

Noun Plurals



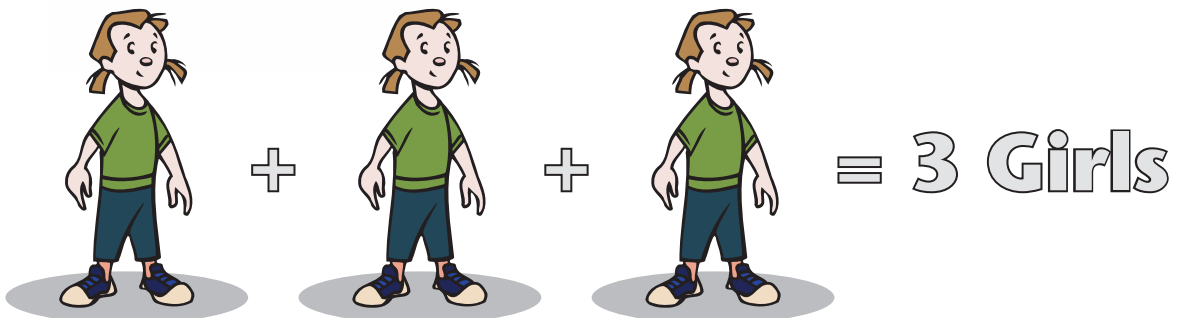
Count Nouns

Nouns that can be counted as individual items are referred to as count nouns. Count nouns can take a singular or plural form and often name things perceived by the senses. If there can be more than one of something, it's likely a count noun.

Examples of count nouns in the singular form:	Examples of count nouns in the plural form:
nut	nuts
hen	hens
door	doors
boy	boys
computer	computers
idea	ideas



You may find some exceptions to the definitions. Also, what may be countable in other languages might not be countable in English.



Add *s* to pluralize most count nouns.

house	→	houses
mountain	→	mountains
bag	→	bags

Add *es* to pluralize count nouns ending in *ss*, *ch*, *s*, *sh*, or *x*.

glass	→	glasses
beach	→	beaches
fax	→	faxes

Add *s* or *es* to nouns ending in *o*.

echo	→	echoes
video	→	videos
hippo	→	hippos
tomato	→	tomatoes

Add *ies* to nouns ending in a consonant and *y*.

baby	→	babies
city	→	cities

Numbers can be used with count nouns.

three hens
two boys
one idea

When a singular count noun is the subject in a sentence, it must be used with the singular verb form.

The cover of that book **tells** us nothing

The plural count noun is used with the plural verb form.

The whales **were** swimming very close to shore.

Incorrect: The woman who **were** working on the magazine received awards for design, layout, and content development.

Explanation: The count noun is the subject of the plural verb **were**, so the two must agree.

Correct: The women who **were** working on the magazine received awards for design, layout, and content development.

Non-count Nouns

When something cannot be counted directly, we call these non-count nouns. These nouns do not have a plural form.

Non-count nouns are often substances, such as water or rice, which cannot easily be counted, or they may be abstract ideas, such as intelligence or honesty.

rain	confidence
money	laughter
grass	oxygen

Non-count nouns do not pluralize.

Incorrect: Our teacher gives us a lot of **homeworks**.

Explanation: Homework is a non-count noun, so it cannot take a plural form.

Correct: Our teacher gives us a lot of **homework**.

Count and Non-count Nouns and the Use of Prepositions

Prepositions link nouns to other words in a sentence. The preposition indicates the relationship of its object to the rest of the sentence.

Consider the nature of the relationship between the noun and the rest of the sentence indicated by the preposition.

Incorrect: We can put partitions up between the **table**.

Explanation: Between suggests more than one item. We should choose the plural count noun.

Correct: We can put partitions up between the **tables**.

Irregular Noun Plurals

There are some common exceptions to the plural rules for nouns. Some of them include:

tooth	→	teeth	man	→	men
mouse	→	mice	woman	→	women
child	→	children			

Some other count nouns do not have a plural form. Some of these include:

fish	→	fish	moose	→	moose
aircraft	→	aircraft	means	→	means

Incorrect: **Deers** come in our yard and eat all our flowers.

Correct: **Deer** come in our yard and eat all our flowers.

Noun Forms



Forming Abstract Nouns

Many abstract nouns are formed by adding suffixes (**-ness**, **-ity**, **-tion**) to adjectives or verbs to make a noun form. Examples are happiness, formality, and gradation.

Some nouns take one suffix and not another.

extensiveness not **extensivity**
centrality not **centralness**

The difficulty comes in choosing the best noun form for your specific sentence. For example, the following two words are both abstract nouns with similar meanings. You will find both words in your dictionary.

fragility - a noun referring to the condition of being fragile

fragileness - a noun referring to how fragile something is

One of them will be the better noun form in the following sentence:

The author argued that culture’s fragility was the main problem.

Fragility is more easily used than fragileness, which sounds awkward.

Consider the words **productiveness** and **productivity**:

Incorrect: The new office arrangement increased the **productiveness** of the staff.

Correct: The new office arrangement increased the **productivity** of the staff.

Sometimes the noun form created with a suffix is not the best form.

In the following example, the noun phrase is better than the noun form created with the **ity** suffix:

The **central placement** of the new building will make it easy to reach from any place on campus.

Explanation: In this sentence, **central placement** is better than **centrality** because we're not talking about an abstract quality belonging to the new building; we're talking about its specific site.

In the following sentence, **centrality** is the better form because we're talking about the abstract quality:

We want to keep the old mascot, given its **centrality** to the history of the school.



Nouns ending in **ness** are always abstract nouns and cannot be pluralized. Some nouns ending in **ity** are concrete and can be pluralized.

monstrosity — monstrosities

variety — varieties

Noun Usage

Some nouns can mean the same thing, but not in every instance.

Narration and narrative can both mean a continuous story.

Which is the proper noun used in this sentence?

The _____ that went along with that movie was very loud and expressive.

We would use **narration** here because the context tells us this is specifically a spoken accompaniment to a film, which is always called the narration.

Some nouns look very close, but they mean different things.

The noun **employee** is a person who works for wages or salary.

The noun **employ** means the state of being employed.

Incorrect: I have been in the **employee** of the college for four months.

Correct: I have been in the **employ** of the college for four months.

Some nouns are made from shorter nouns with different meanings.

The noun **horse** refers to the four-legged animal.

The noun **sawhorse** refers to the four-legged workbench.

Incorrect: I used my **horse** to support the 2 x 4 while I cut off the ends.

Correct: I used my **sawhorse** to support the 2 x 4 while I cut off the ends.

Examples of noun usage:

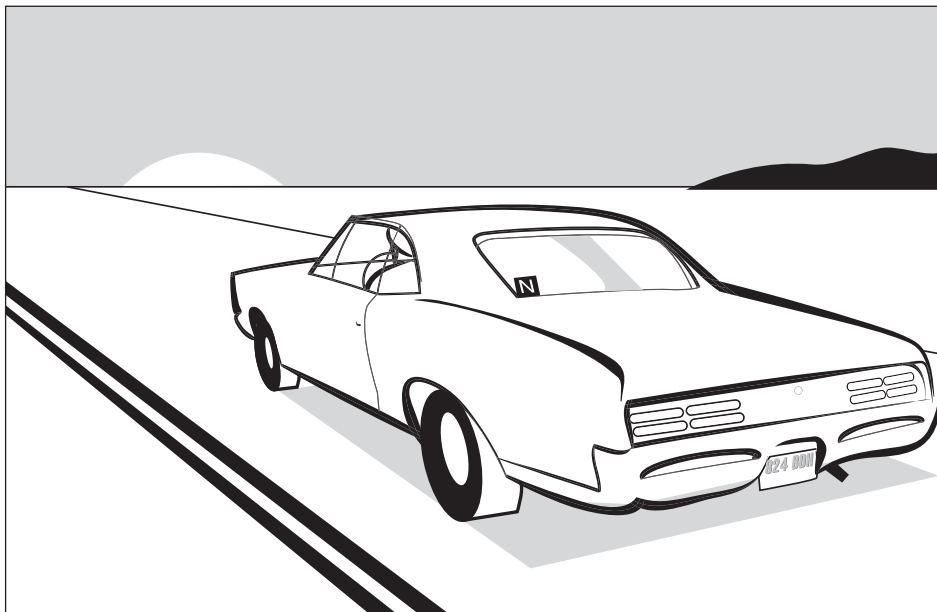
Incorrect: My hate of him has me turning red.

Correct: My hatred of him has me turning red.



Incorrect: We have many more mileage to drive before we reach our vacation spot.

Correct: We have many more miles to drive before we reach our vacation spot.



Article Use



Articles are short words that come before a noun. There are two kinds of articles used in front of noun groups: **indefinite** and **definite** articles.

A or *an* is an indefinite article.

Use *a* or *an* to refer to a non-specific, singular noun.

a book an angel a person an elephant

***The* is a definite article.**

Use *the* to refer to a specific singular or plural noun.

the cake in the refrigerator
the movies we saw last night
the past

The Indefinite Article *A* or *An*

***A* or *an* is used in front of a noun that can be counted.**

a pleasant afternoon.
We can count a number of afternoons.

Use an indefinite article when you talk about people or things without saying exactly who or what they are.

I went to see a doctor.

Use an indefinite article the first time you refer to something that is not specifically known to the person you are communicating with.

While we were on vacation, we went to a show. The show we saw was called *Les Miserables*.



If the next word begins with a consonant sound when spoken, for example “uniform,” use **a**. We say “uniform” with a “y” sound at the beginning, as though it were spelt “youniform”; so, “**a** uniform” is correct.

If the next word begins with a vowel sound when spoken, for example “honourable,” use **an**. We say “honourable” with a silent h, as though it were spelled “onorable”; so, “an honourable student” is correct.

The Definite Article *The*

***The* is used in front of a count noun, and when the noun cannot be counted, but is specific:**

the dollar he lent me. (We can count the number of dollars.)

the sadness I feel. (We cannot count a number of sadness.)

Use a definite article when the person you are talking to knows which person or thing you mean.

We saw him in **the** cafeteria.

Use a definite article when you have already mentioned the person or thing.

I was looking after a dog this weekend. **The** dog was very disobedient.

Some non-count nouns do not require an article.

I need to buy coffee.



Do not use an article when talking about languages, places, sports, or countries, except when the country name includes an article, such as The Netherlands, or The U.S.A.

Do not use an article when you talk about things in general.

Textbooks are expensive. (all textbooks)

Sugar is sweet. (all sugar)

Using Articles in Front of a Modifier

Put the correct article in front of a noun group or in front of numbers or adjectives.

Specific	Non-specific
Would you like the delightful cherry tart on this plate?	Would you like a delightful cherry tart?
The three witches of Eastwick flew by.	A witch from Eastwick flew by.



Examples of Article Usage:

Incorrect: There was great lecture this evening.

Correct: There was a great lecture this evening.

Incorrect: The students nodded at the teacher to show the comprehension.

Correct: The students nodded at the teacher to show their comprehension.

Be careful of words that have both a count and a non-count meaning.

Non-count nouns normally cannot have the indefinite article **a** or **an** in front of them. We make an exception when using words that have both a count and non-count meaning.

Non-count meaning: I need to buy coffee.

Count meaning: Can I buy you a coffee?

Explanation: A cup of coffee is something that you can count.

Non-count meaning: I value **friendship** along with the virtues of honesty and compassion.

Explanation: Friendship refers to the general idea.

Count meaning: I have many **friendships** that span more than a decade.

Explanation: Friendships refer to a number of specific bonds with friends.



Food and beverage non-count nouns can be used in a count sense.

I enjoy **juices** from B.C.

count meaning: kinds of juice

The **foods** presented at the culinary arts show impressed all.

count meaning: kinds of food

Pronoun Cases



Subjective Pronouns

When the pronoun is the subject of the verb, use the subjective case. The following are subjective pronouns:

Singular	Plural
I you (singular) he, she, it	we you (plural) they

- I am taking English next year. → I is the subject of the verb **take**.
We saw the thief leave the store. → We is the subject of the verb **saw**.
You help at the veterinary clinic. → You is the subject of the verb **help**.

Objective Pronouns

When the pronoun is the object of the verb or preposition, use the objective case. The following are object pronouns:

Singular	Plural
me you (singular) him, her, it	us you (plural) them

- Your sister is going with **us** to see that play. → **Us** is the object of the verb **going**.
Please pass **me** that tool by your foot. → **Me** is the object of the verb **pass**.
The dog jumped right over **him**. → **Him** is the object of the preposition **over**.

Choose the correct pronoun when replacing noun groups or a noun and a pronoun together.

It is common to make a pronoun error when using these structures. It helps to drop one pronoun or the noun temporarily to see if the sentence is correct.

Examples: **Shau-yu and me like** to check out the market on Saturdays.
Drop **Shau-yu**. Is **“Me like** to check out the market” correct?
The pronoun is the subject of **like** - the correct subject pronoun is **I**.

Corrected: **Shau-yu and I like** to check out the market on Saturdays.

Examples: Annie wants to go to the story workshop **with Olaulu and I**.
Drop **Olaulu**. Is **“With I”** correct?
The pronoun is the object of the verb **go** - the correct object pronoun is **me**.

Corrected: Annie wants to go to the story workshop **with Olaulu and me**.

It is also helpful to imagine the sentence with the pronoun directly beside the verb.

Incorrect: **Us two enjoy** snowshoeing.
(Would you say **“Us enjoy snowshoeing”**?)

Correct: **We two enjoy** snowshoeing.

Informal writing allows the subjective case *who* when the pronoun is the object in the sentence.

Who am I speaking to?

In formal writing, you use the objective case *whom* when the pronoun is the object in the sentence.

To whom am I speaking?



You is used for both the singular and plural form in both the subjective and objective cases.

Possessive Pronouns

When you want to indicate ownership of something, use the possessive pronoun form. The following are possessive pronouns:

my/mine
your/yours

their/theirs
our/ours

his, her/hers, it/its
whose

This is **my** stop.

I didn't think much of that presentation of **theirs**.

Her decorating sense is unique.

Whose idea was it to have dinner here?

Some possessive pronouns are used to show possession or ownership.

I never go a whole month without washing **my** car.

Some possessive pronouns can stand alone.

I never go a whole month without washing **mine**.



Your and you're sound exactly the same, but they're different parts of speech.

Incorrect: **Your** going to like this beach we're hiking to.

Explanation: The correct word here would be the contraction of you are: **you're**.

Correct: **Your** shoes are coming undone!

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns introduce clauses that are dependent on the rest of the sentence.

that **whom** **who** **which** **whose**

Relative pronouns have different forms according to their case.

	Subject	Object	Possessive
personal	who	whom	whose
impersonal	which	which	whose
	that	that	

I went to see the singer **who** played on Saturday.

Explanation: **Who** is a relative pronoun, which is the subject of the clause **who played on Saturday**.

I read the book **that** my roommate recommended to me.

Explanation: **That**, an impersonal relative pronoun, is the object of the clause **that my roommate recommended to me**.

Note: **roommate** is the subject.

Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are used to ask a question. These pronouns can all be used as relative pronouns. What makes these pronouns interrogative? They are found in a question.

what	whom	who
which	whose	

Whose pencils are these?

What time do we have to leave?

Who told you that?

To **whom** did you tell that?



The suffix “ever” or “soever” can be added to make the pronouns **whoever**, **whichever**, **whosoever**.

Use *who*, *which*, and *what* as subjective pronouns; use *whom* as the objective pronoun.

Incorrect: Which did you give that piece of advice to?

Explanation: Which is not an interrogative pronoun.

Correct: To whom did you give that piece of advice?

Pronouns Following "to be" Verbs

Informal writing and speaking allows the use of the objective case *following to be* verbs.

It was **her**.

This **is him** speaking.

I hope it **is me** who wins the prize.

In formal writing, you use the subjective case.

It was **she**.

This **is he** speaking.

I hope it **is I** who wins the prize.



Adjective versus Adverb Usage



Purpose of Adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe nouns or pronouns.

ripe peaches

a week's vacation

hot, humid weather

purple shorts

two-year-old child

Purpose of Adverbs

Adverbs are words that describe verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. A word is an adverb if it answers how, when, or where. Many—but not all—adverbs are formed by adding **ly** to an adjective.

She ran by **quickly**.

Pour the milk into the batter **slowly**.

He left **early**.

Avoid confusing adjectives and adverbs.

Examples of adverb versus adjective confusion

Incorrect: He did **fair** on that last test.

Correct: He did **fairly** on that last test.

Incorrect: Something has gone **wrongly** with programming the new DVR.

Correct: Something has gone **wrong** with programming the new DVR.

Some words do not change their form.

Adjective: hard

The **hard** shell of the crab could not be cracked.

Adverb: hard

I ran **hard**, but I still didn't win the race.

Some words have a different suffix.

Adjective: beautiful

It was such a **beautiful** day that we couldn't sit in the library to read.

Adverb: beautifully

The student recited the poem **beautifully** to the class.

Some words take on a completely different form.

Adjective: good

That bouquet of roses smells **good**.

That was a **good** stir-fry you made for dinner.

Adverb: well

She knows **well** what to do.

He performs **well** on stage.

Incorrect: Annika did **good** on her last essay.

Correct: Annika did **well** on her last essay.



To say **I am good** usually implies you are not only in good health, but your spirits are high.

The exception comes when we use *well* as an adjective to mean “not sick.”

I am *well*, thank you.



Another Exception

Use the adjective form *bad* after verbs when referring to human emotions—to use *badly* would mean your sense of touch isn't working right.

My friend's cat died this weekend. I felt *bad* for him.

Incorrect: The driver felt **badly** about the accident.

Correct: The driver felt **bad** about the accident.

Verb Forms



All **verbs** have five forms, often called the principal parts.

the infinitive	simple present	simple past	past participle	present participle
to walk	walk, walks	walked	walked	walking
to approve	approve, approves	approved	approved	approving
to help	help, helps helped	helped	helped	helping
to navigate	navigate, navigates	navigated	navigated	navigating

All verbs take a final **-s** in the third person singular form when the tense is simple present.

Incorrect: She **desire** to become a doctor someday.

Correct: She **desires** to become a doctor someday.

Incorrect: The essay **convey** its message in a clear, concise manner.

Correct: The essay **conveys** its message in a clear, concise manner.

Simple past and past participle regular verbs both end in *-ed*.

Dhara **paint~~ed~~** the rooms upstairs a light green.

paint~~ed~~ = simple past

Dhara **had paint~~ed~~** these rooms before, but she didn't like the colour.

had = helping verb

paint~~ed~~ = past participle

Verb Forms

The principal parts of verbs change depending on the form they take. There are many rules to follow to avoid using the incorrect form of a verb.

Simple past tense verbs always have just one part: no helping verb is needed.

Please **throw** this in the trash for me.

Many multi-part verbs require the past participle after one or more helping verbs.

We **have throw~~n~~** a surprise party for Bren on more than one occasion.

have = helping verb

throw~~n~~ = past participle

We **might have throw~~n~~** another for her this year, but we didn't.

might have = helping verbs

throw~~n~~ = past participle

Verbs that describe states generally cannot be used in the **-ing** form to express something going on right now, or going on in the past.

Action verbs describe actions.

go hit charge speak run

Non-action verbs describe states.

appearance - **seem, appear**
emotions - **love, like, prefer, dislike**
mental states - **know, appreciate, believe, doubt**
perceptions - **hear, recognize**
possession - **own**
want - **need, desire**

Use the simple form *without -ing* to describe a whole action or the action in general.

Pies **bake** in a hot oven.

Use the progressive form *with -ing* to describe part of an action in progress at one time.

The pie **is baking** in the oven.

Non-action verbs are generally used in the simple form.

She **has** a new puppy. He **looks** sad today.

Some verbs can be used to describe actions or states.

I **hear** she won't come to the party.
She **is hearing** a strange noise coming from the closet.
He **is** sorry for what he did.
They **are being** noisy passengers.

Incorrect: I **am having** a new scanner.

Correct: I **have** a new scanner.

Incorrect: I **am liking** my new roommate.

Correct: I **like** my new roommate.

After a modal, the next verb is always in the simple form.

Modals are words used to express ideas such as possibility, intention, obligation, and necessity. Some examples are **would, can, could, should, and will**.

Incorrect: I **will goes** with you.

Correct: I **will go** with you.

Incorrect: She **should been** going with me.

Correct: She **should be** going with me.



This rule also applies to verbs that come after the helping verb **do**.

You **do know** how to make us laugh. (emphasizes the main verb)

I **do not want** to move back to Ontario. (expresses the negative with **not**)

Do we ever **get** a day of sunshine in November? (asks a question)

Verbs after *has/have/had* must be in the past participle form.

Regular past participles:

The teacher **has talked** for most of the class.

I **have asked** my husband for help around the house.

Irregular past participles:

I **had been** to Mexico once before.

I **have chosen** some pretty paper to make the invitations.

Verbs that come after the verb *to be* in the active voice (*is* and *are*) must be in the present participle form.

Habeeb **is helping** me move this weekend.

They **are just pretending** to like us.

How **are you planning** to get that bed frame through that door?

Verbs after *to be* in the passive voice must be in the past participle form.

The part of Ophelia **will be played** by my friend Marie-France.
The leaflet **was designed** by me.

A verb that follows a preposition must be in the *present participle -ing* form.

By following me around, you'll see what a typical workday is like on this job.
Are you thinking **about applying** for that new job?

After a verb followed by *to*, the next verb must be in the simple form.
He **asks to play** with video games every day.

Follow this rule even if the sentence is about something that happened in the past.

Incorrect: I wanted to **finished** my homework before going out.
Correct: I want to **finish** my homework before going out.

Be careful not to confuse the verb forms with *-ing* and *-ed* endings in verb phrases that act as adjectives.

The following sentences are both correct, but they have different meanings.

He is a **frightened** little boy. - the child is scared
He is a **frightening** little boy. - the child is badly behaved

Explanation: The **-ed** ending means that the noun - the little boy - has a passive relationship with something. Something scary happened that made the child frightened. The **-ing** ending implies an action going on. The child is behaving badly, so he is **frightening** to those around him.

The *-ed* modifying verbs are often followed by a preposition.

We **were baffled by** the strange behaviour of our friend's child.
We **were tired of** talking in a shouting voice to hear each other.

Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs form the simple past and past participle in a variety of different ways, with no consistent pattern.

the infinitive	simple present	simple past	past participle	present participle
to put	put, puts	put	put	putting
to go	go, goes	went	gone	going
to swim	swim, swims	swam	swum	swimming
to shrink	shrink, shrinks	shrank	shrunk	shrinking
to throw	throw, throws,	threw	thrown	throwing
to be	are, is	was, were	been	being

Do not add an *-ed* to the end of an irregular verb or use the simple past for past participle, or vice versa.

Incorrect: Nikolay **putted** a load of laundry in the dryer and **gone** outside to the pool, where he **swum** so long that he forgot the laundry and his outfit **shrunk**.

Correct: Nikolay **put** a load of laundry in the dryer and **went** outside to the pool, where he **swam** so long that he forgot the laundry and his outfit **shrank**.

To avoid mistakes, familiarize yourself with all the irregular verbs; the table above is just a sample.

Verbal Phrases and Prepositions They Take

Some verbs are followed by a preposition. These two-part verbs are called verbal phrases.

Often the usual meaning of the verb is different in a verbal phrase. If you **brush**, you make sweeping physical contact with something. But if you **brush up on** something, you revive your former knowledge of something.

My boyfriend and I **broke up** last week.

Before the barbeque, I'm going to **rinse off** the deck.

I didn't like it at first, but the story **grew on** me.

The main character made so many mistakes, I really **felt for** him.

Sometimes Jarrel's imagination **runs away with** him.

Sometimes you can separate the verb from the preposition and insert a noun or pronoun.

Correct: We will **carry out** the plan after midnight.

Correct: We will **carry it out** after midnight.

Other verb phrases cannot have the verb separated from the preposition.

Correct: Jeanine said she would **keep to** her promise.

Incorrect: Jeanine said she would **keep** her promise **to**.

Other verb phrases cannot take a direct object.

Correct: When I asked about the alternate plan, she said she wouldn't **back down**.

Correct: She wouldn't **back down** the alternate plan.

There is no rule for determining which verbal phrases can be separated. The only solution is to familiarize yourself with the different verbal phrases.

It's important to use the correct verb form within the verbal phrase. Even though the verb phrase may change the meaning of the verb, the verb will still follow the same forms it takes when it is not in a verbal phrase.

Incorrect: My father is **buy out** his partner's share of their business.

Explanation: The meaning is something going on in the present tense.
Use the present participle.

Correct: My father is **buying out** his partner's share of their business.



Verb Tenses



There are three verb tenses: present, past, and future.

Each takes a different form depending on whether the action is completed, continues, continues in the past, present or future, or is expected to be completed in the future.

Common Forms of Tenses

Two tenses use the verb alone with no helping verbs.

present → he runs

past → he ran

Other tenses use other words called auxiliaries. The auxiliary verbs are forms of **be**, **have**, and **do**.

Verb Tense Forms			
Simple Present Tense	Present Continuous Tense	Present Perfect Tense	Present Perfect Tense
I do	I am doing, I am doing tomorrow	I have done	I have been doing
Simple Past Tense	Past Continuous Tense	Past Perfect Tense	Past Perfect Continuous Tense
I did do, I did	I was doing	I had done	I had been doing
Simple Future Tense	Future Continuous Tense	Future Perfect Tense	Future Perfect Continuous Tense
I will do	I will be doing	I will have done	I will have been doing

Other auxiliaries are called **modals**, and these express possibility, intention, obligation, and necessity. **Can**, **could**, **will**, **would**, **shall**, **should**, **ought to**, and **need** are some examples.

I **would** have picked you up, if you had wanted me to.
Yes, I **can** come now.

The following are some guidelines for using the more complex verb tenses.

Use the *present perfect* tense to describe an action which began in the past but continues into the present.

I *studied* computer science for eight years.

This implies that the speaker's studying is complete. The speaker no longer studies.

I *have studied* computer science for eight years.

This implies that the speaker not only began studying eight years ago but continues to study today.

Use the *present perfect* tense when combining an infinitive with *have* in talking about something hoped or planned for the future.

Brian *hoped to have gone* to the fair with Zorana.

The hoping went on in the past, but is completed, now. The fair is over, and Brian knows Zorana did not accompany him.

Use of the *past perfect* tense designates action completed in the past before another action.

1. Indira **cut** curtains and later **sewed** them. (past)
2. Indira **sewed** curtains that she **had cut**. (past perfect—the curtains were cut before they were sewn.)

1. Daniel **cleaned** the house when his mother-in-law **arrived**. (simple past)
2. Daniel **had cleaned** the house when his mother-in-law **arrived**. (past perfect)

Explanation: In (1), Daniel waited until his mother-in-law arrived, and then he cleaned the house. In (2), he had already finished cleaning the house by the time she arrived.

Use the *past perfect tense* in the part that states a condition in sentences that describe a condition and result.

1. If I **had pressed** that button, I **would have deleted** my file.
2. I think Tim would **have won** if he **hadn't made** an error in his final move.



There can be only one **would have** action group in a sentence—we do not say: I think Tim **would have won** if he **would not have** made an error in his final move.

Use the *future perfect tense* to designate an action that will have been completed at a specified time in the future.

1. On Saturday I **will finish** my essay. (simple future)
2. By Saturday noon, I **will have finished** my essay. (future perfect)

Common Tense Errors

Be careful not to shift verb tenses unnecessarily.

Incorrect: Last week we **had registered** for our classes and picked up our student cards.

Correct: Last week we **registered** for our classes and picked up our student cards.

Explanation: There isn't a need to shift tense in this sentence. Change the past perfect **had registered** to simple past **registered** in order to be consistent with the simple past verb **picked**.

Correct: I **love** my new purse which I **bought** on sale.

Explanation: Shifting tense here is necessary. The speaker loves the purse in the present, but the action of buying the purse occurred in the past.

Be aware the simple present tense can be used for the future. We can use the simple present to express future, scheduled events with verbs that express beginning and end, or departure and arrival.

When **does** our plane leave?

It **leaves** at 6:30 tomorrow morning.

I **visit** my friends next week.

We **go** to the museum on Thursday.

When using the future tense in the past, follow the same rules for the simple future tense.

Incorrect: I knew Akiko was *going to fell* in love with Lorsen.

Correct: I knew Akiko was *going to fall* in love with Lorsen.

Explanation: The speaker knew the two were going to fall in love at some point in the future, so the form is was/were + going to + simple present tense verb. It helps to remember the verb form rule regarding infinitives when writing these sentences: always use the simple verb form after the word "to."

Incorrect: I said I *would talked* to Todov later.

Correct: I said I *would talk* to Todov later.

Take care deciding when to use present perfect tense or simple past tense. Use *present perfect* for the following:

1. an action that happened at an unspecified time in the past

They *have moved* houses. -no specific time is indicated.

2. repetition of an activity in the past

I *have told* Irina many times not to put marbles up her nose.

3. with the expression "for" or "since," meaning that the event began in the past and continues until the present

I *have been* training for a half marathon.

I *have wanted to run* this distance for a long time.

4. the action began in the past and continues until the present time

We *have argued* all morning. (it is still morning.)

Use *past perfect* to compare two events in the past, one happening before the other. Past perfect shows which event happened first and which one followed.

The cat **hopped** off the bookshelf and went outside. His owner **had forgotten** to shut the door.

Noriko **had** already **left** when the doctor **arrived**.



When comparing two events, if **before** or **after** is used, the simple past can be used instead because the relationship of time is already clear. In this sentence, **had** is not needed and can be removed.

Incorrect: **After** the girls **had** left, the whole gang talked about them.

Correct: **After** the girls left, the whole gang talked about them.

Use *past perfect* for conditional clauses that talk about events of the past that aren't real, but just imagined.

Incorrect: Zorana wonders what would have happened if she *have decided* to go to the fall fair with Brian.

Explanation: Zorana's decision in the past happens before she wonders about it—so past perfect should be used, not present perfect, in the part of the sentence referring to the decision.

Correct: Zorana wonders what would have happened if she **had decided** to go to the fall fair with Brian.

Note: In the main clause you use **would have** and the past participle.

Use the *simple present* verb form for something that is a habit or fact.

Incorrect: She always **is leaving** her purse at home.

Correct: She always **leaves** her purse at home.

Use the verb form *were* if something is untrue or merely wished for when using the verb *be*.

Incorrect: If I **was** the boss, I'd let everyone leave early on Fridays.

Correct: If I **were** the boss, I'd let everyone leave early on Fridays.

Correct: I wish he **were** coming with us.

Active and Passive Voice



In the **active voice**, the subject performs the action expressed by the verb.

Carlos *unwrapped* the chocolate bar.

Micki *eats* a piece.

In the **passive voice**, the object of the action is made into the grammatical subject of the sentence.

Form the passive voice by using a form of the verb to be and a past participle. object + be + participle + subject.

The chocolate bar **was opened by Carlos.**

A piece **is eaten by Micki.**

Active and Passive Forms		
Verb Form	Active	Passive
Simple present	Sung teaches Tiffany	Tiffany is taught by Sung
Present continuous	Sung is teaching Tiffany	Tiffany is being taught by Sung
Present perfect	Sung has taught Tiffany	Tiffany has been taught by Sung
Simple past	Sung taught Tiffany	Tiffany was taught by Sung
Past continuous	Sung was teaching Tiffany	Tiffany was being taught by Sung
Past perfect	Sung had taught Tiffany	Tiffany had been taught by Sung
Simple future	Sung will teach Tiffany	Tiffany will be taught by Sung
Be going to	Sung is going to teach Tiffany	Tiffany is going to be taught by Sung
Future perfect	Sung will have taught Tiffany	Tiffany will have been taught by Sung
Modals	Sung can teach Tiffany	Tiffany can be taught by Sung

Stylistic Choices:

The passive voice is used to emphasize the action instead of the subject doing the action. Normally it is considered weak writing to use the passive voice, but there are times when the passive voice is appropriate:

- reporting the results of experiments, to focus on the thing affected by the action
- giving theatre directions, to focus on the actions to be directed on stage

Solution A *was changed* to bright red after adding a drop of Solution B.



A rumbling sound *is heard* offstage.

Micki *is accosted* by the robbers.

Often the subject is omitted from the sentence in the passive voice.

Micki *was robbed* by **the gang** from the east side
would be shortened to Micki *was robbed*.

This illustrates the main problem with the inappropriate use of passive voice: the subject of the action is not clearly indicated within the sentence.

Converting Passive to Active Voice

The active voice is preferable for almost all of your writing.

1. First, identify the subject doing the action expressed in the verb.

The floor *is being cleaned* by the housekeeper.

(The **housekeeper** is the subject doing the action.)

2. Our next step is to make the housekeeper the subject of the sentence, and change the verb:

The housekeeper *is cleaning* the floor.

Example: The mint green uniform *was required*.

The main verb here is **required**. We need to find out who is doing the requiring, and make that person the subject of the verb.

The subject isn't specified within the sentence. We'll say it is the manager. We will make that person the subject of the sentence, and change the verb:

Active Voice: The manager *required* mint green uniforms.

Example: My defensive wall *can be raised* or *lowered* depending on the safety of my environment.

The speaker is the subject doing the raising or lowering of the wall. Change the subject to I, and change the verb accordingly:

Active voice: I *can raise* or *lower* my defensive wall depending on the safety of my environment.

Preposition Usage



Prepositions link nouns, pronouns, and phrases to other words in a sentence. The word or phrase that the preposition links to is called its object. In each of the following sentences, a preposition locates the noun **diary** in space or in time.

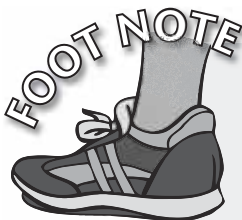
The diary is **beneath** the table.
The diary is **on** the table.
The diary is leaning **against** the table.
The diary is **beside** the table.
She held the diary **over** the table.
She read the diary **during** class.

The preposition with its object make up a **prepositional phrase**, which can act like an adjective or adverb to modify a noun phrase or verb phrase.

- Irina has a can of cola.
The preposition is **of**, and its object is the noun **cola**.
- Shilpa sat **on** the sofa.
The preposition is **on** and its object is **the sofa**. These combine to form the prepositional phrase **on the sofa**, modifying the verb **sat**.

Sometimes a **prepositional phrase** can act as the object in a sentence.

- Get the cat out **from under** there!
The object of the preposition **from** is another prepositional phrase, **under there**.



The object of a preposition is at times implied:
Get out of here may be shortened to **Get out**.

General Usage Tips

Prepositions used to express abstract thoughts can create confusion. We can picture the book being **on** the table versus **under** the table. But how can we picture the difference between being the prepositions in the following two sentences?

Donald is concerned **with** something in the environment.
Donald is concerned **by** something in the environment.

In the first sentence, Donald is likely talking about having a concerned interest in an aspect of the environment—maybe the decreased wetlands due to urban development, or the pollution of the air we breathe. In the second sentence, Donald is bothered personally by something in his immediate environment—maybe there’s a strange noise coming from the closet.

There are no easy rules for using prepositions. The best you can do is familiarize yourself with the different prepositions and prepositional phrases, practise using them, and memorize the different uses of common prepositions. The following are some general guidelines. The next section includes a list of prepositions and their usage.

Use *by* with most forms of transport; use *in*, *into*, and *out of* with cars; use *on*, *onto* and *off* with other forms of transport such as planes.

We went there **by** car.
We got **into** the car.
We got **onto** the boat at the lower dock.
We got **off** the plane at Vancouver.

Use prepositional phrases to say where a person or thing is, or to describe the direction they are moving in.

They sat **by** the lake.
We went **over** the hill.

Use *at* to talk about a place or point; use *in* to talk about a place as an area; use *on* to talk about a place as a surface.

I waited **at** the farm but the tractor wasn't delivered that day.

I took a walk **in** the pasture.

I skated **on** the pond.

Of can be used to add different types of information; *with* is used to specify a quality or possession.

She wore a coat **of** rabbit fur.

The one **with** the red ribbon tied around her neck.

A List of Prepositions and Their Usage

The following are prepositions that describe relations of time:

during: during the meal, during the morning hours

before: before 8 o'clock, before I left for the store

until: until eleven p.m., until he arrives

throughout: throughout the performance, throughout the night

after: after he thought about it, after ten p.m.

about: about four p.m.

by: by six in the morning

from: from Saturday to Monday

at: at last, at 2 o'clock

on: he was on time, on a Wednesday

past: a quarter past nine

for: for a long while, for two hours

in: in time, in the wee hours, in 2006, in the summer

to: a quarter to five, ten minutes to

The following are prepositions that describe place or direction:

around: She walked around the park.

at: We'll be at home.

down: They lived down the hall.

at: We were at the restaurant. The cat looked at me.

from: I came here from downtown.

in: in a church, in the pasture
from: The reception is two kilometers from here.
inside: Put this tape inside my purse.
of: They took the road south of Innisfil.
on: We lay on the beach.
through: He drove through the tunnel.
to: He went to Salmon Arm. Pass the sugar to me.
towards: Push your side of the couch towards me.
up: We climbed up the hill.
with: Bill went with her.

The following are prepositions that describe the means or agent:

by: She was hit by a ball. Dannika came by train. I made it by trial and error.
from: His success results from careful planning.
in: He takes pleasure in his work.
on: My baby lives on crackers and raisins.
with: He poked the sea anemone with a stick.

The following are prepositions that describe the manner:

by: By building your own garden shed, you save money.
like: She carries herself like a model.
with: She cut the cake with a knife.
in: The party ended in chaos.

The following are prepositions that describe the state or condition:

at: My son is at daycare.
by: We are by ourselves.
in: Her desk is in a state of confusion.
on: He is on duty.
for: Don't mistake the baking soda for the baking powder.
as: I see it as a small problem.
To describe quantity or measure
for: We ran for ten kilometres.
by: She adds sugar by the spoonful.

The following are prepositions that describe purpose:

for: She's saving her money for a rainy day. She wanted to go out for New Year's Eve.

Confusing Prepositions and Some Further Guidelines

The preposition *from* is also used in making comparisons.

Use **from** when the comparison is between two different things.

My book is very different **from** your book.

Use *than* when the object of comparison is a full clause.

I am a much better writer **than** I was ten years ago.

Prepositions can be used interchangeably.

He sat **in front of** me in class.

He sat **ahead of** me in class.

Prepositions are often combined with verbs to make phrasal verbs.

to **burn down** a house

to get so mad you **burn up**

A single preposition can express many different ideas.

The old table is standing **by** the dumpster.

I got this A **by** studying.



Be careful not to use prepositions where they are not needed.

Incorrect: Meiko fell **off of** the ladder.

Correct: Meiko fell **off** the ladder.

Incorrect: Where are you going **to**?

Correct: Where are you going?

Incorrect: Please take the delivery **in back of** the house.

Correct: Please take the delivery **behind** the house.

When parallelism requires the same preposition to be correct, do not use the preposition twice.

Incorrect: Mom wanted me **to** vacuum, **to** weed the garden, and **to** take out the trash.

Correct: Mom wanted me **to** vacuum, weed the garden, and take out the trash.

When the sentence calls for different prepositions, be sure not to omit one.

Incorrect: She refused **to** become cruel **to** and controlling others.

Correct: She refused **to** become cruel **to** and controlling **of** others.

Word Forms



The following words are often confused or used incorrectly. Some of these are homonyms, which have the same sound, but have different meanings. Other words in the list are often confused for words that they resemble.

Commonly Confused Words

air: the invisible gas surrounding the earth

err: a mistake

heir: the one who inherits

accept: take or receive

except: exclude

advice: a noun, words given or offered as an opinion

advise: a verb, to offer one's advice

affect: most commonly a verb meaning to influence; less commonly a verb meaning to pretend or imitate

effect: a noun meaning a result; also, a verb meaning to bring about or accomplish

allowed: permitted

aloud: audible

beside: a preposition indicating location

besides: an adverb meaning: in addition to

capital: most important

capitol: a building where heads of government gather

coarse: rough to the touch

course: a program of study

council: an advisory body, a group meeting regularly

counsel: as a noun—formally given advice; as a verb—to advise formally

decent: proper, right
descent: going down, or ancestry

elicit: to draw forth
illicit: illegal

eminent: distinguished
imminent: about to happen

fair: reasonable, just
fair: blond or light in complexion
fair: a moderate quantity or amount
fair: a gathering or stalls and/or amusements, usually outdoors
fare: a fee charged

farther: refers to actual distance
further: refers to figurative distance meaning more
• example: *There is nothing further to discuss.*

insure: protection against loss
• example: *We will insure our house.*
assure: convince, make sure
ensure: make sure, make safe

less: use less with uncountable amounts
• example: *I have less work to do than Noriko.*
fewer: use with countable quantities.
• example: *I have fewer assignments to do.*

lie: to recline, or rest. An intransitive verb, not taking an object.
• example: *I will lie on the couch for ten minutes when I get home.*
The dog lies in the hot sun.

lay: to place something down. A transitive verb, taking an object.
• example: *Lay the fresh towels on the table. He won't let me lay this matter to rest.*

Confusion comes in forming the past tense of lie—it's spelled and pronounced the same as the present tense of lay.

• example: *This morning we lay in the hammock.*

loose: adjective, opposite of tight or confined
lose: verb, to misplace, cease to have

may be: a modal + verb, meaning: might be
• example: *It may be true that ghosts are real.*
maybe: an adverb, meaning perhaps

passed: a verb, past tense of **to pass**
• example: *the past years at this school*
• also a preposition, meaning by or beyond: *He drove past us too quickly*
• also a noun, meaning a period of time: *I have ridden horseback in the past.*

past: an adjective, meaning former:

precede: verb, to go before
proceed: verb, to begin or continue

presence: being present, attendance
presents: gifts

quiet: not noisy
quite: very, completely

than: a conjunction that makes a comparison:
• example: *I am taller than you.*
then: an adverb meaning at that time:
• example: *We will eat dinner; then, I will start the movie.*
their: a possessive pronoun:
• example: *It is their decision.*
they're: a contraction of they are:
• example: *They're going to decide.*
there: an adverb referring to place:
• example: *They're going to build their new house there.*

who's: a contraction of who is
whose: possessive pronoun of who

Other Common Errors

all, all of: redundant when used with common nouns. Just use all.

- example: *all the women at the party*

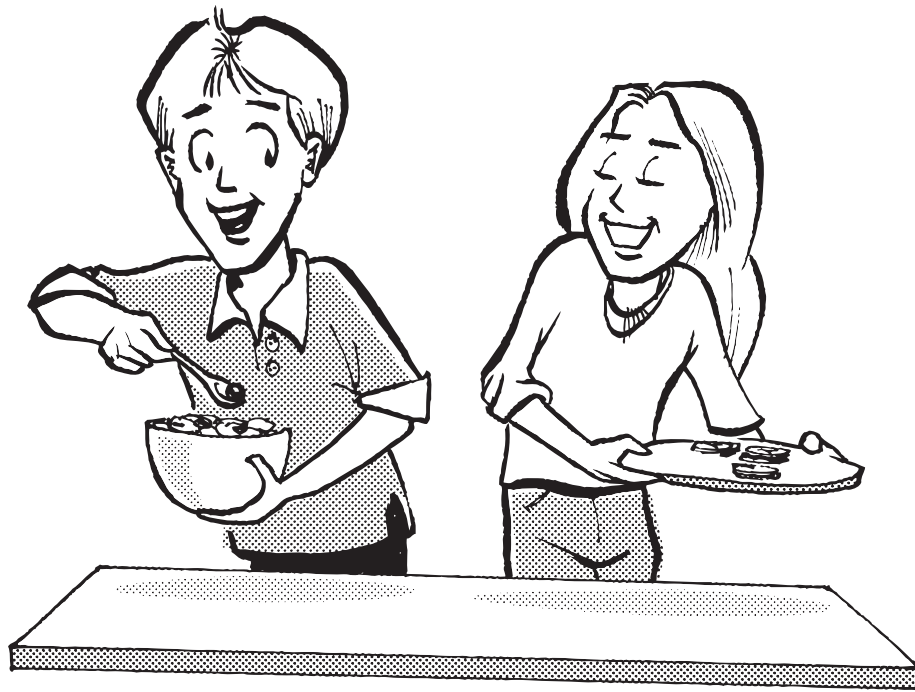
alright for all right: alright is incorrect. The correct form is all right.

alot for a lot: alot is a misspelling. A lot is a colloquial term used for many or much.

irregardless: not a word. Use regardless.

have got: a colloquial term for have. Use *I have two chocolate bars* **not** *I have got two chocolate bars*.

reason is because: a redundancy. Use **that:** *The reason the cookies are burned is that I didn't hear the oven timer.* OR: *The cookies burned because I didn't hear the oven timer.*



if, whether: If is sometimes used to introduce alternative conditions.

- example: *Tell us if you see Leo;* which can mean not only tell us whether you can see Leo or not, but also tell us in case you ever see him. To be clear, use whether.