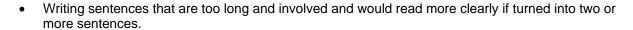# Common Writing Errors

- Spelling "a lot" as though it were one word, "alot."

- Writing "its" when you should use "it's," or vice versa. Use "it's" when you mean "it is." Otherwise, use "its."

- Writing "centering around." You center on and revolve around.

- Omitting apostrophes, usually in possessives.

- Using commas incorrectly, especially as substitutes for periods and semicolons; using semicolons as colons.

- Writing run-on sentences — instances in which two sentences are punctuated as though they were one sentence.

- Writing fragments or phrases instead of sentences when a sentence is required. Generally, every sentence should have a noun and a verb and usually an object.

- Writing sentences that are too long and involved and would read more clearly if turned into two or more sentences.

- Shifting the person in a sentence. If you start out using "she," you don't shift to "they," or "you," or "one."

- Neglecting to make the subject and the verb agree as to whether they are singular or plural. For example, "The boy and the girl is in love." You should say, they "are" in love, or the couple "is" in love.

- Shifting verb tenses. For example, "The girl said, 'Wow'. The boy says, 'Double wow'" is incorrect. Be sure to choose one tense, and use the tense consistently.

- Writing sentences with unclear pronoun references: "Jim and John played with his football." Whose football? Also, neglecting to make pronouns agree with their nouns: "The newspaper covers sports very well. They print a lot of statistics other papers don't." It is the correct pronoun.

- Being redundant. Some things bear repeating to ensure clarity, but not many things.

- Overusing adjectives and adverbs.

- Mixing up effect and affect. "Effect" is a noun: "The effect of the policy is unclear." "Affect" is a verb: "I don't know how the policy will affect me." Of course, to make things confusing, "effect" can be a verb: "We will effect the change next year," and "affect" can be a noun: "Did you notice her affect?"

- Mixing up that and which. Use "that" if the phrase following it is necessary for the meaning of the sentence: "The book that I lost will cost me $25." Use "which" and commas if the phrase following it is not necessary for the meaning of the sentence: "The book, which I bought last year, is now lost."

- Not checking carefully for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, typing, and word meaning before handing in work.