

English Grammar · A1

English edition

Contents

1 The verb to be

1.1 am / is / are

The verb to be

am	is	are
with I	he / she / it	you / we / they
<i>I am</i>	<i>she is</i>	<i>they are</i>

The verb to be: reference card grid

The verb “to be” means “is / am / are.” It changes according to the subject and has three forms:

- **I → am**
- **he / she / it → is**
- **you / we / they → are**

I am a student.

I am a student.

She is happy.

She is happy.

They are from China.

They are from China.

Note: Common spoken contractions: I’m, you’re, he’s, she’s, it’s, we’re, they’re.

1.2 Negation and Interrogative

Negation: Add **not** after the be verb (often contracted).

He is not a teacher.

He is not a teacher. (= He isn’t a teacher.)

Interrogative: Place the be verb **before the subject**.

Are you ready?

Are you ready?

Short answers: **Yes, I am.** / **No, I'm not.**

Note: Negative contractions: is not → isn't, are not → aren't; but am not is only contracted to I'm not (there is no ~amn't~).

Common Errors

- × ~He busy.~ → ✓ He **is** busy. — In Chinese, “He is very busy” can exist without a verb, but an English sentence must have a verb. Use be to link when the predicative is an adjective or noun and there are no other verbs in the sentence (He **is** busy); do not add be if the sentence already contains an ordinary verb (I go to school).
- × ~I am go to school.~ → ✓ I go to school. — Do not use be and ordinary verbs together; “go” alone suffices for “to go.”
- × ~They is my friends.~ → ✓ They **are** my friends. — Plural subjects (you / we / they) take are.
- × ~I am agree.~ → ✓ I agree. — agree is itself a verb; do not add am before it.
- × ~Are you ready? — Yes, I'm.~ → ✓ Yes, I **am**. — Contractions cannot be used at the end of affirmative short answers (say Yes, I am); however, negative short answers typically end with a negative contraction (No, he isn't / No, I can't; first person is No, I'm not, as there is no amn't).

2 Subject pronouns

2.1 I, you, he, she, it, we, they

Pronoun vs possessive

Subject	Possessive
does the verb	before a noun
<i>I, he, they</i>	<i>my, his, their</i>

Pronoun vs possessive: reference card grid

Subject pronouns replace the subject and are placed **before the verb**:

- **I**(I), **you**(you), **he**(he), **she**(she)
- **it**(it), **we**(we), **they**(they)

He is my brother.

He is my brother.

We like music.

We like music.

Key Usage Points:

- **I** is always **capitalized**, regardless of its position in the sentence.
- Things and animals commonly use **it**: *This is my bag. **It** is new.*(This is my bag. It is new.)*
- Plural people or things both use **they**: *The books are here. **They** are mine.*(The books are here. They are mine.)*

Note: Subject pronouns are followed by verbs; do not confuse them with object pronouns (me, him, her...) which will be learned later.

Common Errors

- × ~~My mother is a doctor. He is very kind.~~ → ✓ **She** is very kind. — In colloquial Chinese, “he/she” sounds identical, but in English, he and she must be

clearly distinguished.

- × ~~Me am a student.~~ → ✓ **I** am a student. — Use I for the subject, not me.
- × ~~My friend he is tall.~~ → ✓ My friend is tall. — The subject needs to be mentioned only once; avoid repeating “noun + pronoun” (the Chinese habit of saying “my friend he...” does not apply in English).
- × ~~Is raining.~~ → ✓ **It** is raining. — English sentences must have a subject; weather, time, and dates begin with it.

3 Possessive adjectives

3.1 my, your, his, her, our, their

Possessive adjectives

my	your	his / her	our / their
I	you	he / she	we / they
<i>my bag</i>	<i>your book</i>	<i>her name</i>	<i>our house</i>

Possessive adjectives: reference card grid

Possessive adjectives indicate “whose” and are placed **before the noun**:

- I → **my**(my), you → **your**(your), he → **his**(his)
- she → **her**(her), it → **its**(its), we → **our**(our), they → **their**(their)

This is my bag.

This is my bag.

Her name is Lucy.

Her name is Lucy.

Key Usage Points:

- Possessive adjectives are **always followed by a noun**: my **book**, their **house**.
- They do **not change with noun number**: my book, my books(my remains unchanged).

Note: Be careful to distinguish **its** (its, no apostrophe) and **it's** (= it is). For example: *The dog wags **its** tail.*(The dog wags its tail.)*

Common Errors

- × *~This is she book.~* → ✓ This is **her** book. — A possessive form must precede a noun: he → his, she → her.
- × *~He is me friend.~* → ✓ He is **my** friend. — The possessive form of I is my.

- × ~~The dog wags it's tail.~~ → ✓ ...wags **its** tail. — it's = it is; "its" (possessive) has no apostrophe.
- × ~~Their is a park near here.~~ → ✓ **There** is a park near here. — their (their) and there (there/here) sound identical; do not mix them up in writing.

4 this, that, these, those

4.1 this and that

Pointing words

this	that	these	those
near · one	far · one	near · many	far · many
<i>this pen</i>	<i>that car</i>	<i>these books</i>	<i>those people</i>

Pointing words: reference card grid

Demonstratives point out “which one.” Use **this** and **that** for singular:

- **this**(this): Close to the speaker.
- **that**(that): Far from the speaker.

This is my phone.

This is my phone. (Close)

That is your car.

That is your car. (Far)

4.2 these and those

Use **these** and **those** for plural:

- **these**(these): Close. **those**(those): Far.

These are my books.

These are my books.

Those are her friends.

Those are her friends.

Contrastive Memory:

- Near → this (singular) / these (plural).

- Far → that (singular) / those (plural).

Note: These / those are followed by **plural nouns**: these books, not ~~these book~~.

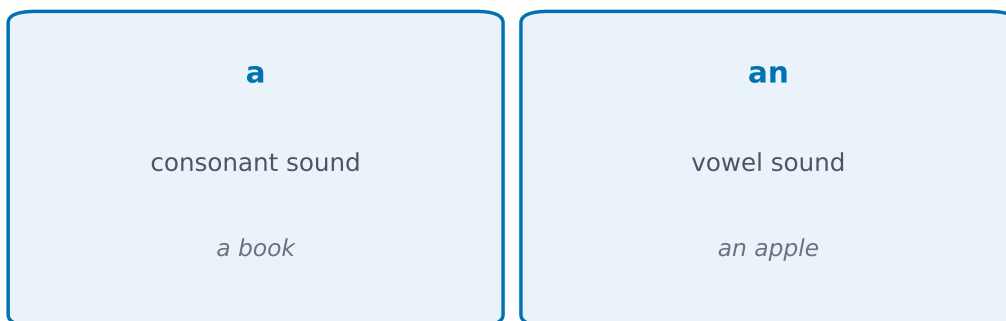
Common Errors

- × ~~these book~~ → ✓ these books — Plural nouns must follow these / those.
- × ~~This books are mine.~~ → ✓ **These** books are mine. — If the noun is plural, the demonstrative must also be plural.
- × When introducing yourself on the phone, say ~~I am Tom.~~ → ✓ **This is** Tom. — In English, introduce yourself on the phone using this is.
- Remember pairs: Near this / these are often used with **here**; far that / those are often used with **there**.

5 a, an and plurals

5.1 a and an

a or an?



a or an?: reference card grid

a and **an** mean “one” and are used before **singular countable nouns**. How to choose depends on **pronunciation**:

- **a** + consonant sound: a book, a dog, a cat.
- **an** + vowel sound: an apple, an egg, an orange.

I have a pen.

I have a pen.

She eats an apple.

She eats an apple.

Note: Look at the sound, not the letter: an **h**our (h is silent), a **u**niversity (pronounced “yu-”).

5.2 Plural Nouns

To indicate “more than one,” use the **plural** form of the noun, usually adding **-s**:

- Generally add **-s**: book → books, car → cars.
- Words ending in -s / -sh / -ch / -x add **-es**: bus → buses, box → boxes.
- Consonant + y ending: change y to i and add -es: baby → babies, city → cities.

I have two cats.

I have two cats.

Irregular plurals (must memorize):

- man → **men**, woman → **women**, child → **children**.
- foot → **feet**, tooth → **teeth**, person → **people**.

Note: Do **not** use a / an before plural nouns: ~~a books~~ × → books / two books ✓.

Common Errors

- × ~~I have dog.~~ → ✓ I have **a** dog. — In Chinese you can say “I have dogs,” but singular countable nouns in English must have a / an (or my, the, etc.) before them.
- × ~~an university~~ → ✓ **a** university; × ~~a hour~~ → ✓ **an** hour — Look at pronunciation, not spelling: university starts with a consonant sound /j/, and h is silent in hour.
- × ~~two book~~ → ✓ two **books** — Chinese nouns do not change for plurality, but nouns after numbers in English require -s; this is easily forgotten.
- × ~~three childs~~ → ✓ three **children** — Irregular plurals must be memorized separately: men, women, children, feet, teeth, people.
- × ~~a people~~ → ✓ **a person** (one person) / people (many people) — people is inherently plural.

6 there is and there are

6.1 Singular and Plural

There is / There are

There is	There are
singular / uncountable	plural
<i>a cat · water</i>	<i>two books</i>

There is / There are: reference card grid

there is / there are means “there exists” (something exists somewhere).

- **There is + singular / uncountable noun:** There is a book.
- **There are + plural noun:** There are two books.

There is a cat on the sofa.

There is a cat on the sofa.

There are three books on the desk.

There are three books on the table.

Note: In spoken English, there is is often contracted to **there's**: There's a problem.

6.2 Negation and Interrogative

Negative: there is **not** / there are **not** (contracted as there isn't / there aren't).

There isn't any milk.

There is no milk left.

Question: Move is / are to the **front** of there.

Is there a bank near here?

Is there a bank nearby?

Short answer: **Yes, there is.** / **No, there isn't.**

Note: Use **any** frequently in negative / question sentences: Is there **any** water? (Is there any water?)

Common Errors

- × ~~Here has many people.~~ → ✓ **There are** many people here. — The “have” in the Chinese “There are many people here” indicates existence; use there is / there are in English, do not translate literally as have.
- × ~~There have a book on the desk.~~ → ✓ There **is** a book on the desk. — Use is / are after there; there have does not exist.
- × ~~There is two cats.~~ → ✓ There **are** two cats. — If the following noun is plural, use are.
- × ~~There are a milk.~~ → ✓ There is **some** milk. — milk is uncountable: use there is + some, do not use a.

7 have got

7.1 have got / has got

have got / has got

have got	has got
I / you / we / they	he / she / it
<i>I have got</i>	<i>she has got</i>

have got / has got: reference card grid

have got means “to possess” (= have), common in British English.

- I / you / we / they → **have got**
- he / she / it → **has got**

I have got a brother.

I have a brother. (= I have a brother.)

She has got blue eyes.

She has blue eyes.

Note: Often contracted in spoken language: I’ve got, she’s got, they’ve got. Same meaning as have / has.

7.2 Negation and Interrogative

Negative: haven’t got / hasn’t got.

He hasn’t got a car.

He doesn’t have a car.

Question: Move **Have** / **Has** to the front of the subject.

Have you got a pen?

Do you have a pen?

Short answer: **Yes, I have.** / **No, I haven't.**

Note: have got is mostly used for current possession; for past or habits, use regular have / had.

Common Errors

- × ~~She have got long hair.~~ → ✓ She **has got** long hair. — Use has got for he / she / it.
- × ~~I have got not a car.~~ → ✓ I **haven't got** a car. — Place not after have / has, then contract.
- × ~~Do you have got a pen?~~ → ✓ **Have you got** a pen? / **Do you have** a pen? — Both question forms are correct, but never mix them.
- × ~~Yes, I have got.~~ → ✓ Yes, I **have.** — Short answers end at have / has, without got.

8 Present simple

8.1 Habits and Third Person -s

Present simple - a repeated habit



Present simple: a repeated habit: tense timeline

Present simple (present simple) describes **habits** and **facts**. The base form is the **infinitive** (base verb).

I like tea.

I like tea.

When the subject is **he** / **she** / **it**, add **-s** to the verb:

He plays football.

He plays football.

Spelling rules:

- Generally add -s: like → likes.
- Words ending in -s / -sh / -ch / -x / -o add -es: go → goes, watch → watches.
- Consonant + y ending: change y to i and add -es: study → studies.

Note: Only he / she / it take -s; I / you / we / they use the base form: They **like** tea.

8.2 Negation and Interrogative



For negatives and questions, use auxiliary verbs **do** / **does** (does for he / she / it).

Negative: Subject + **don't** / **doesn't** + base verb.

I don't like coffee.

I don't like coffee.

Question: **Do** / **Does** + Subject + base verb ?

Does she live here?

Does she live here?

Note: When using do / does, the verb returns to its **base form** (no -s): ~~Does she lives~~ × → Does she live ✓.

Common Errors

- × ~~He go to school by bus.~~ → ✓ He **goes** to school by bus. — Forgetting to add -s in third person singular is the most frequent error; check your work afterwards.
- × ~~She doesn't likes coffee.~~ → ✓ She doesn't **like** coffee. — When using does / doesn't, the verb returns to its base form.
- × ~~I very like English.~~ → ✓ I like English **very much**. — “Very much” in Chinese cannot be translated literally; very cannot directly modify a verb.
- × ~~You like tea?~~ → ✓ **Do** you like tea? — Questions must start with do / does; rising intonation alone is insufficient.

9 can

9.1 Ability and Requests

can

can	can't	Can ...?
ability / request	negative	question
<i>I can swim</i>	<i>she can't drive</i>	<i>Can you help?</i>

can: reference card grid

can expresses **ability** (“know how to / be able to”) or is used for **requests**. It is followed by the **base form of the verb**, and remains the same for all persons.

I can swim.

I can swim.

Can you help me?

Can you help me?

Note: Use the **base form** after can: *~~can to swim~~* ×, *~~can swims~~* × → *can swim* ✓.

9.2 Negation and Interrogative

Negative: **cannot** (abbreviation **can't**) + base form of the verb.

She can't drive.

She cannot drive.

Question: Place **Can** before the subject.

Can he cook?

Can he cook?

Short answer: **Yes, I can.** / **No, I can't.**

Note: can has no -s and does not use do/does: ask directly with **Can he...?**, not ~Does he can...?~

Common Errors

- × ~She cans drive.~ → ✓ She **can** drive. — can has no third-person singular -s; it is the same for all persons.
- × ~I don't can swim.~ → ✓ I **can't** swim. — The negative of can is formed directly with not (can't), without using don't.
- × ~He can sings very good.~ → ✓ He can **sing** very **well**. — Use the base form of the verb after can; use the adverb well to modify a verb, not good.
- × ~You can help me?~ → ✓ **Can** you help me? — When making a request, place can before the subject.

10 Imperatives

10.1 Commands and Instructions

Imperatives

Verb!	Don't ...	... please
base verb	negative	polite
<i>Open the door.</i>	<i>Don't be late.</i>	<i>Please sit down.</i>

Imperatives: reference card grid

Imperatives are used to give **commands**, provide **instructions**, or make **requests**. Start directly with the **base form of the verb**, without a subject.

Open the door, please.

Please open the door.

Sit down.

Sit down.

Negative: Add **Don't** at the beginning.

Don't be late.

Don't be late.

Key Usage Points:

- Add **please** to be more polite: Please come in.
- Also used for directions and instructions: Turn left. Mix the eggs.

Note: Do not write a subject in imperatives: ~~You open the door~~ (for a command)
→ **Open** the door.

Common Errors

- × ~~Please open door.~~ → ✓ Please open **the** door. — Articles must still be included in imperatives.

- × ~~Don't to touch it.~~ → ✓ Don't **touch** it. — Follow don't directly with the base form of the verb; do not add to.
- × ~~No talk in class!~~ → ✓ **Don't talk** in class! / No **talking**! — To prohibit an action, use don't + base form; after no, use -ing or a noun.
- × ~~You sit down!~~ → ✓ Sit down, please. — Adding you to a command sounds angry; add please for politeness, or change to Can you...?

11 Question words

11.1 what, where, who

Question words

What?	Where?	Who?	When?
a thing	a place	a person	a time
<i>What is it?</i>	<i>Where? Home.</i>	<i>Who is she?</i>	<i>When? At six.</i>

Question words: reference card grid

Question words are placed at the **beginning** of a question to ask for specific information.

- **what** (what), **where** (where), **who** (who)

What is your name?

What's your name?

Where do you live?

Where do you live?

Who is that man?

Who is that man?

Note: A be verb or auxiliary do/does often follows the question word: Where **do** you work?

11.2 when, why, how

- **when** (when), **why** (why), **how** (how / in what way)

When is the party?

When is the party?

Why are you sad?

Why are you sad?

How do you spell it?

How do you spell this?

Note: **how** can also combine with adjectives to ask about degree: How old are you?
How much is it?

Common Errors

- × ~~Where you live?~~ → ✓ Where **do** you live? — After the question word, you still need do/does or be; you cannot follow directly with the subject.
- × ~~What means this word?~~ → ✓ What **does** this word **mean**? — mean is an ordinary verb: question word + does + subject + base form.
- × ~~Why you are late?~~ → ✓ Why **are** you late? — When there is a be verb in the sentence, move be before the subject.
- × ~~How to spell it?~~ → ✓ **How do you spell** it? — A literal translation of “How to spell?” loses the subject and auxiliary verb; these must be added.

12 Prepositions of place

12.1 in, on, under

Prepositions of place

in	on	under
inside	a surface	below
<i>in the bag</i>	<i>on the table</i>	<i>under the chair</i>

Prepositions of place: reference card grid

Prepositions of place indicate **where** something is located.

- **in** (inside...), **on** (on top of... / surface), **under** (below...)

The keys are in the bag.

The key is in the bag.

The book is on the table.

The book is on the table.

The cat is under the chair.

The cat is under the chair.

12.2 next to, between, behind

- **next to** (beside...), **between** (between...), **behind** (behind...), **in front of** (in front of...)

The shop is next to the bank.

The shop is next to the bank.

She sits between Tom and Sam.

She sits between Tom and Sam.

Note: between means “between two,” and is usually followed by **A and B**: between the door **and** the window.

Common Errors

- × ~~The picture is in the wall.~~ → ✓ The picture is **on** the wall. — Hanging “on” the wall involves surface contact, so use on.
- × ~~I read it on the book.~~ → ✓ ...**in** the book. — Content “inside” a book uses in; people in photos also use **in** the photo.
- × ~~The shop is next the bank.~~ → ✓ next **to** the bank — next to is two words; to cannot be omitted.
- × ~~between the door with the window~~ → ✓ between the door **and** the window — between takes the fixed collocation A and B.