

Editing Checklist for Writers and Evaluators <https://www.tntech.edu/cob/student-resources/eagle>

Step #1: Proofread. Pay special attention to spelling, capitals, and missing words.

Step #2: Consult the EAGLE online tutorial, available from the COB homepage (click student resources, then Easy Access Guide to Language Excellence) for help with these errors that may reflect poorly on your professional writing and your overall ability. The site suggests more resources for further help. ✓ = acceptable X = needs work

Subject-Verb Agreement Error

__1. Plural subjects have plural verbs; singular subjects have singular verbs.

Hint: Identify the subject, and then substitute *it* or *they* to check your work.

He goes. They go. It does. We did. The committee is happy. The members are confused.

__2. Company names, titles, and words used as words are singular and require singular verbs. (*It*, not *they*)

Jackson, Brewer, & Jones, Inc., has (not have) renewed its (not their) contract with us.

__3. The subject and verb agree even when other words come between them.

Our president, in addition to the committee members, approves the change.

Fused sentence or comma splice

__5. Independent clauses (clauses that could stand alone as sentences) have appropriate punctuation separating them. A comma is not usually enough.

__6. A comma is not enough to join main clauses even with a conjunctive adverb. Use a semicolon, make two sentences, or rewrite the sentence.

Simon is attending a conference in Seattle this week; therefore, he cannot chair our meeting Tuesday.

Apostrophe Error

__7. In general, indicate possession with an apostrophe before an *s* for singular nouns and an apostrophe after the *s* for plural nouns. To form the possessive of plural nouns that do not end in *s*, add an apostrophe and *s* at the end of the noun.

boy's hat, boys' camp, women's (not womens') workshop

__8. Personal pronouns do not add an apostrophe to form the possessive.

hers (not her's), ours (not our's), its (not it's) NOTE: it's = it is or it has

__9. Apostrophes indicate possession or contraction, not plurals (with a few exceptions to avoid confusion).

The 1990s (not 1990's), the '90s (the apostrophe indicates omitted numbers, the *s* indicates plural form)

Confusing Pronouns

__10. Pronouns and their antecedents should be clear. Be especially careful to avoid sexist language.

A college freshman should attend all his classes. (error—not all college freshmen are male)

A college freshman should attend all their classes. (acceptable in casual communication, avoids the sexist problem)

College freshmen should attend all their classes. (better)

First-year students should attend all their classes. (better)

On campus they are strict about parking. (they?) Campus parking regulations are strict. (better)

Incoherent sentences

__11. Use only complete sentences in professional writing; avoid fragments.

__12. Subjects and verbs should fit each other logically.

A famous story from American history is George Washington. (faulty predication)

A famous story from American history is George Washington's crossing the Delaware.