

Language Skills Test (LST) Information:

The Language Skills Test is the entrance examination to the Gaylord College. The LST must be completed prior to enrollment in JMC 2033 (Writing for Mass Media), a course that is required of all journalism and mass communication majors.

- The LST is administered in the **Student Services Center** (2533 Gaylord Hall) Monday through Friday
- from **8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.** No appointment is necessary.
- The LST consists of 80 questions that are grouped into four sections: spelling; frequently confused words and irregular verb forms; identifying parts of speech and parts of a sentence; and general language skills.
- The LST may be attempted **three** times. If a student fails the third time, the student will be required to enroll in JMC 0123 (Fundamentals of Writing for the Media), a course that will not apply toward the degree.

2 Sample Tests are available:

SAMPLE TEST 1 : <http://gaylord.ou.edu/lst/example/sampletest1.html>

SAMPLE TEST 2 : <http://gaylord.ou.edu/lst/example/sampletest2.html>

Answer keys are provided with all exercises. The sample tests are written in the same format as the LST.

The LST takes most students about 45 minutes to complete; you will have 90 minutes to complete the test. Students must get 70 percent (56 correct) to pass the exam. Results are available immediately.

STUDY GUIDE

All curriculum and *examples were taken from the (1) eighth edition of "Working with Words: A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors," by Brian S. Brooks, James L. Pinson, and Jean Gaddy Wilson and the (2) second edition of "Media Writer's Handbook: A Guide to Common Writing and Editing Problems," by George T. Arnold and the (3) Grammar Girl Presents the Ultimate Writing Guide for Students," by Mignon Fogarty, and (4) the chompchomp.com
*Some examples created by Mia Chism

Grammar Basics

Noun = person, place or thing

Pronoun = replacement for nouns; refers to the noun without renaming it

Verb = what a noun does, an action

Adjective = describes a noun (or a pronoun); answers the questions: which one, what kind, or how many

Adverb = describes verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, clauses; answers the questions: where, when and how (how often and how much)

Simple Subject = tells who or what the sentence is about; the noun nugget of the complete subject

Ex. The **joke** flopped.

Simple Predicate = tells what is happening to the subject.

Ex. Squiggly **ran**.

Direct Object = direct recipient of the verb's actions

Ex. Squiggly bought **rocks**. [rocks is the DO]

Indirect Object = is the person or thing that receives the direct object

Ex. Squiggly gave **me** rocks. [me is the IO, while rocks is the DO]

Ex. She threw **him** a kiss. [him is the IO, while kiss is the DO]

Object of a preposition = Prepositions often begin prepositional phrases. To complete the phrase, the preposition usually teams up with a noun, pronoun, or gerund, or the object of the preposition.

Ex. At noon [At = preposition; noon = noun or the object of the preposition.]

Ex. Behind them [Behind = preposition; them = pronoun or the object of the preposition.]

Ex. At the kitchen counter [At = preposition; the, kitchen = modifiers; counter = noun or the object of the preposition]

Nominative v. Objective Case Pronouns

Nominative case is used when the **pronoun** is the subject, predicated nominative or noun of the direct address.

VS.

Objective case is used when the **pronoun** is the direct object; the indirect object; the object of a preposition, participle, gerund or infinitive; or the subject of an infinitive.

Nominative Case – I, you, he, she, it, we, they, one, who

Objective Case – me, you, him, her, it, us, them, one, whom

Examples of Nominative Case:

1.

Right → Jamie and I patted the baby hippo.

Wrong → Jamie and me patted the baby hippo.

WHY? “Jamie and I” is a compound subject, which means it is still the main subject.

Compound subjects are all in the **nominative** case.

2.

Right → That photographer, as well as we two reporters, was in France to cover the summit.

Wrong → That photographer, as well as us two reporters, was in France to cover the summit.

The pronoun **we** is still part of the complete subject, so it is in the nominative case.

Examples of Objective Case:

1. Right → Rescuers couldn't reach *them* in time. (Direct object)

2. Right → David Beckham kicked *him* the ball. (Indirect object)

3. Right → His brother borrowed the bike **from** *him*. (Object of the preposition ‘from’)

4. Right → **Missing** *him*, she wrote a letter. (object of the participle ‘missing’)

5. Right → **Cleaning** *it* proved difficult. (object of the gerund ‘cleaning’)

6. Right → They took *him* to be me. (subject of the infinitive ‘to be’)

Other pronoun examples:

As/Like Pronoun agreement:

Wrong → He did it the same as *her*.

Right → He did it the same as *she* [did it].

As/Than Pronoun agreement:

Wrong → She's faster than *him*.

Right → She's faster than *he* [is].

“Me” as a pronoun:

Wrong → Give the report to the committee and *I*.

Right → Give the report to the committee and *me*.

“Myself” as a pronoun:

** Use only in a sentence in which *I* has been used earlier.

Wrong → You can give it to myself of Christine.

Right → You can give it to Christine or me.

Wrong → *I* hurt myself.

Right → *I, myself*, believe otherwise.

Possessive Pronouns v. Contractions

It's = It is	Ex.) It's sunny outside today. / It is sunny outside today.
Its = possessive of pronoun	Ex.) Its whereabouts were unknown.
Their	Ex.) Their car was in the garage.
Theirs	Ex.) The car is theirs.
They're = They are	Ex.) They're going out tonight. / They are going out tonight.
There = location	Ex.) The book is over there in the corner.
Who's = Who is	Ex.) Who's going out tonight? / Who is going out tonight?
Whose = possessive	Ex.) Whose textbook is this?
Yours = possessive	Ex.) This textbook is yours.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Just like verbs agree with their subjects (Ex.) Jim sings in class. / Jim and Tina sing in class., pronouns have to agree with their antecedents, which basically a fancy term for **renaming** the noun. Antecedents must agree in number, gender and person.

Examples of agreement in number:

Right → The City Council gave its approval.

Wrong → The City Council gave their approval.

Why? City Council is a single thing; it is a **collective** noun. Collective nouns take the antecedent *it* or *its* (possessive).

Other common collective nouns:

Audience, cast, choir, class, club, crew, crowd, department, faculty, family, gang, group, herd, jury, mob, orchestra, press, public, staff, team

Examples of agreement in gender and number:

Wrong → A reporter should check their facts.

Better → A reporter should check his or her facts. (The subject is singular, so the antecedent must be singular.)

Best → Reporters should check their facts. (The subject is plural, so the antecedent is plural.)

Examples of agreement with Who & That:

Wrong → She was the kind of person *that* disliked *their* own handwriting.

Right → She was the kind of person *who* disliked *her* own handwriting.

Why?? The subject of the sentence is a person (she), which correlates with the antecedent *who*.

Wrong → *Each* [student] was responsible for *their* backpack.

Right → *Each* [student] was responsible for *his or her* backpack.

Why?? The subject is *each*, and *each* is a singular verb.

Other common singular pronouns:

Another, anybody, anyone, anything, each one, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, somebody, someone and something

***All, any, each, more, none, plenty, some* and *such* can be either singular or plural depending on the context.

→ All are here. All is lost.

Some are coming. Some is left.

Essential v. Non-essential/ Restrictive Clauses

Use *that* to introduce restrictive (essential) clauses that do not require commas.

Use *which* to introduce nonrestrictive (nonessential) clauses that require commas.

Examples:

1. Nonrestrictive → The Nile, *which* flows into the Mediterranean, gives Egypt life.

Why?? You can remove this clause, and what is left is a complete thought/sentence.

**Hint: nonrestrictive will use commas.

Restrictive → The Nile is the river *that* gives Egypt life.

Why?? Using *that* restricts the clause from being removed. You cannot remove this clause or else it would be an incomplete thought.

2. Nonrestrictive → The policy, *which* critics charged was flawed from the beginning, was amended.

Restrictive → The policy *that* critics charged was flawed from the beginning was amended.

3. Nonrestrictive → The corner house, *which* had a brick front, was theirs.

Restrictive → The house that had a brick front was theirs.

Who, Whoever v. Whom, Whomever

Use *who* or *whoever* when the clause calls for the nominative case.

- TIPS** 1. Nominative Case** – I, you, he, she, it, we, they, one, who
2. If you can use *he, she* or *they*: *who* or *whoever* is the correct choice.

Examples:

1. *Who* did you say wrote the Miss Minimalist blog?
Why?? *Who* is the subject of the clause, so nominative case: “Did you say she wrote the Miss Minimalist blog?”
2. *Whoever* is going had better get ready.
Why?? *Whoever* is the subject of the clause, so nominative case: “He is singing.”

Use *whom* or *whomever* when the clause calls for the objective case.

- TIPS ** 1. Objective Case** – me, you, him, her, it, us, them, one, whom
3. If you can use *him, her* or *them*: *whom* or *whomever* is the correct choice.

Examples:

1. To *whom* are you speaking?
Why?? *Whom* is the object of preposition *to*, so objective case: “Are you speaking to them?”
2. Talk with *whomever* you like, and you’ll get the same answer.
Why?? *Whomever* is the object of preposition *with*, so objective case: “You like her.”

To decide when *who* or *whom* needs *ever* at the end, remember that *whoever* is used in place of *anyone* or *anyone who* and *whomever* is used in place of *anyone whom*.

Examples:

1. *Whoever* [*Anyone who*] was interested could pick up a brochure at the fair.
2. *Whomever* [*Anyone whom*] you want to invite may come.

Interrogative and Reciprocal Pronouns

Whose = possessive form of who

Who's = Who is OR Who has

Examples:

Wrong → Whose going to see the new Will Ferrell movie?

Right → Who's [Who is] going to see the new Will Ferrell movie?

Wrong → She said she didn't care who's feelings were hurt.

Right → She said she didn't care whose feelings were hurt.

Reciprocal pronouns:

There are 2! They express mutual action, effect or relationship.

Each other = involving two people or things

One another = involving more than two people or things

Examples:

1. Andrew and Kate are going to help each other make dinner tonight. (two people)
2. The librarians looked at one another in disbelief. (more than two people)

Demonstrative Pronouns

There are only 4!

This and *That*, which are singular

AND

These and *Those*, which are plural

This and *These* are used to identify and point out people, places and things **nearby**.

Examples:

1. This is my favorite newspaper.
2. These are my awards.

That and *Those* are used to identify and point out people, places, and things more **distant**.

Examples:

1. That is where my office is located.
2. Those are the lamps I'll place on my desk.

Reflexive Pronouns

These pronouns come after the verb and refer to the subject. They serve as either the direct object or the predicate complement.

Singular “self” pronouns: *herself, himself, itself, **myself and yourself*

** Use only in a sentence in which *I* has been used earlier.

Plural “self” pronouns: *themselves, yourselves and ourselves*

DO NOT USE: *hissself, theirsself, ourself or theirselves*

Examples:

1. The reporter hurt himself when he dropped the camera on his foot.
2. The editor promised herself that she would never make the same grammar mistake again.
3. I, myself, will do it.

Subject-verb agreement with/ Collective and uncountable nouns

Examples with conjunctions:

1. Larson *and* Smith *oppose* the bill. [Plural subject, plural verb]
2. Pork and beans *is* not the chef’s favorite dish. [Pork and beans is one dish, so singular verb.]
3. Mary *or* Phil *is* answering calls today. [When using ‘Or’ the verb agrees with the nearest noun or pronoun.]
4. Mary or her colleagues *are* answering the calls today. [Nearest noun is plural, so plural verb.]
5. Carrie, as well as they, *is* voting in the primary election. [Parenthetical words or phrases do not affect the number of the subject.]

Collective Nouns:

What are these? They are nouns in singular form but plural in meaning.

These take SINGULAR verbs and antecedents (its, it). They count as one thing.

*Army, assembly, audience, board, breed, cast, choir, class, club, commission, committee, community, company, corporation, council, couple, covey, crew, crowd, department, faculty, family, firm, flock, furniture, gang, gossip, group, herd, jury, mob, orchestra, panel, press, pubic, **remainder, staff, team, union and U.S.*

Note: ‘*Couple*’ can take both a singular or plural verb.

Examples:

Singular → A married couple often pays more under U.S. tax law than two people living together but filing separately.

Why?? The *couple* here is two people acting as a unit, filing jointly.

Plural → A couple *were* holding hands in the park.

Why?? The *couple* here refers to two people acting as individuals, holding each other's hands.

Uncountable Nouns:

What are these? They are nouns that have no plural, although they look plural already.

Some take a singular verb, while some take a plural.

Uncountable nouns that take a SINGULAR verb:

Advice, apparatus, athletics, civics, courage, economics, fun, health, information, jazz, kudos, linguistics, mathematics, measles, mumps, news, remainder, shambles, summons and whereabouts

Uncountable nouns that take a PLURAL verb:

Assets, barracks, earnings, goods, odds, pants, pliers, proceeds, remains, riches, scissors, shears, tactics, tanks, tongs and wages

Uncountable nouns that can take SINGULAR or PLURAL (depending on the context):

Ethics, gross, headquarters, mechanics, politics, savings, series, species and statistics.

Examples:

1. Politics is her favorite subject.
2. Her politics are socialistic.

Irregular verbs

Common irregular verbs and their tenses:

<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>	<u>Present Participle</u>
Bear	bore	had/have borne	bearing
**Drink	drank	had/have drunk	drinking
Drive	drove	had/have driven	driving
Fly	flew	had/have flown	flying
Lay (to set down)	laid	had/have laid	laying
Lie (to recline)	lay	had/have lain	lying
Ring	rang	had/have rung	ringing
Swim	swam	had/have swum	swimming

****Example:**

I drink coffee. (Present)

I drank coffee. (Past)

I have never drunk coffee. / I had never drunk coffee. (Past Participle)

Subjunctive mood

This mood should be used to talk about any condition contrary to fact, or to express a wish, doubt, prayer, desire, request, hypothetical situation or hope.

Note: The **subjunctive** is often **used** after **if** in sentences in which the verb in the main clause is in the conditional.

Subjunctive Forms of *To Be*:

Present Tense → *I be, you be, he/she/it be, we be, they be*

Past Tense → *I were, you were, he/she/it were, we were, they were*

Examples:

1. The bill would close tax loopholes if it *were* [not was] passed into law.
Why?? The *were* is in the subjunctive mood because it's proposing a hypothetical situation.
2. If I were you, I'd quit. [I cannot be you, so it is hypothetical, which calls for subjunctive.]
3. I wish I were a cowboy.
4. The hijackers demanded that 17 terrorists *be* set free. [They have not yet been freed.]
5. He asked that the editor *edit* [not *edits*] his story carefully for potential libel.
6. I *could* do it *were* I *given* the proper tools. [*Could* is conditional; *were given* is a passive-voice form of subjunctive.]

Apostrophes

Rule 1: **Add an 's** to make possessive both singular and plural common nouns and indefinite pronouns whose spelling does not end with an s.

Examples:

<u>Singular nouns</u>	<u>Plural nouns</u>	<u>Indefinite pronouns</u>	
Child's	children's	anyone's	another's
Man's	men's	everyone's	other's
Woman's	women's	someone's	everyone else's
Alumna's	alumnae's	one's	neither's

Rule 2: Add an apostrophe to make possessive a plural noun ending in *s*, *es* or *ies*.

Examples:

Boys'	actresses'	agencies'
Girls'	Joneses'	companies'
Players'	witnesses'	properties'

Rule 3: In journalistic uses, add an apostrophe to make possessive singular proper nouns whose spelling ends in *s*.

Examples:

Hayes' Jones' Lucas' Sias' Willis'

Rule 3.5: In formal writing, add an 's to make possessive singular proper nouns whose spelling ends in s.

Examples:

Hayes's Jones's Lucas's Sias's Willis's

Rule 4: **Add an 's** to a singular common noun ending in s. **HOWEVER**, if the next word starts with an s, add only an apostrophe.

Examples:

Actress's best role actress' stand-in
Compass's great value compass' steel case
Boss's biggest gripe boss' secret

Rule 5: **Add an 's** to the last word to make compound nouns possessive.

Examples:

Brother-in-law's father-in-law's secretary of state's
Sister-in-law's mother-in-law's attorney general's

Rule 6 and 6.5: **Add an 's** to the last noun to indicate joint ownership OR to **EACH name to indicate separate ownership.**

Examples:

Pete and Bob's Drive –In
Ed and Wilma's coffee shop

OR

Pete's and Bob's cars
Ed's and Wilma's computers

Rule 7: Use an apostrophe to replace a letter or a figure omitted on purpose.

Examples:

'37 flood (1937) summer of '83 (1983)
the '40s (the 1940s) singin' (singing)

NEVER USE APOSTROPHE'S to form the possessive of relative and personal pronouns:

Examples: our's, it's, who's your's, their's

→ ours, its, whose, yours, theirs

Commas, colons, and semicolons

Commas:

Rule 1: Use a comma after *said* when introducing a direct quotation that is at least one sentence long.

Examples:

Cooper said, "I don't feel like going to work today."

Rule 2: Use a comma after words in a series but not before the conjunction unless the meaning would be unclear. Meaning, NO oxford comma.

Examples:

The new budget proposals would cut spending for student loans, building repairs, road improvements and farm subsidies.

Rule 3: Use a comma between two independent clauses joined by a conjunction to form a single sentence.

Examples:

COMMA NEEDED → A dentist and her assistant discussed tooth care with the students, and they used Mr. Gross Mouth to illustrate their points.

NO comma needed → A dentist and her assistant discussed tooth care with the students and used Mr. Gross Mouth to illustrate their points.

Rule 4: Use commas around nonrestrictive (nonessential) words, phrases or clauses.

Example:

The yellow car, which was in the driveway, belongs to Jim.

Rule 5: Use a comma after a dependent clause at the start of a sentence. (Sentences beginning with *although, because, if or since*)

Examples:

1. Although the police were criticized for the arrest, the chief defended it.
2. Because clouds covered the sky, it was difficult to see the comet last night.

Semicolons:

Rule 1: Use a semicolon between items in a series that has commas within the items. Remember to put a semicolon before the final conjunction.

Examples:

1. The American flag is red, white and blue; the Canadian flag is red and white; and the German flag is red, gold and black.
2. Their diet consists of juice, toast and coffee for breakfast; fruit with yogurt, cottage cheese or tofu for lunch; and lean meat, vegetables and a starch for dinner.

Rule 2: A semicolon may be used between independent clauses when a conjunction is absent.

Example:

The Padres are weak this year; they have the worst record in the league.

Rule 3: A semicolon can be used before a conjunctive adverb connecting two independent clauses.

Example:

Smith's lawyer contended he was mentally incompetent; however, the jury decided the evidence was not so clear.

Colons:

Colons are used before a list.

Example:

Last year Rachel bought shirts from 7 states: Florida, Missouri, Nebraska, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, California.

Adjective/adverb recognition

For most short adjectives, to make the comparative form, add *-er* the end of the positive form. To make a superlative form, add *-est* to the end of the positive form.

Examples:

Tall [Positive]

Taller [Comparative]

Tallest [Superlative]

Note**

Don't say someone is "the *oldest* of the two brothers." If there are only two, he's the *older*.

To form most adverbs, add *-ly* to the end of the positive form of an adjective. This *-ly* form is then the positive form of the adverb. You can add *more* or *less* in front of the positive form, and the superlative by putting the word *most* or *least* in front of the positive form.

Examples:

Quick [adjective]

Quickly [positive form of the adverb]

More quickly or less quickly [comparative form of the adverb]

Most quickly or least quickly [superlative form of the adverb]

Some intransitive verbs in some uses may be linking verbs and take a predicate adjective, but in other uses may be complete verbs or transitive verbs and be followed by an adverb.

Examples:

He says it feels good to be alive.

The sculptor said her hands cannot feel the clay well with heavy gloves on.

The patient feels well enough to be discharged.

Sentence fragment v. complete sentence

Fragments: A fragment is a word or group of words that isn't a complete sentence. Either it lacks a subject or verb, or it's a dependent clause.

Examples:

A team for all seasons.

Takes the guesswork out of the game.

Because he was sick.

Active v. passive voice

All verbs are in either the active voice or the passive voice, but it may be easier to think of all sentences as being either active or passive.

Examples:

ACTIVE VOICE, PRESENT TENSE → The printer publishes the magazine.

ACTIVE VOICE, PAST TENSE → The printer published the magazine.

Passive-voice sentences stress the receiver of an action by making the receiver the subject of the sentence and having the subject acted upon:

Examples:

PASSIVE VOICE, PRESENT TENSE → The magazine is published by the printer.

PASSIVE VOICE, PAST TENSE → The magazine was published by the printer.

PASSIVE VOICE, EXPRESSED → The magazine was published by the printer.

PASSIVE VOICE, IMPLIED → The magazine was published.

ACTIVE VOICE → The military interrogated the prisoners.

PASSIVE VOICE, EXPRESSED → The prisoners were interrogated by the military.

PASSIVE VOICE, IMPLIED → The prisoners were interrogated.

ACTIVE VOICE → The City Council voted to censure the mayor.

[The City Council took action.]

PASSIVE VOICE → The mayor was censured by the City Council. [The mayor was acted upon by the City Council.]

PASSIVE VOICE → The mayor was censured.

[The mayor was acted upon by someone or something else.]

(EXTREME) PASSIVE VOICE → Censure was effectuated by the City Council.

[The subject has been turned into a thing being acted upon.]

Frequently Misspelled Words

accessible	battalion	caffeine	defendant
accidentally	believable	calendar	definite
accommodate	bookkeeper	canceled	definitely
acquaint	cemetery	descendant	
acquit	changeable	despair	
aerial	commitment	develop	
aggressive	committee	disappoint	
allege	conscious		
analyze	correspondence		
annual	courageous		
arctic	criticize		
ascend			
assassin			
athlete			

eligible
embarrass
environment
equivalent
exercise
exhaust
existence
exorbitant

feasible
fiery
guarantee
hygiene
hypocrite

gauge
grammar
homicide

harass
hemorrhage

incidentally
independence
indispensable
interfere
irrelevant
irresistible

judgment
license
lightning
likelihood
loneliness

kindergarten liaison

maintenance
maneuver
miscellaneous
misspell
municipal
murmur

necessary
nickel
noticeable
nuisance
optimistic
perseverance
pleasant
precedent
privilege
professor
pronunciation
psychology

occasion
occasional
occurred
omitted
permanent

parallel
parliamentary
pastime
perennial

questionnaire
recommend
repetition
rhythm
receive

secretary
seize
sergeant
sheriff
siege
simultaneous
sophomore

tendency
tragedy

usable

visible

weird

Frequently confused words

Accept— to receive

Except — but for; to exclude

All right — everyone prepared

Alright — by now

Affect — verb; to influence or produce a change in

Effect — noun; result OR verb; to cause or accomplish

A lot — an abundance of

Alot — *not a word*

Anyone — any person at all

Any one — any single person or thing

Altogether — thoroughly

All together — everyone grouped

Principal — noun; someone or something first in rank OR adj.; most important

Principle — basic rule or guide

Martial — As in martial law. (Marital refers to marriage)

Marshall — word as a name only

Marshal — verb; to direct OR noun; title of an office in the military or in police department

Are — To be

Our — Possessive

Hour — Time

Advice — noun

Advise — verb

Advize — *not a word*

Elusion — an escape

Allusion — casual mention

Illusion — erroneous perception or belief

Desert — noun; barren region OR verb; to abandon

Dessert — noun; sweet course in a meal
Lead — noun; metal OR verb; present tense of lead
Led — past tense of lead

Council — deliberative body; assembly of advisers
Counsel — noun; legal adviser OR verb; to advise
Consul — diplomat

Their — possessive
They're — contraction of *they are*
There — placement, location

Its — possessive
It's — contraction of *it is*
Its' — *not a word, not appropriate usage*

Whose — possessive
Who's — contraction of *who is*
Whos' — *not a word, not appropriate usage*

Yours — possessive
Yours' — *not a word, not appropriate usage*
Yours — *not a word, not appropriate usage*

Your — possessive
You're — contraction of *you are*

Let's — contraction for *let us*
Lets — allows
Lets' — *not a word, not appropriate usage*