its importance. Regardless of the motive, understatement is usually achieved by combining a word with a negative prefix, such as in-, un-, or non-, with a negative word.

EXAMPLES: Such accidents are scarcely unavoidable.

This phenomenon isn't entirely inexplicable.

EXERCISE C: Writing Understatements. Rewrite each of the following sentences as an understatement. Underline the negative word and the negative prefix in your sentence. Be prepared to explain the difference between the direct statements and the understatements.

1. The price for this dimestore trinket is estimable.
2. Tad is certainly a conformist.
3. I am impressed by your fluency in Russian.
4. During the sale, all items are refundable.
5. Taking some time for yourself is essential.
7. Interruptions from inquisitive children were frequent.
8. Our company is managed for profit.
9. Their militant code was violent.
10. Considering the barbaric manners of his guests, I think Bob's conduct was quite honorable.

APPLICATION: Writing Negative Sentences. None of the following sentences contains negative words. Rewrite each sentence to express a negative idea.

1. Any other person could have written such a scathing letter to the editor.
2. Something I carelessly said must have aroused their suspicion.
3. Their actions are consistent with the tenets of their faith.
4. This salad made from the dandelion greens could taste better.
5. Each one of the team's members showed good sportsmanship.

end to test your understanding. After you have completed the exercises, you should continue to refer to the section whenever you are preparing formal written or spoken material.

To use this section as a reference tool, remember that the usage problems are listed in alphabetical order. When there are two or more words or phrases included within a problem, they too will generally be in alphabetical order. If you cannot find what you are looking for, check the index located at the back of the book.

(1) A and An. The article a is used before consonant sounds; an, before vowel sounds. When using a and an before words beginning with h, o, or u, make sure that you have chosen the correct article. Sometimes these three letters have consonant sounds; at other times they have vowel sounds.

CONSONANT SOUNDS: a historical document (h-sound)

a one-way street (w-sound)

a universal human right (y-sound)

VOWEL SOUNDS: an honest day's work (no h-sound)

an open door (o-sound)

an unearthly howl (u-sound)

(2) Accept and Except. Accept, a verb, means "to receive." Except, a preposition, means "leaving out" or "other than."

VERB: I accept your challenge to a debate.

PREPOSITION: Everyone came to the picnic except her.

(3) Accuse and Allege. Notice the distinction in the meanings of these two verbs. Accuse means "to blame" or "to bring a charge against." Allege means "to claim something that has not been proved."

EXAMPLES: We mistakenly accused an innocent bystander.

The employees allege that their employer ignored safety regulations.

(4) Adapt and Adopt. Adapt, a verb, means "to change." Adopt, also a verb, means "to take as one's own."
 EXAMPLES: We adapted our sleeping habits to the long Arctic summer days.

They adopted the homeless waif.

(5) Advice and Advise. Notice the difference in meaning between these related words. Advice is the noun, meaning “an opinion.” Advise is the verb, meaning “to give an opinion to.”

NOUN: I need your advice.

VERB: Hikers are advised to take along a canteen of water.

(6) Affect and Effect. Affect is almost always a verb meaning “to influence” or “to bring about a change in.” Effect, usually a noun, means “result.” Occasionally, effect is a verb; then it means “to bring about” or “to cause.”

VERB: The years spent in the mines affected his lungs.

NOUN: One effect of her travels was a new open-mindedness.

VERB: The new administration effected many changes in foreign policy.

(7) Aggravate. Aggravate means “to make worse.” Avoid using this word to mean “to annoy.”

PREFERRED: Scratching will only aggravate the mosquito bite.

LESS ACCEPTABLE: He was aggravated by their lack of comprehension.

(8) Ain’t. Ain’t, originally a contraction of am not, is not considered acceptable standard English. Avoid using it in all writing.

NONSTANDARD: He ain’t come home yet.

CORRECT: He hasn’t come home yet.

(9) All Ready and Already. All ready, two separate words, is an expression meaning “ready.” The expression functions as an adjective. Already is an adverb meaning “by or before this time” or “even now.”

ADJECTIVE: I am all ready to listen to your report.

ADVERB: I have already made a decision.

(10) All Right and Alright. Alright, though it is more and more frequently seen in print, is not considered a correct spelling. Always use the two-word form in your writing.

PREFERRED: My sprained wrist is all right now.

LESS ACCEPTABLE: Whatever you decide is alright with me.

(11) All Together and Altogether. These two adverbs have different meanings. All together means “all at once.” Altogether means “completely” or “in all.”

EXAMPLES: We will march all together in the rally.

You are altogether mistaken about my brother’s character.

(12) A Lot, Alot, and Allot. A lot is an informal expression meaning “a great many” or “a great amount.” Avoid using it in formal writing. Alot is nonstandard and should never be used. Allot, a verb, means “to divide in parts” or “to give out in shares.”

NONSTANDARD: She had alot of relatives.

CORRECT: She has a lot of relatives.

BETTER: She has many relatives.

VERB: The government allotted the funds equally among the researchers.

(13) A.M. and P.M. A.M. refers to hours before noon; P.M. to hours after noon. Never spell out numbers when you use these abbreviations. In addition, never use such phrases as “in the morning” or “in the afternoon” with them.

INCORRECT: The train arrives at eleven A.M. in the morning and departs at one P.M.

CORRECT: The train arrives at 11:00 A.M. and departs at 1:00 P.M.

(14) Among and Between. Among and between are both prepositions. Among always implies three or more. Between is generally used with just two things.

EXAMPLES: There is a feeling of discontent among the citizens.

Juan got between Carlos and me.
(15) **Amount and Number.** Use *amount* with qualities and quantities that cannot be counted. Use *number* with things that can be counted.

**EXAMPLES:** a small *amount* of cream, a large *amount* of profit  
a *number* of empty bottles, a *number* of books

(16) **Anxious.** Anxious means "worried," "uneasy," or "fearful." Do not use it as a substitute for *eager*.

**AMBIGUOUS:** I am anxious to meet new people.  
**CLEAR:** I am always eager to meet new people.  
**CLEAR:** I am always anxious about meeting people for the first time.

(17) **Anyone, Everyone, Any One, and Every One.** Learn to distinguish between these one-word and two-word forms. *Anyone* and *everyone* mean "any person" and "every person." *Any one* means "any single person (or thing)," and *every one* means "every single person (or thing)."

**EXAMPLES:** *Anyone* who is interested in joining the debate team should attend the meeting after school.  
*Everyone* complained about the service.  
*Any one* of these students could be elected class president.  
*Every one* of the dishes was broken.

(18) **Anyway, Anywhere, Everywhere, Nowhere, and Somewhere.** These adverbs should never end in *-s*.

**NONSTANDARD:** The weather may be inclement, but we will go hiking *anyways*.  
**CORRECT:** The weather may be inclement, but we will go hiking *anyway*.

(19) **As.** Do not use the conjunction *as* to mean "because" or "since."

**PREFERRED:** We stayed home, since our mother was sick, and helped prepare dinner.  
**LESS ACCEPTABLE:** We stayed home, as our mother was sick, and helped prepare dinner.

(20) **As To.** *As to* is considered awkward. Replace it with a single preposition such as *about, for, or of*.

**NONSTANDARD:** Scientists have several theories *as to* how the continents were formed.  
**CORRECT:** Scientists have several theories *about* how the continents were formed.

(21) **At.** Do not use *at* after *where*. Simply eliminate the word *at*.

**NONSTANDARD:** Do you know where the bus station is *at*?  
**CORRECT:** Do you know where the bus station is?

(22) **At About.** Avoid using *at* with *about*. Simply eliminate either the word *at* or the word *about*.

**PREFERRED:** We arrived at lunch time.  
We arrived *about* lunch time.  
**LESS ACCEPTABLE:** We arrived *at about* lunch time.

(23) **Awful and Awfully.** *Awful* is used informally to mean "extremely bad." *Awfully* is used informally to mean "very."
Both modifiers are overused and should be replaced with more descriptive words. In formal writing, use *awful* only to mean "inspiring fear."

**INFORMAL:** He looked *awful* after the operation.  
**BETTER:** He looked *pale and defeated* after the operation.  
**INFORMAL:** I am *awfully* tired.  
**BETTER:** I am *exhausted*.  
**FORMAL:** The man fell on his knees in the *awful* presence of the king.

(24) **A While and Awhile.** *A while* is an article and a noun and is usually used after the preposition *for*. *Awhile* is an adverb, which in itself means "for a while."

**NOUN:** Stay for *a while* and keep me company.  
**ADVERB:** Rest *awhile* before you leave.
(25) **Beat and Win.** *Beat* means "to overcome (an opponent)." *Win* means "to achieve victory in." Do not use *win* in place of *beat.*

**INCORRECT:** The Dodgers won the Yankees in the World Series.

**CORRECT:** The Dodgers *beat* the Yankees in the World Series.

(26) **Because.** Do not use *because* after the *reason.* Rephrase the sentence using one or the other.

**NONSTANDARD:** The reason we are late is *because* our car broke down.

**CORRECT:** We are late *because* our car broke down.

**CORRECT:** The reason we are late is that our car broke down.

(27) **Being That and Being As.** Avoid using either expression. Use *since* or *because* instead.

**NONSTANDARD:** Being that (or as) the tide was coming in, we left.

**CORRECT:** Since (or Because) the tide was coming in, we left.

(28) **Beside and Besides.** As prepositions, these two words have different meanings and cannot be interchanged. *Beside* means "at the side of" or "close to." *Besides* means "in addition to."

**EXAMPLES:** The athletic field is beside the school.

Who besides you will come to the play?

(29) **Blond and Blonde.** These two words originally came from French, in which *blond* refers to males and *blonde* to females. Although many writers continue to make this distinction in English, *blond* may correctly be used to refer to either gender.

**INCORRECT:** My brother is a *blonde.*

**CORRECT:** My brother is a *blond.*

**CORRECT:** Harriet is the *blond* (or *blonde*) standing at the top of the stairs.

(30) **Bring and Take.** *Bring* means "to carry from a distant place to a nearer one." *Take* means the opposite: "to carry from a near place to a more distant place."

**EXAMPLES:** Please *bring* your paper to me here.

Will you *take* the dog to the veterinarian?

(31) **Bunch.** *Bunch* means "a number of things of the same kind." Avoid using this word to mean "group."

**PREFERRED:** She bought a *bunch* of grapes.

**LESS ACCEPTABLE:** A *bunch* of us went downtown.

**BETTER:** A group of us went downtown.

(32) **Burst, Bust, and Busted.** *Burst* is the standard present, past, and past participle of the verb *burst.* *Bust* and *busted* are nonstandard forms.

**NONSTANDARD:** I will *bust* if I take one more bite.

He shouldn't have *busted* the blister.

**CORRECT:** I will *burst* if I take one more bite.

He shouldn't have *burst* the blister.

(33) **But What.** Do not use *but what.* Instead, use *that.*

**NONSTANDARD:** I don't doubt *but what* I will win.

**CORRECT:** I don't doubt *that* I will win.

(34) **Can and May.** Use *can* to mean "to have the ability to." Use *may* to mean "to have permission to" or "to be possible or likely to."

**ABILITY:** This scale *can* register up to five hundred pounds.

**PERMISSION:** Yes, you *may* leave.

**POSSIBILITY:** It may rain today.

(35) **Can't Help But.** This is a nonstandard expression. Use *can't help* plus a gerund instead.
NONSTANDARD: I can't help but wonder where you have been.
CORRECT: I can't help wondering where you have been.

(36) **Clipped Words.** Avoid using clipped or shortened words such as gym, phone, and photo, in formal writing.

FORMAL: The plans for a new gymnasium will be presented at the meeting.
INFORMAL: The plans for a new gym will be presented at the meeting.

(37) **Condemn and Condone.** Notice the difference in the meanings of these two verbs. Condemn means "to express strong disapproval of." Condone means "to pardon or overlook."

EXAMPLES: They condemned him for his indifference to the suffering of others.
I cannot condone such cruelty.

(38) **Continual and Continuous.** Notice the difference in the meanings of these related adjectives. Continual means "occurring again and again in succession." Continuous means "occurring without interruption."

EXAMPLES: His continual coffee breaks caused the manager to fire him.
His continuous absence from work caused the manager to fire him.

(39) **Different From and Different Than.** Though the distinction is beginning to disappear, different from is preferred to different than.

PREFERRED: Your concept of fun is different from mine.
LESS ACCEPTABLE: Your concept of fun is different than mine.

(40) **Doesn't and Don't.** Do not use don't with third-person singular pronouns and nouns. Use doesn't instead.

NONSTANDARD: He don't like heights.
My watch don't keep accurate time.

CORRECT: He doesn't like heights.
My watch doesn't keep accurate time.

(41) **Done.** Done is the past participle of the verb do. It should always follow a helping verb.

NONSTANDARD: She always done more than what was expected of her.
CORRECT: She has always done more than what was expected of her.

(42) **Dove.** Dove, a past tense of dive, is considered unacceptable by many speakers and writers. Use dived instead.

PREFERRED: He dived into the ice-cold water.
LESS ACCEPTABLE: He dove into the ice-cold water.

(43) **Due To.** Due to means "caused by." It should only be used to begin a phrase that clearly and logically modifies a noun. When in doubt try replacing due to with another expression, such as because of.

NONSTANDARD: She became blind due to a freak accident.
CORRECT: Her blindness was due to a freak accident.

(44) **Due To The Fact That.** All of these words are unnecessary. Use since or because instead.

PREFERRED: Since he was undernourished, he easily became sick.
LESS ACCEPTABLE: Due to the fact that he was undernourished, he easily became sick.

(45) **Each Other and One Another.** Each other and one another are usually interchangeable. At times, however, each other is more logically used in reference to only two; one another, in reference to more than two.

EXAMPLES: People should be kind to each other (or one another).
As the couple walked, they held each other's hand.
In our large family, we make every effort to be considerate of one another's privacy.
(46) *Emigrate* and *Immigrate*. Notice the difference in the meanings of these two verbs. *Emigrate* means “to leave a country for a new residency.” *Immigrate* means “to enter a country to establish residency.”

**EXAMPLES:** During the Potato Famine, many Irish people *emigrated* from Ireland. Many Irish people *immigrated* to the United States.

(47) *Enthusiastic* and *Enthused*. *Enthusiastic* is the standard form. Avoid using *enthused*.

**NONSTANDARD:** All of us are *enthused* about the community project.

**CORRECT:** All of us are *enthusiastic* about the community project.

(48) *Etc.* *Etc.* is an abbreviation of the Latin phrase *et cetera*, meaning “and so on.” Thus, it is wrong to write *and etc.* In formal writing it is best to avoid using this abbreviation altogether.

**INCORRECT:** From the Salvation Army you can buy shirts, slacks, jackets, *and etc.*

**CORRECT:** From the Salvation Army you can buy shirts, slacks, jackets, *et cetera*.

**FORMAL:** From the Salvation Army you can buy shirts, slacks, jackets, and other articles of clothing.

(49) *Farther* and *Further*. *Farther* refers to distance. *Further* means “additional” or “to a greater degree or extent.”

**EXAMPLES:** The sun is much farther from us than the moon. We want further information from the planning committee. *Further* enlightenment on the causes of cancer is needed.

(50) *Fewer* and *Less*. Use *fewer* with things that can be counted. Use *less* with qualities and quantities that cannot be counted.

**EXAMPLES:** fewer complaints, fewer problems, fewer diseases

less coffee, less incentive, less trouble

(51) *Former* and *Latter*. *Former* refers to the first of two previously mentioned items. *Latter* refers to the second of the two

**EXAMPLE:** The box contained hollyhocks and sweet williams. The *former* we planted along the wall; the *latter* we thought would be more suited for the rock garden.

(52) *Get*, *Got*, and *Gotten*. All forms of the verb *get* are acceptable in standard usage, but it is best to avoid using *get, got, and gotten* in formal writing.

**INFORMAL:** All residents will *get* a form in the mail.

**FORMAL:** All residents will receive a form in the mail.

Whenever possible, try to use a more specific word in place of *get*.

**ACCEPTABLE:** *get* a license, *got* wealthier, to have *gotten* recognition

**BETTER:** obtain a license, *acquired* greater wealth, to have *earned* recognition

(53) *Good*, *Lovely*, and *Nice*. These three adjectives are weak and overused. Whenever possible, substitute a more specific adjective.

**WEAK:** good description, lovely vacation, nice taste

**BETTER:** clear description, exotic vacation, refined taste

(54) *Hanged* and *Hung*. Use *hanged* to mean “executed.” Use *hung* to mean “suspended.”

**EXAMPLES:** The revolutionary council *hanged* the ministers of the former government. A spider plant *hung* from the ceiling.

(55) *Healthy* and *Healthful*. People are *healthy*; things are *healthful*.

**PREFERRED:** Bean sprouts are *healthful* in any diet.

**LESS ACCEPTABLE:** Bean sprouts are *healthy* in any diet

(56) *If* and *Whether*. These two subordinate conjunctions are interchangeable. When using *whether*, it is not necessary to include *or not* after it.
EXAMPLE: We wonder if (or whether) Joe will meet us here.

(57) In and Into. In refers to position. Into suggests motion.

POSITION: Each piece of silverware is in the correct place.

MOTION: Put all of the silverware into (not in) the drawer.

(58) Irregardless. Avoid using this word. Use regardless instead.

NONSTANDARD: Choose the most experienced applicant irregardless of personality.

CORRECT: Choose the most experienced applicant regardless of personality.

(59) Its and It's. Its is a possessive personal pronoun; it's is a contraction for it is.

PRONOUN: Her shoe had lost its heel.

CONTRACTION: Act quickly before it's too late.

(60) Judicial and Judicious. Do not confuse the meaning of these adjectives. Judicial means "relating to the administration of justice." Judicious means "showing wisdom."

EXAMPLES: The Supreme Court is our highest judicial tribunal.

King Solomon's judicious decision revealed the child's true mother.

(61) Kind Of and Sort Of. Do not use kind of and sort of to mean "rather" or "somewhat."

NONSTANDARD: You look kind of pale.

CORRECT: You look somewhat pale.

(62) Kind Of A and Sort Of A. Do not use a after kind of and sort of.

NONSTANDARD: Which kind of a dressing do you want on your salad?

CORRECT: Which kind of dressing do you want on your salad?

In addition, avoid such expressions as "this kind of books" or "these sorts of examination." If kind or sort is singular, the object of the preposition of should also be singular. If kind or sort is plural, make sure the object is plural too.

NONSTANDARD: this kind of books
these sorts of examination

CORRECT: this kind of book
these sorts of examinations

(63) Learn and Teach. Learn means "to acquire knowledge." Teach means "to give knowledge to."

EXAMPLES: Helen Keller learned the word "water."

Anne Sullivan taught (not learned) Helen the word "water."

(64) Leave and Let. Leave means "to allow to remain." Let means "to permit." Do not reverse the meanings.

NONSTANDARD: Let me alone!

CORRECT: Leave me alone!

(65) Lie and Lay. Notice the different in the meanings and uses of these two verbs. Lie means "to recline." Its principal parts are lie, lying, lay, and lain. As an intransitive verb, it does not take an object. Lay means "to put or set down." Its principal parts are lay, laying, laid, and laid. As a transitive verb, it usually does take an object.

LIE: Lie down for an hour and rest.

After I became tired, I lay down and rested.

The dog has lain there all afternoon.

LAY: Lay your books on the desk.

He gently laid the eggs in the basket.

She has laid forty slate slabs to form a walkway through the garden.

(66) Like, As, and As If. Like is a preposition meaning "similar to." As and as if are conjunctions. As means "in the same way that." As if means "that," or "as it (or someone) would if."
(67) Lose and Loose. Lose is always a verb, generally meaning "to miss from one's possession." Loose is usually an adjective or part of such idioms as cut loose, turn loose, or break loose.

VERB: Don't lose this telephone number.
ADJECTIVE: The door hinge was loose.
IDIOM: The goat broke loose from the pen.

(68) Mad. In formal usage, the adjective mad means "insane." Used informally, mad means "angry."

FORMAL: Jane Eyre soon learned that Mr. Rochester's wife was quite mad.
INFORMAL: I am mad at you for ignoring me.

(69) May Be and Maybe. May be is a helping verb and verb. Maybe is an adverb meaning "perhaps."

VERB: You may be right.
ADVERB: Maybe I can investigate this matter myself.

(70) Of. Do not write of after a helping verb such as should, would, could, or must. Use have instead. Moreover, do not use of after outside, inside, off, and atop. Simply eliminate it.

NONSTANDARD: He must of remembered he had a commitment elsewhere.
CORRECT: He must have remembered he had a commitment elsewhere.
PREFERRED: He fell off the stool.
LESS ACCEPTABLE: He fell off of the stool.

(71) OK, O.K., and Okay. In informal writing, OK, O.K., and okay are acceptably used to mean "all right." Do not use either the abbreviations or okay in formal writing, however.

FORMAL: This architect's blueprint looks flawless.
INFORMAL: This architect's blueprint looks okay.

(72) Ought. Never use ought with have or had. Simply eliminate have or had.

NONSTANDARD: After being repaired this washing machine had ought to work.
CORRECT: After being repaired this washing machine ought to work.

(73) Outside Of. Do not use this expression to mean "besides" or "except."

NONSTANDARD: No one came to the party outside of Dinah.
CORRECT: No one came to the party except Dinah.

(74) Parameter. This word is correctly used only in mathematical contexts, in which it designates a variable. Do not use parameter to mean "boundary," "limit," "scope," "detail," and so on.

NONSTANDARD: The purpose of this meeting is to determine the parameters of the problem.
CORRECT: The purpose of this meeting is to determine the limits of the problem.

(75) Persecute and Prosecute. Do not confuse the meaning or spelling of these words. Persecute means "to subject to ill treatment." Prosecute means "to bring a lawsuit against."

EXAMPLES: He was persecuted for his religious beliefs.
Jack is being prosecuted for libel.

(76) Plenty. Plenty, a noun, does not mean "very." It is usually correctly followed by of, as in "plenty of food."

NONSTANDARD: Liz is plenty angry about your forgetting to invite her.
CORRECT: Liz is very angry about your forgetting to invite her.

(77) Plurals That Do Not End in -s. The plurals of certain nouns from Greek and Latin are formed as they were in their original languages. Words such as criteria, media, and phenomena are plural and should not be treated as if they were singular (criterion, medium, phenomenon).

INCORRECT: I do not agree with that criteria for selecting a winner.
CORRECT: I do not agree with those criteria for selecting a winner.

INCORRECT: The mass media is responsible for the fast and accurate distribution of information.
CORRECT: The mass media are responsible for the fast and accurate distribution of information.

(78) Poorly. Poorly is used in an informal way to mean "ill." Avoid this use in formal situations.

INFORMAL: Grandmother is feeling poorly.
FORMAL: Grandmother is feeling ill.

(79) Precede and Proceed. Precede means "to go before." Proceed means "to move or go forward."

EXAMPLES: The preceding paragraph introduced the topic.
Proceed to the next step.

(80) Principal and Principle. As an adjective, principal means "most important" or "chief"; as a noun, it means "a person who has controlling authority." Principle, always a noun, means "a fundamental law."

ADJECTIVE: The principal reason for evacuating the town was the danger of typhoid fever.

NOUN: Mr. Clark is the school's principal.

NOUN: "Thou shalt not kill" is a principle of many religions.

(81) Raise and Rise. Raise, a transitive verb that generally takes an object, means "to lift," "to increase," or "to grow." Rise, an intransitive verb that does not take an object, means "to move upward" or "to be increased."

EXAMPLES: Platform heels raised him to average height.
Smoke rises from the chimneys every morning.

(82) Real. Real means "authentic." The use of real to mean "very" or "really" should be avoided in formal writing.

FORMAL: This painting with Picasso's signature is real.
INFORMAL: Dwight was real discouraged.

BETTER: Dwight was very discouraged.

(83) Says. Says should not be used as a substitute for said.

NONSTANDARD: Then she says to me, "Be quiet!"
CORRECT: Then she said to me, "Be quiet!"

(84) Set and Sit. Set, a transitive verb that generally takes an object, means "to put (something) in a certain place." Sit, an intransitive verb that does not take an object, means "to be seated."

EXAMPLES: Set the chair in this corner.
Sit in a chair before you buy it.

(85) Shall and Will. These helping verbs are interchangeable in most instances. Except in questions asking for permission or agreement, however, will is the more commonly used.

EXAMPLES: Shall we go out for Chinese food?
We will go.

(86) Shape. The standard meaning for the noun shape is "spatial form." Do not use shape to mean "condition."

STANDARD: The shape of this lens is convex.
INFORMAL: The driver of the demolished car is in serious shape.

BETTER: The driver of the demolished car is in serious condition.

(87) Slow and Slowly. Although slow can now be used as either an adjective or an adverb, careful writers still use it as an adjective. Slowly is preferred as the adverb.
CORRECT: Turtles are slow.

PREFERRED: Crawl slowly along this ledge.

LESS ACCEPTABLE: Move slow.

(88) So. So is acceptable as a conjunction. It should not be used, however, to begin a sentence.

STANDARD: Move over so I can sit down.

NONSTANDARD: So she vanished without leaving a trace.

CORRECT: She vanished without leaving a trace.

(89) Take And. This is a nonstandard expression. Eliminate it entirely.

NONSTANDARD: Take and put these flowers in a vase.

CORRECT: Put these flowers in a vase.

(90) Than and Then. Than is used in comparisons. Do not confuse it with the adverb then, which usually refers to time.

EXAMPLES: A pig is smarter than most dogs.
Wait until the sun begins to shine through the rain and then look for a rainbow.

(91) That, Which, and Who. Be sure to use these relative pronouns correctly. That refers to people or things; which refers only to things; who refers only to people.

PEOPLE: She reminds me of someone that (or whom) I used to know.

THINGS: I forgot the key that (or which) opens this door.

(92) Their, There, and They’re. Do not confuse the spellings of these three words. Their, a possessive pronoun, always modifies a noun. There can be used either as an expletive at the beginning of a sentence or as an adverb. They’re is a contraction for they are.

PRONOUN: The frightened cattle milled around their pen.

EXPLETIVE: There can be no room for error.

ADVANCED USE:

(93) Them, Them There, These Here, This Here, and That There. Them is always a personal pronoun, never an adjective. When a sentence calls for an adjective, use these or those in place of either them or there. To correct a sentence containing these here, this here, and that there, simply leave out here and there.

NONSTANDARD: Them flowers certainly look pretty.

CORRECT: These flowers certainly look pretty.

(94) Till and Until. These words are interchangeable. Be careful, however, of spelling. Till should not be spelled til or ’til; until always ends in one l.

EXAMPLE: The children played till (or until) it was dark.

(95) To, Too, and Two. Do not confuse the spellings of these three words. To, a preposition, begins a prepositional phrase or an infinitive. Too, an adverb, modifies adjectives and other adverbs. Do not forget the second o. Two is a number.

PREPOSITION: to a concert

INFINITIVE: to think

ADVERB: too quiet, too awkwardly

NUMBER: two cents, two umbrellas

(96) Unique. Unique means “one of a kind.” It should not be used to mean odd, interesting, or unusual. Since the word means “one of a kind,” such expressions as most unique, very unique, and extremely unique are illogical and should not be used.

NONSTANDARD: He enjoys the most unique life style.

CORRECT: He enjoys a unique life style.
(97) **Want In and Want Out.** These are nonstandard expressions for “want to come in” or “want to enter,” and “want to leave” or “want to get out.”

**NONSTANDARD:** The dog is scratching at the door because he wants in.

**CORRECT:** The dog is scratching at the door because he wants to come in.

Moreover, do not use want before such prepositions as down, off, or up.

**NONSTANDARD:** I want down from this horse.

**CORRECT:** I want to get down from this horse.

(98) **Ways.** Ways is plural. Do not use it after the article a. Use instead the singular form way.

**NONSTANDARD:** I have a considerable ways to go before I reach Connecticut.

**CORRECT:** I have a considerable way to go before I reach Connecticut.

(99) **When and Where.** Do not use when or where directly after a linking verb.

**NONSTANDARD:** My best childhood memory was when my parents gave me a pony.

An automat is where food is dispensed by machines.

**CORRECT:** My best childhood memory is of being given a pony by my parents.

An automat is a cafeteria where food is dispensed by machines.

In addition, do not use where as a substitute for that.

**NONSTANDARD:** I read in a magazine where ancient coins are a good investment.

**CORRECT:** I read in a magazine that ancient coins are a good investment.

(100) **-wise.** Avoid using this suffix to create new words for a particular situation.

**PREFERRED:** This freezer is very energy-efficient.

**LESS ACCEPTABLE:** Energywise, this freezer is very efficient.

**EXERCISE A: Avoiding Usage Problems (1–10).** Choose the correct expression from the choices in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Try to complete the exercise without looking back in the book.

1. They should have (all ready, already) left by now.
2. Did your broken ankle (affect, effect) your vacation plans?
3. Jim (ain’t, isn’t) capable of performing before an audience.
4. Everyone (accept, except) me was dressed in black.
5. You look (all right, alright) without any mascara.
6. A speck of dust can (aggravate, annoy) an inflamed eye.
7. His (advice, advise) should be ignored.
8. “But Brutus says he was ambitious; And Brutus is (a, an) honorable man.”
9. He tried to (adapt, adopt) a philosophy of nonviolence.
10. The teacher was (aggravated, annoyed) by my total disinterest.
11. One (affect, effect) of the radiation was a change in chromosomes.
12. The ice cream is (all ready, already) to be served.
13. I (accept, except) your proposal.
14. The report (accuses, alleges) negligence by the manufacturer.
15. It is not (all right, alright) for you to barge in uninvited.
16. She (accused, alleged) him of trying to evade the issue.
17. An injection of insulin (affected, effected) an immediate improvement in his condition.
18. This pamphlet (advises, advises) pregnant women not to take aspirin or to smoke.
19. The pioneers (adapted, adopted) to a hostile environment.
20. We heard (a, an) hysterical, ghostly laugh.

**EXERCISE B: Avoiding Usage Problems (11–20).** Follow the directions for Exercise A.

1. My car keys must be (somewhere, somewheres) in my pocketbook.
2. We should shout the cheer (all together, altogether).
3. You can do (alot, much) to improve yourself.
4. One black orchid grew (among, between) the many white ones.
5. The trainer feels very (anxious, eager) about the colt’s injured leg.
6. Despite economic predictions, I remain an optimist (anyway, anyways).