



All About

Top 5 Tips for Avoiding Common Mistakes in English

14

Grammar Points

2

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The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five Tips for Avoiding Common Mistakes in English.

In this lesson, we're going to give you some tips on how to avoid common mistakes made by learners of English. This is so that you can be aware of certain errors and keep them in mind when you learn. Common errors are different for different language backgrounds, but we'll try to touch upon the general differences.

Tip Number One: Watch Your Spelling!

One thing to be careful of is your spelling. When writing something in English, a single spelling error could ruin the whole piece of writing. English words are tricky in a sense that the spelling does not always match the way we pronounce a word. Be sure to use the spell checker on your computer, and even then double check with your eyes for the correct spelling of heterographs, which are words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings. Be careful with American spelling and British spelling: use one or the other and don't change them around while writing. It's also a good idea to double check the spelling of somebody's name, because that is a common mistake.

Tip Number Two: Watch Your Language!

Although English is relatively casual compared to languages that have levels of formality, you still have to choose your words according to the company you find yourself in. In other words, language that you might have learned from music or movies may not always be appropriate in professional or

proper situations and could well offend someone. If you're going to be in polite company, you might want to reassess some of the words that are in your vocabulary bank. Words that are most likely safe to use are from newspapers or the news on TV. Keep political correctness in mind as well-in other words, be sure not to use terms that may offend certain groups of people. For example, the word "stewardess" has been replaced by "flight attendant." It is better to stay safe and watch your language.

Tip Number Three: Watch Your Nouns

Nouns are easy when you learn them. They seem pretty straightforward, but some of them may be tricky. We can divide nouns into count and non-count nouns. We can make the count nouns plural by adding an "-s" or "-es" to the words, depending on the word. We cannot make non-count nouns into plurals by adding an "-s." For example, we can pluralize the word "song" by adding an "-s," as in "that is his favorite song" or "those are his favorite songs." However, we don't usually pluralize the word "music," for example, by adding an "-s": "that is his favorite musics" is not used. We put something in front of it to make the noun countable, which in this case would be "pieces of music" or "types of music."

Tip Number Four: Know Your Vowels

Vowels in English are tricky. There are five written vowels: "-a," "-e," "-i," "-o," or "-u," but there are many different ways to pronounce them. Depending on the combination with other vowels and consonants, the sound of the vowel may change. People with different accents will also pronounce the same vowel in a word differently, whether or not they speak it as a first or second language. So if you're coming from a language with flat vowels, this might be a tricky thing to catch. A good way to practice this is by shadowing native speakers and by better understanding the positioning of the tongue. This way, you will not only become a clearer speaker yourself, but you will also be able to catch the sounds that you didn't hear before.

Tip Number Five: Know that Some Differences are VERY Different

Many languages have speakers that speak with different accents, which as mentioned before is true also in English. Yet speakers of English generally understand one another because in the end it is the same language. However, once in a while, differences in vocabulary arise and an odd word comes along with a completely different meaning in one English than the other. For example, in American English, we call the piece of clothing on the lower half of the body "pants." Yet the same word in British English refers to an undergarment. Another example is that we consider the first floor in the United States the "ground floor" and often mark it with a "G" in an elevator, whereas in British English, we mark it with a "1" to indicate it is the "first floor." Here's another example-one that might cause embarrassment if you make a mistake. An "eraser" is the tool that you use when you make mistakes with your pencil in American English. In British English, this is called a "rubber." However, "rubber" is slang for a "condom" in the United States.

So there are some common mistakes that you want to avoid if you can, but at the same time, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Learn from them and improve your English when you make a mistake!