

# GRAMMAR IN PRACTICE

Usage

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*for Kathryn Rogers,  
grammar goddess*



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## INTRODUCTION

# How to Use This Book —and Why

A thorough understanding of grammar and the mechanics of writing is one of the pillars of a solid education. It prepares you for success in college, careers, and daily life. For this reason, now more than ever, students are being asked to demonstrate proficiency in grammar, usage, and composition. State tests, the SAT, and the ACT will measure your ability to recognize and correct errors in grammar and mechanics. These tests as well as your classroom assignments require that you write clear, correct sentences and paragraphs, both in isolation and in essay format.

This is the second in a series of books that offer instruction, review, and practice in the basics of grammar, mechanics, and composition. The concepts build on one another, from the parts of speech through paragraph composition, so that by the end of the series, you will have the tools necessary to assemble polished compositions. The first book, *Grammar in Practice: A Foundation*, covered the parts of speech, grammar rules, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. This book offers expanded instruction on grammar, common usage errors, and using different kinds of sentences. The next book, *Grammar in Practice: Sentences and Paragraphs*, will show you how to pull together your grammar and usage skills to write strong, engaging sentences and paragraphs.

Here in *Grammar in Practice: Usage* you will find a variety of lessons, features, and activities:

- **Instructional sections:** Short, easy to read sections introduce and explain key concepts, complete with definitions, explanations, and examples. Your teacher may skip sections you already know well and return for review to sections that were especially helpful or important.
- **Activities:** Many brief workbook-style exercises let you practice applying lesson concepts. Some are literature-based exercises that require critical analysis of specific points of grammar, mechanics, or style in an excerpt.
- **Composition Hints:** These features offer tips and techniques for applying rules and for developing your personal style in writing.
- **ESL Focus:** These features explain points of grammar and usage that can be particularly challenging to non-native English speakers.
- **Writing Applications:** To help you integrate the grammar and usage concepts you learn, you'll often be asked to write and revise sentences and paragraphs, occasionally working with a classmate.
- **Games and Puzzles:** Throughout the book you will find visual puzzles and word games that will reinforce what you're learning. They offer a fun yet challenging way to approach grammar and usage. Depending on the puzzle, your teacher may have you work in pairs or may provide hints or word lists derived from the teacher's manual.
- **Real-World Applications:** These assignments at the end of each lesson group let you explore how people use grammar, mechanics, and sentences in the real world, outside classroom walls. With them, you'll have the opportunity to showcase your strengths while incorporating your individual style and creativity. Many of them feature technology applications.
- **Test Practice:** Each lesson group concludes with a practice test covering only the material in those lessons. Additionally, the book concludes with a comprehensive test covering major concepts in the book. Most tests are multiple choice and are modeled after state-proficiency and standardized tests you will take in order to graduate or apply to colleges.

With so much variety, this book is an invaluable tool. Your teacher can pick and choose lessons, work through from beginning to end, or have you use the book as a homework resource. However you and your teacher decide to use it, you'll learn how to craft stronger sentences that are free of grammar errors. Use the entire series and you will be able to write interesting and effective compositions with confidence and flair.

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# Using Nouns

As you recall from Lesson 1, a *noun* is a word that names a person, place, thing, animal, or idea. In this lesson, we will review different types of nouns and how they are used in sentences.

## Concrete Nouns and Abstract Nouns

Most nouns fall clearly into one of two categories: concrete or abstract.



**A *concrete noun* names a person, place, animal, or thing that can be perceived with at least one of the five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing).**

Aladdin rubbed the lamp, and a genie appeared. (concrete nouns)



**An *abstract noun* names a quality, feeling, or idea. It cannot be perceived by any of the five senses.**

To Aladdin's delight, he received three wishes. (abstract nouns)

### ACTIVITY 1

---

**Decide whether each noun in the following list is concrete or abstract. Then, in the appropriate section, use the noun in a sentence.**

~~loyalty~~

~~announcement~~

music

smoke

contentment

salt

solitude

concentration

justice

elevator

distance

moon

### Concrete Nouns

**Sample:**

We listened to a brief announcement from our principal.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract Nouns

### Sample:

Loyalty to a friend should not mean lying for that person.

6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

## Collective Nouns

You can think of a collective noun as a word that refers to a collection of individual things. These things may be people, animals, or objects. For example, *audience* is a collective noun that names a group of people. *Herd* names a group of animals.



**A collective noun names a group of individual things as a unit.**

Here is a list of collective nouns.

audience	crowd	number	swarm
batch	flock	orchestra	team
bunch	gaggle	pride	
cluster	jury	set	
committee	litter	staff	

QUESTION: Is a collective noun considered singular or plural?

ANSWER: It usually depends on how the noun is used in the sentence. Follow these two guidelines:

**(a)** If the sentence is speaking about the group *as a whole*, the collective noun is singular. Use a **singular verb** or **singular pronoun** in reference to it.

The herd of cows prefers grain to hay.

(This sentence says something about the group of animals as a unit—as one thing. Remember, words coming between the subject and verb do not affect subject-verb agreement.)

The audience rose to its feet.

(This sentence says something about the group of people as a unit—as one thing.)

(b) If the sentence is speaking about the *individual things* in the group, the collective noun is plural. Use a **plural verb** or **plural pronoun** in reference to it.

The audience were milling around the lobby and in the aisles.

(This sentence refers to the group of people as individuals—as many things.)

The herd are protective of **their** calves.

(This sentence refers to the group of animals as individuals.)

## ACTIVITY 2

---

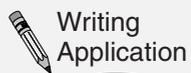
In each sentence, underline the collective noun. Then underline the word in parentheses that agrees with the noun.

### Samples:

a. In the jungle, a pride of lions (was, were) lounging in warm sunlight.

b. A number of respondents expressed (its, their) opinions at length.

1. The batch of cookies (has, have) been tucked into our lunches or stored in the cookie jar.
2. During each trial, the jury (sits, sit) in these chairs.
3. On Friday, the committee will hold (its, their) monthly meeting.
4. This litter of kittens (is, are) being adopted by several different families.
5. A bunch of us (is, are) eating at picnic tables, on park benches, or in cars.
6. The crowd (belongs, belong) behind the yellow line at all times.
7. The team tried (its, their) best, but the opponents were victorious.
8. Until recently, the set of dishes (was, were) displayed in this china hutch.
9. A flock of sparrows (rests, rest) in the trees and shrubs near the lily pond.
10. Did the staff turn in (its, their) activity sheets for approval?



### Using Collective Nouns

On a separate sheet of paper, write **ten** sentences using the collective nouns in Activity 2. If the noun was used as a singular noun in the activity, use it as a plural noun in your sentence. If it was used as a plural noun, use it as a singular noun in your sentence.

# Count and Noncount Nouns

The difference between count and noncount nouns is the quality of being countable.



**A *count noun* names something that can be counted.**

COUNT NOUNS: pencil, friend, hat, sandwich, key, cloud, fingernail

Count nouns exist as separate units and are therefore countable. *One pencil, two friends, several hats.* As you can see, these nouns have a singular form and a plural form.

Count nouns usually (but not always) name concrete nouns—that is, things that we can perceive with our senses.



**A *noncount noun* names something that cannot be counted.**

NONCOUNT NOUNS: furniture, respect, rice, air, water, homework, education

A noncount noun usually names a whole that we don't think of as countable. As a result, these nouns usually do not have a plural form.

Where should I deliver the *furniture*? (NOT furnitures)

How much homework do you have? (NOT How many homeworks)

## ACTIVITY 3

---

**Sort the nouns into the appropriate columns—count or noncount.**

~~weather~~      oxygen      idea      nature      envelope      stripe  
~~shoe~~      English      information      year      ice      warning

**Samples:**

COUNT NOUNS

NONCOUNT NOUNS

a. shoe

b. weather

1. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

## ESL Focus

### Using Articles with Count and Noncount Nouns

As you recall, the words *a*, *an*, and *the* are a special group of adjectives called *articles*. These words are used before nouns and pronouns.

*a* pencil    *an* apple    *the* rice

We use *the* with count and noncount nouns to indicate a specific item.

Please hand me *the pencil*. (one specific pencil)

Did you like *the rice*? (a specific dish of rice)

When a count noun is singular and indefinite, we use *a* or *an* before it.

Please hand me *a pencil*. (any pencil at all)

Would you like *an apple*? (any apple at all)

We do not usually use *a* or *an* with noncount nouns. Often, however, we use the adjective *some*.

Ahmad ate *rice* and a steak. (NOT *a rice*)

Ahmad ate *some rice* and a steak.

To express quantities of noncount nouns, we generally use units of measure.

Ahmad bought *a quart* of milk. (but NOT *a milk*)

Ahmed bought *a loaf* of bread. (but NOT *a bread*)

Ahmed bought *some loaves* of bread.

Ahmed bought *three loaves* of bread. (but NOT *some three loaves*)

## ACTIVITY 4

On each blank, write *a*, *an*, *the*, or *some*, as appropriate. Then, on the blank at the end of the sentence, state whether the noun in boldface is count or noncount.

### Samples:

a. Who is responsible for the **graffiti** on this wall? noncount

b. For English class, Seth wrote a **poem**. count

- |   | <u>COUNT OR NONCOUNT?</u> |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Would you like _____ <b>broccoli</b> ?                   | _____                     |
| 2. Please move _____ <b>chair</b> so I can mop the floor.   | _____                     |
| 3. At the market, Freddie selected _____ <b>pineapple</b> . | _____                     |
| 4. There is _____ <b>mail</b> on the hall table for you.    | _____                     |
| 5. Amira lives in _____ <b>apartment</b> near school.       | _____                     |

6. \_\_\_\_\_ **bee** stung me on the arm. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Who left \_\_\_\_\_ **milk** sitting out all night? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Ana made \_\_\_\_\_ **jewelry** in this case by hand. \_\_\_\_\_
9. You may complete \_\_\_\_\_ **assignment** with a partner. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Dimitri posted \_\_\_\_\_ **poetry** on the Web. \_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITY 5

In Part I, place each letter in the box in the grid below to form a noun of five or more letters, reading left to right. Compound nouns and plural nouns are not used. Two nouns are completed as samples. Instructions for Part II follow the puzzle.

### Part I

Y N R ~~G~~ C O A S D E T ~~X~~

Samples: a.	M	J	U	Q	I	B	G	A	G	G	L	E	Z
b.	R	Y	W	U	C	O	U	R	A	G	E	A	N
1.	E	I	N	G	R	E		I	E	N	T	R	E
2.	V	A	C	A	T	I		N	A	P	T	H	C
3.	T	U	M	E	R	C		C	K	O	O	D	Y
4.	A	Q	S	C	L	U		T	E	R	L	O	P
5.	P	Y	E	I	D	M		C	H	A	N	I	C
6.	U	I	M	A	G	I		A	T	I	O	N	N
7.	R	S	O	S	W	A		M	F	U	P	C	V
8.	M	A	B	A	G	G		G	E	O	X	B	I
9.	O	V	G	G	O	R		H	E	S	T	R	A
10.	T	E	H	C	L	O		H	I	N	G	I	L

### Part II

On the numbered line corresponding to each line of the puzzle, write the noun you found in that line. Then write whether the noun is *concrete* or *abstract*, whether it is *count* or *non-count*, and whether it collective (*yes* or *no*).

#### Samples:

	<u>NOUN</u>	<u>CONCRETE OR ABSTRACT?</u>	<u>COUNT OR NONCOUNT?</u>	<u>COLLECTIVE?</u>
a.	<u>gaggle</u>	<u>concrete</u>	<u>count</u>	<u>yes</u>
b.	<u>courage</u>	<u>abstract</u>	<u>noncount</u>	<u>no</u>

	<u>NOUN</u>	<u>CONCRETE OR ABSTRACT?</u>	<u>COUNT OR NONCOUNT?</u>	<u>COLLECTIVE?</u>
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____

### Using Grammar

It's time to take a break from traditional grammar exercises. The following activities ask you to explore how people use grammar in the real world, outside your classroom walls. Which activity sparks your interest? Choose an activity to complete; then, with your teacher's approval, share the results with your classmates. Have a good time!

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#### Now Crispier!

How do advertisers use the degrees of comparison? Do a study of what kinds of things are compared—products, qualities, consumer preferences, and so on. Then examine how advertisers phrase the comparisons. For example, why do they sometimes use open-ended comparisons, such as “Now crispier!”? (You are left to wonder, Crispier than what?) Write a summary of your findings, giving examples of comparisons in advertisements along with your own analysis of why ads are worded this way.

---

#### Oh, Don't Nobody Love Me?

Take a few days to listen—really listen—to the lyrics in songs. How many grammar errors can you collect? Make a list of grammar errors, along with the songs and artists responsible. Then think about how each error affects you as a listener. Does it interfere with your understanding? Create a particular mood? Send a message about the speaker in the song, or about the artist?

---

#### Local Color

Find out about the local color movement in American literature. When was the local color movement? What qualities define local color writing? Who are some of the authors who wrote in this style? And, most important, how do these authors use grammar in characters' speech to help show local color?

---

#### Check It Out

Many people rely on grammar-check software to find the grammar errors in their writing. How reliable is this method of finding errors? Is the software “blind” to certain kinds of errors? Does it always suggest the best correction? Perform a test of grammar-check software to see how it responds to the kinds of errors discussed in Lessons 3–6. Based on your findings, what recommendations do you have for writers?

---

#### Prima Donna

The dumb jock, the ditzy cheerleader, the country bumpkin, the rich snob—these are just a few stereotypes. Does one of these stereotypes, or some other one, strike you as particularly unfair? Prepare a defense of this kind of person—an athlete, for example, or a politician. Present a summary of the stereotype,

then show how real-life individuals of this sort are not stereotypical. Pay special attention to how the use of grammar affects a stereotype. (Do all professional football players use double negatives, for example?)

---

## **Careers**

Job descriptions rarely specify that applicants be able to use grammar correctly. Does this mean that grammar is unimportant in most jobs? Examine five different careers that interest you and decide how important correct grammar is in each job. Give examples of responsibilities and activities that support your analysis.

---

## **Slow Children at Play**

The careless—or uninformed—use of modifiers, verbs, and pronouns sometimes leads to unexpected humor. Read signs in your town or city or surf the Internet to find humorous errors or interpretations. Write a short skit or dialogue, using the sign/sentence as a punch line, or create a cartoon drawing or comic strip inspired by the humorous error. How would you rewrite the sign or sentence to make its meaning more clear and specific?