

Functional Skills

English

Level 2 Writing W6b

Ensure Written Work is Fit for Purpose and Audience,
with Accurate Grammar (Verb Tenses) v1.0

Functional Skills English:

Level 2

Skill Standard:

Writing W6b

Coverage and Range:

‘Sentences should show correct use of tense... including the correct use of agreements regarding pronouns.’¹

¹ QCA Functional Skills guidance: amplification of the standards June 2008 QCA/08/3700

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that stands in for a noun or *noun phrase* (a noun made up of more than one word). Take this text for example:

Maximilian took Maximilian's bike and rode off to meet Maximilian's brother and sister. Maximilian then went with Maximilian's brother and sister for lunch.

Although this makes sense (just!), it sounds very odd because the writer has not used any pronouns. Rewritten, it makes for much better reading:

Maximilian took **his** bike and rode off to meet **his** brother and sister. **He** then went with **them** for lunch.

As you can see, pronouns are a natural part of writing and they depend for their correct meaning on other parts of the sentence in which they appear, e.g. **his** and **he** are used in the above because Maximilian is a male name, whilst **them** is used to refer to the brother and sister as it refers to more than one person, i.e. it's a plural.

In your own texts it must be clear from the context to what or whom a pronoun refers. Make sure that this is checked during proof reading.

All pronouns must agree with the nouns they replace in terms of:

- the person used, e.g. first (I, we), second (you) or third person (he, she, it, they);
- the number, e.g. singular (I, you, he, she, it) or plural (we, they, us);
- the gender, e.g. masculine (he), feminine (she) or neutral (it);
- the case, e.g. as a subject (I, you), object (me, her) or possessive (mine, yours);
- and the subject-verb agreement (see relevant bksb unit).

Details

Do not let any of this confuse you. As a native speaker you will have used pronouns almost every day since you started to speak. This entire section is really just for clarification, as when you look at the examples you will realise that you know how to use all these types of pronoun already:

<p>Have you met Kate? Have you met her?</p>	<p>Is that your coat? Is that yours?</p>
<p>Tom and Jai congratulated Tom and Jai on their successful exam results. Tom and Jai congratulated themselves on their successful exam results.</p>	
<p>George was not there to answer the call. He/Nobody was there to answer the call.</p>	<p>The book was by James Berry. It was by James Berry.</p>

For reference, below is a list of many, but by no means all, English pronouns.

all	everybody	his	much	she	these	who
another	everyone	I	myself	some	they	whoever
any	everything	it	neither	somebody	this	whom
anybody	few	its	no one	someone	those	whomever
anyone	he	itself	nobody	something	us	whose
anything	her	many	none	that	we	you
both	hers	me	nothing	their	what	your
each	herself	mine	one another	theirs	whatever	yours
each other	him	more	ours	them	which	yourself
either	himself	most	ourselves	themselves	whichever	yourselves

Cases

Pronouns are considered to fall into one of three *cases*. These tell the reader whether the pronoun is being used as the subject of a sentence, the object, or as a possessive:

Subject Pronouns	Object Pronouns	Possessive Pronouns
I	me	my / mine
you	you	your / yours
he / she / it	him / her / it	his / her / hers / it / its
we	us	our / ours
they	them	their / theirs
who	whom	whose

Again, as a native English speaker you would almost never misuse these. The only time people tend to get mixed up is in sentences involving themselves and another person, e.g.

- × *Me and my wife enjoy visiting the theatre.*
- × *My best mate and me went fishing last weekend.*

The key point to note is that whenever anyone else is involved in the sentence, you should still refer to yourself as you would have done had you been on your own.

For example, you would never say: *Me enjoy visiting the theatre.* To refer to yourself you would, of course, use *I* instead: *I enjoy visiting the theatre.* If you are attending the theatre with someone else, you would therefore retain this format and just add the other person on: *My wife and I enjoy visiting the theatre.*

Note, too, that you should also follow the convention of putting yourself last when using *I* in such combinations, e.g.

- ✗ *I and my best mate went fishing last weekend.*
- ✓ *My best mate and I went fishing last weekend.*
- ✗ *I and Jane have been invited to the party.*
- ✓ *Jane and I have been invited to the party.*

Exercise 1

Replace the **emboldened pronouns** with ones that make sense.

The girl strolled into the dining room. At once all eyes were upon **them**. **He** seemed unaware of the interest **it** had aroused. The head waiter approached her and caught **their** attention. "Perhaps Madam was not aware that dress is formal in the dining room," **they** said smiling. "But my dress is formal," **it** said. "**They** was made by the finest couturier in Paris. **He** is the height of fashion in New York." "I don't doubt it, Madam, but I am afraid that what is acceptable there is not acceptable here. Trousers are not formal dress," **she** said bluntly. "I must ask **him** to leave." The girl blushed, turned on **their** heels and left. The general hubbub of conversation resumed. "The very idea!" someone said. "Women wearing trousers and in the dining room! What is the world coming to?"

Exercise 2

Replace each emboldened **noun** or **noun phrase** with an appropriate pronoun.

- 1) What is the name of the person who spilt the milk? John spilt the milk.

- 2) I saw **Edison** break the window.

- 3) By twelve o'clock **the bedroom carpets** had been vacuumed by the cleaner.

- 4) **The patient in bed 8** was very bored by the end of his first week in hospital.

- 5) I can't remember **the object** I was supposed to pick up from the station.

6) Margaret looked at **Margaret** in the mirror and sighed a long deep sigh.

7) Although we took our sandwiches with us, others hadn't and ended up eating **our sandwiches**.

8) Do you remember to **which person** you sent the email?

9) **None of the people** we expected to go was there.

10) We could all hear **a noise** coming from the cellar.

Verb Tenses

For our purposes, when a verb alters to reflect the time of the action it is demonstrating, it can be said to change **tense**. There are three major forms of **tense**:

Past: Actions that have already happened

Present: Actions that are happening now or generally happen

Future: Actions that will or may occur in the future

When the tense changes, the verbs in the sentence also vary, e.g.

Pronoun	Verb: <i>To be</i>		
	Past	Present	Future
I	was	am	will be
You	were	are	will be
He/She/It	was	is	will be
They/We	were	are	will be

There are unnecessary complications involved in delving any deeper into verb structures, but as a native speaker you will already know when to use, for example, *I am walking* instead of *I walk*, or *I will have been walking* in lieu of *I will walk*.

In terms of using verb tenses accurately therefore, the key is to rarely move tenses within the same sentence or paragraph, and do so only when you have a justified reason, e.g.

This week I am visiting the Norfolk Broads, and at this very moment I am standing in exactly the same spot from which I saw a humpback whale off the coast last year. Given the rain we've had, I will be very fortunate to see one today.

Exercise 3

Identify whether the sentences below make sense in terms of their verb tenses.

1. When the performance began, a few people have not taken their seats.	Yes / No
2. I was thrilled when I saw the result, as I really wanted my team to win.	Yes / No
3. The man claimed that he has found the bag full of money.	Yes / No
4. Half a million people are expected to have visited the gallery by the time it closes in May next year.	Yes / No
5. Nobody thinks that the referee would reverse his decision.	Yes / No
6. Doctors predict that the technology will be perfected in the next decade.	Yes / No
7. My key had broken, so I will go and get it fixed at the garage.	Yes / No
8. The opportunities that a new park brings to the area will be lost if the council fails to support the proposal in committee.	Yes / No
9. Harry is going to Las Vegas with his family for two weeks in November.	Yes / No
10. If the company reduced its staffing levels, it will have more money to invest.	Yes / No
11. Bob wants to play the guitar today but one of his strings had broken.	Yes / No
12. They had a meal around six, catch a taxi and just made it to the recital.	Yes / No
13. He hated playing in goal, but he was the best keeper we've got.	Yes / No
14. The mice will sneak into the larder and are eating the cheese.	Yes / No
15. Debbie and Ian, the grandparents of Harriet, were over there.	Yes / No
16. After I had finished the race, I am shocked how good I feel.	Yes / No

Exercise 4

In the following text, some of the verb tenses are missing. Circle the correct versions from the options available.

In the morning I [**was obeying, obeys, obeyed, obeying, did obey**] Holmes's injunctions to the letter. A cab [**was, I, were, am**] [**procure, procured, was procured, were procured**] with such precaution as would [**preventable, preventing, prevented, prevent, to prevent**] its being one which was placed ready for us, and I [**driving, drove, driven, did drive**] immediately after breakfast to the Lowther Arcade, through which I [**hurry, hurries, hurrying, hurried**] at the top of my speed. A carriage [**is waiting, were waiting, was waited, will wait, is waiting, was waiting**] with a very massive driver [**wrap, to wrap, having been wrapped, wrapped, wrapping**] in a dark cloak, who, the instant that I [**have step, have stepped, stepping, was stepped, is stepped, had stepped, am stepped, stepped**] in, whipped up the horse and rattled off to Victoria Station. On my [**alighted, alighting, alight, will alight, did alight, had alighted**] there he turned the carriage, and [**did dashed, had dashed, dashed, dashing, dash**] away again without so much as a look in my direction.

Exercise 5

Complete these sentences by inserting the correct verb form(s) in the spaces provided. The first one has been done for you as an example.

1. With this year's weather having been warmer and wetter than average, farmers [present tense, to be] are [present tense, to enjoy] enjoying bumper harvests.
2. The sails of the large clipper ship [past tense, to be] _____ [past tense, to buffet] _____ by the wind.
3. The sun [past tense, to go] _____ behind that cloud just as we set up our picnic.
4. We [future tense, to leave] _____ our luggage at the check-in desk.
5. The IT helpdesk staff members [present tense, to be] _____ [present tense, to have] _____ a meeting as we speak.
6. Yesterday, all my troubles [past tense, to seem] _____ so far away, but now it looks as though they [present tense, to be] _____ here to stay.
7. The captain must always be [past tense, to salute] _____ by the crew when he [present tense, to board] _____ the ship.
8. The lady in room 4b [present tense, to think] _____ that there are noises [present tense, to come] _____ from inside her wardrobe!
9. The fireman [past tense, to pound] _____ on the door with his axe, as behind him the alarm bell [past tense, to ring] _____ continuously.
10. The new software [future tense, to release] _____ early next year.