Grammar Codes

1. Spelling/Capitalization error:
   1a. Misspelled word: Write the correct spelling of the word 5 times on your paper. Yes, you have to do this for every time you misspelled the same word.

   1b. Capitalization error: This word is a proper noun or part of a title and needs to be capitalized. OR this word does not need to be capitalized.

2. Word choice error:

   2a. Wrong meaning: This word does not mean what you think it does. Replace it with a word that has your desired meaning.

   2b. Weak word: Choose a more descriptive, specific or effective word.

   *Ineffective*: Tom has a lot of stuff in his room.

   *More effective*: Tom has a lot of dirty clothes and dishes in his room.

2c. Commonly confused word: This word sounds similar to the word you actually want, but has a different spelling & meaning. Replace it with the correct word.

   Incorrect: Weather you are coming or not, I am going to there house.

   Correct: Whether you are coming or not, I am going to their house.

2d. Missing word: You left out at least one important word from this phrase or sentence, so it doesn’t make sense.

3. Article error: An indefinite article (“a” or “an”) should be used to refer to a noun when its specific identity is unknown. “A” is used for words that begin with a consonant and “an” is used for words that begin with a vowel. A definite article (”the”) is used in front of singular or plural nouns and adjectives to refer to something with which both the writer and reader are already familiar. Proper nouns do not need articles.

   Incorrect: The George took a walk to a corner store near his house.

   Correct: George took a walk to the corner store near his house.

4. Verb tense shift: Keep your verb tenses consistent; don’t switch from past to present and then back again. Generally, for history essays, we write in past tense.

5. Pronoun use: Use pronouns consistently; don’t switch from singular to plural pronouns and back again. It is also generally more appropriate to use third person pronouns (he, she, they, etc.) and to avoid first and second person pronouns (I, you, etc.) in formal essays.

6. Agreement error: Different parts of your sentence do not match up correctly.

   6a. Subject-Verb agreement: The subject and verb in your sentence must agree in number. Remember, collective nouns (a group that acts as one) need a singular verb.

   Incorrect: The team are training hard for the city championships.

   Correct: The team is training hard for the city championships.

   6b. Pronoun-Antecedent agreement: A pronoun must agree with its antecedent (the word, phrase or clause to which it refers) in gender, person, and number.

   Incorrect: Steve forgot to bring their textbook to class.

   Correct: Steve forgot to bring his textbook to class.

7. Adjective or adverb error: Adjectives describe nouns and adverbs describe verbs. Don’t confuse them. Generally, you can add an “ly” to the end of an adjective to make it an adverb.

   Incorrect: The sleepy students didn’t finish their corrections and did badly on the next assignment.

   Correct: The sleepy students didn’t finish their corrections and did badly on the next assignment.

8. Preposition error: A preposition explains the relationship between the noun or pronoun in your sentence and the other parts of your sentence in terms of space and time. You either left out a preposition or used the wrong one.

   Ex: She was at the finish before the other runners and won the race.

9. Apostrophe error: An apostrophe is in the wrong place and/or missing.

   9a. Use an apostrophe to form the possessive of nouns and indefinite pronouns.

   Ex: Lee’s, everyone’s, Canada’s

   9b. “It’s” only ever means “it is.” The possessive form of “it” is “its.”

   Ex: The boys’ uniforms, my parents’ decision, Ross’ new car

9d. Do not use an apostrophe where something is plural, not possessive.

   Ex: 1960s, MPs

10. Comma error: You left out a needed comma or added one where it doesn’t belong.

   10a. Use a comma between two independent clauses joined by and, or, but, or, yet. Ex: Lucy hates grammar exercises, but she understands the importance of completing them.

   10b. Use commas to separate items in a series (Ex: I like pears, apples and oranges.)

   10c. Use a comma between two adjectives used to describe the same noun.

   Ex: My car is the green, rusty eyesore in the back corner of the lot.

   10d. Use a comma to set off introductory elements.

   Ex: Screaming for help, the girl wrestled the raging bear.

   10e. Use a comma to prevent misreading or to improve the clarity of your sentence.

   Ex: Ever since, Frank has been a better boy. vs. Ever since Frank has been a better boy (fragment)

   10f. Do not use unnecessary commas.

   10g. Semicolons are fancy periods, not fancy commas. Do not use them in place of a comma.

11. Sentence fragment: A sentence must have a subject (the topic of the sentence) and a predicate (the part that gives information about the subject). Your sentence is incomplete.

12. Comma splice and/or run-on sentence: You’ve joined two or more independent clauses (complete sentences) without proper punctuation.

   Incorrect: I got up late this morning, I didn’t have time for breakfast.

   Correct: I got up late this morning, I didn’t have time for breakfast.

   Also correct: I got up late this morning, so I didn’t have time for breakfast.

   Also correct: I got up late this morning; I didn’t have time for breakfast.

   Also correct: Since I got up late this morning, I didn’t have time for breakfast.

13. Parallel structure error: Coordinating units of writing must have the same pattern of words if they are going to have clarity and flow.

   Incorrect: He was handsome, wealthy and an athlete. [adjective, adjective, noun]

   Correct: He was handsome, wealthy and athletic. [adjective, adjective, adjective]

   Incorrect: The manager praised her employees for their dedication and because they were willing to work on weekends. [prepositional phrase; adverb clause]

   Correct: The manager praised her employees for their dedication and their willingness to work on weekends. [prepositional phrase; prepositional phrase]

14. Title was mishandled: Titles of major works (novels, plays, long poems, etc.) are underlined in handwritten essays and italicized on typed essays. Titles of minor works (short stories, poems, songs, etc.) are placed within quotation marks on both handwritten and typed essays. Your essay has never been published, so its title is only capitalized and doesn’t receive quotes, underlining, or italics.

15. Name was mishandled: The first time you refer to a person, use his or her full name (Ex: John A. Macdonald). For all other references to the same person, use the last name only (Macdonald). Do not use formal titles, like Mr. or Dr. The first time you refer to an organization, event, etc. with a very long name, write it out the full name with an abbreviation given in parentheses. For each subsequent reference, you may then use the abbreviation.

   Ex: Canadian Expeditiory Force (CEF)
Essay Correction Codes

To improve your writing, you must learn to fix the mistakes you are making so that you will not continue to make the same errors. The numbers/letters I wrote on your essay correspond to the rules given here.

Directions: Number all of the errors on your paper. Then, on a sheet of lined paper, work through each error by identifying and correcting the error. Read through the grammar and content rules each time you make the same mistake, so you start to learn how to do things correctly. You do NOT need to rewrite the entire essay. Instead, rewrite the incorrect sentence or sentences and correct the mistake. These handwritten corrections are due next class, along with your original graded essay.

Grammar Codes (continued)

16. Numbers were mishandled: Write out numbers that can be written as one or two words (sixteen, ninety-nine, ten billion). Use numerals for numbers that require more than two words when written (2078). Use numerals before units of measurement (24 kilometres), with abbreviations (7:25 a.m.), with symbols (10%), in addresses (341 Valour Road), in dates (April 11, 1973), for a range of numbers (17 000-20 000) and in divisions (page 42). Use Roman numerals for people or events in a series (Henry VIII, World War II).

17. Errors incorporating quotations:
   17a. Punctuation error—periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks.
   17b. Frame your quotation. Do not just slap a quotation into the middle of your paragraph without the proper guidance for your reader. Include a signal phrase or other transition.

18. Punctuation error: Necessary punctuation is missing OR you have chosen the wrong type of punctuation for the situation.

Content & Research Skills Codes

A. Thesis is weak: Your thesis may be unclear or missing. Never, never, never phrase your thesis as a question.

B. Omit unnecessary words: It may be that you used ten words when one or two would do the job just as well, or it may be that this section is fluff or filler or just taking up space without saying anything new. Get to the point in as few words as possible.

C. Cliché or formulaic wording: Keep your writing fresh and engaging by avoiding overused phrases.

D. Rhetorical question: Don’t ask questions in a formal essay. Rhetorical questions are a sign that the writer hasn’t made up his/her mind or he/she is just trying to fill up the page. Instead, make bold, powerful statements.

E. Your writing is too informal: Never use slang, abbreviations, sarcasm or other informal elements in your writing. This is formal writing, so use formal language.

F. Confusing, awkward, unclear or contradictory language: I’ve re-read this passage several times and still don’t understand what you are trying to say. Re-write it so that your ideas come across more clearly.

G. Provide more details: Don’t assume that your reader knows as much about the topic as you do. Add more details, so that your reader has a better understanding of the issue at hand. Bonus: providing a lot of relevant and helpful details shows your knowledge of the topic and impresses your reader (who will probably give you a higher mark as a result).

H. Weak or missing introductory sentence.

I. Weak or missing concluding sentence.

J. Inaccurate information: The information in this passage is not correct; you need to double check your facts.

K. Analysis needed: You are far too dependent on reporting your research materials instead of providing your own unique, thoughtful analysis of the information you have gathered.

L. Weak analysis: You need to “dig deeper” here. You are playing it a little too safe and are simply providing analysis that anyone who has done even a little bit of research on this topic could provide.

M. Repetitive: You have already made this point. This information should either be edited out to avoid repetition or rephrased so that it provides new and useful information.

N. Off topic information: This part of your analysis does not appear to have a connection to your thesis and/or the rest of the information in this paragraph.

O. Citation needed: The information you have provided here would not be considered common knowledge and needs a citation.

P. Incorrect citation formatting: Perhaps you included the wrong information in the parentheses, or perhaps you placed your punctuation in the wrong spot.

Q. Incorrect entry for a List of Works Cited: Most likely you have used incorrect punctuation or ordering of information in your entry. It may be missing a required element (like a date of access for a Web source) or it may include something unnecessary (like all 8 names of the contributing authors).

R. List of Works Cited is improperly formatted: Your List of Works Cited may not be on a separate page or you may have used the wrong font or forgotten to centre your title. It may be that your entries are not double spaced with hanging indentations or they are not in alphabetical order. It could also be that you have numbered or bulleted your entries, which is not allowed.

S. Essay is incorrectly formatted: It may be that you need to type or double space your work, that you are missing page numbers or that the name, teacher, course and date are missing or are in the wrong location or order.

T. Please see me. The correction you need to make cannot be easily explained. You need to see me so that I explain your mistake to you.

U. Your essay or paragraph needs a title: It may be that you forgot to include a title or that your title is just a label (e.g. Research Essay). Give your work a descriptive title that will grab your reader’s attention.

V. Poor organization: This information could have been better organized, so that your ideas come through more clearly. It could be that you needed to put it in chronological order or that you neglected to work from your weakest point to your strongest one.

W. Concession and refutation error: It is okay to acknowledge an opposing view on your topic (that’s called concession), but you must make sure you refute it or you weaken your argument. Concession and refutation should be done near the beginning of your essay. If you leave it to the end, it weakens your argument.

X. Misread question: You misread the question or forgot to address part of the question, which has resulted in an inappropriate or incomplete response.