

Grammar Book in a Page

1. commas

- a. To separate parts of dates and addresses; use immediately following dates and addresses:
*On February 1, 1994, he... *In his hometown of Flagstaff, Arizona, his father built...
- b. Three or more items in a series: *He was melancholic, sour(,) and temperamental. (The comma after the last item in a series is optional)
- c. Before a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet) to connect two complete sentences (makes a compound sentence): *The children did not see it coming, but Mr. and Mrs. Danilek got a divorce while their youngest child was still in elementary school.
- d. To set off nonessential phrases: *Fyodor Dostoevsky, my favorite author, wrote plenty of books to keep me busy all year round. *We would touch down at Columbus International Airport, the largest airport in the state.
- e. Introductory phrases: *Therefore, the proposition must... *However, they were not... *In fact, we thought... *In the summer, we used to... After the rain subsided, I thought I would...
- f. To set off dialogue tags where the sentence does not naturally flow into the quotation:
*Place a comma: Mr. Flipp postulated, "The molecular makeup...
*Don't include a comma: Mr. Flopp counters that "until scientists are able..."

2. semicolons

- a. To separate two complete sentences that are closely related: *They did not plan for the tornado; it took them by surprise.
- b. To separate items in a series if those items contain commas: *We visited the following: Rockport, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts; Hartford, Connecticut; and Providence, Rhode Island.

3. colons

Before formally introduced lists, statements, or quotations: *Mark Twain made the following point:
"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest." *The following are all examples of things that appear in nightmares: talking trees, small dogs with large teeth, babies that turn into animals, and evil clowns.

4. quotation marks and apostrophes

- a. Around names of songs, chapters, articles, direct quotes: *A bumper sticker states, "We kill people to show that killing people is wrong."
- b. Use single quotes within double quotes: *"When the man went to see his daughter, he was turned away by a sign on the door that read, 'Visiting hours are over for today.'"
- c. To show possession (If the possessor is plural and ends in an s, the apostrophe goes after the s.) *one's, Sarah's, Ohio's, children's, women's, people's, Seniors', secretaries', players', Chris'
or in a contraction (whenever you leave a letter out of a word): *it's, let's, don't, 'till, swimmin', 'bout
do *not* use an apostrophe when the item is simply plural: *1960s, 1800s, As, Bs, Cs
Commas and periods always go inside the closing quotation mark: *"She was one of those 'gypsies,' and my mother told me to have nothing to do with her."

5. underlining or italics - these are interchangeable; choose to do one and be consistent throughout paper:

Titles of books, magazines, newspapers, movies, web sites, ships or aircraft, and foreign words

6. spelling - That one's on you; don't assume that you're okay because "eye halve a spelling chequer."

7. capitalization - proper nouns (specific persons, places, things), sentence beginnings

8. indent quotes longer than four lines and do not place quotation marks around:

* In *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, Veruca feels entitled to visit Willy Wonka's factory. Her Father reinforces her demands by using an entire factory of workers to open chocolate bars in hopes of finding the golden ticket. Veruca's sense of instant gratification dominates her father's world, and instead of interfering with her unreasonable demands, he pleads for her understanding.

Father: Veruca, sweetheart, I'm not a magician! Give me time!

Veruca: I want it now! What's the matter with those twerps?

Father: For five days now, the entire factory's been on the job! They haven't shelled a peanut since Monday! They've been shelling chocolate bars from dawn to dusk!

Veruca: Make them work nights! ...They're not even trying! They don't want to find it! They're jealous!

Father: Sweetheart, I can't push them no harder...

Veruca: You promised! You promised I'd have it the first day! ...

Father: It breaks my heart. I hate to see her unhappy... There are only 4 tickets left in the world and the whole world's hunting for them! (Dahl 43-44)

9. no abbreviations *in formal writing*, except first or middle names and the times a.m. and p.m.

10. write out numbers less than one hundred or multiples of one hundred that are two words
11. no run-ons

Separate distinct ideas: *Incorrect: There are very few who will make it into the ivy league schools such accomplishments require a tremendous amount of work. *Correct: There are very few who will make it into the ivy league schools; such accomplishments require a tremendous amount of work.
12. no fragments

Separate sentence part that does not express a complete thought: *Incorrect: I knew that I was in trouble. Before we even got home. Correct: I knew that I was in trouble before I even got home.
13. no use of second or first person (except in quotations) *in formal writing*: I, we, us, me, our, ours, my, mine, you, your, yours
14. correct subject/verb agreement - *Correct: *Many* in the crowd *were* tired. Hint: Ignore prepositional phrases; only find the subject and the verb: *Correct: The *pages* of the book *were* torn.
15. consistent verb tenses

If you write in past tense, continue in past tense; if you write in present tense, continue in present tense: *Incorrect: There *was* a girl next door. She *has* black hair. *Correct: She *had* black hair.
16. no informal language, slang or clichés *in formal writing*: 'till, just 'cause, really tired, pretty sick, wound up, okay
17. no contractions (whenever you leave a letter out of a word): You just can't, so don't try.
18. do not end a sentence with a preposition *in formal writing*: *Incorrect: Here is the box to place the papers in. Correct: Here is the box in which to place the papers. *Incorrect: He was the man who we confided in. Correct: He is the man in whom we confided.
19. no misplaced modifiers: *Incorrect: All of the members of my family went together on vacations every year, who were a large influence on my early development. (Were the vacations an influence, or were the family members?) Correct: All of the members of my family, who had a huge influence on my early development, went together on vacations every year.
20. pronouns
 - a. Give antecedents for all pronouns: **They* decided to give it to *him*. Who, what, to whom?
 - b. If the previous pronoun is singular, it should be followed by his/her, she/he, or his/hers: *Everyone should floss his/her teeth daily.
21. words left out or faulty wording
22. overly wordy; the statement could be made with far fewer words
23. correct use of ellipsis marks
 - a. Use an ellipsis mark to show that words have been removed from within a quote; should have a space between each dot.
 - b. More than one sentence removed should have a period before ellipsis (totaling four dots).
 - c. Ellipsis not needed at the beginning or end of a quote:

*Incorrect: The "...number of murders seen on TV by the time an average child finishes elementary school is ... 8,000." (Miller 23) *Correct: The "number of murders seen on TV by the time an average child finishes elementary school is... 8,000." (Miller 23)
24. correct use of hyphens
 - a. Hyphenate whole numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine
 - b. Hyphenate prefixes *all-*, *ex-*, *self-*: all-powerful, self-made, ex-convict
 - c. Hyphens with prefixes before a proper noun or adjective: all-American, anti-Israeli
 - d. Hyphens with compound adjectives before a noun: five-foot boy, how-to-do-it book, cross-country runner, round-faced woman
25. no passive voice in formal writing- the subject of the sentence should be acting; the subject should never be receiving the action, unless the agent giving/creating action is otherwise clear in the sentence:

*Incorrect: The company was shut down. *Correct: The authorities terminated the company. *Incorrect: The house was built by my father. *Correct: My father built the house.
26. do not be redundant - *Incorrect: *Also*, he was fighting a disease *also*. *He won in the *first primary* elections.
27. correct end marks - periods, question marks, exclamation points
28. miscellaneous - means there is an error not listed on this sheet; the type of error is marked on the paper