

GRADING SYMBOLS for COMMON ERRORS

- F SENTENCE FRAGMENT.** A fragment is an incomplete sentence. Correct it by adding whatever is missing or by attaching it to the preceding or following sentence.
- RO RUN-ON SENTENCE.** Correct it by placing a comma and a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb, or a semicolon between the two main clauses. You could also just break it up into two separate sentences.
- CS COMMA SPLICE.** You will see this sign when you have joined two sentences with a comma. This is a no-no! Either break it into two separate sentences, separate the two sentences with a semi-colon, or add a coordinating conjunction after the comma.
- MLA** You will see this symbol when you have made an error in MLA formatting.
- P PUNCTUATION ERRORS.** You will see this symbol when you make any kind of error other than a comma splice or run-on sentence.
- AP APOSTROPHE ERROR.** You will see this sign if your possessive noun does not contain an apostrophe or if you have used an apostrophe incorrectly. Don't forget, if you are using the apostrophe to make a contraction (ok in informal writing, but not in academic writing) you need to eliminate the contraction.
- SV SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT.** Be sure that the subject and verb agree in number.
- REP REPETITIVE.** You have already used this word nearby, or you've used it too frequently or You have already said this.
- V VERB USAGE.** You will probably see this sign if you have used the verb wrong, for example if you used it in the past tense even though the rest of the essay is written in the present tense.
- WV WEAK VERB.** Use strong verbs. Avoid helping verbs like is, are, be, have, has, seems. Avoid words like "says."
- PP PERSONAL PRONOUN.** Avoid using the personal pronouns I and you in critical writing.
- CT CONTRACTIONS.** Do not use contractions (don't, wouldn't, etc) in academic writing. They are only acceptable in very informal writing. When in doubt, do not use it.
- REF REFERENCE PROBLEM.** Either the antecedent (the thing you are referring to) is unclear or missing or the pronoun you used does not agree with the antecedent in number, person, or gender.
- SS SENTENCE STRUCTURE.** You will see this sign when you have made an error other than a fragment or a run-on, or when your sentence is awkward and difficult to understand.
- SP/T SPELLING ERROR OR TYPO.** Proofread carefully. Pay attention to the red or green squiggly line that your computer might place under a word.

// **PARALLEL ERROR.** Your sentence should have parallel construction. Sentence parts that are equal in emphasis should have the same construction, otherwise they are confusing.

X **CARELESS ERROR.** *You* have the power to avoid careless errors! (1) Reread your paper on the screen. Now, read it aloud. It is harder to see errors on the screen, so next, (2) Print out your paper and read it on paper. Now, read it aloud. (3) **AFTER** you have done 1 and 2, get somebody else to read your paper and look for errors.

? **QUESTION MARK** means “What? I don’t understand.” Did you write what you were thinking? Is something missing from your sentence?

CL **CLICHÉ.** Avoid using clichés. A cliché is an overused word or expression; It is the opposite of an original thought.

¶ **PARAGRAPHING.** This sign means that you have not started a new paragraph where you need to. If you see the symbol with a line through it, you have started a new paragraph where you shouldn’t have.

SP **SPACING.** You have inserted a space where one doesn’t belong, or left one out where it belongs. Check that there is a space after *but not before* a period, comma, semicolon (;) and colon (:).

Q **QUOTES ERROR.** You have either used quotation marks where they don’t belong, or you have not punctuated them

correctly. End punctuation goes inside the last quotation mark.

V **INSERT.** This symbol, combined with something above it (or the inverse with something below it), means you need to insert something. You might see this symbol combined with another symbol.

DW **DEAD WOOD.** This means you have added “dead wood,” or words that add nothing to the sentence or to the composition. Dead wood serves as a filler.

COLL **COLLOQUIAL.** The word or phrase you used is too spoken or informal. Words like “awesome,” “amazing,” “incredible,” and “epic” are examples of words that cannot be used with their popular, spoken meaning in writing assignments.

WK This symbol means WEAK. You have used a week word like “very” or “truly” that doesn’t actually add the emphasis you intended.

AWK **AWKWARD.** You probably wouldn’t say it that way, so don’t write it that way. Reading your work out loud helps you catch awkward spots.

WDY **WORDY.** You could have used fewer words to convey the same meaning.

WCH **WORD CHOICE.** Your choice of words is a little off; you have not used the perfectly appropriate word or phrase.