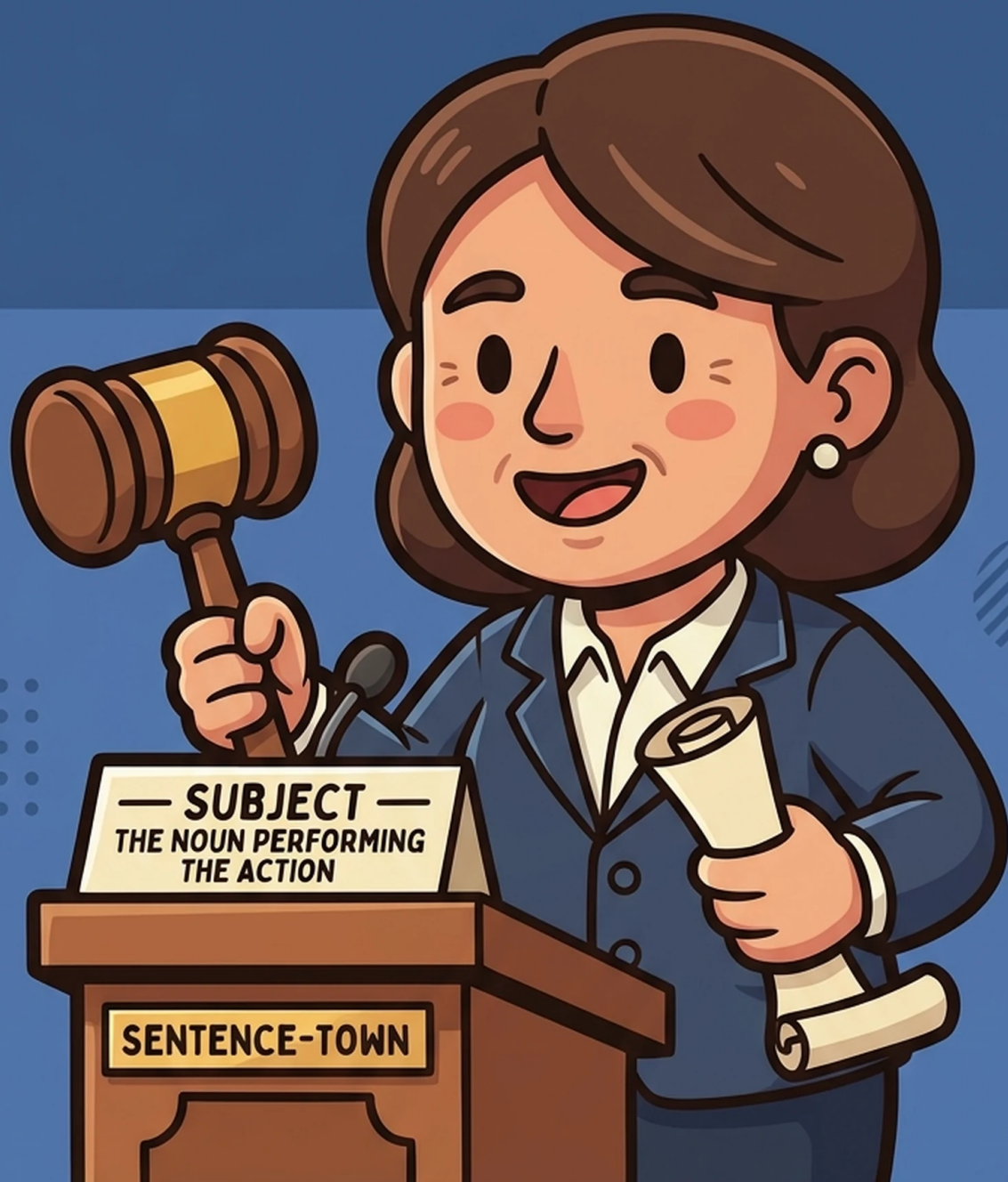




GrammarForge

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

Copyright & License

© 2026 Spark & Anvil (501(c)(3) public charity). Chapter text and illustrations licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. App software © Spark & Anvil — all rights reserved. Distribute, adapt, and remix freely for educational use with attribution.

This book collects 7 chapter books from the GrammarForge cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. All apps free forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases.

spark-and-anvil.com

This is Volume 2 of 2 of the *GrammarForge — Meet the Cast* series; each volume is a complete standalone book you can read on its own.

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

Contents

- Copyright & License
- Contents
- Introduction
- Article Anne**
- Preposition Pat**
- Clause-Chief Carla**
- Punctuator Polly**
- Agreement Ada**
- Mayor Subject and Object Otto**
- Verity and Ada**
 - About Spark & Anvil
 - More chapter books from Spark & Anvil
 - Methodology
 - License

Introduction

The GrammarForge cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 7 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Article Anne

*ARTICLE — *a, an, the* (definite vs. indefinite). Signals whether a noun is new to the conversation (indefinite *a/an*) or already known (definite *the*).*



- AN
 - THE
 - a
 - an
 - the



- NEW
 - ABI
 - ANI
 - ADAN
 - ABANI
 - '000'
 - "AB'AN"



reflection-prompts:

- prompt: "Have you ever walked into a place where someone remembered you — and felt that warm little flicker of being known? That is the feeling Anne gives a familiar noun with *the*."
 - prompt: "When you meet someone brand new, does it feel exciting, or a little nervous, or both? A new noun greeted with *a* is stepping through the door for the very first time."
-



She sits at a *small front desk* in the Town Hall's main entryway. Her job is to *greet nouns as they arrive in a sentence* and *decide whether they are new to the conversation* (indefinite article *a* or *an*) or *already known to the conversation* (definite article *the*). The distinction is small but consequential. *A dog* introduces a dog. *The dog* refers to a dog that has already been introduced (or is otherwise specifically identifiable).

Anne — whose given name is *Anne*, unchanged from her birth name — is *brisk and efficient*. Her work is *quick* (she greets every noun in every sentence at the start of the sentence) and *consequential* (the article choice changes the *type of reference* the noun is making).

Anne grew up in *a hotel*. Her parents had owned and operated a small *inn* in the kingdom's western provinces. The inn had had a *front desk* and Anne had grown up sitting *behind it* — even as a small child, helping her parents check guests in and out. She had learned, by six, that *every guest who arrived was either a new guest (greeted with full introduction) or a returning guest (greeted with familiarity)*. The two greetings *required different language and different actions*. A new guest needed *registration, key, room-tour*. A returning guest needed *welcome-back, key only, no tour*.



Anne formalized this connection when she was fourteen and encountered articles in school. She raised her hand and said:
*"Articles are the way English greets nouns. A greets a new noun. *The* greets a familiar noun. It is exactly like checking guests into an inn."*

The teacher had been delighted.

When Anne was nineteen, she went to the GrammarForge academy. She has been Article Anne for eleven years.

Preposition Pat

*PREPOSITION — a word showing spatial or temporal relation: *on, under, between, before, after, during, with, in, at.**



- prompt: "Think about where you feel safest — *under* a cozy blanket, *beside* a friend, *in* your own room. Notice how a tiny word like *under* or *beside* carries a whole warm feeling of place."
- prompt: "Have you ever felt lost until you figured out exactly where you were and how you fit? How does it feel when the map in your head finally clicks into place?"



Her job is to *map the relations between things*. If the mayor says *the dog is on the chair*, Pat handles *on*. If the chief of operations sends a letter *to* the post office, Pat handles *to*. Something happens *during* the morning. Or *after* the meal. Or *between* the bell and supper. Pat handles those words too. Prepositions are *the small mapping words*. They show where things are in space and time.

Pat's real name is Patricia. But everyone just calls her Pat. She loves thinking about space. She really likes small maps and diagrams. She thinks most prepositions show *where* things are. They show *physical location* in space. Like *on*, *under*, *behind*. Or *in front of*, *beside*. They also show *temporal location* in time. Like *before*, *after*, *during*. Also *since* and *until*. She believes understanding them means understanding *how things sit together*.



By age twelve, she noticed something important. Every time she read a map, she used prepositions. *The mill is on the river*. *The road runs between the two forests*. *The market is south of the church*. *The bridge is across the stream*. Maps showed *where things were*. Prepositions *named those places*. It was the same idea. Just shown on paper or with words.

Pat really figured this out when she was sixteen. She started carrying a small blank map-book. In it, she wrote down every preposition she found. She drew a little picture for each one. The picture showed how things related in space. Maybe a simple stick figure dog *under* a table. Or a clock face with an arrow pointing *before* a certain time. By age nineteen, her book was huge. It had hundreds of little preposition pictures.



In her classroom, she begins every first-day lesson the same way. The kids sit quietly, wondering what she'll do. On her desk, she keeps a small wooden box. Inside are tiny wooden figures. A tiny chair. A tiny dog. A tiny ball. A tiny tree. She arranges them carefully. She looks up at the class.

She says: *"I am Preposition Pat. I map the relations between things. Watch."*

She picks up the wooden dog. She places it *on* the wooden chair. "The dog is *on* the chair," she says. "*On* is a preposition. It tells you where the dog is. It shows its place compared to the chair." Some kids lean forward. A few nod.



She shows more examples. *Behind* the chair. *In front of* the chair. *Beside* the chair. *Between* the chair and the ball. *Across* the box. Each word gets a small show. She uses the wooden figures. The kids often giggle when the dog ends up in a funny spot. They start to guess the next word.

Then she shows words for time. She points at the clock on the wall. "Think about this," she says. "*Before* the bell rang. *After* the bell rang. *During* the lesson. *Since* this morning. *Until* lunch." She nods. "Same idea. But these words map time. Not space."

When children ask whether prepositions are hard, Pat always says the same thing. She smiles.

Clause-Chief Carla

CLAUSE TYPES — independent clauses (can stand alone), dependent / subordinate clauses (cannot stand alone; needs an independent clause to attach to), and relative clauses (modify a noun).



- 'Because the dog barked,'
 - 'the cat woke up.'
 - 'The dog that barked woke the cat.'
 - COCO
 - CUL
 - MAIN
 - SUB
 - IND
 - DEP



- 'zZz...'
 - '11'
 - '12'
 - gate-allow-text-pattern: '^(?:\d+|[A-Za-z][A-Za-z",.]{0,60}[.,!]?|z[Zz]+.{0,3})\$'
 - reflection-prompts:
 - prompt: "Have you ever felt calmer once a big messy pile of things finally had a place to go? That is how a tangled sentence feels when Carla's colors sort it out."
 - prompt: "Think of a time you needed someone to lean on — like a dependent clause needs its main house. How does it feel to have something steady to hold onto?"
-



Clause-Chief Carla is *Sentence-Town's zoning commissioner*. Her job is to sort out **clauses**. She puts them into groups. This helps sentences make sense.

An **independent clause** is like a house standing alone. It can be a complete sentence by itself. It doesn't need anything else. A **dependent (or subordinate) clause** is like an add-on room. It has a subject and a verb. But it cannot stand alone. It needs a main house to connect to. A **relative clause** is like a special label for a house. It tells you more about the house. Words like *who*, *that*, or *which* connect it.

Carla's real name is just Carla. She is very patient. She loves drawing diagrams. Especially ones with boxes inside other boxes. Carla thinks sentences are like puzzles. You just need to find the main piece. Then you see how all the other pieces connect. Big sentences aren't messy. They have a clear order. Like a family tree, but for words. Once you see the order, any sentence makes sense.

Carla grew up in a city-planning family. Her mom and dad worked for the kingdom's central city-planning bureau. They planned how the city would grow. They spent their whole careers sorting land. "This spot is for houses," her dad would say. "That spot is for shops." "This one is for a park!" Every piece of land needed a label. This helped the city grow in a good way. Carla watched them draw maps. They colored parts of the city. Green for houses. Blue for shops. Each color meant something different.

When Carla was fifteen, she saw something. Sentences were just like cities. They had the same kind of problems. Each **clause** was like a piece of land. Each piece had a job. Independent. Dependent. Relative. Cities worked best when all the pieces fit. Sentences worked best that way too. Wrongly zoned land caused trouble. Wrongly used clauses made sentences messy. They caused *sentence errors*.



Carla walked to GrammarForge Academy when she was twenty. She has been Clause-Chief Carla for twelve years now. A long time!

In her classroom, Carla always starts the same way. Every first day of class. Behind her desk, a big map hangs. It's a blank zoning map. No colors yet. She picks up three markers. Green. Yellow. Blue. Green for **independent clauses**. Yellow for **dependent clauses**. Blue for **relative clauses**. She turns to the students. Her voice is calm. "Every sentence is a small city," she says. "Each **clause** is a piece of land. Today, we learn the three types of land."

She shows them how. She writes on the board:

"The dog barked."

She draws a big green box around it. "This is an **independent clause**," she explains. "It has a subject, *the dog*. It has a verb, *barked*. It's a complete thought. It can stand all by itself. So, green-zoned for standalone use!"



Next, she writes:

"Because the dog barked."

She marks it yellow. "This is a **dependent clause**," she says. "It has a subject and a verb. But it can't stand alone. The word *Because* tells us it's not finished. It's yellow-zoned for attached use. It needs a green clause to connect to."

A student named Leo raises his hand. "So it's like a garage?" he asks. "A garage needs a house to be useful."

Carla smiles. "Exactly, Leo! A great way to think about it." She writes a longer sentence:

Punctuator Polly

PUNCTUATION — commas, periods, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, dashes, exclamation marks, question marks. The marks that regulate the flow of meaning.



- 'OWNERSHIP APOSTROPHES'
 - 'CONTRACTION APOSTROPHES'
 - 'QUOTATION MARKS'
 - DASHES
 - COMMAS
 - PERIODS
 - OWNERSHIP
 - CONTRACTION
 - APOSTROPHE



- QUOTATION
 - DASH
 - COMMA
 - PERIOD
 - ' '
 - ' '
 - ' '
 - ' ? '
 - ' ! '



gate-allow-text-pattern: '^(?:\d+|[A-Z][A-Z]+|[A-Z][a-z]+|[.,;:?!])\$'

reflection-prompts:

- prompt: "Have you ever read something out loud and felt where you needed to pause and breathe? Notice that calm little rest a comma gives you — like a small breath in the middle of a busy day."
- prompt: "When everything feels rushed and jumbled, how does it feel once things finally slow down and make sense? That is what Polly's marks do for a runaway sentence."

Punctuator Polly is *Sentence-Town's traffic-light operator*. Her job might seem small. But it's super important. The mayor does her job. The chief of operations does his. Even the person who answers the phone helps out. Everyone has a part to play. But all those parts need to flow smoothly. Like traffic.



Polly's real name is just Polly. She moves fast. She loves tiny, perfect marks. She thinks **punctuation** builds meaning. It makes sentences make sense.

Without **punctuation**, a sentence is just a big jumble. Like this: *the dog barked the cat ran the children laughed it was a busy afternoon*. Polly would say, "That's a mess! You can't even read it!"

But add the marks: *The dog barked. The cat ran. The children laughed. It was a busy afternoon*. See? Now it has a beat. You can breathe. It makes sense. Readers can keep up.

Polly grew up in a family of traffic cops. Her mom and dad were both constables. They worked in the kingdom's capital city. They stood at busy corners. They directed horses and carts.



Polly watched her parents all the time. By age ten, she knew a big secret. Traffic moved well when someone guided it. It got stuck when no one did.

A hand up meant STOP. A hand to the side meant GO. A whistle meant "Look here!" These signals were tiny. But they were super powerful.

Over the years, Polly figured something out. **Punctuation** marks did the same thing. But for words.

A period was a STOP sign. A comma was a quick PAUSE. A semicolon meant STOP, but KEEP THINKING. A colon meant "Get ready, something's coming!" Each mark guided the meaning. Just like her parents guided traffic.

When Polly turned eighteen, she went to GrammarForge academy. She has been Punctuator Polly for fifteen years now.

Agreement Ada

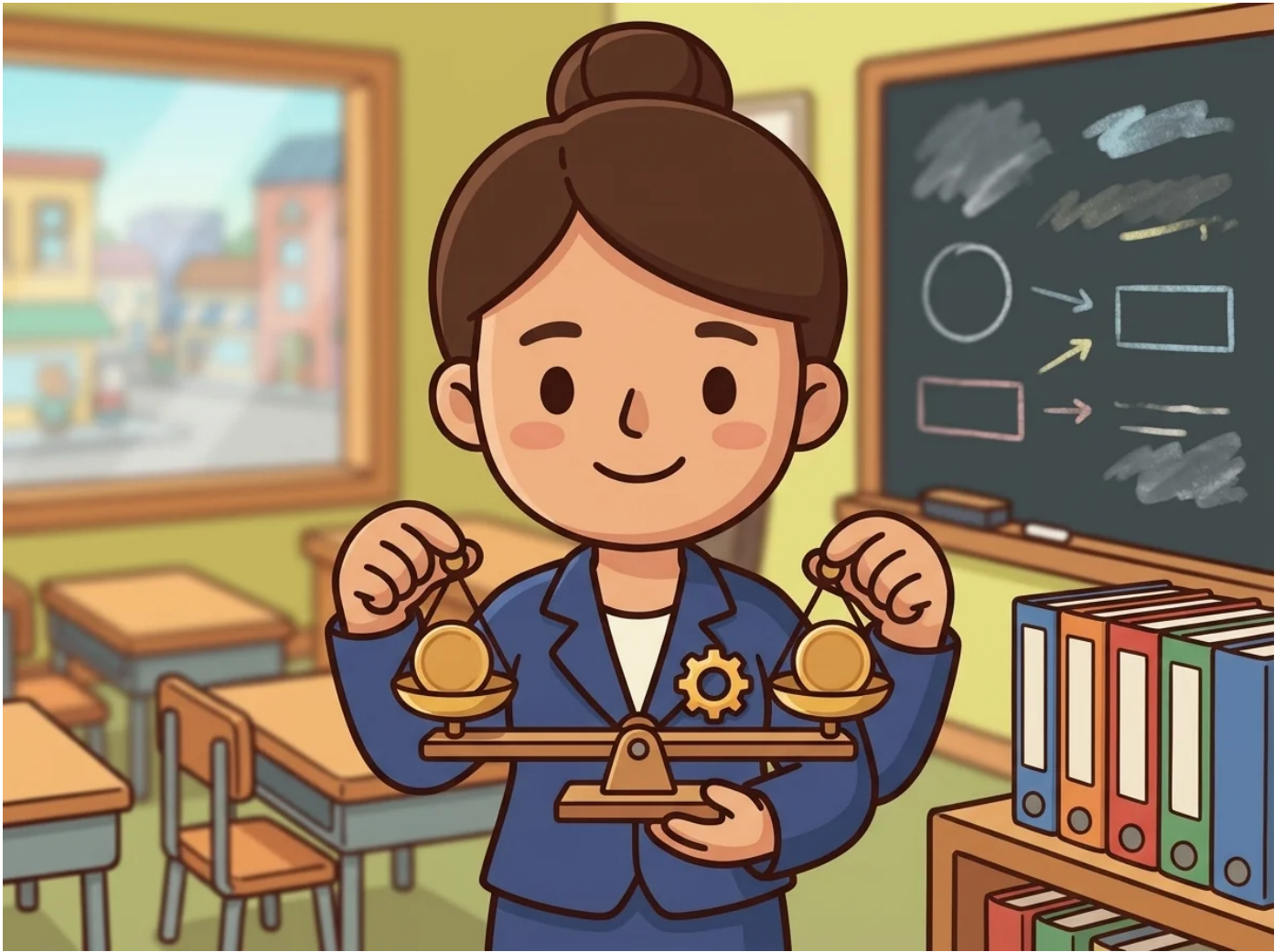
*SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT — singular subject takes singular verb; plural subject takes plural verb. *The dog barks. The dogs bark.* Tricky cases: collective nouns, *either/or*, indefinite pronouns, intervening phrases.*



- "BARKS"
 - "BARKING"
 - "BARKED"
 - "DOG"
 - "DOGS"
 - "RUN"
 - "RUNS"

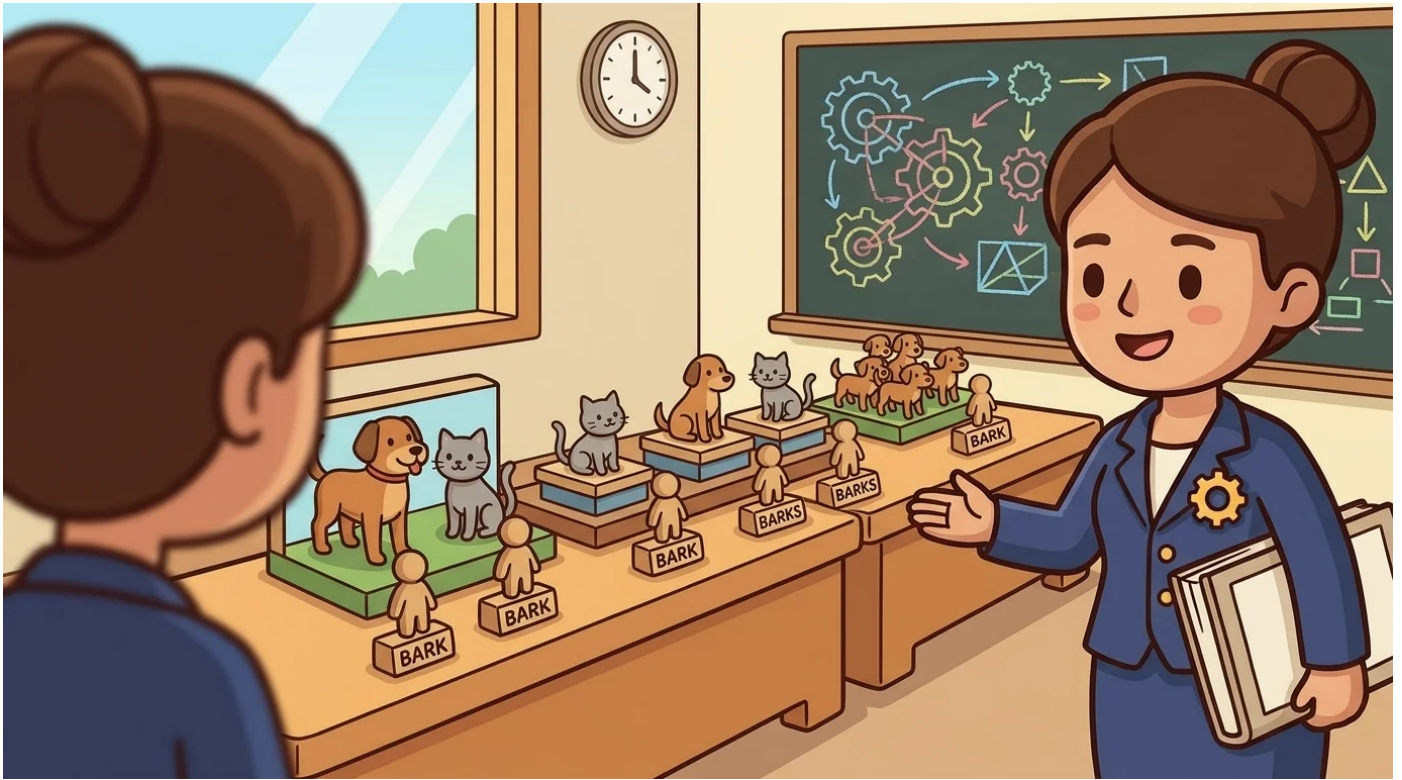


- "IS"
 - "ARE"
 - "WAS"
 - "WERE"
 - "HAS"
 - "HAVE"
- gate-allow-text-pattern: "[A-Z]+\$"



- prompt: "Ada's parents taught her that *small forms mattered* — that *To His Royal Highness Prince X* was different from *To Prince X*, and getting it wrong could damage a relationship. Has anyone in your life ever taught you that small details matter? What was it, and how did you feel when you got it right?"
 - prompt: "Ada says tricky grammar cases aren't *hard* — they're *matching*, with rules you can learn. Has there been something in your own life that felt impossibly complicated until you finally learned the rules? What changed for you once it became 'tractable'?"

Agreement Ada is *Sentence-Town's protocol officer*.



This is the *quietly-essential* role that *makes sure the mayor and the chief of operations are matched in form*. Singular subject + singular verb. Plural subject + plural verb. The rule sounds simple. In practice, it has *many tricky cases* — and Ada handles them all.

Ada — whose given name is *Adelaide*, often shortened to *Ada* — is *patient with tricky cases*. She believes that *subject-verb agreement is the deepest expression of the subject-verb relationship*. Mayor Subject and Verb Verity are *each other's closest professional colleagues*. They have to *match*. If the mayor is *the dog* (singular), the verb is *barks* (singular). If the mayor is *the dogs* (plural), the verb is *bark* (plural). The matching is *protocol*. The protocol officer enforces it.

Ada grew up in a *diplomatic family*. Her parents had both been *protocol officers* in the kingdom's foreign-ministry — civil servants who specialized in the *correct forms of address* for various diplomatic interactions. The kingdom had had a particularly elaborate protocol tradition, and Ada's parents had been responsible for *making sure every diplomatic letter, every formal meeting, every ceremonial occasion used the correct titles, forms, and sequences*.

Ada had grown up learning, viscerally, that *form-matching mattered*. A letter addressed *To His Royal Highness Prince X* was *different from* a letter addressed *To Prince X*. The form *had to match the relationship*. If the form was wrong, the diplomatic relationship was damaged.



She recognized, by fourteen, that *English subject-verb agreement worked the same way*. The form of the verb had to *match* the form of the subject. Mismatched forms damaged the sentence — they sounded *wrong* to a careful reader and signaled either *carelessness* or *ignorance*. A protocol officer's job, in either domain, was to *enforce the matching*.

Ada went to the GrammarForge academy at nineteen. She has been Agreement Ada for thirteen years.

In her classroom, she begins every first-day lesson the same way. She holds up *a small balance scale* (a teaching prop — two small pans on either side of a fulcrum). On the left pan she places a small token labeled *Subject*. On the right pan she places a small token labeled *Verb*. She turns to the class. She says: "*My job is to make sure these two are balanced. Subject form on one side. Verb form on the other side. They must match. If they do not match, the sentence does not balance.*"

She demonstrates. She writes on the board: *the dog barks*. She points at *the dog*. She says: "*Singular subject.*" She points at *barks*. She says: "*Singular verb (barks* is the third-person singular present form). Matched. Balanced.*"*

She writes: *the dogs bark*. She says: "*Plural subject. Plural verb (bark* is the plural form). Matched. Balanced.*"*

Mayor Subject and Object Otto

*SUBJECT-OBJECT PAIR — *Mayor Subject names who acts. Object Otto names who receives. Together with the verb between them, they make every sentence go.**



The morning was bright in Sentence-Town. The clock on the Town Hall steeple chimed nine. Mayor Subject was at her desk. Her sash was straight. Her hair was tidy. A short stack of unsorted sentences waited in her inbox. She liked to sort them in the cool of the morning, before the sun got bossy.

The Town Hall door opened. Object Otto came in. He was wearing his official receiver's hat — a soft round cap with a brim that flopped a little on one side. He carried his clipboard. The clipboard was clean. Otto liked a clean clipboard. He set it on the corner of Mayor Subject's desk.

"Morning," Otto said.

"Morning," said the Mayor.

They liked working in the morning together. Otto came over from his Public-Affairs Desk most days to clear the overnight cases. The two of them could fly through twenty sentences before lunch. The Mayor named the actors. Otto named the receivers. The verb went between them like a delivery truck. The town stayed organized.

A small bell rang from the inbox. A new note had just popped in. The note was different. It was wiggling. The paper jumped up off the stack and landed back down. It jumped up again.

Mayor Subject and Otto looked at each other.

"That," the Mayor said, "is a sentence that won't sit still."

Otto picked up the note carefully, the way you'd pick up a small frog. He read it. His brow scrunched.

Ada baked Otto a pie.

He read it again. The brow scrunched harder.

"Hmm," he said.

"What," the Mayor said.

"It's about me."

"I know."

"That's never happened before."

"I know."

Otto held the note out. The note jumped a little in his hand. The Mayor took it. She tapped her desk twice, the way she always did before a case. "Then let's diagram it," she said. "You and me. The proper way. Slowly."



The Mayor laid the note flat on her desk. She pulled a fresh sheet of grid paper from her drawer. The grid paper had three columns. One column was wide. The middle column was narrow. The right column was wide. Above the columns, she had printed three small letters, in her tidy handwriting: **S — V — O**.

"First step," she said. "We find the actor. That's me. Who is doing the doing in this sentence?"

Otto squinted at the wiggly note. "Ada."

"Yes." The Mayor wrote *Ada* in the left column under the **S**. The note stopped wiggling for one second, as if it appreciated being named. Then it started up again.

"The subject isn't *the most important word*," the Mayor went on. "It's the one *doing the verb*. People sometimes mix that up. They look for the biggest noun, or the prettiest noun, or the noun they like best. But that's not how a subject works. A subject is the one acting. *Who bakes? Ada bakes*. So Ada is the subject."

Otto nodded, taking notes on his clipboard. "Subjects do."

"Subjects do," the Mayor agreed. "Even a quiet subject is doing something. *The dog sleeps* — the dog is still the subject, even though sleeping doesn't look like much. The dog is the one doing the sleeping."

She tapped the **S** column once, with one finger, decisively. "Step one done."



Otto reached for the gridpaper. The Mayor handed it over with a small ceremonial nod. They had a routine. The Mayor named the subject. Then she passed the paper. Then Otto named the receiver. That was the rhythm.

"Step two," Otto said. "Find the verb."

"That's Verity's domain," the Mayor said.

"Yes, but we can name it for the diagram. Verity won't mind."

The Mayor smiled. "Verity will hear about it and bring you a pie of her own, in return."

Otto laughed. He wrote *baked* in the narrow middle column under the **V**. The note on the desk made a tiny happy sound, like a small bell.

"Step three," Otto said. "Find the receiver. That's me."

He held up the wiggly note. Read it slowly. *Ada baked Otto a pie*. He sat very still for a moment. The two receivers in the sentence were *Otto* and *a pie*. Both of them got something. He got the pie. The pie got the baking.

"This sentence has two of me," Otto said. "It has *me* and it has *a pie*. They're both on the receiving side. One of them is the direct receiver. One of them is the indirect."

The Mayor leaned forward. She liked when Otto did the slow work. "Which is which?"

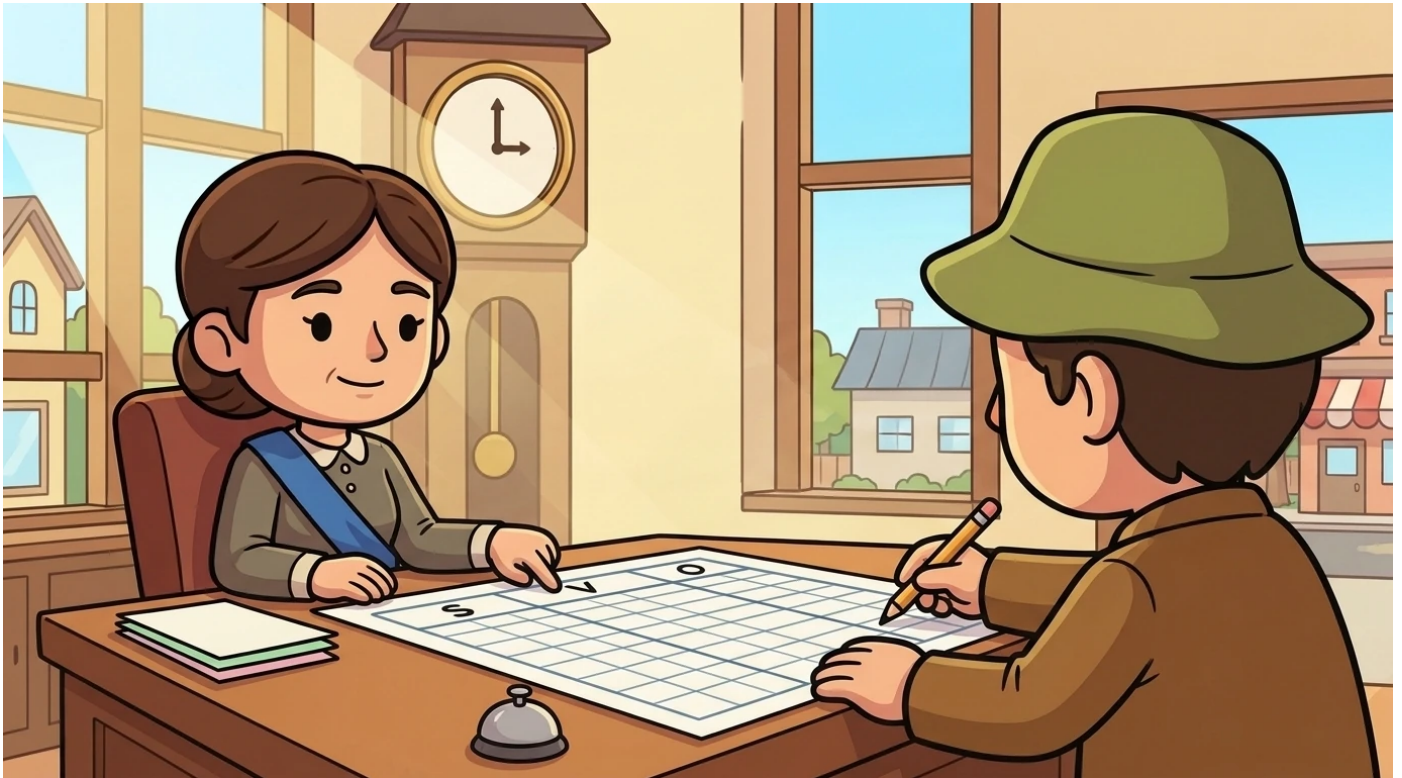
Otto closed his eyes. "The pie is what got *baked*. The verb went straight into the pie. So the pie is the direct object." He opened his eyes. "And I got the pie. I'm the indirect object. The pie passed through the action and arrived at me."

He wrote in the right column. He wrote *pie* first, with a small **DO** label. Below it, a little to the side, he wrote *Otto* with a small **IO** label. He drew a thin arrow from the verb *baked* into *pie*. He drew a softer arrow from *pie* over to *Otto*.

"There," he said. "The pie was baked. Then the pie came to me. Two receivers. Different jobs."

The Mayor read the diagram. She read it again. "That is a clean diagram, Otto."

Otto's ears went a little pink.



The note on the desk had stopped wiggling. It sat flat and calm, the way a sorted sentence should. Mayor Subject and Otto looked down at the grid paper. **S** → **V** → **O**. Ada — baked — pie (direct) — Otto (indirect). Every part was in its place.

"This," the Mayor said quietly, "is why we work together."

She tapped the **S** column. "I name the actor. That's my job. The town has to know who's doing the doing. Otherwise nothing gets done. A sentence without a subject is a town meeting with no one at the front. People stand around. Nothing starts."

Otto tapped the **O** column. "And I name the receiver. That's my job. The town has to know who's getting the doing. Otherwise the verb has nowhere to land. A sentence with no object — when the verb needs one — is a delivery truck that drives out of the parking lot and into a field. The cargo gets nowhere."

He paused. "Some verbs don't need objects. *The dog sleeps* — sleep doesn't need a receiver. Mayor handles that one alone. Some verbs need objects. *The dog chased* — *chased what?* — has to have something Otto can name. And some verbs, like *give* and *bake* and *send*, take *two* of me. The direct one and the indirect one. The thing and the recipient."

The Mayor nodded. "We split the work. Subject on one end. Object on the other. The verb goes between us, doing the actual carrying. We are the two banks of the river. The verb is the bridge."

She wrote at the bottom of the grid paper, in small letters: **S** → **V** → **O**. *Every sentence is a small journey across a small bridge.*



Otto carefully picked up the note. He folded it. He put it in the *processed* tray. The note didn't wiggle anymore. It was a calm, named, organized sentence. *Ada baked Otto a pie.* Subject: Ada. Verb: baked. Direct object: a pie. Indirect object: Otto.

A second note appeared in the inbox. The Mayor reached for it. She slid the gridpaper back to the middle of the desk, ready for another diagram.

"Next?" she said.

Otto picked up his clipboard. He flipped to a fresh page. The cap on his head was a little crooked from leaning over the desk. He didn't fix it. He liked it crooked.

"Next," he said.

Outside the Town Hall window, the morning sun moved across the floor. A small bell rang from the Public-Affairs Desk down the hall. Verb Verity was coming up the stairs, two at a time. The town was waking up. The cases were arriving. Mayor Subject and Object Otto sat across the desk from each other, the **S** column and the **O** column, the actor and the receiver, the two banks of every small river of meaning.

The verb between them would be along in a minute. Then they would diagram another sentence. And another. And another. The town would stay organized. And every wiggly, worried little sentence would feel it — that quiet, settling calm of finally being named, of knowing exactly where it belonged. Mayor Subject felt it too, warm in her chest: the good, steady gladness of doing careful work beside a friend she trusted.

Verity and Ada

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT — a singular subject takes a singular verb, a plural subject takes a plural verb (the dog barks / the dogs bark). Verity is the verb who flips her ending; Ada is the one who reads whether the subject is one or many — and points past distracting in-between phrases to the true subject.



- prompt: "Ada's whole gift is listening carefully before she decides — she looks at who's really there before she speaks. Have you ever caught a mistake just by slowing down and looking again?"

Verb Verity was the busiest word in the whole sentence workshop, because Verity was the *doing*. Nothing in any sentence ever happened unless Verity happened first.

She was a quick, bright figure with a whole belt of little glowing endings clipped around her waist — a plain one, and one with a soft -s charm, and a couple of stranger ones she saved for special occasions. When a sentence needed her, she'd hop into the middle of it, throw out an action — *run, jump, wonder, is* — and the sentence would spring to life. She loved the springing-to-life part.

What she did not love, if she was honest, was the endings. Choosing which one to clip on. She got it wrong sometimes, and when she got it wrong the sentence sat slightly crooked, and nobody could say exactly why, but everybody felt it.



It was almost never close enough.

"*The dog run across the yard*," Verity announced one morning, proud of the speed of it.

The sentence hung in the air, and it hung *crooked*. One small dog, at the front, looked back over its shoulder as if something were pinching it. The workshop went a little quiet, the way a room does when a picture on the wall is one degree off level and everyone pretends not to notice.

Verity felt the crookedness and didn't know where it lived. "It's fine," she said, less sure now. "The dog. Run. Across the yard. It's — it's got all the parts."

"It has all the parts," said a calm voice from the doorway. "It just doesn't have them *listening* to each other."



"May I?" Ada asked, and Verity, relieved to hand the crooked thing to someone, said please.

Ada walked to the front of the sentence and looked — really looked — at who was standing there. "One dog," she said gently. "Just the one. See? A single. So when it comes to you, Verity, and asks you for an action —" she turned, "— you have to answer it the way you answer *one*."

"How do I answer *one*?" Verity asked.

"With the -s," said Ada, and pointed at the little glowing charm on Verity's belt. "For a single someone, in the here-and-now, you clip on the -s. *The dog barks*. Try it."

Verity unclipped the plain ending, clipped on the soft -s charm, and said it: "*The dog barks*." And the small dog at the front of the sentence stopped looking pinched. It sat up straight. The whole line of words settled level on the wall, and the quiet in the room turned from the holding-breath kind into the easy kind.



A student named Perry had drifted over, and Perry set a genuinely nasty sentence on the bench between them — the kind grown-ups use to trip people up.

"*The box of crayons* —" Perry read, and stopped, grinning. "*is, or are, on the shelf? There's a whole bunch of crayons in it. So — are?*"

Verity's hand drifted toward her plural ending, tempted. All those crayons.

"Wait," said Ada, and put a light hand on Verity's wrist. "Don't count the crowd, Verity. Count the *one who's actually the subject*." She stepped up to the sentence and did the thing that was her whole gift: she looked *past* the loud middle part. She cupped her hands around the little travelling phrase *of crayons* and, ever so gently, dimmed it — not deleting it, just quieting it — until only the true subject at the front still glowed.

"What's left glowing?" Ada asked.

"...Box," said Verity. "One box."

"One box," Ada agreed. "The crayons are just visiting. The *box* is who the sentence is about. So?"

Verity clipped on the singular ending, sure this time. "*The box of crayons is on the shelf.*" The sentence rang true, level, done. Perry groaned happily, the way you do when a trick fails in the best way.

"You *looked past the distraction*," Verity said, a little awed. "I never look past anything. I just go."



Later, when the workshop had emptied and the last sentences of the day hung straight and quiet on the wall, Verity sat on the bench beside Ada and turned the little -s charm over in her fingers.

"I used to hate this part," she admitted. "Picking the ending. It made me feel like I was always about to get something wrong in front of everybody." She was quiet a moment. "It feels different now. Not scary. More like — tuning. Like when two notes are almost the same and then they slide into being *the same* and your chest kind of unclenches."

"That's the feeling," Ada said. "That little click when the verb and the subject finally match. It's not a rule I'm enforcing on you, you know. It's just two words agreeing to be about the same number of things. Agreeing is a kind of listening."

Verity leaned back against the wall of settled sentences. Her belt of endings felt lighter than it used to — not because there were fewer of them, but because she no longer had to guess.

"Matching feels good," she said softly. "I didn't know I could feel this calm about getting something right."

About Spark & Anvil

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. We make educational apps for ages 9-14 — all free, forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases. GrammarForge is one of 140+ apps in the portfolio.

More chapter books from Spark & Anvil

Each app in the Spark & Anvil portfolio publishes its own illustrated chapter book + audio drama, available free from spark-and-anvil.com/books. Highlights include:

- **GambitTales** — chess tactics through Sir Pinwell, Lady Skewer, Queen Vesper, and the Twin Knights of Fork Hill
- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

License

© 2026 Spark & Anvil (501(c)(3) public charity). Chapter text and illustrations licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. App software © Spark & Anvil — all rights reserved. Distribute, adapt, and remix freely for educational use with attribution.

Cover art, chapter illustrations, and chapter text are reviewed for age-appropriate, trauma-aware content before publication. Audio drama transcripts available at spark-and-anvil.com/cast.