Grammar: Common Terms

Every language can be described in terms of its grammar. The grammar of a language refers to the way words are put together to make meaningful sentences. TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR has some useful terms that you need to be able to use when you are discussing your writing and referring to sources that describe writing in the following areas:

1. University standards for grammar
2. Using grammar terms to describe writing problems
3. Common grammar terms

GRAMMAR CHECKERS are notoriously erratic for checking and correcting grammar in your writing. However, they have a few helpful hints that will alert you to check your grammar. You will need to know grammar terms to interpret this information.

1. University standards for grammar

Most university subjects require that you write clearly and accurately and use correct punctuation, grammar, and spelling. Lack of application of these skills will give your marker a poor impression of your attitude towards your studies. Be sure to check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation thoroughly before handing in your work.

2. Using grammar terms to describe writing problems

When you receive feedback on your writing, spelling, grammar, and punctuation, errors are mostly described using common grammar terms.

Subject-verb agreement – make the subject of the sentence agree in number with the verb.

Use the correct *preposition* (up).
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Use a comma before a coordinating *conjunction* (e.g., and) that joins independent *clauses.*

Use a comma after an introductory *clause.*

Spell this word as 'practise' when it is used as a *verb*.

Shift the *adverb phrase* because it makes the *sentence* sound awkward. e.g., 'After finishing writing, students should proofread and edit their writing'.

Examples

1. A common error that students make in essays are **X** poor proofreading**.**

2. When students writes an essay **X** it is important to write a plan before starting to write.

3. The research shows that students who practice **X** their spelling skills are more likely to proofread their essays correctly.

4. To make out **X** for lost time, the student revised their study timetable.

5. Students should, after finishing writing **X**, proofread and edit their writing.

6. Assignment writing requires very careful planning and preparation **X** and it is essential that a detailed analysis of the question is performed before a written response is attempted.

NOTE: DICTIONARIES DESCRIBE WORDS AND THEIR FUNCTION USING GRAMMATICAL TERMS.

3. Common grammar terms

To proofread your work, you need to be able to identify different parts of a sentence. Below are some examples of common grammatical terms that are used to describe language functions.

TERM	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
noun[1] **proper noun**[2]	[1]A word that names a person, thing or idea [2]Names of specific persons, places and things that are capitalised	[1]teacher, car, freedom . . . [2]John Smith, Mount Cross, Brown Drive, Dog River, The Courier Express . . .
verb	A word or group of words that express actions, feelings, thoughts, and possessions	drive, refers, love, has, suggests, should be explained, cannot be considered, will be discussed . . .
adjective	A word that describes a noun, e.g., the quality, appearance or size	considerable, serious, impossible . . .
adverb	A word that describes a verb or an adjective	hopefully, happily, seriously, afterwards, very, most …
preposition	A word that comes before a noun to indicate a place, direction	in, on, at, under, by, from, during, after, through . . .
pronoun[1] **relative pronoun**[2]	[1]A word used in place of a noun [2]A word that introduces subordinate clauses functioning as adjectives	[1]I, you, he, she, it, we, they, them, their, this, that . . . [2]who, whom, whose, which, that
conjunction	A word that joins words or sentences	and, but, although, because . . .
phrase	A small group of words that are related and occur within a sentence or a clause.	. . . during the war . . . . . . after the 1980s . . . . . . the world's oil reserves . . . . . . struck off . . .
subject	The noun, noun group, or pronoun that performs the action of the verb.	<u>Cars</u> are a necessary form of transport. <u>The world's oil reserves</u> are becoming scarce. <u>It</u> could be argued . . .
clause	A group of words with a subject and a verb Main/independent clause expresses a complete thought and can be a sentence. Dependent clause does not express a complete thought and cannot be sentence.	The world's oil reserves are becoming scarce (main/independent clause) because there is a dependence on oil-driven technology (dependent clause).
sentence	A group of words that communicates a complete idea. A sentence contains one or more clauses, and must have a subject and at least one verb.	The world's oil reserves are becoming scarce. Because of the inclement weather, the swimming carnival was cancelled. OR The swimming carnival was cancelled because of the inclement weather.