

Grammar



Grammar is the foundation of clear communication. If you don't believe me, talk to someone who ignores the rules. *I have 30 years* is not a confession from a convict but a foreign born person trying to tell you they are 30 years old. In their own language it is perfectly expressed. Used in the context of English grammar, it takes a moment for us to catch on. Here's a couple more: *Thanks God, the restaurant had an open table*, as in thank God but not a prayer; *Do you have some gums?* they are asking if you have any gum. The reason we're confused is they've misused our rules of communication.

Word order, double negatives, use of pronouns and value words are also confused. But those learning English or mixing it with their known grammar should be excused. It is when native speakers ignore their own language rules that it gets embarrassing.

Below are examples taken from viralnova.com where commas and periods would have been helpful on signs:

Hunters Please Use Caution When Hunting Pedestrians Using Walk Trails
(Thanks God, I'm not on this trail!)

The Average American Consumes More Than 400 Africans
(Pretty sure I never have.)

Attention Toilet ONLY for Disabled Elderly Pregnant Children
Thank you for shopping with us!!!
(How many of *those* children are shopping in the mall?)

We laugh, but we do not want our readers laughing. Listed below are the top mistakes beginning writers make.

Comma Splice. Mary went to the store, Gabe went with her. Two independent sentences combined needs a comma and a conjunction. Mary went to the store, **and** Gabe went with her. Or, the semicolon may be used. Mary went to the store; Gabe went with her.

Run on Sentence. Mary went to the store Gabe went with her. See above example for corrections.

Dangling modifiers. Texting while driving, the deer was hit and died. Do deer text? No, the driver of the car was, and he hit the deer. This information is missing. How about this one: Gigi handed out cookies to the kids in gift boxes. Are kids in gift boxes?

Subject Verb Agreement. The candy in the jars were for the children. Candy was. The problem here is the preposition interrupting, and you link the plural noun jars with the plural verb were. The **candy** in the jars **was** for the children.

Vague Use of Pronoun. When Sally went to the party with Glenda, she was so nervous. I'm not sure whose nervous, Sally or Glenda?

Its. The contraction for it is needs an apostrophe: it's. If used as a pronoun as in, *The dog wagged its tail*, no apostrophe is used.

Word Usage. Pear for pair or pare; accept for except; effect for affect; lie for lay; their for there or they're, etc.

Introductory Clauses. Long ones need a comma. Short ones need it for clarity.

Related Words Must Stay Together. Mother made a doll quilt for Janey's doll that cost six dollars. What cost \$6? The doll or the quilt? If it is the quilt, the dollar amount should be grouped with it. Mother made a quilt that cost six dollars for Janey's doll.

The only remedy to sentence confusion is learning grammar. Get a good grammar book and read it regularly. No one is perfect, but at least we can improve.