Nouns:
- Don’t confuse plural and possessive forms: babies = plural; babies’ and baby’s = possessive.
- Use the correct form for irregular plural nouns: man/men, woman/women, foot/feet.
- Noncount nouns (advice, knowledge, salt) have no plural form, so don’t end them with –s or –es.

Pronouns:
- Don’t confuse subject and object pronouns: he/him, she/her, they/them.
- Don’t confuse masculine and feminine pronouns: he/she, him/her.
- Don’t use it or which to refer to people.
- Don’t leave out a pronoun used as the subject of the sentence: It is crowded, not Is crowded.
- Don’t use a pronoun to repeat the subject of the sentence: The teacher she is strict.

Articles
- Use the (definite article) for a specific person, place, or thing.
- Use a or an (indefinite article) for a person, place, or thing whose specific identity is unknown.
- Don’t use any article with noncount nouns (alcohol, courage, butter, clothing) or plural count nouns when they signify general categories: She loves cats.

Verbs
- Use the correct forms for irregular verbs: give/gives, gave, given, giving.
- Don’t omit linking verbs and helping verbs: She is able to speak, not She able to speak.
- When a verb takes another verb form as its object (He likes running), you need to decide between the gerund (the -ing verb form) and the infinitive (the to verb form). Some verbs can be followed by either, depending on the meaning intended: I love to sing, I love singing. But generally, an infinitive should follow a verb that states an intention, desire, or expectation: She wants to work as a travel agent after graduation. A gerund should follow a verb that states a fact or event: He started working at noon. These boots are made for walking.

Adjectives and adverbs
- Use the proper form for nouns, adjectives, and adverbs that share the same root word: beauty/beautiful/beautifully; excitement/exciting/excitedly; care/careful/carefully.
- Don’t confuse the –ed and the –ing forms of adjectives: bored/boring; interested/interesting, excited/exciting. The –ed form usually describes a person’s reaction (Jo is excited); the –ing form usually describes the thing reacted to (The game is exciting).
- Use the correct form for comparative and superlative adjectives: tall/taller/tallest; careful/more careful/most careful.

Prepositions (at/in/on)
- To show time:
  - At expresses a specific time (at 6 p.m., at lunchtime).
  - In expresses a general time or a period of time (in the afternoon, in 1960, in two hours).
  - On expresses a specific day or date (on Monday, on June 5).
- To show place:
  - At expresses a specific place (at home, at my desk) or a specific target (I shot at the target).
  - In expresses an enclosed space (in the bedroom), a geographic location (in Florida), or a print medium (in a book).
  - On expresses a surface (on the floor, on the street) or an electronic medium (on television).
- Exceptions and idiomatic uses that don’t follow the rules should be memorized: in a car, but on a train; in the morning, but at night.

Word order — basic sentence:
- The most common sentence pattern is subject-verb-object (S-V-O). Revise for awkward, unclear word order.
- Adjectives come before the nouns they modify: I have a very messy room, not I have a room very messy.
- Don’t separate the verb from its object: Sam ate seven eggrolls for dinner, not Sam ate for dinner seven eggrolls.

[updated 11-22-10]