

DIRECTIONS: Do the practice exercises in each section below **after** reading how to fix these five common grammatical errors.

ERROR 1: RUN-ON SENTENCES

A run-on sentence occurs when you try to cram too many ideas into one sentence without proper punctuation. This is a run-on sentence: *Jane and I went to the mall we were shopping for shoes later we had some pizza at the food court.* To fix run-on sentences, divide each complete thought into its own sentence by using a period after it. *Jane and I went to the mall. We were shopping for shoes. Later, we had some pizza at the food court.* This method can result in choppy writing, though. Another way to fix run-on sentences is to join ideas that are closely related with a conjunction (words such as *and, but, so, or, because, and since*) like this: *Jane and I went to the mall because we were shopping for shoes. Later, we had some pizza at the food court.* This method is much less choppy than the first one.

Correct each of the following run-on sentences twice; once by breaking them into two or more shorter sentences, and the second time by using a conjunction.

1. It snowed yesterday the roads are icy and very slippery.
2. Frank didn't know about the test until the last minute he had to change his plans and study for it.
3. Choosing a snowboard is difficult there are many good ones for sale these days.
4. Will you help me with my project I really need a good mark I didn't do well on the last one.
5. Some young people spend their allowance foolishly they don't know the value of a dollar.
6. Many people come to the Okanagan for Wine Fest each fall the Grape Stomp is fun.

ERROR 2: SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

A sentence fragment is punctuated like a sentence but doesn't contain all the parts a sentence requires. Sometimes the subject is missing (*Ate the hotdog.*), sometimes the predicate is missing (*That scary ghost.*), and sometimes there is no independent clause (*When she didn't call me.*). All of these example sentences have missing information. To fix a sentence fragment which has no subject, add one (***Sarah ate the hotdog.***). To fix a sentence fragment which has no predicate, add one (***That scary ghost haunts the old mansion.***). And to fix a sentence which has no independent clause, add one (***I was annoyed when she didn't call me.***).

Correct each of the following sentences fragments by using the most appropriate method.

1. Your beautiful new jacket.
2. Until they have to pay for it.
3. During the movie.
4. If I hadn't slipped and fallen.
5. Because of the hot weather.
6. Since the start of the new school year.

ERROR 3: COMMA ERRORS

A sentence can have too few or too many commas in it. This sentence has too many commas in it (*That gorgeous, new, suede, jacket looks good, on you.*), and this sentence has too few commas in it (*People come to the Okanagan in the summer for the sun beaches boating camping and shopping.*). Commas should be used to separate words that describe a series of things. (*People come to the Okanagan in the summer for the sun, beaches, boating, camping, and shopping.*). Usually, a dependent clause or phrase that adds additional information to the main idea is separated from the independent clause with commas (*Jesse hoped that Paul, her younger brother, would get better soon.*). Be sure that you don't have a comma separating the subject and verb in your sentence. Sometimes the best approach is simply to reword the sentence to reduce the need for commas.

Correct each of the following sentences by adding commas if there are too few, or removing commas if there are too many.

1. His favourite snack is taco chips burritos and a coke after school.
2. The vacation was horrible because of the cold temperatures strong winds and rainy weather.
3. Jane, the Grad Class President, called a meeting, to discuss the Grad Banquet.
4. The boy in the red jacket who is waiting for the SkyTrain looks happy.
5. Your job is to peel the carrots wash them cut them into slices and put them in with the stew.
6. The man in the front row who is talking too loudly should be quieter.

ERROR 4: VAGUE PRONOUN REFERENCES

When a pronoun is used to replace a noun, and it is unclear which noun it is replacing, you have a vague pronoun reference. For example, (*Jasmine and Robyn met at the mall and she was very grumpy.*), is a vague pronoun reference because we aren't sure whether the *she* refers to Jasmine or Robyn. Fixing this problem is easy; you just have to make it clear what the reference is by replacing the pronoun (*she*) with the noun (*Robyn*), or by rewriting the sentence so there is no confusion. (*Jasmine and Robyn met at the mall, and Robyn was very grumpy.*) Or, (*Jasmine met a very grumpy Robyn at the mall.*)

Each of the following sentences has a problem with vague pronoun references. Correct each one using either of the two repair methods.

1. When Frank told Jim they had won the raffle, he shouted with joy.
2. George told his Dad he had an accident with the car. He got very angry.
3. Sarah put the empty milk carton into the garbage can and noticed it wouldn't close properly.
4. My sister and her friend Jane are going to the mall although she hates shopping there.
5. Sandy and Sally had to sweep the floor, wash the walls, and dust. She had never done this before.
6. The teacher put the textbook on the desk and noticed that it was damaged.

ERROR 5: WRONG PRONOUN - NUMBER, GENDER OR PERSON

A pronoun must always agree in number, gender, or person with the noun it replaces or your sentence can be confusing. To agree in number, a pronoun must refer to the same quantity as the noun. Singular nouns (quantity = one) require singular pronouns, while plural nouns (quantity = more than one) require plural pronouns.

Correct each of the following sentences by fixing the wrong pronoun in each, using either of the two repair methods.

1. When the CD came, we listened to them on our stereo.
2. Amanda and Dani is usually late for class.
3. Some new cars come with an MP3 player, and they sound wonderful.
4. How does the two of them keep from fighting?
5. Julie learned to type on a typewriter when he was in school.
6. One of the girls broke their wrist playing hockey.