

Grammar Workshop
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Taking the time to edit/proofread your class papers, journal article submissions, master's papers, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations before submitting them will give you a more professional final product. Having a higher-quality first submission will speed up the review process wherever you may be submitting your document. This workshop outlines some of the common grammatical issues that writers have.

Run-on Sentences (RO)

John went to the store and he bought some milk.	RO
John went to the store, and he bought some milk.	Correct
John went to the store. He bought some milk.	Correct
John went to the store; he bought some milk.	Correct

Comma Splices (CS)

John went to the store, he bought some milk.	CS
John went to the store, and he bought some milk.	Correct
John went to the store. He bought some milk.	Correct
John went to the store; he bought some milk.	Correct

Sentence Fragments

When John went to the store.	Fragment ("When" creates a dependent clause.)
John went to the store.	Correct
When John went to the store, he bought some milk.	Correct

Noun-Verb Agreement

Nouns and verbs need to agree in number. If you have dependent clauses or prepositional phrases, noun-verb agreement may be more challenging since the subject of the sentence and its verb are not next to each other.

The <u>data</u> <u>was</u> presented.	Incorrect
The <u>data</u> <u>were</u> presented.	Correct
The <u>datum</u> <u>was</u> presented.	Correct

Explanation: "Datum" is singular while "data" is plural.

<u>Members</u> of the church <u>was</u> going to the service	Incorrect
<u>Members</u> of the church <u>were</u> going to the service.	Correct

Explanation: The subject of the sentence (members) needs to agree with the verb (were). "Church" is the object of the preposition (of), so it should be ignored when selecting the verb.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Pronouns and their antecedents (the nouns to which pronouns refer) must agree in number.

The garden club went to the fair. They enjoyed the day. Incorrect

The garden club members went to the fair. They enjoyed the day. Correct

The garden club went to the fair. Its members enjoyed the day. Correct

Explanation: “Club” (the antecedent in the first sentence) is singular while “they” (the pronoun) is plural. “Members” (the antecedent in the second sentence) is plural. “Its” (the pronoun in the third sentence) is singular like its antecedent (club).

Parallel Structure

John went to the store, to the bank, and the post office. Not Parallel

John went to the store, to the bank, and to the post office. Parallel

John went shopping, running, and fished. Not Parallel

John went shopping, running, and fishing. Parallel

Explanation: Having a parallel sentence structure makes the writing smoother and easier to read.

Prepositions

The team won the tournament it was playing in. Incorrect

The team won the tournament in which it was playing. Correct

Explanation: You should not end a sentence with a preposition.

In two out of three studies, the results were the same. Incorrect

In two of three studies, the results were the same. Correct

Explanation: Avoid having two consecutive prepositions.

Punctuation

The race went through Fargo, ND, Moorhead, MN, and Aberdeen, SD. Incorrect

The race went through Fargo, ND; Moorhead, MN; and Aberdeen, SD. Correct

Explanation: Semicolons are used to separate items in a series with internal commas.

John said, “The store was busy”. Incorrect

John said, “The store was busy.” Correct

Explanation: Commas and periods go inside quotation marks while colons and semicolons go outside quotation marks.

Word Choices

The book is entitled *Gone with the Wind*. Incorrect

The book is titled *Gone with the Wind*. Correct

Explanation: You are entitled to title a document.

A quote is given below. Incorrect
 A quotation is given below. Correct
 John was quoted in the article. Correct
 Explanation: “Quotation” is a noun while “quote” is a verb.

The cat ate it’s food. Incorrect
 The cat ate its food. Correct
 Explanation: “It’s” is a contraction for “it is” while “its” is the singular, possessive pronoun needed.

The club members went to there garden party. Incorrect
 The club members went to they’re garden party. Incorrect
 The club members went to their garden party. Correct
They’re going to the garden party. Correct
 The garden party is at the fair. The club members are there. Correct
 Explanation: “Their” is the plural, possessive pronoun while “they’re” is the contraction for “they are.”
 “There” is used for place or time.

The reception is where the honorees were recognized. Correct
 Explanation: Sometimes, people use “where” when they mean “were” or “were” when they mean “where.” Spellcheck will not catch this error since both words are spelled correctly. “Where” helps to show place while “were” is a verb. [Examples such as the previous three illustrate why proofreading is important.]

My advisor is Dr. Doe. Less Correct
 My adviser is Dr. Doe. More Correct
 Explanation: Even though both spellings are listed in the dictionary as correct, NDSU chooses to use “adviser” (the first listed spelling).