

QUICK EDITING ROADMAP

This **QUICK EDITING ROADMAP** gives you brief explanations and examples of some common word and sentence problems. After each possible problem is described, you are given a roadmap (**Go to Chapter X**) to where you can find more information or examples.

Word-Level Problems

1. Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement

Use singular pronouns to refer to singular nouns, and use plural pronouns to refer to plural nouns. **Go to Chapter 4.**

- The **pilot** of Air Force One is on-call; **her** phone could ring at any time.
- **Pilots** of Air Force One are on-call; **their** phones could ring at any time.

2. Regular and Irregular Verbs

The past tense and past participle form is *-ed* for all regular verbs.

- The pilot **walked** to the plane.
- The pilot **has walked** to the plane.

However, the past tense and past participle forms for irregular verbs can vary.

- The pilot **flew** the plane.
- The pilot **has flown** the plane.

Go to 6d for a table of common irregular verbs.

3. Subject/Verb Agreement

In the following sentences, the complete subject is in blue, and the simple subject or head noun is underlined. Make sure that the verb agrees with the simple subject or head noun. **See Chapter 7.**

- The pilot is ready to take off.
- The call sign for the president's plane changes with different planes; Air Force One is maintained by the Air Force, Navy One by the Navy, and Coast Guard One by the Coast Guard.

4. Commonly Confused or Misspelled Words

If you know that you have some words that you frequently misuse, such as the homonyms in the following sentences, check out the table of commonly confused words that begins on **page 88.**

- The pilots are in the plane. **They're** in **their** plane.
- The plane is in the hangar. **It's** in **its** hangar.

5. Apostrophes

The apostrophe is used in a variety of situations and is one of the most complicated punctuation marks to use. Unless you know for sure that the way you use it is always correct, it is a good idea to double-check its use during editing sessions or revise your sentence to avoid it. **See Chapter 19.**

- The pilots **didn't** see that the **president's** mother was not in the plane with the group of the United **Nations'** dignitaries.

Sentence-Level Problems

1. Comma after Introductory Element with Verb

Commas are often used to set off introductory words and phrases. If the word or phrase includes a verb, a comma should *always* be used to separate the word or phrase from the main sentence. See 15a1 for more information on introductory adverbs, prepositional phrases, and introductory clauses.

→ **Shocked by the alarm**, the pilots turned the plane around.

→ **Following the prearranged plan**, the pilots continued to Paris.

2. Sentence Fragments

Dependent clauses do not express a complete thought, and they need to be attached to an independent clause to be grammatically complete. When dependent clauses are presented as full sentences, they are fragments. See 29b2, 31f 1, and 32b3 for more information on fragments.

Fragment → Since we took off early before the snow storm.

OK sentence → **Since we took off early before the snow storm, we landed on time in Atlanta.**

3. Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

When you coordinate or combine together two simple sentences with a coordinator, you create a compound sentence that also needs a comma. See 30a and 30b1 for more information.

Missing comma → The pilots left for the airport early and they still got caught in rush-hour traffic.

OK sentence → The pilots left for the airport early, and they still got caught in rush-hour traffic.

Missing comma → The pilots left for the airport late but they still arrived on time.

OK sentence → The pilots left for the airport late, but they still arrived on time.

4. Comma Splice

Mistakenly joining two independent clauses together with only a comma creates a sentence with a comma splice. See 30c2 and 32b2 for more samples.

Comma splice → The pilots left for the airport early, they still got caught in rush-hour traffic.

OK sentence → The pilots left for the airport early, and they still got caught in rush-hour traffic.

5. Run-on or Fused Sentence

If you fail to join two independent clauses together with the appropriate punctuation, you can create another common sentence problem—the run-on or fused sentence. See 30c3 and 32b1 for more ways to punctuate run-on sentences.

Run-on/fused sentence → The pilots left for the airport early they still got caught in rush-hour traffic.

OK sentence → The pilots left for the airport early, and they still got caught in rush-hour traffic.