

2026 Grammar Guide

120 Quick Fixes (Learner Edition)

Clear rules • Common mistakes • Natural alternatives

Last revised: February 16, 2026

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How to use this guide

Each point follows the same format:

- **Rule:** the key idea (what to do)
- **Avoid:** a common learner mistake (what to *not* do)
- **Prefer:** a clearer or more natural option
- **Examples:** preferred / avoid (with a suggested fix)

Note on variety:

This guide uses international “standard” English. Where British and American English differ, both options are shown and labelled.

Meaning & commonly confused words (1–20)

1. According to

Rule	Use “ according to ” to report what <i>someone else</i> says or what a <i>source</i> says.
Avoid	Using “ according to ” to give your own opinion.
Prefer	“ In my opinion ... / I think ... / I believe ... ”

Examples

Correct	According to the report, sales have increased.
Fix	Avoid: According to me, she should have resigned earlier. → Prefer: In my opinion, she should have resigned earlier.

2. Across and through

Rule	Use across for movement from one side to the other over a surface/area ; use through for movement inside something (enter and exit) or among/within .
Avoid	Using through when you mean “from one side to the other (open area)”.
Prefer	Choose the preposition that matches the movement.

Examples

Correct	We walked across the field. (one side → the other)
Correct	The train went through a tunnel. (inside)
Fix	Avoid: We walked through the field. (if you mean one side → the other) → Prefer: We walked across the field.

3. Adjectives ending in -ly (friendly, costly, likely)

Rule	Some words ending in -ly are adjectives , not adverbs (e.g., <i>friendly, costly</i>). To modify a verb, you often need an -ly adverb (<i>expensively</i>) or a phrase (<i>in a ... way</i>).
Avoid	<i>friendlyly / costlyly</i> and other “double -ly” forms.
Prefer	“ in a friendly way ” / “ at great cost ” / “ expensively ” (and similar rephrases).

Examples

Fix	Avoid: She smiled friendly. → Prefer: She smiled in a friendly way.
Fix	Avoid: They decorated the room costly. → Prefer: They decorated the room expensively / at great cost.

4. Ago and before

Rule	ago counts back from <i>now</i> and is used with a past time expression; before means “earlier than” a time/event.
Avoid	Using before to mean ago .
Prefer	Use ago for “X years/months ago”; use before with a reference point.

Examples

Correct	I moved here three years ago.
Correct	I had met her before I started university.
Fix	Avoid: I moved here three years before. → Prefer: I moved here three years ago.

5. Already, yet, still

Rule	already = earlier than expected; yet = “until now” (usually in negatives/questions); still = continuing.
Avoid	Using yet in affirmative statements in standard learner writing.
Prefer	already (affirmative), yet (questions/negatives), still (continuation).

Examples

Correct	I’ve already finished.
Correct	Have you finished yet?
Correct	I haven’t finished yet.
Correct	I’m still working.

6. Although / though / even though

Rule	Use although / even though to introduce contrast. Don’t use but in the same clause. Though can also appear at the end of a sentence.
Avoid	Although ... but ...
Prefer	Use although or but , not both.

Examples

Correct	Although it was raining, we went out.
Fix	Avoid: Although it was raining, but we went out. → Prefer: Although it was raining, we went out.
Correct	It was raining, but we went out.
Correct	We went out. It was raining, though.

7. Amount and number

Rule	Use amount with uncountable nouns; use number with countable plural nouns.
Avoid	amount of people/students in formal writing.
Prefer	the number of people/students

Examples

Correct	The amount of water in the bottle is low.
Correct	The number of students in the class is 25.
Fix	Avoid: A large amount of people came. → Prefer: A large number of people came.

8. Another / other / the other

Rule	another = one more (or an additional different one); other = different/additional; the other = the remaining one (of two) / the remaining ones.
Avoid	Confusing another and the other .
Prefer	Choose based on meaning: “one more” vs “the remaining one”.

Examples

Correct	Can I have another coffee? (one more)
Correct	I have two pens. One is blue; the other is black.
Correct	Some people like tea; other people prefer coffee.

9. Some and any

Rule	Use some in affirmative sentences and in offers/requests; use any in negatives and many questions. Any can also mean “it doesn’t matter which”.
Avoid	Using some in neutral information questions.
Prefer	any for neutral questions; some for offers/requests.

Examples

Correct	I have some questions.
Correct	Do you have any questions?
Correct	Would you like some tea? (offer)
Correct	You can choose any seat. (no restriction)

10. As and like

Rule	Use like + noun/pronoun; use as + clause (subject + verb). As also means “in the role of”.
Avoid	Like I said ... in formal writing (it’s common in speech, but not ideal for exams).
Prefer	As I said ... (formal/neutral)

Examples

Correct	She sings like her mother. (noun)
Correct	As I said earlier, we need more time. (clause)
Correct	As a teacher, I recommend daily practice. (role)

11. As if / as though

Rule	Use as if / as though to describe appearance/impression. Use past forms to show the situation is unreal/imagined.
Avoid	Mixing real and unreal meanings.
Prefer	Past form for unreal: as if he were ... / as though she had ...

Examples

Correct	He looks as if he’s tired. (possibly true)
Correct	He talks as if he were the boss. (unreal/imagined)

12. At the end and in the end

Rule	at the end = the final part of something; in the end = finally / the result.
Avoid	Using at the end when you mean “finally”.
Prefer	Use in the end for outcome; at the end for position/time in something.

Examples

Correct	At the end of the film, everyone cried.
Correct	In the end, we decided to stay home.
Fix	Avoid: At the end, we decided to stay home. → Prefer: In the end, we decided to stay home.

13. Because / because of / due to

Rule	because + clause; because of + noun phrase. due to is most natural after be (formal).
Avoid	because of + clause and overusing due to as a general replacement.
Prefer	because (clause) / because of (noun) / was due to (formal).

Examples

Correct	We stayed home because it was raining.
Correct	We stayed home because of the rain.
Correct	The delay was due to bad weather. (formal)
Fix	Avoid: We stayed home because of it was raining. → Prefer: We stayed home because it was raining.

14. Beside and besides

Rule	beside = next to; besides = in addition.
Avoid	Mixing the meanings.
Prefer	Choose the word that matches the meaning.

Examples

Correct	Sit beside me. (next to)
Correct	Besides English, she speaks Spanish. (in addition)

15. Between and among

Rule	between is common for two; among is common for a group. Between can also be used for a group when you mean clear, separate relationships.
Avoid	Using among for "two".
Prefer	between (two) / among (group).

Examples

Correct	The negotiations are between the two companies.
Correct	She was sitting among friends.
Correct	Divide the money between the three of you. (separate shares)

16. Borrow and lend

Rule	borrow = take temporarily; lend = give temporarily.
Avoid	<i>borrow me / lend from.</i>
Prefer	borrow (something) from (someone) / lend (someone) (something).

Examples

Correct	Can I borrow your pen?
Correct	She lent me her book.
Fix	Avoid: Can you borrow me your pen? → Prefer: Can you lend me your pen?

17. Bring and take

Rule	bring = towards the speaker/this place; take = away from the speaker/this place.
Avoid	Using bring when movement is away.
Prefer	Choose based on direction.

Examples

Correct	Bring your laptop to class tomorrow.
Correct	Take this letter to the post office.
Fix	Avoid: Take your laptop to class (if you're speaking from the classroom). → Prefer: Bring your laptop to class.

18. Come and go

Rule	come = towards the speaker/where the speaker is; go = away.
Avoid	Using come when the movement is away from the speaker.
Prefer	Choose based on point of view.

Examples

Correct	Are you coming to the party?
Correct	I'm going to the party now.

19. Do and make

Rule	do = activities/tasks; make = create/produce or cause.
Avoid	<i>make homework.</i>
Prefer	do homework; make a decision / make a mistake / make money.

Examples

Correct	I need to do my homework.
Correct	Let's make a plan.
Fix	Avoid: I made my homework. → Prefer: I did my homework.

20. Say / tell / speak / talk

Rule	say + (something); tell + (someone) + (something). Speak/talk often use to/with .
Avoid	<i>tell something</i> without a person when the listener matters.
Prefer	say for words; tell for information to someone.

Examples

Correct	She said she was tired.
Correct	She told me she was tired.
Correct	Can I speak to the manager?
Correct	We talked about the problem.

Prepositions & time/place expressions (21–40)

21. At / on / in (time)

Rule	at + clock times; on + days/dates; in + months/years/long periods.
Avoid	Mixing these time prepositions.
Prefer	at 7, on Monday, in July.

Examples

Correct	The lesson starts at 9:00.
Correct	I work on Fridays.
Correct	She was born in 2001.

22. At / in / on (place)

Rule	at = a point/event; in = inside an area; on = on a surface or along a line (streets/floors).
Avoid	Using in when you mean a point/event.
Prefer	at the bus stop / at a meeting, in London, on the wall.

Examples

Correct	I'll meet you at the station.
Correct	She lives in Berlin.
Correct	The photo is on the wall.

23. In and into

Rule	in = position; into = movement (entering).
Avoid	Using in for movement.
Prefer	into when something changes position to the inside.

Examples

Correct	The keys are in my bag.
Correct	I put the keys into my bag.
Fix	Avoid: I put the keys in my bag. (movement) → Prefer: I put the keys into my bag. (more precise)

24. On and onto

Rule	on = position; onto = movement to a surface (often optional in modern English).
Avoid	Using on when the movement needs to be clear.
Prefer	onto when you want to highlight movement.

Examples

Correct	The book is on the table.
Correct	He jumped onto the table.

25. By and until

Rule	by = no later than a deadline; until = up to that time (continuation).
Avoid	Using until when you mean a deadline.
Prefer	by for deadlines; until for duration.

Examples

Correct	Please send it by Friday. (deadline)
Correct	I'll wait until Friday. (continuation)

26. During / for / while

Rule	during + noun; for + length of time; while + clause.
Avoid	during + clause.
Prefer	Use the right structure.

Examples

Correct	I slept during the flight.
Correct	I slept for two hours.
Correct	I slept while we were travelling.
Fix	Avoid: I slept during we were travelling. → Prefer: I slept while we were travelling.

27. Since and for (with the present perfect)

Rule	Use since + starting point; for + duration (often with present perfect).
Avoid	Mixing since and for .
Prefer	since 2019 / for three years .

Examples

Correct	I've lived here since 2019.
Correct	I've lived here for three years.
Fix	Avoid: I've lived here since three years. → Prefer: I've lived here for three years.

28. From ... to / between ... and

Rule	Use from ... to ... or between ... and ... (not <i>between ... to ...</i>).
Avoid	between X to Y
Prefer	between X and Y

Examples

Correct	The shop is open from 9 to 6.
Correct	The shop is open between 9 and 6.
Fix	Avoid: between 9 to 6 → Prefer: between 9 and 6

29. In time and on time

Rule	on time = punctual; in time = early enough (before it's too late).
Avoid	Confusing punctuality with "early enough".
Prefer	Choose the phrase that matches the situation.

Examples

Correct	The train arrived on time.
Correct	We arrived in time to catch the train.

30. By the time and until

Rule	by the time + clause sets a deadline; until shows continuation up to a point.
Avoid	Using until where the meaning is "deadline/result already happened".
Prefer	by the time for "before X happens".

Examples

Correct	By the time we arrived, the film had started.
Correct	Wait here until I come back.

31. Last / for the last / in the last

Rule	Use last week/month/year (no <i>for</i>). Use for the last ... or in the last ... for a period up to now.
Avoid	for last week (when you mean “last week”).
Prefer	last + time period; for the last / in the last + period.

Examples

Correct	I saw her last week.
Correct	I’ve been very busy for the last two weeks / in the last two weeks.
Fix	Avoid: I saw her for last week. → Prefer: I saw her last week.

32. Next / this / last (no “in”)

Rule	Say next week / this year / last month (not <i>in next week</i>).
Avoid	in next week / in last year
Prefer	Use next/this/last directly.

Examples

Correct	I’ll call you next week.
Fix	Avoid: I’ll call you in next week. → Prefer: I’ll call you next week.

33. In the morning, in the evening, at night

Rule	Use in with morning/afternoon/evening; use at with night.
Avoid	in night in general statements.
Prefer	at night.

Examples

Correct	I study in the evening.
Correct	I don’t like driving at night.

34. At the weekend / on the weekend

Rule	BrE: <i>at the weekend</i> ; AmE: <i>on the weekend</i> . Both are correct.
Avoid	Mixing varieties in the same text.
Prefer	Choose one variety and stay consistent.

Examples

Correct	(BrE) I'll see you at the weekend.
Correct	(AmE) I'll see you on the weekend.

35. At last and finally

Rule	at last = after a long delay (often relief); finally = last in a sequence / at the end of a process.
Avoid	Using at last just to list the last point (without the "long delay" meaning).
Prefer	finally for sequences; at last for "after waiting".

Examples

Correct	At last, the bus arrived!
Correct	Finally, I'd like to thank my teachers.

36. When / while / as (time)

Rule	when = point in time; while = longer background action; as = "at the same time" (often gradual).
Avoid	Overusing when for long background actions.
Prefer	while for background actions.

Examples

Correct	When I arrived, she opened the door.
Correct	While I was cooking, he set the table.
Correct	As I was walking home, it started to rain.

37. Since (time) vs because (reason)

Rule	since can mean “from a time” or “because”. In learner writing, because is clearer for reasons.
Avoid	since when it could be understood as time.
Prefer	because for reasons (especially in exams).

Examples

Correct	I’ve known her since 2018. (time)
Correct	Because it was late, we went home.
Fix	Avoid: Since it was late, we went home. (can be unclear) → Prefer: Because it was late, we went home.

38. After and afterwards

Rule	after is a preposition/conjunction; afterwards is an adverb.
Avoid	Using afterwards directly before a noun.
Prefer	after + noun/clause ; afterwards alone.

Examples

Correct	After the meeting, I went home.
Correct	I went home afterwards.
Fix	Avoid: Afterwards the meeting, I went home. → Prefer: After the meeting, I went home.

39. Before + -ing / before + clause

Rule	Use before + -ing or before + subject + verb .
Avoid	before to + verb
Prefer	before doing / before I do/did

Examples

Correct	Wash your hands before eating.
Correct	Call me before you leave.
Fix	Avoid: before to eat → Prefer: before eating

40. Until / till / 'til (and spelling)

Rule	until and till mean the same. 'til is informal. The correct spelling is until (one L).
Avoid	untill
Prefer	until (standard spelling).

Examples

Correct	We're open until 6.
Fix	Avoid: untill 6 → Prefer: until 6

Articles & determiners (41–55)

41. A vs an (sound, not spelling)

Rule	Use an before a vowel <i>sound</i> ; use a before a consonant <i>sound</i> .
Avoid	Choosing based only on the first letter.
Prefer	Listen to the sound: <i>an hour, a university</i> .

Examples

Correct	an hour (silent "h")
Correct	a university ("you" sound)
Correct	an umbrella

42. A/an vs the (first mention vs known)

Rule	Use a/an for something new/not specific; use the for something known/specific.
Avoid	Using the the first time you mention something (when it's not specific).
Prefer	Start with a/an , then switch to the .

Examples

Correct	I bought a jacket. The jacket was expensive.
Fix	Avoid: I bought the jacket. (first mention; unclear) → Prefer: I bought a jacket.

43. The for specific things (not general)

Rule	Use the when you mean a specific thing; don't use the for general ideas.
Avoid	The life is... / The people are... when speaking generally.
Prefer	Zero article for general meaning.

Examples

Correct	Life is unpredictable. (general)
Correct	The life of a pilot can be stressful. (specific)
Fix	Avoid: The life is unpredictable. → Prefer: Life is unpredictable.

44. Zero article with plural/uncountable general nouns

Rule	For general statements, use plural (countable) or uncountable with no article .
Avoid	Adding a/an to uncountable nouns.
Prefer	Dogs are... / Water is...

Examples

Correct	Dogs are loyal animals.
Correct	Water is essential for life.
Fix	Avoid: An information is important. → Prefer: Information is important.

45. The with superlatives and ordinals

Rule	Use the with superlatives and ordinal numbers (<i>the best, the first</i>).
Avoid	Leaving out the in these common patterns.
Prefer	the + superlative/ordinal

Examples

Correct	She is the best player on the team.
Correct	This is the first time I've been here.
Fix	Avoid: She is best player. → Prefer: She is the best player.

46. The with countries and regions

Rule	Most country names have no article (<i>France, Japan</i>). Use the with plural names or “of” phrases (<i>the United States, the United Kingdom</i>).
Avoid	the with single country names.
Prefer	Learn common “the” country names.

Examples

Correct	I live in Canada.
Correct	I live in the United States.
Fix	Avoid: I live in the Canada. → Prefer: I live in Canada.

47. The with rivers, seas, deserts, mountain ranges

Rule	Use the with rivers, seas/oceans, deserts, and mountain ranges.
Avoid	Missing the with these place types.
Prefer	the Nile / the Alps / the Sahara

Examples

Correct	The Nile is in Africa.
Correct	We sailed across the Atlantic.
Correct	They climbed the Alps.

48. School / hospital / prison (institution vs building)

Rule	Without the , these often mean the institution/purpose. With the , you mean a specific building.
Avoid	Adding the when you mean the general activity/purpose.
Prefer	go to school (study) vs go to the school (building).

Examples

Correct	She goes to school every day. (student)
Correct	I went to the school to speak to the teacher. (building)
Correct	(BrE) He’s in hospital.
Correct	(AmE) He’s in the hospital.

49. A vs one

Rule	a/an introduces something; one emphasizes “one (not two)” or contrasts.
Avoid	Overusing one when you just mean “a”.
Prefer	Use one only for emphasis/contrast.

Examples

Correct	I need a pen. (any pen)
Correct	I need one pen, not two. (contrast)
Fix	Avoid: I bought one new jacket. (no contrast) → Prefer: I bought a new jacket.

50. This/that/these/those

Rule	this/these = near/now; that/those = far/then/previously mentioned.
Avoid	Using this for something far away.
Prefer	Choose based on distance/time/reference.

Examples

Correct	This book here is mine.
Correct	That house over there is beautiful.
Correct	Those were good times.

51. Each and every

Rule	each focuses on individuals; every focuses on the whole group (often similar meaning).
Avoid	Using each when you mean “all together” (general habit).
Prefer	every for general habits; each for individual focus.

Examples

Correct	I check my email every day.
Correct	Each student received a certificate.

52. Either and neither

Rule	either = one of two; neither = not one and not the other. Often followed by singular verb in formal writing.
Avoid	neither of them are (common, but not ideal for formal learner writing).
Prefer	neither of them is (formal) / keep the structure consistent.

Examples

Correct	Either option is fine.
Correct	Neither answer is correct.
Fix	Avoid: Neither of them are ready. → Prefer: Neither of them is ready.

53. Both and all

Rule	Use both for two; use all for three or more.
Avoid	Using both for three+ items.
Prefer	both (2) / all (3+).

Examples

Correct	Both cars are expensive.
Correct	All three cars are expensive.
Fix	Avoid: Both three cars are expensive. → Prefer: All three cars are expensive.

54. Few / a few; little / a little

Rule	few/little = almost none (negative meaning); a few/a little = some (positive meaning).
Avoid	Confusing the positive and negative meanings.
Prefer	Choose based on whether "some" is enough.

Examples

Correct	I have a few friends here. (some)
Correct	I have few friends here. (not many; sad/negative)
Correct	There is a little milk left. (some)
Correct	There is little milk left. (almost none)

55. Much / many / a lot of

Rule	many + countable plural; much + uncountable. A lot of works with both and is common in speech.
Avoid	Overusing much in affirmative sentences (it sounds formal/unnatural).
Prefer	a lot of (neutral) or many/much where natural.

Examples

Correct	Many people agree.
Correct	Much time is needed. (formal)
Correct	I have a lot of homework.
Fix	Avoid: I have much homework. → Prefer: I have a lot of homework.

Countability & agreement (56–65)

56. Information / advice / news (uncountable)

Rule	These nouns are usually uncountable in English.
Avoid	an information / advices / a news
Prefer	some information/advice/news or a piece of ...

Examples

Correct	I got some useful advice.
Correct	Here's a piece of information you need.
Fix	Avoid: She gave me an advice. → Prefer: She gave me some advice.

57. Furniture / equipment / luggage (uncountable)

Rule	These are usually uncountable .
Avoid	furnitures / equipments / luggages
Prefer	a piece/item of furniture, some equipment, a bag/suitcase.

Examples

Correct	We bought some new furniture.
Correct	I have two pieces of luggage.
Fix	Avoid: The hotel has modern furnitures. → Prefer: The hotel has modern furniture.

58. Work and job

Rule	work is usually uncountable; job is countable.
Avoid	a work (when you mean employment).
Prefer	work (general) / a job (one position).

Examples

Correct	I have a job in marketing.
Correct	I have a lot of work today.
Fix	Avoid: I have a new work. → Prefer: I have a new job.

59. Person and people

Rule	people is the plural of person in everyday English.
Avoid	peoples (unless you mean different nations/ethnic groups).
Prefer	people for “persons” in general.

Examples

Correct	Two people are waiting outside.
Fix	Avoid: Two persons are waiting outside. (formal/legal) → Prefer: Two people are waiting outside.

60. One of + plural

Rule	After one of , use a plural noun ; the verb is usually singular .
Avoid	one of the student
Prefer	one of the students is...

Examples

Correct	One of the students is absent.
Fix	Avoid: One of the student is absent. → Prefer: One of the students is absent.

61. Police / staff / people (agreement)

Rule	police is plural (no singular <i>a police</i>). staff can be singular or plural depending on meaning/variety.
Avoid	The police is...
Prefer	The police are...

Examples

Correct	The police are investigating the case.
Correct	(BrE) Our staff are friendly.
Correct	(AmE) Our staff is friendly. (common singular collective)

62. There is / there are

Rule	Match there is/are to the noun after it (especially the first noun in a list).
Avoid	There is with a clearly plural noun.
Prefer	There are with plural; There is with singular/uncountable.

Examples

Correct	There is a problem.
Correct	There are two problems.
Fix	Avoid: There is many reasons. → Prefer: There are many reasons.

63. Collective nouns (team, family, government)

Rule	In BrE , collective nouns can be singular or plural; in AmE , they're usually singular. Consistency matters more than the choice.
Avoid	Switching singular/plural within one text.
Prefer	Pick one style and keep it.

Examples

Correct	The team is winning. (AmE/neutral)
Correct	The team are winning. (BrE; team as individuals)
Correct	The team is winning; it is playing well. (consistent)

64. A number of / the number of

Rule	a number of = several (plural verb); the number of = the quantity (singular verb).
Avoid	Using the wrong verb form.
Prefer	a number of + plural verb / the number of + singular verb.

Examples

Correct	A number of students are absent today.
Correct	The number of students is increasing.
Fix	Avoid: The number of students are increasing. → Prefer: The number of students is increasing.

65. Nouns ending in -s (singular vs plural)

Rule	Some nouns ending in -s are singular (<i>news, mathematics, politics</i>). Some are plural-only (<i>clothes, scissors</i>).
Avoid	Using the wrong verb form.
Prefer	Learn the common patterns.

Examples

Correct	The news is shocking.
Correct	Mathematics is difficult for some students.
Correct	These trousers are new.
Fix	Avoid: The news are shocking. → Prefer: The news is shocking.

Adjectives, adverbs & comparison (66–82)

66. Good and well

Rule	good is an adjective; well is an adverb (and an adjective meaning “healthy”).
Avoid	She sings good.
Prefer	She sings well (adverb).

Examples

Correct	She's a good singer.
Correct	She sings well.
Correct	I'm well, thanks. (healthy)
Fix	Avoid: She sings good. → Prefer: She sings well.

67. Hard and hardly

Rule	hard = with effort; hardly = almost not.
Avoid	Using hardly when you mean "a lot".
Prefer	hard for effort; hardly for "almost not".

Examples

Correct	I worked hard this week.
Correct	I hardly slept. (almost not)
Fix	Avoid: I worked hardly. → Prefer: I worked hard.

68. Late and lately

Rule	late = not on time; lately = recently.
Avoid	Using lately to mean "not on time".
Prefer	late (timing) / lately (recently).

Examples

Correct	Sorry I'm late.
Correct	I've been busy lately.
Fix	Avoid: Sorry I'm lately. → Prefer: Sorry I'm late.

69. Near and nearly

Rule	near = close; nearly = almost.
Avoid	Confusing "close" with "almost".
Prefer	Use near for distance; nearly for "almost".

Examples

Correct	I live near the station.
Correct	I'm nearly finished. (almost)
Fix	Avoid: I'm near finished. → Prefer: I'm nearly finished.

70. Adverbs without -ly (fast, early, late)

Rule	Some common adverbs don't end in -ly (e.g., <i>fast, early, late</i>).
Avoid	<i>fastly</i> (not standard).
Prefer	Use the standard adverb form.

Examples

Correct	He drives fast.
Correct	I arrived early.
Fix	Avoid: He drives fastly. → Prefer: He drives fast.

71. Comparatives and superlatives (basic)

Rule	Use -er/-est for many short adjectives; use more/most for many longer adjectives. Learn irregular forms (<i>good</i> → <i>better</i> → <i>best</i>).
Avoid	more better / most happiest
Prefer	One comparative marker only.

Examples

Correct	This test is harder than the last one.
Correct	This solution is more effective.
Fix	Avoid: more better → Prefer: better
Fix	Avoid: the most happiest → Prefer: the happiest

72. Than and then

Rule	than is for comparisons; then is for time/sequence.
Avoid	Mixing the spellings.
Prefer	than (comparison) / then (time).

Examples

Correct	She is taller than me.
Correct	We ate dinner, then we watched a film.
Fix	Avoid: taller then me → Prefer: taller than me

73. As ... as (comparisons)

Rule	Use as + adjective/adverb + as for equality.
Avoid	so ... as in positive statements (it's mainly used in negatives/formal style).
Prefer	as ... as (neutral).

Examples

Correct	This phone is as good as the other one.
Correct	It isn't as expensive as I expected.

74. Too and very

Rule	very = strong degree; too = more than needed / a problem.
Avoid	Using too when you simply mean "very".
Prefer	Use too when there is a negative result.

Examples

Correct	It's very hot today. (no problem implied)
Correct	It's too hot to work. (problem/result)
Fix	Avoid: It's too beautiful! (meaning "very") → Prefer: It's so beautiful! / It's very beautiful!

75. Enough (position)

Rule	adjective/adverb + enough; enough + noun.
Avoid	enough strong / enough quickly
Prefer	strong enough / quickly enough

Examples

Correct	He isn't old enough to drive.
Correct	We have enough time.
Fix	Avoid: He isn't enough strong. → Prefer: He isn't strong enough.

76. So and such

Rule	so + adjective/adverb; such + (a/an) + adjective + noun.
Avoid	so a with a noun.
Prefer	such a + adjective + noun

Examples

Correct	It was so cold.
Correct	It was such a cold day.
Fix	Avoid: It was so a cold day. → Prefer: It was such a cold day.

77. Much too / too much / too many

Rule	much too + adjective; too much + uncountable noun; too many + countable plural noun.
Avoid	too much people / much too money
Prefer	Match the phrase to the noun/type.

Examples

Correct	This bag is much too heavy.
Correct	There's too much noise.
Correct	There are too many people.
Fix	Avoid: too much people → Prefer: too many people

78. Less and fewer

Rule	less + uncountable; fewer + countable plural.
Avoid	less people in careful writing.
Prefer	fewer people

Examples

Correct	I drink less coffee now.
Correct	There are fewer cars on the road.
Fix	Avoid: less people → Prefer: fewer people

79. Older/oldest vs elder/eldest

Rule	older/oldest is general. elder/eldest is mainly for family relationships and is more formal.
Avoid	Using elder for things or general comparisons.
Prefer	Use older unless you mean family position.

Examples

Correct	My sister is older than me.
Correct	My elder brother lives abroad. (family; formal)
Fix	Avoid: This phone is elder than that one. → Prefer: This phone is older than that one.

80. Farther and further

Rule	farther = physical distance; further = additional/more (and can also be distance in modern usage).
Avoid	Using farther when you mean “more/additional”.
Prefer	further information / further questions

Examples

Correct	The hotel is farther/further than I thought. (distance; both common)
Correct	For further information, email us.
Fix	Avoid: For farther information ... → Prefer: For further information ...

81. Different from / to / than

Rule	different from is widely accepted. different to is common in BrE; different than is common in AmE.
Avoid	Mixing varieties in the same text.
Prefer	different from (safe international choice).

Examples

Correct	This plan is different from the original.
Correct	(BrE) different to
Correct	(AmE) different than

82. The same as / similar to

Rule	Use the same as and similar to (not <i>similar as</i>).
Avoid	similar as
Prefer	similar to

Examples

Correct	My answer is the same as yours.
Correct	This design is similar to the old one.
Fix	Avoid: similar as → Prefer: similar to

Verb forms & tenses (83–100)

83. Present simple vs present continuous

Rule	Present simple = habits/facts; present continuous = now/temporary arrangements.
Avoid	Using present continuous for permanent facts.
Prefer	Use present simple for facts/habits.

Examples

Correct	I work in finance. (permanent)
Correct	I'm working from home this week. (temporary)
Fix	Avoid: I'm working in finance. (if permanent) → Prefer: I work in finance.

84. Stative verbs (know, like, believe)

Rule	Stative verbs usually describe states, not actions, so they are not often used in continuous forms (with some exceptions).
Avoid	I'm knowing / I'm liking (in standard learner writing).
Prefer	I know / I like

Examples

Correct	I know the answer.
Correct	I like this song.
Fix	Avoid: I'm knowing the answer. → Prefer: I know the answer.

85. Present perfect vs past simple

Rule	Use present perfect for life experience/unfinished time; use past simple for finished time (yesterday, last year).
Avoid	Present perfect with a finished past time expression.
Prefer	I've been (experience) / I went (finished time).

Examples

Correct	I've been to Spain. (experience)
Correct	I went to Spain last summer. (finished time)
Fix	Avoid: I've been to Spain last summer. → Prefer: I went to Spain last summer.

86. "Today/this week/so far" (finished vs unfinished time)

Rule	If the time period is still continuing, present perfect is possible; if it's finished, use past simple.
Avoid	Using past simple when the focus is "up to now".
Prefer	Present perfect with so far / this week / today (when still ongoing).

Examples

Correct	I've had three meetings today. (still today)
Correct	I had three meetings yesterday. (finished)
Correct	So far, we've raised \$500.

87. Present perfect simple vs continuous

Rule	Use present perfect continuous for actions continuing recently/with visible effort; use present perfect simple for results/completed actions.
Avoid	Using the simple form when the focus is the activity duration.
Prefer	Continuous for ongoing/recent activity; simple for result.

Examples

Correct	I've been studying for two hours. (activity/duration)
Correct	I've finished my homework. (result)

88. Past simple vs past continuous

Rule	Past continuous gives background; past simple gives the main event.
Avoid	Using past simple for the background action when you want to set the scene.
Prefer	was/were + -ing for background.

Examples

Correct	I was cooking when the phone rang.
Correct	While we were walking, it started to rain.

89. Past perfect (the earlier past)

Rule	Use past perfect for an action that happened <i>before</i> another past action.
Avoid	Using past simple for the earlier action when the order is unclear.
Prefer	had + past participle for the earlier past.

Examples

Correct	When I arrived, she had already left.
Fix	Avoid: When I arrived, she already left. → Prefer: When I arrived, she had already left.

90. Used to vs would (past habits)

Rule	used to describes past habits and states; would describes repeated past actions (not states).
Avoid	would with state verbs (<i>would know, would like</i>) when you mean a past state.
Prefer	used to for states.

Examples

Correct	I used to live in Rome. (state)
Correct	On Sundays, we would visit my grandparents. (repeated action)
Fix	Avoid: I would live in Rome. → Prefer: I used to live in Rome.

91. Be used to (accustomed to)

Rule	be used to + noun/-ing = “be accustomed to” (not a past habit).
Avoid	Confusing used to do with be used to doing .
Prefer	used to + verb (past habit) vs be used to + -ing (accustomed).

Examples

Correct	I used to wake up early. (past habit)
Correct	I’m used to waking up early. (accustomed now)

92. Get used to (become accustomed)

Rule	get used to means “become accustomed”. Use noun/-ing after to .
Avoid	get used to do
Prefer	get used to doing

Examples

Correct	You’ll get used to driving on the left.
Fix	Avoid: get used to drive → Prefer: get used to driving

93. Will vs going to (future)

Rule	Use going to for plans/intentions and predictions with evidence; use will for instant decisions and general predictions.
Avoid	Using will for a clear plan already decided.
Prefer	going to for plans.

Examples

Correct	I’m going to visit my aunt this weekend. (plan)
Correct	I think it will rain tomorrow. (prediction)
Correct	I’ll answer the phone! (instant decision)

94. Present continuous for arrangements

Rule	Use present continuous for fixed plans/arrangements (often with time/place).
Avoid	Using will for fixed arrangements when a schedule/plan is already set.
Prefer	I'm meeting / I'm flying for arrangements.

Examples

Correct	I'm meeting John at 6.
Correct	We're flying to Madrid on Friday.

95. Future time clauses (no "will")

Rule	After when/after/before/as soon as/if , use the present tense for future meaning (not <i>will</i>).
Avoid	When I will arrive...
Prefer	When I arrive...

Examples

Correct	When I arrive, I'll call you.
Correct	If it rains, we'll stay home.
Fix	Avoid: When I will arrive, I'll call you. → Prefer: When I arrive, I'll call you.

96. Verb patterns: -ing vs to + verb (common)

Rule	Some verbs take -ing (enjoy, avoid, consider); others take to + verb (decide, want, need).
Avoid	Mixing patterns (<i>enjoy to...</i>).
Prefer	Learn common verb patterns in chunks.

Examples

Correct	I enjoy reading.
Correct	I decided to leave early.
Fix	Avoid: I enjoy to read. → Prefer: I enjoy reading.

97. Stop doing vs stop to do

Rule	stop doing = stop the activity; stop to do = stop in order to do something else.
Avoid	Confusing the meanings.
Prefer	Choose the pattern based on meaning.

Examples

Correct	He stopped smoking. (quit the habit)
Correct	He stopped to smoke. (stopped walking/driving to smoke)

98. Remember/forget doing vs to do

Rule	remember/forget to do = remember/forget an action you need to do; remember doing = remember a past memory.
Avoid	Using the wrong form for the meaning.
Prefer	to do (task) vs doing (memory).

Examples

Correct	Remember to lock the door. (task)
Correct	I remember meeting her in 2019. (memory)
Fix	Avoid: I remember to meet her in 2019. → Prefer: I remember meeting her in 2019.

99. Try doing vs try to do

Rule	try to do = attempt; try doing = experiment with a method.
Avoid	Using try to when you mean “experiment with”.
Prefer	try doing for suggestions/solutions.

Examples

Correct	I tried to open the window, but it was stuck. (attempt)
Correct	Try restarting your phone. (method)

100. Passive voice (be + past participle)

Rule	Use the passive when the action/result is more important than the doer: be + past participle .
Avoid	Missing be (<i>The window broken</i>).
Prefer	is/was/were + past participle (and add by... if needed).

Examples

Correct	The window was broken last night.
Correct	My bike was stolen. (doer unknown/unimportant)
Fix	Avoid: The window broken last night. → Prefer: The window was broken last night.

Modals & conditionals (101–115)

101. Must and have to

Rule	Both express obligation. Must can sound stronger/more personal; have to often sounds more neutral/external.
Avoid	Overusing must in everyday requests (it can sound too strong).
Prefer	have to (neutral obligation), must (strong rule/necessity).

Examples

Correct	I have to get up early tomorrow. (neutral)
Correct	You must wear a seatbelt. (rule)

102. Mustn't vs don't have to

Rule	mustn't = prohibited; don't have to = not necessary.
Avoid	Using mustn't when you mean "no need".
Prefer	don't have to for "optional/no necessity".

Examples

Correct	You mustn't park here. (not allowed)
Correct	You don't have to come early. (optional)
Fix	Avoid: You mustn't come early. (meaning "optional") → Prefer: You don't have to come early.

103. Can / could / may (permission)

Rule	can = common and informal; could = more polite; may = formal.
Avoid	Using may in very casual conversation if you want a natural tone (it can sound overly formal).
Prefer	Could you...? for polite requests.

Examples

Correct	Can I open the window?
Correct	Could I ask a question?
Correct	May I speak to Mr Jones? (formal)

104. Could vs was able to (past ability)

Rule	could = general past ability; was/were able to often fits a single successful action.
Avoid	Using could for one specific successful event when you want to emphasize success.
Prefer	was able to for a one-time achievement.

Examples

Correct	When I was young, I could run fast. (general ability)
Correct	I was able to fix the problem yesterday. (one successful event)
Example	(Also possible in some contexts: I could finally fix it. — but “was able to” is safer for learners.)

105. Should / ought to / had better

Rule	should/ought to = advice; had better = strong advice/warning (often implies consequences).
Avoid	Using had better when you only mean light advice.
Prefer	should for neutral advice.

Examples

Correct	You should see a doctor.
Correct	You'd better leave now, or you'll miss the train. (warning)

106. Needn't / don't need to

Rule	Both mean "not necessary". needn't is more common in BrE and slightly more formal.
Avoid	mustn't when you mean "not necessary" (see point 102).
Prefer	don't need to (neutral/international).

Examples

Correct	You don't need to bring anything.
Correct	You needn't worry. (BrE/formal)

107. Might / may / could (possibility)

Rule	All can express possibility. might often feels less certain; could suggests a possible option.
Avoid	Treating might as "past of may" only (it often isn't).
Prefer	Choose one and keep the meaning consistent.

Examples

Correct	It might rain later. (possible)
Correct	We could go by train. (one option)

108. Would (polite requests & hypothetical)

Rule	Use would for polite requests and hypothetical situations.
Avoid	Using will you... when you want to sound more polite (it can sound too direct).
Prefer	Would you...?

Examples

Correct	Would you mind closing the door?
Correct	I would help if I had more time.

109. First conditional (real future)

Rule	If + present, will/can + verb for real possible future situations.
Avoid	If + will (in most cases).
Prefer	If I see... I'll...

Examples

Correct	If it rains, we'll stay inside.
Fix	Avoid: If it will rain, we'll stay inside. → Prefer: If it rains, we'll stay inside.

110. Second conditional (unreal present/future)

Rule	If + past, would + verb for unreal/imagined situations now or in the future.
Avoid	Using will for clearly unreal situations.
Prefer	If I were... I would... (formal) / If I was... (informal; "were" is safer for learners).

Examples

Correct	If I had more money, I would travel more.
Correct	If I were you, I would apologize.

111. Third conditional (unreal past)

Rule	If + past perfect, would have + past participle for unreal past situations.
Avoid	Mixing the verb forms.
Prefer	If I had known... I would have...

Examples

Correct	If I had known, I would have called you.
Fix	Avoid: If I would have known... → Prefer: If I had known...

112. Unless

Rule	unless = "if not".
Avoid	Double negatives (<i>unless you don't...</i>) when you mean a simple condition.
Prefer	Keep it simple: unless + positive verb.

Examples

Correct	I won't go unless you come with me. (= if you don't come, I won't go)
Fix	Avoid: I won't go unless you don't come. → Prefer: I won't go unless you come.

113. Wish / if only

Rule	wish + past for a present unreal situation; wish + past perfect for regret about the past.
Avoid	Using present tense after wish for unreal meaning.
Prefer	Past forms after wish .

Examples

Correct	I wish I knew the answer. (now)
Correct	I wish I had studied more. (past regret)
Fix	Avoid: I wish I know the answer. → Prefer: I wish I knew the answer.

114. Would rather

Rule	would rather + base verb ; would rather (that) + past for someone else.
Avoid	would rather to...
Prefer	would rather do

Examples

Correct	I'd rather stay home tonight.
Correct	I'd rather you didn't tell anyone. (someone else)

115. In case

Rule	in case = as a precaution (not the same as "if").
Avoid	Using in case when you mean a real condition.
Prefer	if for conditions; in case for precautions.

Examples

Correct	Take an umbrella in case it rains. (precaution)
Correct	If it rains, we'll cancel the picnic. (condition)

Sentence structure & clarity (116–120)

116. Relative pronouns: who / which / that / where

Rule	Use who for people, which for things, where for places. That can replace who/which in defining clauses.
Avoid	Using which for people in standard writing.
Prefer	who for people.

Examples

Correct	The woman who called you is my manager.
Correct	The book that I bought is expensive.
Correct	The café where we met is closed now.
Fix	Avoid: The woman which called you... → Prefer: The woman who called you...

117. Defining vs non-defining relative clauses (commas)

Rule	Defining clauses give essential information (no commas). Non-defining clauses add extra information (use commas).
Avoid	Missing commas in non-defining clauses.
Prefer	Add commas for extra information; don't use that in non-defining clauses.

Examples

Correct	The man who lives next door is a doctor. (defining: which man?)
Correct	My brother, who lives in Canada, is a doctor. (non-defining: extra info)
Fix	Avoid: My brother who lives in Canada is a doctor. (implies I have more than one brother) → Prefer: My brother, who lives in Canada, ...

118. Prepositions in relative clauses

Rule	In everyday English, the preposition usually comes at the end: the person (who) I spoke to . In formal English: to whom I spoke .
Avoid	Unnatural word order (<i>to who I spoke</i>) in standard writing.
Prefer	End-position preposition for neutral style.

Examples

Correct	That's the colleague (who) I spoke to yesterday.
Correct	(formal) That's the colleague to whom I spoke yesterday.
Fix	Avoid: That's the colleague to who I spoke yesterday. → Prefer: That's the colleague who I spoke to yesterday.

119. Parallel structures (either...or / neither...nor / not only...but also)

Rule	Keep grammar parallel: the same structure on both sides of the pair.
Avoid	Mixing verb forms or noun/verb structures.
Prefer	Match the patterns.

Examples

Correct	Either we leave now, or we miss the train.
Correct	She neither called nor texted.
Fix	Avoid: She neither called nor she texted. → Prefer: She neither called nor texted.

120. Apostrophes & common confusions (it's/its, they're/there/their)

Rule	it's = it is; its = possessive. Apostrophes show missing letters or possession (not plurals).
Avoid	it's for possession; apostrophes in plurals (<i>apple's</i>).
Prefer	Check: can you replace it's with it is ?

Examples

Correct	It's raining. (= It is raining.)
Correct	The dog wagged its tail. (possessive)
Fix	Avoid: The dog wagged it's tail. → Prefer: The dog wagged its tail.
Correct	They're here.
Correct	Put it there.
Correct	That's their car.