

All Megablunders 13

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: The cove ended in a tidal pond, which had once been dammed to power a mill wheel.

ERROR: NONE

2.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Frosty in the early morning when the first rays of the sun had barely cleared the second-growth pines to the east.

ERROR: FRAG

CORRECTED VERSION: The lawn was frosty in the early morning when the first rays of the sun had barely cleared the second-growth pines to the east.

EXPLANATION: *The original sentence is actually an adjective phrase. The corrected version completes the sentence by adding a subject and a linking verb.*

3.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: The equipment truck, with all the uniforms, cleats, bats, and balls, and even the supplies of gum and chewing tobacco, were lost in the wilds of southern New Jersey for eighteen hours.

ERROR: AGREE

CORRECTED VERSION: The equipment truck, with all the uniforms, cleats, bats, and balls, and even the supplies of gum and chewing tobacco, was lost in the wilds of southern New Jersey for eighteen hours.

EXPLANATION: *The sentence contains many plural nouns. However, the one with which the main verb must agree is the subject, "truck," a singular.*

4.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: The inheritance means less to me than my sister.

ERROR: PAR

CORRECTED VERSION: The inheritance means less to me than to my sister.

EXPLANATION: *In the original sentence, the point is ambiguous: is the writer comparing what the inheritance means to him with what it means to his sister? is he comparing what the inheritance means to him with what his sister means to him? Adding a second "to" strengthens the parallelism and removes the ambiguity. We could express the other possible meaning clearly by writing, "The inheritance means less to me than my sister does"--implying, perhaps, that in order to avoid alienating my sister, I will refrain from contesting the will.*

5.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Because of the resistance put up by Jim and I, the authorities have agreed to reconsider the question.

ERROR: CASE

CORRECTED VERSION: Because of the resistance put up by Jim and me, the authorities have agreed to reconsider the question.

EXPLANATION: *A pronoun that is the object of a preposition ("by") must be in the object form ("me," not "I").*

6.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Henri remembered how much he loved Madeleine as he leafed through the photo album.

ERROR: MM

CORRECTED VERSION: As he leafed through the photo album, Henri remembered how much he loved Madeleine.

EXPLANATION: *The adverb clause that ends the original sentence appears to modify "loved" but more logically modifies "remembered." In general, adverb clauses that modify the main verb work best at beginning of the sentence.*

7.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: By dredging the beds with giant scoops, the local oyster population was brought to the verge of extinction.

ERROR: DM

CORRECTED VERSION: By dredging the beds with giant scoops, fishermen brought the local oyster population to the verge of extinction.

EXPLANATION: *The do-er of the action in an introductory verbal phrase must be the same as the subject of main clause. This principle extends to introductory prepositional phrases in which the object of the preposition is a gerund, as here. In the corrected version, the subject of the main clause identifies those who did the dredging.*

8.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: To err is human, however, a little practice will permit one to avoid most Megablunders.

ERROR: ROS

CORRECTED VERSION: To err is human; however, a little practice will permit one to avoid most Megablunders.

EXPLANATION: *When two main clauses are joined by a conjunctive adverb, such as "however," the first clause must end in a full stop.*

9.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: We spent a month completing a 5000-piece jigsaw puzzle on the dining room table, which annoyed my grandmother considerably.

ERROR: PR

CORRECTED VERSION: By spending a month completing a 5000-piece jigsaw puzzle on the dining room table, we annoyed my grandmother considerably.

EXPLANATION: *In the original sentence, pronoun "which" refers to the entire main clause. The corrected version eliminates the PR problem by eliminating the pronoun.*

10.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Driving cars that get 15 miles per gallon is a good idea neither for ourselves nor future generations.

ERROR: PAR

CORRECTED VERSION: Driving cars that get 15 miles per gallon is a good idea neither for ourselves nor for future generations.

EXPLANATION: *The correlative conjunctions "neither...nor" require accurate parallel structure. Since "neither" is followed by a prepositional phrase, "nor" must also be followed by one, even when the same preposition must be repeated.*