Writing Errors to Avoid

1. **"is when"/"the reason is because"** – use “occurs when” or “happens when”/“the reason is that” or some verb other than a linking verb, which will attempt to set up an adverb clause as a predicate noun.

2. **“due to”** is used correctly ONLY following a linking verb as in “His absence is due to illness.” Many writers misuse it when they should use “because of” as in “Because of [NOT Due to] the bad weather, the game was postponed.”

3. **which/that** – “Which” introduces nonessential or nonrestrictive clauses; use it sparingly. In most instances “that” is the pronoun you should use.

4. **“naked this”** – Be sure that each pronoun has a clear, single-word antecedent to avoid this kind of error: “Willie told Jack to find some dirt on Judge Irwin. This was a task that turned out to be easier than Jack thought.” What is the antecedent for “this”? You can correct (or avoid) this kind of error by adding a noun after “this”: “This task was one that turned out to be easier….”

5. **Vague antecedent (which)** -- A similar error occurs with the vague use of “which” when that pronoun is used to refer to an entire clause as in this sentence: “When Jack sought some dirt on Judge Irwin, which he thought was an impossible task, he was surprised to find some wrongdoing.” What is the antecedent for “which”? This pronoun requires a single-word antecedent, too. This kind of error requires more rewriting than the previous kind. “When Jack sought some dirt on Judge Irwin in a quest that he thought was impossible, he was surprised to find some wrongdoing.”

6. **Quote/quotation** – Quote is a verb; quotation is a noun. Learn some synonyms for “quotation”: “excerpt,” “passage,” “comment,” “statement,” and “remark” are some examples.

7. **Use of quotation marks with other marks of punctuation** – Commas and periods are always placed inside quotation marks; semicolons and colons are placed outside. Question marks and exclamation marks are placed according to their use in the sentence. Single quotation marks appear ONLY inside double quotation marks. EXCEPTION: When you are using internal documentation for a quotation, the period follows the closing parenthesis.

8. **“feel”** – This verb pertains either to a sense of touch, to a feeling or emotion, or occasionally to a type of linking verb. In most instances when students use “feel,” they mean “think,” “believe,” or “know.” “I feel think (or believe) that the most important idea in the novel accepting the past.” “The narrator feels invisible because no one seems to be aware of him as an individual.” Here “feels” is used correctly. Be careful about your choice of words.