APPENDIX

A Checklist for the ESL Writer

Students whose second language is English often have questions about grammar and usage that are not discussed in the other sections of this book. This checklist is for such students. It emphasizes the areas in which ESL writers and speakers have frequent problems.

We realize that merely memorizing these pages would not solve all of your problems with English. Even native speakers of English encounter questions of grammar and usage that can be very confusing. Ask your instructor if he or she can provide *Longman ESL Worksheets* which are available to students who use this textbook. The worksheets have been designed for individual use or independent study, and they can help you identify areas requiring additional attention. An equally important way to improve your mastery of English and become a confident, effective user of the language is by reading and listening to native English speakers and writers.

Articles and Quantifiers

The use of articles (*a, an, the*) and quantifiers (words like *a few, some, many, a lot of*) can be confusing for anyone who speaks English as a second language. These guidelines will help you use articles and quantifiers in your speaking and writing.

Articles (a/an, the)

A and *an* are called *indefinite* articles. Use *a* when the word following it begins with a consonant sound. Use *an* when the word following it begins with a vowel sound:

a *bear*, a *car*, a *unit*; an *apple*, an *argument*, an *hour*

The is called the *definite* article.

How do you know whether to use an indefinite (*a* or *an*) article or a definite (*the*) article before a noun? For example, when should you write or say "*a* bear" or "*the* bear"? "A fire" or "*the* fire"? "An orange" or "*the* orange"? Before you can decide which article to use before a

noun—or whether none should be used—you have to know whether the noun is *countable* or *uncountable*.

Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Countable nouns are the names of things, people, and ideas which we can count or make plural; they have a singular and a plural form:

◆ a dog	six dogs
◆ the salesman	the salesmen
◆ a phobia	several phobias
◆ the saucer	three saucers

Uncountable nouns are the names of things we usually cannot count; they have no plural form:

- ◆ earth (we don't say "earths")
- ◆ weather (not "weathers")
- ◆ health (not "healths")
- ◆ information (not "informations")

Uncountable nouns have only one form: the singular.

By deciding whether a noun is countable or uncountable, you are ready to decide the kind of article to use with it.

Using Articles with Countable Nouns

When the countable noun is singular, you should use either *a/an* or *the* in front of it, depending on the listener's (or reader's) familiarity with the thing being referred to. When referring to things in general or to things that are not already known to both the speaker and the listener, use the indefinite article (*a/an*) before the noun:

- ◆ *A* good mechanic is difficult to find.
- ◆ *An* apple was all I had for breakfast.

In these sentences the writer is not referring to a specific mechanic or apple. But when it is clear which thing we mean and we are referring to things known to our listener, we use the definite article *the*:

- ◆ *The* mechanic who worked on my car said it needs new brakes. (The listener knows which mechanic is referred to.)
- ◆ *The* apple you gave me yesterday was rotten. (Not just any apple; the one you gave me.)

- I watched *a* program on television last night. *The* program was about incurable diseases. (In the first sentence, *a* is used because the listener does not know which program is referred to; in the second sentence, *the* is used before *program* because it has been identified.)
- We will need *a* shovel when we plant the rosebushes. (No specific shovel is meant.)
- Please give me *the* shovel in the toolshed. (The listener knows which shovel is meant.)

Other Uses of a/an

As explained above, we use *a/an* in front of a singular countable noun when we are introducing it for the first time, without having referred to it before. Here are some other uses of *a/an*:

1. Before singular countable nouns:
   - This is *a* boring movie. (NOT: "This is boring movie.")
   - Would you like *a* cup of coffee? (NOT: "Would you like cup of coffee?")
   - I have *an* idea. (NOT: "I have idea.")

2. To refer to any one member of a class:
   - A professional musician must study for many years.
   - An *isosceles* triangle has three sides.

3. To refer to a particular person or thing when the listener doesn't know which one is meant or when it doesn't matter which one:
   - My cousin bought *an* expensive German car. (The listener or reader doesn't know which expensive German car it is.)
   - Alberto comes from *a* small town in Texas.
   - Could you give me *a* piece of paper?

4. Before a noun when we say what something is, or what something or someone is like:
   - That is *a* good idea.
   - Tony is *a* thoughtful person.
   - Stan has *a* great sense of humor.
   - This is *an* incredible view!

Do not use a/an before uncountable nouns: "a music," "a weather," "a gold," etc. Exceptions are when we are limiting the meaning of certain uncountable nouns in some ways:

- He brings *a* certain excitement to his performances. (NOT: "He brings certain excitement.")
- Kim has *an* incredible understanding of Asian politics. (NOT: "Kim has incredible understanding of Asian politics.")

Use *a/an* or *the* to make generalizations with most singular nouns:

- *A* gesture can often be misunderstood by visitors in a foreign country. (*A* can mean any gesture.)
- *The* telephone is being replaced by the cellular phone in many homes. (*The* is used to mean telephones in general.)

By omitting *a* and *the* and making the nouns plural in these sentences, you can make generalizations:

- *Gestures* can often be misunderstood by visitors in a foreign country.
- *Telephones* are being replaced by the cellular phone in many homes.

Other Uses of *the*

The definite article *the*, as noted above, is used when it is clear which thing we mean. Here are several other uses of *the*:

1. When there is only one of something:
   - London is *the* capital of England.
   - Bill Gates is *the* richest man in the United States.
   - Superman leaped from *the* top of the building.
2. When we mean something in particular:
   - *The* singers at the concert last night were great. (The singers at the concert, not singers in general.)
   - *The* cookies I made yesterday were full of calories. (Not all cookies; a particular group of cookies.)
3. To refer to things in general by using *the* with a singular countable noun:
   - *The* rose is my favorite flower.
   - *The* hippopotamus, despite its appearance, is a very fast animal.
4. To refer to a noun and identify or limit it:
   - *The* argument that I had with my sister was over trivial matters. (*that I had with my sister* limits the argument to a specific one)

- *The* argument against the tax increase was delivered by the mayor. (*against the tax increase* limits the argument to a specific one)

5. To refer to certain nationality words and adjectives: *the rich, the poor, the Germans, the Irish*, etc.
6. With a number of expressions referring to our physical environment: *the city, the country, the sea, the beach, the mountains, the wind, the weather, the universe, the future, the sunshine*, etc.

Do *not* use *the* in the following situations:

1. Do not use *the* with uncountable or plural nouns to talk about things in general. For example, do not use "The books are expensive" when you mean books in general. Similarly, do not use "The life in starving countries is precarious" when you mean life in general.
2. Do not use *the* with singular proper names: NOT: "Mike lives in *the* Chicago."
   Exceptions: Certain geographical names (*The* Bronx, *the* Atlantic, *the* Pacific, *the* Mississippi River, *the* Matterhorn, etc.)
3. Do not use *the* with the names of meals: We usually eat lunch at noon. (NOT: "We usually eat *the* lunch at noon.")
   Exception: Use *the* if you are referring to a specific meal: "*The* dinner that she prepared was delicious.")
4. Do not use *the* when you are thinking of certain places and what they are used for.
   - Mrs. O'Reilly goes to church every Sunday. (NOT: "goes to *the* church")
   - After graduation from high school, Sean joined the army. (NOT: "from *the* high school")
   - On the other hand: The fire at *the* church last week was caused by arson.
     The new high school enrolled new students last week.

These are not the only situations in which articles are used. As you continue to speak and write English, you will become familiar with other rules. In the meantime, consult one of the books mentioned on page 339 when you have questions about their use.

Quantifiers

Quantifiers are words that come before nouns and tell you *how many* or *how much*. Their use can sometimes be confusing, and when used incorrectly, can change the meaning of a sentence. In this section we will examine some of the most confusing quantifiers.

Some and any

Both *some* and *any* can refer to an indefinite or vague quantity or number. They are used when it is difficult or unimportant to specify exactly how much or how many of

something we are thinking of. In general, we use *some* in positive sentences and *any* in negative sentences:

- I have *some* money left from my shopping trip.
- I don't have *any* money left to buy more gifts.
- Helen said *something* to me about the matter.
- I didn't understand *any* of her remarks.

Any is common in questions:

- Do you have *any* ideas for your term paper yet?
- No, I don't have *any* ideas. (NOT: No, I don't have *some* ideas.)
- Has *anybody* heard from Luis?

If we expect the answer "Yes," we often use *some* in questions:

- Would you like *some* help with that package?
- Would you like *some* coffee?

Any is used in affirmative statements after words like *never, hardly, without,* and *little* that have a negative meaning:

- We had *hardly any* problem in finding our way to the beach.
- There are *never any* surprises in Professor Forrest's exams.

Use *any* (or *anyone, anybody, anything, anywhere*) when it means "it doesn't matter *which, who, what,* or *where*":

- You can use *any* of these scissors. They're all sharp.
- Students may register *any* time before September 10.
- I dreamed that I could have *anything* I wanted for my graduation gift.
- Fianna said that *anybody* could request a song.

Both *any* and *some* are used in if-clauses:

- If you hear *any/some* news, give me a call.
- If you meet *any/some* of our neighbors, tell them we'll return home soon.

Use *some* in requests:

- May I have *some* more paper, please?

Much, many, little, few, a lot, plenty

We use *much* and *little* with uncountable nouns:

- *much* energy *much* optimism *little* money *little* admiration

We use *many* and *few* with plural nouns:

- *many* dreams *many* voters *few* friends *few* parking spaces

We use *a lot of*/*lots of* and *plenty of* with uncountable and plural nouns:

- *a lot of* energy *lots of* mail *plenty of* courage
- *a lot of* visitors *lots of* tires *plenty of* reasons

We use *much* and *many* chiefly in negative sentences and in questions:

- Our car doesn't require *much* fuel.
- Do you have *many* relatives here?

Much is not usually used in positive sentences. Most speakers and writers prefer *a lot (of)* in such constructions:

- Politicians spent *a lot of* money in the last election. (NOT: spent *much* money)
- There has been *a lot of* thunder and lightning this week. (NOT: *much* thunder and lightning)

In positive sentences, however, *too much* and *so much* are used:

- There has been *too much* rain this week.
- I ate *so much* pasta that I couldn't finish my dessert.

We can omit a noun after *much* or *many* if the meaning is clear:

- You haven't talked *much* tonight.
- Have you seen any football games this season? Not *many*.

Little and *few* are negative ideas:

- There's *little* interest in going on a trip next week.
- She has *few* memories of growing up in Nebraska.

We can intensify the meaning of *little* and *few* by using *very* before them:

- There's *very little* interest in going on a trip next week.
- She has *very few* memories of growing up in Nebraska.

"A little" and "a few" are more positive; their meaning is closer to "some."

- We have *a little time* before the bus leaves. (some time)
- A *few* of her records survived the fire. (some records)

Problems with Verbs

If you are not a native speaker of English, you probably run into confusing situations when deciding which form of a verb or tense to use. *Tense* refers to the form of the verb that indicates time. The tense forms do not always agree with divisions of actual time, however. The simple present tense, for example, is not limited to the present time. Furthermore, helping/auxiliary verbs and many adverbs and expressions are used with verbs to indicate time.

In the first section below we will review the twelve verb tenses and their uses, as well as the ways they are formed. Then you will learn to distinguish among the more confusing tenses and to avoid mistakes that even native speakers of English sometimes make.

The Twelve Verb Tenses

1. Simple present tense

   This is the simple present tense:

   - I/we/you/they study
   - He/she/it studies

   The simple present tense is used to speak of things that happen all the time or repeatedly, or are true in general:

   - The sun *rises* in the East.
   - The Star Spangled Banner *is* our national anthem.
   - Helen's father *works* in a bank.

2. Simple past tense

   This is the simple past tense:

   - I/we/you/he/she/it/they studied

   The simple past tense often ends in *-ed*. But many of our common verbs are irregular.

This means that their past tense form does not end in *-ed* and must be memorized:

Present	Past	
buy	bought	We *bought* a house in the country last summer.
go	went	The police *went* with the doctor to the hospital.
hit	hit	A severe storm *hit* the area last week.

The simple past tense is used to talk about actions or situations completed in the past:

- Clark *worked* until eleven o'clock last night.
- World War Two *ended* in 1945.
- Sherry *spent* her inheritance in Paris last month.

3. Simple future tense

The simple future tense takes two forms:

- I/we/you/he/she/it/they will study
- I am/he/she/it/is/you/we/they/are going to study

The simple future tense is used to describe an action in the future:

- I *will study* my biology notes tonight.
- I *am going to study* my lab notes tonight.

4. Present perfect tense

This is the present perfect tense:

- I/we/you/they have studied
- he/she/it/ has studied

We form the present perfect tense with *have/has* and the past participle of the verb. The past participle often ends in *-ed* (waited, hoped), but many important verbs are irregular (*thought*, *written*, *done*, etc.). See pages 137–39 for other examples of irregular past participles.

We use the present perfect tense to describe an action that occurred at an unspecified time in the past:

- Marta *has* already *mailed* her application for a passport.

We also use the present perfect tense to describe an action that started in the past and continues up to the present:

- Marta *has lived* in North Carolina for three years.

5. Past perfect tense
This is the past perfect tense:

- I/we/you/he/she/it/they had studied

We form the past perfect tense with *had* and the past participle (see the present perfect tense above about irregular forms of the past participle). We use the past perfect tense to describe something in the past that occurred before another action in the past:

- Fred was very nervous because he *had* never *been* on a blind date before.
- Sheila knew who the killer was because she *had seen* the movie last week.
- When I arrived home I discovered that I *had lost* my door key.

6. Future perfect tense
This is the future perfect tense:

- I/we/you/he/she/it/they will have studied

We form the future perfect tense by using *will have* and the past participle of the verb. The future perfect tense is used to describe an action in the future that will be completed or achieved by a certain time in the future:

- By next September we *will have lived* in this apartment three years.
- Claudia *will have completed* the requirements for her degree by the time she is twenty.
- By the time her treatment for rabies is completed, Michele *will have received* a dozen vaccination shots.

7. Present progressive tense
This is the present progressive tense:

- I am studying
- he/she/it is studying
- we/you/they are studying

The present progressive tense is formed by using the simple present form of *be* (*am*, *is*, *are*) and the present participle form of the verb (the *-ing* form).

We use the present progressive tense to describe something that is happening at or very close to the time of speaking:

- They *are working* in the garden now.
- Tony *is watching* the game on television.
- Lou *is taking* a nap.

8. Past progressive tense
This is the past progressive tense:

- I/he/she/it was studying
- we/you/they were studying

The past progressive tense is formed by using the simple past tense form of *be* (*was*, *were*) and the present participle form of the verb.

The past progressive tense is used to describe a continuous action that was going on around a particular past time:

- What *were* you *doing* when I called you?
- George *was painting* the kitchen when the doorbell rang.
- The sun *was setting* on the horizon as our boat pulled out of the harbor.

9. Future progressive tense
This is the future progressive tense:

- I/he/she/it/we/you/they will be studying

The future progressive tense is formed by using the simple future form of *be* (*will be*) and the present participle form of the verb.

We use the future progressive tense to describe an action that will be going on at a particular moment in the future:

- We *will be thinking* of you next week on your anniversary.
- The *dogs will be barking* soon if I don't feed them.
- Sharon *will be playing* her new guitar in the recital tonight.

10. Present perfect progressive tense
This is the present perfect progressive tense:

- I/you/we/they have been studying
- he/she/it has been studying

The present perfect progressive tense is formed by combining the present perfect form of *be* (*have been*, *has been*) with the present participle form of the verb.

We use the present perfect progressive tense to describe situations which started in the past and are still going on, or which have just stopped and have present results:

- It *has been snowing* since last Tuesday evening.
- Mike *has been complaining* about the noise from the new neighbors, but the landlord refuses to do anything about it.
- We *have been watching* late-night television while on vacation.

11. Past perfect progressive tense
This is the past perfect progressive tense:

- I/he/sh/it/we/you/they had been studying

The past perfect progressive tense is formed by combining the past perfect form of *be* (*had been*) with the present participle form of the verb.

We use the past perfect progressive tense to describe a continuous activity in the past that is completed before another action in the past:

- When I received my raise, I *had been working* at the restaurant two months.
- When Carla returned home, she told her sister that she *had been shopping*.
- Paul said that he *had been having* bad dreams, and he blamed them on the huge meals he *had been eating* just before going to bed.

12. Future perfect progressive tense
This is the future perfect progressive tense:

- I/he/she/it/we/you/they will have been studying

The future perfect progressive tense is formed by combining the future perfect form of *be* (*will have been*) with the present participle form of the verb. It is used to describe a continuous action in the future that is completed before another action in the future:

- Jim *will have been working* at the hardware store for seven years next week.
- Mr. Baylor, my math prof, *will have been teaching* for thirty years this June.
- Tara *will have been studying* the harp for six months tomorrow.

Tips for Choosing the Right Tense

1. *Knowing how to describe an action in the present*
Most English verbs have two "present" tenses. Forms like *I study* and *he works* are called "simple present." Forms like *I am studying* and *he is working* are called "present progressive." These two "present" tenses are used to describe several different kinds of time.
We usually use the *simple present* to describe permanent situations or things that happen all the time or regularly:

- Ricardo *plays* goalie on his soccer team.
- I *drive* downtown to my job five days a week.
- British Columbia *is* on the west coast of Canada.

We usually use the *present progressive tense* to talk about temporary continuing actions and events that are going on around now:

- Richard *is playing* goalie today because the regular goalie was injured last week.
- I *am driving* to work this week because of the subway strike.
- Marcella *is looking* for an apartment closer to her job.

a. We use the *simple present tense* in the following situations:

In summaries of plays, stories, and movies:

- In Act One, Macbeth *encounters* three witches in the forest. They *tell* him . . .
- In today's program Margaret *learns* that her real father *is* . . .

When asking for and giving instructions:

- "How *do* I *enroll* in the exercise class?" "You *attend* the first session and *fill out* a registration form and *pay* the fee."

With dependent clauses to refer to the future:

- I'll be ready when you *call*.

With verbs that cannot normally be used in progressive forms:

- I like the ice cream very much. (NOT: I *am liking* . . . .)
- I know his telephone number. (NOT: I *am knowing* . . .)

We do not use the simple present tense in the following situations:

To talk about temporary actions that are going on only around the present:

- The telephone *is ringing*. Shall I get it? (NOT: The telephone *rings* . . . .)

To say how long a situation has been going on:

- I *have lived* here since 1990. (NOT: I *live* here since . . . .)
- I *have been studying* English for two years. (NOT: I *study* English for . . . .)

b. We use the *present progressive tense* in the following situations:
To describe changing situations:

- Helen *is becoming* more confident in her use of chopsticks.
- Athletes *are growing* taller because of better diets.

To refer to future events in the following constructions:

- Where *are* you *going* on your vacation next week?
- She *is leaving* for Cleveland next month.

Note: When the present progressive tense is used to indicate future action, a word or phrase like *tomorrow, next week,* etc., indicating time is usually used.

To refer to repeated actions if they are happening around the moment of speaking:

- Why *are* you *rubbing* your elbow?
- Fernando *is speaking* to several campus organizations this afternoon.

To describe future events that are decided, or are starting to happen:

- "What *is* Phil *doing* this evening?" "*He's working* on his car." (NOT: "What *does* Phil *do* this evening?" "He *works* on his car.")

We do not use the present progressive tense in the following situations:

To talk about repeated actions not closely connected to the moment of speaking:

- I *ski* once or twice a year. (NOT: I *am skiing* . . . .)
- Muriel *cries* every time she *sees* that movie. (NOT: Muriel *is crying* . . *is seeing* . . . .)

With certain verbs that refer to mental states, the use of the senses, and certain other meanings, rather than to action. Such verbs are usually used only in simple tenses.

- I *realize* now that I was wrong. (NOT: I *am realizing* now . . . .)
- *Do* you *like* anchovies on your pizza? (NOT: *Are* you *liking* anchovies . . . .)
- I *doubt* that I have enough time to take a nap. (NOT: I *am doubting* that . . . .)

Here is a list of some common verbs which are rarely used in progressive tenses:

be	know	recognize
believe	like	remember
belong	love	see
doubt	need	seem
feel	own	suppose
hate	prefer	understand
hear	realize	wish
imagine		

Many of these verbs can be used with progressive tenses, but with a change in their meaning. Notice the difference in meaning in the following pairs of sentences:

- I *feel* we shouldn't try to leave now. (NOT: I *am feeling* . . . .)
  But: *I'm feeling* much better now.
- I *see* what you mean by that (NOT: I *am seeing* . . . .)
  But: *I'm seeing* Jo Ann next week.

2. *Learning the difference between the simple past and the present perfect tenses*
Many situations allow us to use either the simple past tense or the present perfect tense:

- I *solved* the problem. *Were* you able to solve it?
- *I've solved* the problem. *Have* you *solved* it?
- Lisa *saved* one hundred dollars this month. I *saved* fifty.
- Lisa *has saved* one hundred dollars this month. *I've saved* fifty.

In most situations however, the meaning of the sentence requires that we choose either the simple past or the present perfect tense.

a. We use the simple past tense in the following situations:
To say when something happened:

- Her parents *came* to this country in 1980.
- I *played* basketball yesterday.

To describe actions that are not connected with the present:

- Thomas Edison *invented* the lightbulb. (NOT: *has invented*)
- The United States *was* the first nation to use the atom bomb in war. (NOT: *has been* . . . .)

b. We use the simple present perfect in the following situations:
To give news of recent events:

- There *has been* a severe earthquake in Japan, according to news accounts.

With *yet* in questions and negative sentences to show that something is expected to happen:

- *Has* Gerald *arrived* yet?
- Doris *hasn't received* her grades yet.

With *ever* and *never:*

- I *have* never *been* to Sweden.
- *Have* you ever *been* to Miami?

We do not use the simple present perfect to talk about an event that happened at a specific time:

- There *was* a severe earthquake in Japan yesterday. (NOT: There *has been* . . . .)

The present perfect always has a connection with the present; the simple past tense only tells us about the past. If we say that something has happened, we are thinking about the past and the present at the same time. Notice the difference in these sentences:

- My father *worked* as a lifeguard when he was in college.
- My father *has worked* for the post office for thirty years.

3. *Learning the difference between the simple present perfect and the present perfect progressive tenses*

In general, both the present perfect and present perfect progressive tenses can be used to describe recent actions that have results in the present. The present perfect tense, however, suggests completion or a result. The present perfect progressive tense is used to describe or talk about more temporary actions. Notice the difference between these sentences:

- Present perfect progressive: The artist *has been painting* the portrait all week.
- Present perfect: The artist *has painted* over fifty portraits.

To show that an action or event is going on at the time of writing or speaking, you can use the present perfect progressive tense:

- Charles *has been pulling* weeds and *spraying* the flowers all day.
- I *have been studying* all morning.
- I *have been thinking* about my brother all day.
- *I've been running* on the beach this month.

As you can see, each of the sentences above suggests an emphasis on continuous activity. The *present perfect*, on the other hand, suggests a result or completed activity:

- Charles *has pulled* weeds and *sprayed* flowers all day.
- I *have studied* all morning.
- I *have thought* about my brother all day.
- *I've run* on the beach this month.

Learning to Use Phrasal Verbs

Most verbs in English consist of only one word. Some verbs, however, consist of two or three words: the main verb and a word like *across*, *away*, *down*, *for*, *in*, *off*, *out*, *up*, and *with*. Such verbs are called "phrasal verbs." and their meanings are usually very different from the meanings of their parts taken separately. For example, the verb *run* has a different meaning from the verb *run into*:

- Larry *ran* the mile when he was on his high school track team.
- I *ran into* an old friend while I was at the library last night.

The verbs *broke* and *broke down* have different meanings, as illustrated by these sentences:

- Mike *broke* his arm while riding his motorcycle.
- His motorcycle *broke down* while he was in Phoenix.

The English language has hundreds of these verbs. You should make a note of the most confusing ones as you hear them.

Sometimes a phrasal verb is followed by an object. In such cases the object can go in either of two positions:

- The referee *called off* the game.
- The referee *called* the game *off*.

Here are other examples:

- Did you *make up* that story?
- Did you *make* that story *up*?

- We decided to *put off* our vacation until August.
- We decided to *put* our vacation *off* until August.

An exception occurs when the object of a phrasal verb is a pronoun (*me/you/it/him/her/us/them*). In such cases, the pronoun must come before the preposition (words like *up/down/in/out/on/off*, etc.):

- Please *wake me up* by seven o'clock tomorrow morning. (NOT: *wake up me. . . .*)
- You can solve the problem if you *break it down* into its separate parts. (NOT: if you *break down it. . . .*)

Common Two- and Three-Word Verbs and Their Meanings

This is not a complete list. The English language contains many others, and you should learn them as you encounter them.

break down	fail or stop
call off	cancel
check into	investigate
clear up	explain
cut down on	reduce
cut off	shut off, stop
figure out	solve or discover
fill in	inform
find out	learn, discover
get off	exit from a vehicle
give up	stop trying
go over	review
grow up	mature
hand in	submit
look after	take care of
look into	investigate
look out for	take care of, be aware of
make up	invent
pick out	select
put off	delay
put up with	allow or tolerate
run across	meet by chance
run into	meet by chance
run out on	betray
show	appear, arrive
speak up	express freely, loudly
stand up for	defend
straighten out	organize
sum up	conclude, summarize
take back	recover, regain
try on	test
try out	compete, apply for
work out	solve, develop

Common Expressions

This section presents commonly used words and expressions that can be confusing to students of the English language.

Using "used to"

Used to when followed by a verb describes past situations that no longer exist and describes actions that happened in the past but no longer happen:

- Sherry *used to smoke*. She *used to smoke* two packs of cigarettes a day. [This sentence means that Sherry smoked regularly in the past but doesn't smoke now.]

These sentences convey similar meanings:

- Juan *used to live* in Santo Domingo, but now he lives in Atlanta.
- Connie *used to work* at an electronics store, but now she has her own business.
- San Diego *used to be* a small navy town, but now it is a cosmopolitan city.
- This record shop *used to be* a grocery store.

Used to has no present form. If we wish to describe situations existing in the present, we usually use the simple present tense:

- **Past:** Sherry *used to* smoke.
- **Present:** Sherry *smokes*. (NOT: Sherry *uses to* smoke.)
- **Past:** Lance *used to* snore when he slept.
- **Present:** Lance *snores* when he sleeps. (NOT: Lance *uses* to snore. . . .)

To ask questions, the following form is used: *did . . . use to . . . ?*

- *Did* you *use to* have a Volkswagen?
- *Did* Marino *use to* coach football?

The negative form is *didn't use to . . . .*

- *Didn't* you *use to* have a Volkswagen?
- *Didn't* Marino *use to* coach football?

Used to describes things that happened in the past and are now finished. Do not use *used to* to say what happened at a specific past time, or how many times it occurred, or how long it took:

- Charlotte *lost* five pounds last month. (NOT: Charlotte *used to lose*. . . .)
- Pedro *lived* in Newport News for two years. (NOT: Pedro *used to live* in. . . .)
- I *went* to the health club twelve times last month. (NOT: I *used to go* to the. . . .)

Do not confuse *used to* and *to be used to*. If a person is *used to* something, it is familiar or no longer new:

- I *used to be* afraid to drive in heavy traffic. (I was afraid to drive in heavy traffic, but I no longer am.)
- I *am used to* driving in heavy traffic. (I am accustomed to driving in heavy traffic.)

Using "when" and "if"

Be careful not to confuse *when* and *if*.
Use *when* for things that are sure to happen:

- *When* we go to lunch today, I think I'll have just a salad.
- *When* you boil water long enough, it turns to steam.

Use *if* for things that will possibly happen:

- *If* he doesn't call me soon, I'll leave for work.
- *If* I buy a new computer, I'll probably get a new monitor with it.
- Please call my brother *if* you go to Cleveland.

Using "since" and "for"

We use *since* to give the starting points of actions or events, particularly from the point of view of a particular present or past end-point:

- Sheila has been married *since* 1998.
- Raul has been studying flamenco *since* his return from Madrid.

Notice that we use *since* when we mention the beginning of the period (*since 1998, since his return*, etc.).

We use *for* to measure how long something lasts:

- Sheila has been married *for* two years. (NOT: *since* two years)
- Raul has been studying flamenco *for* two months. (NOT: *since* two months)

Notice that we use *for* when we say the period of time (*two years, two hours, a long time*, etc.).

Using "-s" and "-es"

When forming third person singular nouns and pronouns, don't forget that present tense verbs end in *-s* or *-es:*

- Incorrect: Every day at five o'clock the factory whistle *blow*.
- Correct: Every day at five o'clock the factory whistle *blows*.
- Incorrect: Roberta *watch* the news on television while working on her math.
- Correct: Roberta *watches* the news on television while working on her math.

If the helping verb *do* or *does* is used, add the *-s* or *-es* to the helping verb, not to the main verb:

- Incorrect: The whistle *don't* blow at five o'clock.
- Correct: The whistle *doesn't* blow at five o'clock.

Problems with Word Order and Unnecessary Words

Adjectives

When several adjectives come before a noun, they usually have to be placed in a particular order. For example, we say a *beautiful, small, shiny metal* coin, not a metal, beautiful, shiny, small coin. Adjectives like *beautiful* are called opinion adjectives because they tell us what the speaker or writer thinks of the object being described. Adjectives like *small, shiny,* and *metal* are called fact adjectives, and they give objective information about something. Opinion adjectives usually come before fact adjectives when they modify or describe nouns.

opinion	fact
a depressing	rainy day
a glamorous	American actress
a boring	political speech

The rules for adjective order can be very confusing, and there is disagreement among writers and speakers on the rules. Nevertheless, the following list will help you arrange them correctly. In general, adjectives should follow each other in this order:

1. Opinion (words like *silly, ugly, intelligent, fascinating*)
2. Size (*length, weight, height, width*)
3. Age (*old, modern, new, recent*)
4. Color
5. Origin (*British, Western, Oriental,* etc.)
6. Material (*glass, wood, leather, steel,* etc.)

7. Purpose (*coffee* table, *racing* car, *water* bottle)
8. The noun being modified

Examples (the numbers after each phrase correspond to the list above):

- a small, ancient, black Japanese wooden cigar box (2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8)
- the impatient German teacher (1 + 5 + 8)
- a nostalgic old Hungarian wedding song (1 + 3 + 5 + 7 + 8)

Adverbs in the Sentence

Adverbs can usually appear in three positions in a sentence:
At the beginning:

- *Yesterday* a rainbow appeared in the eastern sky.

In the middle:

- A rainbow appeared *yesterday* in the eastern sky.

At the end:

- A rainbow appeared in the eastern sky *yesterday*.

There are a few situations, however, in which we cannot place adverbs randomly.
Do not place adverbs between a verb and its object:

- Maxine plays the piano *beautifully*. (NOT: Maxine plays beautifully the piano.)
- Laine *often* forgets her new telephone number. (NOT: Laine forgets often her new telephone number.)

Do not place adverbs before *am/is/are/was/were* when the adverbs say how often something happens (words like *always, never, ever, usually, often, sometimes*, etc.):

- Dorothy is *always* on time for her French class. (NOT: Dorothy always is on time . . . .)
- Visitors are *sometimes* unaware of the dangers of riptides. (NOT: Visitors sometimes are unaware. . . .)

Unnecessary repetition of the subject of the sentence:

- The President *he* gave the State of the Union address last night. (Because *President* and *he* refer to the same person, *he* is unnecessary repetition.)