

72 Omitted Words esl

Do Not Omit Expletives, Subjects, or Verbs

Are three chapters to read this week has a common second language error. The writer left out a word, the expletive *there*. Corrected, the sentence should read, *There are three chapters to read this week*.

English does not allow you to omit expletives, subjects, or verbs. English does allow you to omit *you* in commands—that is, when *you* is understood: *Read the directions with care*. If your first language allows for these omissions, stay alert! Acceptable omissions in your first language may not be acceptable in English.

- ◆ ^I ~~W~~_Aorry about my life span because I smoke.
- ◆ Cultural knowledge ^{is} ~~im~~_Aportant.
- ◆ Jorge Lopez, ^{who} ~~studied~~_A karate, broke a brick with a hand.

An expletive, *there* or *it*, may be required in sentences where the subject follows the verb.

- ◆ ^{It} ~~is~~_A easy to make mistakes.
- ◆ Children believe ^{there} ~~are~~_A scary creatures in the night.

Remember, *is*, *are*, *was*, or *were* cannot begin a clause unless the clause is a question, such as *Are you awake?*, or an exclamation, such as *Was I sick!*

Exercise 72.1: Omitted Words

Read the following paragraph. Find the missing subjects and verbs and add them to the text.

Government loans to college students the lowest in ten years. The president very concerned. Appointed a committee to investigate falling income. Will not meet until next September. The president unhappy about the slow start. Is one

73 Noun Markers esl

of the problems the president promised to solve during his campaign. Are thousands of needy students in the United States cannot afford a college education. Are unhappy about this problem. Is little hope. Seems to be an unfair policy.

Use Noun Markers

English nouns frequently have markers. Noun markers are words indicating a noun is coming (though the noun might not be the next word). The command *Read stories* is wrong, unless the writer means all stories, which would not make much sense. Corrected, it would read, *Read the stories*.

COMMON NOUN MARKERS

ARTICLES	a car; the car; an automobile
NUMBERS	12 cats; seven dogs
POSSESSIVE NOUNS	Van's stories; China's goal
POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS	my, our, your, his, her, its, their
OTHER PRONOUNS	all, every, any, each, either, neither, few, many, more, most, this, that, these, those, much, several, some, whose

Other words may be placed between the marker and the noun.

The shiny new motorcycle belongs to her.
Twelve white ducks swim in the lake.
Jon's hopeless whining gets nothing done.
Her demanding schedule is exhausting.

Of all the noun markers, articles (*a*, *an*, *the*) can be troublesome.

Definite Article: *the*

Use *the* before nouns that are specifically identified.

Wear *the* boots you bought in Santa Fe.

according to Professor Gary Ruvkun, _____ geneticist at Harvard University.

In the remainder of the paragraph, determine where articles should be added or deleted.

Human wastes in water can transmit the cholera, diarrhea, and salmonellosis. In developing world, where only 34 percent of population has access to the toilets, life spans can be up to 30 years less than average in the industrialized countries.

74 Verb Combinations *esl*

Use Correct Verb Combinations

Van have taken three tests, but only two are difficult, has a common second language error: The writer has not used a correct verb combination. Corrected, the sentence would read, *Van has taken three tests, but only two were difficult*.

Helping Verbs. English sentences often require combinations of helping verbs and main verbs. Helping verbs appear before main verbs. Some main verbs will not be complete without helping verbs.

- ◆ The mail ^{will} arrive soon.

There are twenty-three helping verbs. Nine are called *modals*; they work only as helping verbs. The others, which are forms of *do*, *have*, and *be*, can also work as main verbs.

HELPING VERBS

Three forms of *do*: do, does, did

Three forms of *have*: have, has, had

All forms of *be*: be, is, was, were, are, am, been, being

Modals: can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would

After a modal or *do*, *does*, *did*, use a plain verb.

may dance	might fly	should bring
do swim	does feel	did hurt

- ◆ My Web page may expands my clientele.
- ◆ Your answer does not convinces me.
- ◆ Did you finished your projects?

After *have*, *has*, *had*, use the past participle to form the perfect tense.

have driven has contributed had slept

- ◆ Those hungry guys must have ^{eaten} eat the leftovers.
- ◆ Julia has accomplish^{ed} nothing this weekend.
- ◆ Luis had finish^{ed} his sculpture just in time.

After the helping verbs *is*, *was*, *were*, *are*, *am*, use a present participle to form one of the progressive tenses.

is going was swimming were eating
are studying am thinking

- ◆ Jason was work^{ing}ed on his car.

Be and *been* must be preceded by other helping verbs and followed by a present participle to form one of the progressive tenses.

can or *could* be
may, *might*, or *must* be
shall or *should* be
will or *would* be
has, *have*, or *had* been
can or *could* have been
may, *might*, or *must* have been
shall or *should* have been
will or *would* have been

- ◆ Rod ^{will} be leaving soon.
- ◆ Minh ^{has} been studying late.

After the helping verbs *is*, *was*, *were*, *are*, *am*, use a past participle to form the passive voice.

is repeated was thrown were submitted

according to Professor Gary Ruvkun, _____ geneticist at Harvard University.

In the remainder of the paragraph, determine where articles should be added or deleted.

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After a modal or *do*, *does*, *did*, use a plain verb.

may dance	might fly	should bring
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- ◆ Jason was work^{ing}ed on his car.

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can or *could* be
may, *might*, or *must* be
shall or *should* be
will or *would* be
has, *have*, or *had* been
can or *could* have been
may, *might*, or *must* have been
shall or *should* have been
will or *would* have been

- ◆ Rod ^{will} be leaving soon.
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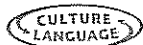
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is repeated was thrown were submitted

many surprising qualities. 5 In the end most critics agreed that the book was a pleased novel about the struggles of an African American woman. 6 For many, the movie made from the book was less interested. 7 Some viewers found the entire movie irritated, criticizing it for relying on tired feelings. 8 Other viewers thought that Whoopi Goldberg did an amazed job of creating Celie, the central character. 9 Some critics congratulated Steven Spielberg, the director, for creating a fulfilling movie.

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Use *a*, *an*, *the*, and other determiners appropriately.



Determiners are special kinds of adjectives that mark nouns because they always precede nouns. Some common determiners are *a*, *an*, and *the* (called articles) and *my*, *their*, *whose*, *this*, *these*, *those*, *one*, *some*, and *any*.

Native speakers of standard American English can rely on their intuition when using determiners, but speakers of other languages and dialects often have difficulty with them. In standard American English, the use of determiners depends on the context they appear in and the kind of noun they precede:

- A *proper noun* names a particular person, place, or thing and begins with a capital letter: *February*, *Joe Allen*, *Red River*. Most proper nouns are not preceded by determiners.
- A *count noun* names something that is countable in English and can form a plural: *girl/girls*, *apple/apples*, *child/children*. A singular count noun is always preceded by a determiner; a plural count noun sometimes is.
- A *noncount noun* names something not usually considered countable in English, and so it does not form a plural. A noncount noun is sometimes preceded by a determiner. Here is a sample of noncount nouns, sorted into groups by meaning:

Abstractions: confidence, democracy, education, equality, evidence, health, information, intelligence, knowledge, luxury, peace, pollution, research, success, supervision, truth, wealth, work

Food and drink: bread, candy, cereal, flour, meat, milk, salt, water, wine

Emotions: anger, courage, happiness, hate, joy, love, respect, satisfaction

Natural events and substances: air, blood, dirt, gasoline, gold, hair, heat, ice, oil, oxygen, rain, silver, smoke, weather, wood

Groups: clergy, clothing, equipment, furniture, garbage, jewelry, junk, legislation, machinery, mail, military, money, police, vocabulary

Fields of study: architecture, accounting, biology, business, chemistry, engineering, literature, psychology, science

A dictionary of English as a second language will tell you whether a noun is a count noun, a noncount noun, or both. (See 3 p. 171 for recommended dictionaries.)

Note Many nouns are sometimes count nouns and sometimes noncount nouns:

The library has a room for readers. [*Room* is a count noun meaning "walled area."]

The library has room for reading. [*Room* is a noncount noun meaning "space."]

Grammar checkers Partly because the same noun may fall into different groups, a grammar checker is an unreliable guide to missing or misused articles and other determiners. For instance, a checker flagged the omitted *a* before *Scientist* in *Scientist developed new processes*; it did not flag the omitted *a* before *new* in *A scientist developed new process*; and it mistakenly flagged the correctly omitted article *the* before *Vegetation* in *Vegetation suffers from drought*.

1 A, an, and the

With singular count nouns

A or *an* precedes a singular count noun when the reader does not already know its identity, usually because you have not mentioned it before:

A scientist in our chemistry department developed a process to strengthen metals. [*Scientist* and *process* are being introduced for the first time.]

The precedes a singular count noun that has a specific identity for the reader, for one of the following reasons:

- You have mentioned the noun before:

A scientist in our chemistry department developed a process to strengthen metals. The scientist patented the process. [*Scientist* and *process* were identified in the preceding sentence.]

- You identify the noun immediately before or after you state it:

The most productive laboratory is the research center in the chemistry department. [*Most productive* identifies *laboratory*. In the chemistry department identifies *research center*. And *chemistry department* is a shared facility—see the next page.]

- The noun names something unique—the only one in existence:

The sun rises in the east. [*Sun* and *east* are unique.]

- The noun names an institution or facility that is shared by the community of readers:

Many men and women aspire to the presidency. [*Presidency* is a shared institution.]

The cell phone has changed business communication. [*Cell phone* is a shared facility.]

The is not used before a singular noun that names a general category:

Wordsworth's poetry shows his love of nature [not the nature].
General Sherman said that war is hell. [*War* names a general category.]
The war in Iraq left many wounded. [*War* names a specific war.]

With plural count nouns

A or *an* never precedes a plural noun. *The* does not precede a plural noun that names a general category. *The* does precede a plural noun that names specific representatives of a category.

Men and women are different. [*Men* and *women* name general categories.]

The women formed a team. [*Women* refers to specific people.]

With noncount nouns

A or *an* never precedes a noncount noun. *The* does precede a noncount noun that names specific representatives of a general category.

Vegetation suffers from drought. [*Vegetation* names a general category.]
The vegetation in the park withered or died. [*Vegetation* refers to specific plants.]

With proper nouns

A or *an* never precedes a proper noun. *The* generally does not precede proper nouns.

Garcia lives in Boulder.

There are exceptions, however. For instance, we generally use *the* before plural proper nouns (*the Murphys*, *the Boston Celtics*) and before the names of groups and organizations (*the Department of Justice*, *the Sierra Club*), ships (*the Lusitania*), oceans (*the Pacific*), mountain ranges (*the Alps*), regions (*the Middle East*), rivers (*the Mississippi*), and some countries (*the United States*, *the Netherlands*).

Exercise 33.6 Revising: *A, an, and the* CULTURE LANGUAGE

In the following paragraph, identify and revise errors in the use of *a*, *an*, and *the* with count, noncount, and proper nouns. Mark the number preceding any sentence that is correct as given.

1 A recent court case has moved some Native Americans to observe that a lot of people want to be the Native Americans now that the tribes have something of the value—namely, gambling casinos. 2 The man named Stephen Jones claimed to be the Native American in order to open casino in the New York's Catskills region. 3 However, the documents Jones provided to support the claim were questioned by a US Bureau of Indian Affairs. 4 On death certificate for Jones's grandfather, the W for *white* had been changed to an I for *Indian* with the ballpoint pen. 5 The ballpoint pens had not been invented until after a grandfather's death. 6 In addition, Jones provided the 1845 census of Indians in New York, and someone had recently added Jones's great-grandfather's name to the list of Indian household heads. 7 Jones, who called himself the Chief Golden Eagle, pled guilty to filing false documents with Bureau of Indian Affairs.

2 Other determiners

The uses of English determiners besides articles also depend on context and kind of noun. The following determiners may be used as indicated with singular count nouns, plural count nouns, or noncount nouns.

With any kind of noun (singular count, plural count, noncount)

my, *our*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *their*, possessive nouns (*boy's*, *boys'*)

whose, *which(ever)*, *what(ever)*

some, *any*, *the other*

no

Their account is overdrawn. [Singular count.]

Their funds are low. [Plural count.]

Their money is running out. [Noncount.]

Only with singular nouns (count and noncount)

this, *that*

This account has some money. [Count.]

That information may help. [Noncount.]

Only with noncount nouns and plural count nouns

most, *enough*, *other*, *such*, *all*, *all of the*, *a lot of*

Most funds are committed. [Plural count.]

Most money is needed elsewhere. [Noncount.]

Only with singular count nouns

one, every, each, either, neither, another

One car must be sold. [Singular count.]

Only with plural count nouns

these, those

both, many, few, a few, fewer, fewest, several

two, three, and so forth

Two cars are unnecessary. [Plural count.]

Note *Few* means “not many” or “not enough.” *A few* means “some” or “a small but sufficient quantity.”

Few committee members came to the meeting.
A few members can keep the committee going.

Do not use *much* with a plural count noun.

Many [not Much] members want to help.

Only with noncount nouns

much, more, little, a little, less, least, a large amount of

Less luxury is in order. [Noncount.]

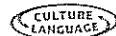
Note *Little* means “not many” or “not enough.” *A little* means “some” or “a small but sufficient quantity.”

Little time remains before the conference.
The members need a little help from their colleagues.

Do not use *many* with a noncount noun.

Much [not Many] work remains.

Exercise 33.7 Revising: Determiners



In the following paragraph, identify and revise missing or incorrect determiners. Mark the number preceding any sentence that is correct as given.

- 1 Much people love to swim for exercise or just plain fun.
- 2 Few swimmers, however, are aware of the possible danger of sharing their swimming spot with others.
- 3 These danger has increased in recent years because of dramatic rise in outbreaks of the parasite cryptosporidium.
- 4 Swallowing even little water containing cryptosporidium can make anyone sick.
- 5 Chlorine is used in nearly every public pools to kill parasites, but the chlorine takes six or seven days to kill cryptosporidium.
- 6 Most health authorities advise people to limit their swimming in public pools and to drink as little of the pool water as possible.

Exercise 33.8 Revising: Adjectives and adverbs

Revise the following paragraph to correct errors in the use of adjectives and adverbs.

1 Americans often argue about which professional sport is better: basketball, football, or baseball. 2 Basketball fans contend that their sport offers more action because the players are constant running and shooting. 3 Because it is played indoors in relative small arenas, basketball allows fans to be more closer to the action than the other sports. 4 Football fanatics say they don't hardly stop yelling once the game begins. 5 They cheer when their team executes a complicated play good. 6 They roar more louder when the defense stops the opponents in a goal-line stand. 7 They yell loudest when a fullback crashes in for a score. 8 In contrast, the supporters of baseball believe that it is the better sport. 9 It combines the one-on-one duel of pitcher and batter struggling valiant with the tight teamwork of double and triple plays. 10 Because the game is played slow and careful, fans can analyze and discuss the manager's strategy.

34 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

The arrangement of words in a sentence is an important clue to their relationships. Modifiers will be unclear if readers can't connect them to the words they modify.

Grammar checkers A grammar checker cannot recognize most problems with modifiers. For instance, a checker failed to flag the misplaced modifiers in *Gasoline high prices affect usually car sales* or the dangling modifier in *The vandalism was visible passing the building*.

34a Reposition misplaced modifiers.

A misplaced modifier falls in the wrong place in a sentence. It is usually awkward or confusing. It may even be unintentionally funny.

1 Clear placement

Readers tend to link a modifier to the nearest word it could modify. Any other placement can link the modifier to the wrong word.

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Visit mycomplab.com for more resources and exercises on misplaced and dangling modifiers.

signment} {a proven need}. Some irregular past participles have only this adjectival function {a shaven face} {a graven image}, the past-participial verb having taken a different form {shaved} {engraved}. See also 5.84.

Articles as Limiting Adjectives

- 5-69 *Definition of an article.* An article is a limiting adjective that precedes a noun or noun phrase and determines the noun's or phrase's use to indicate something definite (*the*) or indefinite (*a* or *an*). An article might stand alone or be used with other adjectives {a road} {a brick road} {the yellow brick road}. When present, it is always the first word in a noun phrase.
- 5-70 *Definite article.* The definite article points to a definite object that (1) is so well understood that it does not need description (e.g., *the package is here* is a shortened form of *the package that was expected is here*); (2) is a thing that is about to be described {the sights in Chicago}; or (3) is important {won the grand prize}. The definite article may precede a singular or a plural noun. Mass nouns may also take the definite article {the evidence} {the herd}.
- 5-71 *Indefinite article.* An indefinite article points to nonspecific objects, things, or persons that are not distinguished from the other members of a class. The thing may be singular {a student at Princeton}, or uncountable {a multitude}, or generalized {an idea inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost*}.
- 5-72 *Exceptions.* In a few usages, the indefinite article provides a specific reference {I saw a great movie last night} and the definite article a generic reference {the Scots are talking about independence} (generalizing by nationality).
- 5-73 *Choosing "a" or "an."* With the indefinite article, the choice of *a* or *an* depends on the sound of the word it precedes. *A* comes before words with a consonant sound, including /y/, /h/, and /w/, no matter how the word is spelled {a eulogy} {a hotel suite} {a Ouachita tribe member}. *An* comes before words with a vowel sound {an LSAT exam room} {an *X-Files* episode} {an hour ago}. See also 5.202, 7.46, 15.9.
- 5-74 *Articles with coordinate nouns.* With a series of coordinate nouns, an article should appear before each noun {the rosebush and the hedge need trimming} {a letter and a magazine came in the mail today}. If the things named make up a single idea, the article need not be repeated {in the highest degree of dressage, the horse and rider appear to be one entity}. And if the named things are covered by one plural noun, the definite article

should not be repeated with each modifier {in the first and second years of college}.

- 5-75 *Effect on meaning.* Because articles have a demonstrative value, the meaning of a phrase may shift depending on the article used. For example, *an officer and gentleman escorted Princess Plum to her car* suggests (though ambiguously) that the escort was one man with two descriptive characteristics. But *an officer and a friend escorted Princess Plum to her car* suggests that two people acted as escorts. Similarly, *Do you like the red and blue cloth?* suggests that the cloth contains both red and blue threads. But *Do you like the red and the blue cloth?* suggests that two different fabrics are being discussed. If ambiguity is likely in a given context, the clearest way to express the idea that the cloth contains both red and blue is to hyphenate the phrase as a compound modifier: *red-and-blue cloth*; and with two kinds of cloth, the clear expression is either to repeat the word *cloth* (*the red cloth and the blue cloth*) or to use *cloth* with the first adjective rather than the second (*the red cloth and the blue*).
- 5-76 *Zero article.* Some usages call for a zero article, an article implicitly present, usually before a mass or plural noun {although both new and washed bottles are stacked nearby, cider is poured into new bottles only} (*the* is implicit before *new bottles*).
- 5-77 *Omitted article.* The absence of an article may alter a sentence's meaning—for example, the meaning of *the news brought us little comfort* (we weren't comforted) changes if *a* is inserted before *little*: *the news brought us a little comfort* (we felt somewhat comforted).
- 5-78 *Article as pronoun substitute.* An article may sometimes substitute for a pronoun. For example, the blanks in *a patient who develops the described rash on ____ hands should inform ____ doctor* may be filled in with the pronoun phrase *his* or *her* or the article *the*. See also 5.204.

Dates as Adjectives

- 5-79 *Use and punctuation.* Dates are often used as descriptive adjectives, more so today than in years past. If a month-and-year or month-and-day date is used as an adjective, no hyphen or comma is needed {October 31 festivities} {December 2003 financial statement}. If a full month-day-year date is used, then a comma is considered necessary both before and after the year {the May 18, 2002, commencement ceremonies}. But this construction seems awkward because the adjective (which is forward-looking) contains two commas (which are backward-looking); the construction is