

Signs: A Grammar Handbook

Online Exercises

Section I: Word Level - Basic Grammar

NOTE: those titles marked with yellow highlighting should be noted as especially good practice for ESL students.

Chapter 1

EXERCISE 1: Articles – Indefinite and Definite Articles

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the appropriate articles.

_____ standard for living in harmony with nature and science is established in _____second chapter, in which _____ lifestyle of a typical Martian couple is described. _____ description of _____ house evokes _____ serene, peaceful environment of fruit-bearing walls and creek-inlaid floors. Everything about _____ house has been designed to complement _____ Martian climate. For example, being farther from _____ Sun than Earth, _____ Martians have found a way to get as much sunlight as possible: _____ house “turned and followed _____ sun, flower-like” throughout the day, but to withstand _____ cold of night, it “clos[ed] itself in, like _____ giant flower, with _____ passing of light” (Bradbury 2, 5). Because _____ climate is also mostly dry, _____Martians have invented ingenious ways to harness their limited water supply to provide necessary humidity: Within _____ home, _____ “gentle rain sprang from _____ fluted pillar tops, cooling _____ scorched air, falling gently on [Ylla]. On hot days it was like walking in _____ creek. _____ floors of _____ house glittered with cool streams” (Bradbury 2-3). _____Martians have remained in control of their technology, using their impressive technological advances to enhance their harmonious relationship with nature. They sleep on clouds of chemicals that support and conform to their bodies overnight and gently lower them down to _____ floor in the morning. Books are fashioned from durable metal, eliminating _____ need for wasteful, polluting paper production.

Chapter 2

EXERCISE 1: Singular or plural nouns

Directions: Look over the following sentences and correct any nouns that are not in the correct singular or plural form.

1. Studying science is sometimes complicated by the need for exact datum.
2. For example, if you wanted to know why a certain species of fish developed specific characteristics, you would need to do a thorough analyses.
3. After a series of tests, you may be able to find one criteria that explains the special characteristics.
4. Your explanation could be that a particular bacteria caused a mutation or that the environment helped provide a stimuli that triggered a change.
5. Whatever your discovery is, you will usually need to present your findings in a particular media.

EXERCISE 2: Count or non-count nouns

*Directions: Use **many** with count nouns and **much** with non-count nouns in the following sentences, and change the noun ending if appropriate.*

1. Being a superior student requires _____ knowledge and _____ good grade.
2. You often get _____ excellent advice, but _____ courage and patience is also required.
3. The _____ paper that you produce in college can show _____ progress in your writing and grammar skills from your freshman to senior year.
4. Even with _____ homework and _____ assignment, you can use your editing skills to help you to become a better writer.
5. Having _____ good idea is always a good start, but effective editing skills are always the best way to end the paper writing process.

EXERCISE 3: Possessive nouns

Directions: Change the description on the left to one that includes the possessive form of the noun.

Example: *That book belongs to Jane. ~~That is Jane's book.~~*

1. Wherever I go, I see that sign by Allstate. → That is _____ sign.
2. On each side of the road, there are signs for Allstate and State Farm. → Those are _____ signs.
3. Signs with grammatical errors always annoy my friend George. → That is _____ frustration.
4. The sign for Green Soda is much more interesting than the sign for Red Soda. → _____ sign is much more interesting than _____.
5. Billboard signs are a popular way to advertise. → One of _____ most popular ways to catch new customers is through billboards.

EXERCISE 4: Nouns

Directions: Indicate whether the underlined nouns in these sentences are **common** or **proper**, **concrete** or **abstract**, and **count** or **non-count**.

Example: *Falling leaves are a good indicator that winter is around the corner. Answer: common, concrete, count*

Unlike their Martian (1) counterparts, few Earth men appreciate the (2) advantages of a peaceful, natural existence as illustrated in chapter seven. After three failed missions before them, the fourth (3) expedition lands on (4) Mars only to find a dead planet. The crew's cavalier attitude clearly shows the typical Earthman's, or more specifically, the typical American's, insensitivity to the loss of life or (5) culture as long as their goal is achieved. They revel in their success despite the discovery that a nearby Martian city's population was decimated as recently as a week ago.

- 1.
- 2.

- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Chapter 3

EXERCISE 1: Personal pronouns and possessive pronouns

Directions: Fill in the blank with an appropriate personal or possessive pronoun.

Between 1939 and 1945, the world was engulfed in a conflict fought on almost every continent and ocean, involving every world power, and ultimately costing more than 50 million people, both soldiers and civilians, _____ lives. More than a dozen nations, among _____ the United States, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R, fought on the side of the Allies, joining forces against the Axis powers—primarily Germany, Italy, and Japan—who, at the apex of _____ power, controlled or were poised to control large swaths of Europe, Africa, the Pacific Ocean, and East and Southeast Asia. Perhaps the greatest difference between World War II and the wars and conflicts that preceded _____ was _____ ubiquity.

From http://www.archaeology.org/1105/features/world_war_II_wwII_archaeology.html

EXERCISE 2: Reflexive or intensive pronouns

Directions: Fill in the blank with an appropriate reflexive or intensive pronoun.

Archaeologists _____ often forget that in World War II, there were no clearly defined front lines where battles began and ended. Gabriel Moshenska, who studies the archaeology of modern conflict, often has to remind _____ and others how World War II changed everything about the modern world, including warfare. Technology, _____, changed. Art and literature changed. Everything, including the world's structure, _____, changed.

Adapted from http://www.archaeology.org/1105/features/world_war_II_wwII_archaeology.html

EXERCISE 3

Directions: Fill in the blank with the appropriate relative pronoun.

1. In 1987, Prince put out an album titled *Signs of the Times*, _____ was released by the Paisley Park record label.
2. This album was Prince's first since he departed from The Revolution, _____ was his long-time back-up band.
3. Because Prince recorded many songs in the control room, rather than in the recording booth, in his studio, he often asked Susan Rogers, _____ was his sound engineer, to either leave the control room or turn her back.
4. *Signs of the Times* had three songs _____ hit the top ten.
5. Sheena Easton, _____ had collaborated with Prince in the past, sang duet lead vocals on "U Got the Look."

Chapter 4

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Change any ungrammatical pronoun to a more appropriate one.

Meteorite ALH84001 is a softball-sized igneous rock weighing 1.9 kilograms (4.2 pounds). He is one of twelve meteorites discovered on Earth that are thought to be from Mars. Most meteorites formed early in the history of the solar system, some 4.6 billion years ago. Eleven of the twelve Martian meteorites have ages less than 1.3 billion years, ALH84001 at 4.5 billion years old being the only exception. All twelve are igneous rocks crystallized from molten magma in a way that suggests it formed in a planetary-sized body, not an asteroid. They have similar oxygen isotope characteristics to each one and higher concentrations of ferric iron, water, and other volatiles than other meteorites. All twelve also show evidence of shock heating, presumably as a result of the impact which ejected themselves into space. Gas bubbles trapped in one meteorite,

EETA79001, have a composition that matches the current Martian atmosphere as measured by the Viking Landers, compelling evidence that this meteorite and by association the others, including ALH84001, came from Mars.

Paragraph adapted from <http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/marslife.html>

Chapter 5

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Underline the complete subjects in the following sentences.

EXAMPLE: During the flight, the pilot saw signs of engine problems.

1. Road Sign Math is a game in which players look for mathematical relationships that happen to occur on road signs.
2. Players post their road signs and related math equations on the Road Sign Math website.
3. Currently, about forty people are playing the game.
4. Since the inception of the Road Sign Math website, 232 mathematically related road signs have been posted.
5. No signs from Arkansas or Kansas have been posted as of yet.

Chapter 6

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Underline the linking verbs in the following sentences.

EXAMPLE: Signs can be funny sometimes.

1. Advertising signs have been around since ancient times.
2. Signs are a fundamental element in trade, commerce, and industry.
3. Judging by the number of billboards on the interstates, drivers are even able to pay attention to signs that quickly fly by.
4. Quirky billboards, such as the ones for Chick-fil-A, are both funny and popular.
5. However, some signs seem more like art than advertisements.

EXERCISE 2

Directions: Underline the transitive verbs, and circle the direct objects in the following sentences.

EXAMPLE: The pilot canceled the flight

1. In “The Day the Earth Stood Still,” a remake of the 1951 sci-fi classic, an alien visits Earth.
2. The alien’s mission is to save humans from themselves.
3. Seth Shostak, a senior astronomer at the SETI Institute, advised the makers of the film.
4. According to Shostak, an alien could detect a dangerous buildup of carbon dioxide on Earth if he was no more than 50 light-years away.
5. The hope, according to Shostak, is that the film will hook a new generation on space exploration

Adapted from http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28148553/ns/technology_and_science-space/t/six-frontiers-alien-life/

EXERCISE 3

Directions: Underline the verbals in the following sentences.

For Example: Left on their own, the kids decided to color on the walls.

1. Driving to the office, the doctor noticed a car on the side of the road with the driver hunched over the steering wheel.
2. To see if she could help, the doctor pulled her car off the side of the road and walked to the other car.
3. Approaching the car, she noticed a state highway patrol car pull up behind her car.
4. When the patrolman opened the car door, the doctor heard the crying baby in the back seat.
5. The question was who she was going to help first—the crying baby or the unconscious driver.

EXERCISE 4

Directions: Specify the tense (present, past, or future) of the underlined verbs in the following sentences.

1. Dysthymia, sometimes referred to as chronic depression, is a less severe form of depression.
2. With dysthymia, the depression symptoms will linger for a long period of time, perhaps two years or longer.

3. Those who have suffered from dysthymia in the past have a greater chance of suffering from it in the future.
4. Experts are not sure what causes dysthymia, but this form of chronic depression is thought to be related to brain changes that involve serotonin, a chemical or neurotransmitter that aids your brain in coping with emotions.
5. Major life stressors, chronic illness, medications, and relationship or work problems have been known to also increase the chances of dysthymia.

Adapted from <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/chronic-depression-dysthymia>

EXERCISE 5

Directions: Identify each underlined verb by its tense (present, past, future) and its aspect (perfect, progressive).

EXAMPLE: I have wanted to fly to Jamaica for a long time. (present perfect)

1. It is sometimes difficult to see whether or not your dog is aging.
2. Signs of old age in dogs include difficulty getting up, problems navigating the stairs, and “accidents” in the home.
3. You can help your dog age gracefully if you have thought about the problems it might have as it ages.
4. Dog steps that you have provided may help your dog get in and out of the car.
5. And, of course, your dog is always more comfortable if you provide a warm, soft place for them to rest and sleep.

EXERCISE 6

Directions: In the following paragraph, change all passive verb phrases to active forms.

How the atmosphere interacts with the oceans and land is included in the study of weather systems. Weather is studied by NASA Earth Science for two reasons. First, an understanding of the entire Earth system is gained through an improvement in our understanding of weather processes. Second, new technologies are developed by NASA that some U.S. infrastructures, such as NOAA and the FAA, require. Space-based sensors that are developed by NASA are also used by national weather forecasting systems. In addition, satellite-based profiles of temperature

and moisture are routinely used in NOAA's operational system. Thus, many aspects of earth science are helped by NASA's scientific endeavors.

Adapted from <http://science.nasa.gov/earth-science/focus-areas/earth-weather/>

Chapter 7

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Change the verbs in the following paragraphs that do not agree with their subjects.

In the Cascade mountains of California, north of Lassen Peak, astronomers is looking for aliens. The Allen Telescope Array (mostly paid for by Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft) consist of 42 dish antennas, each six meters across, scattered across the countryside. When the array is complete, it will have 350 dishes that, by acting in concert, will have the power of a single instrument 700 meters across.

The Allen telescope are looking for aliens the traditional way: by searching for radio signals that has either been sent out deliberately, or leaked into space accidentally, as human radio signals are. The search for extraterrestrial intelligence, or SETI, are a 50-year-old idea. Much progress have been made in locating Earthlike planets, but about 1,000 star systems has also been subject to serious radio scrutiny. The Allen array will increase the number to one million within a decade.

That are an impressive number, but some think this are the wrong approach. Paul Davies, a physicist at Arizona State University, point out that widespread radio communications may prove a short-lived historical phenomenon on Earth. Humans is, after all, increasingly using fiber optics to talk to each other. Moreover, many modern radio devices (such as cell phones) relies on a technique called "spread spectrum" encoding. It uses signals that look like background noise, except to a receiver equipped with the right unscrambling code. Humans figured this out within a century of inventing radio technology, so aliens might have done the same. Radio signals that is clearly artificial in origin may, then, be only a transient sign of civilization. So it might make sense to widen the search by looking for other telltale signs.

Adapted from <http://www.economist.com/node/15905827>

Chapter 8

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Underline each adjective or adjective phrase in the following sentences.

1. Parents and coaches need to know the signs of a child's dehydrated body and take the required action to prevent serious injury.
2. Thirst, fatigue, dizziness, and nausea are the most common signs of dehydration.
3. Thirst may not be the only indication of a dehydrated body, but drinking water before the start of a game or before a young person is even thirsty will help prevent dehydration.
4. Because exercise can sometimes inhibit thirst, fluids should also be provided during practice.
5. Fatigue and an impaired performance are both mental and physical symptoms of the body lacking water or fluids.

Adapted from <http://dehydration.net/2011/preventing-dehydration-in-young-athletes/>

Chapter 9

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Underline each adverb phrase in the following sentences.

1. Athletes who move slowly during a practice could be showing symptoms of thirst.
2. Calling water breaks often might save a young athlete's life, especially during a hot summer.
3. Young athletes should always have a bottle of water on or near them.
4. The water should be able to effectively replace oxygen saturation, electrolytes, and minerals.
5. If there are limited times to drink water or other liquids during a game, athletes should be sure to drink ten minutes before the game starts and then as much as they can during the game.

Adapted from <http://dehydration.net/2011/preventing-dehydration-in-young-athletes/>

Chapter 10

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Underline each prepositional phrase, and circle each preposition. If a prepositional phrase is within another prepositional phrase, underline it twice.

1. The American Sign Museum was founded by Tod Swormstedt, a former editor and publisher of *Signs of the Times* magazine.
2. He began the museum with just an idea and no items in his collection.
3. With the initial support of ST Media Group and some other donors, the museum began to take shape.
4. The museum opened in spring of 2005, and it has continued to expand significantly since then.
5. It now has a collection of more than 3,800 cataloged objects with new acquisitions arriving all the time.

Adapted from <http://www.signmuseum.net/about.asp>