

# GRAMMAR

If you are like most students, you may feel that grammar is a nuisance, that grammar does not matter, and that teachers should relax and just let you put a comma wherever you want to put one.

However, you are in College Bound because you want to go to college.

Going to college means you will encounter the following writing hurdles:

- 1) High school essays (good essays = good grades = good college = good job, etc)
- 2) **SAT** (NEW: **writing** AND **sentence correction** sections!)
- 3) Application essays to colleges
- 4) College essays

Therefore, accept two truths if you are serious about going to college:

- 1) Grammar is important. It affects the meaning of your writing.
- 2) Even if you refuse to admit that grammar is important, colleges use your writing to decide whether they will accept you, and companies read your writing to decide if they will hire you. Their opinions MATTER.

This handbook addresses the grammatical rules most frequently misunderstood by students your age and most frequently noticed by college admission officials. There are dozens of other rules and nuances, but you need to be sure that the basics discussed in this handbook are **SECOND NATURE** to you before you are ready to study those additional rules.

After you earn your degree and become a powerful millionaire, you may single-handedly change the importance of grammar, mechanics, and usage in the developed world. Until then, you must learn the rules.

# Grammar Diagnostic Test

By Richard Seth Davis

**ANSWER KEY and PARTNERS' NOTES:** In this version you will find grammatically correct versions of the sentences in your students' tests. Use the grammatically correct versions in Section 1 to check that your students have circled each error correctly. You will also find "Partners' Notes" sprinkled throughout the document to help you build upon this test and teach your students style as well as grammar.

**PLEASE READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE BEGINNING.**

**Instructions:** This test will help you measure your knowledge of grammatical rules. By identifying your strengths and elements you need to review you will know what to focus on in your study of grammar.

To take this test all you need is a pencil, your mind, and a few minutes. The test consists of two sections.

**Section 1** allows you to start off by concentrating on grammatical errors in single sentences. This section has fifteen (15) sentences. Each sentence has 1 – 3 errors in them. Your task is to **CIRCLE** every grammatical error you see.

**Section 2** allows you to build on what you've done in Section 1. Section 2 presents three brief paragraphs consisting of 3 – 4 sentences. The sentences in each paragraph have a number of grammatical errors in them. Your task is to **FIND** and **CORRECT** every grammatical error you see.

As you read the sentences in each section you will find many errors quickly. Review each sentence carefully after a first reading and you will be well on your way to learning each and every grammatical rule.

Good luck!

## Section 1

**CIRCLE each error. There are 15 sentences total.**

**Here's an example of what you will see and do in section 1:**

**Washington, D.C. are, my hometown.**

**You will circle “are,” and the misplaced comma. These are “subject-verb agreement” and punctuation errors.**

**1. Washington, D.C. are, my hometown.**

*Washington, D.C. is my hometown.*

**2. She know how to drive really good.**

*She knows how to drive really well.*

**3. He plays the lottery but, he dont win.**

*He plays the lottery, but he doesn't win.*

**4. Science is her best subject on school because she works hardly.**

*Science is her best subject in school because she works hard.*

*Partners' Notes: “Hard” functions both as an adjective and an adverb. When used as an adverb, “hard” means “with great effort.” “Hardly” originally meant “with force,” but in Modern English it is an adverb used to denote a small amount of effort.*

**5. Shorty go with her cousins brother today.**

*Shorty went with her cousin's brother today.*

**6. The big tall house look run-down broken, and burnt-out now.**

*The big, tall house looks run-down, broken, and burnt-out now.*

**7. They tells me “Dont forget the way” when I leaves.**

*They tell me, “Don't forget the way,” when I leave.*

*Partners' Notes: You may find this sentence a fruitful example of a grammatically correct construction that has stylistic problems. When I leave, they tell me, “Don't forget the way,” is more stylistically successful, as it creates a more linear pace to the dispensation of information in the sentence.*

8. Don't tell me, where their going.

*Don't tell me where they're going.*

9. Summers better than fall usually.

*Summer's better than fall usually.*

10. Only, he could forgets to show up.

*Only he could forget to show up.*

11. She, and Warren, likes green blue and red, but they both don't likes purple.

*She and Warren like green, blue, and red, but they both don't like purple.*

*Partners' Notes: Here again you find an example of a grammatically correct but stylistically deficient sentence. You can use these examples as springboards for discussing "style" and "economy of writing" with your students. A better construction of this sentence would be: "She and Warren like green, blue, and red, but neither likes purple."*

12. Soccer in Europe is "football", but basketball, is basketball everywhere.

*Soccer in Europe is "football," but basketball is "basketball" everywhere.*

13. I was born in the United States of America, my sister wasn't.

*I was born in the United States of America. My sister wasn't.*

*OR*

*I was born in the United States of America, but my sister wasn't.*

14. Concerning your work it is very well!

*Concerning your work, it is very good!*

*Partners' Notes: A better version of this sentence, stylistically, would be: "Your work is very good." This example illustrates the value of economy in writing.*

15. Quick Darren will run in his new run shoes.

*Quickly Darren will run in his new shoes.*

*OR*

*Darren will run quickly in his new shoes.*

## Section 2

**FIND and CORRECT** each error.

Here's an example of what you will see and do in Section 2:

Ive never seen the beaches of Los Angeles, i hear theyre sandy.

Reading this sentence carefully will allow you to find the errors. After each section you will find blank lines.

---

Use these lines to write and correct the errors you find.

**Errors:** “Ive” should be “I’ve.” (See the rules on contractions and apostrophes).

After “Los Angeles” there should be a period (.) and “I” should be capitalized to begin a new sentence. (See the rules on commas and sentences).

“theyre” should be “they’re.” (See the rules on contractions and apostrophes).

**Partners’ Notes:**

*Use the “correct” copies below as guidelines. There are multiple ways to correct the deficiencies in the test passages, so please allow your students the freedom to work within the rule of grammar to find their own style of correction.*

**Paragraph 1:**

Ive never seen the beaches of Los Angeles, i hear theyre sandy. My cousin stays out their and tells me Los Angeles can be smoggily. I dont think i’ll ever move out theyre though if did i could go to the beach maybe i will move there you never know.

I’ve never seen the beaches of Los Angeles. I hear they’re sandy. My cousin stays out there and tells me that Los Angeles can be smoggy. I don’t think I’ll ever move out there, though if I did I could go to beach. Maybe I will move there. You never know.

*Partners’ Notes: You may ask your students to discover ways to cut this passage down from six sentences to four, or, if they’re enterprising, even three. Asking them to cut their writing in half can be a powerful way to teach style and economy of thought.*

## Paragraph 2:

My favorite music is, rap and hip hop: Theres people that don't like it but they dont know how to listen. So's that's what I tell them that you have to learn how to hear. When they'll learn how to hear then theyll know what im saying.

My favorite music is rap and hip-hop. There are people that don't like either, but they don't know how to listen. So that's what I tell them: "you have to learn how to hear." When they learn how to hear, then they'll know what I'm saying.

*Partners' Notes: As to the last sentence, traditional wisdom might have it rendered thus: "When they learn how to hear; then, they'll know what I'm saying." More contemporary usages permit the use of the comma.*

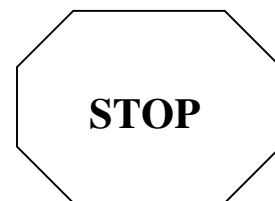
*The colon used in the third sentence sets off the quotation as an illustration of the speaker's principle. Though not in the students' grammar handbook, the use of the colon in this way is an important point to touch upon in this case.*

## Paragraph 3:

My mom and dad always says "you need to have pride in your work, and i always believe them. When I work I try to concentrate because thats what's having pride means. Also it means working even if you don't want to work. If you do have pride and work when you have to then you can do great things. Because each of us have greatness inside ourselves.

My mom and dad always say, "You need to have pride in your work," and I always believe them. When I work, I try to concentrate because that's what having pride means. It also means working even if you don't want to work. If you do have pride and work when you have to, then you can do great things, because each of us has greatness inside ourselves.

*Partners' Notes: Ask your student to write two or three sentences defining what "greatness" means to them. Review your student's work with them, focusing on grammatical strengths as well as errors. Ultimately, the best way to learn writing is to write!*



# Essential Parts of a Sentence

*In the middle of the night. My paper was due at 9:00 a.m. and I hadn't even started it. Two more pages to go. One more all-nighter for me.*

Review the lines above. If you believe that the lines above contain correctly punctuated sentences, you are like most College Bound students.

However, the lines above are not punctuated correctly. The following section will explain why, so that you can avoid these common mistakes.

Sentences are NOT simply words in between a capitalized letter and a period. You DO NOT create a sentence by capitalizing the first word and putting a period at the end.

A sentence is a group of words that contain at least one **INDEPENDENT PHRASE**.

An independent phrase is just as it sounds—a phrase that, by itself, can stand alone as a sentence. An independent phrase consists of three things:

- ❑ A **SUBJECT** (a noun that is DOING or BEING something)
- ❑ A **SIMPLE PREDICATE** (the verb(s) that the SUBJECT is DOING or BEING)
- ❑ An **INDEPENDENT, COMPLETE THOUGHT**

➤ **WHAT ARE NOUNS?**

A NOUN is the name of a person, place, or thing.

Examples: tree, dress, question, home, William,  
Texas, Bill of Rights

**PRONOUNS** can take the place of nouns and can also be subjects. Some examples of pronouns are: I, you, he, she, it, that, who, and they.

➤ **WHAT ARE SUBJECTS?**

The SUBJECT is the NOUN or PRONOUN that is doing or being something in a sentence.

The sentences below contain multiple nouns. Which noun is the SUBJECT (which noun is DOING or BEING something)?

Chelsea loves Dan and Ryan.

Chelsea loves, so Chelsea is the subject.  
Dan and Ryan are not doing anything.

Music is the most important thing in her life.

Music is, so music is the subject.



➤ **WHAT ARE VERBS?**

A VERB describes what something or someone is doing. Verbs can be action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

✓ **ACTION VERBS** are words that describe action: **write, swimming, find, keep.**

✓ **LINKING VERBS**

Common linking verbs are:

<b>am</b>	<b>become</b>	<b>look</b>	<b>smell</b>
<b>appear</b>	<b>feel</b>	<b>prove</b>	<b>sound</b>
<b>are</b>	<b>grow</b>	<b>remain</b>	<b>stay</b>
<b>be</b>	<b>is</b>	<b>seem</b>	<b>was</b>

Linking verbs can do two different jobs:

- 1) Conveying the subject's state of being. These linking verbs don't seem as active as action verbs.

I **was** lost.  
Shelly **is** crazy.

- 2) Linking a subject to something describing that subject.

You **seem** tired.  
The rock **feels** smooth.

✓ **HELPING VERBS** slightly modify the meaning of linking or action verbs. They do not occur in sentences by themselves.

Common helping verbs are:

<b>am</b>	<b>be</b>	<b>do</b>	<b>have</b>	<b>can</b>	<b>must</b>
<b>are</b>	<b>being</b>	<b>does</b>	<b>has</b>	<b>could</b>	<b>may</b>
<b>is</b>	<b>been</b>	<b>did</b>	<b>had</b>	<b>would</b>	<b>might</b>
<b>was</b>	<b>should</b>	<b>shall</b>	<b>were</b>	<b>will</b>	

You ***can** finish* this sentence.  
You ***will** finish* this sentence.  
You ***have** finished* this sentence.

Above, the verb phrase is italicized, and the helping verb is in bold.

## ➤ WHAT ARE PREDICATES?

The PREDICATE centers on the VERB that the subject is doing or being.

The **SIMPLE PREDICATE** is the verb or verb phrase that the subject is doing or being.

Look again at the sentences we saw when discussing SUBJECTS:

Chelsea loves Dan and Ryan.

Music is the most important thing in her life.

In these sentences, loves and is are the **verbs** that the subjects are **doing or being**. Therefore, “loves” and “is” are the simple predicates.

If the main verb is also accompanied by a helping or a linking verb, the entire verb phrase (all of the connected verbs) is the simple predicate. In the examples below, the simple predicate is in bold:

Sara **was holding** my hand.

My paper **should have gotten** an A.

I **used to know** her name.

The **COMPLETE PREDICATE** includes the verb or verb phrase that the subject is doing or being in addition to other words. At this point, we will not deal with complete predicates.

## ADDITIONAL PRACTICE WITH SUBJECTS AND PREDICATES:

Sometimes a sentence will have two subjects or two predicates:

Sara hates fish but loves chicken.  
(two simple predicates = hates and loves)

Steve and Brian learn from their mistakes.  
(two subjects = Steve and Brian)

If you ever have two subjects and two predicates, they are probably two different independent phrases and should be separated by a period or a comma with a conjunction:

**John learns from his mistakes, but Michael ignores his.**

John learns, so John is the subject and learns is the predicate in the first independent phrase.

Michael ignores, so Michael is the subject and ignores is the predicate in the second independent phrase.

The two independent phrases are connected by a comma and the conjunction “but.” (see chapter on Commas)

## NOW YOU TRY:

With your partner, try to correct the example from the beginning of this lesson.

*It was the middle of the night. My paper was due at 9:00 a.m., and I hadn't even started it. I had two more pages to go, which meant another all-nighter for me.*

Once you and your student have reviewed this sample, continue practicing! Review any passage in the Reading Lab or any other printed material. Try to identify the subject and simple predicate in each sentence in the passage. Can you find any mistakes that the editor missed???

# Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs MUST agree in number.

As you learned in the preceding section, sentences must contain at least one independent phrase.

An independent phrase contains at least one subject and at least one predicate.

If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural.

If the subject is singular, the predicate must be singular.

---

What are **singular nouns**?

Singular nouns are nouns that stand for one thing.

Examples: mom, television, and New York.

Singular pronouns take the place of singular nouns.

Singular pronouns are: I, you, he, she, and it.

---

What are **plural nouns**?

Plural nouns are nouns that stand for more than one thing.

To make a noun plural, you usually ADD “s” to the nouns.

Examples: spiders, lamps, keys, and rocks.

There are some irregular nouns, to which you do not add “s” to make them plural: children, geese, and women.

Plural pronouns take the place of plural nouns.

Plural pronouns are: they, we, us, and you.

(yes—“you” can be plural!)

What are singular verbs?

Singular verbs are verbs that are paired with singular nouns.

- ✓ Singular verbs usually end in “s.”

Examples of singular verbs: sees, bumps, and sings.

She loves her best friend.

After school, Dan usually drives home.

In the sentences above, she and Dan are SINGULAR, so they need singular verbs. Loves and drives are singular verbs.

What are plural verbs?

Plural verbs are verbs that are paired with plural nouns.

- ✓ Plural verbs usually DO NOT end in “s.”

Examples of plural verbs: see, bump, and sing.

We love her best friend.

After school, they usually drive home.

In the sentences above, we and they are PLURAL, so they need plural verbs. Love and drive are plural verbs.

NOTE: Even though “I” is singular, “I” usually uses plural verbs:

Incorrect: I loves you

Correct: I love you

**PRACTICE:** Review any passage in the Reading Lab, a newspaper, or any other printed material. Identify five singular nouns, five singular verbs, five plural nouns, and five plural verbs. Then, with your partner, make up sentences on your own. Keep practicing until subject-verb agreement comes naturally to you!

# Commas

## MISCONCEPTIONS:

- Commas go where a reader should pause.
- Commas go wherever I want them to go.

**THE TRUTH:** Specific rules govern where commas belong. Commas belong **ONLY** in the following situations:

✓ **Dates, Addresses, and Large Numbers**  
(the easy stuff):

January 14, 2003  
Washington, D.C.  
57,000 people

✓ **Items in a series:**

Joe rode the train to Greenbelt, Metro Center, and Woodley Park.

I like to read books, write fiction, and play soccer.

(NOTICE: a comma goes before “and” too!)

✓ **Separating two independent phrases,<sup>1</sup> while also using a conjunction**  
(conjunctions = *and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so*):

Harris wanted to see *Bourne Supremacy*, but Caitlin wanted to watch *Harry Potter*.

Danielle walked up to him, so I pretended to tie my shoe.

---

<sup>1</sup> See discussion on the parts of a sentence.

✓ **Introductory phrases:**

After<sup>2</sup> I finish this project, I just want to go home and sleep for a month.

Until that day, I had never believed him.

Concerned, I reached for her hidden key.

Beginning today, I will always treat my mother with respect.

No, I can't hear you.

---

✓ **Gramatically unnecessary phrases (phrases that can be taken out of the sentence and leave a complete sentence behind):**

Mrs. Ford gave us hours of homework tonight, making it impossible for me to go to the mall.

(“Mrs. Ford gave us hours of homework tonight” can stand as a sentence alone.)

---

✓ **Before “which” (“which” sets off extra information—information you do not NEED for the sentence to be complete!):**

The study found that ice cream contains calories, which everyone already knew.

---

<sup>2</sup> Prepositions like “after” usually begin an introductory phrase, which will need a comma! (See chapter on prepositions.)

✓ **Renaming (providing additional information for someone or something already named in the sentence):**

Jones, the quarterback, will play for the University of Tennessee this fall.

Garrett, who is nice to everyone, couldn't believe it.

My favorite holiday, Halloween, is only a week away!

---

✓ **Quotations:**

"Give me that," I said with a glare.

T.J. shouted, "Watch me!"

Lyddie said, "You're doing it wrong," and took the shovel away from me.

---

✓ **In between two or more adjectives:**

His short, ditzy friend will be there.

**PRACTICE:** The exercises below will help strengthen your student's understanding of this section. Please complete on a separate sheet of paper.



# Comma Exercise 1

*Add commas as needed in the sentences below. If the sentence is correct as it is, write C on the line.*

  C   He left the scene of the accident and tried to forget that it had happened.

      Oil, which is lighter than water, rises to the surface.

      Madame de Stael was an attractive, gracious lady.

      Nice is a word with many meanings, and some of them are contradictory.

  C   The contractor testified that the house was completed and that the work had been done properly.

  C   Some people refuse to go to the zoo because of pity for creatures that must live in small cages.

  C   Taxicabs that are dirty are illegal in some cities.

      The closet contained worn clothes, old shoes, and dirty hats.

  C   The uninvited guest wore a dark blue tweed suit.

      Mark Twain's early novels, I believe, stand the test of time.

      December 7, 1941, will never be forgotten.

      The field was safe enough, wasn't it?

      Write the editor of the *Atlantic*, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116.

      He replied, "I have no idea what you mean."

      After a good washing and grooming, the pup looked like a new dog.

      Because of their opposition to institutions that force creatures to live in captivity, some people refuse to go to the zoo.

  C   Men who are bald are frequently the ones who are the most authoritative on the subject of baldness.

      Vests, which were once popular, have been out of vogue for several years.

      As a celestial goddess, she regulated the course of the heavenly bodies and controlled the alternating seasons.

## Comma Exercise 2

*Place commas wherever they are needed in the following sentences.*

1. We went to Bar Harbor but did not take the ferry to Nova Scotia.
2. The ginkgo tree, whose leaves turn bright yellow in the fall, came to this country from Asia.
3. The address for the governor's mansion is 391 West Ferry Road, Atlanta, Georgia.
4. The villagers enjoyed fairs, festivals, and good conversation.
5. When the intermission was over, the members of the audience moved back to their seats.
6. Andy took the elevator to the third floor, rushed into the office, and asked to see his father.
7. When he stumbled over your feet, William was clumsy, not rude.
8. She listened to her favorite record with close, careful attention.
9. Jillian, who had worked in the dress shop all summer, hoped to work there again during the Christmas holidays.
10. Go the first traffic light, turn left, and then look for a yellow brick building on the north side of the street.
11. After eating the dog's dinner, Frisbee ate his own.
12. "Oh no," Max exclaimed, "I think that Dr. Holmes was referring to Eliot the novelist, not Eliot the poet."
13. Below, the fields stretched out in a hundred shades of green.
14. To understand the purpose of the course, the student needs to read the syllabus.
15. All students are eligible to receive tickets but must go to the athletic office to pick them up.
17. You don't want any more hamburgers, do you?

# Commas after Introductions Exercise

*A. If the following sentences are correctly punctuated with introductory commas, mark a C on the line to the left of the sentence. If there is an error, add introductory commas where they are needed. Do you know why each sentence is correct or incorrect?*

\_\_\_ 1. As the boat turned, about a dozen dolphins began to follow it.

C 2. Since we moved into town, our fuel bill has tripled.

\_\_\_ 3. Having chosen nursing as a career, Susan enrolled in many science courses.

C 4. Usually, I have time to eat breakfast.

C 5. From outside the twelve-mile fishing limits off the coast of Maine, a strange phenomenon has been reported.

\_\_\_ 6. When he was in high school, he was known only as an athlete.

C 7. Before you decide what courses to take, you should consider the amount of work you are willing to do.

\_\_\_ 8. Nevertheless, I do not want to meet him.

\_\_\_ 9. To give Jane a good look at the university, Mr. Benson drove up for the Day on Campus.

\_\_\_ 10. Since the dog had started to run a way, we had to scramble to catch him.

\_\_\_ 11. Of course, the movie that I had rushed to see didn't start on time.

C 12. Her secondhand car was in excellent condition when she bought it.

\_\_\_ 13. As I mentioned, the rules can be broken occasionally.

\_\_\_ 14. Having decided to eat only natural foods, he had to give up all of his favorite junk food snacks.

\_\_\_ 15. To estimate the costs, he consulted a repairman by phone

*B. Write your own sentences with introductory elements, and punctuate them correctly.  
Answers will vary.*

1. After \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. To save \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. If \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Often \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Hearing \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Commas with Nonessential Elements Exercise

*The following sentences have essential and nonessential words, phrases, and clauses in them. Put in the necessary punctuation. Some sentences are correct as is. Write a C if you think the sentence is correct.*

1. The girl who teaches swimming at the neighborhood pool has a great deal of patience.  
(Correct)
2. The girl who enjoyed teaching swimming, decided to major in physical education at college.
3. The high school course that was most valuable to me was typing. (Correct)
4. Maria, wearing an original dress of her own design, was the center of attention.
5. Dogsled mushing, which has been his favorite sport for years, requires a lot of effort.
6. Dauphin Island, located off the coast of Alabama, is a favorite spot for fishermen.
7. He saw his favorite movie, *Star Wars*, eight times.
8. Two of her friends, Kate and Beth, are planning to share an apartment with her next summer.
9. *Citizen Kane*, considered by many critics to be the greatest American film ever made, won only one Academy Award.
10. The officer who made the arrest had been investigated previously for excessive use of force.  
(Correct)

# Comma Splice Exercise 1

*Instructions:*

*Decide if the sentence is a comma splice or a complete sentence.*

1. John is always late for work, nobody seems to care.
  - a) **Comma splice**
  - b) Complete sentence
2. Hot summer weather is nice, high temperatures are dangerous for certain people.
  - a) **Comma splice**
  - b) Complete sentence
3. Emily broke her ankle on the weekend; now she is in a great deal of pain.
  - a) Comma splice
  - b) **Complete sentence**
4. Driving the car is fast and comfortable, riding the bicycle is better for one's health.
  - a) **Comma splice**
  - b) Complete sentence
5. When a student likes his class, he is more likely to achieve good grades.
  - a) Comma splice
  - b) **Complete sentence**
6. Jarod had an interview with a television company, I might get a job as his assistant.
  - a) **Comma splice**
  - b) Complete sentence
7. After I was paid last week, I was able to do the grocery shopping.
  - a) Comma splice
  - b) **Complete sentence**

8. Due to the fact that I am busy this week, I don't have time for sports.

a) Comma splice

**b) Complete sentence**

9. Whenever Janis does not sleep, she gets a horrible migraine.

a) Comma splice

**b) Complete sentence**

10. The air conditioner is too loud, Cleo can't sleep.

**a) Comma splice**

b) Complete sentence

# Comma Splice Exercise 2

*Instructions:*

*Decide if the sentence is a comma splice or a complete sentence.*

1. I love eating fruit, it is one of my favorite things.
  - a) **Comma splice**
  - b) Complete sentence
2. After visiting the cinema, we are intending to go to the carnival.
  - a) Comma splice
  - b) **Complete sentence**
3. After a bite to eat, we enjoyed a lovely stroll along the beach.
  - a) Comma splice
  - b) **Complete sentence**
4. There are many reasons to visit Greece, the beaches are lovely and the people are friendly.
  - a) **Comma splice**
  - b) Complete sentence
5. I'll never be able to buy a house, prices these days are just ridiculous.
  - a) **Comma splice**
  - b) Complete sentence
6. I cannot afford a house in London, so I am moving to Sunderland.
  - a) Comma splice
  - b) **Complete sentence**
7. This is a lovely cake, you must give me the recipe one day.
  - a) **Comma splice**
  - b) Complete sentence



8. The computer in my room is old, but the carpet is ancient.

a) Comma splice

**b) Complete sentence**

9. Hungary is an interesting country, the churches contain some of the finest frescos found anywhere in Europe.

a) Comma splice

b) Complete sentence

10. Given the lack of understanding among the general public, it is not surprising that many people are guilty of using the comma splice.

a) Comma splice

**b) Complete sentence**

# Sharpening Your Writing

## BOTTOM LINE:

Do not use ten words to say what you can say with three.

Many students, especially conscientious students, have the misconception that a longer sentence is better.

## LONGER SENTENCES ARE NOT NECESSARILY BETTER!

Teachers, admission counselors, and employers across the nation beg you to keep it simple and keep it clear. Do not waste their time by forcing them to read the same information two or three times!

Some problems with wordiness are redundancy and/or using words you don't need. The following are examples of redundant or wordy phrases:

Examples in sentences:

The bus came to a stop.  
She did not pay attention to him.  
The store is offering free gifts.  
The story first began in high school.

More examples:

in advance of...	actual facts
due to the fact that...	in order to
in the near future...	new innovation
in the vicinity of...	past history
is in possession of...	revert back to
made an investigation of...	right here
suffered the loss of...	tracked down
have got to...	10 a.m. in the morning
take into consideration...	general public
arrived at a decision...	join together

Discuss with your partner how the above phrases are unnecessarily wordy or redundant.

## ARE YOU GUILTY?

To evaluate whether you write unnecessarily wordy sentences, do the following:

- 1) Take out a sample of your own writing.
- 2) For each sentence, try to sum up the point of the sentence in as few words as possible.

If you can not summarize your point using fewer words, you may already be a concise writer! Go over your writing with your partner, and see if you can sharpen any of your sentences or phrases!

**NOTE:** Unnecessary wordiness can also occur in paragraphs and/or essays. Evaluate each sentence in your writing. If you have sentences that repeat the same information, remove those sentences!

### More Practice:

Here is how students can sharpen the language in the practices sentences:

- 1) She hesitates now because she is afraid.
- 2) He disliked me because my investigation proved he was lying throughout the trial.
- 3) Many complex plans have been suggested to help the city regain financial stability.
- 4) In a conservative suit, he moped in the corner when the committee denied his plan.
- 5) We will evaluate the plan to make the staff more accountable.

# Apostrophes

Apostrophes ( ' ) are used **ONLY** in the following situations:

- ✓ To show possession (**singular nouns**):

This is **Kate's** house.  
**Joe's** dog is lost again.  
My **computer's** hard drive crashed.  
**Chris's** mom was surprised.

Note: For SINGULAR NOUNS, the apostrophe ALWAYS goes before an "s." Even if the noun ends in an "s" (like in "Chris"), you still need to add an apostrophe and then the letter "s!"

- ✓ To show possession (**plural nouns ending in "s"**):

Rain ruined the **boys'** campsite.  
The **cars'** retail prices shocked me.  
The **divers'** lives were in danger.

Note: For PLURAL NOUNS ending in "s," the apostrophe goes after the "s."

- ✓ To show possession (**plural nouns not ending in "s"**):

My **children's** room.

Note: For PLURAL NOUNS not ending in "s," the apostrophe goes before an "s," like you would do for a singular noun.

- ✓ To make contractions:

I **can't** go to the mall.  
Yellow **isn't** your color.  
**Wouldn't** it be easier to just learn it?

**DO NOT USE CONTRACTIONS IN FORMAL WRITING!**

**PRACTICE:** The exercises below will help strengthen your student's understanding of this section. Please complete on a separate sheet of paper.

# Apostrophes Exercise

The following sentences are punctuated with apostrophes according to the rules for using the apostrophe. Correct answers are in bold.

1. **Who's** the **party's** candidate for vice president this year?
2. The fox had its right foreleg caught securely in the **trap's** jaws.
3. Our **neighbor's** car is an old Chrysler, and **it's** just about to fall apart.
4. In three **weeks'** time **we'll** have to begin school again.
5. **Didn't** you hear that **they're** leaving tomorrow?
6. Whenever I think of the stories I read as a child, I remember **Cinderella's** glass slipper and **Snow White's** wicked stepmother.
7. We claimed the picnic table was ours, but the **Smiths'** children looked so disappointed that we found another spot.
8. **It's** important that the kitten learns to find its way home.
9. She did not hear her **children's** cries.
10. My address has three **7s**, and **Tim's** phone number has four **2s**.
11. **Didn't** he say when he would arrive at **Arnie's** house?
12. **It's** such a beautiful day that **I've** decided to take a sun bath.
13. She said the watch Jack found was hers, but she **couldn't** identify the **manufacturer's** name on it.
14. Little **girls'** clothing is on the first floor, and the **men's** department is on the second.
15. The **dog's** bark was far worse than its bite.
16. The **moon's** rays shone feebly on the path, and I heard the **insects'** chirpings and whistlings.
17. **They're** not afraid to go ahead with the plans, though the choice is not theirs.
18. The man whose face was tan said that he had spent his two **weeks'** vacation in the mountains.
19. I found myself constantly putting two **c's** in the word process.
20. **John's '69** Ford is his proudest possession.

# Prepositions

Prepositions tell you how certain words relate to each other in a sentence.

- Prepositions begin a prepositional phrase.
- A prepositional phrase consists of the preposition and the object of the preposition.
- The preposition usually tells you where, when, or how (with a few exceptions).
- The object of the preposition tells you what.

## EXAMPLES:

The cat is **under** the car.

**By** Thursday, I'll have an answer.

In the above sentences, under and by are the **prepositions** and car and Thursday are the objects of the prepositions.

**IMPORTANT:** You must know which words are prepositions, so that you can correctly use commas to set prepositional phrases apart from the rest of a sentence (see chapter on commas).

The **BEST** way to identify a prepositional phrase is to memorize the following list of words most commonly used as prepositions. Like learning how to read—it will take some effort in the beginning, but then life will be a thousand times easier for you. You will be glad you did.

about	behind	for	onto	unlike
above	below	from	out	until
across	beneath	in	outside	up
after	beside	inside	over	upon
against	between	into	past	with
along	beyond	like	since	within
among	by	near	through	without
around	down	of	to	
at	during	off	toward	
before	except	on	under	

Helpful trick: If a word (other than a verb) can go in front of the phrase *the dog house*, the word is probably a preposition! (**under** the dog house, **outside** the dog house, etc...)

Have you memorized the list yet? DO NOT go on until you have memorized this list!

# Prepositions of Direction Exercise

The correct prepositions are bolded.

1. Anna has returned **to** her home town.
2. The dog jumped **in / into** the lake.
3. Are the boys still swimming **in** the pool?
4. Thomas fell **on / onto** the floor.
5. The plane landed **on** the runway.
6. We drove **toward** the river for an hour but turned north before we reached it.
7. The kids climbed **on / onto** the monkey bars.
8. Joanna got **in / into** Fred's car.
9. The baby spilled his cereal **on** the floor.
10. We cried to the man on the ladder, "Hang **on**!"
11. I went **to** the gym.
12. Matthew and Michelle moved the table **into** the dining room.
13. Allan left your keys **on** the table.
14. Dr. Karper apologized for interrupting us and told us to carry **on** with our discussion.
15. I walk **to** the amusement park.
16. Pat drove Mike **to** the airport.
17. Glenn almost fell **in / into** the river.
18. The waitress noticed that there was no more Diet Pepsi **in** Marty's glass.
19. Lee and Sarah took the bus that was heading **toward** the university.
20. Mary Sue jumped **on / onto** the stage and danced.

# Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives describe **nouns** and **pronouns**.

For words that are commonly identified as adjectives, refer to Chapter 10, which provides a list of adjectives to assist you with your descriptive writing.

Some notes about adjectives:

- ❑ A, an, and the are articles, and they are also adjectives! (The dog describes which dog!)
- ❑ My, their, this, these, those, some, and any are also adjectives!
- ❑ You can generally create adjectives by adding -al, -able, -ful, -less, and -y to nouns or verbs (always check your dictionary, looking for the notation *adj* to be sure!):

<u>Noun/verb</u>	<u>Adjective</u>
success (noun)	successful
love (verb)	lovable
hope (verb)	hopeful
sap (noun)	sappy

- ❑ Words that look like verbs can also be used to describe—they are called **participles**.

“Running shoes” describes what kind of shoes.

“Wilted flowers” describes what kind of flowers.

“Frightening movie” describes what kind of movie.



Adverbs describe **verbs, adjectives**  
and **other adverbs**.

If you are describing HOW, WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH, or WHY something is DONE  
(slowly, poorly, well...), you need to use an adverb!!!

Many adverbs are easy to spot because they end in -ly:

slowly  
softly  
carefully  
hopelessly  
jokingly

“Soon” and “well” are adverbs that don’t end in -ly.

Examples (the adverbs are underlined; the question each adverb answers is in parentheses):

Darren quickly finished his paper. (HOW)  
Sonia turned her head lazily. (HOW)  
He unexpectedly remembered my birthday! (HOW)  
I’m doing well today, thanks. (HOW)  
Yesterday I went to the grocery store. (WHEN)  
Later she came home. (WHEN)  
He asked her to come inside. (WHERE)  
She loved him immensely. (HOW MUCH)

# Adjective and Adverb Exercise 1

Correct answers are in bold.

1. He **correctly** defined the terms. The answer sounded **correct**.
2. She **quickly** adjusted the fees. She adapted **quickly** to any situation.
3. He measured the floor **exactly**. They proved to be **perfectly exact** measurements.
4. The stillness of the tomb was **awful**. The tomb was **awfully** still.
5. It was a **dangerous** lake to swim in. The man was **dangerously** drunk. The gas smelled **dangerous**.
6. She performed **magnificently**. It was a **magnificently** beautiful performance.
7. Her voice sounds **beautiful**. She sang the song **exactly** as it was written. We heard it **perfectly**.
8. He was a very **sensible** person. He acted very **sensibly**.
9. Mike wrote too **slowly** on the exam. He always writes **slowly**.
10. Talk **softly** or don't talk at all. The music played **softly**.
11. Andrea knows the material very **well**. She always treats us **well**.
12. You must send payments **regularly**. We deal on a **strictly** cash basis.
13. The mechanic's tools were **good**. The foreman said that his work was **well** done.
14. She worked **carefully** with the sick child. She was a very **careful** worker.
15. He did not pass the course as **easily** as he thought he would.
16. I find this novel very **interesting**. It was **interestingly** written.

# Adjective and Adverb Exercise 2

Correct answers are in bold. Incorrect answers are in italics.

1. Terrence plays quarterback as well as Brian. **Correct**
2. The game *hadn't* hardly begun before it started to rain. **Had**
3. This was *sure* a mild winter. **Surely**
4. Jane behaves more *pleasant* than Joan. **Pleasantly**
5. When you are a parent, you will think *different* about children. **Differently**
6. I felt *badly* about not having done *good* on my final exams. **Bad, Well**
7. Whether you win is not *near* as important as how you play. **Nearly**
8. Asian music often sounds *oddly* to Western listeners. **Odd**
9. Does your car run well enough to enter the race? **Correct**
10. I felt *safely* enough to go out at night on my own. **Safe**
11. You can see the distant mountains *clear* with these binoculars. **Clearly**
12. Our team was *real* sharp last Saturday afternoon during the game. **Really**

# Grammar Cheat Sheet

Without looking back to find the answers, answer each question and provide two examples using each concept to demonstrate your understanding.

**What do you need to have a complete sentence?**

**What does an independent phrase consist of?**

**What is a subject?**

**What is a simple predicate?**

**When should you use commas?**

**What does subject-verb agreement mean?**

**How do you make most nouns plural? Name two exceptions.**

**How do you make most verbs plural? Name two exceptions.**

**When should you use apostrophes?**

**What are prepositions?**

**What makes up a prepositional phrase?**

**What do adjectives do?**

**What do adverbs do?**

# Grammar Post-Diagnostic Test

By Seth Davis

**ANSWER KEY and PARTNERS' NOTES:** In this version you will find grammatically correct versions of the sentences in your students' tests. Use the grammatically correct versions in Section 1 to check that your students have circled each error correctly. You will also find "Partners' Notes" sprinkled throughout the document to help you build upon this test and teach your students style as well as grammar.

**PLEASE READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE BEGINNING.**

**Instructions:** Congratulations on completing your hard work with this grammar handbook. This test will help you measure your knowledge of grammatical rules now that you've reviewed the rules. You've learned a great deal, so sit back, have fun, and use what you know.

To take this test all you need is a pencil, your mind, and a few minutes. The test consists of two sections.

**Section 1** allows you to start off by concentrating on grammatical errors in single sentences. This section has fifteen (15) sentences. Each sentence has 1 – 3 errors in them. Your task is to **CIRCLE** every grammatical error you see.

**Section 2** allows you to build on what you've done in Section 1. Section 2 presents three brief paragraphs consisting of 3 – 4 sentences. The sentences in each paragraph have a number of grammatical errors in them. Your task is to **FIND** and **CORRECT** every grammatical error you see.

As you read the sentences in each section you will find many errors quickly. Review each sentence carefully after a first reading and you will be able to apply all you've learned.

**Good luck!**

## Section 1

**CIRCLE each error. There are 15 sentences total.**

**Here's an example of what you will see and do in section 1:**

**Washington, D.C. are, my hometown.**

**You will circle “are,” and the misplaced comma. These are “subject-verb agreement” and punctuation errors.**

**1. Washington, D.C. are, my hometown.**

*Washington, D.C., is my hometown.*

**2. The university dont has what i want in a school.**

*The University doesn't have what I want in a school.*

**3. There, is the tree with the meticulous prepared hawk's nest, on it.**

*There is the tree with the meticulously prepared hawk's nest on it.*

**4. Toni Morrison wrote Beloved: which is my favorite book.**

*Toni Morrison wrote Beloved, which is my favorite book.*

**5. Where is he and she headed to, today on this important day?**

*Where are he and she headed to today, on this important day?*

*Partners' Notes: Here the word “today” is unnecessary though not ungrammatical. Students can return to this example to study an instance of verbosity in style.*

**6. Well you knows hows it goes.**

*Well, you know how it goes.*

**7. Finding the Pacific Ocean, when you're in LA is as easy as, finding a dinosaur in a haystack!**

*Finding the Pacific Ocean when you're in LA is as easy as finding a dinosaur in a haystack!*

**8. Doesn't you know that the bird was quietly.**

*Don't you know that the bird was quiet?*

9. Only it was raining; and I couldn't get, to work.

*Only, it was raining, and I couldn't get to work.*

10. Immanuel Kant wrote philosophic texts. Which are books that offer particular, arguments, about how the nature of reality, Kant was German.

*Immanuel Kant wrote philosophic texts, which are books that offer particular arguments about the nature of reality. Kant was German.*

11. My sister works well I don't, but I'm going to start, Today!

*My sister works well. I don't, but I'm going to start, today!*

12. A Leyden jar is; a type of condenser: once used in electrical experiments.

*A Leyden jar is a type of condenser once used in electrical experiments.*

13. Dont take insults personally your mind and your heart are your own.

*Don't take insults personally; your mind and your heart are your own.*

OR

*Don't take insults personally. Your mind and your heart are your own.*

*Partners' Notes: Proper writing is more than proper grammar. It involves choices between equally correct alternatives. As your students have progressed through the course, you can offer these answers as examples of the choices they face as writers.*

14. My teacher said keep up the good work”!

*My teacher said, “keep up the good work!”*

15. Now, I know, what I need to know, to succeed.

*Now I know what I need to know to succeed.*



## Section 2

**FIND and CORRECT each error.**

**Here's an example of what you will see and do in Section 2:**

**Ive never seen the beaches of Los Angeles, i hear theyre sandy.**

**Reading this sentence carefully will allow you to find the errors. After each section you will find blank lines.**

---

**Use these lines to write and correct the errors you find.**

***Errors: "Ive" should be "I've." (See the rules on contractions and apostrophes).***

***After "Los Angeles" there should be a period (.) and "I" should be capitalized to begin a new sentence. (See the rules on commas and sentences).***

***"theyre" should be "they're." (See the rules on contractions and apostrophes).***

***Partners' Notes:***

***Use the "correct" copies below as guidelines. There are multiple ways to correct the deficiencies in the test passages, so please allow your students the freedom to work within the rule of grammar to find their own style of correction.***

**Paragraph 1:**

**Weve been reading a new work in English class its by a man named Olaudah Equiano. and it is a story of his life or an autobiography in which Equiano details his enslavement in 1756 at the age of approximately eleven: in Africa, and his subsequent experiences as a slave. then the book speaks of his freedom in 1766. Equiano eventually moved to London. Spoke out against slavery, and married in 1792. Five years before his death. His autobiography was extremely popular and, his intelligence and personal strength are clear in his use of metaphor anecdote in the book and the details of his life; contained therein.**

**We've been reading a new work in English class. It is by a man named Olaudah Equiano. It is a story of his life, or an "autobiography," in which Equiano details his enslavement in 1756 at the age of approximately eleven in Africa as well as his subsequent experiences as a slave. Then the book speaks of his freedom in 1766. Equiano eventually moved to London, spoke out against slavery, and married in 1792, five years before his death. His autobiography was extremely popular. His intelligence and personal strength are clear in**

his use of metaphor and anecdote in the book as well as the details of his life contained therein.

**Paragraph 2:**

white-tailed prairie dogs sleep ALOT! during the winter. In their burrows. Underground! We call this long sleep, hibernation. When a white-tailed prairie dog hibernates – its body temperature drops. While its cardiac rate slows. The white-tailed prairie dogs emerge from hibernation in the early spring, where they live, the western United States and certain parts of Mexico.

During the winter, white-tailed prairie dogs sleep a lot underground, in their burrows. We call this long sleep, “hibernation.” When a white-tailed prairie dog hibernates, its body temperature drops while its cardiac rate slows. The white-tailed prairie dogs emerge from hibernation in early spring. They live in the Western United States and in certain parts of Mexico.

**Paragraph 3:**

there was a wise old woman; who lived on the fourth floor of the building, at the end of my block. On weekends – she’d put down a folding chair, at the corner of smith and west. Sit and read. Or talk with anyone who’d come by with questions. But one day she stopped me. With a question! Where do you think genius lies”? She said Not around here, I joked. She SMILED. “Touch your finger to your forehead she said. It lies everywhere, child. Everywhere you walk,” she said.

There was a wise old woman who lived on the fourth floor of the building at the end of my bloc. On weekends she’d put down a folding chair at the corner of Smith and West. She’d sit and read or talk with anyone who’d come by with questions. But one day she stopped me with a question! “Where do you think genius lies,” she said. “Not around here,” I joked. She smiled. “Touch your finger to your forehead,” she said. “It lies everywhere, child. Everywhere you walk,” she said.

