

Fumblerules by William Safire

Fumblerule: A mistake that calls attention to the rule.

- 1) About sentence fragments
- 2) Avoid run on sentences they are hard to read the reader may not understand them.
- 3) A writer must not shift your point of view.
- 4) Do not put sentences in the negative form.
- 5) Don't use contractions in formal writing.
- 6) Make an all out effort to hyphenate when necessary but not when unnecessary.
- 7) Don't use capital letters without good REASON.
- 8) Each pronoun should agree with their antecedents.
- 9) It behooves us to avoid archaic words.
- 10) Reserve the apostrophe for its proper use.
- 11) Write all adverbial forms correct.
- 12) Use the semicolon properly, use it between complete thoughts; and not between an independent clause and a mere phrase.
- 13) Don't use no double negatives.
- 14) When a dependent clause precedes an independent clause put a comma after the dependent clause.
- 15) If I've told you once I've told you a million times: resist hyperbole.
- 16) If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.
- 17) Avoid commas, that are not necessary.
- 18) Avoid trendy words or phrases that sound flaky.
- 19) And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
- 20) The passive voice should never be used.
- 21) Writing carefully, dangling participles should be avoided.
- 22) Unless you are quoting other people's exclamation, don't use exclamation points!!!
- 23) Never use a long word when a diminutive word will do.
- 24) The rigid use of the "i before e except after c" rule raises spelling to a science.
- 25) Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.
- 26) Use parallel structure when you write and in speaking.
- 27) Ixnay the use of colloquial words.
- 28) Resist new verb forms that have snuck into the language.
- 29) Better to walk through the valley of the shadow of death than to string prepositional phrases together.
- 30) One will not have needed the future perfect tense in one's entire life.
- 31) Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences such as those with ten or more words, to their antecedents.
- 32) Remember to never split an infinitive.
- 33) Take the bull by the hand and don't mix metaphors.
- 34) Always pick on the correct idiom.
- 35) Never, ever use repetitive redundancies.

- 36) "Avoid overuse of 'quotation 'marks.' ' ' "
- 37) Never use prepositions to end a sentence with.
- 38) Last, but not least, avoid clichés like the plague.