



# Grammar and Documentation

A brief guide to grammar and punctuation, *plus* an overview of MLA documentation

## REVIEWING THE PARTS OF SPEECH

Words have traditionally been classified into eight categories, called the **parts of speech**: **noun**, **pronoun**, **verb**, **adjective**, **adverb**, **preposition**, **conjunction**, and **interjection**.

**Nouns.** **Nouns** are words that name. Nouns name persons (*Shakespeare*; *actor*; *women*), places (*Pittsburgh*; *prairie*; *suburbs*), animals and objects (*reindeer*; *Bunsen burner*; *cassettes*), events and activities (*meeting*; *fire*), or ideas and feelings (*freedom*; *frustration*).

**Proper nouns** name unique and particular persons, places, objects, or ideas and are capitalized: *Milton*; *Honda*; *Martin Luther King, Jr.* **Common nouns** name people, places, objects, and ideas in general and are not capitalized: *poet-dramatist*; *motorcycle*; *preacher*.

**Pronouns.** **Pronouns** are words that stand for or take the place of nouns or other pronouns. When a pronoun refers to a specific noun or pronoun, the word to which it refers is called the **antecedent**. In the following sentences, *italicized* words are antecedents of the pronouns in **boldface** type:

Because *vitamins* can have toxic side effects, **they** should be administered with care.

*Most* of the old records are scratched. **They** cannot be replaced.

*Each* of the mothers thought *her* child should receive the award.

In a sentence, pronouns can take the form of the subject (*I*; *you*; *he*; *she*; *it*; *we*; *they*; *who*; *whoever*) or the object of verbs or prepositions (*me*; *you*; *him*; *her*; *it*; *us*; *them*; *whom*; *whomever*). They can also show possession (*my*; *mine*; *your*; *yours*; *his*; *her*; *hers*; *its*; *our*; *ours*; *their*; *theirs*; *whose*), taking the form of an adjective.

He wrote *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. (subjective)

Many awards have been given to *him*. (objective)

Scott Momaday has increased *our* awareness of the daily struggle of Native Americans. (possessive)

**Verbs.** Verbs can be either action verbs or linking verbs. An **action verb** reveals the action being performed by the subject of a sentence.

Marie and Pierre Curie successfully **isolated** radium.

**Linking verbs** express a state of being or condition and connect their subjects to words that describe or identify those subjects. The most common linking verbs are *appear*, *be*, *become*, *feel*, *grow*, *look*, *remain*, *seem*, *smell*, *sound*, and *taste*.

Radiotherapy **is** the treatment of disease with radiation.

Forms of the verbs *be*, *have*, and *do* can help show important shifts in meaning in various forms that signal **tense** and **mood** of a main verb. When they serve this function, they are called **helping verbs**.

MAIN VERB: *She goes.*

HELPING VERBS: *She is going; she has gone; they have been going.*

**Modals** are used to form questions, to help express a negative, to emphasize, to show future time, and to express such conditions as possibility, certainty, or obligation. The words *can*, *could*; *may*, *might*, *must*; *will*, *shall*; *would*, *should*; and *ought to* are modals. A verb phrase may include both helping verbs and modals.

The part of a sentence that contains the verb and makes an assertion about the subject is called the **predicate**.

**Adjectives.** **Adjectives** are words that modify nouns or pronouns.

The **efficient** *secretary* organized the schedule. (modifies a noun)

He **is efficient**. (modifies a pronoun)

The *riddles* in **Anglo-Saxon** poetry were **clever** and **humorous**. (all modify nouns)

Adjectives modify by answering the question, What kind?

**Adverbs.** **Adverbs** are words that modify, or limit the meaning of, verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

During the Harbor Festival the tall ships **sailed gracefully** into the bay. (modifies a verb)

I thought her drawing was **nearly perfect**. (modifies an adjective)

The band at the club played **very badly**. (modifies an adverb)

Adverbs modify by answering one of the following questions:

(1) When? (2) Where? (3) How? (4) How often? or (5) To what extent?

**Prepositions.** **Prepositions** (e.g., *above*; *at*; *below*; *on*; *through*; *with*) are words that orient things and actions in space and time.

A group of words beginning with a preposition and ending with a noun or pronoun (called the *object* of the preposition) is a **prepositional phrase**. Prepositional phrases function in a sentence as adjectives or adverbs. In the following sentence, the preposition is printed in **boldface**, the object is *italicized*, and the prepositional phrase is underlined:

The rabbit jumped **over the stump**.

**Conjunctions.** **Conjunctions** are words that are used to join other words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. A **coordinating conjunction** (*and*; *but*; *for*; *nor*; *or*; *so*; *yet*) joins elements of equal grammatical rank. These elements may be single words, phrases, or independent clauses.

The coordinating conjunctions below are in **boldface**, and the elements being joined are *italicized*.

The children of *Queen Victoria* **and** *Prince Albert* married into many of the other ruling houses of Europe. (joins proper nouns)

*Some* enjoy *Matthew Arnold* **primarily for his poetry**, **but** *others* respect *him more for his criticism*. (joins clauses)

**Subordinating conjunctions** (e.g., *after*; *although*; *because*; *if*; *provided that*; *since*; *unless*; *until*; *whether*; *while*) join subordinate, or dependent, clauses to main, or independent, clauses.

**dependent clause** **independent clause**  
Because colleges need to cut budgets, **deans are eliminating entire**  
**departments.**

**Interjections.** **Interjections** (e.g., *hey*; *hooray*; *ouch*) are words that express strong feelings. When an interjection is used on its own as a full sentence, it is followed by an exclamation point: *Oh! Wow!* When an interjection is part of a sentence, it is followed by a comma.

*Oh, no!* She is late for school again.



## AVOIDING FRAGMENTS

**Sentence fragments** are incomplete sentences punctuated as if they were complete sentences. A sentence fragment lacks a subject, a predicate, or both, or it is a dependent clause presented as if it were a sentence.

**Correcting Fragments Lacking a Subject.** To correct a sentence fragment that lacks a subject, add a subject to the group of words or connect the group to a sentence containing an appropriate subject.

**NOT:** Jean Rhys was born in the West Indies. And evoked the magic of these islands in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

**BUT:** Jean Rhys was born in the West Indies and evoked the magic of these islands in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

**Correcting Fragments Lacking a Predicate.** A predicate must have a finite, or complete, verb. To correct a sentence fragment that lacks a predicate, add a complete verb or a helping verb or modal to make the verb complete, or connect the fragment to a sentence that contains an appropriate verb.

**NOT:** The sun rising over the rooftops.

**BUT:** The sun was rising over the rooftops.

**NOT:** In the back of the theater were standing-room-only ticket holders. And latecomers impatient for their seats.

**BUT:** In the back of the theater were standing-room-only ticket holders and latecomers impatient for their seats.

**Correcting Phrase Fragments.** To correct a phrase fragment, make the fragment part of an independent clause.

**NOT:** The professor rode with two officers in their squad car for six weeks. To learn about police work firsthand.

**BUT:** To learn about police work firsthand, the professor rode with two officers in their squad car for six weeks.

**Correcting Dependent Clause Fragments.** A dependent clause usually begins with a subordinating word, which may be a subordinating conjunction (e.g., *after*; *because*; *if*) or a relative pronoun (e.g., *who*; *whom*; *whose*; *which*; *that*). To correct a dependent clause fragment, remove the subordinating word or connect the dependent clause to an independent clause.

**NOT:** Because Charlene was fluent in French.

**BUT:** Charlene was fluent in French.

**NOT:** Although John Muir is often pictured as a genial nature guide. He was actually a shrewd, strong-willed, thoughtful man. Who was an effective political lobbyist for conservation.

**BUT:** Although John Muir is often pictured as a genial nature guide, he was actually a shrewd, strong-willed, thoughtful man who was an effective political lobbyist for conservation.

## AVOIDING RUN-ON SENTENCES

A **run-on sentence** is two or more complete sentences written as though they were one sentence. Two types of errors result in a run-on sentence: *comma splices* and *fused sentences*. Although there are many ways of correcting run-on sentences, these are the five most common:

- (1) Create two separate sentences.
- (2) Use a comma plus a coordinating conjunction (*and*; *but*; *for*; *nor*; *or*; *so*; *yet*) to join the two clauses.
- (3) Use a semicolon plus a transitional phrase or conjunctive adverb (e.g., *consequently*; *for example*; *however*; *in contrast*; *therefore*) to join the two clauses.
- (4) Rewrite one of the independent clauses as a dependent clause.
- (5) Place a semicolon between the two clauses.

**Correcting Comma Splices.** Do not join two independent clauses with only a comma. This error is called a **comma splice**.

**NOT:** Researchers are attempting to program robots to see, this procedure is much more complicated than you might expect.

**BUT:** Researchers are attempting to program robots to see. **This** procedure is much more complicated than you might expect. (See solution (1) above.)

**OR:** Researchers are attempting to program robots to see, **but** this procedure is much more complicated than you might expect. (See solution (2) above.)

**OR:** Researchers are attempting to program robots to see; this procedure is much more complicated than you might expect. (See solution (5) above.)

**NOT:** The exhibit at the museum was well reviewed and well promoted, there were long lines for tickets.

**BUT:** The exhibit at the museum was well reviewed and well promoted; **consequently**, there were long lines for tickets. (See solution (3) above.)

**Correcting Fused Sentences.** Do not join two independent clauses with no punctuation between them. This error is called a **fused sentence**.

**NOT:** Doctors are again using leeches these creatures can prevent the problem of clotting that occurs after reattachment surgery.

**BUT:** Doctors are again using leeches. **These** creatures can prevent the problem of clotting that occurs after reattachment surgery. (See solution (1) above.)

**NOT:** Maria washed the car Carlos mowed the lawn.

**BUT:** Maria washed the car, **and** Carlos mowed the lawn. (See solution (2) above.)

**NOT:** The cat wanted her breakfast she mewed loudly.

**BUT:** **When** the cat wanted her breakfast, she mewed loudly. (See solution (4) above.)

**NOT:** Cindy found the movie dull Lee thought it was wonderful.

**BUT:** Cindy found the movie dull; Lee thought it was wonderful. (See solution (5) above.)



## AVOIDING UNCLEAR PRONOUN REFERENCE

For its meaning to be clear, a pronoun usually must have a clear antecedent (the word or words to which the pronoun refers).

**Correcting Vague Reference.** Provide a clear antecedent for each pronoun that needs one. In general, do not use a pronoun to refer to the entire idea in a previous sentence or clause or to an antecedent that has not been clearly stated.

**VAGUE:** Lou is an excellent mechanic, and she uses **this** to earn money for college.

The pronoun *this* refers vaguely to the idea of Lou's skill as a mechanic.

**CLEAR:** Lou is an excellent mechanic, and she uses her skill to earn money for college.

**VAGUE:** Now that her children were away at school, she felt free to pursue her own interests for the first time in years. Perhaps she would get a job. Perhaps she would go back to school. Suddenly she felt alive again. Until this moment, she hadn't realized how badly she had needed **this**.

**CLEAR:** Now that her children were away at school, she felt free to pursue her own interests for the first time in years. Perhaps she would get a job. Perhaps she would go back to school. Suddenly she felt alive again. Until this moment, she hadn't realized how badly she had needed a change in her life.

**Correcting Ambiguous Reference.** Do not use a pronoun that could refer to either of two or more antecedents.

**AMBIGUOUS:** Malcolm told Henry that **he** had won a trip to France.

The pronoun *he* could refer to either *Malcolm* or *Henry*. If *he* refers to *Malcolm*, rewrite the sentence to make this reference clear.

**CLEAR:** Malcolm told Henry, "I have won a trip to France."

**OR:** Malcolm, who had won a trip to France, told Henry the news.

If the pronoun refers to *Henry*, rewrite the sentence appropriately.

**CLEAR:** Malcolm told Henry, "You have won a trip to France."

**OR:** Malcolm knew that Henry had won a trip to France and told him so.

**AMBIGUOUS:** Fourteenth-century Europe was scarred by war and plague. It is hard to tell which was worse. The figures given by the chroniclers differ, but according to some accounts, **it** reduced the population by a third.

**CLEAR:** Fourteenth-century Europe was scarred by war and plague. It is hard to tell which was worse. The figures given by the chroniclers differ, but according to some accounts, **plague alone** reduced the population by a third.

## AVOIDING DOUBLE NEGATIVES

A **double negative** is the combining of two negative words to make a negative statement. Although this device was often used in earlier centuries to emphasize the idea of negation, it is not acceptable in standard modern English.

**Correcting Double Negatives.** Use only one **negative word** (e.g., *hardly*; *never*; *no*; *none*; *not*) to express a negative meaning.

**NOT:** Felicity **didn't** bring **nothing** to the party.

**BUT:** Felicity **didn't** bring **anything** to the party.

**OR:** Felicity brought **nothing** to the party.

**NOT:** She **can't** **hardly** see in this light.

**BUT:** She **can** **hardly** see in this light.

## AVOIDING DANGLING AND MISPLACED MODIFIERS

Modifying words or phrases must be placed close to the words they modify, or ambiguity in meaning results.

**Correcting Dangling Modifiers.** A **dangling modifier** is an introductory phrase that does not clearly modify the noun or pronoun that follows it. Make sure an introductory phrase clearly refers to the noun or pronoun that follows it and that is usually the subject of the sentence.

**UNCLEAR:** **Frightened by the huge, gnarled tree outside his window,** his head dived under the covers.

In the sentence above, the introductory participial phrase seems to modify *his head*, yet it was the person himself who was frightened.

**CLEAR:** **Frightened by the huge, gnarled tree outside his window,** the boy hid his head under the covers.

**UNCLEAR:** **Unable to make a living in Detroit,** relocating to Houston seemed a good idea.

In the sentence above, the introductory phrase does not sensibly modify *relocating*.

**CLEAR:** **Unable to make a living in Detroit,** she thought relocating to Houston was a good idea.

**OR:** **Unable to make a living in Detroit,** she thought she might move to Houston.

**OR:** **Because she was unable to make a living in Detroit,** relocating to Houston seemed a good idea.

**Correcting Misplaced Modifiers.** A **misplaced modifier** is a modifier placed in a sentence so that it seems to refer to a word other than the one intended. Misplaced modifiers make a sentence confusing or even ridiculous. Place modifiers as close as possible to the words they modify.

**UNCLEAR:** He almost spoke for two hours.

**CLEAR:** He spoke for **almost** two hours.

**UNCLEAR:** He sang a song about filling a hole with his sister.

**CLEAR:** **With his sister,** he sang a song about filling a hole.

**OR:** He sang a song **with his sister** about filling a hole.

**Correcting Squinting Modifiers.** A **squinting modifier** is a modifier that could refer to either the preceding or the following element in a sentence. Position modifiers to prevent ambiguity.

**UNCLEAR:** The mayor said **in March** he would run for reelection.

Was it the announcement or the election that was in March?

**CLEAR:** The mayor said he would run for reelection **in March**.

**OR:** **In March,** the mayor said he would run for reelection.



## USING APOSTROPHES IN POSSESSIVE FORMS

The possessive forms of all nouns and of some pronouns are spelled with an apostrophe.

**Possessive Forms of Singular Nouns.** To form the possessive of a singular noun, add an apostrophe and s.

A **woman's** effort to free herself from the past is the concern of **Alice Walker's** novel *Meridian*.

The Greeks tried to appease **Zeus's** anger, just as the Romans tried to avoid **Jupiter's** wrath.

Usage varies for singular nouns ending in s. Many writers follow the regular rule for singular nouns and add an apostrophe and s.

The **boss's** salary is three times that of her assistant.

It is also acceptable to form the possessive of singular nouns ending in s by adding only an apostrophe.

The **witness'** testimony seemed vague and unconvincing.

Macmillan published **Yeats'** first collected edition of poetry in 1939.

**Possessive Forms of Plural Nouns.** To form the possessive of a plural noun that does not end in s, add an apostrophe and s.

The **women's** proposal called for a day-care center to be set up within a year.

Dr. Seuss is a well-known name in the field of **children's** literature.

To form the possessive of a plural noun that ends in s, add an apostrophe alone.

The **doctors'** commitment to patients was questioned at the forum.

**Possessive Forms of Compound Nouns.** To form the possessive of a compound noun, make the last word possessive.

Do most people welcome a **mother-in-law's** advice?

As a result of the **vice president's** remarks, the student council members asked for a revised budget.

The editorial defended the **police officers'** conduct in the case.

Sociologists were concerned that the **royal couple's** announcement would set off a new baby boom in Britain.

**Possessive Forms of Noun Pairs or Nouns in a Series.** To show joint possession, add an apostrophe and s to the last noun in a pair or a series.

**Lennon and McCartney's** music had a dramatic effect on their contemporaries.

To show individual possession, add an apostrophe and s to each noun in a pair or a series.

**Anne Tyler's** and **Sam Shepard's** styles have many similarities.

**Possessive Forms of Indefinite Pronouns.** To form the possessive of some indefinite pronouns, add an apostrophe and s. (Note that *each*, *both*, *all*, and some others can have no possessive form.)

We can learn from **each other's** mistakes.

How we can improve our care of the elderly is a subject on almost **everyone's** mind.

**Possessive Forms of Personal Pronouns.** Do not use an apostrophe with the possessive forms of personal pronouns.

Her analysis of the problem was more complete than **yours**.

Our troops are better prepared than **theirs**.

The school must take responsibility for the safety of **its** students.

## USING QUOTATION MARKS

**Quotation Marks for Direct Quotations.** Use quotation marks to enclose a direct quotation—the exact words of a speaker or writer.

When one character says to Mae West, "My goodness, those diamonds are beautiful," West replies, "Goodness had nothing to do with it."

The opening lines set the tone of the poem: "I will be the gladdest thing / Under the sun!" (The slash indicates the end of a line in a poem.)

**Quotation Marks for Quotations Within Quotations.** Use single quotation marks to enclose quoted material contained within a quotation.

Jensen looked up from his research and declared, "I've found the answer. It was Henry Clay who said, 'I would rather be right than President.'"

**Quotation Marks for Titles of Short Works.** Use quotation marks to enclose the quoted titles of short stories, short poems, one-act plays, essays, articles, subdivisions of books, episodes of a television series, songs, short musical compositions, and dissertations.

In his poem "Son of Frankenstein," Edward Field reveals the loneliness of the Frankenstein monster.

**Quotation Marks with Other Punctuation Marks.** Place a period or a comma *inside* a closing quotation mark.

"I don't want to talk grammar," Eliza Doolittle says in *Pygmalion*.  
"I want to talk like a lady."

Place a semicolon or a colon *outside* a closing quotation mark.

The critic wrote that the play demonstrated the playwright's "dissatisfaction with satisfaction"; this comment, I felt, was more preposterous than the play itself.

One of the best-known female private eyes in the American detective story appears in Stuart Palmer's "The Riddle of the Twelve Amethysts"; Hildegarde Withers.

Place a question mark or an exclamation point *inside* a closing quotation mark if the quotation itself is a question or an exclamation.

Upon reaching the summit of Mount Everest, Sherpa Tensing declared, "We've done the bugger!"

Place a question mark or an exclamation point *outside* the closing quotation mark if the sentence is a question or an exclamation but the quotation itself is not.

Who first said, "Big Brother is watching you"?

If both the sentence and the quotation are questions or exclamations, use only one question mark or exclamation point, and place it *inside* the closing quotation mark.

Why did she cause a scene by asking, "Who is that woman?"



## USING COMMAS WITH SUBORDINATION

**Punctuating with Subordinating Conjunctions.** Use a comma after an introductory clause that starts with a subordinating conjunction (e.g., *after; although; because; if; since; while*).

If the earth were to undergo another ice age, certain species would flourish.

At the end of a sentence, if the clause is **essential (restrictive)** to the meaning of the **main** clause, do not use a comma; if the clause is **nonessential (nonrestrictive)**, use a comma.

**ESSENTIAL:** Andrew Johnson became the President of the United States **after Abraham Lincoln was killed**.

**NONESSENTIAL:** Computers are now used in many classrooms, **although their presence was rare not long ago**.

**Punctuating with Relative Pronouns.** If the modifying clause is **essential (restrictive)** to the meaning of the **main** clause, do not use commas; if the modifying clause is **nonessential (nonrestrictive)**, use commas to set it off.

**ESSENTIAL:** The person **who buys the first ticket** will win a trip to Mexico.

**NONESSENTIAL:** Aretha Franklin, **who was born in 1942**, is considered "the Queen of Soul."

**ESSENTIAL:** The performance **that they gave last night** was flawless.

**NONESSENTIAL:** Modern dance, **which was originated by Martha Graham**, still influences dance and drama today.

## AVOIDING UNNECESSARY COMMAS

**Avoid using a comma to separate a subject from its predicate.**

**NOT:** The album that he recorded last year, sold a million copies.

**BUT:** The album that he recorded last year sold a million copies.

**OR:** The album, which he recorded last year, sold a million copies.

**Avoid using a comma to separate a verb from its complement,** which is a word or group of words that completes the meaning of a verb.

**NOT:** Did you know, that chimps can use sign language?

**BUT:** Did you know that chimps can use sign language?

**Avoid using a comma between cumulative adjectives.**

**NOT:** She declared him to be a handsome, young man.

**BUT:** She declared him to be a handsome young man.

**Avoid using a comma to separate the two parts of a compound subject, a compound verb, or a compound complement.**

**NOT:** High ceilings, and bay windows are features I look for in a house.

**BUT:** High ceilings and bay windows are features I look for in a house.

**NOT:** The skier cleaned his boots, and then put them away.

**BUT:** The skier cleaned his boots and then put them away.

**NOT:** For breakfast she ordered a ham omelet, and a side dish of fries.

**BUT:** For breakfast she ordered a ham omelet and a side dish of fries.

**Avoid using a comma to separate two dependent clauses joined by *and*.**

**NOT:** They promised that they would obey the laws of their new country, and that they would uphold its principles.

**BUT:** They promised that they would obey the laws of their new country and that they would uphold its principles.

**Avoid using a comma to separate the parts of a comparison.**

**NOT:** During the five months she spent alone in the woods, she was more productive, than she had ever been before.

**BUT:** During the five months she spent alone in the woods, she was more productive than she had ever been before.

## AVOIDING UNNECESSARY SHIFTS

**Correcting Shifts in Number.** Avoid shifting pronouns awkwardly and inconsistently between the singular and the plural. Many shifts of this kind are problems with pronoun-antecedent agreement.

**INCONSISTENT:** **Anyone** who travels to Greece will see many sites about which **they** have read.

**CONSISTENT:** **People** who travel to Greece will see many sites about which **they** have read.

**OR:** **Travelers** to Greece will see many sites about which **they** have read.

**Correcting Shifts in Person.** Avoid shifting pronouns awkwardly between the first person (*I; we*) and the second person (*you*) or the second person and the third person (e.g., *he; she; one*).

**INCONSISTENT:** As **we** read about the killing of animals, **one** becomes appalled by the selfishness of humankind.

**CONSISTENT:** As **we** read about the killing of animals, **we** become appalled by the selfishness of humankind.

**Correcting Shifts in Voice.** Avoid shifting verbs awkwardly between the active voice and the passive voice.

**INCONSISTENT:** A group of ants <sup>passive</sup> **is called** a colony, but you <sup>active</sup> **refer** to a group of bees as a swarm.

**CONSISTENT:** A group of ants <sup>passive</sup> **is called** a colony, but a group of bees <sup>passive</sup> **is referred** to as a swarm.

**Correcting Shifts in Mood.** Avoid shifting verbs awkwardly between the indicative (used for statements), imperative (used for commands), and subjunctive (used to express uncertainty—requests, wishes, or possibility) moods.

**INCONSISTENT:** If **I were** president of this club and he **was** my second in command, things would be very different.

**CONSISTENT:** If **I were** president of this club and he **were** my second in command, things would be very different.

**INCONSISTENT:** First, **brown** the onions in butter. Then you **should add** them to the beef stock.

**CONSISTENT:** First, you **should brown** the onions in butter. Then you **should add** them to the beef stock.

**Correcting Shifts in Verb Tense.** Maintain a logical sequence of tenses to indicate when events happen in relation to one another.

Avoid shifting awkwardly between the present tense and the past tense. When writing about literature or history, you can often use either the present tense or the past tense. However, writing that starts in one tense should continue in that tense.

**INCONSISTENT:** At the end of the war, Ezra Pound **is accused** of treason. He **was confined** at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, where he **spends** the next twelve years.

**CONSISTENT:** At the end of the war, Ezra Pound **is accused** of treason. He **is confined** at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, where he **spends** the next twelve years.



## USING COMMAS IN A SERIES

Use commas to separate three or more items—words, phrases, or clauses—in a series.

**WORDS IN A SERIES:** Murillo Velázquez, and El Greco were three major seventeenth-century Spanish painters.

**PHRASES IN A SERIES:** Running in the halls, smoking in the bathrooms, and shouting in the classrooms are not allowed.

**CLAUSES IN A SERIES:** Foster stole the ball, he dribbled it down the court, and he made a basket.

## CREATING SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Make a verb agree with its subject in number (singular, plural) and person (first, second, third).

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
FIRST PERSON:	I fly south.	We fly south.
SECOND PERSON:	You fly south.	You fly south.
THIRD PERSON:	He (she, it) flies south.	They fly south.

In contrast to most action verbs, most modals (e.g., *may*; *can*; *will*) do not add *s* or *es* in third-person singular present tense. The helping verb *do*, however, changes form to *does*. The helping verb *have* changes form to *has*.

**Agreement with *be*.** The verb *be* changes to indicate number in both the present tense and the past tense and in both the first person and the third person.

PRESENT TENSE		PAST TENSE	
I am	we are	I was	we were
you are	you are	you were	you were
he/she/it is	they are	he/she/it was	they were

**Compound Subjects with *and*.** In most cases, use a plural verb form with a compound subject joined by the word *and*.

*Shatonda and Sal make films for a living.*

Use a singular verb form with a compound subject joined by *and* if the compound is considered a single unit.

*Pork and beans is a popular dish.*

*His pride and joy was his 1962 convertible.*

**Compound Subjects with *or* or *nor*.** With a compound subject joined by *or* or *nor* or by *either . . . or* or *neither . . . nor*, make the verb agree with the subject closer to it.

*The cat or her kittens have pushed the vase off the table.*

**Intervening Phrases and Clauses.** Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a word in an intervening phrase or clause.

### Intervening phrases

*The picture hanging between the windows at the top of the stairs is a portrait of my mother.*

Phrases introduced by *together with*, *as well as*, *in addition to*, *accompanied by*, and similar expressions do not affect the number of the verb.

*His wit, accompanied by his excellent grasp of the facts, makes him a sharp interviewer.*

### Intervening clauses

*The people who came to the concert that was canceled are receiving rain checks.*

**Collective Nouns.** Usually, a collective noun refers to a group of people or things as a single unit. When this is the case, the collective noun is singular and the verb form should be singular.

*The group is selling tickets to raise money for charity.*

Sometimes a collective noun refers to a group of things or people as individuals. When this is the case, the collective noun is plural and the verb form should be plural.

*The jury are arguing among themselves; six think the defendant is guilty, and six think he is innocent.*

If you think that using a plural verb form with a collective noun sounds awkward, you can avoid this problem by inserting “the members of” or a similar expression before the collective noun.

*The members of the jury are arguing among themselves; six think the defendant is guilty, and six think he is innocent.*

**Nouns Plural in Form but Singular in Meaning.** The following common words are plural in form but singular in meaning: *checkers*, *civics*, *economics*, *ethics*, *mathematics*, *measles*, *molasses*, *mumps*, *news*, *pediatrics*, and *physics*. With such words, use a singular verb.

*Statistics is required of clinical psychologists.*

**Indefinite Pronoun Subjects.** The following indefinite pronouns are considered singular: *anybody*, *anyone*, *each*, *either*, *everybody*, *everyone*, *neither*, *nobody*, *none*, *no one*, *one*, *somebody*, and *someone*. Use a singular verb form with them.

*Everybody is voting on Tuesday.*

The following indefinite pronouns are considered plural: *both*, *few*, *many*, and *several*. Use a plural verb form with them.

*Few are certain enough of their beliefs to take a stand.*

The following indefinite pronouns may be singular or plural: *all*, *any*, *enough*, *more*, *most*, and *some*. If the noun to which the pronoun refers is singular, use a singular verb form. If the noun is plural, use a plural verb form.

*All of the money was recovered. (singular)*

*Most of the guests were hungry. (plural)*

**Relative Pronoun Subjects.** A verb whose subject is a relative pronoun should agree with the antecedent of the pronoun.

*The man who narrates the film has a raspy voice. (singular)*

*The radios that were made in Japan are selling well. (plural)*

*The newspaper, which was founded in 1893, is closing. (singular)*

*The man is one of the hostages who are in most danger. (plural)*

*This is the only one of Mark's songs that has been published. (singular)*

**Inverted Sentence Order.** Use a verb that agrees with its subject, even when the subject follows the verb.

*Outside the building were crowds of spectators.*

Do not be confused by sentences beginning with *there* and *here*. These words are never the subject.

*There is a chicken roasting in the oven.*

*Here are the groceries you asked me to pick up.*



**The Works Cited List.** The *Works Cited* list at the end of a paper contains the complete information on all the sources used. The list is alphabetized by author's last name, so give the author's last name first in each entry. Books written by a group should be listed with the name of the organization first. Give the complete title of the work, capitalizing all important words. Titles of books and periodicals are underlined. Titles of journal articles are placed in quotation marks. For books, publication information includes the city of publication, the publisher, and the publication year, in that order. Shorten publishers' names (for example, *Oxford UP* for *Oxford University Press*). For journals include the journal name, the volume number, the publication year, and the page numbers for the article.

## Books

### BOOKS WITH ONE AUTHOR

Scholes, Robert. *The Rise and Fall of English: Reconstructing English as a Discipline*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998.

### BOOKS WITH MORE THAN ONE AUTHOR

Anson, Chris M., Robert A. Schwegler, and Marcia F. Muth. *The Longman Writer's Companion*. New York: Longman, 2000.

For works with more than three authors, write out all the names or list only the first author, followed by a comma and "et al."

### TWO OR MORE BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR(S)

Jameson, Fredric. *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic*. London: Verso, 1990.  
---. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.

### ANTHOLOGIES

Forché, Carolyn, ed. *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness*. New York: Norton, 1993.

### WORKS IN ANTHOLOGIES

Treichler, Paula A. "A Room of Whose Own? Lessons from Feminist Classroom Narratives." *Changing Classroom Practices: Resources for Literary and Cultural Studies*. Ed. David B. Downing. Urbana: NCTE, 1994. 75-103.

### TRANSLATIONS

Foucault, Michel. *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*. Trans. Charles Ruas. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.

### REFERENCE WORKS

"Livery." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Compact ed. 1971.

## Periodicals

### JOURNALS WITH CONTINUOUS PAGINATION THROUGHOUT A VOLUME

Bishop, Wendy. "Against the Odds in Composition and Rhetoric." *College Composition and Communication* 53 (2001): 322-35.

### JOURNALS WITH INDIVIDUAL ISSUE PAGINATION

Hartley, George. "Realism and Reification: The Poetics and Politics of Three Language Poets." *Boundary Two* 16.2-3 (1989): 311-34.

### MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Lazere, Daniel. "False Testament: Archaeology Refutes the Bible's Claim to History." *Harper's* Mar. 2002: 39-47.

### NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Uchitelle, Louis. "Families, Deep in Debt, Bracing for Pain of Interest Rate Rise." *New York Times* 28 June 2004, late ed.: A1+.

### BOOK REVIEWS

Prose, Francine. "The Coldest Eye: Acting Badly Among the Arabs." Rev. of *The Stories of Paul Bowles and The Spider's House*, by Paul Bowles. *Harper's* Mar. 2002: 60-65.

## Electronic Publications

MLA-style entries for electronic publications may include several elements. The author's name and the document title generally follow the format for print sources. For electronic sources that were originally published in print form, include that information. Information about electronic publication includes the name of the Web site, the date of electronic publication or latest update, and the name of any sponsoring organization. Access information includes the access date, the URL, or the path.

Note: If breaking a URL at the end of a line, *do not* add a hyphen; break the URL following a slash (/).

### ONLINE BOOKS AND LITERARY TEXTS

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Ed. W. J. Craig. London: Oxford UP, 1914. 22 Apr. 2003 <<http://www.bartleby.com/70/index11.html>>.

### ARTICLES FROM ONLINE JOURNALS

White, Curtis. "Our Pure War with Islam." *Context* 10 (2002). 3 Mar. 2002 <<http://www.centerforbookculture.org/context/index.html>>.

### ONLINE DATABASES OR SCHOLARLY PROJECTS

"A Shakespeare Timeline." Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet. Ed. Terry A. Gray. Vers. 4.0. 2004. Palomar Coll. 11 Mar. 2004. <<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/default.htm>>.

### ARTICLES FROM ONLINE NEWSPAPERS AND WIRE SERVICES

Riding, Alan. "All's Well with the World in the Globe Theater." *New York Times on the Web* 3 Mar. 2002. 4 Mar. 2002 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/03/arts/theater/03RIDI.html?todayshadlines>>.

### WORKS FROM LIBRARY SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

George, Olakunle. "Alice Walker's Africa: Globalization and the Province of Fiction." *Comparative Literature* 53 (2001): 19-. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Wright State U, Dunbar Lib. 2 Apr. 2003 <<http://www.epnet.com/>>.

### E-MAIL

White, Curtis. "Re: New Censorship." E-mail to Michael Greer. 17 July 2003.

**In-text Citations.** MLA style recommends parenthetical *in-text citations* to indicate the quoting or borrowing of words and ideas of other writers. Provide only enough information so that a reader can find the source in the works cited list. For books, give at least the page number. For online sources, give enough information about the page or links followed to locate a specific passage or section on a site. For plays, identify act and scene numbers; with poetry, use line numbers to locate a specific passage. Quotations longer than four lines should be treated as block quotations, which are indented an extra inch.

### Direct Quotation, Using Author's Name in Discussion

More women teach at the college level now than at any other time in history; still, Treichler asserts, female students' "classroom experiences are often different from those of white males" (75).

### Direct Quotation, Omitting Author's Name in Discussion

Some feminist researchers continue to claim that classroom bias affects the experiences of many students, "in ways still not recognized in the academy" (Treichler 75).

**More Than One Work by the Same Author.** If the works cited list includes more than one work by an author, add a concise title to the in-text citation to clarify which source is being quoted: (Treichler, "Room" 75).

**Two or More Sources in a Single Citation.** If you need to cite more than one source in a single citation, separate the sources with a semicolon: (Treichler 75; Giroux et al. 119).