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## Common Usage Errors

**Below are words that are easily confused in writing. Write one sentence using each group of words correctly. For example: *There* are two apples over *there* and *they're* not going to eat them because *they're* rotten. Think carefully and always reread your work to avoid making these common mistakes.**

1. there, their, they're -
2. to, too, two -
3. then, than -
4. loose, lose -
5. could have, should have, would have (NOT could OF, should OF, would OF) -
6. your, you're -
7. its, it's -
8. were, we're, where -
9. are, our -
10. knew, new
11. know, no
12. accept, except
13. I (never, ever, i)

## Common Usage Errors

**Choose the correct word and fill in the blank. Use capital letters at the beginning of a sentence.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_going to visit the Palmer Museum of Art. (there, their, they're)
2. \_\_\_\_\_foundation is collapsing. (Its, It's)
3. \_\_\_\_\_of the puppies are brown. (to, too, two)
4. If you think\_\_\_\_\_ funny, you should see the movie. (its, it's)
5. The class is proud of \_\_\_\_\_progress. (its, it's)
6. \_\_\_\_\_books are on the shelf where they left them. (there, their, they're)
7. My teacher said that \_\_\_\_\_may borrow a book. (I, i)
8. Would you like to go to the movies,\_\_\_\_\_? (to, too, two)
9. Do you \_\_\_\_\_the meaning of *succinct*? (no, know)
10. Do you have a \_\_\_\_\_tooth? (lose, loose)
11. Would you please place your book over \_\_\_\_\_(there, their, they're)?
12. I \_\_\_\_\_you would be late again. (new, knew)
13. I will make dinner, \_\_\_\_\_I will serve it to you. (than, then)
14. \_\_\_\_\_the best basketball player I know. (Your, You're)
15. \_\_\_\_\_are you going? (were, where, we're)
16. Our \_\_\_\_\_ computer is excellent! (new, knew)
17. Do you want \_\_\_\_\_sweater dyed red? (your, you're)
18. This book is \_\_\_\_\_difficult to understand. (to, too, two)
19. This is \_\_\_\_\_best offer for the house. (are, our)
20. \_\_\_\_\_going on a field trip tomorrow. (were, where, we're)
21. I will \_\_\_\_\_your apology. (accept, except)
22. I would rather drive \_\_\_\_\_walk. (than, then)

23. I liked the dinner \_\_\_\_\_ for the desert. (accept, except)
24. Have you seen \_\_\_\_\_ excellent art work? (there, their, they're)
25. I \_\_\_\_\_ taken my time doing this assignment. (should of, should have)
26. Are you going \_\_\_\_\_ (were, where, we're) \_\_\_\_\_ (were, where, we're going, or are you going \_\_\_\_\_ (were, where, we're) \_\_\_\_\_ (there, their, they're) going?
27. This is \_\_\_\_\_ favorite song. (are, our)
28. I \_\_\_\_\_ really enjoyed that play if I had been allowed to go. (would of, would have)

### Now or Then: Tense Consistency

**Know your tenses. Read the sentence and decide if the event is happening NOW (present) or THEN (past).**

1. When we went to the store, we bought five bags of groceries. \_\_\_\_\_
2. As I walk home, I whistle. \_\_\_\_\_
3. She dances so well that we cannot take our eyes off her. \_\_\_\_\_
4. He missed the catch and lost the game for everyone. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The movie is so exciting, I am clinging to my seat. \_\_\_\_\_

**Proofread. Edit the sentences so they are logical because the tense is consistent.**

6. I walk inside and look up: the ceiling was covered with beautiful paintings.
7. He asked her if she would go to dinner tonight, and she says, "Yes!"
8. I went to the mall. My friends were waiting for me. We go into our favorite store.
9. My dad told me that I couldn't go on the monkey bars, but I don't care. I go on them anyway, and I got hurt badly when I fell.
10. The sky is getting dark, so we went inside before it started to pour.

**Choose a tense. Then change all the verbs to match that tense.**

I didn't feel like paddling. Dad doesn't either. We drift at a turtle's pace around the bay. The water was speckled with morning sun in a way that makes me shiver. The osprey fly into their nests with food for the little ones. A horseshoe crab floats under our boat. Although I'd never had a liking for these creatures, this morning they were beautiful. Water bugs send small ripples toward our boat. Green littered the shoreline. Everything seemed just right.

## Sentence Fragments

**Read the following information, then do the exercises that follow.**

1. A complete sentence is about someone or something (the subject) doing something (the verb):
  - Birds fly.
  - Pat drives a delivery truck on Saturdays.
  - Dan is an excellent athlete.
  - Mary is happy.
  
2. A sentence may have a compound subject:
  - Kevin and Natalie painted the house.
  
3. A sentence may have a compound verb:
  - Michael mowed the lawn and trimmed the hedge.
  
4. There are many verb forms:
  - I drive.
  - I am driving.
  - I have driven.
  - I have been driving.
  - I drove.
  
5. Be careful of these verb forms:
  - The -ing form can not be the proper verb of a complete sentence by itself:  
Driving to California.
  - A verb with "to" in front of it can not be the proper verb of a complete sentence:  
To drive to California.
  
6. A dependent clause includes a subject and a verb, but is **not** a complete sentence. Some words or phrases that may begin a dependent clause are: after, although, because, before, even though, if, how, since, unless, whatever, when, while, whose. These are dependent clauses that do not constitute a complete sentence:
  - After we finished the game.
  - While you are waiting.
  - Since he began working here.

## Sentence Fragments

**If a sentence is correct, write a C before it. If a sentence is a fragment, write an F before it and rewrite it correctly.**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. When we went shopping.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. As soon as I get home, I am going to make dinner.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Forgetting where I was supposed to go.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. If I can't go to the concert.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Although I passed the test, I did not do as well as I should have.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Without knowing her shoe size.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. As soon as you are ready, we will leave for our vacation.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Though she was an intelligent girl.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. I am cold. And afraid.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. Many of the teenagers, who sat in the class quietly.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. By alerting the store in time, a disaster was prevented.

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. The beginning of the story.

## Run-on Sentences

**A run-on sentence occurs when two sentences are joined together into one sentence, either separated by a comma, or run together with no punctuation at all.**

**You can correct run-on sentences in several ways:**

1. You may separate the two sentences with a period, writing them as two complete sentences.  
For example:
  - Run-on: Dolphins have a complex communication system some scientists compare it to human language.
  - Correct: Dolphins have a complex communication system. Some scientists compare it to human language.
2. You may separate the two sentences with a semicolon when they are closely related in meaning.  
For example:
  - Run-on: Sequoia was a Cherokee scholar, he is famous for developing a written alphabet for his language.
  - Correct: Sequoia was a Cherokee scholar; he is famous for developing a written alphabet for his language.
3. You may use a semicolon plus a conjunctive adverb to join the two sentences. A conjunctive adverb, which shows the relationship between two sentences, is always followed by a comma.  
For example:
  - Run-on: During the first film the class was noisy and unresponsive nevertheless the teacher decided to show the second film.
  - Correct: During the first film the class was noisy and unresponsive; nevertheless, the teacher decided to show the second film.
4. You may combine two sentences with a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction.
  - Run-on: Today Scott Joplin is enormously popular as a ragtime composer, his ragtime ballet and opera scores were not successful in his lifetime.
  - Correct: Today Scott Joplin is enormously popular as a ragtime composer, but his ragtime ballet and opera scores were not successful in his lifetime.
5. Change one of the sentences into a dependent clause.
  - Run-on: Isadora Duncan is famous as an innovator in modern dance, she rebelled against the formal choreography of ballet.
  - Correct: Isadora Duncan, who is famous as an innovator in modern dance, rebelled against the formal choreography of ballet.



## Run-on Sentences

**If a sentence is correct, place a C before it. If it is a run-on, write an R before it and correct it.**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. The outside of the building looked interesting inside it was very dull.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Shamita found her missing necklace and was very happy.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. After the explosion the people went back to work they didn't feel safe.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Paul worked hard, he was rewarded with a more interesting job.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Kelly bought a new dress it didn't fit she returned it to the store.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. We're going to Florida for our family vacation.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. The food was not enough Jon wanted more.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Today is the first day of the rest of your life.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Don't drive fast it's dangerous.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. This book is excellent, and I highly recommend that you read it.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. What is that movie about I don't understand it.

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. Nicole ate her dinner, did her homework, and went to bed early.

## Semicolons

**A semicolon (;) can be used instead of a period to mark a break between two complete thoughts, but it should be used sparingly.**

For example: My father hates to fly; he would rather drive under any circumstances.

**Insert a semicolon where the break occurs between the two complete thoughts in each of the following sentences:**

1. It rained all week parts of the highway were flooded.
2. The audience roared with laughter the comedian felt satisfied.
3. I spend eight hours a day in a windowless classroom it's a relief to get out in the open air after school.
4. Jim never goes to that gas station anymore he found out that he was overcharged for a valve job.
5. I loved the sweater my friend bought me I wear it almost everyday.

**Sometimes a semicolon can be used with a transitional word and a comma to join two complete thoughts.**

For example: We were short of money; therefore, we decided not to eat out this weekend.

**Insert a semicolon before the transitional word and a comma after the word.**

1. Exams are over however I still feel tense and nervous.
2. I did not understand her point therefore I asked her to repeat it.
3. They should dress warmly for the parade otherwise they will get cold.
4. I did not do my homework consequently I got a zero.
5. Today is a cold, rainy day furthermore it is a Monday.

## Commas

**Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (and, or, but, nor, yet, for, so) that separates two independent clauses.**

For example:

I would love to go to the party, but I am not feeling well today.

He is a good friend, but he doesn't always make the best decisions.

**Use a comma after a phrase or clause that comes before a main clause.**

For example:

Strangely, no one has suggested that we need to go to summer school.

Despite the athlete's high hopes, his illusions were shattered.

**Use a comma around unessential phrases in the middle of a sentence.**

For example:

Paul McCartney, an innovative writer, has written songs that have become classics.

President Kennedy, a very popular politician, did not live long enough to carry out his policies.

**Use commas between items in a series.**

For example:

I like tragedies, comedies, and dramas.

I like to run around the track, ride my bicycle to school, and do jumping jacks after work.

**Use commas within quotation marks.**

For example:

"I would like to play the violin," my sister Janice said.

Robert said, "What's happening friend?"

## Commas

**Place commas appropriately in the following sentences.**

1. Interestingly many critics say students need to do more work.
2. As the day progresses students become more active.
3. Sharon won the award but she was not able to be at the ceremony.
4. Ron likes lemon grape and cherry soda.
5. This was not in other words the best of the experience.
6. Senator Smith who is a democrat won the nomination the first time he ran for office.
7. She was a good artist but did not have the discipline to finish her work.
8. As more anti-smoking laws are passed we see more smokers standing out in the cold.
9. Though my dogs are messy and hard to train though they chew up my shoes and give me the blues though they eat me out of house and home I still find them a necessary part of my life.
10. I am afraid of falling yet I continue to ski.
11. Since the new software was introduced it has been much easier to keep track of grades.
12. Traditional mealtimes are not observed very often and many people find themselves eating all through the day.
13. I would love to ride my bike to school but I can't make it up the hill.
14. "This is a great lesson" said Cheryl "but I can't understand it."
15. I like the way you speak not the way you act.

## Quotation Marks

**Use quotation marks to set off all exact words of a speaker or writer.**

The little girl's mother said, "Please eat only two cookies before dinner."

"I'm afraid," the mechanic muttered to Fred, "that your car is in big trouble."

"We cannot solve a problem by hoping that someone else will solve it for us," wrote psychiatrist M. Scott Peck.

**Do not use quotation marks for each new sentence. Only one pair of quotation marks is used as long as the quotation is not interrupted.**

"Our report is not interesting," complained Wanda. "I wish I had worked on it harder. This is an important grade."

**Quoted material is usually set off from the rest of the sentence by a comma. When the comma comes at the end of quoted material, it is included inside the quotation marks. The same is true for a period, exclamation point, or question mark that ends quoted material.**

*Incorrect:* "Watching golf", complained Rosie, "is like watching grass grow".

*Correct:* "Watching golf," complained Rosie, "is like watching grass grow."

*Incorrect:* "Aren't you ready yet"? Dad yelled. "Hurry up, or we're going without you"!

*Correct:* "Aren't you ready yet?" Dad yelled. "Hurry up, or we're going without you!"

**Notice, too, that a quoted sentence begins with a capital letter, even when it is preceded by other words:**

*Incorrect:* The diner asked suspiciously, "is this fish fresh?"

*Correct:* The diner asked suspiciously, "Is this fish fresh?"

## Quotation Marks

**Punctuate the following sentences correctly.**

1. I won't take anymore criticism, Kylie said to her boyfriend. Our relationship is over.
2. The clerk stated, The price of this bread has gone up.
3. Let's all turn on our computers, the instructor said.
4. The label on the chlorine bleach says, do not mix this product with other cleansers.
5. This is a movie that will scare everyone in the family, the reviewer said.
6. The boat captain said sternly, please keep your arms and legs inside the boat. Failure to do so will make the alligators happy.
7. In his book *Think Big*, Dr. Benjamin Carson writes, I had been in the fifth grade not even two weeks before everyone considered me the dumbest kid in the class.
8. Cut the onions into thin slices, the cooking instructor explained. Then place them in the hot skillet.
9. Could you turn the radio down? the passenger shouted to the taxi driver.
10. Anne Frank wrote the following in her diary: It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals, which seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.

## **Modifiers and Misplaced Modifiers**

“Modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that provide description in sentences. Modifiers allow writers to take the picture that they have in their heads and transfer it accurately to the heads of their readers. Essentially, modifiers breathe life into sentences.” (Robin L. Simmons. *The Modifier*. 1997-2011. Web. 18 Jan. 2011.)

Using misplaced modifiers (ones that modify something you didn't intend them to modify) is a common mistake writers make. They are among the errors most likely to confuse your readers, but they're also kind of fun to identify because misplaced modifiers can give your sentences silly meanings that you never intended.

- For example, the word “only” is a modifier that's easy to misplace. These two sentences mean different things:  
**I ate only vegetables.** This sentence means that I ate nothing but vegetables – no fruit, no meat, just vegetables.  
**I only ate vegetables.** This sentence means that all I did with vegetables was eat them. I didn't plant, harvest, wash, or cook them. I only ate them.
- It's easiest to get modifiers right when you keep them as close as possible to the thing they are modifying. When you're working with one-word modifiers, for example, they usually go right before the word they modify.

Here's another example of two sentences with very different meanings:

**I almost failed every art class I took.** (This means that although it was a close call, I actually passed all those classes.)

**I failed almost every art class I took.** (This means that I passed a few art classes, but failed most of them.)

- Another example of a misplaced and confusing modifier:  
**After our conversation lessons, we could understand the Spanish spoken by our visitors from Madrid easily.** (Do the visitors speak it easily or do we understand it easily?)  
This revision eliminates the confusion:  
**We could easily understand the Spanish spoken by our visitors from Madrid.**

Reread everything you write very carefully to make sure that you are saying what you mean to say by placing your modifiers correctly.

## Modifiers and Misplaced Modifiers

**Rewrite each sentence so that the modifier is used clearly and correctly:**

1. Confusing: Blooming abundantly, their fence was covered with morning glories.

Rewrite:

2. Confusing: Derek received high marks from the judges, playing a creative guitar solo.

Rewrite:

3. Confusing: I stared up at the clouds waiting in the doorway.

Rewrite:

4. Confusing: Brightly wrapped boxes lined the hall that had yet to be opened.

Rewrite:

5. Confusing: Helicopters flew over the houses that were used on training missions for pilots.

Rewrite:

6. Confusing: Angela leaned down and picked up the baby, who had just returned from aerobics class.

Rewrite:

7. Confusing: Dust swirled around the house that had blown in from the plains.

Rewrite:

8. Confusing: The students hiked all day on the mountain wearing rain gear.

Rewrite:

9. Confusing: Mr. Jones lectured about bridge construction in the auditorium.

Rewrite:

10. Confusing: Carrie by her enthusiasm for skating is often carried away.

Rewrite:



## **Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement**

**Read the following information, then do the exercises that follow.**

**A pronoun must agree in number with its antecedent. (The antecedent is the noun to which the pronoun refers.) If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must also be plural.**

### **Examples:**

Because the man had been badly injured in the accident, he was taken to a hospital.

Because the men had been badly injured in the accident, they were taken to a hospital.

If Frank wants a raise in his salary, he will have to improve his work.

Whenever my neighbors go on a vacation, they take their dogs with them.

**When indefinite pronouns are used as antecedents, they require singular subject, object, and possessive pronouns.**

### **Examples:**

Everyone did as he or she pleased.

Somebody has forgotten her lace shawl.

Either of the choices has its advantages.

Every applicant must send his or her application on time.

Each boy scout lit his fire safely.

### Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

**Read the following sentences. If a sentence is correct, mark a C before it; if it is incorrect, mark an I and make the necessary changes. Look for pronoun/antecedent agreement.**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Someone on the girl's softball team lost their temper.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. When a taxpayer gets angry, they should complain.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Every contestant must send in his or her application.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Either Sue or Eve forgot their coat.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Working mothers often have trouble finding day-care for their children.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. No one wants their opinions to be ignored.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. After the fans arrived, they cheered.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. When a driver sees it's snowing hard, they should slow down.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. If a competitor wants to win, they must train regularly.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. When people watch a new movie, he or she sometimes does not understand the point.

## Parallelism

**Words in a pair or a series should have a parallel structure. By balancing the items in a pair or a series so that they have the same kind of structure, you will make a sentence clearer and easier to read. Such parallelism will improve your writing style.**

For example:

Wrong: I love reading mysteries, snuggling my blanket, and to drink a cup of tea.

Right: I love reading mysteries, snuggling my blanket, and drinking a cup of tea.

Underline the word or phrase that maintains the parallel structure in each sentence.

1. I enjoy working hard, getting paid well, and (to get a sense of satisfaction, achieving a sense of satisfaction).
2. Terry hates to get up in the morning, to brush his teeth, and (combing his hair, to comb his hair).
3. I admire her talent, her ambition, and (her ability to keep cool, she was able to keep cool).
4. The drummer kept the beat, the guitarist played the melody and (the singing was done by the piano player, the piano player sang).
5. My aunt was charming, helpful, and (kind, always doing kind things).

Cross out the element in each series that is not parallel to the other two.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. standing in line<br>to cash a check<br>speaking to my friend      | 2. in the forest<br>on a trail<br>pitching a tent                  |
| 3. tall<br>handsome<br>with brown hair                               | 4. looking outside<br>was in the room<br>wanted to open the window |
| 5. by raking the leaves<br>mowing the lawn<br>by trimming the shrubs | 6. sturdy<br>made of wood<br>has compartments for pencils          |

All of the following sentences have an error in parallelism. Write a corrected version of each sentence.

1. Come to the meeting prepared to take notes and with some questions to ask.
2. We were surprised by the gift but appreciating it.
3. Dribbling, shooting, and to pass are important skills in basketball.

4. I respected his intellect, his strength, and he was also very funny.
5. It would make my day complete to see you, going to a movie, and to have dinner with you.
6. Lisa spends her day studying, attends classes, and to listen to music.
7. My lunch included a tuna sandwich, soup, carrot sticks, and there was also some dessert.
8. We were not sure that our request for a refund was fair or it would be granted.
9. She spoke about her experience in Australia and several predictions about the country's future.
10. One of the accident victims suffered a broken arm, several broken ribs, and one of his lungs was punctured.

**Rewrite the following passage, eliminating any cases of faulty parallelism.**

A public library is a good place to spend an afternoon and relaxing. You can read the newspaper from any major city, spend time looking for a good novel, surf the Web, or listening to a CD. Librarians can tell you where to find a particular book and a quiet place to read it. Many libraries have display halls where you can observe artwork or just strolling around.

People find many different things to do in the library. There is usually someone studying or to write a research paper, there are those who read periodicals and those just chatting with a friend. All things considered, the library is an excellent place for meeting people, to read, or to relax.

Rewrite:

**Overview and Review**  
**The Twelve Ingredients of Good Writing**

**#1 - Avoid slang and colloquialisms (words used in familiar or local conversation).**

- Incorrect: He is really into skateboards.
  - Correct: He enjoys skateboarding.
  
  - Incorrect: Jenny has got to go to Ohio for a week.
  - Correct: Jenny must go to Ohio for a week.
  
  - Incorrect: Scott has been doing science for eight years now.
  - Correct: Scott has been a scientist for eight years now.
  
  - Rewrite: Cindy Clark sure knows her stuff.
- 

- Rewrite: Having something funny to say is totally awesome.
- 

**#2 - Avoid sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Do NOT begin sentences with subordinate conjunctions like: after, because, since, until, whenever, while, before, etc.**

- *Sentence fragments:*

- Incorrect: Why do I think the author's position is preposterous? Because he makes generalizations that I know are untrue.
  - Correct: I think the author's position is preposterous because he makes generalizations that I know are untrue.
  
  - Incorrect: Seattle is a great place to live. Having mountains, the ocean and forests nearby. If you can ignore the rain.
  - Correct: Seattle is a great place to live with mountains, the ocean, and forests nearby; however, you need to ignore the rain.
  
  - Rewrite: The academy has all the programs Angie will need. Except the sports program, which has been phased out.
- 
-

- Run-on sentences:

- Incorrect: Current insurance practices are unfair they discriminate against the people who need insurance.
  - Correct: Current insurance practices are unfair. They discriminate against the people who need insurance.
  - Correct: Current insurance practices are unfair; they discriminate against the people who need insurance.
  - Correct: Current insurance practices are unfair because they discriminate against the people who need insurance.
  - Rewrite: Current insurance practices are discriminatory, furthermore they make insurance too expensive for the poor and the middle class people also pay too much.
- 
- 

### #3: Use commas correctly.

- Incorrect: My advisor suggests that I compile a portfolio of, stock, bonds, and futures.
  - Correct: My advisor suggests that I compile a portfolio of stocks, bonds, and futures.
  - Incorrect: The newspaper, that has the most unpleasant editorials, is the *Record Times*.
  - Correct: The newspaper that has the most unpleasant editorials is the *Record Times*.
  - Incorrect: After the banquet Harold and Martha went dancing.
  - Correct: After the banquet, Harold and Martha went dancing.
  - Rewrite: It takes a friendly energetic smart person to be a successful salesman.
- 
- 

- Rewrite: Pushing through the panicked crowd the security guards frantically searched for the suspect.
- 
- 

### #4: Use semicolons correctly.

- Incorrect: Whooping cranes are an endangered species; and they are unlikely to survive if we continue to pollute.
  - Correct: Whooping cranes are an endangered species; they are unlikely to survive if we continue to pollute.
  - Correct: Whooping cranes are an endangered species; there are only 50 whooping cranes in New Jersey today.
  - Rewrite: You should always be prepared when you go on a camping trip, however you must avoid carrying unnecessary weight.
- 
-

**#5: Use colons correctly.**

- Incorrect: I want: a slice of pizza and a small green salad.
  - Correct: This is what I want: A slice of pizza and a small green salad.
  
  - Rewrite: The chef has created a masterpiece, the pasta is delicate yet firm, the mustard greens are fresh, and the medallions of beef are melting in my mouth.
- 
- 

**#6: Use hyphens and dashes correctly.**

- Incorrect: Sixty five students constitute a majority.
  - Correct: Sixty-five students constitute a majority.
  
  - Incorrect: The president elect was invited to chair the meeting.
  - Correct: The president-elect was invited to chair the meeting.
  
  - Incorrect: The three year old boy ate a large lunch.
  - Correct: The three-year-old boy ate a large lunch.
  
  - Rewrite: The child was able to count from one to ninety nine.
- 

- Rewrite: The adults only movie was banned from commercial TV.
- 

**#7: Use apostrophes correctly.**

- Incorrect: You're new suit is a great color.
  - Correct: Your new suit is a great color.
  
  - Incorrect: The dog hurt it's paw.
  - Correct: The dog hurt its paw.
  
  - Incorrect: We saw the foxes' bushy tail.
  - Correct: We saw the fox's bushy tail.
  
  - Rewrite: The presidents limousine had a flat tire.
- 

- Rewrite: Your going to love this movie.
-

**#8: Pay attention to subject-verb agreement.**

- Incorrect: The family have a long history.
  - Correct: The family has a long history.
  
  - Incorrect: The committee decide how to proceed.
  - Correct: The committee decides how to proceed.
  
  - Rewrite: The team run during practice.
- 

**#9: Use modifiers correctly.**

- Incorrect: Tom and Jen sat talking about the movie in the office.
  - Correct: Tom and Jen sat in the office talking about the movie.
  
  - Incorrect: The dentist instructed him regularly to brush his teeth.
  - Correct: The dentist instructed him to brush his teeth regularly.
  
  - Rewrite: Coming out of the woodwork, he was surprised to see termites.
- 

- Rewrite: The governor's conference met to discuss racial unrest in the auditorium.
- 

**#10: Use pronouns correctly.**

- Incorrect: The teacher told the student he was lazy. (Does "he" refer to the teacher or the student?)
  - Correct: The student was lazy, and the teacher told him so.
  
  - Incorrect: I would rather settle in Phoenix than in Albuquerque, although it lacks wonderful restaurants.
  - Correct: I would rather settle in Phoenix than in Albuquerque, although Phoenix lacks wonderful restaurants.
  
  - Rewrite: Sam told Mark he was upset that he arrived late.
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### #11: Pay attention to parallelism.

- Incorrect: They are sturdy, attractive, and are only costing a dollar each.
  - Correct: They are sturdy, attractive, and only cost a dollar each.
  
  - Incorrect: All students should learn word processing, accounting, and how to program computers.
  - Correct: All students should learn word processing, accounting, and computer programming.
  
  - Rewrite: The grocery baggers were ready, able, and were quite determined to do a great job.
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- Rewrite: The requirements for a business degree are not as strict as a law degree.
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### #12: Don't shift narrative voice.

- Incorrect: Just by following the news, you can readily see how politicians have a vested interest in pleasing powerful interest groups, but one should not generalize about this tendency.
  - Correct: Just by following the news, one can readily see how politicians have a vested interest in pleasing powerful interest groups, but one should not generalize about this tendency.
  
  - Rewrite: I am disgusted with the waste we tolerate in this country. One cannot simply stand by without adding to such waste; living here makes you wasteful.
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\*Adapted from the Kaplan New SAT Writing Workbook