Rules of Grammar I

Clauses and Phrases

- **Clauses**: groups of words that include noun + verb (subject + predicate).

  - noun: indicates a person, place, thing, or idea

  - verb: describes an action, state of being, or occurrence

  - subject: person/place/thing performing an action or being described

  - predicate: completes the sentence (can be as simple as a verb):
    "The Zika virus spread."
    "The fires have been displacing communities."

Clauses and Phrases

- **Phrases**: groups of words that include a noun but <u>no</u> verb.
    - phrases can act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs
    - adjectives: words that describe a noun ("<u>difficult</u> assignment")
    - adverbs: words that describe a verb ("word hard," "listen carefully")
    - examples of phrases:
        - "devoted mother/father" (noun)
        - "difficult semester" (adjective)
        - "tough going" (adverb)

Independent and Dependent Clauses

- **Rule #1**: don't write sentence fragments (stand-alone dependent clauses).

- **Independent Clauses** (groups of words that include noun + verb)
  - can stand alone
  - are complete (simple) sentences
  - "The 9th circuit court of appeals rejected the revised travel ban."

Independent and Dependent Clauses

- More on Rule #1

- **Dependent Clauses**
  - cannot stand alone: need independent clause to complete the sentence
  - created by using "relative pronouns" or "subordinating conjunctions"
    - ↳ relative pronouns: that, which, who, whom, whose
    - ↳ subordinating conjunctions: while, since, after, although
  - "That the 9th circuit court of appeals rejected the revised travel ban."
  - "While the 9th circuit court of appeals rejected the revised travel ban."

Independent and Dependent Clauses

- More on Rule #1

- **Independent and Dependent Clauses**
  - be able to distinguish dependent from independent clauses

  - "Although working collectively is difficult, states have strong incentives to curb the spread of infectious diseases."

  - "While Ames et al. seemed to confirm that natural pesticides are more pervasive than synthetic, it's still unclear why this implies that we should not be concerned about exposure to synthetic pesticides."

Plurals and Possessives

- **Rule #2**: do not commit spelling errors regarding plurals, possessives, plural possessives, and homophones.

- **Plurals**
  - indicate more than one of something
  - examples: regulations, communities, viruses, alternatives, methods

- **Possessives**
  - indicate that one or more things belong to someone or something else
  - examples: regulation's, community's, virus', alternative's, method's

- **Plural Possessives**
  - indicate that one or more things belong to a group of people or things
  - examples: regulations', communities', viruses', alternatives', methods'

Homophones

- **More on Rule #2**
- **Homophones: words that sound the same but have different meanings**
  - "there" versus "their" versus "they're"
    there = noun
    their = plural possessive adjective
    they're = noun/verb conjunction

  - "its" versus "it's"
    its = possessive adjective
    it's = noun/verb conjunction

  - "affect" versus "effect"
    affect = verb
    effect = noun

Singular v. Plural Pronouns

- **Rule #3**: do not use plural pronoun to substitute for a singular noun.

- Pronouns are words that substitute for nouns and make general reference to a subject in a current or previous sentence.

  - examples of singular pronouns: he/his, she/her, it/its, this, that, you/yours
  - examples of plural pronouns: we, us, ours, they, them, their, theirs

  - e.g., subject = the USDA—pronoun = ?
  - e.g., subject = infectious diseases' effects on human health—pronoun = ?

Singular v. Plural Pronouns

- More on Rule #3

- Common (improper) practice in student writing.
  - "Everyone understands their health risks once environmental standards are implemented."

  - "The FDA expects to bring their lawsuit before the Supreme Court."

  - singular nouns require singular pronouns
  - plural nouns require plural pronouns

That v. Who(m)

- **Rule #4**: do <u>not</u> use the relative pronoun "that" when referring to persons
  - "that" commonly is reserved for referring to things and places
  - "who" and "whom" commonly are reserved for referring to people

  - "scholars who provide strong examples of good research and writing"
  - "fields of study that do not have clear standards of good writing"

Who v. Whom

- **Rule #5**: do <u>not</u> use the subject pronoun "who" when referring to an object in a sentence.
  - subject: primary noun performing the action in the sentence
  - object: any noun that "receives" or is affected by the action

  - subject pronouns: I, he, she, it, you, we, they, who, whoever
  - object pronouns: me, him, her, it, you, us, them, whom, whomever
  - possessive pronouns: my, his, hers, its, ours, theirs, whose, whosever

  - "Those who have physiological vulnerabilities face the greatest risk."
  - "Compensation is owed those whom had no idea they were put at risk."

Complex Adjectives

- **Rule #6**: use a dash to connect multiple words that constitute a single adjective.
  - adjective: describes the noun (or subject)
    - ↳ difficult exam, convoluted analysis, protracted writing process
  - four-year-old child v. child who is four years old
  - historically-poor community v. community that is historically poor
  - commonly-cited theories v. theories that are commonly cited

Proper Nouns

- **Rule #7**: capitalize proper nouns.
  - proper noun: names a *particular* noun (person, place, thing)

  - United States Congress v. congressional district

  - President Trump's Cabinet v. a presidential cabinet

  - Basel Convention (on sale of hazardous waste) v. an international treaty

Conjunctions, Etc.

- **Coordinating Conjunctions**
  - join 2+ words, phrases, or clauses of <u>equal</u> value
  - examples: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS)
  - "The Paris Agreement shows the potential for global collaboration, but it has yet to be seen whether countries will agree to their pledges."

- **Subordinating Conjunctions**
  - join two or more words, phrases, or clauses of <u>unequal</u> value
  - examples: after, although, as, because, before, since, though, unless, when, while, etc.
  - "Since it is necessary for any successful climate treaty to be inclusive, developing nations had to agree to reduce their emissions too."

Conjunctions, Etc.

- **Relative Pronouns** (from earlier on dependent clauses)
  - connect a noun to a dependent clause, providing info about that noun
  - examples: that, which, who, whom, whose
  - "This assignment, which is due next week, …."

- **Conjunctive Adverbs**
  - join two independent clauses
  - examples: however, nevertheless, therefore, thus, accordingly, indeed, moreover, consequently
  - "Scientific research based on induction is problematic; however, we don't need to be nihilists about truth."

Punctuation: Comma

- **Rule #8**: use a comma <u>and</u> a coordinating conjunction—for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so—to join two independent clauses.
  - "Before its enactment, no testing on existing effluents were required, so the Lautenberg Act should help to protect public health."
  - "International environmental regulations often have sanctions for non-compliance, but nations still often skirt their responsibilities."

- **Rule #9**: use a comma to set apart non-essential dependent clauses.
  - essential: are necessary to establish the meaning of a sentence
  - non-essential: are <u>un</u>necessary to establish the meaning of a sentence

Punctuation: Comma

- More on Rule #9
  - "I didn't like how dense these scientific journal articles were at first, although I really appreciated how short they tend to be."
  - "The United States' agreement to reduce its GHG emissions by 17.9%, which was agreed to in Paris in 2015, drew much criticism."
  - when non-essential phrases or clauses occur in the middle of a sentence, bookend them with commas
- **Rule #10**: ask yourself if your non-essential clauses add to your meaning.
  - if they don't add meaning to your sentence, consider omitting them
  - always strive for greater clarity (here, via conciseness)

Punctuation: Comma

- **Rule #11**: omit commas with essential phrases and clauses.
  - "The majority of pathogens <u>that are involved in EID events</u> are bacterial or rickettsial" (Jones et al. 2008, 990).
  - "One of the biases <u>that the authors try to account for</u> is the disproportionate reporting of EID events in wealthy nations."

  - NOTE: the relative pronoun "**that**" is <u>only</u> used with essential clauses, and therefore does <u>not</u> require a comma.
  - the relative pronoun "**which**" can be used with both essential and non-essential clauses, and therefore requires a comma (only) when introducing a non-essential phrase or clause.

Punctuation: Comma

- **Rule #12**: use a comma to separate a dependent or introductory clause from an independent clause that follows.
  - "First, we have to justify our primary variables. Then, we consider alternative explanations."

- **Rule #13**: do <u>not</u> use a comma join two independent clauses.
  - "The regression initially suggested my key variables have no effect, after further tests the correlation I expected to find was confirmed."
  - this error is called a "comma splice"
  - ; or — or : should be used to join independent clauses (Rule 14 and 16)

Punctuation: Semi-Colon

- **Rule #14**: use a semi-colon (or double-dash) to join independent clauses
  - semi-colons (and double-dashes) can combine closely-related independent clauses (acting like a "weak period")
  - "The regression initially suggested my key variables have no effect; after further tests the correlation I expected to find was confirmed."
  - "I think the Paris Climate Agreement will fail—my professor agrees."

  - consider joining related independent clauses with a conjunctive adverb
  - "Our study was successful; nevertheless, we need to consider the limitations of our empirical modeling."
  - "I would love to land this job; yet, I don't think I'm qualified."

Punctuation: Semi-Colon

- **Rule #15**: do <u>not</u> use a semi-colon to join an dependent and independent clause.

    - see Rule 9 and 12

    - "While the empirical data is problematic; my conceptual justification for this cause-and-effect relationship is strong."

    - "As this analysis suggests; more research is necessary to understand whether growth hormones in milk cause adverse health effects."

Punctuation: Colon

- **Rule #16**: a complete statement (independent clause) <u>must</u> precede a colon.
  - colons used to indicate additional information, such as a list, result, or illustration (i.e., it acts as a verbal "=" sign).
  - "He only wants two things from his teacher: an easy A and no attendance policy."
  - "There is one major problem with international treaties: states can always choose to exercise their sovereignty and violate the terms."
  - example of incorrect use: "The internship requires several things such as: previous grassroots experience, strong communication skills, and personal initiative."

Punctuation: Broadly

- **Rule #17**: avoid run-on sentences
  - sentences that try to fit multiple independent ideas into one single sentence without proper coordination or punctuation
  - "If scientists evaluate the research findings of their peers on the basis of their political perspectives, then "scientific" debate among academics risks simply becoming political debate in the guise of science from the perspective of the public or policymakers, scientific debate and political debate on many environmental issues already have become indistinguishable" (adapted from Pielke 2006, 28).
  - the use of "," and ";" and "—" and ":" and "." are necessary to properly separate and to clearly convey our ideas