

FREE PRINTABLE REFERENCE

English Grammar Cheat Sheet

Essential rules, clear examples, and practice for everyday writing and speaking.

REMEMBER Start with the sentence basics, then use the verb and tense tables whenever you need a quick example.

What is inside

BUILD YOUR FOUNDATION	MASTER EVERYDAY GRAMMAR
Sentence structure and parts of speech	12 traditional tense forms and time clues
Articles, nouns and determiners	Agreement, pronouns and comparisons
Modals, prepositions and questions	Conditionals, passive voice and reported speech
Common mistakes and punctuation	Practice questions with an answer key

The 5-second sentence check

- Does my sentence have a subject and a verb?
- Does the verb match the subject and time?
- Do I need an article (a, an, the)?
- Is my word order natural?
- Have I checked spelling and punctuation?

Designed for learners and teachers • A4 friendly • English examples throughout

01 Sentence basics and word classes

Most English sentences follow Subject + Verb + Object/Complement, although not every sentence needs an object.

Pattern	Example
Subject + verb	Birds fly.
Subject + verb + object	She reads books.
Subject + linking verb + complement	He is happy.
Subject + verb + indirect + direct object	She gave me a gift.

The eight traditional parts of speech

Part	Job	Example
Noun	Names a person, place, thing or idea	teacher, school, joy
Pronoun	Replaces or refers to a noun	she, they, it
Verb	Shows an action or state	write, seem, are
Adjective	Describes a noun	an interesting book
Adverb	Modifies a verb, adjective or adverb	speaks clearly; very good
Preposition	Shows a relationship	on the table
Conjunction	Connects words or clauses	and, but, because
Interjection	Expresses a reaction	Wow! Oh!

REMEMBER A phrase is a group of words without its own subject-verb pair (in the morning). A clause has a subject and verb (when she arrived).

02 Present tense forms

Choose the form according to meaning. The examples below use the common 12-form teaching model.

Form	Structure	Use + example
Present simple	subject + base verb (he/she/it + -s/-es)	Habits and facts She works every day.
Present continuous	am/is/are + verb-ing	Action happening now or around now She is working now.
Present perfect	have/has + past participle	Past action relevant to now She has finished her work.
Present perfect continuous	have/has been + verb-ing	Activity continuing until now She has been working for two hours.

Common signal words

- Simple: always, usually, often, every day.
- Continuous: now, at the moment, currently.
- Perfect: already, just, yet, ever, never.
- Perfect continuous: since Monday, for three hours, all morning.

Present simple: negatives and questions

Positive	Negative	Question
She likes tea.	She does not like tea.	Does she like tea?
They play football.	They do not play football.	Do they play football?

REMEMBER After do/does/did, use the base verb: Does he go? NOT Does he goes? "Since" names a starting point; "for" names a duration.

03 Past tense forms

Use past forms to describe completed actions, past progress, or a sequence of events.

Form	Structure	Use + example
Past simple	past verb (regular -ed or irregular)	Finished action They visited us yesterday.
Past continuous	was/were + verb-ing	Action in progress at a past time I was studying at 8 p.m.
Past perfect	had + past participle	Earlier of two past events She had left before I arrived.
Past perfect continuous	had been + verb-ing	Duration before a past event He had been waiting for an hour when the bus came.

Irregular verbs to remember

Base	Past simple	Past participle
go	went	gone
write	wrote	written
see	saw	seen
eat	ate	eaten
speak	spoke	spoken
take	took	taken
do	did	done
be	was/were	been

REMEMBER Past simple negative: She did not go. Past simple question: Did she go? After “did”, use the base verb.

04 Future forms and time clues

English expresses future meaning in several ways; “will” is one common choice.

Form	Structure	Use + example
Future simple	will + base verb	Prediction or spontaneous decision I will call you tonight.
Future continuous	will be + verb-ing	In progress at a future time I will be travelling at noon.
Future perfect	will have + past participle	Finished by a future deadline She will have finished by Friday.
Future perfect continuous	will have been + verb-ing	Duration up to a future point By June, I will have been teaching for ten years.
Be going to	am/is/are going to + base verb	Plans or evidence-based predictions We are going to move soon.
Present continuous for future	am/is/are + verb-ing	Arrangements I am meeting her tomorrow.

Choosing the right form

- Scheduled events: The train leaves at six. (present simple)
- Fixed arrangement: We are meeting on Thursday.
- Decision now: I will help you.
- Plan already made: I am going to learn French.

REMEMBER In many future time clauses after when, before, after, as soon as and if, use a present form: When she arrives, we will eat.

05 Articles, nouns and determiners

Use a/an for one nonspecific countable thing; use the for something identifiable to the listener or reader.

Rule	Examples
a + consonant sound; an + vowel sound	a university; an hour; an apple
the for a known or unique referent	Please close the window. The sun is bright.
No article for plural/uncountable general meaning	Dogs are friendly. Water is essential.
Countable nouns can be singular or plural	one book; three books
Uncountable nouns do not normally take a/an	some information; a piece of advice

Quantifiers at a glance

With countable plural nouns	With uncountable nouns	With both
many books	much water	some books / some water
a few ideas	a little time	a lot of ideas / a lot of time
fewer mistakes	less sugar	enough chairs / enough food

This, that, these, those

- This book is mine. (singular, near)
- That car is expensive. (singular, farther away)
- These shoes are new. (plural, near)
- Those houses are old. (plural, farther away)

REMEMBER "A/an" depends on sound, not spelling: an honest person; a European city.

06 Subject-verb agreement and pronouns

A singular subject normally takes a singular present-tense verb; a plural subject normally takes the base present verb.

Rule	Correct example
He/she/it + verb-s in present simple	She speaks English.
I/you/we/they + base verb in present simple	They speak English.
Each/every/everyone usually takes a singular verb	Everyone is ready.
A phrase between subject and verb does not change agreement	The box of pencils is here.
There is / there are agrees with what follows	There are two books on the desk.

Pronoun reference chart

Subject	Object	Possessive adjective	Possessive pronoun
I	me	my	mine
you	you	your	yours
he	him	his	his
she	her	her	hers
we	us	our	ours
they	them	their	theirs

Reflexive pronouns

myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves.

Example: She taught herself English. (Not: She taught her English, unless she taught another person.)

REMEMBER Pronoun case: She and I went home. The teacher helped her and me.

07 Adjectives, adverbs and comparison

An adjective modifies a noun; an adverb often modifies a verb, adjective or another adverb.

Use	Example
Adjective before noun	It was a careful decision.
Adjective after linking verb	The soup tastes delicious.
Adverb describing an action	She drives carefully.
Degree adverb	The task is very difficult.

Comparatives and superlatives

Basic	Comparative (2)	Superlative (3+)
small	smaller	smallest
beautiful	more beautiful	most beautiful
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
far	farther/further	farthest/furthest

- Comparative: This road is safer than that road.
- Superlative: It is the safest road in town.
- Equal comparison: She is as tall as her sister.

Position and common traps

- Use good as an adjective: She is a good singer.
- Use well as an adverb: She sings well.
- Do not double a comparative: better, not “more better”.

REMEMBER Some adverbs do not end in -ly: fast, hard, late. “Hardly” means almost not; “hard” means with effort.

08 Modals and prepositions

Modal verbs express ability, possibility, advice, obligation, permission and more.

Modal	Common meaning	Example
can	ability / permission	I can swim.
could	past ability / polite request	Could you help?
may	permission / possibility	It may rain.
might	possibility	She might join us.
must	strong obligation / deduction	You must wear a seat belt.
should	advice / expectation	You should rest.
would	polite request / hypothetical	I would travel if I could.

Prepositions of place and time

Preposition	Time	Place
in	in July; in 2026	in the room
on	on Monday	on the desk
at	at 5 p.m.	at the station
for	for two hours	-
since	since Monday	-
between	between 2 and 3	between two houses

REMEMBER After a central modal (can, should, must, etc.), use the base verb without “to”: She can swim, not “can to swim”.

09 Questions, negatives and linking words

With be or a modal, put it before the subject. For most other simple-tense questions, use do/does/did.

Statement	Question	Negative
You are ready.	Are you ready?	You are not ready.
She likes tea.	Does she like tea?	She does not like tea.
They went home.	Did they go home?	They did not go home.
He can drive.	Can he drive?	He cannot drive.

WH questions

- Who is calling? (person)
- What are you reading? (thing)
- Where do they live? (place)
- When does the class begin? (time)
- Why did she leave? (reason)
- How does it work? (manner)

Conjunctions and clauses

Link	Example
and (addition)	I cooked and he cleaned.
but (contrast)	I tried, but I failed.
because (reason)	We stayed inside because it rained.
although (contrast)	Although it rained, we walked.
if (condition)	If it rains, we will stay in.

REMEMBER Indirect questions use statement order: Could you tell me where she lives? Not “where does she live?”

10 Conditionals and passive voice

Conditional sentences connect a condition with its result.

Type	Common pattern	Example
Zero	If + present, present	If water freezes, it expands.
First	If + present, will + base	If I study, I will improve.
Second	If + past, would + base	If I had more time, I would read.
Third	If + past perfect, would have + past participle	If I had left earlier, I would have caught the train.

Active and passive voice

Use the passive when the action or receiver is more important than the doer. Basic pattern: be + past participle.

Active	Passive
The chef cooks the meal.	The meal is cooked by the chef.
They built the bridge in 2010.	The bridge was built in 2010.
Someone has stolen my bag.	My bag has been stolen.
They will announce the result.	The result will be announced.

REMEMBER A passive sentence may omit "by + doer": The window was broken. Use "If I were..." in formal hypothetical sentences.

11 Reported speech and punctuation

Reported speech tells someone what another person said. Backshifting commonly happens when reporting a past statement, but it is not automatic in every context.

Direct speech	Reported speech
She said, "I am tired."	She said (that) she was tired.
He said, "I will help."	He said (that) he would help.
Maya said, "I have finished."	Maya said (that) she had finished.
He asked, "Are you ready?"	He asked if I was ready.
She said, "Please sit down."	She asked me to sit down.

Essential punctuation

Mark	Use	Example
.	Ends a statement	I enjoy reading.
?	Ends a direct question	Are you ready?
,	Separates items and some clauses	After lunch, we left.
'	Marks contractions and possession	Don't worry. Rina's bag.
:	Introduces a list/explanation	Bring three things: water, a pen and paper.
;	Links closely related independent clauses	It was late; we went home.

REMEMBER A comma alone cannot join two independent sentences: use a period, semicolon or a comma + coordinating conjunction.

12 Common mistakes: correct them fast

Instead of...	Say...	Rule
She go to school.	She goes to school.	Third-person singular -s
He did not went.	He did not go.	Base verb after did
I am agree.	I agree.	Agree is a verb
She is more taller.	She is taller.	No double comparison
I have many information.	I have a lot of information.	Information is uncountable
He can to swim.	He can swim.	Base verb after modal
I am living here since 2020.	I have lived here since 2020.	Present perfect for continuing state
Where you are going?	Where are you going?	Question word order
She is good in English.	She is good at English.	Common preposition pairing
I look forward to meet you.	I look forward to meeting you.	-ing after this "to"

30-second proofreading checklist

- Check subject-verb agreement.
- Choose the right tense for the time meaning.
- Use a/an/the only where needed.
- Check word order in questions.
- Review prepositions, spelling and punctuation.

REMEMBER Some choices depend on context. These tables give reliable learner-friendly defaults, not an exhaustive description of English grammar.

Practice: test your grammar

Choose or supply the best form. Write answers on paper before checking the key.

1. She _____ (go) to work every weekday.
2. They _____ (watch) a film when I called.
3. I have lived here _____ 2021. (since / for)
4. We waited _____ two hours. (since / for)
5. Do you have _____ umbrella? (a / an)
6. The information _____ useful. (is / are)
7. You _____ wear a seat belt. (must / might)
8. He did not _____ the answer. (knew / know)
9. This problem is _____ than that one. (easy / easier)
10. If it rains, we _____ at home. (will stay / stayed)
11. The letter _____ yesterday. (was sent / sent)
12. "She is busy," he said. → He said that she _____ busy.
13. _____ you like tea? (Do / Does)
14. I look forward to _____ you. (meet / meeting)
15. They _____ here by Friday. (will have arrived / arrived)

Answer key

1 goes • 2 were watching • 3 since • 4 for • 5 an • 6 is • 7 must • 8 know • 9 easier • 10 will stay • 11 was sent
• 12 was • 13 Do • 14 meeting • 15 will have arrived

REMEMBER Keep the detailed guide near your desk. Practice by writing three original examples for each rule.