

All Megablunders 11

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.

CORRECTED VERSIONS ARE SUGGESTIONS ONLY; OTHER ANSWERS ARE POSSIBLE.

1.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: A seal that when it saw us left the rock hurriedly with a loud slap of its tail.

ERROR: FRAG

CORRECTED VERSION: When it saw us, the seal left the rock hurriedly with a loud slap of its tail.

EXPLANATION: *The original sentence is actually a noun phrase in which the headword, "seal," is modified by an adjective clause. The corrected version makes the verb in the adjective clause into a main verb with "seal" as its subject.*

2.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Both by generous encouragement and occasional pointed criticism, the coach got the best out of his team.

ERROR: PAR

CORRECTED VERSION: Both by generous encouragement and by occasional pointed criticism, the coach got the best out of his team.

EXPLANATION: *The correlative conjunctions "both...and" require strict parallel structure. In this case, when "both" is followed by a prepositional phrase, "and" must also be followed by one; hence, the "by" must be repeated. We could also correct the original sentence by placing "both" after the initial "by" so that "both" and "and" would be followed by parallel noun phrases.*

3.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: The player who all the fans love best is free-swinging David Ortiz.

ERROR: CASE

CORRECTED VERSION: The player whom all the fans love best is free-swinging David Ortiz.

EXPLANATION: *In the original sentence, the pronoun "who" is the object in its clause. (The subject in the clause is "fans.") The pronoun must therefore take the object form, "whom."*

4.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: I learned that my car had been stolen because the police called me at three in the morning.

ERROR: MM

CORRECTED VERSION: Because the police called me at three in the morning, I learned that my car had been stolen.

EXPLANATION: *The order of clauses in the original sentence suggests an illogical cause-effect relationship: that the car was stolen because the police called. Moving the adverb clause to the beginning of the sentence produces a more logical order.*

5.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: An old-fashioned dress with its many buttons, hooks and bows were very time-consuming for a woman to put on.

ERROR: AGREE

CORRECTED VERSION: An old-fashioned dress with its many buttons, hooks and bows was very time-consuming for a woman to put on.

EXPLANATION: *The subject of the sentence is "dress," a singular noun. Therefore, the verb must also be singular--"was," not "were." The plural nouns in the intervening prepositional phrase do not affect this relationship.*

6.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Brecht proposes that what there is should be awarded to whoever will take the best care of it.

ERROR: NONE

7.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Squire Western drinks immoderately and throws greasy table scraps to his dogs, which causes his sister to denounce him as a "perfect boor."

ERROR: PR

CORRECTED VERSION: Squire Western drinks immoderately and throws greasy table scraps to his dogs--habits which cause his sister to denounce him as a "perfect boor."

EXPLANATION: *Pronoun "which" must refer to a specific noun, not to a whole clause or idea. Adding the summary noun "habits" provides "which" with a proper antecedent.*

8.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Snead needed only to make an 18-inch putt for the championship, however he pulled it wide left, lost a playoff, and finished second.

ERROR: ROS

CORRECTED VERSION: Snead needed only to make an 18-inch putt for the championship; however, he pulled it wide left, lost a playoff, and finished second.

EXPLANATION: *When a conjunctive adverb such as "however" appears between main clauses, it must be preceded by a full stop--ordinarily, a period or semi-colon.*

9.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Crusted with a dozen different shades of moss and lichens, we found the boulder remarkably beautiful.

ERROR: DM or MM

CORRECTED VERSION: Crusted with a dozen different shades of moss and lichens, the boulder struck us as remarkably beautiful.

EXPLANATION: *A verbal phrase at the beginning of a sentence must modify the subject of the main clause. The original sentence implies that "we," not the boulder, are crust with moss and lichens. Because the sentence does contain a word for the verbal to modify, we might equally well classify it as an MM and correct it by moving the phrase to a more accurate position: "We found the boulder, crusted with a dozen different shades of moss and lichens, remarkably beautiful."*

10.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: The stakes are much greater for she and I than for my brother.

ERROR: CASE

CORRECTED VERSION: The stakes are much greater for her and me than for my brother.

EXPLANATION: *The pronouns are objects of the preposition "for." Objects of verbs and prepositions must have the object form.*