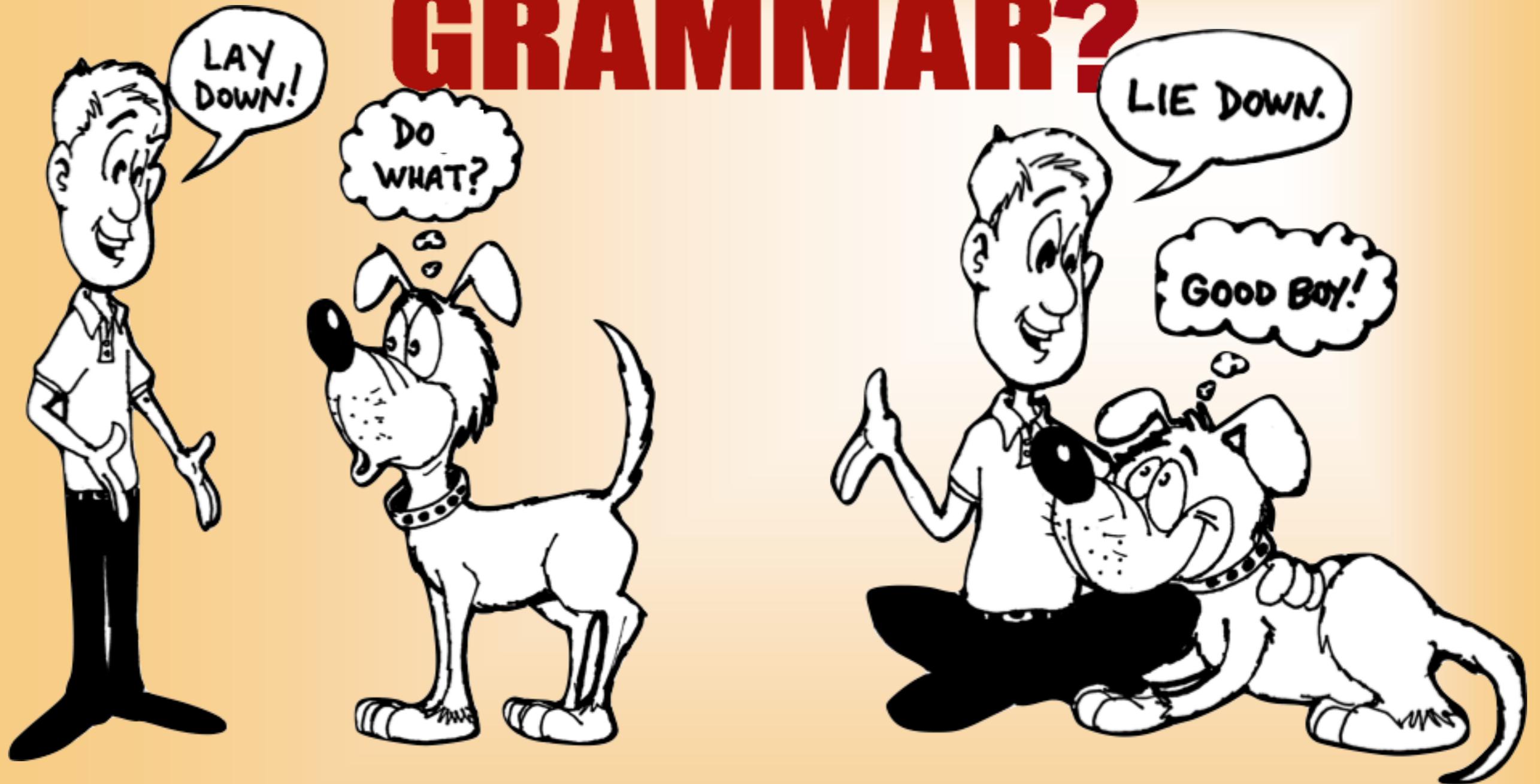


HOW'S YOUR GRAMMAR?

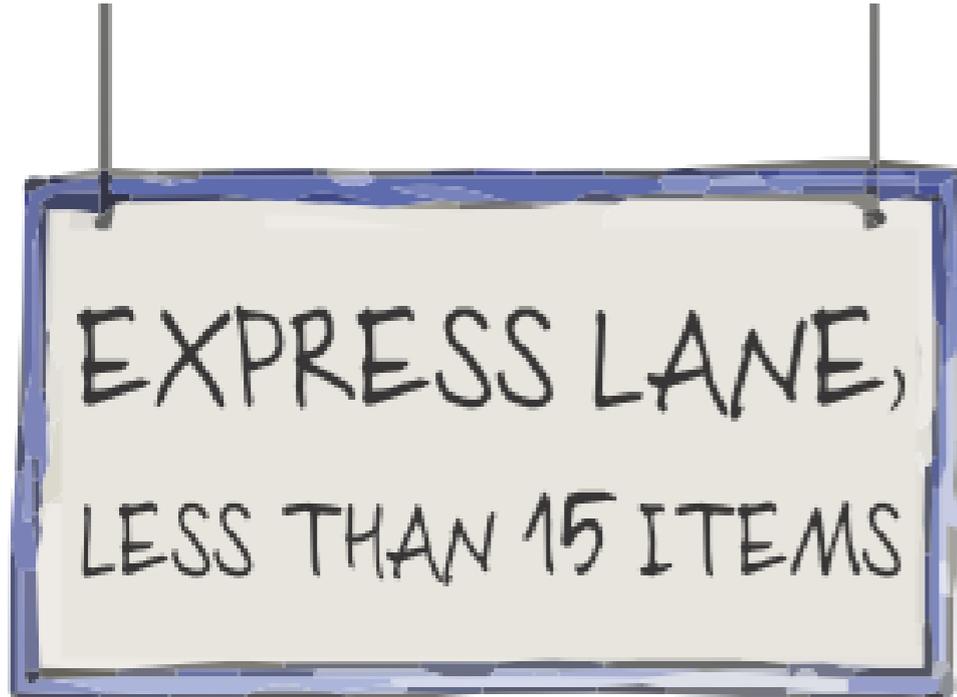


By William B. Bradshaw, PhD

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Have you ever seen this sign in a supermarket?



This sign is grammatically incorrect.

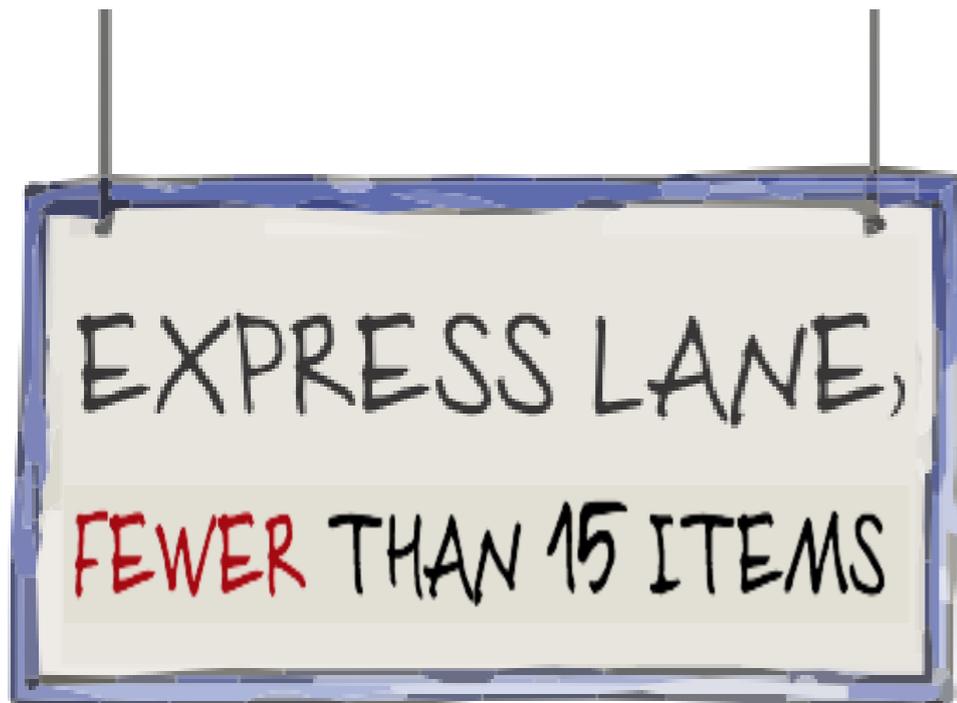
Although there may be others, I know of only one grocery-store chain—a national one—that uses correct signs at their express lanes. I complimented a checkout clerk at one of these stores about the store's use of correct express lane signs.

She looked a little puzzled, so I took about thirty seconds explaining to her that most express lane signs are incorrect and why. She thanked me, but I knew she had no idea what I was talking about.

Do you know what is wrong with this sign and why?

See the next page for the answer.

Here is your answer:



Using “Less” or “Fewer.”

Except in mathematical equations where numbers are defined as being “less than” or “greater than” other numbers, “**less**” is used to refer to bulk or to **a general quantity**, and “**fewer**” is used to refer to individual items or to a number, to **something that can be counted**.

Examples:

- ✓ “My new car uses less gasoline than my old one.” **Correct.**
- ✓ “My new car uses fewer gallons of gasoline than my old one.” **Correct.**

**Let’s take a short test to see how your grammar is.
See the next page for four questions.**

Short Test

Find the mistakes

1. I look forward to you meeting with Janice and I next week. (two mistakes)
2. I first met the Jones' in the early 1990's and since then have celebrated many Thanksgivings and Christmas's with Mr. and Mrs. Jones in the Jones' home. (four mistakes)
3. You, Janice and I were supposed to meet on Monday, June 28, 2012 to make plans for our high school reunion which is to be held in St. Louis, Missouri on August 30 2012. (five mistakes: hint - think about commas)
4. When we were young we were required to learn our ABC's in kindergarten and our teachers, one who had a B.A. degree and the other a Ph.D. degree always stressed dotting our "i's" and crossing our "t's". (six mistakes)



See the next page for answers.

Answers

1. I look forward to ~~you~~ your meeting with Janice and ~~I~~ me next week. (two corrections)
2. I first met the ~~Jones'~~ Joneses in the early ~~1990's~~ 1990s and since then have celebrated many Thanksgivings and ~~Christmas's~~ Christmases with Mr. and Mrs. Jones in the ~~Jones'~~ Joneses' home. (four corrections)
3. You₁ Janice, and I were supposed to meet on Monday, June 28, 201₂, to make plans for our high school re_union₁, which is to be held in St. Louis, Missouri₁ on August 30₁, 2012. (five corrections)
4. When we were young₁ we were required to learn our ~~ABC's~~ ABCs in kindergarten₁, and our teachers, one who had a ~~B.A.~~ BA degree and the other a ~~Ph.D.~~ PhD degree₁, always stressed dotting our "i's" and crossing our "~~t's~~". "t's." (six corrections)



**Do you know what's new in grammar?
See the next page for five new grammar changes.**

Standard Practices of Grammar

Five Recent Changes

During our years of elementary and secondary education, we learn the basics of English grammar. But it is necessary to stay up-to-date in English grammar, just as it is in any field.

However slowly, standard practices of grammar do change. Grammar scholars from countries around the world communicate with each other by written documents, e-mails, telephone calls, and conventions, deciding on changes to standard practices of English grammar.

To stay updated, be sure to use a recently published grammar book that is scholarly accurate.

See the next page for the first of five recent changes.

1. “Farther” and “further”

For many, many years “*farther*” and “*further*” were used interchangeably.

In the late 1940s they began to take on slightly different meanings, and today they definitely are used with different meanings. “*Farther*” is now used to indicate distance: for example, “It is *farther* to New York than I thought” or “Bill ran *farther* than Joe.”

“*Further*” is now used to indicate time, degree, or quantity: for example, “I need to look into the matter *further* before making a decision” or “My research needs to go *further* before I write the report.”



See the next page for the second recent change.

2. No periods after academic degrees

In the past, it was the accepted practice to use periods in the abbreviations of academic degrees and professional certifications, for example, B.A., M.A., M.B.A., LL.D., M.D., Ph.D., Ed.D., C.P.A., and R.N.

Over the years, however, this has been changing, and now most recognized authorities on grammar recommend omitting periods in such abbreviations.

For example, the accepted practice for making such abbreviations is now: **BA, MA, MBA, LLD, MD, PhD, EdD, CPA, and RN**. These are only examples; not including periods applies to the abbreviations of all academic degrees and professional certifications.



See the next page for the third recent change.

3. “Sure” and “certain”

“*Sure*” and “*certain*” are both **used to express lack of doubt about something**. But they are used differently, depending on how one reached the conclusion that there is “no doubt.”

“*Sure*” is used to express one’s belief of “**lack of doubt**” through intuition or feeling: for example, “I am *sure* she loves me” or “I am *sure* I did well on the exam” or “I am not *sure* I turned off the iron.”

“*Certain*,” on the other hand, is used when one reaches the conclusion of “**absence of doubt**” based on facts, evidence, or definite grounds of some kind, rather than feeling: for example, “After looking at the report, I am *certain* the company did the right thing” or “The police are *certain* that the evidence confirms his guilt.”



See the next page for the fourth recent change.

4. Using simple personal pronouns

It is appropriate to use a compound pronoun for emphasis. For example, “She saw the president *himself*” or “I will fix that *myself*” or “The queen *herself* mingled among the commoners.” But in the 1940s, people began the incorrect practice of a much broader use of the compound pronoun.

The following examples of using the compound pronoun (instead of the simple personal pronoun) are becoming more and more popular, and they **are**

incorrect: “The committee gave the report to *myself*” or “Bill and *myself* are going to Reno together” or “They brought the stuff to Ellen and *myself*.” Be correct; just keep it simple: “The committee brought the report to *me*” or “Bill and *I* are going to Reno together” or “They brought the stuff to Ellen and *me*.”



See the next page for the fifth recent change.

5. Spelling out numbers

The spelling out of numbers has definitely changed in recent years. It used to be that the accepted standards of grammar called for numbers from one through ten to be spelled out and above ten to use numerals. **Now**, except in technical and scientific contexts,

- ✓ **Whole numbers** from one through one hundred are spelled out and use hyphens to combine letters, and most numbers above one hundred use numerals (for example, “Forty-one children from eleven churches were riding in the five vans” and “The two parking lots provide spaces for 144 cars”).
- ✓ **Round numbers** (hundreds, thousands, hundred thousands, and millions) are spelled out and hyphens are not used with them (for example, “About four hundred people lived in the small community, but they were near a city of two hundred thousand people”). **Centuries** are spelled out and not capitalized.

Please visit my [Contact Page](#) to submit your questions or comments.

