

No comma after introductory element

In Plain English: If a sentence begins with a phrase or clause or transition, you probably need a comma to separate it from the independent clause that follows. In other words, use a comma after an introduction or opener (Anderson 90).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber: -The Subordinating Conjunction

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Use a comma to set off an opener.

Opener, SENTENCE.

Vague pronoun reference

In Plain English: If the reader can't tell which word(s) a pronoun **refers** to (the antecedent), that makes a vague pronoun **reference**. Pronouns (pro meaning "for") stand in for nouns, keeping the writing succinct and less repetitive. What a pronoun replaces has to be easy for the reader to see. Pronouns also establish the point of view of the narrator (Anderson 104).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

First Person (*I, we voice*):

Second Person (*you voice*)

Third Person (*he, she, it, they voice*):

No comma in compound sentence

In Plain English: Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses. Conjunctions are connectors that link equal words, phrases, or clauses. Coordinating conjunction cue readers in on the relations between ideas (Anderson 84).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Wrong word

In Plain English:

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Let's make a list of words that are used JUST WRONG!

No comma in nonrestrictive element

In Plain English: When a group of words interrupts a sentence, it needs to have commas on both sides. Use two commas to set off nonessential information (Anderson 93).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Nonrestrictive elements may also be known as appositives, asides, parentheticals, or adjectives out of order. Interrupters gives the writer the options of adding information, like a double experience, and provides more detail.

Wrong/missing inflected endings

In Plain English: Inflected endings such as -s, -es, -ed, and -ing that are often dropped in speech and writing. Dropping the inflectional ending essentially drops the verb tense. This error is a close cousin to subject-verb agreement, but it is strictly about articulating and attending to the endings of verbs (Anderson 121).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Subject-verb disagreement, tense shifts, irregular verbs

In writing, those one of two letters at the end of a verb means everything about the when the event happen. Readers cling to those kinds of clues, and when there is a shift, it is necessary.

Wrong or missing prepositions

In Plain English: A preposition shows the relationship between a noun and other words in a sentence. Some teachers say a preposition is everywhere a cat can go. Prepositions make our writing clearer, orienting the reader in time and space, showing relationship. They may serve as transitions between ideas. Leaving out a preposition or using the wrong one makes readers stumble (Anderson 74).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Common reposition lists: above, against, along, among, around, at, behind, below, beside, between, beyond, by, down, from, in, inside, into, near, on, out, outside, over, past, though, to, toward, under, underneath, up, and within.

Comma splice

In Plain English: Coordinating conjunctions, such as and, but and or, join words and phrases and clauses of equal importance. Even though the comma splice appears to be a repeat of having no comma in a compound sentence, it's not. It the same song, second verse. This time the error lies in leaving out the coordinating conjunction and using a comma when a semicolon or period would be more appropriate (Anderson 87).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

The comma is there, but the conjunction is nowhere to be found. It can be easily corrected with a semicolon or a period.

Possessive apostrophe error

In Plain English: Use an apostrophe to show a contraction or to show ownership or possession. The apostrophe always communicates possession or contraction (Anderson 113).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Confusion over homophones (spelling), possessives and contractions.

Tense shift

In Plain English: Verbs tell when the action in writing takes place. Another close cousin to subject-verb disagreement, this error focuses on consistency of tense what shifts mean (Anderson 127).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Inconsistent tense-Keep your tenses logical and consistent. Verbs must live in the same time zone. Don't bob and weave from past to present to future. Make sure there is a reason behind the shift (maybe for effect, a flashback, some shift in time), but sloppy shifts disrupt the flow in writing.

Unnecessary shift in person

In Plain English:

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Sentence Fragments

In Plain English: A sentence must contain at least one subject and one verb, and it must form a complete thought. A fragment is missing a subject or verb, and/or it doesn't contain a complete thought (Anderson 64).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber: *Incomplete sentence, non-sentence, intentional fragment. A fragment is not a sentence. It may have a capital letter, maybe even a period, but an important element has to be missing. Identify fragments and develop them to be complete.*

Wrong tense or verb form

In Plain English: Present is RIGHT NOW. Leave verbs as is unless using he/she/it voice. Past is ALREADY HAPPENED. These verbs usually need the ending of -ed. There is a long list of irregular verbs that we will visit also. Those need to be memorized (Anderson 123).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

There are irregular verbs that need to be memorized. Once you get them, write them down and study each one. If a regular verb, remember the pattern above.

Subject-verb agreement

In Plain English: A verb expresses action, existence (state of being), or an occurrence. A subject is a noun or noun phrase that is *doing* or being something in a sentence. Verbs must agree with their subjects in number and person (Anderson 118).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Agreeing number and person, singular and plural.

Lack of comma in a series

In Plain English: Use commas to separate a series of three or more things, actions, or phrases. Commas in a series separate items or actions so the reader can identify each intended item. In other words, use commas as separators to keep the items or actions in discrete chunks and to ease communication (Anderson 99).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Commas in a series help with parallelism and balance. It makes the list look more professional. The key is making sure they are of equal value for balance.

Pronoun agreement error

In Plain English: Pronoun agreement error is a mismatch between the pronoun and its antecedent, involving gender, number, and person (Anderson 107).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Pronouns and their antecedents were made for each other. They are the perfect couple, and when they join together for a kiss, it just seems right.

Unnecessary comma with restrictive element

In Plain English: When a group of words interrupts a sentence, it needs to have commas on both sides. Use two commas to set off nonessential information (Anderson 93).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Nonessential elements can also be known as appositives, asides, parentheticals, or adjectives out of order. They add information to a sentence. The interrupter gives the writer the option to add more information and to give double exposure to the preceding noun. It gives more details.

Run-on or fused sentences

In Plain English: A run-on sentence is created when two or more independent clauses are placed together without proper punctuation or connectors. Connectors may be transition words or coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (Anderson 68).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

*"Playing with long sentences does not mean ignoring basic rules." -Constance Hale, Sin and Syntax
Lack of end marks, lack of punctuation, and stringy sentences make it difficult to read the writing. If reading your work has a "and then-itus" effect, it's difficult to appreciate.*

Dangling or misplaced modifier

In Plain English: Modifiers are words or phrases that describe or modify part of a sentence. Modifiers dangle when it's not clear what they describe. Modifiers usually need to be near the idea (noun) they are meant to describe or modify. Correctly placed modifiers sharpen the image of sentences and combine multiple ideas or actions in one sentence (Anderson 71).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

Modifiers change a sentence's structure and meaning. They should be placed as close as possible to the nouns they modify to prevent confusion. Always remember the statement, "Your modifier is showing."

It's versus its error

In Plain English: Can you replace *it* with *it is*? Then use *it's*. If *it* is showing possession, then *it's* *its*. Yes, *it's* is a rule that goes against the major rule you have learned with using *'s* (Anderson 113).

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Example:

Grammar Grabber:

*Read it in a sentence to hear what works best. If you can separate it with *it is*, you know to use the *'s*.*

Mechanically Inclined:

Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop

By Jeff Anderson

Ms. Mathews-English 11

Classroom Flashcards