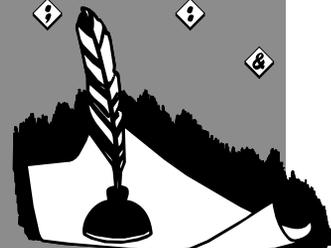
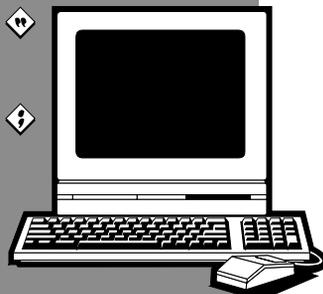
Good. Sharon will be glad to hear it isn't serious.

Darn.
I left my hard hat in the truck.

SAMPLE

Chapter 4: Subject-Verb Agreement

SAMPLE



Subject-Verb Agreement

Make subjects and verbs agree in number and person.

There are two grammatical numbers:



singular and plural

There are three grammatical persons:



first, second, and third

Introduction

Grammatical Number and Person

It is important that subjects and verbs agree in *number* and *person*.

Grammatical numbers

There are two grammatical *numbers*:

- *Singular* - refers to **one** person or thing
- *Plural* - refers to **more than one** person or thing

Singular subjects require singular verbs; plural subjects require plural verbs.

Grammatical persons

There are three grammatical *persons*:

- *First person* - the person(s) speaking: *I, we*
- *Second person* - the person(s) being spoken to: *you*
- *Third person* - the person(s) being spoken about: *he, she, it, they*, and any noun

Subjects and verbs must also agree in person.

Basic Subject-Verb Agreement

When you have only one subject, be it singular or plural, it is fairly easy to determine the correct form of verb to use. (There are some exceptions, but we will deal with those later when we cover the more complex rules.)

<u>Person</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<i>First</i>	I <i>am</i> a firefighter.	We <i>are</i> firefighters.
<i>Second</i>	You <i>are</i> a firefighter.	You <i>are</i> firefighters.
<i>Third</i>	He/she <i>is</i> a firefighter.	They <i>are</i> firefighters.

Subject-Verb Agreement

An *s* or *es* ending does opposite things to nouns and verbs; it usually makes a noun *plural*, but it always makes a present tense verb *singular*. Notice in the following examples that where the verb ends in *s*, the subject does not. Where the subject ends in *s* or *es*, the verb does not.

Singular Subject and Verb

The wound *hurts*.
The stitch *looks* ugly.

Plural Subject and Verb

The *wounds* hurt.
The *stitches* look ugly.

The only exceptions to these rules involve nouns that form irregular plurals (for example, *child* becomes *children*). The irregular plural noun does not end in *s* or *es*, but still requires a plural verb. Similarly, there are a few irregular verbs that do not end with *s* or *es* in the plural form (for example, *is* becomes *are*).

Singular Subject and Verb

The child *steals* money.
The man *is* drunk.

Plural Subject and Verb

The children *steal* money.
The men *are* drunk.

When other words come between subject and verb

The subject and verb must agree even when other words come between them. The intervening words do not alter the relation between subject and verb. If the intervening words make it difficult to determine the correct verb, try mentally removing them from the sentence.

The *strike team* from Santa Clara County *is* on its way. (*The strike team is on its way.*)

The *emphasis* in all our activities *has* to be on safety. (*The emphasis has to be on safety.*)

The *injuries* she sustained in the crash *are* not serious. (*The injuries are not serious.*)

The *police officers* patrolling Highway 85 *write* many speeding tickets. (*The police officers write many tickets.*)

The primary *objective* of our initial operations *is* search and rescue. (*The primary objective is search and rescue.*)

The primary *objectives* of the first-alarm assignment *are* rescue and exposure protection. (*The primary objectives are rescue and exposure protection.*)

Singular subjects require singular verbs. Plural subjects require plural verbs.

Our CEO requires that all employees participate in the annual fire drill.



Make the subject and verb agree even when other words come between them.

The goal of these fire drills is to make sure employees can evacuate safely and quickly in a real emergency.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects joined by *and* usually require plural verbs.

Brandon and his father often talk to high school students about the dangers of drinking and driving.



However, if two subjects act as one, they require a singular verb.

Drinking and driving is a deadly combination.

Compound (or Multiple) Subjects

Subjects Joined by *And*

Subjects joined by *and* usually require plural verbs. This is true regardless of whether the subjects themselves are singular, plural, or a mixture of both.

Engine 1 and Truck 1 *are* available on scene.

The nerves and blood vessels *are* damaged.

The suspect and his friends *were* last seen hanging around the fairgrounds.

Two Subjects That Act as One

When parts of the subject form a single idea or refer to a single person or thing, they require a singular verb.

Drinking and driving *is* a deadly combination. (*The sentence refers to the combination of drinking and driving.*)

The author and publisher of this book *is* Jill Meryl Levy. (*Jill is both the author and publisher.*)

Subjects with Supplemental Information

Some expressions make it difficult to determine the subject of the sentence and the correct verb form to use. The bottom line, however, is that *and* is the only word that makes subjects plural. Any information introduced by expressions such as those listed below is not considered part of the subject.

accompanied by
along with
and not
as well as

besides
except
in addition to
including

not even
plus
rather than
together with

If you mentally set aside the information introduced by these expressions, you can easily identify the subject. If the subject is singular, use a singular verb; if it is plural, use a plural verb.

Subject-Verb Agreement

The *bullets*, together with the gun they came from, *were* carefully examined for fingerprints.

No one, not even the manufacturers, *is* able to tell us what to expect if the two chemicals mix.

Sentences that contain this supplemental information can sometimes be awkward. Think carefully about what you are trying to say. If you really mean *and*, use it. Then the subject will clearly be a compound one, and the verb will be plural. If using *and* creates even more confusion, try rewording the sentence.

Awkward: The *rifle*, as well as the handguns, *was* loaded.
Better: The rifle and the handguns *were* loaded.

Awkward: The man accused of murdering a local police officer, accompanied by his lawyer, *is* entering the courthouse.

Confusing: The man accused of murdering a local police officer and his lawyer *are* entering the courthouse. (*This can be misunderstood to mean that the man is accused of murdering a police officer and the officer's lawyer.*)

Clear: The man accused of murdering a local police officer *is* entering the courthouse, accompanied by his lawyer.

Subjects Modified by *Each, Every* or *Many A*

Use a singular verb when a compound subject is preceded by *each*, *every*, *many a*, or *many an*.

Every man, woman, and child *has* the right to expect the very best service from our emergency response personnel.

Each victim and rescuer *was* decontaminated at the scene.

Many a man and woman *has* praised our physical agility test.

However, use a plural verb when *each* follows either a plural or a compound subject.

The fire department and the police department *each have* different opinions about shutting down the highway during such incidents.

Supplemental information is not part of the subject and does not change the verb required.

Her wrist, as well as her ankle, is swollen.



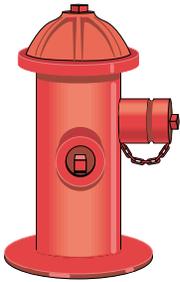
Use a singular verb when a compound subject is preceded by *each* or *every*.

Every finger and toe was frostbitten.

Subject-Verb Agreement

When subjects are joined by *or* or similar words, make the verb agree with the subject.

Either this hydrant or the one on the corner was deliberately tampered with.



If one part of the subject is singular and the other part plural, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.

Neither this hydrant nor the ones down the street have been tested yet.

Subjects Joined by *Or* or Similar Words

When subjects are joined by *or*, *either . . . or*, *neither . . . nor*, or *not only . . . but also*, make the verb agree with the subject.

All parts singular or plural

When all parts of the subject are singular, use a singular verb; when all parts are plural, use a plural verb.

Neither the sergeant nor the lieutenant *knows* why the rookie failed to adequately search the suspect. (*both singular*)

The firefighters or the paramedics *provide* oxygen to most accident victims. (*both plural*)

Neither our local jails nor the state prisons *are* adequately designed to withstand a major earthquake. (*both plural*)

One part singular, one part plural

If one part of the subject is singular and the other part is plural, make the verb agree with the nearer subject. Although the subjects may appear in either order, it is generally less awkward to put the singular one first and the plural one second.

Awkward: Neither the firefighters nor the *paramedic was* able to locate the third victim.

Better: Neither the paramedic nor the *firefighters were* able to locate the third victim.

Realize that rearranging the order of the subjects can change the emphasis of the sentence. Make sure the sentence says what you want it to.

Example 1: Not only the hood and duct system but also the *sprinklers were* activated.

Example 2: Not only the sprinklers but also the *hood and duct system was* activated.

Notice how the emphasis is different in each of the two examples above. The emphasis is on the subject that follows *but also*. The first example implies that a stove fire was large enough to overwhelm the hood and duct system, requiring the activation of nearby sprinklers. The second implies that a fire was close enough to the stove that both the overhead sprinklers and the nearby hood and duct system were activated.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Agreement with person

Also make the verb agree in person (first, second, or third) with the nearer subject.

Either you or Sally *has* to report this theft to the police.

Neither the paramedics nor their supervisor *wants* to authorize a helicopter transport.

If this creates an awkward sentence, try to reword it.

Awkward: Either Bill or I *am* responsible for investigating this fire.

Better: Either Bill *is* responsible for investigating this fire, or I *am*.

Awkward: Neither you nor I *am* likely to be promoted off this list.

Better: Neither one of us *is* likely to be promoted off this list.

Make the verb agree in person with the nearer subject.



Either you or Joe needs to make sure that everyone has evacuated.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Singular indefinite pronouns refer to one person, thing, or group.

Someone has slashed my tires.



Substituting the word “one” can often help you identify the singular indefinite pronouns.

Every tire was slashed. (Every one was slashed.)

Indefinite Pronouns

An *indefinite pronoun* is a pronoun that does not refer to a specific person or thing.

Singular Indefinite Pronouns

The following indefinite pronouns are singular in meaning; they refer to a single unspecified person or thing or to one collective group. These indefinite pronouns require singular verbs.

another	either	much	one
anybody	every	neither	somebody
anyone	everybody	nobody	someone
(or any one)	everyone	no one	(or some one)
anything	(or every one)	nothing	something
each	everything		

Some of the examples that follow are written in two different ways to show how you can sometimes substitute the word *one* for another noun to help identify the singular indefinite pronouns.

Every drum is leaking. (Every one is leaking.)

Neither suspect was willing to confess. (Neither one was willing to confess.)

Another storm is predicted for tomorrow. (Another one is predicted for tomorrow.)

Each of the victims requires medical attention. (Each one requires medical attention.)

Neither of the victims wants to go to the hospital. (Neither one wants to go the hospital.)

Someone from the mayor’s office is waiting to talk to the incident commander.

Everyone is worried about aftershocks.

Nobody wants to risk another explosion.

We need to know if *anybody is* trapped inside the building.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Use a singular verb even when two or more of these singular indefinite pronouns are joined by *and*.

I want to question *anyone* and *everyone* who *was* in the building when the bomb went off.

In order to determine whether to spell *anyone*, *everyone*, and *someone* as one word or two, look at the construction of the sentence. If the pronoun is followed by an *of* phrase or is used to mean “one of a number of things,” use two words. In all other cases, use one word.

Two words: *Every one* of us was exhausted after climbing the hill to the fire.

One word: *Everyone* was exhausted after climbing the hill to the fire.

Two words: *Any one* could be leaking.

Two words: *Any one* of the drums could be leaking.

One word: Does *anyone* know which drum is leaking?

For more information on the use of *each*, *every*, *many a*, or *many an*, refer to page 169. For more information on the use of *one of*, refer to page 175.

Plural Indefinite Pronouns

The indefinite pronouns *both*, *few*, *many*, *others*, and *several* are always plural; they require plural verbs.

Several of the trucks *are* improperly placarded. (*Several are improperly placarded.*)

Both of the guns *were* loaded. (*Both were loaded.*)

A *few* of our volunteer firefighters *are* certified to drive the fire engines. *Others have* expressed an interest in going through the certification program.

Use two words when referring to one of a larger number. Otherwise, use one word.

Any one of them is well qualified to perform the operation.

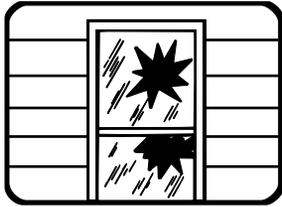


Does anyone have a recommendation?

Subject-Verb Agreement

Some indefinite pronouns may be singular or plural, depending on the context of the sentence.

Most of the windows were broken.
(plural)



Most of the damage was minor.
(singular)

Indefinite Pronouns That May Be Singular or Plural

The indefinite pronouns *all*, *any*, *more*, *most*, *none*, and *some* may use either a singular or a plural verb, depending on the context of the sentence.

Most of the building is damaged. (refers to one building)

Most of the windows are broken. (refers to several windows)

All is lost because we failed to plan adequately. (refers to one goal)

All have been killed or injured by the blast. (refers to several victims)

Is there any evidence we can take with us? (refers to evidence as a collective unit)

Are there any fingerprints on the door knob? (refers to more than one fingerprint)

None of the gasoline has entered the storm drain. (refers to one product)

None of the containers have ruptured. (refers to several containers)

Plural verbs are used with *count nouns* (things you can count). Using the examples above, we can count how many windows are broken, how many people were killed or injured, how many fingerprints were found on the door, and how many containers are either intact or ruptured.

Singular verbs are used with *noncount nouns* (things you cannot count). The format in which the information is presented is the key to distinguishing between singular and plural. For example, you can count (or estimate) how many gallons of gasoline enters a storm drain. However, if you refer to *all* or *none*, you are referring to the product as one unit; you are not referring to the number of gallons. Each of the singular examples above is similar. They all refer to one thing: one building, one goal, evidence as one collective unit, or one product.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Phrases With *One Of* . . .

Although the indefinite pronoun *one* is always singular, when the word *one* is used in a phrase beginning with *one of*, the phrase may be either singular or plural, depending on the context of the sentence. Look for the telltale phrases listed below:

singular verb required

one of
one of the
the only one of

plural verb required

one of (those) who
one of the (things) that
only one of

The following examples show how these phrases impact which verb form to use. The key is being able to recognize which noun or pronoun the verb refers to.

Singular: *One of the sprinkler heads is leaking. (One sprinkler head is leaking.)*

Plural: *This is one of the sprinkler heads that are leaking. (Two or more sprinkler heads are leaking; this is one of them.)*

Singular: *One of the vehicles was burning. (One vehicle was burning.)*

Plural: *This is one of the vehicles that were burning. (Two or more were burning; this is one of them.)*

Singular: *One of the passengers was ejected from the vehicle. (One passenger was ejected.)*

Plural: *She is one of the passengers who were ejected from the vehicle. (Two or more were ejected; she is one of them.)*

Singular: *He is the only one of the defendants who was found guilty. (Of the defendants, he was the only one found guilty.)*

Plural: *He is only one of the defendants who were found guilty. (Two or more defendants were found guilty; he is one of them.)*

One of may be singular or plural, depending on the context of the sentence.

One of the sprinkler heads is leaking. (singular)

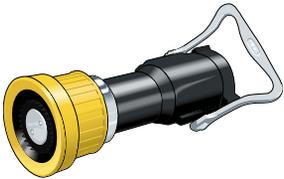


This is one of the sprinkler heads that are leaking. (plural)

Subject-Verb Agreement

A relative pronoun (*who, which, that*) has the same form regardless of whether it is used with a singular or plural word.

This is the nozzle that works the best.
(singular)



These are the nozzles that were recommended.
(plural)

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns, such as *who, which, and that*, are used to relate groups of words to nouns or other pronouns. Relative pronouns have the same form regardless of whether they are being used with singular or plural words. To determine the correct verb form, you must first identify the subject of the sentence. (If the sentence contains the word *only*, the verb will be singular.)

This *is* the *creep* who *steals* from people in the company.
(*singular*)

These *are* the *radios* that *transmit* poorly. (*plural*)

Which *arm is* broken? (*singular*)

Let's determine which *victims have* not yet been triaged.
(*plural*)

It is *not* your *weapons* but your good *judgment* in the field that *keeps* you safe. (*Good judgment, not your weapons, keeps you safe.*) (*singular*)

Susan is the *only* one of the *probies* who *has* trouble raising ladders. (*Of the probies, Susan is the only one who has trouble.*) (*singular*)

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is one that has singular form, but can be either singular or plural, depending on how it is used. Collective nouns are words that name a group of individuals or things. The following are examples:

army	crew	majority
audience	crowd	media
board	faculty	membership
class	family	minority
committee	gang	platoon
corporation	government	public
council	group	staff
couple	jury	team

The Group as One Unit - Singular

When the group acts as one unit, use a singular verb.

The *Safety Committee meets* monthly.

The *jury has* reached a verdict.

Let's wait until the *audience is* seated. We don't want to panic anyone.

The Group as Separate Individuals - Plural

When considering the group members as individuals who act separately, use a plural verb.

The *media have* been waiting for an updated report on the fire. (*refers to several members of the news media*)

The *majority belong* to the union. (*refers to the majority of members within the department*)

A *group of us were* certified as paramedics long before the department decided to implement a paramedic program. (*refers to individuals who were certified separately*)

When the group acts as one unit, use a singular verb.

The crew is ready to take off.



When members of the group act separately, use a plural verb.

The crew are highly trained flight nurses.

Subject-Verb Agreement

It is often better to rewrite the sentence than to use a verb form that sounds awkward.

The committee are arguing.
(awkward)



The committee members are arguing.
(better)

Sometimes even when it is grammatically correct to use a plural verb, it doesn't sound right. In those cases, it may be better to rewrite the sentence.

Awkward: The *committee are* arguing about which technique works best.

Better: The *committee members are* arguing about which technique works best.

Awkward: The *strike team are* coming from five different departments.

Better: The *strike team is comprised of* engines from five different departments.

Some words may require either singular or plural verbs, depending on whether your emphasis is on the group as a whole or as a collection of individuals. This is another situation where you may need to rewrite the sentence to keep it from being awkward.

Singular: The family *is* suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. (*emphasizes the family as a whole*)

Plural: The family *are* suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. (*emphasizes each individual in the family*)

Revised: Everyone in the family *is* suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. (*singular*)

Revised: All members of the family *are* suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. (*plural*)

Numbers and Quantities

Time, Money, and Quantity

Use a singular verb when referring to time, money, or quantity as a single unit. Use a plural verb when you are referring to multiple individual units.

Two weeks is a long time to wait for the results of a blood test. (*singular*)

Two weeks have passed since he was bitten, and we've seen no sign of rabies. (*plural*)

I think that *\$7000 is* an outrageous fine for such a minor violation. (*singular*)

Thousands of dollars were wasted because they failed to comply with life safety codes and had to start over. (*plural*)

Forty gallons is not much gasoline. (*singular*)

However, if *forty gallons of gasoline are* spilled into the storm drain, we are going to have a big problem. (*plural*)

Fractions and percentages

The same rule applies when dealing with fractions or percentages.

One-fifth of his body is badly burned. (*singular*)

Half of the victims are children. (*plural*)

Fifty percent of the building is fully involved in fire. (*singular*)

Roughly *eighty percent of our nation's fire victims die* from smoke inhalation, not from burn injuries. (*plural*)

Part of the job involves dealing with angry citizens. (*singular*)

Part of the tickets I wrote today were for multiple infractions of the vehicle code. (*plural*)

Use a singular verb when referring to time, money, or quantity as a single unit.

Forty thousand dollars is missing.



Use a plural verb when you are referring to multiple individual units.

Thousands of dollars were stolen.

Subject-Verb Agreement

**A number
is plural;
the number
is singular.**

**A largenumber
of teenage girls
are pregnant.**



**The number of
teen pregnancies
is growing at an
alarming rate.**

Numbers in arithmetic

In arithmetic, you may use singular or plural verbs.

Singular: Two and two *is* four.
Two and two *makes* four.
Plural: Two and two *are* four.
Two and two *make* four.

“A Number” and “The Number”

The collective noun *number* may be singular or plural. Preceded by *a*, it is plural; preceded by *the*, it is singular.

A number of crimes *are* committed every day.

The number of violent crimes *is* increasing.

A number of people *are* protesting.

The number of protestors *grows* by the hour.

Nouns Ending in S

Most nouns ending in *s* are plural and thus require plural verbs. However, there are some exceptions and special considerations. A good dictionary can often help you determine the correct verb form to use.

Nouns That Are Singular in Meaning

Some nouns are singular in meaning even though they end in *s*; they require singular verbs.

The *measles is* not something I want to experience.

News about the bombing victims *was* slow in coming.

The *summons is* for jury duty.

Nouns That Are Plural in Meaning

Some plural nouns refer to a single item, but are nonetheless considered plural. Examples include:

assets	earnings	premises	riches
belongings	goods	proceeds	savings
credentials	grounds	quarters	thanks
dues	odds	remains	winnings

These nouns require plural verbs.

All of their *belongings were* destroyed by the fire.

Her *remains were* found by two boys playing in the woods.

Odds are that it's going to be another false alarm.

We made sure the *premises were* secure before we left.

Unions *dues are* due this month.

Some nouns are singular in meaning even though they end in *s*.

***News* about the case was slow in coming.**



Some plural nouns refer to a single item, but are nonetheless considered plural.

***The grounds were* thoroughly searched.**

Subject-Verb Agreement

When nouns may be singular or plural, you must determine the correct verb based on the meaning of the sentence.

Her whereabouts is being kept secret.
(singular)



Their whereabouts are unknown.
(plural)

Nouns That May Be Singular or Plural

Some nouns that end in *s* are written the same way whether they are singular or plural. You must determine the correct verb form based on the meaning of the sentence.

Singular: *The means we use most often to extinguish a fire is cooling.*

Plural: *Other means of fire extinguishment are smothering, removing the fuel, and interrupting the chemical chain reaction.*

Singular: *This series of murders was committed by the same individual.*

Plural: *These two series of murders are similar.*

In the first example below, *headquarters* refers to management as a singular entity. *Headquarters* in the second example may be interpreted to mean the offices (plural) of the police department or the building itself (singular). Either verb is acceptable.

Headquarters has asked that we complete our hydrant testing by the end of June.

Police *headquarters are/is* located at 70 North First Street.

The same rules apply to other words that *do not* end in *s*, but that also have the same form regardless of whether they are singular or plural in meaning (for example, *sheep*, *deer*, and *moose*).

Two-Part Objects

Use a plural verb with two-part objects such as *glasses*, *trousers*, *pants*, *pliers*, *scissors*, *tweezers*, *handcuffs*, and *turnouts*. However, use a singular verb when the word is preceded by the phrase *pair of* (unless you are referring to multiple pairs).

These *scissors are* not sharp enough to cut through the seat belt.

Our *turnouts are* designed to protect us from fire, not from hazardous materials.

One *pair* of uniform pants *is* missing from my locker.

Three pairs (or *pair*) of uniform pants *are* missing from my locker. (*When referring to inanimate objects, it is acceptable to use either pairs or pair when preceded by a number.*)

Nouns Ending in *ICS*

Some nouns that end in *ics* may require singular or plural verbs, depending on their meaning in the sentence. Examples include:

acoustics	economics	politics	statistics
athletics	ethics	physics	

Use a singular verb if the noun refers to a body of knowledge or a course of study. Use a plural verb if the noun is used to describe qualities, activities, or individual facts.

Singular: *Statistics is* much easier for me now that I have a computer.

Plural: These *statistics were* derived from fire reports collected from all over the country.

Singular: *Ethics deals* with the values relating to human conduct.

Plural: Their attorney's *ethics are* questionable.

Singular: *Politics is* a dirty business.

Plural: Department *politics are* often frustrating.

Nouns that end in *ics* may require singular or plural verbs, depending on the meaning of the sentence.

***Politics is* a dirty business.**



***Department politics are* often frustrating.**

Subject-Verb Agreement

If a noun of foreign origin is singular, use a singular verb; if it is plural, use a plural verb.

This bacterium is the culprit that produces the botulinus toxin.
(singular)



The bacteria are hard to see.
(plural)

Nouns of Foreign Origin

If a noun of foreign origin is singular, use a singular verb; if it is plural, use a plural verb.

Singular: The first *diagnosis* was correct.

Plural: Both *diagnoses* say the same thing.

Singular: We don't believe this to be the work of a serial killer because the *modus operandi* does not match any that we are familiar with.

Plural: Their *modi operandi* were similar enough that we originally believed all the crimes were committed by the same person.

Singular: Our new *Memorandum of Agreement* provides for healthy wage increases over the next two years.

Plural: *Memorandums* (or *memoranda*) of agreement are easier to negotiate with the current administration than they were with the last one.

Singular: The *bacterium Clostridium botulinum* is the culprit that produces the deadly *botulinus* toxin.

Plural: *Clostridium* bacteria produce a very deadly toxin called "botulin."

It can sometimes be difficult to determine the correct form of these foreign words. This is partly because the rules for forming plurals in other languages are frequently different than they are in the English language. In addition, there are some words that are seldom used. For example, we almost always use *bacteria* (plural) rather than *bacterium* (singular) because we mostly refer to multiple organisms rather than the *type* of organism. We almost always use *larynx* (singular) rather than *larynges* (plural) because a person only has one larynx.

(Foreign words and phrases that have *not* become an established part of the English language should be italicized. Normally, only the words *Clostridium bacterium* in the last set of examples above would be italicized. The other words were italicized to show the relation between subject and verb.)

Subject-Verb Agreement

Examples of singular and plural foreign nouns

Some words have become so much a part of the English language that we don't realize they are of foreign origin. The following list shows the singular form of various foreign nouns, the original foreign plural, and if one exists, an alternate plural that was created within the English language. Where two plural forms are listed, the preferred form is written in italics.

Singular	Original Foreign Plural	Alternate Plural
analysis	analyses	
appendix	appendices	<i>appendixes</i>
apparatus	<i>apparatus</i>	apparatuses
axis	axes	
bacterium	bacteria	
basis	bases	
bureau	bureaux	<i>bureaus</i>
cranium	crania	<i>craniums</i>
crisis	crises	
criterion	<i>criteria</i>	criteria
curriculum	<i>curricula</i>	curriculums
datum *	<i>data</i>	datums
diagnosis	diagnoses	
formula	formulae	<i>formulas</i>
hypothesis	hypotheses	
larynx	<i>larynges</i>	larynxes
matrix	<i>matrices</i>	matrixes
memorandum	memoranda	<i>memorandums</i>
modus operandi	modi operandi	
nucleus	<i>nuclei</i>	nucleuses
phenomenon	<i>phenomena</i>	phenomenons
plateau	plateaux	<i>plateaus</i>
stimulus	stimuli	
synthesis	syntheses	
ultimatum	ultimata	<i>ultimatums</i>
vertebra	<i>vertebrae</i>	vertebras

* *Datum* is rarely used in English. Although *data* is most often used as a plural noun meaning "facts or pieces of information," it is also used as a singular mass noun meaning "information."

Words of foreign origin may have unusual plural forms. But singular nouns still need singular verbs; plural nouns still need plural verbs.

The seventh cervical vertebra is out of alignment. (singular)



The other vertebrae are all right. (plural)

Subject-Verb Agreement

Company names are generally considered to be singular.

Good Samaritan Hospital wants to host the next county-wide disaster drill.



Valley Medical Center is remodeling its emergency department.

Miscellaneous Names and Words

Company Names

Company names are generally considered to be singular and usually require singular verbs.

Firebelle Productions *publishes* books that are primarily geared for emergency response personnel.

The FBI *has* given us *its* full support.

Writers sometimes treat a company name as plural if the entire name carries a plural idea—that is, if it contains the names of two or more individuals or it contains words that imply two or more individuals. Both options are considered acceptable.

Singular: Floyd & Associates *is* planning to host another paramedic class this fall.

Plural: Floyd & Associates *are* planning to host another paramedic class this fall.

Singular: Innis and Bardet *has* agreed to let us use *its* old warehouse for training before the building is demolished.

Plural: Innis and Bardet *have* agreed to let us use *their* old warehouse for training before the building is demolished.

Notice in the last example above that when the verb is singular (*has*), so is the pronoun (*its*). When the verb is plural (*have*), the pronoun is plural too (*their*). Refer to pages 264-265 for more information on choosing the correct pronoun for use with company names.

Geographic Names

Geographic names ending in *s* may be either singular or plural, depending on whether they refer to one entity or multiple entities.

The *United States leads* the rest of the industrialized world in fire deaths per capita.

The *Hawaiian Islands are* far enough away that *they* are not likely to be affected by the storms that are pounding California.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Words Being Defined or Described

Use a singular verb when defining or describing a word, even if it is in plural form. (Note: Words being defined are often set in italics or enclosed in quotation marks.)

Turnouts *is* another name for bunker gear.

Heaters *is* a slang term for pistols or guns.

Civvies *is* a slang term meaning “civilian clothes.”

Smoke and mirrors *is* an expression that means “a strategy of deception and cover-up.”

Titles

The title of a book, magazine, television show, and so on, is considered singular.

Cops *is* his favorite television show.

JEMS *contains* interesting articles about emergency care in the field.

Use a singular verb when defining or describing a word.



“Heaters” is a slang term for pistols or guns.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Most phrases or clauses that serve as the subject of a sentence require singular verbs.



Knowing sign language is often helpful to emergency responders.

Phrases or Clauses Serving as Subjects

You must also choose the correct verb when phrases or clauses serve as the subject of a sentence.

Phrases and Clauses in General

Phrases or clauses serving as the subject of a sentence require singular verbs.

Saving lives is very rewarding.

Lying to a police officer was stupid.

Whether we could have saved her if we had gotten there any sooner is questionable.

Whatever you tell me in confidence stays right here.

Clauses Beginning with *What*

If the clause begins with *what*, you must look at the meaning of the sentence to determine the correct verb. In other words, to what does the word *what* refer?

What we need *is* a new *defibrillator*.

What I want *are* extra *rifles*.

Reversing the order of the sentence can also help you determine the correct verb.

A new *defibrillator is* what we need.

Extra *rifles are* what I want.

Sentences Beginning with *There*, *Here*, or *It*

Sentences Beginning with *There* or *Here*

The words *there* and *here* are never the subject of a sentence. In sentences beginning with *there* or *here*, look past the verb to find the subject. Once you determine whether the subject is singular or plural, you can determine the correct verb to use.

There *is* an accident up ahead.

There *are* two dispatchers on duty.

Reversing the order of the sentence can also help you determine the correct verb.

An accident *is* up ahead.

Two dispatchers *are* on duty.

Many of the rules covered so far also apply to sentences beginning with *there* or *here*.

Here *are* the defibrillator and the drug box. (Two subjects joined by *and* usually require a plural verb.)

Here *is* my best friend and former captain. (The verb is singular because *best friend* and *former captain* are meant to describe the same person.)

Here *is* every Bill of Lading and Material Safety Data Sheet I could find. (Use a singular verb when a compound subject is preceded by *each*, *every*, *many a*, or *many an*.)

There *is* at least one 24-foot ladder or one 35-foot ladder on each rig. (Two singular subjects joined by *or* require a singular verb.)

There *are* neither enough exits nor enough space to accommodate a crowd of this size. (In sentences that contain neither . . . nor, if one subject is singular and one is plural, make the verb agree with the nearer subject.)

The words *there* and *here* are never the subject of your sentence. Make the verb agree with the subject.

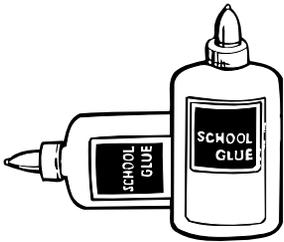
Be careful.
There *is* a beehive in the backyard.



There *are* also several angry bees flying around.

Subject-Verb Agreement

The word *it* is always singular.



It is unsafe to sniff glue.

There *are* a number of victims that need to be transported to the hospital. (*Use a plural verb with a number.*)

Here *is* the number of patients we transported. (*Use a singular verb with the number.*)

If you are unsure whether to use a singular verb or a plural verb in a particular sentence beginning with *there* or *here*, you may be able to find the answer by looking back at the other rules presented in this chapter.

Sentences Beginning With

The word *it* is always singular.

It is this doctor who stopped at the scene of the accident.

It was my captain who ordered us to retreat.

It was the firefighters who discovered the drug lab.

It is the young and the elderly who are most vulnerable to fire.

More Effective Sentences

Sentences beginning with *there is* or *it is* are often less dynamic than other sentences. Several of the sentences on these last two pages could be more effective if rewritten. The following are three examples.

Weak: There are a number of victims that need to be transported to the hospital.

Better: A number of victims need to be transported to the hospital.

Weak: It was the firefighters who discovered the drug lab.

Better: The firefighters are the ones who discovered the drug lab.

Weak: It is the young and the elderly who are most vulnerable to fire.

Better: The young and the elderly are the most vulnerable to fire.

Sentences with Inverted Word Order

The verb must agree with the subject even when the normal word order is inverted (the verb precedes the subject). Inverted word order occurs mainly in questions and in sentences beginning with *there* or *it* and a form of *be*.

Are there any survivors?

Is there a chance of survival?

Where *is* your personal alarm *device*?

What *were* the *drugs* you confiscated?

There *are* several *survivors*.

What *doesn't* make sense to me *is why* he would steal everything else but this.

What *start* out to be seemingly routine *calls are* sometimes our most dangerous *ones*.

It *is Nick* who found them.

Enclosed *is a* copy of the incident *report* for your reference.

If you are unsure which verb form to use, try mentally putting the subject before the verb.

Nick is the one who found them.

A *copy* of the incident report *is* enclosed.

Word order is sometimes reversed for emphasis or drama. The verb must still agree with the subject.

From somewhere beneath the rubble *came* several *cries* for help.

The verb must agree with the subject even when the normal word order is inverted (the verb precedes the subject).



Enclosed are three disks that contain proof that Rodgers was embezzling from the company.

Subject-Verb Agreement

A linking verb must agree with its subject.

Her chief complaint is headaches.



Headaches are her chief complaint.

Miscellaneous Rules

Linking Verbs

A linking verb, such as *is* or *are*, must agree with its subject, not its subject complement (a word that renames or describes the subject).

Her chief *complaint is* headaches. (*The subject is the singular word complaint.*)

Headaches are her chief complaint. (*The subject is the plural word headaches.*)

One of the things I'm afraid of is earthquakes. (*The subject is the singular word one.*)

Smoke *detectors are* one thing that no home should be without. (*The subject is the plural word detectors.*)

Positive and Negative Subjects

If your sentence has a positive subject contrasted with a negative one, make the verb agree with the positive subject.

It is the *captain*, not the firefighters, who *is* ultimately responsible for what happens on the fireground.

It is the *paramedics*, not their supervisor, who *are* under the most pressure in the field.

Exceptions and Special Circumstances

There are a few idiomatic expressions that defy the rules. For some reason, it simply sounds better to use a different verb form. Ordinarily, two subjects joined by the word *and* require a plural verb. Yet you could not use *are* in place of *is* in the following sentence.

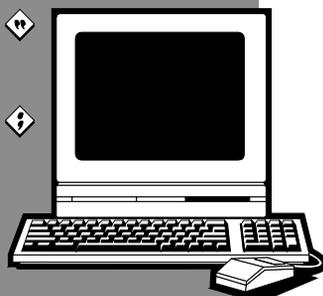
There *is* no place to hide and no chance of escape.

Sentences written in the subjunctive mood sometimes require different verb forms than other sentences. Refer to pages 206-210 for more information.

I wouldn't do that if I *were* you. (not *was*)

Chapter 5: More on Verbs

SAMPLE



More on Verbs

Most verbs are regular; the past tense and the past participle are formed by adding either *d* or *ed* to the present tense.



I scream loudly.

I screamed earlier.

I had screamed before I realized it was you.

Recognizing Regular and Irregular Verbs

A verb is either regular or irregular, depending on how the past tense and past participle forms are created.

Regular Verbs

Most verbs in the English language are regular, meaning the past tense and the past participle are formed by adding either *d* or *ed* to the present tense (or plain form). Some undergo spelling changes when forming the past tense and past participle. For example, the final consonant may be doubled or a final *y* may be changed to an *i* before adding *ed*. But the verbs are still considered to be regular because they follow normal spelling conventions. The past tense and the past participle are always identical for regular verbs.

Present Tense (<i>Now I . . .</i>)	Past Tense (<i>Yesterday I . . .</i>)	Past Participle (<i>I have or had . . .</i>)
live	lived	lived
save	saved	saved
arrest	arrested	arrested
scream	screamed	screamed
drag	dragged	dragged
plot	plotted	plotted
bury	buried	buried
try	tried	tried

Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs do not follow the normal pattern when forming the past tense and past participle. There are about 200 irregular verbs in the English language, most of which are listed here. Unfortunately, there are no easy rules to help you remember the irregular verbs. You need to either memorize them or look them up.

Present Tense (<i>Now I . . .</i>)	Past Tense (<i>Yesterday I . . .</i>)	Past Participle (<i>I have or had . . .</i>)
am, be	was, were	been
arise	arose	arisen
awake	awoke, awaked	awaked, awoke

More on Verbs

bear	bore	borne
beat	beat	beat, beaten
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent
bet	bet	bet
bid (offer)	bid	bid
bid (order)	bade	bidden, bid
bind	bound	bound
bite	bit	bitten, bit
bleed	bled	bled
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
build	built	built
burst	burst	burst
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
cling	clung	clung
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
creep	crept	crept
cut	cut	cut
deal	dealt	dealt
dig	dug	dug
dive	dived, dove	dived
do	did	done
draw	drew	drawn
dream	dreamed, dreamt	dreamed, dreamt
drink	drank	drunk, drank
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feed	fed	fed
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
fit	fit, fitted	fit, fitted
flee	fled	fled
fling	flung	flung
fly	flew	flown
forbid	forbade	forbidden
forget	forgot	forgotten, forgot
forgive	forgave	forgiven
forsake	forsook	forsaken
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	got, gotten
give	gave	given

Irregular verbs do not follow the normal pattern when forming the past tense and past participle.



I fight hard.

I fought hard yesterday.

I have fought before.

More on Verbs

With some irregular verbs, the past tense and the past participle are the same.



I shoot accurately.

I shot the suspect.

I have shot criminals before.

go	went	gone
grind	ground	ground
grow	grew	grown
hang (suspend)	hung	hung
hang (execute)	hanged	hanged
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
hide	hid	hidden, hid
hit	hit	hit
hold	held	held
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept
know	knew	known
lay	laid	laid
lead	led	led
leave	left	left
lend	lent	lent
let	let	let
lie (deceive)	lied	lied
lie (recline)	lay	lain
light	lighted, lit	lighted, lit
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
mean	meant	meant
meet	met	met
mistake	mistook	mistaken
pay	paid	paid
prove	proved	proved, proven
put	put	put
quit	quit	quit
read	read	read
rid	rid	rid
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
seek	sought	sought
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
set	set	set
shake	shook	shaken
shear	sheared	sheared, shorn
shed	shed	shed
shine (light)	shone	shone
shine (polish)	shined	shined
shoe	shod, shoed	shod, shoed, shodden
shoot	shot	shot

More on Verbs

show	showed	shown, showed
shrink	shrank, shrunk	shrunk, shrunken
shut	shut	shut
sing	sang, sung	sung
sink	sank, sunk	sunk, sunken
sit	sat	sat
slay	slew	slain
sleep	slept	slept
slide	slid	slid
sling	slung	slung
slit	slit	slit
sneak	sneaked, snuck	sneaked, snuck
speak	spoke	spoken
speed	ped, speeded	ped, speeded
spend	spent	spent
split	split	split
spin	spun	spun
spread	spread	spread
spring	sprang, sprung	sprung
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
stick	stuck	stuck
sting	stung	stung
stink	stank, stunk	stunk
stride	strode	stridden
strike	struck	struck, stricken
strive	strove	striven
swear	swore	sworn
swim	swam	swum
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
tell	told	told
think	thought	thought
throw	threw	thrown
upset	upset	upset
wake	waked, woke	waked, woken
wear	wore	worn
weave	wove, weaved	woven, wove
weep	wept	wept
win	won	won
wind	wound	wound
withdraw	withdrew	withdrawn
withhold	withheld	withheld
wring	wrung	wrung
write	wrote	written

With other irregular verbs, the past tense and the past participle are different.



I speak with him daily.

I spoke with him yesterday.

I have spoken with him before.

More on Verbs

If a verb is irregular, you will see multiple entries in the dictionary.



sleep, slept, sleeping

Using a Dictionary to Identify Regular and Irregular Verbs

An authoritative dictionary can help you determine whether a verb is regular or irregular. If a verb is regular, you will generally see only one entry. For example, you will see *scream*, but not *screamed* or *screaming*. It is understood that the past tense and past participle are formed by adding *ed* and that the present participle is formed by adding *ing*.

Some dictionaries list multiple entries if the present tense ends with a silent *e* (*save, saved, saving*). Dictionaries usually list multiple entries if the verb undergoes spelling changes when adding a suffix, such as when the final consonant is doubled (*plot, plotted, plotting*) or when the final *y* is changed to an *i* (*try, tried, trying*). The second entry (*saved, plotted, and tried* in these examples) represents both the past tense and the past participle.

If the verb is irregular, you will always see multiple entries. You may see something like *bleed, bled, bleeding*. If there are only three entries, it means the past tense and the past participle are identical (*bled*). If they are not identical, you will see an additional entry, for example, *slay, slew, slain, slaying*. The second entry (*slew*) is the past tense. The third entry (*slain*) is the past participle.

Sometimes more than one spelling is acceptable. In that case you may see something like this: *sink, sank or sunk, sunk or sunken, sinking*. *Sank* and *sunk* are the past tense. *Sunk* or *sunken* are the past participles.

Sometimes the meaning of the word dictates which spelling you should use. For example, use *lied* when your meaning is “deceived” and *lay* or *lain* when your meaning is “reclined.” Those meanings are well defined in the dictionary.

The English language is dynamic. New words are added. Current ones fall out of use. Meanings and usage change. A five- or ten-year-old dictionary will not reflect current acceptable usage. Make sure you purchase a new dictionary periodically to keep up with the changes.

Using the Correct Verb Tense

Verb tense tells when the action takes place. The various tenses are shown briefly below. The following pages provide a closer look at when and how these tenses are used.

Verb Tenses: An Overview

There are three *primary tenses* that correspond to the three time divisions: *present, past, and future*. The primary tenses are sometimes referred to as *simple tenses* because they indicate relatively simple time relations.

Present: I work out.
 Past: I worked out.
 Future: I will work out.

There are three *perfect tenses*. The perfect tenses are used to show more complex time relations than can be shown with the primary tenses. An action expressed in one of the perfect tenses is something that either was or will be completed at the time of another action.

Present perfect: I have worked out.
 Past perfect: I had worked out.
 Future perfect: I will have worked out.

There are six *progressive tenses*, each corresponding to one of the previous tenses. The progressive tenses describe actions in progress.

Present progressive: I am working out.
 Past progressive: I was working out.
 Future progressive: I will be working out.
 Present perfect progressive: I have been working out.
 Past perfect progressive: I had been working out.
 Future perfect progressive: I will have been working out.

There are also two *emphatic tenses*.

Present emphatic: I do work out.
 Past emphatic: I did work out.

Verb tense tells when the action takes place.

There are three primary tenses.



**Present tense:
*I work out.***

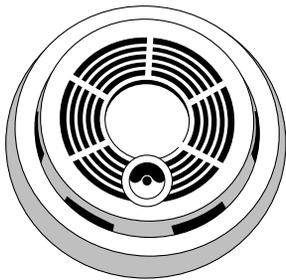
**Past tense:
*I worked out.***

**Future tense:
*I will work out.***

More on Verbs

The present tense is used to indicate action that is occurring now.

The smoke detector needs new batteries.



The present tense is used to state a general truth.

Smoke detectors save lives.

The Present Tense

The present tense has several uses. First, the present tense is used to indicate action that is occurring now.

He *needs* CPR.

I *know* where the fire started.

It is also used to indicate habitual or recurring action.

Our shift *starts* at 0800 hours.

We *inspect* the facility annually.

The present tense is used to state a general truth.

Smoke detectors *save* lives.

The dose *makes* the poison.

The present tense can be used when referring to a future time if the time is specified.

C shift *is* back on duty tomorrow.

The drill *begins* at 9:00 a.m.

The present tense is generally used when referring to literature, and film.

The author *provides* a good, common sense approach to dealing with haz mat terrorism.

Lad and Wolf *escape* the fire in the barn; unfortunately, Lady and Angela's puppy, Little Lad, *are* killed.

The Past Tense

The past tense refers to an action that occurred before now.

He *died* in my arms.

We *destroyed* the evidence.

More on Verbs

Be careful with irregular verbs

The past tense and past participle of *regular* verbs are identical, so there is no worry about confusing them. However, such is not the case with many of the *irregular* verbs. Be careful with irregular verbs. Do not use the past participle when you should be using the past tense.

Wrong: Ellen *begun* to worry when her son did not return from school.

Right: Ellen *began* to worry when her son did not return from school.

Wrong: How can we tell if she *drunk* the poison?

Right: How can we tell if she *drank* the poison?

The Future Tense

The future tense refers to an action that will occur in the future. It uses the helping verb *will* or *shall* plus the plain form of the verb.

I *will see* the doctor tomorrow.

They *shall not get away* this time.

The Present Perfect Tense

The present perfect tense refers to an action that began in the past and has either recently been completed or is still going on. It uses the helping verb *have* or *has* plus the past participle.

Hate crimes *have become* a significant problem in our city.

He *has threatened* to sabotage the water treatment facility.

The Past Perfect Tense

The past perfect tense refers to the earlier of two past actions. If two prior actions or events did not occur at the same time, use the past perfect tense to refer to the one in the more distant past; use the regular past tense for the more recent action or event. The past perfect tense uses the helping verb *had* plus the past participle.

We *had seen* the smoke before anyone reported the fire.

The past tense refers to an action that occurred before now.

The child swallowed paint thinner.



Be careful with irregular verbs. Do not use the past participle when you should be using the past tense.

She drank (not drunk) paint thinner.

More on Verbs

The past perfect tense refers to the earlier of two past actions.

The fire did extensive damage because the residents had delayed calling the fire department.



Sometimes the later action is implied.

The police had received complaints about them before. (before they received this one)

Sue suddenly remembered where she *had seen* the suspect before.

Sometimes the later action is implied.

We *hadn't noticed* the damage before tonight. (*before we noticed it tonight*)

The police *had received* complaints about them before. (*before they received this one*)

If you want to show that the more recent action is the result of a prior event, mention the more recent action first.

The Robinsons *survived* the fire because they *had installed* smoke detectors throughout the house.

The fire *did* extensive damage because the residents *had delayed* calling the fire department.

The past perfect tense is also used in "if clauses" that express the earlier of two past actions or events.

If you *had gone* to the doctor right away, the wound would not have become infected.

If officers *had done* a better job of preserving evidence at the scene, we might have been able to build a stronger case.

The Future Perfect Tense

The future perfect tense refers to an action that will be completed before a certain time, date, or event in the future. The future perfect tense uses primarily the verb phrase *will have* plus the past participle. (Occasionally *shall have* is used instead.)

I *will have turned* 18 by the time they are ready to hire for the next academy.

We *will have graduated* from the academy by Christmas.

More on Verbs

The Present Progressive Tense

The present progressive tense is probably used more often than the present tense to express an action in progress. The present progressive tense uses the helping verbs *am*, *is*, or *are* plus the present participle.

She *is bleeding* severely.

The neighbors *are fighting* again.

Note: Use the present tense, not the present progressive tense, with verbs that express facts that do not require conscious effort.

Wrong: I *am thinking* it is a pipe bomb.

Right: I *think* it is a pipe bomb.

Wrong: They *are being* gang members.

Right: They *are* gang members.

If these same verbs are used to express a conscious effort, however, use the present progressive tense. Be aware that the meaning is slightly different in this tense than it is in the present tense.

I *am thinking* about [*considering*] writing a book on haz mat terrorism.

They *are being* [*acting*] reckless.

The Past Progressive Tense

The past progressive tense is used to relate a past action with a prior time or event. The past progressive tense uses the helping verbs *was* or *were* plus the present participle.

He *was cleaning* the inside of the tank when he was overcome by the toluene vapors.

They *were sleeping* when the fire started.

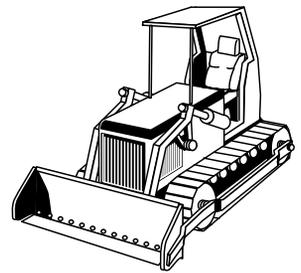
Note: Use the past tense, not the past progressive tense, with verbs that express facts that do not require conscious effort.

Wrong: We *were not having* enough resources to safely manage the incident.

Right: We *didn't have* enough resources to safely manage the incident.

The present progressive tense is used to express an action in progress.

Construction crews are digging in the area.



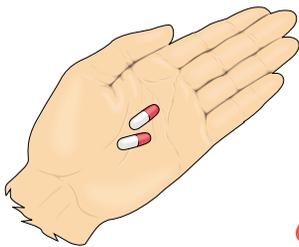
The past progressive tense is used to relate a past action with a prior time or event.

Construction crews were digging in the area when they ruptured a gas line.

More on Verbs

The future progressive tense applies to an action that will be in progress in the future.

The doctor will be prescribing a new blood pressure medication.



The present perfect progressive tense is used to express action in progress in the past.

I have been having problems with my current medication.

Wrong: I *was being* in shock.
Right: I *was* in shock.

If these same verbs are used to express a conscious effort, however, use the past progressive tense. Be aware that the meaning is slightly different in this tense.

We *were having* [experiencing] difficulty containing the fire yesterday because of the high winds.

The prisoner *was being* difficult [behaving in a difficult manner].

The Future Progressive Tense

The future progressive tense applies to an action that will be in progress in the future. The action may or may not have already begun in the present. The future progressive tense uses primarily the verb phrase *will be* plus the present participle. (Occasionally *shall be* is used instead.)

I *will be taking* a hydraulics class next semester.

When *will Anita be coming* home from the hospital?

The Present Perfect Progressive Tense

The present perfect progressive tense is used to express action in progress in the past. The action may be either recently completed or still going on. The present perfect progressive tense uses the verb phrase *have been* or *has been* plus the present participle.

The alarm system *has been malfunctioning* all day.

I *have been trying* to convince the chief that we should be trained to the first responder operational (FRO) level.

The Past Perfect Progressive Tense

The past perfect progressive tense refers to an action that was in progress before another past event. It uses the verb phrase *had been* plus the present participle.

I *had been playing* basketball when I injured my knee.

More on Verbs

The witness said that the men *had been arguing* for at least ten minutes before she heard the shot.

The Future Perfect Progressive Tense

The future perfect progressive tense is used to express an action that has been in progress for some measurable length of time and will be completed at a specific time in the future. The future perfect progressive tense uses primarily the verb phrase *will have been* plus the present participle. (Occasionally *shall have been* is used instead.)

By Saturday, we *will have been working* without a contract for three months.

Tomorrow she *will have been missing* for two weeks.

The past perfect progressive tense refers to an action that was in progress before another past event.

She had been walking home when she was kidnapped.



The future perfect progressive tense refers to an action that will have been in progress at a specific time in the future.

Tomorrow she will have been missing for two weeks.

More on Verbs

The *indicative* mood is used to state a fact, to express an opinion, or to ask a question.

The patient requires surgery. Is the operating room ready?



The *imperative* mood is used to give a command or to give directions.

Please take him to the operating room.

Using the Correct Mood

The Three Moods

There are three moods in English: *indicative*, *imperative*, and *subjunctive*. (*Mood* is sometimes referred to as *mode* instead.)

The indicative mood

The *indicative* mood is used to state a fact, to express an opinion, or to ask a question.

- Fact:* Three people were killed in the accident.
Opinion: It was a terrible accident.
Question: What caused the accident?

The imperative mood

The *imperative* mood is used to give a command or to give directions. The subject of the sentence, *you*, is implied.

- Command:* Call 911.
Direction: Tell the dispatcher we have two people with major injuries.

The subjunctive mood

The *subjunctive* mood is used to express a suggestion or a requirement or to express desires or conditions that are contrary to fact.

- Suggestion:* I suggest that Bob *go* with the paramedics to the hospital.
Requirement: We require that he *sign* a release if he decides not to go to the hospital.
Desire: I wish I *knew* what to say to convince him to go to the hospital.
Condition: If I *were* him, I would go to the hospital.

The indicative and imperative moods are relatively simple. However, the subjunctive mood sometimes causes problems for writers because the verbs do not always take the same forms that they do in the other moods. Look at the examples above. We have *Bob go* instead of *Bob goes*, *he sign* instead of *he signs*, *I knew* instead of *I know*, and *I were* instead of *I was*. The remainder of this section provides guidelines on how to choose the correct verb form when writing in the subjunctive mood.

More on Verbs

More on the Subjunctive Mood

Once again, the verb form is often different when writing in the subjunctive mood than it is when writing in the indicative or imperative moods.

With suggestions and requirements

Sentences that express suggestions or requirements with verbs such as those listed below often require the subjunctive mood.

ask	mandate	propose
command	move [propose]	require
demand	recommend	suggest
insist	request	urge

Sentences beginning with expressions such as those listed below may also signal the need for the subjunctive mood.

it is essential	it is important	it is necessary
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

When writing in the subjunctive mood, the verb in the dependent clause—the clause introduced by the word *that*—is always in the base form. For example, use *be* (not *am*, *is*, or *are*) for all three persons (first, second, and third).

I insist that I *be* allowed to ride in the ambulance with my baby. (not *am*)

I recommend that he *be* sentenced to life in prison. (not *is*)

We require that you *be* certified as first responders at the operational level. (not *are*)

Other verbs are also written in the base form, even when the subject is third person singular.

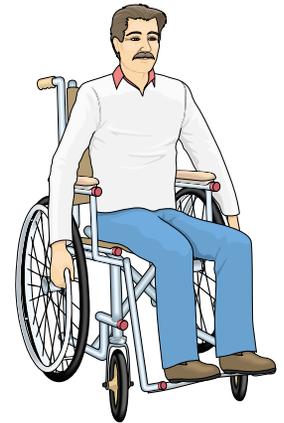
The doctor suggested that Bruce *try* physical therapy before considering surgery. (not *tries*)

It is important that Judy *document* the injury as soon as possible. (not *documents*)

It is required that the hotel *post* emergency procedures information in the guest rooms. (not *posts*)

The *subjunctive* mood is used to express a suggestion or a requirement.

The doctor suggested that Will continue to use the wheelchair for a while longer.



It is important that he allow the knee a chance to heal.

More on Verbs

The subjunctive mood is used to express desire.

The key word to look for in the sentence is *wish* or *wishes*



Standard:
I wish I were on the SWAT Team.

Informal:
I wish I was on the SWAT Team.

When expressing desire (wishes)

The subjunctive mood is used to express desire. The key word to look for in the sentence is *wish* or *wishes*.

To express a present wish—a wish about something that does not currently exist—put the verb in the past tense.

I wish I *knew* what caused the fire.

Greg wishes he *could be* a paramedic.

Use *were* for all three persons, whether singular or plural, if the verb is *to be*. *Was* is sometimes used with singular subjects in informal speech, but should not be used in writing.

Informal: I wish I *was* on a USAR team.

Standard: I wish I *were* on a USAR team.

Informal: Jim sometimes wishes he *was* still on the line instead of in the office.

Standard: Jim sometimes wishes he *were* still on the line instead of in the office.

To express a wish about the past, put the verb in the past perfect tense.

I wish we *could have saved* her.

Nikki wishes that she *had called* the police the first time her husband hit her.

To express a wish about the future, use the helping verb *would* with the base form of the main verb.

I wish the storm *would let up*.

They wish we *would waive* some of these requirements.

With conditions that are contrary to fact (if)

Clauses that start with *if* may or may not require the subjunctive mood. It depends on the meaning of your sentence. If you state a condition that is *highly improbable*, *doubtful*, or *contrary to fact*, use the subjunctive mood. If you state a condition that is *possible* or *likely*, use the indicative mood.

More on Verbs

The following examples express conditions that are contrary to fact; hence the subjunctive mood is required. The past tense (*were* and *knew*) is used to express conditions that exist in the present, whereas the helping verb *would* is used with the base form of the main verb (*do* and *tell*) to express actions that would occur if the conditions were true.

I *wouldn't do* that if I *were* you (but I am not).

If I *knew* where he was hiding (but I don't), I *would tell* you.

The following examples also express conditions that are contrary to fact. However, the past perfect tense (*had been* and *had known*) is used to express conditions in the past. The helping verbs *would* and *have* are used with the past participle to express actions that would have occurred if the conditions had been true.

I *wouldn't have done* that if I *had been* in your position (but I wasn't in your position).

If I *had known* where he was hiding (but at the time I didn't know), I *would have told* you.

The word *would* is used only in the independent clause, not in the conditional clause—the one introduced by *if*. In the two examples above, we have *if I had been* (not *if I would have been*) and *if I had known* (not *if I would have known*).

The examples below help illustrate when the subjunctive mood is required and when it is not. Again, the subjunctive mood is required with conditions that are *highly improbable, doubtful, or contrary to fact*. The indicative mood is required with conditions that are *possible or likely*.

Probable. If she *survives* (and she probably will), she *will have* a long recovery period ahead of her.

Improbable. If she *had survived* (but she probably won't), she *would have had* a long recovery period ahead of her.

Probable. If I *go* to the hospital (and I probably will), I *will need* someone to drive me.

Improbable. If I *were going* to the hospital (but I probably won't), I *would need* someone to drive me.

The subjunctive mood is used with conditions that are *highly improbable, doubtful, or contrary to fact*



I wouldn't get too close if I were you.

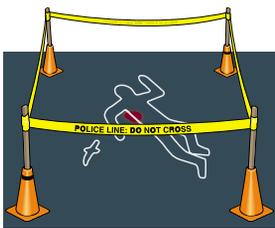
(But I am not you.)

More on Verbs

The subjunctive mood is used in *as if* clauses expressing conditions contrary to fact.

They made it look as if he were stabbed to death.

(But he wasn't.)



However, the indicative mood is used if the condition is highly probable.

It looks as if he was stabbed to death.

(And he probably was.)

Clauses that use *as if* or *as though* to express conditions that are *contrary to fact* also require the subjunctive mood. Do not use the subjunctive mood, however, if the condition is *highly probable*.

Contrary: Dale acts as if he *were* in charge. (*Dale may talk as if he were in charge, but he isn't.*)

Probable: Dale acts as if he *is* in charge. (*I'm assuming Dale is in charge because he seems to be filling the role.*)

Contrary: Georgia talks as though she *knew* who killed him. (*She doesn't know. She is bluffing.*)

Probable: Georgia talks as though she *knows* who killed him. (*She probably does know who the killer is and may be able to help us.*)

Idiomatic expressions

Some idiomatic expressions also require the use of the subjunctive mood.

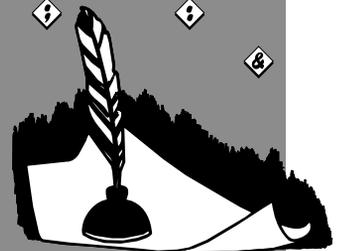
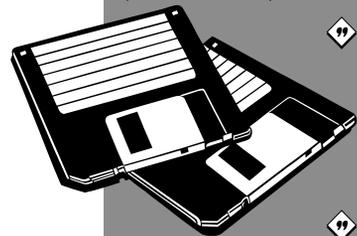
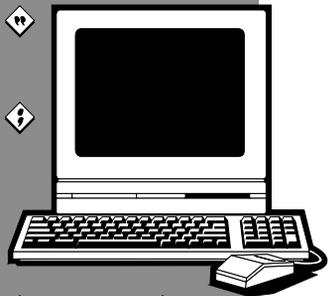
We're going to hold the drill on Saturday, *come rain or shine*.

Far be it from me to tell you what to do, but I think you are making a big mistake.

Be that as it may, we don't have enough evidence to hold him another night.

Chapter 6: Adjectives and Adverbs

SAMPLE



Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives are used to modify nouns and pronouns.

The bucket contains infectious waste.



Adverbs are used to modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or whole groups of words.

Handle it carefully

Recognizing Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives Defined

An *adjective* is a word used to modify a noun or pronoun. An adjective identifies *what kind, which one, or how many*.

The thieves must have known that there would be only a *skeleton* crew on duty tonight.

I applied a tourniquet to the patient's *left* leg.

We detained *three* suspects for questioning.

Sometimes phrases and clauses can serve as adjectives.

The two men *they found unconscious in the laundry room* apparently overdosed on cocaine.

The blood samples *that you collected* have been sent to the lab for analysis.

Adverbs Defined

An *adverb* is a word used to modify a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or whole groups of words. Adverbs usually identify *when, where, how, why, under what conditions, or to what degree*.

Did you hear that Kim was injured *today*? (tells *when*)

Everyone knows that Dan drinks *excessively*. (tells *to what degree*)

Gingerly, Greg disconnected the wires from the explosive device. (tells *how*)

Sometimes phrases and clauses serve as adverbs.

Let's get this repaired *before anyone gets hurt*. (tells *when*)

As soon as she heard the first shot, Patricia dove *under her desk* for protection. (tells *when*, tells *where*)

Adjectives and Adverbs

The Relation Between Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are often related. For example, many adverbs are created by adding the letters *ly* to an adjective.

<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Adverb</u>
<i>real</i> money	to <i>really</i> understand something
a <i>tragic</i> accident	to die <i>tragically</i>
a <i>violent</i> death	to be <i>violently</i> opposed

Adjectives and adverbs are often related to nouns or verbs. If you understand the relation between such words, it can help you avoid some common spelling errors, such as using *accidently* (which is not even a real word) when you should be using *accidentally*.

- Noun:* The chlorine release was an *accident*.
- Adjective:* The plant manager confirmed that it was an *accidental* release, not an act of sabotage.
- Adverb:* A worker *accidentally* turned a valve in the wrong direction.
- Verb:* We are hoping that Tina will *surprise* us and pull out of the coma.
- Adjective:* Tina made a *surprising* recovery.
- Adverb:* The medical staff said it was a *surprisingly* rapid recovery, considering the extent of her injuries.

Adjectives with *ly* endings

While *most* words ending in *ly* are adverbs, some are adjectives. The following are examples of adjectives that end in *ly*.

costly	ghastly	lovely	timely
earthly	ghostly	motherly	unsightly
fatherly	lonely	neighborly	untimely
friendly	lively	orderly	worldly

Each of these words is used to modify nouns and pronouns.

Neighbors described him as a *friendly* man. They never thought him capable of such a *ghastly* crime.

They made a *costly* mistake.

Her *untimely* death shocked us all.

Many adverbs are created by adding the letters *ly* to an adjective.

***It was an accidental overdose.* (adjective)**

***She accidentally overdosed on sleeping pills.* (adverb)**



Adjectives and adverbs are often related to noun or verbs.

***The overdose was an accident* (noun)**

Adjectives and Adverbs

Most words ending in *ly* are adverbs. However, some are adjectives, and some can be used both ways.

***We received only one call.*
(adverb)**



***It was the only clue we had to go on.*
(adjective)**

Words that can be either adjectives or adverbs

A few words that end in *ly* can be used either as adjectives or as adverbs (for example, *early, only, hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly*).

Adjective. Our new chief insists on having *weekly* staff meetings. (*modifies the noun* staff meetings)

Adverb. We meet *weekly* to discuss department operations. (*modifies the verb* meet)

Adjective. This is the *only* piece of evidence we could find. (*modifies the noun* piece)

Adverb. If we could *only* piece together all these clues, we could figure out who killed her. (*modifies the verb phrase* piece together)

Adverb. You were lucky to escape with *only* minor injuries. (*modifies the adjective* minor)

Some words that *don't* end in *ly* can also be used either as adjectives or as adverbs.

Adjective. Ricky died yesterday, after a *short* illness. (*modifies the noun* illness)

Adverb. His life was cut *short* by a mysterious illness. (*modifies the verb* cut)

Adjective. The suspect made a *right* turn onto Winchester. (*modifies the noun* turn)

Adverb. The suspect turned *right* onto Winchester. (*modifies the verb* turned)

Adverbs that have two forms

Some adverbs have two forms, one that ends in *ly* and one that does not. The following are some examples.

cheap, cheaply	high, highly	sharp, sharply
close, closely	late, lately	short, shortly
deep, deeply	loud, loudly	slow, slowly
direct, directly	near, nearly	tight, tightly
fair, fairly	quick, quickly	wide, widely
hard, hardly	right, rightly	wrong, wrongly

Sometimes these different forms have different meanings. A good dictionary can help you identify the various meanings of the words and the correct form to use.

Adjectives and Adverbs

We arrived too *late* (not in time) to save the victim.

We've had a rash of arson fires *lately* (recently).

John worked *hard* (diligently) to become a police officer.

We could *hardly* (barely) see through all the smoke.

Sometimes the difference between these two forms is negligible. It's more a question of which form of the adverb is more colloquial or more common for the particular usage.

Let's not venture too *deep* inside until we get some backup.

You hurt me *deeply* when you said you didn't trust me.

Criminals don't fight *fair*.

We treat all prisoners *fairly*.

In general, the short form of the adverb is considered to be more casual than the long form. Therefore, when the difference between the two forms is negligible and you are writing in a professional setting, you should use the *-ly* form.

Troublesome modifiers

It's not surprising that some modifiers are particularly troublesome for writers. Most experts agree, for example, that *real* and *sure* are adjectives and that *really* and *surely* are adverbs. However, *real* and *sure* are frequently used as adverbs in informal speech. Don't use them as adverbs in your writing, however, unless you are quoting someone else.

Informal: I was *real* scared we might not find him in time.

Standard: I was *really* scared we might not find him in time.

Informal: That was *sure* a close call.

Standard: That was *surely* a close call.

Bad and *badly* are often confused, as are *good* and *well*. *Bad* and *good* are primarily adjectives, while *badly* and *well* are primarily adverbs. Again, however, there are other acceptable uses. For more information on choosing between troublesome modifiers like those listed here, refer to Chapter 10, "Finding the Right Words."

Some adverbs have two forms. Sometimes these different forms can have different meanings. Other times the difference will be negligible.

We arrived too late (not in time) to save the victim.



We've had a rash of arson fires lately (recently).

Adjectives and Adverbs

Use an adjective if you are trying to modify a noun or pronoun.

I have bad feet.



Use an adverb if you are trying to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

My feet hurt badly

Choosing Between Adjectives and Adverbs

It is sometimes difficult to determine if you should use an adjective or an adverb. A couple of simple tests can often help solve the problem.

What Are You Trying to Modify?

The key to determining whether you should use an adjective or an adverb is recognizing what it is that you are trying to modify. If you are trying to modify a noun or pronoun, use an adjective.

Everyone grew *quiet* as the realization sank in that two fire-fighters had been killed. (*modifies the indefinite pronoun everyone*)

Tonight's drill is on *forcible* entry. (*modifies the noun entry*)

Use an adverb if you are trying to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

The burglar entered *quietly* through an open window. (*modifies the verb entered*)

Police had to *forcibly* remove her from the building. (*modifies the verb remove*)

Can You Substitute Some Form *be*?

Sometimes you can determine whether you need an adjective or an adverb by substituting some form of the verb *be* (*am, are, be, been, being, is, was, or were*) for another verb. If you can logically substitute some form of *be*, use an adjective; if not, use an adverb.

Correct: He looks *angry*. (He is *angry*.)

Incorrect: He looks *angrily*. (He is *angrily*.)

Correct: You seem *suspicious*. (You are *suspicious*.)

Incorrect: You seem *suspiciously*. (You are *suspiciously*.)

Adjectives and Adverbs

You will be able to logically substitute some form of *be* for verbs of the senses (such as *feel*, *look*, and *sound*) and other linking verbs (such as *appear*, *become*, *seem*, *prove*, *remain*, and *stay*) because the modifier refers to the *subject of the sentence*, not to the *action of the verb*. However, some of these linking verbs can also serve as action verbs. Therefore, you must be clear about what word or words you are trying to modify.

Let's look at some examples to see how the meaning of the sentence changes as I switch from an adjective to an adverb.

Adjective: He looked *angry* at her.
Translation: He looked as if he was *angry* with her.
 (He was angry with her.)

Adverb: He looked *angrily* at her.
Translation: He had an *angry* expression on his face when he looked at her.

To *look angry at* (or more correctly, *to look angry with*) someone means to look as if you *are* (a form of *be*) angry. *To look angrily* means to look with an angry expression. You cannot substitute some form of *be* for *looked* when you use the adverb *angrily*.

Can You Substitute *a . . . Manner*?

Use an adverb if you can substitute *in a . . . manner* for a word ending in *ly*.

Please remove the victim *carefully* (*in a careful manner*).

You may need to shout *loudly* (*in a loud manner*) in order to be heard above the noise of the fire.

Be careful with this test too. Some *adjectives* end in *ly*. Take, for example, the word *orderly* used as a adjective. It makes sense to say that *we need to evacuate in an orderly manner*. It does not work to say that *we need to evacuate in an order manner*. And, while some dictionaries show that *orderly* can be used as an adverb as well, it does not sound right to say that *we need to evacuate orderly*.

If you can logically substitute some form of *be* in place of another verb, use an adjective.

She seems scared.
(She is scared.)



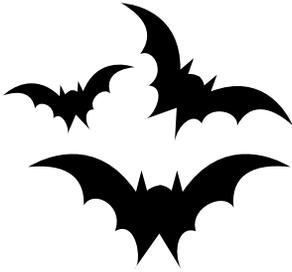
Use an adverb if you can substitute *in a . . . manner* for a word ending in *ly*.

She spoke cautiously
(She spoke in a cautious manner.)

Adjectives and Adverbs

Add *er* and *est* to form comparative and superlative forms of one-syllable modifiers.

big
bigger
biggest



Add *more/less* or *most/least* to modifiers of three or more syllables.

frightening
more frightening
most frightening

Using Comparative and Superlative Modifiers

Most adjectives and adverbs have different forms to indicate degrees of comparison. In general, the *comparative* form is used to compare two items; the *superlative* form is used to compare three or more items. This is explained in more detail starting on the following page.

Recognize the Comparative and Superlative Forms

Comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs are formed differently, depending on how many syllables there are in the word.

One-syllable modifiers

The comparative and superlative forms of *one-syllable* modifiers are usually formed by adding *er* and *est* to the base word (often referred to as the positive form of the word).

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
safe	safer	safest
dark	darker	darkest
fast	faster	fastest

Modifiers with three or more syllables

The comparative and superlative forms of modifiers with *three or more syllables* are formed by adding *more* (or *less*) and *most* (or *least*) before the base word.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
dangerous	more/less dangerous	most/least dangerous
threatening	more/less threatening	most/least threatening
carefully	more/less carefully	most/least carefully

Two-syllable modifiers

The two-syllable modifiers are the ones that can be tricky. The comparative and superlative forms of most two-syllable modifiers are formed by adding *more* (or *less*) and *most* (or *least*) before the base word. However, some can be formed by adding *er* or *est* to the base word. A good dictionary will tell you if it is appropriate to add *er* or *est*. (Note: If the base word ends in *y*, the *y* changes to an *i* before the addition of *er* or *est*.)

Adjectives and Adverbs

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
awful	more/less awful	most/least awful
heated	more/less heated	most/least heated
thankful	more/less thankful	most/least thankful
scary	more/less scary	most/least scary
	scariest	scariest
angry	more/less angry	most/least angry
	angrier	angriest
smoky	more/less smoky	most least smoky
	smokier	smokiest

Irregular comparative and superlative forms

Finally, there are some adjectives and adverbs that have irregular comparisons; the comparative and superlative forms, for the most part, do not follow any of the rules previously identified.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
good, well	better	best
bad, badly, ill	worse	worst
many, some, much	more	most
far	farther, further	farthest, furthest
little	less, lesser (or littler)	least (or littlest)

Use the Correct Form

The *comparative* form is generally used to compare two items; the *superlative* form is used to compare three or more items.

Comparative. I have been teaching CPR *longer* than Ken has.

Superlative. Mike has been teaching CPR the *longest* of all three instructors.

Comparative. State regulations are often *more stringent* than federal regulations.

Superlative. Our regulations are the *most stringent* in the country.

If multiple items are involved, but they are being compared only two at a time, use the comparative form.

Cody is *more dangerous* than either his father or his brother. (Cody is *more dangerous* than his father; he is also *more dangerous* than his brother.)

The comparative and superlative forms of two-syllable modifiers are normally formed by adding *more/less* and *most/least*

scary
more scary
most scary



However, some can also be formed by adding *er* or *est*

scary
scariest
scariest

Adjectives and Adverbs

The comparative form is generally used to compare two items.

The drug problem in this neighborhood is worse than it was last year.



The superlative form is generally used to compare three or more items.

This neighborhood is the worst one in our city.

There are a few idiomatic expressions in which the superlative form is used even when referring to only two items. However, this use of the superlative form is the exception rather than the rule.

May the *best* candidate win.

Put your *best* foot forward.

Use the *superlative* form when comparing a person or thing to others within the same group. This is consistent with the rule for using the superlative form to compare three or more items.

Sam's injuries are the *worst* of all the victims.

San Jose Fire Department is the *largest* fire department in this county.

Use the *comparative* form and the words *other* or *else* when comparing a person or thing with *individual members* of the group.

Sam's injuries are *worse* than anyone *else's*. (not *anyone's*)

San Jose Fire Department is *larger* than any *other* fire department in this county. (*Without the word other, the sentence would imply that the San Jose Fire Department is located in some county outside the one being referred to.*)

Compare Like Things

Whenever you are making comparisons, be sure to compare like things.

Wrong: This year's fire season is worse than last year.

Right: This year's fire season is worse than last year's. (fire season)

Avoid Confusing Comparisons

When there are two ways to form comparisons, use the comparison that is less confusing.

Confusing: Cocaine is less harmless than marijuana.

Clear: Cocaine is more harmful than marijuana.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Avoid Double Comparisons

Avoid double comparisons because they are redundant and contrary to standard usage.

This is probably the *safest* (not *most safest*) way to extricate the victim.

This is a *better* (not *more better*) rifle.

Avoid Illogical Comparisons

Some adjectives and adverbs cannot logically be compared. For example, although some dictionaries list *deader* and *deadest* as real words, a victim cannot be *deader* than dead, *deader* than another victim, or *deadest* of all. The following are some other words that many experts agree cannot be compared.

alone	fatal	instantaneous	pregnant
always	first	last	single
correct	final	mortal	supreme
dead	impossible	never	universal
everlasting	infinite	only	wrong

Some of these words can be modified by adverbs such as *almost*, *hardly*, *more*, *less*, *nearly*, and *virtually* when used in the sense of “something less than absolute” or “approaching absolute.”

The victim was *nearly dead* by the time we found him.

Death was *almost instantaneous*.

It was *virtually impossible* to distinguish the counterfeit bills from the real ones.

Some experts object to using comparisons with modifiers such as *complete*, *perfect*, and *unique* on the basis that these words imply absolute conditions that do not exist in varying degrees. However, modern usage is more flexible. For example, one report can be *more complete* (meaning “more thorough”) than another, one crime can be *more unique* (meaning “more unusual”) than the rest, and it is possible to observe the *most perfect* sunset imaginable. But, in general, when you are tempted to make comparisons that might be considered questionable, consider rewriting the sentence.

Wrong: Karen is *more pregnant* than Lori.

Right: Karen is *due to give birth sooner* than Lori.

Right: Karen is *further along in her pregnancy* than Lori.

Some modifiers cannot logically be compared, though they can be modified by other adverbs.

A person cannot be *deader* or *deadest* . . .

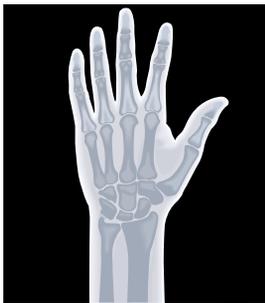


. . . but he or she can be *nearly dead*

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs can be positioned in a variety of locations as long as the meaning remains clear.

Donna cried softly as the doctor examined her injured wrist.



Despite her painful injury, the x-rays appeared normal.

Positioning Adjectives and Adverbs

It's important to make sure that adjectives and adverbs are positioned properly within a sentence. Otherwise, your sentences can be awkward and confusing.

Position Based on Type of Modifier

Most *adjectives* are positioned before the nouns they describe. However, adjectives can sometimes be placed after nouns. They can even be placed in the predicate of the sentence if they follow linking verbs.

Sharon had *several* injuries.

Those boys, *drunk* or *sober*, are always causing trouble.

The wound became *infected*.

Adverbs can generally be placed in one of four locations: before the words they modify, after the words they modify, at the beginning of the sentence, or at the end of the sentence.

The *unusually* wet weather has contributed to severe flooding across the nation.

He failed *miserably* during his oral board interview.

Reluctantly, Chris and Shawn retreated and waited for the backup team.

He shot his wife and child *deliberately*.

Adverbs are often positioned between a helping verb and a main verb.

We had *scarcely* begun to fight the fire when the wind direction suddenly reversed itself.

Adverbs are sometimes placed in the middle of an infinitive, creating what is known as a *split infinitive*. (Split infinitives are covered in more detail on pages 224-226.)

Randy taught us to *always* double check our rescue systems before use.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Position Based on Meaning

Limiting modifiers modify the word or words that immediately follow them. Examples of limiting modifiers include *almost*, *even*, *exactly*, *hardly*, *just*, *merely*, *nearly*, *only*, *scarcely*, and *simply*. Notice how changing the position of the modifier changes the meaning of the following sentences. Place limiting modifiers as close as possible to the words they modify.

Version 1: He was *almost* burned over his entire body. (*But he ultimately avoided the burn injury.*)

Version 2: He was burned over *almost* his entire body. (*Very little of his body was not burned.*)

Version 1: We *just* found one victim. (*We found a victim just now.*)

Version 2: We found *just* one victim. (*We found only one victim.*)

Sometimes you can change the position of an adverb without significantly affecting the meaning of the sentence.

Version 1: *Bravely*, the children testified in court against the man who had molested them.

Version 2: The children *bravely* testified in court against the man who had molested them.

Version 3: The children testified *bravely* in court against the man who had molested them.

Problems can occur, however, if you put an adverb in the wrong location. In all three examples above, it is clear that *bravely* modifies the verb *testified*. However, if the word *bravely* is moved to the end of the sentence, it appears to modify *molested* instead.

Misplaced: The children testified in court against the man who had molested them *bravely*.

This is what we call a *misplaced modifier*. Misplaced modifiers are covered in more detail on page 227.

Another type of misplaced modifier is the *squinting modifier*. A squinting modifier is one that falls between two words or phrases and can conceivably modify the words or phrases on either side.

Squinting: The possibility of the roof collapsing *suddenly* worries me.

Limiting modifiers modify the word or words that immediately follow them.

We just found one victim.



We found just one victim.

Changing the position of the modifier changes the meaning sentence.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Sometimes changing the position of an adverb changes the emphasis of the sentence.

This morning an explosion ripped through the plant.
(more emphasis on the time frame)



An explosion ripped through the plant this morning.
(more emphasis on the event)

In the previous example, it isn't clear whether *suddenly* modifies *collapsing* or *worries*. Is the writer worried about a sudden collapse, or did the writer have a sudden realization that collapse was possible? The revised sentence makes this clear.

Revised: The possibility of the roof *suddenly* collapsing worries me.

Squinting modifiers are covered in more detail on page 228.

Position Based on Emphasis

Sometimes changing the position of an adverb does not change the meaning of the sentence, but it does change the emphasis. This can either strengthen or weaken your sentence. In the examples below, moving the adverb away from the beginning of the sentence puts a greater focus on the event rather than on the time frame.

Weaker: *This morning* an explosion ripped through the manufacturing plant, killing three people and injuring dozens more.

Stronger: An explosion ripped through the manufacturing plant *this morning*, killing three people and injuring dozens more.

Weaker: *Recently* we've seen an increase in hate crimes.

Stronger: We've seen an increase in hate crimes *recently*.

Position Based on Ease of Reading

Properly positioning an adverb can also make the difference between a sentence that is smooth and easy to read versus one that is awkward and confusing.

Split infinitives

Many experts recommend positioning an adverb or adverbial phrase either before or after an infinitive because splitting an infinitive can result in an awkward sentence. An *infinitive* is a phrase that consists of the word *to* plus a verb: *to rescue*, *to breathe*, *to shoot*. An infinitive is generally considered to be a single unit. (The infinitives are underlined in the examples that follow.)

Awkward: We need to *before nightfall* find the child.

Revised: We need to find the child *before nightfall*.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Awkward: The captain warned us to not get too close to the tanker.

Revised: The captain warned us *not to get* too close to the tanker.

Although an infinitive is generally considered to be a single unit, there are times when it is acceptable or even desirable to split an infinitive. For example, splitting an infinitive is preferable to positioning an adverb where it will create ambiguity.

Ambiguous: The plant manager directed everyone *quickly to evacuate* the building after the switchboard operator advised him of the bomb threat.

Ambiguous: The plant manager directed everyone to evacuate the building *quickly* after the switchboard operator advised him of the bomb threat.

Clear: The plant manager directed everyone to quickly evacuate the building after the switchboard operator advised him of the bomb threat.

Only in the last sentence above does *quickly* clearly modify the verb *evacuate*. In the first sentence, *quickly* can be misunderstood to mean that the plant manager *spoke in a quick manner*. A person reading the second sentence might assume that *he acted quickly after hearing about the bomb threat*. It should be clear to the reader that his goal was to get everyone out of the building *without delay*.

Splitting an infinitive is preferable to positioning the adverb in a remote location, far away from the infinitive it modifies. In the first sentence below, while the reader may understand that the word *thoroughly* modifies the verb *clean*, it is so far away that some readers may have trouble with it.

Awkward: We need to clean any wounds that have become contaminated *thoroughly*.

Revised: We need to thoroughly clean any wounds that have become contaminated.

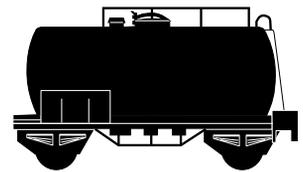
The following is another effective use of the split infinitive. Although the first sentence is acceptable, splitting the infinitive provides a more concise sentence.

Acceptable: We expect to increase our call volume *by more than one hundred percent* now that we are providing EMS services.

Revised: We expect to more than double our call volume now that we are providing EMS services.

Adverbs should generally be positioned either before or after an infinitive, not in between.

The captain warned us not to get too close.



However, there are times when it is desirable to split an infinitive.

We need to accurately identify the product before we take any action.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Short adverbs may go between the parts of a verbal phrase as long as the meaning remains clear.

He was definitely wearing his seat belt when the accident occurred.



Maintain a logical order to the sentence.

The victim stopped breathing shortly after he was extricated.

Splitting an infinitive is not a terrible offense, as some experts would have us believe. However, when you can write an effective sentence without splitting the infinitive, it is best to do so.

Acceptable: After his best friend was killed by a drunk driver, Clyde vowed to never touch alcohol again.

Preferred: After his best friend was killed by a drunk driver, Clyde vowed *never* to touch alcohol again.

Verbal phrases

It is acceptable to put one-word adverbs between the parts of a verbal phrase as long as the meaning remains clear. A *verbal phrase* is one that contains a helping verb plus a main verb: *have climbed, will go, am chasing, had been stealing,* and so on. (The verbal phrases are underlined in the examples below.)

They are *knowingly* deceiving the public.

We are *rapidly* running out of time.

However, putting long adverbial phrases between parts of a verbal phrase can make the sentence awkward.

Awkward: Mary had, *even though the caller was unable to accurately pinpoint the location of the accident,* dispatched the appropriate resources.

Revised: Mary had dispatched the appropriate resources *even though the caller was unable to accurately pinpoint the location of the accident.*

Revised: *Even though the caller was unable to accurately pinpoint the location of the accident,* Mary had dispatched the appropriate resources.

Maintaining a logical order to the sentence

Any modifier that interrupts the logical order of a sentence can make the sentence awkward or confusing. Maintain a logical order to the sentence.

Awkward: The victim, *shortly after he was extricated,* stopped breathing.

Revised: The victim stopped breathing *shortly after he was extricated.*

Awkward: We had, *without giving much thought to fire safety,* put the barbecue too close to the house.

Revised: *We hadn't given much thought to fire safety* when we put the barbecue so close to the house.

Fixing Misplaced Modifiers

Place Modifiers Close to the Words They Modify

Readers generally associate modifiers with the nearest words they might logically modify. When modifiers are put in the wrong place, it can result in confusing, amusing, or embarrassing sentences. The following are some examples of what are called *misplaced modifiers*.

Misplaced: The fire was extinguished *before any appreciable damage was done* by the fire department.

Revised: The fire was extinguished by the fire department *before any appreciable damage was done*.

The first sentence implies the fire department does more damage than the fire. This is not the message we want to give the public.

Misplaced: The following are some tips for protecting your home *from the police department*.

Revised: The following are some tips *from the police department* for protecting your home.

If we must protect our homes from police officers, we are in trouble. The revised sentence makes it clear that the police are providing tips to protect homeowners from other intruders.

Misplaced: *Being old and not up to current standards*, we took the helmets out of service.

Revised: We took the helmets out of service *because they were old and not up to current standards*.

Is it the writer or the helmets that are old and not up to current standards? The revised sentence makes this clear.

Misplaced: Some of the people were killed by the passing tornado *who did not seek shelter*.

Revised: Some of the people *who did not seek shelter* were killed by the passing tornado.

The first sentence implies it was the killer tornado that did not seek shelter. Imagine a tornado trying to seek shelter in your basement.

Misplaced modifiers can result in confusing sentences.

Some of the people were killed by the passing tornado who did not seek shelter. (misplaced)



Some of the people who did not seek shelter were killed by the passing tornado. (revised)

Adjectives and Adverbs

Squinting modifiers create ambiguity because they can conceivably modify the words or phrases on either side.

People who drink and drive frequently cause accidents.
(squinting)



Frequently people who drink and drive cause accidents.
(revised)

Avoid Squinting Modifiers

When a modifier falls between two words or phrases and can conceivably modify the words or phrases on either side, it is said to be “squinting.” Squinting modifiers create ambiguity.

Squinting. People who drink and drive *frequently* cause accidents.

When you say a sentence aloud, you can use pauses and vocal inflection to make your meaning clear: *People who drink and drive—pause—frequently cause accidents.* However, someone *reading* the same sentence cannot hear your pauses and vocal inflection and may interpret the sentence differently: *People who drink and drive frequently—pause—cause accidents.* You can avoid this confusion by repositioning the modifier.

Clear. *Frequently*, people who drink and drive cause accidents.

Do not try to fix a squinting modifier by inserting a comma to make your readers pause. While every comma signals a pause, not every pause warrants a comma. It would be grammatically incorrect to insert a comma between the words *drive* and *frequently* in the first example above.

Squinting modifiers are often a hazard of writing the way we talk. While writing the way we talk is not inherently bad, we must be alert to potential problems. In the example below, does *wrongly* modify *hired* or *accused*? The revised sentence makes this clear.

Squinting. The couple claim that the nanny they hired *wrongly* accused them of child abuse.

Clear. The couple claim that the nanny they hired accused them *wrongly* of child abuse.

Does *intensely* modify *inhaled* or *irritated* in the next example?

Squinting. The smoke I inhaled *intensely* irritated my throat.

Clear. The smoke I inhaled irritated my throat *intensely*.

Does *badly* modify *exploded* or *injured* in the following sentence?

Squinting. The bomb that exploded *badly* injured several people.

Clear. The bomb that exploded injured several people *badly*.

Fixing Dangling Modifiers

Recognize Dangling Modifiers

A *dangling modifier* is one that does not clearly describe anything in the sentence. Although the connection may be clear in the writer's mind, it is not necessarily clear in the reader's. It is a bit like presenting evidence in court without clearly illustrating how the evidence relates to the case. Dangling modifiers often result in very awkward sentences.

Dangling: *Totally engulfed in flames*, the chief decided to let the building burn and protect the exposures instead. (*This implies that the chief was totally engulfed in flames when he made his decision.*)

Revised: Since the building was totally engulfed in flames, the chief decided to let it burn and protect the exposures instead.

In the first example above, the phrase that introduces the sentence does not have a subject of its own. Therefore, readers are likely to conclude that the first noun they encounter, *chief*, is the subject being modified by the introductory phrase. This is quite common with dangling modifiers.

Although dangling modifiers occur most often at the beginning of a sentence, they can occur in other places. In the following example, the modifier at the end of the sentence does not clearly relate to the subject introduced in the beginning of the sentence.

Dangling: The damage was visible *entering the building*. (*Have you ever seen damage enter a building?*)

Revised: The damage was visible to us as we entered the building.

Eliminate Dangling Modifiers

The following examples illustrate the different types of dangling modifiers and ways to correct them. Do not be concerned about remembering the technical names. It is more important that you be able to recognize a dangling modifier when you see one and that you know how to correct it.

Dangling modifiers lack critical information that is necessary to put the whole picture together.

Dangling modifiers can create confusing and awkward sentences.

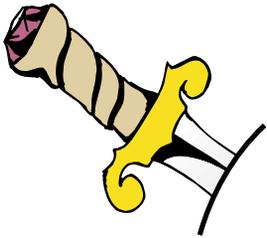


***Totally engulfed in flames*, the chief decided to let the building burn and protect the exposures instead. (dangling)**

Adjectives and Adverbs

Dangling modifiers do not logically relate to the subject in the main clause.

If still impaled in the victim, you should stabilize the knife in place.
(dangling)



If the knife is still impaled in the victim, you should stabilize it in place.
(revised)

The key to eliminating dangling modifiers is to make sure the modifier clearly relates to the subject of the sentence. One way to do this is to give the phrase or clause a subject of its own. Another is to change the subject of the main clause. A third is to use the active voice; dangling modifiers are more likely to happen when the main clause is written in the passive voice rather than in the active voice. If all else fails, you may need to change the entire construction of the sentence. You will see examples of these solutions on the following pages.

Dangling elliptical clauses

An elliptical clause is one that has been condensed by omitting key words, usually the subject and all or part of the verb; for example, *if possible* (meaning *if it is possible*). Elliptical clauses work when the implied subject of the elliptical clause is the same as the stated subject in the main clause. If the subjects are different, however, the sentence will be confusing.

Dangling: *When a baby,* my mother died in a plane crash. (*If my mother died when she was a baby, who gave birth to me?*)

Revised: When I was a baby, my mother died in a plane crash.

Revised: My mother died in a plane crash when I was a baby.

Dangling: If still impaled in the victim, you should stabilize the knife in place. (*It would be quite awkward to find an emergency responder impaled in a victim.*)

Revised: If the knife is still impaled in the victim, you should stabilize it in place.

Dangling infinitive phrases

An infinitive is a phrase that consists of the word *to* plus a verb (*to stop, to be ruled*) and any modifiers. The infinitive phrase must logically relate to the subject in the main clause.

Dangling: *To stop the bleeding,* direct pressure is applied. (*By whom? Direct pressure does not apply itself.*)

Revised: To stop the bleeding, apply direct pressure to the wound. (*The word you is implied.*)

Revised: Apply direct pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Dangling. To be ruled admissible in court, you must ensure the chain of custody is unbroken. (*This suggests that the subject of the sentence, you, might be ruled inadmissible in court. It says nothing about the evidence.*)

Revised: To be ruled admissible in court, evidence must be maintained with an unbroken chain of custody.

Revised: For evidence to be ruled admissible in court, you must ensure the chain of custody is unbroken.

Dangling participial (or participle) phrases

A participial (or participle) phrase is one that shows continued or completed action. It consists of a participle (*kidnapped, flying*) and any modifiers. The participial phrase must logically relate to the subject in the main clause.

Dangling. *Kidnapped during the night*, Diane's parents were distraught. (*Who was kidnapped? Was it Diane or her parents?*)

Revised: Because Diane had been kidnapped during the night, her parents were distraught.

Revised: Diane's parents were distraught because she had been kidnapped during the night.

Dangling. *Flying over the fire*, spot fires were visible burning outside the fireline. (*This suggests that the spot fires were flying over the fire.*)

Revised: Flying over the fire, the air attack officer could see spot fires burning outside the fireline.

Revised: As the air attack officer flew over the fire, he could see spot fires burning outside the fireline.

Dangling prepositional-gerund phrases

Each of following examples contains a phrase that begins with a preposition (*after, while*) and has a gerund (*searching, inspecting*) as the object of the preposition. The prepositional-gerund phrase must logically relate to the subject of the sentence.

Dangling. *After searching for hours*, the victim trapped beneath the rubble was located. (*Who did the searching?*)

Revised: After searching for hours, rescue workers located the victim trapped beneath the rubble.

The key to eliminating dangling modifiers is to make sure the modifier clearly relates to the subject of the sentence.

Flying over the fire, spot fires were visible burning outside the fireline. (dangling)

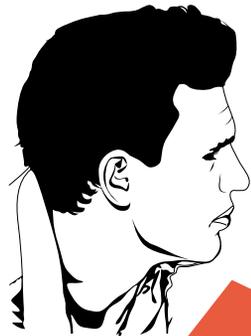


Flying over the fire, the air attack officer could see spot fires burning outside the fireline. (revised)

Adjectives and Adverbs

Make sure the modifier clearly relates to the subject of the sentence.

As a known sex offender the police department will be watching him closely.
(dangling)



As a known sex offender he will be closely watched by the police department.
(revised)

Dangling. While inspecting the building, several safety violations were noticed. (*This suggests that the safety violations inspected the building.*)

Revised: While inspecting the building, we noticed several safety violations.

Revised: We noticed several safety violations while we were inspecting the building.

Dangling prepositional phrases

The examples below also begin with prepositions, but are followed by nouns (*women*) or noun phrases (*a known sex offender*) rather than gerunds. Dangling prepositional phrases lead readers to expect one subject when, in fact, the subject is someone or something else.

Dangling. As women, some men think we are not strong enough to be firefighters or police officers. (*The men were never women.*)

Revised: Because we are women, some men think we are not strong enough to be firefighters or police officers.

Revised: Some men think we are not strong enough to be firefighters or police officers because we are women.

Dangling. As a known sex offender, the police department will be watching him closely. (*This suggests that the police department is the known sex offender.*)

Revised: As a known sex offender, he will be closely watched by the police department.

Revised: Because he is a known sex offender, the police department will be watching him closely.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Don't Fix What Isn't Broken

Absolute phrases, also called *absolute modifiers* or *sentence modifiers*, may look like dangling modifiers. However, they modify the sentence as a whole, rather than a specific word or group of words in the sentence. Absolute phrases consist of at least a noun or pronoun plus a participle (the *-ing* or *-ed* form of a verb).

Considering how badly the building was damaged, it's a miracle no one was killed.

Providing the witness can give us a good description of the killer, we should be able to release a composite sketch by late this afternoon.

That mystery solved, maybe we can get some real work done.

Her home destroyed by fire, Marjorie found herself living among the homeless whom she had looked upon with contempt for so many years.

Remember, a *dangling modifier* is one that does not clearly describe anything in the sentence; therefore, the connection is often confusing to readers. On the other hand, since an absolute phrase modifies the sentence as a whole, readers don't have to make any connection. The sentence is clear as written.

**Absolute phrases
are different
from dangling
modifiers.
Absolute phrases
are clear as
written.**

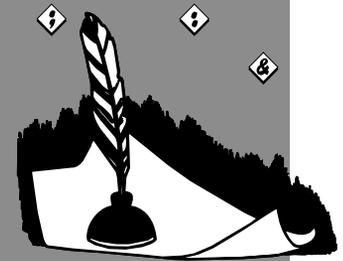
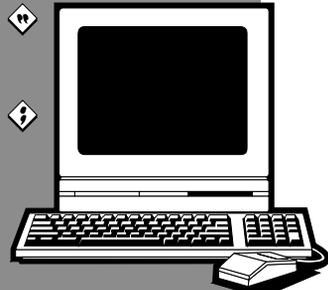


**Providing
we get a good
description, we
should be able
to release a
composite
sketch by late
this afternoon.**

SAMPLE

Chapter 7: Pronouns and Antecedents

SAVED!



Pronouns and Antecedents

A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun:
I, you, he, she, it, we, they, each, every, everyone, nobody, one, some . . .

She was last seen riding her tricycle in the street in front of their house.



Anyone who might have information about the kidnapping should call the police.

Pronouns and Antecedents Defined

The next few pages address the correct use of pronouns based on:

- number - singular or plural
- person - first, second, or third
- gender - masculine, feminine, or neuter
- case - nominative (or subjective), objective, or possessive
- meaning

Before looking at the rules regarding the correct use of pronouns, we need to define some terms.

Pronouns

Pronouns are simply words that are used in place of a noun. There are several types of pronouns. It is not essential that you know what they are called. However, it is important that you be able to recognize pronouns and use them correctly.

- **Personal** pronouns refer to specific people or objects: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*, and so forth.
- **Indefinite** pronouns refer to people or objects that are not specific: *anyone, everyone, each, every, some, all, few*, and so on.
- **Relative** pronouns relate groups of words to nouns or pronouns: *who, whom, whose, which, that, whoever*, and so forth.
- **Interrogative** pronouns are used to introduce questions: *who, whom, whose, what, which*.
- **Compound personal** pronouns are formed by adding *self* or *selves* to a personal pronoun: *myself, yourselves, himself, themselves*, and such. Compound personal pronouns may be used to direct action back to the subject or to emphasize a noun or pronoun already mentioned.
- **Demonstrative** pronouns point to a specific person, place, or thing: *this, that, these, those*.
- **Reciprocal** pronouns serve as objects of verbs when the subjects are plural: *each other, one another*.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Antecedents

The *antecedent* is the noun or phrase to which a pronoun refers.

James fired his gun.

In the example above, *his* refers to *James*. *James* is the antecedent of the pronoun *his*.

The *woman and her children* were trapped in their car.

The second example contains two pronouns and two antecedents. The pronoun *her* refers to *the woman*, so *the woman* is the antecedent of *her*. *Their* refers to the *woman and her children*. The *woman and her children* is the antecedent of the pronoun *their*.

Being a woman in a male-dominated profession has its advantages and disadvantages.

In the last example, *its* refers to the phrase *being a woman in a male-dominated profession*; the entire phrase is the antecedent.

Pronouns Used as Adjectives

Many words in the English language serve multiple functions. This chapter is about pronouns—words that can be used in place of nouns. However, some pronouns can also be used *with* a noun, modifying or describing the noun just as any other adjective would. Adjectives tell *what kind*, *how many*, or *which one*.

As a pronoun: *Several* were damaged.
As an adjective: *Several* homes were damaged.

As a pronoun: *Whose* is this?
As an adjective: *Whose* SCBA is this?

As a pronoun: *This* is the murder weapon.
As an adjective: *This* gun is the murder weapon.

An antecedent is the noun or phrase to which a pronoun refers.

The residents are worried about their homes.



Some words commonly used as pronouns may also serve as adjectives.

Several homes are in danger.

Pronouns and Antecedents

If the antecedent is singular, use a singular pronoun. If it is plural, use a plural pronoun.

Larry could have been badly injured if he wasn't wearing his safety glasses.



Fortunately, our employees are diligent about wearing their safety equipment.

Agreement in Number

Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number. There may be times when you need to worry about number, gender, and person in the same sentence. However, let's look at number first; gender and person are addressed on pages 242-245.

One Noun or Pronoun

If the antecedent consists of one noun or pronoun that is singular, use a singular pronoun; if the noun or pronoun is plural, use a plural pronoun.

The *man* said that *his* daughter had suffered a seizure.

She noted the violations in *her* report.

The *dog* injured *its* leg. (or *his* or *her* as appropriate)

We had to deploy *our* tent shelters for survival.

The *paramedics* did *their* best to save her.

Our officers prefer *this kind* of radar *gun*.

These kinds of *incidents* are often difficult to manage.

The *police department* completed *its* investigation. *

* For information on choosing the correct pronoun when referring to companies and organizations, see pages 264-265.

Indefinite Pronouns

Some indefinite pronouns are singular in meaning, some are plural, and others can be used both ways. It is important to be able to tell the difference.

Singular indefinite pronouns

The following indefinite pronouns are singular in meaning; they refer to a single unspecified person or thing or to one collective group.

Pronouns and Antecedents

another	either	much	one
anybody	every	neither	somebody
anyone	everybody	nobody	someone
(or any one)	everyone	no one	(or some one)
anything	(or every one)	nothing	something
each	everything		

Use a singular pronoun when these indefinite pronouns are used as the antecedent.

One has to discipline *oneself* to study hard during probation. (not *themselves*)

Each of these alarm systems has *its* own advantages and disadvantages. (not *their*)

If the context of the sentence requires a plural pronoun, make sure it's clear to readers that your meaning is plural and that you are using the plural pronoun correctly.

Incorrect: *Neither* of the boys knew that *their* fingerprints were on the glass.

Correct: *Neither* of the boys knew that *both their* fingerprints were on the glass.

Because the indefinite pronouns listed above are singular, you can run into gender problems when trying to use a singular pronoun. If so, you may be better off rewording the sentence.

Incorrect: Everyone feared for *their* lives.

Awkward: Everyone feared for *his* life.

Better: All the hostages feared for *their* lives.

Plural indefinite pronouns

The indefinite pronouns *both*, *few*, *many*, *others*, and *several* are always plural; they require plural pronouns.

Several officers teach self-defense classes on *their* days off.

Both victims said *they* tried to fight off *their* attackers.

Some indefinite pronouns may be singular or plural

All, *any*, *more*, *most*, *none*, and *some* may need either a singular pronoun or a plural pronoun, depending on the noun they refer to.

Most of the *house* was knocked off *its* foundation by the earthquake. (*singular*)

Most indefinite pronouns are singular.

***Each* alarm system has *its* advantages.**

Some are plural.

***Both* have *their* disadvantages as well.**



Some may be singular or plural, depending on the noun they refer to.

***Most* of our customers have been happy with *their* alarm systems.**

Pronouns and Antecedents

In general, use a plural pronoun when the antecedent consists of two nouns or pronouns joined by *and*

Linda and Cathy were wearing their seat belts.



When two plural nouns are joined by *or* or *nor*, use a plural pronoun.

Neither the drivers nor their passengers were wearing their seat belts.

Most of the patients we treated complained that their eyes were irritated from exposure to the product. (plural)

Two Nouns or Pronouns Joined by *and*

Use a plural pronoun when referring to an antecedent that consists of two nouns or pronouns joined by the word *and*.

Kelly and Hal said *they* will teach the next haz mat class.

You and I should practice *our* EMT skills again before *we* are tested next week.

You and George should protect *yourselves* better.

However, when two nouns joined by *and* refer to a single idea, person, or thing, the pronoun is singular.

My *friend and mentor* is on *his* way to becoming our next state fire marshal.

Nouns Joined by *Or* or *Nor*

When both nouns are plural, use a plural pronoun.

Either the *paid personnel* or the *reserves* will be scheduled to do *their* baseline medical exams in December.

Neither the *drivers* nor their *passengers* were wearing *their* seat belts.

When both nouns are singular, use a singular pronoun. (Warning: This can sometimes lead to gender problems. See pages 242-244 for information on how to deal with these problems.)

Either *Brian* or *Ken* will lend me *his* helmet while I raise the ladder. (not *their*)

Neither *Donna* nor *Debbie* could remember what *she* was doing just before the explosion. (not *they*)

Neither the *engine* nor the *truck* needs *its* brakes replaced at this time. (not *their*)

Pronouns and Antecedents

When the antecedent consists of one noun that is singular and another one that is plural, make the pronoun agree with the nearest noun. The sentence will usually be less awkward if you put the plural noun second. (Notice that the verb also changes to agree with the nearest noun.)

Awkward: Neither my keys nor my purse *is* where I left *it*.
Better: Neither my purse nor my keys *are* where I left *them*.

This kind of sentence construction can sometimes lead to gender problems. Refer to pages 242-244 for more information.

A Compound Noun After *Each* or *Every*

Use a singular pronoun when the antecedent consists of two or more nouns that follow *each* or *every*.

Each drum and cylinder is in *its* proper place.

Every oxygen bottle and air bottle we have was hydrostatically tested by *its* manufacturer last year.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns such as *committee*, *family*, *group*, and *team* have singular form, but may require singular or plural pronouns, depending on the sentence.

When the group acts as a unit, use a singular pronoun.

The Safety *Committee* finalized *its* mission statement today. (not *their*)

The *jury* reached *its* verdict very quickly. (not *their*)

When referring to members of the group who act separately, use a plural pronoun.

The crew don't like *their* new uniforms. (not *its*)

The crowd aren't going to like it if we make *them* wait while we search *their* cars. (not *it* and *its*)

When two singular nouns are joined by *or* or *nor*, use a singular pronoun.

Neither Amanda nor Patty keeps her purse in a locked drawer.



If one noun is singular and the other one is plural, make the pronoun agree with the nearest noun.

Neither my purse nor my keys are where I left them.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Singular personal pronouns may be masculine, feminine, or neuter.



he, him, his



she, her, hers



it, its

Agreement with Gender

Making pronouns and antecedents agree in gender is more than a question of being grammatically correct; today it is a question of being *politically and socially* correct.

When One Gender Is Clearly Appropriate

If one particular gender is clearly appropriate, use the corresponding pronoun. A singular personal pronoun may be masculine (*he, him, his*), feminine (*she, her, hers*), or neuter (*it, its*). The plural personal pronouns *they, them, their, and theirs* have no specific gender.

Mark said *he* left *his* stethoscope in the ambulance.

Please ask your captain if *she* has finished *her* report yet. (She and her are appropriate in this situation because the captain being referred to is known to be a woman.)

The dog got *its* paw stuck between the bars of the crate. (His or her is also appropriate if the dog's gender is known.)

Options for Dealing with Gender Problems

Many nouns and pronouns create gender problems. For years it was considered acceptable to use *he, him, or his* as a generic pronoun referring to both males and females. However, if the noun referred to an occupation or role predominantly associated with women, most writers used *she, her, or hers* instead.

Every firefighter should be able to don *his* SCBA in under a minute.

A nurse must use good body mechanics when lifting and moving *her* patients, or *she* may injure *her* back.

This kind of writing is seldom acceptable anymore. Use of the masculine pronouns excludes women. Use of the feminine pronouns in roles predominantly associated with women not only excludes men but also serves to reinforce stereotypes about women.

Let's look at some of the options that are available for dealing with gender issues.

Pronouns and Antecedents

1. Use *he or she*, *his or her*, or *him or her* instead: *Every firefighter should be able to don his or her SCBA in under a minute.* This option is acceptable if you do not have to use it too often. However, if you have several gender problems throughout your document, you will be better off using one of the other techniques. (Note: Some experts prefer *he or she* over *he/she*. Not many experts like *s/he*.)
2. Avoid the pronoun by replacing it with an article (*a*, *an*, or *the*): *Every firefighter should be able to don an SCBA in under a minute.* Not every situation lends itself to this option, however. For example, you could not say *each firefighter washed the hands after coming in contact with the victim's blood.*
3. Rewrite the sentence so that everything is plural: *All firefighters should be able to don their SCBAs in under a minute.* This is often the best solution.
4. Sometimes you can rewrite the sentence entirely: *Being able to don an SCBA in under a minute is something we expect of all of our firefighters.* Don't get carried away with this option, however. It can lead to wordy sentences or awkward sentences that mean something different than you intended.

Additional examples

The following are some other examples of sentences that were revised to eliminate both gender and number problems. The first example below was fixed by making the sentence plural.

Awkward: Every firefighter, police officer, and paramedic should know *his* blood type.

Incorrect: Every firefighter, police officer, and paramedic should know *their* blood type. (*The word their is incorrect because every is singular*)

Better: All firefighters, police officers, and paramedics should know *their* blood types.

In the next example, the order of the nouns had to be reversed to make the sentence plural.

Awkward: Neither the firefighters nor the paramedic wants to risk *his* life for a body recovery operation.

Better: Neither the paramedic nor the firefighters want to risk *their* lives for a body recovery operation.

Many nouns and pronouns create gender problems.

Every firefighter should be able to don his SCBA in under a minute.



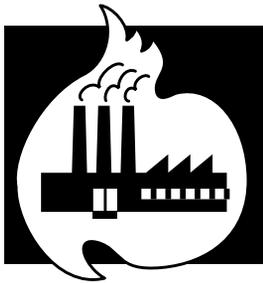
Often the best way to avoid gender problems is to make everything plural.

All firefighters should be able to don their SCBAs in under a minute.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Sometimes it is best to reword the sentence and eliminate the pronoun.

If anyone should ask what started the fire, tell them that we haven't determined the cause yet. (incorrect)



If anyone should ask what started the fire, just say that we haven't determined the cause yet. (revised)

When there is no correct pronoun based on number or gender, look for ways to eliminate the pronoun.

Incorrect: If *anyone* should ask what started the fire, tell *them* that we haven't determined the cause yet. (*The word them is incorrect because anyone is singular*)

Awkward: If *anyone* should ask what started the fire, tell *him* that we haven't determined the cause yet.

Better: If *anyone* should ask what started the fire, *just say* that we haven't determined the cause yet.

Incorrect: Either Steve or Carol will lend me *his/her/their* helmet while I raise the ladder. (*Grammatically, this sentence requires a singular pronoun, but a singular pronoun creates gender problems.*)

Awkward: Either Steve will lend me his helmet while I raise the ladder, or Carol will lend me hers. (*This is grammatically correct, but it is wordy.*)

Better: Either Steve or Carol will lend me *a* helmet while I raise the ladder.

Agreement with Person

Make Pronouns and Antecedents Agree in Person

Pronouns and their antecedents must agree in person (first, second, or third).

I lost *my* pager.

You drew *your* gun first.

Tim was the first to complete *his* assignment.

We risk *our* lives to save others in danger.

Avoid Shifts in Person

Be careful not to inadvertently shift from one person to the next.

Incorrect: If *anyone* witnessed the accident, *you* should call the police and tell them what *you* saw.
(*shift from third person to second person*)

Revised: If *you* witnessed the accident, *you* should call the police and tell them what *you* saw.
(*all second person*)

Revised: *Anyone* who witnessed the accident should call the police and tell them what happened.
(*personal pronouns removed*)

Incorrect: If *someone* doesn't know how to do CPR, *they* should sign up for the class.
(*shift from third person singular to third person plural*)

Revised: If *people* don't know how to do CPR, they should sign up for the class.
(*all third person plural*)

Revised: *People* who don't know how to do CPR should sign up for the class.
(*personal pronouns removed*)

Pronouns and their antecedents must agree in person.

If anyone witnessed the accident, you should call the police and tell them what you saw.
(incorrect)

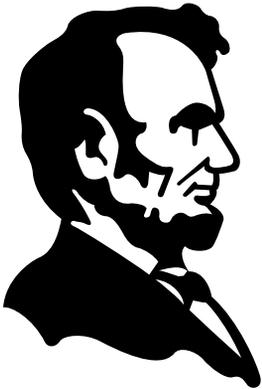


If you witnessed the accident, you should call the police and tell them what you saw.
(correct)

Pronouns and Antecedents

Pronouns have different forms based on the way they are used in a sentence.

Nominative case: He was murdered.



Objective case: Someone shot him.

Possessive case: His murderer was identified as John Wilkes Booth.

The Correct Pronoun Based on Case

Pronouns have different forms based on case (the way a pronoun is used in a sentence).

An Overview of the Three Cases

The following is an overview of the three cases of pronouns. Each will be covered in more detail over the next few pages.

- The *nominative* (or *subjective*) case refers to a pronoun used as a subject or a subject complement.
- The *objective* case refers to a pronoun used as a direct object, an indirect object, or the object of a preposition.
- The *possessive* case refers to a pronoun used to show ownership or possession.

The following chart shows the three cases of pronouns.

person, number	<u>nominative</u>	<u>objective</u>	<u>possessive</u>
<i>first, singular</i>	I	me	my, mine
<i>first, plural</i>	we	us	our, ours
<i>second, singular</i>	you	you	your, yours
<i>second, plural</i>	you	you	your, yours
<i>third, singular</i>	he	him	his
	she	her	her, hers
	it	it	its
<i>third, plural</i>	they	them	their, theirs

The Nominative (or Subjective) Case

Use the nominative form of a pronoun (*I, we, you, he, she, it, or they*) when the pronoun is the subject of the sentence.

You are under arrest.

We rescued three people from the burning building.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Sometimes a sentence contains two pronouns, each serving as an independent subject with its own verb. Each pronoun should be in the nominative form.

I tried to splint Stephanie's arm, but *she* wouldn't let me.

They fired first, so *we* fired back.

The following sentences contain two pronouns (or a noun and a pronoun) serving as a compound subject. Once again, the pronouns should be in the nominative form.

He and *I* already searched the house. (not *him and me* or *me and him*)

Either Denise or *I* can start the IV. (not *Denise or me* or *me or Denise*)

If you are not sure which form of the pronoun to use in sentences like the two above, try using each pronoun alone. You could not say "*him* searched the house" or "*me* searched the house." Therefore, *he and I* is correct.

Use a nominative pronoun when the pronoun follows a form of the verb *to be* (*be, am, are, is, was, were, been, or being*). Notice that each of the following sentences could be rewritten to make the pronoun the subject of the sentence. Mentally rearranging the sentence can often help you determine the correct pronoun.

The one who robbed the bank is *he*. (*He is the one who robbed the bank.*)

It could have been *we* who were killed. (*We could have been the ones who were killed.*)

It was *I* who found the victim. (*I am the one who found the victim.*)

The Objective Case

Use an objective pronoun (*me, us, you, him, her, it, or them*) when the pronoun serves as the object of a verb. (The object of a verb is the person or thing being acted upon.)

He shot *me*. (not *I*)

I want to thank the firefighters who rescued my daughter and *me*. (not *I*)

Use the nominative case if the pronoun serves as the subject of the sentence.

***He and I* were almost hit by the drunk driver.**



If you are unsure which pronoun to use, try using each pronoun alone.

***He* was almost hit. *I* was almost hit. Hence: *He and I* were almost hit.**

Pronouns and Antecedents

Use the objective case when the pronoun serves as the object of a verb.

His parents often leave him home alone.



Use the objective case when the pronoun serves as the object of a preposition.

Between you and me, I think they abuse the boy too.

The chief promoted Todd and *her*. (not *she*)

An easy way to determine the correct pronoun when the sentence contains two objects is to mentally omit the other noun: *I want to thank the firefighters who rescued me. The chief promoted her.*

Use an objective pronoun when the pronoun serves as the object of a preposition. A preposition is a connecting word; it connects a noun or pronoun to another word in the sentence. Examples of prepositions include *to, from, in, on, at, by, for, of, with, after, before,* and *between*.

The department ordered new bulletproof vests for *us*.

Between *you* and *me*, I think the homeowner set this fire. (not *you and I*)

The chief wants to talk to *you* and *me*. (not *you and I*)

Note: The word *of* can be used as a preposition, or it may be used to indicate possession. The usage determines the correct pronoun.

The chief spoke highly of *her*. (*The pronoun is the object of a preposition; thus her is correct.*)

The chief is a strong supporter of *hers*. (*The pronoun is used in the possessive sense—her supporter; thus hers is correct.*)

The Possessive Case

Most of the possessive pronouns have two forms. One form is used if the possessive pronoun immediately precedes the noun it refers to. The other form is used if the possessive pronoun stands apart from the noun it modifies.

<u>if pronoun precedes noun</u>	<u>if pronoun stands apart</u>
my *	mine
your *	yours
his	his
her	hers
its	its
our *	ours
their *	theirs

* Unlike other pronouns, these words cannot be used in place of a noun. They are used *with* nouns (for example, *my chief*) to identify *which one*. As such, they are really adjectives.

Pronouns and Antecedents

The following are some examples of how to use these pronouns.

Precedes noun: It is *my* baton.
Stands alone: The baton is *mine*.

Precedes noun: *Their* baby drowned.
Stands alone: The baby that drowned was *theirs*.

Possessive pronouns are also used before an *-ing* verb that serves as a noun. (The technical name for this verb form is *gerund*.) Not all *-ing* verbs serve as nouns, however. If the emphasis is on the *activity*, the verb serves as a noun and a possessive pronoun is required. If the emphasis is on the *person* doing the activity, use an objective pronoun.

Activity: I don't like *your* lying to a police officer.
 (I don't like lying to a police officer.)

Person: I heard *you* lying to the police officer.
 (I heard you as you told the lie.)

Activity: Residents are upset about *their* evacuating the area.
 (Residents are upset about the evacuation.)

Person: I don't want *them* evacuating the area.
 (I don't want the firefighters evacuating the area; I want them mitigating the hazard. The police can handle the evacuation.)

Possessive pronouns versus contractions

Do not confuse possessive pronouns with contractions.

<u>possessive pronoun</u>	<u>contraction</u>
its	it's (<i>it is</i> or <i>it has</i>)
their	they're (<i>they are</i>)
theirs	there's (<i>there is</i> or <i>there has</i>)
your	you're (<i>you are</i>)
whose	who's (<i>who is</i>)

If you are unsure which word to use, try substituting the words from which the contraction is formed. If the new sentence makes sense, you can use the contraction; if it doesn't, you must use a possessive pronoun.

Original: It's not safe to go in there.
Test version: It is not safe to go in there. (Since it is makes sense, the contraction it's is appropriate. The possessive pronoun its would be wrong.)

Possessive pronouns are also used before an *-ing* verb that serves as a noun.

If the emphasis is on the *activity* use a possessive pronoun.

We don't like your lying to a police officer.



If the emphasis is on the *person* use an objective pronoun.

We heard you lying to the police officer.

Pronouns and Antecedents

When making comparisons between two people, supplying the missing words can help you choose the correct pronoun.

Bill is more diligent about maintaining the ambulance than _____. (me or I?)



Bill is more diligent about maintaining the ambulance than I am.

Original: You shouldn't risk *your* life just to save property.

Test version: You shouldn't risk *you are* life just to save property. (*The substitution doesn't work, so the possessive pronoun your is required. The contraction you're would be wrong.*)

(Notice that possessive pronouns do not have apostrophes. Use *hers*, not *her's*; *yours*, not *your's*; and so forth.)

Other Case Studies

Let's look at a few other situations with respect to case that don't fit neatly into one single category.

Comparisons between two people

The first situation involves making comparisons between two people. A comparison may require either a nominative pronoun or an objective pronoun, depending on the meaning of the sentence. Each of the examples below is written both with the verb omitted and with the verb supplied. Notice that it becomes very easy to determine the correct pronoun when the missing word(s) are added. In fact, while both versions are correct, your sentences will generally be clearer and less awkward when you supply the missing words.

Verb omitted: Scott is better at starting IVs than *I*.
Verb supplied: Scott is better at starting IVs than *I am*.
 (*Supplying the missing verb clearly shows that the nominative pronoun I is required, not the objective pronoun me.*)

Verb omitted: I trust you more than *him*.
Verb supplied: I trust you more than *I trust him*.

Verb omitted: I trust you more than *he*.
Verb supplied: I trust you more than *he does*.
 (*Supplying the missing words shows how your choice of pronoun can affect the meaning of the sentence.*)

When a pronoun identifies a noun or another pronoun

Another situation that requires choosing between the nominative case and the objective case is when a pronoun is used to identify a noun or another pronoun. Often you can determine the correct pronoun by mentally omitting words or rearranging the sentence.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Original: The chief told us, Chris and *me*, that we had been nominated for a valor award.

Test version: The chief told *me* that we had been nominated for a valor award.
(Omitting a few words clearly shows that the objective pronoun *me* is required, not the nominative pronoun *I*.)

Original: They thought we were guilty of stealing, Henry and *I*.

Test version: They thought *I* was guilty of stealing.
(Rewriting this sentence clearly shows that the nominative pronoun *I* is required, not the objective pronoun *me*.)

Original: We arrested the suspect last night, Tony and *I*.

Test version: *I* arrested the suspect last night.
(Rewriting this sentence clearly shows that the nominative pronoun *I* is required, not the objective pronoun *me*.)

Test versions can help you determine the correct pronoun.

Original:
We arrested the suspect last night, Tony and _____. (me or I?)



Test version:
I arrested the suspect last night.

Hence:
We arrested the suspect last night, Tony and I.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Use compound personal pronouns to direct action back to the subject.

He injured himself during the race.



Use compound personal pronouns to emphasize a noun or pronoun that has already been expressed.

The chief himself asked us to investigate the possibility of foul play.

Compound Personal Pronouns

Compound personal pronouns are those that end in *self* or *selves*.

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<i>First person</i>	myself	ourselves
<i>Second person</i>	yourself	yourselves
<i>Third person</i>	himself, herself, itself	themselves

Correct Use of Compound Personal Pronouns

Use a compound personal pronoun to direct action back to the subject.

Why did *you* shoot *yourself*?

Roger took it upon *himself* to notify the on-call investigator.

Use a compound personal pronoun to emphasize or intensify a noun or pronoun that has already been expressed.

The *chief himself* asked me to work on this project.

I myself made sure the building was secure before I left.

Misuse of Compound Personal Pronouns

Avoid using compound personal pronouns when they merely add extra words to the sentence. In the last two examples, the compound personal pronouns were used to call particular attention to the noun or pronoun. For example, it was the chief, not someone acting on his behalf, who asked me to work on the project. However, if the extra emphasis is not required, it is better to be concise than wordy.

Wordy: She herself is to blame for the accident.

Better: She is to blame for the accident.

Do not use a compound personal pronoun *in place of* the subject or object of a sentence. Remember, a compound personal pronoun emphasizes a noun or pronoun *that has already been expressed*.

Will threatened Don and *me*. (not *Don and myself*)

Wayne and *I* searched the house. (not *Wayne and myself*)

Interrogative and Relative Pronouns

Some words can function either as interrogative pronouns or as relative pronouns. Examples include *who*, *what*, *which*, and *whom*.

Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are those which are used to introduce questions. They may be either singular or plural.

Who will inspect this facility?

What happened?

Which men attacked you?

To *whom* should I report the injury?

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns relate groups of words to nouns or pronouns. They, too, may be either singular or plural.

The doctor *who* stopped to help is a former paramedic.

The hoses *that* were damaged were taken out of service.

I wish I knew *which* one of us was going on the strike team.

Todd, *whom* everyone admires, was just promoted.

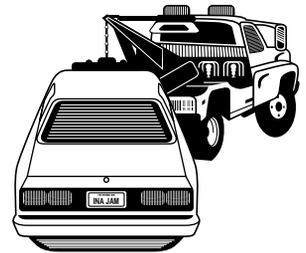
Who or Whom? (Whoever Whomever?)

Who and *whoever* are nominative pronouns. *Whom* and *whomever* are objective pronouns. The following list shows how these pronouns relate to the others covered so far.

Some words can function as interrogative pronouns or relative pronouns.

Interrogative pronouns introduce questions.

Which car needs to be towed?



Relative pronouns relate groups of words to nouns or pronouns.

There is one car that needs to be towed.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Use *who* or *whoever* if a nominative pronoun is needed.

Who is smuggling drugs? He is smuggling drugs.



Use *whom* or *whomever* if an objective pronoun is needed.

Whom did you arrest? I arrested him.

nominative

I
we
you
he
she
it
they
who
whoever

objective

me
us
you
him
her
it
them
whom
whomever

A substitution test to determine the correct pronoun

If you are not sure whether to use *who* or *whom* (or *whoever* or *whomever*), try substituting one of the other personal pronouns for the clause containing *who* or *whom* (or *whoever* or *whomever*). If the nominative form works, use *who* or *whoever*. If the objective form is required, use *whom* or *whomever*. (I have underlined the clause containing *who* or *whom* in most of the examples below to help you identify what part of the sentence to focus on.)

(Note: The pronouns *you* and *it* are the same in both the nominative and objective forms. Although you may still need to decide between *who* and *whom* in a sentence where *you* or *it* would be appropriate, you cannot use *you* or *it* for the substitution test.)

Who reported the accident? (*She* reported the accident.)

Whom did you report the accident to? (I reported the accident to *her*.)

The captain from Rescue 14 is the one who called for the second alarm. (*He* called for the second alarm.)

Jerry is the officer whom I prefer to work with. (I prefer to work with *him*.)

Have you identified who needs to go to the hospital? (*They* need to go to the hospital.)

I want to know whom we are transporting by helicopter. (We are transporting *them* by helicopter.)

Whoever arrives on scene first will assume command. (*He* will arrive on scene first.)

Keith will help whomever he can. (He can help *me*.)

Pronouns and Antecedents

The media want a picture of whoever participated in the rescue. (*We* participated in the rescue.)

We will save whomever we can. (We can save *them*.)

This substitution trick looks easy when someone else does the work. Yet it is very easy to make the wrong substitution and come up with the wrong answer. Let's take one of the previous sentences as an example: *The media want a picture of whoever participated in the rescue*. You could rewrite the sentence to say "*The media want a picture of us*." *Us* is an objective pronoun, which would lead you to believe that you should use the pronoun *whomever* rather than *whoever*. However, if you rewrite the sentence that way, you will have made the wrong substitution. Focus on the clause that is introduced by *who/whoever* or *whom/whomever*. *Who participated in the rescue? We* did. Thus *whoever* is the correct pronoun.

Whose or Who's?

Whose is the possessive form of the pronoun *who*. *Who's* is the contraction for *who is* or *who has*. Use *who's* only if you can substitute *who is* or *who has*; otherwise, use *whose*.

Whose radio is this? (not *who's*)

Who's (*Who is*) talking on the radio? (not *whose*)

Who, Which or That?

The relative pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that* are used to introduce certain kinds of dependent clauses. These pronouns help clarify the relation between a noun or pronoun and the remainder of the sentence.

Use either *who* or *that* when referring to people. *Who* (or *whom*) is more personal; it is more appropriate when referring to an individual or group of individuals. *That* is more impersonal; it is more appropriate when referring to types or classes of people. Keep in mind that even with these guidelines, it can still be difficult to choose between *who* and *that*. If it is difficult to choose between the two, chances are that either one is acceptable.

Jeff is someone *who* can keep his cool in an emergency.

Lynne is one of the firefighters *who* were hired in the last academy.

Whose is the possessive form of *who*

We need to determine whose horse was stolen.



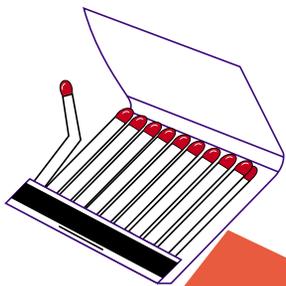
Who's is the contraction for *who is* or *who has*

Then we need a list of everyone who's (*who is*) authorized to go near the stables.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Many experts recommend using *that* for essential clauses and *which* for nonessential ones.

The fire that we responded to this morning was caused by children playing with matches. (essential)



This fire, which was caused by children playing with matches, must have been smoldering for hours. (nonessential)

Catherine is the one person *whom* everyone trusted.

We need someone *whom* (or *that*) we can count on to keep the public out until it's safe to reenter.

Harry is the kind of paramedic *that* I want working on me if I ever get hurt.

Who is sometimes used when referring an animal if the animal's name is provided. However, the pronoun *that* is more common.

JaiJai is the dog *that* (or *who*) had to be rescued by the crew of Truck 1.

Use *which* or *that* when referring to objects, places, or animals (with the one possible exception identified above). Nonessential clauses should be introduced by *which*. Essential clauses are generally introduced by *that*.

Essential: The fire *that* Engine 6 responded to this morning was caused by children playing with matches.

Nonessential: This fire, *which* we know was caused by children playing with matches, must have been smoldering for hours before anyone discovered it.

Essential: Animal Control has quarantined the dog *that* bit Jason.

Nonessential: The dog, *which* is a pit bull, has bitten other children in the past.

Although some experts insist that *which* should be used for nonessential clauses only, others say that *which* can be used to introduce both essential and nonessential clauses. In fact, *which* may be better than *that* if *that* has already been used in the sentence.

That is the vehicle *which* ran the red light.

Which may be better than *that* if there are two or more parallel essential clauses in the sentence.

The patient has a laceration *which* is going to need stitches and *which* can become infected if not properly treated.

And expressions like *this . . . which* can be better than *this . . . that*.

We know the fire was caused by an electrical short because of the beading on *this* wire *which* Bill found in the debris.

Demonstrative and Reciprocal Pronouns

Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns point to a specific person or thing. *This* and *that* are the singular forms. *These* and *those* are the plural forms.

This is the damaged hose clamp.

That is the murder weapon.

These are the boys who found the victim.

Those are not our medical supplies.

Like many other pronouns, demonstrative pronouns can also serve as adjectives.

This child is injured. (modifies *child*)

These wounds suggest that she was murdered. (modifies *wounds*)

Reciprocal Pronouns

Reciprocal pronouns serve as objects of verbs when the subjects are plural. Use *each other* to refer to two persons or things; use *one another* to refer to more than two.

The boy called 911 when his parents began to threaten *each other*.

You and your partner should record *each other's* vital signs before making entry into the hot zone.

Gang members are not just killing *one another*. They are killing innocent people who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We all must take responsibility for *one another's* safety.

Demonstrative pronouns point to a specific person or thing.

"This is Bobby. I need help."



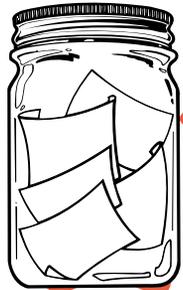
Reciprocal pronouns serve as objects of verbs when the subjects are plural.

The boy called 911 when his parents began to threaten each other

Pronouns and Antecedents

Faulty pronoun reference occurs when a writer uses pronouns without clearly distinguishing what these pronouns refer to.

The investigator removed the evidence from the house and turned it over to the property owner.



Did he turn over the evidence or the house?

Faulty Pronoun Reference

Faulty pronoun reference is a fairly common problem, but one that is relatively easy to fix when you know what you are looking for.

What Is Faulty Pronoun Reference?

In a nutshell, faulty pronoun reference occurs when a writer uses pronouns such as *it*, *they*, *which*, and *that* without clearly distinguishing what these words refer to. The reference may be clear to the writer who knows what he or she is trying to say, but it is not necessarily clear to the reader.

Faulty pronoun reference can occur when there are multiple antecedents in the same sentence, when the pronoun is too far from the antecedent, when the antecedent is implied rather than stated directly, or when *it*, *they*, or *you* are used without reference.

When There Are Multiple Antecedents

If you have more than one antecedent in the sentence, you must clearly identify which one the pronoun refers to. Otherwise, your readers may become confused. There are several things you can do to eliminate this confusion.

Replace the pronoun with a noun

An easy way to clarify which antecedent you are referring to is to replace the pronoun with a noun.

Confusing. The investigator removed the evidence from the house and turned *it* over to the property owner. (*Did he turn over the evidence or the house?*)

Clear. The investigator removed the evidence from the house and turned *the house* over to the property owner.

Rewrite the sentence with only one possible antecedent

Rather than repeat one of the antecedents, you can rewrite the sentence so that only one antecedent is possible.

After removing the evidence from *it*, the investigator turned *the house* over to the property owner.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Eliminate the pronoun

Sometimes eliminating the pronoun will not only clear up the confusion but also result in a tighter, more effective sentence.

The investigator turned the house over to the property owner after removing the evidence.

Use direct quotations rather than indirect quotations

Reporting what someone else has said can cause confusion too. Occasionally it is easier to rewrite the sentence using a direct quotation rather than an indirect quotation.

Confusing: Kevin told Tom that he needed to report to the command post. (*Who needs to report to the command post, Kevin or Tom?*)

Clear: Kevin told Tom, "You need to report to the command post."

Clear: Kevin told Tom, "I need to report to the command post."

Put the noun in parentheses behind the pronoun

While using direct quotations is an effective way to report what another person has said, there may be times when using direct quotations does not fit within your department's normal style of writing reports. You could repeat the noun instead, but it may be more effective to put the noun in parentheses behind the pronoun.

Confusing: Kevin told Tom that Tom needed to report to the command post. (*Are we talking about the same Tom or a different Tom?*)

Clear: Kevin told Tom that he (Tom) needed to report to the command post.

Rephrase the sentence

Some experts frown on putting a noun in parentheses behind the pronoun as in the previous example. It is often less awkward and more effective to rephrase the sentence. While the previous example could not easily be rewritten, the following one can.

Weak: Nick handed the resuscitator to Bruce, and he (Nick) took over compressions.

Better: Nick handed the resuscitator to Bruce, then took over compressions.

Or: Nick handed Bruce the resuscitator and took over compressions.

Sometimes eliminating the pronoun can clear up the confusion and provide a tighter, more effective sentence.

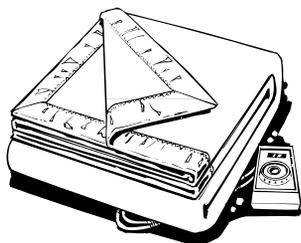


The investigator turned the house over to the property owner after removing the evidence.

Pronouns and Antecedents

If you rewrite a sentence, make sure the new sentence is clear.

Hank found a candle on the electric blanket that may have started the fire.
(confusing)



Hank found a candle that may have started the fire on the electric blanket.
(confusing)



What really happened?

When the Pronoun Is Too Far from the Antecedent

When the pronoun is too far away from the antecedent, readers may end up having to backtrack to determine who or what you are referring to.

Bring the pronoun closer to the antecedent

The pronouns *who*, *which*, or *that* generally should be positioned right after the words they refer to.

Confusing: Jerry found a heater in the basement *that* may have started the fire. (*People may misread this to mean that the basement, not the heater, may have started the fire.*)

Clear: In the basement, Jerry found a heater *that* may have started the fire.

Caution: Rearranging the sentence can cause other problems. Read the sentence carefully to make sure that it is clear.

Original: Hank found a candle on the electric blanket *that* may have started the fire. (*This can be misinterpreted to mean that the electric blanket started the fire and that the candle probably ended up on top of the blanket later.*)

Confusing: Hank found a candle *that* may have started the fire on the electric blanket. (*This can be misinterpreted to mean that the electric blanket may have been the only thing that burned.*)

Clear: Hank found a candle on the electric blanket. The candle may have started the fire. (*This is a little wordier, but the meaning is clear.*)

Sometimes even when the antecedent is clear, it is still too far away from the pronoun. By the time readers get to the pronoun, they have forgotten who or what you are talking about. This problem is common when you have long sentences or when the pronoun is in an entirely different sentence from the antecedent.

Confusing: Al located an additional *patient* in the back of the bus *who* had not yet been triaged. (*Who clearly refers to the patient, not the bus. However, who is still too far away from patient.*)

Clear: In the back of the bus, Al located an additional *patient who* had not yet been triaged.

Pronouns and Antecedents

When the Antecedent Is Only Implied

When you do not clearly identify to whom or what the pronoun refers, readers are left to form their own conclusions. Make your antecedents explicit rather than implicit.

Be careful about making broad references

Sometimes the pronouns *this*, *that*, *it*, or *which* refer to a whole idea or situation described earlier in the sentence or paragraph. The pronoun makes a broad reference to prior information. However, unless it is unmistakably clear what the pronoun is referring to, you should either substitute an appropriate noun or rewrite the sentence.

Confusing: Our fire department now serves Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Saratoga, and the unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County. *It* has almost doubled in size since I first became a firefighter. (*What does it refer to?*)

Clear: Our fire department now serves Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Saratoga, and the unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County. *The department* has almost doubled in size since I first became a firefighter.

Be explicit rather than implicit

Even though your readers may understand an implied antecedent, your writing will be more clear and more effective if you are explicit rather than implicit.

Confusing: In Dan's testimony, he was not convincing enough.

Clear: Dan's testimony was not convincing enough.

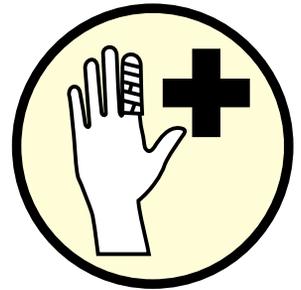
Confusing: She fell two days ago, but it was minor.

Clear: She fell two days ago, but her injuries were minor.

Clear: She fell two days ago, but she sustained only minor injuries.

The sentence will generally be clearer and more effective if the antecedent is explicit.

She fell two days ago, but it was minor. (confusing)



She fell two days ago, but her injuries were minor. (clear)

Pronouns and Antecedents

It's important to clarify who or what you are referring to by *it, they* and *you*

They often show firefighters fighting fire without wearing their masks. (confusing)



Many movies about emergency responders show firefighters fighting fire without wearing their masks. (revised)

Titles and subtitles are not clear antecedents

Titles and subtitles are not clear antecedents. Most people do not read everything on the page. They will often skim a page to find what they are looking for. Even when people read something intently, there are things they may skip over.

It is not uncommon for readers to skip over a title or subtitle, even inadvertently, because they expect the body of the text to contain the same information. If you proceed directly from a title or subtitle to a pronoun, readers may get lost.

Confusing: **Report on Conditions**

Provide *it* as soon as possible.

Clear: **Report on Conditions**

Provide *a report on conditions* as soon as possible.

When *It, They* and *You* Are Used Without Reference

Some people use the pronouns *it, they,* and *you* quite casually in daily conversation: *They say a moving target is harder to hit.* Yet, when you are writing, it is important to clarify whom or what you are referring to by *it, they,* and *you.* Who says a moving target is harder to hit?

Confusing: *They* say nicotine isn't addictive.

Clear: *Some people* say nicotine isn't addictive.

Clear: *Some tobacco companies* insist nicotine isn't addictive.

Try to avoid making loose associations. The more specific you are, the clearer your writing will be.

Confusing: *They* often show firefighters fighting fire without wearing their masks. (*Whom does the word they refer to?*)

Awkward: In many movies about emergency responders, *they* show firefighters fighting fire without wearing their masks.

Clear: *Many movies about emergency responders* show firefighters fighting fire without wearing their masks.

Pronouns and Antecedents

Confusing: It says we should evacuate to a distance of at least 2000 feet. (*What does it refer to?*)

Awkward: In the *North American Emergency Response Guidebook*, it says we should evacuate to a distance of at least 2000 feet.

Clear: The *North American Emergency Response Guidebook* indicates that we should evacuate to a distance of at least 2000 feet.

Use *you* only when addressing the reader.

Before arresting suspects, *you* must read them their rights.

When responding to a haz mat call, *you* should approach from upwind, uphill, and upstream.

If you do not mean to address the reader, do not use *you*.

Wrong: When I first joined the department, *you* weren't issued two sets of turnouts.

Revised: When I first joined the department, *I wasn't* issued two sets of turnouts.

Revised: When I first joined the department, *firefighters weren't* issued two sets of turnouts.

Wrong: I remember when *you* didn't have to worry about criminals having such high-powered weapons.

Revised: I remember when *we* didn't have to worry about criminals having such high-powered weapons.

Revised: I remember when *police* didn't have to worry about criminals having such high-powered weapons.

If you do not mean to address the reader, do not use *you*

I remember when you didn't have to worry about criminals having such high-powered weapons.
(wrong)



I remember when we didn't have to worry about criminals having such high-powered weapons.
(revised)

Pronouns and Antecedents

Company names are generally considered to be singular, requiring singular verbs and singular pronouns.



***County Fire* has completed *its* investigation.**

The Appropriate Pronouns for Companies or Organizations

Choosing the correct pronoun to refer to companies, organizations, agencies, and so forth, can be tricky.

Company Names Are Generally Singular

Company names are generally considered to be singular; thus you should use singular verbs and singular pronouns. This is true whether you use the formal name (*Santa Clara County Fire Department*) or a generic name (*the fire department*).

The fire department *has* completed *its* investigation.

Plural Pronouns Can Be Used When Appropriate

Unfortunately, it is sometimes awkward to use singular pronouns. Plural pronouns may seem more appropriate, particularly when referring to actions or characteristics attributed to the individuals who work at the company.

Singular: When I asked the fire department for a copy of the investigation report, *it* told me the report was not complete.

Plural: When I asked the fire department for a copy of the investigation report, *they* told me the report was not complete.

To say *it told me* as opposed to *they told me* doesn't seem natural. People tell us things; inanimate objects do not. However, simply changing the pronoun can cause other problems, as you will see on the following page.

Plural pronouns are also more appropriate when referring to one's own organization.

It is *our* policy to automatically dispatch an investigator on all working structure fires.

The plural pronoun *our* communicates that it is the department's policy. A singular pronoun, such as *my*, *his*, or *her*, would refer to an individual's policy, not the department's policy.

Pronouns and Antecedents

A noun may be more effective

You can often avoid the struggle to choose the correct pronoun by replacing the pronoun with an appropriate noun.

When I asked the fire department for a copy of the investigation report, *the receptionist* told me it was not complete.

It is *the department's* policy to automatically dispatch an investigator on all working structure fires.

Whatever you do, be consistent

Because company names are generally considered to be singular, you should use singular verbs and pronouns as much as possible. There is some flexibility in the rules to permit the use of plural pronouns if necessary. However, you need to be consistent. The following examples illustrate how you need to pay close attention to the words you choose.

Awkward: The fire department *has* completed *its* investigation. *It* has determined the cause of the fire to be arson. *It* will send us a copy of the report when *it* is complete.

This paragraph seems awkward because it attributes human characteristics to an “it.” There is one additional problem in the last sentence; the word *it* is used twice—once to refer to the fire department and once to refer to the report. This can confuse readers.

Incorrect: The fire department *has* completed *their* investigation. *They* have determined the cause of the fire to be arson. *They* will send us a copy of the report when it is complete.

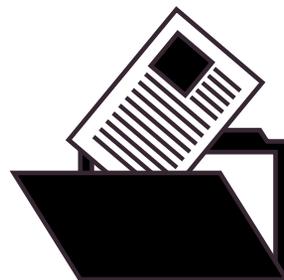
Although the second version is less awkward, the first sentence of the paragraph is grammatically incorrect because it combines a singular helping verb (*has*) with a plural pronoun (*their*).

Revised: The *fire department* *has* completed *its* investigation. The *investigators* *have* determined the cause of the fire to be arson. *They* will send us a copy of the report when it is complete.

Even though there are both singular and plural pronouns in the same paragraph, this revision works because a new antecedent (*investigators*) was introduced between *fire department* (in the first sentence) and *they* (in the third sentence).

If a singular pronoun seems awkward, try rewording the sentence or paragraph.

It has determined the cause to be arson. It will send us a copy of the report when it is complete. (awkward)

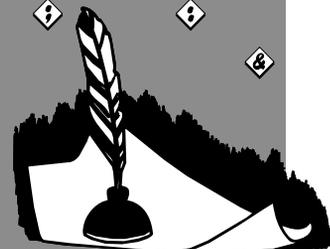
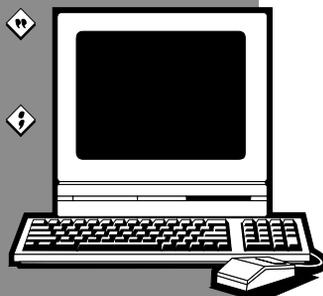


Investigators have determined the cause to be arson. They will send us a copy of the report when it is complete. (revised)

SAMPLE

Chapter 8: Spelling

SAMPLE



Spelling

Excessive spelling errors are distracting and may cause readers to doubt the accuracy of your information.



Spelling errors can have dire consequences when it comes to drugs, poisons, or hazardous materials.

Introduction

How Spelling Errors Can Hurt You

Spelling errors can hurt your credibility as easily as bad writing can. Most readers will forgive an occasional spelling error. However, when there are too many errors, it sends a message that you don't care about the quality of your work or about your reader. Some readers may assume that if you can't be bothered to check your spelling, you may not have bothered to check your facts either. Are there more inaccuracies than meet the eye?

Spelling errors are also distracting. Readers begin focusing on your errors rather than on your message. Ultimately, your message loses its effectiveness.

Fatal spelling errors

Despite the expression "embarrassed to death," most spelling errors will never be fatal. In the emergency response field, however, there are exceptions, most notably in the area of hazardous materials. Some products with very similar names have very different properties and hazards. If we develop an action plan based on a misspelled chemical name, we can easily make fatal mistakes.

Correct spelling can also be critical in the EMS arena, for example, when you are trying to identify what poison a patient has been exposed to in order to provide proper treatment or when you are trying to determine what drugs a patient is taking in order to avoid dangerous drug interactions.

The Purpose of This Chapter

This chapter provides some guidelines that may help you spell better. However, keep in mind that there are exceptions to many of the guidelines. There are some words that can be spelled in more than one way. And there are many specialized terms in the emergency response field that may defy the basic guidelines provided in this chapter. There is no substitute for a good dictionary.

Spelling

Techniques to Improve Your Spelling

Let's look at some techniques you can use to improve your spelling.

Use Spell Checkers

If the word processing program you are using comes with a spell checker, use it. Remember to use your spell checker again after any editing.

Keep in mind that spell checkers identify words that are *spelled* incorrectly, but not those which are *used* incorrectly (for example, *you* versus *your*, *form* versus *from*, or *pubic safety* versus *public safety*). There is no substitute for careful proofreading.

Even the best spell checker is not nearly as thorough as a good printed dictionary. You may even find differences between the words your spell checker recognizes and those found in your dictionary. Luckily, most spell checkers allow you to create a custom dictionary, so you can add words that you use frequently.

Pronounce Words Properly

Not all words are spelled the way they are pronounced. However, mispronouncing words can lead to further misspelling. The following are examples of words that are commonly mispronounced and thus often misspelled.

<u>Correct</u>	<u>Incorrect</u>
accidentally	accidently
disastrous	disasterous
frustrate	fustrate
incidentally	incidently
mischievous	mischievous
nuclear	nucular

While careful pronunciation can help you spell better, it does not solve all spelling problems. Many words are not spelled the way they sound. Some words have silent letters, for example, the final *b* in *bomb* or the *p* and the *e* in *pneumonia*.

While spell checkers are very helpful, they will not identify words that are spelled correctly but used incorrectly.

Wrong:
pubic safety

Right:
public safety



Mispronouncing words can lead to misspellings.

Wrong:
mischievous

Right:
mischievous

Spelling

Be familiar with words that are frequently confused.

Slow down if necessary. Many errors occur when people work too quickly.



Really see what you are looking at when you proofread. If possible, ask someone else to proofread your document also.

Some sounds can be created by more than one letter combination. For example, *snuff* and *rough* are pronounced the same way, even though they are spelled quite differently. Conversely, the words *cough*, *enough*, *though*, and *through* all contain the *ough* letter combination, but each is pronounced differently.

Be Familiar with Frequently Confused Words

Many spelling errors are not actually errors in spelling, but rather a problem with using one word where another is intended, such as *affect* versus *effect*. You may be able to solve many of your spelling woes simply by being familiar with words that are frequently confused and with the definitions of those words. (See Chapter 10 for more information.)

Spell Carefully

Many spelling errors occur not because people don't know how to spell particular words, but because they are working quickly and fail to notice that they have typed or written the words incorrectly. Common mistakes include transposing letters, omitting letters, adding letters that should not be there, and writing two words as one or vice versa. Other common mistakes include omitting entire words or writing the wrong words altogether. Most of these errors can be eliminated just by slowing down and writing more carefully.

Proofread Carefully

It is generally easier to proofread someone else's material than our own. When we proof our own material, we tend to skim over things we are more familiar with. As a result, more errors go unnoticed.

Read carefully when you proofread your material. Really *see* what you are looking at; do not just skim the words on the page. If possible, let the document sit for a day or two before you proofread it. It is often easier to catch mistakes if you let some time pass between when you write the document and when you proofread it. Finally, ask someone you trust to proofread your document for you—someone who you know will do a good job for you. Another set of eyes can often find what you miss.

Use Memory Devices (Mnemonics)

Sometimes memory devices (mnemonics) can help you spell better. A mnemonic is a tool or trick you can use to associate the spelling of a word with something else. The following are some examples.

autopsy	The coroner will do an autopsy on the auto accident victims.
bargain	Gain a lighter sentence by bargain ing with the court.
battalion	Battalion comes from battle . Two t 's, one l .
believe	Don't believe a lie .
canceled	I canceled the second l . Canceled not cancelled .
defendant	I can't defend a defendant who isn't honest.
embarrassed	Double r , double s , double trouble.
fatal	Fatal means lethal to mortal s.
gurney	Think gun gling money .
harassed	Treating two individuals differently (one r , two s 's) may be considered a form of harassment .
judgment	The judge dismissed the silent e . Judgment not judgement .
lieutenant	Think in lieu of —three vowels (ieu) create the u sound. Furthermore, there are ten ants in lieutenant .
maneuver	Putting a silent e behind the man was a sneaky maneuver .
marshal	We have only one state fire marshal . One l .
nausea	A nau tical experience: sea sickness.
separate	There is a rat in separate . Also, separate contains two a 's between two e 's.
sheriff	The town was pretty rough (ruff) until we hired a sheriff . One r , two f 's. However, I am the sheriff , not you .
syringe	Who put syn up in the syringe ?
vaccine	How many cc 's are required for this vacc ine?
warrant	Warran t: Two r 's between two a 's.
weapon	He was wea ring a conce aled wea pon.

One important thing to remember is that memory devices are effective only if they make sense to you and if they are easy for you to remember. The ones listed above are just a few examples, many of which I made up for words I struggle with. You can easily do the same for words that challenge you.

Memory devices can help you spell better.

***We only have one marshal.
(one l, not two)***



***The town was rough (ruff) until we hired a sheriff.
(one r, two f's)***

***However I am the sheiff, not you.
(i, not u)***

Spelling

Creating your own list of troublesome words may save you many trips to the dictionary.



Make Your Own List of Troublesome Words

Many grammar and spelling books contain lists of words that are frequently misspelled. These lists can be helpful, but they don't contain many of the specialized terms we use in the emergency response field. You may want to create your own list of troublesome words; a brief list is easier to use than a large dictionary.

Use a Bad Speller's Dictionary

One of the biggest problems with using a dictionary is that you need to have some idea how to spell a word in order to look it up. Even spell checkers won't help you if you aren't somewhat close.

Many bookstores sell bad speller's dictionaries. These are dictionaries that list words in order by common misspellings. You might not know how to spell *pneumonia*, for example, but you may find it by looking up *nuemonia*.

Ask People How to Spell Their Names

This chapter would not be complete without mentioning the importance of spelling people's names correctly. When you don't make an effort to spell someone's name correctly, it sends a message that you don't care about your readers or the people you are writing about. At the very least, it is distracting to readers, which causes your message to lose its effectiveness. Some readers, however, will consider the misspelling to be offensive. When in doubt, ask people how to spell their names correctly.

Basic Spelling Guidelines

EI or IE

The popular old rhyme can often help you solve the *ei/ie* dilemma:

i before *e*
 except after *c*
 or when sounded like *a*
 as in *neighbor* and *weigh*

Other experts provide a slightly different guideline: When the sound is a long *e* (as in *me*), write *ie*, unless it follows *c*, in which case write *ei*. When the sound is something other than long *e*, most words are written *ei*.

i* before *e

Use *i* before *e* in many words. Notice that these words have the sound of a long *e*.

achieve	fiend	piece	shriek
believe	fierce	pierce	siege
cashier	grief	relief	thief
diesel	hygiene	shield	yield

e* before *i

Use *e* before *i* after *c*. These words also have the sound of a long *e*.

conceive	deceive	receive	perceive
conceit	deceit	receipt	ceiling

Use *e* before *i* when sounded like *a*, as in *neighbor* or *weigh*.

eight	freight	surveillance	vein
feint	heinous	veil	weight

Exceptions to the guidelines

While both guidelines listed at the top of the page work for most situations, there are a number of exceptions. For example, some words have the sound of a long *e*, but are written *ei*.

either	leisure	caffeine	protein
neither	seizure	codeine	weird

In general, use *i* before *e*, except after *c* . . .

make-believe

deceive



. . . or when sounded like *a*, as in *neighbor* or *weigh*

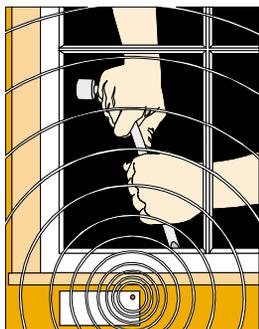
surveillance

Spelling

AR, ER, or OR?

The greatest number of words end in *er*.

prowler



Many common words end in *or*.

perpetrator

The least common ending is *ar*.

burglar

Some words are spelled with *ie*, even though they do not have the sound of a long *e*.

friend mischief mischievous handkerchief

Some words are spelled with *ie*, even though the *ie* follows *c*. Note that the *i* combines with the *c* that precedes it to make a *sh* sound.

conscience deficient proficient species

The following words are spelled with *ei*. The *ei* does not follow *c*, nor does it sound like *a*, as in *neighbor* and *weigh*. But it does produce a sound that is something other than long *e*.

heir height forfeit seismograph
their foreign counterfeit Fahrenheit

In all the words presented so far, *ie* and *ei* serve to produce a single sound. However, if the *i* and the *e* are pronounced separately, you must spell the words according to pronunciation.

audience science society quiet
experience fiery sobriety deity

AR, ER, or OR

The greatest number of words end in *er*.

anger dagger first aider stranger
attacker danger prowler surrender
bystander disaster safer tamper
cancer fever smolder trigger

Many common words end in *or*.

behavior horror investigator perpetrator
creator impersonator misdemeanor survivor
doctor interrogator operator tremor

The least common ending is *ar*.

beggar calendar dollar regular
burglar cellar popular similar

Unfortunately, there are very few guidelines to help distinguish between these three endings. However, if the word has another form that ends in *ate* or *ation*, the ending is usually *or*.

Spelling

defibrillate	defibrillation	defibrillator
investigate	investigation	investigator
resuscitate	resuscitation	resuscitator

Of course, there are exceptions. Some words with *ate* or *ation* forms use *ar* instead of *or*, for example, *populate* and *popular*, *regulation* and *regular*.

Some words can be spelled in different ways, depending on their meaning, for example, *altar* or *alter* and *miner* or *minor*. (See Chapter 10 for more information.)

ARY, ERY, or ORY

The majority of words end in *ary*. If you are unsure whether to use *ary* or *ery*, you stand a good chance of being right if you pick *ary*.

burglary	disciplinary	precautionary	secondary
capillary	incendiary	probationary	sedentary
coronary	necessary	pulmonary	temporary
dictionary	ordinary	sanitary	voluntary

A number of words end in *ory*. The *o* is easy to hear in most of these words, so you are less likely to misspell them with *ary* or *ery*.

accessory	category	inflammatory	purgatory
accusatory	circulatory	inventory	regulatory
ambulatory	directory	mandatory	respiratory

Some words end in *ery*, but *ery* is less common than *ary* or *ory*.

adultery	cemetery	dysentery	slippery
artillery	delivery	mastery	trickery

Some words can be spelled in different ways, depending on meaning, for example, *stationary* and *stationery*. (See Chapter 10 for more information.)

EL or ELL

Most one-syllable words end in *ell*. There are only a few exceptions (for example, *gel* and *belle*).

bell	fell	swell	well
cell	smell	tell	yell

**ARY, ERY,
or ORY?**

**The majority
of words end
in *ary***

pulmonary



**The *o* is easy
to hear in most
of the words
ending in *ory***

respiratory

***Ery* is less
common than
ary or *ory***

dysentery

Spelling

IZE or ISE?

Most words end in *ize*

terrorize



Ise* is less common than *ize

disguise

Many troublesome words of two or more syllables end in *el*.

compel	excel	personnel	rappel
dispel	hotel	propel	rebel

Words of two or more syllables that end in *ell* are generally either compound words or one-syllable words to which a prefix was added.

door + bell = doorbell	nut + shell = nutshell
fare + well = farewell	un + well = unwell

IZE, ISE, or YZE

Most words in this category end in *ize*.

apologize	emphasize	organize	recognize
authorize	memorize	penalize	specialize
criticize	mobilize	realize	vandalize

In general, use *ize* if you can remove *ize* and still have a complete word or if you can replace *ize* with *y*. Other words also end in *ize*, but you pretty much have to memorize them.

legalize → legal	agonize → agony
terrorize → terror	jeopardize → jeopardy

Many familiar words end in *ise*, but *ise* is less common than *ize*.

advise	disguise	improvise	supervise
compromise	exercise	otherwise	surprise

Only a few words end in *yze*.

analyze	paralyze	catalyze
---------	----------	----------

EFY or IFY

Almost all the words in this category end in *ify*.

certify	identify	justify	simplify
falsify	intensify	notify	testify

Only a few of these words end in *efy*.

liquefy	putrefy	rarefy	stupefy
---------	---------	--------	---------

Spelling

CEDE, CEED, or SEDE

There are only about a dozen words that end with the sound of “seed.” Just one of them ends in *sede*: *supersede*.

Only three words end in *ceed*: *exceed*, *proceed*, and *succeed*.

All other words that end with the sound of “seed” are spelled *cede*: *accede*, *concede*, *intercede*, *precede*, *recede*, *secede*.

Derivatives of these words are spelled with only one *e*, for example, *proceed* becomes *procedure* and *succeed* becomes *success*.

American Versus British Spellings

Sometimes the differences between American and British spellings can cause confusion. Unless you are writing for a predominantly British audience, use the American spellings. Otherwise, your readers may think that you don’t know how to spell or that you are pretentious.

<u>American Spelling</u>	<u>British Spelling</u>
honor	honour
theater	theatre
canceled	cancelled
analyze	analyse

Different Spellings for Different Forms

Some words change spelling as they change form. There is no good rule to help you identify which words change spelling or how the spelling changes. You simply have to be alert to such words.

commit → commission	prescribe → prescription
enter → entrance	thief → theft
four → forty	tragic → tragedy

Words with Diacritical Marks

Some words borrowed from the French language have diacritical marks. In general, you should try to retain these marks to avoid confusion with others words (for example, *résumé* and *resume* or *exposé* and *expose*).

Some words change spelling as they change form.

thief
theft



commi
commission

Be alert to these troublesome words.

Spelling

When you add a prefix, the spelling of the root word does not change.

If the last letter of the prefix is the same as the first letter of the root word, the letter is doubled.

reexamine



Hyphens may be required to avoid confusion with similar words.

re-treat versus retreat

Adding Prefixes

Don't Change the Spelling of the Original Word

When you add a prefix to a word, the spelling of the original word does not change. If the last letter of the prefix is the same as the first letter of the root word, the letter is doubled (for example, *ss* or *nn*). Do not double the letter otherwise.

dis + similar = <u>dis</u> similar	dis + agree = disagree
in + nocuous = <u>inn</u> ocuous	in + sane = <u>ins</u> ane
mis + spell = <u>miss</u> pell	mis + trust = <u>mistr</u> ust
over + react = <u>overr</u> eact	over + dose = <u>overd</u> ose
re + enter = <u>reent</u> er	re + assign = <u>reass</u> ign
un + needed = <u>unn</u> eeded	un + harmed = <u>unh</u> armed

While the spelling of the original word does not change, the spelling of the prefix sometimes does. For example, the prefix *il* is a variation of the prefix *in* and is commonly used before words that begin with the letter *l*; thus we have the word *illegal* versus *inlegal*.

When you use the word *all* as a prefix, you should generally drop the second *l*, for example, *almost*, *already*, and *always*. One notable exception is *all right*. *Alright* is nonstandard.

Sometimes hyphens are used to avoid confusion with other similar words. For example, *re-strain* means “to strain again,” whereas *restrain* means “to repress,” “to restrict,” or “to limit.”

Use the Correct Prefix

Some prefixes are similar in spelling and pronunciation, but different in meaning. The following are a few examples.

<u>Prefix</u>	<u>Possible Meanings</u>	<u>Examples</u>
ante	before, prior	antemortem, antepartum
anti	against, opposite	antibiotic, antidote
for	away, not, off, utterly	forbid, forget
fore	before, front, superior	forehead, foresee
inter	among, between	interfere, interrupt
intra	within	intramuscular, intravenous
intro	inwardly, within	introduce, introspection
per	through, thoroughly	perjure, persevere
pre	before, prior to	premeditated, premonition
pro	forward, in favor of	procedure, prohibit

Adding Suffixes

Adding suffixes is trickier than adding prefixes because the spelling of the original word often changes.

Doubling a Consonant Before Adding a Suffix

The rules on doubling the final consonant are complicated, and there are quite a few exceptions. However, if you understand at least some of the rules, you can avoid many common mistakes.

Suffixes starting with a consonant

Let's start with the easy rules. If the suffix starts with a *consonant*, do not double the final consonant of the root word.

dead + ly = deadly doubt + less = doubtless
deceit + ful = deceitful mad + ness = madness

If the suffix starts with the same consonant that the root word ends with, use both consonants. The end result is a double consonant, but it occurs without you making any spelling changes.

careful + ly = carefully mean + ness = meanness

If the root word ends with *ll* and you are adding the suffix *ly*, drop one *l*. If you add the suffix *less* or *like*, hyphenate the expression. In other words, avoid using three *ls* in a row.

chill + ly = chilly skull + less = skull-less
full + ly = fully skull + like = skull-like

Suffixes starting with a vowel / one-syllable root words

In general, if a one-syllable root word ends in a *single consonant* preceded by a *single vowel*, double the consonant before adding the letter *y* or a suffix that begins with a vowel.

drug + ed = drugged hid + en = hidden
fog + y = foggy trap + ing = trapping

The following are some exceptions.

fix + ed = fixed slow + est = slowest
gas + eous = gaseous throw + ing = throwing

If the suffix starts with a *consonant* do not double the final consonant of the root word.

dead + ly
deadly



However, if the suffix starts with the same consonant that the root word ends with, use both consonants.

mean + ness
meanness

Spelling

When the suffix starts with a vowel, the rules are far more complicated.

Sometimes the final consonant is doubled.

set
setting



Sometimes it isn't.

burn
burning

If the root word ends with a *y* preceded by a *single vowel*, do not double the *y* when adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

fray + ing = fraying key + ed = keyed
joy + ous = joyous stray + ed = strayed

In general, if the one-syllable root word ends in a *single consonant* preceded by *more than one vowel*, do not double the consonant before adding a suffix. (This same rule applies to root words of more than one syllable, as you will see later.)

greed + ily = greedily scream + ed = screamed
fraud + ulent = fraudulent steal + ing = stealing

The following are some exceptions.

quip + ed = quipped quiz + ical = quizzical
quit + ing = quitting squat + er = squatter

If the root word ends with *more than one consonant*, do not double the last consonant before adding a suffix. (This same rule applies to root words of more than one syllable, as you will see later.)

fiend + ish = fiendish thwart + ed = thwarted
sign + age = signage trash + y = trashy

Suffixes starting with a vowel / multi-syllable root words

Once again, let's start with the easier rules. In general, if a multi-syllable root word ends in a *single consonant* preceded by *more than one vowel*, do not double the consonant before adding a suffix.

avoid + ance = avoidance defraud + ing = defrauding
conceal + able = concealable reveal + ed = revealed

The following are two exceptions.

acquit + al = acquittal equip + ed = equipped

If a multi-syllable root word ends with *more than one consonant*, do not double the last consonant before adding a suffix.

combust + ion = combustion dispatch + er = dispatcher
convict + ed = convicted inform + ant = informant

Spelling

Now the rules become a little more complicated because you also have to look at what syllable the accent is on. In general, if the root word ends in a *single consonant* preceded by a *single vowel* and the accent is on the *last* syllable of the root word, double the final consonant before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

begin + ing = beginning forgot + en = forgotten
 commit + ed = committed occur + ence = occurrence
 forbid + en = forbidden regret + able = regrettable

However, words that end in *x* or *y* do not follow this pattern.

affix + ed = affixed betray + al = betrayal

There is one more important exception. If the accent shifts from the *second* syllable to any other syllable, do not double the final consonant. The examples below show how the final consonant is doubled when adding some suffixes, but not others. Again, the key is whether or not the accent shifts to another syllable.

<u>Root Word</u>	<u>Double</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Single</u>
prefer	preferred	preference	preferable
refer	referral	reference	referee
transfer	transferred	transference	transferee

In general, if a multi-syllable root word ends in a *single consonant* preceded by a *single vowel* and the accent is *not* on the last syllable of the root word, do *not* double the final consonant before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

benefit + ed = benefited terror + ize = terrorize
 offer + ed = offered threaten + ing = threatening

However, there are a number of words that do not follow this rule. When in doubt, consult a dictionary.

diagram + ing = diagramming handicap + ed = handicapped
 format + ing = formatting kidnap + ing = kidnapping

The rules vary based on how many syllables the root word contains, the arrangement of letters at the end of the root word, and where the accent is.

commit
committed



withdraw
withdrawal

When in doubt, consult a dictionary.

Spelling

In general, drop the silent *e* before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

dose + age
dosage



In general, keep the silent *e* before adding a suffix that starts with a consonant.

care + ful
careful

Some words can be spelled two ways. *Cancel*, *channel*, and *travel* are three words that frequently confuse writers. The preferred and alternate spellings are listed below. In most cases, the alternate version is a British spelling. Notice that while there is only one *l* in most of the preferred spellings, the *l* is doubled in *cancellation*.

Preferred Spelling

canceled
canceling
cancelable
cancellation
channeled
channeling
channeler
traveled
traveler
traveling

Alternate Spelling

cancelled
cancelling
cancellable
cancelation
channelled
channelling
channeller
travelled
traveller
travelling

Dropping the Final Silent *e*

If the root word ends in a silent *e*, you should generally drop the *e* before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

believe + able = believable
dose + age = dosage

guide + ance = guidance
seize + ure = seizure

However, there are exceptions to the rule. For example, the *e* is retained when adding *ing* to some words to keep them from being confused with other words or word endings.

dye → dyeing *versus* die → dying
singe → singeing *versus* sing → singing

The following are some other exceptions to the rule.

acre + age = acreage mile + age = mileage
agree + ing = agreeing there + in = therein

A silent *e* is usually dropped before adding the suffix *y*.

ice + y = icy scare + y = scary
gore + y = gory smoke + y = smoky

The following are some exceptions to the rule.

cage + y = cagey smile + y = smiley
mate + y = matey Smokey Bear (not Smoky)

Spelling

If the word ends in *ce* or *ge*, you should generally retain the silent *e* before adding a suffix that starts with *a* or *o*. This is done to keep the sound of the consonant soft.

courage + ous = courageous notice + able = noticeable
manage + able = manageable peace + able = peaceable

However, the silent *e* is usually dropped before adding a suffix that starts with *i*.

age + ing = aging force + ible = forcible
finance + ial = financial manage + ing = managing

If the root word ends in a silent *e*, you should generally retain the *e* before adding a suffix that starts with a consonant.

care + less = careless false + hood = falsehood
discrete + ly = discretely safe + ty = safety

However, the silent *e* is dropped in many familiar words.

argue + ment = argument horrible + ly = horribly
gentle + ly = gently judge + ment = judgment

If a root word ends in *ie*, change the *ie* to a *y* before adding *ing*.

die + ing = dying tie + ing = tying
lie + ing = lying vie + ing = vying

Changing the Final *y* to *i*

If a word ends in *y* preceded by a *consonant*, the *y* is usually changed to *i* before adding a suffix.

angry + ly = angrily mystery + ous = mysterious
happy + ness = happiness testify + ed = testified

The major exception is when adding the suffix *ing*.

horrify + ing = horrifying try + ing = trying

You should also retain the *y* when adding other suffixes that begin with *i* if both the *y* and the *i* are pronounced.

forty + ish = fortyish lobby + ist = lobbyist

In general, if a word ends in *y* preceded by a consonant, change the *y* to an *i* before adding a suffix.

angry + ly
angrily

The major exception is when adding *ing*

horrif~~y~~ + ing
horrifying



In general, retain the *y* if the word ends in *y* preceded by a vowel.

betray + al
betrayal

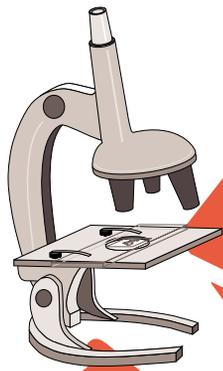
Spelling

ABLE or IBLE?

Able and ible sound identical when pronounced.

It may help to know that *able* is used approximately four times more often than *ible*

detectable



However, many common words end in *ible*

invisible

The following are some other exceptions.

shy + ness = shyness
sly + ly = slyly

baby + hood = babyhood
country + side = countryside

If a word ends in *y* preceded by a *vowel*, the *y* is usually retained before adding any suffix.

annoy + ed = annoyed
betray + al = betrayal

enjoy + ment = enjoyment
obey + ing = obeying

The following are some exceptions.

day + ly = daily
lay + d (ed) = laid

say + d (ed) = said
slay + n = slain

Words Ending in ABLE or IBLE

Deciding between *able* and *ible* is often difficult because the two endings sound identical when pronounced. One helpful tip is that *able* is used approximately four times more often than *ible*. If you are not sure which ending to use, you stand a greater chance of being correct if you choose *able*.

avoidable	deployable	favorable	reasonable
breakable	detectable	predictable	unthinkable

A number of common words end in *ible*.

credible	invisible	possible	susceptible
horrible	plausible	reprehensible	terrible

If the word has other forms that have a long *a* sound (for example, *ame*, *ate*, *ation*), the ending is usually *able*.

admiration → admirable	flame → flammable
duration → durable	irritate → irritable

If the word has other forms that end in *sion*, *ition*, *tion*, or *ion*, the ending is usually *ible*.

admission → admissible	flexion → flexible
corruption → corruptible	suggestion → suggestible

The ending is usually *ible* when preceded by *ns* or *ss*.

comprehensible	responsible	admissible	permissible
reprehensible	sensible	dismissible	transmissible

Spelling

If the root ends in the sound of a soft *c* (pronounced like *s* as in *cell*) or a soft *g* (pronounced like *j* as in *germ*), the ending is usually *ible*.

convincible	irascible	eligible	negligible
forcible	reducible	incorrigible	tangible

If the root ends in the sound of a hard *c* (pronounced like *k* as in *cop*) or a hard *g* (pronounced like *g* as in *gun*), the ending is usually *able*.

applicable	irrevocable	delegable	litigable
despicable	practicable	huggable	navigable

Sometimes the ending is *able* even when the root ends with the sound of a soft *c* or soft *g*. In those cases, the silent *e* is retained in order to preserve the soft sound.

noticeable	traceable	manageable	salvageable
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In most other cases, if the root ends with a silent *e*, the silent *e* is dropped, regardless of whether the ending is *able* or *ible*.

advise → advisable	force → forcible
save → savable	sense → sensible

Some words can be spelled two ways.

collectible/collectable	correctable/correctible
connectible/connectable	detectable/detectible

Words Ending in *ANT*, *ENT*, *ANCE* or *ENCE*

It is often difficult to distinguish between *ant* and *ent* and between *ance* and *ence* because the endings sound so similar.

defendant	belligerent	annoyance	evidence
informant	delinquent	ignorance	influence
relevant	impertinent	surveillance	negligence

If the word has another form that ends in *ate* or *ation*, the ending is usually *ant* or *ance*. However, there are occasional exceptions. For example, *violate* and *violation* become *violent* and *violence*.

hesitate	hesitation	hesitant	hesitance
tolerate	toleration	tolerant	tolerance

***ANT* or *ENT*?
ANCE or *ENCE*?**

If the word has another form that ends in *ate* or *ation*, the ending is usually *ant* or *ance*

***information*
*informant***



A hard *c* or hard *g* usually signals *ant* or *ance*

significant

A soft *c* or soft *g* usually signals *ent* or *ence*

intelligent

Spelling

LY or ALLY?

The ending *ly* is often used to change an adjective into an adverb.

violent
violently



If the root word ends in *al*, adding *ly* will result in *ally*

intentional
intentionally

In general, if the root word ends in *ic*, add *ally*

automatically

If the word has the sound of a hard *c* (pronounced like *k* as in *cop*) or a hard *g* (pronounced like *g* as in *gun*), the ending is usually *ant* or *ance*.

significant/significance arrogant/arrogance

If the word has the sound of a soft *c* (pronounced like *s* as in *cell*) or a soft *g* (pronounced like *j* as in *germ*), the ending is usually *ent* or *ence*.

innocent/innocence intelligent/intelligence
reticent/reticence negligent/negligence

Some words can be spelled two ways.

dependent/dependant descendant/descendent

There are even some words that sound like *ence*, but are spelled *ense*. However, *ense* is much less common than *ence*.

condense expense intense pretense
defense immense nonsense suspense

Words Ending in LY or ALLY

The ending *ly* is often used to change an adjective to an adverb.

bad → badly evident → evidently
dead → deadly violent → violently

When *ly* is added to words that end in a silent *e*, the *e* is usually retained.

absolute → absolutely savage → savagely
definite → definitely severe → severely

However, there are some cases where the silent *e* is dropped.

forcible → forcibly terrible → terribly
possible → possibly true → truly

If the root word ends in *y*, the *y* is changed to *i* before adding *ly*.

angry → angrily ready → readily

Spelling

If the root word ends in *l*, add *ly*. However, if the root word ends in *ll*, add *y*, not *ly*. You should not end up with three *l*s in a row.

cruel → cruelly chill → chilly
intentional → intentionally full → fully

Two words that often confuse people are *accidentally* and *incidentally*. However, if you understand the progression from noun to adjective to adverb, it makes spelling these words easier.

<u>Noun</u>	<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Adverb</u>	<u>Error</u>
accident	accidental	accidentally	accidently
incident	incidental	incidentally	incidently

If the root words end in *ic*, add *ally*. (One exception to this rule is the word *publicly*.)

automatic → automatically basic → basically

Words Ending in **FUL**

When you add the suffix *full* to any word, drop the second *l*.

care + full = careful pain + full = painful
harm + full = harmful wonder + full = wonderful

If the root word ends in *y*, the *y* generally changes to an *i*.

beauty + full = beautiful mercy + full = merciful

Words Ending in **IC**

There are a handful of words that end in *c*. Most require the addition of the letter *k* before a suffix in order to preserve the sound of a hard *c*.

mimic	mimicked	mimicking	<i>but:</i> mimicry
panic	panicked	panicking	panicky
traffic	trafficked	trafficking	trafficker

Here is an important exception: *arc*, *arced*, *arcing*.

When you add the suffix *full* to any word, drop the second *l*.

***pain + full*
*painful***



If the root word ends in *y*, the *y* generally changes to an *i*.

***mercy + full*
*merciful***

Spelling

Most plurals are formed by adding *s* to the singular form.

patient
patients



Singular words that end in *s, x, z, ch, or sh* are usually made plural by adding *es*.

reflex
reflexes

Forming Plurals

Most Words

Most plurals are formed by adding *s* to the singular form.

accident → accidents
alibi → alibis

suspect → suspects
victim → victims

Nouns That End in *s, x, z, ch, or sh*

Singular words that end in *s, x, z, ch,* or *sh* are usually made plural by adding *es*.

buzz → buzzes
crash → crashes
gas → gases

reflex → reflexes
scratch → scratches
witness → witnesses

The word *quiz* (*quizzes*) is an exception to this rule; the *z* is doubled before adding *es*.

Nouns That End in *y*

If a singular noun ends in *y* preceded by a *vowel*, the noun is usually made plural by adding *s*.

attorney → attorneys
boy → boys

chimney → chimneys
highway → highways

If the *y* is preceded by a *consonant*, drop the *y* and add *ies*.

conspiracy → conspiracies
cry → cries

felony → felonies
injury → injuries

Nouns That End in *o*

If a singular noun ends in *o* preceded by a *vowel*, the noun is made plural by adding *s*.

ratio → ratios
scenario → scenarios

tattoo → tattoos
video → videos

Spelling

If a singular noun ends in *o* preceded by a *consonant*, the rules vary. Some words are made plural by adding *s*.

auto → autos	photo → photos
memo → memos	weirdo → weirdos

Some words are made plural by adding *es*.

echo → echoes	potato → potatoes
Negro → Negroes	torpedo → torpedoes

Some words may be made plural by adding either *s* or *es*. The preferred form is generally listed first in the dictionary.

heroes/heros	tornadoes/tornados
placebos/placeboes	volcanoes/volcanos

Nouns That End in *F*, *FE*, or *FF*

Most singular nouns that end in *f*, *fe*, or *ff* are made plural by adding *s*.

chief → chiefs	safe → safes
proof → proofs	sheriff → sheriffs

Some words that end in *f* or *fe* are made plural by changing the *f* or *fe* to *ve* and adding *s*. When in doubt, consult your dictionary.

life → lives	self → selves
knife → knives	thief → thieves

Nouns That Have Irregular Plurals

Some nouns have irregular plurals. There is no particular rule to remember them by. You pretty much have to memorize them.

child → children	mouse → mice
foot → feet	ox → oxen
goose → geese	tooth → teeth
man → men	woman → women

Most singular nouns that end in *f*, *fe*, or *ff* are made plural by adding *s*.

safe
safes



Sometimes the *f* or *fe* is changed to *ve* before adding *s*.

thief
thieves

Spelling

Most proper names are made plural simply by adding *s*.

the Scotts

Some are made plural by adding *es*.

the Thomases



Never change the original spelling when making names plural.

the Stockmans

not:
the Stockmen

Words That Don't Change Spelling

Some words are spelled the same way whether singular or plural.

deer	headquarters	pants	species
sheep	measles	scissors	whereabouts

Proper Names

There are times when you may need to make proper names (first or last) plural. Most names are made plural simply by adding *s*.

There are two *Daves* working at this station.

The *Linneys* are active in our public education program.

Most names ending in *s*, *x*, *z*, *ch*, or *sh* are made plural by adding *es*.

We have several *Chrises* on the department.

The *Joneses* were awakened by their smoke detector.

However, some experts say that if adding *es* would make pronunciation awkward, omit the *es* ending.

The *Winters* (not *Winterses*) were robbed last week.

Never change the original spelling when making names plural.

Mr. and Mrs. Murphy = the Murphys (not *Murphies*)

Ken and Judy Foot = the Foots (not *Fee*)

Nouns of Foreign Origin

Nouns of foreign origin are often challenging. Many form their plurals according to the rules of their original language. English plurals have been created for other nouns of foreign origin. Finally, some words have two plural forms. (Refer to page 185 to see some examples.) There are no simple rules for determining how to spell the plural forms of these various words. When in doubt, use a dictionary.

Compound Nouns

Closed compounds

Most compound nouns written as a solid word are made plural according to the rules already covered for forming plurals.

bystander → bystanders policeman → policemen
 crybaby → crybabies yourself → yourselves

The following are some exceptions to the rules.

passerby → passersby standby → standbys (not *ies*)

Hyphenated or open compounds

The simplest guideline for forming the plurals of hyphenated or open compounds is to make plural the most important word in the compound. When in doubt, consult a dictionary.

mothers-in-law *rules of thumb*
by-products deputy *chiefs* of staff

Most of the titles we hyphenate in the emergency response field are made plural by adding *s* (or *es*) to the last word.

firefighter-*engineers* EMT-*paramedics*

The last word is the one that is pluralized in many other compounds.

go-betweens *have-nots* *know-it-alls* *walkie-talkies*

Some compound expressions can be made plural in two ways. The preferred form is listed first.

attorneys general / attorney *generals*
courts martial / court *martials*

Most solid compound nouns are made plural according to the rules already covered.

bystanders



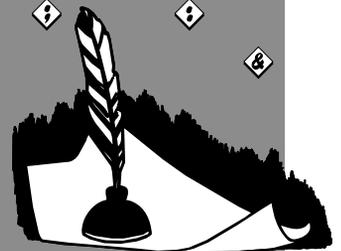
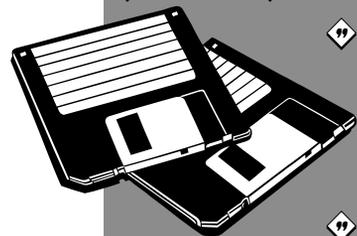
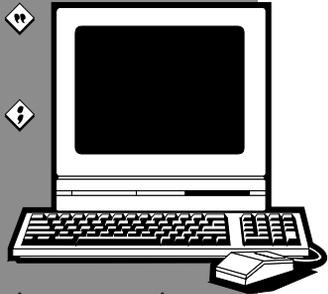
There are only a few exceptions.

passersby

SAMPLE

Chapter 9: Compound Words

SAMPLE



Compound Words

Computer spell checkers are *not* sufficient when it comes to compound words. A good, comprehensive dictionary is essential.



Since even the best dictionary will not answer all of your questions, this chapter contains detailed guidelines that may help when all else fails.

Introduction

The rules for forming compound words can be mind-boggling. Worse yet, there are so many exceptions to the rules that one begins to wonder if the rules are worth learning at all. Some grammar books try to condense the subject into a few easy rules, but these simplifications are often misleading. Other grammar books try to cover every possible rule and exception, leaving readers more confused than before.

Obviously, there is no substitute for a good dictionary. However, we sometimes use expressions that are not in a standard dictionary. When I wrote my first book, I couldn't find any guidelines to tell me if I needed to hyphenate *oxygen-deficient atmosphere* and *water-reactive chemical*. So, I didn't hyphenate the terms because I thought they were easily understood without hyphens. I have since learned that the expressions should be hyphenated.

My goal in this chapter is to give readers some guidelines to use when the dictionary doesn't help. The basics are covered in the beginning of each section. More detailed guidelines follow. Compound adjectives, in particular, is a very complex subject. If you want basic guidelines on compound adjectives, refer to pages 308-311. However, if you are struggling with a particular expression and cannot find it in the dictionary, you may be able to find the answer on pages 312-331.

Warning: The Experts Don't Always Agree!

Unfortunately, the experts disagree on many rules regarding compound words. Even different dictionaries provide different information. Use the following pages as a guide, but recognize that you may find differences of opinion in other reference sources.

A Good Dictionary Is Essential

New words enter our vocabulary on a regular. A ten-year-old dictionary won't reflect these changes. Nor should you totally rely on the spell checkers built into your computer software applications. While they are indispensable for 99% of your spelling needs, they often do not contain the latest information when it comes to hyphenation and compounding. My suggestion is to invest in a modern, comprehensive dictionary.

Definitions

Compound words are two or more words used together to express a single idea. They are classified by form, function, and duration.

Compound Words by Form

There are three forms of compound words: open, closed (solid), and hyphenated.

- **Open compounds** are written as separate words: *heart attack*, *smoke detector*, *law enforcement*.
- **Closed (solid) compounds** are written as one word: *wildland*, *troublemaker*, *lifeguard*.
- **Hyphenated compounds** are two or more words joined by a hyphen: *fire-resistant*, *life-threatening*, *hit-and-run*.

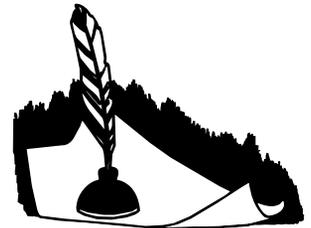
Compound Words by Function

Compound words may serve as nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.

- **Compound nouns** serve as nouns: *fire extinguisher*, *shotgun*, *vital signs*.
- **Compound verbs** serve as verbs: to *cross-examine*, to *fireproof*, to *hijack*.
- **Compound adjectives** serve as adjectives that modify nouns or pronouns: *terror-stricken* passengers, a *life-and-death* situation, an *oxygen-enriched* atmosphere. (Compound adjectives may also be referred to as *compound modifiers*.)
- **Compound adverbs** serve as adverbs that modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs: *underhandedly* agreed, *one-half* empty, knowing *all along*. (Compound adverbs may also be referred to as *compound modifiers*.)

Compound words are two or more words used together to express a single idea.

There are three forms: open, closed, and hyphenated.

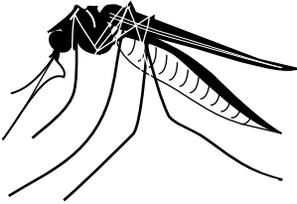


Knowing whether a compound word serves as a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb can often help you determine which form to use.

Compound Words

Compounds in common use are usually found in the dictionary.

airborne



Compounds we make up to fill a particular need are usually not listed.

vector-borne

Compound Words by Duration

Compound words can also be classified as either permanent or temporary.

- **Permanent compounds** are compounds that are in common use and are considered to be a permanent part of the language: *high-tech, ill-equipped, waterproof*. Most of these compounds can be found in the dictionary.
- **Temporary compounds** are those we make up along the way to fill a particular need: *raspy-voiced, vertically-challenged, vector-borne*. Most are not found in the dictionary. If these compounds are used often enough, they may eventually become a permanent part of the language.

Basic Concepts

The following are some basic concepts that apply to most compound words.

Compounds May Be Closed, Open, or Hyphenated

Some compound words are written closed (solid) because they have acquired distinct meaning as compounds.

airborne	lifeguard	stillborn
bloodstream	handcuffs	waterproof

Some closed compounds might have a different meaning if written open. Compare the following:

black board / blackboard	light weight / lightweight
gentle man / gentleman	mad house / madhouse
green back / greenback	slow poke / slowpoke

Some compound words are written open whether they function as compound nouns or as compound adjectives modifying other nouns. There is no need to hyphenate the expressions because they are clear as written; they are normally thought of as single units. And writing them as closed compounds would make them more difficult to read.

<u>As a Compound Noun</u>	<u>As a Compound Adjective</u>
blood pressure	blood pressure cuff
civil service	civil service examination
fire extinguisher	fire extinguisher cabinet
law enforcement	law enforcement agency

When expressions are hyphenated, it is because the meaning might not be clear if the compounds were open and writing them as closed compounds might make them more difficult to read.

bombed-out	know-how	smarty-pants
fast-moving	mind-altering	soul-searching

Several factors impact whether to write a compound open, closed, or hyphenated. One is meaning.



Are we responding to the *lighthouse* or a *light hous*?

Compound Words

Some compound words go through a progression from open to hyphenated to closed.

The trend is toward closed compounds.



Some expressions can be written in more than one way, for example, *firefighter* or *fire fighter*

There Is a Trend Toward Closed Compounds

The trend today is toward using closed compounds versus hyphenated ones. Often when expressions are first introduced into our vocabulary, they are written as two separate words. In time, as these two words begin to gain acceptance as a unit, they may be hyphenated. Finally, depending on how they are used, they may eventually be combined as a closed compound word.

Obviously, not all expressions go through this progression. Some remain open. Some remain hyphenated. Some may enter our vocabulary as closed compounds, never going through the open or hyphenated stages.

Some Words May Have More Than One Spelling

Some expressions can be written in more than one way. For example, you can use either *firefighter* or *fire fighter*. Both terms are equally acceptable. Be careful, however, when dealing with names of organizations such as the *International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)*. Use the organization's correct name.

Some expressions are either so new to our vocabulary or so unique to the emergency services field that they have not been incorporated into the dictionary. For example, we have coined the expression *hazmat* or *haz mat* as an abbreviation for *hazardous material*. Standard dictionaries don't list *hazmat*, *haz mat*, or *haz-mat*. So, what is the correct way to abbreviate *hazardous material*? Whichever way you choose. Just be consistent.

Compounds May or May Not Change Form

Derivatives of compound words generally retain the same form as the original compound. Those that are closed generally remain closed. Those that are hyphenated generally remain hyphenated.

blackmail	→	blackmailing
bloodthirsty	→	bloodthirstiness
cold-blooded	→	cold-bloodedness
self-conscious	→	self-consciously

On the other hand, expressions sometimes change form when changing from one part of speech to another.

Compound Words

As a Noun

a breakthrough
a double cross
a rubber stamp
a workout

As a Verb

to break through
to double-cross
to rubber-stamp
to work out

This chapter provides limited guidelines to help you predict whether a particular expression will change form. However, the best advice is to consult a good dictionary.

Suspending Hyphens Serve as Placeholders

Suspending hyphens can be used to tie a series of hyphenated adjectives together. In the examples that follow, the hyphens indicate that each word or number with a hyphen behind it is related to the noun that follows. The suspending hyphen serves as a placeholder.

The last week of class consists primarily of tabletop exercises ranging from *best- to worst-case scenarios*.

Although the sprinkler system quickly controlled the fire, it caused significant water damage to several *first-, second- and third-floor* apartments.

We confiscated several *.22- and .45-caliber* handguns during the raid.

**Suspending
hyphens can
be used to tie
a series of
adjectives
together.**



***He has first- and
second-degree
burns.***

Compound Words

Most short compound nouns are either closed or open.

caregiver

sick list



Longer compound nouns are usually open.

health professional

Compound Nouns

Introduction

Compound nouns vary in form. Some are closed, some are open, and some are hyphenated. If you are not sure how to write a particular compound, you should check your dictionary.

airpack	air bag	back-pedaling
carjacking	bomb squad	by-product
deathtrap	case study	do-gooder
eyewitness	death rate	no-brainer
fingerprint	flash flood	plea-bargain
pickpocket	shock wave	self-defense
wheelchair	street smarts	stretcher-bearer

If your dictionary lists two separate options, choose the one that works for you and use it consistently within the same application.

baby-sitter / babysitter	fender bender / fender-bender
firestorm / fire storm	right of way / right-of-way

If your dictionary does not list a particular compound, you should generally treat it as two separate words. However, the following guidelines may help you if you are unable to find a particular compound in your dictionary.

General Guidelines

While a number of compound nouns are hyphenated, the majority are either closed or open. Compound nouns tend to be written closed when they are short, when they are commonly used, and when the accent is clearly on the first syllable.

airway	footprint	hothead
bloodstream	graveyard	pacemaker
deadline	gunfight	shortcut
firebug	healthcare	smallpox

Short compound nouns are likely to be written open when the accent is not so heavily weighted in favor of the first syllable.

alarm box	fire truck	short circuit
blood cell	hot spot	time bomb
blue devil	leg wound	waste product
dead time	red alert	yellow fever

Compound Words

Longer compound nouns are usually open.

automatic weapon	internal bleeding	respiratory distress
chemical reaction	malicious mischief	sprinkler system
disaster planning	nitroglycerin tablet	unlawful entry
drug interaction	probable cause	water damage

Some compound nouns can be written in more than one way, for example, *high-rise*, *high rise*, and *highrise*. In these situations, pick the style that works for you and use it consistently.

Noun + Present Participle

Most compound nouns comprised of a noun and a present participle (the *-ing* form of a verb) are written as two words. However, many are written as closed compounds. Some are hyphenated.

blood poisoning	firefighting	crime-fighting
decision making	lifesaving	name-calling
drug testing	safecracking	street-fighting
problem solving	shoplifting	whistle-blowing
report writing	troubleshooting	wife-beating

If your dictionary shows two options, for example, *baby-sitting* and *babysitting*, choose the one that works for you. If your dictionary does not list a compound, you may be able to determine the correct spelling by looking at similar words. However, if you can't find the compound in the dictionary and can't find anything similar to compare to, the best choice is to write the compound as two words.

Verb + Adverb

Verb-adverb compounds will be either closed or hyphenated. Several can be written both ways. There is no easy way to remember how to write these particular compounds. Even different dictionaries may show different spellings because this is an area where many experts disagree.

backup	drive-by	knockdown	show-off
blackout	flareup	lineup	sign-out
break-in	flashback	lockdown	size-up
breakout	follow-up	pileup	spin-out
checkout	get-together	ripoff	standby
cleanup	hangout	runaway	walk-through
cop-out	hideaway	runoff	washdown
cover-up	holdup	shootout	wind-up

Most compound nouns comprised of a noun and an *-ing* verb are written as two words, though many are closed instead.

blood poisoning

handwashing



Verb-adverb compounds are either closed or hyphenated.

cleanup

follow-up

Compound Words

When a single letter is combined with a word to convey one idea, the two are often hyphenated.



Some can be written in more than one way.

x-ray, x ray, X ray, or X-ray

Regardless of how these verb-adverb compounds are spelled when serving as compound nouns, these same expressions are written as two separate words when used as verb phrases.

Noun: The CDC is investigating a possible Ebola *breakout* in Reston.

Verb phrase: *Break out* the Level A chemical suits.

Noun: I noticed it during my initial *size-up*.

Verb phrase: Let me *size up* the situation.

Compound with a Letter

When a single letter is combined with a word to convey one idea, the two are often hyphenated. However, if the connection between the two is clear without a hyphen, the compound may be left open.

A-Frame	O-ring	U-turn
e-mail <i>or</i> E-mail	T cell	X chromosome
H-bomb	T-shirt	X-rated
I-beam	U bolt	y-axis

And then there is *x-ray, x ray, X ray,* and *X-ray.* Take your pick.

Phrases as Compounds

Most phrases serving as compound nouns are hyphenated.

a free-for-all	a know-it-all
a good-for-nothing	make-believe
hide-and-peek	a pick-me-up
a Jack-of-all-trades	a stick-in-the-mud
a Johnny-come-lately	stick-to-it-iveness

Compound nouns formed from repeated or rhyming words are also normally hyphenated.

boo-boo	hocus-pocus	pooper-scooper
goody-goody	nitty-gritty	razzle-dazzle
hanky-panky	no-no	walkie-talkie

If you cannot find a particular phrase in the dictionary, assume it should be hyphenated. However, some phrases are open or closed, so it pays to check a good dictionary first.

mumbo jumbo	teepee	wear and tear
rule of thumb	wannabe	whodunit

Compound Words

Possessive Noun + Noun

Most compound nouns comprised of a possessive noun followed by another noun are open. However, some are hyphenated. Only a very few are closed (and written without the apostrophe).

fool's gold	bird's-eye	ratsbane
hornet's nest	crow's-feet	wolfsbane

Some of these compounds can be written either open or closed.

men's wear / menswear	women's wear / womenswear
-----------------------	---------------------------

Names and Titles

Proper nouns are often open.

Central America	Middle East
French Canadian	Native American

The compound is hyphenated if it contains a prefix or combining form in place of a full word.

Anglo-Saxon	Afro-American
-------------	---------------

Some controversy exists regarding the use of hyphens in ethnic compounds such as *African American* or *Mexican American*. There are two major arguments against it. One is the desire of these American citizens not to be considered "hyphenated Americans." The second is that we do not use hyphens with such compounds as *Native American* or *French Canadians*. In each case, the first noun is used as an adjective to modify the noun that follows; they are not nouns of equal value. *Native* modifies *American*. *French* modifies *Canadian*. If we follow that same logic, *African* and *Mexican* clearly modify *American*, so they should not need hyphens. However, many experts prefer to use them. Other experts suggest that hyphens should be reserved for those times when you want to refer to people of mixed ancestry. The best advice is to pick a style that works for you and use it consistently, at least within the same application.

Family titles containing *great* or *in-law* are always hyphenated.

great-grandmother	mother-in-law
great-grandfather	father-in-law

The experts are divided on whether to write *African American* or *African-American*. Pick the style that works for you.



Family titles containing *great* or *in-law* are always hyphenated.

brother-in-law

Compound Words

Job titles that contain *man*, *men*, *woman*, or *women* are closed.

policeman
policewoman



Gender-neutral terms are generally preferable.

police officer

Job titles that contain *man*, *men*, *woman*, or *women* are closed. Note, however, that while it is acceptable to use these terms when referring to a specific person, it is generally preferable to replace these titles with terms that do not specify gender.

Gender-Specific
fireman
policewoman
foremen
saleswoman

Gender-Neutral
firefighter
police officer
supervisors
salesperson

Civil and military titles are usually not hyphenated.

attorney general
chief of police
commander in chief

lieutenant governor
justice of the peace
sergeant at arms

However, there are some exceptions.

ambassador-at-large

attorney-at-law

Hyphens are used in titles containing the prefix *ex-* (meaning “former”) and the suffix *-elect*. Hyphens are normally used in titles containing the combining form *vice-*, though *vice president* is frequently written without the hyphen.

ex-president
president-elect

vice-chairman
vice-chancellor

Either hyphens or slashes may be used to indicate combined titles.

author-publisher
firefighter-engineer

owner-operator
secretary-treasurer

Scientific and Technical Terms

Chemical names consisting of two or more words should not be hyphenated. (This is true regardless of whether they are used as compound nouns or as compound adjectives before another noun.)

ammonium nitrate
anhydrous ammonia
carbon monoxide

ethyl vinyl ether
hydrogen sulfide
methyl ethyl ketone

Compound Words

Hyphens are frequently used when a chemical name is tied to either a number or a single letter. The hyphen can be omitted, however, if the relationship is clear. A good chemical dictionary can help you identify the correct way to write such names.

carbon-14	Halon 1301
2-propanol	Freon 12
1,3-dinitrobenzene	methyl t-butyl ether (MTBE)

Hyphens are generally not used with scientific and medical terms. (This is true regardless of whether they are used as compound nouns or as compound adjectives before another noun.)

autonomic nervous system	fetal alcohol syndrome
coronary artery disease	simian hemorrhagic fever virus
congestive heart failure	toxic shock syndrome

Hyphenate only when the relationship between the words might otherwise be unclear.

drug-resistant bacteria	jaw-thrust maneuver
heart-lung machine	mouth-to-mouth resuscitation
insulin-dependent diabetes	tonic-clonic seizure

Some technical measurements are written with hyphens. Some are written open. The best advice is to check an authoritative dictionary.

kilowatt-hour	British thermal unit
light-year	gram calorie
pound-force	pounds per square inch

Hyphens are generally not used with scientific and medical terms.

yellow fever vaccine



Hyphenate only when the relationship between the words might otherwise be unclear.

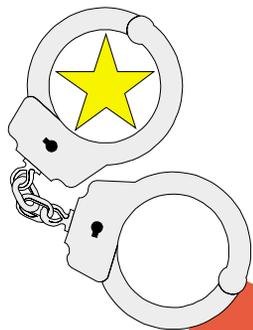
insulin-dependent diabetes

Compound Words

Most compound verbs are either closed or hyphenated.

Handcuff the suspect.

We will strip-search him at the jail.



Verb-adverb compounds are open.

Please hand over the key.

Compound Verbs

General Guidelines

Most compound verbs are either closed or hyphenated.

to blindfold	to handcuff	to outlaw
to broadside	to hogtie	to overtake
to browbeat	to hoodwink	to safeguard
to eyewitness	to mastermind	to sidestep

to brown-nose	to fast-talk	to jury-rig
to cross-examine	to field-test	to second-guess
to double-check	to hot-wire	to strip-search
to drip-feed	to jump-start	to strong-arm

Some compound verbs can be written either way.

troubleshoot / trouble-shoot off-load / offload

Verb-Adverb Compounds

Verb-adverb compounds are open.

to break out	to knock down	to size up
to bump off	to lock out	to throw away
to check in	to run down	to walk through
to flash back	to shut off	to write up

Note: Verb-adverb compounds are always open when used as verbs. However, as compound nouns or compound adjectives, these expressions will be either closed or hyphenated. See pages 301, 302, and 325 for more information.

Compound Adverbs

General Guidelines

Most compound adverbs are open. If you cannot find a particular expression in the dictionary, assume it should be open.

almost always exit
stealing *all along*
spoke *off the record*

saying *over and over*
somewhat regularly attend
bought it *hook, line, and sinker*

Some compound adverbs are hyphenated. Most compound adverbs that need to be hyphenated will be listed in the dictionary. However, fractions used as adverbs (such as *three-fourths* in the example below) generally won't be listed.

all-fired sure
three-fourths empty

trained *in-house*
speak *self-consciously*

Compound Adverbs Containing Prepositions

Compound adverbs containing a preposition are usually closed.

live *downstairs*
go *inside*
move *offstage*
blow *onshore*

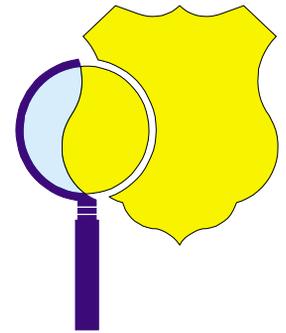
search *outdoors*
wait *overnight*
deal *underhandedly*
approach *upwind*

In-house, of course, is an exception. Other expressions, such as *on-line* and *off-line*, are sometimes used as adverbs, even though they may be listed only as adjectives in the dictionary. If such expressions are not listed as closed compounds and you plan to use them as adverbs, assume they should be hyphenated.

Most compound adverbs are open, though some are hyphenated.

Can I speak off the record?

We'll investigate this in-house.



Compound adverbs containing a preposition are usually closed.

Let's go downtown.

Compound Words

The most difficult part of compound words is knowing how to write them.

Open compounds are naturally thought of as single units.

criminal justice system



With some compounds, the closed form is either more desirable or easier to read.

manslaughter charges

Compound Adjectives: Basic Concepts

Compound adjectives is a complicated topic—one that causes headaches for even the best grammar experts. But if you understand the concepts behind how they are formed, you can more easily determine whether or not a hyphen is needed in a given expression.

Clarity Is the Ultimate Goal

The most difficult part of dealing with compound words is knowing whether to write them open, closed, or hyphenated.

Open compounds

When expressions are written as open compounds, it is because the meaning is clear as written. It is not necessary to write them as closed or hyphenated compounds to show the relation between the words. The expressions are naturally thought of as single units.

hazardous materials incident *less dangerous route*
law enforcement agency *partially amputated finger*

Closed compounds

When expressions are written as closed compounds, it is because the meaning is clear as written and the closed form is either more desirable or easier to read than an open or hyphenated form.

bloodborne pathogen *statewide emergency*
manslaughter charge *wildland fire*

In some cases, writing these expressions as open compounds would either change the meaning or make the meaning ambiguous. We know what a *wildland fire* is. However, if I wrote about a *wild land fire*, it might conjure up images of a chaotic fire burning in the dirt.

Hyphenated compounds

When expressions are written as hyphenated compounds, it is because the meaning might not be clear if the compounds were open. Hyphens are required to show how the words relate to one another.

high-voltage wires *small-claims court*
one-way street *white-collar crime*

Compound Words

Hyphens Often Make Relations Clear

One of the most common uses of the hyphen is to join two or more words to convey a single idea. However, the mere fact that these word combinations convey a single idea does not necessarily mean they should be hyphenated. There are other factors to consider.

Hyphens are to English what parentheses are to math

It may help to think of hyphens as filling a similar role to the one parentheses play in mathematical equations. Parentheses group items together. Notice how shifting the parentheses changes the relation between the numbers and the words below.

$$(3 \times 9) - 5 = 22$$

$$3 \times (9 - 5) = 12$$

(small animal) hospital

small (animal hospital)

(rotten egg) smell

rotten (egg smell)

(second alarm) assignment

second (alarm assignment)

In English, we use hyphens if needed to show the relation between words. A *small animal hospital* suggests an animal hospital that is small, whereas a *small-animal hospital* refers to a hospital for small animals. A *rotten-egg smell* describes the smell of rotten eggs, whereas a *rotten egg smell* suggests perhaps the writer has a strong dislike for the smell of eggs. Hyphens make the relations clear.

Hyphens compensate for changes in form and order

Hyphens are commonly used in compound adjectives because of the way they are formed. A compound adjective is really a shorthand version of an adjective phrase or an adjective clause. Using a compound adjective often results in a tighter, livelier sentence.

Original: We were told it was a situation *that could be the difference between life and death.*

Revised: We were told it was a *life-and-death* situation.

We made two significant changes in the example above. First, we eliminated several words. Second, we relocated the remaining words. We put them before the noun they modify, as if they were ordinary adjectives. Tying them together with hyphens helps to maintain the relation between the words and the noun they modify.

Eliminating some words and relocating the ones that remain does not automatically mean we need to hyphenate the expression. A big factor is clarity. For example, readers recognize a *physical ability test* as a test that measures one's physical ability to do a job. No hyphen is needed.

Hyphens are sometimes needed to make the relation between words clear.

A *small-claims court* is a court established to handle small claims.



A hyphen prevents people from misreading it as a *claims court* that is *small*

Compound Words

Changes in word order and form often signal the need for a hyphen.

Original:
These immunizations will protect you from illness that may threaten your life.



Revised:
These immunizations will protect you from life-threatening illnesses.

Sometimes words undergo a change in form when changing from an adjective phrase or adjective clause to a compound adjective. This change in form often signals the need for a hyphen. Notice the change from *skin* to *skinned* in the following examples.

Original: Witnesses described him as a man with *dark skin*.
Revised: Witnesses described him as a *dark-skinned* man.

A change in word order may also signal the need for a hyphen. Notice how *filled with smoke* becomes *smoke-filled* below.

Original: Several people became disoriented as they tried to escape through the stairwell that was *filled with smoke*.
Revised: Several people became disoriented as they tried to escape through the *smoke-filled* stairwell.

Some situations involve a change in both form and word order.

Original: Doctors say she has an illness *that threatens her life*.
Revised: Doctors say she has a *life-threatening* illness.

Expressions may undergo several changes in the transition from adjective clause or adjective phrase to compound adjective. Hyphens help show relations that may otherwise be unclear.

The Old Familiar Rule Can Be Misleading

Many experts try to simplify compound adjectives by saying you should hyphenate compound adjectives when they precede the noun, but not when they follow the noun. Unfortunately, this is not a rule you can count on. It may be a good starting point, but there are numerous exceptions.

Hyphens are not necessary *before the noun* when the words are clearly recognizable as a unit. This is often the case when the compound adjective is comprised of one of the following:

- A well-established compound noun: *blood pressure* medication, *high school* dropout, *fire code* violations.
- A proper name: *Citizens Band* radio, *Stelling Road* overpass, *New York* cop.
- A foreign expression: *ad hoc* committee, *bona fide* identification, *prima facie* evidence.

Compound Words

Hyphens *are* needed before the noun, however, when the words used to form the compound adjective cannot stand alone as a recognizable compound noun: *white-collar* crime, *low-level* radiation, *long-term* disability.

Some expressions need to be hyphenated before and after

Hyphens are generally not needed *after* the noun—as long as the words play a normal role in a normal order. However, if the compound words that follow a noun exist in an abnormal form or an abnormal order, the expression is still a compound adjective. Most need to be hyphenated whether they come before or after the noun.

Four kinds of compound adjectives fit this pattern. The first is a noun-adjective compound. Notice the inverted word order below. *Knee-deep* refers to water as deep (or as high) as my knee.

Before noun: We waded through *knee-deep* flood water.

After noun: The flood water was *knee-deep*.

The second is a noun-participle compound. Normal word order is inverted in the next example also. *Panic-stricken* means stricken with panic.

Before noun: The *panic-stricken* children were screaming.

After noun: Several of the children were *panic-stricken*.

The third is an adjective-participle compound. The example below contains a change in both word order and form. When we refer to a *sweet-smelling* odor, we are referring to an odor that *smells* sweet.

Before noun: The chemical has a *sweet-smelling* odor.

After noun: The odor is *sweet-smelling*.

The last one is a combination of an adjective followed by a noun plus *ed*. Again, there is a change in form. *High-powered* rifles refers to rifles that are very (or highly) powerful.

Before noun: They stole several *high-powered* rifles.

After noun: We are no match for rifles as *high-powered* as those.

There are, of course, some exceptions. Some compound adjectives that fit into these categories are closed, rather than hyphenated. If they are written closed before a noun, they are also written closed after the noun. Examples are presented later in the chapter.

It is an oversimplification to say you should hyphenate compound adjectives before the noun, but not after.

Hyphens are not always needed before the noun.

Flood control measures failed.

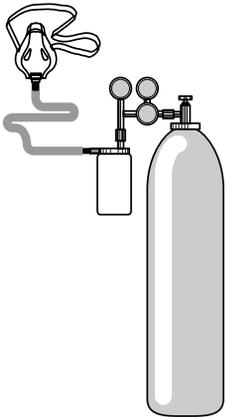


Hyphens are sometimes needed after the noun.

Residents were panic-stricken

Compound Words

Understanding what types of words are used to form the compound can help you determine if hyphens are needed.



high-flow oxygen

If you cannot determine what role the words play in the sentence, look up similar expressions.

Compound Adjectives: The Advanced Course

Introduction

The next several pages provide an in-depth look at specific types of compound adjectives and how they are formed. This information is geared for those readers who need to know more than the basics to answer a particular question. This section is designed to help determine how to write compound adjectives that might not be listed in the dictionary. The left-hand column below identifies the types of words used to form the compound adjective; the right-hand column gives examples.

Types of Words

Adjective + Noun
Compound Noun
Noun + Adjective
Noun + Participle
Adjective + Participle
Adjective + Noun + *ed*
Adverb + Participle
Adverb + Adjective
Participle + Adverb
Adjective + Adjective
Verb + Verb
Verb + Adverb
Verb + Noun
Phrasal Compounds
Compounds with Numbers
Compounds with Letters
Proper Nouns
Foreign Expressions

Example

high-speed chase
fire department headquarters
accident-prone child
smoke-filled room
double-crossing crook
deep-seated fire
well-known principle
badly infected wound
burned-out building
rapid, weak pulse
stop-and-go traffic
drive-by shooting
thank-you letter
head-to-toe examination
third-degree burn
Class A fire
French Canadian police
prima facie evidence

Many words fill multiple roles, sometimes making it difficult to identify what type of compound you have. Let's take the example *high-flow oxygen*. *High* can be an adjective, an adverb, or a noun. *Flow* can be a verb or a noun. If you cannot determine what roles the words play in the compound, look up similar expressions to see how they are written. That may help you determine how to write the compound in question. If you are still unclear, look back at the discussion of clarity starting on page 308. That may help you determine what to do.

Compound Words

Adjective + Noun

When an adjective-noun combination created to fill a specific need is used as a compound modifier before another noun, the words must be hyphenated.

big-time crook
black-tie affair
brown-bag lunch
dead-air space
dead-end street
fair-weather friends
hard-core criminal
high-angle rescue
high-speed chase
large-diameter hose
low-risk operation

low-sodium diet
one-way valve
part-time job
small-bore catheter
small-claims court
strong-arm tactics
top-secret mission
two-way radio
wet-bulb thermometer
white-slavery ring
wild-goose chase

A hyphen is not used, however, if these words play a normal role elsewhere in the sentence.

Before noun: He led officers on a *high-speed* chase.
After noun: Officers pursued him at *high speeds*.

Before noun: A fire of that magnitude will require a *large-scale* evacuation effort.
After noun: We are not prepared to undertake evacuation efforts on such a *large scale*.

If an expression continues to function as a compound adjective in the predicate of the sentence, retain the hyphen. However, do not hyphenate the expression if it plays a normal role in the sentence.

Hyphen: *Long-term* exposure to the chemical may cause central nervous system disorders.

Hyphen: Jim's symptoms are consistent with exposure that is *long-term*.

No hyphen: Jim's symptoms are consistent with repeated exposures over a *long term*. (*object of the preposition over*)

Although some experts say you should follow the same pattern when using comparative or superlative adjectives, it isn't necessary to use hyphens unless misreading is likely.

Before noun: We can fight more fire using *larger-diameter* (or *larger diameter*) hose.

After noun: A significant problem with using hose of *larger diameter* is that it's harder to maneuver.

Adjective-noun combinations created to fill a specific need are hyphenated before the noun.

We pursued the stolen vehicle until the driver turned onto a dead-end street.

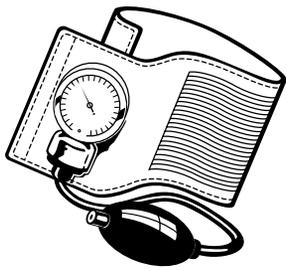


No hyphen is needed if these words play a normal role elsewhere in the sentence.

The driver fled on foot when he realized he had reached a dead end

Compound Words

Hyphens are usually not needed when compound nouns are used as compound adjectives either before or after a noun.



We need a new blood pressure cuff.

The cuff is used to measure blood pressure.

Compound Nouns

When compound nouns serve to modify other nouns, they become compound adjectives. These compounds can consist of either an adjective-noun combination or a noun-noun combination. No hyphens are required, regardless of where the compounds are used in a sentence, because the compound nouns are well known and easily recognized as a unit.

Adjective-Noun Combination

cervical spine injury
coronary artery disease
flammable liquid spill
Good Samaritan law
small craft advisory
Supreme Court decision

Noun-Noun Combination

blood pressure cuff
child endangerment charges
drug abuse problem
fire extinguisher cabinet
sprinkler system malfunction
tank farm explosion

(Note: The difference between adjective-noun compounds that don't need hyphens and those that do is that one stands alone as a clearly recognizable unit and the other does not. Adjective-noun compounds requiring hyphens were covered on the previous page.)

Some compound nouns are written as closed compounds. These compounds take the same form both before and after the noun.

Adjective-Noun Combination

blackmail attempt
greenstick fracture
hotshot detective
lowlife scum
freshwater drowning

Noun-Noun Combination

drugstore robbery
eyewitness account
fingerprint kit
gunpowder residue
graveyard shift

Noun-noun combinations need hyphens only when they involve two words of relatively equal rank.

fracture-dislocation injury
heart-lung machine

murder-suicide pact
risk-benefit analysis

Compound Words

Noun + Adjective

Most noun-adjective combinations are hyphenated. If you do not find a particular compound in the dictionary, assume it should be hyphenated.

age-old	gun-shy	street-smart
brain-dead	ice-cold	sugar-free
cost-effective	insulin-dependent	trigger-happy
fat-soluble	knee-deep	user-friendly
fire-resistant	oxygen-deficient	waist-high
goof-proof	rock-hard	water-resistant

Some adjective-noun compounds are closed. These compounds will be listed in the dictionary.

airtight	lifelong	trustworthy
bloodthirsty	newsworthy	waterproof
fireproof	seasick	worldwide

Noun-adjective combinations take the same form both before and after a noun.

Before noun: We discovered several new strains of *drug-resistant* bacteria.

After noun: Is this new strain *drug-resistant*?

Before noun: According to our pre-plan, the facility uses several *water-reactive* chemicals.

After noun: We cannot use water to fight the fire because the burning chemical is *water-reactive*.

Before noun: The bottles are equipped with *childproof* caps.

After noun: Why are the caps considered *childproof* when only children can get them off?

Noun-adjective modifiers retain the same form when serving as adverbs. In the examples that follow, *year-round* becomes an adverb when it modifies the adjective *open*, and *nationwide* becomes an adverb when it modifies the verb *corrected*.

Adjective: Fire safety is a *year-round* concern.

Adverb: Residents will fight to keep the station open *year-round*.

Adjective: It is an *nationwide* problem.

Adverb: We need to come up with a solution to ensure the problem is corrected *nationwide*.

**Most
noun-adjective
combinations
are hyphenated.**

**Noun-adjective
combinations
take the same
form both before
and after a noun.**



**I'm looking for
flame-retardant
fabric.**

**Children's
sleepwear must
be flame-
retardant.**

Compound Words

Most noun-participle combinations are hyphenated before and after a noun.

Several homes on the rain-soaked hillside are in danger of sliding.



The hillside has been rain-soaked for days.

Noun + Participle

Most noun-participle combinations are hyphenated. If you do not find a particular compound in the dictionary, assume it should be hyphenated.

battle-scarred	government-owned	oxygen-carrying
crime-infested	heat-sensing	panic-stricken
decision-making	knife-wielding	role-playing
drug-induced	life-threatening	smoke-stained
field-tested	man-made	time-consuming
fire-eating	mind-altering	wind-driven

Some noun-participle compounds are closed. You will find them in the dictionary.

bloodborne	frostbitten	homemade
bloodstained	handpicked	lifesaving
breathtaking	heartbroken	painstaking

When a noun-participle compound can stand alone as a clearly recognizable compound noun (such as *word processing*), it is not necessary to hyphenate the expression when used before another noun as a compound adjective (*word processing* program). However, this is the exception rather than the rule.

Noun-participle combinations take the same form both before and after a noun.

Before noun: The *computer-aided* dispatch system makes our job easier.

After noun: The dispatch system has been *computer-aided* for several years.

Before noun: The *law-abiding* citizens of this community are fed up with the high crime rate.

After noun: The handful that are not *law-abiding* have created tremendous problems.

Before noun: A *handwritten* ransom note was found in the girl's bedroom.

After noun: Police suspect the note was *handwritten* by the child's father.

Only one hyphen is used when joining an open compound noun with a participle.

a *machine gun-toting* criminal
a *natural gas-fed* fire

Compound Words

Adjective + Participle

Most adjective-participle compounds are hyphenated. If you do not find a particular compound in the dictionary, assume it should be hyphenated.

clean-shaven	half-drowned	long-lived
double-crossing	half-tempted	odd-looking
double-hung	hard-bitten	single-acting
foul-smelling	high-ranking	slow-burning
full-blown	ill-gotten	smooth-talking
good-looking	ill-informed	strange-sounding

A small number of adjective-participle compounds are closed. You will find them in the dictionary.

dumbstruck	easygoing	hardworking
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Adjective-participle combinations take the same form both before and after a noun.

Before noun: A *high-strung* individual like Gary is a good candidate for a heart attack.

After noun: Gary is too *high-strung* for his own good.

Before noun: We were greeted at the door by a very large, *unfriendly-looking* dog.

After noun: The dog was not as *unfriendly-looking* as the barrel of his master's rifle.

Although some experts prefer to use hyphens with comparative or superlative adjectives, hyphens are usually not necessary unless misreading is likely.

Before noun: We couldn't have chosen a *better qualified* (or *better-qualified*) candidate for the deputy chief position.

After noun: Ken was *better qualified* (or *better-qualified*) than the other candidates were for the position of deputy chief.

Before noun: Burned flesh is one of the *worst smelling* (or *worst-smelling*) odors I have ever encountered.

After noun: The odor of burned flesh is one of the *worst smelling* (or *worst-smelling*) that I have ever encountered.

Most adjective-participle compounds are hyphenated before and after a noun.

I need a long-lasting pain reliever.

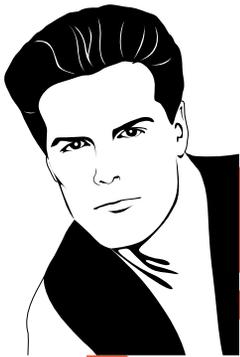


The pharmacist says this one is long-lasting

Compound Words

Most compound adjectives comprised of an adjective plus a noun plus *ed* are hyphenated before and after a noun.

Jenny's hot-tempered husband is going to kill her someday if he doesn't stop drinking.



Jenny knew Bill was hot-tempered when she married him.

Adjective + Noun *ed*

Most compound adjectives comprised of an adjective plus a noun plus *ed* are hyphenated. If you do not find a particular compound in the dictionary, assume it should be hyphenated.

bad-tempered	ill-fated	single-handed
broad-based	long-winded	soft-hearted
cold-blooded	middle-aged	strong-willed
deep-rooted	old-fashioned	thin-skinned
double-sided	open-minded	tight-lipped
good-natured	red-handed	two-faced
hard-edged	right-handed	weak-kneed
heavy-handed	silver-tongued	wild-eyed

Some of these compound adjectives are closed. These closed compounds will be listed in the dictionary.

barehanded	flatfooted	lighthearted
clearheaded	hotheaded	loudmouthed
closefisted	lamebrained	nearsighted

A handful of these compound adjectives can be written either way, for example, *hard-nosed* or *hardnosed*, *hard-headed* or *hardheaded*.

Compound adjectives comprised of an adjective plus a noun plus *ed* take the same form before and after the noun.

Before noun: We use foam to penetrate a *deep-seated* fire.

After noun: This fire is too *deep-seated* for plain water to do the trick.

Before noun: The *short-handed* command staff was overwhelmed for the first half-hour of the fire.

After noun: The command staff was *short-handed* until the off-duty chiefs arrived.

Before noun: The city manager's *shortsighted* proposal calls for laying off six police officers.

After noun: The proposal is *shortsighted*; reduced police protection will lead to increased crime.

Some experts say that you should follow the same pattern when using comparative or superlative adjectives. Others say it isn't necessary to use hyphens unless misreading is likely.

Before noun: We're no match for their *higher-powered* rifles.

After noun: Their rifles are *higher-powered* than anything we have.

Compound Words

Adverb + Participle

If the adverb in an adverb-participle compound ends in *ly*, do not hyphenate the expression.

badly injured patient
clearly defined rules
highly agitated condition

partially amputated finger
poorly written report
widely known principle

Note: Some adjectives also end in *ly*. When an adjective ending in *ly* is used in conjunction with a participle, it is hyphenated like most other adverb-participle compounds: *ghastly-looking* wound, *lonely-sounding* cry.

Most adverb-participle compounds are hyphenated when used before a noun.

almost-convincing argument
far-reaching effects
fast-moving fire
hard-fought battle
long-remembered rescues

much-appreciated efforts
often-overlooked indication
seldom-heard argument
slow-healing injury
well-known criminal

Whether these adverb-participle compounds are hyphenated elsewhere in the sentence depends on how they are used. If the participle becomes part of a verb phrase (helping verb plus participle), omit the hyphen. The adverb now serves strictly as an adverb modifying a verb. It is no longer part of a compound adjective. (Note: The verb phrases are underlined in the examples below.)

Before noun: The soon-forgotten lessons of last year's floods will come back to haunt us this year.

After noun: The lessons were soon-forgotten once the flood waters receded.

Before noun: Lisa is a well-known jewel thief.

After noun: Lisa is well-known to our department.

Before noun: Much-needed medical supplies will be flown to Mexico tonight.

After noun: The medical supplies are much-needed in the areas devastated by the quake.

The key to recognizing that the participle has become part of the verb is to mentally omit the adverb to see if the sentence still makes sense. *The lessons were forgotten. Lisa is known to our department. The medical supplies are needed.*

Most adverb-participle compounds are hyphenated before a noun.

Marion is a well-known prostitute.



When the participle becomes part of a verb phrase, the expression is no longer hyphenated.

She is well-known for keeping company with drug dealers.

Compound Words

If omitting the adverb would change the meaning of the sentence, retain the hyphen.

The fire is fast-moving



If the adverb modifies the verb phrase rather than the noun, the hyphen is omitted.

The fire is fast moving toward the barn.

If omitting the adverb changes the meaning of the sentence, a hyphen is needed. Look at the examples below. A hyphen is needed in the compound *fast-moving* when positioned before the noun *fire*. It is still needed when *fast-moving* is in the predicate because to say *the fire is moving* implies either that the fire is mobile rather than stationary or that watching the fire is a moving experience. The word *fast* is essential to the meaning of the sentence, so a hyphen is required. In the last sentence, *fast* modifies the verb phrase *is moving* rather than the noun *fire*, so the hyphen is omitted.

- Hyphen:* The *fast-moving* fire is threatening several homes on Wood Road.
Hyphen: The fire is *fast-moving*.
No hyphen: The fire *is fast moving* toward the homes on Wood Road.

The following are some other examples where a hyphen is required. The adverbs are essential because the expressions continue to serve as one-thought modifiers after the nouns they modify.

- Before noun:* *Well-meaning* bystanders dragged him out of the vehicle.
After noun: The bystanders were *well-meaning*.
Before noun: It is a *well-designed* harness.
After noun: The harness is *well-designed*.

Some experts say that you should follow the same pattern when using comparative or superlative adjectives. Others say it isn't necessary to use hyphens unless misreading is likely.

- Before noun:* The *best-behaved* (or *best behaved*) convicts are allowed to work on hand crews.
After noun: These are the *best-behaved* (or *best behaved*) of the convicts in our county.

A few adverb-participle compounds are closed. These closed compounds will be listed in the dictionary.

- | | | |
|--------------|----------|------------|
| everlasting | ongoing | widespread |
| freewheeling | outgoing | stillborn |

Closed adverb-participle compounds take the same form both before and after a noun.

- Before noun:* The *widespread* epidemic has killed hundreds of people.
After noun: If the epidemic is as *widespread* as we believe it to be, thousands more will die.

Compound Words

Adverb + Adjective

Adverb-adjective compounds are not hyphenated because the adverb modifies the adjective that follows.

a <i>very frightened</i> child	a <i>quite interesting</i> case
a <i>rather puzzling</i> crime	a <i>not too demanding</i> test
a <i>much safer</i> approach	a <i>too risky</i> operation

Hyphens are generally not needed when *more, less, most, or least* is combined with an adjective.

a <i>more complicated</i> rescue	a <i>less draining</i> event
the <i>most daring</i> theft	the <i>least frightening</i> alternative

Participle + Adverb

Participle-adverb compounds are hyphenated before a noun.

<i>bombed-out</i> building	<i>sold-out</i> concert
<i>cooling-off</i> process	<i>trumped-up</i> charges
<i>made-up</i> stories	<i>unheard-of</i> results
<i>sawed-off</i> shotgun	<i>washed-out</i> bridge
<i>slept-on</i> mattress	<i>worn-down</i> tires

Although these participle-adverb compounds are hyphenated when used before a noun, they are left open when used after a noun.

Before noun: We received multiple reports of smoke coming from the *burned-out* building on Milton Avenue.

After noun: Five families were *burned out* of their homes on Christmas day.

Before noun: A *scaled-down* disaster drill will still test our response capabilities without compromising our coverage of the city.

After noun: The drill has to be *scaled down* because two of the other agencies that were going to participate have decided to back out.

Before noun: If you cut the power to a drug lab, you could interrupt a vital *cooling-off* process.

After noun: If you stop the product from *cooling off*, you may cause a fire or explosion.

Participle-adverb compounds are hyphenated before a noun.

*The **made-up** stories about **contaminated** milk caused **numerous** problems for dairy farmers.*



Participle-adverb compounds are left open when used after a noun.

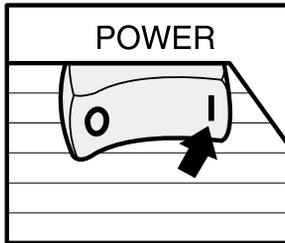
*The stories had **been made upto** scare the public.*

Compound Words

Only a few adjective-adjective compounds are hyphenated.

These include adjectives that express the dual nature of a noun.

Where is the on-off switch?



Two adjectives joined by *and* to form a one-thought modifier are also hyphenated.

We need a tried-and-true solution.

Adjective + Adjective

Do not use a hyphen between coordinate adjectives (two or more adjectives that modify the same word equally). Coordinate adjectives are separated either by the word *and* or by a comma. (For more information on coordinate adjectives, see pages 57-58.)

<i>drunk and disorderly</i> conduct	<i>cold, clammy</i> skin
<i>fixed and dilated</i> pupils	<i>dull, squeezing</i> pressure
<i>senseless and brutal</i> crime	<i>rapid, weak</i> pulse
<i>tired and hungry</i> rescuers	<i>sudden, unexpected</i> storm
<i>unethical and illegal</i> conduct	<i>warm, compassionate</i> doctor

Do not use a hyphen when the first adjective modifies the second. These adjectives are not coordinate.

bright red blood
(*bright* modifies *red*; *red* modifies *blood*)

a *fancy digital* display
(*digital* modifies *display*; *fancy* modifies *digital display*)

Only a few adjective-adjective compounds are hyphenated. These include two adjectives joined by *and* to form a one-thought modifier.

a <i>cut-and-dried</i> situation	an <i>out-and-out</i> lie
a <i>hard-and-fast</i> rule	a <i>quick-and-dirty</i> solution
an <i>open-and-shut</i> case	a <i>rough-and-tumble</i> fight

Two adjectives that express the dual nature of a noun are also hyphenated.

<i>compound-complex</i> sentence	<i>one-two</i> punch
<i>on-off</i> switch	<i>true-false</i> test

Adjective-adjective compounds involving colors

Most experts agree that you should hyphenate adjective-adjective compounds involving colors if the expression might be ambiguous, but not if the first word clearly modifies the second.

<i>emerald-green</i> eyes	<i>bright red</i> blood
<i>navy-blue</i> uniform	<i>dark black</i> smoke
<i>off-white</i> walls	<i>long brown</i> hair
<i>red-hot</i> coals	<i>pale blue</i> shirt

Expressions such as *emerald green* and *navy blue* are often left open after a noun if the meaning is clear: *Our uniform shirts are navy blue.*

Compound Words

Two colors of equal importance in the compound should be hyphenated.

She was hit by a *silver-gray* Mustang.

The lake was full of *blue-green* algae.

One area where the experts disagree is with colors ending in *ish*. Some say hyphens are not needed at all. Some say hyphens are needed when the compound is used before a noun, but not after. Some say you can go either way before a noun.

Chlorine is a *greenish yellow* (or *greenish-yellow*) gas.

Most experts say that two colors joined by the word *and* should be hyphenated when used as a one-thought modifier before the noun, but should be left open when used after the noun.

Before noun: She had a large *black-and-blue* mark on her arm.

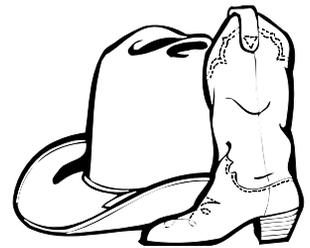
After noun: Her arm was *black and blue* for several weeks.

Following this same logic, you should hyphenate expressions such as *black-and-white photograph* and *black-and-white terms*. Do not hyphenate the expression, however, when referring to the colors separately. A referee's shirt, for example, contains *black and white stripes*, not *black-and-white stripes*. We have *black and white firefighters* on our department, not *black-and-white firefighters*.

Some experts say you can omit the hyphens if the meaning is clear: *The suspect was wearing a black-and-white (or black and white) shirt*. However, you must include the hyphens if ambiguity may result: *The suspect was wearing black and white athletic shoes*. Does this mean the suspect was wearing one black shoe and one white shoe or that the suspect was wearing a matched set of black-and-white shoes?

If three or more colors are used to modify the same noun, do not hyphenate the expression: *a red, white, and blue flag*.

Hyphenate a compound involving colors if the expression might be ambiguous, but not if the first word clearly modifies the second.



The suspect is wearing an off-white cowboy hat and light brown cowboy boots.

Compound Words

Compound adjectives consisting of two verbs are hyphenated when used before a noun.

The duck-and-cover drills paid off.



Omit the hyphens after the noun if the words play a normal role in the sentence.

The children were taught to duck and cover

Verb + Verb

Compound adjectives consisting of two verbs (frequently joined by *and* or *or*) are hyphenated when used before a noun.

<i>can-do</i> attitude	<i>make-or-break</i> opportunity
<i>do-or-die</i> attempt	<i>pass-fail</i> test
<i>duck-and-cover</i> drill	<i>rise-and-shine</i> nonsense
<i>give-and-take</i> session	<i>search-and-destroy</i> mission
<i>hit-and-run</i> accident	<i>search-and-rescue</i> operations
<i>hit-or-miss</i> strategy	<i>stop-and-go</i> traffic
<i>load-and-go</i> philosophy	<i>wait-and-see</i> approach

Retain the hyphens after the noun if the expression continues to serve as a compound adjective. Omit the hyphens if the words play a normal role in the sentence.

<i>Hyphen:</i>	Traffic was <i>stop-and-go</i> all afternoon because of mud slides in the area.
<i>No hyphen:</i>	Traffic continued to <i>stop and go</i> all afternoon.
<i>Hyphen:</i>	The teacher conducted an unannounced <i>duck-and-cover</i> drill today.
<i>No hyphen:</i>	The children are being taught to <i>duck and cover</i> when an earthquake strikes.
<i>Hyphen:</i>	We immediately began <i>search-and-rescue</i> operations.
<i>No hyphen:</i>	Our primary objectives are <i>search and rescue</i> .

Compound Words

Verb + Adverb

Many verb-adverb compounds are hyphenated before a noun. If you do not find a particular compound in the dictionary, assume it should be hyphenated.

<i>break-even</i> point	<i>plug-in</i> appliance
<i>drive-by</i> shooting	<i>pop-up</i> headlights
<i>drive-through</i> window	<i>run-down</i> neighborhood
<i>drop-in</i> visit	<i>screw-on</i> cap
<i>flip-up</i> top	<i>take-up</i> reel
<i>follow-up</i> investigation	<i>trade-in</i> value
<i>play-off</i> game	<i>walk-in</i> clinic

Some verb-adverb compounds are closed. These closed compounds will be listed in the dictionary.

<i>backup</i> team	<i>runaway</i> child
<i>breakthrough</i> technology	<i>standby</i> duty
<i>getaway</i> vehicle	<i>towaway</i> zone
<i>knockout</i> punch	<i>turnout</i> coat
<i>pullover</i> sweater	<i>workout</i> room

Some compounds can be written either way.

<i>callback/call-back</i> number	<i>shutoff/shut-off</i> switch
<i>fallback/fall-back</i> position	<i>standup/stand-up</i> comic
<i>makeup/make-up</i> test	<i>takeout/take-out</i> food

Regardless of what form these compounds take as modifiers, they are written as two separate words when they serve as verb phrases.

Adjective. Who did the *follow-up* investigation?
Verb phrase. I need you to *follow up* on this lead.

Adjective. We spotted the *getaway* vehicle.
Verb phrase. That is the vehicle they used to *get away* from the bank after the robbery.

Adjective. Jill is assigned to the *backup* team.
Verb phrase. Jill and her partner will *back up* the entry team if they have a problem.

Use two words if the second word serves as a preposition. In the second example below, *drive* is a simple verb; *by* is a preposition.

Adjective. We had another *drive-by* shooting tonight.
Preposition. I want to drive *by* the scene again.

Many verb-adverb compounds are hyphenated before a noun; however, some are closed.

A citizen has flagged me down to report a drive-by shooting.

Please send a backup unit.



Use two words when the expression plays a normal role in the sentence.

Back up I want to drive by the scene again.

Compound Words

Some verb-noun compounds are hyphenated before a noun.

We received numerous thank-you letters.



Do not hyphenate these expressions when used in a normal manner elsewhere in the sentence.

We want to thank you for protecting our community.

Verb + Noun

Some verb-noun compounds are hyphenated before a noun.

<i>cut-rate</i> fare	<i>spread-eagle</i> position
<i>show-me</i> attitude	<i>take-home</i> quiz
<i>stop-action</i> photography	<i>thank-you</i> letter

Do not hyphenate these expressions, however, when they are used in a normal manner elsewhere in the sentence.

Before noun: We received numerous *thank-you* letters from residents whose homes we saved from the fire.

After noun: We want to *thank you* for saving our home.

Before noun: I gave the recruits a *take-home* quiz.

After noun: The quiz is one they can *take home* and do at their leisure.

Some verb-noun compounds are solid.

<i>breakfast</i> food	<i>standpipe</i> connection
<i>catchall</i> tarp	<i>stopgap</i> measures
<i>cutthroat</i> deal	<i>telltale</i> signs
<i>daredevil</i> pranks	<i>workplace</i> standards

Well-established compounds such as these generally retain the same form when used elsewhere in the sentence.

Before noun: Engine 2 was directed to stage at the *standpipe* connection.

After noun: The connection to the *standpipe* is in the front of the building.

Before noun: *Workplace* standards are not the same as those used in emergency response.

After noun: Standards designed for the *workplace* are based on nonemergency conditions.

The words may be separated, however, depending on how they are used in the sentence. They may even be separated by other words.

One word: We lost our *catchall* tarp at the fire.

Two words: The tarp is designed to *catch all* the debris.

One word: This is just a *stopgap* measure.

Two words: These measures will only *stop the gap* until we can implement a permanent solution.

Compound Words

Phrases as Compounds

When phrases are used as compound adjectives before a noun, they require hyphens to show the relation between the words.

<i>around-the-clock</i> protection	<i>need-to-know</i> information
<i>back-to-back</i> fires	<i>never-say-die</i> mentality
<i>bumper-to-bumper</i> traffic	<i>not-in-my-backyard</i> attitude
<i>case-by-case</i> situation	<i>off-the-wall</i> comments
<i>cradle-to-grave</i> responsibility	<i>on-the-job</i> training
<i>day-to-day</i> operations	<i>once-in-a-lifetime</i> opportunity
<i>dog-eat-dog</i> world	<i>out-of-court</i> settlement
<i>fight-or-flight</i> reaction	<i>out-of-pocket</i> expenses
<i>foot-in-mouth</i> disease	<i>out-of-the-way</i> location
<i>good-for-nothing</i> crook	<i>over-the-counter</i> drugs
<i>hand-to-hand</i> combat	<i>pain-in-the-butt</i> project
<i>head-to-toe</i> examination	<i>right-to-know</i> legislation
<i>heart-to-heart</i> talk	<i>state-of-the-art</i> equipment
<i>holier-than-thou</i> attitude	<i>spur-of-the-moment</i> decision
<i>mouth-to-mouth</i> resuscitation	<i>up-to-date</i> report

However, when these phrases are used as modifiers in a normal manner elsewhere in the sentence, hyphens are not needed.

<i>Before noun:</i>	The accident caused <i>bumper-to-bumper</i> traffic for two miles in both directions.
<i>After noun:</i>	The traffic crawled along <i>bumper to bumper</i> for over an hour.
<i>Before noun:</i>	She was taken to an <i>out-of-the-way</i> location, raped, beaten, then left for dead.
<i>After noun:</i>	We need to get the debris <i>out of the way</i> before we can extricate the victims.
<i>Before noun:</i>	We had trouble finding a place to build the prison because of the <i>not-in-my-backyard</i> attitude we encountered from citizens.
<i>After noun:</i>	I don't care where they put the prison, as long as it is <i>not in my backyard</i> .

Hyphens are generally used between two nouns joined by the word *and* to form a compound modifier. Some dictionaries may show well-established expressions, such as *dog and pony show*, without hyphens. If your dictionary shows a particular expression without hyphens and readers are unlikely to misinterpret the expression, you may omit the hyphens. Otherwise, you should use them.

Phrases used as compound adjectives before a noun require hyphens to show the relation between the words.

The children learned to do mouth-to-mouth resuscitation by practicing on their teddy bears.



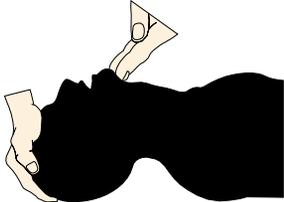
When these phrases are used a normal manner elsewhere in the sentence, hyphens are not needed.

Compound Words

In general, hyphens are needed when the expression is used before a noun, but not when used in a normal manner elsewhere in the sentence.

a life-and-death situation

a matter of life and death



Compounds containing two or more hyphenated expressions may require additional punctuation.

head-tilt/chin-lift maneuver

ball-and-socket joint
cat-and-mouse game
cause-and-effect relationship
day-and-night protection

dog-and-pony show
life-and-death situation
mom-and-pop market
trial-and-error method

While hyphens are generally needed if the expression is used before a noun, they are not needed if the words are used in a normal manner elsewhere in the sentence.

Before noun: This is a *life-and-death* situation
After noun: This is a matter of *life and death*.

Before noun: The *trial-and-error* method is too risky when lives are at stake.
After noun: We came up with this method through *trial and error* at the drill tower.

Compound adjectives formed from repeated or rhyming words are normally hyphenated.

a *buddy-buddy* relationship a *rinky-dink* department
a *helter-skelter* manner a *super-duper* deal
a *hotsy-totsy* attitude a *teensy-weensy* fib
a *hunky-dory* situation a *teeny-weeny* lie
a *hush-hush* operation a *topsy-turvey* organization
an *itsy-bitsy* mistake a *win-win* situation
a *phony-baloney* story a *wishy-washy* decision

These compounds should be hyphenated before and after a noun.

Before noun: This is a *hush-hush* operation.
After noun: We must keep everything *hush-hush* until we have enough proof to put them behind bars.

Before noun: As far as I am concerned, the boss made a *wishy-washy* decision.
After noun: The boss is being *wishy-washy* because he is getting conflicting information from OSHA.

Compounds that consist of two or more hyphenated expressions are generally separated by a comma. However, some dictionaries may list other options.

first-come, first-served policy
go/no-go (or *go-no-go*) decision
head-tilt/chin-lift maneuver
knock-down, drag-out (or *knock-down-drag-out*) fight
non-A, non-B hepatitis
on-again, off-again (or *on-again-off-again*) relationship

Compound Words

Compounds with Numbers

Most compound adjectives containing a number need to be hyphenated before a noun. This is true whether you are using words or figures to represent the number.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Figures</u>
a twenty-year sentence	a 20-year sentence
second-degree murder	2nd-degree murder
a sixteen-year-old girl	a 16-year-old girl
a four-inch laceration	a 4-inch laceration

When the expression is used in a normal manner in a normal location within the sentence, it is not hyphenated.

Before noun: He was charged with *first-degree* murder.
After noun: He was charged with murder in the *first degree*.

Before noun: The fire was fanned by *35-mile-per-hour* winds. (or *35-mph* winds)
After noun: At the height of the fire, winds were gusting up to *35 miles per hour*. (or *35 mph*)

However, if the expression is used as a compound adjective in the predicate of the sentence, it is hyphenated.

Before noun: The victim had *third-degree* burns.
After noun: The burn was classified as *third-degree*.

When a compound adjective formed with a number is preceded by another number, one is written with words, the other with figures.

We'll need *two 3-person* entry teams in Level A suits.

Nineteen 15-year-old students were injured when the bus they were traveling in overturned.

Fractions are also hyphenated when used as adjectives.

We need a *one-half* mile perimeter around the scene.

We need a *two-thirds* majority vote to ratify the contract.

Ratios may be punctuated with hyphens when used as compound adjectives.

Before noun: Chlorine has a *458-to-1* expansion ratio.
After noun: Chlorine has an expansion ratio of *458 to 1*.

Most compound adjectives containing a number need to be hyphenated before a noun.

The driver exceeded the 55-mph speed limit.



When the expression is used in a normal manner elsewhere in the sentence, it is not hyphenated.

The speed limit is 55 mph

Compound Words

Compound adjectives involving a number plus the word *odd* need to be hyphenated.

It took forty odd firefighters to bring the fire under control.
(ambiguous)



It took forty-odd firefighters to bring the fire under control.
(clear)

When a number follows a word, the hyphen is usually omitted.

Class 1.1 explosive
Code 3 response

Title 19 requirement
Type II construction

Specific expressions with numbers

Do not hyphenate expressions that include the word *percent*. The meaning is clear without hyphens.

We have seen a *three percent* decline in the homicide rate this year.

Expressions that specify an amount of money may be written without hyphens if the meaning is clear.

We intercepted a *\$2 million* shipment of cocaine destined for California.

Compound adjectives involving a number plus the word *odd* need to be hyphenated. This is true whether you use words or figures. The first example below is ambiguous. Are we talking about *roughly forty firefighters* or *forty strange firefighters*?

Ambiguous: It took *forty odd* firefighters to bring the fire under control.

Clear: It took *forty-odd* firefighters to bring the fire under control.

Compound adjectives involving a number and the word *plus* need to be hyphenated. This is true whether you use words or figures.

Ambiguous: *Thirty plus* officers dressed in SWAT gear descended on the mobile home park in response to the hostage situation.

Clear: *Thirty-plus* officers dressed in SWAT gear descended on the mobile home park in response to the hostage situation.

Compound adjectives using the word *fold* are written solid when the number is spelled out and hyphenated when the number is written as a figure.

Spelled out: We've had a *tenfold* increase in the number of leads since the kidnapping story aired on TV.

As a figure: We've had a *10-fold* increase in the number of leads since the kidnapping story aired on TV.

Compound Words

Compounds with Letters

When a preceding letter is combined with a word as a one-thought modifier, the two are often hyphenated. However, the compound may be left open if the meaning is clear.

A-Frame ladder *T cell* virus
e-mail (or *E-mail*) message *X-rated* movie

If a letter or number follows the word, it is usually left open.

Class B license *Level A* suits
Class C fire *Type A* personality

Proper Nouns

If you use two proper nouns to form a one-thought modifier, put a hyphen between them. The hyphen gives equal weight to both nouns.

Iran-Iraq war *Washington-Oregon* border
Mexican-American trade *San Francisco-Los Angeles* flight

Do not use a hyphen in compound adjectives if the proper noun is written as two words in its original form.

French Canadian police *Middle East* conflicts
Latin American countries *Native American* tribes

Note: Refer, also, to the discussion of proper nouns such as *African American* and *Mexican American* on page 303. This discussion also applies to proper nouns used as compound adjectives.

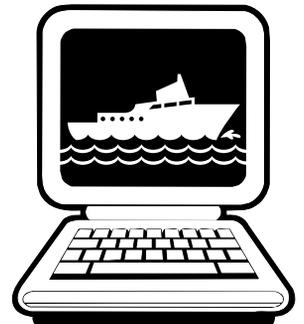
Compounds Formed with Foreign Expressions

Compounds formed with foreign expressions should be written just as they are in the original language. Most are open. However, some are hyphenated, and some are closed. A good dictionary can help you with these expressions.

<i>ad hoc</i> committee	<i>nolo contendere</i> plea
<i>ad-lib</i> speech	<i>per capita</i> income
<i>bona fide</i> offer	<i>per diem</i> fee
<i>bon voyage</i> party	<i>postmortem</i> examination
<i>ex post facto</i> law	<i>postpartum</i> depression
<i>habeas corpus</i> writ	<i>prima facie</i> evidence
<i>laissez-faire</i> policy	<i>pro bono</i> legal services

When a letter is combined with a word as a one-thought modifier, the two are often hyphenated.

I need to send out an e-mail message.



Compounds formed with foreign expressions should be written as they are in the original language.

I want to let everyone know about the chief's bon voyage party.

Compound Words

The trend is toward joining prefixes, suffixes, and combining forms with root words to form closed compounds.



We replaced the wood shingles with a noncombustible composition roof.

Prefixes, Suffixes, and Combining Forms

The Trend Is Toward Closed Compounds

The following prefixes and combining forms are normally run together with root words that follow them to form closed compounds.

a	electro	intro	out	semi
after	ex	iso	over	socio
ante	extra	macro	para	step
anti	for	mal	pan	sub
bi	hydro	meta	peri	super
bio	hyper	micro	poly	supra
circum	hypo	mid	post	trans
co	il	mini	pre	tri
contra	im	mis	pro	ultra
counter	in	mono	proto	un
de	infra	multi	pseudo	under
dis	inter	neo	re	uni
down	intra	non	retro	up

The following suffixes and combining forms are normally run together with root words that precede them to form closed compounds.

able	gram	ish	most	some
age	graph	less	ness	ward
ate	graphy	let	nik	wide
fold	hood	like	proof	wise
ful	ible	ment	ship	worthy

Sometimes Hyphens Are Needed

Although the trend is toward closed compounds, there are some prefixes, suffixes, and combining forms that always need hyphens. Others need them under special circumstances. The following pages contain an overview of exceptions and other trends you should be familiar with. Remember, however, that not all the experts agree on this information, and there are sometimes exceptions to the exceptions. When in doubt, check your dictionary.

Compound Words

Sometimes it is acceptable to write compounds either closed or hyphenated. Some experts view the hyphens as superfluous in these compounds, but that doesn't mean you can't use them. The important thing is to be consistent within the same application.

cooperate / co-operate
coordinate / co-ordinate
infrared / infra-red

microorganism / micro-organism
preempt / pre-empt
reexamine / re-examine

Hyphens are sometimes needed to distinguish between two words that are spelled alike, but have different meanings. This is most common with the prefix *re-* (meaning "again"). However, other prefixes can cause problems too.

to *re-cover* furniture
to *re-lease* a building
the *re-creation* of a crime
to *re-coil* the cable
to *re-mark* the tests
purchased at the *co-op*
an *un-ionized* particle
a *multi-ply* fabric

to *recover* from an injury
to *release* a prisoner
a *recreation* facility
to *recoil* in surprise
to *remark* loudly
hiding in the chicken *coop*
a *unionized* shop
multiply or divide

Use a hyphen when adding a prefix results in a compound that is difficult to read or recognize. This sometimes occurs when adding the prefix results in doubling in tripling a letter.

anti-inflammatory
bell-like
co-own
de-emphasize

de-energize
extra-atmospheric
intra-abdominal
semi-intoxicated

Use a hyphen when a prefix is placed before a capitalized word.

anti-American
mid-November

non-African
post-World War II

In general, use a hyphen when attaching a prefix to either an open compound or a hyphenated compound.

ex-attorney general
anti-gun control legislation

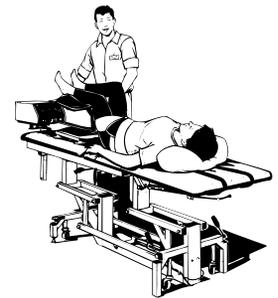
non-life-threatening illness
non-English-speaking citizen

When two or more prefixes are applied to a single word, use a suspending hyphen after the prefixes that stand alone.

A fight broke out between *pro-* and *antiabortion* activists.

Hyphens may be needed to distinguish between two words that are spelled alike, but have different meanings.

I needed to re-treat the patient last week.



Hyphens may be needed to avoid compounds that are difficult to read or recognize.

Let's try an anti-inflammatory drug.

Compound Words

The prefixes *all-*, *ex-* (meaning “former”), *quasi-*, and *self-* generally require hyphens.



She shot her ex-husband in self-defense.

The prefixes *all-*, *ex-* (meaning “former”), *quasi-*, and *self-* generally require hyphens.

all-encompassing	all-inclusive	all-purpose
ex-convict	ex-husband	ex-president
quasi-human	quasi-judicial	quasi-scientific
self-control	self-defense	self-incrimination

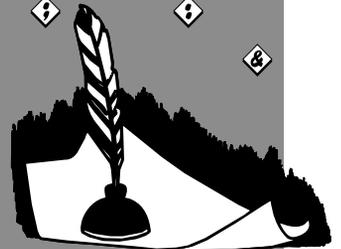
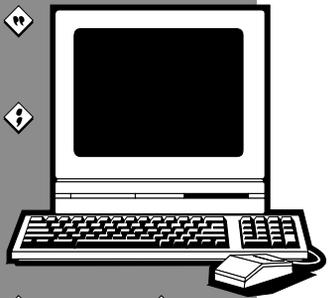
There are only a few exceptions. For example, the word *allover* is written as a closed compound. And *all right* is generally written as two words: *Are you all right?* However, when used as an adjective before a noun, it is hyphenated: *That was an all-right plan.*

Words such as *selfish*, *selfless*, and *selfsame* are also written closed. In these cases, *self* is not a prefix, but rather the base word to which a suffix was added.

Hyphenate compounds ending with the suffix *-elect*: *president-elect*, *senator-elect*.

Chapter 10: Finding the Right Words

SAMPLE



Finding the Right Words

Accept
means “to
receive or to
agree to.”

***Please accept
my apology.***



Except
means “but
or excluding.”

***We can't
give that
information to
anyone except
the immediate
family.***

Words and Expressions That Are Often Confused

This chapter has two purposes:

- To help you distinguish between two or more similar words
- To help you determine the proper expression to use when more than one option is available

This is actually a very broad topic, one that can fill an entire book. However, this chapter focuses on those words and expressions that seem to cause the most problems.

a, an

Both *a* and *an* are indefinite articles. *A* is used before words that begin with a consonant sound: *a fire engine, a union, a hostage*. *An* is used before words that begin with a vowel sound: *an ambulance, an MSDS, an honest attempt*. Remember, it is the *sound* of a word, not the first letter itself, that counts. Many experts say that either *a* or *an* is acceptable before *historic*: *a/an historic occasion*.

accept, except

Accept is a verb meaning “to receive or to agree to.” *Except* is usually a preposition or a conjunction meaning “but or excluding.”

The chief *accepted* all of our suggestions *except* the one to implement a driver's training program for the volunteers.

Except can also be used as a verb meaning “to exclude or leave out.”

Earthquake damage is *excepted* from coverage in the basic insurance policy.

accidentally, accidently

Accidently is a misspelling. Use *accidentally*.

account for, account to

You can *account for* either someone or something. To *account for someone* means “to have an accounting of.” To *account for something* means “to give an explanation or to answer for one's actions.”

Finding the Right Words

We've *accounted for* everyone who was known to be in the building at the time of the blast.

Can you *account for* your whereabouts on the night of the murder?

To *account to* someone means "to answer to or respond to a person."

You will have to *account to* your probation officer for your whereabouts last night.

acts, ax, axe

The noun *acts* refers to deeds or actions. The verb *acts* is the third person singular form of *act*, meaning "to behave."

Sandy *acts* as if her violent *acts* are acceptable.

The noun *ax* (or *axe*) refers to a cutting or chopping tool. The verb *ax* (or *axe*) means "to chop or destroy." Both spellings are acceptable.

We used a pick head *ax* (or *axe*) to *ax* (or *axe*) the door.

adapt, adopt

Adapt means "to adjust or modify." *Adopt* means "to take as one's own."

The movie was *adapted* from a true story about the rape and murder of their *adopted* daughter.

adverse, averse

Adverse applies mainly to effects or events and means "harmful, hostile, or unfavorable." *Averse* applies to people and means "opposed or disinclined."

CDF is *averse* to the idea of providing air support because of the *adverse* weather conditions.

advice, advise

Advice is a noun that refers to a recommendation or suggestion. *Advise* is a verb meaning "to give counsel, to recommend, or to suggest."

When people ask us for *advice* as to how to make their homes more secure, we *advise* them to install deadbolt locks.

***Advice* is a noun that refers to a recommendation or suggestion.**

He wouldn't take our advice.



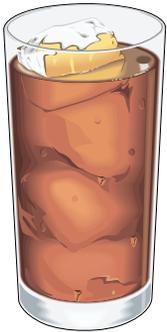
***Advise* is a verb meaning "to give counsel, to recommend, or to suggest."**

We advised him not to go diving there because of reported shark sightings.

Finding the Right Words

***Affect* is usually a verb meaning “to influence or change.”**

***Alcohol* will *affect* a person’s ability to drive.**



***Effect* is usually a noun referring to a result.**

I don’t drink alcohol because I don’t like the effect it has on me.

affect, effect

Affect is usually a verb meaning “to influence or change.” *Effect* is usually a noun referring to a result or a state of being operational.

Smoke inhalation can *affect* a person’s judgment.

The *effects* of smoke inhalation can be seen after only a brief exposure.

Effect is sometimes used as a verb meaning “to produce a result.”

We must *effect* a quick rescue.

Affect is used as a noun only in the field of psychiatry. It refers to an expressed or observed emotional response.

The *affect* is typical of a schizophrenic individual.

agree on, agree to, agree upon, agree with

To *agree on* or *agree upon* means “to reach an understanding.” *Agree to* means “to accept a plan or proposal.” *Agree with* means “to concur with” a person or an idea.

I don’t *agree with* your assessment of the situation, but I will *agree to* investigate further if we can *agree on* how to best proceed.

aid, aide

Aid can be used as a noun meaning “help, support, or assistance,” or it can be used as a verb meaning “to help.” *Aide* is a noun that refers to a helper or assistant.

We stopped to *aid* an injured child.

Many of the flood victims requested *aid* from the federal government.

The incident commander asked for an *aide* to assist him.

aisle, I’ll, isle

An *aisle* is a walkway. *I’ll* is a contraction of *I will* or *I shall*. An *isle* is a small island.

If you allow people to sit in the *aisles*, *I’ll* be forced to cite you for violating fire code regulations.

Finding the Right Words

They were stranded on a deserted *isle*.

alley, ally

An *alley* is a narrow back street. *Ally* can be used as a noun meaning “a supporter” or as a verb meaning “to join or unite.”

We found a body dumped in the *alley* tonight.

We need an *ally* to help us fight this war on crime. Will you *ally* yourself with us?

a lot, alot, allot

A lot (two words) means “many or much.” *Alot* (one word) is a misspelling; use *a lot* instead. *Allot* means “to apportion, to distribute, or to parcel out.”

A lot of us need new helmets. However, the chief will *allot* the new helmets to senior officers first.

already, all ready

Already means “previously.” *All ready* means “completely ready” and is used only where *ready* alone would make sense.

We were *all ready* to ventilate the structure, but the fire had *already* vented before we arrived.

all, all of

All means “the whole of.” The word *of* is optional preceding a noun, but is generally required before a pronoun.

All (or *all of*) the victims were treated and released the same day. *All of* them had only minor injuries.

all right, alright

All right is generally written as two words. Most experts recommend against using the nonstandard spelling *alright*.

all together, altogether

All together means “in a group.” *Altogether* means “entirely.”

The chief gathered us *all together* to tell us he thought we made *altogether* too many mistakes on that incident.

***Already* means
“previously.”**

***They were
already drunk
when I arrived.***



***All ready* means
“completely
ready.”**

***I was all ready
to drive home,
but they didn't
want to leave
the party.***

Finding the Right Words

In general, use *between* when referring to two items and *among* when referring to three or more.



A fight broke out between Tony and Bernardo.

Tony and Bernardo were among several students suspended for fighting.

allude, elude

Allude means “to refer to something indirectly.” *Elude* means “to escape or evade.”

Our informant *alluded* to a prostitution ring in the city, but *eluded* giving us any real evidence.

allusion, illusion

An *allusion* is an indirect reference to something. An *illusion* is a misconception, a false impression, or a deceptive appearance.

Our informant made an *allusion* to a clandestine drug lab operating out of the warehouse on Tenth Street. It seems the owners had created the *illusion* of a legitimate warehouse to hide their illegal drug manufacturing operation.

almost, most

Almost is an adverb meaning “nearly.” *Most* is an adjective meaning “the greatest quantity.” Do not use *most* to mean *almost* in formal writing. The first example below is faulty because only an adverb (*almost*) can be used to modify an adjective (*all*).

Wrong: Most all of my money was stolen.

Right: Almost all of my money was stolen.

Right: Most of my money was stolen.

altar, alter

An *altar* is a raised platform used in worship. *Alter* means “to change.”

We *altered* our plans after we found a bomb behind the *altar*.

amid, among, amongst, between

Use *amid* when referring to something that is uncountable.

We found the body *amid* (not *among*) the debris.

In general, use *between* when referring to two items and *among* when referring to three or more. (*Amongst* is chiefly a British expression. Use *among* instead.)

The responsibilities were divided *among* each person on the task force.

Finding the Right Words

Most of the responsibility was divided *between* Jan and Bill.

Use *between* rather than *among* to show a relationship involving *three or more* persons or things when the items, considered individually rather than collectively, are linked to the others.

A lot of tension exists *between* the various gangs in our city.

Between fighting fires, writing books, and trying to run a business, I don't have much free time.

Between also means "in a space separating two points, objects, time periods, etc."

The patient's condition deteriorated *between* the time we arrived on scene and the time we were able to extricate her from the vehicle.

amount, number

Use *amount* when referring to the sum total of things in bulk or to a mass that *cannot* be counted. Use *number* when referring to the sum total of things that *can* be counted.

We haven't been able to determine the *number* of victims still in the building because there is a large *amount* of debris blocking our access.

angry, mad

Mad is commonly used as a synonym for *angry*. However, many experts consider the substitution to be inappropriate. In general, you should use *angry* to mean "enraged" and use *mad* to mean "insane."

He confessed to blowing up the building because he was *angry* at the government. He must have been *mad* to think he could get away with it.

anxious, eager

Anxious means "worried or apprehensive." *Eager* means "enthusiastic." Many experts insist that *anxious* should be used only to convey a sense of distress or worry. They object to using *anxious* in the sense of "eager." However, some experts say that such use is fully standard.

I am *eager* to start paramedic training, but I am *anxious* about the tremendous work load.

Use *angry* to mean "enraged."

The taxi driver became angry when another motorist cut him off.



Use *mad* to mean "insane."

We're looking for a mad taxi driver who has terrorized motorists for months.

Finding the Right Words

***Anymore* means “any longer” or “presently.”**

Some departments don’t get cats out of trees anymore.



***Any more* means “additional.”**

Are there any more cats that need to be rescued?

anymore, any more

Anymore means “any longer” or “presently.” *Any more* means “additional.”

It shouldn’t rain *anymore* today. However, we may have a problem with flooding if we get *any more* rain this week.

anyone, any one

Anyone means “anybody.” *Any one* refers to any single item in a number of items.

Anyone with a high school diploma can apply.

Any one of the applicants would make a good police officer.

anytime, any time

Anytime means “at any time” or “whenever.” *Any time* means “any amount of time.” It is often used after a preposition such as *at*.

Did you see your husband *anytime* last week?

Did you spend *any time* with him the night of the murder?

Did he threaten you at *any time*?

appraise, apprise

Appraise means “to estimate the value of.” *Apprise* means “to notify.”

Mrs. Van Dyke *apprised* me that the stolen necklace had been *appraised* at \$12,000.

as, as if, like

Because *like* is a preposition, it is normally followed by a noun or a pronoun. Many experts insist that you should not use *like* in place of *as* or *as if* when what follows is a clause. However, others maintain that such use is fully standard in all but the most formal writing. Notice the following comparisons.

Appropriate. Roger looks *like* a police officer.

Acceptable. Roger became a police officer *like* his father and grandfather had before him.

Preferable. Roger became a police officer *as* his father and grandfather had before him.

Finding the Right Words

Appropriate: It looks *like* a gunshot wound.

Acceptable: It looks *like* she was shot.

Preferable: It looks *as if* she was shot.

Acceptable: *Like* we told you, the officer lost control of his motorcycle after another driver cut him off.

Preferred: *As* we told you, the officer lost control of his motorcycle after another driver cut him off.

Using *as* versus *like* just because many experts say it's the proper thing to do does not mean it's the best choice for every situation. While the example below is technically correct, it is also potentially confusing. Readers may mistake this for an incomplete sentence: *You were not almost killed as I was . . . doing what?* Perhaps *like* is a better choice.

Proper: You were not almost killed *as* I was.

Better: You were not almost killed *like* I was.

as, because

The word *as* may be used to mean "because," "since," "when," or "while." Therefore, you should not use *as* if the meaning may be vague or ambiguous.

Unclear: Diners started to panic *as* they noticed smoke coming from the kitchen.

Clear: Diners started to panic *because* they noticed smoke coming from the kitchen.

Clear: Diners started to panic *when* they noticed smoke coming from the kitchen.

as, that, whether

Do not use *as* in place of *whether* or *that*.

I don't know *whether* (not *as*) the restaurant is sprinklered.

ascent, assent

Ascent refers to upward movement. The verb *assent* means "to agree or to conclude." The noun *assent* refers to an agreement.

The plane suddenly lost power during its *ascent*.

I will never *assent* to your demands.

***Like* is normally followed by a noun or pronoun.**

***It looks like* a standard herbicide container.**



***As* or *as if* is generally preferred when what follows is a clause.**

***It looks as if* the container is leaking.**

Finding the Right Words

***Bad* is an adjective meaning “not good.”**

I feel bad anytime we lose a patient.



***Badly* is an adverb meaning “in a defective, incorrect, or undesirable way.”**

The patient was badly injured.

assure, ensure, insure

Assure, ensure, and insure all mean “to make secure or certain.” However, there are subtle differences between them. *Assure* refers to persons, with the sense of setting a person’s mind at rest. *Ensure* means to “make sure” or “make safe.” *Insure* is used when referring to insurance.

We must *ensure* there are no hot spots before we can *assure* the residents that the fire is completely extinguished.

I hope they were *insured* against fire.

averse(see *adverse, averse*)

awhile, a while

Awhile means “for a short time.” *A while* means “a short time.”

The children had been gone for *a while* before anyone noticed they were missing.

We may have to wait *awhile* before we get any leads on their disappearance.

ax, axe(see *acts, ax, axe*)

bad, badly

Bad is an adjective meaning “not good.” *Badly* is an adverb meaning “in a defective, incorrect, or undesirable way.”

John was hurt *badly* in a *bad* accident.

Most experts say that you should use *bad* as an adjective either before a noun (*bad decision, bad mistake*) or after a linking verb (*feel bad, look bad*). Although many people use the phrase *feel badly*, it is best to avoid it in writing.

I feel *bad* (not *badly*) about what happened to him.

bait (baited), bate (bated)

The noun *bait* refers to something used as a lure. The verb *bait* means “to lure or entice.” *Bate* means “to restrain or diminish.”

We watched with *bated* breath to see if the killer would take the *bait*.

Finding the Right Words

because, as (see *as, because*)

because, since

The word *since* can be used to mean either “because” or “from then until now.” Therefore, its meaning can sometimes be ambiguous. If you mean *because* in sentences such as these, use it. That will eliminate the ambiguity.

Brice is limping *because* he injured his knee.

being as, being that

Being as and *being that* are nonstandard expressions sometimes used in place of *because* or *since*. Use *because* or *since* instead.

Because (not *being as*) the bone was broken near the joint, we splinted it in the position found.

beside, besides

Beside and *besides* are both prepositions. *Beside* means “next to.” *Besides* means “in addition to” or “except.”

The maid found the gun *beside* the victim. She said she didn’t see or hear anything unusual *besides* the gunshot.

Besides is also an adverb meaning “furthermore, moreover, or also.”

Besides, there is nothing we can do for him now.

between (see *amid, among, amongst, between*)

bi-, semi- (annual, monthly, weekly)

The prefix *bi-* can mean either “twice each” or “every two.” Therefore, *biannual*, *bimonthly*, and *biweekly* can all cause confusion for readers. It is better to use the prefix *semi-* (for example, *semiannual*) when you mean “twice.” However, “twice each” or “every two” is ultimately less confusing than any prefix.

born, borne

Born and *borne* are both past participles of the verb *bear*. *Borne* is transitive; it requires an object to complete its meaning. *Born* is intransitive; it does not take an object. In all senses that *do not* refer to physical birth, use *borne*.

We have *borne* the burden of crime for too long.

In all senses that do not refer to physical birth, use borne

Universal precautions protect us from bloodborne pathogens.



If referring to physical birth with emphasis on the child, use born

The baby was born three weeks early.

Finding the Right Words

Brakes used as a noun or a verb in reference to slowing or stopping.

Hit the brakes!



Breaks used in all other applications.

Slow down. You are breaking the speed limit.

If referring to physical birth, use *borne* when the meaning is “to bring forth (young)” and the focus is on the mother rather than on the child. If the focus is on the child, however, use *born*.

Caroline had already *borne* four children, so we expected the baby to deliver quickly. The baby was *born* in the back of the ambulance, three blocks from the hospital.

Born is also used as an adjective meaning “possessing (since birth) the quality or character stated.”

Rex is a *born* troublemaker.

brake, break

A *brake* is a device for slowing or stopping something, such as a vehicle. *Brake* is also used as a verb meaning “to slow or stop by using a brake.”

He failed to apply the *brakes* in time to avoid the accident.

The word *break* is used in all other applications. For example, it can be used as a verb meaning “to damage or destroy something” or “to violate or act contrary to a law, rule, or promise.” *Break* is also used as a noun referring to a crack, an opening, or an interruption of activity.

We had to *break* the window to gain access to the victim.

Any *break* in the skin increases your risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

breach, breech

The noun *breach* refers to a broken law or promise. The verb *breach* refers to breaking a law or promise.

If you *breach* our contract, I will file a lawsuit against you for *breach* of contract.

The noun *breach* also refers to a break or rupture. Likewise, the verb *breach* refers to making a breach or opening.

Several thousand gallons of fuel were released when the tank was *breached*.

Breech refers to the hinder or rear part of anything.

It was a *breech* birth.

Finding the Right Words

breath, breathe

Breath is a noun that refers the air inhaled and exhaled during respiration. *Breathe* is a verb meaning “to inhale and exhale.”

Pinch the nose as you *breathe* into the victim. Give one *breath* every five seconds.

bring, take

Bring refers to moving something *closer* to the speaker. *Take* refers to moving something *away* from the speaker.

Please *bring* me the stretcher. Then you can help me *take* the patient out to the ambulance.

callous, callus

Callous means “insensitive or unsympathetic.”

My partner was *callous* toward grieving families when they needed our emotional support.

Callus refers to hardened skin.

I have a *callus* on my hand.

can/could, may/might

Can and *could* indicate ability or power. *May* and *might* are used to express permission. *Can* and *may* are often used interchangeably in conversation when asking or granting permission. However, in writing, you should maintain the distinction between the two.

I don't know if we *can* pull together a mass casualty drill that quickly. (*ability*)

May I check your injury? (*permission*)

May and *might* also indicate possibility.

Do you think the tank *might* rupture? (*possibility*)

Can/could and *may/might* are often used interchangeably when referring to possibility. Many experts insist you should maintain a distinction between the words, but there are times when any of them may be appropriate. *The tank can rupture* means it has the ability to do so. *The tank may rupture* means that it has the ability to do so and that there is a likelihood of the rupture occurring.

***Breath* is a noun that refers to air inhaled and exhaled during respiration.**

Take a deep breath.



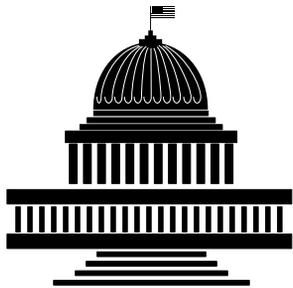
***Breathe* is a verb meaning “to inhale and exhale.”**

Now breathe normally.

Finding the Right Words

***Capitol* refers to the building where the U.S. Congress meets.**

People are protesting outside the Capitol building.



***Capitals* used in all other meanings.**

They are protesting over the issue of capital punishment.

capital, capitol

Capitol refers to the building in Washington, D.C., where the U.S. Congress meets.

The caller said he planted a bomb at the *Capitol*.

The noun *capital* can refer to the city or town that serves as the seat of government. It can also refer to wealth.

Sacramento is the *capital* of California.

My roommate stole the money I had saved to use as *capital* to start my new business.

The adjective *capital* can mean “punishable by death,” or it can mean “principal or highly important.”

The *capital* item on our agenda today is *capital* punishment.

censor, censure, sensor

A *censor* is a person who reviews published or distributed material for the purpose of deleting objectionable matter. To *censor* means “to remove or suppress objectionable material.”

We are asking the networks to *censor* violence on television.

Censure means “to criticize harshly.”

The networks were *censured* for permitting such violence to be shown on television.

A *sensor* is a device that senses light, heat, or movement and responds to it in some manner.

A defective *sensor* in the alarm system was responsible for all the false alarms.

choose, chose

Choose and *chose* are both verbs meaning “to select.” *Choose* is the present tense; *chose* is the past tense.

Choose your weapon.

I already *chose* a saber.

Finding the Right Words

cite, sight, site

Cite can mean “to order someone to appear in court,” “to give an example or quote an authority,” or “to recognize someone, such as for outstanding service.”

I am *citing* you for exceeding the speed limit.

The instructor *cited* directly from the penal code.

Bill was *cited* for his many contributions to the fire service.

Sight can be used as either a verb or a noun referring to vision.

Mary lost her *sight* after her optic nerves were damaged by scarlet fever.

Site refers to a position, location, place, or scene.

Police found her body at an isolated *site* along the river.

climactic, climatic

Climactic refers to a dramatic high point or climax. *Climatic* refers to weather (climate).

The hostage crisis came to a *climactic* ending when police stormed the building just after midnight.

Severe *climatic* conditions contributed to flooding in many areas of the country.

coarse, course

Coarse means “rough, unpolished, or lacking in refinement.”

Their *coarse* language is offensive.

Course is primarily a noun that refers to a program of instruction or to a direction, path, or route to be taken. It also refers to the regular or natural order of events.

I plan to take an EMT *course* next semester.

The virus will run its *course* in a week to ten days.

Course is also used as a verb meaning “to run or move swiftly.”

The poison *coursed* through his system at an alarming rate.

***Site* refers to a position, location, place, or scene.**

Campfires are not allowed at this site.



***Sight* refers to vision.**

Rangers sighted the fire from a distance.

***Cite* has several meanings.**

Rangers cited the campers for starting an illegal campfire.

Finding the Right Words

Conscience refers to the ethical or moral principles that control one's thoughts and actions.

I always follow my conscience when treating patients.



Conscious can mean “aware or alert” or “deliberate or intentional.”

The patient is still unconscious.

compare to, compare with

Compare to means “to show a likeness or resemblance.”

People often *compare* the color of Sunnyvale’s yellow fire engines *to* that of a school bus.

Compare with is used to show actual comparisons (both similarities and differences).

We’ll have to *compare* the prints we found at the scene *with* those of our suspect.

Many experts say that only *compare with* should be used to show actual comparisons. Others say that either *compare to* or *compare with* may be used for this purpose.

complement, compliment

Both *complement* and *compliment* can be used either as nouns or as verbs. *Complement* refers to completing something. *Compliment* refers to praise, commendation, or admiration.

The white gloves *complement* the Class A uniform nicely.

The chief *complimented* the crew on a job well done.

conscience, conscious

Conscience refers to ethical or moral principles that control one’s thoughts and actions. *Conscious* can mean “aware or alert” or “deliberate or intentional.”

You act as if you have a guilty *conscience*.

Is the driver *conscious*?

He made a *conscious* effort to discredit our department.

continual, continuous

Continual means “occurring regularly and repeatedly.” *Continuous* means “constantly, without interruption.”

We’ve had a *continual* stream of requests for sandbags.

Continuous rain over three days contributed to heavy flooding in the area.

Finding the Right Words

corps, corpse

Corps refers to a group of people, often military personnel. A *corpse* is a dead body.

An officer from the Marine *Corps* discovered the *corpse*.

correspond to, correspond with

Correspond to means “to match or be in agreement with.” *Correspond with* means “to exchange letters.”

The information on the MSDS does not *correspond to* the information we received from CHEMTREC.

I have *corresponded with* firefighters all over the country.

could care less, could not care less

Do not use *could care less* when you mean “do not care at all.” The correct expression is *could not care less*.

The vandals *couldn't care less* about what it costs the city to repair the damage.

council, counsel

A *council* is a group of people that meet to consult, deliberate, or advise.

We need to bring the proposal to our city *council*.

The verb *counsel* means “to advise.” The noun *counsel* can refer to advice or to a lawyer or legal advisor.

I'd like to *counsel* juvenile firesetters.

The *counsel* for the defense approached the bench.

coward, cowered

A *coward* is someone who lacks courage. *Cowered* means “cringed in fear.”

Ted *cowered* behind the desk like a *coward*.

A *councils* a group of people that meet to consult, deliberate, or advise.

The judge is a former city council member.



The verb *counsel* means “to advise.”

She counsels juvenile offenders on her days off.

The noun *counsel* can refer to advice.

We respect her wise counsel.

Finding the Right Words

A *device* is a thing or invention. To *devise* means “to contrive, plan, or invent.”



The caller said he devised a device that will cause massive destruction.

cue, queue

Cue and *queue* can be used both as nouns and as verbs. *Cue* refers to a hint or signal. *Queue* refers to a line.

On my *cue*, I want everyone to *queue* up behind the fire engine.

decide on, decide to

Use *decide on* before a noun or noun phrase. Use *decide to* before a verb.

We had to *decide on* a plan of action. We *decided to* use a defensive attack.

desert, dessert

A *desert* is a dry region with little or no vegetation. To *desert* means “to leave or abandon.”

Webster planned to *desert* his partner in the *desert*.

A *dessert* is something sweet served as the last course of a meal. Do not confuse it with *deserts*, a deserved reward or punishment.

Brenda is having trouble with her diabetes because she ate too many *desserts*.

I want to see him get his just *deserts*.

device, devise

Device is a noun referring to a thing, an invention, or a contrivance. *Devise* is a verb meaning “to contrive, plan, or invent.”

I want to *devise* a *device* to help us quickly locate victims in a smoke-filled room.

differ from, differ with

Differ from means “to be unlike.” *Differ with* means “to disagree.”

Mark’s symptoms *differ from* those of the other patients.

I *differ with* you on the diagnosis of his illness.

Finding the Right Words

different from, different than

Different from is preferred in most applications.

This counterfeit bill is *different from* most of the others we have seen.

Different than is considered acceptable when *different from* would result in a wordy or awkward sentence.

Awkward: I would have managed the incident in a *different way from* the way in which you managed it.

Revised: I would have managed the incident in a *different way than* you did.

discreet, discrete

Discreet means “careful, judicious, or prudent.” *Discrete* means “separate or distinct.”

Be *discreet*. We don’t want Phil to know we suspect him.

We performed two *discrete* analyses of the blood found at the murder scene.

disinterested, uninterested

Disinterested means “impartial or unbiased.” *Uninterested* means “not interested.”

A *disinterested* third party may be able to help us resolve this dispute.

The judge *was uninterested* in his excuses.

dragged, drug

Drug is a nonstandard form of *dragged*, the past tense and past participle of *drag*. Use *dragged*, not *drug*.

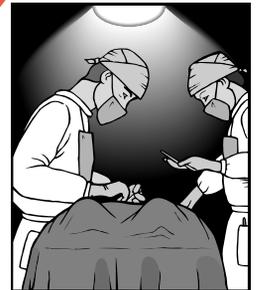
We *dragged* the victim out of the burning building.

eave, eve

Eave refers to the overhanging of a roof. *Eve* refers to the day or evening before a special event.

Our last call on New Year’s *Eve* was reported as a house fire with smoke pouring out from the *eaves*.

Use *dragged*
not *drug*
for the past
tense or past
participle
of *drag*

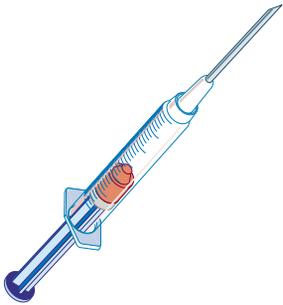


*The victim
suffered severe
injuries after
being dragged
by a car for
400 feet.*

Finding the Right Words

Elicit means
“to evoke or
bring out.”

***We were unable
to elicit any
information
from their
coworkers.***



Illicit means
“illegal or
unlawful.”

***We arrested
them for
possession of
illicit drugs.***

effect(see *affect, effect*)

elicit, illicit

Elicit means “to evoke or bring out.” *Illicit* means “illegal or unlawful.”

See if you can *elicit* information from any of our snitches regarding the sale of *illicit* drugs in the neighborhood.

elude(see *allude, elude*)

emigrate (from), immigrate (to)

Emigrate means “to leave a country,” whereas *immigrate* means “to come to another country.”

They *emigrated* from Europe.

They *immigrated* to the United States.

eminent, imminent

Eminent means “prominent, distinguished, conspicuous, or noteworthy.” *Imminent* means “about to happen.”

Our *eminent* speaker is in *imminent* danger of putting his foot in his mouth.

ensure(see *assure, ensure, insure*)

envelop, envelope

Envelop is a verb meaning “to wrap up, surround, cover, or drape.” *Envelope* is a noun referring to a wrapper or container.

The vapor cloud will *envelop* the city in less than 30 minutes.

Police were concerned that the stained *envelope* may have contained a letter bomb.

everyday, every day

Everyday means “daily, usual, or common.” *Every day* means “each day.”

False alarms are an *everyday* occurrence at this building.

We’ve had false alarms almost *every day* since they installed the new alarm system.

Finding the Right Words

everyone, every one

Everyone means “everybody.” *Every one* refers to each one in a group. Use *every one* when it is followed by an *of* phrase or is used to mean “one of a number of things.”

Everyone here is required to be certified in CPR.

Every one of the students will need to pass a skills test and a written exam before they can be certified.

except(see *accept, except*)

explicit, implicit

Explicit means “stated outright or expressed directly.” *Implicit* means “implied, rather than stated directly.”

I gave him *explicit* instructions to remain outside. However, we had an *implicit* understanding that we would always back each other up if there was ever any sign of trouble.

fail in, fail to

Use *fail in* before a noun or noun phrase. Use *fail to* before a verb.

We *failed in* our attempt to convince the jury, although I *fail to* understand why.

faint, feint

To *faint* means “to lose consciousness.” The adjective *faint* has several meanings, including “dizzy or weak,” “feeble,” “slight,” or “lacking in color, brightness, strength, courage, or other qualities.”

I’m feeling *faint*. I better sit down before I *faint*.

A *feint* is a trick, a deception, or a false move. To *feint* means “to pretend to do something as a means of distraction.”

Feint first to draw your opponent out, then hit him from another direction.

farther, further

Farther and *further* can both be used in reference to physical distance, though many experts insist that only *farther* should be used for this purpose. *Further* is used in all other applications to mean “additional” or “to a greater extent.”

To faint means “to lose consciousness.”

He fainted during the fencing tournament.



To feint means “to pretend to do something as a means of distraction.”

Feint first to draw your opponent out, then hit him from another direction.

Finding the Right Words

***Flammable* and *inflammable* are often used interchangeably; however, the word *flammable* is less likely to cause confusion.**



Class B fires are those involving flammable liquids.

The trauma center is *farther* away, but it is better equipped to handle the patient's injuries.

We need to transport her immediately; *further* delays may be fatal.

feint (see *faint, feint*)

fewer, less

Fewer refers to a smaller *number*. *Less* refers to a smaller *degree* or a smaller *amount*.

We need *fewer* police officers than do comparable cities our size because we have *less* crime.

Some experts say that *fewer* should be used for plural nouns (*fewer accidents, fewer crimes*) and that *less* should be used for singular mass nouns (*less smoke, less money*) and singular abstract nouns (*less crime, less violence*). However, *less than* is used (rather than *fewer than*) when referring to plural nouns expressed as a unitary measure (*less than 20 minutes, less than \$1000 dollars, less than 50 feet, less than 80 pounds*).

flair, flare

Flair refers to a natural aptitude or talent. A *flare* is a device used to warn or illuminate. *Flare* is also a verb meaning "to burn or to burst out."

Bill has a *flair* for predicting wildland fire behavior. He knows when and how a wildland fire will *flare* up.

flammable, inflammable

Both *flammable* and *inflammable* refer to something that is easily ignitable and capable of burning rapidly. The words are often used interchangeably. However, *flammable* is less likely to lead to confusion since *inflammable* is sometimes mistaken for *nonflammable* or *noncombustible*. *Flammable* is the accepted form in fire protection.

The majority of our hazardous materials incidents involve *flammable* liquids.

Inflammable is also used to mean "quickly or easily aroused to strong emotion, passionate." *Flammable* cannot be used for this purpose.

He has an *inflammable* disposition.

Finding the Right Words

forth, fourth

Forth means “onward or forward.” *Fourth* refers to the number 4.

It wasn't until after the *fourth* stabbing incident that witnesses started coming *forth* with information.

good, well

Good is an adjective; *well* is an adverb.

We have a *good* crew that works *well* together.

When referring to the state of one's health, it is possible to use either *good* or *well*. *To feel or look well* means “to be in good health,” whereas *to feel good* generally means “to be in good spirits.” *To look good* means “to look pleasing in appearance.”

gorilla, guerrilla (or guerilla)

A *gorilla* is an ape. *Gorilla* is also a slang term for a hoodlum or thug who threatens or inflicts violence. A *guerrilla* is one who engages in irregular warfare, especially by harassment and sabotage.

The mob boss won't bloody his own hands; he'll send his *gorillas* to do the job.

We train our officers to deal with *guerrilla* tactics.

hangar, hanger

A *hangar* is a garage for airplanes. A *hanger* is a device used to hang something.

There is a fire in the *hangar*.

The thief used a coat *hanger* to unlock the car door.

hanged, hung

Both *hanged* and *hung* are used to describe “death by hanging.” *Hanged* is the preferred form when referring to a legal execution, while *hung* is more common when referring to suicide. *Hung* is also used for all meanings other than “death by hanging.”

Wilson was *hanged* by the neck for his crimes. Three days later, his former cellmate *hung* himself.

Elizabeth *hung* her head in shame.

***Hanged* is preferred when referring to a legal execution.**

He was hanged for his crimes.

***Hung* is more common when referring to suicide.**

He hung himself.



***Hung* is used for all meanings other than “death by hanging.”**

I hung the rope from a tree.

Finding the Right Words

***Imply* means
“to suggest.”**

***She implied
that she
intended to kill
her husband.***



***Infer* means
“to assume or
conclude.”**

***I inferred from
her comments
that she
intended to kill
her husband.***

have, of

Use *have*, not *of*, after *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *ought to*, *should*, and *would*.

They *should have* [not *should of*] called 911 immediately.

heroin, heroine

Heroin is a narcotic drug. A *heroine* is a female hero.

The *heroine* of the story is an undercover officer who helps kids get off *heroin*.

illicit (see *elicit*, *illicit*)

I'll (see *aisle*, *I'll*, *isle*)

immigrate (see *emigrate from*, *immigrate to*)

imminent (see *eminent*, *imminent*)

implicit (see *explicit*, *implicit*)

imply, infer

Imply means “to suggest.” *Infer* means “to assume or conclude.”

Shari *implied* that she had been sexually molested by her father when she was a baby.

We *inferred* from her comments that Shari's mother had known about the molestation, but did nothing to stop it.

in, into, in to

In refers to location or condition. *Into* refers to movement from outside to inside or to a change in condition.

Melanie is *in* the hospital. She has been *in* a coma for two days.

We brought Melanie *into* the hospital after she hit her head and slipped *into* a coma.

Do not use *into* (one word) when *in* is part of a verb phrase.

We sent an entry team *in* to stop the leak. (*In* is part of the verb phrase *sent in*; *to* is part of the infinitive *to stop*.)

Finding the Right Words

The incident report should be turned *in* to Chief Smith. (*In* is part of the verb phrase *turned in*; *to* is a preposition.)

incidence, incidents

Incidence refers to rate of occurrence. *Incidents* refers to individual events.

The high *incidence* of cancer may be linked to a hazardous materials *incident* we responded to in 1980.

incite, insight

Incite means “to stir up or prompt.” *Insight* refers to an intuitive understanding.

If they *incite* a riot, we are going to need more help.

Give me some *insight* on what we can expect tonight.

incredible, incredulous

Incredible means “unbelievable or extraordinary.” *Incredulous* means “skeptical or unbelieving.”

They were *incredulous* when we told them about the *incredible* damage the hurricane did along the entire coastline.

infer (see *imply, infer*)

in regard to

In regards to (with an *s*) is a nonstandard expression. Use *in regard to* (no *s*), *as regards*, *with regard to*, or *regarding*.

irregardless, regardless

Use *regardless*. *Irregardless* is nonstandard.

isle (see *aisle, I'll, isle*)

its, it's

Its is a possessive pronoun. *It's* is a contraction of *it is* or *it has*.

It's not safe to drive a car when *its* brakes are not working properly.

***Incidence
refers to rate of
occurrence.***

***We must do
something about
the high
incidence of
crimes against
the homeless.***



***Incidents refers
to individual
events.***

***Two homeless
men were
attacked in
separate
incidents
last night.***

Finding the Right Words

Lay means “to put or place” someone or something.

Lay the bottle down.



Lie means “to rest or recline.”

Lie still while we check for injuries.

Lie also means “to speak falsely.”

We can't help you if you lie to us.

kind of, sort of

In formal writing, do not use *kind of* or *sort of* to mean “rather” or “somewhat.”

The autopsy results are *rather* (not *kind of*) surprising.

later, latter

Later refers to time and means “more late.”

I'll write my report *later*.

Latter refers to the second of two items. *Latter* also means “near or comparatively near the end.”

We could have taken the patient to either Good Samaritan Hospital or Valley Medical Center. He chose the *latter*.

In the *latter* stages of the disease, the patient becomes extremely ill and is unable to fight off simple infections.

lay, lie

The verbs *lay* and *lie* are often confused because they are so similar. However, *lay* means “to put or place” someone or something, whereas *lie* means “to rest or recline.” *Lay* is a transitive verb; it requires a direct object to complete its meaning. *Lie* is an intransitive verb; it never takes a direct object. In other words, you can *lay* something, but you cannot *lie* anything.

I ordered him to *lay* the gun down and come out with his hands up.

Please *lie* still while I check for injuries.

Lie also means “to remain in a position of inactivity or concealment.”

They were *lying* in ambush for us.

It is easy to confuse the various forms of *lie* and *lay*, especially since the past tense form of *lie* is *lay*.

<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Present Participle</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>
lay [place]	laid [placed]	laying [placing]	(had) laid [placed]
lie [rest]	lay [rested]	lying [resting]	(had) lain [rested]

Finding the Right Words

To *lie*, meaning “to speak falsely,” is unlikely to be confused with *lay*. The past tense and past participle is *lied*. The present participle is *lying*.

lead, led

Lead is a heavy metal. *Lead* is also a slang term referring to bullets. *Led* is the past tense of the verb *lead* and means “guided, directed, or conducted.”

He *led* us on a wild-goose chase with his stories about *lead* poisoning.

leave, let

Leave means “to depart or to go away from.” It can also mean “to allow to remain in the same place or condition.” *Let* means “to allow or permit.”

If you *leave* the scene of an accident without stopping, you can be charged with felony hit-and-run.

The doctor suggested that I *leave* the bandage in place for at least 48 hours.

Don't *let* him get away.

Leave and *let* can be used interchangeably when followed by a noun or pronoun and the word *alone*. However, use *let alone*, not *leave alone*, in the sense of “not to mention.”

Leave/let me alone.

I don't like missing out on any fires in our jurisdiction, *let alone* (not *leave alone*) one of this magnitude.

led (see *lead, led*)

lets, let's

Lets is the third person singular form of the verb *let*, meaning “to allow or permit.” *Let's* is the contraction of *let us*.

Let's see if Mrs. Spelling *lets* her children run out into the street again today.

less (see *fewer, less*)

***Lead* is a slang term referring to bullets.**

He threatened to “pump me full of lead.”



***To lead* means “to guide, direct, or conduct.”**

I'm hoping he will lead us to his accomplice.

The past tense of *lead* is *led*.

He led us to his accomplice.

Finding the Right Words

***Lumbar* refers to the vertebrae in the lower back.**

The patient complained of pain in the lumbar region of the spine.



***Lumber* refers to timber.**

He works in a lumber mill.

lessen, lesson

Lessen means “to reduce or make less.” *Lesson* refers to something learned.

Nothing we can do will *lessen* your grief.

I’ll teach him a *lesson* for stealing from me.

liable, likely

Liable means “legally responsible” or “in danger of.” *Likely* means “probably.” *Liable* and *likely* are often used interchangeably when referring to probability. However, some experts insist that *liable* should be used in reference only to undesirable consequences.

You are *likely* to need help lifting the patient and *liable* to hurt yourself if you don’t get some help.

like (see *as, as if, like*)

likely (see *liable, likely*)

loath, loathe

Loath means “reluctant or unwilling.” *Loathe* means “to detest or to hate.”

I am *loath* to admit it, but I *loathe* that man.

loose, lose

Loose is an adjective or an adverb meaning “free,” “unrestrained,” or “not tight.” It can also be used as a verb meaning “to let loose or to set free.” *Lose* is a verb meaning “to mislay” or “to fail to win.”

We have a few *loose* ends to wrap up on this investigation.

Loose (or *loosen*) the rope.

I don’t want to *lose* the case in court.

lumbar, lumber

Lumbar refers to the vertebrae in the lower region of the spine. The noun *lumber* refers to timber, while the verb *lumber* refers to cutting timber and preparing it for market.

Finding the Right Words

I blew out a disk in my *lumbar* spine while cutting *lumber* last weekend.

The verb *lumber* also means “to move clumsily or heavily.”

The old fire engine *lumbered* down the road, no match for the modern apparatus that replaced it.

mad (see *angry, mad*)

may (see *can/could, may/might*)

maybe, may be

Maybe is an adverb that means “perhaps or possibly.” *May be* is a verb phrase that indicates possibility.

Maybe you should see a doctor about that injury. It *may be* more serious than it looks.

might (see *can/could, may/might*)

miner, minor

A *miner* is someone who works in a mine.

Rescuers worked feverishly to save three *miners* trapped underground after a methane gas explosion rocked through the coal mine.

As a noun, *minor* can refer to person under legal age or to an academic course of study that is subordinate to a major. As an adjective, *minor* means “not serious” or “lesser in importance.”

He was arrested for having sex with a *minor*.

Catherine sustained only *minor* cuts and bruises.

moral, morale

Moral is a noun that refers to a lesson. It is also an adjective that means “ethical.” *Morale* refers to a state of mind.

The *moral* of the story is that crime does not pay.

Our *moral* obligation goes beyond our legal obligation.

Department *morale* has declined because of budget cutbacks.

A *miner* is someone who works in a mine.

The man we are looking for is a gold miner.



A *minor* is a person under legal age.

He assaulted a minor.

***Minor* also means “not serious.”**

He is wanted on several other minor violations.

Finding the Right Words

Off of is redundant. Use off.

Gary was injured when he fell off the cliff into the ocean below.



Avoid using OK in formal writing. Use all right or similar expressions.

He should be all right. His injuries are minor.

morning, mourning

Morning is used as a noun or an adjective referring to the first part of the day. *Mourning* is used as a verb or a noun referring to showing grief or to the act of grieving, respectively.

Ashley died yesterday *morning*. Her family is in *mourning*.

number (see amount, number)

of (see have, of)

off, off of

Off of is redundant. Use *off*.

The patient fell *off* the roof of a two-story building.

OK, O.K., okay

All three spellings are acceptable. However, most experts recommend using other terms, such as *all right*, *acceptable*, or *satisfactory*, in formal writing.

on, onto, on to

Both *on* and *onto* refer to movement over something. *Onto*, however, implies first moving toward and then over.

Climbing *onto* the roof was easy. However, the roof is so slippery that walking *on* it is treacherous.

Use *onto* (one word) when you mean “aware of.”

The police are *onto* us.

Do not use *onto* (one word) when *on* is part of a verb phrase.

Let’s move *on* to the next room. (*On* is part of the verb phrase *move on*; *to* is a preposition.)

on, upon, up on

Upon can mean “up and on,” “in an elevated position on,” “or immediately or very soon after.” *On* and *upon* are often used interchangeably when the meaning is “on.” However, some experts say that you should avoid using *upon* when *on* will do because *upon* sounds too formal.

Finding the Right Words

We believe the fire started when a bottle rocket landed *on* (or *upon*) the roof.

Please notify us *upon* your return.

Do not use *upon* (one word) when *up* is part of a verb phrase.

Stuart has been assigned to follow *up on* your case. (*Up* is part of the verb phrase *follow up*; *on* is a preposition.)

ordinance, ordnance

An *ordinance* is a law, rule, or regulation. *Ordnance* refers to military weapons and ammunition.

Can we adopt an *ordinance* against transporting military *ordnance* through the city?

passed, past

Passed is the past tense of the verb *pass*. *Past* can be an adverb meaning “by or beyond,” an adjective meaning “having existed or occurred in a previous time,” or a noun referring to a former time.

We drove *past* the fire to hook up to the hydrant, not realizing that we had *passed* a closer hydrant located right across the street from the fire building.

patience, patients

Patience refers to tolerance. *Patients* are people who are under medical treatment.

Dealing with problem *patients* requires *patience*.

peace, piece

Peace refers to tranquility, quiet, or silence.

May he rest in *peace*.

The noun *piece* has several meanings, including “a portion of the whole,” “an individual article of a set,” “an example of something,” and “a musical or literary composition.” It is also a slang term for handgun. The verb *piece* means “to mend” or “to put together.”

Grace has a *piece* of glass in her eye.

He keeps the *piece* in his glove box. (*handgun*)

***Patience* refers to tolerance.**

Please have patience. We are very busy today.



***Patients* are people who are under medical treatment.**

We have seen several patients who are sick with the flu.

Finding the Right Words

***Personnel* refers to employees.**

Page the off-duty personnel.



***Personal* means “individual or private.”**

Have them respond directly to the scene in their personal vehicles.

I wish we could *piece* together this murder.

pedal, peddle, petal

The noun *pedal* is a foot-operated lever. The verb *pedal* means “to work or use the pedals.” The adjective *pedal* means “of or pertaining to the feet.”

I could not locate her *pedal* pulse because her foot was trapped under the brake *pedal*.

Peddle means “to sell or distribute.”

He *peddles* drugs to children in the neighborhood.

Petal refers to one of the colorful pieces of a flower’s blossom.

We found blood on the flower *petals*.

percent, percentage

Percent and *percentage* both refer to a rate or proportion per hundred. However, *percent* is used in conjunction with a number. *Percentage* is used with adjectives such as *large* and *small*, not with specific numbers.

Alcohol is a factor in a *large percentage* (over *60 percent*) of all fatal automobile accidents.

persecute, prosecute

Persecute means “to harass, to annoy, or to torment.” *Prosecute* means “to institute legal proceedings.”

The district attorney will *prosecute* him for *persecuting* his neighbors.

personal, personnel

Personal means “individual or private.” *Personnel* refers to employees.

We have issued *personal* alarm devices to all *personnel*.

Personals (usually plural) refers to a column or section of a newspaper or magazine that contains personal notices or items.

The murderer is selecting his victims from among women who advertise in the *personals*.

Finding the Right Words

piece(see *peace, piece*)

plain, plane

Plain and *plane* each have several definitions. *Plain* is used most often as an adjective with meanings that include “distinct to the eye or ear,” “evident,” “common, ordinary, or simple,” and “down-right, sheer, or utter.”

The gun was left lying in *plain* view.

It’s *plain* ridiculous for anyone to accuse our paramedics of selling drugs out of the back of an ambulance.

The noun *plain* refers to a large, relatively flat portion of land.

Fire spread quickly across the open *plain*.

The noun *plane* refers to other flat or level surfaces (for example, a horizontal or vertical plane), to a woodworking tool used for smoothing, or to an airplane.

A *plane* crash just occurred at San Jose Airport.

The verb *plane* means “to make something smooth or even.”

Matt had to *replane* the door after the earthquake.

practicable, practical

Practicable means “feasible or capable of being put into practice.” *Practical* means “useful or sensible.” *Practicable* can be applied to objects, plans, and so forth, but not to people. *Practical* can be applied to both people (*a practical person*) and things.

It may not be *practicable* to evacuate everyone in the threat area. It may be more *practical* to direct everyone to shelter in place until the vapor cloud disperses.

Note: Just because something is *practicable* (feasible) doesn’t mean that it is *practical* (sensible).

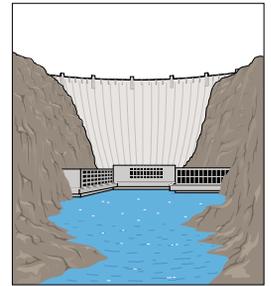
practice for, practice of, practice to

Use *practice for* or *practice to* when *practice* is a verb. Use *practice of* when *practice* is a noun.

Will you help me *practice for* the physical ability test?

Practicable means “feasible.”

It may not be practicable to repair the damage before the next storm.



Practical means “sensible.”

Draining the reservoir would be a practical solution.

Finding the Right Words

A *principal* is the person in charge of a school.

The *principal* accused Manny of defacing school property.



A *principle* is a fundamental rule.

We operate under the principle that a person is considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

The *practice* of recapping needles greatly increases the risk of exposure to disease.

precede, proceed

Precede means “to go before.” *Proceed* means “to move or go forward.”

John *preceded* me into the room.

We’ll *proceed* on your signal.

presence, presents

Presence refers to being present or in the immediate proximity. It also refers to a person’s manner of carrying himself or herself.

The *presence* of additional police officers made the crowd feel more secure.

Lynn shows tremendous *presence* under pressure.

The verb *present(s)* means “to introduce, to bring before the public, or to offer for consideration.” The noun *presents* refers to gifts.

She *presents* a good argument.

The fire destroyed everything in the room, including the Christmas *presents* under the tree.

principal, principle

The noun *principal* can refer to the person in charge of an organization (often an educational one), the primary person responsible for something (such as the principal [versus the accessory] in a crime), or to a capital sum of money (as distinguished from interest or profit).

The *principal* is concerned about students bringing weapons to school.

These boys are accessories to the crime. We still haven’t identified the *principal*.

The interest rates are so high that I’m hardly making a dent in the *principal*.

Principal is also used as an adjective meaning “primary or most important.”

Finding the Right Words

My *principal* complaint is that we didn't get enough hands-on training in the class.

Principle refers to a fundamental rule, a code of conduct, or a natural tendency.

We operate under the *principle* that a person is considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

It is against my *principles* to provide a certificate of completion to someone who cannot perform proficiently.

It is a *principle* of nature that gases expand when they are heated.

prosecute(see *persecute, prosecute*)

proceed(see *precede, proceed*)

prostate, prostrate

The *prostate* is a gland in the male body. *Prostrate* means "lying face down (prone) on the ground." It can also mean "helpless, tired, worn, or utterly dejected."

Beverly was *prostrate* with grief after her husband died of *prostate* cancer.

queue(see *cue, queue*)

quiet, quite

Quiet means "not noisy." *Quite* means "very" or "completely."

Be *quiet*. I'm not *quite* finished with my story.

raise, rise

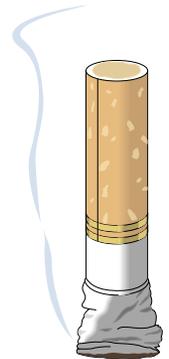
The verbs *raise* and *rise* are often confused because they are so similar. However, *raise* is a transitive verb; it requires a direct object to complete its meaning. *Rise* is an intransitive verb; it does not take a direct object. In other words, you can *raise* something, but you cannot *rise* anything.

I don't like to *raise* the 24-foot ladder by myself when it is this windy.

Our aerial ladder *rises* to a height of 100 feet.

***Raise* is a transitive verb; it requires a direct object to complete its meaning.**

Congress voted to raise the tax on cigarettes.



***Rise* is an intransitive verb; it does not take a direct object.**

If the incidence of lung cancer continues to rise, Congress may raise the taxes even further.

Finding the Right Words

***Real* is an adjective.**

It looked like a real head wound.



***Really* is an adverb.**

Maria did a really good job of moulage.

Raise and *rise* are also used as nouns. *Raise* is used primarily to indicate an increase in wages. *Rise* is more versatile and is used in connection with most other increases.

Our contract calls for a 10% *raise* over the next two years.

A sudden *rise* in temperature may cause organic peroxides to become highly unstable.

The following are the different forms of the verbs *raise* and *rise*.

<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Present Participle</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>
raise	raised	raising	(has) raised
rise	rose	rising	(has) risen

real, really

Real is an adjective. *Really* is an adverb.

Those look like *real* injuries.

You do a *really* good job of applying moulage.

Real is often used informally as an adverb: *You do a real good job.* However, you should avoid using *real* as an adverb in writing.

real, reel

Real is an adjective meaning “actual, true, or authentic.” The noun *reel* refers to a spool. The verb *reel* means “to wind up,” “to sway or stagger,” or “to have a sensation of whirling.”

He gave me the *real* thing, not a placebo.

The drug made my head *reel*.

reconcile to, reconcile with

Reconcile to means “to accept a condition.” *Reconcile with* means “to settle a quarrel or dispute.”

It wasn’t until Sam was able to *reconcile with* his father that he was able to *reconcile* himself *to* the loss of his son.

regardless(see *irregardless, regardless*)

Finding the Right Words

respectfully, respectively

Respectfully means “in a respectful manner.” *Respectively* means “in the order given.”

We *respectfully* request your assistance in defending our brothers.

Jake and Hank were charged with first-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter, *respectively*.

role, roll

Role refers to a part to act, a duty, a function, or a responsibility.

She played the *role* of a police officer in her last movie.

The incident commander’s *role* is to manage the incident.

Roll is used for everything else. For example, as a verb it can mean “to turn over or around,” “to move,” “to commence,” “to form a roll,” or “to curl up.” It is also used as a slang term meaning “to rob,” especially by going through pockets while a victim is asleep or drunk.

The car *rolled* over several times before landing on its roof.

We need to *roll* the dirty hose and stack it on the tailboard.

Roll is also used as a noun referring to anything rolled up or to a count or list of names, as in a *roll call*.

Use a straight *roll* with the male coupling exposed to indicate that the hose is out of service.

Please ask the manager to take *roll* to make sure all employees are accounted for.

sensor (see *ensor, censure, sensor*)

sensual, sensuous

Sensual pertains to gratification of the senses, particularly those associated with sexual pleasure. *Sensuous* means “pleasing to the senses.”

Stacy hoped the *sensuous* music and her *sensual* performance would draw the serial killer into their trap.

***Role* refers to a part to act, a duty, a function, or a responsibility.**

My role is to take the report.



***Roll* is used for everything else.**

The car rolled several times.

Finding the Right Words

Set means “to put or place something.”

Set the chair in the corner.



Sit means “to be seated.”

Please sit down.

set, sit

The verbs *set* and *sit* are often confused because they are so similar. *Set* is primarily a transitive verb, requiring a direct object to complete its meaning. Use *set* when your meaning is “to put or place” something. *Sit* is chiefly an intransitive verb, not requiring a direct object. Use *sit* when you mean “to be seated.”

Set the gun down on the table, then we'll *sit* down and talk.

Both *set* and *sit* have numerous other meanings. *Set* is relatively easy. For example, one *sets* goals, *sets* things on fire, or *sets* traps. *Sit*, however, is used in other situations where one might mistakenly use *set*. Use *sit* when you mean “to cause to be seated,” “to remain quiet or inactive,” or “to be accepted as indicated.”

If I could only *sit* him down and talk to him, I could probably figure out what he's up to.

Let's *sit* on this for a while before we make a decision.

The defendant's story doesn't *sit* well with me.

The following are the different forms of the verbs *set* and *sit*.

<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Present Participle</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>
set	set	setting	(has) set
sit	sat	sitting	(has) sat

shear, sheer

Shear means “to cut something.”

The plane's right wing was *sheared* off in the accident.

Shears (plural) is used to describe a large pair of scissors, such as *trauma shears*. *Shear* is also the correct spelling for *shear wall*, which is a wall that acts to brace a portion of a building against the forces of a strong wind or earthquake.

Sheer has several meanings, including “transparently thin,” “unmixed with anything else,” and “unqualified or utter.”

We can't cut through that; it's *sheer* concrete.

The experience was *sheer* terror.

Sheer is also used as a verb meaning “to deviate from a course.”

Finding the Right Words

The storm caused the ship to *sheer* off course.

sight(see *cite, sight, site*)

since(see *because, since*)

sit (see *set, sit*)

site(see *cite, sight, site*)

someday, some day

Someday means “an unspecified time in the future.” *Some day* means “a specific but unnamed day.”

Jack wants to do a ride-along *someday*. Let’s schedule it for *some day* next week.

sometime, sometimes, some time

Sometime means “at some indefinite time in the future.” *Sometimes* means “occasionally” or “now and then.” *Some time* means “a period of time.”

I plan to visit Lindy in the hospital *sometime* this evening. I *sometimes* visit her during my lunch hour. But since I couldn’t go at lunch today, I need to set *some time* aside this evening.

sort of(see *kind of, sort of*)

speak to, speak with

Speak to means “to tell something to someone.” *Speak with* means “to discuss.”

We intend to *speak to* your parents about your reckless behavior.

The mayor wants to *speak with* the chief about yesterday’s explosion at the plastics company.

stationary, stationery

Stationary means “fixed or not moving.” *Stationery* refers to writing paper and supplies.

It is much easier to hit a *stationary* target than it is to hit a moving one.

Sometimes means “occasionally.”

Sometimes we get lucky.



Some time means “a period of time,” while sometime means “at some indefinite time in the future.”

She will be sore for some time, but she will be all right. You can visit her sometime this afternoon.

Finding the Right Words

***Steal* means “to take illegally or without permission.”**

We arrested him for stealing.



***Steel* is a form of iron metal.**

He assaulted the clerk with a steel bar.

***Steel* is also a verb meaning “to fill with determination or resolve.”**

Steel yourself. It's not a pretty scene.

We had to design new *stationery* when we changed the department logo.

steal, steel

Steal means “to take illegally or without permission” or “to move quietly or secretly.” It is also used informally in reference to a bargain.

He tried to *steal* my purse.

The surveillance tape shows the burglar *stealing* about through the electronics store late at night.

Steel is a form of iron metal.

Steel beams, girders, and columns will fail relatively quickly in a fire if not protected by gypsum, concrete, or an appropriate spray-on application.

Steel is also used as a verb meaning “to fill with determination or resolve.”

Steel yourself. It's not a pretty scene.

subtlety, subtly

The noun *subtlety* refers to a fine distinction. The adverb *subtly* means “delicately or cleverly.”

There are *subtleties* you should be aware of before proceeding with the case.

Greg *subtly* substituted counterfeit bills for the real ones.

sure, surely

Sure is an adjective. *Surely* is an adverb.

I was *sure* Rick was innocent.

Rick was *surely* innocent.

Sure is often used informally as an adverb: *He sure seemed innocent to me.* However, you should avoid using *sure* as an adverb in writing.

Finding the Right Words

sympathy for, sympathy with

Sympathy for means “compassion for.” *Sympathy with* refers to sharing another’s feelings.

We need to show *sympathy for* those people whose homes were damaged or destroyed.

Even though I am in *sympathy with* your position, I don’t have the budget to hire more police officers.

tail, tale

The verb *tail* means “to follow.” The noun *tail* refers to a person who follows or keeps a close surveillance on someone.

We’ll have two of our undercover officers *tail* the suspect tonight. We’ll have a *tail* on him everywhere he goes.

Tail also refers to the rear portion of something.

This should be the *tail* end of the storm.

Tale refers to a story, a lie, or malicious gossip.

She told *tales* about her father abusing her and her sister.

take (see *bring, take*)

than, then

The conjunction *than* is used to indicate a difference or comparison. The adverb *then* means “next, at that time, or in that case.”

The crime rate is lower now *than* it was *then*.

that, which, who

The distinction between *that, which, and who* is covered in detail on pages 255-256. Please refer to those pages.

their, there, they’re

Their is a possessive pronoun meaning “belonging to them.” *There* is an adverb referring to a place that has been indicated. *They’re* is the contraction of *they are* or *they were*.

They’re hoping *their* house will still be *there* after the fire.

The verb *tail* means “to follow.”

We’ll tail him tonight.

The noun *tail* refers to a person who follows someone.

We put a tail on him.



***Tale* refers to a story, a lie, or malicious gossip.**

That was quite a tale they told.

Finding the Right Words

***To* means
“excessive.”**

***Monica drank
too much at
the party.***

***Two* is the
number 2.**

***She injured
two other
people when
she fell asleep
at the wheel.***



***To* is used
as part of an
infinitive.**

***To* is also a
preposition.**

***We are going to
take her to jail.***

till, until, 'til

Till and *until* mean the same thing and are used interchangeably. *'Til* is a contraction of *until*. Though you may see *'til* used in informal writing, poetry, or advertising, you should not use it in formal writing.

to, too, two

To is a preposition. *To* is also used in conjunction with a verb to form an infinitive. *Too* is an adverb meaning “also,” “excessively,” or “very.” *Two* is the number 2.

Monica had *too* much *to drink*. She should have gone *to* bed. She went for a drive instead and ended up injuring *two* people when she lost control of her car.

tort, torte

A *tort* is a wrongful act that results in injury to another’s person, property, or reputation. A *torte* is a rich cake.

Are you familiar with *tort* law?

He tried to kill me with a poisoned *torte*.

tortuous, torturous, treacherous

Tortuous means “twisting, winding, or crooked.” It can also mean “deceitfully indirect.” *Torturous* pertains to causing torture or suffering. *Treacherous* means “dangerous or hazardous.” It can also mean “untrustworthy.”

The only route leading to the cabin was a *tortuous* dirt road that made for *treacherous* driving in a large, heavy fire engine.

We worked feverishly in the *torturous* heat to keep the fire from reaching the structure.

toward, towards

Both *toward* and *towards* are acceptable, though *toward* is more common. Whichever one you choose, use it consistently.

trooper, trouper

A *trooper* is a police officer. *Trouper* can refer to an actor, especially one who performs with a touring company, or it can refer to a loyal and dependable worker or participant.

Finding the Right Words

Don is a state *trooper*.

Jennifer is a real *trouper*; she is as hardworking and dependable as any of the men.

two (see *to, too, two*)

undo, undue

Undo means “to reverse the doing of, to bring to ruin, or to untie.”
Undue means “unwarranted, excessive, or inappropriate.”

You cannot *undo* the damage that was done.

The chief has been under *undue* stress lately.

uninterested (see *disinterested, uninterested*)

until (see *till, until, 'til*)

vain (in vain), vane, vein

Vain is an adjective that can mean “conceited and self-centered” or “futile and unsuccessful.” The phrase *in vain* means “without effect or to no purpose.”

Her *vain* comments are annoying.

Don't let his death be *in vain*.

Vane is a noun. It can refer to a device used for indicating wind direction, to the blade of a windmill or turbine, or to the feathers of an archery arrow.

A lightning bolt struck the weather *vane*.

Don Quixote attacked the *vane* of the windmill with his sword.

Vein is a noun. It can refer to a blood vessel, to a mineral deposit (as in a *vein* of gold), to the framework of a leaf or a wing, or to a line of thought.

We had trouble finding a good *vein* for the IV.

I'm afraid we may overlook something if we continue along the same *vein*.

***Vain* is an adjective that means “futile and unsuccessful.”**

***In vain* means “without effect.”**

Our efforts to save the patient were in vain.



***Vein* is a noun that refers to a blood vessel.**

We were unable to repair the damaged vein.

Finding the Right Words

Where refers to location or position. **Ware** refers to goods or merchandise.

Where were you when the warehouse was robbed?



Wear has many meanings, including “to be clothed in.”

The man was wearing a ski mask.

wait for, wait on, wait out

Wait for means “to remain ready for someone or something.” *Wait on* means “to serve.” *Wait out* means “to remain inactive during the course of something.”

Let’s *wait for* backup before we go in.

We were dispatched to a domestic dispute call before the waitress could *wait on* us.

Rescuers had to *wait out* the blizzard before they could continue the search.

ware, wear, where

Ware(s) refers to goods or merchandise. *Ware* is often used in combination with other words to form compound nouns.

Look for a peddler selling his *wares* in front of the abandoned *warehouse* downtown; he is our informant.

Where refers to location or position.

Where were you the night he was killed?

The verb *wear* has many meanings, including “to be clothed in,” “to diminish or disappear,” and “to bother or weaken.”

The rapist was *wearing* a mask over his face.

She will be in pain when the drug *wears* off.

Working in all this protective gear can *wear* you out quickly.

The noun *wear* refers to deterioration through use.

Our equipment goes through considerable *wear* and tear.

weather, whether

The noun *weather* refers to wind, rain, snow, and other atmospheric conditions. The verb *weather* means “to endure and come safely through something.”

Bad *weather* contributed to the accident.

If we pull together, I know we can *weather* this crisis.

Finding the Right Words

Whether is a conjunction used to introduce or imply alternatives.

Whether the ambulance goes Code 2 or Code 3 to the hospital depends largely on the patient's condition.

It is sometimes necessary to use the expression *whether or not* for clarity. However, if *whether* alone will suffice, drop the words *or not*.

Whether or not he is lying, I don't trust him.

I can't tell *whether* he is lying.

well (see *good, well*)

were, we're

Were is the past tense of the verb "be." *We're* is a contraction of *we are*.

We stopped you because you *were* tailgating. However, *we're* going to let you off with just a warning. *We're* not going to give you a ticket.

where (see *ware, wear, where*)

which, who, that

The distinction between *which*, *who*, and *that* is covered in detail on pages 255-256. Please refer to those pages.

who, whom

The distinction between *who* and *whom* is covered in detail on pages 253-255. Please refer to those pages.

whose, who's

Whose is a possessive pronoun. *Who's* is a contraction of *who is*.

Whose fault is it?

Who's in command?

your, you're

Your is a possessive pronoun. *You're* is the contraction of *you are*.

You're on *your* way to jail.

***Your* is a possessive pronoun. *You're* is the contraction of *you are*.**

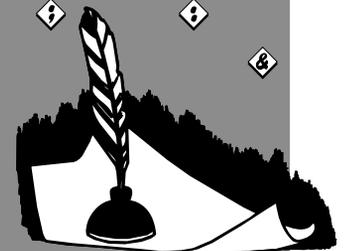
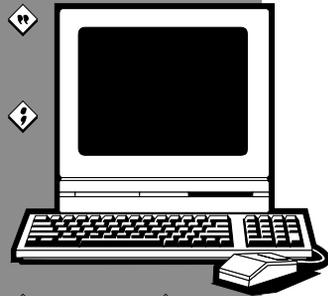


***You're* on *your* way to jail.**

SAMPLE

Chapter 11: Capitalization

SAMPLE



Capitalization

In general, you should minimize the use of capitalization.

Words set in upper and lower case have distinctive and recognizable shapes, making them easier to read than FULL CAPS.

Safety
SAFETY

Avoid FULL CAPS whenever possible.

Introduction

People have a tendency to capitalize more than necessary. While the experts do not agree on all the rules regarding capitalization, one thing they do agree on is that you should minimize the use of capitalization; use it only when there is a specific reason to do so.

The rules of capitalization are overwhelming, and there seem to be as many exceptions as there are rules. In addition, the conventions regarding capitalization are constantly changing. This chapter addresses the most common concerns. Where a particular topic is not covered or where the experts do not agree, pick the style that best meets your needs.

Avoid Full Caps Whenever Possible

Avoid full caps whenever possible. Some people don't know how to capitalize properly, so they use capital letters for everything. Some people think a message typed in full caps will receive greater attention from the reader because they think full caps conveys the impression that the message is important. The truth is, full caps makes your document harder to read, which ultimately detracts from your message.

When we read, we recognize not only the words themselves but also the *shape* of the words. Words set in upper and lower case have distinctive and recognizable shapes. Words set in full caps look like rectangles of different lengths. It takes readers more time and more energy to read the document. The more time and energy it takes, the less likely they are to want to read your document. You will have essentially "turned readers off" before they even know what the message is about.

Another reason not to use full caps for emphasis is that readers may mistake a capitalized word for an acronym or abbreviation. Do not use FULL CAPS when **bold** or *italic* will do instead. For other ideas on how to emphasize your message, refer to Chapter 16.

Sentences and Quotations

Sentences

Most sentences begin with a capital letter. However, there are a few exceptions, as you will see shortly.

Complete sentences

In general, start each complete sentence with a capital letter.

The fire went out quickly.

Nobody was hurt in the accident.

Responses, greetings, or exclamations

We often give responses or make comments that are not considered to be complete sentences because they do not contain a subject and a predicate, yet they are still grammatically correct expressions. These expressions should begin with a capital letter.

Yes.

Good morning.

Sentences in parentheses

Capitalize the first word of a sentence enclosed in parentheses *if it falls between other complete sentences.*

Frank has asked to be transferred to motorcycle patrol. (We have an opening now that Tony has been promoted.) I think Frank would be an excellent choice for the position.

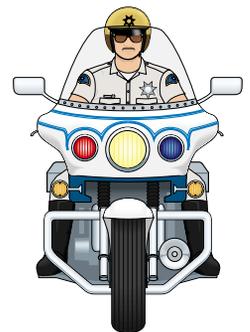
However, do *not* capitalize the first word of the sentence enclosed in parentheses if it is *in the middle of another sentence.* The only exceptions are the pronoun *I*, a proper noun, or a proper adjective. Keep in mind that while it is acceptable to position a sentence within another sentence, it is not the most effective way to write. It is generally better to create two separate sentences as illustrated in the following examples.

Acceptable: One of my neighbors (I still can't believe it) was killed in an auto accident two days ago.

Better: One of my neighbors was killed in an auto accident two days ago. I still can't believe it.

In general, start each complete sentence with a capital letter.

Capitalize the first word of a sentence in parentheses if it falls between other complete sentences.



. . . motorcycle patrol. (We have an opening now that Tony has been promoted.) I think Frank. . . .

Capitalization

Semicolons are sometimes used to join two closely related sentences of equal importance.

In general, do not capitalize the first word of a sentence after a semicolon.



Someone put a penny in the fuse box; that's why they had a fire.

Acceptable: Last week's drowning victim (she was only eight years old) had been left unsupervised in the family's swimming pool.

Better: Last week's drowning victim had been left unsupervised in the family's swimming pool. She was only eight years old.

Sentences set off by dashes

Do not capitalize the first word of a sentence set off by dashes unless the first word is the pronoun *I*, a proper noun, or a proper adjective.

We did everything we could to save her—it just wasn't enough.

If he ever threatens you again—I don't care what time it is—I want you to call the police right away.

However, if a dash is used to show an incomplete or interrupted sentence, the first word of the following sentence is capitalized.

The caller cried out, "Help! There's a fire—!" Then the line went dead.

Sentences that follow semicolons

Semicolons may be used to join two closely related sentences of equal importance. *Don't* capitalize the first word of the second sentence unless it's the pronoun *I*, a proper noun, or a proper adjective.

We've determined that the fire started in the garage; the charring is heaviest around the water heater.

There was no sign of a struggle; however, we are not ruling out the possibility of murder.

Remember, it is not necessary to join sentences just because they are closely related. They could be written as two separate sentences, each starting with a capital letter and ending with a period.

The rules regarding capitalization of sentences that follow *colons* are more complex. They are covered in detail on pages 389-390.

Capitalization

Questions

Questions generally begin with a capital letter. However, questions come in many forms, and the rules regarding capitalization vary.

Independent questions (direct and indirect)

Capitalize the first word of a *direct* question that forms a complete sentence and stands by itself.

What was the fight about?

Which hospital would you like to go to?

Capitalize the first word of an *indirect* question. An indirect question is treated like an ordinary sentence.

She wanted to know if Jeff had been drinking before the accident.

I am curious to find out what started the fire.

Direct questions incorporated into other sentences

Direct questions may be incorporated into other sentences. Whether or not the first word of the question is capitalized depends on the length and type of question, as well as where the question is positioned in the sentence.

Do not capitalize short direct questions either within a sentence or at the end of a sentence.

We can divert the spill, *can't we*, before it enters the storm drain?

You don't really intend to kill him, *do you?*

Capitalize the first word of a longer direct question when the question comes at the end of a sentence.

The question is, *What kind of extinguisher should I put in my home?*

This is my question: *Is there another place nearby where we can land the helicopter if we can't set up an adequate landing zone here?*

Capitalization of a direct question incorporated into other sentences depends on several factors.

The question is, What kind of extinguisher should I put in my home?



I don't need one of each, do I?

Capitalization

Capitalize the first word of independent questions in series.

Are you certain he killed her? Do you have any proof? Did he confess to the crime?



Capitalize the first word of elliptical (condensed) questions.

What was his motive? Jealousy? Revenge? Money?

If the direct question comes at the beginning of the sentence, do not capitalize the first word following the question.

What is the best way to lift the car off the victim? *is* the next question.

Questions in parentheses

Capitalize the first word of a question enclosed in parentheses *if it falls between other complete sentences.*

One of the prisoners escaped last night. (Did you hear about it?) We think he may be hiding out down by the docks.

Do *not* capitalize the first word of the question enclosed in parentheses if it is *in the middle of a sentence.* The only exceptions are the pronoun *I*, a proper noun, or a proper adjective. Once again, however, it is generally better to avoid such sentences.

Acceptable. Our first priority (don't you agree?) should be to isolate the area around the spill.

Better. Our first priority should be to isolate the area around the spill. Don't you agree?

Questions set off by dashes

Do not capitalize the first word of a question set off by dashes unless the word is the pronoun *I*, a proper noun, or a proper adjective. Again, however, you can often find more effective ways to write such sentences.

Acceptable. The fire we had yesterday—did you see it on the news?— went to three alarms in the first five minutes.

Better. The fire we had yesterday went to three alarms in the first five minutes. Did you see the news coverage of the fire?

Questions in series

Capitalize the first word of each question in a series of independent questions.

You need to ask your patient the following questions: What brought on the pain? What does the pain feel like? Where is the pain located? On a scale of one to ten, how bad is the pain? How long has the pain lasted?

Capitalization

Capitalize the first word of elliptical (condensed) questions. Elliptical questions are another form of independent questions.

Is it true that John was injured? When? How badly? (*When was he injured? How badly was he injured?*)

What was Skip's motive? Jealousy? Revenge? Money? (*Was it jealousy? Was it revenge? Was it money?*)

A series of questions that are part of a single sentence may be punctuated with either commas or question marks. When they are punctuated with commas, no special capitalization is required. (Note: Using commas implies that one person may be asked to do all the tasks.)

Who will be responsible for planning the mass casualty drill, recruiting people to play victims, and arranging for any special props we may need?

When these questions are punctuated with question marks, most experts prefer starting each question with a lowercase letter. However, some experts prefer to capitalize them. (Note: Using question marks implies that different people may take on the different responsibilities.)

Who will be responsible for planning the mass casualty drill? recruiting people to play victims? arranging for any special props we may need?

Quotations

Whether or not you need to capitalize a quotation depends on what type of quotation it is and where it is positioned in a sentence.

Direct quotations

The beginning of each sentence or question in a direct quotation starts with a capital letter.

"Do you know how fast you were driving?" the officer asked as the driver handed him her license.

Joyce replied, "We'll need to extricate the passenger first."

"I don't think it's a good idea," Daron interrupted. "Our turnouts are not designed to give us adequate protection against a chemical exposure.

Capitalize the first word of each sentence in a direct quotation.

Mike said, "We often get called for fights at that bar."



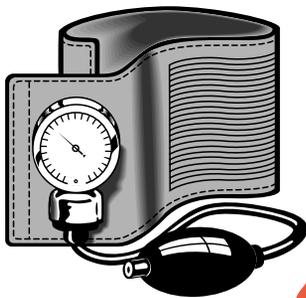
Lowercase the first word of the second half of a divided sentence.

"I think we should swing by," Craig suggested, "and make sure there's no trouble."

Capitalization

Indirect quotations are capitalized like ordinary sentences.

The doctor said that I have high blood pressure.



In general, do not capitalize the first word of a partial quote.

The doctor said that my blood pressure had gone "through the roof."

However, if a single sentence is divided into two parts by expressions such as *he said* or *she replied*, the second part begins with a lowercase letter. The second part of a divided sentence only begins with a capital letter if the first word is the personal pronoun *I*, a proper noun, or a proper adjective.

"One dog is already dead," Randy reported, "but the other one is still alive. She's inhaled a lot of smoke, however."

Indirect quotations

Indirect quotations are capitalized like ordinary sentences.

The probation officer said that he is afraid our suspect is going to jump bail.

Partial quotes

Do not capitalize the first word of a partial quote unless that word is the personal pronoun *I*, a proper noun, or a proper adjective.

Original quote: Jerry said, "I'm jealous enough to kill Becky if she ever sleeps with another man."

Partial quote: I overheard Jerry say that he was "jealous enough to kill Becky" if she ever slept with another man.

Altered quotes

You can use brackets to indicate that you have changed the original capitalization in a quote. This technique is not necessary in most situations. However, it can be important in legal documents where absolute accuracy is important.

Original quote: "It is easy to underestimate the degree of danger at a hazardous materials incident," the author contends.

Altered quote: The author contends, "[i]t is easy to underestimate the degree of danger at a hazardous materials incident."

Original quote: "Let me assure you that our department will leave no stone unturned in trying to catch this murderer," the chief promised.

Altered quote: "[O]ur department will leave no stone unturned in trying to catch this murderer," the chief promised as he addressed anxious citizens at the city council meeting.

Capitalization

Information That Follows Colons

Pages 87-92 contained detailed information on how to use colons. However, it is worth reviewing some of the rules regarding the capitalization of information that follows colons.

Statements and quotations

Capitalize the first word of a sentence that is presented as a formal rule; do not capitalize it when presented as an ordinary sentence.

Formal rule. Always remember this: *Try* before you pry.

Ordinary sentence. Always remember, *try* before you pry.

Capitalize the first word of a quotation that is introduced by a colon.

The chief had this to say: "Our first concern is, and always has been, the safety of our personnel and the public we serve."

Capitalize the first word of an independent clause when the independent clause expresses the main thought and the text before the colon serves only as an introduction.

Let me emphasize one last point: It is much easier to protect yourself from bloodborne pathogens than it is to treat a disease once you get it.

If the material after the colon consists of two or more sentences, capitalize each sentence.

There is one thing I want you all to remember: You cannot help anyone else if you get hurt. Your personal safety is of utmost importance at all times.

We had a couple of major problems at that fire: First, it was very difficult to get needed resources to the fire because of limited access. Second, we couldn't get enough water to fight the fire because our nearest hydrant was 1200 feet below us on a steep hill.

Capitalize the first word of each sentence in a long statement. (See page 89 for an example of a long statement.)

Capitalize the first word of a sentence that is presented as a formal rule.

Always remember this: Better safe than sorry.



Capitalize the first word of a sentence that is introduced.

Let me emphasize one point: It is much easier to protect yourself. . . .

Capitalization

The experts are divided on whether or not to capitalize the first word of an explanatory sentence that follows a colon.



I understand the reason why she was reluctant to report the injury: she didn't want the men to think that she couldn't do the job.

Notes and warnings

Most experts agree that you should capitalize the first word of a note, warning, or announcement.

Note: All reports must be on my desk by 0900 hours.

Warning: Do not enter when equipment is operating.

Explanations

A colon is occasionally used to separate one sentence from another when the second sentence explains or amplifies the first.

I finally understand the reason why she was reluctant to report the injury: she didn't want the men to think that she couldn't do the job.

The experts are sharply divided on the question of whether or not the first word of the second sentence should be capitalized following this usage of the colon. Some insist it should be capitalized; others insist it should not. Some experts say that you can go either way as long as you are consistent.

Horizontal lists

Do not capitalize items in a *horizontal* list that follows a colon unless the items are proper nouns or proper adjectives.

Our suspect has been arrested on several charges in the past: breaking and entering, grand theft, aggravated assault, and attempted rape.

We'll be visiting fire stations in three different states during our vacation: California, Oregon, and Washington.

Vertical lists

There is considerable disagreement among the experts as to whether to capitalize the first word of each item in a vertical list. Some say you should capitalize each item. Others say you should capitalize under some conditions, but not others. Pages 548-557 contain a thorough discussion on capitalization, punctuation, and formatting of vertical lists. Refer to those pages for more information.

Titles and Headings

Many writers struggle with how to capitalize a title or a heading. Unfortunately, even the experts do not fully agree on the rules. These pages provide some basic guidelines. However, in those areas where the experts do not agree, choose the style that works best for you.

Note: Professional titles are covered on pages 397-399. The following pages cover titles of books, articles, newspapers, television shows, movies, poems, plays, songs, and so on. These rules also apply to headings, such as those that are used at the top of a page.

General Guidelines

Do not set a title or heading in full caps just because you are unsure of the proper capitalization. Full caps are difficult to read. (See page 382.) Readers will generally forgive a mistake in capitalization; they are less forgiving of text that is hard to read.

Capitalize the first word, the last word, and all other important words in a title or heading.

In general, do not capitalize the following words. (Exceptions are listed on the following pages.)

- Articles (*a, an, the*)
- Short conjunctions (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*)
- Short prepositions (*at, to, by, of, on, off, up, out, etc.*)
- The word *to* when used in an infinitive (*to Do, to Survive, etc.*)

Do, however, capitalize short verbs: *Be, Do, Is, etc.*

Unfortunately, there is little agreement regarding the capitalization of other short words. Some experts say that prepositions of *four* or more letters (such as *from* and *with*) should be capitalized. Others recommend capitalizing when the preposition reaches *five* or more letters (for example, *about, within, inside*). A few prefer to write prepositions of *any length* in lowercase letters. Some experts say that short subordinating conjunctions such as *if* and *as* should be capitalized; others say they should be lowercased. Pick the style that works for you and use it consistently.

Capitalize the first word, the last word, and all other important words in a title or heading.

In general, do not capitalize articles, short conjunctions, and short prepositions.



Exceptions are identified on the next page.

Capitalization

Capitalize articles, short conjunctions, and short prepositions if they are the first or last words of a title or heading.

“In Memory of Fallen Comrades”



Capitalize the first word after a dash or a colon in a title or heading.

“Shock: The Silent Killer”

Examples of titles

The following are examples of titles that follow the guidelines on the previous page. While these examples are all book titles, they could easily be any other type of title or heading; the same rules regarding capitalization would apply.

The First Responder’s Pocket Guide to Hazardous Materials Emergency Response

The Fire Officer’s Handbook on Wildland Firefighting

Emergency Care and Transportation of the Sick and Injured

For the Record: Report Writing in Law Enforcement

Exceptions and Special Situations

The following are exceptions to the general guidelines presented on the previous page.

Articles, short conjunctions, and short prepositions

Although articles, short conjunctions, and short prepositions normally are not capitalized, these short words should be capitalized in a few special circumstances. Capitalize the *first* and *last* words of a title or heading, regardless of what those words are.

“Up in Smoke”

“In Search of Clues”

“Nothing to Be Scared Of”

If the word *the* is not part of the title, do not capitalize it, italicize it, or enclose it in quotation marks. The word *the* in the sentence below is necessary for grammatical completeness, but it is not part of the title.

We decided to put a copy of the *ICS Field Operations Pocket Guide* in each of our emergency vehicles.

Capitalize the first word after a dash or a colon in a title or heading, regardless of what kind of word it is.

“Shock: The Silent Killer”

“Hazardous Materials: A Common Sense Approach”

Capitalization

Capitalize short prepositions when used together with other prepositions that have four or more letters.

- . . . Up and Down (not *up and Down*)
- . . . In and Around (not *in and Around*)
- . . . On or About (not *on or About*)

Capitalize short words when they serve as adverbs rather than prepositions. As adverbs, they are part of the verb phrases and are needed to complete the meaning of the verbs.

- Adverb:* “Breaking *Out* of Prison”
(The verb phrase is *breaking out*.)
- Preposition:* “When the Chief Is *out* of Town”
- Adverb:* “Sizing *Up* the Scene”
(The verb phrase is *sizing up*.)
- Preposition:* “Laying Line *up* a Hill”

Hyphenated words

Hyphenated expressions can be handled in a couple of different ways. Some experts recommend capitalizing only proper nouns and proper adjectives following the hyphen. Essentially, they treat the expression as one word. Others capitalize all elements in a hyphenated word or expression except articles, short prepositions, and short conjunctions. This is more consistent with the general guidelines regarding capitalization and tends to be less awkward. However, you can pick the style that works for you.

- “*High-Angle* Rescue” (or *High-angle*)
- “Effective *Size-Up* on the Fireground” (or *Size-up*)
- “Conducting *Follow-Up* Investigations” (or *Follow-up*)
- “Maintaining Your *Self-Contained* Breathing Apparatus” (or *Self-contained*)

The following example contains a hyphenated expression with three words. The short preposition in the middle is written in lowercase letters. The final word, *date*, can be either capitalized or not. Again, choose the style you like best.

- “State Fire Marshal Promises *Up-to-Date* Curriculum for the Coming Year” (or *Up-to-date*)

Some experts recommend capitalizing short words when they serve as adverbs rather than prepositions.

“*BreakingOut* of Prison” (adverb)



“*Criminal*sout on Parole” (preposition)

Capitalization

Proper nouns are capitalized; common nouns usually are not.

However, when a common noun is used as part of a proper noun, the common noun is often capitalized.



CASTINE AVE

The first fire I ever went to was on Castine Avenue

Proper Nouns and Adjectives

Proper Nouns Versus Common Nouns

A *common noun* is a word that names a *general* person, place, thing, quality, or idea. A *proper noun* names a *specific* person, place, or thing. Common nouns are not capitalized; proper nouns are.

<u>Common Nouns</u>	<u>Proper Nouns</u>
our chief	Chief Doug Sporleder
the fire department	Santa Clara County Fire Department
a fire engine	Engine 2
our union	Local 1165
an ambulance company	American Medical Response

Nicknames and other imaginative names

Nicknames or other imaginative names are sometimes used in place of proper nouns. These names should be capitalized as well.

the Eagle (our fire chief)	Silicon Valley
the Information Superhighway	the First Lady

Common nouns used as part of proper nouns

Common nouns may be used as part of proper nouns to name specific places or institutions. When used in this context, the common noun is generally capitalized.

<u>Common Noun</u>	<u>Proper Noun</u>
road	Stelling Road
fire station	Seven Springs Station
county	Santa Clara County
reservoir	Lexington Reservoir

The experts are sharply divided on the issue of whether or not to capitalize the common noun when referring to plurals. Some say you should capitalize the common noun; others say you shouldn't. Still others say the common nouns should be capitalized in some situations but not in others. As always, pick the style that works for you and use it consistently.

Cupertino and Monta Vista Stations (or stations)
 Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties (or counties)
 First and Second Streets (or streets)

Capitalization

There are many other instances where the common noun is not capitalized when used with a proper noun. An authoritative dictionary can often help you determine the proper capitalization.

The arsonist used a *Molotov cocktail* to start the fire.

He claims the arresting officer did not read him the *Miranda rights* when he was taken into custody.

She dislodged the object by using the *Heimlich maneuver*.

Words derived from proper nouns or adjectives

Many words derived from proper nouns or proper adjectives have become so much a part of our vocabulary that they are generally written in lowercase letters.

Her doctor told her to expect *siamese* twins.

We found an open bottle of *scotch* whiskey in the car.

Common nouns capitalized for emphasis

Common nouns are sometimes—but not often—capitalized for emphasis or clarity. This technique may be used in advertising to catch a reader's attention or in general writing to underscore a particular point. Use this technique sparingly, however, or readers will conclude that you do not know how to write properly.

There are many reasons a person might want to promote through the ranks. One is *Money*.

Proper Adjectives

Proper adjectives are formed from proper nouns. Proper adjectives are always capitalized.

Proper Noun

California
America
Shakespeare

Proper Adjective

Californian
American
Shakespearean

Yet there are many other instances where the common noun is not capitalized when used with a proper noun.



Try to dislodge the object by using the Heimlich maneuver

Capitalization

Capitalize family titles when used as a substitute for a name, but not when used generically.

Look, Mom! I'm going to be a doctor.



I want to be a doctor just like my father.

Names and Titles

Personal Names

A personal name is a proper noun, and like any other proper noun, it should be capitalized. However, there are many variations when it comes to writing names. The following are some of the factors you may need to consider, above and beyond just capitalization.

- There may be different spellings for the same name: *Stephen* or *Steven*, *Denice* or *Denise*, *Johnsen* or *Johnson*, *Olsen* or *Olson*.
- People may have specific preferences: *Jennifer*, *Jenny*, or *Jen*, *Robert*, *Rob*, or *Bob*.
- Names with prefixes may be capitalized or spaced in different ways: *Le Baudour*, *LeBaudour*, *le Baudour*, or *leBaudour*.
- A married woman may or may not retain her maiden name and may or may not hyphenate her maiden name to her husband's name: *Debra Dixon*, *Debra Zaucha Dixon*, or *Debra Zaucha-Dixon*.

Some experts attempt to provide detailed guidelines on how to handle these questions. However, the safest thing to do is to ask people how they prefer to write their names.

Family Titles

Capitalize family titles when they precede a name or when they are used as a substitute for the name itself.

Mom and *Dad*, I'm going to be a firefighter.

They told me *Grandfather* died of a heart attack.

Paramedics transported *Aunt Riv* to the hospital.

Otherwise, do not capitalize family relationships.

I'd like you to meet my *mother* and *father*.

My *grandfather* died in 1977.

My *aunt* is suffering from pneumonia.

Capitalization

Professional Titles

The following are general guidelines on capitalization of professional titles. Be aware, however, there is enough flexibility in the rules to permit different options. If you are unsure of how to handle a particular title, contact the person or organization involved to determine the appropriate capitalization.

Titles before and after a name

In general, capitalize a professional title before a proper name, but not after. This rule applies to both singular and plural titles.

We were surprised when *Captain* David Ghilarducci retired from the fire department to enroll in medical school.

The high-rise drill will be coordinated by *Captains* Chris Donovan and Clark Mauel.

John Mac Donnell, *chief* of the UTC Fire Department, will host Wildland '98.

The plan was reviewed by Alison Pena and Chris Veargason, *deputy fire marshals* in our Fire Prevention Division.

Some experts say there is enough flexibility in the rules to allow capitalization of titles used *after* a name. Capitalization gives importance, emphasis, and distinction to a title; thus many organizations capitalize titles out of honor and respect to the individuals in those positions. You may use different styles for different types of applications. For example, you might capitalize titles for internal policy manuals, but lowercase them in general correspondence. However, you should be consistent within any given application.

Titles used in an introduction, an acknowledgment, or a list are frequently capitalized, even when used after a name.

The award goes to Bill Hardwicke, *Chief Fire Investigator*, Santa Clara County Fire Department, for his tireless efforts toward arson prevention in our community.

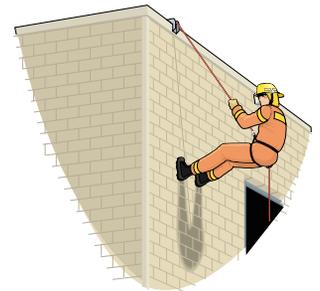
I wish to thank Marie Moore, *Emergency Services Coordinator*, City of Cupertino, for her assistance on this project.

Do not capitalize *late*, *former*, *ex-*, or *-elect* when used with titles. The titles themselves are generally lowercased as well.

The *late captain* Ron Ford died in a diving accident.

In general, capitalize a title before a name, but not after.

The heavy rescue class will be taught by Captain Randy Jones.



Randy will be assisted by Gil Smith, firefighter-paramedic.

Capitalization

Capitalize a title when used as a form of address.

What have you found so far, Detective?



Lowercase titles when used alone.

We have hired our own private detective.

Occupational (descriptive) titles are normally lowercased wherever they are used. Occupational titles differ from official titles in that only official titles can be used with a last name alone; occupational titles cannot.

The wildland class will be taught by *author* Bill Teie.

The case was referred to *attorney* Alex Myers.

Titles of high ranking officials

Capitalize titles of very high rank even when used after the name or when used alone.

We were thrilled when Bill Clinton and Al Gore, *President and Vice President of the United States*, waived to us as they drove past Los Gatos Station.

The *President and Vice President* were getting ready to leave Old Town when we were dispatched to an EMS call outside the restaurant where they had eaten dinner.

While *President of the United States* is considered to be a very high rank, *president of the union* is not—grammatically speaking. However, there is no one-size-fits-all definition of what is considered to be a title of “very high rank.”

Titles as a form of address

Capitalize a title when it is used alone as a form of address.

I didn't think I was speeding, *Officer*.

Please let me know, *Lieutenant*, if you need any help.

Titles used in apposition to a name

Do not capitalize a title used in apposition to a name. In other words, if a title appears before a name and the name is set off by commas, the name is essentially provided to explain or clarify the title. The title, in this case, is used in a generic sense.

My *captain*, Kelly Seitz, has asked me to help plan the next haz mat drill.

Because so many officers were tied up on other calls, the *sergeant*, Steve Hartje, asked one of the firefighters to direct traffic while he photographed the accident scene.

Capitalization

Titles used alone

In general, you should not capitalize a title when it is used alone.

The *paramedic* will ask you to sign a release form if you decide you don't want to be transported to the hospital.

Our *training officer* was very strict during the academy.

A title used alone is often capitalized, however, in formal minutes of meetings and in rules and bylaws.

The *Secretary's* minutes were approved as written.

Titles Under the Incident Command System

There is one area of the emergency response field that deserves special mention: the Incident Command System (ICS). (I refer to ICS because that is the system I am familiar with. However, the same concerns apply to any other incident management system.) Here is the question: Should you or should you not capitalize titles under the Incident Command System in general writing?

If we went strictly by the rules, the names of the various positions under the Incident Command System would not be capitalized in general writing: *incident commander*, *safety officer*, *planning section chief*, *public information officer*, and so forth. However, after looking through a variety of fire service textbooks and magazines, I've come to the conclusion that roughly half of the writers capitalize these titles and half don't.

Regarding the issue of titles under the Incident Command System, the consensus among professional editors is that you can use either option, depending on the amount of emphasis you want to give to the position titles. For example, you might decide to capitalize titles if you were writing ICS position descriptions. Capitalization would help draw attention to the various positions and what these positions were responsible for. On the other hand, if you were writing a textbook or a magazine article where the emphasis was on how to mitigate the incident rather than on specific ICS positions, lowercasing the titles might make more sense so the titles don't take attention away from the main subject.

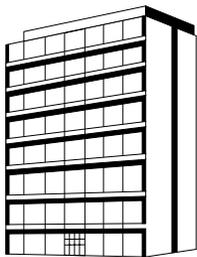
ICS position titles may be capitalized or lowercased, depending on how they are used.



The Operations Section Chief is responsible for managing all tactical operations for the primary mission. He or she reports directly to the Incident Commander.

Capitalization

Although the trend is toward less capitalization, there are several rules that would support capitalizing ICS terms.



Let's have the Salvage Group meet with Division 6 to assess the damage below the fire floor.

You also need to look at the situation from the reader's perspective. Would capitalization aid comprehension, or would it be more of a distraction? The answer to that question will vary, depending on who your audience is and what it is that you are writing. For example, would you as a reader immediately recognize *operations* as a specific position, or would you recognize it more readily if it was capitalized? Keep in mind, also, that you may have to spell things out more clearly for readers if you don't capitalize these titles. For example, you may need to use *operations section chief* rather than *operations* if you lowercase the title, whereas you could probably get away with *Operations* in place of *Operations Section Chief* if you capitalize the title instead.

Consider, also, how the term is used in the sentence. If it is used in place of a name, it should be capitalized: *I was assigned to assist Entry. (I was assigned to help Kevin, the entry team leader.)* If the term is used in a generic sense, you can choose to capitalize or lowercase it based on what best meets your needs: *I was assigned to assist the Entry Team Leader (or entry team leader.)*

Let's take the discussion a step further and look at the various sections, divisions, and so on, under ICS. I'm referring to terms such as *Command Staff, Operations Section, Rescue Group, Division A, Haz Mat Branch, Staging Area*, and so forth. What do we do with these terms?

The trend these days is toward less capitalization. However, there are a number of rules that would support capitalizing these terms. First, the proper names of military service branches, units, and so forth, are capitalized. Police and fire agencies are paramilitary organizations, and ICS is a paramilitary structure. Second, names of individual *departments* within one's own organization are often capitalized, though they may be lowercased when used in a generic sense or when referring to a department in someone else's organization. These ICS sections or groupings are similar to departments within a larger organization. Finally, words used before a letter or a number (for example, *Division A* or *Division 6*) are normally capitalized. It would look inconsistent to capitalize these terms but not the others.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question. The bottom line seems to be that you need to pick the option that best fits your needs and use it consistently, at least within the same application. There is enough flexibility in the rules to allow different options as long as you make your document easy to read and your use of capitalization is consistent.

Government and Other Organizations

Official Government Offices

These next two pages deal with government offices. Although the examples center around emergency services agencies, these same rules apply to any other government office. Remember that different experts may have different interpretations of how to capitalize the names of government agencies. I've tried to present guidelines you can count on.

Official names

Capitalize government offices, departments, and divisions when using the official name.

Santa Clara County Fire Department
California Highway Patrol
Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety
Department of Health Services
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms

The experts sometimes treat words differently depending on the level of government. The *U.S. Supreme Court* is always capitalized, as is the supreme court of any state when the state name is supplied, for example, *California Supreme Court*. However, some experts capitalize the names of lower courts (*San Jose Municipal Court*), whereas others lowercase them (*San Jose municipal court*). General references are normally lowercased: *state supreme court*, *municipal court*, *juvenile court*, *small-claims court*, and so on.

Short forms

Recognizable short forms of national and international bodies should be capitalized as well.

the Bureau (Federal Bureau of Investigation)
the Department (Department of Justice)
the Court (the U.S. Supreme Court)

Realize that short forms can be used for several different agencies. Early in your document, you must make sure to clarify what agency you are referring to when using these short forms, just as you would clarify an acronym the first time you use it.

Capitalize official government names, but not generic references.

I'm a volunteer firefighter for the Santa Clara County Fire Department.



I'm very proud of my fire department.

Capitalization

Do not capitalize words such as *federal* and *state* if used in a generic sense.



Fire inspectors need to be familiar with federal, state, and local codes and regulations.

Generic terms

In general, do not capitalize government designations when they are used in a generic sense.

Although the *fire department* was in charge of the overall incident, the *police department* was responsible for evacuating the surrounding neighborhood.

Common nouns such as *department* are sometimes capitalized in legal documents, formal contracts, and policy statements.

Santa Clara County Fire Department (referred to hereafter as "*the Department*"). . . .

Common nouns are occasionally capitalized when the words are intended to have the full force of the complete name.

The Police Department is proud to announce the opening of its new headquarters.

In general, do not capitalize words such as *federal*, *state*, *city*, *county*, and *government* if you are referring to them in a generic sense. Capitalize these words only if you are referring to a specific entity.

Generic: Flood victims can get financial assistance from the *federal government*.

Specific: The *U.S. Government* is trying to extradite our suspect from England.

Generic: There are several new *federal and state* regulations that impact emergency responders.

Specific: The *State* is developing a new curriculum on the Incident Command System.

Generic: I'm preparing a report to present to the *city council*.

Specific: The *Cupertino City Council* voted to start a Neighborhood Emergency Response Team program.

(Generic references to *federal government* are sometimes capitalized by federal employees, by people writing to federal employees, and in documents where the federal government is strongly personified. However, most experts prefer to use lowercase letters.)

Capitalization

Organizations and Institutions

Capitalize the names of organizations and institutions (educational, political, religious, social, and athletic), as well as their members.

American Red Cross
United Nations
Stanford University (the Stanford Cardinal)
Boy Scouts of America (Scouts)
Democratic Party * (Democrats)

* Note: Many experts disagree on whether the word *party* should be capitalized.

Common nouns, such as *company*, *department*, *university*, are generally not capitalized unless they are used as part of an official name. However, they are sometimes capitalized in legal documents, formal contracts, and policy statements.

Firebelle Productions (referred to hereafter as “the Company”). . . .

Common nouns are occasionally capitalized when the words are intended to have the full force of the complete name.

The Department has banned the use of fireworks within city limits.

Individual departments

The names of individual departments are generally capitalized.

Al Morgan is the chief of the *Training Division*.

Please have *Security* meet the ambulance at the front gate.

We can get information on the patient’s medical history from *Health Services*.

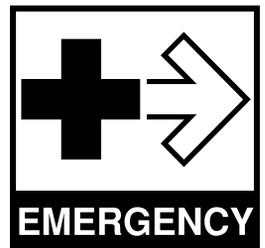
However, the names of individual departments should be written in lowercase letters when used in a generic sense or when you are referring to a department in *someone else’s* organization.

The *security department* in any company should have a plan for dealing with bomb threats.

Their *training division* wants to get a copy of our confined space rescue program.

Capitalize the names of organizations, institutions, and individual departments.

He was transported to the Emergency Department at Good Samaritan Hospital.



Lowercase general references.

I need to get 24 hours of clinical experience in a hospital emergency department.

Capitalization

Capitalize the formal and imaginative names of places and locations.



They shut down the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco because of a haz mat incident.

Other Capitalization Concerns

Places and Locations

Capitalize the names of countries, states, counties, cities, oceans, lakes, rivers, streets, buildings, parks, and so on.

America	Pacific Ocean	Hamilton Avenue
Nevada	Lake Tahoe	Coit Tower
Alameda County	Sacramento River	Old Town
Los Angeles	Oak Meadow Park	Ponderosa Ranch

Experts are divided on whether or not to capitalize the common noun when referring to plurals. Most agree that if the common noun precedes the proper names, the common noun should be capitalized. However, there is little agreement regarding what to do when the common noun follows the proper names. Pick the style that works for you and use it consistently.

Lakes Michigan and Superior
John D. Morgan and Central Parks (or *parks*)
the Sacramento and American Rivers (or *rivers*)

Capitalize imaginative names that represent specific areas.

Silicon Valley	the Bay Area	the Big Apple
Tinseltown	the Twin Cities	the French Quarter

In general, do not capitalize the common names of buildings (such as *city hall*, *post office*, *library*, *museum*). However, capitalize these words when referring to a specific building: *Campbell Post Office*, *Cupertino Library*.

The words *city*, *county*, and *state* are generally capitalized when they follow a name, but lowercased when they precede the name.

New York City	the city of New York
Santa Clara County	the county of Santa Clara
Washington State	the state of Washington

However, the common nouns may be capitalized in legal documents even when they are used before the name: *the County of Santa Clara*.

Capitalization

Compass Directions

Capitalize compass directions when they refer to specific geographical locations or regions and to people and their cultures. Do not capitalize compass directions when referring to a general direction or position.

Several counties in the *Midwest* have been declared federal disaster areas due to damage from heavy flooding.

We have implemented several programs aimed at reducing the crime rate in *East San Jose*.

You haven't seen *Southern* hospitality until you've visited one of our fire stations.

The fire was fanned by strong *westerly* winds.

The accident was located on *northbound* Highway 17, *north* of the summit.

The rules allow for some flexibility, however. Let's look at one example: *Scientists predict there will be another major earthquake in southern California in the next 30 years.* Some experts insist the word *southern* should be lowercased because it refers to a general location within a specific region. Others prefer to capitalize it to lend significance to the area. It is acceptable to use either form as long as you are consistent within the same application.

Stars and Planets

In general, do not capitalize the words *earth*, *sun*, and *moon*. However, capitalize the word *earth* if you are referring to it as a planet. Capitalize *earth*, *moon*, and *sun* if they are being used in connection with the capitalized names of other stars or planets. And capitalize *earth*, *sun*, or *moon* if they are personified.

We are worried about contamination of the *earth* around the spill.

Too much exposure to the *sun* may result in skin cancer.

Satellites orbiting *Earth* provide vital weather information that we can use to help predict wildland fire behavior. (but: *Satellites orbiting the earth.* . . .)

We must take good care of *Mother Earth*.

Capitalize compass directions when referring to specific geographical locations or regions.

We anticipate a bad fire season on the West Coast this year.



Lowercase compass directions when referring to general direction or position.

The fire was fanned by strong westerly winds.

Capitalization

Capitalize months, days, and holidays.

I'd like to get a shift trade for New Year's Eve.



Periods and decades are generally not capitalized.

We're going to see some big changes in the twenty-first century.

Days, Dates, and Times

Capitalize the names of months, days, and holidays.

January	Sunday	Christmas
June	Tuesday	Valentine's Day
September	Friday	Father's Day

Do not capitalize the seasons unless they are personified.

We had several devastating wildland fires last *summer*.

Many people died during the bitter cold *winter*.

Old Man Winter came in with a vengeance.

Periods and decades should not be capitalized, except when used in special expressions.

The theme of the *nineties* seems to be "Do more with less."

I think we're going to see some big changes in the emergency response field during the *twenty-first century*.

My great-grandfather was a firefighter during the *Roaring Twenties*.

Capitalize the names of historical events, imaginative names given to historical periods, and cultural ages. Contemporary ages (such as *space age* and *nuclear age*), on the other hand, are usually not capitalized.

the Great Chicago Fire	World War II
Fire Prevention Week	Desert Storm
the San Francisco Earthquake	the Middle Ages
the Holocaust	the Stone Age
Prohibition	the space age
the Depression	the nuclear age

Time zones are usually written in lowercase letters, except when they contain a proper noun. However, there are many variations with respect to time zone. Some experts capitalize all of these expressions. The abbreviations are always capitalized.

Pacific standard time (PST)	eastern standard time (EST)
central standard time (CST)	daylight savings time (DST)

Capitalization

Laws and Legal Materials

Capitalize the formal titles of acts, laws, bills, or treaties; lowercase general references.

Formal: *Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA)* specifically deals with emergency planning and community right-to-know requirements.

General: This and other *hazardous materials legislation* have a direct impact on emergency responders.

Formal: OSHA was established under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970*.

General: OSHA oversees and regulates *workplace health and safety regulations*.

Formal: Possession of cocaine was outlawed by Congress in 1914 under the *Harrison Anti-Narcotics Act*.

General: Despite the *anti-narcotics act*, cocaine has been increasing in popularity since the 1970s.

Formal: The judge ruled that it was a violation of the *Copyright Act of 1976*.

General: It was a blatant violation of *federal copyright laws*.

Some words may be capitalized or lowercased depending on how they are used.

The *Social Security Administration* requested our assistance in recovering the stolen *social security* checks.

Capitalize the names of plaintiffs and defendants in legal cases. Case names are generally italicized as well.

Miranda v. Arizona
Williams v. the County of Santa Clara
In the Matter of John Black

The introductory words in some legal documents, such as minutes, legislation, and resolutions, may be entirely capitalized.

WHEREAS, In the . . .
WHEREFORE, The . . .
RESOLVED, That . . .

Capitalize the formal titles of acts, laws, bills, or treaties.

The Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) addresses emergency planning and community right-to-know requirements.



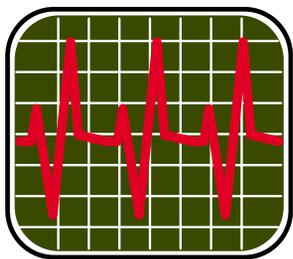
Lowercase general references.

Community right-to-know laws have a direct impact on emergency responders.

Capitalization

Most medical and scientific terms are not capitalized.

Paramedics insisted on doing an electrocardiogram.



Abbreviations and acronyms generally are capitalized, however.

The EKG showed that she had an arrhythmia.

Medical and Scientific Terms

Use lowercase letters for diseases, symptoms, syndromes, and tests. However, capitalize any proper names that are part of the term.

acquired immune deficiency syndrome	hepatitis
carpal tunnel syndrome	tuberculosis
E. coli (Escherichia coli) bacteria	Lyme disease
Alzheimer's disease	German measles
cardiopulmonary resuscitation	electrocardiogram
magnetic resonance imaging	x-ray (or X-ray)

Abbreviations and acronyms for diseases, symptoms, syndromes, and tests are usually capitalized: *AIDS, CPR, EKG, MRI*.

Lowercase the names of generic drugs, but capitalize trade names.

acetaminophen	Tylenol
diazepam	Valium

Use lowercase letters for chemical names. Most chemical symbols, on the other hand, consist of either a single capital letter or a capital letter and a lowercase letter. The symbols of chemical compounds consist of a combination of the individual chemical symbols.

carbon	C	mercury	Hg
oxygen	O	sodium	Na
carbon monoxide	CO	chlorine	Cl
carbon dioxide	CO ₂	sodium chloride	NaCl

Signs and Notices

Capitalize the text of short signs and notices both on the sign or notice itself and in any reference to it. Many signs are actually written in all capital letters, but you should not follow that format in text. Full caps are harder to read. If you introduce the name of the sign with words such as *that says*, enclose it in quotation marks.

Follow the Emergency Exit sign.

Look for the sign that says "Emergency Exit."

You need to install a No Smoking sign in the Lobby.

Capitalization

Military Terms

Capitalize the proper names of a country's military service branches, units, and so on. Informal references are usually lowercased, though some experts prefer to capitalize short forms of the U.S. forces.

the U.S. Army	the army (or the Army)
the U.S. Navy	the navy (or the Navy)
the U.S. Marine Corps	the marines (or the Marines)
the U.S. Coast Guard	the Coast Guard
the Royal Air Force	the British air force
the Allies (World War I and II)	

Capitalize military titles when they come before a name; lowercase them when they stand alone.

The *chief* asked me to report to *Captain Bergstrom*.

Capitalize the full names of wars and battles, but lowercase the words *war* and *battle* when used alone or in a generic sense.

the Civil War	Desert Storm
the American Revolution	the Vietnam War

Awards and Honors

Capitalize the proper names of awards, honors, medals, decorations, and scholarships. However, words that are not a part of the actual name are lowercased.

Academy Award	the Medal of Valor
Nobel Prize winner	Rhodes Scholarship (scholar)
the Purple Heart	the Congressional Medal of Honor

People and Their Languages

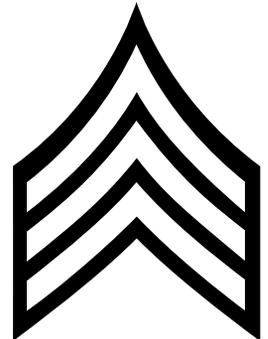
Capitalize the names of races, tribes, nationalities, and languages.

Americans	Negroes	English
Caucasians	Mexican	French
American Indians	Chinese	Spanish

The experts are divided on the question of whether to capitalize the words *blacks* and *whites*. Once again, you need to pick the style that works for you and use it consistently.

Capitalize military titles before a name; lowercase them when they stand alone.

I've been assigned to work with Sergeant Hooker.

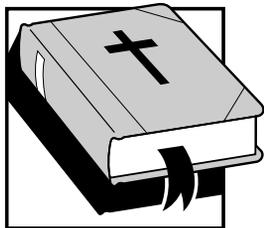


The sergeant will need to authorize this.

Capitalization

Many religious references are capitalized.

I'm telling the truth. I'll swear on the Bible.



Religious titles and offices are generally lowercased when used in the generic sense.

The patient is asking to see his minister.

Religious References

Capitalize religions and their followers, holy books, holy days, and religious names and titles that are considered sacred.

God	Heavenly Father	Easter
Christ	Christianity	Christmas
Buddha	Christians	Chanukah
the Lord	the Bible *	Ten Commandments

* The word *Bible* is capitalized when referring to sacred religious writings. However, *bible* is written in lowercase letters when used in the sense of an authoritative, informative, or reliable book or reference: *He wrote the bible on emergency care in the field.*

Capitalize religious titles and offices that precede a name. However, titles and offices usually are not capitalized when referred to in a generic sense.

Pope John Paul	the pope
Reverend Alden	the minister
Rabbi Albert Levy	the rabbi

The Deity

If you are specifically referring to *the Deity* or *the Supreme Being*, capitalize these words. However, if you are generically referring to *a deity* or *a supreme being*, the words should be lowercased.

Some writers prefer to capitalize all pronouns when referring to the Deity; others prefer not to unless capitalization is needed to prevent ambiguity.

Believe in *Him*. (*Capitalization prevents ambiguity.*)

If you have faith in God, *he* will help you through these hard times. (*It is clear in this sentence that he refers to God. Capitalization is optional.*)

The word *God* is capitalized in some expressions, but not in others. This is where a good dictionary comes in handy.

God-fearing	godsend
Godspeed	godforsaken

Capitalization

Trademarks and Brand Names

Capitalize trademarks and brand names of commercial products. If you are referring to a generic name, use lowercase letters instead. (Note: The symbol ® after the name indicates that it is a registered trademark. While companies generally use the symbol both as a form of advertising and as a way to protect their trademark, the symbol is often omitted in general writing.)

<u>Trade Name</u>	<u>Generic Name</u>
Resusci® Anne	manikin or CPR manikin
Ambu® Bag	manual resuscitator or bag-mask resuscitator
Interspiro	self-contained breathing apparatus or airpack
Winchester	rifle

Watch out for unique forms of capitalization that some manufacturers use (for example, *PageMaker* and *LaserJet*). Be careful with trademarks that have become so much a part of our vocabulary that we tend to use them in a generic sense, for example, *Band-Aid*, *Xerox*, and *Kleenex*. These words are generally capitalized. However, if your dictionary includes a notation that the words may be written in lowercase letters, you can use either option.

Numbers and Letters Combined with Words

When a hyphenated term is formed by combining a single letter with a word, the letter is often capitalized. However, it is sometimes acceptable to use lowercase letters instead. When in doubt, check a good dictionary.

U-turn	T-shirt
I-beam	X-ray <i>or</i> x-ray

In general, you should capitalize a noun that is followed by either a number or a letter when the two are used together to convey a single idea.

Class A uniform	Title 29, Section 1910.120
Model T fire engine	Class I, Division 2 wiring
Type S fuses	Article 80 of the Uniform Fire Code

When numbers or letters follow a word, the word is often capitalized.

It was a Class B fire.



Article 80 of the Uniform Fire Code deals with hazardous materials.

Capitalization

Specific courses are capitalized; general subjects are not.

I took Fire Prevention 1A three years ago.



I need only one more class in fire prevention to complete my degree.

Major references are generally capitalized; minor ones are not. Some common examples are listed below. However, don't consider this a definitive list. Some experts would lowercase words like *chapter*, *diagram*, *figure*, *lesson*, and *section*. The bottom line is to minimize the use of unnecessary capitals without sacrificing clarity. Pick the style that works for you, and use it consistently within the same application.

Appendix A	Illustration 32	line 16
Chapter 9	Lesson 6	note 3
Diagram 3	Part 4	page 24
Exhibit B	Room 10	paragraph 8
Figure 21	Section 2	size 12
Flight 800	Table 19	step 5
Highway 9	Unit 5	verse 2

Educational Programs

Capitalize the names of specific courses, but lowercase general subjects or areas of study.

I've enrolled in *Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) 1A*.

Several of our firefighters are taking *paramedic training*.

The Administration of Justice Department is offering a new *internship program*.

Capitalize any proper nouns or proper adjectives even when they are part of a generic reference.

I want to take a class in *basic medical Spanish*.

Many experts say that you should not capitalize academic degrees in general reference. However, some prefer to capitalize the names of specific degrees.

I received an *associate of science degree* in fire science technology.

In order to apply for the chief's position, you need to have a *master's degree* in public administration.

Do not capitalize the words *freshman*, *sophomore*, *junior*, or *senior*. Capitalize the word *grade* when a number follows it (*Grade 3*), but not when the number comes first (*third grade*).

Capitalization

Mottoes and Slogans

Mottoes and slogans are usually capitalized. When they are used as headings or used on signs, bumper stickers, and so forth, capitalize the first word, the last word, and all other important words. (See pages 391-393 for more information on capitalizing headings.)

Just Say No to Drugs

Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires

When a motto or slogan is incorporated into a sentence, you can either capitalize just the first word or you can capitalize the entire motto or slogan as shown above.

We want to get across the message, Just say no to drugs.

Smokey Bear says, "Only you can prevent forest fires."

Capitalize the first word in a motto or slogan.



We want to get across the message, Just say no to drugs.

Sports

Capitalize names of teams, leagues, conferences, special sporting events, and so forth.

Police and Fire World Games the San Jose Sharks
the National Basketball Association the Pac 10 Conference

The Opening and Closing of a Letter

In general, you should capitalize each word in the opening salutation of a letter.

Dear Sir: Dear Valued Customer:
Dear Mrs. Jenkins: To Whom It May Concern:

However, it is acceptable to use either capital or lowercase letters for informal correspondence.

Dear Friends, or Dear friends,

Capitalize only the first word of the closing.

Very truly yours, Warmest regards,
Yours truly, Best wishes,

Capitalization

Always capitalize the pronoun *I*.

I think I had better stop before I have too much.



I have to remain sober because I'm the designated driver.

The Pronoun *I*

Always capitalize the pronoun *I*, regardless of how it is used or where it falls in a sentence.

Norris and I will triage these patients.

Where will I be assigned after the academy?

Forms and Programs

Capitalize the names of official forms when you refer to them in business correspondence. If the word *form* is part of the official name—if it is printed on the form itself—it should be capitalized as well: *Injury and Illness Report Form*, *Incident Report Form*. If the word *form* is not part of the official title, it should probably be lowercased. However, it is important to be consistent within the same document. Therefore, if you need to capitalize the word *form* once, you should probably capitalize it for each form you name.

The appropriate capitalization of the word *program* is another question that is not clearly answered by the experts. Should you write *Neighborhood Watch Program* or *Neighborhood Watch program*? Capitalization lends importance to a word; thus capitalizing the word *program* establishes it as an important component of the entire name. Conversely, the trend these days is toward minimizing the use of capitalization, so lowercasing the word *program* is also acceptable. The bottom line is that either form is appropriate as long as you use it consistently within the same application.

Personifications

Capitalize any personifications: *Mother Nature*, *Father Sky*, *Old Man Winter*, *Father Time*.

Poetry

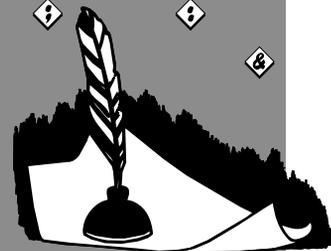
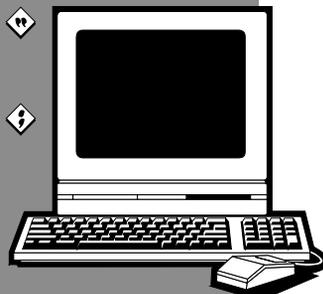
Capitalize the first word of each line in a poem unless the poet specifically did not follow this convention when writing the poem.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Refer to Chapter 12 for information on how to handle abbreviations and acronyms.

Chapter 12: Abbreviations and Acronyms

SAMPLE



Abbreviations and Acronyms

An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or phrase.



***Emergency
Medical
Technician
(EMT)***

Abbreviation or Acronym?

Abbreviations Defined

An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or phrase. Abbreviations vary in format. They may be written in all capital letters, all lowercase letters, or a combination of capital and lowercase letters. They may contain periods, slashes, hyphens, or spaces. They may represent a single word or a longer phrase. Some abbreviations may be written in more than one way. The following are some examples of different abbreviations.

Dr.	doctor
Capt.	captain
min <i>or</i> min.	minute
mph <i>or</i> m.p.h.	miles per hour
ppm	parts per million
e.g.	for example (<i>exempli gratia</i>)
a.m. <i>or</i> A.M.	before noon (<i>ante meridiem</i>)
e-mail <i>or</i> E-mail	electronic mail
ft/sec <i>or</i> ft./sec.	feet per second
sq ft <i>or</i> sq. ft.	square feet
mm Hg <i>or</i> mmHg	millimeters of mercury
Btu	British thermal unit
DOA <i>or</i> D.O.A.	dead on arrival
EMS	emergency medical services
ICS	Incident Command System
PPE	personal protective equipment
COPD	chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
AAR	Association of American Railroads

Some abbreviations contain both letters and numbers.

m ³	cubic meters
H ₂ O	water
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
LD ₅₀	lethal dose (lethal to 50% of the test population)

Some abbreviations are in the form of symbols.

%	percent	\$	dollar(s)
°	degree(s)	¢	cent(s)
'	foot (or feet)	@	at
"	inch(es)	&	and

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Acronyms Defined

An acronym is also a shortened form of a longer expression. Acronyms are generally derived from the *initial* letters of the words that make up the complete expression, although other letters may be used as well. Most acronyms are written in all capital letters. However, what distinguishes acronyms from abbreviations written in full capitals is that acronyms are pronounced as words rather than pronounced letter by letter. The following are some examples.

LOX	liquid <u>o</u> x <u>y</u> gen
KED	<u>K</u> endrick <u>E</u> xtrication <u>D</u> evice
AIDS	<u>a</u> cquired <u>i</u> mmune <u>d</u> eficiency <u>s</u> ndrome
SIDS	<u>s</u> udden <u>i</u> nfant <u>d</u> eath <u>s</u> ndrome
MADD	<u>M</u> others <u>A</u> gainst <u>D</u> runk <u>D</u> riving
CHEMTREC	<u>C</u> hemical <u>T</u> ransportation <u>E</u> mergency <u>C</u> enter

Some abbreviations look like acronyms. However, if they are pronounced letter by letter, they are really abbreviations. For example, the abbreviation *SOB* is sometimes used in the EMS field to mean “short of breath.” (Occasionally it is used by the rest of the world to mean “son of a b—”) But it is not pronounced like the word *sob*. Each letter is pronounced separately.

Some acronyms are written in lowercase letters.

scuba	<u>s</u> elf- <u>c</u> ontained <u>u</u> nderwater <u>b</u> reathing <u>a</u> pparatus
radar	<u>r</u> adio <u>d</u> etecting <u>a</u> nd <u>r</u> anging
modem	<u>m</u> odulator <u>a</u> nd <u>d</u> emodulator
laser	light <u>a</u> mplification by <u>s</u> timulated emission of radiation

Words That Fit Neither Category

Shortened versions of words or phrases are neither abbreviations nor acronyms. Some have become so much a part of our vocabulary that they are recognized as words in their own right. Others are considered to be slang expressions or jargon. The following are some examples.

ammo (ammunition)	ludes (Quaaludes)
barbs (barbiturates)	meth (methamphetamine)
con (convict)	perp (perpetrator)
exam (examination)	photo (photograph)

What distinguishes acronyms from abbreviations is that acronyms are pronounced like words rather than pronounced letter by letter.



***acquired
immune
deficiency
syndrome
(AIDS)***

Abbreviations and Acronyms

If used wisely, abbreviations and acronyms can make your documents easier to read.

Wrongly used, however, they give readers the impression that you do not know how to write.



I'll meet you in the a.m.
(wrong)

I'll meet you in the morning.
(right)

General Guidelines

Used properly, abbreviations and acronyms can be effective tools. However, when they are used improperly, they can make your document difficult to read and can undermine your credibility as a writer.

Before we delve into the rules regarding specific abbreviations and acronyms, let's look at some general guidelines to set the stage for the information that follows.

Recognize the Advantages

Abbreviations and acronyms can make a document easier to read—imagine having to read *acquired immune deficiency syndrome* or *miles per hour* over and over when you could be reading *AIDS* or *mph* instead. Abbreviations and acronyms are also useful in applications where space is limited, such as in charts and headlines. Saving space can occasionally be important in ordinary text as well.

Limit Abbreviations in Ordinary Writing

Although abbreviations are acceptable when appropriate for the given audience, purpose, and occasion, many experts recommend minimizing their use in ordinary writing. Using too many abbreviations or using abbreviations inappropriately can give readers the impression that you do not know how to write.

Wrong: I'll meet you in the *a.m.*

Right: I'll meet you in the *morning.*

However, abbreviations and acronyms designed to replace long and cumbersome expressions are appropriate on any occasion.

My partner became infected with the *HIV* virus when he was accidentally stuck by a contaminated needle.

We arrested him for impersonating an *FBI* agent.

When abbreviations are only one or two characters shorter than the full word (for example, *pd.* for *paid* or *pp.* for *pages*), spell the word out. Abbreviate only if you are very tight on space or if you are using several other abbreviations and want to be consistent.

Use *legitimate* abbreviations when you decide to abbreviate. Do not make things up, or you will confuse your readers.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Sometimes experts will say that use of particular abbreviations is appropriate in informal writing, but not in formal writing. But what is the difference between formal and informal writing?

In general, abbreviations are appropriate in “expedient” documents where the emphasis is on communicating information in the briefest form. Examples include interoffice memos, routine correspondence, business forms, catalogs, invoices, and purchase orders. However, abbreviations should be kept to a minimum in other types of documents, where the emphasis is more on style and effect. It may help to think of using abbreviations in the same light as serving coffee. There are times when it is appropriate to serve coffee in a paper or Styrofoam cup and times when you probably wouldn’t think of using anything less than a good mug. If you think your audience deserves better than a Styrofoam cup, you should keep your use of abbreviations to a minimum.

There are some abbreviations that are appropriate in all situations, formal and informal (for example, *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *a.m.*, *p.m.*). Long names and expressions are commonly abbreviated in all but the most formal writing (for example, *CPR*, *EKG*, *FBI*, *CIA*, *NFPA*). Latin abbreviations such as *e.g.* (for example), *i.e.* (that is), and *etc.* (and so forth) are acceptable in most ordinary writing. However, in formal writing, you should use the English equivalents.

Properly Introduce New Abbreviations or Acronyms

If you plan to use an abbreviation or acronym that readers might not be familiar with, introduce it the first time by putting it in parentheses behind the word or words it represents. Alternately, you could use the abbreviation or acronym first, with the spelled-out version in parentheses behind it. The acronym or abbreviation can be written alone in subsequent uses.

I work in the *Intensive Care Unit (ICU)*.

They were manufacturing *LSD (lysergic acid derivatives)* at a clandestine drug lab in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Use or Omit Periods as Appropriate

There is good news and bad news regarding the use of periods. The good news is that periods are not used with *acronyms*. So, once you have identified that you have an acronym as opposed to an abbreviation, you are off the hook. The bad news is that the rules are not so simple with abbreviations.

Some abbreviations are appropriate in any situation.

Mr. Sherman had a heart attack.



Long names and expressions are commonly abbreviated in all but the most formal writing.

A neighbor began CPR immediately.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Periods are used with some abbreviations, particularly if needed to prevent misreading.



The suspect was last seen heading toward L.A.

(Los Angeles, not Louisiana)

The trend today is moving away from the use of periods as long as the meaning remains clear. This is partly because periods take up extra space; abbreviations are supposed to save space. In addition, abbreviations are often easier to read without periods because periods tend to elongate or drag out the text. Nonetheless, periods are still used in many situations.

The following are some general guidelines regarding when to use or omit periods. Keep in mind that you may see different guidelines in other books because the experts do not always agree. When in doubt, consult a good dictionary.

When to use periods

Use periods in the following situations:

- Initials used in place of a proper name: *C.W. Craven, Capt. T. Hall*
- Abbreviations of titles that precede a name: *Mr., Mrs., Dr., Lt.*
- Abbreviations of some titles that follow a name: *Sr., Jr., Esq.*
- The word *Saint* when abbreviated: *Mike St. John, St. James Park*
- Some expressions of time: *a.m. (or A.M.), p.m. (or P.M.), A.D., B.C.*
- Many Latin abbreviations: *i.e., e.g., et al., etc., vs.*
- Many business names: *Co., Corp., Inc., Bros., Ltd., R.R.*
- Days and months that have been abbreviated: *Mon., Feb., Sept.*
- Street names when abbreviated: *Ave., St., Rd., Ct., Blvd.* (Note: On envelopes and mailing labels, the U.S. Postal Service prefers that addresses are set in all capital letters with no punctuation.)
- State names, except when using the approved two-letter abbreviations preferred by the U.S. Postal Service: *Calif., Colo., Ore.*
- Many abbreviations of a single word: *approx., cont., dept., misc.*
- Many abbreviations made up of lowercase initials: *a.k.a., d.b.a.*

Many of our conventions regarding the use of periods comes from the desire to prevent misreading. The following examples show how omitting needed periods may cause confusion.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

<u>Original Word(s)</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Possible Confusion</u>
inches	in.	the preposition <i>in</i>
number	no.	the word <i>no</i>
Company	Co.	the prefix <i>co</i>
Washington	Wash.	the word <i>wash</i>
Mississippi	Miss.	the title <i>Miss</i>
Los Angeles	L.A.	Louisiana (<i>LA</i>)
before noon	a.m./A.M.	<i>am</i> (a form of the verb <i>be</i>)

The context in which abbreviations are used has a lot to do with the risk of misreading. Most of the abbreviations above could be used without periods in a chart or table without confusing readers.

When to omit periods

Do not use periods in the following situations:

- Acronyms:

AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
BLEVE	boiling liquid expanding vapor explosion

- Most abbreviations written in all capital letters:

ARC	American Red Cross
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
LPG	liquid petroleum gas
ICS	Incident Command System
ER	Emergency Room
OD	overdose

- Many military terms:

USCG	United States Coast Guard
POW	Prisoner of War
APO	Army Post Office

- Television and radio station call letters: *KNTV, KRON, KLIV, KGO*

- Contractions: *sec'y, cont'd, Int'l*

- Chemical symbols: *H₂O, CO₂, NaCl*

- Metric units of measure: *mm, cm, kg, cc*

- Compass directions: *N, E, S, W, NE, SW*

Periods are not used with acronyms.

The baby died from SIDS.



Most all-capital abbreviations are written without periods.

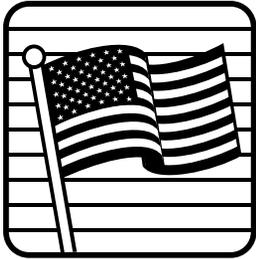
We did CPR on the baby.

However, some can be written two ways.

The baby was pronounced DOA (or D.O.A.).

Abbreviations and Acronyms

There are some areas where the experts do not agree regarding the use of periods.



For example, while most experts write *U.S.* or *U.S.A.*, some write *US* or *USA*

- Approved two-letter postal abbreviations for states: *CA, OR, WA*
- Letters used as symbols rather than initials: *Team A will be the victims for the first drill; Team B will be the rescuers.*
- Shortened forms of words: *porn, photo, lab, exam, decon*

Where the experts often disagree

In some cases, either option is acceptable. It is a matter of personal preference or how much space you have to work with.

- Titles after a name: *M.D. (or MD), Ph.D. (or PhD), C.S.P or (CSP)*
- The United States: *U.S. (or US), U.S.A. (or USA)*
- Weights, measures, and time: *lb (or lb.), ft (or ft.), min (or min.)*

Although many experts say that abbreviations written in all capital letters should not contain periods, there are some abbreviations that may be written either way. Sometimes, it is simply a matter of personal preference. However, once you have decided, you should be consistent—at least within the same document.

DOA or D.O.A.
IOU or I.O.U.

RSVP or R.S.V.P.
SOP or S.O.P.

Use Only One Period at the End of a Sentence

Do not use two periods at the end of a sentence if the sentence ends with an abbreviation. The final period in the abbreviation also serves as the period for the sentence.

Wrong. The call came in at 2:48 a.m..
Right. The call came in at 2:48 a.m.

The only time you ever need a second period is when the abbreviation falls within parentheses at the end of the sentence.

You can pick up a copy of the report at police headquarters tomorrow afternoon (before 5:00 p.m.).

If the sentence ends with an exclamation point or a question mark, it comes after the period in the abbreviation.

Can we get the search warrant by 3:00 p.m.?

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Use or Omit Spaces as Appropriate

Most abbreviations, whether they contain periods or not, should be written closed up without spaces.

a.m.	mph	M.D.	CPR	D.C.
e.g.	mg/kg	Ph.D.	EMS	U.S.

However, units of measurement made up of two or more words generally have spaces between the letters in the abbreviation.

sq ft cu cm

Spaces are also used in most abbreviations of two or more words when the abbreviation consists of more than just single initials.

Lt. Col. W. Va. et al. gr. wt.

Most abbreviations that use symbols are written closed up, without spaces between the symbol and the number or letter next to it.

Oxygen-enriched atmospheres (>23.5% oxygen) will cause materials to ignite more easily and burn more intensely.

The flash point of gasoline is approximately -45°F.

Do not store anything within 18" of a sprinkler head.

We need to know what chemicals are being used at your R&D facility.

However, spaces are needed before and after the symbols @, =, +, -, ×, and x. Spaces are also needed before and after an ampersand (&) if it is used between two words.

The child fell down a 2' x 3' vertical shaft.

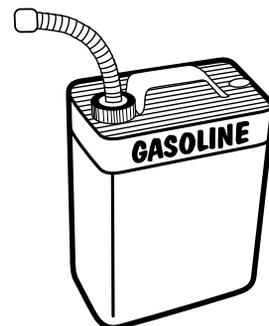
The clerk recognized the gun as a *Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum*.

Form Plurals with or 's as Appropriate

Most abbreviations and acronyms are made plural by adding an s.

capt. → capts.	EMT → EMTs
dept. → depts.	IV → IVs
bldg. → bldgs.	SOP → SOPs

Most abbreviations that use symbols are written closed up, without spaces between the symbol and the number or letter next to it.



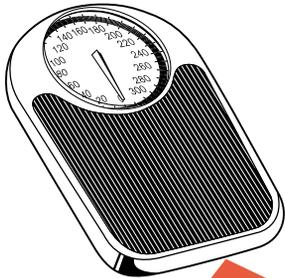
The flash point of gasoline is approximately -45°F.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Most units of time, weight, and measure are generally abbreviated the same way in both the singular and plural forms.

lb (pound, pounds)

oz (ounce, ounces)



However, some can also be made plural by adding an *s*.

lbs (pounds)
ozs (ounces)

While most experts favor adding *s* alone to form the plurals of abbreviations or acronyms written in full capitals, some like to use an apostrophe plus *s* ('*s*), for example, *SOP's*. However, the apostrophe is functionally unnecessary.

Apostrophes are needed with plurals of abbreviations consisting of just lowercase letters: *pj's* (or *p.j.'s*), *c.o.d.'s*, *p.m.'s*, *e.g.'s*.

Unfortunately, experts do not agree on whether to use apostrophes with capitalized abbreviations that are punctuated with periods: *M.D.s* or *M.D.'s*, *Ph.D.s* or *Ph.D.'s*. Since the experts do not agree, pick the style that works for you and use it consistently.

Most units of time, weight, and measure are abbreviated the same way in both the singular and plural forms.

ft	(foot, feet)	oz	(ounce, ounces)
yd	(yard, yards)	lb	(pound, pounds)
mm	(millimeter, millimeters)	hr	(hour, hours)
mi	(mile, miles)	yr	(year, years)

Some units of time, weight, and measure can also be made plural by adding an *s* (for example, *hrs*, *lbs*, *yds*). However, the trend is toward omitting the *s* and simplifying the abbreviation.

Occasionally, you will find some irregular plurals.

Mr. → Messrs.	p. (page) → pp. (pages)
Mrs. → Mmes.	s. (section) → ss. (sections)
Ms. → Mses.	¶ (paragraph) → ¶¶ (paragraphs)

Use an Apostrophe to Form the Possessive

The possessives of abbreviations and acronyms are formed according to the same basic rules for forming the possessive of singular and plural nouns. Add an apostrophe plus *s* ('*s*) to the singular forms. Add an apostrophe alone (') to the plural forms.

<i>Singular:</i>	The KED's chin strap is missing.
<i>Plural:</i>	The KEDS' chin straps are missing.

Use Articles *a*, *an*, and *the* as Appropriate

If an abbreviation or acronym starts with a vowel sound, use the article *an*. If the abbreviation or acronym starts with a consonant sound, use the article *a*.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

I'm only *an EMT*, not a paramedic.

We were unable to locate *an* MSDS for this product.

Direct flame impingement on the vapor space of a pressure vessel can cause *a BLEVE*.

The witness claims he saw *a UFO*.

It may or may not be necessary to use the article *the* before an abbreviation or acronym.

The FBI insisted that it was in charge of the incident.

FEMA responded quickly once the governor declared a state of emergency.

Don't Start Sentences with Some Abbreviations

Do not start a sentence with an abbreviation if the abbreviation is a partial word, a lowercase letter, or a number.

Wrong: *Approx.* 250 people were injured when the train derailed.

Right: *Approximately* 250 people were injured when the train derailed.

Wrong: *a.k.a.* names are common among criminals.

Right: *Alias* names are common among criminals.

Wrong: *¹⁴C* is a naturally occurring radioactive element.

Right: *Carbon 14* (*¹⁴C*) is a naturally occurring radioactive element.

Otherwise, starting a sentence with an abbreviation is acceptable.

Dr. Taylor authorized me to return to work on light duty.

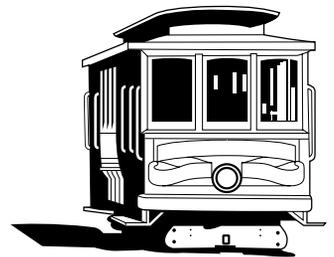
CPR is most effective when started immediately after the victim's collapse.

Use Abbreviations Rather Than Contractions

If you have a choice between using an abbreviation or a contraction, use an abbreviation. For example, use *dept.* rather than *dep't* and *cont.* rather than *cont'd*. Abbreviations are easier to read and they look better to the reader.

Do not start a sentence with an abbreviation if the abbreviation is a partial word, a lowercase letter, or a number.

Approx. a dozen people were injured in the accident.
(wrong)



Approximately a dozen people were injured in the accident.
(right)

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Do not abbreviate people's names in ordinary writing.

Use *Robert*, *Rob*, or *Bob*. Do not use *Robt*.



Respect people's preferences when writing their names.

Please call me Robert.

Names and Titles

Abbreviations are common with names and titles. However, they are not appropriate in all situations.

Proper Names

Do not abbreviate people's names in ordinary writing.

Wrong: *Chas.* coordinates our department's haz mat emergency response program.

Right: *Charles* (or *Charlie*) coordinates our department's haz mat emergency response program.

Abbreviations are acceptable in charts, tables, and other applications where space is tight. However, it is preferable to spell out the names when possible.

When the word *Saint* is part of a surname, follow the preference of the individual (for example, *Mike St. John* versus *Mike Saint John*). When the word *Saint* is used before the name of actual saints (for example, *Saint Anthony*), it is generally spelled out, except where space is tight.

Initials

Initials are frequently used in place of middle names. When first and middle initials are used, most experts say they should be separated by a space: *J. M. Levy*. However, some experts say it is permissible to omit the space between the initials: *J.M. Levy*.

When initials are used in place of both the given and family names, most experts prefer not to use periods: *JFK*. However, some say periods are acceptable: *J.F.K.* In either case, there should be no space between the letters.

Do not use periods when a single initial is used as a substitute for a real name.

Victim A had multiple gunshot wounds to the head and chest. *Victim B* was strangled.

A period should be used, however, if the initial is used to represent an actual name.

Dr. B. (*Dr. Boyd*) took out the stitches three days ago.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Titles

The titles *junior* and *senior* are normally abbreviated when used with personal names: *Howard G. Hoff Jr.*, *Brian Bowron Sr.*

The abbreviation *Esq.* (esquire) is seldom used in the United States, except as a title applied to lawyers. When *Esq.* is used, it is not combined with any other title.

Incorrect: Mr. Andrew Steel, Esq.
Correct: Andrew Steel, Esq.

General Forms of Address

Abbreviations are almost always used in standard forms of address; these words are seldom spelled out. Both the singular and plural forms are listed below. Notice that each ends with a period.

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
Mr.	Messrs.
Mrs.	Mmes.
Ms.	Mses.

Many people are not familiar with the plural abbreviations. Therefore, it is usually better to address each individual separately.

Acceptable: Dear Messrs. Brian Floyd and Don Gilbert:
Preferred: Dear Mr. Brian Floyd and Mr. Don Gilbert:

Miss is not an abbreviation. Neither *Miss* nor its plural form, *Misses*, should be punctuated with a period.

Ms., Miss, or Mrs.?

The abbreviation *Ms.* has gained widespread popularity because it does not indicate a woman's marital status. Many people feel there is no reason to reveal a woman's marital status by use of a title; we don't do that for men. On the other hand, it's important to be sensitive to a woman's preference. Some women do not like *Ms.* Others object to being called *Mrs.* when they are single or being called *Miss* when they are married.

If you do not know a woman's preference, but you do know her marital status, use the appropriate title (*Miss* or *Mrs.*). If you do not know her preference or her marital status, use *Ms.*

**Abbreviations
are almost
always used in
standard forms
of address.**



***Mrs. Robinson
enjoys reading
mystery novels.***

Abbreviations and Acronyms

A Doctor of Medicine or a Doctor of Philosophy may be identified by abbreviations either before or after the name.

Dr. Greg Barsten



Greg Barsten, D.C.

Medical or Academic Degrees

A Doctor of Medicine or a Doctor of Philosophy may be identified by abbreviations before or after the name. Abbreviations written after the name are often specific to the particular area of specialization.

<u>Name and Abbreviated Title</u>	<u>Specialization</u>
Dr. Gary R. Zeidler	(not specified)
David Ghilarducci, M.D.	Doctor of Medicine
Greg Barsten, D.C.	(not otherwise specified) Doctor of Chiropractic
Steven I. Subotnick, D.P.M., D.C.	Doctor of Podiatric Medicine and Doctor of Chiropractic
Lawrence Carr, Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy

The experts generally prefer writing the abbreviations with periods (for example, *M.D.*, *Ph.D.*), though periods are sometimes dropped in applications where space is tight.

Do not use duplicate titles, and do not use generic forms of address, such as *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, and *Ms.*, if you use a title behind the name.

<i>Wrong:</i>	Dr. Michaela Quinn, M.D.
<i>Wrong:</i>	Ms. Michaela Quinn, M.D.
<i>Right:</i>	Dr. Michaela Quinn
<i>Right:</i>	Michaela Quinn, M.D.

Do not use abbreviations in ordinary writing unless they are used in conjunction with a name.

<i>Wrong:</i>	You should have a <i>Dr.</i> look at this burn.
<i>Right:</i>	You should have a <i>doctor</i> look at this burn.
<i>Right:</i>	You should have <i>Dr. Baker</i> look at this burn.

People with other academic degrees often use abbreviations after their names. Abbreviations of *academic degrees* are commonly written *with* periods, whereas abbreviations of *professional designations* are more often written *without* periods.

<u>Name and Abbreviated Title</u>	<u>Degree or Designation</u>
Lori Lehtola, M.A.	Master of Arts
Dan Ross, R.N.	Registered Nurse
Daniel G. Lehtola, CSP	Certified Safety Professional
Leonard W. Williams, CPA	Certified Public Accountant

However, when professional designations and academic degrees are used together, periods are generally used throughout.

Leonard W. Williams, *B.S., M.B.A., C.P.A.*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Military and Civil Titles

Military and civil titles should be spelled out in formal writing. The titles may be abbreviated in informal writing as long as a first name or initials are used with the surname. If the surname is used alone, do not abbreviate the title.

Wrong: Capt. Vandenberg
Right: Captain Vandenberg
Right: Captain or Capt. M. Vandenberg
Right: Captain or Capt. Monique Vandenberg

Wrong: Gov. Wilson
Right: Governor Wilson
Right: Governor or Gov. P. Wilson
Right: Governor or Gov. Pete Wilson

Do not abbreviate the title *Honorable* when it is preceded by the word *the*.

Wrong: the Hon. Mike Honda
Right: the Honorable Mike Honda

Titles of the Clergy

Abbreviate titles of the clergy only if they are followed by a first name or initial and a surname. If the title is followed by only a surname, use the full title.

Wrong: Rev. Alden
Right: Reverend Alden
Right: Reverend or Rev. R. Alden
Right: Reverend or Rev. Robert Alden

Do not abbreviate the title *Reverend* when it is preceded by the word *the*. (If the first name or initial is omitted, use the title *Dr.* or *Mr.* instead.)

Wrong: the Rev. Robert Alden
Right: the Reverend Robert Alden
Right: the Reverend Dr. Alden
Right: the Reverend Mr. Alden

Military and civil titles may be abbreviated in informal writing as long as a first name or initials are used with the surname.



Capt. H. Chase

Capt. Hal Chase

Abbreviations and Acronyms

In general, do not abbreviate place names in ordinary writing.



The intersection of Northern Avenue and Western Drive is a common hangout for prostitutes.

Places and Locations

Most place names should be spelled out in ordinary writing. In general, the use of abbreviations should be limited to tables, charts, graphs, and other applications where space is limited. However, there are some exceptions.

Addresses

Most experts prefer to spell out the names of streets and buildings in ordinary writing.

We responded to an accident on Stevens Creek *Boulevard*.

Ed was part of the USAR Team that went to Oklahoma after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal *Building*.

Compass points are generally spelled out when used *before* the street name, but abbreviated when used *after* the street name. Most experts prefer abbreviating compass points without periods.

124 East Main Street, NW

The words *county*, *fort*, *mount*, *point*, and *port* should not be abbreviated, except in applications where space is limited.

We are going to *Port Hueneme* for a week-long rescue class.

The word *Saint* is generally abbreviated in geographical references. It is also commonly abbreviated when used in the names of churches or other institutions, though some people prefer to spell it out.

The victim was attacked while jogging in *St. James Park*.

We received multiple calls for a dumpster fire endangering the structure behind *St. Lucy's* (or *Saint Lucy's*) Church.

City names should be spelled out in ordinary writing. Some experts say that it is acceptable in informal writing to use *L.A.* for *Los Angeles* and *D.C.* for *Washington, D.C.* (District of Columbia). However, the names should generally be spelled out.

Informal: This guy has killed dozens of women from *L.A.* to *D.C.*

Formal: This guy has killed dozens of women from *Los Angeles* to *Washington, D.C.*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

State Names

State names should be spelled out in ordinary writing.

There was an earthquake in *California* last night.

Some experts say that it is acceptable to abbreviate state names in informal writing if they are used in conjunction with city names. However, it is generally preferred to spell the name out.

Acceptable: I was home sick the day of the earthquake in Northridge, *Calif.* (or *CA*)

Preferred: I was home sick the day of the earthquake in Northridge, *California.*

Street and state names are often abbreviated on envelopes and mailing labels. The U.S. Postal Service prefers addresses set in capital letters with no punctuation for better compatibility with automated mail sorting equipment. San serif fonts, such as Helvetica, are best because they are more easily read by the optical character readers (OCRs).

SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
14700 WINCHESTER BLVD
LOS GATOS CA 95032-1818

Postal abbreviations for U.S. states and possessions

The U.S. Postal Service publishes a list of standard address abbreviations that are recommended for use on mailing labels, envelopes, and so forth. Abbreviations should be written without periods.

Alabama	AL	Missouri	MO
Alaska	AK	Montana	MT
American Samoa	AS	Nebraska	NE
Arizona	AZ	Nevada	NV
Arkansas	AR	New Hampshire	NH
California	CA	New Jersey	NJ
Colorado	CO	New Mexico	NM
Connecticut	CT	New York	NY
Delaware	DE	North Carolina	NC
District of Columbia	DC	North Dakota	ND
Federated States of Micronesia	FM	Northern Mariana Islands	MP
Florida	FL	Ohio	OH
Georgia	GA	Oklahoma	OK
Guam	GU	Oregon	OR
Hawaii	HI	Palau	PW
Idaho	ID	Pennsylvania	PA
		Puerto Rico	PR

**Use
standard address
abbreviations for
more efficient
mail sorting.**



**You can contact
the U.S. Postal
Service for a
more complete
list of standard
address
abbreviations.**

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Some experts prefer the more traditional state abbreviations over the postal abbreviations.



However, the standard postal abbreviations should be used on mailing labels and envelopes.

Illinois	IL	Rhode Island	RI
Indiana	IN	South Carolina	SC
Iowa	IA	South Dakota	SD
Kansas	KS	Tennessee	TN
Kentucky	KY	Texas	TX
Louisiana	LA	Utah	UT
Maine	ME	Vermont	VT
Marshall Islands	MH	Virginia	VA
Maryland	MD	Virgin Islands	VI
Massachusetts	MA	Washington	WA
Michigan	MI	West Virginia	WV
Minnesota	MN	Wisconsin	WI
Mississippi	MS	Wyoming	WY

Traditional state abbreviations

The following are the more traditional abbreviations. They should be punctuated with periods as shown below. Some experts prefer these abbreviations over the postal abbreviations, except on envelopes and mailing labels.

Alabama	Ala.	Montana	Mont.
Alaska	Alas.	Nebraska	Neb., Nebr.
Arizona	Ariz.	Nevada	Nev.
Arkansas	Ark.	New Hampshire	N.H.
California	Calif., Cal.	New Jersey	N.J.
Colorado	Colo., Col.	New Mexico	N.M., N. Mex.
Connecticut	Conn., Ct.	New York	N.Y.
Delaware	Del.	North Carolina	N.C.
District of Columbia	D.C.	North Dakota	N.D., N. Dak.
Florida	Fla.	Ohio	—
Georgia	Ga.	Oklahoma	Okla.
Guam	—	Oregon	Ore., Oreg.
Hawaii	Haw.	Pennsylvania	Pa., Penn.
Idaho	Ida., Id.	Puerto Rico	P.R.
Illinois	Ill.	Rhode Island	R.I.
Indiana	Ind.	South Carolina	S.C.
Iowa	Ia., Io.	South Dakota	S.D., S. Dak.
Kansas	Kan., Kans.	Tennessee	Tenn.
Kentucky	Ky., Ken.	Texas	Tex.
Louisiana	La.	Utah	Ut.
Maine	Me.	Vermont	Vt.
Maryland	Md.	Virginia	Va.
Massachusetts	Mass.	Virgin Islands	V.I.
Michigan	Mich.	Washington	Wash.
Minnesota	Minn.	West Virginia	W. Va.
Mississippi	Miss.	Wisconsin	Wis.
Missouri	Mo.	Wyoming	Wyo., Wy.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Country Names

In general, country names should be spelled out when used in ordinary writing. However, abbreviations may be used in charts, tables, and other applications where space is limited.

She warned us about drug traffic coming from *Mexico*.

In general, spell out *United States* when using it as a noun.

We intercepted a shipment of cocaine on its way from Mexico to the *United States*.

However, *United States* can be abbreviated when used in a direct quotation.

“We intercepted a shipment of cocaine on its way from Mexico to the *U.S.*,” Sergeant Harris reported.

United States can also be abbreviated when used in headlines.

Domestic Terrorism in the *U.S.*

The *United States* is often abbreviated when used as an adjective, though many experts prefer spelling it out in formal writing.

Informal: Many Americans are frustrated with the *U.S. judicial system*.

Formal: Many Americans are frustrated with the *United States judicial system*.

Informal: We need to notify the *U.S. Coast Guard* about the spill.

Formal: We need to notify the *United States Coast Guard* about the spill.

The majority of experts prefer using periods when abbreviating the *United States (U.S.)*. However, some say that it is acceptable to omit the periods (*US*), especially in charts, tables, and other applications where space is tight. Periods should definitely be omitted when writing the abbreviations of federal agencies.

U.S. Coast Guard	→	USCG	(not U.S.C.G.)
U.S. Forest Service	→	USFS	(not U.S.F.S.)
U.S. Marshal's Office	→	USMS	(not U.S.M.S.)

Most experts agree that the *Union of Soviet Socialist Republic* can be abbreviated as *U.S.S.R.* in ordinary writing. However, some prefer writing *Soviet Union*, *Moscow*, or *Russia* instead.

In general, spell out *United States* when using it as a noun.

We are concerned about the growing risk of terrorism in the United States.



The *United States* may be abbreviated when used as an adjective in informal writing.

The U.S. government will not give in to terrorists.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Words such as *Association, Bureau, Department, and Division* should not be abbreviated, except where space is limited.

Notify the Federal Aviation Association.



However, it is acceptable to use abbreviations or acronyms in place of company names.

Notify the FAA.

Names of Organizations

Company Names in Ordinary Writing

The rules allow for some flexibility when it comes to the names of companies or other organizations. Some experts prefer not to abbreviate any part of the name unless the abbreviation is part of the *official* name. Others say that it is permissible to abbreviate words such as those listed below. Whenever possible, follow the company's preference.

Brothers	Bros.	Limited	Ltd.
Company	Co.	Manufacturers	Mfrs.
Corporation	Corp.	Manufacturing	Mfg.
Incorporated	Inc.	Railroad	R.R.

The abbreviations *Inc.* and *Ltd.* are often omitted in ordinary writing unless the full formal name of the company is desired.

Spell out words such as *Association, Bureau, Department, and Division*. Do not abbreviate, except in cases where space is limited.

Wrong: Santa Clara County Fire *Dept.*
Right: Santa Clara County Fire *Department*

Wrong: National Fire Protection *Assn.*
Right: National Fire Protection *Association*

Do not use an ampersand (&) in place of *and* unless the ampersand is part of the official business name.

Official Abbreviations or Acronyms

It is acceptable to use official abbreviations or acronyms in place of company names. Use capital letters without periods or spaces between them.

NRC	National Response Center
IAFF	International Association of Fire Fighters
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization

If there is a possibility that readers may not know what the abbreviation stands for, spell it out the first time you use it.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA)* fined the company owner for numerous safety violations.

Dates and Times

General Guidelines

Do not abbreviate days, months, or holidays in ordinary writing.

Wrong: He has been missing since *Sun.* afternoon.
Right: He has been missing since *Sunday* afternoon.

Wrong: Fire killed 492 people at the Cocanut Grove night-club in Boston, Massachusetts, on *Nov. 28, 1942.*
Right: Fire killed 492 people at the Cocanut Grove night-club in Boston, Massachusetts, on *November 28, 1942.*

The word *Saint*, however, is commonly abbreviated, except in the most formal situations.

Informal: The victim was driving home from a *St. Patrick's Day* party when the accident occurred.
Formal: The victim was driving home from a *Saint Patrick's Day* party when the accident occurred.

Some abbreviations of time are always acceptable, even in formal writing.

The Quake of '89 occurred at exactly 5:04 *p.m.* PDT.

However, do not abbreviate expressions of time if they are not used with specific numbers.

Wrong: The accident occurred in the *early p.m.*
Right: The accident occurred in the *early evening.*

Abbreviations of time are commonly used in technical writing.

According to the NFPA *Fire Protection Handbook*, a *30-min* exposure to hydrogen cyanide at 135 ppm may be fatal to humans.

A *2-hr* fire-resistance rating indicates that the assembly withstood the standard test for longer than *2 hrs* without failure, based on specific acceptance criteria.

Do not abbreviate the names of days, months, or holidays in ordinary writing.

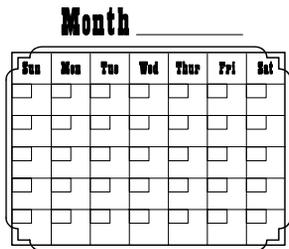
We had two back-to-back second-alarm structure fires on Xmas day.
(wrong)



We had two back-to-back second-alarm structure fires on Christmas day.
(right)

Abbreviations and Acronyms

It is acceptable to abbreviate the names of days, months, and holidays in applications where space is limited.



Day and Month Abbreviations

It is acceptable to abbreviate the names of days, months, and holidays in charts, graphs, or other applications where space is tight. The abbreviations in the left-hand column below are the most widely accepted. However, if space is very tight, you can use the shorter abbreviations in the right-hand column.

	<u>Preferred</u>	<u>Acceptable</u>
Sunday	Sun.	Su
Monday	Mon.	M
Tuesday	Tues. or Tue.	Tu
Wednesday	Wed.	W
Thursday	Thurs. or Thur.	Th
Friday	Fri.	F
Saturday	Sat.	Sa
January	Jan.	Ja
February	Feb.	F
March	Mar.	Mr
April	Apr.	Ap
May	(not usually abbreviated)	My
June	Jun.	Je
July	Jul.	Jl
August	Aug.	Au
September	Sept. or Sep.	S
October	Oct.	O
November	Nov.	N
December	Dec.	D

You may be able to use other one-letter abbreviations (such as *S* for *Saturday* or *Sunday* and *J* for *January*, *June*, or *July*) on calendars, charts, graphs, and other applications, as long as readers will not be confused.

Shortened date formats such as 6/3/97 may be used in situations where space is limited, but should not be used in ordinary writing. It does not look as professional as writing the full date. In addition, this format can mean different things to different people. To most Americans, 6/3/97 means June 3, 1997. But in some countries, it would be interpreted as 06 March 1997.

Abbreviations of Time

The following are some common abbreviations of time. While some experts prefer to punctuate them with periods, they may be written without periods if the meaning is clear.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

sec	second or seconds (also <i>secs</i>)
min	minute or minutes
hr	hour or hours (also <i>hrs</i>)
da	day or days
wk	week or weeks (also <i>wks</i>)
mo	month or months (also <i>mos</i>)
yr	year or years (also <i>yrs</i>)

These time frames should be spelled out in ordinary writing to avoid confusing your readers. However, abbreviations are commonly used in technical and scientific writing; in informal memos; and in charts, tables, graphs, and other applications where space is tight.

The building plans call for Type 3 construction, with *1-hr* fire resistance rating for the walls and structural elements.

The flow rate through a 14 gauge, 5 cm catheter is approximately *125 mL/min*.

Two other abbreviations worth mentioning are A.D. (meaning “anno Domini” or “in the year of our Lord”) and B.C. (meaning “before Christ”). A.D. is written before the date (for example, *A.D. 1997*), whereas B.C. is written after the date (for example, *1600 B.C.*).

The a.m./p.m. controversy

There is a lot of disagreement among the experts as to how to write abbreviations of time. Many experts prefer to lowercase *a.m.* and *p.m.* Some prefer to capitalize *A.M.* and *P.M.* Some recommended using small caps (*A.M.* and *P.M.*) rather than full size capital letters—if you use capitals at all. Finally, some experts say that any of these options is acceptable. The abbreviations are usually punctuated with periods. However, some experts say the periods may be omitted when using capital letters, either large or small. Pick the style that works for you and use it consistently.

Do not combine these abbreviations with the words *morning*, *noon*, *afternoon*, *evening*, *night*, or *midnight*. It would be redundant.

Wrong. I estimate the time of death to be *8:00 p.m. at night*.

Right: I estimate the time of death to be *8:00 p.m.*

Right: I estimate the time of death to be *8:00 at night*.

Wrong. The bomb was set to go off at *12:00 p.m. noon*.

Right: The bomb was set to go off at *12:00 p.m.*

Right: The bomb was set to go off at *12:00 noon*.

Right: The bomb was set to go off at *noon*.

In general, either lowercase (a.m.) or capital (A.M.) letters are acceptable when indicating time.

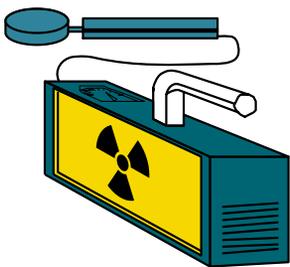
The drill will start promptly at 9:00 a.m.



The drill will start promptly at 9:00 A.M.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Short units of measurement should be spelled out in ordinary writing.



Units of measurement are usually abbreviated in technical and scientific writing.

Set up an initial control zone where radiation levels are at or below 2mR/hr.

Units of Measure

In Ordinary Writing

Short units of measurement should be spelled out rather than abbreviated in ordinary writing. However, they may be abbreviated in charts, graphs, tables, or other applications where space is tight.

We used a *24-foot* ladder to reach the second-story window.

Engine 9 responded on a public service detail to assist a *450-pound* man back into bed.

If a number is spelled out rather than written as a figure, the unit of measure should be spelled out too.

According to the *Emergency Response Guidebook*, we should evacuate to a distance of *three miles* downwind from the release. (not *three mi*)

The victim had a *six-inch* laceration on her leg. (not *six-in*)

Longer or technical terms of measurement may be abbreviated for ease of reading. However, terms that may be unfamiliar to your readers should be spelled out the first time they are used, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses.

A *British thermal unit (Btu)* is the amount of heat required to raise the temperature of one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit.

According to the radar, the suspect was traveling in excess of 90 *mph* when officers first spotted him.

In Technical and Scientific Writing

Units of measurement are usually abbreviated in technical and scientific writing.

The procedure calls for administering 500 *ml* of *D₅W*.

Set up an initial control zone at the point where radiation levels are at or below 2 *mR/hr* above the background radiation level as measured by a Rad meter or Geiger counter.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

With or Without Periods

Abbreviations for metric units of measurement are written without periods.

We found a Browning *9 mm* handgun next to the victim.

We administered *50 mg* lidocaine IV push, followed by infusion of *2 mg/min*.

The experts do not agree on what to do with English units of measurement. Some prefer using periods; others prefer to omit them. In general, the trend is to minimize the use of punctuation where the meaning is clear. Most readers would have no difficulty recognizing abbreviations such as *mph*, *psi*, *rpm*, *gal*, and *ft*. These can easily be written without periods.

The speed limit is *25 mph* near a school while children are outside or crossing the street.

Tank test pressures range from *35 to 100 psi* on nonpressure tank cars.

Be careful with the abbreviation *in* (for *inch* or *inches*). If readers can mistake it for the preposition *in*, as in the first example below, you should use a period.

Confusing. Floors of fire-resistive construction shall extend not less than 6 in beyond the appliance on all sides.

Clear. Floors of fire-resistive construction shall extend not less than 6 in. beyond the appliance on all sides.

Other Guidelines

Units of measurement are usually abbreviated the same way in both singular and plural form.

ft	(foot, feet)	psi	(pounds per square inch)
mi	(mile, miles)	mph	(miles per hour)
gal	(gallon, gallons)	rpm	(revolutions per minute)
lb	(pound, pounds)	Btu	(British thermal units)

Some units of measurement can be made plural by adding an *s* (for example, *lbs*, *yds*). However, the trend is toward omitting the *s* and simplifying the abbreviation.

Metric abbreviations of measurement are written without periods.

However, the experts do not always agree regarding English abbreviations.



The speed limit is 25 mph (or m.p.h) while children are outside or crossing the street.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

You can reserve abbreviations for the last of two or more numbers in series if readers will not have difficulty understanding what they are reading.



This sprinkler head will discharge 22 to 40 *gpm* at initial water pressures of 15 to 50 *psi*.

It is acceptable to reserve abbreviations for the last of two or more numbers in series if readers will not have difficulty understanding what they are reading.

This sprinkler head will discharge 22 to 40 *gpm* at initial water pressures of 15 to 50 *psi*.

The fuel load in hospital patient rooms generally ranges from 3 to 4.5 *lb per sq.ft.*

However, abbreviations should be repeated with each number if readers might otherwise be confused.

Exit doors from premanufactured paint spray booths shall not be less than 2 *ft 6 in* by 6 *ft 8 in*.

Poison gases in hazard zone B have an LC_{50} greater than 200 *ppm* and less than or equal to 1000 *ppm*.

Symbols are repeated with each number.

Approximately 75% to 90% of sex offenders are known to the children they abuse.

Cargo tanks constructed of stainless steel will sustain significant loss of strength at temperatures of 1500 *F* to 1600 *F*.

Symbols are sometimes used to help readers comprehend concepts more quickly.

No symbols: Vapors or gases with vapor densities greater than one are heavier than air. Gases with vapor densities less than one are lighter than air.

Symbols: Vapors or gases with vapor densities greater than one (>1) are heavier than air. Gases with vapor densities less than one (<1) are lighter than air.

When numbers and abbreviations are used together as a compound adjective before a noun, they are joined with a hyphen.

The only thing he stole was an expensive 35-*mm* camera.

The department just purchased a new 1500-*gpm* pumper.

Latin Expressions

Using the Latin Abbreviations

The following are common Latin abbreviations. Some experts recommend using English equivalents rather than abbreviations. Yet the abbreviations are frequently used in technical and business writing. They can be extremely useful when space is limited. (Notice how periods are used with these abbreviations.)

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Original Expression</u>	<u>English Equivalent</u>
e.g.	exempli gratia	for example
et al.	et alii	and others
etc.	et cetera	and so forth
i.e.	id est	that is
ibid.	ibidem	in the same place
vs. or v.	versus	against
viz.	videlicet	namely

Use commas after the abbreviations *i.e.*, *e.g.*, and *viz.*, just as you would with the English expressions. (See page 56 for more information on using commas with examples.)

The results of the blood test showed that Trevor had drugs (*i.e.*, marijuana) in his system.

There are many areas of specialization within the fire service (*e.g.*, fire prevention, training, public education).

Avoid being redundant. Since the English equivalents of *et al.* and *etc.* contain the word *and*, do not use *and* with these abbreviations.

Wrong: The patient's vital signs (pulse, respiration, blood pressure, *and etc.*) were all within normal limits.

Right: The patient's vital signs (pulse, respiration, blood pressure, *etc.*) were all within normal limits.

Do not use *etc.* or its English equivalent in conjunction with *e.g.*, *for example*, or *such as*. That would also be redundant.

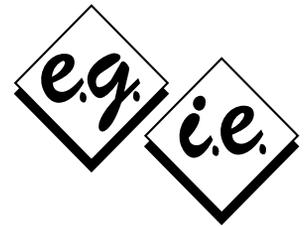
Wrong: Henry has experimented with several drugs (*e.g.*, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine, *etc.*).

Right: Henry has experimented with several drugs (*e.g.*, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine).

Right: Henry has experimented with several drugs (heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine, *etc.*).

Latin abbreviations often have periods. When in doubt, check your dictionary.

Use commas after the abbreviations *i.e.*, *e.g.*, and *viz.*, just as you would with the English expressions.

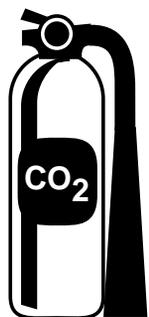


The results of the blood test showed that Trevor had drugs (i.e., marijuana) in his system.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Chemical names are usually not abbreviated in ordinary writing.

Do not use water on an electrical fire.



Exceptions are made for common chemical symbols that readers should recognize.

You can use a CO₂ extinguisher instead.

Miscellaneous Abbreviations

Chemical Names and Symbols

Chemical names are usually not abbreviated in ordinary writing.

Wrong: Our engine carries a thousand gallons of H_2O .

Right: Our engine carries a thousand gallons of *water*.

Common chemical symbols are acceptable in ordinary writing if readers will have no difficulty understanding them.

We were able to extinguish the fire with a CO_2 extinguisher.

Abbreviations and chemical symbols may be used in technical and scientific writing, charts, tables, equations, and formulas.

Benzene (C_6H_6) is the most toxic of all the aromatic hydrocarbons.

Carbon tetrachloride (CCl_4) was a very effective extinguishing agent. However, *carbon tet*, also known as Halon 1040, had to be taken off the market because it was very toxic.

Colleges and Courses of Instruction

Names of colleges and collegiate associations are often abbreviated. The abbreviations are written without periods.

SCU	Santa Clara University
SJSU	San Jose State University
UCSC	University of California at Santa Cruz
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association

College degrees are often abbreviated. Most experts prefer to write the abbreviations with periods, though some say omitting them is acceptable.

A.A.	Associate of Arts
B.S.	Bachelor of Science
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Do not abbreviate courses of instruction in ordinary writing.

Wrong: *Basic chem.* did not adequately prepare me for hazardous materials training.

Right: The *basic chemistry classes* I took in college did not adequately prepare me for hazardous materials training.

Right: *Basic Chemistry* did not adequately prepare me for hazardous materials training.

However, it is appropriate to use shortened names that have been accepted as words in their own right.

I'd like to take a *math* (or *mathematics*) course so that I can better understand the principles of hydraulics.

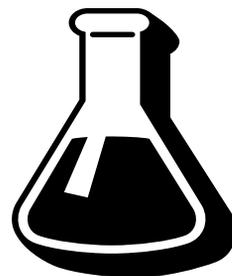
References

Words such as *volume*, *chapter*, *page*, and *figure* should generally be spelled out. However, they are often abbreviated in bibliographies and in tables, charts, and other applications where space is limited. The appropriate abbreviations are as follows:

<u>Original (singular, plural)</u>	<u>Abbreviation (singular, plural)</u>
volume, volumes	vol., vols.
chapter, chapters	ch., chs.
page, pages	p. (or pg.), pp.
line, lines	l., ll.
figure, figures	fig.
note, notes	n., nn.
copy, copies	c., cc.
verse, verses	v., vv.

Do not abbreviate courses of instruction in ordinary writing.

Basic chem. did not prepare me for hazardous materials training.
(wrong)

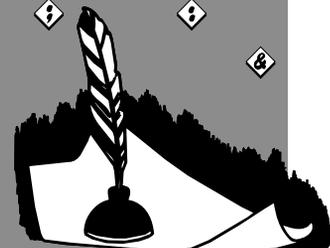
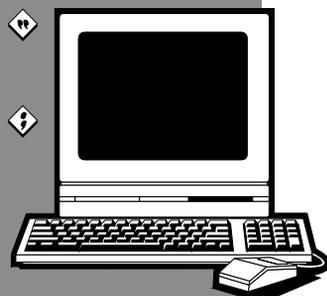


Basic Chemistry did not prepare me for hazardous materials training.
(right)

SAMPLE

Chapter 13: Numbers

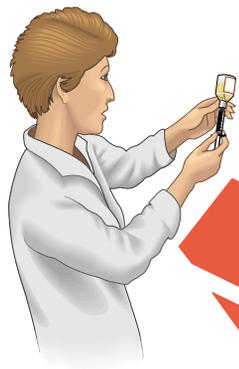
SAVED!



Numbers

The type of writing is one of several factors that impact how to write numbers.

Figures are normally used in *technical* and *scientific* writing to help readers grasp the information quickly.



The doctor ordered me to decrease the dosage to 5 cc.

General Guidelines for Choosing Between Figures and Words

In general, the biggest dilemma when dealing with numbers is determining whether to represent them with figures or words. There is no question that figures are easier and faster to read than words are. As a result, there is a trend toward using figures whenever they can be justified. Yet there are many times when words are more appropriate.

It is difficult to give one set of guidelines that you can always count on because the experts themselves often disagree. Plus, there are many factors that affect the final decision. The first few pages provide some general guidelines to get you started. More specific rules are covered later in the chapter.

Consider the Type of Writing

The type of writing has a significant impact on whether you should use figures or words. Figures are normally used in *technical* and *scientific* writing to help readers grasp the information quickly.

A flammable liquid is one that a flash point of not more than *141°F (60.5°C)*.

A cryogenic liquid means a refrigerated liquefied gas having a boiling point colder than *-90°C (-130°F)* at *101.3 kPA (14.7 psi)* absolute.

Numbers are more commonly represented by words in *general* writing. Using words rather than figures keeps the numbers from being too obtrusive.

The fire had consumed over *two thousand acres* before we were able to contain it.

Paramedics transported *twenty-three* people to the hospital after last night's riot.

Numbers

The area that is most controversial is *business* writing. Some experts favor using figures. Others prefer using words. However, you should use the format that best meets the needs of your audience. Consider the example below. It is tough enough to gain compliance with fire code regulations without making it harder for a business owner to read a number. This is an effective use of figures.

Figures: The code requires that you maintain *36* inches of clearance in front of the fire extinguisher.

Words: The code requires that you maintain *thirty-six* inches of clearance in front of the fire extinguisher.

The following example could almost go either way, depending on where you want to put your emphasis. Using figures puts more emphasis on the number of hours, whereas using words places more emphasis on community service.

Figures: You must perform *200* hours of community service as a condition of your probation.

Words: You must perform *two hundred* hours of community service as a condition of your probation.

Sometimes, particularly in legal documents, it is appropriate to use both words and figures. However, this format is not widely used in most writing.

You will have *fourteen (14)* days to comply with the requirements, or we will revoke your occupancy permit.

Your agency may have specific guidelines for the documents you write. If so, follow those guidelines.

Use Words for Small Numbers, Figures for Big Ones

Most experts agree that you should use words to represent small numbers and figures to represent larger numbers. However, let's take a closer look at what this means.

Numbers from 1 to 10

In general, use words to represent numbers from 1 to 10. Again, figures are more common in technical and scientific writing. Other exceptions will be discussed throughout the chapter. But for most general writing, spell out the numbers.

We found *three* people injured at the base of the cliff.

Our department had *ten* recruits in the last joint academy.

Numbers are more commonly represented by words in general writing.

We have thirty-five extinguishers that need to be serviced.



In business writing, you should use the format that provides the most clarity.

Maintain 36 inches of clearance in front of the fire extinguisher.

Numbers

The size of the number is another important factor.

In general, use words to represent small numbers and figures to represent large ones.



Use the three-second rule to avoid following too closely.

The average stopping distance at 55 mph is 228 feet.

Numbers from 11 to 99

The experts are divided on how to handle numbers from 11 to 99. Some favor using figures for any numbers over 10. Others prefer spelling out numbers that can be written in only one or two words. (Hyphenated numbers from *twenty-one* to *ninety-nine* are generally considered to be one word.)

Figures: The child has been missing for *36* hours.

Words: The child has been missing for *thirty-six* hours.

Since the experts do not agree on this issue, you will need to evaluate other criteria when choosing between figures and words. How the type of writing impacts that choice was addressed on the previous pages. Other factors include how much emphasis you need to give the number, where the number is positioned in the sentence, the need for consistency when multiple numbers are used, and what information is being communicated by the numbers. These issues will be addressed throughout the chapter.

Numbers larger than 99

Numbers larger than 99 that *can* be expressed in only one or two words are generally spelled out.

The victim was dragged approximately *four hundred* feet by the hit-and-run vehicle.

Over *a thousand* gallons of fuel were spilled into the bay.

Numbers larger than 99 that *can't* be expressed in only one or two words should be written as figures.

The average stopping distance at that speed is 162 feet.

The stolen necklace was valued at \$34,500.

If you use a number in the figurative sense, as in the example below, the number should be spelled out. The words *a hundred* are being used to mean “many,” not an actual count of 100.

For every drug dealer we put behind bars, there are a *hundred* others anxious to move in on his territory.

When there are two ways to express a large number, use the simpler form.

Numbers

Use this: Nearly *twelve hundred* employees had to be laid off when the factory burned down.

Not this: Nearly *one thousand two hundred* employees had to be laid off when the factory burned down.

Round numbers over a million may be expressed as a combination of figures and words.

Severe flooding threatened more than *30 million* homes across the country this month.

Treat Ordinal Numbers as You Do Cardinal Numbers

Ordinal numbers (*first, second, third*) are treated much like cardinal numbers (*one, two, three*). In general, you should spell out ordinal numbers that can be written in one or two words.

Campbell Police Department was *one of the first* police departments in the country to implement a “Cop Card” program.

Hyphenated ordinal numbers from *twenty-first* to *ninety-ninth* are generally considered to be one word. However, the experts don’t always agree on how to write them. Some prefer to use figures; others prefer to spell out the words. You may need to evaluate what works best based on the type of writing, how much emphasis you need to give the number, where the number is positioned in the sentence, the need for consistency when multiple numbers are used, and what information is being communicated by the numbers.

Figures: On the *63rd* day since his accident, Frank finally woke from the coma.

Words: On the *sixty-third* day since his accident, Frank finally woke from the coma.

Larger numbers should be expressed with figures.

Scott Greenly was the *187th* CHP officer to be killed in the line of duty.

Note: The words *second* and *third* can be abbreviated in two ways.

Acceptable: 2d, 3d

Preferred: 2nd, 3rd

Large numbers that can be expressed in only one or two words are generally spelled out.

More than a thousand officers attended Scott’s funeral.



Ordinal numbers are treated much like cardinal numbers.

Scott Greenly was the 187th CHP officer to be killed in the line of duty.

Numbers

Express numbers with figures whenever you use abbreviations and symbols.

The patient's blood pressure is 130/82 mm Hg.



Symbols are repeated with each number in a range of numbers. Abbreviations do not need to be repeated.

His temperature has dropped from 102°F to 100.4°F.

Use Figures with Abbreviations and Symbols

Express numbers with figures whenever you use abbreviations and symbols.

He was driving *90 mph*.

The patient's core temperature is *85°F*.

When spilled in water, the materials on this list may generate toxic vapors that endanger the public up to *10 km (6.2 miles)* downwind of the incident.

Symbols are repeated with each number in a range of numbers. Abbreviations do not need to be repeated as long as the meaning remains clear.

The flammable range of gasoline is *1.4% to 7.6%*.

Codes and standards typically call for fire walls to have a parapet *18" to 36"* above a combustible roof.

Tank pressures range from *100 to 600 psi*.

Use Figures with Numbers in Series

In general, use figures when there are several numbers in series. Separate the numbers with commas.

The man attacked five women, ages *69, 74, 82, 58, and 73*, respectively.

However, words can be used when the numbers are small and the words don't make the sentence too cumbersome.

We rescued three children, ages *three, four, and six*, from the burning building.

Don't Begin a Sentence with a Figure

Spell out any number that begins a sentence.

Thirty-five people were arrested at the protest rally.

Fifteen hundred people were evacuated from their homes because of the recent flooding.

Numbers

If the number would be long or awkward if it were spelled out, rewrite the sentence to place the number elsewhere.

Awkward: *Twelve hundred and fifty-one* families filed applications for disaster assistance.

Revised: The federal government received disaster assistance applications from *1251* families.

While the experts agree that you should not begin a sentence with a figure, some say it is acceptable if the figure represents a year. Clearly, the figure is easier to read than words. However, it is generally better to rewrite the sentence.

Acceptable: *Nineteen ninety-one* was the year we had the devastating fire in the Oakland hills.

Questionable: *1991* was the year we had the devastating fire in the Oakland hills.

Preferred: The devastating fire in the Oakland hills occurred in *1991*.

Spell out any number that begins a sentence.

Sixty-four people were injured when the train derailed.

Be Consistent with Numbers in the Same Sentence

When you use several *related* numbers in the same sentence, use either all figures or all words.

The fire at the MGM Grand Hotel killed *85* people and injured more than *600* others.

The jury consists of *seven* women and *five* men.

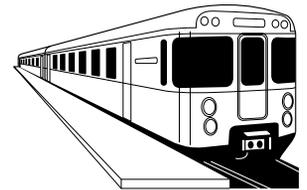
If the sentence contains large numbers that need to be written as figures, write *all* the numbers as figures—even numbers from 1 to 10. Use a consistent format throughout the sentence.

Wrong: There were *154* adults and *eight* children aboard the plane it crashed.

Right: There were *154* adults and *8* children aboard the plane it crashed.

It is acceptable to use different formats for *unrelated* numbers. In the example below, the number *two* refers to engine companies, whereas the other numbers refer to responses.

Our *two* busiest engine companies each respond to an average of *150* calls per month, or *1800* calls per year.



Use a consistent format for related numbers.

There were 118 adults and 9 children aboard at the time.

Numbers

When two numbers are adjacent to each other and one is part of a compound modifier, write one as a figure and the other as a word.



Two 4-year-olds wandered away when their parents weren't watching.

Use Different Formats for Adjacent Numbers

When two numbers are adjacent to each other and one is part of a compound modifier, write one as a figure and the other as a word.

Two 12-year-old Asian boys were arrested for attacking a younger child on the school playground.

The experts provide conflicting guidelines regarding which number to spell out and which one to express in figures. The bottom line is to do whatever makes the sentence easy to read. Each set of examples below is similar. However, option 1 is easier to read in the first set, whereas option 2 is easier in the second.

Option 1: Officer Davis confiscated a briefcase containing 750 *twenty-dollar bills*.

Option 2: Officer Davis confiscated a briefcase containing *seven hundred fifty* \$20 bills.

Option 1: Exhibit B is a plain manila envelope containing 80 *five-dollar bills*.

Option 2: Exhibit B is a plain manila envelope containing *eighty* \$5 bills.

Use commas to separate adjacent numbers if appropriate

Sometimes, as in the example below, it will be neither appropriate nor desirable to spell out one of the numbers. To avoid misreading, separate the numbers with a comma.

Confusing: On *April 19 168* people were killed when an explosion ripped through the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Clear: On *April 19, 168* people were killed when an explosion ripped through the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Follow an Organization's Preference

When writing the name of an organization or product, follow the organization's preference.

Two men robbed the *7-Eleven* store on Sunnyside Avenue.

A young boy was injured when a plastic *7UP* bottle filled with dry ice exploded.

Specific Topics

Dates and Times

Several factors affect how to write dates and times. The following are some basic guidelines. Sometimes, however, it is primarily a matter of personal preference.

Dates

In general, use figures to express dates, regardless of whether you use the traditional month-day-year sequence or the inverted day-month-year sequence.

Traditional: We found the body on *December 15, 1995.*

Military: We found the body on *15 December 1995.*

Notice that there is a comma between the date and the year when using the traditional month-day-year sequence. The comma is necessary to prevent misreading adjacent numbers. However, no commas are needed when using the inverted day-month-year sequence or when only the month and year are provided (as shown below).

We weren't able to solve the homicide until *March 1997.*

Use cardinal numbers (*1, 2, 3*) to express a full date, even though dates are normally pronounced as ordinal numbers.

I was born on *June 25, 1960.* (not *June 25th*)

Use ordinal numbers (*1st, 2nd, 3rd*) when a date precedes the month and is followed by the word *of*.

We will have extra personnel on duty the *4th of July* because of the high fire danger. (or *Fourth of July*)

Either cardinal numbers or ordinal numbers may be used when the year is omitted.

The trial is set to start on *May 9.* (or *May 9th*)

Use ordinal numbers when the month is omitted.

We inspected the facility on the *23rd.*

**In general,
use figures to
express dates.
Use cardinal
numbers (1, 2, 3)
when writing a
full date.**

***She disappeared
on May 3, 1997.***



**Either cardinal
numbers or
ordinal numbers
may be used
when the year
is omitted.**

***She disappeared
on May 3.
(or May 3rd)***

Numbers

Decades may be expressed in several ways.

AIDS took a tremendous toll in the eighties and nineties. (or '80s and '90s)



Centuries are generally spelled out, though some writers will use figures instead.

Perhaps we will find a cure as we enter the twenty-first century.

Once a numeric date has been provided, an elliptical reference to a related date can be spelled out.

Elliot was reported missing on the fifth of October, but his body was not discovered until the *ninth*.

Years are sometimes abbreviated in informal writing or when referring to well-known events.

My house was damaged by the Quake of '89.

Dates are occasionally written with the abbreviation A.D. (meaning "anno Domini" or "in the year of our Lord") or B.C. (meaning "before Christ"). A.D. is written before the date (for example, *A.D. 1998*), whereas B.C. is written after the date (for example, *1200 B.C.*).

Shortened date formats such as 7/2/98 may be used in situations where space is limited, but should not be used in ordinary writing. It does not look as professional as writing the full date. In addition, this format can mean different things to different people. To most Americans, 7/2/98 means July 2, 1998. But in some countries, it would be interpreted as 07 February 1998.

Decades and centuries

Decades may be expressed in several ways. The important thing is to be consistent. Pick one format and stick with it, at least within the same document.

Words: the nineteen-nineties
the nineties

Figures: the 1990s
the '90s

Notice that the words are not capitalized. Capitalize only in special references such as *the Gay Nineties* or *the Roaring Twenties*.

Centuries are generally spelled out, though some writers will use figures instead, particularly where space is tight or where special emphasis is desired.

What can we expect in the *twenty-first century*?

Times

Most experts prefer to use figures when expressing exact time.

A powerful earthquake hit the San Francisco Bay Area at *9:14 this morning*.

Numbers

Always use figures when expressing time with the abbreviations *a.m.* and *p.m.* Do not use *o'clock* or expressions such as *in the morning* or *at night* with *a.m.* and *p.m.* It would be redundant. (Refer to page 437 for information on choosing between *a.m./p.m.*, *A.M./P.M.*, and *A.M./P.M.*)

The first major aftershock struck at *9:17 a.m.*

The time of day is usually spelled out when followed by *o'clock*. Some writers use figures instead for emphasis, but the use of figures is nonstandard. Expressions of time containing *o'clock* should be followed by phrases such as *in the morning* or *at night* if there is a chance readers may misunderstand the meaning.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported that by *ten o'clock in the morning* there were at least seven aftershocks registering more than 5.0 on the Richter scale.

The time of day is usually spelled out in general writing when referring to the hour, half hour, or quarter hour.

The Emergency Operations Center was activated at *a quarter to ten* and was fully staffed by *ten-thirty*.

However, figures are acceptable when referring to the hour, half hour, or quarter hour if you want to emphasize the time, perhaps for quick comprehension. Figures are also recommended if you have two or more times written in the same sentence and need to maintain a consistent format. The example below contains an exact time (*9:47*) rather than an approximate time (*a quarter to ten*); therefore *10:30* is also expressed in figures rather than words.

The Emergency Operations Center was officially activated at *9:47* and was fully staffed by *10:30*.

Zeros are not needed to denote minutes when referring to even hours. However, they are acceptable if you want to emphasize the precise time.

The EOC manager scheduled a media briefing for *11 a.m.* (or *11:00 a.m.*)

Some experts recommend using zeros to be consistent if you have two or more times in the same sentence. Others say the zeros aren't necessary. Pick the style that works for you.

The briefing ran from *11 a.m.* (or *11:00 a.m.*) to *11:20 a.m.*

Always use figures when expressing time with the abbreviations *a.m.* and *p.m.*

The bomb was detonated at 4:58 p.m.



The time of day is usually spelled out when followed by *o'clock*

The bomb was detonated shortly before five o'clock.

Numbers

For the most part, you should spell out periods of time in general writing.

The paramedics will be here within five minutes.



However, it is acceptable to use figures when the number deserves special emphasis.

Flush your eyes for at least 15 minutes.

When you refer to *twelve o'clock*, you can often avoid confusion by using *noon* or *midnight* rather than *a.m.* or *p.m.* Alternately, you can use *noon* or *midnight* alone.

Off-duty personnel were requested to return to the stations by *12 noon*. (or *by noon*)

While colons are used to separate hours and minutes in standard time references, no punctuation is used with military time. Also, do not use *a.m.*, *p.m.*, *o'clock*, or expressions such as *in the morning* or *at night* with military time.

A strong aftershock at *1241 hours* ruptured a major gas line near city hall.

Periods of Time

For the most part, spell out periods of time in general writing.

Under normal circumstances, the fire department has a *four-minute response* time to your facility.

The man had been arrested twice in the last *twenty-four months* for driving under the influence.

However, use figures if the number requires more than two words or if the number requires special emphasis.

Simmons served only *191 days* of his one-year sentence.

We operate a *24-hour* crisis hotline.

Use figures in technical and scientific writing.

Openings in *1-hr* enclosures of vertical openings in buildings, such as stairs and shafts, are protected by *1-hr* fire doors.

Ages and Anniversaries

Ages are commonly written as figures.

The *31-year-old* CHP officer was struck and killed by an alleged drunk driver while conducting a routine traffic stop.

It is against the law to serve alcohol to anyone under the *age of 21*.

Numbers

However, ages may be spelled out in nontechnical writing and in formal writing.

The *two-year-old* child sustained minor brain damage after a near-drowning accident in his family's swimming pool.

The suspect is in his *late twenties*.

References to birthdays and anniversaries are commonly spelled out except where special emphasis is desired or where the number requires more than two words.

Because Mark was just a few days away from his *eighteenth* birthday when he committed the murder, the judge decided to try him as an adult.

We designed a new logo to commemorate the department's *50th* anniversary.

Units of Measure

Units of measure should be written as figures when they have a technical significance.

The flash point of gasoline is *-45°F*.

If ventricular fibrillation or ventricular tachycardia persists, countershock with *360 joules*.

Fire apparatus access roads shall have an unobstructed width of not less than *20 feet (6096 mm)* and an unobstructed vertical clearance of not less than *13 feet 6 inches (4115 mm)*.

Figures should also be used when it is important to emphasize the number.

It is against the law to follow within *300 feet* of any emergency vehicle which is answering an emergency call.

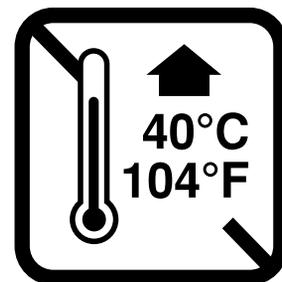
Aisles serving seats on both sides shall have a minimum width of *42 inches*.

Units of measure can be spelled out in nontechnical writing.

The doctor advised him to lose *thirty pounds*.

Units of measurement are generally written as figures.

These materials must be stored in an area where the temperature does not exceed 104°F (40°C).



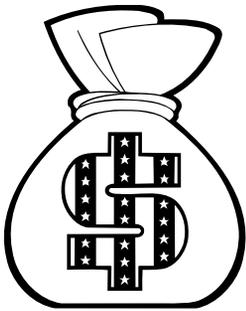
However, the numbers may be spelled out in general writing.

It is ten degrees warmer than it was yesterday.

Numbers

Money is most commonly expressed with figures.

George embezzled over \$150,000 from the company.



Amounts of money can be spelled out in general writing if the numbers can be written in one or two words.

They stole ten thousand dollars from the bank.

The temperature has dropped at least *fifteen degrees* in the last hour.

Anytime an abbreviation or symbol is used, the number must be expressed as a figure.

The patient's blood pressure is *120/86 mmHg*.

The fire was contained to a *10' x 12'* office.

A measurement containing several elements is considered a single unit. Do not separate the elements with a comma.

The baby weighed *eight pounds eleven ounces*.

The suspect is *6 feet 2 inches* tall and weighs 210 pounds.

Use hyphens to connect all elements when this type of measurement is used as a compound adjective.

His accomplice was described as *5-foot-4-inch* female with blonde hair and green eyes.

Money

Money is most commonly expressed with figures.

The fire did roughly *\$60,000* damage to the structure.

John had to pay *\$406* to replace the lost pager.

It is not necessary to use a decimal point and zeros when referring to whole dollar amounts (as in the examples above). However, some experts prefer to use the decimal point and zeros if a whole number appears near other dollar amounts that are not even.

The cashier said the thief stole *\$250.00*, but the register is actually short *\$316.50*. How do you account for the missing money?

Amounts of money can be spelled out in general writing if the numbers can be written in one or two words.

We don't think the motive was robbery because the victim still had *two hundred* dollars in his wallet when we found him.

Numbers

Amounts less than one dollar can be expressed using words or figures.

When did they raise the cost of using a pay phone to *35 cents?* (or *35¢*)

The man catches his victims off guard by saying he needs *fifty cents* for the parking meter. Once his victims open their purses, he proceeds to rob them.

If the sentence contains amounts both greater than and less than one dollar, use a consistent format. In the example below, the sales tax is expressed as *\$0.85* rather than *85¢* so that both figures are written in terms of dollars.

The cost of the pocket mask is *\$10.95* plus *\$0.85* sales tax.

Sums of money in round amounts of a million or more are usually expressed using a combination of figures and words.

Cory had embezzled *\$4.5 million* (or *4.5 million dollars*) over the last three years.

Roads and Addresses

Highway and road numbers are expressed with figures.

The accident was located on the connector ramp from northbound *Highway 85* to southbound *Interstate 280*.

Most street addresses are written in figures.

We received an anonymous tip that the suspect was hiding in a house at *136 Prospect Avenue*.

If the building's name is also its address, the number is spelled out.

We responded to a dumpster fire behind *One Jack London Square*.

In text, it is preferable to spell out the names of numbered streets of 100 or less. However, usage varies. Some experts don't spell out any number greater than 10.

- 1-10: First Street, Fifth Avenue
- 11-100: Thirteenth (or 13th) Street
Eighty-second (or 82nd) Avenue
- >100: 145th Avenue, 164th Street

Most street addresses are written in figures.

We responded to a domestic dispute at 870 Camden Avenue.



Highway and road numbers are expressed with figures.

The house backs up to Highway 17.

Numbers

A number of formats are acceptable when writing a phone number.

800-555-1212

(800) 555-1212

800/555-1212

800.555.1212



When words or letters are used in a phone number, follow the preference of the particular organization.

(800) 47-ARSON

It is best to spell out a numbered street name when the street address and the street name are adjacent to each other. That helps to avoid confusion.

Potentially confusing. 121 11th Street
Clear. 121 Eleventh Street

However, spelling out a street name is clearly not an option when the number is greater than 100. Some experts recommend using a hyphen to separate the address from the street name to minimize confusion.

65 183rd Street or 65-183rd Street

Many government publications use figures for *all* street names just to remain consistent: *400 7th St., 409 3rd St.* As long as the meaning is clear, there is no reason to insist on doing anything else.

Room numbers, suite numbers, and apartment numbers are written in figures.

We found a broken sprinkler head in Suite 205.

Telephone Numbers

When you write seven-digit phone numbers, use a hyphen to separate the first three digits from the last four.

555-1212

When you use the area code, you can use any of the following styles.

800-555-1212 800/555-1212
 (800) 555-1212 800.555.1212

When an organization uses words or letters to express its phone number, follow the organization's preference.

(800) 47-ARSON

Percentages

Percentages are normally expressed as figures, though the numbers may be spelled out in formal writing. The word *percent* is usually spelled out in general writing, but written as a symbol (%) in technical and scientific writing or in charts, tables, and other applications where space is tight.

Doctors gave him only a *20 percent* chance of survival.

The driver's blood alcohol level was *0.24%*.

Oxygen-enriched atmospheres (*>23.5%*) should be considered potentially explosive.

Fractions

In general, spell out common fractions used alone (without a whole number preceding).

Two-thirds of the prisoners in our jail are repeat offenders.

We need to evacuate the area within a *one-half* mile radius.

Use figures, however, in technical writing or anytime the spelled-out form would be long or awkward.

Words on the exit sign shall be at least 6 inches in height with a stroke of not less than *3/4 inch*.

Variations in run or height between adjacent treads or risers shall not exceed *3/16 inch* (4.8 mm).

Note that fractions expressed as figures do not have any endings.

Correct: *3/16 inch*

Incorrect: *3/16th of an inch*

Some fractions can be expressed in more than one way.

Option 1: He died *a half hour* later.

Option 2: He died *half an hour* later.

Option 1: We arrested *a half-dozen* protestors.

Option 2: We arrested *half-a-dozen* protestors.

Percentages are normally expressed as figures.

The driver had a blood alcohol level of 0.28% after the crash.



In general, spell out common fractions used alone.

Three-fourths of the people at the party were legally drunk.

Numbers

Mixed numbers are generally expressed as figures, but may be spelled out in formal writing.

The hose reel contains $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch hose.



The hose reel contains inch-and-a-half hose.

Some experts hyphenate fractions when they are used as adjectives, but not when they are used as nouns. Others hyphenate all fractions regardless of how they are used. Ultimately, either option for expressing fractions used as nouns is acceptable as long as the meaning remains clear.

Adjective. Our tank is *one-half* empty.

Noun option 1: We emptied *one half* of our tank.

Noun option 2: We emptied *one-half* of our tank.

Do not hyphenate *one half* when writing sentences containing the balanced phrases *one half* . . . *the other half*.

One half of the victims were hospitalized; *the other half* were treated for minor injuries and released the same day.

Be careful to put hyphens in the correct location when you spell out fractions. The following examples show how hyphens are used to distinguish the numerators and denominators.

eighty-five hundredths = 85/100

eight five-hundredths = 8/500

Mixed numbers are generally expressed as figures, but may be spelled out in formal writing. Alternately, you may be able to convert the fraction to a decimal form.

Figures: We are concerned about flooding after the $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches of rain that fell over the last three days.

Words: We are concerned about flooding after the *two-and-a-half* inches of rain that fell over the last three days.

Decimals: We are concerned about flooding after the *2.5* inches of rain that fell over the last three days.

Some computer programs contain a special character set that will allow you to make the numbers of a fraction smaller than ordinary numbers; others do not. If you cannot make smaller numbers, you can either leave a space between the whole number and the fraction or you can put a hyphen between the two.

Option 1: $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches of rain

Option 2: $2\ 1/2$ inches of rain

Option 3: $2-1/2$ inches of rain

Numbers

Decimals

Always use figures to express decimals.

The atomic weight of oxygen is *15.9994*.

Use a zero in front of decimals that stand alone (numbers less than one). The zero prevents misreading.

The vapor density of ammonia is *0.59*.

The zero is generally not needed before the decimal point when referring to the caliber of guns and bullets. However, there are some exceptions. When in doubt, follow the style used by the company that manufactured the gun or bullet in question.

The boy was carrying a *.45* caliber revolver.

Ratios

Most ratios are expressed with figures.

Chlorine has a vapor expansion ratio of *458 to 1*.

If the ratio is used as a compound adjective before the noun, the word *to* may be either expressed with a colon or spelled out.

Chlorine has a *458:1* (or *458-to-1*) expansion ratio.

Hyphens or slashes may also be used to express ratios if the meaning remains clear.

Fred has a *50-50* (or *50/50*) chance of survival.

Scores and Voting Results

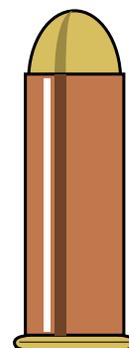
Use figures to report scores and voting results.

The firefighters beat the police officers *86 to 79* in the first game of the basketball tournament.

The vote was *5 to 2* (or *5-2*) in favor of hiring six more police officers.

To prevent misreading, use a zero in front of decimals that stand alone.

The diameter of the bullet is 45/100 inch (0.45).



The zero is generally not needed when referring to the caliber of guns and bullets, but there can be exceptions.

The bullet came from a .45 caliber revolver.

Numbers

Use figures for numbers that are part of chemical names and formulas.



The fire extinguisher contains Halon 1211.

Indefinite Numbers and Amounts

Spell out references to indefinite numbers and amounts.

Hundreds of firefighters were called in to fight the fire.

The fire burned *several thousand* acres.

Numbers Referred to as Numbers

Use figures to express numbers referred to as numbers.

Pick a number from *1* to *20*.

Do you really think number *13* is unlucky?

Using *No.* or

If you need to abbreviate the word *number*, it is usually better to use *No.* (singular) or *Nos.* (plural) rather than the symbol #.

Truck No. 568 was found abandoned in the desert.

Do not use an abbreviation at the beginning of a sentence. Spell out the word *number*.

Number 568 was reported stolen three days ago.

The word *number* is unnecessary when the meaning is clear.

Have investigators determined what caused the explosion aboard *Flight 800*?

Refer to *Invoice 971042*.

Chemical Names and Formulas

Use figures for numbers that are part of chemical names and formulas. Numbers used in product names are written full size.

The system contains Halon *1301*.

Numbers that appear *before* a symbol are also written full size.

Another name for isopropyl alcohol is *2-propanol*.

Numbers

Numbers that appear *after* the symbol are written in subscript type.

The formula for isopropyl alcohol is $\text{CH}_3\text{CHOHCH}_3$.

Names of Organizations

Use figures to indicate the number of a union.

Our union is *IAFF Local 1165*.

Spell out a number that is part of the name of a church.

Someone tried to burn the *First Baptist Church* tonight.

Numbers used in the names of military, governmental, and private organizations follow the same basic principles for expressing any other ordinal numbers.

John works in the *Third* Precinct.

I live in the *sixteenth* (or *16th*) congressional district.

Where can I get some information on the makeup of the *105th* Congress?

Parts of Books

Use figures when referring to parts of books.

Chapter 2
Page 19

Figure 3
Volume 4 (or IV)

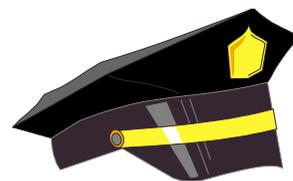
Family Names

Numbers used as part of a person's family name may be written as Roman numerals or arabic numerals according to the individual's preference.

Roman numerals: Benjamin F. Lopes III

Arabic numerals: Benjamin F. Lopes 3rd

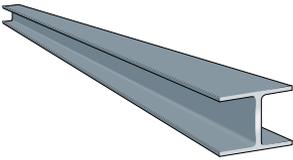
Numbers used in the names of organizations follow the same principles for expressing any other ordinal numbers.



Carl has been transferred to the Fourteenth (or 14th) Precinct.

Numbers

Roman numerals are used in some applications.



The plans call for Type II (noncombustible) construction.

Roman Numerals

The following chart shows how to form Roman numerals for the numbers 1 through 20. Once you recognize the pattern of forming the numbers, you can recognize how to write numbers that are not listed in the chart. For example, 21 is written as XXI, 22 is written as XXII, and so forth.

1	I	6	VI	11	XI	16	XVI
2	II	7	VII	12	XII	17	XVII
3	III	8	VIII	13	XIII	18	XVIII
4	IV	9	IX	14	XIV	19	XIX
5	V	10	X	15	XV	20	XX

Listed below are the numbers 10 through 200 in multiples of 10.

10	X	60	LX	110	CX	160	CLX
20	XX	70	LXX	120	CXX	170	CLXX
30	XXX	80	LXXX	130	CXXX	180	CLXXX
40	XL	90	XC	140	CXL	190	CXC
50	L	100	C	150	CL	200	CC

Here are the numbers 100 through 2000 in multiples of 100.

100	C	600	DC	1100	MC	1600	MDC
200	CC	700	DCC	1200	MCC	1700	MDCC
300	CCC	800	DCCC	1300	MCCC	1800	MDCCC
400	CD	900	CM	1400	MCD	1900	MCM
500	D	1000	M	1500	MD	2000	MM

Avoid using Roman numerals for numbers 4000 and above because the system requires writing a dash over some of the Roman numerals to indicate that the original value of the numeral is multiplied by 1000. For example, 4000 is written as M \bar{V} , and 5000 is written as \bar{V} . Most readers will not recognize these numerals, and few software programs have character sets that will allow you to form the numerals easily.

Small Roman numerals are sometimes used for page numbers in the front section of a book or report: *i, ii, iii, iv, v*.

Numbers

Forming Plurals

Plurals of numbers that are spelled out are generally formed by adding *s* or *es*.

The witness said the vehicle had a specialty license plate consisting of *sixes* and *nines*: 696969.

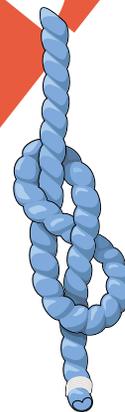
Plurals of figures are generally formed by adding *s*.

You should be able to tie Figure *8s* without looking.

We had several fires on that street in the early *1980s*.

While some experts prefer to form plurals by adding an apostrophe plus *s* ('*s*), for example, *nine's* or *1980's*, most prefer not to use the apostrophe because the apostrophe is functionally unnecessary.

Plurals of figures are generally formed by adding *s*.



You should be able to tie Figure 8s without looking.

Numbers

Hyphenate compound numbers from 21 to 99 when they are spelled out.

He has been missing for twenty-three days.



Hyphenate compound adjectives containing a number.

The four-year-old boy was last seen playing in front of his parents' house.

Guidelines for Punctuating Numbers

Hyphenate Numbers from 21 to 99

Hyphenate compound numbers from 21 to 99 when they are spelled out. This includes both *cardinal* numbers (*one, two, three*) and *ordinal* numbers (*first, second, third*).

Cardinal Numbers

twenty-four
forty-nine
seventy-two

Ordinal Numbers

twenty-fourth
forty-ninth
seventy-second

Do not hyphenate numbers over 100 unless they contain compound numbers from 21 to 99. (These numbers may be written either with or without the word *and*.)

No hyphen: one hundred twenty
one hundred and twenty
Hyphen: one hundred twenty-one
one hundred and twenty-one

Hyphenate Numbers Used in Compound Adjectives

Hyphenate compound adjectives containing a number, regardless of whether you are using words or figures to represent the number. The hyphen makes it clear that the words are being used together to convey a single idea.

Words

an eighteen-year-old suspect
a five-story building
a second-degree burn

Figures

an 18-year-old suspect
a 5-story building
a 2nd-degree burn

See pages 329-330 for more information on compound adjectives containing numbers.

Hyphenate Numbers in Series as Appropriate

Hyphens are sometimes used to show a range of numbers in a series. (On a computer, you can use an *en dash* [-] instead of a hyphen [-]. An en dash is longer than a hyphen, but shorter than a full dash, or *em dash* [—].)

The department is sponsoring a haz mat terrorism class during the week of *January 26–30*.

El Niño caused numerous flooding problems during the winter of *1997–1998*.

Do not use a hyphen or en dash, however, if the numbers are introduced by the words *from* or *between*.

There was a significant decrease in drunk-driving arrests *from 1990 to 1995*. (not: *from 1990–1995*)

He conned hundreds of people out of large sums of money *between 1992 and 1997*. (not: *between 1992–1997*)

It is acceptable to abbreviate the second number in a sequence connected by a hyphen or en dash as long as the meaning remains clear. However, writing the full number is preferable.

Preferred: the winter of 1997–1998
Acceptable: the winter of 1997–98

Preferred: pages 416–419
Acceptable: pages 416–19 (or 416–9)

Do not abbreviate the second number when the numbers have only two digits.

Wrong: pages 32–9
Right: pages 32–39

Do not abbreviate the second number when the first number ends in two zeros (00).

Wrong: the winter of 1900–01 (or 1900–1)
Right: the winter of 1900–1901

Wrong: pages 300–05 or 300–5
Right: pages 300–305

It is preferable to use full numbers when writing numbers in sequence.

El Niño caused numerous flooding problems during the winter of 1997–1998.

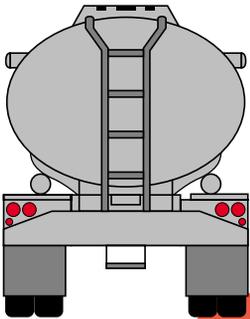


Do not abbreviate the second number when the first number ends in two zeros (1900–0) or when it starts with different digits (1999–00).

Numbers

Commas are used to separate long numbers to make them easier to read.

However, the comma is optional if the number contains just four digits.



The tanker contains 9000 (or 9,000) gallons of fuel.

Do not abbreviate the second number when it starts with different digits than the first number does.

Wrong: the winter of 1999–00
Right: the winter of 1999–2000

Wrong: pages 295–12
Right: pages 295–312

Use Commas to Separate Numbers as Appropriate

In general, use commas to separate long numbers so they are easy to read and understand. The numbers are separated in groups of three, counting from the right.

The fire burned more than *25,000* acres.

Nearly *13,000* gallons of fuel were spilled into the ocean.

The comma is optional if the number contains just four digits.

Engine 6 responded to 1341 (or 1,341) calls last year.

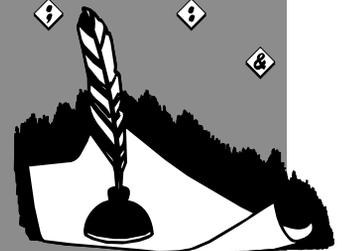
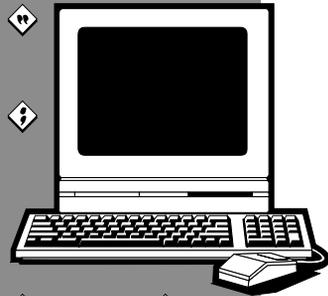
Do not use commas in the following situations:

<u>Type Number</u>	<u>Example</u>
Years	1997
Street Addresses (Digits)	21250 Stevens Creek Boulevard
Zip Codes	Cupertino, CA 95014
Room Numbers	Apartment 1642
Page Numbers	Page 1836
Telephone Numbers	(800) 555-1212
Temperatures	1500°F
After Decimal Points	24,450. <u>2098</u>

Most serial numbers, invoice numbers, policy numbers, and so forth are also written without commas. However, they may include spaces, hyphens, or other means of separating the numbers. Follow the style used by the person or company that generated the number.

Chapter 14: More Effective Writing

SAVED!



More Effective Writing

The active voice emphasizes the one doing the action.

Dolph detected a residue of flammable liquid.



The passive voice emphasizes the person or thing being acted upon.

A residue of flammable liquid had been detected.

Using the Appropriate Voice

Recognizing the Active and Passive Voices

There are two voices in sentence structure: *active* and *passive*. The *active voice* emphasizes the one doing the action. The *passive voice* emphasizes the person or thing being acted upon. The one doing the action may or may not even be mentioned in a sentence written in the passive voice.

Active: Ed treated the homeowner for smoke inhalation.

Passive: The homeowner was treated for smoke inhalation by Ed.

Active: John found the gun hidden in a desk drawer.

Passive: The gun was found hidden in a desk drawer.

Active: Dolph detected a residue of flammable liquid underneath the carpet.

Passive: A residue of flammable liquid had been detected underneath the carpet.

Notice that the passive voice requires a form of the verb *be* plus the past participle of the main verb (*was treated, was found, had been detected*).

Using the Appropriate Voice

Your writing will generally be more effective if you write in the active voice rather than the passive voice. The active voice is more powerful, more interesting, and usually more concise. You should use the active voice as much as possible, unless you have good reason to do otherwise.

Sometimes the passive voice is preferable to the active voice, particularly in the emergency response arena. For example, the passive voice is useful when the one doing the action is either unknown or less important than the one being acted upon.

Active: Someone kidnapped a newborn baby from the maternity ward this morning.

Passive: A newborn baby was kidnapped from the maternity ward this morning.

More Effective Writing

Active: A man attacked Susan in the parking lot of her apartment complex.

Passive: Susan was attacked in the parking lot of her apartment complex.

Sometimes it is desirable not to disclose the identity of the one doing the action—even when the identity is known. For example, it might be important to protect the identity of a witness. You can use the active voice, substituting the words *a witness*, or you can rephrase the sentence using the passive voice instead of the active voice.

Active: The bartender reported seeing the suspect with the murder victim an hour before the shooting.

Active: A witness reported seeing the suspect with the murder victim an hour before the shooting.

Passive: The suspect was seen with the murder victim an hour before the shooting.

The passive voice is often used to sound more diplomatic, to soften the impact of a strong statement, or to avoid sounding bossy.

Active: We rejected your request for a leave of absence.

Passive: Your request for a leave of absence was rejected.

Active: You must bring the building up to code within the next 60 days.

Passive: The building must be brought up to code within the next 60 days.

The passive voice is often used in scientific and technical writing where the emphasis is once again on the action being taken rather than the one doing the action.

Active: Several scientists across the country are conducting studies to identify a suitable replacement for Halon extinguishing agents.

Passive: Several studies are being conducted across the country to identify a suitable replacement for Halon extinguishing agents.

The active voice is stronger and more direct. However, the passive voice is appropriate when you need to emphasize the one(s) being acted upon.



A baby was kidnapped this morning.

More Effective Writing

Avoid needless shifts in tense. If actions take place in the same time frame, you should keep the tense consistent.

The man robbed the bank and steals ten thousand dollars.
(inconsistent)



The man robbed the bank and stole ten thousand dollars.
(revised)

Avoiding Needless Shifts

A shift is a change in structure or style midway through a sentence or paragraph. Shifts may involve changes in tense, number, person, mood, discourse, voice, or point of view.

Shifts in Tense

It is sometimes necessary to change tenses within a sentence or paragraph because relative time frames are different. Such is the case in the example below where we want to show how an event in the future relates to one in the past.

The victim *will have* a better chance of survival if we can get him to the hospital *within* one hour of when the accident *occurred*.

A problem occurs, however, when you change tenses without a valid reason to do so. If actions take place in the same time frame, you should keep the tense consistent.

Inconsistent: The boy *robbed* the clerk at gunpoint and *steals* over three hundred dollars.

Revised: The boy *robbed* the clerk at gunpoint and *stole* over three hundred dollars.

The first example above shifted from past tense (*robbed*) to present tense (*steals*). If you are describing an event that occurred in the past, use the past tense throughout. You can use the present tense instead: *The boy robs the clerk at gunpoint and steals over three hundred dollars.* However, this construction would be more appropriate when describing the action in a book or movie.

Shifts in Number

Pronouns and antecedents must agree in number. The first example on the following page shifts from a singular antecedent (*a person*) to a plural pronoun (*they*). You can correct this problem by making everything either singular or plural. Making everything plural is often the easiest approach. Alternately, you can rewrite the sentence to eliminate the pronoun. (The correct use of pronouns is covered in more detail in Chapter 7.)

- Inconsistent:* If *a person* mixes drinking and driving, *they* may end up in jail.
- Revised:* If *a person* mixes drinking and driving, *he or she* may end up in jail.
- Revised:* If *people* mix drinking and driving, *they* may end up in jail.
- Better:* People who mix drinking and driving may end up in jail.

There must also be a logical agreement between other related words. Look at the nouns in the examples below. *Recruits* is plural; however, the recruits do not have a single collective *attitude*. Therefore, *attitudes* must also be plural.

- Inconsistent:* All the *recruits* have a good *attitude*.
- Revised:* All the *recruits* have good *attitudes*.

Shifts in Person

Shifting from one person to another is a common problem, both in writing and in speech. The first example below shifts from third person (*a person*) to second person (*you*). You can correct this problem by putting everything in either the second person or the third person or by rewriting the sentence entirely.

- Inconsistent:* If *a person* stops breathing, *you* can suffer permanent brain damage in four to six minutes.
- Revised:* If *you* stop breathing, *you* can suffer permanent brain damage in four to six minutes.
- Revised:* If *a person* stops breathing, *he or she* can suffer permanent brain damage in four to six minutes.
- Revised:* *People* who stop breathing can suffer permanent brain damage in four to six minutes.

The first example below contains a shift from first person (*I*) to second person (*you*). This problem often occurs when writers try to state an opinion without being too “me-oriented” or when they try to show how others are impacted by the same thing. You can correct this problem by putting everything in the first person or by rewriting the sentence.

- Inconsistent:* *I* like the new helmets because they give *you* better protection.
- Revised:* *I* like the new helmets because they give *me* better protection.
- Revised:* I like the new helmets because they provide better protection.

Avoid shifts in number.

If a person mixes drinking and driving, they may end up in jail.



Often the best solution is to make everything plural.

If people mix drinking and driving, they may end up in jail.
(revised)

More Effective Writing

Avoid inappropriate shifts in voice.

We followed the suspect and his position was radioed to officers on the ground. (inconsistent)



We followed the suspect and radioed his position to officers on the ground. (revised)

Shifts in Voice

Sometimes a shift in voice is appropriate because it keeps the reader focused on a single subject. The following example shifts from an active voice to a passive voice, but the subject, *fire*, does not change.

The fire burned out of control for hours, but was extinguished by early morning.

If a shift in voice also involves a shift in subject (for example, from *we* to *the children*), the resulting sentence will be awkward and confusing. The following sentence was corrected by putting everything in the active voice.

Inconsistent: As we pulled up to the burning structure, the children inside could be heard screaming desperately for help.

Revised: As we pulled up to the burning structure, we could hear the children inside screaming desperately for help.

Shifts in Mood

Watch for shifts in mood when writing directions. The first example below shifts from the imperative mood (*apply direct pressure*) to the indicative mood (*you should elevate*). The initial revision is written in the indicative mood; the words *you should* are understood to apply to both directions. The imperative mood, used in the final example, is clearer and more concise. However, either mood is acceptable, as long as you use it consistently.

Inconsistent: Apply direct pressure to the wound, and you should elevate the arm above the level of the heart.

Revised: You should apply direct pressure to the wound and elevate the arm above the level of the heart.

Better: Apply direct pressure to the wound, and elevate the arm above the level of the heart.

Shifts in Discourse

Shifts in discourse can occur when reporting what someone else has said or written. The first example below shifts from a direct quotation to an indirect quotation. Correct this problem by using either direct discourse or indirect discourse throughout.

Inconsistent: The chief's secretary said, "He's in a meeting," and could she take a message.

Revised: The chief's secretary said that he was in a meeting and offered to take a message.

Revised: The chief's secretary said, "He's in a meeting. Can I take a message?"

The next example shifts from an indirect question to a direct question. By rewording it slightly, we can maintain an indirect question throughout. Alternately, the entire thing can be written as a direct question.

Inconsistent: I asked whether the product is flammable and, if so, is it within its flammable range.

Revised: I asked whether the product is flammable and, if so, whether it is within its flammable range.

Revised: Is the product flammable and, if so, is it within its flammable range?

Shifts in Point of View

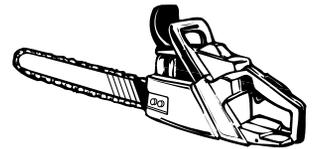
Point of view refers to the person through whose eyes the story is told. The first example below begins with an observation made by rescue workers, then abruptly switches to the driver's point of view. The problem was corrected by writing everything in the eyes of the rescue workers.

Inconsistent: We found the vehicle resting on its roof at the bottom of the embankment. The driver struggled to crawl out through the broken window, afraid the leaking gasoline would ignite.

Revised: We found the vehicle resting on its roof at the bottom of the embankment. We could see the driver struggling to crawl out through the broken window, apparently afraid that the leaking gasoline would ignite.

Avoid shifts between direct and indirect discourse.

Steve said that we need to ventilate the roof and could I bring him the chain saw. (inconsistent)



Steve said that we need to ventilate the roof and asked me to bring him the chain saw. (revised)

More Effective Writing

Parallel sentences use the same kinds of words.

Playing with fireworks can lead to fires and getting burned (nonparallel)



Playing with fireworks can lead to fires and burn injuries (parallel)

Using Parallel Structure

To use parallel structure means to use *like form or structure* in your writing. In other words, when two or more items or ideas are presented in the same sentence or list, the wording should be similar.

Parallelism in Coordinate Elements

Each of the examples below combine two or more items or ideas by using coordinating conjunctions, such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, or *yet*. These sentences require consistent structure or wording.

Nonparallel: I like *fighting* fires, but not *to find* burn victims.

Parallel: I like *fighting* fires, but not *finding* burn victims.

Nonparallel: Mike is in charge of *salvage*, *overhaul*, and *to ventilate the structure*.

Parallel: Mike is in charge of *salvage*, *overhaul*, and *ventilation*.

In the example that follows, students need to do three things: *to perform*, *to report*, and *to identify*. Writing all three as infinitive phrases provides a parallel structure. (The word *to* can be omitted after the first infinitive because it is understood to carry through to the others.)

Nonparallel: At this station, students need to *perform* a primary and secondary survey, *report* their findings, and *they need to identify* the appropriate course of treatment.

Parallel: At this station, students need to *perform* a primary and secondary survey, *report* their findings, and *identify* the appropriate course of treatment.

The next example contains two adjectives (*intelligent* and *compassionate*) followed by a verb phrase (*perform well under pressure*). Changing the verb phrase to an adjective phrase (*able to perform . . .*) provides a parallel structure. The adjective phrase functions as an adjective.

Nonparallel: Our dispatchers are *intelligent*, *compassionate*, and *perform well under pressure*.

Parallel: Our dispatchers are *intelligent*, *compassionate*, and *able to perform well under pressure*.

Sometimes it is necessary to repeat a word to avoid confusion and to ensure that the parallel structure is obvious to the reader. The first sentence below is awkward. Repeating the preposition *in* creates a better sentence.

- Nonparallel:* We found the gun not in the glove box but the trunk.
Parallel: We found the gun not in the glove box but *in* the trunk.

The following example is made clearer by repeating the word *that*. When the word *that* is not repeated, readers see *we caught the rapist and the woman he assaulted*. . . . It appears as if we caught two people. Only after readers get to the end of the sentence do they realize that something doesn't make sense. They may end up having to reread the sentence to understand its meaning.

- Nonparallel:* I'll notify the media that we caught the rapist and the woman he assaulted will be released from the hospital tomorrow.
Parallel: I'll notify the media that we caught the rapist and *that* the woman he assaulted will be released from the hospital tomorrow.

Parallelism in Correlative Pairs

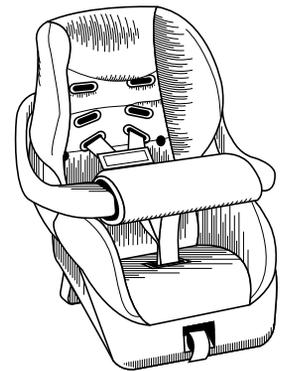
Correlative conjunctions (*both . . . and*, *either . . . or*, *neither . . . nor*, *not . . . but*, *not only . . . but also*, and *whether . . . or*) emphasize the relation between elements. These elements are parallel only when what follows one correlative conjunction is presented in the same format as what follows the other. Many of these problems can be subtle and easy to miss.

In the following example, the words or phrases following the word *both* and the word *and* should be consistent in form. *Both from . . . and* is not consistent. One solution is to say *both from . . . and from*. The other is to reverse the order of the words *from* and *both* so that you can say *both San Mateo County and Santa Cruz County*.

- Nonparallel:* We received mutual aid *both from* San Mateo County *and* Santa Cruz County.
Parallel: We received mutual aid *both from* San Mateo County *and from* Santa Cruz County.
Parallel: We received mutual aid from *both* San Mateo County *and* Santa Cruz County.

What follows one correlative conjunction should be parallel with what follows the other.

Children must be placed in approved safety seats if they are either under four years old or weigh less than forty pounds.
(nonparallel)



. . . if they either are under four years old or weigh less than forty pounds.
(parallel)

More Effective Writing

Elements being compared or contrasted should be parallel.

Roger decided to become a police officer rather than a career in the fire service.
(nonparallel)



Roger decided to become a police officer rather than a firefighter.
(parallel)

Words following *not only* should be consistent with those following *but also*: *not only a motive . . . but also the opportunity*. The simplest solution is to move the words *that he had* to another location.

Nonparallel: We must be able to prove *not only that he had* a motive to commit the crime *but also the opportunity* to do so.

Parallel: We must be able to prove that he had *not only a motive* to commit the crime *but also the opportunity* to do so.

The words that follow *neither* and *nor* must be parallel in structure too: *neither verify . . . nor confirm*. An alternate solution is to rewrite the sentences as two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction.

Nonparallel: At this point, I can *neither verify* the victim's identity *nor can I* confirm the cause of death.

Parallel: At this point, I can *neither verify* the victim's identity *nor confirm* the cause of death.

Parallel: At this point, I cannot verify the victim's identity, nor can I confirm the cause of death.

Parallelism in Elements Being Compared

Elements being compared or contrasted should be parallel.

Nonparallel: It is better to be *safe* than *being sorry*.

Parallel: It is better to be *safe* than *sorry*.

The example below contains a phrase (*sending him to jail*) on one side of the comparison and a noun (*probation*) on the other. Either use two phrases or two nouns.

Nonparallel: The district attorney will probably recommend *sending him to jail* rather than *probation*.

Parallel: The district attorney will probably recommend *sending him to jail* rather than *releasing him on probation*.

Parallel: The district attorney will probably recommend *jail* rather than *probation*.

Parallelism in Lists

Parallel structure is also important when presenting items in a list format. Notice the verbs below: *maintaining*, *treating*, and *call*. We can fix this problem simply by changing *call* to *calling*.

Nonparallel: I want to stress the importance of:

- Maintaining ABCs
- Treating for shock
- Call 911 as soon as possible

Parallel: I want to stress the importance of:

- Maintaining ABCs
- Treating for shock
- Calling 911 as soon as possible

Look at the verbs in the next example: *ensure*, *isolate*, and *identify*. The best solution is to change *identifying* to *identify*.

Nonparallel: Our objectives are to:

- *Ensure* our personal safety
- *Isolate* the area
- *Identifying* the hazardous material

Parallel: Our objectives are to:

- *Ensure* our personal safety
- *Isolate* the area
- *Identify* the hazardous material

Use parallel structure when presenting items in a list format.



Pull the pin.

Aim the extinguisher.

Squeeze the handle.

Sweepback and forth.

More Effective Writing

Avoid mixed constructions.

By doubling your distance from a radioactive source reduces your risk of exposure by 75%. (mixed)



Doubling your distance from a radioactive source reduces your risk of exposure by 75%. (revised)

Avoiding Mixed Sentences

Avoid Mixed Constructions

If you begin a sentence one way, then **change gears** midway through, you will end up with two or more grammatical structures that are incompatible. For example, you cannot use a prepositional phrase as the subject of a sentence. The sentence below has no subject.

Mixed: By doubling your distance from a radioactive source reduces your risk of exposure by 75%.

There are two way to correct this. The first is to make sure the prepositional phrase serves as a modifier by providing a subject—*you*—for the independent clause.

Revised: By doubling your distance from a radioactive source, *you* reduce your risk of exposure by 75%.

The other alternative is to remove the word *by*. This eliminates the prepositional phrase, leaving a gerund phrase that can serve as the subject of a sentence.

Revised: Doubling your distance from a radioactive source reduces your risk of exposure by 75%.

The following example contains a subordinate clause followed by an independent clause. It is not appropriate to use a coordinating conjunction (*but*) between the two.

Mixed: Although neighbors tried to resuscitate the cat, *but* it did not survive.

Revised: Although neighbors tried to resuscitate the cat, it did not survive.

Make Logical Connections

When a subject and predicate do not make sense together, it results in something called *faulty predication*. In the first example below, it is *Shelly*, not her *welfare*, who is possibly being abused.

Faulty: It was a math teacher who first suspected that *Shelly's welfare* was being abused by her stepfather.

Revised: It was a math teacher who first suspected that *Shelly* was being abused by her stepfather.

Some faulty predications are more subtle. In the example below, we can say that *deciding* to close the highway caused problems for commuters. However, it is really the *act* of closing the highway, not the *decision* to close it, that caused the problems. You can *decide* all you want to, but nothing happens until you *act*.

Faulty: *Deciding to close* the highway caused problems for commuters all evening.

Revised: *Closing* the highway caused problems for commuters all evening.

The example below is also subtle. Clearly, just *having* a smoke detector doesn't provide early warning; you have to *use* it. However, you can *design* smoke detectors; you can't design the *use* of such devices.

Faulty: *The use of smoke detectors* is designed to provide early warning of smoke and other products of combustion.

Revised: *Smoke detectors* are designed to provide early warning of smoke and other products of combustion.

Avoid Faulty Definitions

When you define something, put nouns on both sides of the verb *be*. Avoid using *is where* or *is when* to complete your definitions. Such constructions are sometimes heard in informal speech, but they are not appropriate in writing. The first two sentences below are faulty because *lividity* is an observable sign, not a place or time.

Faulty: *Lividity is where* there is a bluish red discoloration caused by blood pooling in the dependent parts of the body after death.

Faulty: *Lividity is when* there is a bluish red discoloration caused by blood pooling in the dependent parts of the body after death.

Revised: *Lividity* is the bluish red discoloration caused by blood pooling in the dependent parts of the body after death.

Make logical connections.

Deciding to close the highway caused problems for commuters all evening. (faulty)

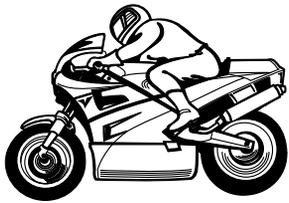


Closing the highway caused problems for commuters all evening. (revised)

More Effective Writing

A sentence fragment is part of a sentence that is incorrectly punctuated as if it were a complete sentence.

Sped away from police.
(fragment)



Complete sentences must contain a subject.

He sped away from police.
(revised)

Avoiding Sentence Fragments

Sentence Fragments Defined

A *sentence fragment* is part of a sentence that is incorrectly punctuated as if it were a complete sentence. Some fragments are word groups that are missing a subject, a verb, or both. Others are dependent clauses that are separated from main clauses.

You can correct most sentence fragments in one of two ways. You can either attach the fragment to another sentence, making sure to punctuate the new sentence properly, or you can rewrite the fragment as a complete sentence.

Fragments with a Missing Subject

Complete sentences must contain both a subject and a verb. If either is missing, the word group is probably a fragment. Let's look first at examples where the subject is missing.

Fragment: Arrived on scene at 1537 hours.

Revised: Engine 13 arrived on scene at 1537 hours.

In theory, one could write an entire report with such fragments: *Found the structure fully involved. Took a live line through the front door. Began searching for victims. Ordered the next-in unit to lay a supply line.* However, fragments such as these often leave the reader unclear about who or what the subject is. Did Engine 13's crew do all these things, or were there other people involved? And because sentence fragments are not grammatically correct, they also reflect poorly on the writer.

This next example contains an independent clause followed by a sentence fragment. The error can be corrected either by adding an appropriate subject to the fragment or by making a slight change and pulling the fragment into the independent clause.

Fragment: People around the world were in shock. Didn't want to believe that Diana was dead.

Revised: People around the world were in shock. *They* didn't want to believe that Diana was dead.

Revised: People around the world were in shock, *not wanting* to believe that Diana was dead.

The sentence fragment in the example below is actually part of a compound predicate relating to the subject (I): *I informed . . . and requested*. The fragment must be reattached to the main clause.

Fragment: I informed the dispatcher that I was following the stolen vehicle. And requested that she send additional units as backup.

Revised: I informed the dispatcher that I was following the stolen vehicle and requested that she send additional units as backup.

Fragments with a Missing Verb

Just as a complete sentence must contain a subject, it must also contain a verb. If the verb is missing, put it in.

Fragment: The elderly woman clearly dead.

Revised: The elderly woman *was* clearly dead.

Watch out for incomplete verbs. *Choking* is a verb form, but it is not a complete verb. It requires a helping verb.

Fragment: The baby choking.

Revised: The baby *is* choking.

Fragmented Phrases and Clauses

A dependent clause, one that begins with a subordinating word (such as *after*, *although*, *because*, *if*, *since*, *that*, *unless*, *until*, *when*, *where*, *which*, or *whom*) cannot stand alone. Frequently the best solution is to pull the dependent clause into a nearby sentence.

Fragment: Police raided a San Jose home this morning. *Where they discovered an illegal drug lab.*

Revised: Police raided a San Jose home this morning, where they discovered an illegal drug lab.

Sometimes you can either attach the dependent clause to a main clause or rewrite it as a complete sentence that can stand alone.

Fragment: Marie refuses to wear her seat belt. *Because she says it wrinkles her dress.*

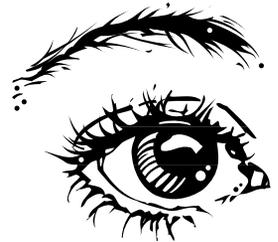
Revised: Marie refuses to wear her seat belt because she says it wrinkles her dress.

Revised: Marie refuses to wear her seat belt. She says it wrinkles her dress.

A complete sentence must also contain a verb.

Her eye irritated.
(fragment)

Her eyes irritated.
(revised)



Use helping verbs when required.

She complaining about irritation.
(fragment)

She is complaining about irritation.
(revised)

More Effective Writing

Phrases cannot stand alone as complete sentences.

We finally figured out who the killer was. Thanks to a tip from an anonymous caller.
(fragment)



We finally figured out who the killer was, thanks to a tip from an anonymous caller.
(revised)

Phrases cannot stand alone either. The following prepositional phrase needs to be pulled into the nearby sentence.

Fragment: He was lying face down. *In a pool of blood.*

Revised: He was lying face down in a pool of blood.

The following participial phrase can be either pulled into the nearby sentence or rewritten as an independent clause.

Fragment: David crouched behind the desk. *Hoping the intruder wouldn't notice him in the darkness.*

Revised: David crouched behind the desk, hoping the intruder wouldn't notice him in the darkness.

Revised: David crouched behind the desk. He hoped the intruder wouldn't notice him in the darkness.

Appositives (words or phrases that define, explain, or rename other nouns before them) need to be incorporated into a main clause. They cannot stand alone.

Fragment: The patient had a ruptured aorta. *The major artery that carries freshly oxygenated blood from the heart to the body.*

Revised: The patient had a ruptured aorta, the major artery that carries freshly oxygenated blood from the heart to the body.

Examples cannot stand alone either. The fragment below can be corrected either by incorporating the examples into the preceding sentence or by giving the fragment a subject (*he*) and turning it into an independent clause.

Fragment: Vic often causes trouble. *For example, breaking windows and setting fires in trash cans.*

Revised: Vic often causes trouble, for example, breaking windows and setting fires in trash cans.

Revised: Vic often causes trouble. For example, he breaks windows and sets fires in trash cans.

Intentional Fragments

Fragments are sometimes used intentionally, for example, as an answer to a question (Where is he? *In the garage.*), as an exclamation (*Oh no!*), as an advertisement (*Tastes great. Less filling.*), or as a transition (*One final reminder.*). However, most experts agree that intentional fragments are appropriate only in informal writing, and even then, they should be used sparingly.

Avoiding Run-Ons and Comma Splices

Recognizing Run-Ons and Comma Splices

Run-on sentences (also called *fused sentences*) and *comma splices* are errors in which two independent clauses are joined incorrectly. In a run-on sentence, two independent clauses are joined without any punctuation whatsoever. In a comma splice, the clauses are joined by a comma alone, rather than by a comma and coordinating conjunction. Both run-ons and comma splices are confusing to readers since there are no clues to let readers know that a new sentence has started.

Run-on sentence. The smoke was thick they had trouble advancing.

Comma splice. The smoke was thick, they had trouble advancing.

There are several ways to correct run-ons and comma splices. The best option will vary, depending on the content of the sentences and the relation between them.

Making Separate Sentences

One fix is simply to write the clauses as two separate sentences.

The smoke was thick. They had trouble advancing.

This option is not always desirable, however. The two sentences above are short and choppy, and the relation between the two is not clear. For these sentences, it will be better to find another solution. (Alternate solutions are presented on the following pages.)

Dividing clauses into two separate sentences works best when one or both of the clauses are long.

Comma splice. The driver said that she didn't see the children before they dashed out into the street, they apparently ran out from behind a parked car.

Revised. The driver said that she didn't see the children before they dashed out into the street. They apparently ran out from behind a parked car.

In a *run-on sentence*, two independent clauses are joined without any punctuation whatsoever.

Eye and head protection are required don't enter without it.
(wrong)



In a *comma splice*, two independent clauses are joined by a comma alone.

Eye and head protection are required, don't enter without it.
(wrong)

More Effective Writing

Closely related clauses of equal importance can be joined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

The man is dangerous, so be careful.



Two closely related clauses can be joined with a semicolon.

He has killed at least three people; he may have killed more.

This option also works well with different types of sentences, for example, when one is a statement and the other is a question.

Run-on: I need help teaching CPR this weekend will you be able to help me?

Revised: I need help teaching CPR this weekend. Will you be able to help me?

Using a Comma and a Coordinating Conjunction

If two clauses are closely related and equally important, they can be joined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet*).

The smoke was thick, *so* they had trouble advancing.

We know who killed her, *but* we just can't prove it.

Using a Semicolon

Two closely related clauses can be joined with a semicolon.

We know who killed her; we just can't prove it.

When the relation between the clauses might not be clear using a semicolon alone, you can add a conjunctive adverb or transitional expression. Just remember that when you use one of these expressions, you must put either a semicolon or a period between the clauses. A comma between the clauses will result in a comma splice.

Comma splice: The smoke was thick, *as a result*, they had trouble advancing.

Revised: The smoke was thick; *as a result*, they had trouble advancing.

Unlike coordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs and transitional expressions can be positioned elsewhere in the sentence. However, regardless of where they are positioned, the two independent clauses must be separated by a period or a semicolon.

Run-on: Seven children were injured in the accident only one required hospitalization.

Revised: Seven children were injured in the accident; only one, *however*, required hospitalization.

The following are examples of other conjunctive adverbs and transitional expressions that may be used when joining two clauses.

also	however	nonetheless
anyway	in addition	of course
as a result	indeed	on the other hand
besides	in fact	otherwise
consequently	in other words	similarly
finally	instead	still
for example	likewise	then
furthermore	meanwhile	therefore
hence	moreover	thus

Making One Clause Subordinate to Another

Often the most effective way to fix a run-on sentence or a comma splice is to make one clause subordinate to the other. Subordination generally shows the relation between the ideas more clearly than any other option. There are a couple of ways to achieve subordination. One is to join two clauses by using a subordinating conjunction, such as *after*, *although*, *because*, *before*, *unless*, and *whereas*. The other is to convert one clause to a phrase that modifies the main idea.

They had trouble advancing *because* the smoke was thick.

The smoke was thick, *making it difficult for them to advance*.

Here are two more examples.

Comma splice. She has not fully recovered from her injuries, she is well enough to come home from the hospital.

Revised: *Even though* she is well enough to come home from the hospital, she has not fully recovered from her injuries.

Run-on: Jason made his way to the exit he pulled his injured partner to safety.

Revised: Jason made his way to the exit, *pulling* his injured partner to safety.

Subordination generally shows the relation between the ideas more clearly than any other option.



Call the police immediately if you see any suspicious activity in the neighborhood.

More Effective Writing

Careless repetition will weaken your writing. Avoid using different words that mean the same thing.

Her fractured clavicle was broken in two places.
(repetitious)



Her clavicle was broken in two places.
(revised)

Being Concise

Being concise is fundamental to effective writing. Writing concisely does not mean omitting details for the sake of brevity. Nor does it require writers to sacrifice creativity. But it does mean using words economically and omitting words that don't add value.

Avoid Unnecessary Repetition

Repetition is sometimes an effective tool to make writing more coherent or emphatic. Careless repetition, however, will weaken your writing. Avoid using different words that mean the same thing.

Repetitious: He remained *awake* and *conscious* throughout the ordeal.
Revised: He remained conscious throughout the ordeal.
Revised: He remained awake throughout the ordeal.

Using both *awake* and *conscious* doesn't add value to the sentence. However, there are some idiomatic expressions where repetition is acceptable. For example, we refer to patients as being *alert* and *oriented*. *Alert* and *oriented* mean the same thing, yet emergency responders are so accustomed to using the words together that it would seem incomplete to use either one alone.

Repetitive words sometimes creep in at opposite ends of a sentence.

Repetitious: The *smoke-filled* attic was *charged with smoke*.
Revised: The attic was charged with smoke.

Repetitious: I *momentarily* lost sight of the suspect *for an instant*.
Revised: I momentarily lost sight of the suspect.
Revised: I lost sight of the suspect for an instant.

Repetitive words are often found side by side.

Repetitious: We would like you to *return again* tomorrow to work with our sketch artist.
Revised: We would like you to return tomorrow to work with our sketch artist.

Repetitious: The jury has reached a *consensus of opinion*.
Revised: The jury has reached a consensus.

More Effective Writing

The key to eliminating unnecessary repetition is being able to identify words that can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence. Consider the following examples.

Repetitious

red in color
circular in shape
dangerous in nature
cooperate together

Concise

red
circular
dangerous
cooperate

Redundant modifiers

Redundant modifiers are often harder to recognize. Many writers focus on how colorful or catchy the writing is, but fail to spot the redundancy. To say *the officer clenched his fists tightly* is redundant because *clenched* implies *tightly*. Similarly, there is no need to describe a *lifeless corpse*. Other examples of redundant modifiers include *intentional sabotage*, *flaming inferno*, *totally demolished*, *gaseous vapors*, *advance warning*, *unexpected surprise*, *personal belongings*, and *true facts*.

There are often subtle differences between a redundant modifier and one that serves a purpose. For example, *toxic poison* is redundant because *toxic* means *poisonous*. However, *deadly poison* is *not* redundant. By definition, a poison is a substance with an inherent property to destroy life *or impair health*. So, for example, a *mild poison* might be one that causes harmful effects to the body, but does not ordinarily cause death. A *deadly poison*, by comparison, would be one that easily causes death upon minimal exposure.

Omit Unnecessary Words

Be thorough when you need to be, but do not fill your sentences with empty words that don't add value.

Empty words

Let's start by looking at little words that can be easily eliminated without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Help me lower the basket ~~down~~ to the victim. (*Where else would you lower something—up?*)

Where is the gun ~~at~~?

We didn't have a single call all shift ~~long~~.

Avoid redundant modifiers.

The product is toxic in nature.
(redundant)

The product is toxic.
(concise)



Subtle differences may separate a redundant modifier from one that serves a purpose.

Toxic poison is redundant; deadly poison is not.

More Effective Writing

Don't fill your sentences with empty words.

I pulled him over for the reason that he made an illegal U-turn.
(wordy)



Many phrases can be replaced by one or two words.

I pulled him over because he made an illegal U-turn.
(concise)

Please ~~go~~ get the gurney.

We have triaged all ~~of~~ the victims.

Empty phrases

Many phrases can be replaced by one or two words.

Wordy: We had to shut down the highway *because of the fact that there was* an accident involving an overturned gasoline tanker.

Concise: We had to shut down the highway *because of* an accident involving an overturned gasoline tanker.

Wordy: We will need additional resources *in the event that it becomes necessary to* evacuate residents from the neighborhood.

Concise: We will need additional resources *if* it becomes necessary to evacuate residents from the neighborhood.

Here are more examples of empty phrases that can be replaced by a word or two.

Wordy
at the present time
at that point in time
until such time as
at a later date
ahead of schedule
for the purpose of
in order to
for the reason that
because of the fact that
in the event that
provided that
all of a sudden
at the same time as
during the course of
in spite of the fact that
has the ability to
pertaining to
with regard to
a sufficient number of
on two different occasions
make contact with
in view of the fact that
it would appear that
it is my opinion

Concise
now, currently
then
until
later
early
for
to
because
because
if
if
suddenly
while
during
although, though
can, is able to
about
about
enough
twice
meet, call
considering
it seems
I think

Empty thoughts

The following examples are more extreme. The unnecessary words and phrases make the sentences unclear and difficult to read. Readers quickly become frustrated with such garbled writing and may even question the credibility of document and its author.

Garbled: I made the decision to spend my own time and money to put myself through the paramedic training program mostly for the reason that I was under the impression it would give me an advantage that could possibly help me get a job as a firefighter someday.

Revised: I put myself through paramedic school mainly because I thought it would help me get a job as a firefighter someday.

Garbled: The operations concepts addressed in this plan allow for the emergency response and mitigation efforts relating to a broad spectrum of hazards with which the site could be faced.

Revised: This plan contains guidelines for responding to a variety of emergencies that could occur at the site.

Garbled: If special assistance is required for the evacuation of disabled persons, assist as necessary with “buddies” or Emergency Response Teams if the evacuation buddies are unable to accomplish the action.

Revised: Assign personnel to assist with the evacuation of disabled persons as needed.

Legal documents are some of the worst offenders. The attorneys and bureaucrats who write like this are overly concerned about addressing every minute detail from a legal standpoint and seldom stop to consider the individuals who must read the documents and implement the programs. The following garbled examples come from *29 CFR 1910.120, Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response*. The suggested revisions are easier to read.

Garbled: All suspected conditions that may pose inhalation or skin absorption hazards that are immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH), or other conditions that may cause death or serious harm, shall be identified during the preliminary survey and evaluated during the detailed survey.

Revised: All potential hazards shall be identified during the preliminary survey and evaluated during the detailed survey.

Make your message clear.

This plan contains guidelines for responding to a variety of emergencies that could occur at the site.



Assign personnel to assist with the evacuation of disabled persons as needed.

More Effective Writing

Discretionary expressions can often be eliminated.

It is my opinion that Bob is an excellent dispatcher.
(discretionary)



Bob is an excellent dispatcher.
(revised)

You must be able to recognize when an expression adds value and when it does not.

Garbled: Based upon the results of the preliminary site evaluation, an ensemble of PPE shall be selected and used during initial site entry which will provide protection to a level of exposure below permissible exposure limits and published exposure levels for known or suspected hazardous substances and health hazards, and which will provide protection against other known and suspected hazards identified during the preliminary site evaluation.

Revised: PPE used for initial site entry shall provide protection against known or suspected hazards identified during the preliminary site evaluation. PPE shall maintain exposures to known or suspected hazardous substances below permissible exposure limits and published exposure levels.

Excessive detail

Don't bore your readers with elaborate detail that adds nothing to the material. For example, most people either know how to do Rescue Breathing or have some picture of what the process entails. The first example below adds nothing to the meaning. The second sentence is far more effective.

Overkill: I knelt down next to the victim's head, put my right hand on his forehead and the index and middle fingers of my left hand on his chin, tipped his head back, put my ear down next to his face, with my head facing towards his chest, and checked his breathing by looking for the chest to rise and fall, listening for the sound of breathing, and feeling for his breath against the side of my face.

Revised: I knelt down next to the victim, tipped his head, and checked his breathing.

Discretionary expressions

Discretionary expressions used to qualify a statement can often be eliminated without sacrificing clarity. Consider the expression *It is my opinion that*. If you are making a statement, does it not imply that this is your opinion? If you need to clarify that this is *your* opinion versus someone else's, the expression may be important. Otherwise, why not leave it out?

Discretionary: *It is my opinion that* we should inspect the facility more often.

Revised: We should inspect the facility more often.

How about the phrase *for all intents and purposes* in the following example? Is the investigation complete or not? If it is, don't add the extra words. If not, why not specify what still needs to be done?

Discretionary: The investigation is complete, *for all intents and purposes*.

Revised: The investigation is complete.

Revised: The investigation is complete, except for the independent analysis from a private lab.

What about the phrase *all things considered* in the first example below? What does that really mean? It may be appropriate if the sentence follows a discussion of problems encountered at the fire. By itself, however, the phrase raises questions. It is better to eliminate the phrase or replace it with specific information.

Discretionary: *All things considered*, we made a good stop on the fire.

Revised: We made a good stop on the fire.

Revised: Despite delays due to difficult access and poor hydrant pressure, we made a good stop on the fire.

Keep It Simple and Direct

Your writing will be more powerful and more effective if you keep it simple and direct.

Combine sentences

If two or more sentences relate to the same subject, try combining them into one tight sentence.

Wordy: Engine 11 reported that a motorcycle officer was injured. Engine 11 requested an additional ambulance.

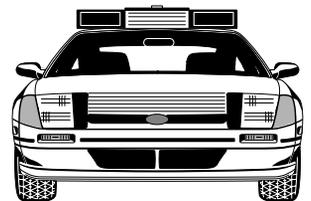
Revised: Engine 11 reported that a motorcycle officer was injured and requested an additional ambulance.

Wordy: I am taking an EMT class. Beth is taking the class also. The entire class runs twelve weeks. It is being held at the fire department training center.

Revised: Beth and I are taking a twelve-week EMT class at the fire department training center.

If two or more sentences relate to the same subject, you can often combine them into one tight sentence.

She saw the patrol car in her rear view mirror. She immediately slowed down when she saw the patrol car.
(wordy)



She saw the patrol car in her rear view mirror and immediately slowed down.
(revised)

More Effective Writing

Clauses and phrases used as modifiers can often be reduced to fewer words without losing emphasis or clarity.

***The boots that have been contaminated need to be replaced.* (wordy)**



***The contaminated boots need to be replaced.* (revised)**

Reduce your modifiers

Try restructuring clauses, phrases, and words used as modifiers to see if you can reduce the word count without losing emphasis or clarity.

Wordy: We found the knife, *which was covered with blood*, in a trash can behind the house.

Revised: We found the *bloody* knife in a trash can behind the house.

Wordy: The earthquake, *which was terrifying and occurred without warning*, left hundreds of people *displaced from their homes*.

Revised: The *sudden, terrifying* earthquake left hundreds *homeless*.

Use fewer expletives

Sentences that begin with expletives—*there is* or *it is*—are wordier and less dynamic than other sentences. Expletives have their place, such as when introducing a subject for the first time or when indicating a change in direction. However, you should eliminate expletives that merely postpone getting to the subject of the sentence.

Wordy: There were three children who perished in the fire.

Revised: Three children perished in the fire.

Wordy: It is the minister's daughter who was struck by a hit-and-run driver.

Revised: The minister's daughter was struck by a hit-and-run driver.

Use strong verbs

Use strong verbs that get directly to the point. Weak verbs de-energize your sentences.

Weak: The thought of being trapped in a burning building *is scary* to me.

Strong: The thought of being trapped in a burning building *scares* me.

Weak: We *made a search of* the woods all afternoon *with the hope that we might find* some clue that might lead us to the missing child.

Strong: We *searched* the woods all afternoon, *hoping to find* some clue that might lead us to the missing child.

More Effective Writing

When we talk about “weak verbs” in the context of being concise, we are not talking about your choice of verb, for example, *scares*, *frightens*, or *terrifies*. We are talking about how the verbs are used. Weak verbs are disguised as nouns and tucked into phrases, as in the left-hand column below.

<u>Weak</u>	<u>Strong</u>
conducted an <i>investigation</i>	investigated
managed to <i>escape</i>	escaped
reached an <i>agreement</i>	agreed
came to the <i>realization</i>	realized
made a <i>decision</i>	decided

Use the active voice

Sentences written in the active voice are generally more concise than those written in the passive voice. However, there are many times when the passive voice will be more appropriate. (See pages 472-473 for information on the active and passive voices.)

Don't be wishy-washy

Many writers use wishy-washy qualifiers such as *a bit*, *a little*, *sort of*, *kind of*, *really*, *rather*, *quite*, *pretty much*, *somewhat*, *for the most part*, *as a rule*, *more or less*, *actually*, *literally*, *essentially*, *very*, and *too*. These qualifiers dilute the power of the sentence.

Weak. I am *kind of irritated* by your lack of integrity.
Strong. I am *irritated* by your lack of integrity.

Weak. We need to be *somewhat cautious* about where we let our children go trick-or-treating.
Strong. We need to be *cautious* about where we let our children go trick-or-treating.

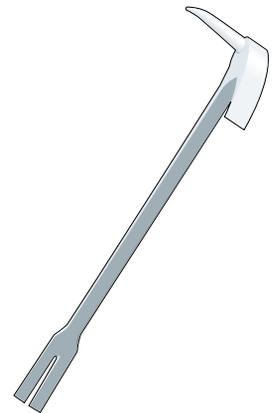
Some words don't need to be qualified. Either a person is exhausted or he isn't. Actions are either legal or illegal. Words such as *very* and *rather* don't change the situation.

Weak. Doug was *very exhausted* after completing the physical ability test.
Strong. Doug was *exhausted* after completing the physical ability test.

Weak. His actions are *rather illegal*.
Strong. His actions are *illegal*.

**Weak verbs
de-energize your
writing and add
unnecessary
words.**

***We managed to
force entry using
a Halligan tool.*
(weak)**



**Use strong verbs
that get directly
to the point.**

***We forced
entry using a
Halligan tool.*
(strong)**

More Effective Writing

The word *not* is often a signal that there may be a clearer and more economical way to phrase the sentence.



The driver was not sober
(wordy)

The driver was drunk
(revised)

Use positives rather than negatives

Negative sentences are wordier and less direct than positive ones.

Wordy: The driver *did not obey* the speed limit.

Revised: The driver *exceeded* the speed limit.

Wordy: It is *not likely* that anyone survived the crash.

Revised: It is *unlikely* that anyone survived the crash.

The word *not* is often a signal that there may be a clearer and more economical way to phrase the sentence. *Not guilty* means *innocent*. *Did not die* means *survived*. But not all negative sentences are bad. It makes more sense, for example, to say *we have not transported anyone to the hospital yet* than it does to say *we have transported no one to the hospital yet*.

Beware the double negatives

Negative constructions sometimes lead to double negatives. Double negatives are often confusing because two negatives in the same sentence give the sentence a positive meaning.

Confusing: We *don't want no* trouble from the police.

Clear: We *don't want any* trouble from the police.

Clear: We *want no* trouble from the police.

Confusing: We *didn't see hardly any* smoke upon our arrival.

Clear: We *didn't see much* smoke upon our arrival.

Clear: We *saw hardly any* smoke upon our arrival.

Double negatives can sometimes be used for effect, as long as the sentence is intended to have a positive meaning. Version 2 below puts more emphasis on the issue of awareness than the straightforward positive construction in version 1 does.

Version 1: We were *aware* of the danger.

Version 2: We were *not unaware* of the danger.

Use Pronouns

Pronouns, when used correctly, can be an effective tool to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Wordy: The county jail is overcrowded. *The county jail* was never built to house so many prisoners.

Revised: The county jail is overcrowded. *It* was never built to house so many prisoners.

Use Elliptical Constructions

Elliptical constructions are words or phrases that are understood to represent more complete thoughts.

Wordy: *If it is possible*, I would like to get a copy of the coroner's report before noon.

Revised: *If possible*, I would like to get a copy of the coroner's report before noon.

Wordy: Our helmets are color-coded. White helmets are for chief officers, red helmets are for captains, yellow helmets are for firefighters and engineers, and black helmets are for volunteers.

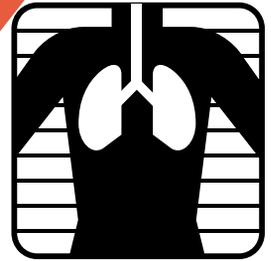
Revised: Our helmets are color-coded: white for chief officers, red for captains, yellow for firefighters and engineers, and black for volunteers.

Consolidate Where Possible

Look for ways to consolidate information. Let's say, for example, that you are writing about the signs and symptoms of respiratory emergencies and the proper treatment for each. There are two ways to present this information. One is to discuss each medical condition separately, describing each one in detail. The other is to first describe the general signs and symptoms that apply to *all* respiratory emergencies, followed by the appropriate treatment for those signs and symptoms. Then, once you have built a solid foundation for your readers, you can identify any variations that apply to specific medical conditions.

It's important to consider the reader's perspective when determining how to present the information. It is often easier for readers to remember one set of rules and a handful of exceptions than it is to remember a multitude of procedures.

Look for ways to consolidate information.



For example, all respiratory emergencies have certain things in common.

More Effective Writing

Do not omit words that are needed to prevent misreading.

I read another child was kidnapped last night. (confusing)



I read that another child was kidnapped last night. (clear)

Retaining Needed Words

Omitting little words for the sake of being concise can sometimes cause other problems.

Words Needed to Prevent Misreading

The word *that* can often be omitted without sacrificing clarity.

Captain Swanson pulled everyone out of the building because he was concerned [~~that~~] the roof might collapse.

However, if there is a possibility that readers may misread the sentence, do not omit the word *that*.

Confusing: I just heard Bill, our former fire marshal, died while I was out of town.

Clear: I just heard *that* Bill, our former fire marshal, died while I was out of town.

Sentences must be clear as readers are reading from left to right. If you write *I just heard Bill*, readers will expect you to identify what you heard Bill say. Using the word *that* prevents confusion.

Words Needed to Complete Compound Structures

Some words can be omitted without causing the sentence to be grammatically incorrect. The word *who* is common to both parts of the compound structure below, so it can be omitted.

Danny is the one officer in our department who is the most familiar with clandestine drug lab operations and [~~who~~] is most qualified to teach this section of the academy.

If a word is not common to both parts of the compound structure, however, omitting it will cause the sentence to be grammatically incorrect. In the first example below, you cannot say *never have take*. Therefore, you must include the word *taken*.

Wrong: I never *have* and *never will* take drugs.

Right: I never *have taken* and *never will* take drugs.

You must also keep idiomatic expressions intact, such as the expression *believes in* used below.

- Wrong:* Our department *believes* and uses the Incident Command System.
Right: Our department *believes in* and uses the Incident Command System.

Words Needed for Logical and Complete Comparisons

Make sure that comparisons are complete enough for readers to understand what is being compared. Otherwise, readers may interpret your comparison in a different manner than you intended.

- Incomplete:* We are more worried about the children than their parents.
Complete: We are more worried about the children than *we are about* their parents.
Complete: We are more worried about the children than their parents *are.* (*are worried*)

Be sure to state what is being compared.

- Incomplete:* Craig is more proficient. (*More proficient than what?*)
Complete: Craig is more proficient *than he used to be.*
Complete: Craig is more proficient *than I am.*

Make sure that you are clearly comparing two like items. The first sentence below illogically compares *damage* to *fire*.

- Illogical:* There was more *smoke damage* than actual *fire*.
Logical: There was more *smoke damage* than actual *fire damage*.

Include the word *other* if necessary to ensure clarity. The first sentence below *may* be clear if readers know who Paul is and what department he works for. However, the second sentence makes it clear to all readers that Paul works for the department being mentioned, as opposed to some other department.

- Questionable:* Paul writes more speeding tickets than *any* officer on our department.
Clear: Paul writes more speeding tickets than *any other* officer on our department.

If your comparisons are incomplete, readers may misinterpret your meaning.

***We are more worried about the children than their parents.* (incomplete)**



Is the writer more worried about the children than about their parents or more worried about the children than their parents are?

More Effective Writing

Avoid using sexist language.

Use *firefighter* not *fireman*



Do not invent clumsy terms such as *firelady* or *firewoman*

Choosing Your Words Wisely

Words are tools, like any of the tools we use in the emergency response field. The right tools allow us to perform our jobs more effectively. The wrong tools hamper our effectiveness. The same is true of words. The ability to communicate successfully with our readers has a lot to do with the words we use.

Words need to be clear and easy to understand. They need to convey the right image. They sometimes need to be chosen with care to avoid offending readers. The next few pages provide a variety of guidelines for selecting words that will enhance your effectiveness.

Avoid Sexist Language

Avoid using sexist language. At the very least, sexist language is distracting to those readers who know better. Other readers may find it insulting or offensive. Either way, it dilutes the effectiveness of your message.

Gender-Specific

fireman
policeman, policewoman
chairman
congressman
foreman
husbands, wives
man, mankind
manpower
workmen
to man

Gender-Neutral

firefighter
police officer
chairperson, chair, head
representative, member of Congress
supervisor
spouses
people, human beings, humanity
personnel, staffing, work force
workers
to staff, to operate

Of course, it is acceptable to use gender-specific terms, such as *policeman* or *policewoman*, when referring to a specific man or woman. However, gender-neutral terms, such as *police officer*, are often preferable.

Do not invent clumsy terms such as *firelady* or *firewoman*. Some women find these terms offensive because the terms are so awkward and artificial. When you refer to a woman using gender-neutral terms, such as *firefighter*, you show her that you accept her as a professional.

More Effective Writing

Pronouns such as *he*, *him*, *his*, *she*, and *her* may also be considered sexist. Do not stereotype people. For example, don't automatically refer to doctors as men and to nurses as women. There are many different ways to write a sentence without using gender-specific pronouns.

Wrong: A paramedic should reassure her patients.

Revised: A paramedic should reassure his or her patients.

Revised: A paramedic should reassure patients.

Revised: Paramedics should reassure their patients.

Avoid Biased Language

Avoid language that may be considered prejudiced, patronizing, hurtful, or offensive. Not only does such language interfere with the effectiveness of the message, it also reflects poorly on the writer. You don't have to go overboard in trying to be politically correct. It is acceptable to say *blind* instead of *visually challenged*, for example. The bottom line is to be considerate. Call people by the names they prefer.

Realize that you will not please everybody, no matter what you do. Consider the question of whether *handicapped* or *disabled* is more appropriate. Even people who fit into this category don't all agree on which word they prefer. If your employer has a policy on what language to use, follow it. If not, ask the people who are affected by it. Ask the handicapped/disabled people in your department or your community. They may not all agree, but they will respect you for asking.

Use Jargon with Care

Jargon is the specialized vocabulary peculiar to a particular trade, profession, or group. It is acceptable to use some jargon if your readers are familiar with the particular technical terms. However, you should minimize the use of jargon when writing for a general audience. When you need to use technical terms, make sure to clearly define them for your readers. Your readers should not have to hold your document in one hand and a dictionary in the other.

Jargon

cerebrovascular accident
myocardial infarction
triple combination pumper
ex post facto

Clear

stroke
heart attack
fire engine
after the fact

Minimize the use of jargon when writing for a general audience.

***Body armor* is acceptable when writing for law enforcement officers.**



***Bulletproof vest* is better when writing for a general audience.**

More Effective Writing

Use slang and euphemisms only when appropriate.

***Died* is better than *passed away*, except when blunt, truthful words might needlessly hurt your readers.**



***To die or to be killed* is more professional than *to bite the dust*.**

Avoid Pretentious Language

Pretentious language also interferes with clarity. What good is a word or phrase if your readers cannot understand it?

Pretentious
acrimony
deleterious
a prevarication
to vociferate

Clear
bitterness, animosity
harmful, damaging
a lie, a falsehood
to speak or cry out loudly

Minimize the Use of Euphemisms

Euphemisms are indirect or vague expressions substituted for words thought to be harsh, ugly, or offensive.

Euphemism
chemical dependency
correctional facility
impaired
passed away

Clear
drug addiction
prison
drunk
died

Euphemisms are appropriate when blunt, truthful words might needlessly hurt or offend your readers. But don't hide behind weak words when you need to be direct or specific.

Use Slang Only When Appropriate

As emergency responders, we need to be familiar with some slang expressions to effectively communicate with the public we serve. However, you should minimize the use of slang in your writing. Otherwise, readers may perceive you as being less professional.

Slang
to bite the dust
to go under the knife
a reefer
a sitting duck

Better
to die or to be killed
to undergo surgery
a marijuana cigarette
vulnerable to attack

Some slang expressions may be appropriate in the right context. For example, the word *john* is a slang term meaning "the customer of a prostitute." The word *customer* is less offensive. However, it lacks the directness of *john*. You must be able to sense when slang is appropriate and when it is not. When in doubt, use more professional terms.

Avoid Nonstandard Language

Some people will occasionally use nonstandard English in informal speech, particularly with their peers. However, such expressions should be avoided in writing because they may lead readers to believe that you do not know how to write properly.

Nonstandard

ain't
he don't
I been
them is

Standard

am not, are not, or is not
he does not, he doesn't
I have been
they are

Likewise, you should use standard idioms.

Nonstandard

different than
preferable than
sure and
try and

Standard

different from
preferable to
sure to
try to

Avoid Worn-Out Clichés

Avoid using worn-out clichés that dilute the power of your writing. When you write about someone being *white as a ghost*, for example, the reader doesn't know if you truly mean *very pale* or if you simply threw in an overused cliché out of laziness or a desire to impress someone. When you write *very pale* instead, readers are more inclined to believe that you put some thought into coming up with an accurate description.

Cliché

dead as a doorknob
hit the roof
stiff as a board
three sheets to the wind

Better

dead
became very angry
stiff, rigid
drunk, intoxicated, impaired

Avoid using worn-out clichés that dilute the power of your writing.

The patient was white as a ghost.



Put some thought into coming up with an accurate description.

The patient was very pale.

More Effective Writing

Use general terms instead of regionalisms whenever possible.

Turnouts and bunker gear may be appropriate when writing for a local audience.



Firefighter protective clothing is understood throughout the country.

Avoid Doubletalk (or Weasel Words)

Avoid using doubletalk, or weasel words, designed to evade the truth or to confuse readers. Such dishonesty will only hurt your credibility. There is nothing wrong with writing about *financial incentives*, for example, if you are referring to honest and legitimate incentives. But don't use *financial incentives* when you really mean *bribes*.

Possible Doubletalk
a financial incentive
a persuasive argument
a revenue enhancement

The Truth
a bribe
a threat
a tax

Use Regionalisms Only When Appropriate

Words and expressions that are peculiar to a particular area may be confusing or distracting to readers in other locations. Regionalisms may be appropriate if you are writing for a local audience. However, when you are writing for a larger audience, you should use expressions that are more widely accepted.

Regional
down the road a piece from
oughtn't, hadn't ought
reckon

General
a short distance from
ought not
think, suppose

Some of the jargon or slang we use in the emergency response field can also be considered regional. However, there may or may not be a good general term that works for everyone. We can replace *turnouts* or *bunker gear* with *firefighter protective clothing* if we can tolerate the extra wordiness. We can use *hot (exclusion) zone* if it doesn't become too cumbersome. But sometimes we need to just pick one term and use it consistently.

Some call it
hot zone
incident command system
turnouts

Others call it
exclusion zone
incident management system
bunker gear

Use the Correct Words

When you choose words, you must consider their *denotations* (their dictionary definitions) and their *connotations* (the additional implications or emotional overtones associated with them). You can easily use a word with the wrong denotation if you are not familiar with its meaning, if you fail to check the correct spelling in the dictionary, or if you fail to carefully proofread your work.

Wrong Denotation

to *diffuse* a tense situation
the high *incidents* of crime
to suffer an *infirmary*
a matter that calls for *subtly*

Right Denotation

to *defuse* a tense situation
the high *incidence* of crime
to suffer an *infirmity*
a matter that calls for *subtlety*

Words that have similar denotations often have different connotations. If you use a word with the wrong connotation, it can be distracting to your readers.

Wrong Connotation

to *murder* a prisoner
a building *demolished* by fire
a health *difficulty*
to *induce* a police officer

Right Connotation

to *execute* a prisoner
a building *destroyed* by fire
a health *problem*
to *bribe* a police officer

Words with different connotations can suggest different images for readers. Those images may evoke different emotions, positive or negative.

Milder Connotation

a *large/heavy* patient
a *crying/weeping* child
to *disagree* with someone
to *advise* someone of danger

Stronger Connotation

a *fat/obese* patient
a *sobbing/bawling* child
to *argue* with someone
to *warn* someone of danger

Be Concrete and Specific

Your writing will be clearer and more vivid when you use concrete and specific terms.

Words are either abstract or concrete. *Abstract* words deal with qualities, concepts, or ideas: *evil, illness, justice, rewarding*. *Concrete* words name things we can touch, see, hear, smell, or taste: *blood, bullet, scream, smoke*.

Choose words with the correct *denotation* (dictionary definition).

Wrong:
to suffer an infirmary

Right:
to suffer an infirmity



Choose words with the right *connotation* (implication or overtone).

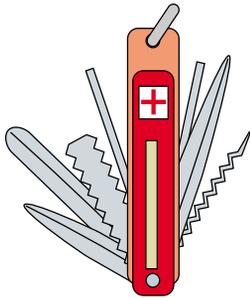
Wrong:
a health difficulty

Right:
a health problem

More Effective Writing

Be specific when possible.

He threatened us with a pocket knife.



Be general when you don't want to narrow your focus.

He resisted our attempt to search him for concealed weapons.

Abstract words are not inherently bad or wrong. However, they are more open to interpretation by the reader. For example, to write about *a bad accident* is abstract in the sense that *bad* means different things to different people. If you write about a five-car pileup in which three people were killed and nine others were injured, your readers will have a more accurate picture.

Words can also be either general or specific. *General* words are broader in scope, whereas *specific* words are more focused and precise.

<u>General</u>	<u>Specific</u>	<u>More Specific</u>
a crime	a felony	murder
an emergency	a fire	a residential structure fire
a weapon	a knife	a butcher knife
the highway	Highway 17	Highway 17 at Camden

General words, like abstract words, are appropriate in the right context. For example, if you want to write about the importance of searching a suspect for concealed weapons, don't narrow the focus to only one type of weapon. However, when documenting that a specific suspect was carrying a concealed weapon, identify what type of weapon it was.

Use Colloquial Language Only When Appropriate

Colloquial language refers to words and expressions considered to be more conversational or informal. Colloquial language is acceptable in informal writing, but should be avoided in formal writing.

<u>Colloquial</u>	<u>Formal</u>
in a lot of pain	in considerable pain
to bellyache about something	to complain about something
spooky	frightening
to throw up	to vomit

Avoid Obsolete and Archaic Words or Meanings

Obsolete and archaic words are inappropriate for most writing. *Obsolete words* are those that are no longer in general use. *Archaic words* are those that are still used, but only in special contexts, such as poetry or literature. Specific meanings or definitions can also be obsolete or archaic, even if the words themselves are not. An authoritative dictionary will identify obsolete and archaic words and definitions.

Obsolete or Archaic

a naught man
to proceed anon
to felicitate
to belie someone

Revised

a wicked man
to proceed immediately
to make happy
to lie about or slander someone

Use Neologisms (Invented Words) with Care

Neologisms are words that are invented, or coined, to fill specific needs but that may not be widely recognized. These words are often patterned after similar words. For example, *palimony* is patterned after *alimony*, and *prequel* is patterned after *sequel*. Some words, like *palimony* and *prequel*, eventually become popular enough to be incorporated into our vocabulary. But if a word such as *rightsizing*, patterned after *downsizing*, is too new and unfamiliar, it may not be listed in the dictionary.

You do your readers a disservice anytime they have to open a dictionary to understand what you have written—assuming they even bother to look. If readers cannot find a word in the dictionary, your entire message may be lost.

Use Figures of Speech with Care

A *figure of speech* uses imaginative descriptions to convey an idea. The two primary figures of speech are the *simile* and the *metaphor*. A *simile* makes an explicit comparison between two seemingly unlike things, usually linked by the word *like* or *as*.

Accidents are common on this stretch of highway where the fog consumes everything in its path as if it were a creature out *Star Trek*.

We found the child lying in a corner, looking like a tattered rag doll discarded in favor of newer toys.

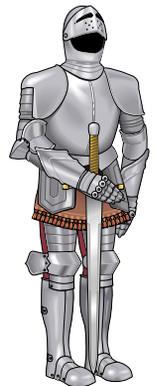
A *metaphor* is an implied comparison. It is written without the word *like* or *as*. The example below implies a comparison between firefighters and Darth Vader.

Four-year-old Laura screamed in stark terror as the image of Darth Vader approached through the fire and smoke. She had never seen a firefighter before. She had no way of knowing that Peter was there to rescue her.

A figure of speech uses imaginative descriptions to convey an idea.

A simile makes an explicit comparison.

The officer looked like a knight in shining armor.



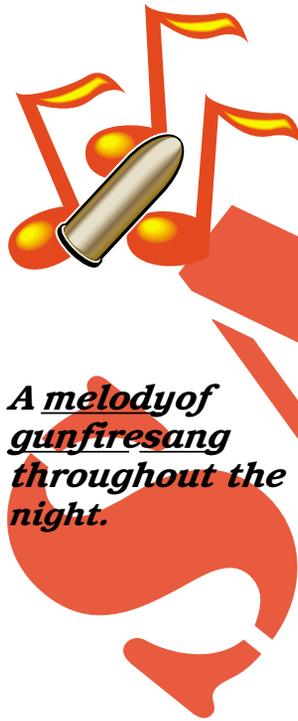
A metaphor is an implied comparison.

A knight in shining armor emerged from the patrol car.

More Effective Writing

Avoid using so many figures of speech that it interferes with your message.

Avoid using mixed metaphors—the comparison of images that don't work well together.



A melody of gunfire sang throughout the night.

The following example uses the expression *alphabet soup* to mean “other government agencies,” many of which are referred to by abbreviations or acronyms.

A terrorist event of any magnitude will bring out the FBI, the CIA, the ATF, and the rest of the alphabet soup.

Figurative language can enhance your writing by creating more vivid and precise images. However, when figurative language is used poorly, it reduces the effectiveness of your message.

Avoid overusing figures of speech. Don't make your readers feel as if you are more interested in being cute and creative than you are in conveying information. Remember, too, that readers may have to work harder to interpret your meaning, particularly when the comparisons are implicit rather than explicit. Don't make your readers work too hard.

Realize that similes and metaphors can become overused clichés. Thick fog is frequently compared to pea soup. However, the first example on the previous page compares fog to a creature out of *Star Trek*. Something fresh and original catches readers by surprise, forcing them to take notice of a different image.

Avoid *mixed metaphors*, the comparison of two or more images that don't work well together. For example, comparing a destructive fire scene with a winter wonderland would be jarring to readers.

Mixed: The scene became a winter wonderland as firefighters blanketed the smoldering debris with foam.

Nor does it work to compare a trail of blood to peppermint candy.

Mixed: It was a trail of peppermint candy—splatters of blood no larger than a nickel, sprinkled with fresh snow.

Again, figurative language is a powerful tool for creating different images. Anyone who has seen Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* trilogy can immediately see, hear, and feel what it must be like to have a firefighter approach through flames and smoke. However, if you are not careful to find compatible images when using figurative language, you can end up with mixed metaphors like those above.

Using Coordination and Subordination Appropriately

Coordination and subordination are two tools you can use to eliminate short choppy sentences.

Choppy. We treated Mrs. Ingle for smoke inhalation. We transported Mrs. Ingle to the hospital.

Better. We treated Mrs. Ingle for smoke inhalation and transported her to the hospital.

Choppy. The caller provided specific details about a possible bomb. We considered the bomb threat to be real. We didn't treat it like a hoax.

Better. Because the caller provided specific details, we considered the bomb threat to be real rather than a hoax.

Use Coordination for Equal Emphasis

Use coordination to give equal emphasis to two or more ideas. You can use coordination in several ways. One is to join main clauses using a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, or yet*).

The exit was not clearly marked, and the door was difficult to open.

We performed CPR, but the victim did not survive.

Another technique is to join two main clauses either with a semicolon alone or with a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb, such as *however, therefore, moreover, or thus*.

The drugs and weapons weren't hidden in Karen's bedroom; they were hidden in her brother's room.

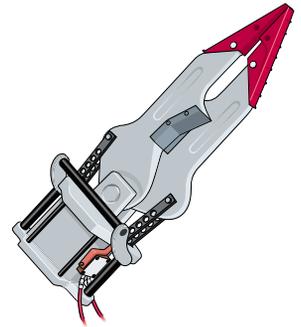
The clerk refused to open the cash register; therefore, the thief shot him.

Individual words and phrases can also be joined with a coordinating conjunction, resulting in either compound subjects or compound predicates.

The driver and the passenger sustained minor injuries.

Use coordination to give equal emphasis to two or more ideas.

We'll need the Hurst tool, for the victims are trapped in the vehicle.

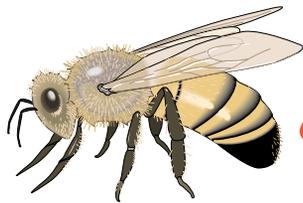


The Hurst tool is set up and ready to use; however, we still need to stabilize the vehicle.

More Effective Writing

Use subordination to de-emphasize less important ideas so that the more significant ones stand out.

We have to act quickly . . .
(main idea)



. . . because she is allergic to bee stings.
(subordinate idea)

We put up the ladder and advanced a line to the second-story window.

Use Subordination for Unequal Emphasis

Use subordination to de-emphasize less important ideas so that the more significant ones stand out. One way to do this is to put the less important ideas into a subordinate clause. *Subordinate clauses*, also called *dependent clauses*, are typically introduced with words such as the following:

after	if	until	which
although	since	when	while
as	that	where	who
because	though	whereas	whom
before	unless	whether	whose

The subordinate clauses are identified in italics below.

Although her physical injuries are not life-threatening, she could die from shock.

The earthquake measured 4.3 on the Richter scale, *which means it was a relatively minor earthquake*.

You can also put less important information into phrases.

Like most parents, I am upset that a registered sex offender was allowed to move into the neighborhood.

Seeing the ladder about to fall, Steve grabbed Carol and pushed her out of the way.

You can use individual adjectives and adverbs to present subordinate ideas.

Officers searched the area for over an hour before they found the *frightened* child.

Calmly, Penny prepared to intubate a real patient for the first time.

Finally, subordinate ideas can be presented as appositives.

John, *Linda's boyfriend*, wants to be a police officer.

They use arsine, *a highly toxic gas*, at this facility.

Avoid Excessive Coordination and Subordination

If you try to put too much information into a single sentence, the sentence will become difficult to read and your message will become obscured.

Excessive: We could hear the tension in the dispatcher's voice as she informed us that she had already received several calls on the fire, and as we turned onto Winchester Boulevard, we could see a large column of smoke against the predawn sky, so I grabbed the radio and requested a second alarm.

Revised: We could hear the tension in the dispatcher's voice as she informed us that she had already received several calls on the fire. As we turned onto Winchester Boulevard, we could see a large column of smoke against the predawn sky. I grabbed the radio and requested a second alarm.

Be sure to put the emphasis where it belongs. Do not put your main idea in the subordinate clause.

Do Not Subordinate Major Ideas

Do not put your main idea in the subordinate clause. The first sentence below puts more emphasis on Kevin's not wearing his seat belt than it does on his being ejected from the vehicle. The revised sentences put the emphasis where it belongs.

Wrong: Kevin, who was ejected from the vehicle, was not wearing his seat belt.

Right: Kevin, who was not wearing his seat belt, was ejected from the vehicle.

Right: Kevin was ejected from the vehicle because he was not wearing his seat belt.

In the examples above, there was one idea that clearly stood out as being the most important. However, that is not always the case. Sometimes both ideas are important, and you need to determine which one you want to emphasize. The first example below stresses the fact that the bank robber was wounded, while the second example puts the emphasis on the fact that he eluded police.

Option 1: Although the bank robber eluded police, he was wounded during the exchange of gunfire.

Option 2: Although the bank robber was wounded during the exchange of gunfire, he eluded the police.

Although we are not taking any chances, the raccoon doesn't look rabid.
(wrong)



Although the raccoon doesn't look rabid, we are not taking any chances.
(right)

More Effective Writing

Make sure that connecting words clearly show the relation between ideas. Failure to do so will result in faulty coordination.

The patient said that he used his inhaler, and it didn't help.
(faulty)



The patient said that he used his inhaler, but it didn't help.
(revised)

Make Logical Connections

When you use coordination to join two or more ideas, you must make sure the connecting word clearly shows the relation between those ideas. Failure to do so will result in *faulty coordination*. The following example contains two contrasting ideas. They should be joined by *but* or *yet*, not *and*.

Faulty: We searched all night for the missing child *and* were unable to find her.

Revised: We searched all night for the missing child, *but* we were unable to find her.

You must also make sure the ideas are equal in importance. In the following example, one idea is clearly less important than the other. This sentence calls for subordination, rather than coordination.

Faulty: You can check the carotid artery, and you will find the pulse more easily.

Revised: You will find the pulse more easily if you check the carotid artery.

The example below has both problems. Two unequal ideas are joined with a coordinating conjunction, and the conjunction does not clearly show the relation between the ideas. Both problems have been corrected in the revised sentence.

Faulty: We are getting rid of our Halon fire extinguishers, *and* we are concerned about protecting the ozone layer.

Revised: We are getting rid of our Halon fire extinguishers *because* we are concerned about protecting the ozone layer.

Putting Variety into Your Sentences

Your writing will be more effective—and more interesting—if you put variety into your sentences.

Vary Sentence Length and Structure

One of the easiest ways to put variety into your writing is to use sentences that vary in length and structure. Too many short sentences make your writing choppy and hard to read. Conversely, too many long sentences can be cumbersome. A mixture of short sentences and long sentences make a paragraph flow better.

The same is true when it comes to sentence structure. Coordination and subordination, techniques covered over the last four pages, provide a break from too many simple sentences. However, too many compound or complex sentences get tedious also.

Vary Sentence Openings

Most sentences begin with the subject. While there is nothing wrong with such sentences, too many of them in succession can become monotonous. You can achieve some variety by using different sentence openings occasionally. In the revised example below, an adverbial phrase was moved to the beginning of the sentence.

Original: The engine burst into flames *seconds after takeoff*, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing.

Revised: *Seconds after takeoff*, the engine burst into flames, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing.

The following sentence was revised in two different ways. The first revision starts with a prepositional phrase, the second with a participial phrase.

Original: Ryan began to panic *after being separated from the rest of his crew*.

Revised: *After being separated from the rest of his crew*, Ryan began to panic.

Revised: *Separated from the rest of his crew*, Ryan began to panic.

You can achieve variety by varying your sentence openings.

Original:
We'll make our move once everyone is in position.

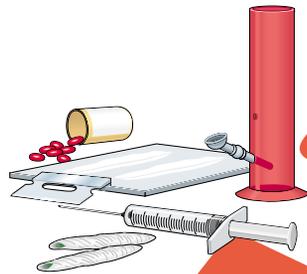


Revised:
Once everyone is in position, we'll make our move.

More Effective Writing

You can sometimes invert the normal word order for additional emphasis.

Original:
Illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia were scattered throughout the apartment.



Revised:
Scattered throughout the apartment were illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia.

The following example was revised by moving an infinitive phrase to the beginning of the sentence.

Original: We need to thoroughly overhaul the structure *to ensure we don't have a rekindle.*

Revised: *To ensure we don't have a rekindle,* we need to thoroughly overhaul the structure.

Sometimes you can move an adjective to the beginning of a sentence, trimming a few words in the process.

Original: The little girl *became terrified* and started to cry.

Revised: *Terrified,* the little girl began to cry.

The examples provided here represent just a few of the many ways you can open a sentence, but they should give you an idea of what is possible if you use your imagination. Make sure, however, that any introductory phrase clearly relates to the subject of your sentence. If it does not, you may end up with a dangling modifier. For more information on dangling modifiers, refer to pages 229-232.

Invert Sentences Occasionally

You can occasionally invert the normal subject-verb-object word order for additional emphasis.

Original: The burned body of a young woman barely out of her teens lay crumpled in a heap next to the fence.

Revised: Crumpled in a heap next to the fence lay the burned body of a young woman barely out of her teens.

Original: Two empty bottles of sleeping pills were on the victim's dresser.

Revised: On the victim's dresser were two empty bottles of sleeping pills.

On the other hand, if this technique is used too often or is used improperly, it can result in sentences that seem awkward and artificial. Invert sentences only when the inversion sounds natural.

Use Different Types of Sentences Occasionally

You can sometimes achieve variety by incorporating questions or commands into a paragraph, rather than by using only declarative sentences.

I suddenly found myself lost and alone in the smoke-filled tower. Where was the exit? Surely it had to be right in front of me. I knew the layout of the building and knew I had gone the right direction. I found the standpipe connection. I tripped over hose and other supplies I knew were stored in the tower. Everything was right where I expected it to be—except the door. Never had I been so disoriented. Imagine how frightening it would be if this were a building I wasn't familiar with and if I were running low on air as I tried to escape.

This technique works best when the questions or commands are used to achieve a specific purpose. They need to be effective for the context, not simply a gimmick to achieve variety. Switching from one type of sentence to another can be jarring to the reader if not done appropriately.

You can sometimes achieve variety by using different types of sentences.

I suddenly found myself lost and alone.

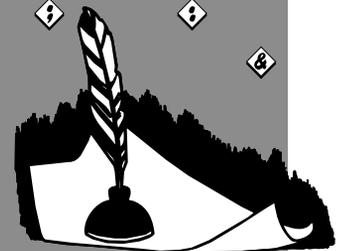
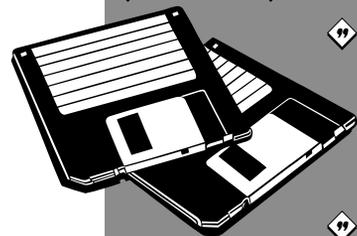
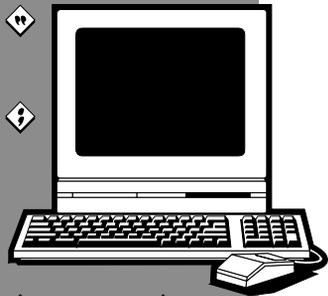


Where was the exit?

SAMPLE

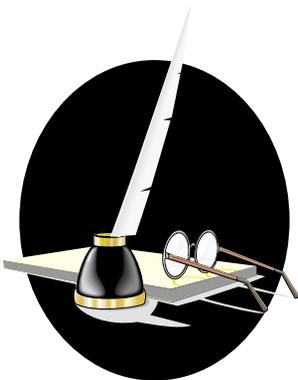
Chapter 15: Writing for Special Applications

SAMPLE



Writing for Special Applications

To write an effective letter or memo, you must have a clear idea of what you are trying to accomplish.



State your purpose up front, along with what action you expect readers to take.

Writing Letters and Memos

Reflect for a moment on all the letters and memos you have written or received throughout your life. Think about the good ones and the bad ones, the long ones and the short ones, the clear ones and the confusing ones, the ones that made you feel good and the ones that made you angry. If you're like most people, you probably recalled only a few clearly.

Most of us write and receive so many letters and memos that few of them really stand out in the great scheme of things. However, even those that are ultimately forgotten can have a significant impact at the time they are written or received.

Make Your Purpose Clear

Before you can begin to write an effective letter or memo, you must have a clear idea of what you are trying to accomplish. If you are not clear yourself, you cannot expect your readers to be clear about what you expect of them. If you are not clear, you may want to ask yourself if you need to write a letter or memo at all. Don't waste your time or your readers' time if you don't have something important to say.

The best way to ensure clarity is to state your purpose up front, along with what action you expect your readers to take. Think of your letter or memo as being the exact opposite of a mystery novel, one that keeps readers in suspense until the very end and that reveals important details little by little as the plot thickens. In other words, take the mystery out of your writing. Get to the point early so readers know where you are leading them. Don't generate questions that become a distraction to your readers until they are finally answered.

Be Concise, Thorough, and Accurate

Most experts recommend keeping letters and memos brief and concise. Writing concisely means using words economically and omitting words that don't add value. Fluff doesn't add anything to your writing. Rather, it obscures your message and frustrates your readers. (Refer to pages 490-499 for information on how to make your writing more concise.)

Writing for Special Applications

As for brevity, a lot depends on what you are trying to accomplish with your letter or memo and how much information is needed by the reader. Think about what happens when you receive letters that do not contain sufficient information. Do you toss them aside because you don't have enough information to act on? Do you find yourself wasting more time and energy trying to contact the sender to get your questions answered? As much as people don't like to read lengthy letters, most would rather receive complete information than receive letters that make unnecessary work for them.

A good way to strike a balance between brief and thorough when you have a lot of information is to write a one-page cover letter that summarizes the key points; leave the details for a separate enclosure. Organize the detailed information in a format that is easy to read and understand. Use headings, lists, or other techniques as appropriate to make it easy for readers to find specific details.

If you are writing to complain about a product or service, be specific. If you tell your reader merely that you are unhappy with the poor workmanship or poor service, the reader will have no idea how to resolve the problem. Describe the problem objectively. Provide necessary background information, but don't clutter the issue with irrelevant details. Most importantly, include a suggestion as to how the reader can resolve the problem to your satisfaction.

The same holds true when writing to provide positive feedback. Do not say merely that you are pleased with the product or the service. Explain why. It shows you put some thought into the letter. It also helps your readers make additional improvements to their products or services because it shows what you value as a customer.

If you are responding to someone else's letter or memo, respond to all questions raised. If you cannot answer all questions at once, acknowledge the ones you can't answer and identify how you will follow up. When you neglect to answer questions, readers may form conclusions, right or wrong, about your intelligence, your integrity, or your ability to perform your job.

Make sure your letters or memos are accurate. Check your facts before you commit something to paper. If you write something that may be questionable in your first draft, intending to come back to it later, flag it in some way to remind yourself to check your facts before the final draft goes out. Always spell check your document.

Be concise in your writing. If possible, keep your letters brief. However, do not omit important information for the sake of brevity.



Make sure your letters are accurate. Check your facts, and spell check your letter before you send it.

Writing for Special Applications

Present your information in an organized manner so that readers can easily understand your message.



Be Organized

Present your information in an organized manner. If the information appears disorganized, it not only reflects poorly on you but also makes it difficult for reader to understand your message. Readers should be able to absorb your message the first time they read it, rather than have to either reread your document or call you to clarify something.

Ask yourself, too, if the information is organized to meet the needs of the reader. Let's say, for example, that you are writing a follow-up letter after inspecting a facility, and there are several problems you want the business owner to correct. You must decide whether to identify the problems room by room or to group them by category. In fact, you may need to do a combination of both. Think about what will make the most sense to the business owner as he or she works to correct the problems. For example, if you noticed several fire extinguishers that need servicing, you can address that as one line item, listing the locations of those extinguishers in the same paragraph so the business owner doesn't have to hunt through the entire letter to find the information. With many other problems, however, it will make sense to document them room by room so the business owner can walk into each room and see everything at once rather than have to run back and forth throughout the facility.

Use an Appropriate Tone

Before you decide what tone to use in your letters and memos, think about the results you are looking for. Think about how readers will perceive you and the organization you represent. Think about what you are asking of your readers and how willing (or unwilling) they may be to follow through on your requests. Think about the potential consequences, positive and negative, that may result from your letter.

You will generally produce much better results if the tone of your letters is courteous and professional. However, don't be afraid to be firm when the situation calls for it. There may be times when you need to say "Look, pal. You need to take care of business, or there are going to be consequences." But a letter can be firm and courteous without being threatening.

If you need to say something unfavorable, try to introduce it with a favorable comment. For example, you might highlight the positive aspects of a situation before addressing the problems.

Writing for Special Applications

We appreciate the time and effort the Training Division has put into volunteer drills over the last few months. The drills have been challenging, fun, and more meaningful than they were prior to implementing the new program. However, we are concerned that drilling monthly instead of weekly will cause a decline in our proficiency levels, which could ultimately impact our safety at an incident. We would like you to consider restoring the weekly drills and would be happy to meet with you to discuss a strategy for returning to the weekly format without increasing your work load.

Whether your tone should be formal or informal depends on many factors, such as whom you are writing to, whether or not you know the reader, the purpose of your letter, and even the topic you are writing about. However, don't automatically assume a particular tone just because you think you should. For example, I wouldn't necessarily use a formal tone to write a letter to my fire chief just because he is the chief. A letter to my chief should be respectful and professional. As such, it is likely to be more formal than informal. But I would also want my letter to reflect the fact that I consider my chief an approachable human being, not a stuffy gold badge. If my letter is too formal, it may create a subconscious barrier between the chief and me. That barrier may reduce the effectiveness of my message.

Consider whether to use a personal tone or an impersonal tone. Giving your letter a warm and personal touch can make your reader feel more involved. It is usually more effective than a cold, impersonal approach. One way to make your tone more personal is to use personal pronouns, such as *I*, *we*, and *you*.

Impersonal: Enclosed please find the information you requested regarding the department's DARE program.

Personal: Thank you for inquiring about the department's DARE program. I've enclosed the information you requested. Please don't hesitate to call if I can answer any other questions for you. I appreciate your efforts to help stop drug use in our community.

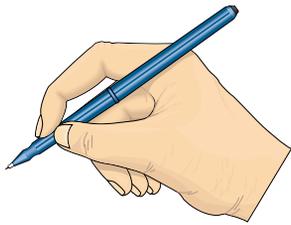
On the other hand, an impersonal approach is sometimes more effective when dealing with problems or enforcement issues. If, for example, you are writing to a business owner about fire code violations that have not been corrected, using personal pronouns may cause the reader to feel as if he or she is under personal attack: *You failed to correct the violations I noted in my last inspection.* It is less threatening to use an impersonal tone: *The following violations noted during the last inspection still have not been corrected.*

You will generally produce better results if the tone of your letters is courteous and professional.



Writing for Special Applications

The salutation helps set the tone (formal or informal).



Avoid using salutations such as *Dear Sir* or *Dear Madam* when you don't know a person's gender.

Use Appropriate Language

Clearly, your language has much to do with the **tone** of your letter. However, it also impacts the clarity and effectiveness of your message. Avoid language that may alienate your readers, such as sexist language or biased language. Use **slang** only if appropriate. Minimize the use of jargon. Avoid the **convoluted legalese** that tends to confuse and frustrate readers. Your message loses its effectiveness if your readers can't understand it. (The use of appropriate language is covered in detail on pages 502-510.)

Use an Appropriate Salutation

As brief as it is, the **salutation** can be a very important component of your business letter. (Salutations are used in letters but not in memos.) The salutation helps set the tone. *Dear Mr. Fields* sets a formal tone, while *Dear Jim* sets an informal one. However, even if the letter itself is more informal than it is formal, you may not want to greet someone by first name. It depends on how well you know the individual and what kind of relationship you have with that person. Consider, also, the other people who may see the letter. If you are sending copies to several other people who are not on a first-name basis with the recipient, you may want to use a more formal salutation.

If you do not know the name of the person to whom you are writing, you can use *To Whom It May Concern*, or you can address the person by title: *Dear Chief*, *Dear Captain*, *Dear Customer*, *Dear Taxpayer*. You can also address the organization: *Dear Santa Clara County Fire Department*, *Dear Firebelle Productions*. If you are sending a letter to several individuals, you might use something like *Dear Colleagues*, *Dear Friends*, or *Ladies and Gentlemen*.

Be careful with respect to gender. If you don't know someone's gender, avoid using *Dear Sir* or *Dear Madam*. Use a more generic salutation instead. If you can't tell a person's gender by looking at the first name, you may want to use both first and last name: *Dear Chris Harrington*. Better still, call the person's employer and ask whether you should address the person as *Mr.* or *Ms.* Don't forget about the handful of names that are usually associated with one particular gender, but which can go both ways. For example, *District Chief Lynn Caldwell* won't be impressed if you address him as *Dear Ms. Caldwell*. When you make mistakes regarding gender or when you misspell a person's name, you send a message that you don't care enough about the individual to get his or her name right. That in itself can interfere with the effectiveness of your message.

Writing for Special Applications

Use E-Mail Effectively

The emergence of e-mail has added a whole new dimension to writing letters and memos. Many of the guidelines that apply to writing ordinary letters and memos also apply to sending e-mail. However, there are some additional considerations you must think of.

E-mail is so easy to use that some people send far too many messages to far too many people. Be considerate of your readers. Don't waste their time with junk mail they neither need nor want.

Don't revert to sloppy writing habits and poor grammar just because you are using e-mail. Be as professional as you would with any other letter.

Be cautious about what you say and to whom you say it. Many people have suffered considerable embarrassment after inadvertently sending something inappropriate to a broader distribution list than intended. Once you send an e-mail message, it's too late to take it back.

Try to make your message visually appealing by leaving sufficient white space, using headings, or breaking up the information into easy-to-digest sections. The format of many e-mail programs is so unappealing that it detracts from the message. If you can enhance the visual appearance without creating other distractions, it can improve the readability of your message.

Keep in mind that e-mail systems vary widely in their capabilities, as do the individual users themselves. If you add enclosures that your readers cannot access, regardless of the reason, it reduces the effectiveness of your message and causes frustration for your readers. If e-mail is going to create problems for your readers, you may find it better to use a standard letter or memo instead.

That brings me to one last point about e-mail: know thy reader. Some people do not like using e-mail as a means to communicate. Some people are not comfortable with computers. Some don't have ready access to a computer and must use someone else's system when the need arises. Some people don't like the unappealing format of e-mail and would rather receive a standard letter. Conversely, some people prefer the simplicity of e-mail over the clutter of excess paper. If you know your readers have a particular preference, try to work with it. Otherwise, it increases the risk of people not responding to you in a timely manner.

Be as professional when using e-mail as you would be with any other letter.



While e-mail has several advantages, there are times when a standard letter or memo will be more effective.

Writing for Special Applications

Reports must be well-written.

Poorly written reports can hurt your credibility.



A poorly written report can cause you to lose a case in court.

Poorly written reports can undermine your goals in numerous other ways as well.

Writing Reports

Reports serve as a permanent record of incidents, events, problems, and so forth. There are many types of reports, each of which serves different functions. Some are used to keep people informed of activities within the department. Some are used to compile statistical information, identify problems in the community, or identify department training needs. Some reports are needed to facilitate investigations, prepare court cases, or defend cases in court.

It is beyond the scope of this book to elaborate on the different types of reports used in the emergency response field or on the report-writing process itself. That information needs to come from your particular agency. However, I want to briefly touch on the importance of well-written reports and the characteristics of a good report.

The Importance of Well-Written Reports

Poorly written reports hurt your credibility by making you appear less competent and professional. They can also undermine your ultimate goals in numerous ways. A poorly written report can cause you to lose a case in court, perhaps resulting in a criminal being set free to kill, rape, or steal again. Poorly written reports can make it difficult to accurately identify training and equipment needs. They can result in failure to take appropriate follow-up action on a problem. And those are just a few examples. You can probably think of others from your own experience.

Characteristics of a Good Report

A well-written report is accurate, factual, objective, concise, complete, clear, and grammatically correct. Well-written reports require some effort. They should not be something you merely throw together between calls. You should carefully review and edit each report before filing it or forwarding it to your supervisor.

Accurate and specific

Emergency responders do not have much room for error. The mistakes we make can mean the difference between life and death for the citizens we serve, as well as for ourselves and our coworkers.

Writing for Special Applications

Reports are a little different. You can *type* the wrong number when documenting a drug dosage, for example, without killing your patient. But the error can come back to haunt you later when your supervisor, the patient's family, or an attorney want to know why you administered the wrong dosage. Some errors are not discovered until years later when a case goes to court. By that time, you may have forgotten the details of the case. Even if you do remember the correct information, your credibility will suffer when you have to admit you made an error in your report. It raises questions about how many other errors you made.

Many inaccuracies are due to simple spelling errors and typos. Spell check your reports. Double check dates, times, names, phone numbers, addresses, license numbers, and so forth.

Being accurate also means being specific. Vague references do not give readers much information.

Vague. The patient had a high fever.
Specific: The patient was running a fever of 103°F.

Vague. The victim was hit by a tan truck exceeding the speed limit.
Specific: The victim was hit by a 1985 tan Toyota pickup that was traveling an estimated 45 mph in a 25-mph zone.

Factual

Well-written reports are also factual. There is a difference, by the way, between accurate and factual. A fact is something real that can be either proved or disproved. *The fire destroyed nine homes* is a statement of fact. However, further investigation may show that the fire destroyed three homes and six outbuildings. The first statement was found to be inaccurate, but it was a statement of fact versus an inference or opinion.

An *inference* is a conclusion based on reasoning. Inferences can be valuable if you support them with sufficient evidence. Supporting evidence gives you credibility.

Inference. We suspected he was driving under the influence because we could smell alcohol on his breath and because his speech was slurred.
Fact. Blood tests confirmed that he had a blood alcohol level that was twice the legal limit.

Reports must be accurate, specific, and factual.

He was drunk.
(vague)

He had a blood alcohol level of 0.18%.
(specific and factual)



Inferences should be supported by evidence.

I suspected he was drunk because he made two unsafe lane changes.

Writing for Special Applications

Well-written reports are fair and impartial, not influenced by emotion or opinion.

Subjective:
The only person visible in the area was a dirty bag lady pushing a shopping cart.



Objective:
The only person visible in the area was a homeless woman pushing a shopping cart.

Inference. We concluded that she had been killed sometime before midnight based on the presence of rigor mortis.

Fact. Rigor mortis had set in prior to our arrival.

An *opinion* is a personal belief. Opinions are often based on prejudice and bias. Opinions do not belong in your reports.

Fact. The driver who caused the accident had a blood alcohol level that was twice the legal limit.

Opinion. People who kill others while driving under the influence of alcohol should be charged with first-degree murder.

Objective

Objective reports are fair and impartial, not influenced by emotion or opinion. One key to being objective is to avoid words that have connotative meanings, either positive or negative.

Objective. Her face was *bloody* after the accident.

Subjective. Her face was *gruesome* after the accident.

An objective report includes both sides of the story and does not favor one side or the other. The first account below is objective. However, the second and third are slanted to favor wife and the husband, respectively. Only the first one is appropriate.

Objective. Several witnesses reported hearing the couple arguing about money. Mr. Reilly allegedly hit his wife in the face during the argument. We found Mrs. Reilly with a bloody nose and a swollen cheek.

Slanted. Numerous witnesses reported that the couple had been fighting because Mr. Reilly couldn't hold down a job. Mr. Reilly slugged his wife in the face because he was furious that she brought up the subject. We found Mrs. Reilly with severe injuries to the face, including a bloody nose and a badly swollen cheek.

Slanted. Several witnesses reported that the couple had been arguing because Mrs. Reilly kept nagging her husband about being laid off. Mrs. Reilly became so hostile that her husband momentarily lost control and slapped her in the face. Mrs. Reilly claimed to have been badly beaten, but she had only a little bit of blood beneath her nose and a slightly red cheek.

Writing for Special Applications

Statements from other people may not be objective. However, when you include those statements in your reports, you need to make it clear that you are quoting someone else, for example, “Mrs. Reilly claimed her husband slugged her in the face because he was furious with her.” “Slugged” and “furious” are Mrs. Reilly’s words, not yours. She can use emotional words; you should not. You must be objective even if the people you are quoting from are not.

Concise

Being concise means using words economically and omitting words that do not add value. It does not mean leaving out important details. The following are just two examples. Refer to pages 490-499 for more information how to write concisely.

Wordy. The paramedics made the decision to take her to the trauma unit at Valley Medical Center because of the fact that she had massive internal injuries.

Concise. The paramedics decided to take her to Valley Medical Center’s trauma unit because she had massive internal injuries.

Wordy. The engine company that arrived first on the scene immediately began operations to search the first floor of the hotel and rescue anyone who might be trapped.

Concise. The first-in engine company immediately began search and rescue operations on the first floor of the hotel.

Complete

A well-written report is complete. It covers *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how*. It does not leave any unanswered questions. For example, don’t stop with who the victim was and who responded to the call. Include who discovered the incident, who reported it, who witnessed it, whom you talked to during your investigation, who marked and received the evidence, other people whom you notified, who the insurance carrier is, and so forth.

How much detail is appropriate for a given report depends largely on the incident and your department’s policies. Consider, also, how the report may be used in the future. Will it be used in court someday? If so, anticipate that both the prosecution and the defense will examine the report closely. You should anticipate being questioned about every detail, including some that are not in the report. The more you put in the report, the less you have to rely on memory and the more credibility you have in the courtroom.

A well-written report does not contain unnecessary words. Nor does it leave unanswered questions.



Recognize that your reports may be used in court someday. The more complete your reports, the less you have to rely on memory.

Writing for Special Applications

A clear report is one that can be easily understood by anyone who is reading it.

He illegally modifies cars.
(vague)



He buys stolen vehicles, repaints them, changes a few parts, then sells the cars for a profit.
(clear)

Will you want to reference the report someday? Will you need the information to show a trend in your city? Will you need to compare the circumstances of this incident with another one that might be related? If there are details you may need in the future, include them in the report.

Who else may read your report? Investigators? City officials? Insurance companies? Others? What information will they need? Be sure your report covers those details too.

Does your department have a procedure for recording details that should *not* be made public? Many of the details you don't want made public still need to be documented somewhere.

Clear

A clear report is one that can be easily understood and that contains no ambiguities. If different people can read the same report and come up with different interpretations, the report is not clear.

Provide specific details. As already indicated, vague references do not give readers much information. The more details you provide, the clearer the incident will be to your readers. Look at the first example below. What does *overcrowded* mean? Who says the balcony was overcrowded? The first sentence is unclear because it leaves too much open to interpretation.

Vague: The balcony collapsed because it was overcrowded.

Clear: The wooden balcony collapsed because it was overloaded. Structural engineers confirmed that it was designed to hold a maximum of eight people. Several witnesses said there were at least fifteen people on the balcony when it collapsed.

Use standard English and standard abbreviations. Do not use words or abbreviations that your readers may misinterpret. For example, just because *SOB* means "shortness of breath" to you does not mean everyone will interpret it the same way. Likewise, keep jargon to a minimum. Keep in mind that your reports may be read by people outside the department, including citizens, the media, city officials, attorneys, judges, and jurors. You need to write in a way that they will understand what you have written.

Use diagrams, sketches, and photographs to help illustrate the scene. Make sure the information in your report is consistent with what is shown in the diagrams, sketches, and photographs.

Writing for Special Applications

Grammatically Correct

Many of the errors made in report writing are errors in grammar and punctuation. Errors in grammar and punctuation can affect both the clarity and the accuracy of your report. They also make you look less professional. Grammar and punctuation are covered in much more detail throughout this book; however, the following examples should give you an idea of some of the problems that can occur when your sentences are not grammatically correct.

The first example below is called a *run-on sentence*. Two independent clauses are incorrectly joined without any punctuation. The best way to fix this error is to write two separate sentences.

Wrong: Witnesses said the suspect fled the scene on foot he was last seen running southbound on University Avenue.

Right: Witnesses said the suspect fled the scene on foot. He was last seen running southbound on University Avenue.

The first sentence below is missing a comma that is essential to prevent misreading. It can be fixed either by inserting the comma or by restructuring the sentence.

Wrong: While he was eating the patient began experiencing chest pain.

Right: While he was eating, the patient began experiencing chest pain.

Right: The patient began experiencing chest pain while he was eating.

The following is an example of a *dangling modifier*. The introductory phrase does not clearly modify the subject. It appears as if the officers, not the drunk driver, were weaving in and out of traffic.

Wrong: Weaving in and out of traffic, we suspected the man was driving under the influence.

Right: Because he was weaving in and out of traffic, we suspected the man was driving under the influence.

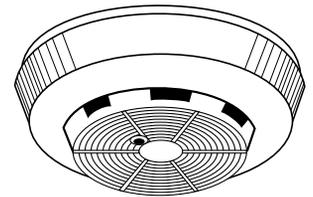
The following example shifts from the past tense to the present tense. This is easily fixed by changing the word *hits* to *hit*.

Wrong: The driver lost control of her vehicle and hits a pedestrian in the crosswalk.

Right: The driver lost control of her vehicle and hit a pedestrian in the crosswalk.

Errors in grammar and punctuation can affect both the clarity and the accuracy of your report.

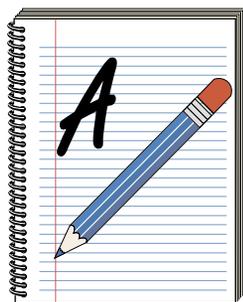
The woman died, she didn't have a smoke detector. (wrong)



The woman died because she didn't have a smoke detector. (right)

Writing for Special Applications

Students often have a lot at stake when they take your tests.



Always strive for quality. Write tests that add value to the class and that challenge students.

Writing Tests

Writing good tests is not easy. However, when you are in a position to write pre-employment tests, promotional tests, or certification exams, it is absolutely essential that you do a good job. The people taking these tests often have a lot at stake.

The next few pages won't make you an expert in test writing. However, they provide guidelines to help you avoid some of the more typical problems. This section focuses on multiple-choice tests because they are the most common. They are fairly reliable and easy to administer. Multiple-choice tests also seem to have more advantages and fewer disadvantages than other types of tests.

Don't Write Another "Typical State Test"

Students often joke and complain about the "typical state test." You know the one: It is at least ten years out of date. Many of the questions come from some obscure part of the student manual that you would have never thought to study if the instructor hadn't warned you ahead of time. Many of the questions are irrelevant to what you do out in the field. Some questions are so easy that they fail to measure anything of value. Others are so difficult or so poorly written that even the brightest students in class struggle with them.

When you write a test, write questions that add value to the class and that challenge students. Students should be able to walk away from the test feeling that they have accomplished something in the class and that the test was a good measure of what they accomplished. Always strive for quality.

Know Key Terms and Definitions

There are three parts to each multiple-choice test item:

- The *premise* is the part of a test item that states the question or problem.
- The *correct answer* is the option that best completes the premise.
- The *distractors* are the incorrect choices.

These terms will be used throughout this section.

Writing for Special Applications

Keep Questions Current

It's very important, particularly in the emergency response field, that questions be current and up to date. It is a disservice to your students and to the public they serve if students have to remember codes, regulations, techniques, and so on, that are no longer valid. It can be dangerous if students are asked to remember response information that is no longer accurate. And, if those reasons alone are not sufficient to convince you, remember that an obsolete test hurts your credibility. It can also make things difficult for other instructors who may administer your test. Always do your best to keep questions current.

Make Questions Relevant and Interesting

Test questions should be relevant to what students will eventually do in the field. Don't write a test just for the sake of having a test. That's no fun for you, and it is of little value to your students.

A test should add value to the learning experience. A test should show students how they can use the information learned in class. The following test question may be appropriate, but it is boring. It is a memorization question.

Boring. Sarin is an example of a _____ agent.

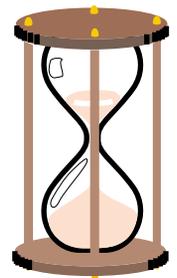
- Blister
- Blood
- Choking
- Nerve

The next question is almost identical, but it immediately draws students into the drama or the urgency of the situation. What if this were happening in my community and I had to respond to it? This is more than just a test question. It has direct application to the job. This question is more relevant and interesting than the one above.

Revised: You have just received word that a terrorist group is threatening to release sarin, a chemical warfare agent, at a nearby amusement park. What type of chemical warfare agent is sarin?

- A blister agent
- A blood agent
- A choking agent
- A nerve agent

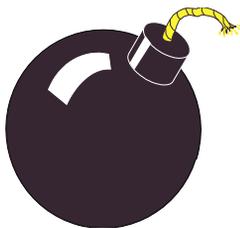
Keep test questions current.



It is a disservice to the students and to the public they serve if students have to take out-of-date tests.

Writing for Special Applications

Test questions should be relevant to what students may eventually do in the field.



Which of the following steps is appropriate upon discovery of a possible bomb?

On the other hand, you must be careful not to make the premise too wordy. Story problems are not appropriate in all situations. Sometimes they get in the way. Consider the reading level of your students and how much time they will have to take the test. If students have difficulty reading or if they feel like they are being rushed, the story problems will be more of a hindrance than a help. If you put too much information into the premise, students may also read things into the question and have difficulty picking the right answer as a result. The key is balance.

Wordy: The department secretary notifies you that a suspicious package has just been delivered to headquarters. Upon investigation, you find a bulky package with oil stains on the outer wrapping. It is addressed to the chief of the department, though his name has been misspelled, and the handwriting is sloppy. There is no return address. The package is marked "Personal." You suspect this may be a mail bomb. You tell the secretary to alert the bomb squad and to begin evacuating the building. Meanwhile, you should:

- Immerse the package in water to minimize the blast effects.
- Open doors and windows to minimize damage from the blast.
- Take the package outside where it will do less harm if it detonates.
- Put the package in a confined space, such as a cabinet or desk drawer, to confine the blast.

The previous example is too much for a single question (although it is acceptable to use the a lengthy premise for *multiple* questions). The revised example below may not be as dramatic, but it is relevant. You don't have to build an elaborate scenario for students to picture themselves in a situation where they discover a possible mail bomb and have to deal with it.

Revised: Which of the following steps is appropriate upon discovery of a possible mail bomb?

- Immerse the package in water to minimize the blast effects.
- Open doors and windows to minimize damage from the blast.
- Take the package outside where it will do less harm if it detonates.
- Put the package in a confined space, such as a cabinet or desk drawer, to confine the blast.

Writing for Special Applications

Avoid Trivia Questions

Avoid trivia questions that have little to do with the course objectives. The following question may work in a class on the history of pipelines, but it is not appropriate in a class on emergency response.

- Trivia:* Pipeline safety regulations are a result of the Natural Gas and Pipeline Safety Act of:
- 1966
 - 1967
 - 1968
 - 1969

If you have a ruptured pipeline spewing product into the air, the last thing you should be concerned about is when the regulations were written. You need to know how to identify the hazards and how to mitigate the incident. The following question is more appropriate.

- Better:* The most important reason for calling the pipeline company before shutting off valves at a pipeline leak is to:
- Eliminate all ignition sources.
 - Determine how much product will continue to flow after valves have been shut off.
 - Determine whether to extinguish a fire or let it burn.
 - Make sure shutting off a valve won't cause problems elsewhere in the line.

Trivia questions are very easy to write, much more so than quality questions. They are often easier to defend too. If you look at the two examples above, you can see that the trivia question is pretty straightforward. The second question, though it does have a single best answer, is more open to interpretation. The best answer is (d), but all the distractors are relevant concerns.

This is the trap that many test writers fall into. They want questions that are easy to write and easy to defend. However, trivia questions are inappropriate. They do not represent the material taught in class nor the information we want emergency responders to know in the field. They also hurt the credibility of the test writer because students resent these kinds of questions.

Avoid trivia questions that have little to do with the course objectives.

Pipeline safety regulations are a result of the Natural Gas and Pipeline Safety Act of. . . . (trivia)



The most important reason for calling the pipeline company before shutting off valves at a pipeline leak is to. . . . (revised)

Writing for Special Applications

Avoid giving away the answers with extraneous clues.

Which of the following definitions best describes circumstantial evidence?



Evidence that is inferred by establishing a condition of surrounding and limited circumstances

Don't Give Away the Answers

Giving away the answers defeats the purpose of the test. A test is supposed to be a tool to evaluate learning. It is not supposed to be an opportunity for good test-takers to outsmart the instructor. There are several traps you need to watch out for.

Extraneous clues in the premise or the answer

The first trap is extraneous clues that lead students to the answer. In the first example below, the words *vapor* and *pressure* are both used in the premise. Even someone who does not know the material would be able to choose *vapor pressure* as the correct answer. A simple fix would be to replace the word *pressure* in the premise with the word *force*.

Which of the following terms is used to describe the pressure exerted by the vapors of a liquid against the atmosphere or the sides of a container?

- Vapor pressure
- Vapor density
- Vapor expansion ratio
- Specific gravity

In the next example, the word *circumstances* in answer (c) is a give-away. Again, even someone who does not know the material would be led to the correct answer. We cannot take the word *circumstantial* out of the premise, but we can replace the answer with a definition such as the following: *Evidence from which a fact can be easily inferred, although not directly proven.*

Which of the following definitions best describes circumstantial evidence?

- The preponderance of credible evidence
- Evidence that has a direct bearing on the decision of the case
- Evidence that is inferred by establishing a condition of surrounding and limited *circumstances*
- Testimony of a witness who states what others have said rather than what the witness knows directly

Writing for Special Applications

The next example is a poor question for two reasons. First, the words *directly above the fire* lead students to answer (a). *Directly above the fire* implies vertical. Second, students could argue that despite the clue, there are two possible right answers. After all, opening windows on upper floors is a less destructive means of providing vertical ventilation, if that option is available. Don't cover up a bad question by pointing students to the answer you are looking for. Rewrite the question instead.

Vertical ventilation is best accomplished by:

- Cutting a hole in the roof *directly above the fire*
- Opening windows in the fire room
- Opening windows on upper floors
- Positioning a smoke blower in the doorway for positive pressure

Another type of extraneous clue is the use the indefinite articles *a* and *an*. Since the premise below ends with *an*, it is logical to assume that the answer is *opium compound*. There are two ways to correct this. One is to use *a/an* in the premise. The other is to remove the article from the premise and use the appropriate article in each answer: *a CNS depressant, an opium compound, and so on*.

Heroin is an example of an:

- CNS Depressant
- CNS Stimulant
- Hallucinogen
- Opium compound

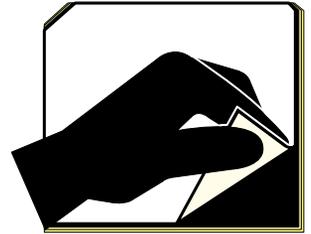
Clues elsewhere in the test

Another trap to watch out for is providing clues elsewhere in the test. Let's say, for example, that students are struggling with the following question. Perhaps they are hesitant to call the authorities when they suspect child abuse, but cannot prove it. They are contemplating another answer. Maybe they skip this question for the time being, intending to come back to it later.

Healthcare practitioners who suspect that a juvenile patient has been the victim of child abuse should:

- Not do anything until they have proof.
- Question the child to determine if their suspicions are true.
- Confront the parents or legal guardians.
- Report their suspicions to a child protective agency as soon as possible.

Avoid putting clues elsewhere in the test.



Look at the test as a whole to make sure that answers to one question are not provided in the premise of another.

Writing for Special Applications

Many professional test writers recommend against using answers such as *all of the above*, *none of the above*, and *both (a) and (b)* because they are often giveaways.



However, these options can be used in moderation if used wisely.

Later in the test, students encounter the following question. The premise in this question confirms the answer to the previous one.

The California Penal Code requires certain professionals to report known or suspected cases of child abuse to a child protection agency immediately or as soon as practically possible by telephone and to send a written report thereof within ___ hours of receiving information concerning the incident.

- a. 12
- b. 24
- c. 36
- d. 48

All of the above*, *none of the above*, *both (a) and (b)

Professional test writers generally recommend against writing questions that contain answers such as *all of the above*, *none of the above*, and *both (a) and (b)*. It isn't that these are bad questions, per se. However, test writers seldom use these options when they are not the right answer. Students know they stand a good chance of being correct by choosing these options, whether they know the answer to the question or not. Most of the time, it is a giveaway.

Cyanosis is:

- a. A good sign that the brain is not getting enough oxygen
- b. Best seen in the nail beds or mucus membranes of people with dark skin
- c. Characterized by a bluish color of the skin
- d. All of the above

Many professional test writers don't like these questions, but the questions do have value. Although the test is an evaluation tool, it is also a learning tool. It helps reinforce concepts learned in class. The more information students retain, the better. The goal is not to trick students on a test. The goal is to help them save lives. The question above gives students three important things to remember about cyanosis. A question with one right answer and three distractors gives students only one important point to walk away with.

Use these questions with care, however. Look for alternatives, such as breaking one question into two or three. The first question may ask what cyanosis indicates, while the second asks where it can be seen in people with dark skin. If you use questions like the one above, throw in other questions where *all of the above*, *none of the above*, and *both (a) and (b)* are clearly incorrect. When students realize that these are sometimes distractors, they stop thinking about them as giveaways.

Writing for Special Applications

One option significantly longer or shorter than the others

When one option is significantly longer or shorter than the others, it is often a giveaway. If the correct answer is significantly longer than the distractors, as in the example below, it suggests that you put more effort into writing this answer to ensure that it was the most correct of all the options. Conversely, if the correct answer is significantly shorter than the distractors, it suggests you put more effort into ensuring that the distractors were clearly wrong. You are less likely to give away the answer when all options are approximately the same length.

Which one of the following statements is most correct regarding the shape of hazardous materials containers?

- Container shape provides no clues regarding contents.
- The container shape is a reliable clue for determining contents.
- Each container shape can be matched with a specific class of hazardous material.
- Container shape should be used for initial assessment only. Always confirm container contents through other sources, such as labels, placards, shipping papers, and Material Safety Data Sheets.

Different wording

Another giveaway is when the correct answer is worded differently from the distractors. The three distractors below are worded as dependent clauses, whereas the correct answer (d) contains two independent clauses. The different wording points to this as the most likely answer.

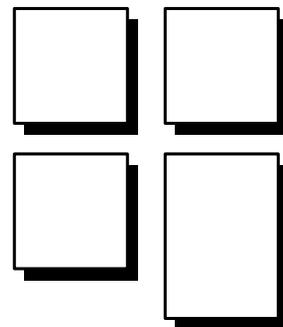
In caring for a patient with serious injuries, you should treat for shock:

- When you first notice the signs and symptoms of shock.
- When the patient's condition begins to decline.
- After you treat all other injuries.
- Treat for shock routinely. Don't wait for the signs and symptoms to develop.

Absolute and partial determiners

Absolute determiners (such as *all*, *none*, *always*, *never*, *only*, and *every*) and partial determiners (such as *most*, *usually*, *generally*, and *sometimes*) are also giveaways. Students can rule out answer (d) in the following example because of the word *never*. Meanwhile, the word *most* in answer (a) points to this as the likely answer.

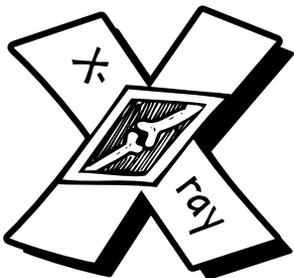
When one option is significantly longer or shorter than the others, it is often a giveaway.



Another giveaway is when the correct answer is worded differently from the distractors.

Writing for Special Applications

Avoid vocabulary questions. They show only that students recognize a word.



Use questions that require students to understand the significance of the information taught in class.

Which of the following statements is correct regarding the treatment of impaled objects?

- a. Most impaled objects should be stabilized in place with bulky dressings.
- b. Impaled objects should be left in place because removal will cause the victim additional pain.
- c. Impaled objects should be removed so that they do not do more damage to surrounding nerves, blood vessels, or muscles.
- d. EMTs should never remove an impaled object.

Avoid Vocabulary Questions

Vocabulary questions show only that students recognize a word. They do not show that students understand its significance.

Poor: A bluish color of the skin is called:

- a. Pallor
- b. Cyanosis
- c. Jaundice
- d. Discoloration

The following is a better question. It not only tests if students know the word, it also shows if they know what causes cyanosis.

Revised: Cyanosis is characteristic of:

- a. Heat stroke
- b. High blood pressure
- c. Carbon monoxide poisoning
- d. Lack of oxygen in the blood

The next question is even better because it tests multiple concepts. It requires students to know what cyanosis means, part of what causes it, and how to begin treating it.

Better: If a victim is cyanotic, the first thing you should do is:

- a. Reassess the airway.
- b. Elevate the victim's legs.
- c. Monitor and record vital signs.
- d. Loosen constrictive clothing.

Writing for Special Applications

Test to the Appropriate Level

The previous examples lead us into the subject of testing to the appropriate level. The first question, asking students to identify what a bluish color of the skin is called, is inappropriate on an EMT final. It would be fine if EMTs were expected only to identify cyanosis in the field. *“That’s cyanosis. Oh, goody.”* However, we are talking about people who may make the difference between life and death for ill or injured citizens. We want them to be able to do more than answer a vocabulary question.

Testing to the appropriate level means two things. First, it means testing to the level at which the class was taught. Don’t ask questions that are so easy they don’t measure what was taught in the classroom. Conversely, don’t ask questions that are much more difficult than the information presented. Neither extreme is fair. Second, it means testing—and teaching—to the level that is appropriate to your audience. You should not be testing or teaching to a basic awareness level if you expect emergency responders to demonstrate competency or proficiency in the field. Give students the training they need to be successful.

Level 1 - basic knowledge

The first level is one of basic knowledge and awareness. It requires students to recall, recognize, and identify. The following question requires only that students be able to recall the information from the lecture or the reading material.

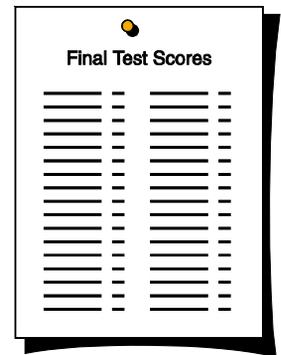
A normal atmosphere contains approximately ___ oxygen?

- a. 19%
- b. 20%
- c. 21%
- d. 22%

Level 2 - competent

The second level is one of competency. It requires students to apply information learned to prescribed problems. The next question requires students to do a little thinking.

Test to the level at which the class was taught.



Test (and teach) to the level that is appropriate to your audience.

Writing for Special Applications

Don't test to a basic awareness level . . .



. . . if you expect emergency responders to demonstrate competency or proficiency in the field.

You get a reading of 20% oxygen (a 1% drop from normal). How much of a displacing gas (contaminant) is likely to be present?

- a. 1%
- b. 3%
- c. 5%
- d. 7%

Since oxygen comprises just over one-fifth of the gases found in a normal atmosphere (20.9%), a 1% drop in oxygen means that close to 5% of the normal atmosphere has been displaced. Hence there may be as much as 5% of a contaminating gas in the atmosphere.

Level 3 - highly proficient

The third level is one of high proficiency. At this point, students should be able to apply information learned to a new set of circumstances. Students need to think *beyond* what was taught in class. The following example requires students to know the relationship between oxygen concentration and contaminant levels, just as the previous question does. However, they must now apply that knowledge to a possible scenario.

You get a reading of 20.5% oxygen in an atmosphere suspected to contain acetone vapors. Acetone has a lower explosive limit (LEL) of 2.5% and an upper exposure limit (UEL) of 12.8%. What do these initial oxygen readings suggest?

- a. The acetone concentration may be below the LEL.
- b. The acetone concentration may be within the flammable range.
- c. The acetone concentration may be above the UEL.
- d. The initial readings do not provide any information that can be used to predict flammability.

A 0.4% drop in oxygen means that roughly 2.0% of the normal atmosphere has been displaced. (Remember, oxygen comprises just over one-fifth of the atmosphere. Multiply 0.4 times 5.) If the atmosphere contains 2.0% acetone, the acetone concentration is likely to be below the LEL of 2.5%. Other monitoring equipment should be used to confirm actual concentration, but initial readings do provide some information to help predict flammability. Answer (a) is the best answer.

Writing for Special Applications

Minimize the Use of Negative Premises

Many professional test writers say that you should avoid writing negative premises—those with words and phrases such as *not*, *least*, *false*, and *all of the following except*—because they tend to be confusing and misleading. The biggest problem is that students often miss the negative word, even when it is emphasized in some way.

Which of the following statements is *not* true?

- Many chemicals have multiple hazards associated with them.
- You should treat all materials as hazardous until proven otherwise.
- You seldom have to worry about small incidents because it is the dose that makes the poison.
- There are often other dangers present at a hazardous materials incident besides those associated with the chemical.

There are times when negative premises can be used successfully. The question above emphasizes four important points for students to walk away with. If we turned this question around—gave it a positive premise and reworded the answers so that only one of them was correct—it would make less of an impact. Again, you can use tests as a learning tool, not just an evaluation tool.

If you do use a negative premise, make the negative words stand out. The italic type used in the example above is weak. Students are likely to miss it. Other options include underlining, **boldface**, **FULL CAPS**, or a combination of two or more. Students are more likely to see not, **not**, **NOT**, **NOT**, or **NOT** than *not*. Also, pay attention to test results. Are students missing these questions? If so, it may be that the negative-premise questions are just too confusing.

Double negatives are worse yet. If you have negative qualifiers in both the premise and one or more of the answers, it is even more confusing. Questions with double negatives should be rewritten.

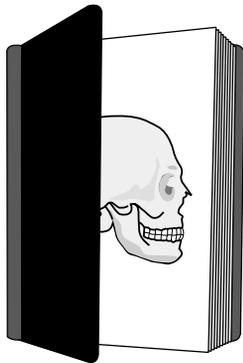
**Negative
premises are
often confusing
and misleading.**

NOT

**If you do
use a negative
premise, make
the negative
words stand out
so that students
don't miss them.**

Writing for Special Applications

When the premise contains an opinion or guideline from a specific source, identify the source.



This is particularly important when other sources may contain conflicting information.

Quote Specific Sources as Needed

When the premise contains an opinion or guideline from a specific source, identify the source. This helps eliminate controversy. Citing NFPA in the example below should prevent students from protesting that their department SOPs call for something else or that they are familiar with other procedures for handling fires involving explosives. There is only one correct answer.

For fires involving explosive materials, NFPA recommends that firefighters should:

- Evacuate to a distance of 2000 feet.
- Withdraw to a distance of 200 feet, and fight the fire using master streams.
- Extinguish the fire by inerting the atmosphere with nitrogen or dry ice.
- Wait for the initial explosion, then move in to extinguish any remaining fire.

Write Complete Premises

Your premise should be as complete as possible, except for the answer. The first example below is weak because students have to read both the premise and the possible answers to know what is expected. *Ice is illegal. Ice is deadly. Ice is cold. Ice is whatever.* The possibilities are endless.

Weak: Ice is:

- PCP
- Cocaine
- Amphetamine
- Crystal methamphetamine

The premise below is better. Students who know the material should be able to answer this question without looking at the choices. Not every situation will lend itself to a complete premise like this, but you should strive to make the premise as complete as possible.

Better: "Ice" is the street name for which drug?

- PCP
- Cocaine
- Amphetamine
- Crystal methamphetamine

Writing for Special Applications

Avoid Overlapping Alternatives

Students are more likely to challenge test questions that contain overlapping alternatives than questions that don't. The correct answer below is (c). Yet, because answers (b) and (d) overlap the correct answer, students may be drawn to either one of them instead. If students challenge the question, you may be forced to accept all three answers since answers (b) and (d) do contain partially correct information.

- Poor:* Brain damage usually begins after a victim has been without oxygen for:
- 2 to 3 minutes
 - 3 to 5 minutes
 - 4 to 6 minutes
 - 5 to 7 minutes

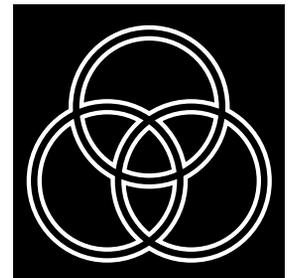
The revised question below is less subject to controversy. Not only can you show students that the textbook clearly says *four to six minutes*, but you can also defend the answer with logic. The brain can usually survive at least two to three minutes without oxygen before the onset of brain damage. Ten minutes is too long under normal circumstances. The previous question communicates to students that you are more concerned with them regurgitating facts from a textbook than you are with them understanding the importance of beginning rescue breathing in a timely manner.

- Revised:* Brain damage usually begins after a victim has been without oxygen for:
- Any time at all
 - 2 to 3 minutes
 - 4 to 6 minutes
 - More than 10 minutes

Make the Correct Answer the Clear Choice

It is often a challenge to write four answers for the multiple-choice question. The correct answer should be the clear choice either because it is the *only correct answer* or because it is *definitely the best of the options presented*. The distractors should be clearly incorrect or inferior to the correct answer. However, they should be plausible enough that students who don't know the correct answer may select a distractor instead. If you find it difficult to come up with three plausible distractors, make sure that at least one of them is plausible enough to make students think.

Students are more likely to challenge test questions that contain overlapping alternatives than questions that don't.



The goal is not to trick students; it is to ensure they understand important concepts.

Writing for Special Applications

Distractors should be plausible enough that students who don't know the correct answer may select a distractor instead.



The best distractors often come from common errors, mistakes, or misconceptions that students have.

The best distractors often come from common errors, mistakes, or misconceptions that students have. The following question would be difficult for someone who does not know the material. The correct answer is (c). Organic peroxides are similar to explosives in that they contain both a fuel component and an oxidizer component in the same formula. Their explosive and unstable nature is a more serious hazard than their character as oxidizers. However, they do have an oxidizer component in them, and they are a Class 5 material, just like other oxidizers. Many have toxic properties. Any of them can be considered unpredictable if you are not familiar with their properties. All of the answers are plausible. However, the greatest risk, the one most critical for students to remember, is answer (c).

What is generally the greatest risk associated with organic peroxides?

- They are very toxic.
- They are strong oxidizers that will fuel a fire.
- They are flammable and unstable, similar to explosives.
- They are highly unpredictable.

Distribute the Answers Evenly

It is best to have an even distribution of answers throughout the test. In other words, if your questions all contain four choices, answers (a), (b), (c), and (d) should each be the correct answer roughly 25% of the time. It does not have to be exact. You can go as low as 20% on some and as high as 30% on others and still have a fairly even distribution. What you want to avoid is any distribution that gives away the answers. If students see, for example, that a high percentage of the answers are (c), they may choose (c) as a default when they don't know the answer to a particular question because they know the odds of being right are greater.

Review Your Tests to Ensure Quality and Fairness

Make sure your tests are valid—that they measure what they are supposed to measure. They should be current. They should also be job-related. Some tests, such as pre-employment tests, may need to be more generic to avoid discriminating against candidates who do not have prior knowledge of a specific subject area. Even still, the test questions should represent activities a person might have to do on the job. Reading comprehension, for example, is fair game because reading comprehension is a skill we would expect emergency responders to have.

Writing for Special Applications

Make sure your tests are reliable, meaning that the test results should be consistent over repeated trials. If a student performs well on the test on Monday, he or she should also perform well on the same test if retaken on Tuesday.

Reliability assumes that all conditions are equal. For example, you may not get consistent results when comparing the scores of one class to those of another if the instructors were different. However, if the scores are dramatically different, it may indicate holes in the overall curriculum. You may have a bigger issue to deal with than just the test.

Ensure your tests are fair to both protected and non-protected groups, meaning that they do not contain content that is distracting or offensive to the point that it interferes with the students' ability to respond to the questions. Avoid terms that are sexist, as well as items that stereotype a specific gender or ethnic group.

It is good to have several people review the test before you administer it. Often other people can see little things you miss. Review the test results after you administer the test as well. Which questions are being missed? How often are they being missed? What are students selecting as their answers? Repeated problems may point to a problem with the test, problems in the curriculum, problems with the instructor's delivery, or a combination of factors. Evaluate, also, the questions that everyone answers correctly. You want students to answer questions correctly because they truly learned the material, not because the questions were so easy that students couldn't possibly fail. Take another look at grammar, punctuation, and overall readability. You may find things that can be improved.

Writing good tests is not easy. However, people often have a lot at stake when they take these tests. We all have a responsibility to ensure the tests we write are good ones.

Review your tests both before and after you administer them to ensure quality and fairness.



Repeated problems may point to a problem with the test, problems in the curriculum, problems with the instructor's delivery, or a combination of factors.

Writing for Special Applications

Horizontal (run-in) lists are capitalized and punctuated like any other sentence.



Vertical lists, on the other hand, can be formatted in a variety of ways.

Writing Lists

Lists can be an effective way of presenting information because they help break down and organize material in an easy-to-follow format. Yet determining how to format lists can be frustrating for writers. Even the experts do not agree on formatting. The biggest concerns center around questions of punctuation and capitalization. There are two types of lists: horizontal and vertical. The rules are different for each type of list.

Horizontal (Run-In) Lists

Horizontal (run-in) lists are those that are presented within a single paragraph. This is the simplest type of list, for it is the least subject to controversy. The horizontal format is good for short lists. Long lists, however, should be formatted vertically for ease of reading.

Horizontal lists are handled much like any other sentence. Use a period at the end. Separate items with commas or semicolons as appropriate. (Refer to pages 53 or 86 for information on when to use semicolons instead of commas.) Capitalize the first word of the sentence, the pronoun *I*, any proper nouns, any proper adjectives, and any acronym or abbreviation that is supposed to be capitalized; lowercase everything else. This is all straightforward.

Even the question of whether to use colons is straightforward. Use a colon to introduce a list that follows a grammatically complete statement. Do not use a colon if an incomplete statement precedes the list. (Refer to page 87 for additional examples.)

Colon:

The jury has been instructed to render one of the following verdicts: second-degree murder, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, or self-defense.

No Colon:

The jury has been instructed to render a verdict of second-degree murder, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, or self-defense.

Items in a horizontal list are sometimes enumerated with numbers or letters. The following example uses numbers, but the numbers could easily be replaced by the letters (a), (b), (c), and (d).

This chapter will address four methods of collecting latent fingerprints: (1) dusting, (2) spraying, (3) dipping, and (4) fuming.

Writing for Special Applications

Vertical (Display) Lists

The experts do not agree on any one set of rules when it comes to vertical (display) lists. Much of it comes down to the writer's preference. I have tried to simplify the explanations by presenting the issues of capitalization and punctuation one at a time.

As you review the various options that follow, keep in mind that whatever options you prefer to use, you should be consistent. Do not capitalize some items in the list, but not others. Do not punctuate some items in the list one way and others a different way. You have some leeway when there are multiple lists in the same document. Not all lists have to be formatted the same way. However, similar lists should be formatted alike. If, for example, you start by putting periods after incomplete sentences in a list, you should continue to do so in all the lists that contain incomplete sentences.

Capitalization

The introductory sentence must begin with a capital letter. Other things that must be capitalized are the pronoun *I*, proper nouns, and proper adjectives. Most acronyms and some abbreviations are capitalized as well. The confusion centers around whether you should capitalize the first word of each item in the list.

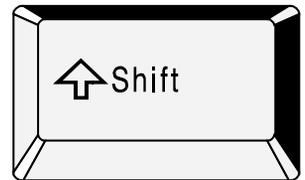
The experts agree that if both the introductory sentence and each item in the list are complete sentences, each item in the list should begin with a capital letter.

Three factors suggest that it was murder rather than suicide:

- The victim had multiple stab wounds.
- One of the stab wounds was to the victim's back.
- There are cuts that appear to be defensive wounds on the victim's arms.

The experts do not agree, however, on what to do when each item in the list is a *complete* sentence, but the list is preceded by an *incomplete* introductory statement. Some experts insist that you should always capitalize the first word of each list item. Others prefer to capitalize and punctuate the entire list just as you would a horizontal list. (Punctuation of vertical lists is covered in more detail on pages 551-554.)

The sentence that introduces a vertical list must begin with a capital letter.



If the introductory sentence and each item in the list are complete sentences, each item in the list should also begin with a capital letter.

Writing for Special Applications

Some experts insist that you should capitalize the first word of each item in a vertical list . . .



. . . regardless of whether or not the introductory statement and list items are complete sentences.

Option 1: A person's airway can become obstructed if:

- The back of the tongue drops into the throat.
- The tissues in the throat swell.
- A solid object gets stuck in the airway.
- Fluids collect in the airway.

Option 2: A person's airway can become obstructed if:

- the back of the tongue drops into the throat,
- the tissues in the throat swell,
- a solid object gets stuck in the airway, or
- fluids collect in the airway.

The experts also do not agree on what to do if the introductory statement is a complete sentence, but the items in the list are *not* complete sentences. Some experts insist that you should always capitalize the first word of each list item. Others recommend against it if the items are not complete sentences. Still others say that either option is acceptable, as long as you use it consistently. One advantage to capitalizing each item is that it provides consistency if one or more items in the list starts with a proper noun, a proper adjective, or an acronym.

Option 1: Five factors determine the seriousness of a thermal burn:

- Depth (first-, second-, or third-degree)
- Amount of surface area burned
- Involvement of critical areas, such as face, hands, feet, or genitalia
- Age of the patient
- The patient's general health

Option 2: Five factors determine the seriousness of a thermal burn:

- depth (first-, second-, or third-degree)
- amount of surface area burned
- involvement of critical areas, such as face, hands, feet, or genitalia
- age of the patient
- the patient's general health

Writing for Special Applications

Nor do the experts agree on whether to capitalize or lowercase the first word of each item when neither the introductory sentence nor the items in the list are complete sentences. Again, some insist on always capitalizing the first word. Some insist on lowercasing the first word because each item in the list represents a continuation of the introductory sentence. Others say you can go either way.

Option 1: The DOT must be notified as soon as possible for haz mat transportation incidents involving:

- Death
- Injuries that require hospitalization
- Property damage in excess of \$50,000
- Fire, breakage, or spillage of radioactive materials or etiologic agents
- Situations that continue to endanger life at the scene

Option 2: The DOT must be notified as soon as possible for haz mat transportation incidents involving:

- death
- injuries that require hospitalization
- property damage in excess of \$50,000
- fire, breakage, or spillage of radioactive materials or etiologic agents
- situations that continue to endanger life at the scene

Punctuation of the introductory sentence

When a vertical list is introduced by a *complete* sentence, you can punctuate the introductory sentence with either a period or a colon. (A colon is sometimes a better choice when the introductory sentence contains anticipatory words or phrases such as *these*, *as follows*, and *the following*.)

Option 1: Operating a fire extinguisher involves four simple steps. (*period*)

- Pull the pin.
- Aim the extinguisher.
- Squeeze the handle.
- Sweep from side to side.

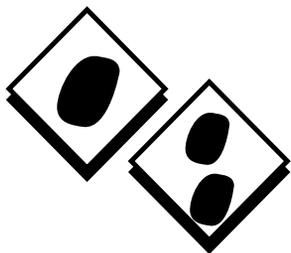
Some prefer to capitalize and punctuate the entire list just as you would a horizontal list. Others say you can go either way.



The important thing is to be consistent with the format you choose.

Writing for Special Applications

If the introductory statement is a complete sentence, it may be punctuated with a period or a colon.



Incomplete sentences may be left open or punctuated with colons or dashes.



Option 2: Operating a fire extinguisher involves four simple steps: *(colon)*

- Pull the pin.
- Aim the extinguisher.
- Squeeze the handle.
- Sweep from side to side.

When a vertical list is introduced by an *incomplete* sentence, many experts recommend punctuating the introductory sentence with a colon. A colon signals the reader that something else is coming. However, not all experts agree on this point. Some say that an incomplete introductory sentence should not be followed by a colon, no more than it would be in a horizontal list. They insist on using either no punctuation at all or a dash (—) instead.

Option 1: Protect yourself from radiation exposure with:

- Time
- Distance
- Shielding

Option 2: Protect yourself from radiation exposure with

- Time
- Distance
- Shielding

Option 3: Protect yourself from radiation exposure with—

- Time
- Distance
- Shielding

Punctuation of each item in the list

There are several options for punctuating items in a list when each item in the list is an *incomplete* sentence. (This is true whether the introductory sentence is complete or incomplete.) The options are (1) using no punctuation at all, (2) ending each item with a period, (3) punctuating the text as you would a horizontal list, using commas to separate each list item, and (4) punctuating the text as you would a horizontal list, using semicolons instead of commas to separate each list item. (Refer to the examples on the following page.)

Some experts have preferences. Others say it is up to you. Pick the style that works for you and be consistent.

Writing for Special Applications

Option 1: We dispatched four units to the fire:

- Two engines
- One truck
- One battalion chief

Option 2: We dispatched four units to the fire:

- Two engines.
- One truck.
- One battalion chief.

Option 3: We dispatched four units to the fire:

- Two engines,
- One truck, and
- One battalion chief.

Option 4: We dispatched four units to the fire:

- Two engines;
- One truck; and
- One battalion chief.

If any item in the list is a *complete* sentence and the list is preceded by a *complete* introductory sentence, each item in the list should end with a period. Some writers will omit the periods when each item in the list is a single sentence, given that the periods are not necessary to form a break between two consecutive sentences. However, the use of periods is more common.

Place your ear over the victim's mouth and nose, and check for breathing:

- Look for the chest to rise and fall.
- Listen for air escaping during exhalation.
- Feel for the flow of air against the side of your face.

However, when the list is preceded by an *incomplete* introductory sentence and each item in the list completes the introductory sentence, it is acceptable to either use periods or punctuate the text as you would a horizontal list. Once again, some writers will omit the end punctuation. However, it is far more common to punctuate the list items. (Capitalization of list items when preceded by an incomplete introductory statement is addressed on page 551.)

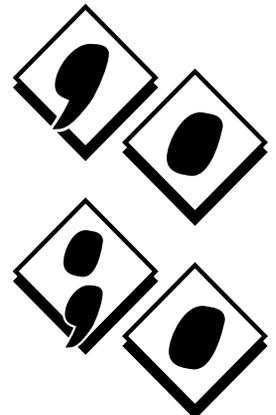
List items that form incomplete sentences may be written without punctuation,



punctuated with periods,



or punctuated as they would be in a horizontal list.



Writing for Special Applications

If you need to refer readers to particular items in the list, use numbers or letters to identify list items.



Option 1: To check the victim's breathing, you must:

- Look for the chest to rise and fall.
- Listen for air escaping during exhalation.
- Feel for the flow of air against the side of your face.

Option 2: To check the victim's breathing, you must:

- Look for the chest to rise and fall,
- Listen for air escaping during exhalation, and
- Feel for the flow of air against the side of your face.

Using bullets, numbers, or letters

Bullets have been used in each of the examples presented so far. However, you can use numbers or letters instead. If you do, use periods or parentheses to separate the number or letter from the text that follows so that readers will not become confused. The following are some common options.

- | | | | | | |
|----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 1. | 1) | (1) | A. | A) | (A) |
| 2. | 2) | (2) | B. | B) | (B) |
| 3. | 3) | (3) | C. | C) | (C) |

Numbers and letters are particularly helpful if you need to direct the readers' attention to a particular item in the list. It is much clearer when you can refer readers to item 8 than it is to have them count down to the eighth bullet.

If you have ten or more items in the list, many experts recommend aligning the periods, as shown below. However, this only makes sense when your bulleted list is indented to begin with. If the list is flush with the left margin, aligning the periods will cause the first digit of numbers ten or greater to extend beyond the left margin.

The following are behavioral indicators of sexual abuse in older children and adolescents:

1. Withdrawal
2. Clinical depression
3. Alcohol and drug abuse
-
10. Suicide attempts or other self-destructive behavior

Writing for Special Applications

Long lists and lists that span more than one page

Long lists (sometimes referred to as *laundry lists*) are difficult to read. If a list is lengthy, consider breaking it into two or more separate lists. Keep in mind that too many lists (long or short), can make your document seem choppy and hard to read. Use lists when they make it easier for readers to absorb the information. Don't resort to lists as a way to escape the effort required to write a cohesive paragraph.

Whenever possible, it is best to keep lists intact on a single page. However, there are times when you may have to start a list on one page and continue it on the next. When you have to split a list like that, try to divide *between* items. It is difficult for readers to follow a list when an individual item is broken over two pages. In addition, try to break your list such that no item is by itself. When a single item is by itself, either at the end of one page or at the beginning of the next, readers have difficulty associating it with the rest of the list.

Lists Used for Multiple-Choice Test Questions

Multiple-choice test questions are similar to any other vertical list. The guidelines regarding capitalization and punctuation are the same, except that if the premise forms a complete question, you can punctuate it with a question mark.

The only other difference is the use of letters and numbers. Most experts prefer to use lowercase letters (a, b, c, d) to indicate the four choices, as in the example below. De-emphasizing the letters—everyone knows what they are—allows readers to focus on the answers they have to choose from. However, some writers prefer to capitalize the letters. Both ways are acceptable.

1. Which route of entry is generally considered to be the most hazardous?
 - a. Absorption
 - b. Ingestion
 - c. Inhalation
 - d. Injection

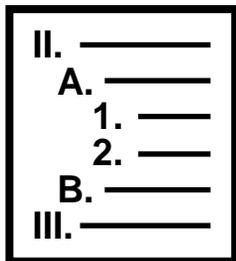
If a list is lengthy, consider breaking it into two or more separate lists.



If possible, avoid breaking lists over two pages.

Writing for Special Applications

Outlines are another form of list.



Capitalize the first word in each line of an outline. Omit punctuation unless needed for clarity.

Outlines

Outlines are another form of list. Outlines are systematically indented to organize the material, and each layer is systematically labeled using a combination of Roman numerals (I, II, III), Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3), and letters. The first word of each line is capitalized. Punctuation is generally omitted unless needed for clarity. The following is part of an outline from a hazardous materials class.

- I. Make a safe approach
 - A. Approach from upwind, uphill, and upstream
 - B. Maintain a safe distance according to:
 1. Emergency Response Guidebook
 2. Department SOPs
 3. Rule of Thumb
 - C. Position vehicles headed away from incident
- II. Lay the foundation for a safe incident
 - A. Treat materials as hazardous until proven otherwise
 - B. Observe all hazards
 1. Chemical
 - a. Primary
 - b. Secondary
 2. Others
 - a. Traffic
 - b. Tripping hazards
 - c. Electrical hazards
 - d. Sharp objects
 - C. Isolate the area and deny entry
 - D. Protect other incoming responders
 1. Thorough report on conditions
 2. Directions for safe approach
 3. Location of a safe staging area

Additional layers are identified with parentheses: (1), (a), (1), a), and so forth. Some writers may use different variations. Any system of enumeration is acceptable, as long as you use it consistently within the same application.

There is general agreement that no subheading should appear by itself—that every level of an outline should have at least two items. If you have a Part A, you must have a Part B. If you have a Part 1, you must have a Part 2. (I am more flexible. If I have an item that is clearly a subpoint to the one above and clearly the *only* subpoint I want to make, I would rather list it by itself than stick it someplace where it doesn't make sense. There are only a few rules that should never be broken. Others, like this one, can be broken when there is a legitimate reason to do so. Clarity is a legitimate reason.)

Writing for Special Applications

Parallelism in Lists

Items in a list should be parallel in structure, meaning the format should be similar. The first example below contains a clause, a phrase, and clause. The revised list contains all clauses. The problem was corrected by changing the word *ensuring* to *ensure*.

Nonparallel: To do rescue breathing using a barrier device:

- Position the barrier device over the victim's mouth and nose.
- *Ensuring* an adequate seal.
- Give two slow breaths to the victim, pausing after the first breath to take a breath.

Parallel: To do rescue breathing using a barrier device:

- Position the barrier device over the victim's mouth and nose.
- *Ensure* an adequate seal.
- Give two slow breaths to the victim, pausing after the first breath to take a breath.

For more information on parallelism in lists, refer to page 481.

List items should be parallel in form and structure.



Writing for Special Applications

Writing as Part of a Team

This final section is not about writing, *per se*, but rather about working with other people as part of a team. Pooling talented resources often results in a better product. It spreads out the work load so that no one person has to assume the entire burden. However, when you write as part of a team, you may run into obstacles that aren't an issue when one person has sole responsibility for a project. The following are some simple suggestions for keeping your projects on track.

Good planning is essential to success.



However, too much time spent *planning* and not enough time spent *doing* will paralyze the project.

Plan It Well, but Don't Plan It to Death

You have no doubt heard the expression, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." It applies as much to writing as it does to anything else in the emergency response field. After all, if you do not have a clear plan, you may end up spinning your wheels in the wrong direction. What is the scope of the project? What will the finished project look like? How will you divide the responsibilities among the committee members? What time lines do you need to meet? These are but a few of the questions that must be addressed early in the process.

Recognize that you can hurt a project by planning it to death. Many committees waste so much time planning that they paralyze their projects. Then they have to scramble at the end to meet their deadlines. Planning is important. Just don't use it as an excuse to keep from *doing*.

Equally important is to be able to effectively resolve issues that committee members don't agree on. You will have as many opinions as you have committee members, and those opinions may vary widely. If you cannot effectively resolve conflicts, you may waste many hours either arguing about the issues or redoing work you thought was done correctly already.

Projects can also be stalled by ineffective meetings. You need to keep people focused and keep meetings on track. One way to do that is to go into the meeting with measurable objectives. Know what it is you want to accomplish with each meeting. Be honest in evaluating whether or not those goals were met.

Finally, keep in mind that if you are not moving forward, you may be losing precious time that will seriously impact you later.

Writing for Special Applications

Be Honest About Your Level of Commitment

Once you agree to take on a portion of the project, people will be counting on you to follow through within the time allotted. If you break your commitment, other people have to pick up the pieces, often at the last minute. This doesn't hurt just the other committee members. It can hurt your credibility if others see you as someone who can't follow through on things.

Be honest about what you can contribute to the project. Don't commit to something you know you can't (or won't) do. Once you do commit to something, follow through in the time frame given. If things change to where you can't fulfill your commitment, be prompt about letting the others know so that they have sufficient time to make adjustments.

Set Realistic Deadlines

One of the most difficult things to do on creative projects is to estimate how much time it will take to complete the project. A good rule of thumb is to take your best guess and multiply the number of hours by four. There are countless problems and interruptions that will delay the project along the way, even on days when the creative juices are flowing smoothly.

Set realistic deadlines, then stick to them. Make sure the deadlines include a buffer to account for problems that may come up. Conduct periodic status checks to make sure that everything is progressing according to plan. If possible, the status checks should include an actual look at what other people have produced to date. Unfortunately, some people will tell you they have completed things when they really haven't. Some people may believe they are on the right track with the materials they are developing when, in fact, the materials are not what the committee is expecting. The time to find out the project isn't meeting expectations is not the day it's due.

Depending on what you are writing, you may need build in time for peer review. Accuracy is extremely important in the emergency response field. For example, if you put out a training manual or SOP that contains inaccurate information, it might cost lives in the field. You have both a moral and a legal responsibility to make sure your information is correct and current.

**Follow through
on your
commitments.**



**Set realistic
deadlines, then
stick to them.**

Writing for Special Applications

Chose committee members you can count on to complete the tasks they've committed to.



Seek the advice of experts who can help you avoid costly mistakes.

Choose Your Experts Wisely

If you are in a position to choose the members of your committee, choose carefully. Choose people you can count on to complete the tasks they've committed to. Select people who will work well with other members on the committee. Use people who are truly good in their fields. Just because people have specific degrees doesn't necessarily mean they will be able to produce the quality of work you need on the project. Choose people based on results they have produced in their lives, not on the stories they tell.

Know when to seek the advice of other experts. Getting some good guidance up front can keep you from making costly mistakes. For example, I've spent many long, tedious hours reformatting other people's documents because they were still using the computer like a typewriter. A quick computer lesson up front would have prevented the problem.

Seeking the advice of experts is even more critical if you are going to have something professionally printed. Discuss the project with your printer ahead of time so that you understand each other's needs. If you don't, you may find yourself wasting valuable time and money.

Anticipate Problems and Plan Accordingly

You will invariably run into problems along the way. The more accurately you can anticipate those problems and plan accordingly, the more successful you will be in turning out a finished product you can be proud of. Some of those potential problems have been addressed already. You can avoid many of these problems by putting things in writing and making sure everyone on the committee receives a copy. People sometimes leave meetings with different understandings of what was said. People sometimes forget what they have committed to or forget what deadlines were established. And just because you put something in writing doesn't mean people will read it. Sometimes it pays to make follow-up phone calls to make sure committee members are on track.

Other problems can arise if committee members are working with different computers or different software. Determine which computer system and software package will be used to produce the final product. Identify potential compatibility problems up front so that you can make adjustments as needed.

Writing for Special Applications

Obviously, it doesn't take much to destroy hours of hard work: a hard drive crash, a computer virus, a bad disk, a power outage, a lost disk, on so on. There is nothing you can do at that point but cry and start over. Save your work frequently. Consider storing backup copies in another location just in case.

Think about other problems might you run into. What will you do if you run over budget? What if funding is suddenly withdrawn from the project? Will your printer go on vacation, shutting down the entire print shop for a week? What if you learn that someone on the committee has, knowingly or unknowingly, plagiarized copyrighted material? What if you run into obstacles trying to obtain needed information? A good emergency responder makes contingency plans in anticipation of foreseeable problems.

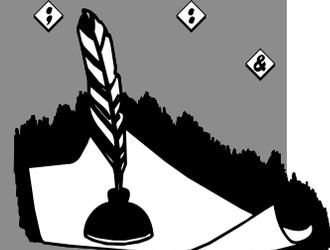
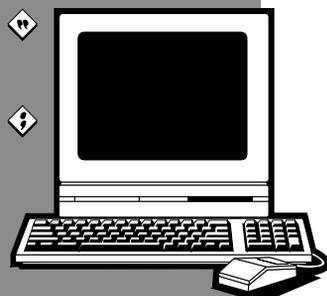
**Back up your
work frequently.**



SAMPLE

Chapter 16: In the Eye of the Beholder

SAMPLE



In the Eye of the Beholder

If your message is important enough to put in writing, it's worth making your document look good.



LOOK

A document that looks professional and user-friendly will attract readers more than one that looks ugly or difficult to read.

Introduction

If It Doesn't Look Good, It Isn't Worth Reading!

While it may be an exaggeration to say that “if it doesn't look good, it isn't worth reading,” it is true that the nicer a document looks, the better chance there is that someone will read it. If your message is important enough to put in writing, it's worth making the document look good.

People do not often go out of their way to read something unless they *have to* read it or *want to* read it. If your document looks professional, attractive, and user-friendly, people are more inclined to *want* to read it. If it looks ugly or difficult to read, they may simply ignore it. This chapter is intended to encourage you to think not just of the *reader*, but of the overall *beholder*.

When you make an effort to make your documents look nicer, it communicates to readers that you care about them and their needs, that you take pride in your work, and that what you have put in writing is important to you.

Realize that everyone has a different opinion of what looks nice. Yet there are basic guidelines that most experts will agree on. Fortunately, you do not need to be an expert in desktop publishing to make your documents look nice. This chapter contains tips that you can put to use immediately. These are techniques that can be used with most word processing programs.

Adding Emphasis

There are many ways of adding emphasis to your documents. The next few pages provide an overview of some simple techniques. Specific topics are covered in more detail throughout the chapter.

Using Type for Emphasis

Perhaps the simplest way to add emphasis is to do so with type. The most common techniques involve using **boldface** *italics*, underlining, or FULL CAPS. Unfortunately, people sometimes misuse these techniques, ending up with a document that is difficult to read and unpleasant to look at.

Boldface type generally the most effective way to make something pop out on the page. Yet, too much bold type can undermine the intended effect and make the page look dark and intimidating. In addition, if your print quality is poor, the type has a tendency to plug up, making the words difficult to read.

Italic type provides a subtle contrast to the main text. It is used primarily when *subtlety*, as opposed to strength, is desired. Since italic type is more difficult to read than plain text, it should be used sparingly.

Underlining is the least desirable because it is hard to read. Readers have difficulty separating the words from the lines beneath them. Some letters are especially difficult for readers to identify because they run into the underlining: g, j, p, q, y.

Use FULL CAPS sparingly—if you must use them at all. **Never** use all capital letters for sustained reading. When we read, we recognize not only the words but also the *shape* of the words. Words set in upper and lower case have distinctive and recognizable shapes. Have you ever noticed how sometimes you can identify words from a distance even before you are close enough to actually read them? It is because you recognize the shape or pattern that the words form, particularly when they appear in a known context. Pattern recognition is an important part of the reading process. Words set in FULL CAPS just look like different size rectangles. They are much more difficult to read than type set in uppercase and lowercase letters.

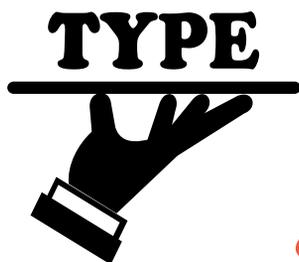
Boldface type, italics, underlining, and full caps are four techniques of using type for emphasis.



Each technique must be used properly to ensure a document that is easy to read and pleasant to look at.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Setting type aside from the main body of the text can be an effective tool when used properly.



However, do not put so many highlights on the page that readers don't know where to focus their attention.

Some people use full caps because they believe the reader will perceive the message as being more important. In reality, many readers are turned off by text set in full caps because it is harder to read. Readers may actually perceive the message as being *less* important instead.

Using Other Tricks with Type

There are many other ways to use type for emphasis. The following are some of the more common ones.

Larger type

One trick is to use a larger type size. This is most effective when you set the type aside from the main body of the text. If you incorporate it into text, as I did in this paragraph, it disrupts both the normal line spacing and the overall visual image, which can detract from your message.

Setting type aside

Setting type aside from the main body of the text can be a very effective tool when used properly.

One thing you don't want is for your message to get lost.

There are times when readers will miss something entirely because it was not given the emphasis it deserved. The sentence above stands out because it is set aside from the rest of the text. The extra white space around it and the different alignment draw attention to the sentence. However, it does not stand out as much as the example below.

One thing you don't want is for your message to get lost.

One example commands your attention as you turn to this page. The other waits patiently to be noticed. Keep in mind that if the type you set aside is too subtle, readers may miss it entirely. On the other hand, too much large or bold type becomes offensive because it seems to be shouting at the reader. Too many highlights on the page are confusing. Readers won't know where to focus their attention.

Sidebars and pull quotes

Sidebars are another example of setting type aside to call attention to things. Sidebars have been used throughout this book to help reinforce specific concepts and to add visual interest to the page. The sidebars in this book serve yet another purpose. They provide sort of a “Reader’s Digest” version of the rules for those people who prefer simple guidelines over an in-depth knowledge.

Pull quotes are similar. A pull quote is a quotation pulled from the main body of the text and incorporated into the layout as a design element. Pull quotes are often used in newsletters and magazines. Since the pull quote is designed to grab readers’ attention and inspire them to read the rest of the page, it should be one of the most provocative sentences in the document. Pull quotes should be set aside from the rest of the text with lines, boxes, white space, or some other graphic element.

The pull quote should be one of the most provocative sentences in the document.

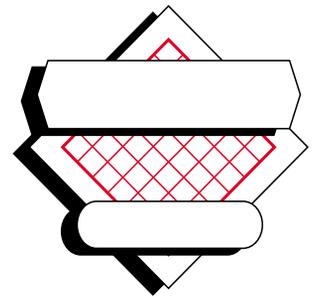
Headlines and subheads

Headlines and subheads are organizational tools to help readers identify what information is being presented in the text that follows. Subheads help break up the text into manageable segments and allow the readers to quickly locate specific information. They also add visual interest to the page by breaking up large expanses of text. This makes reading less of a chore, which increases the effectiveness of your message.

Headlines and subheads should be set off from the main text by using larger type, bolder type, or both. They may be set in a different typeface for greater contrast. They may be aligned differently from the body text. For example, the headline or subhead might be centered while the rest of the text is justified. Headlines can be set off with rules, like the pull quote above.

Headlines and subheads should be parallel—alike in form and structure. For example, once you choose a font for your headlines, you should use it consistently within the same document. As much as possible, the grammar should be consistent too. If large projects (like a book or training manual) do not lend themselves to consistent wording throughout, at least try to be consistent within sections. (Refer to pages 478-481 for more information on parallelism.)

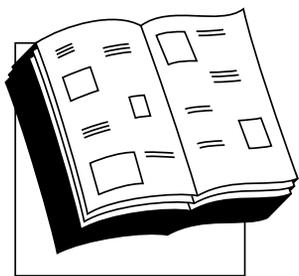
Headlines and subheads are organizational tools to help readers locate specific information.



They also add visual interest to the page by breaking up large expanses of text.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Because captions are short and quick to read, they are often read before the text itself.

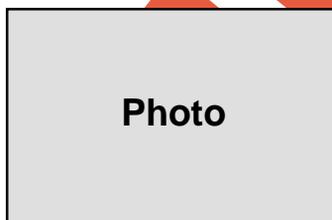


Make sure captions provide meaningful information. Position them where they will enhance your document.

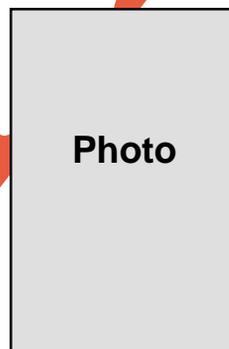
Captions

Captions placed either next to, above, or below photographs and other artwork help relate the images to the rest of the document. Because captions are short and quick to read, they are often read before the text itself. Therefore, you should make sure your captions provide meaningful information that will inspire your audience to read further.

Captions above or below the artwork are relatively easy to work with in terms of alignment and balance. Captions placed next to the artwork sometimes—but not always—leave undesirable white space that throws the page out of balance and draws readers' attention away from the more important message. This does not mean that one format is inherently better than the other. It merely means that you need to take a look at the big picture when designing your page layout.



Captions placed above or below the artwork are relatively easy to work with.



Captions placed next to the artwork can sometimes leave undesirable white space.

Drop caps and raised caps

While drop caps and raised caps do not provide emphasis, per se, they do add visual interest to the page. That alone may draw readers' attention to something within your document. This paragraph contains an example of a drop cap. A raised cap is the opposite; it rests on the same baseline as the first line of text, but the first letter is much taller than the others.

Like anything else, drop caps and raised caps are most effective when used in moderation. They get tiring when used too often. You must also be sure you don't compromise readability. Some software programs are better than others are at forming drop caps and raised caps. If your software program can't create effective drop caps and raised caps, readers may have difficulty recognizing the words.

Combining Type with Graphic Elements

You can call attention to text with various graphic elements, such as rules, boxes, backgrounds, and decorative dingbats.

Rules (lines)

The pull quote illustrated earlier is an excellent example of combining type with graphic elements. Graphic artists refer to these lines as “rules.” Rules come in many different sizes. Whether you use thin rules or thick rules depends in part on the overall “color” of the page. In other words, is the page light or dark? You also need to evaluate whether the rules complement the type. If the rules either overpower the type or wash out next to it, the rules become a distraction rather than an enhancement.

Boxes

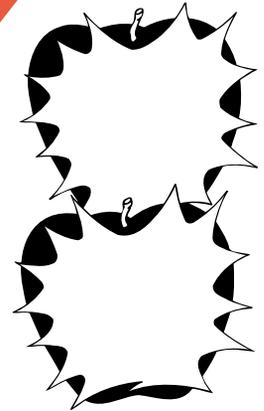
Another technique is to enclose type in a box. Again, you need to use a line width that will complement your type. You also need to leave a border of white space between the text and the lines of your box. Text that touches the lines is hard to read and ugly to look at.

Leave a border of white space between your text and the lines of your box.

Text that touches the lines is hard to read and ugly to look at.

Some software programs give you a variety of shapes and line weights to work with. You can produce square corners or round corners. You can make circles or ovals. You can use solid lines or dashed ones. You can choose between single, double, or triple lines. You can even use shadow boxes. Sometimes there isn't one answer that stands out as being “the best.” However, there are some choices that clearly stand out as being inappropriate. Remember, you want graphic elements to enhance your message, not compete with it.

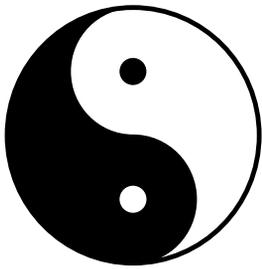
You can call attention to text with rules, boxes, backgrounds, and decorative dingbats.



Some software programs provide a variety of shapes and line weights. Clip art provides other options.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Black text on a white background is easier to read than white text on a black background.



When printing on a colored or patterned background, you may have to use a different font or larger type.

Backgrounds

When using text against a gray, colored, or patterned background, be sure to maintain enough contrast that the type is easy to read. Consider using larger or darker type so that it stands out against the background. If the background is dark, you may need to reverse the text instead. However, studies have shown that black text on a white background is as much as 40% easier to read than white text on a black background. The illustration below shows how changing the background, text color, type size, or type style can impact readability. Readability problems become more pronounced when the printer resolution is lower.



Decorative dingbats

You can use a wide variety of decorative dingbats to draw attention to your text. The key to success is making sure whatever you use enhances your message, rather than detracts from it. The following are two examples of decorative dingbats that you can create using Zapf Dingbat or a similar typeface on your computer. Refer to page 582 for more examples.

“Giant quotation marks can attract more attention than standard ones.”

Other decorative dingbats provide just a touch of “color” to your document.



Choosing a Typeface

Choosing an appropriate typeface is almost as important as choosing your words. The right typeface can make your document not only easier to read but also more attractive and inviting. The wrong typeface can make your message less palatable to readers. Furthermore, if the type is difficult to read or unpleasant to look at, your document may go unread. The following are some simple guidelines to help you choose an effective typeface.

Serif Versus Sans Serif

Type is generally grouped into two basic styles: *serif* and *sans serif*. *Serifs* are lines or curves projecting from the end of a letter. (Refer to the illustration in the sidebar.) Serif typefaces have these little lines or curves, whereas sans serif faces do not. Serifs help guide the reader's eye from one letter to the next. Therefore, serif type is considered better for prolonged reading, such as body text in a training manual.

Sans serif faces, on the other hand, are generally thought to be easier to read at very large sizes or very small sizes. They work particularly well for headlines where the type is larger than the rest of the text. They also work well for forms where the type is very small and space is limited.

Type is grouped into two basic styles: *serif* and *sans serif*.
Serifs are lines or curves projecting from the end of a letter.

Serif

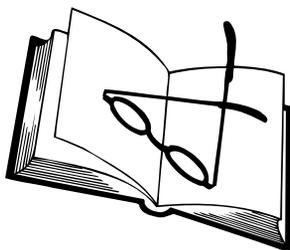
Serif faces have these projections, whereas sans serif faces do not.

Is It Serif or Sans Serif?

serif	sans serif	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Times
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Palatino
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Helvetica
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bookman
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Avant Garde

In the Eye of the Beholder

Readability must be your first priority when choosing a typeface.



If a typeface is too fancy, it will be difficult to read and will interfere with your message.

Sometimes you must weigh several factors when deciding between serif and sans serif. For example, my first book, *The First Responder's Pocket Guide to Hazardous Materials Emergency Response*, is set in Helvetica, a sans serif typeface. The field guide format made it necessary to keep everything small. You can see from the two examples below that 8-point Helvetica (left) looks larger than 8-point Times (right) because there are no serifs to take valuable space away from the basic letter.

Sans Serif and Serif Typefaces at 8-Point Size

Very Small Type Very Small Type

Readability

Readability must be your first priority when choosing a typeface. Is the type easy to read, or does it make extra work for the reader? Most of the standard faces are easy to read. As long as you stick with standard typefaces and a font size that is large enough to be read by your audience, readability should not be a problem.

Fancy typefaces can be difficult to read

Sometimes you may want to use fancy typefaces to add character to a document. There is nothing wrong with using fancy typefaces, as long as you maintain readability. Old English, for example, is very difficult to read. A better option when you want something fancy may be to use an italic typeface instead. But even italic typefaces should be used in moderation because they are more difficult to read than plain type.

A typeface that is too fancy, such as Old English, can be very difficult to read.

An italic typeface, such as Times Italic, is easier to read by comparison.

Personality

Each typeface has its own personality. It is important to use a typeface that enhances your message—or at least doesn't work against it.

In the Eye of the Beholder

How do you know what works and what doesn't? I recommend trying different typefaces with your document to get a feel for how each one fits with your message. You could purchase books on typography and design to see what various graphic artists say. However, their opinions often vary. It is your opinion and the opinions of your readers that really matter.

It is beyond the scope of this book to provide an analysis of different typefaces and their personalities. Instead, I have listed a few concerns, such as timeliness, gender, liveliness, and attitude, and have given you some comparisons to think about. You can make your own comparisons with the typefaces you have available on your computer.

Timeliness

Some typefaces convey a sense of time. If you compare Garamond and Avant Garde, for example, Garamond looks more old-fashioned. It feels more warm and comfortable. Avant Garde, on the other hand, is more contemporary. It has more of an "upbeat" feel to it.

Garamond is more of an old-fashioned font:
warm and comfortable.

Avant Garde is more
contemporary and "upbeat."

Some experts say that Courier has the feel of "late-breaking news." Others say that Courier immediately gives readers the impression the document hasn't been updated since the 1970s—before the days of desktop publishing. If you want the "typewriter" look without turning your readers off, try American Typewriter instead.

Courier says "late-breaking news"
to some and "out of date" to others.

American Typewriter can say "late-breaking,"
without looking obsolete.

Gender

Rounder and softer typefaces, such as Souvenir, feel more feminine, whereas typefaces that are sharper or more rigid, such as Palatino, feel more masculine. But don't think only about the gender of your audience. Think about your message. For example, you may want a more feminine typeface for warm, nurturing topics and a more masculine typeface for more serious issues.

**Each typeface
has its own
personality.**



**It is important
to use a typeface
that enhances
your message—
or at least
doesn't work
against it.**

In the Eye of the Beholder

Some typefaces are more lively than others. A lively typeface can make your document easier and more enjoyable to read.



Typefaces also convey different attitudes. The attitude of your type should complement the attitude of your message.

Souvenir is rounder and softer;
it feels more feminine.

Palatino is sharper and more rigid;
it feels more masculine.

Keep in mind that the gender of type can be very subjective. Palatino looks more masculine next to the softer, rounder Souvenir. By itself, it may be equally appealing to both men and women.

Liveliness

Times is one of the most common typefaces in use. It is easy to read and very efficient; you can fit more text into a given space when using Times than you can with typefaces such as Bookman or New Century Schoolbook. However, many graphic artists find Times to be dull, boring, and overused. Sometimes a small “facelift” can give your document a more lively appearance.

While Times is easy to read and very efficient, many graphic artists find it to be dull, boring, and overused.

New Century Schoolbook can create
a more lively appearance.

Attitude and associations

What is the attitude of your message? Is it formal or informal? Social or professional? Does the typeface convey the same attitude? Do you associate a particular theme or experience with the typeface? Is it appropriate to your message?

Look at the two No Smoking signs below. The first is set in Helvetica Black; the second, in Cooper Black. If you were told to post one sign on the loading dock and the other in the executive board room, you would have little difficulty determining which sign to post where. Helvetica Black has a more authoritative attitude. Cooper Black is almost a polite request by comparison.

NO SMOKING

NO SMOKING

In the Eye of the Beholder

Try your text in different typefaces to see how it makes you feel. A good typeface will complement the message. For example, if you are developing a brochure on earthquake preparedness, you may want to create a sense urgency in your readers. Urgency—but not irritation. You want to motivate readers to get ready for the big one. You don't want them to feel you are being too pushy about it.

Perhaps there isn't one typeface that clearly stands out as being the best. After all, each of us will have different opinions about how a particular typeface makes us feel. Sometimes the best typeface is one that is neutral and unobtrusive; its strength is in what it doesn't say. Compare that, for example, with a typeface that truly conflicts with the message. The last two examples below look more suited to a wedding invitation than to a brochure on earthquake preparedness.

Earthquake Preparedness
 Earthquake Preparedness
Earthquake Preparedness
Earthquake Preparedness

(The examples above use the following typefaces: Bookman, New Century Schoolbook, Palatino, Helvetica, Avant Garde, Souvenir, Gill Sans, American Typewriter Medium, Courier, Zapf Chancery, and Nuptial Script.)

Variety

Most of the standard typefaces allow you to produce text in regular (often called "Roman"), **bold** *italic*, and **bold italic** type. In fact, sometimes we take it for granted that all four options are available and are surprised when a particular typeface isn't as flexible.

Readers sometimes associate a typeface with a particular theme or experience. The typeface you choose should complement your message.



If no one typeface stands out as being the clear choice, it may be best to choose one that is neutral and unobtrusive.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Using multiple typefaces can be appropriate if done wisely.

**RANSOM
NOTE**

However, using too many typefaces can make your document look like a ransom note that has been pasted together.

Occasionally you may need a typeface that provides more than the basic options. You may need a condensed style that squeezes more information into a tight spot or an extra dark style that produces a bolder headline. Rather than use different typefaces, you can use different styles within the same type family. So, for example, you might use Helvetica for the bulk of your text, but use Helvetica Narrow in a narrow table and Helvetica Black for the headline. Each of the examples below are set in 14-point type. As you can see, there is considerable difference between the three. And these are just three examples from a much larger family.

This is Helvetica.
This is Helvetica Narrow.
This is Helvetica Black.

Mixing and matching typefaces

Should you mix and match typefaces? Using multiple typefaces can be appropriate if done wisely. For example, many graphic artists will use a serif typeface for body text and a sans serif typeface for headlines. That is entirely appropriate.

However, if you use too many typefaces in the same document, it can make your message look like a ransom note pasted together with words cut from different sources. The type becomes a distraction, taking attention away from your message. The page looks messy and amateurish, rather than clean and professional. Careless intermingling of regular, bold, italic, and bold italic can be distracting as well, even when you stick with the same typeface.

Size

Type size is another important factor, closely related to your choice of typeface. Sometimes size is driven by how much space you have for your message. However, you also need to consider readability. Can the type be read from a distance if needed? Does the type need to be larger for older readers?

Type sizes are not all created equal. The following examples are all set in 11-point type but, as you can see, the height and line length vary from one typeface to another.

This is 11-point Times.
This is 11-point Helvetica.
This is 11-point Bookman.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Think, too, about whether the size is appropriate to the content and to the degree of emphasis it deserves. Is the type so large that it seems to be “shouting” at your audience? Is it so small that it downplays your message? Typefaces can look different at different sizes. What looks pleasing at one size can look obtrusive at another. Conversely, what seems relatively uninteresting at a smaller size can suddenly take on new personality at a larger size.

Other Considerations

How your document will be reproduced can influence your choice of type. If you are printing limited copies on your laser printer, you pretty much know how the finished product will look. If you will be reproducing it on a copy machine instead, the results can be quite different. If the copy machine tends to produce dark copies, your text will look bold and heavy. If you cannot adjust the copy quality, you may need to switch to a lighter typeface. Conversely, if the copy machine tends to make light copies, your type can look washed out. Fine type may even appear broken, which will make it harder to read. You may need to switch to a heavier typeface.

If you are having something professionally printed, you may opt to have the master printed by a linotronic service bureau. The type will appear finer at 1200 dots per inch (dpi) than it will at 600 or 300 dpi. The result is a more professional appearance. However, if you were not expecting the finer print, you may be surprised.

What kind of paper are you printing your document on? If you are printing on colored paper, you may need to use a heavier typeface. A fine typeface will get lost on darker papers or papers with speckles or other patterns in them. Fine typefaces may not reproduce well on textured papers either.

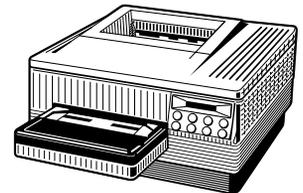
Are you using any illustrations or photographs in the document? If so, how do they work with the type? Do they complement one another, or do they compete for the reader’s attention?

Are you going to use any reverse type? When you reverse type out of a colored background, you need to make sure the type will hold up the way you want it to. Type that is too fine may plug up if your printer is set too dark. Notice how changing the typeface and line weight changes readability in the examples below.

Reverse	Reverse
Reverse	Reverse

How your document will be reproduced can influence your choice of type.

What is the resolution of your printer?

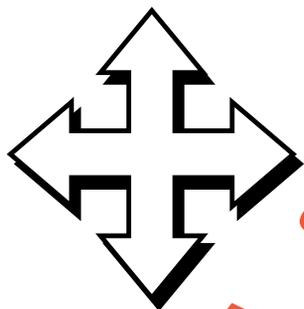


Does your copy machine produce good quality copies?

What kind of paper are you printing your document on?

In the Eye of the Beholder

There are four basic options with respect to aligning text: justified, flush left, flush right, and centered.



Most documents are set in either justified or flush left text.

Aligning Text

The Four Basic Options

There are four basic options with respect to aligning text: justified, flush left, flush right, and centered.

Justified text is flush, or even, on both the left and right margins. Justification generally gives documents a neater, more professional appearance. However, because the normal space between letters and words is altered in order to justify the text, justification sometimes results in uneven spacing.

Flush left text is even with the left margin and uneven, or ragged, on the right. Flush left text is relatively easy to read and allows even word spacing. It also eliminates the excessive hyphenation that can be distracting in justified text.

Flush right is difficult to read because we are used to reading from left to right. With flush right type, the reader has more difficulty finding the beginning of each line. Flush right can be used for special effects, captions, or short sidebar comments, such as the ones used throughout this book. Excessive use of flush right is not recommended, however.

Centered text works well for most headlines, as well as for formal invitations and announcements. It does not work well for body text because it is difficult to read for the same reasons that flush right is.

Choosing Between Justified and Flush Left

Most documents are set in either justified or flush left text. The choice between the two is often a matter of personal preference. Many designers and publishers insist that flush left is easier to read because the spacing between letters and words is consistent throughout the document and because the amount of hyphenation is significantly reduced. Other experts say that the ragged right margins are tiresome to readers and that readers prefer the orderly appearance of justified type.

In the Eye of the Beholder

As a general rule, flush left is better in narrow columns of text. The narrower the column, the harder it is to get even word spacing using justified text. In this case, a ragged right edge is often less distracting than uneven word spacing and excessive hyphenation. (Refer to the comparison below.) Conversely, justified text is generally preferable for longer documents that require continuous reading and concentration.

Comparison Between Flush Left and Justified Text

As a general rule, flush left is better in narrow columns of text. The narrower the column, the harder it is to get even word spacing using justified text. In this case, a ragged right edge is often less distracting than uneven word spacing. And, as a general rule, justified text is preferable for longer documents that require continuous reading and concentration.

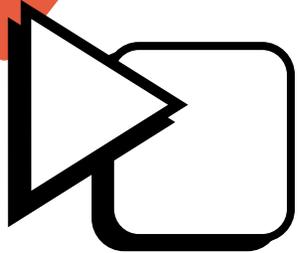
As a general rule, flush left is better in narrow columns of text. The narrower the column, the harder it is to get even word spacing using justified text. In this case, a ragged right edge is often less distracting than uneven word spacing. And, as a general rule, justified text is preferable for longer documents that require continuous reading and concentration.

Sometimes you may need to try both formats to determine what looks best in a particular application. It often comes down to a subjective opinion; one alignment produces a better “flavor” than the other.

If you decide to use justified text, keep the following guidelines in mind. First, make sure your software is capable of producing satisfactory results. Sophisticated word processing software uses both word spacing and letter spacing to proportion the type. Less sophisticated programs merely insert extra spacing between words. This often results in unsightly gaps between words rather than a more professional typeset appearance. Even programs that utilize letter spacing are not infallible. They sometimes insert too much space between letters, making individual words difficult to recognize.

The other thing to be concerned with is hyphenation. Excessive hyphenation makes reading difficult. Minimize problems with excessive hyphenation either by editing your work or by adjusting some of the settings in your word processing program.

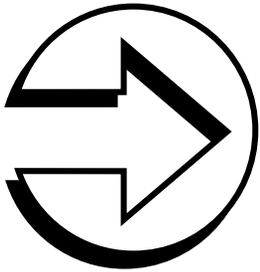
Flush left provides even word spacing and minimal hyphenation.



Justified type provides a more orderly appearance that is better for long documents that require continuous reading and concentration.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Readability and overall appearance should determine the best way to align bulleted text.



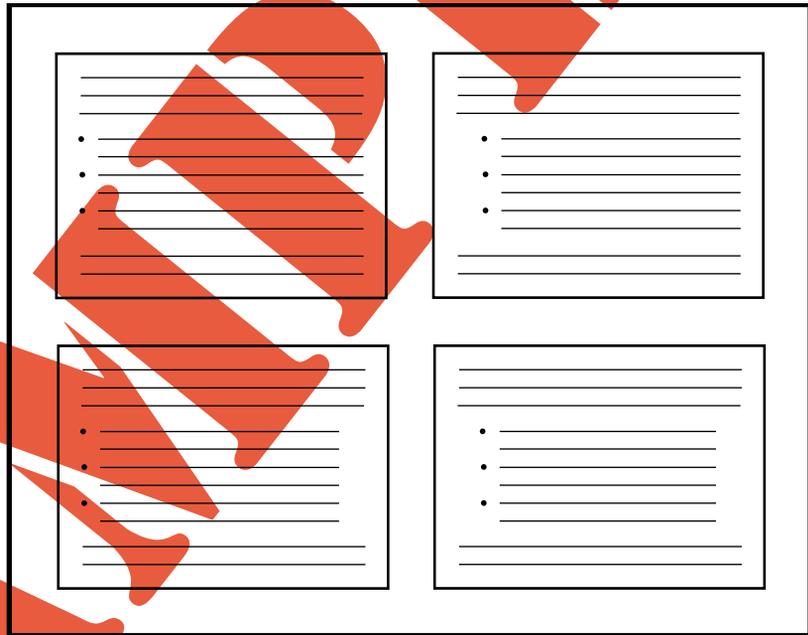
No one option is best for all situations. What looks best in one document might not look as good in another.

Handling Bullets

Formatting Text When Using Bullets

There are several ways you can align text when using bullets. For example, you can align the bullets with the left margin, or you can indent them slightly. You can align all the text along the right margin, or you can use a shorter line length for bulleted items. Four options are illustrated below. (The individual lines represent lines of text.)

Some Options for Aligning Text with Bullets



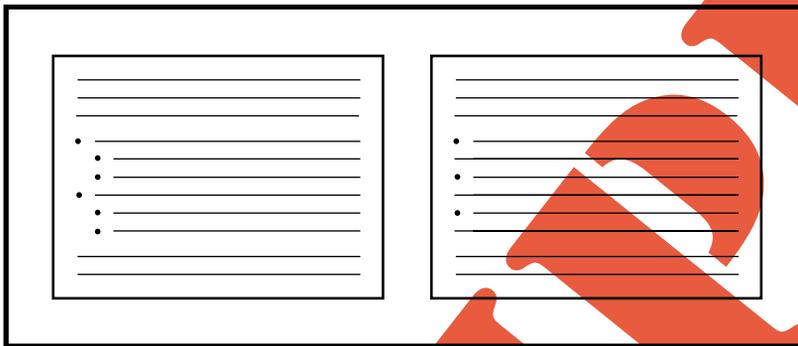
There is no hard and fast rule for which option you should use. Sometimes it is merely a matter of what looks or feels right for the particular application. What looks best in one document might not look as good in another. Readability is a second concern. There may be times when you might prefer aligning the bullets with the left margin for the sake of appearance, but choose to indent them instead because it makes for a clearer connection between the text above and the list that follows.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Sometimes you may need two or three levels of bullets, as in the example on the left-hand side below. (Once again, you may or may not want to indent the text along the right margin.)

The least desirable format is one like the example on the right-hand side below. Notice how the second line of each bulleted item aligns with the left margin instead of aligning with the text on the previous line. This makes it harder for readers to determine where each new item starts.

More Options for Aligning Text with Bullets



Use tabs and text wrapping to position type

Always use tabs and text wrapping to position your type. Don't do it manually. (For more information on text wrapping, see page 608.)

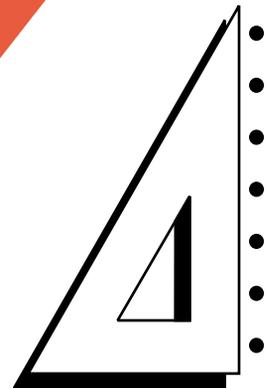
- If you use the space bar and return key instead, your left margins will never line up properly—just as this example does not line up properly. Plus, if you ever have to edit your document, it will throw all your spacing off.

Using Creative Bullets

The standard bullet (•), such as I have used throughout this book, is created by typing Option-8 on a Macintosh or Ctrl-Shift-8 on a PC. It is a simple, unobtrusive text element that works well for most applications.

People have used a number of other devices to create bullets. Some are as simple as periods (.), dashes (-), or asterisks (*). However, the options are almost limitless when working on a computer.

Always use tabs and text wrapping to position your type, particularly when using bullets.

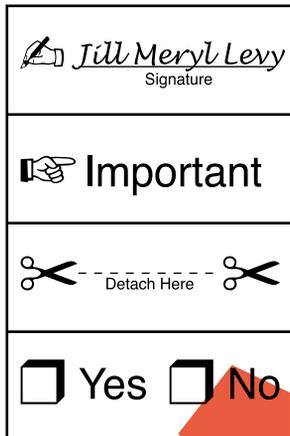


Text wrapping allows you to ensure your text lines up properly. This is critical not just for appearance but also for ease of editing later.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Consider spicing up your bullets with Zapf Dingbats.

Some symbols are particularly useful for special messages.



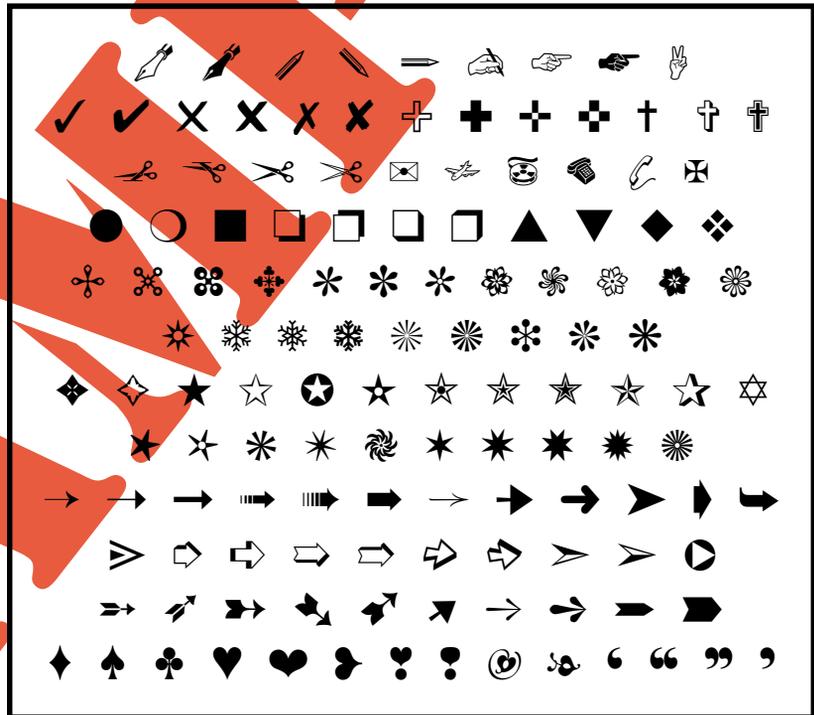
However, if you get carried away, dingbats can overshadow your message.

Zapf Dingbats

One thing that you can do to make your documents more attractive is to spice up your bullets with Zapf Dingbats or a similar typeface. Zapf Dingbats allows you to create check marks, boxes, stars, arrows, diamonds, and a variety of other symbols. For example, you can use check marks (✓) to reinforce the message that you are presenting a checklist of things to be done. You can use boxes (☐) instead if you want readers to physically check off each item on the list as it is completed. You can use other symbols, such as the hand holding a pen (✍) or the finger pointing (☞), to call readers' attention to something you want them to sign or act upon, respectively.

Be careful, however, in using Zapf Dingbats for bullets. Don't overdo it. Don't let "cute" enhancements overshadow your message.

A Sample of Zapf Dingbats



Using Space Effectively

Spacing Between Characters (Tracking)

Tracking is the amount of space between characters. The default settings on the computer should work well for most of your documents. Nonetheless, many applications give you the flexibility to adjust the tracking.

Tightening the tracking can help you squeeze more information into a tight spot. However, if the letters are so close that they touch one another, your document will be difficult to read.

Loosening the tracking can lighten the page and make it look less intimidating. But, if the letters are spread too far apart, readers may have trouble recognizing individual words. They will quickly get tired of having to work so hard to read.

Examples of Tight and Loose Tracking

Tightening the tracking can help you squeeze more information into a tight spot. However, if the letters are so close that they touch one another, your document will be difficult to read.

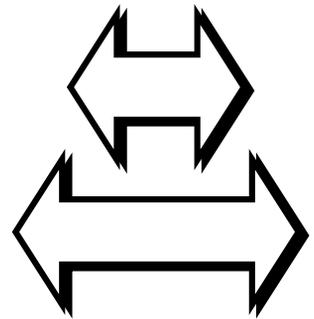
Loosening the tracking can lighten the page and make it look less intimidating. But, if the letters are spread too far apart, readers may have trouble recognizing individual words. They will quickly get tired of having to work so hard to read.

Spacing Between Sentences

One thing that was not addressed in the punctuation chapter is how many spaces to put at the end of a sentence. Should you use one space or two after a period, question mark, or exclamation point?

When working on a typewriter, the answer is clear. Use two spaces. In the world of desktop publishing, the answer is not so clear. Many experts insist that you should put only one space at the end of a sentence because the proportional spacing provided by your word processing program creates an adequate visual break between sentences. They say that two spaces leave too big a gap and that the extra white space is distracting. Others disagree.

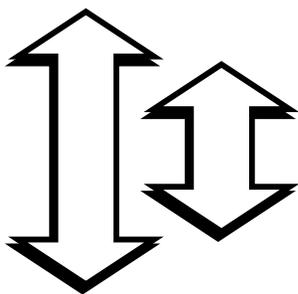
Tracking is the amount of space between characters.



Tightening or loosening the tracking can affect readability and overall appearance.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Leading is the amount of vertical space between lines of text.



Leading sometimes needs to be adjusted based on line length or type size.

When you leave a greater distance between two sentences than between two words, it helps readers recognize where one sentence leaves off and the other one begins. (This text contains two spaces after a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point, but only one space after a semicolon or colon where the intent is to tie two clauses together.)

Since you cannot hope to please everyone, pick the style that works for you. Of all the spacing issues, this is the one that makes the least difference.

Spacing Between Lines (Leading)

Leading is the amount of vertical space between lines of text. The default setting on your computer is generally appropriate for body text. The default setting is usually 120% of the type size. For example, the default for 10-point type is 12-point leading.

At times, you may want to add more leading to “open up” the page and make it look less “gray.” However, do not add so much leading that readers get lost when they move from one line to the next. Conversely, you may want to decrease the leading to fit more text on a page. Yet decreasing the leading too much will make the text difficult to read. The following examples illustrate what happens when you increase (left) or decrease (right) the leading. Compare these examples to the default setting used in this paragraph.

Adjusted Leading

There are times when you may want to add more leading to “open up” the page and make it look less “gray.” However, do not add so much leading that readers get lost when they move from one line to the next. . . .

There are times when you may want to add more leading to “open up” the page and make it look less “gray.” However, do not add so much leading that readers get lost when they move from one line to the next. Sometimes you may want to decrease the leading to fit more text on a page. Yet decreasing the. . . .

Line length, or column width, also impacts leading. The longer the line, the more leading you need to maintain readability. If lines are too close together, readers have to work harder to find the start of each new line and may inadvertently skip a line or read the same line twice. Extra leading can help eliminate this problem.

In the Eye of the Beholder

You may need to decrease the leading in headlines or other applications that use large text. Decreasing the leading makes the text easier to read because it brings the lines of text closer together, allowing the reader to grasp them as a unit.

A Heading at Default and Adjusted Settings

**The Default Setting
Has Been Used in
this Heading**

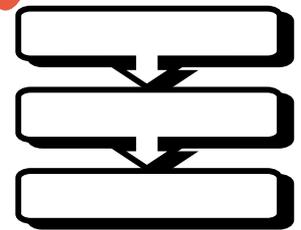
**The Leading
Has Been Decreased
in this Heading**

**The block style
of paragraph
spacing adds
more white
space and makes
the page less
intimidating.**

Spacing Between Paragraphs

There are several options for spacing between paragraphs, as illustrated below. Block style (upper left) adds more white space than indent style (lower left) and makes the page look less intimidating. It also helps the reader to see each paragraph as a distinct and separate unit. However, the indent style allows you to fit more lines of text on the page.

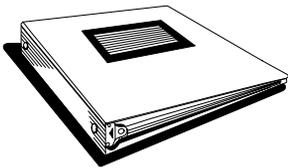
Some Options for Starting New Paragraphs



**The indent
style allows
you to fit more
lines of text on
the page.**

In the Eye of the Beholder

The margins around the edges of the page should be generous enough to keep the page from looking dark and intimidating.



You may need to allow extra room on the inside edges if the document will be put into a three-ring binder.

The top two options on the previous page both use the block style. However, the upper left option has more space between the paragraphs than does the upper right option. In the days when all we had were typewriters, block style could only be achieved by hitting the return key twice to provide a separation between paragraphs. Some software programs allow you to adjust the space between paragraphs using a paragraph spacing command. Many experts prefer this over hitting the return key twice. They believe that it creates a more professional appearance. The biggest disadvantage of adjusting the paragraph spacing is that if you are working in a multiple-column format, the lines of text may not line up evenly. The visual image can be distracting. No one technique is significantly better than the other. Use whichever technique seems to work best in any given document.

Another option is to both indent the first word of the paragraph and add extra spacing between the paragraphs (as in the lower right-hand example on the previous page). It may be superfluous to do both, but many people like it. Choose the look that appeals to you and that makes your document easy to read.

Margins

Allow adequate margins around all the edges of your document. What constitutes “adequate margins” will depend on the size of the page, as well as the amount and size of your type. It is a subjective decision. However, there should be adequate space that readers can hold the page in their hands without covering any of the type with their fingers. The margins should be generous enough to prevent the page from looking dark and intimidating. Consider using wider margins in training manuals or other documents where readers might want to make notes in the margin.

You also need to think about how the document will be bound. Will it be put in a three-ring binder? If so, you may need more of a margin on the inside edge so the holes will not interfere with the type. Will the document be bound like a book or magazine? If so, you may need to increase the inside margin so that the type does not get lost in the “gutter” between the pages.

Columns

The majority of documents we produce consist of a single column of type. Certainly, the single-column format is appropriate for letters and reports. However, as you move into the realm of training manuals, newsletters, and other documents, it opens up different possibilities.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Multi-column formats can be more difficult to produce from a technical standpoint, particularly with a less sophisticated word processing program. However, they do have advantages. The primary advantage of a multi-column format is that it is often easier to read. Less eye movement is required to scan a narrower column than to scan a wider column. In addition, the reader doesn't have to work as hard to find the start of each new line. Multi-column formats often make the page more visually appealing. And they create more white space, which makes the page less dark and intimidating.

There should be enough space between columns so that the page does not look cramped, yet not so much of a gap that the white space becomes a distraction. A space of at least 1 pica (1/6 inch) is usually considered the minimum. However, additional space is sometimes needed.

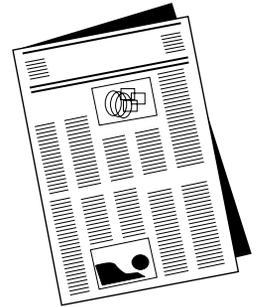
Column widths do not always have to be equal. Unequal column width often adds visual interest to the page and may even be more practical, depending on what you want to accomplish. This book is a perfect example of how two columns of unequal width can enhance your message. If I had written this book in a single-column format, with no sidebar comments and graphics, it would be much more difficult to read and not nearly as pleasing to look at.

Columns do not always need to be separated with a line down the middle. In fact, lines can be distracting when they do not serve a useful purpose. If, for example, you have an article that spans two columns of a newsletter, a line down the middle might cause readers to assume there are two separate articles instead of one. A line would be more appropriate when there really are separate articles. A line can also be used to form a stronger demarcation between two columns that are formatted differently so that readers are less likely to be distracted as they read the text.

One more thing to be concerned about with a multi-column format is unequal spacing. The human eye is very sensitive to even slight variations in spacing. As much as possible, the text should line up evenly from one column to the next. However, if you do anything to alter line spacing, such as adding subheads of a different size than the text or adjusting the space between paragraphs rather than hitting the return key twice, it will impact the alignment. That doesn't mean you can't do these things. It only means you need to take a closer look at the overall image to make sure something you did to add visual interest isn't overshadowed by tiny distractions.

Multi-column formats can make the text easier to read and the page more appealing to look at.

They can also make the page less dark and intimidating.



However, multi-column formats can be more difficult to produce.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Widows and orphans should be eliminated when possible. People often miss widows and orphans when reading.

A *widow* is a single word or syllable on a line by itself at the end of a paragraph.



***Orphans* are single lines of text that have become separated from the rest of the paragraph.**

Widows and Orphans

Widows and orphans are two things you should eliminate whenever possible. A *widow* is a single word or syllable on a line by itself at the end of a paragraph. Widows are visually distracting because they are isolated and because they leave so much extra white space between paragraphs—more than you would have with a longer line of text. Because widows are so isolated, readers sometimes skip right over them as if they don't exist. That impacts the readability of your document.

Orphans are single lines of text that have become separated from the rest of the paragraph because of a page break or a column break. In some cases, the first line of a paragraph is alone at the bottom of a page or column, while the remainder of the paragraph carries over to the next page or column. In other cases, it is the last line of a paragraph that does not fit on one page or column and must be carried over. In either case, readers often miss the single line isolated by itself.

Widows and Orphans



Editing the text is often an effective way to eliminate widows and orphans. Simply adding or deleting a word or two usually does the trick. Other solutions include changing margins, adjusting the word spacing or letter spacing, changing the font size, adjusting the column length, and manually inserting a page break in a different location. Sometimes a combination of solutions is necessary.

White Space

Whether you realize it or not, white space is almost as critical as your message. Adequate white space is essential to keeping a reader's attention. A full page of type is fatiguing and intimidating. White space creates the impression that it isn't such a chore to plow through the page.

In the Eye of the Beholder

It is beyond the scope of this book to address all the ways in which white space can be used as a design element. If you are involved in the production of brochures, newsletters, or other documents, and you are interested in design concepts, invest in some good books on desktop publishing and design. Books that show makeovers (before and after designs) are extremely helpful. This section focuses on some simple guidelines that can help make any document you write more user-friendly.

There should be enough space between characters, lines, and columns that the text doesn't look cramped. Space between paragraphs also opens up the page and makes it look less cramped. Even something as simple as breaking a long paragraph into two shorter paragraphs can make your text look less intimidating.

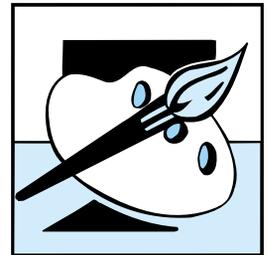
Use white space to organize information and keep readers on track. When you start a new topic, start a new page. Don't bury the start of a new topic at the bottom of a page where readers may not notice it. Give it the attention it deserves. You may even find it desirable to adjust page breaks to avoid splitting a paragraph over two pages. This reduces the chance that readers will lose the train of thought in the middle of a paragraph. It allows readers to finalize their thoughts about the previous paragraph before proceeding to the next one.

White space can be used for emphasis. Rather than put a particular message in full caps, which is difficult to read, or bold face, which can be dark and intimidating if there is too much of it, you can isolate your message from the main body of the text and use the white space to draw the readers' attention to it. White space, used properly, is a powerful design element that is almost like a magnet; readers cannot help but be drawn to it. You can combine white space with other design elements—as I did in the sidebars throughout this book—for even greater impact.

Be careful, however. Too much white space and poorly used white space can make the page look boring or unappealing. Important information can get lost if the page is not visually interesting.

White space can add color to your document.

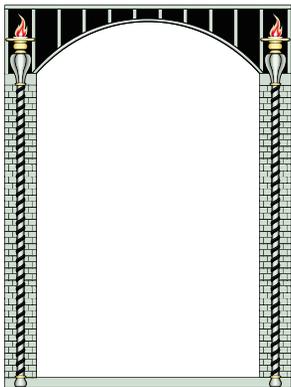
White space is an important design element, critical to maintaining a reader's attention.



You can use white space to help focus the reader's attention and to emphasize key points in your message.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Headers and footers help readers quickly locate specific information.



Creating headers and footers on master pages ensures consistency throughout the document.

Using Headers and Footers

Headers and footers help readers quickly locate specific information, such as publication, chapter, or section title; author's name; page number; publication date; and volume number. Headers are placed at the top of the page; footers are placed at the bottom.

While some experts may have strong opinions about what should go in a header or footer, it is more important to do what looks and feels right for a given publication. For example, the page number can go in either the header or the footer, depending on which option is most functional and gives the page the best overall appearance.

Formatting Headers and Footers

Headers and footers are not just sources of information; they are also design elements. Therefore, it is important that you give consideration to making your headers and footers look good as well. Avoid cluttering headers or footers to the point where they become distracting. Less information is often more powerful.

It is sometimes helpful to put headers and footers in a different typeface and to separate them from the main body of the text with a rule or border of some kind. Otherwise, if your text is too close to the headers and footers, readers may have trouble determining where one picks up and the other leaves off. Rules across the top and bottom of the page can also serve to tie pages together and carry the readers' eyes from one page to the next.

Most software applications allow you to create headers and footers either on a master page or in special windows. It is well worth your time to learn how to do this if you haven't done so already. First, you can ensure that your headers and footers will be consistent throughout the document. Second, you can put page numbers into the header or footer, meaning that the computer will automatically number the pages for you. Finally, some programs will even allow you to design separate headers and footers for each section of your document, eliminating the need to have separate files for each section.

Working with Color

Chances are that most of the documents you produce are printed in black ink on white paper. However, maybe you occasionally use colored ink or colored paper for brochures, flyers, or other special projects. Color can do much to enhance your message. Improper use of color, on the other hand, can work against you.

Basic Thoughts About Color

Black ink on white paper provides the strongest contrast (and thus the highest readability) of any possible color combination. Colored paper and colored ink may add visual interest, but do not necessarily aid readability.

Color cannot compensate for a poorly written document or a badly designed layout. Garbage is garbage, whether it is in black-and-white or color. If your document is bad to begin with (either in content or appearance), color may only serve to call more attention to existing weaknesses.

Color should be used for a purpose, not just because it is available. For example, you might produce a two-color brochure, using black ink for the main body of the text and the second color for subheads and graphics. It adds visual interest to the page, and it helps distinguish separate blocks of information.

Color is more expensive than black-and-white, particularly when it comes to professional printing. This is true whether you are talking about colored paper, colored inks, or both. Of course, technology is changing on a daily basis. For example, many people own color ink jet printers. But even the best color ink jet printer currently available is not as sharp and crisp as a good black-and-white laser printer. As a result, documents produced on a color ink jet printer can look amateurish and less professional than they would if they were produced on a black-and-white laser printer.

Color takes time. If you are going to have something professionally printed, allow extra time for colored paper or colored ink. Colored paper may take longer for the printer to get. When printers switch to a colored ink, they have to wash their presses. That impacts how they schedule print jobs. Small printers that only have one- or two-color presses may have to run a multi-color job through the press more than once. That adds both time and money. Talk with your printer ahead of time so that you know what to expect.

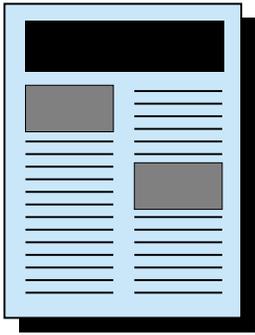
Color can enhance your message when used properly.



However, color cannot compensate for a poorly written document or a badly designed layout.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Your first concern when using colored paper should be readability.



Dark papers and papers with patterns in them can make reading difficult.

Colored Paper

One of the least expensive ways to introduce color is to use colored paper. While colored paper is generally more expensive than white paper, it is less expensive than colored ink.

Your first concern when using colored paper should be readability. In general, the darker the paper, the more difficult it will be to read the text. So while a rich red or green paper might be acceptable for a flyer announcing your Christmas party, it is hardly appropriate for anything that requires sustained reading. If you use a dark paper, consider using larger, bolder type to maintain readability. Be cautious, also, when using papers with patterns in them. The speckled, "recycled" look is very attractive. However, those same speckles can make small fine type difficult to read.

Colors tend to generate different emotions. Cool colors are more relaxing, whereas bright colors are more exciting. Some colors may be associated with particular themes, as green is with money and as red, orange, and yellow are with safety.

Avoid using dark papers if your document may need to be copied or faxed. The results will be disastrous.

Inks look different on different colored papers. If you are having something professionally printed, consult with your printer ahead of time to make sure you will be satisfied with the end result. If you are printing on your own color ink jet printer, experiment before you spend too much time designing your project.

Colored Inks

Most of the following comments are geared towards using colored inks in professional printing. However, some are also applicable when printing with color ink jet or laser printers.

The more ink colors you use, the more expensive your project will be. However, you can often create the illusion of more colors by using screens (fine dot patterns of varying intensities). Let's say, for example, that you want dark blue type against a light blue background. You can create that light blue background by using a 20% screen of the same blue used for the type, using one ink to produce two colors.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Ink colors will look different on coated (glossy) papers than they do on uncoated (dull) paper, just as they look different on colored papers than they do on white. If you are having a document professionally printed, ask your printer to show you a *Pantone Color Formula Guide* so you can see how different inks look on coated and uncoated papers. The printer should also have other guides to show you how different inks will look on colored papers.

The amount of ink on the page affects how different colors look. For example, a deep forest green may look like black when used for text. Therefore, if you produce a two-color brochure using black and forest green, your second color may be barely noticeable.

Large designs requiring solid ink coverage show more flaws. Dust that lands on the page during the printing process may cause small “hickeys” or white spots. Printers generally charge more for printing jobs with large print areas because they have to print a greater quantity to allow for waste.

The use of illustrations or photos may impact the ink colors you use. For example, photographs of people generally look best when printed in either black-and-white or full color. People can look unnatural when you print photographs in other colors.

Whenever the ink is designed to bleed off the edges of the page, the project will have to be printed on larger size paper, then trimmed to the final finished size. This is true even when printing only in black ink. Printers often charge more for bleeds because they have to pay more for the larger paper and because they have to factor in the additional labor for trimming the finished product. However, printers vary in the way they work. Good printers routinely print on larger paper anytime they print in multiple colors because they use registration marks beyond the borders of the document to help line everything up properly. They don't need to charge extra for bleeds because they aren't doing anything different from what they normally do. Other printers don't worry about registration marks. Rather, they line everything up visually so they don't have to print on larger paper and trim the piece later. Bleeds require them to take that extra step.

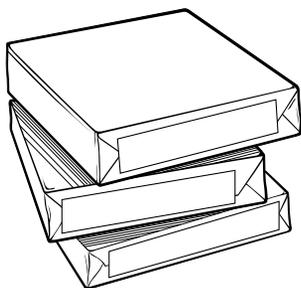
The more ink colors you use, the more expensive your project will be.



Consider the paper you are printing on, the amount of ink on the page, and how photos or illustrations will look in color.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Choose papers that will enhance your message, rather than detract from it.



A bright white paper will provide a sharp contrast with the type, thus making your document easier to read.

Choosing Your Paper Stock

No matter how important or well-written your message, if you put it on the wrong paper, it can lose its effectiveness. You may be somewhat limited by the capabilities of your printer. Nonetheless, you should try to use papers that will enhance your message, rather than detract from it.

Factors to Consider

Not all bond papers are created equal. If you were to compare the standard bond paper typically used in copiers and laser printers with a high quality bond paper, you would see a significant difference in whiteness, opacity, and texture. Standard bond paper may be fine for draft documents, but the higher quality paper is much better suited for your finished product. The opacity and brighter white color will provide a sharper contrast with the type, thus making your document easier to read. The paper generally has more life and vibrance to it, which helps maintain the reader's interest and attention. The smoother texture also feels "richer."

Specialty papers open up a whole new realm of possibilities. Stationary stores and mail order catalogs offer a variety of papers with preprinted designs in a multitude of colors. These papers are great for flyers, invitations, and other special projects.

Recycled paper is becoming very popular, although it is sometimes more expensive than virgin paper. Using recycled paper obviously helps the environment. However, not all recycled paper is created equal. Just as with virgin paper, the whiter the recycled paper is, the more contrast it provides and the easier it will be for people to read your document.

Paper comes in a variety of textures. However, photographs and fine type will not reproduce as well on papers with rougher textures. If someone will need to write on your document, make sure the paper you choose is easy to write on. That goes not only for textured paper but for coated paper as well.

Papers are either *coated* (glossy) or *uncoated* (dull). Uncoated papers are easier to print on and thus are generally less expensive. Most are also compatible with laser printers. Coated papers often look richer, but they are not appropriate for all projects. When choosing coated stocks, try to avoid high-gloss papers since glare can make your document difficult to read.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Some papers are more opaque than others. If you are printing on both sides of the paper, choose a paper that is opaque enough to prevent show-through.

Papers may come in a variety of weights. The heavier the paper, the more expensive it will be. Heavier papers may not work well in laser printers. However, heavier papers are more durable and more appropriate for some applications. If you anticipate printing a variety of projects (for example, matching letterhead, envelopes, and business cards), choose a paper that is available in different weights and formats.

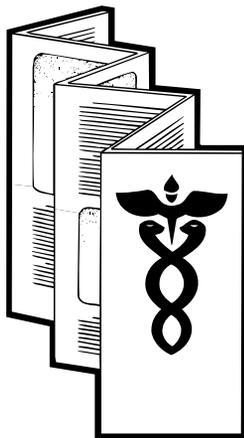
If you are going to have your document professionally printed, discuss paper selection with your printer. He or she can help you select a paper that will work well with your document and that will produce satisfactory results during the printing process.

**If someone will
need to write on
your document,
make sure the
paper is easy
to write on.**



In the Eye of the Beholder

Put careful thought into planning your document whenever you use different formats.



Recognize that size, format, and placement of information can impact the effectiveness of your message.

Varying the Size and Format

The following are some guidelines for producing brochures or other documents where you have some flexibility in size and format.

General Guidelines

Standard sizes fit better. A standard size brochure, for example, will fit in normal envelopes and brochure racks. Letter size documents are more convenient than legal size documents because they can be copied easily and will fit well into file folders and binders. Odd sizes generally cost more and often create problems. That doesn't mean you shouldn't use odd sizes if they enhance your message. Just make sure you anticipate potential problems and plan accordingly.

If you have too much information to fit in one brochure, consider making two. *Companion pieces* may be less intimidating than one brochure crammed with too much type. Make sure companion pieces complement each other without looking too similar. (I once produced two fire safety brochures designed as companion pieces. While they *were* visually different from each other, they were not different enough. Several people asked me why I had distributed twice as many brochures as they needed. It taught me a lesson. Either I can complain about people not paying attention to what is in front of them, or I can design my brochures differently next time.)

Mailers designed with one panel reserved for addresses may cost less because you don't need a separate envelope. However, a brochure mailed inside an envelope is better protected in the mail. It also gives you an extra panel that you can print on. Both have their place. It is simply a matter of which best meets your needs.

If you are designing mailers or envelopes, you should check with the U.S. Postal Service regarding design specifications. You may be able to save on postage and ensure faster and more accurate delivery by designing mail that is compatible with the automated equipment used by the Postal Service.

If you are including a coupon, application, or reply card of any kind in your brochure, make sure it is located someplace where it is easy to cut or tear out. Also, be sure that there is nothing critical on the back side. You don't want your customers to lose your name, address, phone number, or other important information because the only place the information was printed was on the back of the reply card or application they mailed back to you.

Using Illustrations and Photographs

Clip art, technical drawings, and photographs can often enhance the appearance of your document, making it easier and more enjoyable to read. Illustrations and photographs not only “look pretty,” but they can often help readers understand particular concepts. Imagine, for example, trying to learn how to tie a Figure-8 knot based solely on written instructions. It would be very difficult.

General Guidelines

Keep the following basic guidelines in mind, regardless of what kind of images you put into your documents.

Make every image serve a purpose

First and foremost, have a purpose for every image you use. “Designer droppings” (dots, lines, squiggles, and other shapes thrown into the document to take up space) are distracting to the reader. And while they may look slightly better than empty space, they are considerably inferior to good quality graphics. “Designer droppings” can reduce the effectiveness of your message.

Use only high-quality images

Use high quality images. Bad artwork and photos are distracting. Worse than that, they can hurt your credibility as a writer. If you have an illustration or photograph that either fails to adequately depict what it is supposed to or is so unclear that readers do not even know what they are looking at, readers will become frustrated. They will resent having their time wasted. They will resent being expected to make sense of the garbage you gave them. They will perceive you as being sloppy and careless. They may even conclude, right or wrong, that the quality of your images is a reflection of the accuracy of your text. Poor quality images may be worse than having no artwork or photographs.

“Designer droppings” are distracting to the reader.

Avoid using meaningless images just to fill up the page.

Have a purpose for every image you use.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Use images that complement the text and that complement one another.



Inappropriate images will reduce the effectiveness of your message.

Use appropriate images

Use images that are appropriate to your audience. Cartoon-style illustrations, for example, may not be appropriate for adult readers, unless the illustrations are of high quality and do a good job of complementing the text. If you have a mixed audience, try to include illustrations or photographs of men and women, as well as people of different ethnic backgrounds. It helps readers feel they have been acknowledged.

Don't overshadow your message

Avoid using so many graphic elements that they overshadow your message. For example, a report on the drug problem in your community might contain a few pictures, charts, or graphs to support the text. They make it more meaningful. They make the page more visually appealing. But they should not steal the reader's attention away from the text like a jealous child trying to take attention away from a sibling. The key is balance.

Conversely, learn to recognize when the graphic element *is* the message. If, instead of a report on the drug problem in your community, you are creating a poster designed to discourage young people from using drugs, you might use one large photograph with the words "Just Say No" superimposed on top. In this case, the photograph—if it is the *right* photograph—almost says everything that needs to be said. The text is the supporting element.

Use images that complement one another

Just as you want your images to complement the text, you should also strive to use images that complement one another. Images that do not work well together reduce the effectiveness of your message by distracting the reader and by creating the impression that you do sloppy work.

Consider, for example, that you are producing a brochure on the problem of drunk driving. Perhaps you have included photos of accident scenes, trauma victims, or grieving relatives. Then, to fill an awkward white space, you stick in a cartoon of a drunk driver behind the wheel with an open beer can in his hand. It doesn't work. The cartoon pokes fun at the seriousness of your message. That doesn't mean you can't produce a brochure on drunk driving illustrated solely with tasteful cartoons. But don't mix a lighthearted cartoon with serious photos.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Let's take another example. Suppose you are creating a brochure or newsletter that contains several clip art illustrations. Perhaps some of the illustrations were drawn by different artists, each with his or her own style. If the illustration styles do not complement one another, your document can look amateurish. You don't have to use the same illustration style throughout the entire document, but each page or group of pages that readers will see at the same time must look compatible.

Be judicious about using wraparounds

Many software programs allow you to wrap text around an illustration or photograph. Wraparounds can be very attractive. However, many people do not know how to wrap text properly. They either end up with unsightly gaps between the text and the graphic, or they end up with such uneven letter and word spacing that the text is difficult to read.

If you use wraparounds, make sure the resulting image is pleasing to look at and easy to read. Don't use wraparounds just to be cute. If the wraparound looks amateurish or unprofessional, readers may assume that the author is also amateurish or unprofessional.

Don't infringe on copyrights

Not all of us have the talent, time, or resources to create our own artwork or photographs. Yet when you use other material, you need to make sure you don't infringe on someone else's copyright. There are several good, inexpensive clip art packages that contain a variety of copyright-free illustrations or photographs. (See pages 605-607 for some recommendations.) Unfortunately, there are not many graphics packages geared specifically for the emergency response field. Consequently, some people may be tempted to copy illustrations or photos that are protected by copyright. (By the way, this discussion about copyright infringement isn't limited to artwork. It also applies to any writing you do.)

Copyright infringement is a serious offense that, if proved in a court of law, may result in injunctions against using and distributing the materials you created; impoundment and destruction of all infringing materials; awards of damages to the copyright owner; awards to cover attorney's fees and court costs; and criminal prosecution.

There are, of course, some limitations to copyright protection. One limitation is the doctrine of fair use, which allows copyrighted material to be used for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, and research.

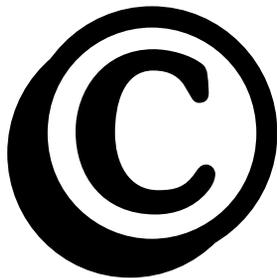
If you use wraparounds, make sure the resulting image is pleasing to look at and easy to read.



Uneven spacing or unsightly gaps between the text and the graphic are distracting.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Do not infringe on someone else's copyright. Copyright infringement is a serious offense.



Caution: Many materials are protected by copyright even when a copyright notice does not appear on the materials.

There are four factors that determine whether a use is fair. One is the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes. The more commercial the use, the more vulnerable you are.

The second consideration is the nature of the copyrighted work. Many factors come into play when evaluating the nature of the work. One such factor is the availability of the copyrighted work. Copying something from a book that is out of print might be considered fair use, whereas copying something you could have purchased instead would not be. However, this is just an example, not a legal interpretation. You should consult a qualified attorney before making any assumptions.

A third consideration is the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole. The more of the work that you copy, the greater risk you take.

Last but not least is the effect of the use on the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. If copying someone else's material results in financial losses for the copyright owner, it does not constitute fair use of the material. For example, copying software or clip art packages that you have not purchased would be copyright infringement.

Don't automatically assume that something exists in the public domain just because you don't see a copyright notice. A copyright notice is not required to appear on works created on or after March 1, 1989, in order for those works to be protected under copyright law. While most people who want to protect their creations do include the copyright notice, some may not. You also need to be concerned about the possibility that the document you want to copy from contains material that was copied illegally by someone else. When in doubt, ask.

One way to determine if something is protected by copyright is to call the Copyright Office in Washington, D.C., at (202) 707-3000. The Copyright Office will search its records for an hourly fee and furnish you with a report. However, the Copyright Office will only have records of works that have been registered. It is not necessary for the creator to register the work in order for the work to be copyrighted. Copyright protection exists from the moment the work is "fixed" in a tangible medium, for example, once it is put on paper.

Works created by the U.S. government are not copyrightable. However, works published by the government may contain copyrighted material used by permission from the copyright holder. Therefore, you should check documents carefully for copyright notices before copying them. When in doubt, ask.

In the Eye of the Beholder

If you want to use something that is protected by copyright, contact the copyright owner and ask for permission. The copyright owner may give you permission to use the material free of charge as long as you acknowledge the source. Or the copyright owner may ask you to pay a fee. You may or may not decide to use the material if you have to pay a fee for it. However, keep in mind that any usage fee will be considerably less than the penalty for copyright infringement. If the usage fee is not in your budget, you can be sure the penalty fee won't be either.

Using Photographs

A thorough discussion on the use of photos could fill an entire chapter, but here are a few important highlights.

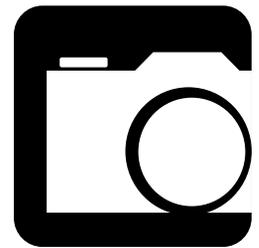
Use good photographs and reproduce them well

Photographs serve two primary purposes: to make your document more visually appealing and to illustrate concepts that might not be as clear if described by words alone. Realize, of course, that this is true only if you use good photos. Poor photographs will make your document less attractive and detract from your message.

When evaluating photographs, you need to consider content, technical quality, and how well the photos will reproduce. Make sure your photos clearly depict whatever you are trying to show. Make sure they do not contain things you don't want readers to see. For example, don't use a photo showing emergency responders doing something incorrectly unless it is your intent to illustrate errors. Use photographs that are in focus. Make sure the lighting and contrast are good. You don't have to use professional photos, but your photos must be clear and easy to recognize.

The technology you use to place photos into your document will affect the quality of your images. Having a service bureau scan the photos on a high-resolution drum scanner will give you the best results. Flatbed scanners, 35-mm slide scanners, digital cameras, photostat machines, and video-capture equipment are some of the other technologies available. Obviously, your budget will be a factor in which technology you choose. However, the better your photos look, the more professional your final product will appear.

Photographs can make your document more visually appealing and can help illustrate difficult concepts.



Photos must be clear and easy to recognize. Poor quality photos will detract from your message.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Good cropping can make a photograph more dynamic and interesting.



original image



cropped image

How you reproduce your document is an important factor too. The camera-ready art for this book, for example, was printed by a linotronic output device at 2450 dots per inch. Although it costs more than using a good laser printer, linotronic output provides the clearest, most professional results. The book itself was professionally printed from the camera-ready art. (The cost of linotronic output is roughly \$12 per page when printing only a few pages. Many service bureaus give significant discounts on large projects.)

Chances are that most of the documents you produce will not be professionally printed. However, you should reproduce them in such a way that they still look good. Photographs duplicated on a copy machine can look muddy. If you have ever received a hand-out that contained photographs which had been copied so many times that you could no longer make out what the photograph depicted, you know how frustrating it can be. What is the point of even using a photograph if it looks like a black blotch on the page?

Crop, reduce, or enlarge photographs as appropriate

Most photographs can benefit from a little manipulation. The most common form of manipulation is cropping. Cropping involves eliminating areas of the photograph that are unnecessary or distracting. Cropping is sometimes done to make an image fit into a smaller space, but more often to highlight a particular portion of the photograph. Good cropping can turn a mediocre photo into something dynamic and powerful. However, there is such a thing as too much cropping. Don't crop out vital information that might be meaningful to your audience.

Resizing, or scaling, is another common form of manipulation, often used in conjunction with cropping. Perhaps your uncropped photo fits perfectly in a given space, but eliminating unnecessary background information leaves an image that is now too small to fill the space that you allotted for it. You may need to enlarge the photo. Conversely, you may have a large photo that must be both cropped and reduced to fit into a smaller space.

Keep in mind that it is always better to reduce than to enlarge. Any time you enlarge a photograph, you lose some detail. In addition, any flaws in the photo become magnified. Small enlargements are not a big problem. However, if you need to significantly increase the size of your image, you may want to have the photo professionally scanned.

In the Eye of the Beholder

It is also better to scan the images at the size you need them than to resize them in your desktop publishing program. Images sometimes become distorted when they are resized. Again, enlarging is more of a problem than reducing. The problem is also worse when you are printing color photographs versus black-and-white.

If you are going to have your document professionally printed, the best thing to do is to talk with your printer ahead of time. Your printer can help you plan out the project properly so that you are not disappointed with the finished product.

Use other special effects as appropriate

Silhouetting, or masking, involves dropping out shadows or other details that you don't want to detract from the subject of your photo. It differs from cropping in that cropping merely cuts off the outer edges of the photo. When you silhouette or mask a photo, you keep the outer dimensions the same, but drop out distracting information that surrounds the person or thing you want your audience to focus on. If you have a program like Adobe Photoshop, you can do this yourself. Otherwise, you can have a service bureau edit your photo for you when you have the photo scanned.

There are times you may want to edit specific information in a photograph. For example, you may want to delete the name on a badge, helmet, or turnout coat to avoid identifying an individual. You may want to remove scratches, distracting glare spots, or other flaws.

Finally, you can use special effects to distort photographs. Just be sure these special effects truly enhance your message. Special effects can backfire far too easily, detracting from your message and making your document look unprofessional.

Use captions

Most photographs need captions. Very few are striking enough or evident enough that they can stand alone. Readers generally look at a photograph first, then look for the caption. If you haven't included a caption or if the caption is difficult to locate, readers may get irritated. The photograph ultimately loses its effectiveness because readers are missing vital information. Captions are also powerful "marketing tools" to inspire people to read the text. If you don't use captions, you lose that benefit.

You can use silhouetting to drop out distracting information and help your audience focus on key elements.



You can also edit out names, scratches, glare spots, or unwanted flaws.

In the Eye of the Beholder

There are many types of charts and graphs.



You may need to experiment to determine what works best in a particular application.

Using Charts, Graphs, and Diagrams

Human beings are visually-oriented creatures. We can often assimilate information faster and more effectively from charts, graphs, and diagrams than we can from text alone. Charts, graphs, and diagrams are similar to photographs in that they generally require captions or explanations of some sort. If you leave out that vital information, your visual aids will lose their effectiveness.

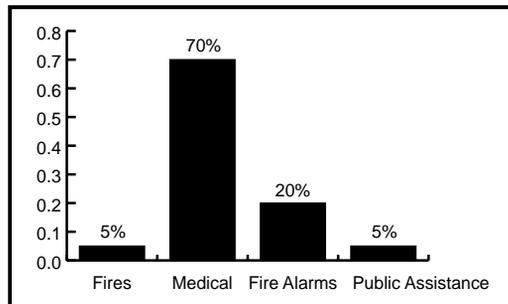
There are many different ways to present the same information. As always, the key is to use a technique that enhances your message and creates a visually appealing image. What is most effective in one document might not be the leading choice for another.

The first illustration below is a simple no-frills chart identifying the types of calls to which my fire department responds. Compare that to the bar graph below it. Both are good tools for presenting the information. However, the bar graph allows readers to assimilate the information much faster. (Depending on the text of the document, it may be necessary to supplement the chart or graph with a caption that identifies the fire department and the years involved.)

Emergency Response Activities Based on Type of Call

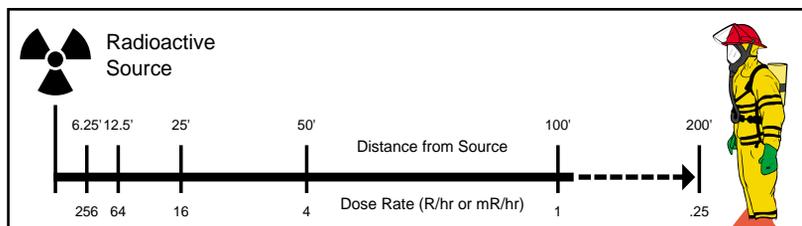
Fires	5%
Medical	70%
False Alarms	20%
Public Assistance	5%

Emergency Response Activities Based on Type of Call



In the Eye of the Beholder

Technical illustrations, such as the one below, can help clarify difficult concepts. Be sure to include a good caption.



*The greater the distance, the less the exposure.
Doubling your distance reduces your exposure by 75%.*

Illustrations help readers assimilate information more quickly than they can by text alone.

Sources of Great Graphics

Most of the artwork used in this book came from several excellent clip art packages. The packages listed on the following pages were selected on the basis of illustration quality, postscript file format, cost per image, a printed catalog of images, and compatibility with the Macintosh platform. Another important factor is each company's commitment to customer service and integrity in business. I prefer to deal only with companies that stand behind their products by offering technical support and/or a money-back guarantee if the product does not perform as advertised.

Many of the images in the book have been modified to some extent using Adobe Illustrator. Therefore, you may see differences between the images in the book and any you find in clip art packages that you purchase.

Sources of good emergency response graphics

Many of the illustrations used in this book came from the "Law Enforcement/Firefighting" and "Health Care" clip art packages from Totem Graphics Inc. Each contains 96 full-color images that are professionally drawn in exquisite detail. Each of the packages comes with a color printed catalog of images. The clip art is available in either Macintosh or Windows/DOS format.

Totem Graphics Inc.

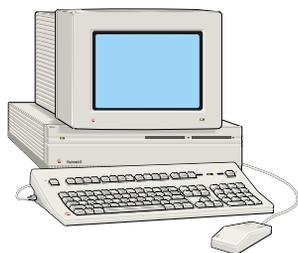
6200-F Capitol Boulevard, South
Tumwater, Washington 98501-5288
Phone: (360) 352-1851 • Fax: (360) 352-2554
e-mail: www.gototem.com



Most illustrations require captions to make the meaning clear.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Good clip art can make your documents more attractive and easier to read.



Two excellent sources of emergency response graphics are *Totem Graphics Inc.* and *Accent Publishing.*

Another good resource for fire service clip art is Accent Publishing. Accent Publishing has three clip art packages, ranging from 85 to 139 images on each. Images are available in either Macintosh or Windows/DOS format. All packages come with a printed catalog.

Most of these graphics are geared for public education materials. (Accent Publishing's primary service is producing public education materials for the fire service. Other products include such things as handout materials, activity sheets for children, and fire and life safety articles. Fire departments can purchase the master copies for a reasonable price, then reproduce them for use within their jurisdictions.)

Accent Publishing

2839 SW Second Avenue, Suite B
Portland, Oregon 97201-4711

Phone: (503) 243-6122 • Fax: (503) 423-7949
e-mail: www.AccentPub.com

For more information on both Totem Graphics Inc. and Accent Publishing, refer to the ads in the back of this book.

Sources of other good graphics

Other clip art packages used in the production of this book are listed below. These packages are not specifically geared for the emergency response field, but do contain some emergency response images.

18 Subject CD-ROM

Totem Graphics Inc.

6200-F Capitol Boulevard, South
Tumwater, Washington 98501-5288
Phone: (360) 352-1851 • Fax: (360) 352-2554
e-mail: www.gototem.com

ClickArt Incredible Image Pak 65,000

Broderbund Software

P.O. Box 6121
Novato, California 94948-6121
Phone: (415) 382-4400
e-mail: www.broder.com

Art Explosion 125,000 and Art Explosion 250,000

Nova Development Corporation

23801 Calabasas Road, Suite 2005
Calabasas, California 91302-1547
Phone: (818) 591-9600 • Fax: (818) 591-8885
e mail: <http://www.novadevcorp.com>

In the Eye of the Beholder

CLIPables

C.A.R., Inc.

4661 Maryland Avenue, Suite 200
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

Phone: (314) 454-3535 • Fax: (314) 454-0105

MasterClips 101,000

IMSI

1895 Francisco Boulevard East
San Rafael, California 94901

Phone: (415) 257-3000 • Fax: (415) 257-3565
e-mail: www.imsisoft.com

Volume 24: Science & Medicine

Image Club Graphics Inc.

833 4th Avenue SW, Suite 800
Calgary, Alberta Canada T2P 3T5

Phone: (800) 661-9410 • Fax: (800) 814-7783

**There are many
other excellent
clip art packages
available.**



**General clip art
packages often
have several
emergency
response images.**

In the Eye of the Beholder

Failure to use valuable desktop publishing features can cause minor problems that are visible and distracting to readers.



Use text wrapping to ensure proper alignment.

Select Desktop Publishing Techniques

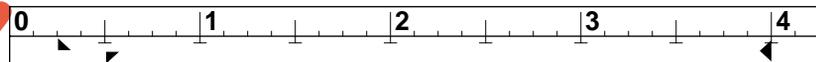
The remainder of this chapter is devoted to three desktop publishing concerns. The information is included for two reasons. First, if you are not taking advantage of these features, it can cause minor problems that are visible to your readers. *Visible* means *distracting*, which reduces the effectiveness of your message. Second, if you set up your documents properly to begin with, it becomes much easier for you or someone else to edit them later.

Text Wrapping

One of the most common mistakes people make is failing to wrap text. Unlike a typewriter, the computer will automatically continue text from one line to the next when you come to the end of the line. There is no need to hit the return key to bring the cursor to the beginning of the next line. This is true regardless of whether your text is justified, flush left, flush right, or centered.

This becomes even more important when aligning text that is indented. The worst thing you can do is to hit the return key at the end of the line, then tab or space over to where you want the next line to begin. Your text will never quite line up properly. And if you should ever have to edit the document, every word you add or delete will disrupt the spacing throughout the entire paragraph. If you change either the typeface or the type size, it will be a disaster.

Each word processing program contains some means by which to adjust margins, indents, and tabs. Take the time to look at your instruction manual if you are not familiar with how to do it. In Microsoft Word for the Macintosh, I format text using a ruler at the top of the screen. Other programs have similar features. The following illustration shows what that ruler looks like when I indent text as I did in the paragraphs below.



1. The little triangles in the ruler were adjusted to change both the margins and the first indent.
2. The only tabs here are between the numbers (1, 2, and 3) and the first word of each sentence.
3. Everything else wraps automatically according to the settings chosen.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Styles

Most word processing applications allow you to define *styles* that can be used throughout the document. The advantage of using styles is that you can change the entire document simultaneously just by changing the style. It isn't necessary to make changes line by line or paragraph by paragraph.

The following instructions apply to Microsoft Word 5.1 for the Macintosh. If you use Microsoft Word, either Mac or Windows, this should give you enough information that you can immediately start using styles to improve your documents. If you use any other program, you will need to look at the instruction manual that came with it. However, styles are easy to use, and you will find any research you have to do well worth the effort.

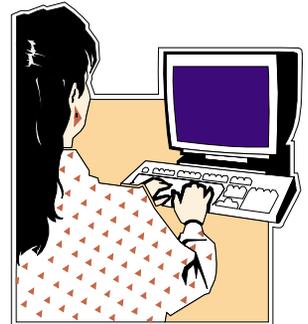
The easiest way to assign styles in Microsoft Word is to start by formatting a single paragraph. First type your paragraph, then select (highlight) the paragraph and adjust it using the rulers at the top of the screen. (If you are reformatting an existing document, you can select as much type as you want.)

In the upper left-hand corner of your screen, just above the ruler, you will find two horizontal boxes. The top one is for choosing the font. The bottom one is for assigning the style. If you haven't yet assigned a style to your text, you will probably see the word *Normal* in the lower box. Decide on a name for the paragraph you have just formatted. It should be a name that will make sense to you later (for example, "body text" or "bullet"). With your paragraph still highlighted, position your cursor in the box. Type in the new name you have chosen, then hit the return key. You will see a dialog box asking you if you wish to define the style based on the selected type. Click "Define" or hit the return key.

If you later decide that you want to change the style, format your type on the screen first, using the ruler just as you did in the beginning. With your type still highlighted, position your cursor on the style box again and hit the return key. You will get a dialog box asking you to choose between reapplying the style (just in case you changed your mind and want to retain the original style) or redefining the style based on the selected type. If you change the style at this point, it will change everything in the entire document that is assigned the same style.

Keep in mind that when you change one style, you may be simultaneously changing several others because each style is based on another by default. You can get around this by modifying the style in the style dialog box under the "Format" menu. This allows you to specify what style (if any) you want to base the new style on.

Using styles allows you to maintain a consistent format throughout your document.



It also allows you to reformat easily, rather than have to make changes one at a time.

In the Eye of the Beholder

“Find” and “Replace” can help you make changes quickly and reliably.



**Warning:
If you are going to make significant changes, start by making a duplicate copy of your file.**

Find and Replace

“Find” and “Replace” are two extremely useful commands in any word processing application. The most obvious use for these commands is to change a word or phrase simultaneously throughout the document. For example, you can change the word *fireman* to *firefighter* simply by asking the computer to “Replace All” from the “Replace” dialog box.

“Find” and “Replace” can also be used to fix problems more efficiently. For example, you can use these commands when cleaning up documents that were created by people who use their computers like typewriters. It is extremely tedious to manually delete extra tab marks, paragraph marks, or spaces in order to use text wrapping to properly align type. “Find” and “Replace” makes the task a little more tolerable.

You can also use “Find” and “Replace” to completely reformat some documents. For example, you can turn entire student manuals into lesson plans. Start by converting paragraphs into individual sentences by replacing every “period, space, space” with “paragraph mark, paragraph mark, tab.” Then put the appropriate letters or numbers in front of each sentence in preparation for converting the text into an outline. Next, adjust the format of each sentence to create your layered outline. Finally, add or delete text as needed. It is still a tedious process, but it is often faster than typing an outline from scratch.

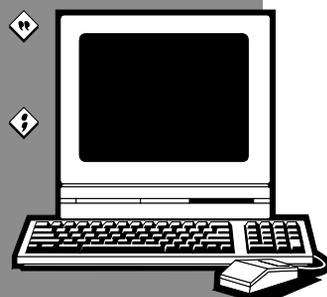
There are potential problems with “Find” and “Replace.” First, if you are going to make significant changes, start by making a duplicate of your file. That way, if you make a major error, you can recover more easily.

Second, using a global “Find” and “Replace” may change things that you don’t want changed. Check your document carefully afterwards to make sure that you haven’t created another monster. One alternative is to make each replacement one at a time. The “Replace” dialog box gives you a choice to “Replace” and “Find Next” or automatically “Replace All.” Replacing items one at a time is more time consuming, but it often helps avoid other problems.

Finally, there are times when you may be doing something complex enough that you will have to find and replace in a specific order to obtain the results you want. Again, start by making a backup copy of your file. Study your document carefully to determine what needs to be replaced and in what order. You may even want to experiment with a single page or paragraph first before tackling the entire document.

Chapter 17: Glossary

SAVED!



Glossary

Grammatical terms in this section are grouped by type.



For example, the various types of phrases are grouped under “Phrase.”

How to Use This Section

In order to minimize the amount of repetition, the grammatical terms listed throughout this glossary have been grouped by type. For example, there are 13 individual definitions under the main heading of *Phrase*. If you are looking for the definition of a *gerund phrase*, for example, you will find it under the major heading of *Phrase*, not as a separate listing after *Gerund*.

All major headings are listed in alphabetical order. Definitions listed under those major headings are more often organized based on how they might be presented in the text so that the progression from one concept to the next makes sense.

Glossary of Grammatical Terms

Adjective

An adjective is a word used to modify a noun or pronoun. An adjective identifies *what kind, which one, or how many*.

Demonstrative adjectives (*this, that, these, and those*) identify *which one or ones*: *this patient, these fingerprints*.

Descriptive adjectives provide such information as *size, shape, age, color, origin, or material*: *white powder, jagged edges*. They can also convey the writer's subjective opinion or perception of the noun being modified: *unethical attorney, chilling story*.

Possessive adjectives identify *which one* by answering the question of *whose*: *Bonnie's arm, my gun*.

Proper adjectives are formed from proper nouns: *American citizen, Asian flu*. Proper adjectives are always capitalized.

Compound adjectives are made up of two or more words used to describe a noun. Compound adjectives may or may not be hyphenated: *greenish yellow gas, high-flow oxygen*.

Coordinate adjectives are two or more adjectives that equally modify the same word. They are separated by commas rather than by coordinating conjunctions: *pink, frothy sputum; dark, stormy night*.

Predicate adjectives follow linking verbs (such as *be, become, seem, remain, feel, look, and sound*). They describe the subject of the sentence, even though they are located in the predicate. Example: Her pupils were *fixed* and *dilated*.

Adverb

An adverb is a word used to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Some adverbs can also modify entire sentences. Adverbs describe *how, when, where, why, or to what degree*: *repeatedly denied, brutally raped*.

Adverbs of degree (also called **intensifiers**) are adverbs that modify adjectives or other adverbs. They indicate the *intensity* of the adjective or adverb: *unusually heavy rains* (modifies *heavy*), *too quickly* (modifies *quickly*).

Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns. Adjectives tell what kind, which one, or how many

***an ambulatory patient* (what kind)**



Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Adverbs tell how, when, where, why, or to what degree

***walkingslowly* (how)**

Glossary

An appositive is a word or phrase that defines, explains, or renames another noun before it.



The pull station, or fire alarm box, is located near the exit.

Agreement

Agreement is the corresponding relationship of one word to another, for example, subject and verb or pronoun and antecedent. Words must agree in person (first, second, or third), in number (singular or plural), and in gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter).

Antecedent

The antecedent is the noun or phrase to which a pronoun refers.

Mickey killed his parents. (*Mickey* is the antecedent of *his*.)

Being the wife of a police officer has its drawbacks. (*Being the wife of a police officer* is the antecedent of *its*.)

Appositive

An appositive is a word or phrase that defines, explains, or renames another noun before it.

Approximately 40 percent of all patients who suffer an acute myocardial infarction, or *heart attack*, die before they reach the hospital.

Article

There are three articles: *a*, *an*, and *the*. *A* and *an* are *indefinite* articles; they refer to an unspecified item. *The* is a *definite* article; it refers to one or more specific items.

Case

There are three different cases of personal pronouns. (Pages 246-251 provide a detailed look at the three different cases.)

The **nominative case** (sometimes called the subjective case) refers to a pronoun used as a subject or a subject complement.

They were killed sometime last night.

It was *they* who were killed.

The **objective case** refers to a pronoun used as a direct object, an indirect object, or the object of a preposition.

Someone robbed *them* first, then stabbed *them* to death.

The **possessive case** is used to show ownership or possession.

Their murderer has not yet been identified.

Clause

A clause is a group of related words containing both a subject and a predicate.

A **independent** (or **main**) **clause** has both a subject and a predicate and can stand alone as a sentence.

Workers at the water treatment facility called to report an accidental release of chlorine gas from a one-ton container.

A **dependent** (or **subordinate**) **clause** contains both a subject and a verb, but cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. Rather, it is used to modify a main clause. A dependent clause may function as an adjective, an adverb, or a noun. (The example below is both a dependent clause and an adverbial clause; it identifies *when*.)

Before we do anything else, I want to isolate the area and call for the haz mat team.

An **essential** (or **restrictive**) **clause** cannot be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence. An essential clause is not set off by commas. (The example below is also an adjective clause because it helps identify *which worker*.)

One of the workers *who was in the immediate area when the accident occurred* is complaining of irritation to the eyes, nose, respiratory tract.

A **nonessential** (or **nonrestrictive**) **clause** is one that adds additional information; however, it can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence or leaving the sentence structurally incomplete. A nonessential clause is set off by commas. (The example below is also an adjective clause because it further describes the noun *chlorine*.)

Chlorine, *which is placarded as a poison gas*, can severely damage the respiratory system if inhaled.

An **adjective clause** is a dependent clause that serves as an adjective; that is, it modifies a noun or pronoun in the main clause. Adjective clauses may be introduced by relative pronouns (*who*, *whose*, *whom*, *which*, or *that*) or by relative adverbs (*when*, *where*, or *why*).

A clause is a group of related words containing both a subject and a predicate.



The woman was assaulted by a man who forced his way into her apartment.

Glossary

There are several types of clauses.

A noun clause:

The fact that your temperature has returned to normal is a good sign.



A dependent clause serving as an adverb:

If your temperature remains normal, you should be able to go home tomorrow.

The one-ton container *that is leaking* has a liquid capacity of about 300 gallons.

An **adverbial clause** is a dependent clause that serves as an adverb. It can modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb in the main clause. Adverbial clauses are used to express *time, place, manner, degree, purpose, cause (or reason), result, condition, comparison (or contrast), or concession*. The following example tells *why (reason)*.

Because chlorine causes severe burns to skin, eyes, and mucous membranes, we want the highest level of both skin and respiratory protection: fully-encapsulating Level A suits.

A **noun clause** is a dependent clause that serves as a noun. It may function as a subject, an object, or a complement.

The fact that chlorine has an expansion ratio of 458:1 means that one leaking container can put out a very large cloud of gas. (noun clause as a subject)

Workers believe *that the chlorine is leaking from a damaged fusible plug. (noun clause as an object)*

An **elliptical clause** is a clause from which some words have been omitted. However, the remaining words are understood to represent the complete clause.

If so, (If it is so,) we should evacuate the area for half a mile downwind of the release.

It is easy to recognize a clause when the subject is obvious. Yet when the noun or personal pronoun is replaced by a relative pronoun, as it is in some of the examples in this section, it is easy to mistake the clause for a phrase (which lacks a subject, a predicate, or both). Let's look at one of the examples again:

Chlorine, *which is placarded as a poison gas*, can severely damage the respiratory system if inhaled.

There are two things you can do to help you see that the clause does indeed contain both a subject and a predicate. First, mentally substitute the relative pronoun (*which*) with a noun or personal pronoun: *Chlorine is placarded as a poison gas*. Clearly, this is a clause. The word *which* in the original sentence filled the role of the subject just as *chlorine* does in the revised clause. Second, try picturing the clause as a question: *Which (which one) is placarded as a poison gas?* This trick also helps show that the relative pronoun *which* filled the role of the subject in the original sentence.

Comma Splice (or Comma Fault)

A comma splice (or comma fault) is an error in which two independent clauses are joined solely by a comma.

Faulty: The driver was pronounced dead at the scene, his passenger died later at the hospital.

Revised: The driver was pronounced dead at the scene. His passenger died later at the hospital.

A comma splice can be fixed by replacing the comma with a semi-colon, separating the text into two separate sentences, leaving the comma and adding a coordinating conjunction, or by making one clause subordinate to the other. See pages 487-489 for more information.

Complement

A complement is a word or phrase used to complete the sense of a subject, an object, or a verb.

A **subject complement** follows a linking verb, for example, *be*, *seem*, or *appear*, and modifies or refers to the subject. The subject complement may be an adjective, a noun, or a pronoun. In the example below, the noun *hazardous materials specialist* and the adjective *proficient* both complement the subject *I*.

Although I am a *hazardous materials specialist*, I am not yet *proficient* in the use of our specialized atmospheric monitoring equipment.

An **object complement** refers to or modifies a direct object. It may be an adjective or a noun. In the example below, the noun *Public Information Officer* complements or modifies the direct object *me*, while the adjective *ready* complements the direct object *press release*.

If you assign me *Public Information Officer*, I can have a press release *ready* in 15 minutes.

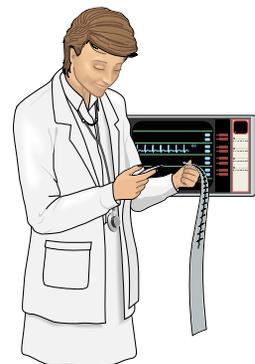
A **verb complement** simply the direct or indirect object of a verb. (See *Object* for more information.)

Note: An adjective that serves as a complement may also be called an **adjective complement** a **predicate adjective** A noun that serves as a complement may also be called a **noun complement** **predicate noun** or a **predicate nominative**

A complement is a word or phrase used to complete the sense of a subject, an object, or a verb.

A subject complement:

Maureen is a doctor.



An object complement:

Her patients call her a miracle worker.

Glossary

A conjunction is a connector that joins words, phrases, or clauses.

Officers from Campbell and Los Gatos assembled outside the courthouse.



Police feared there might be a riot, but the crowd behaved.

Conjunction

A conjunction is a connector that joins words, phrases, or clauses.

Coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, and yet*) connect like parts of speech, for example, nouns to nouns, verbs to verbs, and phrases to phrases.

Correlative conjunctions also connect like parts of speech. However, correlative conjunctions always come in pairs, for example, *both . . . and, either . . . or, and not only . . . but also*. The first conjunction emphasizes the meaning of the second.

Subordinating conjunctions join dependent (or subordinate) clauses with independent (or main) clauses. Examples of subordinating conjunctions include *although, because, if, since, unless, and whereas*.

Conjunctive adverbs (or adverbial conjunctions) are transition words that link only main clauses together. Examples include *as a result, conversely, however, and therefore*. When conjunctive adverbs are used, you must either join the two clauses by a semicolon or punctuate them as two separate sentences. You cannot join the clauses with a comma.

Contraction

A contraction is a condensed expression formed by condensing two words into one. One or more letters are removed from the original two words, and an apostrophe is added to take their place. Examples include *don't, can't, I'm, they're, it's, and o'clock*.

Elliptical Expression

Elliptical expressions represent more complete sentences.

If possible (If it is possible), I'd like to get a copy of the court transcript.

Essential (or Restrictive) Element

An essential (or restrictive) element is one that cannot be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence. See *Clauses* and *Phrases* for examples of both essential and nonessential elements.

Gender

Gender is the classification of nouns or pronouns as *masculine* (*Paul, father, he*), *feminine* (*Paula, mother, she*), or *neuter* (*vehicle, hydrant, it*).

Gerund

A gerund is a verb form that ends in *ing* and serves as a noun. It may be used as a subject, an object, or the object of a preposition.

Smoking is bad for your health. (*subject*)

I hate *smoking*. (*object*)

Richard is an expert on *smoking* and the harmful effects it has on the body. (*object of the preposition on.*)

Idiom

An idiom is an expression that is peculiar to a language and that may not make sense to someone not familiar with the expression: *drown your sorrows, lay odds, bide your time*.

Infinitive

An infinitive is a form of verb made up of the word *to* plus the present tense of the verb: *to drown, to experiment, to survey*.

Interjection

Interjections are words or expressions designed to show a strong feeling or sudden emotion, such as anger, frustration, excitement, surprise, happiness, pain, or shock. They may also be used to catch a reader's attention. Examples include *oh, ouch, hey, darn, well, yes, and no*.

A gerund is a verb form that ends in *ing* and functions as a noun does.

As a subject:

***Fencing* is fun.**



As an object:

I love fencing

As the object of a preposition:

I stay in shape by fencing

Glossary

A *modifier* is a word, phrase, or clause that qualifies or limits the meaning of another word or group of words.

A *wild bobcat* is loose in the area.



Police retreated cautiously afraid to startle the bobcat.

Modifier

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that qualifies or limits the meaning of another word or group of words. Modifiers include adjectives and adverbs, as well as words, phrases, and clauses that serve as adjectives or adverbs.

Comparative modifiers are generally used to compare two items.

We have a *worse* problem with AIDS, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases than we did a decade ago.

Superlative modifiers are generally used to compare three or more items.

I fear the *worst* is yet to come.

Limiting modifiers limit or restrict the word or words that immediately follow them. Examples of limiting modifiers include *almost, even, exactly, hardly, just, merely, nearly, only, scarcely,* and *simply*.

Misplaced modifiers are positioned either too far from the terms they modify or close enough to other terms they could conceivably modify that the resulting sentence is unclear.

Misplaced: We are giving out free condoms to protect against HIV *provided by the county health department*.

Revised: We are giving out free condoms *provided by the county health department* to protect against HIV.

A **dangling modifier** is one that does not clearly refer to anything in the sentence. Readers are often misled to believe that the modifier refers to one thing when, in fact, it refers to something else.

Dangling: *Having injected heroin and other drugs for many years,* we considered it likely that he was infected with HIV.

Revised: *Because he had injected heroin and other drugs for many years,* we considered it likely that he was infected with HIV.

Glossary

A **squinting modifier** is one that falls between two words or phrases and can conceivably modify the words or phrases on either side.

Squinting. The AIDS awareness training that we provide *diligently* has failed to stop the growing epidemic.

Revised. The AIDS awareness training that we *diligently* provide has failed to stop the growing epidemic.

Mood (or Mode)

Mood (or mode) refers to the attitude behind a statement. Mood dictates which form of the verb to use.

The **indicative mood** is used to make a statement or ask a question.

The gunman is holding several people hostage.

Are any of the hostages injured?

The **imperative mood** is used to give a command or make a request.

Get a hostage negotiator out here.

The **subjunctive mood** is used to express a wish, a condition contrary to fact, a recommendation, or a demand.

I wish we could determine how many hostages he has.

The gunman is demanding that he be given safe passage across the border.

Nonessential (or Nonrestrictive) Element

A nonessential (or nonrestrictive) element adds additional information; however, it can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence or leaving the sentence structurally incomplete. A nonessential element is set off by commas. See *Clauses* and *Phrases* for examples of both essential and nonessential elements.

Mood refers to the attitude behind a statement.

Indicative mood:

Cinder is our station mascot.



Imperative mood:

Cinder, come here.

Subjunctive mood:

I wish I knew where Cinder was hiding.

Glossary

A *noun* is a word that names a person, place, thing, quality, or idea.

Common noun:

nurse



Proper noun:

Penny

Noun

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, quality, or idea.

Concrete nouns name something tangible. Examples include *smoke*, *gun*, and *bones*.

Abstract nouns name something intangible, such as an idea, quality, feeling, or emotion. Examples include *integrity*, *illness*, and *exhaustion*.

Collective nouns name a group or unit, for example, *crew*, *team*, and *jury*.

Common nouns name a *general* person, place, thing, quality or idea. Examples include *chief*, *station*, and *week*.

Proper nouns name a *specific* person, place, or thing. Examples include *Chief Waldvogel*, *Quito Station*, and *Fire Prevention Week*.

Compound nouns are nouns made up of two or more words. Some compound nouns are written as one solid word (such as *fireplace*), some are written as two words (such as *police officer*), and some are hyphenated (such as *mother-in-law*).

Possessive nouns indicate ownership or possession, for example, *Jim's* and *suspect's*.

Predicate nouns (or subject complements) are nouns that follow a form of the verb *to be* and describe the subject. Example: The product is *sarin*.

Object

The object is the person or thing that receives the action of the verb. The object may be a word, a phrase, or a clause.

We put out the *fire*. (*word*)

They are afraid *to talk to the police*. (*phrase*)

I'm concerned because *she is never this late*. (*clause*)

The **direct objects** the person or thing that *directly* receives the action of the verb.

Mitch gave Matt the *marijuana*. (*The marijuana is what is being given or acted upon.*)

Glossary

The **indirect object** is the person or thing that *indirectly* receives the action of the verb.

Mitch gave *Matt* the marijuana. (*Matt received the marijuana that was being given or acted upon.*)

The **object of a preposition** is a noun or noun substitute that follows a preposition and is linked by that preposition to the rest of the sentence. In the example below, *helicopter* is the object of the preposition *by*; *trauma center* is the object of the preposition *to*. The preposition, its object, and any modifiers together comprise what is called a *prepositional phrase*.

We transported Michael *by helicopter* to the nearest *trauma center*.

Parallel Construction

Parallel construction refers to the use of grammatically similar form between two or more coordinated elements. See pages 478-481 for more information.

Now more than ever, we must rely on the citizens of our community to help in our fight against *growing crime rates* and *diminishing financial resources*.

Parenthetical Element

Parenthetical elements are words or groups of words that interrupt the main flow of thought in a sentence, but are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. They are called *parenthetical* because they can (and sometimes do) appear in parentheses. Sometimes they are set off by commas or dashes instead.

Attacks with a deadly weapon (*aggravated assault*) occur almost 40 times more often than rape.

Participle

A participle is a verb form that is used either as part of a verb phrase (is *breathing*, had *investigated*) or as a modifier (a *crying* child, a *broken* window).

The **present participle** ends in *ing*, for example, *changing*, *reporting*, *consoling*.

The object is the person or thing that receives the action of the verb.

Direct object:

The doctor reviewed the x-ray



Indirect object:

The doctor gave the patient the good news that her arm was not broken.

Glossary

A phrase is a group of two or more related words that lacks a subject and a predicate or both and that acts as a single part of speech.



The fire burning since Sunday night is now endangering several homes.

The **past participle** of regular verbs ends in *d* or *ed*, for example, *cracked*, *ended*, *died*. The past participle of irregular verbs have different forms, for example, *fought*, *chosen*, *stunk*.

The **perfect participle** consists of the word *having* plus the past participle, for example, *having seen*, *having failed*, *having chased*.

Person

There are three grammatical persons. The *first person* is the person(s) speaking: *I* or *we*. The *second person* is the person(s) being spoken to: *you*. The *third person* is the person(s) being spoken about: *he*, *she*, *it*, or *they*.

Phrase

A phrase is a group of two or more related words that lacks a subject and a predicate or both and that acts as a single part of speech.

An **essential** (or **restrictive**) **phrase** cannot be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence. An essential phrase is not set off by commas.

Some of the agencies *providing training on emergency response to terrorism* fail to include good, tactical guidelines as to how to safely and effectively mitigate the incident.

A **nonessential** (or **nonrestrictive**) **phrase** is one that adds additional information; however, it can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence or leaving the sentence structurally incomplete. A nonessential phrase is set off by commas.

The bulk of the training we have received so far, *focusing on the ways in which a terrorist can do harm*, merely heightens our awareness of the problem. It isn't enough for the first responder.

A **noun phrase** is a phrase that functions as a noun. Gerund phrases, infinitive phrases, and participial phrases often serve as noun phrases. The following example is both a noun phrase and a gerund phrase.

Responding to domestic terrorism is becoming a growing concern in the United States.

Glossary

An **adjective phrase** is a phrase that functions as an adjective. Infinitive phrases, participial phrases, and prepositional phrases often serve as adjective phrases. The following example is both an adjective phrase and a participial phrase.

The terrorism awareness training *provided thus far* has not adequately prepared us to handle a terrorist event.

An **adverbial phrase** is a phrase that functions as an adverb. Infinitive phrases and prepositional phrases often serve as adverbial phrases. The following example is both an adverbial phrase and a prepositional phrase.

We have a greater appreciation of the risk of domestic terrorism *after the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings*.

A **gerund phrase** consists of a gerund (the *-ing* form of a verb) plus its object and modifiers. It is used as a noun.

Finding good, reliable information on chemical and biological warfare agents is proving to be a daunting task.

An **infinitive phrase** consists of an infinitive (*to* plus a verb) and its object and modifiers. It may be used as noun, an adjective, or an adverb. The following example is used as an adjective; it tells *what kind of decision*.

My decision *to write a field guide on responding to terrorist events* was prompted by the knowledge that we don't have many good resources available at the first responder level.

A **participial** (or **participle phrase**) consists of a participle (a form of verb) and its object and modifiers. It is used as an adjective. There are two participial phrases in the following example. The entire phrase beginning with *designed to kill* tells *what kind of devices*. However, *responding to the event* tells *which emergency personnel*.

Terrorists may plant secondary devices *designed to kill or injure emergency personnel responding to the event*.

A **prepositional phrase** consists of a preposition (a connecting word) and its object and modifiers. It may be used as noun, an adjective, or an adverb. The following example contains two prepositional phrases, both used as adjectives. The first tells *which of our resources*, the second tells *what kind of information*.

There are several types of phrases.

A participial phrase serving as an adjective:

The men and women fighting the fire are making a valiant effort.



A gerund phrase serving as a noun:

Fighting forest fires is hard work.

Glossary

The predicate says what the subject does, what is done to the subject, or what state of being the subject is in.



The vehicle fire is endangering a structure.

Most of the reference sources we have *on our haz mat unit* contain very limited information *on chemical and biological warfare agents*.

A **prepositional-gerund phrase** begins with a preposition and has a gerund as its object. In the example below, *by* is the preposition; the gerund *failing* is the object of *by*.

By failing to recognize the signs of terrorism, we may find ourselves walking into a trap.

A **verb phrase** consists of a verb and any other terms (such as adverbs or helping verbs) that modify the verb or complete its meaning. In the example below, *may not* modifies *have*, and *with* completes the meaning of *deal*.

We may not have appropriate personal protective equipment to safely *deal with* some of the chemical and biological agents that are out there.

A **verbal phrase** consists of a gerund, a participle, or an infinitive plus any objects or modifiers. Gerund phrases, participial phrases, and infinite phrases are all verbal phrases.

An **absolute phrase** is a phrase that modifies a whole clause or sentence, rather than a particular element, and is not joined to the rest of the sentence by a connector. An absolute phrase contains at least a noun or a pronoun and a participle (the *-ing* or *-ed* form of a verb).

Considering how easy it is to obtain some of these chemical and biological agents, it's amazing that we haven't had more terrorist events in this country.

Predicate

The predicate is that part of the sentence that says something about the subject. It may say what the subject does, what is done to the subject, or what state of being the subject is in.

A **simple predicate** is the verb (or helping verb plus main verb) alone. The simple predicate below is *was exposed*.

He *was exposed* to Ebola while in Zaire.

A **complete predicate** consists of the verb (*was exposed*) plus its complement (*to Ebola*) and any modifiers (*while in Zaire*).

He *was exposed to Ebola while in Zaire*.

A **compound predicate** consists of two or more predicates joined by conjunctions. Each share the same subject. In the example below, *he* refers to *was exposed* and to *never contracted*.

He was exposed to Ebola while in Zaire, but never contracted the disease.

Prefix

A prefix is a letter, syllable, or word added to the beginning of a root word to change its meaning, for example, *asymptomatic*, *injustice*, *dishonest*, and *overreacted*.

Preposition

A preposition is a connecting word that shows how a noun or pronoun relates to another part of the sentence. Prepositions may be used to indicate place (*above*, *below*, *inside*), direction (*up*, *down*, *across*), time (*before*, *during*, *after*) or other relationships (*by*, *with*, *instead of*.)

Pronoun

A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of a noun.

Personal pronouns refer to specific people or objects, for example, *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, and *they*.

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to people or things that are not specific. Examples include *each*, *every*, *many*, *most*, and *some*.

Relative pronouns are used to relate groups of words to nouns or pronouns. Examples include *who*, *which*, *that*, and *what*.

Interrogative pronouns are used to introduce questions. Examples include *who*, *which*, *whose*, and *what*.

Demonstrative pronouns (*this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*) point to a specific person, place, or thing.

Compound personal pronouns may be used to direct action back to the subject or to emphasize a noun or pronoun already mentioned. They are formed by adding *self* or *selves* to a personal pronoun. Examples include *myself*, *yourself*, and *ourselves*.

Reciprocal pronouns (*each other* and *one another*) serve as objects of verbs when the subjects are plural.

A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of a noun.



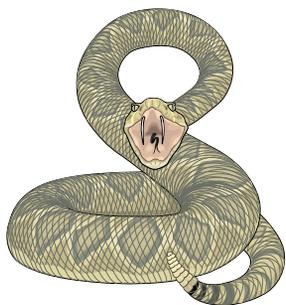
They compete in the muster each year.

(They is used in place of the names.)

Glossary

A direct question is one that asks a question and ends with a question mark.

What kind of snake was it?



An indirect question is one that reports a question and ends with a period.

I asked what kind of snake it was.

Question

A **direct question** is a sentence that *asks* a question and ends with a question mark.

What are the health hazards associated with the product?

An **indirect question** is a sentence that *reports* a question and that ends with a period.

I asked for information on the health hazards associated with the product.

An **elliptical (condensed) question** is a word or phrase that is understood to represent a more complete question.

How much? (How much of the product was the victim exposed to?)

An **independent question** is a question that is incorporated into a larger sentence.

The question that worries me is, *What is the risk of secondary contamination to EMS personnel who treat the victim?*

A **rhetorical question** is one that does not require an answer. The reader is merely expected to agree with the idea.

Who wouldn't be concerned about the risk of secondary contamination?

Quotation

Quotations report what someone else has said or written. **Direct quotations** contain the exact words of the person being quoted. **Indirect quotations** often do not. Direct quotations are enclosed in quotation marks. Indirect quotations are not.

Direct: She said, "Thousands of people were left homeless by the hurricane."

Indirect: She said that thousands of people were left homeless by the hurricane.

Run-On Sentence

A run-on sentence is similar to a comma splice, or comma fault, in that two or more independent clauses are run together in the same sentence. However, the clauses are run together without any kind of punctuation mark or connecting word between them. A run-on sentence is a grammatical error.

Run-on: We had to cut short the station tour we were dispatched on an EMS call.

Revised: We had to cut short the station tour because we were dispatched on an EMS call.

Sentence

A sentence is a group of words that can stand on its own as a complete thought and that consists of at least a subject and a predicate. Sentences are classified by structure.

A **simple sentence** contains one independent (or main) clause.

She was stung by a bee.

A **compound sentence** consists of two or more independent clauses.

She is allergic to bee stings, but she does not have her bee sting kit with her.

A **complex sentence** contains one independent clause and one or more dependent (or subordinate) clauses.

Because she is allergic to bee stings, we now have a life-or-death situation on our hands.

A **compound-complex sentence** consists of two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

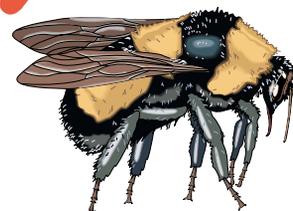
She normally takes her bee sting kit with her when she goes hiking, but as soon as we arrived at our destination, she realized that she had left the kit at home.

An **elliptical sentence** is a word or phrase that is understood to represent a complete sentence (or question), even though the subject and verb are missing.

What now? (What do we do now?)

A sentence is a group of words that can stand on its own as a complete thought.

She was stung by a bee.



A compound sentence consists of two or more independent clauses.

She is allergic to bee stings, but she does not have her bee sting kit with her.

Glossary

A sentence fragment is a word or phrase that has been incorrectly separated from another sentence. It is a grammatical error.



They were traveling at 95 mph. According to the radar.
(fragment)

They were traveling at 95 mph, according to the radar.
(revised)

Sentences are also classified by purpose.

A **declarative sentence** one that makes a statement.

She is having difficulty breathing.

An **exclamatory sentence** expresses strong emotion.

She'll die if we don't get help soon!

An **imperative sentence** one that expresses a command or request. (The subject *you* is often implied.)

Call 911 and tell the dispatcher that we have a 21-year-old female in anaphylactic shock after being stung by a bee.

An **interrogative sentence** a question. Refer to page 628 for information on the different types of questions.

Sentence Fragment

A sentence fragment is a grammatical error. It is a word or phrase that has been incorrectly separated from another sentence.

I'll testify against him. *If you give me police protection.*

Split Infinitive

A split infinitive is an infinitive that has been separated by an adverb, for example, *to honestly believe*, *to reluctantly withdraw*, *to knowingly commit*. Split infinitives should be avoided where they create awkward constructions.

Subject

A subject is the word or group of words in a sentence that names the person, place, thing, or idea that the sentence is about.

A **simple subject** the noun or pronoun alone.

The *suspect* we arrested last night has an airtight alibi.

A **complete subject** includes the simple subject and the words associated with it. The simple subject below is *suspect*. *Suspect* plus *we arrested last night* form the complete subject.

The suspect we arrested last night has an airtight alibi.

Glossary

A **compound subject** two or more subjects that are joined by a conjunction and that share the same predicate.

The killer and his victim attended the same school.

Suffix

A suffix is a letter, syllable, or word added to the end of a root word to change its meaning and/or to allow it to function as a different part of speech, for example, bloody, violent~~ly~~, accidental, penal~~ize~~, and effort~~less~~.

Synonym

Synonyms are words that are close enough in meaning that they can be used interchangeably in most applications, for example, *murder* and *homicide* or *bleed* and *hemorrhage*.

Tense

Verb tense tells when an action takes place. There are six main tenses (three primary ones and three perfect ones).

present:	he lies
past:	he lied
future:	he will lie
present perfect:	he has lied
past perfect:	he had lied
future perfect:	he will have lied

There are six progressive tenses, each of which correspond to one of the six main tenses above.

present progressive:	he is lying
past progressive:	he was lying
future progressive:	he will be lying
present perfect progressive:	he has been lying
past perfect progressive:	he had been lying
future perfect progressive:	he will have been lying

Transitional Expression

Transitional expressions are words or phrases that link clauses or sentences and show the relations between them. Examples include *therefore*, *thus*, *as a result*, *after all*, and *in conclusion*.

Verb *tense* tells when an action takes place.

There are three primary tenses.



Present tense:
He lies.

Past tense:
He lied.

Future tense:
He will lie.

Glossary

A *verbis* a word that expresses either an action or a state of being. Without a verb, you cannot have a sentence.

I climb the ladder.



***Helping* (or *auxiliary verbs*) modify the verbs they precede.**

I am climbing the ladder.

Verb

A verb is a word that expresses either an action or a state of being. Without a verb, you cannot have a sentence.

Action verbs express action. It may be a physical action that can be observed visually (for example, *fight* or *cry*), or it may be a mental action that others cannot see directly (such as *feel* or *think*). The majority of verbs are action verbs.

Linking verbs express a state of being. They link the subject to other words in the sentence. The most common linking verbs are *be* and its various different forms (*am*, *are*, *been*, *being*, *is*, *was*, *were*). Others include *become*, *appear*, *look*, *feel*, and *seem*.

A **transitive verb** is one that requires an object to complete its meaning, whereas an **intransitive verb** does not. Many verbs can be transitive or intransitive, depending on how they are used in the sentence.

Transitive. Be very careful not to *drop* the patient.

Intransitive. We will see more cases of hypothermia and frostbite if the temperature continues to *drop*.

Helping (or **auxiliary verbs**) modify the meaning of the verbs they precede. Examples of helping verbs include *be*, *do*, *have*, *can*, *may*, *will*, and *should*.

Regular verbs form the past tense and past participle by adding either *d* or *ed*, for example, *fired*, *saved*, *confessed*, and *sabotaged*. Most verbs in the English language are regular.

Irregular verbs do not follow the normal pattern when forming the past tense and past participle. There are about 200 irregular verbs in the English language. (See pages 194-197.)

Voice

Voice indicates whether the subject acts or is acted upon.

The **active voice** emphasizes the one(s) doing the action.

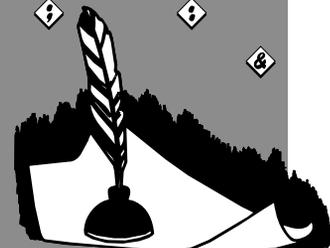
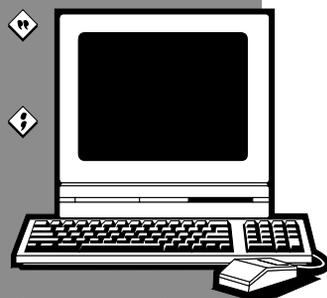
We found the victim in a ravine.

The **passive voice** emphasizes the one(s) being acted upon. The one(s) doing the action may or may not be mentioned.

The victim was found in a ravine.

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SAMPLE



Bibliography

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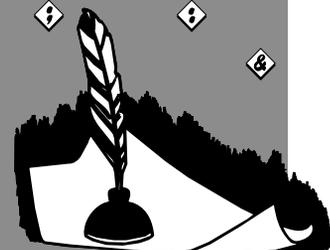
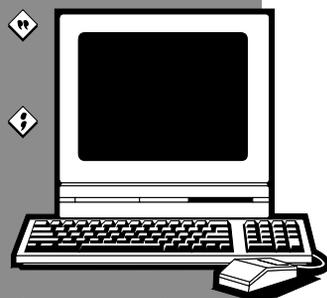
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