

# Grammatical Mistakes DON'T Sell

By Alexandria K. Brown

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When you receive a sales letter with typos or grammar mistakes in it, do you take it seriously? Probably not. As soon as I see a few eighth-grade English blunders in any marketing effort, I quickly decide the author's product or service is not deserving of my time.

E-mail is so quick and easy to write and send, that we don't give it the same attention as we would a printed letter. It's VERY important to make sure any communication you send to clients, customers, and prospects represents you only in the best light.

Now, if good grammar isn't your strength, no worries! I write and edit for a living, so this stuff is my bag. My point is that you should \*check and double-check\* all communications you send out, or you risk blowing your credibility.

Here are the five most common (and embarrassing) grammar mistakes I see in sales letters every day. And they're all for words that sound alike, as you'll see.

### 1. IT'S AND ITS

it's - contraction for "it is."

"It's really beautiful outside today."

its - possessive, something belongs to "it."

"Our company credits its new CEO for this year's successes."

TIP: One of my grade school teachers taught me to remember that an "it" can't own anything, so it doesn't deserve an apostrophe as the possessive.

### 2. AFFECT and EFFECT

affect - to influence (always a VERB)

"Your tardiness has affected the whole team!"

effect - to bring about or execute (VERB), result (NOUN)

"We'd like to effect this policy immediately." (verb)

"Those legwarmers definitely lend your outfit an '80s effect." (noun)

TIP: I relate the "a" in "affect" to the "a" in "action."

### 3. WHO'S and WHOSE

who's - contraction for "who is"

"Jeff's the guy who's giving us a ride."

whose - the possessive of "who." Something belongs to someone.

"Whose notes are these?"

TIP: Again, you're only using the apostrophe with the \*contraction\* (like in "it's").

### 4. YOU'RE and YOUR

you're - contraction for "you are"

"You're really asking for a raise?"

your - the possessive of "you." Something belongs to someone.

"Mrs. Henley, your dog is digging in our yard again."

TIP: And yet again, you're only using the apostrophe with the \*contraction\* (like in "it's").

### 5. THERE, THEIR, AND THEY'RE

there - use this spelling when you're talking about a place (literal or figurative).

"Sit over there." "Stop right there." "I absolutely agree with you there."

their - the possessive of "they." Something belongs to them.

"She thinks the Joneses are so cool because of their new BMW."

they're - contraction for "they are"

"They're ready to quit their corporate jobs and go retire in Maine."

TIP: And, once more folks, you're only using the apostrophe with the \*contraction.\* (See the pattern here?)

Okay, Got All That? : )

Now, if you can't memorize all these right away, don't worry! The idea is to realize what you DON'T know well, and have the sense to look it up when you're not sure.

In fact, why not print this e-mail and keep it handy?

Have a great weekend!

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