

Some Common Basic Writing Mistakes

Spelling

argument: Yup, no 'e' after the 'u'.

judgment: Although the British often spell this 'judgement', the usual spelling in American English is as given.

then/than: 'than' is used for comparisons, 'then' for temporal ordering, as in 'He is taller *than* the lady' or 'I wanted to know more *than* that' versus 'Go straight three blocks and *then* turn right' or 'If you get lost, *then* you are in trouble'. See: <http://www.paulhensel.org/teachprob.html>

possessives: for singular nouns, add an 's. For plural nouns ending in s, add only '. Exception: for the possessive of *it*, write *its*; for the contraction of *it* and *is*, write *it's*. Examples: *this paper's conclusion*, *Broad's argument*, *the student's backpacks* (the backpacks of the (one) student), *the students' backpacks* (the backpacks of the (many) students). Actually, the rules are much more complex and controversial, but these rules will get most cases correct. For a little more complication: <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/possessives.htm>

whereas: Yup, no space in the middle.

must of: It sounds right, but it should be *must have* (similarly, it's *should have*, *had to have*, etc.)

Grammar

run-ons and fragments: A very common error is to not recognize what elements make up a sentence and so to have either a sentence fragment or a run-on sentence. A sentence fragment is when you have part of a sentence punctuated as if it is a full sentence. A run-on sentence is when you have multiple sentences punctuated as if they are one sentence. For example: "I am here today and will be tomorrow. Which should come as no surprise, since I am always here." The second sentence is a fragment. In contrast, "I am here you are there" is a run-on sentence. [This site](#) gives you examples of sentence fragments and advice on how to fix them, and [this site](#) has some exercises that can help.

General

[This site](#) has information about all sorts of grammar and spelling errors, with useful interactive exercises.