

## Exercises Answer Key: Preparing to Solve the 15 Common Errors

### Exercise 1: Finding Subjects and Simple Predicates

1. **Lenore** went to the pow-wow.

“Went” is the past tense form of “go,” an intransitive verb. For a listing of irregular verbs (those that conjugate outside the usual patterns), see *Acting on Words* pages 535-540.

2. **Lenore** and **Daniel** went to the pow-wow.

Two or more players can be the doer of the action. These are referred to as a compound subject. A compound subject is considered plural and therefore takes the plural form of the verb, e.g., “They go. She goes.”

3. **Lenore** and **Daniel** went to the pow-wow and danced.

A subject or compound subject can perform more than one action, resulting in a compound verb.

4. The **milk** turned *sour*.

“Turned” is a linking verb, like “felt,” “disappeared,” “seemed,” “smelled,” and “was.”  
“Sour” is the subject complement

5. **Richard Burton** is *Antony*.

Antony is the subject complement.

6. The **committee** of elders sees a *solution*.

Prepositions—words like “of,” “by,” and “to,” etc.—indicate the relationship of a noun or pronoun to other words in the sentence. The main subject of a sentence will not follow a preposition. Subjects often occur at the beginning of a sentence, sometimes followed by a preposition linking to further information about the subject. This further information serves as an adjective describing the noun that it follows. When looking for the subject, simply imagine lines crossing out the preposition and following noun, which functions as object of the preposition:

The **committee** ~~of elders~~ sees a *solution*.

7. **We** laughed.

“Laugh” is an intransitive verb.

8. **We** threw the *ball*.

“Ball” is the direct object.

9. Where are you going?

Questions often change the standard word order of English sentences. The subject may fall between the helping verb and the verb. “Are going” expresses the present progressive tense, one of 12 tenses in English. These are illustrated in *Acting on Words* on pages 532-534. Since this sentence poses a question, it is called interrogative.

10. Is the **bibliography** *current*?

Many interrogative (questioning) sentences begin with the linking verb, move to the subject and then to the subject complement. In other words, the subject and verb have reversed their customary locations.

11. Think about it.

This imperative style sentence (giving a command) addresses the listener as “you”: (*You*) *think about it*. In this type of sentence, the subject “you” is said to be implied or elliptical.

12. It is a *rainy* **day**.

Imperative sentences notwithstanding, English likes to keep a subject in each sentence, preferably before the verb. In the above example, “day” may be considered the intended or actual subject, but the so-called *dummy* subject “it” stands in for the real subject at the point in the sentence where a subject is expected. “Rainy” represents the subject complement: (*The*) *day is rainy*. Another example of this form uses “there”: There are *four* good **reasons** to study hard. The dummy words “it” or “there” as used in this sentence pattern are sometimes also referred to as *expletives*.

13. There are **problems** *brewing* in this program.

Like example 11, this one also illustrates use of the expletive structure. This structure can add emphasis when used effectively. Sometimes it is the most natural way to express an idea. But it often results in wordiness and weakened expression.

14. A **problem** was identified by the committee of elders.

See *Acting on Words* pages 563-564 for a discussion of the *passive voice*. This manner of expressing an idea banishes the logical doer of the action (in this case the “committee”) into the grammatical role of modifying words within the complete predicate. Passive voice elevates the logical direct object of a thought into the grammatical role of subject. To maintain the movie analogy, passive voice is usually an example of miscasting. It makes more sense to say “The committee of elders identified the problem” than “A problem was identified by the committee of elders.” The former, more standard version is less wordy, more direct, and clearer. As example 15 illustrates, passive voice may go so far as to omit any mention of the actual doer of the action being referred to.

15. A **problem** was identified.

Even though this sentence begs the question *who* identified the problem, English considers this a complete grammatical unit, since it contains a subject (“problem”), a linking verb (“was”) and a subject complement (“identified”), in this case a verb participle serving as an adjective. So when English demands a “complete” thought, it does not always mean a truly complete thought. Sometimes a pseudo-complete thought will do. In a vague sense, this sentence expresses the thought that a certain outcome occurred concerning the problem, but it does not reveal who acted. The thing acted upon (“problem”) masquerades as the doer of an action. Most writing coaches today advocate for active voice rather than passive voice, but grounds of tact or style sometimes justify use of passive voice.

16. **She** will sing at the concert tomorrow.

“She” is doing the action and so is the subject of the sentence. The auxiliary “will” serves with the base verb “sing” to express future tense. In addition, in British English, use of “will” (rather than “shall”) for third person expresses an indicative mood rather than an imperative one. “She shall sing” expresses an added quality of will, of intensity. This relationship is reversed in British English for first person. “I shall go” simply declares a fact whereas “I will go” expresses determination or some other form of insistence. Some might feel that these choices are needless complications, like the British distinctions between the words “alternate” and “alternative”; others might argue that having such choices increases opportunities for nuance.

17. **We** had been talking about the business when **she** arrived.

This one was meant to be a trick. The preceding 16 examples each contain just one subject-verb set. Example 16 has *two* subject-verb sets. So which is the proper subject-verb set of the sentence? “We had been talking” is considered the main subject-verb set of this sentence because it expresses a complete thought whereas, despite the presence of a subject and its complete verb, “when she arrived” does not. This introduces the idea of

independent clauses, dependent clauses, and sentence patterns that involve two or more clauses linked according to various conventional methods.

### **Exercise 2: Recognizing Independent (Main) and Dependent (Subordinate) Clauses**

1. (After the girl parked her mother's car,) she ran towards him.
2. She asked for his autograph, (but Leonard Cohen could not find his pen.)
3. (When he found it,) he signed her book.
4. The girl thanked Leonard Cohen, (while dancing a jig around the car park.)

### **Exercise 3: Combining Clauses Uses Coordination and FANBOYS**

[Possible solutions only]

1. More research is needed to understand women's health needs, and it is important the women participate as volunteers in this research.
2. Assisted suicide is illegal in Canada, but there is a growing movement to change the law.

### **Exercise 4: Combining Clauses Using Coordination and a Semicolon**

1. Some individuals make the choice to die; other individuals make the choice to live.

### **Exercise 5: Combining Clauses Using a Semicolon and a Conjunctive Adverb**

[Possible solutions only]

1. Stress is a natural part of life; however, too much stress can decrease our physical health.
2. Shamanic healing acknowledges that all healing includes a spiritual dimension; consequently, Shamans attempt to create a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual balance.

## **Exercise 6: Combining Clauses Using a Subordinating Conjunction**

[Possible solutions only]

1. After European awareness of the new world increased, opportunities for trade with aboriginal peoples were explored.
2. Indian artists work with a wide variety of art forms, although basketry, beadwork, textiles, and carvings are some of the most traditional mediums.
3. It is important to preserve the aboriginal oral tradition because oral narratives transmit and preserve traditional Indigenous knowledge.

## **Exercise 7: More Practice With Coordination and Subordination**

[Possible solutions only]

1. After Leonard Cohen shook his head, he climbed into the back of his limousine.
2. Although the car was already leaving the car park, the girl ran towards the limousine.
3. As the limousine sped away, he waved to her.
4. Because she was disappointed, she stared dejectedly after him.
5. She was thirsty, so she decided to buy an iced tea from the coffee shop.

## **Exercise 8: More Practice in Using Adverbial Conjunctions After a Semicolon to Make Compound Sentences**

[Possible solutions only]

1. Leonard Cohen is one of the most distinguished Canadian songwriters; consequently, he is held in high regard in Canada.
2. Cohen's songs reflect his skill as a poet; however, his skill as a poet does not negate his skill as a songwriter.
3. Leonard Cohen has been inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame; moreover, he has been awarded the Order of Canada.

## **Exercise 9: Using a Relative Pronoun to Link a Restrictive Clause**

1. Many aboriginal artists who are concerned with traditional ways of life pass on aboriginal beliefs about nature and spirituality to future generations.
2. Traditional painters or carvers who are most deeply concerned with natural themes resist commercial pressures.

### Exercise 10: Identifying Non-restrictive Subordinate Clauses

1. Sharon Hall, who belongs to the Brown Bear Clan, uses her dreams to inspire her art.
2. Aboriginal artists, who often work with bone, beads, and animal hair, express their unique tribal heritage in their art.
3. The creative process of Aboriginal pottery making, which often involves collecting the clay from secret places, celebrates the relationship between life and mother earth.

### Exercise 11: Combining Sentences Using Non-restrictive Subordination

1. Oral Narratives, which are transmitted by word-of-mouth, articulate and record cultural histories, beliefs, and values.
2. Historian and anthropologists, who use oral histories and traditions to understand past events, distinguish between traditions, eyewitness accounts, and cultural storytelling.

### Exercise 12: More Practice in Identifying Restrictive and Non-restrictive Modifying Information

1. Randy Bachman, (another Canadian singer-songwriter,) is legendary in the rock-and-roll industry.
2. Lucie Blue Tremblay writes and performs lesbian music that has both English and French interpretations.
3. Joni Mitchell sings and performs folk-rock and jazz music, (which is well-known throughout the world.)
4. Molly Johnson, (who is a Canadian rock and jazz singer,) released a solo jazz album in 2000.

### Exercise 13: More Practice in Identifying Compound and Complex Sentences

1. Horses jump. S
2. Show jumping classes are seen at horse shows all over the world, (and, since 1912, show jumping has been an Olympic sport. ) C
3. The history of show jumping is interesting. S
4. The Enclosure acts, (which were instigated in England in the eighteenth century,) required the construction of fences to separate the land of the wealthy farm owners from the land of the common people, (and there was an increasing demand for horses who could jump these fences.) CC

5. (In the late nineteenth-century, [phrase]) horses jumping became a spectator sport.  
Cx
6. Originally, the spectators would watch the competitors ride across country, racing from church steeple to church steeple (point to point), (but the spectators soon became frustrated because they could not see all the fences,) (and the sport became contained to a field or arena.) CC
7. In France [noun phrase], “lepping” competitions, (which were confined to an arena,) became popular, (and these competitions spread to England in the late nineteenth century.) CC
8. These “lepping” competitions are the precursor to modern show jumping classes.  
S
9. Canada’s Spruce Meadows, (which is in Calgary, Alberta,) has one of the best show jumping facilities in the world. Cx

### Exercise 14: Analyzing Dickens

In a corner below the mangle, on a couple of stools, sat two very little children, a boy and a girl, and when the very long boy, in an interval of staring, took a turn at the mangle, it was alarming to see how it lunged itself at those two innocents, like a catapult designed for their destruction, harmlessly retiring when within an inch of their heads.

Dickens’s passage is compound-complex. It has one independent clause joined by coordination to a second independent clause (or de facto independent clause) that is introduced by a dependent clause. The first independent clause is inverted; that is, the verb “sat” comes before the subject “children.” Elements of the complete predicate come before the verb. Turning the elements into standard word order, the first independent clause might read like this:

Two very little children, a boy and a girl, sat on a couple of stools in a corner below the mangle.

“Two very little children” [adjectives modifying the noun and subject “children”; a noun phrase]

“children” [subject of the independent clause]

“a boy and a girl” [a non-restrictive noun phrase working appositively to modify the preceding noun phrase]

“sat on a couple of stools in a corner below the mangle” [complete predicate consisting of the intransitive verb “sat,” the adverbial phrase “on a couple of stools,” the adjective phrase “in a corner” modifying “stools,” and the adjective phrase “below the mangle” modifying “corner”]

The comma after “girl” followed by the FANBOYS conjunction “and” announces that a new independent clause is on the way. But it is preceded by the following introductory subordinate clause:

“when the very long boy, in an interval of staring, took a turn at the mangle”

“when” [adverbial conjunction introducing the dependent clause]

“the very long boy” [noun phrase including two adjectives and the subject of the clause, “boy”]

“in an interval of staring” [a modifying prepositional phrase that seems intended to function as an adverb, telling how he takes a turn]

“took a turn at the mangle” [the complete predicate consisting of the transitive verb “took,” the object “turn,” and the adjectival prepositional phrase “at the mangle,” which describes the noun “turn”]

The comma after “mangle” announces the end of the introductory dependent clause. The reader realizes the second independent clause will follow. It reads as follows:

“it was alarming to see how it lunged itself at those two innocents”

“it” [a dummy subject]

“was” [a linking verb]

“alarming” [a subject complement, an adjective]

“to see how it lunged” [an infinitive phrase serving as subject of the clause]

“how it lunged itself at those two innocents” [a dependent clause with the adverbial conjunction “how,” the subject “it,” the verb “lunged” used transitively, the reflexive pronoun “itself” serving as object of the verb, and the prepositional phrase “at those two innocents” serving to modify the verb and ending with the indirect object “innocents”]

Shorn of the dummy word approach, this independent clause might be written thus:

To see how it lunged itself at those two innocents was alarming.

Technically, two clauses occur in this independent clause, but they function to express one complete thought. The subordinate clause functions merely as a restrictive element describing the subject “to see,” not as the vehicle of a related subordinate idea.

The comma after the end of the second independent clause, which ends with the word “innocents,” allows Dickens to append an adverbial prepositional phrase “like a catapult designed for their destruction.” A comma after this phrase permits one more descriptive cluster, “harmlessly retiring when within an inch of their heads.” The latter is an adjectival participle phrase describing the noun “catapult.” The adverb “harmlessly” modifies the adjectival participle “retiring,” which is further modified by what is in essence a restrictive subordinate clause [when *it was* within an inch of their heads]. The subject “it” and linking verb “was” are implied but omitted or elliptical.

This sentence may seem highly complicated. In an era increasingly alienated from language, analyzing these 67 words may seem akin to counting angels on the head of a pin. But when we realize what Dickens has done—what joy he takes in playing with



possibilities to this extent—perhaps this sense of complex unreality will melt away into its opposite.

## Exercise 15: Identifying Incomplete Sentences

[Possible solutions only]

1. sang another torch song

This phrase serves as a predicate (verb + object). It is missing a subject.

**She** sang another torch song.

[Introduce a subject.]

2. a consummate singer

This noun phrase could serve as subject, object, or subject complement. It lacks a verb or predicate.

A consummate singer appeared.

[Introduce an intransitive verb.]

A consummate singer took the *stage*.

[Introduce a verb and, if the verb is transitive, like “took,” an object.]

**The manager** hired a consummate singer.

[Introduce a subject and a verb. The noun phrase now serves as object.]

**She** is a consummate singer.

[Introduce a subject and a linking verb. The noun phrase now serves as subject complement.]

3. lighting up the crowd

This phrase could serve as an adjective or noun (gerund). With a complete verb, it could also serve as a predicate (verb + object).

Lighting up the crowd, the **singer** knew *she should extend her set*.

[Introduce an independent clause, which the phrase now modifies as an adjective. “Singer” is subject, “knew” is verb, and “she could extend her set” is a restrictive subordinate clause serving as object, answering the question “what did she know?” The relative pronoun is understood to introduce the subordinate clause. The word “that” before subordinate clauses can often be cut and understood elliptically.]

Lighting up the crowd is not something every performer can do.

[“Lighting up the crowd” serves here as a gerund phrase, a noun, the subject of the sentence. The linking verb “is” connects the gerund to the subject complement “not something.” The pronoun “something” is modified by the restrictive clause “that every performer can do.” Again, the relative pronoun “that” is implicitly understood to introduce the subordinate clause.]

**She** was lighting up the crowd.

4. after she left the stage

“She left the stage” expresses a complete thought with the required subject, verb, and (in this case) object. With the adverbial conjunction, however, the thought becomes subordinated and therefore incomplete. Either the subordinate clause must be linked to an independent clause or the subordinating adverbial conjunction must be removed to make an independent clause.

After she left the stage, the **crowd** continued *to yell, applaud, and stamp*.

[Here the dependent clause modifies the independent clause that has been introduced to express a complete thought. “Crowd” is the subject. “Continued” is the verb and the infinitive phrase “to yell, applaud, and stamp” serves as an adverb modifying “continued.”

She left the stage.

[Removing the adverbial conjunction removes the state of subordination. The subject, verb, and object (“she,” “left,” and “stage”) now express a complete thought.

## SUPPLEMENTAL EXERCISES

### Exercise 16: Finding Subjects and Verbs

1. Simon and Peter were covered in snow.

2. They struggled to their feet.
3. Their skis were either broken or lost.
4. A few people, who were skiing by, stopped to help them.
5. Someone on a skidoo came and gave them a ride down the hill.

### Exercise 17: Finding Verbs

1. His mother drives him to the interview.
2. Bobby dances skilfully for the panel of interviewers.
3. The interviewers congratulate and applaud Bobby's performance.
4. Bobby became one of the youngest dancers at the school.
5. Bobby and his mother are thrilled.

### Exercise 18: Finding Subjects and Simple Predicates

1. The girl (borrowed) her mother's car, and (drove) to the folk festival.
2. On the way, she (stopped) at the coffee shop.
3. She (gasped.)
4. Leonard Cohen was standing in the car park.

### Exercise 19: Finding Complete Subjects and Complete Predicates

1. Sue Rodriguez, a woman who had Lou Gehrig's disease, (fought) (for the right to die.)
2. As a disabled woman, she (argued) (that the law discriminated against her.)
3. She (lost) (her case in the courts.)
4. Physician-assisted suicide (is) (illegal in Canada.)