

- for several years after retiring as a player. [Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.]
- In 1941, Williams finished the season with a batting average of .406. No player has hit over .400 for a season since then. [Use a semicolon.]
 - Williams acknowledged that Joe DiMaggio was a better all-around player. Williams felt that he was a better hitter than DiMaggio. [Use the subordinating conjunction *although*.]
 - Williams was a stubborn man. He always refused to tip his cap to the crowd after a home run because he claimed that fans were fickle. [Use a semicolon and the transitional phrase for example.]
 - Williams's relationship with the media was unfriendly at best. He sarcastically called baseball writers the "knights of the keyboard" in his memoir. [Use a semicolon.]

14b Combine choppy sentences.

Short sentences demand attention, so you should use them primarily for emphasis. Too many short sentences, one after the other, will give your writing a choppy effect.

If an idea is not important enough to deserve its own sentence, try combining it with a sentence close by. Put any minor ideas in subordinate structures such as phrases or subordinate clauses. (See 49.)

- ▶ Twitter has started to label certain posts by its users/ ^{because the} ~~The~~ company is concerned about the spread of misinformation on its platform.

The writer wanted to emphasize that Twitter has started labeling certain posts, so she put the reason in a subordinate clause beginning with *because*.

- ▶ The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, is a 184-mile waterway constructed in the 1800s/ ~~It~~ was a major source of transportation for goods during the Civil War.

A minor idea is now expressed in an appositive phrase (*a 184-mile waterway constructed in the 1800s*).

Although subordination is ordinarily the most effective technique for combining short, choppy sentences, coordination is appropriate when the ideas are equal in importance.

- On January 1, lawmakers raised the minimum wage, ^{and} lawmakers increased funding for public schools.

Combining two short sentences by joining their predicates (*raised... increased*) is an effective coordination technique.

FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS

Unlike some other languages, written English does not repeat objects or adverbs in adjective clauses. See 30d.

- The apartment that we rented it needed repairs.
The pronoun *it* cannot repeat the relative pronoun *that*.

EXERCISE 14-2

Combine the following sentences by subordinating minor ideas or by coordinating ideas of equal importance. You must decide which ideas are minor because the sentences are given out of context. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

Agnes, [^] was another girl I worked with, [^] She was a quiet child.

- The X-Men comic books and Japanese woodcuts of kabuki dancers were part of Marlena's research project on popular culture. They covered the tabletop and the chairs.
- The students organized a petition. The petition asked to change the school motto. The motto was "A man's greatest strength is his education."
- Employees can apply for a spot in the leadership program. The program teaches management and communication skills.
- Shore houses were flooded up to the first floor. Beaches were washed away. Brant's Lighthouse was swallowed by the sea.
- Laura Thackray was an engineer at Volvo Car Corporation. She addressed women's safety needs. She designed a pregnant crash-test dummy.

14c Avoid ineffective or excessive coordination.

Coordinate structures are appropriate only when you intend to draw readers' attention equally to two or more ideas: *Professor Sakellarios praises loudly, and she criticizes softly*. If one idea is

- ▶ At every building entrance, our school installed ramps accessible to ^{people who use wheelchairs.} ~~the handicapped.~~
- ▶ North Dakota takes its name from the ^{Lakota} ~~Indian~~ word meaning “friend” or “ally.”

Negative stereotypes (such as “drives like an old lady”) are of course hurtful. But even if you believe your generalization to be positive, it is harmful to make assumptions based on a person’s or group’s characteristics.

- ▶ It was no surprise that Greer, ^{an excellent math and science student,} ~~a Chinese-American,~~ was selected for the honors chemistry program.

18 Find the exact words.

Two reference works (or their online equivalents) will help you find words to express your meaning exactly: a good dictionary, such as *The American Heritage Dictionary* or *Merriam-Webster* online, and a collection of synonyms and antonyms, such as *Roget’s International Thesaurus*.

NOTE: Do not turn to a thesaurus in search of impressive words. Look for words that express your meaning exactly.

18a Select words with appropriate connotations.

In addition to their strict dictionary meanings (or *denotations*), words have *connotations*, emotional colorings that affect how readers respond to them. The word *steel* denotes “commercial iron that contains carbon,” but it also calls up images associated with steel. These associations give the word its connotations—cold, hard, smooth, unbending.

If the connotation of a word does not seem appropriate for your purpose, your audience, or your subject matter, you should

change the word. When a more appropriate synonym does not come quickly to mind, consult a dictionary or a thesaurus.

- ▶ When American soldiers returned home after World War II, many women ^{left} abandoned their jobs in favor of marriage.

The word *abandoned* is too negative for the context.

EXERCISE 18-1

Use a dictionary and a thesaurus to find at least four synonyms for each of the following words. Be prepared to explain any slight differences in meaning.

1. decay (verb)
2. difficult (adjective)
3. hurry (verb)
4. pleasure (noun)
5. secret (adjective)
6. talent (noun)

18b Prefer specific, concrete nouns.

Unlike general nouns, which refer to broad classes of things, specific nouns point to particular items. *Film*, for example, names a general class, *animated film* names a narrower class, and *Coco* is more specific still. Other examples: *team*, *football team*, *Denver Broncos*; *music*, *symphony*, *Beethoven's Ninth*.

Unlike abstract nouns, which refer to qualities and ideas (*justice*, *beauty*, *realism*), concrete nouns point to immediate, often sensory experience and to physical objects (*steeple*, *lilac*, *stone*).

Specific, concrete nouns express meaning more vividly than general or abstract ones. Although general and abstract language is sometimes necessary to convey your meaning, use specific, concrete words when possible.

- ▶ The senator spoke about the challenges of the future: *climate change*, *dwindling resources*, and *domestic extremism*.
the ~~environment and world peace~~.

Nouns such as *thing*, *area*, *aspect*, and *factor* are especially dull and imprecise.

- ▶ Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is about slavery, *motherhood*, and *memory*.
among other things.

18c Take care with idioms.

Idioms are speech forms that follow no easily specified rules. The English say “Bernice went *to hospital*,” an idiom strange to American ears, which are accustomed to hearing *the* in front of *hospital*. Idioms with prepositions (such as *with*, *to*, *at*, and *of*) sometimes cause trouble, especially when they follow certain verbs and adjectives. When in doubt, consult a dictionary.

UNIDIOMATIC

agree to (an idea)
 angry at (a person)
 different than (a person
 or thing)
 off of
 plan on doing
 sure and
 try and

IDIOMATIC

agree with (an idea)
 angry with (a person)
 different from (a person
 or thing)
 off
 plan to do
 sure to
 try to

FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS

Because idioms follow no particular rules, you must learn them individually. You may find it helpful to keep a list of idioms that you frequently encounter in conversation and in reading.

EXERCISE 18-2

Edit the following sentences to eliminate errors in the use of idiomatic expressions. If a sentence is correct, write “correct” after it. Revisions appear in the back of the book.

We agreed to abide ^{by} ~~with~~ the decision of the judge.

- Queen Anne was so angry at Sarah Churchill that she refused to see her again.
- Jean-Pierre is going to try and finish his sociology project this weekend.
- The parade moved off of the street and onto the beach.
- The experienced hikers plan on making the dangerous trek across the mountains.
- Be sure to fill out the necessary forms before going to the DMV.

18d Do not rely heavily on clichés.

The pioneer who first announced that he had “slept like a log” no doubt amused his companions with a fresh and unlikely comparison. Today, however, that comparison is a cliché, a saying that can no longer add emphasis or surprise.

To see just how predictable clichés are, put your hand over the right-hand column in the following list and then finish the phrases on the left.

busy as a

cool as a

dead as a

light as a

avoid clichés like the

bee, beaver

cucumber

doornail

feather

plague

The solution for clichés is simple: Delete them.

- ▶ When I received a full scholarship from my second-choice school, I ~~found myself between a rock and a hard place.~~
felt pressured to settle for second best.

Sometimes you can write around a cliché by adding an element of surprise. For example, one student who had written that she had butterflies in her stomach revised her cliché like this:

If all of the action in my stomach is caused by butterflies, there must be a horde of them, with horseshoes on.

The image of butterflies wearing horseshoes is fresh and unlikely, not predictable like the original cliché.

18e Use figures of speech with care.

A figure of speech is an expression that uses words imaginatively (rather than literally) to make abstract ideas concrete. Most often, figures of speech compare two seemingly unlike things to reveal surprising similarities.

In a *simile*, the writer makes the comparison explicitly, usually by introducing it with *like* or *as*: *By the time cotton had to be picked, Grandfather's neck was as red as the clay he plowed.*

In a *metaphor*, the *like* or *as* is omitted, and the comparison is implied. Historians, economists, and politicians, for example, use metaphors when they describe the future as a rocky path

forward, compare the economy to a rigged game, describe a historical moment as a new chapter, or debate whether America is a melting pot.

Although figures of speech are useful devices, writers sometimes misuse them if they don't think about the images they evoke. The result is often a *mixed metaphor*, the use of two or more images that don't make sense together.

- ▶ Our manager decided to put all controversial issues

~~in a holding pattern~~ on a back burner until after the annual meeting.

Here the writer is mixing airplanes and stoves. Simply deleting one of the images corrects the problem.

EXERCISE 18-3

Edit the following sentences to replace worn-out expressions and clarify mixed figures of speech. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

When he heard about the accident, ^{the color drained from his face.} ~~he turned white as a sheet.~~

- a. John stormed into the room like a bull in a china shop.
- b. Some people insist that they'll always be there for you, even when they haven't been before.
- c. The Cubs easily beat the Mets, who were in over their heads early in the game today at Wrigley Field.
- d. We ironed out the sticky spots in our relationship.
- e. My mother accused me of beating around the bush when in fact I was just talking off the top of my head.

18f Use the right words. (Glossary of usage)

This glossary includes words commonly confused (such as *accept* and *except*), words commonly misused (such as *anxious*), and words and phrases that are used informally (such as *irregardless*). It also lists words that are often appropriate in speech but may be inappropriate in academic writing.

accept, except *Accept* is a verb meaning "to receive." *Except* is usually a preposition meaning "excluding." *I will accept all the packages except that one.* *Except* is also a verb meaning "to exclude." *Please except that item from the list.*

advice, advise *Advice* is a noun, *advise* a verb. We *advise* you to follow Hector's *advice*.

affect, effect *Affect* is usually a verb meaning "to influence." *Effect* is usually a noun meaning "result." *The drug did not affect the disease, and it had adverse side effects.* *Effect* can also be a verb meaning "to bring about." *Only the president can effect such a dramatic change.*

agree to, agree with *Agree to* means "to give consent to." *Agree with* means "to be in accord with" or "to come to an understanding with." He *agrees with me about the need for change, but he won't agree to my plan.*

all ready, already *All ready* means "completely prepared." *Already* means "previously." *Susan was all ready for the concert, but her friends had already left.*

all together, altogether *All together* means "everyone or everything in one place." *Altogether* means "entirely." *We were not altogether certain that we could bring the family all together for the reunion.*

allude To *allude* to something is to make an indirect reference to it. Do not use *allude* to mean "to refer directly." *In his lecture, the professor referred (not alluded) to several pre-Socratic philosophers.*

allusion, illusion An *allusion* is an indirect reference. An *illusion* is a misconception or false impression. *Did you catch my allusion to Shakespeare? Mirrors give the room an illusion of depth.*

a lot *A lot* is two words. Do not write *alot*. *Sam lost a lot of weight.* See also *lots, lots of*.

among, between See *between, among*.

amount, number Use *amount* with quantities that cannot be counted; use *number* with those that can. *This recipe calls for a large amount of sugar.* *We have a large number of toads in our garden.*

anyone, any one *Anyone*, an indefinite pronoun, means "any person at all." *Any one*, the pronoun *one* preceded by the adjective *any*, refers to a particular person or thing in a group. *Anyone from the winning team may choose any one of the prizes on display.*

anyplace *Anyplace* is informal. In formal writing, use *anywhere*.

as Do not use *as* to mean "because" if there is any chance of ambiguity. *We canceled the picnic because (not as) it began raining.* *As* here could mean either "because" or "when."

awhile, a while *Awhile* is an adverb; it can modify a verb, but it cannot be the object of a preposition such as *for*. The two-word form *a while* is a noun preceded by an article and therefore can be the object of a preposition. *Stay awhile.* *Stay for a while.*

being as, being that *Being as* and *being that* are informal expressions. Write *because* instead. *Because* (not *Being as*) *I slept late, I had to skip breakfast.*

beside, besides *Beside* is a preposition meaning "at the side of" or "next to." *Annie sleeps with a flashlight beside her bed.* *Besides* is a preposition meaning "except" or "in addition to." *No one besides Terrie can have that ice cream.* *Besides* is also an adverb meaning "in addition." *I'm not hungry; besides, I don't like ice cream.*

between, among Ordinarily, use *among* with three or more entities, *between* with two. *The prize was divided among several contestants. You have a choice between carrots and beans.*

bring, take Use *bring* when an object is being transported toward you, *take* when it is being moved away. *Please bring me a glass of water. Please take these forms to Mr. Scott.*

can, may *Can* is traditionally reserved for ability, *may* for permission. *Can you speak French? May I help you?*

capital, capitol *Capital* refers to a city, *capitol* to a building where lawmakers meet. *Capital* also refers to wealth or resources. *The residents of the state capital protested plans to close the streets surrounding the capitol.*

cite, site *Cite* means "to quote as an authority or example." *Site* is usually a noun meaning "a particular place." *He cited the zoning law in his argument against the proposed site of the gas station.* Locations on the Internet are usually referred to as *sites* (short for *websites*). *The library's site now includes a chat feature.*

compare to, compare with *Compare to* means "to represent as similar." *She compared him to a wild stallion.* *Compare with* means "to examine similarities and differences." *The study compared the language ability of apes with that of dolphins.*

complement, compliment *Complement* is a verb meaning "to go with or complete" or a noun meaning "something that completes." As a verb, *compliment* means "to flatter"; as a noun, it means "flattering remark." *Her skill at rushing the net complements his skill at volleying. Min's flower arrangements receive many compliments.*

conscience, conscious *Conscience* is a noun meaning "moral principles." *Conscious* is an adjective meaning "aware or alert." *Let your conscience be your guide. Were you conscious of his love for you?*

continual, continuous *Continual* means "repeated regularly and frequently." *She grew weary of the continual telephone calls.* *Continuous* means "extended or prolonged without interruption." *The broken siren made a continuous wail.*

council, counsel A *council* is a deliberative body, and a *councilor* is a member of such a body. *Counsel* usually means "advice" and can also mean

"lawyer"; a *counselor* is one who gives advice or guidance. The councilors met to draft the council's position paper. The pastor offered wise counsel to the troubled teenager.

data *Data* is a plural noun technically meaning "facts or propositions." But *data* is increasingly being accepted as a singular noun. The new data suggest (or suggests) that our theory is correct. (The singular *datum* is rarely used.)

different from, different than Ordinarily, write *different from*. Your sense of style is *different from Jim's*. However, *different than* is acceptable to avoid an awkward construction. Please let me know if your plans are *different than* (to avoid *from what*) they were six weeks ago.

disinterested, uninterested *Disinterested* means "impartial, objective"; *uninterested* means "not interested." We sought the advice of a *disinterested counselor* to help us solve our problem. Mark was *uninterested* in anyone's opinion but his own.

e.g. When writing sentences, replace the Latin abbreviation *e.g.* with its English equivalent: *for example* or *for instance*.

emigrate from, immigrate to *Emigrate* means "to leave one country or region to settle in another." In 1903, my great-grandfather *emigrated from Russia to escape the religious pogroms*. *Immigrate* means "to enter another country and reside there." More than fifty thousand Bosnians *immigrated to the United States in the 1990s*.

etc. Avoid ending a list with *etc.* It is more emphatic to end with an example, and in most contexts readers will understand that the list is not exhaustive. When you don't wish to end with an example, *and so on* is more graceful than *etc.*

everyone, every one *Everyone* is an indefinite pronoun. *Every one*, the pronoun *one* preceded by the adjective *every*, means "each individual or thing in a particular group." *Every one* is usually followed by *of*. *Everyone wanted to go. Every one of the missing books was found.*

except See *accept, except*.

explicit, implicit *Explicit* means "expressed directly" or "clearly defined"; *implicit* means "implied, unstated." I gave him *explicit instructions not to go swimming*. My mother's silence indicated her *implicit approval*.

farther, further *Farther* usually describes distances. *Further* usually suggests quantity or degree. *Chicago is farther from Miami than I thought. I would be grateful for further suggestions.*

fewer, less Use *fewer* for items that can be counted; use *less* for items that cannot be counted. *Fewer people are living in the city. Please put less sugar in my tea.*

firstly *Firstly* sounds pretentious, and it leads to the ungainly series *firstly, secondly, thirdly*, and so on. Write *first, second, third* instead.

further See *farther, further*.

good, well *Good* is an adjective, *well* an adverb. (See 26a, 26b, and 26c.)
He hasn't felt good about his game since he sprained his wrist last season. She performed well on the uneven parallel bars.

hanged, hung *Hanged* is the past-tense and past-participle form of the verb *hang* meaning "to execute." *The prisoner was hanged at dawn. Hung* is the past-tense and past-participle form of the verb *hang* meaning "to fasten or suspend." *The stockings were hung by the chimney with care.*

hopefully *Hopefully* means "in a hopeful manner." *We looked hopefully to the future.* Some usage experts object to the use of *hopefully* as a sentence adverb on grounds of clarity. To be safe, avoid using *hopefully* in sentences such as the following: *Hopefully, your son will recover soon.* Instead, indicate who is doing the hoping: *I hope that your son will recover soon.*

however It is acceptable to start a sentence with the conjunctive adverb *however*, but be careful to place the word in your sentence according to your intended meaning and emphasis. All of the following sentences are correct. *Pam decided, however, to attend the lecture. However, Pam decided to attend the lecture. (She had been considering other activities.) Pam, however, decided to attend the lecture. (Unlike someone else, Pam chose to attend the lecture.)* (See 33f.)

hung See *hanged, hung*.

i.e. When writing sentences, use *in other words* or *that is* rather than the Latin abbreviation *i.e.* to introduce a clarifying statement. *Exposure to borax usually causes only mild skin irritation; in other words (not i.e.), it's not usually toxic.*

if, whether Use *if* to express a condition and *whether* to express alternatives. *If you go on a trip, whether to Idaho or Italy, remember to bring identification.*

illusion See *allusion, illusion*.

immigrate See *emigrate from, immigrate to*.

imply, infer *Imply* means "to suggest or state indirectly"; *infer* means "to draw a conclusion." *Jonathan implied that he knew all about databases, but the interviewer inferred that John was inexperienced.*

in, into *In* indicates location or condition; *into* indicates movement or a change in condition. *They found the lost letters in a box after moving into the house.*

irregardless *Irregardless* is incorrect. Use *regardless*.

kind of, sort of Avoid using *kind of* or *sort of* to mean "somewhat." *The movie was somewhat (not sort of) boring. Do not put a after either phrase. That kind of (not kind of a) movie bores me.*

lay, lie See *lie, lay*.

lead, led *Lead* is a metallic element; it is a noun. *Led* is the past tense of the verb *lead*. *He led me to the treasure.*

less See *fewer, less*.

lie, lay *Lie* is an intransitive verb meaning "to recline or rest on a surface." Its forms are *lie, lay, lain*. *Lay* is a transitive verb meaning "to put or place." Its forms are *lay, laid, laid*. *I'm going to lay my phone on the picnic table and lie in the hammock.*

like, as *Like* is a preposition, not a subordinating conjunction. It can be followed only by a noun or a noun phrase. *As* is a subordinating conjunction that introduces a subordinate clause. In casual speech, you may say *She looks like she hasn't slept*. But in academic writing, use *as*. *She looks as if she hasn't slept*. (See also 47f and 47g.)

loose, lose *Loose* is an adjective meaning "not securely fastened." *Lose* is a verb meaning "to misplace" or "to not win." *Did you lose all your loose change?*

lots, lots of *Lots* and *lots of* are informal substitutes for *many, much, or a lot*. Avoid using them in formal writing.

may See *can, may*.

maybe, may be *Maybe* is an adverb meaning "possibly." *Maybe the sun will shine tomorrow*. *May be* is a verb phrase. *Tomorrow may be brighter*.

number See *amount, number*.

of Use the verb *have*, not the preposition *of*, after the verbs *could, should, would, may, might, and must*. *They must have (not must of) left early*.

off of *Off* is sufficient. Omit *of*. *The ball rolled off (not off of) the table*.

passed, past *Passed* is the past tense of the verb *pass*. *Ann passed me another slice of cake*. *Past* usually means "belonging to a former time" or "beyond a time or place." *Our past president spoke until past midnight*. *The hotel is just past the next intersection*.

precede, proceed *Precede* means "to come before." *Proceed* means "to go forward." *As we proceeded up the mountain path, we noticed fresh tracks in the mud, evidence that a group of hikers had preceded us*.

principal, principle *Principal* is a noun meaning "the head of a school or an organization" or "a sum of money." It is also an adjective meaning "most important." *Principle* is a noun meaning "a basic truth or law." *The principal expelled her for three principal reasons*. *We believe in the principle of equal justice for all*.

quotation, quote *Quotation* is a noun; *quote* is a verb. Avoid using *quote* as a shortened form of *quotation*. *Her quotations (not Her quotes) are appearing in various social media channels*.

raise, rise *Raise* is a transitive verb meaning "to move or cause to move upward." It takes a direct object. *I raised the shades.* *Rise* is an intransitive verb meaning "to go up." *Heat rises.*

real, really *Real* is an adjective; *really* is an adverb. *Real* is sometimes used informally as an adverb, but avoid this use in formal writing. *She was really (not real) angry.*

reason why The expression *reason why* is redundant. *The reason (not The reason why) Jones lost the election is clear.*

respectfully, respectively *Respectfully* means "showing or marked by respect." *Respectively* means "each in the order given." *He respectfully submitted his opinion to the judge. Sofia, Henry, and Jesse were a butcher, a baker, and a lawyer, respectively.*

set, sit *Set* is a transitive verb meaning "to put" or "to place." Its past tense is *set*. *Sit* is an intransitive verb meaning "to be seated." Its past tense is *sat*. *She set the dough in a warm corner of the kitchen. The cat sat in the doorway.*

since Do not use *since* to mean "because" if there is any chance of ambiguity. *Because (not Since) we won the game, we have been celebrating with pizza.* *Since* here could mean either "because" or "from the time that."

site See *cite, site*.

sometime, some time, sometimes *Sometime* is an adverb meaning "at an indefinite time." *Some time* is the adjective *some* modifying the noun *time* and means "a period of time." *Sometimes* is an adverb meaning "at times, now and then." *I'll see you sometime soon. I haven't lived there for some time. Sometimes I see him at work.*

suppose to *Suppose to* is an informal version of *supposed to*. *I am supposed to (not suppose to) be there by noon.*

sure and Write *sure to*. *We were all taught to be sure to (not sure and) look both ways before crossing a street.*

take See *bring, take*.

than, then *Than* is a conjunction used in comparisons; *then* is an adverb denoting time. *That pizza is more than I can eat. Tom laughed, and then we recognized him.*

that See *who, which, that*.

that, which Many writers reserve *that* for restrictive clauses, *which* for nonrestrictive clauses. *Restaurants that allow pets are few in number. Restaurants, which generally don't allow pets, must follow strict health codes.* (See 33e.)

there, their, they're *There* is an adverb specifying place; it is also an expletive (placeholder). Adverb: *Sylvia is sitting there patiently.* Expletive: *There are*

two plums left. *Their* is a possessive pronoun. *Fred and Jane finally washed their car.* *They're* is a contraction of *they are*. *They're later than usual today.*

to, too, two *To* is a preposition; *too* is an adverb; *two* is a number. *Too many of your shots slice to the left, but the last two were just right.*

toward, towards *Toward* and *towards* are generally interchangeable, although *toward* is preferred in American English.

try and *Try and* is an informal version of *try to*. *The teacher asked us all to try to (not try and) write an original haiku.*

unique Avoid expressions such as *most unique, more straight, less perfect, very round*. Either something is unique or it isn't. It is illogical to suggest degrees of uniqueness. (See 26d.)

wait for, wait on *Wait for* means "to be in readiness for" or "to await." *Wait on* means "to serve." *We're waiting for (not waiting on) Ruth to take us to the museum.*

weather, whether The noun *weather* refers to the state of the atmosphere. *Whether* is a conjunction referring to a choice between alternatives. *We wondered whether the weather would clear.*

well, good See *good, well*.

which See *that, which* and *who, which, that*.

while Avoid using *while* to mean "although" or "whereas" if there is any chance of ambiguity. *Although (not While) Gloria lost money in the slot machine, Tanya won money at roulette.* Here *While* could mean either "although" or "at the same time that."

who, which, that Do not use *which* to refer to persons. Use *who* instead. *That*, though generally used to refer to things, may be used to refer to a particular group of people. *The player who (not that or which) made the basket at the buzzer was named MVP. The team that scores the most points in this game will win the tournament.*

who, whom *Who* is used for subjects and subject complements; *whom* is used for objects. *Who are the candidates for this year's scholarship? The candidates, whom I met with yesterday, are impressive.* (See 25.)

who's, whose *Who's* is a contraction of *who is*; *whose* is a possessive pronoun. *Who's ready for more popcorn? Whose coat is this?* (See 37b and 37c.)

would of *Would of* is an informal version of *would have*. *She would have (not would of) had a chance to play if she had arrived on time.*

your, you're *Your* is a possessive pronoun; *you're* is a contraction of *you are*. *Is that your new bike? You're in the finals.* (See 37b, 37c, and 47b.)

21 Make subjects and verbs agree.

In the present tense, verbs agree with their subjects in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second, third): *I sing, you sing, he sings, she sings, we sing, they sing*. Even if your ear recognizes the subject-verb combinations presented in 21a, you will no doubt encounter tricky situations such as those described in 21b–21k.

21a Learn to recognize subject-verb combinations.

This section describes the basic guidelines for making present-tense verbs agree with their subjects. The present-tense ending *-s* (or *-es*) is used on a verb if its subject is third-person singular (*he, she, it*, and singular nouns); otherwise, the verb takes no ending. Consider, for example, the present-tense forms of the verbs *love* and *try*, given at the beginning of the chart on page 182.

The verb *be* varies from this pattern; it has special forms in both the present and the past tense. These forms appear at the end of the chart.

If you aren't sure which forms to use, use the charts on pages 182 and 183 as you proofread your work for subject-verb agreement. You may also want to look at 27c on *-s* endings of regular and irregular verbs.

21b Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a word that comes between.

Word groups often come between the subject and the verb. Such word groups, usually modifying the subject, may contain a noun that appears to be the subject. By mentally stripping away such modifiers, you can isolate the noun that is in fact the subject.

The *samples* on the tray in the lab *need* testing.

- ▶ High levels of air pollution causes damage to the respiratory tract.

The subject is *levels*, not *pollution*. Strip away the phrase of *air pollution* to hear the correct verb: *levels cause*.

- ▶ The slaughter of pandas for their pelts ^{has} have caused the panda population to decline drastically.

The subject is *slaughter*, not *pandas* or *pelts*.

NOTE: Phrases beginning with the prepositions *as well as*, *in addition to*, *accompanied by*, and *along with* do not make a singular subject plural.

- ▶ The governor as well as his press secretary ^{was} were on the plane.

To emphasize that two people were on the plane, the writer could use *and* instead: *The governor and his press secretary were on the plane.*

21c Treat most subjects joined with *and* as plural.

A subject with two or more parts is said to be compound. If the parts are connected with *and*, the subject is nearly always plural.

 Leon and Jan often jog together.

- ▶ The Supreme Court's willingness to hear the case and its affirmation of the original decision ^{have} has set a new precedent.

EXCEPTION 1: When the parts of the subject form a single unit or when they refer to the same person or thing, treat the subject as singular.

Fish and chips is always on the menu.

Ali's friend and adviser was surprised by her decision.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Present-tense forms of love and try (typical verbs)

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
FIRST PERSON	I	love	we	love
SECOND PERSON	you	love	you	love
THIRD PERSON	he/she/it*	loves	they**	love

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
FIRST PERSON	I	try	we	try
SECOND PERSON	you	try	you	try
THIRD PERSON	he/she/it*	tries	they**	try

Present-tense forms of have

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
FIRST PERSON	I	have	we	have
SECOND PERSON	you	have	you	have
THIRD PERSON	he/she/it*	has	they**	have

Present-tense forms of do (including negative forms)

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
FIRST PERSON	I	do/don't	we	do/don't
SECOND PERSON	you	do/don't	you	do/don't
THIRD PERSON	he/she/it*	does/doesn't	they**	do/don't

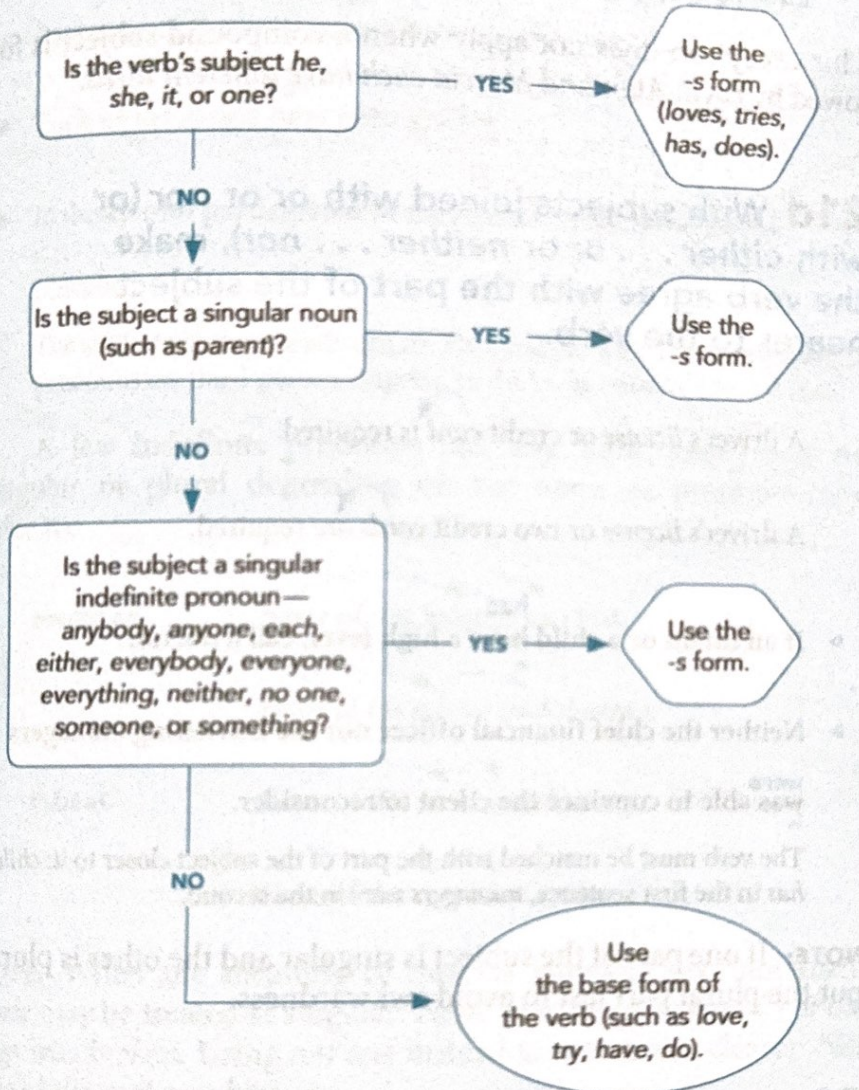
Present-tense and past-tense forms of be

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
FIRST PERSON	I	am/was	we	are/were
SECOND PERSON	you	are/were	you	are/were
THIRD PERSON	he/she/it*	is/was	they**	are/were

*And singular nouns (*child, Roger*)

**And plural nouns (*children, the Mannings*), or when used as a gender-neutral singular pronoun

WHEN TO USE THE -S (OR -ES) FORM OF A PRESENT-TENSE VERB



EXCEPTION: Choosing the correct present-tense form of *be* (*am*, *is*, or *are*) is not quite so simple. See the chart on the previous page for both present- and past-tense forms of *be*.

NOTE: Do not use the -s form of a verb if it follows a modal verb such as *can*, *must*, or *should* or another helping verb. (See 28c.)

EXCEPTION 2: When a compound subject is preceded by *each* or *every*, treat it as singular.

Each tree, shrub, and vine needs to be sprayed.

This exception does not apply when a compound subject is followed by *each*: *Alan and Marcia each have different ideas.*

21d With subjects joined with *or* or *nor* (or with *either . . . or* or *neither . . . nor*), make the verb agree with the part of the subject nearer to the verb.

A driver's license or credit card ^{is} required.

A driver's license or two credit cards ^{are} required.

▶ If an infant or a child ^{has} have a high fever, call a doctor.

▶ Neither the chief financial officer nor the marketing managers

^{were} was able to convince the client to reconsider.

The verb must be matched with the part of the subject closer to it: *child has* in the first sentence, *managers were* in the second.

NOTE: If one part of the subject is singular and the other is plural, put the plural part last to avoid awkwardness.

21e Treat most indefinite pronouns as singular.

Indefinite pronouns, those that do not refer to specific persons or things, are singular.

COMMONLY USED INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

anybody	each	everyone	nobody	somebody
anyone	either	everything	no one	someone
anything	everybody	neither	nothing	something

Many of these words appear to have plural meanings, and they are often treated as plural in casual speech. In formal written English, however, they are nearly always treated as singular.

Everyone on the team *supports* the coach.

- ▶ Each of the essays ^{has} ~~have~~ been graded.
- ▶ Nobody who participated in the clinical trials ^{was} ~~were~~ given a placebo.

The subjects of these sentences are *Each* and *Nobody*. These indefinite pronouns are third-person singular, so the verbs must be *has* and *was*.

A few indefinite pronouns (*all*, *any*, *none*, *some*) may be singular or plural depending on the noun or pronoun they refer to.

SINGULAR

Some of our luggage *was* lost.

None of his advice *makes* sense.

PLURAL

Some of the rocks *are* slippery.

None of the eggs *were* broken.

NOTE: When the meaning of *none* is emphatically “not one,” *none* may be treated as singular: *None* [meaning “Not one”] *of* the eggs *was* broken. Using *not one* instead is sometimes clearer: *Not one of the eggs was broken.*

21f Treat collective nouns as singular unless the meaning is clearly plural.

Collective nouns such as *jury*, *committee*, *audience*, *crowd*, *troop*, *family*, and *couple* name a class or a group. Collective nouns are nearly always treated as singular to emphasize the group as a unit. Occasionally, when there is some reason to draw attention

to the individual members of the group, a collective noun may be treated as plural. (See also 22b.)

SINGULAR The *class* respects the teacher.

PLURAL The *class* are debating among themselves.

To underscore the notion of individuality in the second sentence, many writers would add a clearly plural noun.

PLURAL The *class members* are debating among themselves.

► The board of trustees ^{meets} meet in Denver twice a year.

The board as a whole meets; there is no reason to draw attention to its individual members.

► A young couple ^{were} were arguing about politics while holding hands.

The meaning is clearly plural. Only separate individuals can argue and hold hands.

NOTE: The phrase *the number* is treated as singular, *a number* as plural.

SINGULAR The *number* of school-age children is declining.

PLURAL A *number* of children are attending the wedding.

NOTE: In general, when a fraction or a unit of measurement is used with a singular noun, treat it as singular; when it is used with a plural noun, treat it as plural.

SINGULAR Twenty *inches* of wallboard was covered with mud.

PLURAL Two *pounds* of blueberries were used to make the pie.

21g Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb.

Verbs ordinarily follow subjects. When this order is reversed, it is easy to become confused. Sentences beginning with *there is* or *there are* (or *there was* or *there were*) are inverted; the subject follows the verb.

There ^{are} surprisingly few honeybees left in southern China.

- ▶ There ^{were} was a social worker and a journalist at the meeting.

The subject, *worker and journalist*, is plural, so the verb must be *were*.

Occasionally, you may decide to invert a sentence for variety or effect. When you do so, check to make sure that your subject and verb agree.

- ▶ Of particular concern ^{are} is penicillin and tetracycline, antibiotics used to make animals more resistant to disease.

The subject, *penicillin and tetracycline*, is plural, so the verb must be *are*.

21h Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a subject complement.

One basic sentence pattern in English consists of a subject, a linking verb, and a subject complement: *Amir is a lawyer*. Because the subject complement (*lawyer*) names or describes the subject (*Amir*), it is sometimes mistaken for the subject. (See 48b on subject complements.)

These ^{are} exercises are a way to test your ability to perform under pressure.

- ▶ A tent and a sleeping bag ^{is} are the required equipment.

Tent and bag is the subject, not *equipment*.

- A major force in today's economy ^{is} ~~are~~ children — as consumers, decision makers, and trend spotters.

Force is the subject, not *children*. If the corrected version seems too awkward, make *children* the subject: *Children are a major force in today's economy — as consumers, decision makers, and trend spotters.*

21i Ensure that *who*, *which*, and *that* take verbs that agree with their antecedents.

Like most pronouns, the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that* have antecedents, nouns or pronouns to which they refer. A relative pronoun used as the subject of a subordinate clause takes a verb that agrees with its antecedent.

Take a *course* ^{ANT} *that* ^{PN} *prepares* ^V you for classroom management.

One of the

Constructions such as *one of the students who* [or *one of the things that*] cause problems for writers. Do not assume that the antecedent must be *one*. Instead, consider the logic of the sentence.

- Our ability to use language is *one of the things that set* us apart from animals.

The antecedent of *that* is *things*, not *one*. Several things set us apart from animals.

Only one of the

When the phrase *the only* comes before *one*, you are safe in assuming that *one* is the antecedent of the relative pronoun.

- Veronica was the *only one of the first-year Spanish students* ^{was} ~~were~~ fluent enough to apply for the exchange program.

The antecedent of *who* is *one*, not *students*. Only one student was fluent enough.

21j Treat words such as *athletics*, *economics*, *mathematics*, and *news* as singular, despite their plural form.

- ▶ Politics ^{is} are among my mother's favorite pastimes.
^

EXCEPTION: Occasionally some of these words, especially *economics*, *mathematics*, *politics*, and *statistics*, have plural meanings: *Office politics often sway decisions about hiring and promotion.* *The economics of the building plan are prohibitive.*

21k Treat titles of works, company names, words mentioned as words, and gerund phrases as singular.

- ▶ *Lost Cities* ^{describes} describe the discoveries of fifty ancient civilizations.
^
- ▶ *Delmonico Brothers* ^{specializes} specialize in organic produce.
^
- ▶ *Controlled substances* ^{is} are a euphemism for illegal drugs.
^

A gerund phrase consists of an *-ing* verb form followed by any objects, complements, or modifiers (see 49b). Treat gerund phrases as singular.

- ▶ Encountering long wait times ^{makes} make customers impatient.
^

EXERCISE 21-1 Edit the following sentences to eliminate problems with subject-verb agreement. If a sentence is correct, write "correct" after it. Answers appear in the back of the book.

Jack's first days in the infantry ^{were} was grueling.
^

- One of the main reasons for elephant poaching are the profits received from selling the ivory tusks.
- Not until my interview with Dr. Hwang were other possibilities opened to me.
- A number of students in the seminar was aware of the importance of joining the discussion.