

# English Grammar · A1

English edition

# 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   |
| my bag | your book | her name  | our house   |

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~~.

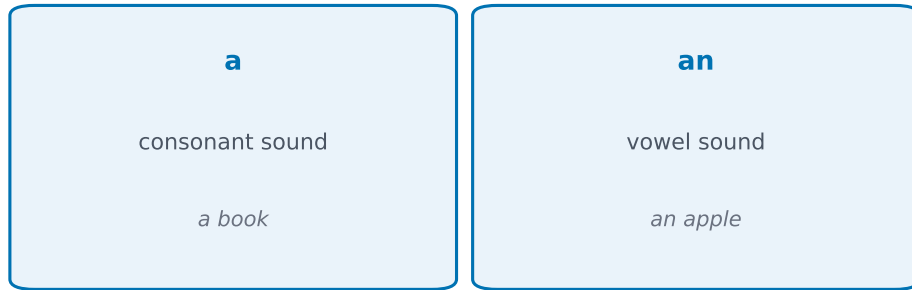
### Common Errors

- × ~~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 **hour** (h is silent), a **university** (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.

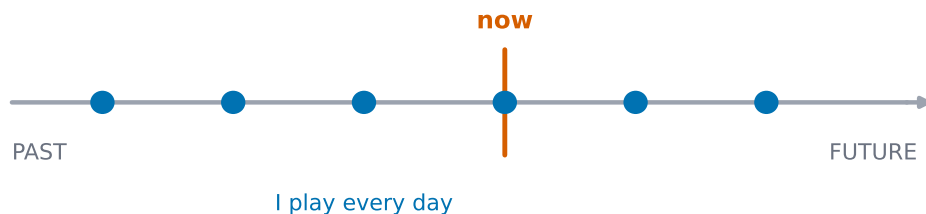
#### Common Errors

- × ~~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.