Ten Most Common Grammar Errors

1. **Comma Splice**: A comma splice occurs when a comma is placed between two complete sentences. **Sample Sentence with Comma Splice**: Joey went to the grocery store, he needed to buy eggs for breakfast. **Three corrections**: Joey went to the grocery store; he needed to buy eggs for breakfast. Joey went to the grocery store, for he needed to buy eggs for breakfast. Joey went to the grocery store because he needed to buy eggs for breakfast.

2. **Sentence Fragment**: Fragments are incomplete sentences. **Sample Sentence Fragment**: During the first act of *Twelfth Night*. **One correction**: During the first act of *Twelfth Night*, Viola and Orsino meet.

3. **The Run-on Sentence**: Run-on sentences join two or more complete sentences with no punctuation. **Sample Run-on Sentence**: Michaela loves to draw horses she is a talented artist. **Two corrections**: Michaela loves to draw horses, and she is a talented artist. We are not surprised that Michaela is able to draw horses because she is a talented artist.

4. **Pronoun Reference**: Pronouns should refer to specific antecedents. **Sample Sentence with Pronoun Reference Problem**: They seriously consider publishing short story collections when some of the stories have already been published in journals. **One correction**: Publishers seriously consider publishing short story collections when some of the stories have already been published in journals. **Another correction**: Instead of writing “Each person should follow his or her dreams,” write the following: “All people should follow their dreams.”

5. **Faulty Parallelism**: When two elements of a sentence are similar in meaning, writers need to express these elements in parallel form. In other words, all linked words should match in form. **Sample Sentence with Faulty Parallel Structure**: Shakespeare wrote comedies, tragedies, romances, and the plays based on historical figures. **One correction**: Shakespeare wrote comedies, tragedies, romances, and history plays.

6. **Wordiness**: Wordy sentences use too many useless words that clutter writing. **Sample Wordy Sentence**: For all intents and purposes, the reason Mr. Henderson arrived late for work was due to the fact that he stopped at many traffic lights that were red in color. **One correction**: Mr. Henderson arrived late for work because he stopped at numerous red lights.

7. **Misplaced and Dangling Modifier**: Misplaced and dangling modifiers are phrases that are not located properly in relation to the words they modify. **Sentence with Misplaced Modifier**: A small book sat on the desk that Sarah had read. **One correction**: A small book that Sarah had read sat on the desk. **Sentence with Dangling Participle**: Walking through the park, the grass tickled my feet. **One correction**: Walking through the park, I found that the grass tickled my feet.

8. **The Passive Voice**: Avoid using the passive voice (form of be and past participle) when possible. The active voice is strong, dynamic, and direct.
**Sentence with Passive Voice:** The horse was seen by Carolyn. **One correction:** Carolyn saw the horse.

9. **Disagreeing Subject and Verb:** The subject of a sentence must agree in number (singular vs. plural) and in person (first, second, or third person) with the verb. **Sample Disagreement Sentence:** Neither Edna’s neighbors nor her husband agree with her decision. **One correction:** Neither Edna’s neighbors nor her husband agrees with her decision. **Note:** In this case, go with the subject nearer to the verb.

10. **The Faulty Apostrophe:** Faulty apostrophes (indicating ownership) can be used when writing sentences having singular and plural nouns, compound nouns, joint ownership, possessive pronouns, and indefinite pronouns. **Sentences with Faulty Apostrophes and Their Corrections in ( ) Sentences:** Jenna and Morris walked they’re four dogs every day. (Jenna and Morris walked their four dogs every day.) The dogs would often run on other peoples’ lawns. (The dogs would often run on other people’s lawns.) Jenna took away the four dog’s privileges. (Jenna took away the four dogs’ privileges.) **Rule of Thumb:** To show possession with a singular noun, add ‘s to the noun. (See Note below.) For a plural noun, if the word neither ends with an “s,” nor with an “s” or “z” sound, then add ‘s. For a plural noun, if the word ends with an “s,” or with an “s” or “z” sound, then add the apostrophe.

Source: [http://ace.acadiau.ca/english/grammar/intro.htm](http://ace.acadiau.ca/english/grammar/intro.htm)


Note: An exception to the rule about adding ‘s to make a noun possessive occurs when the word is singular and already has two “s” sounds at the end. In cases like the following, an apostrophe is all that is needed:

Mr. Moses’ application
The crisis’ dimensions