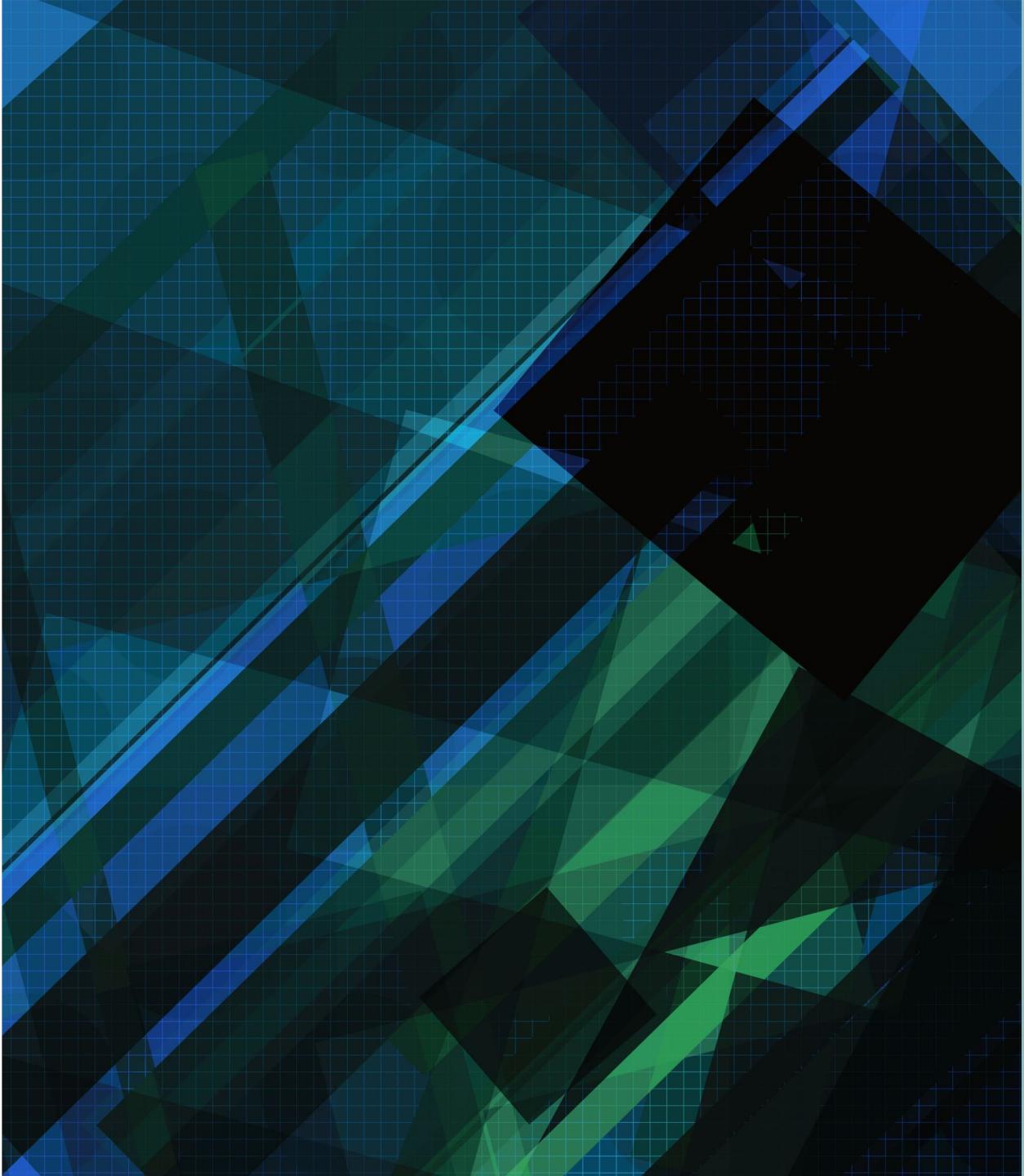


A Very Short Lesson in  
Grammar

# Writing is a System



# Writing is a system . . .

- What, exactly, is a system?
  - **System:** a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole.  
(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)
- To understand a system you need to identify the constituent *parts* and their *relationships*.



# Why study grammar?

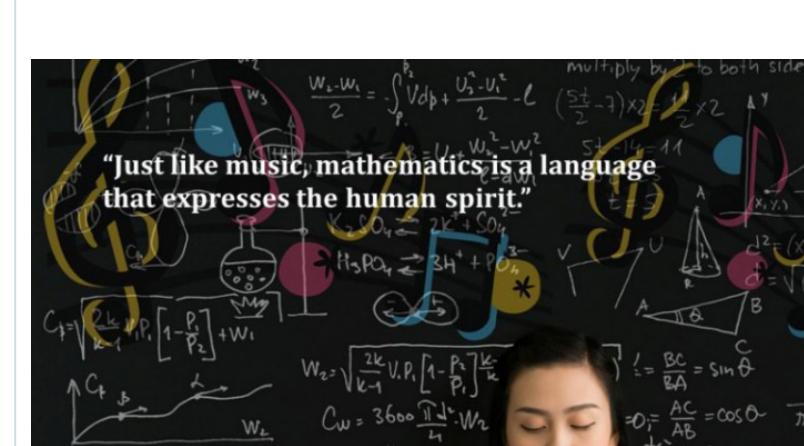


- Grammar is the secret code or “key” to coherent and graceful writing.
- It’s “secret” because many people write intuitively (by ear) without understanding most of the rules.
- Good grammar is also a key to success in school and the professional world.
- It allows you to *express yourself* clearly and eloquently—it allows you to be heard.

# Why review the basics?

- Like math, grammar builds on basic terms and “operations.”
- Understanding the terminology also makes grammar handbooks and websites easier to use, and that leads to a better grasp of grammar and better writing over time.
- As in math, we need to be fluent in the basics in order to perform more advanced “operations.”

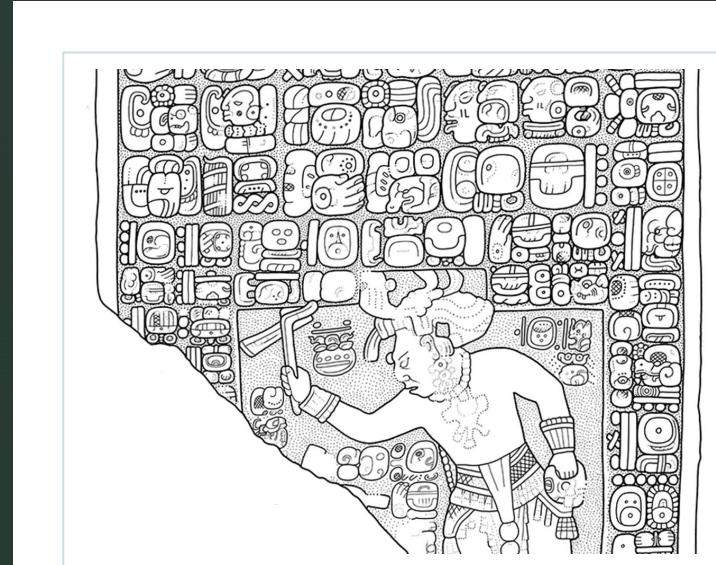
		Sujeto (y atributo)	Complemento directo	Complemento indirecto	Complemento preposicional
1 <sup>a</sup> persona	Singular	yo	me		mí, conmigo
	Plural	nosotros (as)	nos		nosotros (-as)
2 <sup>a</sup> persona	Singular	tú	te		ti, contigo
	Plural	vosotros (as)	os		vosotros (-as)
3 <sup>a</sup> persona	Singular	él, ella, ello	lo, la	le, se	él, ella, ello
	Plural	ellos (-as)	los, las	les, se	ellos (-as)



# Mayan Writing System

- This tablet was discovered in the southeastern Mexico around 2014.
- Ancient writing systems are deciphered using pattern analysis.
- They are also compared with other texts.
- Glyphs (picture language) illustrate the evolution of language as a system in which drawings represent ( = ) things and concepts.

Note: “The tablet was discovered . . .”  
<https://www.iflscience.com/editors-blog/ancient-maya-kingdom-discovered-in-backyard-of-a-mexican-cattle-rancher/>

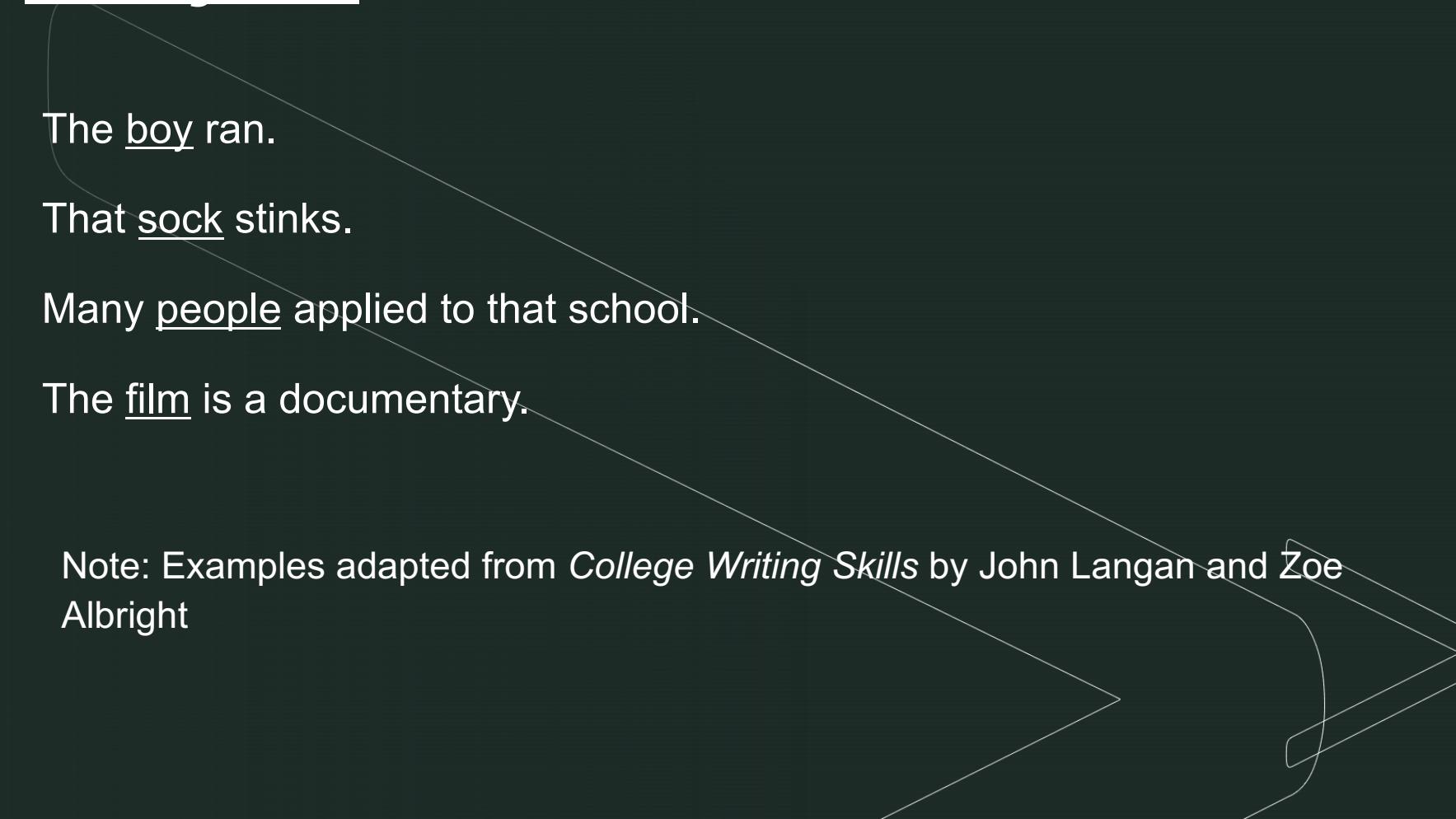




# Every sentence has a subject and a verb

- The boy ran.
- That sock stinks.
- Many people applied to that school.
- The film is a documentary.

Note: Examples adapted from *College Writing Skills* by John Langan and Zoe Albright



# Every sentence has a subject and a verb

- The boy ran.
- That sock stinks.
- Many people applied to that school.
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- Note: Examples adapted from *College Writing Skills* by John Langan and Zoe Albright



# Find the subject and the verb:

- A stream of water comes through a crack in the wall.
- Snowflakes dance gently in the sunlight.
- Red lights indicated an intersection in the rain.
- Every student is entitled to a good education.

- Tip: try to ignore descriptive words and phrases when identifying subjects and verbs.
- Note: Examples adapted from *College Writing Skills* by John Langan and Zoe Albright

# Sentence Fragments

Note: Examples adapted from *College Writing Skills* by John Langan and Zoe Albright



Fragment: Whenever I shop for groceries.



Correct Sentence: Whenever I shop for groceries, I imagine that I am a famous chef.



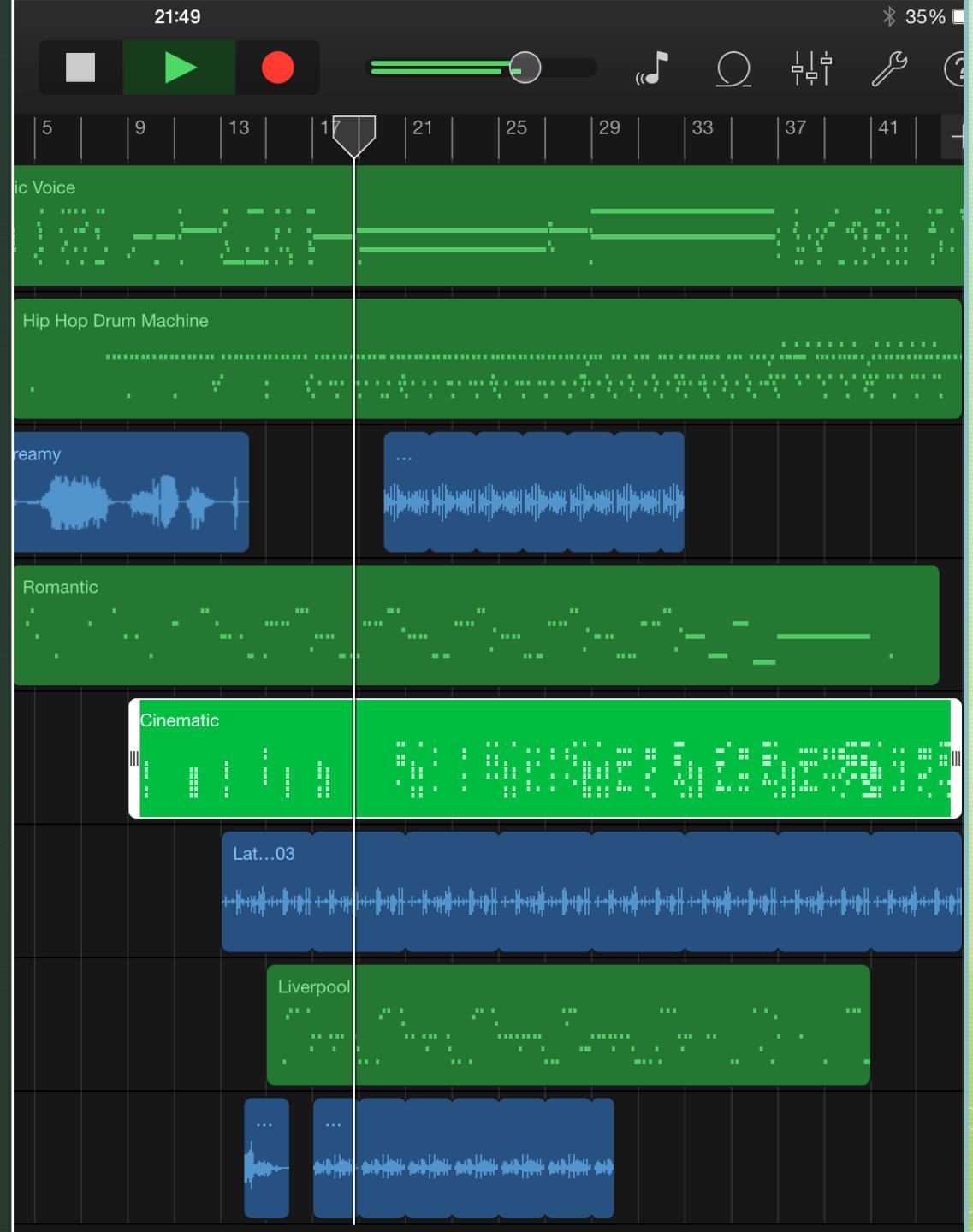
Fragment: Searching for the right filament for his light bulb. Thomas Edison failed many, many times.



Correct Sentence: Searching for the right filament for his light bulb, Thomas Edison failed many, many times.

# Comma splice

- A comma splice is a grammatical error in which a writer “splices” or “fuses together” two sentences (or independent clauses).
- In general, grammatically complete sentences should be punctuated (separated) with a period or semicolon.



## Fixing comma splices

- Comma splice: It's not how many times you fall, it's how many times you get up.
- Correct sentences:
  - It's not how many times you fall. It's how many times you get up.
  - or
  - It's not how many times you fall; it's how many times you get up.

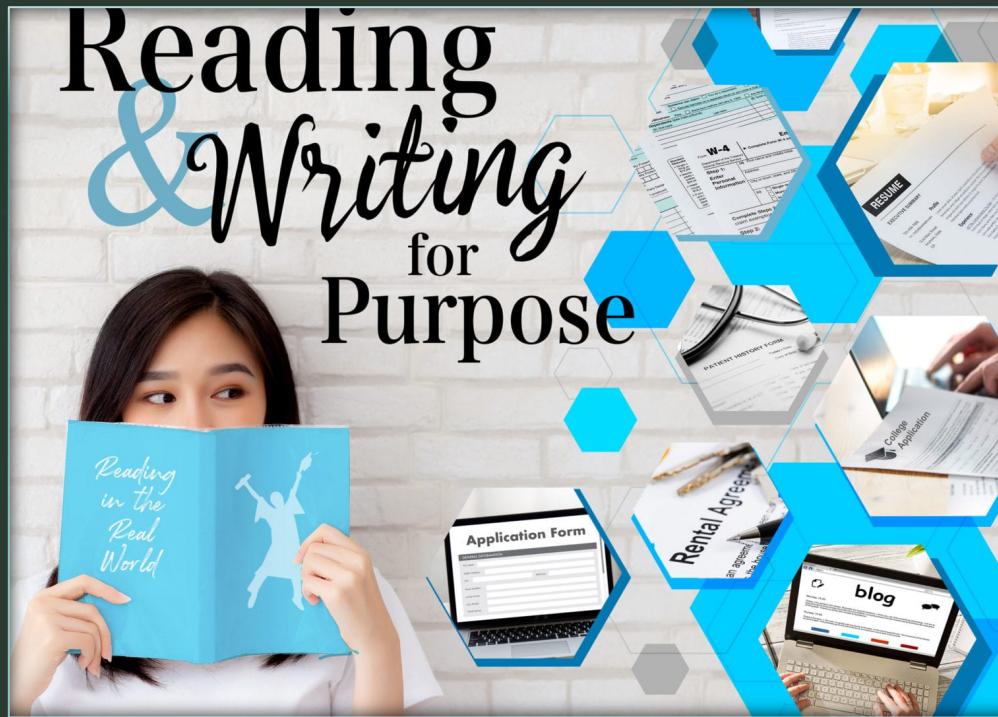
# Dirty little grammar secret . . .

- “It’s” is a short form (contraction of “it is”)
  - It’s important to pay attention to the details.
- “Its” means belonging to “it”:
  - The dog scratched behind its ears.



# Remember . . .

- Grammar is a system.
- It's complex but it can be mastered.
- Learning the "secret code" is a start, but *practice* makes perfect.
- Reading and writing on your own time are the best ways to practice.
- Reading and writing have many, many practical applications.



# Teotihuacan.

- A big city is a complex system.
- Is architecture a language?
- What kinds of maths and sciences would be required to build a great city?



# Image Credits

- Complex system: <https://www.business.uzh.ch/en/research/professorships/networkscience/teaching/Guest-Lectures/phdcsmgmt.html>
- Secret key: <https://www.defyandhustle.com/why-a-principle-centered-life-is-the-secret-key-to-increased-success-and-self-regard-in-2019/>
- Tablet: <https://www.futurity.org/maya-kingdom-sak-tzi-2302762-2/>
- Mayan glyphs: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/228276274837254758/>
- Comma splice: <https://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=fragments-runons-and-comma-splices>
- Scratching dog: <https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/scratching-fleas-cute-dog-cartoon-gm1187805771-335689800>
- Reading and Writing: <https://edynamiclearning.com/course/reading-and-writing-for-purpose/>
- Teotihuacan: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zug55/46844265285>