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# Telling Your Story

Distance Learning Lesson: Grammar + Creative Writing

Prisoner Express is a program of the Durland Alternatives Library which is a project partner of the Center for Transformative Action (CTA).



Due to the high demand of both Grammar and Telling Your Story, Michelle and Clara decided to put them together into one comprehensive packet, since grammar is a key component in writing clearly. For those who did not sign up for both, I hope this is a pleasant surprise, just in time for the holidays! Please feel free to participate in both, especially the latter writing portion—put what you learn in the grammar portion to practice! To contact Clara specifically and only about the grammar section (questions/comments), please label your letter envelope with “ATTN: GRAM,” but otherwise, to respond to Michelle’s writing section prompts or to comment about this packet overall, please label your letter envelope with “ATTN: TYS.” We are excited to see everyone’s new and improved writing soon!

**GRAMMAR SECTION**

**Hello everyone!** Welcome to Clara's Grammar Packet! Some of you may be familiar with me if you have participated in the April/May Theme Essay Compilation or if you received a letter from me in the Journal Program, but for those who aren't, my name is Clara, and I work at Prisoner Express (obviously). Outside of writing this packet, I work on getting your requests for programs entered into the Prisoner Express system. After having seen everyone's enthusiasm in other PE programs, I thought I'd chime in with something too. Feel free to write me if you have any feedback, comments, and/or questions for and about this packet (write ATTN: GRAM on your letter envelope)! Also, make sure to read this grammar study portion slowly and try not rush through. The material is very dense and there are a lot of words on the page, so take your time to digest the information. It will be difficult to read this packet once and implement it perfectly and immediately so I recommend that you really take the time to study the material carefully, but remember, practice makes perfect.

**What Is Grammar?**

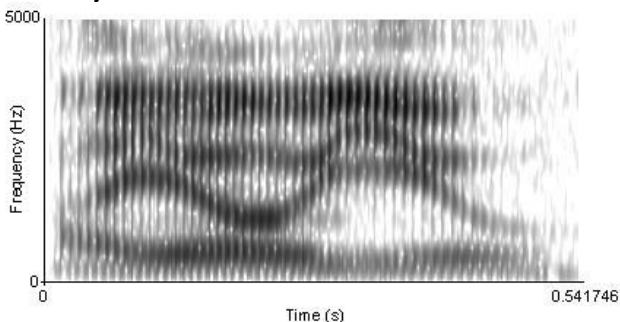
In linguistics, the study of language, there are two types of grammar: descriptive and prescriptive. If you are a native English speaker, or are completely fluent in it, you already have a set of rules in your brain that you may or may not have realized. These rules are what allows you to understand English! For example, you know that you can end a word with "rt" like "dart" or "tart," but you also know you cannot start a word with "rt." How would one even pronounce that? Linguists focus their study on these descriptive rules of grammar to try to understand how we acquire language. However, in this packet, I will be going over the nitty-gritty of prescriptive grammar, the rules that you should follow (according to textbooks and academia). But first, I want to present a few linguistics facts to get your brain going! Throughout the packet, here and there, I will ask you questions relating to the topic I cover. The answers will be written in the back page of this packet, so refrain from looking at that until you've thoroughly thought the questions through!

**Understanding Language:**

Not only is language a way of expression, but it also dictates your perception of the world. One clear example of this is in the perception of color. In English, blue is a color ranging from baby blues to navy. However, in Russian, there is no word for that large range of hues. Instead, different shades of blue have their own names. In an experiment with Russian speakers and English speakers, Russians were found to have a much better sense at distinguishing between shades of blue than English speakers. In other words, native Russian speakers were able to see more shades of blue than native English speakers. In a way, depending on the language you speak, you are slightly color blind to certain spectrums. In contrast, in Japanese, the word "aoi" covers what in English would be called blue and green. They describe green traffic lights as "aoi" and the sky as "aoi." (Note: With globalization, "midori" became a word for "green," but "aoi" is still used for some green colored items, especially for vegetables.) In this way, language has a profound impact on our perception of the world. This theory is called the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, for anyone really interested in cognitive science!

**Brain Teaser:**

Have you noticed that you usually don't pause between words? Try quickly saying the sentence, "I owe you." You probably pronounced the sentence, "ai-yeou you." Compare that to reading each word separately, "I. Owe. You." Do you hear the difference? In pronouncing the whole sentence, a "y" sound creeps in between "I" and "Owe." This is because when we say a combination of words, we construct transitional sounds that connect the words. Not only does it completely distort the sound of the words themselves, it makes it hard to know when a word starts and stops. The image below is a spectrogram, an image of the sound you hear for our sentence, "I owe you." Sound is basically the vibrations in the air that hits our ear drum, sending electrical signals to our brain. So if this is the sound we hear, how do we



distinguish between the words? Where does the "I" end and the "Owe" begin? Where does the "Owe" end and the "You" begin? How is it that our brains can segment these continuous sounds into separate words so well without much conscious effort? This is a complicated question that is still debated today with multiple different theories.

**\*Q1: Critical Thinking: This doesn't mean we have ZERO pauses of sound in our speech. Where do you think most of our pauses are? Hint: Think of what sound the sentence, "I owe you," lacks.**

\* Q1: Consonants! Say the word "trouble." Do you hear it? There's a slight pause in sound right after you pronounce the T before the R. We produce no sound between two consonants-- that means that most of our pauses are within words. This further complicates the conundrum of speech perception, doesn't it?

## Introduction:

I know this packet has A LOT of words, but bear with me!

Languages are so complicated, and so you can break grammar down into very small details. I am not going to get too much in depth with every one of those details in this packet, but once you read through and understand everything, you will have a strong grasp of the tools necessary to write with correct grammar. Before all of that, I want to begin with providing you with definitions of some basic grammar terms:

Sentence = subject + predicate (this is all you need to construct the most basic sentence)

Predicate: action or description (ex: Sam ran or Sam is tall)

Independent clause: acts as a sentence within a sentence

Dependent clause: subject + predicate (needs an independent clause to complete sentence)

The boy went to school / after he ate breakfast

Independent                      Dependent

In the above example, "The boy went to school" is independent because it can be a sentence on its own but "after he ate breakfast" is dependent as it contains a subject and predicate but cannot be a sentence alone.

Phrase: two or more words that is not subject + predicate (ex: during the winter)

## The Basics:

As fluent English speakers, we may think we have a solid grasp of the English language as we can construct sentences, especially verbally, without much thought. But that's just descriptive grammar. Even for those with a solid grasp, prescriptive grammar, the rules that I will get into, has to be taught. No matter how basic a section is, I would encourage you to follow along to refresh your memory and have an even better command of the English language. I will also have interesting facts (*italicized*) and questions (**bolded**) on the topics for you to play with!

## Parts of Speech:

There are eight general "types" of words: Nouns, Pronouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs, Conjunction, Preposition, and Interjection. Here is a quick run down of them for review!

There are two types of nouns. Proper nouns are nouns that names specific places, people, or things, and are usually capitalized. (Example: John, Utah, Australia, Panda, Eiffel Tower, Hobsonville Middle School.) Common nouns are objects or subjects that don't pertain to a single specific thing. (Example: dog, person, chair, skateboard.) Usually when your thinking of writing a plural form of a noun, you think to add an S to the end of the word. These are the cases when this rule doesn't work:

1. Nouns ending with -y → change to -ies                      [enemy → enemies]
2. Nouns ending with -o → change to -es                      [tomato → tomatoes]
3. Nouns ending with -is → change to -es                      [thesis → theses]
4. Nouns ending with -f or -fe → change to -ves                      [life → lives]
5. Nouns ending with -us → change to -i                      [fungus → fungi]
6. Nouns that contain -oo- → change to -ee-                      [foot → feet]

There are so many more that the list could go on forever. English is pretty weird in this sense. Sometimes the nouns entirely change when put into the plural form. Mouse to Mice or Person to People are clear examples. Sometimes they don't change at all! Sheep, Series, and Aircraft are all both singular and plural forms of the noun. I hear this is one of the hardest things to learn when trying to pick up the English language.

*Irregularities in our language has baffled linguists in language acquisition. How is it that babies are able to get a grasp of all of these exceptions to language rules? One theory that I personally lean towards is one from Connectionism. This approach to mental processes thinks about our brain as a bunch of neural networks. Hebbian theory states that the nerve cells in our body (more specifically the brain here), neurons, that fire together, wire together, meaning those neurons will have a stronger connection to each other. In this way, connectionism proposes that a child will be able to infer from practice and mistakes. Imagine a child starting to understand plurals. She starts with the essentials: is to are or has to have. She then begins to learn rules. She knows that the plural of boot is boots, so she says "hoops" for the plural of hoop. In her brain, the connection of neurons that is utilized in the addition of the -s for plurals further solidifies. The stronger this connection becomes, the faster she will be able to access this rule (this is also how we learn in general— practice = perfect!). Next time she tries to think of a plural for a noun, she'll be able to recall the s-rule faster. However, when she says "tooths" instead of teeth," her mother corrects her, and now, her brain reorganizes this information. As this exception violates her expectations for plurals, the neurons in her brain fire rapidly. She may repeat this mistake, but over time, the more she uses the word, the less thinking she will have to do to be correct. Her brain biologically programs the word "tooth" differently from the rule of -s. You and I don't have to put much thought into this process because its essentially built into our brains now. After the child encounters more of these exceptions of the many plural rules, she will be able to correctly predict when words fit the rules or when a word is an exception, even when they're brand new words. Keep in mind, this is just one theory on language acquisition!*

Pronouns, like nouns, are also the subjects and objects of the sentence. They are used to refer to individuals or a group of people that have been referenced before. If I wrote, *Throw the ball to her*, “her” would have no specific meaning. You would need to have clarified who “her” is before this sentence. Also, keep in mind that words such as my, your, or there, are adjectives describing who the noun belongs to, so these are not nouns themselves.

*History of the Word “You”*

The chart below shows the different forms of the third person pronouns (what you use to talk about other people). Notice how each cell has its own pronoun.

	Subject	Object
Singular	He/She	Him/Her
Plural	They	Them

Compare to the second person pronoun:

	Subject	Object
Singular	You	You
Plural	You	You

How is it that the word “you” is so much more versatile? Below, you can see how the second person pronoun for Old English (5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Centuries), the earliest form of English. (Note: the alphabet for Old English was not the alphabet we use today. What I have below is the pronunciation of the words in the modern alphabet.)

	Subject	Object
Singular	Thou	Thee
Plural	Ye	You

Fast forward to the days of Shakespeare, we arrive at Early Modern English. By this time, French aristocratic culture permeated the English language. The French used the plural form to address people of higher status, so “ye” and “you” became the go-to word to be polite in speech. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially with the blurring of social statuses, “thou,” “thee,” “ye,” were all dropped, leaving the dominant “you”!

If you have some original Shakespearean text (not the edited!) with you, I encourage you to go through that text again with this knowledge. When he uses the word “you,” he is addressing the plural. Does that make a difference to the analysis of the text? [When Hamlet addresses Ophelia, he often uses “you.” In this way, Shakespeare alludes to Hamlet’s projection to all women, not just Ophelia.]

There are many different kinds of verbs for varying purposes. They describe what the subject of the sentence is doing (or being) in relation to an object, if given. The main three categories of verbs are action verbs, linking verbs, and helping verbs. As the name suggests, action verbs are the verbs that tell you the action of the subject of the sentence. In the sentence, “I threw the ball,” “threw” is action verb as I am doing that action to the ball. Linking verbs do not express action but the state or condition of the subject it describes. I will get more into this in a side for adjectives/adverbs below. Helping verbs, or auxiliary verbs, are used to give more information about the verb (action or linking) that follows. In the sentence, “You must come,” “must” is a helping verb, describing an obligatory tone for “come,” the action verb of the sentence. Helping verbs can also describe the tense of the sentence. If a sentence reads, “She is jogging,” the “is” puts the action of jogging into the progressive tense, expressing an ongoing action. Similarly, in the sentence, “I had eaten before Sam arrived,” the “had” puts the action of eating in the past before the event of Sam’s arrival. In this way, helping verbs can give more information about the main verb of the sentence.

Verbs are important for the “voice” of your writing. In a sentence, if the action is being performed by the subject, then the voice is active. This is what we use most of the time. In the passive voice, the action is being received. *He bought spaghetti* is active, as the subject, he, does the action of buying, whereas *The spaghetti was bought by him* is passive; the spaghetti is receiving the action of buying. You could even omit him entirely and write, “The spaghetti was bought.” As a writer, you should use the passive voice to draw attention away from the subject. (questions on the next page!)

**\*Q2: Identify whether the sentence is active or passive, and then, rewrite it in the opposite voice:**

1. The problem was solved by a genius.
2. My brother caught the ball.
3. The fireman extinguished the fire.
4. Thomas fed his dog.
5. The letter was written by a female.
6. Manny opened the door
7. The bear has learned a few tricks.
8. The house was being cleaned by the owner.

Adjectives are words that modify or describe a noun. Adverbs do the same for verbs. Usually, you can tell what is an adjective and what is an adverb by looking at the ending of the word. The -ly ending is most usually an adverb, sometimes as a modification of an adjective. For example, "bright" is an adjective as it describes the quality of a (noun) reflecting or emitting light. Once you add -ly, "bright" becomes an adverb: "brightly." However, like everything in the world of language, there are exceptions to this rule.

**\*Q3: Can you think of some adverbs that are identical to their adjective form? Test the words by constructing sentences using these words as both adjectives and adverbs. *Sally runs fast.* & *The fast rabbit hopped.***

*The most widely used irregular adverb is the word, "well," the adjective form being "good." People tend to mix these two up regularly. In the grammar world though, there is a harsh distinction between the two. When someone asks you, "How are you?" you should most definitely say, "I'm doing well." If you say, "I'm doing good," you are saying your doing good things/actions, not that you are in a good state. As you can see, this can get confusing when the verb at play is not an action verb but a linking verb. As described previously, these verbs don't implicate any action, but a state of being. This could refer to thoughts, emotions, relationships, senses, and measurements. The most widely used is the word "is," which could also be a helping verb—don't confuse this with helping verbs, which need a secondary verb after them! An example of "is" as a linking verb is like this: "Sally is Sam's sister." The "is" establishes their relationship. ("Is" or "was" (the past tense of "is") as a helping verb looks more like this: He is/was working.) You use linking verbs all the time when you say, "He is tall" or "She is sad," or "The baby is 7 pounds," in describing the state of being, emotion and measurement, respectively. I mention this, because whether you use an adjective or adverb changes the meaning of the sentence in the context of linking verbs. Take for example this sentence: "I feel well." This can mean two things, that I feel healthy or that I have a great sense of touch. Now, do you think "I feel good" is grammatically correct? Pause reading this packet, refer back to when linking verbs are used, and think about this question. The answer is yes! When you say "I feel good," the meaning changes to "I feel happy/content/optimistic," since feel here is a linking verb describing a state of being.*

**\*Q4: Explain the difference between these two sentences: "I hear well." vs "I hear good."**

Conjunctions are the parts of speech that connects words, sentences, phrases, and clauses. Using the acronym "FANBOYS" (each letter represents a conjunction), answer the following question.

**\*Q5: Name some conjunctions. F is "For," the first one.**

When FANBOYS are used between two independent clauses, a comma is a necessity. I will go into commas and independent clauses for the punctuation section. I do, however, want to get specific about NOR and YET. Though the use of nor has been in decline recently, there are still concrete rules for when it is used. In the statement, "you can either walk or take a bus," "either" is matched up with "or." In the same way, "neither" and "nor" has to match up. "I want neither pancakes nor waffles," would be correct. Nor can also be used in negative expressions. "That is not what I meant to say, nor should it matter to you," is an example. Yet, when used as a conjunction, can mean something like nevertheless or but. "He loves art, yet he chose to pursue studies in physics," is an example of this. Be careful though; yet has several other

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\* Q2: 1. Passive, The genius solved the problem. 2. Active, The ball was caught by my brother. 3. Active, The fire was extinguished by the fireman. 4. Active, The dog is fed by Thomas. 5. Passive, A female wrote the letter. 6. Active, The door was opened by Manny. 7. Active, A few tricks has been learned by the bear. 8. Passive, The owner was cleaning the house.

\* Q3 Common Answers: hard, late, early, daily, wrong, straight

\* Q4: "I hear well" means that your ears work well, that your auditory system works. "I hear good," on the other hand, means that whatever you're listening to is good stuff.

\* Q5 Answers in order: and, nor, but, or, yet, so

meanings and uses, functioning as an adverb at times. This applies to for and so as well. They aren't always conjunctions, but you can use them as such.

Prepositions indicate the location of a certain action or noun in time or space. You can easily identify a preposition by asking yourself if that word is telling you anything about a where or when something is or is happening. Examples of prepositions include, about, above, behind, with, of, over, in, through, etc.

*Did you know that you can't end a sentence with a preposition? To say "What are you majoring in?" is technically grammatically incorrect. Instead, the sentence should be corrected to "In what are you majoring?" Yes, it looks/sounds weird, but it is what it is!*

**\*Q6: How would you fix the following sentence? Where is the dog under?**

*Since we're on the topic of strange-sounding-grammar, I want you to think back to pronouns. Imagine you pick up a phone call. The voice asks for you. "Hello, can I speak to (your name)?" Would you ever say, "Yes, this is he/she" (instead of him/her)? Technically, this is the grammatically correct way to reply. This is a way to sound more sophisticated!*

Lastly, interjections capture bursts of emotions or mimic a sound, so they are used mostly in speech. Examples include, "Yum," "Bam," "Darn," or "Hooray." A sentence should make sense with or without interjections. "Ugh, I don't want to do work" works just as well as a sentence as "I don't want to do work," just that the "ugh" adds more character and expression to the sentence.

Before I end this section, I want to briefly talk about articles. These are almost forgotten to us in a way because these parts of speech are so instinctual. I am talking about A/AN, and THE. A/AN is an indefinite article, which refers to a generalized noun. THE, on the other hand, points to something specific. If you say, "I almost hit a deer," you would not be referring to a specific deer. However, if you say, "I almost hit the deer," you must have mentioned something about that specific deer before in conversation so that the reader/listener knows which deer you are referring to.

*Have you ever wondered why "THE" can be pronounced thee or thuh? There's actually a rule for this! You should say thee when the next word starts with a vowel sound and thuh when the next word start with a consonant sound.*

**\*Q7: How would you pronounce "THE" when its before the word "unity"?**

**Tenses:**

If you're a native English speaker, who has not had much interest in grammar, you would be pretty surprised with the number of tenses our language has. I personally first came across the names of tenses when I was trying to learn Spanish. If you refer to the chart below, you will notice that there are generally three "time periods": past, present, and future. There are also three categories for each of the times: simple, continuous, and perfect. The simple tense is as the name suggests is the most simple, basic form of that tense. The verb "be" is an irregular verb in the present and past, so I've included transformations of that as well below. Again, as the name suggests, the continuous tense is used when the action is ongoing so it is also referred to as "progressive." The perfect tense, which can be either simple or continuous, gets a little tricky so refer to the chart below as you read the rest of this paragraph. Present perfect is used to describe an action which began in the past but which continues into the present or the effect of which still continues into the present. Past perfect is used to describe an action in the past just as simple past does, but the action of the past perfect is an action completed in the past before another action. Finally, future perfect is used to describe an action that will have been completed at a specified time in the future. If this was confusing to you, try to imagine the context in which you would answer in that tense. For example, as the following chart shows, "I had been eating chocolate all day" is past perfect continuous. I would say that sentence if I am presently eating a salad because "I had been eating chocolate all day." This fits under the description of past perfect continuous as the action of eating was continuous and has completed in the past to make way for my present-time healthy eating. Try the following exercises for tense conjugation too, using the chart on the back of this page (note: progressive means the same thing as continuous). The answers are on the right half of the exercise page, so cover that part while you do the exercises, and when you're done, check your answers!

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\* Q6: Under where is the dog?

\* Q7: *thuh!* Though the beginning letter, u, is a vowel, the word "unity" is pronounced *yoo-nity*, so it's considered to start with a consonant sound.

**Tense Chart:**

	positive	negative
present simple	subject + verb (+ s ) I eat. She eats toast.	subject + do / does + not + verb I don't eat toast. She doesn't eat fish.
present simple with 'be'	subject + am / is / are I am hungry. She is in a cafe.	subject + am / is / are + not I'm not hungry. She isn't happy.
present continuous	subject + am / is / are + verb-ing She's eating toast. They are eating lunch now.	subject + am / is / are + not + verb-ing He isn't eating. We are not eating at home.
present perfect simple	subject + have / has + past participle I've eaten breakfast. He has eaten lunch.	subject + have / has + not + past participle We haven't eaten yet. She hasn't eaten the chocolate.
present perfect continuous	subject + have / has + been + verb-ing I've been eating. She's been eating biscuits all day.	subject + have / has + not + been + verb-ing They haven't been eating. He has not been eating toast.
past simple	subject + past simple (verb +ed) I ate an apple. She ate some rice.	subject + did + not + verb She didn't eat anything. They did not eat breakfast.
past simple with 'be'	subject + was / were I was hungry. They were in a restaurant.	subject + was / were + not We weren't hungry. She wasn't at home.
past continuous	subject + was / were + verb-ing I was eating. They were eating lunch.	subject + was / were + not + verb-ing You weren't eating. She wasn't eating a sandwich.
past perfect simple	subject + had + past participle I had eaten. She'd eaten lunch.	subject + had + not + past participle We hadn't eaten. He had not eaten an apple.
past perfect continuous	subject + had + been + verb-ing I had been eating chocolate all day. She'd been eating breakfast.	subject + had + not + been + verb-ing I hadn't been eating. She hadn't been eating an apple.
future simple	subject + will + verb I will eat later. She will eat at home.	subject + will + not + verb We won't eat anything tonight. He will not eat fish.
future continuous	subject + will + be + verb-ing I will be eating at 8pm. She will be eating a sandwich.	subject + will + not + be + verb-ing They won't be eating. He will not be eating anything.
future perfect simple	subject + will + have + past participle I will have eaten lunch by 3 o'clock. She'll have eaten all the chocolate.	subject + will + not + have + past participle He won't have eaten lunch yet. They will not have eaten their sandwiches.
future perfect continuous	subject + will + have + been + verb-ing They will have been eating fruit. We'll have been eating all day.	subject + will + not + have + been + verb-ing I won't have been eating fish. They will not have been eating lunch.

## Tense Exercises:

1. We - learn - the whole night. (past perfect progressive)
2. We - walk down - street (past progressive)
3. We never - read - books (present simple)
4. I - go - to the doctor next Monday (future progressive)
5. She - wait - for an hour (present perfect progressive)
6. He - be - an interesting man (past simple)
7. We - discuss - the topic for hours (present perfect progressive)
8. We - finish - our homework (present perfect simple)
9. He often - shop - at Harrods (present simple)
10. He said that Mom - already go - out (past perfect simple)
11. I - find - this cap this morning (present perfect simple)
12. John and Sheila - marry - on Wednesday (present progressive)
13. I - cannot go - out last night (past simple)
14. I - read - book (past perfect simple)
15. At this time tomorrow, Susan - fish - in the pond (future progressive)
16. We - get married - on June 5th (present progressive)
17. They - live - here since 1940 (present perfect progressive)
18. You - write - a wonderful story (past simple)
19. John never - smoke - (present simple)
20. They - spy - on us (past perfect progressive)
21. You - get - prettier (present progressive)
22. I - find - a new house (present perfect simple)
23. We - have - accident (past perfect simple)
24. It - rain - for three hours (present perfect progressive)
25. John - walk - to school yesterday at nine (past progressive)
1. We had been learning the whole night.
2. We were walking down the street.
3. We never read books.
4. I will be going to the doctor next Monday.
5. She has been waiting for an hour.
6. He was an interesting man.
7. We have been discussing the topic for hours.
8. We have finished our homework.
9. He often shops at Harrods.
10. He said that Mom had already gone out.
11. I have found this cap this morning.
12. John and Sheila are marrying on Wednesday.
13. I could not go out last night.
14. I had read the book.
15. At this time tomorrow, Susan will be fishing in the pond.
16. We are getting married on June 5th.
17. They have been living here since 1940.
18. You wrote a wonderful story.
19. John never smokes.
20. They had been spying on us.
21. You are getting prettier.
22. I have found a new house.
23. We had had an accident.
24. It has been raining for three hours.
25. John was walking to school yesterday at nine.



## Punctuation:

Punctuation is important to convey the correct meaning of what you are trying to express. They are very important to avoid ambiguity.

Periods, question marks, and exclamation marks function to end sentences. Let's start with the period. Here is an example of ambiguity due to a lack of a period:

*She sat on the couch until she heard back from Mark she didn't know what to make for dinner*

This sentence could be interpreted as:

*She sat on the couch until she heard back from Mark. She didn't know what to make for dinner.*

OR

*She sat on the couch. Until she heard back from Mark, she didn't know what to make for dinner.*

This is why punctuation is imperative!

Question marks and exclamation marks should only be used at the end of the sentence, unless they're held within a quotation. Many people make this common mistake of using question marks for sentences that begin with something like "I wonder if..." "I was wondering if you had time" is a statement that I am "wondering."

**\*Q8: Which of the following needs a question mark?**

- A. Have you seen my bag anywhere(?)
- B. You should never eat that pie (?)
- C. I've been thinking whether I should wear pink or red (?)
- D. Weren't you wondering whether the restaurant is open or not (?)
- E. How much time does it take to get there (?)
- F. I was curious about how chocolate is made (?)

Exclamations are much more straightforward. You would use them to emphasize the sentence, or imply that the sentence is being shouted. Both question and exclamation marks can be used within a sentence if it is part of a quotation. In narratives, the author can use these punctuations in this way: "*How is he?*" she asked or "*I am done!*" she yelled.

Speaking of quotations and quotation marks, punctuation gets tricky in the context of a narrative. First rule: you cannot use a quotation by itself unless it is VERY clear to the reader who is speaking. This essentially means that quotations are generally a part of a sentence. So how does one incorporate quotes correctly in a sentence? In a narrative, a quotation can begin or end the sentence. If it begins the sentence, you must have a comma at the end of the wording before you put in quotation marks. "*Don't go over there,*" said Henry. is a correct example. If the wording in the quotation needs a question mark or exclamation mark, you would just replace the comma with what you need to use. In the case where the quotation ends the sentence, you must have a comma before the start off the quotation, and you must end the quotations with a period, question mark, or exclamation mark. Henry said, "Don't go over there." is correct to write the previous example this way. Quotations can be multiple sentences too. This would be correct: *I said, "Don't wander off."* with a comma before the quotation. However, this would not be correct: *I cannot remember a certain dream I had as a child. I don't remember if it was pleasant or scary, if it was about reality or my fantasy. I somehow remember that that dream happened, but I can't recall any of its contents,"* Red wrote to start his story. As you can see, I can use a period within the quotation, because it is part of what Red wrote, but I have to end the last sentence of the quotation with a comma to end the quotations and continue to the end of the sentence as a whole. The last thing to note is that you generally capitalize the first word of the quotations. (Most of the rules here are for narratives. Quotation marks can be used in a different context, but that's not part of essential grammar, so I have skipped that)

When reading your journal entries and essays for the theme writing, I've noticed one place people forget to use their commas the most. It's not a big issue when trying to understand the sentence, but it is part of the rules for commas. When joining two sentences together using a conjunction (covered above), you must use a comma.

**\*Q9: Can you identify the sentences that require a comma?**

**Hint: Read the wording before the supposed comma. Is it a sentence? Read the wording after the supposed comma, excluding the first word. Is it a sentence? If the answer is yes to both, you need a comma.**

- A) Harry need a camera (,) to take photos on his trip.
- B) Dana and Zoe are looking for a dog to adopt (,) because they love animals.
- C) The mouse scuttled across the floor (,) and the cat chased after it.
- D) Who has attended the meeting (,) and went to the orientation?
- E) Curtis asked if he could come to work in sweatpants (,) but his boss said no.

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\* Q8: A, D, E.

\* Q9: B, C, E.

If you have a dependent clause or a phrase that begins or ends the sentence, you must also use a comma. “If you have a dependent clause or phrase that begins or ends the sentence” is a dependent clause as it contains a subject and a verb, but cannot stand as a sentence by itself. Just like the sentence you are reading now, the comma is necessary to separate the dependent clause of the sentence. Phrases that do not make up the essential part of the sentence also needs to have a comma. Here is an example of when a comma drastically changes the meaning of the sentence when a comma isn’t used to pause after a phrase: *Most of the time travelers are smart about packing.* vs *Most of the time, travelers are smart about packing.* The first sentence states that many time travelers (people who travel through time) are smart about packing, whereas the second states that often, travelers (not time travelers) are smart about packing. The comma must be used to end the first phrase, or else the sentence will be misread. The sentence would make sense without the beginning phrase and such phrases can be put at the end of the sentence as well, using a comma to begin. “Travelers are smart about packing, most of the time” is still correct. An introductory word also requires a comma. You could use a single word “often” in place of “most of the time.” Just isolate a word, phrase, or clause if it is not an essential part of the sentence.

**\*Q10: (This one is tricky!) Would you use a comma in this sentence?**

1. Fred(,) who is a master chess player(,) likes you.
2. I asked the woman(,) who was wearing a blue shirt.
3. I enjoy eating avocados(,) that are ripe.



As we saw from Q10, a comma is not necessary for 3., as “ripe” is a necessary adjective to describe the avocado pertaining to the sentence. Sometimes, “that” can be replaced with “which,” but the change brings a different meaning. If I had said, “At the farmer’s market, I ate an avocado, which was ripe” the comma and “which” pair lets the reader know that the avocado I ate was ripe, but that the ripeness is not the identifying quality of the avocado I ate.

Here is another example where the absence of a comma changes the meaning of a sentence: *Lets eat, Sam.* vs *Lets eat Sam.* The speaker in the first sentence is calling for Sam to eat, whereas the second sentence indicates that the speaker wants to eat Sam. In this way, commas are very important in being clear with what you want to convey through writing.

**\*Q11: Can you find what is wrong with this sentence on this magazine and fix it?**

Semicolons can be used like commas, but they are more specifically used to join two independent but related sentences without a conjunction. Here is an example: *Sarah loves to run; she and her boyfriend frequently participate in marathons.* They can also be used to list things when the items contain commas themselves. Listing cities of countries is a common use of semicolons: *Paris, London; Auckland, New Zealand; Texas, USA; Berlin, Germany; and Ottawa, Canada are all places I want to visit.*

Colons are used to introduce a list, idea, quotation, or explanation. You have seen many colons in this packet when I introduce an example.

Dashes, usually two in a row, indicate parenthetical information or an afterthought. You can use dashes in place of parenthesis or right before an afterthought. Here is an example of an afterthought: *I didn’t do too well on the exam-- at least I tried hard!*

Apostrophes indicate when a letter or letters are missing. They are most commonly used in contractions, such as “can’t” which is a shortened version of “can not”. The apostrophe shows that the “n” and “o” are missing. Apostrophes should also be used in instances such as sayin’ or livin’ the apostrophe in place of the “g.” In this way, this punctuation can show a lot of character in speech and should be used purposefully. Apostrophes are also used to show possession of nouns, but never for pronouns.

**\*Q11: What is the difference between “you’re” and “your””? Think about what the apostrophe is replacing in “you’re.”**

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\* Q10: In 1., you would use a comma because “who is a master chess player” does not particularly identify who Fred is nor does it relate to how he likes you, so this information is not important. In 2., you would not need the comma, as the “blue shirt” identifies who the woman is, meaning that this is an essential part of the sentence. The same logic applies to 3. I enjoy eating ripe avocados, not unripe, so the phrase “that are ripe” should not have a comma.

\* Q11: Rachael Ray finds inspiration in cooking her family and her dog” means that Ray likes to cook people and a dog. The sentence should have been written: “Rachael Ray finds inspiration in cooking, her family, and her dog” with the commas between each thing that inspires her.

\* Q11: “Your” is the possessive “you” and “You’re” is the contraction of “you” and “are.” The “a” in “are” is the missing alphabet.

Finally, quotation marks are used to quote speech, quotations, or words. I personally like to use them to show sarcasm. For example, I would write, *that's "great"* to insinuate that I don't believe that it was indeed that great.

*Using quotations is pretty straightforward, but when you combine that with other punctuation marks, things get a bit tricky. Things are a little different if you're British, but in the U.S., when the punctuation does NOT belong to the quote, but rather the sentence you yourself have written, commas and periods get placed within quotations, whereas semicolons, colons, question marks, and exclamation marks are placed outside.*

**\*Q12: Between A and B, which exhibits the correct placement of the period?**

- A) **INSIDE:** Then she said, "Hi, I'm Clara."
- B) **OUTSIDE:** Then she said, "Hi, I'm Clara".

*Note that the period is not part of the quotation. The period here is used to The only exception to the rule for periods is when you are citing words/phrases/sentences. This is especially true for when you reference academic work or something from a book. Though I won't go into that in this packet, know that when you quote written work, after the quotation, you should end the sentence with a (page number/line number) and then a period.*

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## **Important Extras:**

Now that we are done with the basics, let's get into the more complicated stuff. Since I could write forever on this, I decided to focus on a few key points. In this section, I will be going over some details in which I see writers within PE make mistakes.

### **Comparatives:**

There are two ways to compare things, one using "as" and one using "than." As only has one rule. You must flank the adjective or adverb using "as." What I mean by this is that you must use it twice, once before the adjective or adverb and once after. "I am as tall as a tree," "I can run as fast as Usain Bolt," "I ate as much as you did" are both examples of correct use of "as." Keep in mind, the word "as" could be used in non-comparative settings. Examples include: "such as," "as for you," or "as you know."

When you use "than," you need to modify the adjective or adverb at play. Let's start with the adjectives. If the adjective is a one syllable word, you must add an -er ending. Tall or smart are such one syllable words where the -er ending would be appropriate. If the one syllable word ends with one consonant (any alphabet letter that is not a vowel, which are a, e, i, o, u), that consonant has to be doubled. Big, fat, and hot, would be bigger, fatter, and hotter. If the adjective has two syllables and it ends with a -y, then the -er ending is necessary, but if not a -y ending, then the word "more" should precede the adjective. Happy, easy, and lanky, are all words that would change to an -er ending: happier, easier, and lankier. Boring, careful, and active are two-syllable adjectives that do not end with a -y so instead, you would write: more boring, more careful, and more active. With three syllables or more, the -er ending no longer applies.

With adverbs, the one syllable rule remains. Fast, hard, and high are adverbs that only consists of one syllable, so they become faster, harder, and higher. In any other scenario, "more" is added before the adverb. Such cases include slowly, beautifully, and swiftly would all need a preceding "more."

One thing to keep in mind would be to always keep a mirror image on both sides of the comparative. What I mean by this is that if you say, since you can only compare things that are similar

### **Superlatives:**

With comparatives, you can say that one thing is better or worse than something else, but with superlatives, you can say that one thing is the best or the worst. In the cases where you add the -er ending to both adjectives and adverbs, you would replace that with an -est ending. Bigger, happier, and higher would become biggest, happiest, and highest for the superlative. When "more" is added, you would replace that with "most." More boring, more active, and more swiftly would become most boring, most active, and most swiftly.

### **Irregulars in Comparatives and Superlatives:**

Sometimes the adjectives and adverbs need to completely change. The most common example is good/well and bad/badly. Both forms of the adjective and adverb become "better" and "worse." Both "better" and "worse" can act as an adjective or an adverb. In the superlative, the two words change to "best" and "worst." Other common irregulars include far and little, which become farther and less in the comparative, then farthest and least in the superlative, respectively.

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\* Q12: A

Dangling Modifiers:

One of the common mistakes I've seen in your writing has been with dangling modifiers. This is an example of one: "Planning on driving safely, the car moved very slowly." The beginning phrase of the sentence, "planning on driving safely," is what you would call a modifying phrase. This phrase serves to modify the subject of the sentence. As you can see in the example above, what does planning on driving modify? Can a car plan on driving safely? This is why the phrase would be determined to be "dangling," since it isn't really modifying anything. A better way of writing this would be to say, "Planning on driving safely, Chris drove the car slowly." Now, the modifying phrase is describing Chris, so it is no longer dangling!

Who vs. Whom

If you don't know the rule for when to use who versus when to use whom, the distinction between the uses for the two words may seem difficult. I assure you, you will understand and learn how to correctly use them in 5 minutes! "Who" is a subject pronoun, whereas "Whom" is an object pronoun. As a refresher, the subject is the doer noun, and the object is the being-done noun. In the sentence, "I threw the ball at you," "I" is the subject since "I" am doing the throwing, and "you" is the object, the receiver of the throwing action. So, essentially, the sentence can be rewritten as "Who threw the ball at whom?".

**\*Q13: Choose the word that correctly fits the sentences below:**

**Tip: Try constructing a sentence from the phrase that describes the (who/whom). Would you use a subject pronoun (he/she) or an object pronoun (him/her)?**

**Example 1: I went with the man (who/whom) seemed to know the area well.**

"He seemed to know the area well" – "he" is the subject, therefore, "who" is correct.

**Example 2: My dad (who/whom) I deeply respect is my mentor.**

"I deeply respect him" – "him" is the object, therefore, "whom" is correct.

1. I went hiking with Mike, (who/whom) is an expert survivalist.
2. (Who/Whom) are you going to invite to the party?
3. To (who/whom) would you like to speak?
4. That person is (who/whom) I was talking about!
5. She knew the man (who/whom) owns the store.

Vocabulary

One great elements of a piece of writing is diverse vocabulary. To end this grammar portion, and to lead onto Michelle's section, here are some words I've chosen that I thought would be useful for what she has prepared for you all! My challenge for you is to use these words as much as possible in your writing so that they are engrained into your brain's vocab list at your disposal. I am not discouraging the use of "easier" words—just encouraging a diverse word bank!

VOCAB	DEFINITION	VOCAB	Definition
Adulation	strong admiration	Bellicose	war-like; aggressive
Erratic	irregular; unpredictable	Elusive	hard to find, catch, or achieve
Obstreperous	noisy and boisterous	Gregarious	extroverted; outgoing
Adversity	hardship	Surly	grumpy; rude
Deference	respect (noun)	Zeal	enthusiasm
Obtuse	mentally dull or unaware	Belligerent	aggressive; ready to fight
Revere	respect; worship	Surreptitious	secret; sneaky; stealthy
Torpid	inactive; lazy; stagnant	Benign	kind or harmless
Susceptible	vulnerable	Dogged	stubborn or determined
Affable	friendly; social; easygoing	Gullible	easily fooled
Rigor	thoroughness, tenacity	Emulate	to imitate something admired
Officious	domineering; intrusive	Taciturn	quiet; saying little

\* Q13: 1. Who; HE is an expert survivalist. 2. Whom; You invite HIM to the party. 3. Whom; You would like to speak to HIM. 4. Whom; I was talking about HIM. 5. Who; HE owns the store.

## WRITING SECTION

Hi everyone--thanks for signing up for the Telling Your Story Packet! My name is Michelle, and I have been coordinating the Themes Program. Reading those essays inspired me to start a program that focuses on *you* because your work is a great tool to communicate your thoughts, interests, and memories. As authors and readers, we build a relationship with one another through our stories.

Through Telling Your Story, I hope for you all to respond to prompts that ask you to be more critical and self-reflective. When we are more aware of ourselves, relationships, and surroundings, we better understand and communicate our situation to others. This packet will foster relationships between authors and readers (who may also be authors!) so we can remember that we are all people, even under seemingly disparate circumstances.

With your hard work and essays, I will produce an anthology highlighting common experiences across various time periods of the authors' lives so as readers, we recognize our similarities. Here at PE, I'll act as head editor and curator for the final anthology. After carefully reading every essay, the PE staff will select a limited number of submissions for each question then compile them for a single mailing. Whether or not your work appears in the final anthology, your participation influences the outcome of this project and is a wonderful opportunity to learn and become effective communicators. As most of us who participate in PE knows, communication is an asset that helps us well beyond a writing prompt.

### **TASK:**

On the back of this paper, you will see a chart of time periods organized into rectangles. Please select one question from as many time periods as you would like to write about, then compose a short essay for each topic chosen (600-800 words). **On the envelope, please write "Attn: TYS" so your essays *quickly* get to the right place!**

Be brave to ask yourself questions and to accept that you may not know the answers. Telling Your Story is all about self-reflecting and forming strong relationships with yourself, your readers, and those beyond this project.

**\* ALL SUBMISSIONS DUE February 15, 2017. \* Send Earlier If Possible!!**

<p><b>Childhood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is your earliest memory?</li> <li>● What's your hometown culture? Is it known for anything special? What makes your neighborhood different than the other ones in your hometown?</li> <li>● Did your parents remind you to say the "magic word" please? How often do you say it now?</li> <li>● When you were in elementary school, what was your relationship with nature like?</li> <li>● If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?</li> <li>● Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people's?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Perception of prison before your arrest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Did you know anyone who has been incarcerated?</li> <li>● Did you think prisons were like those on TV shows?</li> <li>● What do you think is the average perception of prison?</li> <li>● How has that perception changed or stayed the same?</li> <li>● Did you think friends would stay in close contact? Are they still?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teenage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As a teen, did you compare yourself to others often? How did this evolve over time?</li> <li>● Did you have a best friend in high school? What's your relationship like now?</li> <li>● Let's talk acne. How'd you deal with it as a teenager? Did it affect your confidence?</li> <li>● What were your high school writing and literature classes like?</li> <li>● What was your first date like? Did it feel awkward?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Incarceration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What was it like the moment you got arrested? Do you remember how you physically felt?</li> <li>● What could you envision yourself doing if you weren't incarcerated?</li> <li>● What was your relationship like with your parents or guardians as a child? How about now?</li> <li>● How do you think the "free world" perceives you?</li> <li>● Has anyone, or anything, made you feel invisible?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adulthood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When do you mark the beginning of your adulthood?</li> <li>● If you have kids, were you nervous about anything during the first pregnancy?</li> <li>● Share an embarrassing moment! In what ways do you still feel embarrassed?</li> <li>● What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?</li> <li>● What's your least favorite house chore? How about one you'd rather do?</li> </ul>	<p><b>TIPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be succinct: Wordy writing slows down reading. For example: "I am planning to buy food at the store in the near future." versus "I plan to buy food at the store soon." Do you notice the differences? The use of words refers to word economy: why use more words when you can use one?</li> <li>● After your first draft, take a break and edit later so you can see your work with fresh eyes. Doing this helps me clarify my sentences and catch my mistakes.</li> <li>● Outline your essay: What do you want the reader to know? How will you take them on a journey? If you have a plan, it's easier for us all to follow.</li> </ul>