

## METACOGNITIVE CHALLENGES TO CORRECT PARAGRAPHS AND ESSAYS

Based on the following explanations, please correct your own mistakes. Enhance your understanding and awareness about the English rules to contribute with the development of good writing skills.

### SYNTACTIC CHALLENGES

1- Be careful when using ***in order to*** plus a negation.

**Example:** ~~I left home early in order to not to be late for the appointment.~~

**Correction:** I left home **early in order not to be** late for the appointment.

2- The ***-ing*** form can be used like a **noun** or be part of a “**noun phrase**”.

**Example:** ~~Smoke is forbidden. Speak to an audience is always stressful.~~

**Correction:** **Smoking** is forbidden. **Speaking** to an audience is always stressful.

**Example:** ~~the second step is create campaigns~~

**Correction:** the second step **is creating** campaigns.

3- You use the verb with ***-ing*** after the prepositions **in, at, with, of, for, about, also**

**Example:** ~~After to hang out with my friends, I went to my house.~~

**Correction:** **After hanging** out with my friends, I went to my house.

**Example:** She is here for plan the party.

**Correction:** She is here **for planning** the party.

4- **Agreement:** pay attention to the conjugation of the verbs; the object pronouns which replace the subject pronouns are also important.

**Example:** ~~the invention of perfection create lots of stereotypes.~~

**Correction:** the invention of perfection **creates** lots of stereotypes.

**Example:** children should talk to her parents

**Correction:** children should talk to **their** parents.

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5- Spelling problem.

**Example:** ~~begginig~~

**Correction:** ~~begginig~~

6- Correct the demonstrative: **that/those/this/these**

**Example:** ~~This customs are very remarkable.~~

**Correction:** ~~This~~ customs are very remarkable.

7- Pay attention to parallel structure.

**Example:** ~~I like swimming, studying and to listen to music.~~

**Correction:** I like swimming, studying and ~~listening to music~~.

8- A semicolon is most commonly used to link (in a single sentence) two **independent clauses** that are closely related in thought. When a semicolon is used to join two or more ideas (parts) in a sentence, those ideas are then given equal position or rank.

**Example:** ~~Some people write with a word processor, others write with a pen or pencil.~~

**Correction:** ~~Some people write with a word processor, others write with a pen or pencil.~~

9- The exclamation and question marks are different from Spanish.

**Example:** ~~¿are you happy?~~

**Correction:** ~~are you happy?~~

**Example:** ~~¡I'm tired!~~

**Correction:** ~~I'm tired!~~

10- Use indentation in each paragraph.

11- When you do not have a specific pronoun, use **it** to have a complete and appropriate sentence.

**Example:** ~~consists on doing a nice job~~

**Correction:** ~~It~~ consists on doing a nice job.

12- Do not use the definite article THE with general words, names of people, means of transportation, institutions, names of countries in singular, among others.

**Example:** ~~the life is too short.~~

**Correction:** **life** is too short.

13- Use **Consists of** when something is **composed or made up** of something else.

**Example:** ~~the story consists in six parts.~~

**Correction:** the story consists **of** six parts.

14. Use **consist in** when explaining **how something works**.

**Example:** ~~Meditation consists of attentive watchfulness.~~

**Correction:** Meditation consists **in** attentive watchfulness.

15. The thesis statement (also called the central idea or the topic sentence in case of paragraphs) should be expressed in a **complete sentence**; since it makes a statement, it should not be written as a question.

**Example:** ~~My fear of the dark.~~

**Correction:** My fear of the dark has made my life miserable.

16. The **conclusion** can restate (briefly) the main points discussed in your paragraph or essay. To do so, you can **paraphrase**. A conclusion should not, however, bring up a new topic.

**Example:** an essay about the most interesting places to visit in Mexico could conclude as follows: there are, of course, many more things to visit while you are in Mexico, but the beach at Progreso, the Aztec ruin, and the famous monument represent some of the more significant and beautiful sights to see. When you go to Mexico, visit these sights and you will be guaranteed a fond memory after you go home.

**Note:** some ways to conclude a paragraph or an essay include:

- End with a call to action; that is to say, asking the reader to do something.
- End with a final point: it ties together all the ideas in your essay; it provides the reader with the sense that the entire essay has been leading up to this final point.

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- End with a question: by ending with a question, you leave the reader with a final problem that you wish him or her to think about.

17. To cite, follow this pattern: (Last name, year: page).

- Ex: ~~(A. Burges 2007: 45).~~
- Correction: (Burges, 2007: 45).

18. Look at the correct **prepositions** used with some verbs.

Agree	With
Ask	For
Accuse	Of
Base	On
Begin	With
Benefit	From
Believe	In
Compare	With/to
react	Against/to
rely	On
refer	To
Recover	From
suffer	From
result	In
Specialize	In
speak	To
according	To

complain	About
compose	Of
depend	On
differ	From
dream	Of/about
excuse	For
explain	To
forget	About
Get married	To
Get tired	Of
Hide	From
Insist	On
Joke	About
Know	About
Laugh	At/about
Listen	To

19. Do not use quotation marks with quoted material that is more than three lines in length; instead, use the colon to introduce a direct quotation that is more than three lines in length. In this situation, leave a blank line above and below the quoted material. Single space the long quotation. Quotation marks are not used. Use Italics.

**Example:** The author of *Touched*, Jane Straus, wrote in the first chapter:

*Georgia went back to her bed and stared at the intricate patterns of burned moth wings in the translucent glass of the overhead light. Her father was in “hyper mode” again where nothing could calm him down. He’d been talking nonstop*

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*for a week about remodeling projects, following her around the house as she tried to escape his chatter. He was just about to crash, she knew.*

20. Use **quotations** to name something which does not have English translation.

**Example:** When I was in Tolima, I used to eat ~~tamales~~ all the time.

**Correction:** When I was in Tolima, I used to eat **"tamales"** all the time.

21. Remember: **adjectives are never pluralized.**

**Example:** ~~the girls are beautifuls~~

**Correction:** The girls are **beautiful**

**Example:** ~~they are very different~~

**Correction:** they are very **different.**

22. It does not matter if you have one, two or more than three **adjectives** in a single sentence; they **always go before the noun**. The only thing that matters is that you organize them appropriately. Follow this pattern:

- Opinion: interesting, boring
- Dimension (size): big, small
- Age: new, modern.
- Shape: square, oval.
- Color: blue, green.
- Origin (nationalities): Chinese
- Material: plastic, golden.

**Example:** ~~I have a blue plastic old car.~~

**Correction:** **I have an old blue plastic car.**

23. Use the verb agree and the noun agreement differently.

**Example:** ~~I am agree with you~~

**Correction:** I **am in agreement** with you OR **I agree with you.**

24. The correct expression is: Most of the people/ the majority of people.  
Most of the cases/ in most cases

**Example:** ~~the most of the people are taking on line classes.~~

**Correction:** **most of the people** are taking on line classes.

25. After **because** we use a **clause**; after **because of** we use a **noun** or **pronoun**.

**Example:** The river overflowed its banks **because it rained.**

**Example:** The river overflowed its banks **because of the rain.**

26. Be careful with the **plural of some nouns**.

**Example:** cats have seven ~~lives~~.

**Correction:** cats have seven **lives.**

27. There is missing a complement.

**Example:** there are three easy steps to lose...

**Correction:** there are three easy steps **to lose weight**; to lose money...

28. The word **advice** is never pluralized.

**Example:** ~~I have lots of advices to tell you.~~

**Correction:** I have lots of **advice** to tell you.

29. Avoid exact translation from the Spanish language in regards to expressing possession.

**Example:** ~~this is the life of my son.~~

**Correction:** **this is my son's life.**

30. **Avoid long sentences.** Instead, make use of connectors and punctuation marks to avoid misunderstandings or incoherent sentences.

31. **Uses of commas.**

- Use a comma when beginning sentences with introductory words such as well, now, both or yes.

**Examples:**

Yes, I do need that report.

Well, I never thought I'd live to see the day...

- Use a comma to separate two strong clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction--and, or, but, for, nor. You can omit the comma if the clauses are both short.

**Examples:**

I have painted the entire house, but he is still working on sanding the doors. I paint and he writes.

- When the information in the clause is not necessary to complete your main idea, insert a comma to separate it from the rest of the sentence.

**Examples:**

She cannot meet on Friday, because of schedule conflicts and deadlines.

- Use a comma or commas with transitional expressions (however, therefore, moreover, for example, on the other hand, in fact, so etc.)

**Example 1:** On the one hand, Odysseus loves Penelope and wants to return to her.

**Example 2:** His love of fame and adventure, however, overshadows his love for his wife.

32. Rules to develop a topic sentence.

A topic sentence is generally written at the beginning of the paragraph, it should contain a **topic** and a **controlling idea**.

**Example:** Drinking coffee could be hazardous for health.

TOPIC                      CONTROLLING IDEA

33. Expository texts.

The main objective of expository texts is presenting information. We usually do not express our opinion. It should be objective.

34. Word order.

Pay attention to sentence structure. Sometimes, the word is not located in the correct position.

**Example:** ~~I yesterday wrote a letter~~

**Correction:** I wrote a letter **yesterday.**

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35. A paragraph consists of several sentences that are grouped together. It should be a **unity. Do not leave space between them.**

**Example:** ~~My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features. First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. Also, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep.~~

**Correction:** My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features. First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. Also, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep.

36. Relative clauses.

Pay attention to the correct relative clause used in your sentence.

Example: I told you about the woman **who** lives next door.

Do you see the cat **which** is lying on the roof?

Do you know the boy **whose** mother is a nurse?

I don't like the table **that** stands in the kitchen.

37. The words **somebody (someone), nobody (no one), everybody (everyone), everything, anyone (anybody)** are conjugated as in the **third person.**

**Example:** nobody **wants** coffee

**Example:** Everybody **is** invited.

38. Use of synonyms.

Use a different word so that your paragraph does not seem redundant.

39. Use of colon

Use a colon instead of a semicolon between two sentences when the second sentence explains or illustrates the first sentence

**Example:** my biggest dream: having a nice wife.

40. Omit some words; they are not necessary in your sentence.

**Example:** ~~in making mistakes is a huge advantage.~~

**Correction:** **making** mistakes is a huge advantage.

#### 41. Capitalization

- Capitalize the pronoun **I**.
- Capitalize the **first letter of the first word** of each sentence.

**Example:** Learning to capitalize correctly will improve your writing. That will make your paragraph readable.

- Capitalize the first letter of names of people, organizations, and places.

**Example:** John went on a trip to Tokyo, Japan for his company, General Motors Corporation.

- Capitalize the first letter of adjectives that are made from the names of people and places.

**Example:** I like Mexican food.

- Capitalize initials

**Example:** My brother's favorite author is H.G. Wells.

- Capitalize the first letter of directions only when they are used to designate actual places, not when they point in a direction.

**Example:** When we visited the Southwest, we actually had to drive north.

- Capitalize the first letter of the names of months and the days of the week.

**Example:** My birthday will be on a Friday next June.

- Capitalize the official title of a person (including abbreviations), but only when you use it with the person's name.

**Example:** Did Clarissa recommend Dr. Montoya to you?

- Capitalize words used as names or parts of names.

**Example:** Did Uncle George call my mom to tell her our grandmother is with Dad?

- Capitalize the first letter of important words in a title of a book, magazine, story, essay, etc.

**Example:** I enjoyed Mark's essay, "The Truth About Being a Good Student."

- Capitalize historical events and documents.

**Example:** The Emancipation Proclamation was issued during the Civil War.

- Capitalize the name of languages, races, nationalities, and religions.

**Example:** I learned in Spanish class that several Hispanics are Catholic.

- Capitalize acronyms. (An acronym is a word formed by the first, or first few, letters of words in a long name of an organization.)

**Example:** CARE is the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere.

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42. Use a period [ . ] at the end of a sentence that makes a statement.

43. There is a missing word in your sentence.

**Example:** ~~you must the next steps~~

**Correction:** you must **follow** the next steps.

44. Do not put period to your title.

**Example:** ~~Types of students.~~

**Correction:** Types of students

45. We use etc. after a list more than 3 elements.

**Example:** ~~I like eating pizza, hamburger, etc.~~

**Correction:** I like eating pizza, hamburger, hotdog, etc.

46. Wrong subject in the dependent clause.

**Example:** ~~When a person has eating disorders, it may suffer a lot of problems.~~

**Correction:** When a person has eating disorders, he/she may suffer a lot of problems.

47. Wrong use of tenses.

**Example:** ~~We generally take the first product we found on the shelf.~~

**Correction:** We generally take the first product we **find** on the shelf.

48. When using modals, do not conjugate the verb you use after it.

**Example:** ~~We could bought more food later.~~

**Correction:** We could buy more food later.

49. Also, use bare infinitives after the modal verbs. (except for **HAVE TO**, **OUGHT TO**)

**Example:** ~~A tiger can to run as fast as a car.~~

**Correction:** A tiger can run as fast as a car.

50. Use of indefinite articles.

When using indefinite articles, pay attention to the first letter of the noun you use next. If the noun starts with a vowel, use **An**; if it starts with a consonant use **A**.

**Example:** Give me **a** apple.

**Correction:** Give me an apple.

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The difference between the definite and indefinite articles is the difference between talking about a specific apple, or any old apple at all. Take also into account the quantity.

**Example:** Give me **an** apples.

**Correction:** Give me some apples.

51. When using the word **EXIST**, use the word THERE before it.

Example: ~~Exist many types of friends.~~

Correction: **There** exist many types of friends.

## PRAGMATIC CHALLENGES

1- **Avoid contractions**; they are informal in academic writing.

**Example:** It ~~doesn't~~ matter

**Correction:** It **does not** matter

2- The **title** is the first thing the readers look at. Thus, make sure you call their attention so that they are eager to read your ideas.

3- Pay attention to the audience you are writing to; the level of formality changes.

**Example:** (when writing to a friend) Hi Pal! What's up?

(when writing to your boss) Good afternoon Mr. Jhonson, how are you?

4- Use the correct person (first, second, third) depending on the type of text you are writing.

**Example:**

- **You** should follow the next steps (sentence in a process paragraph/essay)
- **we** must take care of water ( sentence in a persuasive paragraph/essay)
- **People** who believe in euthanasia are crazy (sentence in an argumentative paragraph/essay)

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## SEMANTIC CHALLENGES

1- Some words resemble the Spanish language but they differ in meaning.

**Example:** ~~Actually~~, depression is becoming a huge problem in our society.

**Correction:** **Nowadays**, depression is becoming a huge problem in our society.

**NOTE # 1:** **Actually** means in fact, truly.

**NOTE # 2:** Some synonyms or close words you can use instead of nowadays are: currently, recently, in recent times, today, lately, now.

2- Look for another word; this one does not fit with the correct meaning.

**Example:** ~~Host~~ the exam.

**Possible Correction:** I **failed** the exam.

3- Avoid redundancy in meaning.

**Example:** ~~If all of us cooperate together, we will succeed.~~

**Correction:** If all of us **cooperate** (or work together), we will succeed.

**NOTE #1:** In this sentence, the words cooperate and together have been used; but these words convey the same meaning.

### 4- USE OF CONNECTORS

USE	CONNECTOR
<b>ADDING</b>	And/as well as/Besides, / Moreover, / Furthermore,/What is more, / In addition, not only... but also / ... as well / ... too/ another point is
<b>CONTRASTING</b>	But/However,/ Nevertheless,/ Although / Even though / Even if ..., /though/ Despite / in spite of/ On the contrary,/on the one hand/on the other hand,/whereas/while/In contrast,/ Neither...nor/ Otherwise

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<b>EXPRESSING CAUSE AND RESULT</b>	Because /As / Since/ so / Therefore,/ As a result,/This is why,/Consequently,/For this reason,/ due to / owing to / because of
<b>NARRATING</b>	First (of all) / At first / Firstly/ To begin with, / In the first place, /At the beginning / In the beginning/secondly,/thirdly,/then / later / next/Before/ After/ After that / afterwards/immediately/Once/Suddenly/ As soon as/Finally/Eventually/until/ At the end
<b>EXPRESSING PURPOSE / OPINION</b>	/ in order to/ in order that / so that/I would say that/In my opinion,/I (don't) think (that)/I (don't) believe (that)/Personally,/From my point of view, / In my view,/As far as ... /is concerned/As regards/ As far as I can see/
<b>CONCLUDING</b>	All in all/In conclusion,/On the whole/To sum up,/Lastly,/In short,/
<b>GIVING EXAMPLES / EXCEPTING</b>	For example/for instance/such as/ Apart from,/With the exception of/ Take the case of
<b>AGREEING / DISAGREEING</b>	I agree with/to I don't agree with/to / I disagree with/to I'm in favor of
<b>CLARIFYING</b>	I mean (that)/That is to say,/In other words,

5- Pay attention to the correct **prefix** used. Here, there are some examples.

<b>Prefix</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example</b>
<i>a-, an-</i>	Without	Amoral
<i>ante-</i>	Before	Antecedent
<i>anti-</i>	Against	Anticlímax
<i>auto-</i>	Self	Autopilot
<i>circum-</i>	Around	Circumvent

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<i>co-</i>	With	Copilot
<i>com-, con-</i>	With	companion, contact
<i>contra-</i>	Against	Contradict
<i>de-</i>	off, away from	Devalue
<i>dis-</i>	Not	Disappear
<i>en-</i>	put into	Enclose
<i>ex-</i>	out of, former	extract, ex- president
<i>extra-</i>	beyond, more than	Extracurricular
<i>hetero-</i>	Different	Heterosexual
<i>homo-</i>	Same	Homonym
<i>hyper-</i>	over, more	Hyperactive
<i>il-, im-, in-, ir-</i>	not, without	illegal, immoral, inconsiderate, irresponsible
<i>in-</i>	Into	Insert
<i>inter-</i>	Between	Intersect
<i>intra-</i>	Between	Intravenous
<i>macro-</i>	Large	Macroeconomics
<i>micro-</i>	Small	Microscope
<i>mono-</i>	One	Monocle
<i>non-</i>	not, without	Nonentity
<i>omni-</i>	all, every	Omniscient
<i>post-</i>	After	Postmortem
<i>pre-, pro-</i>	before, forward	precede, Project
<i>sub-</i>	Under	Submarine
<i>syn-</i>	same time	Synchronize
<i>trans-</i>	Across	Transmit
<i>tri-</i>	Three	Tricycle
<i>un-</i>	Not	Unfinished
<i>uni-</i>	One	Unicorn

6- Pay attention to the correct **suffix**. Here, there are some examples.

<b>Noun Suffixes</b>		
<b>Suffix</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example</b>
-acy	state or quality	Privacy
-al	act or process of	Refusal
-ance, -ence	state or quality of	maintenance, eminence
-dom	place or state of being	freedom, kingdom
-er, -or	one who	trainer, protector
-ism	doctrine, belief	Communism
-ist	one who	Chemist
-ity, -ty	quality of	Veracity
-ment	condition of	Argument
-ness	state of being	Heaviness
-ship	position held	Fellowship
-sion, -tion	state of being	concession, transition
<b>Verb Suffixes</b>		
-ate	Become	Eradicate
-en	Become	Enlighten
-ify, -fy	make or become	Terrify
-ize, -ise	Become	Civilize
<b>Adjective Suffixes</b>		
-able, -ible	capable of being	edible, presentable
-al	pertaining to	Regional
-esque	reminiscent of	Picturesque
-ful	notable for	Fanciful
-ic, -ical	pertaining to	musical, mythic
-ious, -ous	characterized by	nutritious, portentous
-ish	having the quality of	Fiendish
-ive	having the nature of	Creative
-less	Without	Endless
-y	characterized by	Sleazy

7- Be careful when using **adjectives ending in ED / ING** because they totally change the meaning of your sentence.

**Example:** Steve is embarrassed/ Steve is embarrassing.

**NOTE # 1:** Adjectives ending in **-ed** describe emotions while adjectives ending in **-ing** describe a characteristic of something or someone.

8- **Another** and **other** are used in different ways. **Other is an adjective** meaning 'different' and it is used with both, **singular and plural nouns**; **another expresses quantity**, something extra or additional and it is used with **singular nouns only**.

**Example:** Have the **other** cup of tea, not this cup/Have **another** cup of tea, not just this one.

9- **Coherence** is the unifying element in good writing. It is what gives a piece of writing its flow. When writing lacks coherence, the reader is forced to stop and reread. **Organize your ideas, please.**