

Mrs. Scaggs' List of Convention Musts

1. Spell all words correctly.

In particular, remember these rules:

- **A lot not a lot** – there must be a space between **a** and **lot**
- **I** not **i** – always capitalize *I* when used alone as a word
- Correctly spell **its** and **it's**
 - **Its** – possessive – The car lost its fender.
 - **It's** – contraction of it is – It's going to be a nice day.
- Correctly use and spell there, their, and they're
 - **There** – adverb or expletive (often begins sentence in which the subject follows the verb). *There* is a mouse over there.
 - **Their** – shows possession – We borrowed *their* camper.
 - **They're** – contraction of they are – *They're* having a party tomorrow.
- Correctly use and spell your and you're
 - **Your** – shows possession – Please remove *your* hat.
 - **You're** – contraction of you are – *You're* late!
- Correctly use and spell two, too, and to
 - **Two** – indicates number – My nephew is *two* years old.
 - **Too** – in addition to – I would like to join the club *too*!
 - **To** – indicates direction – Are you going *to* the dance?
- Correctly use and spell we're, where, were
 - **We're** – contraction for we are
We're glad to help.
 - **Where** – location
Where are you going? (This is a place word, and so it contains the word here)
 - **Were** – a past tense form of the verb be
They *were* walking side by side.

2. Than, Then

- **Than**
 - Used in comparison statements – He is richer *than* I.
 - Used in statements of preference – I would rather dance *than* eat.
 - Used to suggest quantities beyond a specified amount – Read more *than* the first paragraph.
- **Then**
 - A time other than now – He was younger *then*. She will start her new job *then*.
 - Next in time, space, or order – First we must study; *then* we can play.
 - Suggesting a logical conclusion – If you've studied hard, *then* the exam should be no problem.

3. Accept, Except

- **Accept** = verb meaning to receive or to agree
 - He *accepted* their praise graciously.
- **Except** = preposition meaning all but, other than
 - Everyone went to the game *except* Allyson.

4. **Affect, Effect**
 - Affect = verb meaning to influence
 - Will lack of sleep *affect* your game?
 - Effect = noun meaning result or consequence
 - Will lack of sleep have an *effect* on your game?
 - Effect = verb meaning to bring about, to accomplish
 - Our efforts have *effected* a major change in university policy.

5. **Use apostrophes correctly.** Apostrophes are used to show possession and for contractions. Never use apostrophes to indicate the word is plural!
 - *She's* going to Cedar Point this weekend.
 - *Elizabeth's* iPad was stolen last night.
 - My grandfather was born in the *1800s*.
 - All of the *students* were reprimanded for their poor behavior at the dance.

6. **There may be no more than one speaker per paragraph.** When a new person speaks, start a new paragraph. If you are confused, look in a book to see examples of how it is done. Please note that quotation marks must be on the outside of the punctuation.

7. **Avoid run-on sentences.** A run-on sentence is two complete sentences incorrectly linked together with or without a comma. Complete sentences may only be separated by using a period, a semicolon, or a comma followed by a conjunction. For example:

Incorrect:
Abby is clever, she is also a dreamer.
Abby is clever she is also a dreamer.

Correct:
Abby is clever; she is also a dreamer.
Abby is clever. She is also a dreamer.
Abby is clever, and she is also a dreamer.

8. Spell out **numbers** written in one or two words and represent other numbers by numerals (*one, thirty-six, ninety-nine, one hundred, fifteen hundred, two thousand, three million*, but *2½, 101, 137, 1,275*). Use words, not numerals, to begin sentences. For example: *Eleven* students did not finish the test.

9. **Break your paper into paragraphs.** Each paragraph is a new idea. Indent the first line of each paragraph.

10. **Tense:** Keep verb tense (past, present, or future) consistent.

Inconsistent
When we went to the football game, we buy souvenirs.

Consistent
When we went to the football game, we bought souvenirs.
When we go to the football game, we will buy souvenirs.

11. **Do not abbreviate in formal writing.** An email to a teacher or another professional is considered formal writing. Proofread emails for perfection in conventions before sending. Common texting abbreviations should be avoided such as:
 - **Lol, omg, bday, u, 4, +, &, b/c, cause, cuz, r, etc.**