SECTION 5

GRAMMAR AND STYLE

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AT WORD LEVEL

A. Word Form

Words in a sentence must be in the correct form. Errors in **word form** may include wrong choices with respect to singular or plural, part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb), pronoun form (male or female), or verb form.

Examples

> *Wrong (verb form):* Chung **walking** very quickly along the street.
>
> *Correct:* Chung **was walking** very quickly along the street**.**
>
> *Wrong (adverb form):* Chung was walking very **quick** along the street.
>
> *Correct:* Chung was walking very **quickly** along the street.

Exercise 5.1: Recognizing Word Form Errors

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Ex. 5.1

Each of these sentences has one or two word form errors. Correct the errors. The first one has been done for you as an example.

1. The inventions of tool use was a huge step in human development. [*inventions* should be singular to agree with the singular verb *was.*]

2. Progress in agricultural are essential for all societies.

3. The industrial revolution was based on learning how to harnessed the power of machinery.

4. The use of spoken language is the most important attribute of humans, setting him and her apart from all others forms of life.

5. The impact of writer systems was profound because it allowed humans to communicate easy across great distances of time and space.

6. Oral history is part of many culture, but written history is said to be the foundation of civilize.

7. Some experts claiming that computer technology, as compared to all other inventions, has had the great influence on world history.

8. Electronic calculators have enable modern commerce to progress in unexpected ways.

9. The astonishingly advances in modern telecommunications will enable a new revolutionary to occur.

10. Before the invention of heavier-than-air machines, people would had dismissed modern jet travel as foolish fantasy.

11. The most important question is whether humans can learn to using technology for peaceful purposes.

12. Inventions that we have not yet even dream of will be part of the normal life of future generation.

B. Articles

Terms to know

Indefinite article: *a* (or *an* if the noun begins with a vowel sound)

Definite article: *the*

Count (countable) noun: A noun that can be made plural or counted (*book, books, three books*).

Non-count (uncountable) noun: Nouns that usually cannot be counted or made plural (*furniture, flour, weather*).

Zero article: This refers to use of a noun with no article before it; as in *Snow is white.*

To decide which article to use, determine what type of noun is being described.

Count and Non-Count Nouns

Singular Nouns

- Use **a (an)** *w*ith a singular count noun (never with a non-count or plural noun).

Examples

> Give me **a** pen.
> (referring to an unspecified pen)
>
> **An** elephant damaged this tree.
> (referring to an unspecified elephant)

- Use **a** if someone (or something) is one out of a group of many.

Example

> I discussed it with Dr. Martin, **a** professor in the Philosophy Department.

> ▸ ▸ ▸ **Usage Note:**
>
> Many nouns can be non-count or count **depending on the context.** In these cases, the meaning of the noun may be different according to whether it is non-count or count.

Nouns with General Reference

- Use **no article and the singular form** of the noun to refer to a general type of something.

Examples

> I went there by **bus**.
>
> **Time** flies when you're having fun. (general idea of time)

- Use **no article and the plural form** of the noun to refer to a noun in general—meaning *all* things or persons referred to by that noun.

Examples

> **Students** often come here to see me. (refers to all types of students)
>
> I've been to that restaurant many **times**.
> (a specific number of different times)

- Use **a(n)** or **the** for the general meaning of all types, species, or items referred to by the noun, especially to a species or type of something (a more formal usage).

Examples

   A lion is an interesting animal

   The lion is an interesting animal.

Nouns with Definite Reference

- Use **the** with count or non-count nouns, in singular or plural, when the reader (or listener) knows what definite or specific thing is being referred to by the noun. Often an *of* phrase or *that* clause makes something specific.

> ▶ ▶ ▶ **Usage Note:**
> Some adjectives can also make a noun unique and definite.

Examples

   Give me **the** pen.
   (referring to a specific pen that the reader/listener knows)

   The development of this system is recent.

   The information that he gave me was wrong.

   The medicines in my cabinet are effective.

Examples

   Give it to **the first person** to arrive.

   The only way to do the job is to work hard.

   Talk to **the next customer.**

- Use **the** with many specific geographical features or regions when there is an adjectival form in the name.

Examples

It sank in **the Allegheny River**.

We went to **the Rocky Mountains**.

My sister vacationed in **the Hawaiian Islands**.

- Use **the** when the noun is something specific because it is unique.

Examples

The earth revolves around **the sun**, and **the moon** revolves around **the earth**.

I left my coffee cup in **the kitchen**.
(when there is one kitchen in the house)

- Use **the** when you want to point out a particular group and exclude other groups.

Examples

The bus drivers in this city are very friendly.
(specific contrast with other groups)

Nouns Using Zero (No) Article

- Use **no article** before the noun with non-specific, non-count nouns, plural count nouns, and names or titles (such as movies, people, or books).

Examples

There was **evidence** to prove it.
(non-specific, non-count noun)

I need **money**.
(non-specific, non-count noun)

I don't like **raisins**.
(plural count noun)

Take the patient to **Wilkins Hospital**.
(name of a hospital)

Great Expectations is a great novel.
(title of a book)

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Ex. 5.2,
5.3

Exercise 5.2: Articles

Fill in the blanks with **a/an, the,** or **0** for zero article. Some items may have more than one answer.

1. She would like to borrow _____ pencil on the desk.

2. _____ student sitting in _____ corner has an extra pencil.

3. Would you like _____ coffee or _____ tea?

4. He took _____ only maps that were left.

5. Our director announced, "_____ play has been cancelled."

6. She went to _____ Heinz Hall to listen to the symphony last night.

7. I bought _____ rice, _____ broccoli, and _____ pan at the store.

8. My daughter is learning to play _____ violin at school.

9. That restaurant is on _____ Fifth Avenue.

10. Seoul is _____ capital of Korea.

11. _____ President Costa defeated all his _____ opponents in the election.

12. I had an appointment with Ms. Aldali, _____ accountant who works for _____ Baker, Zelie, and Sons, Ltd.

13. Marie ate some of _____ candy that I gave her.

14. _____ human being is a mammal.

C. Prepositions

Prepositions are best learned in context because they can vary in meaning, depending on which other words they are used with. They are often idiomatic, and, in many cases, they do not have translation equivalents in other languages. The most common prepositions in English are *at*, *by*, *for*, *from*, *in*, *of*, *on*, *to*, and *with*. However, there are many others. Give special attention to their use in what you read and hear, and try to give them repeated attention in order to gradually learn their usage.

Note these important points:

- Prepositions usually indicate relationships of **time, place, movement, and logical connections between ideas**. Prepositions connect a noun (or pronoun or noun phrase) with another word, usually a noun, verb, or adjective.
- A preposition has a **noun (or noun phrase, pronoun, or gerund) as its object**. Use the object form of pronouns after prepositions. A verb that follows a preposition as object must be in the gerund form (V + *-ing*), its noun form.
- There are many **verb + preposition** combinations—**phrasal verbs**—in which the preposition does not have its usual meaning and the meaning of the phrasal verb is not clear from its parts. Phrasal verbs must be learned as whole phrases.

Examples

I think you should arrive **before** 12:30 PM. (Time)

Lionel will stay **in** the house. (Place)

Walk **along** the street. (Movement)

It was done **by** the policeman. (Logical relationship—Agent)

After some time, I **gave up**. (Phrasal verb)

Bill walked **around her**. (Object form following preposition)

She tried to **talk** me **into going** to see the movie. (Phrasal verb + gerund)

After speaking, Ahmed left the room. (Gerund following preposition)

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Ex. 5.4,
5.5

Exercise 5.3: Using Appropriate Prepositions

Insert the correct preposition in each gap in the paragraph.

① _____ my opinion the most important and useful everyday device ② _____ present is a computer. There are several reasons why I would suggest buying a computer first when you would like to furnish your apartment ③ _____ technical devices. Modern computers have enough multimedia and computational capabilities to perform all functions that such devices ④ _____ televisions, audio players, and video equipment can. In relation ⑤ _____ computer games, a computer can become the entertainment center ⑥ _____ your world. The Internet as a source ⑦ _____ most news information, e-business, e-shopping opportunities, e-mail, and videoconference communication is an advantage you can obtain only ⑧ _____ means ⑨ _____ a home computer. Finally a great deal ⑩ _____ hiring ⑪ _____ modern jobs is done ⑫ _____ using computers. Having a computer ⑬ _____ home helps you to get the necessary practice if you are a novice. If you are an experienced user, all these arguments are redundant because you know the reasons! I am sure you will agree ⑭ _____ me.

D. Word Choice in Formal Writing Style

It is important when writing in a formal, academic style to choose words that are very specific in meaning. This will give the reader an exact idea of what is being expressed. Vague or general words such as *thing* or *get* should be avoided. Be careful when choosing alternates because some words that are similar do not always have the same meaning or connotation when used in different contexts. For instance, *proficient* and *beneficial* can both substitute for *good*, but they have different meanings and must be used accordingly. A **thesaurus** (reference list or book of synonyms) can be very helpful in finding alternates, but use a dictionary as well to help you select the most appropriate words.

Words that are usually too general or too informal, followed by examples of alternate words that might be used instead:

give → **donate, provide, offer**

get → **obtain, acquire, achieve**

lots → **much/many, numerous, multiple**

nice → **kind, pleasant, enjoyable**

good → **proficient, beneficial, decent**

let → **allow, enable, permit**

thing → **element, factor, entity**

people → **individuals, citizens, inhabitants**

make → **compose, formulate, create**

Common **phrasal verbs** that are too informal for academic texts, followed by examples of alternate words that might be used instead:

talk about → **discuss**

go into → **enter**

cut back → **reduce**

drop by → **visit**

ask for → **request**

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Ex. 5.6

Exercise 5.4: Using More Specific Words

Replace all of the underlined words with a word that is more specific.

1. I am planning to <u>get</u> a new car this year. _____

2. Eating nutritious food and getting enough exercise are the most important <u>things</u> for a healthy lifestyle. _____

3. From the time she was a child, she has been a <u>good</u> soccer player.

   _____

4. Standardized tests should be required of all <u>people in high school and college</u>. _____

Exercise 5.5: Using More Formal Words

Replace the underlined words with words that are more formal.

1. For her research, she will <u>look at</u> the effects of carbon monoxide emissions on the environment. _____

2. In order to <u>get</u> a driver's license, you have to take a computerized test and a driving exam. _____

3. The third chapter of the book <u>talks about</u> the role of stereotypes in speech processing. _____

4. Mrs. Romero was a <u>great</u> person; she always gave money to charities and helped individuals financially whenever she could. _____

E. Reference Words: Pronouns and Synonyms

Accurate use of reference words helps writers create coherence and avoid unnecessary repetition. The most common reference words are personal pronouns (*he/him, she/her, you, it, we, you, they/them*), possessive pronouns (*mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs*), and demonstrative pronouns (*this, that, these, those*).

Synonyms also help writers avoid repetition when used together with *this, that, these, those.* By using synonyms, previously mentioned ideas can be referred to without using the same words too many times.

Using Pronouns to Avoid Repeating Nouns

Examples

Weak: My husband's mother is a very courageous woman. *My husband* admires *his mother* because *my husband's mother* worked extremely hard throughout *my husband's* childhood in order to support the family.

Better: My husband's mother is a very courageous woman. **He** admires **his** mother because **she** worked extremely hard throughout **his** childhood in order to support **her** family.

However, make sure it is clear which noun a pronoun refers to. You might have to repeat a noun rather than using a pronoun.

Examples

Unclear: Doctors and patients must have good relationships. *They* must be friendly and relaxed so that *they* feel comfortable. Then, *they* will be willing to openly discuss *their* problems with *them*.

Clear: Doctors and patients must have good relationships. **Doctors** must be friendly and relaxed so that **their patients** feel comfortable. Then, **the patients** will be willing to openly discuss their problems with **them**.

Using the Demonstrative Pronouns to Avoid Repeating an Entire Phrase

It can only represent a noun or noun phrase. *This* must be used to represent an idea or process.

Examples

> *Doing research in the library* requires some planning and preparation. However, **it** is an enjoyable process once you get started.

> We first subjected the samples to extreme heat. **This** took twelve hours.

Make sure that the pronouns you use agree with the nouns they refer to (singular/plural agreement and person).

Example

> We experienced *numerous problems* in our experiment. **They** delayed our results so much that we could not publish our article in September as we had planned.

Using Synonyms for Reference

Good writing uses synonyms to avoid repetition. They are often used with demonstrative pronouns *this, that, these, those* or with the reference word *such.* Remember that few words in English have <u>exactly</u> the same meaning. Be sure you know the precise meaning of any synonyms you choose. For instance, the words in each of these groups might be used as alternatives for each other in certain contexts.

- *situation, condition, event, circumstance, process*

- *concept, idea, theory, opinion, hypothesis, perspective, argument, claim, reasoning, position*

- *problem, obstacle, challenge, difficulty, complication*

- *issue, question, matter, topic, subject*

- *characteristic, property, aspect, feature, quality*

Examples

> We experienced numerous *problems* in our experiment. **These obstacles** delayed our results so much that we could not publish our article.

> Her professor asked her to explain *the relationship between the global economy and the local unemployment rate*. She had never before considered **such an issue** and found the question extremely difficult.

Other words, such as *one, another, a/the first, a/the second, the former, the previous, the latter,* may also be used to refer back to previous ideas.

Exercise 5.6: Using Reference Words to Avoid Repetition

Revise the sentences to avoid repetition and/or correct errors in pronoun usage. Answers may vary.

1. Scientists often experience setbacks in their research. The scientists should not feel discouraged, however, because setbacks can help scientists make new discoveries that might have been overlooked.

2. There are two advantages of having friends who are different from ourselves. One advantage is that you can share different opinions. A second advantage is that they will learn a lot and help each other because they have different qualities than us.

3. Employees must take occasional vacations to reduce stress and stay efficient. Some employers encourage employees to take vacations, but some employers discourage taking vacations.

4. Since the first settlers arrived in South America, Brazil has gone through three main periods in Brazilian history. In the first main period, from the discovery of Brazil until about 1822, Brazil was a Portuguese colony.

5. The lifestyle of people who live in cities is totally different from the lifestyle of people who live in small towns or rural areas. People who live in cities often walk quickly and speak quickly because they are under pressure. Time is money for them. However, people who live in small towns do everything more slowly.

6. Public libraries are often faced with the difficulty of dealing with problem users. Problem users generally means users who cause difficulties in libraries by their offensive behaviors, such as eating, drinking, loitering, staring at others, or talking in a loud voice.

F. Reducing Wordiness

In good writing, being concise is valued. Wordiness represents a lack of skill. Wordiness includes repetition of ideas and redundancy. The two basic guidelines for reducing wordiness are:

- Do not use more words than necessary.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition.

Examples

Weak: **The majority of the time** that type of course takes place after 10 AM **in the morning.**

Better: That type of course **usually** takes place **after 10 AM**.

Weak: Professor Rouleau **teaches** at the university, where **he is the instructor** of the **introductory course** in Chemistry that is **designed to prepare students for later courses**.

Better: Professor Rouleau **teaches** the **introductory course** in Chemistry at the university.

Exercise 5.7: Reducing Wordiness

Reduce the wordy expressions in the essay on a separate sheet of paper. Be sure to keep the meaning of the original even if you make grammar changes. Paragraphs are numbered only for reference in this exercise. Answers may vary.

Disposing of Garbage

1. Garbage in the modern world is becoming a serious problem and is invading our lives nowadays. In the past, people used to be thrifty. They did not waste anything in those days but used all leftovers for some purpose; for example, cardboard was used for fires and heating, or containers were reused. People used to create less trash and waste in former times. Nowadays, unfortunately, we make a lot of waste. The quantity of garbage that we generate and throw in the trash is much more than the quantity of food we consume. Consequently, we are having problems and difficulties getting rid of garbage, which has started overwhelming our lives, nature, and the air we breathe. However, as we go forward into the future which is to come, we can find ways and means of exploiting garbage and using it positively.

2. The bad effects of garbage are not limited to the personal lives of individuals and families. In fact, the effects have spread out immensely to become a social and global phenomenon affecting the whole earth and the whole universe. Garbage has invaded and threatened our lives. Pollution and toxic chemicals and substances, some of which are the result of garbage, are threatening our existence.

3. Yet there are some solutions that could prevent the increase of the bad effects of garbage and reduce pollution. Some countries have developed very sophisticated ways of exploiting their garbage and extracting energy from it. In other countries, there are some initiatives to exploit garbage by recycling it or using it as compost for fertilizing seeds and plants.

4. Nowadays, people have become aware of the danger garbage can put their lives in. Consciousness of the bad, negative, injurious effects has increased. They have figured out smart ways of disposing of garbage without creating harmful side effects such as pollution. People have discovered how to manage their garbage and use it intelligently to make their lives easier and cleaner at the present time.