



SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF RHETORIC

- **Frag. Fragment:** The main clause lacks a subject or verb so that the sentence remains incomplete.

My sister, who works in a hospital [].
(What about the sister? Where is the main verb to complete the clause?)

- **CS Comma Splice:** Two independent clauses come together with a mere comma when they need a semicolon or a conjunction.

Mary and I plan to leave Tuesday for New York [,] we will spend five days there before sailing for Europe.

I studied diligently for the test [,]however, I failed.

- **RO Run-on Sentence:** Two independent clauses run together without any punctuation when they need either a semicolon or separation into two sentences.

Mary and I plan to leave Tuesday for New York [] we will spend five days there before sailing for Europe.

- **SV Agr. Faulty Subject-verb Agreement:** The subject does not agree in number with its verb.

The main problem of most homemakers are all their trips to transport children here, there, and yonder.

None of the children have enough clothes for camp.

- **ProAnt Agr. Faulty Pronoun-antecedent Agreement:** A pronoun does not agree in number with its antecedent.

The theatre did not reach their goal of 600 subscribers.

Everyone should bring their book to class.

- **MM/Dang. Mod. Misplaced or Dangling Modifier:** A sentence fails to convey sense in reading because a participial phrase or other construction does not clearly modify the correct word.

As a mother of five children, my ironing board is always up.
(Marvelous ironing board! Already the mother of five!)

The author claims the revolt was caused by corruption in the first chapter.
(How can a chapter be corrupt?)

- **PR Pronoun Reference Fault:** A pronoun fails to refer accurately to its antecedent.

Take the cover off the swing and paint it red. (What should be painted? The cover or the swing?)

The dog barked constantly and disturbed the neighbors. This distressed his owners.
(What distressed his owners? The barking? The neighbors' irritation? Both?)

Though the following do not qualify as "sins," they can weaken writing and should be used sparingly or avoided when possible:

- **PV Passive Voice:** Avoid writing in passive voice instead of active voice.

The ball was hit by Joe.
Joe hit the ball.

- **CV Crutch verbs:** Avoid writing unnecessary weak, sprawling, imprecise verbs. We term them crutch verbs because poor writers employ them as crutches instead of reaching for a descriptive, lively, precise verb.

is	has	give	felt	seem
are	had	giving	feeling	seeming
am	make	gave	get	seemed
was	making	given	getting	put
were	made	show	got	putting
be	take	showing	gotten	state
being	taking	showed	use	stated
been	takes	feel	used	
have				

- We had been studying genetics for three weeks before the test.
We studied genetics for three weeks before the test.

I have to study.
I must study.

- **Expl Expletives:** Rely on expletives sparingly. (They include it is, there are, these are, etc.)

These are the men who will join the team.
These men will join the team.

There are six items in the sack.
The sack contains six items.

**It is likely that women will confront prejudice among traditional managers.
Likely, women will confront prejudice among tradition managers.**

