

How to use correct grammar

Before you begin

What you need:

Related text: **“Cranes Fly South” by Edward McCourt**

Exit with Success and *The Bare Essentials Plus* (optional)

Approximate time this exercise should take you: **30 minutes**

Reminder

The following is reprinted before each of the exercises in Module 16 as it includes useful reminders for all the grammar exercises.

Grammar is one of the more difficult areas of the English language to perfect. There are many rules, verbs, verb tenses, pronouns, articles, agreement forms and other points of grammar to learn. In *Exit with Success* you will find explanations and examples of the typical errors students tend to make in grammar. As well, if you are using *The Bare Essentials Plus*, you will find a fuller review of grammar with exercises. If grammar is a particular area of weakness for you, do not hesitate to consult your tutor for extra tips and help. In the grammar exercise below you are going to review the following:

- **Subject-verb agreement**

- The most frequent subject-verb agreement error is in the third-person singular present: he/she/it walks
- The second most frequent error is caused when the writer thinks the subject of the sentence is in the prepositional phrase. Error: **The thought of cranes are enough to excite the depressed old man.** Correction: **The thought (subject) of cranes is enough to excite the depressed old man.**

- **Faulty use of pronouns**

- When the pronoun refers to the subject of the sentence, use the subject pronouns: **I, you, he/she/it/one, we, you, they**
- If the pronoun does not refer to the subject, use the object pronouns: **me, you, him/her/it/one, us, you, them**. Note this common error: **The boy is stronger than *him***. Correction: **The boy is stronger than *he (is)***.
- The pronoun must also agree with its antecedent. **The father supported *his* son's decision**. Remember that the pronoun reference must be clear. It should not be able to refer to more than one antecedent. Error: **The mother knows her son and her father so she probably knows *he* is the one who instigated the trip to see the cranes**. Revision: **The mother knows her son and her father so she probably knows *the old man* is the one who instigated the trip to see the cranes**.

- **Dangling and misplaced modifiers**

- A modifier is a word or phrase that adds description or explanation about another word in a sentence. The modifier must be placed as close as possible to the word it modifies. If it is placed incorrectly, it is a misplaced modifier: ***Only* the grandson can help him. /The grandson can help *only* him**. Here is another example: **Looking for redemption before he dies, the boy takes the grandfather to the slough**. Here the modifier is beside "the boy," so the writer is inadvertently stating that it is the boy who is looking for redemption. Finally, the modifier is said to be dangling when it refers to something or someone that is absent from the sentence. Here is an example: **While riding to the slough, a crane flew into the sky**. Correction: **While riding to the slough, the grandfather and the boy saw a crane fly into the sky**.

- **Misuse of articles**

- The article before a noun indicates whether the noun is specific or non-specific. "The" is specific; "a" or "an" is non-specific. "An" is used before words beginning with a vowel sound or a silent "h." **The hour has arrived for action. An hour is all that we require**.

- **Verb tense consistency**

- It is acceptable to write your analysis of the text in either the present or the past tense. Once you have decided which tense you will use, however, do not change tense unless the change is required for the meaning.

Instructions

Rewrite the following sentences to correct the grammar errors.

Exercise

1. Thinking about the high-flying crane, the bleak landscape is contrasted.

2. The grandfather's diction reveal that he is old, hesitant, and infirm.

3. The grandfather told Lee that his mother would be angry at him if they went out looking for the whooping crane.

4. Although an old man, the reader is reminded frequently that the grandfather is still strong and vital.

5. Despite the fact that he is very old and frail, Lee decides to listen to the grandfather rather than to she.

6. More than me, my brother developed a very close relationship with my grandmother.

7. Respect for elderly parents are rare in North American society today.

8. The excitement of travelling and seeing the crane are too much for the old man.

9. The grandfather, as well as Lee, need to experience the joy of seeing the flight of this near-extinct crane.

10. Neither his father, nor his mother, understand how much this experience has initiated Lee into adulthood.

Answer key

You may have found other ways to correct some of the sentences.

1. **The high-flying crane is** contrasted with the bleak landscape.
2. The grandfather's **diction reveals** that he is old, hesitant, and infirm.
3. The grandfather told **his grandson that Lee's mother** would be angry **at Lee if** they went out looking for the whooping crane.
4. The reader is reminded frequently that the **grandfather, although an old man, is** still strong and vital.
5. Lee decides to listen to the **grandfather, despite the fact that** he is very old and frail, rather than **to his mother**.
6. **More than I, my** brother developed a very close relationship with my grandmother.
7. Respect for elderly parents **is** rare in North American society today.
8. The excitement of travelling and seeing the crane **is** too much for the old man.
9. The grandfather, as well as Lee, **needs** to experience the joy of seeing the flight of this near extinct crane.
10. Neither his father nor his mother **understands** how much this experience has initiated Lee into adulthood.