

English Grammar Essentials: A Guide to Clear Communication

Part 1: The Core Components of a Sentence

A complete sentence requires a subject and a predicate. The **subject** is the noun or pronoun that performs the action or is being described. The **predicate** is the part of the sentence that contains the verb and tells us something about the subject.

- **Subject:** *The quick brown fox*
- **Predicate:** *jumps over the lazy dog.*

Understanding clauses is also critical. An **independent clause** can stand alone as a complete sentence. A **dependent (or subordinate) clause** cannot stand alone and must be attached to an independent clause.

Part 2: Common Punctuation Mistakes

Proper punctuation is essential for clarity. Three common errors to avoid are the comma splice, the run-on sentence, and the sentence fragment.

- **Comma Splice:** Incorrectly joining two independent clauses with only a comma.
 - *Incorrect:* The sun is shining, it is a beautiful day.
 - *Correct:* The sun is shining; it is a beautiful day. (Use a semicolon)
 - *Correct:* The sun is shining, and it is a beautiful day. (Use a coordinating conjunction)
- **Run-on Sentence:** Joining two independent clauses with no punctuation at all.
- **Sentence Fragment:** A group of words that is punctuated as a sentence but is grammatically incomplete.

Part 3: Subject-Verb Agreement

The verb in a sentence must agree with its subject in number. A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb.

- *Singular:* The **dog barks**.
- *Plural:* The **dogs bark**.

Be careful with compound subjects joined by "or" or "nor"; the verb agrees with the subject closer to it. Indefinite pronouns like "everyone," "each," and "nobody" are singular and require singular verbs.