

## All Megablunders 14

Each of the following sentences is correct or contains a Megablunder. Possible Megablunders include ROS, FRAG, PAR, MM, DM, PR, AGREE, CASE. In the space to the left of the sentence, write either C for correct or the abbreviation for the Megablunder. For sentences containing an error, write a complete corrected version in the space below.

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CORRECTED VERSIONS ARE SUGGESTIONS ONLY; OTHER ANSWERS ARE POSSIBLE.

1.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Although there were parasites invading Robert's kidney, the doctor said that it didn't matter.

ERROR: PR

CORRECTED VERSION: The doctor said that the invasion of Robert's kidney by parasites didn't matter.

EXPLANATION: *The pronoun "it" cannot logically refer to "kidney"—a kidney definitely does matter. Nor can the pronoun correctly refer to the whole subordinate clause. As is often the case, the best solution is to rewrite the sentence without using the pronoun at all.*

2.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Schilling has pitched ineffectively out of the bullpen, in fact he gave up two home runs in his most recent appearance.

ERROR: ROS

CORRECTED VERSION: Schilling has pitched ineffectively out of the bullpen; in fact, he gave up two home runs in his most recent appearance.

EXPLANATION: *When a conjunctive adverb, such as "in fact," connects two main clauses, the first clause must end with a full stop.*

3.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: At Gettysburg, Lincoln promoted government of the people, by the people, and serving the people's best interests.

ERROR: PAR

CORRECTED VERSION: At Gettysburg, Lincoln promoted government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

EXPLANATION: *Lincoln understood that parallel structure was a powerful rhetorical tool. He would never have constructed a series, like the one in the original sentence, in which two prepositional phrases were followed by a participial phrase.*

4.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Following the coastline closely, U.S. Route 1 is certainly the most scenic road in California.

ERROR: NONE

5.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: The top scorers--Jared, Tyler, Zack, and me--received trophies and certificates.

ERROR: CASE

CORRECTED VERSION: The top scorers--Jared, Tyler, Zack, and I--received trophies and certificates.

EXPLANATION: *In the original sentence, pronoun "me" is the last in a series of appositives to the subject of the sentence, "scorers." Appositives to a subject must be in the subject form.*

6.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: When American readers, who had waited anxiously for weeks, swarmed the docks in anticipation of the latest installment of Dickens's current novel.

ERROR: FRAG

CORRECTED VERSION: American readers, who had waited anxiously for weeks, swarmed the docks in anticipation of the latest installment of Dickens's current novel.

EXPLANATION: *The original "sentence" consists of two subordinate clauses and no main clause. Removing the subordinating conjunction "when" transforms one of the subordinate clauses into a main clause.*

7.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Two bats inhabited the clock tower, which came out at night to hunt for insects.

ERROR: MM or PR

CORRECTED VERSION: Two bats, which came out at night to hunt for insects, inhabited the clock tower.

EXPLANATION: *Adjective clauses must immediately follow the noun that they modify. Here the adjective clause clearly modifies "bats" and is thus misplaced at the end of the original sentence. The case for calling the sentence a PR error is that pronoun "which" appears to refer to "tower" when it should properly refer to "bats."*

8.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: To insert a model ship into a bottle, the masts must be collapsed so that they lie flat on the deck.

ERROR: DM

CORRECTED VERSION: To insert a model ship into a bottle, one must collapse the masts so that they lie flat on the deck.

EXPLANATION: *Like other introductory verbals, an introductory infinitive modifier must express action that is performed by the subject of the main clause. In the original sentence, the masts do not insert a ship into a bottle, and in fact the do-er of the action does not appear at all.*

9.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Neither of the two kittens at the pet store were particularly friendly; Jeremy could understand, however, why young creatures in a crowded store might feel shy.

ERROR: AGREE

CORRECTED VERSION: Neither of the two kittens at the pet store was particularly friendly; Jeremy could understand, however, why young creatures in a crowded store might feel shy.

EXPLANATION: *In the first clause of the original sentence, the subject of the verb is the singular pronoun "neither." (The plural noun "kittens" is the object of the preposition "of," so it cannot also be the subject of a verb; remember that each noun in a sentence can do one and only one of the five noun jobs.) Since "neither" is singular, its verb must be "was," not "were."*

10.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Maggie asked Eliza if she should shut down the switchboard for the night.

ERROR: PR

CORRECTED VERSION: Maggie asked Eliza, "Should I shut down the switchboard for the night?"

EXPLANATION: *The pronoun in the original sentence could refer equally logically to "Maggie" or "Eliza." Recasting the end of the sentence as dialogue clarifies the reference. Of course the dialogue could just as well read, "Should you shut down the switchboard for the night?"*