



# C2

## GRAMMAR SHEETS

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Free English Grammar Resource

## 1 Fine distinctions in tense & aspect

### FORM

Perfect infinitive: to have + past participle (claims to have worked) · Continuous infinitive: to be doing  
will have + past participle: confident deduction about the past · Present Perfect Simple vs Continuous:  
completion vs open-ended process

### USE

At C2, aspect signals whether an event is presented as complete, ongoing, deduced or merely claimed — often within an infinitive.

### EXAMPLES

- *She seems to have misunderstood the brief.*
- *I'd rather be lying on a beach right now.*
- *They'll have been wondering where we are.*

### PRACTICE 1

Choose the form that best fits the intended meaning.

1. He claims (to work / to have worked) for NASA in the nineties.
2. Don't ring them now — they (will have gone / would have gone) to bed.
3. I've (read / been reading) that biography — I'm about halfway through.
4. I've (read / been reading) that biography — you can borrow it now.
5. It's a relief (to finish / to have finished) the audit at last.

## 2 Advanced modal nuance

### FORM

will: present deduction (That'll be the courier.) · may well: quite probably · might as well: no reason not to  
should after emotional adjectives: odd / astonishing that he should ... · was / were to have + past participle: an  
unfulfilled plan

### USE

These uses go beyond obligation and possibility: they express deduction, emotional colouring and plans that never happened.

### EXAMPLES

- *You may well be right.*
- *It's strange that he should refuse such an offer.*
- *She was to have chaired the session, but she fell ill.*

### PRACTICE 2

Choose the correct option.

1. That (will / shall) be the courier at the door — I'm expecting a parcel.
2. The launch (was to have taken / must have taken) place in June, but it was postponed.
3. It's astonishing that anyone (should / must) believe such a rumour.
4. There's no rush, but you (might as well / may well) start now — we're all here.
5. The forecast (may well / might as well) be wrong; forecasts often are.

### 3 Mixed & implied conditionals

#### FORM

Had it not been for / But for + noun · otherwise / or else: an implied unreal condition

Imperative + and / or: Touch that alarm and you'll regret it. · Given + noun phrase

#### USE

Mature writing often implies the condition instead of stating it with if; the reader reconstructs it from context.

#### EXAMPLES

- *Had it not been for the goalkeeper, they'd have lost by five.*
- *I took a taxi; otherwise I'd still be waiting.*
- *One more delay and we cancel the whole order.*

#### PRACTICE 3

Rewrite or complete as instructed.

1. If the sponsors hadn't stepped in, the festival would not exist today. (Had it not been ...)
2. Luckily I'd saved a copy; if I hadn't, weeks of work would have been lost. (Rewrite the second clause with "otherwise".)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ for your warning, I'd have signed the contract. (one word)
4. Touch that alarm and (you'll regret / you'd regret) it.
5. (Given more time / Giving more time), the team would have delivered something remarkable.

### 4 Advanced inversion

#### FORM

Try as + subject + might / may · adjective + though / as + subject + be: Exhausted though they were ...

So + adjective + be + subject + that · Not until ... + inversion · Scarcely / Hardly ... when

#### USE

These concessive and emphatic inversions belong to literary and rhetorical registers; the mechanics must be exact.

#### EXAMPLES

- *Try as we might, we couldn't open the safe.*
- *Exhausted though they were, they pressed on.*
- *Not until the final page is the truth revealed.*

#### PRACTICE 4

Rewrite each sentence beginning as shown.

1. Although she was frightened, she kept her voice steady. (Frightened though ...)
2. We tried hard, but we could not persuade him. (Try as ...)
3. The applause was so loud that the speaker paused. (So loud ...)
4. The truth did not emerge until the trial. (Not until ...)
5. We had scarcely begun when the fire alarm went off. (Scarcely ...)

## 5 Cleft & pseudo-cleft structures

### FORM

The reason (why) ... is that ... · The place where / The thing that ...

Reversed pseudo-cleft: A holiday is what you need. · All-cleft · It wasn't until ... that ...

### USE

Beyond the basic it-cleft, C2 writers choose among a family of focusing devices, each placing emphasis slightly differently.

### EXAMPLES

- *The reason the scheme failed was that nobody owned it.*
- *A proper apology is what they're waiting for.*
- *It wasn't until March that funding was confirmed.*

### PRACTICE 5

Rewrite each sentence beginning as shown.

1. You need a break. (What ...)
2. They left early because the roads were icy. (The reason ...)
3. Funding was confirmed only in March. (It wasn't until ...)
4. She objects to the tone, not the decision. (It's ...)
5. I'm asking for nothing more than honesty. (All ...)

## 6 Advanced ellipsis & substitution

### FORM

Gapping: She plays the violin, and her brother the cello. · as agreed / as discussed / as promised

Modal stranding: "Will they appeal?" "They may." · Comparative ellipsis: better than I do.

### USE

The most economical version of a sentence is often the most elegant. Ellipsis works only where the reader can reconstruct every omitted word.

### EXAMPLES

- *Kerem chose the window seat and Lale the aisle.*
- *We'll proceed as agreed.*
- *"Will they appeal?" "They may, though I doubt it."*

### PRACTICE 6

Shorten each sentence by removing the words that can be ellipted. One possible answer is given in the key.

1. She plays the violin, and her brother plays the cello.
2. I sent the invoice, exactly as we had agreed.
3. "Will you be applying for the grant?" "I might apply for the grant."
4. He speaks French better than I speak French.
5. Some of the delegates arrived on Monday; the other delegates arrived on Tuesday.

## 7 Absolute clauses & complex participials

### FORM

Noun + participle: Weather permitting, ... · The negotiations having collapsed, ...

Noun + adjective / prepositional phrase: The meeting over, ... · She stood there, arms folded. · with + noun + -ing / past participle

### USE

Absolute constructions attach a separate mini-clause with its own subject — dense, literary and highly economical.

### EXAMPLES

- *Weather permitting, the ceremony will be held outdoors.*
- *The negotiations having collapsed, both sides blamed each other.*
- *She stood in the doorway, arms folded.*

### PRACTICE 7

**Rewrite each sentence using an absolute construction, beginning as shown where indicated.**

1. If the weather permits, we'll sail at dawn. (Weather ...)
2. When the exams were over, the campus emptied. (The exams ...)
3. Because the bridge was closed, traffic was diverted. (The bridge ...)
4. Everything has been considered, and the plan seems sound. (All things ...)
5. He listened, and his eyes were fixed on the screen. (Use "with".)

## 8 Nominalisation & dense noun phrases

### FORM

Stacked premodifiers: a long-awaited government infrastructure review

Clause → noun phrase: The report was published late → the late publication of the report

### USE

Information-dense noun phrases are the engine of academic and institutional prose; C2 writers build and unpack them at will.

### EXAMPLES

- *The committee questioned the feasibility of the proposed timetable.*
- *A last-minute change of venue caused confusion.*
- *Rising energy costs remain the chief obstacle.*

### PRACTICE 8

**Compress each pair into one sentence built around a noun phrase. Model answers are given in the key.**

1. The report was published late. This attracted criticism.
2. The company withdrew from the deal. This shocked the market.
3. Housing is becoming less affordable. This concerns policymakers.
4. The two sides refused to compromise. This prolonged the strike.
5. The law was interpreted narrowly. This limited its impact.

## 9 Subtle article & determiner choices

### FORM

the + singular noun for a whole class: The violin is difficult to master.

Zero article with institutions (British English): in hospital, at school, in prison · a most + adjective = very · quite  
the + noun

### USE

Article choice at this level is about genre and nuance: generic reference, institutional use and idiomatic intensifiers.

### EXAMPLES

- *The violin is notoriously difficult to master.*
- *She's in hospital again.*
- *It was a most peculiar meeting.*

### PRACTICE 9

Choose the correct or more idiomatic option. British English is used where relevant.

1. (The tiger / Tiger) is close to extinction in parts of Asia.
2. He was taken to (hospital / the hospital) with minor injuries.
3. Translators here are paid by (hour / the hour).
4. That was (a most / the most) unusual film — I'm still thinking about it.
5. She's become (quite the / rather the) celebrity since the interview.

## 10 Advanced quantification

### FORM

many a + singular noun + singular verb · what little / what few: the small amount that exists  
few (almost none, negative) vs a few (some, neutral) · the odd = occasional

### USE

These quantifiers carry attitude as well as amount — resignation, scarcity or casualness.

### EXAMPLES

- *Many a traveller has been caught out by this timetable.*
- *We spent what little money we had on repairs.*
- *He treats himself to the odd cigar.*

### PRACTICE 10

Choose the correct option.

1. Many a student (has / have) regretted leaving revision to the last minute.
2. We had (few / a few) objections — three or four at most, all minor.
3. We had (few / a few) allies left, and the vote was lost.
4. She gave me what (little / less) advice she could.
5. I still play (the odd / an odd) game of chess online.

## 11 Complex complementation & reporting

### FORM

Subjunctive after demand / insist / suggest / essential: that he be informed · that she apply  
lest + subjunctive · meaning shift: regret to say vs regret saying · consider / declare + object + to be

### USE

Formal complementation patterns — including the mandative subjunctive — signal high register and legal or institutional tone.

### EXAMPLES

- *The board insisted that the CEO resign immediately.*
- *We regret to inform you that the position has been filled.*
- *She considers the criticism to be unfair.*

### PRACTICE 11

Choose the correct option.

1. The auditors demanded that every receipt (is / be) produced.
2. We regret (to announce / announcing) that tonight's performance is cancelled.
3. He lowered his voice, lest anyone (overhear / overhears) him.
4. The judges declared the result (to be / being) invalid.
5. She suggested that he (applies / apply) in writing.

## 12 Advanced passive constructions

### FORM

There is said / thought / believed to be ... · perception & causative passives: was seen to leave · was made to sign  
consider + object (+ to be): She is considered (to be) the finest ...

### USE

Note that after passive make, see and hear, the bare infinitive of the active becomes a to-infinitive.

### EXAMPLES

- *There are believed to be survivors.*
- *He was made to repeat the entire test.*
- *The intruder was seen to leave by the side gate.*

### PRACTICE 12

Rewrite each sentence in the passive, beginning as shown where indicated.

1. People say there is a simpler solution. (There ...)
2. They made the trainees sign a confidentiality agreement. (The trainees ...)
3. Witnesses heard the driver sound the horn. (The driver ...)
4. Experts think there are fewer than forty of these manuscripts. (There ...)
5. People consider her the finest pianist of her generation. (She ...)

## 13 Information structure: fronting, topicalisation & end-weight

### FORM

It-extraposition: It surprised us that he resigned. · existential there: There remains the question of ...  
 Fronting for contrast: His rudeness I can forgive; ... · end-weight: keep long, heavy elements at the end

### USE

English prefers given information first and heavy, new information last; skilled writers reorder sentences to obey this rhythm.

### EXAMPLES

- *There remains the delicate question of who pays.*
- *Some proposals we adopted at once; others we shelved.*
- *It surprised everyone that she declined.*

### PRACTICE 13

Rewrite each sentence to improve its information flow, beginning as shown.

1. That he resigned so suddenly surprised us. (It ...)
2. One question remains: who will pay? (There remains ...)
3. I can forgive his rudeness. I cannot forgive his dishonesty. (Combine: His rudeness ...)
4. A famous conductor was among the guests. (Among the guests ...)
5. The committee rejected the plan because implementing it in the current climate would be almost impossible. (The plan was rejected ...)

## 14 Register, spoken vs written grammar & ambiguity

### FORM

Spoken: heads & tails (It's brilliant, that café.) · situational ellipsis (Sounds good.)  
 Written: full clauses, nominalisation, impersonal passives · Structural ambiguity: Visiting relatives can be tiring.

### USE

A C2 user moves between registers deliberately — and can spot when a sentence has two grammatical readings.

### EXAMPLES

- *“Lovely, that.” (spoken) vs “That was delightful.” (written)*
- *Flying planes can be dangerous. (two readings)*
- *The invoicing error has been resolved. (formal report style)*

### PRACTICE 14

Follow the instruction for each item. Model answers are given in the key.

1. Rewrite for a formal report: “We’ve sorted out the invoice mix-up.”
2. Rewrite as informal spoken English: “I would be grateful if you could close the window.”
3. Give the two possible meanings: “Visiting relatives can be tiring.”
4. Give the two possible meanings: “She saw the man with the binoculars.”
5. Rewrite the tail construction as neutral written English: “It’s a strange piece, that sonata.”

## Mixed Grammar Review

Choose the correct option.

1. It's odd that he (should have left / had left) without a word.
2. (Scarcely had the show begun / Scarcely the show had begun) when the lights failed.
3. Had it not been (for / from) her testimony, the case would have collapsed.
4. The manuscripts are thought (to be destroyed / to have been destroyed) in the fire of 1666.
5. The chair insisted that the minutes (be / are) amended.
6. (Weather permitting / Weather permits), the fireworks will go ahead.
7. Many a director (has / have) underestimated this role.
8. What (little / few) support remained soon evaporated.
9. Some claims we could verify; (others we could not / we could not others).
10. She's in (the hospital / hospital) for tests — nothing serious. (British English)

## C2 Grammar Sheets — Answer Key

### Practice 1 · Fine distinctions in tense & aspect

1. to have worked 2. will have gone 3. been reading 4. read 5. to have finished

### Practice 2 · Advanced modal nuance

1. will 2. was to have taken 3. should 4. might as well 5. may well

### Practice 3 · Mixed & implied conditionals

1. Had it not been for the sponsors, the festival would not exist today. 2. ...; otherwise weeks of work would have been lost. 3. But 4. you'll regret 5. Given more time

### Practice 4 · Advanced inversion

1. Frightened though she was, she kept her voice steady. 2. Try as we might, we could not persuade him. 3. So loud was the applause that the speaker paused. 4. Not until the trial did the truth emerge. 5. Scarcely had we begun when the fire alarm went off.

### Practice 5 · Cleft & pseudo-cleft structures

1. What you need is a break. 2. The reason (why / that) they left early was that the roads were icy. 3. It wasn't until March that funding was confirmed. 4. It's the tone (that) she objects to, not the decision. 5. All I'm asking for is honesty.

### Practice 6 · Advanced ellipsis & substitution

1. She plays the violin, and her brother the cello. 2. I sent the invoice, exactly as agreed. 3. "I might." 4. He speaks French better than I do. 5. Some of the delegates arrived on Monday; the others on Tuesday.

### Practice 7 · Absolute clauses & complex participials

1. Weather permitting, we'll sail at dawn. 2. The exams (being) over, the campus emptied. 3. The bridge (being) closed, traffic was diverted. 4. All things considered, the plan seems sound. 5. He listened, with his eyes fixed on the screen.

### Practice 8 · Nominalisation & dense noun phrases

1. The late publication of the report attracted criticism. 2. The company's withdrawal from the deal shocked the market. 3. The declining affordability of housing concerns policymakers. 4. The two sides' refusal to compromise prolonged the strike. 5. The narrow interpretation of the law limited its impact.

### Practice 9 · Subtle article & determiner choices

1. The tiger 2. hospital 3. the hour 4. a most 5. quite the

### Practice 10 · Advanced quantification

1. has 2. a few 3. few 4. little 5. the odd

### Practice 11 · Complex complementation & reporting

1. be 2. to announce 3. overhear 4. to be 5. apply

### Practice 12 · Advanced passive constructions

1. There is said to be a simpler solution. 2. The trainees were made to sign a confidentiality agreement. 3. The driver was heard to sound the horn. 4. There are thought to be fewer than forty of these manuscripts. 5. She is considered (to be) the finest pianist of her generation.

### Practice 13 · Information structure: fronting, topicalisation & end-weight

1. It surprised us that he resigned so suddenly. 2. There remains one question: who will pay? (or: There remains the question of who will pay.) 3. His rudeness I can forgive; his dishonesty I cannot. 4. Among the guests was a famous conductor. 5. The plan was rejected because implementing it in the current climate would be almost impossible.

### Practice 14 · Register, spoken vs written grammar & ambiguity

1. The invoicing error has been resolved. 2. Could you close the window? (or: Close the window, would you?) 3. (a) Relatives who visit can be tiring. (b) Going to visit relatives can be tiring. 4. (a) She used the binoculars to see him. (b) The man had the binoculars. 5. That sonata is a strange piece.

### Mixed Grammar Review

1. should have left 2. Scarcely had the show begun 3. for 4. to have been destroyed 5. be 6. Weather permitting 7. has 8. little 9. others we could not 10. hospital