

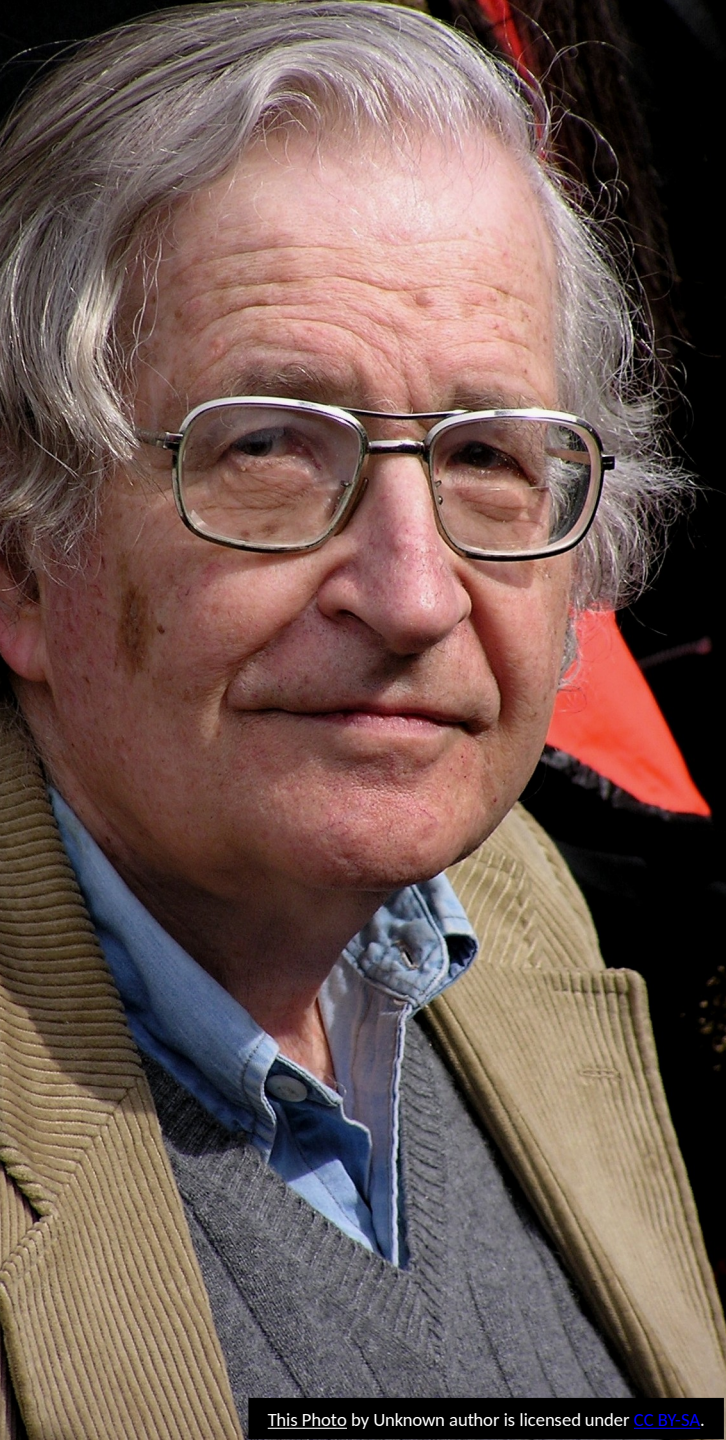


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The World of Languages and Languages of the World

- Let's look at semantics.
- The words 'semantic' and 'semantically' relate to the *meaning* of a sentence.
- Sentences can be grammatically correct but semantically incorrect.





Sentences with no meaning

Noam Chomsky (pictured right) is an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historian, social critic, and political activist. He is sometimes called "the father of modern linguistics".

He wrote a very famous sentence that doesn't actually mean anything, despite being grammatically correct.

We'll investigate this later.

Ill-formed sentences



Here are some examples of sentences which are grammatically correct but make no sense.

Explain why each one is odd:

- a) The bird neighed
- b) He had left next Friday
- c) She broke her scarf
- d) The teacher counted the sky
- e) The car crashed for two hours

Here is Noam
Chomsky's
famous sentence:

**Colourless green
ideas sleep
furiously.**

Find the three
reasons why this
sentence is
semantically
wrong.

Reason 1

Reason 2

Reason 3



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Let's play



Cross out one word from Noam Chomsky's sentence and replace it with one which makes it *grammatically incorrect*.

There are many different ways you could do this.

Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

Try to imagine / draw / describe / say aloud your sentence as you go. This should help you get a picture of whether or not a sentence 'sounds right or wrong' or describes something which is or could be 'real' or not.



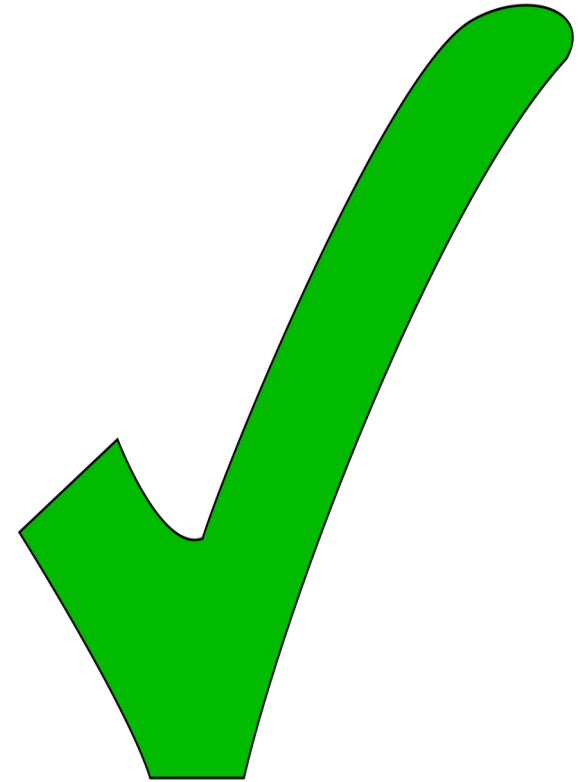
Your Corrections



Rewrite Noam Chomsky's sentence by changing the words in bold so that it is *grammatically correct* and *semantically correct*.

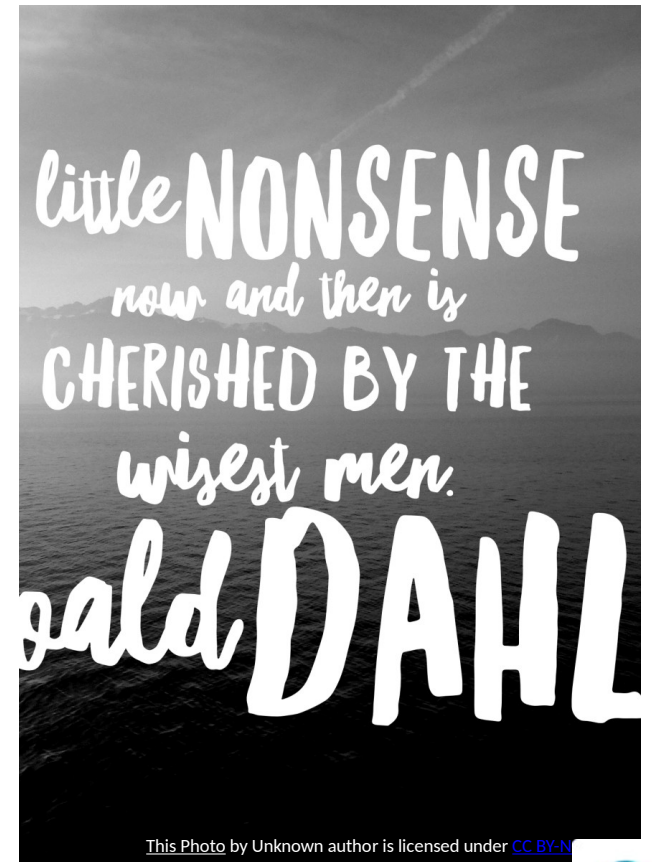
There are many different ways you could do this.

Colourless green **ideas** sleep **furiously**.



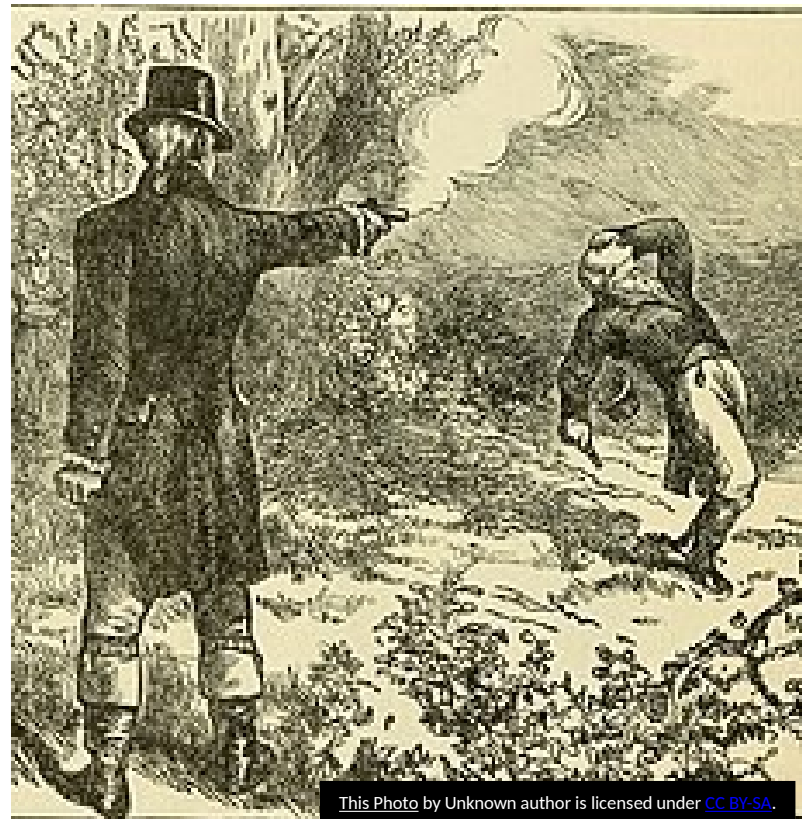
Utter nonsense!

Write a sentence of your own which, like Noam Chomsky's original example, is *grammatically correct* but *semantically incorrect* ('nonsense').



A Nonsense Poem

On one bright day in the middle of
the night
Two dead boys got up to fight
Back to back they faced each other
Drew their swords and shot each
other

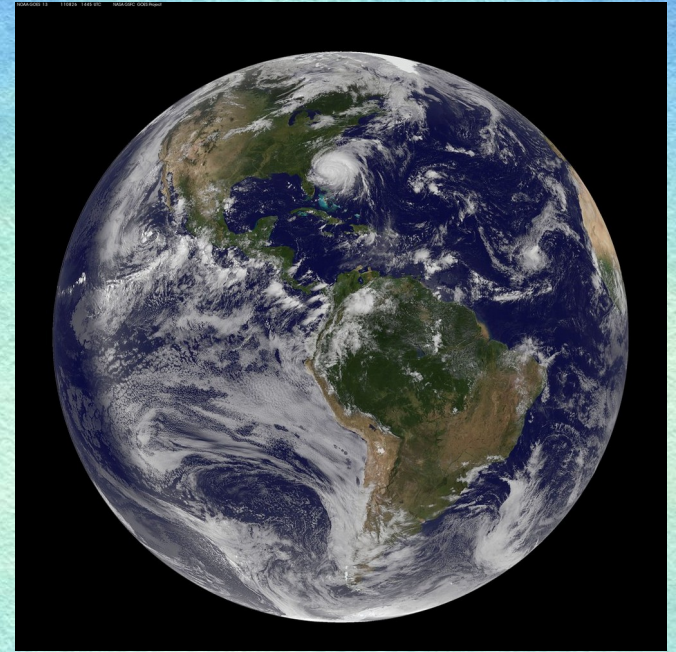


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Plenary

For l_____e to
make sense, we need
accurate g_____r and
accurate s_____s.

This is the case for all
languages the world
over.



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**What about this
then...?!**

Create your **long own** sentence with adjectives of opinion, size, age, shape (as listed below).

Now rearrange the adjectives to make another nonsense sentence.

adjectives in English absolutely have to be in this order: opinion-size-age-shape-colour-origin-material-purpose Noun. So you can have a lovely little old rectangular green French silver whittling knife. But if you mess with that word order in the slightest you'll sound like a maniac. It's an odd thing that every English speaker uses that list, but almost none of us could write it out. And as size comes before colour, green great dragons can't exist.



Acknowledgements

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