

## COMMON ERROR TYPES: SENTENCES FOR PRACTICE

The following examples were taken from handbooks available in the Writing Center. Use these examples to practice identifying and correcting common types of errors.

- *subject-verb agreement*
- *verb tense*
- *verb form*
- *singular and plural noun endings*
- *sentence structure*

Consult the source under the appropriate asterisk for more information or to review the grammar rule.

### SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ERROR

*This error occurs when the verb does not match in number with the singular or plural subject of the sentence or clause.*

1. INCORRECT: **Vitamin supplements improves** your love life.\*  
CORRECT: **Vitamin supplements improve** your love life.
2. INCORRECT: There **is** only blue **jelly beans** left.\*  
CORRECT: There **are** only blue **jelly beans** left.
3. INCORRECT: **The Whale Shark**, the largest of all sharks, **feed** on plankton.\*\*  
CORRECT: **The Whale Shark**, the largest of all sharks, **feeds** on plankton.

### VERB TENSE ERROR

*The verb tenses with a piece of writing shift inappropriately from one time frame to another\*\*:*

1. INCORRECT: While Brazil **looks** to ecotourism to fund rainforest preservation, other South American nations **relied** on foreign aid and conservation efforts.  
CORRECT: While Brazil **looks** to ecotourism to fund rainforest preservation, other South American nations **rely** on foreign aid and conservation efforts.

*An incorrect verb tense has been used in a sentence or clause\*\*\*:*

2. INCORRECT: Alex **has sent out** several job applications last month.  
CORRECT: Alex **sent out** several job applications last month.
3. INCORRECT: Today, Yosemite Park **was** one of the most popular of all the national parks.  
CORRECT: Today, Yosemite Park **is** one of the most popular of all the national parks.

*(For a concise overview of all twelve verb tenses in English, see Understanding and Using English Grammar by Betty Azar, one of the resources available at every tutoring station.)*

\* Fine & Josephson. 1998. Nitty-Gritty Grammar: pg. 11 (subject-verb agreement).

\*\* Faigley, Lester. 2006. The Brief Penguin Handbook: pg. 438 (subject-verb agreement), 446-447 (verb tense).

\*\*\* Lane, Janet & Ellen Lange. 1999. Writing Clearly: An Editing Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: pg. 6-8 (verb tense).

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## VERB FORM ERROR

### *An irregular verb has been incorrectly formed:*

1. INCORRECT: My comment **hurted** my roommate's feelings.  
CORRECT: My comment **hurt** my roommate's feelings.
2. INCORRECT: She **flied** to Los Angeles for Chinese New Year.  
CORRECT: She **flew** to Los Angeles for Chinese New Year.

### *A main verb or an adjective has been incorrectly used instead of [be + past participle]:*

3. INCORRECT: I **confuse** about what you just said.  
CORRECT: I **am confused** about what you just said.

## SINGULAR / PLURAL NOUN ENDINGS ERROR\*\*\*

### *A countable noun is singular when it should be plural:*

1. INCORRECT: The **student** in the class were asking **question**.  
CORRECT: The **students** in the class were asking **questions**.

### *A noncount noun has been made plural.*

2. INCORRECT: You should seek **advices** when you are making an important decision.  
CORRECT: You should seek **advice** when you are making an important decision.
3. INCORRECT: Some of the **milks** has gone sour.  
CORRECT: Some of the **milk** has gone sour.

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE \*\*\*

### *The verb to be is missing:*

1. INCORRECT: [My cousin probably a very rich man] in Vietnam since he owned many houses and drove a fancy car.  
CORRECT: My cousin **was** probably a very rich man in Vietnam since he owned many houses and drove a fancy car.

### *The subject of a sentence has been unnecessarily repeated.*

2. INCORRECT: [**My roommate he**] works a part-time job when he is not busy with his school work.  
CORRECT: **My roommate** works a part-time job when he is not busy with his school work.

### *Two clauses or a clause and a phrase have been used that do not fit together grammatically:*

3. INCORRECT: [In the article, "Vitamin C Under Attack," by Mario Nevares, explains some possible negative effects] of taking large doses of vitamin C.  
CORRECT: In the article, "Vitamin C Under Attack," **Mario Nevares explains** some possible negative effects of taking large doses of vitamin C.

\* Fine & Josephson. 1998. *Nitty-Gritty Grammar*: pg. 11 (subject-verb agreement).

\*\* Faigley, Lester. 2006. *The Brief Penguin Handbook*: pg. 438 (subject-verb agreement), 446-447 (verb tense).

\*\*\* Lane, Janet & Ellen Lange. 1999. *Writing Clearly: An Editing Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: pg. 6-8 (verb tense).