

**“CLICK HEAR TO BUY ...”**

**“AMERICAS BEST ...”**

# The Webmaster's Grammar Bible

**SAVE YOUR SALES**

**Quick fixes for the  
mistakes your spelling  
checker can't find  
and are costing you sales**

For CHECKLIST go to page 27

SCROLL DOWN FOR BOOK

**Phil Gosling**



# The Webmaster's Grammar Bible

## Introduction

*“You may look like a king but you’ll be judged when you open your mouth.”*

**S**o runs the old saying, but on the internet it means that your website can look a million dollars but if the words are screwed up, so will your reader’s opinion of you be. And this means that your site, your product or your service is seriously degraded in the eyes of the beholder. At the end of the day that means fewer sales. If you aim to look in any way professional you’ve got to get your grammar right, and if not perfect, then at least “acceptable”. This book is all about “acceptable”; having the least number of mistakes that the largest number of your visitors won’t know you’ve made. In simple English it means cutting out the Howlers.

This is nothing to do with spelling. Your spelling checker should take care of that, it’s about the correct use of certain words, the ones the spell hinge Czech her missed. Neither is this about taking a college course in English grammar nor learning a thousand rules about indefinite clauses in the passive voice. It’s about getting rid of *the most common mistakes* that are made on innumerable websites, mistakes that are costing them money, and correcting those mistakes as quickly as possible.

We’ve narrowed these mistakes down to about fifty, with the most prominent given special status in the form of a quick-check page towards the end of this book.

It might only be fifty items but we have scoured the World’s websites to find the most common errors, cross-checked innumerable text books and consulted several scholars to get them. In this book we simply aim to improve your website, your image, your credibility and ultimately your sales by the easiest route possible – eliminating the Howlers as quickly as possible so that it only takes a few extra minutes to edit your words.

It’s always worth remembering that if you take away the pictures, graphics and look of a website, you’ll still sell *something*. But if you take away the words, you’ll sell nothing. Improve the words, improve the sales. It’s a no-brainer.

# “The hairs on the head, she is cutting?”

(Extracted from a Portuguese-English language guide as the correct approach to a hairdresser.)

IT is impossible to get English right. Unlike the French who have a government department devoted to the rules of French grammar and the “purity” of the language, English doesn’t have a rule book of any kind anywhere. Some of the greatest writers of the English language made mistakes, and in the case of Shakespeare, he just invented words as he went along. There is no single repository of English rules of grammar so if someone shouts at you for getting it wrong, just ask, “Says who?” (well, actually it’s *says whom* but who says? ☺). It follows that no matter who you are or whatever your mastery of the written word, you’ll still make a mistake somewhere. There are mistakes in this book, as there are in Shakespeare, Dickens or that bastion of all written knowledge – Fowler. Yes, there are mistakes, but not ‘*their* are mistakes’. That’s not a mistake; that’s a howler. *Howlers must be eliminated completely*, whereas the best we can do with mere errors is to reduce them to the point where only a specific kind of person will spot them ...

*“...professional busybodies and righters of imaginary wrongs, the Sunday visitors of language, dropping in weekly on the local poor to make sure that everything is up to their own idea of standard ...”*

*- William Safire*

But who wants orders from these guys anyway? They’ll only complain.

Of course there are rules, they’re just flexible and change when sufficient people adopt a new rule. The US write *realize* instead of the British *realise* and now the “z” has become acceptable everywhere, including the UK. People will happily accept differences in spelling, jargon and even “chat writing” (“Hey, yuz guys, take a handle on this baby.”) but huge numbers of people still know and love the basic, time-served rules and if you don’t want to appear a complete idiot then you *need* to know about avoiding howlers.

# “English like what she is spoke.”

(The Portuguese have a lot to answer for)

**What's a howler?** A howler is grammatical mistake that:

1. **Is blindly obvious to too many people**, not everyone, just too many. I've selected fifty of the most common howlers and that, I believe, is sufficient to make you money. That's because this book is not a treatise on English grammar, it's a book on how to make money by not repelling potential customers.
2. **Jumps off the page and slaps the reader in the face.** Obvious mistakes. Real off-putters. The kind that undermine your credibility and professionalism.
3. **Puts people off because they assume that if you cannot create your page sufficiently accurately, then your product or service will be the same.** It's the Mousehole effect – the point where people feel insecure about dealing with you. They're insecure anyway; and howlers tip the balance.

Here are a few real-life examples taken from the internet. The identities of the suspects have been hidden to protect the guilty:

... *less than a **days's** work* ...

... *sort out the next **years** timetable, and we are certainly not **privvy** to any other **clubs** intentions* ...

... *whilst **i** have no answer* ...

... *does **it's** best to not only make them welcome* ...

I downloaded these within one minute of randomly checking one website on Google.

Here are some more real crackers from recent observations, the errors are in red:

Click *hear* to buy

*Americas* best golf circuit

If *your* thinking what I'm thinking

*Borne* on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July

For *CD's* and *Childrens'* books

*Randy,s* Pet Supply,*s*

Two *week's* notice

Billy the *Kids* story

*Als'* Auto Mart

*Who's* life is it anyway? (*Who's* should be *whose*, that's the howler. The question mark is merely incorrect [it's a rhetorical question] but most people wouldn't know a rhetorical question from a silverback gorilla so that's not something to worry about.)

*The bird-flu epidemic* in China (OK, that's me being trying to be a clever-dick. An epidemic only happens to humans. For animals it's an epizootic. But this isn't a problem, we're looking for howlers that most people would recognize, not what a literate minority on a mission would find peevish.)

**The most jarring example, absolutely guaranteed to get your customers to be someone else's customers, is not knowing where to put apostrophes** (*Als'* Auto Mart). Word-switches are a close second (there/their, affect/effect, your/you're, to/too, all right/alright, whose/who's, etc.). These are the most common howlers and getting rid of them will instantly translate into bigger profits.

## It's not your fault

No, it isn't your fault. If Dickens can make mistakes so can anyone, but Dickens never had to cope with a computer screen which makes error spotting even more difficult, and in some cases, almost impossible.

The screen you're reading this on probably has a resolution no better than 72 pixels per inch. Yet a sheet of typed paper can have a nominal resolution of at least 1200 or even 10,000. That's why it's a good idea to print the text off your website and read it on a sheet of paper. You'll spot

80% of your mistakes just by doing this simple thing, mistakes you most likely would not see on screen.

Your computer screen flickers. It “refreshes” itself between 50 – 100 times each second. You don’t notice it, but bear in mind that your eye and brain can remember how many street signs you passed on the way to work this morning. So somewhere in the back of your head half a million synapses are doing hula-hoops trying to figure out why the damn screen keeps changing. That’s why reading script from a screen can be very tiring. You’re reading and performing optical push-ups at the same time.

Your mind has set word patterns that make it difficult to copy check your own writing. When you read, your eye picks up sentences or groups of words and regards them as one thing. So if one word in the group is slightly wrong, you don’t notice it. Someone else could, because they have different reading patterns:

Mary had a little lamb.  
Its fleece was white as snow. And  
and everywhere that Mary went  
the lamb was sure to go.

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch pjroacet at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttatr in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer is in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit any dficuilfty. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Is it any wdnoer we make mstkaeis ?

And a spelling checker regards both these as correct ...

They're know miss steaks in this newsletter cause we used special soft wear witch Czechs you're spelling. It is mower or lass a weigh to verify hit. How ever it can knot correct arrows in punctuation ore usage: an it will not fined words witch are miss used butt spelled rite. Four example; a paragraph cud half mini flaws but wood bee past by the spill checker. And it want catch the sent tense fragment which you rite. Their fore, the massage is that proofreading is knot eliminated, butt is still berry much reek wired.

There are no mistakes in this newsletter because we used special software which checks our spelling. It is more or less a way to verify it. However, it cannot correct errors in punctuation or usage, and it will not find words which are misused but spelled correctly. For example, a paragraph could have many flaws but would be passed by the spell checker. And it won't catch the sentence fragment which you write. Therefore, the message is that proofreading is not eliminated, but is still very much required.

## Getting Rid of the Howlers



“**Reader Offer ...**”

“**Welcome to the Widget website and **it's** services**”

“**Making our **customer's live's** easier.**”

“**... if you are in I will call you. If **your** not, I will email you ...**”

(Taken from active websites. The best a reader will think is that the writer is sloppy. At worst that this is a website not worth dealing with. In every case the website is degraded in the mind of the reader. The creators could have spent weeks, or months and thousands of dollars preparing a website whose sole function is to sell, yet not spend five minutes checking words which will quite literally cost them hundreds or thousands of dollars in lost revenue. Paradoxically they will spend hours deciding which words to use, even where on the page to place them, yet not even take the time to check if they've used the right words.)

## Top 50 Howlers ...



Before we get onto the words themselves, a quick general grammar upgrade is required. It concerns the apostrophe ('). In truth, **if you take on board the advice in the following *three* sections and apply them in your future web copy, you will completely eliminate over 80% of all howlers at a stroke.**

### **PLURALS, POSSESSIVES, ABBREVIATIONS**

A **plural** is, obviously, two or more of anything. The *cars* in the car park; two *cats*, a pair of *socks*; “evil *hobbitses*”, and so on. **There are no apostrophes in plurals.** They usually, but not always, end in *s* or *es* and if you write “My two website's can be found on ...” then some people will not visit either of them because you've just blown it.

\* \* \*

**Possessives** are sentences in which something belongs to someone. The cat's paws; the kid's baseball cap; the car's hood; all the President's men. **The apostrophe tells you who owns it.** For example, *the cat's paws* are the paws belonging to a solitary cat. However *the cats' paws* (note where the apostrophe is) are the paws belonging to all the cats, not just one. So, *America's best golf clubs* are the best golf clubs in America. But *Americas' best golf clubs* (the apostrophe is after the *s*) imply they are the best golf clubs in all the Americas on the planet. How many Americas are there? Finally, *Americas best golf clubs*, without any apostrophe, means the writer doesn't know how write English like what she is spoke. If you wrote: *the cats paws*, are you talking about one cat or two? It *must* have an apostrophe. The most common error is where someone has mixed plurals and possessives the wrong way round by incorrectly putting apostrophes into plurals and leaving them out with possessives.

The rule for possessives is beautifully simple:

**Ask yourself, "Who does it belong to" and put the apostrophe immediately after it.**

*The Presidents men.* Who does it (the men) belong to? The President. Put the 's immediately after President to make President's; The President's men.

*The cats paws.* Who does it (the paws) belong to? If it's only one cat then use *the cat's paws*. If more than one cat: the cats' paws.

Another way of describing this rule is to mentally turn the sentence around and say "the paws belonging to the cat" or "the men belonging to the President". That way you'll identify if it's one President (or cat), or two.

All this is easy. So which of these is correct?

- A. The childrens coats
- B. The childrens' coats
- C. The children's coats

The first, A, is instantly wrong because we *must have an apostrophe* somewhere. But where? Ask yourself, "Who does it belong to?" In this case, who do the coats belong to? Do the coats belong to the *childrens*? Obviously not because *children* is already a plural and the extra *s* on the

end is trying to turn a plural into a plural, which leads to all sorts of nonsensesssss. So B is wrong because *children* is already a plural.

Do the coats belong to the *children*? Yes. So put the apostrophe immediately after word *children* to make “The *children*’s coats”. Easy.

**So with possessives just ask yourself *who the thing in question belongs to and put the apostrophe immediately after it.***

The Womens’ Institute. Right or wrong?<sup>1</sup>

On the web some of the most glaring errors involve this business of shoving an apostrophe into a plural, or leaving out the apostrophe in a possessive. Disasters include:

*Todays Wal-Mart*. Who does it [Wal-Mart] belong to? Today or Todays? It should be: Today’s Wal-Mart.

*Childrens clothes*. Who does it [the clothes] belong to? Children or childrens? It should be: Children’s clothes.

*Mens wear*. Should be Men’s wear.

*Womens gowns*. Should be Women’s gowns.

*Member’s area*. (Only one member?) Should be Members’ area.

*Home business person’s website*. (One person? Perhaps the writer was trying to get home business *people* to visit.)

*Last years prices*. The price belongs to last year, so it should be *last year’s prices*. If the phrase was *previous three years prices* it’s still wrong because the apostrophe must go somewhere. In this case the prices belong to the previous three years, so it should read *previous three years’ prices*.)

There is always a glorious exception and that it ITS. More on that later. In the meantime, “Who does it belong to?”

\* \* \*

**Abbreviations** happen when letters are left out of a word and apostrophes are left in their place. So can’t = cannot, don’t = do not, etc. Unfortunately there are no hard and fast rules. Won’t = will not, despite the fact the “ill” has been left out and replaced with an “o”. Howlers

---

<sup>1</sup> Should be The Women’s Institute

happen when the apostrophe is left out altogether (wont and cant are different words) or put in the wrong place (*I cant' spell*). An apostrophe is also used when the abbreviation has letters missing in the middle (i.e. the first and last letters are still in place). This is called a contraction, because you have contracted the word to a shorter length. If the word has been cut completely, like Capt. is cut down from Captain, then the abbreviation has a period at the end - not always, but a good enough rule that the breach of it won't make any difference to your sales. So the abbreviation *Mr* should not have a period at the end because the last letter is still in the correct place. (Being the astute person you are, you'll have noticed that technically it should be M'r, but that's English for you!)

This is why it's essential to print out your web page on paper (either by printing the web page, or highlighting it and then copy and pasting it into a word processor) and getting another person to read it. The 80/20 rule applies. The first copy check will eliminate 80% of problems. The second will eliminate 80% of the remaining 20%, and so on. It'll never be perfect, so two copy checks will probably be sufficient. If nothing else, do a self-check for howlers.

\* \* \*

And finally' if you don,t know the difference between a comma and an apostrophe then make absolutely sure you get your copy checked by someone who does. Most, if not all howlers are caused not by ignorance, just haste in trying to get your ideas down on paper.

Grasp the three concepts: plurals, possessives and abbreviations, and most howlers will dissolve away.

### English Made Simple

You just need to remember there's no egg in an eggplant, no ham in a hamburger and neither apple nor pine in a pineapple. French fries aren't French and sweetmeats aren't sweet, or meaty.

You will find that writers write but fingers don't fing and hammers don't ham. Boxing rings are square and a guinea pig isn't a pig and comes from Peru, not Guinea.

The plural of tooth is teeth but the plural of booth isn't beeth. You can have one goose or two geese, but if you have more than one moose you don't have meese unless you hate meeses to pieces.

A wise guy and a wise man are opposites but a slim chance and fat chance are the same. Quicksand is slow, quicklime is hot and English was invented by the human race, which isn't a race but we do race each other.

Historically the English should be speaking French and but for one vote (it is said) Americans should be speaking German. Switzerland does not have any national language, and Latin is a language without a nation to speak it. China and Japan do not have an alphabet and if it wasn't for Arab scholars, this book would be XXXIV pages long. Simple isn't it?

# The 50 most common website howlers

(in alphabetical order)



## Affect or effect?

Affect is a verb – *to* affect. Effect is a noun – *an/the* effect.

“His affected manner was achieving the desired effect.”

In this sentence, *affect* is a verb describing his manner (to affect a manner). The final *effect* is the desired thing which is clearly a noun.



## And, But.

And contrary to popular belief, you can start a new sentence with either of these words. But it's better not to.



## Anyone for tennis?

Any time is always two words (think T for Two in Time). The rest (anybody, anyone, anything, anyway, anywhere) are usually one word.



## Bear/Bare/Baring/Bearing

The verb *to bear* means to carry a weight, either physically or emotionally. The noun *a bear*, is a large furry thing that steals your picnic.

*Bare* means uncovered or naked. *Bared* is the past tense of *bare*.

*Baring* means to make bare, whereas *bearing* still means carrying a weight, but not necessarily the bear that's just stolen your picnic.



## “Between you and I...”

Wrong. It should always read, “Between you and me”.



### Biweekly, biannual, bimonthly

Avoid using these words. Technically, bimonthly means very two months but many also think it's twice a month. If your subscribers are expecting a bimonthly newsletter twice a month, and get one every two months, they will be disappointed.



### Born/Borne

Born refers to birth. Borne is the past tense of bearing a load or putting up with.



### Breech/Breach

Breech means the bottom or back-end of something. (The breech of a gun. The baby was born breech first.)

Breach is derived from the word *break* and means a hole or split. (A breach in the dyke. "Once more into the breach, dear friends ...".)



### CD's, Video's, Book's and DVD's

These are all plurals. **There are no apostrophes in plurals.** It's a silly mistake and easily sorted. Just ask yourself if this word is a plural. If you are simply talking about two or more of something then no apostrophe applies.



### Choose/Chose

Chose is the past tense of choose. You *choose* a new pair of shoes. That is the pair you *chose*.



## Chronic/ Acute

Chronic is mistakenly used to mean intense when it should mean long lasting. So a chronic headache is NOT an intense headache but one which has lasted a long time. (Think: Chronometer for an accurate timepiece.) Acute means intense.



## Company's/Companies

a) Company's = company has/is. (The best offer our company's ever made. Our company's the best.)

b) *Company's* as a possessive. (Our company's best product range). Think 'who does it belong to'. In this case the product range belongs to the company.

c) *Companies* is the plural of company. You can have several companies but you can't have several companys because the word doesn't exist.



## Copywrite/Copyright

Copyright is a legal term regarding the *right to copy* someone else's work. Often used in the context: Copyright 2005 XYZ Inc.

There is no such word as copywrite. Copy-writers are people who write copy (copy is the word used to describe written material, particularly material used in adverts or sales).



## Course/Coarse

Most often, *course* means route, or something in the context of movement. It also has several other meanings such as a sail on a sailing ship.

Generally, *coarse* means rough or uncultured. Course Marshals at motor-racing circuits can use either spelling depending on whether they are referring to their profession or reflecting on the parentage of drivers who ignore warning flags.



## Dates

*The 1960's* or even the '60's is not wrong. It can also be 1960s or '60s. However, the phrase *1963's hit*, "*I love you because*" is correct because it's the hit belonging to 1963. Without the apostrophe it would be incorrect.

*The summer of '42*. The apostrophe tells you that 19 is missing.

It's not *one weeks time*. It's *one week's time*. (The time belonging to one week.)

It's not *one years time*. It's *one year's time*. (The time belonging to one year.)

If more than one year, or week:

Two years' time. (The time belonging to two years.) Two weeks' notice. (The notice 'belonging' to two weeks.)



## Doesn't

Short for *does not*. Doesnt and Doe'snt are short for *illiterate moron*.



## Don't

Don't means do not, as in don't use do'nt.



## Double meanings

Watch your headlines for double meanings.

"Bottom touched in Stock crisis"

"Dicks In Tray" (Not a headline, I know, but too horrific an example to leave in Richard's in-tray.)



## Double negatives

“I ain’t had no experience ...” is not a problem with the word *ain’t*. The double negative (ain’t – no) in this sentence, translates to: I *haven’t* had *no-experience*. If you haven’t had nothing, then logically you *have* had something. Double negatives cancel each other out and produce a positive statement. “I ain’t no criminal” means you are one. “I ain’t a criminal” means you ain’t a criminal.

“This is unlikely not to go ahead”. This means that a “not go ahead” is unlikely to happen, so a “go ahead” IS likely to happen.



## ect.

Little mistakes show up like bright lights. Etc. is short for **et cetera**, hence the letter order of E-T-C. It is NOT ect or e.t.c. Because the word is cut shorter it always has a period at the end indicating it’s an abbreviation. If it occurs at the end of a sentence do NOT use two periods, only one, etc. Most often found preceded by a comma (, etc.).



## e.g. or i.e.

The Latin abbreviation *e.g.* means “for example”, after which you give an example, such as - “Some animals are very strong, e.g., an elephant.”

The abbreviation *i.e.* means “that is to say”, after which you clarify what you’ve said, for example, “Some animals are carnivorous, i.e., they eat meat.”

Always use periods. Eg and ie don’t exist.



## The ellipsis (...)

Three periods that indicate that something has been omitted or unsaid or left to be said. There are three. Not two, not five. If the ellipsis is at the end of a sentence then add another period.

“Sure, his website’s OK, but then again ....”



### The exclamation mark - !

Borderline howler. It's now often being used to emphasize a sentence. This is not technically correct. It should be used when the sentence is being shouted or otherwise exclaimed.



### Fewer or less

Two guides that work hand in hand. The better guide is to look at the sentence and if it refers to more than one person or thing (i.e. plural nouns), then use *fewer*. (Fewer cars, Fewer nurses. Fewer than 10% of voters ....)

If the sentence refers to *one* person or thing (i.e. a singular noun) then use *less*. (One person less and the play would have been abandoned. Less sugar, etc.)

A more common but less helpful method is to see if numbers are involved.

Use *fewer* if **numbers** are involved. (Fewer than 10% ....)

Use *less* if **no numbers** are involved. (There were *less* than previously imagined.)

If in doubt, use *less*, on the basis that only the "Sunday visitors of language" will know the difference.



### Forever, or for ever.

Use *forever*. It's now common usage although there once was an Atlantic split where *forever* was used in the US and *for ever* in the UK. Then Batman came along.



### Go further, farther, or go farther still.

*Farther* is used if you could technically measure the actual distance. It's a concept of physical distance or time. "Bill's house is farther away than Kyle's."

*Further* is used when the distance is purely imaginative, e.g., "I want to make a further point."

Think "Far" means distance, but "Fur" doesn't.



### Geek speak.

"Version 5.1432 of Acme Technology's new suite of integrated KM, CRM and ERP wireless tools suffers from software bloat."

Translation: "This software contains more features than we'd ever need, and it's too complicated to run."

"This will give us a multi-tier architecture that's low maintenance, flexible and robust."

Translation: "The technology is useful, cheap and it won't break."

*Taken with thanks from, "How to translate Geek Speak", by Mindy Blodgett. CIO magazine.*

In the world of technology, very few new words need to be created in order to express a new technology. In the main, old words have been adapted to new uses (mouse, desktop, virus, and the irrepressible 'spam' [taken from Monty Python – spam, spam, spam, spam ...]). Then technocratic laziness (or the inability to use a dictionary) created new words that are in fact old words (overview = summary or précis). Then a whole new language was created that used geek speak to express simple ideas in complex ways. As an attempt to sound clever it doesn't fool anyone.



I

i think that anyone who writes a lower case i instead of an upper case I in a sentence is going to lose a lot of sales.



## I, me, you.

a). Not a grammatical howler but an accepted copy-writing technique in which a website should emphasize the word *you*, rather than the I or *me* of the writer. So instead of writing: “My website shows how I created my first widget”, you can say, “My website shows *you* how *you* can create *your* own widgets”.

b). “David and me created this website.” Or is it *David and I*? To find the answer, take out the other person which in this case is David. This would change the sentence to either *me created this website* or *I created this website*. Whichever sounds best is the one to use when you re-introduce the second person.



## IT'S, ITS OR ITS'

Example: *This is the most common howler on all websites, so **it's** about time webmasters reduced **its** influence.*

Remember: **There is no ITS'**, which narrows the problem down to two.

IT'S = IT IS or IT HAS. The apostrophe (') is there to tell you a letter is missing. That's all you need to remember – if you meant *it has* or *it is*, then use it's. Examples: It's a grand day. It's been a hard day's night.

ITS = Belonging to it<sup>2</sup>. In this case there is no apostrophe at all. Example: Its eyes shone in the dark. (The eyes belonging to it.)

If you are undecided whether to use IT'S or ITS all you have to do is to read back the sentence and say IT IS (or IT HAS) whenever you see either form. So, to use our example:

*This is the most regular cock-up on all websites, so **it is** (correct, use it's) about time webmasters reduced **it is** (incorrect, so it cannot be it is. It must be its) influence.*

**So the rule is to imagine saying IT IS / IT HAS, whenever you see either form. If it sounds right, use IT'S. If it doesn't then use ITS.**

---

<sup>2</sup> The reason is easy to work out. On the basis of “who does it belong to” the possessive ITS should technically have an apostrophe after the IT, BUT because IT'S = IT IS, you can't do it. The abbreviated form of IT IS takes precedence. No-one knows why. Live with it.



## Lead/Led

The past tense of *to lead* (walk ahead of, not the metal) is *led*. (He led his men by example.) *Led Zeppelin* is the popular rock combo whereas Lead Zeppelin is a gentleman in Finland who doesn't understand why he receives so much mail.



## Management consultancy speak

Don't use long phrases that mean nothing.

"We're moving forward together in a united effort to achieve uniformity of progress."

"HR professionals have arrived at the strategy-creating table. This is good, but learn why it is time for HR as a profession to move past this objective." (What!)

This kind of garbage by a writer is either an excuse to say nothing or a misguided attempt at sounding cleverer than he really is. It fools no-one.



## Normalcy, Normalwise, Computerizationally, Personalitywise.

Don't invent words. Just don't. It doesn't sound goodlywise and makes your website truly crapola.



## Numbers

Always write the numbers 1-9 in words, after that you can use numbers. (Car three was 20 minutes behind the leader.)



## Past/Passed

*Past* with a *t* is to do with *time*. (In the past. Half past three.)

Passed is the past-tense of the verb *to pass* meaning the physical act (as in passing the buck).



### **Pour/Pore**

Pour means to flow. (You pour water. The fans poured out of the stadium). Pore as a verb (*to pore*), means to examine carefully (the lawyer pored over the trial notes).



### **Principle/Principal**

A principle is a fundamental belief or truth.

Principal, means either chief or of chief importance, and is often related to the Principal of a school (i.e the principal teacher or head).



### **Prophecy/Prophecy**

Prophecy is a noun – a prophecy. (Proff-es-see.)

Prophecy is a verb – to prophesy. (Proff-es-eye.)

“My prophecy is that I prophesy trouble.”



### **Six feet tall or six foot tall?**

Tricky. As a rule of thumb, if the number preceding the word foot or feet is 1, then use foot. If 2 or more, use feet. Use this rule of thumb if you cannot decide whether the noun after the foot/feet is singular or plural.

A wall can be six feet high but a man can be six foot tall.

More importantly, the internet is a World-wide place and most of that world is decimal. If you are dealing with measurements, and you're using pints or miles, it's a good idea to add the decimal equivalent as well.

“Take one pint (0.47 litres) of water ...”



### **Stationary/Stationery**

Think “e” for envelope. Stationery means paper, pens and related products. Stationary means to stand still.



### There/Their

A very common error, mainly due to mistyping rather than ignorance. *Their* is a possessive referring to what people own (their hats). Another is distance (over there) or a time factor (there will be ...).



### They'll, They're, They've

They will. They are. They have.



### Thru / Through

It's better practice to use through. Why risk even one lost sale?



### 'till, 'cause

Short for until and because. Without the apostrophes they are different words. Both 'til and 'till are OK with the proviso that most people with an IQ higher than a chocolate donut would regard these abbreviations in much the same way as a *Cordon Bleu* chef would regard a chocolate donut.



### To/Too/Two

Always worth checking which one you wrote down as opposed to which one you meant. Too means an excess, (too much) or in addition (he came too). "To use too many twos is too much."



### Ton/Tonne

A ton is 2,240 pounds weight. A tonne is 1000 kilograms. So a 1000 tons is actually 1016.046 tonnes just in case you were even remotely interested.



## **YOUR or YOU'RE (YOU'RE = YOU ARE)**

Example: *If your website's a grammatical mess then you're losing customers.*

As in ITS, every time you see either of these words whilst copy checking, substitute YOU ARE and see how it sounds. So, *Is this your hat?* becomes *Is this you are hat?* and obviously *you are* (you're) doesn't fit, so YOUR is correct. To quote our example:

*If YOU ARE website's a linguistic mess then YOU ARE losing customers.* Clearly the first is *your* and the second is *you're*.

**If it's not YOU ARE then YOUR is the rule**



## **We're/were**

"ILLITERATE WEB-DESIGNERS, INC. – WERE HERE TO HELP YOU." *We're* means *we are*.



## **Who/whom/whomever**

Got an hour to spare? Even the explanation would take several pages. So let's keep it simple.

It's *to whom, for whom*. Usually.

Try to avoid it. Like the plague.



## **Whose/Who's**

*Who's* is short for *who is*. (Who's coming to dinner?)

Whose is the possessive (belonging to). (Whose website is that?)



## World, also America

Often quoted on websites in the context of “the World’s best”, or “America’s finest”. Always use a capital letter to start and always end in apostrophe s (’s).

\* \* \*

## Helpful extras

### British English or American English?

The rule, if you are not American, is to use American spelling. This is because of the historic US dominance of the internet which has made the dollar, and American spelling, the norm. Only use other types when there is good reason to do so. I would expect the website of a Scotch Whiskey distillery to be sprinkled with the odd ‘Och Aye’ or ‘Wee slickit beasties’.

If your product has a world-wide customer base, then use American spelling. If it has a particular audience, for example, British or Australian, then use the spelling common to that audience.

It’s arguable if American English separated from Old English or vice versa. According to American travel-writer Bill Bryson there are American towns along the US eastern seaboard where the accent spoken is almost pure “Olde English”, a dialect long lost in the place it originated. Brits have now taken on board the annual Trick or Treat Halloween activity assuming it to have been exported from the US via movies and The Simpson’s Halloween Specials. In reality it was an Old English tradition carried to America, then lost in England, and now found again. Funny ol’ World.

\* \* \*

There’s an on-line dictionary and thesaurus at

<http://www.dictionary.com>

\* \* \*

Annual means once a year. If a book is an Annual it means it’s printed once a year.

\* \* \*

Remember that in the US a *billion* is  $10^9$  (1000 million). In the UK it's  $10^{12}$  (one million million). So perhaps Malcolm Glazer underestimated the US\$1.91 billion he needed to buy Manchester United.

\* \* \*

Dakota is not a State. It doesn't exist. North Dakota and South Dakota exist and are independent States. The same is true for Carolina and Virginia. (The habit comes from England – see Yorkshire, Sussex.)

\* \* \*

Celibacy does not mean to abstain from sex. It means to abstain from marriage, usually by making a vow. Chastity means to abstain from sex. So a lady who is Chaste is probably being chaste by celibates. (☺)

\* \* \*

Aweigh/Away. Only for nautical websites who wouldn't get it wrong anyweigh. The call, "Anchor's aweigh" is used when a ship's anchor is being raised. It's the point when the anchor just leaves the bottom. Note that, "anchors aweigh" is for two anchors. It's uncertain if the film *Anchors Away* is a deliberate play on words or a rare Hollywood divergence from fact.

\* \* \*

Math/Maths. If you want to be technically correct, *math* is short for the singular word *mathematic* or *mathematical*. *Maths* is short for the plural – *mathematics*. So "do the math" technically means "do the mathematic" which doesn't sound right.

\* \* \*

Light year. It's distance, not time. "It could take you light years to find this information on the internet" is wrong, as it refers to time not distance. If you can replace "light years" with "miles" and still retain the meaning, then you're light years beyond anyone else.

## Amusing Oddities not worth worrying about, but good for impressing your friends over a beer ...

Koala Bear. It's not a bear, it's a marsupial.

§

Knots per hour. A knot means "nautical miles per hour", so just use the word *knot*. Similarly 3.00am *in the morning* is superfluous. When else would 3.00am be?

§

Gendarmes are not French policemen, they are soldiers employed in policing duties.

§

Flotsam & Jetsam. Flotsam is wreckage or cargo that floats off a sinking ship of its own accord. Jetsam has been jettisoned (thrown off). Depending on the laws of the country concerned, flotsam can be kept if found, but jetsam must be handed in to the authorities. As if you could tell.

§

The *True History of the Kelly Gang*, by Peter Carey (2001) had no commas at all.

§

There is no such thing as a grammatical error. It's either grammatical, in which case it's correct, or ungrammatical, in which case it's in error.

§

The definition of the English word *home* is only found in English. Other nations have words for *abode*, or *home* in the sense of a building lived in, but not *home* as used in English. The Germanic *gemütlich* translates as *cozy* or *comfy* but the meaning doesn't quite hit the mark.

§

Quantum Leap. Usually expressed as meaning great or large (a quantum leap in web-design). Some pedants say it actually means very small because it implies the distance jumped by an electron when

changing states inside an atom. Actually it's neither. So when someone tells you, over a beer, that it's misquoted you can earn serious brownie-points by telling them that quantum means "indivisible" in the sense of all at once. A quantum leap in web-design means an advance that happened suddenly rather than gradually over time. A quantum leap in Physics means the electron changed states (orbits) without being in-between orbits at any time. It just disappeared from one orbit and magically re-appeared in the next one. Clever little electron.

§

i as a new guy hAVE COME UP AGAINST BARRIERS TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW TO DO THINGS but i been told its takes 3year to do this grade and 5year todo that grade the otherday i ask about fire truck [ans] i got told was how long is a pace of string and if your face fits so how are we going to get new guys to give up there time with a manner like that of A I.O NO NAMES we need a basic strututor so ever one lerns parts of it i my self have got 10year as rmn and 17 years as a traffic officer and now retired

- Taken from a chat site. A team of emergency paragramatics from Harvard has been scrambled.

§

Thirty-one words ending in "ough", with nine different pronunciations and all in one sentence. Who said English was easy ...

"Although I thought that I ought to have bought enough doughnuts on furlough with the dough I brought to the borough, I coughed roughly and hiccoughed as the wind soughed in the boughs and wrought havoc in the drought, while a snake thoroughly sloughed its tough skin in the trough by the lough, and I fought on doughtily, ploughing through the slough and sought help as a chough flew by, but alas, all was for nought for the doughnuts were short.

### **How to use the Quick-Check List**

All web-browsers, HTML editors and word-processors have a 'find' facility, usually Control +F. It's easier to work with the HTML editor so that howlers can be removed immediately. Print out the following check-list and always use it. The search for the apostrophe will cover most of the howlers, then search the rest. The 'Howler' column tells you what we're looking at. The 'Use Control + F' column is the keyword search. The 'Quick Check' column is your correction guide.

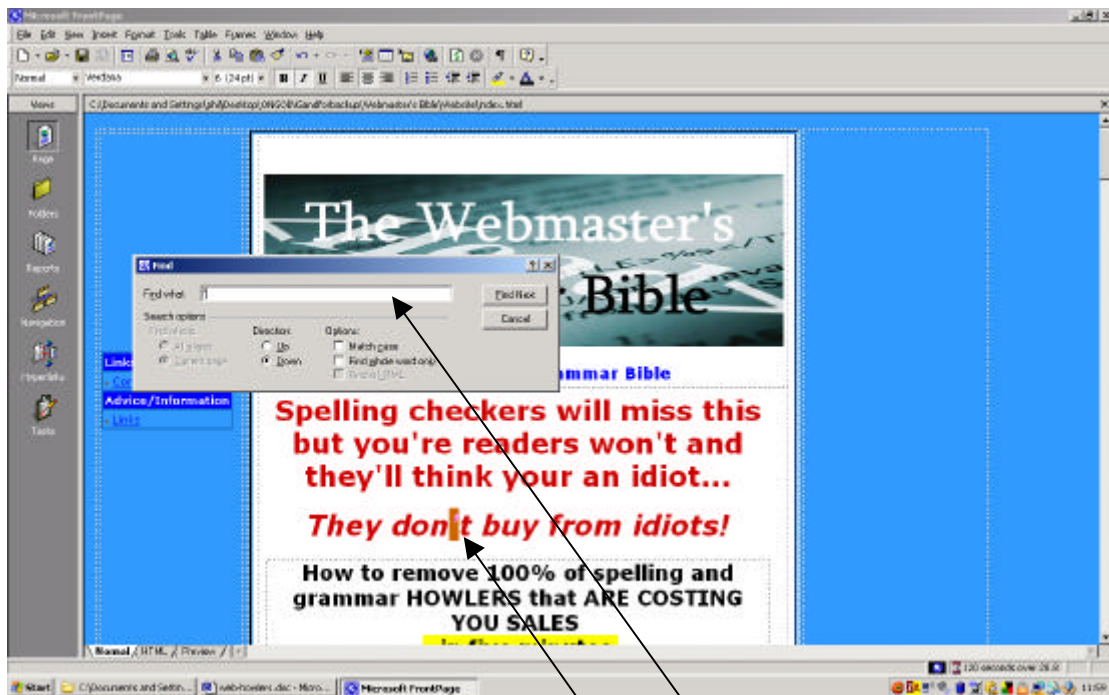
## Quick-Check list

Print out these three pages and keep them near your work desk

HOWLER	USE CONTROL + F TO FIND:	QUICK CHECK
<p>Check for the Apostrophe e.g. ' or ‘</p>	<p>Two kinds of apostrophe, a curly (') and a straight ('). Do it for both. Copy and paste one from your webpage into Control + F.</p> <p><b>See full explanation with screenshot on page 29</b></p> <p>This one check will automatically locate most of the words in which howlers reside.</p>	<p><b>EVERY TIME YOUR SEARCH STOPS AT AN APOSTROPHE, ASK:</b></p> <p><b>Is it a plural? (CDs) – No apostrophe</b></p> <p><b>Is it possessive or belonging to something? (e.g. the <i>company's</i> product). Ask 'who does it belong to' and place the 's after the thing it belongs to.</b></p> <p><b>Double-check the following:</b></p> <p><b>CAN'T = CANNOT.</b></p> <p><b>DOESN'T = DOES NOT</b></p> <p><b>DON'T = DO NOT</b></p> <p><b>IT'S = IT IS. ITS = BELONGING TO IT</b></p> <p><b>THEY'LL, THEY'RE, THEY'VE. They will, they are, they have.</b></p> <p><b>YOU'RE = YOU ARE. If 'you are' makes sense, use <i>you're</i>. If not, use <i>your</i>.</b></p> <p><b>WE'RE = WE ARE. If 'we are' doesn't make sense then use 'were'</b></p> <p><b>WHO'LL, WHO'VE. Who will. Who have.</b></p> <p><b>WHOSE OR WHO'S. If 'who is' or 'who has' makes sense, choose <i>who's</i>. The spelling <i>whose</i> is possessive.</b></p> <p><b>WORLD'S OR AMERICA'S. Unless you have two Worlds, Americas or whatever, then it's always World's Best.</b></p>

<p><b>HOWLER</b></p> <p>This section is to locate howlers that the apostrophe check missed</p>	<p><b>USE CONTROL + F TO FIND:</b></p>	<p><b>QUICK CHECK</b></p>
YOUR/YOU'RE	YOUR	YOU'RE = YOU ARE. If 'you are' makes sense, use it. If not use 'your'.
Fewer/Less	Less	Plural nouns. If the sentence refers to more than one person/thing, use <i>Fewer</i> (Fewer people voted) Single nouns. If the sentence refers to one person or thing, use <i>less</i> (one person less)
There / Their	<i>The</i> or each one individually	<i>Their</i> is possessive (their hats) <i>There</i> is distance (over there)
To / Too / Two	To	Too means excessive (too much) Two is the number 2 To is the most common
Were / We're	Were	We're = we are. If 'we are' doesn't make sense then use 'were'
World	World	Must have capital W. If <i>World's best</i> check the 's is correct
America / X	America or your country	As above
Whose / Who's	Whose	If 'who is' or 'who has' makes sense, choose <i>who's</i> . The spelling <i>whose</i> is possessive.
Choose / Chose	Cho	<i>Chose</i> is past tense
I	i (Select 'Match Whole Word Only' + 'Match Case'.)	Always use a capital (I am, not i am)
Who / Whom	who	<i>To whom, for whom, by whom, with whom</i>
Thru / Through	thru	Change to <i>through</i>

HOWLER	USE CONTROL + F TO FIND:	QUICK CHECK
Etc. e.g. i.e.	ect e.c.t e.t.c. Same for e.g. and i.e.	Should be, etc. e.g. i.e.
Anytime	Any	<i>Any time</i> is two words, the rest are one word.
ITS	ITS	IT'S = IT IS ITS = BELONGING TO IT
Company	compan	Company's (Belonging to the Company) Company is/has Companies = plural
Copyright	copy	It's Copyright (The right to copy)
Of / Off	Of (or do both)	This would just be a typo. Most howlers are.



To check apostrophes, highlight the kind you are using and copy and paste it into the FIND box (Control + F). You may need to do this twice because different fonts use different apostrophe symbols. Most headings are san-serif, like Ariel or Verdana. Some body copy is Times New Roman. Isolating the apostrophe and using FIND is a very good way of seeing ALL your uses of apostrophes in one go, and avoids you having to do one search for IT and another for DOES and another for WHO and so on.

## Appendix

### TRUST

I read an eBook recently in which the author devoted half of the first page to telling his readers about all the dire prognostications that were to befall them if they so much as lent his book to their significant other. Yeah, yeah ...

I also know of at least 12 systems that would automatically disable the book if readers cancelled their payment. But the reader would have to log onto the internet every time he or she wanted to read it. This strikes me as hypocrisy. The author expected you to trust him enough to pay for the book but he doesn't trust you in return. Not good.

I hold out the same honesty to you as you did to me. If you want to pass this book to a *few* close friends and family, as you would a paperback, then feel free to do so with my blessings; but only a handful, OK, please?

If you're inclined to pirate the book and sell it across the internet – then why not do that in a way that's legal and we *both* benefit? Indeed you will make more out of it than I do! Read below for more information.

### How to become a licensed retailer for this book

I have in place a special joint-venture program that allows other web-masters and eZine proprietors to offer this book to their own audiences and groups. Inclusion in this program is subject to certain restrictions. However, if you are:

- An eZine owner with a database of subscribers
- A website owner with a database of subscribers
- A networker with your own downline
- Any business with an internet presence and a current list of interested prospects.

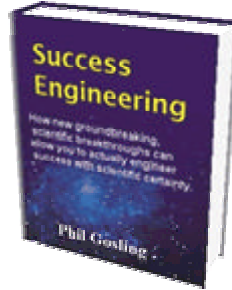
- then for further details please find out more on:

[www.webmastersgrammarbible.com](http://www.webmastersgrammarbible.com)

(click LINKS, then RETAILER INFO)

\* \* \*

**Also see Phil's best-seller:**  
**[www.success-engineering.com](http://www.success-engineering.com)**



“How new groundbreaking,  
breakthroughs can allow you to

cutting edge scientific  
actually *engineer* success into

your life with scientific certainty. *Success engineering* – the ability to create success out of thin air – really exists. All you have to do is to get it right. Everything you have ever wanted: the car, the home, the vacations, the time to fish or watch your kids grow, is there for the taking.

And I can prove it ...”

From one of the Internet's most accomplished writers, Success-Engineering sets out to explore the reasons why one person is successful and his neighbor isn't, and reaches a stunning conclusion:

You don't change yourself. You change the world around you.

“Crazy? No. This is Success Engineering!”

**See the free preview at**  
**[www.success-engineering.com](http://www.success-engineering.com)**

Coming soon:

# RenegadeLemming.com



**In order to succeed you need to be the lemming that walks the opposite way.**

**Break free from the tyranny of job boredom and money worries** by learning the RIGHT way to start a money-making on-line business that will turn Monday into a day you love. You will **never do it more quickly or easily** than by subscribing to the Renegade Lemming Newsletter and its associated website.

The Renegade Lemming Newsletter is a private, monthly on-line personal letter that **PACKS** hard-hitting information about **how to make money**. There is nothing conventional here. It's called the Renegade Lemming because Phil Gosling was once described as the lemming that was always going the other way - pushing against the crowd. In order to achieve your dream, you must do exactly the same. If you've ever started a venture and not succeeded (like most people) it means you're walking with the crowd.

**Don't walk with the crowd. RUN the other way. When you do, you'll turn a 6k a year JOB into a 200+K a year LIFE.** And you'll do it a lot faster than most.

**We absolutely guarantee that the products, services, help files, information, videos and specially negotiated discounts for other people's products and seminars will be such huge value, and probably save you more than the annual subscription for this site, that if you don't think too, We'll return your subscription in full - absolutely no quibble.** This is an ongoing annual guarantee that means just one thing - you can't lose!

**And that's without reading a word of the newsletter!** That's right.

**It's almost certain that at the savings you'll make by joining Renegade Lemming will outstrip the cost of membership.**

The main reason is our profit-sharing points scheme. By using our on-line booking office you can buy items either at large discounts or we'll give you back a percentage in the form of a profit-sharing scheme to cover your next year's subscription. The moment your purchases from this site exceed the amount needed to pay your next year's subscription, then not only will you get the following year's membership for free, but we'll send you some cash as well!

I've designed this so that it would be more expensive *not* to join! And what if you're actually so bold as to **read** the newsletter and use the huge facilities on this site? The sky's the limit. 50K, 100K, 200K - these incomes are being earned NOW by people who not only started out like you but WORSE than you are now.

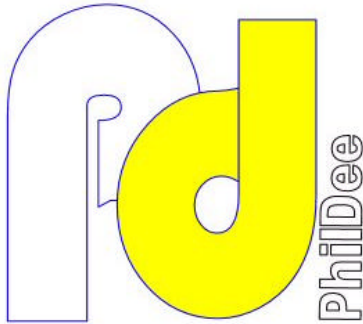
Check this out. There are people in Internet marketing who make over **1000 dollars a DAY**. We know because we've been there and will show you how it's done. In the subscription membership site area there are guys making **several million a year**. We'll show you that too.

We were all like YOU. We are like you now. The difference is we're free. The actual details of income are just details, the point is we're free. **To become free all you have to do is to stop following the crowd, otherwise you will stay one of the crowd. You need to be the lone wolf, the independent, the one on the road less travelled. You need to be a renegade lemming. THIS, is where you need to be.**

- **Save more money than your subscription with our profit sharing scheme**
- **Advice Clinic**
- **Video tutorials**
- **Free or heavily discounted eBooks and products**
- **Powerful Monthly Newsletter**
- **Discussion Forum**
- **Copy Writing and Critique service**
- **Public Domain Central**

Currently (Aug 2005) under construction. Check out  
[www. RenegadeLemming.com](http://www.RenegadeLemming.com)  
Soon!

## Published by



**Great books you've read...  
Great books you haven't.**

**PhilDee was established in 1992 as a supplier of motivational business books and courses.**

**Contact email address:**

**Due to the huge volumes of spam we've been receiving on our old email address we have had to change email systems completely to a new anti-spam system. The system we are now using is called ZOEMAIL. Effectively, the zoemail system allows you to register with us (just once) and you will then receive your own, personal, contact email address. Once you have this address, please save it and use it every time you want to send us an email. If you would like to send us an email, please go to:**

**<http://www.zoemail.net/?phildee>**

**IF YOU CANNOT for any reason get this to work we do have an "emergency" email address:**

**[bookpower2004@hotmail.com](mailto:bookpower2004@hotmail.com)**

**Please only use this address if you cannot get through by any other means.  
This address is only checked weekly.**