

Common Mistakes

Proofreading Strategies

Spelling Errors - make use of a spelling checker / dictionary / thesaurus

Inconsistent Spelling - beware of switching between different spellings of the same word

e.g. focused / focussed advisor / adviser center / centre

Homophones - similar sounding words with different spellings / meanings

e.g. affect / effect by / buy discrete / discreet...

Tautology - saying the same thing twice

e.g. equally as good... they arrived one after the other in succession... to revert back...

Missing Punctuation - beware of missing full stops and incomplete quotation marks or brackets

Double Punctuation - full stops inside and outside of closing "quotations." or (brackets.).

Wrongly Ordered Punctuation - if the sentence starts outside of the quotation / bracket then the punctuation ends outside too:

(Sentences completely enclosed by brackets have their full stop inside.)

Sentences that start outside the brackets have the full stop outside (as here).

Commas, where used (as here), come after the brackets, never before.

Question marks in speech should be placed correctly:

Did you say "it is ready"?

He asked "is it ready?"

Inconsistent Hyphens e.g. *co-operate / cooperate or proof-reading / proofreading*

Ambiguity e.g. *the car was in the garage when he painted it (painted what?)*

Repetition e.g. *it is not right for the writer to write the same word repeatedly right through a written sentence because they cannot find the right written alternative.*

Apostrophes the apostrophe has two functions: contraction and possession

Contractions

The apostrophe is used to indicate a missing letter

she's = she is

can't = cannot

wouldn't = would not

it's = it is

you're = you are

they're = they are

Possession

When the possessor is single (i.e. just one thing / person), we indicate possession by using an apostrophe followed by the letter 's'

the man's coat

my sister's hat

the lady's dress

the dog's bowl

When the possessors are plural, we indicate possession by placing the apostrophe after the final letter 's'

the girls' bicycles

my cousins' parents

the secretaries' desks

However... when a word changes completely in the plural, the apostrophe remains before the 's'

the men's books

the children's toys

the women's bags

Library & Learning Services

Apostrophes are not required where there is no possession

PCs	MOTs	1990s
PAs	hers	

*Tip: If the **subject** is followed by a **verb** an apostrophe will probably not be needed, if it is followed by a **noun** then one may be required.*

Verb is a doing word e.g. *conveys an action, an occurrence, or a state of being*

Noun is a thing e.g. *living creatures, objects, places, actions, qualities, or ideas*

Misplaced Apostrophes - *none of the following need an apostrophe:*

<i>on it's own</i>	<i>his and her's</i>	<i>MOT's</i>
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The following should have an apostrophe before the 's':

<i>other people's</i>	<i>each other's</i>	<i>the children's clothes</i>
<i>the women's group</i>		

The following should have an apostrophe after the 's':

<i>in six months' time</i>	<i>Achilles' heel</i>	<i>the employers' association.</i>
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