

# The 12 Twelve Most Common Grammar Errors

Many people do misspell common words, confuse similarly spelled words, or sometimes simply use the wrong form of words like “there” and “their”. In a family, friendly or informal setting, it doesn’t matter as much when such words are misused or confused since we know what they intend to say. In a formal or business setting however, such mistakes can be quite expensive. Grammar errors that make you look unprofessional can cost you customers or even indirectly drive you out of business.

Here are the commonest mistakes (if you can afford to avoid these common mistakes in your business and website materials then you will be outstanding as a potential new customer):

1. **Subject/verb agreement:** Many people know the necessary basics of this one. The concept is to match a plural verb with a plural noun and vice versa. You would for example say “The lady IS speeding” and not “The lady ARE speeding”. Some people also get mixed up with subjects such as “nobody” or “everyone”. These nouns are quite confusing in that they are singular and refer to more than one person. So you would say “Everyone HAS an important issue” or “Nobody WANTS to be wasted” and not “Nobody WANT....” Or “Everyone HAVE....”
2. **Mixing up the past and present tenses:** This is a common error in fiction writing but it does come out once in a while in business correspondences. In some cases, service or product descriptions are written in the present tense to portray a sense of agency or immediacy. The error that occurs however in such instances is the failure to maintain the present tense. The only exception here is when you clearly state that now you are talking about an event or something in the past. e.g., “Even ten years ago, old folks weren’t able to get news in time”.
3. **Apostrophe errors:** Apostrophes are usually used for two reasons: to denote a letter deleted from contractions (i.e. won’t instead of will not) or to express possession (A toy is the boy’s best present). It is however a common grammatical mistake nowadays for people to misuse apostrophes to express plural tense. So do not write “Only dog’s should eat dog-food” instead write “Only dogs should eat dog-food”
4. **Failure to put a proper ending on a past tense verb:** You must be well aware that a majority of past tense verbs end with -ed: picked, stated, walked etc. there are exceptions however and it is pretty easy to mess up at this. Be sure to double-check your correspondence or better still have someone to proofread your work before presentation. Sentences such as “He walk daily to that hotel” sounds uneducated. They are easy to catch and fix, so make sure you read between the lines.
5. **Misuse of commas:** Commas are basically used to indicate to readers that they need to take a break before proceeding with rest of the sentence. A common mistake is using them in the place of periods. If by any chance the second part of the sentence can stand on its own, then you better use a semi-colon or split it into two.
6. **Use of the wrong form of “there”:** Most people have a tendency of confusing the words “there”, “their” and “they’re” because of their similarity in pronunciation. The first word

should be used as a noun, the second one as an indication of possession and the third one as a contraction for they are.

7. **Then and than:** “Than” is used for comparison while “Then” is used to refer to something taking place or happening next.
8. **Confusion of “It’s” and “its”:** This is one of the commonest typos in common writing, especially in descriptive writing. “Its” does not follow the rules for possessives as mentioned above. The apostrophe can only be used when contracting “it is”. So write “Your phone has lost its value” instead of “Your phone has lost it’s value
9. **Lose and loose:** That probably hit you, right? It is quite common with most casual or informal writers. “Loose” is an adjective that means not fastened or not confined while “lose” is used to mean no longer have, fail to find or fail to win.
10. **Misplaced Modifiers:** To ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly, you need to place a modifier directly next to the word you intend to modify. The modifier therefore needs to refer to a specific word in a phrase or sentence. Instead of writing “At ten years old, my mother gave me a toy for Christmas” write “When I was ten years old, my mother gave me a toy for Christmas”
11. **Fewer and Less:** “Less” is used when referring to hypothetical quantities. “Fewer” and “few” are used when referring to quantifiable things. e.g., “The school has fewer than twenty employees” or “The school is less successful this year round”.
12. **Which and What:** This is understandably one of the most common grammar errors out there. You need to keep in mind that “That” is a restrictive pronoun and very important to the noun to which it refers. e.g., “I don’t trust hardware and software that has no user manual” In this case, I am referring to all software and hardware. “Which” is used to introduce a relative clause. It may allow qualifiers that are not essential. e.g., “I recommend you buy certified software and hardware, which are available in certified stores”. In this case, you don’t have to head to a specific store to buy certified hardware and software. Just remember that “that” restricts and “which “qualifies”. “which” is however quite ambiguous and can be used in various relative clauses.

The best practice to avoid these common typos and grammatical mistakes is to first of all identify your weaknesses. Point out the areas that trouble you and practice to ensure that you have them clearly singled out and mastered. [Here](#) is another checklist.

You need to keep in mind that this takes time and cannot be accomplished in a single sitting but rather in your daily writings and talking. There are however online spell check tools and websites such as [www.spellchecker.org](http://www.spellchecker.org) that offers instant spell check and aid can make your learning quite easy.

Keep practicing and do not neglect the little things, remember they are the ones that matter here. If all does not work, then you should consider enrolling for a part time course in spelling, grammar and other such language tests. Bottom line, practice makes perfect.