

MaxBook:

The little book
of grammar

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To my mother, Hilda Maud Nelson,
the most influential and
inspirational person in my life.

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Foreword

This is a “must read” book that is for everyone and anyone. It has special relevance for people who communicate with the public via television, radio or print. It has relevance for high school, college and university students, as well as for elementary school, high school, college and university professors/teacher.

It is absolutely necessary for politicians, public servants and news and sports casters and for all TV and radio personalities to familiarize themselves with the contents of this book.

I have been driven to write this book because of the total disappointment I feel when I hear so many of our TV personalities and public figures utterly destroy the English language with bad grammar. Because of the widespread influence that these media personalities have on pop-culture and on our society, the errors they make on air lead to a perpetuation of these errors and ultimately to the deterioration of the language.

This book is intended to be a quick reference guide for those who desire to speak and write proper English. This book serves as a quick and easy-to-use guide that helps people to avoid grammatical pitfalls.

This book also has special importance for persons who wish to learn English as an additional language.

My objective has been to keep the book simple. I had no desire to complicate things by giving more details than I deemed to be absolutely necessary.

Part 1: Basic Parts of Speech/Definitions

Noun: The name of a person, place or thing.

- E.g.** a) *John Brown, Mary Jones*
 b) *Toronto, London*
 c) *table, car, chair, luggage*

Verb: An action word.

- E.g.** *run, drive, work*

Be aware that a word can be a verb or a noun depending on whether it is used as an action word or as a thing.

- E.g.** a) Action: I run to the mailbox often.
 Thing: Every day I go for a run.
 b) Action: I drive my car to work
 Thing: I enjoy going for a long drive in the country.
 c) Action: I work hard to earn a living.
 Thing: I have a lot of work to do later.

Pronoun: A substitute for a noun.

- E.g.** *he, she, I, me, we, us, they, them*

Adjective: A word which is used to describe a noun or a pronoun.

- E.g.** a) *He is a very handsome man. (handsome = adjective, man = noun)*
 b) *Look at that beautiful girl. (beautiful = adjective, girl = noun)*
 c) *Throw the round ball. (round = adjective, ball = noun)*

Adverb: A word which is used to describe a verb or an adjective. Usually ends in “ly”.

- E.g.** a) *She loves him deeply. (loves = verb, deeply = adverb)*
 b) *She is an amazingly beautiful person. (amazingly = adverb, beautiful = adjective)*

Subject: The subject is the “performer” of the action.

- E.g.** a) She shares her lunch with me. [*She = subject, shares = action (verb)*]
b) Tom broke the window. [*Tom = subject, broke = action (verb)*]

Object: The object is the receiver of the action. In other words, the action is done to the object.

- E.g.** a) She shares her lunch with me. [*me = object, shares = action (verb)*]
b) Tom broke the window. [*Tom = subject, broke = action (verb), window = object*]

Part II: Usage

Accept/Except

Accept

“Accept” means to take or receive what is offered. “Accept” is a verb.

- E.g.** *a) I willingly accept your offer.*
 b) I gratefully accept your gift.

Except

“Except” means to omit or exclude.

- E.g.** *a) Everyone except me has been invited to the party.*
 b) The pauper has nothing except the clothes on his back.

Affect/Effect

Affect

“Affect” is a verb. “Affect” means to have an effect upon. It means to act upon or to produce a change upon.

- E.g.** *a) A lack of exercise will affect your health.*
 b) Your bad attitude is affecting my mood.

Note: *The word “effect” has two meanings. See below:*

i) Effect

“Effect” is a noun. “Effect” means a result or consequence. It means influence or action on something.

- E.g.** *a) The long war had a disastrous effect on the citizens.*
 b) The effect of the long winter was devastation to the crops.
 c) Reading in poor light has had a destructive effect on his eyes.



MaxBook Tip! It is wrong to say “The effect of _____ caused _____.” The reason this is incorrect is because the word “effect”, by definition means “the result or consequence”. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that the “result or consequence” is the “cause” of something. The cause always comes first in the sequence of events or in the timeline. A cause creates an effect and not the reverse (i.e. the effect NEVER creates the cause). The proper way to say it is “the effect of _____ was _____.”

ii) **Effect**

“Effect” is a verb. “Effect” means to bring about. It means to cause to happen or bring about a result.

- E.g.** a) *My job as your supervisor is to effect positive changes in your performance.*
 b) *The teacher thought her role was to effect behavioral changes in her students.*

Begin/Began/Begun

Begin

“Begin” is present tense.

- E.g.** *Today I begin walking to work instead of driving.*

Began

“Began” is past tense.

- E.g.** *Yesterday I began walking to work instead of driving.*

Begun

“Begun” is the past participle used with “have” or “has”.

- E.g.** *I have begun to walk to work rather than driving.*

Note: *“Begun” is used in conjunction with “have” or “has”.*

Bring/Fetch

These two words have to do with the position of the speaker in relation to the person to whom she/he is speaking.

Bring

One can use “bring” when the speaker and the person spoken to are not at the same physical location.

- E.g.** *Bring me a bottle of wine when you come to visit.*

The person being spoken to is not currently with the speaker. He or she is being asked to bring something from one location to the location where the speaker is located.

Fetch

“Fetch” implies that both the speaker and the person spoken to are at the same place/location at the same time.

E.g. *Please fetch me a pail of water.*

This means go get the water and bring it to me. An alternative would be:

E.g. *Please go and fetch me a pail of water.*

The speaker and the other person are at the same location when the speaker is asking the other person to leave to “fetch” an item and bring it back to the original location where the speaker remains.

Continuously/Continually**Continuously**

“Continuously” means unbroken, unending, without cessation, joined without a break or without a space.

E.g. a) *The ocean is continuously in motion.*
b) *It has been raining continuously.*

Continually

“Continually” means consistent but with breaks or spaces in between. It means regularly or with frequency.

E.g. a) *He is continually interrupting her.*
b) *She continually makes the same mistake.*

Criterion/Criteria**Criterion**

“Criterion” is singular.

E.g. a) *Tell me one criterion you are using to make this decision.*
b) *This criterion is powerful and simple to explain.*

Criteria

“Criteria” is plural.

- E.g.** a) *Tell me the criteria you are using to make this decision.*
 b) *These criteria are powerful and simple to explain.*



MaxBook Tip! Remember “Criterion is” vs. “Criteria are”

Either/Neither**Either**

“Either” means one or the other, also this one or that one. It means each taken one at a time. "Either" is singular and is used in conjunction with “is”. It is never to be used in conjunction with “are”.

- E.g.** a) *Either spelling of the word is correct.*
 b) *Either the blue or the white dress will work with those shoes.*

Neither

“Neither” means “none” or “not one”. “Neither” is singular. It is never to be used in conjunction with “are”.

- E.g.** a) *Neither spelling of the word is correct.*
 b) *Neither John nor Mary is coming to the party.*



MaxBook Tip! “Either/or, neither/nor” – “either” is used in conjunction with “or” and “neither” is used in conjunction with “nor”.

Everybody/Everyone/All**Everybody**

“Everybody” is singular. “Everybody” means all the people taken one at a time, as opposed to a group. Therefore, it is proper to say “Everybody is”. It is incorrect to say “Everybody are”.

E.g. *Everybody is going to the party tonight.*

Everyone

“Everyone” is singular. “Everyone” means all the people taken one at a time as opposed to a group. Therefore, it is proper to say “Everyone is”. It is incorrect to say “Everyone are”.

- E.g. a) *Everyone is going to the party tonight.* ✓
 b) *Everybody is taking care of his or her business.* ✓
 c) *Everyone is taking care of their business.* ✗



MaxBook Tip! “Everybody” or “everyone” is used in conjunction with “his” or “her”. It is incorrect to use “everybody” or “everyone” in conjunction with “their”.

All

“All” is plural. “All” means all the people taken as a group, as opposed to one at a time. Therefore, it is proper to say “All are”.

E.g. *All are welcome to come to my party tonight.*

Fewer/Less

Fewer

“Fewer” refers to quantifiable things, ideas and concepts which are identifiable one at a time (individually).

- E.g. a) *I own fewer shirts than he does.* ✓
 b) *She ate fewer cookies than I did.* ✓
 c) *There is fewer sunshine in the front of the house in the morning.* ✗

Less

“Less” refers to things, ideas, and concepts that cannot be broken down or identified individually.

- E.g. a) *Less water flows over Dunns River Falls than over Niagara Falls.* ✓
 b) *After she opened the valve there was less air in the pump.* ✓
 c) *I own less shirts than he does.* ✗

Go/Gone/Went

Go

“Go” is a verb. It can be both present tense and future tense.

- E.g.** *a) Today I go to school at 8:00 am.*
 b) I will go to my dentist tomorrow at 4:00 pm.

Gone

“Gone” is the past participle of “go”. It is used in conjunction with “have” or “has”.

- E.g.** *a) I have gone to my dentist and will be home at 6:00 pm.*
 b) She has gone to school and will be home later.

Went

“Went” is the past tense of “go”.

- E.g.** *a) Yesterday I went to school at 8:00 am.*
 b) Last Tuesday I went to see my dentist.

Good/Well

Good

“Good” is an adjective or noun depending on the usage.

- E.g.** *a) This is a good day. (good = adjective, day = noun)*
 b) I am doing this for your own good. (good = noun)

Well

“Well” is an adverb. Remember an adverb describes a verb or adjective.

- E.g.** *a) Today I feel well.*
 b) I did well on my exams.
 *c) **NEVER:** I did good on my exams. ☒*

Hang/Hanged/Hanged/Hung

Hang & Hanged

“Hang” has the same past tense and past participle (“hanged”) when used in relation to something “being place”.

- E.g.** *a) I like to hang pictures on the wall.*

- b) Yesterday I hanged pictures on the wall. (past tense)
 c) I have hanged pictures on the wall. (past participle)

Hang, Hanged & Hung

When “hang” is used specifically in relation to the taking of a life it has the past tense “hanged” and the past participle “hung”.

- E.g.** a) The criminal has been sentenced to hang by the judge.
 b) Yesterday the criminal was hanged. (past tense)
 c) The criminal has been hung. (past participle)

I/Me

I

“I” is the performer of the action. As we learned earlier, this means that “I” is the subject of a sentence. Therefore, “I” can never be the receiver of the action or have the action done to it. “I” is never the object.

- E.g.** a) I love cherries. (I = subject)
 b) I give you my word. (I = subject)

Me

“Me” is the receiver of the action. The action is done to it. In other words, “me” is the object of the sentence. “Me” can never do the action and is therefore never the subject.

- E.g.** a) Give the money to me. (me = object)
 b) Come to spend some time with me. (me = object)

When used in combination with a noun the same rules apply. That is “I” is always the subject and “me” is always the object of the sentence.

- E.g.** Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to Jim and me.

Remember! “Me” is the receiver of the action (“me” is the object). “I” can never be the receiver of the action (cannot be the object).

- E.g.** Jim and I gave a gift to my parents.

Remember! “I” is the performer (here, the giver of the gift). It would be incorrect to say “Jim and me gave a present to my parents” because “me” can never be the performer. “Me” has to be the receiver. “I” is always the subject that performs the action of the sentence.



MaxBook Tip! When in doubt, pull the sentence apart by separating the objects and subjects. Then try saying the sentence each way; once saying “me”, then try it saying “I”.

E.g. #1: Using the example: *Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to Jim and me.*

- a) *Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to Jim.* ✓
- b) *Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to me.* ✓
- c) *Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to I.* ✗

You see from this example that “I” cannot be the receiver of the action and therefore cannot have the action done to it.

Now put it all together to get your solution:

Solution= “Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to Jim and me.”

E.g. #2: Using the example: *Jim and I gave a gift to my parents.*

- a) *Jim gave a gift to my parents.* ✓
- b) *I gave a gift to my parents.* ✓
- c) *Me gave a gift to my parents.* ✗

You see from this example that “me” cannot be the performer of the action and therefore “I” is the correct word to use here.

Now put it all together to get your solution:

Solution = “Jim and I gave a gift to my parents.”

In/Into

In

“In” indicates being at a specific location.

- E.g.**
- a) *I am in my room.*
 - b) *I am in a good mood.*

Into

“Into” indicates moving or being moved to a different location.

- E.g. a) Please come into my office.
 b) I am pouring milk into my coffee.
 c) I have let you into my life.

Innovation**Innovation**

“Innovation” refers to some idea or development which is new. There is no need to add the word “new” in front of the word innovation.

- E.g. a) This technology is an innovation.
 b) This technology is a new innovation.

It's/Its**It's**

“It's” is an abbreviated form of “it is”, just as “we're” is an abbreviated form of “we are”.

- E.g. a) *It's going to rain later.*
 b) *My son, it's time you went to bed.*

Its

“Its” is a possessive form.

- E.g. a) *Don't expect a cat to change its behavior because you want it to.*
 b) *A leopard cannot change its spots.*

Lay/Laid/Laid**Lay**

“Lay” means to place or to set down.

- E.g. *I lay bricks at work.*

Laid

“Laid” is the past tense of “lay”

- E.g.** a) *Yesterday I laid bricks at work.*
 b) *I have laid bricks at work for the past month.*



MaxBook Tip! Be consciously aware of whether you are using “lay” as in to recline or “lay” as in setting down or placing.

Lie/Lay/Lain

Lie

“Lie” means to recline. It is the present tense of the word.

- E.g.** a) *I need to lie down.*

Lay

“Lay” is the past tense of the word that means to recline.

- E.g.** a) *Yesterday I lay on the sofa.*

Lain

“Lain” is the past participle of the word that means to recline.

- E.g.** a) *For the past week I have lain on the sofa.*

Note: Past participle is used with “have”, “has” etc.

- E.g.** a) *I have lain on the sofa.*
 b) *She has lain on the sofa.*



MaxBook Tip! There is no such thing as “lied” in the context of the word which refers to the action of reclining. “Lied” is only used in reference to not telling the truth. E.g. *I lied about my age.*

Liking/Likeness

These words are often misunderstood and misused.

Liking

“Liking” reflects emotion.

E.g. *I have a strong liking for you.*

Likeness

“Likeness” means resemblance.

E.g. *There is a likeness between the father and his son.*

Lose/Loose

Lose

“Lose” means to not win. The past tense is “lost”.

E.g. *a) We lose every time we play against your team. (present tense)*

b) We lost every time we played against your team. (past tense)

Loose

“Loose” means not tight fitting. It means free and unfettered.

E.g. *a) Tom has a loose and uninhibited attitude.*

b) I like to wear loose fitting clothes at home.

None

None

None is always singular. None means not one. None is used in conjunction with “is”. It is incorrect to use “none” in conjunction with “are”.

E.g. *a) None of these apples is good for eating.*

b) None of these apples are good for eating.

Off/Off Of

There is no such thing as “off of”. “Off” does not need “of” to complement it. It is incorrect to say the following:

E.g. *a) The breeze is coming off of the lake.*

b) The slugger hit a home run off of the relief pitcher.

To correct the above statements:

- E.g.** a) *The breeze is coming off the lake.*
 b) *The slugger hit a home run off the relief pitcher.*

People/Everyone/All

People

“People” means a group of persons taken together. It takes the plural form.

- E.g.** a) *People are important to our organization.*
 b) *Are the people coming tonight?*

Everyone

“Everyone” takes the singular form. It indicates a group of people taken one at a time.

- E.g.** a) *Everyone is invited to my party.*
 b) *Is everyone coming tonight?*

All

“All” takes the plural form.

- E.g.** a) *All are welcome to attend our party.*
 b) *Are all of you coming tonight?*



MaxBook Tip: Remember: “People are”, “Everyone is”, and “All are”

See/Saw/Seen

See

“See” is a present tense verb.

Saw

“Saw” is the past tense application of “see”.

Seen

“Seen” is the past participle of “see”.

- E.g.** a) *I can see you standing there.*
 b) *I saw you standing there yesterday.*

- c) I have seen you on standing there on several occasions.
- d) I seen you standing there.
- e) I have saw you standing there.

Them/Their

The following statement is incorrect:

E.g. I am sad about them leaving.

It is not “them” that makes the person sad. It is the action of their leaving that makes the person sad.

E.g. I am sad about their leaving.

Them/They

Them

“Them” is the receiver of the action or has the action done to it.

They

“They” is the subject of the sentence and is the performer of the action.

- E.g. a) They are going to the movies. (they = subject, “they” performs action)
- b) Mike is going to the movies with them. (them = object, action done to “them”)



MaxBook Tip! When in doubt, break the sentence apart by separating the objects and subjects. Then try saying the sentence each way; once with “they”, then try it the other way saying “them”.

E.g. #1: Using the example: Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to Jim and them.

- a) Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to Jim.
- b) Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to them.
- c) Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to they.

Now put it all together to get your solution:

Solution = “Thank you for giving such a beautiful gift to Jim and them.”

E.g. #2: Using the example: *Jim and they gave a gift to my parents.*

- a) Jim gave a gift to my parents.
- b) They gave a gift to my parents.
- c) Them gave a gift to my parents.

Now put it all together to get your solution:

Solution = “Jim and they gave a gift to my parents.”

There/Their/They're

There

“There” refers to a place.

- E.g.**
- a) *Go sit over there.*
 - b) *Please hang your coat there.*

Their

“Their” is possessive.

- E.g.** *Mary and Paul invited us to their house for dinner tonight.*

They're

“They're” is an abbreviated form of “they are”.

- E.g.** *They're all going to the baseball game.*

Unique

Unique

The word “unique” means one of a kind. It is inappropriate to use the adverb “very” in front of it.

- E.g.**
- a) *That lady has a unique personality.*
 - b) *That lady has a very unique personality.*

We/Us**We**

“We” is the subject of the sentence and is the performer of the action.

Us

“Us” is the receiver of the action or has the action done to it.

- E.g.** a) *We are going to the movies. (we = subject, “we” performs action)*
 b) *Mike is coming to the movies with us. (us = object, action done to “us”)*

Who/Which/That**Who**

“Who” refers to a person.

Which & That

“Which” and “That” refer to things and animals.

- E.g.** a) *Donate money to help the animals that need your help.*
 b) *Donate money to help the animals who need your help.*

Similarly, do NOT refer to a person as “that”. A person is referred to by “who”.

- E.g.** a) *She is the person who gave me the coupon.*
 b) *She is the person that gave me the coupon.*

Who/Whom**Who**

“Who” refers to the doer of the action.

- E.g.** a) *I saw the man who broke the sprinting world record.*
 b) *This is the woman who makes me happy.*

Whom

“Whom” refers to the receiver of the action.

- E.g.** a) *To whom much is given, much is expected.*
 b) *This is the boy to whom the prize was given.*

Whose/Who's

Whose

“Whose” is possessive.

- E.g.** a) *I saw the lady whose husband won the race.*
 b) *Whose water is this?*

Who's

“Who's” is the abbreviated form of “who is”.

- E.g.** a) *Look who's coming!*
 b) *I am the one who's making the decision.*

You/Your

I often hear people making the following incorrect statement:

- E.g.** a) *I appreciate you coming.* ❌

It is not the person, but the **coming** that is being appreciated. This is wrong to say.
 The correct statement is,

“I appreciate your coming.” ✅

- E.g.** b) *I appreciate you doing this for me.* ❌

Again, it is not the person, but the **doing** that is being appreciated. This is wrong to say.
 The correct statement is,

“I appreciate your doing this for me.” ✅

Your/You're

Your

“Your” shows ownership.

- E.g. Please tell me your name.*

You're

“You're” is an abbreviated form of “you are”.

- E.g.** *You're bothering me with that constant talking.*

Part III: Words that do NOT exist

Aint

There is no such word as “**aint**”. The correct words are “**is not**”

- E.g. a) That *aint* right.
- b) That *is not* right.

Conversate

There is no such word as “**conversate**”. The correct word is “**converse**”.

- E.g. a) Let’s go somewhere that we can *conversate*.
- b) Let’s go somewhere that we can *converse*.

Converse

“Converse” indicates speaking, talking or discussing.

- E.g. *My friends converse fluently in French.*

Lacksidaisical

There is no such word as “**Lacksidaisical**”.

The correct word is “**Lackadaisical**”.

This means lacking life, spirit or zest. It means to approach something without interest, vigor or determination.

Mother/Father/Sister/Brother in Laws

The following words do not exist:

Mother in laws, father in laws, sister in laws, bother in laws

The correct words are:

Mothers in law

Fathers in law

Sisters in law

Brothers in law

Nother/Another/Other

There is no such word as “**nother**”. The acceptable word is “**another**”.

- E.g. a) *That is a whole nother story.*
- b) *That is a whole other story.*
- c) *That is another story entirely.*

Spoon/Cup Fulls

There is no such word as “fulls”, therefore, there is no such saying as “**spoon fulls**”. The correct saying is “**spoons full**”.

- E.g. a) *The recipe calls for two spoon fulls.*
- b) *The recipe calls for two spoons full.*

Similarly, there is no such saying as “**cup fulls**”. The correct saying is “**cups full**”.

- E.g. a) *The recipe calls for two cup fulls.*
- b) *The recipe calls for two cups full.*