

## Commonly Misused Words

1. **accept** – (v) to receive  
**except** – (prep) omit
2. **affect** (v) – to cause  
**effect** (n) – the result
3. **allusion** – indirect reference (literary technique)  
**illusion** – mirage
4. **alumni** – male plural (use when referred to as a group)  
**alumnae** – female plural
5. **amount** – refers to **singular** word  
**number** – refers to **plural** word
6. Use **ETC.** – not “and etc.” because “etc.” means “and”
7. **Anyway** or **Anywhere** (**NOT** “anyways” or “anywheres”) – **no “s”** at the end
8. Use **BECAUSE** – not “being as or being that”
9. **Avoid “at”** when writing a question using “where”- (example: Where is the store?)
10. **between** – compares 2 things  
**among** – used with 3 or more
11. **bring** – to **come** carrying something  
**take**- to **go** carrying something
12. Use **forms of BREAK or BURST** – not “bust” or “busted”
13. **Avoid Double Negatives** – (example: “can’t hardly”, “can’t scarcely”)
14. **emigrate** – to leave a country for another  
**immigrate** – to go to another country
15. **Avoid Double Subjects**- example: **Suzy she** is home. Correct- **Suzy is home.**)
16. **imply** – to suggest  
**infer** – to interpret, to draw conclusions
17. “**Of**” is a preposition- Do **NOT** use after a verb  
(example: “could of” = “could’ve”, a contraction for “could have”)
18. **than** – compares  
**then** – tells when
19. **who** – refers to **people**  
**which, that** – refers to **things**

20. Use “**as far as**” or “**as fast as**” – **NOT** “all the farther” or “all the faster”
21. **Beside** (prep) – meaning “next to, as the side of”  
**Besides** (as prep) meaning “in addition to”  
**Besides** (as adverb) meaning “moreover”
22. **discover** – to be the first to see, find, or learn about something that **already** exists  
**invent** – to be the first **to do or make** something
23. **fewer** – use with **plural** words  
**less** – use with **singular** words
24. **good** – (adj) **NEVER** use to describe a VERB (example: The news made her feel **good**.)  
**well** – (adverb) (example: I didn’t feel **well**, so I went home.)
25. **leave** – meaning “to go away or depart”  
**let** – meaning “to allow”
26. **As** – often used as a conjunction, to join two phrases or sentences  
(example: We should do **as** our coach suggests.)  
**Like** – used as a preposition (example: She **looks** like her sister.)
27. Do **NOT** use “**when**” or “**where**” in writing a definition  
(example: **INCORRECT** : A “pass” is when a player receives a ball thrown by the quarterback”  
**CORRECT**: A “pass” is a player receiving the ball thrown by the quarterback.”)
28. **Unless** – use to mean without (example: I would not be able to sing **unless** my cold gets better.)

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**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Capitalization**

1. Names of persons  
(examples:) Malvina Hoffman, Mr. Jeff Rosenwald, Dr. Marjorie Hemphill
2. Geographical Names  
(examples:) Pacific Ocean, the East, Sixth Street, Hawaiian Islands
3. Organizations, Business Firms, Institutions, Government Bodies  
(examples:) Supreme Court, Laguna Hills High School, Starving Artists Moving Lines, Key Club
4. Historical Events and Periods. Special Events, Calendar Items  
(examples:) Civil War, Ice Age, Thanksgiving Day, April, Pebble Beach Open Tournament
5. Nationalities, Races, Religions  
(examples:) Japanese, Roman Catholic, Hannukkah, God, Allah, African-American
6. Brand Names  
(examples:) Ford Mustang, Hewlett Packard, General Electric
7. Other Particular Places, Things, Events, Awards  
(examples:) Apollo I, Nobel Prize, Pluto, Washington Monument, Congressional Medal of Honor, President John F. Kennedy, *City of New Orleans*
8. Specific Courses, Languages  
(examples:) Chemistry I, French, History of the Americas
9. Titles  
(examples:) President of the United States, the Senator from Iowa, Queen of England, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Holy Bible*

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Commas**

1. Use to separate items in a series  
(example:) My sister's favorite sports are soccer, tennis, basketball, and golf.
2. If "and, but, or" join the items in a series, do **NOT** use comma  
(example:) I enjoy jogging and running and swimming.
3. Independent clauses joined with a conjunction (and, but, or, for, yet, etc. – I, and I.)  
(example:) I love to watch TV, and my favorite program is *The O.C.*
4. Use to separate **two or more adjectives** that come before a noun  
(example:) The purple, spotted, soft, cuddly stuffed animal is her favorite.
5. Use to set off non-essential clauses and non-essential participial phrases  
(example:) Eileen Murray, who is at the top of her class, wants to go to medical school.
6. Use after certain introductory elements:
  - a. use after words such as: *well, yes, no* and *why* when they begin a sentence  
(example:) Well, that certainly was interesting.
  - b. use after introductory participial phrase  
(example:) Disappointed by the high prices, we made up a new gift list.
  - c. use after a series of introductory prepositional phrases (usually two or more)  
(example:) Inside the fence at the far end of the yard, she built a swimming pool.
  - d. use after introductory adverb clause (D, I).  
(example:) When you see smoke, you know there is a fire.
7. Use to set off interrupters in a sentence
  - a. Use to set off appositives and appositive phrases  
(example:) My dog, a collie, is very gentle.
  - b. Use to set off words used in direct address  
(example:) Mom, did you bring my money?
  - c. Use to set off parenthetical expressions (side remarks that add info or relate ideas)

**Common Parenthetical Expressions:**

after all	generally speaking	nevertheless	at any rate
however	of course	on the contrary	I believe
for example	in the first place	on the other hand	consequently
for instance	moreover	therefore	

(example:) On the contrary, I am glad that you told me about the error.

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – End Marks**

**End marks** – periods, question marks, exclamation points – are used to indicate purpose of the sentence.

1. Use a period at the end of a declarative statement.  
(example:) Nancy Lopez won the tournament.
2. Use a question mark ? after a question or interrogative statement.  
(example:) Can a cat see color?
3. Use an exclamation point ! to indicate strong feelings  
(example:) Hurrah! What a great play!

**Periods** – are used with most abbreviations

1. Personal names, titles used with names, states, time of day, years, addresses, organizations and companies  
(example:) A. E. Housman, Mr. Ed Adams, Calif., A. M., B. C., Ave., Inc. Assn., Corp.
2. **Exceptions**
  - a. Two letter state abbreviations when zip code is used  
(example:) Los Angeles, CA 90210
  - b. Government agencies and international organizations used often written without periods  
(example:) FBI, ROTC, UN, UFO
  - c. Units of measure don't use periods (with the exception of in. for inch so as to not confuse it with the word *in*)  
(example:) lb, oz, mi, kg, ml

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Semi-Colons**

1. Use to join two independent clauses – **not** joined with conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) (I;I).  
(example:) Patty likes to act; her sister gets stage fright.
2. Use to join two independent clauses which are joined by conjunctive adverbs or transition expressions

**Common Conjunctive Adverbs: Semi-colon comes before**

also	besides	moreover	accordingly	consequently	furthermore
next	however	nevertheless	therefore	meanwhile	otherwise
then	instead	indeed	still		

(example:) Emma felt shy; however, she soon made many new friends.

**Common Transitional Expressions: Semi-colon comes before**

as a result	for instance	in fact	on the other hand
for example	in addition	that is	in other words

(example:) My parents are strict; for example, I can watch TV only on the weekends.

3. Use to separate two independent clauses when coordinating conjunctions are used within either part of the independent clause  
(example:) Alana, Eric, and Kim voted for her for class president; and Scott and Vanessa voted for Jason.
4. Use between items in a series that use commas within the items  
(example:) I have post cards from Paris, France; Rome, Italy; Lisbon, Portugal; and London, England.

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Colons**

1. Use before a list of items (especially after words like *the following* and *as follows*)  
(example:) You will need to bring the following equipment: a sleeping bag, a warm sweater, and extra socks.
2. Do **NOT** use if the list follows a verb or a preposition  
(example:) Additional supplies are a toothbrush, toothpaste, change of clothes, a towel and soap.  
(example:) You need to shop for brown shoelaces, a quart of milk, and fresh carrots.
3. Use before a long formal statement  
(example:) Horace Mann had this to say: “Do not think of knocking out another person’s brains because he differs in opinion from you. It would be as rational to knock yourself on the head because you differ from yourself ten years ago.”
4. Use between hour and minutes (example:) 9:30 A. M.
5. Use between chapter and verse in biblical references and between all titles and subtitles  
(example:) Deuteronomy 25: 1-16      *Parting The Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63*
6. Use after salutation in a business letter  
(example:) Dear Ms. Garcia:      Dear Sir:      To Whom It May Concern:



**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Italics**

1. Use in titles of books, plays, films, newspapers, magazines (periodicals), works of art, TV programs, ships, aircraft, spacecraft (when writing by hand underline to indicate *italics*)  
(example:) *The Diary of Anne Frank, Romeo and Juliet, Casablanca, The Thinker, 60 Minutes, Titanic, Spirit of St. Louis*
2. Use for title of long poems – long enough to be published in a separate book (volume)  
(example:) I plan to use quotes from Part VII of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.
3. Use for foreign words (example:) The *corrido*, a fast-paced ballad, was brought to the New World by Spain.
4. Use for words, letters and figures when referred to as such  
(example:) The 3 on that license plate looks like an 8.

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Quotation Marks**

1. Use when directly quoting a person's **exact** words (**direct quote**)  
(example:) Melanie said, "This car is making a very strange noise."  
Do **NOT** use quotation marks for indirect quotes:  
(example:) Melanie said that the car was making a very strange noise.
2. Quotation marks are used at the beginning and end of quote and when an interrupted expression (which is not part of the quote)  
(example:) "Let's sit here," Jennifer whispered, "not way down there in front." \* **Note** the placement of **commas**

**Direct Quotes and Dialogue**

3. Begin with capital letters
4. When direct quote is interrupted, the second part of quote begins with a lower case letter
5. Commas and periods are inside of closing quote mark
6. Semi-colons and colons are outside closing quote mark
7. Question marks and exclamation points (if not part of quote) then place outside of quote marks
8. Dialogue between two people – with each new speaker start a new paragraph
9. If quote passage is more than one paragraph, **quote first paragraph and each subsequent paragraph** at the **beginning** of the each paragraph, but **only at the end of last paragraph**. (not at the end of each paragraph)
10. Use a single quote mark to denote a quote that appears within a quote – “ ‘ ... ‘ “

**Other Uses:**

11. Use quotes for titles of:  
Articles within newspapers or magazines, short stories, essays, poems, songs, individual episodes of TV shows, chapters and other parts of newspapers or magazines.

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Apostrophes**

**Possession (shows ownership)**

1. singular possessive nouns (example:) wife's car, hostess's ideas, pony's harness
2. plural possessive nouns (example:) students' papers, heroes' medals, children's toys
3. possessive personal pronouns (example:) his bicycle, our TV, a friend of theirs \* **Note** – **no** apostrophe used
4. possessive indefinite pronouns (example:) everyone's wish, somebody's jacket, no one's concern
5. possessive compound nouns (nouns that show joint possession)  
(example:) great-uncle's hat, Sweeper Broom Company's advertisement, Maya and Theo's project
6. nouns that show individual possession  
(example:) Brad's and Nicole's lunches, Mr. Molina's and Ms. Jackson's jobs

**Contractions**

Contractions indicate letter/s are missing. The apostrophe takes the place of the missing letter/s or number/s  
(example:) Who's there? It's ten o'clock. During the 1960s and '70s rock music changed.

Use with plurals of **lowercase letters, some uppercase letters, and some words referred to as words**

(example:) p's and q's, I got two A's and three B's on my report card. Ha ha's

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Hyphens**

1. Use with some compound words (example:) red-hot
2. Use to divide words at end of a line
  - Do **NOT** divide one-syllable words
  - Only divide hyphenated words at the hyphen
  - Do **NOT** divide a word so that only **ONE** letter stands alone
3. Use with compound numbers from **twenty-one** to **ninety-nine** and with **fractions** used as **adjectives** (example:) one-half cup flour but no hyphen : one half cup *of the flour* \* Note the difference
4. Use with the prefixes : *ex-*, *self-*, *all-* and with the suffix *-elect*
5. Before a **proper noun** or **proper adjective**  
(example:) ex-coach          mid-July          self-made          president-elect          pro-American          pre-Civil War

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Dashes**

1. Used parenthetically – breaks into main thought of a sentence. Most parenthetical elements are set off by parentheses. If stronger emphasis is indicated, use Dash  
(example:) The decision (which player should he choose?) weighed on Coach Johnson’s mind. **OR**  
The decision - which player should he choose? - weighed on Coach Johnson’s mind.
2. Use to indicate an abrupt break in thought or speech of an unfinished statement or question  
(example:) Judy – Ms. Smith, I mean – will be your new supervisor.  
Our dog – he’s a long-haired dachshund – is too affectionate to be a good watchdog.  
“Why – why can’t I come, too?” Janet asked hesitatingly.  
“You’re being –“ Tina began and then stopped.

**Summary Guidelines/Rules for: Punctuation – Parentheses**

Use to enclose added material that is not considered of major importance.

Helpful guidelines:

1. Any parenthetical material may be omitted without changing the basic meaning and construction of the sentence.
  2. Too many parenthetical expressions in a piece of writing distracts from the main idea. Keep the meaning clear by limiting the number of these expressions.
- (examples:) Fill in the application carefully. (Use a pen).  
The old house (it was built at the turn of the last century) may soon become a landmark.