

Quick Guide - Grammar Terms



Articles

- **Indefinite:** a/an/some

Examples: I ate an apple. I ate a banana. I ate some apples

The above sentences are not referring to a specific apple or banana. Since both nouns are indefinite singular countable nouns, it is necessary to put an article before the noun. The indefinite article *some* refers to non-specific plural nouns.

Use *a* before consonant sounds. Use *an* before vowel sounds.

- **Definite:** the

Example: I went to eat the apple, but it was gone.

The above sentence refers to a specific apple. The reader would have prior knowledge about this specific apple.

Qualifiers and Quantifiers

- **Qualifier:** Words or phrases that add meaning to a noun, noun phrase, verb, or verb phrase.

Examples: good, generally, somewhat, very, kind of, enough...

- **Quantifiers:** Words or phrases that show quantity of a noun.

Examples: three, each, some, every, that, all of the, many, a few ...

FYI¹: It is important to look at the relationship between countable and uncountable nouns.

Clauses

- **Subordinate Clause:** Also known as a dependent clause. Subordinate clauses have a subject and a verb, but they are not complete sentences. Look for subordinating conjunctions (see below) at the beginning of the clause.

Example: While I was at the Teaching and Learning Center, I got help with my paper.

- **Insubordinate Clause:** Also known as an independent clause or main clause. Insubordinate clauses have at least one subject and verb.

FYI: The underlined subordinate clause needs a comma and another clause to make it a complete sentence.

Example: I got help with my paper.

Example: I got help with my paper while I was at the Teaching and Learning Center.

There is no comma needed if the subordinate clause is after an insubordinate clause.

¹ FYI – For your information

Teaching and Learning Center- The Rancho Bernardo Center

Phrases

- **Phrase:** This is an incomplete sentence because it lacks a subject or a verb.

Example: An accomplished and well-respected cook. (This phrase contains a subject, the cook, but no verb).

Conjunctions

- **Coordinating conjunctions:** These are more commonly known as FANBOYS. Use a coordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses.

Examples: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

FYI: A safe rule is to use a comma when joining two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction. There are some exceptions.

- Do not use a comma when joining two nouns.
- Do not use a comma when you are joining clauses that are not independent clauses.

- **Subordinating conjunctions:** Words that are used to link sentences. A subordinate conjunction can go before or after the main clause (see Clauses).

Some Common Examples: *until, while, since, when, because, after, even though, so that, and before.*

Common Error types

- **Run-on sentence:** Two clauses that are connected with no punctuation mark or conjunction.

Example: The boy was walking inside it was raining outside.

- **Comma splice:** Two clauses have been connected incorrectly with a comma.

Example: The boy was walking inside, it was raining outside.

Punctuation

- **Colon:** A colon is used to introduce a list. It draws attention to information that follows.

Example: I need the following items: rolls, sandwich meat, and cheese.

- **Comma:** A comma is used to separate words or ideas.

Example: I am going to bring rolls, sandwich meat, and cheese.

- **Ellipsis:** An ellipsis is used to show omitted words or sentences or to indicate a pause in dialogue.

Example: He said, "I want to go to many places in the world such as Paris, Seoul, Beijing, and Ankara."

He said, "I want to go to...Paris, Seoul, Beijing, and Ankara."

Teaching and Learning Center- The Rancho Bernardo Center

- **Semicolon:** A semicolon is used to connect independent clauses and to indicate a closer relationship between the clauses than a period does.
Example: I am going to the grocery store; I need to buy cookies and milk.

Common Types of Sentences

- **Simple:** One clause with at least a subject and a verb.
Example: I ran outside.
- **Compound:** Two clauses joined together with a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) or semicolon.
Example: I ran outside, but my brother stayed inside.
I ran outside; my brother stayed inside.
- **Complex:** Two clauses joined together by a subordinating conjunction.
Examples:
 - I am really happy because I got an A on my test.
 - Because I got an A on my test, I am really happy.
- **Complex-compound:** Two independent clauses with one or more dependent clauses.
Examples:
 - Because my wife got a promotion, we are going to pay off our house, and we will buy a new car.

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that have the same spelling and same pronunciation, but they have different meanings.

Example: I am going to *watch* the game. I bought a new *watch*.

Homophones

Homophones are words that have the same pronunciation but different spelling and meanings

Example: *Their* binoculars are very powerful. Look over *there*.

their/there; two, to, too; passed, past; bored, board

FYI. Many writers have trouble with homophones. These words are commonly confused words.

Look at these web sources for more in-depth information:

- <http://www.palindromelist.net/>
- <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/qualifiers/>
- http://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation_rules.asp

760-744-1150 ext. 8563

<https://www2.palomar.edu/pages/tlc-ranchobernardo/>

The Rancho Bernardo Center - Teaching and Learning Center (SEC 401)