

Here are some notes I put together after reviewing our group feedback story for this month. These common mistakes are easy to correct and make our text much cleaner.

1. **Semicolon.** I've heard a semicolon called the *love child of a colon and a comma*, and it has *only* two uses. It can be used to *replace* a conjunction in a compound sentence.

I enjoyed the movie, but I loved the dinner afterward.
I enjoyed the movie; I loved the dinner afterward.

A semicolon is needed for clarity with a complex list where each entry includes explanatory details.

Family members in attendance included Jeff, my brother, Mary, my aunt, and Chris, my cousin. May be six people there.

Family members in attendance included Jeff, my brother; Mary, my aunt; and Chris, my cousin. Accurately identifies three people there.

2. **Pronouns.** A pronoun refers to an earlier noun, also called an *antecedent*. Be careful when using pronouns—especially *it, that, these, those*, and *such*—that it is clear what the pronoun represents. Check each pronoun to be sure you mean for it to represent the last applicable person or item named before the pronoun is used.
3. **That.** *That* is an often-overused word. We use it a lot out of habit rather than need. Read your sentence without *that*. If the meaning is still clear, delete the extraneous *that*.

I bought the car that I wanted all my life.
I bought the car I wanted all my life.

4. **Direction.** When using *north, south, east, or west* as a direction, lowercase the first letter, i.e., *He turned south on Main Street*. When used as a specific location, capitalize the direction, i.e., *Northeastern Maine, South Louisiana*.
5. **Who/that.** Use *who* when referring to a person, and *That* when referring to something that is not a person. *She was the person who sang "The Star-Spangled Banner."* *It was his dessert that won first prize.*