

**A to Z**

Text Box



**Guide to  
Literacy**

## Abbreviations and Initials

An abbreviation is a short way of writing a word or words. Use capital letters and full stops to write most abbreviations.

An **initial** is an abbreviation of a name. The initial is the first letter of the name.

Examples:

Doctor = Dr.            Tuesday = Tues.

Avenue = Ave.        January = Jan.

Thomas John Evans = T. J. Evans

## Adjectives

An **adjective** is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun.

Adjectives can tell how many, what colour or what size or shape. They can also describe how something feels, sounds, tastes, or smells. Use exact adjectives to paint clear word pictures.

Examples:

**Two** birds were in the nest.

The **blue** ball was in a **big** box.

## Adjectives that Compare: more, most

Use **more** with some adjectives to compare two nouns or pronouns.

Use **most** with some adjectives to compare more than two nouns or pronouns.

Examples:

Driving may be the **most** difficult of all sports.

It is **more** interesting to watch than golf.

## Special Forms of Adjectives that Compare

Some adjectives have special forms for comparing.

Examples:

Oliver has a **good** wooden puppet.

Charles' puppet is **better** than Oliver's.

Tina's silk puppet is the **best** of all the puppets.

Adjective	Comparing two things	Comparing more than two things
Good	Better	Best
Bad	Worse	Worst

## Predicate Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or pronoun. A **predicate adjective** follows a linking verb such as is, seems, or looks. When an adjective follows a linking verb, it can describe the subject of the sentence.

Example:

That elephant is **huge**.

That snake looks **scary**.

A

## Adverbs

An **adverb** is a word that describes a verb.

An **adverb** may tell how, when, or where an action happens. **Adverbs** that tell how often end in **ly**.

Vary your sentences by moving the **adverbs**.

Examples: **Today** we visited a zoo.

We walked through **there slowly**.

## Adverbs that Compare

To make some one-syllable **adverbs** show **comparison**, add **er** or **est**.

To make adverbs that end in **ly** show **comparison**, use **more** or **most**.

Examples:

Andy ran **faster** than anyone else.

I read **more slowly** than my sister.



## Adverb or Adjective

Use an adverb to describe a verb.

Use an adjective to describe a noun or pronoun.

Examples:

Ben and Me is a **humorous** book about Benjamin Franklin.; **adjective**

The story is **amusingly** told from a mouse's point of view.; **adverb**

A

## Antonym

An **antonym** is a word that means the opposite of another word.

When a word has more than one **antonym**, use the one that expresses your meaning exactly.

Examples:

**Hard** is an **antonym** of **soft**.

**Short** is an **antonym** of **tall**.

## Articles

The adjectives **a**, **an**, and **the** are called **articles**.

Use **a** before a word that begins with a consonant sound.

Use **an** before a word that begins with a vowel sound.

Use **the** before a word that begins with a consonant or a vowel.

Examples: Have you ever seen **an** owl?

**The** owl is a nocturnal animal.

## Brackets

Brackets ( ) are a pair of punctuation marks used to indicate that the words written are not essential to the meaning of the sentence, but provide additional information.

Examples:

It's like any group of people (real or virtual); you're going to have different opinions about online shopping.

## Using Capital Letters

Use a capital letter to begin the first word of a sentence.

Use a capital letter to begin the first word, the last word, and all other important words in the title of a book, a story, a magazine article, a poem, a song, or a television show.

Examples:

Today we solved some arithmetic problems.

Millions of Cats (book)

“Numbers and You” (story)

## Colons and Apostrophes

Use a **colon** (:) between the hour and the minute in the time of day. Use an **apostrophe** (') to show that one or more letters have been left out in a contraction. Add an **apostrophe** and an s to singular nouns to show possession. Add an **apostrophe** to plural nouns that end in s to show possession.

Add an **apostrophe** and s to plural nouns that do not end in s to show possession.

Examples: 2:35 P.M.                      7:10 A.M.                      was not = wasn't

Eric's coat                      did not = didn't                      guests' laughter

boys' plan                      the cat's whiskers                      children's schoolwork

## Using Commas

Use a **comma** (,) after the words yes and no when they begin a statement.

Use a **comma** after time-order words such as first, next, then and last. Use a **comma** to separate three or more words in a series.

Use a **comma** before the word **and**, **but**, or **or** when two sentences are combined. Use a **comma** to separate a word used in direct address from a sentence. Use a **comma** between quotation and the rest of the sentence.

## Commas in a Series

Use a **comma** (,) after each item except the last one **in a series** of three or more items.

Example:

The green mamba snake is beautiful, swift, and deadly.



## Contractions with Not

A **contraction** is a short way of writing two words together. Some of the letters are left out. An apostrophe takes the place of the missing letters. Use verbs and the word not to form some **contractions**.

Examples:

could + not = couldn't

had + not = hadn't

will + not = won't

did + not = didn't

## Dash

**Dash** is a punctuation mark that looks like an extended hyphen. Is a word that shows action. It comes in two sizes: an **em dash** (--) and an **en dash** (-).

**Em dash** (--) is used to mark a break in sentences.

**En dash** (-) is used to show sequences: 1999-2000

## Exclamation Point

Use an **exclamation point (!)** at the end of an exclamatory sentence.

Example:

Fire!

I cannot imagine stealing from a detective!

E

## Full Stops

Use a **full stop** (.) at the end of a declarative or imperative sentence.

Use a **full stop** after an abbreviation. **U.K. Tues. A.M.**

Use a **full stop** after an initial. **J.** (Jim) Smith.

Use a **full stop** after the numeral in a main topic and after the capital letter in a subtopic of an outline.

## Good and Well

Students often have trouble with **good** and well.

Use **good** as an **adjective**.

Use **well** most often as an **adverb**.

Examples:

Brenda did a **good** job on her report.

She writes **well**.

## Homographs

**Homographs** are words that have the same spelling but different meanings.

Some **homographs** are pronounced differently.

Example:

Some animals **live** on land and water.

**Live** plants are not allowed in this building.

## Homophones

**Homophones** are words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings.

Example:

Beth did the **right** thing to help her allergy.

Did she **write** a thank-you note to the doctor?

“Please **be** my friend!” Beth begged.

Beth was not allergic to **bee** stings.

## I, Me, We, Us

Use **I** and **we** as subject pronouns.

Use **me** and **us** as object pronouns.

Examples:

**I** like to read books.

**We** have to read two books this month.

Dad took **me** to the library.

The librarian showed **us** the books.



## Using Metaphors and Similes

Writers can create word pictures by comparing two things that are not usually thought of as alike.

When **like** or **as** is used to compare two things, the comparison is called a **simile**.

A **metaphor** makes a comparison by speaking of one thing as if **is** or **was/were** another.

Examples: His feet smelled **like** dead fish.

Steven Jones was as big **as** a tree.

The hot room **was** an oven.

## Using Figurative Language

Writers use **figurative language** to compare unlike things.

**Figurative language** uses figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, and personification.

**Figurative language** gives a meaning that is not exactly that of the words used.

**Figurative language** tries to create a clearer word picture for the reader.

Examples:

**Mother Nature.**

**Father Time.**

## Narrative

A **narrative** is a story. It tells about real or made-up events. A **narrative** tells about one main idea. A **narrative** should have a beginning, middle, and an end. Most **narratives** have dialogue. A writer uses dialogue to show how characters speak to one another.

1. Write an interesting beginning to present the main character and setting.
2. Write about a problem that the main character has to solve in the middle.
3. Write an ending that tells how the main character solves the problem or meets the challenge.

## Negatives

A **negative** is a word that means “no” or “not”. The words never, **no**, **nobody**, **none**, **not**, **nothing**, and **nowhere** are **negatives**.

The negative word not is often used in contractions.

Do not use two negatives in the same sentence.

Examples:

Joe had **never** worked in a factory before.

**Nobody** there knew him.

He **didn't** know at first how hard the work was.

## Taking Notes

A writer takes good notes to remember the facts he or she finds when doing research for a report.

1. Write a question. Then, find a book to answer the question.
2. List the title of the book, the author, and the page numbers on which you find information.
3. Write only facts you want to include in your report.
4. Write the information in your words.

## Nouns

A **noun** is a word that names a person, place, or thing.

Use exact **nouns** to make clear pictures.

Examples:

Person = **woman**

Place = **library**

Thing = **chair**

## Common Nouns and Proper Nouns

A **common noun** names any person, place, or thing.

It begins with a lowercase letter.

Example: **inventor city month**

A proper noun names a particular person, place, or thing. Each important word of a **proper noun** begins with a capital letter.

Examples: **Isaac Newton London July**

## Plural Possessive Nouns

A **plural possessive noun** shows ownership by more than one person or thing.

To form the **possessive** of a **plural noun** ending in s or es, add only an apostrophe (').

To form the **possessive** of a **plural noun** that does not end in s, add an apostrophe and s ('s).

Examples:

Cars' tyres   foxes' home   children's books



## Proper Nouns

A **proper noun** is a word that names a special person, place, or thing.

A **proper noun** **begins with a capital letter**.

Examples: Grace Hopper      Main Street  
Saturday      Christmas Day  
Ernesford Grange Community School

N

## Singular and Plural Nouns

A **singular noun** names one person, place, or thing. It begins with a lowercase letter.

Examples: **dog**    **house**    **box**

A **plural noun** names more than one person, place, or thing. Make most nouns plural by adding **s** or **es**.

Example: **dogs**    **houses**    **boxes**

## Singular Possessive Nouns

A **singular possessive noun** shows ownership by one person or thing. Add an apostrophe (') and s to most singular nouns to show possession.

Examples:

Sam's dog      the dog's teeth

N

## Special Plural Nouns

Some **nouns** change spelling in the plural form. Other nouns have the same singular plural form.

Examples:

Change Spelling

man – men

child – children

foot – feet

goose – geese

wolf – wolves

Same Singular and Plural

salmon

elk

deer

trout

sheep

## Outline

A writer uses an outline to organize the information he or she has gathered for the research report.

1. Write a title that tells the subject of your report.
2. Write the main topics.
3. Begin each main topic with a capital letter.
4. Write subtopics under each main topic. Use a capital letter followed by a full stop for each subtopic.

## Paraphrasing

**Paraphrasing** means to restate an idea in your own words.

You should not copy what the other writer has written.

Instead, you would tell the information in your own words.

## Paragraph

A **paragraph** is a group of sentences that tells about one main idea.

The first line of each paragraph is separated from another paragraph by leaving a line blank between each paragraph.

The topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph. It tells what all the other sentences in the paragraph are about.

The topic sentence is often the first sentence in a paragraph. The other sentences in a paragraph are detail sentences.

Detail sentences add more information about the topic sentence. They help the reader to understand the main idea in far more detail.

## Descriptive Paragraph

In a **descriptive paragraph**, a writer describes a person, place, thing, or event. A good description lets the reader see, feel, hear, and sometimes taste or smell what is being described.

1. Write a topic sentence that clearly tells what the paragraph is about.
2. Add detail to sentences to further expand information about the topic.
3. Use colourful and lively words to describe the topic. Make a picture for the reader with your words.



## Cause and Effect Paragraph

A **cause** is an event that makes something else happen.

An **effect** is something that happens as a result of a cause. In a **cause and effect paragraph**, a writer first gives a cause. Then, he or she explains what effect or effects happen because of it.

1. Write a topic sentence that tells what happened. Include the cause.
2. Tell the effects of what happened in detailed sentences. Include any new causes, too.
3. Write detailed sentences in the order the effects happened.

## Compare and Contrast Paragraph

In a **compare and contrast paragraph**, a writer shows how two people, places, or things are alike or different.

1. Write a topic sentence that names the subjects and tells briefly how they are alike and different.
2. Give detailed examples that clearly tell how the subjects are alike and different.
3. Write about the likenesses or differences in the same order you named them in the topic sentence.

## Information Paragraph

An **information paragraph** gives facts about one topic. It has a topic sentence that tells the main idea. Detailed sentences give facts about the main idea.

1. Write a topic sentence that tells your main idea.
2. Write at least three detailed sentences that give information about your main idea.
3. Think of a title for your information paragraph.

## Persuasive Paragraph

In a **persuasive paragraph**, a writer tries to make readers agree with his or her opinion.

1. Write a topic sentence that tells the issue and your opinion about it.
2. Give at least three reasons that will convince the reader to agree with you.
3. Explain each reason with one or more examples.
4. Save your strongest reason for last.
5. At the end of your paragraph, tell your feelings again. Ask your reader to feel the same way.

## Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of one or more nouns. Use **pronouns** to avoid repeating words.

A **singular** pronoun replaces a singular noun. The words **I, me, you, he, she, him, her,** and **it** are singular pronouns.

**Always capitalize the pronoun I.**

A **plural pronoun** replaces a plural noun. The words **we, you, they, us,** and **them** are **plural pronouns**.

Examples: Mr Thomas thought **he** should go to the city.

The campers searched for a place **they** could stay.

## Contractions with Pronouns

A **contraction** is a short way of writing two words together. Some of the letters are left out. An apostrophe (') takes the place of the missing letters.

Form some **contractions** by joining pronouns and verbs.

Examples: I + would = I'd

you + are = you're

it + is = it's

## Possessive Pronouns

A **possessive pronoun** shows ownership. Some **possessive pronouns** are **my, your, his, her, its, our, and their.**

Examples:

Sam is **my** horse.

He stays in **our** barn.

Who is **your** pet?

## Subject Pronouns

A **subject pronoun** takes the place of one or more nouns in the subject of a sentence. The words **I, you, he, she, it, we,** and **they** are subject pronouns.

Examples:

**He** brought a spider to school.

**We** do not like spiders.

**You** can hold the spider.



## Object Pronouns

An **object pronoun** follows an action verb, such as **see** or **tell**, or a word such as **about, at, for, from, near, of, to,** or **with**. The words **me, you, him, her, it, us,** and **them** are **object pronouns**.

Examples:

Tom took **it** home. Dad had a letter for **me**.

My sister heard **you**. Please **tell** Ryan a story.

## Using Personification

Sometimes a writer will give human characteristics to non-human things. Objects, ideas, places, or animals may be given human qualities. They may perform human actions. This kind of language is called **personification**.

**Personification** helps a writer to create an exciting picture in the reader's mind.

Examples:

The clothes on the line **danced** in the wind.

The flames **ate** hungrily at the wood.

## Compound Predicates

A **compound predicate** is two or more predicates that have the same subject.

The simple predicates in a **compound predicate** are usually joined by **and** or **or**.

Examples:

Dogs **chase or injure** sheep sometimes.

Farmers **watch and protect** their flocks.

## Prefix

A **prefix** is a letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a base word. A base word is a word to which other word parts may be added. Adding a **prefix** to a word changes the word's meaning.

Prefix	Meaning	Example
<b>dis</b>	not	dislike
<b>pre</b>	before	prepay
<b>re</b>	again	reread
<b>un</b>	opposite of	unbutton

## Question Marks

Use a **question mark (?)** at the end of an interrogative sentence.

Example:

Who stole the roller skates?

Q

## Direct Quotations and Dialogue

Use a direct quotation to tell a speaker's exact words.

Use quotation marks (“ ”) before and after the words a speaker says. Begin the first word a speaker says with a capital letter. Put end punctuation before the ending quotation marks. Begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.

Examples:

Mum asked, “Where have you been?”

“I went to the library,” Edward said

## Names and Titles of People and Animals

The **names of people and animals** are proper nouns.

The first and last **names of a person** or **animal** begin with a capital letter.

The **titles** of **people** begin with a capital letter.

Most **titles** end with a full stop.

These are **titles of people**: **Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss Dr.**

Examples: **Tony Shaw, Dr. Vera Wesley**

**I** know **I** have a dentist appointment today.

## Reading for information

**Skimming** is a quick reading method.

When you skim a page in a book, you note its general subject, its divisions, and its major heading.

**Scanning** is also a quick reading method.

When you scan a page, you look for key words.



## Rough Draft

A writer first puts all of his or her ideas on paper in a **rough draft**.

1. Read your outline and notes.
2. Follow your outline to write a rough draft.
3. Write one paragraph for each main topic.
4. Write freely. Do not worry about mistakes now.
5. Read over your draft. Make notes about changes you want to make.

R

## Sentences

A **sentence** is a group of words that tells or asks something. It gives a complete thought.

Every sentence begins with a capital letter.

Every sentence ends with a punctuation mark.

Examples:

Cindy's cat has white hair.

Robert drew pictures of many animals.

## Parts of a Sentence

Every **sentence** has two parts.

The **naming part** tells who or what the sentence is about.

The **naming part** is called the subject.

The **action part** tells something about the naming part.

The **action part** is called the predicate.

Example: **Naming Part**

Sara

Multiplication tables

**Action Part**

plants some seeds

are learned by students

## Compound Subjects

A **compound subject** is two or more subjects joined by **and** or **or**.

These subjects share the same predicate.

Examples:

**A child or an adult** can ride a bicycle.

**Health and fitness** are concerns of many bike riders.

## Declarative and Interrogative Sentences

Use a **declarative sentence** to make a statement.

Begin it with a capital letter and end it with a full stop (.).

Use an **interrogative sentence** to ask a question.

Begin it with a capital letter and end it with a question mark (?).

Examples:

Robin draws great pictures. (**declarative**)

What did Robin draw today? (**interrogative**)

## Expanding Sentences

A writer can **expand** short **sentences** by adding exact details. The details should be colourful words that give the reader an exact picture of how something looks, sounds, or tastes. These details can also tell more about how something moves or feels.

Examples:

Americans chose the eagle as their symbol.

Americans **proudly** chose the **bald** eagle as their **national** symbol.

## Imperative and Exclamatory Sentences

Use an imperative sentence to make a request or give a command. End it with a full stop (.).

Use an exclamatory sentence to express strong feeling. End it with an exclamation point (!).

Examples:

Don't be afraid to try new things. (**imperative**)

Watch out for that bus! (**exclamatory**)

## Joining Sentences

Good writers make their writing more interesting by joining sentences that are short and snappy. Sentences that have ideas that go together can be joined with a **comma** (,) and the word **and**, **but**, or **or**. Be sure the connecting word makes the meaning of the combined sentences clear.

Examples:

Robert may draw a picture of an elephant. He may draw a lion instead.

Robert may draw a picture of an elephant, **or** he may draw a lion instead.



## Subjects and Predicates

Remember that every sentence has a **subject** that **names the person or thing** the sentence is about.

Every sentence has a **predicate** that **tells** what that subject of the sentence **is or does**.

Examples:

Susan Morris **hears the rain on the roof**.

Tom Winter **laughs out loud**.

## Simple Subjects and Complete Subjects

The **simple subject** is the main word or words in the **complete subject** of a sentence.

The **complete subject** includes all the words that tell whom or what the sentence is about.

Examples:

Many farm **children** raise pigs for fun.

(Simple subject)

**These proud owners** love their unusual pets.

(Complete subject)

## Summary

A **summary** is a short sentence or paragraph that tells the main facts or ideas in a story or selection. To summarize any writing, you must pay attention to the details.

Using the question words **who, what, where, when,** and **why** can help you find the important details to include in a summary.

## Suffixes

A **suffix** is a letter or group of letters added to the ending of a base word. A base word is a word to which other word parts may be added. A suffix changes the meaning of a word.

<b>Suffix</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example</b>
al able, ible er, or ful	like, referring to able to be one who full of	coastal breakable, flexible singer, sailor helpful

## Synonym

A **synonym** is a word that has almost the same meaning as another word. When a word has several **synonyms**, use the one that works best in the sentence.

Examples:

**Jobs** is a **synonym** of **tasks**

**End** is a **synonym** of **finish**

## Verbs

A **verb** is a word that expresses action or being.

A **verb** is the main word in the predicate of a sentence. A **verb** and its subject should agree in number.

Examples:

People all over the world **play** board games.

The game of checkers **is** more than 700 years old.

V

## Action Verbs

An **action verb** is a word that shows action.

Verbs tell what a person, place, or thing does.

Examples:

Sandy **ran** along the path.

She **jumped** over the sleeping dog.

V

## Future-Tense Verbs

A **future-tense verb** shows action that will happen in the future. To form the future tense of a verb, use the helping verb **will** with the main verb.

Example:

Tomorrow we **will** visit my aunt's new restaurant.

V



## Helping Verbs

A **helping verb** works with the main verb to tell about an action. The helping verb always comes before the main verb. These words are often used as helping verbs: **am, is, are, was, has, have, had** and **will**.

Examples: Our class **is organising** a large picnic.

We **will invite** our families and friends.

The class **will** certainly **have** a lot to do.

## Irregular Verbs

An **irregular verb** is a verb that does not end with **ed** to show past tense.

Some **irregular verbs** show past tense by using a different form of the main verb with **have, has, or had**.

Present	Past	Past with Helping Verb
do, does	did	(have, has, had) done
come, comes	came	(have, has, had) come
run, runs	ran	(have, has, had) run
go, goes	went	(have, has, had) gone

## Linking Verbs

A **linking verb** connects the subject to a word or words in the predicate. The most common linking verbs are forms of **be**. Some forms of be are **am, is, are, was, and were**. Use **am, is, and are** to show present tense. Use **was** and **were** to show past tense. Some other common **linking verbs** are **become, feel, and seem**.

Examples: Diane and Anna **are** in the garden.

They **seem** happy about something.

## Main Verbs

Sometimes a simple predicate is made up of two or more verbs. The **main verb** is the most important verb in the predicate. It comes last in a group of verbs.

Examples:

People around the world have **played** board games for years.

We are **learning** games from many countries.

V

## Past -Tense Verbs

Verbs can tell about actions in the past.

Form the past tense of most verbs by adding **ed**.

Examples:

Long ago, hunters **hunted** huge mammoths.

These gigantic mammoths **died** long ago.

V

## Present -Tense Verbs

Present - tense verbs tell about action that happens now.

Examples:

Maria's family **grows** coffee beans.

She **watches** the harvest.

The beans **grow** on bushes.

V

## Compound Words

A **compound word** is formed by putting together two smaller words. The first word in a **compound word** usually describes the second.

Examples:

Play + ground = **playground**

Bed + room = **bedroom**

W

## Troublesome Words

Use too when you mean “more than enough” or “also”.

Use to when you mean “in the direction of.”

Use two when you mean the number.

Examples:

Scotland is too beautiful for words!

I've never been to the Highlands.

My brother went there for two weeks.

W



## More Troublesome Words

Use it's when you mean “it is”.

Use its when you mean “belonging to it.”

Examples:

It's a good day to carve a totem pole.

A totem pole has many figures on its body.

Use your when you mean “belonging to you.”

Use you're when you mean “you are.”

Examples:

You're welcome to join our football team.

Don't forget to bring your football boots.

W

## Even More Troublesome Words

Use their when you mean “belonging to them.”

Use there when you mean “in that place.”

Use they’re when you mean “they are.”

Examples:

Their “brains” are really computers.

I like that little robot over there.

They’re small, silver, and smart.