

Grammatical Challenges: Points to Ponder



Use the **possessive** form with a **gerund**.

Proper

- I really appreciate **your** **helping** with this initiative.
- They would appreciate **its** **being** included on the program.
- All assumptions are based on **his** **getting** well soon.

Improper

- I really appreciate you **helping** with this initiative.
- They would appreciate it **being** included on the program.
- All assumptions are based on him **getting** well soon.

Which is correct?

- It was a good business plan, and I did not mind him profiting from it.
- It was a good business plan, and I did not mind his profiting from it.



Which vs. That

- “Which” is preceded by a comma.
- “That” is not preceded by a comma.



Which vs. That

Proper

- He maintains high standards, **which** are very helpful to him in meeting his goals.
- He maintains standards **that** are very helpful to him in meeting his goals.

Improper

- He maintains high standards, that are very helpful to him in meeting his goals.
- He maintains standards which are very helpful to him in meeting his goals.

Which are correct?

- She has attained the rank of full professor, which is a laudable achievement in today's competitive academic environment.
- She has garnered publicity that will help the project.
- She has attained the rank of full professor that is a laudable achievement in today's competitive academic environment.
- She has garnered publicity which will help the project.

Use the singular form for organizations

Proper

- The Association is proud of **its** accomplishments.

Improper

- The Association is proud of **their** accomplishments.



Which is correct?

- The College hopes to achieve their fundraising goals.
- The College hopes to achieve its fundraising goals.



Lie vs. Lay

Proper

- In the meeting, he laid out several alternatives.
- I will lay down my burden.
- Let's go lie out in the sun and relax.
- He has laid down the gauntlet.

Improper

- In the meeting, he lay out several alternatives.
- Let's go lay out in the sun and relax.



Which is correct?

- I plan to lay down on the sand at the beach.
- I plan to lie down on the sand at the beach.



Sank vs. Sunk

Proper

- The boat sank.
- The boat has sunk.

Improper

- The boat sunk.



Which is correct?

- The ship on which I was riding sank, but we were rescued.
- The ship on which we were riding sank, but we were rescued.



Hang vs. Hung

Proper

- Maria hung up her coat.
- Sue hangs the wallpaper very well.
- Since John has been convicted of the crime, he will be hanged.
- She hanged herself.

Improper

- Since John has been convicted of the crime, he will be hung.
- She hung herself.



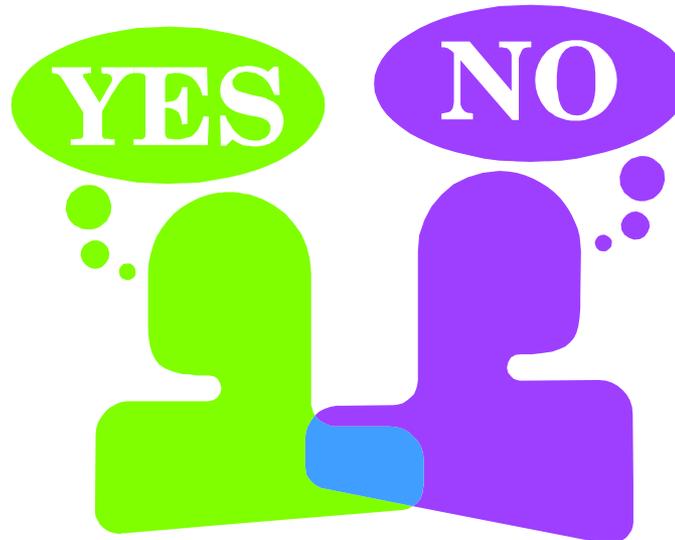
Which is correct?

- Mary Surratt was convicted and subsequently hung.
- Mary Surratt was convicted and subsequently hanged.

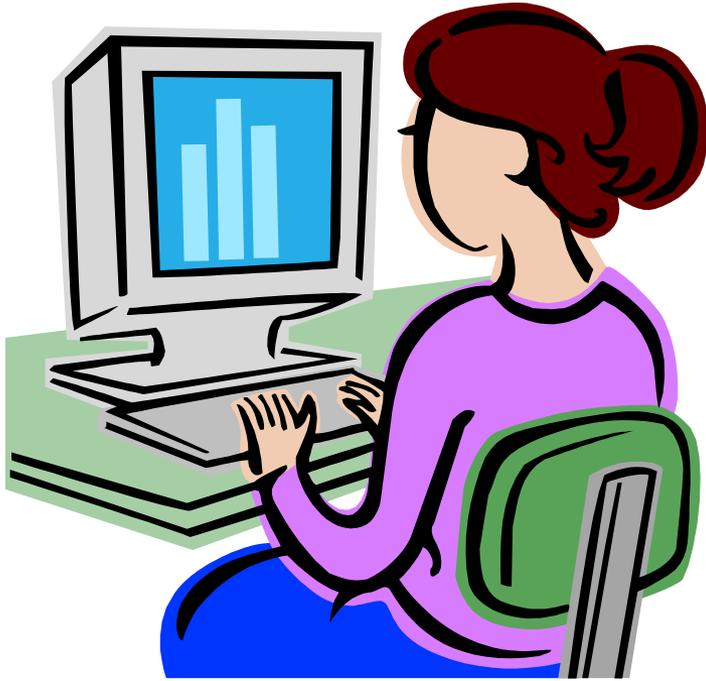


Authorities may disagree

- Her strategy has **proven** to be very useful.
- The group has **striven** to meet its goals.
- Her strategy has **proved** to be very useful.
- The group has **strived** to meet its goals.



When in doubt...



- Be guided by how the phrase appears in related materials.
- Do a search in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*.

Avoiding common pitfalls



- “Accommodate” has two “m’s.”
- The word “irregardless” does not exist!
- There is “a rat” in “separate.”
- Use “i” before “e,” except after “c” (e.g., receive)

Which is correct?

- I hope to receive separate accommodations regardless of financial considerations.
- I hope to recieve separate accomodations irregardless of financial considerations.



Happy Grammatical Sailing!

