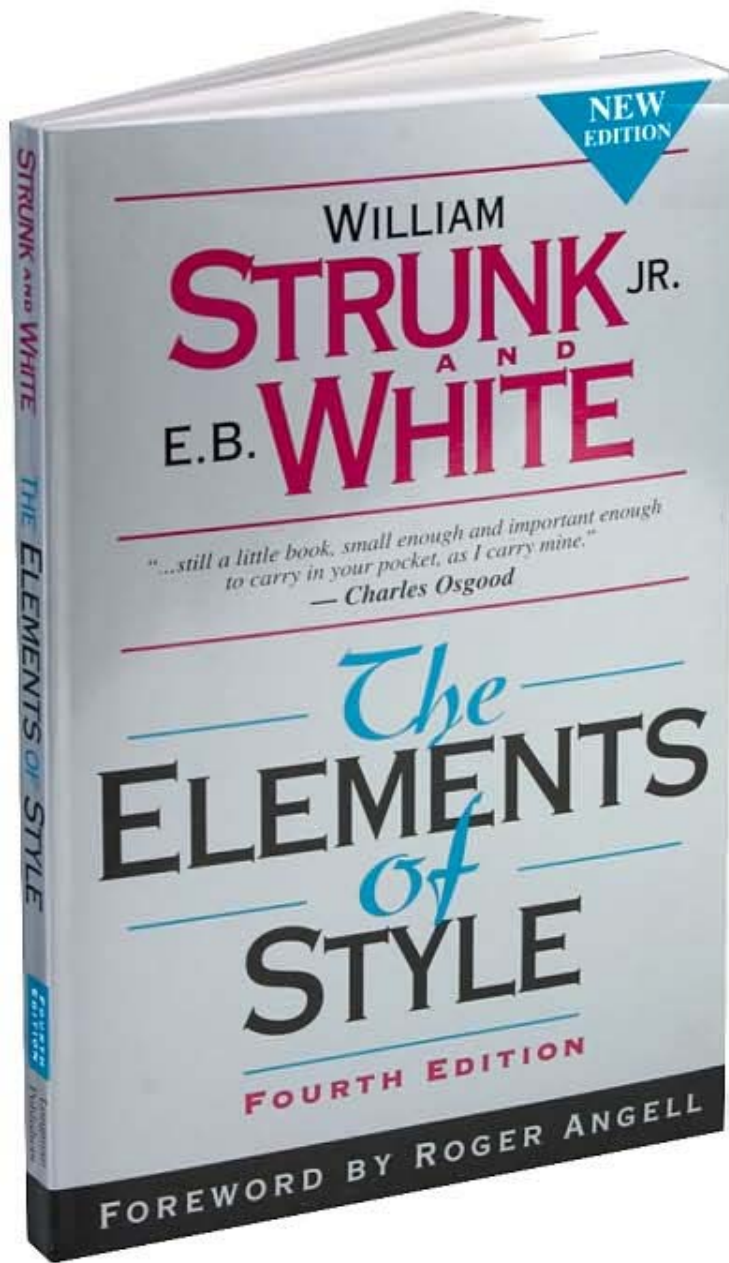


A spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light-colored, textured fabric-like surface. The spiral binding is on the left side. The text is centered on the page in a red, italicized serif font.

*The Elements of Style and
other grammatical oddities*



The Elements of Style



William Strunk Jr.

1869 - 1946

born in Cincinnati,
Ohio

He was a graduate of Woodward High School and the University of Cincinnati.

Doctoral work at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

A dedicated teacher

Elwyn Brooks White

1899-1985

born in Mount Vernon,
New York



He attended Cornell University, graduating in 1921.

He was one of the most influential modern American essayists.

He revised Strunk's *Elements of Style* for the college market.

Vigorous writing is concise

- “A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires that the writer make all of his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.” --*The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. [1918]

Elementary Rules of Usage

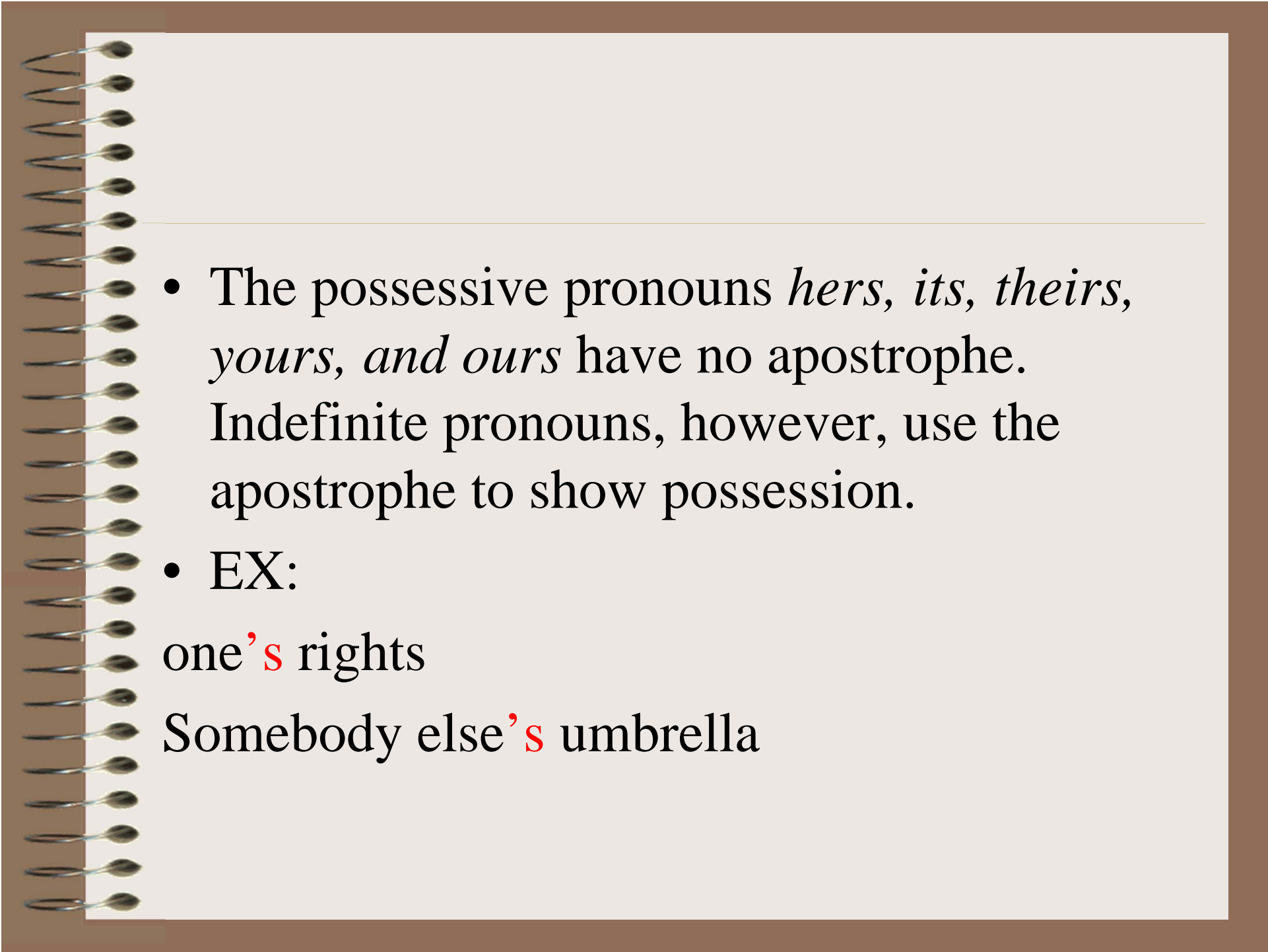
- Form the possessive *singular* of nouns by adding 's

- EX:

Charles's friend

Burns's poems


The witch's malice.

- 
- A spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains a list of bullet points.
- The possessive pronouns *hers, its, theirs, yours, and ours* have no apostrophe. Indefinite pronouns, however, use the apostrophe to show possession.

- EX:

one's rights

Somebody else's umbrella

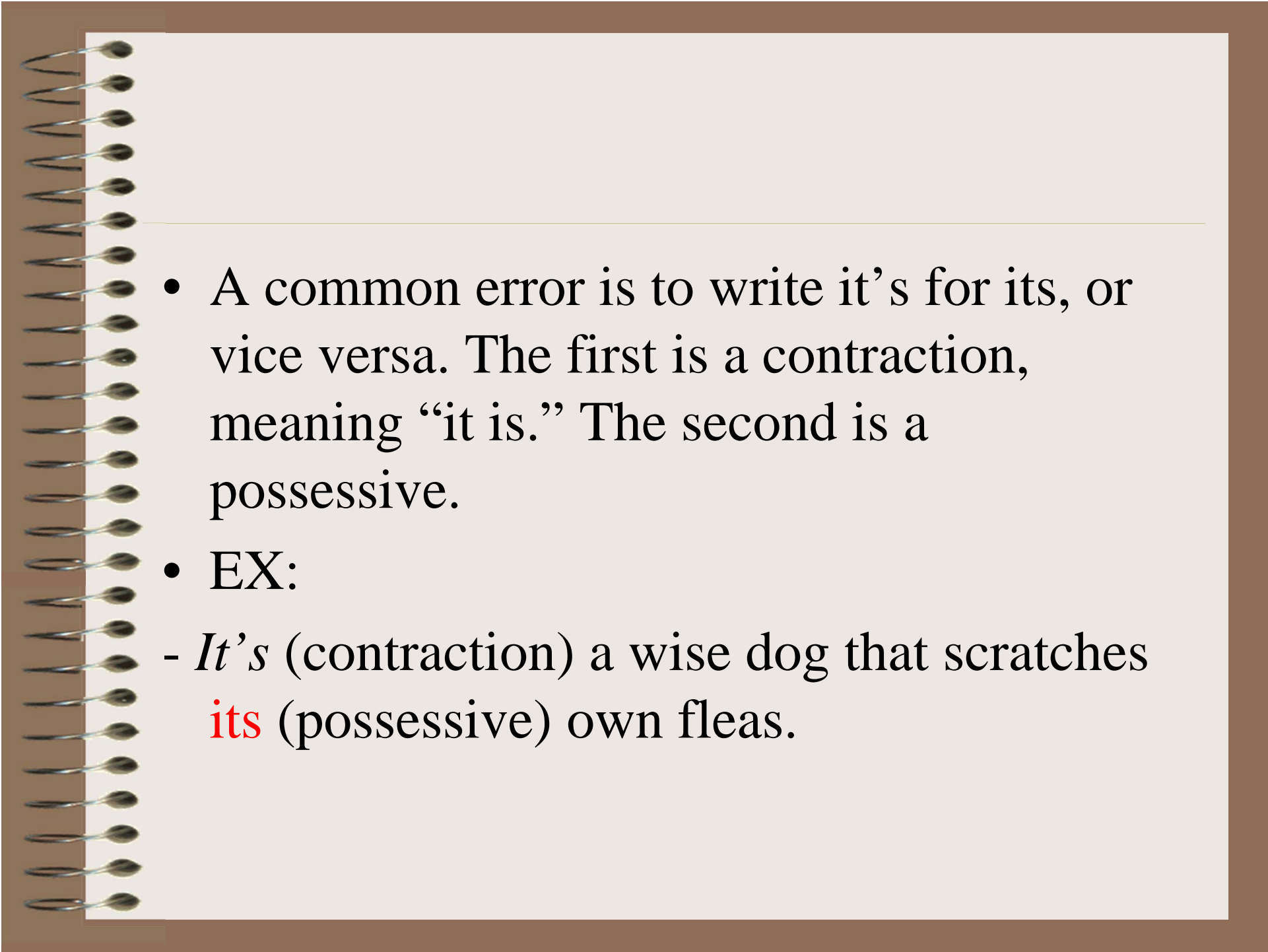


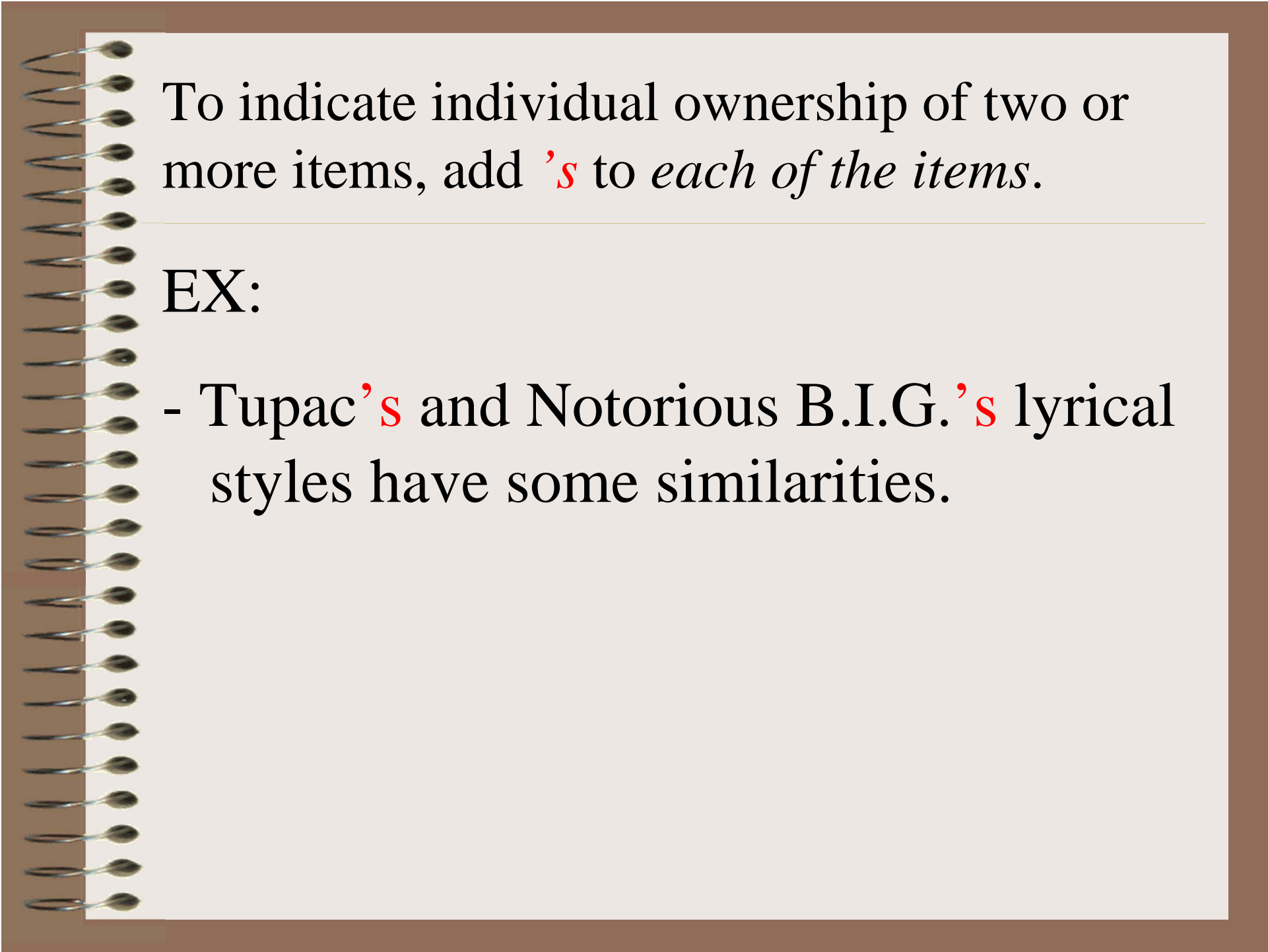
To form the possessive for regular *plural nouns* that end in *s* or *es*, add only the apostrophe

- EX:

The Graves' book collection consists mainly of works by Harlan Corben and Patricia Cromwell.

The Lopezes' three children are identical triplets.

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains a list of bullet points.
- A common error is to write it's for its, or vice versa. The first is a contraction, meaning "it is." The second is a possessive.
 - EX:
 - *It's* (contraction) a wise dog that scratches **its** (possessive) own fleas.

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The text is written on the page.

To indicate individual ownership of two or more items, add 's to *each of the items*.

EX:


- Tupac's and Notorious B.I.G.'s lyrical styles have some similarities.

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The text is written on the page.

To indicate *joint ownerships*, add 's only to the last item.

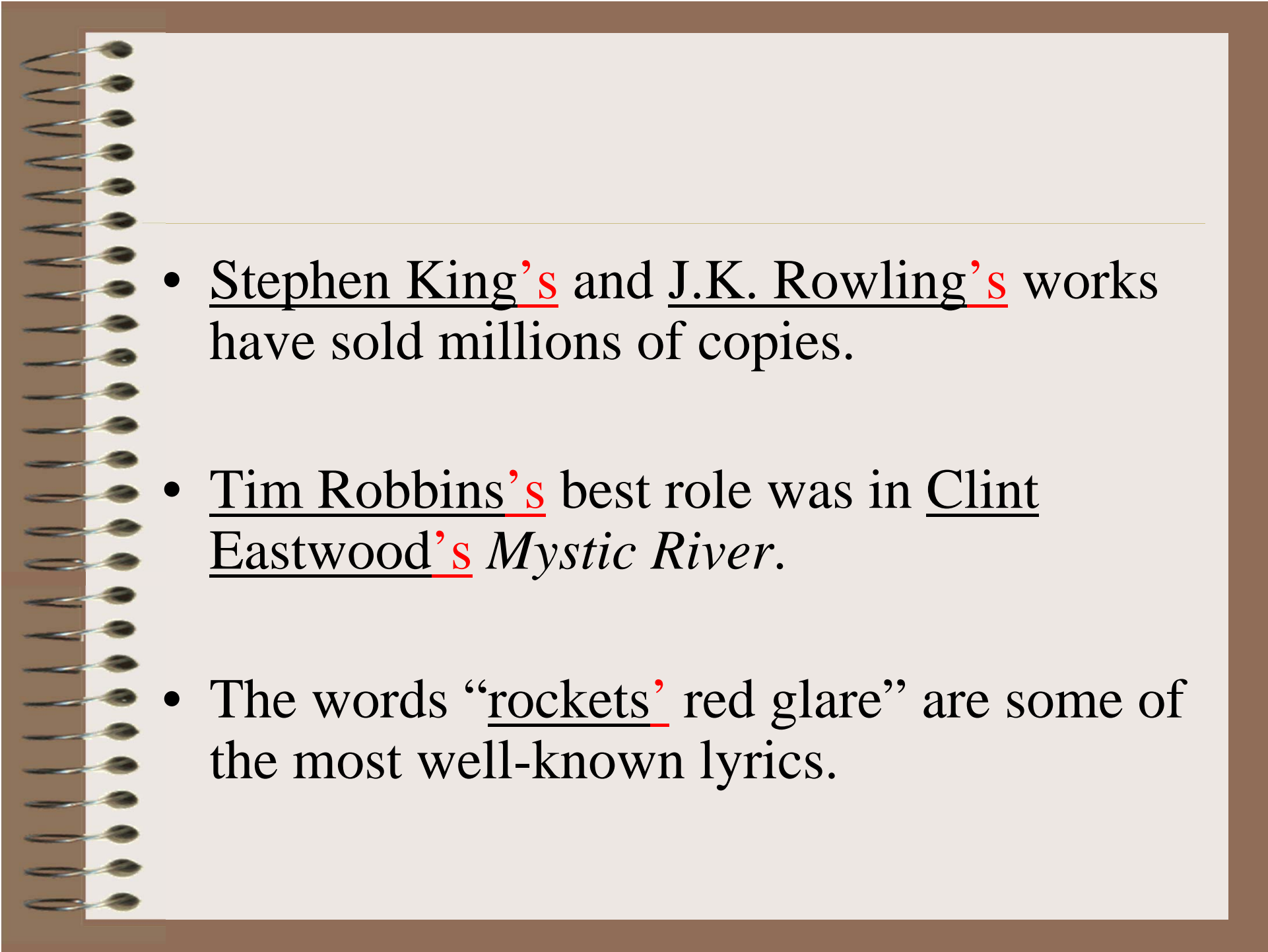
EX:

Britney Spears and her first husband's marriage lasted all of fourteen hours.



Practice- Copy these sentences down and place the apostrophe in the correct places for the underlined words:

- Stephen King and J.K. Rowling works have sold millions of copies.
- Tim Robbins best role was in Clint Eastwood *Mystic River*.
- The words “rockets red glare” are some of the most well-known lyrics.

- 
- Stephen King's and J.K. Rowling's works have sold millions of copies.
 - Tim Robbins's best role was in Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River*.
 - The words "rockets' red glare" are some of the most well-known lyrics.

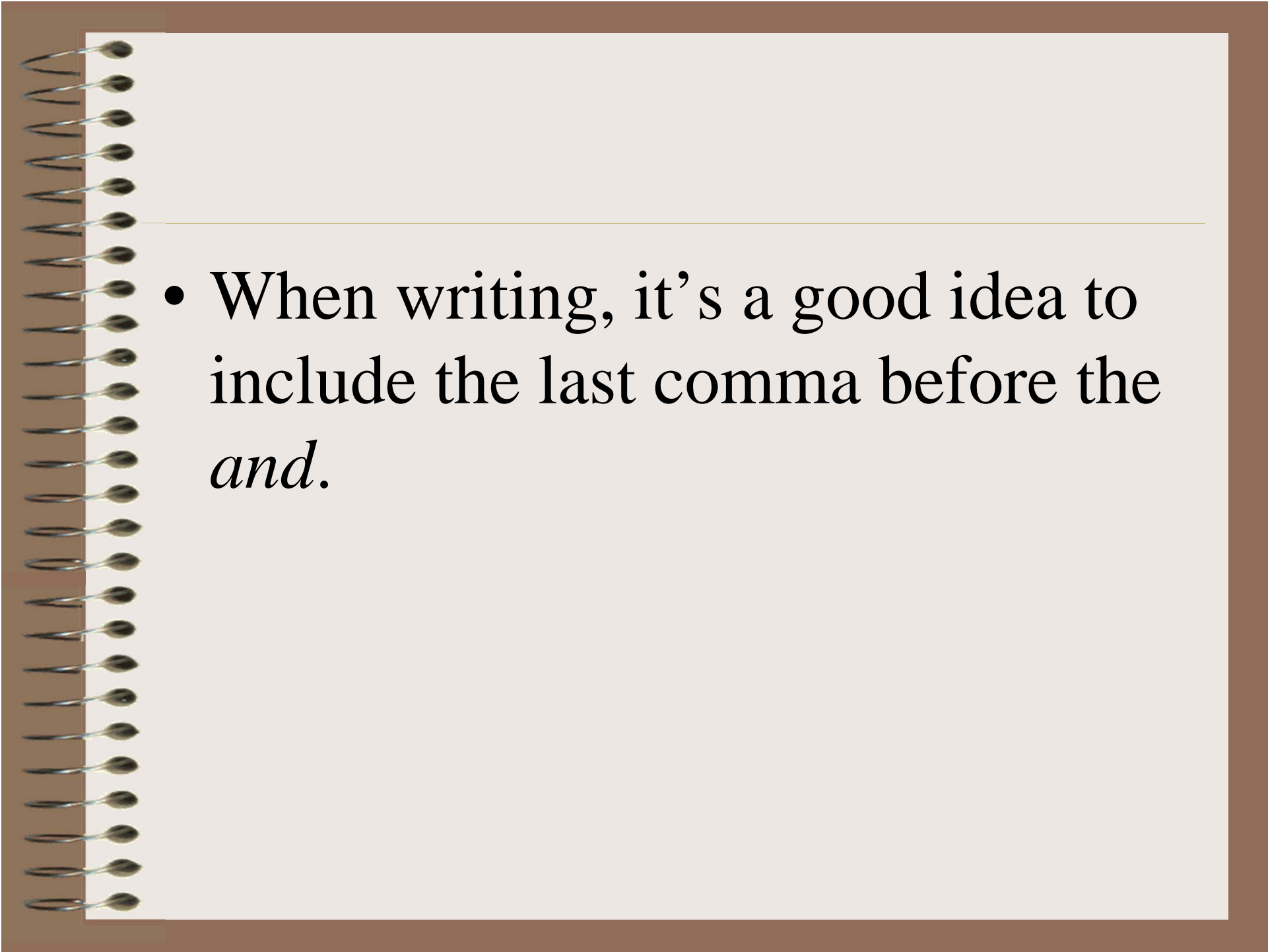
The Comma

- In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last.

- EX:

red, white, and blue

He opened the letter, read it, and made a note of its contents.


- 
- A spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page is mostly blank, with a single bullet point of text in the center.
- When writing, it's a good idea to include the last comma before the *and*.

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The text is written on the page.

Enclose parenthetical expressions
between commas


- EX:

The best way to see a country,
unless you are pressed for time, is
to travel on foot.




A name or title in direct address is
parenthetical.

- EX:
- If, Sir, you refuse, I cannot predict what will happen.
- Well, Susan, this is a fine mess you are in.




No comma, however, should separate a noun from a restrictive term of identification.

- EX:
- Billy the Kid
- The novelist Richard Matheson
- William the Conqueror
- The poet Blake



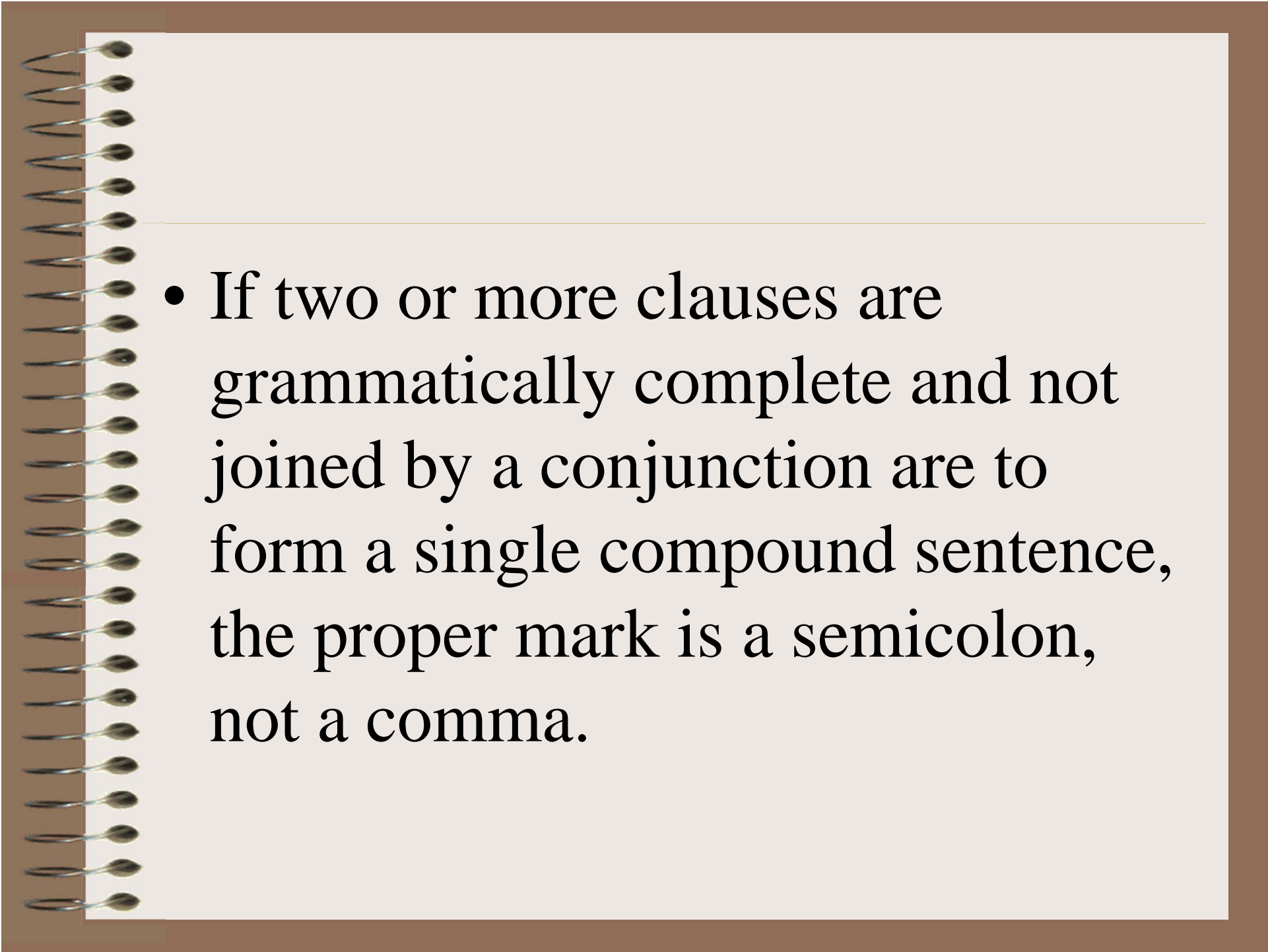
Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (and, or, for, nor, but, yet, so) introducing an independent clause.

- Mary counsels students, *and* she volunteers at the local hospital.
- John planned to invest his tax return, *but* he bought an X Box 360 instead.




Do not use commas before conjunctions that link phrases other than complete sentences.

- Mary counsels students and delivers meals to shut-ins.
- Two inches of snow and a glazing of ice covered the streets.

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains a single bullet point.
- If two or more clauses are grammatically complete and not joined by a conjunction are to form a single compound sentence, the proper mark is a semicolon, not a comma.


EX:

- Mary Shelley's works are entertaining; they are full of engaging ideas.
- It is nearly half past five; we cannot reach town before dark.

- 
- When the subject is the same for both clauses and is expressed only once, a comma is useful if the connective is *but*.
 - When the connective is *and*, the comma should be omitted if the relation between the two statements is close or immediate.

Ex:

- I have heard the arguments, *but* am still unconvinced.
- He has had several years' experience *and* is thoroughly competent.



Use a comma to separate adjectives modifying the same noun.

- EX:
- We felt the *salty, humid* air blowing into Kemah.
- Luis's date objected to the *powder blue, ruffled, jacketless* tuxedo he was planning to wear to prom.

Commas separate elements that introduce and modify sentences.

After looking at several Outkast CDs,
Whitney decided on *Stankonia*
believing it was better than
Speakerboxx/The Love Below.

During the day, Alex **prefers to play**
his 3 DS than attend classes.

Quotations

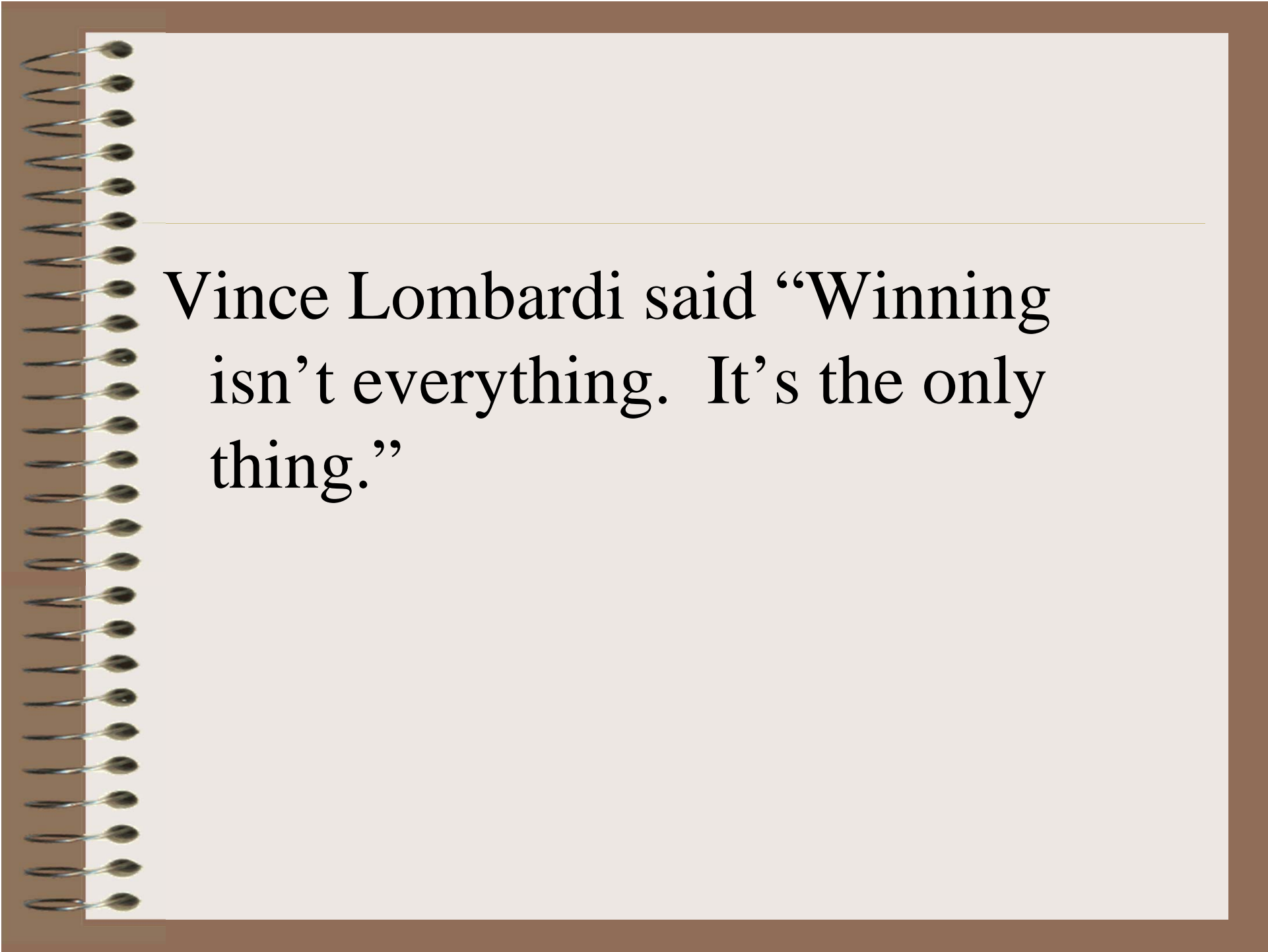
- In *Old School*, Frank (played by Will Ferrell) screams, “Blue, you’re my boy!” in memory of Joseph “Blue” Polaski.
- Use a comma when introducing quotes.

P.S.: Commas save lives

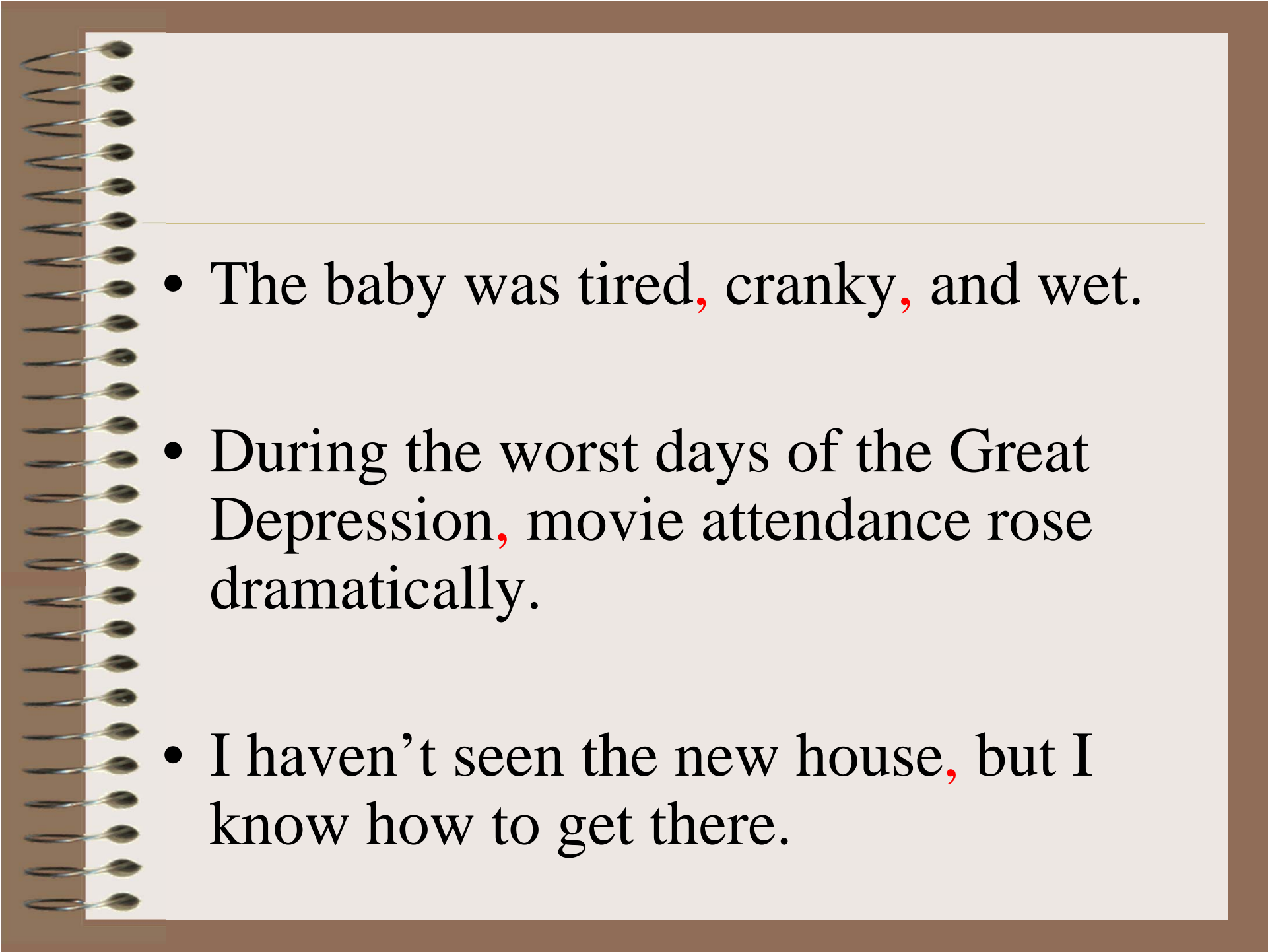
- Let's eat, Grandma.
- Let's eat Grandma.

Practice:

- The baby was tired cranky and wet.
- During the worst days of the Great Depression movie attendance rose dramatically.
- I haven't seen the new house but I know how to get there.

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The text is centered on the page.

Vince Lombardi said “Winning isn’t everything. It’s the only thing.”

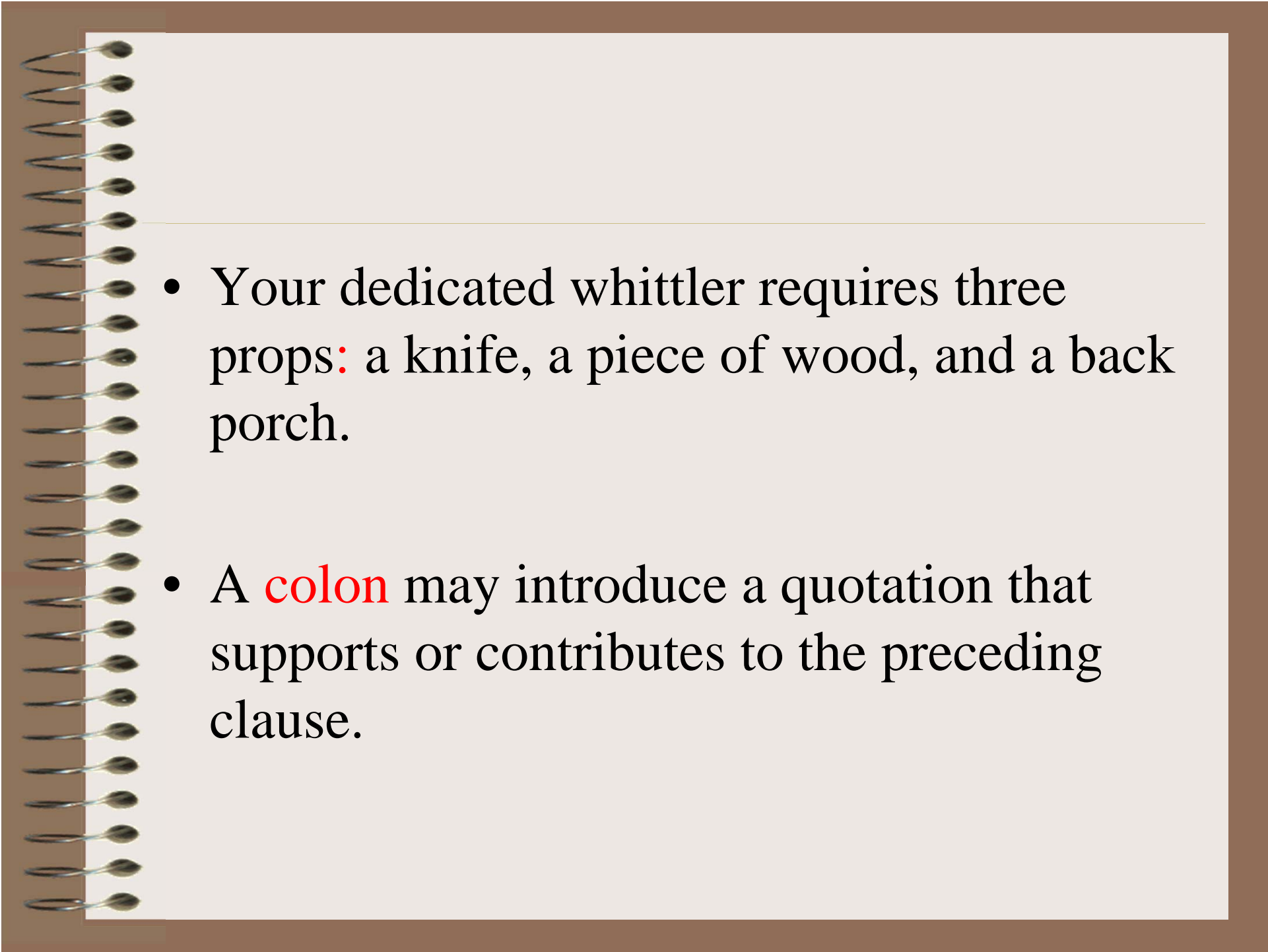
- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains three bullet points.
- The baby was tired, cranky, and wet.
 - During the worst days of the Great Depression, movie attendance rose dramatically.
 - I haven't seen the new house, but I know how to get there.

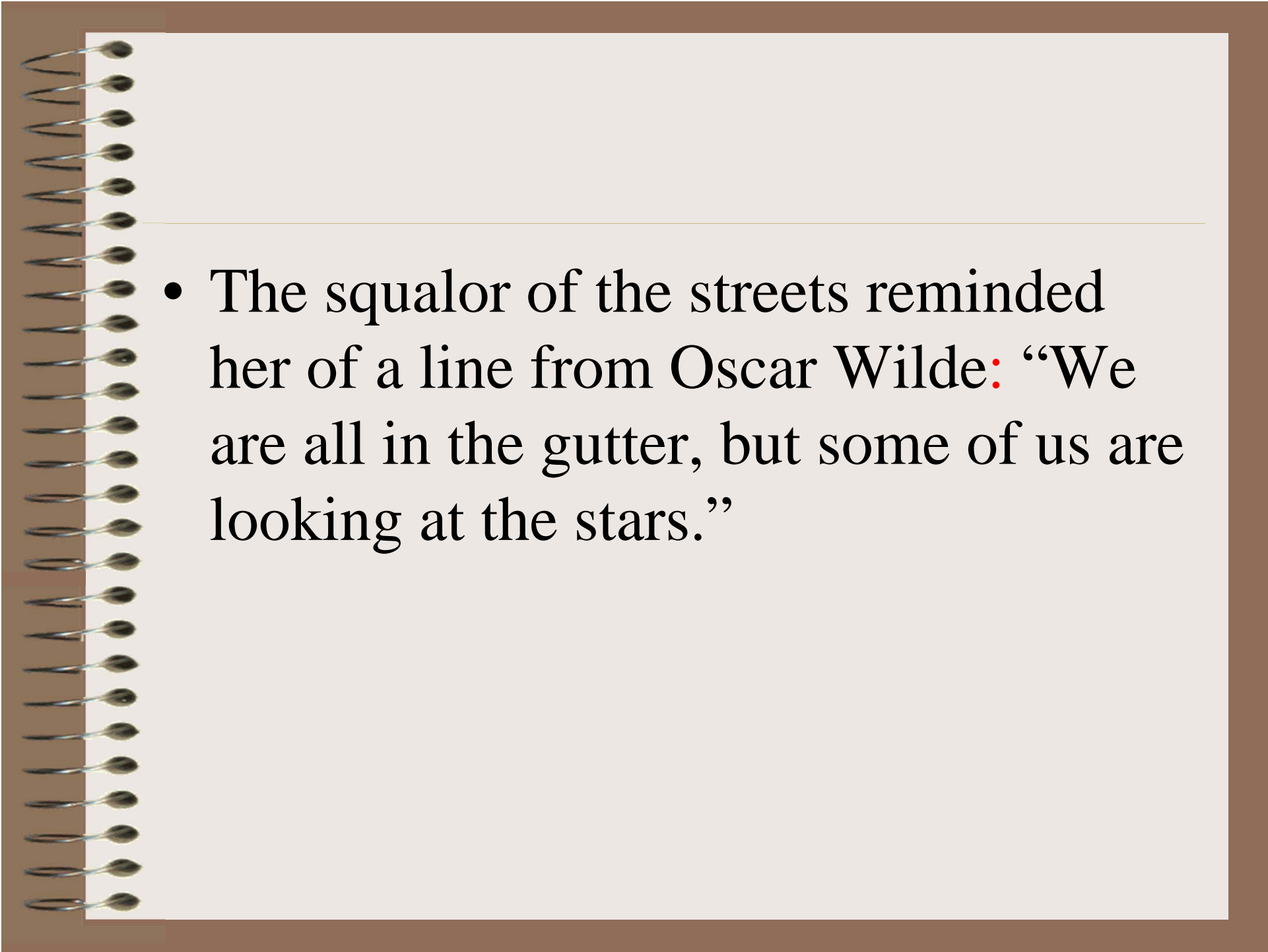


Vince Lombardi said, “Winning isn’t everything. It’s the only thing.”

Colon

- Use a **colon** after an independent clause to introduce a list of particulars, an appositive, an amplification, or an illustrative quotation.
- A **colon** tells the reader that what follows is closely related to the preceding clause.

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains two bullet points.
- Your dedicated whittler requires three props: a knife, a piece of wood, and a back porch.
 - A **colon** may introduce a quotation that supports or contributes to the preceding clause.

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains a single bullet point.
- The squalor of the streets reminded her of a line from Oscar Wilde: “We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.”

Dash

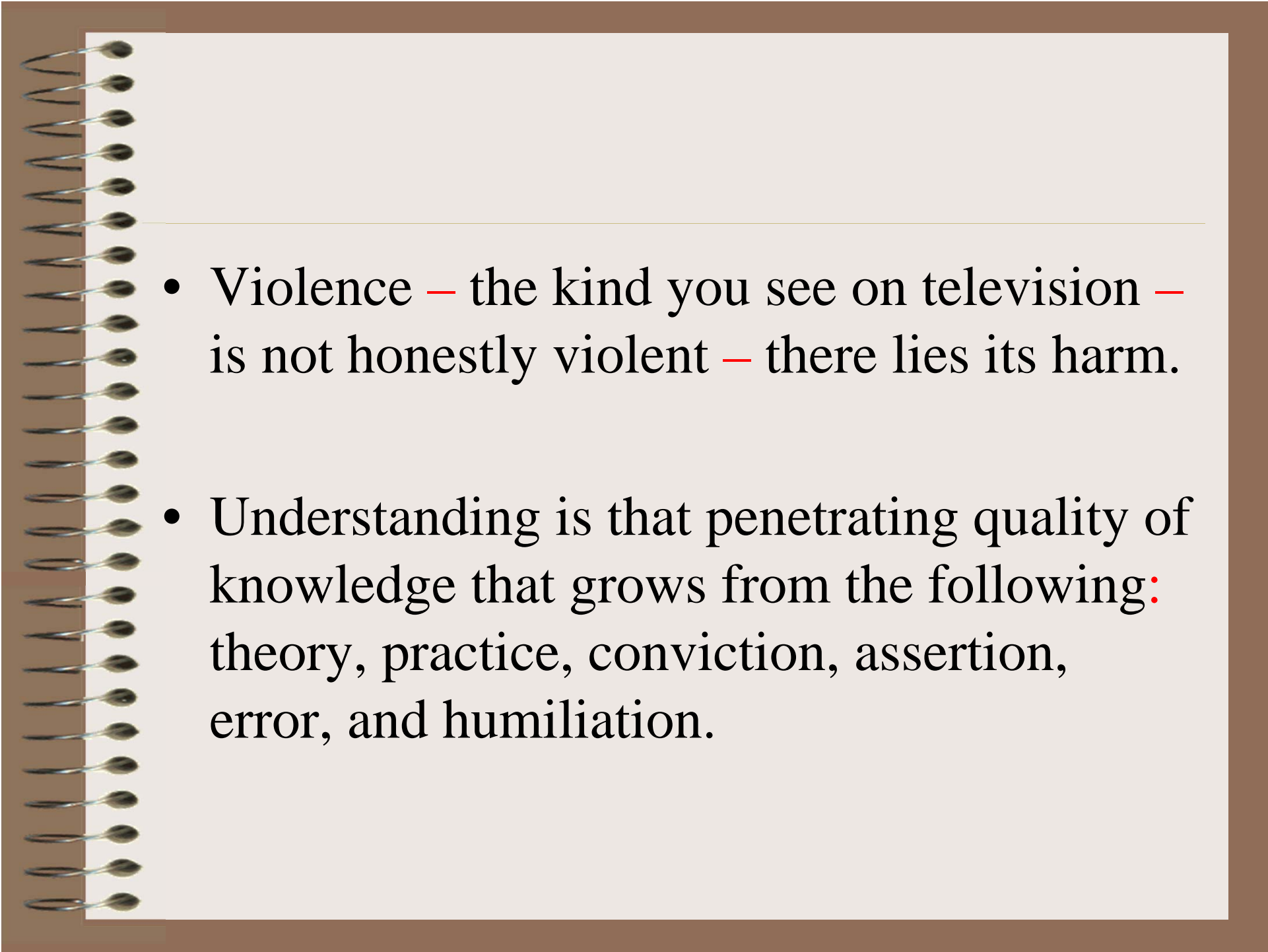
- Use a **dash** to set off an abrupt break or interruption and to announce a long appositive or a summary.
- EX:
- His first thought of getting out of bed— if he had any thought at all — was to get back in again.

Respect the dash!

—

Practice

- Violence the kind you see on television is not honestly violent there lies its harm.
- Understanding is that penetrating quality of knowledge that grows from the following theory, practice, conviction, assertion, error, and humiliation.

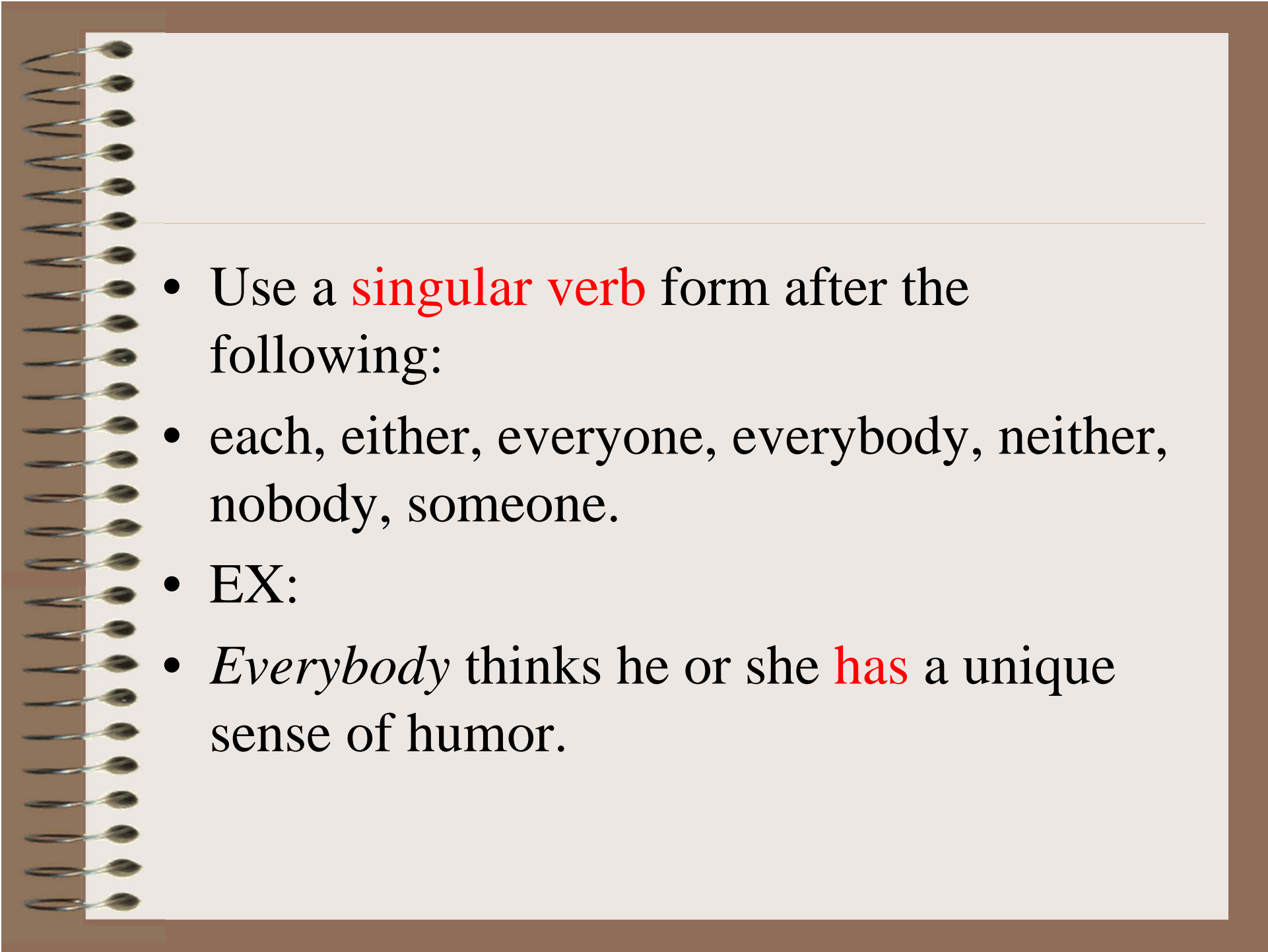
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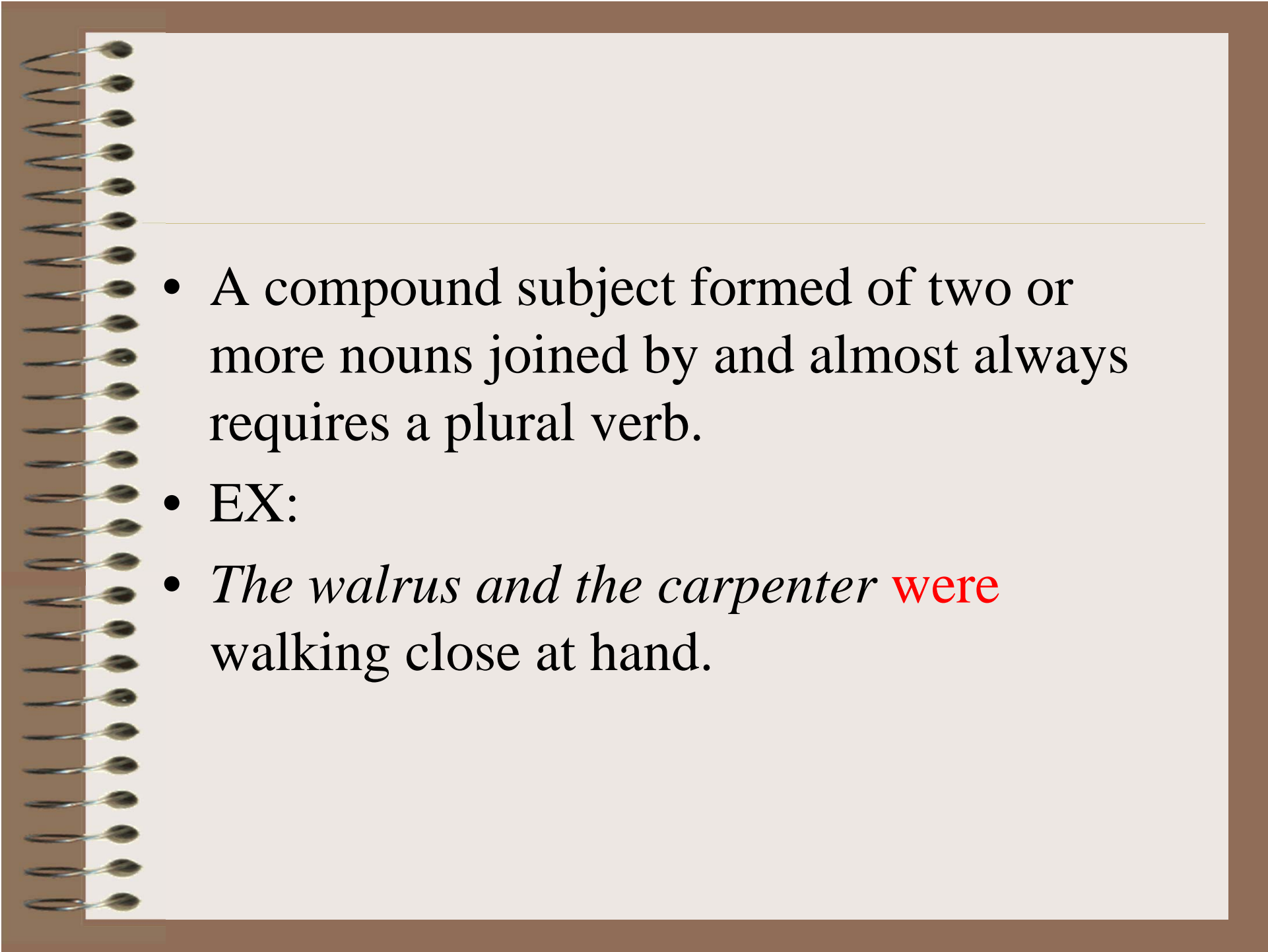
Subject-Verb Agreement

- The number of the subject determines the number of the verb.
- Words that intervene between subject and verb do not affect the number of the verb.

EX:

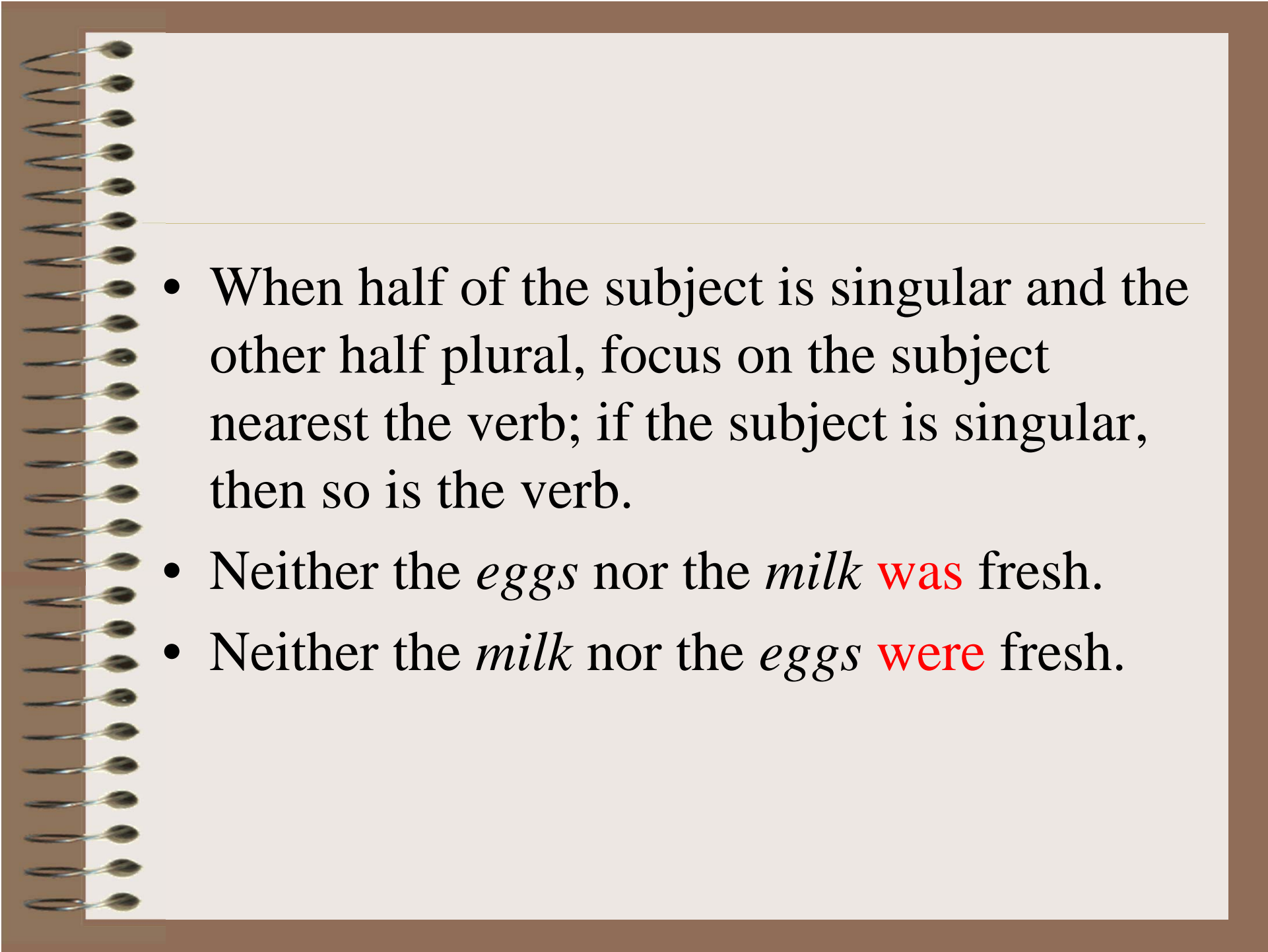
- *The bittersweet flavor of youth* – its trials, its joys, its adventures, its challenges – **is** not soon forgotten.

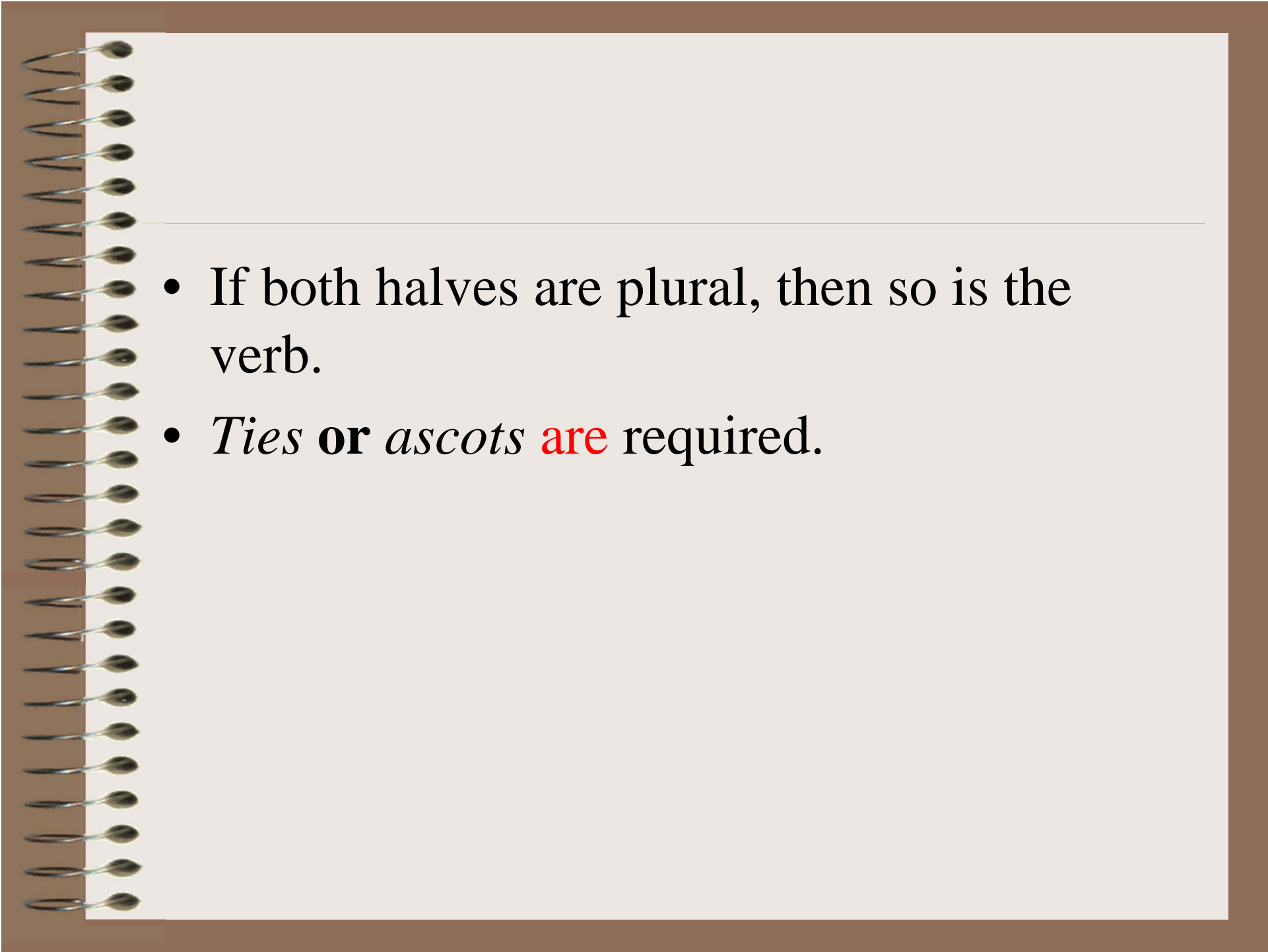
- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains a list of bullet points.
- Use a **singular verb** form after the following:
 - each, either, everyone, everybody, neither, nobody, someone.
 - EX:
 - *Everybody* thinks he or she **has** a unique sense of humor.

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains a list of three bullet points.
- A compound subject formed of two or more nouns joined by and almost always requires a plural verb.
 - EX:
 - *The walrus and the carpenter* were walking close at hand.

Split Decisions

- Or and nor
- When both halves of the subject is singular, so is the verb.
- Neither *alcohol* **nor** *tobacco* **is** allowed.
- *Milk* or *cream* **is** fine, thank you.

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains three bullet points.
- When half of the subject is singular and the other half plural, focus on the subject nearest the verb; if the subject is singular, then so is the verb.
 - Neither the *eggs* nor the *milk* **was** fresh.
 - Neither the *milk* nor the *eggs* **were** fresh.

- 
- A spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains two bullet points.
- If both halves are plural, then so is the verb.
 - *Ties or ascots* **are** required.

Use the proper case of pronoun

- The personal pronouns, as well as the pronoun **who**, change form as they function as subject or object.
- EX:
- *We* heavy eaters would rather walk than ride.
- The culprit, it turned out, was *he*.

That vs. Which


- If you can drop the clause and not lose the point of the sentence, use *which*. If you can't, use *that*.
- EX:
- Buster's bulldog, *which* had one white ear, won best in show.
- The dog *that* won best in show was Buster's bulldog.

Who vs. Whom

- Who does something (it's the subject, like he), and whom has something done to it (it's an object, like him).
- Try substituting he or him where who or whom should go: if he fits, you want *who*.


Dash vs. Hyphen

- The **dash** is used to separate ideas, whereas the **hyphen** is used to join words. Also, the hyphen is used to modify other words.
- Pantene uses a **built-in** conditioning system. (“built-in” modifies “conditioning;” hence, the hyphen)

- 
- My brother-in-law has red hair. (hyphen used to combine words)
 - My red-haired brother – the one who swore there was no woman for him – is getting married! I just pray that she is a strong-willed person.

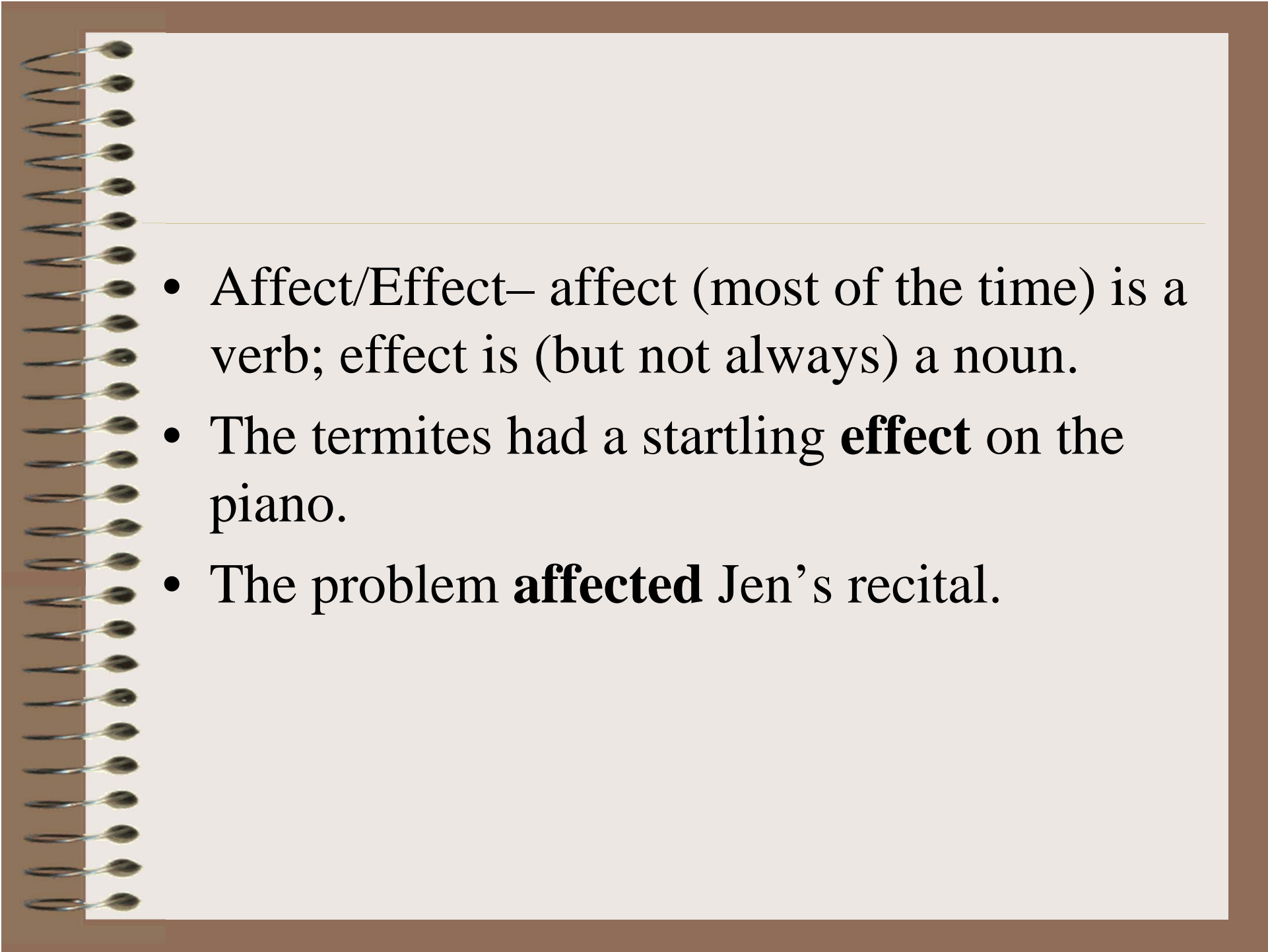
Italics vs. “Quotes”

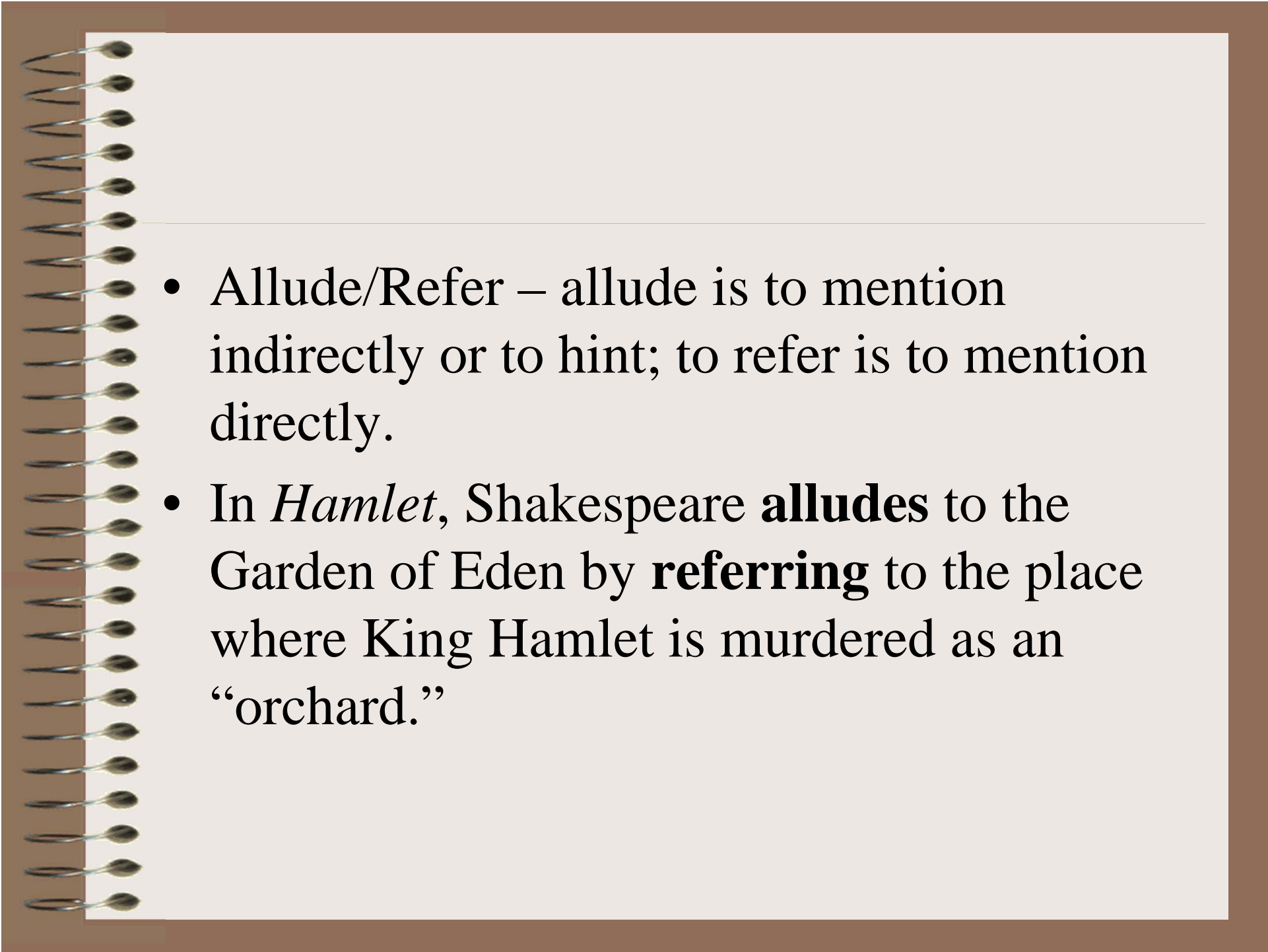
- Titles of novels, films, television shows, newspapers, video games, and paintings are all *italicized*.
- *Fight Club; Inception; Tangled; Scrubs; Psych; Time; Call of Duty: Black Ops.*

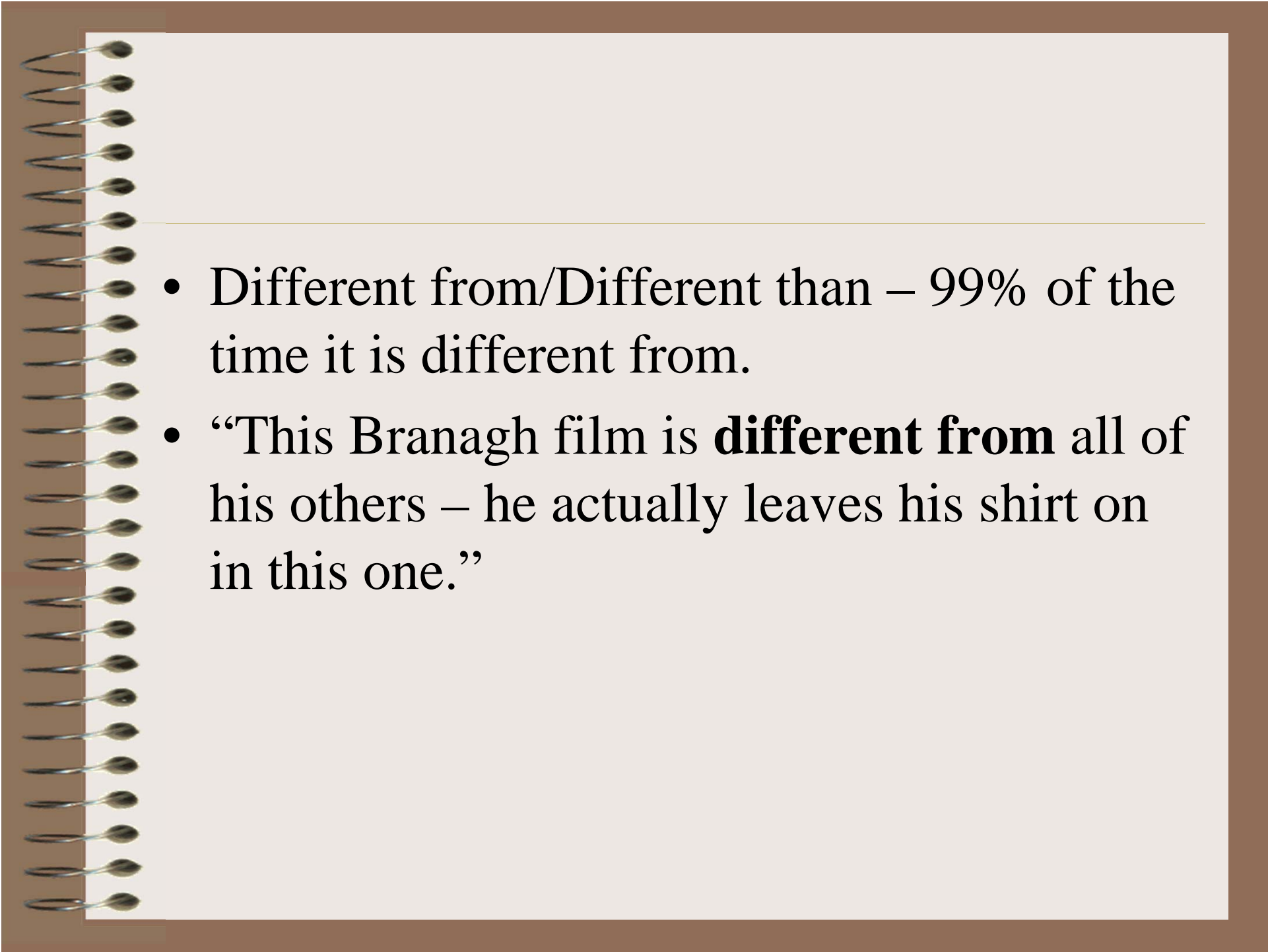
- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains two bullet points.
- Titles of poems, short stories, articles, and songs are all in “quotes.”
 - “Bad Romance,” “Repent, Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman,” “The Raven.”

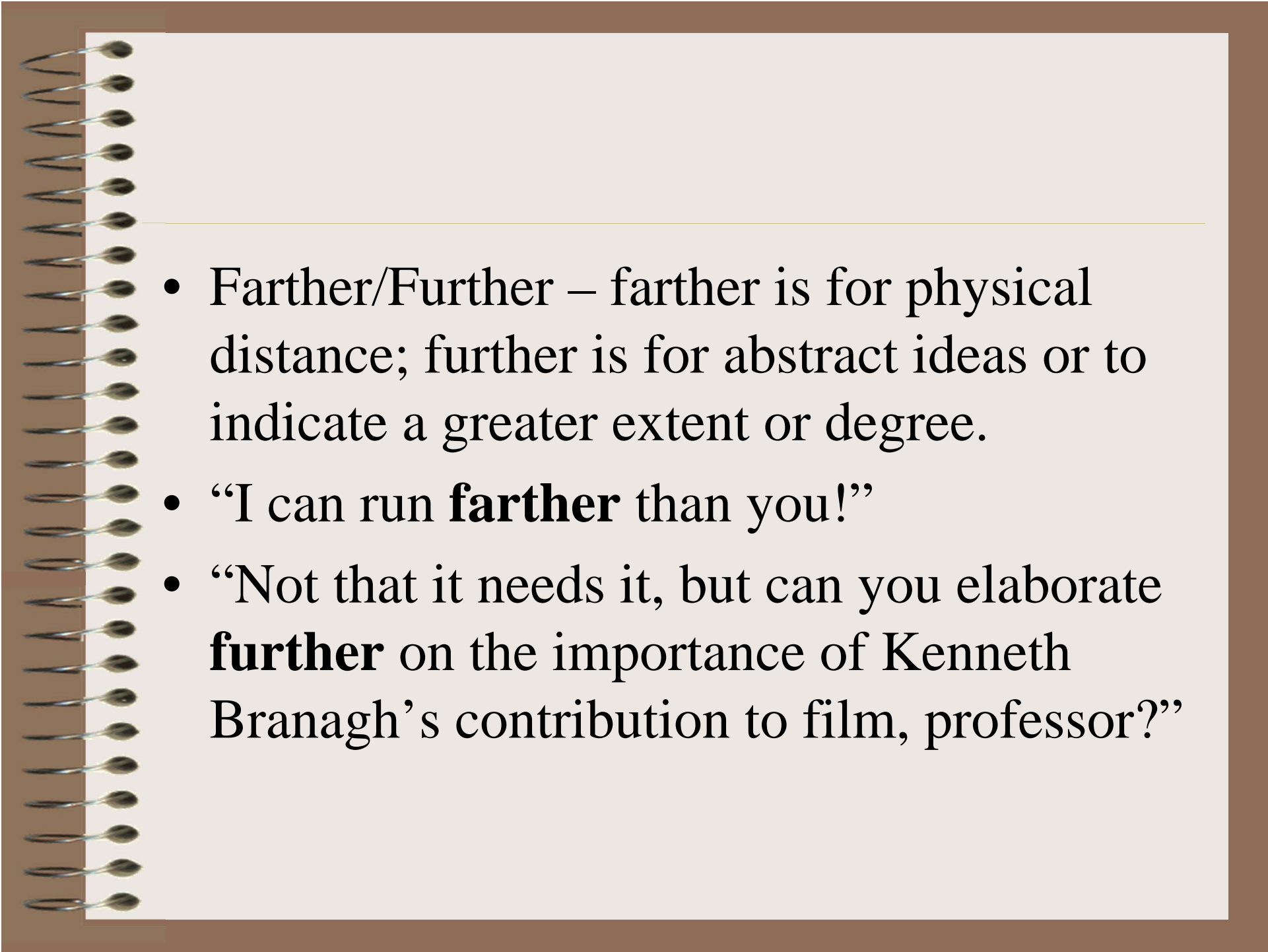
Words often confused

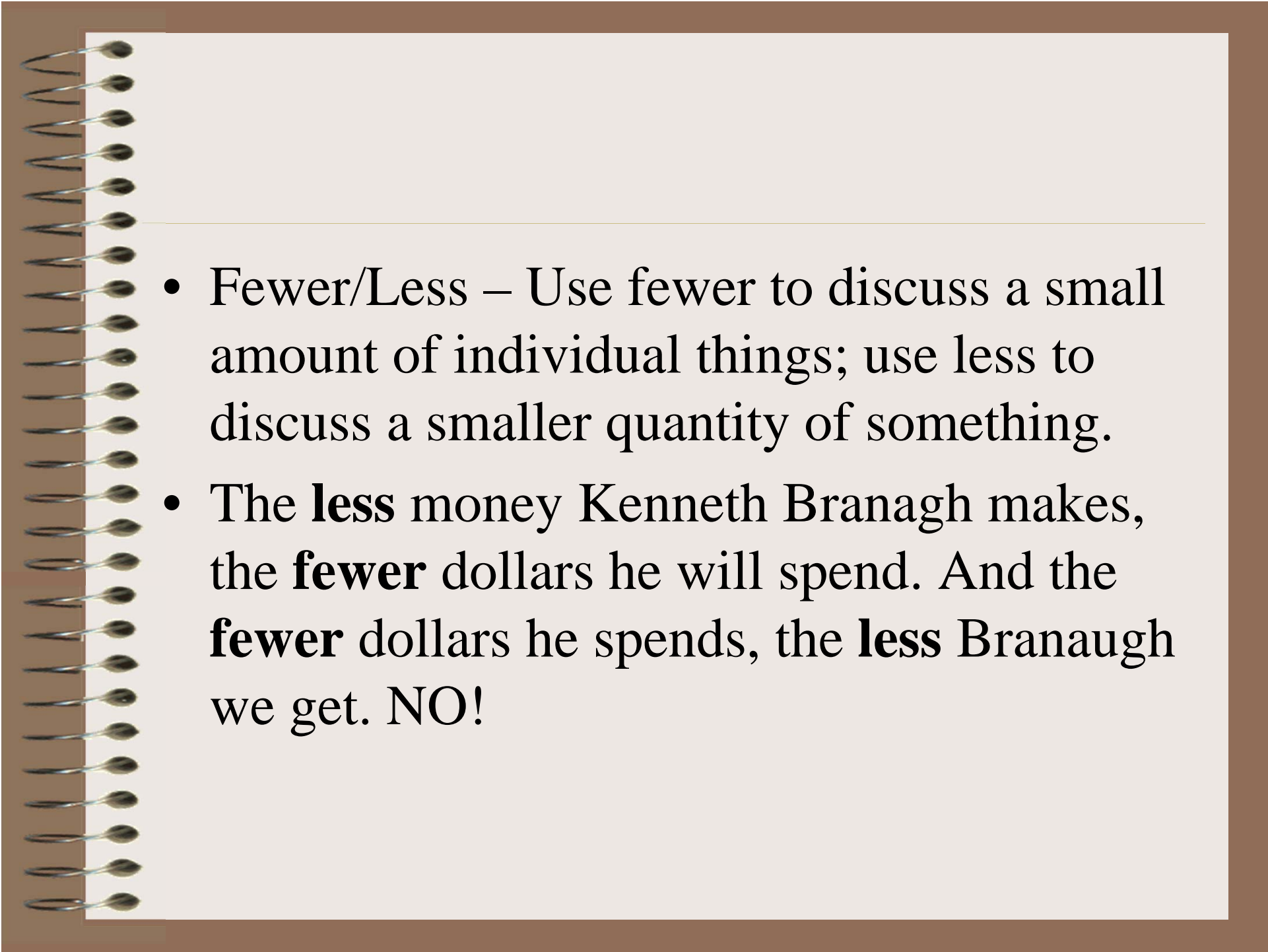
- Accept / Except – To **accept** something is to take it or agree to it; **except** generally means “other than.”
- I made a mistake, and fully **accept** the responsibility.
- I enjoy all of Kenneth Branagh’s movies **except** *Frankenstein*.

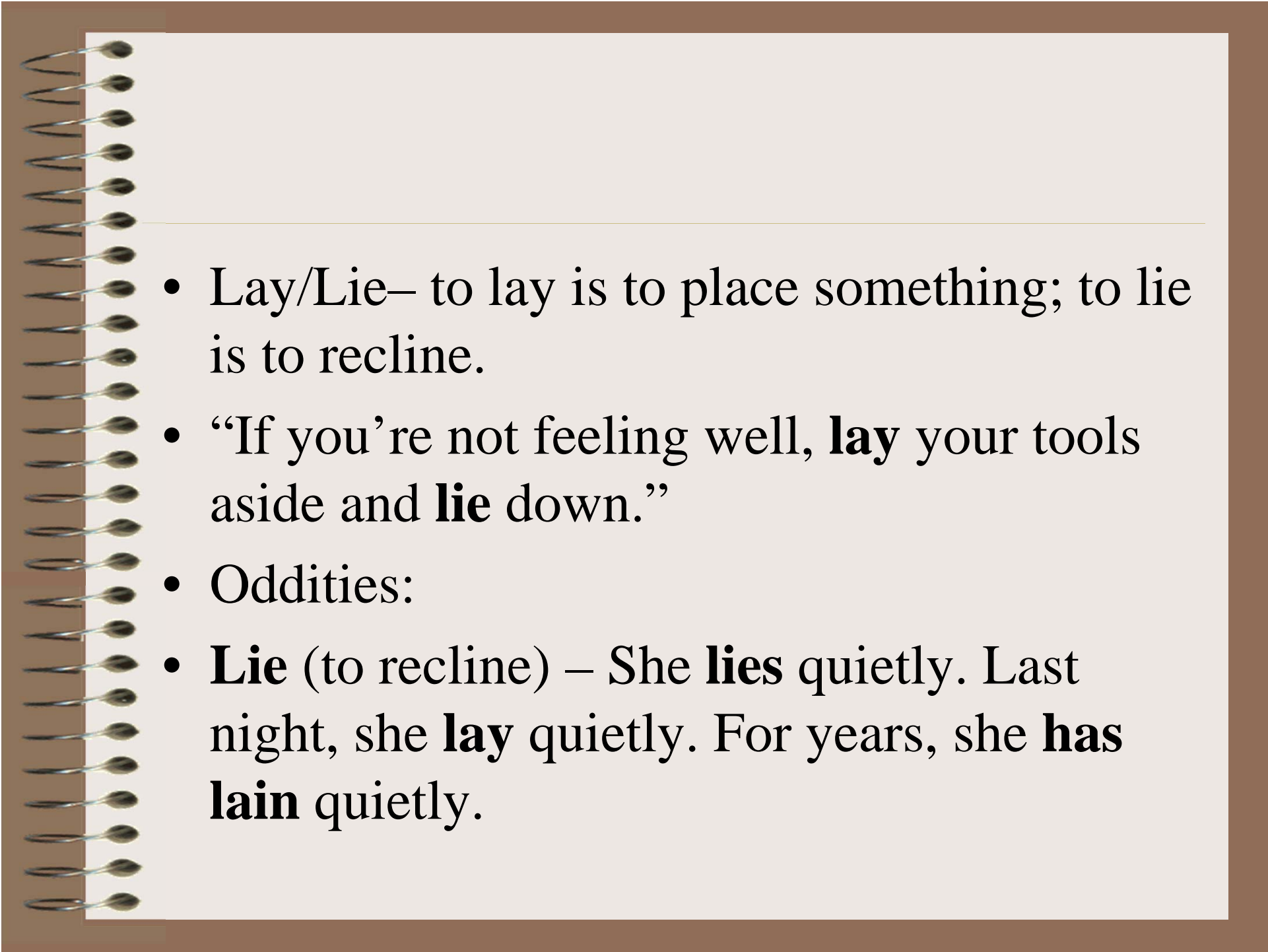
- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains three bullet points.
- Affect/Effect– affect (most of the time) is a verb; effect is (but not always) a noun.
 - The termites had a startling **effect** on the piano.
 - The problem **affected** Jen’s recital.


- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains two bullet points.
- Allude/Refer – allude is to mention indirectly or to hint; to refer is to mention directly.
 - In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare **alludes** to the Garden of Eden by **referring** to the place where King Hamlet is murdered as an “orchard.”

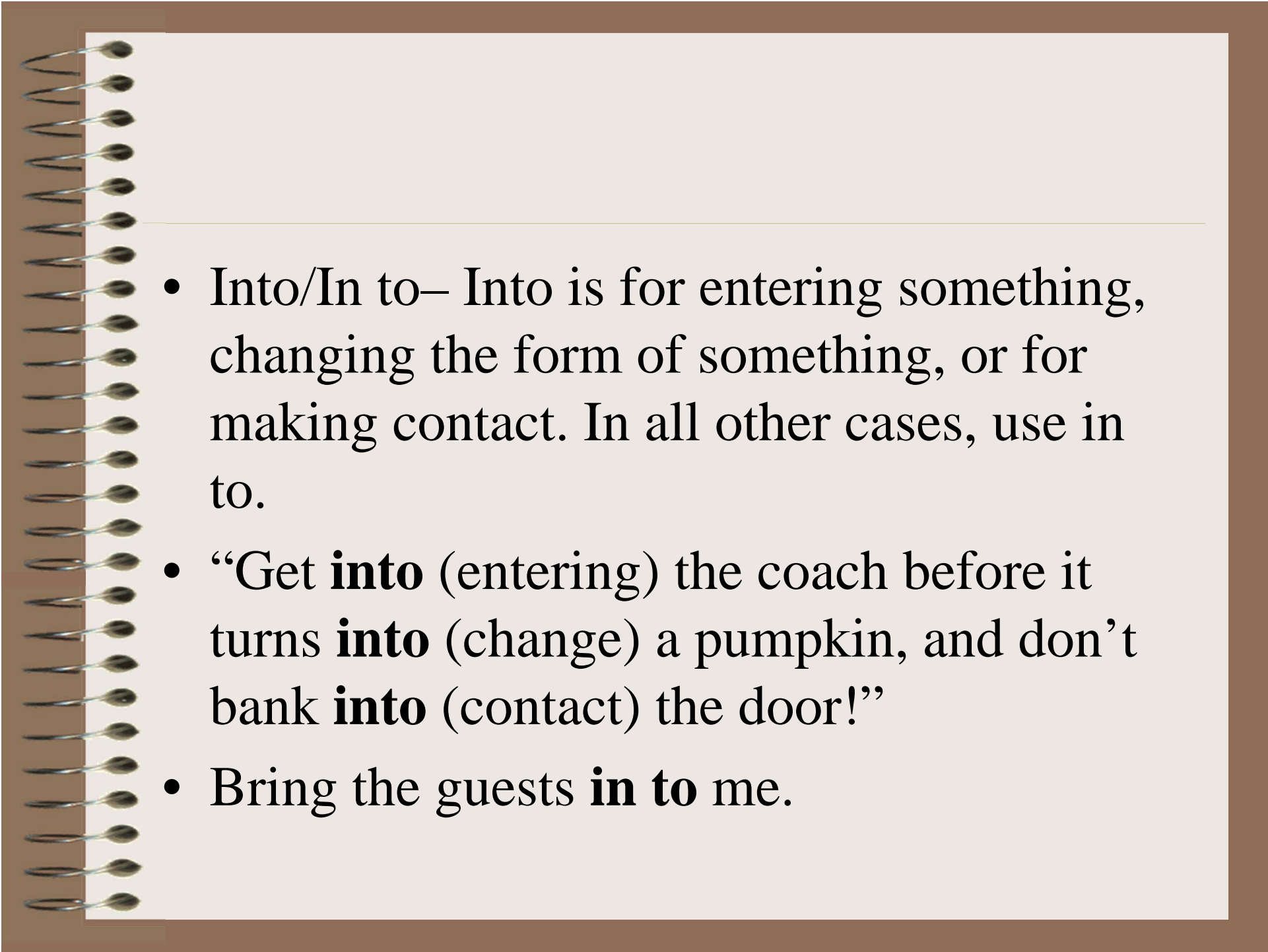
- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains two bullet points.
- Different from/Different than – 99% of the time it is different from.
 - “This Branagh film is **different from** all of his others – he actually leaves his shirt on in this one.”

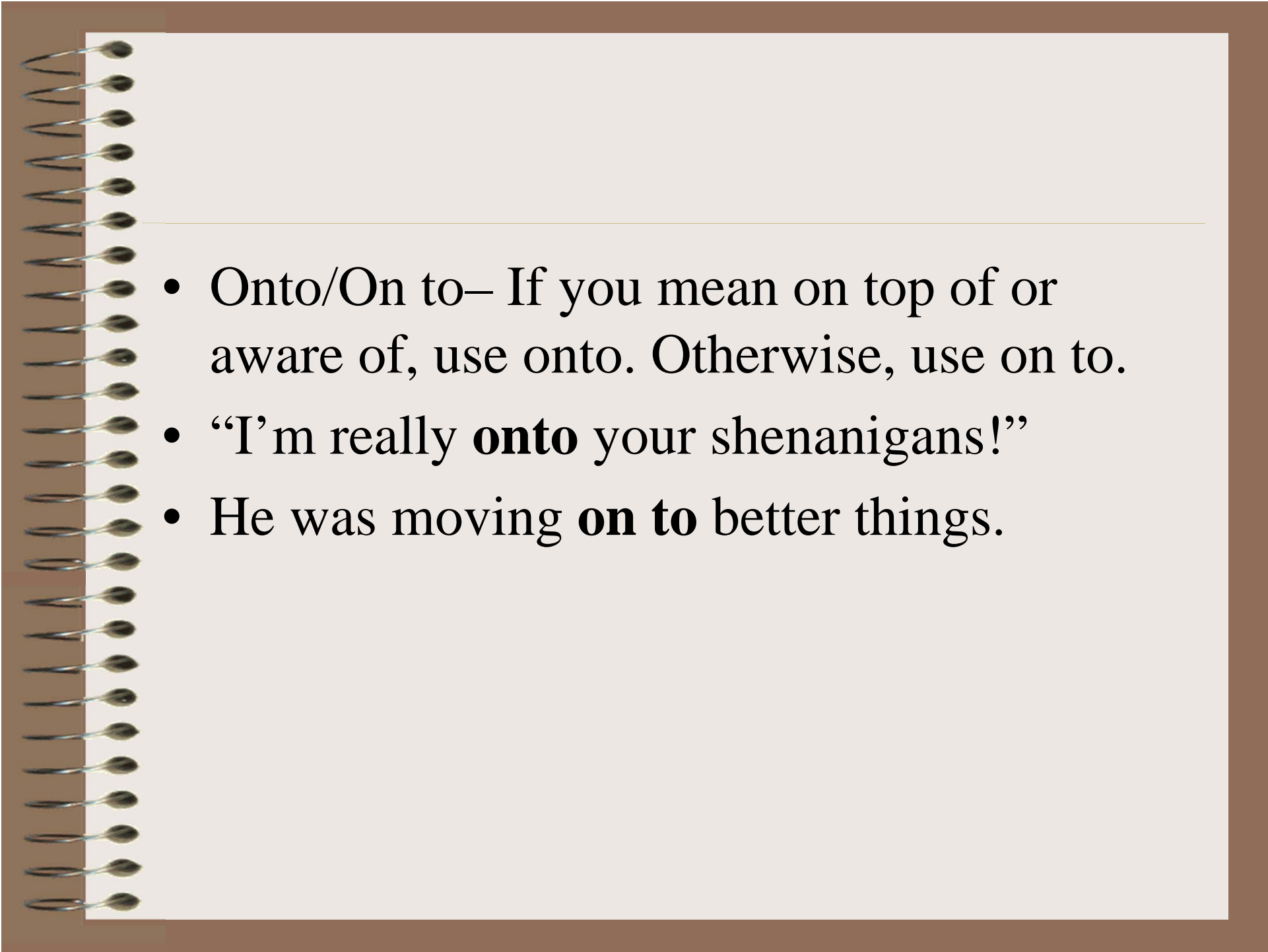
- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains a list of three bullet points.
- Farther/Further – farther is for physical distance; further is for abstract ideas or to indicate a greater extent or degree.
 - “I can run **farther** than you!”
 - “Not that it needs it, but can you elaborate **further** on the importance of Kenneth Branagh’s contribution to film, professor?”

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains two bullet points.
- Fewer/Less – Use fewer to discuss a small amount of individual things; use less to discuss a smaller quantity of something.
 - The **less** money Kenneth Branagh makes, the **fewer** dollars he will spend. And the **fewer** dollars he spends, the **less** Branaugh we get. NO!

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains a list of bullet points.
- Lay/Lie– to lay is to place something; to lie is to recline.
 - “If you’re not feeling well, **lay** your tools aside and **lie** down.”
 - Oddities:
 - **Lie** (to recline) – She **lies** quietly. Last night, she **lay** quietly. For years, she **has lain** quietly.

- 
- Lie (to fib)– He **lies**. Yesterday he **lied**.
Frequently he has **lied**.
 - Lay (to place)– She **lays** it there. Yesterday she **laid** it there. (When lay means “to place,” it’s always followed by an object, the thing being placed).

- 
- A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page contains three bullet points.
- Into/In to– Into is for entering something, changing the form of something, or for making contact. In all other cases, use in to.
 - “Get **into** (entering) the coach before it turns **into** (change) a pumpkin, and don’t bank **into** (contact) the door!”
 - Bring the guests **in to** me.

- 
- A spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a light beige page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page has a horizontal line near the top. Three bullet points are written on the page.
- **Onto/On to**– If you mean on top of or aware of, use **onto**. Otherwise, use **on to**.
 - “I’m really **onto** your shenanigans!”
 - He was moving **on to** better things.

Beware the Dangler!

- The dangler is a word or phrase that's in the wrong place at the wrong time, so it ends up describing the wrong thing.
- Born at the age of forty-three, the baby was a great comfort to Mrs. Smith.
- As the sentence is arranged, the baby – not the mother – is forty-three. (The phrase at the beginning is attached to the baby, so that's what it describes).

Correct or Incorrect?

- Tail wagging merrily, John took the dog for a walk.
- As a den mother, Mrs. Beck's station wagon was always full of Cub Scouts.

Correct versions

- Tail wagging merrily, the dog went for a walk with John.
- As a den mother, Mrs. Beck always had her station wagon full of Cub Scouts.