

# 5 Common Grammatical Errors

## Error #1: Run-on Sentence or Comma Spliced Sentence

A run-on sentence is a sentence is made up of two independent clauses. There is no punctuation or connecting conjunction. A comma spliced sentence is similar in that it uses a comma to join two clauses that have no connecting conjunction.

A run-on sentence or a comma splice can be fixed in one of several different ways:

- Make two sentences.
- Replace the comma with a semi-colon.
- Replace the comma with a coordinating conjunction--and, but, for, yet, nor, so.
- Replace the comma with a subordinating conjunction--after, although, before, unless, as, because, even though, if, since, until, when, while.
- Replace the comma with a semi-colon and transitional word--however, moreover, on the other hand, nevertheless, instead, also, therefore, consequently, otherwise, as a result.
- It has also become more acceptable to replace the comma with a long hyphen, commonly known as an emdash.

For example:

- Incorrect: Boyd is very talented, he could read music when he was four years old.
- Correct: Boyd is very talented. He could read music when he was four years old.
- Correct: Boyd is very talented; he could read music when he was four years old.
- Correct: Boyd is very talented, and he could read music when he was four years old.
- Correct: Because Boyd is very talented, he could read music when he was four years old.
- Correct: Boyd is very talented; as a result, he could read music when he was four years old.
- Correct: Boyd is very talented—he could read music when he was four years old.

## Error #2: Pronoun Errors

Pronoun errors occur when they do not agree numerically with the nouns to which they refer. If the noun is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the noun is plural, the pronoun must be plural as well.

For example:

- Incorrect: Everybody must bring their own lunch.
- Correct: Everybody must bring his or her own lunch.

Many people believe that pronoun errors are the result of writers who are trying to avoid the implication of sexist language. Although this is an admirable goal, correct grammar is still important.

### **Error #3: Mistakes in Apostrophe Usage**

Apostrophes are used to show possession. However, you do not use an apostrophe after a possessive pronoun such as my, mine, our, ours, his, hers, its, their, or theirs.

For example:

- Incorrect: My mothers cabin is next to his' cabin.
- Correct: My mother's cabin is next to his cabin.

In the case of it's, the apostrophe is used to indicate a contraction for it is. For example:

- Incorrect: Its a cold day in October.
- Correct: It's a cold day in October.

There is no apostrophe in the possessive use of 'it'.

- Incorrect: The lion will attack when it's cubs are threatened.
- Correct: The lion will attack when its cubs are threatened.

### **Error #4: Lack of Subject/Verb Agreement**

When speaking or writing in the present tense, a sentence must have subjects and verbs that agree in number. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular. If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural as well.

For example:

- Incorrect: The workouts is excellent for endurance training.
- Correct: The workouts are excellent for endurance training.

### **Error #5: Misplaced Modifiers**

In order to communicate ideas clearly, a modifier should be directly next to the word it is supposed to modify. The modifier should clearly refer to a specific word in the sentence.

For example:

- Incorrect: An attractive young lady was walking a dog in a short skirt.
- Correct: An attractive young lady in a short skirt was walking a dog.