

Crash Course **in HiSET Grammar**

Language Arts Skills You Need to Pass the HiSET Exam

By Garry W. Johnson *et al.*

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Crash Course

in HiSET Grammar

In order to learn how to read and write correctly, you need practice. Please take the time to read this grammar packet slowly and thoroughly. The material is very dense and there are a lot of words on each page. Pay special attention to the words in bold print. Make sure you know the meaning of every word in the packet. If you find any word you are unsure of, look it up in the dictionary and write it and its definition on a separate sheet of paper. **This is very important** to building your vocabulary. Throughout the packet there will be questions relating to the topics covered. Think your answers through, formulate your best response, and write it in the blank provided.

What Is Grammar?

In linguistics (the study of language) there are two types of grammar: descriptive and prescriptive. If you are a fluent English speaker you already have a set of rules in your mind that you may or may not even realize are there. These rules allow 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 you 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, we will be going over the nitty-gritty of *prescriptive* grammar – the rules that you should follow according to textbooks and academia, the rules you'll need to know to pass the HiSET exam.

Language is complicated, so it helps to break grammar down into small segments. We are not going to get too in-depth in this packet, but once you read through and understand this material, you will have a strong grasp of the tools necessary to write with correct grammar. Let's start with some definitions of basic grammar terms:

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

Predicate: action or description (*e.g.* Sam ran *or* Sam is tall)

Independent clause: can stand as a sentence alone

Dependent clause: subject + predicate (must be accompanied by an independent clause to complete a sentence, cannot stand alone)

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 are not subject + predicate (*e.g.* during the winter)

The Basics

As fluent English speakers, we may think we have a solid grasp of the English language since we can verbally construct sentences without much thought. But that is just *descriptive* grammar. Even if you can speak well, you still need to learn the rules of *prescriptive* grammar.

Parts of Speech: There are eight general types of words: Nouns, Pronouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs, Conjunctions, Prepositions, and Interjections. Here is a quick run down of them for review:

There are two types of nouns. **Proper nouns** are nouns that name specific places, people, or things, and are usually capitalized. (e.g. John, Utah, Australia, Panda, Eiffel Tower, Mountain City Middle School.) **Common nouns** are objects or subjects that do not pertain to a single specific thing. (e.g. dog, person, chair, skateboard.) Usually when you're thinking of writing a plural form of a noun, you think to add an *s* to the end of the word. These are some cases when this rule does not work:

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Nouns ending with <i>-y</i> | change to <i>-ies</i> | [enemy → enemies] |
| 2. Nouns ending with <i>-o</i> | change to <i>-oes</i> | [tomato → tomatoes] |
| 3. Nouns ending with <i>-is</i> | change to <i>-es</i> | [thesis → theses] |
| 4. Nouns ending with <i>-f</i> or <i>-fe</i> | change to <i>-ves</i> | [life → lives] |
| 5. Nouns ending with <i>-us</i> | change to <i>-i</i> | [fungus → fungi] |

There are so many more that the list could go on many pages. English is pretty odd 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 do not change at all. *Sheep*, *Series*, and *Aircraft* are all both singular and plural forms of the noun. This is one of the hardest things to learn when trying to pick up the English language.

Pronouns, like nouns, are also subjects and objects of a 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 *their* 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	<i>He/She</i>	<i>Him/Her</i>
Plural	<i>They</i>	<i>Them</i>

Compare to the second person pronoun:

	Subject	Object
Singular	<i>You</i>	<i>You</i>
Plural	<i>You</i>	<i>You</i>

How is it that the word “you” is so much more versatile? First you need to understand the second person pronoun for Old English (5th-11th 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	<i>Thou</i>	<i>Thee</i>
Plural	<i>Ye</i>	<i>You</i>

Fast forward to the days of Shakespeare, and 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 17th century, especially with the blurring of social statuses, “thou,” “thee,” and “ye,” were all dropped, leaving the dominant “you.”

If you can find some original, unedited Shakespearean text, I encourage you to go through it 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.] This same information can be applied to the text of the 1611 King James Bible.

Verbs 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, “Garry threw the ball,” *threw* is an action verb, as *Garry* is doing the action to the ball. **Linking verbs** do not express action but the state or condition of the subject it describes. We will get more into this in an aside 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*, which is 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. An **active voice** is when the action in a sentence is being performed by the subject. This is what we use most of the time, because writing in the active voice is clearer and more direct. It helps you to convey your meaning more easily. In the **passive voice**, the action is being received. “He bought spaghetti” is active, as the subject, *he*, does the action of buying. “The spaghetti was bought by him” is passive, as 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 sparingly, and only to draw attention away from the subject. Sentences in passive voice often become too wordy, lack focus, and cause your readers to have a tough time identifying your point.

Question 1: Identify whether the sentence is active or passive, and then, rewrite it in the opposite voice:

1. The problem was solved by a genius. (Active or Passive)

2. My brother caught the ball. (Active or Passive)

3. The fireman extinguished the fire. (Active or Passive)

4. Thomas fed his dog. (Active or Passive)

5. The letter was written by a female. (Active or Passive)

6. Manny opened the door. (Active or Passive)

7. The bear has learned a few tricks. (Active or Passive)

8. The house was being cleaned by the owner. (Active or Passive)

Adjectives are words that modify or describe a noun. (I have a *white* cat. Linda is a *sad* girl. She bought the *paisley* dress, the *baggy* pants, and the *gray* blouse.) **Adverbs** do the same for verbs. They can also be used to modify an adjective or other adverb. Usually, you can tell what is an adjective and what is an adverb by looking at the ending of the word. Words ending in *-ly* are usually adverbs and are often modifications of an adjective. For example, “bright” is an adjective. It describes the quality of a noun: “The *bright* star is easily seen at night.” Once you add *-ly*, “bright” becomes the adverb “brightly”: “The star shown *brightly* against the night sky.” However, like everything in the world of language, there are exceptions to this rule, like the adverbs *so*, and *very*. Take a look at how the examples from the Adjectives section change with the addition of adverbs: I have a *very* white cat. Linda is a *ridiculously* sad girl. She *quickly* bought the paisley dress, the baggy pants, and the gray blouse.

Question 2: Can you think of some adverbs that are identical to their adjective form? Test these words by constructing sentences using the words as both adjectives and adverbs. Come up with at least three more examples.

Sally runs *fast*. (Adverb) The *fast* rabbit hopped. (Adjective)

GOOD and WELL: The most widely used irregular adverb is the word “well,” the adjective for being “good.” People tend to mix these two up regularly. However, in the world of grammar 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 that you’re 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 do not implicate any action, but a state of being. This could refer to thoughts, emotions, relationships, senses, and measurements.

The most widely used linking verb is the word “is,” which could also be a helping verb – don’t confuse the two. As a helping verb, *is* will have a secondary verb after it. Here is an example of *is* as a linking verb: “Sally is Sam’s sister.” The *is* establishes their relationship. As a helping verb, *is* or *was* (the past tense of *is*) looks more like this: “He is (or was) working.” You use this linking verb 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.

Whether you use an adjective or adverb changes the meaning of the sentence in the context of linking verbs. For example, this sentence: “I feel well,” can mean two things: “I feel healthy,” or “I have a great sense of touch.” Now, do you think “I feel good” is grammatically correct? Pause here and look back to the section defining linking verbs, 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, which describes a state of being.

Question 3: Explain the difference between these two sentences: “I hear well.” “I hear good.”

Conjunctions are the parts of speech that connects words, sentences, phrases, and clauses. They come in three forms: coordinating, correlative, and subordinating. For now, we are only going to deal with the seven coordinating conjunctions. Do you know what they are? Using the acronym “FANBOYS” (each letter represents a conjunction), answer the following question.

Question 4: What are the seven coordinating conjunctions? Think of as many as you can. If you get stuck, they are all in the following paragraph. The most obvious one has been done for you.

F – **N –** **O –** **S –**
A – and **B –** **Y –**

When FANBOYS (conjunctions) are used between two independent clauses, a comma is a necessity. We will get into commas and independent clauses in the punctuation section. However, we need to get specific about “nor” and “yet” here. 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* have 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 meanings and uses, functioning as an adverb at times. This applies to *for* and *so* as well. They are not 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 *where* or *when* something is or is not happening. Some examples of prepositions are: *about, above, behind, with, of, over, in,* and *through*.

Did you know that you can not end a sentence with a preposition? To say “What book are you working in?” is technically and grammatically incorrect. Instead, the sentence should be: “In what book are you working?” It may look or sound weird, but it is grammatically correct. Before my incarceration, whenever I would end a sentence with “at” (for example: “Where are my keys at?”), my wife would answer: “Behind the ‘at!’” It was her nice way of correcting my poor grammar.

Question 5: How would you fix the following sentence? “What is the dog under?”

Since we are on the topic of strange-sounding grammar, I want you to think back to pronouns. Imagine you answer the phone and a stranger asks for you: “Hello, can I speak to (your name)?” Would you ever say, “Yes, this is he” (instead of “this is him”)? Technically, “this is he” is the grammatically correct way to reply. It may even help you make a better first impression.

Lastly, **interjections** capture bursts of emotions or mimic a sound, so they are used mostly in speech. Examples include: “Yum,” “Bam,” “Darn,” “Hooray,” and any number of obscenities you hear when people spill their coffee. A sentence should make sense with or without interjections. “Ugh, I don’t want to fail this HiSET test again” makes just as good of a sentence as “I don’t want to fail this HiSET test again.” The “ugh” simply adds more character and expression to the sentence.

Before we end this section, let’s briefly talk about **articles** – *a*, *an* and *the*. The first two, *a* and *an*, are indefinite articles that refer to a generalized noun. On the other hand, *the* 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, 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 is 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.

Question 6: How would you pronounce “the” when it’s before the word “unity”? Why?

Tenses: If you are 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. Those who know their Spanish may not be as surprised. If you refer to the chart on the next page, 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, the most simple, basic form of that tense. The verb “be” is an irregular verb in the present and past, so transformations of that are included 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 as you read the rest of this paragraph.

Present perfect is used to describe an action that began in the past but 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. You would say that sentence if you are presently eating a salad. 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 your present-time eating activity. This is probably something you are not going to get in one lesson so when you receive you graded packet back, keep it as a reference tool.

Tense Chart

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

Try the following exercise for assigning tense, using the chart above. (Note: *progressive* means the same thing as *continuous*). Write a sentence for each in the tense specified.

Tense Exercise

1. We - learn - the whole night. (past perfect progressive)

We had been learning the whole night.

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)

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 are held within a quotation. Many people make the 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," not a question.

Question 7: Which of the following needs a question mark? Circle the letter of the sentences that do.

- 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 (?)

Exclamation marks are much more straightforward. You 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 they are 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 the end quotation mark. *“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 or colon before the start of the quotation, and you must end the quotation with a period, question mark, or exclamation mark. *Henry said, “Don’t go over there.”* is the correct way to write the previous example.

Quotations can be multiple sentences too. This would be correct: *I said, “Don’t wander off.”* with a comma before the quotation. This would also 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, you can use a period within this quotation, because it is part of what Red wrote, but you have to end the last sentence of the quotation with a comma and continue to the end of the sentence as a whole before adding the period. The last thing to note is that you generally capitalize the first word of a quotation. (Most of the rules here are for narratives, or telling a story. Quotation marks can also be used in other contexts, but that’s not part of essential grammar, so we have skipped it for now.)

In student essays, commas are the most often overlooked punctuation. It is often not a big issue when trying to understand the sentence, but it is part of the rules for commas and will cost you points. For example, when joining two sentences (or independent clauses) together using a conjunction (also covered above), you must use a comma.

Question 8: 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.)

Circle the letter of the sentences requiring commas:

- A) Harry needs 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) Curt is asked if he could come to work in sweatpants (,) but his boss said no.

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 need to have a comma. Here is an example of when the lack of a comma drastically changes the meaning of the

sentence: *Most of the time travelers are smart about packing.* This sentence states that many “time travelers” (people who travel through time) are smart about packing. The same sentence, with a properly placed comma, states that travelers (not time travelers) are often smart about packing: *Most of the 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 also 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.

Question 9: Which commas are needed and why? (This one is tricky!)

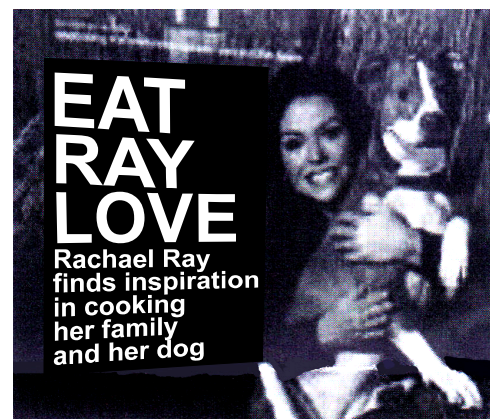
1. Fred (,) who is a master chess player (,) likes you.

2. I asked the woman (,) who was wearing a blue shirt.

3. I enjoy eating avocados (,) that are ripe.

As we saw from Question 9, a comma is not necessary for 3., as *ripe* is a necessary adjective describing the avocado in 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 paired with *which* 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: “Let’s eat, Sam.” is not the same as “Let’s 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.



Question 10: Can you find what is wrong with this sentence in the magazine photo above and fix it? (Ignore the headings “Eat Ray Love” and start with the sentence “Rachael ...”)

Semicolons (;) are 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.” Semicolons can also be used to list things when the items contain commas themselves. Listing cities or states of countries is a common use of semicolons: “Paris, France; Auckland, New Zealand; Texas, USA; Berlin, Germany; and Ottawa, Canada are all places I want to visit.” Do not use the semicolon at the beginning of the list.

Colons (:) are used to introduce a list, idea, quotation, or explanation. You have seen many colons in this packet at the introduction of an example.

Dashes (–), which look like a long hyphen (-), indicate parenthetical information or an afterthought. You can use dashes in place of parentheses (to indicate emphasis) 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 quoting colloquialisms, such as *sayin’* or *livin’*, where the apostrophe is used in place of the *g*. In this way, apostrophes can show a lot of character in speech and should be used purposefully. Apostrophes are also used to show possession of nouns (before the *s*), but never for pronouns.

Question 11: What is the difference between *you’re* and *your*? Think about what the apostrophe is replacing in *you’re*.

Finally, **quotation marks** are used to quote speech, quotations, and words as words, which is sometimes used to show sarcasm. For example, to write that something is “great” can insinuate that you do not believe that it was indeed great. Have you ever seen anyone use “air quotes”?

Using quotations is pretty straightforward, but when you combine that with other punctuation marks, things get a bit tricky. 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. Things are a little different if you’re British.

Question 12: Which exhibits the correct placement of the period?

- A) Then she said, “Hi, I’m Clara.” (Inside the quotation marks)
- B) Then she said, “Hi, I’m Clara”. (Outside the quotation marks)

Note that the period is not part of the quotation, yet periods and commas are *always* placed within quotation marks – with one exception. When you are citing a reference work as a source for a quote, the period is placed after the parenthetical cite: “You will be careful, if you are wise, how you touch men’s religion, or credit, or eyes” (*Poor Richard’s Almanack*, p.15).

More Grammar You Need To Know

Now that we are done with the basics, let's get into some more complicated stuff. We'll focus here on a few key points writers in ABE often miss.

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 this means 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 examples of the 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 letter that is not a vowel) 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*.

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 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. So please, for the love of Pete (it's an expression), never say something is "gooder" than something else ... Mrs. Angel will roll her eyes at you.

Dangling Modifiers: One of the common mistakes many novice writers make is leaving 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 safely” modify? Can a car plan on driving safely? This is why the phrase would be determined to be “dangling,” since it is not 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 do not 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 can 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?* Try constructing a sentence from the phrase that describes the (who/whom), and ask yourself if you would 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.

Reason it out: *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.

Reason it out: *I deeply respect him* – *him* is the object, therefore, *whom* is correct.

Question 13: Which word correctly fits the sentences below?

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.

Accept vs. Except: This is one I used to have a lot of trouble with. Take a look at how these two very common words are used in the following sentences: Everyone *except* George is prepared to *accept* the final results of the vote.

As the sample sentence shows, *accept* is commonly used as a verb, while *except* is commonly used in the same way as the word *but*. *Except* can also be used as a verb, meaning “to exclude,” while the verb *accept* means “to receive willingly” or “approve of.” For example, you might say: *Excepting* George, we were all prepared to *accept* the final results of the vote.

When choosing between *except* and *accept*, decide which part of speech the word needs to be. If the required word should be a verb it’s probably *accept*, unless someone or something is being excluded. If the required word is *not* a verb, the correct word will always be *except*.

Vocabulary

One great element of a piece of writing is diverse vocabulary. You should be learning new words everyday from your reading. If you followed the instructions at the beginning of this packet, then you should know the following word, as they were all used in this packet:

academia, acquire, acronym, ambiguity, consonant, emphasize, essential, exclamation, exhibits, extinguished, fluent, imperative, implicate, imply, incorporate, indefinite, insinuate, irregular, isolate, modifications, narrative, obligatory, obscenities, optimistic, orientation, parenthetical, pertain, sarcasm, superlative, and segments. If there are any words in this list you do not know then add them to your personal vocabulary list now, by looking them up in the dictionary and writing them and their definition on a separate sheet of paper.

Below are more words that will be useful for your writing. It will be to your benefit to use these words as much as possible so they become ingrained into your vocabulary. It is also a good practice to build your own vocabulary list from new words you run across in your day-to-day reading. Anytime you find a word you are unsure of, write it and its definition down, so you can use it later in your own writing. Remember, never use words you are unsure of in your prose – it will show.

adulation – strong admiration

adversity – hardship

affable – friendly; social; easygoing

bellicose – war-like; aggressive

belligerent – aggressive; ready to fight

benign – kind or harmless

deference – respect (noun)

dogged – stubborn or determined

elusive – hard to find, catch, or achieve

emulate – to imitate something admired

erratic – irregular; unpredictable

gullible – easily fooled

obstreperous – noisy and boisterous

obtuse – mentally dull or unaware

revere – respect; worship

rigor – thoroughness, tenacity

surreptitious – secret; sneaky; stealthy

susceptible – vulnerable

torpid – inactive; lazy; stagnant

gregarious – extroverted; outgoing

surly – grumpy; rude

zeal – enthusiasm

To complete the *Crash Course in HiSET Language Arts* packet, define the following words. (These definitions can all be found in this packet.)

action verb: _____

active voice: _____

adjectives: _____

adverb: _____

apostrophe: _____

articles: _____

colon: _____

common noun: _____

conjunction: _____

continuous (or progressive) tense: _____

dash: _____

dependent clause: _____

future perfect tense: _____

helping (or auxiliary) verb: _____

independent clause: _____

interjections: _____

linguistics: _____

linking verb: _____

passive voice: _____

past perfect tense: _____

phrase: _____

plural: _____

predicate: _____

prepositions: _____

prescriptive grammar: _____

present perfect tense: _____

pronoun: _____

proper noun: _____

quotation marks: _____

semicolons: _____

sentence: _____

simple tense: _____

verb: _____

Answers:

Question 1: 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 have been learned by the bear. 8. Passive / The owner was cleaning the house.

Question 2: Common Answers: hard, late, early, daily, wrong, straight

Question 3: “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 are listening to is good stuff.

Question 4: Answers in order: and, nor, but, or, yet, so

Question 5: Under what is the dog?

Question 6: *thuh!* Though the beginning letter, u, is a vowel, the word “unity” is pronounced *yoo-nity*, so it starts with a consonant *sound*.

Tense Exercise Answers:

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

Question 7: A, D, E.

Question 8: B, C, E.

Question 9: 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.

Question 10: “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.

Question 11: “Your” is the possessive of “you” and “you’re” is the contraction of “you are.” The “a” in “are” is the missing letter.

Question 12: A

Question 13: 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.

Covenant Concepts

A Church of God Prison Outreach

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