

# ESSAY CORRECTION CODES

## Grammar Codes

### 1. Spelling/Capitalization/Pluralization errors:

- 1a. Misspelled word:** To improve your spelling, write the correct spelling of the word 5 times on a sheet of paper 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.
- 1c. Pluralization error:** You made this word plural, and it shouldn't be **OR** you made this word singular and it should be plural **OR** you put the wrong ending on your plural word (e.g. it is countries NOT countrys) **OR** this word is an uncountable noun that does not change spelling regardless of the amount (e.g. you may have one fish or many fish, but never many fishes)

### 2. Word choice error:

- 2a. Wrong meaning:** This word does not make sense in this context. 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 dusty knick-knacks in his room.
- 2c. Commonly confused word:** This word sounds like the word you actually want, but it has a different spelling and 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(s):** You left out at least one important word from this sentence, so it doesn't make sense.
- 2e. Not a real word:** This word does not exist
- 2f. Part of speech error:** You are using a word as the wrong part of speech (e.g. as a verb when it is a noun)  
*Incorrect:* At the end of the war, Hitler suicided himself. [Using suicide incorrectly as a verb]  
*Correct:* At the end of the war, Hitler committed suicide. [Using suicide correctly as a noun]

- 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 (e.g. people's names) do not need articles.  
*Incorrect:* The George took an 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 act 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.
- 6c. Other agreement error:** This part of your sentence does not match up with the rest of the sentence.

- 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 sleepily students didn't finish their corrections and did bad 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. Different words use different prepositions, so it may help you to memorize the correct ones for words you use often (e.g. We discriminate against people, not on them).

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. Indicate possession:** With most singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in "s," the word should be followed by an apostrophe and an "s."  
Ex: Lee's, everyone's, Canada's
  - 9b. Its vs. it's:** "It's" only ever means "it is." The possessive form of "it" is "its."
  - 9c. Plural possessives and words ending in "s":** With a plural noun or a singular noun ending in "s," place the apostrophe after the "s" to indicate possession.  
Ex: the boys' uniforms, my parents' decision, Ross' new car
  - 9d. Plural, not possessive:** Do not use an apostrophe where something is plural, not possessive.  
Ex: 1960s, MP3s

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

- 10a. Use with coordinating conjunctions (a.k.a. FANBOYS):** Use a comma between two independent clauses joined by a FANBOYS word (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).  
Ex: Lucy hates grammar exercises, but she understands the importance of completing them.
- 10b. Separate items in a list:** When you have 3 or more words, phrases or clauses in a series, separate them with commas.  
Ex: I like pears, apples and oranges.  
Use a comma before the last item in a series if you need to prevent confusion.  
Ex: I went to the movie with my cousins, Fazeen and Aabid. vs. I went to the movies with my cousins, Fazeen, and Aabid.
- 10c. Separate interchangeable adjectives:** When you use 2 or more adjectives to describe the same noun, and you could use those adjectives in any order and your statement would still make sense, separate the adjectives with commas.  
Ex: My car is the green, rusty eyesore in the back corner of the lot.  
If the adjectives must come in a certain order to make sense, commas are not needed.  
Ex: The Nguyens live in the small brick house. vs. The Nguyens live in the brick small house.
- 10d. Use after introductory phrases:** When your sentence starts with a dependent clause, use a comma at the end of the clause. No comma is needed if the dependent clause follows an independent clause.  
Ex: Screaming for help, the girl wrestled the raging bear.
- 10e. Set off non-essential elements:** If your sentence would still make sense without the word or phrase included, set them off with commas (not parentheses).  
Ex: Vishal, my older brother, likes baseball. ["Vishal likes baseball" would also make sense, so commas are needed].
- 10f. Incorrect comma use:** This comma is unnecessary.

- 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). It should express a complete thought. Your sentence is missing one of these elements and 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. [separate with a period]

*Also correct:* I got up late this morning, so I didn't have time for breakfast. [join with FANBOYS]

*Also correct:* I got up late this morning; I didn't have time for breakfast. [join with a semi-colon]

*Also correct:* Since I got up late this morning, I didn't have time for breakfast. [subordinate a clause]

**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. [noun phrase; prepositional phrase]

*Correct:* The manager praised her employees for their dedication and their willingness to work on weekends. [noun phrase; noun 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 in 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 out the full name with an abbreviation given in parentheses. For each subsequent reference, you may then use the abbreviation.

Ex: Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)

**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 and for events in a series (Henry VIII, World War II).

**17. Errors incorporating quotations:**

**17a. Punctuation error:** If the phrase introducing your quotation is a complete sentence, use a colon before the quotation. If the signal phrase is an incomplete sentence, use a comma before the quotation. At the end of your quotation, all other punctuation (e.g. periods, commas) stay inside the quotation marks.

**17b. Frame your quotation.** Do not just slap a quotation into the middle of your paragraph without a proper introduction for your reader. Include a signal phrase to explain how the quotation is connected to the rest of your writing.

**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 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 that 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. Leave out formulaic phrases (e.g. "In this essay, I will...") that do not add meaning or substance to your writing.

**D. Rhetorical question:** The answer to a rhetorical question is obvious, so this question is taking up unnecessary space. Using rhetorical questions is too conversational for formal writing and may look like you are trying to meet your word requirement rather than saying something meaningful.

**E. Your writing is too informal:** Never use slang, abbreviations, contractions, sarcasm or other informal, conversational elements in formal academic writing.

**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.

**H. Weak or missing introductory sentence:** Every paragraph needs an introductory sentence that clearly states what the paragraph will discuss. Yours is either unclear or missing.

**I. Weak or missing concluding sentence:** Every paragraph should end with an effective concluding sentence that effectively summarizes the paragraph (if you are just writing one paragraph), smoothly transitions to the next paragraph (if the two points are related) or that connects the ideas in the preceding paragraph(s) back to your thesis (if you are concluding a point). Yours is either unclear, ineffective or missing.

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

**K. Analysis needed:** Do not simply list facts from your research materials. Instead offer your own unique, thoughtful analysis of the information you have gathered that shows how these facts are connected and how they help prove your thesis.

**L. Weak analysis:** You need to "dig deeper" or be clearer at this point. Don't hint at deeper meanings and connections, making the reader do the work. Clearly explain connections between facts in detail and explicitly connect them to your thesis.

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

**N. Off topic information:** These facts or 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:** The citation should be placed as close to the relevant information as possible. It should be in parentheses and should be followed by any punctuation that is needed for that part of the sentence (e.g. comma, period). The parentheses for your citation should include the author's last name followed by a page number (just the number) or a paragraph number (the abbreviation "par." should precede the number). You DO NOT NEED TO USE A COMMA between the name and number. If you do not have an author's name, use a short form of the article's title in quotation marks.

**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:** This aspect of your paper is not properly set up in MLA format. 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. 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, that you separated related ideas within your paper or that you neglected to work from your weakest point to your strongest one.

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For more help with grammar and research skills, check out:

- The Writing Workshop at [msliewscsclass.weebly.com](https://msliewscsclass.weebly.com)
- The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>