



# COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

## when a learner's first language is Dutch

Common language errors can vary a lot according to the first language of the learner. When teaching English as a second language to Dutch students, it is common to spot the following mistakes in a learner's grammar and vocabulary.

### Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **successful** (for example, spelled **succesful**)
- **success** (for example, spelled **succes**)
- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **until** (for example, spelled **untill**)
- **pollution** (for example, spelled **polution**)
- **interested** (for example, spelled **intrested**)
- **embarrassing** (for example, spelled **embarrasing**)
- **because** (for example, spelled **becouse**)
- **very** (for example, spelled **verry**)
- **children** (for example, spelled **childeren**)

It is very common to confuse *to* and *too*, e.g. “**to too** much”. A distinctively Dutch error is to confuse *live* and *life*, e.g. “my whole **live life**”.

### Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

The most common grammatical error for Dutch learners is using the wrong preposition collocation. The most frequent prepositions learners miss out are *in*, *to*, *on* and *for*.

- He wanted his team to be the best **of in** the world.
- When I came back **in to** England, my host family told me a parcel had arrived for me.
- Last Friday we had a party **of for** one of my colleagues.
- I am not only writing **for on** my family's behalf, but also on behalf of the whole neighbourhood.

Key: errors in **red**, corrections in **blue**.



## Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

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This is the third most common grammar/vocabulary error for Dutch learners. A verb is often added where no verb is needed, and the verbs that are most often missed out are *have* and *take*.

- I want to **learn** **teach** them to listen to other people and take care of everybody.
- I think that it is easier to **make** **do** exercises in a group than to **make** **do** them alone.
- This country has decided to make sure that all households **get** **have** drinkable water.

## Conditionals and the present perfect are problematic

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Some common problem areas with tenses are conditionals and the present perfect. The most commonly confused verbs are *was*, *could* and *would*.

- My friend told me that you **can** **could** train me.
- It **will** **would** be fantastic if there **are** **were** more trees in the High Street.
- It **has been** **was** set up by a team of Swiss journalists.
- We **are** **have been** in business for around 10 years now.

## Learners often confuse nouns in set phrases

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Dutch learners tend to have more difficulty in this area than speakers of many other languages. Some of the most frequent errors are as follows:

- This problem is solved already because of the two hundred extra parking **places** **spaces**.
- I am sure that they feel better in the **nature** **wild** than in a zoo.
- If the reliability decreases, the **amount** **number** of complaints will increase.

Key: errors in **red**, corrections in **blue**.