

## How to Avoid 10 Common Grammar Mistakes

### Student's Handout

**To watch and download the video:**

<http://englishforcommunicationsandcustomercare.wordpress.com/2012/02/01/writing-skills-how-to-avoid-10-common-grammar-mistakes/>

**Original Video Source: How Cast**

<http://www.howcast.com/videos/346237-How-To-Avoid-10-Common-Grammar-Mistakes>

**Also on Youtube:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCkRW5\\_ZINI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCkRW5_ZINI)

### How to Avoid 10 Common Grammar Mistakes

- Do you want to learn how to avoid 10 common grammar mistakes?
- Are you ready to learn about grammar and impress expert grammarians with your knowledge of English grammar?
- Achieve those goals by just watching the video *How to avoid 10 common grammar mistakes*

**Step 1:** This sentence has a mistake. Can you correct it?

Andrew went to the party and there he meet Sally Bullock.

Step 1.a. Now watch section 1 of the video, from **beginning to minute 00:30**. Check your answer to the previous question.

Step 1.b. Can you describe the mistake? .....

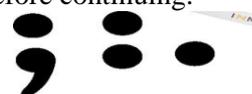
**Step 2:** Correct the mistake in the following sentence.

People who attended the trade fair were very happy with the service. He valued the expertise and the “savoir faire” of the organizers.

Step 2.a. Now watch section 2 of the video, from **minute 00:30 to minute 00:51** and check your answer to the previous questions.

Step 2.b. Can you describe the mistake? .....

Tip: Study the names of these punctuation symbols before continuing:



Semicolon, colon and period

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**Step 3:** Read the sentence in the speech bubble in fig.1. Is it correct?

Step 3.a. Check your prediction by listening to **minute 00:51 to minute 1:15** of the video.

Step 3.b. What is the correct way of joining the two clauses in the sentence?



Fig. 1. Is this sentence correct?

**Step 4:** The uses of comma

Step 4.a. A complex sentence includes an introductory clause and a dependent clause. The following sentence is **incorrect**. A comma needs to separate the introductory clause from the dependent clause. Can you place the comma?

When I was studying for my exam it was terribly noisy

Step 4. b. Commas should surround “non-restrictive relative clauses”

If you don't know what a “non restrictive clause is, read the following explanation.

**A non- restrictive clause** tells you something about a preceding subject without limiting (or restricting ) the meaning of that subject.

Compare the following examples.

Restrictive clause or defining

*The store manager congratulated all the workers that had been in the company over 10 years.*

The manager only congratulated the senior workers. Junior workers were not congratulated. This is a restrictive clause because it limits the amount of workers that were congratulated.

Non-restrictive or non-defining

*The store manager congratulated all the workers, who had been in the company over 10 years.*

The manager congratulated everybody as everybody had been in the company for at least the last ten years.

A non-restrictive sentence is an explanation that can be omitted without the meaning of the sentence suffering greatly.

Decide if the following sentence contains a restrictive or non-restrictive clause and punctuate it accordingly.

Mr. Harlin who is a teacher at my school recommended the library

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4.c. Use commas to set off geographical names. Where would you place the comma in this sentence?

I am from South Bend Indiana.

4.d. Use commas when you change from an explanation (main discourse), to what a person actually said, which should be introduced by quotation marks. You can also use colon in this case. Can you punctuate the following sentence?

“ ”

Quotation marks

Mr. Harling said Go to the Harold Washington Library

Now watch the video from **minute 1:15 to 1:34** and check your answers to 4.a., 4.b., 4.c., and 4.d.

**Steps 5 and 6.** Apostrophes and incomplete sentences.

**Step 5:** Apostrophes are used to:

- Indicate possession.
- Signify that a letter was omitted.

Place the apostrophes in the correct place.

- Youre very good at your job.
- Its leg is broken. Its impossible to repair it.
- The clerks notebook got wet in the stormy weather (There is only one clerk)
- The students book was properly taken care of (There are several students).
- These systems dont work and wont work unless were really ready to put money into the project.



**Step 6:** Incomplete sentences.

A sentence should contain at least a conjugated verb and its corresponding subject. One of the sentences below is incomplete. Rewrite the sentences using the correct punctuation symbols.

I am good at several things. Such as painting and cooking.

Now watch **minute 1:34 to 2:04** and correct your answer to step 6.

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**Step 7:** This step takes us back to **step 4.b.**

Relative pronouns join clauses to create complex sentences, such as the ones we saw in section 4.b.

Step 7 a. Can you remember some relative pronouns?

Step 7 b. Compare these sentences to understand the most common misuse of a relative pronoun and answer this question:

What is the difference between using “that” and “which” in a relative clause?

Restrictive clause or defining

*The store manager took all the boxes that had a label on them*

Non-restrictive or non-defining

*The store manager took all the boxes, which had the label on them .*

Now watch **minute 2:04 to 2:30** and check your answers to exercises 7.a and 7. b

**Step 8:** Don't let your modifiers dangle

Modifiers are groups of words that give information about part of the speech. The incorrect position of modifiers may change the meaning of your sentence.

Look at these examples:

8.a. Imagine I was looking through the window and I saw Jenny. Is this a correct way of expressing this idea?

I saw Jenny looking through the window

8.b. I was camping in Sri Lanka and when I woke up I had to shoot an elephant. Is this the correct way of expressing this idea?

One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas

8.c. In pairs decide what this sentence means:

At two my sister taught me Spanish

Now watch the corresponding section **minute 2:30 to 2:52** and see if your guess was correct.



These are  
“dangle”  
earrings

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**Steps 9 and 10:** Pronouns and proofreading.

**Step 9:** A pronoun is a word that substitutes a noun.

9.a. What do you think the prefix “pro-” mean?

- a. next to   b. instead of   c. before

9.b. Read this short text. Although it is grammatically correct it sounds strange. Can you decide why?

Ms. Lewis is the new girl at the office. Everybody is looking forward to meeting Ms. Lewis. Ms. Frank has already met Ms. Lewis. When Ms. Frank saw Ms. Lewis for the first time, Ms. Frank was positively impressed by Ms. Lewis good manners and willingness to learn.

Now watch the video from **minute 2:52 to 2:59** and check your answer. Now, correct the text in section 9b

**Step 10:** The video ends with a final recommendation. See **minute 2:59 to 03:11**. What is it?

**English trivia.** Nobody knows the exact number of words that English has. English is spoken in many countries, which means that there is a wide variety of “Englishes”. The Global Language Monitor is an institution that publishes a list of words that have appeared in print and electronic media more than 25,000 times. There is a consensus that if a word appears so many times, it is an English word.

a. According to the Global Language Monitor, how many words does English have?

Listen to the last section of the video **minute 03: 11 till the end** and check your answer.

b. What was the last word that was officially added to the English language?