Rookie Mistakes That Even Veterans Make

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“Then” is an adverb, not a conjunction.

then ★

adv. [[ME: see THAN]] 1 at that time [he was young then] 2 soon afterward; next in time [he took his hat and then left] 3 next in order [first comes alpha and then beta] 5 in that case; therefore; accordingly [if it rains, then there will be no picnic] 5 besides; moreover [he enjoys walking, and then there are the benefits of exercise] 6 at another time or at other times: used as a correlative with now, sometimes, etc. [now it’s warm, then it’s freezing] –adj. of that time; being such at that time: often in comb. [the then-director] –n. that time [by then, they were gone] –but then but on the other hand; but at the same time –then again from the opposed point of view; on the other hand –then and there at that time and in that place; at once –what then? what would happen in that case?
“Then” is an adverb, not a conjunction.

- WRONG: Jay took the record out of the sleeve, then put it on the turntable.
- RIGHT: Jay took the record out of the sleeve and then put it on the turntable.
- RIGHT: Jay took the record out of the sleeve. Then he put it on the turntable.
Correlative Conjunctions

- EXAMPLES: either...or, neither...nor, both...and, not only...but also, not...but

- No comma.

- What comes before the first conjunction must make grammatical sense with what comes after the second conjunction.
Correlative Conjunctions

I have not only been to the ACES conference but also the Editors Canada conference.

I have been to not only the ACES conference but also the Editors Canada conference.
Correlative Conjunctions

- I either will or I won’t.
- I either will or won’t.
- Either I will or I won’t.
An apostrophe is an apostrophe is an apostrophe. A single opening quotation mark should never take the place of an apostrophe.

The ’80s were fabulous.
Sic ‘im, boy!
(sic) ‘im, boy!
It’s not you, it’s me.

I can’t go to the beach, I don’t have sunscreen.
Em Dash

dash (-)

Follow these guidelines:

ABRUPT CHANGE: Use dashes to denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence or an emphatic pause: *Through her long reign, the queen and her family have adapted – usually skillfully – to the changing taste of the time.* But avoid overuse of dashes to set off phrases when commas would suffice.

SERIES WITHIN A PHRASE: When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas, use dashes to set off the full phrase: *He listed the qualities – intelligence, humor, conservatism, independence – that he liked in an executive.*

ATTRIBUTION: Use a dash before an author’s or composer’s name at the end of a quotation: *“Who steals my purse steals trash.” – Shakespeare.*
Em Dash

The Em Dash (—)

Em dashes should be used in the following situations:

- To indicate an important break in thought or in sentence structure:
  
  The title—if it has a title—cannot be found on this page.  
  Books, paper, pens—these are essential materials.

- To set off an appositive that is a series:
  
  The winners—Allen, Susan, and Dan—have entered the finals.

- To mean namely, in other words, that is, and similar expressions that precede explanations:
  
  The umpire had it in his power to prevent the trouble—he could have stopped the game.

- To indicate speech that is broken or faltering:
  
  “I—I’m not sure exactly where—where they went,” he stammered.

- After an incomplete sentence (the em dash should be used without a period):
  
  She murmured, “When I saw the giant mushroom cloud in the sky—”

Four spaced periods may be used in place of the em dash in this situation. See the section titled “The Ellipsis ( . . . or . . . )” later in this part.
We aren’t going to make it — there are too many traffic lights between here and there.

It’s not that your way is right — it’s just that I don’t care enough.

It’s not that your way is right; it’s just that I don’t care enough.
Parallel Construction

- I’m married and have two kids.

I am married and have two kids.

- She is a great listener, kisser and has a good sense of humor.

She is a great listener and kisser and has a good sense of humor.
A lover of green eggs and ham, he eats them on a bus, on a hill, in a plane, in a car, in a café and at a baseball game.
Give this envelope to whomever is the winner.

WRONG

Give this envelope to (him/her) whoever is the winner.
I drink wine at least four or five times a week.

Is it at least four or at least five?

I drink wine at least four times a week.

I drink wine four or five times a week.
The person who “doesn’t want to talk about it” usually does.

My daughter has completely alienated me because I “can’t find my own way.”
The person who doesn’t “want to talk about it” usually does.

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

My daughter has completely alienated me because I can’t find my own way.

“You can’t find your own way.”
Last year, 40 percent of attendees at the ACES conference were freelancers. This year, 50 percent of people at the conference are freelancers.
There were 58,220 Americans killed in the Vietnam War. Of those soldiers, 523 died in Cambodia.

Only members of the Army are soldiers.
Military

- Army: soldiers
- Marine Corps: Marines
- Navy: sailors
- Air Force: airmen
- Coast Guard: Coast Guardsmen

catchall: service members, troops, members of the armed forces/military
There were 58,220 American casualties in the Vietnam War.
There were 58,220 American casualties in the Vietnam War.

There were more than 366,000 American casualties in the Vietnam War, including those who were killed, wounded, missing or captured in action.
For months, we flirted back and forth when she came into the store and one day finally exchanged numbers.

Last week, he brought a suitcase over and has spent every night here since.

For months, we flirted back and forth when she came into the store, and one day we finally exchanged numbers.

Last week, he brought a suitcase over, and he has spent every night here since.
A cause you used to be passionate about has lost luster in your mind’s eye. You’ll hone in on exactly why.
home verb

inflected form(s): -ed/-ing/-s

intransitive verb

1 a: to go or return home
   <a plane homes to its carrier>
   <when school is out a boy homes to his dog and his marbles>
specifically, of an animal: to return accurately to its home or natal area from a distance
   <a pigeon homes to its loft>
   <a salmon homes to the stream in which it was spawned>

b: to move toward an objective by following a beam or landmark — usually used with on or in
   <picked up a radio beam and homed on it toward the fiord — Sloan Wilson>
   <mariners ... sought the dark spires of Oakland’s redwoods to home on — J. W. Noble>
   <with one engine out of action, the aircraft turned back and homed in on the ... radio beacon — U.N. Bulletin>

c: to become guided to a target by an emanation from it — usually used with on or in
   <the new long-range electric torpedo ... homes on the noise of the target ship’s propellers — New York Times>
   <keep the missile homing in on the source of heat — Newsweek>

hone transitive verb

inflected form(s): -ed/-ing/-s

1: to sharpen with or as if with a hone: WET
   <learned to hone and strop his razor correctly — G. S. Perry>
   <honed his antlers sharp as knives — D. C. Peattie>
   <the Yankee character was honed sharp right here — Bernard DeVoto>

2: to enlarge or smooth with a hone
   <cylinder bodies are bored and then honed to a mirror finish — Mechanical Engineering>
   <the walls of the vestibule are lined with honed pink stone from Mankato — American Guide Series: Minnesota>
Most usage commentators consider *hone in* to be a mistake for *home in*. The use may have arisen from *home in* by the weakening of the \m\ sound to \n\ or it may have developed simply because of the influence of *hone*, with perhaps an underlying sense that “honing” figuratively involves a narrowing or sharpening of focus. Whatever the explanation of its origins, it has established itself in American English and has begun to make a few inroads into British English as well. Even so, your use of it especially in writing is likely to be called a mistake. *Home in* or in figurative use *zero in* is an easy alternative.

**Origin ofHONE IN**

alteration of *home in*

First Known Use: 1965
If you’re one of those people that gets heartburn and then treats...

If you’re one of those people that get heartburn and then treat...
The girl was walking on the sidewalk and dropped her scoop of ice cream on the cement.

The girl was walking on the sidewalk and dropped her scoop of ice cream on the concrete.
Cement/Concrete

**cement**

*Cement* is the powder mixed with water and sand or gravel to make *concrete*. The proper term is *concrete* (not *cement*) *pavement*, *blocks*, *driveways*, etc.
If ever there were a bad president, it’s Donald Trump.
If ever there was a bad president, it’s Donald Trump.
If ever there were a rapture, I would surely be left behind to burn.
This session began at 1 p.m. CST.

This session began at 1 p.m. CDT.
Plethora

A flavorful medley of vegetables, the heart of this meal is the plethora of tender, savory beef.
— KoreAm, 2003
pleth.o.ra ★

(plethˈərə)

n. [ML < Gr plēthōrē < pēthein, to be full; overabundance; excess] 1 the state of being too full; overabundance; excess 2 an abnormal condition characterized by an excess of blood in the circulatory system or in some part of it
pleth·o·ra noun  \ple-the-ra sometimes ple-\thor-\a\  

plural -s

1  : a bodily condition characterized by an excess of blood and marked by turgescence and a florid complexion

2  : an often undesirable or hampering superfluity : EXCESS, PROFUSION
   <a plethora of ... attractions to look at — Janet Flanner>
   <to plow through a plethora of references — Dwight MacDonald>
   <the plethora of distracting activities — Virgil Thomson>

3  : a defect of wood resulting from excessive and uneven growth of the tissues

Origin of PLETHORA

Medieval Latin, from Greek plēthōra fullness, plethora, from plēthein to be full — more at FULL

First Known Use: 1541 (sense 1)
3. Usually with of. Originally in pejorative sense: an excessive supply, an overabundance; an undesirably large quantity. Subsequently, and more usually, in neutral or favourable sense: a very large amount, quantity, or variety.
In an effort to recreate their college experience, the 30-somethings played a game of Beirut.

In an effort to re-create their college experience, the 30-somethings played a game of Beirut.
Recreate/Re-create

**rec.re.ate**

(rek’rē āt)

*vt.* -at'ed, -at'ing [\[< L recreatus, pp. of recreare, to restore, refresh, create anew: see RE- & CREATE]] to put fresh life into; refresh or restore in body or mind, esp. after work, by play, amusement, or relaxation

*vi.* to take recreation

-re•c·re•a•tive adj.

- The 30-somethings recreated by playing a nostalgic game of Beirut.
“Aren’t I great?”
Myths, Lies, and Half-Truths of Language Usage

Professor John McWhorter
Columbia University
“Podium” Instead of “Lectern”

A speaker stands *behind a lectern, on a podium or rostrum, or in the pulpit.*
Redundancies

- She made it clear that the terms of the agreement were unacceptable.

She made clear that the terms of the agreement were unacceptable.
Redundancies

\textbf{that (conjunction)} ★

Use the conjunction \textit{that} to introduce a dependent clause if the sentence sounds or looks awkward without it. There are no hard-and-fast rules, but in general:

- \textit{That} usually may be omitted when a dependent clause immediately follows a form of the verb \textit{to say}: \textit{The president said he had signed the bill}.

- \textit{That} should be used when a time element intervenes between the verb and the dependent clause: \textit{The president said Monday that he had signed the bill}.

- \textit{That} usually is necessary after some verbs. They include: \textit{advocate, assert, contend, declare, estimate, make clear, point out, propose} and \textit{state}.

- \textit{That} is required before subordinate clauses beginning with conjunctions such as \textit{after, although, because, before, in addition to, until} and \textit{while}: \textit{Haldeman said that after he learned of Nixon’s intention to resign, he sought pardons for all connected with Watergate}.

When in doubt, include \textit{that}. Omission can hurt. Inclusion never does.
Redundancies

The reason why I hate you is because I saw a picture of you in Charlottesville.

The reason I hate you is I saw a picture of you in Charlottesville.
**REASON IS BECAUSE:** Use *reason is that*. See *because*.

**Incorrect:** His *reason* for being late *was because* he could not find his hat.

**Correct:** Kristin’s *reason* for leaving early *was that* she felt ill.

**REASON WHY:** The *why* is redundant. See *reason is because*. 
At the Pyeongchang Olympics, China’s Wu Dajing set a new record in short track speed skating by finishing the 500-meter race in 39.584 seconds.
record ★

Avoid the redundant *new record*.
The only person he told was Jack, his confidante.

The only person he told was Jack, his confidant.

Her confidante, Sue, knew all her dirty little secrets.
The proposed tax cuts will benefit the rich.

The proposed tax cuts would benefit the rich.
After looking at all the menu options, the steak jumped out at her.

DANGLING MODIFIER
Dangling Modifiers/Participles

- Horrid and putrid, he walked past the roadkill.

- Your lack of preparation will bite you in the ass while taking the exam.
A major battle in 9 A.D. established this river as the boundary between the Roman Empire and Germany.

A major battle in A.D. 9 established this river as the boundary between the Roman Empire and Germany.
Acceptable in all references for *anno Domini*: in the year of the Lord. Because the full phrase would read *in the year of the Lord 96*, the abbreviation *A.D.* goes before the figure for the year: *A.D. 96.*
LIKE

Yes, I try to use such as when I’m making an inclusive comparison. I was a sucker for brunettes such as Valerie Bertinelli and Phoebe Cates. Many consider this a bogus distinction, and I understand that position. I am talking about tiny acts of elegance, and this is a pretty tiny one. If I had used like rather than such as in my sentence about brunettes, nobody would think I was referring to Barbara Hershey and Mia Sara but not Valerie or Phoebe. But bear with me. I’ve pointed out that the moral scold and slot-machine enthusiast Bill Bennett railed against behaviors like gambling but not against gambling. I’ve said that while food snobs like me consider Old Ebbitt Grill a D.C. tourist trap, I happen to like the place. I’ve pointed to a deft Psychedelic Furs lyric that depends on the distinction: I’ve been waiting all night for someone like you / But you’ll have to do.