

Typical Grammatical Errors: Definitions & Examples



Sentence Fragment - A word group that lacks a subject or a verb and does not express a complete thought

Incorrect: Studying the rules in his driver's manual.

Correct: Studying the rules in his driver's manual, he realized he wasn't ready for the test.

Run-On – When two complete sentences are run together with no adequate sign given to mark the break between them.

Incorrect: Our television set obviously needs repairs the color keeps fading from the picture.

Correct: Our television set obviously needs repairs; the color keeps fading from the picture.

Verb Conjugation – there are standard forms for conjugating (I talk, he talks, etc) regular and irregular verbs which must be used to create a correct sentence

*Incorrect: My roommate and I **seen** a double feature this weekend.*

*Correct: My roommate and I **saw** a double feature this weekend.*

Subject Verb Disagreement – A verb must agree with its subject in quantity (singular vs. plural)

*Incorrect: The **cost** of those new tires**are** more than I can afford.*

*Correct: The **cost** of those new tires**is** more than I can afford.*

Inconsistent Verb Tense – Verbs should not shift from the past to the present unnecessarily in the same sentence.

*Incorrect: Last summer, a burglar **smash** my car window and **stole** my jacket.*

*Correct: Last summer, a burglar **smashed** my car window and **stole** my jacket.*

Pronoun Reference – A pronoun, which takes the place of a noun, must:

1. agree in number (singular/plural) with the word it replaces

*Incorrect: **Neither** of the girls brought**their** umbrellas.*

*Correct: **Neither** of the girls brought**her** umbrella.*

2. should not shift its point of view (first/second/third person) unnecessarily

*Incorrect: **I** like to shop at factory outlets because **you** can always get brand names at a discount.*

*Correct: **I** like to shop at factory outlets because **I** can always get brand names at a discount.*

Misplaced Modifier – Words that, because of awkward placement, do not enhance the words the writer intended them to describe

Incorrect: Anita returned the hamburger to the supermarket that was spoiled.

Correct: Anita returned the hamburger that was spoiled to the supermarket

Faulty Parallelism – Words in a pair or series (list) should have parallel structure (all noun phrases, all verb phrases, consistent verb tenses or forms within a verb phrase, etc)

*Incorrect: Three remedies for insomnia are warm milk, **taking** a hot bath, and medication.*

Correct: Three remedies for insomnia are warm milk, a hot bath, and medication.

*Incorrect: In the afternoon, I studied two chapters, heated a bowl of soup, and**was watching** TV.*

*Correct: In the afternoon, I studied two chapters, heated a bowl of soup, and**watched** TV.*

Some material excerpted from *Sentence Skills with Readings* by John Langan