

# Sentences

**Subject – verb agreement**

**Consistent verb tense**

**Making verbs consistent in mood and voice**

**Pronoun – antecedent agreement**

**Balancing parallel ideas**

**Completing compound structures**

**Completing comparisons**

**Positioning modifiers near the words they modify**

# **More on Sentences**

**Avoiding multiple noun modifiers**

**Not splitting infinitives**

**Avoiding dangling modifiers**

**Providing variety**

**Varying sentence openings**

**Avoiding "echoes"**

**Deleting repetitive elements**

**Metaphors – mixed and defective**

# Subject – verb (S/V)

The mitochondria in the cytoplasmic matrix is rich in enzymes.

The mitochondria **a** in the cytoplasmic matrix **are** rich in enzymes.

# Subject – verb

The slaughter of pandas for their pelts  
have caused populations to decline.

The **slaughter** of pandas for their pelts  
**has** caused populations to decline.

# Subject – verb

High levels of estrogen increases the risk of breast cancer.

High **levels** of estrogen **increase** the risk of breast cancer.

# Subject – verb

The wolf, along with the grizzly bear, is a rare predator endemic to the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

The **wolf and the grizzly bear** **are** rare predators endemic to the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

# Subject – verb

The penguin's toughness and durability is important in its hostile environment.

The penguin's **toughness and durability** **are** important in its hostile environment.

# **Subject – verb**

**With compound subjects connected by "or" or "nor," make the verb agree with the part of the subject nearer the verb.**



# Subject – verb

**Neither the students nor their professor  
were able to solve the problem**

**Neither the students nor their professor  
was able to solve the problem**



# Subject – verb

**Indefinite pronouns (anybody, anyone, each, either, . . .): in formal writing, treat as singular.**

**Each of the species have arisen during the last 3 million years.**

**Each of the species has arisen during the last 3 million years.**

# **Subject – verb**

**Some of the muscles have atrophied.**

**Some of the hemoglobin has degraded.**

**Both are ok; "some" can be singular or plural.**

# Subject – verb

**Collective nouns (jury, family, audience, . . .) usually are treated as a singular, thereby emphasizing the group as a unit.**

**The committee meet each Tuesday at noon.**

***The committee **meets** each Tuesday***

***...***

# **Subject – verb**

**Our ability to clone DNA is one of the things that allow us to identify individuals uniquely.**

**The antecedent of "that" is "things." So, the plural verb "allow" is appropriate.**

# Subject – verb

*Daphnia magna* is the only one of the cladocerans that are hermaphroditic.

*Daphnia magna* is the only **one** of the cladocerans that **is** hermaphroditic.

The antecedent of "that" is "one." So, "is" is appropriate.

# **Subject – verb**

**Some singular nouns take a plural form (athletics, news, economics, measles) so are treated collectively as singular.**

**Statistics (*as a subject*) is one of the most difficult subjects in our program.**

# Subject – verb

**But, when referring to statistics as a group of calculated properties of a collection, then it is plural.**

**NOT The statistics on habitat loss for tropical birds **is** discouraging.**

**RATHER, The statistics on habitat loss for tropical birds **are** discouraging.**



# Pronoun – antecedent (P/A)

Generic pronouns represent a typical (or any) member of a group and may seem like plurals, but are singular.

Every wildebeest must run at top speed if **they** are to keep from being trampled.

Every wildebeest must run at top speed if **it** is to keep from being trampled.

# Pronoun – antecedent

The animal care committee granted their permission for the study to begin.

The animal care committee granted its permission for the study to begin.

Same as for S/V

# Pronoun – antecedent

When Jane put the spatula holding the sample into the flame, **it** turned green.

**What turned green?**

**Make pronoun references unambiguous.  
("P/A")**

# Pronoun – antecedent

The use of chlorofluorocarbons affects the ozone layer, especially near the poles, so that ultraviolet radiation poses an increased risk to humans and other species. The importance of **this effect** cannot be exaggerated.

Pronouns should refer to an antecedent very specifically.

# Verb consistency in mood and voice

The lab instructor advised against adding water to the acid, because it could overheat and splatter. Also, be sure to wear lab goggles and an apron.

The lab instructor advised against adding water to acid, because it could overheat and splatter. She also advised us to wear lab goggles and an apron.

# Verb consistency in mood and voice

When the data files are ready, the technician notifies the statistician. Each file is then listed on the master register, and a hard copy of the file is stored.

When the data files are ready, the technician notifies the statistician, then lists each file on the master register, and stores a hard copy.

OK among sentences, but not within.

# **Verb consistency in mood and voice**

**A police officer is often criticized for always being there when they are not needed, and never being there when they are.**

**Police officers are often criticized for always being there when they are not needed, and never being there when they are.**

# Balancing parallel ideas

When listing or pairing items or ideas, express them in similar grammatical form.

Patients with hepatitis B commonly exhibit one or more symptoms: jaundice, tender abdomen, fatigue, and **they are depressed.**

Patients with hepatitis B commonly exhibit one or more symptoms: jaundice, tender abdomen, fatigue, and depression.



# **Balancing parallel ideas**

**For a deer, losing energy stores over winter can result in reproductive failure or even being killed by a predator.**

**For a deer, losing energy stores over winter can result in reproductive failure or even death by predation.**

**For a deer, losing energy stores over winter can result in failing to reproduce or even dying from predation.**

# Balancing parallel ideas

**It is easier to measure hematocrit than understanding what it means in cases of anemia.**

**It is easier to measure hematocrit than to understand what it means in cases of anemia.**

# **Balancing parallel ideas**

**For most drivers who have a blood alcohol level of 0.05% double their risk of being in an accident.**

**Drivers who have a blood alcohol level of 0.05% double their risk of being in an accident.**

# **Balancing parallel ideas**

**The graduation rate for our student athletes is higher than non-athletes**

**The graduation rate for our student athletes is higher than (the rate) (that) for non-athletes.**

# **Complete compound structures**

**I never have and never will take a course in biochemistry.**

**I never have taken and never will take a course in biochemistry.**

# **Complete compound structures**

**Many of these religious groups believe and live by the hope of reincarnation.**

**Many of these religious groups believe in and live by the hope of reincarnation.**

# Complete comparisons

**This toothpaste reduces cavities by 40%.**

***Compared to . . .***

***another toothpaste?***

***not brushing?***

***brushing without any toothpaste?***

***brushing with table sugar?***

# **Complete comparisons**

**The mortality rate in tuberculosis patients with HIV is 63% higher.**

**The mortality rate in tuberculosis patients with HIV is 63% higher than in TB patients without HIV.**



# **The position of modifiers**

**The physician returned to the clinic where she had performed the angioplasty in a limousine.**

**The physician returned in a limousine to the clinic where she had performed the angioplasty.**

# **The position of modifiers**

**Our team did not even observe one grizzly bear.**

**Our team did not observe even one grizzly bear.**

# **Nouns modifying nouns (“Noun Pile-ups”)**

- . . . mule deer population dynamics studies**
- . . . studies of population dynamics of mule deer**

# Nouns modifying nouns

Avoid “noun strings”

~~... 1999 Yellowstone National Park Great Blue  
Heron population dynamics data analysis~~

# Split infinitives

**Patients should try to if possible avoid climbing stairs**

**Patients should try, if possible, to avoid climbing stairs.**

# Dangling modifiers

*Word groups that suggest, but do not name an actor.*

**Opening the window to let out a huge bumblebee, the car accidentally swerved into a tree.**

**Opening the window to let out a huge bumblebee, the driver accidentally swerved the car into a tree.**

# **Dangling modifiers**

**After finishing college, women's access to dental school has often been denied.**

**After finishing college, women have often been denied access to dental school.**

# Deleting repetitive elements

**Body size was larger in adult females in 2005 than in 2004 for the treatment group, but not for the control group. For adult males, body size did not differ from 2004 to 2005 for either the treatment group or control group. For juveniles, body size was larger in 2004 than in 2005 for the treatment group, but not the control group.**



# **Deleting repetitive elements**

**From 2004 to 2005, relative to the control group, body size increased in adult females, did not change in adult males, and decreased in juveniles. Body sizes of control animals did not change with time.**

# **Deleting repetitive elements**

**Blood alcohol levels of older patients returned to normal within 3.0 hr, whereas blood alcohol levels for younger patients remained elevated for 3.8 hr.**

**Blood alcohol levels of older patients returned to normal within 3.0 hr, whereas the levels for younger patients remained elevated for 3.8 hr.**

# Mixed Metaphors

**I appreciate the contributions of our leaders,  
who have paved the future for our discipline.**

**I appreciate the contributions of our leaders,  
who have paved the way to the future of our  
discipline.**

# **Mixed metaphors**

**She grabbed the bull by the horns, and ran with it.**

**I have hit the nail on the jackpot.**

**I am shooting from the seat of my pants.**