

15 Common Grammar Mistakes that can be Easily Avoided

As confusing and difficult as grammar may be to some of us, it is well-worth a few minutes of your time to refresh the basics and make sure you don't fall into one of the problematic grammar traps.

Here are 15 common grammar mistakes that can be easily avoided:

1. Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

The subject and verb of a sentence must agree with one another in number whether they are singular or plural. If the subject of the sentence is singular, its verb must also be singular; and if the subject is plural, the verb must also be plural.

Example 1:

Incorrect: An important part of my life have been the people who stood by me.

Correct: An important part of my life has been the people who stood by me.

Example 2:

Incorrect: The two best things about the party was the food and the music.

Correct: The two best things about the party were the food and the music.

2. Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences that don't have one independent clause. A fragment may lack a subject, a complete verb, or both. Sometimes fragments depend on the proceeding sentence to give it meaning.

Example 1:

Incorrect: He gave his mother an extravagant gift after the argument. In spite of everything.

Correct: In spite of everything, he gave his mother an extravagant gift after the argument.

Example 2:

Incorrect: The boys snuck home late that night. Then waited for the consequences.

Correct: The boys snuck home late that night, then waited for the consequences.

3. Missing Comma after Introductory Element

A comma should be used after an introductory word, phrase, or clause. This gives the reader a slight pause after an introductory element and often can help avoid confusion.

Example 1:

Incorrect: In case you haven't noticed my real name doesn't appear in the article.

Correct: In case you haven't noticed, my real name doesn't appear in the article.

Example 2:

Incorrect: Before she had time to think about it Sharon jumped into the icy pool.

Correct: Before she had time to think about it, Sharon jumped into the icy pool.

4. Misusing the Apostrophe with "Its"

You use an apostrophe with *it's* only when the word means *it is* or *it has*. Without the apostrophe, *its* means *belonging to it*.

Example 1:

Incorrect: I don't believe its finally Friday.

Correct: I don't believe it's (it is) finally Friday.

Example 2:

Incorrect: The cat was licking it's tail.

Correct: The cat was licking its tail.

5. No Comma in a Compound Sentence

A comma separates two or more independent clauses in a compound sentence separated by a conjunction. The comma goes after the first clause and before the coordinating conjunction that separates the clauses.

Example 1:

Incorrect: The man jumped into a black sedan and he drove away before being noticed.

Correct: The man jumped into a black sedan, and he drove away before being noticed.

Example 2:

Incorrect: She was beautiful and she was happy and she was full of life.

Correct: She was beautiful, and she was happy, and she was full of life.

6. Misplaced or Dangling Modifier

A misplaced modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that is improperly separated from the word it modifies or describes. Sentences with this error can sound awkward, ridiculous, or confusing. A dangling modifier is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence.

Example 1:

Incorrect: While walking on the sidewalk, Mary found a sparkly girl's bracelet.

Correct: While walking on the sidewalk, Mary found a girl's sparkly bracelet.

Example 2:

Incorrect: After finally setting off on the trail, the morning felt more exciting.

Correct: After finally setting off on the trail, he felt the morning was more exciting.

7. Vague Pronoun Reference

A pronoun can replace a noun, and its antecedent should be the person, place, or thing to which the pronoun refers. A vague pronoun reference (including words such as it, that, this, and which) can leave the reader confused about what or to whom the pronoun refers.

Example 1:

Incorrect: When Jonathan finally found his dog, he was so happy. (The dog or Jonathan?)

Correct: Jonathan was so happy when he finally found his dog.

Example 2:

Incorrect: Don felt a lot of anger and bitterness as a result of Marie's decision. This is what ended everything. (What ended everything? Don's anger and bitterness or Marie's decision?)

Correct: Don felt a lot of anger and bitterness as a result of Marie's decision. Her choice ended everything.

8. Wrong Word Usage

There are a variety of words and phrases that are commonly confused and misused in sentences. Using them incorrectly can change the meaning of the sentence or simply reflect carelessness on the writer's part. There are hundreds of these commonly confused words, so when in doubt, always check the definition and correct spelling of the word.

Example 1:

Incorrect: She **excepted** his offer to drive her home.

Correct: She **accepted** his offer to drive her home.

Example 2:

Incorrect: It was a **breathe** of fresh air to meet someone so genuine.

Correct: It was a **breath** of fresh air to meet someone so genuine.

9. Run-On Sentence

A run-on sentence occurs when you connect two main clauses with no punctuation.

Example 1:

Incorrect: She tried to sneak out of the house her mother saw her leaving.

Correct: She tried to sneak out of the house, but her mother saw her leaving.

Example 2:

Incorrect: He ran through the field as fast as he could all the while rain was soaking him to the bone.

Correct: He ran through the field as fast as he could. All the while rain was soaking him to the bone.

10. Superfluous Commas

It's common writing mistake to throw commas around liberally when they aren't necessary. There are dozens of examples of this error, but here are a few common mistakes.

Example 1:

Incorrect: The woman never went into the city, because she didn't feel comfortable driving in traffic.

Correct: The woman never went into the city because she didn't feel comfortable driving in traffic.

Example 2:

Incorrect: He wants to get a degree in engineering, or medicine.

Correct: He wants to get a degree in engineering or medicine.

Example 3:

Incorrect: Sam knew immediately, what was going to happen next.

Correct: Sam knew immediately what was going to happen next.

Example 4:

Incorrect: Old cars, that have been left in a junkyard, are an eyesore.

Correct: Old cars that have been left in a junkyard are an eyesore.

Example 5:

Incorrect: The bouquet of flowers on the table, belongs to Mary.

Correct: The bouquet of flowers on the table belongs to Mary.

11. Lack of Parallel Structure

Faulty parallelism occurs when two or more parts of a sentence are similar in meaning but not parallel (or grammatically similar) in form. It often occurs with paired constructions and items in a series.

Example 1:

Incorrect: He wanted to learn more about careers in programming, engineering, biochemist, and research scientist.

Correct: He wanted to learn more about careers in programming, engineering, biochemistry, and research science.

Example 2:

Incorrect: The key directives of his boss were clear:

- Meet monthly sales quotas.
- Aggressive marketing techniques.
- Reporting in every day.

Correct: The key directives of his boss were clear:

- Meet monthly sales goals.
- Practice aggressive marketing techniques.
- Report in every day.

12. Sentence Sprawl

A sentence can become a burden to read when there are too many equally weighted phrases.

Example 1:

Incorrect: Jason was planning to attend his friend's wedding on June 30, but at the last minute he found out he had jury duty, so he couldn't attend the wedding, and he felt really guilty about it.

Correct: Unexpectedly Jason was called for jury duty and couldn't attend his friend's June 30 wedding. He felt guilty about missing it.

13. Comma Splice

A comma splice occurs when two separate sentences are joined with a comma rather than a period or semicolon. Writers often create comma splices when using transitional words, such as however, therefore, moreover, nevertheless, or furthermore.

Example 1:

Incorrect: My intention was to take her out to dinner, however I decided not to invite her after all.

Correct: My intention was to take her out to dinner; however, I decided not to invite her after all.

Example 2:

Incorrect: My sisters and I love to go shopping, we then have lunch together when we're done.

Correct: My sisters and I love to go shopping. We then have lunch together when we're done.

14. Colon Mistakes

A colon is used after a complete sentence to introduce a word, phrase, clause, list, or quotation. The colon signals that what follows proves or explains the sentence preceding the colon.

Example 1:

Incorrect: People move to Florida for: the warmer weather, the beach, and the theme parks.

Correct: People move to Florida for three reasons: the warmer weather, the beach, and the theme parks.

15. Split Infinitives

An infinitive is the word “to” with a verb. A split infinitive separates the word “to” and the verb with another word (often an adverb). There are no grammar rules that prohibit split infinitives, but many experts disapprove of them. If the sentence sounds awkward by correcting the split, our rule of thumb is to go with what makes the most sense in the context of your writing and for the ease of reading. (For example, “To boldly go where no man has gone before” would sound awkward and less powerful as, “To go boldly where no man has gone before.”)

Example 1:

Incorrect: She tried to quickly finish the book before she had to leave.

Correct: She tried to finish the book quickly before she had to leave.

Example 2:

Incorrect: He wanted to gradually improve his strength by increasing the weight.

Correct: He wanted to improve his strength gradually by increasing the weight.

As a writer, you want to put your best foot forward with your writing.

Whenever you're in doubt about a rule, take a brief moment to look it up.

Source: <http://authority.pub/common-grammar-mistakes/>