Chapter 4

Help for English Language Learners
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the basic structures of sentences.
2. Determine ways to turn sentences into questions.
3. Define adjectives and how they are used.

If your first language is not English, you will most likely need some extra help when writing in Standard, or formal, English. New students of Standard English often make similar kinds of errors. Even if you have been speaking English for a long time, you may not feel as confident in your written English skills. This chapter covers the most common errors made by English language learners and helps you avoid similar mistakes in your writing.

Basic Sentence Structures

The most basic sentence structure in English is a subject plus a verb. A subject performs the action in the sentence, and the verb identifies the action. Keep in mind that in some languages, such as Spanish and Italian, an obvious subject does not always perform the action in a sentence; the subject is often implied by the verb. However, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb to express a complete thought.

Not all sentences are as simple as a subject plus a verb. To form more complex sentences, writers build upon this basic structure. Adding a prepositional phrase to the basic sentence creates a more complex sentence. A preposition is a part of speech that relates a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. It also introduces a prepositional phrase. If you can identify a preposition, you will be able to identify a prepositional phrase.

1. A word that tells what the sentence is about. Subjects are usually nouns or pronouns.
2. A word that tells what the subject is doing or links the subject to a describing word.
3. Type of word that connects a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies it. Common prepositions include in, on, under, near, by, with, and about.
4. A group of words that begins with a preposition.
On is the preposition. On the couch is the prepositional phrase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Prepositions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>about</td>
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<td>above</td>
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<td>behind</td>
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**EXERCISE 1**

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and underline the prepositional phrases.

1. Linda and Javier danced under the stars.
2. Each person has an opinion about the topic.
3. The fans walked through the gates.
4. Jamyra ran around the track.
5. Maria celebrated her birthday in January.

Another sentence structure that is important to understand is subject + verb + object. There are two types of objects: **direct objects** and **indirect objects**.
A direct object receives the action of the verb.

\[
\text{subject + verb + direct object}
\]

Janice writes a letter.

The letter directly receives the action of the verb \textit{writes}.

Tip

A quick way to find the direct object is to ask \textit{what?} or \textit{who?}

\textbf{Sentence:} Maurice kicked the ball.

\textit{What} did Maurice kick? The direct object, \textit{ball}.

\textbf{Sentence:} Maurice kicked Tom by accident.

\textit{Who} did Maurice kick? The direct object, \textit{Tom}.

An indirect object does not receive the action of the verb.

\[
\text{subject + verb + indirect object}
\]

Janice writes me a letter.

The action (\textit{writes}) is performed for or to the indirect object (\textit{me}).
Tip

Even though the indirect object is not found after a preposition in English, it can be discovered by asking to whom? or for whom? after the verb.

Sentence: Dad baked the children some cookies.

For whom did Dad bake the cookies? The indirect object, children.

EXERCISE 2

On a separate sheet of paper, identify the subject, verb, direct object, and indirect object in the following sentences.

1. Captain Kirk told the crew a story.
2. Jermaine gave his girlfriend a dozen yellow tulips.
3. That hospital offers nurses better pay.
4. Dad served Grandma a delicious dinner.
5. Mom bought herself a new car.

EXERCISE 3

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the sentences in the correct order. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. The pizza Jeannine burnt.
2. To the Mexican restaurant we had to go for dinner.
3. Jeannine loved the food.
4. So full were we during the walk home.
5. I will make the pizza next time.

Questions

English speakers rely on the following two common ways to turn sentences into questions:
1. Move the helping verb and add a question mark.
2. Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did* and add a question mark.

Move the helping verb and add a question mark.

**Sentence:** Sierra can pack these boxes.

**Question:** Can Sierra pack these boxes?

Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did*, and add a question mark:

**Sentence:** Jolene skated across the pond.

**Question:** Did Jolene skate across the pond?

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**EXERCISE 4**

On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.

1. *Slumdog Millionaire* is a film directed by Danny Boyle.
2. The story centers on a character named Jamal Malik.
3. He and his older brother find different ways to escape the slums.
4. His brother, Salim, pursues a life of crime.
5. Jamal ends up on the game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*?

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**Adjectives**

An _adjective_ is a kind of descriptive word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It tells *which one*, *what kind*, and *how many*. Adjectives make your writing more lively and interesting. Keep in mind, a common error that English language learners make is misplacing the adjectives in a sentence. It is important to know where to place the adjective in a sentence so that readers are not confused.

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7. A word that describes a noun or a pronoun.
If you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun, place the adjectives in the following order before the noun:

1. **Opinion**: an interesting book, a boring movie, a fun ride
2. **Size**: a large box, a tiny turtle, a tall woman
3. **Shape**: a round ball, a long hose, a square field
4. **Age**: a new day, an old horse, a modern building
5. **Color**: an orange sunset, a green jacket, a red bug
6. **Ethnicity**: Italian cheese, French wine, Chinese tea
7. **Material**: silk shirt, wool socks, a cotton dress

**Tip**

Adjectives can also be placed at the end of a sentence if they describe the subject of a sentence and appear after the verb.

**Sentence**: My English teacher is excellent.

**EXERCISE 5**

On a separate sheet of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun. The first one has been done for you.

1. book: old, small, Spanish

   a small old Spanish book (age, size, ethnicity)
2. photograph: new, strange
3. suit: wool, green, funny
4. opinion: refreshing, new
5. dress: fashionable, purple
KEY TAKEAWAYS

• The most basic sentence structure is a subject plus a verb that expresses a complete thought.
• Adding a prepositional phrase or a direct or indirect object to a sentence makes it more complex.
• English speakers change a sentence into a question in one of the following two ways: moving the helping verb and adding a question mark or adding the verb do, does, or did and adding a question mark.
• Adjectives follow a particular order before the noun they describe. The order is opinion, size, shape, age, color, ethnicity, and material.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph about a memorable family trip. Use at least two adjectives to describe each noun in your paragraph. Proofread your paragraph, and then exchange papers with a classmate. Check your classmate's use of adjectives to make sure they are correct.
4.2 Negative Statements

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify a negative statement.
2. Write negative statements.

Negative statements are the opposite of positive statements and are necessary to express an opposing idea. The following charts list negative words and helping verbs that can be combined to form a negative statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Words</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
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<tr>
<td>nobody</td>
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<tr>
<td>no one</td>
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<tr>
<td>nowhere</td>
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<th>Common Helping Verbs</th>
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<td>am</td>
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<td>could</td>
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<tr>
<td>must</td>
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<tr>
<td>would</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The following examples show several ways to make a sentence negative in the present tense.

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8. A sentence or phrase that expresses the opposite of a positive statement.

9. A verb that is used with a main verb to describe mood or tense. The helping verb is usually a form of be, do, or have.
1. A helping verb used with the negative word *not*.
   
   **Sentence:** My guests are arriving now.
   
   **Negative:** My guests are **not** arriving now.

2. The negative word *no*.
   
   **Sentence:** Jennie has money.
   
   **Negative:** Jennie has **no** money.

3. The contraction *n’t*.
   
   **Sentence:** Janetta does miss her mom.
   
   **Negative:** Janetta doesn’t miss her mom.

4. The negative adverb *rarely*.
   
   **Sentence:** I always go to the gym after work.
   
   **Negative:** I rarely go to the gym after work.

5. The negative subject *nobody*.
   
   **Sentence:** Everybody gets the day off.
   
   **Negative:** Nobody gets the day off.

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**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

1. Everybody is happy about the mandatory lunch.
2. Deborah likes to visit online dating sites.
3. Jordan donates blood every six months.
4. Our writing instructor is very effective.
5. That beautiful papaya is cheap.

The following sentences show you the ways to make a sentence negative in the past tense.
Notice that when forming a negative in the past tense, the helping verb did is what signals the past tense, and the main verb laugh does not have an -ed ending.

**EXERCISE 2**

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the errors in the past-tense negative sentences.

Celeste no did call me when she reached North Carolina. I was worried because she not drove alone before. She was going to meet her friend, Terry, who lived in a town called Asheville, North Carolina. I did never want to worry, but she said she was going to call when she reached there. Finally, four hours later, she called and said, “Mom, I’m sorry I did not call. I lost track of time because I was so happy to see Terry!” I was relieved.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor’s answers.
Double negatives are two negatives used in the same phrase or sentence. They are considered incorrect in Standard English. You should avoid using double negatives in all formal writing. If you want to say something negative, use only one negative word in the sentence. Return to the beginning of this section for a list of negative words, and then study the following examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Double negative (incorrect)</th>
<th>Single negative (correct)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neg. + neg.</td>
<td>neg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I couldn’t find no paper.</td>
<td>I couldn’t find any paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neg. + neg.</td>
<td>neg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want nothing.</td>
<td>I don’t want anything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tip

Ain’t is considered a contraction of am not. Although some may use it in everyday speech, it is considered incorrect in Standard English. Avoid using it when speaking and writing in formal contexts.

EXERCISE 3

On your own sheet of paper, correct the double negatives and rewrite the following sentences.

1. Jose didn’t like none of the choices on the menu.
2. Brittany can’t make no friends with nobody.
3. The Southwest hardly had no rain last summer.
4. My kids never get into no trouble.
5. I could not do nothing about the past.
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Negatives are usually formed using a negative word plus a helping verb.
- Double negatives are considered incorrect in Standard English.
- Only one negative word is used to express a negative statement.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing your favorite meal. Use rich, colorful language to describe the meal. Exchange papers with a classmate and read his or her paragraph. Then rewrite each sentence of your classmate’s paragraph using negatives. Be sure to avoid double negatives. Share your negative paragraphs with each other.
Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define and use count and noncount nouns.
2. Recognize and use definite and indefinite articles.

Nouns are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called count nouns because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.

On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called noncount nouns. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of money or furniture and simply add -s to the end of the noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

Incorrect: five moneys, two furnitures
Correct: some money, two pieces of furniture

By the end of Section 4.3.1 "Count and Noncount Nouns", you will grasp the difference between the two types of nouns and be able to use them confidently in speaking and writing.

Count and Noncount Nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding -s.
A noncount noun identifies a whole object that cannot separate and count individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.
EXERCISE 1

On a separate sheet of paper, label each of the following nouns as count or noncount.

1. Electricity ________
2. Water ________
3. Book ________
4. Sculpture ________
5. Advice ________

EXERCISE 2

On a separate sheet of paper, identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or noncount noun by writing C or NC above the noun.

1. The amount of traffic on the way home was terrible.
2. Forgiveness is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic apples I bought.
4. I prefer film cameras instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is history.

Definite and Indefinite Articles

The word the is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, the woman refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article the is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words a and an are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, a woman refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article a or an is used before a singular count noun.

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16. The word the that refers to one or more specific things.
17. The words a and an that refer to one nonspecific thing.
Definite Articles (The) and Indefinite Articles (A/An) with Count Nouns

I saw the concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw the concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)

I saw the U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw a concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)

EXERCISE 3

On a separate sheet of paper, write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write OK if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. ________
2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. ________
3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. ________
4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor’s performance in the play. ________
5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. ________
EXERCISE 4

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebula are astonishing.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor’s answers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You can make count nouns plural by adding -s.
- Count nouns are individual people, places, or things that can be counted, such as politicians, deserts, or candles.
- Noncount nouns refer to whole things that cannot be made plural, such as salt, peace, or happiness.
- The is a definite article and is used to refer to a specific person, place, or thing, such as the Queen of England.
- A and an are indefinite articles, and they refer to nonspecific people, places, or things, such as an apple or a bicycle.
Writing Application

Write five sentences using the definite article the. Write five sentences using the indefinite article a or an. Exchange papers with a classmate and check each other’s work.
4.4 Pronouns

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Recognize subject and object pronouns.
2. Identify possessive pronouns.
3. Determine common pronoun errors.

A **pronoun**\(^{18}\) is a word that can be used in place of the noun. We use pronouns so we do not have to repeat words. For example, imagine writing the following sentence: Afrah put her scarf on because Afrah was cold. The sentence sounds a bit strange because *Afrah* is named twice; however, if you use a pronoun, the sentence will be shorter and less repetitive. You might rewrite the sentence to something similar to the following: Afrah put her scarf on because she was cold. *She* refers to Afrah, so you do not have to write the name twice.

**Types of Pronouns**

**Subject pronouns**\(^{19}\) are often the subject of a sentence—“who” and “what” the sentence is about.

Sentence: *She* loves the desserts in France.

*She* is the subject.

Sentence: By lunch time, *they* were hungry.

*They* is the subject.

**Object pronouns**\(^{20}\) are often the object of the verb—“who” or “what” was acted upon.

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18. A word that substitutes for a noun; for example, *I, you, he, she, it, we, or they.*

19. A pronoun that functions as the subject in a sentence; the “who” and the “what” the sentence is about.

20. Pronoun that functions as the object of a verb or a preposition; the “who” or “what” acted upon.
Sentence: Melanie’s thoughtfulness touched him.

Him is the object of the verb touched.

Sentence: We lifted it.

It is the object of the verb lifted.

Tip

The masculine subject pronoun is he, and the masculine object pronoun is him. The feminine subject pronoun is she, and the feminine object pronoun is her.

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a possessive pronoun.  

Sentence: The teacher took her apple and left.

The pronoun her shows the teacher owns the apple.

Sentence: The hikers spotted their guide on the trail.

The pronoun their shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.

Table 4.3 Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Pronouns</th>
<th>I, you, he, she, it, we, they</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Object Pronouns</td>
<td>me, you, him, her, it, us, them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. A pronoun that shows possession or ownership.
Possessive Pronouns | my (mine), your(s), his, hers, its, our(s), their(s)

**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct pronoun.

1. Unfortunately, the house was too expensive for (we, us, they).
2. I completed (mine, my, your) research paper, and she completed (his, hers, theirs).
3. My dog Buster is old, but (he, it, them) is very playful.
4. That ring belongs to my father, so it is (hers, his, theirs).
5. I cannot find my textbook, so I think (they, it, he) is lost.

**Common Pronoun Errors**

English language learners often make the same errors when using pronouns. The following examples illustrate common errors.

**Incorrect:** Me and Daniela went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is incorrect because an object pronoun (me) is used instead of a subject pronoun.

**Correct:** Daniela and I went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is now correct because a subject pronoun (I) is used.
Incorrect: Mark put her grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun *her* refers to a female, and Mark is a male.

Correct: Mark put *his* grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is now correct because the male pronoun *his* refers to the male person, *Mark*.

Incorrect: The woman she went to work earlier than usual.

This sentence is incorrect because the subject *the woman* is repeated by the pronoun *she*.

Correct: The woman went to work earlier than usual.

Correct: She went to work earlier than usual.

These sentences are now correct because the unnecessary repeated subject has been removed.

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, correct the following sentences that have pronoun errors. If the sentence is correct as it is, write **OK**.

1. Us are going to the county fair this weekend.
2. Steven did not want to see a movie because she had a headache.
3. The teacher congratulated Maria and me.
4. The eighth grade students they were all behaving mysteriously well.
5. Derrick and he received the best grade on the grammar test.
Relative Pronouns

A **relative pronoun** is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may often combine two shorter sentences. The relative pronouns are *who, whom, whose, which* or *that*.

**Sentence**: A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun.

The subject of this sentence is a **relative pronoun**. The clause *is a type of pronoun* gives some information about the subject.

The relative pronoun *that* may be added to give more details to the subject.

**Sentence using a relative pronoun**: A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun **that** helps connect details to the subject of the sentence.

**Tip**

Remember the following uses of relative pronouns:

- *Who, whom, and whose* refer only to people.
- *Which* refers to things.
- *That* refers to people or things.

The following examples show how a relative pronoun may be used to connect two sentences and to connect details to the subject.

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22. A type of pronoun that helps combine two sentences.

4.4 Pronouns
Sentence 1: Gossip is a form of communication.

Sentence 2: It is a waste of time and energy.

Combination of 1 and 2: Gossip is a form of communication that is a waste of time and energy.

Notice how the relative pronoun that replaces the subject it in sentence 2.

That is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (is a waste of time and energy) to the subject (Gossip).

Sentence 1: My grandmother is eighty years old.

Sentence 2: She collects seashells.

Combination of 1 and 2: My grandmother, who is eighty years old, collects seashells.

Notice how the relative pronoun who replaces the subject she in sentence 2.

Who is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (is eighty years old) to the subject (My grandmother).

EXERCISE 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by selecting the correct relative pronoun.

1. He showed me a photo (who, that) upset me.
2. Soccer is a fast moving game (who, that) has many fans worldwide.
3. Juan is a man (which, who) has high standards for everything.
4. Jamaica is a beautiful country (that, who) I would like to visit next year.
5. My mother only eats bananas (who, that) are green.
EXERCISE 4

On a separate sheet of paper, combine the two sentences into one sentence using a relative pronoun.

1. Jeff is a dependable person. He will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster. It was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand. It protects them from the hot sun.
4. Jackie is trying not to use so many plastic products. They are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Sherry is teaching me how to drive. She has never been in accident or gotten a ticket.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

• A pronoun is used in place of a noun.
• There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
• Subject pronouns are the “who” and “what” the sentence is about.
• Object pronouns are the “who” and “what” that receives the action.
• A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
• Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun.
• Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

Writing Application

Proofread a piece of your writing for the types of pronoun errors discussed in this section. Correct any errors you come across.
4.5 Verb Tenses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify simple verb tenses.
2. Recognize to be, to have, and to do verbs.
3. Use perfect verb tenses.
4. Apply progressive verb tenses.
5. Define gerunds and infinitives.

You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb.

Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Future</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday I jumped.</td>
<td>Today I jump.</td>
<td>Tomorrow I will jump.</td>
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</table>

Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:

1. When the action takes place now
   
   I drink the water greedily.

2. When the action is something that happens regularly
   
   I always cross my fingers for good luck.

3. When describing things that are generally true
   
   College tuition is very costly.

23. A word that tells what the subject is doing or links the subject to a describing word.

24. A verb form that identifies the time of action described in a sentence.

25. Verb tense that describes things that are generally true, indicates that an action takes place in the present, or indicates that the action is something that happens regularly.
Table 4.4 Regular Simple Present Tense Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>He/She/It</th>
<th>You</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>They</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>dances</td>
<td>dance</td>
<td>dance</td>
<td>dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>erase</td>
<td>erase</td>
<td>erases</td>
<td>erase</td>
<td>erase</td>
<td>erase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiss</td>
<td>kiss</td>
<td>kisses</td>
<td>kiss</td>
<td>kiss</td>
<td>kiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>push</td>
<td>push</td>
<td>pushes</td>
<td>push</td>
<td>push</td>
<td>push</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wash</td>
<td>wash</td>
<td>washes</td>
<td>wash</td>
<td>wash</td>
<td>wash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it is he, she, or it doing the present tense action, remember to add -s, or -es to the end of the verb or to change the y to -ies.

**Simple past** verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I **washed** my uniform last night.
- I **asked** for more pie.
- I **coughed** loudly last night.

Table 4.5 Regular Simple Past Tense Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>He/She/It</th>
<th>You</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>They</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ask</td>
<td>asked</td>
<td>asked</td>
<td>asked</td>
<td>asked</td>
<td>asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bake</td>
<td>baked</td>
<td>baked</td>
<td>baked</td>
<td>baked</td>
<td>baked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cook</td>
<td>cooked</td>
<td>cooked</td>
<td>cooked</td>
<td>cooked</td>
<td>cooked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cough</td>
<td>coughed</td>
<td>coughed</td>
<td>coughed</td>
<td>coughed</td>
<td>coughed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clap</td>
<td>clapped</td>
<td>clapped</td>
<td>clapped</td>
<td>clapped</td>
<td>clapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dance</td>
<td>danced</td>
<td>danced</td>
<td>danced</td>
<td>danced</td>
<td>danced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. Verb tense that is used when the action has already taken place and is now finished.
When *he*, *she*, or *it* is doing the action in the past tense, remember to add -ed to the end of regular verbs.

**Simple future** verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I will work late tomorrow.
- I will kiss my boyfriend when I see him.
- I will erase the board after class.

### Table 4.6 Regular Simple Future Tense Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>He/She/It</th>
<th>You</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>They</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>erase</td>
<td>erased</td>
<td>erased</td>
<td>erased</td>
<td>erased</td>
<td>erased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiss</td>
<td>kissed</td>
<td>kissed</td>
<td>kissed</td>
<td>kissed</td>
<td>kissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>push</td>
<td>pushed</td>
<td>pushed</td>
<td>pushed</td>
<td>pushed</td>
<td>pushed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wash</td>
<td>washed</td>
<td>washed</td>
<td>washed</td>
<td>washed</td>
<td>washed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Going to* can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense:

- I am going to go to work tomorrow.

---

27. Verb tense that is used when the action has not yet taken place.
## Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense.

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.
3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow’s bake sale.

## Exercise 2

Correct the verb tense mistakes in the following paragraph.

Last summer, I walk around Walden Pond. Walden Pond is in Concord, Massachusetts. It is where the philosopher Henry David Thoreau will live during the mid-nineteenth century. During his time there, he wrote a book called *Walden*. *Walden* is a book of Thoreau’s reflections on the natural environment. It will be consider a classic in American literature. I did not know that Walden Pond is consider the birthplace of the environmental movement. It was very relaxing there. I will listen to birds, frogs, and crickets, not to mention the peaceful sound of the pond itself.

**Collaboration**

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor’s answers.

### To Be, To Do, and To Have

There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these are the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*. 
Table 4.7 Verb Forms of To Be, To Do, and To Have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base Form</th>
<th>Present Tense Form</th>
<th>Past Tense Form</th>
<th>Future Tense Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>am/is/are</td>
<td>was/were</td>
<td>will be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>do/does</td>
<td>did</td>
<td>will do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td>have/has</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>will have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tip

Memorize the present tense forms of to be, to do, and to have. A song or rhythmic pattern will make them easier to memorize.

Review these examples of to be, to do, and to have used in sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>← Present →</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To Be</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday I was angry.</td>
<td>Today I am not angry.</td>
<td>Tomorrow I will be angry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To Do</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did my best yesterday.</td>
<td>I do my best every day.</td>
<td>Tomorrow I will do my best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To Have</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday I had ten dollars.</td>
<td>Today I have ten dollars.</td>
<td>Tomorrow I will have ten dollars.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Remember the following uses of *to be*, *to have* and *to do*:

**To Be**
- I → am/was/will be
- you/we/they → are/were/will be
- he/she/it → is/was/will be

**To Have**
- I/you/we/they → have/had/will have
- he/she/it → has/had/will have

**To Do**
- I/you/we/they → do/did/will do
- he/she/it → does/did/will do

**Tip**

Remember, if you have a compound subject like *Marie and Jennifer*, think of the subject as *they* to determine the correct verb form.

- Marie and Jennifer (*they*) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as *he*, *she*, or *it*.

- LeBron (*he*) has scored thirty points so far.
EXERCISE 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct form of the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* in the three simple tenses.

1. Stefan always (do, does, will do) his taxes the day before they are due.
2. We (are, is, was) planning a surprise birthday party for my mother.
3. Turtles (have, had, has) the most beautiful patterns on their shells.
4. I always (do, did, will do) my homework before dinner, so I can eat in peace.
5. You (is, are, was) so much smarter than you think!

Perfect Verb Tenses

Up to this point, we have studied the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They are present perfect\(^28\), past perfect\(^29\), and future perfect\(^30\). These are the three basic tenses of English. A past participle\(^31\) is often called the -ed form of the verb, because it is formed by adding -d or -ed to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in -t or -en. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

---

28. Verb tense that describe a continuing situation or something that has just happened.

29. Verb tenses that describe a continuing situation in the past.

30. Verb tense used when anticipating completing an event in the future, but the event is not completed yet.

31. Often called the -ed form of the verb, it is formed by adding -d or -ed to the base form of regular verbs.
Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>has or have</th>
<th>past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.

Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- **I have worked** as a caretaker since June.
  This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

- **Dmitri has just received** an award from the Dean of Students.
  This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award. The word *just* emphasizes that the action happened very recently.
Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>had or have</th>
<th>past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>listened</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The bus **had left** by the time Theo **arrived** at the station.

Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo **arrived** (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus **had left** (past perfect).
Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>will have</th>
<th>past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>will have</td>
<td>graduated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You **will have forgotten** me after you **move** to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (you) **will move** (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject **will have forgotten** (future perfect tense) the speaker, *me*.

**EXERCISE 4**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses.

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I ________ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he ________ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun ________ (to set).
4. Denise ________ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother ________ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.
Progressive Verb Tenses

**Progressive verb tenses** describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as *I am going, I was going, or I will be going.*

The present progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present tense form of <em>to be</em></th>
<th>+</th>
<th><em>-ing</em> (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>am/is/are</td>
<td>help</td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress, although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

- Preeti is **starting** school on Tuesday.
  
  This sentence describes a planned activity.

- Janetta is **getting** her teeth cleaned right now.
  
  This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

- I am **studying** ballet at school.
  
  This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.
The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past tense form of to be</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>was/were</td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You should use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the past, to describe a past activity in progress while another activity occurred, or to describe two past activities in progress at the same time:

- Ella and I were planning a vacation.
  This sentence describes a continuous action in the past.

- I was helping a customer when I smelled delicious fried chicken.
  This sentence describes a past activity in progress while another activity occurred.

- While I was finishing my homework, my wife was talking on the phone.
  This sentence describes two past activities in progress at the same time.
The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment.

To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future tense form of to be</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will be</td>
<td></td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

- Samantha and I will be dancing in the school play next week.
- Tomorrow Agnes will be reading two of her poems.

**EXERCISE 5**

On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)
5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive)
6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)
Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing.

To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present tense form of to have</th>
<th>Been</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>has or have</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- She **has been talking** for the last hour.
  This sentence indicates that she started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

- **I have been feeling** tired lately.
  This sentence indicates that I started feeling tired in the past, and I continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb *lately*. You can also use the adverb *recently* when using the present perfect progressive tense.
Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past.

To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past tense form of to have</th>
<th>been</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>had</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The employees **had been talking** until their boss arrived.
  
  This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

- I **had been working** all day.
  
  This sentence implies that I was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.
The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future.

To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future tense form of to have</th>
<th>been</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will have</td>
<td>Been</td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- By the end of the meeting, I will have been hearing about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

This sentence indicates that in the future I will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of hearing will continue until the end of the meeting, something that is also in the future.

Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in -ing. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition.

You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1. As a subject
   Traveling is Cynthia’s favorite pastime.

2. As a direct object
   I enjoy jogging.

3. As an object of a proposition
   The librarian scolded me for laughing.
Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Study Table 4.8 "Gerunds and Verbs" for examples.

Table 4.8 Gerunds and Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gerund</th>
<th>Verb Followed by a Gerund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>moving</td>
<td>Denise considered moving to Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cleaning</td>
<td>I hate cleaning the bathroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>winning</td>
<td>Nate imagines winning an Oscar one day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worrying</td>
<td>Mom says she has stopped worrying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taking</td>
<td>She admitted taking the pumpkin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infinitives

An infinitive\(^{34}\) is a form of a verb that comes after the word to and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

to + verb = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often verbs are followed by infinitives. Study Table 4.9 "Infinitives and Verbs" for examples.

Table 4.9 Infinitives and Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Verb Followed by Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to help</td>
<td>Jessica offered to help her move.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to arrive</td>
<td>Mick expects to arrive early.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to win</td>
<td>Sunita wants to win the writing contest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to close</td>
<td>He forgot to close the curtains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>She likes to eat late.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{34}\) A verb form that combines the word to with a verb, such as to buy, to go, or to gather.
You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table 4.10 Infinitives and Gerunds Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base Form of Verb</th>
<th>Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>begin</td>
<td>1. John began crying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. John began to cry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hate</td>
<td>1. Marie hated talking on the phone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Marie hated to talk on the phone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forget</td>
<td>1. Wendell forgot paying the bills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Wendell forgot to pay the bills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like</td>
<td>1. I liked leaving messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I liked to leave messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continue</td>
<td>1. He continued listening to the news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. He continued to listen to the news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>start</td>
<td>1. I will start recycling immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I will start to recycle immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>try</td>
<td>1. Mikhail will try climbing the tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Mikhail will try to climb the tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prefer</td>
<td>1. I prefer baking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I prefer to bake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love</td>
<td>1. Josh loves diving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Josh loves to dive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**EXERCISE 6**

On your own sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund.

1. I meant ________ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend ________ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed ________ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish ________ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
- Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these irregular verbs are the verbs to be, to have, and to do.
- There are six main verb tenses in English: simple present, simple past, simple future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect.
- Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.

**Writing Application**

Write about a lively event that is either remembered or imagined. Ask yourself the following three questions: What happened during the event? What happened after the event? Looking back, what do you think of the event now? Answer each question in a separate paragraph to keep the present, past, and future tense verbs separate.
4.6 Modal Auxiliaries

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define and identify modal auxiliaries.
2. Learn how and when to use modal auxiliaries.

We all need to express our moods and emotions, both in writing and in our everyday life. We do this by using modal auxiliaries.35

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that are used only with a main verb to help express its mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>modal auxiliary</th>
<th>main verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>may</td>
<td>call</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

**Table 4.11 Modal Auxiliaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal Auxiliary</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can</td>
<td>Expresses an ability or possibility</td>
<td>I <em>can lift</em> this forty-pound box. (ability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We <em>can embrace</em> green sources of energy. (possibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
<td>Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or</td>
<td>I <em>could beat</em> you at chess when we were kids. (past ability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>future permission</td>
<td>We <em>could bake</em> a pie! (present possibility)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35. A type of helping verb that is only used with a main verb to help express its mood.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal Auxiliary</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>may</td>
<td>Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question</td>
<td>I may attend the concert. (uncertain future action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You may begin the exam. (permission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May I attend the concert? (yes-no questions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>might</td>
<td>Expresses uncertain future action</td>
<td>I might attend the concert (uncertain future action—same as may)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shall</td>
<td>Expresses intended future action</td>
<td>I shall go to the opera. (intended future action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should</td>
<td>Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists</td>
<td>I should mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as ought to)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Should I call my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will</td>
<td>Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information</td>
<td>I will get an A in this class. (intended future action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will you buy me some chocolate? (favor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will you be finished soon? (information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would</td>
<td>States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions</td>
<td>I would like the steak, please. (preference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Would you like to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would go with you if I didn’t have to babysit tonight. (explain an action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He would write to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must</td>
<td>Expresses obligation</td>
<td>We must be on time for class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ought to</td>
<td>Expresses obligation</td>
<td>I ought to mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tip

Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal auxiliary</th>
<th>subject</th>
<th>main verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>drive?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal
   
   **Incorrect:** I can to move this heavy table.
   
   **Correct:** I can move this heavy table.

2. Using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal
   
   **Incorrect:** I could moving to the United States.
   
   **Correct:** I could move to the United States.

3. Using two modals in a row
   
   **Incorrect:** I should must renew my passport.
   
   **Correct:** I must renew my passport.
   
   **Correct:** I should renew my passport.

4. Leaving out a modal
   
   **Incorrect:** I renew my passport.
   
   **Correct:** I must renew my passport.
EXERCISE 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I would to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not move to France because my family should miss me very much.

Modals and Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subject + has or have + past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subject + modal auxiliary + have + past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>might</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>may</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in the present perfect tense:

1. Using *had* instead of *have*

   **Incorrect:** Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.

   **Correct:** Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

2. Leaving out *have*

   **Incorrect:** Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

   **Correct:** Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by changing the given verb form to a modal auxiliary in present perfect tense.

1. The man ________ (laugh).
2. The frogs ________ (croak).
3. My writing teacher ________ (smile).
4. The audience ________ (cheer) all night.
• The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is

\[
\text{subject} + \text{modal auxiliary} + \text{main verb}
\]

• There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: *can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must*, and *ought to*.

• The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.

• In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.

• The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using *had* instead of *have* and leaving out *have*.

**Writing Application**

On a separate sheet of paper, write ten original sentences using modal auxiliaries.
4.7 Prepositions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify prepositions.
2. Learn how and when to use prepositions.

A **preposition** is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Most prepositions such as *above, below, and behind* usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as *during, after, and until* show location in time.

**In, At, and On**

The prepositions *in, at, and on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways. Study Table 4.12 "In", Table 4.13 "On", and Table 4.14 "On" to learn when to use each one.

Table 4.12 **In**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>year</td>
<td>in 1942</td>
<td>country</td>
<td>in Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>month</td>
<td>in August</td>
<td>state</td>
<td>in California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>season</td>
<td>in the summer</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>in Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>time of day (not with night)</td>
<td>in the afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13 **On**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>on Monday</td>
<td>surfaces</td>
<td>on the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>date</td>
<td>on May 23</td>
<td>streets</td>
<td>on 124th Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>specific days/dates</td>
<td>on Monday</td>
<td>modes of transportation</td>
<td>on the bus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXERCISE 1

Edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors with in, at, and on.

Dear Mrs. Salazar,

I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now.

Sincerely,

Milani Davis

Prepositions after Verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Table 4.15 Verbs + Prepositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb + Preposition</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agree with</td>
<td>to agree with something or someone</td>
<td>My husband always agrees with me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apologize for</td>
<td>to express regret for something, to say sorry about something</td>
<td>I apologize for being late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb + Preposition</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apply for</td>
<td>to ask for something formally</td>
<td>I will apply for that job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believe in</td>
<td>to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something</td>
<td>I believe in educating the world’s women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care about</td>
<td>to think that someone or something is important</td>
<td>I care about the health of our oceans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hear about</td>
<td>to be told about something or someone</td>
<td>I heard about the teachers’ strike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look after</td>
<td>to watch or to protect someone or something</td>
<td>Will you look after my dog while I am on vacation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk about</td>
<td>to discuss something</td>
<td>We will talk about the importance of recycling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak to, with</td>
<td>to talk to/with someone</td>
<td>I will speak to his teacher tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wait for</td>
<td>to await the arrival of someone or something</td>
<td>I will wait for my package to arrive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tip**

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.
EXERCISE 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Charlotte does not ________ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
2. It is impolite to ________ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.
3. Herman said he was going to ________ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
4. Jonas would not ________ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.
5. I ________ (care about, agree with) the environment very much.

Prepositions after Adjectives

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

Table 4.16 Adjectives + Prepositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective + Preposition</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>angry at, about</td>
<td>to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something</td>
<td>I am angry about the oil spill in the ocean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confused about</td>
<td>to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.</td>
<td>Shawn was confused about the concepts presented at the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disappointed in, with</td>
<td>to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something</td>
<td>I was disappointed in my husband because he voted for that candidate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dressed in</td>
<td>to clothe the body</td>
<td>He was dressed in a pin-striped suit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy for</td>
<td>to show happiness for someone or something</td>
<td>I was happy for my sister who graduated from college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interested in</td>
<td>giving attention to something, expressing interest</td>
<td>I am interested in musical theater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective - Preposition</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jealous of</td>
<td>to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability)</td>
<td>I was jealous of her because she always went on vacation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thankful for</td>
<td>to express thanks for something</td>
<td>I am thankful for my wonderful friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tired of</td>
<td>to be disgusted with, have a distaste for</td>
<td>I was tired of driving for hours without end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worried about</td>
<td>to express anxiety or worry about something</td>
<td>I am worried about my father’s health.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 3**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Meera was deeply ________ (interested in, thankful for) marine biology.
2. I was ________ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am ________ (happy for, interested in) him.
4. The lawyer was ________ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was ________ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.
Tip

The following adjectives are always followed by the preposition at:

- Good
  She is really **good at** chess.
- Excellent
  Henry is **excellent at** drawing.
- Brilliant
  Mary Anne is **brilliant at** playing the violin.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways.
- The preposition *in* is used when expressing the following: year, month, season, time of day (not with *night*), country, state, and city.
- The preposition *on* is used to express day, date, and specific days or dates and surfaces, streets, and transportation modes.
- The preposition *at* is used for expressions of time, with *night*, and with addresses and locations.
- Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.
- Prepositions also follow adjectives to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.
Writing Application

Write about a happy childhood memory using as many prepositions followed by verbs and adjectives as you can. Use at least ten. When you are finished, exchange papers with a classmate and correct any preposition errors you find.
4.8 Slang and Idioms

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize slang and idioms.
2. Learn to avoid using slang and idioms in formal writing.

Words are the basis of how a reader or listener judges you, the writer and speaker. When you write an academic paper or speak in a business interview, you want to be sure to choose your words carefully. In our casual, everyday talk, we often use a lot of “ums,” “likes,” “yeahs,” and so on. This everyday language is not appropriate for formal contexts, such as academic papers and business interviews. You should switch between different ways of speaking and writing depending on whether the context is formal or informal.

Slang

Hey guys, let’s learn about slang and other cool stuff like that! It will be awesome, trust me. This section is off the hook!

What do you notice about the previous paragraph? You might notice that the language sounds informal, or casual, like someone might talk with a friend or family member. The paragraph also uses a lot of slang. Slang is a type of language that is informal and playful. It often changes over time. The slang of the past is different than the slang of today, but some slang has carried over into the present. Slang also varies by region and culture. The important thing to understand is that slang is casual talk, and you should avoid using it in formal contexts. There are literally thousands of slang words and expressions. Table 4.17 "Slang Expressions" explains just a few of the more common terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slang Word or Phrase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>check it out, check this out</td>
<td>v. look at, watch, examine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chocoholic, workaholic, shopaholic</td>
<td>n. a person who loves, is addicted to chocolate/work/shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stuff</td>
<td>n. things (used as a singular, noncount noun)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37. Informal words that are considered nonstandard English.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slang Word or Phrase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>taking care of business</td>
<td>doing things that need to be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pro</td>
<td>n. a person who is a professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crack up</td>
<td>v. to laugh uncontrollably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veg (sounds like the veg in vegetable)</td>
<td>v. relax and do nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dude, man</td>
<td>n. person, man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all-nighter</td>
<td>n. studying all night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cool</td>
<td>adj. good, fashionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gross, nasty</td>
<td>adj. disgusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pig out</td>
<td>v. eat a lot, overeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>screw up</td>
<td>v. make a mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awesome</td>
<td>adj. great</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 1**

Edit the business e-mail by replacing any slang words and phrases with more formal language.

Dear Ms. O'Connor:

I am writing to follow up on my interview from last week. First of all, it was awesome to meet you. You are a really cool lady. I believe I would be a pro at all the stuff you mentioned that would be required of me in this job. I am not a workaholic, but I do work hard and “take care of business.” Haha. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

M. Ernest Anderson

**Idioms**

Expressions that have a meaning different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words that make them up.
idioms and idiomatic expressions. The more you are exposed to English, however, the more idioms you will come to understand. Until then, memorizing the more common idioms may be of some help.

Table 4.18 Idioms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiom</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a blessing in disguise</td>
<td>a good thing you do not recognize at first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a piece of cake</td>
<td>easy to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better late than never</td>
<td>it is better to do something late than not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get over it</td>
<td>recover from something (like a perceived insult)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no idea</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not a chance</td>
<td>it will definitely not happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on pins and needles</td>
<td>very nervous about something that is happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on top of the world</td>
<td>feeling great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pulling your leg</td>
<td>making a joke by tricking another person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the sky is the limit</td>
<td>the possibilities are endless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What if you come across an idiom that you do not understand? There are clues that can help you. They are called context clues. Context clues are words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase that may help you decipher its meaning.

1. **Definition or explanation clue.** An idiom may be explained immediately after its use.

   **Sentence:** I felt like I was sitting on pins and needles **I was so nervous.**

2. **Restatement or synonym clues.** An idiom may be simplified or restated.

   **Sentence:** The young girl felt as though she had been sent to the dog house when her mother punished her for fighting in school.

3. **Contrast or Antonym clues.** An idiom may be clarified by a contrasting phrase or antonym that is near it.

   **Sentence:** Chynna thought the 5k marathon would be a piece of cake, but it turned out to be very difficult.

39. Words or phrases in a text that help clarify the meaning of an unfamiliar word.
Pay attention to the signal word *but*, which tells the reader that an opposite thought or concept is occurring.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Informal language is not appropriate in formal writing or speaking contexts.
- Slang and idioms might not make logical sense to nonnative speakers of English.
- It is good to be aware of slang and idioms so they do not appear in your formal writing.

**Writing Application**

Write a short paragraph about yourself to a friend. Write another paragraph about yourself to an employer. Examine and discuss the differences in language between the two paragraphs.
4.9 Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.
EXERCISES

1. On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.
   
a. My daughter will have to think about her college options.
   b. Otto is waiting in the car for his girlfriend.
   c. The article talks about conserving energy.
   d. We need to reduce our needs.
   e. Rusha is always complaining about her work.

2. Underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.
   
a. Monica told us about her trip.
   b. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.
   c. The panther climbed up the tree.
   d. The little boy was standing behind his mother’s legs.
   e. We stayed awake until dawn.

3. Place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.
   
a. eyes: black, mesmerizing
   b. jacket: vintage, orange, suede
   c. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet
   d. vacation: fun, skiing
   e. movie: hilarious, independent

4. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.
   
a. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.
   b. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.
   c. He breathes loudly at night.
   d. I chew on blades of grass in the summer time.
   e. I communicate well with my husband.
5. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot Forrest felt like he couldn’t hardly breathe. Ain’t nothing would get him out the door into that scorching heat. Then he remembered his dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Forrest didn’t have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn’t do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Forrest was sweating in the sun holding the leash. He couldn’t not wait for winter to come.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor’s answers.