WRITER'S HANDBOOK

THE ENGLISH ALPHABET

A a	B b	C c	D d	E e	F f	G g	H h	I i	J j
K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p	Q q	R r	S s	T t
U u	V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z				

The letters *A, E, I, O, U,* and sometimes *Y* are vowels. All the other letters are consonants.

LANGUAGE TERMS

Adjective   An adjective describes a noun.

Lexi is a very **smart** girl.

Adverb   An adverb describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

The secretary types **quickly**. She types **very quickly**.

Article   Articles are used with nouns. The definite article is *the*. The indefinite articles are *a* and *an*.

The teacher gave **an** assignment to **the** students.

Clause   A clause is a group of words that has a subject-verb combination. Sentences can have one or more clauses.

    s   v
Roger attends the College of New Jersey.
       clause

  s   v   s   v
Chris needs to study because **he wants** to pass the class.
   clause 1   clause 2

Complex Sentence   A complex sentence consists of an independent clause and a dependent clause. Dependent clauses include time clauses, *if* clauses, and reasons clauses.

We will go to lunch as soon as class is over.
  independent clause   dependent clause

If you miss the test, you cannot take it again.
  dependent clause   independent clause

Chris studies hard because he wants to do well.
  independent clause   dependent clause

Compound Sentence	A compound sentence consists of two simple sentences that are joined by a comma and a connector such as *and*, *but*, or *so*.
	<u>I love to study English</u>**, but** <u>my sister prefers math</u>. simple sentence 1 simple sentence 2
Dependent Clause	A dependent clause is a group of words with a subject-verb combination that cannot be a sentence by itself. It starts with a connector such as *before*, *after*, *if*, or *because*.
	I am taking a lot of science classes **because I want to go to medical school**.
Independent Clause	An independent clause is a group of words with a subject-verb combination that can be a sentence by itself.
	I am taking a lot of science classes because I want to go to medical school.
Noun	A noun is a person, place, thing, or idea.
	The **students** are reading **poems** about **friendship** and **love**.
Object	An object is a word that comes after a transitive verb or a preposition. It is often a noun, noun phrase, pronoun, or gerund.
	Jim bought **a new car**. I left my jacket in **the house**.
Phrase	A phrase is a group of words that go together, such as a noun phrase or prepositional phrase.
	Kimchi is **a traditional Korean dish**. Jane forgot her phone **on the bus**.
Preposition	A preposition is a word that shows location, time, or direction. Prepositions are often one word (*at, on, in*), but they can also consist of two words (*in between*) or three words (*on top of*).
	The university is **in** the center of the city.
Pronoun	A pronoun can replace a noun in a sentence.
	n subj pronoun **Whales** are mammals. **They** breathe air. n obj pronoun Some **whales** are endangered. We need to protect **them**.
Subject	The subject of a sentence tells who or what a sentence is about. It is often a noun, noun phrase, pronoun, or gerund.
	My teacher gave us a homework assignment. **It** was difficult.

CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION

Capitalization

RULE	EXAMPLE
Capitalize the first word in a sentence.	**T**he weather today is good.
Capitalize the pronoun **I**.	Maria and **I** live in New York.
Capitalize people's formal and professional titles.	**D**r. Johnson works with **M**rs. Smith.
Capitalize proper names (specific people and places).	**T**im visited **F**ifth **A**venue in **N**ew **Y**ork.
Capitalize the names of languages and nationalities.	Many **S**wiss can speak **G**erman, **F**rench, and **I**talian.
Capitalize the first word and important words in titles (Prepositions, conjunctions, and articles are not important words in a title.)	*The Social Network* *Beauty and the Beast*

Do not use capital letters in the middle of a word.

    ✕ AraBic
    ✓ Arabic

Do not use all capital letters.

    ✕ JOE IS FROM BRAZIL
    ✓ Joe is from Brazil.

Punctuation

RULE	EXAMPLE
Put a period at the end of a statement.	**T**he weather today is good.
Put a question mark at the end of a question.	What is the capital of South Korea**?**
Use periods with abbreviations.	The **U.S.** flag has fifty stars and thirteen stripes.
Put a comma after each item in a list of three or more.	My favorite colors are **blue, green, and red.**
Do not put a comma when the list has only two items.	My favorite colors are **blue and red.**
Put a comma before **and, but,** or **so** in a compound sentence.	My job is sometimes difficult**, but** I like it a lot.
Put a comma after a dependent clause when it comes before the main clause in a complex sentence.	**Because it is raining,** Alex needs his umbrella. **After class,** we have basketball practice. **If you have a question,** raise your hand.
Do not use a comma with in a complex sentence when the dependent clause follows the independent clause.	Alex needs his umbrella **because it is raining**. We have basketball practice **after class**. Raise your hand **if you have a question**.
Use a comma after time words and phrases at the beginning of a sentence.	**At the end of the story,** the man and woman get married.

VERB FORMS

VERB FORM AND USE	AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
Simple Present ▪ regular activities or habits ▪ facts or things that are generally true ▪ a process (how to make or do something)	I/you/we/they **work** he/she/it **works** *Be:* I **am** you/we/they **are** he/she/it **is**	I/you/we/they **do not work** he/she/it **does not work** *Be:* I **am not** you/we/they **are not** he/she/it **is not**
Simple Past ▪ recent or historical events ▪ a narrative or story ▪ events in a person's life ▪ results of an experiment	I/you/we/they **worked** he/she/it **worked** *Be:* I **was** you/we/they **were** he/she/it **was**	I/you/we/they **did not work** he/she/it **did not work** *Be:* I **was not** you/we/they **were not** he/she/it **was not**
Present Progressive ▪ actions that are currently in progress ▪ future actions if a future time expression is used or understood	I **am working** you/we/they **are working** he/she/it **is working**	I **am not working** you/we/they **are not working** he/she/it **is not working**
Future with *be going to* ▪ future plans that are already made ▪ predictions that are based on a present action	I **am going to go** you/we/they **are going to go** he/she/it **is going to go**	I **am not going to go** you/we/they **are not going to go** he/she/it **is not going to go**
Future with *will* ▪ future plans/decisions made in the moment ▪ strong predictions ▪ promises and offers to help	I/you/we/they **will go** he/she/it **will go**	I/you/we/they **will not go** he/she/it **will not go**
Present Perfect ▪ actions that began in the past and continue until the present ▪ actions that happened at an indefinite time in the past	I/you/we/they **have worked** he/she/it **has worked**	I/you/we/they **have not worked** he/she/it **has not worked**

SPELLING

-S Form Verbs and Plural Nouns

- Add *s* to most verbs to make the third person singular, *-s* form, and to most nouns to make them plural.

    work—work**s**   teacher—teacher**s**   apple—apple**s**

- If a verb or noun ends in *ss*, *sh*, *ch*, *z*, or *x*, add *es*.

    miss—miss**es**   brush—brush**es**   watch—watch**es**   buzz—buzz**es**   box—box**es**

- If a verb or noun ends in a consonant + *y*, change the *y* to *i* and add *es*.

    party—part**ies**   lady—lad**ies**   library—librar**ies**

- If a verb or noun ends in a vowel + *y*, do not change the *y*. Just add *s*.

    enjoy—enjoy**s**   day—day**s**   toy—toy**s**

Regular Simple Past Verbs

- Add *ed* to the base form of most verbs.

    start—start**ed**   finish—finish**ed**   wash—wash**ed**

- Add only *d* when the base form ends in *e*.

    live—live**d**   care—care**d**   die—die**d**

- If a verb ends in a consonant + *y*, change the *y* to *i* and add *ed*.

    dry—dr**ied**   carry—carr**ied**   study—stud**ied**

- If a verb ends in a vowel + *y,* do not change the *y*. Just add *ed*.

    play—play**ed**   stay—stay**ed**   destroy—destroy**ed**

- If a verb has one syllable and ends in consonant + vowel + consonant (CVC), double the final consonant and add *ed***.**

    stop—sto**pped**   rob—ro**bbed**

- If a verb ends in a *w* or *x,* do not double the final consonant. Just add *ed*.

    sew—sew**ed**   mix—mix**ed**

- If a verb that ends in CVC has two syllables and the second syllable is stressed, double the final consonant and add *ed*.

    admit—admi**tted**   occur—occu**rred**   permit—permi**tted**

- If a verb that ends in CVC has two syllables and the first syllable is stressed, do not double the final consonant. Just add *ed*.

    happen—happen**ed**   listen—listen**ed**   open—open**ed**

IRREGULAR SIMPLE PAST VERBS

Here are some common irregular verbs in English.

BASE FORM	PAST	BASE FORM	PAST	BASE FORM	PAST
be	was/were	find	found	see	saw
become	became	flee	fled	sell	sold
begin	began	forget	forgot	send	sent
bite	bit	get	got	set	set
bleed	bled	give	gave	sing	sang
blow	blew	grow	grew	sink	sank
break	broke	have	had	sit	sat
bring	brought	hear	heard	sleep	slept
build	built	hide	hid	speak	spoke
buy	bought	hit	hit	spend	spent
catch	caught	hold	held	stand	stood
choose	chose	hurt	hurt	steal	stole
come	came	keep	kept	swim	swam
cost	cost	know	knew	take	took
cut	cut	leave	left	teach	taught
do	did	let	let	tell	told
draw	drew	lose	lost	think	thought
drink	drank	make	made	throw	threw
drive	drove	pay	paid	understand	understood
eat	ate	put	put	wear	wore
fall	fell	read	read	win	won
feel	felt	run	ran	write	wrote
fight	fought	say	said		

ARTICLES

A and *An*

Use *a* or *an* before a singular count noun when its meaning is general. Use *a* before a word that starts with a consonant sound. Use *an* before a word that starts with a vowel sound.

Words that begin with the letters *h* and *u* can take *a* or *an* depending on their opening sound.

- When the *h* is pronounced, use *a*.

    a horse / **a** hat / **a** hot day / **a** huge dog

- When the *h* is silent, use *an*.

    an hour / **an** honor / **an** honorable man / **an** herbal tea

- When the *u* sounds like *you*, use *a* (because the first sound in the word is a vowel sound).

    a university / **a** uniform / **a** useful invention / **a** unique idea

- When the *u* sounds like *uh*, use *an*.

    an umpire / **an** umbrella / **an** ugly shirt / **an** uncomfortable chair

The

Use *the*:

- before a singular or plural count noun or a non-count noun when its meaning is specific

    I need to ask my parents to borrow **the** <u>car</u> today.

- the second (and third, fourth, etc.) time you write about something

    I bought a new coat yesterday. **The** <u>coat</u> is blue and gray.

- when the noun you are referring to is unique—there is only one

    The <u>Sun</u> and **the** <u>Earth</u> are both in **the** <u>Milky Way Galaxy</u>.
    The <u>Eiffel Tower</u> is a beautiful monument.

- with specific time periods

    You must be very quiet for **the** <u>next hour</u>.
    The <u>1920s</u> was a time of great change in the United States.

- when other words in your sentence make the noun specific

    The <u>cat in the picture</u> is very pretty.

- with geographic locations that end in the plural *s* (such as a group of islands), or that include the words *united*, *union*, *kingdom*, or *republic*

    We are going to **the** <u>Bahamas</u> for our vacation.
    Who is the president of **the** <u>United States</u>?

- with most buildings, bodies of water (except lakes), mountain chains, and deserts

    The <u>White House</u> is in Washington, DC.
    The <u>Amazon</u> is a very long river in South America.

Do not use *the*:

- with the names of cities, states, countries, continents, and lakes (except as mentioned above)

    Sylvie is from <u>Venezuela</u>. She lives near <u>Lake Maracaibo</u>.
    <u>Lake Baikal</u> is a large freshwater lake in <u>Russia</u>.

- when you talk about something in general

    <u>Water</u> freezes at 0 degrees Celsius.
    Jason is going to make a table with <u>wood</u>.

NOUNS AND PRONOUNS

Common Non-count Nouns

Count nouns can be counted. They have a singular form (*phone*, *person*) and a plural form (*phones*, *people*). Non-count nouns are not countable. They have only one form (*money, information*).

Here are some common non-count nouns.

COMMON NON-COUNT NOUNS	
Food items	butter, sugar, salt, pepper, soup, rice, fish, meat, flour, bread
Liquids	milk, coffee, water, juice, cream
Academic subjects	English, math, science, music, biology
Abstract ideas	love, honesty, poverty, crime, advice, luck, pain, hate, beauty, humor
Others	homework, information, money, furniture, traffic

Possessive Pronouns

A possessive pronoun takes the place of a possessive adjective + noun. Possessive adjectives + nouns and possessive pronouns can be in the subject or object position.

POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE + NOUN	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN
The pencil on the table is **my pencil**.	The pencil on the table is **mine**.
Because I left my book at home, I need to share **your book** with you.	Because I left my book at home, I need to share **yours** with you.
My ring is silver, but **his ring** is gold.	My ring is silver, but **his** is gold.
Carol has my cell phone, and I have **her cell phone**.	Carol has my cell phone, and I have **hers**.
Your room is on the first floor, and **our room** is on the fifth floor.	Your room is on the first floor, and **ours** is on the fifth floor.
Our class had a special party, but **your class** did not.	Our class had a special party, but **yours** did not.
Jenny likes her class, and Karl and Jim like **their class**, too.	Jenny likes her class, and Karl and Jim like **theirs**, too.

Quantifiers

Quantifiers give more information about the number, or quantity, of a noun. They usually go in front of a noun.

QUANTIFIER	EXAMPLE
With Count Nouns	
one, two, three (all numbers)	
a few	
few	
many	**Several** students went to the school office.
another	**Many** people wanted to leave the city.
several	Ellie put **a few** coins in the parking meter.
a pair of	
a couple of	
With Non-count Nouns	
a little	
little	There is only **a little** milk left in the refrigerator.
much	We get too **much** homework every night.
With Count or Non-count Nouns	
some	Mrs. Jones has **a lot of** friends.
any	They got into **a lot of** trouble.
a lot of	I do not have **any** plans for this weekend.
	Adam does not have **any** money.

PREPOSITIONS

At, On, and *In*

Prepositions indicate time, location, and direction. Prepositions are always the first word in a prepositional phrase, which is a preposition + noun.

Three common prepositions in English are *at*, *on*, and *in*.

Using *At*

Location: Use *at* for specific locations.

> Angela works **at** the First National Bank.
> I always do my homework **at** my desk.
> Joel met Jillian **at** the corner of Polk Street and Florida Avenue.

Time: Use *at* for specific times.

> My grammar class meets **at** 9:00 a.m. every day.
> The lunch meeting begins **at** noon.
> Cate does not like to walk alone **at** night.

Direction: Use *at* for motion toward a goal.

> My brother threw a ball **at** me.
> The robber pointed his gun **at** the policewoman.

Using *On*

Location: Use *on* when there is contact between two objects.

> The picture is **on** the wall.
> He put his books **on** the kitchen table.
> Erin lives **on** Bayshore Boulevard.

Time: Use *on* with specific days or dates.

> Our soccer game is **on** Saturday.
> Your dentist appointment is **on** October 14.
> I was born **on** June 22, 1998.

Using *In*

Location: Use *in* when something is inside another thing.

> The books are **in** the big box.
> I left my jacket **in** your car.
> Barbara lives **in** Istanbul.

Time: Use *in* for a specific period of time, a specific year, or a future time.

> I am going to graduate from college **in** three years.
> My best friend got married **in** 2016.
> Mr. Johnson always drinks four cups of coffee **in** the morning.

Other Prepositions

Here are more common prepositions and prepositional phrases of location. In the chart on the next page, the preposition or prepositional phrase shows the location of the ball in relation to the box.

PREPOSITION		EXAMPLE
under		Pedro keeps his shoes **under** his bed.
above/over		Sheila held the umbrella **over** her head.
between		The milk is **between** the eggs and the butter.
in front of		Mark was standing **in front of** the restaurant.
in back of/behind		My shirt fell **behind** my dresser.
across…from		There is a supermarket **across** the street **from** my house.
next to/beside		The mailman left the package **next to** the door.

CONNECTORS

Connectors in Compound Sentences

Connectors in compound sentences are called coordinating conjunctions. They are used to connect two independent clauses. A comma usually appears before a connector that separates two independent clauses in a compound sentence.

COORDINATING CONJUNCTION	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
and	to add information	Miki works full time, **and** she is a student.
but	to show contrast	The exam was hard, **but** everyone passed.
so	to show a result	It was raining, **so** we decided to stay home last night.
or	to give a choice	We can cook, **or** we can order pizza.
yet*	to show contrast/concession	There was a hurricane warning, **yet** many people went to the beach.
nor**	to add negative information	Roberto does not like opera, **nor** does he enjoy hip-hop.
for†	to show reason	He ate a sandwich, **for** he was hungry.

Yet is similar to *but*; however, it usually shows a stronger or unexpected contrast. It is also less common than *but*.
**Question word order is used in the clause that follows *nor*.
†The conjunction *for* is not commonly used except in literary writing.

Many writers remember these connectors in compound sentences (or coordinating conjunctions) with the acronym *FANBOYS*: F = *for*, A = *and*, N = *nor*, B = *but*, O = *or*, Y = *yet*, and S = *so*.

Connectors in Complex Sentences

Connectors in complex sentences are called subordinating conjunctions. They are used to connect a dependent clause and an independent clause. Use a comma after a dependent clause when it is at the beginning of a sentence.

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
because since as	to show reason/cause	He ate a sandwich **because/since/as** he was hungry.
although even though though while	to show contrast	**Although/Even though/Though** the exam was difficult, everyone passed. Deborah is a dentist **while** John is a doctor.
after as as soon as before until while when	to show a time relationship	**After** we ate dinner, we went to a movie. **As** I was leaving the office, it started to rain. **As soon as** class ended, Mia ran out the door. We ate dinner **before** we went to a movie. I will not call you **until** I finish studying. **While** the pasta is cooking, I will cut the vegetables. **When** Jennifer gets home, she is going to eat dinner.
if even if	to show condition	**If** it rains tomorrow, we will stay home. We are going to go to the park **even if** it rains tomorrow.

KEEPING A VOCABULARY JOURNAL

Vocabulary is very important to learning English. The best way for you to really improve your vocabulary is to do more than study from your teacher or this book. You should also keep a vocabulary journal.

A vocabulary journal is a notebook in which you write down all the new words and phrases that you do not know but you think are important. When you find a new word, write it in your notebook. However, writing words in the notebook is not enough. You also need to review the words many times.

The most important thing about learning vocabulary is the number of times you think about the word, listen to it, read it, speak it, or write it. You can practice any way you want.

There are many ways to organize a vocabulary journal, and you should choose a way that you like. It is important to remember this is your journal, and it should be useful for you. Here is one way to keep a vocabulary journal. You write four pieces of information about each new word.

1.   Write the English word first.
2.   Write a translation in your first language.
3.   Write a simple definition or synonym in English.
4.   Write a phrase or sentence with the word. Use a blank (___) instead of writing the word.

With these four kinds of information, you can practice the new vocabulary four ways.

Leave a lot of white space between the words and the information you write. Each page of your notebook should have only five to eight words. As you learn new information about the word, you can write that information in the white space.

Here are two examples:

From a Spanish speaker's vocabulary journal:

dozen   12 things

docena   a _____ eggs

From an Arabic speaker's vocabulary journal:

hot   not cold

حار   The sun is very _____.

THE PARTS OF A PARAGRAPH

What Is a Paragraph?

A **paragraph** is a group of sentences about one specific topic. A paragraph usually has three to ten sentences and the first line is indented (moved in).

Notice how these sentences about someone's family can also be written as a paragraph.

SENTENCES	PARAGRAPH
My roommate and I do not have much free time. Our schedules are really busy. We have classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. We have soccer practice on those days, too. We work on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We work at the same job. We have soccer games on Saturday mornings. We do our homework, shop for food, and call our families on Sundays. We always have something to do. We are not bored.	indented first line ↓ My roommate and I do not have much free time. Our schedules are really busy. We have classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. We have soccer practice on those days, too. We work on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We work at the same job. We have soccer games on Saturday mornings. We do our homework, shop for food, and call our families on Sundays. We always have something to do. We are not bored.

Parts of a Paragraph

A paragraph has three main parts: a topic sentence, a body, and a concluding sentence. See the example below that shows these parts.

The Topic Sentence

Every good paragraph has a **topic sentence**. The topic sentence:

- tells the main idea of the whole paragraph;
- is usually the first sentence in the paragraph;
- should not be too specific or too general.

If a paragraph does not have a topic sentence, the reader may not know what the paragraph is about. Make sure every paragraph has a topic sentence.

The Body

Every good paragraph must have sentences that support the topic sentence. These supporting sentences are called the **body** of a paragraph. The supporting sentences:

- give more information, such as details or examples, about the topic sentence;
- must be related to the topic sentence.

A good body can make your paragraph stronger.

The Concluding Sentence

In addition to a topic sentence and body, every good paragraph has a **concluding sentence**. This sentence ends the paragraph with a final thought. The concluding sentence:

- can give a summary of the information in the paragraph;
- can give information that is similar to the information in the topic sentence;
- can give a suggestion, an opinion, or a prediction.

Our Busy Schedules

Topic sentence

My roommate and I do not have much free time. Our schedules are really busy. We have

classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. We have soccer practice on those days, too.

Body We work on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We work at the same job. We have soccer games on

Saturday mornings. We do our homework, shop for food, and call our families on Sundays.

We always have something to do. We are not bored.

Concluding sentence—opinion