

Catching 5 Common Grammar Mistakes

Incorrect grammar not only reflects poorly on the writer—it makes an organization appear careless. Below are five of the most common grammar mistakes and an explanation for how to correct them.

- 1. Apostrophe use.** Apostrophes have two purposes: to indicate possession or ownership, and to make a contraction. Most errors come from the former.
Wrong: We need to improve our sale's numbers. [Unnecessary apostrophe. The plural noun is not possessive.]
Correct: We need to improve our sales numbers.
- 2. I/me.** Use *I* as the subject of a verb. [Use *me* as the object of a verb or when a verb is acting on someone or something.]
Wrong: The supervisor told Sofia and I to finish the project. [*I* is not the subject; it is being acted on by the verb.]
Correct: The supervisor told Sofia and me to finish the project.
- 3. Its/it's.** *It's* is always a contraction for *it is* and is never used to show possession of the pronoun *it*.
Wrong: The organization held it's press conference at headquarters. [The possessive *its* never requires an apostrophe.]
Correct: The organization held its press conference at headquarters.
- 4. Less/fewer.** *Less* is used when something cannot be counted. *Fewer* is used for countable things.
Wrong: Less than 100 customers made use of the reduced price. [The number 100 is countable.]
Correct: Fewer than 100 customers made use of the reduced price.
- 5. Lose/loose.** *Lose* is a verb that means suffering a loss. *Loose* is an adjective meaning not tight.
Wrong: We can't loose if we maintain these sales numbers. [*loose* is an adjective meaning not tight.]
Correct: We can't lose if we maintain these sales numbers.

Try your skill in catching the errors in the following sentences. Correct the improper word. Mark the sentence with a *C* if it requires no correction.

1. Employees do not want to loose their benefits.
2. People often misplace their cellphones, so its important to enable the "track" feature.
3. All team member's were asked to take time off after they had completed a difficult project.
4. The copier was giving Elisha and I trouble.
5. Julio felt less worried after he received an excellent performance evaluation.
6. Its difficult to maintain composure when being criticized.
7. Three manager's were told their positions were being eliminated.
8. It was fewer than 40 degrees outside.
9. Johann and I worked together to land a new account.
10. The department store has less items to try on since the COVID-19 pandemic.
11. The papers in the folder were loose, and when Antonia dropped them, they scattered.
12. My supervisor and me received kudos for a job well done.