

English Grammar for Clear Communication: An Introduction

- ▶ - Clear communication: readers understand first time, without ambiguity
- ▶ - Grammar errors reduce trust and response rates in 2026
- ▶ - AI tools catch errors, but humans own meaning, tone, and correctness
- ▶ - Goal: move from correctness anxiety to confident, credible writing
- ▶ - Approach: self-assessment, error log, practice feedback—not memorization



Clarity in writing
builds understanding.

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Which Grammar Errors Actually Matter in Professional English



- Low-impact myths: split infinitives, ending with prepositions



- High-impact errors: agreement, pronoun clarity, tense, apostrophes



- Visible errors disproportionately damage professional credibility



- Four key areas: tense, agreement, articles/prepositions, punctuation



- Focus on load-bearing rules, not theoretical violations



UNPROFESSIONAL

Hi team,

I think we should **of** review the report before we submit it.

It's critical that everyone on the team does **there** part.

Lets make sure **were** aligned by **friday**.

Thanks,
Jordan

Why it's unprofessional:

Errors in grammar and mechanics create distraction and undermine your credibility.



CREDIBLE

Hi team,

I think we should review the report before we submit it.

It's critical that everyone on the team does their part.

Let's make sure we're aligned by Friday.

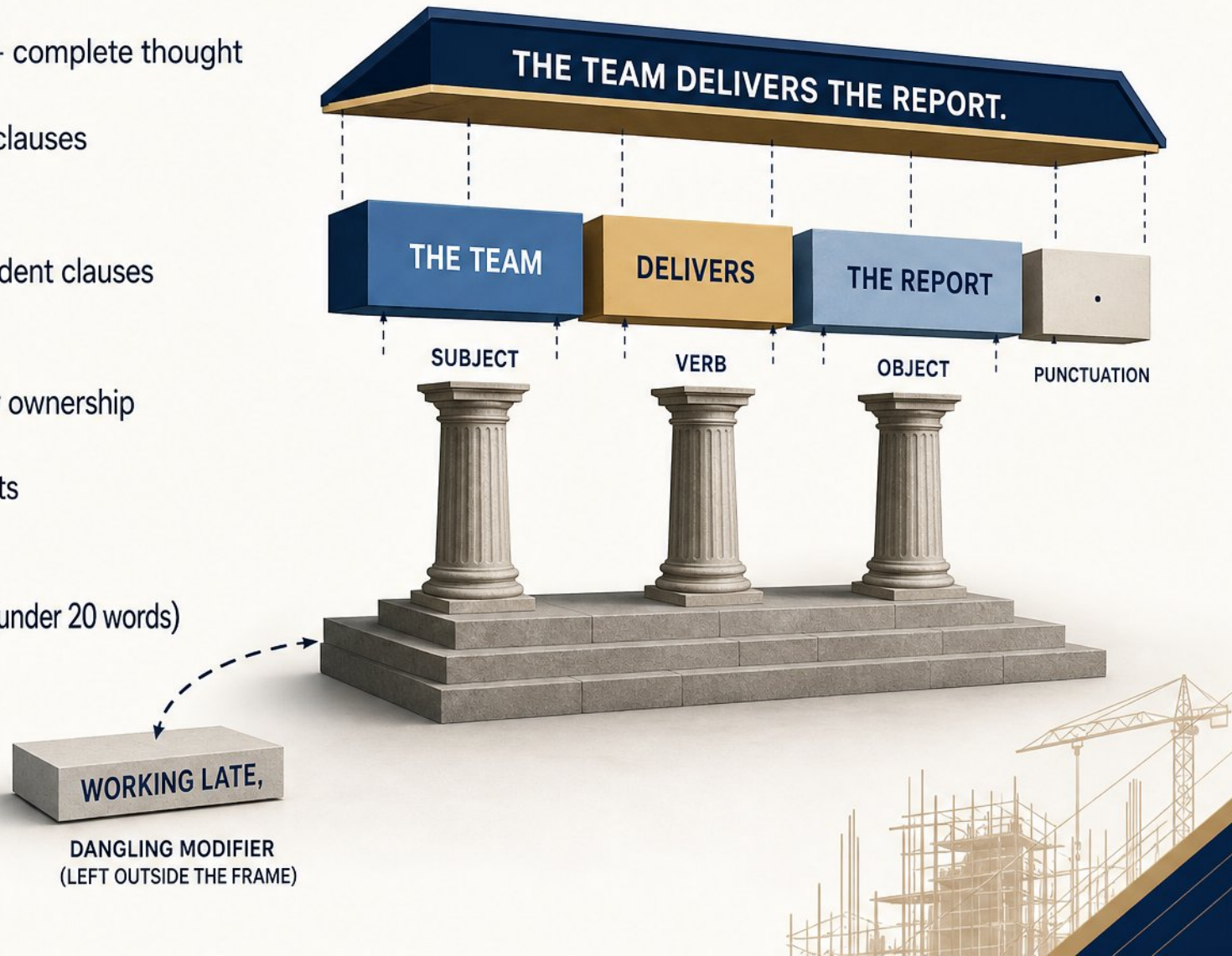
Thanks,
Jordan

Why it's credible:

Clear, correct grammar builds trust and reinforces your professionalism.

Core Sentence Patterns for Clear Workplace Writing

- **SVO order:** subject + verb + complete thought
- **Fix fragments:** dependent clauses need a main clause
- **Avoid run-ons:** join independent clauses with a conjunction
- **Prefer active voice** for clear ownership
- **Keep parallel structure** in lists and comparisons
- **Use short, direct sentences** (under 20 words)



Subject-Verb Agreement and Unambiguous Pronoun Reference



- Match subjects and verbs even when phrases separate them



- Collective nouns, indefinite pronouns, and compound subjects



- "Data" and "team": context decides singular or plural



- Repeat nouns to avoid ambiguous pronoun references



- Singular "they" takes plural verbs and is standard usage

FIELD GUIDE: GRAMMAR SPECIMEN

SPECIMEN: SINGULAR THEY

A standard and inclusive pronoun



PRONOUN

they / them / their / theirs

Used to refer to a single person when gender is unknown, nonbinary, or not relevant.



VERB FORM

Takes plural verbs.

*Example: They **are** ready for the meeting.*

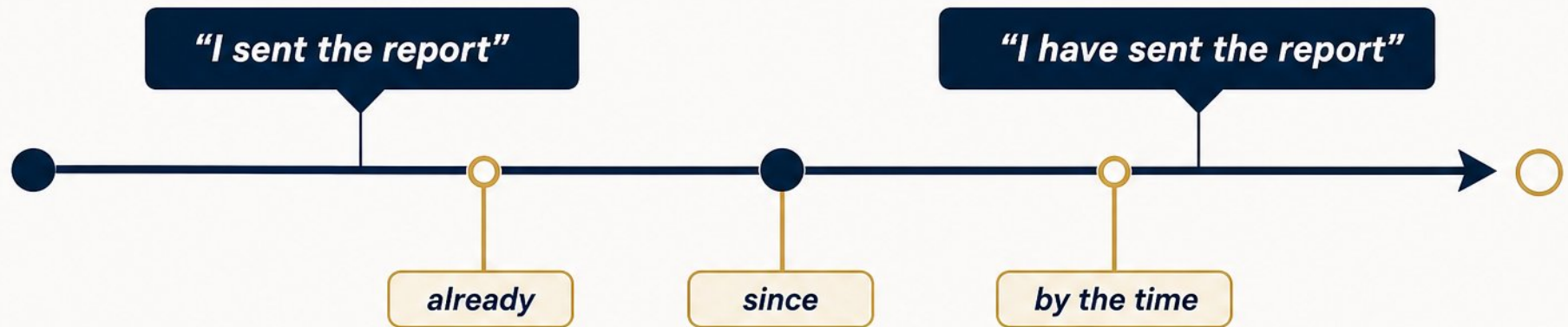


USAGE EXAMPLE

***Taylor** submitted **their** report early because **they** wanted feedback.*

Taylor = one person. "They" takes the plural verb "wanted."

Verb Tenses and Time Logic in Emails and Reports



- Simple past states a past fact; present perfect states a present fact



- 'I sent the report' vs. 'I have sent the report'



- Time markers (*already*, *since*, *by the time*) must match tenses



- Conditionals encode commitment: *'If we receive the files today, we deliver Friday'*



- Keep tense consistent within the same email or report section

Clarity in Modifiers and Comparisons

- Place modifiers next to the words they describe
- Dangling modifiers: describe something not in the sentence
- Fix misplaced modifiers that create ambiguity
- Use comparative/superlative forms correctly
- Avoid double comparisons and illogical comparisons
- Check comparisons for omitted information





Punctuation That Protects Meaning and Credibility



- Commas clarify meaning; missing Oxford comma can alter legal outcomes



- Restrictive vs. non-restrictive clauses flip meaning with commas



- Semicolons join related clauses; colons introduce lists



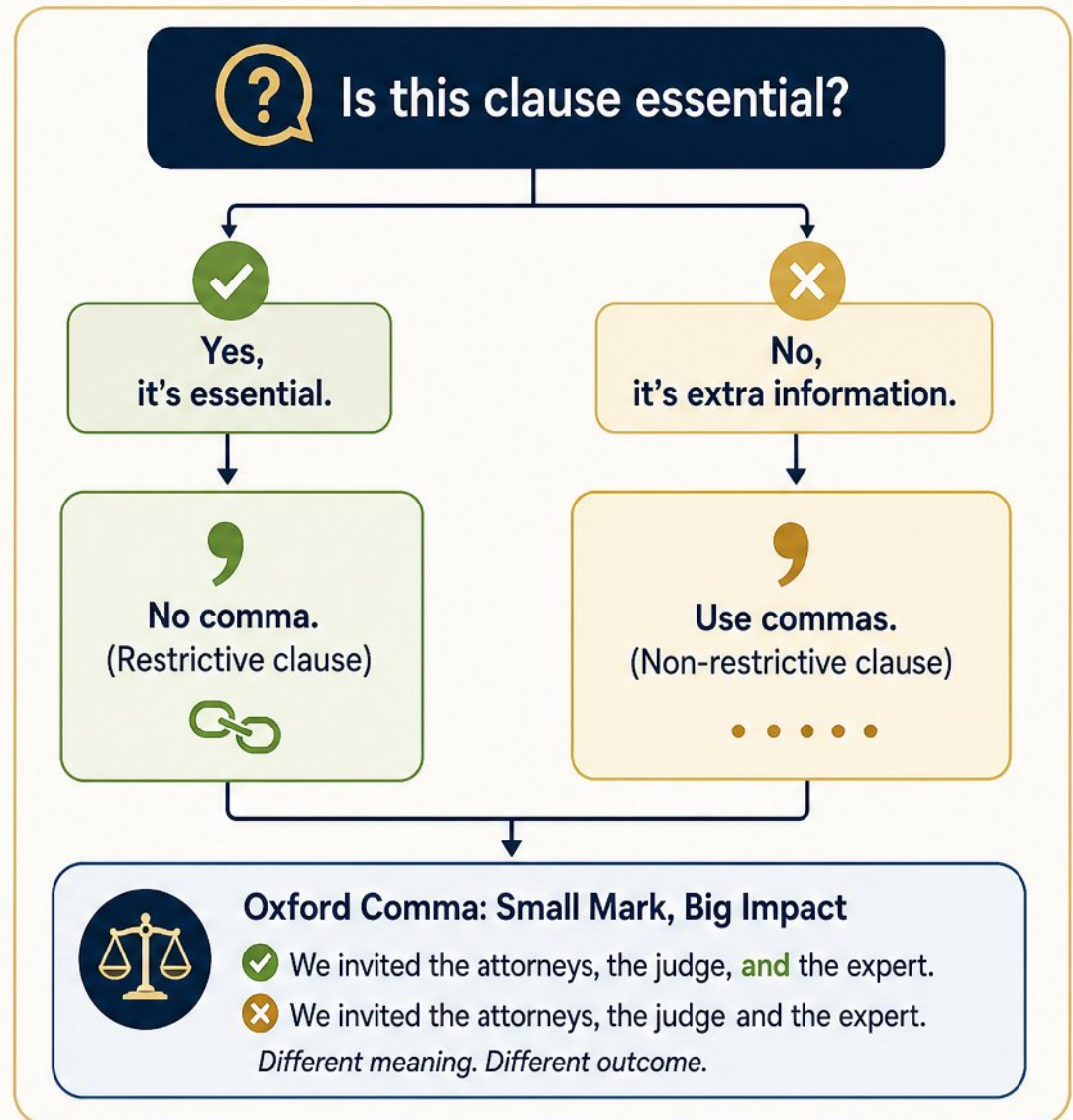
- Apostrophes: its/it's errors most visibly damage credibility



- Greetings, sign-offs, and bullet points follow punctuation conventions



- Avoid apostrophe abuse, excessive exclamation marks, and scare quotes



Common Word Confusions That Undermine Professional Credibility



- **Homophones:** affect/effect, your/you're, its/it's, their/there/they're, lose/loose



- **Smart word pairs:** comprise/compose, fewer/less, disinterested/uninterested, i.e./e.g.



- **Avoid nonstandard forms:** irregardless, revert back, past history



- Use **'literally'** only when something is physically true, not as emphasis



- Build a personal error log and review it before sending high-stakes messages



affect	vs.	effect
The weather affected our travel plans.		The storm had an effect on our travel plans.

your	vs.	you're
Is this your notebook?		You're doing a great job.

its	vs.	it's
The company updated its policy.		It's important to follow the policy.

their	vs.	there	vs.	they're
Their team won the award.		Put it over there .		They're celebrating tonight.

lose	vs.	loose
Don't lose your keys.		The shirt is too loose .

comprise	vs.	compose
The team comprises five experts.		She will compose the report.

fewer	vs.	less
Fewer people attended the meeting.		We have less time today.

disinterested	vs.	uninterested
She seemed disinterested in the topic.		He is uninterested in the role.

i.e.	vs.	e.g.
Bring fruits, i.e. , apples, bananas.		Examples include, e.g. , dogs, cats.

Prepositions, Articles, and Modals: Small Words with Big Impact



- Prepositions are learned per collocation: responsible for ≠ dependent on



- Modals encode commitment: should, will, may have differ in obligation



- Articles persist as a challenge for non-native speakers



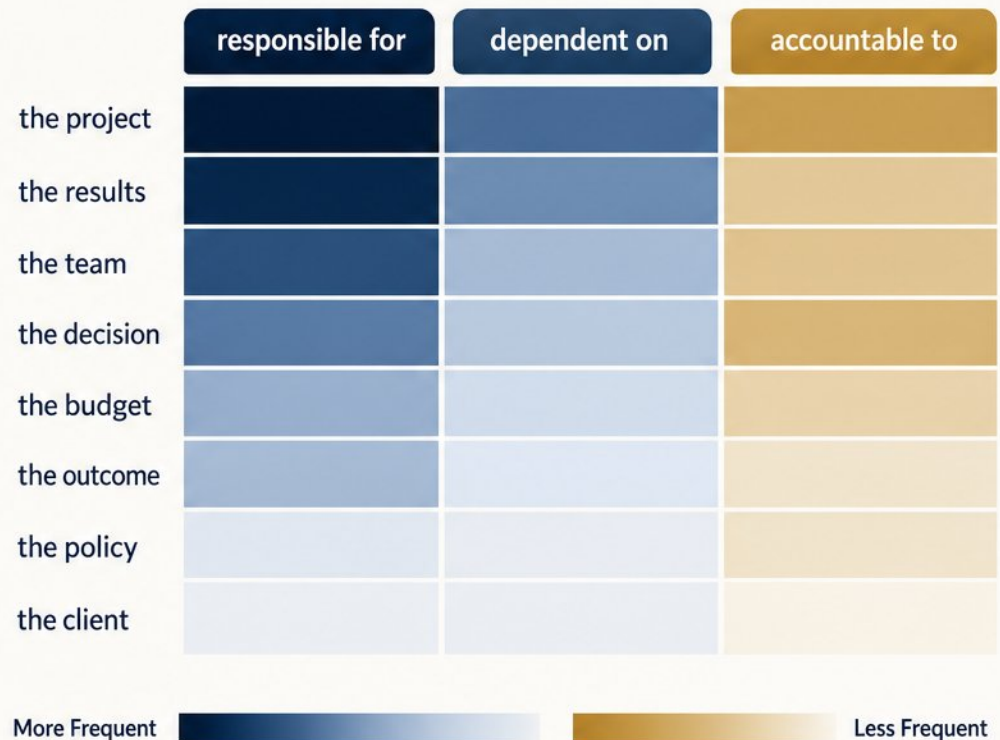
- Avoid double negatives in formal writing



- Choose simple, direct phrasing over unclear formal alternatives

FREQUENCY HEATMAP OF PREPOSITION COLLOCATIONS

How often these preposition collocations appear with common nouns



Editing Strategies for Clearer Sentences

BEFORE

ONE LONG, BLOATED SENTENCE

I wanted to let you know that after reviewing the information and considering the feedback from the team, I believe that we should move forward with the proposal because it aligns with our goals and will help us deliver meaningful results for our stakeholders in the near future.



AFTER

BROKEN INTO CLEAR, SHORT SENTENCES



I reviewed the information and team feedback.



I believe we should move forward with the proposal.



It aligns with our goals and will deliver meaningful results for our stakeholders.



- ✓ Read aloud to catch awkward phrasing and rhythm issues
- ✓ Cut filler words: 'really,' 'actually,' 'basically,' 'just'
- ✓ Break long sentences into units under 20 words
- ✓ Use a 60-second pre-send routine: check openings, ownership, tone, length
- ✓ Test clarity: if a sentence needs rereading, it fails

Grammar in Emails: Tone, Greetings, and High-Stakes Messages



The image shows a hand turning a dial that ranges from 'WEAK ASK' (dark blue) to 'CLEAR REQUEST' (gold). The dial is currently set to a point between the two, with a gold arrow pointing towards the 'CLEAR REQUEST' side. Below the dial are two email examples: a 'WEAK ASK' on the left and a 'CLEAR REQUEST' on the right.

WEAK ASK

Hi **team**,

I was wondering if maybe you could possibly take a look at the deck when you have a chance.

As I already explained, we really need to get this done.

Thanks so much,
Your colleague

CLEAR REQUEST

Hi **team**,

Raj will send the deck by **Thursday**. Please review the deck and share your feedback.

Best regards,
Your colleague



Comma after greeting; capitalize first word of body



Only first word of sign-off capitalized (Best regards)



Avoid weak asks: remove hedging phrases like "I was wondering if maybe"



Remove accusatory phrases: "As I already explained" sounds aggressive



Name owners and deadlines explicitly: "Raj will send the deck by Thursday"



Grammar in Reports and Formal Documents



- ▶ Use consistent tense, voice, and terminology throughout reports



- ▶ Structure with headings, bullets, and numbered lists for scannability



- ▶ Maintain parallel structure in sections, lists, and recommendations



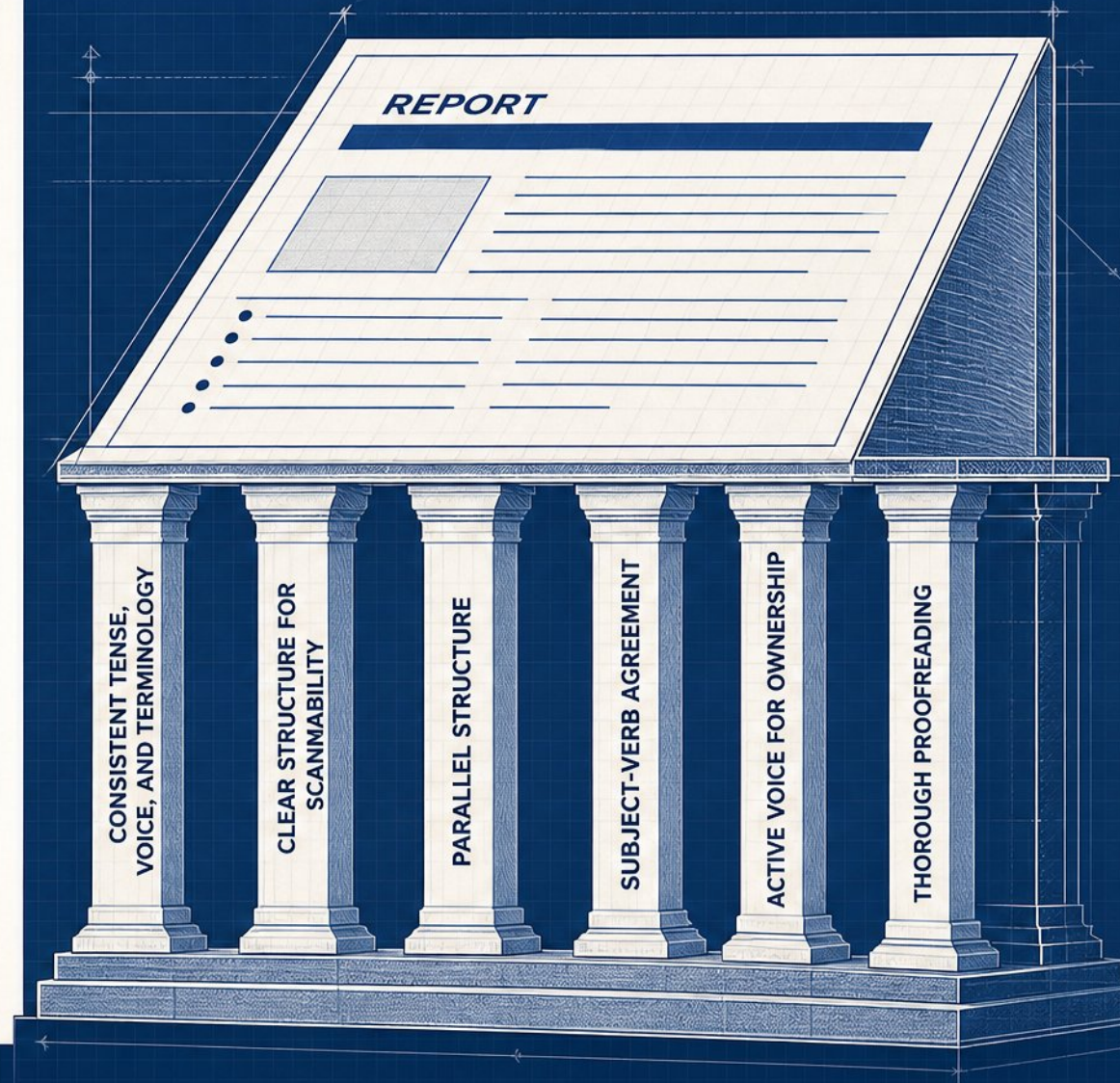
- ▶ Keep subject-verb agreement intact even in long sentences



- ▶ Use active voice for ownership:
"The team completed the project"

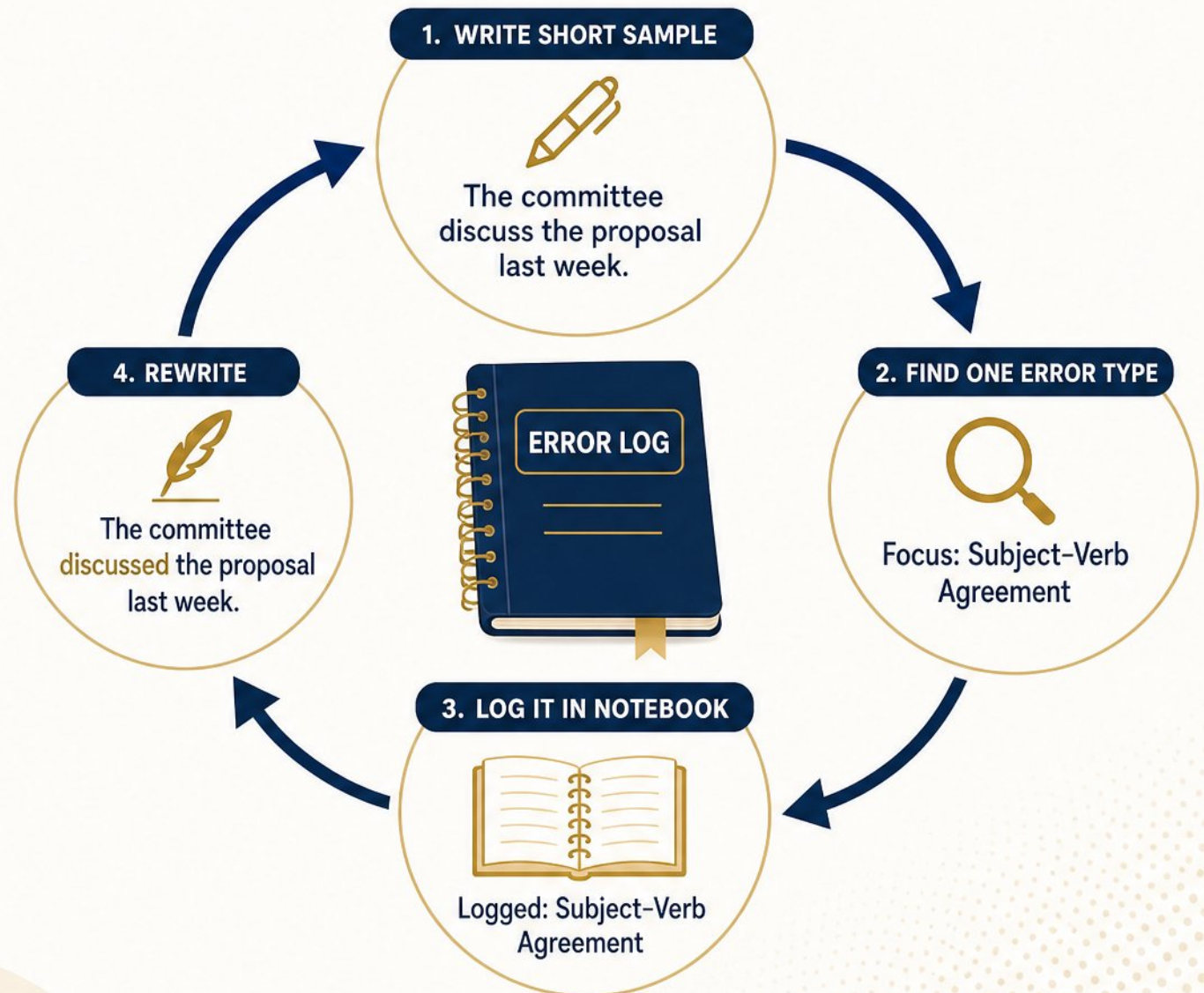


- ▶ Proofread with fresh eyes and a specific error checklist



Using Feedback and Error Logs to Improve Grammar Over Time

- Apply patterns to short writing samples for concrete feedback
- Peer review focuses on high-impact errors, not every rule
- Target specific grammar weaknesses instead of revising generally
- Find your pattern: nobody is evenly weak across all four areas
- Re-read your writing hunting for one error type at a time



Practice Cycle and Next Steps



- Apply all principles to a short workplace-style writing sample
- Use high-impact error checklist for peer and self-review
- Track weekly progress by recording the same writing type
- Build a proofreading routine: grammar knowledge, tools, judgment
- Fix errors that serve the reader; let low-impact rules go

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