

Writing Rules

Capitalization Rules

Rule #1: Capitalize the first word of every sentence.

Example: **T**his is a sentence.

Rule #2: Capitalize the first word of every direct quotation.

Example: Bob said, “**H**ello, everyone.”

Rule #3: In a title, capitalize the first word, the last word, and each important word. Don’t capitalize prepositions, like *of*, *in*, *at*, *with*, or *on*. Don’t capitalize short connecting words like *and* or *but*, the *to* in front of a verb, or *a*, *an*, or *the*.

Example: I liked the movie **E**ternal **S**unshine of the **S**potless **M**ind.

Rule #4: Capitalize names of specific people, places, languages, races, religions, and nationalities.

Example: The president of **F**rance is **N**icolas **S**arkozy.

Rule #5: Capitalize names of months, days of the week, and special days, but not the seasons.

Example: Last **T**hursday was **T**hanksgiving, and important autumn holiday.

Rule #6: When a title or descriptive term is part of a proper name or is a proper name by itself, it is capitalized. If it’s used by itself, without the rest of the name, it is not capitalized.

Example: Let’s go to the **A**merican **R**iver. I like spending time by the river.

Rule #7: Always capitalize the personal pronoun “I,” but do not capitalize other personal pronouns, such as “me,” “my,” “mine,” “she,” or “he.”

Example: When **I** go to the store, **I** need to bring my coupons.

Writing Rules

Commonly Misspelled Words

ACCEPT, EXCEPT

ACCEPT MEANS TO AGREE OR BELIEVE.

EXCEPT MEANS TO EXCLUDE OR LEAVE OUT, AN EXCEPTION.

"EVERYONE **EXCEPT** XAVIER **ACCEPTED** THAT ALICE WOULD MARRY CECIL."

ADVICE, ADVISE

ADVICE IS A NOUN, MEANING A RECOMMENDATION OR OPINION.

ADVISE IS A VERB, MEANING TO GIVE ADVICE.

"**SHARON ADVISES** YOU TO SEEK **ADVICE** FROM **CONNIE**."

AFFECT, EFFECT

AFFECT IS USUALLY USED AS A VERB MEANING "TO INFLUENCE."

EFFECT IS USUALLY USED AS A NOUN MEANING A RESULT, AS IN **CAUSE AND EFFECT**.
WHEN YOU **AFFECT** SOMETHING, YOU HAVE AN **EFFECT** ON IT.

ALL READY, ALREADY

ALL READY IS A PHRASE MEANING COMPLETELY PREPARED: "I AM **ALL READY** TO GO."

ALREADY MEANS "BY NOW" OR PREVIOUSLY: "SHE HAS **ALREADY** DECIDED WHAT DRESS TO WEAR."

ALL TOGETHER, ALTOGETHER

ALL TOGETHER MEANS AS ONE OR ALL IN ONE PLACE: "WE WERE **ALL TOGETHER** FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE."

ALTOGETHER MEANS COMPLETELY: "WE WERE **ALTOGETHER** SURPRISED AT THE ENDING OF THE MOVIE."

ALLUSION, ILLUSION

AN **ALLUSION** IS A REFERENCE TO A LITERARY WORK OR A WORK OF ART.

ILLUSION IS A TRICK. "THE **ILLUSION** THAT THE MAGICIAN WAS SAWING THE WOMAN IN HALF MADE ME ILL."

Writing Rules

ARE, OR, OUR

ARE IS A FORM OF THE VERB **TO BE**: "WE **ARE** GOING TO THE MOVIES. YOU **ARE** ANNOYING!"

OR IS A CONJUNCTION THAT GIVES A CHOICE: "EITHER YOU **OR** I WILL HAVE TO GO. I CAN'T DECIDE IF I LIKE THIS SHIRT **OR** THAT SHIRT."

OUR IS A POSSESSIVE PRONOUN MEANING BELONGING TO US: "THAT IS **OUR** HOUSE. THOSE ARE **OUR** DOGS."

ASCENT, ASSENT

AN **ASCENT** IS THE ACT OF MOVING UPWARDS: "OUR **ASCENT** UP THE MOUNTAIN BROUGHT US TO A BEAUTIFUL OVERLOOK."

ASSENT MEANS TO AGREE: "ALL THREE OF THEM HAD TO **ASSENT** TO RIDING ASSES INSTEAD OF HORSES."

BARE, BEAR

BARE MEANS NAKED, WITHOUT COVERING. "IT'S POLITE TO ASK, 'ARE YOU **BARE**?' BEFORE ENTERING."

BEAR CAN MEAN A LARGE FURRY ANIMAL. IT IS ALSO A VERB MEANING TO CARRY OR TO HANDLE. "I CANNOT **BEAR** TO SEE THAT **BEAR** SO UPSET."

BRAKE, BREAK

TO **BRAKE** IS TO STOP A VEHICLE, SUCH AS A CAR, USING BRAKES.

TO **BREAK** IS TO SMASH OR DESTROY SOMETHING.

"YOU COULD **BREAK** YOUR LEG TRYING TO **BRAKE** YOUR BIKE WITH YOUR FOOT."

BREATH, BREATHE

BREATH IS A NOUN MEANING THE AIR YOU TAKE IN WHEN YOU BREATHE.

BREATHE IS A VERB MEANING TO INHALE AND EXHALE.

BERRY, BURY

A **BERRY** IS A KIND OF FRUIT, SUCH AS A RASPBERRY OR A BLACKBERRY.

BURY IS A VERB MEANING TO INTER OR HIDE SOMETHING UNDERGROUND.

REMEMBER, YOU EAT A **BERRY**, AND YOU **BURY** THINGS UNDERGROUND.

Writing Rules

CAPITAL, CAPITOL

THE WORD **CAPITAL** HAS SEVERAL DEFINITIONS, BUT THE MOST CONFUSING ONE IS A TOWN OR CITY WHERE THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT IS LOCATED: "ATLANTA IS THE **CAPITAL** OF GEORGIA."

THE WORD **CAPITOL** IS THE BUILDING WHERE A GOVERNMENT LEGISLATURE MEETS. "THE **CAPITOL** BUILDING HAS A DOME."

CITE, SITE, SIGHT

CITE MEANS TO REFER TO A SOURCE. "**CITE** YOUR SOURCE, SO YOUR READER CAN SEE WHERE YOUR INFORMATION COMES FROM."

SITE MEANS A LOCATION OR PLACE. "**SOME INTERNET TOY EMPORIUM**" MAY HELP YOU REMEMBER "WEB **SITE**."

SIGHT MEANS VISION, OR THE ABILITY TO SEE. "IF I COULDN'T SEE, I MIGHT MISS MY **SIGHT**."

COMPLEMENT, COMPLIMENT

COMPLEMENT MEANS TO MAKE SOMETHING COMPLETE OR TO SATISFY A NEED. "THAT JACKET **COMPLEMENTS** YOUR SHIRT; IT MAKES A **COMPLETE** OUTFIT."

COMPLIMENT MEANS TO FLATTER OR PRAISE. "**I COMPLIMENT** ALL MY GIRLFRIENDS."

CONSCIENCE, CONSCIOUS

YOUR **CONSCIENCE** MAKES YOU FEEL GUILTY IF YOU'VE DONE SOMETHING WRONG. "AFTER I CHEATED ON MY **SCIENCE** TEST, MY **CONSCIENCE** BOTHERED ME."

CONSCIOUS MEANS THAT YOU'RE AWAKE OR AWARE: "I WAS **CONSCIOUS** OF A DELICIOUS SMELL."

COUNCIL, COUNSEL

A **COUNCIL** IS AN OFFICIAL GROUP OR COMMITTEE. "**I AM A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL**."

TO **COUNSEL** IS TO GIVE ADVICE. "TO **COUNSEL** IS TO GIVE ME ADVICE."

Writing Rules

CHOOSE, CHOSE

CHOOSE (RHYMES WITH **ZOOS**) IS THE PRESENT TENSE OF THE VERB TO CHOOSE, MEANING TO MAKE A CHOICE.

CHOSE (RHYMES WITH **THOSE**) IS THE PAST TENSE OF THE VERB TO CHOOSE.

TO KEEP THEM STRAIGHT, REMEMBER THAT YOU MAY HAVE TO **CHOOSE** BETWEEN **TWO O'S**, BUT YOU'LL HAVE **ONE O** AFTER YOU ALREADY **CHOSE** ONE.

CLOTHES, CLOTHS

CLOTHES ARE THINGS THAT YOU WEAR, SUCH AS PANTS AND SHIRTS. REMEMBER THE **E** IN **CLOTHES** BY REMEMBERING: "WHEN SUSY REALIZED SHE WAS WEARING NO **CLOTHES**, SHE SHOUTED, '**EEEE!**'"

CLOTHS ARE MORE THAN ONE KIND OF CLOTH, LIKE SUEDE AND LINEN.

DESERT, DESSERT

DESERT IS A BARREN LANDSCAPE, WITH CACTUS AND SAND.

DESSERT IS ICE CREAM OR CAKE. REMEMBER, **DESSERT** HAS TWO S'S BECAUSE YOU'LL PROBABLY WANT SECONDS!

DINNER, DINER

DINNER IS A MEAL THAT YOU EAT IN THE EVENING.

A **DINER** IS A RESTAURANT.

REMEMBER THAT YOU CAN GO TO ONE **DINER** AND ORDER TWO **DINNERS**.

DO, DUE

DO IS A VERB MEANING TO PERFORM SOMETHING OR TO CARRY SOMETHING OUT. "CAN YOU **DO** VOO**DOO**?"

DUE IS SOMETHING OWED, OR A DEBT. "GIVE ME THE RESPECT THAT IS **DUE** ME." **DUE** CAN ALSO MEAN "**CAUSED BY**." "THAT FILTHY RESID**UE** IS **DUE** TO YOUR DIRTY LAUNDRY."

Writing Rules

ELICIT, ILLICIT

ELICIT MEANS TO DRAW OUT. REMEMBER, **ELASTIC** STRETCHES OUT, WHILE **ELICIT** DRAWS OUT.

ILLICIT MEANS UNLAWFUL: IF IT'S **ILLICIT**, IT'S **ILLEGAL**. "THE POLICEMAN TRIED TO **ELICIT** A CONFESSION OF **ILLICIT** ACTS FROM THE CRIMINAL."

EMINENT, IMMINENT, IMMANENT

EMINENT MEANS PROMINENT OR FAMOUS. REMEMBER: "**EMINEM** IS AN **EMINENT** RAP STAR."

IMMINENT MEANS ABOUT TO HAPPEN, ESPECIALLY SOMETHING BAD ABOUT TO HAPPEN. REMEMBER: "**I'M IN IMMINENT** DANGER."

IMMANENT IS A WORD THAT'S RARELY USED, MEANING INHERENT. THINK: "**I'M A MAN**, SO I'M **IMMANENTLY** MASCULINE."

FERRY, FAIRY

A **FERRY** IS A BOAT THAT SHUTTLES PEOPLE ACROSS WATER.

A **FAIRY** IS AN ENCHANTED, MYTHICAL CREATURE.

"A **FAIRY** FLIES IN THE **AIR**, BUT A **FERRY** FLOATS ON THE **WATER**."

FORTH, FOURTH

FORTH MEANS ONWARD OR FORWARD: "HE WENT BACK AND **FORTH** ON THE SWING, BACKWARD AND **FORWARD**."

FOURTH MEANS NUMBER FOUR IN A SERIES: FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, **FOURTH**. REMEMBER THAT **FOURTH** HAS THE WORD **FOUR** IN IT.

FARTHER, FURTHER

FARTHER INDICATES LENGTH OR DISTANCE: "SEATTLE IS **FAR**, BUT MONTREAL IS **FARTHER**."

FURTHER MEANS TO A GREATER DEGREE, ADDITIONAL, OR ADDITIONALLY: "SINCE THE USE OF **FUR** IS SO CONTROVERSIAL, WE SHOULD DISCUSS IT **FURTHER**."

Writing Rules

GOLF, GULF

GOLF IS THE GAME PLAYED WITH GOLF BALLS. REMEMBER, AN **O** IS ROUND LIKE A **GOLF** BALL.

A **GULF** IS A WIDE GAP OR A BODY OF WATER, LIKE THE **GULF OF MEXICO**.

HAVE, OF, A

THE WORD **HAVE** IS OFTEN CONFUSED WITH **OF** OR **A** BECAUSE OF THE WAY IT'S PRONOUNCED IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE WITH MODALS LIKE **SHOULD**, **COULD**, **MIGHT**, OR **WOULD**. THE CORRECT FORM IS ALWAYS "**SHOULD HAVE**" (SHOULD'VE), "**COULD HAVE**" (COULD'VE), "**MIGHT HAVE**" (MIGHT'VE), OR "**WOULD HAVE**" (WOULD'VE).

HERE, HEAR

HERE MEANS THE PLACE YOU ARE AT.

HEAR IS WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU LISTEN.

REMEMBER, YOU NEED YOUR **EAR** TO **HEAR**, WHETHER YOU'RE **HERE** OR **THERE**.

IT'S, ITS

IT'S IS A CONTRACTION OF "**IT IS**." IF YOU CAN SUBSTITUTE **IT IS** IN THE SENTENCE, **IT'S** IS THE CORRECT CHOICE.

ITS IS A POSSESSIVE PRONOUN: "THE DOG LOST **ITS** LEASH." IF YOU CAN'T SUBSTITUTE "**IT IS**" IN A SENTENCE (I.E. "THE DOG LOST **IT IS** LEASH."), THEN THE CORRECT CHOICE IS **ITS**.

KNEW, NEW

KNEW IS THE PAST TENSE OF **KNOW**, MEANING TO UNDERSTAND OR REALIZE SOMETHING. NOTE THAT THEY ARE SPELLED ALMOST EXACTLY THE SAME, EXCEPT THE **O** IS CHANGED TO AN **E**.

THE WORD **NEW** IS THE OPPOSITE OF OLD.

"I **KNEW** MY FATHER WOULD LOVE HIS **NEW** CAR."

Writing Rules

KNOW, NO

KNOW MEANS TO UNDERSTAND OR REALIZE SOMETHING. IT IS THE SAME ROOT WORD AS **KNOWLEDGE**.

THE WORD **NO** IS THE OPPOSITE OF **YES**.

"**NO**, I DON'T **KNOW** THE ANSWER."

LED, LEAD

THE WORDS **LED** AND **LEAD** CAN BE VERY CONFUSING. THE WORD **LED** (RHYMES WITH **BED**) IS THE PAST TENSE OF THE VERB "**TO LEAD**" (RHYMES WITH **BEAD**), MEANING TO GUIDE SOMEONE, AS IN **LEADER**.

THE WORD **LEAD** (RHYMES WITH **HEAD**) IS THE METALLIC ELEMENT **LEAD**, AS IN **LEAD PIPE** OR **LEAD PENCIL**.

"AFTER I **LED** THE POLICE TO THE CRIMINAL'S HIDEOUT, SOMEONE HIT ME ON THE **HEAD** WITH A **LEAD** PIPE."

LOOSE, LOSE

LOOSE (RHYMES WITH **GOOSE**) IS THE OPPOSITE OF TIGHT: "YOU'VE GOT A SCREW **LOOSE**."

LOSE (RHYMES WITH **FUSE**) IS THE OPPOSITE OF WIN: "WHEN YOU **LOSE** YOU END UP WITH **ZERO**."

PAST, PASSED

PAST IS THE OPPOSITE OF FUTURE: "IN *BACK TO THE FUTURE*, MICHAEL J. FOX TRAVELS TO THE **PAST**."

PASSED IS THE PAST TENSE OF **PASS**, MEANING TO GO BY SOMETHING.

"I **PASSED** THAT HOUSE MANY TIMES IN THE **PAST**."

WHAT CAN BE VERY CONFUSING IS THAT **PAST** CAN ALSO MEAN **BY** OR **BEYOND**. "I **PASSED** THAT HOUSE" MEANS "I WENT **PAST** THAT HOUSE."

PERSONAL, PERSONNEL

PERSONAL MEANS PRIVATE OR BELONGING TO A SPECIFIC PERSON.

PERSONNEL MEANS PEOPLE WHO WORK FOR A COMPANY.

"MY DIARY IS **PERSONAL**, AND I DON'T WANT THE OFFICE **PERSONNEL** TO READ IT."

Writing Rules

PEACE, PIECE

PEACE IS THE OPPOSITE OF WAR.

PIECE MEANS A PART OF SOMETHING. YOU CAN REMEMBER THAT **PIECE** HAS THE WORD **PIE** IN IT: "I WANT A **PIECE** OF **PIE**."

PRECEDE, PROCEED

PRECEDE MEANS TO COME BEFORE. A WAY TO REMEMBER **PRECEDE** IS: "THE **CENTIP****EDE**'S FRONT FEED **PRECEDE** HIS BACK FEET."

PROCEED MEANS TO CONTINUE. REMEMBER **PROCEED** BY REMEMBERING: "**PROCEED** FULL **SPEED** AHEAD."

PRINCIPLE, PRINCIPAL

A **PRINCIPLE** IS A CODE OR LAW: "HE HAD HIGH **PRINCIPLES** AND STRONG MORALS."

A **PRINCIPAL** IS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF A SCHOOL, AND IT IS ALSO AN ADJECTIVE MEANING **MAIN**: "THE **PRINCIPAL** IS THE **PRINCIPAL** ADMINISTRATOR OF THE SCHOOL." REMEMBER THAT A **PRINCIPAL** IS YOUR **PAL**.

QUIET, QUITE

QUIET MEANS WITHOUT A LOT OF NOISE. YOU CAN REMEMBER THE SPELLING OF QUIET BY SOUNDING IT OUT: QUI-ET.

QUITE MEANS "VERY."

RIGHT, WRITE

RIGHT MEANS CORRECT.

WRITE MEANS TO COMPOSE WORDS AND SENTENCES, THAT IS, TO WRITE SOMETHING DOWN.

"YOU CAN **WRITE** AND STILL BE **WRONG**, BUT YOU CAN'T BE **RIGHT** AND **WRONG**."

STATIONARY, STATIONERY

STATIONARY MEANS NOT MOVING.

STATIONERY IS PAPER TO WRITE LETTERS ON. JUST REMEMBER THAT YOU PUT **STATION****ERY** IN AN **ENVELOPE**.

Writing Rules

THAN, THEN

THAN IS USED TO MAKE A COMPARISON, LIKE **GREATER THAN** OR **LESS THAN**.

THEN INDICATES A TIME. OFTEN, **THEN** HAS A SIMILAR MEANING TO **NEXT**, SO IF YOU CAN SUBSTITUTE THE WORD "**NEXT**" FOR "**THEN**," IT SHOULD BE SPELLED WITH AN **E**. THE WORD **THEN** ALSO GOES WITH THE WORD **IF**. **IF** A SENTENCE STARTS WITH **IF**, **THEN** YOU USE **THEN**.

THEIR, THERE, THEY'RE

THE WORD **THEIR** IS A POSSESSIVE PRONOUN. IF YOU CAN SUBSTITUTE **HIS** OR **HER** IN THE SENTENCE, **THEIR** IS THE CORRECT SPELLING.

THE WORD **THEY'RE** A CONTRACTION OF **THEY ARE**. IF YOU CAN SUBSTITUTE **THEY ARE** IN THE SENTENCE, **THEY'RE** IS THE CORRECT SPELLING.

THE WORD **THERE** INDICATES A PLACE, AS IN **OVER THERE** OR **HERE AND THERE**. REMEMBER THAT IT HAS THE WORD **HERE** IN IT. THE WORD **THERE** IS ALSO USED IN SENTENCES BEGINNING, "**THERE IS...**" OR "**THERE ARE...**"

THREW, THROUGH

THE WORD **THREW** IS THE PAST TENSE OF THE VERB **TO THROW**.

THE WORD **THROUGH** CAN MEAN FINISHED: "I'M **THROUGH** WITH DINNER," OR MOVEMENT INTO AND THEN OUT OF SOMETHING: "I WALKED **THROUGH** THE DOOR." YOU CAN KEEP THESE WORDS STRAIGHT BY REMEMBERING: "I **THREW** THE BALL **THROUGH** THE WINDOW."

TWO, TO, TOO

THE WORD **TWO** MEANS THE NUMBER 2.

THE WORD **TOO** MEANS ALSO OR AN EXCESSIVE AMOUNT: "I ATE **TOO** MUCH. DID YOU EAT **TOO** MUCH, **TOO**?"

THE WORD **TO** IS A PREPOSITION: "I WENT **TO** THE MARKET." THE WORD **TO** IS ALSO USED BEFORE A VERB TO CREATE AN INFINITIVE: "I WANT **TO SEE** THE LIONS. I LIKE **TO LOOK** AT THE BEARS."

WEATHER, WHETHER

WEATHER IS THE STATE OF THE ATMOSPHERE, I.E. RAINY, HOT, COLD, OR SNOWING.

WHETHER INDICATES ALTERNATIVES OR POSSIBILITIES.

"I WONDER **WHETHER** THE **WEATHER** WILL BE WARM?"

Writing Rules

WHERE, WERE

WHERE AND **WERE** ARE OFTEN CONFUSED BECAUSE THEIR SPELLINGS ARE SO SIMILAR.

WHERE INDICATES A PLACE. LIKE THE WORD **THERE**, **WHERE** HAS THE WORD **HERE** IN IT. "**WHERE** DO YOU WANT TO MEET, **HERE** OR **THERE**?"

THE WORD **WERE** IS THE PAST TENSE OF THE VERB **ARE**. "THEY **WERE** GOING TO THE MOVIES."

WHO'S, WHOSE

WHO'S IS A CONTRACTION OF "**WHO IS**." IF YOU CAN SUBSTITUTE **WHO IS** IN THE SENTENCE, **WHO'S** IS THE CORRECT CHOICE.

WHOSE IS A POSSESSIVE PRONOUN: "**WHOSE** DOLL IS THIS?" IF YOU CAN'T SUBSTITUTE "**WHO IS**" IN A SENTENCE (I.E. "**WHO IS** DOLL IS THIS?"), THEN THE CORRECT CHOICE IS **WHOSE**.

WOMAN, WOMEN

WOMAN IS SINGULAR, MEANING ONE WOMAN.

WOMEN IS PLURAL, MEANING MORE THAN ONE WOMAN.

REMEMBER THAT **WOMAN** HAS THE SINGULAR WORD **MAN** IN IT, AND **WOMEN** HAS THE PLURAL WORD **MEN** IN IT.

YOU'RE, YOUR

YOU'RE IS A CONTRACTION OF "**YOU ARE**." IF YOU CAN SUBSTITUTE **YOU ARE** IN THE SENTENCE, **YOU'RE** IS THE CORRECT CHOICE.

YOUR IS A POSSESSIVE PRONOUN: "IS THIS YOUR DOLL?" IF YOU CAN'T SUBSTITUTE "**YOU ARE**" IN A SENTENCE (I.E. "IS THIS **YOU ARE** DOLL?"), THEN THE CORRECT CHOICE IS **YOUR**.

Writing Rules

Spelling Rules

Rule #1: ie vs. ei Selling

“i” before “e,” except after “c”...

friend niece piece receive ceiling

...or when sounded as “ay,” as in “neighbor” or “weigh.”

neighbor neighborhood weigh sleigh vein reign

Exceptions: society, science, height, caffeine, either, neither, financier, foreign, leisure, seize, species, their, weird

Rule #2: ‘y’ endings

When you add an ending to a word that ends in a consonant plus “y,” change the “y” to “i.”

try + -ed = tried	happy + -ly = happily
penny + -es = pennies	ordinary + -ly = ordinarily
penny + -less = penniless	beauty + -ful = beautiful
happy + -ness = happiness	mystery + -ous = mysterious

Except when you’re adding -ing. Then, the “y” does not change.

try + -ing = trying	carry + -ing = carrying
cry + -ing = crying	horrify + -ingly = horrifyingly

Exceptions: dryness, shyness, ladylike

When a word ends in a vowel plus “y,” the “y” does not change:

stay + -ed = stayed	play + -ed = played
destroy + -er = destroyer	joy + -ful = joyful

Rule #3: Silent ‘e’ endings

If an ending starts with a consonant, keep the silent e. If an ending starts with a vowel, drop the silent e.

	ending starts with a consonant	ending starts with a vowel
love ^e	love ^e ly	lovable
measure ^e	measure ^e less	measuring
judge ^e	judg ^e ment	judging
hope ^e	hope ^e ful	hoped
state ^e	stat ^e ment	stating

Exceptions: argue + -ment = argument
courage + -ous = courageous
true + -ly = truly
nine + -th = ninth
notice + -able = noticeable

Writing Rules

Rule #4: Endings

In one-syllable words that have a single vowel followed by a single consonant, double the consonant when adding -ed, -ing, -er, or -est.

win + -er = winner

fit + -est = fittest

grin + -ing = grinning

can + -ed = canned

In multi-syllable words that end with consonant-vowel-consonant, if the stress is on the last syllable, double the consonant when adding -ed, -ing, or -er.

be-gin' + -er = beginner

e-mit' + -ing = emitting

de-ter' + -ed = deterred

for-get' + -ing = forgetting

Exception: A “w” at the end of a word like “new” or “tow” is not considered a consonant.

Rule #5: Contractions

there's → there is

I'm → I am

I've → I have

I'll → I will or shall

I'd → I would or had

you're → you are

you'll → you will

he's → he is or has

she's → she is or has

we're → we are

aren't → are not

they've → they have

could've → could have

let's → let us

what's → what is

can't → cannot

didn't → did not

couldn't → could not

Rule #6: Possessives

If a word doesn't end in “s,” make it possessive by adding apostrophe-s.

the teacher's class

the geese's beaks

If a word ends in “s,” ask if you “sez -ez.” If you add the sound “-ez” to the end of the word when you say it out loud, add apostrophe-s. If you don't, just add an apostrophe.

the boss's kid

the teachers' classes

Mr. Williams' book

Writing Rules

Punctuation Rules

Rule #1—Period: Put a period (.) at the end of a sentence that's not a question and after most abbreviations.

Example: Dr. Martinez is very kind and helpful.

Rule #2—Question Mark: Put a question mark (?) at the end of a direct question, but not an indirect question.

Example: Will Dwayne do any studying? *but* I wonder if Dwayne will do any studying.

Rule #3—Exclamation Point: Use an exclamation point (!) to show strong emotion. Avoid using exclamation points in formal writing, and avoid overuse in informal writing.

Example: Wow! I've never seen anything like that before!

Rule #4—Semicolon: Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses without a conjunction like *or*, *but*, or *and*.

Example: My mom would do anything for me; she raised me all by herself.

Rule #5—Colon: Use a colon after a complete statement that introduces a list, a name, a quotation, or an explanation.

Example: But I remember too all the things she did: making dinners, taking me to the emergency room, and watching me play hoops.

Rule #6—Dash: Use a dash on either side of information that's separate from the rest of the sentence, to show an abrupt change, or to emphasize what comes next.

Example: All parents are just human—and if you think you'll never let your kid down, you're mistaken.

Rule #7—Commas: Use a comma before *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, *for*, *nor*, or *yet* to join two independent clauses.

Example: Dwayne likes Samurai warriors, and he likes pizza.

Rule #8—Commas: Use a comma between three or more items in a series or two items in a series not joined by a connecting word.

Example: Dwayne ordered pizza, Dew, and buffalo wings.

Rule #9—Commas: Use a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence or before an extra comment or question at the end.

Example: Dude, I use them all the time!

Writing Rules

Rule #10—Commas: Use commas around an expression that isn't essential to the thought of the sentence, such as a name, an interrupting expression, or extra information.

Example: The Samurai were originally, as we said, mercenary warriors. They slowly gained enough power, however, to establish a Samurai-dominated government.

Rule #11—Quotation Marks: Put quotation marks around someone's exact words (a direct quotation):

When Curtis said to the class, "Parents jus' regular people. Lovin' only does so much," I guess I overreacted.

...but not around an indirect quotation:

He also said that parents don't mean it when they say they can't let their children down.

Rule #12—Titles:

**Short Works
(in quotation marks)**

Essay
Short story
Song
Poem
TV show episode
Newspaper article
Magazine article

**Long Works
(italicized or underlined)**

Non-fiction book
Novel
Rock opera, opera
Long (book-length) poem, play
TV series, movie
Name of a newspaper
Name of a magazine

Writing Rules

Sentence Structure

Phrases

No subject and verb

Clauses

At least one subject and verb

Subject

Who or what?

Predicate (Verb)

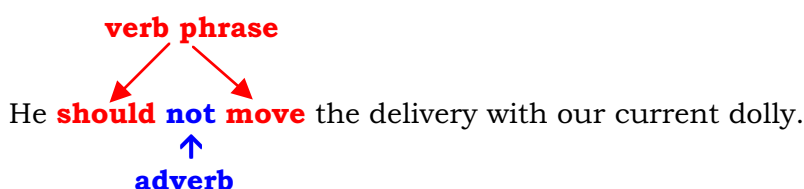
Doing or being what?

Helping Verbs

Forms of “to be”: **am, is, was, been, were, are**

Forms of “to have”: **have, had, has**

Modals: **can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would**



Adverbs

already

also

always

ever

finally

just

never

not

now

often

only

possibly

probably

really

usually

Verb Phrases: Verbs That Aren't Always Verbs

“to” verbs

to run, to fly

–ing verbs

playing, falling

–ed, –en, –t verbs

burnt, saved, seen

–ing Verb Forms

1) With a form of “to be” or “to have,” it is a verb.

She **has been running**. Michael **is** not **going**.

2) Without a form of “to be” or “to have,” it is usually a noun.

I like **running**. **Stocking** shelves is hard work.

Being abducted by aliens is fun.

3) If it describes a noun, it's an adjective.

I went to the **bowling** alley. I have a **swimming** pool.

Writing Rules

Endings

-ed	embarrassed, saved
-t	burnt, dealt
-en	broken, fallen, seen

- 1) It's a verb when used with a helping verb.
I **have been dealt** bad cards.
- 2) It can be used alone as a past-tense verb.
He **embarrassed** me. He **dealt** bad cards.
- 3) When modifying a noun, it is an adjective.
He had an **embarrassed** smile.
Dealt by fate, the cards were bad.

Rule #1: When a verb uses a *to be* or *to have* helping verb, the helping verb changes to match the subject, and the other verb stays the same.

I **am** running. You **are** running. Dwayne **is** running.
Liz **has** fallen asleep. They **have** fallen asleep.

Rule #2: Present-tense verbs end in -s when they go with singular subjects.
One alien **flies**. Two aliens **fly**.

Rule #3: Most indefinite pronouns, like “everyone” and “nobody,” are singular and take a verb with an -s ending.

anybody	anyone	anything	each	everybody
everyone	everything	nobody	no one	nothing
somebody	someone	something		

Rule #4: The ing and “to” forms of verbs, when used as nouns, are singular.
Zooming across the galaxy is fun.

Rule #5: Ignore the words between the subject and verb to decide if the verb is correct...except when the subject is “none,” “any,” “some,” “all,” or “most.”

Most of the **people are** nice.
Most of the **Earth is** covered by ocean.

Rule #6: If a sentence has more than one subject joined by *and*, the subject is plural, but if two singular subjects are joined by *or*, the subject is singular.
Maybe **Curtis or Maria has** an idea.

Writing Rules

Nouns That Describe Groups

class	group	team	cast
labor union	staff	company	family
troupe	gaggle	couple	

Acting as a Group: Singular

The class is going on a field trip.

The gaggle of geese flies in unison.

Acting Individually: Plural

The gaggle of geese are swimming in the lake, sleeping on the shore, and walking over to a picnicking family.

The class are all working on their own projects.

Avoiding Group Nouns Acting Individually

The geese are swimming in the lake, sleeping on the shore, and walking over to a picnicking family.

The class members are all working on their own projects.

FANBOYS join independent clauses

for and nor but or yet so

Words that introduce a new sentence (adverbs—look for -ly)

<i>however</i>	<i>therefore</i>	<i>otherwise</i>	<i>likewise</i>	<i>moreover</i>
<i>thus</i>	<i>then</i>	<i>nevertheless</i>	<i>finally</i>	<i>also</i>
<i>consequently</i>	<i>subsequently</i>	<i>further</i>	<i>furthermore</i>	

Words that introduce dependent clauses

<i>because</i>	<i>since</i>	<i>while</i>	<i>which</i>	<i>that</i>
<i>who</i>	<i>after</i>	<i>since</i>	<i>although</i>	<i>though</i>
<i>when</i>	<i>if</i>	<i>where</i>	<i>as</i>	<i>as if</i>
<i>before</i>	<i>so that</i>	<i>unless</i>	<i>whether</i>	

How to fix run-on sentences:

- 1) join with a semicolon.
- 2) make two separate sentences.
- 3) join with a comma and one of the fanboys words: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so.*
- 4) make one clause a dependent clause using a word like *because, while, although, until, or since.*

Writing Rules

Prepositions

ABOARD	BEFORE	IN BETWEEN	PLUS
ABOUT	BEHIND	INSIDE	REGARDING
ABOVE	BELOW	INSTEAD OF	SINCE
ACROSS	BENEATH	INTO	THAN
AFTER	BESIDE	LIKE	THROUGH
AGAINST	BESIDES	MINUS	THROUGHOUT
AHEAD OF	BETWEEN	NEAR	TILL
ALL OVER	BEYOND	NEAR BY	TO
ALONG	BY	NEAR TO	TOWARD
ALONGSIDE	CIRCA	NEXT TO	TOWARDS
AMID	CLOSE BY	OF	UNDER
AMIDST	CLOSE TO	OFF	UNDERNEATH
AMONG	DESPITE	OFF OF	UNLIKE
AROUND	DOWN	ON	UNTIL
AS	DUE TO	ONTO	UP
AS OF	DURING	OPPOSITE	UPON
AS TO	EXCEPT	OUT	VERSUS
ASIDE	EXCEPT FOR	OUT OF	VIA
ASTRIDE	FOLLOWING	OUTSIDE	WHILE
AT	FOR	OVER	WITH
AWAY FROM	FROM	PAST	WITHIN
BECAUSE OF	IN	PER	WITHOUT

Writing Rules

Chameleon Words (Preposition or Dependent Clause)

after	as	before	like	since
than	till	until	while	

Other Dependent Clause Words

although	as if	because	even if	even though
ever since	how	if	so that (so)	that
though	unless	what	whatever	when
whenever	where	whereas	wherever	whether
which	whichever	who	whom	whose
why				

I went to the market

so (that) I could buy some milk. ← dependent clause

I wanted to buy some milk,

(and) so I went to the market. ← independent clause

Action Verbs Show Action

to fly, to leap, to blow up, to save, to act, to talk

Linking Verbs Link the Subject to a Noun or Adjective

to be, to seem, to feel, to become, to smell, to taste, to look, to appear, to sound

Indefinite Pronouns

anybody	anyone	anything	each	everybody
everyone	everything	nobody	no one	nothing
somebody	someone	something		

Other Pronouns

this	that	these	those
which	who	whom	

Essential Education Corp.

Writing Rules

Paragraph, Essay, Article and Letter Structure

Main Idea / Introduction:

Details:

Conclusion: