

Common Grammar Mistakes

<i>Misused Word(s)</i>	<i>Rule</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Who/Whom	<p>“Who” is subjective and is used when the pronoun acts as the object of a clause.</p> <p>Usage depends on whether you are referring to the subject or object of a sentence.</p> <p>To test, substitute “he” or “she” for “who,” and substitute “him” or “her” for whom.</p>	<p><i>Who</i> loves you? (She loves me.)</p> <p>I consulted with a doctor <i>whom</i> I met in school. (I consulted with him.)</p>
Which/That	<p>“That” is a restrictive pronoun, which means the phrase following it is needed to understand the preceding statement.</p> <p>“Which” introduces a relative clause and is used when there are qualifiers that may not be essential.</p>	<p>I don’t like buying clothes <i>that</i> aren’t made in the USA.</p> <p>You should only buy clothes made locally, <i>which</i> are usually sold at smaller local businesses.</p>
Lay/Lie	<p>“Lay” requires a direct object (past tense: “laid”).</p> <p>“Lie” doesn’t need an object (past tense: “lay”).</p> <p>Common mistake: People use the past tense of “lay” when they mean to use the past tense of “lie.”</p>	<p>I <i>lay</i> my head upon the pillow.</p> <p>Last night, I <i>laid</i> my head upon the pillow.</p> <p>The stones <i>lie</i> near the river.</p> <p>The stones <i>lay</i> near the river, waiting to be washed.</p>
Nor/Or	<p>“Nor” means “and not.”</p> <p>Rule of thumb: Use “nor” with “neither” and “or” with “either”.</p>	<p>I bet neither Mike <i>nor</i> Jessie will like the movie.</p> <p>I bet either Mike or Jessie will not like the movie.</p>
Affect/Effect	<p>“Affect” is a verb that means “to influence or produce an impression.”</p> <p>“Effect” is a noun that means “the result of.”</p>	<p>That movie <i>affected</i> me like no other movie has.</p> <p>I felt no <i>effect</i> from the movie, I wish it <i>affected</i> me, but I thought it was boring.</p>
Since/Because	<p>“Since” refers to time.</p>	<p><i>Since</i> I saw you last, I’ve gotten a new job.</p>

	“Because” refers to causation.	<i>Because</i> I saw you, I looked into that new job you recommended.
Fewer/Less	“Few” and “fewer” are for things you can count. “Less” is for hypothetical quantities.	I ate <i>fewer</i> calories today than I did yesterday. I need to eat <i>less</i> food so I can lose weight.
Whether/If	“Whether” expresses a condition where there are two or more alternatives. “If” expresses a condition where there are no alternatives.	I don’t know <i>whether</i> I will meet up with you later. I will meet up with you tonight <i>if</i> I finish my homework.
May/Might	Both suggest there is a possibility of something happening, but use “may” when there’s a greater likelihood and “might” when there’s little to no chance.	I <i>may</i> see you later if I can finish my essay. I <i>might</i> go to Europe this summer—if I can get over my fear of flying.
That/Who	Whenever you write about people, use “who” to refer to them.	Jane is the girl <i>who</i> lives above me.
Than/Then	“Than” is used when comparing things. “Then” is used when referring to time.	She is much taller <i>than</i> me. I will see you first and <i>then</i> go to the store.
It’s/Its	“It’s” is a contraction of “it is.” “Its” is a possessive pronoun or adjective.	<i>It’s</i> going to rain tomorrow. The dog licked <i>its</i> paw.
There/Their/They’re	“Their” is used when referring to ownership or possession. “They’re” is a contraction of “they are.” “There” is used when referring to location.	<i>Their</i> dog was barking so loudly, I couldn’t sleep. <i>They’re</i> going to go the movies later. <i>There</i> is that sock I was looking for.
Complement/Compliment	“Complement” refers to something that adds to or completes something else. “Compliment” is something nice said about you.	The fresh herbs really <i>complement</i> the chicken. She <i>complimented</i> me and said she liked my shoes.

Loose/Lose	<p>“Loose” refers to when something is coming undone.</p> <p>“Lose” is the opposite of “win” or “gain.”</p>	<p>My pants are so <i>loose</i>, I need a belt to keep them up.</p> <p>If I <i>lose</i> more weight, I'll need a belt to keep my pants up.</p>
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