Writing From the Editor’s Perspective

“No passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else’s draft.”—H.G. Wells
Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject of a sentence must agree with the verb of the sentence. How do they need to agree?

They must agree in two ways:

- In number: singular vs. plural
- In person: first, second, or third person
Subject-Verb Agreement

How do we catch subject-verb disagreement? Three situations:

1. When the subject and verb are separated.
   - The characters in my favorite telenovella lives in Spain.
   - The characters in my favorite telenovella live in Spain.
Subject-Verb Agreement

2. Compound Subjects:

- If the two subjects are joined by “and” the verb will be plural in most situations
  - exception: when the joined subjects are preceded by “every,” “no,” or “nothing”

- If the subjects are joined by “nor” or “or,” the verb agrees with the closer subject (the last one). Examples:
  - Samantha and Charlotte is characters from *Sex in the City*.
  - Samantha and Charlotte are characters from *Sex in the City*.
  - Neither Sen. Clinton’s neighbors nor her husband agree with her decision.
  - Neither Sen. Clinton’s neighbors nor her husband agrees with her decision.
Subject-Verb Agreement

3. Indefinite pronouns

- **single indefinite pronoun:** e.g., *anyone, anybody, each, either, none*
  - They use singular verbs.

- **plural indefinite pronouns:** *both, few, many, several*
  - They use plural verbs.
  - *All, any, most,* and *some* depend on the situation. They can be either singular or plural.
Subject-Verb Agreement

Examples:

- Each of Larry McMurtry’s “cowboy books” use the theme of breaking horses to express aspects of the human condition.
- Each of Larry McMurtry’s “cowboy books” uses the theme of breaking horses to express aspects of the human condition.

- Both of the main characters in Munich believes that revenge is the purpose of life.
- Both of the main characters in Munich believe that revenge is the purpose of life.
Misplaced Modifiers

Misplaced and dangling modifiers are phrases that are not located properly in relation to the words they modify.

A small book sat on the desk that Sarah had read. The modifier—”that Sarah had read”—is misplaced because it modifies the desk. It sounds as if Sarah had read the desk.

A small book that Sarah had read sat on the desk.
Comma Splice

When you join two complete sentences with a comma, you’ve committed a comma splice.
Example: The Seahawks are going to the Super Bowl, they will pound the Steelers.

Five ways to amend:
1. Separate the independent clauses with a semi-colon:
The Seahawks are going to the Super Bowl; they will pound the Steelers.

2. Make two separate sentences.
The Seahawks are going to the Super Bowl. They will pound the Steelers.

3. Use a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, yet, so) to separate the clauses.
The Seahawks are going to the Super Bowl and they will pound the Steelers.
4. We can replace the comma with a subordinating conjunction (after, although, before, unless, as, because, even though, if, since, until, when, while). The Seahawks are going to the Super Bowl even though they will pound the Steelers.

5. We can replace the comma with a semi-colon and transitional word (however, moreover, on the other hand, nevertheless, instead, also, therefore, consequently, otherwise, as a result). The Seahawks are going to the Super Bowl; moreover, they will pound the Steelers.
Run-on Sentence

Run-on sentences join two or more complete sentences with no punctuation.

*James Frey wrote his mind he got in trouble with Oprah.*

You can amend a run-on sentence just as you would a comma splice:

1. Separate the independent clauses with a semi-colon.
   *James Frey wrote his mind; he got in trouble with Oprah.*

2. Make two separate sentences.
   *James Frey wrote his mind. He got in trouble with Oprah.*

3. Use a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, yet, so) to separate the clauses.
   *James Frey wrote his mind, and he got in trouble with Oprah.*
You can amend a run-on sentence just as you would a comma splice:

4. We can replace the comma with a subordinating conjunction (after, although, before, unless, as, because, even though, if, since, until, when, while).
   James Frey wrote his mind before he got in trouble with Oprah.

5. We can replace the comma with a semi-colon and transitional word (however, moreover, on the other hand, nevertheless, instead, also, therefore, consequently, otherwise, as a result).
   James Frey wrote his mind; as a result, he got in trouble with Oprah.