

The Grammar Hammer Handout

Grammar's Top 20 Misses (From Most Serious to Least)

(excerpted from Douglas Cazort's Under the Grammar Hammer, pp 19-24)

1. Wrong Tense or Verb Form (Past, Present, Future)

Incorrect: When William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066, he *done* the English language a big favor.

Correct: When William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066, he *did* the English language a big favor.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 30 – 35, *Writer's Inc* pp 510-512, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 718, 720, 722

2. Fused or Run-on Sentence

Incorrect: Over 75 percent of mistakes in English cannot be committed in speech they can only be made in writing.

Correct: Over 75 percent of mistakes in English cannot be committed in speech. They can only be made in writing.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 35 – 38, *Writer's Inc* p 84, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 738

3. Sentence Fragment

Incorrect: With 500,000 words, the English vocabulary is larger than that of any other language. *Partly because 80 percent of English words come from foreign sources.*

Correct: With 500,000 words, the English vocabulary is larger than that of any other language, *partly because 80 percent of English words come from foreign sources.*

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 38 – 41, *Writer's Inc* pp 83, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 738

4. Lack of Agreement Between Subject and Verb (In number)

Incorrect: An important function of managers *are* delegating responsibility.

Correct: An important function of managers *is* delegating responsibility.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 41 – 45, *Writer's Inc* pp 526-528, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 752, 754

5. Wrong Word

Incorrect: Creative people believe *their* creative.

Correct: Creative people believe *they're* creative.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 45 – 51, *Writer's Inc* pp 491-500, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 678-696

6. Missing Comma(s) with a Nonrestrictive Element

Incorrect: Roger von Oech's *A Whack on the Side of the Head* expanded and revised for the 1990's is an excellent guide to a more creative life.

Correct: Roger von Oech's *A Whack on the Side of the Head*, expanded and revised for the 1990's, is an excellent guide to a more creative life.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 51 – 53, *Writer's Inc* pp 459, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 612

7. Unnecessary Shift in Tense

Incorrect: The first English dictionary was published in 1604 and written by Robert Cawdray, who *says* he produced it for “ladies...and other unskillful persons.”

Correct: The first English dictionary was published in 1604 and written by Robert Cawdray, who *said* he produced it for “ladies...and other unskillful persons.”

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 54 – 56, *Writer’s Inc* pp 90,511, 526, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 718,720

8. Missing Commas in a Series

Incorrect: George Burns defines happiness as having a large loving caring close-knit family in another city.

Correct: George Burns defines happiness as having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 54 – 59, *Writer’s Inc* pp 458, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 610

9. Missing or Misplaced Possessive Apostrophe

Incorrect: Parkinsons law states that a job expands to fill allotted time.

Correct: Parkinson’s law states that a job expands to fill allotted time.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 59 – 61, *Writer’s Inc* pp 472-473, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 628, 630

10. Unnecessary Comma(s) with a Restrictive Element

Incorrect: Linguistic research has found, that New Yorkers communicate social class through their pronunciation of the letter r.

Correct: Linguistic research has found that New Yorkers communicate social class through their pronunciation of the letter r.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 61 – 63, *Writer’s Inc* pp 459, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 612

11. Confusion of Its and It’s

Incorrect: “If it sells, *its* creative,” they say in advertising.

Correct: “If it sells, *it’s* creative,” they say in advertising.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 63 - 65, *Writer’s Inc* pp 496, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 688

12. Dangling or Misplaced Modifier

Incorrect: *Popping, sparking, and blowing fuses*, the CEO, stood helplessly watching at the podium while the new audio-visual system self-destructed.

Correct: Popping, sparking, and blowing fuses, the new audio-visual system self-destructed while the CEO, stood helplessly watching at the podium.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 65 – 67, *Writer’s Inc* pp 86

13. Lack of Agreement Between Pronoun and Antecedent

Incorrect: A “Type-A” *person* will hurry *themselves* to death.

Correct: “Type-A” *people* will hurry *themselves* to death.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 67 – 70, *Writer’s Inc* pp 503, 528, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 704

14. Wrong or Missing Preposition

Incorrect: We need to invent a language in which politicians would be incapable *from* lying.

Correct: We need to invent a language in which politicians would be incapable *of* lying.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 70– 73, *Writer’s Inc* pp 515, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 700, 732

15. Vague Pronoun Reference

Incorrect: Some managers focus only on short-term profit, *which* can lower the quality of the product or service.

Correct: Some managers focus only on short-term profit, *a practice that* can lower the quality of the product or service.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 74-76, *Writer’s Inc* p 85, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 704

16. Unnecessary Shift in Pronoun

Incorrect: If *one* wants to become an international airline pilot, *they* have to learn English.

Correct: If *you* want to become an international airline pilot, *you* have to learn English.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 76 – 79, *Writer’s Inc* pp 503 - 506, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 708, 710

17. Comma Splice

Incorrect: Professor Adams Sherman Hill of Harvard was obsessed with mistakes in spelling and grammar, he passed his obsession on to generations of English teachers and the American public.

Correct: Professor Adams Sherman Hill of Harvard was obsessed with mistakes in spelling and grammar, *and* he passed his obsession on to generations of English teachers and the American public.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 79 – 81, *Writer’s Inc* pp 83-84, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp. 608, 618

18. Wrong or missing Verb Ending

Incorrect: The healthy office worker *park* one mile from work and *walk* twenty minutes for exercise.

Correct: The healthy office worker *parks* one mile from work and *walks* twenty minutes for exercise..

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 81 – 83, *Writer’s Inc* pp 507-512, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp714-724

19. Missing Commas in a Compound Sentence

Incorrect: Many Americans own a thesaurus yet these books of synonyms don’t exist for some languages with small vocabularies.

Correct: Many Americans own a thesaurus, yet these books of synonyms don’t exist for some languages with small vocabularies.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 83 – 84, *Writer’s Inc* pp 458-459, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 748 & 608

20. Missing Comma After an Introductory Element

Incorrect: While the dog ate the cat stayed away from the dish.

Correct: While the dog ate, the cat stayed away from the dish.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 84 – 86, *Writer’s Inc* pp 458, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 610

Five Uncommonly Serious Mistakes

(excerpted from Douglas Cazort's Under the Grammar Hammer, pp. 25-27)

The following five mistakes are not among the most common, but they receive strong negative responses when committed. In other words, we don't make these mistakes very often, but when we do, we cause strong negative reactions.... If you don't make these mistakes, you needn't worry. If you do, take steps to correct them.

21. Objective case pronouns used as subjects

Incorrect: Her guru and her agreed that we are what we think.

Correct: Her guru and she agreed that we are what we think.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 87-90, *Writer's Inc* pp 502, 506, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 710

22. Double negatives

Incorrect: One hard lesson for many to learn is that worry *won't hardly* change the future.

Correct: One hard lesson for many to learn is that worry *will hardly* change the future.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 90-92, *Writer's Inc* pp 89

23. Failure to capitalize proper names

Incorrect: roger von oech, the president of creative think, has conducted workshops on creativity for american express, proctor and gamble, and the Japanese management association.

Correct: Roger von Oech, the president of Creative Think, has conducted workshops on creativity for American Express, Apple Computer, Proctor and Gamble, and the Japanese Management Association.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 92-95, *Writer's Inc* pp 475-477, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 648

24. Faulty parallelism

Incorrect: A good manager requires the ability to lead, the capacity to learn, and delegating.

Correct: A good manager requires the ability to lead, the capacity to learn, and the willingness to delegate.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 95-97, *Writer's Inc* pp 90, 129, 138, 432

25. Subjective-case pronouns used as objects

Incorrect: The senator's use of double negatives surprised my students and *I*.

Correct: The senator's use of double negatives surprised my students and *me*.

For Additional Help: Cazort pp 97-99, *Writer's Inc* pp 506, *Write Source Gr. 9 -12* pp 710