

Writing Precision

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Excerpted from
English Studies (2026)
Available now at eliakazanbooks.com

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INTRO

This presentation focuses on precision and intentionality in writing. Fundamentals in writing are always relevant and necessary in any writing course. Word choice, spelling, and grammar should be intentional.

CORE PARTS OF SPEECH

Noun: a person, place, or thing (including tangibles like objects and intangibles like an idea).

Adjective: a word that describes the noun (“yellow” shirt).

Adverb: a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. It tells us how, when, or where. For example: actually, certainly, really, usually, very, completely, eventually, frequently, naturally, perfectly. Many end in “ly,” not all do.

DIACRITICAL MARKS

The word diacritic comes from Greek *diakritikos*, meaning “distinguishing.” This is the technical umbrella term for any glyph or mark added to a letter to alter its pronunciation, distinguish words, or honor original etymology. As the writer, you can choose whether or not to honor an original language’s accent marks. This choice can be viewed as both a responsibility towards language but it is also stylistic.

1. **Acute accent** (é), pronounced like the “ay” sound in “day”

déjà vu
résumé
fiancé (male), fiancée (female)
protégé
cliché
entrée
poké

2. **Grave accent** (è), pronounced “eh” (as in “get” or “bed”)

crème brûlée
crème de la crème

3. **Circumflex** (ê, â, ô, etc.) Prolonged “eh”

Tête-à-tête (the ‘a’ here has a grave accent)

Château. Such is smaller than a castle but larger than a manor. From largest to smallest:

- a. Place
- b. Castle
- c. Château (“eau” sounds like the letter “O”)
- d. Manor
- e. House

4. **Cedilla** (ç) Soft “s” sound

This tail adds a soft “s” sound to the letter “c.”

façade

Française

5. **Ring** (å) pronounced like the “aw” sound in “saw” or “law”

This circular mark is found in Scandinavian languages.

Let’s feast on this well-prepared smorgasbord (a spread of food variety, typically meats, cheeses, breads, etc.)

6. **Tilde** (ñ), pronounced like the “ny” sound in “canyon” or “onion”

jalapeño

mañana

7. **Diaeresis** (ï) pronounced di-er-uh-sis

The two dots indicate that two adjacent vowels are pronounced as separate sounds.

noël. As a noun for Christmas, Noël is not capitalized. Used as a first name, it is.

Naïve: An adjective meaning innocent, inexperienced, or unsophisticated. Pronounced nah-eev or nye-eev.

Naïveté: The noun form, meaning the state or quality of being naïve. Pronounced nah-eev-tay or nah-eev-tuh-tay. Naïveté preserves the French suffix -té (pronounced -tay or -tuh-tay).

You may choose to omit the diacritical marks and write the more Anglicized versions: naïve and naïvety (pronounced nah-eev-uh-tee). The

Anglicized “naivety” adapts the word to standard English phonetic rules using the common -ty suffix (pronounced -uh-tee).

Note that nativity is a separate word altogether, meaning birth, the place or circumstances of one’s birth, or specifically the birth of Jesus Christ (as in a nativity scene).

German has a ö called an **umlaut**.

LIGATURES

These are two letters joined into one. They sound like a blended single vowel, such as “uh” or “er” depending on the word. The ‘o’ and ‘e’ are connected.

- œuvre
- hors d’œuvres
- œuf (means “egg.”)

LATIN WORDS OR PHRASES: DO WE ITALICIZE?

If it 's integrated and very common in English, we generally don 't italicize. If it 's not commonly used, we italicize.

Usually Italicized

- *a posteriori* — based on experience or observation
- *a priori* — based on prior reasoning
- *actus reus* — the physical, guilty, criminal act
- *ex post facto* — after the fact
- *in situ* — in its original place
- *inter alia* — it means “among other things”
- *mens rea* — the guilty mind; criminal intent
- *prima facie* — at first appearance; sufficient on its face

Usually Not Italicized

- ad hoc — for a specific purpose
- alma mater — school or university one attended
- alter ego — another self; a second identity
- bona fide — genuine; in good faith
- carpe diem — seize the day
- de facto — in fact; in practice (varies by style guide)
- de jure — by law; officially
- et cetera — “and so on”
- in vitro — outside a living organism
- in vivo — within a living organism
- per capita — per person
- per se — in itself
- quid pro quo — something given in exchange for something else
- status quo — existing state of affairs
- versus — against
- vice versa — with the order reversed

Ad hoc, de facto, in vitro, in vivo, quid pro quo, and status quo straddle the fence. Some style guides want them italicized, others don 't so your choice there.

Many other non-English words we have adopted also are not italicized:

- algebra (mathematical system using symbols, Arabic)
- boondock (remote rural area, Tagalog)

- glitch (sudden minor malfunction, German)
- khaki (dull yellowish-brown fabric, Urdu/Persian)
- safari (expedition for observing wildlife, Swahili/Arabic)
- taiga (subarctic evergreen forest, Russian)

TITLES: ITALICS OR QUOTATION MARKS?

“Short story” — shortest form of prose fiction, typically ranging from 10 to 40 pages, or up to 10,000 words. “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor

Novella — between short-story and novel in length, falling between 70 and 200 pages, or 17,500 to 40,000 words. *A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Charles Dickens

Novel — longest form, generally beginning at 200 pages (or 40,000 words) and extending upward.

Books: *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley.

Newspapers and Magazines: *The New York Times*, *Harper’s Magazine*, *The Atlantic*. Use italics.

Albums: In italics. *Come On Over* (1997), *The Slim Shady LP* (1999)

Songs: “That ‘ Don ‘t Impress Me Much” (1982), “As the World Turns,” Eminem

Movies: *Jaws* (1975), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Jurassic Park* (1993). Use italics.

Stage Musicals: *The Lion King* (1997), *Wicked* (2003), *Hamilton* (2015). Use italics.

Corporate and Brand Names: Panda Express, Apple, Nike. Use standard roman text. No italics or quotation marks.

Countries and Governments: The United States, France, the United Kingdom. Use standard roman text and capitalization. No italics or quotation marks.

ONE WORD, TWO WORDS, AND HYPHENS

(One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish — Dr. Suess)

HYPHENATION

When two or more words work together as a single unit to modify a noun, they need hyphens to ensure clarity.

It was an out-of-context example.

The example was out of context.

It was an in-person meeting.

We met in person.

One-on-one meeting

We meet one on one.

It was a face-to-face discussion.

We talked face to face.

Agatha experienced real-world success when she created her manuscript.

The real world is full of opportunities.

A well-thought-out thesis (adjective).

ONE WORD, TWO WORDS, OR HYPHEN?

Many English words evolve through three stages: open (two separate words), hyphenated (transitional phase), and closed (merged into one word).

- to day → to-day → today
- side note → side-note → sidenote
- over-priced → overpriced
- down-graded → downgraded

The rule of thumb: If the phrase functions as a compound adjective directly before a noun, hyphenate it. If it acts as a verb, noun, or predicate phrase, do not.

A well-said comment. (well-said here is an adjective)
Well said! Well done!

A thought-provoking discussion. (thought-provoking is an adjective)
That was thought provoking!

These are just some of my everyday habits
We work out every day.

The real-estate market is overpriced.
I want to study real estate.

The 65-year-old doctor
I am 65 years old.

It was a good-faith question.
I asked in good faith.

I need a quick-reference guide.
I need a quick reference

QUICK-REFERENCE GUIDE

1. **One Word** (closed compounds and solid adverbs)

Anyway “We had a great time anyway.” (adverb / transition)
Anytime “We can talk anytime.”
Anywhere “Is there anywhere I can go?”
Bookstore “I bought it at the bookstore.”
Breakthrough “The discovery was a major breakthrough.”
Everyday (as a noun modifier, adjective) “Taking a walk is part of her everyday routine.”
Healthcare “She works as a healthcare professional.”
Makeup “She applies makeup before going out.” (Noun)
Pickup “I drive a pickup truck.”
Website “Check out our website.”

2. **Two Words** (verbs, nouns, and predicate phrases)

Any time “Do you have any time to talk?”
Any way “Is there any way we can resolve this?”
Catch up “We need to catch up.” (Verb)
Every day “We practice soccer every day.”
Good morning Good morning, Claire!
Good night Have a good night! Note: Goodnight, Sonny!
Gray rock “I ‘ve been gray rocking them, being ‘the most boring ‘ person ever” Note: British: grey, American English: gray
Ice cream “I want some ice cream.”
In person “We should meet in person.”
Log in “I need my password to log in.”
Make up “To make up a story.”
Point of view “From my point of view...”
Real estate “I am looking to buy real estate.”

3. **Hyphenated** (compound adjectives and modifiers)

Agreed-upon “We met at the agreed-upon hour.”
Catch-up “We had a catch-up meeting.”
Data-driven “A data-driven mindset.”
Face-to-face “We had a face-to-face confrontation.”
Game-changer “This tool was a total game-changer.”
Long-term “A long-term investment strategy.”
Make-up “A make-up exam.”
Step-by-step “It is a step-by-step process.”

Two-bedroom “A two-bedroom apartment.”

HYPHEN, EN DASH, EM DASH

Hyphen –

Used to join two or more words together into a single compound modifier when placed directly before a noun, or to join certain prefixes to words.

- We scheduled an in-person interview.
- She presented a well-thought-out argument
- Pro-American policy
- Pre-1960s architecture

En dash (the width of “n”) –

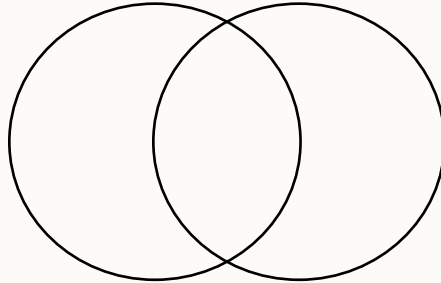
Used for number ranges: The years 2011–2014, Pages 114–119

Em dash (the width of the letter “m”) —

I quickly grabbed several items—apples, blueberries, and bananas—and walked out.

TWO WORDS ARE TWO WORDS

They may have overlap, such as a Venn Diagram. It may also help to think of the concept “continuum” which is a gradient.



Argumentative The connotation is geared towards data (qualitative and quantitative) and logic.

Persuasive Connotation is geared toward belief, emotions, and values.

Rhetorical This is the technical mechanics of how something is convincing (logos, ethos, pathos, kairos). In everyday language they appear synonymous, but by definition they have slight variations in focus.

Class You attended today ‘s class. Not “I am attending today ‘s course.”

Course You pass the course after a semester of work.

Culture General way of living. Categories of culture include education, music, and language

Tradition Specific ways of doing these things. literature (short story, novels, etc.), haiku, fable, country music, slang.

Correlation A statistical relationship or connection between two variables, where a change in one coincides with a change in the other, but one does not directly force the other to happen (e.g., “a correlation between ice cream sales and sunscreen purchases”).

Causation A direct cause-and-effect relationship where one event or factor explicitly produces or guarantees the occurrence of another (e.g., “increased sunlight directly driving higher rates of photosynthesis”).

If you are describing the link between hot weather and rising ice cream sales, do you call it correlation or causation? In academic and scientific contexts, calling it a correlation is the precise, standard choice. Causation requires a direct, deterministic mechanism where factor A automatically forces outcome B to occur every single time. Hot weather does not force every person who steps outside to buy ice cream—it simply creates conditions where more people choose to buy it, making higher temperatures and increased ice cream sales move together on a spectrum.

By contrast, sunnier weather and higher ambient temperature directly stimulating light reaction processes in plant cells is a clear demonstration of causation through photosynthesis. If you refer to a strong correlation as a cause in casual discussion, it’s not a tragedy or an absolute error.

In everyday conversation and broad media reporting, people conflate correlation and causation all the time, often saying one thing “causes” another when they really just mean they are closely related. Students and professionals alike speak this way constantly without a second thought. But still, “correlation” is technically accurate here.

Disagreeing	Expressing a different opinion, perspective, or interpretation based on reason or alternative evidence.
Disrespectful	Engaging in behaviors intended to demean, belittle, mock, or dismiss a person, such as name-calling, interrupting, using contemptuous tone, rolling eyes, or making personal attacks, rather than engaging with their idea. If I disagree with you, that doesn't mean I 'm being disrespectful. I am allowed to have a differing opinion. There are "multiple ways to cut an apple."
England	The country occupying the southern part of the GB island
Great Britain (GB)	England, Wales, Scotland
United Kingdom (UK)	GB plus Northern Ireland
British Isles	UK plus Ireland
Envy	A two-party matter, where one wants what another has. "I want their job position." Envy is one of the Seven Deadly Sins in Christianity.
Jealousy	A three-party matter, where you are guarding what is yours from a perceived threat. I am jealous he might take my job position.
Example	Something that proves a rule or illustrates a general concept (like "an example of a thesis statement").
Sample	A representative specimen of a finished product meant for analysis, modeling, or emulation (like a writing sample, a blood sample, or an essay sample). If you are sharing a "past student sample," do you call it an example or sample? In academic and instructional contexts, calling it an essay sample (or student sample) is the standard professional choice.

When you hand students a piece of writing to study its mechanics, structure, or tone, you are giving them a sample to dissect and learn from.

If you call it an example, it 's not a tragedy or an absolute error. In everyday academic conversation and classroom settings, “student example” and “student sample” are used interchangeably all the time. Students and professors say both constantly without a second thought. But “sample” is technically accurate here.

Example A real or existing instance used to illustrate a general rule, concept, or standard (e.g., “an example from a past student essay”). A concrete, real-world case or specimen drawn from existing evidence or past occurrences.

Hypothetical An imagined or assumed scenario used to explore a possibility, theory, or rule without relying on real facts (e.g., “a hypothetical situation where a law passes”). A constructed “what-if” framework designed to test reasoning, apply a rule, or spark discussion (like a hypothetical case study or a hypothetical objection).

If you are describing a scenario or illustration in a prompt or lecture, do you call it an example or a hypothetical? In academic and instructional contexts, calling it a hypothetical (or hypothetical scenario) is the precise choice when the scenario is made up or theoretical.

When you ask students to imagine a scenario that hasn't actually happened, you are giving them a hypothetical to analyze; when you show them something that actually occurred, you are giving them an example.

If you refer to a fictional scenario as an example, it's not a tragedy or an absolute error. In everyday academic conversation and classroom settings, people call fictional scenarios “examples” all the time (e.g., “Let 's look at an example...” before presenting a made-up scenario). Students and professors say both constantly without a second thought. However, “hypothetical” is technically accurate here.

- Fast** Describes speed over a sustained distance, time, or rate of motion (e.g., “a fast runner” or “a fast car”).
- Quick** Describes a brief duration, immediate response, or an action taking place in a short moment (e.g., “a quick response,” “a quick break,” or “a quick glance”). Fast refers to high speed or rate of movement (like a fast pace or a fast process). Quick refers to something happening in a short amount of time or with little delay (like a quick question, a quick edit, or a quick reply). If you interchange them, it’s not a tragedy or an absolute error.
- Hispanic** Anyone speaking Spanish as their primary cultural language
- Latin America** This region runs from Mexico (which actually a part of North America) to Cape Horn (bottom of Argentina). People from any part of this region would be considered “Latin.”
- Loneliness** Unhealthy due to chronic isolation.
- Solitude** Healthy for self-construction but need not be overdone or can turn to loneliness.
- Multiple** Consisting of, including, or involving more than one. It highlights that there is more than one instance, object, or occurrence.
Multiple does not inherently mean “a lot,” it simply means “more than one” (e.g., multiple choice, multiple attempts). She suffered multiple injuries in the crash. There are multiple ways to solve this equation.
- Numerous** Great in number. Many. It emphasizes a large or impressive quantity. Numerous implies a high count or a large volume,

going far beyond just “more than one.” He received numerous awards throughout his career. Numerous complaints were filed against the company.

Opinion A personal belief, judgment, or view about a subject that may or may not be supported by evidence. It is a wide and general umbrella term. Includes reflection and argument.

Reflection This examines personal impact. It does not argue.

Argument This aims to persuade.

Race Race is just a social construct (mental framework) based on phenotypes (superficial adaptations), genes, ancestry. The sociodemographic categories are White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

 The biological reality is that there is just *Homo sapiens*. Dear King Phillip Came Over For Good Soup. Ends at *Homo sapiens*. No further biological “sub-species,” which racism of the past used to suggest. There is far greater genetic variation within any given racial group (85–95%) than between different racial groups.

Ethnicity A social and cultural identity based on shared ancestry, heritage, culture, language, nationality, history, or traditions passed down through generations.

- Her race is Asian based on physical characteristics, but her ethnicity is Han Chinese based on language and cultural heritage.
- Two people can share the same Black race, yet have distinct ethnicities like Nigerian or Afro-Caribbean based on their cultural traditions.
- He marks White as his race on official forms, but identifies his ethnicity as Greek due to his family ‘s shared regional culture and history.

Sex	One 's biological anatomy. One is born with either male or female organs. In some rare medical instances, differences or disorders of sex development.
Gender	A person 's internal sense of being a man or woman. It has been broadened to include identities outside of that binary (transgender, nonbinary, agender, bigender). Population-based demographic studies and meta-analyses establish that approximately 99–99.5% of individuals identify as cisgender (identifying gender with one 's sex). Gender minorities thus comprise roughly 0.5% to 1% of the adult population. See Meerwijk, E. L., & Sevelius, J. M. (2017). <i>Transgender population size in the United States: A meta-regression of population-based probability samples</i> . American Journal of Public Health, 107(2), e1–e8. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303578 .
Gender Expression	One 's external manifestation of their gender through behavior, mannerisms, clothing, etc.
Sexual Orientation	Approximately 5% to 10% of the general population identifies as non-heterosexual (bisexual, lesbian, gay, or queer), though the exact percentage varies depending on how the question is asked, whether by self-identity, sexual attraction, or lifetime sexual behavior. See Jones, Jeffrey M. 2023. "LGBT Identification in U.S. Reaches 7.2%." Gallup News. https://news.gallup.com/poll/470708/lgbt-identification-reach-7.2.aspx . Reflecting multi-year peer-reviewed tracking methodologies published via Gallup 's demographic data analytics.
Standard	What is usual, customary, or baseline. The path of least resistance.
Mandatory	What is compulsory, required, or strictly enforced by rule or law.

When someone tells you a process or rule is “standard,” they are often conflating what is commonly done with what must be done. People hear “standard” and assume it carries the weight of a requirement, meanwhile it just means convenient, traditional, or default. It is the baseline choice someone made because it requires no extra thought or justification. Treating “standard” as synonymous with “normal” allows it to be used as an organizational cop-out—a way to defend a practice simply because “that’s how we’ve always done it.”

When confronted with a “standard practice,” break it down with three clarifying questions:

- “Is this required, or is it just the default option?” (Distinguishes policy from habit.)
- “What happens if we depart from the standard here?” (Tests whether flexibility actually exists.)
- “Was this standard designed for this specific situation, or is it just convenient?” (Exposes whether the rule is serving a purpose or just acting as a shortcut.)

Calling something “standard” describes precedent, not obligation.

SIMILAR SOUNDING WORDS

Adapt: to modify to fit

Adopt: to take up or accept

Affect: to influence (usually a verb)

Effect: to result or consequence.

Altar: a religious table

Alter: to change

Canvas: strong cloth

Canvass: to solicit votes or opinions

Capital: wealth or city

Capitol: government headquarter building, or where a legislative body meets

Childish: immature

Childlike: innocent or youthful

Cite: to quote

Site: location

Sight: ability to see

Compliment: expression of praise

Complement: something that completes another

Comprehensive: covering much

Comprehensible: able to be understood

Condemn: To express complete disapproval of, censure harshly, or officially declare someone guilty or unfit.

Condone: To accept, allow, or overlook bad behavior (treating it as acceptable or harmless) Not actively praising it.

Conscience: moral sense

Conscious: aware or awake

Unconscionable act: conduct or contract terms so overwhelmingly unfair, oppressive, and one-sided that it “shocks the conscience” of the court.

Credible: believable

Credulous: too ready to believe

Incredible: not believable; also, shocking

Discreet: tactful or careful

Discrete: separate or distinct

Economic: relating to the economy

Economical: avoiding waste or expense

Elicit: draw out

Illicit: illegal

Eminent: Famous or distinguished

Imminent: about to happen

Historic: important in history

Historical: related to history

Imply: suggest indirectly

Infer: draw a conclusion

Ingenious: clever and inventive

Ingenuous: innocent and sincere

Ingenuous (think genuine) this word means sincere

Ingenious (think genius) this word means very smart, or genius

“in” as a prefix as two meanings. Either “non” as in insubordinate, or indeterminate. It can also mean “in or within.”

Disingenuous means insincere.

Naïve: inexperienced

Native: belonging to a particular place

Personal: individual or private

Personnel: employees

Precede: to come before

Proceed: to continue or move forward

Prescribe: officially recommend

Proscribe: officially forbid

Principal: the main thing (deposit), or main person in charge

Principle: fundamental rule or belief

Respectable: worthy of respect

Respectful: showing respect

Sensible: practical, reasonable, or showing good judgment.

Sensitive: easily affected, responsive, or easily hurt or offended.

Stationary: not moving

Stationery: writing materials like paper, pencil, and pen.

LANGUAGE FAMILY TREES

Romance languages are French, Spanish, Italian. These are Latin based. Latin was the language used by the Romans, hence Romance language.

West Germanic: German, English, Dutch, Scots

North Germanic: Scandinavian languages

Slavic: Russian, Polish, Czech, Serbian

Celtic: Scottish Gaelic (also called Gaelic)

English's core grammar and sentence structure are West Germanic. However, the majority of its words are Latin-based, especially through French! Of all English words, approximately 30% are Germanic, 30% are French, 30% are Latin, 6% are Greek, with a remaining mix of other origins.

How did a lot of Latin words end up in English? In 1066, William the Conqueror from Normandy, France, crossed the English Channel and invaded and conquered England. French became the official language of the English court and ruling class for roughly 300 years (from 1066 to 1362). Thus, Old English (pre-1066) turned into Middle English. By the time 1500 came about, English had evolved into Early Modern English, which is the foundation of what we use today.

DON'TS IN WRITING

Using the ampersand symbol (&) in prose

Should only be used in titles or official names.

- The Department of Writing & Literature
- The company Barnes & Noble has in stock the book *Syntax & Semantics in World Literature*

Students must submit their drafts by Friday evening & they should include a complete works-cited page. (incorrect)

Students must submit their drafts by Friday evening, and they should include a complete works-cited page. (correct)

The and/or dilemma

“Or” has two possible meanings: exclusive or and inclusive or.

1. Exclusive “or”: One or the other, but not both.

In everyday conversation, or often presents a choice between two alternatives. If someone asks, “Would you like steak or salmon for dinner?” the expected answer is usually one or the other, not both.

2. Inclusive “or”: One, the other, or both.

This is the part that messes people up. In logic and many written contexts, “or” *does not* exclude the possibility of both alternatives being true. For example, “You can enter if you have a passport or a driver’s license.” Either document qualifies, and having both is perfectly acceptable.

Another example: “You can use a pencil, a blue pen, or a black pen on the test.” What it feels like: Pick one writing utensil to use. The ambiguity: If a student writes the first half of the test in pencil, switches to a blue pen, and finishes with a black pen, did they break the rule? An inclusive reading says they satisfied all three conditions, but a strict teacher might say, “No, I meant pick one.”

3. The problem: Context determines the meaning.

English uses the same word, or, for both situations. Readers rely on context to determine whether the alternatives are mutually exclusive. When that

distinction matters, writers may need to clarify their meaning. Consider these three sentences:

And: “Students who study biology and chemistry can earn a certificate.” This suggests that students must study both subjects.

Or: “Students who study biology or chemistry can earn a certificate.”

Students who study either subject qualify; studying both may also qualify, depending on the context.

And/or: “Students who study biology and/or chemistry can earn a certificate.”

This explicitly includes students who study biology, chemistry, or both.

Takeaway: Use “and” when you mean both (easy), “or” when presenting alternatives, and “and/or” when you specifically need to make clear that either option or both options are acceptable. Because “or” can already be inclusive, “and/or” is not always necessary. The best choice depends on what you want your reader to understand. You might want to add a sentence of meaning, just to be clear, as in “you can only pick one, not two or more.”

Affect and Effect

Incorrect: The new policy will effect morale.

Correct: The new policy will affect morale. (Affect is usually a verb; effect is usually a noun).

Correct: There are multiple effects.

Apart versus a part

We broke apart. I want to be a part of this team.

Apostrophe with Plurals

Incorrect: We sell fresh apple ‘s and orange ‘s.

Correct: We sell fresh apples and oranges. (Plurals do not take apostrophes).

Could of instead of Could have

Incorrect: I could of sworn I left my keys here.

Correct: I could have sworn I left my keys here. (Always spell out “have”).

Irregardless

Incorrect: Irregardless of the weather, we are going.

Correct: Regardless of the weather, we are going. (The “ir-” prefix is redundant).

Its and it ‘s

Incorrect: The dog chased it ‘s tail.

Correct: The dog chased its tail. (Use “it ‘s” only as a contraction for “it is”).

In regards to

The correct phrase is “in regard to [this matter]” No “s”

“I could care less,” when meaning the opposite

Incorrect: I could care less about what they think.

Correct: I couldn’t ‘t care less about what they think. (If you could care less, you still care a little).

“Literally” for figurative speech

Incorrect: My head literally exploded from stress.

Correct: My head figuratively exploded from stress. (Or just drop “literally” entirely).

Then and Than

Incorrect: She is smarter then her brother.

Correct: She is smarter than her brother. (Use “than” for comparisons, “then” for time sequences).

Write and right

I won ‘t even explain this one

Your and You ‘re

Incorrect: Is this you 're jacket?

Correct: Is this your jacket? (Use "you 're" only as a contraction for "you are").



About the Author

Elia Kazan is an author, publisher, scholar, and rap artist. For more information, visit his website eliakazanbooks.com

Colophon

This text uses Arial, size 13,
line spacing set at exactly 16.5 points,
indented at 0.3 inch.

Spacing is 0 pt before and after paragraphs.

Text alignment is justified, with hyphenation turned on.

Margins are 1 inch top and bottom 1-inch,
and 1.25 inch left and right.