Top 10 Common Writing Mistakes

10. **Redundancy** – the use of more words than necessary to convey meaning.

**Examples:**

- They were *both* alike
- a *total of* 68 participants
- four *different* groups
- *absolutely* essential
- has been *previously* found
- small *in size*

- *one and* the same
- in *close* proximity
- *period of* time
- summarize *briefly*
- the reason is *because*
- *completely* unanimous
9. **Incorrect Parallel Structure** - parallel ideas are not presented in a parallel or coordinating form.

**Examples:**

*Incorrect* –
Results show that such changes could be made without affecting error rate *and latencies* continued to decrease over time.

*Correct* –
Results show that such changes could be made without affecting error rate *and that latencies* continued to decrease over time.

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**Parallel Structure, cont.**

*Incorrect* –
The participants were told to make themselves comfortable, to read the instructions, and *that they should ask* about anything they did not understand.

*Correct* –
The participants were told to make themselves comfortable, to read the instructions, and *to ask* about anything they did not understand.

*Incorrect* –
We recorded the difference between the performance of subjects who completed the first task *and the second task*.

*Correct* –
We recorded the difference between the performance of subjects who completed the first task *and the performance of those who completed the second task*. 
8. Misrepresentation of Numbers - In general, numerals are used to express numbers 10 and above and words are used to express numbers below 10.

**Numbers Expressed in Numerals:**
- 12 cm wide
- The remaining 10%
- 25 years old
- the 15th trial
- 13 lists
- 105 stimulus words

**Numbers Expressed in Words:**
- one fifth of the class
- two-thirds majority
- Twelve students improved, and 12 students did not improve.
- the Twelve Apostles
- Five Pillars of Islam

**Special cases –**
- Numbers that immediately precede a unit of measurement (a **5-mg** dose, **10.54** cm of . . .)
- Numbers that represent statistical or mathematical functions, fractional or decimal quantities, percentages, ratios, and percentiles (multiplied by **5, 3** times as many)
- Numbers that represent time, dates, ages, scores and points on a scale, and numerals as numerals (1 hr **34** min, 2-year-olds, scored **4** on a **7**-point scale)
- Numbers that denote a specific place in a numbered series, parts of books and tables, and each number in a list of four or more numbers (Grade **8**, Table **3**, row **5**)

Numbers, cont
7. Improper Use of Semicolons and Colons

**Semicolon** – part period and part comma ( ; ), used to indicate a close relationship between two independent clauses or separate elements in a series that already contain commas

**Examples:**
The participants in the first study were paid; those in the second were unpaid.

age, M=34.5 years, 95% CI [29.4, 39.6]; years of education, M=10.4 [8.7, 12.1]; and weekly income, M=612 [522, 702]

**Semicolon/Colon Usage, cont.**

**Colon** – ( : ), means “note what follows,” used before a list of items, before a long, formal statement or quotation, or between independent clauses when the second clause explains or restates the idea of the first

**Examples:**
For example, Freud (1930/1961) wrote of two urges: an urge toward union with others and an egoistic urge toward happiness.

They have agreed on the outcome: Informed participants perform better than do uninformed participants.
6. **Lack of Subject/Verb Agreement** – The subject and verb of a sentence must agree in number, regardless of intervening phrases.

**Examples:**
*Incorrect* – The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increases with practice.

*Correct* – The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increase with practice.

*Incorrect* – The data indicates that Terrence was correct.

*Correct* – The data indicate that Terrence was correct.

Let’s practice what we have discussed so far!
In this study, the annual rainfall trends were analyzed using daily precipitation data from 1890 through 2011 in Kansas with three methods: linear regression model and Mann-Kendall and Spearman tests. A gradual increase in total annual rainfall was found for 21 out of 23 stations with 7 significant trends and a greater increase for recent years (1951 through 2011) and eastern part. The average trend slope for the state is 68 mm/10yr with a minimum value of -85 mm/10yr for Saint Francis in Northwest and a maximum value of 20 mm/10yr for Independence in Southeast.
5. **Ambiguous Pronouns** – Pronouns replace nouns. Each pronoun should refer clearly to its antecedent and should agree with the antecedent in number and gender.

**Examples:**

*Incorrect* –
Neither the highest scorer nor the lowest scorer in the group had any doubt about *their* competence.

*Correct* –
Neither the highest scorer nor the lowest scorer in the group had any doubt about *his or her* competence.

**Ambiguous Pronouns, cont.**

*Incorrect* –
The students *that* completed the task successfully were rewarded.

*Correct* –
The students *who* completed the task successfully were rewarded.

*Incorrect* –
One of the researchers *were* responsible for the statistical analysis.

*Correct* –
One of the researchers *was* responsible for the statistical analysis.

*Incorrect* –
*Those* pair of pups is coming closer.

*Correct* –
*That* pair of pups is coming closer.
4. **Incorrect Comma Usage** – should be used between elements in a series, to set off a nonessential clause, to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction, and to set off the year in exact dates.

**Examples:**

*Incorrect* –
the height, width or depth

*Correct* –
the height, width, or depth

*Incorrect* –
Switch A which was on a panel controlled the recording device.

*Correct* –
Switch A, which was on a panel, controlled the recording device.

**Comma Usage, cont.**

*Incorrect* –
Cedar shavings covered the floor and paper was available for shredding.

*Correct* –
Cedar shavings covered the floor, and paper was available for shredding.

*Incorrect* –
April 18 1992 was the correct date.

*Correct* –
April 18, 1992, was the correct date.

*Correct* –
April 1992 was the correct month.
Comma Usage, cont.

**Do not use a comma before an essential clause, between two parts of a compound predicate, or to separate parts of measurement.**

Incorrect –
The switch, that stops the recording device, also controls the light.

Correct –
The switch that stops the recording device also controls the light.

Incorrect –
All subjects completed the first phase of the experiment, and returned for Phase 2.

Correct –
All subjects completed the first phase of the experiment and returned for Phase 2.

Correct –
8 years 2 months 3 min 40 s

3. Vague Word Choices – Every single word should be specific and exactly what you intend it to mean.

Examples:
Incorrect –
Articles by psychologists like Skinner and Watson . . .

Correct –
Articles by psychologists such as Skinner and Watson . . .

Words to avoid:
important, like, some, good, different, very few, feel, etc!!!!
2. Ending a Sentence with a Preposition – A preposition is used with a noun or pronoun to show the relationship between the noun or pronoun and another word in the sentence.

**Examples:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>about</td>
<td>beside</td>
<td>like</td>
<td>toward</td>
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<td>above</td>
<td>between</td>
<td>near</td>
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<td>across</td>
<td>beyond</td>
<td>of</td>
<td>until</td>
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<td>after</td>
<td>but</td>
<td>off</td>
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<td>against</td>
<td>by</td>
<td>on</td>
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<td>down</td>
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<td>through</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>beneath</td>
<td>into</td>
<td>to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prepositions, cont.**

*Incorrect –*
That is a situation I have not thought of.

*Correct –*
I have not thought of that situation.

*Incorrect –*
She is a person I cannot cope with.

*Correct –*
She is a person with whom I cannot cope.
1. Lack of Proofreading!

Tips:

• Reread your own writing, especially out loud! You will be amazed how many errors you catch by rereading or listening to your own written words.
• Enlist a fresh pair of eyes. Ask a friend, spouse, roommate, family member, etc, to read your document and offer any helpful comments or suggestions. If your document is extremely long, offer chapters or sections to others to read.
• Utilize outside resources such as reputable websites, faculty advisors, on-campus Writing Center, or editors (me!).

**A vast majority of the time, you are your own best editor!!!**

Additional Editing Resources

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/index.htm
(Sponsored by Capital Community College Foundation)

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

www.grammarly.com
(This service requires a subscription – 29.95/month or 11.66/month annually.)


ERGP Editor –
Tamara Robinson, tamarar@ksu.edu
https://www.engg.ksu.edu/content/engineering-research-news
More Self-Editing Practice!

Usually a proper power balance between the generators and the loads is a prerequisite for stable and efficient functioning of a power system. In shipboard power system, though the power to the loads is supplied by the generators, there are various reasons as to why an effective energy storage system is required. In some cases, due to the inability of the supply power to sufficiently satisfy the peak power demand in a power system, energy storage systems are needed to serve as additional means of source since the power demand is beyond the capacity of the generators. Other reasons for using energy storage devices could be to compensate for the unbalanced power, if any, and hence improve system stability.
Gobbledygook – For Fun!!!

1. This establishment affords you an unobstructed entrance and is conducting business within.
2. Bring your vehicle to a complete halt.
3. It is undesirable for you to supply nourishment to the mammals in this institution.
4. Refrain from perambulating across the thoroughfare.
5. This merchandise is available for acquisition.
6. The ejection of paper, cans, and other garbage from your vehicle onto the highway is against the law.
7. It is requested that you not propel yourself through any part of this clear, colorless liquid.
8. Use the portal beneath this notification to penetrate these premises.
9. The igniting and inhaling of tobacco is forbidden.
10. This roadway comes to an abrupt termination, making it impossible to proceed farther.

**A majority of information used for this presentation is from: