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2nd Edition

English Grammar

FOR

DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Get down to basics with the rules of English grammar
- Improve your writing and verbal communication skills
- Brush up on your proofreading abilities
- Improve your grades and/or test scores

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For Dummies





Are you affected? Or effected?

Has the study of grammar affected or effected your brain? Should you set or sit on the porch to think about this sentence? These two pairs of words are a complete annoyance, but once you learn them, you're all set. (And I do mean set.) Here are the definitions:

Affect versus effect: Affect is a verb. It means to influence. Effect is a noun meaning result. Hence

Sunlight affects Ludwig's appetite; he never eats during the day.

Ludmilla thinks that her vegetarian pizza will affect Ludwig's dietary regimen, but I think the effect will be disastrous.

Special note: Affect may also be a noun meaning "the way one relates to and shows emotions." Effect may act as a verb meaning "to cause a complete change." However, you rarely need these secondary meanings.

Sit versus set: Sit is a verb meaning "to plop yourself down on a chair, to take a load off your feet." Set means "to put something else down, to place something in a particular spot." Thus

Ratrug seldom sits for more than two minutes.

I'd like to sit down while I speak, but only if you promise not to set that plate of pickled fish eyeballs in front of me.

The brother-in-law rule: Hyphenated plurals

If you intend to insult your relatives, you may as well do so with the correct plural form. Remember: Form the plural of hyphenated nouns by adding *s* or *es* to the important word, not to the add-ons. These words are all plurals:

- ✓ mothers-in-law
- ✓ brothers-in-law
- ✓ vice-presidents
- ✓ secretaries-general
- ✓ dogcatchers-in-chief



You may hear references to "attorney generals." If you do, call the grammar police. An "attorney general" is a lawyer, not a military officer. Therefore, *attorney* is the important part of this title, and it's a noun. The *general* is a description — a reference to the rank of the *attorney*. To form a plural, you deal with the noun, not with the descriptive word. Therefore, you have one *attorney general* and two or more *attorneys general*.