



Outline of Common Errors

Parallelism

1. infinitive - gerund

Incorrect	She likes to hunt and fishing.
Correct	She likes to hunt and to fish <i>or</i> hunting and fishing

2. phrase - clause

Incorrect	Jane will undoubtedly succeed because of her honesty and because she is industrious.
Correct	. . . because of her honesty and industry <i>or</i> because she is honest and industrious.

3. misplaced correlatives

Incorrect	Virginia Woolf is not only famous in England but also in America.
Correct	Virginia Woolf is famous not only in England but also in America.

4. unnecessary shift in person and voice

Incorrect	Last night I read for some time, and then several letters were written by me.
Correct	Last night I read for some time, and then wrote several letters.

5. improper series

Incorrect	This book is interesting, instructive, and it is also up-to-date.
Correct	This book is interesting, instructive, and informative.

Nominative or Subject Form Pronouns

When the pronoun precedes the linking verb (all forms of am, is, are, was, were), the nominative or subject form of the pronoun is required. A pronoun in the subjective case (I, you, he, she, it, we, they) functions as a subject. Rearrange the sentence by placing the predicate pronoun as the subject.

1. predicate pronoun after a finite verb phrase

Incorrect	The coach is him, the man standing near the bench.
Correct	The coach is he, the man standing near the bench.

Incorrect	Him is the man standing near the bench.
Correct	He is the man standing near the bench.

2. subject of an infinitive

Incorrect	I know he to be the thief.
Correct	I know him to be the thief

3. predicate pronoun after an infinitive

Incorrect	I know the thief to be he.
Correct	I know the thief to be him.

4. direct object after a verb (phrase) or verbal

Incorrect	Mother called Jane and I to dinner.
Correct	Mother called Jane and me to dinner.

Noun or Pronouns

1. before a gerund

- Incorrect Father does not approve of Jack and me staying out till 3 a.m.
Correct Father does not approve of Jack's and my staying out till 3 a.m.

Lack of Agreement

1. subject-predicate

- Incorrect Neither James nor Ann are coming.
Correct Neither James nor Ann is coming.

Lack of Agreement

1. pronoun and antecedent

- Incorrect Everyone in the stands is throwing their hat high into the air.
Correct Everyone in the stands is throwing his or her hat into the air.

Dangling Element

1. participle

- Incorrect Coming across the campus, the library met my gaze.
Correct Coming across the campus, I saw the library.

2. infinitive

- Incorrect To speak French fluently, several years should be spent in France.
Correct To speak French fluently, one should spend several years in France.

3. gerund phrase

- Incorrect On entering the gallery, the statue of Apollo immediately became visible.
Correct I immediately saw the statue of Apollo upon entering the gallery.

4. elliptical clause

- Incorrect When three days old, my grandparents brought me to America.
Correct When I was three days old, my grandparents brought me to America.

Double Negative

- Incorrect In the last row of the hall we could not scarcely hear a word of the lecture.
Correct In the last row of the hall we could scarcely hear a word of the lecture.

Incorrect Tense (Sequence), Mood

1. present perfect for past

- Incorrect I have called you several times last evening.
Correct I called you several times last evening.

2. past for present perfect

- Incorrect Did you prepare your French lesson yet?
Correct Have you prepared your French lesson yet?

3. past for past perfect

- Incorrect Yesterday I found my gloves where I left them at camp many weeks ago.
Correct Yesterday I found my gloves where I had left them at camp many weeks ago.

4. perfect infinitive for present

Incorrect I should have liked to have seen you last week.
Correct I should have liked to see you last week.

5. sequence

Incorrect The superintendent said yesterday that she cannot approve our plan.
Correct The superintendent said yesterday that she could not approve our plan.

Incomplete Sentence (fragment)

1. infinitive phrase

Incorrect To reach the station in time. We had to leave at 7 a.m.
Correct To reach the station in time, we had to leave at 7 a.m.

2. dependent clause

Incorrect When I entered the room. I saw Jack by the fireplace.
Correct When I entered the room, I saw Jack by the fireplace.

3. participial phrase

Incorrect Running for the train. Norma slipped and fell.
Correct Running for the train, Norma slipped and fell.

4. appositive

Incorrect Shakespeare wrote several types of plays. Comedies, histories, and tragedies.
Correct Shakespeare wrote several types of plays: comedies, histories, and tragedies.

Faulty Reference (Pronoun)

1. vague

Incorrect John is habitually tardy, which annoys his parents.
Correct John's habitual tardiness is a habit, which annoys his parents.

2. ambiguous

Incorrect There is a bad stain on my coat. Can you remove it?
Correct There is a bad stain on my coat. Can you remove the spot?

Faulty Punctuation of Restrictive or Nonrestrictive Elements

1. relative clause

Incorrect Anna Minski who is my cousin is an artist.
Correct Anna Minski, who is my cousin, is an artist.

2. participial phrase

Incorrect Aunt Mary rocking on the porch saw the accident.
Correct Aunt Mary, rocking on the porch, saw the accident.

3. appositive

Incorrect *Gone With the Wind* a novel by Margaret Mitchell is an exciting tale.
Correct *Gone With the Wind*, a novel by Margaret Mitchell, is an exciting tale.

4. comma fault (splice)

Incorrect We easily won last Saturday's game, my roommate is captain of the team.
Correct We easily won last Saturday's game. My roommate is captain of the team.

Incorrect Position

1. adverb

Incorrect I only saw Rita at the office, no one else.
Correct I saw only Rita at the office, no one else.

2. phrase

Incorrect I saw an advertisement for a man who can sell insurance in the subway.
Correct I saw in the subway an advertisement for a man who can sell insurance.

3. clause

Incorrect My cousin has just sold his sister a new house in Dedham which he designed and built.
Correct My cousin has just sold his sister a new house, which he designed and built in Dedham.

4. appositive

Incorrect A sincere lover of Israel's people, no pains were spared by Golda Meir to serve their best interests.
Correct A sincere lover of Israel's people, Golda Meir spared no pains to serve their best interests.

Tautology: A needless repetition of an idea, statement, or word

Incorrect In my opinion I think the evidence is most convincing.
Correct In my opinion *or* I think the evidence is most convincing.

Faulty Comparison

Incorrect Beethoven's later symphonies are far more highly developed than Mozart.
Correct Beethoven's later symphonies are far more highly developed than Mozart's *or* those of Mozart.

Incorrect New York is larger than any city in the United States.
Correct New York is larger than any other city in the United States.