Revising a Research Report: Get It Right!

Revising is the process of reworking a written draft to improve and strengthen its content and reorganization. To revise your research paper, you must see it and read it as if you are one of your readers, rather than the writer. You must put yourself in your readers' place and see whether they will clearly understand what you've written. Your purpose in writing this research paper is to present your topic, which in this unit will be an American hero. You must be sure your readers grasp your intent. Although readers may understand your actual words and sentences, unless they can convert your words into understandable knowledge, you have not reached your goal.

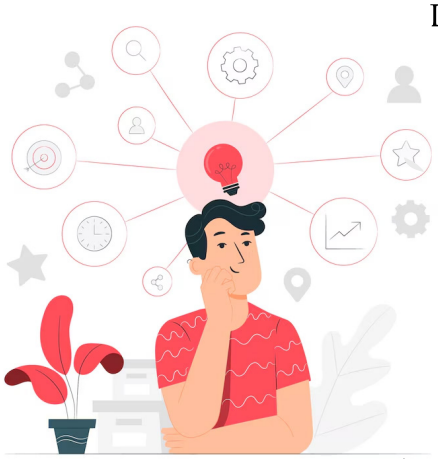


Image by storyset on Freepik

During the revising stage, you are examining the content and organization of your writing. You are checking to see if you have chosen the best words to express your ideas. You are also checking your supportive information and your reasoning to make sure it is clear and persuasive.

Checking and revising your first draft can seem like an overwhelming and complex project. You may be unsure of how or where you should begin checking your first draft. Fortunately, most complex projects, including revising your research paper, can be made manageable by viewing them both as a whole and then by breaking them down into parts. Your own report can best be examined in the following four ways:

1. Check the report as a whole which includes the title and paragraphs.
2. Check the introductory or first paragraph.
3. Check the body paragraphs.
4. Check the concluding or last paragraph.

The Report as a Whole: Achieve Your Goal

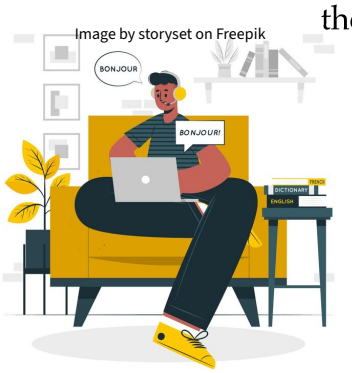
Use the sets of questions below to first examine the report as a whole. Few writers get it right in the first draft. Remember to stay open to ways to improve and strengthen your work as you begin the task of revising your report.

The Essay as a Whole

Ask the following questions of your essay as a whole:
1. Does your title announce your topic and excite your readers' interest?
2. Have you accomplished your purpose?
3. Do all of your body paragraphs explain and discuss your topic?
4. Are your body paragraphs arranged in the best order?

Revising the Introductory Paragraph: Capture the Reader's Interest

The introductory paragraph of your report should capture your reader's interest. It should set up a connection between the points of interest and thesis statement and create a set of expectations that will be fulfilled in the report. In other words, the introductory paragraph sets up the promise of what is to follow in the report.



The thesis statement of the introductory paragraph gives direction to the report, just as a topic sentence gives direction to a single paragraph. The thesis statement has three purposes: 1) to state the main point of the report; 2) to indicate your attitude toward the topic; and 3) to suggest the organization to be followed in the report. Remember to keep your purpose and audience in mind and make your thesis statement precise.

The Introductory Paragraph

Ask the following questions of your introductory paragraph:
1. How do the first two or three sentences capture your readers' interest?
2. Have you set up connecting sentence(s) between your points of interest and your thesis statement?
3. Is your thesis statement precise?

Body Paragraphs: Topic and Detail Sentences to Support Your Topic

Body paragraphs develop or support the thesis statement presented in the introductory paragraph. Generally, each main point becomes a separate body paragraph, following the order in which it was addressed in the introductory paragraph. Each body paragraph has two components: the topic sentence and the detail sentences.

Topic Sentences: A Main Point or a Claim

The *topic sentence* states the main idea that the paragraph will develop and support. A good place to put topic sentences is at the beginning of your body paragraphs. Experienced writers may vary the position of topic sentences in paragraphs.

The Topic Sentence

Ask the following questions of your topic sentence:
1. Does your topic sentence state your main point or claim with which a person could agree or disagree?
2. Are there any words or phrases in your topic sentences that are too general and need to be replaced with specific words?
3. Does your topic sentence suggest the way the rest of the paragraph will be developed?

Detail Sentences: Explain, Illustrate, or Persuade

The sentences that follow the topic sentence are called *detail sentences*. Detail sentences explain, illustrate, persuade, or otherwise discuss the claim made in the topic sentence. Think of a detail sentence as a witness for the topic sentence. The topic sentence is on trial and the detail sentence testifies on its behalf.

Image by storyset on Freepik

If you find yourself short on detail sentences, look at the list below to create details for your topic sentences, and choose the ones that work best for you.

The Detail Sentences

Ask the following questions of each of your detail sentences:
1. Does this detail sentence adequately support or explain the claim made in the topic sentence? a. If so, how does it support or explain the topic sentence? b. If not, can this detail sentence be rewritten to support or explain the topic sentence? Is it unnecessary, irrelevant, or confusing?
2. Are there any additional explanations, illustrations, or information that would help readers more clearly understand your point? Where might you include a telling detail, vivid example, or revealing statistic?
3. Are there any words or phrases in your detail sentences that are too general and need to be replaced with specific words or phrases?
4. Are your sources of information unbiased, up-to-date, and authoritative?
5. Are your detail sentences in the best order?
6. Is a concluding sentence needed to summarize the point of your paragraph?

Revising the Concluding Paragraph: How to Finish Your Report

The concluding paragraph of a report is the last thing your audience will read. It needs to be clear and convincing. The conclusion should review and tie together the main points of your paper.

The Concluding Paragraph

Ask the following questions of your concluding paragraph:
1. Does your concluding paragraph summarize or retell your main points without repeating sentences, phrases, or words you used in your introductory or body paragraphs?
2. Does your concluding paragraph present one new thing about your topic, or does it present a new angle on your topic?
3. Does your concluding paragraph end with a statement that closes your discussion?

The First Step in Editing: Add Style to and Subtract Errors from Your Draft

You have now finished revising a second draft of your report. Your report tells your readers something worthwhile about your hero and the paragraphs are ordered to help your readers follow and understand your discussion. You are now ready to edit your research report.

During the **editing** process, you will improve your report in two ways: (1) varying your words and sentences, and (2) eliminating any errors in grammar and usage, punctuation, capitalization, or spelling.

During the Editing Process–Improve Your Report
vary the words and sentences
eliminate any errors in grammar and usage, punctuation, capitalization, or spelling

Enhance Your Writing: Vary Words and Create Vivid Images

Key techniques to enhance writing include the use of words to create *vivid images* that excite our senses. They also include the use of sentences *of different lengths and structures*. In addition, key writing techniques use *transitions* to link language and ideas to make the writing flow. Writing that uses words to create images, a variety of sentence structures, and transitions has power. We can sense a real person behind it and can almost see and hear the writer speaking to us.

Vivid images are seen clearly and precisely. For example, read the following two descriptions:

> James *sat* in the chair.
>
> James *slouched* in the chair.

Simply by changing a single word, the writer can turn a vague image into a specific and vivid one. Sometimes exchanging one vague word for an exact word is not enough. In some places in your writing, you may decide that to make your point or to create an image, you must replace a word with a phrase, clause, or even a whole paragraph.

Sentence Types: Simple, Compound, Complex

To keep readers alert and interested, a variety in sentence structure and length is necessary. Perhaps you've been trapped by a well-meaning person who goes on and on in sentences that are nearly identical. The effect can be quite boring. The same kind of effect can happen to the reader of a series of sentences that are similar in structure and length. Therefore, no matter how interesting your ideas, descriptions, or information, if you don't vary your sentence structures and lengths, your readers will find it difficult to stay alert and interested.

To understand sentences, we can break them into smaller parts—*clauses* and *phrases*. A *phrase* is a group of related words used as a single part of speech. It does not contain a verb or subject. A *clause* is a group of words that contains a verb and subject and is used as part of a sentence. Clauses can be independent or dependent. An *independent clause* is one part of a sentence that can stand alone and expresses a complete thought. A *dependent clause* is a part of a sentence that cannot stand alone, does not express a complete thought, and needs an independent clause to make it complete.

Sentences are classified according to their structure—*simple, compound,* and *complex*. A *simple sentence* is a sentence with one independent clause and no dependent clause. It has only one subject and one **verb**. (Verbs are also referred to as *predicates*.) Both the subject and the verb may be compound.

A *compound sentence* is a sentence that has two or more independent clauses and no dependent clauses. Simply, it consists of two or more simple sentences joined by a semicolon, or by a comma and a coordinating conjunction—***f****or*, ***a****nd*, ***n****or*, ***b****ut*, ***o****r*, ***y****et*, or ***s****o* (fan boys*). For example—"Outside the sun climbed high in the sky, *and* seagulls perched on the exposed oyster bar."

Be careful not to confuse a simple sentence having a compound subject or verb with an actual compound sentence.

> *Simple sentence* with *compound subject*: *Joel* and *James* bought a new CD player.

* See *English III Teacher's Guide,* page 27.

Simple sentence with *compound verb*: Stacy *ran* and *leaped* over the hurdles.

Compound sentence: Max bought a new sofa, *and* Lindsay picked out pillows to go with the sofa.

A *complex sentence* has at least one independent clause and one dependent clause. The dependent clause *depends* on the independent clause to complete its meaning. For example, the dependent clause "Since she is a great dancer" leaves us wondering, "What about the fact that she is a great dancer?" To complete the meaning, add an independent clause: "Since she is a great dancer, she will compete in the dance contest." Note that the clauses in a complex sentence can be reversed: "She will compete in the dance contest, since she is a great dancer." Dependent clauses are connected to independent clauses with subordinating conjunctions. Below are the most frequently used subordinating conjunctions:

The Most Frequently Used Subordinating Conjunctions

after	before	rather than	until
although	considering (that)	since	when
as	even if	so long as	whenever
as far as	even though	so that	where
as if	if	than	whereas
as long as	in as much as	that	wherever
as soon as	in order that	though	whether
because	provided that	unless	while

Sentence Expanding: Turn Simple Sentences into Complex Ones

Another way to add variety to sentences in a paragraph is through *sentence expanding*. Expand sentences by adding modifiers to a basic sentence pattern. The new sentence will give the reader more details and clarify your meaning. For example, look at the process of expanding the simple sentence below. Details that have been added to each sentence are italicized.

> The teacher smiled at the class.
>
> The teacher smiled at the class *after everyone was seated*.
>
> The teacher smiled at the class after everyone was seated *before the tardy bell*.
>
> The teacher smiled at the class after everyone was seated before the tardy bell *because the principal was observing*.
>
> The *new* teacher smiled at the whole class after everyone was seated before the sound of the tardy bell because the *stern* principal was observing.

The teacher smiled at the class.

Sentences Using Transitions: Link Ideas

Transitions are words or phrases that help the reader follow your thoughts from one sentence or paragraph to another. They are sometimes called *connectors* because their purpose is to connect one idea to the next idea (or paragraph).

> *After* thinking about your abilities and interests, the *next* stop is to consider the personal goals you wish to accomplish in life.

Study the list of transitions and connecting words in the chart below before completing the practice exercises.

Transitions and Connecting Words

Words that show *location*:

at
above
away from
beyond
into
over
across
behind
by
near
throughout
against
below
down
off
to the right
along
beneath
in back of
onto
under
among
beside
in front of
on top of
around
between
inside
outside

Words to *conclude* or *summarize*:

as a result
finally
in conclusion
to sum up
therefore
last
in summary
all in all

Words that show *differences*:

but
otherwise
although
on the other hand
however
yet
still
even though

Words used to *clarify*:

in other words
for instance
that is
put another way

Words that show *similarities* (likenesses):

in the same way
likewise
as
similarly
like
also

Words that show *emphasis* (stress a certain point or idea):

again
for this reason
truly
to repeat
to emphasize
in fact

Words that show *time*:

about
first
meanwhile
soon
then
after
second
today
later
next
at
third
tomorrow
afterward
as soon as
before
till
next week
immediately
when
during
until
yesterday
finally

Words used to add *information*:

again
another
for instance
finally
also
and
moreover
as well
additionally
besides
next
along with
in addition
for example
likewise
equally important

The Next Step in Editing: Check Your Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling

After you have edited your draft for style, you are ready for the second step of editing. This is the process of checking your writing for any errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

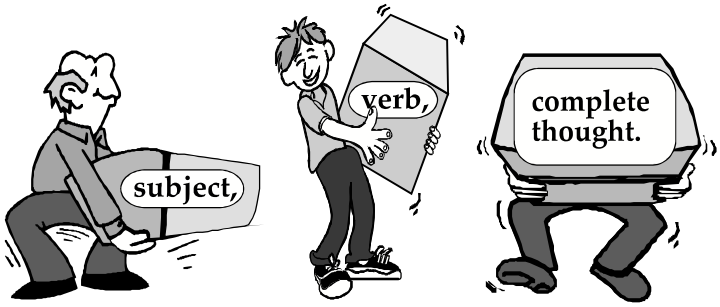
First, begin by checking the grammar of your writing. In this section, you will learn or review the correct way to use the following:

- sentence formation
- subject and verb agreement
- regular and irregular verbs
- singular and plural nouns
- noun and pronoun agreement
- possessives

Sentence Formation: Build Complete Sentences

When we write, our sentences need to convey whole messages. A **complete sentence** has a subject, has a verb, and expresses a complete thought. Complete sentences can come in a variety of lengths.

A complete sentence has a:



However, the two most common mistakes that writers make when forming sentences are *sentence fragments* and **run-on sentences**. Neither the sentence fragment nor the run-on sentence is a correct complete sentence.

The sentence that seems to go on forever is called a *run-on sentence.* A run-on sentence consists of two or more sentences incorrectly written as one. It is unclear where one idea ends and the next one begins. To correct a run-on sentence, read the sentence to yourself and notice where you naturally pause between ideas. The pause usually indicates where you should place punctuation.

Kinds of Complete Sentences: Declarative, Exclamatory, Imperative, and Interrogative

There are four kinds of complete sentences—*declarative sentences, exclamatory sentences, imperative sentences,* and *interrogative sentences*. Each kind of complete sentence ends in a particular punctuation mark. Using these four kinds of sentences and the correct end marks adds meaning to what you are writing.

Study the types of complete sentences and their examples in the chart below.

Types of Sentences

Sentence Type	Definition/Example	End Mark
Declarative	A sentence which makes a statement. *I would like to spend more time at the beach.*	.
Exclamatory	A sentence which expresses strong emotion. *Be a responsible citizen and vote!*	!
Imperative	A sentence which gives an order. *Stop killing seals!*	. *or* !
Interrogative	A sentence which asks a question. *When are we going to visit Atlanta?*	?

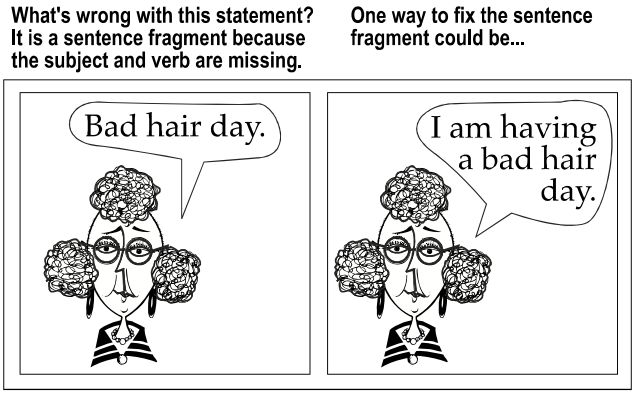
Incomplete Sentences: Finish the Thought

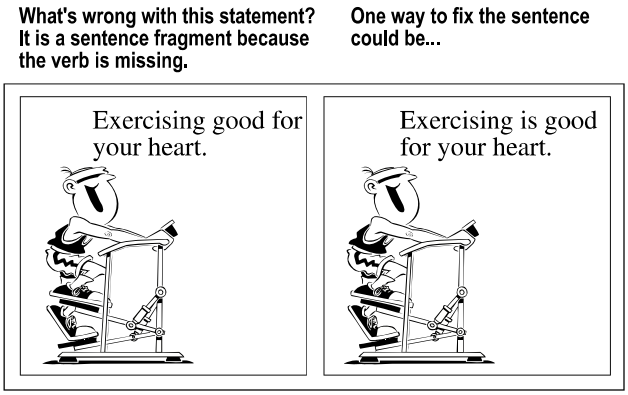
The sentence that is missing some information or is *in*complete is a *sentence fragment.* For example, "The driver having a poor memory for directions." Fragments cannot stand alone because they are missing important information that the reader needs to make meaning from the

sentence. Correct sentence fragments by adding the missing subject, verb, or both to complete the thought. For example, "The driver having a poor memory for directions had all directions handwritten by his friends."

Correcting sentence fragments is part of revising and editing. In order to correct sentence fragments, you must be able to identify them and then rewrite them so they are complete thoughts. Ask yourself the following questions to help you identify and correct sentence fragments.

1. Does the sentence express a complete thought? If it does not, add the necessary words to make the thought complete.
2. Does the sentence have a subject? Do you know *who* or *what* is performing the action? If the sentence does not have a subject, insert one.
3. Does the sentence have a verb? Do you know what is the *action* or *state of being* of the subject? If the sentence does not have a verb, add one.





Correcting Run-on Sentences: Know When to Pause

There are four ways to correct run-on sentences. Here is an example of a run-on sentence and how it can be transformed into a complete sentence using each of the four ways.

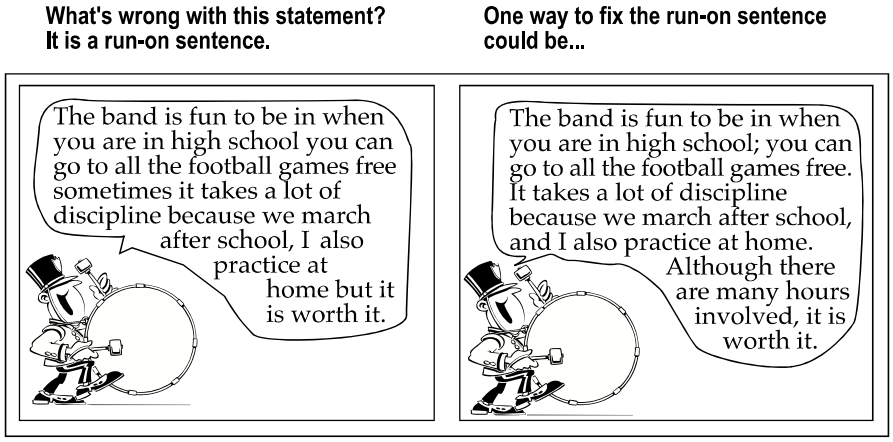
Run-on sentence: Comedies are funny most people enjoy them.

1. **You can make two (or more) sentences from the original run-on.** Comedies are funny. Most people enjoy them.

2. **You can use a semicolon.** Comedies are funny; most people enjoy them.

3. **You can make a compound sentence using connecting words.** Comedies are funny, **and** most people enjoy them.

4. **You can make a complex sentence using independent and dependent clauses.** *Since comedies are funny* (dependent clause), most people enjoy them.



Subject and Verb Agreement: Matching Plural and Singular

Most of us learn to speak English by copying what we hear at home. Because you learn to speak from listening to your family members or others, you might find yourself using words or phrases that others don't completely understand.

A local dialect might include mismatching the subject and verb of a sentence. You might have heard someone say, "*They was tired*," instead of "*They were tired*," or "*She don't know,*" instead of "*She doesn't know.*" In order to make sure that your audience understands what you are saying, it is important to use language that will not be misunderstood by your readers.

One way you can make sure that what you are writing is not misunderstood by your audience is to follow the rule of **subject and verb agreement**. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular. Additionally, if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. This is known as *subject/verb agreement*.

In some sentences, you may find it difficult to tell if a subject is singular or plural, which in turn makes it difficult to make the verb agree. For example, read the following sentence:

A reply to your letters is finally here.

Is the subject the singular noun *reply* or the plural noun *letters*? The subject is *reply*. It is a reply—*not* the letters that is finally here. Do not let the phrase or clause between the subject (a reply) and its verb (is) confuse you. In this example, the phrase *to your letters* simply modifies or describes a reply. What is the subject in the following example?

Magazines in the store are arranged by subject.

The subject is the plural noun *magazines*. It is the magazines, *not* the store, that are arranged by subject. In this example, the phrase *in the store* simply modifies or describes magazines.

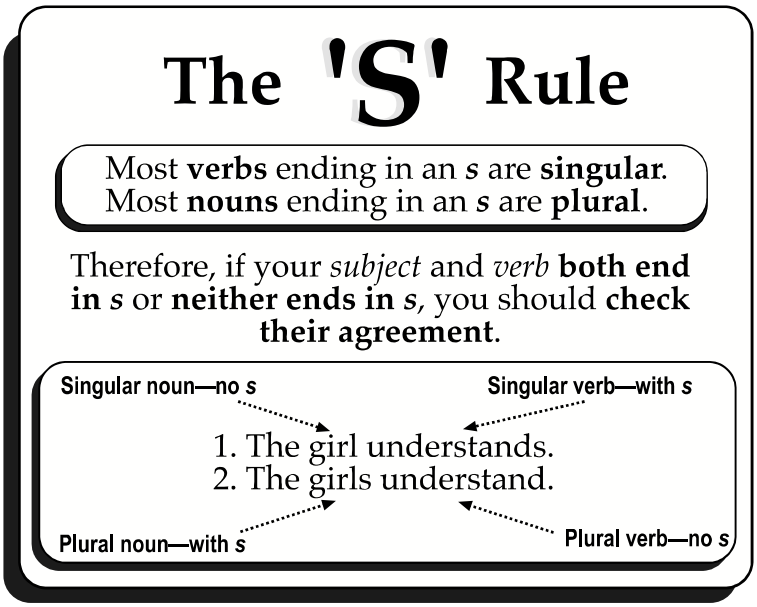
It is fairly easy to determine that pronouns such as *I*, *he*, and *she* are singular, but what about the pronouns *anyone* or *few*? Study and remember the "Rules about Pronouns" and "The 'S' Rule" on the following page.

Rules about Pronouns

1. A phrase that follows a subject does not change the number of the subject.
2. The following are singular pronouns and require singular verbs: *each, either, neither, one, no one, everybody, someone, anyone, everyone, nobody, somebody, everything,* and *anything.*
3. The following are plural pronouns and require plural verbs: *several, many, both,* and *few.*
4. The following are singular *or* plural pronouns depending on the sentence: *some, all, most, any,* and *none.*

   If these words refer to a singular noun, then they are also singular. For example—**Some** of the **pie** *was* still frozen.

   If the words refer to a plural noun, then they are also plural. For example—**Some** of the **birds** *were* captured.



Regular and Irregular Verbs: Forming Principal Parts

Verbs tell what the action is in a sentence and when the action happened. The action of a sentence can happen in the past, in the present, or in the future. These time frames are called the *tense* of a verb.

Verbs have four principle tenses.

Present	Present Participle	Past	Past Participle
laugh	laughing	laughed	have laughed
shout	shouting	shouted	have shouted
love	loving	loved	have loved

All the verbs above are regular. The past tense of a regular verb is made by adding ***-ed*** to the basic (present) form. The past participle of a verb is made by adding ***-ed*** to the verb itself and then pairing it up with *have*, *has*, or *had*.

The students **laugh**. (present)

The students are **laughing**. (present participle)

The student **laughed**. (past)

The students **have laughed**. (past participle)

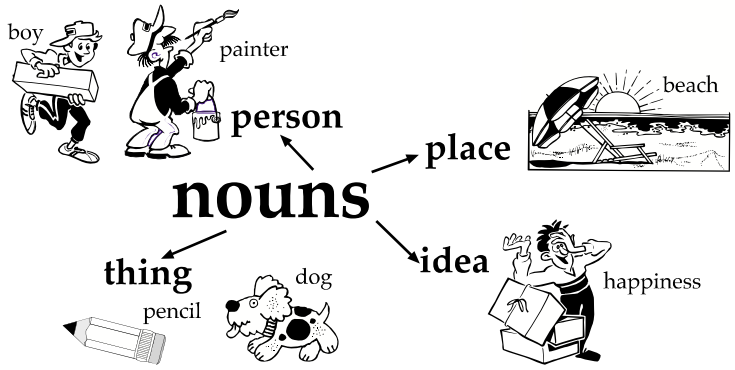
Irregular verbs do not follow this rule. The best way to learn and spell irregular verbs is to memorize them. Study the "Principal Parts of Irregular Verbs" chart on the following page.

Principal Parts of Irregular Verbs

Present	Past	Past Participle	Present	Past	Past Participle
be	was	been	**lose**	lost	lost
become	became	become	**make**	made	made
begin	began	begun	**mean**	meant	meant
blow	blew	blown	**meet**	met	met
break	broke	broken	**pay**	paid	paid
bring	brought	brought	**put**	put	put
buy	bought	bought	**read**	read	read
catch	caught	caught	**ride**	rode	ridden
come	came	come	**ring**	rang	rung
cost	cost	cost	**run**	ran	run
do	did	done	**say**	said	said
drink	drank	drunk	**see**	saw	seen
drive	drove	driven	**sell**	sold	sold
eat	ate	eaten	**send**	sent	sent
fall	fell	fallen	**shake**	shook	shaken
feel	felt	felt	**shoot**	shot	shot
fight	fought	fought	**shut**	shut	shut
find	found	found	**sing**	sang	sung
fly	flew	flown	**sit**	sat	sat
forget	forgot	forgotten	**sleep**	slept	slept
get	got	gotten	**speak**	spoke	spoken
give	gave	given	**spend**	spent	spent
go	went	gone	**stand**	stood	stood
grow	grew	grown	**steal**	stole	stolen
have	had	had	**sweep**	swept	swept
hear	heard	heard	**take**	took	taken
hold	held	held	**teach**	taught	taught
hurt	hurt	hurt	**tell**	told	told
keep	kept	kept	**think**	thought	thought
know	knew	known	**throw**	threw	thrown
lay	laid	laid	**understand**	understood	understood
leave	left	left	**wear**	wore	worn
lend	lent	lent	**win**	won	won
lie	lay	lain	**write**	wrote	written

Nouns: Plural or Singular?

A **noun** is a word that names a person, a place, a thing, or an idea. Writers use nouns to describe the details of lives as well as the hopes, fears, and ideals of generations. A **common noun** is the general name of a person, place, thing, or idea. A **proper noun** is the name of a particular person, place, thing, or idea.



Read this sentence that includes common nouns.

> While riding in a city taxi, the woman was reading a good magazine.

Read the same sentence in which the common nouns have been replaced with proper nouns.

> While riding in a Miami taxi, Maria Sanchez was reading *Today's Successful Woman*.

Compound nouns are made up of two or more words joined together. The words may be hyphenated, joined together, or written separately. *Runner-up*, *brother-in-law*, *track meet*, *brake lining*, and *brainpower* are all compound nouns.

Collective nouns are singular nouns that name a group. *Class*, *herd*, *congregation*, *chorus*, and *team* are all collective nouns.

All of these nouns—common, proper, compound, and collective—can be singular or plural depending on their meaning in a sentence. Plurals are formed in various ways. Typically, we add *s* or *es* to the ends of nouns to make them plural. However, some plurals are formed by changing the spelling of the noun, while still others may remain exactly the same as the singular form.

Study the rules for forming plurals of nouns in the chart below.

Rules of Pluralization

To make a noun plural…		
add *s* to most nouns.	*car*	*car**s***
add *es* to nouns ending in *s, sh, ch, x,* and *z*.	*branch*	*branch**es***
change the *y* to *i* and add *es* to nouns ending in a consonant followed by a *y*.	*pony*	*pon**ies***
add *s* to nouns ending in a vowel followed by a *y*.	*boy*	*boy**s***
add *s* to nouns ending in *f* or *ff*.	*chief* *puff*	*chief**s*** *puff**s***
change the *f* to *v* and add *es* to nouns ending in *fe* or *lf*.	*knife* *wolf*	*kniv**es*** *wolv**es***
add *s* to nouns ending in a vowel followed by *o*.	*rodeo*	*rodeo**s***
add *es* to nouns ending in a consonant followed by *o*.	*tomato*	*tomato**es***
change the basic spelling of certain words.	*ox*	*ox**en***
spell certain words the same way in singular and plural form.	*deer*	***deer***
add *s* or *es* following appropriate rules, if the number is spelled out.	*three*	*three**s***
add *s* or *es* to compound nouns to make compound nouns plural.	*leftover* *eyelash*	*leftover**s*** *eyelash**es***
add *s* to the noun and leave the modifier in hyphenated compound nouns unchanged.	*son-in-law* *runner-up*	*son**s**-in-law* *runner**s**-up*

Noun and Pronoun Agreement: Matching Case, Gender, and Number

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun or even another pronoun. Pronouns allow you to avoid unnecessary repetitions when you write or speak. Consider the following examples:

(a) The *student* wished *she* had studied longer for the test.
(b) The *students* wished *they* had studied longer for the test.

In sentence (a), the word *she* is a pronoun. It stands in for the noun, *student*. Both are singular. In sentence (b), the word *they* is a pronoun. It stands in for the noun, *students*. Both are plural. The noun to which a pronoun refers is called an *antecedent*. In the examples above, the antecedents are *student* and *students*. Wherever you use a noun (antecedent) and pronoun, they must match. This is called ***noun and pronoun agreement*** or *pronoun-antecedent agreement*.

Imagine you are reading and you find this sentence: "The *students* wished *she* had studied longer for the test." You would be left to wonder where the *she* in this sentence came from or where *she* belongs. You would know *she* could not be the students—because there are many *students* but only one *she*. When a noun and pronoun do not agree, the reader is left a little confused.

Pronouns must match their antecedents in case, gender, and number.

Case refers to the way a pronoun is used in a sentence.

- A pronoun can be used as a subject:
  He is able to do nine things at once but not 10 things.

- A pronoun can be used as an object:
  Don't ask *him* to do 10 things at once.

- A pronoun can be used as a possessive:
  His ability to do nine things at once is remarkable!

Gender refers to the sexual category of a noun or proper noun.

- Pronouns that refer to masculine antecedents must also be masculine:

  Joe can do nine things at a time. *He* cannot, however, do 10 things at once.

  The *boy* will always know you care for *him*.

  Joe knows *he* can do the job well.

- Pronouns that refer to feminine antecedents must also be feminine:

  Gina is one of the finest thinkers in the state. *She* understands how ideas work.

  The *girl* will always carry your smile with *her*.

  Gina knows *she* is a good thinker.

- Pronouns that refer to antecedents of neither sex must also be neuter:

  The *snail* is slow. *It* can move all day and not get too far.

  The *scallop* knows *its* place when the starfish is nearby.

Gender

male female

Image by storyset on Freepik

Number refers to whether the noun is singular (for example, *the boy* or *the table*) or plural (for example, *the boys* or *the tables*).

- Pronouns that refer to singular antecedents must also be singular:

  Take the *exam* and do *it* at home.

- Pronouns that refer to plural antecedents must also be plural:

  Take the *exams* and do *them* at home.

- Some words seem to be both singular and plural. They are *each*, *either*, *neither*, *one*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *no one*, *nobody*, *anyone*, *anybody*, *someone*, and *somebody*. When referring to these antecedents, use a singular pronoun such as *he*, *him*, *his*, *she*, *her*, *hers*, *it*, *its*:

  Each person needs a challenge *he* can overcome.

  Everybody should bring a book *she* can share with the class.

- When two singular antecedents are joined by *or* or *nor*, the pronoun should be singular:

  Either Alice *or* Mary will read a poem *she* has written.

  Neither John *nor* Fernando can find a sweater *he* likes.

- When two or more antecedents are joined by *and*, the pronoun should be plural:

  Alice *and* Fernando know *they* have a lot of studying to do before the exam.

  Gina *and* Mary can't come to the party. *They* have an exam the next morning.

Possessives: Showing Ownership

Possessives are used to show ownership or relationship. For example, the clause, *That is the girl's car,* shows that the car is owned by the girl. Possessives are also used to show the relationship between one thing and another. For example, the question, *Who is performing in this evening's program?*, asks a question about the program that is being presented today. Possessives are shown by an apostrophe and an *s*, or in some cases, by just adding an apostrophe:

the boy's book (one boy)

the boys' book (more than one boy)

the children's game (children)

the ladies' office (more than one lady)

In most cases, it is easy to tell whether a word should be made possessive, as in the examples above. However, some cases are more difficult. Would you add an apostrophe to the word *days* in the phrase *a days work*? If you are uncertain, simply rewrite the phrase using the word *of*: *the work of a day*. If the *of* fits, then use an apostrophe: *a day's work*.

Study the rules for forming possessives in the chart below.

Rules for Forming Possessives

▶ To form the possessive of a singular noun, simply add an *apostrophe* and an *s*.

the notebook that belongs to Brita	→ Brita's notebook
the cat that belongs to the boy	→ the boy's cat
the eyes that belong to the monster	→ the monster's eyes

▶ To form the possessive of a plural noun ending in *s*, simply add an *apostrophe*.

the manes that belong to the horses	→ the horses' manes
the discoveries that belong to the students	→ the students' discoveries

▶ To form the possessive of a plural noun that does not end in *s*, simply add an apostrophe and an *s*.

the clubhouse that belongs to the children	→ the children's clubhouse
the antiques that belong to the men	→ the men's antiques

Pronouns present a special case. The possessive case of a pronoun is not formed by adding an apostrophe or an *s*. Study the chart below.

Pronoun	Possessive
I	my, mine
you	your, yours
he	his
she	her, hers
it	its (not "it's," which means *it is*)
we	our, ours
they	their, theirs
who	whose

Capitalization: Rules of Upper Case

Capital letters are used for two main reasons. First, they are used to signal the beginning of a sentence or quote. Second, they are used to signal words that refer to some particular person, place, or thing rather than to a general class. Custom also determines the use of capital letters. Study the chart below for the rules of capitalization.

RULES OF CAPITALIZATION

Always capitalize…	
the first word of every sentence.	The coffee grounds were in my cup.
a person's name and any initials.	John F. Kennedy
titles of people.	Dr. Jones, Mrs. Fisher
***I* and *O* when they are used as words.**	It's the duck that I saw. "Exult O shores! and ring O bells!"
days of the week and months of the year.	Tuesday, March
religions, creeds, denominations, names applied to the Bible and its parts, other sacred books, and nouns and pronouns referring to a deity.	Christianity, Old Testament, God, the Almighty
countries, nationalities, races, and languages.	Spain, Spaniards, Spanish, Spanish rice, English
names of specific cities, states, avenues, streets, routes, and other geographical and place names.	North America, Atlanta, Chicago, Route 66
names of special organizations—government, businesses, schools, professional, and social.	Amtrak, the Jaycees, Sears, Sandalwood High School
names of special buildings and other man-made structures, ships, and planes.	Southpoint Mall, the *Titanic*, the Gulf Life Building
brand or trade names.	Goodyear tires, Kleenex, General Electric
holidays, special or famous events, historical periods or eras, and famous documents.	Labor Day, the Boston Tea Party, the Gold Rush, the Declaration of Independence
the first word and all important words in the title of a book, magazine, movie, television show, and songs.	*Family Circle, Home Alone, General Hospital,* "America, the Beautiful"
words that come from names that are capitalized.	San Francisco, San Franciscan
the first word of quoted sentences.	Tom said, "We won the game!"

MORE RULES OF CAPITALIZATION

Do *not* capitalize…

the name of a school subject, *unless* it is the name of a specific course or language.	My favorite science course is Biology 101. Sue made low grades in algebra, history, and French.
the names of seasons or directions.	The flowers are lovely in the spring. Turn west after you pass the bank.
the name of trees, fruits, vegetables, birds, or flowers.	roses, robins, oak, mahogany, corn
the names of games or sports, *unless* the name is a trademark.	Tables were arranged for checkers, Scrabble, Monopoly, bridge, and dominoes. Our football team went to see the Dolphins in the playoff.
the name of a disease, *unless* it is named for a person, and then *do not* capitalize the word *disease*.	measles, pneumonia, Hodgkin's disease
the names of musical instruments.	violin, drums, Baldwin piano

Punctuation: Make the Meaning Clear

The purpose of punctuation is to make clear the meaning of what you write. When you speak, the sound of your voice, the rise and fall of your tone of voice, your pauses and hesitations—all serve as a kind of punctuation to indicate precisely what you mean. Even your body plays a part in the unwritten punctuation. In written language, there are none of these hints. The reader needs a type of sign to make sense of your writing. Where should the reader stop, pause, or read your sentence as a question rather than as a command?

We use punctuation to help make our writing clearer and easier to understand. Read the examples below.

Let's paint Jose.

Now look at this sentence.

Let's paint, Jose.

Can you see the difference that one comma makes? Was *Jose to be painted*? Or was *Jose being invited to paint*? Without the comma in the second example, the reader might think that Jose was going to be painted. Commas and other punctuation marks help the reader understand what is written.

Study the "Rules of Punctuation" on the following page.

Rules of Punctuation

Punctuation Mark	Rules	Examples
Apostrophe '	1. Apostrophes are used to show possession, or ownership. 2. Apostrophes are used to form contractions (they go where the missing letter would have been). 3. Apostrophes are used to form plurals of letters, numbers, and symbols.	Joel's sneakers women's clothes animal's trainer it's can't you've p's and q's
Quotation Marks " "	1. Quotation marks are used to show the beginning and end of a direct quotation or a person's exact words. 2. Quotation marks are used to enclose the titles of magazine articles, chapters, short stories, essays, poems, and short pieces of music.	"You can learn punctuation," said the teacher. "The Masque of the Red Death" "The Enemy" "Stairway to Heaven"
Comma ,	1. Commas are used to separate items in a series. 2. Commas are used to separate two or more adjectives before a noun. 3. Commas are used before the conjunctions *for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so* when they join independent clauses. (A mnemonic device to remember the words is ***fan boys,**** standing for the first letter of each of the conjunctions listed above.) 4. Commas are used to set off the name of a person spoken to directly or an introductory word. 5. Commas are used to set aside a descriptive phrase which is not essential to the sentence.	I've worked in Orlando, Tallahassee, and Miami. She is smart, kind, and cheerful. School was awesome, for I had biology. James, can you lend me a quarter? Yes, I can help. Spike, my naughty puppy, ate my sandals.
Semicolon ;	1. Semicolons are used between independent clauses **not** joined by *for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so*. (***fan boys****)	Stretch your mind every day; you'll never regret it.
Colon :	1. Colons are used before a list of items (unless there is a verb right before the list).	I enjoy many arts: music, painting, photography, and sculpture.
Underlining or Italics ***Italics***	1. Underlining is used for the titles of books, magazines, works of art, ships, plays, movies, and TV shows only when handwritten. 2. *Italics* are most often used in printed material or when using a computer for composition.	To Kill a Mocking Bird Newsweek Mona Lisa Titanic *Romeo and Juliet* *Star Wars* *The Oprah Winfrey Show*

* See *English III Teacher's Guide,* page 27.

Spelling: Write It Right!

Our English language owes its richness to the many words it has borrowed from different sources. The payment for this diversity is a wide variety in spelling and spelling rules.

Good spelling is expected of every writer. Spelling mistakes are certain to jolt your readers and may even prejudice them against what you have to say. In job or college applications, poor spelling can have even more serious outcomes.

You may find that you make the same spelling mistakes over and over again. If this is the case, you might find it helpful to keep a notebook of your personal writing mistakes. Record commonly made mistakes in your notebook and refer to them while you are **proofreading**. An example is given below. The mistakes used in the example are common ones.

Mistakes	Corrections
alot	a lot
quite vs. quiet	*quite* means "to an extreme" *quiet* means "silent"
to vs. too	*too* means "also" or "more than enough"
Febuary	February
Wensday	Wednesday
its vs. it's	*it's* is short for "it is" *its* is possessive
there vs. they're	*they're* is short for "they are"
whose vs. who's	*who's* is short for "who is"
your vs. you're	*you're* is short for "you are"
knowlege	knowledge
necesary	necessary
truely	truly
enviroment	environment

Spelling Rules and the Exceptions

Learning to spell requires us to memorize the sequence of letters in a word. Some sequences are more difficult to remember than others. And the English language has many exceptions to the rules—letter combinations have different sounds in different words. For example, ***ou*** has one pronunciation in tr***ou***ble, another in c***ou***ld, another in cl***ou***d, and still another in th***ou***gh. This makes it difficult to generalize our information—using what we know to spell other words without having to resort to the dictionary. When we have access to specific spelling rules, either in our heads or on a handy chart, we can learn to generalize and improve our spelling skills. The following charts of spelling rules are good references and will help you to improve your spelling skills. However, when in doubt, check a dictionary or spell checker. Use caution when using a spell checker. A word may be spelled correctly, but be the incorrect word for the context (e.g., "there" and "their").

Rules of Spelling

Write *ie*, except after *c*; or when sounded like *a*, as in *neighbor* and *weight*.

i before **e** | except after **c** or when sounded like **a**

Examples

believe	field	receive	eight	
thief	brief	receipt	reign	
achieve	shriek	conceit	freight	
		ceiling	vein	

Exceptions

their	height	science	weird	neither
seize	leisure	conscious	foreign	counterfeit

Only one English word ends in *-sede*; only three words end in *-ceed*; all other "seed" words end in *-cede*.

Examples

-sede	*-ceed*	*-cede*	
supersede	succeed	precede	accede
	exceed	recede	secede
	proceed	concede	intercede

When a prefix is added to a word, the spelling of the word itself remains the same.

Examples

il	+ literate	=	illiterate
in	+ numerable	=	innumerable
im	+ mortal	=	immortal
un	+ certain	=	uncertain
dis	+ approve	=	disapprove
mis	+ step	=	misstep
re	+ organize	=	reorganize
over	+ rule	=	overrule

When the suffixes *-ness* and *-ly* are added to a word, the spelling of the word itself is not changed.

Examples

sure	+ ly =	surely	useful	+	ness = usefulness
real	+ ly =	really	polite	+	ness = politeness
usual	+ ly =	usually	stubborn	+	ness = stubbornness

Exceptions

y to i	–	empty = emptiness	easy = easily
true and due	–	true = truly	due = duly

More Rules of Spelling

Drop the final *e* before a suffix beginning with a vowel.

Examples

share	+ ing	= sharing		fame	+ ous	= famous	
hope	+ ing	= hoping		imagine	+ ary	= imaginary	
care	+ ing	= caring		admire	+ ation	= admiration	
love	+ able	= lovable		force	+ ible	= forcible	

Exceptions

mile	+ age	= mileage		dye	+ ing	= dyeing	
singe	+ ing	= singeing		change	+ able	= changeable	
peace	+ able	= peaceable		advantage	+ ous	= advantageous	

Keep the final *e* before a suffix beginning with a consonant.

Examples

nine	+ ty	= ninety		care	+ ful	= careful	
hope	+ less	= hopeless		use	+ less	= useless	
sure	+ ly	= surely		pave	+ ment	= pavement	

Exceptions

whole	+ ly	= wholly		nine	+ th	= ninth	
due	+ ly	= duly		awe	+ ful	= awful	
true	+ ly	= truly		judge	+ ment	= judgment	

Words ending in *y* preceded by a consonant, change the *y* to *i* before any suffix not beginning with *i*.

Examples

fifty	+ eth	= fiftieth		worry	+ ed	= worried	
lazy	+ ness	= laziness		mystery	+ ous	= mysterious	

Exceptions

one syllable words	shy	+ ness	= shyness				
	spry	+ ly	= spryly				
	sky	+ ward	= skyward				

Double the final consonant before a suffix that begins with a vowel if both of the following conditions exist: 1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable, and 2) the word ends in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel.

Examples

drop	+ ing	= dropping		occur	+ ence	= occurrence	
plan	+ ed	= planned		propel	+ er	= propeller	
sit	+ ing	= sitting		control	+ ed	= controlled	

Exceptions

box	+ ing	= boxing		tunnel	+ ing	= tunneling	
appear	+ ance	= appearance		travel	+ er	= traveler	

The Last Step in Editing: Proofread Your Work

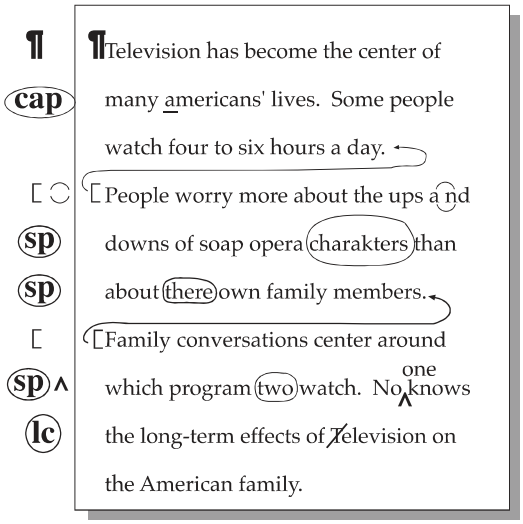
Everything you write, whether it is an essay, a résumé, or a letter, needs to be carefully edited for spelling, grammar, and typographical errors. Even if you have a spell checker on your computer, you should carefully proofread your paper because the computer only checks the spelling. It does not make sure that you're using the correct word.

For example, "There going to be at they're wedding anniversary, two" should be written, "They're going to be at their wedding anniversary, too." But your computer's spell checker would find nothing wrong with the first sentence.

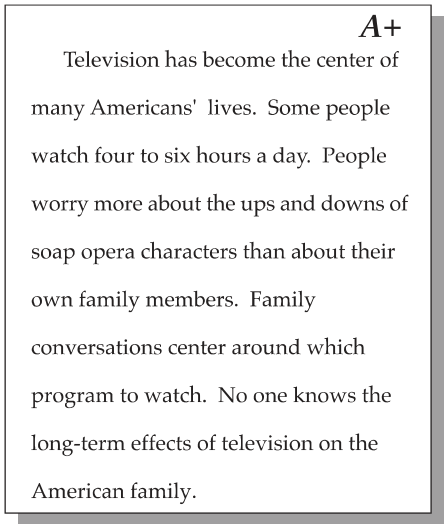
Use the techniques below when you proof your writing.

Proofreading Tips

1. Say each word slowly and aloud. Don't rush through your proofreading or you will read what you think you wrote rather than what is actually on the paper.
2. Keep a list of your common spelling mistakes. Glance at these before you proofread and then double-check these words when they appear.
3. Read backwards to check your spelling. Start at the end of your report or paragraph and read to the beginning. This will force you to look at each word. Study the examples below.



Before Editing and Proofing



After Editing and Proofing

Use these professional copyediting symbols as you proofread your writing. Use them for every piece of writing you do or when you are editing someone else's work.

Copyediting Symbols

Type of Correction Needed	Margin Mark	Editor's Mark
Insert missing item	^	Proofreading is fun.
Insert space	#	Proofreadingis fun.
Insert period	⊙	Proofreading is fun⊙
Delete	ℊ	Proofreadings is fun.
Close up extra space	‿	P roofreading is fun.
Make lowercase	lc	Proofreading is Fun.
Capitalize	cap	proofreading is fun.
Use italics	ital	Proofreading is fun.
Underline	underline	Proofreading is fun.
Transpose	tr	Proofreading fun is.
Don't abbreviate	wo	The class is 3 credit hrs.
Abbreviate	abbr	The stool is 3.5 feet high.
Check spelling	sp	Proofreeding
Leave it as it was; ignore editing marks which appear above the dots	stet	The stool is 3.5 feet high.
Enclose in quotation marks	“ ”	“Proofreading is fun,” she said.
Enclose in parentheses	parens	This (proofreading) is fun.
Center	⌋⌊	⌋Proofreading is fun.⌊
Move left	⌊	⌊Proofreading is fun.
Move right	⌋	⌋Proofreading is fun.
Fix this sentence fragment	frag	Because the stool is 3.5' high.
Equalize spacing	spacing	Proofreading is fun.

Editing Tips

1. **Wait a while before you edit** to get some distance from the content.

2. **Reread the writing as if it were someone else's.** We tend to be overly critical of our own work.

3. **Identify strong aspects of the writing.** It is important to acknowledge what you're good at, as well as what you need help with.

4. **Ask questions** if you're not sure whether you've made a mistake. Even if you were right, you'll feel more confident the next time.

5. **Read your writing aloud.** Hearing your words helps you identify mistakes you might overlook reading silently.

6. **Point to your words as you read them.** This will help you read what is actually there, instead of what you think is there.

7. **Write clear copies for yourself** and your other proofreaders. A paper covered with corrections is hard to proofread.

8. **Read for one type of error at a time**—spelling, sentence structure, or grammar.

9. **Keep a record in a notebook of your common mistakes** and how to correct them.

10. **Use all of the tools available to help you edit**—spell checkers and grammar checkers, dictionaries, knowledgeable people, etc.