**Language Arts Resource For Parents**

[Below you will find a wide range of grammar rules along with examples and non-examples.]

A **complete subject**is the part of a sentence that tells whom or what the sentence is about.

A **complete predicate**tells what the subject does.  The complete predicate starts with the verb.

A **clause** has a subject and a predicate.

An **independent clause** can stand by itself. It is a complete sentence.

A **dependent clause** cannot stand by itself.  It needs more information. It starts with words like ***because, before, when, if, since, until***.

When a dependent clause comes at the beginning of a sentence, it is followed by a comma.

Example:  Since it is raining, we cannot go outside to play.

A **fragment** is a group of words that lacks a subject or a predicate.

Example: Two tiny dogs

A **run-on**is two or more complete sentences run together.

Example: I love short stories I am also fond of poems.

Correction: I love short stories. I am also fond of poems.

A **compound sentence** contains two simple sentences joined by a comma and a conjunction, such as *and, or, but*.

 Example: I wore my Braves hat, and I carried a pennant.

A **complex sentence**contains an independent clause, which can stand alone, and a dependent clause, which cannot stand alone.

 Example: When the team took the field, fans rose to their feet.

**Common Nouns and Proper Nouns**

The names of particular persons, places, and things are **proper nouns**. Capitalize the first word and each important word of a proper noun. All other nouns are **common nouns**. They are not capitalized.

**Regular and Irregular Plural Nouns**

Plural nouns name more than one person, place, or thing.

Add *-s* to form the plural of most nouns.

picture/pictures    wing/wings    pattern/patterns

Add *-es*to nouns ending in *ch, sh, x, z, s,*and *ss.*

bunch/bunches      wish/wishes  

box/boxes             class/classes

If a noun ends in a vowel and y, add *-s.*

day/days                boy/boys

If a noun ends in a consonant and *y*, change *y*to *i*and add *-es.*

city/cities                lady/ladies

Some nouns have **irregular plural** forms. They change spelling.

man/men                  mouse/mice           goose/geese

foot/feet                    child/children          tooth/teeth

For most nouns that end in *f*or *fe*, change*f*to *v*and add *-es.*

leaf/leaves                 knife/knives            calf/calves

Some nouns have the same singular and plural form.

sheep    deer    moose        headquarters    series

**Possessive Nouns**

Possessive nouns show ownership.

There is a difference between making a noun plural and possessive.  To make a noun plural means to make it stand for more than one.  To make a noun possessive means to make it show ownership.

**Singular possessive**nouns show that one person, place, or thing has or owns something. Add an apostrophe and -s to form singular possessive nouns.

 dog                     dog's bone

cat                      cat's fur

girl                      girl's dress

**Plural possessive nouns**show that more than one person, place, or thing has or owns something. Add an apostrophe to a plural noun ending in -s to form the possessive. If the plural noun does  not end in -s, add an apostrophe and -s.

 dogs                     dogs' bones

cats                      cats' fur

girls                      girls' dresses

men                       men's hats

children                 children's toys

geese's                  geese's feathers

**Action and Linking Verbs**

A complete sentence has a subject and a predicate. The main word in the predicate is a verb. An **action verb**tells what the subject does.

The river f*loods* the town.

Action verbs can tell about actions that are physical (*walk, carry*) or mental (*forget, understand).*

A **linking verb** links, or joins, the subject to a word or words in the predicate. It tells what the subject is or is like.

The townspeople *are*afraid.

Forms of the verb be (*am, is, are, was, were*) are often used as linking verbs.

These words also can be linking verbs:  *become, seem, appear, feel, taste, smell,* and *look. (I feel hungry. The pie smells delicious.)*However, some of them can also be used as action verbs. (*Feel this fabric. The dog smells many scents.)*

***Main Verbs and Helping Verbs***

Verbs that are made up of more than one word are **verb phrases**. In a verb phrase, the **main verb** names the action. Some common helping verbs are***has, have, had, am is, are, was, were, be, been, do, does, did, can, could, will, would****, and****should.***

*The****main verb****is always the last word in a verb phrase.*

*(Animals****are losing****habitats.)*

*There may be more than one helping verb in a****verb phrase****.*

*(We****should have saved****more wetland habitats.)*

*Helping verbs such as****is****and****are****show that action is happening in the****present.***

*(Forests are cut down for wood.)*

***Was****and****were****show that action happened in the****past.***

*(Once millions of acres of forest were standing in this area.)*

***Will****shows that action is happening in the****future.***

*(Trees will disappear if we don't conserve them.)*

***Subject-Verb Agreement***

The **subject**and **verb**in a sentence **must agree**, or work together. A singular subject needs a singular verb. A plural subject needs a plural verb.

Use these rules for verbs that tell about the present time.

If the subject is a singular noun or*he, she,*or*it,* add*-s or -es*to most verbs.

A horse*run****s****.*A dog*chase****s***the horse*.* It*bark****s***loudly*.*

If the subject is a plural noun or*I, you, we,*or *they,*do not add*-s or -es*to the verb*.*

Horses*run.*Dogs*chase*the horse*.*They *bark*loudly.

For the verb *be,*use*am*and *is to*agree with singular subjectsand *are*to agree withplural subjects.

I *am*afraid.Paul*is*fearless. The armies *are*here.We *are*surprised.

**Past**, **Present, and Future Tenses**

The**tense** of a verb shows when something happens. Verbs in the present tense show action that happens now.  Most **present tense** singular verbs end with*-s* or*-es.* Most present tense plural verbs do not end with*-s*or *-es*.

The king enters the hall. His subjects bow.

 Verbs in the **past tense** show action that has already happened. Most verbs in the past tense end in*-ed.*

Long ago, a fairy enchanted the princess.

Verbs in the **future tense** show action that will happen.  Add*will* (or *shall*) to most verbs to show the future tense.

She will sleep tonight.

Some regular verbs change spelling when -*ed*is added.

For verbs ending in *e*, drop the *e* and add *-ed:* *liked, loved.*

For verbs ending in a consonant and *y,* change the *y* to*i*, and add -*ed: hurried, carried*.

For most one-syllable verbs that end in one vowel followed by one consonant, double the consonant and add -*ed:*  *stopped, napped*.

**Irregular verbs** change spelling to form the past tense:  *are/were, become/became, bring/brought, eat/ate,  fly/flew, give/gave, have/had, is/was, meet/met, sing/sang,* *take/took, tell/told, write/wrote*

**Principal Parts of Regular Verbs**

A verb's tenses are made from four basic forms. These basic forms are called the verb's **principal parts.**

**Present          Present Participle           Past               Past Participle**

stop                (is, are) stopping               stopped           (has, have, had) stopped

ask                  (is, are) asking                 asked              (has, have, had) asked

A **regular verb** forms its past and past participle by adding*-ed*to the present form.

* The present and the past form can be used by themselves as verbs.
* The present participle and the past participle are always used with a helping verb.

**Principal Parts of Irregular Verbs**

Usually you add*-ed* to a verb to show past tense.  **Irregular verbs**do not follow this rule. Instead of having *-ed* forms to show past tense, irregular verbs usually change to other words.

**Present**                **Present Participle**               **Past**                     **Past Participle**

**(is, are)**                                                         **(has, have, had)**

become                 becoming                            became                  become

begin                     beginning                            began                     begun

buy                        buying                                bought                    bought

do                          doing                                  did                          done

freeze                     freezing                              froze                       frozen

go                           going                                 went                       gone

is/are                      being                                  was/were                been

know                       knowing                              knew                      known

make                       making                               made                      made

see                          seeing                                saw                        seen

think                        thinking                               thought                   thought

write                        writing                                 wrote                       written

**Troublesome Verbs**

Some pairs of verbs are confusing because they have similar meanings or because they look alike.

**Word           Meaning                  Present         Past         Past Participle**

lay               put, place                lay                laid           (has, have, had) laid

lie                rest, recline             lie                 lay             (has, have, had) lain

set               put something          set               set         (has, have, had) set somewhere

sit                sit down                   sit                sat             (has, have, had) sat

let                allow                        let                let              (has, have, had) let

leave            go away                    leave            left              (has, have, had) left

**Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases**

A **preposition** begins a group of words called a **prepositional phrase**. The noun or pronoun

that follows the preposition is called the **object of the preposition**. Prepositional phrases provide details about the rest of the sentence.

Animation is created from careful drawings.   (preposition)

Animation is created from careful drawings.  (preposition phrase)

Animation is created from careful drawings. (object of the preposition)

**Common Prepositions**

about                   around                 by                into               over               until

above                   at                        down            near              through          up

across                  before                 for                of                  to                  with

after                     below                  from             on                 toward

against                 between              in                 onto              under

**Subject and Object Pronouns**

When a pronoun is used as the subject of a sentence, it is called a **subject pronoun**.

***I, you, he, she, it, we***, and ***they*** are subject pronouns.

Pronouns that are used after action verbs or as objects of prepositions are called **object pronouns.**

***Me, you, him, her, it, us***, and ***them***are object pronouns.

TEST TIP

You may be asked to identify the correct pronoun in a phrase such as Jane and I or Terry and her.  Decide whether the subject pronoun or object pronoun is correct by saying the sentence with just the pronoun and not the rest of the phrase.

                      Example:  Jane and   (I     me)    climbed the mountain.

                                      I climbed the mountain.     (yes)

                                      Me climbed the mountain.  (no)

                                      Jane and I climbed the mountain.

                                      Jane showed Terry and (she   her) our pictures.

                                      Jane showed her our pictures.  (yes)

                                      Jane showed  she our pictures. (no)

                                      Jane showed her our pictures.

**Pronouns and Antecedents**

A **pronoun** takes the place of a noun or nouns.

An **antecedent**, or **referent**, is the noun or nouns to which the pronoun refers.

Each pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number and gender.

Example:

**Sam** is happy because **he** made the team.

**Sam** - **antecedent** (singular, male)

**he** - **pronoun** (singular, male)

**TEST TIP**

When the antecedent of a pronoun is the pronoun ***everyone***, ***everybody***, or ***everything***, use a singular pronoun to agree with the referent.

EXAMPLE:

            No: Everyone did **their** best.

            Yes: Everyone did **his** best.   (or Everyone did **her** best.)

**Possessive Pronouns**

**Possessive pronouns** show who or what owns, or possesses, something.  *My, mine, yours, her*, *hers, his, its, our, ours, their*, and *theirs* are possessive pronouns.

          Use *my, your, her, our,* and *their* before nouns.

                    This is my cat.  It was her dog.  They fed their fish.

           Use *mine, yours, hers, ours,* and *theirs* alone.

                      The cat is mine.  The dog was hers.  The fish are theirs.

*His* and *its* can be used both before nouns and alone.

                        He found his dog.  The dog is his.

                        The dog hurt its paw.  The paw is its.

             Do not use an apostrophe with a possessive noun.

**Although possessive nouns use an apostrophe (Jean's dog), possessive pronouns**

**never do (her dog).**

                          NO: A dog loves it's owner.

                          YES:  A dog loves**its**owner.

                           NO:  That dog is her's.

                           YES: That dog is **hers.**

**Indefinite and Reflexive Pronouns**

**Indefinite pronouns**may not refer to specific words.  They do not always have definite antecedents:  Has anyone met the new kid?

Some common indefinite pronouns are listed below:

**Singular Indefinite Pronouns                         Plural Indefinite Pronouns**

someone, somebody, anyone,few, several, both, others, many, all, some

anybody, everyone, everybody,

something, no one, either, each

Use singular verb forms with singular indefinite pronouns and plural verb forms with plural indefinite pronouns:

            Everyone gets a cookie.  Few turn it down.

**Reflexive Pronouns**reflect the action of the verb back on the subject.  Reflexive pronouns

end in -*self*or -*selves*:  We introduced ourselves to her.

**Singular Reflexive Pronouns                            Plural Reflexive Pronouns**

himself, herself, myself, itself                               ourselves, yourselves, themselves

yourself

**Using *Who* and *Whom***

People sometimes confuse the pronouns***who*** and***whom*** when they write.  ***Who*** is a subject

form.  It is used as a subject of a sentence of clause.

***Who***made this mess?

           I saw a performer***who***could do four back flips. (***Who*** is the subject in the dependent

           clause *who could do four back flips*.)

***Whom*** is an object form.  It is used as the object of a preposition or as a direct object.

           To ***whom*** did you send a letter?

***Whom*** will you ask?

In the first example, ***whom***is the object of the preposition.  In the second example,***whom***

            is a direct object.

            The subject (*you)* often does not come first in a question.  Don't be fooled if the

                     subject does not come first.

             To understand why ***Whom***is used in the second sentence, change the word order

                      so that the subject comes first.  (***Whom***will you ask?  becomes *You will*

*ask whom*?)  This makes it easier to see that ***whom*** is a direct object.

**TEST TIP**

***Whom* is rarely used in speaking, so we have trouble deciding when it sounds correct.**

**When you find *who* or *whom* in a subordinate clause, make the clause into a separate**

**sentence.  Then change*who* or *whom* into a personal pronoun such as*she* or *her*.**

**If *she* sounds correct, use *who*.  If *her* sounds correct, use *whom*.**

**Contractions and Negatives**

**A contraction is a shortened form of two words.  An apostrophe is used to show where one or more letters have been left out.  Some contractions are made by combining pronouns and verbs:  I + will = I'll; she + is = she's.  Other contractions are formed by joining a verb and not:  do = not = don't; are + not = aren't.**

**Won't and can't are formed in special ways (can + not = can't; will + not = won't).**

**Negatives are words that mean "no" or "not":  no, not, never, none, nothing.  Contractions with n't are negatives, too.  To make a negative statement, use only one negative word.**

**No    Don't never get in his way.  There wasn't nobody here.**

**Yes   Don't ever get in his way.  There wasn't anybody here.**

**Use positive words, not negatives, in a sentence with not:**

**Negative            Positive             Negative             Positive**

**nobody              anybody,           nothing               anything,**

**somebody                                    something**

**no one               anyone,             nowhere            anywhere,**

**someone                                      somewhere**

**none                  any, all, some     never                 ever, always**

**TEST TIP**

**It's is a contraction of it is.  You're is a contraction of you are.  It's and you're are often confused with the possessive pronouns its and your.**

**No:   Its too bad the bird lost it's mate.**

**Yes:  It's too bad the bird lost its mate.**

**No:  Your kind to share you're time with us.**

**Yes:  You're kind to share your time with us.**

**Adjectives and Articles**

**An adjective describes a noun or pronoun.  It tells what kind, which one, or how many.**

**The articles *a, an,* and *the*appear before nouns or other adjectives.**

**An adjective formed from a proper noun is a proper adjective.  Proper adjectives are capitalized.**

**TEST TIP**

**Adjectives usually are placed before a noun or pronoun.  However, they can appear after a linking verb.  Then they are called predicate adjectives.**

**Before Noun:  a white iceberg**

**After Verb:  The iceberg is white.**

**Comparative and Superlative Adjectives**

**Comparative adjectives** are used to compare two people, places, things, or groups.  Add***-er***to most short adjectives to make their comparative forms.  Use ***more***with longer adjectives.  Superlative adjectives are used to compare three or more people, places, things, or groups.  Add

***-est*** to most short adjectives to make their superlatives forms.  Use ***most*** with longer adjectives.

**Adjective**                                    **Comparative (2)**                       **Superlative (3 or more)**

strange                                         stranger                                    strangest

terrible                                          more terrible                              most terrible

        Adjectives such as ***good*** and***bad*** have irregular comparative and superlative forms:

                   good                            better                                       best

                    bad                             worse                                       worst

**Never use more or most with *-er* and *-est.***

                    NO         NO        NO    more angrier       NO   NO    NO  most remarkablest

                    YES       YES      YES   angrier              YES      YES    most remarkable

**Punctuation**

**Commas**

Commas can clarify meaning and tell readers when to pause.

     Put a comma after every item in a*series*but the last.

                 Poets pay attention to the sounds**, meanings, and emotions of words.**

                 The audience applauded**,** cheered**,** and stood up.

     When you speak or write to someone, you may use the person's name or title.

           This noun of *direct address*is set off with a comma**,** or two commas if it is in

           the middle of a sentence.

                  Will you read some more**,** Mr. Berry?

                  I'd love to**,** children, if you aren't tired of sitting.

      Appositives are noun phrases that describe another noun.  They are set off by

             commas.

                   Ted Kooser**,** a wonderful poet, lives in Nebraska.

       Put a comma after an *introductory word* or *phrase*, such as*yes*, *no, well,*

*of course*, or *in fact*.

                     No**,** I haven't read the new book.  As usual**,** I'm too busy.

**Quotations and Quotation Marks**

        A direct quotation gives a person's exact words and is enclosed in quotation marks

        ("   ").  Direct quotations begin with capital letters and end with proper punctuation.

        End punctuation is inside the closing quotation marks.  Words that tell who is speaking

        are set off from the quotation by punctuation.

                   When the quotation comes last in a sentence, set it off with a comma.

                               Jamie asked, "What was the Hindenburg?"

                    When the quotation comes first in a sentence, a comma, question mark, or

                    exclamation mark sets off the quotation.

                                 "It was a dirigible," replied May.  "It was enormous!" she added.

                     When the quotation is interrupted by words that tell who is speaking, use two

                      sets of quotation marks.  Notice that words telling who is speaking are

                      followed by punctuation.  Use a comma if the second part of the quotation does

                      not begin a new sentence.

                                    "Dirigibles were lighter than air," he added, "because they were

                                      filled with hydrogen."

                       Use end punctuation and a capital letter if the second part of the quotation

                       does begin a new sentence.

                                     "Isn't hydrogen flammable?" asked Jamie.  "What kept it from

                                      exploding?"

**Other Kinds of Punctuation**

            A **colon** (:) is used to separate hours and minutes in expressions of time.  It is also

            used after the salutation in a business letter.   It also can be used to introduce a list of

            list of items.

                       3:45 A.M.

                       Dear Mr. Smith:

                       I like the following vegetables:  green beans, collards, carrots, corn, and okra.

             A **hyphen** (**-**) is used in some compound words.  Two common uses are numbers from

             twenty-one to ninety-nine and compound words that are thought of as one word.

                         old-time music      best-known book    forty-nine

              A **semicolon** (**;**) can be used to join two independent clauses instead of a comma

              and a conjunction.

                           Jazz is a mixture of different types of music**;** New Orleans was its birthplace.

**Italics or underlining**is used for titles of books, newspapers, magazines, TV

               series, movies, plays, and works of art.       Because you cannot write italics,

               underline titles in your writing.

                            the *Chicago Tribune* (newspaper)          *Time for Kids* (magazine)

                   or       the Chicago Tribune                            Time for Kids

**Quotation Marks**are used around the title of a short story, song, short poem,

              magazine or newspaper article, and a chapter of a book.

                              "Trees" (poem)         "My Country 'tis of Thee" (song)

                               "Jack and the Beanstalk" (short story)

                               "Japan Rocked by Earthquake and Tsunami"  (newspaper article)

               A **dash**(\_\_\_\_) sets off information or a comment that interrupts the flow of a

               sentence.

                           Jazz had developed many styles \_\_\_\_\_ bebop and Dixieland, for

                           example\_\_\_\_\_\_ by the 1940s.

**Adverbs**

**Adverbs** tell more about verbs.  They explain *how*, *when*, or *where* actions happen.  Many adverbs that tell *how* end in*-ly*.  Adverbs can appear before or after the verbs they describe.

**How**    The time passed slowly.  The dog waited patiently.

**When**   Travelers seldom stopped.  Yesterday the stage came.

**Where**  Settlers moved westward.  They built a town here.

Some adverbs tell more about an adjective or another adverb.

     Mining towns sprang up very quickly.   They were terribly noisy.

**Comparative adverbs**compare two actions.  Add*-er*to form a comparative adverb.

**Superlative adverbs** compare three or more actions.  Add *-est* to form a superlative adverb.

If an adverb ends in -*ly*, use *more*or *most*instead of -*er* or -*est*.

**Comparative Adverb**       Miners worked harder than storekeepers.

**Superlative Adverb**         Farmers worked hardest of all.

                                            They depended most completely on the land and weather.

The adverbs *well*and *badly* have special comparative and superlative forms: *well, better,*

*best; badly, worse, worst.*

**Modifiers**

Adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases are **modifiers,** words or groups of words that tell

more about, or modify, other words.  Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns.  Adverbs modify

**verbs**, adjectives, or other adverbs.

**As Adjective** The towel with green stripes is mine.

**As Adverb** A crab ran under a rock.

To avoid confusion, place modifiers close to the words they modify.  Adjective phrases usually

come right after the word they modify.  Adverb phrases may appear right after a **verb** or at

the beginning of a sentence.

Meaning can be unclear if a modifier is misplaced.

***No***   The girl set out a picnic in a red bathing suit.

***Yes*** The girl in a red bathing suit set out a picnic.

The position of ***only***in a sentence can also affect meaning.  Place *only* directly before

the word it modifies.

***Example***  Only he ate oysters. (Nobody else ate them.)

                         He only ate oysters. (He didn't do anything except eat.)

                         He ate only oysters.  (He ate nothing else.)