

### Common Mistakes to Look Out For in Writing

1. The Oxford Comma: AP Style, which is what the *Independent* follows, does not place a comma before the last item in a list.  
ex: *They spoke to the Dean, professors and students.*
2. Contractions: Avoid contractions in formal writing.  
ex: *did not* as opposed to *didn't*
3. Hyphenating Compound Modifiers: Use a hyphen between two or more words acting as an adjective as a single idea only when followed by the noun they are modifying.  
ex: *the off-campus students* or *the students are off campus*
4. Clarifying Pronouns: Think about whether a pronoun in a sentence needs clarity as to what or who is being referred to.  
ex: If you referred to an idea or event a few sentences previously, and now have "it" in a sentence, try to clarify now again to avoid confusion.
5. Coordinating Conjunctions: Use a comma before coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) when connecting independent clauses but not if the clause you are connecting would not be a complete sentence on its own.  
ex: *NEIU was closed, but classes were still going on via Zoom.* Or: *NEIU was closed but still had classes going on via Zoom.*
6. Acronyms: Write out the words of an acronym the first time it is introduced. Though, there are universally recognized acronyms such as FBI, EU, USA, CIA, IRS, NASA, NATO and COVID-19.  
ex: *Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU)*
7. Dates: When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec. All other months should always be completely spelled out and include the month, day and year.  
ex: *Spring 2022 ends on May 14, 2022.*
8. Times: Use numerical figures except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes.  
ex: *11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 9-11 a.m., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.*
9. Titles: Capitalize formal titles when they are used immediately before one or more names.  
ex: *Pope Francis, Vice Presidents Yukari Nakamura and Vanessa Smith.*
10. Cardinal Numbers: Spell out one through nine and use figures for 10 or above.  
ex: *The Yankees finished second. He had nine months to go.*