



# Common Errors

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## 1 Capitalization: majors, random

- a) English, Chinese, French = yes
- b) PR = yes, but public relations and advertising = no
- c) Capitalizing Words Does Not Make Them More Important

## 2 Redundancy, repetition

Read aloud to catch it, remedy it (remove or replace)

## 3 Typos: proofread; use spellcheck

Write in WORD, cut and paste to discussion board

## 4 Following AP Style

- a) States: know the difference between postal, abbreviation and when to write out in full.
- b) Dates: May 1, 2019, not May 1st
- c) Times: 9 a.m., not 9am
- d) Numbers: 1-9 = words, 10 and above = numerals; look them up there are exceptions
- e) Titles: lower case when standing alone, or after a name. Uppercase when preceding a name
- f) Fractions: look up how they are handled.
- g) USA = no periods. U.S.= periods as noted

## 5 Agreement

- a) Pronouns: who = people, that = things/situations
- b) Nouns/verbs (singular/plural) should agree
- c) Verb tense: present, past, or future. They should agree and be “parallel” in form.

## 6 Toward/towards, regard/regards.

Generally, do not use “s” in the USA.

## 7 Beware of “that” – it can be a crutch and is often overused

## 8 Proofreading: See typos

Are you reading your work aloud? Is someone else proofing for you?



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## 9 Understand the “corporate entity” and use of pronouns

The “corporate entity” – McDonalds, DePaul University, the Village of Oak Park are ALL singular. When you refer to them as a pronoun, use “it” or “its”—not “they/their.” Sounds dumb. You don’t want to sound dumb.

- a) Old Spice ran a clever campaign; its brand benefited from humor and use of social media.
- b) McDonalds today announced that it will begin paying its workers \$15/hour.

## 10 Choose precise, accurate words. Know these things:

- a) A part/apart:
- b) a part = means to be “part of”
- c) apart = means to be separate
- d) a lot/”alot” is not a word.
- e) “Without” is one word
- f) complement/compliment = complement is to complete; compliment is to praise
- g) loose vs. lose
- h) It’s/its. Know the difference.
- i) Impact is a noun. Avoid it as a verb; consider “affect” instead.
- j) There are a bunch more, so tune into word precision!

## 11 Numbers vs. amounts

Use “number” when you can count something, “amount” when you cannot and must estimate

## 12 Paragraph structure

Keep it short and focused.  
New idea = new paragraph

## 13 Fact check!

- a) Look things up to confirm their accuracy; it’s so easy.
- b) Names, titles, regions, etc.
- c) Is something one word or two? Hyphenated? Look it up. Get in the habit of looking things up.

## 14 Possessives

One little apostrophe can undermine your credibility. Is it possessive? Plural possessive? Look it up. Use it right. Know the difference. For dates: ‘90s not 90’s

## 15 Lastly

Please, please don’t use “lastly.” Good writers don’t say “lastly.” They say “Finally.” P.S. that goes for “firstly” too!

*This is not a comprehensive list. But it is a starting point to build your awareness around grammar, style and other elements of writing that can help you sharpen yours.*