



## Three Grammar Tips

### 1. Subject and Verb Agreement--Subject and verb agreement means that the subject matches in number, referring to singular and plural and in person, referring to first, second, and third person.

- ♣ First Person
  - Singular: I see a field of fireflies.
  - Plural: We see a field of fireflies.
- ♣ Second Person
  - You see a shower of sparks.
- ♣ Third Person
  - The scientist sees a cloud of cosmic dust.
  - The scientists see a cloud of dust.
- ♣ Verbs with Amounts-- subjects that refer to time, sums of money, distance, or measurement are singular.
  - Amounts as subjects = singular verbs
    - **Two hours is** not enough time to finish.
    - **Three hundred dollars is** what we must pay.
    - **Two miles is** a short sprint for some serious joggers.
    - **Three-quarters of an inch is** needed for a perfect fit.
- ♣ Verbs with Fields of Study-- The name for a field of study is singular even if it appears to be plural: economics, mathematics, physics, and statistics.
  - Field of study as subjects = singular verbs
    - **Statistics is** required of science majors.
    - **Statistics show** that a teacher shortage is coming.
- ♣ Verbs with Special Nouns-- Athletics, news, ethics, and measles are singular despite their plural appearance. Also, United States of America is singular. However, politics and sports take singular and plural verbs, depending on the meaning of the sentence.
  - Special nouns as subjects = mostly singular verbs
    - The **news gets** better each day.
    - **Sports is** a good way to build physical stamina.
    - Three **sports are offered at the recreation center.**
    - **Those slacks** need pressing.
    - That **pair** of slacks **needs** pressing.
    - Two new TV **series are** big hit.
    - A **series** of disasters **is** plaguing our production.
- ♣ Verbs with Titles & Company Names-- A title itself refers to one work or entity, so a singular verb is correct. Many companies have plural words in their names. However, a company should always be treated as a singular unit, requiring a singular verb.
  - Titles as subject = singular verbs
    - **Breathing Lessons** by Anne Tyler **is** a prize-winning novel.
  - Company names as subject = singular verbs
    - **Cohn Brothers boxes and delivers** fine art.
- ♣ Verbs with Words Themselves-- Whenever you write about words as themselves to call attention to those words use a singular verb, even if more than one word is involved.
  - Words themselves as subjects = singular verbs
    - **We implies** that everyone is included.
    - During the Vietnam War, **protective reaction strikes was** a euphemism for *bombing*.



# Grammar and Mechanics

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2. **Non-sexist Pronouns**-- A word is nonsexist when it carries neither male nor female gender. Each pronoun in English carries one of three genders: male (he, him, his), female (she, her, hers), or neutral (you, your, yours, we, our, ours, them, they, their, theirs, it, its).
  - ♠ Use neutral pronouns
    - **Everyone** hopes that he or she will win a scholarship.
    - **Many** students hope that they will win a scholarship.
    - **Everyone** hopes to win a scholarship.
3. **Active and Passive Voice**
  - ♠ Passive voice = subject is acted upon
    - Clams are considered a delicacy by many people.
    - Some types of clams are highly valued by seashell collectors.
  - ♠ Active voice = subject performs action
    - Many people consider clams a delicacy.
    - Seashell collectors highly value certain types of clam shells.

## Three Mechanics' Tips

### 1. Commas

- ♠ Items in a List
  - Academic style: I can't believe you went to Disneyland, Six Flags, and Universal Studios all in one day.
  - Journalistic style: He likes mustard, onions and chili on his hotdogs.
- ♠ Introductory Phrases or Clauses
  - **After we completed our whirlwind visit to all three amusement parks**, we fell into a deep sleep for twelve hours.
  - **To Donald Duck**, Mickey Mouse is not a stranger.
  - **To hotdogs**, chili is a natural accompaniment.
- ♠ Nonrestrictive Elements-- A restrictive element contains information that's essential for the sentence to deliver its message. A nonrestrictive element contains information that's not essential for a sentence to deliver its meaning. To test whether an element is nonrestrictive, read the sentence without the element. If the meaning of the sentence does not change, the element is nonrestrictive.
  - **An energetic person**, Anna Hom enjoys jogging.
  - Anna Hom, **who is in excellent physical condition**, enjoys jogging.
  - Anna Hom enjoys jogging, **which is also Adam's favorite pastime**.
- ♠ Coordinating Conjunctions
  - The sky turned dark gray, **and** the wind died suddenly.
  - The November morning had just begun, **but** it looked like dusk.
  - Shopkeepers closed their stores early, **for** they wanted to get home.
  - Soon high winds would start, **or** thick snow would begin silently.
  - The firehouse whistle blew four times, **so** everyone knew a blizzard was coming.
- ♠ Coordinate Adjectives-- Coordinate Adjectives are two or more adjectives of equal weight that describe a noun. Cumulative adjectives build meaning from word to word, as they move toward the noun. To test whether the adjective is coordinate or cumulative, ask yourself the following questions: 1. Can the order of the adjectives be reversed without changing the meaning or creating nonsense? (If yes, use a comma.) 2. Can *and* be sensibly inserted between the adjectives? (If yes, use a comma.)
  - The **huge, restless** crowd waited for the concert to begin.
  - Hundreds of **roaring, cheering, yelling fans** filled the stadium.



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- Only corn grown for popcorn pops consistently because all other kinds of corn lack **tough, enable-like** shells.
- ♣ Quoted Words-- Explanatory words are *said, stated, declared*, and other words that introduce direct discourse. When they fall in the same sentence, quoted words are set off from explanatory words.
  - Speaking of ideal love, the poet William Black wrote, "Love seeketh not itself to please."
  - "My love is a fever," said William Shakespeare about love's passion.
  - "I love no love," proclaimed the poet Mary Coleridge, "but thee."
- 2. **Colons**-- A colon is a full stop that draws attention to the words that follow. It can be placed only at the end of an independent clause. A colon introduces a list, an appositive or a quotation.
  - ♣ Listed Items
    - **If you really want to lose weight, you must do three things:** eat smaller portions, exercise, and drink lots of water.
    - **The students demanded:** an expanded menu in the cafeteria, improved janitorial services, and more up-to-date textbooks.
  - ♣ Appositives & Quotations
    - Appositive
      - Only cats are likely to approve of one old-fashioned remedy for cuts: **a lotion of catnip, butter, and sugar.**
    - Quotation
      - **The little boy in E. T. did say something neat:** "How do you explain school to a higher intelligence?"
- 3. **Semicolons**-- While a period signals the complete separation of independent clauses, a semicolon indicates only partial ("semi") separation. Use a semicolon in only two situations. A semicolon can replace a period between sentences that are closely related in meaning. Also, a semicolon belongs between sentence structures that already contain one or more commas and with certain lists.
  - ♣ Independent Clauses
    - The desert known as Death Valley became a US National Park in 1994; it used to be an US National Monument.
    - This is my husband's second marriage; it's the first one for me.
  - ♣ Sentence Structures & Lists-- When one or more of the independent clauses already contain a comma, link the independent clauses by substituting a semicolon for the period.
    - When the peacock has presented his back, the spectator will usually begin to walk around him to get a front view; **but** the peacock will continue to turn so that no front view is possible.
    - Our Constitution is in actual operation; everything appears to promise that it will last; **but** in this world, nothing is certain but death and taxes.
    - For anything worth having one must pay the price; and the price is always work, patience, love, self-sacrifice.