

Grammar Mistakes

Basic Subject and Verb

A subject and verb must match in number and in person. Singular subjects do not end in –s or –es, but plural subjects do not in –s or –es. It is the opposite for verbs; singular verbs do not end in –s or –es and plural verbs do not end in –s or –es.

Missing Verb Ending

Verb endings such as –s, –es, –ed, or –d are not always pronounced when spoken. The proper ending must be added to the correct verb tense.

Sentence Fragment

Avoid sentence fragments, which usually lack a subject or verb, or begins with a subordinating word.

Run-On Sentences

Avoid independent clauses written without any punctuation between them. Correct a run-on sentence by dividing it into separate sentences, adding a comma and coordinating conjunction, or adding a semicolon. A semicolon may be used alone or with a transitional expression.

Incorrect Possessive Apostrophe

To demonstrate ownership, either an apostrophe and an –s or an apostrophe alone is added to the word representing the thing that possesses the other. An apostrophe and –s are used for singular nouns, indefinite pronouns, and plural nouns that do not end in –s. For plural nouns ending in –s, only the apostrophe is used.

Its / It's Confusion

The possessive pronoun its means “of it” or “belonging to it.” The contradiction it’s is the shortened form of it is or it has.

Incorrect Preposition

Prepositions express unique meanings; use the correct one.

Unnecessary Shift in Tense

Verb tense shifts confuse the reader. Do not move from one time to another in a sentence.

Unnecessary Shift in Pronoun

Pronoun shifts occur when a pronoun used to refer to someone or something shifts to another for no reason. The most common shift is from one to you or I.

Vague Pronoun Reference

Pronouns such as he, she, it, they, this, that, or which should refer to a specific word or words elsewhere in the sentence or previous sentence. When the pronoun could refer to more than one word, the sentence is unclear. The sentence is also unclear when the pronoun refers to a word that is implied but not stated.

Reference Implied and Not Stated

Most pronouns are used to replace other words, so they do not have to be repeated. The word that the pronoun replaces is called the antecedent. Pronouns must agree with their antecedents.

Missing Series Comma

A comma is required between at least three parallel words, phrases, or clauses that appear in a sentence.

Missing Comma After Introductory Element

If there is a pause between the introductory element (word, phrase, or clause) and the main part of the sentence, the pause is signaled by a comma. This indicates the place where the independent clause begins.

Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

The two independent clauses of a compound sentence may be linked by either a semicolon or by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

Commas in Complex Sentences

A complex sentence consists of one independent clause and at least one dependent, or subordinate, clause. When the dependent clauses appears first, it is followed by a comma. When the independent clause appears first, a comma is not used.

Comma Splice

A comma splice occurs when two or more independent clauses are joined together with only a comma between them. This is corrected with a semicolon, a coordinating conjunction, or a period.

Missing Comma(s) With a Nonrestrictive Element

A nonrestrictive element is not essential to the meaning of the sentence; it could be deleted without destroying the sentence's basic meaning. While nonessential elements may be excluded, proper punctuation is essential.

Unnecessary Comma(s) With a Restrictive Element

A restrictive element is a word, phrase, or clause that is essential to the sentence's meaning. A comma should not be present in the sentence.

Incorrect Comma Use With Verb and its Subject

Do not use a comma to separate a verb from its subject.

Incorrect Comma Separation

Do not separate a pair of words, phrases, or subordinate clauses joined by and, or, or nor.

Incorrect Comma Use in Conjunction

Do not use a comma after and, but, although, because, or another conjunction.