

Common “Big” Bad Errors



○ Comma Splices

- A **comma splice** joins two complete sentences together with a comma.
i.e., Joey went to the grocery store, he needed to buy some eggs for supper. (Wrong)
Joey went to the grocery store. **He** needed to buy some eggs for supper. (Right)

○ Fragment Sentence

- A **fragment sentence** is an incomplete sentence. The sentence needs a **subject, verb** and/or a **complete idea**.
i.e., The woman in green felt hat. (The sentence is missing a **verb**)(Wrong)
The **woman** in the green felt hat **paused** to look at herself in the mirror.

○ Run-On Sentence

- A **run-on sentence** joins two or more complete sentences with the overuse of punctuation and/or conjunctions. As well, a series of complete sentences with no punctuation can be a **run-one sentence**.
i.e., My mother says I can go first I have to empty the garbage, though. (Wrong)
My mother says I can go first. **I** have to empty the garbage, though. (Right)

○ Personal and Collective Pronouns

- Overall, formal writing avoids the use of personal pronouns such as, “I” and “Me”. However, the collective pronoun, “We” can be used sparingly.

○ Contractions

- The use of contractions in formal writing is avoided because it is considered slang.
i.e., does not instead of doesn't

○ Clichés

- A **cliché** is a word, phrase, or expression that has been overused.
i.e., I told Mike, “The grass is always greener on the other side.”

○ Transition Words

- To help the flow of a piece of writing is important to include transition words such as: before, on the other hand, similarly, therefore, moreover, thus, in addition, also, to sum up.

○ Appropriate Use of Conjunctions

- The use of **conjunctions** at the beginning of sentences should be avoided.
i.e., And I will love him forever. (Wrong)
I will love him forever. (Right)

○ **Consistency of Tense(s)**

- In literary papers, the writer is often describing the action or characters in a work of literary fiction; therefore, present tense should be used.
i.e., At the midpoint of *The Odyssey*, the hero Odysseus **journeys** to the realm of the dead.
- Conversely, in a history paper, past-tense verbs should dominate the writing.

○ **Usage Errors**

Common Usage Errors:

- **affect/effect:** “Affect” is a verb; “effect” is usually a noun. Note, however, that “effect” may occasionally be a verb meaning “to bring about.”
i.e., His breakup with his girlfriend **affected** his grade point average.
A broken heart may have a bad **effect** on his scholastic achievement.
 - **accept/except:** “Accept” is a verb that means to “consent to”; “except” is a verb or a preposition that mean to “to exclude.”
i.e., I would **accept** your proposition **except** for my husband and six children.
 - **a lot:** “A lot” is a colloquialism for “many” or a “great deal.” There is no form “a lot.”
 - **its/it’s:** “Its” is the possessive form, like “his” or “her.” “It’s” is a contraction for “it is” or “it has.”
i.e., That dog’s bark is worse than **its** bite. **It’s** certainly got big teeth, though.
 - **their/there/they’re:** “Their” is possessive; “there” is an adverb or an expletive, “they’re” is a contraction of “they are.”
i.e., **There** ought to be a law against **their** foolishness. **They’re** asking for trouble.
- **Avoidance of certain words and/or phrases**
- in conclusion, my thesis is, in my essay I, the following quote means, etc.

