

FROM BEGINNER TO ADVANCED

English Grammar

A COMPLETE GUIDE

Clear explanations, real examples, and the rules that actually matter — with practice and answers in every chapter

A LEARNER'S & TEACHER'S REFERENCE

English Grammar: A Complete Guide

Clear Explanations, Real Examples, and the Rules That Actually Matter

First edition, 2026.

This book is an educational reference for learners and teachers of English. It describes standard modern English usage and notes major differences between British and American English where they are relevant. Language is living and varied; in some cases more than one form is acceptable, and usage continues to evolve.

Throughout this book, a check mark (✓) marks correct English and a cross (✗) marks an incorrect form shown for teaching purposes. Example sentences are illustrations only.

You are encouraged to copy the practice exercises and tables for personal study and classroom teaching.

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Introduction — How to Use This Book

Grammar has a reputation problem. For many learners, the word brings back memories of confusing rules, red ink, and the quiet fear of “getting it wrong.” This book is built to undo that. Grammar is not a set of arbitrary traps invented to make your life difficult. It is simply the **shared system that lets human beings turn thoughts into sentences other people understand**. Once you see the patterns behind it, English grammar becomes far more logical — and far less frightening — than it first appears.

This is a complete, practical guide to English grammar, written for two kinds of reader. The first is the **learner** — anyone studying English who wants clear explanations, real examples, and rules that actually matter in everyday communication. The second is the **teacher** — anyone who needs a reliable reference to explain *why* a sentence works the way it does. Whether you are aiming to pass an exam, write with confidence, speak more accurately, or teach others, you will find what you need here.

What makes this book different

Most grammar books fall into one of two traps. Some are so simple they leave out the rules you most need. Others are so technical that you need a linguistics degree to read them. This book aims for the middle: **complete but clear**. Every concept is explained in plain language first, then illustrated with example sentences, then summarized in a way you can actually remember.

A note on examples: Throughout this book, a check mark (✓) marks correct English and a cross (✗) marks a mistake. Studying both is powerful — seeing *why* something is wrong fixes the correct version in your memory.

You will also find recurring callout boxes designed to do specific jobs:

- **Rule** boxes give you the core principle in one or two sentences.
- **Common mistake** boxes show the errors learners make most often — and the fix.
- **Tip** boxes offer shortcuts, memory aids, and practical advice.
- **Watch out** boxes flag tricky exceptions and easily confused points.

How the book is organized

The book moves from the building blocks of English up to complete, polished sentences.

- **Part I — Foundations** introduces how grammar works, the parts of speech, and the basic architecture of an English sentence. If grammar terminology has always confused you, start here.
- **Part II — Nouns, Articles & Pronouns** covers the words we use to name things: nouns and their plurals, the famously tricky articles *a*, *an*, and *the*, the quantifiers like *some* and *much*, and the full family of pronouns.
- **Part III — The Verb System** is the heart of the book. English verbs carry an enormous amount of meaning, and this part takes you through every tense, the perfect and continuous aspects, modal verbs, the passive voice, conditionals, reported speech, gerunds and infinitives, and phrasal verbs.

- **Part IV — Describing & Connecting** handles adjectives and adverbs, comparison, prepositions, conjunctions, and relative clauses — the tools that add detail and join ideas together.
- **Part V — Sentences, Style & Reference** finishes with questions and negatives, punctuation, the most common mistakes to avoid, and two reference sections: a list of irregular verbs and a glossary of grammar terms.

How to use it

You do not have to read this book from cover to cover, though a beginner who does will build a solid foundation. It is designed to be **used**, not just read:

1. **Learn the explanation.** Read the rule and study the examples until the pattern is clear.
2. **Do the practice.** Almost every chapter ends with a *Practice* section and an *Answers* key. Reading about grammar builds recognition; doing exercises builds the ability to *produce* correct English. Do not skip them.
3. **Return as a reference.** When you are unsure whether to write *fewer* or *less*, when to use the present perfect, or where the comma goes, come back to the relevant chapter. Over time, the answers will move from the page into your instinct.

Remember: Fluency is not the absence of mistakes — it is the confidence to communicate while steadily making fewer of them. This book will not make you perfect overnight. Used consistently, it will make you noticeably clearer, more accurate, and more confident, one chapter at a time.

A final encouragement. Every fluent speaker of English you admire was once unsure where to put a comma or which past tense to

choose. Grammar is learnable. The patterns are finite, the rules are knowable, and the exceptions, though real, are fewer than you fear. Turn the page, and let's begin with how the whole system fits together.

PART I

The Foundations of Grammar

*How the system works, the parts of speech, and the
architecture of an English sentence.*

Chapter 1 — How English Grammar Works

Welcome. If grammar has ever made you nervous, take a breath: you already know far more than you think. Every time you turn a thought into a sentence that another person understands, you are using grammar successfully. This chapter is a friendly map of the whole territory. We will not memorize long lists or worry about exceptions yet. Instead, we will look at the big ideas — the ones that make all the smaller rules make sense.

By the end, you will understand what grammar actually is, the two main things it asks of you, and the handful of key words (like *subject*, *verb*, *clause*) that we will use throughout this book. Everything here will be explained in plain language, with plenty of examples.

What Grammar Is — and Why It Exists

Grammar is simply the **shared system** a language uses to turn thoughts into sentences that other people can understand. It is a kind of agreement between speakers: “If we both arrange words this way, we will understand each other.”

Imagine you have three ideas in your head: *a dog*, *a cat*, and the action *chase*. Those three pieces alone do not tell us what happened. Grammar is what lets you combine them into a clear message:

- ✓ *The dog chased the cat.*
- ✓ *The cat chased the dog.*

Same words, but grammar (here, the **order** of the words) tells us who did the chasing and who ran away. Without that shared system, language would be a pile of words with no meaning.

Remember: Grammar is not a set of rules invented to trap you. It is the system that lets your ideas travel safely from your mind into someone else's.

So why does grammar exist? Because communication needs to be **predictable**. When everyone follows roughly the same patterns, a listener can guess what is coming and understand you quickly — even if your accent, vocabulary, or speed is unfamiliar. Grammar is the quiet engine behind that understanding.

And here is the reassuring part: the core of English grammar is **finite**. There are only so many patterns, and they repeat constantly. You do not need to learn millions of sentences — you need to learn the patterns that build them.

The Two Big Ideas

Almost everything in this book grows from two simple ideas.

1. **Words have jobs.** Every word in a sentence is doing a particular kind of work. We call these jobs the *parts of speech*.
2. **Words must be in the right order and form.** It is not enough to choose the right words; you must arrange them correctly and shape them correctly (for example, *go* vs. *went* vs. *going*).

Let's preview each one.

Big Idea 1: Words Have Jobs (Parts of Speech)

A **part of speech** is the category a word belongs to, based on the job it does. Here are the main ones. Don't worry about memorizing them now — later chapters cover each in depth.

Part of speech	Its job	Example
Noun	Names a person, place, thing, or idea	<i>teacher, city, book, freedom</i>
Verb	Shows an action or a state of being	<i>run, think, is, become</i>
Adjective	Describes a noun	<i>happy, tall, blue</i>
Adverb	Describes a verb, adjective, or another adverb	<i>quickly, very, often</i>
Pronoun	Stands in for a noun	<i>I, you, she, it, they</i>
Preposition	Shows relationship (place, time, direction)	<i>in, on, before, with</i>
Conjunction	Joins words or groups of words	<i>and, but, because</i>
Determiner / Article	Comes before a noun to specify it	<i>a, an, the, this, my</i>
Interjection	Expresses feeling	<i>Oh! Wow! Ouch!</i>

Tip: When you meet a new word, ask, “What job is it doing in this sentence?” That single question unlocks most grammar.

Big Idea 2: Order and Form Matter

English relies heavily on **word order**. Many languages can move words around freely because their word endings show the meaning; English usually cannot. The basic English pattern is **Subject – Verb – Object** (we will define these terms in a moment):

- ✓ *Maria reads books.*
- ✗ *Books reads Maria.* (This changes or breaks the meaning.)

English also cares about **form** — the exact shape of a word. The same idea can require different forms depending on the situation:

- ✓ *I walk to work every day.*

- ✓ *She walks to work every day.*
- ✓ *Yesterday I walked to work.*

Notice how *walk* changed to *walks* and *walked*. Choosing the right form is just as important as choosing the right word.

Rule: In a typical English statement, the subject comes before the verb, and the object (if there is one) comes after the verb.

Key Terms, Explained Simply

These are the building blocks we will use in every chapter. Read them slowly; they are worth it.

Subject, Verb, Object

- The **subject** is who or what the sentence is about — usually the doer of the action.
- The **verb** is the action or state.
- The **object** is who or what receives the action.

Look at this sentence:

The children ate the cake.

- **Subject:** *The children* (they are doing the action)
- **Verb:** *ate* (the action)
- **Object:** *the cake* (it receives the action)

Not every sentence has an object. Some verbs work alone:

- ✓ *The baby slept.* (subject + verb, no object — nothing receives the action)
- ✓ *Birds sing.* (subject + verb)

Watch out: A subject is not always a single word, and it is not always at the very start. In “*In the morning, my noisy neighbor sings,*” the subject is *my noisy neighbor*, not *the morning*.

Word, Phrase, and Clause

These three terms describe groups of different sizes. Understanding the difference will help you all through this book.

Term	What it is	Example
Word	A single unit of meaning	<i>dog</i>
Phrase	A small group of words that work together but have no subject + verb pair	<i>the big brown dog</i>
Clause	A group of words that does contain a subject and a verb	<i>the dog barked</i>

The key difference: a **clause has a subject and a verb working together**; a **phrase does not**.

- *the tall building* → phrase (no verb)
- *on Sunday morning* → phrase (no verb)
- *because she was tired* → clause (subject *she* + verb *was*)
- *they laughed* → clause (subject *they* + verb *laughed*)

Common mistake: Learners sometimes call any group of words a “phrase.” Remember the test: if you can find a subject *and* its verb, it’s a clause.

Sentence

A **sentence** is a complete thought, built from at least one clause, that can stand on its own. In writing, it begins with a capital letter and ends with a final punctuation mark (. ? !).

- ✓ *She smiled.* (a complete thought — short, but whole)
- ✗ *Because she was happy.* (this is a clause, but on its own it feels unfinished — we wait for “what happened?”)

That second example is a clause that cannot stand alone; we call it a **dependent clause**. A clause that *can* stand alone (*She smiled*) is an **independent clause**. We will return to these ideas when we study sentence types and joining ideas together.

Form vs. Function: The Same Word, Different Jobs

Here is one of the most freeing ideas in English grammar: a word’s part of speech is not fixed forever. It depends on the **job the word does in that particular sentence**. We call this the difference between *form* (what the word looks like) and *function* (the job it performs).

Take the word *book*:

- ✓ *I read a book.* → Here *book* is a **noun** (a thing).
- ✓ *Please book a table for two.* → Here *book* is a **verb** (an action: to reserve).

Same spelling, different function. Many English words behave this way:

Word	As a noun	As a verb
<i>water</i>	<i>The water is cold.</i>	<i>I water the plants.</i>

Word	As a noun	As a verb
<i>light</i>	<i>Turn on the light.</i>	<i>Light the candle.</i>
<i>call</i>	<i>Give me a call.</i>	<i>I will call you.</i>

Tip: Don't ask "What part of speech is this word?" in the abstract. Ask "What is it doing **here**?" Function depends on context.

This is also why a dictionary often lists the same word as both a noun and a verb. The word is flexible; its sentence decides its job.

A First Look at Agreement and Tense

Two ideas appear so often that we should meet them now, even briefly. Each gets a full chapter later.

Agreement

Agreement means that certain words must match each other in form. The most common type is **subject–verb agreement**: the verb changes its form to match whether the subject is singular (one) or plural (more than one).

- ✓ *The dog barks.* (singular subject → verb ends in -s)
- ✓ *The dogs bark.* (plural subject → no -s)
- ✗ *The dogs barks.*

This surprises many learners, because the -s ending feels backwards: we add -s to the *verb* for a *singular* subject, but to the *noun* for a *plural* one. We will untangle this fully later.

Common mistake: ✗ *He don't know.* The correct form is ✓ *He doesn't know*, because *he* is singular and needs *doesn't* (does not), not *don't* (do not).

Tense

Tense is how a verb shows **time** — whether something happens in the past, present, or future.

Time	Example
Present	<i>I work here.</i>
Past	<i>I worked here last year.</i>
Future	<i>I will work here next year.</i>

English has more shades of time than this simple table shows (for example, continuing actions or completed-but-relevant actions), but the core idea is just: **the verb tells us when**. Chapters on the tenses will build this out gently and completely.

Grammar Is Not One Fixed Thing

Here is something textbooks sometimes hide: there is no single “correct English” that applies in every situation. Good grammar is about **appropriateness** — matching your language to the situation.

Spoken vs. Written Grammar

Spoken English is often looser than written English, and that is perfectly normal — not “wrong.”

- In speech: ✓ “*Where you going?*” (natural, relaxed, understood instantly)
- In writing: ✓ “*Where are you going?*” (complete and expected)

Speakers leave words out, change direction mid-sentence, and add fillers like *um* and *you know*. Writing, which has no tone of voice or facial expression to help it, tends to be more complete and carefully structured.

Formal vs. Informal Register

Register is the level of formality you choose for a situation. Compare:

Informal	Formal
<i>Hi! Thanks loads!</i>	<i>Dear Sir or Madam, thank you very much.</i>
<i>Can't make it, sorry.</i>	<i>I regret that I will be unable to attend.</i>
<i>gonna, wanna, kinda</i>	<i>going to, want to, kind of</i>

Neither column is “better.” Saying “*I regret that I will be unable to attend*” to a close friend would sound strange; saying “*Can't make it, sorry*” to a job interviewer would too. Skilled users of English **switch registers** to fit the moment.

Remember: “Correct” depends on context. Match your grammar and vocabulary to your audience and purpose.

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive Grammar

You will hear two attitudes toward grammar, and it helps to know both.

- **Descriptive grammar** *describes* how people actually use the language — what real speakers really say.
- **Prescriptive grammar** *prescribes* how some people believe the language *should* be used — the “rules.”

For example, a famous prescriptive rule says, “*Never end a sentence with a preposition.*” In real life, fluent speakers do it all the time:

- ✓ *Who are you talking to?* (natural and clear)
- More formal: *To whom are you talking?* (correct, but stiff in everyday speech)

Both have their place. This book takes a balanced view: we will teach you **standard English** — the widely accepted form used in education, business, and international communication — while being honest about how language really works in everyday life. Knowing the standard gives you a reliable, respected default; knowing the real-world variations helps you understand the English you actually hear.

Tip: Learn the standard rules first. They are your safe choice anywhere. Later, you'll develop a feel for when relaxing them is natural.

British vs. American English

Throughout this book, you'll see small differences between British and American usage. They rarely cause confusion, but it's good to be aware of them. A few examples:

Feature	British	American
Collective nouns	<i>The team are winning.</i>	<i>The team is winning.</i>
Spelling	<i>colour, organise, centre</i>	<i>color, organize, center</i>
Past form	<i>learnt, dreamt</i>	<i>learned, dreamed</i>
Vocabulary	<i>flat, lift, holiday</i>	<i>apartment, elevator, vacation</i>

Watch out: Pick one variety and stay consistent within a single piece of writing. Mixing *color* and *colour* in the same essay looks careless.

How to Use This Book

A few suggestions to make your learning smooth:

- **Read the explanations first, then the examples.** The ✓ and ✗ examples show you the rule in action.
- **Notice the callouts.** Boxes labeled **Rule**, **Tip**, **Common mistake**, **Watch out**, and **Remember** highlight the things most worth keeping.
- **Do the Practice sections.** Trying it yourself is how rules become habits. Answers are always provided.
- **Don't rush.** It is better to truly understand one chapter than to skim five.

You do not need to be perfect to be understood. You need to be **clear**, and clarity is a skill anyone can build, one pattern at a time. Let's begin.

Quick Review

- **Grammar** is the shared system that turns thoughts into understandable sentences; it makes communication predictable.
- The two big ideas: words have **jobs** (parts of speech), and words must be in the right **order and form**.
- A **word** stands alone; a **phrase** is a group with no subject–verb pair; a **clause** has both a subject and a verb. A **sentence** expresses a complete thought.
- The **subject** does or is something, the **verb** is the action or state, and the **object** receives the action (some sentences have no object).

- **Form vs. function:** the same word (like *book*) can do different jobs depending on its sentence.
- **Agreement** means words must match (e.g., singular subject → singular verb), and **tense** shows time (past, present, future).
- Grammar is not one fixed thing: spoken differs from written, formal from informal, and **standard English** is your reliable default while real usage varies.

Practice

A. Identify the part of speech of the bold word.

1. *She gave a wonderful speech.*
2. *They race every weekend.*
3. *He spoke very quietly.*
4. *We sat under the tree.*

B. Word, phrase, or clause? Label each group.

1. *the old wooden gate*
2. *the children were playing*

C. Find the subject, verb, and object.

1. *My brother fixed the computer.*

D. Choose the correct form (agreement).

1. *The cat (sit / sits) on the windowsill.*

Answers

A. 1. Noun — *speech* names a thing (the talk she gave). **2. Verb** — *race* is the action they do. **3. Adverb** — *quietly* describes how he spoke (the verb). **4. Preposition** — *under* shows the relationship (position) between *we* and *the tree*.

B. 5. Phrase — there is no subject–verb pair (no action word with a doer). **6. Clause** — it contains the subject *the children* and the verb *were playing*.

C. 7. Subject: *My brother* · Verb: *fixed* · Object: *the computer*.

D. 8. ✓ *The cat sits on the windowsill.* The subject *the cat* is singular, so the verb takes the -s ending.

Chapter 2 — The Parts of Speech

Every sentence you read or speak is built from words, and every word does a particular job. Some words name things. Some describe. Some show action. Some join ideas together. When we sort words by the job they do, we call these groups the **parts of speech** (also called *word classes*). Learning them is like getting a map of the English language: once you can name the streets, you never get lost.

This chapter gives you the whole map at a glance. Later chapters will walk down each street in detail. For now, our goal is to recognise each part of speech, see clear examples, and understand the single most important idea in this chapter: **a word's part of speech depends on the job it does in the sentence**, not on the word alone.

The Eight (or Nine) Parts of Speech

Traditionally, English has **eight** parts of speech. Many modern grammars add a ninth — **determiners** — because words like *a*, *the*, and *my* behave differently from adjectives. We will treat determiners separately so the picture is complete.

Part of speech	What it does	Examples	Example in a sentence
Noun	Names a person, place, thing, or idea	<i>teacher, London, table, freedom</i>	<i>The teacher opened the window.</i>
Pronoun	Replaces a noun	<i>I, you, she, it, they, this, who</i>	<i>Maria is tired, so she went home.</i>

Part of speech	What it does	Examples	Example in a sentence
Verb	Shows an action or a state	<i>run, eat, be, seem, have</i>	<i>The dog ran across the park.</i>
Adjective	Describes a noun or pronoun	<i>happy, blue, tall, ancient</i>	<i>She wore a red coat.</i>
Adverb	Modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb	<i>quickly, very, well, often</i>	<i>He spoke quietly.</i>
Preposition	Shows a relationship (time, place, etc.)	<i>in, on, at, under, before</i>	<i>The keys are on the table.</i>
Conjunction	Joins words, phrases, or clauses	<i>and, but, or, because, although</i>	<i>I was tired but happy.</i>
Determiner / Article	Introduces and limits a noun	<i>a, an, the, this, my, some</i>	<i>I bought a book and the newspaper.</i>
Interjection	Expresses a sudden feeling	<i>oh, wow, ouch, hey</i>	<i>“Ouch! That hurt.”</i>

Tip: Don't try to memorise this table in one sitting. Use it as a reference. After reading the short tour below, come back to the table and the examples will make much more sense.

Nouns — Naming Words

A **noun** names a person, a place, a thing, or an idea.

- People: *doctor, Sara, brother*
- Places: *city, Paris, kitchen*
- Things: *pencil, river, phone*
- Ideas: *love, courage, freedom*

Nouns come in useful pairs:

Common vs. proper. A *common noun* is a general name (*city, woman, day*). A *proper noun* is the specific name of one particular thing and always begins with a capital letter (*London, Maria, Monday*).

- ✓ *We visited a city in Italy.* (common)
- ✓ *We visited Rome.* (proper)

Concrete vs. abstract. A *concrete noun* names something you can see, touch, hear, smell, or taste (*table, music, coffee*). An *abstract noun* names something you cannot physically touch — an idea or feeling (*happiness, time, honesty*).

- ✓ *He gave me a book.* (concrete)
- ✓ *He gave me his trust.* (abstract)

Watch out: Proper nouns need a capital letter even in the middle of a sentence: ✓ *I met Anna on Friday.* not ✗ *I met anna on Friday.*

Pronouns — Words That Replace Nouns

A **pronoun** stands in for a noun so we don't have to repeat it. Without pronouns, we would sound very strange.

- ✗ *Tom called Tom's mother because Tom missed Tom's mother.*
- ✓ *Tom called his mother because he missed her.*

Common pronouns include *I, you, he, she, it, we, they* (subject pronouns); *me, him, her, us, them* (object pronouns); *my, your, his, her, its, our, their* (possessives); and *this, that, these, those, who, which, someone, anything* (others).

- ✓ ***They**** invited us **to** their* *house*.
- ✓ *Is this yours?*

Common mistake: *its* (belonging to it) and *it's* (it is) are different. ✓ *The cat licked its paw.* ✗ *The cat licked it's paw.*

Verbs — Action and State

A **verb** tells us what someone or something **does** or **is**. The verb is the engine of the sentence; without it, there is no complete sentence.

Action verbs describe what happens: *run, write, eat, build, think*.

- ✓ *She writes every morning.*
- ✓ *They built a house.*

Linking (state) verbs do not show action. Instead, they link the subject to a description of it. The most common is *be* (*am, is, are, was, were*). Others include *seem, become, feel, look, appear*.

- ✓ *She is a nurse.*
- ✓ *The soup smells delicious.*
- ✓ *He seems tired.*

Auxiliary (helping) verbs work together with a main verb to show tense, questions, or negatives. The main helpers are *be, do, and have*, plus the modal verbs (*can, will, should, must, and so on*).

- ✓ *She is working.* (*is* helps *working*)
- ✓ **Do** *you understand?* (*do* forms the question)
- ✓ *I have finished.* (*have* helps *finished*)
- ✓ *You should rest.* (modal + main verb)

Remember: A finished sentence needs a verb. ✗ *The children in the garden.* ✓ *The children are in the garden.*

Adjectives — Words That Describe Nouns

An **adjective** describes or gives more information about a noun or pronoun: *what kind, which one, how many*.

Adjectives usually appear in one of two positions:

1. **Before the noun** (attributive): ✓ *a beautiful garden*, ✓ *three old books*.
2. **After a linking verb** (predicative): ✓ *The garden is beautiful*.
✓ *Those books look old*.

More examples:

- ✓ *She has long, dark hair*.
- ✓ *The exam was difficult*.
- ✓ *I need a bigger bag*.

Notice that in English, adjectives do **not** change for plural: ✓ *two red cars*, not ✗ *two reds cars*.

Tip: When several adjectives appear together, English follows a usual order (opinion, size, age, colour, and so on): ✓ *a lovely little old house*. You will study this order in the chapter on adjectives.

Adverbs — Words That Modify Verbs, Adjectives, and Other Adverbs

An **adverb** adds information about *how, when, where, or to what degree* something happens. Adverbs can modify three things:

- A **verb**: ✓ *She sang beautifully*. (how she sang)
- An **adjective**: ✓ *The film was very good*. (how good)
- Another **adverb**: ✓ *He drove too fast*. (how fast)

Many adverbs are formed by adding **-ly** to an adjective: *quick* → *quickly*, *careful* → *carefully*, *happy* → *happily*.

- ✓ *Please speak slowly.*
- ✓ *They worked hard and finished early.*

Watch out: Not every word ending in *-ly* is an adverb. *Friendly*, *lovely*, and *lonely* are **adjectives** (*a friendly dog*). And not every adverb ends in *-ly*: *fast*, *hard*, *well*, *often*, *here*, and *soon* are all adverbs.

Common mistake: Use an adverb, not an adjective, to describe a verb. ✗ *She sings beautiful.* ✓ *She sings beautifully.* But after a linking verb, use an adjective: ✓ *The flowers smell lovely.*

Prepositions — Words That Show Relationships

A **preposition** shows the relationship between a noun (or pronoun) and another word in the sentence. These relationships are often about **place**, **time**, **direction**, or **manner**.

- Place: ✓ *The cat is under the table.*
- Time: ✓ *We met at noon on Monday.*
- Direction: ✓ *She walked into the room.*
- Other relationships: ✓ *This gift is for you.*

Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, *at*, *to*, *from*, *of*, *with*, *by*, *about*, *between*, *before*, *after*, *during*, and *over*. A preposition almost always has an **object** — the noun or pronoun that comes after it (*in the box*, *with me*, *after lunch*).

British/American note: Some prepositions differ across regions. British English says *at the weekend*, while American Eng-

lish says *on the weekend*. British English often uses *in hospital*; American English uses *in the hospital*.

Conjunctions — Words That Join

A **conjunction** connects words, phrases, or clauses. There are two main types.

Coordinating conjunctions join items of equal weight. The seven are *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, *yet* (a handy memory aid is **FANBOYS**).

- ✓ *I bought apples and oranges.*
- ✓ *She was tired, so she rested.*
- ✓ *It was cheap but good.*

Subordinating conjunctions join a less important clause to a main clause. They include *because*, *although*, *if*, *when*, *while*, *since*, *after*, *before*, and *unless*.

- ✓ *We stayed inside because it was raining.*
- ✓ **Although** *he was busy, he helped me.*
- ✓ *Call me when you arrive.*

Tip: A clause beginning with a subordinating conjunction cannot stand alone. ✗ *Because it was raining.* (incomplete) ✓ *We stayed inside because it was raining.*

Determiners and Articles — Words That Introduce Nouns

A **determiner** comes before a noun to tell us *which* or *how much/many*. The most common determiners are the **articles**: *a*, *an*, and *the*.

- **Indefinite articles** *a / an* point to any one example: ✓ *I need a pen.* ✓ *She ate an apple.* (Use *an* before a vowel sound.)
- **Definite article** *the* points to a specific one: ✓ ***The*** *pen on your desk is mine.*

Other determiners include:

Type	Examples	In a sentence
Demonstratives	<i>this, that, these, those</i>	✓ <i>These</i> shoes are new.
Possessives	<i>my, your, his, her, our, their</i>	✓ Bring your umbrella.
Quantifiers	<i>some, any, many, few, all, several</i>	✓ We have some time.
Numbers	<i>one, two, three</i>	✓ I have two sisters.

Articles are often counted as a separate class, but they always work as determiners. The key difference from adjectives is that a determiner **introduces** a noun, while an adjective **describes** it: in *my big house*, *my* is a determiner and *big* is an adjective.

Common mistake: Use *an* before a vowel **sound**, not just a vowel letter. ✓ *an hour* (the *h* is silent), but ✓ *a university* (it begins with a *y* sound).

Interjections — Words That Express Feeling

An **interjection** is a short word or sound that expresses a sudden emotion. It often stands alone and is followed by an exclamation mark or a comma.

- ✓ *“Wow! What a view.”*
- ✓ *“Ouch! That hurt.”*
- ✓ *“Oh, I didn’t see you there.”*
- ✓ *“Hey, wait for me!”*

Interjections are common in speech and informal writing but rare in formal writing such as reports or essays.

The Big Idea: A Word’s Part of Speech Depends on Its Job

Here is the most important lesson in the chapter. **Many English words can belong to more than one part of speech.** You cannot always know a word’s class just by looking at it — you must see what job it is doing in the sentence.

Take the word *light*:

- ✓ *Please turn on the light.* → **noun** (a thing)
- ✓ *Could you light the candle?* → **verb** (an action)
- ✓ *She carried a light bag.* → **adjective** (describes *bag*)

Take the word *fast*:

- ✓ *He is a fast runner.* → **adjective** (describes *runner*)
- ✓ *He runs fast.* → **adverb** (describes *runs*)

A few more multi-function words:

Word	As one part of speech	As another
<i>book</i>	noun: ✓ <i>I read a book.</i>	verb: ✓ <i>I'll book a table.</i>
<i>water</i>	noun: ✓ <i>Drink some water.</i>	verb: ✓ <i>Please water the plants.</i>
<i>well</i>	adverb: ✓ <i>She sings well.</i>	interjection: ✓ <i>"Well, let me think."</i>
<i>that</i>	conjunction: ✓ <i>I know that you're right.</i>	determiner: ✓ <i>I want that one.</i>
<i>over</i>	preposition: ✓ <i>Jump over the wall.</i>	adverb: ✓ <i>The game is over.</i>

Remember: Always ask, “What is this word **doing** here?” The same word can wear different hats in different sentences.

How This Helps You: Dictionaries and Better Sentences

Knowing the parts of speech is not just theory — it has two very practical benefits.

It helps you read dictionary entries. Every good dictionary labels each word with its part of speech, usually with an abbreviation:

- **n.** = noun
- **v.** = verb
- **adj.** = adjective
- **adv.** = adverb
- **prep.** = preposition
- **conj.** = conjunction
- **pron.** = pronoun
- **det.** = determiner
- **interj.** = interjection

So an entry like **run** (*v.*) *to move quickly on foot*; (*n.*) *an act of running* immediately tells you that *run* can be both a verb and a noun. This stops you from using a word in the wrong way.

It helps you build correct sentences. When you know that a sentence needs a verb, you won't write a fragment. When you know that an adverb (not an adjective) describes a verb, you'll write *She drives carefully* instead of *She drives careful*. When you know that *the* introduces a specific noun, you'll choose your articles with confidence.

In short, the parts of speech are the grammar of grammar — the labels that let you talk about how English works and fix your own mistakes.

Quick Review

- English has **eight** traditional parts of speech, often counted as **nine** when *determiners* are listed separately.
- **Nouns** name; **pronouns** replace nouns; **verbs** show action or state; **adjectives** describe nouns; **adverbs** modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.
- **Prepositions** show relationships (time, place, direction); **conjunctions** join; **determiners/articles** introduce nouns; **interjections** express feeling.
- Many words can be **more than one** part of speech. The job a word does in the sentence decides its class.
- Dictionaries label each word's part of speech, which helps you use words correctly.

Practice

Identify the part of speech of the **bold** word in each sentence.

1. *The **river** flooded the village.*
2. *We waited **patiently** for the bus.*
3. *She is **very** kind to everyone.*
4. *The **book** is on the shelf.*
5. *I wanted to go, **but** it was too late.*
6. *Can you **water** the garden tonight?*
7. *“**Wow**, that was amazing!”*
8. *Please pass me **that** plate.*

Answers

1. **Noun** — *river* names a thing.
2. **Adverb** — *patiently* tells how we waited (and ends in *-ly*).
3. **Adjective** — *kind* describes *she* after the linking verb *is*.
4. **Preposition** — *on* shows the relationship of place between *book* and *shelf*.
5. **Conjunction** — *but* joins two clauses (a coordinating conjunction).
6. **Verb** — *water* is an action here (compare the noun *water* in *drink water*).
7. **Interjection** — *Wow* expresses sudden feeling.
8. **Determiner** — *that* introduces and points to the noun *plate* (a demonstrative determiner).

Chapter 3 — Sentence Structure & Word Order

Every sentence is a small machine for carrying meaning. To work, it needs the right parts in the right places. In this chapter you will learn what a complete English sentence must contain, the handful of patterns that almost every English sentence follows, and where to put the extra information — adverbs, adjectives, and clauses — so that your meaning is clear. English depends heavily on **word order**, far more than many languages do, so a small change of position can change everything. Let us build sentences from the ground up.

What Makes a Complete Sentence

A complete sentence needs at least two things: a **subject** (who or what the sentence is about) and a **verb** (what the subject does or is). Together these form an independent clause — a group of words that can stand on its own.

- ✓ *Birds sing.*
- ✓ *She laughed.*
- ✓ *The train arrived.*

Each of these has a subject (*Birds*, *She*, *The train*) and a verb (*sing*, *laughed*, *arrived*). They express a complete thought, so they are complete sentences.

A group of words that is missing a subject or a verb — or that does not finish its thought — is called a **fragment**. Fragments are very common mistakes.

Fragment ()	Problem	Complete sentence (✓)
<i>Because it was raining.</i>	No main clause; thought unfinished	<i>We stayed inside because it was raining.</i>
<i>Running down the street.</i>	No subject; no main verb	<i>A man was running down the street.</i>
<i>The book on the table.</i>	No verb	<i>The book on the table is mine.</i>
<i>And went home.</i>	No subject	<i>They finished work and went home.</i>

Quick test: Read your words aloud and ask, “Does this stand on its own, or is it still waiting for something?” If it is still waiting, you have a fragment.

Note — the imperative exception: A command such as *Sit down.* looks as if it has no subject, but the subject *you* is understood. So *Stop!* is a complete sentence.

The Basic Order: Subject–Verb–Object (SVO)

English is an **SVO language**. In a normal statement, the subject comes first, the verb second, and the object (if there is one) third.

- ✓ *The dog (S) bit (V) the man (O).*
- ✓ *Children (S) love (V) ice cream (O).*
- ✓ *My sister (S) is reading (V) a novel (O).*

Why does order matter so much? In some languages — Latin, Russian, Turkish, German to a degree — special word endings (cases) tell you who does the action and who receives it, so the words can move around freely. English has almost no such endings. Instead, **position carries the meaning**. The noun before the verb is the doer; the noun after it is the receiver.

Compare these two sentences. The words are identical; only the order changes:

- ✓ *The dog bit the man.* (The dog did the biting.)
- ✓ *The man bit the dog.* (Now the man did the biting!)

Nothing but word order tells us who bit whom. This is why learners who rely on word endings from their first language must train themselves to respect English order. Put the doer first.

The Five Basic Clause Patterns

Almost every English clause follows one of five patterns. Learning them gives you a reliable frame for building correct sentences.

Pattern	Structure	Example
1. SV	Subject + Verb	<i>The baby (S) slept (V).</i>
2. SVO	Subject + Verb + Object	<i>I (S) opened (V) the door (O).</i>
3. SVC	Subject + Verb + Complement	<i>She (S) is (V) a doctor (C).</i>
4. SVOO	Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object	<i>He (S) gave (V) me (IO) a gift (DO).</i>
5. SVOC	Subject + Verb + Object + Object Complement	<i>They (S) named (V) the dog (O) Rex (C).</i>

More examples of each pattern:

- **SV** — ✓ *Time passes.* ✓ *Everyone laughed.* ✓ *The lights flickered.*
- **SVO** — ✓ *We watched the film.* ✓ *Maria plays the violin.* ✓ *The storm damaged the roof.*
- **SVC** — ✓ *The soup smells delicious.* ✓ *He became famous.* ✓ *Your idea sounds great.*

- **SVOO** — ✓ *I sent her a letter.* ✓ *Can you tell me the time?* ✓
The teacher asked us a question.
- **SVOC** — ✓ *We painted the wall blue.* ✓ *The news made every-
one happy.* ✓ *They elected her president.*

Good to know: Patterns 1 and 2 (SV and SVO) cover the great majority of everyday sentences. Master those first; the others will follow naturally.

Subjects, Verbs, Objects, and Complements

Let us look more closely at each building block.

The subject is the person or thing the sentence is about, and it controls the form of the verb. It is usually a noun, a pronoun, or a noun phrase.

- ✓ *Dogs bark.* (noun)
- ✓ *She agreed.* (pronoun)
- ✓ *The old wooden bridge collapsed.* (noun phrase)

The verb tells us the action or state. It may be a single word or several words (a verb phrase).

- ✓ *He runs.* (one word)
- ✓ *He has been running.* (verb phrase)

Objects receive the action. There are two kinds. The **direct object** answers *what?* or *whom?* The **indirect object** answers *to whom?* or *for whom?* — it usually names the person who benefits.

- ✓ *She bought a cake.* (*a cake* = direct object: bought what?)
- ✓ *She bought her son a cake.* (*her son* = indirect object; *a cake* = direct object)

When both objects appear, the indirect object normally comes first. Alternatively, you can move it after the direct object using *to* or *for*:

- ✓ *He gave the children sweets.*
- ✓ *He gave sweets to the children.*
- ✗ *He gave to the children sweets.*

Complements are different from objects. A complement does not receive an action; it describes or renames the subject (or the object). It follows a **linking verb** such as *be*, *become*, *seem*, *appear*, *look*, *feel*, *sound*, *smell*, *taste*.

- ✓ *The garden is beautiful.* (*beautiful* describes *the garden*)
- ✓ *He became a teacher.* (*a teacher* renames *he*)
- ✓ *That sounds strange.* (*strange* describes *that*)

Notice the key difference: in *She kicked the ball*, the ball is separate from her (object). In *She is a nurse*, “a nurse” **is** her (complement).

Adverbials: Where the Extra Information Goes

Adverbials add detail — **how**, **where**, **when**, or **how often** something happens. English gives adverbials some freedom of position, but there are strong preferences.

The three most common positions are:

- **Front position** (before the subject): *Yesterday, we left early.*
- **Mid position** (around the main verb): *We often leave early.*
- **End position** (after the verb or object): *We left early yesterday.*

When several adverbials appear together, the usual order at the end of a sentence is **manner**, **then place**, **then time**:

- ✓ *She sang **beautifully** (manner) **at the concert** (place) **last night** (time).*

- ✗ *She sang last night beautifully at the concert.*

A simpler and very reliable rule for two adverbials is **place before time**:

- ✓ *They arrived **at the airport** *early.*
- ✓ *We are meeting **in town** *tomorrow.*
- ✗ *We are meeting tomorrow in town.* (sounds unnatural)

Watch out — adverbs between verb and object: In English, an adverb of manner does not usually go between the verb and its direct object. - ✗ *I speak well English.* - ✓ *I speak English well.*

Adjective Order and Frequency Adverbs

Adjective order. When you stack several adjectives before a noun, English follows a customary sequence: **opinion** → **size** → **age** → **shape** → **colour** → **origin** → **material** → **purpose**.

- ✓ *a lovely small old round wooden table*
- ✗ *a wooden old small lovely round table*

You will rarely use all of these at once, but the order feels wrong when broken. *A red big balloon* sounds odd; *a big red balloon* sounds right.

Frequency adverbs (*always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never*) have their own special position. The rule is simple:

- They go **before** the main verb: ✓ *She always arrives on time.*
- But **after** the verb *be*: ✓ *She is always on time.*
- And **between** an auxiliary and the main verb: ✓ *I have never seen that film.*

More examples:

- ✓ *We usually eat dinner at seven.*
- ✓ *He never drinks coffee.*
- ✗ *He drinks never coffee.*
- ✗ *Always she is late.* (Front position is possible for emphasis but unusual for these adverbs.)

Sentence Types by Purpose

Sentences can be grouped by what they *do*.

Type	Purpose	Example	Ends with
Statement (declarative)	Gives information	<i>The shop opens at nine.</i>	.
Question (interrogative)	Asks for information	<i>Does the shop open at nine?</i>	?
Command (imperative)	Tells someone to do something	<i>Open the shop at nine.</i>	. or !
Exclamation (exclamative)	Expresses strong feeling	<i>What a beautiful day it is!</i>	!

A few notes on word order:

- **Questions** usually reverse the normal order, putting an auxiliary verb before the subject: *You are ready* → *Are you ready?* With most verbs we add *do/does/did*: *She works here* → *Does she work here?*
- **Commands** drop the subject and begin with the base verb: *Close the window. Please be quiet.*
- **Exclamations** often begin with *What* (+ noun) or *How* (+ adjective): *What a mess! How kind you are!*

Simple, Compound, and Complex Sentences

So far we have mostly built single clauses. By joining clauses, we create longer, richer sentences. This is a doorway to topics covered more fully in later chapters, but here is the essential map.

A **simple sentence** has one independent clause.

- ✓ *The sun set.*
- ✓ *I closed the laptop and stretched.* (still one subject and one clause with two verbs)

A **compound sentence** joins two independent clauses (each could stand alone) with a coordinating conjunction such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*. A comma usually comes before the conjunction.

- ✓ *I called him, but he did not answer.*
- ✓ *We can take the bus, or we can walk.*
- ✓ *She was tired, so she went to bed.*

A **complex sentence** joins an independent clause to a **dependent** (subordinate) clause — one that cannot stand alone — using a subordinating conjunction such as *because*, *although*, *when*, *if*, *since*, *while*.

- ✓ *We stayed inside because it was raining.*
- ✓ *Although he was nervous, he gave a great speech.*
- ✓ *When the bell rang, the students left.*

Notice that when the dependent clause comes first, we put a comma after it (*Although he was nervous,*). When it comes second, we usually do not (*he gave a great speech although he was nervous*).

Remember: *Because it was raining* on its own is a fragment. It only becomes a sentence when attached to an independent clause.

Common Word-Order Errors

These mistakes are extremely common among learners. Each callout shows the trap and the fix.

Error — Adverb placement. Do not split the verb and its object with an adverb of manner. - *✗ He drives carefully the car.* → *✓ He drives the car carefully.* - *✗ I like very much this song.* → *✓ I like this song very much.*

Error — Adjective order. Keep adjectives in their natural sequence (opinion before fact, size before colour). - *✗ a green nice jacket* → *✓ a nice green jacket* - *✗ Italian a famous painter* → *✓ a famous Italian painter*

Error — Question word order. Use auxiliary + subject, and do not keep statement order in questions. - *✗ Where you are going?* → *✓ Where are you going?* - *✗ What time the film starts?* → *✓ What time does the film start?*

Error — Place and time. Put place before time, not the reverse. - *✗ I went yesterday to the doctor.* → *✓ I went to the doctor yesterday.*

Quick Review

- A complete sentence needs a **subject** and a **verb** and must express a finished thought; otherwise it is a **fragment**.
- English is an **SVO** language: word order, not endings, shows who does what. *The dog bit the man* ≠ *The man bit the dog*.
- The five clause patterns are **SV, SVO, SVC, SVOO, SVOC**.

- **Objects** receive the action; **complements** (after linking verbs) describe or rename.
- Adverbials prefer the order **manner – place – time**, and the safe rule is **place before time**.
- **Frequency adverbs** go before the main verb but after *be*.
- Stack adjectives as **opinion → size → age → shape → colour → origin → material → purpose**.
- Sentences by purpose: **statements, questions, commands, exclamations**.
- **Simple** = one clause; **compound** = clauses joined by *and/but/or/so*; **complex** = a main clause + a dependent clause (*because, although, when...*).

Practice

A. Complete or fragment? Write C for a complete sentence or F for a fragment. 1. *When the music stopped.* 2. *The waiter brought the bill.* 3. *Sitting quietly in the corner.* 4. *Everyone applauded.*

B. Identify the pattern (SV, SVO, SVC, SVOO, or SVOC). 5. *The lake froze.* 6. *She lent me her umbrella.* 7. *The cake tastes wonderful.* 8. *They called the baby Sofia.*

C. Fix the word order. Rewrite each sentence correctly. 9. *He speaks fluently French.* 10. *We bought a red beautiful car.* 11. *Where you did put the keys?* 12. *I usually am at home in the evening.*

D. Combine the clauses using the word in brackets. 13. *It was cold. We went swimming. (although)* 14. *She studied hard. She passed the exam. (so)*

Answers

1. **F** — dependent clause, no main clause. (e.g., *When the music stopped, we left.*)
2. **C** — SVO, complete.
3. **F** — no subject, no main verb. (e.g., *A cat was sitting quietly in the corner.*)
4. **C** — SV, complete.
5. **SV** — *The lake (S) froze (V).*
6. **SVOO** — *She (S) lent (V) me (IO) her umbrella (DO).*
7. **SVC** — *The cake (S) tastes (V) wonderful (C).*
8. **SVOC** — *They (S) called (V) the baby (O) Sofia (C).*
9. ✓ *He speaks French fluently.* (Do not split verb and object.)
10. ✓ *We bought a beautiful red car.* (Opinion before colour.)
11. ✓ *Where did you put the keys?* (Auxiliary before subject.)
12. ✓ *I am usually at home in the evening.* (Frequency adverb after *be.*)
13. ✓ *Although it was cold, we went swimming.* (Comma after the front dependent clause.)
14. ✓ *She studied hard, so she passed the exam.* (Comma before *so.*)

PART II

Nouns, Articles & Pro- nouns

*The words we use to name things — and the small words
that give them shape.*

Chapter 4 — Nouns: Countable, Uncountable & Plurals

Nouns are the naming words of English. They label people, places, things, and ideas — *teacher, London, table, freedom*. Almost every sentence you build rests on at least one noun, so understanding how nouns behave is one of the most useful things you can do for your English. This chapter explores the different types of nouns, the all-important difference between **countable** and **uncountable** nouns, and the rules (and helpful exceptions) for forming plurals.

Types of Nouns

Before we count anything, let's sort nouns into families. A single noun often belongs to several families at once.

Common vs. Proper Nouns

A **common noun** is a general name for a kind of thing: *city, river, month, company*. A **proper noun** is the specific name of one particular thing: *Tokyo, the Nile, April, Samsung*. Proper nouns always begin with a capital letter.

- ✓ *My favourite city is Paris.*
- ✓ *We met on a Monday in December.*
- ✗ *We met on a monday in december.*

Capitalization tip: Capitalize names of people, places, nationalities, languages, days, months, and titles — *French, Saturday, Dr Lopez*. Do **not** capitalize the seasons (*summer, winter*) or general

subjects (*history, biology*) unless they form part of a proper name (*the History Department*).

Concrete vs. Abstract Nouns

A **concrete noun** names something you can perceive with your senses: *coffee, music, rain, dog*. An **abstract noun** names an idea, quality, or feeling that you cannot touch: *honesty, love, progress, information*.

- ✓ *She showed great courage during a difficult year.*
- ✓ *The smell of fresh bread filled the kitchen.*

This distinction matters because many abstract nouns are uncountable — a point we return to below.

Collective Nouns

A **collective noun** names a group as a single unit: *team, family, government, staff, committee, audience*. Here English speakers across the world do not always agree.

In **American English**, collective nouns are usually treated as singular, with a singular verb:

- ✓ (AmE) *The team is playing well this season.*
- ✓ (AmE) *The government has announced new rules.*

In **British English**, the same nouns can take a singular verb (seeing the group as one body) **or** a plural verb (seeing the individual members):

- ✓ (BrE) *The team is playing well.* (the group as a unit)
- ✓ (BrE) *The team are wearing their new shirts.* (the individual players)

British vs. American: “*The team is*” is correct everywhere. “*The team are*” is normal in Britain but sounds unusual to many Americans. Whichever you choose, stay consistent within a sentence: ✓ *The committee has made its decision* / ✓ *The committee have made their decision*, but not a mix of the two.

Compound Nouns

A **compound noun** is made of two or more words working together as one noun. They appear in three forms: open (*bus stop*), hyphenated (*mother-in-law*), and closed (*toothbrush*). There is no perfect rule for which form to use, so a dictionary is your friend.

A key point is **where the plural goes**. Usually only the main (most important) word changes:

- ✓ *toothbrush* → *toothbrushes* ✓ **bus stop** → ****bus stops**
- ✓ *mother-in-law* → *mothers-in-law* (not *mother-in-laws*)
- ✓ *passer-by* → *passers-by*

Countable vs. Uncountable Nouns

This is the distinction that causes more errors than almost any other, so it deserves close attention.

A **countable noun** names something you can count as separate units. It has a singular and a plural form, and you can put a number in front of it: *one book, two books, three apples*.

An **uncountable noun** (also called a *mass noun*) names something seen as a whole that you cannot count directly: *water, rice, music*,

advice, money, traffic. These nouns normally have **no plural form** and take a **singular verb**.

- ✓ *I'd like some water, please.* ✗ *I'd like ~~a water~~ / ~~two waters~~.*
- ✓ **Rice is** grown in many countries. ✗ *~~Rices are~~ grown...*
- ✓ *Her advice was very helpful.*

Why It Matters: Articles and Quantifiers

The countable/uncountable difference decides which little words you can use. Look at the contrast:

	Countable (singular)	Countable (plural)	Uncountable
Article <i>a/an</i>	✓ <i>a chair</i>	—	✗ <i>~~a furniture~~</i>
Numbers	✓ <i>one chair</i>	✓ <i>three chairs</i>	✗ <i>~~three furnitures~~</i>
<i>many / few</i>	—	✓ <i>many chairs</i>	✗
<i>much / little</i>	—	—	✓ <i>much furniture</i>
<i>some / any</i>	—	✓ <i>some chairs</i>	✓ <i>some furniture</i>
<i>a lot of</i>	—	✓ <i>a lot of chairs</i>	✓ <i>a lot of furniture</i>

- ✓ *How many eggs do we need?* (countable) — ✓ *How much milk?* (uncountable)
- ✓ *There are few chairs.* / ✓ *There is little time.*

The classic learner trap — never add -s to these! Many words that are countable in other languages are **uncountable** in English. They have **no plural** and take a **singular verb**: ✗ *in-formations* → ✓ **information** | ✗ *advices* → ✓ **advice** ✗ *furnitures* → ✓ **furniture** | ✗ *equipments* → ✓ **equipment** ✗ *lugs*

gages / baggages → ✓ **luggage** / **baggage** | ✗ **knowledges** → ✓ **knowledge** ✗ **researches** → ✓ **research** | ✗ **homeworks** → ✓ **homework** | ✗ **moneys** → ✓ **money** ✗ **progresses** → ✓ **progress** | ✗ **traffics** → ✓ **traffic** | ✗ **softwares** → ✓ **software** Say “He gave me some good advice” — never ~~a good advice~~ or ~~good advices~~.

Nouns That Are Both Countable and Uncountable

Some nouns can be **either**, and the meaning shifts depending on which you use. As an uncountable noun, the word usually refers to a material or a general idea; as a countable noun, it refers to a specific item, type, or instance.

Noun	Uncountable meaning	Countable meaning
<i>hair</i>	the hair on your head	individual strands
<i>paper</i>	material for writing	a newspaper; an essay/article
<i>glass</i>	the material	a drinking vessel
<i>coffee</i>	the drink/substance	a cup of coffee; a type of coffee
<i>experience</i>	knowledge gained over time	a single event
<i>work</i>	activity, employment	a creation (a <i>work</i> of art)
<i>light</i>	brightness	a lamp
<i>time</i>	the passing of time	an occasion

- ✓ *Her hair is dark.* (uncountable) — ✓ *There are two hairs in my soup.* (countable)
- ✓ *I need paper to print on.* — ✓ *He bought a paper to read on the train.*
- ✓ *The window is made of glass.* — ✓ *Could I have two glasses of juice?*

- ✓ *She has years of teaching experience.* — ✓ *Visiting Japan was an unforgettable experience.*
- ✓ *Finding a job is hard work.* — ✓ *The museum displays the works of Picasso.*

Making Uncountable Nouns Countable: Partitives

What if you really do want to “count” an uncountable noun? You use a **partitive** — a small phrase, often *a piece of* or *a ... of*, that gives the substance a shape or container. The partitive becomes the countable part.

Partitive phrase	Example
a piece of	<i>a piece of advice / news / information / furniture</i>
a bit of	<i>a bit of luck / paper / fun</i>
a glass of	<i>two glasses of water / wine</i>
a cup of	<i>a cup of coffee / tea</i>
a loaf of	<i>a loaf of bread (also a slice of bread)</i>
a bar of	<i>a bar of chocolate / soap</i>
a sheet of	<i>a sheet of paper</i>
a bottle / can of	<i>a bottle of milk; a can of soup</i>
an item / a piece of	<i>an item of clothing; a piece of equipment</i>
a drop of / a grain of	<i>a drop of water; a grain of rice</i>

- ✓ *Let me give you a piece of advice.* ✓ *I have two pieces of news.*
- ✓ *She drank three cups of coffee before noon.*
- ✓ *We bought a loaf of bread and a bar of chocolate.*

Regular Plurals and Spelling Rules

Most English nouns form their plural by adding **-s**: *book* → *books*, *car* → *cars*, *house* → *houses*. But spelling depends on how the word ends. The table below covers the regular patterns.

Ending	Rule	Examples	Watch out
most nouns	add -s	<i>dog</i> → <i>dogs</i> ; <i>pen</i> → <i>pens</i>	—
-s, -ss, -x, -z, -ch, -sh	add -es	<i>bus</i> → <i>buses</i> ; <i>box</i> → <i>boxes</i> ; <i>church</i> → <i>churches</i> ; <i>dish</i> → <i>dishes</i>	the <i>-ch</i> must sound like /tʃ/ (<i>stomach</i> → <i>stomachs</i>)
consonant + -y	change <i>y</i> → <i>i</i> , add -es	<i>city</i> → <i>cities</i> ; <i>baby</i> → <i>babies</i> ; <i>story</i> → <i>stories</i>	—
vowel + -y	just add -s	<i>boy</i> → <i>boys</i> ; <i>key</i> → <i>keys</i> ; <i>day</i> → <i>days</i>	the <i>y</i> stays
-o	usually add -es	<i>potato</i> → <i>potatoes</i> ; <i>tomato</i> → <i>tomatoes</i> ; <i>hero</i> → <i>heroes</i>	many take only <i>-s</i> : <i>photos</i> , <i>pianos</i> , <i>kilos</i> , <i>zoos</i> , <i>radios</i>
-f / -fe	change to -ves	<i>leaf</i> → <i>leaves</i> ; <i>knife</i> → <i>knives</i> ; <i>wife</i> → <i>wives</i> ; <i>shelf</i> → <i>shelves</i>	exceptions add <i>-s</i> : <i>roofs</i> , <i>chiefs</i> , <i>beliefs</i> , <i>cliffs</i> , <i>safes</i>

- ✓ *We saw three foxes and two wolves.* (-x → -es, -f → -ves)
- ✓ *The babies were sleeping while the boys played.*
- ✓ *He took some photos of the tomatoes.*

Note: A few *-f* words allow both forms — *scarf* gives ✓ *scarves* (more common) or ✓ *scarfs*; *hoof* gives *hooves* or *hoofs*. When in doubt, check a dictionary.

Irregular Plurals

Some of the most common nouns in English do not follow the rules above. These must be learned individually.

Vowel-change and other irregular forms

Singular	Plural
man	men
woman	women
child	children
person	people
foot	feet
tooth	teeth
goose	geese
mouse	mice
ox	oxen

- ✓ *Two men and three women were waiting.*
- ✓ *Most children lose their baby teeth by age twelve.*
- ✓ *There are too many people here. (persons exists but is rare and formal/legal)*

Unchanging plurals (same singular and plural)

Singular	Plural
sheep	sheep
fish	fish (<i>fishes</i> = different species)
deer	deer

Singular	Plural
species	species
aircraft	aircraft
series	series

- ✓ *One sheep, two sheep, a hundred sheep.*
- ✓ *We caught five fish.* (✓ *fishes* only when talking about different kinds of fish)

Latin and Greek plurals

Words borrowed from Latin and Greek often keep their original plural endings, especially in academic and scientific English.

Singular	Plural	Pattern
analysis	analyses	-is → -es
basis	bases	-is → -es
crisis	crises	-is → -es
criterion	criteria	-on → -a
phenomenon	phenomena	-on → -a
datum	data	-um → -a
medium	media	-um → -a
cactus	cacti (or cactuses)	-us → -i
fungus	fungi	-us → -i
nucleus	nuclei	-us → -i

- ✓ *The criteria are strict.* (*criteria* is plural; ✗ *~a criteria~* → use *a criterion*)
- ✓ *This phenomenon is rare, but such phenomena are studied closely.*

Common error: *data*, *media*, and *criteria* are technically plural. In careful or scientific writing, use a plural verb: ✓ *The data are reliable*. In everyday English, *data* is increasingly treated as uncountable: ✓ *The data is reliable*. Both are now widely accepted; *criteria* and *phenomena*, however, still keep their plural verbs.

Nouns with Only One Form

Nouns that are always plural

Tools and clothes made of two matching parts have **no singular form** and take a **plural verb**: *scissors*, *trousers* (BrE) / *pants* (AmE), *glasses*, *jeans*, *shorts*, *pyjamas/pajamas*, *tights*, *binoculars*.

- ✓ *My trousers are too tight.* ✗ *~~My trouser is~~...*
- ✓ *Where are my glasses?*

To count them or refer to one, use **a pair of**:

- ✓ *I bought a pair of jeans and two pairs of scissors.*
- ✓ *A pair of glasses costs more than I expected.* (the verb agrees with *pair*)

Singular nouns that end in -s

Confusingly, some nouns *look* plural but are **singular** and take a **singular verb**. These include the word *news* and many fields of study and activities ending in *-ics*: *mathematics*, *physics*, *economics*, *politics*, *gymnastics*, *athletics*; also diseases like *measles* and games like *darts*.

- ✓ *The news is good today.* ✗ *~~The news are~~...*
- ✓ *Mathematics is my favourite subject.*
- ✓ *Physics was harder than I expected.*

Tip: Some *-ics* words can be plural when they mean a person's activities rather than the subject: ✓ *Politics is a fascinating subject* (the field) but ✓ *Her politics are very liberal* (her views).

Subject–Verb Agreement with Tricky Nouns

A handful of nouns trip up even advanced learners. Here is a quick reference.

- **Indefinite pronouns** (*everyone, everybody, somebody, no one, each*) are **singular**: ✓ *Everyone is here.* / ✓ *Each of the students has a book.*
- **News, mathematics, physics** → **singular**: ✓ *The news is on at six.*
- **The police, people, cattle** → **plural**: ✓ *The police are investigating.* / ✓ *People are kind.*
- **Collective nouns** → singular in AmE; singular or plural in BrE (see above).

Remember: *the police* never takes *-s* and always uses a plural verb — ✓ *The police have arrived*, never ~~*The police is*~~. To talk about one officer, say *a police officer*.

Quick Review

- **Common** nouns are general; **proper** nouns name specific things and are capitalized.
- **Collective** nouns are singular in American English; British English allows singular *or* plural.

- **Countable** nouns can be counted and have plurals; **uncountable** nouns cannot and take singular verbs.
- Never add *-s* to *information, advice, furniture, equipment, luggage, homework, research, money*.
- Use **partitives** (*a piece of advice, two glasses of water*) to “count” uncountable nouns.
- Learn the **spelling rules** for *-es*, consonant + *-y* → *-ies*, and *-f/-fe* → *-ves*, plus their exceptions.
- Memorize **irregular plurals** (*children, feet, people, mice*), **unchanging** ones (*sheep, fish*), and **Latin/Greek** ones (*analyses, criteria, phenomena*).
- Some nouns are **always plural** (*scissors, jeans* — use *a pair of*); some that end in *-s* are **singular** (*news, physics*).
- *The police* and *people* take **plural** verbs; *everyone* and *the news* take **singular** verbs.

Practice

A. Countable or uncountable? Mark each noun **C** or **U**. 1. advice
2. apple 3. water 4. suggestion 5. furniture 6. idea

B. Correct the mistake in each sentence. 7. *She gave me two good advices.* 8. *I need to buy a new furnitures for my room.* 9. *How much books did you read last month?* 10. *The news are very surprising.*

C. Write the plural. 11. box 12. baby 13. knife 14. child 15. analysis
16. sheep

D. Choose the correct verb. 17. *Mathematics (is / are) difficult for me.* 18. *The police (is / are) looking for the driver.* 19. (BrE) *The team (is / are) celebrating their win.* 20. *Everyone (has / have) finished the test.*

E. Add a suitable partitive (*a piece of, a glass of, a loaf of, etc.*).

21. Could I have ___ **water**? 22. **Let me give you _ advice.** 23. **We bought ___** bread at the bakery.

F. Capitalize correctly. Rewrite: *we visited paris last december and learned some french.*

Answers

A. 1. U — 2. C — 3. U — 4. C — 5. U — 6. C

B. 7. *She gave me two pieces of advice. (or some good advice)* 8. *I need to buy some new furniture for my room.* 9. *How many books did you read last month?* 10. *The news is very surprising.*

C. 11. boxes — 12. babies — 13. knives — 14. children — 15. analyses — 16. sheep

D. 17. is — 18. are — 19. are (BrE; *is* is also acceptable) — 20. has

E. (answers may vary slightly) 21. *a glass of water* — 22. *a piece of advice* — 23. *a loaf of bread*

F. *We visited Paris last December and learned some French.*

Chapter 5 — Articles: a, an, the & the Zero Article

Articles are tiny words that carry a surprising amount of meaning. In English there are only three to learn — *a*, *an*, and *the* — plus one more option: using **no article at all** (the “zero article”). If your first language has no articles, this chapter may feel like learning a new sense. Be patient. With a few clear rules and lots of examples, you will soon make the right choice most of the time.

Let’s start with the big picture, then look at each article in detail.

The Big Picture: Three Choices

Every time you use a noun, English asks you a question: *Which article does this noun need?* There are three possible answers.

Art- icle	Meaning	Typical use
a / an	indefinite — <i>one of many</i> , not specific	introducing something new, not yet identified
the	definite — <i>the specific one</i> , known to both speaker and listener	something already known, unique, or identified
(zero)	no article	plurals and uncountables in a general sense; many fixed expressions

A quick way to decide:

- 1. Is the noun specific — does the listener know exactly which one I mean?** If yes, use **the**.
- 2. If not specific, is it a single countable thing?** If yes, use **a / an**.

3. If it is plural or uncountable and general? Use **no article**.

Key idea: Articles answer the question “which one?” *The* says *you know which one*. *A/an* says *one* — but it doesn’t matter which one. Zero article says *I’m talking in general*.

We’ll return to this decision process at the end with a full table. First, the details.

A vs. AN: It’s About Sound, Not Spelling

This is the single most misunderstood rule about articles, so read carefully.

We use **a** before a **consonant sound** and **an** before a **vowel sound**. The deciding factor is the **sound** the next word *begins with* when you say it aloud — **not the letter** it is written with.

Sound, not spelling! Say the word out loud. Does it start with a vowel sound (a, e, i, o, u)? Use *an*. Does it start with a consonant sound? Use *a*.

Most of the time the spelling matches the sound, but watch these important exceptions:

Phrase	Why
✓ <i>a university</i>	“university” begins with a <i>y</i> sound /ju:/, a consonant sound
✓ <i>a uniform</i>	same /ju:/ sound
✓ <i>a European country</i>	“European” begins with /ju/
✓ <i>a one-way street</i>	“one” begins with a <i>w</i> sound /wʌn/
✓ <i>an hour</i>	the <i>h</i> is silent → starts with a vowel sound /aʊ/

Phrase	Why
✓ <i>an honest man</i>	silent <i>h</i> → /ɒ/
✓ <i>an heir</i>	silent <i>h</i> → /eə/
✓ <i>an MP**</i>	the letter <i>M</i> is read “em” → /em/, a vowel sound
✓ <i>an X-ray</i>	<i>X</i> is read “ex” → /eks/
✓ <i>a house</i>	the <i>h</i> is pronounced → consonant sound

Compare these carefully:

- ✓ *She studies at a university.* ✗ *an university*
- ✓ *I’ll be back in an hour.* ✗ *a hour*
- ✓ *He’s an honest politician.* ✗ *a honest*
- ✓ *My uncle is an MP.* ✗ *a MP*
- ✓ *That was a useful lesson.* ✗ *an useful* (because “useful” starts with /ju:/)

British/American note: In some words *herb* is pronounced with a silent *h* in American English (*an herb*) but with a spoken *h* in British English (*a herb*). Follow the pronunciation used where you are.

When to Use A / AN

Remember: *a* and *an* are used **only with singular countable nouns**. You cannot say *a water* or *a furniture* (uncountable), or *a cars* (plural).

1. First mention — when you introduce something for the first time and the listener doesn’t yet know which one.

- ✓ *I saw a dog in the park.* (The listener hears about this dog for the first time.)

- ✓ *She bought a new phone yesterday.*

2. One of a category / a type of thing — when any example of the category would do.

- ✓ *Could you pass me a chair?* (any chair)
- ✓ *He's looking for an apartment.* (no particular one yet)

3. Jobs and roles — to say what someone is or does.

- ✓ *She's a doctor.* ✗ *She's doctor.*
- ✓ *My brother wants to be an engineer.*
- ✓ *He works as a translator.*

4. “What a...!” exclamations with singular countable nouns.

- ✓ *What a beautiful day!*
- ✓ *What an idea!*
- (With plurals or uncountables, use no article: ✓ *What beautiful weather!* ✗ *What a beautiful weather!*)

5. Quantities and rates / measurements.

- ✓ *once a week* — ✓ *60 km an hour* — ✓ *£3 a kilo*

When to Use THE

We use **the** when the noun is **definite** — when both speaker and listener know exactly which one is meant. *The* works with singular, plural, and uncountable nouns alike.

1. Second (and later) mention — once something has been introduced, it becomes known.

- ✓ *I saw a dog in the park. The dog was chasing a ball.*
- ✓ *She bought a phone and a case. The case was blue.*

2. Unique things — there is only one, so it must be specific.

- ✓ *the sun, the moon, the sky, the earth, the world, the internet*
- ✓ *The sun rises in the east.*

3. Shared knowledge / context — the listener can identify it from the situation, even at first mention.

- ✓ *Can you close the door?* (we both know which door)
- ✓ *I'm going to the bank.* (our usual / the obvious one)
- ✓ *Where's the manager?* (of this shop)

4. Superlatives, ordinals, and “only”.

- ✓ *This is the best coffee in town.*
- ✓ *She was the first person to arrive.*
- ✓ *He's the only student who passed.*

5. Defined by what follows — when a phrase or clause makes the noun specific.

- ✓ *the man in the blue jacket* — ✓ ***the book ****that you lent me*****
- ✓ *the capital of France***

6. Rivers, seas, oceans, mountain ranges, deserts, and groups of islands.

- ✓ *the Nile, the Thames, the Mediterranean, the Pacific, the Alps, the Sahara, the Maldives*

7. Certain country and place names — especially those that are plural or contain words like *kingdom, states, or republic*.

- ✓ *the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates, the Czech Republic*

- (But most single-word countries take **no** article: ✓ *France, Japan, Brazil*.)

8. Musical instruments (when talking about playing them in general).

- ✓ *She plays the piano.* — ✓ *He's learning the violin.*
- (Note: with sports, we use **no** article — ✓ *play football*, ✗ *play the football*.)

9. “The + adjective” for whole groups of people.

- ✓ *the* rich*, *the poor*, *the young*, *the elderly*, *the* unemployed*
- ✓ *The government should help the homeless.* (= homeless people in general)

The Zero Article (No Article)

Sometimes the most natural choice is **no article at all**. This is very common — and learners often add *the* where it isn't needed.

1. Plural and uncountable nouns used in a general sense.

- ✓ *I like music.* ✗ *I like the music.* (if you mean music in general)
- ✓ *Dogs are loyal.* ✗ *The dogs are loyal.* (if you mean dogs in general)
- ✓ *Water is essential for life.*
- ✓ *She's interested in history.*

2. Most countries, cities, streets, and continents.

- ✓ *Japan, Paris, Oxford Street, Africa* — ✗ *the Japan, the Oxford Street*

3. Meals.

- ✓ *have breakfast, after lunch, before dinner* — ✗ *have the breakfast*

4. Languages and academic subjects.

- ✓ *She speaks Arabic.* — ✓ *He's good at mathematics.*

5. Sports and games.

- ✓ *They play tennis every weekend.* — ✓ *Do you like chess?*

6. Means of transport with “by”.

- ✓ *by car, by bus, by train, by plane, on foot* — ✗ *by the car*

7. Certain institutions used for their main purpose (see the callout below).

- ✓ *go to bed, go to school, go to work, in hospital, in prison***

Institution vs. building — a crucial contrast. When we mean the **purpose or activity** of an institution, we use **no article**. When we mean the **physical building** (or a specific one), we use **the**.

- ✓ *My son goes to school.* (he is a pupil — the purpose)
- ✓ *I drove to the school to meet his teacher.* (the building)
- ✓ *Her father is in prison.* (he is a prisoner)
- ✓ *The lawyer went to the prison to see her client.* (the building)
- ✓ *He's in hospital.* (he is a patient — British English)
- ✓ *I parked outside the hospital.* (the building)

British/American note: British English says *in hospital* / *at university* for the purpose; American English usually keeps *the* — *in the hospital* — even for the patient sense.

A vs. THE: A Contrast Set

Seeing the two side by side makes the difference clear. *A/an* introduces; *the* identifies.

- ✓ *I need a pen.* (any pen) → ✓ *Where's the pen I gave you?* (that specific pen)
- ✓ *Let's watch a film tonight.* (we haven't chosen) → ✓ **The** *film starts at eight.* (the one we chose)
- ✓ *She lives in a flat.* (first mention) → ✓ **The** *flat has a great view.* (now known)
- ✓ *Is there a bank near here?* (any bank) → ✓ **The** *bank closes at five.* (our local one)

General vs. Specific Reference

This distinction explains many article choices. Compare:

- ✓ *I love coffee.* (coffee in general — no article)
- ✓ **The** *coffee here is great.* (this particular coffee — definite)

And again:

- ✓ **Children** *learn languages quickly.* (children in general)
- ✓ **The** *children next door are very noisy.* (these specific children)
- ✓ *He studies economics.* (the subject in general)
- ✓ **The** *economics of the plan are unclear.* (the specific economics of this plan)

Remember: General statements about plurals and uncountables take **no article**. Add *the* only when you narrow the noun down to a specific instance.

The Most Common Article Mistakes

Mistake 1 — Adding *the* to general plurals/uncountables.

✗ *I like the dogs.* / ✗ *The life is hard.* ✓ *I like dogs.* / ✓ *Life is hard.*

Mistake 2 — Dropping *a/an* before jobs. ✗ *She is teacher.* →

✓ *She is a teacher.*

Mistake 3 — Choosing *a/an* by spelling instead of sound.

✗ *an university* / ✗ *a hour** → ✓ *a university* / ✓ *an** *hour*

Mistake 4 — Using *a/an* with plurals or uncountables. ✗ *a furnitures* / ✗ *an informations* → ✓ *some furniture* / ✓ *some information*

Mistake 5 — Putting *the* before most single-word country

and city names. ✗ *the China* / ✗ *the London* → ✓ *China* / ✓ *London* (but ✓ *the UK*)

Mistake 6 — Forgetting *the* with superlatives, ordinals,

and “only”. ✗ *She’s best in the class.* → ✓ *She’s the best in the class.*

A Concise Decision Table

Use this table to choose quickly. Ask first: *Is the noun specific (the listener knows which one)?*

Noun type	First mention (new, not specific)	Specific (known to both)	General (whole class / substance)
Singular countable	<i>a / an</i> — ✓ <i>I bought a book.</i>	<i>the</i> — ✓ The <i>book was great.</i>	<i>the / a</i> (generic) — ✓ The dog is loyal. / ✓ <i>A dog is loyal.</i>
Plural countable	(zero) / <i>some</i> — ✓ <i>I bought (some) books.</i>	<i>the</i> — ✓ The <i>books were great.</i>	(zero) — ✓ Books <i>are useful.</i>
Uncountable	(zero) / <i>some</i> — ✓ <i>I bought (some) bread.</i>	<i>the</i> — ✓ The <i>bread was fresh.</i>	(zero) — ✓ Bread <i>is cheap here.</i>

Note on generic statements: To talk about a class in general, plurals with no article are the most natural (✓ *Dogs are loyal*). The singular forms *The dog is loyal* and *A dog is loyal* are also possible and common, but slightly more formal or definitional.

Quick Review

- **a / an** = indefinite, one of many, **singular countable nouns only**; used at first mention, for jobs, and in “*What a...!*”
- Choose *a* or *an* by **sound, not spelling**: *a university, an hour, an MP*.
- **the** = definite, the specific one both people know; used for second mention, unique things, superlatives/ordinals/*only*, defined nouns, rivers/seas/mountain ranges/deserts, plural-style country names (*the UK*), instruments (*the piano*), and *the + adjective* groups (*the poor*).
- **Zero article** = no article; used for general plurals and uncountables, most countries/cities/streets, meals, languages, sports, *by*

+ *transport*, and institutions used for their purpose (*go to school*).

- **Institution vs. building:** *go to school* (purpose) vs. *go to the school* (building).
- **General vs. specific:** *I love coffee* (general) vs. *the coffee here* (specific).

Practice

Choose **a**, **an**, **the**, or — (**no article**) for each gap.

1. She works as ___ engineer at a tech company.
2. I'll meet you in ___ hour outside the station.
3. ___ sun was shining and the birds were singing.
4. He can't come to the phone — he's at ___ work.
5. Do you speak ___ Spanish?
6. We saw a film last night. ___ film was about climbing the Alps.
7. My grandmother is in ___ hospital after her operation.
8. ___ honesty is the most important quality in a friend.
9. They travelled across ___ Netherlands by train.
10. What ___ wonderful surprise!

Answers

1. **an** — *engineer* is a job (singular countable); *an* before the vowel sound /e/.
2. **an** — *hour* has a silent *h*, so it begins with a vowel sound.
3. **The** — *the sun* is unique.
4. — (no article) — *at work* is an institution used for its purpose.
5. — (no article) — languages take the zero article.

6. **The** — second mention; the film is now known. (*the Alps* is a fixed *the* with a mountain range.)
7. — (no article, British English) — *in hospital* = a patient. (American English: *in the hospital*.)
8. — (no article) — *honesty* is an uncountable noun used in a general sense.
9. **the** — *the Netherlands* always takes *the*.
10. **a** — *What a...!* with a singular countable noun (*surprise*).

Chapter 6 – Determiners & Quantifiers

Before most nouns in English, you will find a small but powerful word that answers a question: *Which one? How many? Whose?* These words are called **determiners**, and although they are short, they shape the meaning of almost every noun phrase you produce. In this chapter we will map the family of determiners and then focus closely on **quantifiers** – the words that tell us *how much* or *how many*. Articles (*a, an, the*) belong to this same family, but they have a whole chapter of their own, so here we will simply place them on the map and move on.

What Is a Determiner?

A **determiner** is a word that comes before a noun (and before any adjectives describing it) to identify or quantify it.

- **the** *old house* – Which house? The one we both know.
- **this** *book* – Which book? The near one.
- **her** *keys* – Whose keys?
- **several** *problems* – How many problems?

Notice the order: the determiner comes first, then the adjective, then the noun – *those two lovely gardens***.

Determiners fall into a few main groups.

Type	Examples	What they show
Articles	<i>a, an, the</i>	Definite or indefinite (see their own chapter)

Type	Examples	What they show
Demonstratives	<i>this, that, these, those</i>	Distance: near or far
Possessives	<i>my, your, his, her, its, our, their</i>	Who owns it
Quantifiers	<i>some, many, much, few, all, no...</i>	How much / how many
Numbers	<i>one, two, three...; first, second...</i>	Exact quantity or order

Key idea: Most singular **countable** nouns need a determiner. We say ✓ *I bought a car* or ✓ *I bought this car*, not ✗ *I bought car*. Plural and uncountable nouns can often stand alone (✓ *Cars are expensive*; ✓ *Water is free*).

Demonstratives: *this, that, these, those*

Demonstratives point to things in space, time, or conversation. The choice depends on **distance** (near or far) and **number** (singular or plural).

	Near	Far
Singular	<i>this</i>	<i>that</i>
Plural	<i>these</i>	<i>those</i>

- ✓ *This chair (next to me) is comfortable.*
- ✓ *That chair (across the room) is broken.*
- ✓ *These shoes (on my feet) fit well.*
- ✓ *Those mountains (far away) are beautiful.*

They also work for **time**. *This* and *these* point to now or the near future; *that* and *those* point to the past or something more distant.

- ✓ *This week has been busy.* (the current week)
- ✓ *That summer changed my life.* (a past summer)

Demonstratives can act as **determiners** (before a noun) or as **pronouns** (standing alone, replacing the noun).

- Determiner: ✓ *This soup is delicious.*
- Pronoun: ✓ *This is delicious.*

A very common use is on the telephone and in introductions:

- ✓ *Hello, this is Maria speaking.*
- ✓ *Anna, this is my brother, Tom.*

Watch out: Match the demonstrative to the noun's number. ✗ *This shoes are nice* → ✓ *These shoes are nice.* ✗ *Those kind of problem* → ✓ *That kind of problem* / ✓ *Those kinds of problems.*

Possessive Determiners

Possessive determiners show ownership or a relationship. They come before a noun.

Subject	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun
I	<i>my</i>	<i>mine</i>
you	<i>your</i>	<i>yours</i>
he	<i>his</i>	<i>his</i>
she	<i>her</i>	<i>hers</i>
it	<i>its</i>	—
we	<i>our</i>	<i>ours</i>

Subject	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun
they	<i>their</i>	<i>theirs</i>

The key difference: a **possessive determiner** must be followed by a noun, while a **possessive pronoun** stands alone.

- ✓ *This is my book.* (determiner + noun)
- ✓ *This book is mine.* (pronoun, no noun after it)
- ✗ *This book is my.*
- ✗ *This is mine book.*

Remember that possessive determiners agree with the **owner**, not the thing owned: ✓ *The girl loves her dog* (the girl is female), ✓ *The boy loves his dog.*

The classic mistake — *its* vs *it's*: **Its** is the possessive determiner: ✓ *The cat licked its paw.* **It's** is the contraction of *it is* or *it has*: ✓ *It's raining* (it is); ✓ *It's been a long day* (it has). A simple test: if you can replace the word with *it is* or *it has*, write *it's*. Otherwise, write *its* — with no apostrophe. ✗ *The dog wagged it's tail* → ✓ *The dog wagged its tail.*

Quantifiers: The Heart of the Chapter

Quantifiers tell us *how much* or *how many*. The single most important skill is matching the quantifier to the right kind of noun. Recall that **countable** nouns can be counted and have plurals (*one book, two books*), while **uncountable** nouns cannot be counted directly and have no plural (*water, advice, information, money*).

Quantifiers Used With Countable Nouns

These pair with **plural countable** nouns (or, for *each/every*, with singular ones).

- *many*: ✓ *Many people came to the concert.*
- *few / a few*: ✓ *A few friends helped me.*
- *several*: ✓ *I have read several books on this.*
- *a couple of*: ✓ *Give me a couple of minutes.*
- *both*: ✓ *Both answers are correct.*
- *each / every*: ✓ *Each student has a desk.* / ✓ *Every student passed.*

Each vs every: Both refer to all members of a group seen one by one, and both take a **singular verb**. Use **each** when you think of the members individually or when there are only two: ✓ *She held a bag in each hand.* Use **every** when you think of the group as a whole, especially with large numbers: ✓ *Every child needs love.* Only *each* can stand alone as a pronoun: ✓ *They cost five dollars each.* (✗ *...every.*)

Quantifiers Used With Uncountable Nouns

- *much*: ✓ *There isn't much time.*
- *little / a little*: ✓ *I have a little money.*
- *a great deal of*: ✓ *He has a great deal of experience.*
- *a bit of*: ✓ *Add a bit of salt.*

Quantifiers Used With Both

Some quantifiers work happily with countable and uncountable nouns alike.

- *some, any, a lot of / lots of, plenty of, enough, no, all, most, more.*

Summary Table

Quantifier	Countable?	Uncountable?	Example
<i>many</i>	✓	✗	<i>many cars</i>
<i>few / a few</i>	✓	✗	<i>a few cars</i>
<i>several</i>	✓	✗	<i>several cars</i>
<i>each / every</i>	✓ (singular)	✗	<i>every car</i>
<i>both</i>	✓	✗	<i>both cars</i>
<i>much</i>	✗	✓	<i>much traffic</i>
<i>little / a little</i>	✗	✓	<i>a little traffic</i>
<i>a great deal of</i>	✗	✓	<i>a great deal of traffic</i>
<i>some / any</i>	✓	✓	<i>some cars / some traffic</i>
<i>a lot of / lots of</i>	✓	✓	<i>a lot of cars / traffic</i>
<i>plenty of</i>	✓	✓	<i>plenty of cars / time</i>
<i>enough</i>	✓	✓	<i>enough chairs / room</i>
<i>no</i>	✓	✓	<i>no cars / no time</i>
<i>all / most / more</i>	✓	✓	<i>all cars / most time</i>

Some vs Any

This pair confuses many learners, but the basic rule is reliable.

Use **some** in **affirmative** (positive) sentences:

- ✓ *I have some questions.*
- ✓ *There is some milk in the fridge.*

Use **any** in **negatives** and **questions**:

- ✓ *I don't have any questions.*
- ✓ *Is there any milk left?*
- ✗ *I don't have some questions.*

There is one important exception. We use **some** in questions that are **offers** or **requests**, because we expect — or hope for — a *yes*.

Offers and requests take some: ✓ *Would you like some tea?* (an offer) ✓ *Could I have some water, please?* (a request) Using *any* here (*Would you like any tea?*) sounds cold or doubtful. Save *any* for genuine, open questions: ✓ *Do we have any tea at all?*

A second point: **any** can also mean *it doesn't matter which* in affirmative sentences. ✓ *Take any seat you like.* ✓ *Any child could solve this.*

Few vs A Few, Little vs A Little

Here a tiny word — *a* — changes the whole meaning. The forms with *a* are **positive**; the forms without *a* are **negative**.

- **a few** = *some*, a small but sufficient number (countable). Positive tone.
- **few** = *not many*, almost none. Negative tone.
- **a little** = *some*, a small but sufficient amount (uncountable). Positive tone.
- **little** = *not much*, almost none. Negative tone.

Compare the feeling:

- ✓ *I have a few friends here.* (some — I'm content.)
- ✓ *I have few friends here.* (sadly, almost none.)
- ✓ *We still have a little hope.* (some hope remains.)
- ✓ *We have little hope.* (almost no hope.)

The nuance that matters: *A few* and *a little* are optimistic — they emphasise what you *do* have. *Few* and *little* are pessimistic — they emphasise the shortage. In everyday speech, many people soften *few/little* by saying *very few* or *not much*: ✓ *Very few people noticed.* ✓ *There isn't much time.*

Much vs Many (and the Easy Choice: A Lot Of)

Use **many** with plural countable nouns and **much** with uncountable nouns:

- ✓ *How many apples do you want?*
- ✓ *How much sugar do you want?*

In modern English, *much* and *many* sound most natural in **questions** and **negatives**. In positive statements they can feel formal or stiff, so **a lot of** (or *lots of*, slightly more informal) is the friendly, all-purpose choice for both noun types.

- Question: ✓ *Are there many tickets left?*
- Negative: ✓ *We don't have much money.*
- Positive (natural): ✓ *We have a lot of money.* (rather than ✓ *We have much money*, which sounds formal)

For excess and sufficiency, learn this trio:

- **too many** + countable: ✓ *There are too many cars on this road.*

- **too much** + uncountable: ✓ *I drank too much coffee.*
- **(not) enough** + either: ✓ *We have enough chairs.* / ✓ *There isn't enough room.*

Note that *enough* goes **before** a noun (✓ *enough chairs*) but **after** an adjective or adverb (✓ *old enough*, ✓ *quickly enough*).

All / Every / Each / Both / Either / Neither and Verb Agreement

These words describe complete or paired groups, and their grammar — especially verb agreement — repays a little care.

All refers to the whole of a group or quantity. It can take a plural or uncountable noun:

- ✓ *All students must register.* (countable plural → plural verb)
- ✓ *All the water has gone.* (uncountable → singular verb)

Every and **each** take a **singular noun and a singular verb**, even though they refer to many things:

- ✓ *Every room has a window.* (not ✗ *have*)
- ✓ *Each answer is worth two points.*

Both refers to two things together and takes a plural verb:

- ✓ *Both plans are good.*
- ✓ *Both of us agree.*

Either means *one or the other* of two; **neither** means *not one and not the other* of two. Both normally take a **singular** noun and verb:

- ✓ *Either day is fine.* (Monday or Tuesday — pick one)
- ✓ *Neither answer is correct.* (not the first, not the second)

Agreement reminder: *Every, each, either, and neither* feel plural in meaning but are grammatically **singular**: ✓ *Every dog needs exercise.* ✓ *Neither option works.* By contrast, *both* and plural *all* take a plural verb: ✓ *Both options work.*

British vs American note: When *neither/either of* is followed by a plural, careful (especially British) usage prefers a singular verb — ✓ *Neither of the answers is right* — but a plural verb (*are*) is very common in informal speech on both sides of the Atlantic.

Word Order: **Of** and Specific Groups

Many quantifiers can be used in two ways: **directly before a noun** (general) or with **of + a specific group** (*the, this, my, these, etc.*).

- General (no *of*): ✓ *Most people enjoy music.*
- Specific (*of the*): ✓ *Most of the people at the party were students.*

The pattern is simple: drop *of* for the general statement, and add *of* when a second determiner (*the, my, these, them*) follows.

- ✓ *Some children* / ✓ *Some of the children in my class*
- ✓ *All birds* / ✓ *All of my birds* (or ✓ *all my birds* — *of* is optional after *all* and *both*)
- ✓ *None of the answers were correct.* (*none of* is the form before a specific group)

Watch out: Do not mix the two patterns. ✗ *Most of people* → ✓ *Most people* (general) or ✓ *Most of the people* (specific). With a **pronoun**, *of* is always required: ✓ *Most of them* (**not ✗ most them**); ✓ *Both of us*; ✓ *All of you.*

Quick Review

- A **determiner** comes before a noun to show *which, how many, or whose*: articles, demonstratives, possessives, quantifiers, and numbers.
- **Demonstratives** show distance and number: *this/these* (near), *that/those* (far).
- **Possessive determiners** (*my, your, its...*) need a noun; **possessive pronouns** (*mine, yours...*) stand alone. **Its** = possession; **it's** = *it is / it has*.
- Match quantifiers to noun type: *many/few/several* (countable), *much/little* (uncountable), *some/any/a lot of/enough/all* (both).
- **Some** for positives and offers/requests; **any** for negatives and open questions.
- **A few / a little** = positive (*some*); **few / little** = negative (*almost none*).
- Use **a lot of** in positive statements; keep **much/many** mainly for questions and negatives.
- **Every, each, either, neither** take a **singular** verb; **both** and plural **all** take a **plural** verb.
- Add **of** before a specific group (*most of the people*) and before pronouns (*all of them*); drop it for general statements (*most people*).

Practice

A. Choose the correct word.

1. (*This / These*) information is very useful.
2. The bird built (*its / it's*) nest in our tree.

3. I'm thirsty. Could I have (*some / any*) water?
4. We don't have (*much / many*) time before the train leaves.
5. (*Every / Both*) student in the class passed the exam.
6. There were (*few / a few*) tickets left, so we were lucky to get in.

B. Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1. Most of people enjoy a good holiday.
2. She loves her job because it's challenges keep her interested.
3. Each of the rooms have a balcony.

C. Complete with *few*, *a few*, *little*, or *a little*.

1. Hurry — we have very _____ time left!
2. I speak _____ Spanish, so I can order food in a restaurant.

Answers

1. **This** — *information* is uncountable, so it takes the singular *this*.
2. **its** — possession (the nest belongs to the bird); no apostrophe.
3. **some** — it is a polite request, where *some* is used.
4. **much** — *time* is uncountable, and the sentence is negative.
5. **Every** — followed by a singular noun (*student*); *both* needs two things and a plural noun.
6. **a few** — positive meaning (“some, and we were lucky”); *few* would mean almost none.
7. **Most people** enjoy a good holiday. (Drop *of* before a general noun — or say *most of the people*.)
8. She loves her job because **its** challenges keep her interested. (Possessive, no apostrophe.)
9. Each of the rooms **has** a balcony. (*Each* takes a singular verb.)
10. **little** — negative meaning: almost no time, so hurry.

11. **a little** — positive meaning: some Spanish, enough to order food.

Chapter 7 — Pronouns & Possessives

Imagine telling a story without pronouns: “*Maria opened Maria’s bag, took out Maria’s phone, and called Maria’s sister.*” Exhausting, isn’t it? Pronouns rescue us from this kind of repetition. They are small words that stand in for nouns and noun phrases, keeping our sentences light and natural: “*Maria opened her bag, took out her phone, and called her sister.*”

In this chapter we will meet the whole family of pronouns and the closely related possessives. Master them, and your English will sound smoother, clearer, and far more confident.

What Pronouns Do

A pronoun replaces a noun or a noun phrase so that we do not have to repeat it. The word (or words) that a pronoun refers back to is called the **antecedent**.

- *My brother lost his keys. He found them under the sofa. (He = my brother; them = his keys.)*

For communication to work, the antecedent must be clear.

- ✓ *Sara told Lina that she had passed. (ambiguous — who passed?)*
- ✓ *Sara told Lina, “You passed.” (clear)*

Key idea: A pronoun is only as clear as its antecedent. If a reader cannot instantly tell what *it*, *they*, or *this* refers to, rewrite the sentence.

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns change their form depending on the job they do in a sentence. **Subject pronouns** perform the action; **object pronouns** receive it.

- ✓ **She*** called me. (*She is the subject; me* is the object.*)
- ✗ *Her called I.*

The table below shows the complete set, together with the matching possessives and reflexives.

Subject	Object	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun	Reflexive
I	me	my	mine	myself
you (sing.)	you	your	yours	yourself
he	him	his	his	himself
she	her	her	hers	herself
it	it	its	—	itself
we	us	our	ours	ourselves
you (pl.)	you	your	yours	yourselves
they	them	their	theirs	themselves

Here is each column at work:

- **Subject:** ✓ *We are ready.*
- **Object:** ✓ *The teacher praised us.*
- **Possessive determiner:** ✓ *Our house is small.*
- **Possessive pronoun:** ✓ *The small house is ours.*
- **Reflexive:** ✓ *We taught ourselves to cook.*

Common Mistake — “between you and me”: After a preposition (*between, with, for, to*) or as the object of a verb, use the **object** form. *Between* is a preposition, so: - ✓ *This is a secret between you and me.* - ✗ *This is a secret between you and I.*

A quick test: remove the other person. You would never say “*between I,*” so it must be *me*. The same trick fixes subjects: “*Me and Tom went*” → drop Tom → “*Me went*” sounds wrong, so say ✓ *Tom and I went.*

Possessives

Possessives show ownership or a relationship. There are two kinds, and learners often mix them up.

Possessive Determiners vs. Possessive Pronouns

A **possessive determiner** (*my, your, his, her, its, our, their*) comes **before a noun**. A **possessive pronoun** (*mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs*) **stands alone** and replaces the whole “determiner + noun” phrase.

- ✓ *That is my coat.* (determiner + noun)
- ✓ *That coat is mine.* (pronoun, alone)
- ✗ *That coat is mine coat.*
- ✗ *That is mine coat.*

More examples:

- ✓ *Is this your pen, or is it hers?*
- ✓ ***Their** garden is bigger than ours*.**

Notice that **his** serves as both a determiner and a pronoun (*his book / the book is his*), and that there is **no possessive pronoun for it** — we simply rephrase.

The Possessive Apostrophe for Nouns

To show possession with a **noun**, we add an apostrophe.

Situation	Form	Example
Singular noun	add 's	<i>the dog's bone</i>
Plural noun ending in -s	add ' only	<i>the dogs' bones</i>
Irregular plural (no -s)	add 's	<i>the children's toys</i>
Singular name ending in s	's or '	<i>James's car / James' car</i>

- ✓ *the dog's bone* (one dog) vs. ✓ *the dogs' bones* (several dogs)
- ✓ *the women's team* (irregular plural)

British vs. American: Both accept *James's* and *James'*. American style guides lean toward *James's*; British style varies, but *James's* is widely preferred when you would pronounce the extra syllable (“Jameses”). Choose one style and stay consistent.

Strong Callout — its vs. it's: This is the single most common apostrophe error in English. - **its** = possessive determiner (belonging to it): ✓ *The cat licked its paw.* - **it's** = the contraction of *it is* or *it has*: ✓ *It's raining. It's been a long day.*

Test it: if you can replace the word with *it is* or *it has*, use the apostrophe. Otherwise, never. ✗ *The dog wagged it's tail.* → ✓ *its tail.*

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns (*myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves*) end in *-self* (singular) or *-selves* (plural). They have three main uses.

1. When the subject and object are the same person or thing:

- ✓ *She hurt herself.* (She and the person hurt are the same.)
- ✓ *We enjoyed ourselves at the party.*

2. For emphasis:

- ✓ *The manager himself apologised.* (the manager, not someone else)
- ✓ *I'll do it myself.*

3. After *by*, meaning “alone” or “without help”:

- ✓ *She lives by herself.* (alone)
- ✓ *He fixed the car by himself.* (without help)

Common Misuse: Do not use a reflexive pronoun where a plain object or subject pronoun belongs. They are not a “polite” or “formal” version of *me* or *I*. - ✗ *Please contact myself with any questions.* → ✓ *Please contact me.* - ✗ *John and myself will attend.* → ✓ *John and I will attend.*

Demonstrative Pronouns

This, that, these, and those can act as pronouns when they stand **alone**, pointing to something already known. (*This* and *these* suggest things near; *that* and *those* suggest things farther away.)

- ✓ ***This*** is delicious.
- ✓ ***Those*** are too expensive.
- ✓ *I didn't say that.*

When they sit before a noun (*this book, those shoes*), they are determiners, not pronouns — but the words are identical.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to people or things without saying exactly who or which: *someone, anyone, no one, everyone; something, anything, nothing, everything; somebody, anybody, nobody, everybody*.

A key rule: these words are grammatically **singular** and take a **singular verb**, even though they often feel plural in meaning.

- ✓ **Everyone is** here. (not are)
- ✓ **Nothing was** broken.
- ✓ **Somebody has** left a bag.

The modern singular “they”: When the gender of a person is unknown or irrelevant, modern English uses **they / them / their** with a singular meaning. It is now accepted in both formal and informal writing. - ✓ *If anyone calls, tell them I’ll be back soon.* - ✓ **Someone* left** their* umbrella.

This neatly avoids the clumsy “his or her” and is fully standard today.

Reciprocal Pronouns

Each other and *one another* describe an action that two or more people direct **at each other** mutually.

- ✓ *Anna and Ben help each other.* (Anna helps Ben; Ben helps Anna.)
- ✓ *The teammates trust one another.*

Traditionally, *each other* was used for two and *one another* for more than two, but in modern English they are largely interchangeable.

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns (*who*, *whom*, *which*, *that*, *whose*) introduce a clause that gives more information about a noun. (We explore these fully in the chapter on relative clauses; here is a brief introduction.)

- ✓ *The man who lives next door is a doctor.* (*who* for people)
- ✓ *The book that I bought was cheap.* (*that* for people or things)
- ✓ *Paris, which is in France, is beautiful.* (*which* for things)
- ✓ *That's the artist whose work I love.* (*whose* for possession)

Who vs. whom, made simple: Use **who** for the subject (the doer) and **whom** for the object (the receiver). Test by answering with *he* or *him*: if the answer is *he*, use **who**; if it is *him*, use **whom** (both end in *m*). - ✓ *Who called?* → *He called.* (subject) - ✓ *To whom did you speak?* → *I spoke to him.* (object)

In everyday speech, *who* often replaces *whom*; *whom* sounds more formal.

Interrogative Pronouns

We use *who*, *whom*, *what*, and *which* to ask questions.

- ✓ **Who** *is at the door?* (asking about a person)
- ✓ **What** *do you want?* (asking about a thing, open choice)
- ✓ **Which** *do you prefer, tea or coffee?* (asking to choose from a limited set)

“One” and “Ones” as Pronouns

To avoid repeating a countable noun, we can replace it with **one** (singular) or **ones** (plural).

- ✓ *I'd like a coffee — a large one, please. (one = coffee)*
- ✓ *These apples are nicer than the green ones. (ones = apples)*
- ✓ *“Which shirt?” “The blue one.”*

This keeps speech crisp without sounding repetitive.

“It” and “There” as Empty Subjects

English sentences normally need a subject, even when there is no real “doer.” In such cases, *it* and *there* act as **dummy** (or “empty”) subjects — they fill the subject slot but carry no meaning of their own.

We use **it** for weather, time, distance, and general situations:

- ✓ ***It's** raining.*
- ✓ ***It's** half past three.*
- ✓ ***It's** a long way to the station.*

We use **there** to say that something exists or is present:

- ✓ ***There is** a problem.*
- ✓ ***There are** three reasons. (verb agrees with the real subject, reasons)*

Callout — don't drop the dummy subject: Many languages omit the subject here, but English requires it. - ✗ *Is raining.* → ✓ ***It is** raining.* - ✗ *Are many people.* → ✓ ***There are** many people.*

Quick Review

- Pronouns replace nouns to avoid repetition; the noun they refer to is the **antecedent**, which must be clear.
- Use **subject** pronouns for the doer (*I, he, they*) and **object** pronouns for the receiver (*me, him, them*). After prepositions, use the object form: *between you and me***.
- **Possessive determiners** (*my, your*) come before a noun; **possessive pronouns** (*mine, yours*) stand alone.
- Show noun possession with 's (singular), s' (plural). Remember: **its** = belonging to it; **it's** = *it is / it has*.
- **Reflexive** pronouns are for when subject = object, for emphasis, and *by + self* = alone. Don't use them in place of *me* or *I*.
- **Indefinite** pronouns (*everyone, something*) take a **singular verb**; use singular **they** for unknown gender.
- *Each other / one another* are **reciprocal**. *Who/whom/which/that/whose* are **relative**; *who/what/which* are **interrogative**.
- **One/ones** avoid repeating a noun. **It** and **there** are dummy subjects English cannot omit.

Practice

A. Choose the correct pronoun.

1. The gift is for my sister and (I / me).
2. (Who / Whom) did you invite to the party?
3. My parents and (I / me) are going on holiday.
4. Can you keep this between you and (I / me)?

B. Correct the error in each sentence.

1. The cat hurt it's leg.

2. Everyone are welcome to join.
3. Please send the report to myself.
4. That book is mine book.

Answers

1. **me** — object of the preposition *for*. (Test: *for me*, not *for I*.)
2. **Whom** — it is the object (*you invited him*). *Who* is also acceptable in informal speech.
3. **I** — subject of the sentence. (Test: drop *My parents* → *I am going*, not *Me am going*.)
4. **me** — object of the preposition *between*.
5. *The cat hurt its leg.* — possessive, no apostrophe (*it's* would mean *it is*).
6. *Everyone is welcome to join.* — *everyone* takes a singular verb.
7. *Please send the report to me.* — use the object pronoun, not a reflexive.
8. *That book is mine.* — *mine* is a possessive pronoun and stands alone (no following noun).

PART III

The Verb System

The heart of English: every tense and aspect, modals, the passive, conditionals, reported speech, verb patterns, and phrasal verbs.

Chapter 8 — The Present Tenses

The present is where most English conversations live. We talk about who we are, what we do every day, what is happening right now, and what we have planned. To do all of this naturally, you need two tenses working together: the **present simple** and the **present continuous** (also called the present progressive).

These two tenses look easy, and in many ways they are. But they are also responsible for some of the most common mistakes learners make — a forgotten *-s*, a stative verb pushed into the *-ing* form, or the famous “*I am agree*” (✗). This chapter will give you the forms, the uses, and the contrasts you need to use both tenses with confidence.

In this chapter: We cover the present simple and the present continuous. The **present perfect** (*I have lived here for ten years*) is a different tense with its own chapter — we will only point to it here so you do not confuse it with the present simple.

Part 1 — The Present Simple

Form

The present simple is built from the **base form** of the verb. For most subjects, the verb does not change at all. The one exception is the **third person singular** (*he, she, it*, and any singular noun), which takes an *-s* or *-es* ending.

	Affirmative	Negative	Question
I	I work	I don't work	Do I work?
You	You work	You don't work	Do you work?
He / She / It	He works	He doesn't work	Does he work?
We	We work	We don't work	Do we work?
They	They work	They don't work	Do they work?

Notice the pattern:

- **Affirmative:** add *-s* only in the third person singular.
- **Negative:** use *don't* (do not) — or *doesn't* (does not) in the third person.
- **Question:** use *Do* — or *Does* in the third person — before the subject.

A key point: once you use *does* or *doesn't*, the main verb goes back to its **base form**. The *-s* has already “moved” onto *does*.

- ✓ *She works in a bank.*
- ✗ *She work in a bank.*
- ✓ *She doesn't work on Sundays.*
- ✗ *She doesn't works on Sundays.*
- ✓ **Does* she work* here?**
- ✗ **Does* she works* here?**

Spelling of the third-person *-s*

Adding the *-s* usually means simply writing *-s*, but a few spelling rules apply:

Rule	Examples
Most verbs: add <i>-s</i>	<i>work</i> → <i>works</i> , <i>play</i> → <i>plays</i> , <i>run</i> → <i>runs</i>

Rule	Examples
Verbs ending in -s, -ss, -sh, -ch, -x, -z: add -es	<i>miss</i> → <i>misses</i> , <i>wash</i> → <i>washes</i> , <i>watch</i> → <i>watches</i> , <i>fix</i> → <i>fixes</i>
Consonant + -y: change y to i and add -es	<i>study</i> → <i>studies</i> , <i>try</i> → <i>tries</i> , <i>carry</i> → <i>carries</i>
Vowel + -y: just add -s	<i>play</i> → <i>plays</i> , <i>enjoy</i> → <i>enjoys</i> , <i>buy</i> → <i>buys</i>
Irregular	<i>have</i> → <i>has</i> , <i>go</i> → <i>goes</i> , <i>do</i> → <i>does</i>

- ✓ *He studies medicine.* (not *studys*)
- ✓ *The bus goes every hour.*
- ✓ *My brother has two cats.* (not *haves*)

Watch out — the #1 learner slip: The missing third-person -s is the single most common error in English. *He live in Paris* (✗) feels natural to say because the -s carries almost no meaning — but native speakers notice it immediately. Train your ear: **he / she / it = verb + s**. Say it aloud until it feels automatic: *he works, she goes, it rains*.

Uses of the present simple

The present simple is the tense of things that are generally, permanently, or repeatedly true — not tied to this exact moment.

1. Habits and routines (often with frequency adverbs: *always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never*):

- ✓ *I drink coffee every morning.*
- ✓ *She never eats meat.*
- ✓ *We usually go to the gym on Tuesdays.*

Tip — word order with frequency adverbs: These adverbs go **before** the main verb but **after** *be*. ✓ *He often arrives late.* ✓

He is often late. Expressions like every day, once a week, and on Mondays usually go at the end: I check my email every day.

2. Permanent situations:

- ✓ *They live in Madrid.*
- ✓ *I work for a software company.*

3. General truths and facts:

- ✓ *Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.*
- ✓ *The sun rises in the east.*
- ✓ *Bees make honey.*

4. Timetables and schedules (fixed events, even in the future):

- ✓ *The train leaves at 6:00 tomorrow.*
- ✓ *The film starts at eight.*
- ✓ *The shop opens at nine and closes at six.*

5. Instructions and directions:

- ✓ *You take the second left and go straight on.*
- ✓ *First you chop the onions, then you add the garlic.*

6. Narration, commentary, and headlines (live sport, reviews, storytelling, news):

- ✓ *Messi passes to Suárez, who shoots and scores!*
- ✓ *In the novel, the hero arrives in London and meets a stranger.*

7. States (feelings, opinions, possession, senses — see the section on stative verbs below):

- ✓ *I understand the problem.*
- ✓ *This belongs to my sister.*

Part 2 – The Present Continuous

Form

The present continuous is formed with the verb **be** (*am / is / are*) plus the *-ing* form of the main verb.

	Affirmative	Negative	Question
I	I am working	I'm not working	Am I working?
You	You are working	You aren't working	Are you working?
He / She / It	He is working	He isn't working	Is he working?
We	We are working	We aren't working	Are we working?
They	They are working	They aren't working	Are they working?

The contractions are very common in speech and informal writing: *I'm, you're, he's, she's, it's, we're, they're*. Both negative forms are correct: *she's not working* and *she isn't working* mean the same thing.

- ✓ *I'm reading a great book at the moment.*
- ✓ *They aren't listening.*
- ✓ **Is* he** sleeping*?

Don't forget *be*: The *-ing* form can never stand alone as a tense.
 ✗ *I working now.* → ✓ *I am working now.* The verb *be* does the grammatical work; the *-ing* form carries the meaning.

Spelling of the *-ing* form

Rule	Examples
Most verbs: add <i>-ing</i>	<i>work</i> → <i>working</i> , <i>play</i> → <i>playing</i> , <i>read</i> → <i>reading</i>

Rule	Examples
Verbs ending in a silent -e: drop the e, add -ing	<i>make</i> → <i>making</i> , <i>write</i> → <i>writing</i> , <i>come</i> → <i>coming</i>
One-syllable verbs ending consonant–vowel–consonant: double the final consonant	<i>run</i> → <i>running</i> , <i>sit</i> → <i>sitting</i> , <i>stop</i> → <i>stopping</i>
Verbs ending in -ie: change to -y, add -ing	<i>lie</i> → <i>lying</i> , <i>die</i> → <i>dying</i> , <i>tie</i> → <i>tying</i>
(BrE) Verbs ending in -l: usually double the l	<i>travel</i> → <i>travelling</i> (BrE), <i>travel</i> → <i>traveling</i> (AmE)

- ✓ *She is making dinner.* (not *makeing*)
- ✓ *The dog is running in the park.* (not *runing*)
- ✓ *He is lying on the sofa.* (not *lieing*)

British vs American spelling: With verbs that end in a single -l, British English doubles the letter (*travelling*, *cancelling*), while American English keeps one (*traveling*, *canceling*). Both are correct — just be consistent.

Uses of the present continuous

The present continuous describes actions and situations that are **in progress** or **temporary** — happening now or “around now”.

1. Actions happening at the moment of speaking:

- ✓ *Be quiet — the baby is sleeping.*
- ✓ *Look! It ’s raining again.*

2. Temporary situations (happening “around now”, not necessarily this second):

- ✓ *I ’m staying with my parents until I find a flat.*
- ✓ *She ’s working in Berlin this month.*

3. Trends and developments (changing situations):

- ✓ *More and more people are working from home.*
- ✓ *The climate is changing.*
- ✓ *Prices are rising fast.* (often with *get, become, rise, grow, improve*: *The weather is getting colder.*)

4. Future arrangements (a plan you have already fixed, usually with another person, often with a time word):

- ✓ *I 'm meeting Sam tomorrow at noon.*
- ✓ *We 're flying to Rome on Friday.*

Future use, present form: The present continuous is one of the most natural ways to talk about the future when the arrangement is already decided. *What are you doing this weekend?* sounds far more natural to a native speaker than *What will you do this weekend?* The future tenses have their own chapter, but remember that this everyday “diary” future lives here.

5. Annoying or surprising repeated actions with *always, constantly, forever*:

- ✓ *He 's always losing his keys!*
- ✓ *You 're constantly interrupting me.*

Note the feeling: *He always loses his keys* is a neutral fact. *He's always losing his keys!* adds emotion — usually irritation, sometimes affectionate exaggeration. The *always + continuous* combination is how English speakers complain.

Part 3 – Present Simple vs Present Continuous

This is the heart of the chapter. The two tenses answer different questions:

- **Present simple:** Is it generally / permanently / repeatedly true?
In general, what do you do?
- **Present continuous:** Is it happening now or temporarily?
What is happening right now / these days?

Compare these pairs:

- ✓ *I work in a hospital.* (my permanent job) — ✓ *I 'm working in a hospital this summer.* (temporary)
- ✓ *She speaks four languages.* (a permanent ability) — ✓ *She 's speaking Italian to that man.* (right now)
- ✓ *We live in London.* (our home) — ✓ *We 're living with friends while we move.* (temporary)
- ✓ *It usually rains in April.* (general truth) — ✓ *Look, it 's raining!* (now)

Comparison table

Present Simple	Present Continuous
Permanent	Temporary
Habits and routines	Actions in progress now
General truths and facts	Trends and changing situations
Fixed timetables (the train leaves)	Personal arrangements (I'm meeting Sam)
Often with: <i>always, every day, usually, on Mondays</i>	Often with: <i>now, right now, at the moment, today, this week</i>

Time expressions

Typical of present simple	Typical of present continuous
always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never	now, right now, at the moment
every day / week / year	today, tonight, this week / month
on Mondays, twice a week	currently, these days, nowadays
in general, as a rule	still (= continuing), at present

Part 4 – Stative (Non-Action) Verbs

Some verbs describe **states** — not actions — such as feelings, thoughts, senses, and relationships. These verbs are normally **not used in the continuous**, even when we are talking about right now.

Common stative verbs include:

- **Emotions / preferences:** *like, love, hate, want, need, prefer*
- **Mental states:** *know, believe, understand, mean, remember, forget*
- **Senses / appearance:** *seem, look (= appear)*
- **Possession / relationship:** *belong, own, have (= possess)*

Examples:

- ✓ *I like this song.* — ✗ *I am liking this song.*
- ✓ *She wants a coffee.* — ✗ *She is wanting a coffee.*
- ✓ *Do you understand?* — ✗ *Are you understanding?*
- ✓ *This car belongs to me.* — ✗ *This car is belonging to me.*

- ✓ *I need help now.* — ✗ *I am needing help now.*

Even though the meaning is “right now”, we still use the **present simple** because the verb describes a state, not an activity.

Verbs with two meanings

Some verbs can be either stative or active depending on their meaning. When they describe an action, the continuous is fine; when they describe a state, it is not.

Verb	Stative (simple)	Active (continuous)
have	possess: <i>I have two cars.</i>	an action/experience: <i>I 'm having lunch.</i>
think	opinion: <i>I think you're right.</i>	mental activity: <i>I 'm thinking about it.</i>
see	perceive / understand: <i>I see what you mean.</i>	meet / visit: <i>I 'm seeing the doctor today.</i>
taste	quality: <i>The soup tastes salty.</i>	the action: <i>The chef is tasting the soup.</i>
look	appear: <i>You look tired.</i>	direct the eyes: <i>I 'm looking at the photos.</i>
be	character: <i>He is kind.</i>	behaving (temporarily): <i>He 's being rude today.</i>

- ✓ *I have a headache.* (state) / ✓ *I 'm having a great time.* (action)
- ✓ *This tastes delicious.* (state) / ✓ *She 's tasting the sauce.* (action)

Important — same verb, different worlds: *I think it's true* (= my opinion) and *I'm thinking about it* (= I'm using my mind right now) are both correct because the verb *think* has two jobs.

Ask yourself: am I describing a fixed state, or an activity in progress? That decides the tense.

A modern note: Some companies use the continuous in slogans for effect — famously, “*I’m lovin’ it.*” This is deliberate, informal, marketing English. In standard grammar, *love* is stative: ✓ *I love it.*

Common Mistakes

Mistake 1 — Dropping the third-person -s. ✗ *My sister work in a bank.* → ✓ *My sister works in a bank.*

Mistake 2 — Using the continuous with stative verbs. ✗ *I am knowing the answer.* → ✓ *I know the answer.* ✗ *She is wanting to leave.* → ✓ *She wants to leave.*

Mistake 3 — “I am agree”. *Agree* is already a full verb; it does not need *be*. ✗ *I am agree with you.* → ✓ *I agree with you.*

Mistake 4 — Keeping -s after does / doesn’t. ✗ *Does she likes it?* → ✓ *Does she like it?*

Mistake 5 — Forgetting *be* in the continuous. ✗ *They playing football.* → ✓ *They are playing football.*

Quick Review

- The **present simple** uses the base verb; add **-s/-es** in the third person singular (*he works*). Negatives and questions use **do / does**, after which the main verb returns to its base form.
- Use the present simple for **habits, routines, permanent situations, general truths, timetables, instructions, narration, and states.**

- The **present continuous** = **am / is / are + verb-ing**. Watch the spelling: *make* → *making*, *run* → *running*, *lie* → *lying*.
 - Use the present continuous for **actions happening now, temporary situations, trends, future arrangements, and “always + -ing”** for annoyance.
 - **Stative verbs** (*like, know, want, belong, understand...*) normally take the **simple**, not the continuous. Some verbs (*have, think, see, taste*) switch meaning between the two forms.
 - Top error to fix first: the missing third-person **-s**.
-

Practice

A. Put the verb in the correct present tense (simple or continuous).

1. Listen! Someone _____ (sing) in the next room.
2. Water _____ (freeze) at zero degrees.
3. My father usually _____ (read) the newspaper after dinner.
4. I can't talk now – I _____ (drive).
5. The train _____ (leave) at 7:45 every morning.
6. These days, more people _____ (use) public transport.

B. Choose the correct option.

1. I _____ this film is boring. (think / am thinking)
2. Be quiet – she _____ to concentrate. (tries / is trying)
3. This jacket _____ to my brother. (belongs / is belonging)

C. Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1. He don't like spicy food.

Answers

1. *is singing* (action happening now — note “Listen!”)
2. *freezes* (general truth)
3. *reads* (habit, with *usually*)
4. *am driving* (action in progress now)
5. *leaves* (timetable / fixed schedule)
6. *are using* (current trend)
7. *think* (stative — opinion)
8. *is trying* (action in progress now)
9. *belongs* (stative — possession; never *is belonging*)
10. ✓ *He doesn't like spicy food.* (third person needs *doesn't*, and the main verb stays in its base form)

Chapter 9 — The Past Tenses

Every story we tell, every memory we share, and every report we give about what happened lives in the past. To talk about the past clearly in English, you need three tools above all: the **past simple**, the **past continuous**, and the structures **used to** and **would** for past habits. This chapter shows you how each one is formed, when to choose it, and how they work together to make your storytelling natural and accurate.

A quick note: The *past perfect (had done)* and *past perfect continuous (had been doing)* belong to the family of perfect tenses, so they are covered in the chapter on perfect tenses. Here we focus on the everyday backbone of past narration.

Part 1 — The Past Simple

The past simple is the workhorse of past narration. We use it for actions and situations that began and ended in the past.

Forming regular verbs: adding **-ed**

Most English verbs are *regular*: you make the past simple by adding **-ed** to the base form.

- *work* → *worked*
- *play* → *played*
- *open* → *opened*

The same form is used for every subject — there is no change for *he*, *she*, or *it*.

Good news: Unlike the present simple, the past simple has just **one form** for all persons. *I worked, you worked, she worked, they worked.*

Spelling rules for *-ed*

Rule	Examples
Verb ends in -e → add only -d	<i>like</i> → <i>liked</i> , <i>love</i> → <i>loved</i> , <i>hope</i> → <i>hoped</i>
One syllable, consonant–vowel–consonant → double the final consonant	<i>stop</i> → <i>stopped</i> , <i>plan</i> → <i>planned</i> , <i>rob</i> → <i>robbed</i>
Consonant + -y → change y to i , add -ed	<i>study</i> → <i>studied</i> , <i>try</i> → <i>tried</i> , <i>carry</i> → <i>carried</i>
Vowel + -y → keep y , add -ed	<i>play</i> → <i>played</i> , <i>enjoy</i> → <i>enjoyed</i> , <i>stay</i> → <i>stayed</i>
Two syllables, stress on the last → double the consonant	<i>prefer</i> → <i>preferred</i> , <i>admit</i> → <i>admitted</i>
Two syllables, stress on the first → do not double (mostly)	<i>open</i> → <i>opened</i> , <i>visit</i> → <i>visited</i> , <i>listen</i> → <i>listened</i>

British/American difference: Verbs ending in **-l** double the *l* in British spelling but usually not in American spelling. *travel* → *travelled* (BrE) / *traveled* (AmE); *cancel* → *cancelled* (BrE) / *cancelled* (AmE).

Pronunciation of *-ed*

The *-ed* ending is spelled the same way but pronounced in **three** different ways. Listen for the sound at the end of the base verb.

Ending sound of <i>-ed</i>	When it happens	Examples
/t/	After voiceless sounds (except /t/): <i>k, p, f, s, sh, ch</i>	<i>worked, stopped, laughed, watched, washed</i>
/d/	After voiced sounds (except /d/): vowels and <i>b, g, l, m, n, r, v, z</i>	<i>played, opened, called, loved, cleaned</i>
/ɪd/	After /t/ or /d/ only — this adds an extra syllable	<i>wanted, needed, started, decided, visited</i>

Quick test: Only verbs whose base ends in a *t* or *d* sound get the extra syllable /ɪd/. So *wanted* has two syllables (*want-ed*), but *worked* has only one.

Irregular verbs

Many of the most common English verbs are *irregular* — they do not take *-ed* and must be learned individually.

- *go* → *went*
- *have* → *had*
- *see* → *saw*
- *come* → *came*
- *take* → *took*
- *make* → *made*
- *get* → *got*
- *give* → *gave*
- *say* → *said*
- *think* → *thought*
- *buy* → *bought*
- *find* → *found*

Tip: There are a few hundred irregular verbs, but you use the same fifty or so again and again. A full irregular-verbs reference list appears at the back of this book — study it in small groups and review often.

Negatives and questions: *did* / *didn't* + base verb

Here is one of the most important rules in English grammar. To make a **negative** or a **question** in the past simple, we use the auxiliary **did** (the past of *do*) plus the **base form** of the main verb. The past meaning is carried by *did*, so the main verb returns to its base form.

Crucial rule: After **did** / **didn't**, never use the past form. The verb goes back to its **base**. ✗ *Did you went to the party?* → ✓ *Did you go to the party?* ✗ *She didn't came.* → ✓ *She didn't come.* ✗ *We didn't went out.* → ✓ *We didn't go out.*

Examples:

- ✓ *I didn't see him yesterday.*
- ✓ *They didn't finish the work.*
- ✗ *They didn't finished the work.*
- ✓ *Did she call you?*
- ✗ *Did she called you?*
- ✓ *Where did you buy that jacket?*
- ✗ *Where did you bought that jacket?*

The one exception is **be**, which does not use *did*. We say *was/were* directly: *I was tired.* → *I wasn't tired.* → *Were you tired?*

Full form table: past simple (verb to work and verb to be)

	Affirmative	Negative	Question
I / he / she / it	<i>I worked</i>	<i>I did not (didn't) work</i>	<i>Did I work?</i>
you / we / they	<i>they worked</i>	<i>they didn't work</i>	<i>Did they work?</i>
be (I/he/she/it)	<i>I was</i>	<i>I wasn't</i>	<i>Was I?</i>
be (you/we/they)	<i>we were</i>	<i>we weren't</i>	<i>Were we?</i>

Uses of the past simple

- 1. A completed action at a definite past time.** - ✓ *I bought this car in 2010.* - ✓ *We arrived at six o'clock.*
- 2. A sequence of finished events (narration).** - ✓ *She opened the door, walked in, and sat down.* - ✓ *He woke up, made coffee, and read the news.*
- 3. Past habits and repeated actions.** - ✓ *Every summer we visited my grandparents.*
- 4. Past states.** - ✓ *As a child, I lived in Berlin.* - ✓ *They had a small house by the sea.*

Typical time expressions

The past simple loves a finished time marker:

- *yesterday, last night, last week, last year*
- *two days ago, a long time ago, ten minutes ago*
- *in 2010, in the 1990s, when I was young*
- *then, after that, first, next, finally*

Pattern with ago: *ago* always follows the time period and signals past simple. ✓ *I met her three years ago.* (✗ *I have met her three years ago.*)

Part 2 — The Past Continuous

The past continuous (also called the *past progressive*) describes an action **in progress** at a moment in the past.

Form: *was / were + -ing*

We use **was** (for singular) or **were** (for plural and *you*) plus the *-ing* form of the verb.

Full form table: past continuous (verb to work)

	Affirmative	Negative	Question
I / he / she / it	<i>I was working</i>	<i>I wasn't working</i>	<i>Was I working?</i>
you / we / they	<i>they were work- ing</i>	<i>they weren't work- ing</i>	<i>Were they work- ing?</i>

Examples:

- ✓ *At eight o'clock I was having dinner.*
- ✓ *They weren't listening to the teacher.*
- ✓ *What were you doing at midnight?*

Uses of the past continuous

1. **An action in progress at a specific past moment.** The action started before that moment and was still going on. - ✓ *At ten o'clock last night, I was studying.* - ✓ *This time yesterday we were flying over the Atlantic.*

2. **Background or setting in a story.** We often set the scene with the past continuous before the main events arrive in the past simple. - ✓ *The sun was shining and the birds were singing. Suddenly, a car stopped outside.*
3. **Two simultaneous actions in progress** — often linked with *while*. - ✓ *While I was cooking, my brother was cleaning the kitchen.* - ✓ *She was reading while he was watching TV.*
4. **The interrupted action.** This is the classic combination: a longer action in the past continuous is interrupted by a shorter, completed action in the past simple, joined by **when**. - ✓ *I was cooking when the phone rang.* - ✓ *They were leaving the house when it started to rain.* - ✓ *We were watching the film when the lights went out.*

Key contrast — *when vs. while*: *While / As* introduces the **longer** background action (past continuous): *While I was sleeping...* *When* often introduces the **short** interrupting action (past simple): *...when the alarm rang*. Both can appear at the start or in the middle of the sentence: *When the alarm rang, I was sleeping.* = *I was sleeping when the alarm rang.*

Be careful with the order of meaning: ✓ *When I arrived, she was cooking.* (She started cooking **before** I arrived; it was already in progress.) ✓ *When I arrived, she cooked.* (First I arrived, **then** she cooked — two separate completed events.)

Verbs we usually do NOT use in the continuous

Some verbs describe states rather than actions — *know, believe, want, like, love, understand, belong, need, seem*. We normally keep these in the **simple** form, even for the past.

- ✗ *I was knowing the answer.* → ✓ *I knew the answer.*

- ✗ *She was wanting to leave.* → ✓ *She wanted to leave.*

Part 3 — *used to* and *would* for Past Habits

used to + base verb

We use **used to** to talk about past habits and past states that are **no longer true** today. It draws a clear line between *then* and *now*.

- ✓ *I used to smoke, but I quit five years ago.* (past habit, now stopped)
- ✓ *We used to live in a small village.* (past state, no longer true)
- ✓ *There used to be a cinema here.* (past state)

Negatives and questions

In the negative and question forms, *used* drops its *-d* (because *did* already carries the past). The standard forms are **didn't use to** and **did ... use to**.

- ✓ *I didn't use to like coffee, but now I love it.*
- ✓ *Did you use to play any sport when you were young?*
- ✗ *Did you used to play...* (avoid in careful writing)

Note on spelling: You may occasionally see *didn't used to* in informal British writing, but **didn't use to** is the safe, widely accepted form.

used to vs. past simple

When the action happened **once** or at a **specific time**, use the past simple, not *used to*.

- ✓ *I used to go to that beach every summer.* (repeated habit)

- ✗ *I used to go to that beach last Saturday.* → ✓ *I went to that beach last Saturday.* (single event)

Both can express a repeated past habit, but only the past simple works for single, dated events.

The big confusion — three different expressions: 1. **used to + base verb** = a *past habit/state* that is finished. *I used to live alone.* 2. **be used to + noun / -ing** = *be accustomed to* something now. *I am used to living alone.* (= it is normal for me) 3. **get used to + noun / -ing** = *become accustomed to* over time. *I'm getting used to living alone.*

Compare: ✓ *I used to drive on the left.* (I did it in the past; not anymore.) ✓ *I'm used to driving on the left.* (It feels normal to me now.) Note that *be/get used to* are followed by a noun or the **-ing** form, never the base verb: ✗ *I'm used to drive on the left.*

would for repeated past actions

In storytelling and descriptions of the past, **would** + base verb can replace *used to* for **repeated actions** (not states). It gives a warm, narrative feel.

- ✓ *Every Sunday, my grandfather would sit by the fire and tell us stories.*
- ✓ *When we were children, we would play in the garden for hours.*

Important limitation — would cannot describe past states. Use it only for repeated *actions*. For states (with verbs like *be, have, live, know, like*), use *used to* or the past simple. ✗ *I would have a car when I was a student.* (state of ownership) → ✓ *I used to have a car when I was a student.* ✗ *We would live in Rome.* → ✓ *We used to live in Rome.*

Because *would* on its own can be ambiguous (it also forms conditionals), writers usually establish the past habitual context first: *When I was a boy, every winter we would go skiing.*

Past Simple vs. Past Continuous — at a glance

Past Simple	Past Continuous
Completed action: <i>I read a book last night.</i> (I finished it)	Action in progress: <i>I was reading a book last night.</i> (at some point, ongoing)
The whole event: <i>She painted the room.</i>	The middle of the event: <i>She was painting the room.</i>
Sequence of events: <i>He entered and sat down.</i>	Background to events: <i>He was sitting when I entered.</i>
Short, completed (the interruption): <i>...when the phone rang.</i>	Longer, ongoing (interrupted): <i>I was cooking...</i>
<i>We watched TV all evening.</i> (completed)	<i>We were watching TV when she called.</i> (interrupted)

Remember: Use the **past continuous** for the longer, in-progress action and the **past simple** for the shorter, completed one — together they make the most natural way to tell what was happening when something else occurred.

Common Mistakes

1. **Using the past form after *did*.** - ✗ *Did you saw the film?* → ✓ *Did you see the film?* - ✗ *I didn't went.* → ✓ *I didn't go.*
2. **Using the continuous for a completed action.** - ✗ *I was finishing my homework and went to bed.* (if it was completed) - ✓ *I finished my homework and went to bed.*

3. **Confusing *used to* and *be used to*.** - ✗ *I am used to smoke.* →
✓ *I used to smoke.* (past habit) - ✓ *I am used to the noise.* (I'm accustomed to it)
 4. **Using *would* for a past state.** - ✗ *We would have a dog.* → ✓
We used to have a dog.
 5. **Wrong spelling/doubling of *-ed*.** - ✗ *stoped, studied* → ✓
stopped, studied
 6. **Forgetting that *ago* takes the past simple.** - ✗ *I have seen her two days ago.* → ✓ *I saw her two days ago.*
-

Quick Review

- The **past simple** describes finished actions and states at a definite past time. Regular verbs add **-ed** (with spelling rules); many common verbs are **irregular**.
- **-ed** is pronounced /t/, /d/, or /ɪd/ — the extra syllable /ɪd/ appears only after a *t* or *d* sound.
- Make negatives and questions with **did / didn't + base verb** — never the past form after *did*. The verb *be* uses *was/were* instead.
- The **past continuous** (*was/were + -ing*) shows an action in progress, sets the scene, links simultaneous actions (*while*), and forms the interrupted-action pattern (*I was cooking when the phone rang*).
- **used to + base verb** = finished past habit or state. Negatives/questions: *didn't use to / did you use to*.
- **be/get used to + -ing/noun** = (become) accustomed to — a different structure entirely.
- **would + base verb** narrates repeated past *actions* but **cannot** describe past *states*.

Practice

A. Write the correct past simple form (mind the spelling).

1. study → ___ 2. stop → _ 3. play → 4. go → 5. travel (BrE) → ___

B. Mark each -ed pronunciation as /t/, /d/, or /ɪd/. 6. wanted → ___ **7. played** → _ **8. worked** → ___

C. Correct the mistake in each sentence. 9. *Did you went to the concert?* 10. *I didn't saw anyone.* 11. *We would have a big garden when I was young.* 12. *I am used to smoke when I was a teenager.*

D. Choose past simple or past continuous. 13. *I (read) ___ a book when the lights (go) _____ out.* 14. *While she (cook) ___, he (set) _____ the table.*

E. Rewrite using used to. 15. *When I was a child, I played the violin every day, but I don't now.*

Answers

A. 1. *studied* 2. *stopped* 3. *played* 4. *went* 5. *travelled* (BrE) / *traveled* (AmE)

B. 6. /ɪd/ (*want-ed*, extra syllable) 7. /d/ 8. /t/

C. 9. ✓ *Did you go to the concert?* 10. ✓ *I didn't see anyone.* 11. ✓ *We used to have a big garden when I was young.* (*would* cannot describe a state) 12. ✓ *I used to smoke when I was a teenager.* (*past habit*, not *be used to*)

D. 13. *I was reading a book when the lights went out.* (longer action interrupted by a shorter one) 14. *While she was cooking, he was setting the table.* (two simultaneous actions in progress)

E. 15. *When I was a child, I used to play the violin every day (but I don't now).*

Chapter 10 — The Perfect Tenses & Aspect

The perfect tenses are among the most useful tools in English — and, for many learners, the most puzzling. The good news is that once you understand the single idea behind them, the whole system becomes clear. This chapter will give you that idea, show you each form, and help you avoid the classic mistakes.

What Does “Perfect” Mean? Tense vs. Aspect

First, two important words: **tense** and **aspect**. They are not the same thing.

- **Tense** tells you *when* something happens — past, present, or future.
- **Aspect** tells you *how* an action relates to time — whether it is finished, in progress, or connected to another moment.

The word **perfect** here has nothing to do with “without faults.” It comes from a Latin word meaning *completed*. The **perfect aspect** always does one job: it **connects two times**. It links an earlier action to a later point and says, “this earlier thing matters *here*.”

Remember: The perfect aspect is a bridge between two moments. The present perfect connects the past to *now*. The past perfect connects an earlier past to a *later* past.

Every perfect form is built the same way:

have / has / had + past participle

The auxiliary (*have / has / had*) sets the time; the past participle carries the meaning. Let's look at each form.

The Present Perfect

Form

The present perfect is **have / has + past participle**.

Form	Structure	Example
Affirmative	subject + <i>have/has</i> + past participle	<i>I have finished. She has finished.</i>
Negative	subject + <i>have/has</i> + <i>not</i> + past participle	<i>I haven't finished. He hasn't finished.</i>
Question	<i>Have/Has</i> + subject + past participle?	Have* you finished? Has she finished*?

Use *has* with *he / she / it*; use *have* with everyone else. Common contractions: *I've*, *you've*, *he's*, *she's*, *we've*, *they've* and *haven't*, *hasn't*.

Watch out: *He's* can mean *he is* or *he has*. Context decides: *He's tired* (= is) vs. *He's left* (= has). Only *have/has* + past participle is the present perfect.

Use 1: Life Experience (ever / never)

We use the present perfect to talk about experiences in your life up to now, without saying exactly when.

- ✓ *I have visited Japan twice.*
- ✓ **Have*** you ever eaten* *sushi*?
- ✓ *She has never flown in a plane.*

The time is unimportant — what matters is the experience as part of your life so far.

Use 2: Unfinished Time Periods (today, this week)

When the time period is **still continuing**, we use the present perfect.

- ✓ *I have drunk three coffees today.* (Today is not over.)
- ✓ *We have had a lot of rain this month.*
- ✓ *She has called me twice this week.*

Use 3: Recent Actions with a Present Result

A past action can have a result we feel *now*. The present perfect highlights that result.

- ✓ *I've lost my keys.* (Result: I can't get in now.)
- ✓ *He's broken his leg.* (Result: it's in plaster now.)
- ✓ *They've arrived.* (Result: they are here now.)

Use 4: With *just*, *already*, and *yet*

These three words pair naturally with the present perfect.

- ✓ *I've just finished my homework.* (a very short time ago)
- ✓ *She's already left.* (sooner than expected)
- ✓ *Have you eaten yet? — No, not yet.* (questions and negatives)

Tip: *Just* and *already* usually go between *have/has* and the participle. *Yet* goes at the end, in questions and negatives.

Use 5: Duration up to Now — *for* and *since*

To show that something started in the past and continues to now, use the present perfect with *for* or *since*.

- ✓ *I have lived here for ten years.*
- ✓ *I have known her since 2015.*

Rule (for vs. since): - Use **for** with a **length of time**: *for two hours, for a week, for ages*. - Use **since** with a **starting point**: *since Monday, since 9 o'clock, since I was a child*. ✓ *We've been friends for twenty years*. ✓ *We've been friends since 2006*. ✗ *We've been friends ~since twenty years~*.

The Central Difficulty: Present Perfect vs. Past Simple

This is the contrast that gives learners the most trouble — and it is the heart of the chapter. The rule is about **finished vs. unfinished time** and about **connection to now**.

- Use the **past simple** for finished actions at a **finished, specific time**.
- Use the **present perfect** when the time is unfinished or unstated, and the action connects to now.

Present Perfect (connected to now)	Past Simple (finished past)
<i>I've been to Paris.</i> (experience; when isn't stated)	<i>I went to Paris last year.</i> (specific finished time)
<i>She's broken her arm.</i> (it's still broken)	<i>She broke her arm in 2019.</i> (we just report the event)
<i>Have you seen the new film?</i>	<i>Did you see the film on Friday?</i>
<i>We've lived here for years.</i> (still living here)	<i>We lived there for years.</i> (we don't anymore)

Common mistake: Never use the present perfect with a **finished time expression** (*yesterday, last week, in 2010, ten minutes ago, when I was young*). ✗ *I have seen him yesterday*. ✓ *I saw him yesterday*. ✓ *I have seen him*. (no time stated)

Watch out (British vs. American English): British English uses the present perfect strictly with *just / already / yet* and for

recent news. American English often allows the **past simple**: - BrE: *I've just eaten. Have you finished yet?* - AmE: *I just ate. Did you finish yet?* Both are correct in their own variety. For exams, the present perfect is the safer choice with these words.

The Present Perfect Continuous

Form

The present perfect continuous is **have / has + been + verb-ing**.

Form	Example
Affirmative	<i>I have been waiting. She has been waiting.</i>
Negative	<i>I haven't been waiting. He hasn't been waiting.</i>
Question	Have* you been waiting? Has she been waiting*?

Use 1: An Activity Continuing up to Now

It often appears with *for* and *since*, emphasising the **duration** or the **process** rather than the result.

- ✓ *I've been studying English for three years.*
- ✓ *She's been working here since March.*
- ✓ *How long have you been learning the piano?*

Use 2: Recent Activity with Present Evidence

We use it when something has been happening recently and we can see or feel the result now.

- ✓ *You're out of breath — have you been running?*
- ✓ *Her eyes are red. She's been crying.*
- ✓ *The ground is wet; it's been raining.*

Present Perfect Simple vs. Continuous

The simple form points to a **result or completion**; the continuous form points to the **activity or duration**.

Simple (result / completion)	Continuous (activity / duration)
<i>I've read the book.</i> (I finished it.)	<i>I've been reading the book.</i> (in progress; maybe unfinished)
<i>He's painted the fence.</i> (it's done — look)	<i>He's been painting the fence.</i> (that's why he's covered in paint)
<i>I've written three emails.</i> (counting results)	<i>I've been writing emails all morning.</i> (the activity over time)

Tip: When you want to say *how much* or *how many* are completed, use the **simple**. When you want to say *how long* something has been going on, use the **continuous**.

Watch out: Stative verbs (*know, like, have* [= possess], *be, want, believe*) are not normally used in the continuous. ✓ *I've known her for years.* ✗ *I have been knowing her for years.*

The Past Perfect

Form

The past perfect is **had + past participle** — the same for all subjects.

Form	Example
Affirmative	<i>I had finished. They had finished.</i> (contraction: <i>I'd, they'd</i>)
Negative	<i>I hadn't finished.</i>
Question	Had* you finished*?

Use: The “Past Before the Past”

The past perfect describes an action that was **completed before another past action**. It is the bridge that connects an earlier past to a later past.

- ✓ *When I arrived, the train had already left.* (First it left; then I arrived.)
- ✓ *She had finished dinner by the time he got home.*
- ✓ *They were tired because they had been travelling all day.*

It is common with *by the time*, *after*, *before*, and *already*. Compare a simple sequence with a past perfect:

- *He opened the door and saw the mess.* (two events, in order)
- *He saw the mess that the children had made.* (the mess came first)

The past perfect is also essential in **reported speech** and in **narration**, where it lets you step back to an earlier moment.

- ✓ *She said she had seen the film already.* (direct: “*I have seen the film.*”)
- ✓ *By the age of thirty, he had written three novels.*

Common mistake: Don’t use the past perfect just because something happened long ago. It is only needed when you are clearly **already in the past** and want to refer to something **even earlier**. ✗ *I had visited Rome in 2010.* (just one past event) ✓ *I visited Rome in 2010.* ✓ *I had visited Rome before I moved to Italy.* (two past events, one earlier)

The Past Perfect Continuous

Form

The past perfect continuous is **had + been + verb-ing**.

It expresses the **duration of an activity up to a point in the past**, often with *for* or *since*.

- ✓ *She had been working there for ten years before she left.*
- ✓ *We had been waiting for an hour when the bus finally came.*
- ✓ *His clothes were muddy because he had been gardening.*

Like its present-tense cousin, it emphasises the ongoing process and is not used with stative verbs (✗ *had been knowing*).

All Four Perfect Forms Together

Form	Structure	Example
Present perfect	<i>have/has + past participle</i>	<i>I have eaten lunch.</i>
Present perfect continuous	<i>have/has been + -ing</i>	<i>I have been eating all afternoon.</i>
Past perfect	<i>had + past participle</i>	<i>I had eaten before they arrived.</i>
Past perfect continuous	<i>had been + -ing</i>	<i>I had been eating when they arrived.</i>

Quick Review

- **Aspect** describes *how* an action relates to time; **tense** describes *when*. The perfect aspect **connects two times**.

- **Present perfect** (*have/has* + participle): experience, unfinished time, present result, *just/already/yet, for/since* — always linked to **now**. Never use it with a finished time word like *yesterday*.
- **Past simple** is for finished actions at a finished, specific time. *I've been to Paris* (experience) vs. *I went to Paris last year* (specific time).
- **Present perfect continuous** (*have/has been* + -ing): duration and activity up to now, often with visible evidence.
- **Past perfect** (*had* + participle): the “past before the past.”
- **Past perfect continuous** (*had been* + -ing): duration of an activity up to a point in the past.
- **for** = length of time; **since** = starting point.

Practice

Choose or complete the correct form.

1. *I _____ (live) in this city since 2018.*
2. *We _____ (not / finish) the project yet.*
3. *— **you ever** — (ride) a camel?*
4. *He's exhausted. He _____ (work) in the garden all day.*
5. *By the time we got to the cinema, the film _____ (start).*
6. Correct the mistake: *I have met her last week.*
7. *for or since? She has played the violin _____ she was six.*
8. Simple or continuous? *Look at my hands — I _____ (paint) the kitchen.*
9. Past simple or present perfect? *I _____ (see) that film three times. I love it.*
10. *They _____ (wait) for two hours before the train finally arrived.*

Answers

1. *have lived* (duration up to now, with *since*)
2. *haven't finished* (present perfect with *yet*)
3. *Have you ever ridden* (life experience)
4. *has been working* (recent activity, visible result; emphasis on duration)
5. *had started / had already started* (past before the past)
6. *I met her last week.* (*last week* is a finished time, so use the past simple)
7. *since* (*she was six* is a starting point)
8. *have been painting* (the activity explains the present evidence)
9. *have seen* (no specific time; experience connected to now)
10. *had been waiting* (duration of an activity up to a point in the past)

Chapter 11 — Talking About the Future

One of the first surprises for many learners is this: **English has no single “future tense.”** There is no verb ending that means “this happens later,” the way many languages have. Instead, English borrows several different structures — *will*, *be going to*, the present continuous, even the present simple — and each one carries a slightly different shade of meaning.

The good news is that these forms are not random. Once you understand *why* a speaker chooses one form over another, the system becomes logical and even elegant. This chapter walks you through each form, shows you the contrasts that matter most, and points out the mistakes that almost every learner makes at least once.

Let’s begin with the two most important forms: *will* and *be going to*.

Will + Base Verb

The structure could not be simpler. We use *will* (a modal verb) followed by the base form of the main verb. *Will* never changes for person — there is no *wills*.

Form	Example
Affirmative	I/you/he/she/it/we/they will go
Contraction	I’ll go, she’ll help, they’ll wait
Negative	I will not (won’t) go
Question	Will you go?

In speech and informal writing we almost always contract *will* to **‘ll** and *will not* to **won’t**.

- ✓ *I’ll call you tonight.*
- ✓ *She won’t be late.*
- ✗ *I willn’t be late.* (No such word — use *won’t*.)

Uses of Will

1. Instant decisions made at the moment of speaking. When you decide something *right now*, as you speak, *will* is the natural choice.

- ✓ *“The phone’s ringing.” “OK, I’ll get it.”*
- ✓ *I’m tired. I think I’ll go to bed.*

2. Offers and promises.

- ✓ *I’ll carry that bag for you.* (offer)
- ✓ *I promise I’ll pay you back on Friday.* (promise)

3. Predictions and opinions about the future, especially after *think*, *believe*, *expect*, *be sure*, and with words like *probably* and *perhaps*.

- ✓ *I think it will rain tomorrow.*
- ✓ *Robots will probably do most of this work one day.*

4. Facts and certainties about the future — things that are simply going to be true.

- ✓ *I’ll be thirty next year.*
- ✓ *The sun will rise at 5:42 tomorrow.*

Grammar tip: With *will*, we often add *probably*, *definitely*, or *certainly* to show how sure we are. Note the word order: it goes

after will but **before** won't — *I'll probably stay home / I probably won't go out.*

Be Going To + Base Verb

This form uses the verb *be* (am/is/are) + *going to* + the base verb.

Form	Example
Affirmative	I'm going to travel; she's going to study
Negative	They're not going to come / They aren't going to come
Question	Are you going to call her?

Uses of *Be Going To*

1. Plans and intentions decided *before* the moment of speaking. The decision already exists in your head; you are simply reporting it.

- ✓ *We're going to paint the kitchen this weekend.* (We decided earlier.)
- ✓ *She's going to study medicine.*

2. Predictions based on present evidence — something you can see, hear, or feel *right now* that points to the future.

- ✓ *Look at those clouds — it's going to rain.*
- ✓ *Careful! You're going to drop those plates.*
- ✓ *The team is playing brilliantly. They're going to win.*

Good to know: In fast everyday speech, *going to* often becomes *gonna* (*I'm gonna call her*). This is fine in casual conversation, but do **not** write *gonna* in formal English or exams.

Will vs Be Going To — The Key Contrast

This is the contrast that matters most, and it confuses learners more than any other. Two ideas separate them:

1. **Spontaneous decision (*will*) vs prior plan (*be going to*).**
2. **Prediction from opinion (*will*) vs prediction from present evidence (*be going to*).**

Situation	Will	Be going to
Deciding now, as you speak	✓ <i>I'll have the salad.</i>	—
Reporting a plan made earlier	—	✓ <i>I'm going to have the salad — I decided this morning.</i>
Prediction (general opinion)	✓ <i>I think our team will win.</i>	—
Prediction (present evidence)	—	✓ <i>We're 3-0 up — we're going to win!</i>
Offer	✓ <i>I'll help you.</i>	—
Promise	✓ <i>I'll never forget you.</i>	—

Look at this short dialogue, which shows both forms working together:

- “*We don't have any milk.*”
- “*Don't worry — I'll buy some on my way home.*” (decision made this second → *will*)

Compare:

- “*Why are you wearing your coat?*”
- “*I'm going to buy some milk.*” (the plan already existed → *be going to*)

Watch out! For a decision made **at the moment of speaking**, use *will*, not *be going to*. ✗ “The phone’s ringing.” “I’m going to answer it.” ✓ “The phone’s ringing.” “I’ll answer it.” For a plan you already had, use *be going to*, not *will*. ✗ *I will visit my grandmother next week* — *I’ve already booked the train.* (sounds odd if it’s a fixed plan) ✓ *I’m going to visit my grandmother next week.*

In real life the difference is often small, and both forms are sometimes possible. But understanding the contrast helps you sound natural and choose well under pressure.

Present Continuous for the Future

We can use the present continuous (*am/is/are + -ing*) to talk about **fixed arrangements** — plans that involve other people, a specific time, or a specific place. Think of arrangements you might write in a diary.

- ✓ *I’m meeting Sam at six o’clock.*
- ✓ *We’re flying to Madrid on Saturday.*
- ✓ *She’s seeing the dentist tomorrow morning.*

The key idea is **arrangement**: something has been organised, often with another person, and the details are settled.

When to Prefer It Over *Going To*

Be going to expresses an **intention**; the present continuous expresses an **arrangement** that is more definite.

- *I’m going to see a film this weekend.* (my intention — maybe nothing is fixed yet)
- *I’m seeing the new Bond film with Lena at 8 on Friday.* (a firm arrangement — time, place, person)

Because *be going to + go/come* can sound repetitive (*I'm going to go*), speakers very often prefer the present continuous instead:

- ✓ *We're going to the beach tomorrow.* (more natural than *We're going to go to the beach.*)

Present Simple for the Future

The present simple may seem like the wrong choice for the future, but it has one clear job: **timetables, schedules, and scheduled events** that are fixed by a calendar, a clock, or an authority — not by an individual person's plans.

- ✓ *The train leaves at 9:00.*
- ✓ *The film starts at 8:00.*
- ✓ *The shops open at ten on Sundays.*
- ✓ *Our flight departs at 6:45 and arrives at 10:20.*

Compare: Use the **present simple** for the schedule itself, but the **present continuous** for your personal arrangement around it. *The conference starts on Monday.* (timetable) *I'm giving my talk on Tuesday.* (my arrangement)

Future Continuous (*will be + -ing*)

The future continuous describes an action that **will be in progress at a particular moment in the future**. Picture a snapshot taken at a future time: what will be happening then?

Form	Example
Affirmative	I will be (I'll be) working
Negative	I won't be working

Form	Example
Question	Will you be working?

- ✓ *This time tomorrow I'll be flying to Tokyo.*
- ✓ *Don't call at eight – we'll be having dinner then.*
- ✓ *In ten years' time, people will be driving electric cars.*

It also has a useful social function: **polite enquiries** about someone's plans. By asking *will you be...?* you ask about a plan without seeming to pressure the person or make a request.

- ✓ *Will you be using the car this evening?* (a gentle way to find out – perhaps you'd like to borrow it)
- ✓ *Will you be joining us for lunch?*

Future Perfect (**will have + Past Participle**)

The future perfect describes an action that **will be completed before a certain point in the future**. We look forward to a future moment and then look back at something already finished by that time. It very often appears with **by** (*by then, by 2030, by the time...*).

Form	Example
Affirmative	I will have (I'll have) finished
Negative	I won't have finished
Question	Will you have finished?

- ✓ *By 2030, I'll have finished my degree.*
- ✓ *Call me after nine – I'll have arrived home by then.*
- ✓ *By the time you read this, I'll have left the country.*

Future Perfect Continuous (*will have been + -ing*)

This form, used less often, emphasises the **duration** of an activity up to a point in the future — how long something will have been going on.

- ✓ *Next May, I'll have been teaching here for twenty years.*
- ✓ *By midnight, they'll have been driving for ten hours straight.*

Use it when you want to stress the length of time. For a completed result, prefer the future perfect (*I'll have written three books*); for ongoing duration, choose this form (*I'll have been writing for a decade*).

Be About To / Be on the Point of

To talk about the **very near future** — something that will happen in the next few seconds or minutes — use *be about to + base verb*, or the slightly more formal *be on the point of + -ing*.

- ✓ *Hurry up! The train is about to leave.*
- ✓ *I was about to call you when you knocked.*
- ✓ *She's on the point of resigning.*

These structures suggest immediacy: the action is right on the edge of happening.

Future Time Clauses

This is one of the most common mistakes in all of English, so read carefully.

When a sentence has a **time clause** introduced by *when*, *as soon as*, *until*, *before*, *after*, *once*, or by *if*, we do **not** use *will* in that

clause — even though the meaning is clearly future. Instead we use the **present tense**.

The big rule: After *when / as soon as / until / before / after / if* (referring to the future), use the **present simple**, NOT *will*. ✗ *I'll call you when I will arrive.* ✓ *I'll call you when I arrive.*

More examples:

- ✗ *As soon as the rain will stop, we'll go out.*
- ✓ *As soon as the rain stops, we'll go out.*
- ✗ *I won't leave until you will come back.*
- ✓ *I won't leave until you come back.*
- ✗ *We'll have dinner after the guests will arrive.*
- ✓ *We'll have dinner after the guests arrive.*

The *will* (or other future form) stays in the **main clause**; the time clause takes the present.

- ✓ *When I finish work, I'll meet you outside.*
- ✓ *I'll text you before I leave.*

You can also use the **present perfect** in the time clause to stress that one action finishes before the other begins:

- ✓ *I'll call you as soon as I have finished.*
- ✓ *Once you have read the report, send it back to me.*

Note on *if* vs *when*: Both follow the present-tense rule. *When* means you are sure it will happen (*When I see her, I'll tell her*); *if* means it is a possibility (*If I see her, I'll tell her*).

Consolidated Comparison of the Main Future Forms

Form	Main use	Example
<i>will</i> + base	Instant decision, offer, promise, prediction (opinion)	<i>I'll help you with that.</i>
<i>be going to</i> + base	Plan/intention; prediction from present evidence	<i>Look — it's going to snow.</i>
Present continuous	Fixed arrangement (time/place/people)	<i>I'm meeting Anna at five.</i>
Present simple	Timetable / scheduled event	<i>The bus leaves at 7:15.</i>
Future continuous	Action in progress at a future moment	<i>This time tomorrow I'll be flying.</i>
Future perfect	Action completed before a future point	<i>By June I'll have graduated.</i>
Future perfect continuous	Duration up to a future point	<i>By May I'll have been working here for ten years.</i>
<i>be about to</i>	The very near future	<i>The film is about to start.</i>

Common Mistakes

Mistake 1 — *will* in time clauses. ✗ *When I will get home, I'll cook dinner.* ✓ *When I get home, I'll cook dinner.*

Mistake 2 — *be going to* for instant decisions. ✗ *"It's cold in here." "OK, I'm going to close the window."* ✓ *"It's cold in here." "OK, I'll close the window."*

Mistake 3 — *will* for evidence-based predictions. ✗ *Watch out — you'll spill that coffee!* (You can see it tipping right now.) ✓ *Watch out — you're going to spill that coffee!*

Mistake 4 — writing *gonna* or *willn't*. ✗ *I willn't be there. I'm gonna stay home.* (in formal writing) ✓ *I won't be there. I'm going to stay home.*

Mistake 5 — using *will* after *hope* in some patterns, or forgetting that timetables take present simple. ✗ *The concert will start at 8, so don't be late.* (If it's the scheduled time) ✓ *The concert starts at 8, so don't be late.*

Quick Review

- English has **no single future tense**; it uses several forms, each with its own meaning.
- **Will**: instant decisions, offers, promises, predictions based on opinion, and future facts.
- **Be going to**: plans decided beforehand, and predictions based on present evidence.
- **Present continuous**: fixed personal arrangements (often with a time, place, or person).
- **Present simple**: timetables and scheduled events.
- **Future continuous** (*will be + -ing*): an action in progress at a future moment; polite enquiries.
- **Future perfect** (*will have + past participle*): an action completed before a future point, often with *by*.
- **Future perfect continuous** (*will have been + -ing*): duration up to a future point.
- **Be about to / be on the point of**: the very near future.
- In **future time clauses** (*when, as soon as, until, before, after, if*), use the **present tense**, never *will*.

Practice

Choose the best future form, or correct the sentence, as indicated.

1. The phone is ringing. “I _____ (get) it!”
2. Look at the sky — it _____ (rain) any minute.
3. I’ve decided: next year I _____ (learn) Japanese.
4. The train _____ (leave) at 10:45, so we must hurry.
5. Don’t phone at 8 p.m. — we _____ (have) dinner then.
6. By the end of this course, you _____ (learn) over 2,000 new words.
7. Correct the mistake: *I’ll text you when I will get to the station.*
8. I _____ (meet) the lawyer at three tomorrow; it’s all arranged.
9. Quick, the bus _____ (be) about to leave!
10. Correct the mistake: “*We’re out of bread.*” “*Don’t worry, I’m going to buy some.*”

Answers

1. **‘ll get** — a decision made at the moment of speaking → *will*.
2. **’s going to rain** — prediction based on present evidence (the sky).
3. **’m going to learn** — a plan/intention already decided.
4. **leaves** — a timetable / scheduled event → present simple.
5. **‘ll be having** — an action in progress at a future moment → future continuous.
6. **will have learned** (or **‘ll have learnt**) — completed before a future point → future perfect.
7. *I’ll text you when I get to the station.* — no *will* in a future time clause.

8. **'m meeting** — a fixed arrangement → present continuous.
9. **is** — *the bus is about to leave* → near future.
10. “*Don't worry, I'll buy some.*” — an instant decision needs *will*, not *be going to*.

Chapter 12 — The English Tense System: Putting It All Together

By now you have met each of the English tenses on its own. You have learned how the present simple works, why the present perfect feels different from the past simple, and what happens when you add *-ing* or *have* to a verb. This chapter does something different. Instead of looking at one tense at a time, we step back and look at the whole machine at once. When you can see how all the pieces fit together, choosing the right tense stops feeling like guesswork and starts feeling like answering a few simple questions.

The Big Picture: Time × Aspect

Here is the single most useful idea in this book. Every English verb form carries two kinds of information at the same time:

- **TIME** — when, broadly, are we located? Past, present, or future?
- **ASPECT** — how do we view the action? As a whole fact, as something in progress, as something connected to a later point, or as an ongoing activity with duration?

Three times multiplied by four aspects gives us a tidy grid of **twelve** combinations. That is the entire tense system.

	Simple	Continuous	Perfect	Perfect Continuous
Past	✓	✓	✓	✓
Present	✓	✓	✓	✓
Future	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key idea: A “tense” is really *time* + *aspect*. Once you decide your time and your aspect separately, the grammar almost writes itself.

A note on terminology: Strictly speaking, English has only two grammatical *tenses* (present and past) marked on the verb itself — *work* / *worked*. The “future” is expressed with auxiliaries like *will* or *be going to*, not a verb ending. In this book, however, we follow the practical tradition of calling all twelve combinations “tenses,” because that is how learners and teachers use the word every day.

The Master Table

Below is the heart of the chapter: the same verb, *to work*, shown in all twelve forms with the subject *she* (and *they* where natural). Read across each row to feel how aspect changes the meaning while the time stays fixed. Read down each column to feel how time changes while the aspect stays fixed.

Aspect →	Simple	Continuous	Perfect	Perfect Con- tinuous
Past	<i>She worked.</i> (form: <i>worked</i>) — <i>She worked</i> <i>here in 2019.</i>	<i>She was</i> <i>working.</i> (<i>was/were</i> + <i>-ing</i>) — <i>She</i> <i>was working</i> <i>when I called.</i>	<i>She had</i> <i>worked.</i> (<i>had</i> + <i>p.p.</i>) — <i>She</i> <i>had worked</i> <i>there before</i> <i>she moved.</i>	<i>She had been</i> <i>working.</i> (<i>had</i> <i>been</i> + <i>-ing</i>) — <i>She had been</i> <i>working for</i> <i>hours when the</i> <i>power failed.</i>
Present	<i>She works.</i> (<i>work/works</i>) — <i>She</i> <i>works in a</i> <i>bank.</i>	<i>She is work-</i> <i>ing.</i> (<i>am/is/are</i> + <i>-ing</i>) — <i>She</i> <i>is working</i> <i>right now.</i>	<i>She has</i> <i>worked.</i> (<i>have/</i> <i>has</i> + <i>p.p.</i>) — <i>She has</i> <i>worked here</i> <i>since May.</i>	<i>She has been</i> <i>working.</i> (<i>have/</i> <i>has been</i> + <i>-ing</i>) — <i>She has</i> <i>been working all</i> <i>morning.</i>

Aspect →	Simple	Continuous	Perfect	Perfect Continuous
Future	<i>She will work. (will + base) — She will work tomorrow.</i>	<i>She will be working. (will be + -ing) — This time tomorrow she will be working.</i>	<i>She will have worked. (will have + p.p.) — By June she will have worked here a year.</i>	<i>She will have been working. (will have been + -ing) — By June she will have been working here a year.</i>

Keep this table close. Almost every tense question can be answered by finding the right cell.

What Each Aspect Signals

Time is the easy part — past is behind us, present is around us, future is ahead. Aspect is where learners hesitate, so let us pin down what each one actually *means*, independent of time.

Aspect	Core meaning	Typical signal words
Simple	A complete fact, a habit, or a permanent state. We see the action as a whole point, not from the inside.	<i>every day, usually, in 2019, yesterday, always</i>
Continuous	An action in progress, temporary, or unfinished at a given moment. We are <i>inside</i> the action as it happens.	<i>now, at the moment, currently, while, this week</i>
Perfect	A link between two points: an earlier action seen from a later time, often with a present result.	<i>already, yet, just, ever, since, by (the time)</i>
Perfect Continuous	The duration of an activity leading up to a point, often still going or recently stopped.	<i>for hours, all day, since this morning, how long</i>

Mental shortcut: **Simple** = the *fact*. **Continuous** = the *middle* of the action. **Perfect** = the *connection* to a later point. **Perfect Continuous** = *how long* the action has been going.

A Decision Guide: Choosing the Right Tense

When you are unsure which tense to use, do not try to recall a rule. Instead, ask yourself a short series of questions. Each answer narrows your choice.

- 1. When is it?** Past, present, or future? → This fixes your **time** (the row).
- 2. Is the action in progress at the moment I am talking about?** If yes, lean toward **continuous**.
- 3. Is there a connection between an earlier action and a later point (a result, a “so far,” a “by then”)?** If yes, lean toward **perfect**.
- 4. Do I care most about how long the action has lasted up to that point?** If yes, choose **perfect continuous**.
- 5. If none of the above** — just a fact, a habit, a finished event? Use the **simple**.

The table below turns those questions into a quick lookup.

Do I want to show...	...in progress now/ then?	...a connection to a later point?	...duration up to a point?	Choose
A plain fact or habit	No	No	No	Simple
An action happening at a moment	Yes	No	No	Continuous

Do I want to show...	...in progress now/ then?	...a connection to a later point?	...duration up to a point?	Choose
A result or experience up to now/then	No	Yes	No	Perfect
How long something has lasted	Yes	Yes	Yes	Perfect Continuous

The Most Common Confusions, Side by Side

Each of these pairs has its own full chapter. Here the goal is only to feel the **contrast**, so the difference becomes instinctive.

Present Simple vs Present Continuous

Present Simple (general/permanent)	Present Continuous (now/temporary)
✓ <i>I work in marketing.</i> (my job in general)	✓ <i>I am working from home this week.</i> (just now/temporary)
✓ <i>Water boils at 100 °C.</i> (always true)	✓ <i>The kettle is boiling.</i> (in progress)

Tip: Stative verbs (*know, like, want, believe, own*) normally avoid the continuous: ✓ *I know the answer.* / ✗ *I am knowing the answer.*

Present Perfect vs Past Simple

Present Perfect (link to now)	Past Simple (finished time)
✓ <i>I have visited Rome.</i> (some time in my life — when is not the point)	✓ <i>I visited Rome in 2018.</i> (a finished, stated time)

Present Perfect (link to now)	Past Simple (finished time)
✓ <i>She has just left.</i> (result matters now)	✓ <i>She left an hour ago.</i> (finished moment)

British/American note: British English strongly prefers the present perfect with *just*, *already*, and *yet*: ✓ *I have just eaten.* American English often allows the past simple here: ✓ *I just ate.* Both are accepted internationally.

Past Simple vs Past Continuous

Past Continuous (back-ground, in progress)	Past Simple (the event that interrupts)
✓ <i>I was cooking dinner</i>	✓ <i>when the phone rang.</i>
✓ <i>At 8 p.m. we were watching a film.</i>	✓ <i>We watched a film and then went to bed.</i> (sequence of completed events)

Present Perfect Simple vs Present Perfect Continuous

Perfect Simple (result/completion)	Perfect Continuous (duration/activity)
✓ <i>I have written three emails.</i> (focus: how many, finished)	✓ <i>I have been writing emails all morning.</i> (focus: the activity and its length)
✓ <i>She has read the report.</i> (it is done)	✓ <i>She has been reading the report.</i> (maybe not finished; explains why she is tired)

Will vs Going to

<i>will</i> (decisions, predictions, offers)	<i>going to</i> (plans, evidence-based predictions)
✓ <i>The phone's ringing — I'll get it.</i> (decided now)	✓ <i>We're going to paint the house this summer.</i> (already planned)
✓ <i>I think it will rain.</i> (opinion)	✓ <i>Look at those clouds — it's going to rain.</i> (evidence now)

“Tense” in Special Contexts (a Preview)

Sometimes English uses a tense that does not seem to match the time. These cases have their own chapters, but it helps to recognise them early.

1. Time clauses and conditionals use present forms for future meaning. After words like *when*, *after*, *before*, *as soon as*, *until*, and *if*, we do **not** use *will*; we use a present tense even though the meaning is future.

- ✓ *I'll call you when I arrive.* (not *when I will arrive*)
- ✓ *If it rains tomorrow, we will stay home.*

2. Reported speech and “backshift.” When we report what someone said in the past, tenses often shift one step back into the past.

Direct speech	Reported speech
<i>“I am tired.”</i>	<i>She said she was tired.</i>
<i>“I have finished.”</i>	<i>He said he had finished.</i>
<i>“I will help.”</i>	<i>They said they would help.</i>

A Worked Example: One Paragraph, Many Tenses

Real English mixes tenses constantly. Here is a short story; each verb is annotated so you can see *why* that tense was chosen.

Maria **has lived** in Lisbon for ten years. ¹ She **works** ² as a translator, and right now she **is preparing** ³ for an important conference. Yesterday she **stayed** ⁴ at the office late because she **had been struggling** ⁵ with a difficult contract all afternoon. While

she **was reviewing** ⁶ the final page, her boss **walked in** ⁷ and **told** ⁷ her the deadline **had moved**. ⁸ By Friday she **will have translated** ⁹ over two hundred pages. “Don’t worry,” she says, “I’ll **finish** ¹⁰ it as soon as I **get** ¹¹ home.”

1. **Present perfect** — a state starting in the past and continuing to now (*for ten years*).
2. **Present simple** — a permanent fact (her job).
3. **Present continuous** — temporary, in progress at this moment (*right now*).
4. **Past simple** — a single finished event at a stated past time (*yesterday*).
5. **Past perfect continuous** — duration of an activity *before* another past point (*all afternoon*).
6. **Past continuous** — background action in progress, interrupted by the next event.
7. **Past simple** — the interrupting events, in sequence.
8. **Past perfect** — an event completed *before* the past moment of speaking.
9. **Future perfect** — an action that will be complete *by* a future point (*by Friday*).
10. **Will** — a decision/promise made at the moment of speaking.
11. **Present simple** for future meaning — required after the time word *as soon as*.

Tips for Mastering Tenses

- **Think in questions, not rules.** Before you speak, run the decision guide: *When? In progress? Connected to a later point? Duration?* This is faster and more reliable than memorising charts.

- **Separate time from aspect.** First decide the time, then the aspect. Two small decisions are easier than one big one.
- **Notice the signal words.** *Since, for, already, yet, while, by, ago* — these are clues the language gives you for free.
- **Listen and read actively.** When you meet a tense in a film, song, or article, pause and ask, “Why this one and not another?” Real input teaches faster than rules.
- **Do not fear the simple.** When in doubt, the simple aspect is the safest default. English speakers use it far more than learners expect.

Quick Review

- A tense = **TIME** (past / present / future) × **ASPECT** (simple / continuous / perfect / perfect continuous) — a 3 × 4 grid of twelve forms.
- **Simple** = a fact or habit; **Continuous** = in progress; **Perfect** = a link to a later point; **Perfect Continuous** = duration up to a point.
- Choose a tense by asking: *When is it? Is it in progress? Is it connected to a later point? Do I care about duration?*
- The biggest contrasts: present simple vs continuous, present perfect vs past simple, past simple vs past continuous, perfect simple vs perfect continuous, *will* vs *going to*.
- After time words (*when, if, as soon as*) use **present** forms for future meaning; in reported speech, tenses usually **backshift**.

Practice

Choose the correct tense for each gap. (Some have more than one good answer; pick the most natural.)

1. Look! It _____ (snow) outside.
2. Water _____ (freeze) at 0 °C.
3. I _____ (live) in this city since 2015.
4. When the alarm went off, we _____ (sleep).
5. By next year, they _____ (be) married for a decade.
6. She _____ (write) emails all morning, so her hand hurts.
7. I _____ (already / see) that film — let's watch something else.
8. We _____ (visit) my grandmother last Sunday.
9. As soon as I _____ (finish) this report, I'll send it to you.
10. The clouds are dark — it _____ (rain).

Answers

1. *is snowing* — present continuous; in progress now (*Look!*).
2. *freezes* — present simple; a general scientific truth.
3. *have lived* (or *have been living*) — present perfect; a state continuing to now with *since*.
4. *were sleeping* — past continuous; background action in progress when interrupted.
5. *will have been* — future perfect; completed state by a future point (*By next year*).
6. *has been writing* — present perfect continuous; duration of an activity with a present result.

7. *have already seen* — present perfect; experience linked to now (British usage especially). American English may also accept *already saw*.
8. *visited* — past simple; a finished event at a stated past time (*last Sunday*).
9. *finish* — present simple for future meaning after the time word *as soon as*.
10. *is going to rain* — *going to* for a prediction based on present evidence.

Chapter 13 — Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are some of the hardest-working words in English. They are short — *can, must, should, will* — yet they let us do a great deal: talk about what is possible, ask permission politely, give advice, make promises, and judge how certain we are that something is true. Once you understand how modals behave, a whole layer of meaning in English opens up to you.

In this chapter we will first look at the special grammar that all modals share, and then organise the modals by **function** — that is, by what we use them *to do*. This is by far the clearest way to learn them, because the same modal can have several different jobs depending on the situation.

What Are Modal Verbs?

Modal verbs are a special group of helping (auxiliary) verbs. They add meaning to a main verb rather than describing an action themselves. The core modals are:

can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, ought to

Alongside these we have a group of **semi-modals** — expressions that behave like modals in meaning but follow more ordinary grammar: *have to, need to, had better, would rather, be able to, be allowed to*.

The Special Grammar of Modals

Modals do not behave like normal verbs. They follow their own rules, and these rules apply to *all* the core modals. Learn them once and they will serve you everywhere.

The Five Golden Rules of Modals 1. **No -s in the third person.** ✓ *She can swim.* — ✗ *She cans swim.* 2. **They are followed by the base verb** (the infinitive without *to*). ✓ *You must go.* — ✗ *You must to go.* The one exception is **ought to**, which keeps its *to*: ✓ *You ought to go.* 3. **Questions and negatives need no do.** ✓ *Can you help? / She cannot help.* — ✗ *Do you can help? — ✗ She doesn't can help.* 4. **No infinitive and no -ing form.** There is no *to can* and no *musting*. We use substitutes instead (see below). 5. **One modal at a time.** ✗ *She will can come.* Use a substitute: ✓ *She will be able to come.*

Because modals have no infinitive or *-ing* form, and because they cannot be stacked, we often need a **substitute** to express the same idea in a tense a modal cannot reach:

Modal idea	Substitute	Example
ability	be able to	<i>I want to be able to drive.</i>
permission	be allowed to	<i>They have been allowed to leave early.</i>
obligation	have to	<i>She will have to wait.</i>

Negatives are usually contracted in speech: *cannot* → *can't*, *will not* → *won't*, *must not* → *mustn't*, *should not* → *shouldn't*, *would not* → *wouldn't*. Note the unusual spelling **cannot** (one word).

Now let us look at modals function by function.

Ability: *can / could / be able to*

We use **can** for present ability and **could** for past ability. For tenses where these modals cannot go, we use **be able to**.

Time	Form	Example
Present	can / am able to	<i>She can speak three languages.</i>
Past (general)	could / was able to	<i>I could read before I started school.</i>
Future	will be able to	<i>Soon you will be able to drive.</i>
Perfect	have been able to	<i>We haven't been able to reach him.</i>

✓ *Can you play the piano?* ✓ *When I was young, I could run for hours.* ✗ *When I was young, I can run for hours.*

Callout — *could vs was/were able to for a single past achievement*

For a general past ability, both work: ✓ *She could swim very well.* / ✓ *She was able to swim very well.* But when you mean **one specific success on one occasion** — managing to do something difficult at a particular moment — use **was/were able to** (or *managed to*), **not could**. ✓ *The fire spread quickly, but everyone was able to escape.* ✗ *The fire spread quickly, but everyone could escape.* In the **negative**, this restriction disappears — *couldn't* is fine for a single occasion: ✓ *We tried hard, but we couldn't open the door.*

Permission and Requests: *can / could / may*

These three modals all ask for or give permission. They sit on a politeness scale.

Modal	Politeness	Example
can	informal, everyday	<i>Can I borrow your pen?</i>
could	more polite / tentative	<i>Could I borrow your pen?</i>
may	formal, careful	<i>May I borrow your pen?</i>

Asking for permission: ✓ *Can I sit here?* (casual) ✓ *Could I leave a little early today?* (polite) ✓ *May I see your ticket, please?* (formal)

Giving permission: we normally use *can* or *may*, not *could*. ✓ *Yes, you can take the day off.* ✓ *Visitors may use the side entrance.* ✗ *Yes, you could take the day off.* (sounds like a suggestion, not permission)

Requests (asking someone else to act) use *can*, *could*, *will*, or *would*: ✓ *Could you pass the salt?* ✓ *Would you mind closing the window?*

Common Mistake *May* asks about permission; *might* is not normally used to ask permission in modern English (it sounds extremely formal or old-fashioned). Stick with *Could I...?* or *May I...?*

Obligation and Necessity: *must* / *have to* / *should* / *ought to* / *had better* / *need*

This is the busiest area of modal meaning, so take it slowly.

must vs *have to*

Both express obligation, but the **source** of the obligation differs.

- **must** — the obligation comes from the **speaker** (internal feeling, personal authority, or the writer of a rule).

- **have to** — the obligation comes from **outside** (a law, a rule, circumstances).

✓ *I must call my mother — I haven't spoken to her in days.* (my own decision) ✓ *I have to wear a uniform at work.* (the company's rule) ✓ *Passengers must fasten their seatbelts.* (authority speaking through a rule)

In the **past** and **future**, *must* cannot be used for obligation, so we use *have to*: ✓ *Yesterday I had to work late.* ✗ *Yesterday I must work late.* ✓ *You will have to show your passport.*

Callout — The Big One: *mustn't* vs *don't have to* These look similar but mean **opposite** things. This is one of the most common errors learners make. - **mustn't** = it is **prohibited**; do NOT do it. ✓ *You mustn't smoke here.* (= smoking is forbidden) - **don't have to** = it is **not necessary**; you may, but you don't need to. ✓ *You don't have to come if you're tired.* (= no obligation; you have a choice) Compare: ✓ *You mustn't tell anyone.* (telling is forbidden) ✓ *You don't have to tell anyone.* (you can keep it to yourself if you wish)

should and ought to — advice

Both give advice or say what is the right thing to do. They are weaker than *must*. *Ought to* is a little more formal and is more common in the affirmative.

✓ *You should see a doctor about that cough.* ✓ *We ought to leave soon if we want to be on time.* ✓ *You shouldn't eat so much sugar.*

We also use *should* for expectation: ✓ *The train should arrive at six* (= I expect it to).

had better — strong advice with a warning

Had better (often contracted to *'d better*) gives urgent advice and hints at a bad consequence if it is ignored. It is followed by the base verb. The negative is *had better not*.

✓ *You'd better take an umbrella — it looks like rain.* ✓ *We'd better not be late, or we'll lose our seats.* ✗ *You'd better to take an umbrella.* ✗ *You had better taking an umbrella.*

Note *Had better* refers to the immediate present or future, not the past, despite the word *had*.

need to and needn't

Need can work two ways. As an ordinary verb it takes *to* and uses *do* in questions and negatives. As a modal (chiefly in the negative *needn't*) it takes the base verb and no *do*.

✓ *You need to renew your visa.* (ordinary verb) ✓ *Do you need to leave now?* ✓ *You needn't worry — everything is fine.* (modal; = it isn't necessary) ✓ *You don't need to worry.* (same meaning, ordinary verb)

Possibility and Probability: may / might / could / can

To say that something is **possible** (it may or may not be true, or it may or may not happen), use **may**, **might**, or **could**. *Might* often feels slightly less certain than *may*, but in practice they are very close.

✓ *It may rain later.* ✓ *She might be at home — I'm not sure.* ✓ *This could be the answer.*

The negatives *may not* and *might not* mean “it is possible that ... not”: ✓ *He may not come — he’s very busy.* (= perhaps he won’t come)

can is used for **general** possibility — what is possible in general, not on a specific occasion: ✓ *Winters here can be very cold.* (= sometimes they are) ✗ *It can rain tomorrow.* (for a specific future occasion, use *may/might/could*)

Deduction and Certainty (Present): *must / can’t / might / could / may*

When we use logic to work out how likely something is, we are making a **deduction**. Here the same modals carry feelings of certainty.

Certainty	Modal	Meaning	Example
Sure it’s true	must	I’m certain (positive)	<i>He must be tired after that journey.</i>
Sure it’s NOT true	can’t	I’m certain (negative)	<i>She can’t be serious!</i>
Not sure	might / could / may	possible	<i>They might be at lunch.</i>

✓ *The lights are on, so they must be home.* ✓ *That can’t be John — he’s in Spain.* ✓ *You’ve been travelling all day; you must be exhausted.*

Common Mistake For a negative deduction (“I’m sure it’s not true”), use **can’t**, not *mustn’t*. ✓ *That can’t be right.* ✗ *That mustn’t be right.* Remember: *mustn’t* means prohibition, not impossibility.

Offers, Suggestions, and Promises: *shall* / *will* / *can*

- **Offers:** *Shall I...?, Can I...?, Will I...?* ✓ *Shall I carry that for you?* ✓ *Can I get you a drink?*
- **Suggestions:** *Shall we...?, We could...?* ✓ *Shall we go for a walk?* ✓ *We could try the new café.*
- **Promises and willingness:** *will* ✓ *I'll help you, don't worry.* ✓ *I won't tell anyone, I promise.*

British / American Note *Shall* (especially *Shall I...? / Shall we...?*) is common in British English. American English usually prefers *Should I...?, Should we...?* or *Can I...? / Let's...*. *Shall* for the simple future (*I shall go*) sounds formal or old-fashioned to most speakers today; *will* is normal everywhere.

Modals in the Past: *modal* + *have* + *past participle*

To talk about the past, we cannot simply put a modal into a past tense. Instead we use the pattern **modal** + **have** + **past participle**. This lets us make deductions, talk about past possibilities, and express regret about things that did or did not happen.

Form	Meaning	Example
must have + p.p.	past deduction — I'm sure it happened	<i>The ground is wet; it must have rained.</i>
can't have + p.p.	past deduction — I'm sure it didn't happen	<i>He can't have finished already — he only just started.</i>
might / could / may have + p.p.	past possibility — perhaps it happened	<i>She might have missed the bus.</i>

Form	Meaning	Example
should have + p.p.	regret/criticism — the right thing was NOT done	<i>You should have told me earlier.</i>
shouldn't have + p.p.	regret/criticism — a wrong thing WAS done	<i>I shouldn't have eaten that last slice.</i>
needn't have + p.p.	an action was done but was unnecessary	<i>You needn't have cooked — we'd already eaten.</i>
didn't need to + base	the action was unnecessary (and usually not done)	<i>I didn't need to buy milk, so I didn't.</i>

A few of these deserve a closer look.

Past deduction. Just as *must* / *can't* / *might* judge certainty in the present, they judge it in the past with *have*: ✓ *Nobody answered. They must have been out.* ✓ *You can't have seen Maria — she's in Canada.* ✓ *I'm not sure where my keys are. I could have left them at the office.*

Regret and criticism with *should(n't) have*: ✓ *We should have booked a table; now there's no room.* (we didn't book — regret) ✓ *You shouldn't have shouted at him.* (you did shout — criticism)

Callout — *needn't have done* vs *didn't need to do* These two are genuinely tricky. - **needn't have done** = the action **was** done, but it turned out to be unnecessary. ✓ *You needn't have washed the dishes — the cleaner does that.* (you washed them; it was a waste) - **didn't need to do** = it was **not necessary**, and (usually) the action was **not** done. ✓ *I didn't need to wash the dishes, so I left them.* (no washing happened) If you want to stress that something unnecessary was actually carried out, *needn't have* is the form you want.

Summary Table of Modals

Modal	Main function(s)	Example
can	ability; permission; general possibility; offers	<i>She can drive. / Can I help?</i>
could	past ability; polite request; present possibility	<i>Could you wait? / It could be true.</i>
may	formal permission; possibility	<i>You may go. / It may snow.</i>
might	possibility (a little less certain)	<i>I might be late.</i>
will	future; promise; willingness	<i>I'll call you tonight.</i>
would	polite request; hypothetical	<i>Would you mind? / I would love to.</i>
shall	offers/suggestions (BrE); formal future	<i>Shall we begin?</i>
should	advice; expectation	<i>You should rest. / It should work.</i>
ought to	advice (more formal)	<i>We ought to apologise.</i>
must	strong obligation (speaker); certainty	<i>You must stop. / He must know.</i>
have to	obligation (external)	<i>I have to wear a tie.</i>
mustn't	prohibition	<i>You mustn't park here.</i>
don't have to	no obligation	<i>You don't have to stay.</i>
had better	strong advice / warning	<i>You'd better hurry.</i>
need to / needn't	necessity / lack of necessity	<i>You needn't ask.</i>

Quick Review

- Modals take **no -s** in the third person, are followed by the **base verb** (except *ought to*), and form questions and negatives **without do**.
- Modals have **no infinitive or -ing form** and cannot be stacked; use substitutes such as *be able to*, *have to*, *be allowed to*.
- For a **single past success**, prefer *was/were able to* over *could*.
- **mustn't** = forbidden; **don't have to** = not necessary. They are opposites.
- For a **negative deduction**, use **can't** (not *mustn't*): *That can't be true*.
- The past pattern is **modal + have + past participle**: *must have gone*, *should have asked*, *might have known*.
- **needn't have done** = it was done but unnecessary; **didn't need to do** = it wasn't necessary (and usually wasn't done).

Practice

Choose or complete the correct form.

1. ✗ *She cans play the violin.* — Correct the sentence.
2. *When the alarm rang, the staff _____ (could / were able to) evacuate the building safely.*
3. *You _____ (mustn't / don't have to) tell her — it's meant to be a surprise!*
4. *It's a holiday tomorrow, so we _____ (mustn't / don't have to) get up early.*
5. *His car isn't in the drive. He _____ (must / can't) have gone out.*

6. *I'm exhausted. I _____ (should / shouldn't) have stayed up so late last night.*
7. *Choose the more polite request: (a) Can you help me? (b) Could you help me?*
8. *You _____ (needn't have / didn't need to) brought a gift — but thank you, it was kind of you. (The gift was brought.)*
9. *Rewrite using a modal substitute: "She will _____ come to the party." (ability)*
10. *Winters in the mountains _____ (can / may) be extremely cold — it happens every year.*

Answers

1. *She can play the violin.* (no -s on a modal)
2. *were able to* — a single, specific past success.
3. *mustn't* — it is forbidden (to spoil the surprise).
4. *don't have to* — there is no obligation; getting up early is optional.
5. *must* — a logical positive deduction (the missing car is the evidence).
6. *shouldn't* — regret about something you actually did.
7. (b) *Could you help me?* is more polite than *Can you...?*
8. *needn't have* — the gift was brought, but it was unnecessary.
9. *She will be able to come to the party.* (*be able to* substitutes for *can* after *will*).
10. *can* — general possibility (a regular, recurring fact).

Chapter 14 — The Passive Voice

Most sentences in English are *active*: somebody does something. But English also gives us a second way of building a sentence — the **passive voice** — and once you understand it, you will see it everywhere: in the news, in science reports, in instructions, and in polite, careful speech. This chapter shows you exactly how the passive works, when to use it, and the small traps that trip learners up.

Active and Passive: The Core Idea

In an **active** sentence, the subject is the *doer* of the action. In a **passive** sentence, the subject is the *receiver* of the action. The same event is described, but our attention shifts.

Look carefully at how the words move:

Active: *Shakespeare* (subject/doer) *wrote* (verb) *Hamlet* (object). **Passive:** *Hamlet* (subject/receiver) *was written* (be + past participle) *by Shakespeare* (agent).

ACTIVE:	Shakespeare	wrote	Hamlet.
PASSIVE:	Hamlet	was written	by Shakespeare.

Three things happen in the transformation:

1. The **object** of the active sentence (*Hamlet*) becomes the **subject** of the passive.
2. The verb changes to **be + past participle** (*was written*). The tense of *be* matches the tense of the original verb.

3. The original **subject** (*Shakespeare*) becomes the **agent**, introduced by **by** — and is very often left out.

More examples:

- ✓ *The chef prepares the meals.* → ✓ *The meals are prepared (by the chef).*
- ✓ *A dog bit the boy.* → ✓ *The boy was bitten (by a dog).*
- ✓ *They will announce the results tomorrow.* → ✓ *The results will be announced tomorrow.*

Key Formula: subject + **be** (in the correct tense) + **past participle** (+ **by** + agent)

Why and When We Use the Passive

The passive is not “wrong” or “weak” — it is a precise tool. We choose it for clear reasons.

1. **The doer is unknown.** - ✓ *My bicycle was stolen last night.* (We don’t know who took it.)
2. **The doer is unimportant.** - ✓ *The bridge was built in 1890.* (Who built it doesn’t matter here.)
3. **The doer is obvious.** - ✓ *He was arrested yesterday.* (Obviously by the police.) - ✓ *The letters are delivered every morning.* (By the postal service, naturally.)
4. **We deliberately omit the doer** — to be tactful, impersonal, or discreet. - ✓ *A mistake has been made.* (More diplomatic than *You made a mistake.*) - ✓ *It has been decided that the office will close.* (We avoid naming who decided.)

5. We want to focus on the action or the receiver, not the doer. - ✓ *The patient was given oxygen immediately.* (The patient is the focus.)

6. Formal, scientific, academic, and news writing often prefer the passive for an objective, impersonal tone. - ✓ *The samples were heated to 200°C and then cooled.* (Science: the method matters, not the scientist.) - ✓ *Two men have been questioned in connection with the robbery.* (News.)

Tip: Use the passive on purpose, not by accident. If naming the doer makes the sentence clearer or livelier, prefer the active.

The Passive in All the Main Tenses

The pattern never changes: **the correct form of *be* + past participle**. Only the form of *be* moves through the tenses. Study this master table (active verb: *clean*).

Tense / Form	Active	Passive
Present simple	<i>They clean the office.</i>	<i>The office is cleaned.</i>
Present continuous	<i>They are cleaning the office.</i>	<i>The office is being cleaned.</i>
Past simple	<i>They cleaned the office.</i>	<i>The office was cleaned.</i>
Past continuous	<i>They were cleaning the office.</i>	<i>The office was being cleaned.</i>
Present perfect	<i>They have cleaned the office.</i>	<i>The office has been cleaned.</i>
Past perfect	<i>They had cleaned the office.</i>	<i>The office had been cleaned.</i>
Future (will)	<i>They will clean the office.</i>	<i>The office will be cleaned.</i>

Tense / Form	Active	Passive
Going to	<i>They are going to clean the office.</i>	<i>The office is going to be cleaned.</i>
Modal (must)	<i>They must clean the office.</i>	<i>The office must be cleaned.</i>
Modal (can)	<i>They can clean the office.</i>	<i>The office can be cleaned.</i>

Notice the building blocks: *is/are, is/are being, was/were, was/were being, has/have been, had been, will be, going to be, must be, can be* — each followed by the past participle.

Note: Some tenses are almost never used in the passive because they are too clumsy — for example, the future continuous (*will be being cleaned*) or the perfect continuous (*has been being cleaned*). Avoid these; rephrase instead.

The Agent: *by* and *with*

The **agent** is the doer, introduced by **by**. But research and experience show that in most passive sentences the agent is simply left out — because it is unknown, unimportant, or obvious.

Include *by* + *agent* only when it adds useful information:

- ✓ *The novel was written by a teenager.* (Surprising — worth saying.)
- ✗ *The thieves were arrested by the police.* → Usually just: ✓ *The thieves were arrested.* (Obvious agent.)

Use **with** (not *by*) for the **instrument or material** used to do something:

- ✓ *The window was broken with a hammer.* (instrument)
- ✓ *The cake was decorated with fresh fruit.* (material)
- Compare: ✓ *The window was broken by a boy.* (doer)

Passive with Two Objects

Verbs like *give, send, offer, tell, show, pay, teach, lend, promise* can take **two objects** — an indirect object (a person) and a direct object (a thing). This means **two passives are possible**.

Active: *They gave me a book.*

Two Passives: With verbs that have two objects, you can usually make either object the subject: - ✓ *I was given a book.* (**more common in English — start with the person**) - ✓ *A book was given to me.* (note: we often add *to* before the person)

More examples:

- *Someone offered her the job.* → ✓ *She was offered the job.* / ✓ *The job was offered to her.*
- *They told us the news.* → ✓ *We were told the news.* / ✓ *The news was told to us.*

Beginning with the **person** is usually the most natural choice.

Passive Infinitives and *-ing* Forms

The passive can appear in non-finite forms too.

Passive infinitive: (to) be + past participle - ✓ *This form needs to be signed.* - ✓ *The work has to be finished today.* - ✓ *Nobody wants to be lied to.*

Passive *-ing*: being + past participle - ✓ *He hates being interrupted.* - ✓ *The house is being painted at the moment.* (also the present continuous passive) - ✓ *I remember being told that story as a child.*

Passive Reporting Structures

In formal English — especially news and academic writing — we report opinions or beliefs without saying exactly who holds them. Two patterns do this with verbs like *say*, *believe*, *think*, *know*, *report*, *expect*, *consider*.

Pattern 1: *It + be + past participle + that-clause* - ✓ *It is said that he is very rich.* - ✓ *It is believed that the fire started in the kitchen.* - ✓ *It was reported that no one had been injured.*

Pattern 2: *Subject + be + past participle + to-infinitive* - ✓ *He is said to be very rich.* - ✓ *The fire is believed to have started in the kitchen.* - ✓ *No one was reported to have been injured.*

The two patterns mean the same thing. Use **to + infinitive** for a present idea (*is said to be*) and **to have + past participle** for a past idea (*is said to have left*).

Tip: *He is said to have won a fortune = People say that he has won a fortune.* These structures sound polished and cautious — perfect for formal reports.

The Get-Passive

In **informal** speech, we sometimes use **get** instead of **be**, often for things that happen suddenly, accidentally, or to us personally (frequently something negative).

- ✓ *He got arrested at the protest.*
- ✓ *Our flight got cancelled.*
- ✓ *I got paid yesterday.*

Register Warning: The *get*-passive is fine in conversation and casual writing, but avoid it in formal or academic writing — use *be* instead: *He was arrested.*

Verbs That Have No Passive

This is one of the most important rules in the chapter. **Only transitive verbs** (verbs that take an object) can be made passive. **Intransitive verbs** — verbs that have no object — **cannot** be passive, because there is no object to become the new subject.

Common intransitive verbs: *arrive, happen, come, go, die, fall, sleep, cry, exist, occur, rain, appear, disappear, wait.*

Strong Warning — Never Do This: - *✗ The accident was happened.* → *✓ The accident happened.* - *✗ She was died last year.* → *✓ She died last year.* - *✗ We were arrived at noon.* → *✓ We arrived at noon.* - *✗ A problem was occurred.* → *✓ A problem occurred.*

If the verb cannot take an object, it cannot be made passive. Full stop.

Common Mistakes

1. Wrong or missing form of *be*. The passive always needs *be* in the correct tense. - *✗ The house painted last week.* → *✓ The house was painted last week.* - *✗ English is speak here.* → *✓ English is spoken here.*

2. Wrong participle (using the base form or past simple instead of the past participle). - *✗ The window was broke.* → *✓ The window was broken.* - *✗ The report was write quickly.* → *✓*

The report was written quickly. - ✗ *The cake was eat.* → ✓ *The cake was eaten.*

3. Making intransitive verbs passive (see the warning above). - ✗ *He was belonged to a club.* → ✓ *He belonged to a club.*

4. Overusing the passive. Too many passives make writing heavy and unclear. Prefer the active when the doer matters. - Heavy: *It was felt by the committee that the proposal should be rejected.* - Better: ✓ *The committee felt the proposal should be rejected.*

Balance Tip: The passive is a precision tool, not a default style. Use it when the doer is unknown, unimportant, or best left unnamed — otherwise, let the active voice do its lively work.

Quick Review

- The **passive** = **be** (correct tense) + **past participle** (+ **by** + agent).
- The **object** of the active sentence becomes the **subject** of the passive.
- Use the passive when the doer is **unknown, unimportant, obvious, or deliberately omitted**, or to focus on the action/receiver — common in **formal, scientific, and news** writing.
- The agent (**by** + **doer**) is usually omitted; use **with** for instruments.
- Verbs with **two objects** allow **two passives**; starting with the person is more natural.
- Passive non-finite forms: **to be done** and **being done**.
- Reporting: *It is said that...* and *He is said to...* / *to have...*
- The **get-passive** (*got arrested*) is informal.
- **Intransitive verbs** (*happen, arrive, die*) have **no passive**.

Practice

Rewrite or correct as instructed.

1. Make passive: *Someone has stolen my wallet.*
2. Make passive: *They are building a new hospital.*
3. Make passive: *The teacher will correct the tests.*
4. Make passive (two ways): *They offered Maria a scholarship.*
5. Correct the error: *The letter was wrote yesterday.*
6. Correct the error: *The earthquake was happened at midnight.*
7. Make active: *The thief was seen by a neighbour.*
8. Complete with the passive infinitive: *These documents need _____ (sign) today.*
9. Rewrite using “He is said to...”: *People say that he lives in Paris.*
10. Make passive (modal): *You must wash the dishes.*

Answers

1. *My wallet has been stolen.*
2. *A new hospital is being built.*
3. *The tests will be corrected (by the teacher).*
4. *Maria was offered a scholarship. / A scholarship was offered to Maria.*
5. *The letter was written yesterday.* (past participle, not *wrote*)
6. *The earthquake happened at midnight.* (*happen* is intransitive — no passive)
7. *A neighbour saw the thief.*
8. *These documents need to be signed today.*
9. *He is said to live in Paris.*
10. *The dishes must be washed.*

Chapter 15 — Conditionals & the Unreal

Conditionals are sentences about *if*. They let us talk about cause and effect, about plans and predictions, about dreams that might never come true, and about regrets we can never undo. Once you understand the small set of patterns in this chapter, you will be able to express some of the most subtle and human ideas in English: what *would* happen, what *could have* happened, and what we *wish* had been different.

Take your time here. Conditionals reward patient learners. The forms are regular, the logic is clear, and almost every mistake comes from one of just a few traps — all of which we will mark with strong warnings.

The Basic Idea

A conditional sentence has two parts:

- the **condition** — the *if*-clause (sometimes called the *if*-part), which sets up a situation;
- the **result** — the main clause, which says what follows from that situation.

Key term: The *if*-clause is the condition. The main clause is the result.

If it rains, we will stay inside.

Here, *If it rains* is the condition, and *we will stay inside* is the result.

The two clauses can come in **either order**. When the *if*-clause comes first, we separate the clauses with a **comma**. When the main clause comes first, we usually use **no comma**.

- ✓ *If you press this button, the machine stops.*
- ✓ *The machine stops if you press this button.*
- ✗ *The machine stops, if you press this button.* (no comma needed here)

That single comma rule is worth memorising now, because it applies to every conditional type in this chapter.

Zero Conditional — General Truths

We use the **zero conditional** for things that are always or generally true: scientific facts, rules, and habits. The result is not a prediction about one future moment — it is what *always* happens when the condition is met.

Form: *if* + present simple, present simple

Condition (<i>-clause</i>)	Result (main clause)
<i>if</i> + present simple	present simple

- ✓ *If you heat water to 100°C, it boils.*
- ✓ *If you don't water plants, they die.*
- ✓ *Ice melts if you leave it in the sun.*
- ✓ *If I drink coffee late at night, I can't sleep.* (a personal habit/truth)

In the zero conditional, you can often replace *if* with *when* with almost no change in meaning, precisely because the result is always true.

- ✓ *When you heat water to 100°C, it boils.*

Tip: Use the zero conditional for cause-and-effect that is reliable and repeatable. If you mean a single future event that may or may not happen, you need the **first** conditional instead.

First Conditional — Real Future Possibilities

We use the **first conditional** for real and likely situations in the future. The condition is genuinely possible, and the result is what we expect to happen if it occurs.

Form: *if* + present simple, *will* + base verb

Condition (<i>if</i> -clause)	Result (main clause)
<i>if</i> + present simple	<i>will</i> + base verb

- ✓ *If it rains, I'll stay home.*
- ✓ *If you study hard, you'll pass the exam.*
- ✓ *She'll be angry if you're late.*
- ✓ *If we leave now, we'll catch the train.*

Notice that we are talking about the future in both parts, but the *if*-clause still uses the **present** tense. The future meaning lives in the *will* of the main clause.

Variations in the result

The main clause does not have to use *will*. We can replace it with other modal verbs or an imperative to change the tone:

- **may / might** (less certain): *If you ask her, she might say yes.*
- **can** (possibility/permission): *If you finish early, you can go home.*
- **should / must** (advice/obligation): *If you feel ill, you should see a doctor.*
- **imperative** (instruction): *If you see John, tell him to call me.*

Strong warning — never use *will* in the *if*-clause. This is the single most common conditional mistake. - ✗ *If it will rain, I'll stay home.* - ✓ *If it rains, I'll stay home.* The *if*-clause describes the condition in the present form, even though the meaning is future. Keep *will* on the result side.

(There is one rare, polite exception — *If you will wait here, the doctor will see you* — where *will* means “are willing to.” Learners should treat the rule above as absolute until that nuance feels natural.)

Second Conditional — Unreal or Unlikely Present/Future

We use the **second conditional** for situations that are imaginary, hypothetical, or unlikely — in the present or the future. We are not predicting; we are imagining.

Form: *if* + past simple, *would* + base verb

Condition (<i>if</i> -clause)	Result (main clause)
<i>if</i> + past simple	<i>would</i> + base verb

- ✓ *If I won the lottery, I'd travel the world.* (I probably won't win)
- ✓ *If I had more time, I would learn the piano.* (but I don't)
- ✓ *If she lived closer, we would see her more often.*
- ✓ *What would you do if you saw a ghost?*

The past tense here does **not** mean past time. It signals **distance from reality** — the idea is unreal. This is why grammarians sometimes call it the “unreal past.”

The result clause can use **could** (ability/possibility) or **might** (less certain) instead of *would*:

- ✓ *If we had a car, we could drive to the coast.*
- ✓ *If you spoke to him, he might change his mind.*

Special form — *were for all persons.** *In careful and formal English, we use *were* (not *was*) for every subject in the second conditional, especially in the fixed expression *If I were you.* - ✓ *If I were you, I'd apologise.* - ✓ *If he were here, he would know what to do.* - *In everyday speech, *If I was you* is often heard, but *If I were you** is the standard, recommended form.**

Third Conditional — Unreal Past and Regret

We use the **third conditional** to imagine a different past — things that did **not** happen. It is the language of regret, criticism, and “what might have been.”

Form: *if* + past perfect, *would have* + past participle

Condition (<i>if</i> -clause)	Result (main clause)
<i>if</i> + past perfect (<i>had</i> + past participle)	<i>would have</i> + past participle

- ✓ *If I had studied, I would have passed the exam.* (but I didn't study, so I failed)
- ✓ *If they had left earlier, they wouldn't have missed the flight.*
- ✓ *She would have helped you if you had asked.*
- ✓ *If we had known about the traffic, we would have taken another route.*

As with the second conditional, you can use **could have** or **might have** in the result for ability or reduced certainty:

- ✓ *If you had trained harder, you could have won.*
- ✓ *If I had saved the file, I might have kept my work.*

Pronunciation note: *would have*, *could have*, and *might have* are usually contracted in speech to *would've*, *could've*, *might've*. Because these sound like “would of,” learners (and even native speakers) sometimes write ✗ *would of*. Always write ✓ *would have*.

Master Table — The Four Conditionals

Type	<i>if</i> -clause	Main clause	Use	Example
Zero	present simple	present simple	general truths, facts, habits	<i>If you heat ice, it melts.</i>
First	present simple	<i>will</i> + base	real, likely future	<i>If it rains, I'll stay home.</i>
Second	past simple	<i>would</i> + base	unreal/unlikely present or future	<i>If I won the lottery, I'd travel.</i>

Type	<i>if</i> -clause	Main clause	Use	Example
Third	past perfect	<i>would have</i> + past participle	unreal past, regret	<i>If I had studied, I would have passed.</i>

The pattern at a glance: each step “back” in time in the *if*-clause adds a layer of unreality. Present = fact (zero/first). Past = unreal now (second). Past perfect = unreal then (third).

Mixed Conditionals

Real life is not always tidy. Sometimes a past condition has a present result, or a present condition has a past result. These are called **mixed conditionals**, and they combine the building blocks you already know.

Past condition → present result

The condition is in the past (third-conditional *if*-clause), but the result is about now (second-conditional main clause).

Form: *if* + past perfect, *would* + base verb

- ✓ *If I had taken the job, I would be richer now.* (I didn’t take it, so I’m not rich today)
- ✓ *If she had studied medicine, she would be a doctor today.*
- ✓ *If we hadn’t missed the train, we would be at the beach right now.*

Present condition → past result

The condition is a present, ongoing reality (second-conditional *if*-clause), but the result is in the past (third-conditional main clause).

Form: *if* + past simple, *would have* + past participle

- ✓ *If I weren't so shy, I would have introduced myself.* (I am shy — that's always true — so I didn't)
- ✓ *If he were more careful, he wouldn't have made that mistake.*
- ✓ *If they didn't live so far away, they would have visited us last weekend.*

Tip: To build a mixed conditional, decide the *time* of each part separately. Past unreal cause uses *had* + past participle. Present unreal cause uses past simple (or *were*). Then match the result to its own time frame.

Alternatives to *if*

If is not the only way to introduce a condition. These linking words add precise shades of meaning.

- **unless** = “if not” / “except if”: *I won't go unless you come with me.* (= if you don't come)
- **as long as** / **so long as** = “only if; on the condition that”: *You can borrow it as long as you return it tomorrow.*
- **provided (that)** / **providing (that)** = a more formal “if/only if”: *We'll sign the contract provided that the price stays the same.*
- **in case** = “as a precaution against”: *Take an umbrella in case it rains.* (You take it *now*, before knowing — this is **not** the same as *if*.)
- **even if** = “whether or not this happens”: *Even if it rains, the match will go ahead.*
- **suppose** / **supposing** = “imagine that” (often in questions): *Suppose you lost your passport — what would you do?*

British/American note: *provided that* and *providing that* are interchangeable; *provided* is slightly more common in formal British writing, but both are correct on either side of the Atlantic.

Inversion — formal conditionals without *if*

In formal or literary English, we can drop *if* and **invert** the subject and auxiliary verb. This sounds elegant and is common in writing, business, and official notices.

Normal	Inverted (formal)
<i>If you should need help, ...</i>	<i>Should you need help, ...</i>
<i>If I were rich, ...</i>	<i>Were I rich, ...</i>
<i>If I had known, ...</i>	<i>Had I known, ...</i>

- ✓ *Should you have any questions, please contact us.*
- ✓ *Were I in your position, I would accept the offer.*
- ✓ *Had I known the truth, I would have acted differently.*

Callout — inversion replaces *if*. Notice there is no *if* in the inverted versions, and no comma between the inverted verb and its subject. These structures are formal; in casual speech, the ordinary *if*-versions are perfectly natural.

Wish / If Only — The Closest Cousins of Conditionals

Wish and *if only* let us express desires and regrets directly. They follow the same “unreal past” logic as the second and third conditionals, so they belong here. *If only* is simply a more emphatic, more emotional version of *wish*.

Meaning	Structure	Example
Regret about the present	wish + past simple	<i>I wish I knew the answer. (I don't)</i>
Regret about the past	wish + past perfect	<i>I wish I had studied harder. (I didn't)</i>
Complaint / wanting change	wish + would	<i>I wish you would stop interrupting me.</i>

More examples:

- ✓ *I wish I were taller.* (use *were* for all persons, just as in the second conditional)
- ✓ *She wishes she lived by the sea.* (present regret)
- ✓ *If only I had saved more money!* (past regret)
- ✓ *I wish it would stop raining.* (I want the situation to change)

Careful with wish + would. We use it for things outside our own control — other people's annoying behaviour or situations we want to change. We do **not** normally use it for our own actions. - ✗
I wish I would be taller. - ✓ *I wish I were taller.* - ✓ *I wish my neighbours would be quieter.*

Would Rather and It's Time — More Unreal Past

Two further structures use the unreal past in the same way.

would rather + someone + past simple — to express a preference about another person's action:

- ✓ *I'd rather you didn't smoke in here.*
- ✓ *She'd rather we came on Sunday.*

(When the preference is about your *own* action, you use the base verb instead: *I'd rather stay home.*)

It's (high) time + past simple — to say something is overdue and should be happening now:

- ✓ *It's time we left.* (= we should leave now)
- ✓ *It's high time you found a job.*
- ✗ *It's time we leave.*

In all of these, the past-tense form again signals not past time but unreality or “this isn't happening yet, but it should be.”

Common Mistakes

Mistake 1 — will in the if-clause. - ✗ *If you will help me, I'll be grateful.* - ✓ *If you help me, I'll be grateful.*

Mistake 2 — would in both clauses. *Would* belongs in the result, not the condition. - ✗ *If I would have time, I would call you.* - ✓ *If I had time, I would call you.* - ✗ *If I would have known, I would have come.* - ✓ *If I had known, I would have come.*

Mistake 3 — wrong tense combinations. Each conditional has a fixed pair. Don't mix a first-conditional *if*-clause with a third-conditional result, for instance. - ✗ *If I study, I would have passed.* - ✓ *If I had studied, I would have passed.* (third) - ✓ *If I study, I will pass.* (first)

Mistake 4 — was instead of were in fixed phrases. - ✗ *If I was you, I'd leave.* - ✓ *If I were you, I'd leave.*

Quick Review

- A conditional has a **condition** (*if*-clause) and a **result** (main clause). Use a **comma** only when the *if*-clause comes first.
- **Zero:** *if* + present, present — general truths. *If you heat ice, it melts.*
- **First:** *if* + present, *will* + base — real future. *If it rains, I'll stay home.*
- **Second:** *if* + past, *would* + base — unreal present/future; use *were* for all persons. *If I won, I'd travel.*
- **Third:** *if* + past perfect, *would have* + participle — unreal past/regret. *If I had studied, I would have passed.*
- **Mixed:** match each clause to its own time (past cause → present result, or present cause → past result).
- **Alternatives:** *unless, as long as, provided that, in case, even if, suppose*; formal **inversion** (*Should you..., Were I..., Had I...*) drops *if*.
- **Wish / if only:** + past (present regret), + past perfect (past regret), + *would* (complaint). *Would rather* and *It's time* + past also use the unreal past.
- **Never** put *will* or *would* in the *if*-clause.

Practice

Choose or supply the correct form.

1. If you __ (**mix**) **blue and yellow**, you _____ (get) green.
2. If it __ (**be**) **sunny tomorrow**, we _____ (have) a picnic.
3. If I _____ (be) you, I wouldn't trust him.

4. If she ___ **(study) harder last year, she** _____ (pass) the exam.
5. I wish I _____ (know) how to swim. (regret about now)
6. Rewrite without *if*, using inversion: *If I had seen the sign, I would have stopped.*
7. Choose the correct word: *I won't lend you the car (unless / as long as) you don't drive too fast.*
8. Correct the mistake: *If it will snow, we will build a snowman.*
9. Make a mixed conditional: past condition, present result — *I didn't learn French. I can't read this menu now.*
10. Complete: *It's high time you _____ (clean) your room.*

Answers

1. *mix ... get* (zero conditional — a general truth).
2. *is ... will have* (first conditional — real future; note the present *is* in the *if*-clause).
3. *were* (*If I were you* — *were* for all persons).
4. *had studied ... would have passed* (third conditional — unreal past).
5. *knew* (*wish* + past simple for a present regret).
6. *Had I seen the sign, I would have stopped.* (inversion; no *if*, no comma after *Had*).
7. *as long as* — *I won't lend you the car as long as you don't drive too fast.* (*Unless you don't* would create a double negative; the natural alternative would be *unless you drive too fast.*)
8. *If it snows, we will build a snowman.* (remove *will* from the *if*-clause).
9. *If I had learned French, I would be able to read this menu now.* (past condition → present result).

10. *cleaned* (*It's high time* + past simple).

Chapter 16 — Reported Speech

When we want to tell someone what another person said, we have two choices. We can repeat the exact words, or we can report the *meaning* in our own words. This chapter shows you how to do the second of these clearly and accurately. Reported speech (also called *indirect speech*) appears constantly in conversation, news, emails, and essays, so mastering it will make your English sound much more natural and mature.

Direct vs Reported Speech

Direct speech gives the exact words a person used. We put them inside quotation marks and separate them from the reporting verb with a comma.

- ✓ *She said, “I am tired.”*
- ✓ *Tom asked, “Where is the station?”*

Reported speech tells us the same information without quotation marks and usually without the exact words. The structure changes, and often the verb tense changes too.

- ✓ *She said (that) she was tired.*
- ✓ *Tom asked where the station was.*

Notice three differences right away:

Feature	Direct speech	Reported speech
Quotation marks	Yes: “...”	No
Comma after <i>said</i>	Yes	No

Feature	Direct speech	Reported speech
Word <i>that</i>	No	Optional (<i>She said that...</i>)

Note: The little word *that* is optional after verbs like *say*, *tell*, *think*, and *know*. *She said she was tired* and *She said that she was tired* are both correct. In speech, *that* is often dropped.

Backshift: The Core Rule

When the reporting verb is in a **past tense** (*said*, *told*, *asked*, *explained*), the verbs inside the reported clause usually move **one step back** into the past. We call this **backshift**.

Think of it as a timeline. The original words were spoken in the past, so reporting them pulls everything one step further back.

- Direct: *"I work in London."*
- Reported: *He said he worked in London.*

Here is the master table to memorise.

Direct speech	Reported speech	Example (direct → reported)
Present simple (<i>work</i>)	Past simple (<i>worked</i>)	<i>"I work here."</i> → <i>She said she worked there.</i>
Present continuous (<i>am working</i>)	Past continuous (<i>was working</i>)	<i>"I am working."</i> → <i>He said he was working.</i>
Present perfect (<i>have worked</i>)	Past perfect (<i>had worked</i>)	<i>"I have finished."</i> → <i>She said she had finished.</i>
Past simple (<i>worked</i>)	Past perfect (<i>had worked</i>)	<i>"I saw her."</i> → <i>He said he had seen her.</i>
<i>will</i>	<i>would</i>	<i>"I will call."</i> → <i>She said she would call.</i>

Direct speech	Reported speech	Example (direct → reported)
<i>can</i>	<i>could</i>	<i>"I can swim." → He said he could swim.</i>
<i>may</i>	<i>might</i>	<i>"It may rain." → She said it might rain.</i>
<i>must</i> (obligation)	<i>had to</i>	<i>"I must go." → He said he had to go.</i>
<i>am/is/are going to</i>	<i>was/were going to</i>	<i>"I am going to wait." → She said she was going to wait.</i>

A few more worked examples:

- ✓ *"We are studying grammar." → They said they were studying grammar.*
- ✓ *"She has left the office." → He told me she had left the office.*
- ✓ *"You can borrow my car." → She said I could borrow her car.*
- ✓ *"I will help you tomorrow." → He promised he would help me.*

Tip: Some forms are already "as far back as they go" and do not change: the past perfect (*had worked*), and the modals *would*, *could*, *might*, and *should* stay the same. - ✓ *"I had already eaten." → She said she had already eaten.* - ✓ *"You should rest." → He said I should rest.*

When NOT to Backshift

Backshift is not always required. Watch for these situations.

1. The reporting verb is in the present, present perfect, or future. If you report something with *says*, *is saying*, or *will say*, there is no past to shift to, so the tense stays the same.

- ✓ *She says she is tired.* (not *was*)

- ✓ *He has told me he wants to leave.*

2. The statement is still true or is a general truth. Backshift is then *optional*. Many speakers keep the present tense to show the fact is still valid.

- ✓ *The teacher said the Earth goes round the Sun.* (still true)
- ✓ *The teacher said the Earth went round the Sun.* (also correct)
- ✓ *She told me she lives in Berlin.* (she still does)
- ✓ *She told me she lived in Berlin.* (also correct)

Callout — Backshift is a habit, not a law. With a past reporting verb, backshift is the safe, standard choice and is always acceptable. Keeping the present tense is only an option when the information is clearly still true at the moment of reporting. When in doubt, backshift.

Changes to Pronouns, Time, and Place

Because the speaker, the time, and the place are usually different when you report something, words that point to *who*, *when*, and *where* often change.

Pronouns shift to match the new point of view.

- Direct: *“I like your hat.”* (said by Anna to Ben)
- Reported: *Anna said she liked his hat.*

Time and place expressions shift too, because *now* is no longer now and *here* may no longer be here.

Direct	Reported
now	then / at that time
today	that day

Direct	Reported
tonight	that night
tomorrow	the next day / the following day
yesterday	the day before / the previous day
this week	that week
last week	the week before / the previous week
next week	the following week
ago	before
here	there
this	that
these	those

Examples:

- ✓ *“I saw her yesterday.” → He said he had seen her the day before.*
- ✓ *“I’ll do it tomorrow.” → She said she would do it the next day.*
- ✓ *“Sign this form here.” → He told me to sign that form there.*
- ✓ *“They left two hours ago.” → She said they had left two hours before.*

Note: Only change time and place words when the situation actually requires it. If you report something on the **same day**, you can keep *today*: *This morning she said she would finish today.*

Reported Questions

Questions change more than statements, so look carefully. When we report a question, three things happen:

1. The word order becomes **statement order** (subject before verb) — no inversion.
2. We **drop** *do / does / did*.
3. We **remove the question mark**.

Yes/no questions are introduced by *if* or *whether*.

- ✓ “Are you ready?” → *She asked if I was ready.*
- ✓ “Do you like coffee?” → *He asked whether I liked coffee.*

Wh- questions keep the question word (*what, where, when, why, how, who*).

- ✓ “Where do you live?” → *She asked where I lived.*
- ✓ “What time does the film start?” → *He asked what time the film started.*
- ✓ “Why is she crying?” → *They asked why she was crying.*

Callout — The most common error in the whole chapter.

Do not keep question word order in a reported question. There is no *do/does/did* and no inversion. - ✗ *She asked where did I live.* - ✓ *She asked where I lived.* - ✗ *He wanted to know what was my name.* - ✓ *He wanted to know what my name was.*

Reported Commands and Requests

To report an order, instruction, or request, we use a verb such as *tell* or *ask*, then an **object** (the person), then **to + infinitive**. For negatives, we use **not to**.

- ✓ “Sit down.” → *He told me to sit down.*
- ✓ “Please wait here.” → *She asked me to wait there.*
- ✓ “Don’t go.” → *She told me not to go.*
- ✓ “Don’t touch the screen.” → *The guide warned us not to touch the screen.*

Direct	Reported
“Open the window.”	<i>He told her to open the window.</i>
“Could you help me?”	<i>She asked me to help her.</i>
“Don’t be late.”	<i>He told them not to be late.</i>

Tip: Use *tell* for orders and *ask* for polite requests. Both need an object (a person): *tell me*, *ask **him*.

Reporting Verbs Beyond Say and Tell

Good writers do not report everything with *said*. English has a rich set of reporting verbs, and each one follows its own pattern. Learning the **pattern** is just as important as learning the verb.

Reporting verb	Pattern	Example
offer	<i>offer + to + infinitive</i>	<i>He offered to drive me home.</i>
promise	<i>promise + to + infinitive</i>	<i>She promised to call later.</i>

Reporting verb	Pattern	Example
agree	<i>agree + to + infinitive</i>	<i>They agreed to meet at noon.</i>
refuse	<i>refuse + to + infinitive</i>	<i>He refused to apologize.</i>
threaten	<i>threaten + to + infinitive</i>	<i>She threatened to leave.</i>
suggest	<i>suggest + -ing / suggest (that)...</i>	<i>He suggested taking a taxi. / He suggested that we take a taxi.</i>
advise	<i>advise + object + to</i>	<i>The doctor advised me to rest.</i>
remind	<i>remind + object + to</i>	<i>She reminded him to lock the door.</i>
warn	<i>warn + object + (not) to</i>	<i>I warned them not to swim there.</i>
admit	<i>admit + -ing / admit (that)...</i>	<i>He admitted breaking the vase.</i>
deny	<i>deny + -ing / deny (that)...</i>	<i>She denied taking the money.</i>
apologize	<i>apologize for + -ing</i>	<i>He apologized for being late.</i>

More examples in context:

- ✓ *“I’ll definitely pay you back.” → He promised to pay me back.*
- ✓ *“No, I won’t do it.” → She refused to do it.*
- ✓ *“Let’s order pizza.” → He suggested ordering pizza.*
- ✓ *“You should see a dentist.” → She advised me to see a dentist.*
- ✓ *“Sorry I forgot your birthday.” → He apologized for forgetting my birthday.*

Callout — say vs tell. *Tell* needs a person (an object) directly after it; *say* does not. - ✓ *She told me she was busy.* / ✗ *She told she was busy.* - ✓ *She said she was busy.* / ✗ *She said me she was*

busy. Remember the fixed phrases: *tell the truth, tell a lie, tell a story, tell the time* — and *say hello, say sorry*.

Common Mistakes

Mistake 1 — Question word order in reported questions.

✗ *I don't know where is he.* → ✓ *I don't know where he is.*

Mistake 2 — Leaving the question mark. ✗ *She asked if I was coming?* → ✓ *She asked if I was coming.*

Mistake 3 — Forgetting the object after *tell*. ✗ *He told to wait.* → ✓ *He told me to wait.*

Mistake 4 — Using *that* after a command verb. ✗ *She told me that sit down.* → ✓ *She told me to sit down.*

Mistake 5 — Wrong reporting-verb pattern. ✗ *He suggested me to go.* → ✓ *He suggested going.* / ✓ *He suggested that I go.*

Quick Review

- **Direct speech** = exact words in quotation marks; **reported speech** = the meaning, no quotation marks.
- After a past reporting verb, verbs usually **backshift one step** (present → past, *will* → *would*, *must* → *had to*, and so on).
- **Do not backshift** when the reporting verb is present/future, and **optionally** keep the present tense for facts that are still true.
- Change **pronouns** and **time/place words** to fit the new situation (*tomorrow* → *the next day*, *here* → *there*, *this* → *that*).
- **Reported questions** use statement word order, drop *do/does/did*, and have no question mark. Use *if/whether* for yes/no questions and keep the *wh*-word for *wh*-questions.

- **Reported commands/requests** use *tell/ask + object + (not) to + infinitive*.
- Choose precise **reporting verbs** (*offer to, refuse to, suggest -ing, advise + object + to, deny -ing, apologize for -ing*) and respect each pattern.
- *Tell* needs a person; *say* does not.

Practice

Rewrite each sentence in reported speech. Use a **past** reporting verb and backshift where appropriate.

1. “*I am learning Spanish,*” she said.
2. “*We have finished the project,*” they told me.
3. “*I will email you tomorrow,*” he said. (reporting on a different day)
4. “*Where do you work?*” she asked me.
5. “*Are you feeling better?*” the nurse asked him.
6. “*Close the door,*” the teacher told us.
7. “*Don’t worry about the exam,*” she told me.
8. “*I’ll help you carry the bags,*” he said. (use *offer*)
9. “*No, I won’t sign it,*” she said. (use *refuse*)
10. “*Let’s go to the beach,*” he said. (use *suggest*)

Answers

1. *She said (that) she was learning Spanish.*
2. *They told me (that) they had finished the project.*
3. *He said (that) he would email me the next day.*
4. *She asked me where I worked.*
5. *The nurse asked him if/whether he was feeling better.*

6. *The teacher told us to close the door.*
7. *She told me not to worry about the exam.*
8. *He offered to help me carry the bags.*
9. *She refused to sign it.*
10. *He suggested going to the beach. (also correct: He suggested that we go to the beach.)*

Chapter 17 — Gerunds & Infinitives

When we put two verbs together, the second verb usually has to change its shape. We cannot say *I enjoy to swim* or *I want going home*. Instead, English forces a choice: the **gerund** (the *-ing* form) or the **infinitive** (the *to* form, or sometimes the bare base form). Getting this right is one of the biggest steps toward sounding natural in English.

The good news is that most of these patterns can be learned. Some follow logic; others simply have to be memorised verb by verb. This chapter gives you the rules, the lists, and — most importantly — the small group of verbs that change their meaning depending on which form you choose. Read slowly, and keep coming back to the tables.

The Two Forms

A **gerund** is the *-ing* form of a verb used as a noun.

- ✓ *Swimming* is good exercise.
- ✓ I love *reading*.

An **infinitive** has two shapes. The **to-infinitive** is *to* + the base verb, and the **bare infinitive** is the base verb with no *to*.

- ✓ I want *to leave*. (to-infinitive)
- ✓ I must *leave*. (bare infinitive, after a modal)

Key idea: The gerund acts like a noun. The infinitive often expresses a purpose, an action not yet done, or a more abstract idea.

Keep this picture in mind — it explains many of the meaning differences later in the chapter.

How the Gerund Is Used

As a subject

When an action is the subject of a sentence, we normally use the gerund, not the infinitive.

- ✓ *Smoking* damages your health.
- ✓ *Learning* a language takes time.
- ✗ *To smoke* damages your health. (Possible but formal and unusual.)

After prepositions

This is one of the most reliable rules in English: **a verb after a preposition is always a gerund.**

- ✓ She is good at *cooking*.
- ✓ I'm interested in *learning* Italian.
- ✓ Thank you for *helping* me.
- ✓ He left without *saying* goodbye.
- ✓ We are thinking about *moving* house.
- ✗ *She is good at to cook*.

This also applies to expressions ending in a preposition, such as *look forward to* and *be used to*. The word *to* here is a preposition, so a gerund follows.

- ✓ I look forward to *meeting* you.
- ✗ *I look forward to meet* you.

After certain verbs

Some verbs are simply followed by a gerund. See the table below.

Verbs Followed by *-ing* (Gerund)

Verb	Example
enjoy	✓ I <i>enjoy cooking</i> on weekends.
finish	✓ Have you <i>finished writing</i> the report?
avoid	✓ He <i>avoids talking</i> about money.
mind	✓ Do you <i>mind opening</i> the window?
suggest	✓ She <i>suggested going</i> to the beach.
recommend	✓ I <i>recommend booking</i> early.
consider	✓ We're <i>considering moving</i> abroad.
admit	✓ He <i>admitted breaking</i> the vase.
deny	✓ She <i>denied taking</i> the keys.
imagine	✓ I can't <i>imagine living</i> there.
keep (= continue)	✓ He <i>keeps interrupting</i> me.
practise / practice	✓ I <i>practise speaking</i> every day.
miss	✓ I <i>miss seeing</i> my old friends.
can't help	✓ I <i>can't help laughing</i> at his jokes.
can't stand	✓ She <i>can't stand waiting</i> in queues.
give up	✓ He <i>gave up smoking</i> last year.

Common mistake: ✗ *I enjoy to swim.* → ✓ *I enjoy swimming.*
The verbs in this table never take the to-infinitive.

British / American note: The verb is spelled *practise* (verb) and *practice* (noun) in British English, but Americans write *practice* for both.

How the Infinitive Is Used

To express purpose

We use the to-infinitive to say **why** someone does something. This answers the question *Why?* or *What for?*

- ✓ I came here *to help* you.
- ✓ She went out *to buy* some bread.
- ✗ *I came here for to help* you. / ✗ *I came here for help* you.

After adjectives

Many adjectives describing feelings and reactions are followed by a to-infinitive.

- ✓ I'm happy *to see* you.
- ✓ It's easy *to make* mistakes.
- ✓ We were sorry *to hear* the news.
- ✓ She was the first *to arrive*.

After question words

After *how*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *who* and *whether*, we often use a to-infinitive to talk about something we know or need to decide.

- ✓ I don't know *how to drive*.
- ✓ Tell me *what to do*.
- ✓ We weren't sure *where to go*.
- ✗ *I don't know how driving*.

After certain verbs

Some verbs are followed directly by a to-infinitive.

Verbs Followed by the To-Infinitive

Verb	Example
want	✓ I <i>want to go</i> home.
need	✓ You <i>need to rest</i> .
decide	✓ We <i>decided to stay</i> .
hope	✓ I <i>hope to pass</i> the exam.
plan	✓ They <i>plan to travel</i> in July.
promise	✓ He <i>promised to call</i> .
agree	✓ She <i>agreed to help</i> .
refuse	✓ He <i>refused to apologise</i> .
offer	✓ They <i>offered to pay</i> .
manage	✓ I <i>managed to finish</i> on time.
learn	✓ She <i>learned to swim</i> at five.
expect	✓ We <i>expect to arrive</i> by noon.
afford	✓ We can't <i>afford to buy</i> a car.
pretend	✓ He <i>pretended to be</i> asleep.
seem	✓ She <i>seems to know</i> the answer.
fail	✓ They <i>failed to win</i> the match.

Common mistake: ✗ *I want going home.* → ✓ *I want to go home.* These verbs never take the gerund.

Verbs + Object + To-Infinitive

A large group of verbs follows the pattern **verb + someone + to do something**. There is an object (a person) between the two verbs.

Verb	Example
want	✓ I <i>want you to stay</i> .
ask	✓ She <i>asked me to wait</i> .
tell	✓ He <i>told them to leave</i> .
advise	✓ The doctor <i>advised her to rest</i> .
allow	✓ They <i>allowed us to enter</i> .
expect	✓ We <i>expect him to win</i> .
encourage	✓ My teacher <i>encouraged me to apply</i> .
remind	✓ Please <i>remind me to call her</i> .
force	✓ They <i>forced him to sign</i> .
persuade	✓ She <i>persuaded us to come</i> .
invite	✓ They <i>invited me to join them</i> .
warn	✓ I <i>warned them not to go</i> .

Notice how to make these negative: put *not* before *to*.

- ✓ The doctor advised her *not to drive*.

The Bare Infinitive (No To)

Sometimes we use the base verb with **no to**. This is called the bare infinitive.

After modal verbs

- ✓ You *must go*. ✓ She *can swim*. ✓ We *should leave*.

- ✗ *You must to go.*

After **make** and **let** + object

- ✓ *She made me wait* an hour.
- ✓ *My parents let me stay* up late.
- ✗ *She made me to wait.* / ✗ *My parents let me to stay.*

Note: In the passive, *make* takes *to*: ✓ *I was made to wait.* But *let* is not used this way; we use *be allowed to* instead: ✓ *I was allowed to stay.*

After **had better** and **would rather**

- ✓ *You'd better hurry.*
- ✓ *I'd rather walk* than wait for the bus.

After **help**

With *help*, the *to* is optional. Both are correct.

- ✓ *Can you help me carry this?* ✓ *Can you help me to carry this?*

Verbs of perception: **see**, **hear**, **watch**, **feel**

After verbs of perception + object, we can use either the bare infinitive or the *-ing* form — but the meaning shifts slightly.

- ✓ *I saw her cross* the road. (the complete action, from start to finish)
- ✓ *I saw her crossing* the road. (the action in progress, perhaps only part of it)

Both are natural. Use the bare infinitive for a whole event and *-ing* for an ongoing one.

Quick contrast: *I heard him sing* (he sang a whole song) vs *I heard him singing* (he was in the middle of singing when I noticed).

Verbs That Take Either Form (Little or No Change)

A few verbs can be followed by either the gerund or the to-infinitive with almost no difference in meaning. These include **begin**, **start**, **continue**, **like**, **love**, **hate** and **prefer**.

- ✓ *It began to rain.* / ✓ *It began raining.*
- ✓ *I love cooking.* / ✓ *I love to cook.*

Note: Use the to-infinitive after **would like**, **would love**, **would hate** and **would prefer**, because these refer to a specific occasion or offer. - ✓ *I'd like to leave now.* (✗ *I'd like leaving now.*) - ✓ *Would you like to dance?*

Compare: *I like cooking* (a general habit) vs *I would like to cook tonight* (this one occasion).

Verbs That CHANGE Meaning

This is the most important section in the chapter. With the following verbs, choosing the gerund or the infinitive **changes the meaning completely**. Study each pair carefully.

Verb	+ To-Infinitive	+ -ing (Gerund)
re- mem- ber	remember to do = not forget a duty → ✓ <i>I remembered to lock the door.</i> (I locked it)	remember doing = recall a memory → ✓ <i>I remember locking the door.</i> (I have a memory of it)

Verb	+ To-Infinitive	+ -ing (Gerund)
forget	forget to do = fail to do a duty → ✓ <i>I forgot to buy milk. (no milk!)</i>	forget doing = lose the memory of a past act → ✓ <i>I'll never forget meeting her.</i>
stop	stop to do = pause in order to do something → ✓ <i>He stopped to smoke. (paused so he could smoke)</i>	stop doing = end an activity → ✓ <i>He stopped smoking. (quit the habit)</i>
try	try to do = make an effort, attempt something difficult → ✓ <i>I tried to open the window, but it was stuck.</i>	try doing = experiment with a method → ✓ <i>Try opening the window — it might help.</i>
regret	regret to do = be sorry about news you're giving (formal) → ✓ <i>We regret to inform you that...</i>	regret doing = feel sorry about a past act → ✓ <i>I regret saying that.</i>
go on	go on to do = move to a new, different activity → ✓ <i>After the intro, she went on to explain the rules.</i>	go on doing = continue the same activity → ✓ <i>He went on talking for hours.</i>
mean	mean to do = intend → ✓ <i>I didn't mean to hurt you.</i>	mean doing = involve, have as a result → ✓ <i>This job means working weekends.</i>

Strong warning: These differences are real and important. *Stop to smoke* and *stop smoking* are opposites in effect: one starts smoking, the other ends it. *Remember to lock* (a future duty) and *remember locking* (a past memory) point in opposite directions in time. Take the time to learn both columns — examiners and careful readers will notice.

Used to vs Be / Get Used to

These look similar but are completely different structures.

- **used to + base verb** = a past habit that is no longer true.
- ✓ *I used to smoke, but I quit.*

- **be / get used to + -ing** = be (or become) accustomed to something. Here *to* is a preposition, so a gerund follows.
- ✓ *I am used to waking up* early now.
- ✓ She is slowly *getting used to living* alone.

Common mistake: ✗ *I am used to wake up early.* → ✓ *I am used to waking up early.*

Quick Review

- After **prepositions**, always use the **gerund**: *good at cooking, interested in learning*.
- Use the **to-infinitive** to express **purpose**: *I came to help*.
- Some verbs always take *-ing* (*enjoy, finish, avoid, suggest*); some always take *to* (*want, decide, hope, refuse*).
- Many verbs take **object + to-infinitive**: *tell / ask / advise someone to do*.
- Use the **bare infinitive** after modals, after *make / let* + object, after *had better / would rather*, and (optionally) after *help*.
- *See / hear / watch* + object can take the bare infinitive (whole action) or *-ing* (action in progress).
- *Begin, start, like, love, hate* take either form with little change — but **would like** takes *to*.
- A small group **changes meaning**: *stop, remember, forget, try, regret, go on, mean*. Learn both meanings.
- *used to do* (past habit) ≠ *be used to doing* (be accustomed).

Practice

Choose the correct form (gerund or infinitive) of the verb in brackets. Some items have two acceptable answers — explain the meaning where it matters.

1. I really enjoy _____ (read) before bed.
2. She decided _____ (study) medicine.
3. Remember _____ (post) the letter on your way out — it's urgent.
4. He's very good at _____ (play) the guitar.
5. They let their children _____ (stay) up late on Fridays.
6. I came here _____ (ask) you a question.
7. We can't afford _____ (eat) out every night.
8. Do you mind _____ (close) the door?
9. I'll never forget _____ (see) the Grand Canyon for the first time.
10. You'd better _____ (leave) now if you want to catch the train.

Answers

1. *reading* — *enjoy* is always followed by the gerund.
2. *to study* — *decide* takes the to-infinitive.
3. *to post* — *remember to do* means a duty you must not forget (the letter is not yet posted).
4. *playing* — after the preposition *at*, use the gerund.
5. *stay* — *let* + object takes the bare infinitive (no *to*).
6. *to ask* — the to-infinitive of purpose: it explains *why* he came.
7. *to eat* — *afford* takes the to-infinitive.
8. *closing* — *mind* is followed by the gerund.

9. *seeing* — *forget doing* refers to a memory you will always keep.
10. *leave* — after *had better*, use the bare infinitive.

Chapter 18 — Phrasal Verbs

Few features of English cause learners more trouble — or unlock more natural-sounding speech — than phrasal verbs. They are everywhere. Listen to a casual conversation, watch a film, or read an email from a colleague, and you will meet dozens of them. The good news is that phrasal verbs follow patterns, and once you understand those patterns, you can learn and use them with confidence. This chapter explains what phrasal verbs are, the four grammatical types you must know, and a generous reference list to help you build your vocabulary.

What Is a Phrasal Verb?

A **phrasal verb** is a verb combined with one or more small words called **particles** (a preposition or an adverb). Together, the verb and its particle often create a meaning that is completely different from the verb on its own.

- *look* (to use your eyes) + *up* → *look up* (to search for information)
- *give* (to hand something to someone) + *up* → *give up* (to stop trying)
- *put* (to place) + *off* → *put off* (to postpone)

Compare these:

- ✓ *Please look up the word in a dictionary.* (= search for it)
- ✓ *Don't give up — you're nearly finished!* (= stop trying)
- ✓ *We had to put off the meeting until Friday.* (= postpone it)

Why they matter: Phrasal verbs are the heartbeat of everyday and spoken English. Native speakers often choose a phrasal verb

where a learner might reach for a single, more formal word. Saying *Can you find out the time?* sounds far more natural than *Can you ascertain the time?*

Why they're hard: The meaning is frequently **idiomatic** — you cannot guess it from the individual words. *Give up* has nothing to do with “giving,” and *put up with* (to tolerate) has nothing to do with “putting.” You simply have to learn them, much like vocabulary.

Literal vs Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs

Not every phrasal verb is mysterious. Some are **literal**: the meaning is exactly what the words suggest.

- ✓ *Please sit down.* (sit + downward — easy to understand)
- ✓ *She stood up and left the room.*
- ✓ *He picked up the pen from the floor.* (lifted it)

Others are **idiomatic**: the meaning is figurative and must be memorized.

- ✓ *They called off the wedding.* (cancelled — nothing to do with calling)
- ✓ *I can't make out what he's saying.* (understand)
- ✓ *Sales have picked up recently.* (improved — a second, idiomatic meaning of *pick up*)

Notice that one phrasal verb can have both a literal and an idiomatic meaning, as *pick up* shows. Context tells you which one is intended.

The Four Types of Phrasal Verb

This is the most important grammar in the chapter. Every phrasal verb belongs to one of four types, defined by whether it takes an object and, if it does, where the object can go.

Type 1: Intransitive (No Object)

Intransitive phrasal verbs do not take an object. Nothing comes between the verb and the particle, and nothing needs to follow.

- ✓ *My car broke down on the motorway.* (stopped working)
- ✓ *He didn't show up for the interview.* (arrive/appear)
- ✓ *I usually get up at seven.* (leave bed)
- ✓ *Please sit down.*
- ✓ *The plane took off on time.*

You cannot insert an object because there is no object:

- ✗ *My car broke the engine down.*

Type 2: Transitive Separable

These phrasal verbs take an object, and the object can go **either** between the verb and the particle **or** after the particle. Both positions are correct.

- ✓ *Could you turn off the light?*
- ✓ *Could you turn the light off?*
- ✓ *She threw away the old letters. / She threw the old letters away.*
- ✓ *I'll fill in this form. / I'll fill this form in.*

There is, however, one strict rule.

CRITICAL RULE — Pronouns go in the MIDDLE. When the object is a **pronoun** (*it, them, him, her, us, you, me*), it **must** come between the verb and the particle. It can never follow the particle. - ✓ *Turn it off.* ✗ *Turn off it.* - ✓ *Throw them away.* ✗ *Throw away them.* - ✓ *I'll fill it in.* ✗ *I'll fill in it.* This is one of the most common phrasal-verb mistakes, so memorize it well.

Also note: if the noun object is very long, speakers usually keep it after the particle, because separating it would be hard to follow.

- ✓ *She threw away all the letters her ex-boyfriend had sent her.* (natural)
- Less natural: *She threw all the letters her ex-boyfriend had sent her away.*

Type 3: Transitive Inseparable

These phrasal verbs take an object, but the object **must always** come after the particle. You can never separate the verb from its particle — not even with a pronoun.

- ✓ *Who looks after the children while you work?* (cares for)
- ✗ *Who looks the children after?*
- ✓ *She looks after them.* (pronoun also stays after)
- ✗ *She looks them after.*
- ✓ *I ran into an old friend yesterday.* (met by chance)
- ✓ *We need to deal with this problem.*
- ✓ *He takes after his mother.* (resembles)

Type 4: Three-Part Phrasal Verbs

These consist of a verb + an adverb + a preposition. They are **always inseparable**: the object comes after the whole group.

- ✓ *I'm looking forward to the holidays.* (anticipating with pleasure)
- ✓ *I don't know how she puts up with that noise.* (tolerates)
- ✓ *He gets on with his colleagues.* (has a good relationship)
- ✓ *We've run out of milk.* (have none left)
- ✓ *I won't put up with it.* (pronoun still comes after the whole group)

Tip — look forward to + -ing. The *to* in *look forward to* is a preposition, not part of an infinitive. So it is followed by a noun or the **-ing** form, never the base verb. - ✓ *I look forward to meeting you.* - ✗ *I look forward to meet you.* - ✓ *I look forward to the weekend.*

Summary Table of the Four Types

Type	Ob- ject?	Where the object goes	Example
1. Intransitive	No ob- ject	—	<i>The car broke down.</i>
2. Transitive separable	Yes	Before or after the particle; pronoun must go before	<i>Turn the light off / Turn it off</i>
3. Transitive inseparable	Yes	Always after the particle	<i>Look after the kids / them**</i>
4. Three-part (always inseparable)	Yes	Always after the whole group	<i>Put up with the noise / it**</i>

How to Know If a Phrasal Verb Is Separable

There is no foolproof rule that lets you predict separability just by looking at a verb, so use these practical strategies.

1. **Check a good dictionary.** Learner’s dictionaries mark phrasal verbs clearly. They show separable verbs as *turn something off* (with “something” between the parts) and inseparable verbs as *look after somebody* (with the object after the whole verb). The position of *something/somebody* in the dictionary entry tells you everything.
2. **Use the pronoun test.** Replace the object with a pronoun (*it/them*) and put it in the middle. - If *Turn it off* sounds correct → the verb is **separable**. - If *Look it after* sounds wrong (and only *look after it works*) → **the verb is inseparable****.
3. **Remember the categories.** Two-part phrasal verbs may be separable or inseparable, but three-part phrasal verbs are **always inseparable**. That alone covers a large group.

A Themed Reference List

The tables below group useful phrasal verbs so you can learn them in meaningful sets. Try to learn each one inside its example sentence.

Common Verbs: *get*

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
get up	leave your bed	<i>I get up at six on weekdays.</i>
get on (with)	have a good relationship	<i>She gets on well with her boss.</i>
get over	recover from	<i>It took him weeks to get over the flu.</i>

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
get by	manage (with difficulty)	<i>We can get by on a small budget.</i>
get along	have a friendly relationship	<i>The two teams get along fine.</i>

Common Verbs: *take*

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
take off	(of a plane) leave the ground; remove	<i>The plane took off late. / He took off his coat.</i>
take after	resemble (a relative)	<i>She takes after her grandmother.</i>
take up	start a hobby/activity	<i>I've taken up painting.</i>
take over	gain control of	<i>A larger firm took over the company.</i>
take back	return; retract	<i>I take back what I said.</i>

Common Verbs: *put*

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
put off	postpone	<i>They put off the trip until June.</i>
put on	dress in; gain (weight)	<i>She put on her gloves. / I've put on weight.</i>
put up with	tolerate	<i>He won't put up with rudeness.</i>
put out	extinguish	<i>Firefighters put out the blaze.</i>
put away	tidy/store	<i>Please put away your toys.</i>

Common Verbs: look

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
look up	search for information	<i>I'll look up the address online.</i>
look after	take care of	<i>Can you look after the cat?</i>
look for	try to find	<i>I'm looking for my keys.</i>
look forward to	anticipate with pleasure	<i>We look forward to seeing you.</i>
look into	investigate	<i>The police are looking into the case.</i>

Common Verbs: turn, come, go

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
turn on / off	start / stop a device	<i>She turned on the radio. / Turn it off.</i>
turn up / down	increase / decrease (volume); arrive (up); refuse (down)	<i>He turned up late. / They turned down the offer.</i>
come across	find by chance	<i>I came across an old photo.</i>
come back	return	<i>She came back at noon.</i>
go on	continue; happen	<i>Please go on. / What's going on?</i>
go off	(of an alarm) ring; (of food) spoil	<i>My alarm went off early. / The milk's gone off.</i>

By Topic: Daily Routine

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
wake up	stop sleeping	<i>I woke up before the alarm.</i>
get dressed (up)	put on (smart) clothes	<i>They got dressed up for the party.</i>

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
wash up	clean the dishes (BrE)	<i>I'll wash up after dinner.</i>
tidy up	make a place neat	<i>Let's tidy up the kitchen.</i>

British vs American note: In British English, *wash up* usually means “wash the dishes.” In American English, it often means “wash your hands and face.” Americans tend to say *do the dishes* for the cleaning task.

By Topic: Work and Study

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
find out	discover	<i>I'll find out the deadline.</i>
carry on	continue	<i>They carried on working.</i>
hand in	submit	<i>Please hand in your essays.</i>
fill in / out	complete (a form)	<i>Could you fill in this form?</i>
set up	establish; arrange	<i>She set up a new business.</i>

By Topic: Relationships

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
get along (with)	have a good relationship	<i>Do you get along with your neighbours?</i>
break up (with)	end a romantic relationship	<i>They broke up last year.</i>
make up	reconcile after an argument	<i>They argued but soon made up.</i>
fall out (with)	stop being friends after a quarrel	<i>She fell out with her sister.</i>
ask out	invite on a date	<i>He finally asked her out.</i>

By Topic: Travel

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
set off	begin a journey	<i>We set off at dawn.</i>
check in / out	register / leave (a hotel)	<i>We checked in at the hotel.</i>
get on / off	board / leave (bus, train, plane)	<i>Please get off at the next stop.</i>
get in / out (of)	enter / leave (a car/ taxi)	<i>She got out of the taxi.</i>
pick up / drop off	collect / deliver a person	<i>I'll pick you up at eight. / Can you drop me off here?</i>

Phrasal Verbs vs Prepositional Verbs

Grammarians sometimes distinguish **phrasal verbs** (verb + adverb particle) from **prepositional verbs** (verb + preposition). The practical difference matters mainly for word order:

- A true **adverb particle** can often move (separable): *Turn the light off.*
- A **preposition** cannot move; its object must follow it: *look after the kids, never look the kids after.*

For most learners, the useful takeaway is the same as before: if the verb is separable, the small word behaves like an adverb; if it is inseparable, it behaves like a preposition. You do not need the labels to use the verbs correctly — you need to know the word order, which the pronoun test reveals.

Register: Informal vs Formal Equivalents

Phrasal verbs tend to feel **informal** and conversational. In formal or academic writing, a single-word, often Latin-based equivalent may sound more appropriate. Knowing both lets you adjust your tone.

Phrasal verb (informal)	One-word equivalent (formal)
find out	discover, ascertain
put off	postpone
set up	establish
go up	increase, rise
go down	decrease, fall
put up with	tolerate
look into	investigate
carry out	conduct, perform
leave out	omit
give up	quit, abandon

Neither version is “better.” Choose the phrasal verb for everyday speech and friendly writing; choose the one-word equivalent for reports, essays, and formal correspondence.

Common Mistakes

Mistake 1 — Separating an inseparable verb. - *✗ I'll look the number after.* ✓ *I'll look after the number's owner.* (Better example: *✗ Who looks the baby after?* ✓ *Who looks after the baby?)*
 - *✗ We'll deal this with later.* ✓ *We'll deal with this later.*

Mistake 2 — Putting a pronoun after a separable particle.

- ✗ *Turn off it.* ✓ *Turn it off.* - ✗ *Throw away them.* ✓ *Throw them away.*

Mistake 3 — Using the wrong particle. Particles change meaning completely, so the wrong one creates a different verb (or no verb at all). - ✗ *I'll look the word in the dictionary.* (missing particle) ✓ *I'll look up the word.* - ✗ *She gets on her brother.* ✓ *She gets on with her brother.* - ✗ *Please fill the form.* (often needs a particle) ✓ *Please fill in the form.*

Mistake 4 — Treating *to* as an infinitive in three-part verbs. - ✗ *I look forward to hear from you.* ✓ *I look forward to hearing from you.*

Quick Review

- A **phrasal verb** is a verb + particle (*give up, look after*), and its meaning is often **idiomatic** — not guessable from the parts.
- There are **four types**: intransitive (no object), transitive **separable**, transitive **inseparable**, and **three-part** (always inseparable).
- With separable verbs, a noun object can go before or after the particle, but a **pronoun must go in the middle**: *turn it off*, never ✗ *turn off it*.
- With inseparable and three-part verbs, the object **always** follows the particle: *look after them, put up with it*.
- *Look forward to* takes a noun or **-ing** form: *look forward to seeing you*.
- Use a **dictionary** and the **pronoun test** to check separability.
- Phrasal verbs are often **informal**; one-word equivalents (*discover, postpone*) suit formal writing.

Practice

A. Identify the type (1 = intransitive, 2 = separable, 3 = inseparable, 4 = three-part).

1. *My computer broke down this morning.*
2. *Please turn off the television.*
3. *She looks after her elderly neighbour.*
4. *We're looking forward to the concert.*

B. Rewrite each sentence, replacing the underlined object with a pronoun.

1. *Can you turn off the lights?*
2. *He threw away the newspaper.*
3. *She looks after the children.*

C. Choose the correct particle.

1. *I need to find ___ when the shop opens. (out / up)*
2. *They don't get ___ with their landlord. (on / up)*

D. Correct the mistake.

1. *I look forward to meet you next week.*

Answers

1. **1 — intransitive** (no object; *break down* = stop working).
2. **2 — separable** (you can also say *turn the television off* / *turn it off*).
3. **3 — inseparable** (*look after the neighbour* / *look after her*; never *look her after*).
4. **4 — three-part** (*look forward to* + noun/-ing).

5. *Can you turn them off?* (pronoun in the middle; ✗ *turn off them*)
6. *He threw it away.* (✗ *threw away it*)
7. *She looks after them.* (inseparable, so the pronoun stays after the particle; ✗ *looks them after*)
8. **out** — *find out* = discover.
9. **on** — *get on with* = have a good relationship.
10. *I look forward to meeting you next week.* (*to* is a preposition, so use the **-ing** form.)

PART IV

Describing & Connecting

Adjectives, adverbs, comparison, prepositions, conjunctions, and relative clauses — the tools that add detail and join ideas.

Chapter 19 — Adjectives & Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are the words that add colour, detail, and precision to English. Adjectives tell us more about people and things; adverbs tell us more about actions, qualities, and even whole ideas. Once you understand how each one works — and where to put it — your English will sound far more natural and exact.

Adjectives

An **adjective** describes a noun (a person, place, thing, or idea). It can tell us the size, colour, age, opinion, or any other quality of that noun.

- *She has a red car.*
- *That was a difficult decision.*
- *They live in an old house.*

Position: attributive and predicative

Adjectives appear in two main positions.

Attributive adjectives come **before the noun** they describe.

- ✓ *a happy child*
- ✓ *an interesting book*
- ✓ *the tall buildings*

Predicative adjectives come **after a linking verb** such as *be*, *seem*, *look*, *feel*, *become*, *sound*, *taste*, *smell*, or *get*. Here the adjective describes the subject.

- ✓ *The child is happy.*

- ✓ *This book seems interesting.*
- ✓ *She looks tired.*
- ✓ *The soup tastes delicious.*

Notice that after a linking verb we use an **adjective**, not an adverb, because we are describing the subject (a noun), not the action.

- ✓ *You look great.* (not *~~look greatly~~*)
- ✓ *The music sounds beautiful.* (not *~~sounds beautifully~~*)

Rule: After linking verbs (*be, seem, look, feel, become, taste, smell, sound*), use an adjective, because it describes the subject — not an adverb.

Adjectives never take a plural -s

This is one of the most common mistakes for learners. In English, adjectives have **one form**. They do not change for number or gender.

- ✓ *two blue cars* ✗ *two ~~blues~~ cars*
- ✓ *three tall men* ✗ *three ~~talls~~ men*
- ✓ *many important questions* ✗ *many ~~important~s~~ ques-
tions*

Common mistake: Adjectives are invariable. Never add -s to an adjective to match a plural noun. ✗ *reds apples* → ✓ *red apples*.

Order of Adjectives

When we use more than one adjective before a noun, English follows a fairly fixed order. Native speakers feel this order instinctively; learners can use the sequence below.

The usual order is: **opinion** → **size** → **age** → **shape** → **colour** → **origin** → **material** → **purpose** → **noun**.

Order	Type	Examples
1	Opinion	<i>lovely, beautiful, horrible, delicious</i>
2	Size	<i>big, small, tall, tiny</i>
3	Age	<i>old, young, new, ancient</i>
4	Shape	<i>round, square, flat, thin</i>
5	Colour	<i>red, blue, green, white</i>
6	Origin	<i>French, Japanese, lunar</i>
7	Material	<i>wooden, plastic, silk, golden</i>
8	Purpose	<i>sleeping (bag), running (shoes)</i>

Putting it together:

- ✓ *a beautiful small old round brown wooden table* (opinion–size–age–shape–colour–material + noun)
- ✓ *an ugly big black plastic chair*
- ✓ *a comfortable new Italian leather sofa*
- ✓ *lovely little red Spanish shoes*

In practice, we rarely use more than three adjectives together. When we do break the order, it sounds odd:

- ✓ *a small black cat* ✗ *a ~~black small~~ cat*

Tip: A quick memory aid is **OSASCOMP** (Opinion, Size, Age, Shape, Colour, Origin, Material, Purpose). If two adjectives feel awkward, check whether they are in this order.

Adjectives ending in **-ED** and **-ING**

Many adjectives come in pairs: one ending in **-ed** and one ending in **-ing**. They are NOT interchangeable, and confusing them is one of the most frequent errors in English.

- **-ED** describes a **feeling** (how a person feels).
- **-ING** describes the **cause** (the thing or person that produces the feeling).

Compare:

- ✓ *I am bored.* (I feel bored.)
- ✓ *The lesson is boring.* (The lesson causes the feeling.)
- ✓ *She was interested in the topic.* ✓ *The topic was interesting.*
- ✓ *We were excited about the trip.* ✓ *The trip was exciting.*
- ✓ *He felt tired.* ✓ *The journey was tiring.*
- ✓ *They were confused.* ✓ *The instructions were confusing.*
- ✓ *I'm surprised.* ✓ *The news is surprising.*

Now look at a classic error:

- ✗ *I am boring.* (This means *I* make other people bored!)
- ✓ *I am bored.* (This is what you usually mean.)

Common mistake: *I am boring* says you are dull and send others to sleep. *I am bored* says you feel no interest. Use **-ed** for your own feelings.

Remember: People are usually *-ed* (they have feelings); things are usually *-ing* (they cause feelings) — though a person can be *interesting* if they cause interest in others.

Compound Adjectives

A **compound adjective** is made of two or more words joined together, usually with a hyphen, that work as a single adjective before a noun.

- ✓ *a well-known author*
- ✓ *a ten-year-old boy*
- ✓ *an English-speaking country*
- ✓ *a part-time job*
- ✓ *a good-looking actor*

Note that in number + noun compounds, the noun stays **singular**:

- ✓ *a five-star hotel* (not *~~five-stars~~*)
- ✓ *a two-hour film* (not *~~two-hours~~*)

The hyphen usually disappears when the words come after the verb:

- ✓ *a well-known singer* → *The singer is well known.*

Adjectives Used as Nouns

We can use **the + adjective** to talk about a whole group of people. The phrase takes a **plural** verb, and the adjective stays in its base form.

- ✓ ***The rich** get richer.*
- ✓ ***The elderly*** **often** need* *extra care.**
- ✓ ***The unemployed are** looking for work.*
- ✓ *This charity helps the homeless.*

Watch out: *The rich* means *rich people* in general, not one person. ✗ *~The rich is~ getting richer* → ✓ *The rich are getting richer.*

Adverbs

An **adverb** adds information about how, where, when, how often, or to what degree something happens. Adverbs can modify:

- **a verb:** *She sings beautifully.*
- **an adjective:** *It's very cold.*
- **another adverb:** *He runs really fast.*
- **a whole sentence:** ***Fortunately***, nobody was hurt.

Types of adverbs

Type	Question	Examples
Manner	How?	<i>quickly, well, carefully, badly</i>
Place	Where?	<i>here, there, outside, everywhere</i>
Time	When?	<i>yesterday, now, soon, today</i>
Frequency	How often?	<i>always, often, sometimes, never</i>
Degree	How much?	<i>very, quite, too, almost, completely</i>
Sentence	(comment)	<i>fortunately, honestly, perhaps, clearly</i>

Forming Adverbs from Adjectives

Most adverbs of manner are formed by adding **-ly** to an adjective.

- *quick* → *quickly*, *slow* → *slowly*, *careful* → *carefully*

There are a few spelling rules:

Adjective ends in...	Rule	Example
consonant + -y	change <i>y</i> to <i>i</i> , add <i>-ly</i>	<i>happy</i> → <i>happily</i> **
-le	drop <i>e</i> , add <i>-y</i>	<i>terrible</i> → <i>terribly</i> , <i>gentle</i> → <i>gently</i>
-ic	add <i>-ally</i>	<i>basic</i> → <i>basically</i> , <i>automatic</i> → <i>automatically</i>
-ue	drop <i>e</i> , add <i>-ly</i>	<i>true</i> → <i>truly</i> , <i>due</i> → <i>duly</i>
-l	keep the <i>l</i> , add <i>-ly</i>	<i>careful</i> → <i>carefully</i> , <i>beautiful</i> → <i>beautifully</i>

Watch out: Some words ending in **-ly** are adjectives, NOT adverbs: *friendly*, *lovely*, *silly*, *lonely*, *ugly*, *likely*, *elderly*. You cannot say *~~friendlyly~~*. Instead, use a phrase like “**in a ... way**”.

- ✗ *She smiled at me friendlyly.* → ✓ *She smiled at me in a friendly way.*
- ✓ *He behaved in a silly way.*

Irregular and Identical Forms

Some adverbs do not follow the *-ly* pattern. A few share the same form as the adjective, and a small group changes meaning completely when *-ly* is added.

Adjective	Adverb	Example
good	well	<i>She speaks English well.</i>
fast	fast	<i>He drives fast.</i>
hard	hard	<i>They work hard.</i>
late	late	<i>I arrived late.</i>

Adjective	Adverb	Example
early	early	<i>We left early.</i>
near	near	<i>Don't come too near.</i>
high	high	<i>The plane flew high.</i>
daily	daily	<i>The shop opens daily.</i>

Some of these adjectives DO have an -ly adverb – but it means something different:

Word	Meaning	Example
hard	with effort	<i>She studies hard.</i>
hardly	almost not	<i>She hardly studies. (= almost never)</i>
late	not early	<i>He came late.</i>
lately	recently	<i>I haven't seen him lately.</i>
near	close in distance	<i>Come a bit nearer.</i>
nearly	almost	<i>I nearly missed the bus.</i>

Common mistake: *hardly*, *lately*, and *nearly* are NOT the adverb forms of *hard*, *late*, and *near* – they have separate meanings!
 - ✓ *I work hard.* (a lot of effort) vs ✓ *I hardly work.* (almost none) - ✓ *The train left late.* vs ✓ *Have you travelled lately?* (recently)

Adverb Position

Adverbs can go in three main positions: **front**, **mid**, and **end**.

Front position (before the subject) is common for time and sentence adverbs.

- ✓ *Yesterday*, we visited the museum.

- ✓ **Fortunately**, the rain stopped.

End position (after the verb or object) is normal for adverbs of manner, place, and time.

- ✓ *She spoke softly.*
- ✓ *Put the keys there.*
- ✓ *We'll meet tomorrow.*

Mid position (with the verb) is used for many frequency and degree adverbs. The rules are:

- Put the adverb **before the main verb**: *She often sings.*
- Put it **after the verb be**: *She is often late.*
- Put it **after the first auxiliary** verb: *I have never been there. / You should always check.*

Examples:

- ✓ *He usually walks to work.* (before main verb)
- ✓ *He is usually tired.* (after *be*)
- ✓ *She has always wanted to travel.* (after auxiliary)
- ✗ *~~He walks usually~~ to work.*

Order of end-position adverbs

When several adverbs come at the end, the usual order is **manner** → **place** → **time**.

- ✓ *She sang beautifully (manner) at the concert (place) last night (time).*
- ✓ *They played well (manner) at home (place) yesterday (time).*
- ✗ *They played ~~yesterday at home well~~.*

Tip: Remember **MPT** — Manner, Place, Time — for adverbs at the end of a sentence.

Position of frequency adverbs

- ✓ *I always drink coffee in the morning.* (before the main verb)
- ✓ *She is never late.* (after *be*)
- ✓ *We have sometimes considered moving.* (after the auxiliary)

Good vs Well

Good is an **adjective**; *well* is its **adverb**. Use *good* with nouns and after linking verbs; use *well* to describe how an action is done.

- ✓ *She is a good singer.* (adjective + noun)
- ✓ *She sings well.* (how she sings)
- ✗ *She sings ~~good~~.*

Watch out: “I’m good” vs “I’m well.” When someone asks *How are you?*, both *I’m good* and *I’m well* are acceptable. *I’m well* traditionally refers to health; *I’m good* (very common, especially in American English) refers to your general state. Note that *well* can also be an **adjective** meaning *in good health*: *I don’t feel well today.*

Degree Adverbs: Gradable vs Non-gradable Adjectives

Adjectives are either **gradable** (they can be stronger or weaker) or **non-gradable** (they are already extreme or absolute). The degree adverb you choose must match.

Gradable adjectives (*tired, cold, big, interesting*) work with *very, quite, a bit, extremely, rather*.

- ✓ *I'm very tired.*
- ✓ *It's quite cold.*

Non-gradable adjectives (*exhausted, freezing, enormous, excellent, perfect, impossible*) work with *absolutely, completely, totally, utterly* — but NOT with *very*.

- ✓ *I'm absolutely exhausted.* ✗ *I'm ~~very exhausted~~.*
- ✓ *It's absolutely freezing.* ✗ *It's ~~very freezing~~.*

Common mistake: Don't use *very* with extreme or absolute adjectives. ✗ *~~very excellent~~, ~~very perfect~~, ~~very enormous~~* → ✓ *absolutely excellent, absolutely perfect, absolutely enormous.*

Tip: *Really* is flexible and works with both types: *really tired, really exhausted.*

Quick Review

- **Adjectives** describe nouns and have **one form** (✗ *blues cars*).
- They go **before a noun** (attributive) or **after a linking verb** (predicative).
- Multiple adjectives follow the order **opinion—size—age—shape—colour—origin—material—purpose**.
- **-ed** = feeling; **-ing** = cause (*bored* vs *boring*).
- **Adverbs** modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and sentences.
- Most adverbs add **-ly**, with spelling changes (*happy* → *happily*, *true* → *truly*).

- Some adverbs are irregular or identical (*good* → *well*, *fast* → *fast*); *hardly*, *lately*, *nearly* have **different meanings**.
- End adverbs follow **manner** → **place** → **time**; frequency adverbs go **before the main verb / after be**.
- Use *very* with **gradable** adjectives, *absolutely* with **non-gradable** ones.

Practice

A. Choose the correct word.

1. The film was really (*bored / boring*).
2. She plays the piano (*good / well*).
3. They live in a (*small old / old small*) cottage.
4. I'm (*very / absolutely*) exhausted after the marathon.
5. He (*hard / hardly*) ever eats meat.

B. Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1. *We bought two reds bicycles.*
2. *I am very interesting in history.*
3. *She smiled at me friendlily.*
4. *He walks usually to the office.*
5. *That dress is very perfect.*

C. Put the adverbs in the correct order.

1. *She danced (last night / gracefully / at the party).*
2. *I have (been / never / to Japan).*

Answers

1. **boring** (the film causes the feeling).
2. **well** (adverb describing how she plays).

3. **small old** (size before age).
4. **absolutely** (*exhausted* is non-gradable).
5. **hardly** (*hardly ever* = almost never).
6. *We bought two red bicycles.* (adjectives take no plural -s)
7. *I am very interested in history.* (a feeling → -ed)
8. *She smiled at me in a friendly way.* (*friendly* has no -ly adverb)
9. *He usually walks to the office.* (frequency adverb before the main verb)
10. *That dress is absolutely perfect.* (*perfect* is non-gradable; not *very*)
11. *She danced gracefully at the party last night.* (manner–place–time)
12. *I have never been to Japan.* (frequency adverb after the auxiliary)

Chapter 20 — Comparatives & Superlatives

When we want to say that one thing has *more* or *less* of a quality than another, or that one thing has the *most* or *least* of all, we use comparatives and superlatives. These are among the most useful structures in English: you reach for them every time you compare prices, choose a restaurant, describe people, or talk about how things are changing. This chapter shows you how to form them correctly and how to use them naturally.

The Three Degrees

Most adjectives and many adverbs have three forms, called **degrees**.

Degree	Meaning	Example
Positive	the basic quality	<i>tall, interesting</i>
Comparative	comparing two things	<i>taller, more interesting</i>
Superlative	comparing three or more (the extreme)	<i>the tallest, the most interesting</i>

- ✓ *My sister is tall.* (positive — just a description)
- ✓ *My sister is taller than me.* (comparative — two people)
- ✓ *My sister is the tallest in the family.* (superlative — the whole group)

Key idea: Use the **comparative** to compare **two** items, and the **superlative** when one item stands out from **three or more**.

Forming Comparatives and Superlatives

The form you choose depends mainly on the number of syllables in the word.

Type of adjective	Comparative	Superlative
One syllable (<i>tall</i>)	<i>taller</i> **	<i>the tallest</i> **
Two syllables ending in -y (<i>happy</i>)	<i>happier</i> **	<i>the happiest</i> **
Two syllables (other) and longer (<i>modern</i> , <i>careful</i> , <i>beautiful</i>)	more <i>modern</i>	<i>the most modern</i>

One-syllable adjectives: add **-er** / **-est**

- ✓ *cheap* → *cheaper* → *the cheapest*
- ✓ *small* → *smaller* → *the smallest*
- ✓ *young* → *younger* → *the youngest*

Spelling rules for one-syllable adjectives:

Spelling situation	Rule	Example
ends in -e	add only -r / -st	<i>nice</i> → <i>nicer</i> → <i>nicest</i> ; <i>large</i> → <i>larger</i> → <i>largest</i>
one vowel + one consonant	double the consonant	<i>big</i> → <i>bigger</i> → <i>biggest</i> ; <i>hot</i> → <i>hotter</i> → <i>hottest</i> ; <i>thin</i> → <i>thinner</i> → <i>thinnest</i>
ends in consonant + -y	change y → i	<i>dry</i> → <i>drier</i> → <i>driest</i>

Watch out: We do **not** double the consonant after two vowels or after -w. ✓ *cheap* → *cheaper* (not *cheapper*), ✓ *new* → *newer* (not *newwer*), ✓ *slow* → *slower*.

Two-syllable adjectives ending in -y: change y → i

- ✓ *happy* → *happier* → *the happiest*
- ✓ *easy* → *easier* → *the easiest*
- ✓ *busy* → *busier* → *the busiest*
- ✓ *funny* → *funnier* → *the funniest*

Other two-syllable and all longer adjectives: use more / most

- ✓ *modern* → *more modern* → *the most modern*
- ✓ *careful* → *more careful* → *the most careful*
- ✓ *famous* → *more famous* → *the most famous*
- ✓ *beautiful* → *more beautiful* → *the most beautiful*
- ✓ *interesting* → *more interesting* → *the most interesting*
- ✗ *She is the beautifulest girl in the class.*
- ✓ *She is the most beautiful girl in the class.*

Two-syllable adjectives that allow both forms

Some two-syllable adjectives can take **either** *-er/-est* **or** *more/most*. Both are correct. These include *clever*, *simple*, *quiet*, *narrow*, *gentle*, *common*.

- ✓ *clever* → *cleverer* / *more clever* → *the cleverest* / *the most clever*
- ✓ *simple* → *simpler* / *more simple* → *the simplest* / *the most simple*
- ✓ *quiet* → *quieter* / *more quiet* → *the quietest* / *the most quiet*
- ✓ *narrow* → *narrower* / *more narrow* → *the narrowest* / *the most narrow*

Tip: When you are unsure which two-syllable adjective takes *-er*, the *more/most* form is almost always safe and natural. Choosing it will rarely sound wrong.

Irregular Comparatives and Superlatives

A few very common words have special forms that you simply have to learn.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
<i>good / well</i>	<i>better</i>	<i>the best</i>
<i>bad / badly</i>	<i>worse</i>	<i>the worst</i>
<i>far</i>	<i>farther / further</i>	<i>the farthest / the furthest</i>
<i>little</i>	<i>less</i>	<i>the least</i>
<i>much / many</i>	<i>more</i>	<i>the most</i>

- ✓ *This is the best coffee I've had all week.*
- ✓ *My headache is worse today than yesterday.*
- ✓ *We have less time and more work than before.*

British/American note: *farther/farthest* and *further/furthest* are both used for physical distance (*the farthest / furthest village*). For abstract meanings — *further information, no further questions* — use *further*. ✗ *farther information*.

Comparative Structures

than — comparing two things

Use **than** after a comparative.

- ✓ *Tokyo is bigger than Madrid.*

- ✓ *This exam was more difficult than the last one.*

After *than*, both forms below are common:

- Informal: *than* + object pronoun — ✓ *She is taller than me.*
- Formal: *than* + subject pronoun (+ verb) — ✓ *She is taller than I am.*

In conversation: Most speakers say *than me*, *than him*, *than us*. The form *than I*, *than he* (without a verb) sounds very formal and old-fashioned. ✓ *He runs faster than me.* ✓ *He runs faster than I do.* Both are fine; *He runs faster than I* sounds stiff.

as ... as — saying things are equal

Use **as** + **adjective** + **as** to say two things are the **same**.

- ✓ *Anna is as tall as her brother.* (they are the same height)
- ✓ *This phone is as good as the expensive one.*

To say they are **not** equal, use **not as ... as** (or *not so ... as*):

- ✓ *My new flat isn't as big as the old one.* (= the old one is bigger)
- ✓ *Today isn't as cold as yesterday.*

Common mistake: Don't mix *as* with a comparative form. ✗ *as bigger as*. ✓ *as big as*. The adjective inside *as ... as* stays in the **positive** form.

less ... than and the least

To show a smaller degree, use **less** + **adjective** + **than** (the opposite of *more ... than*), and **the least** for the lowest of all.

- ✓ *This route is less crowded than the main road.*
- ✓ *February is the least busy month for us.*

- ✓ *He's less confident than he looks.*

With short adjectives, English usually prefers *not as ... as*: ✓ *It isn't as cheap as I hoped* sounds more natural than *It's less cheap than I hoped*.

Superlative Structures

Use **the** + **superlative**, and follow it with **in** or **of** to name the group.

- Use **in** with a place or organisation: ✓ *the tallest building in the world*; ✓ *the best student in the class*.
- Use **of** with a number, a period, or a group: ✓ *the best of all*; ✓ *the happiest day of my life*; ✓ *the youngest of the three*.
- ✓ *Everest is the highest mountain in the world.*
- ✓ *This is the most important decision of my career.*

Superlative + present perfect: A very common pattern uses *the* + superlative followed by the present perfect with *ever*: ✓ *It's the best film I've ever seen.* ✓ *That was the worst meal we've ever had.* ✓ *She's the kindest person I've ever met.* (See the chapter on the present perfect.)

Modifying Comparatives

We can make a comparison **stronger** or **weaker** with words placed before the comparative.

Big difference	Small difference
<i>much</i>	<i>a bit</i>
<i>a lot</i>	<i>a little</i>

Big difference	Small difference
<i>far</i>	<i>slightly</i>

- ✓ *This car is much bigger than ours.*
- ✓ *Their house is a lot more expensive.*
- ✓ *The trip was far longer than expected.*
- ✓ *I feel a bit better today.*
- ✓ *She arrived slightly later than usual.*

Strong warning — use much, not very, with comparatives. Very cannot modify a comparative. ✗ very bigger, ✗ very better, ✗ very more interesting*. ✓ much bigger, ✓ much better, ✓ far more interesting. Remember: very goes with the positive form (very big), and much goes with the comparative (much bigger*).

the + comparative, the + comparative

This parallel structure links two changes that happen together: as one thing changes, so does the other.

- ✓ ***The more* you practise, the better* you get.***
- ✓ ***The older* I get, the happier* I am.***
- ✓ ***The sooner* we leave, the sooner* we'll arrive.***
- ✓ ***The more* expensive the hotel, the more* comfortable the room.***

A short fixed reply uses the same idea: ✓ *“Shall I invite more people?” “The more, the merrier.”*

get / become + comparative for change

To describe something that is **changing over time**, use *get* (informal) or *become* (more formal) with a comparative. Repeating the comparative with *and* emphasises a continuing change.

- ✓ *It's getting dark.*
- ✓ *The days are becoming longer.*
- ✓ *It's getting colder and colder.*
- ✓ *The queue grew longer and longer.*
- ✓ *English is getting more and more popular.* (with *more/most* adjectives, repeat *more and more*)

Comparing with Adverbs and Nouns

Adverbs follow the same syllable logic. Short adverbs (often the same word as the adjective) take *-er/-est*; adverbs ending in *-ly* take *more/most*.

- ✓ *She runs faster than me.* (short adverb)
- ✓ *He drives more carefully than his brother.* (*-ly* adverb)
- ✓ *Of everyone, Tom finished the most quickly.*
- ✓ Irregular: *well* → *better*, *badly* → *worse* — *I sing worse than you, but I cook better.*

Nouns are compared with **more / fewer / less** (and *the most / the fewest / the least*). Use *fewer* with countable nouns and *less* with uncountable nouns.

- ✓ *I have more money than I expected.*
- ✓ *She made fewer mistakes than last time.* (countable: *mistakes*)

- ✓ *We have less time than we thought.* (uncountable: *time*)
- ✓ *That shop has the most choice in town.*

Common Mistakes

1. Double comparatives. Never use *more* and *-er* together, and never use *most* and *-est* together. ✗ *more taller*, ✗ *most tallest*, ✗ *more easier*. ✓ *taller*, ✓ *the tallest*, ✓ *easier*.

2. *than* vs *then*. *Than* compares; *then* means “at that time” or “next”. ✗ *taller then me*. ✓ *taller than me*. (Compare: *We ate, then we left.*)

3. *as ... as* errors. Keep the positive form between the two *as* words, and don’t drop the second *as*. ✗ *as tall than me*, ✗ *as good as the other one isn’t* (word order). ✓ *as tall as me*; ✓ *not as good as the other one*.

4. *very* + comparative. ✗ *very better*. ✓ *much better* / *far better*.

5. Forgetting *the* with superlatives. ✗ *She is best singer in the band*. ✓ *She is the best singer in the band*.

Quick Review

- The three degrees are **positive** (*fast*), **comparative** (*faster*), and **superlative** (*the fastest*).
- **One syllable:** add *-er* / *-est* (watch the spelling: *big* → *bigger*, *nice* → *nicer*, *hot* → *hottest*).
- **Two syllables ending in -y:** *y* → *ier* / *iest* (*happy* → *happier* → *happiest*).
- **Longer adjectives:** use *more* / *most* (*beautiful* → *more beautiful* → *the most beautiful*).

- Learn the irregulars: *good* → *better* → *best*, *bad* → *worse* → *worst*, *far* → *farther/further* → *farthest/furthest*, *little* → *less* → *least*, *much/many* → *more* → *most*.
- Use *than* after a comparative, *as ... as* for equality, and *not as ... as / less ... than* for inequality.
- Use *the* + *superlative* with *in* (place) or *of* (group), often with the present perfect: *the best I've ever seen*.
- Strengthen comparatives with *much / a lot / far*; soften with *a bit / slightly*. **Never** use *very* with a comparative.
- Use *the* + *comparative*, *the* + *comparative* for linked change, and *get/become* + *comparative* for gradual change.
- Avoid double comparatives (*more taller*) and never confuse *than* with *then*.

Practice

1. Write the comparative and superlative of each word. a) *easy* b) *expensive* c) *good* d) *thin* e) *far*
2. Choose the correct form. a) Mount Fuji is (*high / higher / highest*) than that hill. b) This is the (*more / most*) exciting book I've read this year. c) Today is (*hot / hotter / hottest*) than yesterday.
3. Correct the mistake in each sentence. a) *My phone is more cheaper than yours.* b) *He is very taller than his father.* c) *She sings better then me.*
4. Complete with *as ... as*, *not as ... as*, or *than*. a) *A bicycle isn't _____ fast _____ a car.* b) *This café is busier _____ the one next door.* c) *Your bag is exactly _____ heavy _____ mine — we packed the same amount.*
5. Fill the gap with *much*, *a bit*, or *slightly* (more than one answer may fit). a) *Don't worry, it's only _____ colder than yesterday.* b)

Their new house is ____ bigger than the old one — almost double the size!

6. Complete the *the + comparative* sentences. a) *The more you sleep, the ____ (good) you feel.* b) *The ____ (soon) we start, the ____ (soon) we finish.*

7. Choose *fewer* or *less*. a) *I made (fewer / less) mistakes this time.* b) *We have (fewer / less) money than last month.*

8. Rewrite using a superlative + present perfect. *Example: I have never seen such a beautiful sunset. → It's the most beautiful sunset I've ever seen.* a) *I have never read such a boring book.* b) *We have never had such a good holiday.*

Answers

1. a) *easier / the easiest* b) *more expensive / the most expensive* c) *better / the best* d) *thinner / the thinnest* e) *farther (further) / the farthest (furthest)*

2. a) *higher* b) *most* c) *hotter*

3. a) *My phone is cheaper than yours. (remove more)* b) *He is much taller than his father. (very → much)* c) *She sings better than me. (then → than)*

4. a) *not as ... as — A bicycle isn't as fast as a car.* b) *than — busier than the one next door.* c) *as ... as — exactly as heavy as mine.*

5. a) *a bit or slightly* b) *much*

6. a) *better* b) *sooner ... sooner*

7. a) *fewer* b) *less*

8. a) *It's the most boring book I've ever read.* b) *It's the best holiday we've ever had.*

Chapter 21 – Prepositions

Prepositions are small words with a very big job. They are the words that show how one thing relates to another — in time, in space, in direction, and in countless fixed combinations that English speakers simply learn by heart. Words like *in*, *on*, *at*, *to*, *from*, *for*, *with*, *about*, and *between* are all prepositions.

Look at how a single preposition changes the picture:

- ✓ *The cat sat on the box.*
- ✓ *The cat sat in the box.*
- ✓ *The cat sat under the box.*
- ✓ *The cat sat behind the box.*

The nouns are identical; only the preposition changes. Yet each sentence shows the cat in a completely different place. That is the power of prepositions: they map the relationships between things.

Prepositions can express many kinds of relationship:

Relationship	Example
Time	<i>We met at six o'clock.</i>
Place	<i>She lives in Paris.</i>
Direction	<i>He walked towards the door.</i>
Manner	<i>They travelled by train.</i>
Possession / connection	<i>a friend of mine</i>
Reason	<i>famous for its beaches</i>

What Follows a Preposition

A preposition is almost always followed by a noun, a pronoun, or a gerund (the *-ing* form of a verb used as a noun). It is never followed by a normal infinitive (*to do*, *to swim*).

- ✓ *She is good at languages.* (noun)
- ✓ *Thank you for inviting me.* (pronoun)
- ✓ *He is good at swimming.* (gerund)
- ✗ *He is good at to swim.*

Key rule: After a preposition, use the **-ing** form, not the *to*-infinitive. ✓ *I'm interested in learning Spanish.* ✗ *I'm interested in to learn Spanish.* ✓ *We're thinking about moving house.* ✗ *We're thinking about to move house.*

This single rule prevents one of the most common mistakes learners make. Whenever you see a preposition and want to add a verb, reach for *-ing*.

Be careful, though: the word *to* is sometimes a preposition and sometimes part of an infinitive. When *to* is a preposition, the *-ing* rule still applies, and this catches many learners by surprise.

- ✓ *I look forward to hearing from you.* (*to* is a preposition here)
- ✗ *I look forward to hear from you.*
- ✓ *She is used to working at night.* (*be used to* + *-ing*)
- ✗ *She is used to work at night.*

A quick test: if you can replace the noun after the word with *it* (*look forward to it*, *used to it*), then *to* is a preposition and you need the *-ing* form.

Prepositions of Time

Three little prepositions — *at*, *on*, and *in* — do most of the work for time. The trick is knowing which one goes with which kind of time expression.

Pre- posi- tion	Used for	Examples
at	clock times; <i>night</i> ; <i>the weekend</i> (BrE); festivals; fixed phrases	<i>at 7 o'clock, at midnight, at night, at the weekend, at Christmas, at the moment</i>
on	days; dates; specific days	<i>on Monday, on 5 June, on my birthday, on Friday morning, on New Year's Day</i>
in	months; years; seasons; centuries; parts of the day	<i>in July, in 2026, in summer, in the 21st century, in the morning, in the evening</i>

- ✓ *The film starts at 8 p.m.*
- ✓ *I was born on 12 March.*
- ✓ *We're going on holiday in August.*
- ✓ *She studies best in the morning, but she works at night.*

British vs American English: Britons say **at the weekend**; Americans usually say **on the weekend**. ✓ (BrE) *What did you do at the weekend?* ✓ (AmE) *What did you do on the weekend?*

The big three for time: - **at** = a point on the clock (*at 5:30*) - **on** = a specific day or date (*on Tuesday*) - **in** = a longer period that surrounds you (*in March, in 2026*) Note also: *in the morning / afternoon / evening* but **at night**.

No preposition before *this, next, last, every, tomorrow, yesterday*: ✓ *See you next week.* ✗ *See you in next week.* ✓ *I'll call you tomorrow.* ✗ *I'll call you on tomorrow.*

Other Prepositions of Time

Preposition	Meaning	Example
for	a length of time	<i>We talked for two hours.</i>
since	from a past point until now	<i>I've lived here since 2019.</i>
during	within a period (+ noun)	<i>He slept during the meeting.</i>
while	within a period (+ clause)	<i>He slept while we talked.</i>
by	not later than	<i>Finish it by Friday.</i>
until / till	up to a point	<i>Wait until six.</i>
from ... to	start and end	<i>open from 9 to 5</i>
ago	back from now (after the time)	<i>two weeks ago**</i>
in	after a period	<i>I'll be ready in ten minutes.</i>
within	before a period ends	<i>I'll reply within 24 hours.</i>

- ✓ *I've known her for ten years.* / ✓ *I've known her since 2016.*
- ✓ *We can't leave until the rain stops.*
- ✓ *Please submit the form by Monday.* (Monday is the deadline.)
- ✓ *The shop is closed during the holidays.*
- ✓ *The museum is open from Tuesday to Sunday.*
- ✓ *I finished the book three days ago.*

Notice that *ago* is unusual: it comes **after** the time expression, not before it (*two weeks ago*, not *ago two weeks*), and it is used with the past simple, not the present perfect.

- ✓ *They moved here five years ago.*

- ✗ *They have moved here five years ago.*

for vs since: Use **for** + a duration (*for three days*), and **since** + a starting point (*since Monday*). ✓ *I've been awake for five hours.*

✓ *I've been awake since 3 a.m.*

by vs until: **by** = a single deadline (“at or before that point”); **until** = a continuing action up to a point. ✓ *Be home by 10.* (no later than 10) ✓ *Stay home until 10.* (the whole time up to 10)

in vs within: *in ten minutes* often means “after ten minutes have passed”; *within ten minutes* means “before ten minutes are up.” ✓ *The bus leaves in five minutes.* ✓ *Reply within 48 hours.*

Prepositions of Place

The same three prepositions — *at*, *on*, *in* — also dominate place. Think of them as a point, a surface, and an enclosed space.

Preposition	Idea	Examples
at	a point or specific location	<i>at the bus stop, at the door, at home, at school, at the top, at the party</i>
on	a surface or line	<i>on the table, on the wall, on the floor, on the second floor, on the river, on the left</i>
in	an enclosed space or area	<i>in the box, in the kitchen, in London, in the garden, in the car, in the world</i>

- ✓ *She's waiting at the station.*
- ✓ *There's a picture on the wall.*
- ✓ *The keys are in my pocket.*
- ✓ *He lives in a small village at the edge of the forest.*

The big three for place: - **at** = a point (*at the corner*) - **on** = a surface (*on the desk*) - **in** = inside something / within an area (*in the room, in Spain*) Note: we say *in a car/taxi* but *on a bus/train/plane/bike* (large vehicles you can walk through, and two-wheelers, take **on**).

More Prepositions of Place

Preposition	Meaning	Example
above / below	higher / lower (not touching)	<i>The lamp hangs above the table.</i>
over / under	directly higher / lower; covering	<i>A bridge over the river. / socks under the bed</i>
in front of / behind	ahead of / at the back of	<i>He parked in front of the house.</i>
between	in the middle of two	<i>Sit between Tom and Sara.</i>
among	in the middle of three or more	<i>a house among the trees</i>
next to / beside	at the side of	<i>Sit next to me. / Stand beside her.</i>
opposite	facing	<i>The café is opposite the bank.</i>
near	close to	<i>We live near the park.</i>

- ✓ *The cat is hiding under the bed, and the picture is above it.*
- ✓ *There's a secret between the two of us.* (two people)
- ✓ *She was popular among her classmates.* (many people)

over/under vs above/below: *Over* and *under* often suggest one thing directly covering or crossing another, sometimes touching it (*a blanket over the baby*). *Above* and *below* simply mean higher or lower in position, with no contact (*the shelf above*

the sink). In many cases either pair works, but *over/under* feel more dynamic and *above/below* more static.

A small but useful note on *between* and *among*: traditionally, *between* is used for two things and *among* for three or more. In modern usage, however, *between* is also correct when we think of distinct, individual items, even if there are several of them.

- ✓ *an agreement between the four countries* (each country seen individually)
- ✓ *She wandered among the crowd.* (a mass, not individuals)

Prepositions of Movement and Direction

When something moves, we need prepositions that show the path or destination.

Preposition	Meaning	Example
to	destination	<i>I'm going to the shop.</i>
into	entering	<i>She walked into the room.</i>
out of	leaving	<i>He ran out of the house.</i>
onto	moving to a surface	<i>The cat jumped onto the roof.</i>
off	away from a surface	<i>Take the cup off the table.</i>
through	from one end to the other	<i>We drove through the tunnel.</i>
across	from one side to the other	<i>Swim across the lake.</i>
along	following a line	<i>Walk along the river.</i>
up / down	higher / lower	<i>climb up the hill, run down the stairs</i>
towards	in the direction of	<i>He walked towards me.</i>
around	in a circle / here and there	<i>travel around the world</i>

Preposition	Meaning	Example
past	going by	<i>We drove past the school.</i>

- ✓ *She climbed up the ladder and onto the roof.*
- ✓ *The dog ran across the road and through the gate.*

to vs at: Use **to** for movement towards a destination, and **at** for the place where you stop or are located. ✓ *We drove to the airport.* (movement) ✓ *We arrived at the airport.* (the end point) ✗ *We drove at the airport.* ✗ *We arrived to the airport.*

arrive in vs arrive at — and never “arrive to”: - **arrive in** + a town, city, or country: ✓ *They arrived in Tokyo.* - **arrive at** + a place or building: ✓ *They arrived at the hotel.* - ✗ *They arrived to Tokyo.* (always wrong) Note also: *go home, come home, get home* take **no** preposition — ✗ *go to home.*

Dependent Prepositions (Collocations)

Many prepositions are not chosen for their meaning at all — they are simply fixed to a particular adjective, verb, or noun. These are called **dependent prepositions**, and they must be memorized as part of the word. There is often no logic, and the choice can differ from your own language, so learn the whole phrase together: *good at*, **depend** ****on**, *reason for***.

Adjective + Preposition

Adjective + prep	Example
afraid of	<i>afraid of spiders</i>
interested in	<i>interested in art</i>
good / bad at	<i>good at maths</i>

Adjective + prep	Example
keen on	<i>keen on football</i>
proud of	<i>proud of you</i>
worried about	<i>worried about the exam</i>
married to	<i>married to a doctor</i>
similar to	<i>similar to mine</i>
different from	<i>different from the others</i>
responsible for	<i>responsible for safety</i>
famous for	<i>famous for its cheese</i>
fond of	<i>fond of chocolate</i>

Verb + Preposition

Verb + prep	Example
depend on	<i>It depends on the weather.</i>
listen to	<i>I listen to music.</i>
look at	<i>Look at this!</i>
wait for	<i>We waited for the bus.</i>
belong to	<i>This belongs to me.</i>
agree with	<i>I agree with you.</i>
apologize for	<i>He apologized for the delay.</i>
believe in	<i>They believe in ghosts.</i>
concentrate on	<i>Concentrate on your work.</i>
rely on	<i>You can rely on her.</i>
consist of	<i>Water consists of hydrogen and oxygen.</i>
suffer from	<i>She suffers from allergies.</i>
succeed in	<i>He succeeded in passing.</i>

Noun + Preposition

Noun + prep	Example
reason for	<i>the reason for the delay</i>
solution to	<i>a solution to the problem</i>
increase in	<i>an increase in prices</i>
interest in	<i>an interest in history</i>
cause of	<i>the cause of the fire</i>
advantage of	<i>the advantage of living here</i>

Watch out for cases where the noun and the verb take **different** prepositions. The verb *increase* is followed by *by* a certain amount, but the noun *increase* is followed by *in*.

- ✓ *Prices increased by 5%.* (verb)
- ✓ *There was an increase in prices.* (noun)

A note on memorizing: The best way to learn dependent prepositions is not to study lists of bare prepositions but to record the **whole phrase** every time you meet it — *responsible for*, *a solution to*, *suffer from* — ideally inside a full example sentence. Over time, the correct preposition will simply “sound right,” which is exactly how native speakers choose them.

British vs American English: *different* All three are used: *different from* (**the safest, accepted everywhere**), *different ^{**}to* (common in Britain), and *different than* (**common in America, especially before a clause**). ✓ ***Your answer is different from mine.** ✓ **(BrE) It’s different to what I expected.** ✓ **(AmE) It’s different than* I expected.**

Verbs That Take No Preposition

Some verbs feel as if they should need a preposition, because their equivalents in other languages do — but in English they take a direct object with **nothing** in between. These are frequent sources of error.

Verb	Correct	Common mistake
discuss	✓ <i>Let's discuss the plan.</i>	✗ <i>discuss about the plan</i>
enter	✓ <i>They entered the building.</i>	✗ <i>enter into / to the building</i>
marry	✓ <i>She married a teacher.</i>	✗ <i>marry with a teacher</i>
mention	✓ <i>He mentioned the price.</i>	✗ <i>mention about the price</i>
lack	✓ <i>We lack money.</i>	✗ <i>lack of money (as a verb)</i>
phone / call	✓ <i>I'll phone you later.</i>	✗ <i>phone to you</i>
answer	✓ <i>Please answer the question.</i>	✗ <i>answer to the question</i>

Watch out! These verbs take a direct object with no preposition:
 ✗ *We discussed about the budget.* → ✓ *We discussed the budget.*
 ✗ *He entered to the room.* → ✓ *He entered the room.* ✗ *They got married with each other.* → ✓ *They got married / They married each other.*

Prepositions at the End of a Sentence

You may have heard the old “rule” that a sentence must never end with a preposition. In natural English, this is not a real rule — ending with a preposition is completely correct and often the most natural choice, especially in questions and relative clauses.

- ✓ *Who are you waiting for?*
- ✓ *What are you looking at?*

- ✓ *This is the book I told you about.*

Don't worry about it! Ending a sentence with a preposition is fine and natural. Forcing the preposition to the front (*For whom are you waiting?*) sounds very formal and old-fashioned in everyday English.

Confusing Pairs: Fixed Phrases

A handful of phrases look almost identical but change meaning completely depending on the preposition. Learn each pair as a set.

Phrase	Meaning	Example
in time	early enough; not late	<i>We arrived in time to catch the train.</i>
on time	punctual; at the exact time	<i>The train left on time, at 9:00 sharp.</i>
at the end	at the final point of something	<i>He died at the end of the war.</i>
in the end	finally; after everything	<i>In the end</i> , we decided to stay.
in the way	blocking; an obstacle	<i>Move the box; it's in the way.</i>
on the way	during a journey	<i>I'll buy milk on the way home.</i>

- ✓ *Don't worry, you're in time — the meeting hasn't started.* (not too late)
- ✓ *A good leader is always on time.* (punctual)
- ✓ ***At the end*** of the film, the hero wins. (the last part)
- ✓ *We argued for hours, but in the end we agreed.* (eventually)

Common Mistakes

Top preposition errors to avoid: - *× good in English* → *✓ good at English* - *× depend of* → *✓ depend on* - *× listen the radio* → *✓ listen to the radio* - *× interested to learn* → *✓ interested in learning* - *× married **with* → *✓ married to* - *× arrive **to* → *✓ arrive in / at* - *× discuss **about* → *✓ discuss* (no preposition) - *× on the morning* → *✓ in the morning*

Quick Review

- Prepositions show relationships of **time**, **place**, **direction**, and more.
- A preposition is followed by a noun, pronoun, or **-ing** form — never a *to*-infinitive (*good at swimming*, not *good at to swim*).
- **Time:** *at* + clock times/night/weekend (BrE); *on* + days/dates; *in* + months/years/seasons/parts of the day.
- **Place:** *at* = point, *on* = surface, *in* = enclosed space/area.
- **Movement:** *to* a destination, *into* / *out of*, *onto* / *off*, *through*, *across*, *along*; *arrive in/at* but never *arrive to*.
- **Dependent prepositions** (adjective/verb/noun + prep) are fixed — memorize them.
- Some verbs take **no** preposition: *discuss*, *enter*, *marry*, *mention*, *phone*, *answer*.
- It is fine to **end a sentence with a preposition**.

Practice

Choose or supply the correct preposition. (Where a verb needs no preposition, write —.)

1. The lesson begins _ **9 o'clock** _ Monday morning.
2. She has lived in this city _____ 2015.
3. Are you afraid _____ the dark?
4. We must finish the report _____ Friday at the latest.
5. They _____ (discuss) the problem for an hour. (*verb + preposition or —?*)
6. The plane _ (**arrive**) _ New York at noon.
7. I'm not very good _____ remembering names.
8. _____ the end, we decided to take the earlier train.
9. He's married _____ a famous musician.
10. Please don't stand _____ the way; people are trying to pass.

Answers

1. *at 9 o'clock on Monday morning.* (clock time → *at*; day → *on*)
2. *since 2015.* (a starting point → *since*)
3. *afraid of the dark.* (dependent preposition)
4. *by Friday.* (a deadline → *by*)
5. They *discussed* the problem (—, no preposition). **x** *discussed about*
6. The plane *arrived in* New York. (*arrive in* + city; never *arrive to*)
7. *good at remembering names.* (*good at* + *-ing*)
8. *In the end, we decided...* (eventually → *in the end*)
9. *married to a famous musician.* (**x** *married with*)
10. *in the way.* (blocking → *in the way*)

Chapter 22 — Conjunctions & Linking Words

Every time you connect one idea to another, you use a linking word. Conjunctions and connectors are the joints of the English language: they hold words, phrases, and clauses together and, just as importantly, they tell your reader *how* those ideas relate. Is the second idea a result of the first? A contrast? A condition? The right linking word answers that question before the reader even has to ask it.

In this chapter we will look at four families of joining words — **coordinating conjunctions**, **subordinating conjunctions**, **correlative conjunctions**, and **conjunctive adverbs** (also called linking adverbials) — and at the punctuation each one demands. We will also clear up some of the most common confusions in the language: *although* versus *despite*, *because* versus *because of*, and *so* versus *such*. Master these, and your writing will sound noticeably more fluent and more controlled.

What Conjunctions and Connectors Do

A connector does two jobs at once. First, it **joins**: it links two grammatical units. Second, it **signals a relationship**: addition, contrast, cause, result, time, condition, and so on.

- *Tom* **and** *Sara* (joins two words)
- *in the morning* **or** *in the evening* (joins two phrases)
- *I called you* **because** *I needed help*. (joins two clauses)

The crucial thing to understand is that different connectors follow different grammar — especially different punctuation. A word that

means “contrast” is not automatically interchangeable with another contrast word; *but*, *although*, and *however* all express contrast, yet each is punctuated differently. That is the heart of this chapter.

Coordinating Conjunctions (FANBOYS)

Coordinating conjunctions join elements of **equal grammatical rank**: two nouns, two verbs, two phrases, or — most importantly — two independent clauses (complete sentences that could stand alone). There are exactly seven, easily remembered by the acronym **FANBOYS**.

Conjunction	Meaning	Example
for	reason (“because”)	<i>She stayed home, for she was tired.</i>
and	addition	<i>We packed sandwiches and fruit.</i>
nor	negative addition	<i>He didn’t call, nor did he write.</i>
but	contrast	<i>It’s small but comfortable.</i>
or	alternative	<i>Would you like tea or coffee?</i>
yet	contrast (“but still”)	<i>She’s young, yet very wise.</i>
so	result	<i>It rained, so we left early.</i>

Notice that *nor* triggers inversion (*nor did he write*), and that *for* meaning “because” is fairly formal and literary.

The comma rule (FANBOYS): When a coordinating conjunction joins **two independent clauses**, put a comma **before it**. ✓ *I knocked on the door, but no one answered.* When the conjunction simply joins two words or phrases, use **no comma**. ✓ *I knocked on the door but heard nothing.* (one subject, *I*, two verbs — no comma) ✗ *I knocked on the door, but heard nothing.*

A few more contrasts to make the rule concrete:

- ✓ *We can take the bus, or we can walk.* (two clauses → comma)
- ✓ *We can take the bus or walk.* (shared subject → no comma)
- ✓ *The film was long, yet it never felt slow.*
- ✗ *The film was long yet it never felt slow.* (missing comma between two clauses)

Note (style): Starting a sentence with *And* or *But* is acceptable in modern writing for emphasis: *I asked him twice. But he refused.* Use it sparingly in formal essays.

Subordinating Conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction introduces a **dependent (subordinate) clause** — a clause that cannot stand alone and that depends on a main clause to complete its meaning.

- ✗ *Because it was raining.* (incomplete — what happened?)
- ✓ *Because it was raining, we stayed inside.*

The subordinate clause can come first or second. This flexibility matters for punctuation, which we cover after the tables below. Subordinating conjunctions are best learned by the **relationship** they express.

Time

Conjunction	Example
when	<i>Call me when you arrive.</i>
while	<i>She read while the baby slept.</i>
as	<i>As I opened the door, the phone rang.</i>
before	<i>Finish your work before you leave.</i>

Conjunction	Example
after	<i>We had coffee after we finished.</i>
until	<i>Wait here until I come back.</i>
since	<i>I haven't seen him since he moved.</i>
as soon as	<i>I'll text you as soon as I land.</i>
once	<i>Once the rain stops, we'll go out.</i>

Tip: In time and conditional clauses, English uses the **present tense to talk about the future**. ✓ *I'll call you when I arrive.*
(not ✗ *when I will arrive*)

Reason / Cause

Conjunction	Example
because	<i>We left early because we were tired.</i>
since	<i>Since you're here, let's begin.</i>
as	<i>As it was late, we took a taxi.</i>

Because is the strongest and most direct. *Since* and *as* can also mean “because,” usually when the reason is already known to the listener. (Remember that *since* and *as* have time meanings too, so make sure the context is clear.)

Purpose

Conjunction	Example
so that	<i>I left early so that I could catch the train.</i>
in order that	<i>He spoke slowly in order that everyone could understand.</i>

Purpose clauses usually contain a modal verb (*can*, *could*, *would*, *will*): *She saved money so that she could travel.*

Result

For result, English often uses the patterns **so + adjective/adverb + that** and **such + (a/an) + noun + that**.

Pattern	Example
so ... that	<i>It was so cold that the lake froze.</i>
such ... that	<i>It was such a cold day that the lake froze.</i>

Contrast / Concession

Conjunction	Example
although	<i>Although it was expensive, we bought it.</i>
though	<i>He smiled, though he was upset.</i>
even though	<i>Even though I studied hard, I failed. (stronger)</i>
whereas	<i>She likes tea, whereas he prefers coffee.</i>
while	<i>While I agree in part, I have doubts.</i>

Though is slightly more informal than *although* and can even end a sentence: *It's a long way. I'll walk, though.* *Even though* is the most emphatic. *Whereas* and *while* express direct contrast between two facts.

Condition

Conjunction	Example
if	<i>If you heat ice, it melts.</i>
unless	<i>We'll go unless it rains. (= if it doesn't rain)</i>
as long as	<i>You can stay as long as you're quiet.</i>
provided (that)	<i>I'll lend it to you provided that you return it.</i>

The comma rule (subordinate clauses): When the subordinate clause comes **first**, follow it with a comma. When it comes **second**, use **no comma**. ✓ *Although she was tired, she kept working.* ✓ *She kept working although she was tired.* ✗ *She kept working, although she was tired.* (usually no comma here)

Correlative Conjunctions (Pairs)

Correlative conjunctions work in **pairs**. The two halves must frame **parallel** grammatical elements — if a noun follows the first half, a noun should follow the second.

Pair	Example
both ... and	<i>She is both intelligent and kind.</i>
either ... or	<i>You can have either tea or coffee.</i>
neither ... nor	<i>He neither called nor wrote.</i>
not only ... but also	<i>She not only sings but also plays guitar.</i>
whether ... or	<i>I don't know whether to stay or go.</i>

Keep the structure balanced:

- ✓ *She not only sings but also dances.* (verb / verb)
- ✗ *She not only sings but also a dancer.* (verb / noun — not parallel)

Verb agreement with correlatives: With *either ... or* and *neither ... nor*, the verb agrees with the **nearer** subject. ✓ *Neither the manager nor the employees were informed.* ✓ *Neither the employees nor the manager was informed.* With *both ... and*, the subject is always plural: ✓ *Both the manager and the employees were informed.*

Watch out: *Neither ... nor* is already negative, so don't add another negative. ✗ *He didn't say neither yes nor no.* ✓ *He said neither yes nor no.*

Conjunctive Adverbs (Linking Adverbials)

Words like *however*, *therefore*, and *moreover* feel like conjunctions because they signal relationships between ideas. Grammatically, though, they are **adverbs**, not conjunctions — and that changes everything about their punctuation.

A conjunctive adverb **cannot** join two independent clauses with only a comma. Doing so creates a **comma splice**, one of the most common errors in English.

Strong callout — punctuating conjunctive adverbs: To connect two independent clauses with a conjunctive adverb, use a **semicolon** before it (and usually a comma after), **or** start a **new sentence**. ✓ *The plan was risky; however, we approved it.* ✓ *The plan was risky. However, we approved it.* ✗ *The plan was risky, however, we approved it.* (comma splice) ✗ *The plan was risky however we approved it.* (run-on)

Unlike conjunctions, a conjunctive adverb can also **move** inside its clause: ✓ *We approved it, however, despite the risk.*

Conjunctive adverbs are best grouped by function.

Function	Linking adverbials
Adding	<i>moreover, furthermore, in addition, besides, also</i>
Contrasting	<i>however, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the other hand, instead, conversely</i>
Cause / Result	<i>therefore, thus, consequently, as a result, hence</i>

Function	Linking adverbials
Sequencing	<i>first, then, next, afterwards, meanwhile, finally</i>
Exemplifying	<i>for example, for instance, namely, in particular</i>
Concluding	<i>in conclusion, in summary, to sum up, overall</i>

Examples in use:

- ✓ *The data was incomplete; therefore, we postponed the report.*
- ✓ *Prices rose sharply. Nevertheless, demand stayed strong.*
- ✓ *She loves the outdoors; for example, she hikes every weekend.*
- ✓ *He finished the design. Meanwhile, the team prepared the launch.*
- ✓ *The evidence is overwhelming. In conclusion, the policy must change.*

Three ways, one meaning of “contrast”: Compare how a conjunction, a subordinator, and a conjunctive adverb each handle the same idea. ✓ *It was raining, but we went out.* (coordinating conjunction → comma before) ✓ ***Although it was raining, we went out.*** (subordinating conjunction → comma after the first clause) ✓ ****It was raining; however*, we went out.*** (conjunctive adverb → semicolon)

Although vs Despite / In Spite Of

This is one of the most frequent mistakes learners make, and it comes down to a single rule about **what follows** the word.

- **Although / though / even though** are conjunctions → followed by a **clause** (subject + verb).
- **Despite / in spite of** are prepositions → followed by a **noun**, a **pronoun**, or an **-ing form**.

Strong callout — clause vs noun: ✓ *Although it was late, we kept talking. (although + clause)* ✓ *Despite the late hour, we kept talking. (despite + noun)* ✓ **Despite being late, we kept talking. (despite + -ing)** ✗ *Despite it was late, we kept talking.* ✗ **Although** *the late hour, we kept talking.*

In spite of means exactly the same as *despite* and follows the same grammar — just note the spelling: *despite* has **no of**, while *in spite of* always keeps its *of*.

- ✓ *We won despite the rain.*
- ✓ *We won in spite of the rain.*
- ✗ *We won despite of the rain.*

To turn a noun phrase into a clause after *despite/in spite of*, use **the fact that**:

- ✓ *Despite the fact that it was late, we kept talking.*

Because vs Because Of

The same principle applies here.

- **Because** is a conjunction → followed by a **clause**.
- **Because of** is a preposition → followed by a **noun** or **-ing form**.

Callout — because vs because of: ✓ *The match was cancelled because it rained. (clause)* ✓ *The match was cancelled because of the rain. (noun)* ✓ *The match was cancelled because of the heavy rain.* ✗ *The match was cancelled because of it rained.* ✗ *The match was cancelled because the rain.*

So vs Such

Both intensify, but they sit in front of different structures.

- **so** + **adjective** / **adverb** (alone)
- **such** + (**a/an**) + (adjective) + **noun**

Callout — so vs such: ✓ *The film was so boring.* ✓ *He drives so carelessly.* ✓ *It was such a boring film.* ✓ *They are such kind people.* ✗ *It was so a boring film.* ✗ *The film was such boring.*

With a result clause, both take *that*: ✓ *He was so tired that he fell asleep.* ✓ *It was such a long day that I slept ten hours.*

Note the article placement: *so* + adjective + **a** + noun is possible but formal (*so long a day*), whereas the everyday form is *such a long day*.

Avoiding Run-Ons and Comma Splices

A **run-on** joins two independent clauses with no punctuation. A **comma splice** joins them with only a comma. Both are errors.

- ✗ *I was tired I went to bed.* (run-on)
- ✗ *I was tired, I went to bed.* (comma splice)

There are four reliable ways to fix them:

Fix	Example
1. Full stop	<i>I was tired. I went to bed.</i>
2. Semicolon	<i>I was tired; I went to bed.</i>
3. Comma + coordinating conjunction	<i>I was tired, so I went to bed.</i>
4. Subordinating conjunction	<i>Because I was tired, I went to bed.</i>

Remember the core distinction: A **comma** is strong enough to join clauses **only** when a FANBOYS word follows it. A **semicolon** can join two complete sentences on its own. A conjunctive adverb (*however, therefore*) needs a **semicolon or a full stop** — never just a comma.

Common Mistakes

Mistake 1 — Comma splice with *however*. ✗ *It was cheap, however, it broke quickly.* ✓ *It was cheap; however, it broke quickly.*

Mistake 2 — *Despite* + clause. ✗ *Despite he was ill, he worked.* ✓ *Despite his illness, he worked.* / *Although he was ill, he worked.*

Mistake 3 — Double conjunction. English does not pair *although* with *but*, or *because* with *so*. ✗ *Although it was late, but we stayed.* ✓ *Although it was late, we stayed.* ✗ *Because it rained, so we left.* ✓ *Because it rained, we left.* / *It rained, so we left.*

Mistake 4 — *Will* in time/conditional clauses. ✗ *I'll call you when I will get home.* ✓ *I'll call you when I get home.*

Mistake 5 — Non-parallel correlatives. ✗ *He is not only smart but also works hard.* ✓ *He is not only smart but also hard-working.*

Quick Review

- **Coordinating conjunctions** (FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) join equal elements; use a **comma before** them when they link two independent clauses.

- **Subordinating conjunctions** introduce dependent clauses (time, reason, purpose, result, contrast, condition); use a **comma** when the subordinate clause comes **first**.
- **Correlative conjunctions** come in pairs and must be **parallel**; with *either...or* / *neither...nor*, the verb agrees with the **nearer** subject.
- **Conjunctive adverbs** (*however, therefore, moreover...*) are adverbs, not conjunctions; join clauses with a **semicolon or full stop**, never a lone comma.
- *Although* + clause; *despite / in spite of* + noun or -ing. *Because* + clause; *because of* + noun. *So* + adjective; *such* + (a/an) noun.
- Avoid **run-ons** and **comma splices** with one of four fixes: full stop, semicolon, comma + FANBOYS, or a subordinator.

Practice

A. Add a comma where one is needed (or write “no comma”). 1. *The road was icy so we drove slowly.* 2. *She opened the laptop and started to type.* 3. *Although the test was hard everyone passed.* 4. *We can eat now or we can wait for Tom.*

B. Choose the correct word. 5. *(Despite / Although) the heavy traffic, we arrived on time.* 6. *The flight was delayed (because / because of) the storm.* 7. *It was (so / such) a wonderful concert that nobody wanted to leave.* 8. *Neither the players nor the coach (was / were) happy with the result.*

C. Fix the comma splice or run-on. 9. *The shop was closed, we went home.* 10. *He trained for months therefore he won easily.*

D. Combine each pair using the word in brackets. 11. *It was raining. We played outside.* (although) 12. *She was nervous. She gave a great speech.* (despite)

Answers

1. *The road was icy, so we drove slowly.* (two clauses + FANBOYS)
2. **No comma.** (one subject *she*, two verbs)
3. *Although the test was hard, everyone passed.* (subordinate clause first)
4. *We can eat now, or we can wait for Tom.* (two clauses + FANBOYS)
5. **Although** — followed by a clause (*the heavy traffic* alone would need *despite*; here the sentence has a noun phrase, so **Despite** is also acceptable: *Despite the heavy traffic*). Best single answer for a clause: if the original read *the heavy traffic*, choose **Despite**. → **Despite the heavy traffic, we arrived on time.**
6. **because of** — followed by the noun *the storm*.
7. **such** — followed by *a wonderful concert* (a/an + noun).
8. **was** — the nearer subject is *the coach* (singular).
9. *The shop was closed, so we went home.* (or *...closed. We went home. / ...closed; we went home.*)
10. *He trained for months; therefore, he won easily.* (or *...months. Therefore, he won easily.*)
11. *Although it was raining, we played outside.*
12. *Despite being nervous, she gave a great speech.* (or *Despite her nervousness, she gave a great speech.*)

Chapter 23 — Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are one of the most useful tools in English. They let you join two ideas into a single, smooth sentence instead of producing a string of short, choppy ones. Once you can build them confidently, your speaking and writing will sound far more natural and mature. This chapter explains exactly what relative clauses are, the words that introduce them, and the all-important difference between the two main types.

What Is a Relative Clause?

A **relative clause** is a clause that gives more information about a noun. It usually comes immediately after the noun it describes, and it is introduced by a **relative pronoun** (*who, which, that, whose, whom*) or a **relative adverb** (*where, when, why*).

Look at how two short sentences become one:

- *I have a friend. She speaks five languages. → I have a friend who speaks five languages.*
- *This is the house. We grew up in it. → This is the house where we grew up.*

The underlined part is the relative clause. The noun it describes (*friend, house*) is called the **antecedent**. The relative clause works like an adjective: it tells us *which* friend or *which* house we mean.

Key idea: A relative clause always points back to a noun and tells us something more about it.

Relative Pronouns and Adverbs

The choice of relative word depends on what the antecedent is — a person, a thing, a place, a time, or a reason.

Relative word	Refers to	Example
<i>who</i>	people	<i>The doctor who treated me was very kind.</i>
<i>which</i>	things, animals	<i>The car which I bought is electric.</i>
<i>that</i>	people or things (defining clauses only)	<i>The film that won the prize was French.</i>
<i>whose</i>	possession (people or things)	<i>A writer whose books I love.</i>
<i>whom</i>	people (object, formal)	<i>The candidate whom we interviewed.</i>
<i>where</i>	place	<i>The town where I was born.</i>
<i>when</i>	time	<i>The day when we met.</i>
<i>why</i>	reason	<i>The reason why he left.</i>

Tip: Use *who* for people and *which* for things. *That* can replace either, but only in **defining** clauses (explained below).

Defining (Restrictive) Relative Clauses

A **defining relative clause** gives **essential** information. It tells us exactly which person or thing we are talking about. If you removed it, the sentence would lose its meaning or become unclear.

- ✓ *The man who lives next door is a firefighter.* (Which man? The one next door.)

- ✓ *I returned the book that I had borrowed.* (Which book? The borrowed one.)
- ✓ *People who exercise regularly tend to sleep better.*

Notice three things about defining clauses:

1. **No commas** are used.
2. **That** is possible (and very common in speech) in place of *who* or *which*.
3. The pronoun can be **omitted** when it is the **object** of the clause.

Omitting the Pronoun

When the relative pronoun is the **object** of a defining clause, you can leave it out completely. This is extremely common in everyday English.

- ✓ *The book (that) I read last week was excellent.*
- ✓ *The woman (who/whom) you met is my boss.*
- ✓ *The hotel (which/that) we stayed in was lovely.*

In each case, the noun already has its own subject (*I, you, we*), so the pronoun is doing the job of *object* and can disappear.

Important: You can omit the pronoun **only** when it is the object, and **only** in a defining clause. You can **never** omit a subject pronoun: ✓ *The man who lives here...* — ✗ *The man lives here is my uncle.*

Non-Defining (Non-Restrictive) Relative Clauses

A **non-defining relative clause** gives **extra**, non-essential information — a kind of helpful aside. The sentence still makes complete sense without it. These clauses are set off by **commas**.

- ✓ *My brother, who lives in Spain, is a doctor.* (We already know which brother; the clause just adds detail.)
- ✓ *The Eiffel Tower, which was built in 1889, attracts millions of visitors.*
- ✓ *Dr. Lee, whose research won an award, will speak tonight.*

In non-defining clauses, the rules are different:

1. **Commas** are required (one before, and one after if the sentence continues).
2. **That is NOT allowed.** Use *who* or *which*. - ✗ *My laptop, that I bought last year, broke.* - ✓ *My laptop, which I bought last year, broke.*
3. The pronoun can **never** be omitted. - ✗ *My laptop, I bought last year, broke.*

Strong warning — meaning changes! The comma is not decoration; it changes the meaning. - *My sister who lives in London is a nurse.* (defining) → I have more than one sister; I mean the London one. - *My sister, who lives in London, is a nurse.* (non-defining) → I have only one sister, and by the way she lives in London. Choosing the wrong form can genuinely mislead your reader.

Defining vs Non-Defining at a Glance

Feature	Defining (restrictive)	Non-defining (non-restrictive)
Information	Essential — identifies the noun	Extra — can be removed
Commas?	No	Yes
Can use <i>that</i> ?	Yes	No
Can omit the pronoun?	Yes (object only)	No
Typical meaning	“the specific one(s) I mean”	“and, by the way, ...”

Subject vs Object Relative Pronouns

To know whether you can omit the pronoun, work out its job inside the relative clause.

Subject pronoun — the pronoun does the action; it is followed directly by a verb. It can **never** be omitted.

- ✓ *The artist who painted this is famous.* (*who* = subject; *painted* follows)
- ✓ *A phone that has a good camera is useful.*

Object pronoun — the pronoun receives the action; it is followed by a new subject + verb. In defining clauses it **can** be omitted.

- ✓ *The artist (who) we met is famous.* (*we* is the subject; *who* is the object → can be dropped)
- ✓ *The phone (that) I bought is broken.*

Quick test: If a noun or pronoun (like *I, she, they*) comes straight after the relative word, that word is the object and can usually be left out (in defining clauses). If a verb comes straight after, it is the subject and must stay.

Whose for Possession

Whose shows that something belongs to the antecedent. It works for **both people and things** and is always followed by a noun.

- ✓ *That's the boy whose dog ran away.*
- ✓ *I work for a company whose products are sold worldwide. (a thing — company)*
- ✓ *The author, whose first novel sold millions, lives nearby. (non-defining)*

Do not confuse *whose* (possession) with *who's* (= *who is / who has*).

- ✗ *The man who's car was stolen called the police.*
- ✓ *The man whose car was stolen called the police.*

Relative Adverbs: Where, When, Why

These replace a preposition + *which* and sound more natural.

- **Place** — **where:** ✓ *This is the café where we first met. (= in which)*
- **Time** — **when:** ✓ *I'll never forget the year when I moved abroad. (= in which)*
- **Reason** — **why:** ✓ *Tell me the reason why you're upset. (= for which)*

With *when* and *why* in defining clauses, the adverb can often be dropped: *the year (when) I moved, the reason (why) you're upset*. With *where*, dropping it changes the structure: *the place where I live* vs *the place I live in***.

Prepositions in Relative Clauses

When the relative clause contains a preposition, English offers two styles.

Informal / everyday — the preposition stays at the **end**, and the pronoun is often dropped:

- ✓ *The man (who) I spoke to is the manager.*
- ✓ *The house (that) we live in is old.*

Formal / written — the preposition moves to the **front**, before the pronoun. Here you must use *whom* (for people) or *which* (for things), and you can **never** use *that* or omit the pronoun:

- ✓ *The man to whom I spoke is the manager.*
- ✓ *The house in which we live is old.*
- ✗ *The man to who I spoke...* — ✗ *The house in that we live...*

British / American note: Both varieties accept end-position prepositions in speech, and both reserve front-position *to whom / in which* for formal contexts. The “rule” that you must never end a sentence with a preposition is a myth — *the man I spoke to* is perfectly correct English.

Which Referring to a Whole Clause

In a non-defining clause, *which* can refer back not to a single noun but to the **whole previous idea**. A comma always comes before it.

- ✓ *He arrived an hour late, which annoyed me.* (*which* = the fact that he was late)
- ✓ *She offered to pay for everyone, which was very generous.*
- ✗ *He arrived late, what annoyed me.*

Watch out: This use of *which* always needs a comma, and you can **never** replace it with *what* or *that*.

Reduced Relative Clauses (Participle Clauses)

You can often shorten a relative clause by removing the pronoun and the verb *be*, leaving a **participle**.

Present participle (-ing) replaces an active clause:

- *The man who is standing there* → *The man standing there*
- *Passengers who are travelling to Rome* → *Passengers travelling to Rome*

Past participle (-ed / -en) replaces a passive clause:

- *The letter which was written by hand* → *The letter written by hand*
- *The cars that were damaged in the storm* → *The cars damaged in the storm*

These reduced forms are common in both writing and speech and make sentences more compact.

Quantifier + *of whom* / *of which*

In formal English, you can combine a quantifier (*some, many, most, all, none, both, several*) with *of whom* (people) or *of which* (things). This always forms a non-defining clause with commas.

- ✓ *The team has twelve players, several of whom are injured.*
- ✓ *He gave me three reasons, none of which convinced me.*
- ✓ *She owns two cars, both of which are electric.*

Common Mistakes

Mistake 1 — using *what* instead of *that* / *which*. *What* is not a relative pronoun for nouns. ✗ *The book what I read...* → ✓ *The book (that) I read...*

Mistake 2 — commas with defining clauses. Essential information takes no commas. ✗ *People, who smoke, risk their health.* → ✓ *People who smoke risk their health.*

Mistake 3 — *that* in a non-defining clause. Use *who* / *which* after a comma. ✗ *Paris, that is in France, is beautiful.* → ✓ *Paris, which is in France, is beautiful.*

Mistake 4 — the double subject. Do not repeat the subject with an extra pronoun. ✗ *The man who he lives here is my uncle.* → ✓ *The man who lives here is my uncle.* ✗ *The book that I read it was good.* → ✓ *The book (that) I read was good.*

Quick Review

- A **relative clause** describes a noun and is introduced by a relative pronoun (*who, which, that, whose, whom*) or adverb (*where, when, why*).

- **Defining** clauses give essential information: **no commas**, *that* is allowed, and the **object** pronoun can be **omitted**.
- **Non-defining** clauses give extra information: **commas required**, **no *that***, and the pronoun is **never** omitted.
- Subject pronouns (followed by a verb) cannot be dropped; object pronouns (followed by subject + verb) can be — but only in defining clauses.
- *Whose* shows possession for people and things; *where* / *when* / *why* replace *in/at/for which*.
- Prepositions go at the **end** informally (*the man I spoke to*) or at the **front** formally (*the man to whom I spoke*).
- *Which* after a comma can refer to a whole clause: *He was late, which annoyed me*.
- Reduced clauses use participles: *the man standing there, the letter written by hand*.

Practice

Complete or correct each sentence.

1. Fill the gap: *The woman _____ won the race is my neighbour.*
(*who / which*)
2. Fill the gap: *This is the museum _____ the painting is kept.*
(*where / which*)
3. Add commas if needed: *My grandmother who is eighty-five still drives.* (assume only one grandmother)
4. Can the pronoun be omitted? *The film that was released yesterday is a hit.* (yes / no — why?)
5. Correct the error: *The boy what broke the window ran away.*
6. Correct the error: *London, that is the capital of England, is huge.*

7. Make it formal (front-position preposition): *The colleague who I work with is helpful.*
8. Combine using *which* (referring to the whole idea): *She passed all her exams. This made her parents proud.*
9. Reduce the clause to a participle: *The students who are waiting outside can come in now.*
10. Correct the error: *The man who he called me was very polite.*

Answers

1. **who** — *who* refers to a person (the woman).
2. **where** — it refers to a place (the museum).
3. *My grandmother, who is eighty-five, still drives.* — With only one grandmother, the clause is non-defining, so commas are needed.
4. **No.** *That* is the **subject** of the clause (followed by the verb *was released*); subject pronouns can never be omitted.
5. *The boy who / that broke the window ran away.* — *What* cannot be used as a relative pronoun here.
6. *London, which is the capital of England, is huge.* — *That* is not allowed in a non-defining (comma) clause.
7. *The colleague with whom I work is helpful.*
8. *She passed all her exams, which made her parents proud.*
9. *The students waiting outside can come in now.*
10. *The man who called me was very polite.* — Remove the double subject *he*.

PART V

Sentences, Style & Reference

Questions and negatives, punctuation, the mistakes to avoid, and two reference sections you will return to again and again.

Chapter 24 — Questions, Negatives & Question Tags

Questions and negatives are the engines of conversation. Every time you ask for directions, disagree politely, or check that someone is listening, you reach for the patterns in this chapter. The good news is that English builds nearly all of them from one simple idea: the **auxiliary verb** (a helping verb such as *do*, *be*, *have*, or a modal like *can*) carries the grammatical work, while the main verb stays calm and unchanged. Master the auxiliary, and questions, negatives, short answers, and question tags all fall into place.

Let's build them up step by step.

Forming Negatives

To make a sentence negative, we add **not** (or its contraction **n't**) after an auxiliary verb or after the verb *be*.

With *be* and auxiliary verbs

When the sentence already contains *be*, a modal, or a perfect/continuous auxiliary, simply add *not* / *n't* after it. No extra word is needed.

- ✓ *She is not (isn't) ready.*
- ✓ *They are not (aren't) coming.*
- ✓ *I have not (haven't) finished.*
- ✓ *He can not (cannot / can't) swim.*
- ✓ *We will not (won't) be late.*

Present and past simple: *do / does / did + not*

The present simple and past simple have no auxiliary of their own, so we borrow **do**. This is called **do-support**. The borrowed *do* carries the tense and the person, and the main verb returns to its base form.

- ✓ *I don't like coffee.* (not ✗ *I don't likes coffee.*)
- ✓ *She doesn't work here.* (not ✗ *She doesn't works**.*)
- ✓ *They didn't call.* (not ✗ *They didn't called**.*)

Watch out — the verb loses its ending. Because *does* and *did* already show person and tense, the main verb stays in its base form: ✗ *He doesn't likes it.* → ✓ *He doesn't like it.* / ✗ *We didn't went.* → ✓ *We didn't go.*

Negatives of modal verbs

Modals form negatives directly with *not / n't*. Note a few spellings:

Modal	Negative	Contraction
can	cannot	can't
could	could not	couldn't
will	will not	won't
would	would not	wouldn't
should	should not	shouldn't
must	must not	mustn't
might	might not	(mightn't, rare)

- ✓ *You mustn't touch that.*
- ✓ *I won't tell anyone.*

Negatives with *no* and *any*

There are two natural ways to say you lack something:

- ✓ *I don't have any money.* (negative verb + *any*)
- ✓ *I have no money.* (positive verb + *no*)

Both are correct and mean the same thing. The key rule: use *any* with a negative verb, and *no* with a positive verb. Do not combine two negatives.

Avoid the double negative. In standard English, one negative word per clause is enough. ✗ *I don't know nothing.* → ✓ *I don't know anything.* / ✓ *I know nothing.* Two negatives logically cancel out, so ✗ *I didn't see nobody* literally means you *did* see somebody. (You may hear double negatives in songs and dialects, but avoid them in standard writing and speech.)

Yes/No Questions

A yes/no question can be answered with *yes* or *no*. We form it by putting the auxiliary or *be* **in front of the subject**. This swap is called **inversion**.

- ✓ **Is** she ready? (*She is ready.* → *Is she ready?*)
- ✓ **Are** they coming?
- ✓ **Have** you finished?
- ✓ **Can** he swim?

For the present and past simple, there is no auxiliary to move, so again we use **do-support**: place *do* / *does* / *did* before the subject and keep the main verb in its base form.

- ✓ **Do** you like coffee?

- ✓ **Does** she work here?
- ✓ **Did** they call?

A rising voice is not a question (in standard English). Saying *✗ You like coffee?* with a question intonation happens in casual speech, but the standard, correct form uses inversion or *do*: ✓ *Do you like coffee?* Teach and write the inverted form.

Yes/No question forms across tenses

Tense	Statement	Yes/No question
Present simple	<i>You work here.</i>	Do you work here?
Present simple (be)	<i>She is busy.</i>	Is she busy?
Present continuous	<i>They are eating.</i>	Are they eating?
Past simple	<i>He called.</i>	Did he call?
Past continuous	<i>You were sleeping.</i>	Were you sleeping?
Present perfect	<i>We have met.</i>	Have we met?
Past perfect	<i>She had left.</i>	Had she left?
Future (will)	<i>They will help.</i>	Will they help?
Modal	<i>He can drive.</i>	Can he drive?

Wh- Questions

Wh- questions ask for information, not just *yes* or *no*. They begin with a question word, followed by the same inversion (or do-support) as a yes/no question:

Wh- word + auxiliary + subject + main verb

The main question words are *who*, *what*, *which*, *whose*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*, plus the *how* family: *how much*, *how many*, *how long*, *how often*, *how old*.

Question word	Asks about	Example
who	a person	<i>Who did you meet?</i>
what	a thing/idea	<i>What do you want?</i>
which	a choice	<i>Which do you prefer?</i>
whose	possession	<i>Whose car is this?</i>
where	a place	<i>Where did she go?</i>
when	a time	<i>When does it start?</i>
why	a reason	<i>Why are you laughing?</i>
how	a manner	<i>How did they win?</i>
how much	quantity (uncountable)	<i>How much does it cost?</i>
how many	quantity (countable)	<i>How many do you need?</i>
how long	duration	<i>How long have you waited?</i>
how often	frequency	<i>How often do you exercise?</i>
how old	age	<i>How old is your sister?</i>

Subject vs Object Questions

This is one of the most important — and most misunderstood — points in English questions.

When the **wh-** word asks about the **object** of the verb, we use normal inversion / do-support:

- ✓ *Who did you see?* (*you* is the subject; *who* is the object)
- ✓ *What did she break?*

But when the **wh-** word **is itself the subject** of the verb, there is no inversion and **no do/does/did**. The question word simply takes the subject's place, and the verb is conjugated normally.

- ✓ **Who broke the window?** (not ✗ *Who did break the window?*)
- ✓ **What happened?** (not ✗ *What did happen?*)

Subject questions take NO do/does/did. Compare these carefully: - Subject: ✓ *Who wants ice cream?* — Object: ✓ *Who do you want?* - Subject: ✓ *What made that noise?* — Object: ✓ *What did you make?* - Subject: ✓ *Who called you?* — Object: ✓ *Who did you call?* Ask yourself: who or what is *doing* the verb? If the **wh-** word is the doer, it is a subject question — keep it simple, no *do*.

Questions with Prepositions

In everyday English, prepositions usually stay at the **end** of the question, with the **wh-** word at the front:

- ✓ *What are you looking at?*
- ✓ *Who did you go with?*
- ✓ *Where does she come from?*
- ✓ *What is the meeting about?*

In very formal English, the preposition can move to the front: *With whom did you go?* This sounds stiff and old-fashioned in conversation, so prefer the end position for natural speech and most writing.

Indirect / Embedded Questions

When we put a question *inside* another sentence — often to be more polite — the word order changes back to that of a **statement**. There is **no inversion** and **no do/does/did**.

Direct question	Indirect / embedded question
<i>Where is the station?</i>	<i>Could you tell me where the station is?</i>
<i>What does it mean?</i>	<i>I don't know what it means.</i>
<i>When did they leave?</i>	<i>Do you remember when they left?</i>

- ✓ *Could you tell me where the station is?* (not ✗ *...where is the station?*)
- ✓ *I wonder why she didn't call.* (not ✗ *...why didn't she call.*)

For yes/no questions embedded in a sentence, use **if** or **whether**:

- ✓ *I wonder if it will rain.*
- ✓ *Do you know whether the shop is open?*

Indirect questions use statement order. The most common mistake is keeping the inverted order: ✗ *Can you tell me what time is it?* → ✓ *Can you tell me what time it is?* Embedded questions sound much more polite, which is why we use them to ask strangers for help.

Negative Questions

A negative question puts *not* / *n't* into the question. We use them to express surprise, or to invite the listener to agree with us.

- *Don't you like it?* (surprise: I expected you to like it)
- *Isn't this beautiful?* (inviting agreement)

- *Haven't we met before?* (seeking confirmation)

Answering negative questions can be tricky for learners. In English, base your *yes* or *no* on the **facts**, not on the wording of the question:

- *Don't you like coffee?* — ✓ **Yes, I do.** (= I do like it) / ✓ *No, I don't.* (= I don't like it)

So *yes* always goes with a positive fact, and *no* always goes with a negative fact, regardless of how the question was phrased.

Short Answers and Short Responses

We rarely answer with a bare *yes* or *no*. Instead, we **echo the auxiliary**. Use the auxiliary or *be* from the question — never the full verb.

- *Do you like it?* — ✓ *Yes, I do.* / *No, I don't.*
- *Is she coming?* — ✓ *Yes, she is.* / *No, she isn't.*
- *Can you drive?* — ✓ *Yes, I can.* / *No, I can't.*
- *Have they arrived?* — ✓ *Yes, they have.* / *No, they haven't.*

Don't repeat the main verb in a short answer. ✗ *Do you like it? — Yes, I like.* → ✓ *Yes, I do.* The auxiliary does all the work.

Question Tags

A question tag is a short question added to the end of a statement to check information or invite agreement: *It's cold today, isn't it?**

The rule has three parts:

1. **Positive statement** → **negative tag; negative statement** → **positive tag.**

2. Use the same auxiliary (or *be*) as the statement. If the statement is present/past simple with no auxiliary, use *do / does / did*.

3. Use a pronoun that matches the subject.

- ✓ *She is tired, isn't she?* (positive → negative)
- ✓ *She isn't tired, is she?* (negative → positive)
- ✓ *You like tea, don't you?* (no auxiliary → *do*)
- ✓ *He went home, didn't he?*

Question tags across tenses

Statement	Tag
<i>You're a teacher,</i>	<i>aren't you?</i>
<i>She isn't here,</i>	<i>is she?</i>
<i>They live nearby,</i>	<i>don't they?</i>
<i>He doesn't smoke,</i>	<i>does he?</i>
<i>We met before,</i>	<i>didn't we?</i>
<i>You can swim,</i>	<i>can't you?</i>
<i>It won't rain,</i>	<i>will it?</i>
<i>She has left,</i>	<i>hasn't she?</i>
<i>You wouldn't lie,</i>	<i>would you?</i>

Special cases

A few tags do not follow the basic pattern and must be learned:

Statement	Tag	Note
<i>I'm late,</i>	<i>aren't I?</i>	<i>am I not</i> is too formal; we say <i>aren't I</i>
<i>Open the window,</i>	<i>will you / won't you / can you?</i>	imperatives

Statement	Tag	Note
<i>Don't be late,</i>	will you?	negative imperative
<i>Let's go,</i>	shall we?	suggestions with <i>let's</i>
<i>There's a problem,</i>	isn't there?	<i>there</i> repeats as the subject
<i>Everyone agrees,</i>	don't they?	<i>everyone / someone / nobody</i> → <i>they</i>
<i>Nobody called,</i>	did they?	<i>nobody</i> is already negative → positive tag

Intonation changes the meaning. A **falling** voice on the tag means you expect agreement — you are not really asking: *Lovely day, isn't it?* ↓ A **rising** voice turns it into a genuine question: *You locked the door, didn't you?* ↑ (you truly want to know).

So / Neither + Auxiliary + Subject

To say that something is **also true** for someone, use **so + auxiliary + subject** (for positive statements) or **neither / nor + auxiliary + subject** (for negative statements). Notice the inversion — the auxiliary comes before the subject.

- *I like jazz.* — ✓ **So do I.** (= I like it too)
- *She's tired.* — ✓ **So am I.**
- *I can't swim.* — ✓ **Neither can I.** / ✓ **Nor can I.**
- *He doesn't eat meat.* — ✓ **Neither do I.**

Match the auxiliary, and invert. ✗ *So I do.* → ✓ *So do I.* For negatives, do not add a second *not*: ✗ *Neither I don't.* → ✓ *Neither do I.* (*neither* already carries the negative meaning).

Quick Review

- Negatives, questions, short answers, and tags all run on the **auxiliary verb**. For the present/past simple, borrow **do/does/did** and keep the main verb in its base form.
- **Yes/no questions** invert subject and auxiliary; **wh- questions** add a question word in front.
- **Subject questions** (*Who broke it?*) take **no do/does/did** and no inversion — this is the key trap.
- **Indirect questions** use **statement word order** and are more polite (*Could you tell me where it is?*).
- Avoid **double negatives**: use *any* with a negative verb, *no* with a positive verb.
- **Question tags**: opposite polarity, same auxiliary, pronoun subject — with special cases (*aren't I?*, *shall we?*, *isn't there?*).
- Use **So do I** / **Neither do I** to agree, matching the auxiliary and inverting.

Practice

Rewrite or complete each item correctly.

1. Make negative: *She understands the question.*
2. Make a yes/no question: *They have finished the project.*
3. Correct the error: *He doesn't likes vegetables.*
4. Subject or object question? Complete: _____ *wrote this letter?*
(the writer is unknown)
5. Make a wh- question asking about the object: *You called _____ last night?* → (use *who*)

6. Turn into an indirect question: *Where is the bank?* → *Could you tell me _____?*
7. Add a question tag: *You're coming to the party, _____?*
8. Add a question tag: *Let's leave early, _____?*
9. Correct the double negative: *I didn't see nobody.*
10. Respond showing you agree: *"I don't like horror films."* "*_____ I.*"

Answers

1. *She doesn't understand the question.* (base form *understand*)
2. **Have** they finished the project?
3. *He doesn't like vegetables.* (base form after *doesn't*)
4. **Who wrote this letter?** — a subject question, so no *do/did*.
5. **Who did* you** call last night? — an object question, so use *did** + base form.
6. *Could you tell me where the bank is?* (statement order, no inversion)
7. *You're coming to the party, aren't you?*
8. *Let's leave early, shall we?*
9. *I didn't see anybody.* (or *I saw nobody.*)
10. *"Neither do I."* (or *"Nor do I."*)

Chapter 25 — Punctuation, Capitalization & Common Mistakes

Punctuation and capitalization are the traffic signals of writing. They tell your reader when to pause, when to stop, where one idea ends and another begins, and which words deserve special weight. Get them right and your meaning flows clearly; get them wrong and even good ideas can confuse. This capstone chapter brings together the marks you will use every day, the capitalization rules that catch out even confident writers, and a practical reference to the mistakes and confused words that appear most often. Where British (BrE) and American (AmE) usage differ, we will say so clearly.

Part A — Punctuation

The Full Stop / Period, Question Mark, and Exclamation Mark

These three marks end sentences.

The **full stop** (BrE) or **period** (AmE) closes a statement or a command.

- ✓ *She lives in Lisbon.*
- ✓ *Please close the door.*

The **question mark** closes a direct question. Do not use it after an indirect (reported) question.

- ✓ *Where do you live?*
- ✗ *I asked where she lived?* → ✓ *I asked where she lived.*

The **exclamation mark** signals strong feeling, surprise, or emphasis. Use it sparingly; one is almost always enough.

- ✓ *What a beautiful view!*
- ✗ *Thank you so much!!!* → ✓ *Thank you so much!*

Tip: In formal writing, exclamation marks are rare. If everything is emphasized, nothing is.

The Comma — The Big One

The comma is the most useful and the most misused mark in English. It separates parts of a sentence so readers can group ideas correctly. Here are its main jobs.

1. Separating items in a list. Use commas between three or more items.

- ✓ *We bought bread, cheese, and olives.*

The comma before *and* (or *or*) in a list is called the **serial comma** or **Oxford comma**. It is standard in much American writing and optional in British writing. It can prevent ambiguity.

- ✓ *I'd like to thank my parents, Oprah, and God.* (three separate things)
- ✗ *I'd like to thank my parents, Oprah and God.* (could suggest your parents *are* Oprah and God)

BrE vs AmE — the Oxford comma: AmE often uses it by default; BrE often omits it unless needed for clarity. Either is acceptable — just be consistent within a piece of writing.

2. After an introductory element. Use a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or clause.

- ✓ *After the meeting, we went for coffee.*
- ✓ *Honestly, I had no idea.*
- ✓ *Because it was raining, the match was cancelled.*

3. Around non-essential information. If a phrase or clause adds extra (removable) detail, surround it with commas. If it is essential to the meaning, do not.

- ✓ *My brother, who lives in Tokyo, is a chef.* (non-essential — I have one brother)
- ✓ *The man who lives next door is a chef.* (essential — tells us which man)

4. Before a coordinating conjunction joining two independent clauses. When *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, *yet*, *for*, *nor* join two complete sentences, put a comma before the conjunction.

- ✓ *I called twice, but no one answered.*
- ✓ *She studied hard, so she passed easily.*

Do not add a comma when the conjunction simply joins two verbs (not two full clauses).

- ✗ *She studied hard, and passed.* → ✓ *She studied hard and passed.*

5. With direct address and dates. Use a comma to set off the name of the person spoken to, and within dates.

- ✓ *Thanks, Maria, for your help.*
- ✓ *Let's eat, Grandma.* (Without the comma — *Let's eat Grandma* — the meaning changes alarmingly.)

- ✓ *She was born on June 19, 2026, in Berlin.* (AmE style; note the comma after the year too)
- ✓ *She was born on 19 June 2026 in Berlin.* (BrE style usually needs no commas)



The Comma Splice — A Common Serious Error A

comma splice happens when two complete sentences are joined with only a comma. - ✗ *It was late, we went home.* You can fix it in one of three ways: 1. **Use a full stop:** ✓ *It was late. We went home.* 2. **Use a semicolon:** ✓ *It was late; we went home.* 3. **Add a coordinating conjunction:** ✓ *It was late, so we went home.* Note: *however, therefore, then, and moreover* are **not** coordinating conjunctions, so a comma before them still creates a splice. Use a semicolon: ✓ *It was late; however, we stayed.*

The Semicolon and the Colon

The **semicolon (;)** links two closely related independent clauses without a conjunction. Each side could stand alone as a sentence.

- ✓ *The roads were icy; the buses stopped running.*
- ✓ *Some people love winter; others can't wait for spring.*

It also separates list items that already contain commas.

- ✓ *The tour visits Paris, France; Rome, Italy; and Madrid, Spain.*

The **colon (:)** introduces something: a list, an explanation, or an example. What comes before a colon should normally be a complete clause.

- ✓ *She had one goal: to finish the marathon.*
- ✓ *Bring three things: a pen, paper, and an open mind.*

- ✗ *Bring: a pen, paper, and an open mind.* (the part before the colon is not a full clause)

Mark	Use it to...	Example
Semicolon	Join two related complete sentences	<i>I was tired; I kept working.</i>
Colon	Introduce a list, explanation, or result	<i>I had one wish: rest.</i>

The Apostrophe

The apostrophe has two main jobs: showing **contractions** and showing **possession**.

Contractions — the apostrophe marks missing letters.

- ✓ *do not* → *don't*, *I am* → *I'm*, *they will* → *they'll*, *of the clock* → *o'clock*

Possession — add **'s** to singular nouns, and just an **'** to plural nouns already ending in **-s**.

Case	Rule	Example
Singular	add 's	<i>the girl's bag</i>
Singular ending in -s	usually add 's	<i>James's car</i> (BrE often <i>James')</i>
Plural ending in -s	add ' only	<i>the girls' bags</i>
Irregular plural	add 's	<i>the children's toys, women's rights</i>

⚠ **Its vs It's, and Decades - it's** = *it is* or *it has*: ✓ *It's raining.* / *It's been a long day.* - **its** = belonging to it (no apostrophe): ✓ *The dog wagged its tail.* - ✗ *Its raining.* / ✗ *The dog wagged it's tail.* - **Decades take no apostrophe**: ✓ *the 1990s, the 80s* — ✗ *the 1990's, the 80's.* - Never use an apostrophe to make an ordinary plural: ✗ *apple's for sale* → ✓ *apples for sale.*

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks enclose direct speech and quoted words.

- ✓ *“I’ll be there at six,” she said.*

BrE vs AmE — quotation marks: - **AmE** typically uses **double** quotation marks first: *He said, “Hello.”* - **BrE** often uses **single** quotation marks first: *He said, ‘Hello.’* - Quotes inside quotes switch to the other style: AmE *“She said ‘no’ twice.”* / BrE *‘She said “no” twice.’*

The bigger difference is **where the final period or comma goes**.

- **AmE:** the comma/period goes *inside* the closing quotation mark.
- ✓ *He called it “brilliant.”*
- **BrE:** the comma/period usually goes *outside* (unless it belongs to the quoted material).
- ✓ *He called it ‘brilliant’.*

Question marks and exclamation marks go inside only if they belong to the quotation: ✓ *She asked, “Are you ready?”* but ✓ *Did he really say “no”?*

Hyphen vs Dash

The **hyphen (-)** is short. It joins words, especially **compound modifiers** before a noun, and links some prefixes.

- ✓ *a well-known author, a five-year-old child, a part-time job*
- Note: do not hyphenate when the words come *after* the noun: ✓ *The author is well known.*

A **dash** is longer and separates, rather than joins.

- The **en dash** (–) marks ranges: ✓ *pages 10–20, the 2010–2020 period.*
- The **em dash** (—) marks a strong break or aside: ✓ *She paused — just for a moment — and smiled.*

Tip: A hyphen joins; a dash interrupts. They are different lengths and different jobs.

Parentheses

Parentheses () — called *round brackets* in BrE — enclose extra, non-essential information. The sentence should still read correctly if you remove them.

- ✓ *The museum (founded in 1880) is free on Sundays.*
- ✓ *Call me later (after lunch is best).*

Punctuation belonging to the whole sentence goes *outside* the closing parenthesis: ✓ *We met in Rome (in spring).*

Capitalization

Capitalize the following:

Capitalize	Example
The first word of a sentence	✓ <i>The sun rose.</i>
The pronoun I	✓ <i>Yesterday I left early.</i>
People's names	✓ <i>Anna Smith</i>
Places	✓ <i>Paris, the Nile, Asia</i>
Nationalities, languages	✓ <i>Spanish food, she speaks Arabic</i>

Capitalize	Example
Days and months	✓ <i>Monday, October</i>
Titles of works (main words)	✓ <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>
Titles before a name	✓ <i>President Lincoln, Doctor Patel</i>
Holidays, brands, organizations	✓ <i>Ramadan, Sony, the United Nations</i>

Do **not** capitalize:

- **Seasons:** ✗ *I love Summer.* → ✓ *I love summer.*
- **General directions:** ✓ *Drive south for an hour.* (but capitalize regions: ✓ *the South of the country*)
- **Titles used generally:** ✓ *She wants to be a doctor.* (vs ✓ *Doctor Patel*)
- **Common nouns after a brand or place:** ✓ *French fries* but ✓ *a french press* is often lowercased; ✓ *English grammar* (language stays capitalized).
- ✓ *On Tuesday, I met a French teacher in March.*
- ✗ *on tuesday, i met a french Teacher in march.*

Part B — Common Mistakes & Confused Pairs

This section is a quick reference. For each pair, you get the confusion, the rule, and a ✓/✗ example.

Confused Word Pairs

Words	Rule	Example
its / it's	<i>its</i> = possessive; <i>it's</i> = it is/ has	✓ <i>It's lost its shine.</i>

Words	Rule	Example
your / you're	<i>your</i> = possessive; <i>you're</i> = you are	✓ <i>You're losing your keys.</i>
their / there / they're	possession / place / they are	✓ <i>They're putting their bags over there.</i>
whose / who's	<i>whose</i> = possessive; <i>who's</i> = who is/has	✓ <i>Who's the man whose car is blocked?</i>
to / too / two	direction-or-infinitive / also-or-excess / the number 2	✓ <i>I want to go too, with my two friends.</i>
then / than	<i>then</i> = time; <i>than</i> = comparison	✓ <i>She's taller than me; back then she was shorter.</i>
affect / effect	<i>affect</i> = verb (to influence); <i>effect</i> = noun (a result)	✓ <i>The noise affected me; it had a real effect.</i>
fewer / less	<i>fewer</i> = countable; <i>less</i> = uncountable	✓ <i>Fewer cars, less traffic.</i>
lie / lay	<i>lie</i> = recline (no object); <i>lay</i> = put down (needs object)	✓ <i>I lie down; I lay the book on the table.</i>
who / whom	<i>who</i> = subject; <i>whom</i> = object	✓ <i>Who called? / To whom did you speak?</i>
e.g. / i.e.	<i>e.g.</i> = for example; <i>i.e.</i> = that is	✓ <i>fruit, e.g. apples / ✓ citrus fruit, i.e. lemons and limes</i>
advice / advise	<i>advice</i> = noun; <i>advise</i> = verb	✓ <i>I advise you to take my advice.</i>
practice / practise	BrE: <i>practice</i> = noun, <i>practise</i> = verb (AmE: <i>practice</i> for both)	✓ <i>I practise daily. (BrE verb) / ✓ good practice</i>
lose / loose	<i>lose</i> = misplace/not win; <i>loose</i> = not tight	✓ <i>Don't lose the loose screw.</i>
accept / except	<i>accept</i> = receive; <i>except</i> = apart from	✓ <i>Everyone accepted except me.</i>
principal / principle	<i>principal</i> = main / head of school; <i>principle</i> = a rule or belief	✓ <i>The principal acted on principle.</i>

Words	Rule	Example
stationary / stationery	<i>stationary</i> = not moving; <i>stationery</i> = paper goods	✓ <i>The van was stationary; I bought stationery.</i>
complement / compliment	<i>complement</i> = completes; <i>compliment</i> = praise	✓ <i>The wine complements the meal; she paid me a compliment.</i>
everyday / every day	<i>everyday</i> = ordinary (adjective); <i>every day</i> = each day	✓ <i>an everyday task</i> / ✓ <i>I exercise every day.</i>
into / in to	<i>into</i> = movement/transformation; <i>in to</i> = two words	✓ <i>She walked into the room.</i> / ✓ <i>He came in to help.</i>

Quick check for *who/whom*: If you can answer the question with *he/she/they*, use *who*. If you'd answer with *him/her/them*, use *whom*. ✓ *Whom did you see? — I saw him.*

Subject-Verb Agreement Traps

These constructions trip up even advanced learners.

Pattern	Rule	Example
<i>everyone / everybody / each / no one</i>	always singular	✓ <i>Everyone is here.</i> (✗ <i>are</i>)
the number of	takes a singular verb	✓ <i>The number of students is rising.</i>
a number of	takes a plural verb	✓ <i>A number of students are absent.</i>
neither / either (alone)	singular	✓ <i>Neither answer is correct.</i>
neither... nor / either... or	verb agrees with the nearer subject	✓ <i>Neither the boys nor the teacher was late.</i> / ✓ <i>Neither the teacher nor the boys were late.</i>

Pattern	Rule	Example
collective nouns (<i>team, family, gov- ernment</i>)	AmE usually sin- gular ; BrE may use plural	AmE ✓ <i>The team is winning.</i> / BrE ✓ <i>The team are winning.</i>

Other Frequent Learner Errors

Error	Why it's wrong	Correction
✗ <i>I don't know nothing.</i>	double negative	✓ <i>I don't know anything.</i>
✗ <i>could of / should of / would of</i>	"of" misheard for "have"	✓ <i>could have, should have, would have</i>
✗ <i>more better / most easiest</i>	double comparative/ superlative	✓ <i>better, easiest</i>
✗ <i>very unique / quite perfect</i>	<i>unique</i> and <i>perfect</i> are absolutes	✓ <i>unique, perfect</i> (or <i>al- most unique</i>)
✗ <i>apple's for sale</i>	apostrophe on a plain plural	✓ <i>apples for sale</i>
✗ <i>I can't hardly see.</i>	<i>hardly</i> is already negat- ive	✓ <i>I can hardly see.</i>

⚠ **The "could of" trap:** In speech, *could have* sounds like *could of* (the contraction is *could've*). In writing, always use **have**: ✓ *You could have told me.* — ✗ *You could of told me.*

Quick Review

- End statements with a **full stop/period**, questions with a **question mark**, and strong feeling with a single **exclamation mark**.

- The **comma** separates list items, follows introductory elements, brackets non-essential information, and precedes a coordinating conjunction joining two clauses.
 - A **comma splice** joins two sentences with only a comma — fix it with a full stop, a semicolon, or a conjunction.
 - The **semicolon** links related independent clauses; the **colon** introduces a list, explanation, or result.
 - The **apostrophe** marks contractions and possession — but *its* is possessive, *it's* means *it is*, and decades (*1990s*) take no apostrophe.
 - **Quotation marks:** AmE prefers double and puts commas/periods inside; BrE often prefers single and puts them outside.
 - A **hyphen** joins (compound modifiers); a **dash** interrupts; the **en dash** marks ranges.
 - **Capitalize** sentence starts, *I*, proper nouns, nationalities, languages, days, months, and titles — but **not** seasons.
 - Watch the confused pairs (*your/you're*, *their/there/they're*, *affect/effect*, *fewer/less*) and avoid *could of*, double negatives, and *very unique*.
-

Practice

Correct the punctuation, capitalization, or word-choice error in each sentence.

1. Its been raining all day, and the streets are flooded.
2. We invited two clowns, a magician and a juggler.
3. The meeting was long we left early.
4. My sister who is a doctor lives in canada.
5. You should of called me yesterday.

6. There going to bring they're books to the library over their.
7. I love the cold weather in Winter.
8. Less people came to the second show than to the first.
9. Each of the students have submitted their essay.
10. James asked, "where are you going"?

Answers

1. ✓ *It's been raining all day, and the streets are flooded.* (*it's* = *it has*)
2. ✓ *We invited two clowns, a magician, and a juggler.* (serial/Oxford comma clarifies separate acts; in BrE the comma is optional but helpful here)
3. ✓ *The meeting was long, so we left early.* (comma splice fixed — also valid: *...long; we left early.* or *...long. We left early.*)
4. ✓ *My sister, who is a doctor, lives in Canada.* (non-essential clause needs commas; *Canada* is a proper noun)
5. ✓ *You should have called me yesterday.* (*should of* → *should have*)
6. ✓ *They're going to bring their books to the library over there.* (they are / possessive / place)
7. ✓ *I love the cold weather in winter.* (seasons are not capitalized)
8. ✓ *Fewer people came to the second show than to the first.* (*people* is countable → *fewer*)
9. ✓ *Each of the students has submitted his or her essay.* (*each* is singular → *has*; *their* is widely accepted, but the verb must be *has*)
10. ✓ *James asked, "Where are you going?"* (capital after the quotation opens; the question mark belongs to the quotation, so it goes inside, in both AmE and BrE)

Appendix A — Irregular Verbs

Most English verbs are **regular**: they form their past simple and past participle by adding *-ed* (e.g., *work* → *worked* → *worked*). **Irregular verbs** do not follow this rule. Instead, they change their spelling and often their vowel sound in unpredictable ways (*go* → *went* → *gone*), or they do not change at all (*cut* → *cut* → *cut*). English has these forms largely for historical reasons: many of the most common verbs descend from older Germanic “strong” verbs that signalled tense by changing an internal vowel rather than by adding an ending. Because these verbs are so frequently used, the old patterns survived even as the language regularised most other verbs.

Each verb is listed in three forms, and you need all three:

- **Base form** — the dictionary form, used in the present tense, after *to*, and after modal verbs (*I go*; *to go*; *I will go*).
- **Past simple** — used for finished past actions (*I went yesterday*).
- **Past participle** — used in the perfect tenses and the passive voice (*I have gone*; *it was eaten*).

A practical tip: do not try to memorise the whole list at once. Learn irregular verbs in **groups by pattern**. Once you notice that *bring*, *buy*, *catch*, *teach*, and *think* all behave alike, each new verb in the group becomes easier to remember. The sections below organise the most useful verbs by pattern, followed by a comprehensive alphabetical reference table.

Pattern Group 1 — No change (all three forms identical)

These verbs look the same in all three forms. Most end in *-t* or *-d*. Note that *read* keeps its spelling but changes pronunciation: the

base form rhymes with “reed” /ri:d/, while the past and participle rhyme with “red” /rɛd/.

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes
cut	cut	cut	
put	put	put	
let	let	let	
hit	hit	hit	
cost	cost	cost	
hurt	hurt	hurt	
shut	shut	shut	
set	set	set	
read	read	read	spelling unchanged, pronunciation changes /ri:d/ → /rɛd/
bet	bet	bet	also <i>betted</i> (rare)
burst	burst	burst	
quit	quit	quit	AmE; BrE also <i>quitted</i>
split	split	split	
spread	spread	spread	

Pattern Group 2 – Same past simple and past participle

In this large group the past simple and the past participle are identical, but different from the base form. This is the most common irregular pattern.

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes
buy	bought	bought	

APPENDIX A – IRREGULAR VERBS

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes
bring	brought	brought	
teach	taught	taught	
catch	caught	caught	
think	thought	thought	
fight	fought	fought	
send	sent	sent	
build	built	built	
lend	lent	lent	
spend	spent	spent	
make	made	made	
have	had	had	
find	found	found	
sit	sat	sat	
sleep	slept	slept	
feel	felt	felt	
keep	kept	kept	
leave	left	left	
lose	lost	lost	
meet	met	met	
pay	paid	paid	
say	said	said	pronounced /sɛd/
sell	sold	sold	
tell	told	told	
hold	held	held	
stand	stood	stood	

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes
understand	understood	understood	
win	won	won	
hear	heard	heard	
hang	hung	hung	<i>hanged</i> only for execution

Pattern Group 3 – Three different forms

These verbs have a distinct base form, past simple, and past participle. The past participle very often ends in *-en* or *-n*.

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes
go	went	gone	
do	did	done	
see	saw	seen	
eat	ate	eaten	
give	gave	given	
take	took	taken	
write	wrote	written	
speak	spoke	spoken	
break	broke	broken	
choose	chose	chosen	
drive	drove	driven	
fall	fell	fallen	
fly	flew	flown	
forget	forgot	forgotten	AmE also <i>forgot</i> as participle
freeze	froze	frozen	

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes
get	got	got / gotten	see note below
grow	grew	grown	
know	knew	known	
ride	rode	ridden	
ring	rang	rung	
rise	rose	risen	
shake	shook	shaken	
sing	sang	sung	
sink	sank	sunk	
swim	swam	swum	
throw	threw	thrown	
wake	woke	woken	also <i>waked</i>
wear	wore	worn	
begin	began	begun	
drink	drank	drunk	

Pattern Group 4 – Vowel change *i* → *a* → *u*

A neat sub-pattern within Group 3: the vowel moves *i* (base) → *a* (past) → *u* (participle). Learning these five or six together is a quick memory win.

Base form	Past simple	Past participle
begin	began	begun
drink	drank	drunk
ring	rang	rung
sing	sang	sung

Base form	Past simple	Past participle
sink	sank	sunk
swim	swam	swum

British and American differences

A small but important set of verbs differs between British English (BrE) and American English (AmE):

- **get** — BrE: *got* → *got* (“I have got”). AmE: *got* → *gotten* (“I have gotten”) when it means *obtain/become*; but *have got* meaning *possess* stays *got* in both (“I’ve got a car”).
- **-t vs -ed verbs** — *burn, learn, dream, lean, spell, spill, spoil, smell* take *-t* commonly in BrE (*burnt, learnt, dreamt*) and *-ed* commonly in AmE (*burned, learned, dreamed*). Both are correct.
- **prove** — past participle *proved* (both) or *proven* (increasingly common, especially AmE and in adjectives: *a proven method*).
- **dive** — AmE past *dove* or *dived*; BrE usually *dived*.
- **fit** — AmE often *fit* → *fit*; BrE *fit* → *fitted*.

Comprehensive Reference Table (alphabetical)

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes / meaning
arise	arose	arisen	come up, occur
awake	awoke	awoken	also <i>awaked</i>
be	was / were	been	<i>was</i> (sing.), <i>were</i> (plural)
bear	bore	borne / born	<i>born</i> for birth
beat	beat	beaten	
become	became	become	
begin	began	begun	

APPENDIX A – IRREGULAR VERBS

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes / meaning
bend	bent	bent	
bet	bet	bet	also <i>betted</i>
bind	bound	bound	
bite	bit	bitten	
bleed	bled	bled	
blow	blew	blown	
break	broke	broken	
breed	bred	bred	
bring	brought	brought	
build	built	built	
burn	burnt / burned	burnt / burned	BrE -t, AmE -ed
burst	burst	burst	
buy	bought	bought	
catch	caught	caught	
choose	chose	chosen	
cling	clung	clung	
come	came	come	
cost	cost	cost	
creep	crept	crept	
cut	cut	cut	
deal	dealt	dealt	pronounced /dɛlt/
dig	dug	dug	
dive	dived / dove	dived	<i>dove</i> mainly AmE
do	did	done	
draw	drew	drawn	

APPENDIX A – IRREGULAR VERBS

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes / meaning
dream	dreamt / dreamed	dreamt / dreamed	BrE -t, AmE -ed
drink	drank	drunk	
drive	drove	driven	
eat	ate	eaten	
fall	fell	fallen	
feed	fed	fed	
feel	felt	felt	
fight	fought	fought	
find	found	found	
fit	fitted / fit	fitted / fit	AmE often <i>fit</i>
flee	fled	fled	run away
fling	flung	flung	
fly	flew	flown	
forbid	forbade	forbidden	
forget	forgot	forgotten	AmE also <i>forgot</i>
forgive	forgave	forgiven	
freeze	froze	frozen	
get	got	got / gotten	AmE <i>gotten</i> ; see notes
give	gave	given	
go	went	gone	
grind	ground	ground	
grow	grew	grown	
hang	hung	hung	<i>hanged</i> = executed
have	had	had	

APPENDIX A – IRREGULAR VERBS

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes / meaning
hear	heard	heard	
hide	hid	hidden	
hit	hit	hit	
hold	held	held	
hurt	hurt	hurt	
keep	kept	kept	
kneel	knelt / kneeled	knelt / kneeled	
know	knew	known	
lay	laid	laid	put down (transitive)
lead	led	led	
lean	leant / leaned	leant / leaned	BrE -t, AmE -ed
leap	leapt / leaped	leapt / leaped	
learn	learnt / learned	learnt / learned	BrE -t, AmE -ed
leave	left	left	
lend	lent	lent	
let	let	let	
lie	lay	lain	recline (intransitive)
light	lit / lighted	lit / lighted	
lose	lost	lost	
make	made	made	
mean	meant	meant	pronounced /mɛnt/
meet	met	met	
pay	paid	paid	
prove	proved	proved / proven	
put	put	put	

APPENDIX A – IRREGULAR VERBS

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes / meaning
quit	quit / quitted	quit / quitted	AmE <i>quit</i>
read	read	read	pronunciation /ri:d/ → /rɛd/
ride	rode	ridden	
ring	rang	rung	
rise	rose	risen	
run	ran	run	
saw	sawed	sawn / sawed	cut with a saw
say	said	said	pronounced /sɛd/
see	saw	seen	
seek	sought	sought	
sell	sold	sold	
send	sent	sent	
set	set	set	
sew	sewed	sewn / sewed	stitch
shake	shook	shaken	
shine	shone	shone	<i>shined</i> = polished
shoot	shot	shot	
show	showed	shown / showed	
shrink	shrank	shrunk	
shut	shut	shut	
sing	sang	sung	
sink	sank	sunk	
sit	sat	sat	
sleep	slept	slept	

APPENDIX A – IRREGULAR VERBS

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes / meaning
slide	slid	slid	
smell	smelt / smelled	smelt / smelled	BrE -t, AmE -ed
sow	sowed	sown / sowed	plant seed
speak	spoke	spoken	
speed	sped / speeded	sped / speeded	
spell	spelt / spelled	spelt / spelled	BrE -t, AmE -ed
spend	spent	spent	
spill	spilt / spilled	spilt / spilled	BrE -t, AmE -ed
spin	spun	spun	
spit	spat / spit	spat / spit	AmE often <i>spit</i>
split	split	split	
spoil	spoilt / spoiled	spoilt / spoiled	BrE -t, AmE -ed
spread	spread	spread	
spring	sprang	sprung	
stand	stood	stood	
steal	stole	stolen	
stick	stuck	stuck	
sting	stung	stung	
stink	stank / stunk	stunk	
strike	struck	struck	
swear	swore	sworn	
sweep	swept	swept	
swell	swelled	swollen / swelled	
swim	swam	swum	
swing	swung	swung	

Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Notes / meaning
take	took	taken	
teach	taught	taught	
tear	tore	torn	
tell	told	told	
think	thought	thought	
throw	threw	thrown	
under-stand	understood	understood	
wake	woke	woken	also <i>waked</i>
wear	wore	worn	
weave	wove	woven	
weep	wept	wept	cry
win	won	won	
wind	wound	wound	/waɪnd/ → /waʊnd/
withdraw	withdrew	withdrawn	
write	wrote	written	

A note on tricky pairs

A few verbs are confused because they look similar but have different meanings and patterns:

- **lie / lay** — *lie* (recline) is intransitive: *lie* → *lay* → *lain*. *lay* (put something down) is transitive: *lay* → *laid* → *laid*. The overlap of *lay* causes most of the trouble.
- **rise / raise** — *rise* (go up) is irregular and intransitive: *rise* → *rose* → *risen*. *raise* (lift something) is regular and transitive: *raise* → *raised* → *raised*.

- **find / found** — note that *found* meaning “establish” (*to found a company*) is a separate, **regular** verb: *found* → *founded* → *founded*.

Closing tip — how to practise

The fastest way to master irregular verbs is little and often. Pick one pattern group at a time and say the three forms aloud in rhythm: “*go, went, gone; eat, ate, eaten.*” Saying them builds muscle memory that silent reading does not. Then put each verb into a short personal sentence in all three tenses — *I eat breakfast; I ate breakfast yesterday; I have eaten already* — so the form is tied to real meaning. Keep a small notebook of any verb you get wrong and review only those; the list of verbs you actually struggle with is far shorter than the full table. Finally, read and listen widely: repeated exposure to correct forms in context is what makes them feel automatic.

Appendix B — Glossary of Grammar Terms

This glossary collects the essential grammar terms used throughout *English Grammar: A Complete Guide*. Each entry gives a clear, plain-language definition and, where it helps, a short example in *italics*. The terms are grouped alphabetically into A–Z sections so that you can find them quickly, and cross-references point you to related terms. Whether you are a learner or a teacher checking a precise meaning, treat this appendix as a quick reference rather than a chapter to read straight through.

A

Active voice — The form of a sentence in which the subject performs the action of the verb; it contrasts with the passive voice. *The dog chased the cat.*

Adjective — A word that describes or modifies a noun or pronoun, giving information about qualities such as size, colour, or number. *a tall building.*

Adverb — A word that modifies a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or a whole sentence, often expressing manner, place, time, frequency, or degree. Many end in *-ly*. *She sang beautifully.*

Adverbial — A word, phrase, or clause that functions the way an adverb does, adding information about how, when, where, or why. *He left in a hurry.*

Agreement (concord) — The matching of grammatical forms so that related words share features such as number and person, most often a verb agreeing with its subject. *She walks; they walk.*

Antecedent — The noun or noun phrase that a pronoun refers back to. *Maria lost her keys, but she found them later.* (*Maria* is the antecedent of *she*.)

Apostrophe — The punctuation mark (') used to show possession or to mark omitted letters in a contraction. *the dog's bone; don't.*

Article — A word placed before a noun to show whether it is specific or general. English has the definite article *the* and the indefinite articles *a* and *an*. See also **zero article**.

Aspect — The grammatical category that shows how an action relates to the flow of time, such as whether it is in progress or completed. English has two main aspects, the **continuous (progressive)** and the **perfect**. *She is reading; she has read.*

Auxiliary verb — A “helping” verb used with a main verb to form tenses, questions, negatives, or the passive. The primary auxiliaries are *be*, *do*, and *have*. *She is working; do you know?* See also **modal verb**.

B

Bare infinitive — The infinitive used without the word *to*, appearing after modal verbs and certain other verbs. *You should go; let me help.*

C

Clause (main/subordinate) — A group of words containing a subject and a finite verb. A **main (independent) clause** can stand alone; a **subordinate (dependent) clause** cannot and depends on a main clause. *I stayed home because it was raining.*

Collective noun — A noun that refers to a group of people or things as a single unit: *team, family, committee, flock*. It can take a singular or plural verb depending on the meaning.

Comparative — The form of an adjective or adverb used to compare two things, formed with *-er* or *more*. *taller, more carefully*. See also **superlative**.

Complement — A word or phrase that completes the meaning of a verb, often describing the subject or object. *She is a doctor; the soup tastes delicious*.

Compound noun — A noun made up of two or more words acting as a single unit. *toothbrush, swimming pool, mother-in-law*.

Conditional — A structure (often using *if*) that expresses that one thing depends on another, describing possible or imagined situations. *If it rains, we will stay in*.

Continuous (progressive) — The verb aspect formed with *be* + the *-ing* participle, showing an action in progress. *They are watching television*.

Contraction — A shortened form in which two words are combined and missing letters are marked by an apostrophe. *don't (do not), she's (she is), we'll (we will)*.

Coordinating conjunction — A conjunction that joins words, phrases, or clauses of equal grammatical rank: *and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*. *I tried, but I failed*.

Countable noun — A noun naming something that can be counted and that has both singular and plural forms. *one book, two books*. Contrast with **uncountable noun**.

D

Dangling modifier — A modifying phrase that does not logically attach to the word it is meant to describe, often because that word is missing. *Walking to school, the rain began to fall.* (The rain was not walking.)

Definite article — The word *the*, used before a noun to refer to something specific or already known. *Please pass the salt.*

Demonstrative — A word that points to something and shows whether it is near or far: *this, that, these, those*. ***This* is mine; those* are yours.***

Dependent clause — Another name for a **subordinate clause**: a clause that cannot stand alone and relies on a main clause. *...although she was tired.*

Determiner — A word placed before a noun to identify or quantify it, such as an article, demonstrative, possessive, or quantifier. *the, this, my, some, every.*

Direct object — The noun or pronoun that receives the action of a transitive verb. *She read a book.*

Direct speech — Reporting words by quoting them exactly, usually within quotation marks. *He said, “I am leaving now.”* Contrast with **indirect (reported) speech**.

E

Ellipsis — The omission of words that can be understood from the context. *She can sing and (she can) dance.* The term also names the punctuation mark (...) that shows omitted text.

F

Finite verb — A verb form that shows tense, person, and number and can serve as the main verb of a clause. *She writes; they wrote.* Contrast with non-finite forms (infinitives, participles).

First/second/third person — The category showing who is involved: the **first person** is the speaker (*I, we*), the **second person** the listener (*you*), and the **third person** the one spoken about (*he, she, it, they*).

G

Gerund — The *-ing* form of a verb used as a noun. *Swimming* is good exercise; I enjoy reading*.*

Gradable adjective — An adjective describing a quality that can exist in different degrees, so it can be used with words like *very* or in comparative forms. *cold, colder, very cold.* Contrast with non-gradable adjectives like *perfect*.

I

Imperative — The verb form used to give commands, instructions, or requests, usually with no stated subject. *Close* the door; be* careful.*

Indefinite article — The words *a* and *an*, used before a singular countable noun to refer to something non-specific. *I saw a dog and an owl.*

Independent clause — A clause containing a subject and a finite verb that can stand alone as a complete sentence; also called a main clause. *The sun rose.*

Indirect object — The person or thing that receives the direct object, often answering “to whom?” or “for whom?”. *She gave him a gift.*

Indirect (reported) speech — Reporting what someone said without quoting the exact words, usually with changes to tense and pronouns. *He said (that) he was leaving.* Contrast with **direct speech**.

Infinitive — The base form of a verb, usually preceded by *to*. *I want to learn.* See also **bare infinitive**.

Inflection — A change in the form of a word to express grammatical meaning such as tense, number, or comparison. *walk* → *walked*; *cat* → *cats*.

Intransitive verb — A verb that does not take a direct object. *She slept.* Contrast with **transitive verb**.

Irregular verb — A verb that does not form its past tense and past participle with the regular *-ed* ending. *go* → *went* → *gone*.

L

Linking verb — A verb that connects the subject to a complement that describes or identifies it, rather than showing an action: *be*, *seem*, *become*, *appear*, *feel*. *He seems tired.*

M

Main verb — The verb in a clause that carries the principal meaning, as opposed to an auxiliary. *She has finished.* (*Finished* is the main verb; *has* is the auxiliary.)

Modal verb — An auxiliary verb expressing meanings such as ability, possibility, permission, obligation, or advice: *can*, *could*, *may*,

might, must, shall, should, will, would. You must wait; she can swim.

Modifier — A word or group of words that describes or limits another element in a sentence. Adjectives and adverbs are common modifiers. *a bright light.*

Mood — The grammatical category that shows the speaker’s attitude toward what is said: stating a fact (indicative), giving a command (imperative), or expressing a wish or hypothesis (subjunctive). *He goes; Go!; I wish he were here.*

N

Negative — A word, form, or structure that expresses denial or absence, typically using *not* or words like *no, never, nobody*. *She does not know.*

Non-defining relative clause — A relative clause that adds extra, non-essential information about a noun and is set off by commas; removing it does not change the basic meaning. *My brother, who lives in Rome, is a chef.*

Noun — A word that names a person, place, thing, idea, or quality. *teacher, London, table, freedom.*

Noun phrase — A noun together with the words that modify it, functioning as a single unit in a sentence. *the tall man in the grey coat.*

O

Object — A noun, pronoun, or noun phrase affected by the action of a verb or governed by a preposition. It may be a direct object, an indirect object, or the object of a preposition. *She kicked the ball.*

P

Participle (present/past) — A verb form used in compound tenses, in the passive, or as an adjective. The **present participle** ends in *-ing* (*running*); the **past participle** usually ends in *-ed* or is irregular (*walked, broken*).

Particle — A short word, often resembling a preposition or adverb, that combines with a verb to form a phrasal verb. *give up, look after, turn off*.

Passive voice — The form in which the subject receives the action rather than performing it, formed with *be* + past participle. *The cat was chased by the dog*. Contrast with **active voice**.

Past tense — The verb form used to refer to actions or states in the past. *She walked home; they were happy*.

Perfect — The verb aspect formed with *have* + past participle, linking an earlier action to a later point in time. *I have finished*.

Phrasal verb — A verb combined with one or more particles whose meaning often differs from the separate words. *give up (stop), look after (care for), put off (postpone)*.

Phrase — A group of words working together as a unit but, unlike a clause, not containing both a subject and a finite verb. *in the morning; the old house*.

Plural — The grammatical form indicating more than one. *books, children, women*. Contrast with **singular**.

Possessive — A form showing ownership or a close relationship, made with an apostrophe and *s* or with a possessive word. *Tom's car; my, your, mine, hers*.

Predicate — The part of a clause that says something about the subject, containing the verb and any objects, complements, or adverbials. *The children played in the garden.*

Prefix — A group of letters added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. *un-happy, re-write*. See also **suffix**.

Preposition — A word that shows the relationship of a noun or pronoun to another word, often expressing position, direction, or time: *in, on, at, under, before, between*. *The cat is under the table.*

Prepositional phrase — A preposition together with its object and any modifiers, working as a unit. *on the table; after a long day; in the morning*.

Present tense — The verb form used to refer to current actions, habits, general truths, or states. *She works here; water boils at 100°C.*

Pronoun — A word used in place of a noun or noun phrase to avoid repetition: *I, you, he, she, it, they, who, this, mine*. *Maria called and she sounded happy.*

Proper noun — A noun naming a particular person, place, or organisation, normally written with a capital letter. *London, Sarah, Microsoft, Monday*.

Q

Quantifier — A determiner or phrase expressing quantity without an exact number: *some, many, much, few, several, a lot of*. *Many people came.*

Question tag — A short question added to the end of a statement, usually to invite agreement or confirmation. *You're coming, aren't you? She didn't call, did she?*

R

Reflexive pronoun — A pronoun ending in *-self* or *-selves* that refers back to the subject: *myself, yourself, himself, themselves*. *She taught herself to paint.*

Register — The level of formality and style of language chosen to suit a situation, audience, or purpose. *Formal: “I would be grateful if you could...”; informal: “Can you...?”*

Regular verb — A verb that forms its past tense and past participle by adding *-ed* to the base form. *walk* → *walked*. Contrast with **irregular verb**.

Relative clause — A clause that gives more information about a noun, usually introduced by a relative pronoun. *The man who lives next door is a doctor.* See also **non-defining relative clause**.

Relative pronoun — A pronoun that introduces a relative clause and refers back to a noun: *who, whom, whose, which, that*. *the book that I read.*

Reported speech — Another name for **indirect speech**: reporting what was said without quoting the exact words. *She said she was tired.*

S

Sentence — A complete unit of meaning containing at least one main clause, beginning with a capital letter and ending with a full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark. *The bell rang.*

Singular — The grammatical form indicating just one. *book, child, woman*. Contrast with **plural**.

Stative verb — A verb that describes a state or condition rather than an action, and is not usually used in the continuous form: *know, believe, own, like, seem. I know the answer* (not *I am knowing*).

Subject — The person or thing that performs the action of the verb or about which the sentence makes a statement. *The children are playing.*

Subjunctive — A verb mood expressing wishes, suggestions, demands, or hypothetical situations, often with a base-form verb or *were. I suggest that he be present.*

Subordinate clause — A clause that cannot stand alone and depends on a main clause, usually introduced by a subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun; also called a dependent clause. *We left after the film ended.*

Subordinating conjunction — A conjunction that introduces a subordinate clause and links it to a main clause: *because, although, if, when, while, since, unless. Call me when you arrive.*

Suffix — A group of letters added to the end of a word to change its meaning or part of speech. *happi-ness, quick-ly.* See also **prefix**.

Superlative — The form of an adjective or adverb used to compare three or more things and show the highest degree, formed with *-est* or *most. the tallest.* See also **comparative**.

Syllable — A unit of pronunciation containing one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants. *cat* has one syllable; *water* has two; *ba-na-na* has three.

T

Tense — The form of a verb that shows the time of an action or state, chiefly present or past, and combined with **aspect** to express finer time relationships. *She plays; she played.*

Transitive verb — A verb that takes a direct object to complete its meaning. *She wrote a letter.* Contrast with **intransitive verb**.

U

Uncountable (mass) noun — A noun naming something that cannot normally be counted and has no plural form, such as a substance or abstract idea: *water, information, advice, furniture. I need some advice (not an advice).*

V

Verb — A word that expresses an action, an event, or a state of being. *run, think, become, exist. They ran to the bus.*

Voice — The grammatical category showing whether the subject performs the action (**active voice**) or receives it (**passive voice**). *The chef cooked the meal / The meal was cooked.*

W

Word class (part of speech) — A category into which words are grouped according to how they behave in a sentence: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition, conjunction, determiner, and interjection.

Z

Zero article — The absence of any article before a noun, common with plural and uncountable nouns used in a general sense. *I like music; cats are independent.*