The VirtualWritingTutor Revision Strategies Card

version 1.1

By Nicholas Walker

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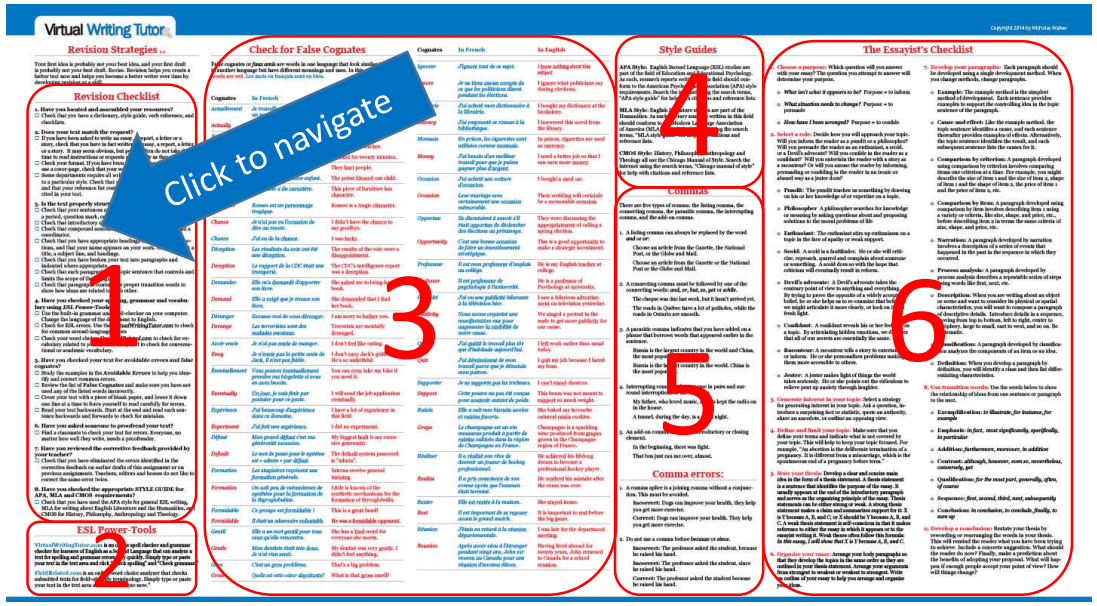
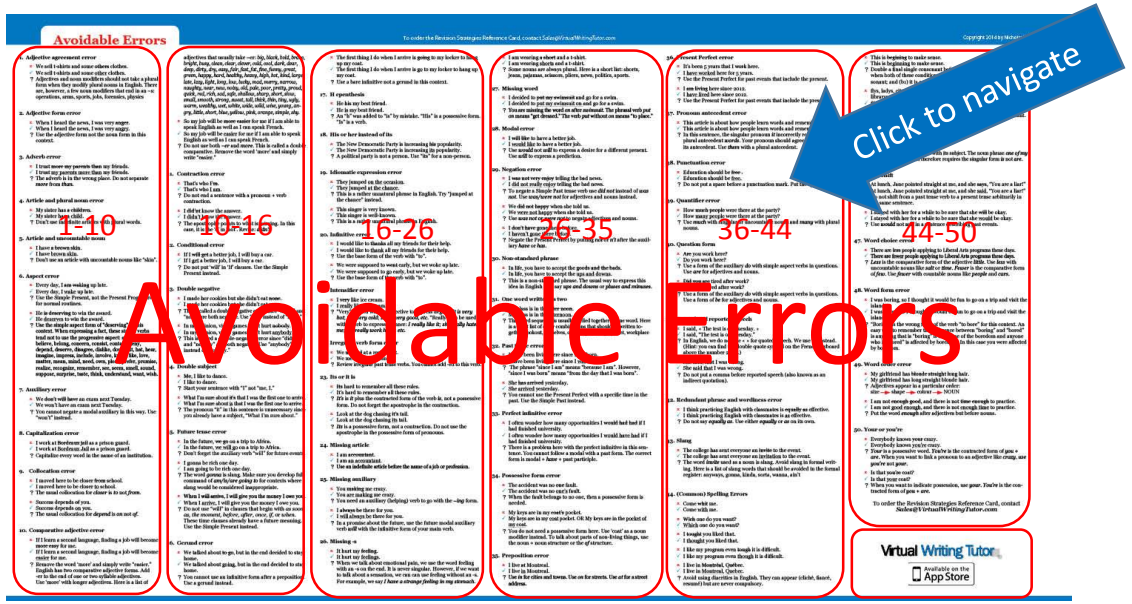
For use with the Virtual Writing Tutor Revision Strategies Card

Virtual Writing Tutor

Revision Strategies Card About





Good writers familiarize themselves with available resources.

The Virtual Writing Tutor Revision Strategies Card is a resource for ESL writers from Bokomaru Publications. It is a companion resource to the free VirtualWritingTutor.com website.

The map on the left is hyperlinked. Use your mouse to click on the section you want to review. Hit the space bar to see the next slide in that section.

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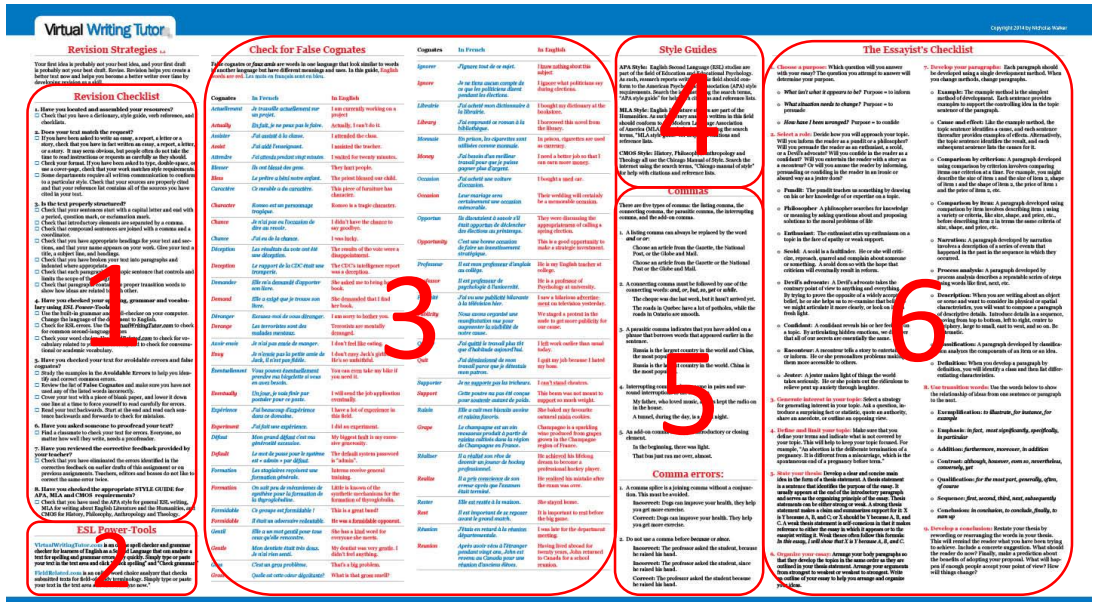

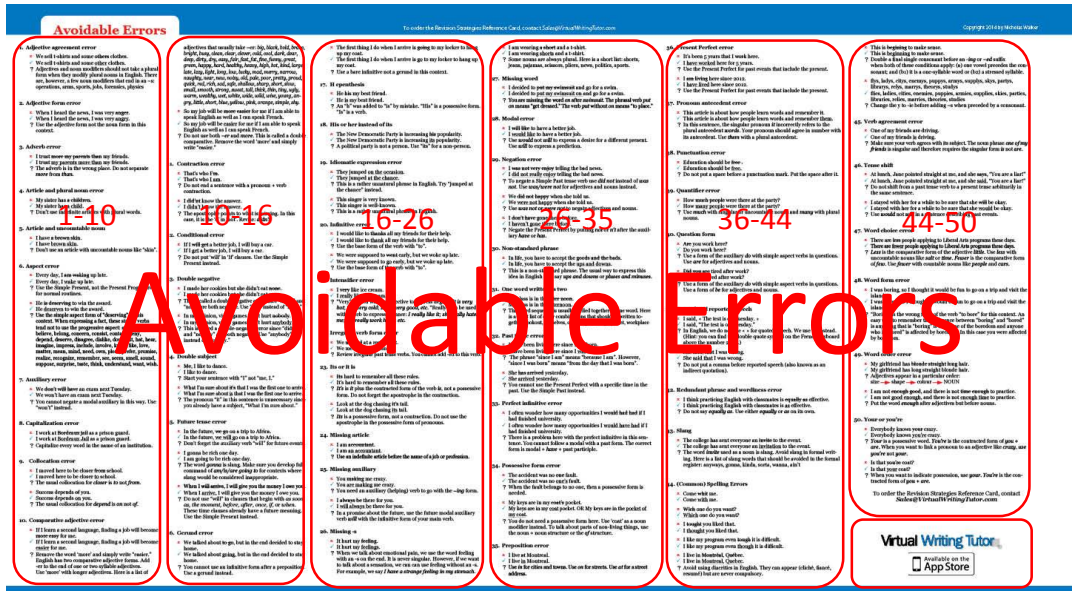

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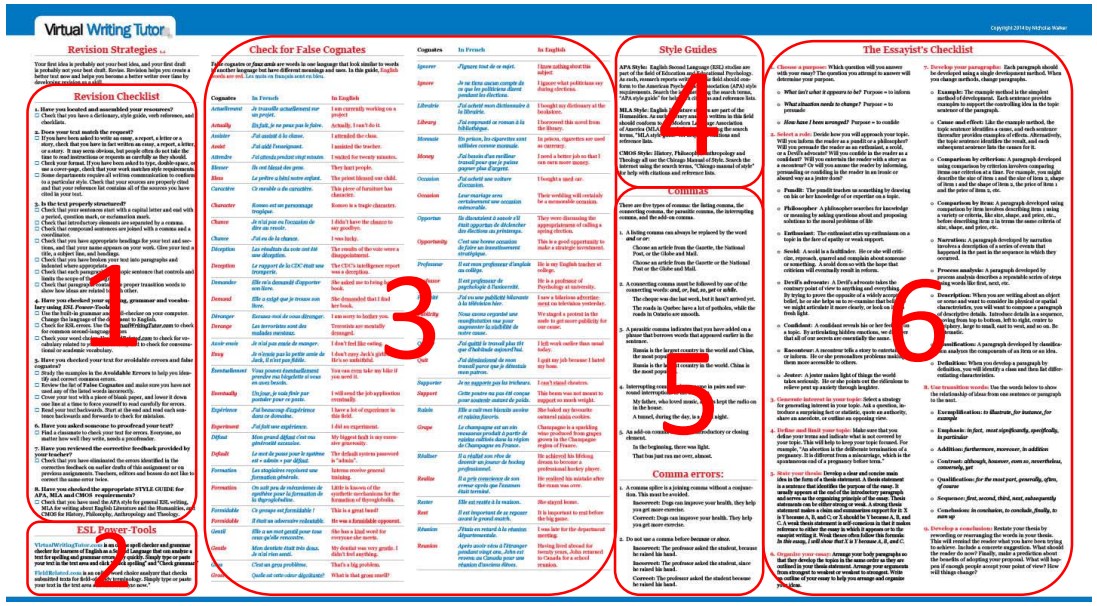
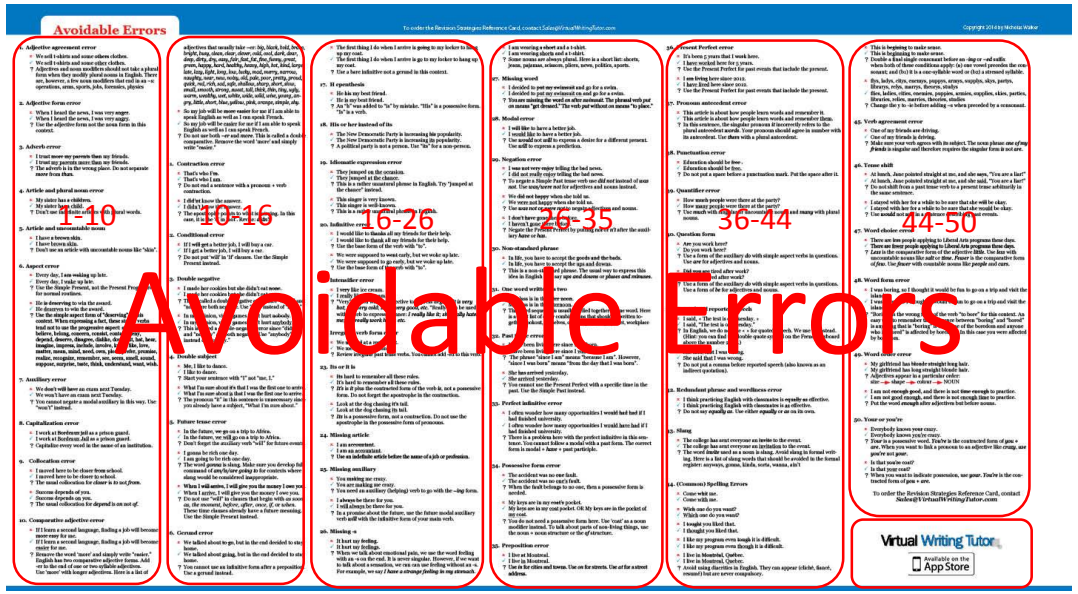
Please take the time to familiarize yourself with our products, and the range of ways that you can be part of the collaborative project that is Bokomaru Publications.





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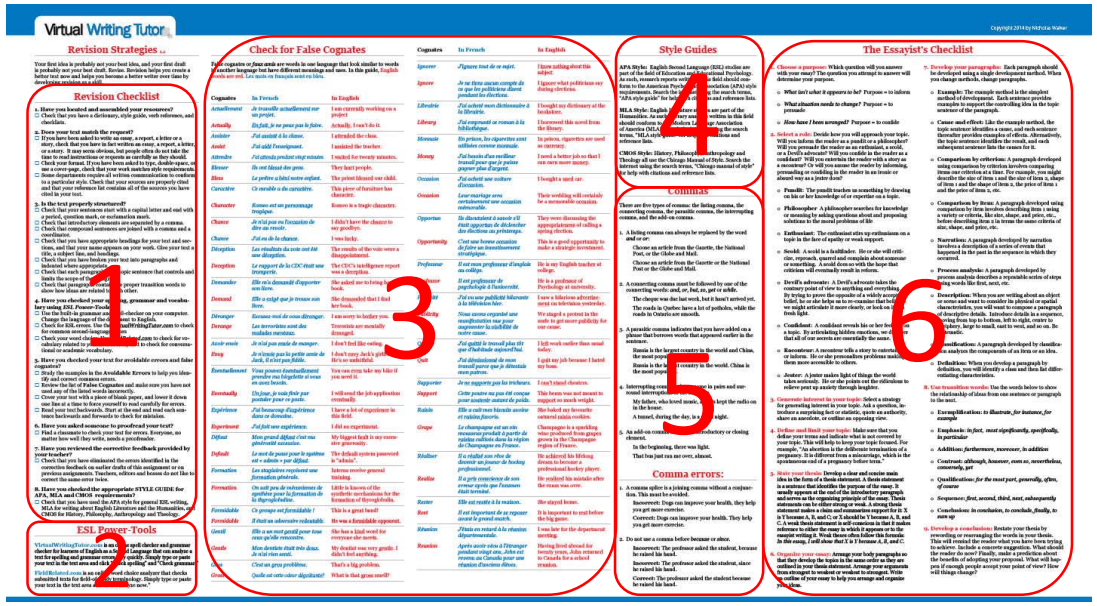
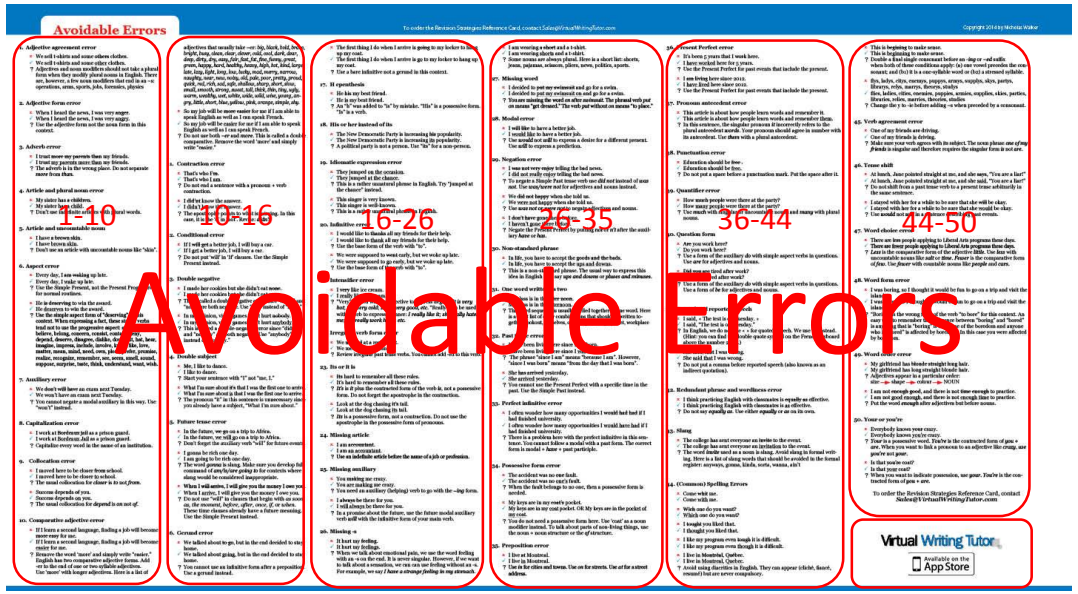
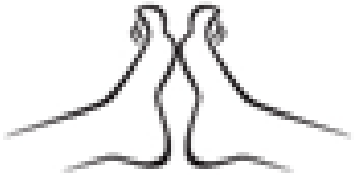




What's with the feet? *Boko-maru* is a made-up word from a Kurt Vonnegut novel called *Cat's Cradle*. It describes how two seated children at either end of a sofa sometimes place the palms of their feet against the other's in a reciprocal and collaborative dance.

Boko-maru is therefore a symbol of playfulness, trust and collaboration.



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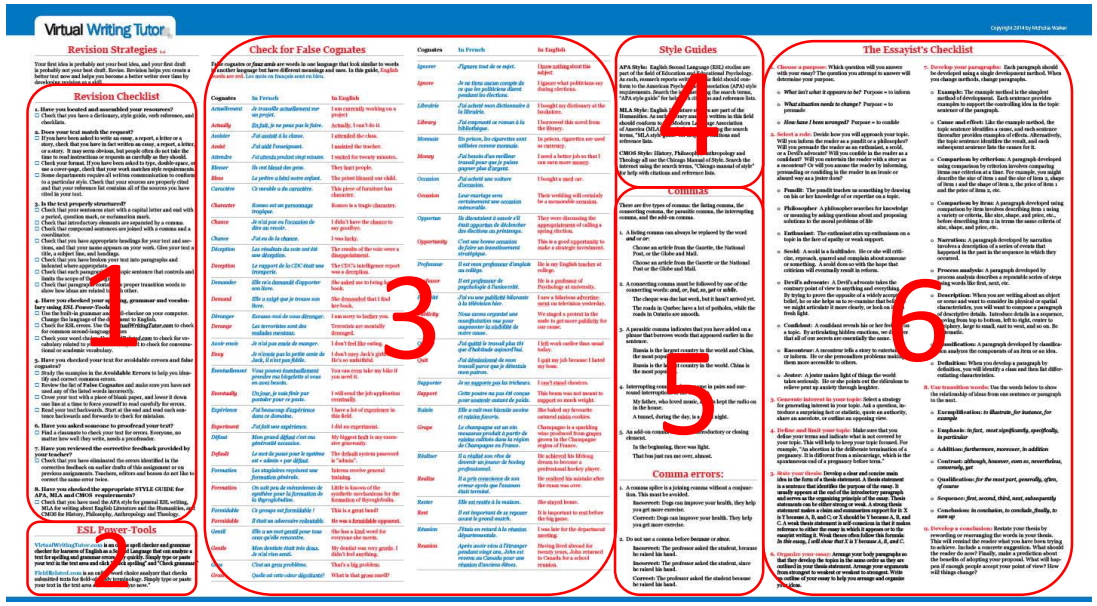
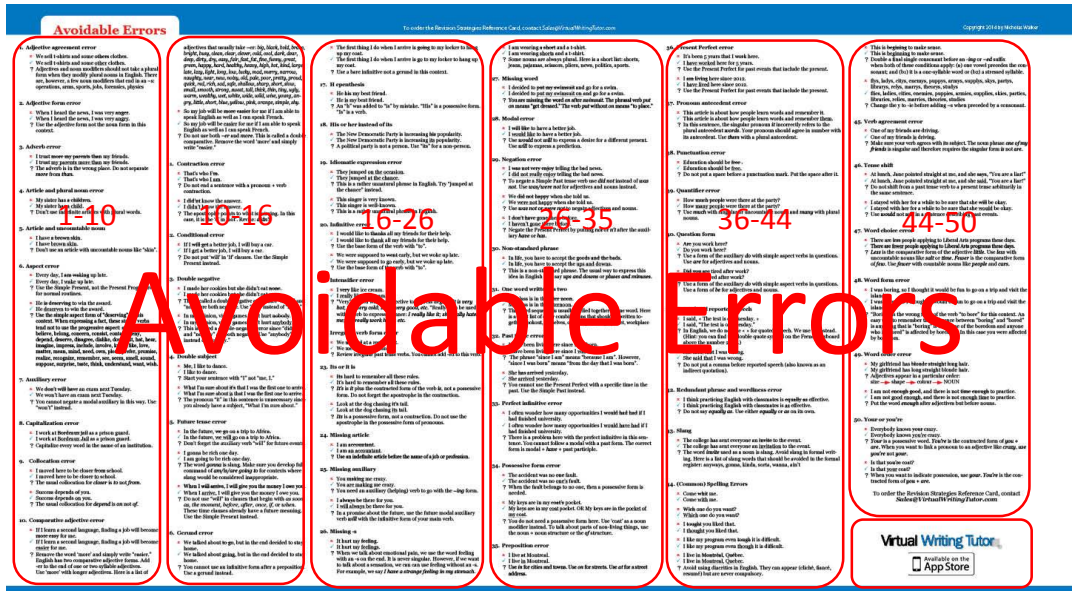
Revision Strategies Card
Revision Checklist



Good writers are systematic in the way they plan and review their writing.



The *Revision Checklist* provides a systematic way to review a text. Simply read down the list, checking off each step once you have done it. With time, you will internalize this revision checklist as an automatic cognitive routine and become a better writer in the process.

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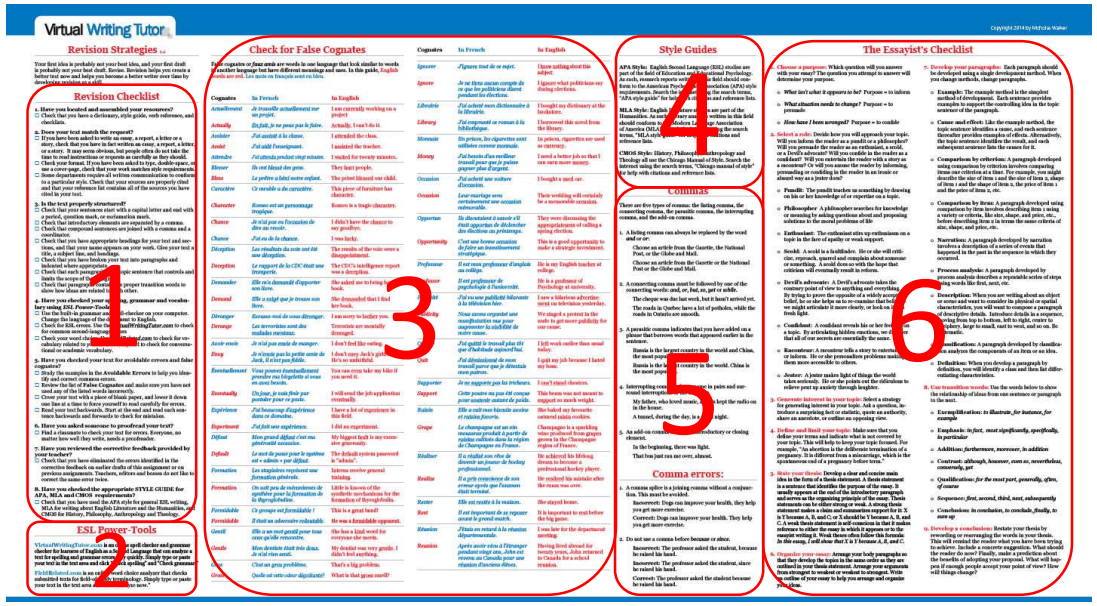
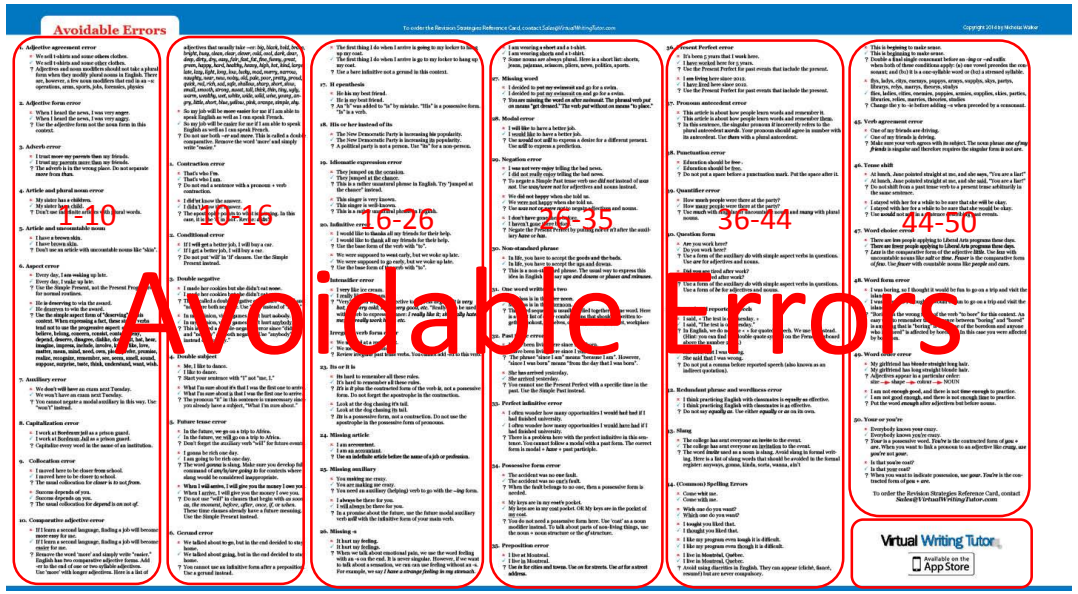
Revision Checklist 1-2





Revision Checklist

1. Have you located and assembled your resources?

- ✓ Check that you have a dictionary, style guide, verb reference, and checklists.

2. Does your text match the request?

- ✓ If you have been asked to write an essay, a report, a letter, a story, check that you have in fact written an essay, a report, a letter, or a story. It may seem obvious, but people often do not take the time to read instructions or requests as carefully as they should.
- ✓ Check your format. If you have been asked to type, double-space, or use a cover-page, check that your work matches style requirements.
- ✓ Some departments require all written communication to conform to a particular style. Check that your sources are properly cited and that your reference list contains all of the sources you have cited in your text.

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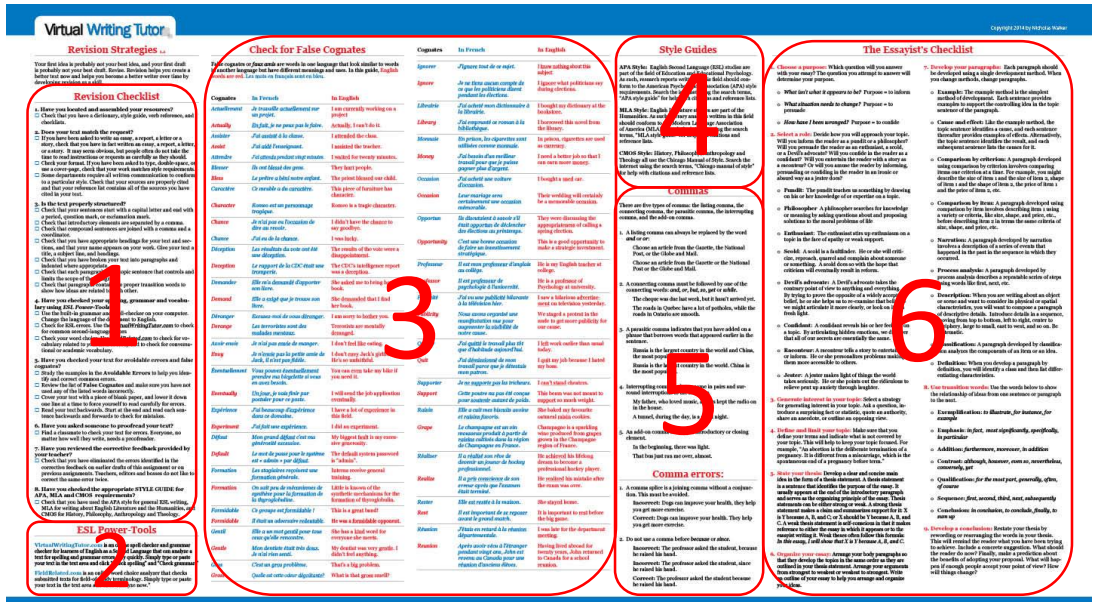
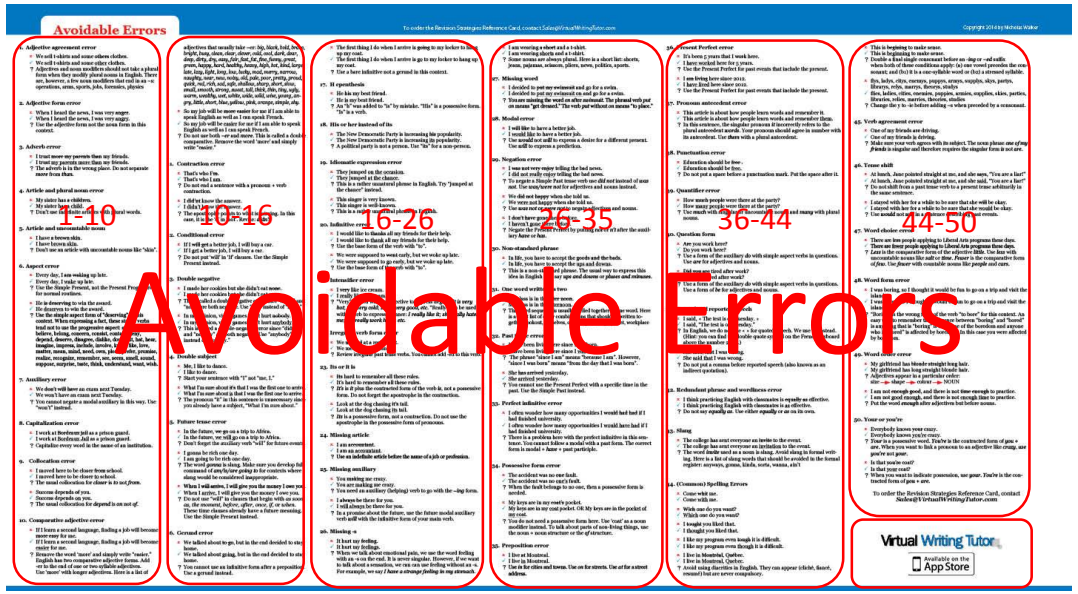
Revision Checklist 3





3. Is the text properly structured?
- ☑ Check that your sentences start with a capital letter and end with a period, question mark, or exclamation mark.
- ☑ Check that introductory elements are separated by a comma.
- ☑ Check that compound sentences are joined with a comma and a coordinator.
- ☑ Check that you have appropriate headings for your text and sections, and that your name appears on your work. Give your text a title, a subject line, and headings.
- ☑ Check that you have broken your text into paragraphs and indented where appropriate.
- ☑ Check that each paragraph has a topic sentence that controls and limits the scope of the paragraph.
- ☑ Check that paragraphs contain the proper transition words to show how ideas are related to each other.

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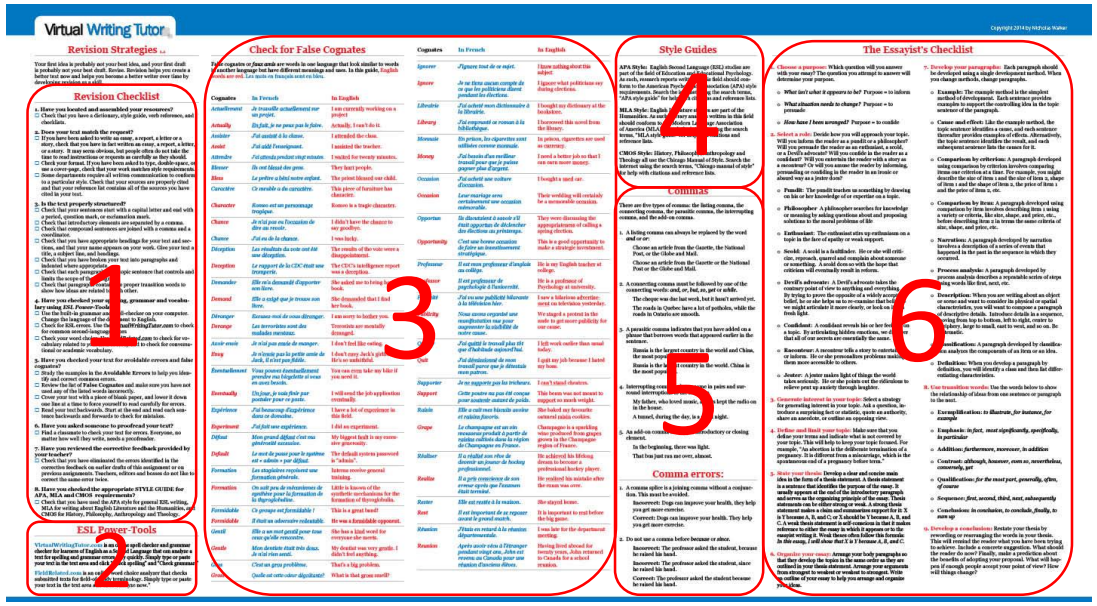
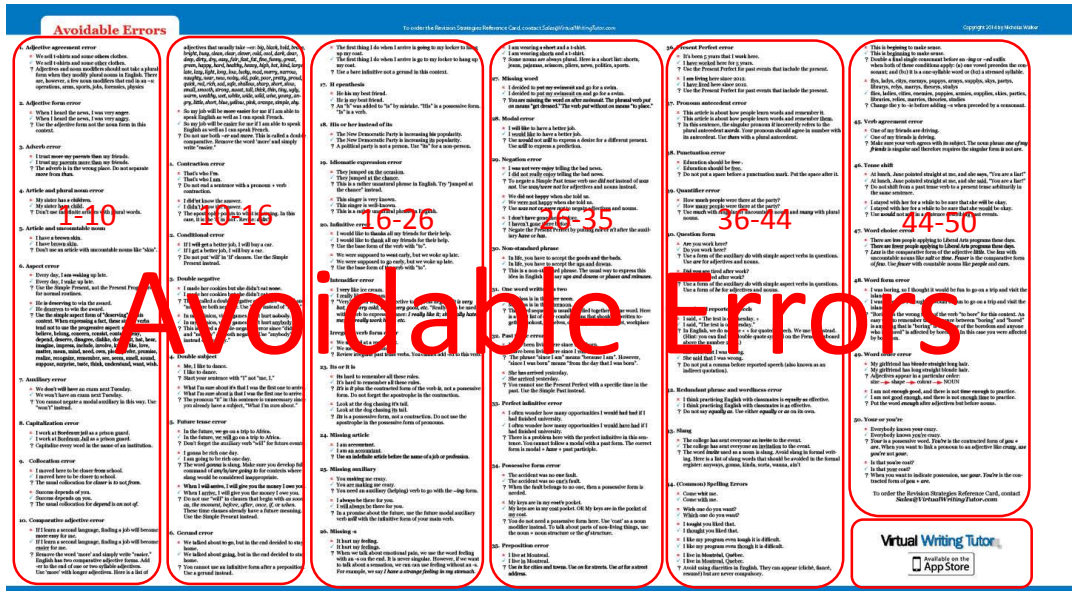
Revision Checklist 4





4. Have you checked your spelling, grammar and vocabulary using *ESL Power-Tools*?

- ☑ Use the built-in grammar and spell-checker on your computer.
- ☑ Change the language of the document to English.
- ☑ Check for ESL errors. Use the *VirtualWritingTutor.com* to check for common second-language errors
- ☑ Check your word choice. Use *FieldRelated.com* to check for vocabulary related to your field of study and to check for conversational or academic vocabulary.

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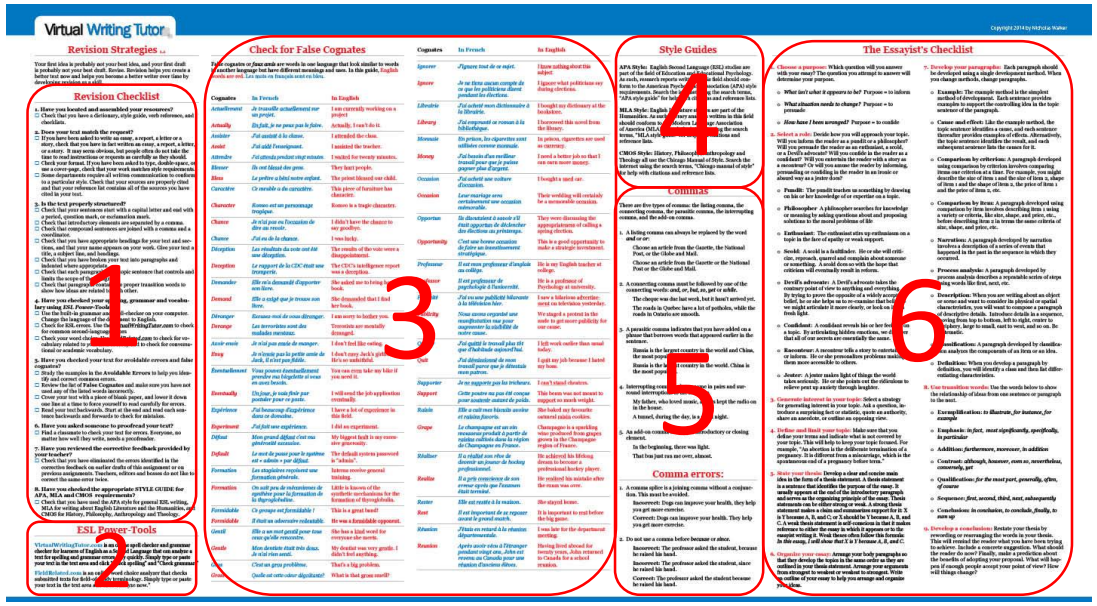
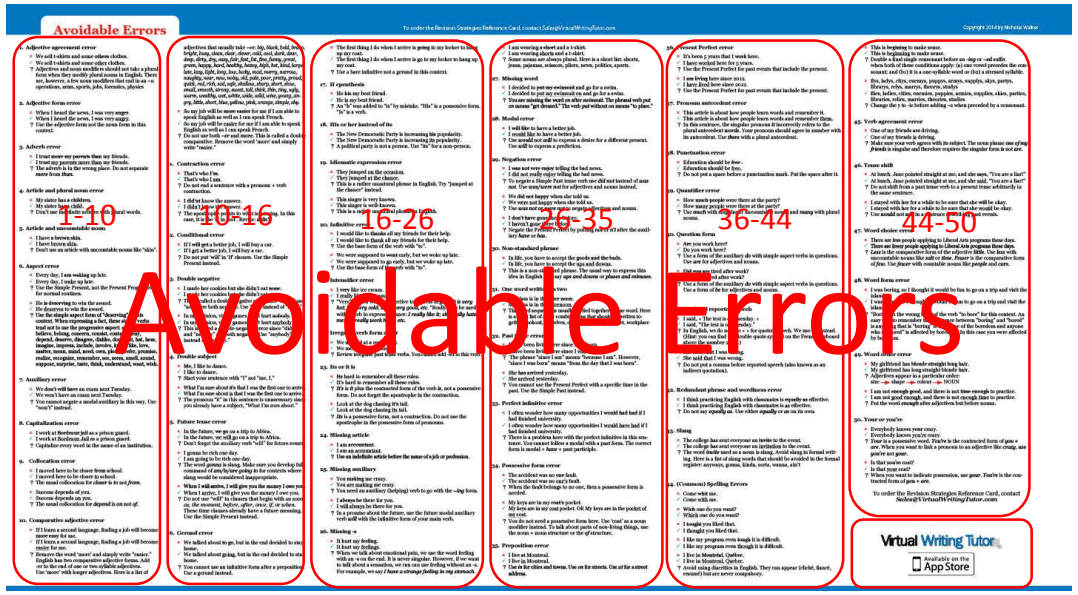
Revision Checklist 5





5. Have you checked your text for avoidable errors and false cognates?

- Study the examples in the **Avoidable Errors** to help you identify and correct common errors.
- Review the list of **False Cognates** and make sure you have not used any of the listed words incorrectly.
- Cover your text with a piece of blank paper, and lower it down one line at a time to force yourself to read carefully for errors.
- Read your text backwards. Start at the end and read each sentence backwards and forwards to check for mistakes.

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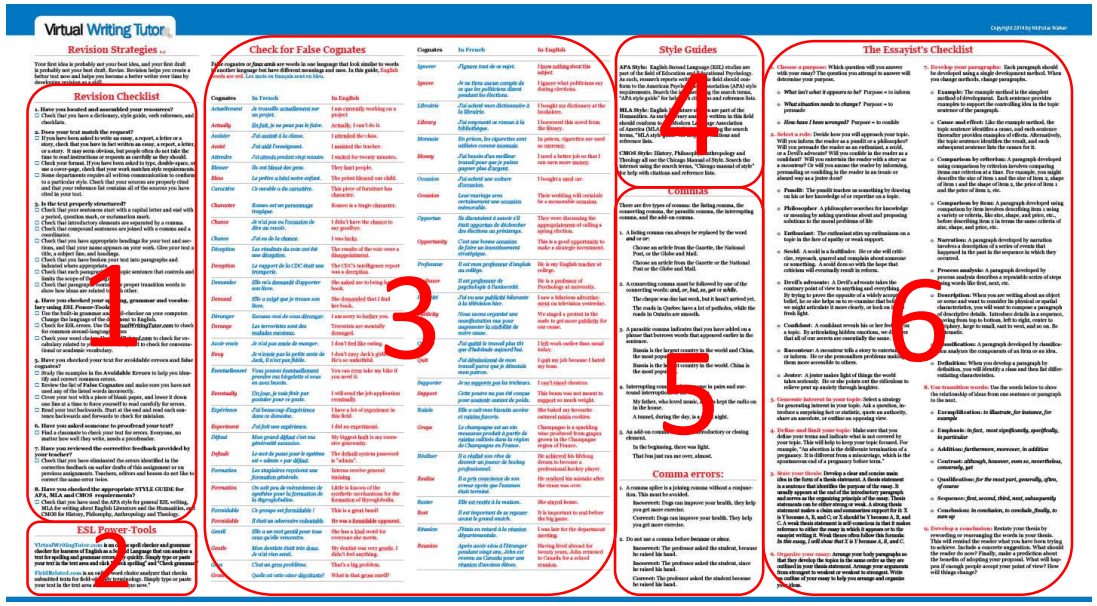
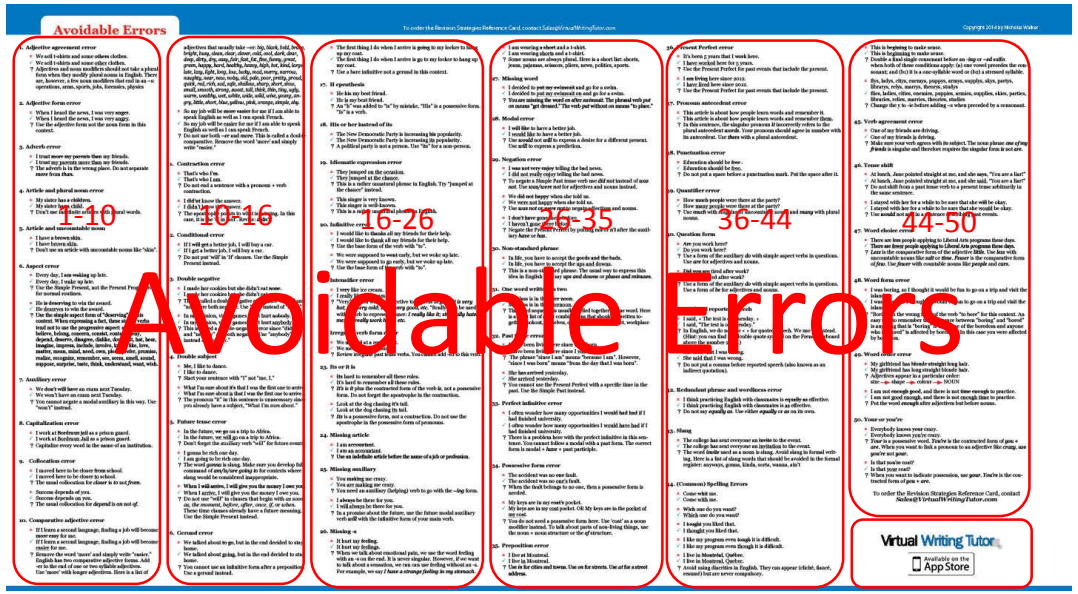
Revision Checklist 6-8





6. Have you asked someone to proofread your text?

- ☑ Find a classmate to check your text for errors. Everyone, no matter how well they write, needs a proofreader.

7. Have you reviewed the corrective feedback provided by your teacher?

- ☑ Check that you have eliminated the errors identified in the corrective feedback on earlier drafts of this assignment or on previous assignments. Teachers, editors and bosses do not like to correct the same error twice.

8. Have you checked the appropriate STYLE GUIDE for APA, MLA and CMOS requirements?

- ☑ Check that you have used the APA style for general ESL writing, MLA for writing about the English Literature and the Humanities, and CMOS for History, Philosophy, Anthropology and Theology.

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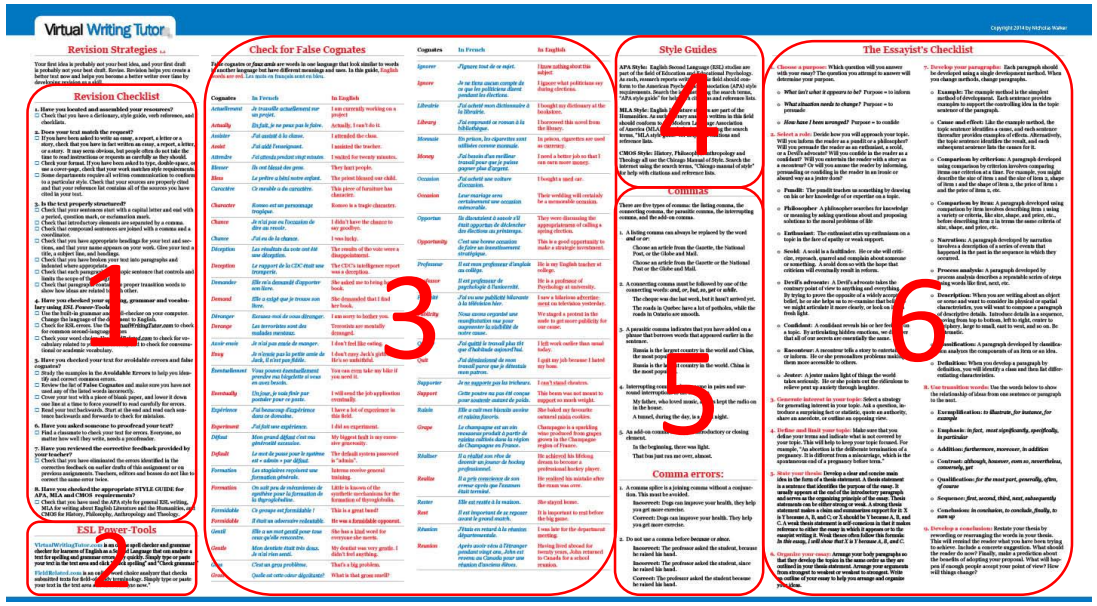
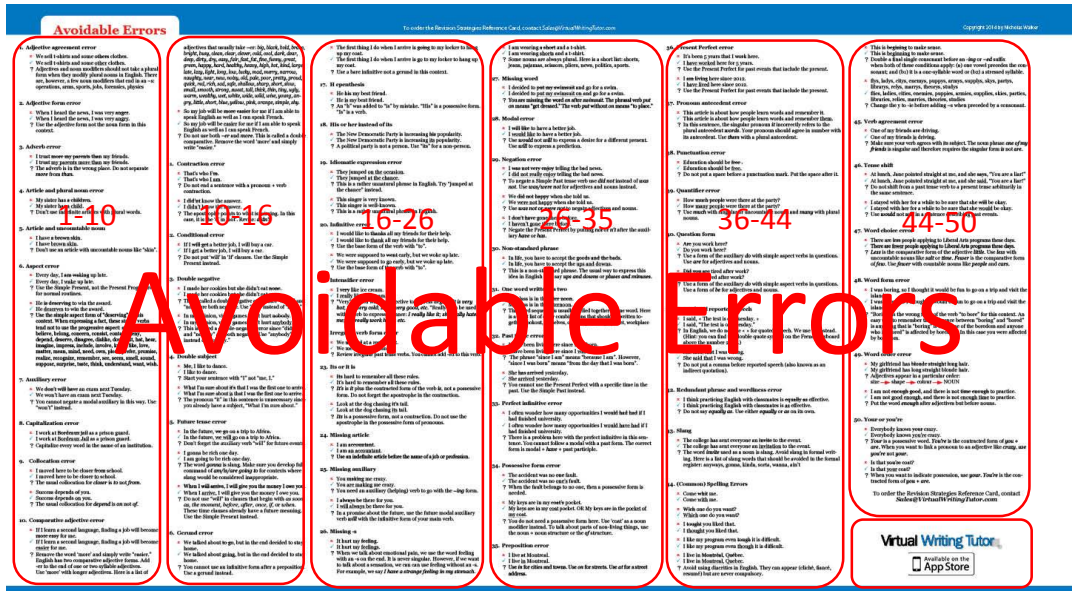
ESL Power Tools





Productive workers use power tools.

Technology can assist writers in the review process. Take time to familiarize yourself with available tools so that you can use them effectively.

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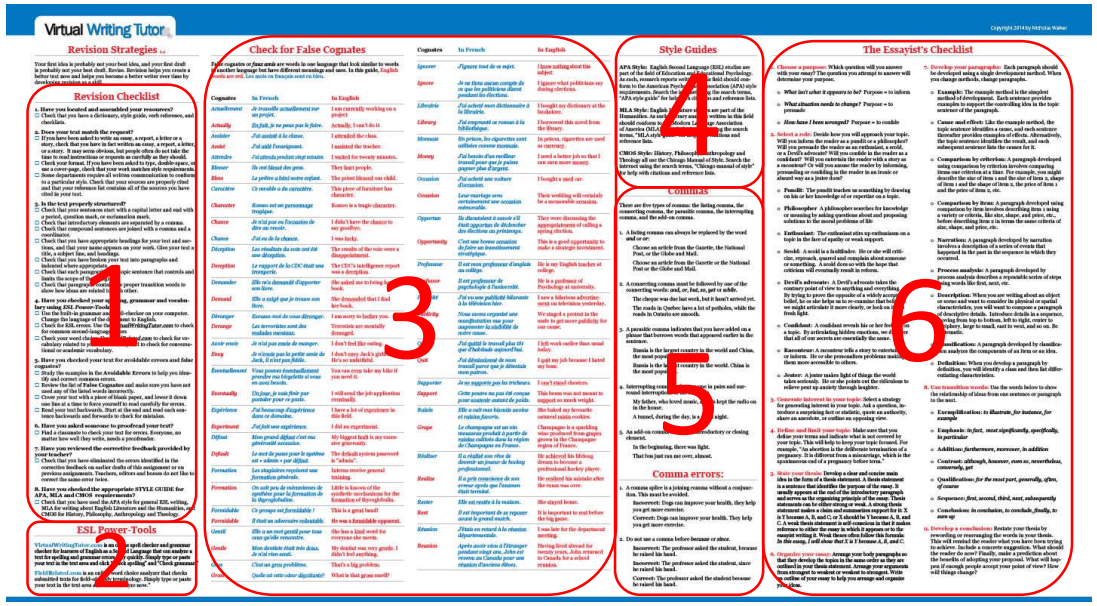
ESL Power Tools



ESL Power-Tools

VirtualWritingTutor.com is an online spell checker and grammar checker for learners of English as a Second Language that can analyze a text for spelling and grammar errors very quickly. Simply type or paste your text in the text area and click “Check spelling” and “Check grammar.”

FieldRelated.com is an online word choice analyzer that checks submitted texts for field-of-study terminology. Simply type or paste your text in the text area and click “Analyze now.”

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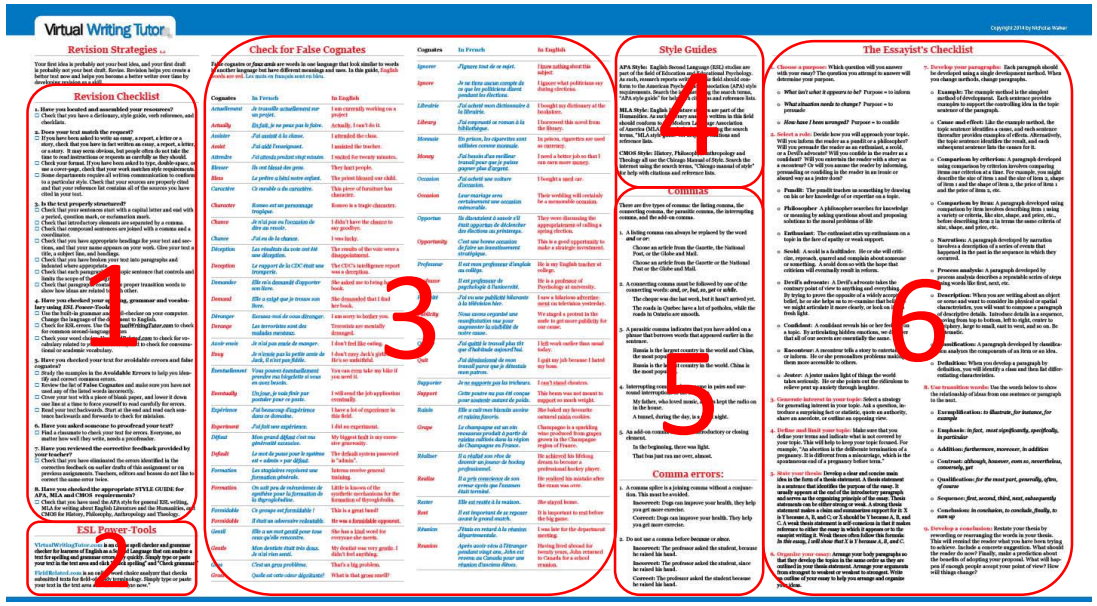

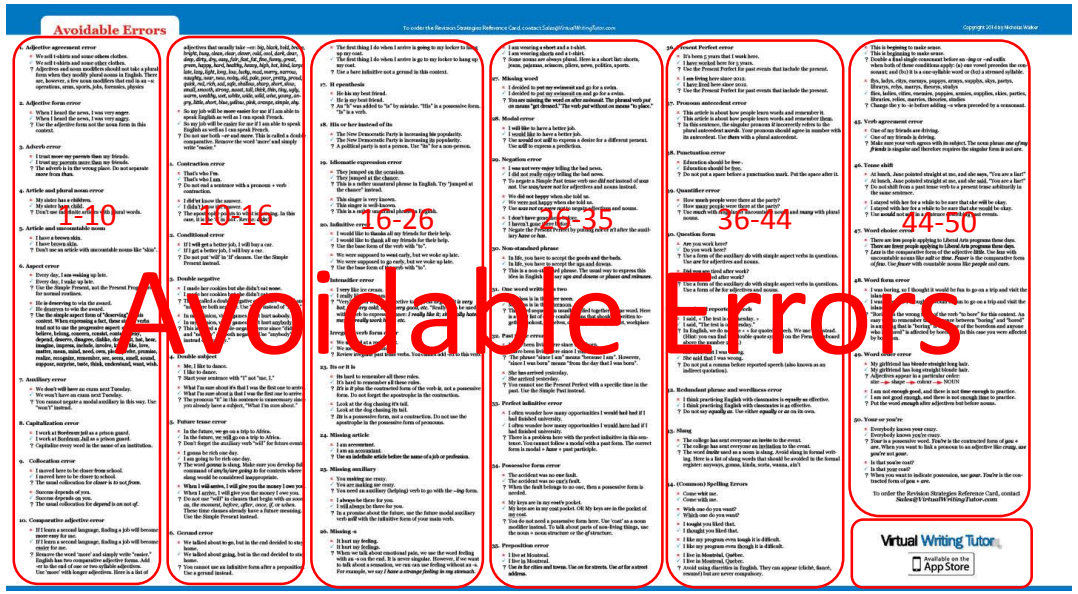

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Check for False Cognates

Bilinguals check for false cognates.

Having two languages is a wonderful thing. However, it is easy to mistakenly believe that a word in one language that looks like a word in another language should be used in the same way. Often times, they are cognates. Sometimes they are false cognates, and a different word is needed in its place.

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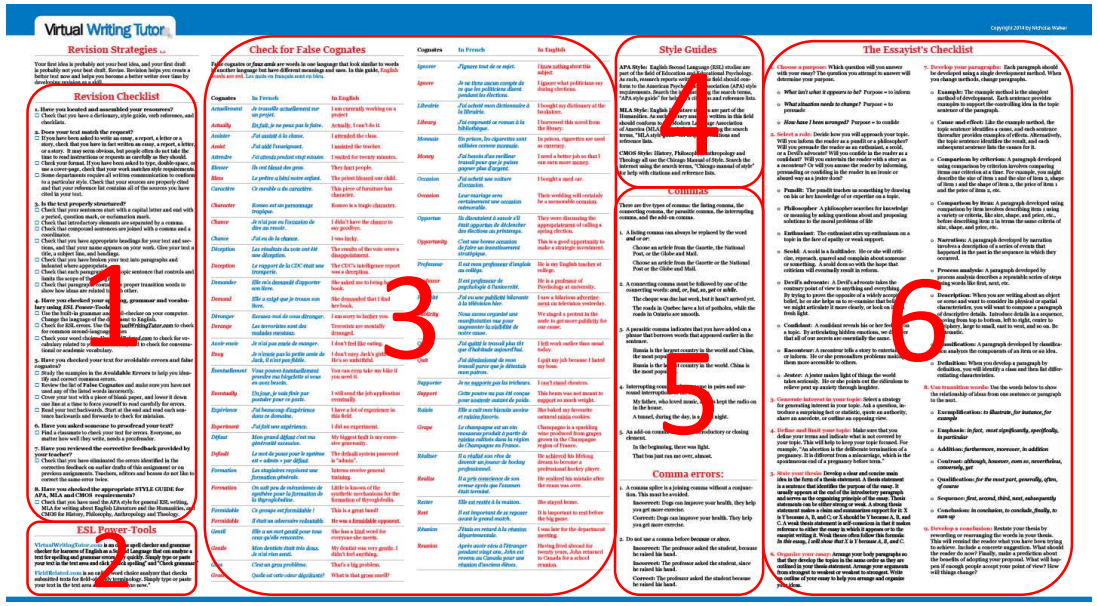
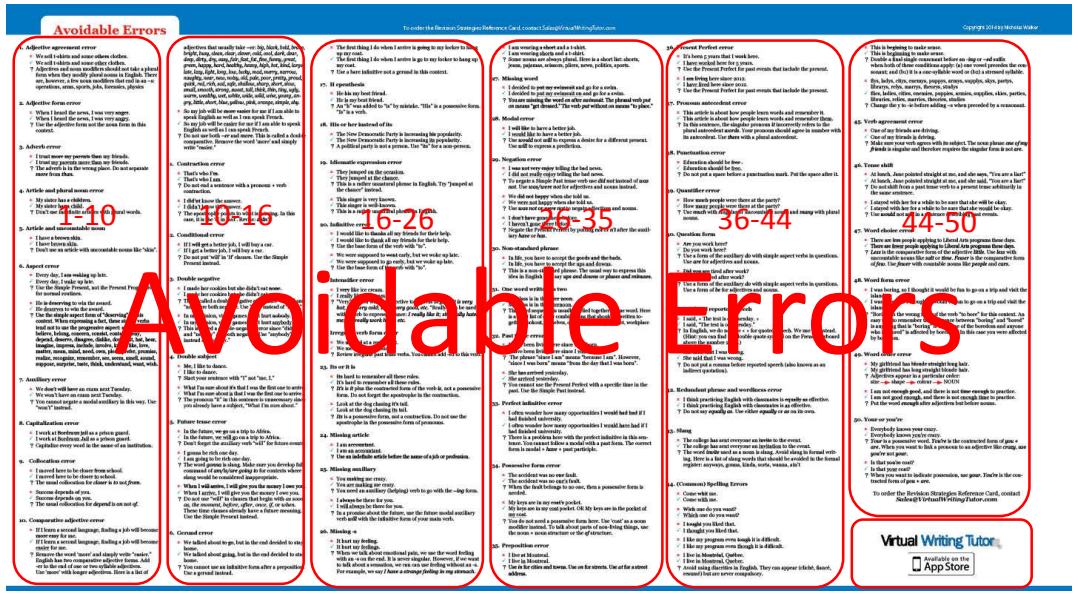
Check for False Cognates 1





Cognates	In French	In English
Actuellement	*Je travaille actuellement sur un projet.*	I am currently working on a project
Actually	*En fait, je ne peux pas le faire.*	Actually, I can't do it.
Assister	*J'ai assisté à la classe.*	I attended the class.
Assist	*J'ai aidé l'enseignant.*	I assisted the teacher.
Attendre	*J'ai attendu pendant vingt minutes.*	I waited for twenty minutes.
Blesser	*Ils ont blessé des gens.*	They hurt people.
Bless	*Le prêtre a béni notre enfant.*	The priest blessed our child.
Caractère	*Ce meuble a du caractère.*	This piece of furniture has character.
Character	*Romeo est un personnage tragique.*	Romeo is a tragic character.
Chance	*Je n'ai pas eu l'occasion de dire au revoir.*	I didn't have the chance to say goodbye.
Chance	*J'ai eu de la chance.*	I was lucky.

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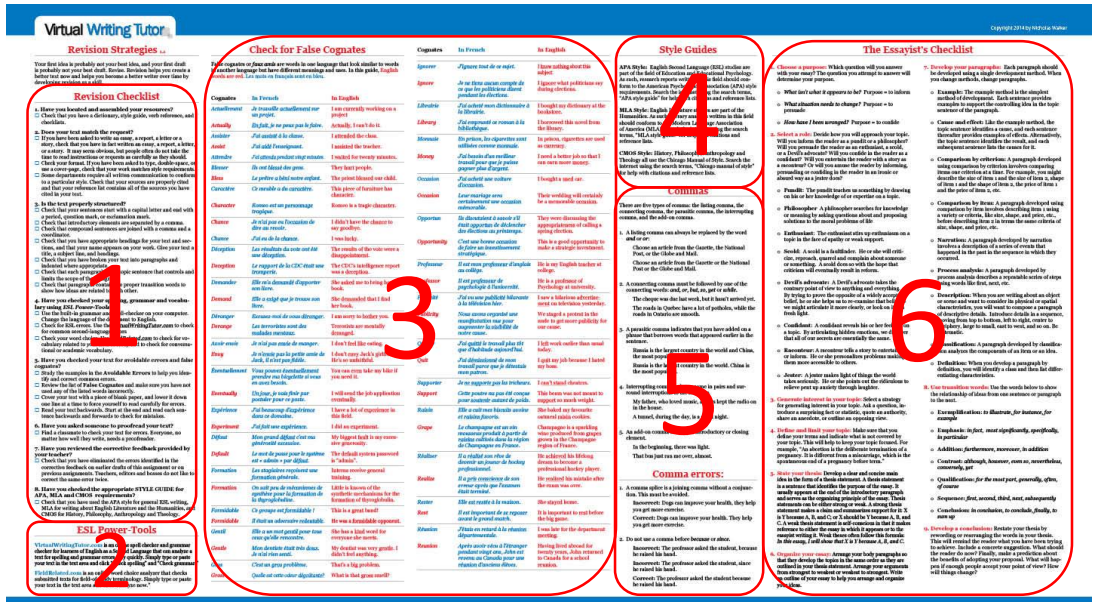
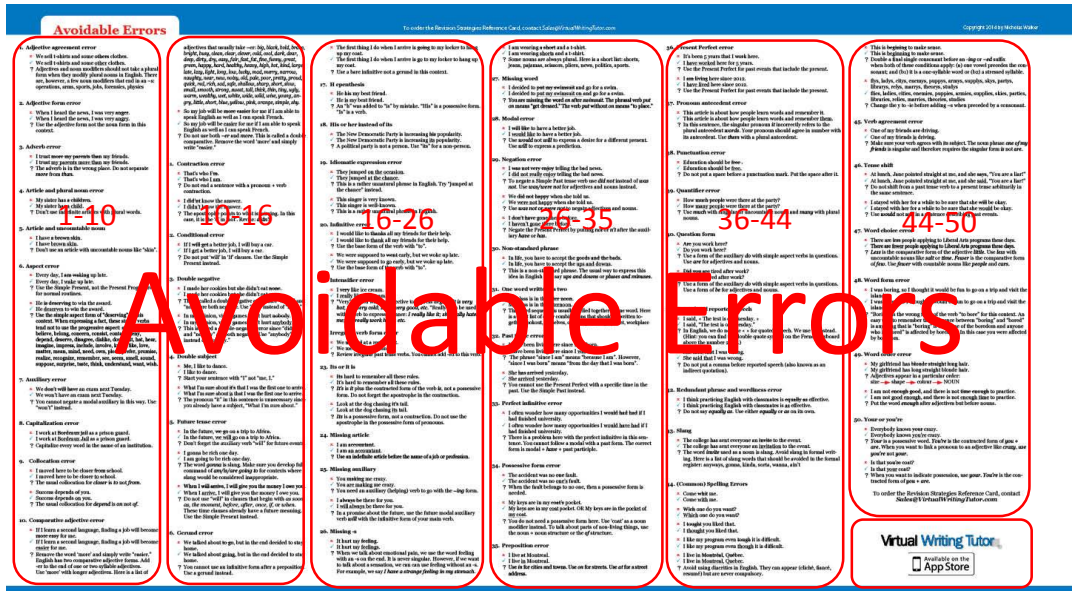
Check for False Cognates 2





Déception	*Les résultats du vote ont été une déception.*	The results of the vote were a disappointment.
Deception	*Le rapport de la CDC était une tromperie.*	The CDC's intelligence report was a deception.
Demander	*Elle m'a demandé d'apporter son livre.*	She asked me to bring her book.
Demand	*Elle a exigé que je trouve son livre.*	She demanded that I find her book.
Déranger	*Excusez-moi de vous déranger.*	I am sorry to bother you.
Derange	*Les terroristes sont des malades mentaux.*	Terrorists are mentally deranged.
Avoir envie	*Je n'ai pas envie de manger.*	I don't feel like eating.
Envy	*Je n'envie pas la petite amie de Jack, il n'est pas fidèle.*	I don't envy Jack's girlfriend. He's so unfaithful.
Éventuellement	*Vous pouvez éventuellement prendre ma bicyclette si vous en avez besoin.*	You can even take my bike if you need it.
Eventually	*Un jour, je vais finir par postuler pour ce poste.*	I will send the job application eventually.
Expérience	*J'ai beaucoup d'expérience dans ce domaine.*	I have a lot of experience in this field.
Experiment	*J'ai fait une expérience.*	I did an experiment.

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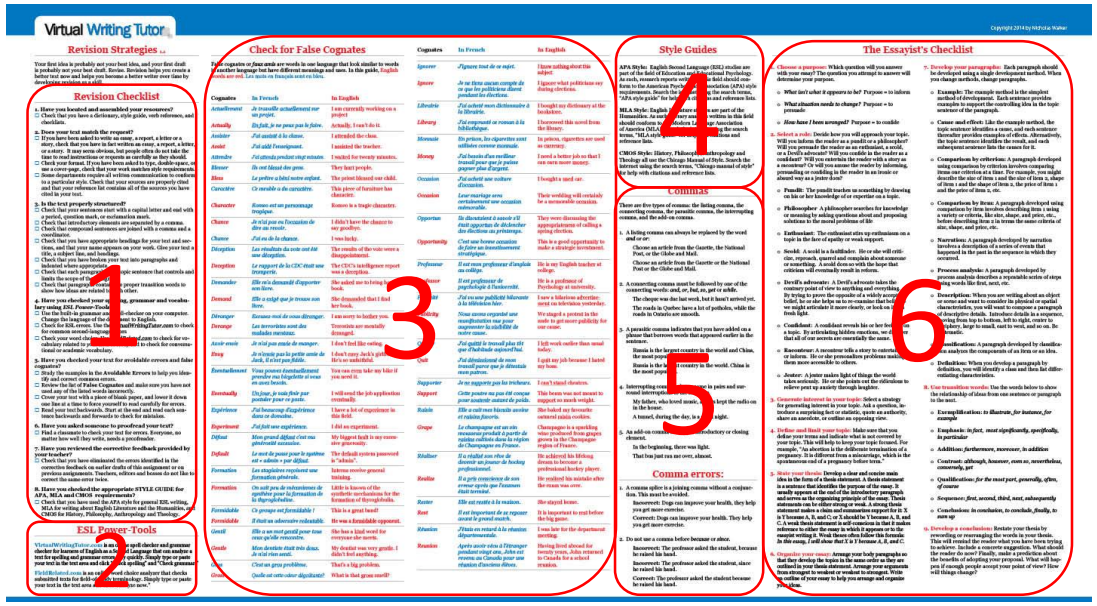
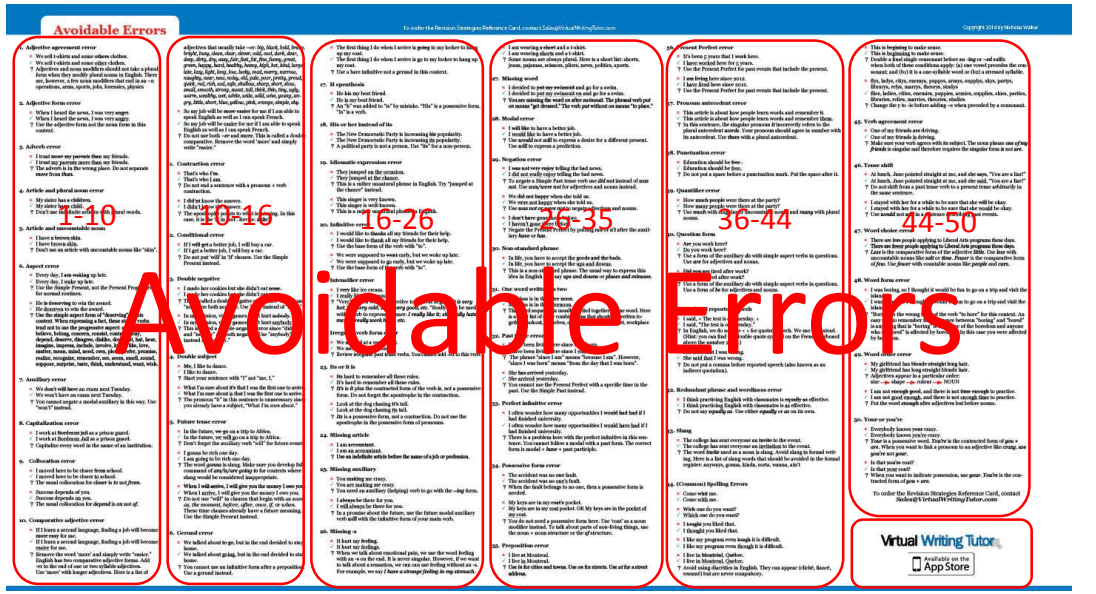
Check for False Cognates 3





Défaut	*Mon grand défaut c'est ma générosité excessive.*	My biggest fault is my excessive generosity.
Default	*Le mot de passe pour le système est « admin » par défaut.*	The default system password is "admin".
Formation	*Les stagiaires reçoivent une formation générale.*	Interns receive general training.
Formation	*On sait peu de mécanismes de synthèse pour la formation de la thyroglobuline.*	Little is known of the synthetic mechanisms for the formation of thyroglobulin.
Formidable	*Ce groupe est formidable !*	This is a great band!
Formidable	*Il était un adversaire redoutable.*	He was a formidable opponent.
Gentil	*Elle a un mot gentil pour tous ceux qu'elle rencontre.*	She has a kind word for everyone she meets.
Gentle	*Mon dentiste était très doux. Je n'ai rien senti.*	My dentist was very gentle. I didn't feel anything.
Gros	*C'est un gros problème.*	That's a big problem.
Gross	*Quelle est cette odeur dégoûtante?*	What is that gross smell?

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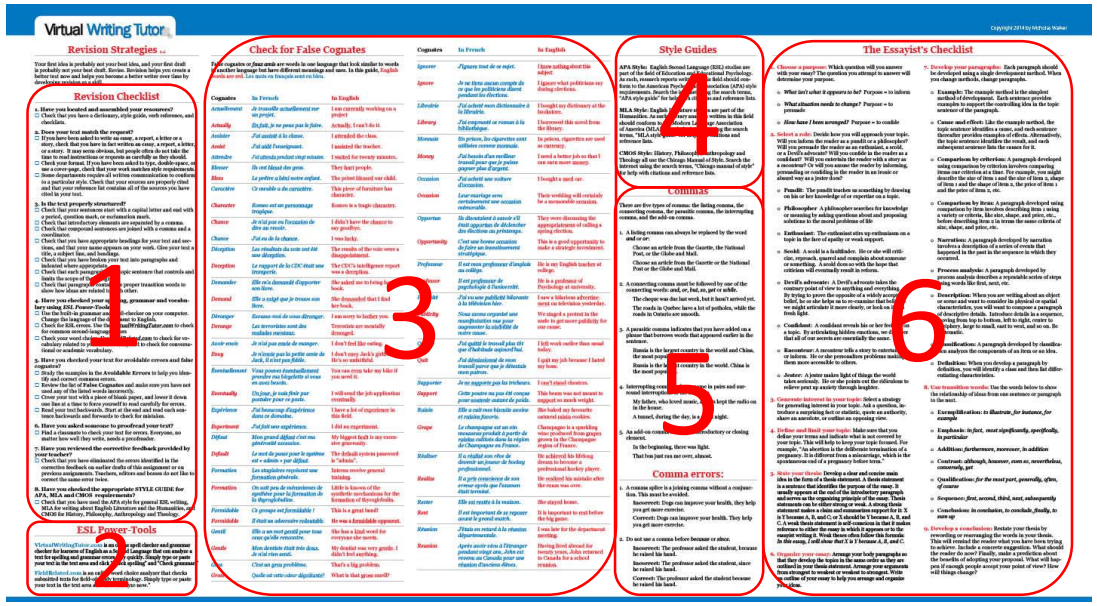
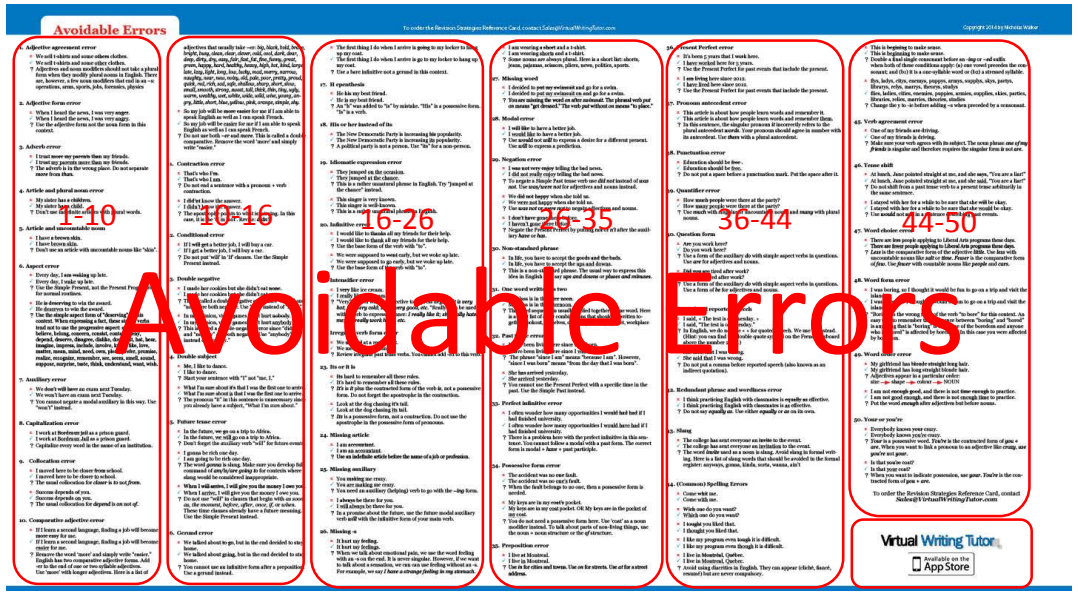
Check for False Cognates 4





Cognates	In French	In English
Ignorer	*J'ignore tout de ce sujet.*	I know nothing about this subject.
Ignore	*Je ne tiens aucun compte de ce que les politiciens disent pendant les élections.*	I ignore what politicians say during elections.
Librairie	*J'ai acheté mon dictionnaire à la librairie.*	I bought my dictionary at the bookstore.
Library	*J'ai emprunté ce roman à la bibliothèque.*	I borrowed this novel from the library.
Monnaie	*En prison, les cigarettes sont utilisées comme monnaie.*	In prison, cigarettes are used as currency.
Money	*J'ai besoin d'un meilleur travail pour que je puisse gagner plus d'argent.*	I need a better job so that I can earn more money.

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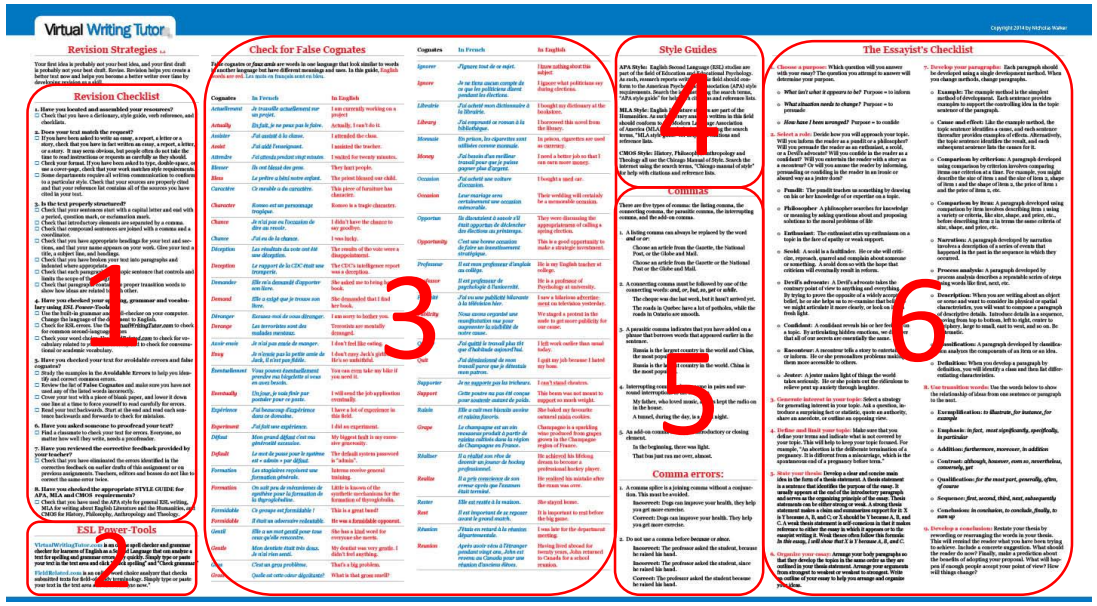
Check for False Cognates 5



Occasion	*J'ai acheté une voiture d'occasion.*	I bought a used car.
Occasion	*Leur mariage sera certainement une occasion mémorable.*	Their wedding will certainly be a memorable occasion.
Opportun	*Ils discutaient à savoir s'il était opportun de déclencher des élections au printemps.*	They were discussing the appropriateness of calling a spring election.
Opportunity	*C'est une bonne occasion de faire un investissement stratégique.*	This is a good opportunity to make a strategic investment.
Professeur	*Il est mon professeur d'anglais au collège.*	He is my English teacher at college.
Professor	*Il est professeur de psychologie à l'université.*	He is a professor of Psychology at university.
Publicité	*J'ai vu une publicité hilarante à la télévision hier.*	I saw a hilarious advertisement on television yesterday.
Publicity	*Nous avons organisé une manifestation nue pour augmenter la visibilité de notre cause.*	We staged a protest in the nude to get more publicity for our cause.
Quitter	*J'ai quitté le travail plus tôt que d'habitude aujourd'hui.*	I left work earlier than usual today.
Quit	*J'ai démissionné de mon travail parce que je détestais mon patron.*	I quit my job because I hated my boss.

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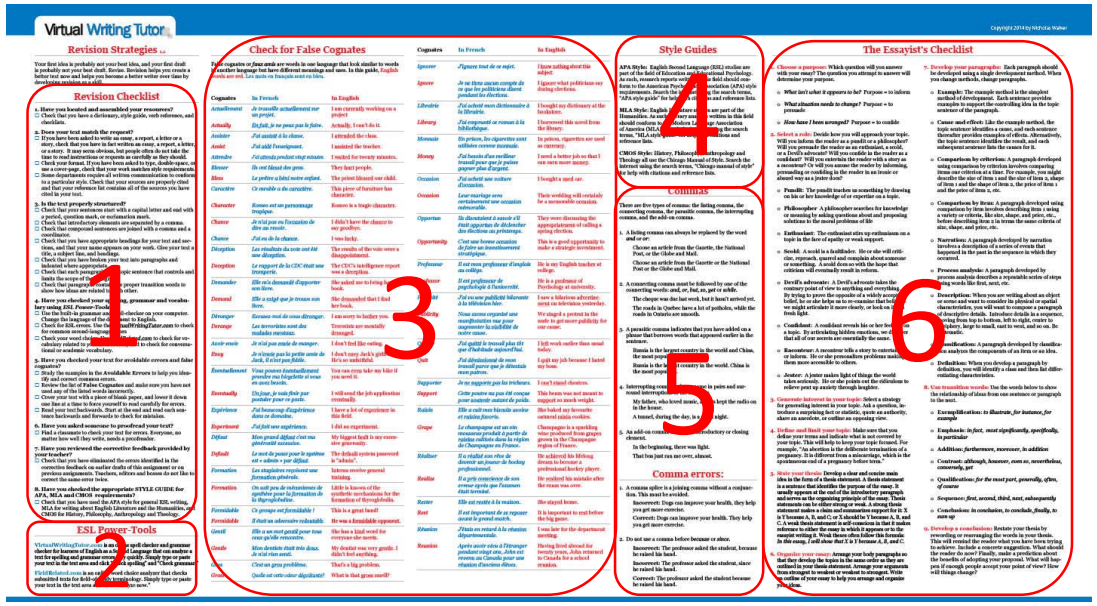
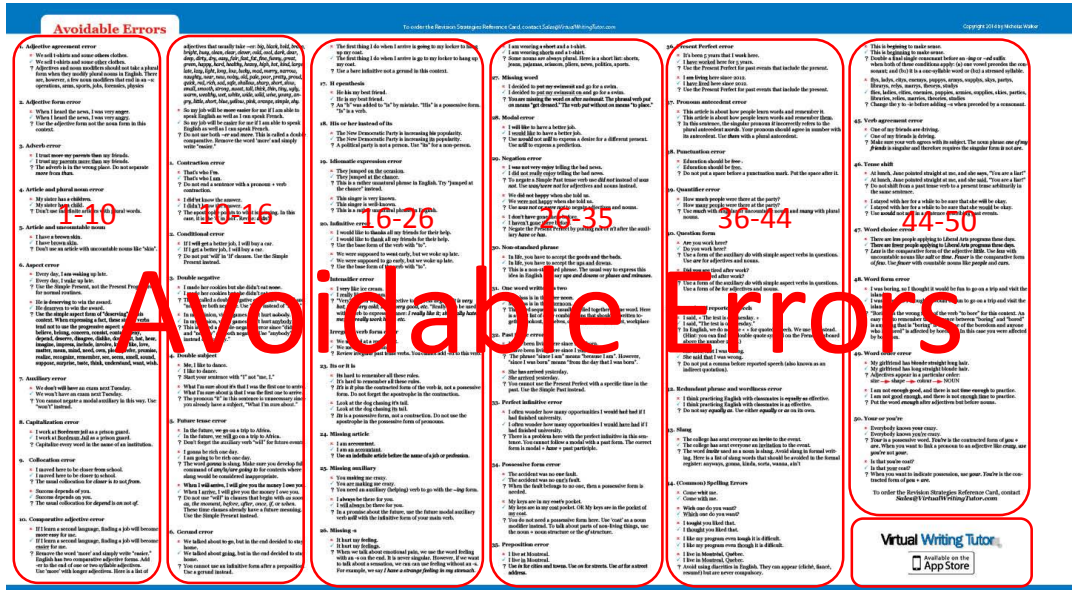
Revision Strategies Card

Check for False Cognates 6





Supporter	*Je ne supporte pas les tricheurs.*	I can't stand cheaters.
Support	*Cette poutre ne pas été conçue pour soutenir autant de poids.*	This beam was not meant to support so much weight.
Raisin	*Elle a cuit mes biscuits avoine et raisins favoris.*	She baked my favourite oatmeal raisin cookies.
Grape	*Le champagne est un vin mousseux produit à partir de raisins cultivés dans la région de Champagne en France.*	Champagne is a sparkling wine produced from grapes grown in the Champagne region of France.
Réaliser	*Il a réalisé son rêve de devenir un joueur de hockey professionnel.*	He achieved his lifelong dream to become a professional hockey player.
Realize	*Il a pris conscience de son erreur après que l'examen était terminé.*	He realized his mistake after the exam was over.
Rester	*Elle est restée à la maison.*	She stayed home.
Rest	*Il est important de se reposer avant le grand match.*	It is important to rest before the big game.
Réunion	*J'étais en retard à la réunion départementale.*	I was late for the department meeting.
Reunion	*Après avoir vécu à l'étranger pendant vingt ans, John est revenu au Canada pour une réunion d'anciens élèves.*	Having lived abroad for twenty years, John returned to Canada for a school reunion.

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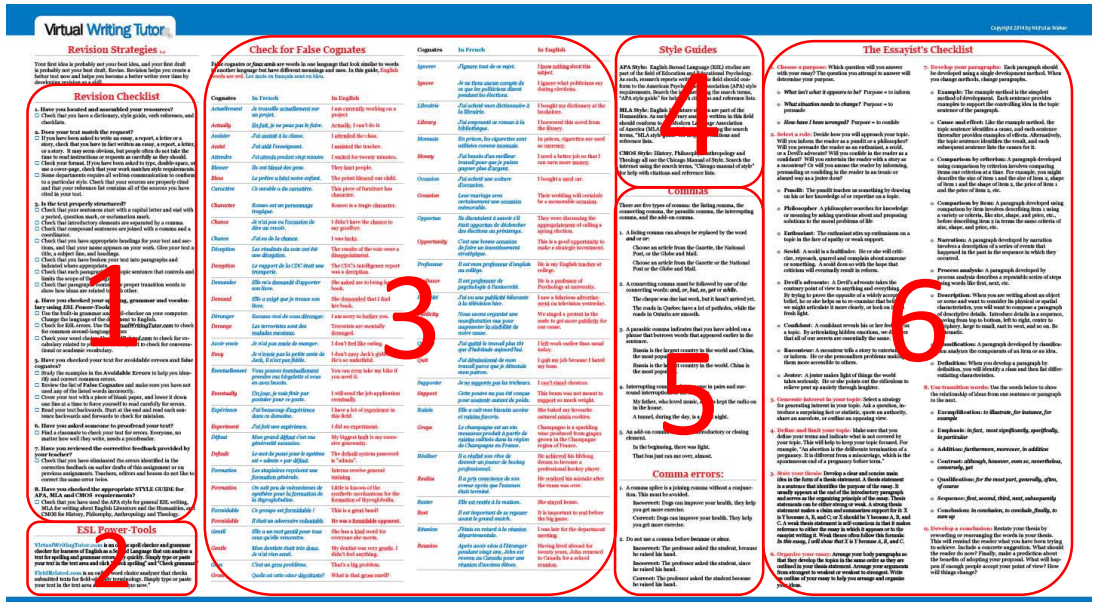
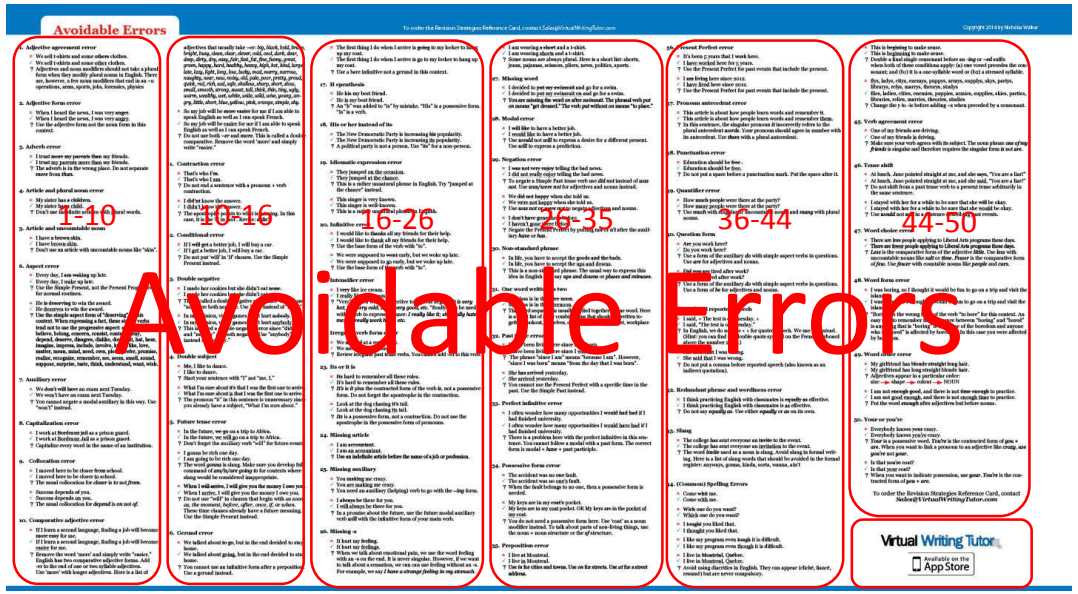
Style Guides

Professional writers use style guides.

Depending on your field of study, cite and reference your sources in the appropriate style.





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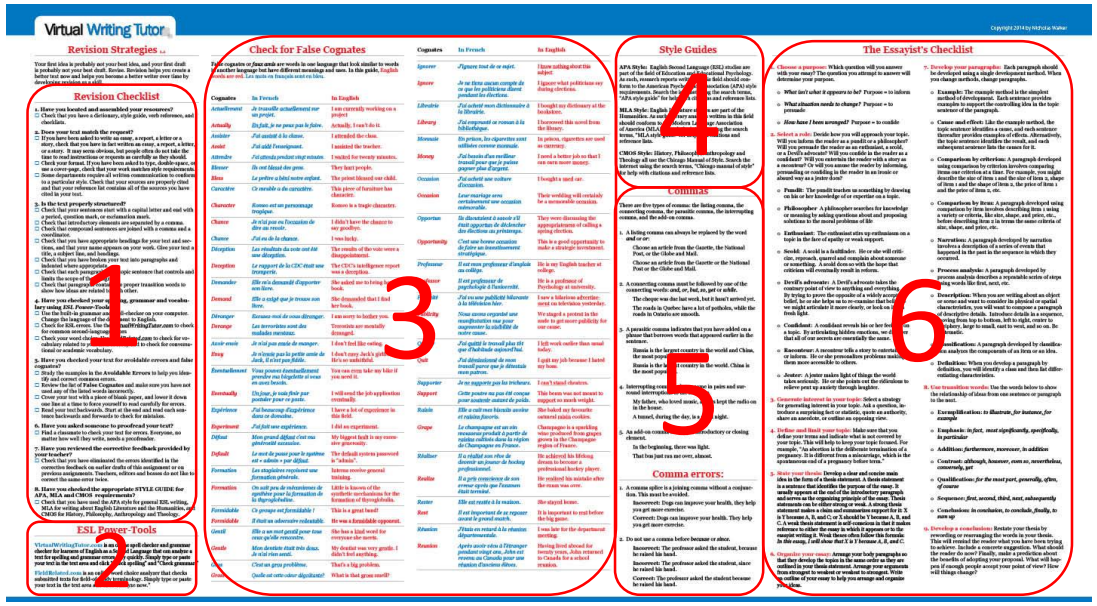
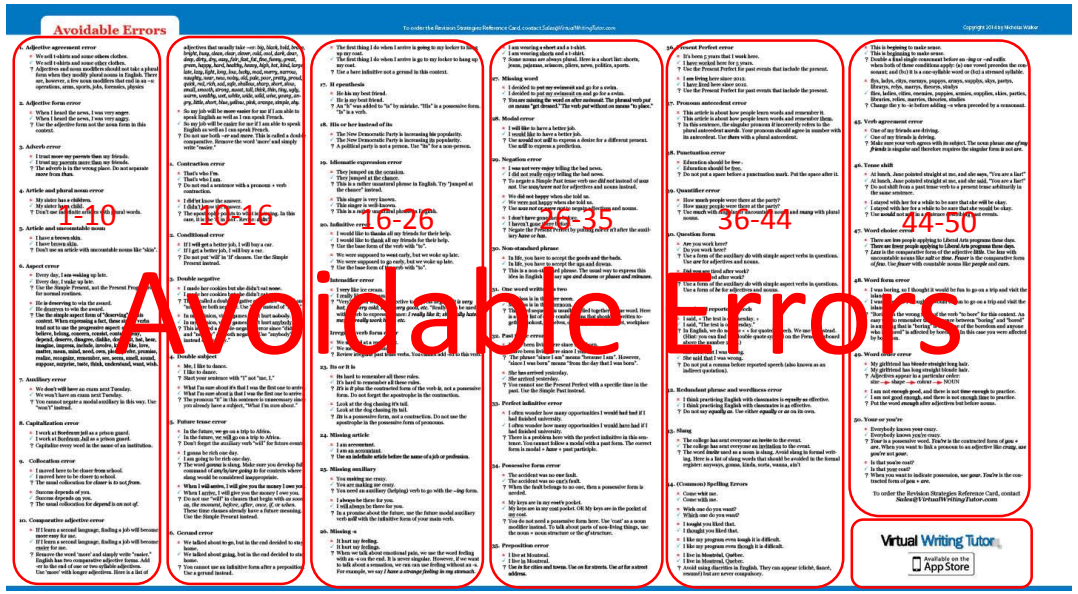
Style Guides





Style Guides

APA Style: English Second Language (ESL) studies are part of the field of Education and Educational Psychology. As such, research reports written in this field should conform to the American Psychological Association (APA) style requirements. Search the internet using the search terms, "APA style guide" for help with citations and reference lists.

MLA Style: English Literature studies are part of the Humanities. As such, literary analyses written in this field should conform to the Modern Language Association of America (MLA). Search the internet using the search terms, "MLA style guide" for help with citations and reference lists.

CMOS Style: History, Philosophy, Anthropology and Theology all use the Chicago Manual of Style. Search the internet using the search terms, "Chicago manual of style" for help with citations and reference lists.

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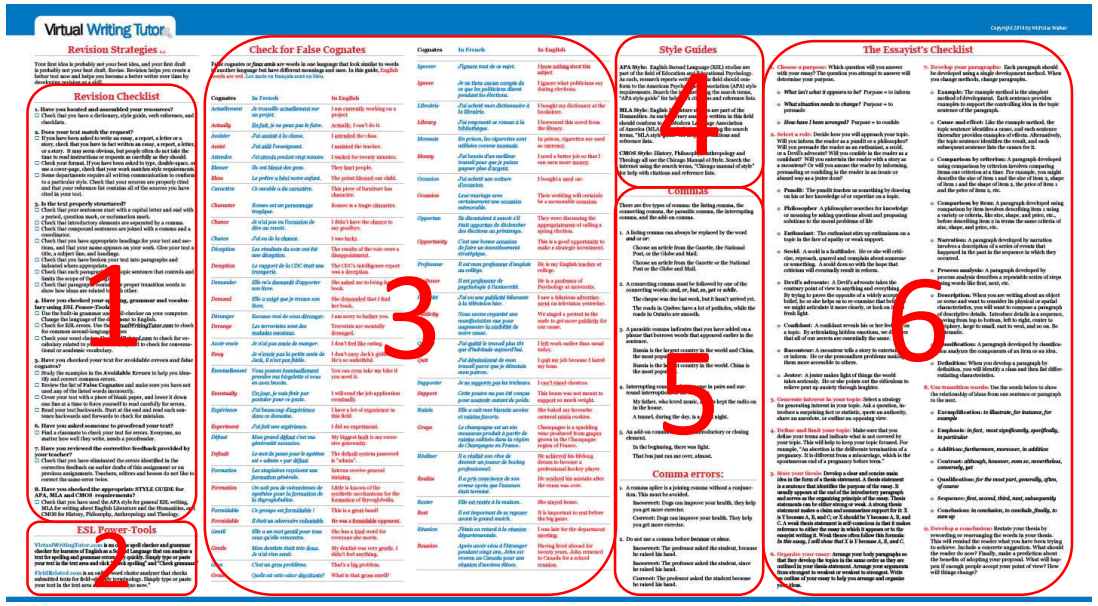

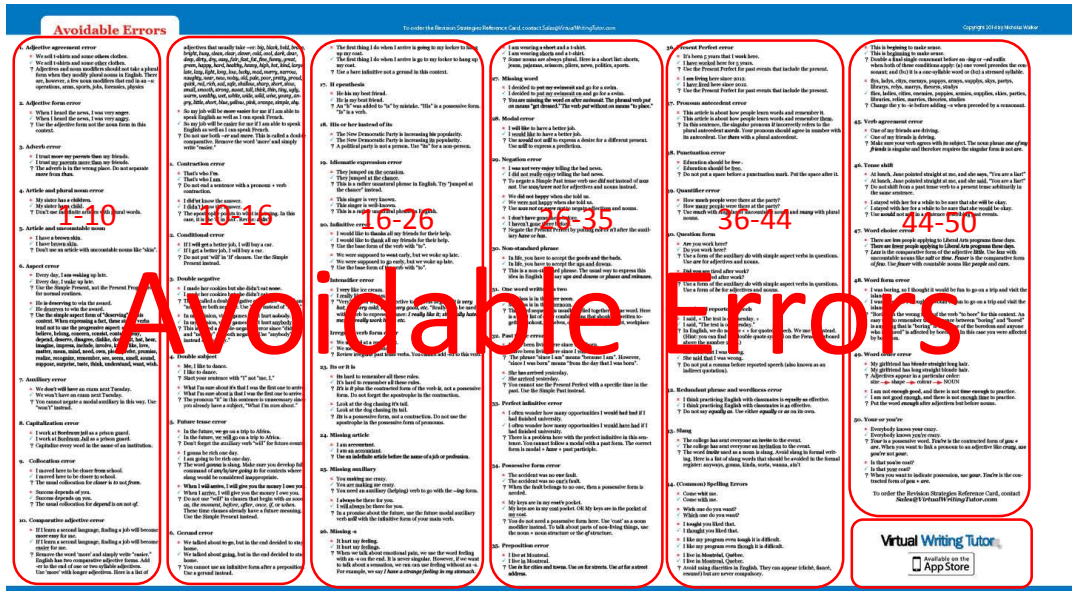

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Revision Strategies Card
Commas

Good writers know how to use commas.

There are five kinds of commas and two common comma errors. Memorizing these seven comma rules will give you greater confidence in your punctuation. This is one example of where rote memorization is really worth the effort.

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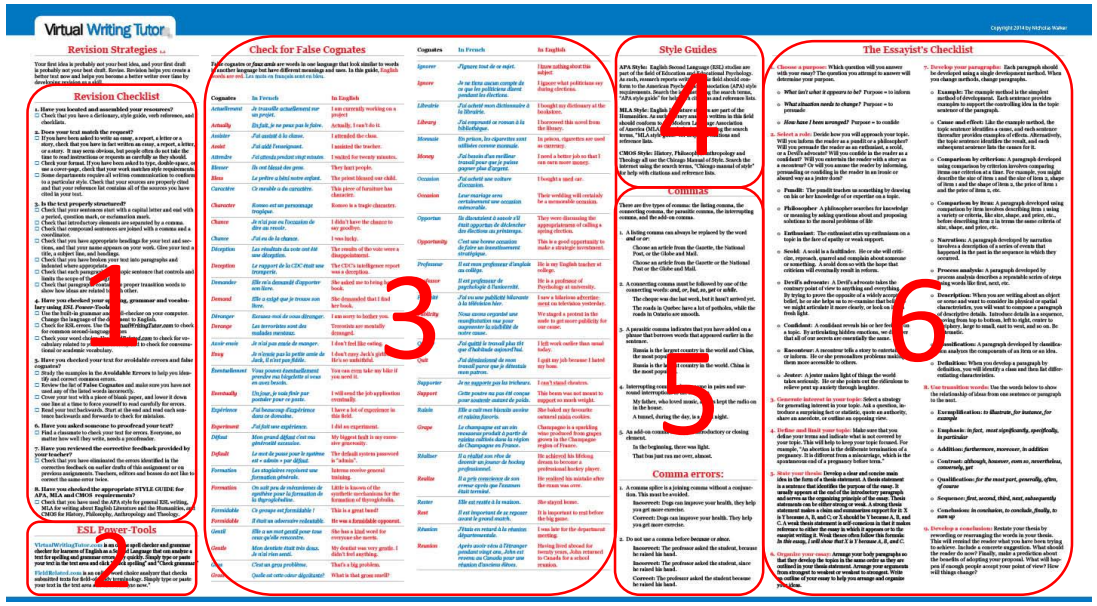
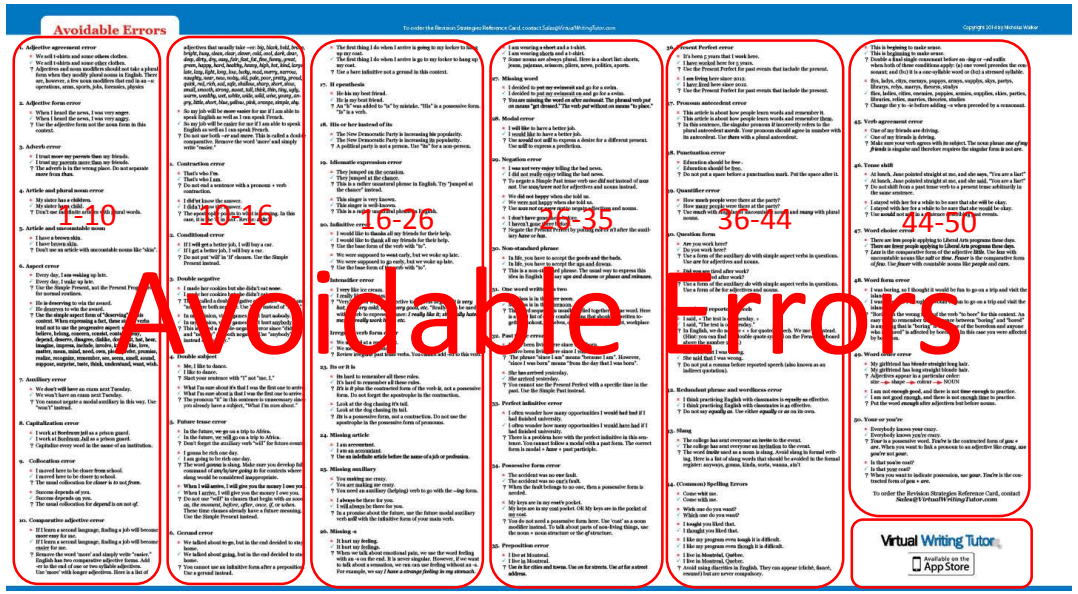
Revision Strategies Card

Commas 1





Commas

There are five types of commas: the listing comma, the connecting comma, the parasitic comma, the interrupting comma, and the add-on comma.

1. A listing comma can always be replaced by the word *and* or *or*:

   Choose an article from the Gazette, the National Post, or the Globe and Mail.

   Choose an article from the Gazette or the National Post or the Globe and Mail.

2. A connecting comma must be followed by one of the connecting words: *and, or, but, so, yet* or *while*.

   The cheque was due last week, but it hasn't arrived yet.

   The roads in Quebec have a lot of potholes, while the roads in Ontario are smooth.

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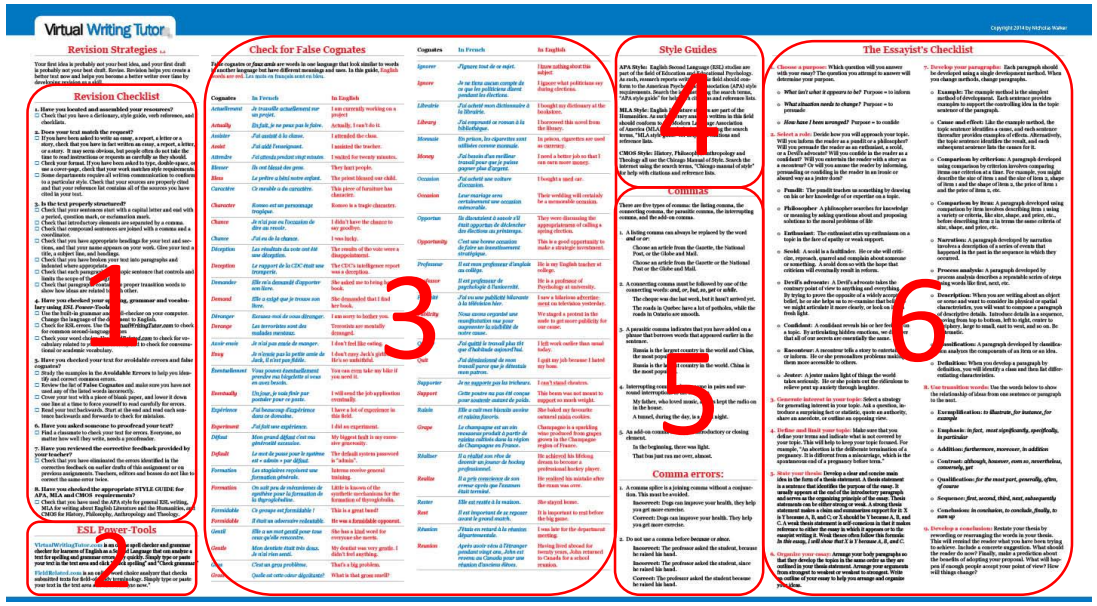
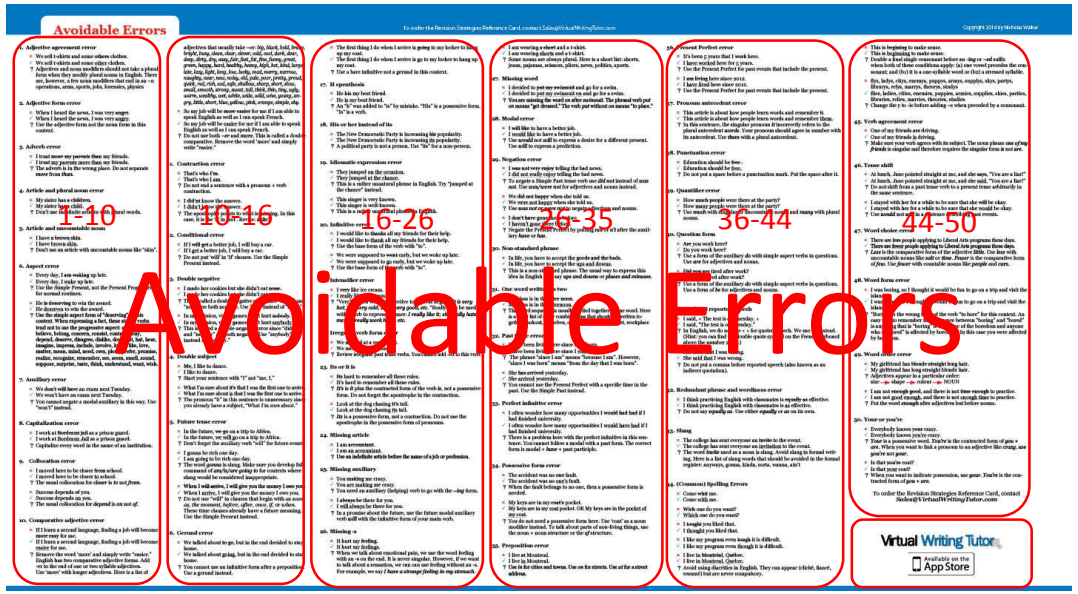
Revision Strategies Card

Commas 2





3. A parasitic comma indicates that you have added on a phrase that borrows words that appeared earlier in the sentence.

   Russia is the largest country in the world and China, the most populous.

   Russia is the largest country in the world. China is the most populous.

4. Interrupting commas always come in pairs and surround interruptions to the sentence.

   My father, who loved music, always kept the radio on in the house.

   A tunnel, during the day, is a short night.

5. An add-on comma sets off an introductory or closing element.

   In the beginning, there was light.

   That bus just ran me over, almost.

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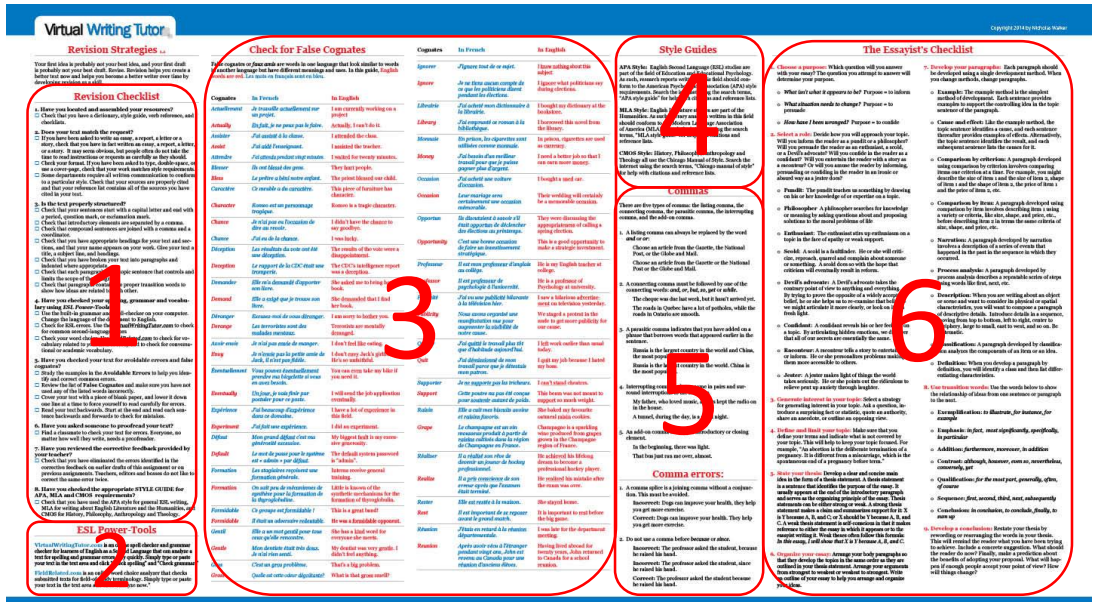
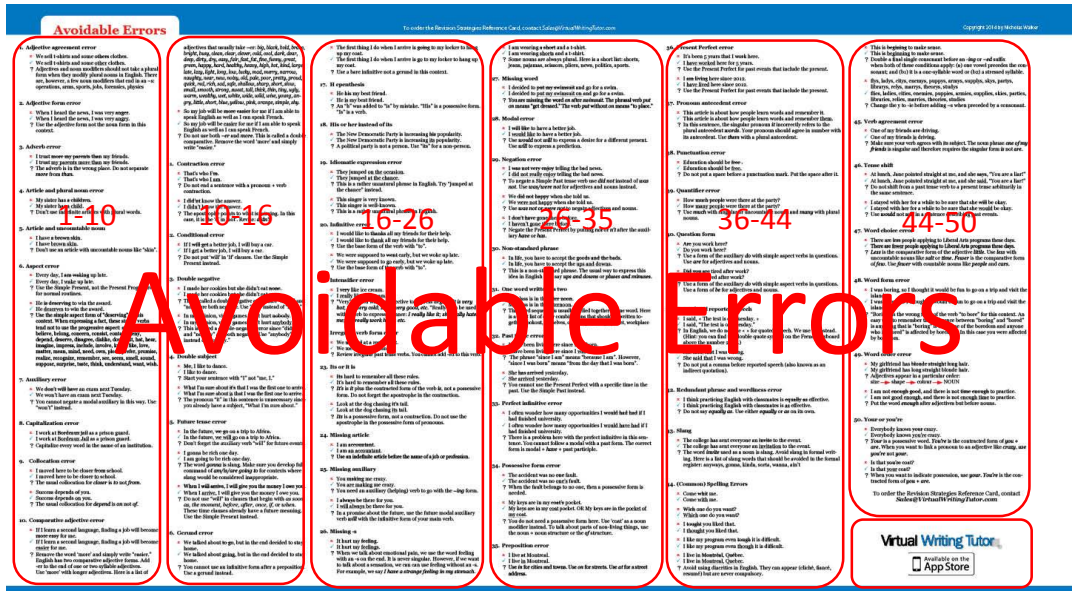
Commas errors





Comma errors:

1. A comma splice is a joining comma without a conjunction. This must be avoided.

   Incorrect: Dogs can improve your health, they help you get more exercise.

   Correct: Dogs can improve your health. They help you get more exercise.

2. Do not use a comma before *because* or *since*.

   Incorrect: The professor asked the student, because he raised his hand.

   Incorrect: The professor asked the student, since he raised his hand.

   Correct: The professor asked the student because he raised his hand.

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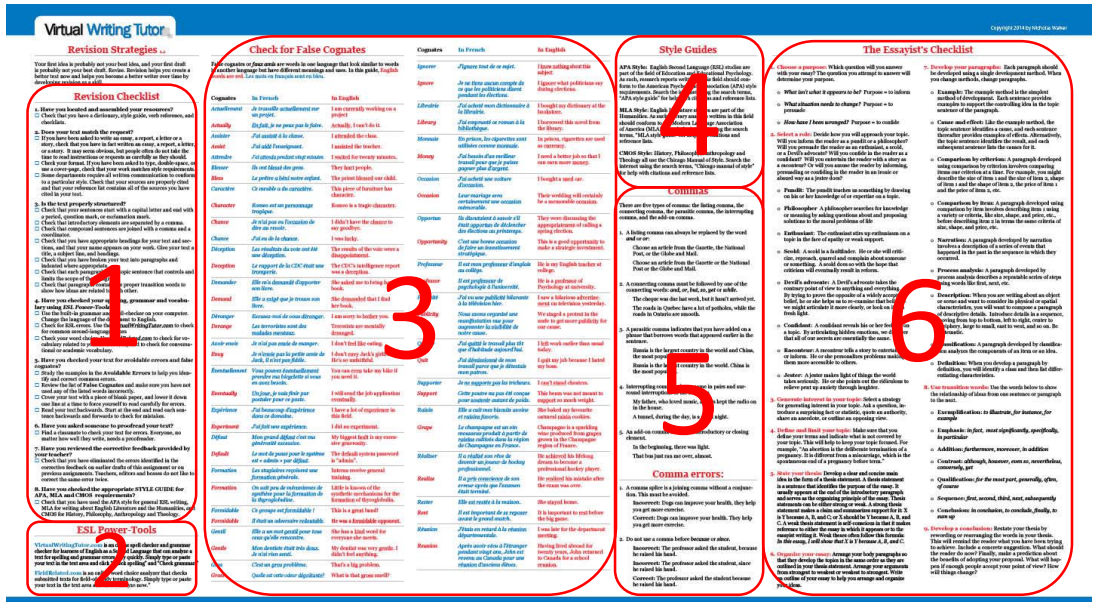
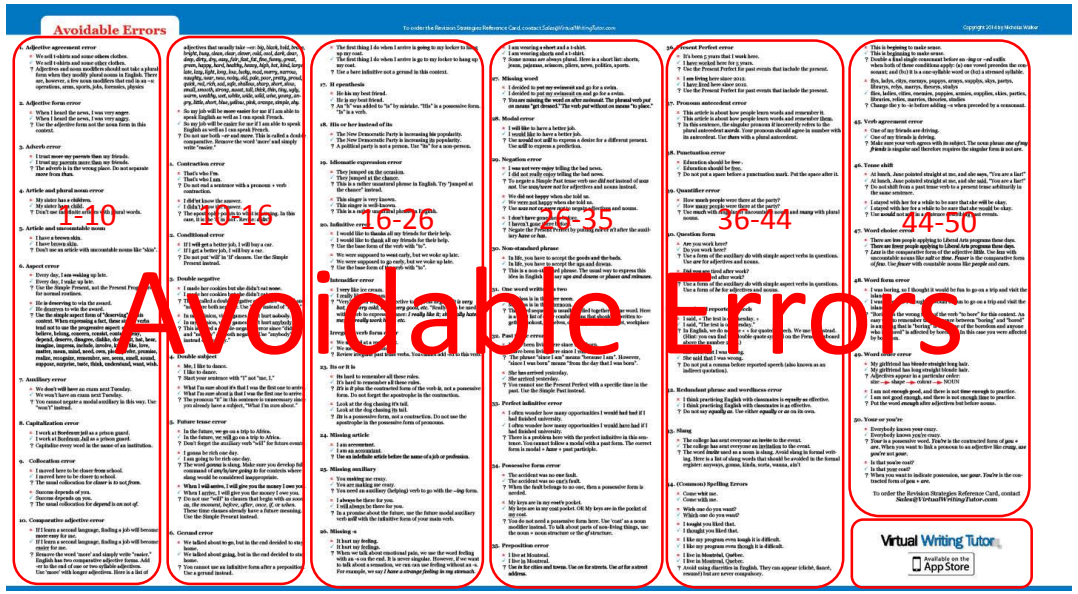
Revision Strategies Card
The Essayist's Checklist



Formal writing is a skill that can be taught and learned.



The "5-paragraph essay" is a common academic writing task in both the first and second language. Learning to write a short article using this highly formulaic model is believed to help learners gain control over, and facility with, academic writing.

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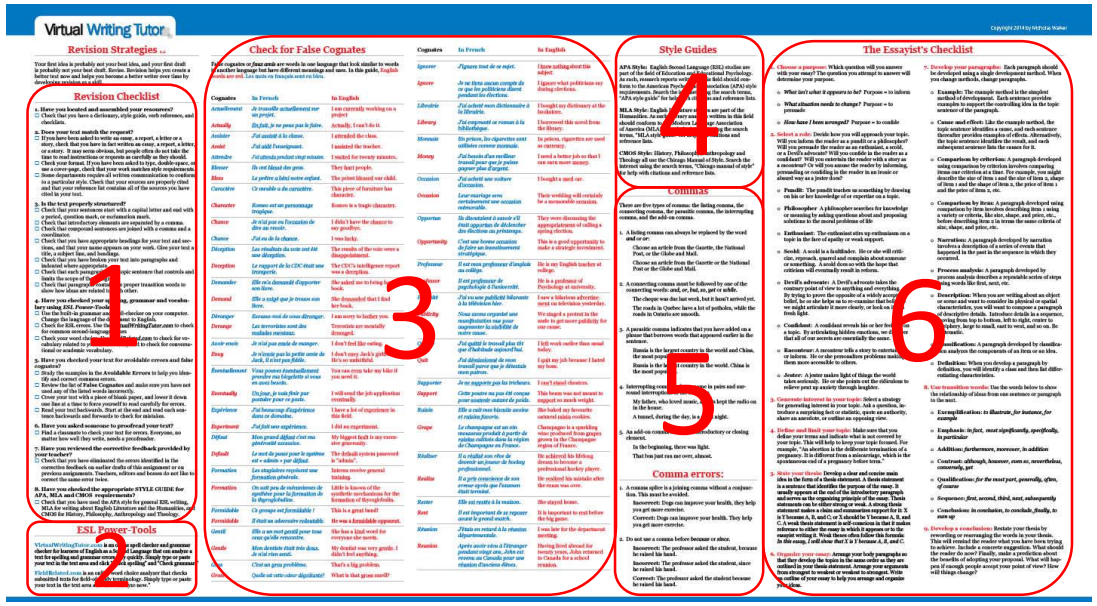
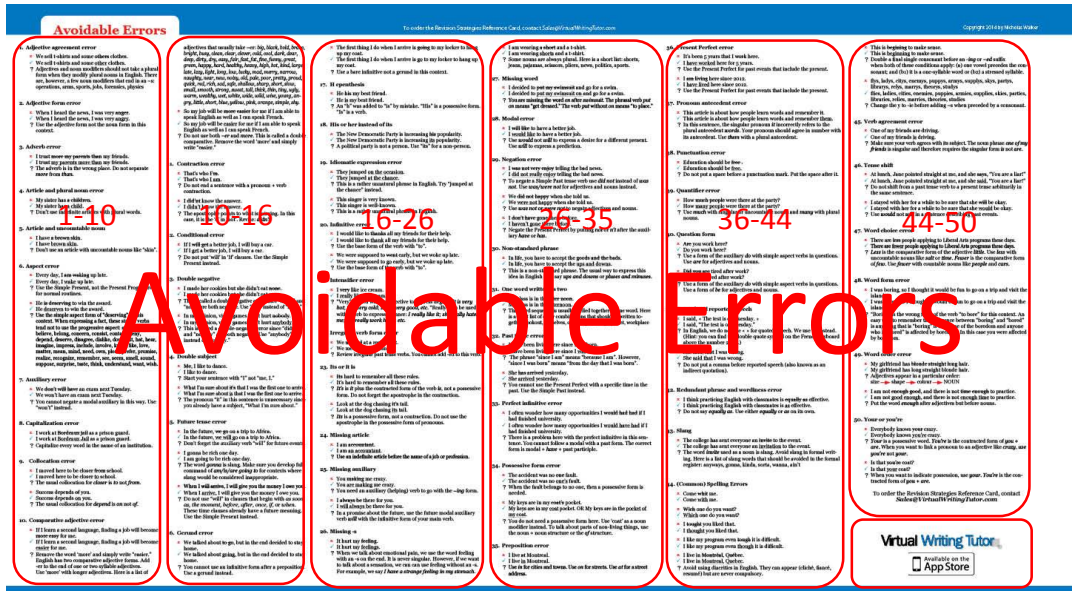
The Essayist's Checklist 1





1. **Choose a purpose:** Which question will you answer with your essay? The question you attempt to answer will determine your purpose.
   - *What isn't what it appears to be?* Purpose = to inform
   - *What situation needs to change?* Purpose = to persuade
   - *How have I been wronged?* Purpose = to confide

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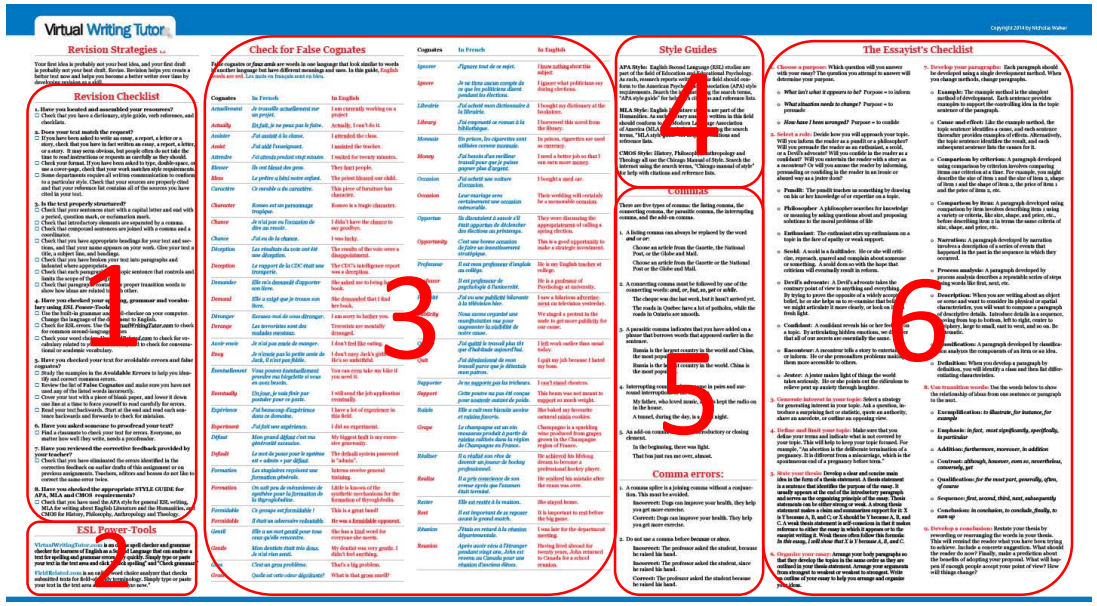
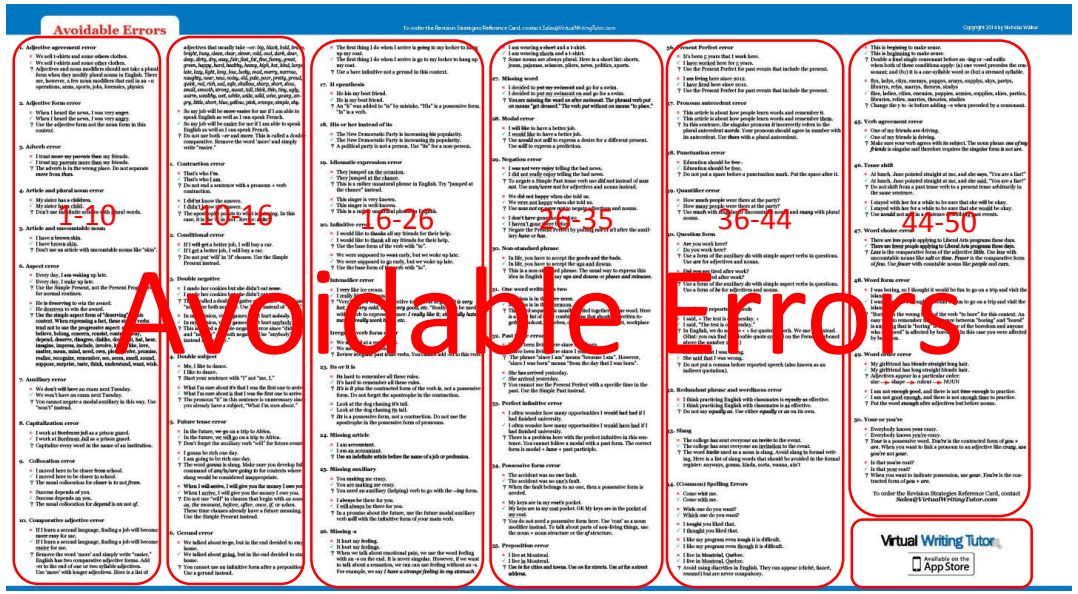
The Essayist's Checklist 2a





2. Select a role: Decide how you will approach your topic. Will you inform the reader as a pundit or a philosopher? Will you persuade the reader as an enthusiast, a scold, or a Devil's advocate? Will you confide in the reader as a confidant? Will you entertain the reader with a story as a raconteur? Or will you amuse the reader by informing, persuading or confiding in the reader in an ironic or absurd way as a jester does?

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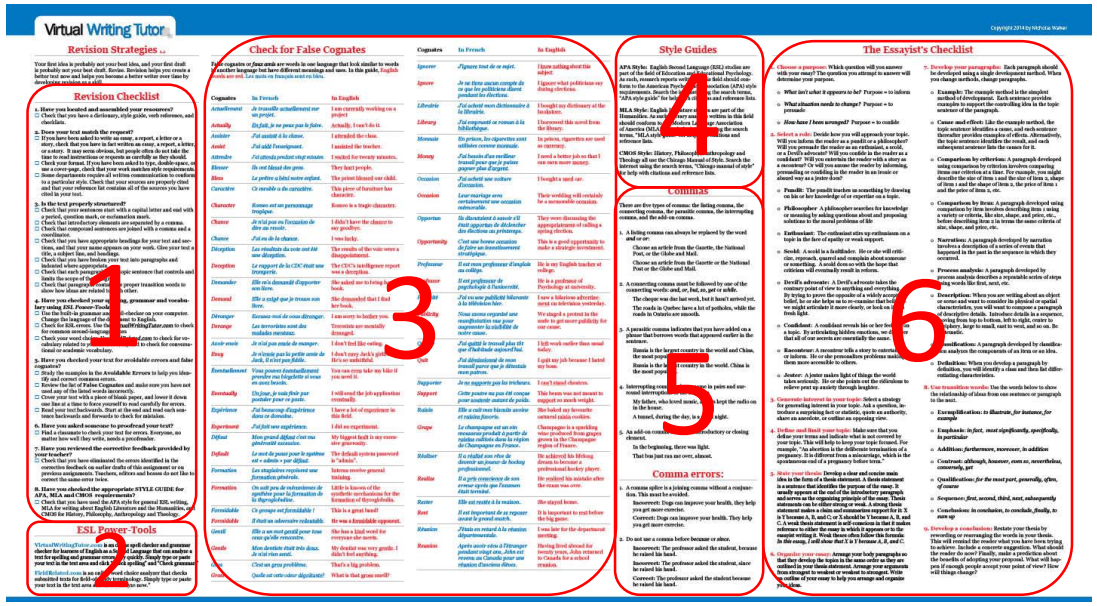

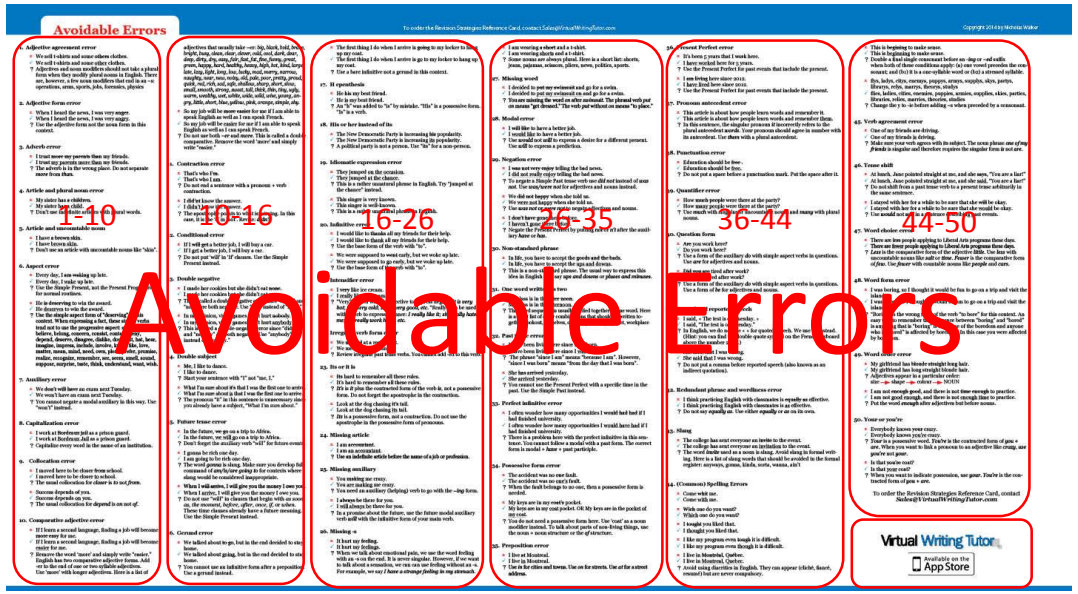

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The Essayist's Checklist 2b

- **Pundit**: The pundit teaches us something by drawing on his or her knowledge of or expertise on a topic.
- **Philosopher** A philosopher searches for knowledge or meaning by asking questions about and proposing solutions to the moral problems of life
- **Enthusiast**: The enthusiast stirs up enthusiasm on a topic in the face of apathy or weak support.
- **Scold**: A scold is a faultfinder. He or she will criticize, reproach, quarrel and complain about someone or something. A scold does so with the hope that criticism will eventually result in reform.

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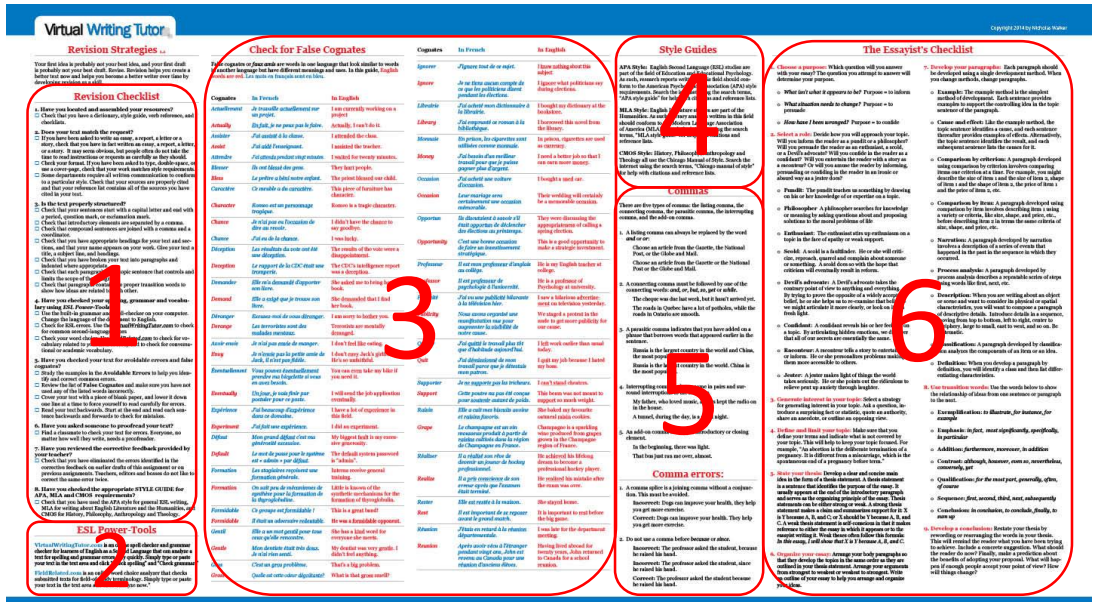
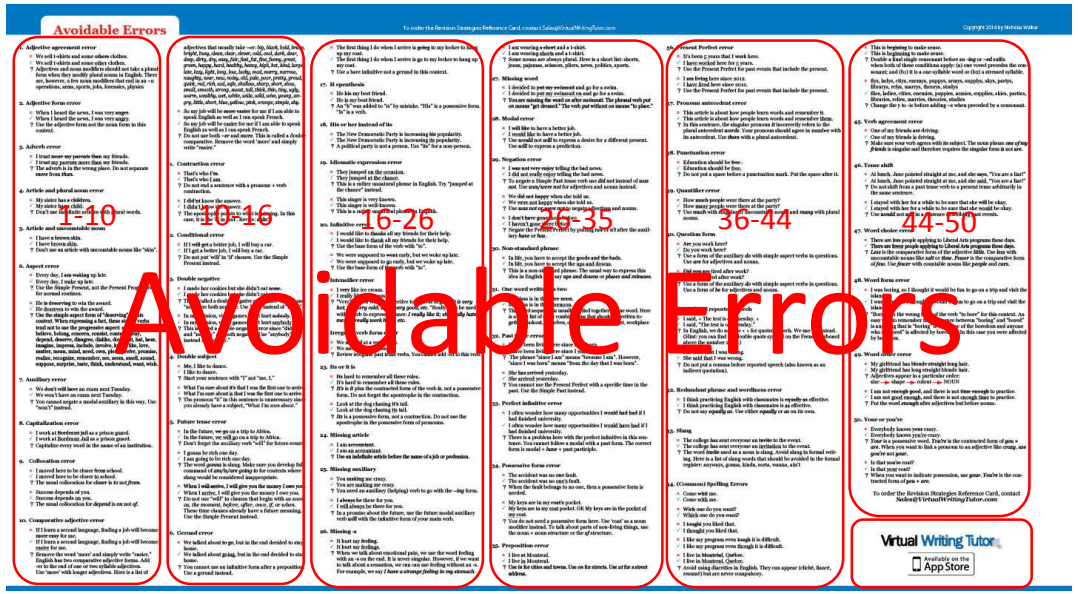
The Essayist's Checklist 2c





- **Devil's advocate:** A Devil's advocate takes the contrary point of view to anything and everything. By trying to prove the opposite of a widely accepted belief, he or she helps us to re-examine that belief so we might articulate it more clearly, or look on it in a fresh light.
- **Confidant**: A confidant reveals his or her feelings on a topic. By articulating hidden emotions, we discover that all of our secrets are essentially the same.
- **Raconteur**: A raconteur tells a story to entertain or inform. He or she personalizes problems making them more accessible to others.
- **Jester**: A jester makes light of things the world takes seriously. He or she points out the ridiculous to relieve pent up anxiety through laughter.

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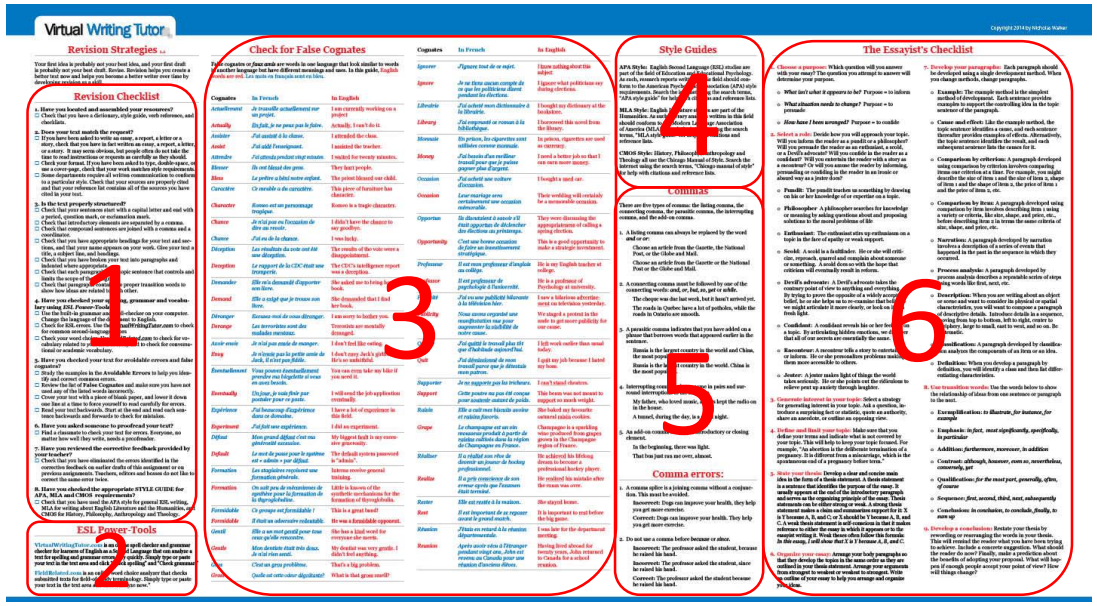
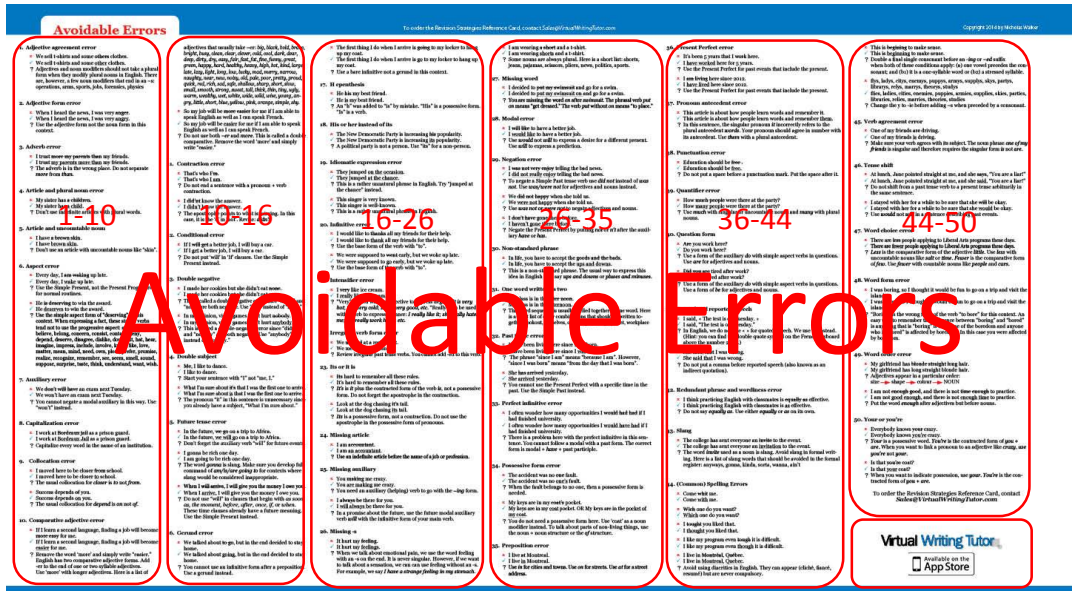
The Essayist's Checklist 3-4





3. Generate interest in your topic: Select a strategy for generating interest in your topic. Ask a question, introduce a surprising fact or statistic, quote an authority, share an anecdote, or outline an opposing view.

4. Define and limit your topic: Make sure that you define your terms and indicate what is not covered by your topic. This will help to keep your topic focused. For example, "An abortion is the deliberate termination of a pregnancy. It is different from a miscarriage, which is the spontaneous end of a pregnancy before term."

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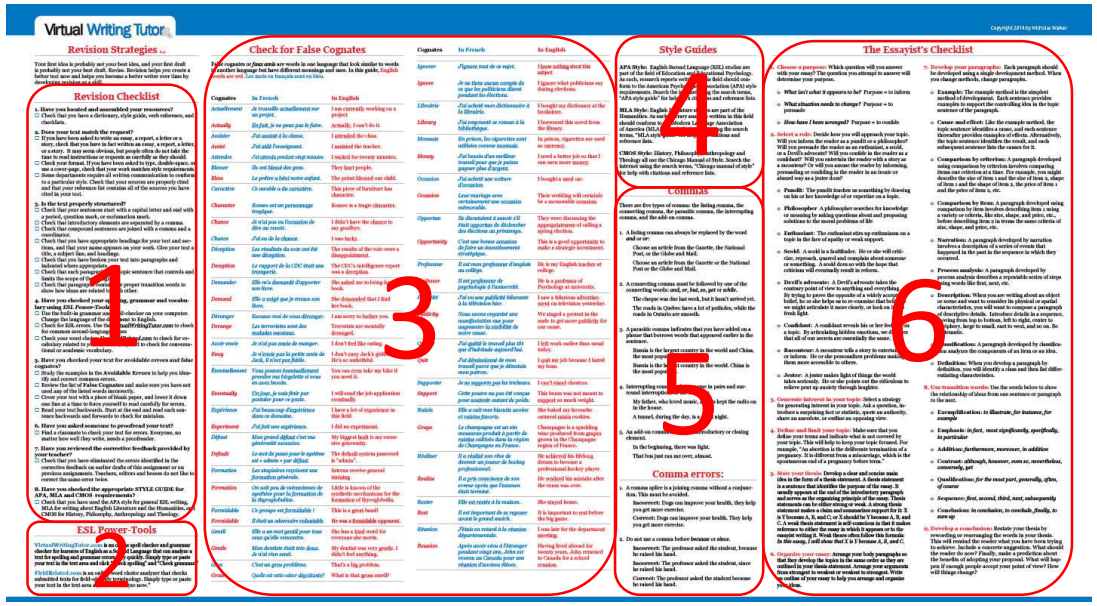
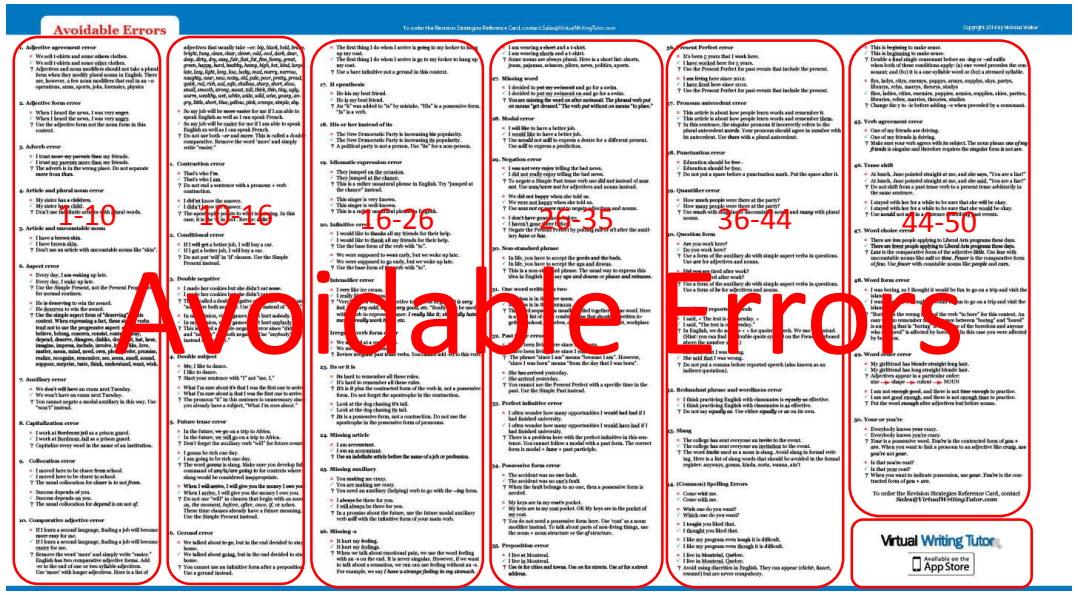
The Essayist's Checklist 5-6





5. State your thesis: Develop a clear and concise main idea in the form of a thesis statement. A thesis statement is a sentence that identifies the purpose of the essay. It usually appears at the end of the introductory paragraph and serves as the organizing principle of the essay. Thesis statements can be either strong or weak. A strong thesis statement makes a claim and summarizes support for it: X is Y because A, B, and C; or X should be Y because A, B, and C. A weak thesis statement is self-conscious in that it makes reference to either the essay in which it appears or to the essayist writing it. Weak theses often follow this formula: *In this essay, I will show that X is Y because A, B, and C.*

6. Organize your essay: Arrange your body paragraphs so that they develop the topics in the same order as they are outlined in your thesis statement. Arrange your arguments from strongest to weakest or weakest to strongest. Write an outline of your essay to help you arrange and organize your ideas.

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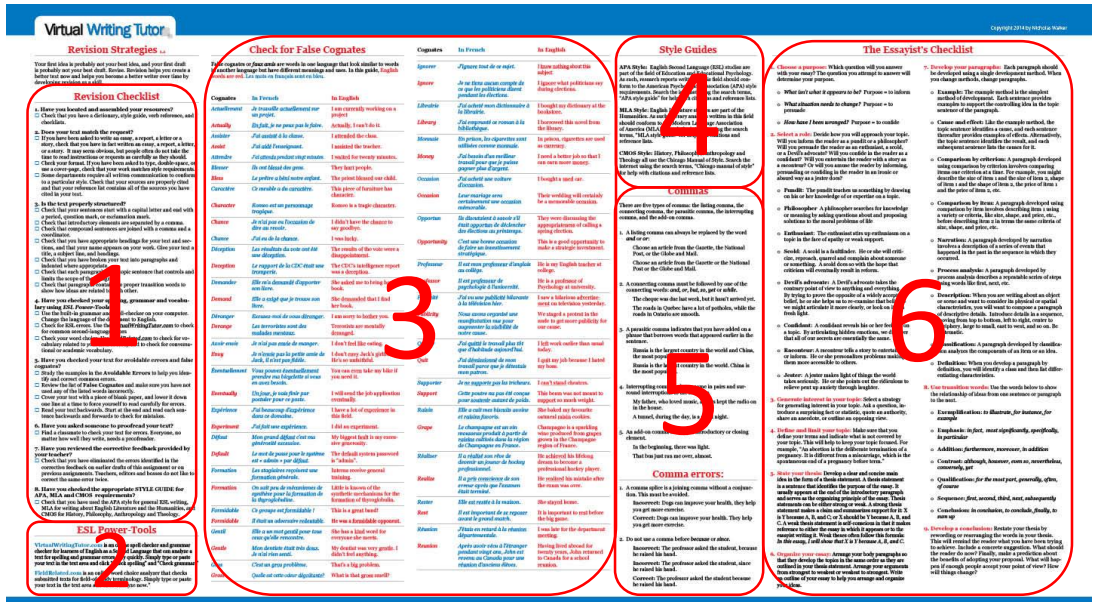
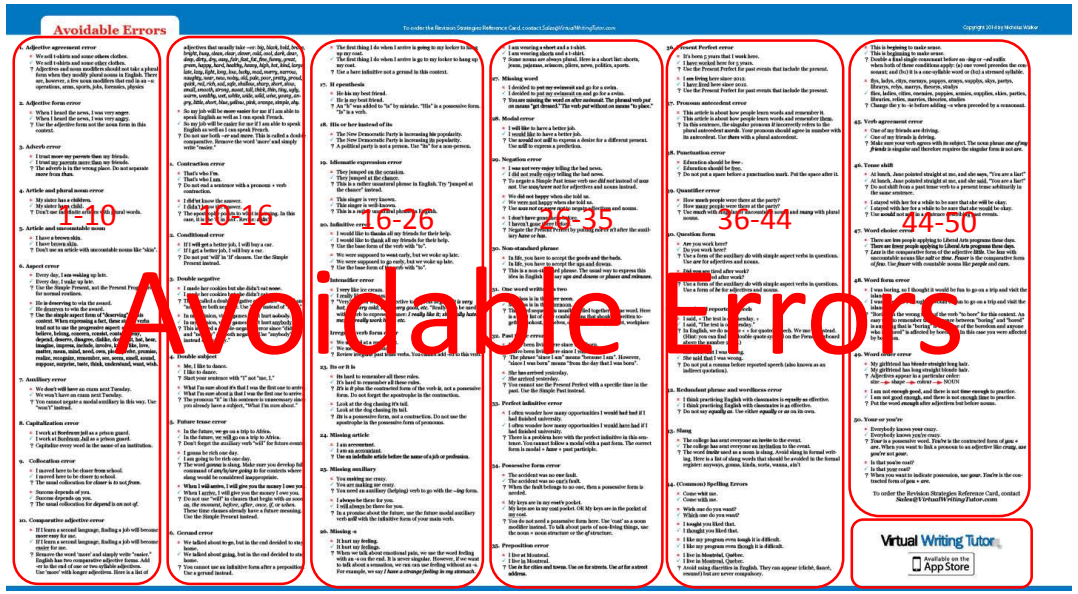
The Essayist's Checklist 7a





7. Develop your paragraphs: Each paragraph should be developed using a single development method. When you change methods, change paragraphs.

- **Example:** The example method is the simplest method of development. Each sentence provides examples to support the controlling idea in the topic sentence of the paragraph.
- **Cause and effect:** Like the example method, the topic sentence identifies a cause, and each sentence thereafter provides examples of effects. Alternatively, the topic sentence identifies the result, and each subsequent sentence lists the causes for it.
- **Comparison by criterion:** A paragraph developed using comparison by criterion involves comparing items one criterion at a time. For example, you might describe the size of item 1 and the size of item 2, shape of item 1 and the shape of item 2, the price of item 1 and the price of item 2, etc.

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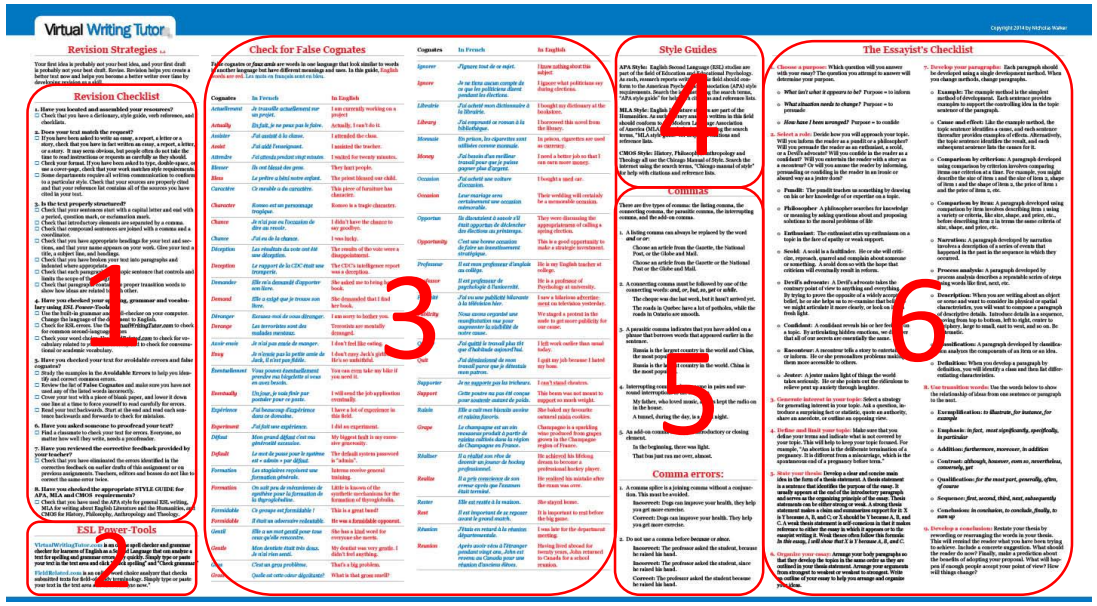
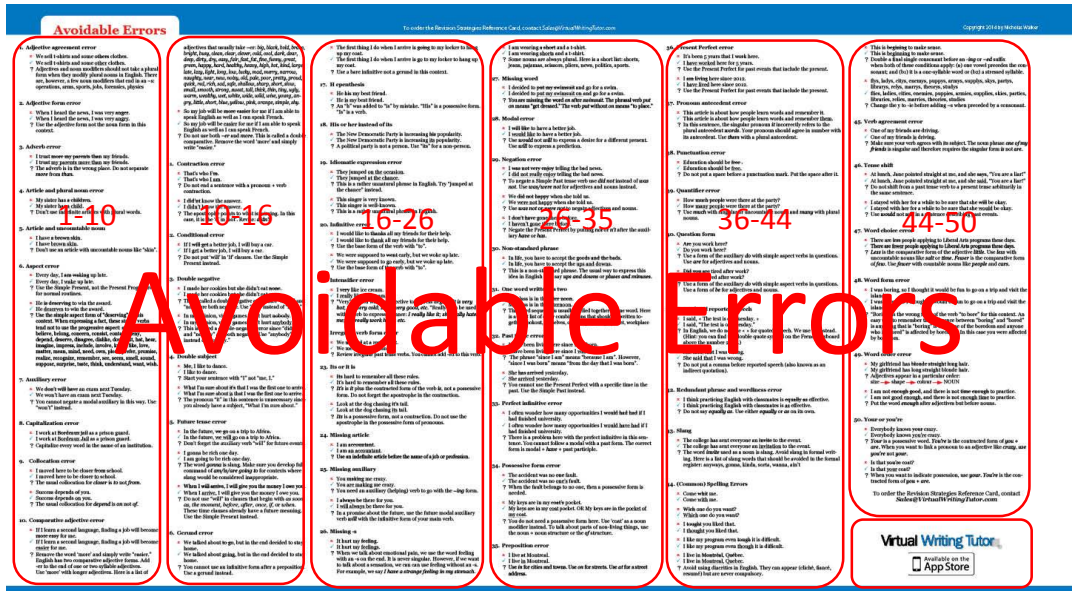
The Essayist's Checklist 7b





- **Comparison by item:** A paragraph developed using comparison by item involves describing item 1 using a variety or criteria, like size, shape, and price, etc., before describing item 2 in terms the same criteria of size, shape, and price, etc.

- **Narration:** A paragraph developed by narration involves a description of a series of events that happened in the past in the sequence in which they occurred.

- **Process analysis:** A paragraph developed by process analysis describes a repeatable series of steps using words like first, next, etc.

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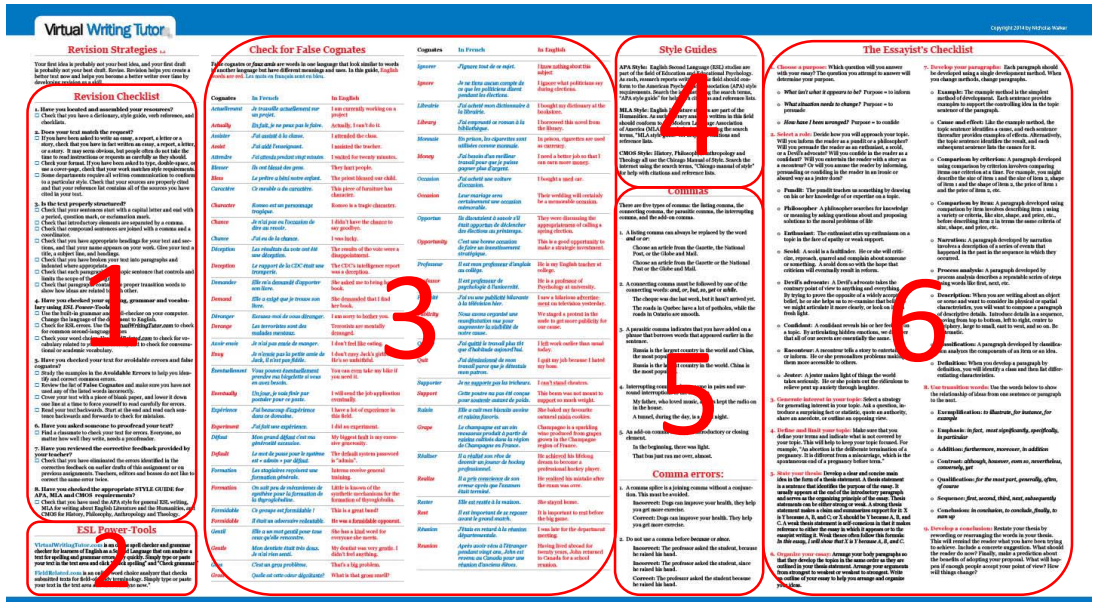
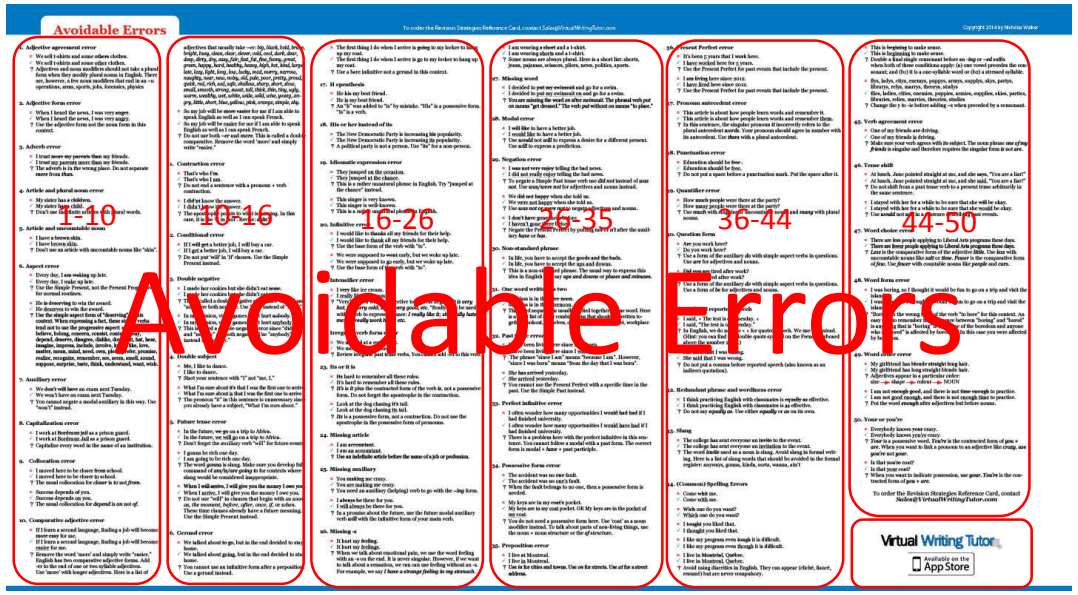
The Essayist's Checklist 7c

- **Description**: When you are writing about an object or scene and want to consider its physical or spatial characteristics, you will want to compose a paragraph of descriptive details. Introduce details in a sequence, moving from top to bottom, left to right, center to periphery, large to small, east to west, and so on. Be systematic.
- **Classification:** A paragraph developed by classification analyzes the components of an item or an idea.
- **Definition:** When you develop a paragraph by definition, you will identify a class and then list differentiating characteristics.





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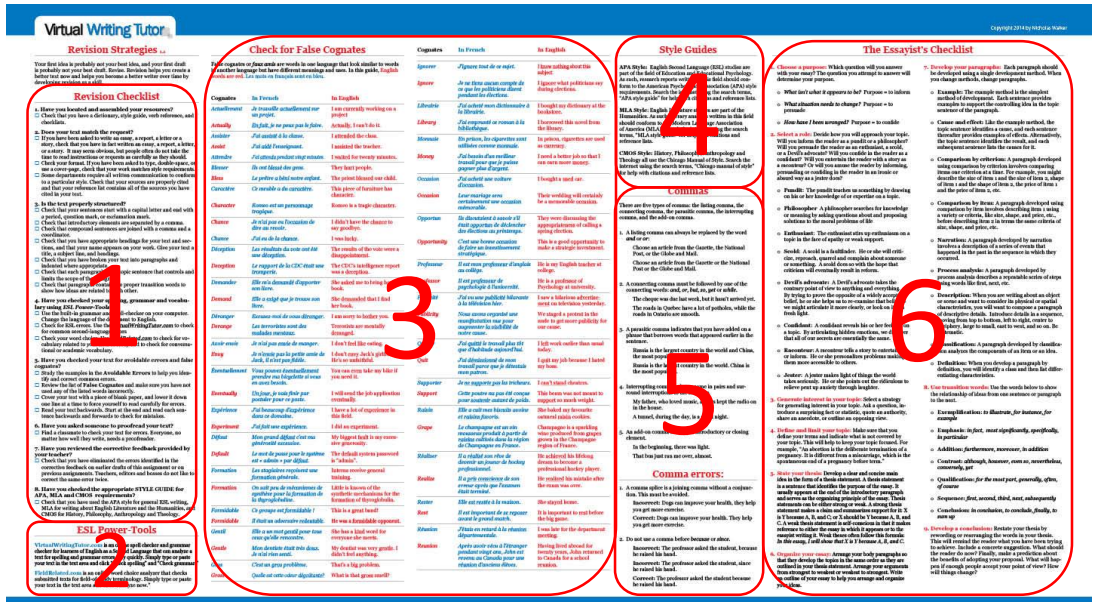
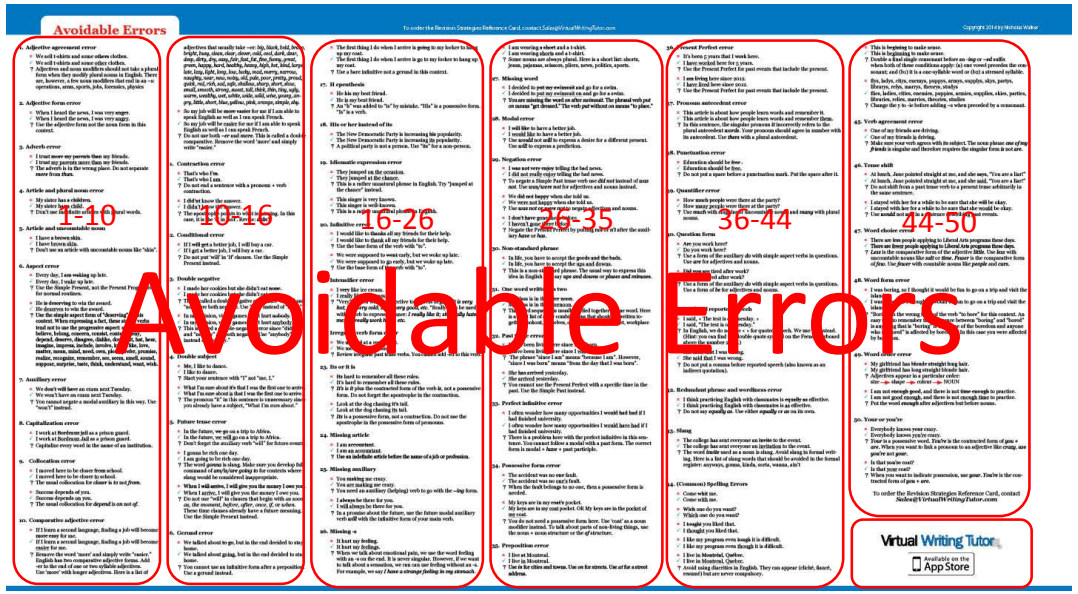
The Essayist's Checklist 8





8. Use transition words: Use the words below to show the relationship of ideas from one sentence or paragraph to the next.

- **Exemplification**: *to illustrate, for instance, for example*
- **Emphasis**: *in fact, most significantly, specifically, in particular*
- **Addition:** *furthermore, moreover, in addition*
- **Contrast:** *although, however, even so, nevertheless, conversely, yet*
- **Qualification:** *for the most part, generally, often, of course*
- **Sequence:** *first, second, third, next, subsequently*
- **Conclusion:** *in conclusion, to conclude, finally, to sum up*

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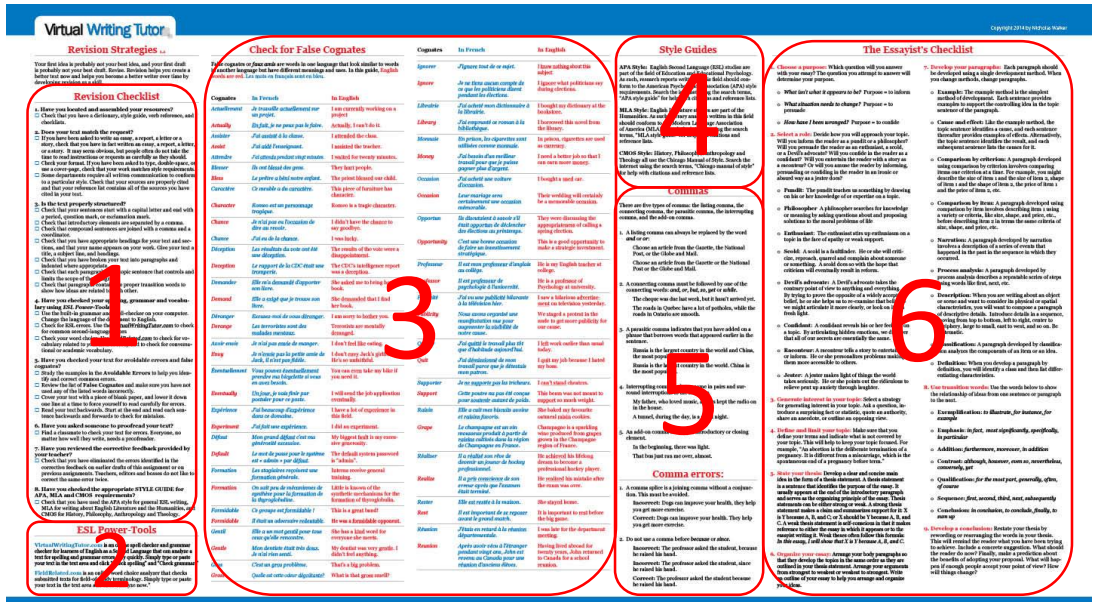
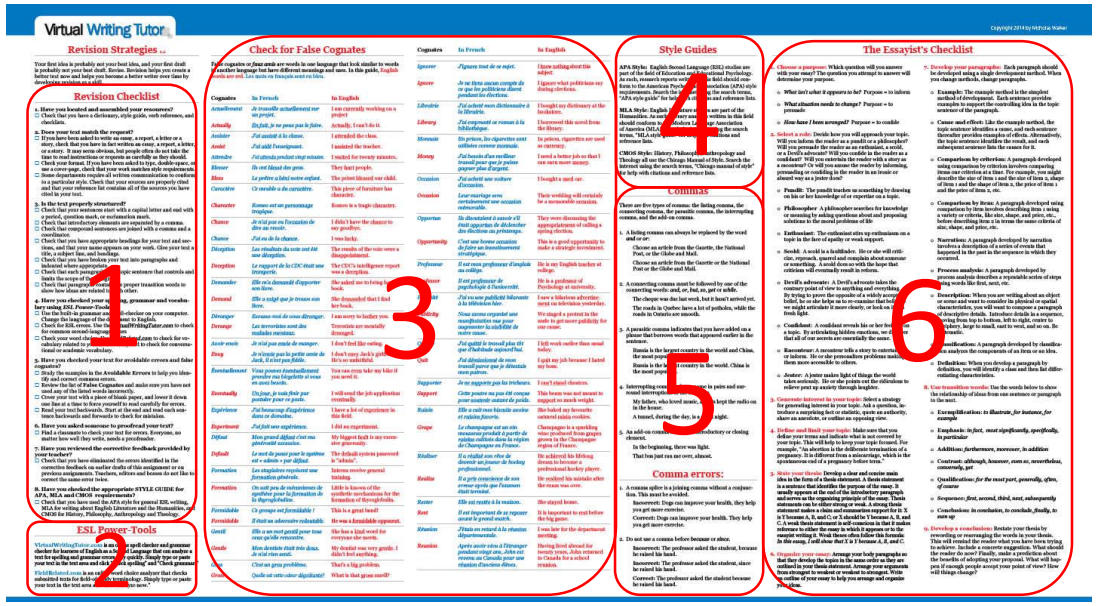
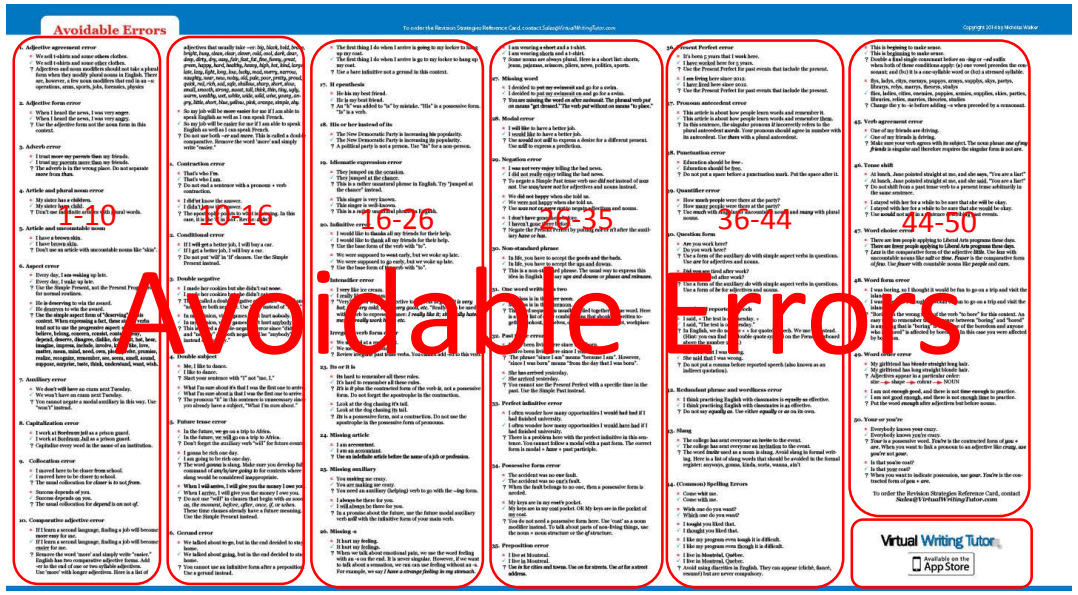
The Essayist's Checklist 9



9. Develop a conclusion: Restate your thesis by rewording or rearranging the words in your thesis. This will remind the reader what you have been trying to achieve. Include a concrete suggestion. What should the reader do now? Finally, make a prediction about the benefits of adopting your proposal. What will happen if enough people accept your point of view? How will things change?





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Revision Strategies Card

Avoidable Errors 1-10

1. Adjective agreement error
2. Adjective form error
3. Adverb error
4. Article and plural noun error
5. Article and uncountable noun
6. Aspect error
7. Auxiliary error
8. Capitalization error
9. Collocation error
10. Comparative adjective error

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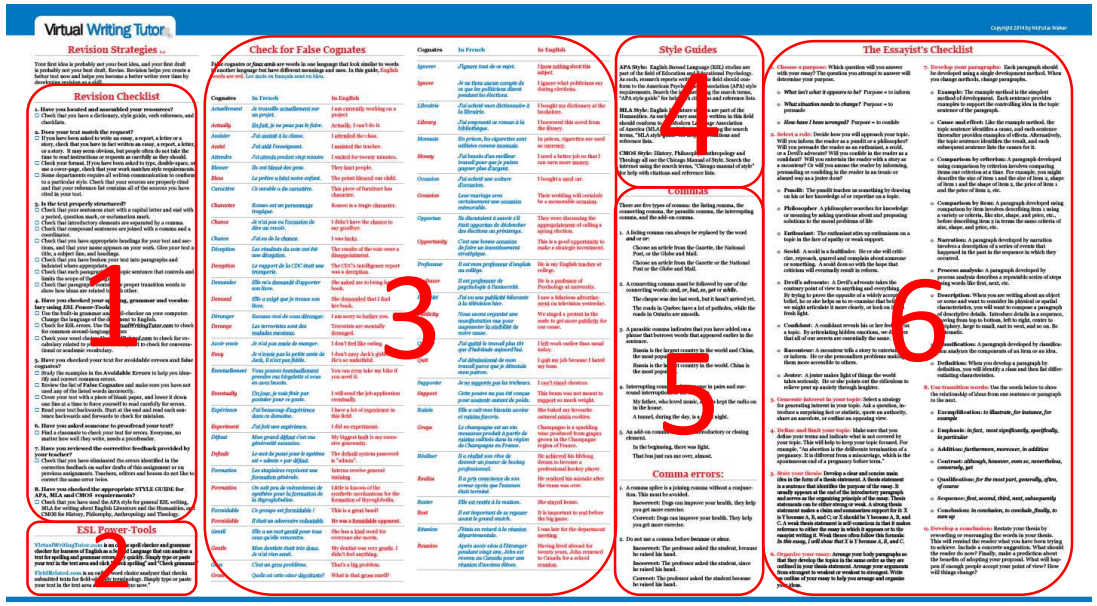
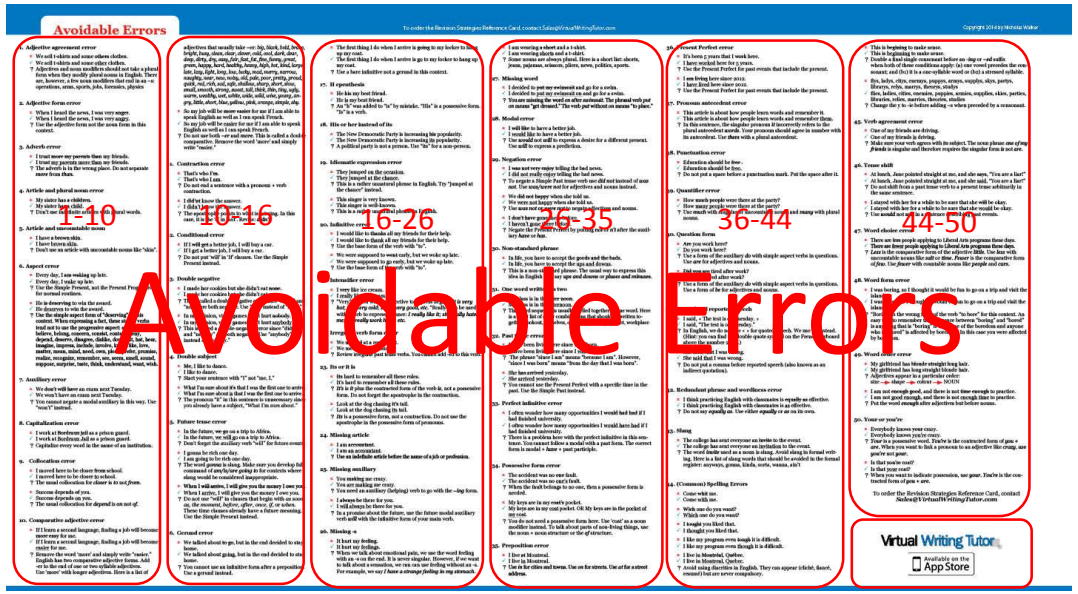
Revision Strategies Card

Avoidable Errors 1





1. **Adjective agreement error**

   ✗ We sell t-shirts and some ~~others~~ clothes.

   ✓ We sell t-shirts and some other clothes.

   ? Adjectives and noun modifiers should not take a plural form when they modify plural nouns in English. There are, however, a few noun modifiers that end in an –s: operations, arms, sports, jobs, forensics, physics

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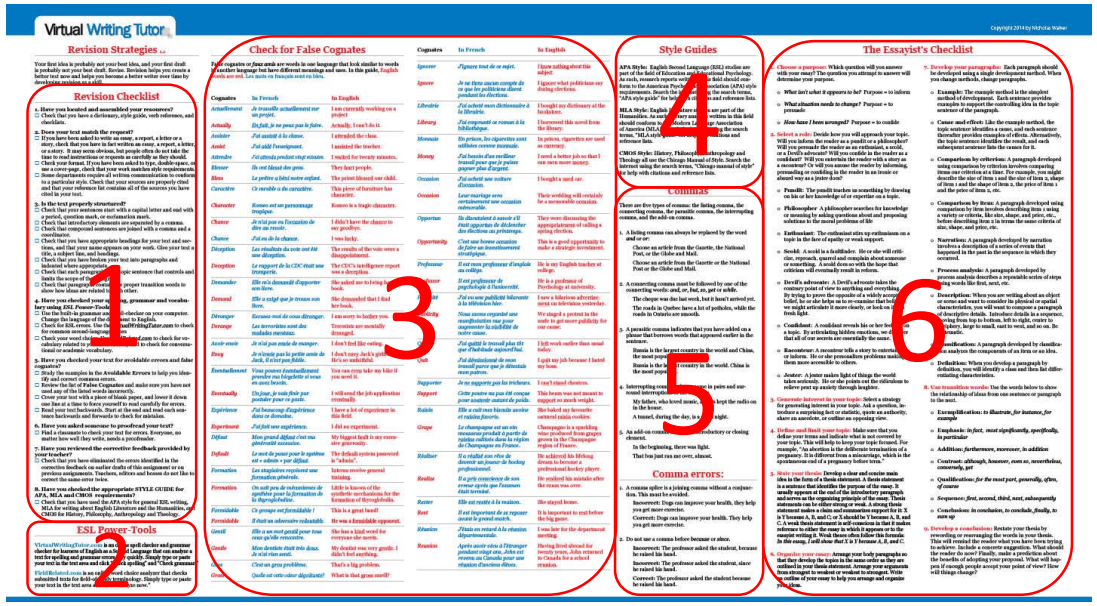
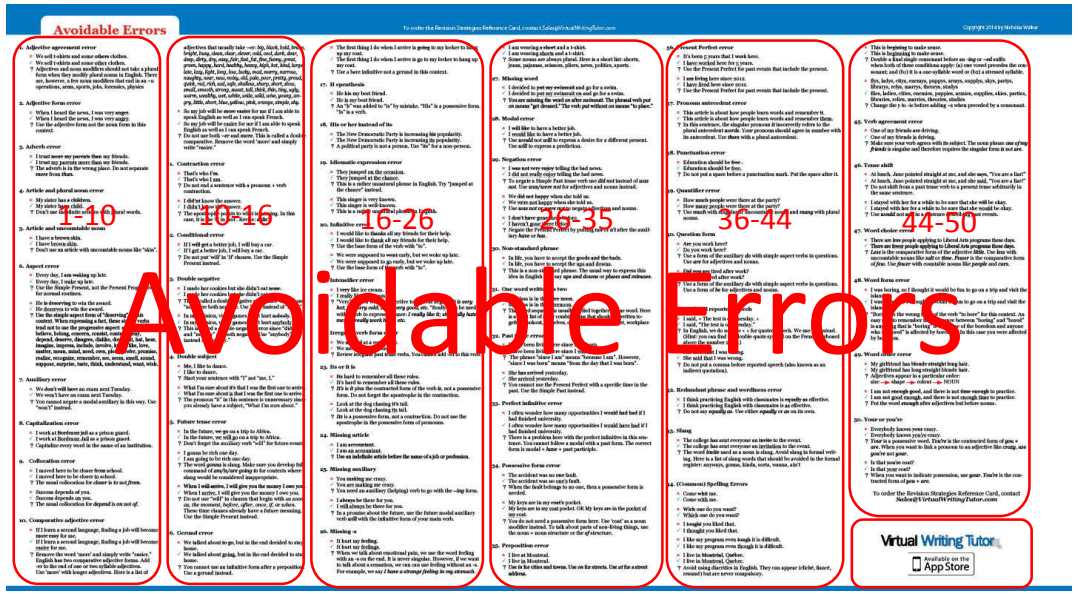
Avoidable Errors 2





2. Adjective form error

- ✗ When I heard the news, I was very ~~anger~~.
- ✓ When I heard the news, I was very angry.
- ? Use the adjective form not the noun form in this context.

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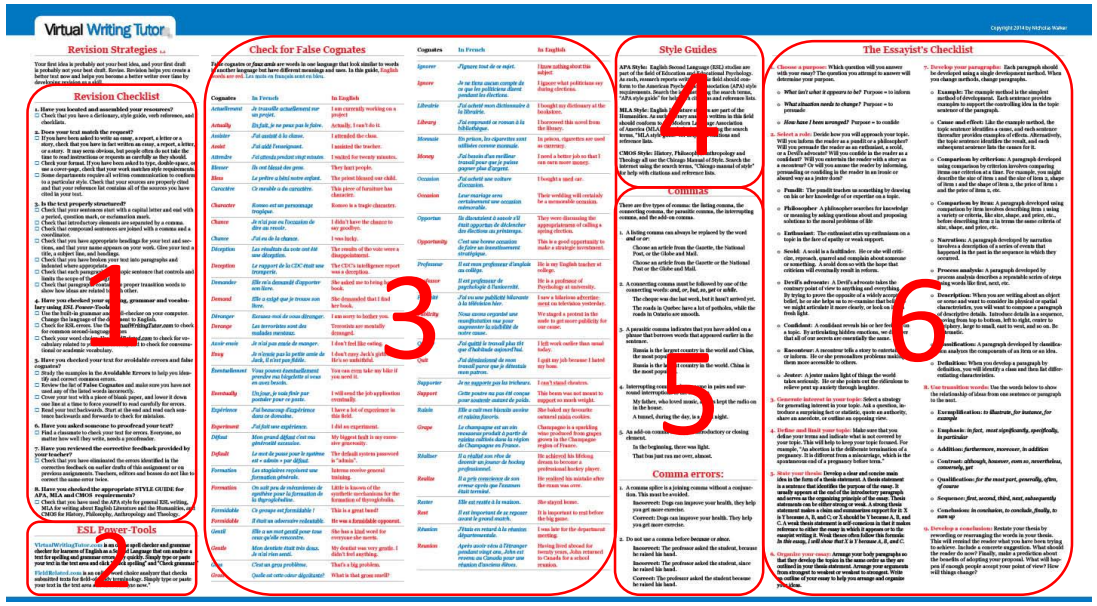
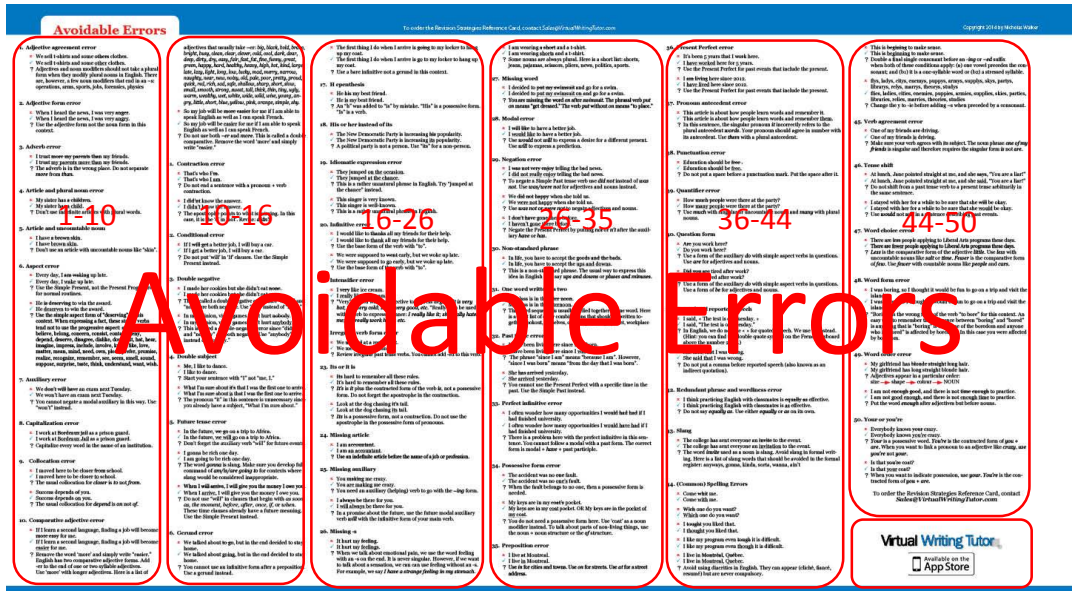
Avoidable Errors 3





3. Adverb error

- ✗ I trust ~~more my parents than~~ my friends.
- ✓ I trust <u>my parents more than</u> my friends.
- ? The adverb is in the wrong place. Do not separate *more* from *than*.

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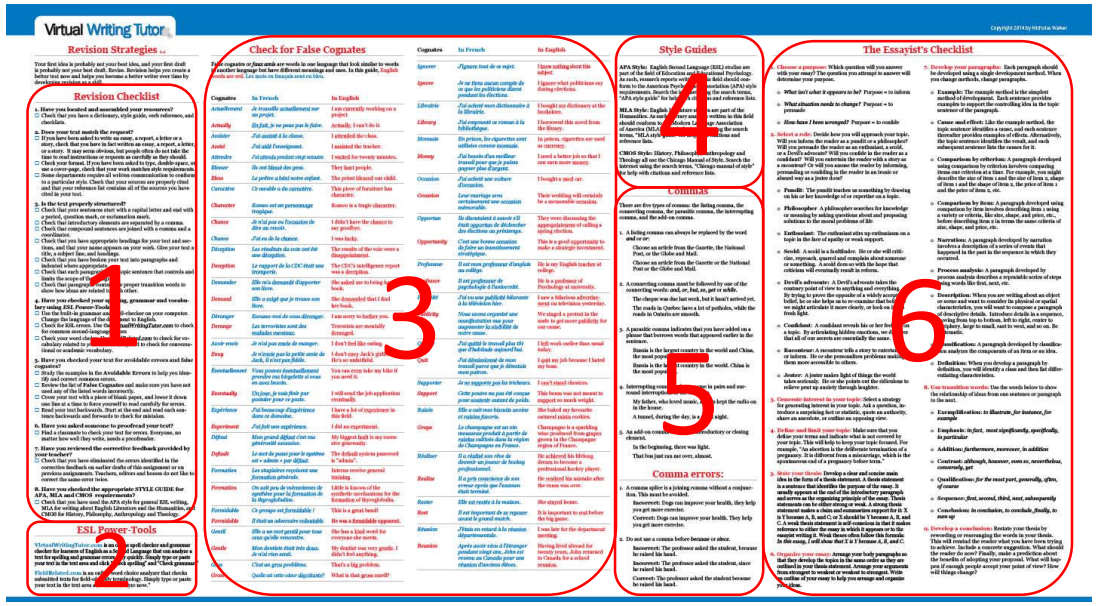
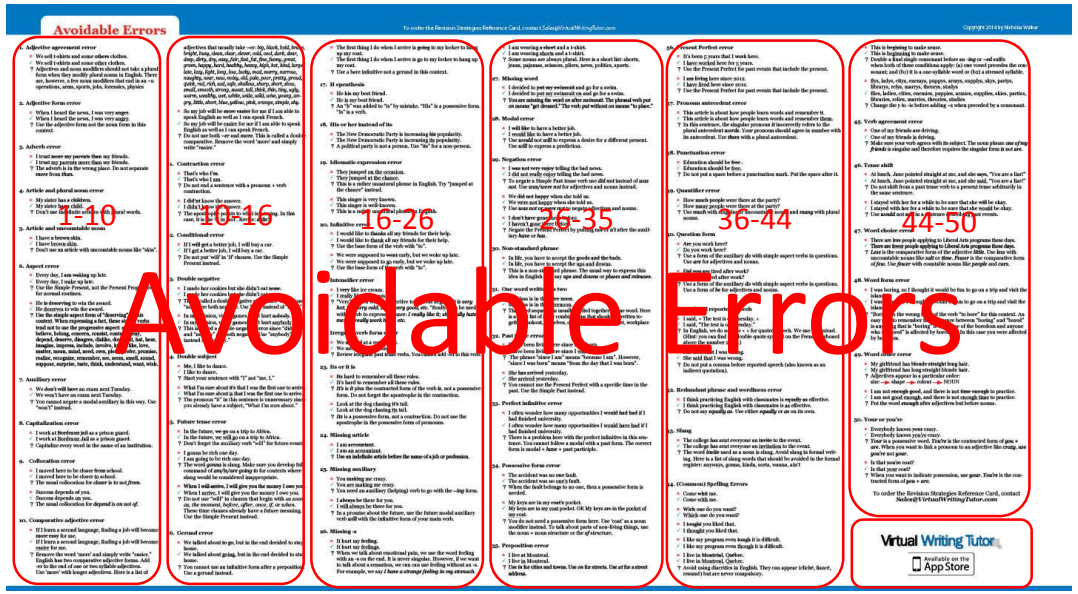
Avoidable Errors 4





4. Article and plural noun error

- ✗ My sister has ~~a children~~.
- ✓ My sister has a child.
- ? Don't use indefinite articles with plural words.

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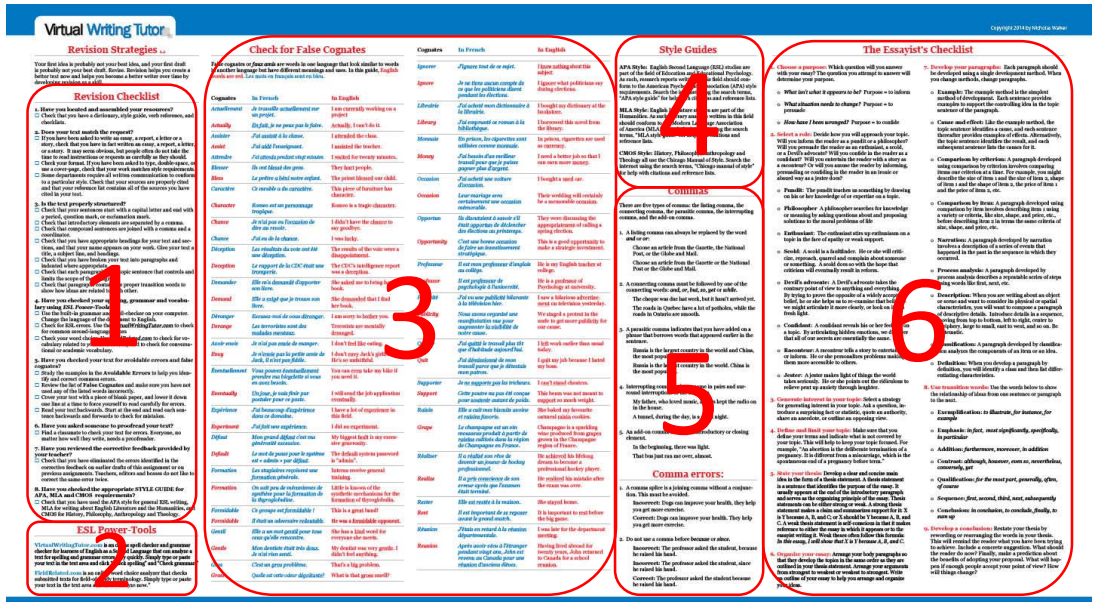
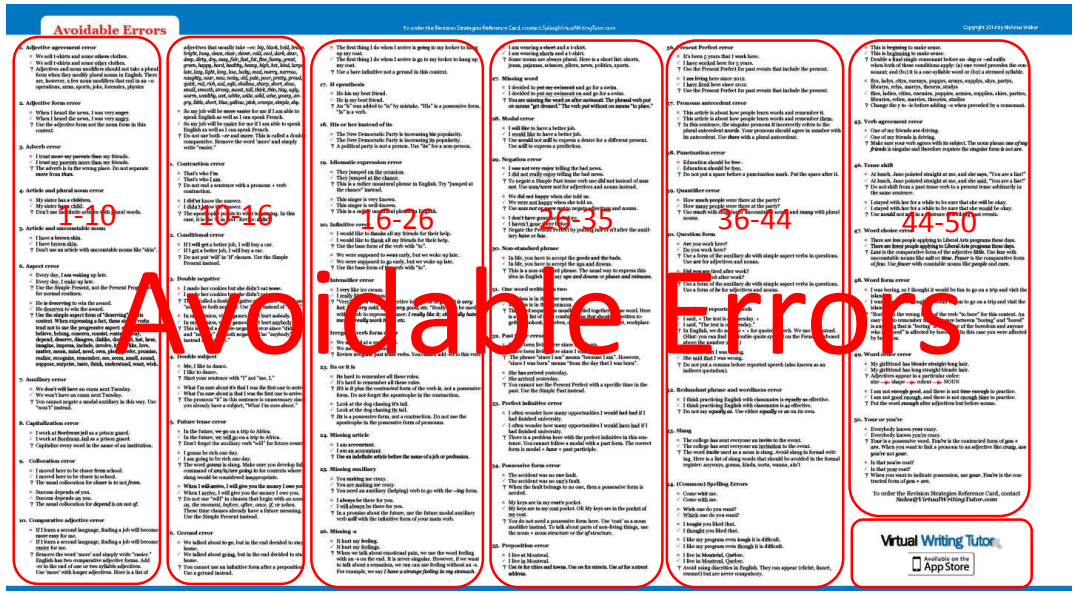
Avoidable Errors 5





5. Article and uncountable noun

✗ I have ~~a brown skin~~.

✓ I have brown skin.

? Don't use an article with uncountable nouns like "skin".

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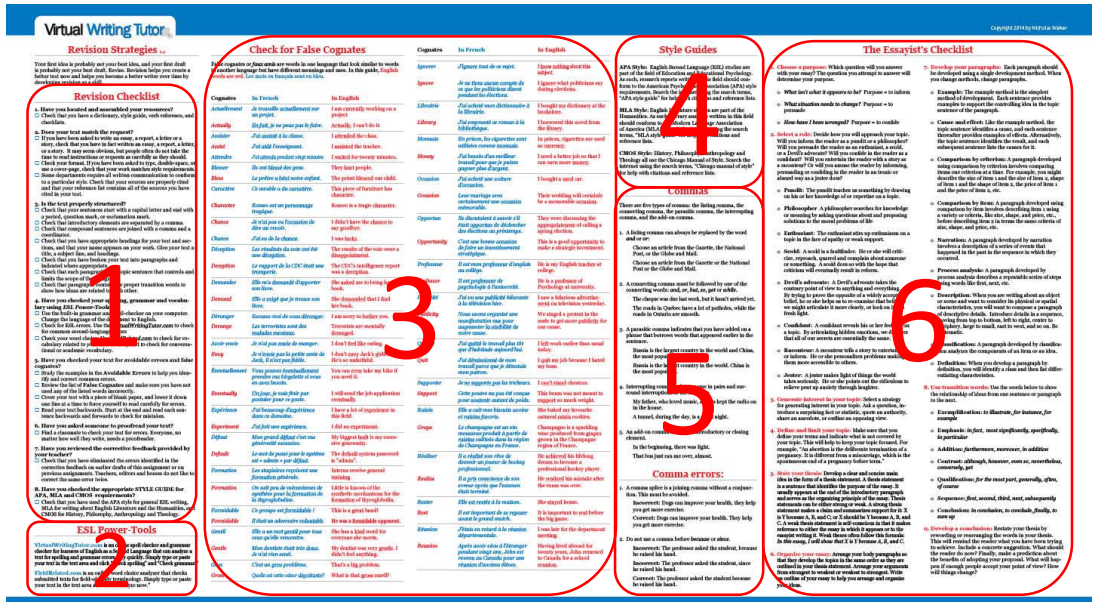
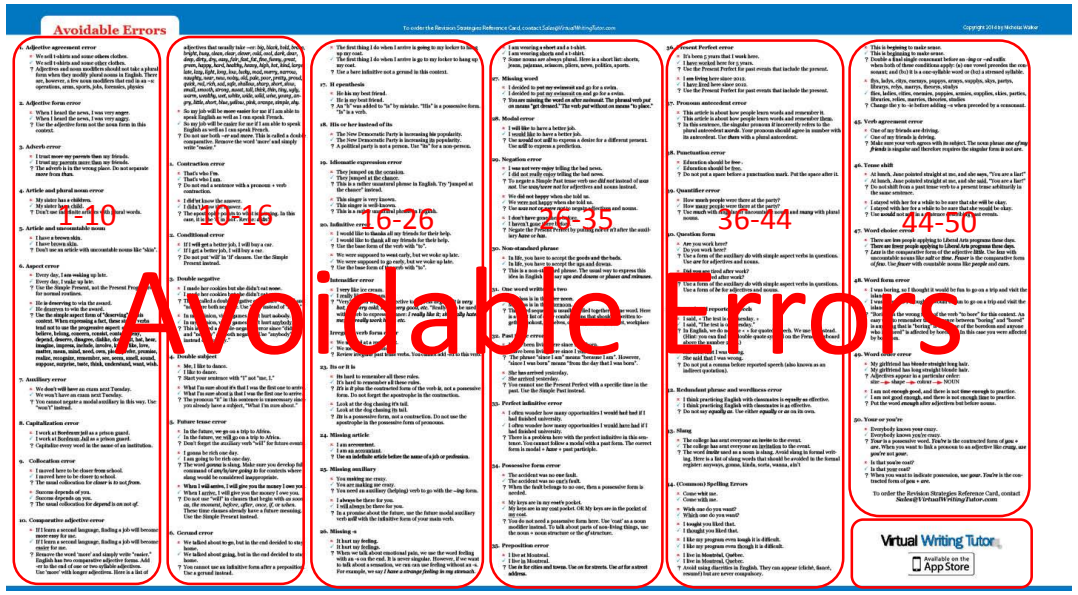
Avoidable Errors 6





6. Aspect error

× Every day, I ~~am waking~~ up late.

✓ Every day, I wake up late.

? Use the Simple Present, not the Present Progressive, for normal routines.

× He ~~is deserving~~ to win the award.

✓ He deserves to win the award.

? Use the simple aspect form of "deserving" in this context. When expressing a fact, these stative verbs tend not to use the progressive aspect: agree, appear, believe, belong, concern, consist, contain, deny, depend, deserve, disagree, dislike, doubt, fit, hat, hear, imagine, impress, include, involve, know, like, love, matter, mean, mind, need, own, pleas, prefer, promise, realize, recognize, remember, see, seem, smell, sound, suppose, surprise, taste, think, understand, want, wish.

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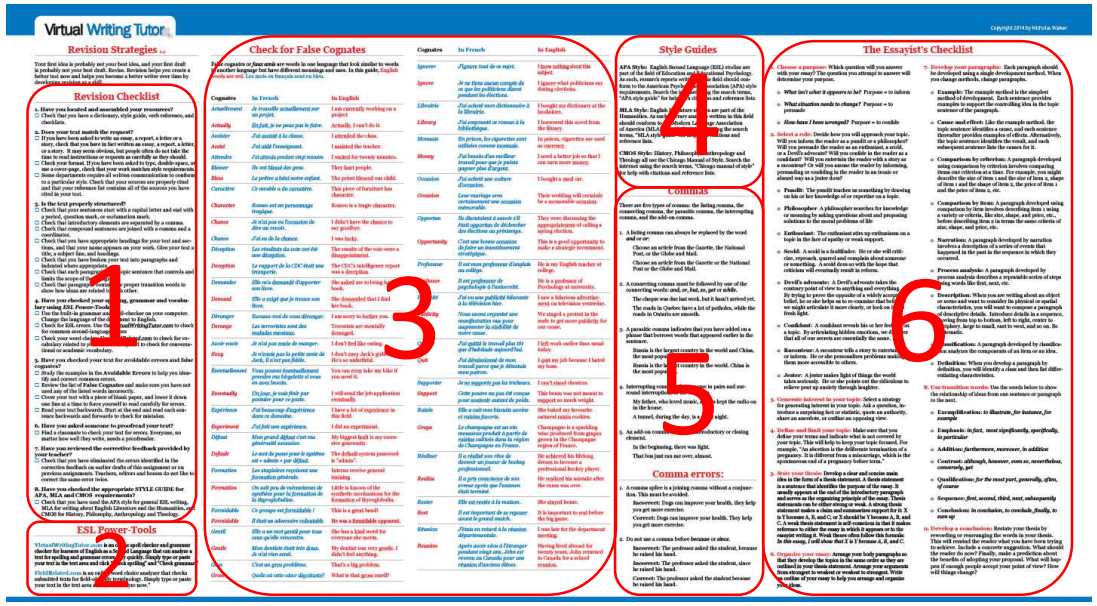
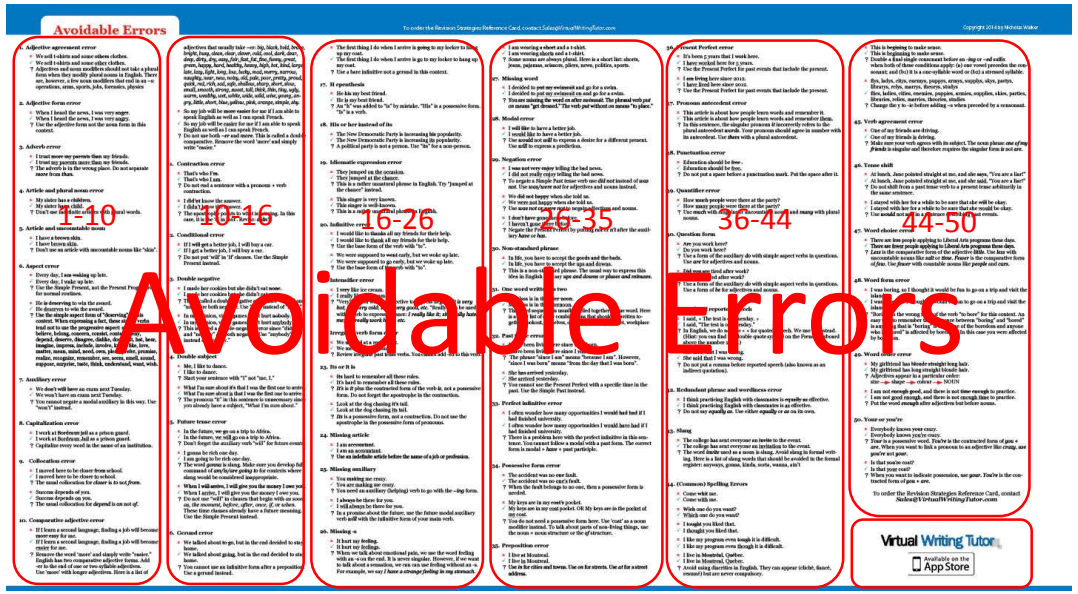
Avoidable Errors 7





7. Auxiliary error

✗ We ~~don't will have~~ an exam next Tuesday.

✓ We won't have an exam next Tuesday.

? You cannot negate a modal auxiliary in this way. Use "won't" instead.

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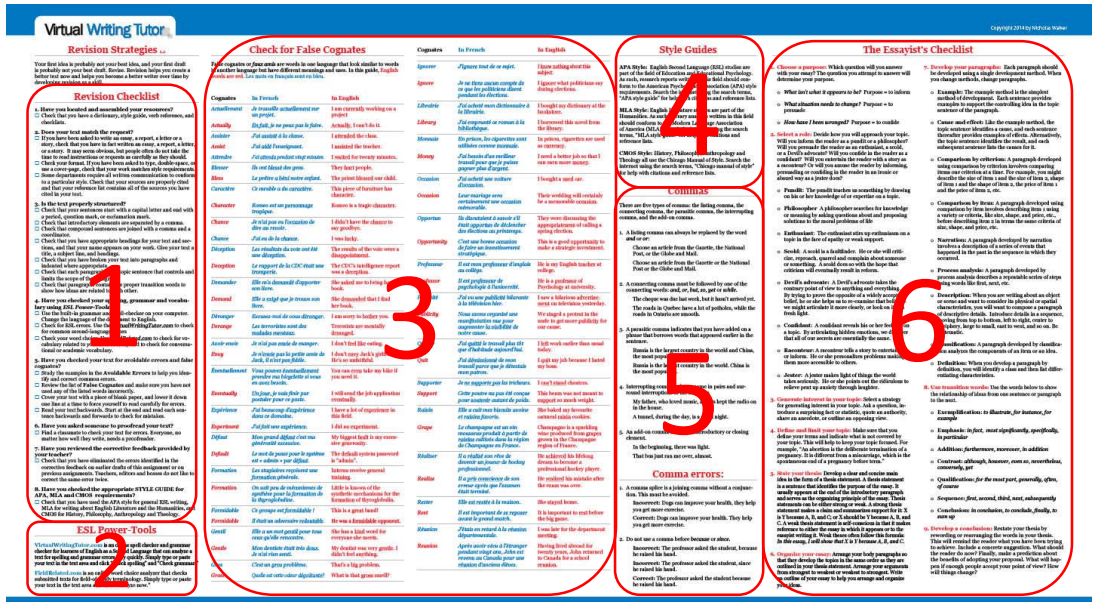
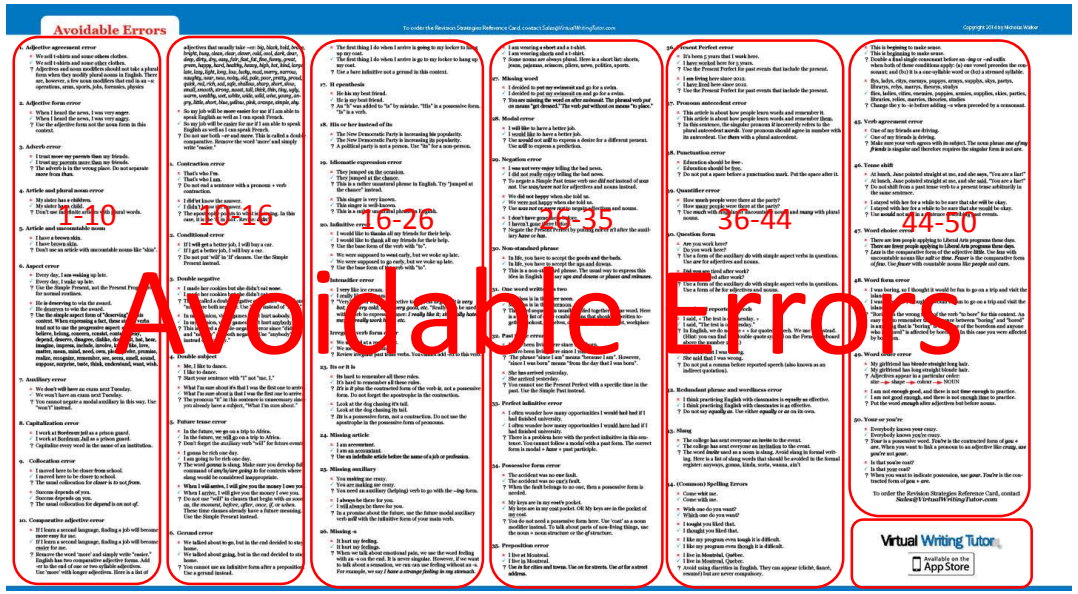
Avoidable Errors 8





8. Capitalization error

✗ I work at ~~Bordeaux jail~~ as a prison guard.

✓ I work at Bordeaux Jail as a prison guard.

? Capitalize every word in the name of an institution.

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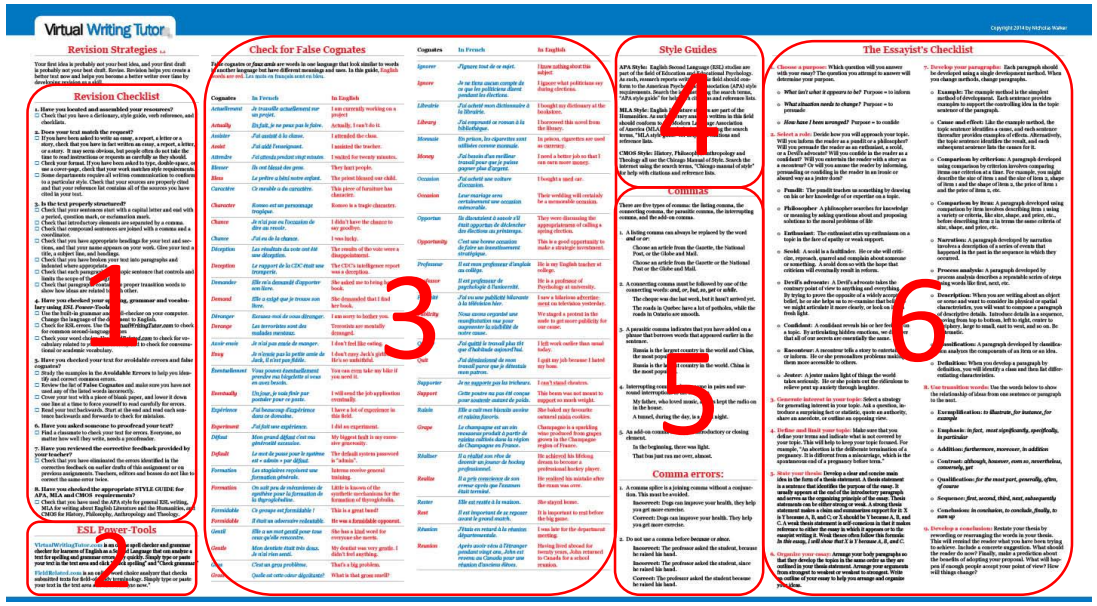
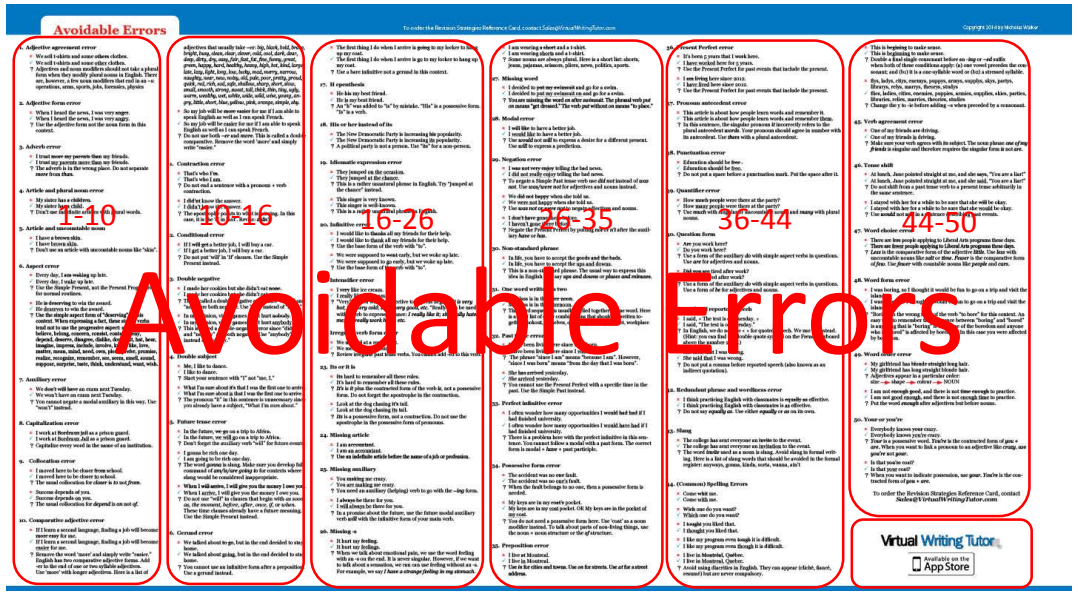
Avoidable Errors 9





9. Collocation error

× I moved here to the closer ~~from~~ school.

✓ I moved here to be closer <u>to</u> school.

? The usual collocation for *closer* is *to* not *from*.

× Success depends ~~of~~ you.

✓ Success depends <u>on</u> you.

? The usual collocation for *depend* is *on* not *of*.

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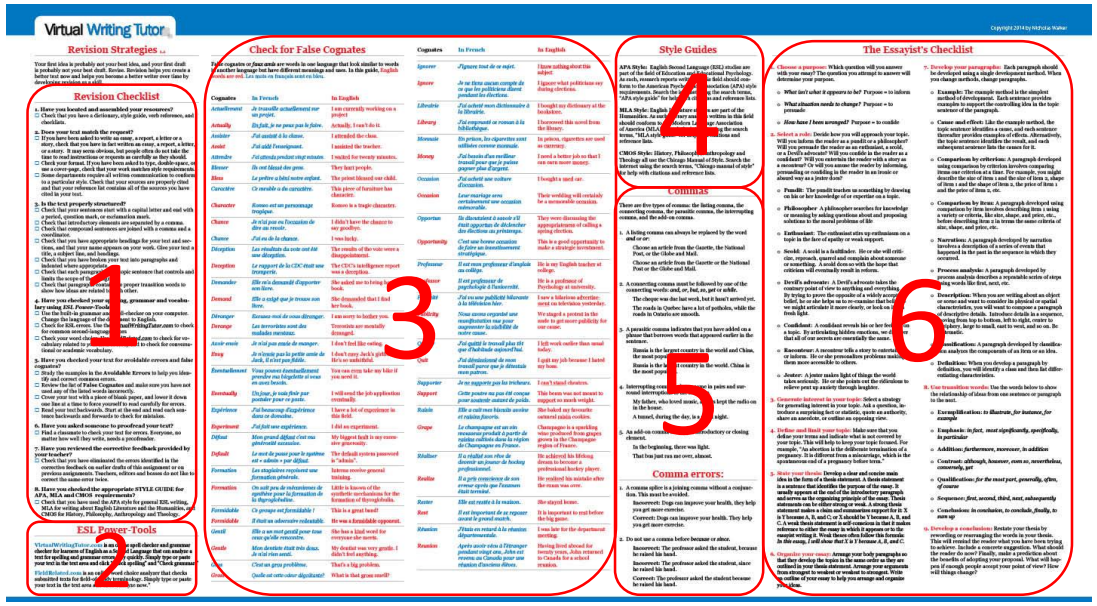
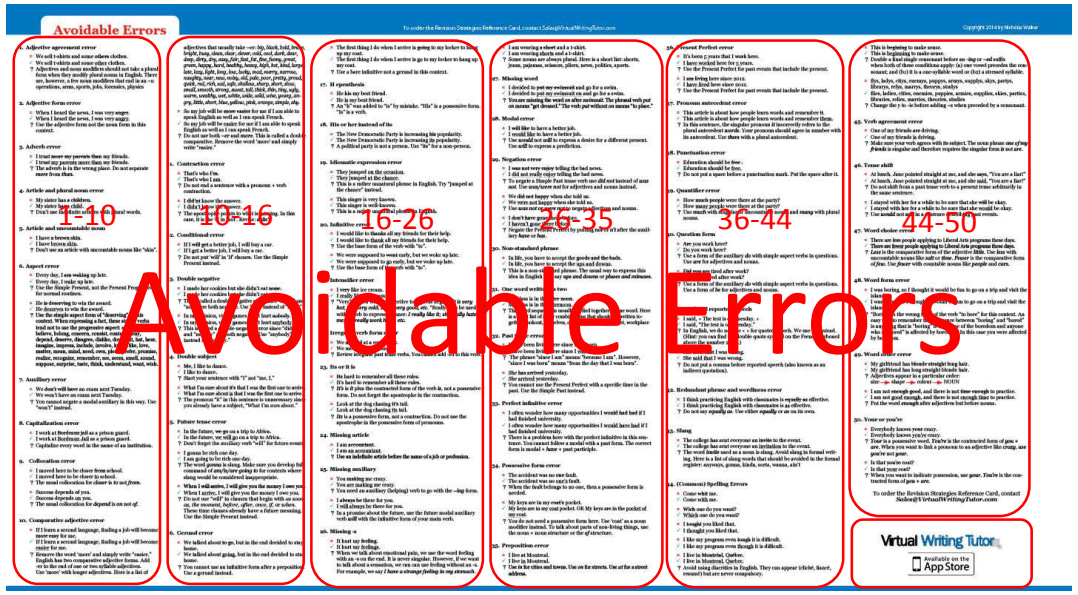
Avoidable Errors 10





10. Comparative adjective error

✗ If I learn a second language, finding a job will become ~~more easy~~ for me.

✓ If I learn a second language, finding a job will become easier for me.

? Remove the word 'more' and simply write "easier." English has two comparative adjective forms. Add -er to the end of one or two syllable adjectives. Use 'more' with longer adjectives. Here is a list of

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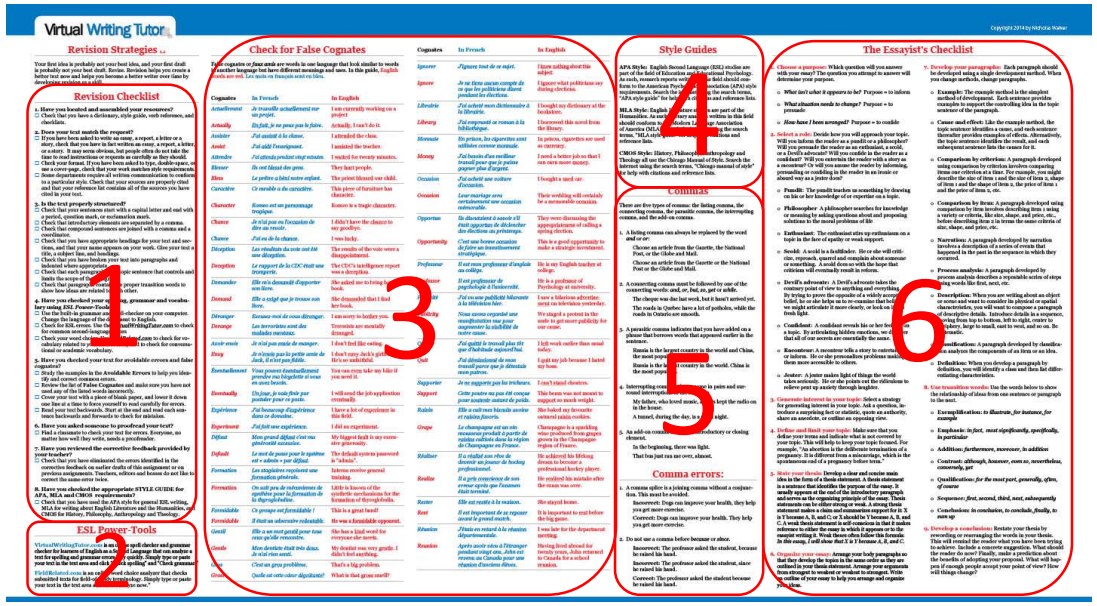
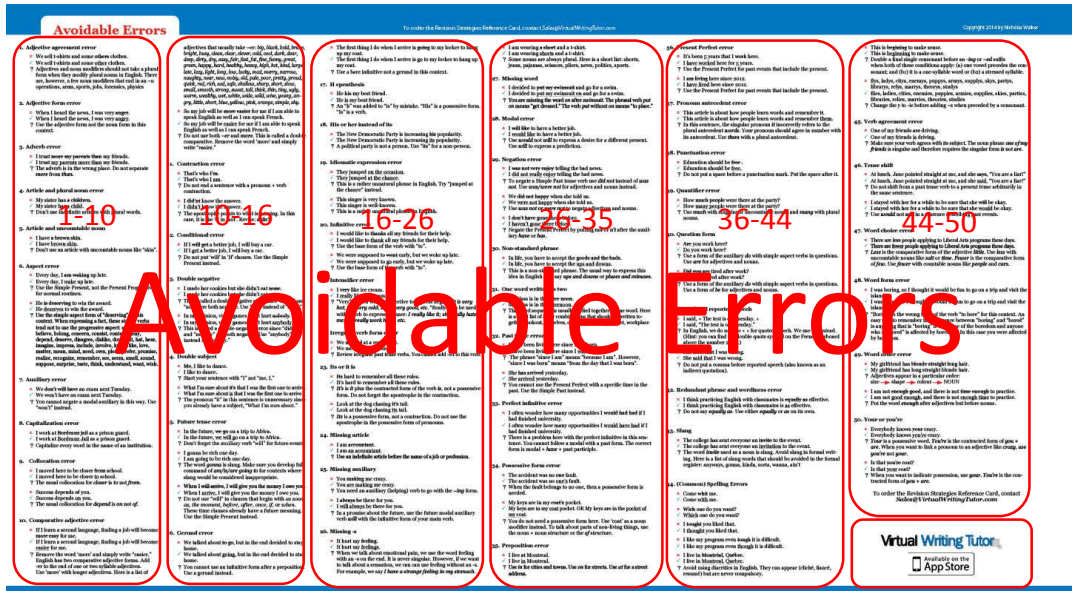
Avoidable Errors 10-16





10. (continued) Comparative adjective error
11. Contraction error
12. Conditional error
13. Double negative
14. Double subject
15. Future tense error
16. Gerund error

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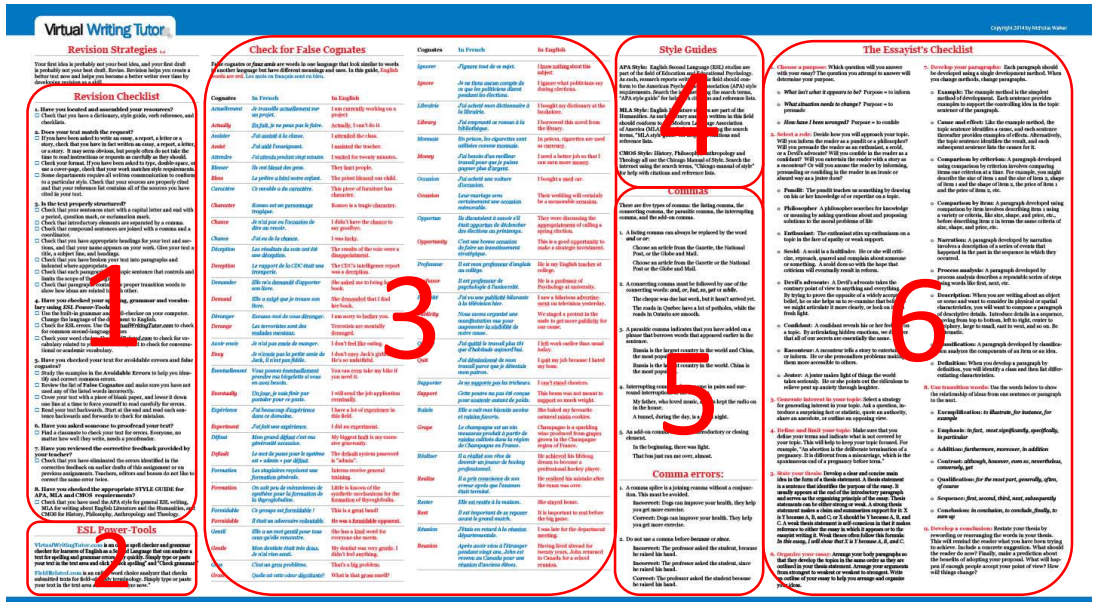
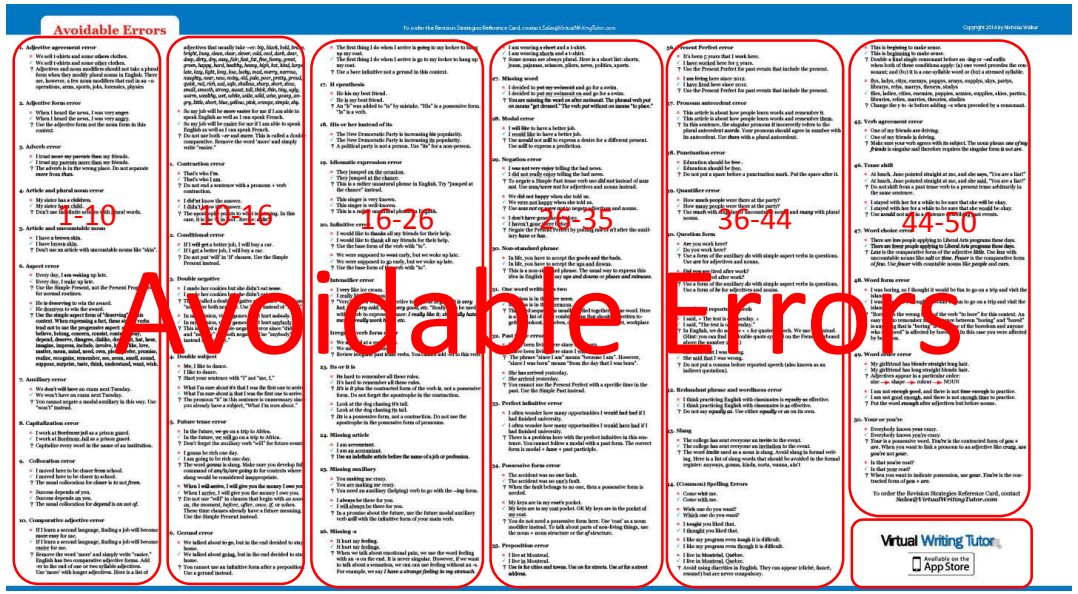
Avoidable Errors 10 (continued)





English has two comparative adjective forms. Add -er to the end of one or two syllable adjectives. Use 'more' with longer adjectives. Here is a list of

adjectives that usually take –er: *big, black, bold, brave, bright, busy, clean, clear, clever, cold, cool, dark, dear, deep, dirty, dry, easy, fair, fast, fat, fine, funny, great, green, happy, hard, healthy, heavy, high, hot, kind, large, late, lazy, light, long, low, lucky, mad, merry, narrow, naughty, near, new, noisy, old, pale, poor, pretty, proud, quick, red, rich, sad, safe, shallow, sharp, short, slow, small, smooth, strong, sweet, tall, thick, thin, tiny, ugly, warm, wealthy, wet, white, wide, wild, wise, young, angry, little, short, blue, yellow, pink, orange, simple, shy.*

× So my job will be ~~more easier~~ for me if I am able to speak English as well as I can speak French.

✓ So my job will be easier for me if I am able to speak English as well as I can speak French.

? Do not use both –*er* and *more*. This is called a double comparative. Remove the word 'more' and simply write "easier."

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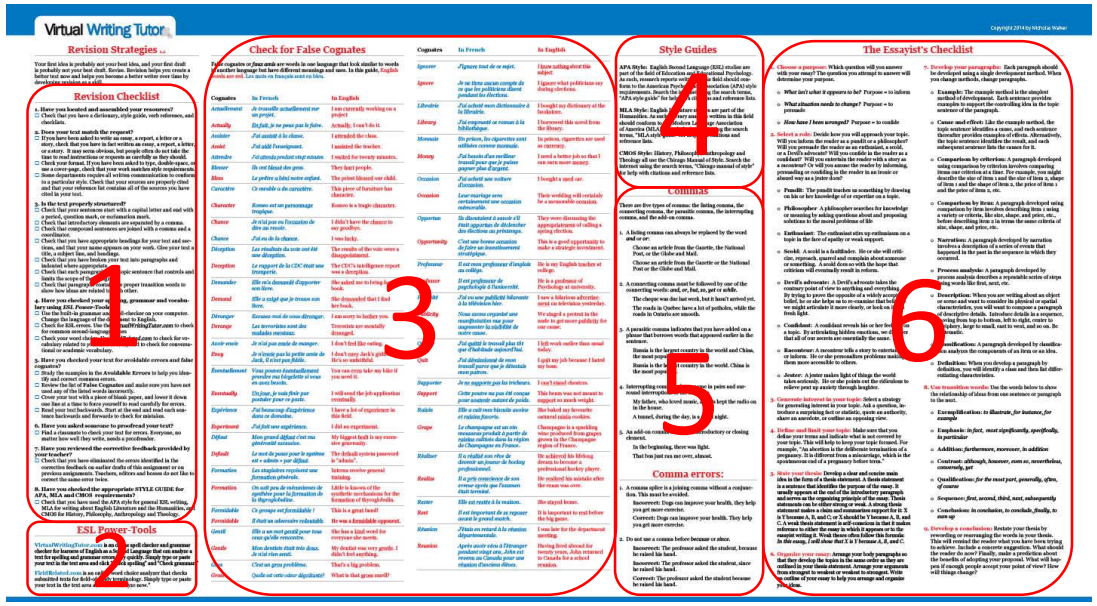
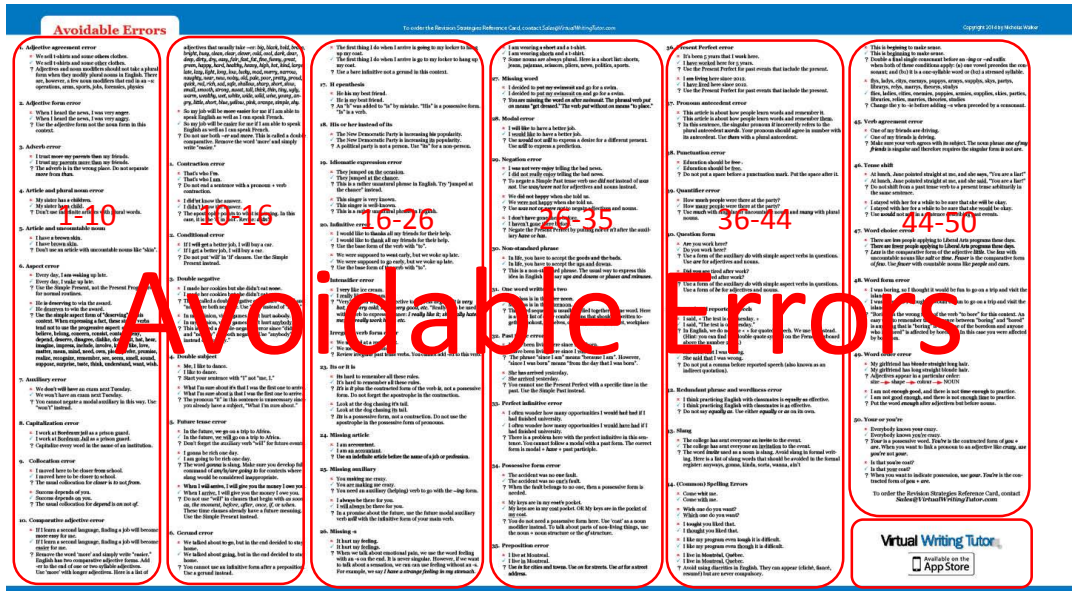
Avoidable Errors 11





11. Contraction error

- ✗ That's who ~~I'm~~.
- ✓ That's who I am.
- ? Do not end a sentence with a pronoun + verb contraction.

- ✗ I ~~did'nt~~ know the answer.
- ✓ I didn't know the answer.
- ? The apostrophe points to what is missing. In this case, it is the 'o' in 'not'. Revise: *didn't*

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Revision Strategies Card

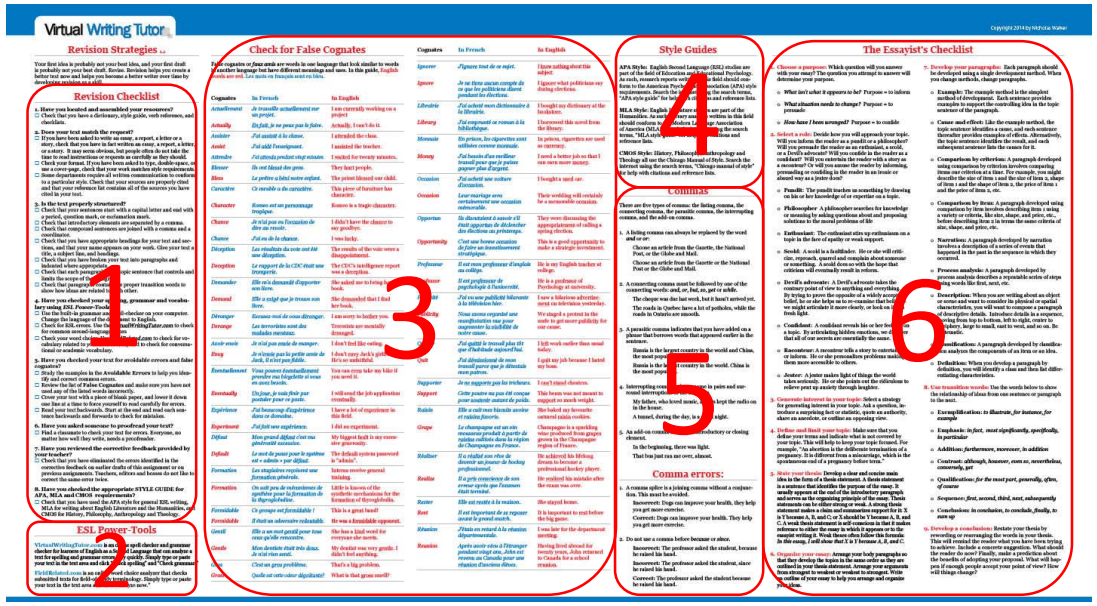
Avoidable Errors 12

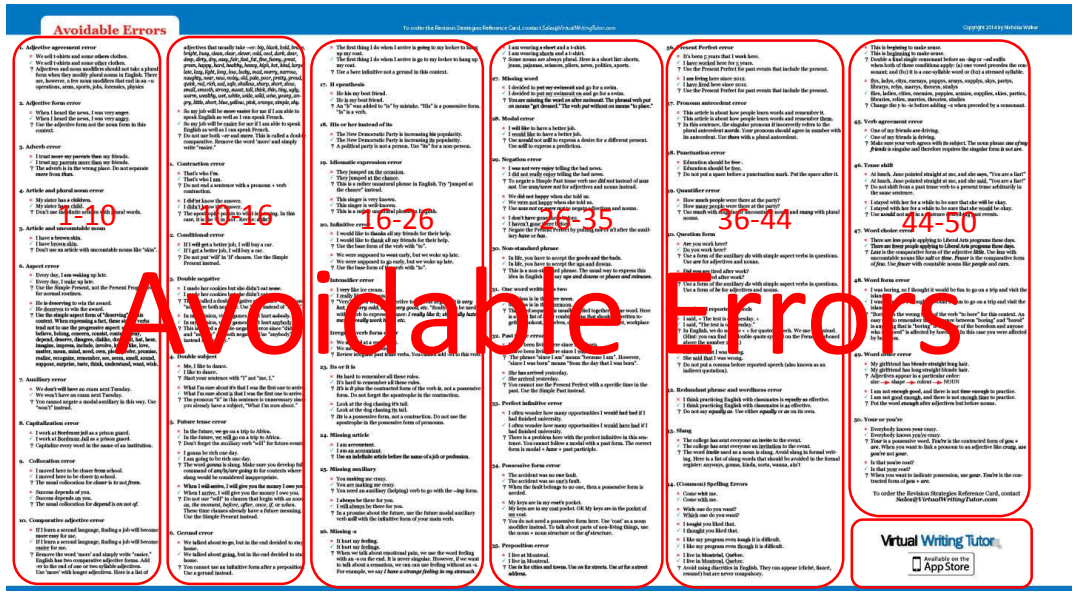
12. Conditional error

✗ If I ~~will get~~ a better job, I will buy a car.

✓ If I get a better job, I will buy a car.

? Do not put 'will' in 'If' clauses. Use the Simple Present instead.





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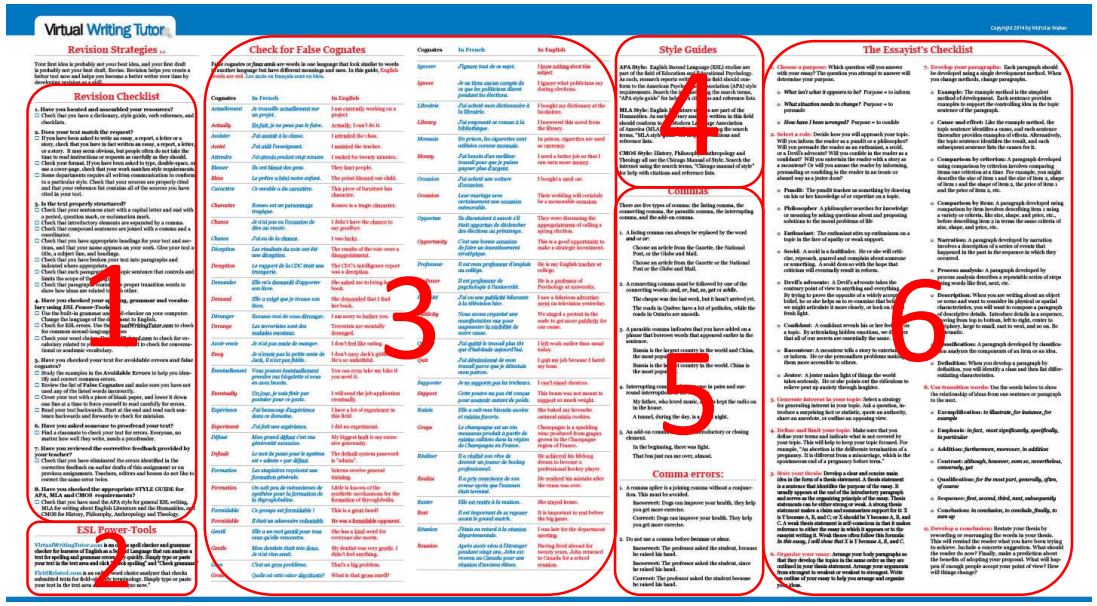
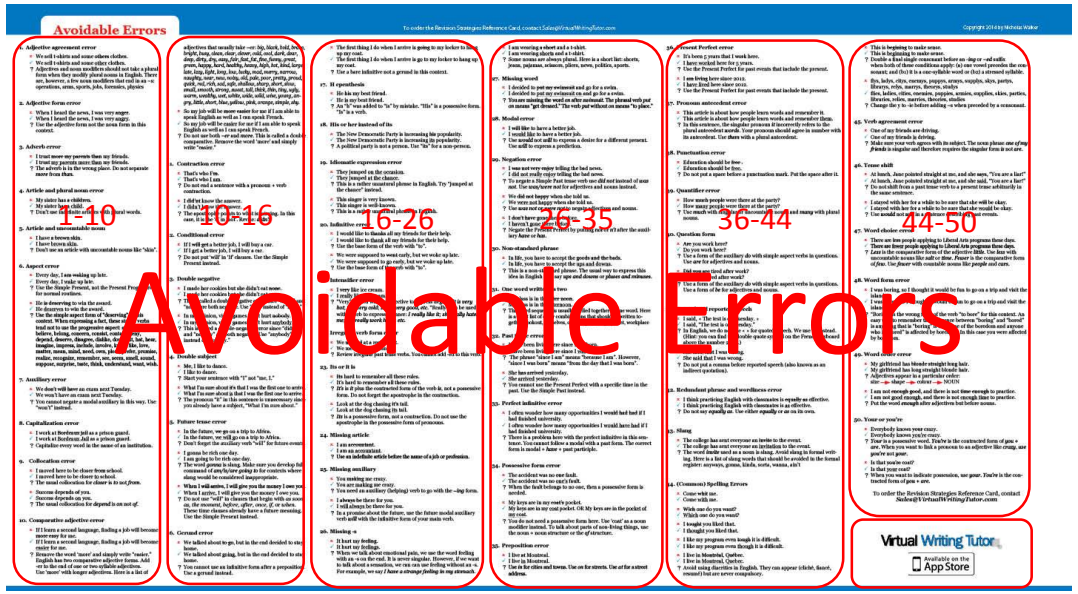
Revision Strategies Card

Avoidable Errors 13





13. Double negative

✗ I made her cookies but she didn't eat ~~none~~.

✓ I made her cookies but she didn't eat <u>any</u>.

? This is called a double-negative error since "didn't" and "none" are both negative. Use "any" instead of "none."

✗ In my opinion, video games don't hurt ~~nobody~~.

✓ In my opinion, video games don't hurt <u>anybody</u>.

? This is called a double-negative error since "didn't" and "nobody" are both negative. Use "anybody" instead of "nobody."

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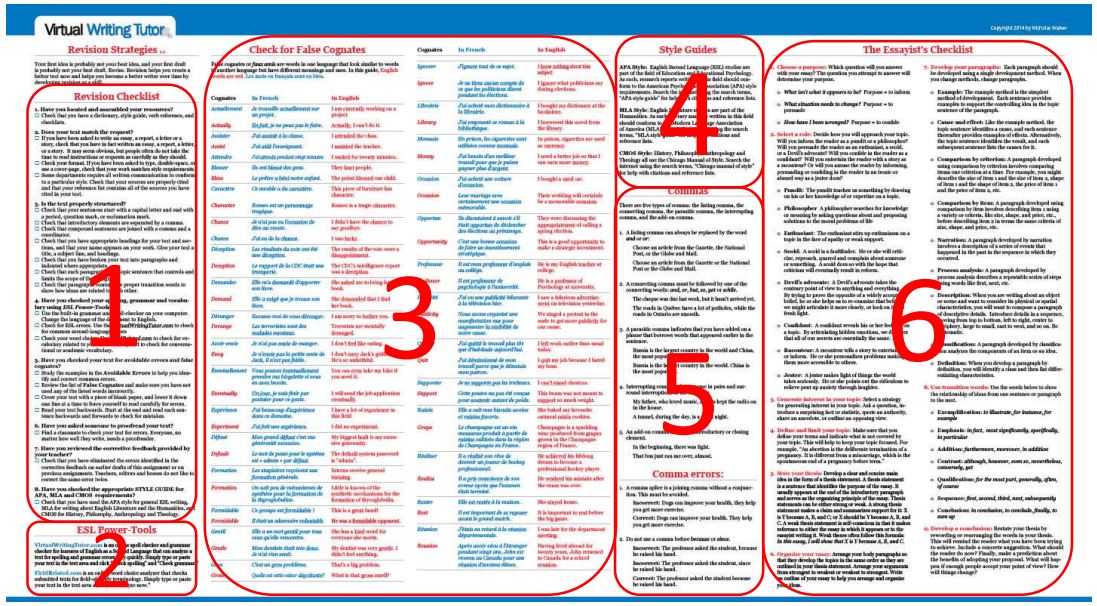
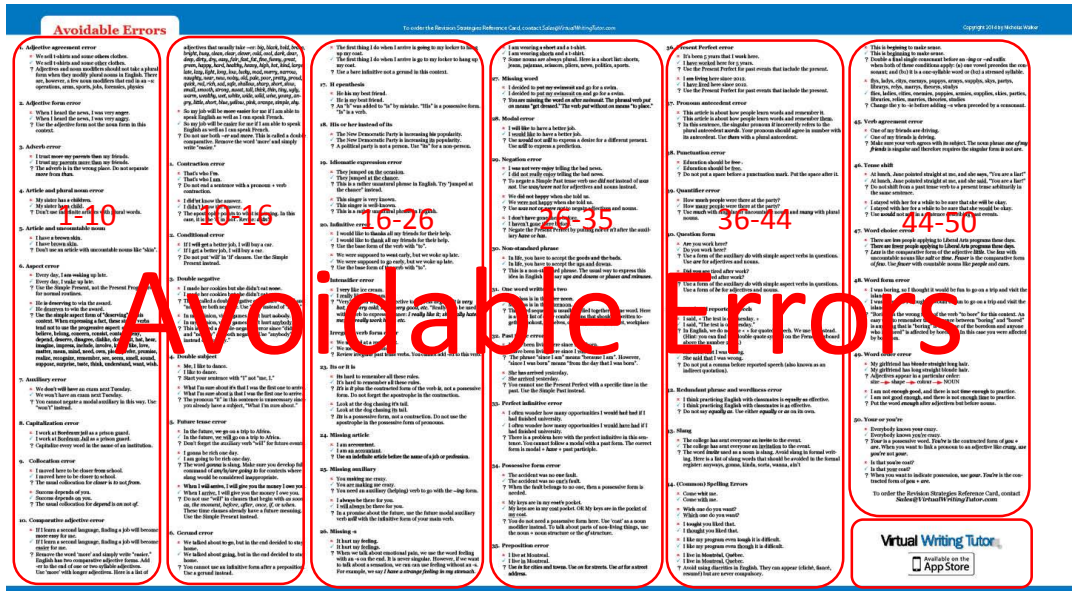
Avoidable Errors 14





14. Double subject

✗ ~~Me,~~ I like to dance.

✓ I like to dance.

? Start your sentence with "I" not "me, I."

✗ What I'm sure about ~~it's~~ that I was the first one to arrive.

✓ What I'm sure about is that I was the first one to arrive.

? The pronoun "it" in this sentence is unnecessary since you already have a subject, "What I'm sure about."

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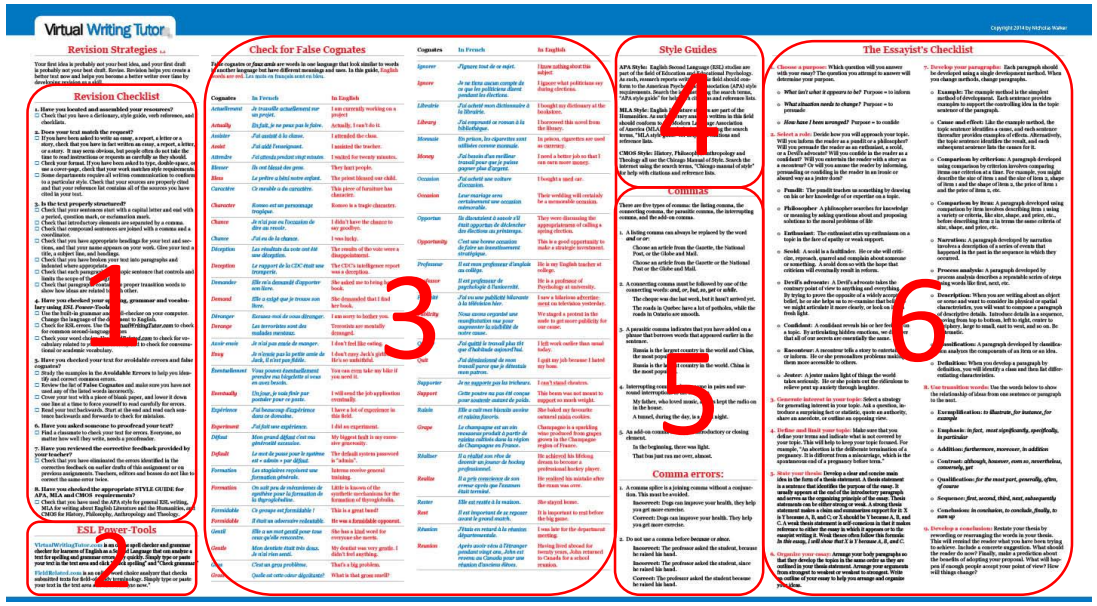
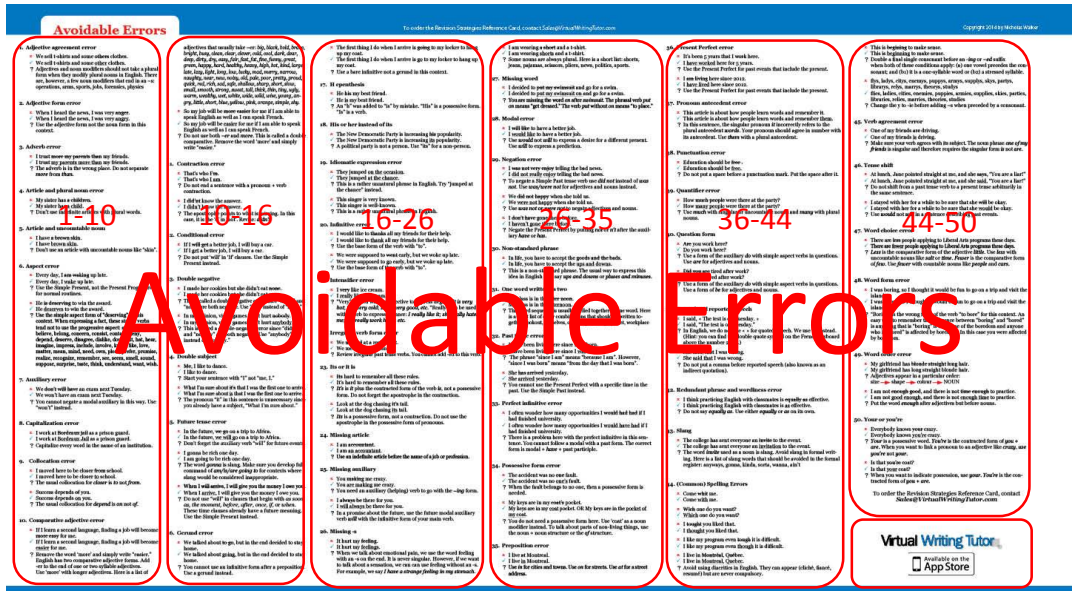
Avoidable Errors 15





15. Future tense error

× In the future, ~~we go~~ on a trip to Africa.

✓ In the future, we will go on a trip to Africa.

? Don't forget the auxiliary verb "will" for future events.

× I gonna be rich one day.

✓ I am going to be rich one day.

? The word *gonna* is slang. Make sure you develop full command of *am/is/are going to* for contexts where slang would be considered inappropriate.

× When I ~~will arrive~~, I will give you the money I owe you.

✓ When I arrive, I will give you the money I owe you.

? Do not use "will" in clauses that begin with *as soon as, the moment, before, after, once, if,* or *when*. These time clauses already have a future meaning. Use the Simple Present instead.

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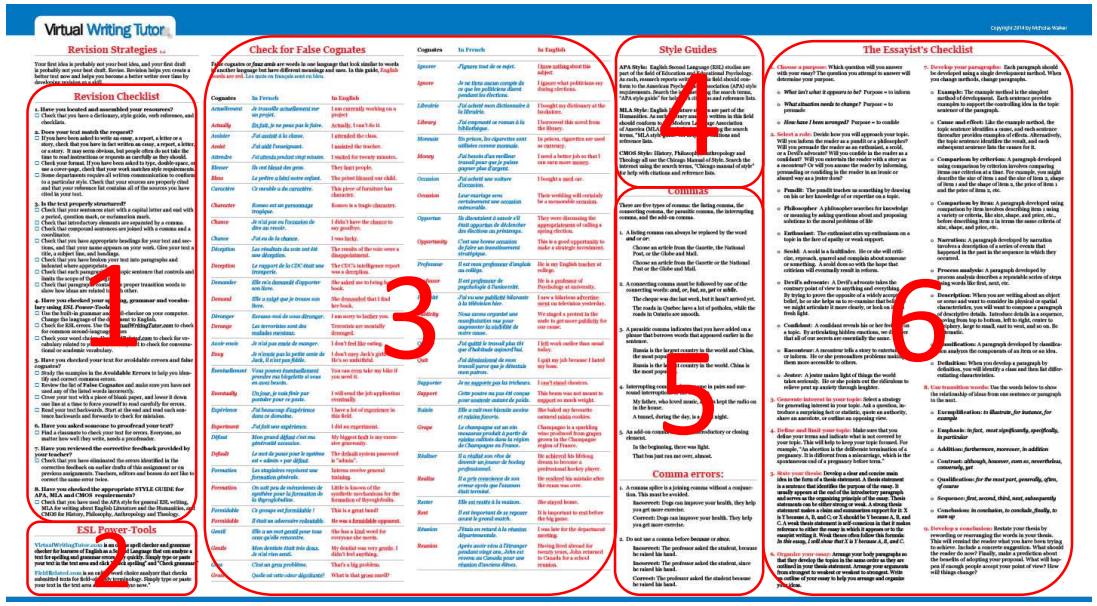
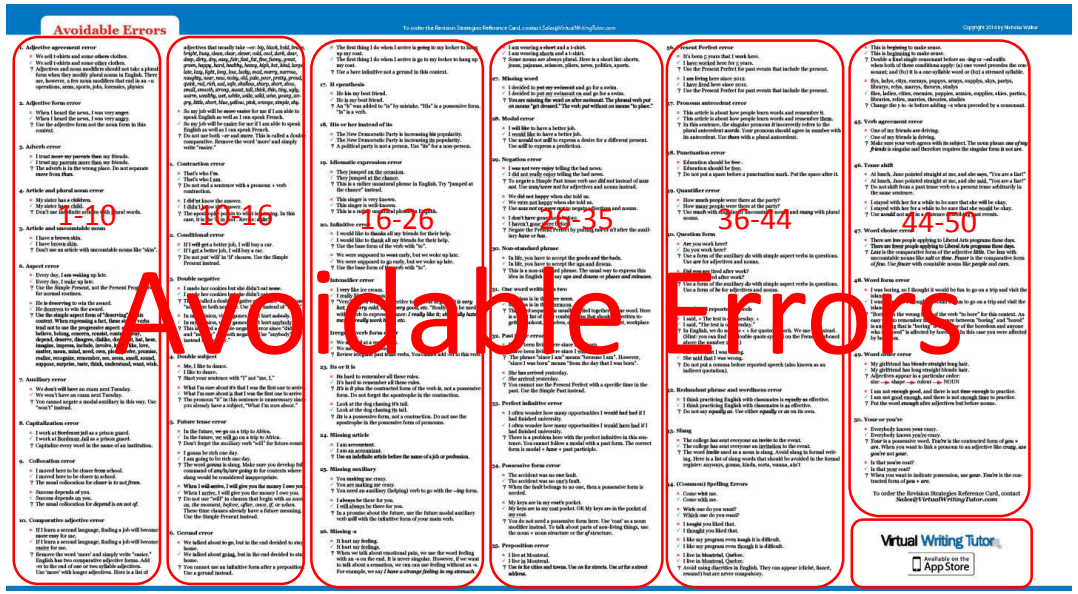
Revision Strategies Card

Avoidable Errors 16





16. Gerund error

✗ We talked about ~~to go~~, but in the end decided to stay home.

✓ We talked about ~~going~~, but in the end decided to stay home.

? You cannot use an infinitive form after a preposition. Use a gerund instead.

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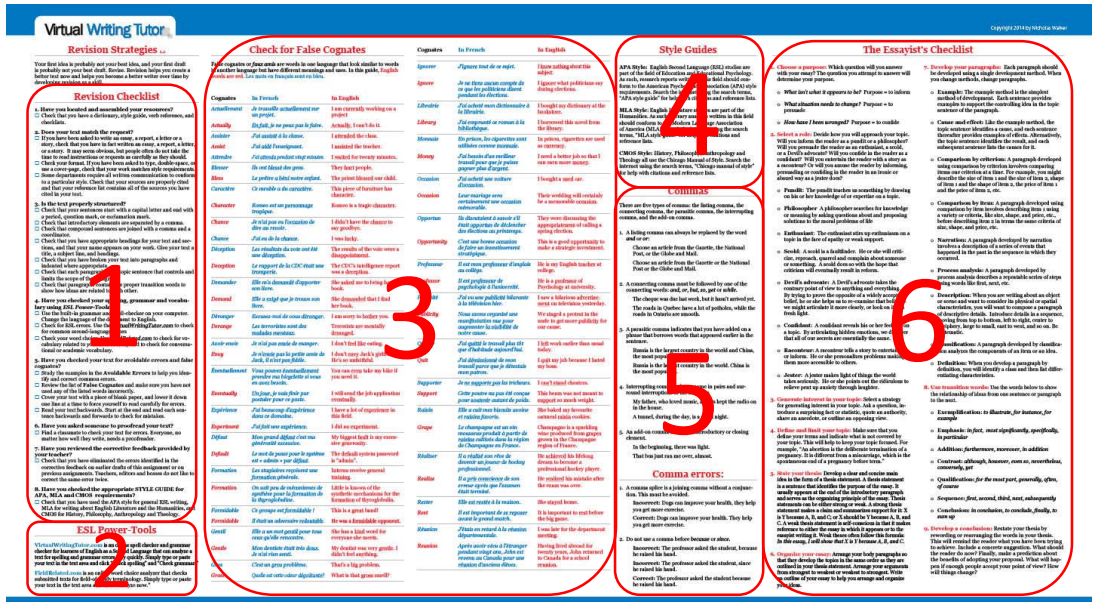
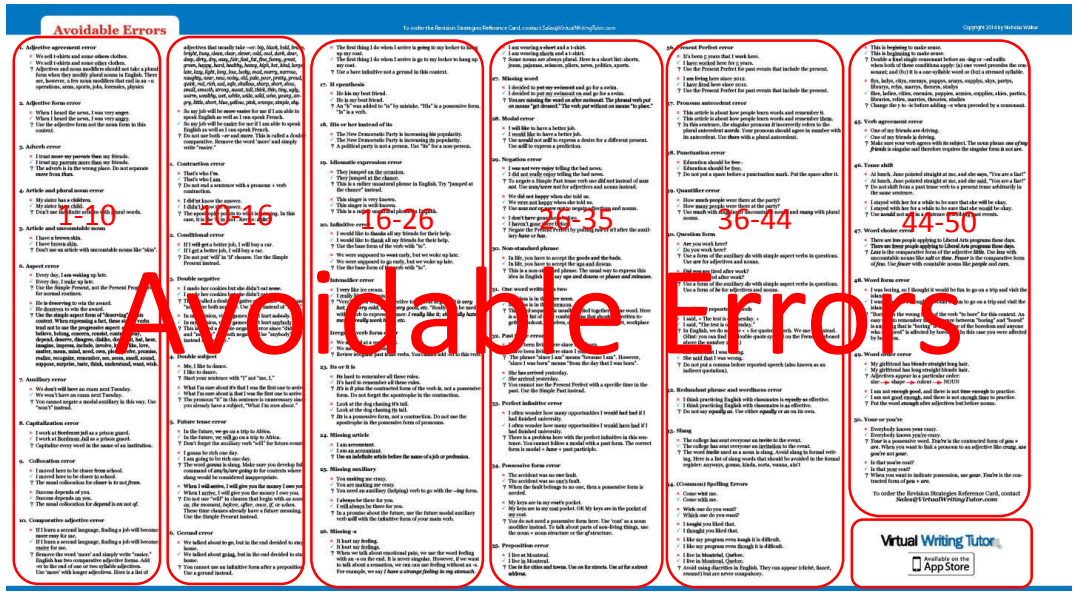
Avoidable Errors 16-26





16. (continued) Gerund error
17. H epenthesis
18. His or her instead of its
19. Idiomatic expression error
20. Infinitive error
21. Intensifier error
22. Irregular verb form error
23. Its or it is
24. Missing article
25. Missing auxiliary
26. Missing -s

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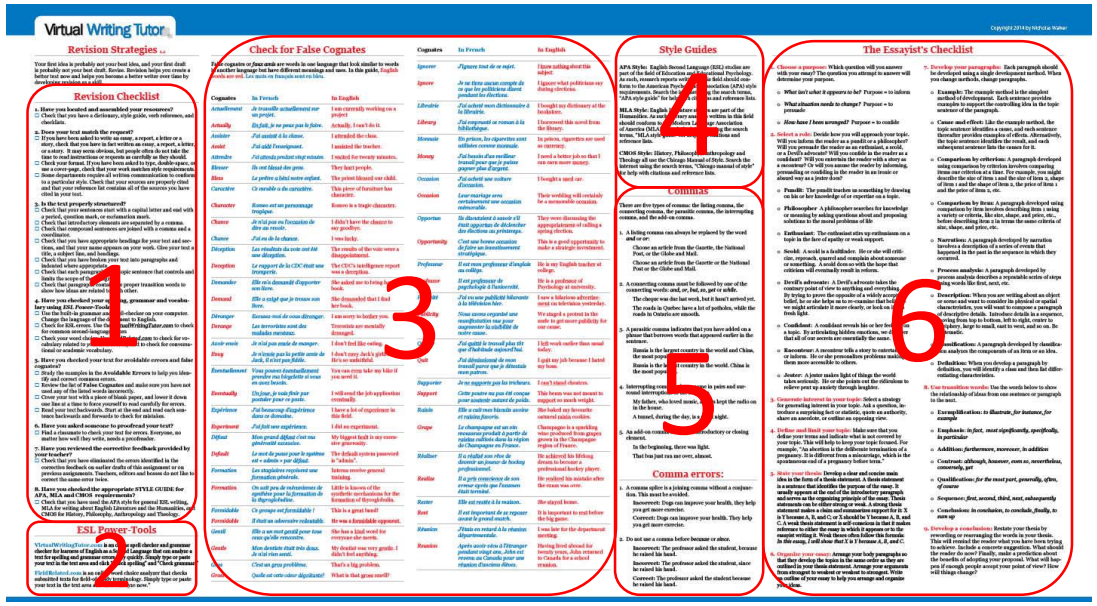
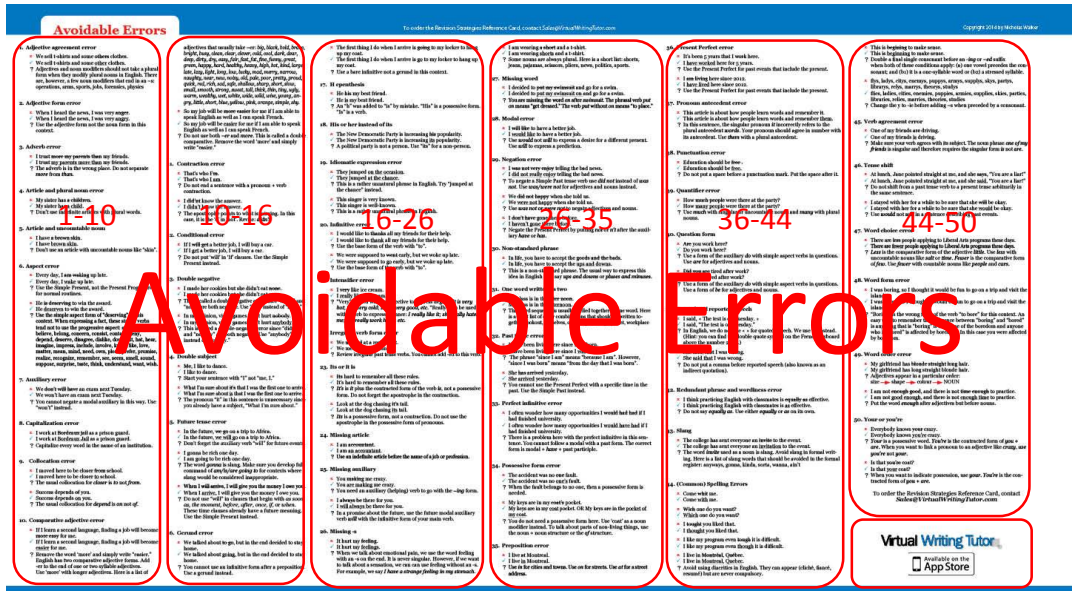
Avoidable Errors 16 (continued)





16. Gerund error

- ✗ We talked about ~~to go~~, but in the end decided to stay home.
- ✓ We talked about ~~going~~, but in the end decided to stay home.
- ? You cannot use an infinitive form after a preposition. Use a gerund instead.

- ✗ The first thing I do when I arrive is ~~going~~ to my locker to hang up my coat.
- ✓ The first thing I do when I arrive is ~~go~~ to my locker to hang up my coat.
- ? Use a bare infinitive not a gerund in this context.

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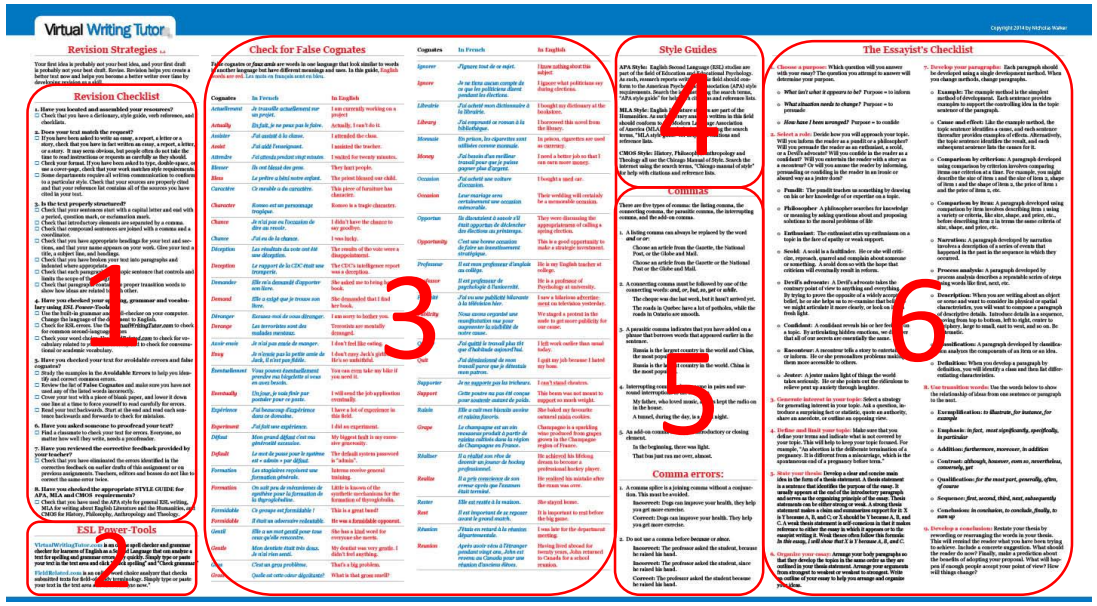
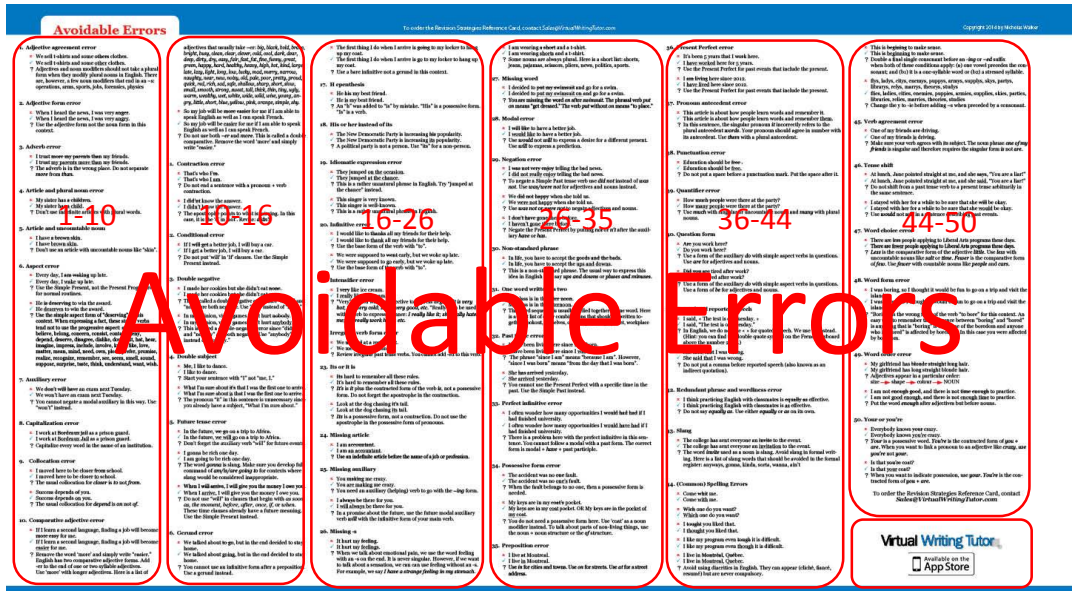
Avoidable Errors 17





17. H epenthesis

✗ He ~~his~~ my best friend.

✓ He is my best friend.

? An "h" was added to "is" by mistake. "His" is a possessive form. "Is" is a verb.

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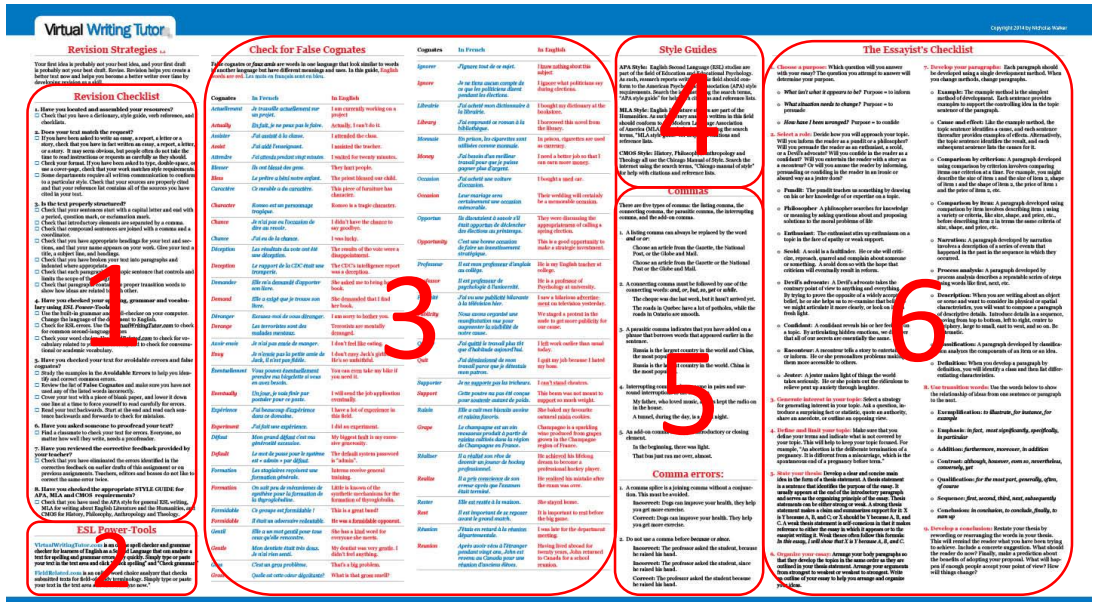
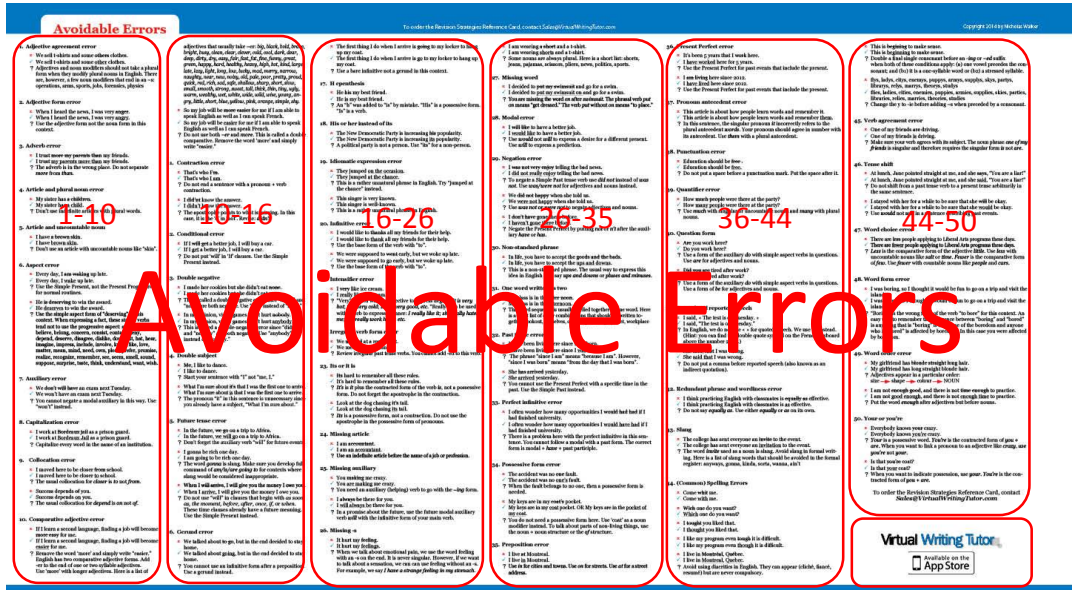
Avoidable Errors 18





18. His or her instead of its

✗ The New Democratic Party is increasing ~~his~~ popularity.

✓ The New Democratic Party is increasing <u>its</u> popularity.

? A political party is not a person. Use "its" for a non-person.

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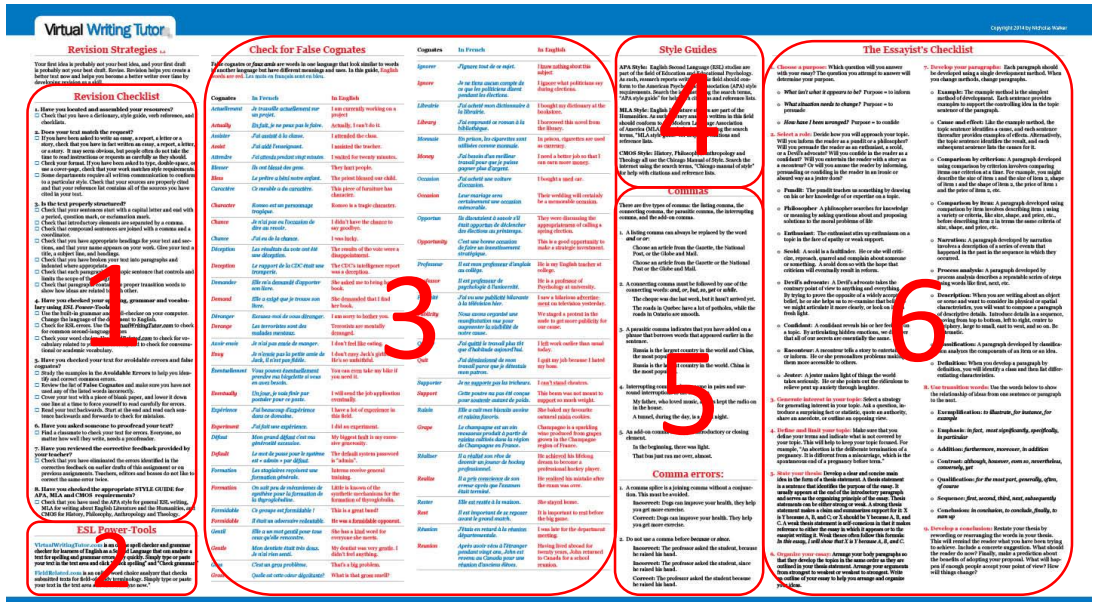
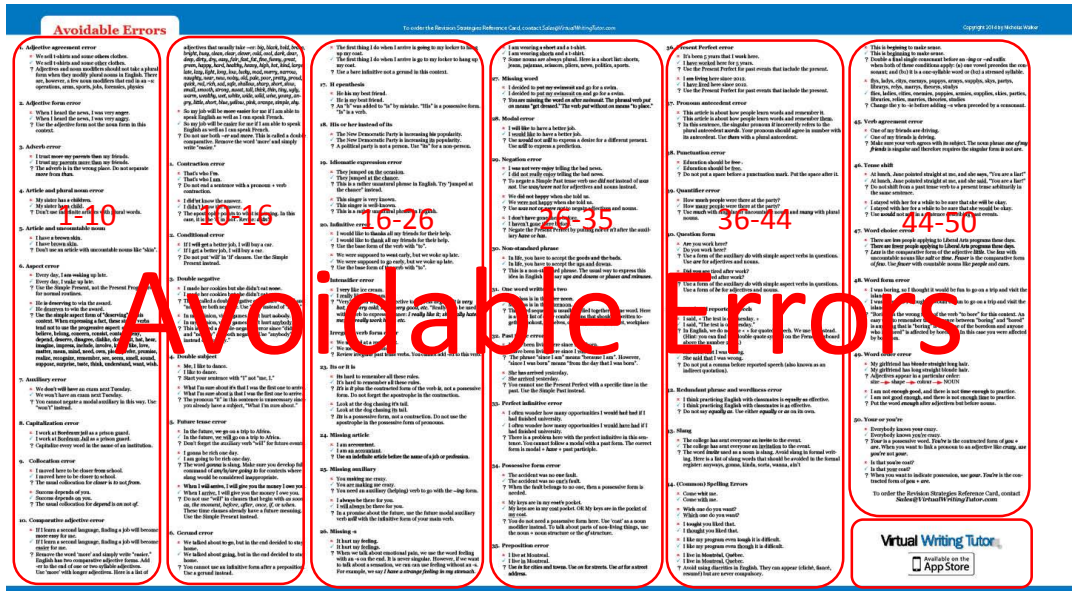
Avoidable Errors 19





19. Idiomatic expression error

× They jumped on the occasion.

✓ They jumped at the chance.

? This is a rather unnatural phrase in English. Try "jumped at the chance" instead.

× This singer is very known.

✓ This singer is well-known.

? This is a rather unnatural phrase in English.

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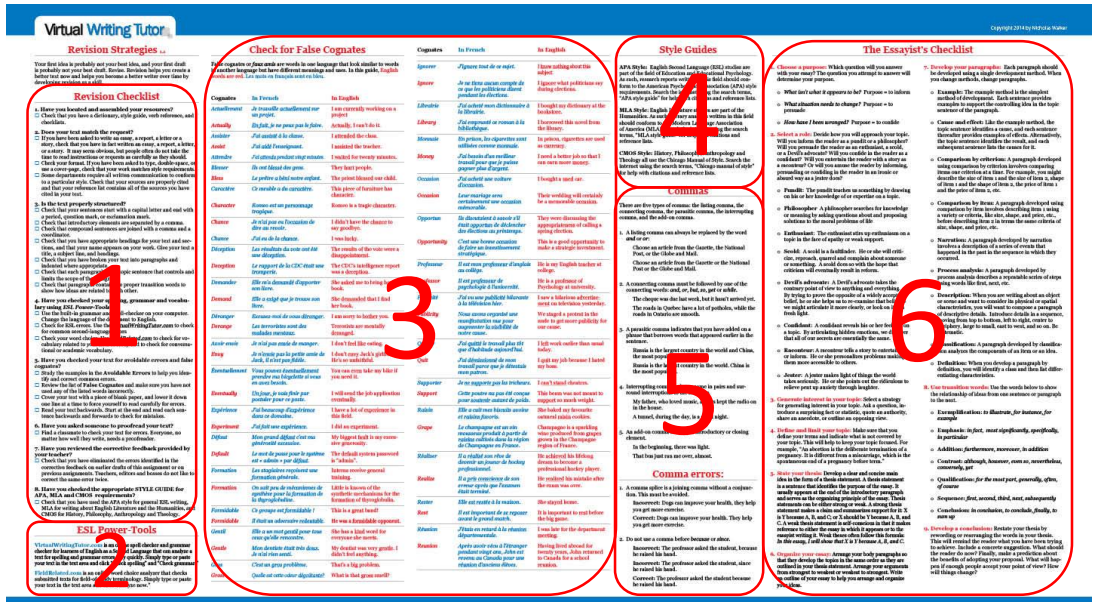
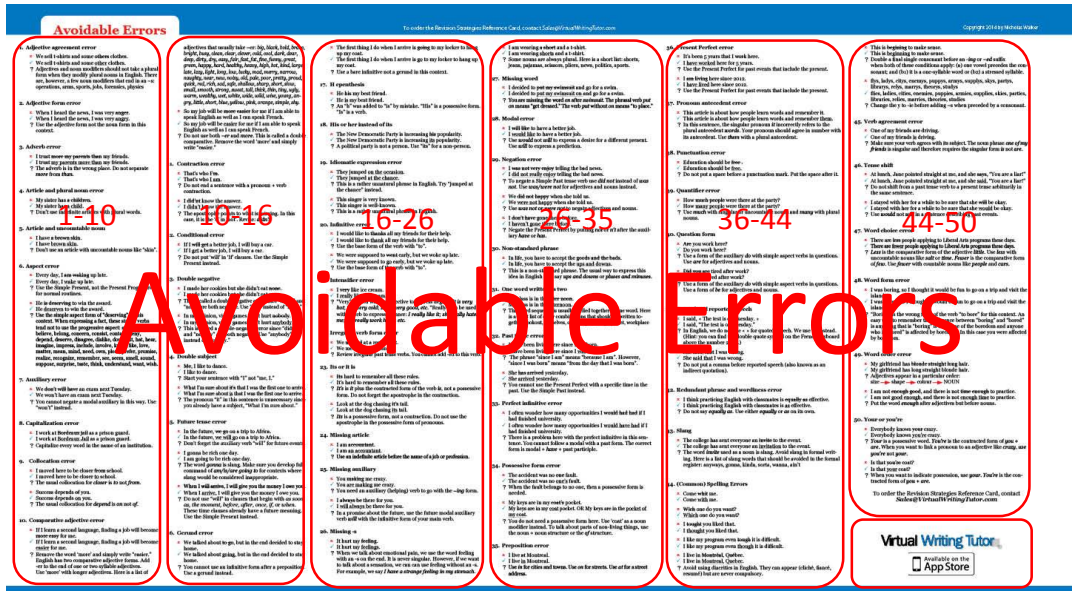
Avoidable Errors 20





20. Infinitive error

× I would like to to ~~thanks~~ all my friends for their help.

✓ I would like to to thank all my friends for their help.

? Use the base form of the verb with "to".

× We were supposed to ~~went~~ early, but we woke up late.

✓ We were supposed to go early, but we woke up late.

? Use the base form of the verb with "to".

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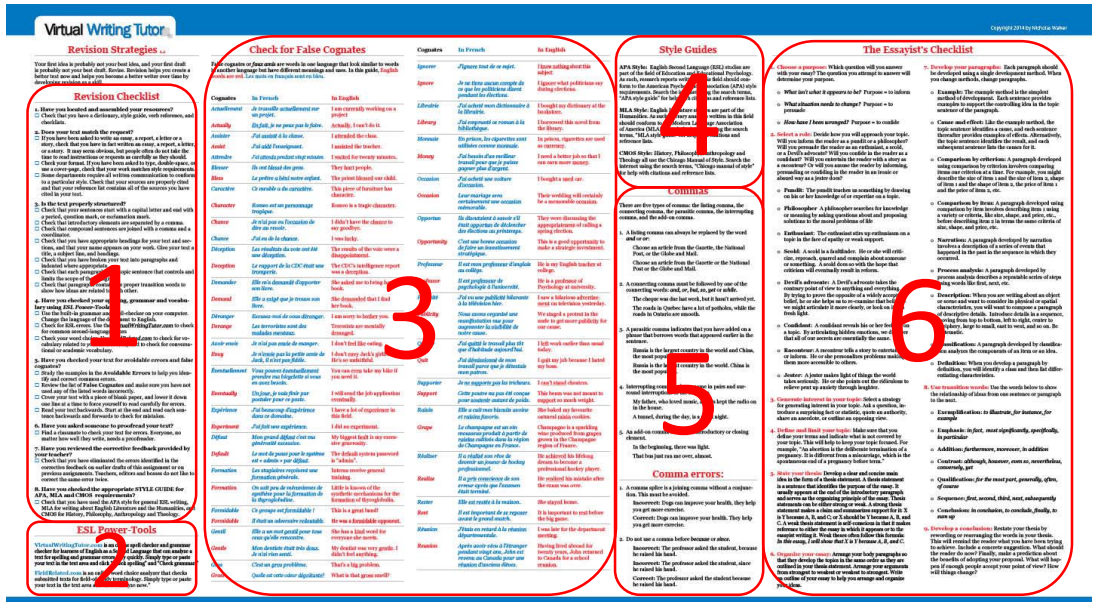
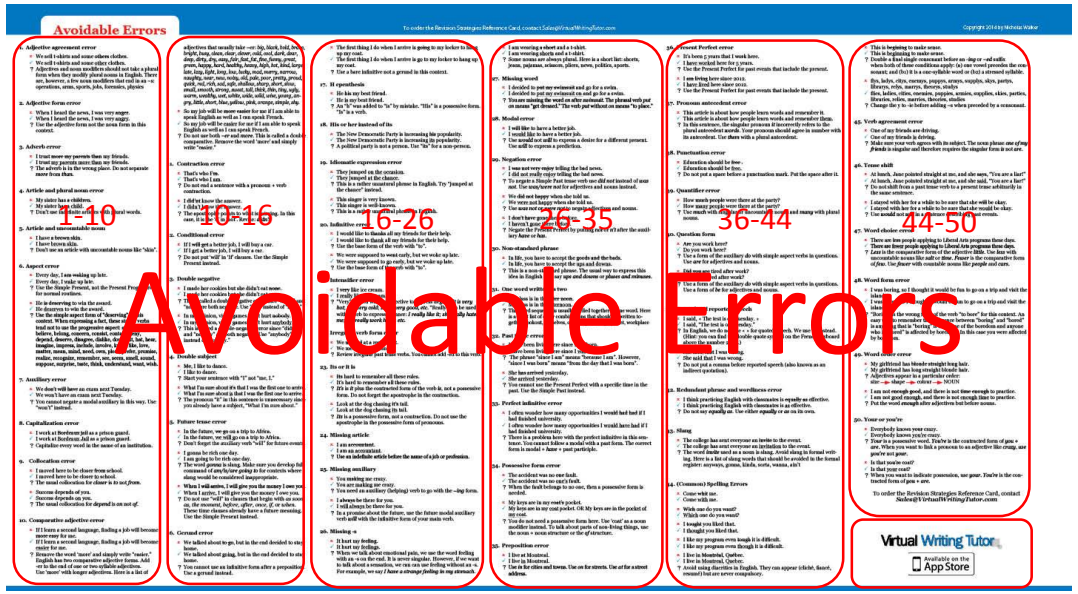
Avoidable Errors 21





21. Intensifier error

✗ I ~~very~~ like ice cream.

✓ I really like ice cream.

? "Very" is used with an adjective to express degree: *It is very hot; it is very cold; she is very good, etc.* "Really" can be used with a verb to express manner: *I really like it; she really hates me; we really work hard; etc.*

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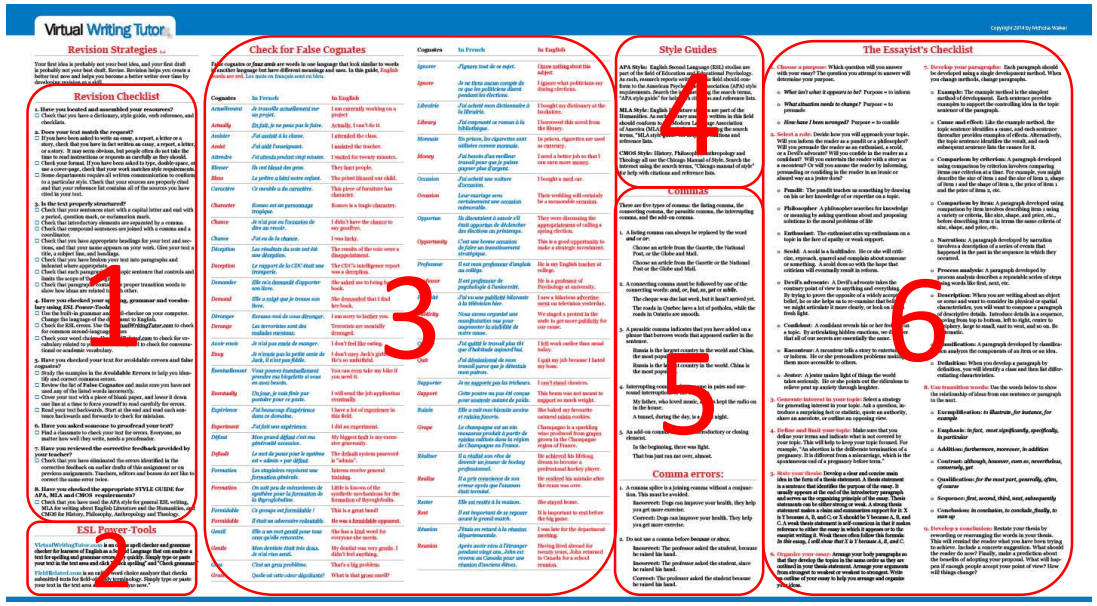
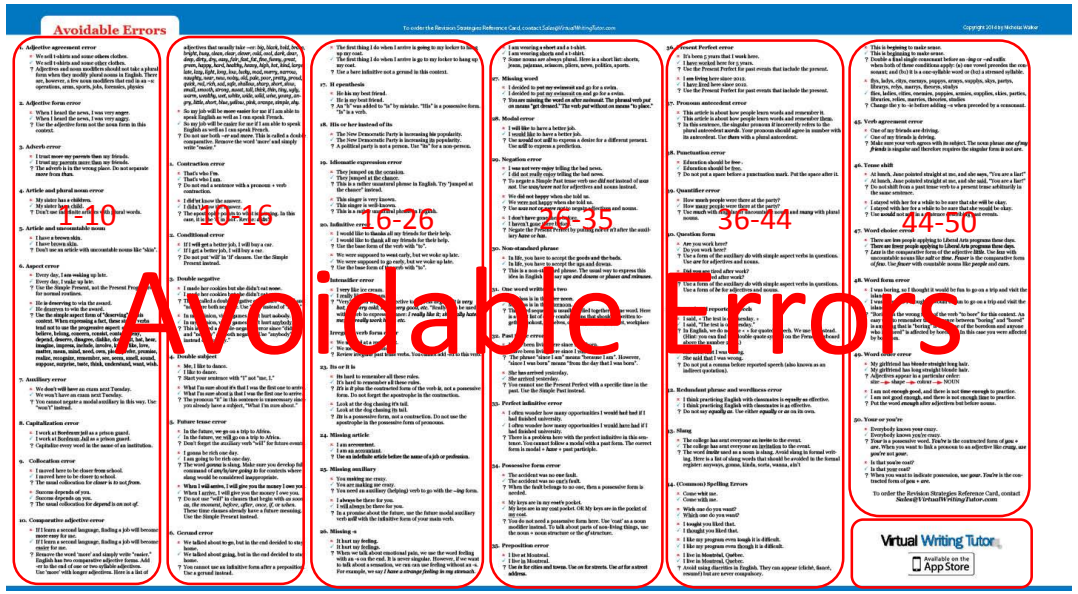
Avoidable Errors 22





22. Irregular verb form error

✗ We ~~mected~~ at a restaurant.

✓ We met at a restaurant.

? Review irregular past tense verbs. You cannot add -ed to this verb.

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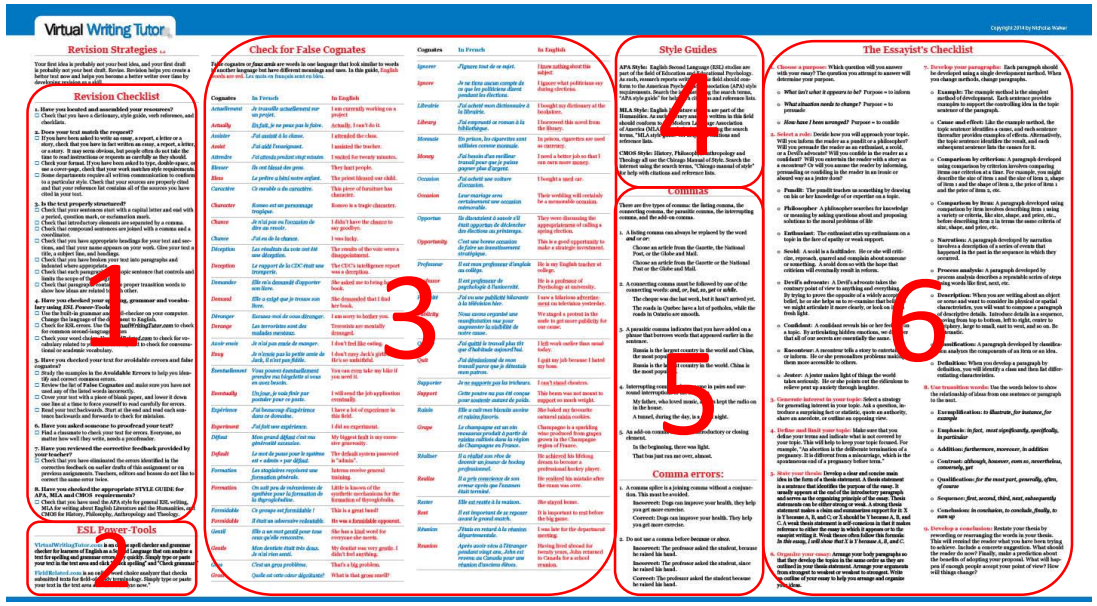
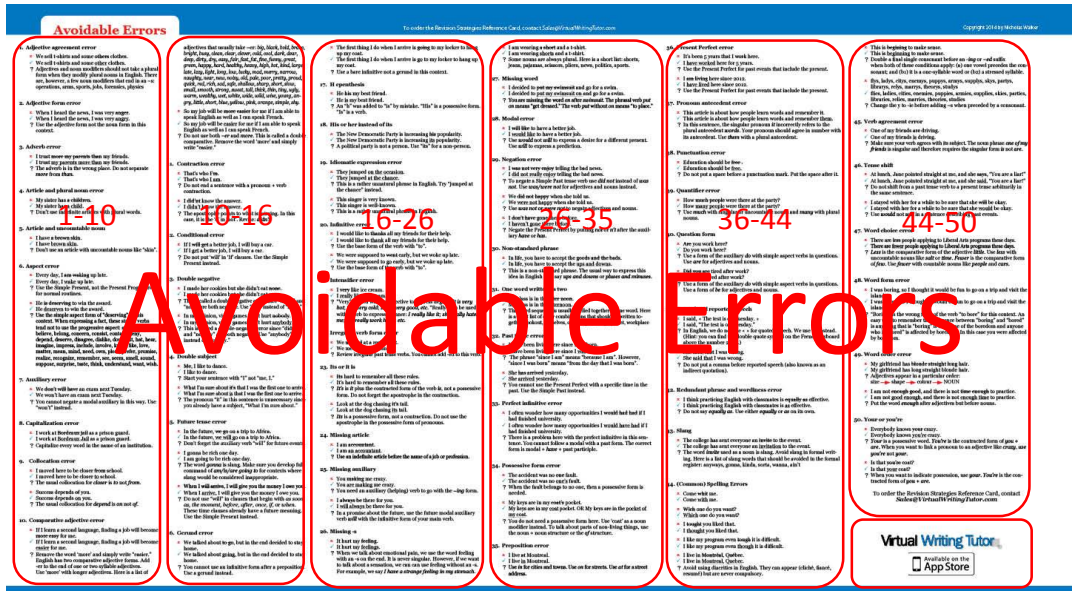
Avoidable Errors 23





23. Its or it is

✗ ~~Its~~ hard to remember all these rules.

✓ It's hard to remember all these rules.

? *It's* is *it* plus the contracted form of the verb *is*, not a possessive form. Do not forget the apostrophe in the contraction.

✗ Look at the dog chasing ~~it's~~ tail.

✓ Look at the dog chasing its tail.

? *Its* is a possessive form, not a contraction. Do not use the apostrophe in the possessive form of pronouns.

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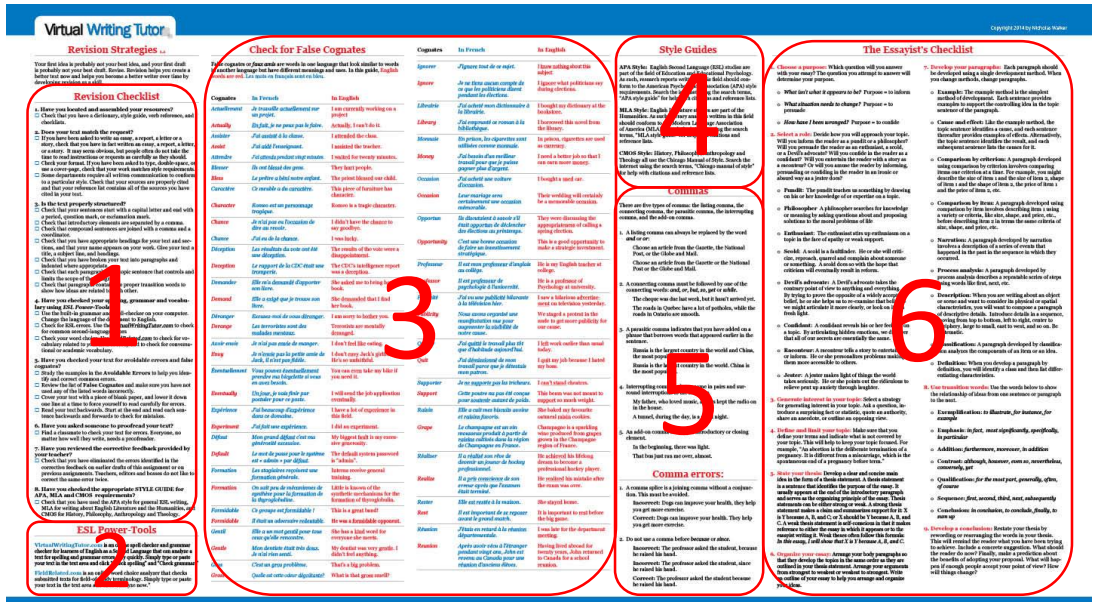
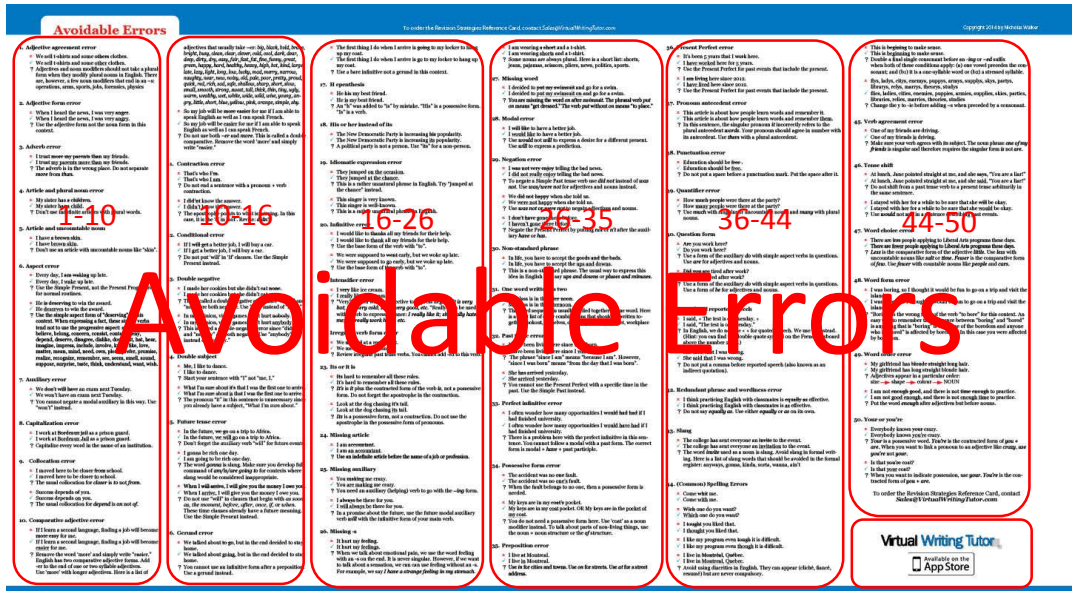
Avoidable Errors 24





24. Missing article

✗ I am ~~accountant~~.

✓ I am an accountant.

? Use an indefinite article before the name of a job or profession.

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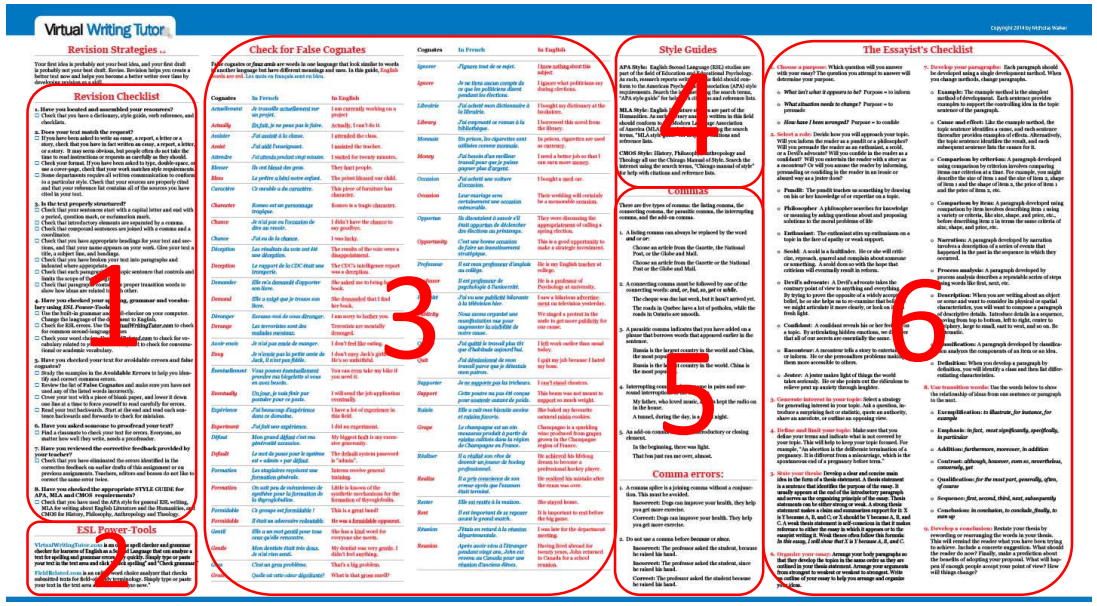
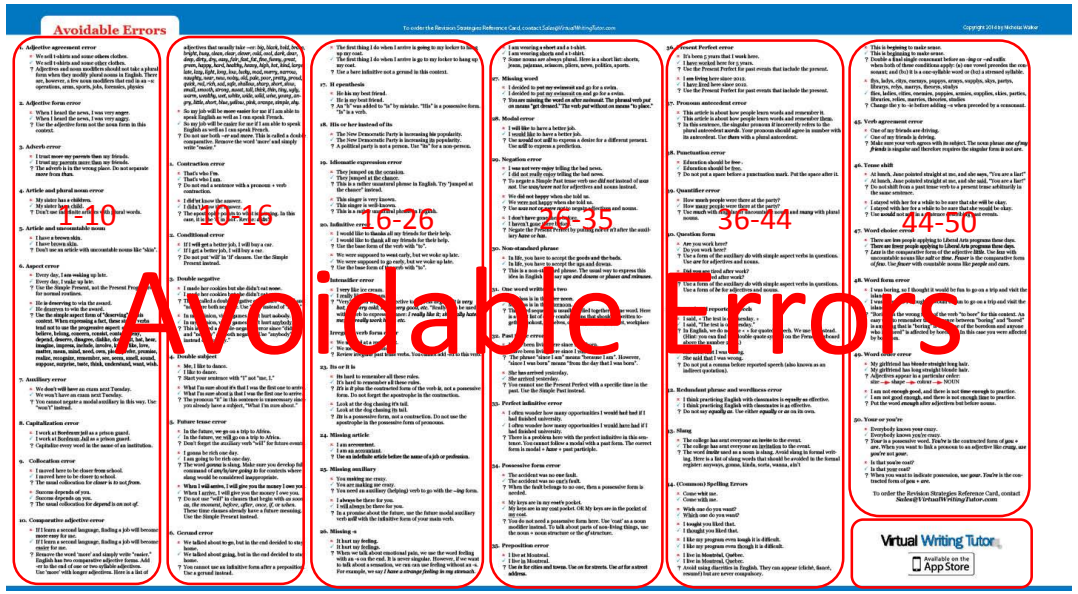
Avoidable Errors 25





25. Missing auxiliary

× You ~~making~~ me crazy.
✓ You are making me crazy.
? You need an auxiliary (helping) verb to go with the *–ing* form.

× I ~~always be~~ there for you.
✓ I will always be there for you.
? In a promise about the future, use the future modal auxiliary verb *will* with the infinitive form of your main verb.

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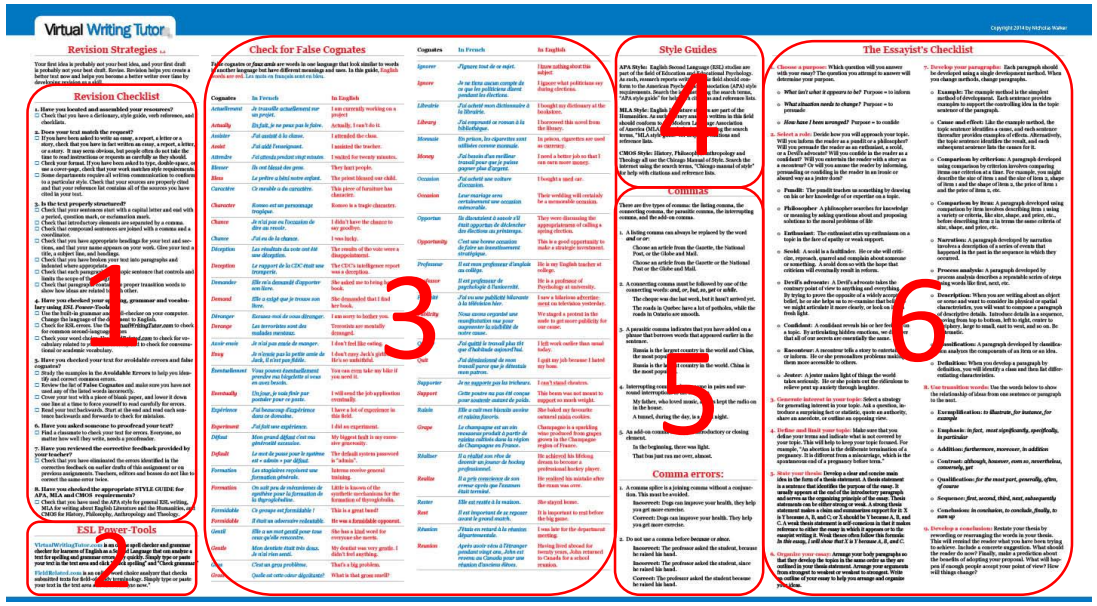
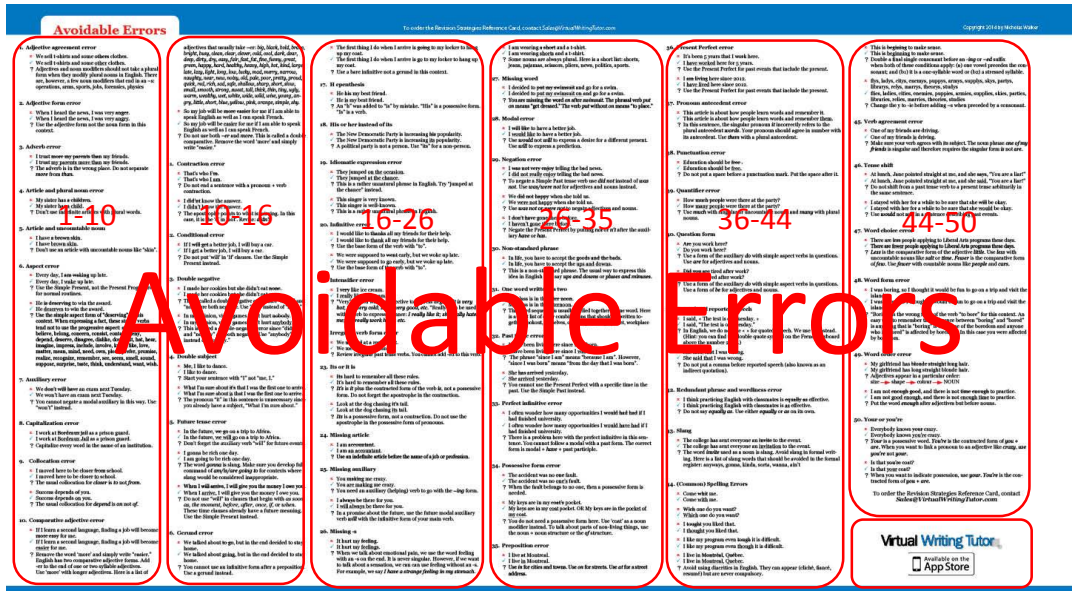
Avoidable Errors 26





26. Missing -s

- ✗ It hurt my ~~feeling~~.
- ✓ It hurt my feelings.
- ? When we talk about emotional pain, we use the word feeling with an -s on the end. It is never singular. However, if we want to talk about a sensation, we can can use feeling without an -s. For example, we say *I have a strange feeling in my stomach*.

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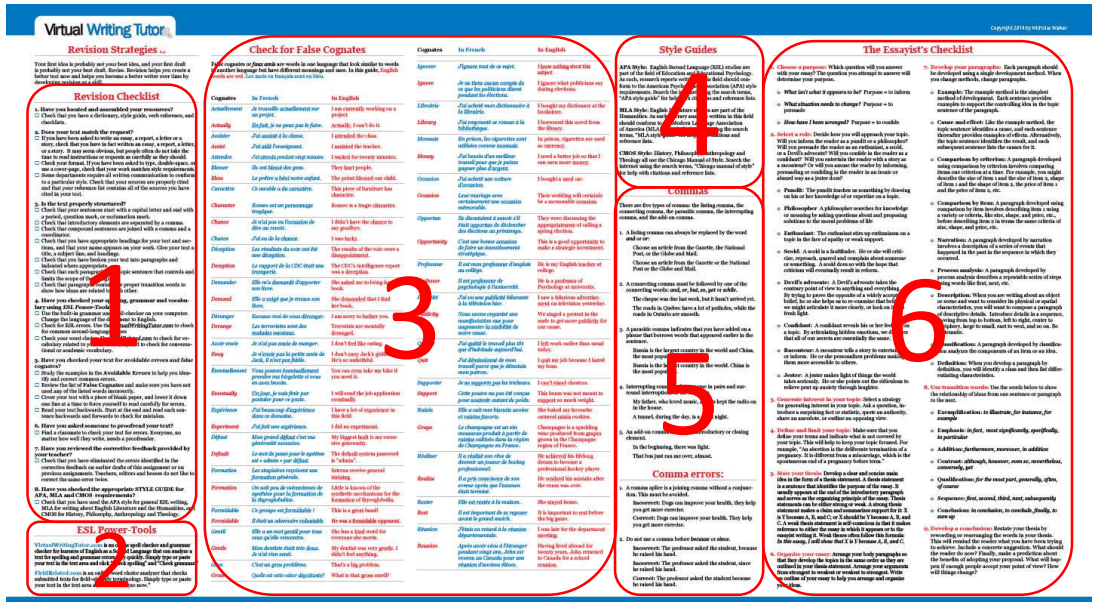
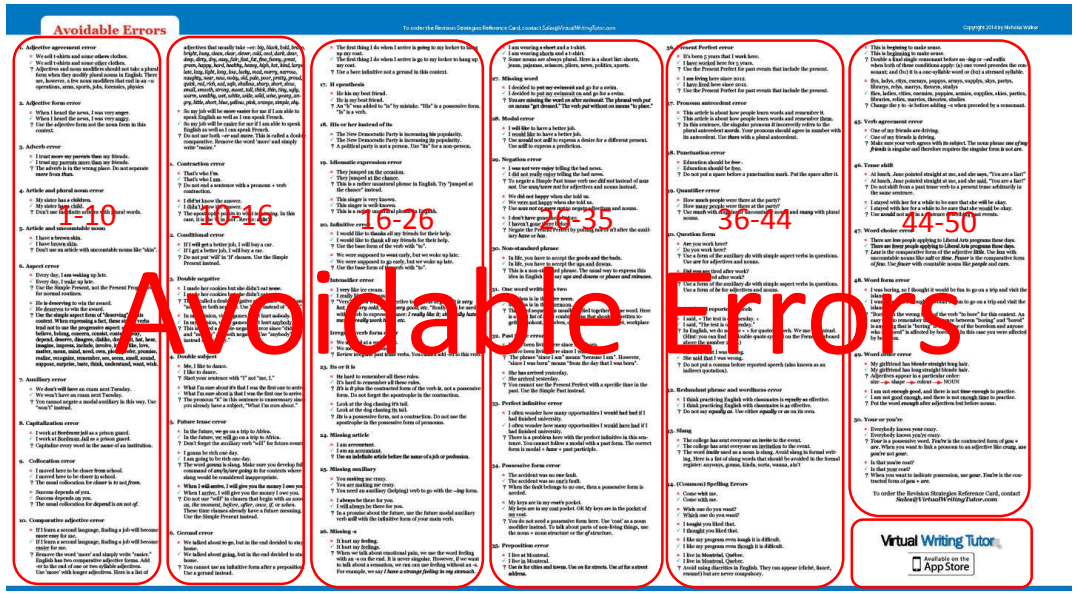
Avoidable Errors 26-35





26. (continued) Missing -s
27. Missing word
28. Modal error
29. Negation error
30. Non-standard phrase
31. One word written as two
32. Past tense error
33. Perfect infinitive error
34. Possessive form error
35. Preposition error

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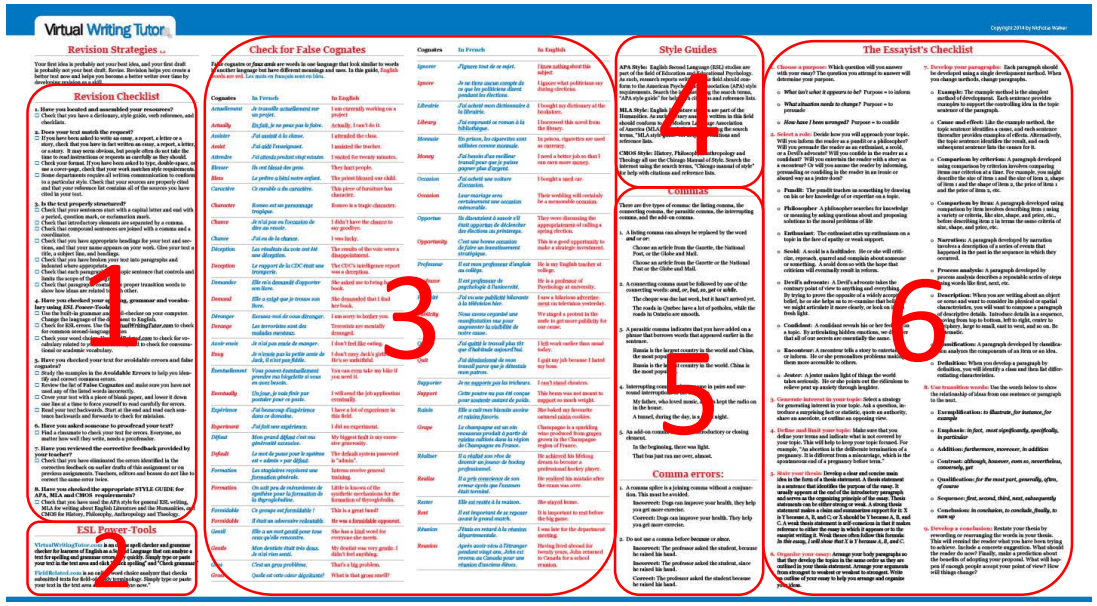
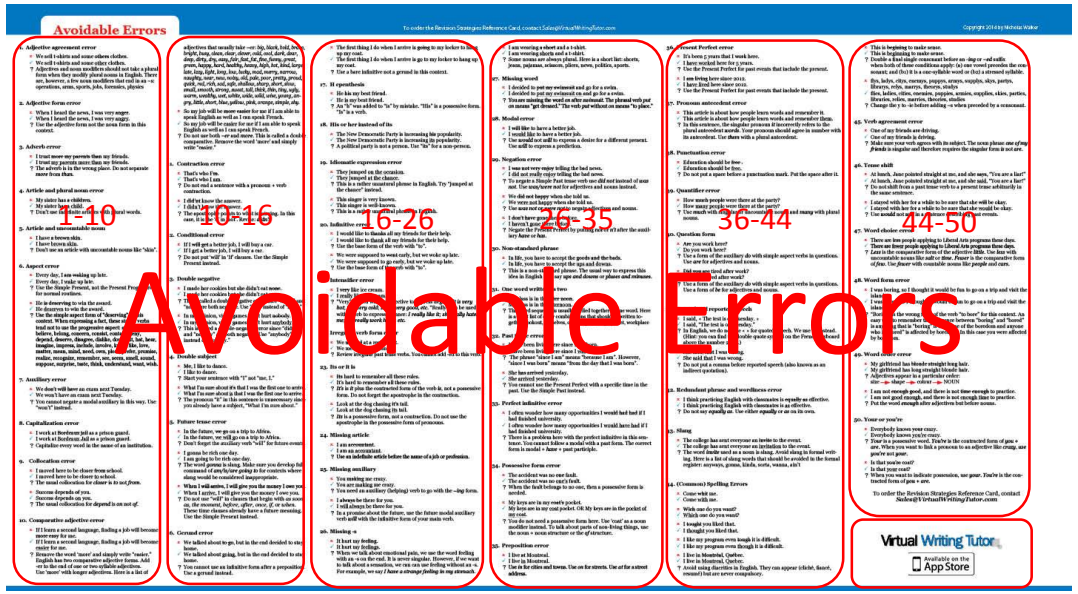
Avoidable Errors 26 (continued)





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- ? When we talk about emotional pain, we use the word feeling with an -s on the end. It is never singular. However, if we want to talk about a sensation, we can can use feeling without an -s. For example, we say *I have a strange feeling in my stomach*.

- ✗ I am wearing ~~a short~~ and a t-shirt.
- ✓ I am wearing shorts and a t-shirt.
- ? Some nouns are always plural. Here is a short list: shorts, jeans, pajamas, scissors, pliers, news, politics, sports.

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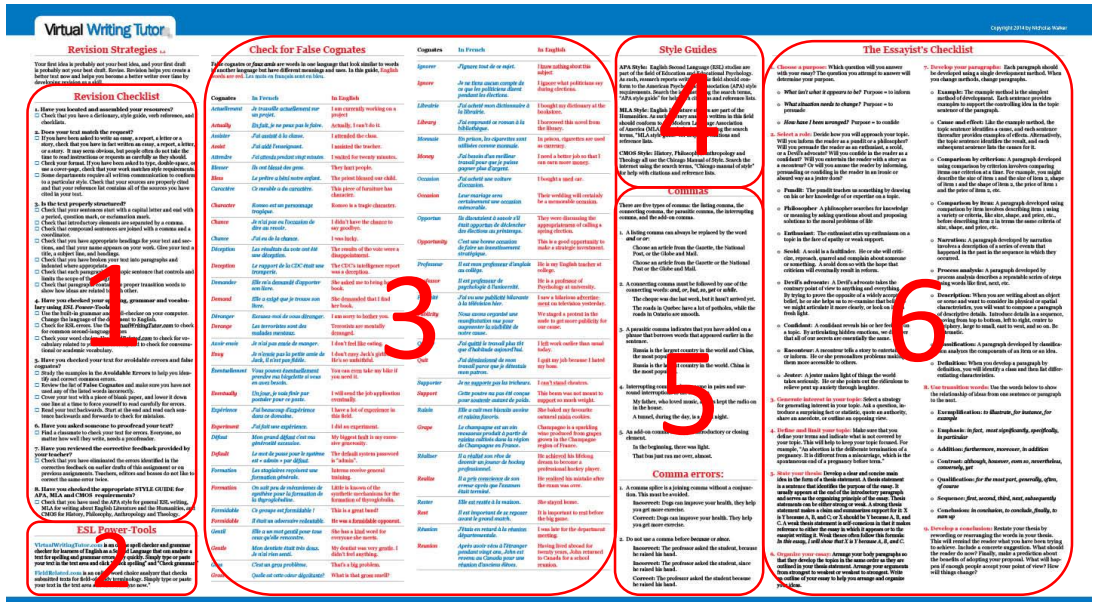
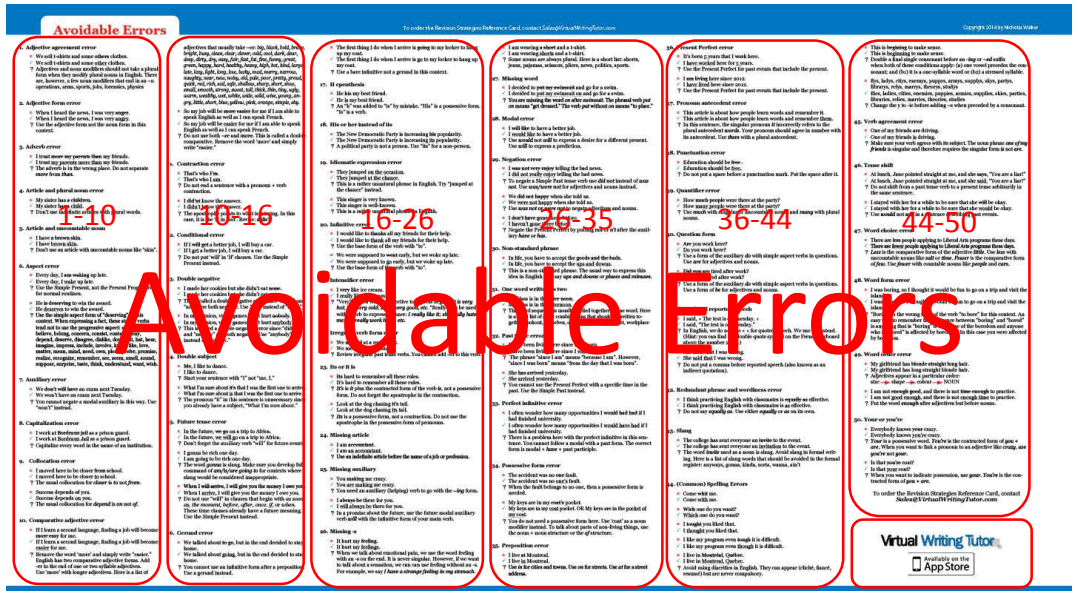
Avoidable Errors 27





27. Missing word

- ✗ I decided to ~~put my swimsuit~~ and go for a swim.
- ✓ I decided to put my swimsuit on and go for a swim.
- ? You are missing the word *on* after *swimsuit*. The phrasal verb *put on* means "get dressed." The verb *put* without *on* means "to place."

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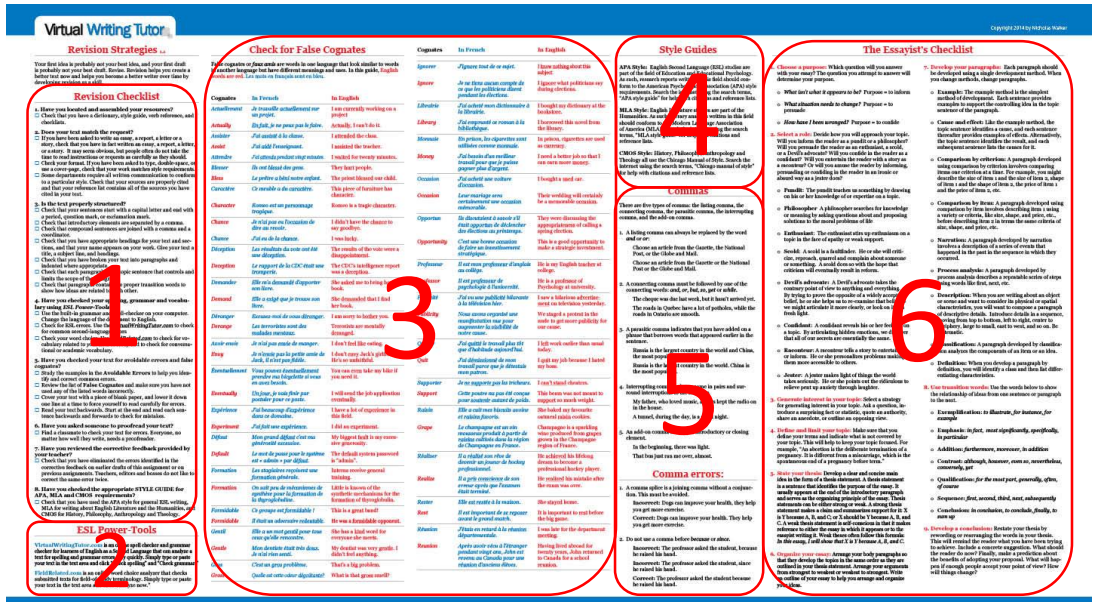
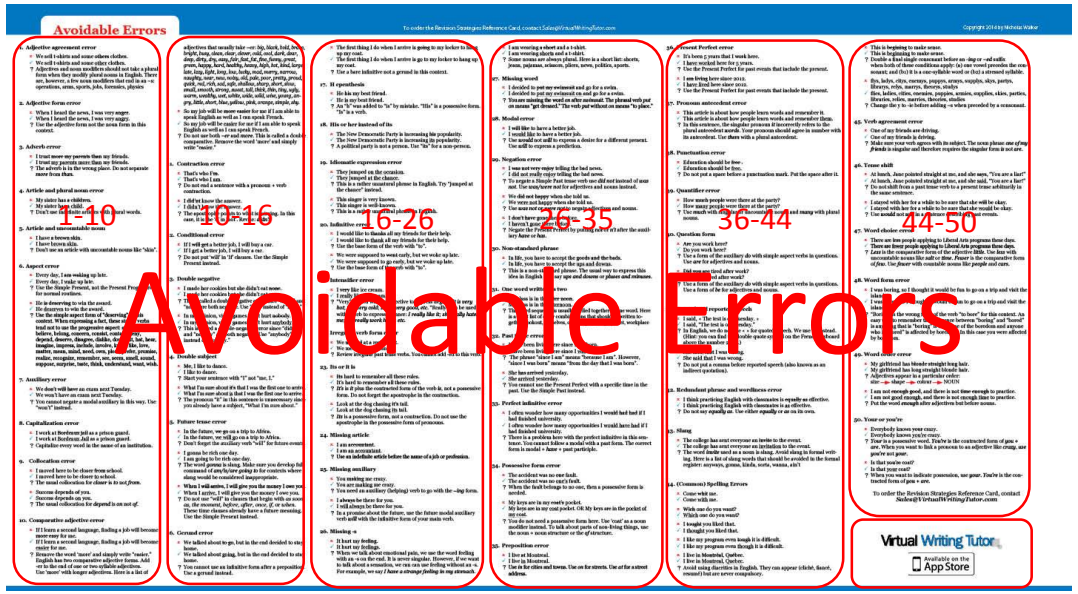
Avoidable Errors 28





28. Modal error

✗ I ~~will like~~ to have a better job.

✓ I would like to have a better job.

? Use *would* not *will* to express a desire for a different present. Use *will* to express a prediction.

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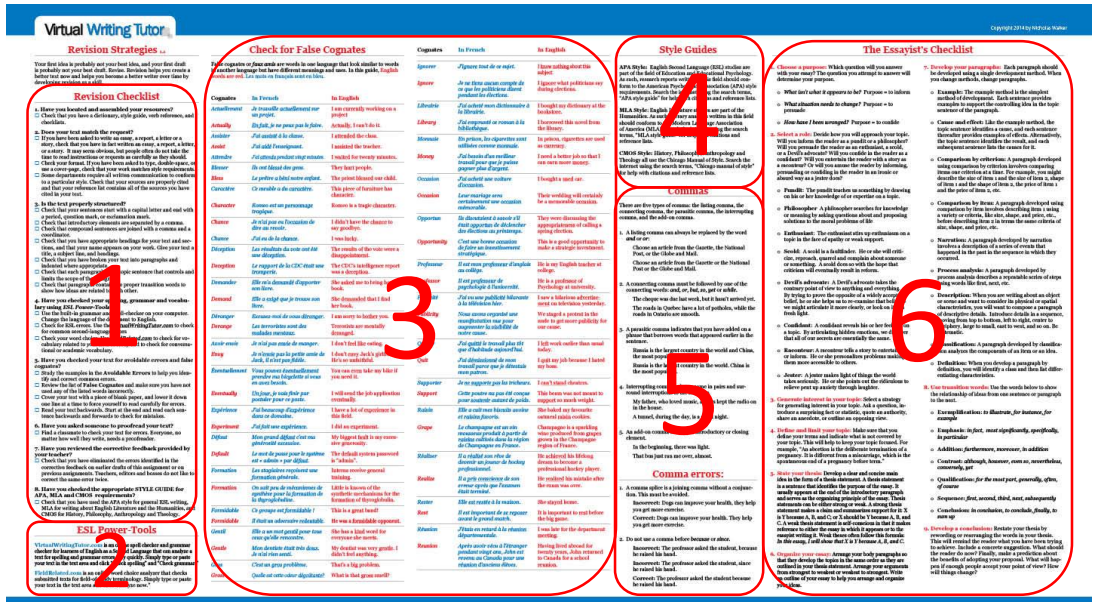
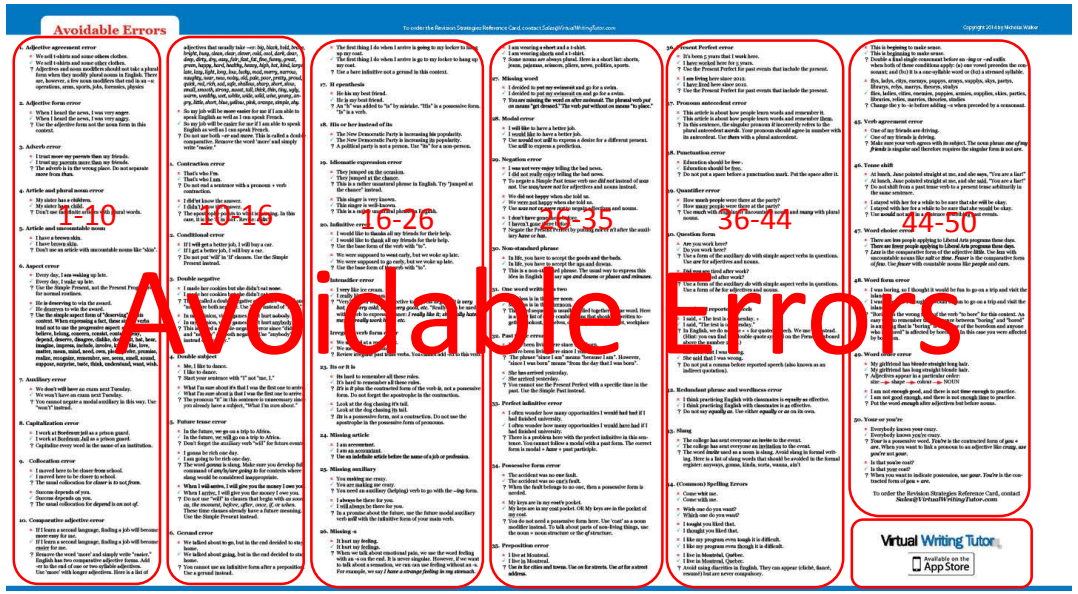
Avoidable Errors 29





29. Negation error

× I ~~was not very enjoy~~ telling the bad news.

✓ I did not really enjoy telling the bad news.

? To negate a Simple Past tense verb use *did not* instead of *was not*. Use *was/were not* for adjectives and nouns instead.

× We ~~did not happy~~ when she told us.

✓ We were not happy when she told us.

? Use *was not or were not* to negate adjectives and nouns.

× I ~~don't have gone~~ there before.

✓ I haven't gone there before.

? Negate the Present Perfect by putting *not* or *n't* after the auxiliary *have* or *has*.

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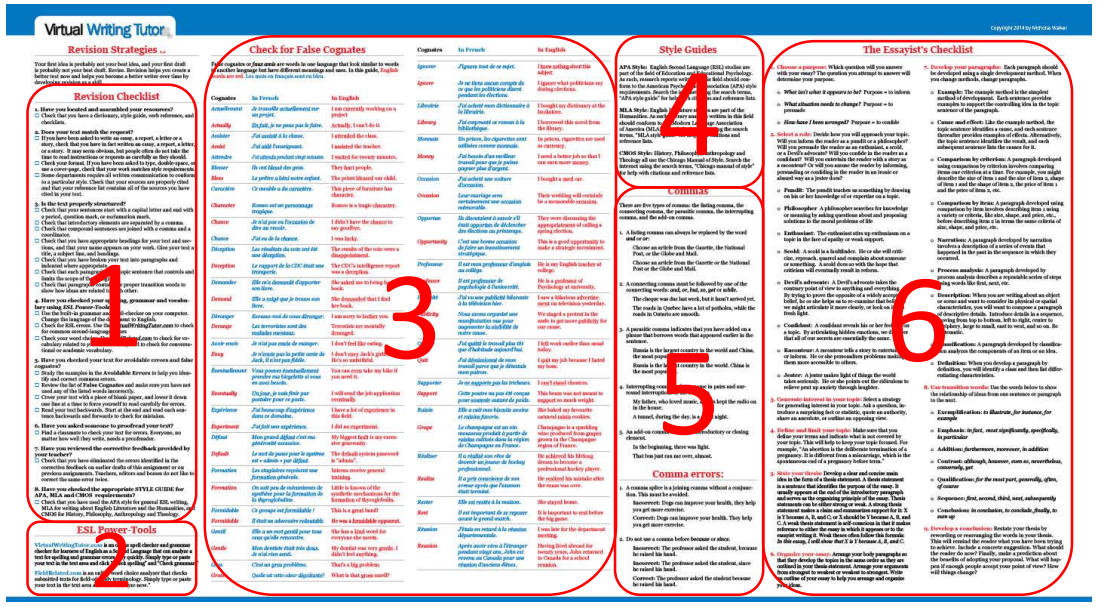
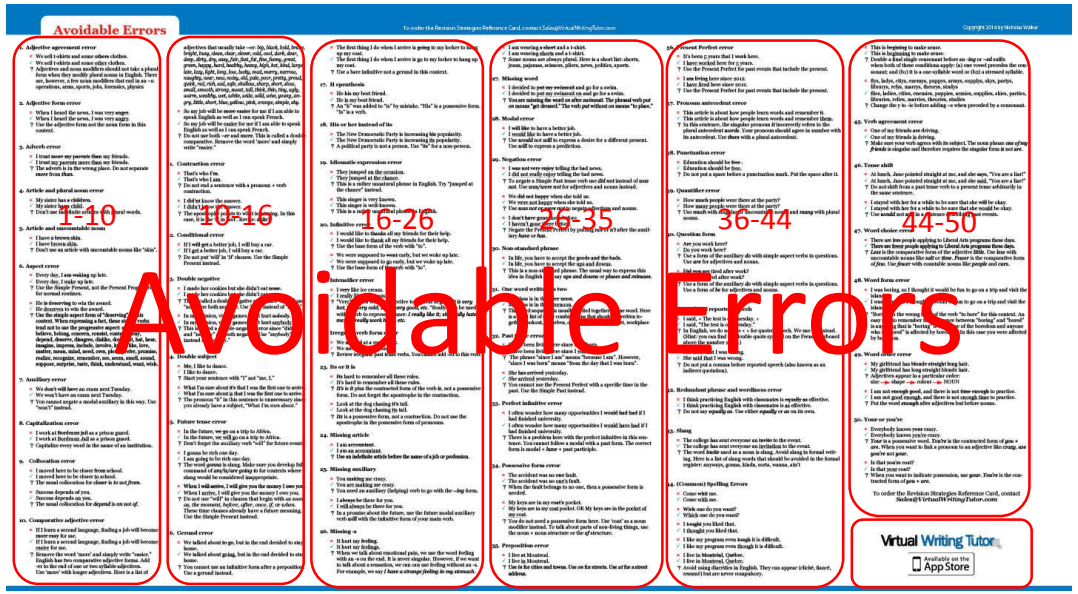
Avoidable Errors 30





30. Non-standard phrase

✗ In life, you have to accept the ~~goods and the bads~~.

✓ In life, you have to accept the ups and downs.

? This is a non-standard phrase. The usual way to express this idea in English is to say *ups and downs* or *pluses and minuses*.

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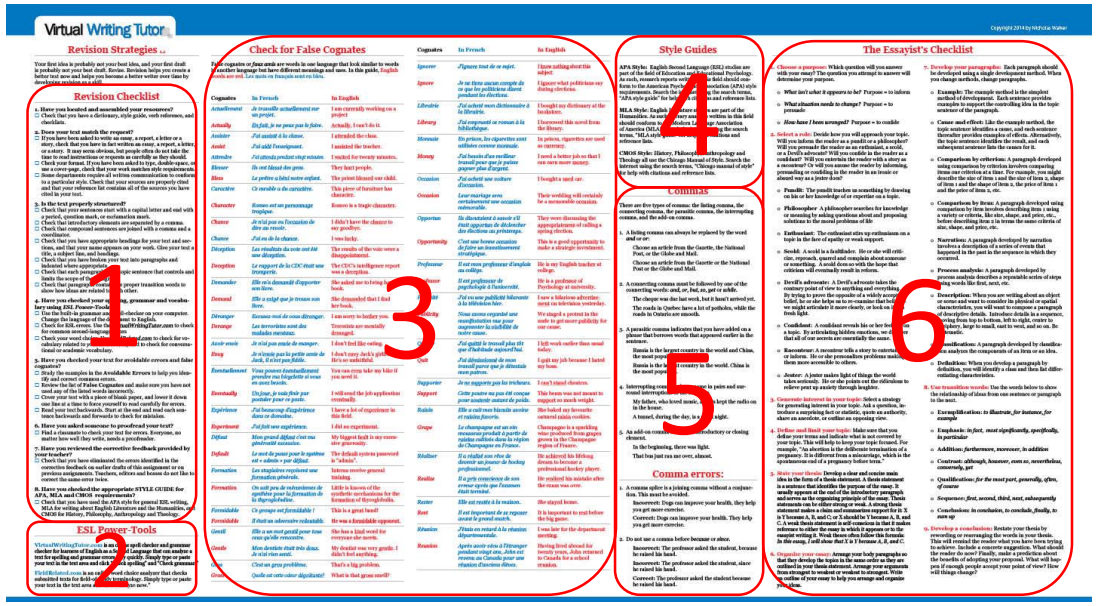
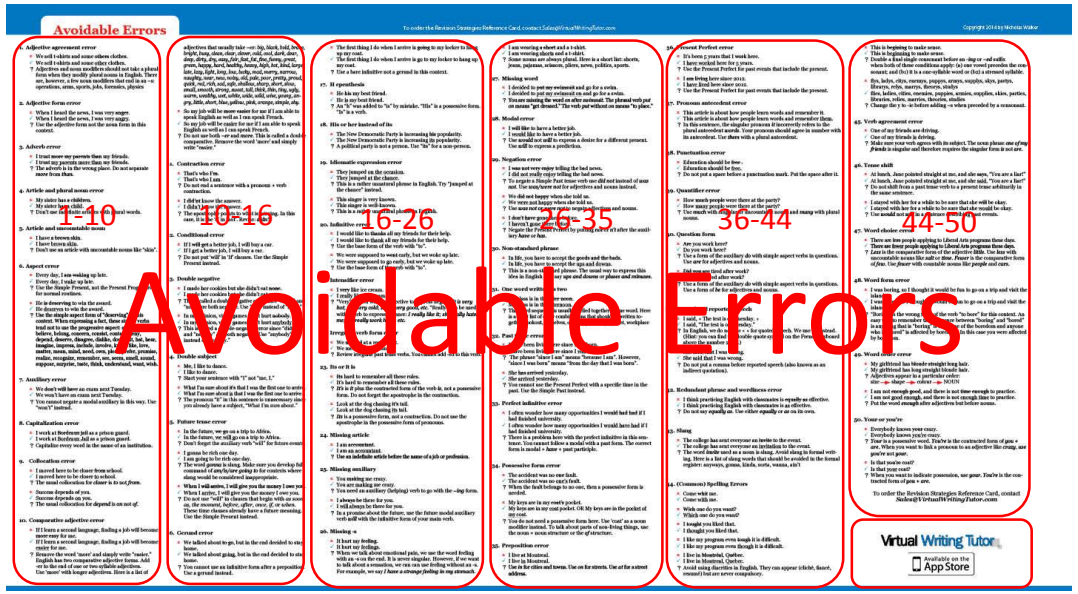
Avoidable Errors 31





31. One word written as two

✗ My class is in the ~~after noon~~.

✓ My class is in the afternoon.

? This word sequence is usually spelled together as one word. Here is a short list of other combinations that should be written together: lookout, ourselves, overweight, straightjacket, workplace

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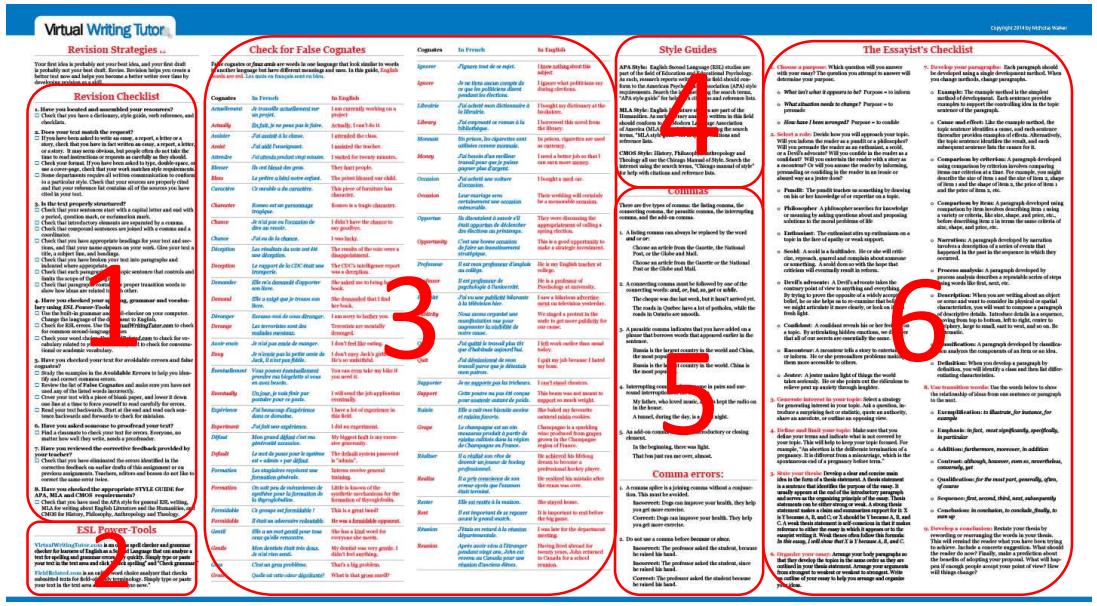
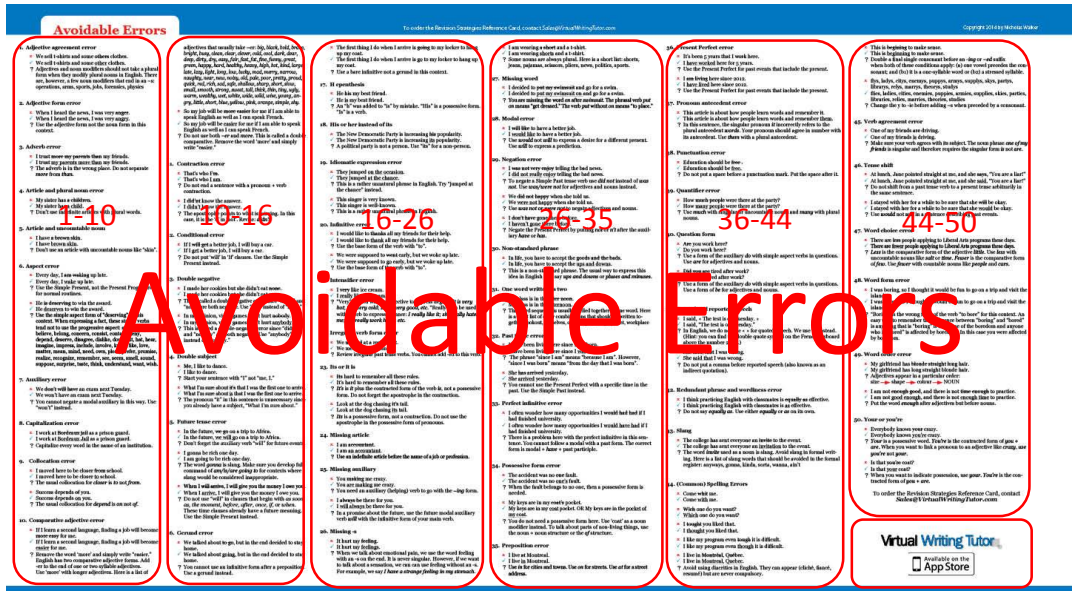
Avoidable Errors 32





32. Past tense error

× I have been living here since I ~~am~~ born.

✓ I have been living here since I was born.

? The phrase "since I am" means "because I am". However, "since I was born" means "from the day that I was born".

× She ~~has arrived~~ yesterday.

✓ She arrived yesterday.

? You cannot use the Present Perfect with a specific time in the past. Use the Simple Past instead.

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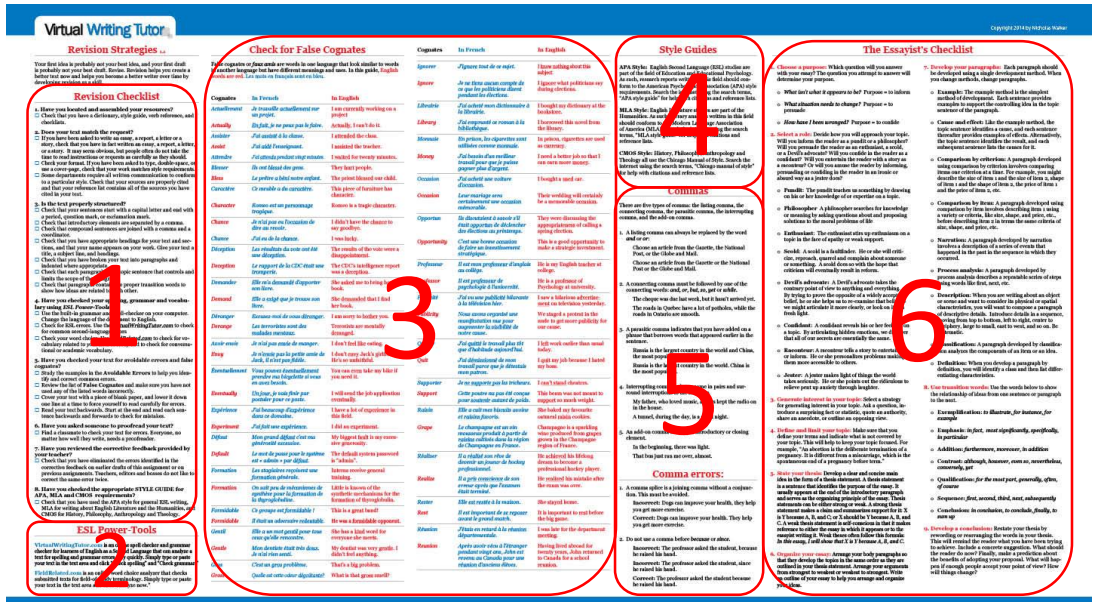
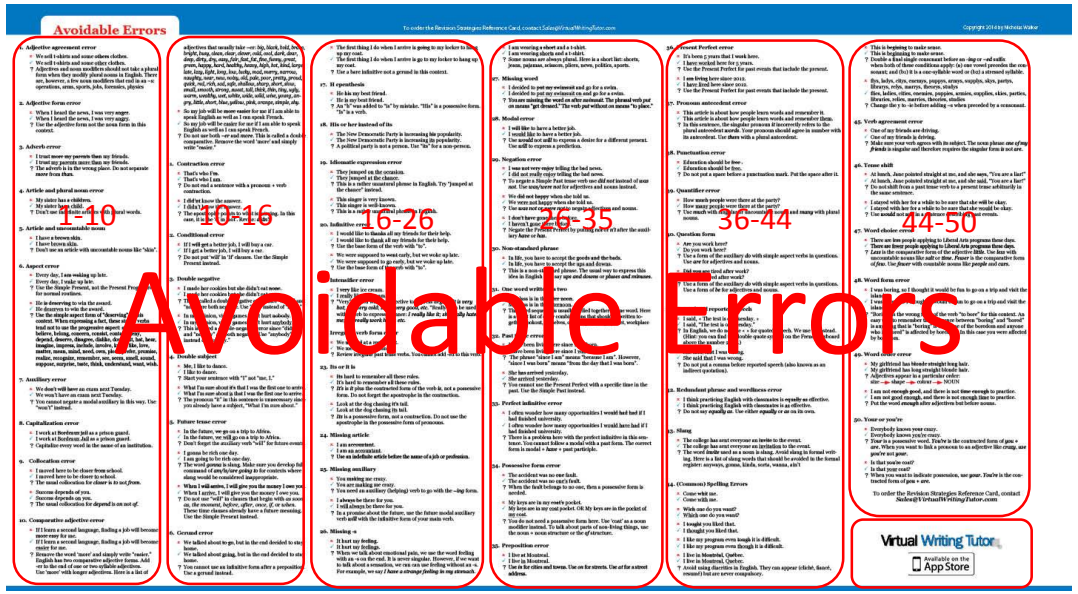
Avoidable Errors 33





33. Perfect infinitive error

✗ I often wonder how many opportunities I ~~would had had~~ if I had finished university.

✓ I often wonder how many opportunities I would have had if I had finished university.

? There is a problem here with the perfect infinitive in this sentence. You cannot follow a modal with a past form. The correct form is modal + *have* + past participle.

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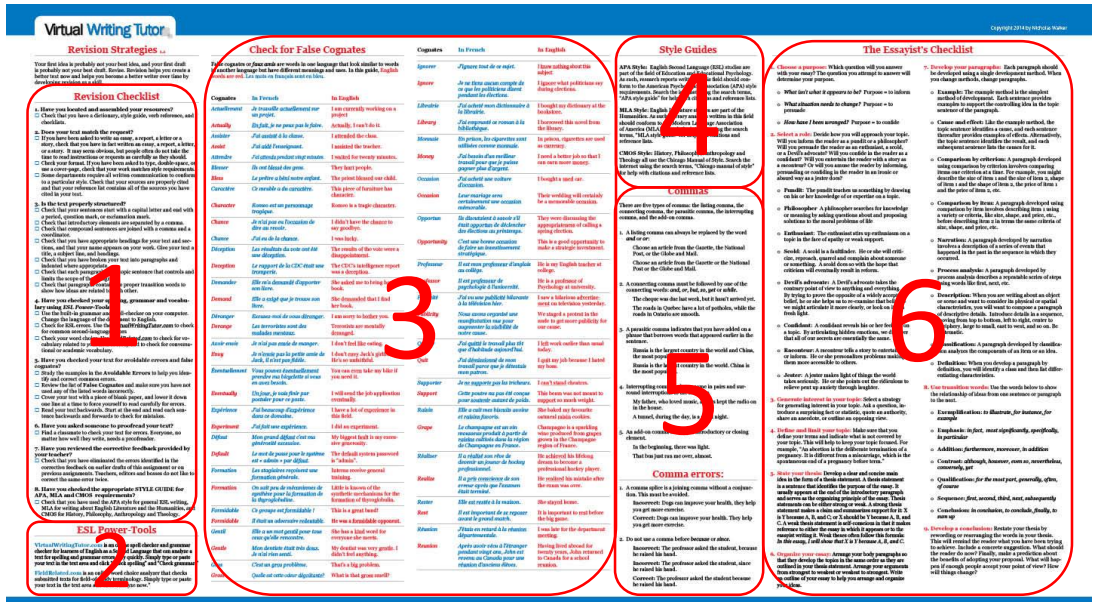
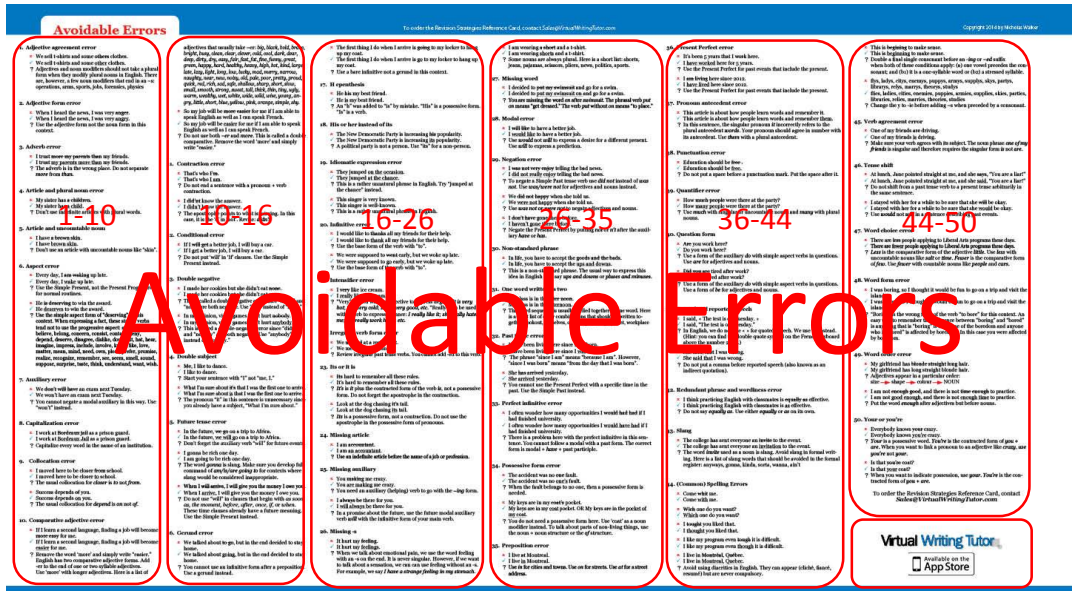
Avoidable Errors 34





34. Possessive form error

✗ The accident was no ~~one~~ fault.

✓ The accident was no one's fault.

? When the fault belongs to no one, then a possessive form is needed.

✗ My keys are in my ~~coat's~~ pocket.

✓ My keys are in my coat pocket. OR My keys are in the pocket of my coat.

? You do not need a possessive form here. Use 'coat' as a noun modifier instead. To talk about parts of non-living things, use the noun + noun structure or the *of* structure.

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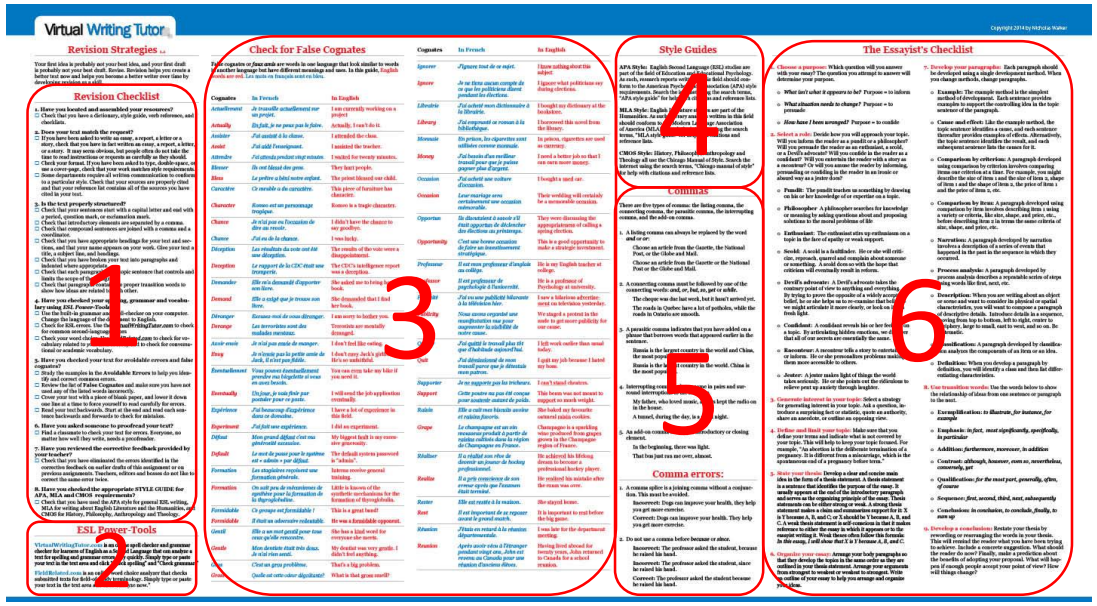
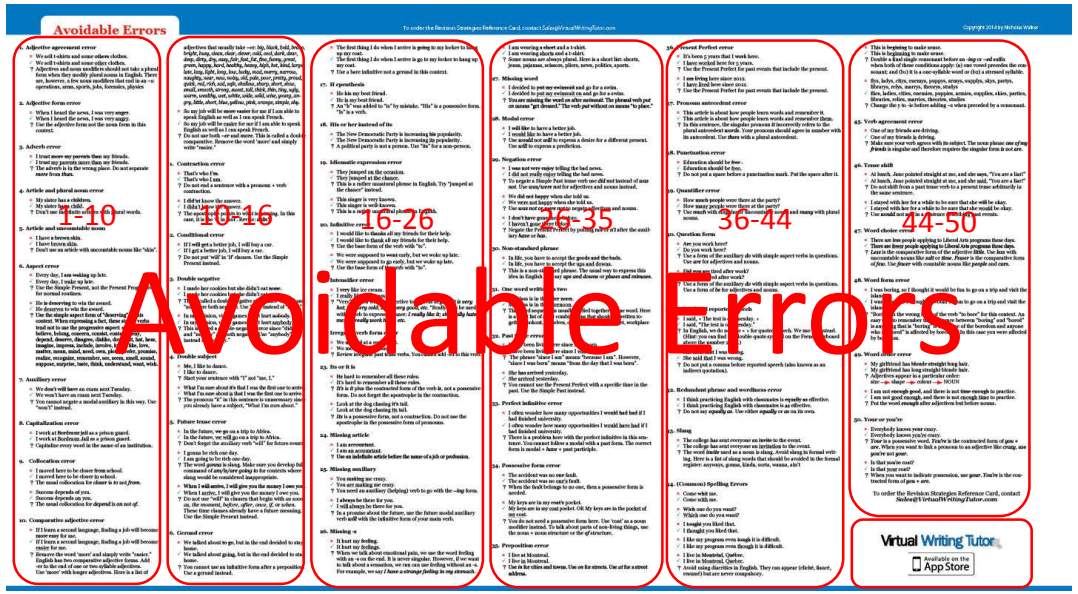
Avoidable Errors 35





35. Preposition error

- ✗ I live ~~at~~ Montreal.
- ✓ I live in Montreal.
- ? Use *in* for cities and towns. Use *on* for streets. Use *at* for a street address.

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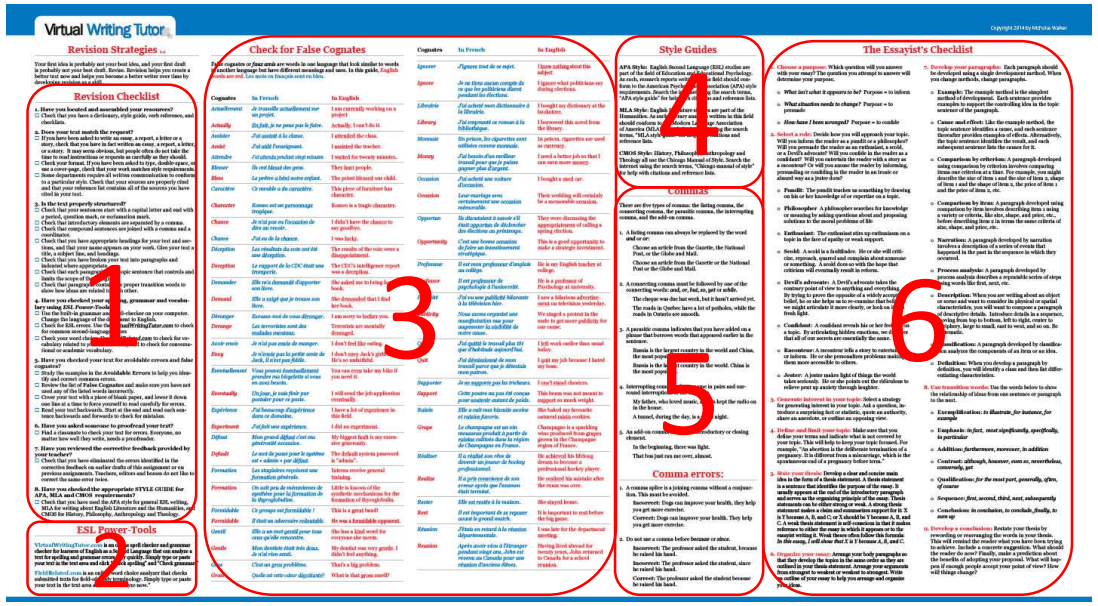
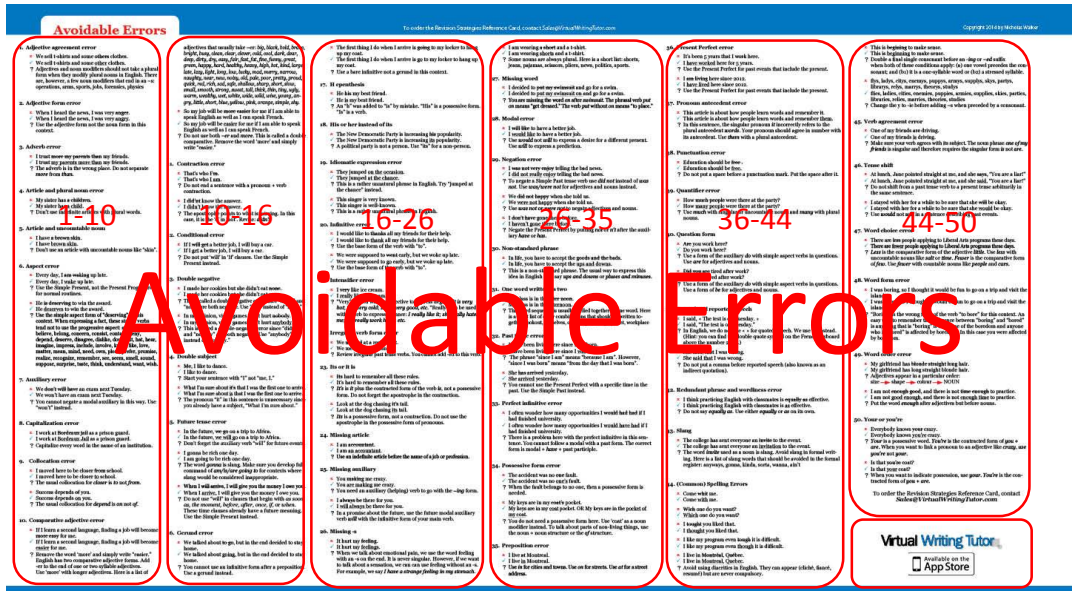
Avoidable Errors 36-44





36. Present Perfect error
37. Pronoun antecedent error
38. Punctuation error
39. Quantifier error
40. Question form
41. Quoted and reported speech
42. Redundant phrase and wordiness error
43. Slang
44. (Common) Spelling Errors

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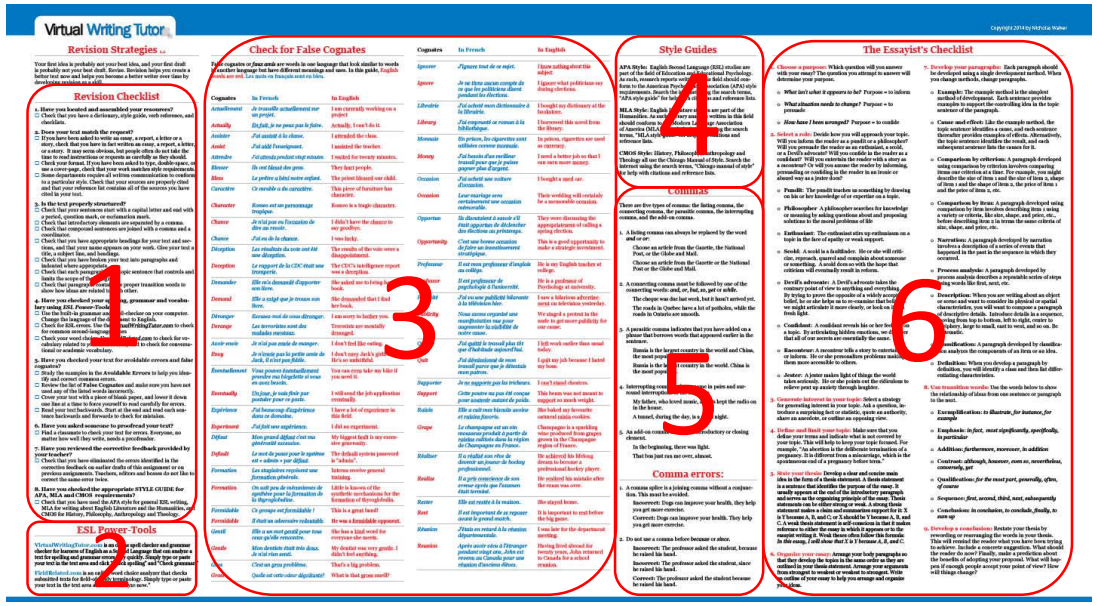
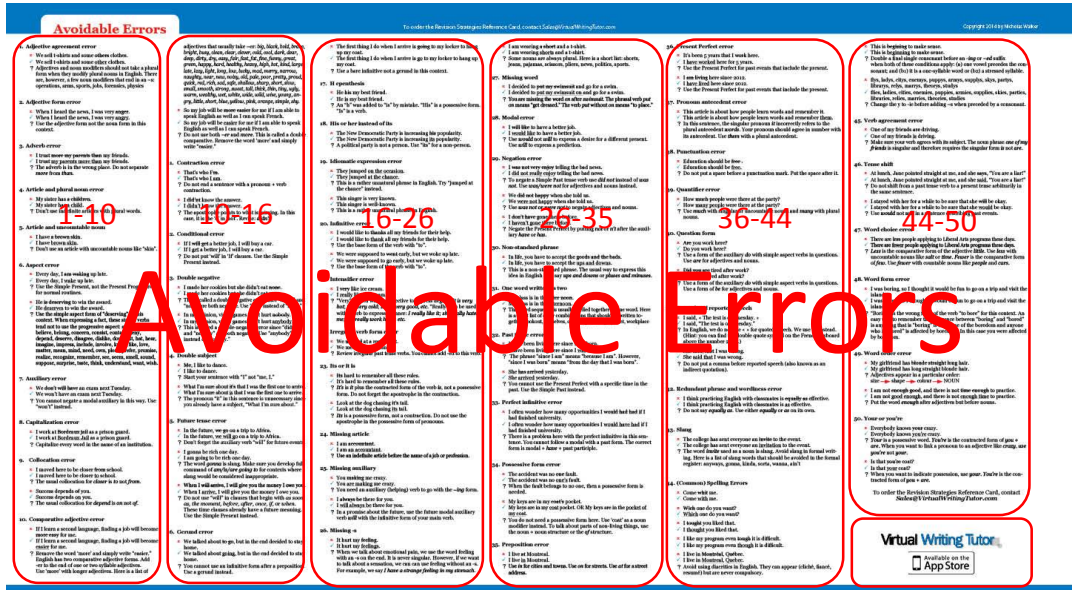
Avoidable Errors 36





36. Present Perfect error

- ✗ It's been 5 years that I ~~work~~ here.
- ✓ I have worked here for 5 years.
- ? Use the Present Perfect for past events that include the present.

- ✗ I ~~am living~~ here since 2012.
- ✓ I have lived here since 2012.
- ? Use the Present Perfect for past events that include the present.

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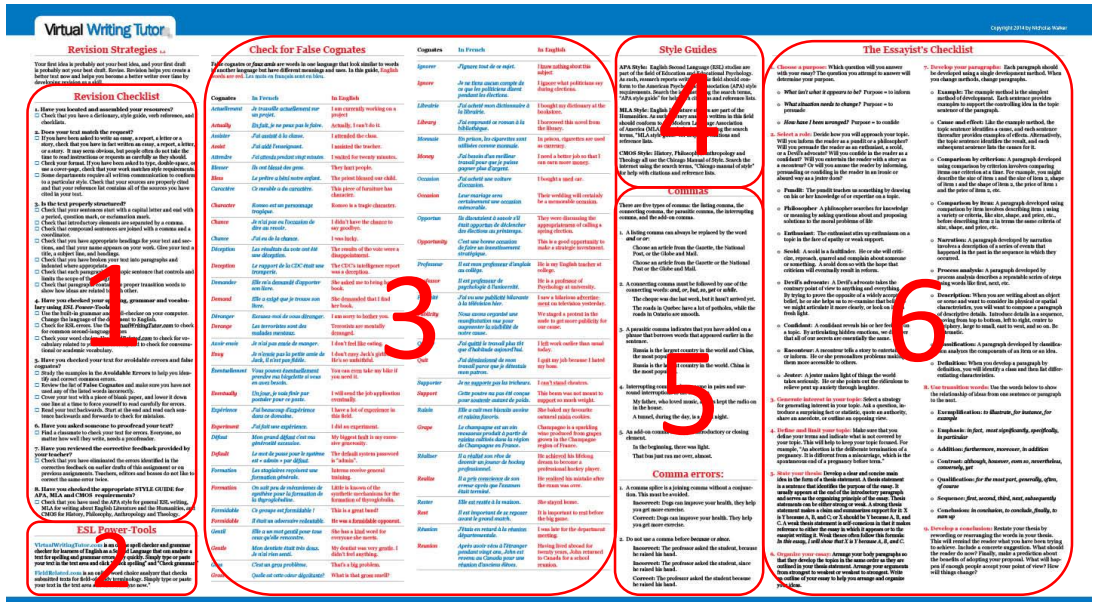
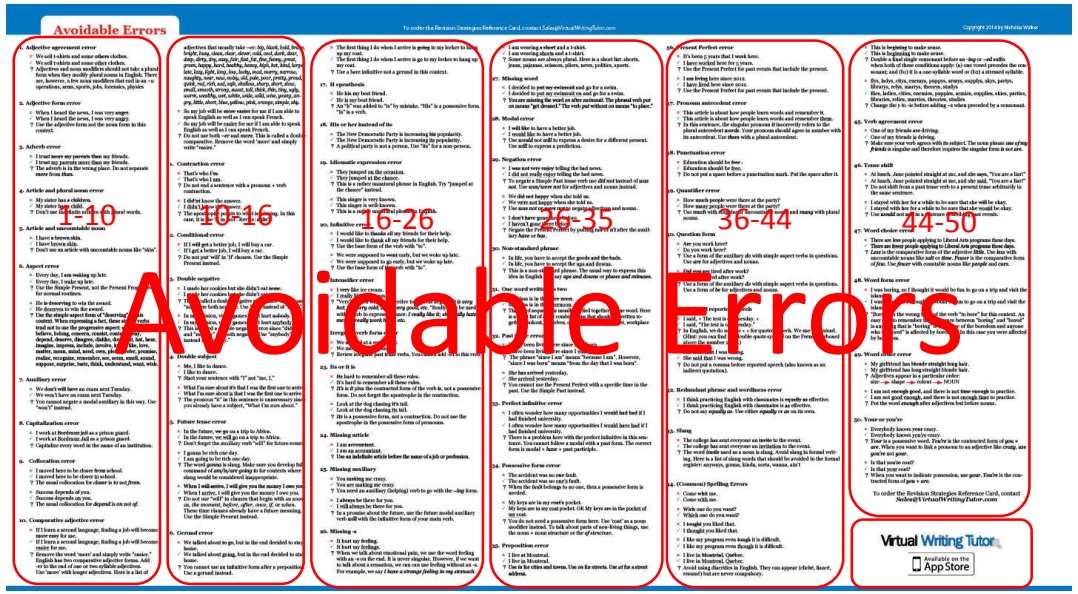
Avoidable Errors 37





37. Pronoun antecedent error

✗ This article is about how people learn words and remember ~~it~~.

✓ This article is about how people learn words and remember ~~them~~.

? In this sentence, the singular pronoun *it* incorrectly refers to the plural antecedent *words*. Your pronoun should agree in number with its antecedent. Use *them* with a plural antecedent.

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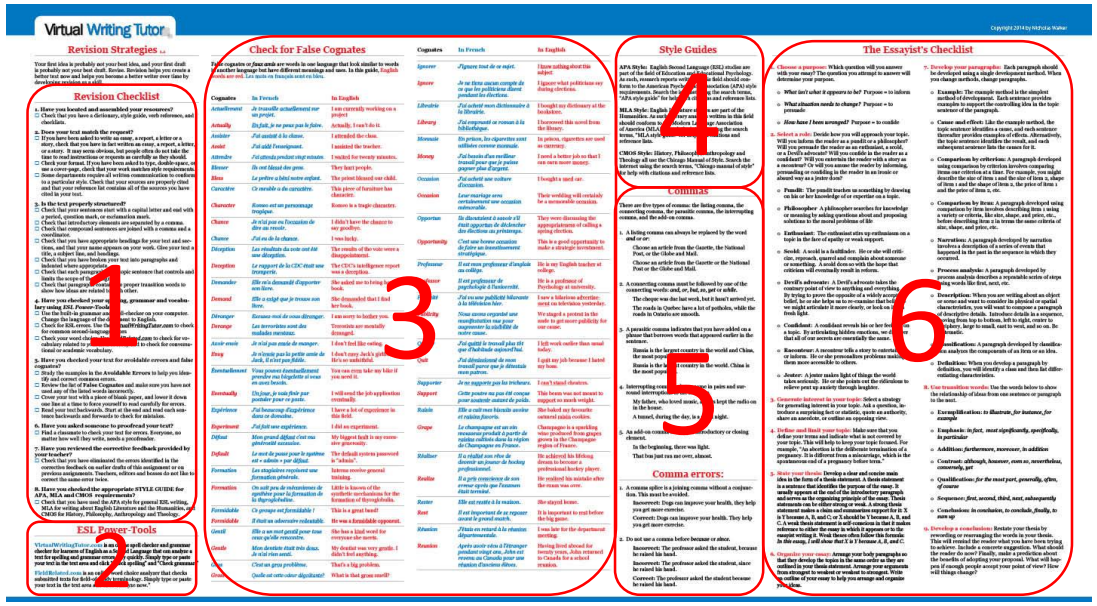
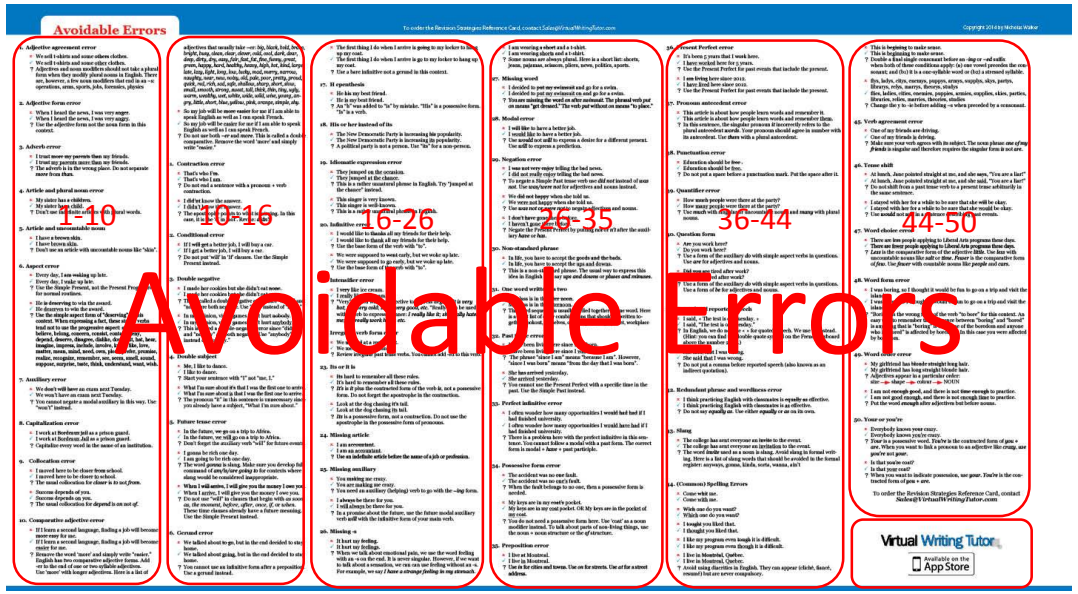
Avoidable Errors 38





38. Punctuation error

× Education should be ~~free.~~

✓ Education should be free.

? Do not put a space before a punctuation mark. Put the space after it.

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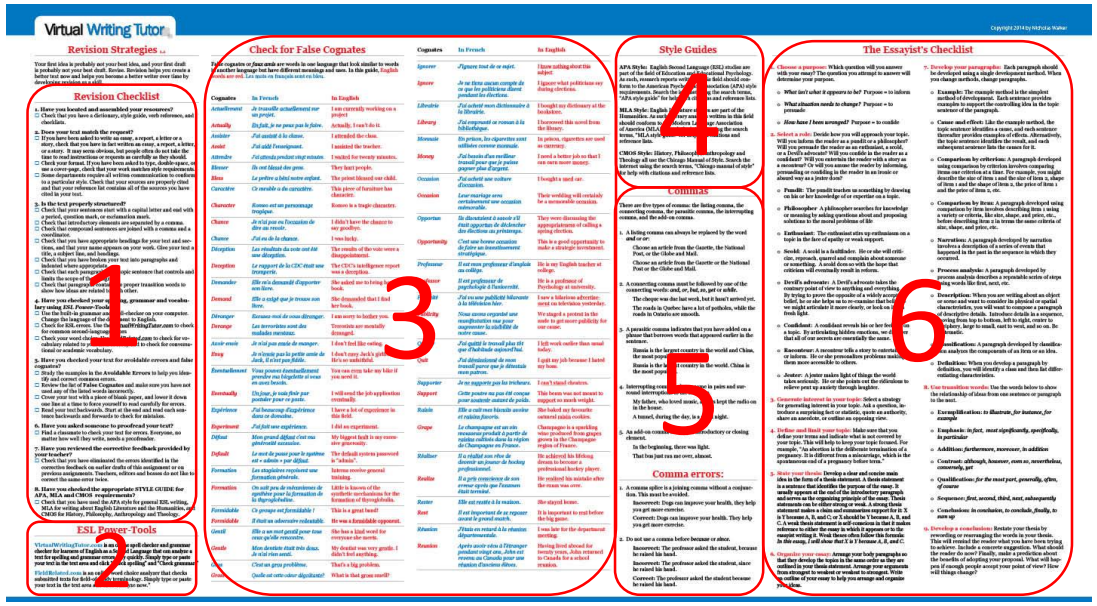
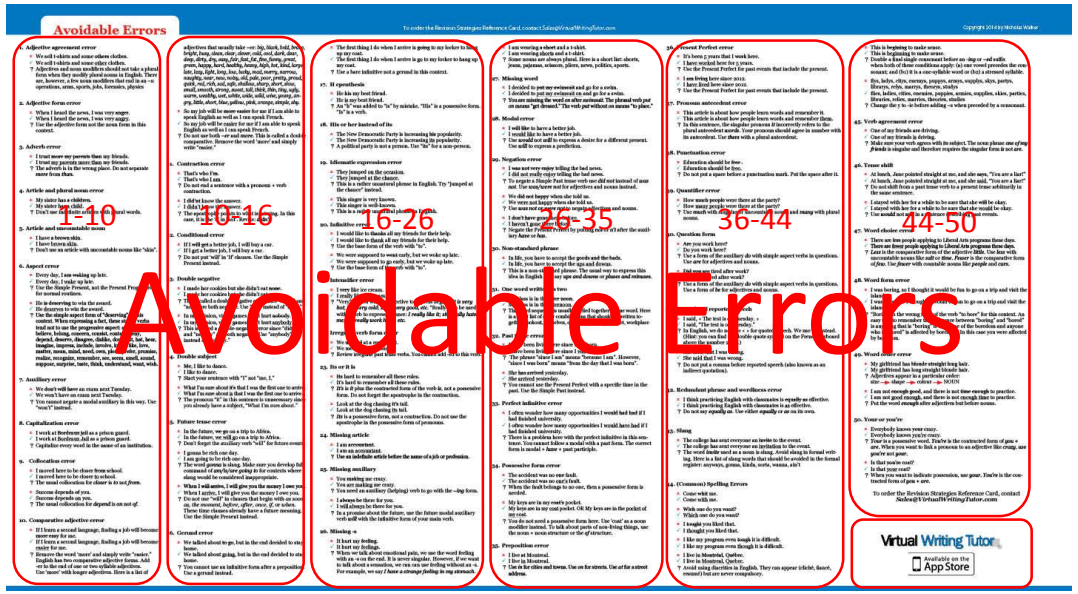
Avoidable Errors 39





39. Quantifier error

✗ How ~~much people~~ were there at the party?

✓ How many people were there at the party?

? Use *much* with singular or uncountable nouns and *many* with plural nouns.

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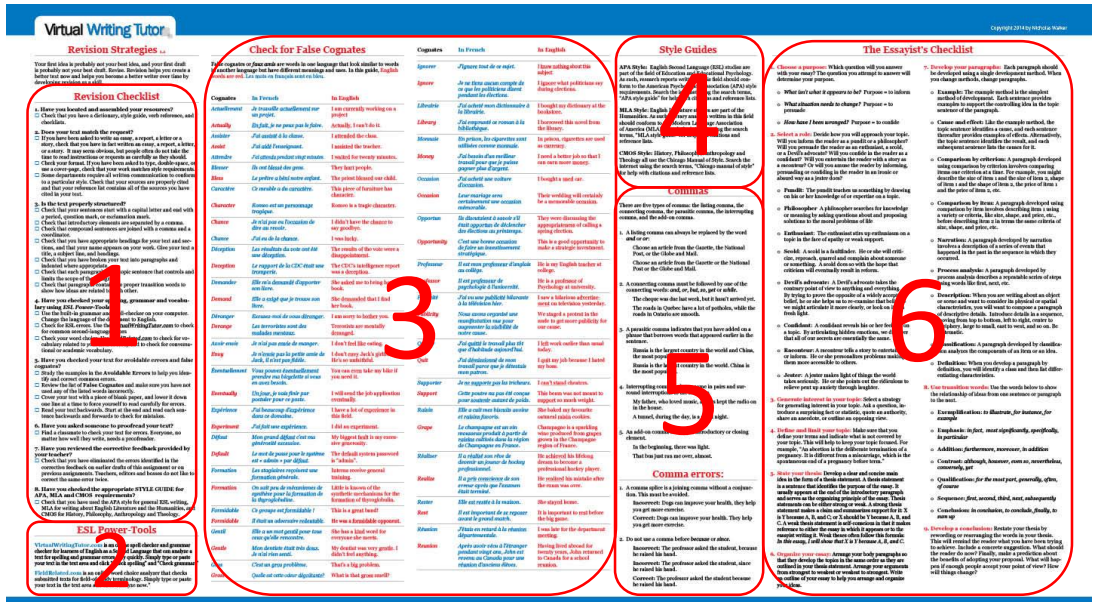
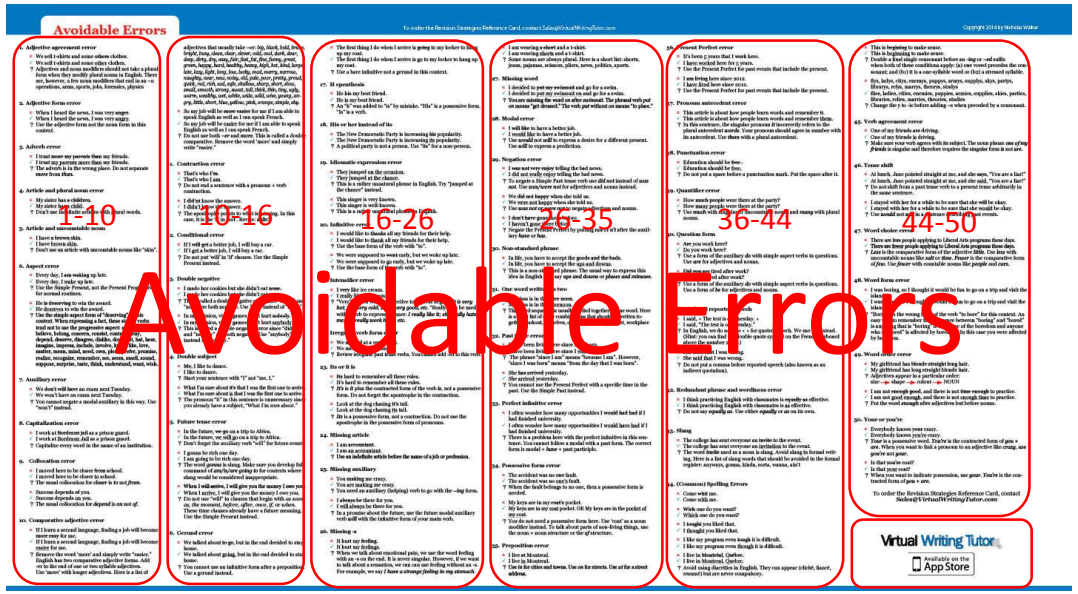
Avoidable Errors 40





40. Question form

× ~~Are~~ you work here?

✓ Do you work here?

? Use a form of the auxiliary *do* with simple aspect verbs in questions. Use *are* for adjectives and nouns.

× ~~Did you are~~ tired after work?

✓ Were you tired after work?

? Use a form of the auxiliary *do* with simple aspect verbs in questions. Use a form of *be* for adjectives and nouns.

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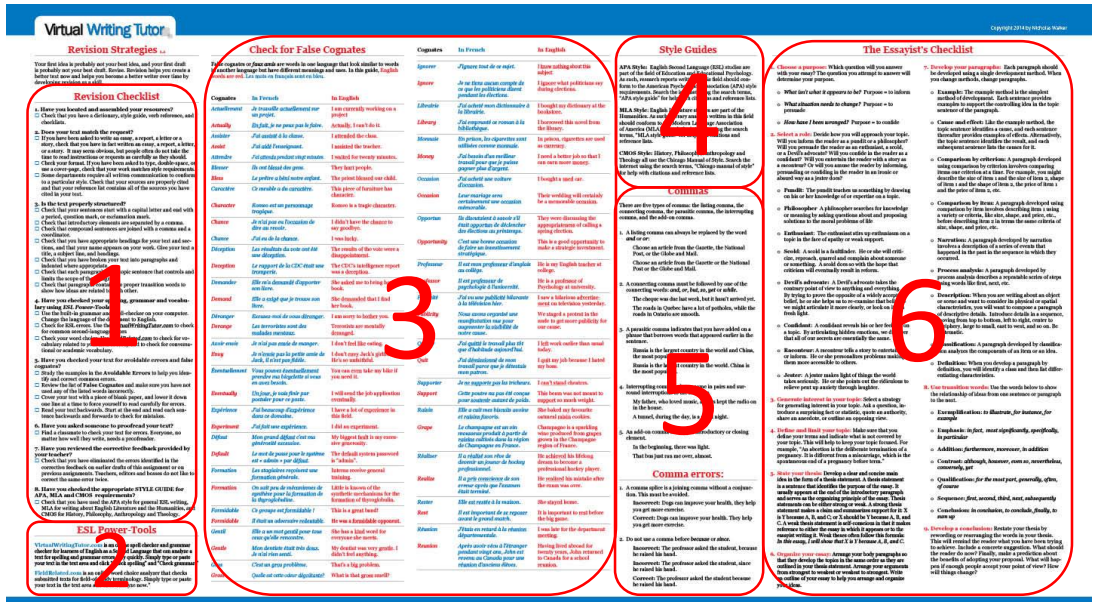
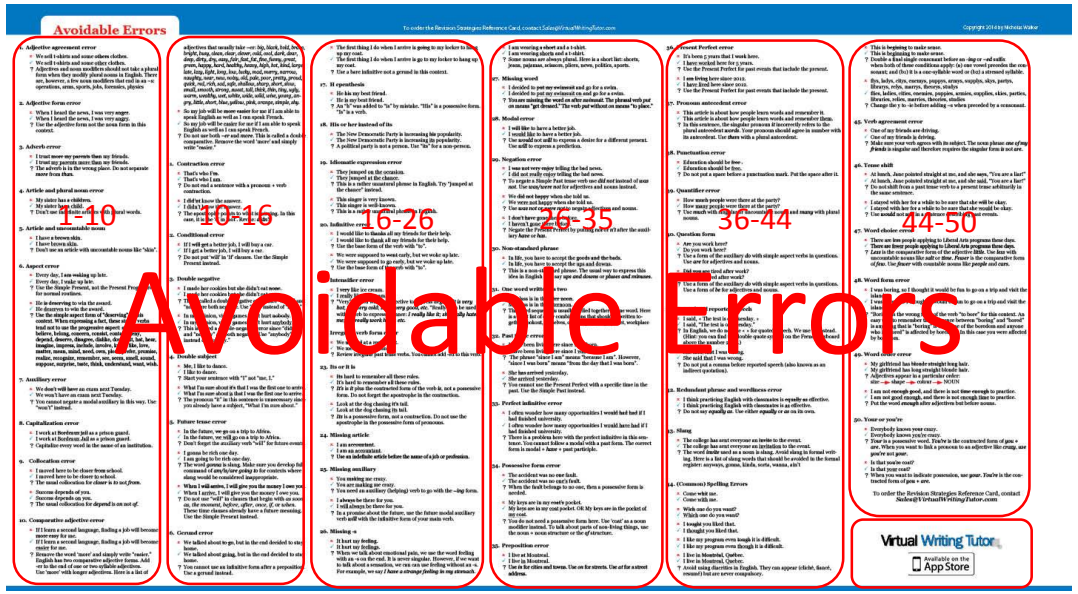
Avoidable Errors 41





41. Quoted and reported speech

✗ I said, « The test is on Tuesday. »

✓ I said, “The test is on Tuesday.”

? In English, we do not use « » for quoted speech. We use “ “ instead. (Hint: you can find the double quote symbol on the French keyboard above the number 2 key.)

✗ She ~~said, that~~ I was wrong.

✓ She said that I was wrong.

? Do not put a comma before reported speech (also known as an indirect quotation).

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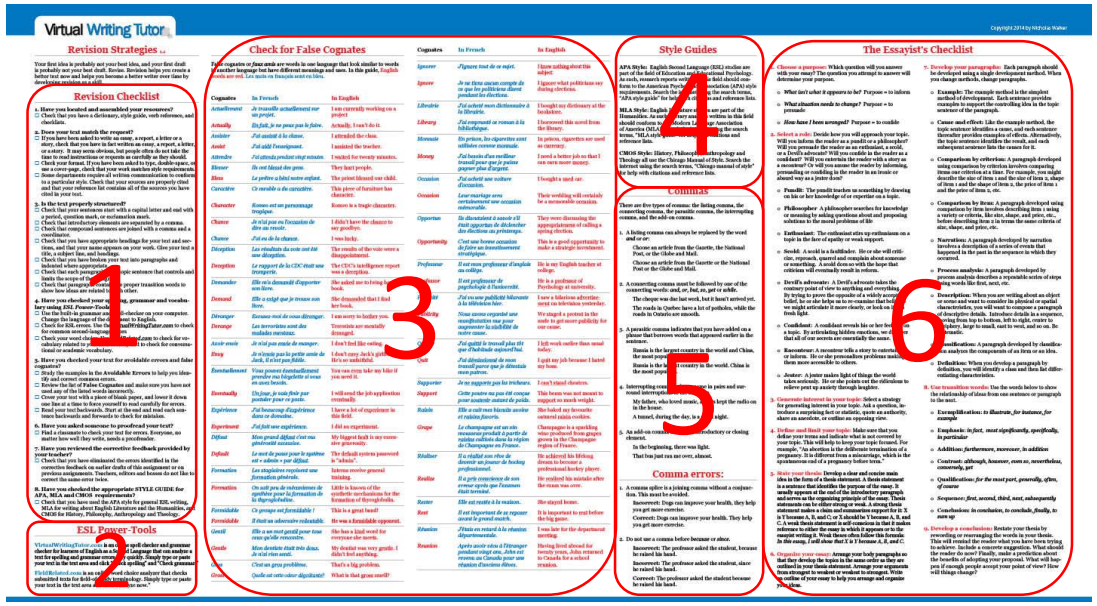
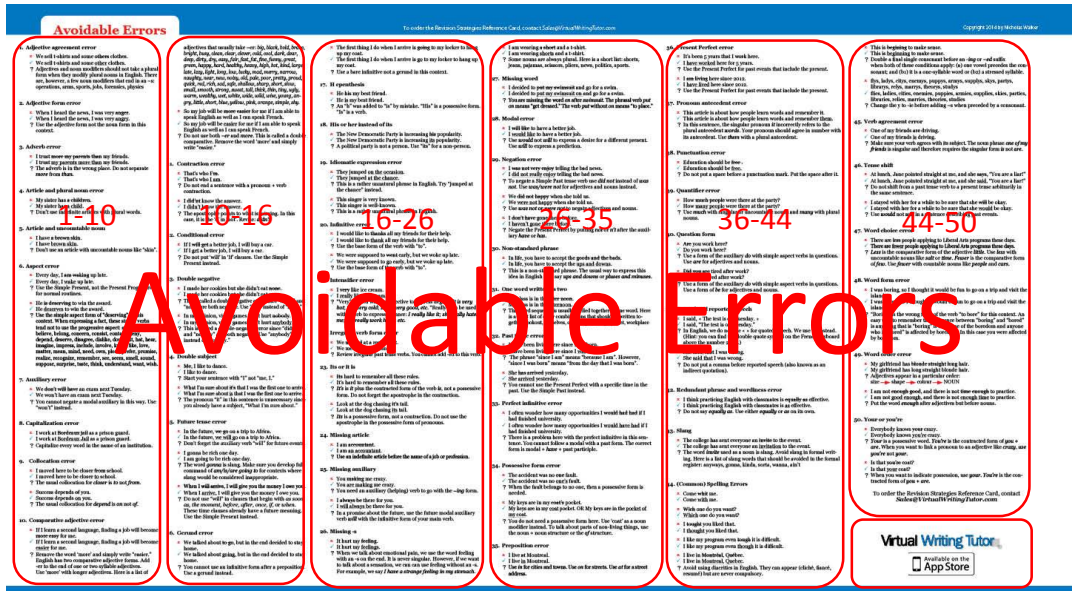
Avoidable Errors 42





42. Redundant phrase and wordiness error

- ✗ I think practicing English with classmates is ~~equally as~~ effective.
- ✓ I think practicing English with classmates is as effective.
- ? Do not say *equally as*. Use either *equally* or *as* on its own.

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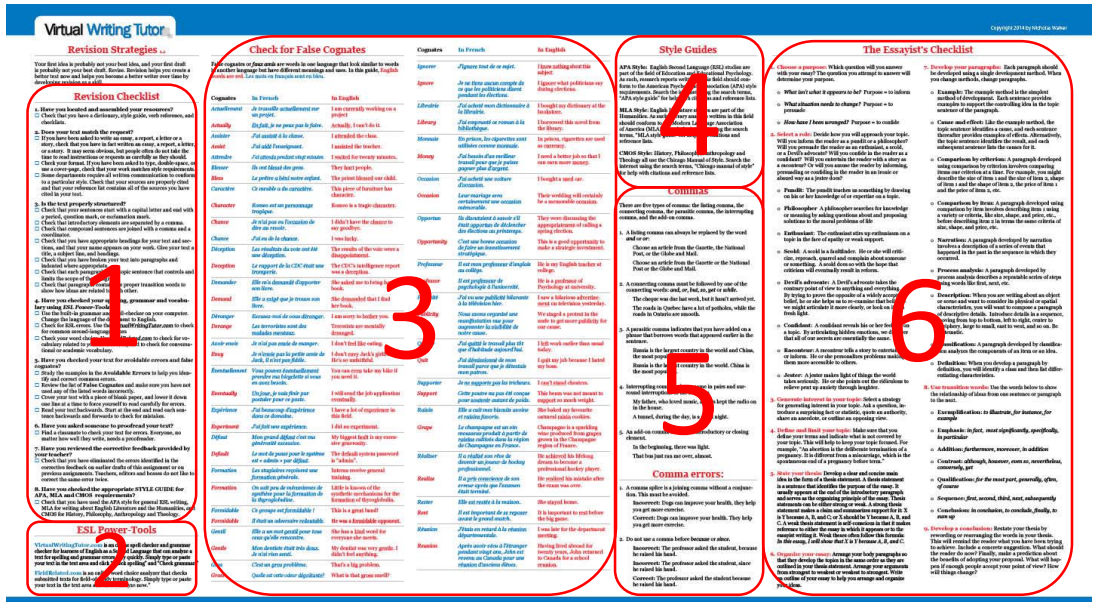
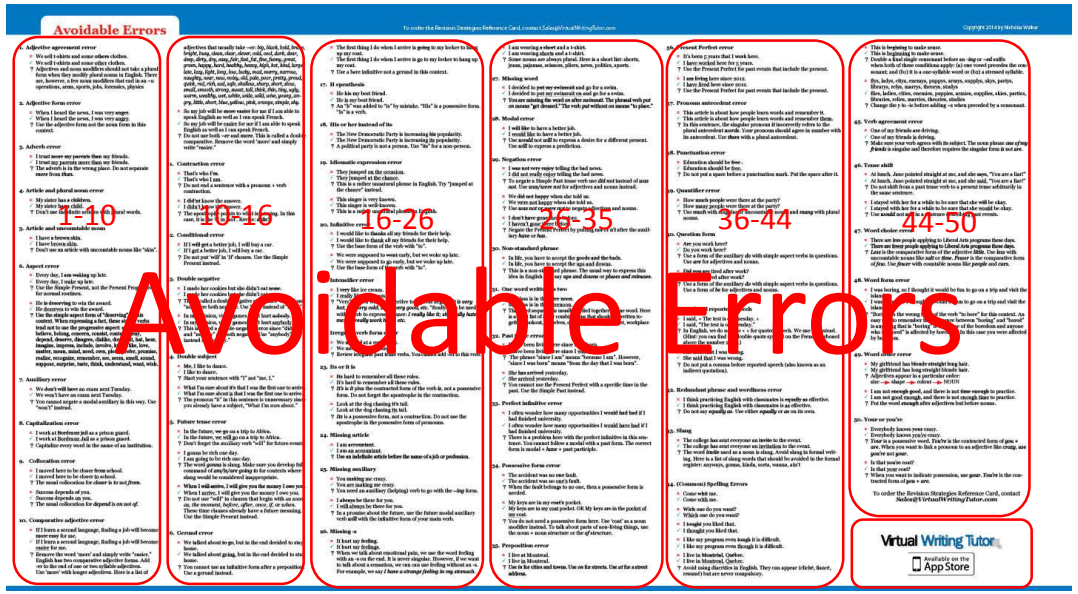
Avoidable Errors 43





43. Slang

✗ The college has sent everyone an ~~invite~~ to the event.

✓ The college has sent everyone an <u>invitation</u> to the event.

? The word *invite* used as a noun is slang. Avoid slang in formal writing. Here is a list of slang words that should be avoided in the formal register: anyways, gonna, kinda, sorta, wanna, ain't

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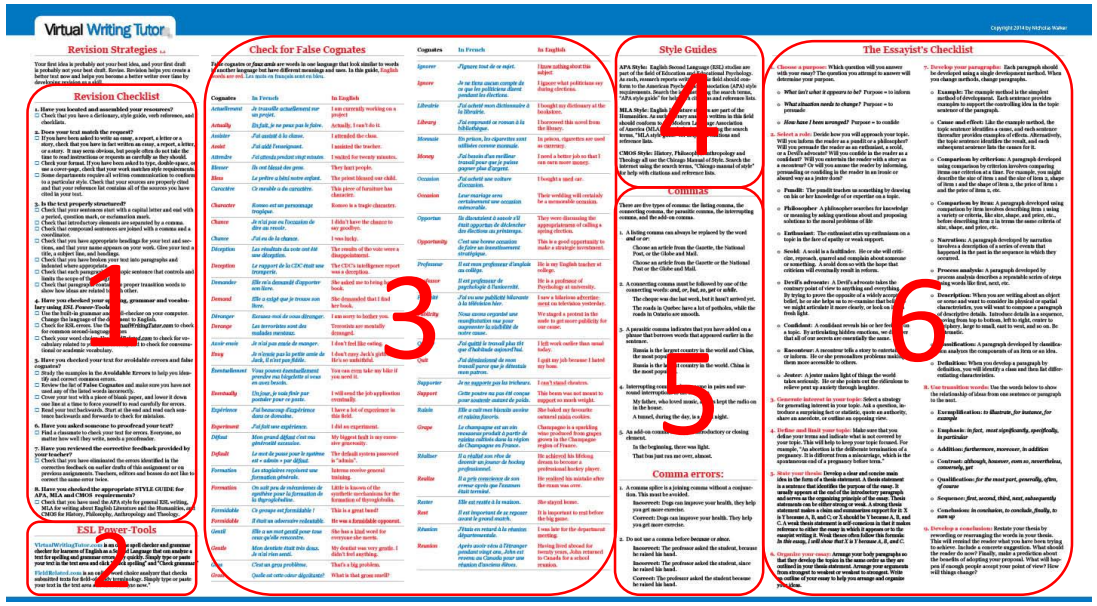
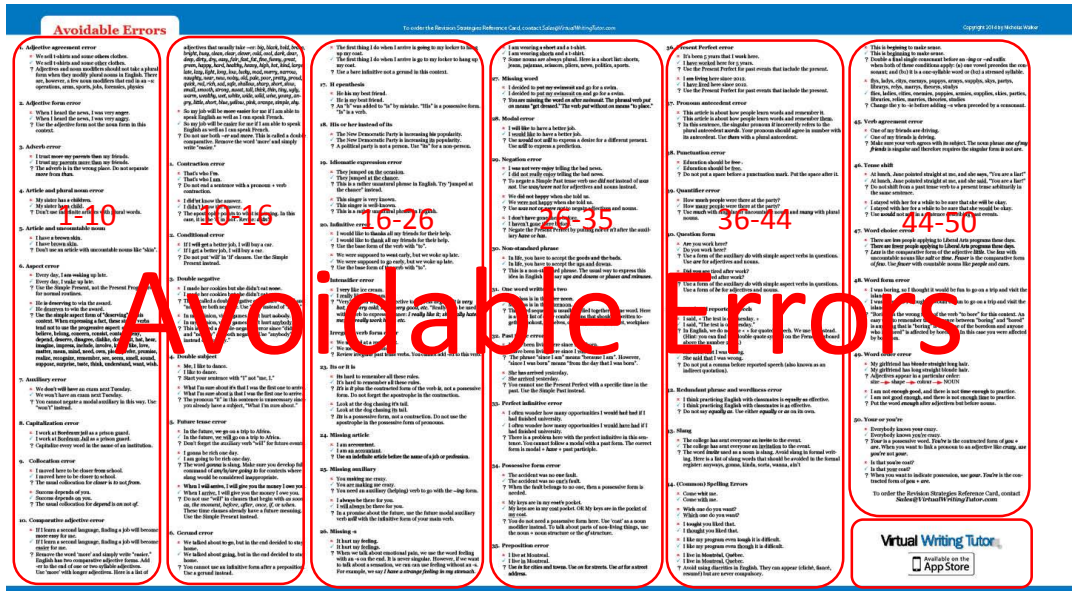
Avoidable Errors 44





44. (Common) Spelling Errors

- ✗ Come ~~whit~~ me.
- ✓ Come with me.

- ✗ ~~Wich~~ one do you want?
- ✓ Which one do you want?

- ✗ I ~~tought~~ you liked that.
- ✓ I thought you liked that.

- ✗ I like my program even ~~tough~~ it is difficult.
- ✓ I like my program even though it is difficult.

- ✗ I live in ~~Montréal~~, ~~Québec~~.
- ✓ I live in Montreal, Quebec.
- **?** Avoid using diacritics in English. They can appear (cliché, fiancé, resumé) but are never compulsory.

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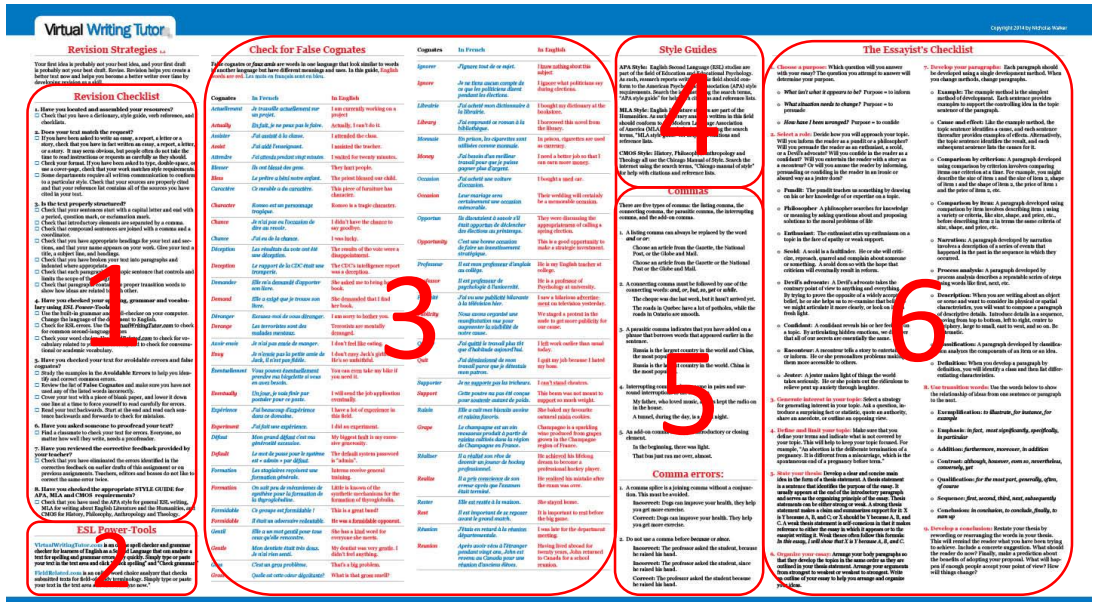

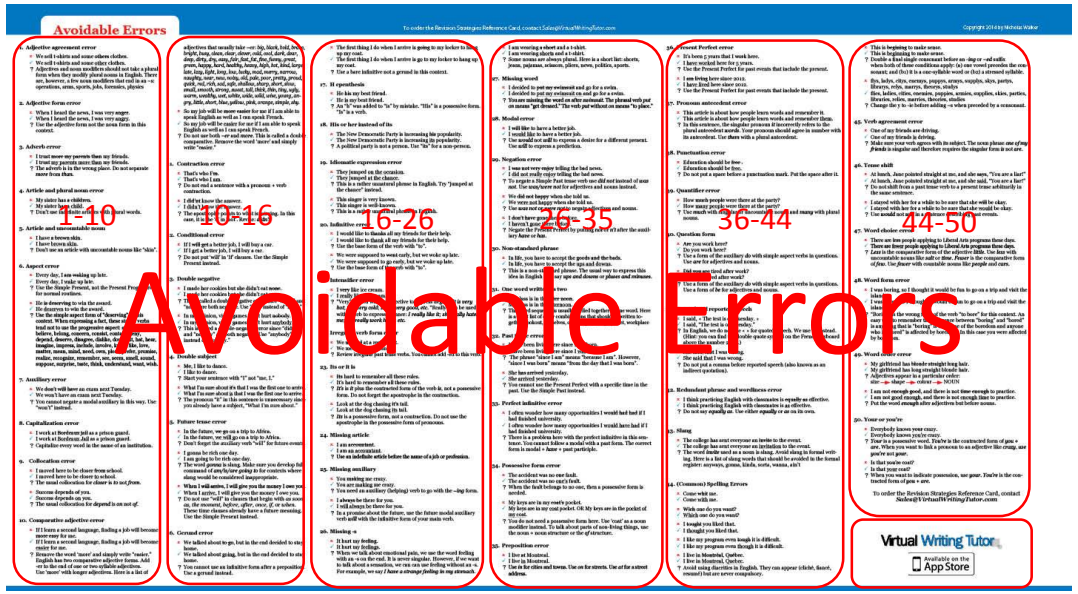

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Avoidable Errors 44-50

44. (continued) (Common) Spelling Errors
45. Verb agreement error
46. Tense shift
47. Word choice error
48. Word form error
49. Word order error
50. Your or you're

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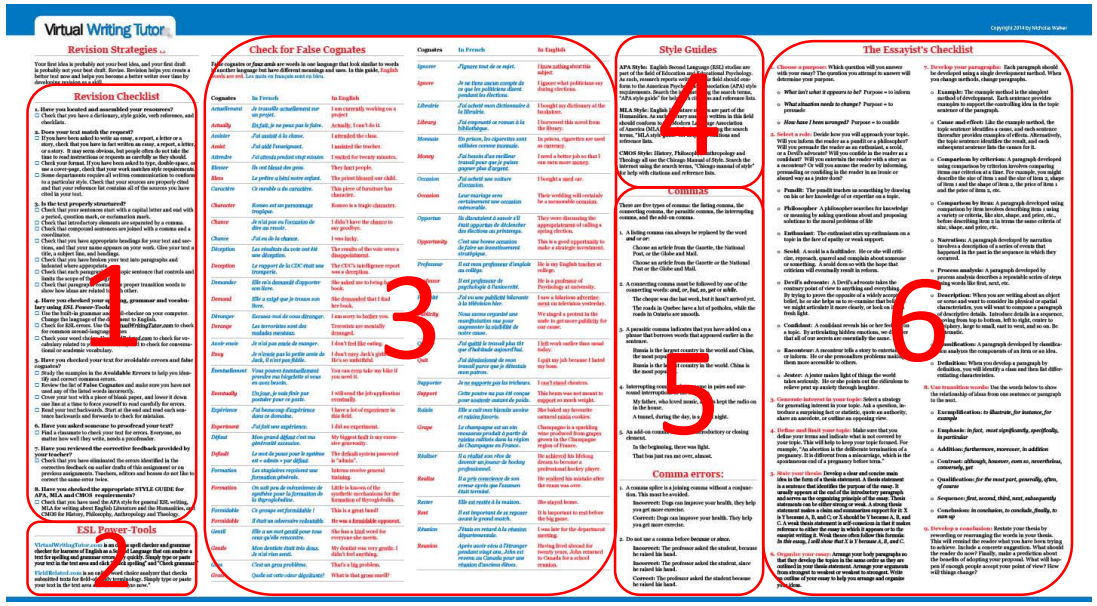
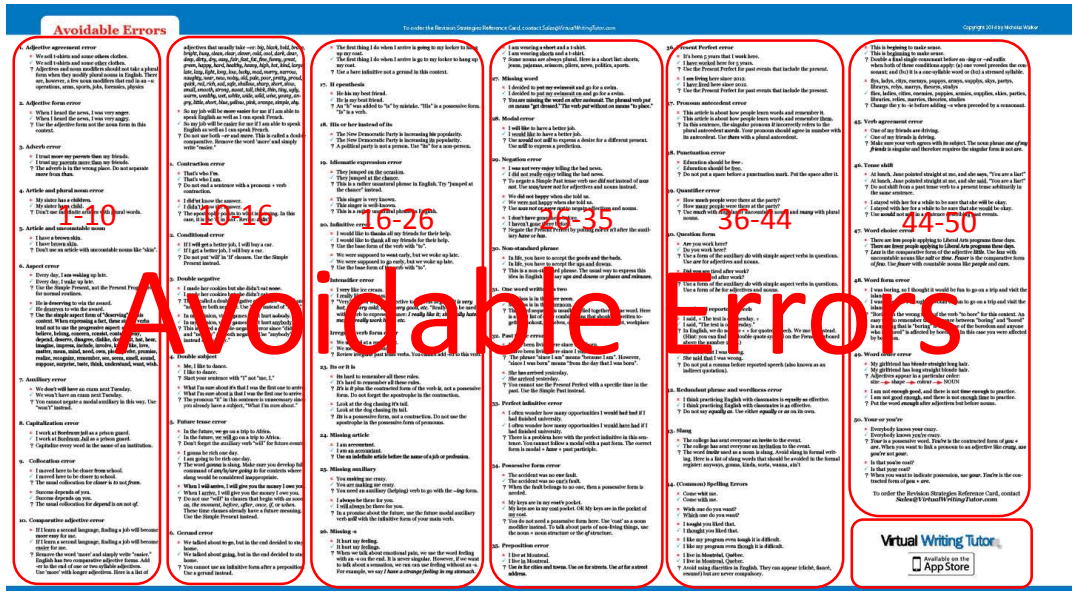
Avoidable Errors 44 (continued)





44. (Common) Spelling Errors

- × Come ~~whit~~ me.
- ✓ Come with me.

- × ~~Wich~~ one do you want?
- ✓ Which one do you want?

- × I ~~tought~~ you liked that.
- ✓ I thought you liked that.

- × I like my program even ~~tough~~ it is difficult.
- ✓ I like my program even though it is difficult.

- × I live in ~~Montréal~~, ~~Québec~~.
- ✓ I live in Montreal, Quebec.
- ? Avoid using diacritics in English. They can appear (cliché, fiancé, resumé) but are never compulsory.

- × This is ~~begining~~ to make sense.
- ✓ This is beginning to make sense.
- ? Double a final single consonant before an *-ing* or *–ed* suffix when both of these conditions apply: (a) one vowel precedes the consonant; and (b1) it is a one-syllable word or (b2) a stressed syllable.

- × flys, ladys, citys, enemys, puppys, armys, supplys, skys, partys, librarys, relys, marrys, theorys, studys
- ✓ flies, ladies, cities, enemies, puppies, armies, supplies, skies, parties, libraries, relies, marries, theories, studies
- ? Change the y to -ie before adding –s when preceded by a consonant.

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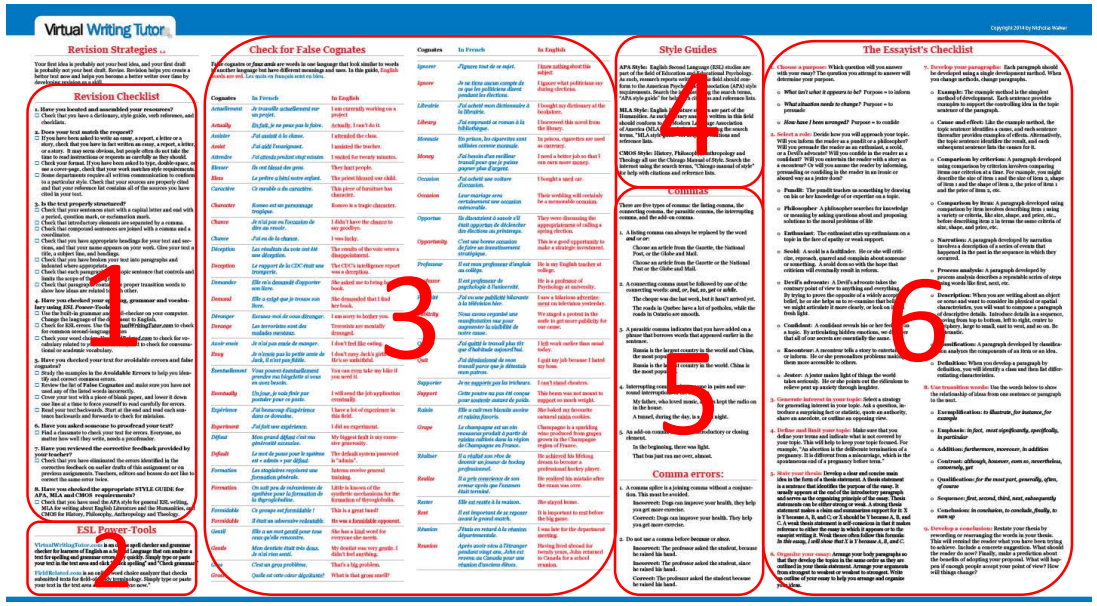
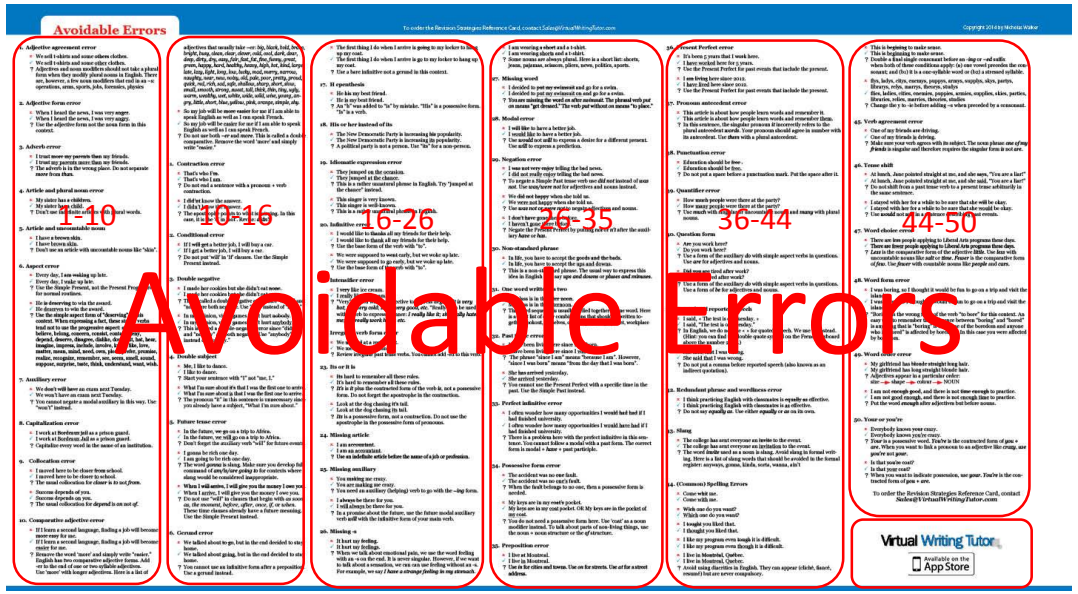
Avoidable Errors 45





45. Verb agreement error

✗ One of my friends ~~are~~ driving.

✓ One of my friends is driving.

? Make sure your verb agrees with its subject. The noun phrase *one of my friends* is singular and therefore requires the singular form *is* not *are*.

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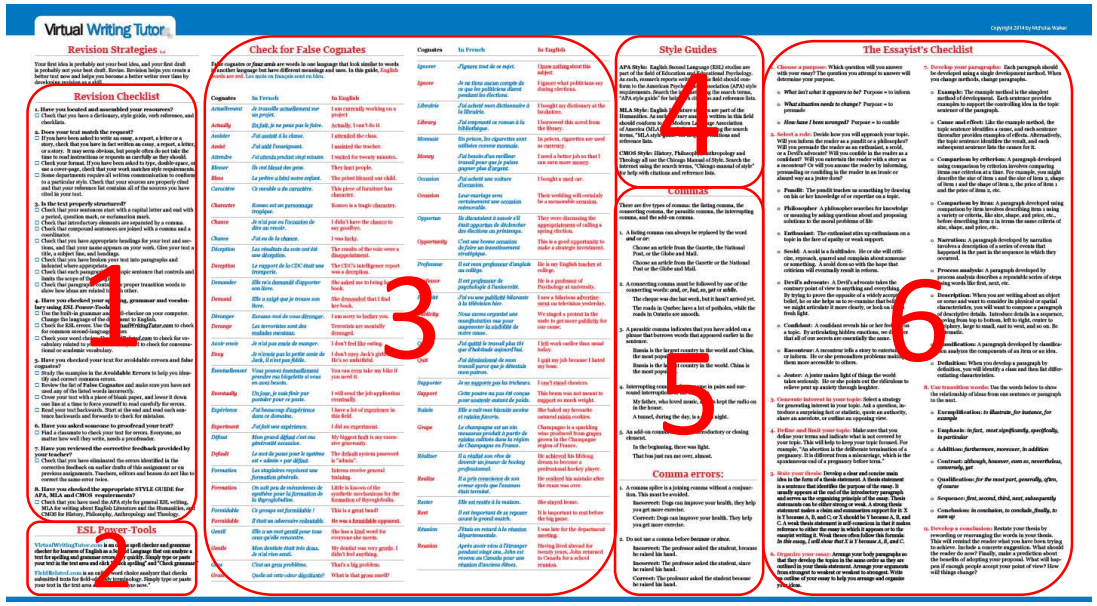
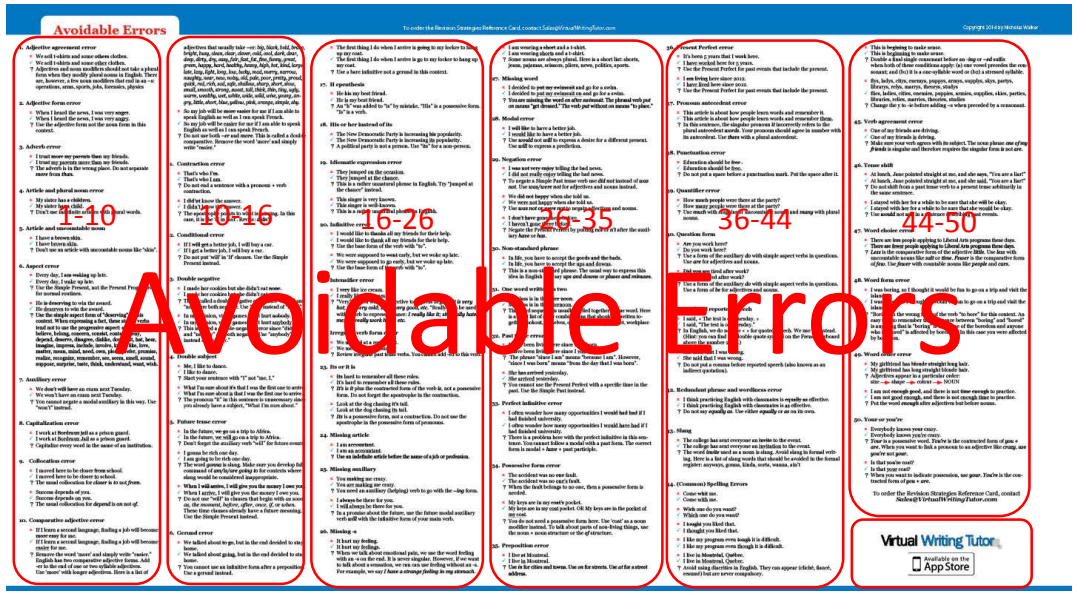
Avoidable Errors 46





46. Tense shift

✗ At lunch, Jane pointed straight at me, and she ~~says~~, "You are a liar!"

✓ At lunch, Jane pointed straight at me, and she said, "You are a liar!"

? Do not shift from a past tense verb to a present tense arbitrarily in the same sentence.

✗ I stayed with her for a while to be sure that she ~~will~~ be okay.

✓ I stayed with her for a while to be sure that she would be okay.

? Use *would* not *will* in a sentence describing past events.

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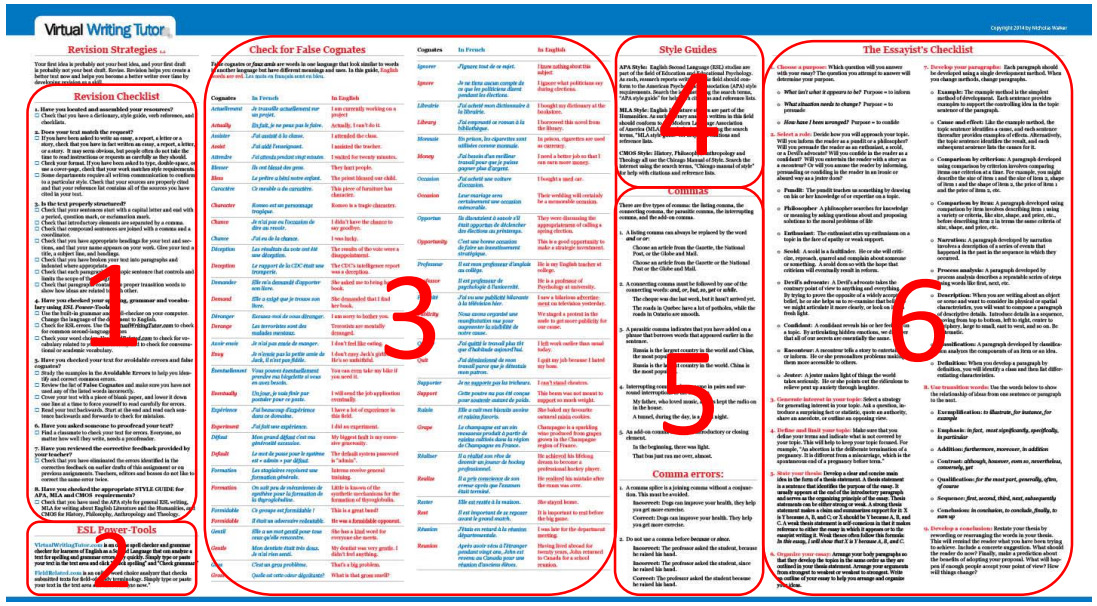
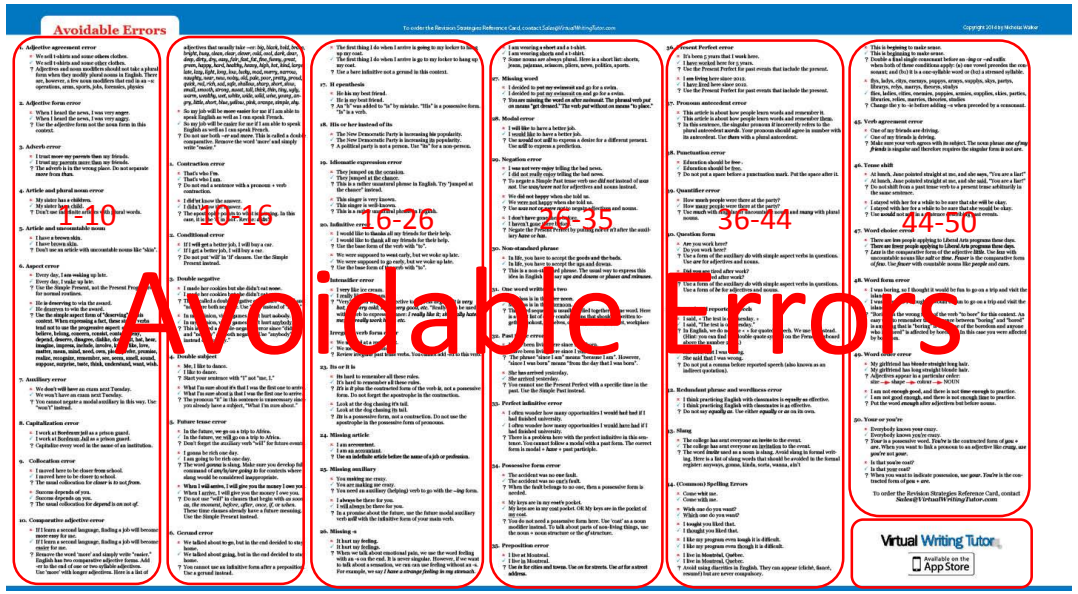
Avoidable Errors 47





47. Word choice error

✗ There are ~~less~~ people applying to Liberal Arts programs these days.

✓ There are fewer people applying to Liberal Arts programs these days.

? *Less* is the comparative form of the adjective *little*. Use *less* with uncountable nouns like *salt* or *time*. *Fewer* is the comparative form of *few*. Use *fewer* with countable nouns like *people* and *cars*.

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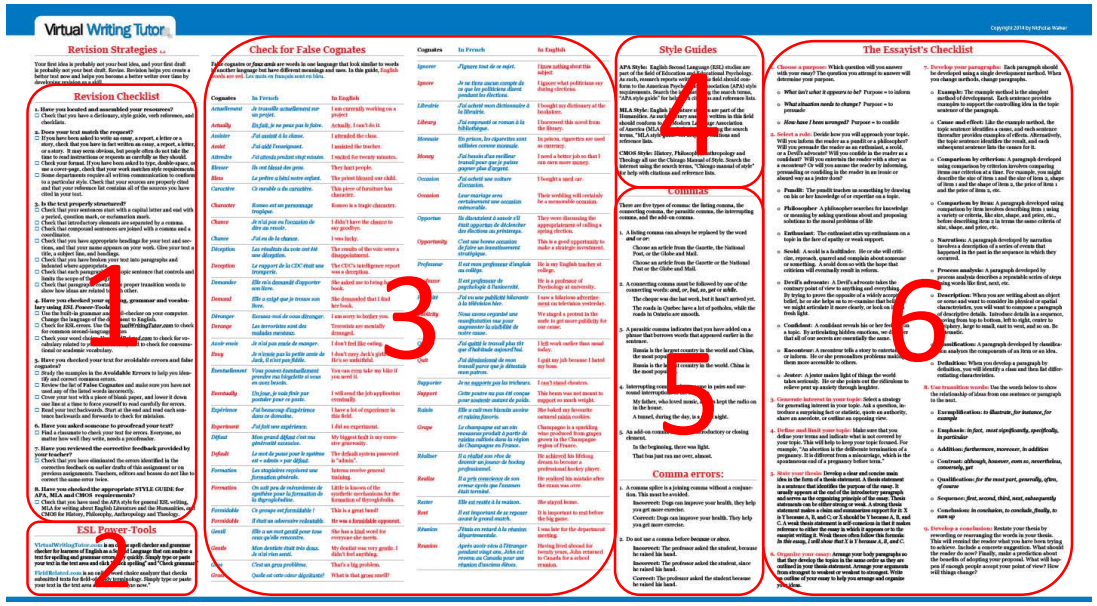

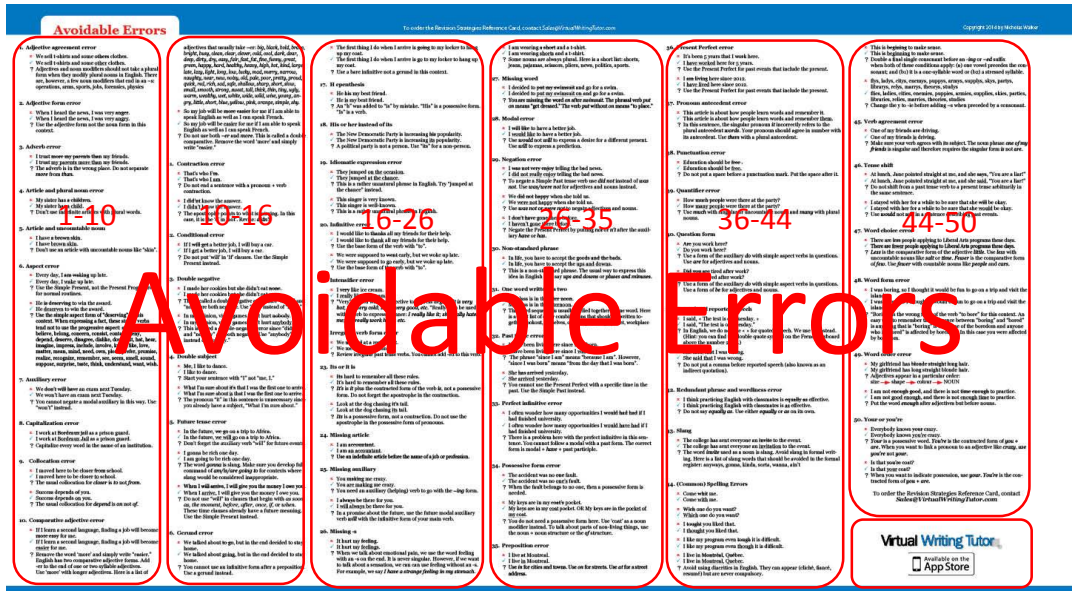

48. Word form error

✗ I was boring, so I thought it would be fun to go on a trip and visit the island.

✓ I was bored, so I thought it would be fun to go on a trip and visit the island.

? "Boring" is the wrong form of the verb "to bore" for this context. An easy way to remember the difference between "boring" and "bored" is anything that is "boring" is the cause of the boredom and anyone who is "bored" is affected by boredom. In this case you were affected by boredom.

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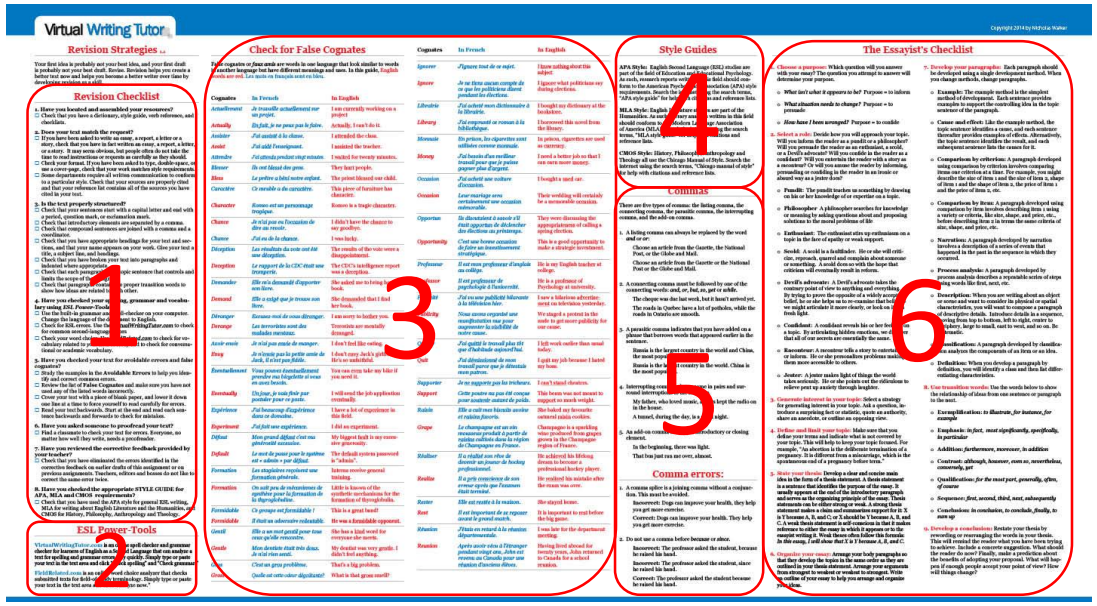

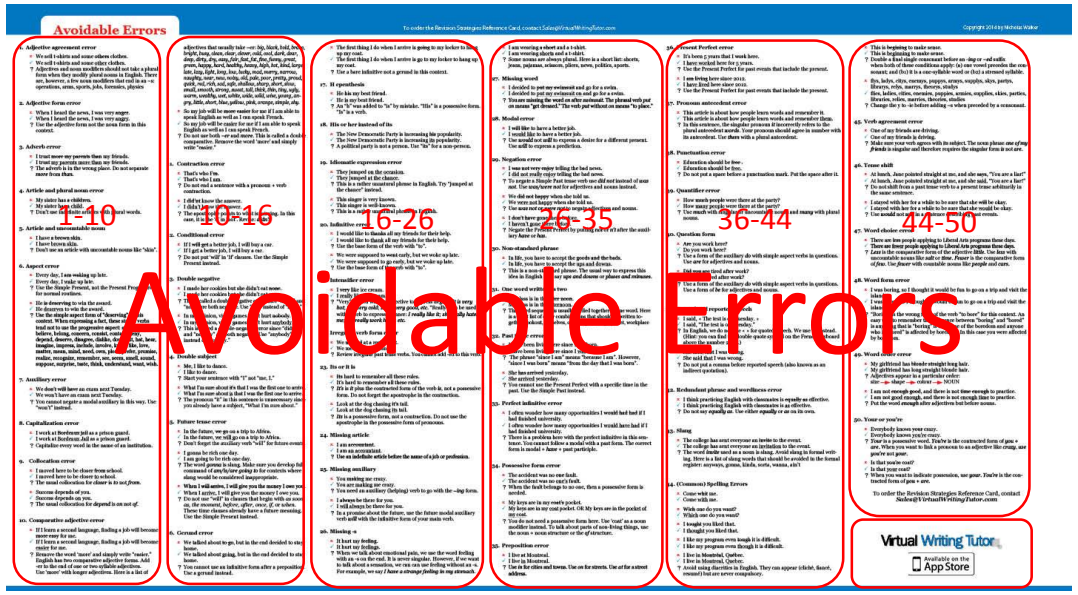

49. Word order error

- ✗ My girlfriend has ~~blonde straight long~~ hair.
- ✓ My girlfriend has long straight blonde hair.
- ? Adjectives appear in a particular order:
  size → shape → colour → NOUN

- ✗ I am not ~~enough good~~, and there is not ~~time enough~~ to practice.
- ✓ I am not good enough, and there is not enough time to practice.
- ? Put the word *enough* after adjectives but before nouns.

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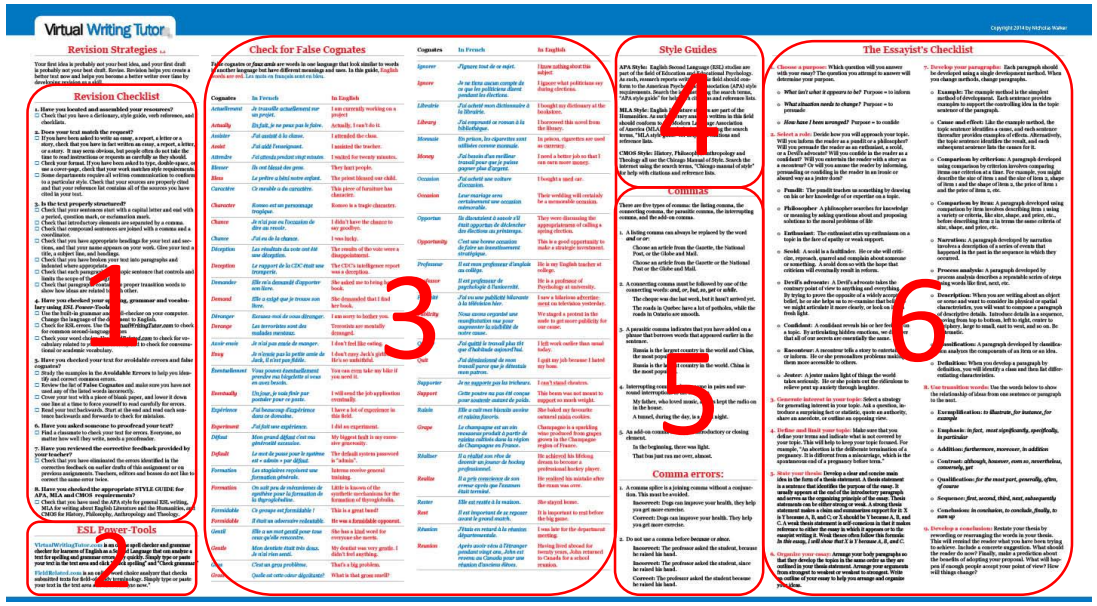

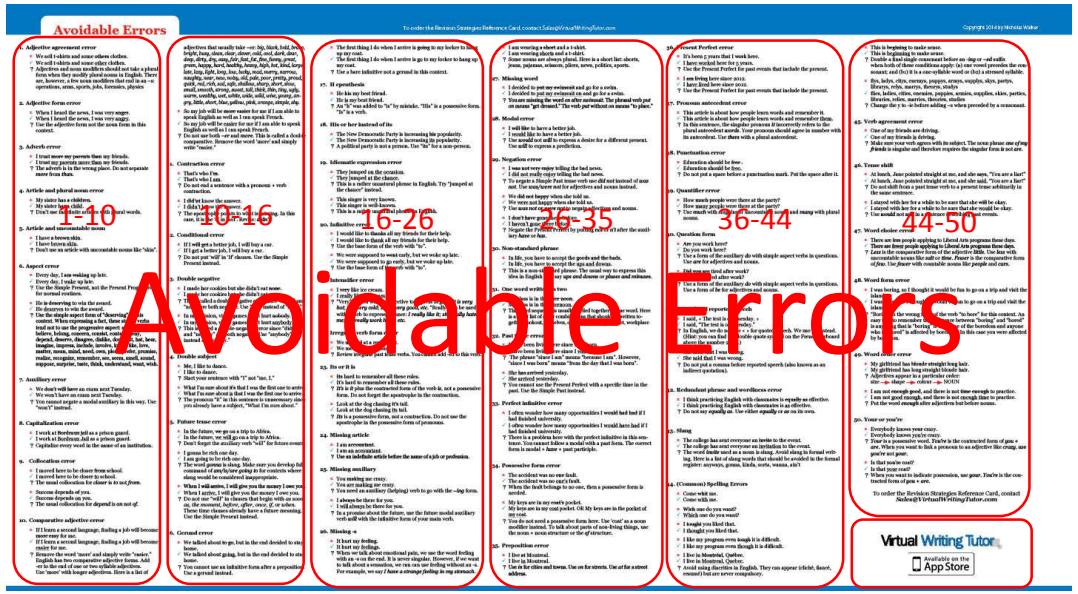

50. Your or you're

✗ Everybody knows ~~your~~ crazy.

✓ Everybody knows you're crazy.

? *Your* is a possessive word. *You're* is the contracted form of *you* + *are*. When you want to link a pronoun to an adjective like *crazy*, use *you're* not *your*.

✗ Is that ~~you're~~ coat?

✓ Is that your coat?

? When you want to indicate possession, use *your*. *You're* is the contracted form of *you* + *are*.

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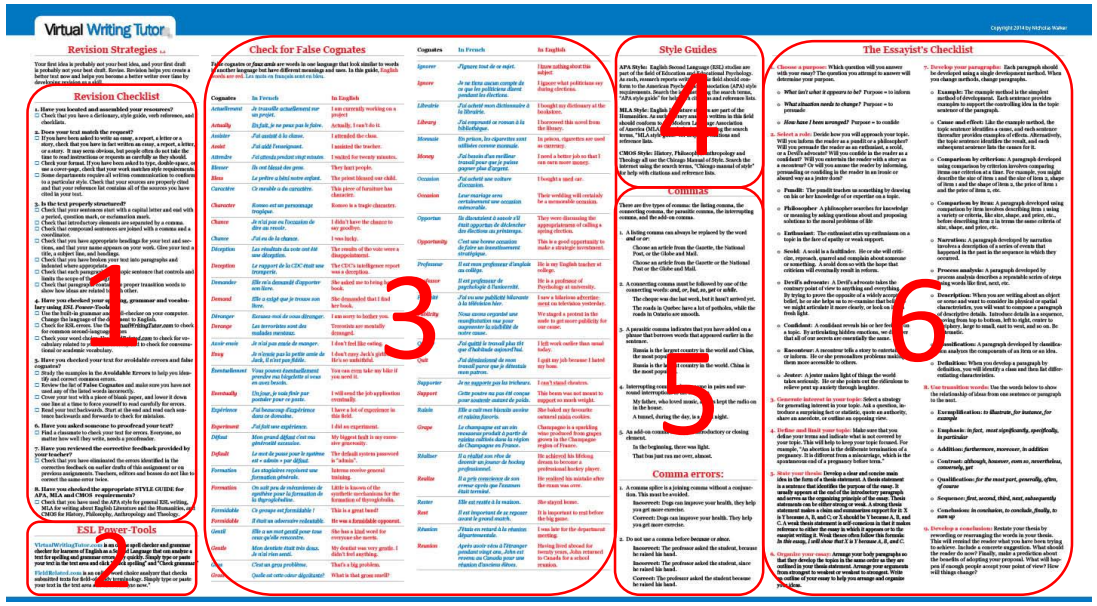

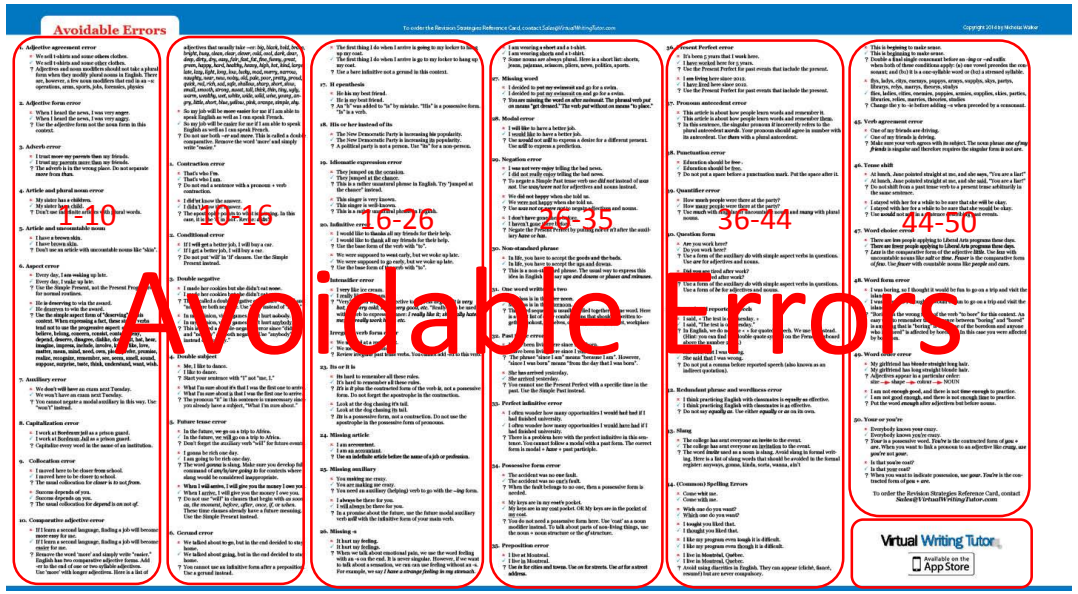

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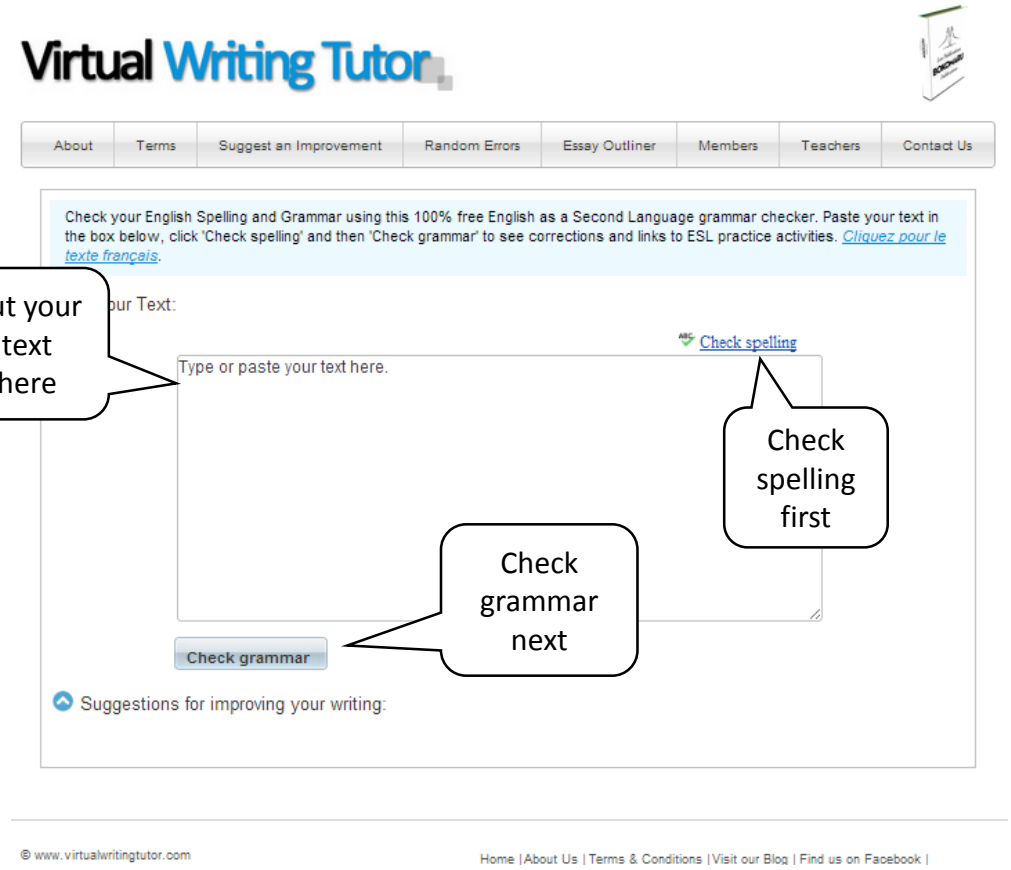

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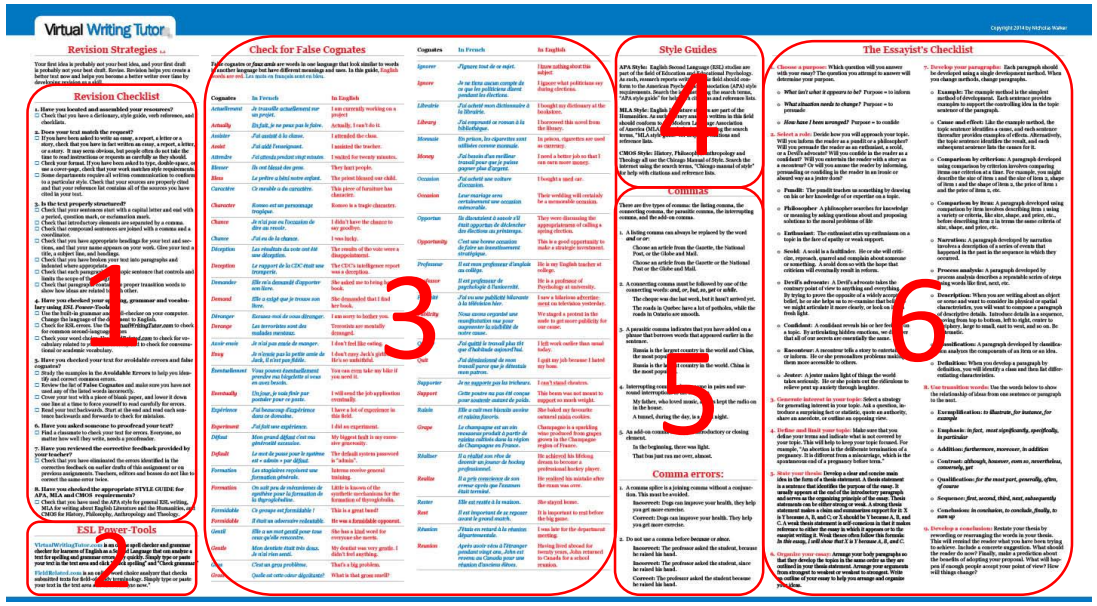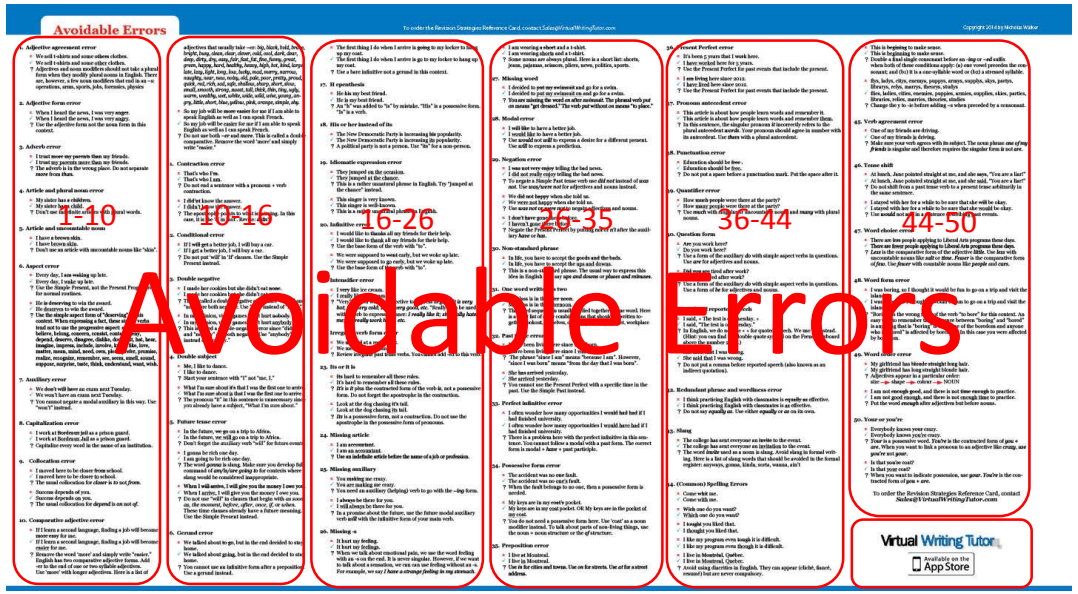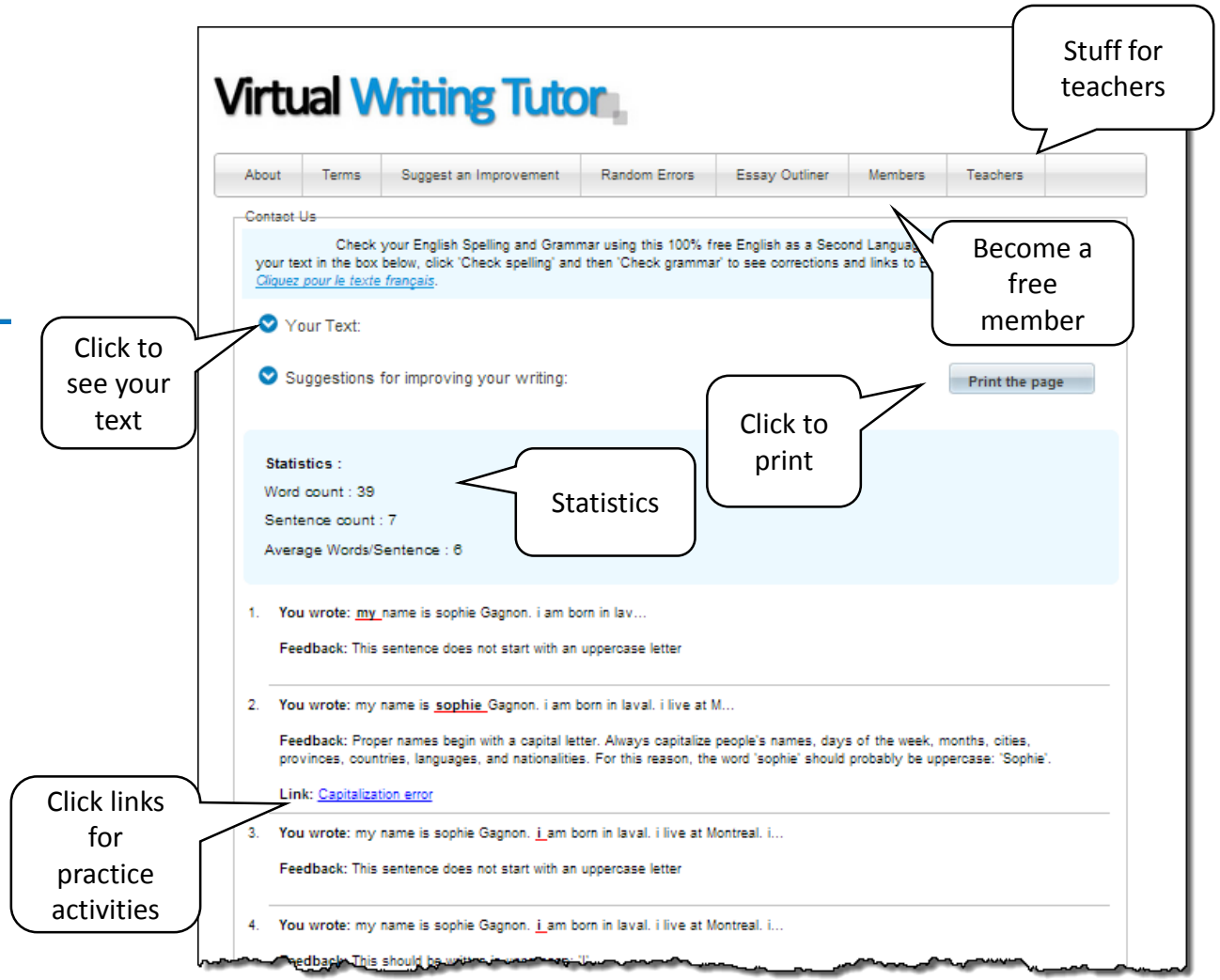
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