

Basic Grammar Rules

1. Spelling Errors

- There is no good excuse for spelling errors in a final draft.
- Everyone should use a dictionary or turn on Spell Check. When in doubt, check it out!

2. Run-on Sentences

- Run-ons occur when you try to make one sentence do too much. For example:
William gazed across the broad Pacific his heart was filled with dread.
- Avoid run-ons by:
 - a. breaking the long sentence into separate sentences:
William gazed across the broad Pacific. His heart was filled with dread.
 - b. reducing one of the clauses to a subordinate clause and adding a comma:
When William gazed across the broad Pacific, his heart was filled with dread.
 - c. adding a comma and coordinating conjunction between the two clauses:
William gazed across the broad Pacific, but his heart was filled with dread.

3. Sentence Fragments

- Fragments occur when you've written only part of a sentence. For example:
Because there was no other way of escaping the fire.
- Fix fragments by making sure your sentence contains both a subject and a verb:
He leaped out of the window because there was no other way of escaping the fire.

4. Subject/Verb Agreement

- If the subject is singular, use a singular verb; if the subject is plural, use a plural verb:
The arrival of many friends promises a good time.
Either the principal or the coach usually attends the dance.
- Remember: the subject of a sentence is never contained within a prepositional phrase!

5. Pronoun Agreement

- Almost everyone makes this mistake: *Everyone should get out their books.*
- A pronoun must agree in number with its antecedent (the word to which the pronoun refers).
- Rewrite the sentence using singular pronouns: *Everyone should take out his or her book.*
Singular pronouns include: *each, either, neither, one, everyone, no one, everybody, nobody, anyone, someone, somebody.*

6. Verb Tense

- Tense means time. Verbs tell us what action is occurring, and when it is occurring. Verbs change form to indicate when an action takes place. Your writing should remain in one tense, switching only when necessary to the meaning. To fix tenses, read your draft looking only for tense agreement.