

Find the subject

- ✓ Cross out the **opener**, the **prepositional phrases** and the **nonessential clauses** — no noun inside one is the subject
- ✓ The subject usually comes before its verb; flip a question or an inverted sentence: *Never did I think* → *I never did think*
- ✓ A gerund can be the subject: *Running* was her main form of exercise

Subject—verb agreement

- ✓ Match the verb to the subject, **not** to a noun in a phrase between them
Jeremy, whose campers are all ten-year-old boys, *has* discovered a talent...
- ✓ **A and B** is plural: Both the cookies and the coffee *were* appreciated
- ✓ **or, nor, either...or, neither...nor, not only...but also:** the verb agrees with the **nearer** subject
Either the Robinsons or Mr. Boniface *runs* the bake sale. Neither Tamir nor the twins *know*.
- ✓ **-one, -body, -thing** words, *each* and *every* are singular: Everyone on the bus *hopes*...
- ✓ Tenses fit the time clues and each other: dogs *became* a separate species tens of thousands of years ago

Pronoun agreement

- ✓ A pronoun matches its **antecedent** in number — not whatever noun is nearest: *All* of the students in Ms. Henderson's class want *their* trip
- ✓ With *or* or *nor*, match the nearer antecedent
- ✓ Possessive *its, their* — not *it's, they're*

Parallel structure

- ✓ Every item in a list or pair takes the **same form**
Zack scrubbed the bathroom, *scoured* the kitchen, and washed six loads.
- ✓ Correlative pairs take their own partner — *neither...nor*, never *neither...or* — and what follows each half matches:
 - both...and
 - neither...nor
 - whether...or
 - no sooner...than
 - just as...so
 - either...or
 - not only...but (also)
 - as...as
 - hardly...when
 - if...then
- ✓ Never swap a half: *as fresh as*, not *as fresh than*; *more insects than*, not *more insects as*

Clauses and conjunctions

- ✓ **Main clause:** a subject and a verb that can stand alone. **Subordinate clause:** can't — alone, it is a fragment
- ✓ **Coordinating (FANBOYS)** join equals: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*
- ✓ **Subordinating** make a clause dependent:
 - although, though
 - before, after
 - unless, if
 - because, since
 - while, whereas
 - once, as soon as
- ✓ A subordinate clause that **opens** the sentence takes a comma: *Although Greg did not want to watch it, he agreed*

Faulty comparisons

- ✓ Compare like with like: Dickens's novels are longer than *Austen's* — or *the novels of Austen* — not *than Austen*
- ✓ *that of, those of* stand in for the second item: better than *that of* Picasso
- ✓ *than* compares; *then* is time