

A P P E N D I X A

A CHECKLIST FOR THE ESL WRITER

A P P E N D I X P R E V I E W

- Learning to use articles (*a*, *an*, and *the*)
- Problems with verbs and tense
- Learning to use phrasal verbs
- Learning to use adjectives and adverbs
- Common expressions that can cause confusion
- Problems with word order and unnecessary words
- Other problems with grammar
- Additional reference books for ESL students

Students whose second language is English often have questions about grammar and usage that we have not discussed in the other sections of this book. This checklist is for such students. In it we will emphasize the areas in which ESL writers and speakers have frequent problems.

We realize that memorizing these pages would not solve all problems a student might have with English. Even native speakers of English encounter questions of grammar and usage that can be very confusing. Ask your instructor if he or she can provide *Longman ESL Worksheets*, which are available to students who use this textbook. The worksheets have been designed for individual use or independent study, and they can help you identify areas requiring additional attention. Equally important ways to improve your mastery of English and become a confident, effective user of the language are by reading and by listening to native English speakers.

Learning to Use Articles and Quantifiers

The use of articles (*a*, *an*, and *the*) and quantifiers (words like *a few*, *some*, *many*, and *a lot of*) can be confusing for anyone who speaks English as a second language. These guidelines will help you use articles and quantifiers in your speaking and writing.

Articles (*a/an* and *the*)

A and *an* are called *indefinite articles*. Use *a* when the word following it begins with a consonant sound. Use *an* when the word following it begins with a vowel sound.

- *a bear, a car, a unit; an apple, an argument, an hour*

The is called a *definite article*.

How do you know whether to use an indefinite article (*a* or *an*) or a definite article (*the*) before a noun? For example, when should you write or say “*a bear*” or “*the bear*”? “*A fire*” or “*the fire*”? “*An orange*” or “*the orange*”? Before you can decide which article to use before a noun—or whether none should be used—you have to know whether the noun is countable or uncountable.

Countable nouns are the names of things, people, and ideas that we can count or make plural; they have a singular and a plural form.

- *a quilt*→*two quilts*
- *the child*→*the children*
- *a canned ham*→*several canned hams*
- *the house*→*six houses*

Uncountable nouns are the names of things we usually cannot count. Uncountable nouns have only one form: the singular.

- *luck* (we don’t say “*lucks*”)
- *news* (we don’t say “*newses*”)
- *health* (we don’t say “*healths*”)
- *information* (we don’t say “*informations*”)

After deciding whether a noun is countable or uncountable, you are ready to decide the kind of article to use with it.

Whether you use *a/an* or *the* in front of a noun depends on the listener’s (or reader’s) familiarity with the thing being referred to and if the noun is countable or uncountable. In general, when referring to things that are countable and that are not already known to both the speaker and the listener, use the indefinite article (*a/an*) before the noun.

- *A good mechanic is difficult to find.*
- *An apple is all I have for breakfast most mornings.*

In these sentences the writer is not referring to a specific mechanic or apple.

When it is clear which thing you mean and you are referring to things known to your listener, use the definite article *the*.

- *The* mechanic who worked on my car said it needs new brakes. (The listener knows which mechanic is referred to.)
- *The* apple you gave me yesterday was rotten. (Not just any apple; the one you gave me.)
- I watched *a* program on television last night. *The* program was about incurable diseases. (In the first sentence, *a* is used because the listener does not know which program is referred to; in the second sentence, *the* is used before *program* because it has been identified.)

Using A/An

1. Use *a/an* before singular countable nouns.
 - This is *a* boring movie. (**Not:** "This is boring movie.")
 - Would you like *a* cup of coffee? (**Not:** "Would you like cup of coffee?")
 - I have *an* idea. (**Not:** "I have idea.")
2. Use *a/an* to refer to a particular person or thing when the listener does not know which one is meant, when it does not matter which one is meant, or in front of a singular countable noun when you are introducing it for the first time without having referred to it before (as explained in the third example above).
 - My cousin bought *an* expensive German car. (The listener or reader does not know which expensive German car it is.)
 - Alberto comes from *a* small town in Texas.
 - Could you give me *a* piece of paper?
3. Use *a/an* to refer to any one member of a class.
 - *A* professional musician must study for many years.
 - *An* isosceles triangle has three sides.
4. Use *a/an* before a noun when you say what something is or what something or someone is like.
 - That is *a* good idea.
 - Tony is *a* thoughtful person.
 - Stan has *a* great sense of humor.
 - This is *an* incredible view!

Do not use *a/an* before uncountable nouns: *music, weather, gold*, and so forth, except when you are limiting the meanings of the nouns in some way.

- He brings *a* certain excitement to his performances. (**Not:** He brings certain excitement.)
- Kim has *an* incredible understanding of Asian politics. (**Not:** Kim has incredible understanding of Asian politics.)

Using The

1. Use the definite article (*the*) when it is clear which thing you mean.
 - We will need *a* shovel when we plant the rosebushes. (No specific shovel is meant.)
 - Please give me *the* shovel in the tool shed. (The listener knows which shovel is meant.)
2. Use *the* when there is only one of something.
 - London is *the* capital of England.
 - Bill Gates is *the* richest man in the United States.
 - Superman leaped from *the* top of the building.
3. Use *the* when you mean something in particular.
 - *The* singers at the concert last night were great. (The singers at the concert, not singers in general.)
 - *The* cookies I made yesterday were full of calories. (Not all cookies; a particular group of cookies.)
4. Use *the* to refer to things in general by using *the* with a singular countable noun.
 - *The* rose is my favorite flower.
 - *The* hippopotamus, despite its appearance, is a very fast animal.
5. Use *the* to refer to a noun and identify or limit it.
 - *The* argument that I had with my sister was over trivial matters. (*That I had with my sister* limits the argument to a specific one.)
 - *The* argument against the tax increase was delivered by the mayor. (*Against the tax increase* limits the argument to a specific one.)

6. Use *the* to refer to words denoting nationality and certain adjectives: *the rich, the poor, the Germans, the Irish*, and so forth.
7. Use *the* with a number of expressions referring to our physical environment: *the city, the country, the sea, the beach, the mountains, the wind, the weather, the universe, the future, the sunshine*, and so forth.

Do NOT use *the* in the following situations.

1. Do not use *the* with uncountable or plural nouns to talk about things in general.

- Books are expensive. (**Not:** The books are expensive.)
- Life in starving countries is precarious. (**Not:** The life in starving countries is precarious).

2. Do not use *the* with singular proper names.

- Mike lives in Chicago. (**Not:** Mike lives in *the* Chicago.)

Exception: Use *the* with certain geographical names (*the* Bronx, *the* Atlantic, *the* Pacific, *the* Mississippi River, and *the* Matterho)

3. Do not use *the* with the names of meals.

- We usually eat lunch at noon. (**Not:** We usually eat *the* lunch at noon.)

Exception: Use *the* if you are referring to a specific meal (*The* dinner that she prepared was delicious).

4. Do not use *the* when you are thinking of certain places and what they are used for.

- Mrs. O'Reilly goes to church every Sunday. (**Not:** Mrs. O'Reilly goes to *the* church every Sunday.)
- After graduation from high school, Sean joined the army. (**Not:** After graduation from *the* high school, Sean joined the army.)

Note that there are some exceptions:

- The fire at *the* church last week was caused by arson.
- *The* new high school enrolled new students last week.

Generalizations

1. Use *a/an* or *the* to make generalizations with most singular nouns:

- A gesture can often be misunderstood by visitors in a foreign country. (*A* can mean any gesture.)



Visit <http://www.mywritinglab.com> for more explanations and exercises related to the use of articles. Click "A Checklist for the ESL Writer," then "Learning to Use Articles and Quantifiers."

- *The* telephone is being replaced by the cellular phone in many homes. (*The* is used to mean telephones in general.)
2. Omit *a* and *the* and make a noun plural to make a generalization:
 - *Gestures* can often be misunderstood by visitors in a foreign country.
 - *Telephones* are being replaced by the cellular phone in many homes.

These are not the only situations in which articles are used. As you continue to speak and write English, you will become familiar with other rules. In the meantime, consult one of the books mentioned on page 306 when you have questions about their use.

Quantifiers

Quantifiers are words that come before nouns and tell you *how many* or *how much*. Their use can sometimes be confusing, and when used incorrectly, they can change the meaning of a sentence. In this section we will examine some of the most confusing quantifiers.

Some and Any Both *some* and *any* can refer to an indefinite or vague quantity or number. They are used when it is difficult or unimportant to specify exactly how much or how many of something we are thinking of.

1. In general, use *some* in positive sentences and *any* in negative sentences.
 - The other team made *some* remarks about our uniforms.
 - We don't have *any* clean uniforms for tonight's game.
 - Sherry promised to bring *something* for our party.
 - There isn't *any* dessert to serve our party guests.
2. Use *any* in questions.
 - Do you have *any* printer paper?
 - No, I don't have *any* printer paper. (**Not:** No, I don't have *some* printer paper.)
 - Has *anybody* read the new Michael Crichton novel?

3. If you expect the answer “Yes,” use *some* in your questions.
 - May I give you *some* advice?
 - Would Daniel like *some* ice cream with his pie?
4. Use *any* in affirmative statements after words like *never*, *hardly*, *without*, and *little* that have a negative meaning.
 - Shannon found the freeway exit *without any* problem.
 - There are *never any* doughnuts left when I arrive.
5. Use *any* (or *anyone*, *anybody*, *anything*, and *anywhere*) when it means “it does not matter *which*, *who*, *what*, or *where*.”
 - The scholarship goes to *anyone* who wins the essay contest.
 - I’ll eat at *any* restaurant you like.
 - *Anything* you give to the charity drive will be appreciated.
 - My dog Dollar will catch *anything* you toss into the air.
6. Use either *any* or *some* in *if* clauses.
 - If you have *any/some* photos for the yearbook, email them by next Friday.
 - If the Girl Scouts are selling *any/some* cookies this month, we’ll buy a box.
7. Use *some* in requests.
 - Will you bring *some* air pumps for the new basketballs, please?

Much, Many, Little, Few, a Lot, and Plenty

1. Use *much* and *little* with uncountable nouns.
 - *much* energy
 - *much* optimism
 - *little* money
 - *little* admiration
2. Use *many* and *few* with plural nouns.
 - *many* dreams
 - *many* voters
 - *few* friends
 - *few* parking spaces
3. Use *a lot of/lots of* and *plenty of* with uncountable and plural nouns.
 - *a lot of* energy
 - *lots of* mail
 - *a lot of* visitors
 - *lots of* tires
 - *plenty of* courage
 - *plenty of* reasons

4. Use *much* and *many* chiefly in negative sentences and in questions.

- Our car doesn't require *much* fuel.
- Do you have *many* relatives here?

Much is not usually used in positive sentences. Most speakers and writers prefer *a lot (of)* in such constructions.

- Politicians spent *a lot of* money in the last election. (**Not:** spent *much* money)
- There has been *a lot of* thunder and lightning this week. (**Not:** *much* thunder and lightning)

5. Use *too much* and *so much* in positive sentences.

- There has been *too much* rain this week.
- I ate *so much* pasta that I couldn't finish my dessert.

We can omit a noun after *much* or *many* if the meaning is clear.

- You haven't talked *much* tonight.
- Have you seen any football games this season? Not *many*.

6. Use *little* and *few* for negative ideas.

- There's *little* interest in going on a trip next week.
- She has *few* memories of growing up in Nebraska.

Intensify the meaning of *little* and *few* by using *very* before them.

- There's *very little* interest in going on a trip next week.
- She has *very few* memories of growing up in Nebraska.

A little and *a few* are more positive; their meaning is closer to *some*.

- We have *a little time* before the bus leaves. (some time)
- *A few* of her records survived the fire. (some records)



For more information and exercises on quantifiers, visit <http://www.mywritinglab.com>. Click "A Checklist for ESL Writers," then "Learning to Use Articles and Quantifiers."

Problems with Verbs

If you are not a native speaker of English, you probably run into situations in which deciding which tense or form of a verb to use is confusing. **Tense** refers to the form of the verb that indicates time. The tense forms do not always agree with divisions of actual time, however. The simple present tense, for example, is not limited to the present time. Furthermore, helping/auxiliary verbs and many adverbs and expressions are used with verbs to indicate time.

First, we will review the twelve verb tenses and their uses, as well as the ways they are formed. Then you will learn to distinguish among the more confusing tenses and to avoid mistakes that even native speakers of English sometimes make.

The Twelve Verb Tenses

1. **Simple Present Tense**—This is the simple present tense:

- I/we/you/they study
- He/she/it studies

Use the simple present tense to speak of things that happen all the time or repeatedly, or are true in general.

- The sun *rises* in the East.
- “The Star Spangled Banner” *is* our national anthem.
- Helen’s father *works* in a bank.

2. **Simple Past Tense**—This is the simple past tense:

- I/we/you/he/she/it/they studied

The simple past tense often ends in *-ed*. But many common verbs are irregular. This means that their past tense does not end in *-ed* and must be memorized.

Some Irregular Verbs

Present	Past	Example
catch	caught	We <i>caught</i> six yellow fin tuna.
run	ran	The batter <i>ran</i> to first base.
shrink	shrank	Her dress <i>shrank</i> in the dryer.
sneak	sneaked	Jimbo <i>sneaked</i> out of class early

Note: See pages 94–96 for other examples.

Use the simple past tense to talk about actions or situations completed in the past.

- Clark *worked* until eleven o'clock last night.
- World War II *ended* in 1945.
- Sherry *spent* her inheritance in Paris last month.

3. **Simple Future Tense**—The simple future tense takes two forms:

- I/we/you/he/she/it/they will study
- I am / he/she/it is / you/we/they are going to study

Use the simple future tense to describe an action in the future.

- I *will study* my biology notes tonight.
- I *am going to study* my lab notes tonight.

4. **Present Perfect Tense**—This is the present perfect tense:

- I/we/you/they have studied
- he/she/it/ has studied

Form the present perfect tense with *have/has* and the past participle of the verb. The past participle often ends in *-ed* (*waited, hoped*), but many important verbs are irregular (*thought, written, done*, and so forth). See pages 94–96 for other examples of irregular past participles.

Use the present perfect tense to describe an action that occurred at an unspecified time in the past.

- Marta *has* already *mailed* her application for a passport.

Use the present perfect tense to describe an action that started in the past and continues up to the present.

- Marta *has lived* in North Carolina for three years.

5. **Past Perfect Tense**—This is the past perfect tense:

- I/we/you/he/she/it/they had studied

Form the past perfect tense with *had* and the past participle (see the present perfect tense about irregular forms of the past participle).

Use the past perfect tense to describe something in the past that occurred before another action in the past.

- Fred was very nervous because he *had never been* on a blind date before.
- Sheila knew who the killer was because she *had seen* the movie last week.
- When I arrived home I discovered that I *had lost* my door key.

6. **Future Perfect Tense**—This is the future perfect tense:

- I/we/you/he/she/it/they will have studied

Form the future perfect tense by using *will have* and the past participle of the verb.

Use the future perfect tense to describe an action in the future that will be completed or achieved by a certain time in the future.

- By next September we *will have lived* in this apartment three years.
- Claudia *will have completed* the requirements for her degree by the time she is twenty.
- By the time her treatment for rabies is completed, Michele *will have received* a dozen vaccination shots.

7. **Present Progressive Tense**—This is the present progressive tense:

- I am studying
- he/she/it is studying
- we/you/they are studying

Form the present progressive tense by using the simple present form of *be* (*am*, *is*, and *are*) and the present participle form of the verb (the “ing” form).

Use the present progressive tense to describe something that is happening at or very close to the time of speaking.

- They *are working* in the garden now.
- Tony *is watching* the game on television.
- Lou *is taking* a nap.

8. **Past Progressive Tense**—This is the past progressive tense:

- I/he/she/it was studying
- we/you/they were studying

Form the past progressive tense by using the simple past tense form of *be* (*was* and *were*) and the present participle form of the verb.

Use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action that was going on around a particular past time.

- What *were* you *doing* when I called you?
- George *was painting* the kitchen when the doorbell rang.
- The sun *was setting* on the horizon as our boat pulled out of the harbor.

9. **Future Progressive Tense**—This is the future progressive tense:

- I/he/she/it/we/you/they will be studying

Form the future progressive tense by using the simple future form of *be* (*will be*) and the present participle form of the verb.

Use the future progressive tense to describe an action that will be going on at a particular moment in the future.

- We *will be thinking* of you next week on your anniversary.
- The dogs *will be barking* soon if I don't feed them.
- Sharon *will be playing* her new guitar in the recital tonight.

10. **Present Perfect Progressive Tense**—This is the present perfect progressive tense:

- I/you/we/they have been studying
- he/she/it has been studying

Form the present perfect progressive tense by combining the present perfect form of *be* (*have been, has been*) with the present participle form of the verb.

Use the present perfect progressive tense to describe situations that started in the past and are still going on or that have just stopped and have present results.

- It *has been snowing* since last Tuesday evening.
- Mike *has been complaining* about the noise from the new neighbors, but the landlord refuses to do anything about it.
- We *have been watching* late-night television while on vacation.

11. **Past Perfect Progressive Tense**—This is the past perfect progressive tense:

- I/he/she/it/we/you/they had been studying

Form the past perfect progressive tense by combining the past perfect form of *be* (*had been*) with the present participle form of the verb.

Use the past perfect progressive tense to describe a continuous activity in the past that is completed before another action in the past.

- When I received my raise, I *had been working* at the restaurant two months.
- When Carla returned home, she told her sister that she *had been shopping*.

- Paul said that he *had been having* bad dreams, and he blamed them on the huge meals he *had been eating* just before going to bed.

12. **Future Perfect Progressive Tense**—This is the future perfect progressive tense:

- I/he/she/it/we/you/they will have been studying

Form the future perfect progressive tense by combining the future perfect form of *be* (*will have been*) with the present participle form of the verb.

Use the future perfect progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the future that is completed before another action in the future:

- Jim *will have been working* at the hardware store for seven years next week.
- Mr. Baylor, my math professor *will have been teaching* for thirty years this June.
- Tara *will have been studying* the harp for six months tomorrow.

Tips for Choosing the Right Tense

1. Know how to describe an action in the present. Most English verbs have two present tenses. Forms like *I study* and *he works* are called simple present tense. Forms like *I am studying* and *he is working* are called present progressive tense. These two present tenses are used to describe several different kinds of time.

The simple present tense is usually used to describe permanent situations or things that happen all the time or regularly.

- Ricardo *plays* goalie on his soccer team.
- I *drive* downtown to my job five days a week.
- British Columbia *is* on the west coast of Canada.

The present progressive tense is usually used to talk about temporary continuing actions and events that are going on around now.

- Richard *is playing* goalie today because the regular goalie was injured last week.
- I *am driving* to work this week because of the subway strike.
- Marcella *is looking* for an apartment closer to her job.

- a. **Simple Present Tense**—Use the simple present tense in the following situations.

(1) In summaries of plays, stories, and movies.

- In Act One, Macbeth *encounters* three witches in the forest. They *tell* him . . .
- On today's program Margaret *learns* that her real father *is* . . .

(2) When asking for and giving instructions.

- How *do* I *enroll* in the exercise class?
- You *attend* the first session and *fill out* a registration form and *pay* the fee.

(3) With dependent clauses to refer to the future.

- I'll be ready when you *call*.

(4) With verbs that cannot normally be used in progressive forms.

- I like the ice cream very much. (**Not:** I *am liking* the ice cream very much.)
- I know his telephone number. (**Not:** I *am knowing* his telephone number.)

Do NOT use the simple present tense in the following situations:

(1) To talk about temporary actions that are going on only around the present.

- The telephone *is ringing*. Shall I get it? (**Not:** The telephone *rings*. Shall I get it?)

(2) To say how long a situation has been going on.

- I *have lived* here since 1990. (**Not:** I *live* here since 1990.)
- I *have been studying* English for two years. (**Not:** I *study* English for two years.)

b. **Present Progressive Tense**—Use the present progressive tense in the following situations.

(1) To describe changing situations.

- Helen *is becoming* more confident in her use of chopsticks.
- Athletes *are growing* taller because of better diets.

(2) To refer to future events in the following constructions.

- Where *are you going* on your vacation next week?
- She *is leaving* for Cleveland next month.

Note: When you use the present progressive tense to indicate future action, use a word or phrase like *tomorrow*, *next week*, and so forth to indicate time.

(3) To refer to repeated actions if they are happening around the moment of speaking.

- Why *are you rubbing* your elbow?
- Fernando *is speaking* to several campus organizations this afternoon.

(4) To describe future events that are decided, or are starting to happen.

- What *is Phil doing* this evening? (**Not:** "What *does Phil do* this evening?")
- *He's working* on his car. (**Not:** He *works* on his car.)

Do NOT use the present progressive tense in the following situations:

(1) To talk about repeated actions that are not closely connected to the moment of speaking.

- I *ski* once or twice a year. (**Not:** I *am skiing* once or twice a year.)
- Muriel *cries* every time she *sees* that movie. (**Not:** Muriel *is crying* every time she *is seeing* that movie.)

(2) With certain verbs that refer to mental states, to the use of the senses, and to certain other meanings rather than to actions. Rather, such verbs are usually used only in simple present.

- I *realize* now that I was wrong. (**Not:** I *am realizing* now that I was wrong.)
- Do you *like* anchovies on your pizza? (**Not:** Are you *liking* anchovies on your pizza?)
- I *doubt* that I have enough time to take a nap. (**Not:** I *am doubting* that I have enough time to take a nap.)

Common Verbs Rarely Used in Progressive Tenses			
be	hear	own	seem
believe	imagine	prefer	suppose
belong	know	realize	understand
doubt	like	recognize	wish
feel	love	remember	
hate	need	see	

The common verbs shown in the box are rarely used in progressive tenses. If they are used in progressive tenses, their meaning changes. Notice the difference in meaning in the following pairs of sentences.

- I *feel* we shouldn't try to leave now. (**Not:** I'm *feeling* much better now.)
- I *see* what you mean by that. (**Not:** I'm *seeing* Jo Ann next week.)

2. Learn the difference between the simple past tense and the present perfect tense. Many situations allow us to use either the simple past tense or the present perfect tense.

- I *solved* the problem. *Were* you able to solve it?
- I *'ve solved* the problem. *Have* you *solved* it?
- Lisa *saved* one hundred dollars this month. I *saved* fifty.
- Lisa *has saved* one hundred dollars this month. I *'ve saved* fifty.

In most situations, however, the meaning of the sentence requires that we choose either the simple past or the present perfect tense.

- a. **Simple Past Tense**—Use the simple past tense in the following situations.

- (1) To say when something happened.

- Her parents *came* to this country in 1980.
- I *played* basketball yesterday.

- (2) To describe actions that are not connected with the present.

- Thomas Edison *invented* the light bulb. (**Not:** *has invented*)
- The United States *was* the first nation to use the atom bomb in war. (**Not:** *has been* . . .)

- b. **Simple Present Perfect Tense**—Use the simple present perfect tense in the following situations.

- (1) To give news of recent events.

- There *has been* a severe earthquake in Japan, according to news accounts.

- (2) With *yet* in questions and negative sentences to show that something is expected to happen.

- *Has* Gerald *arrived* yet?
- Doris *hasn't received* her grades yet.

- (3) With *ever* and *never*.

- I *have* never *been* to Sweden.
- *Have* you ever *been* to Miami?

Do NOT use the simple present perfect to talk about an event that happened at a specific time.

- There *was* a severe earthquake in Japan yesterday. (**Not:** There *has been* . . .)

The present perfect always has a connection with the present; the simple past tense only tells us about the past. If we say that something has happened, we are thinking about the past and the present at the same time. Notice the difference in these sentences:

- My father *worked* as a lifeguard when he was in college.
- My father *has worked* for the post office for thirty years.

3. Learn the difference between the simple present perfect tense and the present perfect progressive tense. In general, both the present perfect and present perfect progressive tenses can be used to describe recent actions that have results in the present. The present perfect tense, however, suggests completion or a result. The present perfect progressive tense is used to describe or talk about more temporary actions. Notice the difference between these sentences.

- **Present perfect progressive tense:** The artist *has been painting* the portrait all week.
- **Present perfect tense:** The artist *has painted* over fifty portraits.

- a. **Present Perfect Progressive Tense**—Use the present perfect progressive tense to show that an action or event is going on at the time of writing or speaking.

- Charles *has been pulling* weeds and *spraying* the flowers all day.
- I *have been studying* all morning.
- I *have been thinking* about my brother all day.
- *I've been running* on the beach this month.

As you can see, each of these sentences suggests an emphasis on continued activity.

- b. **Present Perfect Tense**—Use the present perfect, on the other hand, to suggest a result or completed activity.

- Charles *has pulled* weeds and *sprayed* flowers all day.
- I *have studied* all morning.
- I *have thought* about my brother all day.
- *I've run* on the beach this month.



Visit <http://www.mywritinglab.com> to review the correct use of verb tenses. Click “Verbs,” then “Using the Correct Tense” or “Shifts in Tense” to practice your skills.

Learning to Use Verb Phrases

Most verbs in English consist of only one word. Some verbs, however, consist of two or three words: the main verb and a word like *across*, *away*, *down*, *for*, *in*, *off*, *out*, *up*, and *with*. Such verbs are called verb phrases or verbal phrases, and their meanings are usually very different from the meanings of their parts taken separately. For example, the verb *run* has a meaning different from that of the verb *run into*.

- Larry *ran* the mile when he was on his high school track team.
- I *ran into* an old friend while I was at the library last night.

The verbs *broke* and *broke down* have different meanings, as illustrated by these sentences.

- Mike *broke* his arm while riding his motorcycle.
- His motorcycle *broke down* while he was in Phoenix.

The English language has hundreds of these verbs. Make a note of the most confusing ones as you hear them.

Sometimes a phrasal verb has an object. In such cases part of the verb phrase can go either after the verb or after the object.

- The referee *called off* the game.
- The referee *called* the game *off*.
- Did you *make up* that story?
- Did you *make* that story *up*?
- We decided to *put off* our vacation until August.
- We decided to *put* our vacation *off* until August.

An exception occurs when the object of a phrasal verb is a pronoun (*me*, *you*, *it*, *him*, *her*, *us*, and *them*). In such cases, the pronoun must come before the second part of the verb phrase.

- Please *wake me up* by seven o'clock tomorrow morning. (**Not:** Please *wake up me* by seven o'clock tomorrow morning.)

Common Two- and Three-Word Verbs and Their Meanings

Verb Phrase	Meaning	Verb Phrase	Meaning
break down	fail or stop	make up	invent
call off	cancel	pick out	select
check into	investigate	put off	delay
clear up	explain	put up with	allow or tolerate
cut down on	reduce	run across	meet by chance
cut off	shut off, stop	run into	collide with or meet by chance
figure out	solve or discover	run out on	betray
fill in	inform	show up	appear, arrive
find out	learn, discover	speak up	express freely, loudly
get off	exit from a vehicle	stand up for	defend
give up	stop trying	straighten out	organize
go over	review	sum up	conclude, summarize
grow up	mature	take back	recover, regain
hand in	submit	try on	test
look after	take care of	try out	compete, apply for
look into	investigate	work out	solve, develop
look out for	take care of, be aware of		

*This is not a complete list. The English language contains many others, and you should learn them as you encounter them.

- You can solve the problem if you *break it down* into its separate parts. (**Not:** You can solve the problem if you *break down it* into its separate parts.)

Learning to Use Adjectives and Adverbs

There are general rules for forming adjectives and adverbs.

1. If an adjective ends in *-e*, add *-r* and *-st* for the comparative and superlative.
 - kind/kinder/kindest
 - wise/wiser/wisest
 - tame/tamer/tamest

2. If an adjective ends in *-e*, keep the *-e* before adding the adverb ending *-ly*.
 - safe/safely
 - obsessive/obsessively
 - astute/astutely
3. If an adjective ends in *-le* (*terrible*, *probable*, and so forth), leave off the *-e* and add *-y* to form the adverb.
 - comfortable/comfortably
 - gentle/gently
 - simple/simply

Some adjectives and adverbs have irregular comparative forms.

1. *Good/well* and *better*
 - Mary plays guitar far *better* than George does.
 - These cupcakes taste *better* with extra frosting.
2. *Bad/badly* and *worse*
 - Her headache is *worse* today than it was yesterday.
 - Dyeing a bad haircut often makes it *worse*.

Some adjectives are used with particular prepositions. Study these groups of adjectives and the prepositions that follow them. Sometimes other prepositions are possible; a good dictionary will give you more information.

1. *Angry/annoyed/furious* ABOUT something but WITH someone
 - Anita was annoyed *about* the waiter's poor service.
 - Mr. Lahiri was annoyed *with* the tardy students.
2. *Pleased/happy/disappointed* WITH something
 - Mona was happy *with* her new truck.
3. *Surprised/amazed* BY something
 - Liv was *surprised* by the sudden thunder.
4. *Married/engaged* TO someone
5. *Good/bad* AT doing something

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6. *Aware/conscious* OF something
7. *Jealous/envious/suspicious* OF someone/something
8. *Proud/ashamed* OF someone/something
9. *Afraid/frightened/terrified/scared* OF someone/something
10. *Excited/worried/upset* ABOUT something

The English language contains many pairs of adjectives, one ending in *-ing* and the other in *-ed*.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ■ <i>insulting/insulted</i> | ■ <i>exhausting/exhausted</i> |
| ■ <i>surprising/surprised</i> | ■ <i>stunning/stunned</i> |
| ■ <i>fascinating/fascinated</i> | ■ <i>embarrassing/embarrassed</i> |
| ■ <i>exciting/excited</i> | ■ <i>confusing/confused</i> |
| ■ <i>amusing/amused</i> | ■ <i>satisfying/satisfied</i> |

The ending of the adjective—whether it is *-ed* or *-ing*—creates a difference in meaning.

1. Someone is *-ed* if something (or someone) is *-ing*.
 - Lashonda is *satisfied* when she gets home from work because her job at the hospital is *satisfying*.
2. If something is *-ing*, it makes you *-ed*.
 - Terry was *perplexed* by the crossword puzzle. The puzzle was *perplexing*.



For more practice on these topics, log onto <http://www.mywritinglab.com>. Click "Adjectives" or "Adverbs" for additional explanations and exercises.

Common Expressions

Some commonly used words and expressions can be confusing to students of the English language.

Using *Used To*

Used to when followed by a verb describes past situations that no longer exist or describes actions that happened in the past but no longer happen.

- Sherry *used to smoke*. She *used to smoke* two packs of cigarettes a day. (This sentence means that Sherry smoked regularly in the past but does not smoke now.)
- Juan *used to live* in Santo Domingo, but now he lives in Atlanta.
- Connie *used to work* at an electronics store, but now she has her own business.
- San Diego *used to be* a small navy town, but now it is a cosmopolitan city.
- This record shop *used to be* a grocery store.

Used to has no present form. If you wish to describe situations existing in the present, use the simple present tense.

- **Past:** Sherry *used to smoke*.
- **Present:** Sherry *smokes*. (**Not:** Sherry *uses to smoke*.)
- **Past:** Lance *used to snore* when he slept.
- **Present:** Lance *snores* when he sleeps. (**Not:** Lance *uses to snore* when he sleeps.)

To ask questions, use the following form: *did . . . use to . . . ?*

- *Did you use to have a Volkswagen?*
- *Did Marino use to play football?*

To form the negative, use the following form: *didn't use to . . .*

- *Didn't you use to have a Volkswagen?*
- *Didn't Marino use to play football?*

Used to describes things that happened in the past and are now finished. Do not use *used to* to say what happened at a specific past time, or how many times it occurred, or how long it took.

- Charlotte *lost* five pounds last month. (**Not:** Charlotte *used to lose* five pounds last month.)
- Pedro *lived* in Newport News for two years. (**Not:** Pedro *used to live* in Newport News for two years.)
- I *went* to the health club twelve times last month. (**Not:** I *used to go* to the health club twelve times last month.)

Do not confuse *used to* and *to be used to*. If a person is used to something, it is familiar or no longer new.

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- I *used to be* afraid to drive in heavy traffic. (I was afraid to drive in heavy traffic, but I no longer am.)
- I *am used to* driving in heavy traffic. (I am accustomed to driving in heavy traffic.)

Using *When* and *If*

Be careful not to confuse *when* and *if*. Use *when* for things that are sure to happen.

- *When* we go to lunch today, I think I'll have just a salad.
- *When* you boil water long enough, it turns to steam.

Use *if* for things that will possibly happen.

- *If* he doesn't call me soon, I'll leave for work.
- *If* I buy a new cell phone, I'll probably get a Blue Tooth with it.
- Please call my brother *if* you go to Cleveland.

Using *Since* and *For*

Use *since* to give the starting points of actions or events, particularly from the point of view of a particular present or past end point.

- Sheila has been married *since* 2006.
- Raul has been studying flamenco *since* his return from Madrid.

Notice that we use *since* when we mention the beginning of the period (*since 2006, since his return, and so forth.*).

Use *for* to measure how long something lasts.

- Sheila has been married *for* two years. (**Not:** Sheila has been married *since* two years.)
- Raul has been studying flamenco *for* two months. (**Not:** Raul has been studying flamenco *since* two months.)

Notice that we use *for* when we say the period of time (*for two years, for two hours, for a long time, and so forth.*).

Using *-s* and *-es*

When forming third person singular nouns and pronouns, do not forget that present tense verbs end in *-s* or *-es*.

- **Nonstandard:** Every day at five o'clock the factory whistle *blow*.
- **Standard:** Every day at five o'clock the factory whistle *blows*.
- **Nonstandard:** Roberta *watch* the news on television while working on her math.
- **Standard:** Roberta *watches* the news on television while working on her math.

If the helping verb *do* or *does* is used, add the *-s* or *-es* to the helping verb, not to the main verb.

- **Nonstandard:** The whistle *don't* blow at five o'clock.
- **Standard:** The whistle *doesn't* blow at five o'clock.

Problems with Word Order and Unnecessary Words

Adjectives

When several adjectives come before a noun, they usually have to be ordered in a particular way. For example, we say a *beautiful, small, shiny metal* coin, not a metal, beautiful, shiny, small coin. Adjectives like *beautiful* are called opinion adjectives because they tell us what the speaker or writer thinks of the object being described. Adjectives like *small, shiny, and metal* are called fact adjectives, and they give objective information about something. Opinion adjectives usually come before fact adjectives when they modify or describe nouns.

opinion	fact
a depressing	rainy day
a glamorous	American actress
a boring	political speech

The rules for adjective order can be very confusing, and there is disagreement among writers and speakers on the rules. Nevertheless, the following list will help you arrange them correctly. In general, adjectives should follow each other in this order before the noun being modified:

1. Opinion (*silly, ugly, intelligent, fascinating, and so forth*)
2. Size (*length, weight, height, width, and so forth*)
3. Age (*old, modern, new, recent, and so forth*)
4. Color (*yellow, red, black, and so forth*)
5. Origin (*British, Western, Asian, and so forth*)
6. Material (*glass, wood, leather, steel, and so forth*)
7. Purpose (*coffee table, racing car, water bottle, and so forth*)

Some examples follow. (The numbers correspond to the numbered items in the list above.)

2 3 4 5 6 7

■ a small, ancient, black Japanese wooden cigar box

1 5

■ the impatient German teacher

1 3 5 7

■ a nostalgic old Hungarian wedding song

Adverbs

Adverbs can usually appear in three positions in a sentence. They can appear at the beginning.

■ *Yesterday* a rainbow appeared in the eastern sky.

They can appear in the middle.

■ A rainbow appeared *yesterday* in the eastern sky.

They can appear at the end.

■ A rainbow appeared in the eastern sky *yesterday*.

There are a few situations, however, in which we cannot place adverbs randomly.

1. Do not place adverbs between a verb and its object.

■ Maxine plays the piano *beautifully*. (**Not:** Maxine plays beautifully the piano.)

■ Laine *often* forgets her new telephone number. (**Not:** Laine forgets often her new telephone number.)

2. Do not place adverbs before *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, and *were* when the adverbs (*always*, *never*, *ever*, *usually*, *often*, *sometimes*, and so forth) say how often something happens.

■ Dorothy is *always* on time for her French class. (**Not:** Dorothy always is on time for her French class.)

■ Visitors are *sometimes* unaware of the dangers of rip currents. (**Not:** Visitors sometimes are unaware of the dangers of rip currents.)

Repetition of the Subject

Avoid unnecessary repetition of the subject of the sentence.

■ The president *he* gave the State of the Union address last night. (Because *president* and *he* refer to the same person, *he* is unnecessary repetition.)

Other Problems with Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation

If you have other questions about grammar, spelling, or punctuation, the following list will tell you where you can get help in this book. You can also find help at www.mywritinglab.com.

	Page
Abbreviations	235
Capitalization	263–266
Comma-splices	197–200
Comparatives and superlatives	298–300
Dangling and misplaced modifiers	210–215
Irregular verbs	93–96; 288
Past and present participles	92–96
Possessives	256–259
Punctuation	234–260
Run-on sentences	196–197
Sentence fragments	189–194
Spelling	310
Subject-verb agreement	70–81

Additional Reference Books for ESL Students

Amy Gillett. *Speak Business English Like an American (Book and Audio CD)*. Ann Arbor: Language Success Press, 2007.

Christina Lacie. *English for Foreign Language Speakers the Easy Way*. New York: Barron's Educational Services, Inc., 2008.

Mark Lester. *McGraw-Hill's Essential ESL Grammar*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008.

Robin Torres-Gouzerh. *Practice Makes Perfect: Intermediate English Grammar for ESL Learners*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008.