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Common questions and errors

Affect / Effect
Affect, as a verb, means to influence.

- Example: The winter weather negatively affected traffic.

Affect, as a noun, is used in psychology to describe an emotion.

- Example: The student's affect remained stoic as he was expelled from the university.

NOTE: Affect is rarely used as a noun.
Effect, as a verb, means to cause.

- Example: Hiring new faculty effects changes in the curriculum.

NOTE: Effect is rarely used as a verb.
Effect, as a noun, means result.

- Example: The effect of the poor test scores was a higher grade curve.

Due to
Use due to only when the phrase can be substituted with caused by.
Avoid using due to in place of because. If used in place of because, the phrase should follow a form of to be and must modify a noun.

- Example: Instead of writing "He resigned due to personal problems," write "His resignation was due to personal problems."

Farther / Further
Farther refers to a physical distance.

- Example: She walked farther into the city.

Further refers to an extension of time or degree.

- Example: He will further explore his degree options.

i.e. / e.g.
i.e. is an abbreviation for "that is" and is always followed by a comma.

- Example: Students who attend the evening lecture will receive extra credit, i.e., five points on the next exam.

e.g. is an abbreviation for “for example” and is always followed by a comma.

- Example: There are many options for students interested in drawing (e.g., art, graphic design and architecture).

Just / Only / Precisely
Avoid ‘just’ because of its secondary meaning as ‘rightful.’ Preferred use is ‘only’ when meaning a mere amount; ‘precisely’ when meaning exact.

- Examples: He published his first book when he was only 16 years old. That is exactly why she decided to attend CU-Boulder.

In general, ask yourself whether the sentence can stand go without the adverb.

- Stronger: He published his first book when he was 16 years old. That is why she decided to attend CU-Boulder.

More Than / Over
In 2014, the Associated Press Style Guide began allowing for the use of "over" when referring to numerals and amounts, where previously it was only allowed when describing the state of being physically "above" something. The previously preferred use of "more than" is still desirable.

- Example: More than 60 students failed the exam.

Use over when referring to spatial relationships

- Example: The car drove over the bridge.

That / Which
Use that in essential clauses—those that are important to the meaning of the sentence—without commas.

- Example: Professor Smith returned the test that we took last week.

Use which with nonessential clauses and set off the clause with commas.

- Example: Professor Smith administered a pop quiz today, which prompted groans from all of the students.

Who / Whom
Use who as a pronoun referencing humans and animals with a name. It is never the object of a sentence, phrase or clause.

- Example: Who is the guest of honor at the award ceremony?

NOTE: Use who when you could replace it with he or she: Who is the guest of honor? He is the guest of honor.
Use whom when someone is the object of a verb or preposition

- Example: With whom will you be attending the dinner?

NOTE: Use whom when you could replace it with his or her: With whom will you be attending the dinner? I'll attend the dinner with her.

Trademark and Registered Marks
A trademark is associated with a brand, symbol or word; there is no legal registration required to use a trademark.
The federal registration symbol (the circle-r) is used with goods or services that are officially registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.
When using the name of a federally registered item or service, use the circle-r (®) mark on first use.

Common words, commonly spelled/used incorrectly

- advisor (not adviser)
- campuswide (no hyphen)
- first-professional degrees
- fundraising (no space or hyphen)
- health care (two words unless part of a proper noun)
- semester hours (not credit hours)
- *U.S.News & World Report*
- universitywide (no hyphen)
- University is lower case on second reference: *The University of Colorado comprises four campuses. The university has more than 50,000 students.*
- President is lower case unless it's before the president's full name.
- No serial commas. In other words, seldom use a comma before the word "and" unless the sentence would be confusing otherwise
    - Example: The university focuses on research, health and wellness, and community service.
- An article is not 'entitled' to anything. Say titled or don't say anything: His scholarly work, "Riding the Storm Out," has garnered national attention.
- The panel is composed of three men and four women. Or, the panel comprises three men and four women. Nothing is "comprised of."
- It's the "yin and the yang," not the "ying and the yang."
- Principle (a fundamental, primary, or general law or truth from which others are derived: the principles of modern physics [1]) vs. principal (first or highest in rank, importance, value, etc.; chief; foremost. of the [2] nature [3] of, or constituting principal or capital: a principal investment).

Use American English spellings and not British English spellings:
Examples:

- Canceled, not cancelled
- Traveled, not travelled
- Color, not colour
- Defense, not defence
- Normalcy, not normality
- Toward, not towards
- Gray, not grey
- Theater, not theatre

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