

Word Forms Grammar Resource Sheet for ESL Writers

Word form errors occur when the correct word is chosen but an incorrect *form* of the word is used. For example, look at the following two sentences:

Incorrect – *Young people can be independence in the United States.*

Correct – *Young people can be independent in the United States.*

The noun form *independence* is used in the first sentence instead of the adjective form, *independent*.

Words in English are grouped into eight parts of speech depending on the function in a sentence. They are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, articles and interjections.

Most words in English have different forms for different parts of speech, but not all words have all forms. And some words look the same for different parts of speech. For example:

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
Independence	X	Independent	Independently
Confusion	Confuse	Confusing	Confusingly
Flight	Fly	Flying	X
Anger	Anger	Angry	Angrily

Some words have more than one form for the same part of speech. For example, *bored* and *boring* are both adjectives, but they have different meanings. For example:

The student is bored because the lecture is boring.

Some word forms have different meanings that seem inconsistent or contradictory. For example, *intimate* as an adjective had a different meaning from *intimate* as a verb.

Marilyn and Joe were intimate (close) friends.

Your suggestion intimates (suggests) that we have a serious problem.

Word endings sometimes indicate part of speech. For example, words ending in *-ly* are usually adverbs. Paying close attention as you read is the best way to improve fluency with word forms.

Corrected Examples:

In this example, the wrong part of speech is used.

Incorrect – *The politician emphasis the need for more funding for education.*

Correct – *The politician emphasized the need for more funding for education.*

In this example, a nonexistent part of speech is used.

Incorrect – *My daughter independences every day.*

Correct – *My daughter becomes more independent every day.*

In this example, the right part of speech is used but the wrong noun form.

Incorrect – *I have two best friendships, Huan and Alice.*

Correct – *I have two best friends, Huan and Alice.*

Practice Sentences

1. I just finished decoration the house for Halloween.
2. I feel very healthily today.
3. Sue talked to herself very quiet.
4. After reviewing my notes, I still fell confusing.
5. We helped raise funds to beauty our neighborhood.