



Step 7

Grammar and Style Review



GENERAL OUTLINE

If you want to be able to choose the grammatically correct answers to multiple-choice Sentence Correction questions and to know how to write Analytical Writing Assessment essays that conform to the stylistic conventions of Standard Written American English, you need to know what the rules and conventions are. This lesson presents all the rules and conventions you need to know, in 100 bite-sized pieces, grouped into ten top grammar and style problem areas.

THE FOLLOWING TOPICS WILL BE COVERED IN THIS LESSON:

- Sentence Structure
- Subject-Verb Agreement
- Noun Number
- Verb Tense
- Pronouns
- Modifiers
- Comparisons
- Parallelism
- Idioms
- Style



STANDARD WRITTEN AMERICAN ENGLISH (SWAE)

If you want to join the club, you have to learn the code. A prerequisite for admission to the educated American elite of government, academia, or business is mastery of Standard Written American English, or SWAE. This is the language you are expected to use when you write an academic essay, a journal article, a formal letter, a legal brief, a business plan, or a diplomatic communiqué.

THE RULES OF SWAE

The rules of SWAE are not codified in any one document or managed by any particular academy. The rules are established by precedent and formalized by consensus.

About the great majority of rules there is no dissent. There are people who say “I knows” or “he be,” but they generally know not to write that way. About some rules, however, there are disputes. And these disputes can become surprisingly heated in some circles. In one corner, there are the rigid traditionalists who learned grammar from pedants and who cannot abide a split infinitive or a preposition at the end of a sentence. In the other corner, there are the radicals eager to abandon all rules and to accept the demise of “whom” or the use of “they” as a singular pronoun.

PHINEAS AND THE RULES OF SWAE

The people who write GMAT questions and who grade GMAT essays fall somewhere between these two extremes. To avoid controversy, they do not test you on rules about which there is little consensus. You will not need to worry about split infinitives or prepositions at the ends of sentences. Nor do GMAT writers test you on rules that every literate native speaker knows. You will not have to watch out for “I knows” or “he be.” The rules tested on the GMAT are those that editors and scholars generally agree on but that many educated Americans have trouble with. These are the rules presented on the following pages.

Learning these rules is critical to success on the GMAT. In one of the multiple-choice Verbal question types, Sentence Correction, your task is to detect violations of the rules of SWAE and to identify the answer choices that correct these violations. And in the Analytical Writing Assessment, your task is to produce essays that conform to the rules of SWAE.

Learn the 100 rules on the following pages, and you will be ready to find and correct just about any mistake in a Sentence Correction question and to avoid the most common pitfalls in writing AWA essays.

1. SENTENCE STRUCTURE

The first issue to consider in proofing a sentence is its structure. Is it a sentence? SWAE has quite strict notions about what constitutes a sentence. Beware the **sentence fragment** — that is, an incomplete sentence, a string of words that does not have all it takes to make a sentence. Beware also the **run-on sentence** — an overcomplete sentence, a string of words that should actually be written as two sentences.

Rule 1 Every sentence must have a subject and a conjugated verb.

In speech and casual writing it may be acceptable to produce sentences without verbs, but it is not acceptable in SWAE.

INCORRECT: *Violence on television. That is what makes today's young people so indifferent to human suffering.*

CORRECT: *Violence on television is what makes today's young people so indifferent to human suffering.*

Rule 2 A clause beginning with a subordinating conjunction cannot be the main clause of a sentence.

Conjunctions like “before,” “after,” “although,” “because,” “if,” “when,” or “while” are subordinating conjunctions. A clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction cannot stand alone. Such a clause must be attached to another clause.

INCORRECT: *Why was the move postponed? Because the new location was not yet ready for occupancy.*

CORRECT: *The move was postponed because the new location was not yet ready for occupancy.*

INCORRECT: *Although every attempt was made to rescue the agreement, ranging from compromise through concession to threats.*

CORRECT: *Every attempt was made to rescue the agreement, ranging from compromise through concession to threats.*

The conjunctions “and,” “but,” “or,” “nor,” “for,” “so,” and “yet” are coordinating conjunctions. A clause that begins with one of these conjunctions can be attached to another clause, but such a clause can also stand alone. Some traditionalists object to the practice, but in contemporary SWAE it is acceptable to begin a sentence with “and” or “but.”

Rule 3 A clause beginning with a “which” or “who” cannot be the main clause of a sentence (unless the sentence is a question).

“Which” and “who” are relative pronouns. A clause that begins with a relative pronoun is a subordinate clause and needs another clause to attach to.

INCORRECT: *The president has a degree from Harvard, and the vice president has a degree from the University of Virginia. Which is the Harvard of the South.*

CORRECT: *The president has a degree from Harvard, and the vice president has a degree from the University of Virginia, which is the Harvard of the South.*

Rule 4 Do not join two independent clauses with a comma.

If two clauses can each stand alone as a sentence, then they must be separated by something more final than a comma. A period usually works



best, but a semicolon will work as well.

INCORRECT: *The tomato is not a vegetable, it is a fruit.*

CORRECT: *The tomato is not a vegetable. It is a fruit.*

CORRECT: *The tomato is not a vegetable; it is a fruit.*

INCORRECT: *The forecasts were accurate, the market is rebounding.*

CORRECT: *The forecasts were accurate. The market is rebounding.*

CORRECT: *The forecasts were accurate; the market is rebounding.*

INCORRECT: *A monetary donation is not required, there are other ways to contribute.*

CORRECT: *A monetary donation is not required. There are other ways to contribute.*

CORRECT: *A monetary donation is not required; there are other ways to contribute.*

Be aware that American readers find the semicolon pretentious. Usually a period is all you need. Use semicolons sparingly.

Rule 5 Do not use adverbs to join clauses.

The following words are adverbs:

<i>thus</i>	<i>however</i>	<i>instead</i>
<i>therefore</i>	<i>nevertheless</i>	

These words are not conjunctions and should not be used to join clauses. Begin a new sentence, or at least use a semicolon.

INCORRECT: *The quadrilateral is a parallelogram, therefore opposite angles are equal.*

CORRECT: *The quadrilateral is a parallelogram. Therefore opposite angles are equal.*

CORRECT: *The quadrilateral is a parallelogram; therefore opposite angles are equal.*

INCORRECT: *No former President has ever served in the Senate, however one did serve in the House of Representatives.*

CORRECT: *No former President has ever served in the Senate. However, one did serve in the House of Representatives.*

CORRECT: *No former President has ever served in the Senate; however, one did serve in the House of Representatives.*

INCORRECT: *Auto emissions and industrial waste are under control, nevertheless air pollution is on the increase.*

CORRECT: *Auto emissions and industrial waste are under control. Nevertheless air pollution is on the increase.*

CORRECT: *Auto emissions and industrial waste are under control; nevertheless air pollution is on the increase.*

INCORRECT: *The meeting was not held in the conference room as planned, instead it took place in the director's office.*

CORRECT: *The meeting was not held in the conference room as planned. Instead it took place in the director's office.*

CORRECT: *The meeting was not held in the conference room as planned; instead it took place in the director's office.*

EXERCISE 1 (SENTENCE STRUCTURE)

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any sentence structure errors. (Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *The secretary arrived too late, the meeting had already begun.*
2. *The dangers of secondhand smoke have been exaggerated, therefore the government should considering repealing some of the more restrictive antismoking laws.*
3. *The reasons for the price adjustment: increasing costs and decreasing demand.*
4. *English is not the most widely spoken language in the world, nevertheless it is the most practical language for international business.*
5. *Martinez and Johnson were commended for the new layout. But Chung deserves some credit as well.*
6. *Ask the librarian, he will know.*
7. *Because the head writer was in the hospital — appendicitis — and the artist was on vacation — honeymoon — progress ceased.*
8. *Because it has not rained in two months — the worst drought on record — and reservoir levels are dangerously low.*
9. *Call Novak, he is the only one who can help us now.*
10. *Test scores across the state have risen sharply under this administration. However, there is still room for improvement.*



2. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Once you have verified that the sentence has a subject and a verb, the next step is to make sure the subject and verb agree.

Singular subjects and plural subjects take different verb forms. No native speaker has difficulty with agreement in the typical sentence in which the verb immediately follows the subject. You would never mistakenly say “he are” or “they is.” But when the sentence is more complicated — when the subject and verb are separated, or when the subject comes after the verb — subject-verb agreement becomes more complicated.

Rule 6 The subject and verb must agree no matter what comes between them.

No matter how many words and what kind of words come between them, the subject and verb must agree. Do not let extra information clauses distract you.

INCORRECT: *The rate at which falling objects accelerate are unrelated to their mass.*

CORRECT: *The rate at which falling objects accelerate is unrelated to their mass.*

Rule 7 For most subjects in the form “X of Y,” the verb agrees with X.

Usually the subject form “X of Y” consists of the subject X followed by a prepositional phrase “of Y” that provides extra information about X. As with any extra information clause that separates the subject and verb, the “of Y” clause should have no effect on the agreement of the verb with the true subject.

INCORRECT: *The original intention of the tax cut measures were to jump-start a sluggish economy.*

CORRECT: *The original intention of the tax cut measures was to jump-start a sluggish economy.*

Rule 8 When X in the subject form “X of Y” is a quantity word, the verb agrees with Y.

Sometimes the subject form “X of Y” actually consists of the subject Y preceded by a statement of quantity “X of.” This is the case when X is a fraction, a percent, or a word like “all,” “most,” “rest,” or “majority.”

INCORRECT: *One quarter of the investments is bonds.*

CORRECT: *One quarter of the investments are bonds.*

INCORRECT: *Seventy-five percent of the portfolio are stocks.*

CORRECT: *Seventy-five percent of the portfolio is stocks.*

INCORRECT: *The majority of the House of Representatives are Republican.*

CORRECT: *The majority of the House of Representatives is Republican.*

Rule 9 “A number of” is plural. “The number of” is singular.

“A number of” is a quantity expression, and so verb agrees with the word that follows “of,” which will always be plural. (You cannot use “number” with a singular.) In the phrase “the number of,” the singular noun “number” is the subject.

INCORRECT: *A number of reforms has been proposed.*
CORRECT: *A number of reforms have been proposed.*

INCORRECT: *The number of duplications are negligible.*
CORRECT: *The number of duplications is negligible.*

Rule 10 Only the word “and” can make a plural subject out of two or more singulars.

Such phrases as “together with,” “combined with,” “along with,” and “as well as,” do not create plural subjects.

INCORRECT: *The Senator, along with her husband and children, were expected to attend.*

CORRECT: *The Senator, along with her husband and children, was expected to attend.*

INCORRECT: *The Times, the Post, as well as the Daily News have called for the judge’s resignation.*

CORRECT: *The Times, the Post, and the Daily News have called for the judge’s resignation.*

Rule 11 When a compound subject is formed using “or” or “nor,” the verb agrees with the nearer subject.

If two plural nouns are combined with “or” or “nor,” the verb is plural. But if two singular nouns are combined this way, the verb is singular.

INCORRECT: *Either the Senator or her spokesperson are expected to make a statement shortly.*

CORRECT: *Either the Senator or her spokesperson is expected to make a statement shortly.*

When one part of an “or” or “nor” subject is singular and the other part is plural, the verb agrees with the part that is closer to the verb — usually the part after “or” or “nor.”

INCORRECT: *Neither her sons nor her daughter have been seen publicly in recent weeks.*

CORRECT: *Neither her sons nor her daughter has been seen publicly in recent weeks.*

Rule 12 The verb “be” agrees with the subject, not the complement.

Even when the complement is plural, if the subject is singular, then the verb must be singular.

INCORRECT: *The only furniture were a lamp and a mattress.*

CORRECT: *The only furniture was a lamp and a mattress.*

INCORRECT: *But the true greatness of America are the people.*

CORRECT: *But the true greatness of America is the people.*

Rule 13 In a sentence beginning with “there,” the subject follows the verb.

The word “there” at the beginning of a sentence is not the subject. Do not write “there is” or “there was” when what follows is plural.



INCORRECT: *There is a number of possible explanations.*
CORRECT: *There are a number of possible explanations.*

INCORRECT: *There is not enough people in the department to get the job done.*
CORRECT: *There are not enough people in the department to get the job done.*

INCORRECT: *Each year there was more and more of what the administration euphemistically termed "inoperative statements."*
CORRECT: *Each year there were more and more of what the administration euphemistically termed "inoperative statements."*

Rule 14 In a sentence beginning with an adverbial phrase of location, the subject is often postponed.

Sometimes, for reasons of emphasis or variety, a writer may choose to move an adverbial phrase of location to the front of a sentence, in which case the usual subject-verb order is reversed. Nevertheless, even if the subject comes after the verb, the subject and verb must agree.

INCORRECT: *Between Fifth and Sixth Avenues stand a famous little church.*
CORRECT: *Between Fifth and Sixth Avenues stands a famous little church.*

INCORRECT: *At the back of the book is to be found a glossary and an index.*
CORRECT: *At the back of the book are to be found a glossary and an index.*

Rule 15 In a sentence beginning with a negative adverb or adverbial phrase, the interrogative form is used, with the subject following the verb.

A writer may choose to accentuate the negative by moving a word or phrase such as "hardly," "never," "rarely," or "not in a long time" to the head of a sentence. In that case, the interrogative form is used. That is, "do" or "have" or some modal verb is needed before the subject.

INCORRECT: *Never he had seen so many elephants.*
CORRECT: *Never had he seen so many elephants.*

INCORRECT: *Rarely it snows in New Orleans.*
CORRECT: *Rarely does it snow in New Orleans.*

The verb still agrees with the subject even when the subject is postponed.

INCORRECT: *Hardly does the returning veterans recognize their home town.*
CORRECT: *Hardly do the returning veterans recognize their home town.*

INCORRECT: *In no other U.S. state does more people go to college.*
CORRECT: *In no other U.S. state do more people go to college.*



3. NOUN NUMBER

It can be a challenge to verify that the verb agrees with the subject when it is not clear whether the subject is singular or plural.

Rule 16 There are some plural nouns that do not end in -s.

Some words borrowed directly from Greek or Latin have plural forms that do not end in -s.

<u>singular</u>	<u>plural</u>
criterion	criteria
phenomenon	phenomena
datum	data
medium	media
curriculum	curricula
memorandum	memoranda
bacterium	bacteria
nucleus	nuclei
radius	radii
stimulus	stimuli
alumnus	alumni

Do not use plural forms such as "criteria," "phenomena," "bacteria," or "alumni" as singular nouns.

INCORRECT: The first *criteria* in the selection was experience.

CORRECT: The first **criterion** in the selection was experience.

INCORRECT: He is an *alumni* of Harvard University.

CORRECT: He is an **alumnus** of Harvard University.

In contemporary usage, the plural forms "data" and "media" are often used as singular nouns.

"data"

In the old days, English teachers taught that you must say "the data are," but today "the data is" has become so common that it cannot be considered incorrect.

CORRECT: The data **is** inconclusive.

CORRECT: The data **are** inconclusive.

"media"

This word is still used as the plural of "medium." Oil painting is one "medium," pastel is another "medium," and oil painting and pastel are two "media." Do not use "media" as a singular this way:

INCORRECT: Television is the preferred *media* for political advertising.

CORRECT: Television is the preferred **medium** for political advertising.

However, "media" is today very often used as a singular noun to refer to all the agencies of mass communication as an entity. This usage is so widespread that it can no longer be considered incorrect.

CORRECT: Everywhere the princess goes, the media **follow**.

CORRECT: Everywhere the princess goes, the media **follows**.

Remember, however, that someone may object if you use "data" or "media" as a singular noun. To be on the safe side, treat them as plurals, just like "criteria" and "phenomena."

Rule 17 Uncountable nouns have no plural form.

Nouns such as “money,” “gasoline,” “smog,” “wheat,” “beauty,” “grammar,” and “darkness” denote concepts that cannot be counted. Nouns of this type go by various names: uncountable nouns, noncount nouns, mass nouns. Whatever you call them, they have no plural form. Do not put -s on the end of “information,” “advice,” “baggage,” or “luggage.”

INCORRECT: Each passenger is allowed two carry-on baggages.

CORRECT: Each passenger is allowed two pieces of carry-on baggage.

INCORRECT: The counselor offered two advices.

CORRECT: The counselor offered two pieces of advice.

Rule 18 Some nouns have both a countable and an uncountable meaning.

CORRECT: Business is booming.

CORRECT: It is always risky to start a new business.

CORRECT: Some doctors believe that red wine, in moderation, is good for heart.

CORRECT: The wines of California have an excellent reputation.

Rule 19 There are some nouns that look plural but are in fact singular.

Here are some nouns that end in -s in the singular form and are unchanged in the plural:

means series species

INCORRECT: The two specimens look different but are actually members of the same specie.

CORRECT: The two specimens look different but are actually members of the same species.

Here are some nouns that look like plurals but generally act like uncountable singulars:

news mathematics physics
measles statistics economics

INCORRECT: The news are bad.

CORRECT: The news is bad.

INCORRECT: Quantum physics were all that the guests discussed.

CORRECT: Quantum physics was all that the guests discussed.

Some of these words do have a countable, plural use:

CORRECT: Economics is a popular major.

CORRECT: The economics of the situation demand a tax cut.

CORRECT: Elementary statistics is a prerequisite for this course.

CORRECT: Statistics suggest that people drive more safely now than ten years ago.

**Rule 20** Collective nouns are usually singular.

In American usage, collective nouns such as “government,” “committee,” “public,” “family,” “team,” “band,” “choir,” and “audience” are almost always singular.

INCORRECT: *The government were responsible.*

CORRECT: *The government was responsible.*

INCORRECT: *The Senator's family have left town.*

CORRECT: *The Senator's family has left town.*

INCORRECT: *The choir have arrived and are ready to sing.*

CORRECT: *The choir has arrived and is ready to sing.*

It should be noted that, in British English, collective nouns are often treated as plurals. The three “incorrect” versions above will sound just fine to most British ears.

Rule 21 Collective nouns are sometimes used as expressions of quantity, in which case they can be either singular or plural.

When designating a cohesive unit, a collective noun is singular. But when a collective noun is used to designate individuals acting separately, it can be plural.

CORRECT: *After winning the championship, the team went their separate ways.*

This construction sounds funny to most American ears, and so the sentence would normally be restated something like this:

CORRECT: *After winning the championship, the team members went their separate ways.*

The word “group,” however, sounds fine as either a singular or a plural. You can't go wrong!

CORRECT: *A group of people are waiting for the bus.*

CORRECT: *A group of people is waiting for the bus.*

Rule 22 Amounts of money and units of measure are generally singular.

INCORRECT: *Two hundred dollars are not too much to spend for a business suit.*

CORRECT: *Two hundred dollars is not too much to spend for a business suit.*

Rule 23 Titles and compounds that are thought of as units are generally singular.

Sometimes the word “and” is just a connecting word in the middle of an expression that is in reality felt to be a singular unit. Expressions such as “bacon and eggs,” “gin and tonic,” and “pride and joy” are singular.

INCORRECT: *Bacon and eggs were once considered a healthful breakfast.*

CORRECT: *Bacon and eggs was once considered a healthful breakfast.*

Titles and names of organizations are generally singular.

INCORRECT: *“Romeo and Juliet” are Shakespeare's most popular play.*

CORRECT: *“Romeo and Juliet” is Shakespeare's most popular play.*

INCORRECT: *The United Nations are debating the issue.*

CORRECT: *The United Nations is debating the issue.*

Rule 24 Most indefinite pronouns are singular.

These indefinite pronouns are always singular:

<i>each</i>	<i>anything</i>	<i>everything</i>	<i>nothing</i>
<i>either</i>	<i>anyone</i>	<i>everyone</i>	<i>no one</i>
<i>neither</i>	<i>anybody</i>	<i>everybody</i>	<i>nobody</i>

INCORRECT: *Neither of the proposed solutions are likely to succeed.*

CORRECT: *Neither of the proposed solutions is likely to succeed.*

Rule 25 The indefinite pronouns "none," "all," "any," and "some" can be either singular or plural.

It depends on the context.

CORRECT: *The show has more than 12 original songs and all are tuneful and engaging.*

CORRECT: *Most of the music is new, and all is tuneful and engaging.*

Sometimes you have a choice.

CORRECT: *None of the singers were especially memorable.*

CORRECT: *None of the singers was especially memorable.*

Rule 26 Use "many" with countable nouns and "much" with uncountable nouns.

Do not use "much" with a countable noun.

INCORRECT: *The goal was realized at the cost of much sweat and tears.*

CORRECT: *The goal was realized at the cost of much sweat and many tears.*

Rule 27 Use "few/fewer/fewest" with countable nouns and "little/less/least" with uncountable nouns.

Do not use "less" or "least" with a countable noun.

INCORRECT: *The theater has the most empty seats on Monday nights and the least on Saturday nights.*

CORRECT: *The theater has the most empty seats on Monday nights and the fewest on Saturday nights.*

Rule 28 Use "number" with countable nouns and "amount" with uncountable nouns.

Do not use "amount" with a countable noun.

INCORRECT: *Order was assured by the presence of a large amount of police.*

CORRECT: *Order was assured by the presence of a large number of police.*

**EXERCISE 3 (NOUN NUMBER)**

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any noun number errors. (Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *Anyone requiring additional informations should consult the company Web site.*
2. *The United Nations have been debating a human rights resolution.*
3. *A group of people are waiting for the shuttle bus.*
4. *A solar eclipse is a phenomena that is worth a journey to witness.*
5. *The public are opposed to the proposed legislation.*
6. *This year's promotional event attracted less people than last year's did.*
7. *On Sundays, when admission is free, the amount of people at the museum is astonishing.*
8. *Everyone sang well and were heartily applauded.*
9. *For the first time there were less species on the endangered list than in the previous year.*
10. *None of students was able to complete the assignment in the allotted time.*

4. VERB TENSE

Rule 29 Use the past perfect ("had" + past participle) if one clause takes place at an earlier time than another clause that is in the past.

INCORRECT: The performance already started when they arrived.

CORRECT: The performance had already started when they arrived.

INCORRECT: The Civil War forced the United States to decide issues that the framers of the Constitution raised but left unresolved.

CORRECT: The Civil War forced the United States to decide issues that the framers of the Constitution had raised but left unresolved.

Do not use the past perfect unnecessarily.

INCORRECT: From 1920 to 1930, the number of automobiles in the state had more than tripled.

CORRECT: From 1920 to 1930, the number of automobiles in the state [...] more than tripled.

INCORRECT: In recent years, the corporate dress code had relaxed considerably.

CORRECT: In recent years, the corporate dress code has relaxed considerably.

Rule 30 Use the future perfect ("will have" + past participle) if one clause takes place at an earlier time than another clause that is in the future.

INCORRECT: By the time the lecture ends, it will stop raining.

CORRECT: By the time the lecture ends, it will have stopped raining.

Rule 31 Use the infinitive perfect ("to have" + past participle) if the infinitive takes place at an earlier time than the rest of the clause.

INCORRECT: The sculptor is believed to be born before 1400.

CORRECT: The sculptor is believed to have been born before 1400.

Rule 32 After "when" referring to a future event, use the present tense.

INCORRECT: When the sun will come out, the temperature will rise.

CORRECT: When the sun comes out, the temperature will rise.

INCORRECT: When Jenkins will submit his report tomorrow morning, the governor will have all the information needed to make a decision.

CORRECT: When Jenkins submits his report tomorrow morning, the governor will have all the information needed to make a decision.

Rule 33 After "if" referring to a possible future event, use the present tense, and in the other clause use "will" or "can."

INCORRECT: If the sun comes out tomorrow, we go on a picnic.

CORRECT: If the sun comes out tomorrow, we will go on a picnic.



INCORRECT: *If the value of the dollar be higher this summer than last, more Americans will vacation abroad.*

CORRECT: *If the value of the dollar is higher this summer than last, more Americans will vacation abroad.*

INCORRECT: *If our proposal will be accepted, we can get funding.*

CORRECT: *If our proposal is accepted, we can get funding.*

Rule 34 In a sentence beginning with "if" or "when" and referring to a scientific fact or general truth, you may use the present tense in both clauses.

CORRECT: *If a triangle has two equal sides, it also has two equal angles.*

CORRECT: *When water is heated to 100 degrees Celsius, it boils.*

CORRECT: *Whenever it rains more than an inch in one week, the river floods.*

Rule 35 To express a condition that is contrary to fact in the present, use the past tense in the "if" clause, and use "would" or "could" in the other clause.

(Technically, it's not the past tense, but the contrary-to-fact subjective. But the form is the same as the past tense for every verb except "to be.")

INCORRECT: *If the director has an assistant, the department runs more smoothly.*

CORRECT: *If the director had an assistant, the department would run more smoothly.*

INCORRECT: *If Young earns a bigger salary, the family would travel more.*

CORRECT: *If Young earned a bigger salary, the family would travel more.*

Rule 36 In the case of the verb "be," use "were" in the "if" clause even for the singular.

INCORRECT: *If this was a school with enormous enrollment, students would have less personal contact with professors.*

CORRECT: *If this were a school with enormous enrollment, students would have less personal contact with professors.*

More and more often now one hears and reads "was" in this situation, although "If I was you..." still sounds illiterate to most educated Americans. To avoid offending the traditionalists, use "were."

Rule 37 "Was" is correct in an "if" clause when it is expressing uncertainty about the past, not contrary to fact.

INCORRECT: *If the department head were on vacation last week, then she will be relaxed for today's meeting.*

CORRECT: *If the department head was on vacation last week, then she will be relaxed for today's meeting.*

INCORRECT: *If Martha were able to get a ticket to the opera, she probably got home late last night.*

CORRECT: *If Martha was able to get a ticket to the opera, she probably got home late last night.*

Rule 38 To express a condition that is contrary to fact in the past, use the past perfect ("had" + past participle) in the "if" clause, and use "would have" + past participle in the other clause.

INCORRECT: *If the rain continued another hour, the river would have overflowed its banks.*

CORRECT: *If the rain **had continued** another hour, the river would have overflowed its banks.*

Rule 39 Do not use "would" in the "if" clause.

INCORRECT: *If writers would refer to the dictionary more often, there would be fewer misspellings.*

CORRECT: *If writers **referred** to the dictionary more often, there would be fewer misspellings.*

INCORRECT: *If the student would have studied harder, he would have passed the test.*

CORRECT: *If the student **had studied** harder, he would have passed the test.*

Rule 40 In a "that" clause following a verb of recommendation, request, or requirement, use the subjunctive.

The subjunctive form is the same for all subjects. There is no -s suffix in the third person singular.

INCORRECT: *The advisor recommended that the student repeats the test.*

CORRECT: *The advisor recommended that the student **repeat** the test.*

INCORRECT: *The Constitution requires that the President reports regularly to Congress on the state of the nation.*

CORRECT: *The Constitution requires that the President **report** regularly to Congress on the state of the nation.*

The subjunctive form for the verb "be" is "be."

INCORRECT: *The management suggests that valuables are to be secured in the safe.*

CORRECT: *The management suggests that valuables **be** secured in the safe.*

Rule 41 In a "that" clause following a noun or adjective derived from a verb of recommendation, request, or requirement, use the subjunctive.

INCORRECT: *Next time the associates will take seriously our insistence that everyone is on time for a meeting.*

CORRECT: *Next time the associates will take seriously our insistence that everyone **be** on time for a meeting.*

Rule 42 Do not use "should" or "must" with the subjunctive.

INCORRECT: *The law requires that a motorcyclist must wear a helmet.*

CORRECT: *The law requires that a motorcyclist **wear** a helmet.*

**EXERCISE 4 (VERB TENSE)**

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any verb tense errors.
(Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *If two objects are dropped simultaneously from the same height, they reach the ground at the same time.*
2. *If the stationery store was open yesterday, the office manager probably bought some paper and pens.*
3. *If the team would have started the project a month earlier, they would be finished by now.*
4. *If Americans would eat less red meat, they would have lower cholesterol levels.*
5. *Financial experts recommend that one should diversify one's investments.*
6. *He resents the suggestion that he rewrite the paper.*
7. *He resents the suggestion that he plagiarized.*
8. *The lecturer began with a quick plot synopsis for the benefit of those who did not read the novel.*
9. *The civilization is believed to flourish in the fifteenth century.*
10. *Once the student will pass the comprehensive oral examination, she has satisfied all the requirements for the degree.*

5. PRONOUNS

Rule 43 Pronoun reference must be logical and unambiguous.

A pronoun must generally have an antecedent.

INCORRECT: *The President objected to several provisions and vetoed the bill; however, Congress overrode it.*

CORRECT: *The President objected to several provisions and vetoed the bill; however, Congress overrode **the veto**.*

And it must be absolutely clear what the antecedent is. It is better to repeat the noun than to make the reader figure out what you mean.

INCORRECT: *It is not surprising that Jackson produced a more incisive analysis that Jones did, because he has less firsthand experience.*

CORRECT: *It is not surprising that Jackson produced a more incisive analysis that Jones did, because **Jones** has less firsthand experience.*

Rule 44 Pronouns must agree with their antecedents.

Agreement is a matter of grammar, not reality. An antecedent is a noun. If the noun is singular, any pronoun referring to it must be singular, even when it designates more than one individual.

INCORRECT: *The government should not spend money on space exploration; they should pay more attention to citizens' basic needs.*

CORRECT: *The government should not spend money on space exploration; **it** should pay more attention to citizens' basic needs.*

Rule 45 Do not confuse subject and object pronouns.

"I," "we," "he," "she," "they," and "who" are used as subjects. "Me," "us," "him," "her," "them," and "whom" are used as objects of verbs and prepositions. Native speakers rarely have trouble with the distinction. You know perfectly well never to say or write, "Me love she," or, "Whom is him?"

The distinction becomes a little more complicated when you have a compound subject or object. Use subject pronouns for all parts of compound subjects or complements. Use object pronouns for all parts of compound objects. Do not let the word "and" or "or" confuse you.

INCORRECT: *You teach a child to read, and he or her will be able to pass a literacy test.*

CORRECT: *You teach a child to read, and he or **she** will be able to pass a literacy test.*

INCORRECT: *Between you and I, the state of American education is alarming.*

CORRECT: *Between you and **me**, the state of American education is alarming.*

The distinction between "who" and "whom" seems to be the most difficult for native speakers. The incorrect versions of the following two sentences are encountered more frequently than the correct versions.

INCORRECT: *Who did the director choose?*

CORRECT: ***Whom** did the director choose?*



INCORRECT: *Who is the new computer for?*

CORRECT: ***Whom** is the new computer for?*

"Whom" has virtually disappeared from the spoken language. As a matter of fact, if you use "whom" in everyday speech, your listeners will think you are showing off. In writing, however, you should use "whom" when it is appropriate.

A good way to decide between "who" and "whom" is to try answering the question with "he" or "him." The answer to the question "Who/whom did the director choose?" would be: "The director chose him." Likewise, the answer to the question "Who/whom is the new computer for?" would be: "The computer is for him." When "him" is the answer, "whom" is the question.

Rule 46 Use subject pronouns after "it is" and "it was."

"Be" is not a transitive verb, but a linking verb. A pronoun after "is" or "was" is not a direct object, but a complement. Use the subject pronouns after "is" and "was."

INCORRECT: *It is him who must decide.*

CORRECT: *It is **he** who must decide.*

INCORRECT: *It was them who won the competition.*

CORRECT: *It was **they** who won the competition.*

Rule 47 Use the relative pronoun "which" for things only. Use "who" or "whom" for people.

Do not use "which" for people.

INCORRECT: *The film director which this reviewer most admires is Hitchcock.*

CORRECT: *The film director **whom** this reviewer most admires is Hitchcock.*

Rule 48 In a subordinate clause, use "who" or "whom," and "whoever" or "whomever," according to the pronoun's grammatical function in that clause.

The distinction between "who" and "whom" is even more difficult when they are relative pronouns introducing subordinate clauses. In that case, it's the pronoun's grammatical function within the subordinate clause that determines the form to use.

INCORRECT: *The protagonist, who the author calls Mr. X, is handsome and mysterious.*

In this sentence the relative pronoun refers to the subject "protagonist," but within the subordinate clause the pronoun is the object of the verb "calls." Therefore, the object pronoun "whom" is correct.

CORRECT: *The protagonist, **whom** the author calls Mr. X, is handsome and mysterious.*

You can use the "he/him" test here, too. Take the clause that the pronoun "who" or "whom" is to be a part of. Think of it as a question, and then answer that question with "he" or "him." In the above example, the relative clause is "who/whom the author calls Mr. X." Think of it as a question: "Who/whom does the author call Mr. X?" The answer to that question is "The author calls him Mr. X." When the answer is "him," the correct pronoun is "whom."

Here is another example:

INCORRECT: *They will award the prize to him whom they truly believe deserves it.*

This time the relative pronoun refers to the object "him," but within the subordinate clause the pronoun is the subject of the verb "deserves." Therefore, the subject pronoun "who" is correct.

CORRECT: *They will award the prize to him who they truly believe deserves it.*

Use the "he/him" test. The clause is "who/whom they truly believe deserves it." Think of it as a question: "Who/whom do they truly believe deserves it?" The answer is "They truly believe he deserves it." When the answer is "he," the correct pronoun is "who."

Do not let the words "they truly believe" confuse you. That is a grammatically irrelevant extra information clause. If you omit that phrase, it may become clearer why "who" is correct.

CORRECT: *They will award the prize to him who deserves it.*

The same rule applies to the relative pronouns "whoever" and "whomever." It is the clauses they introduce that tell you which form to use.

INCORRECT: *This letter is addressed to whoever you think it may concern.*

CORRECT: *This letter is addressed to whomever you think it may concern.*

Here the pronoun is the object of "may concern." You would say "you think it may concern him," and so "whomever" is correct.

INCORRECT: *This letter is addressed to whomever you think may be interested.*

CORRECT: *This letter is addressed to whoever you think may be interested.*

This time the pronoun is the subject of "may be interested." You would say "you think he may be interested," and so "whoever" is correct.

Rule 49 You may use either "which" or "that" for a restrictive relative clause, but for a nonrestrictive relative clause you must use "which."

A restrictive clause is one that limits, that tells you which one. A restrictive clause is essential to the meaning of a sentence. Some old-fashioned grammarians insist that you must use "that" in restrictive clauses. Today it is common and acceptable to use "which."

CORRECT: *"The Queen of Spades" is a story that had a profound influence on all subsequent Russian prose.*

CORRECT: *"The Queen of Spades" is a story which had a profound influence on all subsequent Russian prose.*

A nonrestrictive clause is one that does not limit the word or phrase it refers to. A nonrestrictive clause is not essential to the understanding of the sentence, and is always set off from the rest of the sentence with commas. Do not use "that" at the start of a nonrestrictive clause. You must use "which."

INCORRECT: *David was born in the province of Saskatchewan, that is located between Manitoba and Alberta.*

CORRECT: *David was born in the province of Saskatchewan, which is located between Manitoba and Alberta.*

**Rule 50 Do not use "which" to refer to a whole idea.**

"Which" should always have a specific antecedent.

INCORRECT: *The material is expensive and the workmanship is faultless, which is why the price is high.*

CORRECT: *The price is high because the material is expensive and the workmanship is faultless.*

Rule 51 If the antecedent is "everyone," "everybody," "anyone," "no one," etc., the pronoun should be singular.

"Everyone" and "everybody" are particularly troublesome, in that they denote more than one person but are grammatically singular.

INCORRECT: *Everyone must do their part if democracy is to succeed.*

CORRECT: *Everyone must do his or her part if democracy is to succeed.*

Rule 52 Do not use "they" or "them" to avoid specifying the sex of a singular antecedent.

If casual conversation it is common to use "they" and "their" to refer to a singular antecedent of unspecified sex. The intention is laudable, but the method is ungrammatical.

INCORRECT: *Someone phoned this morning, but they did not leave a message.*

CORRECT: *Someone phoned this morning, but he or she did not leave a message.*

A good way to be both politically and grammatically correct is to use the gender-neutral plural throughout the sentence.

INCORRECT: *Every student is required to submit their final schedule by October first.*

CORRECT: *All students are required to submit their final schedules by October first.*

Rule 53 Do not use "they" or "them" as a general person pronoun.

"They" should always have a specific antecedent.

INCORRECT: *They just announced on the radio that the two biggest banks in the state are merging.*

CORRECT: *It was just announced on the radio that the two biggest banks in the state are merging.*

Rule 54 Do not switch pronouns mid-sentence.

Use either "one" or "you" for the general person pronoun, but do not mix them.

INCORRECT: *If one works hard, you will succeed.*

CORRECT: *If one works hard, one will succeed.*

CORRECT: *If you work hard, you will succeed.*

Rule 55 The possessive form of "one" is "one's."

Do not use "your," "his," "his or her," or "their."

INCORRECT: *One should always remember to bring his or her calculator to class.*

CORRECT: *One should always remember to bring one's calculator to class.*

EXERCISE 5 (PRONOUNS)

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any pronoun errors. (Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *My partner invited my wife and me to join him and his wife for dinner.*
2. *No one will buy such an expensive product unless they really need it.*
3. *The directors are looking for someone who they can trust to abide by the rules.*
4. *When one considers the candidate's youth and inexperience, you have to say that the victory was unexpected.*
5. *If the television viewer loses interest for just a few seconds, they will switch channels.*
6. *It is sunny and hot today, but they say it will rain tomorrow.*
7. *If one invests early and wisely, one will be able to enjoy his or her retirement.*
8. *Because the parties have been unable to resolve the dispute, a judge will have to do it.*
9. *After questioning the two suspects, the investigator became convinced that it was them who committed the crime.*
10. *The panel will award the scholarship to whoever they feel will benefit the most.*



6. MODIFIERS

Rule 56 Use adjectives to modify nouns, and adverbs to modify anything else.

Adverbs are words that answer the questions "how?" "when?" and "where?" Most adverbs of manner (adverbs that answer the question "how?") are formed by adding the suffix "-ly" to an adjective. There are, however, some adverbs of manner that do not take the "-ly" suffix. The most important ones are "fast," "hard," and "late." There is no such word as "fastly," and the words "hardly" and "lately" have completely different meanings from "hard" and "late."

INCORRECT: *The day went fastly.*

CORRECT: *The day went fast.*

INCORRECT: *The student worked hardly on the essay and got the good grade she deserved.*

CORRECT: *The student worked hard on the essay and got the good grade she deserved.*

Do not use an adverb to modify a verb.

INCORRECT: *He takes his career serious.*

CORRECT: *He takes his career seriously.*

The adjective "good" must never be used as an adverb. The adverb is "well."

INCORRECT: *The soprano sang good.*

CORRECT: *The soprano sang well.*

Rule 57 Use an adjective after a linking verb to modify the subject. Use an adverb to modify the verb.

Verbs that describe a state of being ("be," "remain," and "become," for example) and verbs that relate to the five senses ("feel," "seem," "look," "sound," "smell," and "taste," for example) are called linking verbs. After a linking verb it makes sense to use an adjective because it is intended to modify the subject.

INCORRECT: *The reheated coffee smelled and tasted bitterly.*

CORRECT: *The reheated coffee smelled and tasted bitter.*

INCORRECT: *The show was canceled because the star felt badly.*

CORRECT: *The show was canceled because the star felt bad.*

However, if the word is intended to modify the verb, use an adverb. Note the differences in the following examples.

CORRECT: *The evidence proved conclusive.*

CORRECT: *The evidence proved conclusively that the accused was guilty.*

CORRECT: *A suitcase left unattended will look suspicious.*

CORRECT: *Security agents will look suspiciously at a suitcase left unattended.*

Rule 58 Absolute adjectives ("unique," "perfect," "impossible," etc.) cannot be qualified with words such as "very" or "most."

INCORRECT: *Madagascar is the most unique tourist destination.*

CORRECT: *Madagascar is a unique tourist destination.*

Rule 59 Avoid misplaced modifiers.

Modifying phrases must be placed unambiguously close to the element they are modifying.

INCORRECT: *Whether baked, fried, or mashed, everyone loves potatoes.*

CORRECT: *Everyone loves potatoes, whether baked, fried, or mashed.*

INCORRECT: *She met a man who owns three beach houses in Phoenix.*

CORRECT: *In Phoenix, she met a man who owns three beach houses.*

Rule 60 Avoid squinting modifiers.

A modifying phrase must be placed unambiguously. A squinting modifier is one that is situated between two possible referents. How is the reader to decide? The following sentence, for example, can be interpreted two ways:

AMBIGUOUS: *People who jog frequently develop knee problems.*

It is not clear whether “frequently” modifies “jog” or “develop.” To make it clear, rewrite the sentence.

CORRECT: *Frequent joggers develop knee problems.*

CORRECT: *Joggers frequently develop knee problems.*

Rule 61 Place limiting modifiers (“only,” “just,” “hardly,” “almost,” etc.) immediately before the elements they modify.

Be especially careful with the placement of “only.” There is a tendency to place it ambiguously before the verb no matter what it modifies.

AMBIGUOUS: *The dean only takes appointments with undergraduates on Mondays and Wednesdays.*

Proper placement of “only” resolves the ambiguity.

CORRECT: *The dean takes appointments only with undergraduates on Mondays and Wednesdays.*

CORRECT: *The dean takes appointments with undergraduates only on Mondays and Wednesdays.*

Rule 62 Avoid dangling modifiers.

Modifying phrases must have something to modify. A dangling modifier is one that has no referent in the sentence. It just hangs there.

INCORRECT: *Having read the book and seen the film, there is no question that the book is better.*

CORRECT: *Having read the book and seen the film, I can say with certainty that the book is better.*

Rule 63 An introductory modifying phrase must modify the subject of the sentence.

When a modifying phrase is placed at the start of a sentence, the phrase is felt to modify the subject of the sentence, which should generally be found right after the comma.

INCORRECT: *With a population of more than five million, some visitors find the city overwhelming.*

CORRECT: *With a population of more than five million, the city overwhelms some visitors.*

An introductory modifying phrase cannot modify a noun in the possessive (-’s) form. A modifying phrase at the beginning of a sentence is felt to modify the subject, not the subject’s possessor.

INCORRECT: *Having recently secured several lucrative contracts, Goldberg’s reputation in the office is on the rise.*

CORRECT: *Having recently secured several lucrative contracts, Goldberg’s reputation in the office is on the rise.*

**EXERCISE 6 (MODIFIERS)**

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any modifier errors. (Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *Driving quickly became his favorite pastime.*
2. *She tries to attract men with makeup and perfume.*
3. *Born and raised near the Mexican border, Spanish came easily to her.*
4. *There is a sculpture on the facade that represents the rise of technology.*
5. *He hired a crew with a truck that is accustomed to handling delicate antiques.*
6. *Having decided to get the story at any cost, nothing could stop the reporter.*
7. *Straight out of the oven and still piping hot, the family devoured the whole pie.*
8. *Even after providing explicit instructions, the new employee did not know what to do.*
9. *Dressed in a T-shirt and jeans, the supervisor ordered the assistant to go home and change into more professional attire.*
10. *No longer sworn enemies, relations between the United States and Russia have improved considerably since the end of the Cold War.*

7. COMPARISONS

Rule 64 Items that are compared must be logically comparable.

A carefully written sentence will compare a quality to a quality, a quantity to a quantity, or a thing to thing. Make sure the sentence does not, when taken literally, actually compare a quality to a thing or a quantity to a thing.

INCORRECT: *The taste of the artificial substitute is indistinguishable from the real thing.*

CORRECT: *The taste of the artificial substitute is indistinguishable from that of the real thing.*

INCORRECT: *The population of California is greater than Canada.*

CORRECT: *The population of California is greater than that of Canada.*

If a sentence compares two things, make sure they are comparable.

INCORRECT: *The operas of Verdi are more tuneful than Wagner.*

CORRECT: *The operas of Verdi are more tuneful than those of Wagner.*

INCORRECT: *The ink cartridges for the new printer cost twice much as the old printer.*

CORRECT: *The ink cartridges for the new printer cost twice much as those for the old printer.*

Rule 65 Items that are compared must be grammatically comparable.

INCORRECT: *The mother envies her son because he has had more opportunities than her.*

CORRECT: *The mother envies her son because he has had more opportunities than she.*

Rule 66 Avoid incomplete comparisons. A comparison must be clear and ambiguous.

INCORRECT: *Martin likes asparagus more than his wife.*

CORRECT: *Martin likes asparagus more than his wife does.*

CORRECT: *Martin likes asparagus more than he does his wife.*

INCORRECT: *Executives are more concerned about profits than employees.*

CORRECT: *Executives are more concerned about profits than employees are.*

CORRECT: *Executives are more concerned about profits than about employees.*

Rule 67 When comparing something with other members of the same group, use the word "other" or "else."

INCORRECT: *The population of California is greater than that of any American state.*

CORRECT: *The population of California is greater than that of any other American state.*

INCORRECT: *Tanya earns a bigger salary than anyone in her family does.*

CORRECT: *Tanya earns a bigger salary than anyone else in her family does.*



Rule 68 Use the comparative form of the adjective with two items.
Use the superlative form with three or more items.

INCORRECT: Her children are both in college, the oldest at Harvard and the youngest at Yale.

CORRECT: Her children are both in college, the older at Harvard and the younger at Yale.

INCORRECT: Of all the films this reviewer has seen in the past year, this one is the more memorable.

CORRECT: Of all the films this reviewer has seen in the past year, this one is the most memorable.

Rule 69 Use the “-er” and “-est” suffixes to form the comparative and superlative of one-syllable adjectives and some two-syllable adjectives. Use “more” and “most” for longer adjectives.

For adjectives of one syllable, the comparative/superlative is formed with the “-er/-est” suffixes.

tall	taller	tallest
big	bigger	biggest

For adjectives of three or more syllables, the comparative/superlative form is “more/most” + adjective.

beautiful	more beautiful	most beautiful
expensive	more expensive	most expensive

Most two-syllable adjectives also take the “more/most” form, but some take the “-er/-est” form.

cheerful	more cheerful	most cheerful
happy	happier	happiest

A few adjectives have irregular comparative and superlative forms.

good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
far	farther	farthest
many	more	most
much	more	most
little	less	least

Rule 70 Use the short comparative or superlative form if it exists.
Otherwise, use the “more” or “most.”

Do not invent “-er” and “-est” forms.

INCORRECT: The interior of the island is peacefuler than the coast.

CORRECT: The interior of the island is more peaceful than the coast.

Rule 71 Do not use “more/most” or “less/least” with the “-er/est” form.

Use one or the other. Never use both on the same adjective.

INCORRECT: It would be more easier to do business with Johnson if he were a more pleasanter person.

CORRECT: It would be easier to do business with Johnson if he were a more pleasant person.

EXERCISE 7 (COMPARISONS)

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any comparison errors. (Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *Americans eat more corn than Europeans.*
2. *The second of the author's two published works sold best.*
3. *The critic maintained that it was the worse film she ever saw.*
4. *Unlike Los Angeles, most New Yorkers use public transportation.*
5. *Every year, more foreign tourists visit Paris than any European city.*
6. *The United States is the most rich and wasteful country in the world.*
7. *Alice may be younger than her husband, but she is more experienced than he.*
8. *His job title is director of marketing, but his salary is still less than a secretary.*
9. *Abraham Lincoln was perhaps one of the most wisest men ever to serve as President.*
10. *Choose either regular or express service: the former is least expensive and the latter is fastest.*



8. PARALLELISM

Rule 72 Items in a list must be parallel.

If the first item in a list is a noun or a noun phrase, all items must be nouns or noun phrases.

INCORRECT: Last month's drop in sales was due to increased competition, poor publicity, and because many clients were away for the holidays.

CORRECT: Last month's drop in sales was due to increased competition, poor publicity, and **the fact that** many clients were away for the holidays.

If the first item in a list is a conjugated verb or verb phrase, all items must be similarly conjugated verbs or verb phrases.

INCORRECT: Our team is successful because we communicate effectively, work well together, and we respect one another.

CORRECT: Our team is successful because we communicate effectively, work well together, and [...] respect one another.

If the first item in a list is a gerund construction, all items must be gerund constructions.

INCORRECT: Air travel means sitting in the same position for hours, watching a bad print of a tiresome film, eating food that has no flavor, and you have to refrain from smoking.

CORRECT: Air travel means sitting in the same position for hours, watching a bad print of a tiresome film, eating food that has no flavor, and **refraining** from smoking.

If the first item in a list is a prepositional phrase, all items must be prepositional phrases.

INCORRECT: He searched for lost item everywhere: in the house, car, and at the office.

CORRECT: He searched for lost item everywhere: in the house, **in the** car, and at the office.

Rule 73 If a preposition is repeated once in a list, it must be repeated every time.

INCORRECT: The train stops in Stamford, Bridgeport, and in New Haven.

CORRECT: The train stops in Stamford, **in** Bridgeport, and **in** New Haven.

CORRECT: The train stops in Stamford, [...] Bridgeport, and [...] New Haven.

The same goes for the function word "to" in infinitives. If it is repeated once, it must be repeated every time.

INCORRECT: His dream is to graduate from MIT, develop an original theory, and to win a Nobel prize.

CORRECT: His dream is to graduate from MIT, **to** develop an original theory, and **to** win a Nobel prize.

CORRECT: His dream is to graduate from MIT, [...] develop an original theory, and [...] win a Nobel prize.

Rule 74 In the structures “both X and Y,” “either X or Y,” and “neither X nor Y,” X and Y must be parallel.

INCORRECT: Architects today must consider both how much a material costs and its durability.

CORRECT: Architects today must consider both a material's cost and its durability.

CORRECT: Architects today must consider both how much a material costs and how long it will last.

INCORRECT: The speaker will go either by train or fly to the conference in Philadelphia.

CORRECT: The speaker will go either by train or by plane to the conference in Philadelphia.

CORRECT: The speaker will either go by train or fly to the conference in Philadelphia.

Rule 75 In the structures “not X but Y” and “not only X but also Y,” X and Y must be parallel.

INCORRECT: The restaurant's success is due not to the quality of food but where it is located.

CORRECT: The restaurant's success is due not to the quality of food but to its location.

INCORRECT: Thomas Edison was not only a brilliant inventor, but he was also a shrewd businessman.

CORRECT: Thomas Edison was not only a brilliant inventor but also a shrewd businessman.

Rule 76 When you use “be” to equate or compare two elements, the elements must be parallel.

A noun can be likened to a noun:

CORRECT: Vanilla is more popular than chocolate.

A gerund can be compared to a gerund:

CORRECT: Seeing is believing.

An infinitive can be compared to an infinitive:

CORRECT: It is better to give than to receive.

Avoid mixing grammatical forms in a comparison:

INCORRECT: Having a spouse with whom one can openly discuss failure and self-doubt is to be happily married.

CORRECT: To have a spouse with whom one can openly discuss failure and self-doubt is to be happily married.

INCORRECT: To learn a foreign language means discovering another way to categorize reality.

CORRECT: Learning a foreign language means discovering another way to categorize reality.

Do not use a clause beginning with “when” to define a noun:

INCORRECT: The novel's saddest event is when the heroine dies.

CORRECT: The novel's saddest event is the death of the heroine.

**EXERCISE 8 (PARALLELISM)**

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any parallelism errors. (Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *To be a celebrity means having no privacy.*
2. *The meeting is not scheduled for today but tomorrow.*
3. *The dieter resolved neither to eat too much nor too little.*
4. *He is not only responsible for the design, but also the execution.*
5. *The turning point in the plot is when the protagonist disappears.*
6. *A teacher's job is to inspire creativity as well as imparting knowledge.*
7. *The artist is neither naturally talented nor is she independently wealthy.*
8. *The two biggest events in his life were when he got married and when his first child was born.*
9. *By the time Baldwin arrived to help, his colleagues had already laid out the site, cleared the land, and began to excavate.*
10. *The changeover to the metric system did not succeed because people could not become accustomed to using meters instead of feet, grams instead of ounces, or to using liters instead of quarts.*

9. IDIOMS

Rule 77 "From" goes with "to," and "between" goes with "and."

Do not use "between" with "to."

INCORRECT: *Between 1980 to 1990, the population of Centerville grew by 50 percent.*

CORRECT: ***From** 1980 **to** 1990, the population of Centerville grew by 50 percent.*

CORRECT: ***Between** 1980 **and** 1990, the population of Centerville grew by 50 percent.*

No preposition is needed with a hyphen to indicate a range of dates.

INCORRECT: *The symposium will take place in the nation's capital between August 11–16.*

CORRECT: *The symposium will take place in the nation's capital [...] August 11–16.*

Rule 78 "Either" goes with "or," and "neither" goes with "nor."

Do not use "neither" with "or."

INCORRECT: *Neither profit warnings or gloomy unemployment news deterred investors.*

CORRECT: ***Neither** profit warnings **nor** gloomy unemployment news deterred investors.*

Do not use "either" with "nor."

INCORRECT: *The young scholar did not intend either to contradict his mentor's theses nor even to question them.*

CORRECT: *The young scholar did not intend **either** to contradict his mentor's theses **or** even to question them.*

Rule 79 "Not only" is always followed by "but also."

A common mistake is to follow "not only" with a mere "but." Do not forget the "also."

INCORRECT: *Alaska is not only the biggest American state in area, but the smallest in population.*

CORRECT: *Alaska is **not only** the biggest American state in area, **but also** the smallest in population.*

Rule 80 "Different" is normally followed by "from."

In casual English it is acceptable to say or write "different than" before a clause. But in SWAE it is always "different from."

INCORRECT: *College life is different than most new students expect.*

CORRECT: *College life is different **from what** most new students expect.*

It is true that in Britain one hears and reads "different to," but in the U.S. it is "different from."

In any case, the phrase "different than" is almost never correct. Remember that "than" is used only with comparatives — words with "more" in front of them or with "-er" attached at the end. "Different than" can be correct only when it is "more different than";

CORRECT: *She knew serving in the Senate would be different from serving in the House of Representatives, but it turned out to be more different than she expected.*

**Rule 81 "Lay" is transitive. "Lie" is intransitive.**

Use "lie" when there is no direct object.

INCORRECT: *She felt ill and decided to go lay down for a while.*

CORRECT: *She felt ill and decided to go lie down for a while.*

What makes "lay" and "lie" so difficult to distinguish is that the word "lay" is also the past tense of "lie." (Now isn't that confusing!) The simple past and past participle forms for "lie" are "lay" and "lain." The simple past and past participle forms for "lay" are "laid" and "laid."

INCORRECT: *He went to the beach and laid in sun all day.*

CORRECT: *He went to the beach and lay in sun all day.*

INCORRECT: *He has lain all his cards on the table.*

CORRECT: *He has laid all his cards on the table.*

Rule 82 "Raise" is transitive. "Rise" is intransitive.

Use "rise" when there is no direct object.

INCORRECT: *If the embargo is not lifted, prices will continue to raise.*

CORRECT: *If the embargo is not lifted, prices will continue to rise.*

The past forms for "rise" are "rose" and "risen." The past forms of "raise" are "raised" and "raised."

INCORRECT: *Because of the embargo, fuel companies have risen prices.*

CORRECT: *Because of the embargo, fuel companies have raised prices.*

Rule 83 Use the idiomatic preposition after a verb.

The vast majority of verb + preposition idioms are no problem. A native speaker knows perfectly well not to say "participate to the event" or "approve at the choice." But even smart native speakers have trouble with a few, including "prefer + to," "prevent + from," "prohibit + from," and "credit + with."

"prefer to"

Do not write "prefer over" or "prefer as opposed to." It is "prefer to."

INCORRECT: *Our customers prefer chocolate over vanilla.*

CORRECT: *Our customers prefer chocolate to vanilla.*

"prevent from"

You do not "prevent" someone "to do" something. You "prevent" someone "from doing" something.

INCORRECT: *The fence was erected to prevent cattle to escape.*

CORRECT: *The fence was erected to prevent cattle from escaping.*

"prohibit from"

You do not "prohibit" someone "to do" something. You "prohibit" someone "from doing" something.

INCORRECT: *A new law prohibits one to use a mobile phone while driving.*

CORRECT: *A new law prohibits one from using a mobile phone while driving.*

"credit with"

You do not "credit" someone "as having done" something. You "credit" someone "with" something.

INCORRECT: *Schoenberg is credited as having invented the dodecaphonic system of musical composition.*

CORRECT: *Schoenberg is credited with the invention of the dodecaphonic system of musical composition.*

Some verbs take different prepositions for different meanings.

"differ with" and "differ from"

When people disagree, they "differ with" each other. When things are not alike, they "differ from" each other.

INCORRECT: *The son differs from his mother on the merits of movie musicals.*

CORRECT: *The son differs with his mother on the merits of movie musicals.*

INCORRECT: *The son differs with his mother in that he is creative and talented.*

CORRECT: *The son differs from his mother in that he is creative and talented.*

"compare to" and "compare with"

To "compare to" is to point out the similarities. To "compare with" is to point out the differences.

CORRECT: *Shakespeare asked his lover, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"*

CORRECT: *When we compare this year's numbers with last year's, we see that revenues are up and expenses are down.*

Do not use "compare to" when the comparison is about differences.

INCORRECT: *Attendance is up, compared to last year.*

CORRECT: *Attendance is up, compared with last year.*

Rule 84 Use "like" to compare nouns. Use "as" to compare clauses.

In comparisons, "like" is a preposition, and "as" is a conjunction. What follows a preposition is a noun, and what follows a conjunction is a clause with a conjugated verb.

INCORRECT: *As many working parents, Jones usually rises before dawn and retires well after midnight.*

CORRECT: *Like many working parents, Jones usually rises before dawn and retires well after midnight.*

INCORRECT: *This peach is firm but juicy, like a ripe peach should be.*

CORRECT: *This peach is firm but juicy, as a ripe peach should be.*

"As" as a preposition means "in the capacity of."

CORRECT: *As a friend and financial advisor, he recommended selling.*

Rule 85 Use "such as" to introduce a list of examples. Do not use "like."

There is a difference between "such as" and "like." If you say you went to a party and saw "people such as Bill Clinton and Madonna," then Bill Clinton and Madonna were there. But if you say you went to a party and saw "people like Bill Clinton and Madonna," then Bill Clinton and Madonna were probably not there. You just saw people that were "like" them.

INCORRECT: *Nineteenth-century Russian writers produced great epic novels like "Crime and Punishment" and "War and Peace."*

CORRECT: *Nineteenth-century Russian writers produced great epic novels such as "Crime and Punishment" and "War and Peace."*

Rule 86 The correct expressions are: "with regard to," "in regard to," and "as regards."

In the expressions "with regard to" and "in regard to," the word "regard" is



a noun. In “as regards,” the word “regards” is a verb. In SWAE, “with regards to” and “in regards to” are unidiomatic.

INCORRECT: *The architectural firm has filed several complaints with regards to city zoning laws.*

CORRECT: *The architectural firm has filed several complaints with regard to city zoning laws.*

All of these expressions are stuffy and wordy. Usually a simple “concerning” or “about” is enough.

CORRECT: *The architectural firm has filed several complaints about city zoning laws.*

Rule 87 Use “between” with two items. Use “among” with three or more.

INCORRECT: *The search committee has narrowed it down to a choice between Jefferson, Kilmer, and Nardo.*

CORRECT: *The search committee has narrowed it down to a choice among Jefferson, Kilmer, and Nardo.*

Rule 88 When referring to an alternative, “whether” is better than “if.”

“If” is common in everyday English, but “whether” is preferred in SWAE.

INCORRECT: *Scholars have been unable to determine if the frescoes were painted by Giotto.*

CORRECT: *Scholars have been unable to determine whether the frescoes were painted by Giotto.*

Rule 89 Be careful with commonly confused words.

Here are a few sets of words that even smart people sometimes confuse.

“affect” and “effect”

“Affect” is usually a verb, meaning “influence.” The noun form of that meaning is “effect.” In other words, to “affect” means to “have an effect.”

INCORRECT: *Farmers wonder how the winter drought will effect next summer’s crops.*

CORRECT: *Farmers wonder how the winter drought will affect next summer’s crops.*

CORRECT: *Farmers wonder what effect the winter drought will have on next summer’s crops.*

As a verb, “effect” means “do” or “cause.”

CORRECT: *It is always difficult to effect fundamental change.*

As a noun, “affect” means “consciousness of emotion.” Unless you are writing about psychology, you will probably never need to use “affect” as a noun.

“alternately” and “alternatively”

Use “alternately” to describe an action that switches back and forth. Use “alternatively” when you are suggesting another option.

CORRECT: *The weather was unsettled, alternately sunny and rainy.*

CORRECT: *The company could declare bankruptcy, or alternatively it could restructure, consolidate, and perhaps emerge from this troubled period.*

Do not confuse the words.

INCORRECT: *Because of the scholarship offer, she will probably go to Princeton; alternately, she could take out a loan and go to Harvard.*

CORRECT: *Because of the scholarship offer, she will probably go to Princeton; alternatively, she could take out a loan and go to Harvard.*

"appraise" and "apprise"

"Appraise" means "estimate, judge the value of." "Apprise" means "inform."

CORRECT: *Before deciding whether to move, they had their house appraised.*

CORRECT: *This notice is to apprise our faithful customers of a change in opening hours.*

Do not confuse the words.

INCORRECT: *He asked his friend to keep him appraised of any further developments.*

CORRECT: *He asked his friend to keep him apprised of any further developments.*

"assure," "ensure," and "insure"

"Assure" means "promise."

CORRECT: *The clerk assured her that the manager would see her shortly.*

"Ensure" means "make certain."

CORRECT: *Proper planning will ensure success.*

"Insure" means "guarantee legally or financially."

CORRECT: *Our firm is insured against theft.*

"continually" and "continuously"

Something that happens repeatedly can be said to happen "continually." Something that happens without interruption can be said to happen "continuously."

CORRECT: *Reporters continually ask questions about private matters.*

CORRECT: *The factory never closes because the furnaces must burn continuously.*

Do not confuse the words.

INCORRECT: *It snowed continually for 24 hours.*

CORRECT: *It snowed continuously for 24 hours.*

"discreet" and "discrete"

These are two different words. They are pronounced the same but have distinct meanings. "Discreet" means "prudent."

CORRECT: *The officer observed the suspect from a discreet distance.*

"Discrete" means "separate, distinct."

CORRECT: *The manager broke the project down into discrete tasks.*

"farther" and "further"

"Farther" refers to a greater distance. "Further" refers to a continuation.

CORRECT: *He ran farther than he thought he could.*

CORRECT: *They decided to discuss the matter further over dinner.*

**“imply” and “infer”**

To “imply” is to suggest; to “infer” is to read into. The speaker or writer implies. The listener or reader infers.

CORRECT: *She did not say so directly, but she implied that she would be available to help.*

CORRECT: *The reader can infer from the passage that Raphael and Michelangelo were contemporaries.*

Do not use “infer” when you mean “imply.”

INCORRECT: *Although he does not say so explicitly, the writer of this editorial infers that capital punishment ought to be abolished.*

CORRECT: *Although he does not say so explicitly, the writer of this editorial implies that capital punishment ought to be abolished.*

“incredible” and “incredulous”

“Incredible” means “unbelievable.” “Incredulous” means “unbelieving, skeptical.”

CORRECT: *After he told an incredible story about having been abducted by aliens, his listeners were incredulous.*

In formal writing, do not use “incredible” to mean “excellent.”

INCORRECT: *All were sated after the incredible meal.*

CORRECT: *All were sated after the excellent meal.*

A story or a fact can never be “incredulous.” Only people can be “incredulous.”

INCORRECT: *The film is said to be based on fact, but I found it incredulous.*

CORRECT: *The film is said to be based on fact, but I found it incredible.*

Rule 90 Be careful with commonly misused words.**“anticipate”**

To “anticipate” is to “act in advance of, prepare for.”

CORRECT: *Residents anticipated potentially damaging winds by boarding up windows.*

Do not use “anticipate” to mean “expect.”

INCORRECT: *We do not anticipate any further delays.*

CORRECT: *We do not expect any further delays.*

“anxious”

To be “anxious” is to be “worried.”

CORRECT: *The patient was anxious about the results of the blood test.*

Do not use “anxious” to mean “eager, excited.”

INCORRECT: *After waiting months for approval, the team was anxious to get started.*

CORRECT: *After waiting months for approval, the team was eager to get started.*

“could care less”

For some reason the trite expression “couldn’t care less” is often shortened to the illogical “could care less.”

INCORRECT: *More apathetic than ever, voters could care less who wins the election.*

CORRECT: *More apathetic than ever, voters could not care less who wins the election.*

You can get away with the expression in speech, but do not write “could care less” unless that is really what you mean.

CORRECT: *I do not care enormously about the Academy Awards, but I could care less.*

“due to”

Use “due to” only after the verb “be.”

CORRECT: *This morning’s departure delays are due to inclement weather.*

Do not use “due to” at the beginning of a sentence or anywhere else to mean “because of.”

INCORRECT: *Due to circumstances beyond our control, the event has been canceled.*

CORRECT: ***Because of** circumstances beyond our control, the event has been canceled.*

“epitome”

The “epitome” of something is the most ordinary, typical example.

CORRECT: *The epitome of the suburban commuter, he spends four hours a day in heavy traffic.*

It is a common mistake to use “epitome” to mean “extreme example.”

INCORRECT: *He is the epitome of a baseball fan: nobody knows more about the game than he.*

CORRECT: *He is the **extreme example** of a baseball fan: nobody knows more about the game than he.*

“ironic”

An event that is the opposite of what one would expect is “ironic.”

CORRECT: *It is ironic that such a sinner would become such an accomplished religious painter.*

Do not use “ironic” to mean “a curious coincidence.”

INCORRECT: *It is ironic that Verdi and Wagner, the antipodes of nineteenth-century opera composers, were born in the same year.*

CORRECT: *It is **a curious coincidence** that Verdi and Wagner, the antipodes of nineteenth-century opera composers, were born in the same year.*

“literally”

Taken literally, “literally” means “actually,” or “exactly as the words say.”

CORRECT: *He took the boss’s advice literally and jumped in a lake.*

Do not use “literally” in a weak attempt at emphasis. In particular, do not use “literally” when you really mean “figuratively.” The best solution is usually just to delete it.

INCORRECT: *Congressional leaders literally held a gun to the President’s head.*

CORRECT: *Congressional leaders [...] held a gun to the President’s head.*

“peruse”

Contrary to popular usage, “peruse” means “read thoroughly.” Do not use “peruse” to mean “glance over, skim, read superficially.”

INCORRECT: *The department head did not have time to read the report thoroughly, so she just perused it.*

CORRECT: *The department head did not have time to **peruse** the report, so she just **skimmed** it.*

**EXERCISE 9 (IDIOMS)**

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any idiom errors. (Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *There were something between twenty to thirty thousand people in attendance.*
2. *The candidate is not inclined either to debate his opponent face to face nor even to respond to questions about the accusations.*
3. *Fletcher is not only the youngest member of the team, but, with three university degrees, he is the most educated.*
4. *The world is a totally different place now than it was before the advent of the personal computer.*
5. *The children were anxious to start eating, but they knew they had to wait until everyone was served.*
6. *The director of human resources uses quaint Southern colloquialisms like "fixin' to."*
7. *Just like a child does, he uses his finger to point at the words as he reads them.*
8. *Her elocution coach taught her to pronounce her r's like they are pronounced in Britain.*
9. *The experience of war in the trenches had a profound affect on the young English poets.*
10. *The jury must first decide if the defendant is telling the truth.*

10. STYLE

Rule 91 Avoid redundancy.

It is bad form to repeat ideas unnecessarily.

INCORRECT: *We are ready for any unforeseen event that may or may not occur.*

CORRECT: *We are ready for any unforeseen event [...].*

Some common examples of redundancy are simply forbidden in SWAE. Editors and essay graders shriek at the sight of the following notorious bugbears:

<i>reason is because</i>	<i>equally as</i>
<i>reason why</i>	<i>hardly never</i>
<i>return back</i>	<i>each and every</i>
<i>repeat again</i>	<i>in any way, shape, or form</i>

INCORRECT: *The reason the business failed was because of mismanagement.*

CORRECT: *The business failed because of mismanagement*

Here are some more examples of redundancies to be avoided:

<i>advance planning</i>	<i>five in number</i>
<i>consensus of opinion</i>	<i>PIN number</i>
<i>safe haven</i>	<i>ATM machine</i>
<i>blue-colored</i>	<i>GMAT test</i>

Rule 92 Omit unnecessary words.

Avoid wordiness. If you can delete a word or series of words without changing or obscuring the meaning, do so. Do not, for example, write "considered as" or "considered to be" when "considered" will do.

INCORRECT: *He is considered to be a leading expert on Etruscan art.*

CORRECT: *He is considered [...] a leading expert on Etruscan art.*

And why write "whether or not" when "whether" means the same thing?

INCORRECT: *The committee will decide whether or not to call witnesses.*

CORRECT: *The committee will decide whether [...] to call witnesses.*

Avoid flabby expressions.

as of yet
at this point in time
due to the fact that
in spite of the fact that
of a _____ nature
in a _____ manner

INCORRECT: *In spite of the fact that the director is more than eighty years of age, the film which he recently directed can be said to be fresh as well as fast, and it is funny also.*

CORRECT: *Although the director is more than eighty years old, his film is fresh, fast, and funny.*

Rule 93 Do not omit necessary words.

Economy is a virtue in SWAE. You want to use as few words as possible to express your meaning. If a word is unnecessary — if the sentence has the same meaning without it — delete it. But do not omit words that are grammatically or logically necessary.



- INCORRECT:** *This year's event should be as big if not bigger than last year's.*
CORRECT: *This year's event should be as big as, if not bigger than, last year's.*
BETTER: *This year's event should be at least as big as last year's.*
INCORRECT: *This team has not yet and never will surrender.*
CORRECT: *This team has not yet surrendered and never will surrender.*

Rule 94 Avoid slang and colloquialisms.

You probably know better than to write something like "he ain't got none" or "That kid is awesome." Slang obviously has no place in SWAE. The dividing line between formal and casual is a fuzzy one. The following words are usually too casual for SWAE:

<i>pretty (as in "a pretty tough question")</i>	<i>a lot</i>
<i>real (as in "a real important job")</i>	<i>nice</i>
<i>awful or awfully</i>	<i>stupid</i>

- INCORRECT:** *Ten thousand dollars is an awful lot of money.*
CORRECT: *Ten thousand dollars is **a great deal** of money.*
INCORRECT: *This company is a pretty nice place to work.*
CORRECT: *This company is a **rather pleasant** place to work.*

Rule 95 Be careful with jargon and trendy expressions.

Conservative editors and English teachers despise fashionable business-speak. They cringe at words like "prioritize," "proactive," and "outsource." But these words are so widely used and understood that they have to be accepted now. Use one of these words if it expresses your meaning precisely and unambiguously, but be aware that some old-fashioned readers may object. As always, consider your audience.

But a line has to be drawn somewhere. The following examples cross that line and are unacceptable.

- INCORRECT:** *The job was in-sourced because we had all the people we needed.*
CORRECT: *We did the job in house because we had all the people we needed.*
INCORRECT: *Because of budget cuts, the department had to dehire several employees.*
CORRECT: *Because of budget cuts, the department had to lay off several employees.*

Conservatives particularly dislike the wanton use of nouns as verbs.

- INCORRECT:** *We want to know how a tax cut would impact the economy.*
CORRECT: *We want to know what impact a tax cut would have on the economy.*

Rule 96 Prefer the active to the passive.

A passive sentence construction is one that turns an object into a subject. "John ate the cake" is active. "The cake was eaten by John." Sometimes the passive construction is appropriate, particularly when the true subject is unknown.

- CORRECT:** *Twelve paintings were stolen.*

But when the true subject is known, it is usually better to make it the grammatical subject as well.

- INCORRECT:** *One thousand likely voters were interviewed by the pollsters.*

CORRECT: *The pollsters interviewed one thousand likely voters.*

Do not write “able to be.”

INCORRECT: *This problem is not able to be solved.*

CORRECT: *This problem cannot be solved.*

Rule 97 Avoid weak intensifiers.

Writers often use words such as “very” or “really” in a vain effort to render their writing more forceful or profound. Be sparing with “very.” And watch out for “really,” “incredibly,” “totally,” and “absolutely.” These feeble attempts to make bolster your words can sometimes lead to nonsense.

INCORRECT: *The story was incredibly believable.*

CORRECT: *The story was [...] realistic.*

Rule 98 Opt for the specific over the vague.

When you are tempted to use a vague word such as “interesting” or “important,” consider whether there is a more specific word to use instead.

WEAK: *That was a very interesting play.*

STRONG: *That was a **thought-provoking** play.*

Look at the following sentence from a White House aide’s testimony at a Congressional hearing.

WEAK: *I was provided with additional input that was radically different from the truth. I assisted in furthering that version.*

This speaker uses vague expressions intentionally. He wants to soften (if not obscure) the truth, which is simply: “They lied and I helped.”

Rule 99 Avoid illogical and meaningless sentences.

Here are several gems of illogical and meaningless nonsense that have been attributed to various U.S. politicians:

NONSENSE: *If we don’t succeed, we run the risk of failure.*

NONSENSE: *When people are out of work, unemployment results.*

NONSENSE: *More and more of our imports come from overseas.*

NONSENSE: *It isn’t pollution that’s harming the environment; it’s the impurities in our air and the water that are doing it.*

Rule 100 Avoid awkwardness.

Awkwardness is an ill-defined and subjective criticism. There are no hard-and-fast rules for recognizing and eliminating awkwardness. But there is no doubt that some sentences are awkward and need to be rewritten.

INCORRECT: *Apart from the master bedroom, which has its own, all the other bedrooms share a bathroom.*

CORRECT: *The master bedroom has its own bathroom; all the other bedrooms share a bathroom.*

Writers sometimes find themselves in quagmires of awkwardness in efforts to avoid sexism. “He or she” and “his and her” may be politically correct, but they are awkward. Try to rewrite the sentence in the gender-neutral plural if you can.

INCORRECT: *If a student wishes to change his or her area of concentration, he or she must obtain written permission from his or her academic advisor.*

CORRECT: *Students who wish to change areas of concentration must obtain written permission from their academic advisors.*

**EXERCISE 10**

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences to correct any style errors. (Note that some sentences may be correct as written.)

1. *Our nation must come together to unite.*
2. *When he goes to his country house for the weekend, he hardly never returns back before Monday afternoon.*
3. *Due to the fact that it sold more than a million copies, the book was considered to be a success.*
4. *The experiences are not able to be compared.*
5. *He says that he has not, does not, and never will eat broccoli.*
6. *According to her itinerary, the consultant will airplane it to New York and from there train it to Boston.*
7. *Pricewise the possible new office is a bargain, but locationwise it is a gamble.*
8. *The 1969 World Series will never be forgotten by the old baseball fan.*
9. *The judges, who were five in number, could not reach a consensus of opinion on a winner.*
10. *The employee complained that the supervisor disrespected him.*

ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1 (SENTENCE STRUCTURE)

1. *The secretary arrived too late. The meeting had already begun.*
2. *The dangers of secondhand smoke have been exaggerated; therefore, the government should considering repealing some of the more restrictive antismoking laws.*
3. *The reasons for the price adjustment are increasing costs and decreasing demand.*
4. *English is not the most widely spoken language in the world; nevertheless, it is the most practical language for international business.*
5. No error.
6. *Ask the librarian. He will know.*
7. *Because the head writer was in the hospital — appendicitis — and the artist was on vacation — honeymoon — progress ceased.*
8. *It has not rained in two months — the worst drought on record — and reservoir levels are dangerously low.*
9. *Call Novak. He is the only one who can help us now.*
10. No error.

EXERCISE 2 (SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT)

1. *The only thing he values more than his career is his wife and children.*
2. *The majority of the people of California support recycling.*
3. *In the last ten years, the number of professional sports teams has doubled.*
4. No error.
5. No error.
6. *Not in several days has the mother or the children been seen.*
7. No error.
8. *No less astonishing than the dimensions of the surviving examples is their variety.*
9. *On the ground floor of the office building are a newsstand, a coffee shop, and a restaurant.*
10. *Never before in the history of the state have Montana's vote-counting procedures received more attention.*

EXERCISE 3 (NOUN NUMBER)

1. *Anyone requiring additional information should consult the company Web site.*
2. *The United Nations has been debating a human rights resolution.*
3. No error.
4. *A solar eclipse is a phenomenon that is worth a journey to witness.*
5. *The public is opposed to the proposed legislation.*
6. *This year's promotional event attracted fewer people than last year's did.*
7. *On Sundays, when admission is free, the number of people at the museum is astonishing.*
8. *Everyone sang well and was heartily applauded.*
9. *For the first time there were fewer species on the endangered list than in the previous year.*
10. No error.

EXERCISE 4 (VERB TENSE)

1. *If two objects are dropped simultaneously from the same height, they will reach the ground at the same time.*
2. No error.
3. *If the team had started the project a month earlier, they would be finished by now.*
4. *If Americans ate less red meat, they would have lower cholesterol levels.*
5. *Financial experts recommend that one diversify one's investments.*
6. No error.
7. No error.
8. *The lecturer began with a quick plot synopsis for the benefit of those who had not read the novel.*
9. *The civilization is believed to have flourished in the fifteenth century.*
10. *Once the student passes the comprehensive oral examination, she has will have satisfied all the requirements for the degree.*

**EXERCISE 5 (PRONOUNS)**

1. No error.
2. No one will buy such an expensive product unless he or she really needs it.
3. The directors are looking for someone whom they can trust to abide by the rule.
4. When one considers the candidate's youth and inexperience, one has to say that the victory was unexpected.
5. If the television viewer loses interest for just a few seconds, he or she will switch channels.
6. It is sunny and hot today, but forecasters say it will rain tomorrow.
7. If one invests early and wisely, one will be able to enjoy his or her retirement.
8. Because the parties have been unable to resolve the dispute, a judge will have to do so.
9. After questioning the two suspects, the investigator became convinced that it was they who committed the crime.
10. No error.

EXERCISE 6 (MODIFIERS)

1. Driving soon became his favorite pastime.
2. With makeup and perfume, she tries to attract men.
3. Because she was born and raised near the Mexican border, Spanish came easily to her.
4. On the facade there is a sculpture that represents the rise of technology.
5. He hired a crew that has a truck and that is accustomed to handling delicate antiques.
6. Once he decided to get the story at any cost, nothing could stop the reporter.
7. The family devoured the whole pie, straight out of the oven and still piping hot.
8. Even after receiving explicit instructions, the new employee did not know what to do.
9. The supervisor ordered the assistant, dressed in a T-shirt and jeans, to go home and change into more professional attire.
10. Because they are no longer sworn enemies, relations between the United States and Russia have improved considerably since the end of the Cold War.

EXERCISE 7 (COMPARISONS)

1. Americans eat more corn than Europeans do.
2. The second of the author's two published works sold better.
3. The critic maintained that it was the worst film she ever saw.
4. Unlike Los Angelenos, most New Yorkers use public transportation.
5. Every year, more foreign tourists visit Paris than any other European city.
6. The United States is the richest and most wasteful country in the world.
7. No error.
8. His job title is director of marketing, but his salary is still less than that of a secretary.
9. Abraham Lincoln was perhaps one of the wisest men ever to serve as President.
10. Choose either regular or express service: the former is less expensive and the latter is faster.

EXERCISE 8 (PARALLELISM)

1. To be a celebrity means to have no privacy.
2. The meeting is scheduled not for today but for tomorrow.
3. The dieter resolved to eat neither too much nor too little.
4. He is responsible for not only the design, but also the execution.
5. The turning point in the plot is the disappearance of the protagonist.
6. A teacher's job is to inspire creativity as well as to impart knowledge.
7. The artist is neither naturally talented nor independently wealthy.
8. The two biggest events in his life were his marriage and the birth of his first child.
9. By the time Baldwin arrived to help, his colleagues had already laid out the site, cleared the land, and begun to excavate.
10. The changeover to the metric system did not succeed because people could not become accustomed to using meters instead of feet, grams instead of ounces, or liters instead of quarts.

EXERCISE 9 (IDIOMS)

1. *There were something between twenty and thirty thousand people in attendance.*
2. *The candidate is not inclined either to debate his opponent face to face or even to respond to questions about the accusations.*
3. *Fletcher is not only the youngest member of the team, but, with three university degrees, he is also the most educated.*
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8. *Her elocution coach taught her to pronounce her r's as they are pronounced in Britain.*
9. *The experience of war in the trenches had a profound effect on the young English poets.*
10. *The jury must first decide whether the defendant is telling the truth.*

EXERCISE 10 (STYLE)

1. *Our nation must come together.*
2. *When he goes to his country house for the weekend, he hardly ever returns before Monday afternoon.*
3. *Because it sold more than a million copies, the book was considered a success.*
4. *The experiences cannot be compared.*
5. *He says that he has not eaten, does not eat, and never will eat broccoli.*
6. *According to her itinerary, the consultant will fly to New York and from there go by train to Boston.*
7. *The price of the possible new office is a bargain, but the location is a gamble.*
8. *The old baseball fan will never forget the 1969 World Series.*
9. *The five judges could not reach a consensus on a winner.*
10. *The employee complained that the supervisor showed him disrespect.*