**Basic Grammar Concepts for Editing purposes**

**Sentence-** in its simplest form it is a group of words that forms a complete thought containing a subject and a verb.

***Subject***-Who or what a sentence is about- Ask- Who/What is the sentence about?

Technically a subject is not a part of speech but you need to know what it is and how to find it to fix sentence errors.

**Parts of speech -**Each **part of speech** explains not what the word *is*, but how the word *is used*. In fact, the same word can be a noun in one [sentence](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/subjpred.html#sentence) and a verb or adjective in the next.

The next few examples show how a word's part of speech can change from one sentence to the next.

1. **Books** are made of ink, paper, and glue.

In this sentence, "books" is a noun, the [subject](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/subjpred.html#subject) of the sentence.

1. Deborah waits patiently while Bridget **books** the tickets.

Here "books" is a verb, and its subject is "Bridget."

1. We **walk** down the street.

In this sentence, "walk" is a verb, and its subject is the pronoun "we."

1. The mail carrier stood on the **walk**.

In this example, "walk" is a noun, which is part of a [prepositional phrase](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/phrfunc.html#prepositional%20phrase) describing where the mail carrier stood.

1. The town decided to build a new **jail**.

Here "jail" is a noun, which is the [object](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/objcompl.html#object) of the [infinitive phrase](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/phrfunc.html#infinitive%20phrase) "to build."

1. The sheriff told us that if we did not leave town immediately he would **jail** us.

Here "jail" is part of the [compound verb](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/vbcmpd.html#compound%20verb) "would jail."

1. They heard high pitched **cries** in the middle of the night.

In this sentence, "cries" is a noun acting as the [direct object](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/objcompl.html#direct%20object) of the verb "heard."

1. The baby **cries** all night long and all day long.

But here "cries" is a verb that describes the actions of the subject of the sentence, the baby.

***Official parts of speech :***Traditional grammar classifies words based on eight **parts of speech**: the [verb](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/verbs.html#verb), the [noun](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/nouns.html#noun), the [pronoun](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/pronouns.html#pronoun), the [adjective](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/adjectve.html#adjective), the [adverb](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/adverbs.html#adverb), the [preposition](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/preposit.html#preposition), the [conjunction](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/conjunct.html#conjunction), and the [interjection](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/interjct.html#interjection).

1. **Verb** -action word (explains what a subject or noun is doing) Ask- What is the subject doing?

A *verb* is often defined as *a word which shows action or state of being*. The *verb* is the heart of a sentence - every sentence must have a *verb*. Recognizing the *verb* is often the most important step in understanding the meaning of a sentence. In the sentence The dog bit the man, bit is the *verb* and the word which shows the action of the sentence.  In the sentence The man is sitting on a chair, even though the action doesn't show much activity, sitting is the *verb* of the sentence.  In the sentence She is a smart girl, there is no action but a state of being expressed by the verb is. The word be is different from other *verbs* in many ways but can still be thought of as a *verb*.

Unlike most of the other parts of speech, *verbs* change their form.  Sometimes endings are added (learn - learned) and sometimes the word itself becomes different (teach-taught).  The different forms of *verbs* show different meanings related to such things as tense (past, present, future), person (first person, second person, third person), number (singular, plural) and voice (active, passive). *Verbs* are also often accompanied by verb-like words called modals (may, could, should, etc.) and auxiliaries(do, have, will, etc.)  to give them different meanings.

One of the most important things about *verbs* is their relationship to time.  *Verbs* tell if something has already happened, if it will happen later, or if it is happening now.  For things happening now, we use the present tense of a verb; for something that has already happened, we use the past tense; and for something that will happen later, we use the future tense.  Some examples of *verbs*  in each tense are in the chart below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Present** | **Past** | **Future** |
| **look** | **looked** | **will look** |
| **move** | **moved** | **will move** |
| **talk** | **talked** | **will talk** |

*Verbs* like those in the chart above that form the past tense by adding -d or -ed are called *regular verbs*.  Some of the most common *verbs* are not regular and the different forms of the *verb* must be learned.  Some examples of such *irregular verbs* are in the chart below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Present** | **Past** | **Future** |
| **see** | **saw** | **will see** |
| **hear** | **heard** | **will hear** |
| **speak** | **spoke** | **will speak** |

The charts above show the *simple tenses* of the *verbs*.  There are also *progressive* or *continuous* forms which show that the action takes place over a period of time, and *perfect* forms which show completion of the action.  These forms will be discussed more in other lessons, but a few examples are given in the chart below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Present Continuous** | **Present Perfect** |
| **is looking** | **has looked** |
| **is speaking** | **has spoken** |
| **is talking** | **has talked** |

*Simple present tense verbs* have a special form for the *third person singular*. *Singular* means "one" and *plural* means "more than one."  *Person* is used here to show who or what does the action and can have the following forms:   
    1st person or the self (I, we)   
    2nd person or the person spoken to (you)   
    3rd person or a person not present (he, she, it, they)   
The *third person singular* forms are represented by the pronouns he, she, it.  The chart below shows how the *third person singular verb* form changes:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Singular** | | **Plural** | |
| **1st Person (I)** | **see**  **hear**  **come** | **1st Person (we)** | **see**  **hear**  **come** |
| **2nd Person (you)** | **see**  **hear**  **come** | **2nd Person (you)** | **see**  **hear**  **come** |
| **3rd Person (he, she, it)** | **sees**  **hears**  **comes** | **3rd Person (they)** | **see**  **hear**  **come** |

A *verb* must "agree" with its *subject*. *Subject-verb agreement* generally means that  the *third person singular verb* form must be used with a *third person subject* in the simple present tense. The  word be - the most irregular and also most common *verb* in English - has different forms for each person and even for the simple past tense.  The forms of the word be are given in the chart below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number** | **Person** | **Present** | **Past** | **Future** |
| **Singular** | **1st (I)** | **am** | **was** | **will be** |
| **2nd (you)** | **are** | **were** | **will be** |
| **3rd (he, she, it)** | **is** | **was** | **will be** |
| **Plural** | **1st (we)** | **are** | **were** | **will be** |
| **2nd (you)** | **are** | **were** | **will be** |
| **3rd (they)** | **are** | **were** | **will be** |

Usually a *subject* comes before a *verb* and an *object* may come after it.  The *subject* is what does the action of the *verb* and the *object* is what receives the action.  In the sentence Bob ate a humburger, Bob is the *subject* or the one who did the eating and the hamburger is the *object* or what got eaten.  A *verb* which has an *object* is called a *transitive verb* and some examples are throw, buy, hit, love.  A *verb* which has no *object* is called an *intransitive verb* and some examples are go, come, walk, listen.

As you can see in the charts above, *verbs* are often made up of more than one word. The future forms, for example, use the word will and the perfect forms use the word have.  These words are called *helping* or *auxiliary verbs*.  The word be can serve as an *auxiliary* and will and shall are also *auxiliary* forms. The chart below shows two other verbs which can also be used as *auxiliaries*:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number** | **Person** | **Present** | **Past** |
| **Singular** | **1st (I)** | **have**  **do** | **had**  **did** |
| **2nd (you)** | **have**  **do** | **had**  **did** |
| **3rd (he, she, it)** | **has**  **does** | **had**  **did** |
| **Plural** | **1st (we)** | **have**  **do** | **had**  **did** |
| **2nd (you)** | **have**  **do** | **had**  **did** |
| **3rd (they)** | **have**  **do** | **had**  **did** |

There is a type of *auxiliary verb* called a *modal* which changes the meaning of a *verb* in different ways.  Words like can, should, would, may, might, and must are *modals* and are covered in other lessons.

1. ***Noun***-person, place or thing

A *noun* is often defined as *a word which names a person, place or thing*.  Here are some examples of *nouns*: boy, river, friend, Mexico, triangle, day, school, truth, university, idea, John F. Kennedy, movie, aunt, vacation, eye, dream, flag, teacher, class, grammar. John F. Kennedy is a noun because it is the name of a person; Mexico is a noun because it is the name of a place; and boy is a noun because it is the name of a thing.

Some grammar books divide *nouns* into 2 groups - *proper nouns* and *common nouns*.  *Proper nouns* are nouns which begin with a capital letter because it is the name of a specific or particular person place or thing.  Some examples of *proper nouns* are: Mexico, John F. Kennedy, Atlantic Ocean, February, Monday, New York City, Susan, Maple Street, Burger King. If you see a word beginning with a capital letter in in the middle of a sentence, it is probably a *proper noun*.  Most nouns are *common nouns* and do not begin with a capital letter.

Many *nouns* have a special *plural* form if there is more than one.  For example, we say one book but two books.  *Plurals* are usually formed by adding an -s (books) or -es (boxes) but some *plurals* are formed in different ways (child - children, person - people, mouse - mice, sheep - sheep).

1. ***Adjective***- word that describes a noun

An *adjective* is often defined as *a word which describes or gives more information about a noun or pronoun*.  *Adjectives* describe nouns in terms of  such qualities as size, color, number, and kind.  In the sentence The lazy dog sat on the rug, the word lazy is an *adjective* which gives more information about the noun dog.  We can add more *adjectives* to describe the dog as well as in the sentence The lazy, old, brown dog sat on the rug.  We can also add *adjectives* to describe the rug as in the sentence The lazy, old, brown dog sat on the beautiful, expensive, new rug. The *adjectives* do not change the basic meaning or structure of the sentence, but they do give a lot more information about the dog and the rug. As you can see in the example above, when more than one adjective is used, a comma (,) is used between the *adjectives*.

Usually an *adjective* comes before the noun that it describes, as in tall man. It can also come after a form of the word beas in The man is tall.  More than one *adjective* can be used in this position  in the sentence The man is tall, dark and handsome. In later lessons, you will learn how to make comparisons with *adjectives*.

Most *adjectives* do not change form whether the noun it describes is *singular* or *plural*.  For example we say big tree and big trees, old house and old houses, good time and good times.  There are, however, some *adjectives* that do have different *singular* and*plural* forms.  The common words this and that have the *plural* forms these and those. These words are called *demonstrative adjectives* because demonstrate or point out what is being referred to.

Another common type of *adjective* is the *possessive adjective* which shows possession or ownership. The words my dog or my dogs indicate that the dog or dogs belong to me.  I would use the *plural* form our if the dog or dogs belonged to me and other people.  The chart below shows the forms of *possessive adjectives*.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Person**[**\***](http://www.eslus.com/LESSONS/GRAMMAR/POS/pos4.htm#person) | **Singular** | **Plural** |
| **1st Person** | **my** | **our** |
| **2nd Person** | **your** | **your** |
| **3rd Person** | **his/her/its** | **their** |

\**Person* is used here as a grammar word and has these meanings:   
*1st person* or the self (I, me, we),   
*2nd person* or the person spoken to (you)   
*3rd person* or the person spoken about (he, she, him, her, they, them).

***Special adjectives-Article***- An *article* is a kind of adjective which *is always used with and gives some information about a noun*.  There are only two *articles* a and the, but they are used very often and are important for using English accurately.

The word a (which becomes an when the next word begins with a *vowel* - a, e, i, o, u) is called the *indefinite article* because the noun it goes with is indefinite or general.  The meaning of the *article* a is similar to the number one, but one is stronger and gives more emphasis.  It is possible to say I have a book or I have one book, but the second sentence emphasizes that I do not have two or three or some other number of books.

The word the is known as the *definite article* and indicates a specific thing.  The difference between the sentences I sat on a chair and I sat on the chair is that the second sentence refers to a particular, specific chair, not just any chair.

1. ***Adverb***-word that describes a verb

We have seen that an adjective is a word that gives more information about a noun or pronoun.  An *adverb* is usually defined as *a word that gives more information about a verb, an adjective or another adverb*.  *Adverbs* describe verbs, adjectives and adverbs in terms of such qualities as *time, frequency* and *manner*.  In the sentence Sue runs fast, fast describes how or the *manner* in which Sue runs.  In the sentence Sue runs very fast, very describes the *adverb* fast and gives information about how fast Sue runs.

Most, but not all *adverbs* end in -ly as in  But not all words that end in -ly are adverbs (ugly is an *adjective*, supply and reply can both be *nouns* or *verbs*). Many times an adjective can be made into an *adverb* by adding -ly as in nicely, quickly, completely, sincerely.

*Adverbs of time* tell when something happens and *adverbs of frequency* tell how often something happens.  Below are some common  *adverbs of time* and *frequency* which you should learn:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Adverbs of Time** | **Adverbs of Frequency** |
| **Do it now.** | **I always do my homework** |
| **I will see you then.** | **We sometimes get confused.** |
| **They will be here soon.** | **He usually gets good grades.** |
| **I can't meet you today.** | **I never went skiing.** |
| **Let's go tomorrow.** | **She rarely eats a big breakfast.** |
| **They told me yesterday.** | **He was once on TV.** |
| **Have you traveled recently?** | **He saw the movie twice.** |

1. ***Pronoun***- word that takes the place of a noun

A *pronoun* is often defined as *a word which can be used instead of a noun*.  For example, instead of saying John is a student, the *pronoun* he can be used in place of the noun John and the sentence becomes He is a student.  We use pronouns very often, especially so that we do not have to keep on repeating a noun.  This chapter is about the kind of *pronoun* called a *personal pronoun* because it often refers to a person.  Like nouns, *personal pronouns* sometimes have *singular* and *plural* forms (I-we, he-they).

Unlike nouns, *personal pronouns* sometimes have different forms for *masculine/male, feminine/female* and *neuter* (he-she-it).  Also unlike nouns, *personal pronouns* have different forms depending on if  they act as *subjects* or *objects* (he-him, she-her).  A *subject* is a word which does an action and usually comes before the verb, and an *object* is a word that receives an action and usually comes after the verb.  For example, in the sentence Yesterday Susan called her mother, Susan is the *subject* and mother is the *object*.  The *pronoun* she can be used instead of Susan and the *pronoun* her can be used instead of mother.  The form of a *personal pronoun* also changes according to what *person* is referred to.  *Person* is used here as a grammar word and means:   
1st person or the self (I, me, we),   
2nd person or the person spoken to (you),   
3rd person or the person spoken about (he, she, him, her, they, them).

There is also a *possessive* form of the *pronoun*.  Just as we can make a noun *possessive* as in the sentence That is my father's book to mean That is the book of my father, we can make the *pronoun possessive* and say That book is his.  There are possessive adjective forms (such as my, your, his, her etc.) that are discussed with other adjectives in chapter 4.  *Possessive pronouns* can stand by themselves without nouns, but possessive adjectives, like other adjectives, are used together with nouns.

There is also an *intensive* form of the *pronoun* which intensifies or emphasizes the noun that it comes after as in the sentence I myself saw him.  The *reflexive* form of the *pronoun* looks exactly like the *intensive* form but is used when the *subject* and *object* of a verb refers to the same person as in the sentence I saw myself in the mirror.

All of this may sound confusing, but if you study the chart below, it will be clearer:

**Singular**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Person** | **Subject** | **Object** | **Possessive** | **Intensive**  **Reflexive** |
| **1st** | **I** | **me** | **mine** | **myself** |
| **2nd** | **you** | **you** | **yours** | **yourself** |
| **3rd** | **he/she/it** | **him/her/it** | **his/hers** | **himself/herself/itself** |

**Plural**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Person** | **Subject** | **Object** | **Possessive** | **Intensive**  **Reflexive** |
| **1st** | **we** | **us** | **ours** | **ourselves** |
| **2nd** | **you** | **you** | **yours** | **yourselves** |
| **3rd** | **they** | **them** | **theirs** | **themselves** |

Notice that the form you is the same for *subject* and *object*, *singular* and *plural* and that there is no *neuter singular possessive* form.

There are also *interrogative pronouns* (who, which, what) used for asking questions and *relative pronouns* (who, which, what, that) used in complex sentences which will be discussed in another place.  Some grammar books also talk about *demonstrative pronouns* (this, that, these, those) and *indefinite pronouns* (some, all, both, each, etc.) which are very similar to adjectives and do not need to be discussed here.

1. ***Preposition***-word that links nouns, pronouns and phrases to other parts of a sentence

A *preposition* is a *word which shows relationships among other words in the sentence*.  The relationships include *direction, place, time, cause, manner* and *amount*.  In the sentence She went to the store, to is a *preposition* which shows *direction*.  In the sentence He came by bus, by is a  *preposition* which shows manner.  In the sentence They will be here at three o'clock, at is a *preposition* which shows *time* and in the sentence It is under the table, under is a *preposition* which shows *place*.

A preposition always goes with a noun or pronoun which is called the *object of the preposition*.  The *preposition* is almost always before the noun or pronoun and that is why it is called a preposition.  The *preposition* and the *object of the preposition* together are called a *prepositional phrase*.  The following chart shows the *prepositions, objects of the preposition,* and *prepositional phrases* of the sentences above.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Preposition** | **Object of the Preposition** | **Prepositional Phrase** |
| **to** | **the store** | **to the store** |
| **by** | **bus** | **by bus** |
| **at** | **three o'clock** | **at three o'clock** |
| **under** | **the table** | **under the table** |

***Prepositional phrases* are like idioms and are best learned through listening to and reading as much as possible.   Below are some common *prepositions* of *time* and *place* and examples of their use.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Prepositions of time:** | **Prepositions of place:** |
| **at two o'clock**  **on Wednesday**  **in an hour, in January; in 1992**  **for a day** | **at my house**  **in New York, in my hand**  **on the table**  **near the library**  **across the street under the bed**  **between the books** |

1. ***Interjection***-a word added to a sentence to convey emotion that is not grammatically linked to any other part of the sentence

You usually follow an interjection with an [exclamation mark](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/endpunct.html#exclamation%20mark). Interjections are uncommon in formal academic prose, except in direct quotations.

The **highlighted** words in the following sentences are interjections:

**Ouch**, that hurt!

**Oh no**, I forgot that the exam was today.

**Hey**! Put that down!

I heard one guy say to another guy, "He has a new car, **eh**?"

I don't know about you but, **good lord**, I think taxes are too high!

1. ***Conjunction***-a word that is used to link sentences, clauses, phrases, Common sentence errors

A *conjunction* is a *word that connects other words or groups of words*.  In the sentence Bob and Dan are friends the *conjunction* and connects two nouns and in the sentence  He will drive or fly,  the *conjunction* or connects two verbs.  In the sentence It is early but we can go, the *conjunction* but connects two groups of words.

*Coordinating conjunctions* are *conjunctions* which connect two equal parts of a sentence.  The most common ones are and, or, but, and so which are used in the following ways:

and is used to join or add words together in the sentence They ate and drank.   
or is used to show choice or possibilities as in the sentence He will be here on Monday or Tuesday.   
but is used to show opposite or conflicting ideas as in the sentence She is small but strong.   
so is used to show result as in the sentence I was tired so I went to sleep.

*Subordinating conjunctions* connect two parts of a sentence that are not equal and will be discussed more in another class.  For now, you should know some of the more common *subordinating conjunctions* such as:

    after                before                unless   
    although          if                        until   
    as                   since                   when   
    because          than                    while

*Correlative conjunctions* are pairs of *conjunctions* that work together.  In the sentence Both Jan and Meg are good swimmers, both . . .and are *correlative conjunctions*.  The most common *correlative conjunctions* are:

    both . . .and   
    either . . . or   
    neither . . . nor   
    not only . . . but also

**Common sentence errors**- With all of these errors you must be able to identify the subjects/verbs to fix them.

Run on sentences - RO Sentence Fragments - SF

Verb Agreement - VA Tense Agreement - TA

**Run on sentence-** when two or more sentences are joined together incorrectly. Sentences must not be joined with commas. To fix these you must identify the subjects and verbs to determine how many sentences there could possibly be in their simplest form. Then join the sentences correctly.

***You can use one of the following methods:***

1. Separate into individual sentences using periods and capitals.

☹Not… The man went to the movies, he got there late.

☺But… The man went to the movies. He got there late

2. Join with a semi-colon if the topics of the sentences are linked.

☹Not… The flight was horrible; I crashed my car. (these two sentences make no sense together)

☺But… My goldfish died; I was sad. (these two sentences are related and make sense together)

3. Make one into a subordinate clause by adding a conjunction (making one part of the sentence dependent on the other)

☹Not… I was interrupted, I ended up being late.

☺But… Since I was interrupted, I ended up being late.

4. Join using an appropriate conjunction.

☹Not… It was a long day, I was tired.

☺But… It was a long day and I was tired.

**Sentence fragment-**A fragment is caused when either the subject, verb, or both are missing in any part of the sentence. To fix this you must first identify the subjects and the verbs. For each possible sentence you must have one of each. Add as required.

☹Not… Just kidding.

☺But… I am just kidding.

☹Not…Because I said so.

☺But…You are not going because I said so.

**Subject/verb agreement -**Subjects and verbs must agree in number- ie. singular subjects must have singular verbs and plural subjects must have plural verbs. If one is singular and the other is plural you must make them match. To fix this you must first identify the subjects and make sure the verbs are the same in number.

☹ Not… The doctor, along with his patients, are attending the seminar. (ignore modifying phrases to find subject and identify verb)

☺ But… The doctor, along with his patients, is attending the seminar. (ignore modifying phrases to find subject and identify verb)

If subjects are separated and one is singular, while the other one is plural, use the subject closest to the verb.

Ie. Either Tom or his brothers are going. Or Either his brothers or Tom is going.

**Tense agreement**

Sentences must be written in the same tense - ie. all in the past, all in the present, all in the future etc. If one part is in one tense and another is in a different tense they must be made to match. To fix you must identify the subjects and the verbs and make sure they are all in the same tense.

☹ Not… Mama baked the cake and puts it in the oven.

☺ But... Mama baked the cake and put it in the oven.