



Other Common Errors

Articles (*the, an, and a*)

the is used to refer to something specific. *a* and *an* are used when you're speaking in general.

Examples:

- **Please give me the blue coffee cup.** (*the* is used because the speaker wants a specific cup.)
- **Please give me a coffee cup.** (*a* is used because the speaker wants any coffee cup, not a specific one.)

Infinitives

Infinitives are the word *to* joined with a verb.

To is also a preposition, so be careful not to confuse infinitives and prepositional phrases!

Infinitives: *to* followed by a verb (*to go, to smile, to walk*)

Prepositions: *to* followed by a noun (*to the park, to Susie, to my sister*)

Prepositions of Time and Place (*at, in, on*)

At is used for a specific time or location: **We will meet *at* 7 p.m. We will meet *at* the mall.**

On is used for specific days and the surfaces of objects: **The meeting is *on* Thursday. Put the folder *on* the table.**

In is used for part of the day/time or a particular place/space: **We go to the store *in* the mornings. I live *in* Florida.**

Works Cited

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Sentence Fragments

A **sentence fragment** is an incomplete sentence because it doesn't express a complete thought.

Usually these sentences are missing something, like a subject or verb.

- **Fragment:** Anna, the best baseball player in town. (The sentence has a subject, but not a verb.)
- **Correction:** Anna is the best baseball player in town. (This is a complete thought because it now has a linking verb *is*.)

Some fragments have both subject and verb, but still are incomplete thoughts.

- **Fragment:** Because it rained. (*Because* is a subordinating conjunction, and makes the reader wonder what happened as a result of the rain.)
- **Correction:** Because it rained, the ball game was postponed. (This sentence has the independent clause "the ball game was postponed," which tells the reader what happened as a result of the rain.)

Run-On Sentences

A **run-on sentence** is a sentence that expresses more than one complete thought without proper punctuation: a comma with a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon, or a period.

- **Run-on:** After the ballgame *we all went to Jamie's house then we made burgers* afterwards *we watched a movie*.
- **Correction:** After the ballgame, *we all went to Jamie's house; then we made burgers*. Afterwards, *we watched a movie*. (Notice how the three independent clauses, which are in different colors, were punctuated.)
- **Alternative Correction:** After the ballgame, we all went to Jamie's house, made burgers, and watched a movie. (Here is another way to revise the same run-on without repeating yourself.)

⇒ **Tip:** Look for independent clauses first and make sure they're connected with the correct punctuation.

Pronoun Usage

Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns. Examples include words like *he, she, I, they*, and *you*.

Pronouns' antecedents are the words that the pronouns are replacing.

Pronouns must agree in gender and number with their antecedents.

Example:

- **Ask Jane and Matt if they want to come.** (The sentence is talking about Jane and Matt together, so the plural pronoun *they* is needed.)
- **Tell Jane or Mary I will pick her up.** (The word *or* in this sentence indicates the girls are separate, not a unit, so the singular pronoun *her* is needed.)

Some pronouns, called indefinite pronouns, don't refer to a specific person, place, or thing. Examples include words like *everyone, all, many, some*, and *nobody*.

These are usually followed by other pronouns, which must agree in number and gender.

Examples:

- **Everyone on the trip must have a name on his or her luggage.** (*Everyone* means each person will be acting individually, so it must be followed by a singular pronoun *his or her*.)
- **All club members must have their dues paid before they can go on the trip.** (*All* refers to the people as a group, so the plural pronouns *their* and *they* are needed.)

Tip: When using an indefinite pronoun, ask yourself if the sentence is referring to a group as one unit, or as individuals. This will help you choose not only the right pronoun, but the right verb as well.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Verbs have singular and plural forms just like nouns and pronouns do. Singular subjects need singular verbs and plural subjects need plural verbs.

Singular subjects include words like *he, she, the dog*, and *Sam*. Plural subjects include words like *you, they*, and *the people*.

Examples:

- **Sam walks our dog every afternoon.** (*Sam* is singular, so you use the singular form of the verb, which is *walks*.)
- **We walk our dog every afternoon.** (*We* is plural, so this time you need the plural form of the verb, which is *walk*.)

⇒ **Remember!** Adding an *s* to a noun makes it plural, but adding an *s* to a verb makes it singular!

Verb Tenses and Forms

Verb tenses tell the reader when a particular action happened, in the past or in the present. Verbs can be irregular or regular. Regular verbs all change the same way.

Examples:

- We *walk* our dog every afternoon.
- We *walked* our dog yesterday

The first is talking about an action that is still occurring, while the second is talking about an action that occurred in the past.

⇒ **Remember!** Many verbs are irregular, and they will NOT change this way (e.g. *write, wrote, written* and *go, went, gone*)

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