

Grammar: Quiz Yourself

The miniquizzes on the following pages will help you determine your strengths and weaknesses in grammar and punctuation. Each section begins with a quiz. If your score is perfect, go on to the next exercise. If you score below 100 percent, continue by reading the instructions and doing the practice exercise.

See Appendix A for solutions to practice exercises.

Dangling modifiers

Quiz yourself

Decide whether each sentence is correct or incorrect. Check the appropriate box.

	CORRECT	INCORRECT
1. Less expensive, we propose the second option.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Closing out the year end, a calculation error jumped out at him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Although he is only an assistant vice president, his parking space is closest to the front entrance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. While Director of Communications, several pioneering ideas became realities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANSWERS:

1. Incorrect: We propose the second option, which is less expensive. 2. Incorrect: When he closed out the year end, a calculation error jumped out at him. 3. Incorrect: His parking space is closest to the front entrance although he is only an assistant vice president. 4. Incorrect: Several pioneering ideas became realities while she was Director of Communications.

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz on parallelism. Less than 100%: Read the following guideline and complete the practice exercise.

Guideline: Avoid dangling modifiers—phrases that do not logically or clearly modify a specific noun or pronoun. When you can't tell whom or what the introductory word group refers to, rearrange or add to the sentence to include the proper information. *Hint:* Pay special attention to the word directly after the comma. Does it belong there?

Example:

Packed in Styrofoam, you can ship the Fogg smoke detector anywhere.

Written this way, the sentence means that *you* are packed in Styrofoam, not the detector. Here are two ways to correct this dangling modifier.

Solution #1:

Add the missing subject (Fogg smoke detector) to the beginning of the main statement.

Packed in Styrofoam, the Fogg smoke detector can be shipped anywhere.

Solution #2:

Add the subject (Fogg smoke detector) and a verb to the modifying phrase to make it a clause.

When the Fogg smoke detector is packed in Styrofoam, you can ship it anywhere.

Practice exercise

Rewrite the sentences that contain dangling modifiers. (Answers are on p. 253.)

1. After spilling the soup at today's luncheon, the new Zappo contract was lost by John.

2. While I was moving the computer, the keyboard fell on my toe.
3. Preparing for the strategic planning meeting, the energy level waned.
4. By editing carefully, a writer can make just a few words hold enormous meaning.
5. After checking my messages, the letter carrier brought the mail, which I read quickly.
6. When 12 years old, her uncle was promoted to vice president of a global corporation.
7. Unless completely rewired, no engineers should handle the Zone A networking equipment.
8. Our curiosity was aroused, seeing a large gathering of emergency vehicles in the parking lot.
9. While circling the airport, my mind was focused on the upcoming meeting.
10. Used for only two weeks, Jim expects to sell his laptop at a good price.

Parallelism

Quiz yourself

Decide whether these sentences are correct or incorrect. Check the appropriate box.

- | | CORRECT | INCORRECT |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The damage was worse than they had anticipated: the rugs were stained, flood damage, and some wiring had to be replaced. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Her skills for the new job included researching, organization, and writing of long reports. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. His prospective employer required five references, but he had only four, so he was worried about his chances of obtaining the job. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The personnel department couldn't decide between rental and buying a third copy machine for the upcoming rush. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ANSWERS:

1. Incorrect: *flood damage was extensive.*
2. Incorrect: *organizing.*
3. Correct.
4. Incorrect: *between renting and buying.*

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz on consistency. Less than 100%: Read the guideline and complete the practice exercise.

Guideline: In a sentence or a list, present parallel ideas in parallel form. In other words, sentence elements with identical functions should have identical construction. To achieve this harmony and equality of ideas, choose one form of a word, phrase, or clause and stick to it. Why? Parallel sentence elements channel the reader's attention in the same way as the refrain in a song—there's a familiar repetition to anticipate.

Example:

His typing is fast and he does it accurately.

Solution:

His typing is fast and accurate.

Practice exercise

In the following sentences, correct the errors in parallelism. Mark "Correct" if the sentence is already correct. (Answers are on p. 253.)

1. The agenda for the meeting is as follows:
 - a. calling the meeting to order
 - b. set date for next meeting
 - c. taking the roll call
 - d. electing new officers.
2. The safety committee voted
 - to install lighting in the parking areas
 - to replace handrails on the stairway
 - that faulty electrical outlets should be replaced
 - to improve clearing ice from the walks.
3. We think she is dedicated and resourceful, and we recommend her for the job.
4. When you make the list, arrange the items in order of importance, write them in parallel form, and all the items should be numbered.
5. Not only was the report disorganized and incomplete, but she misspelled many words.

ANSWERS:

1. Incorrect: *Sometimes people give/because they don't.* 2. Incorrect: *fell into/meeting began.* 3. Correct. 4. Incorrect: *Does it keep us.*

1. Sometimes a person gives short shirt to exercise because they don't know how to fit it into a busy schedule.
2. It was the third time that the team rejected her proposal. Finally, she falls into her chair, defeated before the next meeting begins. How long could she go on this way?
3. The office needed not only a long table for conferences, but also a new filing cabinet and a place to store old correspondence.
4. Is it possible that the Internet is a disruptive force in society? Do they keep us from reading books and newspapers and communicating with our families, traditionally the primary sources for obtaining information?

CORRECT INCORRECT

Are the following sentences correct or incorrect? Check the appropriate box.

Quiz yourself

Consistency

6. He broke down on the highway, missed the meeting, and lost his cell phone, all in the same day.
7. He is efficient, thorough, and has a lot of imagination in his work.
8. By next Monday, please complete the survey, analyze the results, and you should hand in your report.
9. He enjoyed his new job for many reasons: the challenge, the salary, and it was a good working environment.
10. To conserve energy, follow this procedure when you leave the office:
 a. Check that all electrical equipment has been turned off.
 b. Make sure all windows are closed.
 c. Are any lights left on?

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz on logical comparisons. Less than 100%: Read the guideline and complete the practice exercise.

Guideline: Sentences and paragraphs should be consistent in tense, in agreement of verbs with subjects, and in agreement of pronouns with nouns. Consistency assures a logical progression of ideas and helps the reader follow your meaning.

Examples: Here are three different types of inconsistency: tense, verb-subject, and pronoun. A correct version follows each incorrect sentence.

1. Tense

Incorrect:

Today the Director of Training will appoint several new people to the committee. On his list were Kathy, Brad, and Li.

Correct:

Today the Director of Training will appoint several new people to the committee. On his list are Kathy, Brad, and Li.

2. Verb-subject

Incorrect:

Each of the day-shift employees start at 8:30 A.M.

Correct:

Each of the day-shift employees starts at 8:30 A.M.

3. Pronoun

Incorrect:

When someone has a cold, they should drink plenty of fluids.

Correct:

People with colds should drink plenty of fluids.

Practice Exercise

Find and underline the inconsistencies in the following examples. (Answers are on p. 254.)

1. Sometimes a person cannot decide whether they would rather have a raise or a vacation.
2. The laptop computer is a time-saving, space-saving invention. They are not difficult to use.

3. To change the printer cartridge, first turn off the machine. Open the lid and release the red lever. Do not try to lift out the cartridge until you release the lever. Once the lever was released, the cartridge comes off easily.
4. Arriving late at work is a problem we all have from time to time. Sometimes we are late because family responsibilities conflict with work responsibilities, and you feel caught in the middle.
5. He walked up on the stage, grabbed the microphone, and tells a few hilarious jokes as an icebreaker.
6. Routine tasks we can do almost without thinking. New tasks require greater concentration, but all tasks require attention to detail. Alternating the routine with the new refreshes us and help ensure that our attention to detail never wavers.
7. We developed the new Web site after our two companies merged. They have on-line support and a self-help database.
8. On the day before her vacation, she handed in her report, answered all pending correspondence, and organizes her desk.
9. Concentration is the greater part of any skill. If a person wishes to learn a new skill, they must know how to concentrate.
10. If a reader wants to increase his reading speed, he should begin by examining the entire book or article in question. Once he assimilates the main ideas, he can look at the details. You should strive to master this technique in order to read more quickly.

Logical comparisons

Quiz yourself

Decide whether the following sentences are correct or incorrect. Check the appropriate box.

- | | CORRECT | INCORRECT |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The new employee's Spanish was better than many native speakers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. He was better prepared for his speech than any other speech I've heard in a long time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3. The consultant's time-management study proved that our strategy is more efficient than ITT. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. This is among the easiest, if not the easiest, quiz I've ever taken. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ANSWERS:

1. Incorrect: better than that of many. 2. Incorrect: than any other speaker I've heard.
 3. Incorrect: than ITT's. 4. Incorrect: among the easiest quizzes I've ever taken, if not the easiest.

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz for pronoun agreement. Less than 100%: Read the guidelines and complete the practice exercise.

Guidelines:

1. When making comparisons, clearly identify the parallels or differences between the things you compare. You can make logical comparisons only between things of the same class.
2. If you want to make two comparisons in the same sentence, be sure to complete the first before starting the second.

Example:

This is one of the best products we manufacture, if not the best.

Practice exercise

The following sentences are ambiguous as they stand. Delete, add, or rearrange words as needed to make logical comparisons. (Answers are on p. 255.)

1. Our policies are different from Lang Realty.
2. Boston Oil's policy on absenteeism is like Acme Industries.
3. Roy is not only one of the most progressive but also dynamic leaders in our region.
4. I know the treasurer better than the general manager.
5. Jim's cash outlay amounted to \$50 more than his partner.
6. Roberto plays golf more than his colleagues.

7. Our health benefits are different from our competitor.
8. Sarah's sales report is better organized than her assistant.
9. My office is bigger than my manager.

Pronoun agreement

Quiz yourself

Are these sentences correct or incorrect? Check the appropriate box.

	CORRECT	INCORRECT
1. Ingrid was clearer than me about her choice for president.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Between you and I, I feel that the proposal was not fair to minority groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Us optimists have to stick together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If a person makes a mistake, they should admit it and not hide the truth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANSWERS:

1. Incorrect: clearer than I. 2. Incorrect: Between you and me. 3. Incorrect: We optimists. 4. Incorrect: If people make mistakes.

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz on commas. Less than 100%: Read the guidelines and complete the practice exercise.

Guidelines:

1. If a pronoun replaces or functions as the subject of a clause or sentence, use

Singular	Plural
I	we
you	you
he, she, it	they

Example:

The devil made me do it.

He made me do it.

2. If a pronoun replaces or functions as the object of a verb or preposition, use:

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
me	us
you	you
him, her, it	them

Examples:

The memo praised Brian.

The memo praised him.

Send the letter to Sally and Greg.

Send the letter to her and Greg.

Remember: Before choosing a pronoun, determine how you will use it in the sentence. Also decide whether the pronoun is replacing a single or plural noun or nouns.

Practice exercise

Think carefully about the function of each pronoun in the sentences below. Circle the correct form. (Answers are on p. 255.)

1. Between you and (I, me), the company seems on the edge of bankruptcy.
2. Two consultants, Dale and (he, him), made the decision.
3. (We, Us) architects must consider beauty as well as strength in our designs.
4. He showed (we, us) newcomers the training video.
5. Hal was more irritated about the invoice than (I, me).
6. (She, Her) and (me, I) were the only ones who could have done the job.
7. If we need to brainstorm, I'd like to include (he, him) and Tim.
8. Among (us, we) executives at the conference, there were many from Chicago.
9. Alice and (she, her) wrote the speech.
10. The award for the best speech of the year went to Alice and (she, her).

Commas

Quiz yourself

Which sentences require commas? Supply the missing commas where needed.

1. Steven Marx who has a melodious voice is very effective on the telephone.
2. The office that he works in is spacious.
3. Anyone with Web-development skills has an edge in today's job market.
4. He will take advice from any person he considers knowledgeable.
5. This system which has been tested in 25 major office buildings across the country is infallible.

ANSWERS:
1. Steven Marx, who has a melodious voice, is very effective on the telephone. 2. Correct.
3. Correct. 4. Correct. 5. This system, which has been tested in 25 major office buildings across the country, is infallible.

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz for semicolons. Less than 100%: Read the guideline and complete the practice exercise.

Guideline: Use commas before and after phrases or clauses when the information in them offers added facts about the subject. If the phrase could be omitted because it isn't essential to the meaning of the sentence, use commas to set it off.

Example:

Peter Schreiber, who began his career in electrical engineering, is the owner of the firm.

Solution:

The clause "who began his career in electrical engineering" is an added fact about Peter Schreiber. You could omit it and not alter the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, use commas.

Example:

All employees who work this Sunday will be paid overtime.

Solution:

The clause “who work this Sunday” could not be omitted. It is essential to the meaning of the sentence because it identifies *which* employees. Therefore, do not use commas.

Practice exercise

Supply the missing commas where needed. (Answers are on p. 255.)

1. Our company which employs 1,800 people is the largest manufacturer in the area.
2. The men and women who work in management are well motivated.
3. People will usually try harder for a manager whom they consider fair.
4. The earth which has a limited amount of fossil-fuel resources can support only a finite number of people and their homes, cars, planes, and offices.
5. Any person who is as intelligent as Donna can have a job with the firm.
6. I have never known a manager who was as efficient as Frank.
7. Tanya Brock who has never missed a day of work was promoted yesterday.
8. I believe that a firm should not manufacture any product that is useless to society.
9. This desk which is an antique is his pride and joy.
10. Often the people who are the loudest have the least to say.

Semicolons

Quiz yourself

Are these sentences correct or incorrect? Check the appropriate box.

- | | CORRECT | INCORRECT |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The department’s trip to the Ice Follies was canceled; because of the bad storm and the warning of local authorities to stay off the roads. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The document is a fake, we found the real one in the president’s office. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3. Our new equipment takes up a lot of office space, consequently, we must now rearrange the furniture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Working in the training department was a wise choice for Nancy; she is a natural with people. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ANSWERS:
1. Incorrect (no semicolon);
2. Incorrect; fake; we found.
3. Incorrect; space;
4. Correct.
consequently.

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz on colons. Less than 100%: Read the guidelines and complete the practice exercise.

Guidelines:

1. Use a semicolon to link two closely related complete sentences. Independent clauses must always precede and follow a semicolon.

Example:

We cannot predict how long the study will take; we have never conducted this type of analysis before.

2. Use a semicolon to precede independent clauses that begin with transition words such as *however*, *moreover*, *therefore*, *consequently*, or *for example*.

Example:

This training manual is confusing; moreover, it lacks an index and a table of contents.

3. Use a semicolon to separate items in a list or series when any of those items contains a comma.

Example:

The three people authorized to sign checks are Vincent Cabral, the president; Dora Bidiak, the treasurer; and Leslie Trawler, the office manager.

Practice exercise

Insert a semicolon in the following sentences where required. (Answers are on p. 256.)

1. Procrastination can derail a project deadline we must all learn to recognize it.
2. The department needs the new equipment, however, there is no room to install it.
3. We'd like everyone to contribute something to the staff party for example, bring cheese, crackers, cider, soda, cake, or cookies.
4. When I'm on time, no one notices when I'm late, the whole office knows.
5. The telephone survey showed that the bank's services were little known consequently, the PR department started a new publicity campaign.
6. The managers had planned to discontinue that service however, an overwhelming customer demand persuaded them to retain it.
7. We enjoyed our visit to the desktop-publishing department moreover, we were glad to meet the staff.
8. We are tightening security therefore, we will not issue night passes this year.
9. She dislikes committee work consequently, she declined the position.
10. If you need more exercise, don't use the elevator take the stairs.
11. We would like to give him a farewell party however, he would prefer that we do not.
12. We cannot meet this deadline we would like an extension.
13. He opened my mail for me while I was on vacation he even answered most of my letters.
14. The job carries several diverse responsibilities for example, you must prepare the budget, design and implement new systems, and oversee a staff of six.
15. We have several choices, all of them interesting.
16. The company softball team lost two out of three games this summer, but morale remained high.

Colons

Quiz yourself

Which of these sentences are punctuated correctly? Check the appropriate box.

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Marianne is brilliant in her field: artificial intelligence. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. We need to order the following: 500 letterheads, 500 envelopes, 1,000 address labels, and 3 reams of printer paper. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Whoever reserves a booth early for the expo receives a discount: one way to minimize costs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Dear Monica, | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ANSWERS:
 1. Correct. 2. Incorrect: *following*. 3. Correct. 4. A colon is correct in a business letter; a comma is correct in a personal letter only.

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz on dashes. Less than 100%: Read the guidelines and complete the practice exercise.

Guidelines:

1. Use a colon after a name in the salutation of a business letter.

Examples:

Dear Ms. Culpepper:
 Dear Martin:

2. Use a colon to link a list or series to its connecting thought.

Example:

Six states are participating in the conference: New Jersey, Oklahoma, New York, Florida, Texas, and California.

3. It is incorrect to use a colon after a preposition or after a form of the verb *to be*.

Examples:

Distribute these forms to human resources, finance, sales, and I.T.
 The departments that need these forms are human resources, finance, sales, and I.T.
 The following departments need these forms: human resources, finance, sales, and I.T.

4. Use a colon to introduce an amplification of a statement or idea. When used this way, the colon replaces such words as *that is*, *namely*, or *for example*.

Example:

There is only one way to do things: the right way.

Practice exercise

Decide where colons should replace commas. (Answers are on p. 256.)

1. Make an outline, headline each paragraph, begin each paragraph with a topic sentence, and proofread for spelling and punctuation.
2. Several of our functions were outsourced within the last few years, technical support, payroll, and shipping.
3. The nurse gave him the same old advice, drink plenty of liquids, get lots of rest, and take vitamin C.
4. We have three salespeople in each of our four regions the Northeast, the Mid-Atlantic states, the Northwest, the Southwest.
5. The board met in January but could not take a vote, the chair, the secretary, the treasurer, and two members were absent with the flu.
6. There is only one thing to dispel the midwinter gloom in this office, a party.
7. Vacation time increases with length of service, one week the first year, two weeks the second through the fifth year, three weeks thereafter.
8. I cannot begin without the following equipment, a laptop with expanded memory, a scanner, a color printer, a CD burner.
9. We all know why business is booming, Christmas is a week away.
10. Dear Fred,

Dashes

Quiz yourself

Which sentences are punctuated correctly? Check the appropriate box.

CORRECT INCORRECT

1. Formal words can make you sound insecure—something no manager can afford.

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2. The book begins with the simplest writing task—a short letter or e-mail—and then moves on to more challenging issues. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Please wait—until I complete the section on nanotechnology. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Her eyes kept returning to the screen—the blank screen. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ANSWERS:
1. Correct. 2. Correct. 3. Incorrect (no dash). 4. Correct.

Scoring: 100%: Reward—go on to the quiz on apostrophes. Less than 100%: Read the guidelines and complete the practice exercise.

Guidelines:

1. Use a dash to indicate an emphatic pause.

Example:

He knew he had closed the sale—they asked for a contract.

2. Use a dash to repeat an idea for emphasis.

Example:

The office was cold—ice-cold.

3. Use dashes to set off an explanatory expression that needs emphasis.

Example:

The chip—which consumes only 100 mW—quickly converts text into speech.

Practice exercise

Decide whether a dash could improve the following sentences. Some are correct either way. (Answers are on p. 257.)

1. The suburban branch will be closed by the end of this month, unless its sales pick up unexpectedly.
2. He designed, produced, and distributed the posters you saw around the building.

3. Only one system, the XR70, can perform all the functions listed here.
4. The manager was new to the firm, brand-new.
5. If I were you, and I'm glad I'm not, I'd rewrite the report.
6. All our employees, overseas staff included, are eligible for the profit-sharing plan after two years' consecutive service.
7. I gave many specific examples, all well documented. Still, no one understood the problem.
8. Please visit our new showrooms, the new models have arrived.
9. If this trend continues, and there is no reason why it should not, we will show unprecedented profits this year.
10. You are the last one included in our retirement plan; you signed up just in time.

Apostrophes

Quiz yourself

Which sentences are correct? Check the appropriate box.

	CORRECT	INCORRECT
1. When the package arrived in the mailroom, we were mystified by it's contents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Look what she has accomplished in only two years time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Genes happiness with the job was a pleasure to see, and his enthusiasm was contagious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Please use the rear entrance in the evening; its the only one open after 6 P.M.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANSWERS:
1. Incorrect: its. 2. Incorrect: years'. 3. Incorrect: Gene's. 4. Incorrect: it's.

Scoring: 100%: Go on to "Editing: Quiz Yourself." Less than 100%: Read the guidelines and complete the practice exercise.

Guidelines:

1. Form the possessive of a singular noun or a plural noun not ending in *s* by adding an apostrophe and an *s*. Form the possessive of a plural noun ending in *s* by adding only the apostrophe—for example, “a managers’ meeting,” “the two technicians’ findings.”
2. Also use the apostrophe alone to form the possessive of plurals ending in *es*, as in “the witnesses’ testimony.”
3. Apostrophes have traditionally been used to form the plural of letters and numbers (“mind your p’s and q’s”), but the more recent approach is to drop apostrophes whenever the meaning will not be affected—for example, “1990s” or “CD-ROMs.” Always add both an apostrophe and an *s* to form the singular possessive, however (“the YMHA’s building fund”).

Practice exercise

The following sentences need apostrophes. Put the 18 missing apostrophes where they belong. (Answers are on p. 257.)

1. His planner always seems to end up on Miles desk.
2. Fridays sales meeting was canceled on account of Chris Jones illness.
3. The new assistants job is to proofread all of the defending lawyers and the prosecuting attorneys briefs before the trials.
4. Smith & Dawsons system is the same model as Royal Regions.
5. Jims insistence that he can’t work with Mary makes the offices atmosphere tense.
6. Womens retirement needs are different from mens because statistically they live longer.
7. Sudden power surges can damage a computers drives and circuit boards.
8. The PCs backup system isn’t working.
9. He thought Sarahs reports were more carefully researched than either Dawns or his.
10. The X2000s cost is greater than the X1000s, which was developed in the 1990s.