Grammar Review

Big Three

All of the errors outlined above cause readers to stumble over what a writer has written, but three common errors are cited as the most distracting in Rosen’s 1987 research. Those errors are subject verb agreement, fragments, and sentence boundary errors.

Subject Verb Agreement

→ Nouns and verbs must agree in number.
  • Singular nouns need singular verbs
    ○ The nurse attends her patients.
  • Plural nouns need plural verb
    ○ Nurses spend vast amounts of time reading charts.

• Notice that a noun that is singular has no “s” on the end of it but that the verb does, and a noun that is plural has an “s,” so the verb does not. This formula is known as the Rule of S. The only caveat is that some English nouns are irregular, for example, children, people, women.

Fragments

→ Fragments are incomplete thoughts. Four types of fragments plague writing.
  • Missing subject or verb.
    ○ The child ran through the halls. Then stopped suddenly.
      • The second phrase is an incomplete thought because it has no subject.
    ○ The blood running down the patient’s arm.
      • In this phrase running cannot function as a verb because all verbs ending in an –ing must have a helping verb in order to provide action to a sentence. Helping verbs are words like is, have was were.
  • Dependent Word Fragments
    ○ Although the surgery was successful. The patient developed multiple complications.
      • Dependent clauses must be connected to a complete thought. They cannot stand alone. The repair for the example above would be:
• Although the surgery was successful, the patient developed multiple complications.

→ To and –ing Fragments

  o **To establish credibility for the research.** The scientist submitted it for review by a double blind committee.
    - To establish credibility for the research is the introductory phrase to the sentence the scientist submitted it for review by a double blind committee. This opening phrase cannot stand alone.
  o **Returning to discover the patient was out of bed.** The nurse paged a co-worker for assistance.
    - Like the example above, returning to discover the patient out of bed is only the opening to the complete thought the nurse paged a co-worker for assistance.

→ List Fragments

  o Nurses who work the hospital setting must balance many responsibilities at once.
    - **For example, patient care, medicine distribution, and doctor’s orders.**
      - The information included in the list beginning for example is just that a list. This list cannot stand alone because it is neither the subject nor the verb of the “sentence;” furthermore, this list is not a complete thought. It must be joined to the preceding complete thought.

**Comma Splices and Run-ons**

→ Comma splices and run-ons are essentially the same error. Both join two complete thoughts together.

  o A comma splice **splices** the two sentences together with a comma much like an electrician would splice two wires together.
    - The patient needs immediate surgery, his appendix is so infected it could rupture at any moment.
      • The comma between surgery and his appendix represents the comma splice.
    - The patient needs immediate surgery his appendix is so infected it could rupture at any moment.
      • This same sentence now appears as a run-on in which there is not punctuation separating the two complete thoughts.

→ Comma splices and run-ons can be repaired one of three ways

  o Separate with a period or semi-colon
    - The patient needs immediate surgery. His appendix is so infected it could rupture at any moment.
    - The patient needs immediate surgery; his appendix is so infected it could rupture at any moment.
- Create a compound sentence using a FANBOYS (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So)
  - The patient needs immediate surgery, for his appendix is so infected it could rupture at any moment.
- Use a dependent word, like although, because, so that, while, as, if, since, once, when, even though, etc. to transform one complete thought into a dependent clause and join the dependent clause and the independent clause together.
  - The patient needs immediate surgery because his appendix is so infected it could rupture at any moment.

→ **WARNING**: Do not repair a run-on by adding a comma. Doing so transforms the error from a run-on to a comma splice.