#### 1. Missing comma after an introductory element

- Determined to get the job done, we worked all weekend.
- In German, nouns are always capitalized.

Readers usually need a small pause between an introductory word, phrase, or clause and the main part of the sentence, a pause most often signaled by a comma. Try to get into the habit of using a comma after every introductory element. When the introductory element is very short, you don't always need a comma after it. But you're never wrong if you do use a comma.

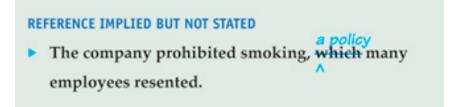
### 2. Vague pronoun reference

POSSIBLE REFERENCE TO MORE THAN ONE WORD

Transmitting radio signals by satellite is a way of

overcoming the problem of scarce airwaves and the airwaves limiting how they are used.

Does they refer to the signals or the airwaves? The editing clarifies what is being limited.



What does which refer to? The editing clarifies what employees resented.

A **pronoun** - a word such as she, yourself, her, it, this, who, or which - should clearly refer to the word or words it replaces (called the **antecedent**) elsewhere in the sentence or in a previous sentence. If more than one word could be the antecedent or if no specific antecedent is present in the sentence, edit to make the meaning clear.

#### 3. Missing comma in a compound sentence

The words "I do" may sound simple, but they mean a life commitment.

A **compound sentence** consists of two or more parts that could each stand alone as a sentence. When the parts are joined by a **coordinating conjunction** - and, but, so, yet, or, nor, or for - use a comma before the conjunction to indicate a pause between the two thoughts. In very short sentences, the comma is optional if the sentence can be easily understood without it. But you'll never be wrong to use a comma.

#### 4. Wrong word

 Paradise Lost contains many allusions to classical mythology.

Illusions means "false ideas or appearances," and allusions means "references."

 Working at a computer all day often means being sedentary sedate for long periods of time.

Sedate means "composed, dignified," and sedentary means "requiring much sitting."

Wrong-word errors can involve mixing up words that sound alike, using a word with the wrong shade of meaning, or using a word with a completely wrong meaning. Many wrong-word errors are due to the improper use of homonyms - words that are pronounced alike but spelled differently, such as *their* and *there*.

#### 5. Missing comma(s) with a nonrestrictive element

Marina, who was the president of the club, was first to speak.

The reader does not need the clause who was the president of the club to know the basic meaning of the sentence: Marina was first to speak.

A **nonrestrictive element** - one that is not essential to the basic meaning of the sentence - could be removed and the sentence would still make sense. Use commas to set off any nonrestrictive parts of a sentence.

#### 6. Wrong or missing verb ending



It's easy to forget the **verb** endings -s (or -es) and -ed (or -d) because they are not always pronounced clearly when spoken. In addition, some varieties of English use the endings in ways that are different from uses in academic and professional English.

## 7. Wrong or missing preposition



In and on both show place, but use on with a street and in with a city.

President Richard Nixon compared the United States with a "pitiful, helpless giant."

Compare to means "regard as similar"; compare with means "to examine to find similarities or differences."

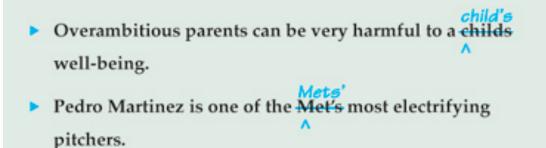
Many words in English are regularly used with a particular **preposition** to express a particular meaning. Throwing a ball to someone is different from throwing a ball at someone. Because many prepositions are short and not stressed or pronounced clearly in speech, they are often accidentally left out or mixed up in writing.

#### 8. Comma splice

- Westward migration had passed Wyoming by, even the discovery of gold in nearby Montana failed to attract settlers.
- I was strongly attracted to her, she had special qualities.
- We hated the meat loaf, the cafeteria served it every Friday.

A **comma splice** occurs when only a comma separates **clauses** that could each stand alone as a sentence. To correct a comma splice, you can insert a semicolon or period, connect the clauses clearly with a word such as and or because, or restructure the sentence.

#### 9. Missing or misplaced possessive apostrophe



To make a noun **possessive**, add either an apostrophe and an -s (Ed's book) or an apostrophe alone (the boys' gym).

#### 10. Unnecessary shift in tense

A few countries produce almost all of the world's affects illegal drugs, but addiction affected many countries.

Priya was watching the great blue heron take off. Then slipped fell she slips and falls into the swamp.

**Verb tenses** tell readers when actions take place: saying Ron <u>went</u> to school indicates a past action whereas saying he <u>will go</u> indicates a future action. Verbs that shift from one tense to another with no clear reason can confuse readers.

#### 11. Unnecessary shift in pronoun

When one first sees a painting by Georgia O'Keeffe, you are impressed by a sense of power and stillness.

An unnecessary **pronoun** shift occurs when a writer who has been using one pronoun to refer to someone or something shifts to another pronoun for no apparent reason.

#### 12. Sentence fragment

#### NO SUBJECT

Marie Antoinette spent huge sums of money on Her extravagance herself and her favorites. And helped bring on the French Revolution.



Sitting cannot function alone as the verb of the sentence. The auxiliary verb was makes it a complete verb.



A **sentence fragment** is part of a sentence that is written as if it were a whole sentence, with a capital letter at the beginning and a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point at the end. A fragment may lack a **subject**, a complete **verb**, or both. Other fragments may begin with a **subordinating conjunction**, such as because, and so depend for their meaning on another sentence. Reading your draft out loud, backwards, sentence by sentence, will help you spot sentence fragments.

#### 13. Wrong tense or verb form



The verb died does not clearly state that the death occurred before Ian arrived.



The verb go has irregular past-tense forms.

Errors of wrong **tense** include using a **verb** that does not clearly indicate when an action or a condition is, was, or will be completed - for example, using walked instead of had walked, or will go instead of will have gone. Errors of wrong form include confusing the forms of **irregular verbs** (such as go, went, and gone) or treating these verbs as if they followed the regular pattern - for example, using beginned instead of began.

#### 14. Lack of subject-verb agreement

A strategist behind the scenes create the candidate's public image.

The subject is the singular noun strategist, not scenes.

Each of these designs coordinates
A

The subject is the singular pronoun each, not designs.

There is two main reasons that I want to become a lawyer.

The subject, reasons, is plural, so the verb is plural.

My brothers or my sister comes
A

Here, the noun closest to the verb is singular (sister). The verb must agree with that singular noun.

#### 14. Lack of subject-verb agreement (continued)



Here, who refers to athletes, so the verb is plural.

A verb must agree with its subject in number and in person. In many cases, the verb must take a form depending on whether the subject is singular or plural: The old <u>man is</u> angry and <u>stamps</u> into the house, but The old <u>men are</u> angry and <u>stamp</u> into the house. Lack of subject-verb agreement is often just a matter of carelessly leaving the -s ending off the verb or of not identifying the subject correctly.

#### 15. Missing comma in a series

Sharks eat mostly squid, shrimp, crabs, and other fish.

When three or more items appear in a series, many disciplines require them to be separated from one another with commas. Although newspapers and magazines do not use a comma between the last two items, the best advice in writing other than journalism is to use a comma because a sentence can be ambiguous without one.

#### 16. Lack of agreement between pronoun and antecedent



Many indefinite pronouns, such as everyone and each, are always singular.

Either Nirupa or Selena will be asked to give their speech to the graduates.

When **antecedents** are joined by or or nor, the **pronoun** must agree with the closer antecedent.



A collective noun can be either singular or plural, depending on whether the people are seen as a single unit or as multiple individuals.

# 16. Lack of agreement between pronoun and antecedent (continued)



With an antecedent that can refer to either a man or a woman, use his or her, he or she, and so on. When the singular antecedent refers to either a male or a female, you can also rewrite the sentence to make the antecedent and pronoun plural or to eliminate the pronoun altogether.

Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in **gender** (for example, using he or him to replace Abraham Lincoln and she or her to replace Queen Elizabeth) and in **number**.

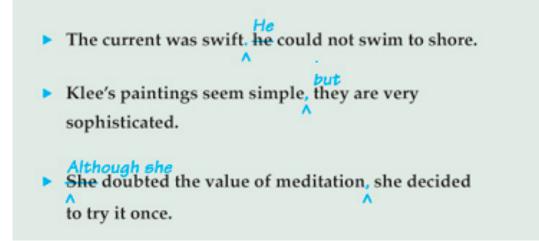
#### 17. Unnecessary comma(s) with a restrictive element

People who wanted to preserve wilderness areas opposed the plan to privatize national parks.

The reader needs the clause who wanted to preserve wilderness areas because it announces which people opposed the plan. The clause should not be set off with commas.

A **restrictive element** is essential to the basic meaning of the sentence. It is not set off from the rest of the sentence with commas.

#### 18. Fused sentence



A **fused sentence** (also called a **run-on sentence**) is created when **clauses** that could stand alone as a sentence are joined with no punctuation or words to link them. Fused sentences must be either divided into separate sentences or joined by adding words or punctuation.

#### 19. Misplaced or dangling modifier

#### MISPLACED MODIFIER With binoculars, the The hikers could see the eagles swooping and diving, with binoculars.

Who was wearing the binoculars - the eagles?

Every **modifier** (whether a word, **phrase**, or **clause**) should be as close as possible to the word it describes or relates to. **Misplaced modifiers** may confuse your readers by seeming to modify some other element in the sentence.



A **dangling modifier** hangs precariously from the beginning or end of a sentence, attached to no other part of the sentence. The element that the phrase modifies may exist in your mind but not in your draft. Each modifier must refer to some other element in the sentence.

#### 20. Its/It's confusion



- Use *its* to mean "belonging to it";
- Use *it's* only when you mean "it is" or "it has."