Agreement, verb forms, modifiers and logical parallelism

Original skill preparation; versioned source scope

Agreement, Verb Forms, Modifiers and Parallelism

- Make a **finite verb** 限定动词 agree with its subject, and choose the right tense.
- Make a pronoun agree with its **antecedent** 先行词.
- Place a **modifier** 修饰语 next to the word it describes, and avoid a **dangling modifier** 垂悬修饰语.
- Keep lists and comparisons in **parallelism** 平行结构.

Subject–verb agreement

- Find the true subject; ignore phrases in between: "The collection of donated tools includes three drills."
- "Each", "every", "either", "neither" and collective nouns such as "team" usually take a singular verb.
- Two subjects joined by "and" take a plural verb.

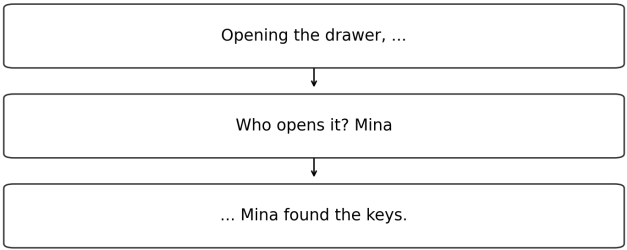
Tense and verb form

- Keep tenses consistent unless the time changes. Time words help: "yesterday" needs the past.
- The past perfect ("had checked") shows that one past event happened before another; use it when the order needs to be clear.
- After "to" or a modal ("can", "must"), use the base form.

Pronouns and modifiers

- A pronoun must have one clear **antecedent** and agree with it: "The team presented its plan."
- If "she" could mean two people, use a name.
- A modifier at the start of a sentence describes the subject that comes right after the comma.

Figure: Pronouns and modifiers



- Worked steps: Opening the drawer, ... → Who opens it? Mina → ... Mina found the keys.
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Parallelism and logical comparison

- Items in a list take the same form: "to clean, label and display", not "to clean, labelling and display".
- Compare like with like: "The museum's hours are longer than the archive's hours" (or "the archive's"), not "than the archive".

Practice passage

- **Editing passage.** The collection of donated tools [1: include/includes] three old drills.
- Examining the smallest drill, [2: a crack surprised Jo/Jo noticed a crack].
- Yesterday Jo [3: repairs/repaired] the casing.
- The volunteer team plans to clean, [4: label/labelling], and display the tools.

Worked example: five choices

1 "Includes": the subject is "collection", singular.

2 "Jo noticed a crack": Jo is the one examining, so Jo must follow the comma.

3 "Repaired": "yesterday" needs the past.

Worked example: five choices (2)

4 "Label": parallel with "clean" and "display" after "to".

5 "The archive's opening hours": hours are compared with hours, not with a building.

Worked example: unclear reference and sequence

- "When Jo met Mina, she showed her the repaired drill." "She" could be either person. Clear: "When they met, Jo showed Mina the repaired drill."
- "Before the shop opened last Monday, Jo had checked the drills." The past perfect shows the checking came first. Here "before" already shows the order, so the simple past would also be acceptable; judge each sentence.
- A parallel list: "checking cables, replacing screws and cleaning handles", all -ing forms.

Common errors

- Matching the verb to the nearest noun instead of the subject.
- Using "their" for a singular collective noun such as "the team".
- Leaving an opening modifier with no subject it can describe.

Common errors (2)

- Mixing forms in a list.
- Comparing a thing with a person or place.

Key terms

- **finite verb**: A verb with tense that can be the main verb of a clause.
- **antecedent**: The noun that a pronoun refers back to.
- **modifier**: A word or phrase that describes another part of the sentence.
- **dangling modifier**: A modifier with no clear word in the sentence to describe.

Check yourself

- Choose: "Neither of the answers ____ correct." (is / are)
- Correct: "Walking to school, the rain started."
- Make parallel: "She likes swimming, to run and cycling."