

Common writing mistakes - part 2

UK vs. US Spelling

British and American spellings are different in many ways. It doesn't really matter which spelling you use while writing. However, you have to remain consistent throughout your writing. So for example, if you intend to use American spelling, stick to it. Do not use American spellings for some words and British spellings for other words.

Avoid excessively long sentences

In a bid to impress the examiner, students often try to write excessively long sentences that contain numerous main and subordinate clauses. Unfortunately, this is not a good practice. When your sentences are too long, your chances of making mistakes are pretty high. This doesn't necessarily mean that you have to write only simple sentences. Actually, that is not recommended either. If all of your sentences are of the same length, they will make your text boring. Therefore, it is always a good idea to strike a balance between simple and complex sentences. Use them both in your writing, but make sure that your complex sentences are of a manageable length. Although there are no hard and fast rules regarding the length of a sentence, it is always a good idea to limit the number of subordinate clauses to two or three. And at the same time, do not use more than two main clauses in a sentence. By using different sentence patterns, you can add variety and sophistication to your writing.

Bottom-line: Do not use too many conjunctions in a sentence. If you feel that your sentences are too long, re-read them to see if they can be broken up. Your readers will also like shorter sentences because they are easier to understand.

Avoid excessively long paragraphs

Pay attention to the size of your paragraphs. They should be neither too long, nor too short. If you are writing an essay, you can try paragraphs of different lengths. For example, you can write a short paragraph after a long one or vice-versa. This will add variety. Avoid excessively long paragraphs at any cost. For one thing, they will immediately put off the reader. Studies have proved that people are more likely to read shorter pieces of text. They wouldn't mind reading a long essay or document if it is neatly broken into paragraphs of reasonable length. But if your paragraphs are too long, few people will bother to read in the first place.

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In general, you can include three to five paragraphs on an A4 paper. Also make sure that only one main idea or topic is discussed in each paragraph.