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GRAMMAR SUCCESS IN 20 MINUTES A DAY



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Contents



INTRODUCTION		vii
PRETEST		1
NOUNS and PRONOUNS		
LESSON 1	Kinds of Nouns <i>Common, proper, concrete, abstract, collective, and compound nouns</i>	13
LESSON 2	Noun Usage <i>Plural and possessive nouns</i>	19
LESSON 3	Pronouns <i>Personal, reflexive, demonstrative, relative, interrogative, and indefinite pronouns</i>	27
VERBS		
LESSON 4	Verb Types <i>Action, linking, and helping verbs</i>	35
LESSON 5	Regular and Irregular Verbs <i>Common regular and irregular verbs, problem, and tricky verbs</i>	39
LESSON 6	Verb Forms and Tenses <i>Present and past, present and past participle, and other verb forms; basic tense review</i>	49
MODIFIERS		
LESSON 7	Adjectives <i>Articles, pronouns as adjectives, and demonstrative and comparative adjectives</i>	57

CONTENTS

LESSON 8	Adverbs <i>Common adverbs, comparative adverbs, and how to distinguish adverbs from adjectives</i>	63
LESSON 9	Prepositions <i>Common prepositions and how to distinguish prepositions from adverbs</i>	69
LESSON 10	Misplaced Modifiers and Tricky Words <i>Kinds of modifiers, homonyms, and homographs</i>	73
SENTENCE STRUCTURE		
LESSON 11	Sentence Basics <i>Subjects, predicates, complements, and direct and indirect objects</i>	83
LESSON 12	Agreement <i>Subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement</i>	89
LESSON 13	Phrases <i>Prepositional, adjective, adverb, verbal, participial, infinitive, gerund, and appositive phrases</i>	95
LESSON 14	Clauses <i>Independent, subordinate, noun, adjective, and adverb clauses</i>	99
LESSON 15	Conjunctions <i>Coordinating, corrective, and subordinating conjunctions</i>	105
LESSON 16	Combining Sentences <i>Kinds of sentences, including compound, complex, and compound-complex, that enliven writing</i>	111
PUNCTUATION		
LESSON 17	End Punctuation <i>Periods, question marks, and exclamation points</i>	119
LESSON 18	Internal Punctuation I <i>Commas, colons, and semicolons</i>	123
LESSON 19	Internal Punctuation II <i>Apostrophes, hyphens, and dashes</i>	131
LESSON 20	Internal Punctuation III <i>Quotation marks, parentheses, brackets, italics and underlining, and parentheses</i>	137
POSTTEST		145

Introduction



Do your grammar skills need some brushing up? Perhaps you have an exam on your horizon, or you want to hone your grammar skills to help improve your writing or speech. Whatever the case may be, this quick reference guide will help put you well on your way toward accomplishing your grammar goals—no matter how big or small.

Because English is so complex, the rules and guidelines—called grammar and usage—are necessary to help us better understand its many idiosyncrasies. While language is forever changing to meet our needs, the inner workings of a sentence are, for the most part, as constant as the stars, and figuring out these dynamics is like putting a puzzle together (or taking it apart, if you will). Understanding the inner workings of a sentence will ultimately help you with your speech and writing—the essence of communication and language. And the benefits of your efforts will always far outweigh the loss of about 20 or so minutes of your day.

Before you begin to progress through the book, take the time to determine what you know and what you might need to focus more on by taking the pretest. You might be surprised just how much you remember!

Pretest



Before you start your study of grammar skills, you may want to get an idea of how much you already know and how much you need to learn. If that's the case, take the pretest that follows.

The pretest consists of 50 multiple-choice questions covering all the lessons in this book. Naturally, 50 questions can't cover every single concept or rule you will learn by working through these pages. So even if you answer all of the questions on the pretest correctly, it's almost guaranteed that you will find a few ideas or rules in this book that you didn't already know. On the other hand, if you get a lot of the answers wrong on this pretest, don't despair. This book will show you how to improve your grammar and writing, step by step.

So use this pretest for a general idea of how much of what's in this book you already know. If you get a high score, you may be able to spend less time with this book than you originally planned. If you get a low score, you may find that you will need more than 20 minutes a day to get through each chapter and learn all the grammar and mechanics concepts you need.

Record the answers in this book. If the book doesn't belong to you, write the numbers 1–50 on a piece of paper and write your answers there. Take as much time as you need to complete this short test. When you finish, check your answers against the answer section that follows. Each answer tells you which lesson of this book teaches you about the grammatical rule in that question.

► **Pretest**

1. Circle the common nouns.

soda	love	puppy
Jamaica	thoughtlessness	Logan Road
troubling	clapping	zip
friendly	sorrow	mend

2. Circle the abstract nouns.

peace	telephone	livelihood
deceit	cheerfulness	jungle
NASA	smile	rubber band
test	eyelash	patience

3. Circle the proper nouns.

Texas	Work	Clock
Puzzle	Nancy	Mr. Klondike
Licorice	Mexico City	Basketball
IBM	Spiderman	Mt. Everest

4. Circle the nouns that are pluralized correctly.

stockings	partys	deer
knots	tooths	cacti
chimnies	mice	radioes
dresses	guies	suitcases

5. Circle the hyphenated nouns that are spelled correctly.

sister-in-laws	kilowatt-hours
runner-ups	forget-me-nots
follow-ups	sticks-in-the-mud

6. Circle the nouns that have been correctly made possessive.

child's	her's	Jody's
Congress'	tooth's	cactus's
puppies'	moms'	Jason's
women's	his'	dress's

7. Circle the antecedents/pronouns that properly agree in gender.

John/he	bird/she
fish/his	Mrs. Brown/she
student/it	Mr. Cho/her

8. Circle the antecedents/pronouns that agree in number.

kids/him	everybody/they
Kathy and I/it	fish/they
group/it	fish/it
each/he or she	woman/we
both/they	

9. Circle the interrogative pronouns.

who	when	whose
which	whom	whomever
how	where	what

10. Circle the subjective case pronouns.

I went to his house and saw him.
She brought me an apple and I thanked her.
They went to Pat's and called me.

11. Circle the objective case pronouns.

He threw it toward me.
Pass me the salt.
We made them sandwiches.

12. Circle the reflexive case pronouns and underline the possessive case pronouns.

She helped herself to the apple pie her mom made this afternoon.
Drew's headache was so bad he couldn't bring himself to finish paying his bills.
We ourselves are responsible for our own happiness.

- 13.** Circle the demonstrative pronouns and underline the relative pronouns.

That is the most annoying sound that I have ever heard.

Those are the boxes of blankets that Mom plans to take to the SPCA.

Is this the channel that you were watching?

- 14.** Circle the action verbs.

wash	be	hold	cook
would	buy	pray	gnaw
put	write	loan	marry

- 15.** Circle the linking verbs.

appear	took	become	sat
feel	prove	call	grow
study	look	is	lose

- 16.** Circle the regular verbs and underline the irregular verbs.

forgive	grow	buy	walk
wash	hide	sew	pet
sit	hear	play	throw

- 17.** Circle the correct form of lay/lie in each sentence.

Joy found her hairbrush (laying, lying) in the suitcase.

The swing has (lain, laid) broken behind the shed for two years.

The boy had (laid, lain) awake before getting up to play.

- 18.** Circle the correct form of sit/set in each sentence.

The class (set, sat) patiently as the teacher took attendance.

Claudia's aunt (sits, sets) the table while Gert cooks dinner.

(Setting, Sitting) on the porch on a cool summer night is the best.

- 19.** Circle the correct tricky verb in each sentence.

Sandy carefully (hanged, hung) her new curtains on the window.

Peter tried to (accept, except) his explanation, but it was difficult.

You (can, may) take another glass of lemonade if you like.

- 20.** Identify the tense of the verbs that follow as: present, past, future, present perfect, past perfect, future perfect, present progressive, past progressive, or future progressive.

will drive	am driving
had driven	drove
drive	has driven
drives	will have driven

- 21.** Circle the common adjectives in the following sentences.

Dan went to the community library to research the American Revolution.

The beach is the perfect place to relax and read a good book.

Ben was sad that his new radio had broken.

- 22.** Place the correct indefinite article in front of each noun.

___ house	___ elephant
___ unicorn	___ yellow flower
___ one-way street	___ honor
___ underdog	___ loafer
___ unopened gift	___ orange
___ hour	___ occasion
___ wrist	___ admirer
___ upper level	

- 23.** Change the following proper nouns into proper adjectives.

Italy	Bahama	Africa
Texas	France	Hawaii
America	Virginia	Denmark
California	Belgium	China
Japan	Inca	England

- 24.** Determine whether the boldfaced word in each sentence is a possessive pronoun or a possessive adjective.

His sneakers were worn, so he bought new ones.

Marissa crossed **her** fingers and hoped the winning ticket would be **hers**.

My uncle showed me an autographed Babe Ruth baseball card and said it would one day be mine.

- 25.** Determine whether the boldfaced word in each sentence is a demonstrative pronoun or a demonstrative adjective.

This is really over-the-top!

Take **this** money and buy yourself a treat.

Watch **these** carefully while they boil.

- 26.** Determine which form of comparative or superlative adjective best completes each sentence.

Terry's (most high, highest) jump in the high jump was four feet, six inches.

Sean's bank account was (larger, more large) than mine.

Barbara was (best, better) at chess than her roommate Natalie.

- 27.** Circle the correct form of the comparative and superlative adverbs in the following sentences.

Joel was (less, least) active during the winter than during the summer.

The store brand's price was the (low, lower, lowest) of the three brands.

This was the (long, longer, longest) day of the year.

- 28.** Determine whether the boldfaced word in the sentence is an adjective or an adverb.

The accounting department ran at a **fast** but friendly pace.

Cory worked **hard** on improving his tennis swing for the tournament.

Nora was sent **straight** to her room for disobeying her parents.

- 29.** Identify the prepositional phrases in the following sentences.

Ferdinand Magellan was the first explorer to sail around the world.

Without a doubt, regular exercise is necessary for good health.

The little monkey ran around Mom's living room and climbed up the drapes.

- 30.** Determine whether the boldfaced word is a preposition or an adverb.

Holly was **beside** herself with fear when the child darted into the street.

If we can reach Hightstown **by** five, we may be able to see the president's motorcade go **by**.

Use caution when you walk **across** busy streets.

- 31.** Rewrite each sentence so that the misplaced modifiers are properly placed.

The woman was walking her dog with hair curlers.

Walking along the shore the sand burned my feet.

Tina bought a guinea pig for her brother they call Butterscotch.

- 32.** Using the clues, write the homonyms or homographs.
- school leader/integrity
to crack/a short rest
carry on/curriculum vitae
rip/saline from the eye
good/underwater spring
wrapped/a boo-boo
- 33.** Identify the simple subject in the following sentences.
- Next week, Scott and Jennifer will get married.
Shopping sprees can be fun, but very expensive.
It may be too soon to tell.
- 34.** Identify the simple predicate in the following sentences.
- Reading is good exercise for the brain.
Try again.
The log, when turned over, revealed a whole different world.
- 35.** Identify whether the boldfaced word is a direct or an indirect object in the following sentences.
- Brandy took the **pot** of flowers and brought **it** into the garden window.
Grumbling to himself, Stan dragged the heavy **garbage cans** out to the street.
He gave **her** a **high-five** to assure her that all was well.
- 36.** Identify the verb that correctly agrees with the subject in each sentence.
- Patty (fly, flies) frequently for work.
All of us (watch, watches) out for one another.
Nobody (want, wants) to play croquet in the backyard with me.
- 37.** Identify the verb that correctly completes the following sentences.
- Neither Jessica nor Marty (like, likes) to do the laundry.
Spaghetti and meatballs (is, are) my favorite Italian meal.
Sally or Zach (is, are) probably going to be the valedictorian this year.
- 38.** Identify the verb that will agree with the indefinite pronouns in the following sentences.
- Everything (go, goes) to the basement for sorting.
Somebody (need, needs) to bring some milk home.
While others (prefers, prefer) to eat salad first, I prefer to eat it last.
- 39.** Determine which pronoun best fits for proper pronoun/antecedent agreement in each sentence.
- The boys took _____ time walking home from school.
Nobody saw _____ name on the cast list.
The scared joey hopped to _____ mother for security.
- 40.** Identify the adjective and adverb phrases in the following sentences.
- Books with weak spines need to be reinforced to lengthen their shelf life.
The lizard scurried across the sidewalk and disappeared into the bushes.
The cashier with the red hair and braces was especially helpful.

- 41.** Identify the participial phrases, infinitive phrases, and gerund phrases in the following sentences.
- Hoping to win the lottery, Harriet bought 50 tickets for tonight's drawing.
- To help pass the time, Jake reads a book that he takes along.
- Caring for her ailing grandmother is Lori's focus right now.
- 42.** Identify the appositive phrases in the following sentences.
- Ron, a referee and mentor, is a fair-minded and friendly man.
- Jeannine works for KTL, a telecommunications company in Kansas City.
- Molly, my student, has a very fanciful imagination.
- 43.** Determine whether each group of words is an independent or a subordinate clause.
- Made to order
- Loosen up a little bit
- Don't make any assumptions
- We'll just see about that
- Before you go
- Have a nice day
- 44.** Identify the adjective clause in each sentence.
- Now I remember the guy that you described to me yesterday.
- The house at the end of the road is where my father grew up.
- The room next to the office is where the professors meet.
- 45.** Identify the noun clause in each sentence.
- I can see what you mean.
- What Wendy said took everyone by surprise.
- How it ends remains to be seen.
- 46.** Identify the adverb clause in each sentence.
- Because it was getting late, Sonya got her things ready to go.
- It will be an enjoyable gathering, provided it doesn't rain.
- Craig was going to try to reach the finish line, even though it seemed so far off.
- 47.** Identify the coordinating conjunction(s) in each sentence, and the word or group of words it is connecting.
- Logan or Melanie can go to the retreat if they want to.
- Karla wanted to visit longer with her friend, but she had a long drive home and it was late.
- We signed up for the early class so we could have the rest of the afternoon free.
- 48.** Identify the simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences.
- We can go to dinner now or we can go after the concert.
 - When the judge announced the winner, the audience clapped loudly and gave him a standing ovation.
 - All of the graduates will receive a degree.
 - If you try harder, you will certainly achieve success.

- 49.** Add punctuation where necessary in the following sentences.

Nathans birthday is May 21 1991 which fell on a Monday this year

Mr Roberts left a message asking me to pick up these items staples printer paper correction fluid and two boxes of paper clips I guess the supply closet got raided

All of the girls dresses were pink with white eyelet ruffles on the sleeves edges.

- 50.** Correctly place quotation marks, commas, and end marks in the following sentences.

Are we almost there yet Jodi asked for the ninth time.

And if you look to your left the tour guide went on to say you'll see Elvis's home, Graceland

► Answers

If you miss any of the following questions, you may refer to the designated lesson for further explanation.

1. soda, love, puppy, thoughtlessness, clapping, sorrow (Lesson 1)
2. peace, livelihood, deceit, cheerfulness, patience (Lesson 1)
3. Texas, Nancy, Mr. Klondike, Mexico City, IBM, Spiderman, Mt. Everest (Lesson 1)
4. stockings, deer, knots, cacti, mice, dresses, suitcases (Lesson 2)
5. kilowatt-hours, forget-me-nots, follow-ups, sticks-in-the-mud (Lesson 2)
6. child's, Jody's, Congress', tooth's, cactus's, puppies', moms', Jason's, women's, dress's (Lesson 2)
7. John/he, Mrs. Brown/she (Lesson 3)
8. fish/they, group/it, fish/it, each/he or she, both/they (Lesson 3)
9. who, whose, which, whom, whomever (Lesson 3)
10. **I** went to his house and saw him.
She brought me an apple and **I** thanked her.
They went to Pat's and called me.
(Lesson 3)
11. He threw **it** toward **me**.
Pass **me** the salt.
We made **them** sandwiches.
(Lesson 3)
12. She helped **herself** to the apple pie **her** mom made this afternoon.
Drew's headache was so bad he couldn't bring **himself** to finish paying **his** bills.
We **ourselves** are responsible for **our** own happiness.
(Lesson 3)
13. **That** is the most annoying sound **that** I have ever heard.
Those are the boxes of blankets **that** Mom plans to take to the SPCA.
Is **this** the channel **that** you were watching?
(Lesson 3)
14. wash, hold, cook, buy, pray, gnaw, put, write, loan, marry (Lesson 4)
15. appear, become, feel, prove, grow, look (Lesson 4)
16. **forgive** **grow** **buy** **walk**
wash **hide** **sew** **pet**
sit **hear** **play** **throw**
(Lesson 5)
17. lying, lain, lain (Lesson 5)
18. sat, sets, Sitting (Lesson 5)
19. hung, accept, may (Lesson 5)
20. will drive: future
had driven: past perfect
drive: present
drives: present
am driving: present progressive
drove: past
has driven: present perfect
will have driven: future perfect
(Lesson 6)
21. community, perfect, good, new (Lesson 7)
22. a house, a unicorn, a one-way street, an underdog, an unopened gift, an hour, a wrist, an upper level, an elephant, a yellow flower, an honor, a loafer, an orange, an occasion, an admirer
(Lesson 7)
23. Italian, Bahamian, African, Texan, French, Hawaiian, American, Virginian, Danish, Californian, Belgian, Chinese, Japanese, Incan, English
(Lesson 7)
24. **His**: possessive adjective; **her**: possessive adjective; **hers**: possessive pronoun; **My**: possessive adjective (Lesson 7)
25. **This**: demonstrative pronoun; **this**: demonstrative adjective; **these**: demonstrative pronoun
(Lesson 7)
26. highest, larger, better (Lesson 7)
27. less, lowest, longest (Lesson 8)

- 28. fast:** adjective; **hard:** adverb; **straight:** adverb
(Lessons 7 and 8)
- 29.** around the world; Without a doubt; for good health; around Mom's living room; up the drapes
(Lesson 9)
- 30. beside** herself: preposition; **by** five: preposition; **by:** adverb; **across** busy streets: preposition
(Lesson 9)
- 31.** The woman with hair curlers was walking her dog.
The sand burned my feet while I was walking along the shore.
Tina bought a guinea pig they call Butterscotch for her brother.
(Lesson 10)
- 32.** principal/principle tear/tear
break/break well/well
resume/resume wound/wound
(Lesson 10)
- 33.** Scott and Jennifer; Shopping sprees; It (Lesson 11)
- 34.** is; Try; revealed (Lesson 11)
- 35. pot:** direct object; **it:** direct object; **garbage cans:** direct object; **her:** indirect object; **high-five:** direct object (Lesson 11)
- 36.** flies, watch, wants (Lesson 12)
- 37.** likes, is, is (Lesson 12)
- 38.** goes, needs, prefer (Lesson 12)
- 39.** their, his or her, its (Lesson 12)
- 40.** with weak spines: adjective phrase
across the sidewalk: adverb phrase; into the bushes: adverb phrase
with the red hair and braces: adjective phrase
(Lesson 13)
- 41.** Hoping to win the lottery: participial phrase
To help pass the time: infinitive phrase
Caring for her ailing grandmother: gerund phrase
(Lesson 13)
- 42.** a referee and mentor
a telecommunications company in Kansas City
my student
(Lesson 13)
- 43.** Made to order: subordinate clause
Loosen up a little bit: independent clause
Don't make any assumptions: independent clause
We'll just see about that: independent clause
Before you go: subordinate clause
Have a nice day: independent clause
(Lesson 14)
- 44.** that you described
where my father grew up
where the professors meet
(Lesson 14)
- 45.** what you mean
What Wendy said
How it ends
(Lesson 14)
- 46.** Because it was getting late
provided it doesn't rain
even though it seemed so far off
(Lesson 14)
- 47.** Logan **or** Melanie
Karla wanted to visit longer with her friend, **but** she had a long drive home **and** it was late.
We signed up for the early class **so** we could have the rest of the afternoon free.
(Lesson 15)
- 48. a.** compound; **b.** compound-complex; **c.** simple; **d.** complex
(Lesson 16)
- 49.** Nathan's birthday is May 21, 1991, which fell on a Monday this year.
Mr. Roberts left a message asking me to pick up these items: staples, printer paper, correction fluid, and two boxes of paper clips; I guess the supply closet got raided.
All of the girls' dresses were pink with white eyelet ruffles on the sleeves' edges.
(Lessons 17–20)
- 50.** "Are we almost there yet?" Jodi asked for the ninth time.
"And if you look to your left," the tour guide went on to say, "you'll see Elvis's home, Graceland."
(Lessons 17–20)

Nouns and Pronouns



LESSON

1



Kinds of Nouns

LESSON SUMMARY

Learn why the noun, and its six identifiable subgroups, is the fundamental component of our language.

Nouns, the most basic component of a language, are naming words. We can break nouns into six identifiable groups: common nouns, proper nouns, concrete nouns, abstract nouns, collective nouns, and compound nouns. It's useful to know about nouns and their important place in the context of writing and grammar—even in speaking, if it's to be done correctly—as so many other parts of speech relate to them in some form. So, here is where we'll begin.

The following table briefly summarizes the six noun groups and the unique qualities that separate them from one another. We will look at them in more detail later.

► The Six Types of Nouns

Common Nouns

A **common noun** is a word that speaks of something only in a general way, like *book*, *car*, and *person*. Common nouns can be written in singular form (*book*, *car*, and *person*) or plural (*books*, *cars*, and *people*).

Proper Nouns

Unlike common nouns, **proper nouns** name a very specific person, place, or thing. One distinguishing aspect of proper nouns is that they *always* begin with a capital letter. *Catcher in the Rye*, *BMW Z4*, and *Arnold Schwarzenegger* are proper nouns.

Concrete Nouns

Concrete nouns name something that appeals to your senses. For instance, *toothbrush*, *cell phone*, *moonlight*, *waves*, and *breezes* are all concrete nouns.

Abstract Nouns

Abstract nouns name beliefs, concepts, and characteristics or qualities—things that can't be touched, seen, or accrued. For example, *composure*, *sovereignty*, *free enterprise*, *daring*, and *handsome* are abstract.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns are words used to name people, places, and things in terms of a unit. For instance, *class*, *flock*, *herd*, and *family* are collective nouns.

Compound Nouns

New words can be formed by combining two or more words, thus forming a compound word. Compounds

can be made up of a number of speech components, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Some examples of compounds are *motorcycle*, *onlooker*, *input*, *software*, and *washing machine*.

► A Closer Look at Nouns

Proper nouns are easily distinguishable from common nouns by their capital letters. But be cautious. Don't assume that every word in a sentence that begins with a capital is a proper noun. Basic sentence structure dictates that every sentence must begin with a capital letter—remember that from some distant English class? Also, what might appear to be a proper noun, or some form thereof, could instead be a proper adjective simply because it is describing or telling about a noun that follows it in the sentence. For example, the proper noun *Florida* is acting as a proper adjective in the following sentence because it is used to describe the word *sunshine*.

Example:

Almost nothing beats the warmth of Florida sunshine.

In the following sentence, *Florida* is a proper noun, because it is not describing another word

Example:

My family goes to Florida every summer for vacation.

EXAMPLES OF PROPER NOUNS BY CATEGORY

PEOPLE

Officials	President G.W. Bush, Mayor Giuliani, Officer Dunlap
Historic Figures	Benjamin Franklin, Cleopatra, Lewis and Clark
Actors	Audrey Hepburn, James Stewart, Lucille Ball
Authors	Jack London, Shakespeare, O. Henry
Artists	Picasso, Vincent van Gogh, Rembrandt

PLACES

States	Oklahoma, Michigan, New Jersey
Restaurants	Olive Garden, Red Lobster, Salt Creek Grille
Structures	Eiffel Tower, Washington Monument, Empire State Building
Universities	Penn State University, Princeton University, Monmouth University

THINGS

Transportation	Delta Airlines, Greyhound, Amtrak
Businesses	FedEx, Toys “R” Us, Barnes and Noble
Products	Hebrew National hot dogs, Microsoft Word, Pantene shampoo

Practice

Determine whether the boldfaced words are proper nouns or proper adjectives in the following sentences.

1. The movie ***Gone with the Wind*** is a classic, wouldn't you agree?
2. **University of Richmond**, like most colleges, holds open house sessions throughout the summer.
3. This **UPS** tracking code seems to have expired.
4. Every **November**, he trades his **Jeep** in for a newer model.
5. The **Smithsonian Institute** comprises more than 19 museums in the nation's capital of **Washington, D.C.**

6. A **Degas** painting once sold for over four million dollars at **Sotheby's**, an auction house in **London**.
7. You can see for miles from the observation deck of the **Sears Tower** in **Chicago, Illinois**.
8. The **French** toast was exceptionally delicious at breakfast this morning.
9. The **French** toast the **New Year** with the phrase “bonne année!”

Concrete nouns are fairly simple to identify. They are nouns that appeal to your senses—hearing, touch, taste, smell, and sight. Besides things like an *avalanche*, a *stretch limo*, *newborn kittens*, or a piping hot plate of *barbeque ribs*, things such as *air*, *cells*, *molecules*, and *atoms* are concrete, even though they can't readily be seen with the naked eye. Got the idea?

Abstract nouns, on the other hand, name ideas, qualities or characteristics, and feelings. Words such as *pride*, *resentfulness*, *health*, *democracy*, and *love* fall into this category. Do you see the difference between the two?

Practice

Identify the boldfaced nouns as either concrete or abstract in the following sentences.

- 10. The caring **message** written in my get-well **card** was **evidence** of Kim’s **thoughtfulness** and **compassion**.
- 11. The **globalization** of **capitalism** has become tremendous in the last **quarter-century** due to improved **technology**.
- 12. There’s a lot to be said for the age-old **adage** “**Beauty** is in the **eye** of the **beholder**.”
- 13. His **intuition** told **him** to swerve right in order to avoid the potential **accident**.

Take a look at a list of collective nouns, and you’re sure to get a few chuckles. Some are fairly familiar, such as *herd*, *club*, *family*, and *committee*. But did you know that a group of oysters is called a *bed*? That a group of butterflies is called a *kaleidoscope*? That a group of islands is called a *chain*? Or that a group of ships is called a *flotilla*?

A collective noun can take either a singular or a plural verb, depending on how it is used in the sentence. Take the word *choir*, for instance. In the sentence

The choir travels to out-of-state performances by bus.

the *choir* is taken as a single unit and therefore takes the singular verb (*the collective group travels*). The follow-

ing sentence, on the other hand, uses the word *choir* in a plural sense.

The choir are fitted for new robes every three years.

This implies that all the individual choir members are fitted for new robes every three years. While the sentence may sound odd, this must obviously be the case, as *each* individual member wears a robe; the *group* as a single unit doesn’t wear a robe.

Practice

Identify the correct verb or pronoun for each collective noun in the following sentences.

- 14. A dozen roses (is, are) a thoughtful gift for Valentine’s Day.
- 15. A dozen students (is, are) going to the library to study for finals.
- 16. The class took (its, their) yearly field trip to Camp Arrowhead this past April.
- 17. The class completed (its, their) exam in American History and did very well.
- 18. The committee submitted (its, their) findings on the case to the jury.
- 19. The committee took (its, their) seat(s) to hear the verdict.

KINDS OF NOUNS

Compound nouns present many writers with issues regarding spelling, rather than usage. There are three ways to spell these nouns, which are made up of two or more words. The closed form refers to two words joined without any space between them, such as *bandwagon*, *forthwith*, and *skyscraper*. The open form has a space between the words, like *water ski* and *stainless steel*. The hyphenated form uses hyphens (-) between the words, like *well-to-do* and *drought-stricken*.

Be careful to distinguish between words that have different meanings as a word pair and as a compound word. The following table lists a few of the most commonly confused compound words.

WORD PAIR	MEANING	COMPOUND WORD	MEANING
<i>all ready</i>	completely prepared	<i>already</i>	it happened
<i>all together</i>	as a group	<i>altogether</i>	completely
<i>every one</i>	each individual	<i>everyone</i>	everybody

Practice

Can you identify the six types of verbs in the following sentences? Identify the boldfaced nouns as common, proper, concrete, abstract, collective, or compound. Some nouns may fit into more than one of these categories.

- 20.** Place the **stamp** on the upper right-hand **corner** of the **envelope** addressed to **Phillip Ware**.
- 21.** It seemed as though the long and brutal **snowstorm** was starting to give way, and some **peace** was going to finally ensue.
- 22.** The **army** of **ants** attacked the defenseless **caterpillar** on my front **sidewalk**.
- 23.** **Tristan** carried a **deck** of cards with him to pass the **time** in between **performances**.

► **Answers**

1. proper noun
2. proper noun
3. proper adjective (*UPS* is modifying *tracking code*)
4. proper noun, proper noun
5. proper noun, proper noun
6. proper adjective (*Degas* is modifying *painting*), proper noun, proper noun
7. proper noun, proper noun
8. proper adjective (*French* is modifying *toast*)
9. proper noun (here, *French* is a proper noun meaning *people from France*, and *toast* is a verb), proper noun
10. concrete, concrete, concrete, abstract, abstract
11. abstract, abstract, concrete, abstract
12. concrete, abstract, concrete, concrete
13. abstract, concrete, concrete
14. is
15. are
16. its
17. their
18. its
19. their
20. **stamp:** common, concrete; **corner:** common, concrete; **envelope:** common, concrete; **Phillip Ware:** proper
21. **snowstorm:** common, concrete; **peace:** common, abstract
22. **army:** common, concrete, collective; **ants:** common, concrete; **caterpillar:** common, concrete; **sidewalk:** common, concrete, compound
23. **Tristan:** proper; **deck:** common, concrete, collective; **time:** common, abstract; **performances:** common, concrete

LESSON

2



Noun Usage

LESSON SUMMARY

Pluralize singular nouns, and turn them into possessives with ease—spelling tips included.

► Plurals

Most, but not all, nouns can be made plural by simply adding an *-s* or *-es* at the end of the word, like *printer/printers*, *lunch/lunches*, *bill/bills*, etc. Some nouns, however, actually change their word form altogether, while others don't change at all. Here are some important rules for making a singular noun plural.

MAKING SINGULAR NOUNS PLURAL

1. Add -s to the end of most words to make them plural.

grill/grills, paper/papers, snake/snakes, razor/razors

The plural form of nouns like these, referred to as *count nouns*, is rather predictable.

2. Add -es to the end of words ending with -ch, -s, -sh, -ss, -x, and -z.

punch/punches, gas/gases, garlic press/garlic presses, brush/brushes, box/boxes, fez/fezes

It would be strange to try and pronounce dresss or crashes if we didn't put an e in front of the s, which forms another syllable.

3. Change -f, -lf, or -fe at the end of words to -ves.

leaf/leaves, half/halves, knife/knives

Be careful; there are exceptions to this rule, for example, chief/chiefs, giraffe/giraffes.

4. Change -y to -ies when the -y follows a consonant.

party/parties, battery/batteries, penny/pennies, baby/babies

5. Just add an -s after a -y when the -y is preceded by a vowel.

guy/guys, day/days, play/plays, key/keys, boy/boys

6. Add -es to words ending with an -o that follows a consonant.

tornado/tornadoes, potato/potatoes, echo/echoes, hero/heroes

7. Simply add -s to words ending with an -o that follows another vowel.

patio/patios, video/videos, radio/radios

Be careful; there are exceptions to this rule. For example, banjo/banjos, piano/pianos

8. For hyphenated compound nouns, add an -s to the word that is changing in number.

passer-by/passers-by, brother-in-law/brothers-in-law

9. There are no rules for pluralizing irregular nouns; you must memorize them.

mice/mouse, deer/deer, child/children, man/men, foot/feet, person/people, stimulus/stimuli, tooth/teeth, octopus/octopi, die/dice, louse/lice, ox/oxen

Practice

Decide whether to add -s or -es to the end of each word in order to make it plural.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. book</p> <p>2. strength</p> <p>3. bush</p> <p>4. box</p> <p>5. package</p> | <p>6. choice</p> <p>7. edge</p> <p>8. freedom</p> <p>9. ogre</p> <p>10. fox</p> <p>11. pencil</p> <p>12. ax</p> |
|---|--|

NOUN USAGE

Identify the correct plural for each of the boldfaced words.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------|-----------|
| 13. half | → | halves | halfs |
| 14. chief | → | chieves | chiefs |
| 15. life | → | lifes | lives |
| 16. giraffe | → | giraffes | giraves |
| 17. oaf | → | oafs | oaves |
| 18. shelf | → | shelves | shelfs |
| 19. sniff | → | sniffs | snives |
| 20. wife | → | wives | wifes |
| 21. safe | → | safes | saves |
| 22. wolf | → | wolves | wolfs |
| 23. monkey | → | monkies | monkeys |
| 24. library | → | librarys | libraries |
| 25. candy | → | candies | candys |
| 26. story | → | storys | stories |
| 27. chimney | → | chimneys | chinnies |
| 28. essay | → | essays | essaies |
| 29. daisy | → | daisys | daisies |
| 30. alley | → | alleys | allies |
| 31. delay | → | delaies | delays |
| 32. family | → | families | familys |

NOUN USAGE

33. domino	→	dominoes	dominos
34. radio	→	radioes	radios
35. volcano	→	volcanos	volcanoes
36. tomato	→	tomatoes	tomatos
37. torpedo	→	torpedos	torpedoes
38. hero	→	heroes	heros
39. echo	→	echos	echoes
40. piano	→	pianoes	pianos
41. mosquito	→	mosquitoes	mosquitos
42. silo	→	siloes	silos
43. studio	→	studios	studioes
44. six-year-old	→	sixes-year-old	six-year-olds
45. go-between	→	goes-between	go-betweenes
46. editor-in-chief	→	editors-in-chief	editor-in-chiefs
47. runner-up	→	runners-up	runner-ups
48. great-grandmother	→	greats-grandmother	great-grandmothers
49. singer-songwriter	→	singers-songwriter	singer-songwriters
50. sister-in-law	→	sister-in-laws	sisters-in-law
51. city-state	→	cities-state	city-states
52. deer	→	deers	deer
53. woman	→	womans	women

54. goose	→	geese	gooses
55. child	→	childs	children
56. moose	→	mooses	moose
57. mouse	→	mice	mouses
58. alumnus	→	alumnuses	alumni
59. phenomenon	→	phenomena	phenomenons
60. cactus	→	cactuses	cacti
61. analysis	→	analyses	analyses
62. criterion	→	criteria	criteria

► Possessives

Possessive nouns are words that imply ownership—something belonging to something else. The important thing is first of all to determine whether the word being used actually implies possession.

Singular Possessives

Take the sentence *the bird nests had eggs inside*. The word *nests*, while it ends with an *-s*, is plural, not possessive. To make *nest* or any singular noun possessive, add an apostrophe and an *-s* (*'s*) to the end of the word, as in *child/child's*, *bread/bread's*, or *music/music's*.

Example:

The *child's* older sister was my *neighbor's friend's* babysitter.

What this sentence tells us is that the older sister of the child was the babysitter of the friend of my neighbor. In other words, the sister “belonged” to the child, the friend “belonged” to the neighbor, and the neighbor “belonged” to me.

Practice

Write the possessive form of the phrases below.

- 63.** the desk of the secretary
- 64.** the applause of the crowd
- 65.** the birthday of Heather
- 66.** the front door of the house
- 67.** the ball glove of Matt

Plural Possessives

Making a plural noun possessive is a bit different. Most plural nouns end with an *-s*, except for irregular nouns (see page 24) like *mouse/mice*, *child/children*, *man/men*, *deer/deer*, and so on. In the case of a regular noun, simply add an apostrophe *after* the *-s* (*'s*), as in *girls/girls'*, *schools/schools'*, or *newspapers/newspapers'*.

Example:

The *districts' administrators' secretaries'* contracts were approved.

This sentence tells us that the contracts of the secretaries of the administrators of the district were approved. In other words, the administrators “belonged” to the district, the secretaries “belonged” to the administrators, and the contracts “belonged” to the secretaries.

Irregular nouns, such as *teeth* or *people*, are treated like singular nouns, and 's is added to them to form a possessive.

Example:

The geese's V formation in the sky was impressive as they flew overhead.

Practice

Write the possessive form of the phrases below.

- 68. the dictionaries of the writers
- 69. the calendars of the doctors
- 70. the hills of ants
- 71. the islands of the countries
- 72. the formations of the geese

When you are confronted with a singular noun ending in -s, and you need to make it possessive, you can do one of two things: add an 's or add an apostrophe after the -s.

Examples:

Tess's new shoes hurt her feet, but she wore them anyway.

Tess' new shoes hurt her feet, but she wore them anyway.

Some words will *sound* awkward with the added s at the end (*Moses's*, *Dickens's*, *Williams's*, etc.). It is recommended that you simply add an apostrophe after the -s at the end of these names, but the matter is left to your discretion.

Plurals Formed with 's

What's a rule without an exception? There are a few instances where you may need to use apostrophe s ('s) to make a plural. For example, you should add an 's to pluralize an abbreviation that has more than one period, such as *Ph.D.* or *M.D.*

Example:

M.D.'s and Ph.D.'s denote doctorates in medicine and philosophy.

Also, when you need to write an expression with words and letters that are usually not seen in the plural form—like *if*, *and*, or *but*, or *P* and *Q*—you should add 's to the word or letter.

Example:

There are no *if's*, *and's*, or *but's* about it, she won't be going to the concert tomorrow. She should have minded her *P's* and *Q's* and kept her comments to herself.

► **Answers**

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. books | 37. torpedoes |
| 2. strengths | 38. heroes |
| 3. bushes | 39. echoes |
| 4. boxes | 40. pianos |
| 5. packages | 41. mosquitoes |
| 6. choices | 42. silos |
| 7. edges | 43. studios |
| 8. freedoms | 44. six-year-olds |
| 9. ogres | 45. go-betweens |
| 10. foxes | 46. editors-in-chief |
| 11. pencils | 47. runners-up |
| 12. axes | 48. great-grandmothers |
| 13. halves | 49. singer-songwriters |
| 14. chiefs | 50. sisters-in-law |
| 15. lives | 51. city-states |
| 16. giraffes | 52. deer |
| 17. oafs | 53. women |
| 18. shelves | 54. geese |
| 19. sniffs | 55. children |
| 20. wives | 56. moose |
| 21. safes | 57. mice |
| 22. wolves | 58. alumni |
| 23. monkeys | 59. phenomena |
| 24. libraries | 60. cacti |
| 25. candies | 61. analyses |
| 26. stories | 62. criteria |
| 27. chimneys | 63. the secretary's desk |
| 28. essays | 64. the crowd's applause |
| 29. daisies | 65. Heather's birthday |
| 30. alleys | 66. the house's front door |
| 31. delays | 67. Matt's ball glove |
| 32. families | 68. writers' dictionaries |
| 33. dominoes | 69. doctors' calendars |
| 34. radios | 70. ants' hills |
| 35. volcanoes | 71. countries' islands |
| 36. tomatoes | 72. geese's formations |