

All Megablunders 7

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Each of the following sentences is correct or exemplifies a Megablunder. 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: Harry decided that either we would go to the picnic in one car or drive in separate cars.

ERROR: PAR

CORRECTED VERSION: Harry decided that we would either go to the picnic in one car or drive in separate cars.

EXPLANATION: *The correlative conjunctions "either...or" require parallel structure. In the original sentence, a complete clause follows "either" but a verb phrase follows "or." The corrected version moves "either" so that it, too, is followed by a verb phrase.*

2.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: When the wind comes over the mountain, causing snow to fly into hikers' eyes and freezing their hair.

ERROR: FRAG

CORRECTED VERSION: The wind comes over the mountain, causing snow to fly into hikers' eyes and freezing their hair.

EXPLANATION: *The original sentence has a subordinate clause and a participial phrase but no main clause. The easiest solution is to remove the subordinating conjunction "When," transforming the subordinate clause into a main clause. Alternatively, you could add a complete main clause to the given sentence.*

3.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Roberta outlined her paper carefully, wrote a decent first draft, and took all suggestions into consideration when she produced her final draft, which made her essay a success.

ERROR: PR

CORRECTED VERSION: Roberta's methodical process--outlining her paper carefully, writing a decent first draft, and taking all suggestions into consideration when she produced her final draft-- made her essay a success.

EXPLANATION: *The writer of the original sentence has used the relative pronoun "which" to refer to an entire clause with three separate predicates. The corrected version eliminates the pronoun altogether by making a precise noun phrase ("Roberta's methodical process") the subject of the sentence.*

4.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Herman, along with his family, go to the same restaurant every Saturday; their status as "regulars" has earned them a coveted corner table in the Rainforest Room.

ERROR: AGREE

CORRECTED VERSION: Herman, along with his family, goes to the same restaurant every Saturday; their status as "regulars" has earned them a coveted corner table in the Rainforest Room.

EXPLANATION: *The subject of the first main clause is "Herman"--a singular noun; hence, the verb must also be singular. The intervening prepositional phrase ("along with his family") does not affect the relationship between subject and verb.*

5.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Coach Stevens gave a great halftime speech to the team, despite his enthusiasm, the players got pasted by the opposition, 55 – 3.

ERROR: ROS

CORRECTED VERSION: Coach Stevens gave a great halftime speech to the team; despite his enthusiasm, the players got pasted by the opposition, 55 – 3.

EXPLANATION: *Two main clauses unconnected by a coordinating conjunction require a full stop between them.*

6.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: The committee decided to give the award to whoever deserved it most; that person turned out to be Hermione.

ERROR: NONE

7.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Waiting for the bus from Omaha to arrive, the lobby of the bus station was quiet and still, with only the muted singing of the shoeshine boy breaking the silence.

ERROR: DM

CORRECTED VERSION: As we waited for the bus from Omaha to arrive, the lobby of the bus station was quiet and still, with only the muted singing of the shoeshine boy breaking the silence.

EXPLANATION: *A lobby cannot wait for a bus, but the structure of the original sentence implies that it does. When a participle dangles at the beginning of sentence, the best solution is often to change it into a clause.*

8.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: The engine repair class is going very well; all we need is a real car to rebuild right down to the hubcaps, since us students are ready to put our knowledge to good use.

ERROR: CASE

CORRECTED VERSION: The engine repair class is going very well; all we need is a real car to rebuild right down to the hubcaps, since we students are ready to put our knowledge to good use.

EXPLANATION: *The subject of the final subordinate clause ("since...use") must be in the subject case--"we," not "us."*

9.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Bob is the only one of those workers who have the courage to confront his tyrannical boss.

ERROR: AGREE

CORRECTED VERSION: Of those workers, Bob is the only one who has the courage to confront his tyrannical boss.

EXPLANATION: *The logical antecedent of the relative pronoun "who" is "one," so the pronoun and the verb that follows it must be singular. In the corrected version, rearranging the syntax helps to clarify the relationship between "one" and "who."*

10.

ORIGINAL SENTENCE: Patricia only gave me five tickets for the air show, when I specifically told her I needed seven, one for me and six for my cousins visiting from Topeka.

ERROR: MM

CORRECTED VERSION: Patricia gave me only five tickets for the air show, when I specifically told her I needed seven, one for me and six for my cousins visiting from Topeka.

EXPLANATION: *"Only" is one of the most commonly misplaced modifiers, and you should check its placement*

carefully every time you use it. As it does here, it usually belongs with a number or an amount. The point of the sentence is that there are only five tickets, not that Patricia only gave them.