

English 95

Some Very Common Problems

(Please pay close attention to this list!)

Wrong Word—Look-alikes

- were, where and we're: *Where were* you going? *We're* (we are) already there.
- *Women* is the plural form of *woman*. ex. Some *women* are going to help that *woman*.
- advice and advise: *Advice* is the noun and *advise* is the verb. ex. I gave my friend some advice. I advised her to leave her boyfriend. There is no such word as “advised”. “Advices” refers only to diplomatic reports, not advice from your friend or counselor.
- sweet v. sweat: candy tastes *sweet*, or a person is *sweet* when he or she is very kind. *Sweat* happens when people exercise.
- no, know and now: *no* is the opposite of yes; you can *know* a person or a subject; *now* means at this moment.
- fell v. feel: *fell* is the past tense of fall, while *feel* is the verb meaning to perceive through the sense of touch or to be aware of.
- choose v. chose: *choose* is the present tense while *chose* is the past tense.
- lose v. loose: *lose* is a verb meaning to be unable to find while *loose* means not tight.

Wrong Word—Sound-alikes

- could *have*, should *have*, would *have* (not could *of*, etc.)
- there, they're and their: Send them over *there* to *their* car because *they're* (they are) ready to go home.
- to, too and two: I need *to* take *two* aspirins because I ate *too* much chocolate. My friend did *too*.
- your, you're: I hope *you're* going to wash *your* face because it is dirty.
- its: belonging to it; it's: it is
- *a lot* is two words, not one.
- whether v. weather: *whether*, as in whether or not; *weather*, as in rain, thunder, sunny, cool, warm, etc. There is no such word as wheather.
- went v. when: *went* is the past tense of the verb “to go” while *when* is an adverb or a conjunction referring to time.
- taught, thought, tough, through, though: *taught* is the past tense of teach; *thought* is the past tense of think, or an idea; *tough* means not easy or smooth; *through* is the preposition meaning by way of; *though* means “in spite of” or “and yet”. ex. I *thought* the meat was too *tough* to cut. My mom *taught* me to think *through* a problem, even *though* that might take some time

Wrong Word

- ask v. tell: *ask* someone a question; *tell* them the answer. Or *asked* a question, *told* the answer.
- Part of speech: words take on different forms depending what part of speech they are. For example, the words “death” and “dead” are not interchangeable. Death is the noun and dead is the adjective. A person can fear death or be dead. A person cannot be death.
- I and a: *I* is the pronoun for the first person. *A* is an article meaning one. Also, “I am” can be abbreviated “I’m,” NOT “I’am.”
- Pronouns can have gender. For example, *he*, *his* and *him* are always male, while *she*, *hers* and *her* are always female.
- made-up words: The noun is *conversation* and the verb is *converse*. There is no such word as *conversate*.

Punctuation Problems

- Please do not use apostrophes with plurals or with third person singular verbs.
- Avoid contractions. This will solve many of your problems.
- Put quotation marks around words you have quoted from someone or somewhere else.
- Put quotation marks around the essay titles.

Verb Problems

- You are *supposed* to add a "d" to the end of "supposed."
- “ed” endings on verbs: do not confuse this with “it.” For example, *decide it* does not mean the same thing as *decided*.
- Make sure your verb tenses make sense, and are logical, not random.

Usage Problems

- Do not use double negatives in Standard English. Ex. I didn’t have no where to go.
- Be careful with nouns that are not countable. For example, there is no such word as “homeworks” or “furnitures.” See your handbook for a partial list.
- Avoid slang words, and avoid oral phrases, such as “and then I’m like” or “gonna.” That is never acceptable.