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Spell-Check Errors

Some spelling mistakes won't be caught by spell check or AutoCorrect. For example, these programs don't know that when you typed *excited*, you actually meant *exited*. That's why it's important to proofread your work.

Directions: Read each sentence. If it is OK, write C, for "correct," next to the sentence. If you find a mistake, cross out the misused word and write the correct word above it. Some sentences have more than one error.

1. My mom called my brother and told him too come home write away.
2. Mrs. Saddler says that we are not aloud to go outside for recess today.
3. "Please take a peace of the cake that I made," said Lisa. "I want to know if its any good!"
4. I just started watching *Vampire Diaries* last week, and I'm all ready on Season 5.
5. After a few very rainy days, Liam was excited to wake up to the sun shining through his bedroom window.
6. Liza and Jonah are worried about having to carry there volcano diorama to school—it weighs eight pounds!
7. I was very careful not to brake any off my grandmother's delicate glass figurines while I was playing with my baby cousins.
8. Mark would rather ride his bike to school then wait for the bus in the cold.
9. My father will eat almost anything—except spinach.
10. "I want to by this teddy bear," said my little sister. "It's so cute!"

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Polish Your Possessives

The *possessive* form of a word shows ownership. Here are some rules to remember about forming possessives:

- 1** To make a **singular noun** (like *girl*) possessive, add an 's to the end of the noun.
For example: *the girl's dog*
Here, the possessive shows that the dog belongs to one girl.
- 2** To make a **plural noun** (like *girls*) possessive, add an ' after the s that is already at the end of the noun.
For example: *the girls' dog*
Here, the possessive shows that the dog belongs to more than one girl.
- 3** To make a **collective noun** (a noun that treats a group as one thing, like *audience, family, or team*) or a plural noun that does not end in s (like *children* or *mice*) possessive, add an 's to the end of the word, just as you would do with a singular noun.
For example: *the children's game*
Here, the possessive shows that the game belongs to more than one child.

Directions: Fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>1. Who or what "owns" the toys in the following sentence? <i>Karla's cats' toys are all over the place.</i></p> <p>Ⓐ one cat
Ⓑ more than one cat
Ⓒ Karla
Ⓓ It is impossible to tell.</p> | <p>2. Which of the following correctly indicates that the fans belong to one team?</p> <p>Ⓐ Our teams' fans cheered loudly.
Ⓑ Our teams fan's cheered loudly.
Ⓒ Our team's fans cheered loudly.
Ⓓ Our teams's fans cheered loudly.</p> | <p>3. Choose the sentence that is punctuated correctly.</p> <p>Ⓐ Taras' socks are filthy.
Ⓑ Taras socks' are filthy.
Ⓒ Tara's socks are filthy.
Ⓓ Taras socks are filthy.</p> |
|--|---|--|

Directions: Rewrite each of the following sentences by making a noun possessive. Change the wording as necessary. For example:

The hat belonging to Tanya is gigantic. ⇨ *Tanya's hat is gigantic.*

4. The jeans that belong to Curt are too loose.

5. I have the birthdays of my friends memorized.

6. The Golden Unicorn is the restaurant my family likes best.

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Don't Forget the Comma!

Introductory clauses and phrases do what they sound like they do: They introduce something. In other words, they set the stage for the main action in a sentence. Introductory clauses and phrases cannot stand alone—their meaning is dependent on the rest of the sentence. Here are some examples:

These are introductory clauses because they have both a subject and a verb.

→ When Melanie arrived at the hotel, she headed straight to the pool.

→ If Nick hits one more home run this year, he'll break a school record.

These are introductory phrases because they DO NOT have a subject, but they have a verb.

→ To get to the library, drive down Main Street and turn left on 16th.

→ After visiting California, Claudia decided she wanted to move there.

Introductory clauses and phrases should be followed by a comma. Look again at the examples above. See how a comma follows each underlined phrase or clause?

Directions: Insert the missing comma after the introductory clause or phrase in each sentence below.

1. If you want to get the lead in the play be sure to practice your lines before the audition.
2. Determined to get an A on her science test Julie began studying a week in advance.
3. Because she was deathly afraid of spiders Lauren refused to walk within 15 feet of the web.
4. Before eating dinner you should always wash your hands.
5. Excited by her basketball team's victory Regina couldn't stop smiling.
6. Despite being a first-time bowler Jenny made three strikes during her first game.
7. Even though she got caught in traffic Marissa arrived at the theater on time.
8. After searching for two hours Joey finally found his pet hamster behind the couch.
9. Once you've had your learner's permit for a year you can get your driver's license.

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Affect vs. Effect

The words *affect* and *effect* are easy to mix up. Here are some simple rules to help keep these words straight.

AFFECT

▶▶ Use *affect* as a verb meaning "to influence or cause a change."

How will this quiz affect my grade?

The referee's call affected the outcome of the game.

EFFECT

▶▶ Use *effect* as a noun meaning "a result or impact."

Exercising regularly has positive effects on your health.

The movie's soundtrack had an effect on my emotions.

Directions: Write a form of *affect* or *effect* in each blank below to correctly complete each sentence.

1. The amount of sleep you get at night _____ your energy level throughout the day.
2. The wildfires devastated forests across the state. The _____ will be felt for years to come.
3. The rainy weather will _____ attendance at the movie's opening night.
4. The company hoped their new commercials would _____ their product's popularity in the coming months.
5. It is always a good idea to read the warning label on any medicine you take so that you understand its possible side _____.
6. It will be interesting to see what _____ the new public transportation system has on traffic.
7. Scientists are studying how space travel _____ the human body.

Directions: Write one sentence using *affect* and one sentence using *effect*.

8. _____

9. _____

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Master Verb-Tense Consistency

A verb's *tense* indicates when the action that it describes takes place—in the past (*I ran*), in the present (*I run*), or in the future (*I will run*).

The verb tense you use should remain *consistent*, or the same, throughout sentences, throughout paragraphs, and throughout the entire body of whatever you are writing—unless you have a good reason to change it.

For example:

Incorrect: After we **play** soccer, Dad **took** us out for pizza.
(*Play* is in the present tense, and *took* is in the past tense—and there is no good reason for the shift.)

Correct Option 1: After we **play** soccer, Dad **takes** us out for pizza.
(Both verbs are in the present tense.)

Correct Option 2: After we **played** soccer, Dad **took** us out for pizza.
(Both verbs are in the past tense.)

So what IS a good reason to change the verb tense you are using? You can change tenses when you are describing events that happen at different times.

For example:

Correct: Tracy's hair **is** blond, though it **was** brown last week.
(You are describing something that is in the present, and you are also describing something in the past.)

Correct: I **packed** my suitcase last night because I **will be flying** to New York tomorrow.
(You are describing something that happened in the past, and you are also describing something that will happen in the future.)

Directions: In each group of sentences or paragraphs below, place a ✓ in front of the sentence or paragraph that correctly uses verb tenses.

1. a _____ The conductor lifted his arms and signals the orchestra to begin.
b _____ The conductor lifts his arms and signaled the orchestra to begin.
c _____ The conductor lifted his arms and signaled the orchestra to begin.

2. a _____ Frogs have smooth, clammy skin, whereas toads have dry, bumpy skin.
b _____ Frogs had smooth, clammy skin, whereas toads have dry, bumpy skin.
c _____ Frogs have smooth, clammy skin, whereas toads had dry, bumpy skin.

3. a _____ Carmen takes gymnastics on Tuesdays; now she goes on Thursdays instead.
b _____ Carmen took gymnastics on Tuesdays; now she went on Thursdays instead.
c _____ Carmen took gymnastics on Tuesdays; now she goes on Thursdays instead.

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Puzzling Pronouns

Think about the following sentence:

Nicholas went to see the lion and he started roaring.

Who is roaring? You can't tell, because it's not clear to whom the pronoun *he* refers. Because of this, the sentence is ambiguous, or open to more than one meaning. Here is one way to make the sentence clear:

The lion started roaring when Nicholas went to see him.

Directions: Place a check (✓) next to the CLEAR sentence in each group. We did the first one for you.

- a _____ When I dropped the vase on the table, it broke.
b The vase broke when I dropped it on the table.
- a _____ Jenny emptied the trash out of her car and washed it.
b _____ Jenny washed her car and emptied the trash out of it.
- a _____ Aaron's brother wondered how tall Aaron was going to be.
b _____ Aaron's brother wondered how tall he was going to be.
- a _____ The teachers assured the students, "You will all pass the test on Friday."
b _____ The teachers assured the students that they would all pass the test on Friday.
- a _____ Evan called Jon every day when he was at camp.
b _____ When Jon was at camp, Evan called him every day.

Directions: Revise the following sentences so that their meanings are clear. We did the first one for you.

6. Noelle and Kayla are twins, but she has always been taller.

Noelle and Kayla are twins, but Noelle has always been taller.

7. Marissa gave Shauna a new book that she couldn't put down.
-

8. The pictures Lucas took of Victor are still on his camera.
-

9. My aunts blamed my uncles for their loss at the family volleyball tournament.
-

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Correct Capitalization

Capital letters are used to mark the beginning of sentences, to distinguish proper nouns from common nouns, and to indicate other words that deserve special attention. Here are some rules to help you use capitals correctly:

Capitalize the first word in every sentence.

Last weekend, we went to see an exhibit about frogs. Did you know that one tiny poison dart frog can contain enough poison to kill 10 adults?

Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation.

Stacy asked, "When are we leaving for vacation?"
"You know I don't like mushrooms," said Ethan.

Capitalize proper nouns. A proper noun names a *specific* person, place, thing, or idea.

I would love to travel to New Zealand, Hawaii, and Australia.

You will read about Anne Frank when you study World War II.

Jason went to the mall to buy Nike sneakers.

Capitalize titles like Mr., Ms., Dr., and official titles like Governor, etc. when they come directly before a name.

I sent a birthday card to Ms. Shaw.

Please give this envelope to Judge Anderson.

Lucy says that Dr. Becker called.

Capitalize titles when they are used instead of a name.

"Please ask Dad to call me after he drops you off," said my mom.

My grandmother just celebrated her 90th birthday. Go, Grandma!

"Nice to see you again, Captain," said Roger.

An activity on capitalization begins on the next page.

Directions: Correct the 17 capitalization errors in the school newspaper story below. Circle any letters that should be capitalized, and draw a slash through any letters that should be lowercase.

Menu Madness on Monday

Last Friday, a brightly colored notice appeared on the cafeteria doors of Mountain Creek High School. It read, "New menu starting Monday!" Despite the sign's upbeat tone, many students were concerned, confused, and upset.

Mrs. Newman, cafeteria manager, did not release any details of the new menu on Friday, except to say that it was a "positive change." Few students felt reassured as they headed into the weekend.

As nervous students filed into the cafeteria on Monday, they found Mrs. Newman and Mr. Greenberg, the principal, waiting for them. Mrs. Newman and Mr. Greenberg explained that from then on, the cafeteria would be serving only healthy meals.

Over the sound of students' groans, Mrs. Newman unveiled the new menu. It included salads, soups, baked fish, and grilled chicken.

"We are concerned that too many students are choosing pizza instead of salad," said Mr. Greenberg, "so we are eliminating the pizza option."

Many students, like eighth-grader Katie Ready, were outraged. "This is a violation of our rights," she said.

"Where are the burgers? Where are the hot dogs?" asked seventh-grader Kevin Miller.

Though many students appeared devastated by the change, there were those who took it in stride, like sixth-grader Frank Robbins. "I don't mind eating some carrots and chicken soup for lunch," he said. "Hopefully, my Mom will let me eat junk food when I get home."

Reported by Juliane Woods

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Know Your Homophones

Some spelling mistakes won't be caught by spell-check or autocorrect. These programs don't recognize homophone errors—*its* instead of *it's*, for example. That's why it's important to know the difference between words that sound the same or similar, and to proofread your work.

Directions: Read each sentence below. Underline the correct word in each boldface pair. If you aren't sure, use a dictionary to help you.

1. **Your/You're** backpack is so heavy!
2. William saw a **bare/bear** in the woods.
3. **There's/theirs** only one slice of pie left?
4. We didn't bring **are/our** bathing suits. We didn't think it would be warm enough to swim.
5. We went to the **new/knew** pizza place on Emery Street last night.
6. This shirt is not very comfortable. The fabric is rather **course/coarse**.
7. Brian found a few **sense/cents** under the couch cushion.
8. No wonder **you're/your** cold: You've got **bare/bear** arms!
9. Leah **new/knew** that Isabella would keep the secret.
10. If you want to talk to John and Dylan, you'd better hurry. **Their/They're** leaving in five minutes.

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Fragment Fix

A sentence fragment is a group of words that does not contain both a subject and a verb, or does not express a complete thought. A sentence fragment does not make sense on its own. Some examples of fragments are below, along with ways to fix them. (The fragments appear in bold.)

Incorrect: Eva wants to come with us to the mall. **After she finishes her chores.**

Correct: Eva wants to come with us to the mall after she finishes her chores.

Incorrect: The movie theater is on Magnolia Avenue. **Which is just past Dogwood Street.**

Correct: The movie theater is on Magnolia Avenue, which is just past Dogwood Street.

Incorrect: **Unless Jackson cleans his room.**

Correct: Unless Jackson cleans his room, he won't be able to come play basketball tonight.

Correct: Jackson has to stay home tonight unless he cleans his room.

Directions: Write **F** for fragment or **S** for sentence on each line below.

- ____ 1. Don't judge a book by its cover.
- ____ 2. After completing her homework, Sofia sat down to watch her favorite show, *The 100*.
- ____ 3. Mark Twain, who wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
- ____ 4. José, who excels in math, aced last week's algebra test.
- ____ 5. Unless Allison decides to come camping with us over the weekend.
- ____ 6. Please stop shouting.
- ____ 7. Even though Ryan's family had adopted the most adorable puppy I'd seen in my entire life.
- ____ 8. While Michelle was in gym class.

Directions: Rewrite the paragraph below, changing all the fragments into complete sentences.

Among the most well-known and fascinating kinds of sharks are the hammerheads. Which include nine separate species. While most hammerheads, because of their small size, are considered harmless to humans. Some can be extremely dangerous. For example, the great hammerhead. Able to grow to more than 20 feet long and weigh up to 1,000 pounds. Beware!

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There, Their, and They're

The words *there*, *their*, and *they're* are often confused and misused. Here's what you need to know:

there	their	they're
<p>Use <i>there</i> to refer to a place or to the existence of something.</p> <p>Examples: Ann found her book over there, behind the oak tree. There will be free ice cream at Scoops's grand opening.</p>	<p>Use <i>their</i> to indicate that something belongs to certain people, animals, or things.</p> <p>Examples: The Goldbergs brought their new baby home today. The dogs played with their tennis balls all afternoon.</p>	<p>Use <i>they're</i> as a contraction of "they are."</p> <p>Examples: I love hanging out with Kim and Carl. They're so funny! Ben and Gabriel say they're trying out for the team.</p>

Directions: Underline the correct boldface word in each sentence below.

1. The Smiths have lived in Madrid for three years, but **there/their/they're** moving back to Seattle next month.
2. Megan already left for the party. Lilly is meeting her **there/their/they're** after dinner.
3. Anthony carried the twins' birthday cake, and I carried **there/their/they're** presents.
4. Tyler said **there/their/they're** are four kittens sleeping in a box under the porch.

Directions: Write either *there*, *their*, or *they're* on each blank in the paragraph below.

Yesterday, my little sisters challenged me to a game of Scrabble. Usually, I avoid playing games with them because _____ terrible cheaters. But _____ pleading wore me down, and it was raining, so I agreed. We set up the board on the dining room table, removing Princess, the cat that likes to sleep _____. Then we picked our tiles. _____ were only two blank tiles, and I got them both! Things were looking good. The girls obviously didn't like _____ tiles: They kept trying to sneak _____ hands into the tile bag for new ones. _____ is not much else to say about the game, except that it went on and on and on. When it finally ended and my sister Lisa won, I was more than ready to get out of _____.