

COMPETENCY 1.0 GRAMMATICAL RELATIONSHIPS**Skill 1.1 Identify errors in use of adjectives and adverbs.**

Adjectives are words that modify or describe nouns or pronouns. Adjectives usually precede the words they modify but not always; for example, an adjective may occur after a linking verb.

Adverbs are words that modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They cannot modify nouns. Adverbs answer such questions as how, why, when, where, how much, or how often something is done. Many adverbs are formed by adding -ly.

Error: The birthday cake tasted sweetly.

Problem: *Tasted* is a linking verb; the modifier that follows should be an adjective, not an adverb.

Correction: The birthday cake tasted sweet.

Error: You have done good with this project.

Problem: *Good* is an adjective and cannot be used to modify a verb phrase such as *have done*.

Correction: You have done well with this project.

Error: The coach was positive happy about the team's chance of winning.

Problem: The adjective *positive* cannot be used to modify another adjective, *happy*. An adverb is needed instead.

Correction: The coach was positively happy about the team's chance of winning.

Error: The fireman acted quick and brave to save the child from the burning building.

Problem: *Quick and brave* are adjectives and cannot be used to describe a verb. Adverbs are needed instead.

Correction: The fireman acted quickly and bravely to save the child from the burning building.

PRACTICE EXERCISE: ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s).
If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

- 1) Moving quick throughout the house, the burglar removed several priceless antiques before carelessly dropping his wallet.
 - A) quickly
 - B) remove
 - C) careless
 - D) No change is necessary.

- 2) The car crashed loudly into the retaining wall before spinning wildly on the sidewalk.
 - A) crashes
 - B) loudly
 - C) wild
 - D) No change is necessary.

- 3) The airplane landed safe on the runway after nearly colliding with a helicopter.
 - A) land
 - B) safely
 - C) near
 - D) No change is necessary.

- 4) The horribly bad special effects in the movie disappointed us great.
 - A) horrible
 - B) badly
 - C) greatly
 - D) No change is necessary.

- 5) The man promised to obey faithfully the rules of the social club.
 - A) faithful
 - B) faithfulness
 - C) faith
 - D) No change is necessary.

ANSWER KEY: PRACTICE EXERCISE FOR ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

- 1) A The adverb *quickly* is needed to modify *moving*. Option B is incorrect because it uses the wrong form of the verb. Option C is incorrect because the adverb *carelessly* is needed before the verb *dropping*, not the adjective *careless*.
- 2) D The sentence is correct as it is written. Adverbs *loudly* and *wildly* are needed to modify *crashed* and *spinning*. Option A incorrectly uses the verb *crashes* instead of the participle *crashing*, which acts as an adjective.
- 3) B The adverb *safely* is needed to modify the verb *landed*. Option A is incorrect because *land* is a noun. Option C is incorrect because *near* is an adjective, not an adverb.
- 4) C The adverb *greatly* is needed to modify the verb *disappointed*. Option A is incorrect because *horrible* is an adjective, not an adverb. Option B is incorrect because the adverb *horribly* needs to modify the adjective *bad*.
- 5) D The adverb *faithfully* is the correct modifier of the verb *promised*. Option A is an adjective used to modify nouns. Neither Option B nor Option C, which are both nouns, is a modifier.

Skill 1.2 Identify errors in use of nouns.

Plural nouns

A good dictionary should replace the learning of the multiplicity and complexity of spelling rules based on phonics, letter doubling, and exceptions to rules if they have not been mastered by adulthood. Learning the use of a dictionary and thesaurus will be a more rewarding use of time.

Most plurals of nouns that end in hard consonants or hard consonant sounds followed by a silent *e* are made by adding *-s*. Some words ending in vowels only add *-s*.

fingers, numerals, banks, bugs, riots, homes, gates, radios, bananas

Nouns that end in soft consonant sounds—*s*, *j*, *x*, *z*, *ch*, and *sh*—add *-es*. Some nouns ending in *o* add *-es*.

dresses, waxes, churches, brushes, tomatoes

Nouns ending in *y* preceded by a vowel, just add *-s*.

boys, alleys

Nouns ending in *y* preceded by a consonant, change the *y* to *i* and add *-es*.

babies, corollaries, frugalities, poppies

Some nouns' plurals are formed irregularly or remain the same.

sheep, deer, children, leaves, oxen

Some nouns derived from foreign words, especially Latin, may make their plurals in two different ways—one of which may be to make them English. Sometimes, the meanings are the same; other times, the two plurals are used in slightly different contexts. It is always wise to consult the dictionary.

appendices, appendixes
indexes, indices

criterion, criteria
crisis, crises

Make the plurals of closed (solid) compound words in the usual way.

timelines, hairpins
cupfuls, handfuls

Make the plurals of open or hyphenated compounds by adding the change in inflection to the word that changes in number.

fathers-in-law, courts-martial, masters of art, doctors of medicine

Make the plurals of letters, numbers, and abbreviations by adding -s.

fives and tens, IBMs, 1990s, *ps* and *qs* (Note that letters are italicized.)

Possessive nouns

Make the possessives of singular nouns by adding an apostrophe followed by the letter *s* (*'s*).

baby's bottle, father's job, elephant's eye, teacher's desk, sympathizer's protests, week's postponement

Make the possessive of singular nouns ending in *s* by adding either an apostrophe or an (*'s*) depending upon common usage or sound. When making the possessive causes difficulty, use a prepositional phrase instead. Even with the sibilant ending, with a few exceptions, it is advisable to use the (*'s*) construction.

dress's color, species' characteristics or characteristics of the species, James' hat or James's hat, Delores's shirt

Make the possessive of plural nouns ending in *s* by adding the apostrophe after the *s*.

horses' coats, jockeys' times, four days' time

Make possessives of plural nouns that do not end in *s* the same as singular nouns by adding *'s*.

children's shoes, deer's antlers, cattle's horns

Make possessives of compound nouns by adding the inflection at the end of the word or phrase.

the mayor of Los Angeles' campaign, the mailman's new truck, the mailmen's new trucks, my father-in-law's first wife, the keepsakes' values, several daughters-in-law's husbands

Note: Because a gerund functions as a noun, any noun preceding it and operating as a possessive adjective must reflect the necessary inflection. However, if the gerundive following the noun is a participle, no inflection is added.

The general was perturbed by the private's sleeping on duty. (The word *sleeping* is a gerund, the object of the preposition *by*.)

—*but*—

The general was perturbed to see the private sleeping on duty. (The word *sleeping* is a participle modifying *private*.)

Skill 1.3 Identify errors in use of pronouns.

Rules for clearly identifying pronoun reference

Make sure that the antecedent reference is clear and cannot refer to something else.

A “distant relative” is a relative pronoun or a relative clause that has been placed too far away from the antecedent to which it refers. It is a common error to place a verb between the relative pronoun and its antecedent.

Error: Return the books to the library that are overdue.

Problem: The relative clause *that are overdue* refers to the *books* and should be placed immediately after the antecedent.

Correction: Return the books that are overdue to the library.

—or—

Return the overdue books to the library.

A pronoun should not refer to adjectives or possessive nouns.

Adjectives, nouns, or possessive pronouns should not be used as antecedents. This will create ambiguity in sentences.

Error: In Todd's letter, he told his mom he'd broken the priceless vase.

Problem: In this sentence, the pronoun *he* seems to refer to the noun phrase *Todd's letter* though it was probably meant to refer to the possessive noun *Todd's*.

Correction: In his letter, Todd told his mom that he had broken the priceless vase.

A pronoun should not refer to an implied idea.

A pronoun must refer to a specific antecedent rather than an implied antecedent. When an antecedent is not stated specifically, the reader has to guess or assume the meaning of a sentence. Pronouns that do not have antecedents are called **expletives**. “It” and “there” are the most common expletives, though other pronouns can become expletives as well. In informal conversation, expletives allow for casual presentation of ideas without supporting evidence. However, in more formal writing, it is best to be more precise.

Error: She said that it is important to floss every day.

Problem: The pronoun *it* refers to an implied idea.

Correction: She said that flossing every day is important.

Error: Milt and Bette returned the books because they had missing pages.

Problem: The pronoun *they* does not refer to the antecedent.

Correction: The customers returned the book with missing pages.

Using Who, That, and Which:

While **who**, **whom**, and **whose** refer to human beings and can introduce either essential or nonessential clauses, **that** refers to things other than humans and is used to introduce essential clauses. **Which** refers to things other than humans and is used to introduce nonessential clauses.

Error: The doctor that performed the surgery said the man would be fully recovered.

Problem: Since the relative pronoun is referring to a human, *who* should be used.

Correction: The doctor who performed the surgery said the man would be fully recovered.

Error: That ice cream cone that you just ate looked delicious.

Problem: *That* has already been used, so you must use *which* to introduce the next clause, whether it is essential or nonessential.

Correction: That ice cream cone, which you just ate, looked delicious.

Identify proper case forms

Pronouns, unlike nouns, change case forms. Pronouns must be in the subjective, objective, or possessive form according to their function in the sentence.

Personal Pronouns

	Subjective (Nominative)		Possessive		Objective	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1 st person	I	We	My	Our Ours	Me	Us
2 nd person	You	You	Your Yours	Your Yours	You	You
3 rd person	He She It	They	His Her/Hers Its	Their Theirs	Him Her It	Them

Relative Pronouns

Who Subjective/Nominative
Whom Objective
Whose Possessive

Error: Tom and me have reserved seats for next week's baseball game.

Problem: The pronoun *me* is the subject of the verb *have reserved* and should be in the subjective form.

Correction: Tom and I have reserved seats for next week's baseball game.

Error: Mr. Green showed all of we students how to make paper hats.

Problem: The pronoun *we* is the object of the preposition *of*. It should be in the objective form, *us*.

Correction: Mr. Green showed all of us students how to make paper hats.

Error: Who's coat is this?

Problem: The interrogative possessive pronoun is *whose*; *who's* is the contraction for who is.

Correction: Whose coat is this?

PRACTICE EXERCISE: PRONOUN CASE

Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s).
If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

- 1) Even though Sheila and he had planned to be alone at the diner, they were joined by three friends of their's instead.
 - A) him
 - B) him and her
 - C) theirs
 - D) No change is necessary.

- 2) Uncle Walter promised to give his car to whomever would guarantee to drive it safely.
 - A) whom
 - B) whoever
 - C) them
 - D) No change is necessary.

- 3) Eddie and him gently laid the body on the ground next to the sign.
 - A) he
 - B) them
 - C) it
 - D) No change is necessary.

- 4) Mary, who is competing in the chess tournament, is a better player than me.
 - A) whose
 - B) whom
 - C) I
 - D) No change is necessary.

- 5) We ourselves have decided not to buy property in that development; however, our friends have already bought themselves some land.
 - A) We, ourself,
 - B) their selves
 - C) their self
 - D) No change is necessary.

ANSWER KEY: PRACTICE EXERCISE FOR PRONOUN CASE

- 1) C The possessive pronoun *theirs* does not need an apostrophe. Option A is incorrect because the subjective pronoun *he* is needed in this sentence. Option B is incorrect because the subjective pronoun *they*, not the objective pronouns *him* and *her*, is needed.
- 2) B The subjective case *whoever*—not the objective case *whomever*—is the subject of the relative clause *whoever would guarantee to drive it safely*. Option A is incorrect because *whom* is an objective pronoun. Option C is incorrect because *car* is singular and takes the pronoun *it*.
- 3) A The subjective pronoun *he* is needed as the subject of the verb *laid*. Option B is incorrect because *them* is vague; the noun *body* is needed to clarify *it*. Option C is incorrect because *it* is vague, and the noun *sign* is necessary for clarification.
- 4) C The subjective pronoun *I* is needed because the comparison is understood. Option A incorrectly uses the possessive *whose*. Option B is incorrect because the subjective pronoun *who*, and not the objective *whom*, is needed.
- 5) D The reflexive pronoun *themselves* refers to the plural *friends*. Option A is incorrect because the plural *we* requires the reflexive *ourselves*. Option C is incorrect because the possessive pronoun *their* is never joined with either *self* or *selves*.