

The following list includes some common mistakes in using Standard English:

- Informal casual tone
- Idioms/slang
- Wordiness
- Capitalization errors
- Using exclamation marks!
- Using American spelling
- Verb errors:
 - Irregular verb form (began vs. begun)
The test has began. → *The test has begun.*
 - s endings on verbs
He seem to understand. → *He seems to understand.*
 - ed endings on past tense verbs
He seem to understand. → *He seemed to understand.*
 - necessary verbs
I eating my lunch → *I am eating my lunch*
 - Double negatives
I can't barely see. → *I can barely see.*
 - Verb tense errors
She get ready and went to work. → *She got ready and went to work.*
 - Problems with subject-verb agreement
She get ready and go to work. → *She gets ready and goes to work.*

Improving Your Standard English

Simplify your language

Your message needs to be simple and clear for your reader. Avoid using conversational language with its more casual tone.

Write at your ability

Attempting to write at a level beyond your ability may confuse your reader and cost you marks. If you do not feel confident using Standard English, remember that your ability will improve with more experience. Only use language you fully understand. For example, when you use synonyms, be sure that the meaning of the synonym has the correct meaning for the situation.

Proofread your work

After trying to write in Standard English, it is extremely important to proofread your work. This is true when submitting any of your ideas for others to review. Consider the purpose of your message and who will receive it. If you do not proofread your work, you risk being perceived as unprofessional or careless.

Use the personal proofreading checklist available in SALS ONLINE to track your common errors and help you improve your writing.

For further improvement

- Notice and use Standard English that you hear and read, then use it to express your ideas
- Ask your professors for feedback
- Access SALS support for information, feedback, and instruction