1. **Sentence Fragments**
   A complete sentence must express a complete thought. Sometimes fragments slip in between closely related thoughts.
   
   *Example:* We had a great party. All the food you could eat.
   
   **Watch for:** words that make sentences incomplete
   
   *Example:* She got soaking wet. Having given her raincoat to Emily. When the sun was still shining. Being that I'm just a student.

2. **Comma Splices And Run-On Sentences**
   Whenever complete thoughts are joined in one sentence, they must have a strong tie, the "double knot" of comma plus conjunction.
   
   When writers violate this rule, they create a comma splice (no conjunction) or a "fused" sentence (no comma). It's that simple.
   
   *Example:* The clock ticked down to zero the gun sounded, the game was over.
   
   **Watch for:** common habit to put in punctuation mentally, look for commas and check to see they are properly used.

3. **Ineffective Passive**
   In the passive voice the subject does nothing--it has something done to it.
   To locate the passive, look for some form of the verb "to be" as a helping verb.
   
   *Examples:* Baskets were shot by the players. Milk should be drunk by children three times a day. Mistakes were made (a govt. agency favorite!)
   
   **Solution:** take out the "helping verb":
   
   The players shot baskets; children should drink milk three times a day; We made mistakes.
   
   **Note:** These passive constructions are not always "wrong"--but often are unnecessarily awkward and usually lead to wordiness--not to mention that impersonal effect.
   
   (That’s why they are useful in documents that need to seem "objective"—eg. scientific or business reports.)
   
   **Watch for:** the telltale is/was/were plus a verb [eg. A list was written] and then ask "by whom?"
   
   If you have both of these conditions, you have passive construction.
   
   Would an active form of verb work better? [eg. She wrote a list]

4. **Dangling Modifiers**
   When a phrase or clause has no word to modify in the sentence--or the word it modifies is elsewhere in the sentence--we say it is misplaced or "dangling."
   
   *Example:* When taking hurdles, the helmet must have a chinstrap (the helmet is taking the hurdles!).
   
   **Solution:** insert the subject that is doing the action
   
   (...runners must have a chinstrap on their helmets)
   
   When modifying phrases are stuck in the sentence in such a way that you can't tell which noun they modify, readers may not be able to make sense of the sentence.
   
   *Example:* The woman in the garden shot her lover. (what does "in the garden" tell--where she is now or where she shot her lover?)
   
   **Solution:** put modifiers next to their reference (she shot her lover in the garden).
   
   **Watch for:** phrases that have an "understood" subject or a participial (ing) ending.