



# *Handbook of Definitions and Rules*



## SUBJECTS AND PREDICATES

- The **simple subject** is the key noun or pronoun that tells what the sentence is about. A **compound subject** is made up of two or more simple subjects that are joined by a conjunction and have the same verb.  
The **lantern** glows.                      **Moths** and **bugs** fly nearby.
- The **simple predicate** is the verb or verb phrase that expresses the essential thought about the subject of the sentence. A **compound predicate** is made up of two or more verbs or verb phrases that are joined by a conjunction and have the same subject.  
Rachel **jogged** down the hill.  
Pete **stretched** and **exercised** for an hour.
- The **complete subject** consists of the simple subject and all the words that modify it.  
**Golden curly hair** framed the child's face.  
**The soft glow of sunset** made her happy.
- The **complete predicate** consists of the simple predicate and all the words that modify it or complete its meaning.  
Lindy **ate a delicious muffin for breakfast**.  
The apple muffin **also contained raisins**.
- Usually the subject comes before the predicate in a sentence. In inverted sentences, all or part of the predicate precedes the subject.  
**(You) Wait** for me at the corner. (request)  
Through the toys **raced** the **children**. (inverted)  
**Is the teacher** feeling better? (question)  
There **are seats** in the first row.

## PARTS OF SPEECH

### Nouns

- A **singular noun** is a word that names one person, place, thing, or idea.  
aunt                      meadow                      pencil                      friendship

A **plural noun** names more than one person, place, thing, or idea.

aunts                      meadows                      pencils                      friendships

- To help you determine whether a word in a sentence is a noun, try adding it to the following sentences. Nouns will fit in at least one of these sentences:  
He said something about \_\_\_\_\_.                      I know something about a(n) \_\_\_\_\_.  
He said something about **aunts**.                      I know something about a **meadow**.
- A **common noun** names a general class of people, places, things, or ideas.  
sailor                      city                      holiday                      music

A **proper noun** specifies a particular person, place, thing, event, or idea. Proper nouns are always capitalized.

**Captain Ahab**                      **Rome**                      **Memorial Day**                      *Treasure Island*

4. A **concrete noun** names an object that occupies space or that can be recognized by any of the senses.

leaf              melody              desk              aroma

An **abstract noun** names an idea, a quality, or a characteristic.

peace              health              strength              contentment

5. A **collective noun** names a group. When the collective noun refers to the group as a whole, it is singular. When it refers to the individual group members, the collective noun is plural.

The **family** eats dinner together every night. (singular)

The **council** vote as they wish on the pay increase. (plural)

6. A **possessive noun** shows possession, ownership, or the relationship between two nouns.

**Monica's** book              the **rabbit's** ears              the **hamster's** cage

## Verbs

1. A **verb** is a word that expresses action or a state of being and is necessary to make a statement. A verb will fit one or more of these sentences:

He \_\_\_\_\_.      We \_\_\_\_\_.      She \_\_\_\_\_ it.

He **knows**.      We **walk**.      She **sees** it.

2. An **action verb** tells what someone or something does. The two types of action verbs are transitive and intransitive. A **transitive verb** is followed by a word or words—called the direct object—that answer the question *what?* or *whom?* An **intransitive verb** is not followed by a word that answers *what?* or *whom?*

Transitive: The tourists **saw** the ruins.              The janitor **washed** the window.

Intransitive: Owls **hooted** during the night.              The children **played** noisily.

3. An indirect object receives what the direct object names.

Marcy sent **her brother** a present.

4. A **linking verb** links, or joins, the subject of a sentence with an adjective or nominative.

The trucks **were** red. (adjective)

She **became** an excellent swimmer. (nominative)

5. A **verb phrase** consists of a main verb and all its auxiliary, or helping, verbs.

We **had been told** of his arrival.

They **are listening** to a symphony.

6. Verbs have four **principle parts** or forms: base, past, present participle, and past participle.

Base: I **talk**.              Present Participle: I am **talking**.

Past: I **talked**.              Past Participle: I have **talked**.

7. **Irregular verbs** form their past form and past participle without adding *-ed* to the base form.

#### PRINCIPAL PARTS OF IRREGULAR VERBS

Base Form	Past Form	Past Participle	Base Form	Past Form	Past Participle
be	was, were	been	lead	led	led
beat	beat	beaten	lend	lent	lent
become	became	become	lie	lay	lain
begin	began	begun	lose	lost	lost
bite	bit	bitten <i>or</i> bit	put	put	put
blow	blew	blown	ride	rode	ridden
break	broke	broken	ring	rang	rung
bring	brought	brought	rise	rose	risen
catch	caught	caught	run	ran	run
choose	chose	chosen	say	said	said
come	came	come	see	saw	seen
do	did	done	set	set	set
draw	drew	drawn	shrink	shrank <i>or</i> shrank	shrunk <i>or</i> shrunk
drink	drank	drunk			
drive	drove	driven	sing	sang	sung
eat	ate	eaten	sit	sat	sat
fall	fell	fallen	speak	spoke	spoken
feel	felt	felt	spring	sprang <i>or</i> sprung	sprung
find	found	found			
fly	flew	flown	steal	stole	stolen
freeze	froze	frozen	swim	swam	swum
get	got	got <i>or</i> gotten	take	took	taken
give	gave	given	tear	tore	torn
go	went	gone	tell	told	told
grow	grew	grown	think	thought	thought
hang	hung <i>or</i> hanged	hung <i>or</i> hanged	throw	threw	thrown
have	had	had	wear	wore	worn
know	knew	known	win	won	won
lay	laid	laid	write	wrote	written

8. The principle parts are used to form six verb tenses. The **tense** of a verb expresses time.

#### Simple Tenses

Present Tense: She **speaks**. (present or habitual action)

Past Tense: She **spoke**. (action completed in the past)

Future Tense: She **will speak**. (action to be done in the future)

#### Perfect Tenses

Present Perfect Tense: She **has spoken**. (action just done or still in effect)

Past Perfect Tense: She **had spoken**. (action completed before some other past action)

Future Perfect Tense: She **will have spoken**. (action to be completed before some future time)

9. **Progressive forms** of verbs are made up of a form of *be* and a present participle and express a continuing action. **Emphatic forms** are made up of a form of *do* and a base form and add emphasis or ask questions.
- Progressive: Marla **is babysitting**. The toddlers **have been napping** for an hour.  
 Emphatic: They **do prefer** beef to pork.  
 We **did ask** for a quiet table.
10. The **voice** of a verb shows whether the subject performs the action or receives the action of the verb. A sentence is in the **active voice** when the subject performs the action. A sentence is in the **passive voice** when the subject receives the action of the verb.
- The robin **ate** the worm. (active)  
 The worm **was eaten** by the robin. (passive)

## Pronouns

- A **pronoun** takes the place of a noun, a group of words acting as a noun, or another pronoun.
- A **personal pronoun** refers to a specific person or thing. **First-person** personal pronouns refer to the speaker, **second-person** pronouns refer to the one spoken to, and **third-person** pronouns refer to the one spoken about.
 

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I, me, my, mine	we, us, our, ours
Second Person	you, your, yours	you, your, yours
Third Person	he, she, it, him, her, his, hers, its	they, them, their, theirs
- A **reflexive pronoun** refers to the subject of the sentence. An **intensive pronoun** adds emphasis to a noun or another pronoun. A **demonstrative pronoun** points out specific persons, places, things, or ideas.
 

Reflexive: **Nikki prepares himself** for the day-long hike.  
 Intensive: **Nikki himself** prepares for the day-long hike.  
 Demonstrative: **That** was a good movie! **These** are the files you wanted.
- An **interrogative pronoun** is used to form questions. A **relative pronoun** is used to introduce a subordinate clause. An **indefinite pronoun** refers to persons, places, or things in a more general way than a personal pronoun does.
 

Interrogative: **Whose** are these? **Which** did you prefer?  
 Relative: The bread **that** we tasted was whole wheat.  
 Indefinite: **Someone** has already told them. **Everyone** agrees on the answer.
- Use the subject form of a personal pronoun when it is used as a subject or when it follows a linking verb.
 

**He** writes stories. Are **they** ready? It is **I**. (after linking verb)
- Use the object form of a personal pronoun when it is an object.
 

Mrs. Cleary called **us**. (direct object) Stephen offered **us** a ride. (indirect object)  
 Sara will go with **us**. (object of preposition)
- Use a **possessive pronoun** to replace a possessive noun. Never use an apostrophe in a possessive personal pronoun.
 

**Their** science experiment is just like **ours**.

8. When a pronoun is followed by an appositive, use the subject pronoun if the appositive is the subject. Use the object pronoun if the appositive is an object. To test whether the pronoun is correct, read the sentence without the appositive.  
**We** eighth-graders would like to thank you.  
 The success of **us** geometry students is due to Ms. Marcia.
9. In incomplete comparisons, choose the pronoun that you would use if the missing words were fully expressed.  
 Harris can play scales faster than **I** (can).  
 It is worth more to you than (it is to) **me**.
10. In questions use *who* for subjects and *whom* for objects.  
**Who** wants another story?  
**Whom** will the class choose as treasurer?
- In subordinate clauses use *who* and *whoever* as subjects and after linking verbs, and use *whom* and *whomever* as objects.  
 These souvenirs are for **whoever** wants to pay the price.  
 The manager will train **whomever** the president hires.
11. An **antecedent** is the word or group of words to which a pronoun refers or that a pronoun replaces. All pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number, gender, and person.  
 Marco's **sister** spent **her** vacation in San Diego.  
 The huge old **trees** held **their** own against the storm.
12. Make sure that the antecedent of a pronoun is clearly stated.  
 UNCLEAR: Mrs. Cardonal baked cookies with her daughters, hoping to sell **them** at the bake sale.  
 CLEAR: Mrs. Cardonal baked cookies with her daughters, hoping to sell **the cookies** at the bake sale.  
 UNCLEAR: If you don't tie the balloon to the stroller, **it** will blow away.  
 CLEAR: If you don't tie the balloon to the stroller, **the balloon** will blow away.

## Adjectives

- An **adjective** modifies, or describes, a noun or pronoun by providing more information or giving a specific detail.  
 The **smooth** surface of the lake gleamed.  
**Frosty** trees glistened in the sun.
- Most adjectives will fit this sentence:  
 The \_\_\_\_\_ one seems very \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The **handmade** one seems very **colorful**.
- Articles** are the adjectives *a*, *an*, and *the*. Articles do not meet the preceding test for adjectives.
- A **proper adjective** is formed from a proper noun and begins with a capital letter.  
 Tricia admired the **Scottish** sweaters.  
 Our **Mexican** vacation was memorable.

5. The comparative form of an adjective compares two things or people. The superlative form compares more than two things or people. Form the comparative by adding *-er* or combining with *more* or *less*. Form the superlative by adding *-est* or combining with *most* or *least*.

POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
slow	slower	slowest
charming	more charming	most charming

6. Some adjectives have irregular comparative forms.

POSITIVE:	good, well	bad	far	many, much	little
COMPARATIVE:	better	worse	farther	more	less
SUPERLATIVE:	best	worst	farthest	most	least

## Adverbs

- An **adverb** modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs tell *how*, *where*, *when*, or *to what extent*.  
The cat walked **quietly**. (how)  
She **seldom** misses a deadline. (when)  
The player moved **forward**. (where)  
The band was **almost** late. (to what extent)
- Many adverbs fit these sentences:  
She thinks \_\_\_\_\_. She thinks \_\_\_\_\_ fast. She \_\_\_\_\_ thinks fast.  
She thinks **quickly**. She thinks **unusually** fast. She **seldom** thinks fast.
- The comparative form of an adverb compares two actions. The superlative form compares more than two actions. For shorter adverbs, add *-er* or *-est* to form the comparative or superlative. For most adverbs, add *more* or *most* or *less* or *least* to form the comparative or superlative.  
We walked **faster** than before.  
They listened **most carefully** to the final speaker.
- Avoid **double negatives**, which are two negative words in the same clause.  
INCORRECT: I have not seen no stray cats.  
CORRECT: I have not seen any stray cats.

## Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections

- A **preposition** shows the relationship of a noun or a pronoun to some other word. A **compound preposition** is made up of more than one word.  
The trees **near** our house provide plenty **of** shade.  
The schools were closed **because of** snow.
- Common prepositions include these: *about, above, according to, across, after, against, along, among, around, as, at, because of, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, besides, between, beyond, but, by, concerning, down, during, except, for, from, in, inside, in spite of, into, like, near, of, off, on, out, outside, over, past, round, since, through, till, to, toward, under, underneath, until, up, upon, with, within, without*.







- c. A **gerund** is a verbal that ends in *-ing*. It is used in the same way a noun is used.  
**Sailing** is a traditional vacation activity for the Andersons.
- d. A **gerund phrase** is a gerund plus any complements or modifiers.  
**Walking to school** is common for many school children.
- e. An **infinitive** is a verbal formed from the word *to* and the base form of a verb. It is often used as a noun. Because an infinitive acts as a noun, it may be the subject of a sentence or the direct object of an action verb.  
**To sing** can be uplifting. (infinitive as subject)  
Babies first learn **to babble**. (infinitive as direct object)
- f. An **infinitive phrase** contains an infinitive plus any complements or modifiers.  
The flight attendants prepared **to feed the hungry passengers**.

## SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

1. A verb must agree with its subject in person and number.  
The kangaroo **jumps**. (singular)      The kangaroos **jump**. (plural)  
She **is leaping**. (singular)      They **are leaping**. (plural)
2. In **inverted sentences** the subject follows the verb. The sentence may begin with a prepositional phrase, the words *there* or *here*, or a form of *do*.  
Into the pond **dove** the *children*.  
**Does** a *bird* **have** a sense of smell?  
There **is** a *squeak* in that third stair.
3. Do not mistake a word in a prepositional phrase for the subject.  
The **glass** in the window **is** streaked. (The singular verb *is* agrees with the subject, *glass*.)
4. A title is always singular, even if nouns in the title are plural.  
**Instant World Facts** **is** a helpful reference book.
5. Subjects combined with *and* or *both* need a plural verb unless the parts are of a whole unit. When compound subjects are joined with *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject listed last.  
**Canterbury and Coventry** **have** famous cathedrals.  
**A bagel and cream cheese** **is** a filling snack.  
**Either** two short **stories** **or** a **novel** **is** acceptable for your book report.
6. A verb must agree in number with an indefinite pronoun subject. Indefinite pronouns that are always singular: *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone, and something*. Always plural: *both, few, many, others, and several*.  
Either singular or plural: *all, any, most, none, and some*  
**Most** of the snow **has** melted.      **All** of the children **have** eaten.

## USAGE GLOSSARY

**a lot, alot** Always write this expression, meaning “very much” or “a large amount,” as two words.

The neighbors pitched in, and the job went **a lot** faster.

**accept, except** *Accept*, a verb, means “to receive” or “to agree to.” *Except* may be a preposition or a verb. As a preposition it means “other than.” As a verb it means “to leave out, to make an exception.”

I **accept** your plan. We ate everything **except** the crust.

**all ready, already** *All ready* means “completely prepared.” *Already* means “before” or “by this time.”

They were **all ready** to leave, but the bus had **already** departed.

**all together, altogether** The two words *all together* mean “in a group.” The single word *altogether* is an adverb meaning “completely” or “on the whole.”

The teachers met **all together** after school.

They were **altogether** prepared for a heated discussion.

**beside, besides** *Beside* means “next to.” *Besides* means “in addition to.”

The sink is **beside** the refrigerator.

**Besides** the kitchen, the den is my favorite room.

**between, among** Use *between* to refer to or to compare two separate nouns. Use *among* to show a relationship in a group.

The joke was **between** Hilary and Megan.

The conversation **among** the teacher, the principal, and the janitor was friendly.

**bring, take** Use *bring* to show movement from a distant place to a closer one. Use *take* to show movement from a nearby place to a more distant one.

You may **bring** your model here.

Please **take** a brochure with you when you go.

**can, may** *Can* indicates the ability to do something. *May* indicates permission to do something.

Constance **can** walk to school.

She **may** ride the bus if she wishes.

**choose, chose** *Choose* means “to select.” *Chose* is the past participle form, meaning “selected.”

I **choose** the blue folder.

Celia **chose** the purple folder.

**fewer, less** Use *fewer* with nouns that can be counted. Use *less* with nouns that cannot be counted.

There were **fewer** sunny days this year.

I see **less** fog today than I expected.

**formally, formerly** *Formally* is the adverb form of formal. *Formerly* is an adverb meaning “in times past.”

They **formally** agreed to the exchange.

Lydia **formerly** lived in Spain, but now she lives in New York City.

**in, into** Use *in* to mean “inside” or “within” and *into* to indicate movement or direction from outside to a point within.

The birds nest **in** the trees.

A bird flew **into** our window yesterday.

**its, it's** *Its* is the possessive form of the pronoun *it*. Possessive pronouns never have apostrophes. *It's* is the contraction of *it is*.

The dog lives in **its** own house.      Who is to say whether **it's** happy or not.

**lay, lie** *Lay* means “to put” or “to place,” and it takes a direct object. *Lie* means “to recline” or “to be positioned,” and it never takes an object.

We **lay** the uniforms on the shelves each day.

The players **lie** on the floor to do their sit-ups.

**learn, teach** *Learn* means “to receive knowledge.” *Teach* means “to give knowledge.”

Children can **learn** foreign languages at an early age.

Mr. Minton will **teach** French to us next year.

**leave, let** *Leave* means “to go away.” *Let* means “to allow” or “to permit.”

I will **leave** after fourth period.

Dad will **let** me go swimming today.

**loose, lose** Use *loose* to mean “not firmly attached” and *lose* to mean “to misplace” or “to fail to win.”

The bike chain was very **loose**.

I did not want to **lose** my balance.

**many, much** Use *many* with nouns that can be counted. Use *much* with nouns that cannot be counted.

**Many** ants were crawling near the anthill.

There was **much** discussion about what to do.

**precede, proceed** *Precede* means “to go or come before.” *Proceed* means “to continue.”

Lunch will **precede** the afternoon session.

Marly can **proceed** with her travel plans.

**quiet, quite** *Quiet* means “calm” or “motionless.” *Quite* means “completely” or “entirely.”

The sleeping kitten was **quiet**.

The other kittens were **quite** playful.

**raise, rise** *Raise* means “to cause to move upward,” and it always takes an object. *Rise* means “to get up”; it is intransitive and never takes an object.

Please **raise** your hand if you would like to help.

I left the bread in a warm spot to **rise**.

**sit, set** *Sit* means “to place oneself in a sitting position.” It rarely takes an object. *Set* means “to place” or “to put” and usually takes an object. *Set* can also be used to describe the sun going down.

Please **sit** in your assigned seats.      **Set** those dishes down.

The sun **set** at 6:14.

**than, then** *Than* is a conjunction that is used to introduce the second element in a comparison; it also shows exception. *Then* is an adverb meaning “at that time.”

Wisconsin produces more milk **than** any other state.

First get comfortable, **then** look the pitcher right in the eye.

**their, they're** *Their* is the possessive form of the personal pronoun *they*. *They're* is the contraction of *they are*.

The Westons returned to **their** favorite vacation spot.

**They're** determined to go next year as well.

**theirs, there's** *Theirs* means “that or those belonging to them.” *There's* is the contraction of *there is*.

**Theirs** is one of the latest models.

**There's** another pitcher of lemonade in the refrigerator.

**to, too, two** *To* is a preposition meaning “in the direction of.” *Too* means “also” or “excessively.” *Two* is the number that falls between one and three.

You may go **to** the library.

It is **too** cold for skating.

There are only **two** days of vacation left.

**where at** Do not use *at* in a sentence after *where*.

**Where** were you yesterday afternoon? (*not* Where were you at yesterday afternoon?)

**who's, whose** *Who's* is the contraction of *who is*. *Whose* is the possessive form of *who*.

**Who's** willing to help me clean up?

Do you know **whose** books these are?

**your, you're** *Your* is the possessive form of *you*. *You're* is the contraction of *you are*.

Please arrange **your** schedule so that you can be on time.

If **you're** late, you may miss something important.