

Punctuation and Grammar Review

What Are Modifiers? A modifier is a word or group of words that describe other words in a sentence. Modifiers can either be adjectives or adverbs and can be phrases, dependent clauses, or single words.

Modifiers as Adjectives: When a modifier is an adjective, it modifies a noun or a pronoun. For example:

- Lee caught a small **mackerel**.
(Here, the adjective *small* modifies the noun *mackerel*.)
- Lee caught a small **mackerel**.
(Don't forget that articles (i.e., *the*, *an*, and *a*) are adjectives too. Here, *a* modifies the noun *mackerel* as does *small*.)

Modifiers as Adverbs: When a modifier is an adverb, it modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. For example:

- Lee accidentally **caught** a small whelk.
(Here, the adverb *accidentally* modifies the verb *caught*.)
- Lee caught an incredibly **small** mackerel.
(Here, the adverb *incredibly* modifies the adjective *small*.)

A Modifier Can Be a Phrase or a Clause: Don't forget that phrases and clauses can play the roles of adjectives and adverbs too. For example:

- Lee caught a **mackerel** smaller than a Mars bar.
(This is an adjective phrase modifying the noun *mackerel*.)
- Lee caught a **mackerel** of tiny proportions.
(This is a prepositional phrase functioning as an adjective. It modifies the noun *mackerel*.)
- Lee caught a **mackerel** which was smaller than a Mars bar.
(This is an adjective clause modifying *mackerel*.)

Modifiers that come before whatever it modifies (called a *premodifier*) or afterwards (called a *postmodifier*).

Misplaced Modifiers - Modifiers need to clearly point to the words that they are describing in a sentence; otherwise, sentences may be illogical. Modifiers should be placed as close as possible to the word that they are describing; if not, the reader may have difficulty knowing which word in the sentence should be modified.

☒ **Before leaving for work, the dog should get a bowl of food.**

Before leaving for work modifies the dog, which makes the sentence illogical. The dog is not leaving for work! It is easy to correct this problem.

✓ Before leaving for work, you should get the dog a bowl of food.

☒ **While still a girl, my father and I went to the fair.**

While still a girl modifies my father, making it sound as though my father was once a girl!

✓ While still a girl, I went to the fair with my father

Dangling Modifiers - A dangling modifier is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence.

- Incorrect: Having finished the assignment, the TV was turned on.
- Correct: Having finished the assignment, Jill turned on the TV.

Dangling Modifier: The sentence does not clarify who turned on the TV.

- Incorrect: Having arrived late for practice, a written excuse was needed.
- Correct: Having arrived late for practice, the team captain needed a written excuse.

Dangling Modifier: The sentence does not clarify who needs a written excuse.

PRONOUNS AND ANTECEDENTS

- A pronoun agrees with its antecedent in number, gender, and person.
 - If the antecedent (noun) is singular, a singular pronoun is required. The plural antecedent requires a plural pronoun.
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The following antecedents are referred to by singular pronouns: anybody, anyone, each, either, everybody, everyone, neither, nobody, one, somebody, someone.

- ⇒ **Each** of the boys has his own savings account.
- ⇒ **Anyone** can achieve his or her goals.

Singular antecedents joined by or/nor are referred to by a singular pronoun.

- ⇒ **John nor Dave** could find his jacket.
- ⇒ **A dog or a cat** can find its way home.

Collective nouns may take either a singular or plural pronoun, depending on the meaning of the sentence.

- ⇒ The **cast** is having its picture taken. (whole group as one)
- ⇒ The **cast** quickly took their places on stage. (individuals)

PRACTICE: Underline the correct pronoun based on the antecedent.

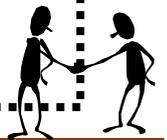
1. Neither Mary nor Laura has turned in (her, their) report.
2. Anybody can learn to set up (his, their) own tent.
3. Each of the boys takes care of (his, their) own room.
4. Neither Tom nor Jim can give (his, their) report today.
5. Anyone can join our group if (he, they) is really interested.
6. The team can't play (its, their) best when it's too hot.
7. Either Bill or Tony will lend you (his, their) book.
8. Everyone should do (his, their) best work on the project.
9. George wants to go into politics; he finds (it, them) exciting.
10. Everyone should be in (his, their) seat before the curtain goes up.
11. Some of the team are wearing (his, their) new helmets.
12. Every class officer will do (her, their) best.
13. I find that playing bridge is hard on (my, your) nerves.
14. Some of the vanilla has lost (its, their) flavor.
15. Everybody will receive (his, their) scores in the mail.
16. Someone will be disappointed by (his, their) grade on the exam.
17. One should not worry too much about (his, their) past mistakes.
18. Each of us is prepared to give (his, their) speech on Thursday.
19. Has anyone lost (her, their) jacket?
20. Nobody plays (his, their) best when the humidity is very high.

Comma Splice: A Misplaced Comma		Colon [:]
To separate two main clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions: (<i>for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so</i>) ⇒ <i>We rushed to the station, but the train had already left.</i>	To set off nouns in direct address. ⇒ <i>Mrs. Smith, have you visited the art museum?</i> ⇒ <i>Have you heard, class, that the assignment is easy?</i>	After the greeting on a business letter ⇒ <i>Dear Sir:</i> To introduce a list ⇒ <i>The following items are needed:</i>
To set off interrupting statements ⇒ <i>I know, of course, that you are studying.</i> ⇒ <i>He is, I believe, the worst player on the team.</i>	In direct quotations ⇒ <i>"I understand," he said, "that you intend to go to France."</i>	Semicolon [;]
To set off an unnecessary restatement of someone's name (an appositive). ⇒ <i>Mr. Smith, my father, is the man wearing the hat.</i>	In dates, between the day and the year ⇒ <i>November 1, 1985</i>	To separate two independent clauses. ⇒ <i>One is small; the other is large.</i> ⇒ <i>Thanks again for allowing us to be of service; we appreciate your business.</i>
After introductory words such as <i>yes, no, first, second, however,</i> and so on. ⇒ <i>Yes, I'd like to go</i>	To separate words in a series ⇒ <i>I want milk, bread, butter, and cheese.</i> ⇒ <i>He hoped that the war would end, that the crime rate would drop, and that his personal problems would be solved.</i>	In compound sentences before such words as <i>furthermore, however, nevertheless, therefore, consequently,</i> and so on (transition words). ⇒ <i>Our plane was three hours late; consequently, we did not arrive on time.</i>
	Between cities and states ⇒ <i>He lives in Miami, Florida</i>	

Subject-Verb Agreement

Basic Rule

A singular subject takes a singular verb.
A plural subject takes a plural verb.



Helpful Hints

Verbs do not form their plurals by adding an s as nouns do.

In order to determine which verb is singular and which one is plural, think of which verb you would use with he or she and which verb you would use with they.

For Example: talks, talk

⇒ We say, "He talks." Therefore, talks is singular.

⇒ We say, "They talk." Therefore, talk is plural.

⇒ Rule 1	⇒ Rule 2
Two singular subjects connected by or or nor require a singular verb. Example: ⇒ My aunt or my uncle is arriving by train today.	Two singular subjects connected by either/or or neither/nor require a singular verb as in Rule 1. Examples: ⇒ Neither Juan nor Carmen is available. ⇒ Either Kiana or Casey is helping us today.
⇒ Rule 3	⇒ Rule 4
When I is one of the two subjects connected by either/or or neither/nor , put it second and follow it with the singular verb am . Example: ⇒ Neither she nor I am going to the game.	When a singular subject is connected by or or nor to a plural subject, put the plural subject last and use a plural verb. Example: ⇒ The bowl or the plates go on that shelf.

⇒ Rule 5	⇒ Rule 6
<p>When a singular and plural subject are connected by <u>either/or</u> or <u>neither/nor</u>, put the plural subject last and use a plural verb.</p> <p>Example: ⇒ Neither Jen nor the others are available.</p>	<p>As a general rule, use a plural verb with two or more subjects when they are connected by <u>and</u>.</p> <p>Example: ⇒ A car and a bike are my means of transportation.</p>
⇒ Rule 7	⇒ Rule 8
<p>Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by words such as <u>along with</u>, <u>as well as</u>, <u>besides</u>, or <u>not</u>.</p> <p>Ignore these expressions when determining whether to use a singular or plural verb.</p> <p>Examples: ⇒ The politician, along with the newsmen, is expected shortly. ⇒ Excitement, as well as nervousness, is the cause of her shaking.</p>	<p>The pronouns <u>each</u>, <u>everyone</u>, <u>every one</u>, <u>everybody</u>, <u>anyone</u>, <u>anybody</u>, <u>someone</u>, and <u>somebody</u> are singular and require singular verbs.</p> <p>Examples: ⇒ Each of the girls sings well. ⇒ Every one of the cakes is gone.</p> <p>NOTE: Everyone is one word when it means everybody. Every one is two words when the meaning is each one.</p>
⇒ Rule 9	⇒ Rule 10
<p>With words that indicate portions—percent, fraction, part, majority, some, all, none, remainder, and so forth—look at the object of the preposition to determine whether to use a singular or plural verb.</p> <p>If the object of the preposition is singular, use a singular verb. If the object of the preposition is plural, use a plural verb.</p> <p>Examples: ⇒ Fifty percent of the pie has disappeared. ⇒ Fifty percent of the pies have disappeared. ⇒ All of the chicken is gone. ⇒ All of the chickens are gone.</p>	<p>The pronoun who, that, or which become singular or plural according to the noun directly in front of them.</p> <p>So, if that noun is singular, use a singular verb. If it is plural, use a plural verb.</p> <p>Examples: ⇒ He is the scientist who writes/write the reports. The word in front of who is scientist, which is singular. Therefore, use the singular verb writes. ⇒ He is one of the men who does/do the work. The word in front of who is men, which is plural. Therefore, use the plural verb do.</p>
⇒ Rule 11	⇒ Rule 12
<p>The words here and there have generally been labeled as adverbs even though they indicate place.</p> <p>In sentences beginning with here or there, the subject follows the verb.</p> <p>Examples: ⇒ There are four hurdles to jump. ⇒ There is a high hurdle to jump.</p>	<p>Use a singular verb with sums of money or periods of time.</p> <p>Examples: ⇒ Ten dollars is a high price to pay. ⇒ Five years is the maximum sentence for that offense.</p>
⇒ Rule 13	⇒ Rule 14
<p>When either and neither are subjects, they always take singular verbs.</p> <p>Examples: ⇒ Neither of them is available to speak right now. ⇒ Either of us is capable of doing the job.</p>	<p>Collective nouns like herd, staff, class, crowd, etc. usually take a singular verb form.</p> <p>Examples: ⇒ The staff is in a meeting. ⇒ The crowd is out of control.</p>