

# Five Deadly Sins

by Pat Mills

## 1. Subject/verb disagreement:

If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular, and likewise for plurals.

Ex. John, as well as the girls, is going.

No matter what parenthetical material comes between subject and verb, John is singular and takes a singular verb.

## 2. Pronoun/antecedent disagreement:

Words that trigger the problem are indefinite pronouns: any, anyone, anybody, each, every, everyone, everybody, one, someone and somebody.

Others which people perceive as indefinite cause problems: person, student, individual. (Avoid this usage, anyway!) These words are singular and take singular pronouns and verbs.

Ex. Someone has left HIS book. (Not THEIR.)

A person should remember HIS grammar. (Not THEIR.)

## 3. Run-on sentences and comma splices:

You cannot hook two independent clauses together with a comma, or run them together without conjunctions and punctuation. Remember, "Conjunction Junction, what's your function?"

Ex. It was raining, he didn't go to class. (WRONG)

### Fixing:

It was raining. He...

It was raining; he...

It was raining, so he...

Because it was raining, he...

## 4. Misplaced modifier:

You must put phrases that describe or add more information to a noun or verb as close as possible to the word they go with.

Ex. Dangling from the ceiling, Dan Rather saw a bank of microphones. (WHO or WHAT was dangling?)

He saw a Cadillac driven by a man with no hubcaps. (Do most men have hubcaps?)

## 5. Wrong use of like (Valleyspeak):

LIKE can be used only with a word or phrase: I feel like hell. Madonna felt "Like a Virgin."

Ex. I felt like I was going to die. "Like I was going to die" has a verb in it and is a clause. Therefore, you must change it to "as if I were..."