

Usage Review

I. Punctuation (Mark in margin)

A. Titles are punctuated to indicate that you are referring to a literary work and to separate the title from your own words. Your original title on your cover sheet IS NOT punctuated.

1. Underline or italicize the titles of books, magazines, newspapers, motion pictures, television series, plays, long musical compositions, and boat names:

Example: The Hobbit or *The Hobbit*

2. Use quotation marks (“ ”) to identify the titles of short stories, essays, or single poems:

Example: “The Most Dangerous Game”

B. Dialogue – the words a character speaks – is placed in quotation marks.

Examples:

Griselda remarked, “I want a triple-cheese shrimp and pineapple pizza.”

“I want,” Griselda blurted, “a triple-cheese shrimp and pineapple pizza.”

“I want a triple-cheese shrimp and pineapple pizza!” Griselda announced unexpectedly.

“Griselda, do you REALLY want a triple-cheese shrimp and pineapple pizza?” I inquired.

C Quotation: In an essay of literary analysis the best way to support your opinion is using the author’s own words. A quotation is part of your argument; it does not stand alone without development and discussion.

1. To place a shorter quotation within your sentence, use quotation marks. If you are quoting poetry, mark line endings in poetry with a slash (/) as well.

Example:

Juliet’s lament, “So tedious is the day/ As is the night before
some festival/ to an impatient child,” (III, ii, 28-30)

shows her youth and frivolous nature. She

perceives her night of love as a party, not a

sacrament.

2. Use BLOCK QUOTATION when citing four or more lines of poetry or prose. BLOCK QUOTATION is indented from the

right and left margins and single-spaced. Do not use quotation marks with block quotation.

Example:

The plot of Romeo and Juliet is tightly knit.

Each scene leads up naturally to the next to develop

the theme stated in the Prologue:

From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
(I. i. 6-8)

The lovers then construct their own tragic end in a series of contrasting scenes.

NOTE that poetry must be copied line for line. If you run out of space, indent the remainder of the line, as in example above.

the

3. When your quotation includes both dialogue and narrative, use single quotations to indicate the dialogue.

Examples:

Tolkein builds suspense in the riddle scene. "After a while

Gollum began to hiss with pleasure to himself: 'Is it nice, my preciousss?' (p. 83) indicates both Bilbo's panic at the passing time and Gollum's threatening character.

Within block quotation, punctuate dialogue as the author does:

After a while Gollum began to hiss with pleasure to himself: "Is it nice, my preciousss? Is it juicy? Is it scrumptiously crunchable?" He began to peer at Bilbo out of the darkness. (pp. 83-84)

Rules of thumb:

- A quotation should be placed within your own sentence.
- Quote the author’s words and punctuation exactly.
- Quote only what you need. Mark the place of omitted words with ellipsis points. (...). If the ellipsis points come at the end of the sentence, add a period. (...)
- Mark line endings in poetry with a slash. (/).
- Cite the source of your quotation:

poetry: cite the line number(s) in parentheses

“They also serve who only stand and wait.” (line 14)

One abbreviates line as “l.” or lines as “ll.”

There cherries grow which none may buy,
Till “Cherry ripe” themselves do cry. (ll. 5-6)

drama: cite the act number in capital Roman numerals: “I “
scene number in lower case Roman numerals: “ i “

verse drama: Act number in capital Roman numerals: “ I “
Scene number in lower case Roman: “ i “ or “ ii “
Line number(s) in Arabic: “ 1 “ or “ 2 “ (I. ii. 4-6)

prose: assuming you use the class text, it is only necessary to cite the page number, in parentheses. One page is “(p. 6)”;

two or more pages are noted “(pp. 6-8).”

- It may be necessary to alter or add to the quoted matter to make it fit grammatically in your sentence or to clarify pronouns or meaning for your reader. These alterations or explanations are placed in brackets: “[]”

Examples:

The Nurse’s comment, “Will you speak well of him [Romeo] that killed your cousin?” (III. ii. 96) encapsulates the lovers’ quandary.

“[H]im that killed your cousin” is the devastating description the nurse applies to Romeo.

D. The **apostrophe** is used to show possession (Mildred’s ideas) and mark the missing letter in contractions. (“Ain’t” ain’t Standard English.) A review of plurals and possessives:

Singular	Singular Possessive	Plural	Plural Possessive
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cat	cat's	cats	cats'
fly	fly's	flies	flies'
woman	woman's	women	women's
box	box's	boxes	boxes'

DO NOT USE THE APOSTROPHE WITH POSSESSIVE PRONOUS:

The dog wagged its tail.

The car is hers.

E. The **comma**: As Mark Twain said, “When in doubt, leave it out.” (Note that this quotation is punctuated – with a comma – just as dialogue is.) There are, however, a few places where the comma is mandatory.

1. **INTERRUPTERS**, such as “however” in the sentence above, must be set off by commas. Some useful interrupters are: *for example, nonetheless, of course, therefore, in fact, unfortunately, and on the other hand*. When these words come at the beginning of the sentence they are usually followed by a comma.

Examples:

For example, Bilbo considers food the most important feature of life.

Bilbo, however, considers food more important than adventure.

2. Phrases which add description but are not necessary to the sentence are set off with commas (inessential appositives and adjective clauses).

Examples:

The man, who is my next door neighbor, ran into my car.

That man, my next door neighbor, ran into my car.

3. Use a comma before “and,” “but,” or “or” when they combine two complete sentences.
4. Use a comma to clarify words in a series.

Examples:

My favorite breakfast is orange juice, ham, eggs, muffins, marmalade, and coffee. OR

My favorite breakfast is orange juice, ham and eggs, muffins and marmalade, and coffee.

5. Use commas in addresses and dates. Note that the comma follows the state and year when occurring within a sentence.

Examples:

Come to Jacksonville, Florida, to meet the nicest people.

July 4, 1976, was the 200th birthday of our country.

6. Use the comma in direct address.

Example:

Matilda, clean your room.

7. Use the comma to mark the “s/he said” in dialogue.

8. Use the comma with conjunctive adverbs when combining sentences with a semi-colon. Note that the punctuation of the conjunctive adverb determines the meaning of the sentence.

Examples:

Bilbo is comfort-loving; however, he does undertake an adventure.

Bilbo is comfort-loving, however; he does enjoy food.

Rules of thumb and don'ts:

- A. Do not separate your subject and verb with one comma; in this case, commas come in pairs.

Wrong: The other dwarves living down in the cave, quite agreed when they got the message.

Right: The other dwarves living down in the cave quite agreed when they got the message.

Right: The other dwarves, who lived down in the cave, quite agreed when they go the message.

- B. Do not separate small prepositional phrases with commas.

Wrong: Romeo and Juliet, by Shakespeare, is a sad play.

Right: Romeo and Juliet by Shakespeare is a sad play.

Better: Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is a sad play.

- C. Remember that the comma gives a pause when that pause will clarify your meaning. Don't use one unless you need that pause.

- D. Do not use the comma before “and” and “but” UNLESS you join two complete sentences.

Wrong: Bilbo is short, and hairy.

Right: Bilbo is short and hairy.

Wrong: Bilbo is comfort-loving, and likes food.

Right: Bilbo is comfort-loving and likes food.

Right: Bilbo is comfort-loving, and he likes food.

Better: The comfort-loving Bilbo likes food.

II. Grammatical Terms

Note: We begin by defining the basic word classes in English. Our language, however, is extraordinarily versatile. A single word may function in several classes; syntax, the order in which the words occur, determines the class of a given word. For example, consider the word “stone”:

A diamond is a precious stone. (noun)

I built a stone wall. (adjective)

The mob stoned the embassy. (verb)

The position and context of the word indicate its function.

- A. **Nouns** are the basic building blocks of English sentences. A noun is a word representing a person (common: boy; proper: John), place (common: lake; proper: Japan), or thing (concrete: box; abstract: honesty).

Building your sentences, a noun may be:

The subject: *John* is here.

The direct object: Peter hit *John*.

The indirect object: Peter gave *John* the ball. (Ball is the direct object.)

The object of a preposition: The bird with white *wings* and a black *crest* flew over the mountains and across the Gulf of Mexico to

Jamaica for

the winter.

- B. **Verbs** express the action or the state of the noun-subject. Verbs can be :
transitive, carrying action from the noun-subject to the noun-object: Peter hit John. [The action of hitting is transferred from Peter to John.]

intransitive, expressing complete action by the subject:

John runs every day.

linking or stative, connecting subject and complement (a word or words which complete the subject. These completers may be nouns,

pronouns

or adjectives):

John *is* president.

John *seems* stupid.

Romeo *is* a tragic hero.

- C. **Adjectives** describe or modify nouns. They usually come before the noun described.

The *black* bird has *purple* wings.

When using several adjectives to modify a single noun, punctuate with commas as in a series:

The *small, clever, impertinent* woman won the election.

Adjectives may appear in the predicate (the verb portion of the sentence) following a stative (linking) verb and describing the subject:

This summer was *cool* and *wet*.

- D. **Pronouns** replace nouns in a sentence. A personal pronoun (one referring to a person) must agree with its antecedent (the noun that comes before) in person (gender) and number (plurality).

Alexander comes to dinner every night; *he* likes my cooking.

Meg and Beth ate *their* dinner together.

Unlike nouns, pronouns exhibit case; that is, they change their forms to reflect their functions in the sentence.

Subject Case	Object Case	Possessive Case
I	me	my
you	you	your
he, she, it	him, her, it	his, hers, its
we	us	our
you	you	your
they	them	their

- E. **Adverbs** are catch-alls; they describe or modify verbs, adjectives, or entire sentences. They answer the questions, “when,” “where,” “how,” “how often” or “to what extent” in the sentence. A common ending for adverbs is “-ly.”

John dances *beautifully*. [How he dances]

John danced *yesterday*. [When he danced]

John dances *here*. [Where he dances]

John dances *frequently*. [How often he dances]

John *almost* danced until he dropped. [To what extent he danced]

- F. **Conjunctions** are words which connect various elements of the sentence. Conjunctions may be:

Coordinating: and, but, or, nor

These balance two or more like elements. (See Parallelism.)

Subordinating: See list, page 9. These introduce and attach subordinate clauses to the sentence.

Correlative: These are used only in pairs: either...or; neither...nor; not only...but also; whether...or; both...and.

Conjunctive Adverbs: These usually join two independent clauses; they act both as conjunctions and as adverbs, modifying the thought

of the second clause. The conjunctive adverb is preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma. Some conjunctive adverbs:

therefore	however	consequently	furthermore
likewise	moreover	nevertheless	otherwise
accordingly	hence	yet	also

Alexander likes my cooking; therefore, he eats with me often.

Bilbo loves his comfort; nevertheless, he set off on an adventure.

- G. **Prepositions** do not occur alone; they introduce phrases which bring more nouns (the objects of the prepositions) into the sentence and show relationships, such as location, direction, and association. Common prepositions:

above	about	across	after
against	along	among	around
at	before	behind	below
beneath	beside	between	beyond
by	down	during	except
for	from	in	inside
into	like	near	of
off	on	onto	out
outside	over	past	through
throughout	to	toward	under

A pronoun functioning as object of the preposition must be in the objective case:

Dr. Jones gave the award to Alexander and *me*.

Just between you and *me*, I deserved the award more than Alexander.

- H. **Phrases** and **clauses** are groups of words that function as a single word class. The distinction between the two is that a **clause** contains a noun and a verb: a **phrase** does not.

A **phrase** may be a:

Noun phrase: A group of words serving as a noun:

Playing tennis is my favorite activity. (gerund phrase as subject)

I want to play *tennis* Sunday. (infinitive phrase as direct object)

Verb phrase: A group of words serving as verb.

Alexander *is going to play* tennis with me.

Prepositional phrase: A group of words containing a preposition, a noun serving as object, and an optional determiner/adjective:

Alexander ran *down the street*. (prep-det-noun)

Alexander ran *to me*. (prep-pronoun)

NOTE AGAIN: Pronouns serving as objects of prepositions must be in objective case: *me, him, her, us, them*.

Clauses may be:

Independent: These are complete statements – sentences – with subjects and verbs that convey a complete idea.

Birds fly.

– as

Dependent: These contain subjects and verbs but do NOT convey a complete idea. They serve a variety of functions in the sentence
adjectives, adverbs, or nouns.

Noun Clause: A group of words with a subject and verb which function as a noun in the sentence:

Whoever wishes to come is welcome. [subject]

I will feed *everyone appearing by five o'clock*. [direct object]

Bilbo felt dubious about *the dwarves' knocking at his door*. [object of preposition]

Adjective/Relative Clause: A group of words with subject and verb which function as an adjective in the sentence:

Romeo, *who is in love with love*, found Juliet.

Bilbo has to trust Gandalf, *who refuses to explain himself*.

The trial *that determines Tom's fate* is the climax of To Kill a Mockingbird.

The house *where I was born* has burned to the ground.

Relative pronouns are those words which introduce the clauses: who, whose, whom, which, that.

Problem area:

1. Who or whom? Use *who* when the relative pronoun is the subject of the adjective clause; use *whom* when the pronoun is the object.
John is the person *who* won the contest.
John is the person *whom* I most admire.
2. Use *who* referring to a person; *that* referring to a thing
3. An adjective clause should be set off by commas when it introduces a new idea (non-restrictive clause) but needs no comma when it defines the noun (restrictive clause).

The man who spoke today was my brother.

My brother, who spoke here today, is an engineer.

or how
a sentence, it
needed when the

Adverbial clauses: These modify nouns, adjectives, verbs, or the entire sentence. They tell the reader when, where, why, how, how often, much and to what extent. When an adverbial clause begins is frequently set off by a comma, but a comma is not needed when the adverbial clause is at the end of a sentence:

Bilbo found the ring *where Gollum had lost it*.

Although Scout did not understand it at the time, her fights with her aunt caused her to grow up.

III. Sentence Structure

- A. A **sentence fragment**, an error in grammar and punctuation, occurs when a dependent clause or phrase is written and punctuated as a sentence. (Mark in margin.)

Examples:

Wrong: Whenever Bilbo appears. (Fragment—what happens?)

Right: Exciting things happen whenever Bilbo appears.

Right: Whenever Bilbo appears, exciting things happen.

Wrong: The dwarves who dig into the dark places of the earth and create splendid jewelry. (What about them?)

Right: The dwarves who dig into the dark places of the earth and create splendid jewelry are also great warriors.

Rule of Thumb: Whenever you begin a sentence with a subordinating conjunction, you must attach the clause to an independent clause.

COMMON SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

after	if	so that
although	in order that	therefore
as	furthermore	though
as long as	however	unless
as if	lest	until
as soon as	moreover	when
because	nevertheless	where
before	otherwise	whereas
but	since	whether
else	so	while

- B. A **run-on sentence** or **comma splice** occurs when two (or more) sentences are punctuated as one.

Run-on: Bilbo frequently jumps to conclusions at first he thought Gandalf was just a “wandering wizard.”

To correct:

1. Separate the sentences with a period:

Bilbo frequently jumps to conclusions. At first he thought Gandalf was just a “wandering wizard.”

2. Separate the sentences with a semi-colon (;) when the two sentences are closely related:

Bilbo frequently jumps to conclusions; at first he thought Gandalf was just a “wandering wizard.”

3. Make one of the sentences a subordinate clause:

Because Bilbo frequently jumps to conclusions, at first he thought Gandalf was just a “wandering wizard.”

4. (NOT THE BEST SOLUTION) Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction:

Bilbo frequently jumps to conclusions, and at first he thought Gandalf was just a “wandering wizard.”

- C. Use **parallel** (the same) grammatical forms to express elements that are parallel in thought. Pay attention to coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor) and correlative conjunctions (either/or, neither/nor, not/but, not only/but also, both/and) to be certain you are connecting the same kind of thing. Word classes go with similar word classes, phrases with similar phrases, and clauses with similar clauses.

Wrong: Bilbo is short and a coward. (“Short” is an adjective; “coward” is a noun.)

Right: Bilbo is short and cowardly.

Wrong: Gandalf promises to send Bilbo on an adventure and that he will succeed. (“To send” is a verb infinitive; “that he will” is a subordinate clause.)

Right: Gandalf promises to send Bilbo on an adventure and to help him succeed.

Better: Gandalf promises to send Bilbo on a successful adventure.

IV. Some Pronoun Problems

- A. The pronouns each, everyone, someone, anyone, no one, everybody, somebody, anybody, nobody, none, and one are SINGULAR. They take singular verbs and pronouns which refer to them. The current problem with pronoun agreement is that we wish to avoid the indefinite “he” in English. At this time of transition, employ “his/her” to refer to one of the collective pronouns.

Wrong: Everybody brought their pencils to class.

Right: Everybody brought his/her pencil to class.

You could also revise your sentence by making your subject plural:

Right: All of the students brought their pencils to class.

- B. The pronoun as subject may have a modifying prepositional phrase or restrictive clause separating it from the verb--but make sure the verb agrees with the subject in person and number.

Wrong: Each of the freshman girls have cast their votes for Homecoming King.

Right: Each of the freshman girls has cast her vote for Homecoming King.

V. A Few Troublesome Usages

affect, effect

Affect is usually a verb; *effect* is usually a noun.

Memory device: *Affect* is an action.

Example: Alliteration *affects* the sound quality of the poem.

Alliteration may have a comic *effect*.

among, between

Among always implies more than two. *Between* originally implies only two, but can be used when referring to larger numbers.

Example: I chose *among* the three alternatives.

Aloysius had to choose *between* Myrtle and Letitia.

amount, number

Amount is used when referring to things considered in bulk; *number*, when referring to things that can be individually counted.

Example: I have a large *amount* of money.

I have a large *number* of nickels.

compare (to or with), contrast

To *compare* one thing to or with another is to point out similarities. To *contrast* a thing with another is to point out differences.

its, it's

Its is a possessive pronoun; *it's* is a contraction of *it is*. (NO EXCEPTIONS!)

Example: *It's* a mistake to deprive a dog of *its* bone.

lay, lie

Lay is a transitive verb which demands a direct object; *lie* is intransitive and suggests a complete action.

Example: I will *lay* the keys on the table for you. ("Keys" is direct object)

I will *lie* down for an hour before I go out. (No direct object)

Notice the tricky change of tense of these two words:

Present: I lay (the keys down)
Past: I laid
Present perfect: I have laid

Present: I lie (on the bed)
Past: I lay
Present perfect: I have lain

less, fewer

These terms are like amount and number; *less* refers to items in bulk, *fewer* to specific items.

Example: I have *less* money than Mrs. Guire.
Mrs. Guire has *fewer* pennies than I.

loose, lose

The adjective *loose* has many connotations such as “slack,” “immoral,” and “free.” The verb *lose* means to misplace, deprive or destroy.

Memory device: *Lose* and *lost* have only one “o”.
“Loose as a goose” rhymes and spells identically
(after the first letter).

predominant, predominate

The adjective is *predominant*, the adverb *predominantly*, and the verb is *predominate*.

Example: Ragweed is the *predominant* cause of hay fever.
Crabgrass *predominates* my lawn.

prejudice, prejudiced

The noun is *prejudice*, the adjective is *prejudiced*.

Example: I found a great deal of *prejudice* in the pioneer.
Prejudiced people miss a great deal of variety in life.

there, their, they're

There is no excuse for confusing these homonyms and few computer programs that can fix an error should you use the wrong one.

There is a place designator: Put it *there*. OR a place holder: *There* are three answers missing.

Memory Device: *There* tells where; here and *there* (note spellings)

Their is a possessive pronoun: *Their* dog is loose. (*Their* should always precede a noun.)

They're is a contraction of “they are.”

then, than

Then refers to time

Memory device: *Then* tells when (note spelling and rhyme)

Than is part of a comparison: He is smarter *than* I.

Memory device: *Than* is used to compare.

unique

The word means “the only one of its kind.” It may not be modified, as “rather unique.” It is or it isn’t.

weather, whether

Weather refers to our environment.

Whether is used to indicate a question involving alternatives.

Memory devices:

1. The w-sound of *weather* may be connected with warm.
2. The wh-sound of *whether* should connect it with where, when or why.

which, who, that

These are all relative pronouns.

Which or *that* should be used to refer to an object.

Who should be used to refer to a person.

Example: The book *which/that* I read yesterday is on the table.

The person *who* came to dinner was my brother.

Which has a general reference; *that* is more specific.

Example: The Summer Festival, *which* is the most democratic event in Ann Arbor, encourages people of all ages to flock to the Power

Center.

I enjoy the Summer Festival *that* occurs each June in Ann Arbor.

you [indefinite pronoun]

“*You* meaning ‘anyone in general and no one in particular,’ though commonly used in spoken English, should be avoided in all English, if for no other reason than that it often results in style.” (The Writing Commitment, Adelstein and Pival)

written
a poor writing

Employing the “you voice” also makes unwarranted assumptions about the reader:

Example: You can see that I’ve analyzed metaphor in Romeo and Juliet.

This tempts the teacher to say: No, I do not see that.

