**Proofreading Guide: Most Common Student Mistakes**

Keep this in your binder for easy reference during in-class writing assignments.

Please ask me, during class or privately, if you are confused by any of this—I will gladly explain it! ☺

1. **Their/They’re/There.**

*Their* shows possession. *They’re* is a contraction of “they are.” *There* shows location.

Example: Officer! They’re running towards their car, which is parked over there!

2. **Apostrophes** show *possession* or a *contraction*.

Example: I like Leo’s hair. It’s spike-tastic! Its peaks remind me of the Sierras.

(“It’s” is a contraction of “it is” while “Its” simply shows possession.)

**Plural possession** requires the apostrophe to go **after** the “s.”

Example: My students’ musical taste becomes increasingly mysterious the more I age.

3. **Cussing** is an indication that you have a limited vocabulary and therefore shouldn’t be taken seriously as a writer. Use an academic tone.

4. **“A lot” is two words**, not one. Students make this mistake… a lot!

5. **Separate**. Some incorrectly spell it like this—seperate. This is such a common mistake that my computer auto-corrected it as I was typing.

6. **To, Too, Two.**

Two students were rowdy in class today. They kept talking to each other, and their voices were way too loud.

7. **Should have.** NOT “should of”. **Could have.** NOT “could of”.

Example: “Bubba, did you do your homework?”

“Should have. Could have. Didn’t.”

8. **Debt--**If you owe somebody money, you are in **debt**, not “dept”. You don’t go shopping with a “depit card”, so don’t write “dept” in your assignments.

9. Historical figures are not your friends. Do not refer to George Washington as “George.” He is either “George Washington” or “Washington.”

10. **Capitalize proper nouns.** Examples: London, Bubba, Dreyer’s.

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| **Common Noun** | **Proper Noun** |
| writer teacher beagle cookie city restaurant document school | Herman Melville Mr. Butkevich Snoopy Oreo Orlando Tito's Taco Palace Declaration of Independence University of Southern California |