

*Grammar Mechanics: The*  
**10 DEADLY SINS** *of Writing*

*Brought to you by the  
Center for  
Teaching and Learning*

# A Quick Note

- Don't worry! This workshop was designed to address the most common grammatical and compositional errors in college writing. That's why we're here; to make all of us, including myself, better writers.



# **SIN #1:** *The Sentence Fragment*

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- A sentence fragment is a partial or incomplete thought that is used as a complete sentence. In most student writing, sentence fragments are the result of a less formal, more conversational tone.
    - Ex: When I tripped on the curb.
    - Re: When I tripped on the curb, I split my pants right down the middle.
  - **TIP:** Look at your writing. Do you have any sentences that cannot **stand alone?**
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## **SIN #2:** *The Run-On*



- The run-on occurs when two (or more) complete thoughts or phrases are written as a single sentence without separation. Run-ons are generally a result of simple carelessness.
    - Ex: Dave went to the store to buy some beer he forgot his wallet.
    - Re: Dave went to the store to buy some beer, but he forgot his wallet.
  - **TIP:** Run-ons are not confined to longer sentences; check the structure of short sentences, too.
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# **SIN #3:** *The Comma Splice & Fused Sentences*

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- This is a type of run-on sentence where two (or more) complete sentences are connected with only a comma. These types of fused sentences are usually the result the writer trying to tie a complex thought together.
    - Ex: Collin works out, he is the strongest guy in the class.
    - Re: Because Collin works out, he is the strongest guy in the class.
  - **TIP:** Review your work. If one sentence can easily be read as two complete sentences, it is probably a comma splice or fused sentence.
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# **SIN #4:** *Lack of Agreement*

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- A lack of agreement occurs when the subject does not agree with the verb (both not singular or both not plural).
    - Ex: The girl run fast down the street.
    - Re: The girl runs fast down the street
  - **TIP:** Try to pay close attention to the verb and its subject(s) or a pronoun and its antecedent(s). Do they agree?
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# **SIN #5:** *Inconsistent Tense*

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- You can have inconsistent tense when the tense of two (or more) verbs in a sentence do not agree.
    - Ex: She forgot that she needs to do some homework for her math class.
    - Re: She forgot that she needed to do some homework for her math class.
  - **TIP:** When you have multiple verbs in one sentence, pay close attention to the tense.
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# **SIN #6:** *Poor Parallelism*

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- Poor parallelism is a grammatical mistake whereby there is an awkward lack of balance in the creation of lists and series.
    - Ex: I glanced out the window and saw an elm tree, a tree with bright red fruit, and a large bush.
    - Re: I glanced out the window and saw an elm tree, an apple tree, and large bush.
  - **TIP:** When making a list or series, pay close attention to the grammatical structure of the nouns.
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# **SIN #7:** *Dangling Modifiers*

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- Simply put, dangling modifiers describe or reference words that never actually appear in a sentence.
    - Ex: Driving down the street, the weather seemed to be changing rather quickly.
    - Re: Driving down the street, I noticed the weather seemed to be changing rather quickly.
  - **TIP:** Try not to carelessly add descriptive phrases to a sentence. Pay attention to the phrases in a sentence and what they modify.
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# **SIN #8:** *Passive Voice*

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- With a passive voice, the subject of a sentence becomes the receiver of the action. Basically, nothing or no one is performing the action.
  - Ex: The haunted house at the top of the hill was greatly feared by us.
  - Re: We feared the haunted house at the top of the hill.
- **TIP:** Unless you absolutely need an passive verb, change it to the active voice.



# SIN #9: *Redundancy*

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- As the term implies, redundancy is the overuse or needless use of words.
    - Ex: She was totally the tallest girl in the classroom.
    - Re: She was the tallest girl in the classroom.
    - Ex: To fix the car, you will need both a wrench and a screwdriver.
    - Re: To fix the car, you will need a wrench and a screwdriver.
  - **TIP:** Go through your work and look for descriptive words you often use when speaking – these tend to be redundant in college-level writing.
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# **SIN #10:** *Inexactness/Imprecision*

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- When writing, make sure you use words and phrases which correctly convey your meaning.
    - Ex: In an attempt to levitate the situation, the police officer backed off a few steps.
    - Re: In an attempt to alleviate the situation, the police officer backed off a few steps.
  - **TIP:** Don't try and stretch your vocabulary. If needed, grab a dictionary to find the best word. Also, try and avoid extremely pretentious wording.
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*Don't forget...*

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Check out our workshop schedule on the CTL website at [www.uis.edu/ctl/](http://www.uis.edu/ctl/)

If you need further assistance, contact the CTL at [ctlwrite@uis.edu](mailto:ctlwrite@uis.edu) or 217-206-6503.