

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS WORKBOOK

Loyola University New Orleans
MBA Program

Lesson One: Split Verbs and Dangling Modifiers
Lesson Two: The Art of Commas
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INTRODUCTION

The best way to ensure your writing is free of grammar and mechanics mistakes is to avoid these mistakes from the beginning—while you’re writing. Learning and understanding grammatical rules will save you time while writing and will make proofreading easier as well.

This workbook explores some common grammatical concepts that MBA student writers often find confusing. Each lesson discusses the underlying rules for one or two concepts and then provides a series of exercises to help you to master the grammar points.

While grammar—language—can be described in rules, the actual act of writing language on paper in a form that someone else can understand is an art. Every rule—once mastered—can be bent on occasion.

Lesson One: SPLIT VERBS AND DANGLING MODIFIERS

MBA Writing Guide reference: Pages 4-5

Split Infinitives

The infinitive, [to + verb], is considered the most basic form of a verb. (You may remember conjugating verbs in your foreign language class using the infinitive.) Many argue that the “to” and the verb should never be separated, especially in formal writing. What usually separates them is an adverb, like *quickly*, *effectively*, or *unfortunately*. As you write, make sure the adverb or other modifier follows—never splits—the infinitive construction. The split infinitive rule applies to “not” as well, although “not” should precede the verb construction.

- ✗ *She hopes to eloquently summarize the conference proceedings to the executive committee.*
- ✓ *She hopes to summarize eloquently the conference proceedings to the executive committee.*
- ✓ *She hopes to summarize the conference proceedings eloquently to the executive committee.*

- ✗ *Marshall hopes to not bore the audience.*
- ✓ *Marshall hopes not to bore the audience.*

Quick Exercises

Rewrite the sentences by moving or removing the adverb splitting the infinitive.

1. The statistical reports have allowed us to quite successfully postulate trends and correlations.

2. The forum also provides the opportunity to truly showcase the thought-leadership of the firm.

3. Please be sure to carefully read the proposal and contact me with your decision.

Dangling Modifiers

Modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that modify, *i.e.*, describe, another word. When modifiers are placed such that they modify the incorrect or illogical object or person, they are called dangling modifiers. Dangling modifiers usually appear at the beginning of sentences. Here is an example; the dangling modifier is underlined:

While hiking in Africa, a lion attacked him.

The lion was presumably not hiking, but the placement of the modifier phrase immediately before “a lion” illogically implies that the lion was hiking. Here is a possible revision:

A lion attacked him while hiking in Africa.

This revision does well to move the modifying phrase next to the actual pronoun it is modifying. Yet the phrase still is ambiguous. A better revision would be to define the subject in the modifier phrase:

While Jason was hiking in Africa, a lion attacked him.
A lion attacked Jason while he was hiking in Africa.

There are two strategies to fix dangling modifiers:

1. Rework the modifying phrase to specify its subject.
2. Rework the sentence so the modifier phrase is placed next to its subject.

Quick Exercises

Revise the sentences to allow the dangling modifier (in italics) to modify the correct subject. Apply the two strategies described above.

1. *While signing books*, the fans asked the author to recite his best-known poem.

2. *Receiving the highest rating by amateur enthusiasts*, wine connoisseurs agree that Nostra is a wine of amazing quality.

3. *Under pressure from the executive board*, the project was finished much faster than planned.

4. *After joining the company's wellness program*, Cerulean offers employees discounts for gym memberships.

5. *Citing unexpected costs*, the project was terminated before its completion.

Revision Exercise

Correct any split infinitives or dangling modifiers in the following paragraph.

The goal of this workshop is to thoroughly understand the Tutwiler method. Drew Mainerd and Allison Fawkes will present. Drawing on systems theory, the six steps will be explained in detail. Understanding the relationship among the various steps and among the elements of the organization will be crucial to effectively implementing the Tutwiler method. Managers will receive packets of information to help them learn the new method and to effectively share and teach the ideas to employees in their divisions.

Lesson Two: THE ART OF COMMAS

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MBA Writing Guide reference: Pages 22-23

The comma is perhaps the most common punctuation mark. A comma marks a pause, insertion, or transition in a sentence, separating text into discrete, easy-to-understand pieces. Over-use and misuse of commas, however, can distract the reader. Unlike the rules governing the period, another ubiquitous punctuation mark, the rules for the use of the comma are not as straightforward. This lesson will explore the basic rules for using commas.

Items in a Series

Use a comma to separate a series of three or more items. Note the comma before “and.”

The financial manager invested the money in gold, copper, and silver.

Inserted Information

Offset inserted information such as titles, degrees, states, dates, and other descriptive information.

Jessica Newton, PhD and well-known therapist, will lead the workshop.

The workshop will be held Monday, March 25, 2013, in the conference room.

She presents the topic, one excessively covered by the media, in a refreshing light.

She presents the topic, which has been excessively covered, in a refreshing light.

Do not use a comma before *that* (restrictive clauses). Unlike sentences using *which* to describe something, which place commas around the descriptive phrase, sentences with *that* do not use commas.

Local Motors is a new type of car company that crowd-sources the design of a vehicle.

Such policies will help to cut youth unemployment, which was 7.3 percent in July, more than twice the national average.

Do not use a comma before the abbreviations Co., Corp., and Inc., nor suffixes such as Jr. or III.

Empire State Building Co. leases the building from the owners.

Multiple Adjectives

Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives modifying the same word if the word “and” could logically be read between the adjectives.

The faster, more precise software dramatically increased the calculation speed.

If one adjective is modifying the other, no comma is needed.

The bright red cover made the report easy to identify.

Clauses and Conjunctions

Clauses are phrases. The type of clause and its position within a sentence determines whether a comma will be used to separate the clause from other parts of a sentence. These distinctions will be discussed in the next lesson, Lesson Three.

Quick Exercises

Add commas where needed in the following sentences.

1. Nick D’Alosio the teenage creator of the Summly app which he sold to Yahoo! for purportedly \$30 million is a self-taught programmer.
2. Campus Cooks Greek House Chefs and College Chefs are all catering businesses that provide in-house meals to college sororities and fraternities.
3. Tomorrow’s speaker Adam Behr will be presenting at 10:00 instead of 9:30.
4. Pizza Hut was started in June 1958 by two brothers Frank and Dan Carney of Wichita Kansas.
5. The newest model of the Mikado console table needs a shinier stronger lacquer finish that should be in muted green and in gray blue.

Revision Exercise

Add or remove commas as necessary from the following text. All other punctuation is correct.

SABMiller which sells 46 local brands across Africa expects to spend about \$300 million to \$500 million a year on the continent outside of South Africa building breweries and bottling facilities says Mark Bowman managing director at SABMiller Africa. In Uganda and Zimbabwe, the company already produces Eagle Lager using sorghum in place of some barley malt. The new beers have a more bitter taste than brews made from barley malt, and Bowman acknowledges that it’s “not supposed to be quite as nice as mainstream beers.” The difference will be a turnoff for some drinkers, accustomed to smoother more expensive quaffs.

Still the newer localized brews helped SABMiller achieve a 9 percent increase in beer production in Africa excluding South Africa for the quarter ended in March, 2012. And sales of low-cost, locally sourced drinks could grow to, “double or triple the size of the premium beer market as people move” from home-brewed concoctions, Bowman says. “These beers are a clear way to reach a market that wants to drink beer, but can’t afford to.”

Text adapted from “Selling Cassava Beer in a Land Without Barley,” by E. Dontoh and J. Kew, in *Bloomberg Businessweek*, May 20-26, 2013, p. 31.

Lesson Three: CLAUSES AND CONJUNCTIONS

MBA Writing Guide reference: Pages 21-23

Clauses are phrases. Some can be full, independent sentences (independent clauses). Others can be shorter phrases that depend on a full sentence to make sense (dependent clauses). When writing we combine independent and dependent clauses together in myriad ways to form sentences. Frequently, we use conjunctions—connecting words—to join clauses together.

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The type of clauses being joined and the conjunction being used dictate the punctuation used. This lesson will explore three different types of clause and conjunction combinations and explain how punctuation is used to join pieces of a sentence together.

Coordinating Conjunctions (*and, or, but, etc.*)

Coordinating conjunctions join two sentence elements together that usually have parallel or opposing functions or meanings. **Use a comma before coordinating conjunctions that connect two sentences.***

The graphics below will provide a visual of the financial benefits, but the focus will be on the stories our business specialists have shared.

The process from start to finish on a case is lengthy, and employees are working on multiple cases at a time.

*Consider carefully what the conjunctions are connecting. If you are actually connecting two nouns, verbs, or modifying phrases—*i.e.*, **not full sentences**—then you do not use a comma before the conjunction. (Of course, if three or more items are being listed, commas would be used. See “Items in a Series” under Lesson Two.)

These companies are not currently household names but will be in three years.

In raising the bar for what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, the institute must not only train employees but also work to attract better applicants.

The spokesperson says that the partnership is sound and they intend to lead software trends.

Let’s identify the elements being connected in the sentences above. Each element is bracketed and marked with a subscript A or B. Notice that none of the elements are independent sentences. Therefore no commas appear before the coordinating conjunctions.

These companies _A[are not currently household names] but _B[will be in three years].

In raising the bar for _A[what is acceptable] and _B[what is not acceptable], the institute must not only _A[train employees] but also _B[work to attract better applicants].

The spokesperson says that _A[the partnership is sound] and _B[they intend to lead software trends].

Subordinating Conjunctions (*because, since, although, if, unless, when, etc.*)

Subordinating conjunctions indicate a dependent relationship between two sentences. The subordinate (dependent) clause can appear before or after the main clause. **If a subordinate clause appears *before* the main clause, use a comma to separate the two clauses. If *after*, no punctuation is necessary.**

*Unless oil prices drop, the product price must remain high to cover transportation costs.
The product price must remain high to cover transportation costs unless oil prices drop.*

*When Sears and Roebuck launched the clothing line, ready-to-wear to apparel was a novelty.
Ready-to-wear apparel was a novelty when Sears and Roebuck launched the clothing line.*

The ability to be placed before and after the main clause applies to dependent clauses of all forms, as does the use (or non-use) of a comma.

*Despite the many analysts who claimed otherwise, the markets were inscrutable.
The markets were inscrutable despite the many analysts who claimed otherwise.*

*Rather than making Lance Armstrong the object of public scorn, his acknowledgment has generated an outpouring of sympathy and support.
Lance Armstrong's acknowledgment has generated an outpouring of sympathy and support rather than making him the object of public scorn.*

Conjunctive Adverbs (*therefore, however, thus, accordingly, etc.*)

Conjunctive adverbs—also known as transition words and phrases—show a relationship between two sentences that function independently of each other. **Either a semicolon or a period may be used to separate the two sentences—not a comma.**

*Each phase will be accomplished within a four-week period; therefore, the entire framework should be established within three months.
Severe weather has delayed the project by two weeks; as a result, we will exceed the budget by more than \$1 million in order to pay workers time and a half to finish on time.*

Quick Exercises

Each sentence has incorrect punctuation with the conjunction. Add or scratch out punctuation to correct the sentences.

1. While Musico blames the economy for its woes brand consultants say it has also failed to change with the times.
2. Skinner decided to give a greatly shortened talk, and lead a conversation on areas of improvement.
3. The combination of managerial maturity, and the fact that the company has younger and “hipper” decision makers has been successful.
4. The lender would decide how quickly the mortgage should be repaid and this decision could potentially affect the hiring process.
5. Today's teens are radically different from other generations, because they reject uniforms.

6. After opening up a new store, and kiosk Rickshaw Dumpling Bar faced a squeezed budget.
7. Like Instagram, the Chinese app PaPa allows for special effects to be added to photos, however, the app goes further to allow similarly altered voice messages to accompany the photos.
8. The technology worked, only if a shopper stood still near the store's entryway.
9. Authors can receive up to 10 percent from royalties but, if the book sells fewer copies than predicted, authors may receive nothing.
10. Due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) independent purchasers of insurance may see premiums increase by 32 percent or more.

Revision Exercise

Add commas where needed.

Rice however had not wanted to be a U.N. ambassador. She had taken a huge risk with a promising career when she decided in 2007 to support Obama over his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton. Rice had served all eight years of Bill Clinton's presidency first on the National Security Council staff and then as assistant secretary of state for African affairs. But when Obama decided to seek the presidency Rice threw in her lot with him because unlike Hillary Clinton he had opposed the war in Iraq. What's more as she told me at the time she thought that Obama (and not Clinton) had a "21st-century view of the world." Rice became a leader of Obama's foreign policy team and his most important surrogate on foreign affairs; early in the campaign they e-mailed and spoke constantly. When Obama won Rice hoped to be national security advisor or at least deputy. But Obama was a young black man with no foreign-policy experience; in Gen. James Jones his first national security advisor he chose an older tall and craggy white man with many stars on his shoulders. Rice got the United Nations.

Text adapted from "The Point Guard: Susan Rice," by J. Traub, in *Foreign Policy*, Sept/Oct 2012, p. 56.

Lesson Four: COMMAS, SEMICOLONS, AND COLONS

MBA Writing Guide reference: Pages 21-23 and 27

In the previous two lessons, we looked at the many ways that commas can be used. Now we will explore how commas, semicolons, and colons differ and how to use them correctly and effectively.

Commas

As discussed, commas are used to mark discrete portions of a sentence so that a reader can more easily follow the flow of ideas. To review, reread Lessons Two and Three or refer to the MBA Writing Guide.

Semicolons (;)

The semicolon can be considered a super-comma, creating a lengthier pause and separation while not dividing entirely, as a period would. Semicolons have limited uses:

1. To separate two full sentences that are closely linked. (A period can also be used; a comma cannot.)

Rarely is the movie more enjoyable than the book; The Princess Bride is one of those exceptions.

2. To separate items in longer or complicated lists, especially if items within the list contain commas.

The company has offices in Gainesville, Fla.; Mobile, Ala.; and New Orleans, La.

3. To precede conjunctive adverbs, such as *therefore* or *however*, when joining two full sentences.

The financial department announced a budget shortfall; therefore all teams must revise operating budgets to reflect the new situation.

Colons (:)

The colon introduces lists, quotes, and further information on the topic at hand. Let's look at several examples of the colon's use:

- a. *She was followed on stage by a succession of speakers who also didn't fit the white-guy-in-a-tie Republican mold: Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina, who is Indian American; [...]*
- b. *Now authorities need to take a giant step forward: make banks release the data needed [...]*
- c. *Adds Flynt: "Everything that's happened since then is rooted in the bitterness of being rejected [...]"*
- d. *Tom Wesselman [...] says Hohmann helped overcome a cultural hurdle: Every department expected perfection.*

Examples adapted from the Sept. 3-9, 2012 issue of *Bloomberg Businessweek*.

In all the examples, the sentence preceding the colon leads up to the information following the colon. The colon is therefore a cue to the reader that more information will follow.

In (a) and (b), the colon is necessary: the information following the colon is not a complete sentence. In

(c), a comma could be used in place of the colon to introduce the quote. In (d), a period or semicolon could be used—but doing so would weaken the build-up preceding the colon.

In (d), the first word following the colon is capitalized because a full sentence follows. In contrast, in (b), the first word following the colon is not capitalized because the information is not a full sentence.

Quick Exercises

In the following sentences, add the correct punctuation mark (comma, colon, or semicolon) in the bracketed space [].

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1. After hosting a car wash [] the volunteer group had earned over \$3,000.
2. Offering low prices may not be enough [] customers also want a pleasing shopping experience.
3. If the nearest distributor closes [] the plant may relocate.
4. Fortune 500 companies with female CEOs include HP [] Campbell Soup [] Lockheed Martin [] and PepsiCo.
5. A U.S. regulation from 1968 requires automobile headlights to have two settings [] high and low beams.
6. Five experts make up the panel [] Sharon Goldman [] from Longworth [] Goldman [] and Sachs [] James Lightner [] Singeltary and Fitch [] Mark Wasserberg [] Integriteam [] Anneliese Conrad [] Peach and Associates [] and Giles Vassar [] NHT Inc.
7. “History is repeating itself on a minor scale[]” says Barofsky.
8. Weiner writes [] “Who needs to be a star when you can be a meme?”
9. The financial environment during March 2013 was unimpressive and even unsettling [] that said [] companies are hopeful for an upswing in the economy.

Revision Exercise

Correct the paragraph below by adding commas, semicolons, and colons in the appropriate places.

Armstrong’s equivalent of SEC fines will be steep the probable voiding of his seven Tour de France wins (including the return of \$7 million in prize money) forfeiting his 2000 Olympic bronze medal and at age 40 a lifetime ban from professional Olympic-style sports—no more New York marathons triathlons or Iron Mans (an announced aspiration). It’s a hefty price to pay but consider the alternative hearings expected to include eye-witness testimony that he took testosterone and the blood booster EPO got illicit blood transfusions and conspired to help his entire team dope.

Lesson Five: RUN-ON SENTENCES

Comma Splices and Run-On Sentences

We have looked at how to combine two sentences together with conjunctions and punctuation. Two or more sentences bundled together with no punctuation or conjunction separating them are called run-on sentences. Run-on sentences with only a comma separating them are called comma splices. Here are two examples:

*Ward's auto restoration work is in high demand he offers clever upgrades to classic cars.
Some change is good, this type of upheaval is disastrous.*

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You can use three different strategies to correct a run-on sentence:

1. Make two sentences.
2. Use appropriate punctuation (semicolon, dash, or colon).
3. Join the sentences with a comma and an appropriate conjunction.

Using one of the examples above, let's apply the three strategies to correct the sentence.

*Some change is good. This type of upheaval is disastrous.
Some change is good; this type of upheaval is disastrous.
Some change is good—this type of upheaval is disastrous.
Some change is good, but this type of upheaval is disastrous.
Some change is good, although this type of upheaval is disastrous.*

Read these revised sentences again and pay close attention to how the added punctuation or conjunctions affect the tone and feel of the sentence.

Quick Exercises

Revise these run-on sentences using the correction strategies above. Use each strategy at least once.

1. The negotiator cannot just make a viewpoint known he has to persuade others to adopt it.

2. Storytelling is not about opening your presentation with a funny anecdote it is about building a message using a powerful story line with a conflict and a resolution.

3. As costs in China and Taiwan grew, Senco began to urge suppliers to move their operations to new lower cost areas, most companies complied with this request.

4. Both groups have become combative, perhaps as a result of miscommunication, the conversation has lost balance.

5. Please let me know when you are available, I look forward to helping to move the initiative forward.

Revision Exercises

Identify and correct the run-on sentences in the following text using the strategies from above.

Since the company did not have 30 internal auditors they could use to staff the group, management decided to use a few of its own staff and then hired an external consulting firm to fill the remaining positions, part of the plan was that the external consultants would be phased out over time. The company estimated that the internal staff on the audit group would need to spend no more than 25 to 50 percent of their time monitoring the control points. The expectation was that they would spend the remainder of their time acting as project managers for improvement projects.

One year passed, nothing had gone according to plan. The audit group was still under development and the company was still shelling out big dollars for external consultants. Internally, many of the owners of the control points were struggling, they had so much data and documentation to organize.

In an attempt to solve the problem, the company launched a Six Sigma DMAIC project sponsored by the director of finance to improve the SOX audit process. The team included several internal auditors, control owners, and external audit support (consultants). The objective of the group was to improve the quality of the SOX compliance while reducing the cost. Estimated financial benefit could be up to \$2 million (the cost of paying the external consulting firm to do the work that the company had wanted to accomplish through an internal audit group) plus what was expected to be significant time savings.

The team evaluated the key issues that were driving the company's inability to support the SOX implementation as it currently existed, the team also mapped out several control points.

Lesson Six: HYPHENATING COMPOUND WORDS

MBA Writing Guide reference: Pages 24-25

Compound words are two or more words that together form a new word or concept. For example:

dog + house = doghouse
long + term = long-term
desktop + publishing = desktop publishing

As you can see from the examples, the words forming the compound can either be conjoined as one word or separated by a hyphen or a space. How do you determine which form to use?

Here are three rough and basic rules to use to gauge when to use the hyphen:

1. **Does your workplace have a preference?** For instance, some organizations prefer “copy-editor” to “copyeditor.”
2. **Does the compound word modify another word?** If yes, you must hyphenate between all words in the compound. If not, no hyphen is needed. For example, you may need to *log in* to your company network. To do so, you will use *log-in information*.
3. **Would the lack of a hyphen make the compound difficult to understand?** Consider the possible forms for the following compound words. Which forms are easier to understand?

socalled	minivacation
so-called	mini-vacation
so called	mini vacation

For further guidance, hyphenate a compound word when it has one of the following attributes:

- Consists of three or more words.
 - Is a verb based on a compound noun.
 - Begins with prefixes such as *all*, *self*, *ex*, *half*, *wide*, or *over*.
 - Has repeated or multiple vowels or consonants when conjoined.
 - Consists of an acronym combined with an affix or other word.
 - Connects an adjective to a past participle (ending in *-ed*).
 - Forms words that could be misread as other words.
- pay-per-view**
to double-space
ex-delegate
re-energize
NPR-like content
quick-witted
re-form

If the compound word in question is a noun and is not being used as an adjective to describe another word, and you are still unsure how to form the compound, your best bets are to either hyphenate the two words or check a dictionary.

Quick Exercises

Create a compound word from the words in parentheses. On the line to the right, write the correct compound form (conjoined, hyphenated, or separated).

1. a (short term) project _____
2. negotiating a (turf war) _____
3. interviewed the (ex commissioner) _____
4. form a (four person) team _____
5. the strategy is (short sighted) _____
6. receives (on the job) training _____
7. counts as a (welfare society) _____
8. build bigger, (farther reaching) programs _____
9. a (close up) of the mechanism _____
10. the proposal looks (all encompassing) _____
11. plans to (water ski) _____
12. news on the (labor market) _____
13. a (multi million dollar) deal _____
14. her (ill tempered) colleague _____

Revision Exercises

In this text are several compound words that need to be joined together. Underline the words in the compound, and over them write — if they should be hyphenated, { if they should be conjoined, or # if they should remain individual words.

However, many take overs, especially those executed by China's private sector groups, ended quickly and badly. Some acquirers had to sell off their investments, some scaled back their ambitions radically, and some even went broke. To understand why things went wrong, we studied three big headline grabbing acquisitions of the time—one by an SOE, one by a private company, and one by a joint venture. Together they provide a comprehensive picture of Chinese acquirers' mistakes.

Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation's short lived attempt to run the South Korean automaker Ssangyong demonstrated that Chinese companies weren't ready to deal with changes in the global

market place. . . . After the deal an SAIC Ssangyong joint management team drew up plans to swiftly expand manufacturing capacity in South Korea and launch five new models world wide. However, things did not go as planned. Rising gasoline prices in 2006 and stringent new emissions standards in Europe and North America sent SUV sales tumbling. During this crisis, SAIC's relations with Ssangyong's powerful trade unions grew strained, culminating in a seven week strike, and because of cultural reasons, Chinese and Korean executives couldn't agree on how to improve performance [. . .].

Example adapted from "How China Reset Its Global Acquisition Agenda," in *Harvard Business Review*, April 2011, p. 110.

Lesson Seven: HOMOPHONES

Homophones are words that sound the same, as in “your” and “you’re.” Homophone errors are challenging because spellcheckers often overlook the use of a word correctly spelled but incorrectly used. To avoid mistakes with homophones, you have to learn to use the various forms correctly.

Here are several ways to learn correct forms:

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1. **Learn the differences.** Spend time looking up tricky words, especially those homophone pairs that cause you problems. Be particularly attentive to words that sound like common words but are used in less common ways. (E.g., *peak* and *peek* are relatively common, but *pique* – and its contexts – is not as common.)
2. **Learn tricks.** Tricks such as word origins or related words can help to remind you which form to use.
3. **Read with awareness.** While reading be aware of homophones. Be careful, however, because many sources, particularly more informal ones (such as blogs), frequently use the wrong forms.

Below, common confusing homophones are presented along with helpful rules or mnemonic devices.

then – than

Then is *when*.

lead – led

I will *lead* a horse to water. I *led* the horse to water.
A *lead* pipe

loose – lose

Loosey-goosey
Lose – *lost*

pair – pear – pare

Using a knife, *pare* the *pair* of *pears*.
A *pair* of *chairs*
A *pear* appeared.
Have a *care*: don't *pare* too much or you'll be *bare*.

reign – rein – rain

Rein *in* your horse.
Kings *reign*.
The *rain* fell through the *air*.

affect – effect

Affect is (generally) the verb.
Effect is (generally) the noun.

straitened – straightened

The *straitened* company is in dire *straits*.
Straight as an *eight*.

lie – lay

I will *lie* in bed. I *lay* in bed *last* night.
I will *lay* down my *cards*. I *laid* down my cards.
I *lied* on my *license*. I'm actually 5'10."

principal – principle	The <i>principal</i> <u>a</u> ction. The <i>principal</i> is the <u>a</u> ditorator. <i>Principles</i> of <u>e</u> thics.
peak – pique – peek	His skills <i>peaked</i> <u>e</u> arly. <i>Piqued</i> my <u>i</u> nterest. <i>Peek</i> with your <u>e</u> yes.
discrete – discreet	<i>Discrete</i> <u>p</u> ieces. Be <i>discreet</i> when you “ <u>e</u> et.”
complimentary – complementary	<i>Complimentary</i> is pol <u>i</u> te and <u>c</u> ivil. <i>Complementary</i> <u>c</u> ompletes.
sight – site – cite	A <i>sight</i> for sore eyes makes me <u>s</u> igh. The <i>site</i> is <u>s</u> ituated. or A perfect <i>site</i> for <u>s</u> itting. <i>Cite</i> – <u>c</u> itation
tenant – tenet	A <i>tenant</i> lives <u>i</u> n an apartment. The <u>T</u> en Commandments are <i>tenets</i> of some religions.

Quick Exercises

Circle the homophone that will correctly complete the sentence.

1. We do not anticipate that the recent dip in the stock prices will [affect / effect] our quarterly earnings.
2. Compumark believes that the new EnKode will [compliment / complement] the product line.
3. Rather [then / than] focusing on packaging design, Ensign spent more time on streamlining customer service.
4. When they arrived at the construction [sight / site / cite], the architects could not believe the [sight / site / cite] before them: the large tower crane in two pieces.
5. Disappointing profits are forcing Munsch-Olafson to [pair / pear / pare] down the budget and [rein / reign / rain] in spending.
6. [Loosing / Losing] the Badeker account could actually be a positive thing; our employees were incredibly stressed because the client was so difficult.

Revision Exercise

Read through the paragraph and correct any incorrect homophones. Be careful: Some homophones are used correctly, and other homophones not covered in the list above have been included.

As a new employee, be sure to read the following safety rules carefully. Hard hats are always to be worn on site. When using the forklift to move palettes, make sure the palettes are secured before lifting or moving. Do not raise the forklift to the peak of it's lift when heavily loaded. Heavy loads can effect the balance of the forklift; if too heavy, the forklift may fall over or loose it's load. If lifting items by hand, maintain a straight back and use the legs to lift. Use the legs and keep a straight back when laying items on the ground. This will prevent injury or strain to the back. If possible, pick up pairs of items – one item in each hand – to balance the load you're carrying. Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Some materials may cause chemical burns if they come into contact with bare skin.