

Is Bad Grammar Ruining Your Love Life?

By Dianna Booher

A colleague tells the story of her first childhood crush named Jack: By eighth-grade standards, Jack was a real catch—tall, athletic, clear-skinned, and popular. Theirs, like many middle school romances before the age of text messaging, was on course to becoming “official” via the usual medium, a hand-written note. Seeing the folded paper make its way across the classroom, my colleague relished her pending status as “Jack’s girlfriend.”

She opened the note and read, “Dear Stef. I like you alot, do you want to go together?”

Her heart sank. She could overlook the common misspelling of “a lot,” but did he really not know the difference between “dear” and “deer”? And why did he use a comma between the sentence and the question? Suddenly, Jack didn’t seem so extraordinary. Stephanie sheepishly wrote back, “Thanks for asking, but I don’t think it’s a good idea. I hope we can be friends.”

A silly coming-of-age story? Hardly! What happened to Jack at the young age of 14 happens to many adults, too. In our era of online dating, romances frequently begin (and end) with a brief email exchange. The “go/no-go” decision about a face-to-face encounter often hinges on the impact of written messages. Are *you* losing your luster with potential dates because your grammar skills are grim? Poor writing detracts from the main message, and in romance, the main message should be the best aspects of your personality—your humor, your creativity, your sense of adventure. But if you struggle with the fundamentals of grammar, your reader will often miss all those traits you have to offer.

So before you click “send,” review your writing for these common grammar missteps that are sure to be a turn-off.

1 – **Misuse of the verb *to go*.** The irregular verb *to go* most often gives people problems in the present and past tenses. That is, they mistakenly use *went* with the helping verbs *have*, *has*, and *had*.

Incorrect: Fritz had went on twelve dates last year.

Correct: Fritz had gone on twelve dates last year.

2 – **Misuse of the words *well* and *good*.** *Good* describes something or somebody. (Like other adjectives, *good* can be used to describe only nouns or pronouns—people, places, things, or ideas.)

Correct: My date is a good dancer.

Well tells how something is done.

Incorrect: My date dances good.

Correct: My date dances well.

3 – **Misuse of the pronoun *me*.** When it comes to pronouns, remember what your momma always told you about being considerate and putting others first. Make your momma proud: Put others first, then follow with pronouns that can play the role of subjects.

Incorrect: Me and Eldora have a lunch date Tuesday. (Would you ever say, “Me has a lunch date Tuesday?” Of course not, so *me* can’t play the role of subject. Get *me* out of there!)

Correct: Eldora and I have a lunch date Tuesday.

4 – **Misuse of reflexive nouns like *myself*, *yourself*, or *herself*.** A sentence must contain another noun or pronoun to which this *self* refers. For example, if *I* is not already in the sentence, it’s incorrect to add *myself*.

Incorrect: Jordan and *myself* have been dating for six months.

Correct: Jordan and I have been dating for six months.

A good reason, on the other hand, to toss in a *self* pronoun is to add emphasis.

Correct: I *myself* told him about the problem!” (meaning: How could he claim that he doesn’t know about the problem? Certainly he knows because I personally told him!)

5 – **Misuse of the verb *to see*.** Another irregular verb that wreaks havoc is *to see*. The typical problem occurs in the past tense, with *seen* (and the failure to use the helping verb *have* or *has* to accompany *seen*).

Incorrect: We seen them go into the courthouse to get married.

Correct: We saw them go into the courthouse to get married.

Correct (if the action continues): We have seen them go into the building.

#

661 words

© Dianna Booher, Booher Consultants, Inc. All rights reserved.

Dianna Booher works with organizations to increase their productivity and effectiveness through better oral, written, interpersonal, and cross-functional communication. She is a keynote speaker and the author of more than 40 books (22 on communication) including The Voice of Authority, Booher's Rules of Business Grammar, Speak with Confidence, and Communicate with Confidence. Dianna is CEO of Booher Consultants, a communication training firm offering programs in presentations skills, business writing, and interpersonal communication. Successful Meetings Magazine named her to its list of "21 Top Speakers for the 21st Century." Executive Excellence Publishing also named Dianna to its "Top 100 Thought Leaders" and "Top 100 Minds on Personal Development." www.booher.com or call 800.342.6621.

*For more on business writing, see Booher's Rules of Business Grammar: 101 Fast and Easy Ways to Correct the Most Common Errors (**McGraw-Hill**) by Dianna Booher.*