

# Lecture 12

## Grammar Pitfalls



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### Lecture 12

## Grammar Pitfalls

- that or which, and why?
- ambiguous or vague antecedents
- 3 word use errors



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## That or Which: (non-)essential clauses & comma use



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essential or non-essential?



Land that is surrounded by water is an island.

Tasmania, which is surrounded by the waters of Bass Strait, is a beautiful island.

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essential or non-essential?



Land ~~that is surrounded by water~~ is an island.

Tasmania, ~~which is surrounded by the waters of Bass Strait~~, is a beautiful island.

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essential or non-essential?



Land **that** is surrounded by water is an island.

Tasmania, **which** is surrounded by the waters of Bass Strait, is a beautiful island.

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### United Kingdom (British English)

'which' or 'that' in essential clauses  
'which' in non-essential clauses

### United States (American English)

only 'that' in essential clauses  
'which' in non-essential clauses

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### which or that? - comma or not?

- The estrogen [.....] is present in most birth control pills [.....] is ethinyl estradiol.
- The estrogen drug ethinyl estradiol [.....] is present in most birth control pills [.....] is only slightly different from endogenous estradiol.

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## which or that? - comma or not?

- The estrogen **that** is present in most birth control pills is ethinyl estradiol.
- The estrogen drug ethinyl estradiol, **which** is present in most birth control pills, is only slightly different from endogenous estradiol.

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<https://www.lexico.com/en/grammar/that-or-which>

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## Vague or ambiguous antecedents



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*this, that, it, which*

**antecedent**

=

the noun, pronoun, or clause  
that a pronoun such as this, that, which, he, she, it  
refers to



.....noun/pronoun/clause.....this/that/it/which.....

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1. The second study was designed to enrol 2000 more participants than the first study and it tested three dose levels of the study drug.
2. Patients with a latent infection may need to be monitored for several months because they are at risk of developing the active form of the disease, which diminishes over time.

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1. The second study was designed to enrol 2000 more participants than the first study and it tested three dose levels of the study drug.

- **Correction 1**

The second study, which tested three dose levels of the study drug, was designed to enrol 2000 more participants than the first study.

- **Correction 2**

The second study, designed to enrol 2000 more participants than the first study, tested three dose levels of the study drug.

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2. Patients with a latent infection may need to be monitored for several months because they are at risk of developing the active form of the disease, **which** diminishes over time.

- **Correction 1**

Patients with a latent infection may need to be monitored for several months because they are at risk of developing the active form of the disease. This risk diminishes over time.

- **Correction 2**

Patients with a latent infection may need to be monitored for several months because they are at risk of developing the active form of the disease. The need to monitor these patients diminishes over time.

- **Correction 3**

Patients with a latent infection may need to be monitored for several months because they are at risk of developing the active form of the disease. As the risk diminishes over time, so too does the need to monitor these patients.

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Keep in mind



- Be especially careful with the pronouns **this, that, it, and which** to ensure that the reader will be able to identify the antecedent.
- You can correct vague pronoun antecedents by:
  - turning the pronoun into an adjective
  - replacing the pronoun with a noun or noun phrase
  - or revising the sentence more extensively.

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## 3 common mistakes in word usage



- affect and effect
  - ie and eg
- incidence and prevalence

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**affect** -> verb -> to act on or to influence

**effect** -> noun -> an outcome, influence, or consequence

Drug A **affected** symptom severity.

Drug B has no **effect** on glucose levels.

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To memorize:

- A person or object acts on (affects) something.
- A person or object causes an event (an effect).

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ie or eg

ie: that is (*id est*)

eg: for example (*exempli gratia*)

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## ie or eg

- None of the regions tested (**ie**, hypothalamus, thalamus, spinal cord) contained these cells.

all possibilities are included

- Students may take one social science course (**eg**, psychology, sociology, linguistics) and one physical science course (**eg**, geology, physics, astronomy).

there are more possibilities, these are examples

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## incidence and prevalence

**incidence**: the number of new cases in a given population over time

The incidence rate for asthma increased from 38 cases per 100,000 in 1990 to 40 cases per 100,000 in 1991.

**prevalence**: the number of existing cases in a given population at a given time

The prevalence of HIV infection in young adults aged 21 to 24 years was 0.1% in the United States in 2004.

Incidence refers to new cases, whereas prevalence refers to existing cases.

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More tips: <http://www.biomedicaleditor.com/grammar-tips.html>