

# 7 QUICK FIXES FOR COMMON WRITING MISTAKES

## NEVER MISUSE COMMAS AGAIN

An independent clause is a complete sentence: subject + verb. Using a comma is one way to join two independent clauses with a conjunction. But only use a comma before the conjunction if what follows is ACTUALLY an independent clause.

Example: My father doesn't enjoy sushi, and he also avoids vegetables.

If the "he" weren't there, leave the "and" and cut the comma.

## KNOW WHERE APOSTROPHES GO

Apostrophes go before the "s," unless the word ends with "s."

Example: The home of Jane Smith is Jane Smith's home, and the home of Marcus is Marcus' home.

## MAKE YOUR SUBJECTS & VERBS AGREE

Base whether your verb is singular or plural on the subject, not on any word that comes between them.

Incorrect: My purse, as well as my keys, were gone.

Correct: My purse, as well as my keys, was gone.

But that still sounds funny, right? Maybe rewrite as "my purse and my keys."

## USE ACTIVE VOICE WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Always try to use as few passive verbs (is, was, be, etc.) verbs as possible. Do a search + replace for these and see how many you can rewrite in active voice.

# 7 QUICK FIXES TO COMMON WRITING MISTAKES

## WIELD COMMAS CONFIDENTLY

### Nonessential Phrases Need Commas

The living room, as organized as it is, is still not fully decorated.

### Essential Phrases Do Not

The woman who has too many scarves has too few necks.

### Introductory Phrases Need Commas

With that, she left the room.

## BE CLEAR

Be careful that a pronoun, a participial phrase, or an appositive refers to the proper subject.

Incorrect: Carrying a heavy backpack, her high heel caught on the curb.

Correct: While she was carrying a heavy backpack, her high heel caught on the curb.

## OMIT UNNECESSARY WORDS

Instead of: "In this paper I would like to convey that I firmly believe that reading classics is important."

Try: "Reading classics is important."