

Common Errors to Watch For

The following chart lists the twenty-eight common writing faults most likely to be on the exam. The second column gives a simple sentence to illustrate the fault (on the exam, unfortunately, the errors will not be nearly so easy to see), with the error underlined. The third column gives the corrected version of the example.

<i>Type of Error</i>	<i>Example of Error</i>	<i>Corrected Example</i>
1. Noun agreement error	France and Italy are a <u>country</u> in Europe.	France and Italy are countries in Europe.
2. Subject-verb agreement error	The <u>students</u> of English <u>is taking</u> the test.	The students of English are taking the test.
3. Pronoun agreement error	<u>Jack</u> was late, so we left without <u>them</u> .	Jack was late, so we left without him.
4. Unclear pronoun reference	<u>Jane, June, and Joan</u> applied, and <u>she</u> got the job.	Jane, June, and Joan applied, and Jane got the job. (Joan or June)
5. Missing specific pronoun antecedent	Dave ate too fast <u>which</u> made him sick.	Dave ate too fast so he got sick.
6. Change of pronoun subjects	<u>One</u> needs a calculator, and <u>you</u> should bring two pens.	One needs a calculator, and one should bring two pens.
7. Wrong pronoun	She is the judge <u>which</u> sentenced the felon.	She is the judge who sentenced the felon.
8. Adjective/adverb error	His writing is <u>carelessly</u> because he writes too <u>rapid</u> .	His writing is careless because he writes too rapidly.
9. Comparative adjective error	Of the seven swimmers, she is the <u>stronger</u> .	Of the seven swimmers, she is the strongest.
10. Misplaced modifier	We saw the boy and <u>his mother in a Batman costume</u> .	We saw the boy in a Batman costume and his mother.
11. Dangling modifier	<u>Flowing from the mountain top</u> , he drank from the stream.	He drank from the stream that was flowing from the mountain top.
12. Double negative	There is <u>hardly no</u> coffee left in the pot.	There is hardly any coffee left in the pot.
13. Illogical comparison	In California, the <u>sun rises later than</u> New York.	In California, the sun rises later than in New York.
14. Verb tense sequence error	He <u>rang</u> the bell, <u>opened</u> the door, and <u>enters</u> the house.	He rang the bell, opened the door, and entered the house.
15. Verb tense error	Last week she <u>buys</u> a new car.	Last week she bought a new car.
16. Change of voice of verb	He <u>runs</u> a mile daily, and weights <u>are lifted</u> by him.	He runs a mile daily and lifts weights.
17. Verb form error	He has <u>brung</u> a bottle of wine.	He brought a bottle of wine.
18. Sentence fragment	<u>Having three sisters, two of them doctors</u> .	Having three sisters, two of them doctors, made her feel better.

(continued)

Type of Error	Example of Error	Corrected Example
19. Comma splice	She has three <u>sisters</u> , <u>two of</u> them are doctors.	She has three sisters, and two of them are doctors.
20. Fused (or run-on) sentences	She has <u>three sisters</u> <u>two of them</u> are doctors.	She has three sisters, and two of them are doctors.
21. Parallelism error	He is studying <u>biology</u> , <u>physics</u> , and <u>how to swim</u> .	He is studying biology, physics, and swimming.
22. Coordination error	Ames wrote only about Boston, <u>and</u> he was never there.	Ames wrote only about Boston, although he was never there.
23. Subordination error	Wilson sets many of his novels in Galway, <u>and he was born there</u> .	Wilson sets many of his novels in Galway where he was born.
24. Diction error	He will be <u>relapsed</u> from prison in June.	He will be released from prison in June.
25. Idiom error: gerund infinitive confusion	I am eager <u>in seeing</u> the film. He is incapable <u>to answer</u> the question.	I am eager to see the film. He is incapable of answering the question.
26. Idiom error: choice of preposition	They are in support <u>to</u> the idea.	They are in support of the idea.
27. Idiom error: choice of conjunction	He is as subtle <u>than</u> a fox.	He is as subtle as a fox.
28. Wordiness	Because <u>of the fact that</u> he failed to give <u>total and complete</u> attention, he missed the exit.	Because he failed to give complete attention, he missed the exit.