

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MOUNT ROYAL COLLEGE**

MINIMUM STANDARD OF CORRECTNESS

Every writer should be familiar with commonly accepted standards of language usage. Therefore, writing in college English courses is evaluated for correctness in spelling, grammar and punctuation, as well as for content, development, organization and clarity. To ensure consistency, the Department of English has adopted the *Guide to Canadian English Usage* (Oxford UP, 1997) as its reference.

The policy below outlines the minimum standards of correct usage that students must meet in all single- and multi-section English courses.

IDENTIFIED ERRORS:

Writing situations where the policy applies appear below. For all courses, errors of any of the following types fall under the policy:

- sentence structure
 - grammatical disagreement
 - misused or missing apostrophes
 - misspelling
- Three spelling errors will be allowed without penalty. Each additional error counts as one. The same word misspelled repeatedly constitutes one error.
 - Repeated misuse of the apostrophe in the same word constitutes one error.

FOR 0200-LEVEL ENGLISH COURSES:

Students can receive no higher than a D+ grade on the final exam essay if they have more than ONE ERROR PER 100 WORDS of any type or combination of the listed errors in their final exam essay.

FOR 1000, 2000, AND 3000-LEVEL ENGLISH COURSES:

Students can receive no higher than a D+ grade on any essay, including the final exam, if they have more than ONE ERROR PER 100 WORDS of any type or combination of the listed errors in the essay.

CLARIFICATION OF MINIMUM STANDARD OF CORRECTNESS

Source: Fee, Margery and Janice McAlpine. *Guide to Canadian English Usage*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1997.

➤ **Sentence Structure:** See Fee and McAlpine, under **sentences, sentence fragment, run-on sentence, comma splice** (444).

- **Each sentence fragment equals one error.** (Instructors will use discretion as to whether a fragment is rhetorically acceptable.)

X	Because she was finished.	✓	She left early because she was finished.
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- **Each comma splice equals one error.**

X	It began to rain, he decided to leave.	✓	It began to rain. He decided to leave.
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- **Each fused (or run-on) sentence equals one error.**

X	Class started on time some people were late.	✓	Class started on time. Some people were late.
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➤ **Grammatical Disagreement:** See Fee and McAlpine, under **agreement, grammatical** (22-4) and **case** (98-9).

◆ **Pronouns:**

- **Each indefinite or missing antecedent equals one error.**

X	Fishing isn't any fun unless I catch one.	✓	Fishing isn't any fun unless I catch something.
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- **Each disagreement in number equals one error (per set).**

X	The student goes to class so they will learn.	✓	Students go to class so they will learn.
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- **Each shift in person or point of view equals one error.**

X	If one works hard, you can achieve goals.	✓	If you work hard, you can achieve goals.
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- **Each sentence using inappropriate pronoun case equals one error.**

X	Me and her divided the work.	✓	She and I divided the work.
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◆ **Verbs:**

- **Each subject/verb disagreement equals one error.**

X	The decisions of the judge is questionable.	✓	The decisions of the judge are questionable.
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- **Each illogical or unwarranted shift in tense equals one error.**

X	Judy got home late and goes straight to bed.	✓	Judy got home late and went straight to bed.
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➤ **Each misused or missing apostrophe equals one error.** See Fee and McAlpine under **apostrophe** (44).

X	She parked Marks car.	✓	She parked Mark's car.
X	Three dog's greeted him at the door.	✓	Three dogs greeted him at the door.
X	Its too late now.	✓	It's too late now.
X	The cat licked it's injured paw.	✓	The cat licked its injured paw.
X	He save's scrap paper.	✓	He saves scrap paper.

➤ **Each misspelling after the third equals one error.**