

100 COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH

Dear student,

Are you ready to improve your English? 😊 This book will help you!

This is a collection of common vocabulary and grammar errors in spoken English, made by English as a Second Language learners. If you know the main errors, it's easier to avoid them.

Some of the errors are worse than others – there are some that completely change the meaning of the sentence, and others that are not exactly “wrong,” but there is a better way to say it.

I hope you find this book useful, but I want to give you one piece of advice: **Don't let the fear of making mistakes stop you from speaking English.** Making mistakes is part of the learning process, and it's better to speak and communicate (even with small mistakes) than to keep quiet and never say anything!

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, e-mail me at help@espressoenglish.net

Good luck in your studies!

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100 Common Errors in English

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#1 – Said / Told

Don't say: “She said me that she was happy.”

Say: “She told me that she was happy.”

Or: “She said that she was happy.”

Tell means “to give information **to a person**” – so **tell** (present) and **told** (past) are always followed by a person: me, you, him, her, us, them, John, Jane, the teacher, etc.

With **say** (present) or **said** (past), we can use these structures:

1. **say (something)**
Frances **says** she doesn't like chocolate.
2. **say that (something)**
I said that the new website design was great.
3. **say (something) to (a person)**
What did the teacher **say to you** when you failed the test?
4. **“(something)” a person said**
“Nice to meet you,” Harry **said**.

Just remember – you **say something**, and you **tell someone something!**

#2 – Irregular Plurals

Don't say: “I have three childrens.”

Say: “I have three children.”

Or: “I have three kids.”

The plural of “child” is “children” – because the word “children” is already plural, we don't add “s.” Another possibility is to say “kids,” which is an alternative word for “children.” Here are some more nouns with irregular plurals:

- person / people
- man / men
- woman / women
- foot / feet
- tooth / teeth
- mouse / mice
- fish / fish
- crisis / crises
- nucleus / nuclei

#3 – Years Old

Don't say: “My daughter has eight years.”

Don't say: “My daughter has eight years old.”

Say: “My daughter is eight years old.”

When speaking about age in English, we use the verb **be** (am, is, are) and not have/has.

- I'm thirty years old.
- My nephew **is** fourteen years old.
- These houses **are** 200 years old.

We can also say **am / are / is** + age without “years old”:

- I'm thirty.
- My nephew is fourteen.
- My kids are six and eight.

When it is somebody's birthday, we say they **turn** age :

- We threw a big party when my mother **turned fifty**.
- My husband's **turning forty** next month.
- My youngest cousin just **turned three**.

#4 – Marriage / Wedding

Don't say: "I'm going to my best friend's marriage on Sunday."

Say: "I'm going to my best friend's wedding on Sunday."

Wedding = The ceremony

- I'm going to my cousin's **wedding** on October 7.
- We want to have a band at our **wedding** reception.
- The **wedding** will be at the church, and the reception will be at a restaurant.

Marriage = The relationship in general, or the institution in society

- My parents have a strong **marriage**. They've been together for 35 years.
- New York has just legalized gay **marriage**.
- Over 40% of **marriages** end in divorce.

Married = Describes the status of a person

- My sister isn't **married**. She's single.
- I've been **married** for 5 years.

Get married = The action of going from single to married

- We're **getting married** in July.
- My teacher **got married** last year.

#5 – Need / Have to

Don't say: "I need study more."

Say: "I need to study more."

Or: "I have to study more."

When the word **need** is followed by a verb, we say **need to** (or **have to**). When the word **need** is followed by a noun, we don't use "to":

- I need a **book**.
(book = noun)
- I need **to go** to the library.
(go = verb)

#6 – Meet / Know

Don't say: "I knew him last year."

Say: "I met him last year."

Meet has two meanings:

- When you have first contact with a person ("I **met** him last year")
- When you will encounter someone you already know. In this case, we often use "meet with" or "meet up with" ("I'm **meeting up with** some friends at the bar after work.")

Know has two different meanings/uses:

- With knowledge and skills in general ("He **knows** everything about computers.")
- With knowing people in general ("Do you **know** Janet? She's in the advanced English class." – "No, I don't think I **know** her.")

#7 – Explain

Don't say: "Can you explain me the problem?"

Say: "Can you explain the problem to me?"

Explain is like "say/said" – we **explain something** to someone. We can also say "explain that" – "The agent **explained that** our flight had been delayed 30 minutes because of the storm."

#8 – Recommend / Suggest

Don't say: "I recommend you to get more exercise."

Say: "I recommend that you get more exercise."

Or: "You should get more exercise."

Recommend and **suggest** are followed by **that** or by the **-ing form**. Don't use **"to"**! Examples:

- I suggested that he see a doctor.
- I suggested seeing a doctor.
- ~~I suggested him to see a doctor.~~

#9 – Ask / Ask for / Ask about Ask (someone) to

Don't say: "I asked to my boss..."

Say: "I asked my boss..."

Never use a preposition between **"ask"** and the person you are asking.

When you want an **object**, you can use **ask for + object**:

- I **asked for** a hamburger.
- I **asked** my boss **for** a raise.

When you want **general information**, you can use **ask about**:

- I **asked about** her family.
- She **asked** me **about** my job.

When you want **specific information**, you can use **ask + (question word)**:

- I **asked how much** the camera cost.
- Let's **ask what time** the theater opens.

- One moment – I’m on the phone **asking** my brother **where** we can park the car.

Finally, when you want **somebody to do something**, you can use **ask (someone) to**:

- I **asked him to** turn off the lights.
- Martha **asked me not to** use her computer.
- We’re going to **ask the teacher to** help us.

#10 – Pass the time / Spend time

Don’t say: “I pass a lot of time reading.”

Say: “I spend a lot of time reading.”

Use “**spend time**” to talk about the time you do an activity. The expression **pass the time** is different – it means doing something to make the time pass faster while you are waiting for something else, for example, “I look at the magazines to **pass the time** while waiting for my appointment at the dentist’s office.”

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