

Common Writing Errors



No one is perfect. Unfortunately, our customers have little tolerance for spelling or grammatical errors. Here are six common errors with tips on the correct usage.

- 1. Affect versus Effect** This gets top billing because it was my Dad's pet peeve. Affect is a verb, e.g., *The misuse of this word affected my Dad negatively.* Effect is a noun, e.g., *The misuse of this word had a negative effect on my Dad.* **Tip: Verb = Action, Action and Affect begin with the letter A.**
- 2. e.g. versus i.e.** Most people know that e.g. means "for example." Unfortunately, many people also think i.e. and e.g. can be used interchangeably. The abbreviation, i.e., is short for the Latin term, *id est*, which means "that is." The top executive in the company, i.e., the CEO, made the final decision - versus - Top executives, e.g., the CEO and CFO, were involved in the decision-making. **Tip: Substitute "in other words" or "that is" for i.e. and "for example" for e.g.**
- 3. Loose versus Lose** I don't know if I am just waking up to this error, but it is very common on the Internet. The meanings are very different. Webster Dictionary's definition of lose is "to part with unintentionally" or "to fail to obtain or to enjoy." Loose means "not rigidly fastened or securely attached." **Tip: Lose the second "o" if everything is securely attached.**
- 4. It's versus Its** This is another very common error. Contractions, like it's, are the shortened version of two words—in this case, it is or it has. Its denotes possession, e.g., The company lost its license. Never use an apostrophe after its. There is no such word. **Tip: Substitute "it is" in a sentence in place of it's or its. If it makes sense, use the contraction, it's.**
- 5. Your versus You're** Since we're on a roll with contractions, you're is the shortened version of you are. Your is a possessive pronoun, e.g., your dog, your job. **Tip: Substitute "you are" in a sentence in place of you're or your. If it makes sense, use the contraction, you're.**
- 6. Their versus There** You may notice a pattern in some of these errors. We appear to get tripped up by words denoting possession. Their is a plural possessive pronoun, e.g., Joe and Mike left their instruments on stage. There wears many hats, as an adverb (we left it over there), as a pronoun (there are so many rules) or as a noun (we went there for lunch). **Tip: If you are talking about people and something they own, use their. Caution: Our friendly automatic spell-checks often change their to there.**



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