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Common Grammar mistakes in English writing
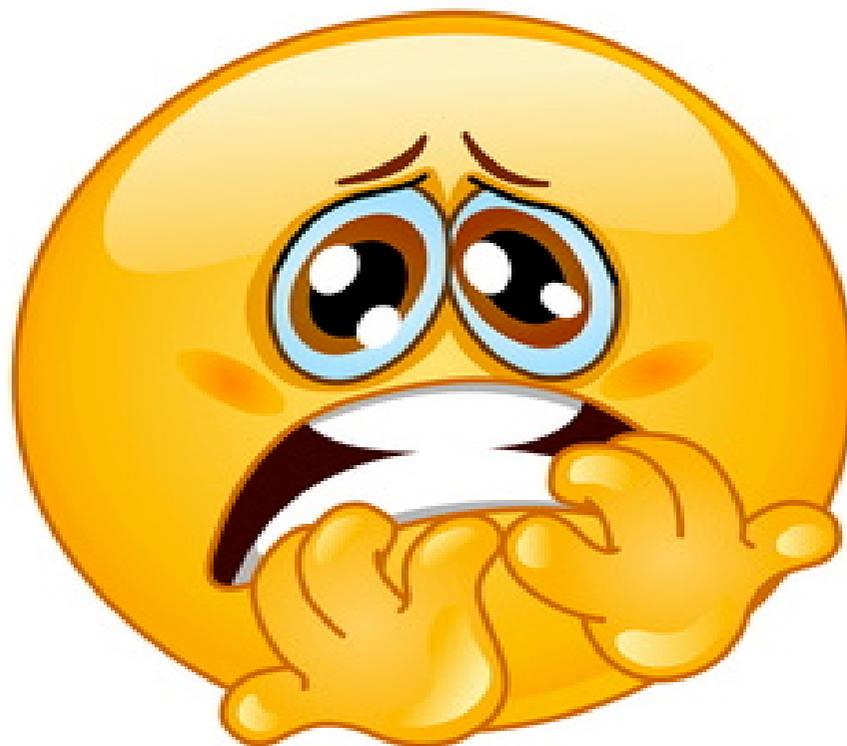
How to find and correct them to improve your writing

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Learning tip

Don't be afraid to make mistakes!

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Improve your writing!

Make checking your writing a habit!

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Give your teacher a break!

Correct your common mistakes, so that your teacher can focus on the challenges only a teacher can help with.

**Common Grammar Error 1
The trouble with 'the'**

the

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These words may need *the*

teachers following
interview younger north
family current summer US
media two weekend University
water Human new right library
Economy government number
plants cinema Office
living same first UK case present
guitar whole train wrong
mobile next last other past day body
sea
beach most people city second
National town concert
elderly internet Modern
gym house
information things
country park
Museum English future teacher
children food Health
British main best morning
kitchen computer USA news only
piano Write time one public night
school United World evening
old
central local
capital company bus weather
Chinese population
environment year
quality students street
advantages

the before a noun makes the noun specific:

- You use it when other people will know which thing you are talking about.

e.g.   *Did you bring **a** book?*
       *Did you bring **the** book?*

       *You should ask **a** teacher.*
       *You should ask **the** teacher.*

Use *the* before a noun that is already specific:

- because there is only one of that thing:

the internet, the environment, the world;
the past, the future, the present;
the south, the north, the east, the west

*But remember: an internet **café**, an internet **connection**, a better **world**, an imaginary **world**

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Tip: Check the word in a learner's dictionary like dictionary.cambridge.org. Look for the word and then look at the example sentences:

the internet

noun [S] · UK 🔊 /ˈɪn.tə.net/ US 🔊 /ˈɪn.t̬ə-.net/ INFORMAL **the Net**

⭐ **A1** **the large system of connected computers around the world that allows people to share information and communicate with each other:**

*I found out about the bombings **from/on** the internet.*

— More examples

If you have access to the internet, you can order online via our website.

It is important that children are able to use the internet safely.

I'm sure you'll find some information about it on the internet.

The college does a beginners' course on how to use the internet.

Apparently she met her husband through the internet, on one of those internet dating agencies.

Use *the* before some **adjectives**:

- because there can only be one thing with that quality:

the next, the last, the best;
the best/smallest/oldest (+ noun)
the same, the least, the most

Use *the* before some **proper nouns**:

- groups of mountains and some mountains (*the Alps, the Eiger*),
- groups of islands or states (*the British Isles, the USA, the UK, the Netherlands*)
- rivers (*the Danube, the Nile*)
- deserts (*the Gobi Desert, the Sahara*)
- seas (*the Black Sea, the Red Sea*),
- geographical regions or habitats (*the Amazon, the Great Barrier Reef*)

Use *the* to talk in a general way about:

- inventions
- musical instruments
- entertainments, *e.g. the cinema, the theatre, the circus, the opera*:

The computer *is the best invention ever.*
Do you play **the piano**?
I want to go to **the cinema**.

The challenge!
Which sentence is correct?

1. We'll go to cinema on Sunday.
2. I really enjoy shopping.
3. I went to Italy in March.

Tip: We use *the* with types of entertainment, e.g. the cinema, the opera, the theatre, the circus – *We'll go to the cinema on Sunday.*

Common Grammar Error 2
Do you like *it*?

it

What is *it* for?

it is often used to refer to a thing that has already been mentioned.

✖ *I made this cake for you. Do you like?*
✔ *I made this cake for you. Do you like it?*

✖ *Yes. Is very nice.*
✔ *Yes. It is very nice.*

These words may need *it* after them

1. We use *it after*...

Linking words (conjunctions) e.g. but, and, that, because, if ...

*I like Barcelona **because** is beautiful.*
*I like Barcelona **because it** is beautiful.*

*I listen to music **and** helps me to relax.*
*I listen to music and **it** helps me to relax.*

We use *it after*… 2

Verbs

- **Verbs about feelings e.g. *like, enjoy, appreciate, regret, love, …***

✗ *I read that book last summer. I really enjoyed.*

✓ *I read that book last summer. I really enjoyed **it**.*

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It challenge!
Which sentence is correct?

1. My English is improving all the time.

2. We went to the shop, but was closed.

3. We had a dessert that was very tasty.

Tip: We use *it* after linking words to refer back to something we mentioned before – *We went to the shop but* it *was closed.*

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Common Grammar Error 3

Do your words agree with each other?

When two words *agree*, they have the same form. For example, the words may *both* be singular or *both* be plural, etc.

✗ *The **cats is** under the table.*
✓ *The **cat is** under the table.*
✓ *The **cats are** under the table.*

✗ *My **dad** usually **cook** dinner.*
✓ *My **dad** usually **cooks** dinner.*

- **Which word is the subject?**
- **Is it singular or plural?**
- **What is the correct ending on the verb?**

1. People in my village depends on tourism.

2. People in my village depend on tourism.

Which word is the subject? Is it singular or plural?

✘ *1. People in my village depends on agriculture.*

✔ *2. People in my village depend on agriculture.*

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Agreement challenge!

- Correct or incorrect?

1. John really hate surprises.

2. I finish school at 4pm.

3. Many houses in this town does not have a garden.

- In the present simple, if the subject of the sentence is *he/she* or *it*, or is a single thing or person, the verb ends with an 's' – *John really hates surprises*; Many houses in this town *do not have a garden.*

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Keep practising to keep improving!

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