

All Megablunders 2

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Each of the following sentences is correct or exemplifies a Mega-blunder. Possible Megablunders include ROS, FRAG, AGREE, PR, CASE, PAR, MM, DM. 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: Because Tom Wolfe invented a new kind of journalism that captured subjective elements missing from traditional newspaper stories.

ERROR: FRAG

CORRECTED VERSION: Tom Wolfe invented a new kind of journalism that captured subjective elements missing from traditional newspaper stories.

EXPLANATION: *The original sentence contains two subordinate clauses ("Because Tom Wolfe..." and "that captured subjective elements...") and no main clause. The easiest fix is to make the first of these into a main clause by removing the subordinating conjunction "Because." One could also add an entire main clause at the beginning or end of the sentence.*

2.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Both by assuming the points of view of his characters and an extravagant, almost hysterical prose style, Wolfe outraged many old-school journalists.

ERROR: PAR

CORRECTED VERSION: Both by assuming the points of view of his characters and by adopting an extravagant, almost hysterical prose style, Wolfe outraged many old-school journalists.

EXPLANATION: *The correlative conjunction "both...and" is a strong signal for parallel structure. If "both" is followed by a prepositional phrase, as it is in the original sentence, "and" cannot be followed by a noun phrase. To create parallelism, the corrected version balances "by assuming" with "by adopting."*

3.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: The White House even expressed its displeasure when Wolfe published a sharp critique of the *New Yorker* magazine, which was a sacred cow in intellectual circles.

ERROR: MM

CORRECTED VERSION: Even the White House expressed its displeasure when Wolfe published a sharp critique of the *New Yorker* magazine, which was a sacred cow in intellectual circles.

EXPLANATION: *"Even" expresses an element of surprise--not only the predictable X but even the unexpected Y--and must be placed before the most surprising word in the sentence. Here the point is that not only literary people but even political ones became involved in the controversy over Wolfe's article.*

4.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: He made fun of the *New Yorker's* obsessive fact-checking and also of its fanatical dedication to its own past--dedication that turned the magazine's offices into a kind of museum.

ERROR: NONE

5.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: A magazine that reverently preserves the doodles of long-dead contributors on its office walls are probably not operating on the cutting-edge of journalistic innovation.

ERROR: AGREE

CORRECTED VERSION: A magazine that reverently preserves the doodles of long-dead contributors on its office walls is probably not operating on the cutting-edge of journalistic innovation.

EXPLANATION: *The subject of the sentence is "magazine." The three plural nouns in the following adjective clause do not change the fact that the main verb must also be singular.*

6.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: A responsible writer must of course check facts carefully, but a legion of fact-checkers and copy editors are also capable of ruining a good story by squeezing the personal voice out of it.

ERROR: AGREE

CORRECTED VERSION: A responsible writer must of course check facts carefully, but a legion of fact-checkers and copy editors is also capable of ruining a good story by squeezing the personal voice out of it.

EXPLANATION: *The subject of the clause following "but" is "legion," a singular noun, so its verb must also be singular, "is" rather than "are."*

7.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Believing that a journalist should plunge into the liveliest experience of his time, drug experimentation in San Francisco became the subject of Wolfe's first full-length book, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*.

ERROR: DM

CORRECTED VERSION: Believing that a journalist should plunge into the liveliest experience of his time, Wolfe chose drug experimentation in San Francisco as the subject of his first full-length book, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*.

EXPLANATION: *The introductory participle "Believing" must modify the subject of the sentence.*

8.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Ken Kesey, the book's main character, tried to alert Middle America to the new consciousness that he believed LSD would produce by taking a cross-country trip in a bus painted with psychedelic colors.

ERROR: MM

CORRECTED VERSION: By taking a cross-country trip in a bus painted with psychedelic colors, Ken Kesey, the book's main character, tried to alert Middle America to the new consciousness that he believed LSD would produce.

EXPLANATION: *As originally written, the sentence suggests that LSD would produce a new consciousness by taking a cross-country bus trip. The prepositional phrase "by taking...colors" logically modifies the main verb "tried" and does so clearly when moved to the beginning of the sentence.*

9.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: One of the funniest scenes in the book occurs when the Hell's Angels come to visit Kesey's Merry Pranksters, the consciousness of the Angels is a little newer than the Pranksters bargained for.

ERROR: ROS

CORRECTED VERSION: One of the funniest scenes in the book occurs when the Hell's Angels come to visit Kesey's Merry Pranksters: the consciousness of the Angels is a little newer than the Pranksters bargained for.

EXPLANATION: *The original sentence contains two main clauses with only a comma between them. Raising the comma to a period or semi-colon would correct the error, but here a colon more accurately reflects the relationship between the two clauses: the second clause explains the first.*

10.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Acid Test brilliantly captures all the excesses of a culture beginning to come apart at the seams; this makes it one of the best introductions for anyone who wishes to understand the 1960s.

ERROR: PR

CORRECTED VERSION: Its brilliant portrayal of all the excesses of a culture beginning to come apart at the seams makes Acid Test one of the best introductions for anyone who wishes to understand the 1960s.

EXPLANATION: *Demonstrative pronoun "this" refers not to a single noun but to the entire first clause. The corrected version not only eliminates the bad pronoun but also strengthens the unity of the sentence by reducing it to a single main clause.*