



## Ms. Particular Presents: Compose vs. Comprise

Celia M. Elliott  
Department of Physics  
University of Illinois



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From *Garner's Modern American Usage* (Bryan A. Garner, Oxford University Press, 2003, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.):

“Correct use of these words is simple, but increasingly rare. The parts *compose* the whole; the whole *comprises* the parts. The whole is *composed* of the parts; the parts are *comprised* in the whole.”

Well, maybe not *that* simple. Let's take a closer look...

## Here are the definitions:

***Comprise* means “to encompass” or “to contain”**

***Compose* means “to make up” or “to constitute”**

**We consider the general case of an interferometer comprising an arbitrary configuration of generic beam splitters...**

**Quasiblock copolymers are comprised of *AB* diblock copolymers and supramolecular *B* segments that can reversibly bond to any available *B* terminus...**

**Spectroscopic ellipsometry was used to study the dielectric function of  $\text{LiCuVO}_4$ , a compound comprised of chains of edge-sharing  $\text{CuO}_4$  plaquettes...**

Example 1 (PRL **105**, 013602 [2010]):

This example correctly uses “comprising”; one interferometer contains a number of beam splitters.

Example 2 (PRL **105**, 108301 [2010]) and Example 3 (PRL **103**, 187401 [2009]):

These examples incorrectly use “comprised.” The authors meant “composed of” (made up of). The tip-off is the “of”; “comprised of” is always incorrect. (And the MS grammar checker doesn’t know that.)

***Ms. Particular to the rescue!***

**“Comprised of” is always wrong. Always.**

**Substitute “composed of” everytime you see “comprised of,” or get rid of the “of” and make the word “comprising.”**

**Even better—replace “comprise” or “compose” with any of the dozens of other words that mean “made up of,” “include,” “incorporate,” or “constitute.”**

**Keeping “comprise” and “compose” straight just isn’t worth the effort.—*Ms. P.***