

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

Please eliminate these errors from your writing by the end of the term.

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.

Its = belonging to it.

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.... The 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.”

“She wore a drop-dead-gorgeous dress.”

“We can't accomplish that in the short term.”

“The short-term effects are significant.”