

Teaching & Learning

Grammar



Writing Resource

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Apostrophes in Possessives

1. Apostrophes often represent possession (ownership). Singular and plural nouns use apostrophes differently to show possession. Singular nouns use an apostrophe before an 's' to show possession.

Examples: Abby's car the cat's meow her sister's hair.

2. Plural nouns that do not end in an 's' represent possession in the same way as singular nouns. That is, an apostrophe is inserted before the possessive 's' to indicate ownership. Examples:

The children's ball (a ball that belongs to multiple children)

The women's ideas (the ideas generated from multiple women)

3. Plural nouns that end in an 's' represent possession differently. The plural 's' is used to represent possession and is *followed* by an apostrophe.

Examples: the boxes' labels his parents' rules their sons' habits

Testing for apostrophes

If you are unsure of whether a noun is possessive, substitute a possessive personal pronoun (his, her, its, their) for the entire noun phrase. If the noun can be replaced with a possessive personal pronoun, then it is a possessive noun and needs an apostrophe.

Original: The clowns shoes were large.

Test: His shoes were long.

Conclusion The clown's shoes were large.

The noun phrase can be replaced by the possessive personal pronoun, so it needs an apostrophe.

The following table shows the use of possessive apostrophes with common nouns.

Singular	Singular Possessive	Plural	Plural Possessive
Child	Child's	Children	Children's
Student	Student's	Students	Students'

Practice

Fill out the following chart using appropriate apostrophe placement

Singular	Singular Possessive	Plural	Plural Possessive
Girl			
Man			
Planet			

Decide if the following sentences require apostrophes and add or delete them as necessary.

1. At Ginas party Karls dog chewed the leg off of Athena and Jon's bench.
2. The girls parents had questions about the schools expectation of parents'.
3. The kid's individual observations were recorded in their science journals.
4. Jake and Brian agreed to proofread the womans paper before she sent it in.

Apostrophes in Time Expressions

Time expressions often use apostrophes. These apostrophes are not possessive. In the sentences below, *today* does not own the world and *three months* do not own the notice. The practice of using apostrophes stems from Old English and just looks like a possessive apostrophe.

Example: Computers are common in today's world.
 I gave the principal three months' notice that I was leaving.

Testing for apostrophes

To test for the time expression apostrophe, paraphrase the time expression using "*of*" in the noun phrase as shown below. Any time expression that can be paraphrased with *of* needs an apostrophe.

Original	Computers are common in today's world.
Test	Computers are common in the world of today.

Original	I gave the principal three months' notice.
Test	I gave the principal the notice of three months.

Practice

Determine if apostrophes are needed and placed appropriately in the sentences below. Make any necessary changes.

1. I was in Japan for three months in 2007.
2. There are many benefits to living in todays information age.
3. With the new hormones, cows experience a full years growth in 18 weeks.
4. In 6 years she will have earned both her BA and an MA in Education.
5. Mi-Son's English has improved drastically over the two months since she arrived.
6. Todays consumer culture is contributing to increased debt.
7. The centuries old tradition of tea time still thrives in Britain.
8. There was no way I'd make Mondays deadline, so I asked for an extension.

Apostrophes in Contractions

Contractions are often used to represent shortened pronunciations of common word combinations. Contractions tend to convey a less formal tone than their long form. Writers might overuse contractions because they are more comfortable with spoken language.

One of the most common errors in using contractions is apostrophe placement. Apostrophes in contractions are usually used to represent one or more missing letters, not to separate the words. The only contraction for which the apostrophe is not located where a missing letter should be is "won't."

Testing for apostrophe placement

To test for apostrophe placement, expand the contraction. Expanding the contraction will show you where the apostrophe belongs. (This test does not work for won't.)

don't → do not → don't

lets → let us → let's ("lets" without an apostrophe means "allows").

its → it is → it's ("its" without an apostrophe indicates ownership).

Practice

Decide if the apostrophe usage is appropriate in the sentences below. Fix apostrophes that are incorrectly placed or missing.

- 1 . Malawi is'nt in Asia.
- 2 Its a poverty-stricken country in Africa.
- 3 Many children don't have the opportunity to attend school.
- 4 Consequently, their education system does'nt match up to other nations'.
- 5 They're highly educated in survival skills.

Introduction to Commas

Many students who learn about commas in school are told, "if you pause when you read it aloud then you need a comma." This practice rarely results in accurate comma usage. Generally it leads people to overuse or not use commas. In the following section, we'll look at the five general ways to use a comma and break down the general categories of comma use to demonstrate specific uses in each category. We'll also look at some common misusages.

One of the most common usages of commas is to separate extra information from the actual sentence. Extra information can be found at the beginning, middle or end of a sentence. Some specific examples of extra information include appositives, introductory elements and non-restrictive clauses. All of these terms and other grammatical terms are defined in the pages that follow for a more detailed explanation of "extra information."

Commas are also commonly used with connectors, words that connect two parts of a sentence. Coordinating conjunctions, more commonly known as the FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) are one kind of connector. If one of these words is used to connect two *complete* sentences, a comma must be used in front of the FANBOYS (e.g., He ate 57 hot dogs, but he didn't win). Conjunctive adverbs (therefore, however, consequently, moreover) are also used to connect complete sentences, and commas are required to separate them from the rest of the sentence. (e.g. They arrived on time; unfortunately, they had forgotten the cake). Another kind of connector is a subordinating conjunction (after, since, unless, because). These are used to connect full and partial sentences. When the partial sentence appears before

the complete sentence. (e.g. Unless we run, we won't make it on time) a comma is used between the two parts of the full sentence.

There are also some prescribed uses of commas. Cities and states are separated by commas, as are cities and countries (e.g. Santiago, Chile). The day and year in dates are also separated by a comma. (e.g. January 23, 2009).

Commas are required when using salutations in correspondence. (e.g. "Dear Miss Appletree,"). Closings are also separated from the name by a comma ("Sincerely, Denny Cobb").

Finally, lists of three or more items require commas. Commas are required between items in a list. The final item in a list is often preceded by "and." The comma before the "and" is optional, but it is important to be consistent in your writing, so either use it all the time or don't use it at all. Most American writers use the comma before the final item in a list (e.g. Students use maps, globes, and atlases to learn geography).

Learning how to use commas and other punctuation correctly is essential to improving your writing. This section will help you understand how and why commas are used and give you ways to test a sentence to see if a comma is necessary.

Commas in Appositives

An appositive restates or defines a preceding noun, and it is always set off by commas.

Example: My crazy psychiatrist, Juniper Roads, is also a hairstylist.

In this sentence *Juniper Roads* is an appositive that restates the noun phrase *my crazy psychiatrist*. If the sentence were reversed,

Juniper Roads, my crazy psychiatrist, is also a hairstylist.

my crazy psychiatrist is the appositive. If an appositive comes at the end of the sentence, the second comma is replaced by the period ending the sentence.

Practice

Decide if commas should be used and if so, where they should be placed.

1. Shakespeare the famous English playwright did not lead a privileged life.
2. I asked Mrs. Johnson's only brother Clifford to teach my class how to make birdhouses.
3. In the island nation of Japan, sumo wrestling is the national sport, but baseball is also popular.
4. I generally cheer for the Mariners the baseball team from Seattle. 5.

At the end of the book, Calvin Ellen's older brother returns from the war.

Commas and Coordinating Conjunctions

There are seven coordinating conjunctions in the English language. They are often taught using the acronym FANBOYS.

For And Nor Bt Or Yet So

Coordinating conjunctions have two functions, but only the first requires a comma.

1. linking independent clauses (complete sentences)
2. linking predicates (generally the main verb and everything that follows).

1. Linking Independent Clauses

Independent clauses can stand alone as sentences.

Example: Calvin ran around the backyard. He threw snowballs at Hobbs.

When a coordinating conjunction links two independent clauses, each side of the coordinating conjunction can stand on its own as a complete sentence. When a coordinating conjunction links independent clauses, the coordinating conjunction **MUST** be preceded by a comma.

Example: Calvin ran around the backyard, **and** he threw snowballs at Hobbs. In this example, both sides of the coordinating conjunction are independent clauses (i.e., complete sentences).

2. Linking Predicates

A predicate is generally that part of the sentence that follows the subject. The predicate of a sentence includes the verb and everything that follows it. When a coordinating conjunction links predicates, the right side of the sentence (Predicate 2 below) is missing a subject and is not a complete sentence. It is only the predicate of a sentence, not an independent clause, because there is no subject.

Example: Calvin ran around the backyard and threw snowballs at Hobbs.

Predicate 1

Predicate 2

Unlike the previous example of linking independent clauses, only the left side of the sentence can stand on its own as a sentence. When a coordinating conjunction links predicates, no comma is used.

Testing for commas with coordinating conjunctions

Split the sentence in two parts. If both sides of the coordinating conjunction are independent clauses, you need a comma before the conjunction.

Original: → I finished the paper and sent it to my teacher.

Test: → I finished the paper. Sent it to my teacher.

Conclusion: 4 The second part isn't an independent clause, so no comma is used.

Original: → Joel is kind to others, and he is a strong leader in class.

Test: → Joel is kind to others. He is a strong leader in class.

Conclusion: → These are two complete sentences, so a comma must be used.

Practice

Determine if the following sentences require commas.

1. He met her at the Daily Grind and they had a cup of coffee.
2. They rushed to buy their tickets for the game was starting.
3. They worked late yet couldn't seem to find the source of the problem.
4. I try to be fair and value everyone's ideas.
5. The class has music after recess so I'm reading journals.

Commas and Introductory Elements

Introductory elements are words that come at the beginning of a sentence before the subject. They always modify either the subject or the verb in the sentence.

After school, the Klein girls go to their grandma's house.

Because I was already late, I took a taxi to the meeting.

In the two examples, the italicized portions are introductory elements. While it is not set in stone that ALL introductory elements must be set off by commas, some must be and all can be. For this reason, it is easier to separate all introductory elements from the remaining sentence by a comma.

Since all introductory elements can be set off with a comma, the key is determining if something is an introductory element. Use the following test to help you determine if words or phrases preceding a subject are introductory elements.

Testing for introductory elements

Delete the words you suspect might be an introductory element. If the remainder of the sentence is grammatically correct, then the deleted words should be set off with a comma. (For the test, the information in the introductory element will be lost, but the sentence will be grammatically correct).

Original → Working on her own, Lillia didn't seem to be motivated.

Test → Lillia didn't seem to be motivated.

Conclusion → The test is grammatically correct, so a comma is required.

Practice

Determine if the following sentences have introductory elements and punctuate them accordingly.

1. In case of emergency, the school will call the person listed here.
2. Here is your journal from yesterday.
3. Surely you can't be serious.
4. Recalling their prior behavior Ms. K. talked to the girls before they left.
5. There are many ways to solve the problem.
6. What they did was inappropriate and uncalled for.

Commas and Restrictive/Nonrestrictive Clauses

Restrictive Adjective Clause

A restrictive adjective clause **restricts the meaning of the noun it modifies**. It tells the reader WHICH specific noun the writer means and narrows the meaning of the main noun.

Example: I can't find the pen *I bought yesterday*.

The adjective clause *I bought yesterday* narrows the meaning of pen, the noun it modifies. It tells WHICH pen can't be found and therefore changes the meaning of the noun *pen*. Because it adds new meaning, this adjective clause "*I bought yesterday*" is essential to the sentence and cannot be set off by commas. It is a restrictive adjective clause.

Nonrestrictive Adjective Clause

A **nonrestrictive adjective clause** adds information about the noun it refers to, but does not narrow or restrict the meaning in any way. Because the information it adds is nonessential, a nonrestrictive adjective clause **must** be set off from the rest of the sentence by commas.

Example: The company president, *who from Ottawa*, lives in that house.

In the sentence above, the company president is already a specific person. It can't be restricted any further. Because the adjective clause does not tell us WHICH company president, it is a nonrestrictive adjective and **must** be set off by commas.

What is the difference in meaning between the following two sentences?

1. My sister who lives in Tokyo came home last summer.
2. My sister, who lives in Tokyo, came home last summer.

In sentence one, the clause, *who lives in Tokyo*, is giving essential information and telling WHICH sister came home. In the second sentence, the adjective clause is just adding information about my sister. It is not explaining WHICH sister because it is nonessential information, so I must have only one sister.

What is the difference in meaning between the following two sentence?

1. All students who miss two Block III classes will fail.
2. All students, who miss two Block III classes, will fail.

When the clause *who miss two Block III classes* is nonrestrictive, as it is in sentence two, the meaning changes dramatically. Any college with such a policy should be kept under close scrutiny. Sentence one, on the other hand, restricts the failing students to those who miss two Block III classes.

Test for comma use

To test if an adjective clause is restrictive, read the sentence without the clause. Does it change the meaning of the sentence? If so, it is a restrictive clause and no comma is needed.

Original: → The moon, which was nearly full, helped the slaves find their way.

Test: → The moon helped the slaves find their way.

The moon is already a specific entity, so it cannot be restricted further. The adjective clause does not tell us WHICH moon. It tells us a quality of the moon, so the information is nonrestrictive and must be set off by commas.

Original → The students who arrived from Iraq last summer are still having difficulty focusing.

Test → The students are still having difficulty focusing.

The test changes the meaning of the sentence, so the adjective clause is providing essential information and cannot be set off by commas.

Practice

Determine if the following sentences contain restrictive or nonrestrictive adjective clauses. Add or delete commas accordingly.

1. I borrowed Jim's book that he bought in Seattle.
2. President Clinton who learned to play the saxophone as a child, played in jazz clubs around the world during his presidency.
3. My aunt is the woman who's wearing the purple scarf on her head.
4. Labin Field, where our event will be held, is at the north end of campus.
5. The high school is holding a fundraiser, that will include students performing traditional dances from around the world, to raise money for their senior party.
6. After losing in the first round, Kasanova, who was previously unbeaten, returned home.

Commas and Conjunctive Adverbs

Meaning: in addition

Synonyms:	further	<u>as a result</u>	<u>on the other hand</u>
	moreover	consequently	however
	similarly	therefore	otherwise
		then	still

It is important to remember that an independent clause that begins with a conjunctive adverb is still an independent clause. Since there are two independent clauses, they must be separated by a period or semicolon. (see run-on sentences for more on punctuating two independent clauses).

Example:

He tried to rush the experiment; consequently, his measurements were off.

He tried to rush the experiment. Consequently, his measurements were off.

Independent clauses are separated by a semicolon, but the conjunctive adverb must also be separated from its clause by commas.

Example:

Testing for comma use

He had to work all night; otherwise he wouldn't finish.

He had to work all night; he wouldn't, otherwise, finish.

He had to work all night; he wouldn't finish otherwise.

Practice

Punctuate the following sentences appropriately.

1. He came in third therefore he did not qualify for the finals.
2. Her paper was clear and concise moreover represented a unique perspective.
3. I would like to go to the ceremony, I have a meeting however so I will be late.
4. They didn't check their work, consequently their answers didn't always add up. 5.

Young people enjoyed the Harry Potter series, adults, likewise enjoyed the books.

Commas and Subordinating Conjunctions

Like conjunctive adverbs, subordinating conjunctions (e.g., because, since, even though, unless) show how two clauses relate to each other. However, subordinating conjunctions join one independent clause and one dependent clause.

He worked all night because the deadline was getting closer
 Independent clause dependent clause

When the independent clause precedes the dependent clause, the two are **not** separated by any punctuation.

Testing for comma use

Subordinating conjunctions are often confused with conjunctive adverbs (e.g. therefore, consequently, however). To test if a word is a subordinating conjunction, move the entire clause to the front of the sentence. If you can move the entire clause to the beginning of the sentence, it is a subordinating conjunction. When the dependent clause (the part of the sentence that begins with a subordinating conjunction) begins the sentence, separate the clauses with a comma.

Original He worked all night because the deadline was looming.
 Test Because the deadline was looming, he worked all night.

When the dependent clause precedes the independent clause, as in the "test" above, the two are separated by a comma.

Practice

Punctuate the following sentences appropriately.

1. He bought a bagel after he finished school.
2. They hate to lose, however, they don't get mad about it.
3. We are ready to begin unless someone is still missing.
4. As soon as I finished reading it I returned the book.
5. She can take the test in the hallway since the classroom is so noisy
6. The test was hard, even though I studied the concepts the night before.
7. Because she'd missed the final shot Karyn was depressed.
8. I went to my grandmother's every day after I finished soccer practice.

Prescribed Uses of Commas

1. Dates

Commas are used to separate the day and year in the date when the month is written out.

Example:

My friend got married on March 17, 2005.

June 24, 1984, is my birthday.

2. Correspondence

The traditional opening to a letter is "Dear Ms. Montgomery." This opening salutation is followed by a comma. The closing of a letter also uses a comma between the close and the writer's name.

Example:

Sincerely,

Joe Kim

3. Places

Commas are used to separate smaller places (e.g. cities) and larger places (e.g. states or countries).

Example:

She was born in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Lillehammer, Norway, hosted the winter Olympics.

Commas in a List

In English, when we list three or more items, we use a comma to separate the items.

Example: Pigs, elephants, and lions are quadrupeds.

When the items being listed include commas, the punctuation between items changes to a semicolon.

Example: Some of America's greatest music cities include Nashville, TN; New Orleans, LA; and Chicago, IL.

Before the final item in a list, we often use "and." There is an optional comma placed before this "and." Generally speaking, American writers tend to use the comma that precedes the "and" in a list. However, it is not required. Whether you use it or not is up to you, but you must be consistent. Either use it all the time or don't use it at all.

Practice

Punctuate the following sentences appropriately.

1. I like ice cream pie and pudding, but chocolate cake is my favorite dessert.
2. My mom grows tulips, dahlias, and asters in her garden.
3. Mystery Romance Adventure and Sci-Fi are popular fiction genres.
4. American car companies like Chevy Ford and Buick are having financial difficulties.
5. Next week we will be studying Mars Jupiter Mercury and Venus
6. Burks, thongs, Texas are all names of sandals.
7. Coniferous trees include cedar spruce fir and cypress.
8. Many people say taupe mushroom and sage are soothing colors.

Pronoun Agreement

Agreement refers to the grammatical connections between words. Pronouns, both personal (you, we, they, me, I) and reflexive (herself, themselves, itself), must agree with their **antecedents** (**ant-a-see-dents**), a person or thing previously referred to, in gender and number.

James wanted *his* sister to give *him* money for the movies.

They completed *their* assignments without *their* parents telling them.

Indefinite Pronoun Agreement

Indefinite pronouns are words used as pronouns to refer to unspecified nouns. The words "some," "many," "someone" and "few" can all be used as indefinite pronouns. The trick is that these pronouns are only *indefinite* pronouns when they act as a noun, not a noun modifier.

noun → Many find the new rules stifling.

noun modifier → Many people find the new rules stifling.

The difficulty in using indefinite pronouns arises **because** the way people speak English is not always grammatically correct, but it influences how people write.

Wrong → Someone finished this one, but I can't find their notes.

Right → Someone finished this one, but I can't find her/his notes.

Many find the use of her/his or s/he to detract from the flow of a sentence. It can be replaced by one or the other which would lend a gender to the indefinite pronoun, but the s/he or her/his cannot be replaced by *they* or *their* because the number does not agree with the indefinite pronoun *someone*.

Testing for pronoun use

To test for proper pronoun use, determine the number and gender of the antecedent and the pronouns that refer to it.

Original	<u>Mike and Jason</u> wanted to teach <u>their</u> students about the ocean.	
Test	Antecedent	Pronoun
	Number = Plural	Number = Plural
	Gender = Male	Gender = not determined

Since both the antecedent and the pronoun that refers to it match in number and don't disagree in gender, they can be used together.

Practice

Look at the sentences below and determine if the pronouns are being used properly.

1. Both students developed interesting hypotheses, but her conclusions were inaccurate.
2. Many girls come to this school from small towns, but she seems to be doing well here. 3.

Can you ask someone who has their assignment finished to help me?

Capitalization

1. Proper Names

Rule: If it is a proper name, the formal or official name of a specific person, place, etc., then it is capitalized. The generic noun (a noun that indicates a common thing or place) is not capitalized.

I played soccer at Spangle High School.

I played soccer in high school.

In the second example, high school is not capitalized because it is not the name of the school. It is a generic noun.

2. Job Titles

Rule: Job titles are only capitalized if they are followed by a proper name.

Senator Patty Murray voted for the bill.

The senator voted against the labor bill.

Major Ozawa will be transferring to Okinawa next week.

I asked Mrs. Khadili about the dog.

3. Always Capitalize.

Some words are capitalized under all circumstances. These words generally refer to a people, a country's product, a language, days of the week, and months.

Examples:

People:	Congolese, Swedish, Egyptian, Washingtonian
Country's Product:	Jordanian culture, French cuisine, Mayan ruins
Languages:	Maori, Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi, Tagalog, English
Days of the week	Wednesday, Friday, Sunday
Calendar months:	June, February, August, November

State names and abbreviations are also capitalized.

Washington = WA

Vermont = VT

Texas = TX

4. Acronyms

Acronyms are phrases that are abbreviated by taking the first letter of each word and making a new word. The rule here is that the abbreviated form is capitalized, but the long version is generally not.

Examples:

English language learner (ELL)

daily oral language (DOL)

Run-on Sentences

An independent clause is a series of words that can stand on its own as a complete sentence. A run-on sentence occurs when two or more independent clauses are joined in the same sentence without a conjunction and/or adequate punctuation. There are two common types of run-ons.

1. **Comma splices:** two independent clauses joined by a comma.

Wrong: My grandmother is coming from Troy, she'll be here tomorrow.

Right: My grandmother is coming from Troy, and she'll be here tomorrow.

Wrong: He'll finish his project soon, his presentation is in October.

Right: He'll finish his project soon. His presentation is in October.

2. **Fused sentences:** two independent clauses joined without punctuation.

Wrong: My grades are fine I'm getting a 3.0.

Right: My grades are fine; I'm getting a 3.0.

Wrong: Those three boys frustrate me they never listen.

Right: Those three boys frustrate me, and they never listen.

Both comma splices and fused sentences can be fixed in the same way; place a semicolon between the two independent clauses. There are other ways to fix run-on sentences including making two sentences or using a coordinating conjunction (see examples above).

Testing for a run-on sentence

To test for a run-on sentence, break the sentence into two full sentences. If you can make two complete sentences without moving or removing any words, then it is a run-on sentence.

Original	Those three boys frustrate me they never listen.
Test	Those three boys frustrate me. They never listen.
Correction 1	Those three boys frustrate me; they never listen.
Correction 2	Those three boys frustrate me, and they never listen.
Correction 3	Those three boys frustrate me. They never listen.

Practice

Determine if the following sentences are run-ons and fix them if needed.

1. We do everyday activities in other languages we do the calendar in Spanish
-

2. Our kids want to avoid getting in trouble, and they know better than to swear.
3. Grammar books are intimidating they are full of official terms I don't know.
4. Leo and Gary represented the school, they wrote an article for the newspaper.
5. The presentation was a great success, everyone enjoyed it and laughed constantly. 6.

As a teacher, I want to know my students, so I can teach to their strengths.

2. are/our

are: is a verb indicating existence in present tense; a helping verb needed for grammatical clarity.

Examples: They are funny. Her stories are going to be big sellers.

our: indicates possession

noun phrase

Our democracy is not the same as that of France.

noun

Practice

Choose the best word to complete the sentences.

1. ____ class worked really hard, but we were not the winners.
2. In the morning, we ____ taking ____ first grade buddies to the zoo.
4. ____ ancestors built the railroad that spans the entire country from east to west.
5. ____ students expected to know their multiplication tables in second grade?

3. every day/everyday

every day: a noun phrase that indicates daily frequency

Computers are now a part of *everyday* life for many people.

Practice

Choose the best word for each sentence.

1. ____ I try to help my students broaden their ideas about the world.
2. In their ____ lives my students see more crime than I ever have.
3. I like to garden, but I don't have time to do it ____
4. People who do yoga ____ seem to be healthier than the average person.

4 than/then

than: used for comparisons

* *Than* is only used when comparing two or more entities.

Many students said the WASL was easier than they had expected.

I think actions are more important than words.

then: indicates an order of events; indicates the consequence of an *if* clause

First, we'll eat pizza. Then, we'll do the piñata.

If you're taller than Jo, then stand on this side of the room.

Practice

Choose the best word for each sentence.

1. Students say it is easier to complete the unit plan in parts ____ to do the whole thing at once.
2. My brother was in a rowing club, and ____ he joined the crew team at school.
3. If you want to go to the exhibit, ____ you should be here by eight tomorrow morning.
4. The news is harder to understand when Mr. O'Reilly does it ____ when Ms. Can does.

5. your/you're

your: a possessive determiner which must always be followed by a noun or a noun phrase.

Example: They found your dog in your neighbor's yard.

noun

noun phrase

you're: a contraction made from combining *you* and *are*. If the sentence does not make sense when you replace *you 're* with *you are*, then you are using the wrong word.

Example: You're coming to class, right? You are coming to class, right?

Practice

Fill in the blank with the most appropriate word.

1. Can we take ____ car tonight?
2. ____ not going to wear that, are you?
3. Vince asked for ____ e-mail, but I couldn't remember it.
4. I'm not sure if ____ graduating this fall or in the spring.

5. ____going to ask _____ mom tonight?

6. to/too/two

to: a preposition often indicating direction or the first word in an infinitive or infinitive phrase.

Example: Allen's dream is to fly to the moon.

I like to swim. It is difficult to read her writing.

Infinitive

infinitive phrase

too: expresses likeness; it means "also." Too can also mean more or less than necessary.

Examples: I like science, too. My sister's name is Elise, too.

There are too many kids for everyone to get a turn.

Her parents make too little to send her to band camp.

Two: the number 2

Practice

Fill in the blank with the most appropriate word.

1. Her friend asked her ____ speak in class next week.
2. In the end, ____ few people were interested in the project.
3. I usually go ____ Moscow ____ buy veggies at the market.
4. They asked _____ to take _____ books home read over the break.

7. its/it's

it's — a contraction made from combining it and is. If the sentence does not make sense when you replace it's with it is, then you are using the wrong word.

Example It's her turn. It's starting at seven in the gym.

its — a possessive determiner. Its is always followed by a noun or noun phrase.

The dog chased its tail. Its ineffective policy created more problems.

noun

noun phrase

Practice

Fill in the blank with the most appropriate word.

1. The board thinks _____ a good plan.
2. Her shoe flew off because _____lace had broken.
3. _____ not difficult to understand the problem.
4. _____ solution is far more difficult to find.
5. I don't think _____going to work, but we can try it.

8. allot/a lot/alot

allot: a verb indicating how something is dispersed.

Example: The group members were allotted individual tasks to get the project finished.

a lot: an adverb indicating a large amount; a preposition indicating a numerous amount. The entire preposition is a lot of and it is always followed by a noun or noun phrase.

Examples: She made *a lot of cupcakes* to share with her class. I

read *a lot* as a child.

alot: _____ is not a word.

Practice

Fill in the blank with the most appropriate word.

1. The school _____ 4 hours for the entire test with a 30 minute break between sections.
2. Brianna ate _____ of bananas when she lived in the Philippines.
3. The _____ time did not leave _____ of time for consultation and planning.
4. Our barn cats kill _____ of mice in the fall.
5. The school has _____ of problems with truancy and vandalism.

Answers

Apostrophes and Possessives

Singular	Singular Possessive	Plural	Plural Possessive
Girl	girl's	girls	girls'
Man	man's	men	men's
Planet	planet's	planets	planets'

1. At Gina's party Karl's dog chewed the leg off of Athena and Jon's bench.
2. The girl's (or girls') parents had questions about the school's expectations of parents.
3. Jake and Brian agreed to proofread the woman's paper before she sent it in.

Apostrophes in Time Expressions

1. I was in Japan for three months in 2007.
2. There are many benefits to living in today's information age.
3. With the new hormones, cows experience a full year's growth in 18 weeks.
4. In 6 years she will have earned both her BA and an MA in Education.
5. Mi-Son's English has improved drastically over the two months since she arrived.
6. Today's consumer culture is contributing to increased debt.
7. The centuries old tradition of tea time still thrives in Britain.
8. There was no way I'd make Monday's deadline, so I asked for an extension.

Apostrophes in Contractions

1. Malawi isn't in Asia.
2. It's a poverty-stricken country in Africa.
3. Many children don't have the opportunity to attend school.

Commas and Appositives

1. Shakespeare, the famous English playwright, did not lead a privileged life.
2. I asked Mrs. Johnson's only brother, Clifford, to teach my class how to make birdhouses.
3. I generally cheer for the Mariners, the baseball team from Seattle.

5. At the end of the book, Calvin, Ellen's older brother, returns from the war.

Commas and Introductory Elements

1. In case of emergency, the school will call the person listed here.
2. Here is your journal from yesterday.
3. Surely, you can't be serious.
4. Recalling their prior behavior, Ms. K. talked to the girls before they left.
5. There are many ways to solve the problem.
6. What they did was inappropriate and uncalled for.

Commas and Restrictive Clauses

1. I borrowed Jim's book that he bought in Seattle.
2. President Clinton, who learned to play the saxophone as a child, played in jazz clubs around the world during his presidency.
3. My aunt is the woman who's wearing the purple scarf on her head.
4. Labin Field, where our event will be held, is at the north end of campus.
5. The high school is holding a fundraiser that will include students performing traditional dances from around the world to raise money for their senior party.
6. After losing in the first round, Kasanova, who was previously unbeaten, returned home.

Commas and Coordinating Conjunctions

- 1 He met her at the Daily Grind, and they had a cup of coffee.
2. They rushed to buy their tickets, for the game was starting.
3. They worked late yet couldn't seem to find the source of the problem.
4. I try to be fair and value everyone's ideas.
5. The class has music after recess, so I'm reading journals.

Commas and Conjunctive Adverbs

1. He came in third; therefore, he did not qualify for the finals.
2. Her paper was clear and concise; moreover, it represented a unique perspective.
3. I would like to go to the ceremony; I have a meeting, however, so I will be late.
4. They didn't check their work; consequently, their answers didn't always add up. 5. Young people enjoyed the Harry Potter series; adults, likewise, enjoyed the books.

Commas and Subordinating Conjunctions

1. He bought a bagel after he finished school.
2. They hate to lose; however, they don't get mad about it.
3. We are ready to begin unless someone is still missing.
4. As soon as I finished reading it, I returned the book.
5. She can take the test in the hallway since the classroom is so noisy.
6. The test was hard even though I studied the concepts the night before.
7. Because she'd missed the final shot, Karyn was depressed.
8. I went to my grandmother's every day after I finished soccer practice.

Commas in a List

1. I like ice cream, pie, and pudding, but chocolate cake is my favorite dessert.
2. My mom grows tulips, dahlias, and asters in her garden.
3. Mystery Romance Adventure and Sci-Fi are popular fiction genres.
4. American car companies like Chevy, Ford, and Buick are having financial difficulties.
5. Next week we will be studying Mars, Jupiter, Mercury, and Venus
6. Burks, thongs, Texas are all names of sandals.
7. Coniferous trees include cedar, spruce, fir, and cypress.
8. Many people say taupe, mushroom, and sage are soothing colors.

Pronouns Usage

1. Both students developed interesting hypotheses, but their conclusions were inaccurate.
 - In this case, the only possible antecedent is *both students*, so "their" is the appropriate choice.
2. Many girls come to this school from small towns, but they seem to be doing well here.
 - In conversation, *she* could work perfectly fine, depending on the situation (for example, if it were a conversation where the speaker was pointing at a particular girl), but in this sentence, "she" has no singular female antecedent, so it cannot be used.
3. Can you ask someone who has her/his assignment finished to help me?
 - There is no plural antecedent, so their cannot be used.

Capitalization

1. The Alamo in San Antonio, TX, was the site of a famous battle.
2. The high school debate competition will be at Yakima High School.
3. A new family from Laos moved into our apartment building.
4. WSU basketball is played at Beasley Coliseum.
5. In the future, I plan to teach my students Japanese and Spanish in class.

6. I forgot my book on Montessori teaching methods.
7. Students have to pass the WASL exam to graduate.
8. I played volleyball in college, but I don't play any more.

Run-on Sentences

1. We do everyday activities in other languages; we do the calendar in Spanish.
2. Our kids want to avoid getting in trouble, and they know better than to swear.
3. Grammar books are intimidating; they are full of official terms I don't know.
4. Leo and Gary represented the school; they wrote an article for the newspaper.
5. The presentation was a great success; everyone enjoyed it and laughed constantly.
6. As a teacher I want to know my students, so I can teach to their strengths.

Homophones

They're/Their/There

1. The teachers supported their students' ideas about the science project.
 2. I'm not sure if they're selling or donating their car.
 3. Next spring, our new playground will stand there where those trees are.
 4. Those kids are very cute in their matching hats and galoshes. 5.
- They're not asking teachers about the new education regulations.

Are/Our

1. Our class worked really hard, but we were not the winners.
2. In the morning, we are taking our first grade buddies to the zoo.
3. Our ancestors built the railroad that spans the entire country from east to west.
4. Are students expected to know their multiplication tables in second grade?

Everyday/Every day

1. Every day I try to help my students broaden their ideas about the world.
2. In their everyday lives my students see more crime than I ever have.
3. I like to garden, but I don't have time to do it every day.
4. People who do yoga every day seem to be healthier than the average person.

Than/Then

1. Students say it is easier to complete the unit plan in parts than to do the whole thing at once.
2. My brother was in a rowing club, and then he joined the crew team at school.
3. If you want to go to the exhibit, then you should be here by eight tomorrow morning.
4. The news is harder to understand when Mr. O'Reilly does it than when Ms. Can does.

To/Too/Two

1. Her friend asked her to speak in class next week.
2. In the end, too few people were interested in the project.
3. I usually go to Moscow to buy veggies at the market.
4. They asked to take two books home to read over the break. 5. I wanted to go too, but the car was full.

Your/You're

1. Can we take your car tonight?
2. You're not going to wear that, are you?
3. Vince asked for your e-mail, but I couldn't remember it.
4. I'm not sure if you're graduating this fall or in the spring.
5. You're going to ask your mom tonight?

It's/Its

1. The board thinks it's a good plan.
2. Her shoe flew off because its lace had broken.
3. It's not difficult to understand the problem.
4. Its solution is far more difficult to find.
5. I don't think it's going to work, but we can try it.



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