

Little, Annoying, Distracting, Common Errors to Root Out of your Writing!

1. **Intensifiers:** An intensifier adds emotion, but no specific information.

Examples: extremely important skill, drastically affects, contribute substantially, quite helpful, significant problems, huge technical challenge, deep understanding, great opportunity, direct understanding, much better, unique challenge, quickly moving.

2. **Punctuation:** “However,” “therefore,” “nonetheless,” and other conjunctive adverbs take a semi-colon when they link two sentences. **Listen** to how the punctuation sounds.

I read the studies, however, I failed to find adequate evidence. (incorrect)

I read the studies; however, I failed to find adequate evidence. (correct)

I read the studies; I failed, however, to find adequate evidence. (correct)

I read the studies, however, and failed to find adequate evidence. (correct)

3. **Its and It’s:** for some readers, a sign of an educated writer.

It’s = It is.

It’s a measure of a writer’s attention to detail to remember that “it’s” means “it is.”

4. **The word “data” is plural.**

The data are.... These data have.... Some data seem.... Our data indicate....

5. **Naked this:** Follow “this” with the noun to which it refers. (Same with “that,” “them,” “those,” “these,” and “it.”) Otherwise, you force your readers to guess, which is annoying to them and risky to you.

“This goal.” “These batteries.” “Those compartments.”

6. **Hyphenation:** A hyphen is generally used to connect two words when they are used as a single word to modify something else.

I told him to drop dead.

The sunset was drop-dead gorgeous.

She wore a drop-dead-gorgeous dress.

We examined the ratio of signal to noise.

We examined the signal-to-noise ratio.

A two sample one tailed student’s t test was conducted.

7. **“As such”:** “As such” does not mean “therefore.” A sentence shouldn’t include the phrase “as such” unless there’s an antecedent that answers the question “as what?”

Correct: We were an intense group of astronomy students. As such [As what? As astronomy students], we were immediately drawn to the exoplanet exhibition.

Incorrect: Because of the accident, he arrived at the dock an hour late. As such [As what? No antecedent. Use “Therefore”], he missed the boat and forfeited his deposit.

Spell Checker

Eye halve a spelling chequer.
It came with my pea sea.
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.
Eye strike a quay and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong or write:
It shows me strait a weigh.
As soon as a mist ache is maid,
It nose bee fore two long.
And eye can putt the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong.
Eye have run this poem threw,
I am shore your pleas two no.
Its let her perfect awl the weigh!
My chequer tolled me sew!

Anonymous