

## THE BASICS

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### OBJECTIVES

**In Part 2 you will learn the basic elements of sentence construction and discover how to recognize, avoid, and correct some of the most common errors in written English.**

**By the end of Part 2, you should be able to**

- Distinguish between the various parts of speech;
- Understand the function of subjects and verbs;
- Use the correct past tense of regular and irregular verbs;
- Distinguish between simple, compound, and complex sentences;
- Combine pairs of simple sentences into compound and complex sentences;
- Distinguish between the various pronoun forms;
- Choose the correct pronoun form;
- Distinguish between indefinite and definite articles;
- Identify missing articles in sentences;
- Distinguish between adjectives and adverbs;
- Determine whether a sentence requires an adjective or an adverb.

## PART 2 PRETEST

The following exercise will help you determine how much you already know about the topics covered in this section.

Here are five sentences, each of which contains **two** of the types of errors covered in Part 2. Correct the errors in the spaces provided. *Answers are available on the Online Learning Centre.*

1. I be glad that my son got a “A” in math.

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2. If you have any questions about the dress code, just ask Jamie or I and we’ll be gladly to help.

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3. Ishmael says that after the game, him and his friends will stay at the field and help clean up a garbage left behind by the spectators.

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4. All the neighbours is relieved that the police caught the thief.

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5. The boys laughed loud when their friend tripped over a ant.

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How many errors did you catch? \_\_\_\_\_/10

# CHAPTER 3

## PARTS OF SPEECH

Words—the building blocks of sentences—can be divided into eight parts of speech. **Parts of speech** are classifications of words according to their meaning and use in a sentence.

This chapter will explain the eight parts of speech:

<b>nouns</b>	<b>prepositions</b>	<b>conjunctions</b>
<b>pronouns</b>	<b>adjectives</b>	<b>interjections</b>
<b>verbs</b>	<b>adverbs</b>	

### NOUNS

A noun is a word that is used to name something: a person, a place, an object, or an idea. Here are some examples of nouns:

woman	city	doughnut	freedom
Margaret Atwood	street	school	possibility
Jim Carrey	Montreal	Seneca College	mystery

Most nouns begin with a lower case (not a capital) letter and are known as **common nouns**. These nouns name general things. Some nouns, however, begin with a capital letter. They are called **proper nouns**. While a common noun refers to a person or thing in general, a proper noun names someone or something specific. For example, *woman* is a common noun—it doesn't name a particular woman. On the other hand, Margaret Atwood is a proper noun because it names a specific woman.

### PRACTICE I

Insert any appropriate noun into each of the following blanks. Answers will vary.

1. Kirpal watched in amazement as the shoplifter stuffed a large \_\_\_\_\_ down the front of his pants.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ kicked the soccer ball down the field.
3. On my flight to Halifax, the person behind me kept putting their \_\_\_\_\_ on my armrest.
4. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ crashed through the window.
5. The snowplow left a huge pile of snow right in front of my \_\_\_\_\_.

## Singular and Plural Nouns

**Singular nouns** name one person, place, object, or idea. **Plural nouns** refer to two or more persons, places, objects, or ideas. Most singular nouns can be made plural with the addition of an *s*:

Singular	Plural
computer	computers
day	days
friend	friends
truth	truths
house	houses

Some nouns have irregular plurals. You can check the plural of nouns you think may be irregular by looking up the singular form in a dictionary. Here are some common irregular plurals:

foot	feet
child	children
box	boxes
bus	buses
mouse	mice
tomato	tomatoes
knife	knives
man	men
tooth	teeth

**For more information on nouns, see “Subjects and Verbs,” page 41.**

### PRACTICE 2

Underline the three nouns in each sentence. Some are singular, and some are plural.

- Two bats swooped over the heads of the frightened children.
- How did you get that stain on the sleeve of your jacket?
- The lost dog has fleas and a broken leg.
- Mariah likes to write all her assignments in green ink.
- Some students start studying the night before an exam.

## PRONOUNS

A **pronoun** is a word that stands for a noun. Pronouns eliminate the need for constant repetition. Look at the following sentences:

- The phone rang, and Gizman answered the phone.
- Denisha met Denisha's friends in the record store at the mall. Denisha meets Denisha's friends there every Saturday.
- The server rushed over to the new customers. The new customers asked the server for menus and coffee.

Now look at how much clearer and smoother the sentences sound with pronouns.

- The phone rang, and Gizman answered **it**.  
The pronoun *it* is used to replace the word *phone*.
- Denisha met **her** friends in the mall record store. **She** meets **them** there every Saturday.  
The pronoun *her* is used to replace the word *Denisha*. The pronoun *she* replaces *Denisha*. The pronoun *them* replaces the words *Denisha's friends*.
- The server rushed over to the new customers. **They** asked **him** for menus and coffee.  
The pronoun *they* is used to replace the words *the new customers*. The pronoun *him* replaces the words *the server*.

Following is a list of commonly used pronouns known as **personal pronouns**:

I	you	he	she	it	we	they
me	your	him	her	its	us	them
my	yours	his	hers		our	their

### PRACTICE 3

Fill in each blank with the appropriate personal pronoun.

1. Erasto feeds his pet lizard every day before school, and \_\_\_\_\_ also gives \_\_\_\_\_ flies in the afternoon.
2. When Alicia interviewed the striking workers, \_\_\_\_\_ told \_\_\_\_\_ about their demand for higher wages and longer breaks.
3. To make studying for the final exam easier, students should save all returned tests, and \_\_\_\_\_ should also keep \_\_\_\_\_ review sheets.
4. The pilot announced that we would fly through some air pockets, but \_\_\_\_\_ said that we should be past \_\_\_\_\_ soon.
5. I sent my instructor an e-mail last Friday, but she insists that \_\_\_\_\_ never received \_\_\_\_\_.

There are a number of types of pronouns. For convenient reference, they are described briefly in the box below.

## Types of Pronouns

**Personal pronouns** can act as subjects, objects, or possessives in a sentence.

*Singular* I, me, my, mine, you, your, yours, he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its

*Plural* we, us, our, ours, you, your, yours, they, them, their, theirs

**Relative pronouns** refer to someone or something already mentioned in the sentence.

who, whose, whom, which, that

**Interrogative pronouns** are used to ask questions.

who, whose, whom, which, what

**Demonstrative pronouns** are used to point out particular persons or things.

this, that, these, those

### NOTE

Do not use *them* (as in *them shoes*), *this here*, *that there*, *these here*, or *those there*.

**Reflexive pronouns** are those that end in *-self* or *-selves*. A reflexive pronoun is used as the object of a verb (as in *Cary cut herself*) or the object of a preposition (as in *Jack sent a birthday card to himself*) when the subject of the verb is the same as the object.

*Singular* myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself

*Plural* ourselves, yourselves, themselves

**Intensive pronouns** have exactly the same forms as reflexive pronouns. The difference is in how they are used. Intensive pronouns are used to add emphasis. (*I myself will need to read the contract before I sign it.*)

**Indefinite pronouns** do not refer to a particular person or thing.

each, either, everyone, nothing, both, several, all, any, most, none

**Reciprocal pronouns** express shared actions or feelings.

each other (used for two), one another (used for three or more)

For more information on pronouns, see “Pronoun Forms,” pages 71–82, and “Pronoun Problems,” pages 83–94.

## PRACTICE 4

Insert one of each of the following types of pronouns in the appropriate spaces: relative, demonstrative, reflexive, indefinite, and reciprocal.

1. Rather than hire painters, Raina has decided to paint her son's room \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Jamal and his two brothers are always fighting with \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The college offers a scholarship to students \_\_\_\_\_ get 80% or more.
4. I don't want these earrings. I would like to see \_\_\_\_\_ ones on the top shelf.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ on the bus became angry when the driver pulled over to have a cigarette.

## VERBS

Every complete sentence must contain at least one verb. There are two types of verbs: **action verbs** and **linking verbs**.

### Action Verbs

An **action verb** tells what is being done in a sentence. For example, look at the following sentences:

- Céline Dion **performed** in Las Vegas last year.
- Rainwater **poured** into the storm sewer.
- The dentist **drilled** into the infected tooth.

In these sentences, the verbs are *performed*, *poured*, and *drilled*. These words are all action verbs; they tell what is happening in each sentence.

**For more about action verbs, see “Subjects and Verbs,” page 41.**

### PRACTICE 5

Insert an appropriate word into each blank. That word will be an action verb; it will tell what is happening in the sentence. Answers will vary.

1. When Jesse's mother came into the room, he quickly \_\_\_\_\_ what he was doing.
2. The animals in the cage \_\_\_\_\_ all day.
3. I only \_\_\_\_\_ healthy food.
4. Lamia \_\_\_\_\_ her boyfriend on the phone.
5. Our instructor \_\_\_\_\_ our papers over the weekend.

### Linking Verbs

Some verbs are **linking verbs**. These verbs link (or join) a noun to something that is said about it. For example, look at the following sentence:

- The clouds **are** steel grey.

In this sentence, *are* is a linking verb. It joins the noun *clouds* to words that describe it: *steel grey*. Other common linking verbs include *am/is/are*, *appear(s)*, *become(s)*, *feel(s)*, *seem(s)*, and *was/were*.

Words that refer to the senses are also linking verbs. For example: look(s), sound(s), feel(s), smell(s), taste(s).

**For more about linking verbs, see “Subjects and Verbs,” page 41.**

### PRACTICE 6

Into each slot, insert one of the following linking verbs: *am*, *feel*, *is*, *looks*, *are*. Use each linking verb once.

1. The important papers \_\_\_\_\_ in a desk drawer.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ anxious to get my test back.
3. The economic situation for the next year \_\_\_\_\_ bad.
4. To serve customers who work late, the grocery store \_\_\_\_\_ open until 11 p.m.
5. Whenever I \_\_\_\_\_ angry, I go off by myself to calm down.

### Helping Verbs

Sometimes the verb of a sentence consists of more than one word. In these cases, the main verb will be joined by one or more **helping verbs**. Look at the following sentence.

- The basketball team **will be leaving** for their game at six o'clock.  
In this sentence, the main verb is *leaving*. The helping verbs are *will* and *be*.

Other helping verbs include *can*, *could*, *do*, *has*, *have*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *should*, and *would*.

**For more information about helping verbs, see “Subjects and Verbs,” pages 42 and 44.**

### PRACTICE 7

Into each slot, insert one of the following helping verbs: *does*, *must*, *should*, *could*, and *has been*. Use each helping verb once.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ your boss know that you want to take next week off?
2. The victim \_\_\_\_\_ describe her attacker in great detail.
3. You \_\_\_\_\_ rinse the dishes before putting them into the dishwasher.
4. My neighbour \_\_\_\_\_ arrested for drunk driving.
5. Even though we asked him nicely, the bus driver told us that he \_\_\_\_\_ not make any extra stops.



## PREPOSITIONS

A **preposition** is a word, usually indicating direction, location, or order, that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in the sentence. For example, look at the following sentence:

- A man **on** the bus was snoring loudly.  
*On* is a preposition. It connects the noun *bus* to *man*.

Here is a list of common prepositions:

about	around	beneath	during	into	over	under
above	at	beside	except	like	since	up
across	before	between	for	of	through	with
after	behind	by	from	off	to	without
among	below	down	in	on	toward	

The noun or pronoun that comes after the preposition is called the **object** of the preposition. Let us look at the sentence again:

- A man **on** the **bus** was snoring loudly.  
The noun *bus* is the object of the preposition *on*. It tells you where the man was.

A group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with its object is called a **prepositional phrase**. The words *on the bus*, for example, are a prepositional phrase.

Now read the following sentences and explanations.

- A spider was crawling **up the teacher's leg**.  
The noun *leg* is the object of the preposition *up*. *Up* connects *leg* with the word *crawling*. The prepositional phrase *up the teacher's leg* describes *crawling*. It tells just where and in what direction the spider was crawling.
- The man **with the black moustache** left the restaurant quickly.  
The noun *moustache* is the object of the preposition *with*. The prepositional phrase *with the black moustache* describes the word *man*. It tells us exactly which man left the restaurant quickly.
- The plant **on the windowsill** was a present **from my mother**.  
The noun *windowsill* is the object of the preposition *on*. The prepositional phrase *on the windowsill* describes the word *plant*. It describes exactly which plant was a present, and where the plant is located.  
There is a second prepositional phrase in this sentence. The preposition is *from*, and its object is *mother*. The prepositional phrase *from my mother* explains *present*. It tells who gave the present.

For more about prepositions, see “Subjects and Verbs,” page 43 and “Subject–Verb Agreement,” pages 119–130.

## PRACTICE 8

Into each slot, insert one of the following prepositions: *after*, *of*, *by*, *in*, and *without*. Use each preposition once.

1. Would you like a drive home \_\_\_\_\_ class?
2. Please put the milk back \_\_\_\_\_ the refrigerator when you are finished with it.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ giving any notice, the tenant moved out of the expensive apartment.
4. Ahmed hungrily ate three scoops \_\_\_\_\_ ice cream and an order of French fries.
5. The recycling bins \_\_\_\_\_ the back door contain glass bottles, plastic containers, and old newspapers.

## ADJECTIVES

An **adjective** is a word that describes a noun (the name of a person, place, or thing). Look at the following sentence.

- The dog lay down on a mat in front of the fireplace.

Now look at this sentence when adjectives have been inserted.

- The **shaggy** dog lay down on a **worn** mat in front of the fireplace.  
 The adjective *shaggy* describes the noun *dog*; the adjective *worn* describes the noun *mat*.  
 Adjectives add spice to our writing. They also help us to identify particular people, places, or things.

Adjectives can be found in two places:

1. An adjective may come before the word it describes (a **damp** night, the **mouldy** bread, a **striped** umbrella).
2. An adjective that describes the subject of a sentence may come after a linking verb. The linking verb may be a form of the verb *be* (he is **furious**, I am **exhausted**, they are **hungry**). Other linking verbs include *feel*, *look*, *sound*, *smell*, *taste*, *appear*, *seem*, and *become* (the soup tastes **salty**, your hands feel **dry**, the girl seems **sad**).



The words *a*, *an*, and *the* (called **articles**) are generally classified as adjectives.

**For more information on adjectives, see “Adjectives and Adverbs,” pages 104–116.**

## PRACTICE 9

Write any appropriate adjective in each slot. Answers will vary.

1. When Guillermo first moved to Manitoba, he found the winters to be very \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ pizza was eaten greedily by the \_\_\_\_\_ teenagers.
3. Melissa gave away the sofa because it was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Although the alley is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, Karen often takes it as a shortcut home.
5. The owner of that restaurant throws away any \_\_\_\_\_ food, but she takes any \_\_\_\_\_ food to a local homeless shelter.
6. When I woke up in the morning, I had a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ fever and a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ throat.

## ADVERBS

An **adverb** is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Many adverbs end in the letters *ly*. Look at the following sentence:

- The parrot squawked in the pet-store window as the children watched.

Now look at this sentence after adverbs have been inserted.

- The parrot squawked **loudly** in the pet-store window as the children watched **silently**.

The adverbs add details to the sentence. They also allow the reader to contrast the noise the parrot is making to the silence of the children. Look at the following sentences and the explanations of how adverbs are used in each case.

- The chef yelled **angrily** at the young waiter.  
The adverb *angrily* describes the verb *yelled*.
- Carl **rarely** watches television.  
The adverb *rarely* describes the verb *watches*.
- My mother has an **extremely** busy schedule on Tuesdays.  
The adverb *extremely* describes the adjective *busy*.
- When I am nervous, I speak **very** softly.  
The adverb *very* describes the adverb *softly*.

Some adverbs do not end in *-ly*. Examples include *very*, *often*, *never*, *always*, and *well*.

**For more information on adverbs, see “Adjectives and Adverbs,” pages 104–116.**

## PRACTICE 10

Write any appropriate adverb in each slot. Answers will vary.

1. Screaming \_\_\_\_\_, the man slammed down the telephone.
2. Skating \_\_\_\_\_ toward the goal, the little girl prepared to score.
3. The 911 operator spoke \_\_\_\_\_ to the young child.
4. The *Canadian Idol* contestant smiled \_\_\_\_\_ after finishing her song.
5. Navneet \_\_\_\_\_ studies, so it is no surprise that she failed her final exam.

## CONJUNCTIONS

**Conjunctions** are words that connect one idea to another within a sentence. There are two types of conjunctions, coordinating and subordinating.

**Coordinating Conjunctions (Joining Words)**

**Coordinating conjunctions** join two equal ideas. Look at the following sentence:

- Most Canadians pay both a provincial sales tax **and** the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST), **but** Alberta does not have a provincial sales tax.

In this sentence, the coordinating conjunction *and* connects the modified nouns *provincial sales tax* and *federal Goods and Services Tax*. The coordinating conjunction *but* connects the first part of the sentence, *Most Canadians pay both a provincial sales tax and the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST)*, to the second part, *but Alberta does not have a provincial sales tax*.

Following is a list of all the coordinating conjunctions. It helps to think of them as **joining words**.

and	for	or	yet
but	nor	so	



The coordinating conjunctions can be remembered by thinking of the word “FANBOYS.”

- |     |     |   |
|-----|-----|---|
| F = | for | (Serena enjoys competitive swimming, <b>for</b> it is challenging.) |
| A = | and | (I was nominated for an award, <b>and</b> I won!)                   |
| N = | nor | (Pavlo doesn't like spinach, <b>nor</b> does he like broccoli.)     |
| B = | but | (Sanah had a soccer game, <b>but</b> it was cancelled due to rain.) |
| O = | or  | (David needs to save money, <b>or</b> he will go broke.)            |
| Y = | yet | (Priya is mad at Melissa, <b>yet</b> she invited her to the party.) |
| S = | so  | (Vancouver is very rainy, <b>so</b> I will pack my umbrella.)       |

**For more on coordinating conjunctions, see information on joining words in “Sentence Types,” pages 61–70, and “Run-Ons and Comma Splices,” pages 145–156.**

## PRACTICE 11

Write a coordinating conjunction in each slot. Choose from the following: *and*, *but*, *so*, *or*, and *nor*. Use each conjunction once.

1. Either Devlin \_\_\_\_\_ Alex scored the winning touchdown.
2. I expected roses for my birthday, \_\_\_\_\_ I received a vase of plastic tulips from the discount store.
3. The cafeteria was serving liver and onions for lunch, \_\_\_\_\_ I bought a sandwich at the corner deli.
4. Nashana brought a pack of playing cards \_\_\_\_\_ a pan of brownies to the company picnic.
5. Neither my sofa \_\_\_\_\_ my armchair matches the rug in my living room.

### Subordinating Conjunctions

When a **subordinating conjunction** is added to a word group, the words can no longer stand alone as an independent sentence. They are no longer a complete thought. For example, look at the following sentence:

- Jaylin fainted in class.  
The word group *Jaylin fainted in class* is a complete thought. It can stand alone as a sentence.

See what happens when a subordinating conjunction is added to a complete thought:

- **When** Jaylin fainted in class  
Now the words cannot stand alone as a sentence. They are dependent on other words to complete the thought.
- **When** Jaylin fainted in class, we brought her some water and called the Student Health Centre.  
In this book, a word that begins a dependent word group is called a **dependent word**.  
Subordinating conjunctions are common dependent words.

Below are some subordinating conjunctions.

after	because	even though	though	when	wherever
although	before	if	unless	whenever	whether
as	even if	since	until	where	while

Following are some more sentences with subordinating conjunctions:

- **After** she finished her last exam, Joanne said, “Now I can relax.”  
*After she finished her last exam* is not a complete thought. It is dependent on the rest of the words to make up a complete sentence.
- Lamont listens to books on tape **while** he drives to work.  
*While he drives to work* cannot stand by itself as a sentence. It depends on the rest of the sentence to make up a complete thought.

- **Since** apples were on sale, we decided to make an apple pie for dessert.  
*Since apples were on sale is not a complete sentence. It depends on we decided to make an apple pie for dessert to complete the thought.*

**For more information on subordinating conjunctions, see information on dependent words in “Sentence Types,” pages 61–70; “Fragments,” pages 131–144; and “Run-Ons and Comma Splices,” pages 145–156.**

**PRACTICE 12**

Write a logical subordinating conjunction in each slot. Choose from the following: *even though, because, until, when, and before*. Use each conjunction once.

1. The bank was closed down \_\_\_\_\_ it lost more money than it earned.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Paula wants to look mysterious, she wears dark sunglasses and a scarf.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ the restaurant was closing in fifteen minutes, customers sipped their coffee slowly and continued to talk.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ anyone else could answer it, Jordan rushed to the phone and whispered, “It’s me.”
5. The waiter was instructed not to serve any food \_\_\_\_\_ the guests of honour arrived.

**INTERJECTIONS**

**Interjections** are words that can stand independently and are used to express emotion. Examples are *oh, wow, ouch, and oops*. These words are usually not found in formal writing.

- “**Hey!**” yelled Maggie. “That’s my bike.”
- **Oh,** we’re late for class.



A word may function as more than one part of speech. For example, the word *dust* can be a verb or a noun, depending on its role in the sentence.

- I **dust** my bedroom once a month, whether it needs it or not. (verb)
- The top of my refrigerator is covered with an inch of **dust**. (noun)



Choose a piece of your own writing. It could be a school assignment, a letter, an e-mail, or something else. Read through it, looking for two examples of each of the following:

- Two nouns: \_\_\_\_\_
- Two pronouns: \_\_\_\_\_
- Two verbs: \_\_\_\_\_
- Two prepositions: \_\_\_\_\_
- Two adjectives: \_\_\_\_\_
- Two adverbs: \_\_\_\_\_
- Two conjunctions: \_\_\_\_\_
- Two interjections: \_\_\_\_\_