

8. Use a dash to set off an abrupt break or interruption and to announce a long appositive or summary.

A dash is a mark of separation stronger than a comma, less formal than a colon, and more relaxed than parentheses.

His first thought on getting out of bed—if he had any thought at all—was to get back in again.

The rear axle began to make a noise—a grinding, chattering, teeth-gritting rasp.

The increasing reluctance of the sun to rise, the extra nip in the breeze, the patter of shed leaves dropping—all the evidences of fall drifting into winter were clearer each day.

Use a dash only when a more common mark of punctuation seems inadequate.

Her father's suspicions proved well-founded—it was not Edward she cared for—it was San Francisco.

Her father's suspicions proved well-founded. It was not Edward she cared for, it was San Francisco.

Violence—the kind you see on television—is not honestly violent—there lies its harm.

Violence, the kind you see on television, is not honestly violent. There lies its harm.

9. The number of the subject determines the number of the verb.

Words that intervene between subject and verb do not affect the number of the verb.

The bittersweet flavor of youth—its trials, its joys, its adventures, its challenges—are not soon forgotten.

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A common blunder is the use of a singular verb form in a relative clause following "one of . . ." or a similar expression when the relative is the subject.

One of the ablest scientists who has attacked this problem

One of those people who is never ready on time

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Use a singular verb form after *each*, *either*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *neither*, *nobody*, *someone*.

Everybody thinks he has a unique sense of humor.

Although both clocks strike cheerfully, neither keeps good time.

With *none*, use the singular verb when the word means "no one" or "not one."

None of us are perfect. None of us is perfect.

A plural verb is commonly used when *none* suggests more than one thing or person.

None are so fallible as those who are sure they're right.

A compound subject formed of two or more nouns joined by *and* almost always requires a plural verb.

The walrus and the carpenter were walking close at hand.

But certain compounds, often clichés, are so inseparable they are considered a unit and so take a singular verb, as do compound subjects qualified by *each* or *every*.

The long and the short of it is . . .

Bread and butter was all she served.

Give and take is essential to a happy household.

Every window, picture, and mirror was smashed.

A singular subject remains singular even if other nouns are connected to it by *with*, *as well as*, *in addition to*, *except*, *together with*, and *no less than*.

His speech as well as his manner is objectionable.

A linking verb agrees with the number of its subject.

What is wanted is a few more pairs of hands.

The trouble with truth is its many varieties.

Some nouns that appear to be plural are usually construed as singular and given a singular verb.

Politics is an art, not a science.

The Republican Headquarters is on this side of the tracks.

But

The general's quarters are across the river.

In these cases the writer must simply learn the idioms. The contents of a book is singular. The contents of a jar may be either singular or plural, depending on what's in the jar—jam or marbles.

10. Use the proper case of pronoun.

The personal pronouns, as well as the pronoun *who*, change form as they function as subject or object.

Will Jane or he be hired, do you think?

The culprit, it turned out, was he.

We heavy eaters would rather walk than ride.

Who knocks?

Give this work to whoever looks idle.

In the last example, *whoever* is the subject of *looks idle*; the object of the preposition *to* is the entire clause *whoever looks idle*. When *who* introduces a subordinate clause, its case depends on its function in that clause.

Virgil Soames is the candidate whom we think will win.

Virgil Soames is the candidate whom we hope to elect.

Virgil Soames is the candidate who we think will win. [We think *he* will win.]

Virgil Soames is the candidate whom we hope to elect. [We hope to elect *him*.]