

**WRITER'S HANDBOOK**  
**NEWTON SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL**  
**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

**PARTS OF SPEECH**

**Noun:** a person, place, thing, idea, or feeling.

Ex. Love often occupies the minds of adolescents.

**Action Verb:** a word or group of words that shows action.

Ex. The crowd erupted with laughter. (ACTION VERB)

You will be eating dinner soon. (VERB PHRASE)

**Linking Verb:** a word or group of words that links a noun or adjective to the subject.

Ex. I feel proud.

She will become president.

**Active Voice:** The subject in the sentence performs the action (verb).

Ex. *Charlie* found the winning ticket in the chocolate bar.

**Passive Voice:** The action (verb) in the sentence is performed upon the subject.

Ex. The *winning ticket* was found by Charlie.

**Adjective:** a word (including articles-*the, an, a*) that describes a noun or pronoun (answers the questions: What kind? Which one? How much? How many?)

Ex. He had two tickets to see the Red Sox on Friday night.

**Adverb:** a word that describes a VERB, ADJECTIVE, or ANOTHER ADVERB (answers the question: How? How often? When? Where? Why? Under what condition? To what extent?)

Ex. She ran too quickly and arrived early, but she did not bring the tickets.

**Pronoun:** a word that takes the place of a noun (antecedent)

A. **Subject case** (I, you, we, he, she, it, they, who)

**Object case** (me, you, us, him, her, it, them, whom)

B. **Indefinite Pronouns:** all, another, both, each, either, neither, few, many, none, some, one, other, several, someone, everyone, anyone, no one, somebody etc.

**Preposition:** a word that shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and some other word in the sentence (always has an object)

Ex. My house is across the street from the gas station and between two street signs.

**Conjunction:** a connecting word that joins words or groups of words in a sentence.

**Coordinating conjunctions** join words or groups of words of equal rank.

Ex. for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS)

**Correlative conjunctions** are always used in pairs.

Ex. either. . .or, neither. . . nor, both . . . and, not only . . . but also

**Subordinating conjunctions** join a dependent clause to the main part of the sentence.

Ex. after, although, as, as if, as though, because, before, if, since, so that, than, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, while

---

## PARTS OF THE SENTENCE

### Sentence Patterns:

S – V	Dana smiled.
S – LV – SC	Robyn is tired.
S – AV – DO	Natalia threw the ball.
S – AV – IO – DO	Jeremiah gave Joe the key.

**Subject:** The part of the sentence that names the person, thing, or idea that the sentence is about.

**Simple Subject:** The noun, pronoun, or noun substitute that the sentence is about (Can be more than one word)

Ex. The lazy, fat cat sleeps for twenty hours every day.

**Complete Subject:** The simple subject plus all of its modifiers, such as adjectives and prepositional phrases.

Ex. The lazy, fat cat sleeps for twenty hours every day.

**Compound Subject:** A subject composed of two or more nouns/pronouns joined by a coordinating conjunction.

Ex. Jack and Jill went up the hill.

**Predicate:** The part of the sentence that tells what the subject does, what it is, or what happens to it.

**Simple Predicate:** The verb or verb phrase that tells something about the subject.

Ex. The lazy, fat cat sleeps for twenty hours every day.

**Complete Predicate:** The simple predicate plus all of its modifiers, objects, and complements.

Ex. The lazy, fat cat sleeps for twenty hours every day.

**Compound Predicate:** Two or more verbs sharing the same subject.

Ex. Jack went up the hill and fetched a pail of water.

**Direct Objects:** A noun or pronoun that receives the action of an action verb.

Ex. In gym class I threw Jake the ball.

**Indirect Object:** A noun or pronoun that answers the question *to whom, for whom, to what, or for what* following and action verb.

Ex. In gym class I threw Jake the ball.

**Subject Complement:**

**Predicate Nominative:** a noun or pronoun that follows the linking verb and renames or identifies the subject.

Ex. He is a phony in disguise.

**Predicate Adjective:** an adjective that follows the linking verb and modifies or describes the subject

Ex. Sue looks unhealthy.

---

## PHRASES

A **phrase** is a group of words that does NOT have a subject or a verb (cannot be a sentence) and that functions as a single part of speech.

**Appositive Phrases:** A noun (and its modifiers) that comes after and renames another noun in a sentence.

Ex. The group members included Sally, *a high school guidance counselor*, and Mary, *an architect.*

**Prepositional Phrases:** Function as adverbs or adjectives and begin with a preposition and end with a noun (object of the preposition).

**Adverb:** The gorilla lurked *in the mist.* (lurked where?)

**Adjective:** The gorilla *in the tree* is named Sam. (which one?)

**Verbals:** Verb forms used as different parts of speech.

**Participle:**

FORM: verb ending in *ing* (present participle) or *d, ed, n, en, or t* (past participle).

FUNCTION: used as an adjective

Ex. Clay pigeons make good moving targets. (modifies *targets*)

**Participial Phrase:**

FORM: the participle and all of its modifiers and complements

FUNCTION: the entire phrase functions as an adjective

Ex. Tugging his line fiercely, Keith landed a huge trout.

**Gerunds:**

FORM: verb ending in “ing”

FUNCTION: used as a noun (thus may be the subject, D.O., S.C., or object of preposition)

Ex.

Swimming is fun. (Subject)

Dan likes arguing. (D.O.)

Her hobby is gardening. (S.C./P.N)

These boots were made for walking. (Obj. of Prep)

**Gerund Phrases:**

FORM: a gerund with all of its modifiers and complements

FUNCTION: the entire phrase functions as a noun

Ex.

Riding a bike is a great method of exercise. (Subject)

**Infinitives**

FORM: “to” plus a verb

FUNCTION: used as a noun, adverb, or adjective

Ex.

As a noun: To forgive is to forget. (S and S.C.)

As an adjective: The player to watch is the quarterback.  
(modifies *player*—tells us *which* player)

As an adverb: Mrs. Chisolm rose to speak.

(modifies *rose*—tells us *why* she rose)

REMEMBER THAT “TO” CAN ALSO BE A PREPOSITION.

**Infinitive Phrases:**

FORM: the infinitive and all of its modifiers and complements

FUNCTION: the entire phrase functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb

Ex.

She is the person to see about the job. (tells us *which* person—ADJ.)

## CLAUSES

**Clause:** a group of words that has a subject and a verb

**Independent (Main) Clause:** expresses a complete thought

Ex. He watched the movie.

**Dependent (Subordinate) Clause:** expresses an incomplete thought and functions as a single part of speech

Ex. If he were here

**Adjective Clause:** modifies a noun and usually introduced by relative pronouns (who, whose, whom, that, which, where, when)

Ex. The boy who sang in the play is now famous.

**Adverb Clause:** modifies a verb, adjective, or other adverb and introduced by subordinating conjunctions (see conjunction section)

Ex. If you build it, they will come.

**Noun Clause:** functions as the subject, PN, DO, IO, or OP

Ex. I know what you did last summer.

---

## SENTENCE TYPES

**Simple Sentence:** has one independent clause and no subordinate clauses.

Ex. Unlike many other languages, the English alphabet has twenty-six letters to represent the sounds of its words.

**Compound Sentence:** has two or more independent clauses and no subordinate clauses.

Ex. Alphabet comes from *alpha* and *beta*; these are the names of the first two letters in the Greek alphabet.

NOTE: Independent clauses in a compound sentence are connected either by a coordinating conjunction or a semi-colon.

COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS: and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so

**Complex Sentence:** must have ONE independent clause and ONE OR MORE subordinate clauses.

Ex. The Cyrillic alphabet, which is the writing system for Russian, has thirty-one characters.

**Compound-Complex Sentence:** has two or more independent clauses and at least one subordinate clause.

Ex. Sequoyah, who lived from 1766 to 1843, created a writing system, and he taught it to other Cherokee.

## COMMON SENTENCE ERRORS

**Sentence Fragment:** a phrase or subordinate clause punctuated as a full sentence. (Sometimes writers use fragments intentionally for emphasis.)

Ex. The cat climbing in the window.

**Run-on Sentence:** two main clauses, or sentences, joined with no punctuation or with only a comma (also known as a **comma splice**)

Ex. Geraniums are hardy flowers they can grow almost anywhere.

Marsha knew perfectly well what the problem was, she didn't correct it, though.

**Misplaced Modifier:** a modifying word, phrase, or clause placed somewhere in the sentence other than next to the element it is meant to modify.

Ex. We bought the firecrackers from a Tennessee store, which cost \$4.50.

**Dangling Modifier:** a modifier that has nothing specific in the sentence to modify.

Ex. Stopping to consider where their next meal is coming from, their faces grow sadder and their frowns become larger.

**Faulty Agreement:** subjects and verbs that do not agree in number, or pronouns that do not agree with their antecedents in number.

Ex. The performance of the madrigals *precede* the intermission.

Neither my grandparents nor Teddy *are* going to the fair.

Someone left *their* book in the classroom.

**Faulty Parallelism:** repeated constructions that are not equivalent in syntax or form.

Ex. Superman fought for truth, justice, and *keeping crime out of Metropolis*.

**Faulty Diction:** the wrong word used in a given context

Ex. Your speech *infers* that America is headed for bankruptcy.

**Incorrect Pronoun Case:** use of a pronoun in a case inappropriate to its function in the sentence.

Ex. Franklin Pierce is the President *who* I know least about.

They live farther from Nelsonville than *us*.

**Vague Pronoun Reference:** pronouns (especially *this* and *which*) without specific antecedents or with remote antecedents.

Ex. The teacher sat on the tack, *which* sent the class into an uproar.

**Faulty Voice:** use of the passive voice when the active is more appropriate, or mixing active and passive voices.

Ex. The little old man was smacked down by the mail truck.

## CONFUSING WORD PAIRS

**Accept:** to receive

**Except:** exception (means “but” or “not including”)

**Affect:** verb

**Effect:** a noun, as in “special effect”

**Bad:** adjective (I feel bad about hurting your feelings.)

**Badly:** adverb (Tom Cruise behaved badly on *Oprah*.)

**Between:** refers to two people or things

**Among:** refers to a group

**Borrow:** to take something temporarily that must be returned

**Loan:** (noun) the thing that is given

**Lend:** (verb) the opposite of *borrow*

**Could of, Should of, Would of, Might of:** ALWAYS WRONG (could *have*)

**Different than:** ALWAYS WRONG (different *from*)

**Farther:** a physical distance

**Further:** a non-physical distance (to a greater degree or extent)

**Fewer:** for things you can count

**Less:** for things you cannot count

**Good:** adjective (You look good in that sweater.)

**Well:** adverb or adjective referring to health (He sings well. I don't feel well.)

**Lie:** intransitive verb (no direct object) (I lie on the couch.)

**Lay:** transitive verb (takes a direct object) (I lay the book on the table.)

**Many:** Use for written work.

**A lot:** Use in speech (NOT in papers).

**Number of:** can be counted

**Amount of:** general quantity (cannot be counted)

**Than:** Used in comparisons.

**Then:** Adverb denoting time or meaning “therefore”

---

## PUNCTUATION RULES

### The Comma

1. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction joining independent clauses.  
Ex. Mary went to the store, but she didn't buy anything.
2. Use a comma after an introductory clause or phrase  
Ex. In the beginning, there was the Word.
3. Use a comma between ALL items in a series  
Ex. I watched Mike, Carol, and Ted play soccer.
4. Use a comma between coordinate adjectives not joined with *and*. Do not use a comma between cumulative adjectives.  
Ex. With the help of a therapist, Mother has become a strong, confident, independent woman.  
Three large gray shapes moved slowly toward us. (cumulative)
5. Use commas to set off transitional and parenthetical expressions and elements expressing contrast.  
Ex. Lisa did not understand our language; moreover, she was unfamiliar with our customs.  
The prospective babysitter, moreover, had blue hair.
6. DO NOT USE A COMMA TO SEPARATE A VERB FROM ITS SUBJECT OR OBJECT.

### The Semicolon

1. Use a semicolon to join the parts of a compound sentence if no coordinating conjunction is used.  
Ex. I went holiday gift shopping; the stores were mobbed.
2. When there are commas within parts of a series, use a semicolon to separate the parts.  
Ex. This summer I plan to go to Phoenix, AZ; Tampa, FL; New York, NY; and Las Vegas, NV.
3. Use a semicolon before conjunctive adverbs—or parenthetical expressions, such as *in fact*—that join the clauses of a compound sentence. Always place a comma after the conjunctive adverb. **Conjunctive adverbs:** therefore, however, so, consequently, besides, nevertheless, then, yet, moreover  
Ex. I was pulled over for speeding; however, I only received a warning.

## The Colon

1. The colon indicates that a list will follow.
2. The colon introduces an explanation or a definition: for example, it performs that function in this sentence.

## The Dash

The dash should be used for three main purposes:

- to indicate an abrupt change or break in thought (Let's make the call now—no, I take that back.)
- to set off a series of appositives (The performers—jugglers, dancers, and singers—were all awaiting the decision.)
- to mean *namely*, *in other words* or *that is* (I had no real choice—the decision had been made for me.)

## Parentheses

Parentheses (which appear in the middle of this sentence) enclose material that explains or elaborates on the rest of the sentence but isn't really essential. Several things to keep in mind about parentheses:

- If you have a parenthetical mark at the end of the sentence, the punctuation goes outside (like this). (If you have a whole sentence in parentheses, the punctuation goes inside!)
- Use parentheses *sparingly*.

## Underlining/Italicizing:

1. Underline or italicize titles of long works (works that stand alone).  
Novels                                      Journals, Magazines, Newspapers  
Plays                                         Works of Art  
Movies                                        Names of Ships
2. Underline or italicize words as words. Ex. The word *word* can be used as slang.

## Quotation Marks:

1. Use quotation marks with titles of short works (works that are included in larger work).  
Short stories  
Journal articles  
Poems & Songs
2. Use quotation marks in dialogue and when using other people's words (see Quotation Handout).

