A survey was completed several years ago which identified 20 grammatical errors usually made by university students.

- In this workshop, we’re going to work through the 15 most common of these.
Frequently occurring grammatical mistakes

• No 1. Incorrect subject – verb agreement
  – Incorrect:
    • The committee want a resolution to the problem.
  – Revised:
    • The committee **wants** a resolution to the problem.
  – Incorrect:
    • It is a combination of factors that cause the present situation.
  – Revised:
    • It is a combination of factors that **causes** the present situation.
Exercises

1. The main function of the circulatory system *is/are* to carry oxygen and nutriments to the tissues and to carry away carbon dioxide and other waste products produced by the metabolic processes in the cells.

2. One of the most important factors contributing to a child’s success at school *is/are* the encouragement given by the parents.

3. The lack of scientific data and controlled experiments *has/have* lead some people to believe that studies of near-death experiences are unimportant.

4. The whole complex of plants and animals making up a community *forms/form* a single unit known as an ecosystem.

5. The heart, veins, arteries and capillaries *is/are* collectively known as the cardiovascular system.
2. Wrong tense or verb form

- Incorrect:
  - It was not until a sociological view of the situation was combine with a psychological approach that some progress was made.

- Revised:
  - It was not until a sociological view of the situation was combined with a psychological approach that some progress was made.

- Incorrect:
  - They were required filling out a long form before enrolling in the course.

- Revised:
  - They were required to fill out a long form before enrolling in the course.
3. Incorrect singular plural agreement

- Incorrect:
  - Tourism has been considered one of the most important factor in the town’s economic development.

- Revised:
  - Tourism has been considered one of the most important factors in the town’s economic development.
4. Incorrect word form

- Incorrect:
  - The primary emphasis of early research on leadership was psychologically and focused on the personality characteristics typical found among success leaders.

- Revised:
  - The primary emphasis of early research on leadership was psychological and focused on the personality characteristics typically found among successful leaders.
**Exercises**

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For example:

- **succeed**
- **success**
- **successful**
- **successfully**
### Exercises

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5. Unclear pronoun reference

- Incorrect:
  
  The boy and his father knew that he was in trouble.

- Revised:
  
  Both the boy and his father knew that the boy was in trouble.
6. Incorrect use of articles

- Incorrect:
  - The meeting ended with call for humanitarian approach to be taken over a question of the refugees.

- Revised
  - The meeting ended with a call for a humanitarian approach to be taken over the question of refugees.
Article exercises

1. Would you like apple?
2. How often do you go to dentist?
3. Excuse me, where is bus station please?
4. I’ve got problem. Can you help me?
5. I’m just going to post office. I won’t be long.
6. There were no chairs, so we had to sit on floor.
7. My sister has just got a job in bank in Manchester.
7. Wrong/missing preposition

- Incorrect:
  - The study emphasised on the need of further research to ascertain the influence by television violence to young children.

- Revised:
  - The study emphasised the need for further research to ascertain the influence of television violence on young children.
Exercises — in, at, on or for

1. I didn’t see you ... the party of Saturday. Where were you?
2. Shall we travel ... your car or mine?
3. The exhibition ... the Museum of Modern Art finished ... Saturday.
4. I’m going to Scotland ... a short holiday next month.
5. We stayed ... a very nice hotel when we were ... Amsterdam.
6. There were 50 rooms ... the hotel.
7. Tom is ill. He wasn’t ... work today. He was ... home ... bed.
8. I wasn’t in when you phoned. I was ... my sister’s house.
9. It’s always too hot ... my sister’s house. The heating is always ... too high.
10. I haven’t seen Kate for some time. I last saw her ... Dave’s wedding.
8. Omitted commas

Let's eat grandpa.
Let's eat, grandpa.

correct punctuation can save a person's life.
Omitted comma exercises

• Incorrect:
  – When it comes to eating people differ in their tastes.

• Revised:
  – When it comes to eating, people differ in their tastes.

• Incorrect:
  – My sister who lives in New York is doing a PhD. (The writer has one sister).

• Revised:
  – My sister, who lives in New York, is doing a PhD.
9. Superfluous commas

- Incorrect:
  - Field trips are required, in several courses, such as botany and geography.

- Revised:
  - Field trips are required in several courses, such as botany and geography.

- Incorrect:
  - My sister, who lives in New York, is doing a PhD. (The writer has two sisters).

- Revised:
  - My sister who lives in New York is doing a PhD.
10. Possessive apostrophe error

- Incorrect:
  - In the current conflict its uncertain who’s borders their contesting.

- Revised:
  - In the current conflict it’s uncertain whose borders they’re contesting.

- Note – The bicycle’s tyre is flat.
- Its tyre is flat.
11. Incorrect word use

- **Incorrect:**
  - The laboratory instructor choose not to offer detailed advise.

- **Revised:**
  - The laboratory instructor chose not to offer detailed advice.

- **Incorrect:**
  - The recession had a negative affect on sales.

- **Revised:**
  - The recession had a negative effect on sales.
Or.....

The effect of caffeine can affect my mood.
• Incorrect:
  – Because some students work part-time as well as studying full-time at university.

• Revised:
  • Some students work part-time as well as studying full-time at university.

• Incorrect:
  – Having considered the implications of this theory and ascertained that it had little relevance to the question.

• Revised 1:
  – Having considered the implications of this theory and ascertained that it had little relevance to the question, the researcher carried out a wider review of the literature.
13. Run-on sentences

• Incorrect:
  – Run-on sentences are sentences that run on forever they are sentences that ought to have been two or even three sentences but the writer didn’t stop to sort them out leaving the reader feeling exhausted by the sentence’s end which is too long in coming.

• Revised:
  – Run-on sentences are sentences that run on forever. They are sentences that ought to have been two, or even three, sentences but the writer didn’t stop to sort them out. The reader is left feeling exhausted by the sentence’s end, which is too long in coming.
14. Lack of parallelism

- Incorrect:
  - The candidate’s goals include winning the election, a national health program, and the educational system.

- Revised:
  - The candidate’s goals include winning the election, *enacting* a national health program, and *improving* the educational system.

- Incorrect:
  - The protestor stood up for her principles by not paying the fine and spending a night in gaol.

- Revised:
  - The protestor stood up for her principles by not paying the fine and *by* spending a night in gaol.
15. Dangling, misplaced modifier

- Incorrect:
  - The professor wrote a paper on globalisation in her office.
- Revised:
  - In her office the professor wrote a paper on globalisation.

- Incorrect:
  - When writing a proposal, an original task is set for research.
- Revised:
  - When writing a proposal, a scholar sets an original task for research.
Conclusion

- Borrow or buy a grammar text book and work on a few exercises every night.
- Exchange assignments with friends and check each other’s grammar.
- Don’t rely on the grammar check in word.
- Remember that often you’re often right the first time.
  - Also remember that good grammar can be irresistible.
For a copy of the slides:

- Please go to: gettingstarted.unsw.edu.au/orientation
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