

Avoiding the Most Common Writing Errors

(With thanks and apologies to “The Elements of Style” by Strunk and White)

WRONG

BETTER

Maintain proper noun-pronoun agreement within and between sentences.

Ramsey School should develop an accurate profile of who you are.

Ramsey School should develop an accurate profile of its student body.

The school has a palpable school climate
They should be commended for their efforts in developing and maintaining it.

The school has a palpable school climate. It should be commended for its efforts in developing and maintaining it.

In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last.

The administration, faculty and students are to be...

The administration, faculty, and students are to be...

Enclose parenthetical expressions between commas.

The best way to increase faculty motivation unless financial circumstances make it impossible, is to provide many more opportunities for professional development.

The best way to increase faculty motivation, unless financial circumstances make it impossible, is to provide many more opportunities for professional development.

Do not join independent clauses with a comma.

The student assemblies appear to be entertaining, they are significant in the lives of the students we met.

The student assemblies appear to be entertaining; they are significant in the lives of the students we met.

A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject.

Walking around the campus, it was apparent that school climate is very positive.

Walking around the campus, the Visiting team was readily aware that the school climate is very positive.

Being in a dilapidated condition, the school is not well served by its current gymnasium.

Being in a dilapidated condition, the current gymnasium does not serve the school well.

WRONG

BETTER

Use definite, specific, and concrete language.

The faculty at the school appear to be generally satisfied.

The faculty at the school expressed genuine satisfaction with the professional morale.

The school has been through a difficult time.

A weakened enrollment and high attrition have caused difficulties for the school.

Omit needless words.

There is no doubt that...

No doubt (or doubtless)

In a hasty manner...

Hastily

The focus should be on how to develop professional satisfaction.

The focus should be on developing professional satisfaction.

Owing to the fact that...

Since (or because)

Does not pay much attention to...

Ignores

Express co-ordinate ideas in similar form (parallel construction).

Formerly, science was taught by lecture, while now the laboratory model is employed.

Formerly, science was taught by lecture; now it is taught by the laboratory method.

The Board, the administration, faculty, and students...

The Board, administration, faculty, and students...

In classes, assemblies, or in activities...

In classes, assemblies, or activities...

Either the school must develop higher salaries or continue to experience increased faculty turnover.

The school must either develop higher salaries or continue to experience increased faculty turnover.

This is a time no longer for words but action.

This is a time no longer for words but for action.

The School has most congenial and caring constituencies. The extraordinary voluntarism of your parents is most impressive.

The School has most congenial and caring constituencies. The extraordinary voluntarism of the parents is impressive.

WRONG

BETTER

In summaries, stick to one tense.

The campus is neat, orderly, and well maintained. The entire school community – administration, faculty, and students – were proud of the ambience.

The campus is neat, orderly, and well maintained. The entire school community – administration, faculty, and students – is proud of the ambience.