



A Review of Grammar and Mechanics for Writing Benefits

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The purpose of this article is to provide useful information on grammar and mechanics for students or people interested in learning how to write properly and clearly. Not only that, it can help the readers to understand the written message, for the knowledge of grammar and mechanics can help them understand the relationships among the various parts of the sentences.

The article “A Review of Grammar and Mechanics for Writing Benefits” is divided into two parts: grammar and mechanics. The grammar part is a review of the use of nouns, determiners, articles, pronouns, verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, the passive, gerunds, adjectives, and adverbs. For the mechanics part, the emphasis is on the use of capital letters and punctuation marks.

Keywords : Grammar, mechanics, writing benefits

A REVIEW OF GRAMMAR

I. NOUNS

A. Count/Countable Nouns

1. Count nouns take a/an or one in the singular, e.g. a book, a uniform, an hour, an orange, one college, one watch.

2. They usually take a final s/es in the plural, e.g. books, uniforms, hours, oranges, colleges, watches.

3. Some are irregular; they do not take s/es in the plural, e.g. child – children, foot – feet, mouse – mice, tooth – teeth.

4. Some have the same form for both the singular and the plural, e.g. deer, salmon, sheep, squid.

B. Noncount/Uncountable Nouns

1. Noncount nouns **do not** take a/

an or one in the singular

2. They do not generally have a plural form.

3. Some of these nouns are, e.g. advice, air, butter, clothing, courage, equipment, evidence, enjoyment, fun, furniture, happiness, homework, honesty, housework, intelligence, jealousy, jewel, knowledge, luck, luggage, machinery, milk, music, postage, poverty, progress, sadness, scenery, significance, silver, traffic, transportation, violence, wealth, yoga, zoom.

II. DETERMINERS

1. For a singular count noun, use one of these determiners: a/an, one, this, that, the.

2. For a plural count noun, use one of these determiners: two (any number words

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except one), these, those, few, a few, many, a lot of, the, some, any, a great number of, the number of, fewer ... than, more ... than

3. For a noncount noun, use one of these determiners: this, that, little, a little, much, a lot of, the, some, any, an amount of, the amount of, less ... than, more ... than.

III. ARTICLES

1. The indefinite article “a” or “an” is used:

1.1 before a singular count noun to mean one She usually has a hamburger for lunch.

1.2 in a general statement A puppy is a lovely pet.

1.3 to introduce a subject for the first time He bought a house last month.

1.4 with a complement including a profession. My mother is an architect.

It should be noted that the indefinite article “a” is used before a word beginning with the **consonant sound**,

e.g. a lovely pet, a one-bedroom apartment, a green apple, a university, a European, etc; and the indefinite article “an”

is used before a word beginning with the **vowel sound**, e.g. an apple, an egg, an hour, an honest person, an island, an orange, an umbrella, etc.

2. The definite article “the” is used:

2.1 when both the speaker and the listener know what specific thing they are talking about

The book that you gave me is very interesting.

2.2 The second time something is mentioned

I bought a skirt and a blouse for my sister yesterday. She likes the skirt, but she doesn't like the blouse.

2.3 with the name of a musical instrument one plays

Joe's little brother plays the guitar.

2.4 with the superlative of adjectives
Who is the most intelligent student in this class?

2.5 when speaking about a specific noun

The tea we had this afternoon was

Chinese.

2.6 when there is only one of something

The moon is beautiful tonight.

2.7 with the words like country, environment, ground, office, movies, theater, sea, sky

Would you prefer living in a city or in the country?

We must do more to help protect the environment.

2.8 before the word “same”

Mary and Marie have the same taste in clothes.

2.9 with adjectives (without nouns) to talk about groups of people, e.g. the dead, the disabled, the elderly, the homeless, the injured, the poor, the rich, the unemployed, the young, etc.

2.10 with some nationality adjectives to mean the people of that country, e.g. the



British, the Chinese, the Dutch, the French, the Japanese, the Irish, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Swiss, etc.

2.11 with the names of countries with a plural name or an adjective in the name except Great Britain, e.g. the Dominican Republic, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Kingdom of Thailand, the Netherlands, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the United Kingdom, the United States of America.

2.12 with the names of oceans, seas, rivers, and canals, e.g. the Atlantic Ocean, the Red Sea, the River Amazon, the Mekong River, the English Channel, the Suez Canal, etc.

2.13 with plural names of people, groups of islands, and mountain ranges, e.g. the Johnsons (the Johnson family), the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, the Andes, the Alps, the Rockies, etc.

2.14 with names of geographic areas such as the North, the South, the East, the West, the Far East, the Middle East, etc.

2.15 with names of hotels, restaurants, pubs, theaters/cinemas, museums, galleries, buildings, newspapers, organizations, and names with ... of ..., e.g. the Bank of Thailand, the Hilton Hotel, the Great Wall of China, the University of London, etc.

2.16 with the names of ships, trains, airplanes, e.g. the Queen Mary, the Orient Express, the Titanic, the Carpathia, etc.

However, there are some important points to be noted here about when **not** to use the article “the.” That is to say, do not use “the” with:

1. names of singular lakes, mountains, and islands, e.g. Samui Island, Mount Everest, Lake Superior, etc.

2. names of continents, e.g. Asia, Africa, Europe, etc.

3. countries with a singular name, e.g. Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Japan, Italy, etc.

4. names of states, provinces, towns, and streets, e.g. Khon Kaen, Los Angeles, Broadway, etc.

5. names of general subjects, e.g. biology, history, physics, etc.

6. names of people, magazines, e.g. Richard Gray, Time magazine, Hello magazine, etc.

7. universities, colleges and schools beginning with a proper noun, e.g. Indiana University, Khon Kaen University, Corning Community High School, etc.

N.B., the article “the” is not usually used with companies or airlines, e.g. Sony, Thai Airways, Nok Air, IBM.

IV. PRONOUNS

There are five forms of pronouns as shown in the table.



Subject	Object	Possessive	Reflexive/ Emphatic	Relative	Possessive Adjective
I	me	mine	myself	who (subject)	my
You (singular)	you	yours	yourself	whom (object)	your
You (plural)	you	yours	yourselves	whose	your
We	us	ours	ourselves	which	our
He	him	his	himself	that	his
She	her	hers	herself		her
It	it	its	itself		its
They	them	theirs	themselves		their

1. The subject pronoun is used:

1.1 when it is the subject of a verb

I am Thai.

She is my cousin.

We are from Bangkok.

1.2 when the subjects of two clauses

are compared

You are taller than I.¹(am)

They speak English more fluently than we.² (do)

He is not as careful as she.³ (is)

In the spoken English, these sentences are accepted, but still considered ungrammatical.

You are taller than me.¹

They speak English more fluently than us.²

He is not as careful as her.³

2. The object pronoun is used:

2.1 when it is the direct object of a verb

Our teacher told us to be more careful.

Mrs. Black helped them a lot.

2.2 when the objects of two clauses

are compared

Mollie likes you more than him.

Jackie understands her more than me.

2.3 after a preposition

Could you please hand that book to me?

Would you like to come with us?

3. The possessive pronoun is used:

3.1 to replace a possessive adjective

and a noun to avoid repetition

Your car is bigger than mine.

(mine = my car)

3.2 after of when it indicates one of

several

Paul is a good friend of hers. (one of several good friends)

4. The reflexive or emphatic pronoun is used:

4.1 when the subject and the object

is the same person

Jill cut herself while cutting the apples.



4.2 to give emphasis to some particular person

They themselves worked on that project.

4.3 with the preposition by to give the meaning of alone

Can you prepare for the oral presentation by yourself?

5. For the relative pronouns, they are used to indicate different functions.

5.1 “Who” refers to people and household animals (as the subject of a verb).

That is the man who wanted to see you yesterday.

I have to take my puppy who is right there to his vet.

5.2 “Whom” refers to people and household animals (as the object used in the formal written language).

With whom can we stay?

These are our new kittens whom I saved from a dog last week.

5.3 “Whose” refers to all nouns and indicates possession.

Do you know whose car is double parked out there?

5.4 “Which” refers to things, collective nouns, and animals.

The report which is on my desk is for you.

5.5 “That” can be used with all nouns.

That is the house that Jack built.

I do not want things that belong to others.

Aside from these pronouns, there is another form of word related to each pronoun, the possessive adjective, which is worth mentioning here.

1. In the written language, a singular verb and a singular possessive adjective must be used with the indefinite pronouns: everyone, everybody; someone, somebody; everything, something; anyone, anybody; no one, nobody; anything, nothing.

Someone has left his mobile phone here.

Everybody is ready to present his research paper now.

2. Each/every refers to an individual of a number of persons or things, and is followed by a singular verb and possessive adjective.

Each university has its own uniqueness.

Every student must hand in his report today.

3. When two words are joined by “either ... or; neither ... nor; not only ... but also ...,” the possessive adjective agrees with the subject closer to it.

Either Janet or Jack will take his car.

Neither Mike nor his friends are going to their class.

4. A collective noun can be either singular or plural. If the individual members are acting as a group, it is singular; if the individual members are acting separately, it is plural. The possessive adjective of that collective now must be used accordingly then.



Some of the collective nouns are assembly, class, committee, crew, crowd, faculty, family, government, jury, organization, public, staff, and team.

The committee is having its monthly meeting. (as a group)

The committee are going back to their homes afterwards. (separately)

V. VERBS: TENSES

A. The Present Progressive (The Present Continuous)

The present progressive (is/am/are/+V.ing) is used:

1. to show what is happening now/ at the moment of speaking

Mark is playing the piano now.

2. to show a future plan

We are going to America this summer.

However, the present progressive in **not** used with these stative verbs: appear, believe, exist, have, hear, know, like, look, love, mean, need, own, prefer, remember, see, seem, smell, sound, taste, understand, want, and wish.

B. The Present Simple (The Present Indefinite)

The present simple (the present form of the verb) is used:

1. with the stative verbs

Do you understand me?

I need an umbrella now.

2. to express a habitual or everyday action

My mother always drinks coffee in the morning.

3. for things happening or existing naturally or regularly

The sun rises in the east.

Cats purr when they are happy.

C. The Past Simple (The Past Indefinite)

The past simple (the past form of the verb) is used:

1. to show that an action happened in the past, usually with a past time indicator, e.g. yesterday, last night, last week, last month, an hour ago, a year ago, in 2015.

We went to England in 2002.

2. to show that one action interrupted another action which was happening in the past

Ben was taking a shower when the telephone rang.

D. The Past Progressive (The Past Continuous)

The past progressive (was/were + V.ing) is used:

1. when an action was going on at a particular time in the past

Tom was watching his favorite program at ten last night.

2. when two actions in the past continued at the same time

My sister was doing the dishes while

I was doing my homework.

3. when an action in the past was going on and another action happened



When I saw you, you were talking to Mike.

E. The Present Perfect

The present perfect (has/have + the past participle form of the verb) is used:

1. to show that an action happened at an indefinite time in the past

I have been to Hyderabad, India

2. when an action started in the past and continues to the present

Mrs. Mill has run her jewelry business in Myanmar for two years now.

They have lived in Singapore since 2012.

(“For” is used with the present perfect tense for duration of time from the beginning until now. “Since” is used with the present perfect tense with the beginning of the time period.)

3. with a repeated action in the past
He has taken two intensive English courses this year.

4. with the adverbs “already” and “yet” to show that an action occurred or did not occur at an indefinite time in the past

Those undergraduate students have already taken writing courses.

We have not finished our project yet.

F. The Present Perfect Progressive (The Present Perfect Continuous)

The present perfect progressive (has/have + been + V.ing) is used:

1. to show that an activity began in the past and is still continuing in the present; it is used with time expressions such as all day, all morning, all week, for, and since.

I have been waiting for them for half an hour.

It has been raining all day.

2. sometimes with the same meaning as the present perfect, and with the verbs such as “live,” “teach,” and “work”

We have been teaching at this college for 12 years.

How long have you been living in Khon Kaen?

G. The Past Perfect

The past perfect (had + the past participle form of the verb) is used to show that an activity was completed before another activity or definite time in the past.

Jane had learned Thai before she came here.

By the time I got home, everybody else had already been in bed.

H. The Past Perfect Progressive (The Past Perfect Continuous)

The past perfect progressive (had + been + V.ing) is used to emphasize the duration of an activity that continued before any activity in the past.

The Browns had been working in their garden when we arrived.



I. The Future Simple

The future simple (will + the present form of the verb) is used to express a statement about a future activity.

We will go on a trip together.

Another structure (is/am/are + going to + the present form of the verb) is used to show a future plan.

Paul is going to move to Malaysia next month.

J. The Future Progressive (The Future Continuous)

The future progressive (will be + V.ing) is used to show that an activity will start at a future time and be going on at a certain time in the future.

At this time next year, we will be studying Chinese in China.

K. The Future Perfect

The future perfect (will have + the past participle form of the verb) is used to show that a future activity will be completed before another activity or time in the future.

We will have finished our work in a few hours.

L. The Future Perfect Progressive (The Future Perfect Continuous)

The future perfect progressive (will have + been + V. ing) is used to emphasize that an activity has started and will be going on before another activity or time in the future.

By the time we take the proficiency test, we will have been taking English for a year.

VI. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT (CONCORD)

A. Noncount Noun and Singular Subjects

A subject which is a noncount noun or a singular count noun or pronoun (excluding I and you) takes:

1. “is” in the present tense and “was” in the past tense form of the verb to be

Is tap water in Thailand drinkable?

Ken was not at school yesterday.

2. “does” a singular verb form of the verb to do in the present tense

Paula does her homework before dinner.

Money does not grow on trees.

3. “has” the singular verb form of the verb to have in the present tense

Coffee has been a very popular beverage now.

4. “es” with verbs ending with ch, o, s, sh, x, or y in the present tense

(A verb ending with a “y” and the “y” is after a consonant, change the “y” to an “i” before adding “es.”)

My father goes to work at 7 o'clock.

She washes her hair twice a week.

Bob studies Thai on Mondays and Wednesdays.

5. “s” with other verbs in the present tense

Whisky contains a large percentage of alcohol.

Maggie writes ten new sentences every day.

My mother buys food from a fresh food market.



B. Plural Subjects

A subject which is a plural count noun or pronoun takes:

1. “are” in the present tense and “were” in the past tense form of the verb to be
Many Thai farmers are still living in poverty.

Their ancestors were Chinese.

2. “do” the plural verb form of the verb to do in the present tense

The Mills do their gardening every summer.

What language do they speak?

3. “have” the plural verb form of the verb to have in the present tense

We usually have lunch at noon.

Mary and Marie have taken two Spanish courses.

The police have arrested the bank robbers.

4. the infinitive form of other verbs

Anna and Ann always dress alike. Those children enjoy playing in the playground.

However, the following points must be remembered:

1. The singular subject pronoun “I” takes:

1.1 “am” in the present tense form and “was” in the past tense form of the verb to be

I am a second year English major at this college.

I was a first year English major here last year.

1.2 “do” in the present tense form of the verb to do

I do my English homework every day.

I do not want to do two things at a time.

1.3 “have” in the present tense form of the verb to have

I have many new friends here.

I have already made several good friends.

1.4 the infinitive form of other verbs

I enjoy studying languages. I love papaya salad and grilled chicken.

2. The singular subject pronoun “you” takes the same form of verbs as a plural count noun or pronoun.

You are my best friend.

Do you like it here?

You have a wonderful personality.

You look nice in blue.

3. A subject indicating a group of animals is considered as singular.

There is a colony of ants near my house.

That school of fish is very beautiful.

4. A subject which is a collective noun takes:

4.1 a singular verb if the individual members are acting as a group

Our football team is winning.

The committee has approved her thesis proposal.

4.2 a plural verb if the individual members are acting separately



The team are going back to their homes after the match.

The committee have been discussing the matter seriously.

5. A subject which is an indefinite pronoun takes a singular verb.

Is there anything I can do to help?

Nobody is interested in that project.

6. The titles of books, plays, movies, etc., take a singular verb.

The Bumbletown Detectives is a good book for children.

Between One and Many is an interesting book on public speaking.

7. A singular subject joined by “together with,” “along with,” “accompanied by,” “as well as,” or “in addition to” takes a singular verb.

The teacher, along with his students, is visiting the National Museum today.

Mrs. Turner, as well as her children, wants to study Chinese.

8. When two subjects together form one thing, a singular verb is used.

Bread and butter is all I want.

The horse and carriage is now no longer in use.

9. When two subjects are joined by “either ... or,” “neither ... nor,” “not only ... but also,” the verb agrees with the subject preceding it.

Either Henry or his friends are to blame for what has happened.

Neither you nor Tim has the right to say that to me.

Not only Maria but also her children do a lot to help the poor.

10. Subjects joined by “and” or “both ... and” take a plural verb.

Fruit and vegetables are good for our health.

Both you and I have to work on this project together.

11. “A number of” takes a plural verb, but “The number of” takes a singular verb.

A number of obnoxious drivers have caused serious accidents everywhere.

The number of students taking the IELTS examination is increasing.

VII. THE PASSIVE

The passive is used to emphasize the thing done, or when the performer of the action is unknown or unimportant. This is how to write a passive sentence.

1. Put the receiver of the action as the subject.

2. Add a form of the verb to be depending on its tense.

3. Put the past participle form of the active verb after the verb to be.

4. If the performer is known, put “by the performer” at the end of the sentence.

Active: Drunk drivers often cause many accidents.

Passive: Many accidents are often caused by drunk drivers.

Active: Somebody broke into his house last night.

Passive: His house was broken into last night.

Active: We will discuss the matter at our next meeting.



Passive: The matter will be discussed at our next meeting.

VIII. Gerunds

A gerund is a verb + ing form used as a noun. It can function as a subject, subject of a complement, or an object. When it functions as the subject of a sentence, it takes a singular verb.

Writing essays in English requires a lot of practice.

I hate waiting for people for a long time.

The gerund is also used after:

1. certain nouns + prepositions, e.g. advantage of, choice of, disadvantage of, excuse for, intension of, possibility of, reason for, etc.

An advantage of living alone is that you can do what you like.

2. certain adjectives + prepositions, e.g. accustomed to, afraid of, angry with someone for, bad at, bored with, brilliant at, capable of, excellent at, excited about, fed up with, fond of, good at, hopeless at, interested in, keen on, sorry for, successful in, tired of, upset about, worried about, etc.

Alan is brilliant at repairing things.

Are you interested in studying foreign languages?

3. certain verbs + prepositions, e.g. accuse someone of, approve of, count on, depend on, dream of, insist on, rely on, succeed in, think about, think of, worry about, etc.

Jennifer succeeded in getting the job.

4. certain verbs, e.g. admit, appreciate, avoid, consider, defer, delay, deny, detest, discuss, dislike, enjoy, escape, excuse, imagine,

finish, give up, go on, keep on, mention, mind, miss, postpone, practice, put off, quit, recommend, regret, resent, risk, suggest, etc.

I suggest going out for a walk now.

You should keep on practicing writing every day.

5. certain idioms, e.g. can't help, can't resist, can't stand, it's no use, it's not worth, it's worth, look forward to, take to, etc.

I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

IX. ADJECTIVES and ADVERBS

A. Adjectives

An adjective modifies a noun. It tells something about it. In a sentence, it can be placed:

1. before a noun

You are a true friend.

However, when two adjectives -- one showing a fact and the other showing an opinion -- are used together, the one showing the fact is placed next to the noun.

That is an interesting English novel.

(opinion) (fact)

This is a beautiful gold ring.

(opinion) (fact)

In addition, if two adjectives are used for emphasis, a conjunction is used. "And" is used if the two

adjectives belong to the same category or go together; "but" is used if they are in contrast.

The night was cold and dark.

My teacher is demanding but kind.



Adjectives in sequence:

When a few adjectives are used to describe a noun, they can be placed as recommended in the following general guide.

Determiner Quality Size Shape Age

1 2 3 4 5

Color Nationality Material Noun

6 7 8 9

My little sister loves her big pink

1 3 6

wooden playhouse.

8 9

I want to buy some nice Thai silk ties

1 2 7 8 9

for my boyfriend.

2. after a verb

2.1 after a linking verb or a verb showing no action: appear, be, become, get, go, grow, prove, remain, seem, stay, and turn

She got angry when she heard she was cheated.

Richard seems happy about his new job.

2.2 after a sense verb: feel, look, smell, sound, and taste

You look nice today.

I felt uncomfortable when I was there.

2.3 after a certain verb to form a special combination: keep quiet, open wide, and stand still

You have to keep quiet even though the teacher is not here.

Can you stand still for a moment?

3. after a noun or a pronoun

My mother likes her coffee hot.

(n)

Flying always makes him nervous.

(pron)

B. Adverbs

An adverb modifies a verb, an adjective, and another adverb.

They talked quietly when they first met.

(v)

I am terribly sorry about that.

(adj)

She ran away incredibly quick

(adv)

It usually follows the verb, but it may also be found in other places in a sentence.

Minnie walked away slowly.

Minnie slowly walked away.

Slowly Minnie walked away.

However, an adverb of frequency is put after the verb to be --is/am/are/was/were -- but before other main verbs.

Our English teacher is always punctual.

She usually arrives before the students.

It is usually formed by adding -ly to an adjective.

Adjective

quiet

terrible

incredible

quick

slow

Adverb

quietly

terribly

incredibly

quickly

slowly



Nevertheless, the following rules must be remembered:

1. A word ending in -ly adding to a noun is not an adverb. It is an adjective.

Noun	Adjective
friend	friendly
week	weekly
month	monthly
mother	motherly
world	worldly

2. A noun can function as an adjective. In this case, it comes before another noun.

Mrs. Brown is a collegeteacher.
(adj) (n)

The students always enjoy a Christmasparty.
(adj) (n)

3. An adjective which is a compound of a noun and a number is hyphenated and it is always singular.

She is a fifteen-year old girl.

This is a two-hour class, so we do not need a break.

4. Adjectives ending in -ing and -ed have different meanings. An adjective ending in -ing tells about the noun; it makes how someone or a person feel, which is described by an adjective ending in -ed.

The new lesson is interesting.

The students are interested in the new lesson.

Going on a field trip is exciting for everyone.

Everyone is excited about going on a field trip.

5. Some adjectives and adverbs have the same form e.g. fast, hard, late, low.

This clock is fast. He works fast.
(adj) (adv)

The test was hard. She works hard.
(adj) (adv)

You are late. They arrived late.
(adj) (adv)

The temperature is very low today.
(adj)

The plane was flying very low.
(adv)

MECHANICS

A. Capital Letters (Uppercase Letters) In formal writing, be sure to capitalize the following words:

1. the first word of every sentence
Writing is a very important language skill.
It is impossible to finish this assignment in two hours.

2. the pronoun "I" (even though it is not at the beginning of the sentence)
When you called me this morning, I was getting dressed.

3. proper names: the names of
3.1 people, e.g. David, Katherine, Mollie, Richard, Daniel McMahon, Almira Turner
3.2 days of the week, e.g. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday
3.3 months of the year, e.g. January, February, November, December
3.4 languages and nationalities, e.g. Chinese, English, Thai, Vietnamese
3.5 religions, e.g. Buddhism,



Christianity, Islam

3.6 holidays, e.g. Christmas, Easter, Halloween, New Year, Thanksgiving Day

3.7 historical events, periods, and documents, e.g. The American Revolution, The Romantic Period, The Treaty of Geneva

3.8 deities, e.g. Jupiter, Neptune, Venus

3.9 places, e.g. Australia, Thailand, Bangkok, London, Paris

3.10 brand names, e.g. McDonald's, Kentucky's Fried Chicken (KFC), Velveeta Cheese

4. titles when they are used with people's proper names, e.g. Mr. Smith, Mrs. Ford, Judge Wilson, Professor Kingley

5. sacred terms, e.g. Holy Bible, Holy Father, The Koran

6. the first word and every important word in a title, e.g. **To Kill a Mocking Bird, Vocabulary in Use, Basic Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences**

7. the first word of a direct quotation, e.g. The teacher said, "Don't copy your friends' work."

8. the words **north, south, east, and west** when they are used as places rather than as directions, e.g. the South of Thailand, the North of Laos (presently the Lao PDR)

9. terms for relatives (like father, mother, uncle, aunt, etc.) when they are used in the place of proper names

Mother, are you comfortable here?
Make yourself at home, Uncle.

B. Punctuation

1. The Period/Full Stop (.)

A period (full stop) is used:

1.1 at the end of a statement I am an English major at this college.

1.2 after an abbreviation

Dr., cont., etc.

1.3 with an individual's initials

R. F. McMahon, T.S. Eliot, J.F.K.

2. The Question Mark (?)

It is used at the end of a question.

Do you know what I mean?

3. The Exclamation Point (Mark) (!)

This is used:

3.1 to end an emphatic phrase or sentence

Hurry up!

3.2 after an interjection

Hurray! Encore!

4. The Semicolon (;)

A semicolon is used to:

4.1 link two independent clauses whose ideas and sentence structure are related
Some students look up the meanings of words that sound alike; some look for sample sentences using the words.

4.2 link main clauses joined by an adverbial conjunction (as furthermore, moreover, consequently, therefore, however, otherwise)

The students have proofread their essays; however, some mistakes can still be found in them.

4.3 separate phrases and clauses when they themselves contain commas

I had dinner with Alan Brown,



a writer; Jennifer Lee, a singer; and Audrey Turner, a photographer.

5. The Comma (,)

A comma is used:

5.1 to separate items in a series-
Jamie’s leisure time activities are reading, surfing the Internet, and playing football.

I lived at 905 6th Street, Corning, Iowa for a year.

5.2 with a connecting word to combine two simple sentences into a compound sentence

My father wanted to go out.
My mother wanted to stay home.
My father wanted to go out, **but** my mother wanted to stay home.

The final examination is going to be difficult. You have to be well-prepared.

The final examination is going to be difficult, **so** you have to be well-prepared.

5.3 to follow introductory words, expressions, phrases, or clauses (sentence adverbs)

Well, I think you have to work on this assignment right now even though you don’t want to.

As a matter of fact, you will have to finish it by tomorrow afternoon.

To begin with, you can brainstorm ideas on how to work on it.

When you have a clearer picture of what you should do, you can work on it individually.

5.4 to surround a word, phrase, or clause when it interrupts the main idea

We will, **however**, do our best.

I wanted, **of course**, to encourage you to search for more information.

Eric will, **I think**, come back next Christmas.

5.5 around nouns in direct address
I think, **Linda**, you should take more Chinese courses next semester.

Henry, could you help me set the table?

5.6 to set off exact words spoken in dialogue.

“**Let us**,” the class representative said, “**help work on the project**.”

5.7 to prevent a misunderstanding
Whoever that is, is going to be blamed.

Before eating, the children should wash their hands.

5.8 to set off contrasting and opposing expressions within sentences

The price is 250 baht, **not** 215.
She has changed her style, **not** her ethics.

5.9 to set off from the rest of the sentence parenthetical elements

Mr. and Mrs. White wanted to visit Vientiane, **the capital of The Lao People’s Democratic Republic**.

The Scarlet Letter, **an 1850 romantic work of fiction in a historical setting**, was written by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

5.10 to separate a tag question from the rest of the sentence

You don’t really like Thai



boxing, do you?

Jessica wants to be a model,

doesn't she?

5.11 in numbers of one thousand
or larger

2,999 1, 234,555

6. The Colon (:)

A colon is used:

6.1 to introduce a phrase or clause
that explains, illustrates, or restates what has
gone before

The paragraph was poorly writ-
ten: **it lacked coherence and continuity.**

Some students have one ma-
jor flaw in their personality: **laziness.**

6.2 between the title and subtitle
of a book

**Cause and Effect: Intermedi-
ate Reading Practice**

**Write to Be Read: Reading,
Reflection, and Writing**

6.3 to punctuate memorandum
and government correspondence headings, and
some subject lines in general business letters

TO:

SUBJECT:

REFERENCE:

7. The Dash (—)

A dash is used to:

7.1 interrupt or break in the con-
tinuity of a sentence

They arrived — **I thought** —
on time.

You should — **I insist** — see
a doctor.

7.2 introduce a summary statement

that follows a series of words or phrases

**Going on trips, watching
television, and reading for pleasure** -- these
are the only activities I plan to do during the
semester break.

8. The Hyphen (-)

A hyphen is used:

8.1 to mark division at the end of
a line terminating with a syllable of a word that
is to be carried over to the next line

The independent clause is a
group of words that could be a simple sentence.

8.2 in some compounds, especially
those containing prepositions

brother-in-law attorney-at-law

8.3 between elements of a
compound modifier

duty-free shops

point-by-point method

9. The Parentheses ()

The parentheses are used to:

9.1 insert extra information

Pierre Curie (1859-1908) and
Marie Curie (1867-1934), French scientists, ...

Orthodontics (dentistry dealing
with the irregularities of teeth) tries to explain
how and why men are different.

9.2 enclose numbers or letters in
a series

We must set forth (1) our
long-term goals, (2) our immediate objectives,
and (3) strong determination.

9.3 enclose abbreviations synonymous
with spelled-out forms and occurring after those



forms

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)

10. The Double Quotation Marks (“ ”)

They are used to:

10.1 enclose direct quotations

I said, “Don’t lie to me.”

She said, “I’ve never lied to you.”

10.2 enclose words or phrases

borrowed from others or used in a special way

Do you know what “mai pen rai” means?

“The time is always right to do what is right.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

10.3 enclose titles of poems, short stories, articles, lectures, chapters of books, short musical compositions, and radio and TV programs

I like “The Voice,” a TV program on Channel 3.

“I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud” is one of William Wordsworth’s remarkable poems showing deeply felt responses to the beauties of nature.

(Titles of longer works such as books, novels, full-length plays, and names of magazines or newspapers are underlined when handwritten. In print, they are in italics or bold.)

11. The Ellipsis (...)

The ellipsis is used to indicate:

11.1 omission of one or more words within a quoted passage

Poetry is the imaginative expression of strong feeling, usually rhythmical ... the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility.

William Wordsworth

11.2 the omission of one or more sentences within a quoted passage or the omission of words at the end of a sentence; in this case, four dots are used; the first dot represents the period.

A paragraph is a part of a composition. Just as a group of related sentences composes a paragraph, so a group of related paragraphs makes up a composition. A group of compositions, in turn, can be the chapters that constitute a book. A book, then, is the largest unit; it covers more ground and is more complex than any one of its chapters. A chapter or composition is broader and says more than any one of its paragraphs. ...

Kathleen E.Sullivan (1984, p. 3)

11.3 the omission of one or more line of poetry

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

Shakespeare

Last but not least, please keep this concluding poem in mind.

If you learn and correctly apply all these rules,

You should be able to write clearly,
For they are effective tools,
That can help you write properly.

Sonjai



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