

## About Common Errors in Student Writing

I have corrected many writing assignments since the semester began, and you have noticed that I sent your documents back to you with many grammar and spelling mistakes indicated. It is quite tiring to correct these documents when the average number of corrections per page becomes quite high.

I would like you to make a better effort in writing carefully and checking work for errors before you hand it in. Many of the errors involve basic grammar rules that you have been learning since junior high school. You know the rules, but you need to review them and work more carefully at applying the rules to your own writing.

### The most common problems and errors are these

Articles (*a, an, the*): He was wearing *a* hat. *The* hat was red.

Verb tense and verb forms: There are too many possible errors to show here with a simple example.

Passive voice and active voice: *Jack built a house* (active). *The house was built by Jack* (passive).

Conditional sentences using *if*. There are too many possible errors to show with a simple example.

Direct and indirect reported speech. *Say, tell or teach?* Verb forms in reported speech.

Singular and plural agreement in nouns and verbs: *One book, two books. I see it. She sees it.*

Parts of speech—for example, using a noun when an adjective is necessary—*safety or safe, strength strengthen or strong?*

Conjunctions— these come in the middle of a sentence after a comma: *..., but... ..., so...*

— *because* comes in the middle of a sentence with no comma before it: *...because...*

Everyone knows that MSWord has a spellchecker, but you should also learn how to turn on the grammar checker. The grammar checker cannot fix everything, but it can catch many common errors. There are also writing assistant tools such as [Grammarly](#) that are very good at checking documents for grammar errors and style errors. Even native speakers of English use Grammarly to help them become better writers. There is a free version and a paid version of the application.

The important message here is that you must make a good effort to check your writing and make it as good as possible before you send it to your teacher. Your teacher is a teacher, not a proofreader. You should not merely write carelessly with the idea in your mind that your teacher will fix all your mistakes as a favor to you. Your teacher knows the grammar lessons that are taught in junior high school and high school. You should be able to correct so-called “careless” errors. In fact, learning English means improving the ability to monitor your speaking and writing for language mistakes which break the rules of language that you have learned previously.