

Solution 25. Expect error-free writing, within reason.

You are right to expect letters and email to clients, senior executives, and others to be free of obvious errors such as misspelled words, missing spaces, and sentences that begin with lower case letters.

On the other hand, if you expect employees to function like copy editors and English teachers, you will not succeed. Typographical errors such as *you* for *your* will happen, especially in fast-paced offices. Subtle errors will occur, and language experts will continue to argue about them.

Each of these sentences contains an obvious error that grammar and spelling checkers will flag and employees must avoid:

- We have received to many inquiries to respond to each one individually.
- Mr. Wilsons attorney will arrive on Monday at 10 a.m.
- The guarantee applies only if you visit a authorized dealer.

These sentences contain English-major “errors” that aren’t worth fixing:

- All newsletter articles must be 400 words or less. (English majors argue over whether the word *less* should be *fewer*.)
- Nelson lives further from work than Edie. (Copy editors argue that the correct word is *farther*—not *further*.)
- Who have you invited? (English teachers argue for *whom*.)

You can and should expect employees to avoid obvious errors that make your organization appear careless and unprofessional. But when it comes to English-major errors, the battle is not worth winning. They are the wrong enemy.

You did recognize the obvious errors, didn’t you? The sentences above should read as follows:

- We have received *too* many inquiries to respond to each one individually.
- Mr. *Wilson’s* attorney will arrive on Monday at 10 a.m.
- The guarantee applies only if you visit *an* authorized dealer.

Expect messages to be virtually error-free. But when a document is crucial to your success, use professional proofreaders. And when you do find errors, be sure they get corrected in all versions of the file. That way they won’t be copied, pasted, and replicated.