

Strategies for Correcting Grammar and Wording Errors in Your English Papers

1. **Don't spend a lot of time fixing your grammar and wording errors until you are satisfied with your paper's content and organization.** Focusing on errors before your content and organization are finished often means wasting your energy and time—you may fix errors that become irrelevant when you delete and/or add in words, phrases, sentences, and perhaps paragraphs.
2. **Focus on identifying and fixing patterns of errors at a time.** For many students, it is better not to try to correct all your grammar and wording errors at once; instead, it is better to focus on patterned errors—ones that you know you likely have a lot of problems with. For example, if you know that you normally have a lot of problems with run-on sentence, fragments, and verb tenses, look for each of these patterned errors one at a time.
3. **Also focus on fixing the errors that interfere the most with your reader's comprehension first.** While you should correct as many errors as possible, focus your time and efforts on types of errors that interfere the most with peoples' ability to understand your writing. Specifically, focus areas such as word order, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, verb tenses, and word forms more than areas such as articles, subject-verb agreement, and prepositions, which generally interfere less with comprehension.
4. **Make sure to look at the right part of the sentences when correcting grammatical errors.** For example, when checking the accuracy of your verb tenses, find all your verbs. When checking for run-on sentences and fragments, look for your subjects, verbs, direct objects, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, etc.
5. **Look beyond the sentence level when necessary.** Remember that certain concepts, such as verb tenses and pronoun/antecedent agreement, require you to analyze preceding and following sentences and paragraphs. Be sure that you focus beyond the sentence level when correcting certain grammatical concepts.
6. **Consider highlighting or circling the concept that you are focusing on.** For example, you may want to highlight all verbs when looking at verb tenses and highlight only verbs taking subject/verb agreement when looking at subject/verb agreement. Highlighting or circling can help keep you focused.
7. **Consult handbooks, handouts, and dictionaries to find the rules to fix your errors.** Few people—even native English writers—know all the rules to fix their grammar and wording errors; instead of relying on your memory you should consult available handbooks, handouts, and dictionaries. Looking at resources will also help you learn the rules, recognize which rules you don't know, and train you in using references to correct your errors. Don't forget that dictionaries are also valuable for information such as what prepositions should follow certain verbs.
8. **Be careful with using your "ears" to fix your grammar and wording errors.** Remember that you often do not hear what needs to be written. Words like "a," "an," and "the" are spoken quickly and quietly, and certain endings on words such as "s" and "ed" endings can have different sounds and sometimes not even be clearly heard. Thus, writing what you "think" you hear is not always helpful.

9. **Consider getting help from the Writing Center.** If you need help identifying your own errors, learning the rules, or applying the rules, consider getting help from the Writing Center. While the tutor will and should not fix your errors for you, s/he can help you to identify and classify your errors and help teach you to find and correct them.
10. **Avoid waiting until the last minute to correct your grammar and wording errors.** Waiting until the last minute to correct your grammar and wording errors usually results in poor performance, particularly if you have a high number of errors. It takes time to analyze your grammar and wording in order to find and correct errors. Be sure to finish your papers early so you can focus on correcting your grammar and wording errors. It's also best if you can work on fixing them several times.
11. **Remain optimistic but also realistic.** Know you can do it and be persistent. Over time, with effort, you can improve your writing accuracy. While it's unrealistic to expect 100% error-free papers right away (and perhaps ever), it is realistic to see marked improvement in your grammar and wording with effort and time.