

Common Grammar and Writing Errors

Proofreading—The Most Important Part of Writing

Always closely read over your paper before turning it in to your professor. You can easily find many of your errors through simply proofreading. Ways to help you check your papers include:

- Read one line at a time.
Take a blank piece of paper or a ruler and cover up your text below each line as you read. You will focus more on each line and each word using this method.
- If you are an oral learner rather than a visual learner (you learn better through hearing than seeing), read each sentence out loud.
- On a timed test, estimate how much time you will need for proofreading and save that amount of time toward the end of the test.
- Check for the following common grammar and writing errors.

Two Sentences Smushed Together (also known as a Run-on Sentence or a Comma Splice)—a very big mistake

Two sentences are smushed together if the sentence looks like the following:

subject-verb, subject-verb

To fix:

- Separate the sentences, or
- Use transition word(s).

One example is:

Minnie wants to go to the beach, Daisy wants to go shopping. **Wrong.**

The easy fix is to use two sentences—replace the comma with a period.
(Do not forget to capitalize the beginning of the new sentence.)

If you want to keep the sentences connected, insert a transition word:

Minnie wants to go to the beach, but Daisy wants to go shopping.

Sentence Structure and Clarity—Especially for Long Sentences

- If you are having issues with grammar, use shorter sentences and concentrate on using:
 - Subject-Verb-Object
Example: Jack [subject] hit [verb] the soccer ball [object].
 - Subject-Verb-Adjective
Example: The teacher [subject] is [verb] really nice [adjective].

- Get rid of extra, unneeded, possibly duplicative words.

Note: some countries expect students to write in long sentences, but not in the United States. Clarity is much more important than length.

- Make sure your sentences have at least a subject and verb.
A sentence without both a subject and a verb is called a **fragment** and is **a major error.**

A few types of situations do not require both a subject and a verb, such as with commands, for example:

Review your paper before turning it in. (no subject)

Also, exclamations do not have a subject and verb, for example:
“Oh, boy!” said Mickey.

Repetitiveness

Combine sentences to avoid repetition, for example:

The employees of Mickey’s Corporation are going to have a big BBQ at Lakeside Park. Lakeside Park is located on Malibu Canyon Road. Malibu Canyon Road is just off Pacific Coast Highway.

A sentence, such as the following, could avoid this repetitiveness:
The employees of Mickey’s Corporation are going to have a big BBQ at Lakeside Park, which is located on Malibu Canyon Road and just off Pacific Coast Highway.

Also avoid similar words within one sentence that do not sound good together, but do not be afraid to repeat words when necessary.