

How to use conventional spelling, punctuation and mechanics

Before you begin

What you need:

Related text: **“Powder” by Tobias Wolff**

Exit with Success and *The Bare Essentials Plus* (optional)

An English dictionary

Approximate time this exercise should take you: **15 minutes**

Reminder

In this exercise, you will be identifying and correcting various types of errors related to the use of conventional spelling, punctuation and mechanics. This is the part of your writing where you need to understand and remember the standard rules of writing and when and where to apply them. For example, in spelling, there are many rules to help you spell correctly. Unfortunately, it is also very easy to confuse certain French and English spellings because they are so similar: futur/future, for example.

If you use any direct quotations from the text you are writing about, make sure to copy accurately, especially in your essay’s introduction when you state the author’s name and title of the text! You should also review the rules of capitalization. Simple applications, such as clearly capitalizing the beginning of a sentence, can make a difference in your grade. In terms of punctuation, you must remember where to place a comma, apostrophe, semi-colon or colon. Additionally, make sure you know how to punctuate properly when quoting from the text. This is another area where you could easily be penalized for faulty mechanics. You can review spelling, punctuation and mechanics in the appropriate chapters of *The Bare Essentials Plus* and *Exit with Success*.

Instructions

In the exercise below you will be reviewing a variety of typical errors students make in spelling, punctuation and mechanics. Select the correct answer from the choices in parentheses.

Exercise

An example is provided below:

This story is so lovingly (**developped/developed**) that the reader could imagine it to be a description of (**Tobias’/Wolff’s**) own relationship with his father.

1. He probably (**gessed/guessed**) that she expected him to be late for (**dinner/diner**).
2. Another (**exemple/example**) of his love for his wife is his (**fear/feer**) that she (**won’t/wont**) forgive him if he is late.
3. Tobias Wolff is an (**American/american**) (**author/auteur**) who writes frequently and (**with/whith**) empathy about childhood.
4. The father is an interesting and cultured person, as can be seen when he takes (**his’/his**) son to see Thelonious Monk (; /,) a famous jazz pianist.
5. The father clearly loves jazz (**music/musique**); he hums “little scat riffs around the melody.”
6. The son is unlike his father(: /,) “I was a boy who kept his clothes on numbered hangers to ensure (**proper/propre**) rotation.”
7. Wolff encourages the reader to admire the father even if the man does (**seam/seem**) a bit (**irresponsible/irresponsable**).
8. He probably thinks the troopers are so (**ignorant/ignorent**) that they will not suspect that he will drive (**through/thru**) despite their warnings.
9. All the father’s hard work did not pay off (**because “my mother decided to make the split final.”/because: “my mother decided to make the split final.”**)
10. One suspects that the author is (**writing/writting**) a story about an (**extremly/extremely**) important episode in his own life.

Answer key

Compare your answers to the corrections in the sentences below.

1. He probably **guessed** that she expected him to be late for **dinner**.
2. Another **example** of his love for his wife is his **fear** that she **won't** forgive him if he is late.
3. Tobias Wolff is an **American author** who writes frequently and **with** empathy about childhood.
4. The father is an interesting and cultured person as can be seen when he takes **his** son to see Thelonious Monk, a famous jazz pianist.
5. The father clearly loves jazz **music**; he hums “little scat riffs around the melody.”
6. The son is unlike his father: “I was a boy who kept his clothes on numbered hangers to insure **proper** rotation.”
7. Wolff encourages the reader to admire the father even if the man does **seem** a bit **irresponsible**.
8. He probably thinks the troopers are so **ignorant** that they will not suspect that he will drive **through** despite their warnings.
9. All the father’s hard work did not pay off **because “my mother decided to make the split final.”**
10. One suspects that the author is **writing** a story about an **extremely** important episode in his own life.