

# Don't Let These Silly Errors in Grammar Undermine Your Credibility

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I know. I know.

You thought you left grammar behind when you graduated from high school. But as more and more of us communicate through writing (think emails, text messages, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), it's critically important to keep your grammar in check. Why? Because silly errors undermine your credibility with your clients and prospects.

Now, don't get me wrong, I have no problem with breaking some of the conventional rules of grammar. For instance, it is often thought that beginning a sentence with "and" or "because" goes against the rules; or that ending a sentence with a preposition, such as the word "for," is a recipe for bad grammar.

But I'm all for breaking these conventions if it makes what you're saying clearer and easier to read for your audience. In fact, a casual, conversational tone is generally more effective than more formal, corporate language, especially when you're writing things like blogs, emails, or online articles.

That being said, there are some major grammar mistakes that you should avoid in any instance – whether you're writing an article for your company newsletter or a formal business proposal.

Here they are:

## **Its vs. it's**

Wrong:

Its going to rain outside.

Right:

It's going to rain outside.

"It's" is a contraction of it is; while "its" is the possessive form of "it."

## **To vs. too**

Wrong:

Mary wanted to ride in the limo to.

Right:

Mary wanted to ride in the limo too.

In this instance, "too" means in addition or as well. But it can also mean extremely or very, such as in: Her boss wasn't too pleased with all her spelling mistakes.

## **There vs. They're vs. Their**

Wrong:

There going to see the new action movie.

Right:

They're going to see the new action movie.

“They’re” is the contraction of “they are.”

Wrong:

There mother was going to call them on Saturday.

Right:

Their mother was going to call them on Saturday.

“Their” is the possessive case of “they.”

### **Who’s vs. Whose**

Wrong:

Who’s jacket is this?

Right:

Whose jacket is this?

Who’s is the contraction of “who is”; “whose” is the possessive form of “who.”

### **Than vs. then**

Wrong:

He’s a lot taller then his brother.

Right:

He’s a lot taller than his brother.

This can be a tricky one. Use “than” when comparing objects or express a choice or diversity – “I’d rather have chocolate than vanilla.”

Use “then” to describe something that happened subsequently.

### **Affect vs. effect**

Wrong:

His mother’s illness didn’t seem to effect him.

Right:

His mother’s illness didn’t seem to affect him.

Affect means to have an effect upon; whereas an effect is a consequence.

### **Insure vs. ensure**

Wrong:

She checked her work to insure she had filled out the form correctly.

Right:

She checked her work to ensure she had filled out the form correctly.

Only use “insure” when you’re talking about insurance, as in home, life, medical. When you’re talking about making sure or certain of something, use “ensure.”

### **Misuse of apostrophes**

Wrong:

He was born in the 1950’s.

Right:

He was born in the 1950s.

Wrong:

I love riding in fast car’s.

Right:

I love riding in fast cars.

Just because a word is plural, doesn’t mean it needs an apostrophe!

### **Infer vs. imply**

Wrong:

The man’s words inferred his disapproval.

Right:

The man’s words implied his disapproval.

Infer means to deduce or draw a conclusion; while imply means to indicate.