

GRAMMAR NINJA

**THE TOP 30
GRAMMAR RULES
FOR YEARS 3-5**



Grammar Ninja: The Top 30 Grammar Rules for Years 3–5

Introduction

Welcome, young grammar ninjas! Just like a real ninja needs training and special skills to master the art of stealth and combat, you need to master the rules of grammar to become a powerful communicator.

Grammar is the secret code that helps us share our ideas clearly and correctly.

In Years 3–5, you're ready to move beyond the basics and discover more exciting ways to use language. This book will teach you 30 essential grammar rules that will transform you into a true Grammar Ninja!

Each rule comes with clear explanations, helpful examples, common mistakes to watch out for, and fun activities to practice your new skills. You'll also find special "Ninja Tips" to help you remember these rules more easily.

Remember – a Grammar Ninja is always learning and practicing. The more you use these rules in your reading and writing, the stronger your grammar powers will become!

Let's begin our grammar adventure together!

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Sentence Structure

Rule 1: Using Complete Sentences

A complete sentence (also called a clause) must contain a subject and a verb, and it must make complete sense on its own.

Examples:

The cat sleeps. (Subject: The cat, Verb: sleeps)

Ninjas train every day. (Subject: Ninjas, Verb: train)

My friend and I built a robot. (Subject: My friend and I, Verb: built)

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Running in the playground. (This is a fragment – it has a verb but no subject)

Incorrect: The tall tree. (This is a fragment – it has a subject but no verb)

Correct: We were running in the playground.

Correct: The tall tree swayed in the wind.

Ninja Tip

When checking if you have a complete sentence, ask yourself: "Who or what?" (to find the subject) and "What are they doing?" (to find the verb). If you can answer both questions, you probably have a complete sentence!

Practice Activity:

Decide which of these are complete sentences. If they're not complete, add what's missing to make them complete.

1. The big, friendly dog.
2. Swimming in the cold pool.
3. The children played games.
4. After finishing homework.
5. James and Sophie walked to school.

Rule 2: Types of Sentences: Statements, Questions, Commands and Exclamations

There are four different types of sentences, each with its own purpose and punctuation.

Examples:

Statement: The ninja practised his moves every day. (Gives information and ends with a full stop)

Question: Have you seen my ninja stars? (Asks something and ends with a question mark)

Command: Climb the wall quickly! (Tells someone to do something and ends with either a full stop or exclamation mark)

Exclamation: What an amazing ninja you are! (Shows strong emotion and ends with an exclamation mark)

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Can you open the window. (Question with a full stop)

Incorrect: What a beautiful day? (Exclamation with a question mark)

Correct: Can you open the window?

Correct: What a beautiful day!

Ninja Tip

Think about the purpose of your sentence: Are you telling (statement), asking (question), directing (command), or expressing strong feelings (exclamation)? This will help you decide which type of sentence you're writing and which punctuation mark to use.

Practice Activity:

Identify which type of sentence each of the following is, and add the correct punctuation at the end:

1. My favourite colour is blue
2. What time is lunch
3. Put your books away
4. What a brilliant goal that was
5. Please be quiet during the test

Rule 3: Conjunctions to Join Clauses

Conjunctions are joining words that connect parts of sentences. They can join words, phrases, or clauses.

Examples:

Coordinating conjunctions (and, or, but, so):

I like chocolate **and** I like vanilla ice cream.

We can go to the park **or** we can stay home.

She wanted to play outside, **but** it was raining.

It was getting late, **so** we went home.

Subordinating conjunctions (when, if, because, although):

When it rains, we play indoors.

I'll share my toys **if** you share yours.

We had to stay inside **because** it was thundering.

Although it was cold, we still went swimming.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: I like football I play every Saturday. (Missing conjunction)

Incorrect: We went to the shop and. (Conjunction at the end without connecting to anything)

Correct: I like football **and** I play every Saturday.

Correct: We went to the shop **and** bought some sweets.

Ninja Tip

Remember the FANBOYS acronym for coordinating conjunctions: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So. In Years 3-5, you'll mostly use and, but, or, and so.

Practice Activity:

Fill in the blanks with appropriate conjunctions:

1. I wanted to go to the cinema, _____ my brother wanted to go to the park.
2. _____ it snows tomorrow, we can build a snowman.
3. I forgot my umbrella, _____ I got wet in the rain.
4. We can eat pizza _____ we can have pasta for dinner.
5. _____ she was tired, she finished her homework.

Rule 4: Using Main and Subordinate Clauses

A main clause makes sense on its own and can be a complete sentence. A subordinate clause adds extra information but doesn't make sense by itself.

Examples:

Main clause: The ninja trained hard.

Subordinate clause + Main clause: Although it was raining, the ninja trained hard.

Main clause + Subordinate clause: The ninja trained hard even though he was tired.

Main clause + Subordinate clause + Main clause: The ninja, who was wearing a black mask, trained hard.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Although it was raining. (This is a subordinate clause on its own)

Incorrect: The ninja who was training. (This is not a complete sentence)

Correct: Although it was raining, we still went to the park.

Correct: The ninja who was training mastered a new skill.

Ninja Tip

A subordinate clause often begins with a subordinating conjunction like 'because', 'when', 'if', 'although', or a relative pronoun like 'who', 'which', or 'that'. If you remove the main clause and are left with something that doesn't make sense on its own, that's a subordinate clause!

Practice Activity:

Underline the main clause and circle the subordinate clause in each sentence:

1. When the bell rang, we all went inside.
2. The film, which we watched yesterday, was amazing.
3. I finished my homework because I wanted to play outside.
4. Although it was sunny, we took our umbrellas.
5. The dog barked loudly when someone knocked on the door.

Rule 5: Creating Complex Sentences

Complex sentences contain a main clause and at least one subordinate clause. They help us express more complicated ideas and show relationships between different parts of information.

Examples:

Complex sentence with a subordinate clause at the beginning: When the sun set, the ninjas began their training.

Complex sentence with a subordinate clause in the middle: The ninja, who had been practising for years, could climb any wall.

Complex sentence with a subordinate clause at the end: We had to be very quiet because we didn't want to wake the baby.

Complex sentence with multiple subordinate clauses: Although it was late, the children stayed up because they wanted to finish the movie that they had started.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Because it was raining. We stayed inside. (First part is a fragment)

Incorrect: My friend who lives next door. Is coming to my party. (Incorrect sentence division)

Correct: Because it was raining, we stayed inside.

Correct: My friend, who lives next door, is coming to my party.

Ninja Tip

Think of a complex sentence like a ninja team: the main clause is the leader who can work alone, while the subordinate clauses are the helpers who need the leader to make sense!

Practice Activity:

Create complex sentences by combining each pair of simple sentences using the conjunction in brackets:

1. I couldn't sleep. There was a loud noise outside. (because)
2. We went to the park. It started to rain. (when)
3. My brother loves chocolate. I prefer vanilla. (while)
4. Ravi completed his homework. He wanted to play with his friends. (before)
5. The book was interesting. I had read it before. (although)

Punctuation

Rule 6: Capital Letters and Full Stops

Capital letters are used at the beginning of sentences and for proper nouns. Full stops (.) mark the end of statements and commands.

Examples:

Beginning of sentences: The ninja walked silently.

Proper nouns: London, Monday, July, Mr Parker, The River Thames

The pronoun 'I': I am learning to be a grammar ninja.

Full stops: The cat sat on the mat. She was very fluffy.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: my friend sam lives in london.

Incorrect: The dog ran after the ball It was very excited.

Correct: My friend Sam lives in London.

Correct: The dog ran after the ball. It was very excited.

Ninja Tip

Remember the CAPS rule: Capitals for the start of sentences, All names of people and places, Pronoun I, Special days and months!

Practice Activity:

Rewrite these sentences with the correct capital letters and full stops:

1. on monday i am going to visit my cousin in birmingham
2. miss jones is my teacher she teaches us maths and english
3. the titanic sank in april 1912
4. my favourite subjects are history science and art
5. when i grow up i want to be a doctor like dr patel

Rule 7: Question Marks and Exclamation Marks

Question marks (?) are used at the end of questions. Exclamation marks (!) are used to show strong emotion, emphasis, or commands.

Examples:

Questions: Where are you going? What time is it? Have you finished your homework?

Exclamations: What a beautiful sunset! That was amazing! Look out!

Commands with emphasis: Stop that right now! Hurry up! Be careful!

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Where did you go.

Incorrect: I'm so excited?

Incorrect: Watch out.

Correct: Where did you go?

Correct: I'm so excited!

Correct: Watch out!

Ninja Tip

If you're asking something, use a question mark. If you're showing strong feelings or giving an urgent command, an exclamation mark adds power! But don't overuse exclamation marks – they should be special, like ninja weapons!

Practice Activity:

Add the correct punctuation mark (. ? or !) to the end of each sentence:

1. When does the film start
2. That was the best football match ever
3. The children walked home from school
4. How old is your brother
5. Be careful with those scissors

Rule 8: Using Commas in Lists

Commas are used to separate items in a list. In British English, we don't usually use a comma before 'and' in a simple list (this is sometimes called the Oxford comma).

Examples:

I bought apples, bananas, oranges and pears.

The ninja needed a sword, stars, rope and black clothes.

We visited London, Paris, Rome and Berlin on our holiday.

For breakfast, I had toast, eggs, bacon and juice.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: I like chocolate biscuits cakes and ice cream. (Missing commas)

Incorrect: She can speak French, Spanish, and Italian. (In British English, typically no comma before 'and')

Correct: I like chocolate, biscuits, cakes and ice cream.

Correct: She can speak French, Spanish and Italian.

Ninja Tip

Think of commas in a list like brief pauses when reading aloud. They help the reader understand that these are separate items. If you read "apples bananas oranges and pears" without pauses, it sounds like one big jumble!

Practice Activity:

Add commas to these sentences where needed:

1. In my pencil case I have pencils rulers erasers and sharpeners.
2. The soup contained carrots potatoes onions leeks and barley.
3. We need to buy bread milk eggs cheese and butter.
4. My favourite sports are football swimming tennis and hockey.

5. For the project we need cardboard glue scissors coloured paper and markers.

Rule 9: Commas after Fronted Adverbials

A fronted adverbial is a word, phrase or clause at the beginning of a sentence that describes the verb (when, where or how something happened). We use a comma after a fronted adverbial.

Examples:

When: Later that day, we went to the cinema.

Where: Under the table, the cat was hiding from the dog.

How: With great care, the ninja picked up the ancient scroll.

How often: Every morning, I brush my teeth before breakfast.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: In the morning I go to school. (Missing comma)

Incorrect: Silently, the ninja, crept through the forest. (Extra comma)

Correct: In the morning, I go to school.

Correct: Silently, the ninja crept through the forest.

Ninja Tip

Fronted adverbials are like a ninja's opening move – they set the scene before the main action happens! When you spot a word or phrase at the beginning of a sentence that tells you when, where, or how something happens, you need a comma after it.

Practice Activity:

Add commas where needed in these sentences with fronted adverbials:

1. During the storm we stayed inside our house.
2. Without warning the tiger pounced on its prey.
3. At the back of the classroom some children were whispering.
4. Throughout the journey I read my exciting book.
5. Beneath the ocean surface many strange creatures live.

Rule 10: Apostrophes for Contraction

An apostrophe for contraction shows where letters have been left out when two words are joined together.

Examples:

do not → don't

I am → I'm

they will → they'll

could not → couldn't

we have → we've

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: dont (missing apostrophe)

Incorrect: should'nt (apostrophe in wrong place)

Incorrect: it's raining (using it's when you mean its - see Rule 11)

Correct: don't

Correct: shouldn't

Correct: it's raining (if you mean 'it is raining')

Think of the apostrophe as a tiny ninja that jumps in to show where letters have disappeared!
The apostrophe goes exactly where the missing letters would be.

Practice Activity:

Write the contracted form of these word pairs:

1. they are
2. he will
3. does not
4. you have
5. we would

Now do the reverse! Write the full forms of these contractions:

1. wasn't
2. I'll
3. she's
4. haven't
5. they'd

Rule 11: Apostrophes for Possession

Apostrophes show that something belongs to someone or something. For singular nouns, add 's. For plural nouns that already end in s, just add an apostrophe after the s.

Examples:

Singular nouns: the boy's bike, the cat's tail, the ninja's sword

Plural nouns ending in s: the boys' bikes, the cats' tails, the ninjas' swords

Plural nouns not ending in s: the children's toys, the people's choice, the men's team

Names: James's book, Chris's car (or Chris' car - both are acceptable in British English)

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: the boys bike (missing apostrophe)

Incorrect: the boy's are playing (using apostrophe for plural, not possession)

Incorrect: the childrens' toys (incorrect placement)

Correct: the boy's bike

Correct: the boys are playing

Correct: the children's toys

Ninja Tip

Ask yourself "who owns what?" to find where the apostrophe goes. If one person/thing owns something, put 's after the owner. If multiple people/things own something and the plural ends in s, put the apostrophe after the s. Remember: its (belonging to it) has no apostrophe, while it's means "it is" or "it has"!

Practice Activity:

Add apostrophes where needed in these sentences:

1. The dogs bowl was empty.
2. The childrens playground is being renovated.
3. Sarahs brother is in my class.
4. The teachers books were on the desk.
5. The monkeys tails were very long.

Rule 12: Inverted Commas for Direct Speech

Inverted commas (also called quotation marks or speech marks) show the exact words that someone said. In British English, we typically use single inverted commas ('...'), but double inverted commas ("...") are also acceptable.

Examples:

'I love grammar,' said Nina.

Ahmed asked, 'What time is lunch?'

'Watch out!' shouted the teacher. 'The floor is wet!'

'When will you be home?' asked Mum. 'I'll be back at six o'clock,' replied Emma.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: I am going to the park said Sara. (Missing inverted commas and punctuation)

Incorrect: 'Will you help me.' asked Tom. (Wrong punctuation inside inverted commas)

Correct: 'I am going to the park,' said Sara.

Correct: 'Will you help me?' asked Tom.

Ninja Tip

Punctuation goes inside the inverted commas if it's part of what the person said. Start a new paragraph each time a different person speaks, like a ninja starting a new move!

Practice Activity:

Add inverted commas and any other punctuation needed to these sentences:

1. Can I have an ice cream asked Ben.
2. The teacher announced Today we are going on a school trip.
3. Stop shouted the policeman You're going too fast.
4. I think it's going to rain today said Dad We should take umbrellas.
5. What time does the film start wondered Priya.

Nouns and Pronouns

Rule 13: Common and Proper Nouns

Common nouns name general people, places, things, or ideas. Proper nouns name specific people, places, or things and always begin with a capital letter.

Examples:

Common nouns: boy, city, river, month, dog, teacher

Proper nouns: Jamie, London, River Thames, January, Rover, Mrs Smith

In sentences: The teacher told Jamie that London is near the River Thames.

In sentences: My aunt visited France last summer with her dog Patch.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Last Sunday, My dad and uncle went fishing.

Incorrect: We visited buckingham palace in London.

Correct: Last Sunday, my dad and uncle went fishing.

Correct: We visited Buckingham Palace in London.

Ninja Tip

Think of proper nouns as VIPs (Very Important People, Places, or Things) – they get the special treatment of a capital letter. If you can replace the noun with another one in the same category (e.g., replace "cat" with "dog"), then it's probably a common noun!

Practice Activity:

Identify whether the underlined words are common or proper nouns, and correct any missing capital letters:

1. My brother is going to france next week.
2. The teacher read us a story about robin hood.
3. We have science class with professor jones on monday.
4. The dog chased a ball across hyde park.

5. aunt sophia makes the best cakes in our family.

Rule 14: Singular and Plural Nouns

Singular nouns refer to one person, place, thing, or idea. Plural nouns refer to more than one. Most plurals are formed by adding -s or -es to the singular form.

Examples:

Add -s: dog → dogs, cat → cats, book → books

Add -es for nouns ending in s, ss, sh, ch, x, or z: bus → buses, glass → glasses, dish → dishes, match → matches, box → boxes, quiz → quizzes

Change y to i and add -es (if y follows a consonant): baby → babies, lady → ladies, party → parties

Just add -s if y follows a vowel: toy → toys, key → keys, boy → boys

Some irregular plurals: child → children, person → people, man → men, woman → women, foot → feet, tooth → teeth, mouse → mice

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: three childs, six boxs, two mouses

Incorrect: The babys are crying. The storys were exciting.

Correct: three children, six boxes, two mice

Correct: The babies are crying. The stories were exciting.

Ninja Tip

Imagine plurals are like ninja multiplying! Regular plurals follow patterns, but those tricky irregular plurals need special ninja memory powers. Make a list of the irregular plurals you use most often and practise them!

Practice Activity:

Write the plural form of these nouns:

1. witch
2. cherry
3. puppy
4. tooth
5. fox
6. city
7. sheep
8. woman
9. tomato
10. leaf

Rule 15: Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns replace nouns so we don't have to repeat the same nouns over and over again. They change depending on their role in the sentence (subject or object) and whether they're singular or plural.

Examples:

Subject pronouns (doing the action): I, you, he, she, it, we, they

Object pronouns (receiving the action): me, you, him, her, it, us, them

In sentences:

Instead of: Sarah opened Sarah's book and Sarah began to read.

We write: Sarah opened her book and she began to read.

Instead of: The teacher gave the homework to the students, and the students completed the homework.

We write: The teacher gave the homework to the students, and they completed it.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Me and my friend went to the park. (Using object pronoun in subject position)

Incorrect: The teacher gave the book to John and I. (Using subject pronoun in object position)

Correct: My friend and I went to the park.

Correct: The teacher gave the book to John and me.

Ninja Tip

To check if you're using I or me correctly, try removing the other person and see if the sentence still sounds right. Would you say "Me went to the park" or "I went to the park"? Would you say "The teacher gave the book to I" or "The teacher gave the book to me"?

Practice Activity:

Replace the underlined words with appropriate pronouns:

1. Tom and Ben are best friends. Tom and Ben play football together.
2. Sophie baked a cake. The cake was delicious.
3. Mum gave Peter and me some money. Peter and I spent the money at the shop.
4. The children were excited because the children were going to the zoo.
5. When Maria arrived at school, Maria realised Maria had forgotten Maria's lunch.

Rule 16: Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns show ownership or belonging. They replace possessive noun phrases and don't need apostrophes.

Examples:

Possessive determiners (used before nouns): my, your, his, her, its, our, their

Possessive pronouns (stand alone): mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs

In sentences:

That is **my** pencil. That pencil is **mine**.

Is this **your** book? Is this book **yours**?

The cat licked **its** paws.

The homework is **theirs**, not **ours**.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: That book is her's. (Adding apostrophe to a possessive pronoun)

Incorrect: The dog wagged it's tail. (Confusing it's with its)

Incorrect: Those pencils are our's. (Adding apostrophe to a possessive pronoun)

Correct: That book is hers.

Correct: The dog wagged its tail.

Correct: Those pencils are ours.

Ninja Tip

Remember: possessive pronouns NEVER have apostrophes! The apostrophe in "it's" means "it is" or "it has" (a contraction), while "its" without an apostrophe shows possession.

Practice Activity:

Fill in the blanks with the correct possessive pronoun or determiner:

1. I forgot to bring _____ lunch to school today.
2. The puppy chased _____ tail around the garden.
3. These toys are _____, not _____. (the children's, belong to us)
4. Sarah lost _____ pencil case, but Tom found _____.
5. The team celebrated _____ victory with a party.

Rule 17: Expanded Noun Phrases

An expanded noun phrase adds more detail about a noun by using modifiers like adjectives, other nouns, or prepositional phrases.

Examples:

Simple noun phrase: the cat

With adjectives before the noun: the fierce, black cat

With a prepositional phrase after the noun: the cat with the white paws

Combining both: the fierce, black cat with the white paws

More examples:

a beautiful, colourful butterfly

the enormous castle on the hill

the delicious chocolate cake with sprinkles

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: the fierce, black, scary, giant cat (too many adjectives make it clunky)

Incorrect: the cat with white paws that was sleeping that belonged to my neighbour (too complicated)

Better: the fierce, black cat with white paws

Better: my neighbour's sleeping cat with white paws

Ninja Tip

Think of expanded noun phrases as giving your reader a clearer picture, like a ninja using special vision techniques to see details! Choose the most important and interesting details to include. Too many adjectives can make your writing cluttered, so choose the best ones!

Practice Activity:

Expand these simple noun phrases by adding adjectives, prepositional phrases, or both:

1. the house
2. a dragon
3. some flowers
4. the teacher
5. the river

Verbs and Tenses

Rule 18: Present Tense: Simple and Continuous

The present tense is used for things happening now or things that are always true. There are two main forms: the simple present and the present continuous.

Examples:

Simple present (for habits, regular actions, facts):

I play football every weekend.

The Earth orbits around the Sun.

She likes chocolate ice cream.

Present continuous (for actions happening right now or around now):

I am playing football right now.

She is reading a book at the moment.

They are learning about grammar this term.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: She play tennis every day. (Missing -s in simple present for he/she/it)

Incorrect: They are believing in magic. (Using continuous form with state verbs)

Correct: She plays tennis every day.

Correct: They believe in magic.

Ninja Tip

For simple present with he/she/it, add an -s or -es to the verb! And remember, some verbs (like love, like, believe, know, have) are "state verbs" that describe thoughts, feelings, or states rather than actions. We usually use these in simple present, not continuous.

Practice Activity:

Choose whether these sentences should use simple present or present continuous, and write the correct form of the verb in brackets:

1. The children _____ (play) in the garden right now.
2. My dad _____ (cook) dinner every Friday night.
3. Be quiet! The baby _____ (sleep).
4. Water _____ (boil) at 100 degrees Celsius.
5. Look! The ninja _____ (climb) the wall.

Rule 19: Past Tense: Simple and Continuous

The past tense is used for actions that have already happened. Like the present tense, it has two main forms: the simple past and the past continuous.

Examples:

Simple past (for completed actions):

I played football yesterday.

She wrote a story last week.

They visited their grandparents in the summer.

Past continuous (for actions in progress at a specific time in the past):

I was playing football when it started to rain.

She was reading when her friend called.

They were watching TV at 7 o'clock last night.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: I goed to the park yesterday. (Incorrect irregular verb form)

Incorrect: When the phone rang, I read a book. (Should be past continuous for an action in progress)

Correct: I went to the park yesterday.

Correct: When the phone rang, I was reading a book.

Ninja Tip

Regular verbs add -ed in the simple past (like walk → walked), but watch out for those sneaky irregular verbs that change in special ways (like go → went, see → saw). For past continuous, remember the formula: was/were + verb+ing.

Practice Activity:

Complete the sentences with the correct past tense form (simple or continuous) of the verbs in brackets:

1. Yesterday, I _____ (visit) my cousin in London.
2. While Dad _____ (cook) dinner, Mum _____ (set) the table.
3. The children _____ (play) in the garden when it _____ (start) to rain.
4. Last summer, we _____ (go) to France for our holiday.
5. At 8 o'clock last night, I _____ (do) my homework.

Rule 20: Present Perfect Tense

The present perfect tense connects the past to the present. It's used for actions that happened at an unknown time in the past or that started in the past and continue to the present.

Examples:

I have visited Paris three times. (It happened in the past, but the exact time isn't important)

She has lost her pencil case. (It happened in the past, and it's still lost now)

They have lived in Manchester for five years. (Started in the past and continues to now)

We have never seen that film. (At no time in the past up to now)

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: I have went to the cinema. (Wrong past participle)

Incorrect: She has lived here since five years. (Wrong preposition with "since")

Correct: I have gone to the cinema.

Correct: She has lived here for five years. OR She has lived here since 2018.

Ninja Tip

The present perfect is formed with have/has + past participle. Use "for" with periods of time (for two hours, for three weeks) and "since" with specific points in time (since Monday, since 2020).

Practice Activity:

Complete the sentences using the present perfect tense of the verbs in brackets:

1. I _____ (finish) all my homework.
2. She _____ (visit) her grandmother twice this week.
3. They _____ (not try) the new ice cream flavour yet.
4. _____ you _____ (see) the new superhero film?

5. We _____ (know) each other since Year 1.

Rule 21: Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs must agree in number. Singular subjects take singular verbs, and plural subjects take plural verbs.

Examples:

Singular subject and verb: The cat sleeps on the sofa.

Plural subject and verb: The cats sleep on the sofa.

With he/she/it in present tense: He runs, she walks, it works.

With I/you/we/they in present tense: I run, you walk, we work, they study.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: The children is playing outside. (Plural subject with singular verb)

Incorrect: The dog bark at strangers. (Singular subject with plural verb)

Incorrect: The team are winning. (In British English, collective nouns can take either singular or plural verbs, depending on whether you're thinking of the group as a unit or as individuals)

Correct: The children are playing outside.

Correct: The dog barks at strangers.

Correct: The team is winning. OR The team are winning.

Ninja Tip

In present tense, most verbs add -s or -es for singular third-person subjects (he/she/it). For plural subjects, use the base form of the verb with no -s. With collective nouns (team, class,

family), British English allows both singular and plural verbs depending on whether you're emphasising the group as a whole or the individuals in it.

Practice Activity:

Choose the correct verb form to agree with the subject:

1. My brother _____ (like/likes) football.
2. The children _____ (is/are) playing in the garden.
3. You _____ (watch/watches) too much television.
4. The class _____ (is/are) going on a trip next week.
5. The scissors _____ (is/are) in the drawer.

Rule 22: Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are helping verbs that express possibility, ability, permission, or obligation. Common modal verbs include: can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would.

Examples:

Ability: I can swim. She could play the piano when she was six.

Permission: You may leave the table. Can I go to the toilet?

Possibility: It might rain tomorrow. The parcel should arrive today.

Obligation: You must finish your homework. We should help with the washing up.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: She cans dance very well. (Adding -s to a modal verb)

Incorrect: I must to go home now. (Using "to" after a modal verb)

Correct: She can dance very well.

Correct: I must go home now.

Ninja Tip

Modal verbs are like ninja helpers that never change their form! They don't add -s in the third person singular (he/she/it), and they're always followed by the base form of the main verb (without "to").

Practice Activity:

Complete these sentences with an appropriate modal verb (can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would):

1. You _____ brush your teeth twice a day.
2. _____ I have another biscuit, please?
3. It _____ rain later, so take your umbrella.
4. I _____ swim when I was five years old.
5. We _____ visit Grandma this weekend.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Rule 23: Using Descriptive Adjectives

Adjectives describe nouns and pronouns. They help create vivid pictures in the reader's mind by providing details about size, colour, shape, feelings, and other qualities.

Examples:

Size: huge castle, tiny insect, enormous dinosaur

Colour: blue sky, golden sunset, emerald green eyes

Shape/appearance: round ball, rough surface, crooked smile

Feelings: happy child, angry tiger, scared rabbit

Opinion: beautiful painting, delicious meal, exciting adventure

In sentences:

The **brave** ninja climbed the **tall, ancient** wall.

My **new** bike has **shiny, silver** handlebars.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: I ate a cookie chocolate chip. (Adjective after noun)

Incorrect: She wore a red, big, old, lovely coat. (Incorrect adjective order)

Correct: I ate a chocolate chip cookie.

Correct: She wore a lovely old big red coat. (Opinion, age, size, colour, material)

Ninja Tip

In English, adjectives usually come before the noun they describe. When using multiple adjectives, the general order is: opinion, size, age, shape, colour, origin, material, purpose. But the most important rule is that opinion adjectives (beautiful, amazing, wonderful) usually come first!

Practice Activity:

Improve these sentences by adding descriptive adjectives:

1. The tiger walked through the jungle.
2. He lives in a house near the beach.
3. The girl ate an apple.
4. We heard a noise from upstairs.
5. The superhero saved the people from the building.

Rule 24: Comparative and Superlative Adjectives

Comparative adjectives compare two things, while superlative adjectives compare more than two things, identifying which has the most of a particular quality.

Examples:

For short adjectives (1 syllable):

tall → taller → tallest

quick → quicker → quickest

For adjectives ending in e:

nice → nicer → nicest

brave → braver → bravest

For adjectives ending in y:

happy → happier → happiest

easy → easier → easiest

For longer adjectives (2+ syllables):

beautiful → more beautiful → most beautiful

exciting → more exciting → most exciting

Irregular forms:

good → better → best

bad → worse → worst

far → further → furthest

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: This cake is more sweeter than that one. (Double comparative)

Incorrect: He is the most tallest boy in the class. (Double superlative)

Incorrect: This book is interestinger than the other one. (Wrong formation)

Correct: This cake is sweeter than that one.

Correct: He is the tallest boy in the class.

Correct: This book is more interesting than the other one.

Ninja Tip

For one-syllable adjectives, add -er for comparative and -est for superlative. For adjectives with two or more syllables, use "more" for comparative and "most" for superlative. But there are exceptions: two-syllable adjectives ending in -y, -le, -ow, and some others can take either form!

Practice Activity:

Write the comparative and superlative forms of these adjectives:

1. fast
2. heavy
3. good
4. beautiful
5. difficult

Now complete these sentences using the correct comparative or superlative forms:

1. This is the _____ (good) birthday party I've ever had!
2. My brother is _____ (tall) than me, but my dad is the _____ (tall) in our family.
3. This exercise is _____ (difficult) than I expected.
4. That was the _____ (bad) film I've ever seen.
5. Summer is _____ (hot) than spring.

Rule 25: Using Adverbs to Describe Verbs

Adverbs describe verbs (actions) by telling how, when, where, or to what extent something happens. Many adverbs of manner (how) end in -ly.

Examples:

How: The ninja moved silently. She sang beautifully. They worked quickly.

When: We'll leave tomorrow. She arrived early. They're coming soon.

Where: Look upstairs. Come inside. They lived nearby.

To what extent: He completely forgot. She almost finished. I really enjoyed it.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: He runs quick. (Using an adjective instead of an adverb)

Incorrect: She sings beautiful. (Using an adjective instead of an adverb)

Correct: He runs quickly.

Correct: She sings beautifully.

Ninja Tip

To form many adverbs, just add -ly to the adjective (quiet → quietly, slow → slowly, careful → carefully). But watch out for exceptions! Some adverbs don't end in -ly (fast, hard, well), and some words that end in -ly aren't adverbs (lovely, friendly, silly are adjectives).

Practice Activity:

Change these adjectives into adverbs:

1. loud
2. happy
3. sad
4. careful
5. brave

Now improve these sentences by adding appropriate adverbs:

1. The children played in the garden.
2. She answered the question.
3. He closed the door.
4. The cat walked along the fence.
5. We waited for the bus.

Rule 26: Fronted Adverbials

A fronted adverbial is a word, phrase, or clause that appears at the beginning of a sentence and describes when, where, or how something happens. It's always followed by a comma.

Examples:

When: Later that day, we went to the cinema.

Where: Behind the shed, there was a family of hedgehogs.

How: With great excitement, the children opened their presents.

How often: Every Saturday, we go swimming.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Suddenly the door burst open. (Missing comma after fronted adverbial)

Incorrect: In the morning, I brush my teeth, and have breakfast. (Extra comma breaking the sentence)

Correct: Suddenly, the door burst open.

Correct: In the morning, I brush my teeth and have breakfast.

Ninja Tip

Think of fronted adverbials as setting the scene before the main action takes place, like a ninja surveying the terrain before making a move! Remember that a fronted adverbial is always followed by a comma, which acts as a brief pause before the main clause.

Practice Activity:

Rewrite these sentences with the adverbial phrase moved to the front, adding a comma where needed:

1. The pirates buried the treasure under the old oak tree.
2. The ninja crept silently through the shadows.

3. We go to the beach every summer.
4. The children played happily in the playground.
5. The cat curled up by the fire after dinner.

Other Important Rules

Rule 27: Prepositions

Prepositions show relationships between nouns or pronouns and other words in a sentence. They often indicate position, direction, time, or manner.

Examples:

Position: on the table, under the bed, between the trees, behind the door

Direction: to school, towards home, into the cave, through the tunnel

Time: at six o'clock, in July, on Monday, during the holiday

Manner: by car, with a friend, without help

In sentences:

The book is **on** the shelf.

We walked **through** the forest.

The party starts **at** three o'clock.

She came **with** her brother.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: I will see you on Friday night at 7 o'clock on the cinema. (Wrong preposition)

Incorrect: She jumped in the swimming pool. (Ambiguous - does this mean she was already in the pool and jumped, or jumped into the pool?)

Correct: I will see you on Friday night at 7 o'clock at the cinema.

Correct: She jumped into the swimming pool.

Ninja Tip

Different prepositions can completely change the meaning of a sentence! Think of prepositions as ninja positioning words - they show exactly where, when, or how something happens. The most common prepositions are: in, on, at, to, with, by, for, from, of, and about.

Practice Activity:

Fill in the blanks with appropriate prepositions:

1. The cat is hiding _____ the sofa.
2. We're going _____ holiday _____ August.
3. She walked _____ the park _____ her friends.
4. The football match starts _____ 3 o'clock _____ Saturday.
5. The book fell _____ the shelf and landed _____ the floor.

Rule 28: Determiners: 'a' or 'an'

The articles 'a' and 'an' are both used before singular countable nouns, but which one we use depends on the sound that follows it, not the letter.

Examples:

Use 'a' before consonant sounds: a banana, a dog, a house, a university (sounds like 'yoo'), a one-way street (sounds like 'wun')

Use 'an' before vowel sounds: an apple, an elephant, an ice cream, an hour (the 'h' is silent), an honest person

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: a apple, a elephant, a hour

Incorrect: an dog, an house, an university

Correct: an apple, an elephant, an hour

Correct: a dog, a house, a university

Ninja Tip

Listen to the sound, not just look at the letter! Some words beginning with 'h' have a silent 'h' (like 'hour', 'honest'), so they take 'an'. Words starting with 'u' or 'eu' often have a 'yoo' sound, so they take 'a' (a unicorn, a European).

Practice Activity:

Choose 'a' or 'an' for each of these nouns:

1. _____ umbrella
2. _____ bicycle
3. _____ honest mistake
4. _____ uniform
5. _____ owl
6. _____ university
7. _____ egg
8. _____ European country
9. _____ MA degree
10. _____ hour

Rule 29: Standard English versus Dialect

Standard English is the form of English taught in schools and used in formal writing and speaking. Dialects are different varieties of English that may have their own vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation patterns.

Examples:

Standard English: I did not do anything.

Dialect: I didn't do nothing.

Standard English: We were going to the shops.

Dialect: We was going to the shops.

Standard English: I saw it yesterday.

Dialect: I seen it yesterday.

Common Mistakes in Standard English:

Incorrect: We was playing football. (Subject-verb agreement error)

Incorrect: Me and my friend went to the park. (Wrong order and pronoun case)

Incorrect: I ain't done nothing. (Double negative and non-standard form)

Correct: We were playing football.

Correct: My friend and I went to the park.

Correct: I haven't done anything.

Ninja Tip

Think of Standard English as your formal ninja uniform for school writing and tests! It's not "better" than dialects, but it's expected in formal situations. In stories, you might use dialect for character speech to show how they talk, but use Standard English for the narrative parts.

Practice Activity:

Rewrite these sentences in Standard English:

1. We ain't got no homework today.
2. Me and him was late for school.
3. She don't like maths.
4. I seen that film already.
5. Them books is interesting.

Rule 30: Paragraphs to Organise Writing

Paragraphs are groups of sentences about a single topic or idea. They help organise writing and make it easier to read and understand.

Examples:

Starting a new paragraph when:

- Introducing a new topic or idea
- Changing time or location
- A new person begins speaking
- Adding a contrasting idea

Example of organised paragraphs:

Paragraph 1: Introduction about ninjas and their history.

Paragraph 2: Description of ninja training.

Paragraph 3: Explanation of ninja weapons and tools.

Paragraph 4: Conclusion about why ninjas were effective.

Common Mistakes:

Incorrect: Writing everything in one large paragraph, mixing many different topics.

Incorrect: Starting a new paragraph for every sentence.

Incorrect: Not indenting or leaving a line space between paragraphs.

Correct: Using paragraphs to group related ideas, and clearly showing where each paragraph begins.

Ninja Tip

Think of paragraphs as different rooms in a ninja house - each one has its own purpose and contains things that belong together! In handwritten work, you can show a new paragraph by indenting the first line or leaving a line space. In typed work, it's common to leave a line space between paragraphs.

Practice Activity:

Read this text and decide where new paragraphs should begin:

Ninjas were skilled warriors in feudal Japan. They were experts in stealth and secrecy. Ninjas wore dark clothing to help them blend into the shadows at night. They trained from a young age in many different skills. They learned martial arts for self-defence. They also studied climbing, disguise, and escape techniques. Ninjas used many special weapons and tools. They carried swords, throwing stars, and smoke bombs. They also had tools for climbing walls and crossing water. One of their most important tools was the grappling hook. It helped them climb buildings and trees. Ninjas were known for their incredible patience. They could wait silently for hours until the perfect moment to act. This patience made them excellent spies and scouts. Many people today are fascinated by ninjas. There are books, films, and games about them. Some martial arts schools still teach ninja techniques. The legends of the ninjas will continue to inspire people for many years to come.