

## Writing English for Speakers of Other Languages

You have chosen to pursue a college education, which is admirable. College classes are rarely easy, and since your native language is not English, you have extra work to do—but you are more to be admired for the extra effort. Interestingly enough, although you have an additional hurdle of writing in English, your study of the language as an English as a Second Language (ESL) learner puts you ahead of most native speakers: (1) you do not automatically learn the bad habits and slang that native speakers assume are correct, (2) you acquire an understanding of the elements of grammar that native speakers rarely bother to learn, and (3) your perspective of communication and your thought processes are different from those of native English speakers, so your writing easily can be more interesting and fresh than that of native speakers, who too often rely on clichés and old, tired phrases.

Officially denied (but known by experienced students) is that good, clear writing can cover a multitude of content weaknesses—in other words, even the most austere and reserved of teachers cannot avoid being affected ever-so-slightly toward the positive if the essay he or she is reading is well written and errorless—even if the premise of the essay is that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1992 in the *Pinta*, the *Niña*, and the *Andrea Doria*.

The Key to Good Writing in English is *Simplicity*  
but  
The **Great Golden Doorway** to Good Writing is  
**R e w r i t i n g !**

Do not commit yourself to what you have written, thinking of it as finished. Think of your writing as a block of wood, and you whittle and chip away at it, each time moving closer and closer to a beautiful sculpture. The great thing about writing is that it takes no great physical effort, no tools, no cleanup of shavings and chips, and no bandages from hitting your thumb with the mallet. But although it is easy to do, like anything else, writing does not become art without polish. Good writing requires rereading, rewriting, and constant tweaking.

Professional writers set their manuscripts aside for a period of time to allow their thinking to be cleared, then they read the manuscript again. The longer you wait before a reread, the more unfamiliar the manuscript will be and the more objective you can be about its quality. The waiting-time can be days, weeks, or even months—the longer, the better. But as a college student, you have tight deadlines. You do not have the luxury of waiting a long time before rereads. So one does what one can with what one has—college is not professional writing, after all. The point is to reread (and retouch) your manuscripts as often as possible before turning them in.

Your entry into the university is evidence of a college-level knowledge of English. However, particularly if you have not lived in the USA for long, you may wish to study further into:

1. Confidence in English word order
  - a. Use of articles
  - b. Use of verbs
  - c. Use of transitional expressions
  - d. The passive voice
2. Familiarity with English idioms, slang, and verbal phrases
  - a. Idioms
  - b. Verbal phrases

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## Use of the Articles *A*, *An*, and *The*

Some languages do not use articles at all. Others use articles differently from the usage in English. Their use in English depends on the nouns they precede and the "focus" of the sentence. While hardly key, strategic elements of communications, articles are some of the earliest language elements taught to children, and native speakers of English seldom use articles incorrectly--errors you may make are therefore noticeable and distracting, particularly in writing.

The easiest definition is between *a* and *an*: they are variations of the same word and their difference is simply that *a* is used before words that begin with consonant sounds (a stone, a small desert), and *an* is used before vowel sounds (an intelligent student, an average day). The choice of *a* or *an*, though, depends on pronunciation, not spelling. Many words that begin with 'u' are preceded by *a* instead of *an* because words like "useful," "uranium," or "utility" are pronounced with a beginning 'y'—ubiquitous, ukulele, ululate, university, urology, usual, etc. In some words of French origin, the initial 'h' is silent: an heir to the throne, an honorable man, an hour before the bell, etc.

Think of *a/an* and *the* as photographic lenses. The article *the* is a telephoto lens, and the words *a/an* are wide-angle lenses. The use of *the* means the following noun is a specific item, one of a particular group, perhaps known or understood by the reader. *A/an*, on the other hand, mean that the following noun is one of a generic group, a universal. To be more specific, articles depend on two ideas: countability and definite/indefinite.

### Countability

This concept refers to people, places, or things that can be counted (one dollar/two dollars, one house/two houses) and those that can not (sand, air, light). Countable nouns can be made plural by adding 's' or some other variation of a plural ending, e.g., pirate(s), difficult(ies), child(ren). A few words are the same in both singular plural, like "deer" and "sheep."

Uncountable nouns often refer to food, beverages, substances, or abstractions (information, meat, steel, tea). Some uncountable nouns (but not the abstract ones) can be made countable by adding a count reference in front of them (a bunch of celery, six blocks of ice, two gallons of milk, three grains of sand, a bar of soap).

You will find no clear-cut distinction between countable and uncountable nouns. Some nouns can be both countable and uncountable even without adding count references. For example, as an uncountable noun, experience refers to abstract knowledge or skill gained by observing or participating in events. As a singular or plural countable noun (experience/experiences), "experience" refers to a particular instance of participation in events. Similarly, the uncountable noun "glass" is a substance made from silicates; a glass (singular) is a drinking utensil; and glasses (plural) are plastic, shell, or metal frames containing lenses that correct imperfect vision.

Beware that nouns countable in your native language may be uncountable in English, and vice-versa. For example, soap is countable in Spanish but uncountable in English. Be aware of these differences, and they probably will not cause much difficulty. The simplest solution is to memorize some of the most frequently occurring uncountable nouns (see below) and look up others in a dictionary if you are not sure whether they are countable or uncountable. Not all dictionaries indicate whether nouns are countable or uncountable, so find one that does.

### **Common Uncountable English Nouns**

#### **Food and Drink**

bacon, beef, beer, bread, broccoli, butter, cabbage, candy, cauliflower, celery, cereal, cheese, chicken, chocolate, coffee, corn, cream, fish, flour, fruit, ice cream, lettuce, meat, milk, oil, pasta, rice, salt, spinach, sugar, tea, water, wine, and yogurt

#### **Nonfood Substances**

air, cement, coal, dirt, gasoline, gold, ice, leather, paper, petroleum, plastic, rain, rubber, silver, snow, soap, steel, wood, and wool.

#### **Abstract nouns**

advice, anger, beauty, confidence, courage, employment, fun, happiness, health, honesty, information, intelligence, knowledge, love, poverty, satisfaction, truth, and wealth

#### **Miscellaneous**

biology, clothing, equipment, furniture, homework, jewelry, luggage, lumber, machinery, mail, money, news, poetry, pollution, research, scenery, traffic, transportation, violence, weather, and work

### **Definite/Indefinite**

A definite noun refers to something specific, known to both the writer/speaker and the reader/listener. For example, if John needs to drive somewhere, he might ask his father, "May I use the car?" He uses the definite article "the" because both he and his father know which car John is referring to (the family car). But later John might say to his friend Eleonore, "The pet shop has a guinea pig named Popo." He uses the indefinite article "a" because he knows which guinea pig he saw, but Eleonore does not.

The Definite/Indefinite Consideration has four possibilities (only one of which requires a definite noun). If both the speaker (or writer of a written communication) and the listener (or reader) do not know precisely what is being talked about, the indefinite article will be used. If both do know precisely, the definite article will be used. For example,

**Indefinite article:** "I saw a guinea pig named Popo."—the writer/speaker knows specifically what is being referred to; the reader/listener does *not*

**Indefinite article:** "I understand your grandmother broke a \$100,000 Chippendale table."—the writer/speaker does *not* know specifically what the table looks like although the reader/listener does know.

**Indefinite article:** "I need to find a new career."—the writer/speaker does *not* know exactly which career; neither does the reader/listener.

**Definite article:** "May I use the car?"—both the writer/speaker and the reader/listener know exactly which car is referred to

To qualify as a definite article, consider if the noun:

(a) Has been previously mentioned—The pet show had a guinea pig named Popo <first mention, indefinite>. It was black and white and tan, and when I reached for it, the guinea pig scampered away <second mention, definite>.

(b) Has a superlative adjective—The fastest car in the race is a Ferrari <There can be only one car that is the fastest>.

(c) Describes something unique (a person, place, or thing)—The earth revolves around the sun once every 365 days <There is only one earth and only one sun>.

(d) Is clear from the context or situation—Close the door <clear to both of speaker and listener which door is referred to>.

### **Choosing the Appropriate Article**

In order to choose the appropriate article for a noun, you first need to decide whether the noun is singular. One way to determine this is to ask yourself whether you could put the number "one" in front of it. For example, you can say "one experiment," but not "one knowledge" or "one examples"; therefore, "experiment" is singular, whereas "knowledge" is uncountable and "examples" is plural.

The use of *the* means what follows is already known to the reader, usually because it has been mentioned earlier (or it is about to be described) or it is a community institution or facility. *The* is not used before a singular noun meaning a general category, e.g., nature, hope, evil, and so on.

The presence of *a/an* means what follows is a universal, a generic, or one of a large group. *A/an* is not necessary if that word is plural (An ant can be a pest. Ants can be pests.)

Examples:

An unknown lake is not a good place to go swimming. *This means any lake in the world that is unknown is a bad place for swimming.*

The unknown lake is not a good place to go swimming. *This means that we are referring to a set of lakes we know of, and the unfamiliar lake in the series is a bad place for swimming.*

A car dealer in town may drop prices because of increasing gasoline prices. The dealer will feel the necessity to trim prices to stay competitive. *The dealer first mentioned is unspecified, any of the dealers in town. The second dealer is the specific one qualifying as the one defined in the first sentence.*

The car dealer in town may drop prices because of increasing gasoline prices. *The meaning would be that the town has only one car dealer, so the article in the second sentence would automatically be "The."*

A person interested in politics may become a legislator, but only one of the thousands may become the President. *A person is a generic term for "anybody." A legislator is one elected office among many. The office of the President, on the other hand, is a singular case. "The" appears before "thousands," meaning the specific group (out of the millions in the country's population) who are interested in politics.*

Try these and identify the meaning you intended:

1. A/The university is close to my house.
  - a. A university is close to my house *means you are describing your house, and the identity of the university is not important.*
  - b. *The university is close to my house means your house is near the university that has already been mentioned earlier or is otherwise known to the reader.*
  
2. A/The Wine has become a/the connoisseur's drink.
  - a. A wine has become a connoisseur's drink *implies a sort of surprise, since the type or brand of the wine appears to be unimportant; therefore, the message of the sentence is that wine has become a preferred drink, and the implication is that this is unexpected. "A connoisseur's" means the writer is referring to any and all connoisseurs.*
  - b. *The wine has become the connoisseur's drink means a particular sort or brand of wine known to the reader (perhaps from local vintner) has become popular. "The connoisseur's" appears at first glance to refer to a specific connoisseur (perhaps a famous gourmet in the town), but modern advertising often directs the focus of "the" past the adjective "connoisseur's" to "drink", meaning "the drink," meaning, literally, "the drink of connoisseurs," meaning the singular, specific drink preferred by connoisseurs.*
  
3. Microwaves can't penetrate metal, so a/the food cooked in a pan in a microwave oven doesn't cook properly.
  - a. *...a food cooked in a pan...implies any food one would choose would not cook successfully in a pan in a microwave.*
  - b. *...the food cooked in a pan...implies that the food in question is one that has already been mentioned, perhaps earlier in the passage.*

4. Ajax Bank's Online Banking Service is a/the convenient way to take control of your finances.
- a. ...*a most convenient way...implies there are several convenient ways, and Ajax Bank's service is only one of them. This would not be as effective in an advertising pitch.*
  - b. ...*the most convenient way...means that Ajax Bank's service is the only convenient way.*
5. The emergency exit is a good way to get out of the building, but we used the steps.
- a. *The emergency exit...implies that there is only one*
  - b. *An emergency exit...would imply that there is more than one—or even that there is none, and one is needed*
  - c. ...*a good way to get out of the building...implies that it is generically a good way*
  - d. ...*the good way to get out of the building...implies that it is the only good way or at least the best way*
  - e. ...*the building...implies that the writer and the reader both understand the building under consideration*
  - f. ...*a building...would imply that the discussion is about principles of emergency exits using a generic building as the example*
  - g. ...*the steps...implies that the writer and the reader both know which steps are under discussion*
  - h. ...*a steps...implies that the building has several sets of steps, and we used one of them.*

# Use of Verbs

## Verb Endings

Those who speak some English dialects and nonnative English speakers sometimes leave out verb endings required by standard English:

**The –s ending of a verb** is required when

- The subject of the sentence is a singular noun (*boy, car, house, etc.*), an indefinite pronoun (*everyone*), or the pronouns *he, she, or it*
- The verb's action occurs in the present.

The school form asks [not *ask*] for a complete address.

The instructor speaks [not *speak*] frequently during registration.

A cowboy often rides [not *ride*] a horse for several days.

**The –d or –ed ending of a verb** is required when

- The verb's action occurred in the past
- The verb form functions as a modifier
- The verb form combines with a form of *be* or *have*

The accused man's lawyer asked [not *ask*] for more time.

The personnel involved [not *involve*] should be punctual.

The restaurant's food is supposed [not *suppose*] to be the best.

This small tailor shop has acquired [not *acquire*] a great reputation.

Beware that computer grammar and style checkers will miss errors of these types. If English is not your native language, and your papers are marked with errors of these types, you may need to edit your writing specifically for these problems.

### **Infinitives**

The basic form of the verb in English consists of two words, "to" and the verb itself, which is called an "infinitive": to eat, to dance, to run, to consider, to play, etc.

A verb with the suffix "ing" becomes a noun called a "gerund": eating, dancing, running, considering, playing, etc.

The problem is that in many languages infinitives and gerunds are interchangeable, but in English infinitives and gerunds may follow some verbs but not others and may have different meanings after a verb:

The card player stopped *to play*.—the gambler has paused at the saloon to  
test his luck

The card player stopped *playing*.—the gambler has decided to end the  
game.

## Idiomatic Expressions

Idiomatic expressions can be problems for non-native speakers because the meaning of the phrase is not literally what the words mean. Also known as "colloquialisms," the only true way to learn them is one by one.

**A poor man's \_\_\_\_\_ :** Something or someone not as good as others is "a poor man's version. A writer who uses exotic locations but is not very convincing would be a poor man's Ernest Hemmingway.

**About-face :** One who changes his or her mind completely is said to have done an about-face.

**Above board :** If things are carried out legally and properly, they are said to be done "above board."

**Achilles' heel :** A person's weak spot is his or her Achilles' heel, so-named because of the Greek hero Achilles, who was invulnerable everywhere on his body except his heels.

**Acid test :** Proves whether something is good and effective or not.

**Across the board :** Something that applies to everybody applies across the board.

**Albatross around your neck :** An albatross around the neck refers to a problem resulting from a past action that continues to keep one from being successful.

**Alter ego :** A very close and intimate friend, from the Latin phrase that literally means "'other self."

**An old flame :** A person with whom one once had an emotional, usually passionate, relationship—a person still looked on with fondness and affection.

**Apple of your eye :** Something or someone very special to you.

**Costs an arm and a leg :** Something very expensive.

**As the crow flies :** The shortest possible distance between two places.

**As well as :** In addition to

**At loggerheads :** People who are arguing and cannot agree on anything are at loggerheads.

**At the drop of a hat :** To do something immediately.

**AWOL** : AWOL stands for Absent Without Leave, a military term used when someone is missing without telling anyone, without permission.

**Axe to grind** : A grievance, resentment, or something for which one seeks revenge that is an ulterior motive, a hidden agenda behind an otherwise innocent activity.

**Babe in the woods** : A naïve person.

**Baby boomer** : Someone born between 1945 and 1965, when the US population was growing rapidly.

**Back burner** : An issue on the back burner has low priority.

**Back to square one** : Starting from the beginning again.

**Backseat driver** : An annoying person fond of giving advice to a person performing a task, particularly when the advice is incorrect or unwelcome.

**Bad egg** : A person who cannot be trusted. A Good egg is the opposite.

**Bad taste in your mouth** : If something is wrong or bad about what you are considering, it is said to leave a bad taste in your mouth.

**Ball is in your court** : If the ball is in your court, it is up to you to make the next decision or step, as in tennis..

**Ballpark figure** : A ballpark figure is a rough or approximate number to give a general idea.

**Banana republic** : A small country with a single crop or resource, governed badly by a corrupt elite.

**Baptism of fire** : A first experience of something unpleasant, usually also a learning experience.

**Baldfaced liar** : One who displays no shame about lying even if he or she is exposed.

**Bark is worse than his or her bite** : Someone who when angry may shout but does not take further action.

**Barking up the wrong tree** : Acting on a complete misunderstanding.

**Basket case** : Something so bad or damaged that it cannot be remedied.

**Bat an eye :** To show emotion—usually used in the negative, e.g., The car was stolen, but he did not bat an eye.

**Be that as it may :** A phrase used to indicate that while one may accept the truth in a concept, one's opinion remains the same, e.g., America was discovered in 1492. Be that as it may, the Native Americans were here long before that.

**Bean counter :** An accountant.

**Beat around the bush :** To avoid being specific; to speak around the topic without actually being concise.

**Beat a dead horse :** To try to raise interest in an issue that no one supports anymore or to attempt to attain something that is unattainable.

**Beck and call :** Someone who does everything for you, no matter when you ask, is at your beck and call.

**Below par :** Something that is not up to standard or to feel in poor health.

**Below the belt :** Something unexpectedly cruel or unfair--like the illegal boxing punch.

**Between a rock and a hard place :** An awkward position in which one must choose between unpleasant alternatives.

**Between the devil and the deep blue sea :** A dilemma or a difficult choice.

**Read between the lines :** To find the real message in what is said or heard, a meaning not available in literal interpretation of the words.

**Beyond a shadow of a doubt :** Absolutely no doubts remains. [**Cliché: avoid this term**].

**Beyond belief :** Behavior almost impossible to accept.

**Beyond the pale :** Activity too extreme to be acceptable morally or socially.

**Big Apple :** New York City

**Big cheese :** The boss.

**Bird's eye view :** A situation from which a situation can be seen and understood clearly.

**Bit player :** Someone with a small or unimportant role.

**Bite the bullet :** In the days before anesthetics, doctors sometimes had a patient bite down onto a bullet to withstand the pain. The phrase means to accept or face unpleasantness because it cannot be avoided.

**Black sheep :** Someone who does not fit into a group or family because of significant behavior or character differences.

**Blessing in disguise :** Bad luck or misfortune which results in something positive.

**Blood is thicker than water :** Family relationships are stronger than friendships or business relationships.

**Blow your stack :** Lose your temper.

**Bolt from the blue :** Something unexpected and sudden.

**Bone of contention :** An issue always causing tension and arguments.

**Bone to pick :** An issue about which one is annoyed, about which one wishes to confront another.

**Born with a silver spoon :** Born into a rich family.

**Bottom line :** In accounting, the line showing net income—the conclusion.

**Get down to brass tacks :** To begin to deal with the real business.

**Break even :** To have neither profit nor loss.

**Break the ice :** To overcome initial shyness or embarrassment meeting someone for the first time.

**Bring the house down :** To do something so popular and spectacular that it is acclaimed and praised vigorously.

**Burn the candle at both ends :** To live life at such a hectic pace that overexertion can affect health.

**Burn the midnight oil :** To stay up very late working or studying.

**Bury the hatchet :** To make peace with someone (to stop arguing and/or fighting).

**By the book :** To do something exactly as it is prescribed.

**By the skin of your teeth :** To manage to accomplish something only barely, coming very near to failing.

**Call a spade a spade :** To speak frankly, making little or no attempt to conceal opinion or spare the feelings of the listener/reader.

**Call the shots :** To be in charge and tell people what to do.

**Can of worms :** An action that creates serious problems is opening a can of worms.

**Can't hold a candle :** A comparison meaning that if X can't hold a candle to Y, Y is tremendously better.

**"\_\_\_" up your sleeve :** Anything up your sleeve is a surprise plan or idea you are holding back until the appropriate time.

**Chew the fat :** To talk at leisure with someone.

**Chickenfeed :** Something small or unimportant.

**Chip off the old block :** Someone who closely resembles one or both of the parents in character.

**Clean bill of health :** To have a clean bill of health means nothing is wrong; everything is fine.

**Clean slate :** To start with a clean slate means nothing bad from the past is taken into account.

**Cliffhanger :** Something in which the result is so close that it cannot be predicted and will be known only at the very end.

**Close but no cigar :** To be close to success but not actually there.

**Cloud nine :** To be on cloud nine is to be extremely happy.

**Cock and bull story :** Something completely unbelievable.

**Cold feet :** To have cold feet is to lose courage to act.

**Cold turkey :** To stop suddenly and without ameliorating actions.

**Collateral damage :** Accidental or unintended damage or casualties.

**Corner a market :** To be dominant in an area and unlikely to be challenged by other companies.

**Couch potato :** An extremely idle or lazy person who chooses to spend leisure time lying in front of the TV eating a diet mostly junk food.

**Crash a party :** To go somewhere you have not been invited.

**Crocodile tears :** To pretend to be upset or affected by something.

**Cut to the chase :** To get to the point or the most interesting or important part of something without delay.

**Cut to the quick :** To be very hurtful and upsetting.

**Cutting edge :** At the forefront of progress in the area of specialization.

**Dark horse :** Someone who is a bit of a mystery.

**Dead as a Doornail :** A person, process, or activity that is lifeless.

**Dead heat :** A tie; two things finishing with exactly the same results.

**Dead in the water :** Something not going anywhere or making any progress.

**Derring-do :** To have derring-do is to show great courage.

**Devil's advocate :** Someone who adopts a position he or she may not believe in just for the sake of the argument

**Die is cast:** Literally the singular of "dice." The phrase means to throw one die—in so doing, it cannot be called back. The phrase's colloquial meaning is that a decision has been made that cannot be altered, and fate will decide the consequences.

**Dog days :** Very hot summer days.

**Dog-eared :** A book that is in bad condition, with page tips bent like dogs' ears, torn pages, and so on.

**Doggy bag :** What a restaurant calls the package of the food you have not eaten for you to take home.

**Doldrums :** Literally a section of the Caribbean Sea in which winds rarely blow. To be in the doldrums means to be depressed. Something in the doldrums is not making any progress.

**Doormat :** A person who does not stand up for him or herself and gets treated badly.

**Down for the count :** To have lost a struggle, like a boxer who has been knocked out and is down for the referee's count of one to ten..

**Down in the dumps :** To be depressed.

**Draw a blank :** To seek for something without getting any useful information.

**Draw the line :** To set limits of is acceptable.

**Dressed to the nines :** To be dressed in one's very best clothes.

**Dyed in the wool :** To have very strong opinions that will not be affected by what others think.

**Eager beaver :** A person who is extremely keen.

**Easy as pie :** Something very easy

**Eat crow :** To admit that one was wrong about something.

**Egg on your face :** To look foolish or embarrassed.

**Elbow grease :** Hard physical work.

**Elbow room :** Working space.

**Eleventh Hour :** At the last moment.

**Even keel :** To be balanced.

**Every Tom, Dick and Harry :** A phrase meaning "nearly everyone."

**Eye for an eye :** Retributive justice, in which the punishment equals the crime.

**Face the music :** To accept the negative consequences of something done incorrectly.

**Fairweather friend :** A friend always present when times are good but who leaves when problems occur.

**Feather in your cap :** A success or achievement that may help in the future.

**Feeling Blue :** To feel blue unwell, depressed, or unhappy.

**Feet on the ground :** Practical and realistic.

**Fifth wheel :** Something unnecessary or useless.

**Fighting chance** : A reasonable possibility of success.

**Fingers and thumbs** : To be "all fingers and thumbs" is to be clumsy and not very skilled with the hands.

**Fire on all cylinders** : Going as well as possible.

**Fishy** : Something that is suspicious or untrustworthy.

**Fit as a fiddle** : In perfect health.

**Flash in the pan** : Something very noticeable but not long-lasting.

**Flat out** : Working as hard and fast as possible.

**Flesh and blood** : Blood relatives, especially the immediate family.

**Flowery speech** : Full of lovely words but possibly lacking substance.

**Fly off the handle** : To become very angry.

**For a song** : Very cheap.

**For kicks** : Done purely for fun or thrills.

**For my money** : In my opinion.

**For the time being** : A phrase indicating that an action or state will continue into the future but is temporary.

**Foregone conclusion** : A result foreseen before the process is complete.

**Foul play** : Criminal activity.

**Fourth estate** : The media, especially newspapers.

**Freudian Slip** : To use the wrong word accidentally and in so doing reveal what one is really thinking.

**From the horse's mouth** : Something heard directly from the person concerned or responsible.

**From the word go** : From the very beginning.

**Full Monty** : The real thing, not reduced in any way.

**Get on your soapbox :** To speak pretentiously about a subject one feels strongly about.

**Get out of bed on the wrong side :** To wake up and start the day in a bad mood for no real reason.

**Get the ball rolling :** To start something so that it can start making progress.

**Get the green light :** To be given necessary permission or authorization.

**Ghost of a chance :** A very slim chance or no chance at all.

**Give someone a piece of your mind :** To criticize strongly and angrily.

**Give up the ghost :** To die.

**Go against the grain :** To do things in an unconventional manner, especially if the methods are not generally approved.

**Go Dutch :** To pay equal shares for a purchase.

**Gone to pot :** To deteriorate and fail to function.

**Gone to the dogs :** To have gone very wrong and lost all good qualities.

**Good egg :** A person who can be relied on. Bad egg is the opposite.

**Good time :** To travel faster than expected.

**Goody two-shoes :** A self-righteous person who makes a great deal of his or her virtue.

**Grass roots :** Ordinary people, those at the bottom of a hierarchy, often used to refer to voters.

**Graveyard shift :** The very late night work schedule.

**Gravy train :** To find an easy way to make lots of money.

**Grease monkey :** A mechanic.

**Grease someone's palm :** To bribe someone to do something.

**Greased lightning :** Adjective meaning to move very rapidly.

**Great guns :** Adjective meaning to do very well.

**Great unwashed** : The working class.

**Great white hope** : Someone expected to be a great success.

**Greek to me** : Phrase meaning "I do not understand."

**Green light** : Approval to do something.

**Green thumb** : A talent for gardening.

**Green-eyed monster** : Strong jealousy

**Greenhorn**: Someone lacking relevant experience and knowledge for the job or task

**Grey area**: An area in which there is no clear right or wrong.

**Guinea pig** : One taking part in an experiment.

**Gung Ho** : To support something blindly and without thinking about the consequences.

**Hammer and tongs** : To argue fiercely.

**Hand to mouth** : Someone who is very poor and needs whatever little money available to cover expenses.

**Hard of hearing** : Someone a bit deaf.

**Hatchet job** : Criticism that destroys someone's reputation.

**Rue the day** : To bitterly regret what has been done.

**Head in the clouds** : To have unrealistic, impractical ideas.

**Head over heels in love** : To be passionately in love and intoxicated by the feeling.

**Headstrong** : To be obstinate and not to take other people's advice readily.

**Heart of gold** : Someone who is genuinely kind and caring.

**Heaven knows** : A reply meaning one has no idea how to answer.

**Heavenly bodies** : The stars and planets.

**Hedge your bets** : To avoid risking everything on one opportunity but to try more than one thing.

**Hit the roof (or ceiling) :** To get very angry.

**Hit the sack :** To go to bed.

**Hold all the aces :** To have all the advantages and to view one's opponents or rivals are in weak positions.

**Hold the bag :** To be responsible for something.

**Hold your horses :** An admonition meaning to slow down, that something is being done too rapidly.

**Home stretch :** The last part of something, referring to the final portion of a horse race.

**Hook, line, and sinker :** To accept something completely, referring to a hungry fish that swallows not only the hook but also the line and the lead weight.

**Hope against hope :** To hope for something even though there is little or no chance of the wish being fulfilled.

**Horns of a dilemma :** To be faced with two equally unpleasant options and have to choose one.

**Hostile takeover :** The process in which a company is bought out when it does not want to be.

**Hue and cry :** Noise and confusion surrounding chasing a criminal or villain. The opposite is "discreetly and without drawing attention."

**Ill-gotten gains :** Profits or benefits made either illegally or unfairly.

**In a nutshell :** Introducing a concise summary.

**In a pickle :** To be in some trouble or a mess.

**In cold blood :** To do something ruthlessly, without any emotion.

**In dire straits :** To be in serious trouble or difficulties.

**In my book :** In my opinion.

**In stitches :** Laughing uncontrollably.

**In tandem :** Two people doing things two things at the same time.

**In the black :** A bank account in credit (to be in debt is "in the red").

**In the doghouse :** To be in disgrace and very unpopular at the moment.

**In the long run :** Over a long period of time, in the end, or in the final result.

**In the offing :** Something very likely to happen soon.

**In the pink :** To be in very good health.

**In the pipeline :** Something that has not arrived yet but expected to arrive soon.

**In the red :** An overdrawn bank account (an account in credit is "in the black").

**In your face :** To be direct and confrontational.

**Into thin air :** To vanish or disappear without trace.

**Irons in the fire :** A number of things one has working to one's advantage at the same time.

**It's not over till the fat lady sings :** Until something has finished officially, the result is uncertain.

**It cost an arm and a leg :** Very expensive.

**Six of one and a half-dozen of the other :** Means little or no difference between two options.

**Will stand you in good stead :** Something that will probably be advantageous in future.

**Ivory tower :** People who live in ivory towers are detached from the world around them.

**Jack-of-all-trades :** Someone who can do many different jobs.

**John Doe :** A name given to an unidentified male who may be party to legal proceedings, to an unidentified person in hospital, or to the unidentified dead. "Jane Doe" is the female equivalent.

**Jockey for position :** To maneuver for an opportunity.

**John Q Public :** The typical, average US person.

**Jump the gun :** To start something too early.

**Jump through hoops :** A phrase used to describe someone willing or obligated to make great efforts and sacrifices for another.

**Jungle out there :** The situation is dangerous and without rules.

**Just desserts :** Deserved punishment or misfortune.

**In the nick of time :** To manage to do something just in time, with seconds to spare.

**Kangaroo court :** A fake legal proceeding; when people take the law into their own hands and form courts that are not legal.

**Keep at bay :** To maintain a safe distance.

**Keep body and soul together :** To earn enough to cover basic expenses but nothing more.

**Keep posted :** To keep up-to-date with information and developments.

**Keep your ear to the ground :** To keep informed about something, especially if there are rumors or uncertainties.

**Keep your head above water :** To manage to survive financially.

**Keep your nose clean :** To stay out of trouble by avoiding any wrong-doing.

**Kick the bucket :** To die.

**Kiss of death :** An action or sign that means failure or ruin.

**Knee-jerk reaction :** An instant, instinctive response to a situation, named for the automatic knee-jerk reaction to a doctor's rubber hammer.

**Know the ropes :** To know how the system works.

**Land of Nod :** To "go to the Land of Nod" is to fall asleep or go to bed.

**Lap of the gods :** Something beyond human control; fate will decide the outcome.

**Larger than life :** Something excessive or exaggerated.

**Last straw :** The final problem that causes a loss of temper—from an Arabic story in which a camel is loaded with straw until a single additional straw breaks its back.

**Last-ditch :** A desperate attempt that will probably fail anyway.

**Leave well enough alone :** To keep a safe distance, either physically or metaphorically.

**Let sleeping dogs lie :** To avoid disturbing a situation that would result in trouble or complications.

**Let the cat out of the bag :** To accidentally reveal a secret.

**Level playing field :** To allow for everyone to be treated equally.

**Lie through your teeth :** To lie continually, regardless of what people know.

**Like a beached whale :** To be completely stuck somewhere, unable to get away—like a whale on a beach, which cannot get back into the water easily.

**Lock, stock and barrel :** An expressions meaning "everything".

**Long in the tooth :** Too old.

**Lower the bar :** To change the standards in order to make things easier.

**Major league :** Very important.

**Make a mint :** To make a lot of money.

**Make a pitch :** To make a bid, offer, or other attempt to get something.

**Make ends meet :** To pay daily expenses.

**Make waves :** To cause trouble.

**Man of letters :** Someone expert in arts and literature.

**Man of means :** Man or woman who is wealthy.

**Man of straw :** Weak person easily beaten or changed.

**Man of the cloth :** A priest.

**Man's best friend :** A dog.

**Mealy-mouthed :** To fail to say clearly what one means.

**Mind P's and Q's :** To be careful about how one behaves.

**Mint condition :** In perfect condition.

**Miss is as good as a mile :** A failure, even by the smallest margin, it is still a failure.

**Money laundering :** To make money illegally acquired "legitimate and clean" by processing it into the mainstream.

**Money to burn :** Someone very rich.

**Monkey business :** To behave naughtily or mischievously.

**Moot point :** A legal usage meaning something about which a final decision cannot be made; in common usage, something debatable and not final.

**Mover and shaker :** A highly-respected key figure in a particular area with much influence and importance.

**Muddy the waters :** To make the situation more complex, less understandable.

**Music to my ears :** Exactly what you wanted to hear.

**Neck and neck :** Used regarding two competitors or candidates—from horse racing, in which two competitors that are very close, and neither is clearly winning, are described as "neck and neck."

**Needle in a haystack :** Something very difficult if not impossible to find.

**Neither fish nor fowl :** Something or someone who does not fit into any group.

**Nest egg :** Money saved for the future.

**New blood :** New ideas or people to invigorate something.

**New lease on life :** To find new enthusiasm and energy for something.

**New York minute :** Something happening very rapidly.

**Nitty gritty :** The most important and serious issues.

**No holds barred :** No rules of conduct apply; one can do anything.

**No ifs or buts :** To indicate that one does not wish to accept any excuses

**No love lost :** Two people have a strong enmity toward one another and make no effort to conceal it.

**No quarter :** Without mercy.

**Not my cup of tea :** Something one does not like very much.

**Odds and ends** : Small, remnant articles and miscellaneous things.

**Off the cuff** : Without preparation.

**Off the hook** : To void punishment or criticism.

**Off the wall** : Unconventional.

**Old hat** : Old-fashioned and dated.

**Olive branch** : An indication that one wants peace.

**On the dot** : Exactly at a pre-specified time.

**On the fly** : To do things without preparation, responding to events as they happen.

**On the level** : To be honest and trustworthy.

**On the map** : A place widely known.

**On the right foot** : Off to a good start.

**On the shelf** : Something set aside--nothing is being done about it at the moment.

**On the tip of your tongue** : A situation in which one knows the word but cannot quite remember it at the moment.

**On the up and up** : Making very good progress in life and doing well.

**On the wagon** : Someone who has stopped drinking alcohol.

**On your high horse** : Someone inflexible and arrogant, who will not make any compromises.

**On your last legs** : Someone close to dying.

**One bad apple** : The full proverb is "one bad apple spoils the barrel," meaning that a bad person or policy can ruin everything around it.

**One fell swoop** : "Fell" means "deadly." Something done at one fell swoop is done in a single period of activity, usually swiftly and ruthlessly.

**One-man band** : One person doing all the work or with all the responsibility.

**One-off** : An object or event happening once, not to be repeated.

**Out of sorts :** To feel upset and depressed.

**Out of the blue :** Something happening suddenly and unexpectedly.

**Over a barrel :** To be in a position in which one has no choice but to accept what is demanded.

**Over the Counter :** Medicines and drugs sold without a doctor's prescription.

**Paint the town red :** A night out with lots of fun and drinking.

**Paper tiger :** A person, country, or institution that looks powerful but is actually weak.

**Par for the course :** A golfing term: something that is what one expected it to be. If it is above par, it is better, and if it is below par, it is worse.

**Pass the buck :** To avoid taking responsibility by saying that someone else is responsible.

**Pass the time of day :** To stop and say hello, enquire how the other person is, and other such communications of social politeness.

**Pay through the nose :** To pay a very high price.

**Pecking order :** Hierarchy of rank.

**Peeping Tom :** A voyeur.

**Pick up the Tab :** To pay the bill.

**Pie in the sky :** An idea or scheme that is utterly impractical.

**Piece of cake :** Something very easy.

**Pig in a poke :** To buy something without checking the condition--usually finding later the object was defective.

**Pipe dream :** An unrealistic, impractical idea or scheme.

**Piping hot :** Very hot food.

**Play hardball :** To be very aggressive in trying to achieve one's aim.

**Play it by ear :** To proceed without a plan of action, deciding what to do as events develop.

**Play second fiddle :** To take a subordinate role behind someone more important.

**Pot-luck :** To take whatever happens to be available at the time.

**Pull someone's leg :** To tease someone, but not maliciously.

**Push the envelope :** To go to the limits, to do something to the maximum possible.

**Put somebody's nose out of joint :** To irritate someone or make him or her angry with you.

**Put your foot in it :** To do or say something embarrassing and tactless or to get yourself into trouble.

**Putting the cart before the horse :** To do something the wrong way round.

**Quick on the trigger :** Someone who acts or responds quickly.

**Rack and ruin :** Something utterly destroyed or wrecked.

**Rags to riches :** Someone who started life very poor and became rich.

**Raining cats and dogs :** To rain very heavily.

**Raw deal :** To be treated unfairly.

**Read someone the riot act :** To give someone clear warning that he or she is in serious trouble.

**Red herring :** Something that distracts from the real issues.

**Red letter day :** A remarkable day in which something special happens.

**Red tape :** A negative term for official paperwork and bureaucracy that obfuscates life.

**Ring a bell :** Something that reminds you of something you have heard before.

**Ringside seat :** To observe something from a very close and clear position.

**Rock the boat :** To destabilize a situation by making trouble.

**Round the bend :** Someone or something no longer rational.

**Rub someone the wrong way :** To annoy or irritate.

**Ruffle a few feathers :** To annoy people when making changes or improvements.

**Rule of thumb** : An approximate rule or commonly held impression.

**Run circles around someone** : To be smarter and intellectually quicker.

**Running on empty** : To be exhausted but to keep going.

**Sacred cow** : Something held in such respect that it cannot be criticized or attacked—from the Hindu regard for cows to the detriment of human residents.

**Salad days** : An especially happy period of life.

**Salt of the earth** : People who decent, dependable, and unpretentious.

**Saved by the bell** : To be rescued from danger or a tricky situation just in time by an external action—deus ex machina.

**Say-so** : The authority, advice, or recommendation of a superior.

**Scraping the barrel** : To search for more when all the best people, things, or ideas used up.

**Screw loose** : To be crazy.

**Second wind** : To overcome exhaustion and find new energy and enthusiasm.

Idioms pt 2

**Seen better days** : Something aged badly (also used to describe people).

**Sell like hot cakes** : Selling very well.

**Set in stone** : Cannot be changed or altered.

**Set the wheels in motion** : Get something started.

**Seventh heaven** : Extreme happiness.

**Sharp cookie** : Someone not easily deceived or fooled.

**Shoestring** : Something done with the very least expenditure.

**Shoot yourself in the foot** : To do something self-damaging (ambition, career, etc.)

**Shot in the dark** : To try something with little hope of success.

**Skeleton in the closet :** To have a dark, shameful secret.

**Slippery slope :** A case in which one action leads to further and worse actions.

**Small fry :** Someone unimportant.

**Smart Alec :** Someone who is conceited, who likes to show off how clever and knowledgeable he or she is.

**Smell a rat :** To know instinctively that something is wrong or that someone is lying.

**Smoke the peace pipe :** To stop arguing and fighting.

**Smoking gun :** Definitive proof of someone's guilt.

**Snake in the grass :** Someone who betrays you even though you have trusted him or her.

**Speak of the devil! :** If talking about someone who happens to walk in, this phrase is used to let the person know you were talking about him or her.

**Spic and span :** Very clean and tidy.

**Spitting image :** The exact similarity, mirror-image.

**Square peg in a round hole :** Someone who does not fit in and who feels out of place.

**Start on the wrong foot :** To start badly.

**State-of-the-art :** A hyphenated adjective meaning something is the latest, incorporating the latest and best technology.

**Stick to your guns :** To keep your position even through attack or criticism.

**Stiff-necked :** An adjective meaning a person is overly formal and does not relax.

**Straw poll :** An informal survey of a few people in order to hypothesize the opinions of a larger number.

**Take it on the chin :** To experience something bad, something which not defended against.

**Take someone for a ride :** To deceive someone.

**Take the bull by its horns :** To tackle a problem directly without worrying about risks.

**Talk shop :** To talk about work matters, particularly outside the work environment.

**Tall order :** Something hard to achieve or fulfill.

**Teething problems :** Problems a project has in its earliest stages.

**The ball's in your court :** Means the next step is up to you.

**Thick-skinned :** A person not affected by criticism.

**Thin-skinned :** A person very sensitive to criticism.

**Throw down the gauntlet :** To issue a challenge.

**Throw in the towel :** To admit defeat.

**Throw the book at someone :** To punish someone as severely as possible.

**Tie the knot :** To get married.

**Tight ship :** A business or situation controlled strictly, not allowing much individual freedom of action.

**Tighten your belt :** To economize.

**Tip of the iceberg :** A serious problem showing only a small part of a situation, with far more serious complications underneath.

**To soft soap :** To flatter someone.

**To spill the beans :** To reveal a secret or confess to something.

**To spin a yarn :** To try to deceive by lying.

**To split hairs :** To concentrate on tiny and unimportant details in order to find fault.

**Top dog :** Most important or influential person.

**Tough cookie** : A person who will do everything necessary to achieve what he or she wants.

**True blue** : A loyal and dependable person.

**Turf war** : People or organizations fighting for control.

**Twenty-four seven** : Twenty-four seven, or "24/7," means all the time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Twinkling of an eye** : Something happening very quickly.

**Under the table** : Illegal or dishonorable practices.

**Under the weather** : To feel ill or to lack energy.

**Under your breath** : To say something very quietly.

**Up in the air** : A matter about which no decision has been made, which is still uncertain.

**Upper hand** : To have the advantage.

**Velvet glove** : Describes a person who appears gentle but is determined and inflexible underneath.

**Waiting in the wings** : To be in the background, nearby, ready to act on short notice.

**Wet blanket** : Someone who tries to spoil other people's fun.

**Work like a dog** : To work very hard.

**Worm information from someone** : To persuade someone to tell you something he or she wanted to keep secret.

**Worm's eye view** : The view from below, either physically or socially.

**Worse for wear** : Something used for a long time which is not in very good condition.

**Writing on the wall** : If the writing is on the wall for something, it is doomed to fail.

**Written all over your face :** If someone has done something wrong or secret and cannot hide it in his or her expression, it is "written all over his or her face."

**Zero tolerance :** To disallow the slightest infraction or discrepancy

## Verbal Phrases

Verb phrases can be confusing to English learners because the combination of words can mean something different from the individual words alone. Here is a list of verb phrases you may encounter (with examples of the verbal phrases used in sentences):

**act up:** to misbehave (for people); not work properly (for machines).

"My little brother gets his way when he screams and **acts up** until my parents surrender."

"I hate electric car windows—in every rainstorm, they start **acting up**."

**act like:** to behave in a way similar to \_\_\_\_\_ .

"Why do you **act like** the boss when you are just a worker?"

**act out:** to put thoughts into action.

"If you **act out** that resentment, you could start a fight."

**add up** (1): to fit together logically; to make sense; (2) to find the total.

(1) "The jury verdict was surprising, but the arguments **add up**."

(2) "If you **add up** the fees, they more than double the charges!"

**ask out:** to ask for a date.

"I like that new girl; I will **ask her out** to the movies."

**back down:** to retreat from a threat.

"Jim was very boisterous, but he **backed down** when the police dog arrived."

**back off:** to refrain from an action.

"The bidders were going crazy about the house, but they **backed off** after Hurricane Ivan destroyed the neighborhood."

**back up** (1): to move backward, in reverse; (2) to confirm a story, facts, or information; (3) to make a copy of the original as insurance.

(1) "Check the car mirror carefully before you **back up**."

(2) "What many newspapers do not do is **back up** their stories with research and facts."

(3) "When the company computer crashed, I was very glad I **backed up** the system."

**beg off**: to decline an invitation or ask for an excuse.

"When they told me I was toastmaster at the Armpit Club, I **begged off**."

**blow up** (1): to inflate; (2) to explode; destroy by exploding; (3) to suddenly become very angry.

(1) "I became lightheaded after **blowing up** balloons for the party."

(2) "War movies always have to show a building **blowing up**."

(3) "When the man spilled his drink on Toni, she **blew up**."

**bone up on**: to review or study thoroughly.

"I hope to spend the week before finals **boning up on** the mathematical formulas."

**break down** (1): to separate into component parts; (2) to stop functioning.

(1) "When he **broke** the charges **down**, he found he still had \$2,000 yet to pay."

(2) "Let's not take that car—It is liable to **break down** on the freeway."

**break in** (1): to enter by using force; (2) to wear or use something until it fits or works well; (3) to train or accustom someone to a routine.

(1) "I came home to find somebody had **broken in** while I was gone."

(2) "New shoes always give me blisters until I **break** them **in**."

(3) "The bad part is that I have to **break in** my replacement before I can transfer to Jamaica."

**break out:** to exceed expectations; to rise above the crowd

"Bonnie Gal ran back with the pack until the homestretch, where she **broke out** to win the Kentucky Derby by two lengths!"

**break up** (1): to disperse or scatter; (2) to end a personal relationship.

(1) "The reunion **broke up** too late last night, and today I am exhausted."

(2) "Cynics believe Hollywood stars **break up** just to get a little publicity."

**bring down:** to discourage or depress

"Whenever I meet my cousin, she **brings me down** with her tales of bad health and debts."

**bring off:** to accomplish something considered difficult, impossible, or unlikely

"I had some doubts about Maria's chances in that class, but she **brought it off.**"

**bring up** (1): to open a topic of discussion; (2) to raise or rear a baby

(1) "I don't really want to **bring this up**, but the janitors have not been cleaning the locker rooms."

(2) "My parents **brought me up** to say "please" and "thank you."

**brush up on:** *same as bone up on*

**burn down:** to destroy buildings by fire

"When lightning struck the courthouse, it **burned down** before the firefighters could arrive."

**burn up** (1): to destroy persons, materials, or plants by fire; (2) to cause someone to become very angry.

(1) "The merchandise and records **burned up** when the warehouse burned down."

(2) "To get a rude email from an Ebay customer really **burns me up!**"

**butt in:** to interrupt impolitely

"The theater will not allow people to **butt in** to the line waiting to buy tickets."

**butter up:** to praise excessively with ulterior motives

"I hate to see Marshal **buttering up** the boss. What a jerk!"

**call off:** to cancel something previously scheduled

"My nephew likes snowstorms because they **call off** school."

**call on:** to ask someone for a reply or for help

"I just know the teacher's going to **call on** me—I don't know the answers."

**calm down:** to become calm, less agitated, or less upset or to help someone become calm, less agitated, or less upset.

"Why are you so angry? I did not mean to spill molasses on you. **Calm down!**"

**care for, not care for:** (1) to like or want; (2) to take care of; supply care to; attend; watch.

(1) "Would you **care for** something to drink? Nature Airlines has herbal tea, pure orange juice, or spring water—unless you **don't care** for that."

(2) "My cousin got out of the hospital last week. The family is **caring for** him at home."

**catch on:** to develop understanding or knowledge of something.

"She never used an algebra calculator until she took a class, but she **caught on** very quickly."

**catch up to:** (1) to pick up abruptly; (2) to ensnare or entangle; (3) to enthrall; (4) to provide with latest information; (5) to overtake; (6) to complete belatedly

(1) "The thief caught up the purse and ran."

(2) "The school was caught up in the confusion of registration, and computer files were lost."

(3) "The crowd was so caught up in the acrobats' performance that they did not notice the teams of pickpockets."

(4) "This team must get caught up on the breaking details of the case!"

(5) "Let's stop here and let the rest of the hikers catch up to us."

(6) "I am beat! I need to catch up on lost sleep!"

**check in(to):** to register at a hotel, conference, etc.; to let someone know officially that you have arrived.

"My plane will arrive around 5:00 p.m., so I hope to **check into** the hotel by 6:00 or 6:30."

"When you arrive at the convention, be sure to **check in** at the registration desk."

**check off:** to make a mark indicating that something on a list has been completed.

"Here are the things you need to do. Please **check off** each job when you have finished it."

**check out of:** to follow procedures for leaving (a hotel, etc.)

"Don't forget to take your room key to the front desk when you **check out of** the hotel."

**check out:** to (1) to follow procedures for borrowing something (usually for a limited period of time); (2) to examine and appraise.

(1) "No, you may not take the encyclopedia home. The library does not **check out** reference books."

(2) "Slow down, I want to **check out** the Corvette they have for sale on that used car lot."

**cheer up:** to help someone feel less worried, depressed, or sad.

"Charline's brother-in-law was depressed about not getting a promotion, so she sent a funny card to **cheer him up**."

**chew out:** to scold someone severely; to berate.

"My father was really angry when I did not come home until 3:00 a.m.. He **chewed me out** and then said I had to stay at home for two weeks."

**chicken out:** to lose the courage or confidence to do something--often at the last minute.

"Sam said he was going to ask Mary Jane for a date, but he **chickened out**."

**chip in:** to contribute or donate (often money) to something done by a group.

"We're going to buy a birthday cake for our supervisor, and I am collecting donations. Do you want to **chip in**?"

**clam up:** to become suddenly quiet; to refuse to talk about something.

"Norton wouldn't talk about the accident. When I asked him what happened, he **clammed up**."

**come across:** to find unexpectedly.

"I have lost my penknife. If you **come across** it during the day, please let me know."

**come down with:** to become ill with.

"Eric will not be at the office today. He **came down with** the measles over the weekend."

**come to:** to (1) to total; (2) to regain consciousness.

(1) "The charges have **come to** \$120, so I will pay by credit card."

(2) "When the announcer told Gina that she had won a million dollars, she fainted, but when she **came to**, she asked for her checkbook."

**count on:** to depend on; to trust that something will happen or that someone will do as expected.

"I am **counting on** you to wake me up tomorrow. I know I will not hear the alarm."

**cross out:** to show that something written is wrong or unnecessary by making an X across it.

"We do not need everything on this shopping list, so I have **crossed out** all the unnecessary things."

**cut back on:** to use less of something.

"You drink too much coffee. You should **cut back on** it."

**do in:** to (1) to cause to become very tired; (2) to kill or murder

(1) "Those three games of baseball yesterday really **did me in**. I slept all the next day."

(2) "The report says the murdered man was **done in** between 10 and 11 o'clock last night."

**do over:** to do something again.

"If you forget to save the report before you turn the computer off, you will have to **do it over!**"

**drag on:** to last much longer than expected or is necessary.

"Maria thought the meeting would be a short one, but it **dragged on** for more than three hours."

**draw up:** to create a formal document.

"The banks decided to merge, so their lawyers will **draw up** the official documents within two weeks."

**drop off:** to (1) to deliver something; (2) to deliver someone (by giving him or her a ride).

(1) "Yes, I will I will **drop off** the letters at the post office as I go home from work."

(2) "You live close to me, so I will **drop you off** after work."

**drop in (on):** to visit informally (and usually without previous arrangement).

"If you are in town next month, we would love to see you. Please try to **drop in.**"

**drop by:** to visit informally (and usually without previous arrangement).

"If you are in town next month, we would love to see you. Please try to **drop by.**"

**drop out (of):** to stop attending or leave school or an organization.

"Sheila **dropped out** of college."

**draw out:** to prolong something (usually far beyond the normal limits).

"I thought the assistant professor should have taken about 15 minutes, but he **drew out** the speech for over an hour!"

**eat out:** to have a meal in a restaurant.

"I am too tired to cook tonight. Why don't we **eat out?**"

**egg on:** to urge or encourage greatly toward doing something (usually something negative).

"At first Carl and Ed were just having a mild argument, but Carl's friends **egged** them **on** until they started fighting."

**end up:** (1) to finally arrive at, or to arrive at an unexpected place; (2) to arrive somewhere as a result or consequence

(1) "We got lost last night and **ended up** in the next town."

(2) "If you don't take it a little slower, you will **end up** in the hospital!"

**face up to:** to admit to, to take responsibility for.

"Sooner or later, you will have to **face up to** the fact that you are failing the course."

**fall through:** to fail to happen.

"Our trip to Canada **fell through** when I got sick."

**feel up to:** to feel strong enough or comfortable enough to do something.

"I know the accident was a terrible shock. Do you **feel up to** talking about it?"

**figure out:** (1) to find the answer to a problem, to solve a problem by thinking about it carefully; (2) to understand why someone behaves the way he or she does

(1) "For a long time I couldn't understand the equation, but I finally **figured it out**."

(2) "I can't **figure Margie out**. Sometimes she's very warm and friendly, and sometimes she acts as if she doesn't know me."

**fill in:** (1) to add information to a form; (2) to supply information that someone doesn't have.

(1) "The office needs to know your home address and phone number. Could you **fill them in** on this form?"

(2) "I was not able to attend the meeting yesterday, but I understand that it was important. Could you **fill me in**?"

**fill in for:** to temporarily do someone else's work, to substitute temporarily for another person.

"Since Professor Rawls is on vacation, who is going to **fill in for** her?"

**fill out:** (1) to complete a form by adding required information; (2) to become less thin, to gain weight

(1) "I **filled out** the application and mailed it over three weeks ago!"

(2) "Jerry used to be very skinny, but in the last year he has begun to **fill out**."

**find out about:** to learn about or get information regarding.

"I did not **find out about** the meeting cancellation until just a few minutes ago."

**get across:** to make something understood, communicate something understandably.

"Alan is really intelligent, but sometimes he has problems **getting** his ideas **across**."

**get along (with):** to have a friendly relationship (with), to be friendly (toward).

"Why can't you and your sister **get along**? Everyone else **gets along with** her just fine!"

**get around:** (1) to avoid having to do something; (2) to move from place to place

(1) "Teresa **got around** the required math classes by doing well on a math proficiency test."

(2) "Without a car, she **gets around** by bicycle, bus, or taxi."

**get around to:** to do something eventually.

"Maybe I will **get around to** washing the dishes tomorrow morning."

**get by:** to survive, usually financially, in a difficult situation.

"Now that I have lost my job, I wonder how we will **get by**."

**get in:** (1) to enter a vehicle; (2) to arrive

(1) "Carole **got in** her car and drove away."

(2) "What time does Fred's plane **get in**?"

**get on:** to enter a large vehicle.

"Angela **got on** the plane about 20 minutes ago."

**get off:** (1) to leave a large vehicle; (2) to be excused from work, class, or other regularly scheduled activity; (3) to make possible an avoidance of punishment

(1) "When you **get off** the bus, cross the street and wait."

(2) "Some schools **got** President's Day **off**, but ours did not."

(3) "Everyone knew he was guilty, but his lawyer was clever and **got him off**."

**get out of:** (1) to leave a small vehicle; (2) to escape doing something unpleasant

(1) "Something is wrong with the garage door opener, so you have to **get out of** the car to open it."

(2) "Lisa faked a terrible headache and **got out of** giving her speech today."

**get over:** (1) to finish; (2) to recover from an illness or painful experience

(1) "What time do your classes **get over**?"

(2) "Katy was really upset when she failed the test. She thought she would never **get over** feeling so stupid."

**get rid of:** (1) to dispose of, give away or throw away; (2) to dismiss someone, fire someone from a job, cause someone to leave.

(1) "That shirt is really ugly. Why don't you **get rid of** it?"

(2) "The treasurer of the XYZ company was spending too much money so the company president **got rid of** him."

**get up** (usually no object, with an object, separable): to leave bed after sleeping and begin your daily activities.

"You will have to **get up** much earlier than usual tomorrow. We have to leave by no later than 6:00 AM."

**give up:** (1) to stop doing something (usually a habit); (2) to decide not to try (unsuccessfully) to solve a problem.

(1) "He knows smoking isn't good for his health, but he can't **give it up**."

(2) "Bill tried to do his own income taxes, but after eight hours he **gave up**."

**go out with:** to have a date with.

"You **went out with** Sharon last night, did not you?"

**go with:** (1) clothes, furniture, etc. that looks pleasing together; (2) to date regularly and steadily.

(1) "You should buy that shirt. It will **go well with** your dark brown suit."

(2) "Is Gina **going with** Jim? I see them together all the time."

**goof off:** to be lazy, do nothing in particular.

"I am just going to stay home tonight and **goof off**."

**grow up:** (1) to spend the years between being a child and being an adult; (2) to behave responsibly, behave as an adult, not a child.

(1) "Did you know that Frank **grew up** in Malaysia?"

(2) "Lee really irritates me sometimes. I wish he would **grow up**."

**hand in:** to submit homework, an assignment, etc.

"You'd better get started on your report. You know that you have to **hand it in** at 8:30 tomorrow morning!"

**hand out:** to distribute.

"Why don't you have a course description and list of assignments? The teacher **handed** them out on the first day of class."

**hang up:** to end a phone conversation by replacing the receiver.

"I'd like to talk longer, but I'd better **hang up**. My sister needs to make a call."

**have to do with:** to be about.

"This class **has to do with** the behavior of people in groups."

**hold up:** (1) to raise, lift to a higher-than-normal position; (2) to delay; (3) to rob, threaten someone with harm unless he/she gives her/his money or other valuable things.

(1) "The winner of the race proudly **held** his trophy **up** for all to see."

(2) "I am sorry I am late. There was an accident on the freeway and traffic **held** me **up**."

(3) "Sarah is very upset. When she was walking home last night, two men **held** her **up** and took her purse and jewelry."

**iron out:** to mutually reach an agreement, mutually resolve difficulties

"Yes, I know we disagree on lots of things, Susan, but we can **iron** them **out**."

**jack up:** (1) to raise or lift by using a jack; (2) to raise (used for prices).

(1) "We'll have to **jack** the back of the car **up** before we can change the tire."

(2) "The car dealer bought my old Ford for \$750 and **jacked** the price **up** to \$1,500 when they sold it."

**jump all over:** to severely scold someone, berate someone.

"Arthur is really upset. His boss **jumped all over** him because he's been late for work three times this week."

**keep on:** to continue

"I am not ready to stop yet. I think I will **keep on** working for a while."

**keep on** (someone): to continue to remind someone to do something until he or she does it (even if this irritates him or her).

"Bill's very forgetful. You will have to **keep on** him, or he'll never do all the things you want him to do."

**kick out:** to expel, force someone to leave because of his/her poor performance or unacceptable behavior.

"Jim's club **kicked** him **out** because he did not pay his dues or come to meetings."

**knock out:** to make unconscious.

"The boxing match ended when one boxer **knocked** the other one **out**."

**knock oneself out:** to work much harder than normal or than what is expected.

"We completed the project on time because of Chuck. He **knocked himself out** to be sure we did not miss the deadline."

**lay off:** to dismiss someone from a job

"I feel really sorry Sally's family. Her father was **laid off** yesterday."

**leave out:** to forget or omit.

"Oh, no! When I made the list of those who attended the meeting, I **left** your name **out!**"

**let down:** to disappoint.

"I know I **let** you **down** when I did not do what I promised. I am really sorry."

**let up:** to become less intense or slower.

"It is been raining hard for a long time. Will it ever **let up**?"

**look back on:** to remember, reflect on or consider something in the past.

"When they **looked back on** their many years together, they realized that their marriage had been a very happy one."

**look down on:** to hold in contempt, regard as inferior.

"It is not surprising that Fred has few friends. He seems to **look down on** anyone who doesn't like the same things that he does."

**look forward to:** to anticipate pleasantly, think about a pleasant thing before it happens

"I am really **looking forward to** vacation. I can't wait for it to begin!"

**look in on:** to visit in order to check something's or someone's condition.

"My father just came home from the hospital. I plan to **look in on** him today after I finish work."

**look into:** to investigate or get more details about something.

"Someone said there was a meeting at 9:30, but I haven't heard anything about it. Shall I **look into** it?"

**look like:** to resemble (in appearance).

"Does he **look like** his father or his mother?"

**look over:** to check, review.

"I think I may have some typos in this report. Could you **look it over**?"

**look up:** (1) to find something in a reference work; (2) to find where someone lives or works and visit him or her.

(1) "I am sorry, but I don't know what that word means. I will have to **look it up**."

(2) "Thanks for giving me your brother's address. When I am in Chicago next month, I will be sure to **look him up**."

**look up to:** to respect.

"Everyone **looks up to** Joyce because she always makes time to help others."

**luck out:** to be unexpectedly lucky.

"Gloria was worried because she was not prepared to give a report at the meeting, but she **lucked out** because the meeting was postponed."

**make fun of:** to make jokes about (usually unkindly).

"I agree that Bob looks ridiculous since he shaved his head, but don't **make fun of** him. You will hurt his feelings."

**make up:** (1) to invent or create (imaginary) information; (2) to compensate for something missed or not done by doing extra or equivalent work.

(1) "Judy's story is hard to believe. I am sure she **made it up**."

(2) "I am sorry I missed the test. May I **make it up**?"

**make up (with):** to re-establish a friendly relationship by admitting guilt.

"Jack and his girlfriend were very angry with each other, but last night they finally **made up**."

**make out:** to see or hear something well enough to understand what it means.

"Ruth's writing is very small. I almost need a magnify glass to **make it out**."

**make for:** (1) to go to or toward; (2) to result in, cause.

(1) "Her teenaged children are always hungry. As soon as they arrive home from school, they **make for** the refrigerator."

(2) "Many hands **make for** light work. (If many people work together, there's less work for everyone.)"

**mark up:** to increase the price (for resale).

"Mrs. White's import shop is profitable because she buys things inexpensively and then **marks** them **up**."

**mark down:** to reduce the price (as an incentive to buy).

"These shoes were really a bargain! The store **marked** them **down** by 40%!"

**mix up:** to cause to become confused.

"I did not complete the assignment because I did not know how. The directions **mixed** me **up**."

**nod off:** to fall sleep (usually unintentionally).

"The speech was so boring that several people in the audience **nodded off** before it was finished."

**open up:** to inaugurate or make available to the public

"After **opening up** the Alaska Territory, the settlers **opened up** stores, mines, and saloons."

**pan out:** to succeed, happen as expected (for plans).

"I will be here next week after all. My trip to Chicago did not **pan out**."

**pass away:** to die.

"I was very sorry to hear that your grandfather **passed away**."

**pass out:** (1) to faint, lose consciousness; (2) to distribute.

(1) "When Ella heard that she'd won a million dollars, she was so shocked that she **passed out**."

(2) "Everyone in the room needs one of these information sheets. Who will help me **pass them out**?"

**pick out:** to choose, select.

"Billy's grandmother especially liked her birthday card because Billy had **picked it out** himself."

**pick up:** (1) to lift, take up; (2) to arrange to meet someone and give her/him a ride; (3) to get, to buy; (4) to refresh, revitalize.

(1) "Those books don't belong on the floor. Will you help me **pick them up**?"

(2) "Of course we can go there together. What time should I **pick you up**?"

(3) "The children just drank the last of the milk. Could you **pick some more up** on your way home this evening?"

(4) "He was feeling a little tired, so he drank a glass of orange juice. It **picked him up** enough to finish his work."

**pick on:** to bully, intentionally try to make someone upset.

"You should be ashamed of teasing your little brother, Bob! **Pick on** someone your own size!"

**pitch in:** to help, join together to accomplish something.

"We'll be finished soon if everyone **pitches in**."

**pull over:** to drive a vehicle to the side of the road.

"When the policeman indicated that I should **pull over**, I knew he was going to give me a ticket."

**put away:** to return something to the proper place.

"I just took these clothes out of the dryer. Will you help me **put them away**?"

**put off:** to postpone, delay, avoid

"I can't **put** this work **off** any longer. If I don't do it soon, it'll be impossible to finish it in time."

**put on:** (1) to begin to wear, don; (2) to try to make someone believe something that is ridiculous or untrue.

(1) "It is a little bit chilly outside. You'd better **put** a sweater **on**."

(2) "Don't believe a word of what Jim was saying. He was just **putting** us **on**."

**put (someone) out:** to inconvenience someone.

"I hate to **put** you **out**, but I need a ride to the train station and hope you can take me."

**put up:** (1) to return something to the proper place; **put up** to provide someone with a place to sleep.

(1) "Your toys are all over the floor, Timmy. Please **put** them **up**."

(2) "There's no need for you to check into a hotel. I will be happy to **put** you **up**."

**put up with:** to tolerate.

"It is really important to come to work on time. The boss will not **put up with** tardiness."

**put back:** to return something to the proper place.

"I have finished with these books. Do you want me to **put** them **back** on the shelves?"

**rip off:** to cheat, take advantage of, charge too much.

"Don't even think about buying a car there. They'll **rip** you **off**."

**round off:** to change from a fraction to the nearest whole number.

"**Round** all prices **off** to the closest whole-dollar amounts. For example, **round** \$33.73 **off** to \$34.00."

**run into:** to meet by chance.

"Yesterday at the supermarket, Jan **ran into** her former roommate. Before yesterday, they hadn't seen each other for nearly five years."

**run out of:** to use the last of.

"On the way home from work, Art **ran out of** gas."

**set up:** to make arrangements for something.

"You will see Mr. Thomas tomorrow. I have **set** a meeting **up** for 9:30 AM."

**set back:** (1) to cause a delay in scheduling; (2) to cost.

(1) "We've had some problems with the project that have **set** us **back** at least two days. We'll give you a progress report tomorrow."

(2) "I wonder how much Bill's new car **set** him **back**?"

**slip up:** to make a mistake.

"You **slipped up** here. The amount should be \$135.28, not \$132.58."

**stand out:** to be noticeably better than other similar people or things.

"Good job, Ann! Your work really **stands out**!"

**stand up:** (1) to rise to a standing position; (2) to make a date but not keep it.

(1) "When the Chairperson entered the room, everyone **stood up**."

(2) "Angela was supposed to go to the dance with Fred, but she **stood him up** and went with Chuck instead."

**show up:** (1) to arrive, appear; (2) to do a noticeably better job (often unexpectedly) than someone else.

(1) "The boss was very upset when you did not **show up** for the meeting. What happened?"

(2) "Everyone thought Marsha would win, but Jean did. Actually, Jean really **showed** Marsha **up**."

**stand for:** (1) to represent; (2) to tolerate, permit (usually negative).

(1) "These letters seem to be an abbreviation. Do you know what they **stand for**?"

(2) "I am not surprised that Mrs. Johnson rejected your report. She will not **stand for** shoddy work."

**take after:** to resemble, favor (in appearance).

"Both my sister and I **take after** our father."

**take or bring back:** to return.

"This book is due tomorrow. I guess I should **take it back** to the library."

**take care of:** (1) to provide care for, watch one's health; (2) to make arrangements (for something to happen), take responsibility for.

(1) "Lois has been **taking care of** her father since he returned home from the hospital."

(2) "Will you **take care of** making reservations for our flight to Boston?"

**take off:** (1) to remove (something you are wearing); (2) to leave, depart (often suddenly or quickly); (3) to make arrangements to be absent from work.

(1) "Please **take** your hat **off** when you go inside a building."

(2) "Was something wrong with Jill? She **took off** without saying goodbye."

(3) "Susan isn't here today. She's **taking** today and tomorrow **off**."

**take up:** to begin (a hobby or leisure-time activity).

"I have never been skiing, but I think I'd like to **take it up**."

**tell (someone) off:** to speak to someone bluntly and negatively, saying exactly what she/he did wrong.

"Julie was really angry at Bob, she **told him off** in front of all of us."

**tick off:** (1) to irritate someone, make someone upset or angry; (2) to show that something has been completed by putting a tick (check) beside it.

(1) "It really **ticks her off** when someone is late for an appointment."

(2) "Here are the things you need to do. **Tick** each one **off** when you finish it."

**throw away:** to discard, put in the garbage.

"You shouldn't **throw** those newspapers **away**, they're recyclable."

**throw out:** (1) to discard, put in the garbage; (2) to forcibly make someone leave (usually because of bad behavior).

(1) "This food smells bad. You'd better **throw it out**."

(2) "Those people are drunk and making everyone uncomfortable. The manager should **throw them out**."

**throw up:** to vomit.

"Paul was so nervous about his job interview that he **threw up** just before he left for it."

**try on:** to wear something briefly to check its fit, how it looks, etc.

"I am not sure that jacket is large enough. May I **try it on**?"

**try out:** to use a machine briefly to determine how well it works.

"I really like the way this car looks. May I **try it out**?"

**try out (for):** to try to win a place on a team or other organization.

"If you like to sing, you should **try out for** the choir."

**turn around:** (1) to move so that you are facing the opposite direction; (2) to move so that someone or something is facing the opposite direction; (3) to make changes so that something that was unprofitable is profitable.

(1) "Everyone **turned around** and stared when I entered the meeting late."

(2) "I don't want this chair facing the window. Will you help me **turn it around**?"

(3) "The company was doing poorly until it hired a new president. He **turned it around** in about six months, and now it is doing quite well."

**turn down:** (1) to decrease the volume; (2) to refuse.

(1) "Your music is giving me a headache! Please **turn it down** or use your headphones!"

(2) "I thought I could borrow some money from Joe, but when I asked, he **turned me down.**"

**turn in:** (1) to give or deliver or submit to someone; (2) to go to bed; (3) to report or deliver wrongdoers to the authorities.

(1) "I have written my report, but I haven't **turned it in.**"

(2) "I am pretty tired. I guess I will **turn in.**"

(3) "Two days after the robbery, the thieves **turned themselves in.**"

**turn off:** (1) to stop by turning a handle or switch; (2) to bore, repel (very informal).

(1) "I am cold. Do you mind if I **turn** the air conditioner **off**?"

(2) "That music **turns** me **off**. Please play something else!"

**turn on:** (1) to start by turning a handle or switch; (2) to interest very much, excite (very informal).

(1) "It is cold in here. I am going to **turn** the heater **on**"

(2) "What kind of music **turns** you **on**?"

**turn up:** (1) to increase the volume; (2) to appear unexpectedly.

(1) "I can barely hear the TV. Can you **turn it up** a little?"

(2) "We were all surprised when Pam **turned up** at the party. We did not even know she was in town."

**wait on:** to serve (usually customers in a restaurant, shop, etc.)

"I want to make a complaint. The person who just **waited on** me was very impolite."

**wait for:** to wait until someone or something arrives or is finished with something else.

"When will Kenny be finished with work? I have been **waiting for** him for almost an hour!"

**wake up:** (1) to stop sleeping; (2) to rouse someone, cause someone to stop sleeping.

(1) "I usually **wake up** around 5:00 AM each day."

(2) "I have an important meeting tomorrow and I am afraid I will not hear my alarm. Will you **wake me up** at 6:00 AM?"

**watch out for:** to be careful of, beware of.

"There's a school at the end of this block. **Watch out for** children crossing the street."

**wear out:** (1) to wear something or use something until it can no longer be worn or be used; (2) to cause to become exhausted, cause to become very tired.

(1) "I need a new pencil sharpener. I **wore** this one **out**."

(2) "I had four different meetings today. They **wore me out**."

**work out:** (1) to exercise (usually in a gym, etc.) to build muscles, body tone, etc.; (2) to solve a problem or resolve a difficult situation (usually by working together).

(1) "Instead of eating lunch on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Sheila goes to the recreation center to **work out**."

(2) "I know we disagree on many points, but I believe we can **work things out**."

**wrap up:** (1) to wear enough clothes to keep warm; (2) to finish something, bring something to a conclusion.

(1) "It is really cold today. Be sure you **wrap up** when you leave the house."

(2) "We've been talking about the problem for nearly three hours. I hope we'll be able to **wrap the discussion up** soon."

**write down:** to record something in writing.

"Could you tell me your e-mail address again? I want to **write it down**."

**write up:** to record, report in writing.

"You will need to make a report on your business meetings. Be sure you **write them up** as soon as possible after you return from your trip."

**zonk out:** to fall asleep quickly because of exhaustion.

"I intended to go shopping after work, but I was so tired that I **zonked out** as soon as I got home."

## Transitional Expressions

Transitional expressions: such as *accordingly*: *as a result*: or *because* can create relationships and connections between sentences: and they can link paragraphs: too.

The car sat outside in the rain. *Accordingly*: the finish deteriorated. *As a result*: the value of the car depreciated *because* it was no longer attractive.

If transitional expressions are not common in your native language: beware of over-using them by adding them to the beginnings of most sentences. These transitions are not needed everywhere: and too many can be awkward to read. When writing and considering the use of a transitional expression: consider the reader's need for such a signal. Often the connection from sentence to sentence is already clear from the context. When using transitional expressions: try varying their positions in the sentences—at the beginning: in the middle: or at the end.

### Typical Transitional Expressions:

#### cause or effect

**accordingly**: The check you sent our company was invalid. *Accordingly*: we have not sent your product.

**as a result**: As a result of your efforts: the company has been saved.

**because**: The horse race scheduled for the fair will not take place because the track was flooded in the week's rains.

**consequently**: I had my wisdom teeth removed; *consequently*: I will be eating soft foods for a while.

**for this purpose:** You will need warm clothing at camp. For this purpose we have enclosed the camp sweater.

**hence:** My hair is not naturally blonde, hence the black roots.

**otherwise:** If you send ample postage, we will send by courier; otherwise, your package will come via USPS.

**since:** Since the squirt gun clogged, we threw water balloons.

**then:** If the chandelier falls from the ceiling, then the wicked witch may be trapped.

**therefore:** A college education can give a great boost to life; therefore, it should receive maximum effort.

**thereupon:** Charlie built a hot rod when he was a teenager, thereupon establishing his future career.

**thus:** Mosquitoes lay eggs in still water, thus making homeowners empty rain barrels.

**to this end:** Rock stars enjoy fortune and fame. To this end, thousands of teenagers try to become musicians.

**with this object:** A diploma can mean added income. With this object, a college education is more sought-after than ever.

### **comparison**

**also:** Although not one of the 13 colonies, Florida was settled early. Also, it had America's first established community.

**in the same way:** A device called a capo bars guitar strings to allow playing in higher keys with the same chord patterns. In the same way, "bar chords" are

played with the musician's index finger across all strings, forming the chord with the rest of the fingers.

**likewise:** An owl is traditionally the favorite pet of a wizard. Likewise, witches favor cats.

**similarly:** Tea is commonly brewed with tea bags. Similarly, coffee is now produced in individual brewing bags.

### **contrast**

**although:** Although the USSR was the world's largest country, since its breakup, it is now not even fourth-largest.

**and yet:** Human childbirth is reputed to be the most painful experience possible, and yet it is undergone voluntarily thousands of times per day.

**but:** Nightshade is a plant deadly to humans, but it is a favorite treat for many birds.

**but at the same time:** Wizardry and magic are not commonly believed these days, but at the same time, entertainment like the Harry Potter movies are very popular.

**despite:** Despite the happiness of the "Sunshine State," residents of Florida note June 1 as the beginning of "Hurricane Season."

**even so:** There is no "majority" ethnic type in Southern California. Even so, Caucasians form the largest minority.

**even though:** Even though the Latin language is no longer spoken by any nation, it survives in spoken form as a liturgical language.

**for all that:** For all that Florida is not in "Tornado Alley," nor does it suffer the

number of thunderstorms of Midwestern states, Florida has more air-to-ground lightning strikes of any state.

**however:** The skies overhead are cloudy; however, the weather forecasts do not predict rain.

**in contrast:** I wrote this book report by hand. In contrast, I usually type everything I hand in for school assignments.

**in spite of:** In spite of the worsening weather, I decided not to bring a jacket.

**nevertheless:** Human beings are living longer. Nevertheless, women still outlive men by an average of 12 years.

**notwithstanding:** Notwithstanding the huge riot crowd surrounding the soccer field, the police were able to control the situation.

**on the contrary:** I think I came across as rude on that occasion. On the contrary, my only intention was to be enthusiastic.

**on the other hand:** Florida now allows the shooting of someone intruding into your house, which will aid in defense against burglars. On the other hand, it seems like an open floodgate for misuse.

**regardless:** Police patrol city streets to guard against traffic infringements.

Regardless, my street almost becomes a race track at 5:00 p.m.

**still:** Scary movies always make me nervous about walking home. Still, I see nearly every one that comes to the theaters.

**though:** Though the title to the car is intact, the registration is incomplete.

**yet:** Apples are famous for being red, yet green apples are the subject of a hit song.

### examples or to intensify

**after all:** Adult college students deserve some sympathy. After all, they have hours of study and preparation added to an already busy life.

**an illustration of:** An illustration of loyalty, a famous Scottish dog spent its remaining lifespan standing guard over its owner's grave.

**even:** There are no additional fees at this store, even if you request gift wrapping.

**for example:** Scientists have nearly equaled nature in some areas. For example, the cubic zirconia has 99% of the hardness of a diamond.

**for instance:** Deserts are not necessarily sandy. For instance, the doldrums area of the Caribbean Sea is an area in which rain almost never falls.

**indeed:** Wool is often uncomfortable to wear; indeed, I find it very itchy.

**in fact:** It is said that horses in fact have more sensitive noses than dogs.

**it is true:** While differences in male and female intelligence are negligible, if they exist at all, it is true that differences in perceptions their can be advantageous in given situations.

**of course:** I was glad to see my car had not been stolen from the inner-city parking space. Of course, I had to have a new set of wheels and tires delivered.

**specifically:** Fishing is not a big industry around the Great Salt Lake. Specifically, it's because the lake is too salty for fish.

**that is:** We usually ship by USPS; that is, the United States Postal Service.

**to illustrate:** Shakespeare said, "The quality of mercy is not strained." To illustrate, a person who is kind to one who is suffering does not feel this way because of official orders, or "straining."

**truly:** Northwestern Florida is warmer than most places in the US and cheaper than many. Truly, it's the perfect place to live—according to thousands.

**indication of place**

**above:** The alarm clock has a basically peaceful face with big numbers and two big, black hands. Above, the action takes place with the alarm bell goes off with a loud racket.

**adjacent to:** The supermarket is on the corner; adjacent to it is the parking mall.

**below:** In the Utah Capitol Building, offices are on the main and upper floors. Below is the museum.

**elsewhere:** Elsewhere in the desert lies a deserted and forgotten gold mine.

**farther on:** The paved driveway ends at the garage, but farther on is the barn.

**here:** As she explains her position to me, I become confused. Here I begin to lose my temper.

**near:** Near the point of distraction, she took a sedative.

**nearby:** The dentist's office is located near a large parking mall. Nearby, a dental lab prepare the dentures and crowns the dentist prescribes.

**on the other side:** A pocket watch has the usual face with hands and numbers. On the other side is often a decorative carving.

**opposite to:** Opposite to the ornate grandfather clock is a portrait of my grandmother.

**there:** The patient exhibited a stubborn fever; there lay the problem the doctor could not understand.

**to the east:** You will find him living in a modest cottage near the city hall. To the

east are the more expensive sections of town.

**to the left:** I love this view. To the left is the red carpet for the Academy Awards Program.

### **indication of time**

**after a while:** Set the pan of water on the stove at medium heat. After a while, the water should be hot, but not boiling.

**afterward:** A grapefruit can be peeled like an orange. Afterward, though, it's not exactly as easy to eat as an orange.

**as long as:** As long as I am in command, this ship will be run by the book.

**as soon as:** The building will be built as soon as the property can be purchased.

**at last:** We spent the day in brutal labor; at last we were finished, but not before two of my partners passed out from exhaustion.

**at length:** At length the panting athlete caught his breath and was able to talk.

**at that time:** The police surrounded the house. At that time, they brought up the loudspeaker.

**before:** Before the launching of the ship into the water, it is traditional to break a bottle of champagne over the bow.

**earlier:** Native Americans became adept at firing rifles from horseback. Earlier, they were good marksmen with bows and arrows.

**formerly:** Formerly an office of the dean, the registration section has become its own department.

**immediately:** He took the medicine. Immediately he felt relief.

**in the meantime:** The examination should take an hour. In the meantime, the

parents can wait in the dining hall.

**in the past:** Colleges are harder to get into today. In the past, SAT scores were not required.

**lately:** Lately I have become careless, but I intend to change.

**later:** We spoke mostly about business matters. Later, he began to mention things about his childhood.

**meanwhile:** It takes a great deal of courage to grab a snake by the tail—  
meanwhile, its head is curving back around to grab you!

**now:** Drivers' licenses were once issued at age 14. Now they are issued only at 16.

**shortly:** Shortly before the beginning of the celebration, they brought in the cake.

**simultaneously:** A suffocating layer of ash from Mt. Vesuvius covered Pompeii.  
Simultaneously, huge blocks of lava shot from the cone landed in the Bay of Naples.

**since:** Since the fall of the Roman Empire, Latin-based languages have been the most common in Europe.

**so far:** So far, the program has developed as expected.

**soon:** Take two aspirins. Soon, the headache will go away.

**subsequently:** The repairman spent twenty minutes or so working on the TV set; subsequently, it worked fine.

**then:** The loudspeakers crackled into life; then the concert began.

**thereafter:** We will maintain the product in operating status until your staff has been trained; thereafter, maintenance will be your responsibility.

**until:** The sun will be on us until sunset; until then, with no air conditioning, we'll have to suffer.

**until now:** Until now, European countries used their own currencies. Now many use the common currency called the Euro.

**when:** We were all studying busily, when the door burst open and Hannibal Lecter rushed in.

### **repetition, summary, or conclusion**

**all in all:** My college career has been a story of ups and down. All in all, it has been a very satisfactory experience.

**altogether:**

**as has been said:** As has been said, the meeting time for this class will be Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

**in brief:** In brief, a credit card makes purchases easy.

**in conclusion:** In conclusion, the various discussions produced a decision that all can live with.

**in other words:** The smallest number was the most important to be discovered; in other words, not until the "invention" of the zero was modern mathematics possible.

**in particular:** I don't like the viciousness of the weasel family; in particular, what a mink will do in a chicken house is revolting.

**in short:** Every night about this time, the communication outlets of this house are inaccessible because of continual use by certain members of the family. In short, you kids get off the phone!

**in simpler terms:** Most CD income tax programs contain algorithms for producing IRS forms. In simpler terms, you don't have to search the town for Internal Revenue forms.

**in summary:** The kids are driving me nuts, and I haven't been out of the house in a week. In summary, if you don't take me to dinner tonight when you get home from the office, you are in deep trouble.

**that is:** Her knowledge is encyclopedic. That is, she knows a lot about a lot.

**therefore:** Knowing a foreign language can be handy; therefore, studying language should be a goal of any college student.

**to put it differently:** She is the epitome of feminine pulchritude. To put it differently, she is gorgeous!

**to summarize:**

### sequence

**again:** I am tired of repetitive jobs. Again, I am bored and crave variety!

**also:** Route 66 used to be the main road between Chicago and Los Angeles; also it was the subject of a hit TV program.

**and:** I combed my hair, and I parted it as usual.

**and then:** She dropped the cake, and then she fell on it.

**besides:** I don't like this car because the color is wrong. Besides, the license plates don't match.

**equally important:** The politicians dealt with the hurricane emergency costs.

Equally important, the local law enforcement organizations handled the traffic and medical emergencies.

**finally:** The argument got worse and worse; finally, she drove away in his car.

**first:** He set to work on the problem. First, he scanned the extent of the damage.

**further:** Further than Baltimore, the West Virginia border touches Maryland.

**furthermore:** The gravy was cold; furthermore, the soup was watery.

**in addition:** A pencil can be sharpened for repeatedly sharp points, and in addition, the rubber eraser can do away with mistakes.

**in the first place:** I cannot wait for an appointment, Doctor! In the first place, I am in pain!

**last:** The team spent a great deal of time and research, and it invested a great amount of effort. Last, it hopes to be amply paid.

**moreover:** One heavy blanket is not as insulating as two or more lighter ones. Moreover, the smaller ones are easier to clean.

**next:** The clock chimed midnight. Next, he turned out the lights.

**second:** I am dying of thirst, and that's all I can think about. Second, though, I want to find out why my failed out here in the desert.

**still:** The slope of Mount Fuji is such that thousands can climb it annually. Still, it is a very high mountain, snowcapped all year.

**too:** You cannot get a deal on these tires if you have purchased the larger wheels, too.

## The Passive Voice

For college students, the passive voice is one of the most mysterious and least understood elements of English writing. In fact, even the terms "passive voice" and "active voice" are not particularly illustrative. The difference between the two is that the passive voice does not reveal the performer of the action.

To use the passive voice is not *evil*. The passive voice has a place in modern writing. Indeed, the passive voice is more compact and transmits information more efficiently. It does not, however, communicate in as personal a manner as the active voice.

### Examples

Let's look at some examples:

"The building was burned to the ground" is the passive voice. But *who* burned it to the ground? If the fact that the building was destroyed is the most important communication, the cause is not as important, so the passive voice is more efficient. On the other hand, if what caused the fire is the focus, the active voice is more effective: "Lightning burned the building to the ground."

"Warehouse stock will be sold before purchasing new wholesale items" is in the passive voice. But *who* is to sell the warehouse stock? If the identity of those persons is not important, the passive voice is more efficient. But if the message of the sentence is to animate some employee, the active voice would be more effective with : "You will sell warehouse stock

before purchasing new wholesale items."

### **Structure of the Passive Voice**

The passive voice takes an easily identifiable construction. It consists of a form of the verb "to be" and a participle. The verb forms are:

to be

are

is

was

were

been

will be

A participle most often is an "ed" word like *enabled, purchased, hunted, disagreed, traveled*, and so on. Other variations end in "t" or "en," like *built* and *spoken*.

Therefore, a sentence like "The protections are to be enabled before the bank is open" is in the passive voice. It does not reveal *who* or *what* is to enable the protections. To change this sentence to the active voice requires identification of the actor: "The guard is to enable the protections before the bank is open."

### **Effects of the Passive Voice**

Again, to use the passive voice is not *evil*, but it can be counterproductive if used unknowingly. Most writing should use the active voice because it communicates more personally. The passive voice is effective in communications not read for pleasure but rather to transmit a maximum of information. Government documents are almost

synonymous with the passive voice—"Two right turns will be demonstrated at the end of the driving test"—because *who* is doing it is not important. Occasional use of the passive voice in an essay is not bad. We often use the passive voice in speech: "I am so sorry to see you go! I will miss you very much. Your name is written in my heart." The first two sentences are in the active voice. The third is in the passive voice (*who* wrote your name in my heart?), but it is effective.

The problem is that over-use of the passive voice in an essay builds a sort of invisible wall between the reader and the writer: *Animal lovers everywhere are braced for Canada's annual seal hunt. Waves of protest are sparked from around the world. A campaign is organized by humane groups against the practice of clubbing baby harp seals for their soft, white fur. A gathering of protestors was organized outside the office of Halifax's fisheries ministry, and an attempt will be made to deliver a petition decrying the hunt.* This is full of emotion and appears to contain a number of actions, but in fact it reads like a cold news report from a radio station. Even sentences identifying the actors with the word "by" ("...campaign is organized by humane groups...") do not change the passive voice nature of those sentences. Note the difference when the paragraph is changed to the active voice: *Animal lovers everywhere braced themselves for Canada's annual seal hunt, which sparked waves of protest from around the world. Humane groups organized a campaign against the practice of clubbing baby harp seals for their soft, white fur. Protestors gathered outside the office of Halifax's fisheries ministry to attempt to deliver a petition decrying the hunt.* The active voice involves the reader in the action, and indeed the active voice *creates* a sense of action because the verb *to be* is essentially

a status verb, the equivalent of the mathematics equals sign "=" and does not show action, merely "this equals that." Removing it automatically causes the sentence to express more action.

**Examples:**

Passive voice: The invoices will be prepared before the shipping office is called.

Change this to the active voice (supply an actor, remove the forms of "to be" and change the participles to active verbs).

*You will prepare the invoices before you call the shipping office.*

*Staff members will prepare the invoices before they call the shipping office.*

*We will prepare the invoices before the delivery department calls the shipping office.*

Active voice: Students will complete four essays before the end of the class.

Change this to the passive voice (remove the actor, change the verb to a participle, and add a form of "to be").

*Four essays will be completed before the end of the class.*

Passive voice: It has been noted that students are using the faculty parking lot.

Change this to the active voice (supply the actor who noted the situation, remove "has been," and changed *noted* to an active verb)

*Campus police noted that students are using the faculty parking lot.*

*Faculty members noted that students are using the faculty parking lot.*

Do not worry about the passive voice when you sit down to write. Write your first draft without paying attention to these problems. In later revisions, go through your draft looking for the marker-flags—a form of *to be* and a participle. In most cases in an essay, you will want to rewrite the sentence, inserting the actor(s), changing the participle to an active verb, and removed the form of *to be*. Occasional use of the passive voice is fine.

Note that the passive-voice effect, which is to hide the actor, can appear in other types of sentences. The use of "one," for example, can create a passive sentence: "One hopes that the criminal will come forward and surrender." *Who* is hoping?