

Module 9: Defining Your Path

Topic 7 Content: Common Errors Made in Writing


Introduction

Common Errors Made in Writing

- Subject/Verb Agreement
- Sentence Fragments
- Run-on Sentences
- Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement
- Basic Comma Usage
- Commonly Confused Words

Introduction

In this interactivity, click each of the tabs to review some of the common errors made in writing. Of course, there are many other errors, but these should give you some good starting points to help you edit your paper. You will also need to remember to spell check your writing as part of the editing process.



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Subject/Verb Agreement

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Subject/Verb Agreement

Make sure that your subject and verb agree. If your subject is singular, then so must be your verb. Watch out for indefinite pronoun subjects and sentences that have prepositional phrases or other phrases or clauses between the subject and verb.

Subjects that are always singular: each, everyone, nobody, anything, either, everybody, nothing, someone, neither, everything, anyone, somebody, one, no one, anybody, something

Subjects that are always plural: several, few, both, many

Subjects that can be either: some, all, any, most, none

Examples:

- *Some of the money **IS** missing. (referring to money)*
- *Some of the kids **ARE** leaving. (referring to kids)*

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Sentence Fragments



The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Common Errors Made in Writing". On the left is a vertical sidebar with several buttons: "Subject/Verb Agreement", "Sentence Fragments" (which is highlighted), "Run-on Sentences", "Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement", "Basic Comma Usage", and "Commonly Confused Words". The main content area on the right is titled "Sentence Fragments" and contains the following text:

Make sure each sentence contains a subject and a verb, expresses a complete thought, and can stand alone.

Example:

- *While she walked across the street.* (**Subject** = she, **Verb** = walked)

Notice how the example does not complete a thought.

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Run-on Sentences

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Run-on Sentences

If you have more than one complete sentence, make sure you join the sentences with either a semicolon or a comma and a coordinating conjunction. Use the acronym **FANBOYS** to help you remember your coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

Examples:

- *She walked her dog to the park, and her dad picked up groceries from the store.*
- *She walked her dog to the park; her dad picked up groceries from the store.*
- *Use a semicolon when you want to have a clear connection between the two sentences.*

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Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement

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Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement

Your pronoun must agree with the antecedent it is referencing. A common error here is to use they or their when you do not know the gender of a singular subject, but that is incorrect. Sometimes it is easier to change the subject.

Examples:

- *The student was told to bring their books to class. (Incorrect)*
- *The student was told to bring his (or her) book to class. (Correct)*
- *The students were told to bring their books to class. (Correct)*

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Basic Comma Usage

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Basic Comma Usage

There are several times where you always want to use commas:

1. Items in a series
 - **Example:** *Make sure to bring pens, pencils, paper, and highlighters with you to class tomorrow.*
2. Joining two independent clauses (like with **FANBOYS** we just examined)
 - **Example:** *Her father wanted her to study music professionally, but her mother wanted her to be a doctor.*
3. With interrupters to the sentence, and with introductory phrases or clauses (usually of four or more words).
 - **Example:** *After a long rain delay, the team finally won the game and advanced to the semifinals.* (Introductory phrase)
 - **Example:** *If they want to win, the football team must practice everyday.* (Introductory clause)

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 - **Example:** *Queen Victoria was, as they say, a formidable woman.* (Interrupter)

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Commonly Confused Words

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Please review these examples of commonly confused words.

- Accept/Except**
 - Example:** All of the students accept the fact that they are going to be responsible for knowing basic grammar.
 - Example:** Everyone except the teacher complained about the amount of work.
- Their/They're/There**
 - Example:** The students were told to bring their books to class. (Possession)
 - Example:** They're going to take a field trip after they finish this unit of study. (Contraction of "they are")
 - Example:** When they get to the zoo, the parents will meet them there. (Location)
- Affect/Effect**
 - Example:** The teacher was affected by the girl's tears

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- **Example:** When they get to the zoo, the parents will meet them there. (Location)

3. Affect/Effect

- **Example:** The teacher was affected by the girl's tears and allowed her to submit her project late. (**Affect** = to influence and is a verb)
- **Example:** The effect of the low grade motivated him to try harder. (**Effect** = result and is a noun)

4. Than/Then

- **Example:** I would rather read than write a paper. (Use **than** with comparisons)

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- **Example:** *I wrote a rough draft, and then I revised and edited my paper. (Use **then** to indicate time or the next thing)*