

Six Common Grammatical Errors

1. Sentences must be complete and not incorrectly combined with other sentences.

- *Sentence Fragment*: The sentence is either missing the subject or the verb or contains an incomplete thought:
 - When you write an essay. (Incomplete thought.)
 - Peter, the son of a fisherman. (No verb.)
 - Went shopping. (No subject.)
- *Fused sentence*: The placement of two sentences together as if they were one sentence:
 - The new wave is not new it is a repetition of old ideas (A full stop, colon, semicolon, or comma followed by co-ordinating conjunction is needed after new.)
- *Comma splice, dash splice*: Two sentences incorrectly joined by a comma or a dash—a very common, but very fundamental, error.
 - The new wave is not new, it is something old. (A full stop, colon or semicolon is needed after new.)
 - The new wave is not new—it is something completely different. (A full stop, colon or semicolon is needed after new.)

Fixing Comma Splices

Wrong: Aldgate is concerned, the 'new wave' is not really new.

It may be corrected in the following ways depending upon your meaning:

- Rewrite as two sentences: Aldgate is concerned. The new wave is not really new. (Indicates two separate, relatively independent thoughts.)
- Use a colon instead: Aldgate is concerned: the 'new wave' is not really new. (Indicates what follow the colon is of especial importance)
- Use a semicolon: Aldgate is concerned; the new wave is not really new. (Indicates two closely related thoughts of equal importance.)
- Use a conjunction: Aldgate is concerned, but the new wave is not really new. (Meaning indicated by the conjunction chosen.)

2. Distinguish between plurals, possessives and contractions. Know the its (=belongs to it)——it's (=it is) distinction/

- Example of possessive: Jekyll's house, **not** Jekylls house
- Example of plural : The cinema of the 1950s, **not** the cinema of the 1950's
- Example of contraction: It's often said, **not** its often said

3. Underline or italicise longer works. Place shorter works within quotation marks.

- Examples:
 - Beloved or *Beloved*. (book)
 - The British Medical Journal (journal)
 - 'Renal Failure in Pre-Adolescents' (journal article)
 - 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' (poem)

4. Proofread for spelling errors.

- Typographical errors (teh for the)
- Authors' names

- Your tutor's name
- Characters within novels.
- Technical terms (e.g. prosopopoeia, dysthymia)
- Frequently misspelled words. (e.g. grammar, secretary)

5. Introduce quotations correctly.

- Use block quotations when you are citing more than two lines of text:
 - The following lines are relevant:
 - The earth is too much with us, late and soon,
 - Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.
 - Little we see in nature that is ours:
 - We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon.¹
 - Note: colon, no quotation marks, footnote.
- Use in-text form for shorter quotations. Make sure all opened quotations are closed.
 - Tony Blair said, 'Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party.'¹ (Note comma, capitalisation, terminal punctuation and footnote)
 - In the tried and true tradition of political loyalty, John Major made the following statement: 'Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party.'¹ (Note usage of colon)
 - He said that now was 'the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party'.¹ (Note lack of introductory comma, no capitalisation, terminal punctuation, footnote.)

6. Make your paragraphs of appropriate length.

- Paragraphs should be no less than 1/2 to 2/3 page in length.