

## Choices: Practicing Correct Usage

Here's your chance to step out of the grammar book and into the real world. You may not notice them, but examples of usage appear in your life every day. The following activities challenge you to find a connection between using words correctly and the world around you. Do the activity below that suits your personality best, and then share your discoveries with your class. Have fun!

### ART

#### Everyone Among Us

Lots of people misuse the prepositions *between* and *among*. Help these people out by illustrating the correct use of these prepositions. For example, you might draw two scenes: one of a person choosing between two things; the other of a person choosing among three or more things. As a caption for each of your pictures, write a sentence that correctly uses *between* or *among*. Then, post your illustrations in your classroom.

### ETYMOLOGY

#### There You Go Again!

The words *their*, *there*, and *they're* may sound alike, but ask yourself this question: Did they all come from the same word originally? Look up the origins of these three words in a good dictionary. While you're at it, look up another set of words that sound alike, such as *affect* and *effect*. Then, write a paragraph or two describing your findings and share them with your class.

### COMEDY

#### What I Meant to Say

Many comedians joke about usage errors. Go to the library and find a few anthologies of jokes. Do you see any jokes that involve usage errors or plays on words? Write several of these down, and share them with the class.

### INTERNET SEARCH

#### Surfing Safari

Where can a writer go on the Internet to get help with using words correctly? Are there sites that include information on usage? If so, what are their addresses and what information do they have? Report your findings to the class. Give everyone in the class a list of Web sites, noting which sites are the most helpful.

### LITERATURE

#### Outlaws of the English Language

As the old saying goes, "You've got to break eggs if you want to make an omelet." Most great writers have, at one time or another, broken an established usage rule, often for a good reason. Find some examples of this outlaw streak that runs through literature. Then, for each of your examples, write a few sentences that explain why you think the author broke usage rules.

### GEOGRAPHY

#### Map It!

Many regions of the country have their own special ways of talking. Dictionaries may label these usages *dialect* or *regionalism*. Most of these usages are informal, but not necessarily incorrect. Research some regional usages (*reckon*, *y'all*), and place them on a map of the United States. On your map, include at least three words or expressions that are commonly used in each region you've specified. With your teacher's permission, post your map in the classroom.

### WORD PROCESSING

#### If You Want Something Done Right

Some computer word processors automatically correct some mistakes for you. However, you may not wish to rely too heavily on this feature. Investigate a computer's automatic-correction feature. Identify the errors the feature will correct, and show the class how to select these corrections. Also, show your classmates how to turn this feature on and off. Then, lead a discussion about times when this feature is appropriate and times when it is best turned off.

# Usage Glossary A

Review the glossary entries on pages 265–67 of *Holt Handbook* for information on the correct usage of the following terms:

<i>a, an</i>	<i>a lot</i>
<i>accept, except</i>	<i>anyways, anywheres, everywhere,</i>
<i>affect, effect</i>	<i>nowheres, somewheres</i>
<i>ain't</i>	<i>at</i>
<i>all ready, already</i>	<i>bad, badly</i>
<i>all right</i>	

**EXERCISE** Two choices appear in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Circle the correct choice.

**Example 1.** My sister cannot go (anywhere *anywheres*) without our younger brother.

1. (*Anyways, Anyway*), as I was saying, the best part of the story happened after we got on the bus.
2. Did that woman tell her friends that their gift was too expensive for her to (*accept, except*)?
3. When my cousin returned from his week-long vacation, his refrigerator smelled (*bad, badly*).
4. Where did you say that Aunt Sally will (*live at, live*) when she moves across town in two weeks?
5. My father says that our grandfather was (*a, an*) honorable man.
6. Cherise was happy that there were (*a lot, alot*) of the same old choices on the new menu.
7. In 1972, every state (*accept, except*) Massachusetts favored Richard Nixon by a majority of electoral college votes.
8. Dad says that he would prefer to wait in the car until we are (*all ready, already*) to leave the house.
9. Darla's allergy to dogs does not (*effect, affect*) her sinuses as severely as her allergy to cats.
10. Is it (*allright, all right*) if we choose to eat lunch in the courtyard this afternoon?
11. Can you believe that those children (*all ready, already*) know how to speak three languages?
12. Though they were naturally athletic, the enthusiastic couple played tennis (*bad, badly*).
13. If we search every room, I am positive we'll find your address book (*somewhere, somewheres*).
14. This (*is not, ain't*) the most exciting book I have ever read.
15. If you have (*all ready, already*) made up your mind, I will not try to persuade you any more.
16. The marching band in the navy and gold uniforms received (*a, an*) high score in the competition.
17. The worried teenager could not remember where she had left her (*keys, keys at*).
18. The lawn looks (*bad, badly*) today; we have not mowed it for three weeks.
19. All of the jurors (*accept, except*) one believed that the defendant was guilty.
20. Do you think it would be (*allright, all right*) if we cooked spaghetti for dinner tomorrow night?

## Usage Glossary B

Review the glossary entries on pages 268–70 of *Holt Handbook* for information on the correct usage of the following terms:

<i>between, among</i>	<i>fewer, less</i>
<i>bring, take</i>	<i>good, well</i>
<i>bust, busted</i>	<i>had ought, hadn't ought</i>
<i>could of</i>	<i>hardly, scarcely</i>
<i>doesn't, don't</i>	

**EXERCISE** Two choices appear in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Circle the correct choice.

**Example 1.** Who would (of, have) guessed we'd be studying in Paris?

- Even though she was nervous, Cleo played (*good, well*) at the piano recital last night.
- There are far (*fewer, less*) bison today than there were one hundred fifty years ago.
- If you ask me, that little boy (*doesn't, don't*) look too happy.
- José shared the prize money (*between, among*) his many friends.
- There are (*fewer, less*) jobs in manufacturing now than there once were.
- Don't forget to (*bring, take*) your baseball mitt to my house tonight.
- The extended school year was discussed (*among, between*) the three parents.
- Derwood might (*have, of*) believed that story about Loch Ness, but I could not tell for sure.
- Mi Ling won't be able to (*bring, take*) her dog along when she goes away to camp.
- The child got (*busted, caught*) when he tried to stay up later than the baby sitter had instructed.
- Many immigrants (*brought, took*) only what they could carry when they came here to the United States.
- Dinah's opinion is that the novel (*ought not, hadn't ought*) to have ended so suddenly.
- She put the flowers (*between, among*) two pages of a favorite childhood book.
- Jimmy Carter (*is, is not*) hardly idle in his retirement from public office.
- Let's put (*fewer, less*) walnuts in this batch of muffins than we put in the last.
- We (*ought not, hadn't ought*) to wander off too far; the trails in this park can be confusing.
- I could (*of, have*) predicted that the most popular song of the year would be that one.
- Not only was the toddler's temperature too high, but we could tell that he did not feel (*good, well*).
- When the temperature outside goes below freezing, we let the faucets drip to prevent the pipes from (*bursting, busting*).
- The art teacher (*don't, doesn't*) mind if we talk while we work, as long as we talk quietly.

## Usage Glossary C

Review the glossary entries on pages 271–73 of *Holt Handbook* for information on correct usage of the following terms:

<i>he, she, it, they</i>	<i>kind of, sort of</i>
<i>hissself</i>	<i>learn, teach</i>
<i>how come</i>	<i>leave, let</i>
<i>its, it's</i>	<i>like, as</i>
<i>kind, sort, type</i>	<i>like, as if, as though</i>

**EXERCISE** Two choices appear in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Circle the correct choice.

**Example 1.** Why don't you do your homework (*like, as*) I do, right after school?

- Perry convinced (*himself, hissself*) that he was going to win the match.
- The peacock spread (*its, it's*) feathers and strutted away from the turkey.
- Abraham Lincoln was a quiet man, but his words can (*teach, learn*) us a lot.
- The man looked (*like, as though*) he had a guilty conscience, but he was later proven innocent.
- The poet was (*kind of, somewhat*) disappointed when the publisher misunderstood her latest poem.
- Do you know (*how come, why*) we got chosen to wash dishes tonight?
- Although (*its, it's*) not right to do so, some salespeople make exaggerated claims.
- The pumpkin was (*kind of, rather*) small, but we made wonderful bread with it.
- The old general looked (*like, as if*) he might cry when he talked about the war.
- The small boy wanted to take the toy, but his cousin convinced him to (*leave, let*) it there.
- Kurt Vonnegut (*is, he is*) one of Uncle Gene's favorite writers.
- Will the lifeguard at camp this summer (*learn, teach*) us how to swim the butterfly stroke?
- The professional photographer uses (*these type, this type*) of film more than any other.
- I'd like to find out (*why, how come*) this batch of mashed potatoes turned out so lumpy.
- Because I am good at math problems, I like to (*learn, teach*) other students how to do them.
- The frantic baby sitter wished that the toddlers would (*let, leave*) her have peace for just one moment.
- Model airplanes (*they are, are*) are all over the desk in my nephew's room.
- By the end of the boat ride, I was feeling (*kind of, slightly*) sick to my stomach.
- (*These sorts, These sort*) of test questions are difficult until you get the chance to practice them.
- The soccer forward decided to shoot right next to the post, just (*like, as*) Coach Weinberg had told the players to do.

## Usage Glossary D

Review the glossary entries on pages 275–76 of *Holt Handbook* for information on the correct usage of the following terms:

<i>of</i>	<i>their, there, they're</i>
<i>real</i>	<i>themselves, themselves</i>
<i>reason . . . because</i>	<i>them</i>
<i>some, somewhat</i>	<i>this here, that there</i>
<i>than, then</i>	<i>try and</i>

**EXERCISE** Two choices appear in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Circle the correct choice.

**Example 1.** Would you get (off, off of) that roof?

- The reason geese migrate is (*that, because*) they can't survive in frozen water.
- The crowd revived (*somewhat, some*), but Judy still thought the team deserved more support.
- Cristina and Gil sent (*their, there*) regards from Niagara Falls.
- From now on, I will (*try to, try and*) do my laundry more often so it won't pile up like this.
- Although (*they're, their*) not large, shrews are quite strong.
- When you finish your dinner, put your trash in one of (*them, those*) trash cans over there.
- Robert Burns wrote the (*real, very*) lovely Scottish song "Auld Lang Syne."
- The reason we can grow corn today is (*because, that*) the Maya cultivated the plant over two thousand years ago.
- The opposing team scored one run more in the final game (*than, then*) our team did.
- Although (*their, there*) coats are often white, Arabian horses have jet black hair underneath.
- I was (*extremely, real*) sorry to hear that you lost your dog.
- Argentina is farther south (*then, than*) Ecuador and has a cooler climate.
- The reason the Appalachians are more rounded than the Rockies is (*that, because*) they are older than the Rockies.
- Her family pays higher property taxes because they live (*outside of, outside*) the city limits.
- In the past ten minutes, the sun has gone down (*somewhat, some*).
- Class, look (*inside, inside of*) this box and choose the book that you would like to read next.
- I told Julia that I would (*try to, try and*) have lunch with her tomorrow.
- (*This here, This*) rainbow trout is the largest fish that I have ever caught.
- Irene, would you pass me (*them, those*) tasty-looking appetizers?
- Can you even believe that those seventh-graders wrote this entire play by (*themselves, themselves*)?

## Usage Glossary E

Review the glossary entries on pages 277–78 of *Holt Handbook* for information on the correct usage of the following terms:

*use to, used to,*  
*suppose to, supposed to*  
*way, ways*  
*when, where*  
*where*

*who, which, that*  
*who's, whose*  
*without, unless*  
*your, you're*

**EXERCISE** Two choices appear in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Circle the correct choice.

**Example 1.** It's only a short (way, ways); I think I'll walk.

1. Singing *a cappella* is (*when there's singing, singing*) without instrumental accompaniment.
2. This relay race is so confusing that I can't tell (*who's, whose*) turn it is to run.
3. Don't go swimming in the ocean (*without, unless*) you have someone with you.
4. Delia is the only child in her class (*who, which*) is from Peru.
5. Negotiation is (*where people discuss and compromise, discussing and compromising*) to reach an agreement.
6. (*Who's, Whose*) the congressperson for your district?
7. Old Dog Tray was the faithful dog (*that, who*) Stephen Foster owned.
8. Nobody should try out (*without, unless*) he or she is willing to rehearse daily.
9. A mosaic is (*when you have small pieces, small pieces*) of material, such as colored gravel, fitted together to create a design on a flat surface.
10. Did it feel unusual at all when you changed (*your, you're*) last name?
11. The ancient Egyptians had an underworld god (*who's, whose*) name was Osiris.
12. You can't travel to some countries (*without, unless*) you have a passport.
13. The bird (*that, who*) visited the speaker in Poe's famous poem was a raven.
14. The photographer used a special lens because her subject was a (*ways, way*) off.
15. The middle school science teachers are (*suppose, supposed*) to go to a conference next month.
16. In order to collect data from Mars, the satellite has to travel a long (*way, ways*).
17. Sheila read (*where, that*) the city of Austin is going to tear down that dance hall.
18. The flight attendant says that (*your, you're*) supposed to fasten your seat belt.
19. Nelson is not (*used to, use to*) animals, but he warmed up to the puppy right away.
20. The driving instructor pointed out a sign (*where, that shows*) the speed limit has changed.



## Review A: Usage Glossary

**EXERCISE** Two choices appear in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Circle the correct choice.

**Example 1.** Did you see that turtle before it slid (*off of*, *off*) the rock and into the water?

1. Jesse will hand me (*them*, *those*) paintbrushes when he is finished with them.
2. By the time we got around to raking the leaves in our front yard, winter had (*all ready*, *already*) come, and there were flurries of snow in the air.
3. Ms. Carbone (*she is*, *is*) my favorite counselor.
4. Red peppers have a powerful flavor, and so they (*affect*, *effect*) the taste of a dish more than most other vegetables do.
5. Can you believe that Martha (*doesn't*, *don't*) want to run for class president?
6. There (*was*, *was not*) scarcely any water in southern California until engineers built waterways from the mountains.
7. Although the chess champion had (*fewer*, *less*) pieces on the board than her opponent, she knew how she would win the game.
8. After World War II, several Allied nations divided Germany (*between*, *among*) themselves.
9. Did you really get (*caught*, *busted*) falling asleep in class?
10. Dad read in the paper (*where*, *that*) the city will let the voters decide whether to create a park here.
11. My Spanish is (*kind of*, *somewhat*) better than my French.
12. Miguel bought (*himself*, *hissself*) a good pen for his writing class.
13. I still do not understand (*why*, *how come*) getting in shape is so difficult while getting out of shape is so easy.
14. William Shakespeare's plays are more well known (*than*, *then*) those of his contemporaries.
15. The reason Lana got angry was (*because*, *that*) Kadeem criticized her unfairly.
16. President Kennedy told Americans to ask what they could do for (*their*, *there*) country.
17. Actually, I did not really want to go to the movies on Friday night (*anyway*, *anyways*).
18. Don't make a promise (*without*, *unless*) you can keep it.
19. Was it Great Britain (*whose*, *who's*) flag was first planted at the summit of Mount Everest?
20. The overanxious reporter did not (*leave*, *let*) the figure skaters have a moment to themselves before asking them how they felt.

## Review B: Usage Glossary

**EXERCISE** Two choices appear in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Circle the correct choice.

**Example 1.** Even though Arthur had (*all ready*, *already*) gone to the grocery store once today, he had to go back because he was missing an ingredient.

1. Why don't we (*accept*, *except*) the seventh-graders who apply to our club so that we can increase our membership?
2. What do you think would be the (*effect*, *affect*) of combining hydrogen and oxygen?
3. The living room has warmed up (*somewhat*, *some*), but Leah still feels comfortable in a sweater and heavy socks.
4. Some of the most expensive cheeses smell (*bad*, *badly*).
5. I have (*fewer*, *less*) money in the bank than Carmelita has because she is very good at saving.
6. Did you know that Mrs. Lawless (*used to*, *use to*) live in Ireland?
7. Amit is going to (*bring*, *take*) his new videotape of *Never Cry Wolf* to Janet's party.
8. Before there was anesthesia, doctors (*could*, *couldn't*) hardly do surgery at all.
9. The basketball center hurt (*himself*, *hissself*) at the end of the first half of the championship game.
10. It's (*kind of*, *rather*) sad that black-and-white movies are seldom made these days.
11. Licking one paw, the snow leopard stared at us from within (*its*, *it's*) icy den.
12. In the middle of January, we felt (*like*, *as though*) warm weather would never return.
13. The lioness holds a (*real*, *very*) important responsibility in the pride.
14. The baby bird flapped its wings tentatively and (*than*, *then*) grew brave enough to fly out of the nest.
15. The city of Sydney, Mr. Wilkinson's first home, is a long (*way*, *ways*) from here.
16. (*This here*, *This*) chicken soup is the best meal to have when it is cold outside.
17. Firing a piece of pottery is (*when you bake it*, *baking it*) until the clay is hard and dry.
18. A bee will not sting (*without*, *unless*) you provoke it.
19. Yes, I'd love to see (*your*, *you're*) art portfolio if you are willing to show it to me.
20. (*Those sorts*, *Those sort*) of paint will not mix well with the ones on this shelf.



## Review C: Usage Glossary

**EXERCISE** Two choices appear in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Circle the correct choice.

**Example 1.** I meant it when I told you that (you're, *your*) a talented singer.

1. After driving through this neighborhood where the houses look so similar, I hardly know where (*I am*, *I am at*) anymore.
2. Let's find out (*who's*, *whose*) going to organize the school newspaper staff next year.
3. By the end of the summer, I am determined to (*teach*, *learn*) myself how to steer this canoe.
4. The Johnstown Flood was a (*real*, *very*) tragic event in U.S. history.
5. My family (*use to*, *used to*) live near the beach.
6. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is the leader (*that*, *which*) everyone remembers from the civil rights marches of the 1960s.
7. Clay has misplaced (*a real*, *an extremely*) important piece of paper.
8. Luis (*had ought*, *ought*) to finish this project before he starts the next one.
9. Jerry practiced his guitar chords every night, just (*like*, *as*) his teacher had encouraged him to do.
10. Carla is proud of her younger brother Joey for doing so (*good*, *well*) at his new job at the software company.
11. I was so hungry last night that I could (*of*, *have*) eaten the whole batch of pasta myself.
12. Keith has read (*alot*, *a lot*) of stories by his favorite science fiction author, but the tale he likes best of all is the one about the man with tattoos that come to life.
13. My best friend can sometimes seem blunt, but I am glad that she is (*an*, *a*) honest person.
14. Laretta's shin stung when the tennis ball hit it, but after a minute or two it felt (*allright*, *all right*).
15. All of the United States is in North America (*accept*, *except*) Hawaii.
16. When the cast and crew were (*all ready*, *already*), the stage manager drew back the curtain.
17. This (*isn't*, *ain't*) the spiciest salsa I have ever tried, but it tastes good with the meal.
18. Maurice accidentally stepped on the back of my shoe, and the shoe flew (*off*, *off of*) my foot.
19. Why do your cats Princess and Wallflower always go off to the corner by (*theirselves*, *themselves*) when it is raining outside?
20. Could you and I (*try to*, *try and*) visit my old friend Jason in Seattle this summer?

## Proofreading Application: Video Script

Good writers are generally good proofreaders. Readers tend to admire and trust writing that is error-free. Make sure that you correct all errors in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation in your writing. Your readers will have more confidence in your words if you have done your best to proofread carefully.

Because we live in a multimedia world, you will probably have the opportunity to compose scripts for video presentations. Although your words will be heard, not read, you still need to write and proofread your script. Usage errors, even when heard, always make a poor impression. Your audience may focus on the usage errors and miss the message or information you are trying to convey.

### PROOFREADING ACTIVITY

Find and correct the common usage problems. Use proofreading symbols to make your corrections.

**Example** The reason we are making this video is <sup>that</sup>~~because~~ we want to introduce you to the computer lab at Mary Taylor Middle School.

We are very proud of these here computers. We want you to treat them good because we have waited a long time for them.

Do not slam the mouse onto the desk or smack you're CPU! There delicate and expensive. We don't want any of them busted. You hadn't ought to thump the keys on the keyboards either. Anyone whose caught doing so will find himself or herself in serious difficulty. In fact, he or she may be setting out in the hall for the rest of the period.

You aren't permitted to take any drinks or food when you come into the lab either. The computers they are here for everyone, so have fun, but obey the rules!

# Literary Model: Narrative

... sometimes on the water you could see a spark or two—on a raft or a scow, you know; and maybe you could hear a fiddle or a song coming over from one of them crafts. It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened—Jim he allowed they was made, but I allowed they happened; I judged it would have took too long to *make* so many. Jim said the moon could a *laid* them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn't say nothing against it. . . .

—from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

**EXERCISE A** Carefully study the excerpt, and underline only those errors in standard usage covered in Chapter 12.

**EXERCISE B** Describe the character in this narrative. Does he sound as if he could be a real person? How does Twain's use of nonstandard elements help you to see the character? Use specific examples.

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## USAGE | Language in Context: Literary Model

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# Writing Application: Announcement

Many writing situations call for formal usage: letters to employers or businesses, essays for class, and applications for special programs and awards. For some writing situations, however, informal usage is actually preferable. When you want to make readers laugh by imitating comic language, when you know that formal usage will sound too serious, or when you want to re-create the sound of speech, do not be afraid to use a less formal diction. Remember, though, that even informal writing should not include nonstandard English unless there is a specific reason to do so.

**FORMAL AND SERIOUS** We sincerely hope that both of you will again grace us with your presence.

**INFORMAL** You guys come back soon, okay?

**NONSTANDARD** I ain't gonna be happy if you guys don't come back soon.

## Writing Activity

Every morning in schools around the country, students hear announcements about upcoming activities. This week, you must make an announcement about an upcoming event. As you write your announcement, keep in mind the difference between informal writing and writing that contains usage errors. Write the announcement for the event as you think your classmates would enjoy hearing it. Be comical, be colloquial, be jazzy—and be sure to check the content with the principal before you go on the air.

**PREWRITING** Brainstorm ideas for what you want to announce, and then choose the one topic you will cover. Then, gather all pertinent information about the event: time, place, cost if any, and so on. Keep in mind that regardless of tone and level of formality, your announcement needs to have its facts right and complete. Double-check your facts, or you may embarrass yourself.

**WRITING** Morning announcements must be brief—students are waiting to get on with the day's work. Draft several versions of the announcement, looking for ways to make your announcement stand out from the others. How will you get students' attention? How will you keep it? Whatever solutions you come up with, be careful that the vital information about the event does not get lost in lively, entertaining writing.

**REVISING** Read the best versions of your announcement to several friends. Listen to their feedback. Can they repeat to you the *when*, *where*, and *how* of the event? Which version do they like best, and why? Consider their comments as you make your final revisions.

**PUBLISHING** Check your announcement for errors in spelling and punctuation. Errors may make you stumble while reading, especially if you are already a bit nervous. Practice your delivery several times before you read the announcement over the PA system. You may also want to publish the written announcement in the school paper or post it on a bulletin board.

## Extending Your Writing

If you enjoyed this exercise, you could develop it into a longer writing project. For a journalism class or for the yearbook, attend the event you announced. Interview participants, jot down what you observe, take photos, and then write up the event for publication.