

Are These Three Errors Worming Their Way Into Your Coffee?

By Jody Calkins

Doesn't it make you cringe when you see an error in your published work?

How did the error sneak past you in the first place?

Discovering an error in your published document can feel like finding out that you left your underwear lying around your tidy home when you're giving a new friend (or worse, a repair guy!) a tour.

Ugh!

How come you didn't see it before?

There are so many opportunities for errors to worm their way into your copy. Just like straightening up our homes when we're on the run can lead to embarrassment, writing and editing when we're in a rush can allow errors to sneak in and be difficult to catch.

The editing process takes time.

How many people do you know whip up an email and hit “Send” without reviewing what they’ve written?

From my recent experiences in the workplace, it’s quite a few. They’re busy, or should I say swamped, and they don’t take the time to make sure their messages are free of errors. Or maybe they do, but they rush through the review process and miss the errors.

Errors in our marketing campaigns can cause confusion and turn into costly mistakes. They can also sabotage your business. When it comes to people who don’t know you personally or who haven’t been following you and soaking in the value that you provide, errors in your writing work can turn them off. They can also cause a prospect to focus on the error and make it bigger than it really is.

While it’s easy to fault people for not taking the time to get it right, we have to realize that it takes time to write quality work that is clear and error-free. It’s no wonder so many errors occur when we live in a rushed society.

But that doesn’t excuse us from making our best effort, especially when it comes to writing for your business or writing to a client.

In this special guide, I will be sharing three types of writing errors that can show up in your copy if you’re not careful. We’ll also talk about ways that can help you catch them.

Let’s get started.

Error #1

How many times have you read a journal entry or the first draft of a business document and found that you wrote the wrong word? One that sounds similar to the one you had intended but definitely the wrong one. Or maybe it doesn't sound similar at all.

That happens to me all the time. I tell myself it's because my brain is moving in multiple directions when I write! (ha!)

Those words can be hard to catch and end up in the final draft if you're not careful.

When it comes to a headline though, it can be fun and catchy to make this error on purpose, like in the title for this guide. This type of error can get your readers to take notice, to awaken their senses (no pun intended), and interrupt their daily routine.

While it's okay to let one error slip (or two), it's another to let them litter your copy, especially in the main body of your document.

Headlines can be crazy and outrageous. But for the most part for business documents, you want to keep the main section of copy professional.

To help you eliminate this type of error, read your copy out loud, slowly, and word for word. Be on high alert for this type of error. Let the critic step in and do her job.

Error #2

Typos are another error that could be showing up in your coffee... er, copy.

These could be misspelled words, incorrect punctuation, or misused capitalization.

If these errors are missed, they can suggest to readers that you do not take your work seriously or that you do not provide exceptional service to your customers.

Clients expect you to be professional. If you are a lawyer or an accountant, a typo can imply the wrong things about your performance and how you operate your business. And it can lead to a bad long-lasting impression which can damage your reputation.

But with strong attention to detail, these errors can be fixed easily.

What if you don't have strong attention to detail skills?

Like I mentioned above for error #1, take your time. Read your writing out loud and do it slowly.

When you are reviewing your work, expect to find errors and question everything you have written.

If you have put a lot of effort into the first draft and the message you want to share, you'll likely find that most of the work has already been done. If you rushed through

the first draft, you're likely to find that your writing needs a bit of reworking. And that's okay. Sometimes an overhaul of our work can yield even better writing than if we had written it well enough the first time.

Another thing to keep in mind is that for longer projects, you will need to put your work through many revisions. It won't be perfect after the first revision. It may not even be close-to-perfect after four revisions. But each revision should yield better and better writing.

Error #3

The last type of error I wanted to bring up is the incorrect noun/verb agreement.

This one can be hard to catch.

Typically, the error occurs when the writer is distracted by phrases or side notes he places between the noun and the verb. And sometimes the writer isn't sure if he should use the plural form of the verb or the singular form.

This error isn't a major error like the other two we've discussed because it *is* harder to catch, but it can suggest to clients and prospects, if they catch it, that your business is not a professional one.

No one is perfect and errors happen, but there is something about companies that get the grammar correct (or that put out marketing materials and other written documents that are error-free). It suggests that they know what they're doing and that they operate a professional business. And it makes them look like they are well-established. (The same goes for professional graphic design. Professional copy and professional graphic design go hand in hand.)

These companies have ad agencies making sure their advertising is professional. And each campaign is reviewed by many people. If an error gets through the first check, there is someone else who can catch it. (True, there are errors that get out even with an ad agency or

marketing firm. It's just going to depend on the quality a particular agency provides.)

If you operate a small business or are a solo entrepreneur, you still have the ability to get your writing work reviewed by a professional or someone who has really strong attention to detail skills.

At the very least, having a friend review your work could provide some insight. And if your friend happens to be a writer and grammarian, all the better!

From my experience, nonwriters can be great critics; however, if literature and language are not their expertise and if they don't have strong attention to detail skills, they may not catch everything that needs to be fixed.

To catch the noun/verb error, the writer (or editor) must avoid the distraction by skipping over the words between the noun and the verb, reading only the noun and verb together. This helps you focus on one thing at a time, which is to find the correct form of the verb for your sentence.

Also, just like for the other two types of errors, read your writing slowly and with a critical eye. And take your time. Set your writing work aside for a few days. Then go back to it with fresh eyes and fix anything that doesn't seem right.

Special Invitation

Well, that concludes this special guide. I hope you have found it to be helpful.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions about writing or editing. I am always open to new topics or questions that I can feature on my blog and newsletter.

You can write to me here:

<http://emeryroad.com/contact>

I look forward to hearing from you!

In the meantime, come join me on my Facebook page where I share helpful tips for writers and entrepreneurs –

<http://facebook.com/emeryroad>

I can't wait to see you there!

Best of luck with your writing!

Jody Calkins

Writer & Editor

Emery Road Writing Services, LLC

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



As a Denver-based marketing communications writer and editor with sixteen years of writing experience, Jody Calkins helps businesses and professionals convey their messages through the written word.

She specializes in writing and editing marketing brochures, case studies, newsletters, and reports, and has experience working with a variety of industries and fields including business management, corporate risk management, security protection, and leadership development.

Jody is an Institute of Children's Literature graduate, and she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Classics, the study of ancient Roman and Greek literature, language, history, architecture, and philosophy, from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

She is also the author of the following instructional guides:

- [*How to Write an eBook That Shines: A Practical Guide to Enhancing Your eBook Through Clarity, Quality, and Creativity*](#)
- [*How to Craft an Effective Case Study That Will Make Prospects Hire YOU!*](#)

She currently resides in Colorado with her husband, two cats, and one dog.

For information about her writing and editing services, please visit her website at <http://emeryroad.com>.

Join Jody on Twitter and Facebook!

www.Twitter.com/JodyCalkins | www.facebook.com/EmeryRoad