

A P P E N D I X B

A BRIEF GUIDE FOR AVOIDING ERRORS IN GRAMMAR AND USAGE

Here are the most common errors in grammar and usage that college students make in their writing. For a quick review, turn to the pages cited. For more explanations and exercises related to any topic discussed, log onto <http://www.mywritinglab.com>.

1. Sentence fragments (incomplete sentences)

- **Incorrect:** The referee stopped the match. Because of the crowd's rowdy behavior.
- **Correct:** The referee stopped the match because of the crowd's rowdy behavior.

(See "Prepositional Phrases as Fragments," pages 190–191.)

- **Incorrect:** Her cheering fans encouraged the singer. To sing several encores.
- **Correct:** Her cheering fans encouraged the singer to sing several encores.

(See "Infinitive Phrases as Fragments," page 191.)

- **Incorrect:** Trying to avoid a head-on collision. Mike pulled off the road and hit a tree.
- **Correct:** Trying to avoid a head-on collision, Mike pulled off the road and hit a tree.

(See "Participle Phrases as Fragments," pages 191–193.)

- **Incorrect:** A new rule governing offside violations, passed by the referees' association.
- **Correct:** A new rule governing offside violations was passed by the referees' association.

(See "Noun Phrases as Fragments," pages 193–194.)

- **Incorrect:** All professional boxing fights were contested with bare knuckles until 1892. When John L. Sullivan and James Corbett fought in a bout in which both wore regulation gloves.
- **Correct:** All professional boxing fights were contested with bare knuckles until 1892, when John L. Sullivan and James Corbett fought in a bout in which both wore regulation gloves.

(See "Dependent Clauses as Fragments," pages 194–195.)

Note: Each of the preceding sentence fragments can be corrected in additional ways. Check the appropriate pages.

2. Run-on sentences

- **Incorrect:** The original Social Security Act was passed in 1935 it is administered by the Social Security Administration.
- **Correct:** The original Social Security Act was passed in 1935. It is administered by the Social Security Administration.

(See "Run-on Sentences," pages 196–197, for other ways to correct run-on sentences.)

3. Comma-splices

- **Incorrect:** Machu Picchu is an ancient Inca fortress in the Andes Mountains in Peru, it was built in the mid-fifteenth century.
- **Correct:** Machu Picchu is an ancient Inca fortress in the Andes Mountains in Peru. It was built in the mid-fifteenth century.

(See "Comma-Splices," pages 197–201, for other ways to correct comma-splices.)

4. Failing to make the subject and verb agree

- **Incorrect:** Everyone who attended the tryouts were given a number.
- **Correct:** Everyone who attended the tryouts was given a number.

- **Incorrect:** Across the street was several curious spectators.
- **Correct:** Across the street were several curious spectators.

(See “Making the Subject and Verb Agree,” pages 70–81.)

5. Using the wrong form of the verb

- **Incorrect:** It was obvious that the tenor had never sang the National Anthem before.
- **Correct:** It was obvious that the tenor had never sung the National Anthem before.

- **Incorrect:** We were startled to see how much our young nephew had growed since we last saw him.
- **Correct:** We were startled to see how much our young nephew had grown since we last saw him.

- **Incorrect:** After running the marathon, Frank laid on the grass and rested.
- **Correct:** After running the marathon, Frank lay on the grass and rested.

(See “Common Errors Involving Verbs,” pages 91–110.)

6. Using the wrong form of the pronoun

- **Incorrect:** Between you and I, Donny’s new suit is out of style.
- **Correct:** Between you and me, Donny’s new suit is out of style.

- **Incorrect:** Who do you intend to vote for in tomorrow’s election?
- **Correct:** Whom do you intend to vote for in tomorrow’s election?

- **Incorrect:** Much to my surprise, my dance partner and myself won a prize in the contest.
- **Correct:** Much to my surprise, my dance partner and I won a prize in the contest.

(See “Using the Correct Form of the Pronoun,” pages 120–133.)

7. Confusing adjectives and adverbs

- **Incorrect:** Laura spoke very modest of her accomplishments.
- **Correct:** Laura spoke very modestly of her accomplishments.

■ **Incorrect:** Maria's tostadas, based on her mother's recipe, tasted deliciously.

■ **Correct:** Maria's tostadas, based on her mother's recipe, tasted delicious.

(See "Confusing Adjective and Adverbs," pages 218–220.)

8. Misplacing modifiers and participles

■ **Incorrect:** Snoring loudly, the intruder was not heard by Vince.

■ **Correct:** Snoring loudly, Vince did not hear the intruder.

■ **Incorrect:** After looking over my notes, the biology exam was easier than I had feared.

■ **Correct:** After I looked over my notes, the biology exam was easier than I had feared.

(See "Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers," pages 210–215.)

9. Misusing commas and other punctuation

■ **Incorrect:** Herbert has lived in this country for fifty years but he still speaks with a heavy accent.

■ **Correct:** Herbert has lived in this country for fifty years, but he still speaks with a heavy accent.

■ **Incorrect:** In her youth Sheila worked as a waitress, and lab assistant.

■ **Correct:** In her youth Sheila worked as a waitress and lab assistant.

■ **Incorrect:** Watching television several hours a day, was Hugh's only exercise.

■ **Correct:** Watching television several hours a day was Hugh's only exercise.

(See "Punctuation and Capitalization," pages 234–268.)

10. Misspelling

Proofread your papers carefully, looking closely and carefully for words whose spelling you are uncertain of. You may even find it helpful to have a friend read over your work, since writers are often blind to their own mistakes.

Keeping a list of troublesome words is another way of pinpointing and reducing the number of misspelled words that can occur in writing.

Finally, you should own a college-level dictionary or refer to reliable online dictionary Web sites. For suggestions, see page 3 or follow the recommendation of your instructor.