

## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Misplaced modifiers** cause confusion when in a sentence they are separated from the word(s) they are intended to modify. For example, look at the word *easily* in this sentence. GET HELP FROM ANGIE TO REMOVE THIS BOX.

(Wrong) After taking French for two years, I could understand spoken French when we took our trip to Europe *easily*.

The writer meant to say that she “could *easily* understand spoken French,” but a listener might think she was referring to the trip as being *easy*. A better sentence would be:

(Right) After taking French for two years, I could *easily* understand spoken French when we took our trip to Europe.

A good general rule to follow is to place single-word modifiers next to the word or words they modify. Reading aloud what you have written, will sometimes help you to discover that you have a *misplaced* or a *squinting* (it is looking both ways) modifier.

Phrases work much the same. Because of what listeners and readers know about the real world, they can usually figure out the meaning as with the famous example:

(Wrong) Abraham Lincoln wrote the *Gettysburg Address* while riding the train on the back of an envelope.

Of course we know that President Lincoln’s train was on rails rather than on “the back of an envelope,” but still better writers do not make their readers go through such mental gymnastics and so will write something like:

(Right) While Abraham Lincoln was riding on a train, he wrote the *Gettysburg Address* on the back of an envelope.

**Dangling Modifiers** cause confusion when there is no specific subject in the sentence for them to modify, or the item they modify is not in the expected grammatical slot. They are often located at the beginning of the sentence, as in this example:

(Wrong) Although not finished, we left the meeting early to see a movie.

From the way this sentence is written, the people (*we*) are the ones “not yet finished.” On second thought, a listener or reader would probably realize that it must be the meeting that is not finished, which means this would be a better sentence:

(Right) Although the meeting was not finished, we left early to see a movie.

## ***PRACTICE EXERCISE***

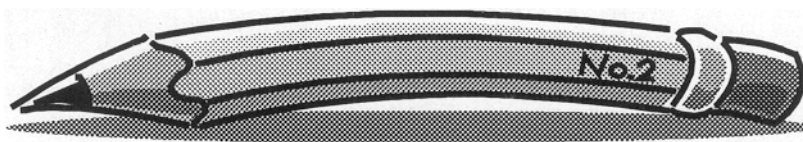
Read these sentences to yourself and rewrite them so as to remove the confusion that surrounds the modifiers.

1. I gave my mom a picture of me in a wood frame.
2. Beeping and buzzing loudly, we were excited to go to the video arcade.
3. While shopping at Arizona Mills, a sandstorm filled my car with dust.
4. Although exhausted, the ride was so much fun that we went again.
5. I almost ate all of my roommate's groceries.
6. To qualify for a loan, an application has to be submitted.

### **Suggested Rewrites:**

1. I gave my mom a wood-framed picture of me.
2. We were excited to go to the video arcade that was beeping and buzzing loudly.
3. While shopping at Arizona Mills, I left the windows of my car open and a sandstorm filled it with dust./While I was shopping at Arizona Mills, a sandstorm filled my car with dust.
4. The ride was so much fun that we went again although we were exhausted.
5. I ate almost all of my roommate’s groceries.
6. To qualify for a loan, a student must submit an application.

*Lesson created by Natalie Perkins*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Choosing Between *A* and *An*

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*A* and *An* are both indefinite articles. In contrast to *the*, which is used to refer to a particular thing, *a* and *an* are used with general nouns. For example, if we say, "Take this to *the* car," we have a particular car in mind, but if we say, "Take this to *a* car," we mean any car.

American speakers use *a* when the following noun begins with a consonant (letters that are not vowels), and *an* with nouns that begin with a vowel (a,e,i,o,u).

Examples of *a* used with words beginning with consonants:

a book	a towel
a football player	a screaming meemie
a total failure	a wicked form of punishment

Examples of *an* used with words beginning with vowels:

an apple	an inquiry
an invitational tournament	an oval shaped table
an indefinite answer	an inhumane form of punishment

The difference between *a* and *an* is one of pronunciation, and so we also use *an* in front of a silent *h* because judging only by sound, the word begins with the vowel that follows the *h*.

Examples: an hour, an honor, an herb

American speakers treat breathy-sounding *h*'s as consonants and so use *a*.

Examples: a historical book, a hoped-for outcome, a house

We also use *a* in front of vowels when their pronunciation sounds like *you*.

Examples: a European, a unit, a university

If you read these examples of incorrect and correct usage aloud, you will probably be able to hear how the sentences on the right sound more like the language you hear on television and read in print.

WRONG

RIGHT

1. John had a egg for breakfast.
2. I drank an glass of water.

1. John had an egg for breakfast.
2. I drank a glass of water.

3. I forgot to bring a umbrella.
4. Olivia is a honor's student.
5. We are going to a opera in May.

3. I forgot to bring an umbrella.
4. Olivia is an honor's student.
5. We are going to an opera in May.

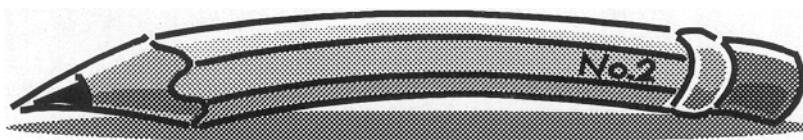
## ***PRACTICE EXERCISE***

Circle the correct form of the indefinite article and then read the sentences to yourself to see if they sound "right."

1. We have to leave for the concert in (a, an) hour.
2. I will have (a, an) orange with my breakfast.
3. I have to mail (a, an) letter at the post office.
4. Can I please have (a, an) slice of cake?
5. (A, An) man and (a, an) woman walked slowly across the street.
6. Beth and Sarah are meeting at (a, an) English tea room for lunch.
7. The title of the book is, "(A, An) Wrinkle in Time".
8. We went to (a, an) movie and shared (a, an) ice cream cone.
9. I would like to attend (a, an) university after graduating from high school.
10. Hannah told (a, an) interesting story about her childhood.
11. The group had (a, an) presentation to attend last Tuesday.
12. I saw (a, an) elephant sunbathing at the San Diego Zoo.
13. The documentary showed (a, an) Eskimo building (a, an) igloo.
14. (A, An) yellow canary flew across the room and out the window.
15. Would you like (a, an) glass of milk to go with your cookies?

Answers: 1. an 2. an 3. a 4. a 5. A, a 6. an 7. a 8. a 9. a 10. an 11. a 12. an 13. an, an 14. A 15. A

*Lesson created by Lesley Schaefer*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Using Apostrophes

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Apostrophe usage is an often-overlooked writing convention. In fact, misusing apostrophes is one of the most common grammatical errors committed by student writers. By mastering this simple convention, you can improve both word and sentence clarity.

**Singular Possessives:** To make most singular nouns possessive, simply add an apostrophe and an *-s* to at the end as in:

Tiger's golf shots were great.

Montgomery's golf shots were terrible.

For most singular nouns ending in *-s*, add an apostrophe and another *-s* to make the word possessive. Modern English accepts simply adding an apostrophe after the singular *-s* if pronunciation remains unchanged. Compare the following examples:

Sirius's reflection is bright.

Tiger Woods' golf shots were great.

**Plural Possessives:** A plural noun ending in *-s* is made possessive by adding an apostrophe.

The actors' performances were all lousy.

A plural noun not ending in *-s* is made possessive by adding an apostrophe and an *-s*.

These are not children's toys.

The syllabi's contents are fascinating.

**Compound Noun Possessive:** Following the previous rules, the last word in a compound noun is made possessive:

My sister-in-law's profession

The Supreme Court justices' meeting

**Possessive Pronouns:** Be careful here because possessive pronouns do not take apostrophes.

The possessive forms of common pronouns are as follows.

#### PRONOUN

my, mine

your, yours

his

her, hers

its

our, ours

#### EXAMPLE

My brother is annoying

Is yours annoying?

Why wear his shoe?

It looks too much like hers.

Is that her car?

Its tongue is magenta

I doubt the inheritance will be ours.

Our table is the one in the corner.

The difference between *its* and *it's* is a frequent source of confusion for writers. *Its* is a possessive pronoun as listed above. *It's* is a contraction as demonstrated below.

**Contractions:** Contractions are shortened versions of common expressions. They are constructed by adding an apostrophe to replaces the missing letter(s).

It is almost over.

It's almost over.

He is cool.

He's cool.

Contractions are generally used for informal writing. For academic and professional writing, try to avoid using contractions.

## **PRACTICE EXERCISE**

Using your knowledge from this lesson, construct ten sentences. Some words are listed to give you ideas, but you may also use other words. Employ each apostrophe usage (or non-usage) two times (singular possessive, plural possessive, compound noun possessive, possessive pronouns, and contraction). An example is provided below to get you started.

Singular possessive: William's homework obligations made him miss *The Simpsons*.

1. Singular possessive (*the dog, Sam, the officer, the teacher, Julie*)

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2. Singular possessive

---

3. Plural possessive (*friends, cities, cats, boys, authors, street sweepers*)

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4. Plural possessive

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5. Compound noun possessive (*dog trainer, brother-in-law, truck driver, football coach*)

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6. Compound noun possessive

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7. Possessive pronoun(s) (*his, her, my, ours, your*)

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8. Possessive pronoun(s)

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9. Contraction (*it is, we are, they are, I am, you are*)

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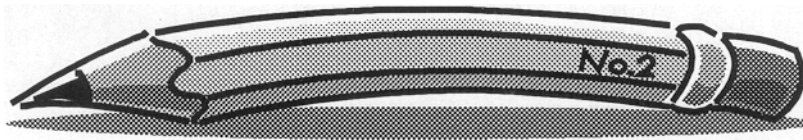
10. Contraction

---

Possible sentences: 1. The officer's gun was not loaded. 2. Julie's plans changed. 3. His friends' decision was wrong. 4. Several authors' books were on display. 5. The dog trainer's equipment was damaged. 6. His brother-in-law's car was stolen. 7. My cat is overweight. 8. Her new haircut is ridiculous. 9. It's too late now. 10. I'm sure you understand.

*Lesson created by William Gerchick  
with help from*

<http://www.wheaton.edu/learnres/writectr/Resources/apostrophe.htm> Wheaton College



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Choosing Between *Fewer* and *Less*

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The key to knowing when to use *fewer* and when to use *less* is having a firm understanding of mass nouns and count nouns.

- Mass nouns are called *non-count nouns* because they are not readily countable as with such words as *music, justice, time, sunbathing, and virtue*.
- Count nouns name things that you can count as with such words as *cars, books, shoes, friends*.

The rules of grammar state that we are to use *less* with mass or non-count nouns as in, “Once school starts, there is *less* time for sunbathing.”

We are to use *fewer* with count nouns as in “Math classes require *fewer* books than do English classes.”

Speakers often change mass nouns into count nouns either by providing a container (which can be counted) or by referring to the item with a different word. For example, *ice cream* is a mass noun, but *ice cream cones* can be counted. *Money* is a mass noun, but if we change and say *dollars*, then it can be counted. With the following examples of mass nouns using *less*, see if you can provide a way to turn them into count nouns so that *fewer* can be used.

*Less milk, but fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less honey, but fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less food, but fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less clothing, but fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less oil, but fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less paint, but fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

(Possible answers: quarts of milk, jars of honey, hamburgers, shirts, barrels of oil, buckets of paint.)

Speakers of English can use *more* with either a count noun or a mass noun. This is probably one of the reasons that people have a hard time remembering that we need to distinguish between *fewer* and *less*. Another reason is that advertisers and package designers prefer to use short words so they can make the type bigger. Because of this, we sometimes see labels on prepared food and drink reading “LESS CALORIES!” In formal, written English the correct message would be “FEWER CALORIES!” because calories are something that can be counted.

## PRACTICE EXERCISE

With these sentences, write either *less* or *fewer* in the blank spaces.

1. She takes \_\_\_\_\_ care of her siblings than is good for them.
2. There are \_\_\_\_\_ murals in Denver than there are in San Francisco.
3. Radio disc jockeys play \_\_\_\_\_ rock music than they used to.
4. Radio disc jockeys play \_\_\_\_\_ rap songs than they used to.
5. Water has \_\_\_\_\_ calories than soda has.
6. We saw \_\_\_\_\_ cars by the Grand Canyon than we see everyday around Phoenix.
7. The students have \_\_\_\_\_ minutes to eat lunch now that the class periods are extended.
8. The student have \_\_\_\_\_ time to eat lunch now that the class periods are extended.
9. Does America have \_\_\_\_\_ culture than Mexico?
10. Suzie has \_\_\_\_\_ responsibilities now that her Aunt has come to help.

Answers: 1. less, 2. fewer, 3. less, 4. fewer, 5. fewer, 6. fewer, 7. fewer, 8. less, 9. less, 10. fewer

Part II: Now make up two sentences of your own using *fewer* and two using *less*.

fewer: 1. \_\_\_\_\_

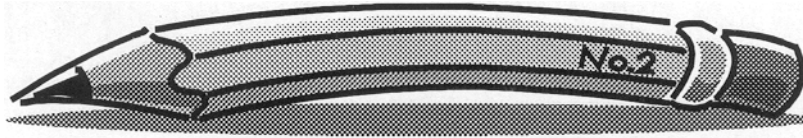
2. \_\_\_\_\_

less 1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

*Lesson created by Kristen Kelly*





## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Making Verbs Agree with Their Subjects

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

You probably have little trouble in figuring out how to make your verbs agree with your subjects when the subjects are clearly singular or plural as in these examples.

#### SINGULAR SUBJECTS

Marie plays the piano.  
This book is poorly bound.  
A city is a good place to buy gas.  
The boy skips school all the time.

#### PLURAL SUBJECTS

My friends play soccer.  
These books are poorly bound.  
Cities are good places to buy gas.  
The boys skip school all the time.

However, it is not so easy when there are complications in the way the subject is presented as with these kinds of statements:

#### COMPLICATION

Use of *either...or* and *Neither...nor*

Use of *each, either, neither, anyone, anybody, everybody, everything, another, little, much*

Use of such compound subjects as *Sam and Angie* or Indefinite plural pronouns such as *several, few, many, most, others, both*

The use of an appositive or parenthetical phrase, set off by commas and such words as *plus* or *as well as*.

#### RULE

Make the verb agree with the closer subject.  
Ex. Neither my aunt nor my cousins are coming.

Use a singular verb.  
Ex. Neither wants to get up at 7:00 a.m.  
Nobody is here.

Use a plural verb.  
Ex. Sam and Angie are going.  
Several of us are angry.

Make the verb agree with the main subject.  
The appositive is something extra that does not affect the verb.  
Ex. My nephew, plus two or three friends, is coming with us.

### PRACTICE EXERCISE

Follow these rules to figure out which verb should be used in the following sentences. Circle the appropriate form of the verb in each sentence. For extra practice, rewrite the sentence on the line below so that it will be correct using the alternate form of the verb.

*Example:* Either player (know, knows) how to pitch a curve ball. (you should circle *knows*)

*Rewrite:* Both players know how to pitch a curve ball.

1. Someone (sing, sings) a solo in the talent show.

\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Spaghetti and pizza (is, are) his favorite foods.

\_\_\_\_\_.

3. The senior judge, as well as three junior judges, (is, are) to attend the seminar.

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. There (was, were) a flat tire on the bicycle.

\_\_\_\_\_.

5. Neither Max nor Clara (use, uses) catsup on hamburgers and French fries.

\_\_\_\_\_.

6. The team, including the coach, (host, hosts) the pep rally each spring.

\_\_\_\_\_.

7. Violet, Mia and Devon's teams (play, plays) well under pressure.

\_\_\_\_\_.

8. His favorite meal (is, are) spaghetti and meatballs.

\_\_\_\_\_.

9. One of the two teachers (is, are) eligible for promotion this year.

\_\_\_\_\_.

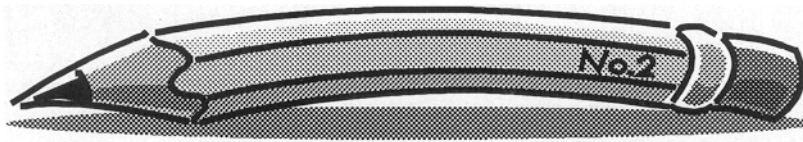
Verbs to be circled: 1. sings, 2. are, 3. is, 4. was, 5. uses 6. hosts, 7. play, 8. is, 9. is

Possible rewrites: 1. Both sing a solo... 2. Homemade spaghetti is...3. The senior judge and three junior judges are...

4. There were two flat tires... 5. Both Max and Clara use... 6. The coach and the team host... 7. Violet's team plays

well... 8. His favorite foods are spaghetti and pizza. 9. Both teachers are eligible...

*Lesson created by Rachel Collay*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### LIE vs. LAY

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I would not be a liar if I told you that  
People *lay* their puppies down.  
Puppies *lie* on people.  
People *lie* on beds.  
It is bad to *lie* to a friend.  
It is also bad to get *laid off* (that is, set aside by your employer.)

**Lie** means, “to repose.” It is intransitive and never takes an object, as in,  
I *lie* down to sleep.

A different **lie** that is spelled and pronounced the same means, “to fabricate or mislead” someone through speech as in,  
He *lied* to me. or He told a *lie*.

**Lay** means, “to put.” It is transitive and always takes an object as in,  
I *lay* my baby down to sleep.

Here is a chart showing how these three confusing words are conjugated:

	<u>Present Tense</u>	<u>Past Tense</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>	<u>Present Participle</u>
(telling an untruth)	lie	lied	have lied	is lying
transitive verb	lay	laid	have laid	is laying
intransitive verb	lie	lay	have lain	is lying

## PRACTICE EXERCISE:

In the following sentences, write in the correct form of these three confusing verbs. It will be one of the verbs shown in the chart

1. Would you please \_\_\_\_\_ the book on the desk and help me?
2. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ to me; I promise not to be mad if only you will tell the truth.
3. Why don't you \_\_\_\_\_ down and take a nap before we go?
4. After \_\_\_\_\_ down the concrete, the workers began to dig another trench.
5. The mother told her son to \_\_\_\_\_ still.
6. She has \_\_\_\_\_ in bed for four months now.
7. As I \_\_\_\_\_ me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
8. Someone \_\_\_\_\_ the treasures there hundreds of years ago.
9. They \_\_\_\_\_ out \$4,000 for their daughter's wedding reception.
10. Mark Harris has written a book with an ambiguous title, "\_\_\_\_\_ in Bed."

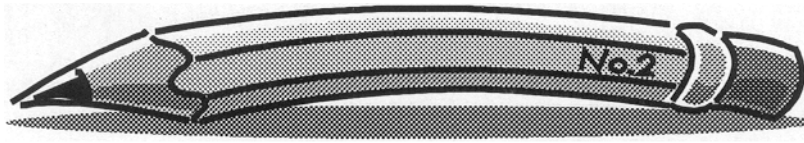
Now write one sentence of your own using the past tense of these three verbs:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1. lay, 2. lie, 3. lie, 4. laying, 5. lie, 6. lain, 7. lay, 8. laid, 9. laid, 10. Lying

Possible sentences: 1. John lied to the teacher. 2. They laid the pavement this morning. 3. For a three-year-old, he lay so quietly I was worried.

*Lesson created by Justin MacDonald*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Don't Get Frazzled Over Fragments!

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have a tendency to write fragments, you should check for them in all of your writing. A group of words must have the following to be a complete sentence:

1. It must have a subject.
2. It must have a finite verb. (A finite verb has tense: present, past, or future.)
3. Unless it is a question, the words must have at least one clause that does not begin with a subordinating word such as:

although	as	because
before	how	if
since	that	though
unless	when	where
whether	who	why

Read the following groups of words aloud to see if they sound somehow incomplete. Rewrite these groups of words trying to keep a similar meaning but having complete sentences.

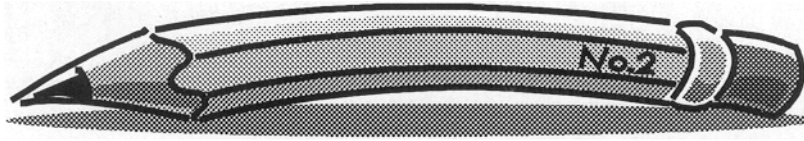
With some of the fragments, you will have to add some information so that you will have a finite verb. With others of these examples, you will want to make the fragments parts of the sentences that already have a finite verb.

1. The log holding back the shallow pond.
2. Barely five inches long, with nothing but a handle, a trigger, and a barrel.
3. Rachel stayed home for three months after Jared was born. To recuperate and to take care of him.
4. The large dog with sharp teeth. He was mean.

5. Getting a new car. Would be a nice graduation present.
6. They sold their house. And moved to a new one.
7. Zack looked close to crying. Standing with his head bowed.
8. Controlling my temper. That has been one of my goals this year.

Suggested rewrites: 1. I saw the log holding back the shallow pond. 2. He was holding a gun barely five inches long, with nothing but a handle, a trigger, and a barrel. 3. Rachel stayed home for three months after Jared was born to recuperate and take care of him. 4. The large dog with the sharp teeth was mean. 5. Getting a new car would be a nice graduation present. 6. They sold their house and moved to a new one. 7. Standing with his head bowed, Zack looked close to crying. 8. Controlling my temper has been one of my goals this year.

*Lesson Created by Heather Hanson*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### ALL RIGHT, ALL READY... ALL TOGETHER!

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**All right, all ready, and all together** are three terms that are often misused in writing because each term has its own homonym, which is another word that sounds the same but has a different meaning. It is important to know the differences when you write. If you confuse these two-word terms for their one-word sound-alikes, you may put across the wrong meaning:

**All right vs. alright**

**All ready vs. already**

**All together vs. altogether**

**All right** is a term that is sometimes incorrectly written as **alright**. Even though **alright** has appeared in the works of such well-known writers as James Joyce and Langston Hughes, it has never been accepted as grammatically correct. When writers use it on purpose, they are probably trying to communicate an informal attitude as in the *Who*'s song, "The Kids are Alright."

**All right** can be used as an adjective, for example:

1. I checked to see if the tires were *all right*.
2. Eating a hamburger for lunch is *all right* by me.
3. Your answers are *all right*.

**All right** can also be used as an adverb, for example:

1. I did *all right* on the test.
2. *All right*, here's the plan.
3. He sure runs fast, *all right*.

**All ready** is often confused with *already*. It is an adjective meaning, "completely prepared," as in:

1. Are you *all ready* for your speech?
2. The students are *all ready* for the test.

**Already** is an adverb meaning "by a certain time," as in:

1. The store was *already* closed when we arrived.
2. The 7th graders have *already* had their yearbook pictures taken.

**Altogether** is an adverbs that indicates a collective action or concept:

1. *The players traveled all together.*

2. *She came up with an altogether new idea.*
3. *There were altogether 50 students in the field trip.*

**All together** is used only in sentences that can be rephrased so that *all together* may be separated by other words:

*The shoes lay **all together** in a pile.*  
***All** the shoes lay **together** in a pile.*

## PRACTICE EXERCISE

Fill-in the blanks with the most appropriate of these forms:

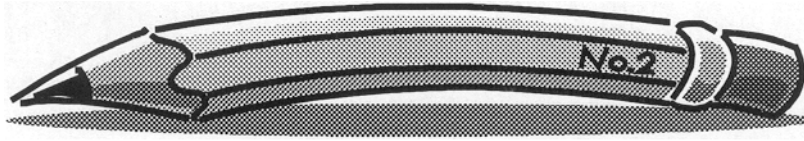
All right	all ready	all together
alright	already	altogether

1. \_\_\_\_\_, this has been a successful semester.
2. “Is class over \_\_\_\_\_?” Susie exclaimed with surprise.
3. The parking lot was \_\_\_\_\_ a week before school started.
4. The crossing guard made sure the ten children crossed the street \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The *Who*’s song “The Kids are \_\_\_\_\_” is really cool, even if it uses a non-standard adjective.
6. Just as the movie was \_\_\_\_\_ to begin, Zach’s popcorn ran out.
7. Sarah broke her arm after slipping on a chicken nugget, but now she’s \_\_\_\_\_.
8. After struggling up “A” Mountain, John and Jane fell asleep and missed the sunrise \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Since she had forgotten to turn on the oven, Phyllis’ apple pie was not at \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Even though such well-known authors as Langston Hughes and James Joyce used it, \_\_\_\_\_ has never been accepted as the single word spelling of \_\_\_\_\_.
11. “If we push the rock \_\_\_\_\_, we will open the cave’s entrance and find the hidden treasure!” urged the wily old pirate captain to his motley crew.
12. Krusty was \_\_\_\_\_ barking eagerly before his owner had even entered the front door.

Answers: 1. already, 2. already, 3. all ready, 4. all together 5. alright, 6. all ready, 7. all right, 8. altogether, 9. all ready, 10. alright, 11. all right, 12. already

*Lesson created by Diego Dalmau*





## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Too, To, and Two

These three words are called homophones, meaning that they sound alike even though they historically come from different sources and have different meanings.

**To** is the word we use when we talk about going *towards* something. It might help you to remember its spelling, if you think of it as the beginning letters of *towards*. We also use *to* as part of infinitive verbs as when we say such things as *to run*, *to rain*, *to consider*, *to tell*. People who make **TO DO** lists (they write down all the thing that need *to do*) have a head start in remembering this sense.

**Too** is used to mean more than enough, as in, "I am *too* tired to stay for refreshments." Some people remember this spelling by thinking that the two *o*'s in its spelling are **too** many.

**Two** is the way to spell the name of the number 2. One way to remember that the word with the *w* in it is the number is to think of other words starting with *tw* that mean *two*. *Twins* is one such word, and so is *twice* and *twain*. *Tweezers* have two parts, *twilight* has light from the day and the night, and if you are *betwixt* and *between*, you are caught between *two* choices.

### PRACTICE EXERCISE

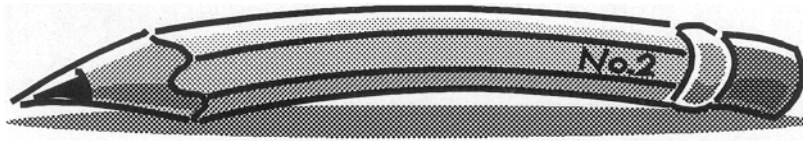
In the following sentences that tell the story of an ill-fated shopping trip, write the correct *two*, *too*, or *to* in the blank spaces.

1. The other day I went \_\_\_\_\_ the mall.
2. While I was there I bought a shirt and \_\_\_\_\_ pairs of shoes.
3. I went \_\_\_\_\_ the cash register \_\_\_\_\_ pay and to have the items put in a bag.

4. As I was leaving the store the bag broke open because it was \_\_\_\_\_ thin.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ store employees ran over \_\_\_\_\_ help me but it was \_\_\_\_\_ late.
6. The shoes and shirt fell through the hole in the bottom of the bag and crashed onto the floor. Customers tried \_\_\_\_\_ help but there was nothing they could do when someone accidentally stepped on the shirt and got it dirty.
7. The manager came over \_\_\_\_\_ talk \_\_\_\_\_ me and explain that their new plastic bags are \_\_\_\_\_ thin \_\_\_\_\_ use for heavy items like shoes.
8. He said it was a good idea \_\_\_\_\_ double-bag bigger packages.
9. Now when I go \_\_\_\_\_ the mall to shop, I am always ready \_\_\_\_\_ make sure that the employees use \_\_\_\_\_ bags instead of one, just \_\_\_\_\_ be safe.

Answers: 1. to, 2. two, 3. to, to, 4. too, 5. two, to, too, 6. to, 7. to to, too, to, 8. to, 9. to, to, two, to.

*Lesson created by Kristen MacKenzie*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Making Comparisons

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Comparatives** are adjectives or adverbs that compare **two** things. Many of them are made from one-syllable adjectives and adverbs to which *-er* has been added:

Ex.: big/bigger  
sad/sadder

When the words have two syllables, we add *-ier* as in happy/happier and pretty/prettier.

Which dog is happier?



**Superlatives** are adjectives or adverbs that compare **three or more** things. They can be made from the same words as are comparatives, but the ending will be either *-est* or *-iest*.

Ex.: big/biggest  
sad/saddest  
happy/happiest

Which dog is the saddest?



**Incomparables** are words that cannot be compared because they describe a state that either is or is not true. This is the basis of the joking way that people say a woman can not be “a little pregnant.” Either she is pregnant or she is not pregnant. Other words that cannot be compared include:

perfect  
final  
dead

empty  
single  
full

vertical  
unique  
square

**Irregular** words are ones that do not follow expected patterns. Here are the ways that some irregular adjectives work:

good, better, best  
bad, worse, worst  
little, less, least (when used with a non-count noun)

**More** and **Most** are commonly used to turn ordinary words into comparatives or superlatives. In Shakespeare's time, speakers could use these words for emphasis alongside other comparatives as when Julius Caesar says to Brutus, "That was the most unkindest cut of all!" But today if we use *more* or *most* with either a comparative or a superlative we sound uneducated.

## PRACTICE EXERCISE

Rewrite these sentences so that they use only one comparative or superlative.

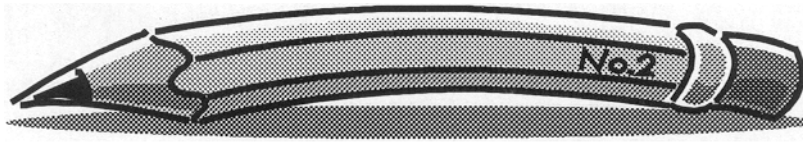
1. My cat is *more smarter* than your dog. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Barkley can jump *more high* than Fido. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Harriet is *more prettier* than her sister. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Our house is the *most ugliest* we have ever had. \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite these other sentences to make them fit the rules discussed above.

1. Fifi is the *beautifullest* dog in the world. \_\_\_\_\_
2. That was the *worstest* meal. \_\_\_\_\_
3. He is *deader than* a doorknob. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Her personality is *more unique*. \_\_\_\_\_
5. It was *funner* than staying home. \_\_\_\_\_

1. smarter, 2. higher, 3. prettier, 4. ugliest  
1. most beautiful, 2. worst, 3. dead as, 4. unique, 5. more fun

*Lesson created by Jill Littlejohn*  
with help from  
[www.english.com](http://www.english.com); [www.ucalgary.ca](http://www.ucalgary.ca); [www.uard.edu](http://www.uard.edu)



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### THEY'RE, THEIR, and THERE

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

English has three words that sound the same, but are actually quite different.

**They're** seems as though it could mean many things. Actually, it is a contraction of *they are*. The confusion probably relates to the fact that people are unsure about using apostrophes. When you write *they're*, ask yourself whether you can substitute *they are*. If not, you have made a mistake.

**Their** and **Theirs** are possessive pronouns similar to *her* and *hers* and *our* and *ours*. The fact that *heir* (referring to a person who inherits something) is hidden in the words *their* and *theirs* might help you remember that these are possessive pronouns. Another thing to remember with *their* and *theirs* is that possessive pronouns do not take apostrophe as shown in these sentences:

They eat *their* hamburgers with ketchup.

I think the car is *theirs*.

Because of the old rule about “*I* before *e* except after *c*,” people sometimes misspell this word as *their*. You can avoid this problem by remembering that all three of these words (*they*, *their*, and *there*) begin with the same three letters: T-H-E.

**There** is the most common of these three words. It is used in such sentences as:

*There* goes the ball--out of the park!

Put it right *there*!

*There* are not many home runs hit like that.

Another helpful hint is that *here* is buried inside *there*. The phrase “*here* and *there*” might help you remember that T-H-E-R-E is the word that people sometimes use to point to a place.

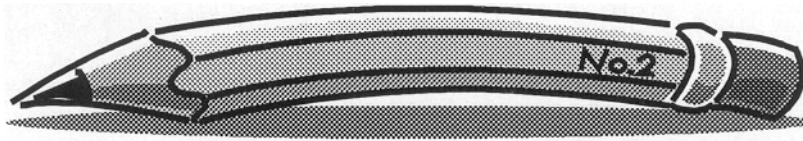
## PRACTICE EXERCISE

Fill in the blanks in these sentences with the appropriate form: *they're, their, there*.

1. \_\_\_ dog is an annoying mutt.
2. \_\_\_ once was a bird called a Dodo.
3. My aunt and uncle are arriving tomorrow. \_\_\_\_\_ coming from California.
4. Many years ago \_\_\_\_\_ were not any cars, so people used to travel by horse and carriage.
5. My neighbors have bought a second car. \_\_\_\_\_ new one is candy apple red.
6. Surprisingly, both of \_\_\_\_\_ cars are 4WD.
7. If you look over \_\_\_\_\_ you will see the beautiful sunset.
8. Have you seen where \_\_\_\_\_ building that new road?
9. I think \_\_\_\_\_ address is 1171 Newlands Road.
10. Do you know what \_\_\_\_\_ phone number is?

Answers: 1. Their, 2. There, 3. they're, 4. there, 5. their, 6. their, 7. there, 8. they're, 9. their, 10. their.

*Lesson created by Brendan Wydra*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### COULD HAVE, SHOULD HAVE, WOULD HAVE

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Helping or auxiliary verbs such as **could**, **should** and **would** are used in conjunction with a main verb to express shades of time and mood.

When people say such things as “I *could have* come sooner, if I had known,” and “You *would have* liked her, I’m sure,” they run the *could have* and *would have* together so the sentences are contracted to:

I *could've* come sooner, if I had known.  
and  
You *would've* liked her, I’m sure.

Many people listening to such sentences do not recognize the contraction of *have* and so they make the mistake of writing such sentences as:

I *could of* come sooner.... or I *coulda* come sooner...  
You *would of* liked her... or You *woulda* liked her...

### PRACTICE EXERCISE

Rewrite these correct sentences so that they are still correct, but you are being less formal and are so are using conjunctions.

1. They could have finished the job today if they had hurried.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I should have made my bed this morning.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. She would have mowed the lawn if it hadn't been raining.

\_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1. They could've finished the job today..., 2. I should've made my bed..., 3. She would've mowed the lawn....

**Now rewrite these incorrect sentences in two forms.** First, write the sentences using the complete forms and then rewrite the sentences using the contracted forms:

1. I should of gone to bed earlier last night.

Complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Contracted: \_\_\_\_\_

2. We coulda gone to the concert, but now it's too late.

Complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Contracted: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What should I of done?

Complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Contracted: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Although they didn't make it to the party, they should of.

Complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Contracted: \_\_\_\_\_

5. ASU would of raised our tuition.

Complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Contracted: \_\_\_\_\_

6. I woulda gone to class if I hadn't been eaten by the one-eyed, blind purple people-eater

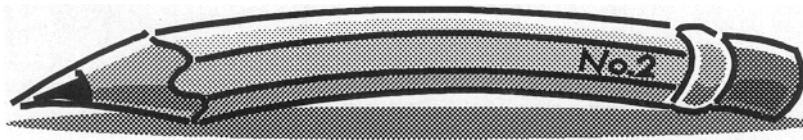
Complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Contracted: \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1. I should have gone to bed earlier last night, I should've gone to bed earlier last night. 2. We could have gone to the concert, but now it's too late. We could've gone to the concert, but now it's too late. 3. What should I have done? What should I've done? 4. Although they didn't make it to the party, they should have. Although they didn't make it to the party, they should've. 5. ASU would have raised our tuition. ASU would've raised our tuition. 6. I would have gone to class if I hadn't been eaten by the one-eyed, blind purple people-eater. I would've gone to class if I hadn't been eaten by the one-eyed, blind purple people-eater.

*Lesson Created by Diane Gilhooly-Keyes*





## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Avoiding Double (or Multiple) Negatives

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A rule of formal grammar is that speakers should avoid using double negatives because if we say something like, “I don’t see no paper,” a logical interpretation could be that since the speaker does NOT see NO paper, then the speaker must be looking at some paper. If there is actually no paper, it would have been better for the speaker to have said, “I don’t see any paper,” or “I see no paper.” Speakers probably make the mistake of using double negatives because it seems like a natural way to emphasize negation as when we tell a baby who is about to touch something dangerous, “No, no!” or “No, Stop!”

Another reason that speakers make the mistake is that they use *not* with such words as:

hardly                      scarcely                      barely

These words already communicate a negative sense, so if you say, “I can’t hardly understand you,” the interpretation could be that you fully understand the person. A clearer sentence would be, “I can hardly understand you,” or “I cannot understand you.”

One way to help discover whether or not you have used double negatives in a paper is to read your paper aloud. Reading contractions as the two separate words that they may help you to see if you have used two negatives. For example, you would probably be more likely to recognize the double negatives in “I would not do no drugs,” than you would in “I wouldn’t do no drugs.”

### PRACTICE EXERCISE

Rewrite the following sentences so that they do not use double negatives.

1. I didn’t hardly notice you cut your hair.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I didn’t get no beans.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. She wouldn’t get no credit for her answers.

---

4. She is not barely old enough to be a mother.

---

5. You didn't hardly finish your beans.

---

6. Her handwriting wasn't scarcely legible.

---

7. Her answers were not incorrect.

---

8. The gas truck was not inflammable.

---

9. The teacher didn't think she deserved no credit.

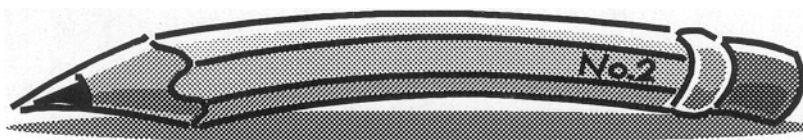
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10. I'm surprised that you won't get no money.

---

Suggested rewrites: 1. I hardly noticed you cut your hair. 2. I didn't get any beans. 3. She would get no credit for her answers, 4. She is barely old enough to be a mother. 5. You hardly finished your beans. 6. Her handwriting was scarcely legible. 7. Her answers were correct. 8. The gas truck was flammable. 9. The teacher thought she deserved no credit. 10. I'm surprised that you won't get money.

*Lesson Created by Jennifer Ann Parsons*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Restrictive vs. Non-Restrictive Clauses

**Relative clauses** can be broken down into two types: (1) restrictive and (2) non-restrictive.

A **restrictive clause** provides information that is pertinent or essential to the meaning of the sentence.

A **non-restrictive clause**, also called a parenthetical or an appositive, contains information that is extra. Information contained in a non-restrictive clause may be removed from the sentence altogether without changing the overall meaning of the sentence. Because this information is not crucial to the meaning of a sentence, it is set apart with commas, or, more emphatically, with dashes, or parentheses.

Both kinds of clauses can be signaled by the use of *wh* word (*which*, *when*, *where*, and *who*). *That* is used to signal a restrictive clause. Because a restrictive clause contributes to the basic meaning of the sentence, it is not separated from the rest of the sentence with commas or other surrounding punctuation.

The meaning of a sentence can be altered by whether a clause is punctuated so as to show that it is a restrictive clause (giving crucial information) or a non-restrictive clause (giving extra information).

A summary table follows.

---

<b>Restrictive</b>	<b>Non-Restrictive (appositive/parenthetical)</b>
a. begins with <i>wh</i> words or <i>that</i>	may begin with <i>wh</i> words
b. presents highly relevant information	gives "extra" information
c. is not separated from the sentence	is separated by commas, dashes, or parentheses

---



#### Examples of non-restrictive clauses:

Bill Clinton, who was the former President, cheated on his wife.

Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*, which I read in my Victorian novels class this semester, is a classic.

We know that these are non-restrictive clauses because the subjects' names are given; therefore the *wh* clauses are just giving extra information so it is appropriate that these clauses be set off by commas.

### **Examples of restrictive clauses:**

The woman whom I met at the baseball game was wearing my same shirt.

The on-screen kiss that I like the best is the one at the end of the movie *Clueless*.

We know that these are restrictive clauses partly because they are not set aside by commas, but also because we need the information to know what is being talked about.

## **PRACTICE EXERCISE**

Read the following sentences and put commas around the non-restrictive clauses. Put an N after the sentences that are non-restrictive. Put an R after the sentences that contain a restrictive clause. Leave those sentences without internal punctuation. A few of the sentences could be either, but the meaning would change.

1. Charles Dickens who was great writer in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century is the author of Little Dorrit.
2. The piece of chocolate cake which probably has a million calories in it was delicious.
3. My favorite place to ski is Snow Basin in Utah which is one of the least crowded resorts.
4. The guy that my old roommate married is boring.
5. He reads and studies maps for fun which is no exaggeration.
6. I love the weather which has been so nice lately in Arizona.
7. My graduation from Arizona State University this August which I am extremely elated about has been hard earned.
8. I am jealous of the guy in my neighborhood who drives a hot 1969 Chevy Camaro.
9. Methods of Teaching English which is my favorite class this semester meets on Tuesday nights.
10. I had the answer that made the most sense.

Answers: 1. N, 2. N, 3. N, 4. R, 5. N, 6. R, 7. N, 8. R, 9. N, 10. R

*Lesson created by Jessica Kempton*



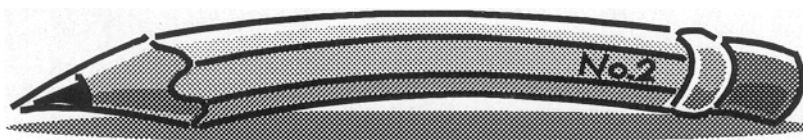
## PRACTICE EXERCISE

Directions: Fill in the blanks in each sentence with the correct version of the homophones listed below the blank.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ of pie is that?  
Who's/whose      piece/peace
2. I have \_\_\_\_\_ new \_\_\_\_\_ of shoes.  
two/too/to      pears/pairs
3. \_\_\_\_\_ going to \_\_\_\_\_ out of town this \_\_\_\_\_.  
Their/They're/There      be/bee      weak/week
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ a present \_\_\_\_\_ you.  
maid/made      for/four/fore
5. I \_\_\_\_\_ that you \_\_\_\_\_ game yesterday.  
heard/herd      won/one      you're/your
6. \_\_\_\_\_ math worksheet is \_\_\_\_\_ tomorrow.  
Hour/Our      due/dew/do
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ the necklace away because \_\_\_\_\_ broken.  
through/threw      its/it's
8. I \_\_\_\_\_ the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ the paper I \_\_\_\_\_.  
heard/herd      red/read      rote/wrote

Answers: 1. Whose, piece 2. two, pairs 3. They're, be, week 4.. made, for 5. heard, won, your 6. Our, due 7. threw, it's 8. heard, read, wrote

*Lesson created by Chris Williams*



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Reflexive Pronouns

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflexive pronouns are the *-self* forms of pronouns:

RIGHT

**Myself**  
**Itself**

**Yourself**  
**Ourselves**

**Himself**  
**Yourselves**

**Herself**  
**Themselves**

Because English also has the personal pronouns *his* and *their*, some speakers extend the above system and use *hissself* and *theirselves*. Although it is easy to see why people do this, these forms are considered non-standard.

WRONG

He always bragged on *hissself*.  
They gave the money to *theirselves*.

RIGHT

He always bragged on *himself*.  
They gave the money to *themselves*.

### OTHER MISTAKES

When speakers are trying to sound formal or respectful, they will sometimes use one of the reflexive pronouns when a plain pronoun would be better. For example:

WRONG

Jack will be traveling with Jenny and myself.  
Dana loves being with Grandpa and yourself.

RIGHT

Jack will be traveling with Jenny and me.  
Dana loves being with Grandpa and you.

Another mistake is to use a reflexive pronoun as the subject of a sentence.

WRONG

Yourself is hot stuff.  
Herself is my favorite person.

RIGHT

You are hot stuff.  
She is my favorite person.

### Reflexive Pronouns as Intensifiers

A reflexive pronoun may be used immediately after another pronoun to emphasize or intensify the first pronoun, as long as both refer to the same person(s). For example,

I myself cooked this gourmet dinner.  
We ourselves must make these changes rather than depend on others.

## PRACTICE EXERCISE

Decide whether these sentences are correct or incorrect. Write correct by the ones that are acceptable; rewrite the others so that they are in standard English.

1. The policeman shot himself accidentally. \_\_\_\_\_
2. They aimed the insult at both herself and others. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Danny and myself will be the lead speakers. \_\_\_\_\_
4. They promised to give shots to themselves. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I myself should take responsibility. \_\_\_\_\_
6. They don't trust themselves to do the job right. \_\_\_\_\_
7. He gave hisself a haircut. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The intersection itself is to blame. \_\_\_\_\_

*Answers. 1. Correct, 2. They aimed the insult at both her and others. 3. Danny and I will be the lead speakers. 4. They promised to give shots to themselves. 5. Correct, 6. Correct, 7. He gave himself a haircut. 8. Correct*

Now, to help you remember the acceptable forms of reflexive pronouns, write a grammatically correct sentence using each of the following:

1. Myself \_\_\_\_\_
2. Yourself \_\_\_\_\_
3. Himself \_\_\_\_\_
4. Herself \_\_\_\_\_
5. Itself \_\_\_\_\_
6. Ourselves \_\_\_\_\_
7. Yourselves \_\_\_\_\_
8. Themselves \_\_\_\_\_

*Lesson created by Robin Adamson*



