

Essay Corrections for expository writing

In order to improve your writing, you must learn to fix the mistakes you are making so that you will not continue to commit the same errors. The numbers/letters I wrote on your essay correspond to the explanation of the errors below.

Directions:

Number all of the marked errors on your paper for both grammar and content issues. Then, on a sheet of binder paper, work through each of your errors by writing the rule you violated and show me what you would need to do to correct the error. You do NOT need to rewrite the entire essay. Instead, write the rule and isolate/fix the error. These handwritten corrections are due tomorrow, along with your original graded essay.

Grammar Codes

1. Misspelled word. Write the correct spelling of the word 10 times on your paper. And, yes, those of you who misspelled the same word, say, 17 times will need to write the correct spelling of that word 170 times.
2. Comma error – You have either left out a needed comma or added one where it doesn't belong.
 - 2a. Use a comma between two independent clauses joined by for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. (FANBOYS)
 - 2b. Use commas to separate items in a series (Ex: I like pears, apples, and oranges.)
 - 2c. Use a comma between two adjectives of a similar meaning or tone used to describe the same noun.
Ex: The yard was full of romping, running children.
 - 2d. Use a comma to set off introductory elements.
Ex: Screaming for help, the girl wrestled the raging bear.
 - 2e. Use commas to set off the explainers of the direct quotation.
Ex: The girl sighed, "Just go without me."
 - 2f. Use a comma to prevent misreading.
Ex: Ever since, Frank has been a better boy. vs. Ever since Frank has been a little boy (fragment)
 - 2g. Do not use unnecessary commas.
 - 2h. Semicolons are fancy periods, not fancy commas. Do not use them in place of a comma.
3. Sentence fragment. A sentence must have a subject and a predicate. Your sentence is missing a vital element.
4. Comma-splice and/or Run-on. You've joined two or more independent clauses without proper punctuation.
Incorrect: I got up late this morning, I didn't have time for breakfast.
Correct: I got up late this morning. I didn't have time for breakfast.
Also correct: I got up late this morning, so I didn't have time for breakfast.
Also correct: I got up late this morning; I didn't have time for breakfast.
Also correct: Since I got up late this morning, I didn't have time for breakfast.
5. An apostrophe is in the wrong place and/or missing.
 - 5a. Use an apostrophe to form the possessive of nouns and indefinite pronouns.
 - 5b. "It's" only ever means "it is." The possessive form of "it" is "its."
Incorrect: It's feet are bruised, so it cannot walk.
Correct: Its feet are bruised, so it cannot walk.
Incorrect: Its going to rain today.
Correct: It's going to rain today.
 - 5c. Use an apostrophe to form the possessive of plural noun ending in "s."
Ex: It was my parents' decision.
6. Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.
7. Avoid needless shifts in verb tense. Verb tense shifting confuses your reader and is an unpleasant distraction.
8. Pronoun-antecedent agreement error. A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in gender, person, and number. Most of these errors are fixed by turning the antecedent into a plural form to match a plural pronoun.
9. Use parallel construction to create a smooth flow.
Incorrect: He liked to play basketball and riding horses.
Correct: He liked playing basketball and riding horses.
10. Title was mishandled. Titles of major works (novels, plays, long poems, etc.) are underlined in handwritten essays and italicized on typed essays. Titles of minor works (short stories, poems, songs, magazine articles, etc.) are placed within quotation marks on both handwritten and typed essays. The title of your own original essay is only capitalized. Since your essay hasn't been published, it doesn't receive quote marks, underlining, or italics.

Content Codes

- A. Choppy. Avoid choppiness in your writing. You likely have stacked several short sentences together, repeatedly used the same sentence starter, or left out crucial transitions. Work on smoothing your flow by creating more complex sentences and/or using more transitions.
- B. Omit unnecessary words. This section is fluff, filler, or material that just takes up space without saying anything new. Move your argument forward more quickly.
- C. Stick to third-person pronouns. You've slipped unnecessary first- or second-person pronouns into your writing and have, therefore, undermined the power of your essay. Whenever possible avoid these words: I, me, my, we, us, our, you, your.
- D. Never, ever, ever ask a question in a formal essay. Rhetorical questions are a sign that the writer doesn't really know his/her mind and, most of the time, such questions are really just filler on a page. (See "B" above.) Instead, make bold, powerful statements.
- E. Avoid clichés, tired phrases, and/or slang. This is formal writing, so use formal language while still keeping it fresh.
- F. Be sure to add context before just inserting a quote, especially if the quote is making a different point or using new evidence.
- G. Confused or contradictory language. I've read this passage three times and I still don't understand what you're trying to say. Clarify your thinking before you begin to write.
- H. Avoid unsure language ("may," "might," etc.) in formal writing; it makes you sound as though you are not sure of what you are writing about and robs your essay of its power. Such words lead to wimpy, wishy-washy writing.
- I. Your analysis is weak or non-existent. Rather than a simple restatement of the quote you should be making an assertion based on the quote that is arguable and advances your point. If you are stuck, ask yourself a few questions: "So what?" "Why did I include this?" "Can I make an argument for or against what I said here?" "How is this relevant?"