

1. A, AN

The indefinite article *a* is used before words starting with a consonant sound.

Incorrect: a elephant, a igloo

Correct: a desk, a house, a unicorn

The indefinite article *an* is used before words starting with a vowel sound.

Incorrect: an book, an ukulele

Correct: an umbrella; an egg; an x-ray

2. AIN'T

The contraction *ain't* is the improper form of *am not* or *is not*.

Incorrect: I ain't going to the meeting.

Correct: I am not going to the meeting.

Incorrect: Frank ain't in his office.

Correct: Frank isn't in his office.

3. ALRIGHT, ALL RIGHT

In formal writing, use the two words *all right* rather than the less accepted *alright*.

Avoid: She's doing alright in her sewing class.

Correct: She's doing all right in her sewing class.

4. ANYWHERE, NOWHERE, SOMEWHERE, EVERYWHERE, ANYWAYS

It is not necessary to add and -s to the words *anywhere*, *nowhere*, *somewhere*, *everywhere*, and *anyway*

Incorrect: I have nowheres to put this box.

Correct: I have nowhere to put this box.

5. ARE, HOUR, OUR

Don't misspell these words that sound similar but have completely different meanings.

The word *are* is a verb that is used as a helping verb or a linking verb.

Correct: We *are* going to church. (helping verb)

Correct: Your grades *are* awesome! (linking verb)

The word *hour* is a noun that is a unit of time.

Correct: We got home at a late *hour*.

The word *our* is a pronoun that shows possession.

Correct: *Our* salvation is through Jesus alone.

6. BETWEEN YOU AND I, FOR YOU AND I

The subjective case pronoun *I* is used incorrectly within the prepositional phrases *between you and I* and *for you and I*. The pronoun *I* should be changed to the objective case *me*.

Incorrect: Our neighbors baked this cake for you and I.

Correct: Our neighbors baked this cake for you and me.

7. BORROW, LEND

Borrow means to **receive** something with the intention of returning it.

Correct: May I borrow your dictionary?

Lend means to **give** something with the intention of it being returned.

Correct: Let me borrow you my dictionary.

Correct: Let me lend you my dictionary.

8. BRING, TAKE

Bring implies movement towards.

Correct: Please bring me my glasses.

Take implies movement away from.

Correct: Please take the car to the auto shop.

9. CAN, MAY

Can indicates *capability*.

Correct: Can you please check the pie?

May indicates *consent*.

Correct: May I be dismissed from class?

10. COUNSEL, COUNCIL

Counsel refers to *advice*.

Correct: The young man sought counsel from his pastor.

Council refers to a *committee*.

Correct: Mr. Smitty is running for City Council.

11. DONE

Avoid using *done* in place of the helping verb *have*.

Incorrect: They *done* finished that job.

Correct: They *have* finished that job.

12. DON'T

Avoid using *don't* (or do not) when its subject is singular; use *doesn't* (or does not) instead.

Incorrect: She *don't* want any breakfast.

Correct: She *doesn't* want any breakfast.

Correct: They *don't* want any breakfast.

13. DOUBLE NEGATIVE

No, *not* (or *n't*), *none*, *never*, *no one*, *nobody*, *nothing*, *hardly*, *rarely*, *scarcely*, and *but* (meaning *only*) are considered negatives. Avoid using two negatives where one is adequate.

Incorrect: They *rarely never* go out of town on the weekends.

Correct: They *rarely* go out of town on the weekends.

Correct: They *never* go out of town on the weekends.

Incorrect: *No one* knew *nothing* about the surprise party.

Correct: *No one* knew *anything* about the surprise party.

Correct: They knew *nothing* about the surprise party.

14.DOUBLE SUBJECT

Avoid using a double subject..

Incorrect: His family they went on vacation.

Correct: His family went on vacation.

15.FAZE, PHASE

These two words sound the same but have completely different meanings; don't mix them up. Faze is a verb which means to disturb or fluster.

Correct: Getting hit in the head by the baseball didn't even *faze* Charlie.

Phase is a noun which generally means a stage in a process.

Correct: Our church is nearly done with the first *phase* of our building project.

16.HAD OF

Change *had of* to simply *had*.

Incorrect: I wish I had of known of the changes earlier.

Correct: I wish I had known of the changes earlier.

17.HAD OUGHT

Change *had ought* to simply *ought*.

Incorrect: She had ought to clean the house before the visitors arrive.

Correct: She ought to clean the house before the visitors arrive.

18.HAVE, OF

The preposition *of* should not be used in place of the verb *have*.

Incorrect: He must of gotten the wrong address.

Correct: He must have gotten the wrong address.

19.HISSELF, THEIRSELVES

Avoid using the nonstandard pronouns *hisself* and *theirselves*.

Incorrect: The athlete discouraged *hisself* from eating too late at night.
Correct: The athlete discouraged himself from eating too late at night.

Incorrect: They picked up the table *theirselves*.
Correct: They picked up the table themselves.

20.ITS, IT'S

Its is a possessive case pronoun and functions as an adjective or pronoun.

Correct: The bear crawled back to *its* den.

It's is the contraction for *it is*.

Correct: *It's* (It is) extremely cold outside!

21.LEARN, TEACH

Learn means to acquire knowledge.

Correct: She wants to learn how to grow a garden.

Teach means to impart knowledge.

Correct: The gardener is going to teach her how to plant.

22. LIKE

The word *like* is a perfectly good English word, and it is correctly used in sentences like this:

Correct: The young man does *like* the young lady.
Correct: I want to marry a man *like* dear old dad.

The word *like* is used incorrectly when it is used to mean 'said' in the popular culture.

Incorrect: She was *like*, "I can't believe that."
Incorrect: And he was *like*, "I can't believe that either."
Incorrect: And she was *like*, "It was horrible."
Incorrect: And he was *like*, "Yeah, I know."

23.MRS., MISS, MS.

Mrs. is a title referring to a married woman.

Correct: Mrs. Mason works with her husband at the church.

Miss is a title referring to a girl or an unmarried woman.

Correct: Miss Lang is going to have her wedding reception at the lodge.

Ms. is a title commonly used when the marital status of a woman is unknown or when the distinction between a married and an unmarried woman is purposely avoided. . The title of *Ms.* was put forward by the women's liberation movement in an effort to indicate that marriage and marital status were unimportant; therefore, from the Christian point of view, we avoid this abbreviation. Instead, seek to find the woman's marital status. If you cannot find it, use just her name.

Avoid: Dear Ms. Downey, You have been selected to participate in our survey!

Use: Dear Elaine, You have been selected to participate in our survey!

24.PRECEDE, PROCEED

These two words sound similar but have very different meanings.

Precede is a verb which means to come before.

Correct: Earthquakes often *precede* volcanic eruptions.

Proceed is a verb which means to go on or move forward.

Correct: After a short break, I *proceeded* to work on my term paper.

25.PRINCIPAL, PRINCIPLE

Don't accidentally misspell these two words that have different meanings.

Principal is either an adjective or a noun. It means the main or most important thing. When referring to a person, it usually means the leader of a school.

Incorrect: My *principle* contribution to the project was money.

Correct: My *principal* contribution to the project was money.

Correct: Larry was called to the *principal's* office during English class.

Principle is always a noun. It means a general or fundamental law or truth.

Incorrect: The young Muslim said he agreed with Hezbollah's *principals* but opposed its tactics.

Correct: The young Muslim said he agreed with Hezbollah's *principles* but opposed its tactics.

26. REASON IS BECAUSE

Change *reason is because* to *reason is that* or simply to the word *because*.

Incorrect: The *reason* our flight was delayed *is because* the weather became stormy.

Correct: The reason our flight was delayed is that the weather became stormy.

Correct: Our flight was delayed because the weather became stormy.

27. THAN, THEN

Than is used when comparing.

Correct: This year's baseball team is better than last year's team.

Then is used when referring to a time or order following.

Correct: First, we practiced our pitching, then our batting.

28. THEIR, THERE, THEY'RE

Their is a word that shows possession. It means something that belongs to them.

Incorrect: I saw *there* car in the parking lot.

Incorrect: I saw *they're* car in the parking lot.

Correct: I saw *their* car in the parking lot.

There is a word which shows location.

Incorrect: Did you go *their* on vacation?

Incorrect: Did you go *they're* on vacation?

Correct: Did you go *there* on vacation?

They're is a contraction which means "they are."

Incorrect: I invited them, and *their* coming to church tonight!

Incorrect: I invited them, and *there* coming to church tonight!

Correct: I invited them, and *they're* coming to church tonight!

29. TO, TOO, TWO

The word *to* is a common preposition.

Incorrect: Do not be late *too* class.

Incorrect: Do not be late *two* class.

Correct: Do not be late *to* class.

The word *too* means also.

Incorrect: Would you like some popcorn *to*?

Incorrect: Would you like some popcorn *two*?

Correct: Would you like some popcorn *too*?

The word *two* is a number.

Incorrect: Jessica ate *to* tacos.

Incorrect: Jessica ate *too* tacos.

Correct: Jessica ate *two* tacos.

30. USED TO COULD

Change *used to could* to *used to be able to*.

Incorrect: He *used to could* run very quickly.

Correct: He *used to be able to* run very quickly.

31. WHERE, WHEN

Avoid using *where* or *when* when introducing a definition.

Incorrect: A referee is *where* someone judges the proceedings in a game.

Correct: A referee is someone who judges the proceedings in a game.

32. YOUR, YOU'RE

Your is a word that shows possession. It means something that belongs to you.

Incorrect: You did very well on *you're* test.

Correct: You did very well on *your* test.

You're is a contraction which means "you are."

Incorrect: I know *your* in there!

Correct: I know *you're* in there!