

5 Common Grammatical Errors to Avoid in the Workplace

Some of the most typical grammatical mistakes can make your writing unclear and without purpose. This often translates into misinterpretation and confusion. And worst of all, it leaves you looking like an unprofessional, unpolished employee. I've assembled some of the most egregious grammatical mistakes that continuously show up in the workplace, and should be strictly avoided.

1. Wordiness

This is not necessarily a grammar infraction, but it is one of the most common errors afflicting emails. Filling communication with extra words or phrases simply to appear more intellectual can actually have the opposite effect. Run-on sentences, unclear responses and misuse of common vernacular only highlight your inability to demonstrate knowledge and authority on a subject. Business communication should be concise and to the point.

2. Fragments And "Text Talk"

Where some people use too many words, others use too little. Communicating in sentence fragments is communication in incomplete thoughts—it leaves your writing open to misinterpretation. And, as easy as it is to resort to text mode when writing emails, don't write as you would text. Take the time to spell out words and complete sentences. What might seem to save time can actually initiate a complicated back-and-forth conversation rooted in confusing language.

3. The Dangling (gasp) Participle

Or, to put it simply, when you order your sentences in a confusing way.

Suspect sentence example: *Prior to being processed through HR, Jake completed the documents necessary to request additional training in our department.* This sentence suggests Jake was being processed through HR, not the documents. Let's bring Jake back from processing and re-order this sentence so that it makes sense: *Jake completed the documents necessary to request additional training in our department before they could be processed through HR. Think about what you want to say and how you want to say it. Always re-read your work to make sure it conveys your thoughts clearly.*

4. Comma Drama... And Other Misused Punctuation

The overexposed comma is the worst, and it happens to the best of us. Commas indicate that the reader should pause before moving on in the text. Too many commas create chopiness or string together sentences that could stand on their own. Not enough commas create endless lines of text that seem to run on with no clear point. Be consistent with comma usage. If you are unsure when and where to place a comma, I suggest using bullet points or a numbered list to clearly outline your points.

It's also helpful to read your message out loud before sending it. That way you can hear where the natural pauses are and know where the commas should be. Just remember: comma free, drama free.

5. Word Confusion

We've all done it: Mixed up *your* and *you're*, or *there*, *they're*, and *their*. I've paused before guessing whether to use *effect* or *affect*, and thrown that extra 'o' in *lose*, writing *loose* instead. These particular errors are, perhaps, the most embarrassing. These are easy misses, and because we write phonetically, it happens all of the time. We also rely heavily on auto-correct and predictive text when we're communicating electronically. Always take a few extra moments to check for commonly confused words.