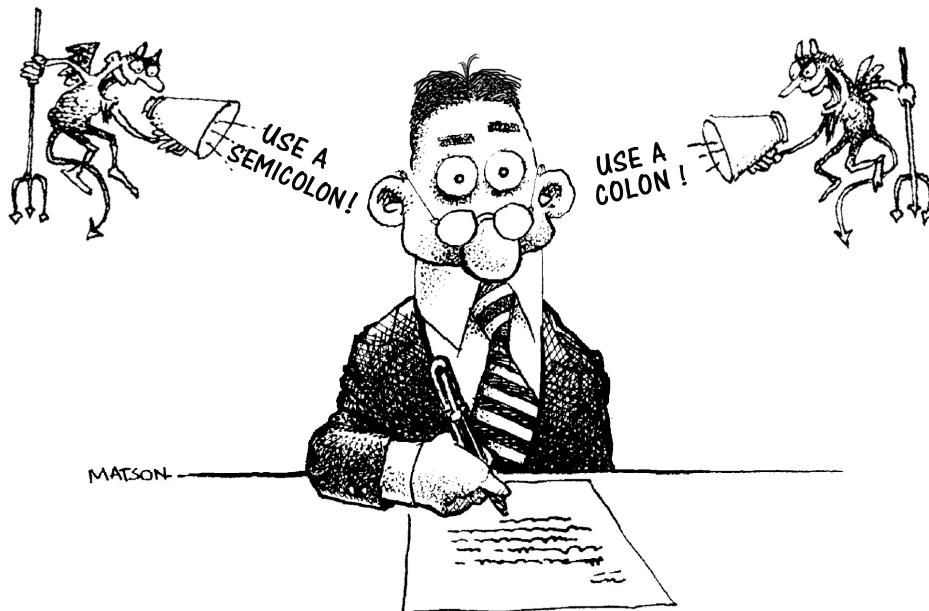


Grammar for the real world



How grammar should be taught
(but seldom is)

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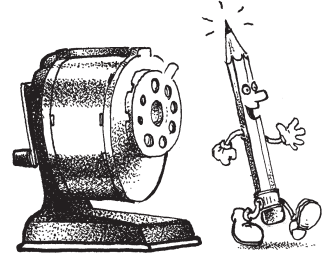


INTERDEPENDENCY

Dependent and independent clauses

AN INDEPENDENT CLAUSE CAN STAND on its own as a complete thought. Put another way, it forms a sentence—it could, in fact, be a sentence, just the way it is:

Mr. Bingley finds you attractive.



A DEPENDENT CLAUSE, by contrast, will leave you hanging:

Since Mr. Bingley finds you attractive... (dependent)

—it forms a complete idea only when combined with an INDEPENDENT CLAUSE:

Since Mr. Bingley finds you attractive, (dependent)
we must invite him to dinner. (independent)

MORE EXAMPLES

If you bring me the Golden Fleece, you may marry my daughter.
If you bring me the Golden Fleece, (dependent)
you may marry my daughter. (independent)

As soon as you look at her, you turn to stone.
As soon as you look at her, (dependent)
you turn to stone. (independent)

Exercise

Directions: Decide whether the group of words in bold is a DEPENDENT (D) or an INDEPENDENT (I) CLAUSE.

1. **If you fly too near the sun**, your wings will melt. _____
2. By the time we get to Rivendell, **it may be too late**. _____
3. Just as Merry and Pippin were about to begin their third breakfast, **there was a knock at the door**. _____
4. Anna enjoyed playing the game, **even though she didn't win**. _____
5. **Where there's smoke**, there's fire. _____
6. While Nero fiddled, **Rome burned**. _____
7. **Once we understood your idea**, we accepted it. _____
8. Even though my sister and I constantly fight, **we are very close**. _____
9. When Odysseus woke up, **he was alone on the beach**. _____

AT A GLANCE

An INDEPENDENT CLAUSE can stand on its own as a complete thought.

A DEPENDENT CLAUSE forms a complete thought only when combined with an INDEPENDENT CLAUSE.

INTERDEPENDENCY

**THE WRITER'S TOOLBOX**

Ideas expressed in INDEPENDENT CLAUSES will carry more weight with readers than those expressed in DEPENDENT CLAUSES.

Writing guideline. When a sentence contains both a DEPENDENT and an INDEPENDENT CLAUSE, the emphasis will be on whichever idea you position in the INDEPENDENT CLAUSE. You should, accordingly, choose carefully *which idea you would rather emphasize* — and then position that idea in the INDEPENDENT CLAUSE.

Exercise

Directions: Rewrite the following sentences so that the idea currently in the DEPENDENT CLAUSE is expressed as an INDEPENDENT CLAUSE, and vice-versa.

REQUIREMENT: Begin each re-write with the new DEPENDENT CLAUSE.

10. While Nero fiddled, Rome burned.

11. Even though my sister and I constantly fight, we are very close.

12. While Anna didn't win, she really enjoyed playing the game.

13. While you may have a piece of chocolate cake for dessert, you will not be allowed to watch TV or play on the computer.



MODIFYING CLAUSES & PHRASES

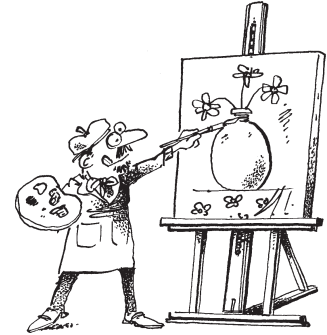
How groups of words behave as modifiers

Sometimes an entire PHRASE or CLAUSE acts as a MODIFIER:

The schedule *we have set up for your classes* is subject to change.

Bob loved the present *we gave him for his birthday*.

The applicants *selected by the committee* are from Cincinnati.



Exercise

Directions: Each of the following sentences contains a MODIFYING PHRASE or CLAUSE shown in italics. Draw an arrow from that PHRASE or CLAUSE to the word it modifies.

1. Everyone *we contacted* signed up for tango lessons.
2. The cake *we served to all the children, their parents, and their pets* was chocolate with chocolate icing and chocolate sprinkles.
3. The tango steps *Kim has learned over the past three weeks* will help her win the dance competition.
4. The plan *approved by the steering committee* was embraced by the entire student body.
5. *To keep the goats quiet*, Odysseus gave each one a lollypop.
6. *While reading the newspaper this morning*, Mary spilled her coffee.
7. The hockey coach, *who arrived early this morning*, fell asleep during practice.
8. The carousel operator, *who was looking down at her phone*, gave the kids an extra-long ride.

AT A GLANCE

An entire CLAUSE or PHRASE
can sometimes act
as a great big MODIFIER.

MODIFYING CLAUSES & PHRASES

**THE WRITER'S TOOLBOX: CORRECT PLACEMENT OF "ONLY"**

In speech, people often misplace the word "only." In writing, however, you can clarify your intended meaning by placing "only" directly next to the word, PHRASE, or CLAUSE it is intended to modify:

I only cooked the onions, not the peppers. (incorrect)

I cooked only the onions, not the peppers. (correct)

And notice:

I only toasted the marshmallow; I didn't burn it. (correct)

Exercise

Directions: In each of the following sentences, locate the MODIFIER *only*, and use an arrow to indicate where it *should* be placed.

1. The bakery only wanted to hire Nick if he could work on weekends.
2. The manager of the bakery only hired Nick to please the owner.
3. Forty-seven percent of households only use cellphones and do not have a landline.
4. To qualify for the playoffs, the Patriots only needed to win one more game.
5. The amateur chef only needed to make six donuts, but she made a dozen.
6. Janet only knew two of the more than twenty guests her husband had invited to the party.
7. Henry Purcell lived exactly as long as did Mozart—just thirty-five years—but we only know in detail what he did for three of those years.
8. The first edition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was only stretched to three volumes by printing few words to the line, few lines to the page, and few pages to the volume.

AT A GLANCE

MODIFIERS must be positioned next to whatever they modify. — In your writing, you must take pains with the placement of the word *only*.

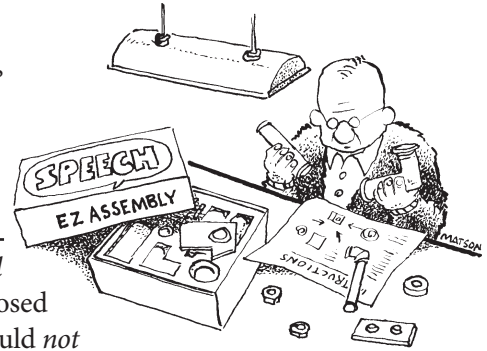


PUTTING COMMAS IN THEIR PLACE

Commas in Pairs

Essential vs. parenthetical clauses & phrases

PHRASES AND CLAUSES are sometimes essential to the main idea of the sentence, and sometimes not. This distinction has implications for punctuation.



ESSENTIAL—NO COMMAS

If the PHRASE OR CLAUSE is truly *essential* to the main idea of the sentence—as opposed to merely relevant or interesting—it should *not* be set apart with COMMAS.

People *who live in glass houses* shouldn't throw stones.

Everyone *we have spoken to* wants to be on the stone-throwing team.

The team *with the largest stones* usually wins the match.

In each of these examples, the italicized CLAUSE is ESSENTIAL—i.e., it can't be dropped from the sentence without damage to the main idea.

PARENTHETICAL—COMMAS

If the PHRASE OR CLAUSE adds information incidental to the main idea, it is considered nonessential—or *parenthetical*—and should be set apart from the rest of the sentence using COMMAS.

My friend Rocky, *who has never thrown a stone at a glass house*, will be here again this week.

The house across the street from us, *which has been vacant for two years*, was finally sold.

Everyone we have spoken to, *including the stone-throwers from St. Louis*, is interested in the program.

The italicized CLAUSE in each case gives added information, but the main idea is intact without it.

KEY IDEA

The test for PARENTHETICAL INFORMATION is simple: Try dropping the phrase or clause in question, and then ask yourself, *Is the main idea still intact?* —If it is, the information is PARENTHETICAL.

AT A GLANCE

ESSENTIAL does not mean *important*; PARENTHETICAL does not mean *unimportant*.

These terms, in other words, are used to describe not the *importance* of the information, but the *structure of the sentence*.

COMMAS IN PAIRS

**THE WRITER'S TOOLBOX: BESIDES THE COMMA**

COMMAS ARE NOT your only choice for setting apart parenthetical information — DASHES OR PARENTHESES are equally valid choices.

Consider this example:

The eldest of Bilbo's young cousins, and Bilbo's favorite, was young Frodo Baggins.

The eldest of Bilbo's young cousins (and Bilbo's favorite) was young Frodo Baggins.

The eldest of Bilbo's young cousins—and Bilbo's favorite—was young Frodo Baggins.

**A MATTER OF EMPHASIS**

The information conveyed in these sentences is identical, but depending on how you set off the parenthetical information—and *Bilbo's favorite*—you can alter its *impact* or *emphasis* in subtle ways.

- **Parentheses** — the *least* emphatic way of setting off the information; they suggest that the information could be omitted with no real loss.
- **Commas** — more neutral, telling us that the information is parenthetical without really de-emphasizing it.
- **Dashes** — the most dramatic option, actually calling attention to the information. Enclosing information within dashes is a bit like putting the information on stage.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE**EMPHASIS:**

It was popularly believed—whatever the old folk might say—that the Hill at Bag End was full of tunnels stuffed with treasure.

NEUTRAL:

It was popularly believed, whatever the old folk might say, that the Hill at Bag End was full of tunnels stuffed with treasure.

DE-EMPHASIS:

It was popularly believed (whatever the old folk might say) that the Hill at Bag End was full of tunnels stuffed with treasure.



NOTES

THE COLON & THE SEMICOLON

Introducing, connecting, and separating

THE COLON

IN AMERICAN ENGLISH the COLON sends a unique signal. It tells the reader that the preceding statement is *introducing* whatever comes next—a list of items, another statement, or any other kind of information the reader can be prepared to receive. Consider the following examples:

Spain gave Columbus three ships: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria.

[items in a series]

They could think of only one agent with the necessary equipment: Mr. Gadget.

[a single name]

Curly and Larry came up with a plan: they would look for gold without Moe!

[an idea or plan]

They all knew why she was late: in July and August her old Studebaker often overheated on the turnpike.

[the reason for her lateness]



KEY IDEAS

- 1. Virtually anything that can be introduced can be introduced with a COLON.**

The notion that COLONS are used exclusively to introduce *lists* is a common misconception. As the examples above show, almost any kind of information could conceivably be introduced using a COLON.

- 2. What *precedes* the COLON is a kind of promise; what *follows* the COLON must deliver on that promise.**

When well executed, the statement that precedes a COLON sets up a clear expectation in the reader's mind.

AT A GLANCE

The COLON is used to indicate a specific, logical relationship: what comes before it *introduces* whatever comes after it.

THE COLON & THE SEMICOLON

Exercise

Directions: Decide which of the options in bold represents the proper punctuation.

1. This movie had a number of things going for it (**colon/no punctuation**) stellar performances, a fast pace, and great special effects.
2. Here's the best feature of the new Scrabble game (**colon/no punctuation**) letter-tiles made out of milk chocolate.
3. The author dedicated his book to the most important person in his life (**colon/no punctuation**) his mother.
4. The Granata boys loved (**colon/no punctuation**) baking banana bread, knitting pillow covers, and flower arranging.
5. The Granata boys enjoyed a number of activities (**colon/no punctuation**) baking banana bread, knitting pillow covers, flower arranging, and lion taming.
6. Mary loved her horse, Sparky, for three reasons (**colon/no punctuation**) his chestnut color, his silky mane, and his skilled delivery with knock-knock jokes.
7. Today's lunch special includes (**colon/no punctuation**) a cup of soup, a small salad, half a sandwich, and a toothpick.
8. Last night's TV programs were boring (**colon/comma**) so Andrew went bowling.
9. The new bedroom set included (**colon/no punctuation**) bunk beds, two dressers, two desks with chairs, and a bubble-gum dispenser.
10. The new bedroom set included nine items (**colon/no punctuation**) two bunk beds, two dressers, two desks with chairs, and a bubble-gum dispenser.



Special note: Sometimes what precedes a COLON is a short introductory word or phrase like *Note*, *Safety Tip*, or *Remember*. In this situation, always capitalize the first word of the statement that follows the COLON.

The above paragraph — **Special note:** *Sometimes what precedes a COLON...* — illustrates this principle. Here's another example:

Next week the entire school will be closed on Thursday and Friday for much-needed repairs to our heating system. The good news: Beginning on Monday, an adjustable thermostat will control the temperature in every classroom. The bad news: During the subsequent two weeks, we will make up the lost days by beginning each school day at 6:30 AM.

**NOTES****AT A GLANCE**

Do not use *superfluous* COLONS—i.e., in situations where the sentence functions perfectly well without one.



NOTES

THE COLON & THE SEMICOLON

THE WRITER'S TOOLBOX: THE SEMICOLON

As you have already seen, the SEMICOLON can be used to join two INDEPENDENT CLAUSES into a single sentence. So from a writing perspective, here's the important question: When does it make sense to use a semicolon, as opposed to writing two separate sentences?

You should favor a semicolon only when the two ideas are *very closely related*—two aspects of a single topic:

You can't catch me; I'm too fast.

Jack Sprat could eat no fat; his wife could eat no lean.

Writing the story was the easy part; the hard part was drawing the pictures.

**Complex items in a series**

You can also use a SEMICOLON to separate items in a series, but you should reserve it for lists of items that are themselves lengthy or complicated. — Example:

ITEMS IN A SERIES—COMMAS:

In addition to the four hobbits, the "Fellowship" included Aragorn, Gandalf, Legolas, Boromir, and Gimli.

COMPLEX ITEMS—SEMICOLONS:

In addition to the four hobbits, the "Fellowship" included Aragorn, son of Arathorn, descended from the ancient kings of Gondor; Gandalf the Grey, the wizard already familiar to us from *The Hobbit*; the Elf Legolas, son of King Thranduil of Northern Mirkwood; Boromir from the city of Gondor, son of the current regent; and Gimli the dwarf, son of Gloin.

So what's the difference?

Notice that the COLON and the SEMICOLON are *not* interchangeable—each has a discrete purpose and function: the COLON *introduces*; the SEMICOLON is a *separator* between two closely related ideas.

Each example below opens with exactly the same INDEPENDENT CLAUSE — but from there, the sentences go in quite different directions. Study the punctuation:

INTRODUCING:

This Wonka bar has everything I love in a chocolate bar: creamy milk chocolate (not dark), a bit of crunch, bite-size squares that are easy to break off, and just enough thickness to make each square a satisfying mouthful.

SEPARATING RELATED IDEAS:

This Wonka bar has everything I love in a chocolate bar; I think I'll buy one for Alyssa.

NUMBERS GAME — SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

**Exercise**

Directions: In the following passage, correct any errors of SUBJECT-VERB agreement.

Custom Playgrounds for Luxury Homes

- 1 Across the country, there are new signs of life in residential playgrounds.
- 2 A national survey of more than a thousand home-architecture firms show
- 3 unprecedented demand for outdoor recreational equipment. The complexity
- 4 of decks, patios, verandas, and other outside spaces are increasing, and
- 5 luxury-home architects are also seeing growing interest in designer play
- 6 areas. The shift, according to industry experts, residential architects, and
- 7 real-estate professionals, reflect what's happening *indoors*: walls and the
- 8 notion of boxy, formal living space is falling out of favor. Developers today
- 9 are taking their cues from the resort industry, where the outdoors shines.

- 10 A group of builders in waterfront Malibu, Calif., where outdoor living is the
- 11 rule, are leading the charge. Developer Crystal Pointe Estates is selling, for
- 12 \$22.9 million, a 13,814-square-foot contemporary home with another 10,000
- 13 square feet of outdoor recreational space. The home, which was designed by
- 14 Cole & Associates, opens to an infinity-edge pool flanked by two ground-
- 15 level trampolines. The twin trampolines on the westward-facing side of
- 16 the house offers a panoramic view of the Pacific. Adjacent to them lies an
- 17 outdoor yoga and massage room where guests may regain their strength.

- 18 Equally extravagant is the play area outside Rob Stryker's Lake Michigan
- 19 home. It isn't just big; stretching three stories high and measuring
- 20 about 6,000 square feet, it's got its own rock-climbing wall. The rock wall
- 21 occupying the north- and east-facing sides of the play tower provide the
- 22 only access point to the rooftop trampoline. The three platforms that form
- 23 the tower, perched on a dune overlooking the lake, includes a high-speed
- 24 merry-go-round, a resistance-swimming pool, and a set of rope swings.

- 25 Stryker's recreation tower is central to his home. The 40-acre property's
- 26 steep slope and unique arrangement makes for magnificent lake views, but
- 27 difficult construction. The tower's four vertical support beams balanced atop
- 28 the uneven terrain connects via steel cables to the home's foundation. The
- 29 limestone and copper house with 12-foot walls of sliding glass adhere to a
- 30 Japanese contemporary style.

- 31 While unique features can make for impressive homes, they can also limit
- 32 the pool of prospective buyers. The return on investments in luxury play
- 33 areas vary greatly depending on the market, said Kevin Kegan, the editor-in-
- 34 chief of *Residential* magazine.

From HS College-Bound—the finest grammar instruction available:

The Writer's Guide to Grammar

The really important stuff—and why it matters

by ROY SPEED

This new approach to language fundamentals spotlights the principles that writers actually *need to know*; then it presents those issues with unusual clarity. — But that's not all: whenever a grammar concept has direct application to a writing tool, the author shows exactly how that concept plays out in common writing situations. For just that reason, many sections in this workbook bear the headline “The Writer’s Toolbox.”

This workbook serves as a self-paced home-study course. But it also works in a classroom setting — a homeschooling co-op, for example, can take advantage of exercises and activities that lend themselves to work in small groups or teams. Suggestions for such activities are found in the companion **Teaching Guide With Answer Key**.

Using this material, students can:

- master the most important points of English grammar and usage;
- perceive with little effort both the structure of a sentence and how proper punctuation can enhance that structure;
- employ with dictionary-precision a rich arsenal of English words.

The Writer's Guide to Grammar also corrects all the most common misconceptions—things students *think* they know but actually know *wrong*.

Most important, the course places the greatest emphasis where it belongs: on the concepts critical to effective writing. Those concepts are presented in an easy-to-understand manner and are clearly illustrated with simple examples.

The entire workbook is laid out to maximize efficient learning. It helps with all of the following challenges:

■ Moving the learning into long-term memory.

The author drives home the critical concepts, but he does so in a manner that is stealthy: in a variety of guises, the workbook incorporates drill, repetition, and review sufficient to master the critical guidelines for usage and punctuation.

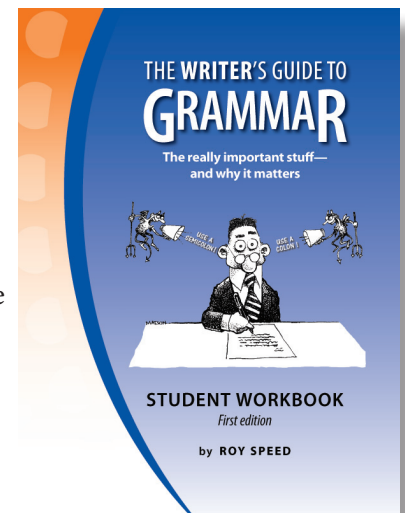
■ Keeping the learner engaged.

Among the standout features of the program are its attractive appearance, variety, and humor — all critical aids to learning. Put another way, in this workbook, variety and humor are used to ensure that drill and repetition never *feel* like drill and repetition.

■ Applying the knowledge to real-world situations.

The program is filled with activities that mirror real-life writing challenges — memos, letters, articles, and essays.

This program has been used successfully by high school and college students but is perfectly suitable for anyone who wants to improve his or her writing.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roy Speed is a professional educator in the business world and a homeschooling dad, with a B.A. in English from Northwestern and a passion for history and for Shakespeare. In the business world, he's a writing consultant: he creates writing training and eLearning programs—one of his writing programs has been translated into seventeen languages and has become required training for more than a quarter-million employees around the world. He is also a sometime lecturer on business writing topics at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. In the homeschooling world, Roy has taught writing, literature, and history to students of all ages. He is also the author of the the grammar text *The Writer's Guide to Grammar*.

