

**Westmont High School**  
**English Department Writing Errors and Tips**

**Errors:**

1. Title Problem: underline or *italicize* published works / use “quotation marks” when appropriate.
2. Do not use slang.
3. Tense agreement problem - write about literature in the **present** tense.
4. Format problem: heading, spacing, margins, pagination, paper choice.
5. Word usage problem.
6. Do not use abbreviations.
7. Off topic - going off on a tangent. Need to address the prompt. Avoid hypothetical examples.
8. Capitalization error.
9. Spelling error.
10. Punctuation error.
11. Agreement. (subject/verb, parallel structure, participle/ verb).
12. Missing complete introduction to quote or missing clarification of quote.
13. Wrong pronoun reference (the child says that they will love English).
14. Unclear antecedent/pronoun (Hamlet tells Horatio that he is smart).
15. Font size / style problem.
16. Sense / clarity problem.
17. Sentence ends with a preposition.
18. Formal, third person (no I, we, **you**, us, me...unless in quotes).
19. Do not use unnecessary generalizations / judgments.
20. Run-on sentence.
21. Fragment.
22. Repetitive, redundant.
23. Too much plot! - not enough analysis - need to analyze not summarize.
24. Missing divisions of proof (normally three elements that will support your claim in an essay).
25. Do not use quotes as claims - state your own idea.
26. Missing word(s).
27. Using names. (use the full name first [John Lennon, Barry Bonds, Rosa Parks]  
only use the last name thereafter [Lennon, Bonds, Parks]).
28. Do not make assumptions. The reader of your paper could be anyone. Explain your reasoning.
29. Citation error-format-MLA
30. Missing citation.
31. Misplaced modifier.

**Tips:**

50. Support argument with examples, evidence, details, data, quotes. Be specific. Show don't tell.
51. Proofread. Writer proofreads. Someone else proofreads.
52. Commentary must prove thesis. Link your quote to the thesis.
53. Need a conclusion.
54. Need a transition.
55. Vague. Avoid this, that, it.
56. Increase vocabulary.
57. Add an attention-getter or “hook”.
58. Avoid split-infinitives.
59. Avoid using forms of to be (is, are, was, am). Find stronger verbs. Avoid using passive voice.
60. Need a creative title.
61. Awkward wording or sentence structure.
62. Use a wider variety of sentence patterns.
63. Avoid contractions.
64. Avoid starting sentences with conjunctions.
65. Avoid using clichés and over-used expressions.
66. Be more descriptive of characters. Add appositive or adjective.