

Recognizing Common Errors in Usage, Grammar, and Punctuation

Usage Exercises: In the sentences below, choose the correct words. (<http://www.me.vt.edu/writing/exercises/>)

- 1) We produced a small (amount / **number**) of automobiles this year, even (**fewer** / less) than last year.
- 2) The serum, which was (**composed** / comprised) of two antigens, had serious side (affects / **effects**).
- 3) Every 250 years, Pluto completes (**its** / it's) orbit about the sun.
- 4) Over the past three weeks, our team made (**continual** / continuous) improvements to the design.
- 5) The talk centered (around / **on**) the (principal / **principle**) of virtual work.
- 6) This report discusses how the eruption (**affected** / effected) the surrounding terrain.
- 7) Last year, Japan (lead / **led**) the world in automobile sales.
- 8) (Hopefully, / **It is hoped that**) the antibodies will destroy the cancer cells.
- 9) Reduced weight was the (**principal** / principle) reason for choosing aluminum.
- 10) All the bombings involved explosives (**that** / , which) contained the chemicals PETN and RDX.
- 11) All the bombings involved Semtex (that / , **which**) contains the chemicals PETN and RDX.
- 12) Following those descriptions, the criteria for assessing each system (**are** / is) given.
- 13) Thank you for the job offer. I am (anxious, **eager**) to begin work next month.

Grammar Exercises: Each of the word groups may have one of the following grammatical errors: run-on (RO), dangling modifier (DM), faulty parallelism (H), or unclear pronoun reference (ref). Identify and correct the error.

- 14) Climatologists have long recognized that global temperatures are **rising. However**, some skeptics argue that urban sprawl has created the appearance of warming where none has truly happened. (RO)
- 15) The retained radiation heats the earth's **atmosphere. Therefore**, the planet keeps warm. (RO)
- 16) Printed circuit board relays are limited to small coil **voltages and contact** ratings, and lack multi-pole configurations. (H)
- 17) Quickly replacing the jumper, **we retested the circuit and verified it** to be working properly.
- 18) Scientists have problems assuring that the viral vectors apply themselves to the correct cells. When implanted, **these vectors** tend to migrate throughout the body and miss targeted cells more often than not. (ref)
- 19) After an earthquake, **a lit match** or any open flame may cause a gas explosion. (H)
- 20) An oval shape is necessary in the die **cavity. Otherwise**, the flow of metal would be restricted. (RO)

Punctuation Exercises: Each of the following may have a punctuation error: undesired punctuation, missing punctuation, or punctuation that should be changed. Correct the punctuation error.

- 21) The new conductor, which will be available next **week, is** composed of barium, copper, and oxygen.
- 22) As World War II **escalated, the** United States became locked into a race with Germany to develop the first atomic bomb.
- 23) The three largest earthquakes occurred **in San** Francisco, Tokyo, and Lima.
- 24) The fluid serves as a transmission medium for hydrodynamic energy in the torque converter, hydrostatic energy in servos and logic **circuits, and** sliding friction energy in clutches.
- 25) The synergistic reactor contains a chamber in which the exhaust from the burning coal mixes with **limestone (see Appendix A)**.