**Content Mistakes in Essay Writing**

You may not believe it, but writing a concise and interesting essay is quite easy. This challenging and time-consuming task can be turned into a sheer pleasure.

The only thing you have to do is to remember a few “Nevers”, representing **potential pitfalls to avoid**:

* **Never write an essay, in which the content does not reflect and develop the real topic.**

Many students think that if they write a text that has something to do with the words in the topic, it will be enough for successful completion of the task. Unfortunately, it is not true. Before you start writing, read the question carefully, single out the key words and elaborate the idea of what you should write.

* **Never write an essay without an introduction.**

Remember that this part is actually your presentation of the topic, which provides the background for the rest of the essay. If you fail to write an interesting introduction, you will also fail to explain what you are going to write about.

* **Never write an essay without a thesis.**

A thesis statement expresses the key idea of the essay, the writer’s idea of the topic. It must give the reader a certain hint about the way the topic is going to be developed. However, it is not simply a declaration of the author’s thoughts, but a statement, which will invite the reader to think about the topic together with the author. Don’t forget to further support your thesis with proper evidence.

* **Never write a thesis statement that you will fail to develop due to the lack of ideas.**

When planning your essay, think carefully if you will be able to support your thesis with enough ideas. If you are not sure, drop it and try to formulate another one, as otherwise, it will not sound convincing.

* **Never use ideas, which you cannot prove with examples.**

Any idea needs its clarification and proof, which can result from an appropriate example. If you do not give the examples, your essay will provide an impression of a superficial collection of niceties without any depth of thought.

* **Never write an essay without a conclusion.**

Conclusion is essential, it is both a summary and a generalization which restates your thesis, thus, laying additional emphasis on what has been written.

These points represent the most common mistakes students tend to make in terms of content while doing academic writing. Certainly, avoiding them requires certain practice. However, if you bear in mind this list, you will soon find out that writing an essay has become much easier for you.

**Vocabulary Mistakes in Essay Writing**

Writing a good essay can be a challenging task. In order to succeed, you need an ability to develop your ideas logically, use correct grammar and make appropriate stylistic references.

However, even if you are brilliant at all the above mentioned, your essay can turn out to be a disaster in terms of vocabulary.

**The four most common types of vocabulary mistakes are**:

1. **Misuse of homonyms.**

**Homonyms are words that sound the same, but differ in meaning, spelling and usage.** While writing, we can easily confuse such words and, as a result, the reader will fail to understand the idea. Typical homonyms which are often misused are ***here*vs. *hear*, *hole*vs. *whole*, *its*vs. *it’s*, *know*vs. *no*, *knew*vs. *new*, etc.**

1. **Confused words.**

Apart from homonyms, there are words which are similar in spelling, sound and meaning and, thus, are often confused. Such words as ***accept – except, affect – effect, loose – lose, quite – quit*** *– quiet, then – than* will not be identified by a computer spell checker. So, it is important to proofread your essay carefully in order to make sure you have used the correct words.

1. **Wrong word forms**.

When we write quickly, we can also make a mistake in writing a word form, different from what we were actually going to write. This is especially true about parts of speech reference. For example, it is a common mistake to write a verb instead of an adjective, which can considerably change the meaning (e.g. *disable people* instead of *disabled people*).

1. **Nonstandard vocabulary**.

Another important point, which is actually on the borderline between a stylistic and a vocabulary error, is the use of nonstandard words like ***wanna, gonna, kinda***. Although they are generally understood by the reader, when used in academic writing, they produce an unfavorable impression and must be avoided.

**In order to eliminate such mistakes, use the following strategies**:

* **Plan your time effectively**: do not spend too much time for the preparation stage; this will mean you have very little time for the writing process itself, which can make you nervous and inattentive.
* **proofread your writing**, paying special attention to the key problem areas.
* **Revise your writing** several days after you have written the first variant and find a person who will read your essay for you.

**Stylistic Mistakes in Essay Writing**

* Writing well stylistically is crucial for creating a successful essay, yet, it is not always easy, as there is a number of difficulties students encounter in terms of style.
* **The most commonly observed stylistic problems are as follows:**
* **Word repetition**.
* The problem of word repetition usually results from the desire of a student to emphasize a certain idea. However, using the same lexical sets can make your essay look boring and childish. A good way out in this case is to use synonyms. Another effective technique is to use word substitutes like *one*, *the former*, *the latter*, etc. to avoid repetition of the same nouns.
* **Inappropriate words and phrases, which are either too formal or too informal.**
* The problem of creating a stylistically inappropriate piece of writing is mainly accounted for the fact that students tend to forget that an academic essay requires a totally different layer of vocabulary, than the one we use in our everyday life. In order to make your essay sound good, avoid using slangish expressions and nonstandard verb forms, like *gotta, wanna,* etc. However, it is equally important not to use the constructions and vocabulary, characteristic of other more formal styles (e.g. the lexis of legal writing style or dated invertical constructions). So, keep the balance and consult a good dictionary if you are not sure.
* **Too many passive structures.**
* Many students see the passive voice as an indispensable prerequisite of the academic style. It is certainly true up to a point, as it makes your sentences sound more impersonal and objective. However, passive sentences are usually longer, harder to read and, thus, can hinder understanding of the text. On the contrary, active sentences are clearer and more direct. So, in order to create a powerful piece of writing, use both types, but make sure you use not more than **20% of passive** constructions and only in the cases when the emphasis is on the action, receiver, or result, you do not know who performed the action or it is of minor importance and in case you want to sound objective.
* **Too long or too short sentences.**
* The problem of using too long or too short sentences has a lot to do with the way you convey your ideas to the reader. If a sentence is too bulky, it can easily absorb your idea and make it difficult to perceive. On the contrary, if the sentences are too short, they destroy the logical development of the idea and make your writing sound choppy and incomplete. So, try to find a happy medium and use a variety of long and short sentences.
* **Sentences beginning with coordinating conjunctions.**
* Another common problem for many students is inappropriate use of coordinate conjunctions (e.g. *and, but, as, or, yet, for*, etc.). They are mainly used to coordinate, join ideas within the same sentence. Sometimes they can also be used to begin a sentence. However, when the text has too many coordinating conjunctions in the beginning of the sentence, there is lack of smooth connections and links between the sentences. So, try to use them only when it is justified by the emphatic usage.
* These rules may seem difficult at first. But if you try to apply them to your personal style, you will soon find out that your writing has improved dramatically and your essays have become a sheer pleasure to read.
* We also recommend to consult our [Stylistic tips](https://www.essay-writing-tips.com/writing-tips/essay-writing-tips-on-stylistics.html) section to improve your writing skills.

**Structural Mistakes in Essay Writing**

Successful essay is supposed to be well-structured both at the level of sentence and at the level of text. Thus, the most common structural mistakes can be subdivided into those which refer to the sentence structure and those which influence the structure of the whole essay.

**Sentence Errors**

The most typical mistakes of the first type are *fragments*and *run-on sentences*.

**Fragment**is an incomplete structure, which does not contain a subject-predicate unit, and, thus, does not express an idea properly, despite beginning with a capital letter and ending with a punctuation mark. Fragments cannot function in the text on their own and must be either added to a complete sentence or rewritten in the way there is a proper subject-predicate unit in them.

**WRONG**:  
*Difficult to develop an idea.*

**RIGHT**:  
*Many students can find it difficult to develop an idea.  
It is certainly difficult to develop an idea properly.*

**Run-on sentences** are sentences which consist of two subject-predicate units, joined together without a conjunction or any proper punctuation and, thus, being confusing for the reader. In order to correct a run-on sentence, you can divide it into two separate sentences, add a coordinating conjunction or a subordinating one.

**WRONG**:  
*Good essay writing skills are important for achieving good academic results they are easy to develop.*

**RIGHT**:  
*Good essay writing skills are important for achieving good academic results. They are easy to develop.  
Good essay writing skills are important for achieving good academic results, yet they are easy to develop.*

**Text structure errors**

The most common mistake in the text structure is poor paragraph division or its total absence. Although the issue of paragraphs seems to be relatively unimportant if compared to the issue of ideas, an essay, which does not have a clear text structure, will definitely fail to convey the meaning effectively.

Any essay must be organized in **at least four paragraphs** with the introduction, conclusion and two paragraphs of the main body.

So, if you want to create a powerful piece of writing, make sure both the text and the sentences have a clear structure, presenting a complete development of the ideas. This will ensure that your essay is impressive and easy to read.

If you want to improve your skills, consult our [Writing tips](https://www.essay-writing-tips.com/writing-tips/) section.

**Spelling Mistakes in Essay Writing**

Many students complain that the English language boasts of the most unpredictable spelling in the world. However, numerous linguistic studies prove that it is actually not true: only about 400 words in English have the spelling that does not follow any rule.

That is the good news! The bad news is that these 400 are the most widely used and the rest of the rules must be learned by heart in order to write correctly.

**Here are the most commonly used spelling rules, which can make your life a lot easier**:

* Usually write *-i* before *-e* (like in *friend*, *believe*, etc.); however, write *-ei* after *-c* (*receive*) and when it sounds like *a* (*weight*, *heir*, etc.).
* If a word ends in a silent *-e*, drop it before adding a suffix starting with a vowel (*bite*– *biting*) and use it when the suffix starts with a consonant (*use*– *useful*).
* When a word ends in *-y* preceded by a consonant, change *-y* into *-i* before adding a suffix (*beauty*– *beautiful*, *try*– *tried*).
* When a word ends in one vowel and one consonant, double the final consonant when adding a suffix (*swim*– *swimmer*).

Another important consideration in trying to achieve an ideal spelling is to avoid **typos**– mistakes that we make when typing. The most common way to deal with the problem is to use a spell check function on your computer.

However, this is not enough, as there are certain mistakes that the spell checker will not identify. This mainly happens when the word is spelled correctly, but is used instead of its homophone (e.g.*Learn the rule and right correctly*).

These mistakes can only be spotted if you **read your essay carefully** after you have finished it. For the best result, you can ask somebody to read your essay, or at least read it the next day after you have finished it.

Another tip for improving your spelling is to **keep record of the words that you usually misspell** and practice writing them from time to time. Then check your essay for these words specifically.

Learn the rules and follow these simple strategies and you will find it easy to achieve a positive result.

In order to improve your writing skills, check our [Writing tips](https://www.essay-writing-tips.com/writing-tips/essay-writing-tips-on-grammar.html) section.

**Punctuation Mistakes in Essay Writing**

Although punctuation is of utmost importance for successful writing, using punctuation marks correctly is probably the most neglected writing skill. The **most common mistakes** in terms of punctuation can be divided into those referring to the use of apostrophe, comma and hyphen:

1. Use an **apostrophe**when writing a contraction and pay attention to its place in a word. However, it is worth mentioning that contractions are not common in formal style in general.

**WRONG**  
*Lets take care of our planet.*  
*We could’nt get there on time.*

**RIGHT**  
*Let’s take care of our planet.*  
*We couldn’t get there on time.*

1. Use an **apostrophe**to form the possessive case of nouns and mind its position for singular nouns (before *-s*) and plural nouns (after *-s*).
2. Use a **comma and a conjunction**to join clauses of a compound sentence: *The ideas are important for a successful essay, yet they can be totally destroyed if the grammar is poor.*
3. **Comma**is used to separate information attached to the beginning or the end of sentence if this position is syntactically unusual.

**WRONG**  
*Many years ago the experiment was carried out.*

**RIGHT**  
*Many years ago, the experiment was carried out.*  
*The experiment was carried out many years ago.*

1. **Comma**is necessary between each item of a list when you are enumerating three or more items in a sentence: *Grammar, vocabulary, style, and original ideas are important components of an essay.*
2. Use a **comma**to separate epithets used before a noun they describe: *It was a challenging, time-consuming task.*
3. Use **commas**to single out appositions, parenthetic words and constructions and non-defining relative clauses.

*Her father, Professor Johns, was a famous scientist.*  
*A first year student, who knows very little about the routine of a university life, can face many problems.*  
*And, last but not least, remember to meet the deadline.*

1. **Commas**set off quoted phrase from the one that introduces it: *As a famous poet once said, “He who is tired of London is tired of life.”*
2. In written American English, **commas**are also used to set off numbers in groups of three digits, words for the day of the week, month and year of a date.

*The total company’s turnover is $5,000,000.*  
*The paper is due Monday, December, 7th, 2010.*

1. Use **hyphens**with compound adjectives and numbers (e.g. *time-consuming, twenty-one*, etc.) and prefixes *self-, ex-, great-* (e.g. *self-efficient, ex-president*).

Keep to these useful tips and you are sure to avoid many mistakes.

**Grammar Mistakes in Essay Writing**

It somehow goes without saying that a successful essay must be grammatically correct. However, grammar mistakes are one of the most frequent reasons why many students fail to perform the task.

So, what are the potential grammar pitfalls to avoid?

**The most common grammar mistakes can be roughly divided into five groups**:

1. **Noun form mistakes.**

Correct noun forms are of utmost importance, as nouns can perform functions of both subject and object. Key grammar areas, studying of which will help you succeed, are countable and uncountable nouns, plural forms and the use of determiners with singular nouns.

1. **Verb form mistakes.**

The main grammar rules to remember, when it comes to verb form mistakes, are those, related to the place of auxiliary verbs in sentence, usage of state verbs, meanings of the modals and the correct use of infinitive.

1. **Subject-predicate agreement.**

The subject-predicate agreement in English seems to be easy: subject and predicate must always agree in number. But despite this simplicity, the grammar point can present considerable difficulty. First, it is important to pay attention to the cases with a compound subject, which can be introduced by the words *both*, *neither*, etc., and still acquire the plural predicate. Second, in the American English, unlike British English and many other European languages, collective nouns take a singular predicate.

1. **Pronouns.**

Pronouns are a part of speech that can perform functions of a noun and, therefore, are used very often. Pronouns must necessarily agree with the nouns they refer to, and it is important to remember that some indefinite pronouns can be only plural or only singular, but some of them can be both depending on the situation. It is also important to bear in mind that if there are two nouns joined by a conjunction, a pronoun that refers to them must also agree in number correctly. Always make sure that you do not use pronouns excessively, as it may be confusing.

1. **Forms of expressing possession.**

When considering the forms of expressing possession, it is important to agree the possessive pronoun with the noun it refers to in number and not to use an apostrophe with it. However, when using the possessive case of a noun, the rules of using the apostrophe and an *-s*(*-‘s*) must be strictly observed, so make sure you put it in the right place and only when it is necessary.

So, in order to avoid the mistakes, after you have finished your essay, proofread it and **use the following checklist**:

* Are all the uncountable nouns in singular?
* Have I used correct determiners with singular countable nouns?
* Have I used correct auxiliaries and modal verbs?
* Does the subject agree with the predicate in person and number in all the sentences?
* Are there any pronouns which do not agree with nouns?
* Have I used the possessive forms correctly?

If the answers to these questions are positive – you are sure to have written your essay correctly, which is a great plus and your definite advantage over the other students.