

## The rules and their interconnections

### WORDS AND SENTENCES

1. *Rule 1: Add an apostrophe followed by an s to indicate the possessive case of singular nouns*
  - This rule relates to the subject of a sentence.
2. *Rule 2: Do not (physically or mentally) break sentences into two (or more) parts*
  - When we add a verb to a subject, we get a sentence. We can of course add more things into the sentence. No matter how small or how big a sentence, always remember that it is a single unit of thought. The subject and the predicate together form one complete whole.
  - Serves as the basic guiding principle for all sentences in general (and for Rules 5-7 in particular)
  - Provides a note of caution against the fragmentary nature of the human mind (i.e., we should not allow ourselves to be misled by the fragmentary nature of the thinking process)
3. *Rule 3: In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last*
  - Relates to a listing of items (nouns [subjects/objects], verbs, adjectives, phrases, clauses) within a sentence
  - Called the serial comma (US) or the Oxford comma (UK)
  - Implies that the pause before the conjunction is essentially the same as that after any element in the list

### GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX

4. *Rule 4: The number of the subject determines the number of the verb*
  - When the subject and the verb come together to form a sentence, they have to agree with each other.
  - The rule holds good irrespective of whether the verb comes before or after the subject.
5. *Rule 5: Use parenthetical commas to set off nonrestrictive elements; do not, however, set off elements that are defining or essential for the meaning of the sentence*
  - The subject, verb, and object (and also the object of a preposition) are so tightly knit in a sentence that when we add a modifier anywhere, we need a method of indicating whether the modifier acts in a restrictive or nonrestrictive way
  - This rule connects sentence structure and punctuation and indicates how to construct (or read) a sentence in the first place
  - Added or omitted commas are thus ways of indicating syntax—ways of indicating relationships between the words, phrases, and clauses within a sentence
6. *Rule 6: Keep related words together*
  - Lays down the principles to follow while adding more and more modifiers and building highly complex sentences
7. *Rule 7: An introductory element must be logically connected with the main clause*
  - Addresses sentences that do not begin with the subject
  - Provides a note of caution on dealing with sentences that do not begin with the subject

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8. *Rule 8: Ensure that every pronoun (a) has an unambiguous antecedent, (b) takes the appropriate case, and (c) follows subject–verb agreement norms*
- We use pronouns to avoid repetition of nouns
  - This rule lays down the principles to follow while using pronouns

## **PUNCTUATION MARKS**

We know when to use periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and quotation marks. The only marks remaining are the semicolon, colon, and the dash. We have one rule for each of these.

9. *Rule 9: To join two independent clauses, use (a) a comma followed by a conjunction, (b) a semicolon, or (c) a semicolon followed by a sentence modifier*
- Provides three ways of combining two independent thoughts/sentences
  - Introduces the semicolon as a connector and separator
  - Lays down principles of semicolon use
10. *Rule 10: Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of particulars, an appositive, an amplification, or an illustrative quotation*
- Introduces the colon as a connector between two parts of a sentence and a method of drawing attention to something in a formal way (as the colon basically asks one to pay attention to whatever follows)
11. *Rule 11: Use a dash to set off an abrupt break or interruption and to announce a long appositive or summary*
- Provides for writing sentences in a lighter vein and with a break in thought
  - Introduces a punctuation mark with some versatile functions

## **BEYOND GRAMMAR: POWER OF EXPRESSION**

12. *Rule 12: Express coordinate ideas in similar form*
- Introduces the concept of symmetry in thought and expression, in structure and function
  - Provides a method of indicating symmetry in thought by a corresponding symmetry in sentence structure
  - Contributes to ease of understanding
  - Provides scope for elegance of expression
13. *Rule 13: Omit needless words*
- Introduces the concept of brevity and encourages forceful writing
  - Simple and powerful reminder to help the writer counter the randomness commonly associated with the thinking process
14. *Rule 14: Be judicious in the use of active and passive voice*
- Good writing has a natural flow of thought, and voice is something that can be used to advantage in taking the reader from the known to the unknown
  - This rule is a reminder to the writer to think in terms of what one wants to say and how