

Commonly Misused Words

Some words and terms are often incorrect or used incorrectly in informal mediums. Using these terms or using them incorrectly will make the writing sound unprofessional to the reader. Here are some common errors seen in English writing.

<i>alot</i>	There is no such word in the English language as <i>alot</i> . To fix this place a space between the article <i>a</i> and the modifier <i>lot</i> . Alternatively, use many , much , or describe the specific amount.
<i>anyways</i>	There is no <i>s</i> at the end of anyway .
<i>could of</i>	Additionally, <i>would of</i> and <i>should of</i> follow this rule. The correct form is could have . This mistake is often made as when speaking the contraction <i>could've</i> sounds very similar to <i>could have</i> .
<i>criteria</i> used as a singular word	This word is only correct when it is used as a plural. The singular version of this word is criterion .
<i>didn't do nothing</i>	Double negatives are grammatically incorrect and are confusing for the reader. Only use one negative in each sentence, such as did nothing or didn't do anything .
<i>irregardless</i>	This is not a real word. The correct word is regardless .
<i>irrevelant</i>	This is a common misspelling of irrelevant .
<i>media</i> used as a singular word	<i>Media</i> is only correct when used as a plural. When discussing one specific type of media, such as radio, the singular form is medium .
<i>off of</i>	The <i>of</i> in this phrase is repetitive. Use off on its own.
<i>phenomena</i> used as a singular word	<i>Phenomena</i> is plural. Use phenomenon for singular.
<i>prejudice</i> used as an adjective	This word is not an adjective. When wanting to use <i>prejudice</i> as an adjective, use prejudiced .
<i>prejudism</i>	This is not a real word. Use prejudiced .
<i>real</i> used as an adverb	When describing a verb use really or very .
<i>reason is because</i>	Either use because or reason is that .
<i>suppose to</i>	The correct form is supposed to .
<i>themself</i>	Also, <i>theirself</i> , <i>ourselves</i> , and <i>yourselves</i> . The plural of <i>self</i> is <i>selves</i> . Because <i>them</i> is a plural pronoun, the correct version is themselves . Additionally, <i>theirselves</i> is not a word.
<i>unresponsible</i>	This word does not exist. Use irresponsible .
<i>youse</i>	<i>Youse</i> is not a proper word. You is both singular and plural in English.

Adapted from: Norton, S. & Green, B. (1993). Chapter 29: Abusages. In *The bare essentials* (Form B, 3rd ed, pp. 265-277). Montreal, QU: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.