



# 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**.



# COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

## when a learner's first language is French

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

### Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **company** (for example, spelled **compagny**)
- **advertisement** (for example, spelled **advertisment**)
- **future** (for example, spelled **futur**)
- **tomorrow** (for example, spelled **tomorow**)
- **comfortable** (for example, spelled **confortable**)
- **interesting** (for example, spelled **interresting**)
- **beginning** (for example, spelled **begining**)
- **very** (for example, spelled **verry**)
- **address** (for example, spelled **adress**)

French learners are comparatively very good at English spelling, perhaps because of the large number of borrowed French words in English.

### Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

The biggest error for French learners of English is using the wrong verb. *Make* and *do* are used when other verbs are more suitable, while *have*, *get*, *go* and *do* are most often missed out. *Come* and *go* are commonly confused.

- Finally, could you **make do** me a favour?
- I managed to **do go** scuba diving and windsurfing for only £30.
- It took three hours to **go get** to Woolsey Castle.

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



## Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

Preposition errors may depend on verbs, nouns or adjectives either before or after the preposition (shown in bold), so there are a lot of patterns to learn.

- We decided to go to the south of **France** **in to** a small village called Le Grau-du-Roi.
- At first, they were **in on** good **terms** with each other.
- To be **successful** **in at** something is to have a passion.

## Modal verbs and the present tense are problematic

There are often problems with modal verbs like *can* and *would*, and also overuse of present tense.

- It **will would** be better to ask for their prices before accepting the proposal.
- You **could can** buy bus tickets at the airport.
- I liked this competition because it **is was** exciting.

## Commonly confused nouns

- |                        |                    |                    |                   |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| • <b>travel</b>        | <b>trip</b>        | • <b>job</b>       | <b>work</b>       |
| • <b>advertisement</b> | <b>advertising</b> | • <b>travel</b>    | <b>journey</b>    |
| • <b>home</b>          | <b>house</b>       | • <b>education</b> | <b>upbringing</b> |
| • <b>possibility</b>   | <b>opportunity</b> | • <b>amount</b>    | <b>number</b>     |
| • <b>parking</b>       | <b>car park</b>    | • <b>work</b>      | <b>job</b>        |

- If we compare the cost of **advertisement** **advertising** it is nearly the same.
- You can come to my **home** **house** at 5pm.
- My father added his own personal ideas to my **education** **upbringing**.

Finally, a prominent French error is use of **be interesting in** for **be interested in** and **last** for **latest**.

Key: errors in red, corrections in blue.



# COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

## when a learner's first language is German

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

### Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **accomodation**)
- **advertisement** (for example, spelled **advertisment**)
- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **department** (for example, spelled **departement**)
- **interested** (for example, spelled **intrested**)
- **colleagues** (for example, spelled **collegues**)
- **interesting** (for example, spelled **interresting**)
- **programme** (for example, spelled **programm**)
- **decision** (for example, spelled **decission**)
- **sincerely** (for example, spelled **sencereley**)

There is confusion between the verbs **loose** and **lose** and between nouns **costumers** and **customers**.

### Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

The most common errors are **in** for **on**, **of** for **for** and **in** for **at**.

- We would like a seminar **in on** the subject of achieving customer service.
- It could be a centre **of for** recreation and tourism.
- The figures are not available **in at** the moment.

### Word order

A prominent error that learners make is putting words in the wrong order.

- Yes, I **have also also have** a favourite restaurant.
- We have **a quite quite a** big training room.

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



## Conditional and past simple tenses can be easily confused

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These tend to involve either conditional patterns (e.g. the second conditional shown below), or tense errors mainly when learners use present simple instead of past simple.

Conditionals:

- It would be perfect if there **are** **were** sockets for our phone chargers.

Non-conditionals:

- There **is** **was** a slight increase during the first week, but it decreased immediately in the next few days.

## Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

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*Make* is most often used when other verbs are more suitable, while *have*, *had* and *do* are most often missed out. Contextual words which form phrases are shown in bold.

- What you **make** **do with** your talent is up to you.
- We would like to **make** **have** a training **course** in our building.
- You don't know where to go or you've already **made** **had** bad **experiences**.

## Use of the wrong noun in a particular context

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The most common nouns learners don't use when they should are *opportunity*, *number* and *advertising*.

- Volunteering gives students a great **possibility** **opportunity** to socialise.
- It depends on the length of the **way** **journey** from home to work or school.
- It was agreed that **advertisement** **advertising** had a direct impact on profits.

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



# COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

## when a learner's first language is Japanese

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

### Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **convenient** (for example, spelled **convinient**)
- **recommend** (for example, spelled **recomend**)
- **advertisement** (for example, spelled **advertisment**)
- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **accomodation**)
- **environment** (for example, spelled **enviroment**)
- **disappointed** (for example, spelled **dissappointed**)
- **definitely** (for example, spelled **definatly**)
- **course** (for example, spelled **couse**)
- **atmosphere** (for example, spelled **atomosphere**)
- **opportunity** (for example, spelled **oppotunity**)

### Not remembering to include all the determiners

Determiners are words like *the*, *a/an*, and also *my*, *your*, *their*, etc. Determiners are a major problem for languages in the Eastern Hemisphere which tend not to use a word like *the*. They are hard to remember, as there may be more than one in a sentence (shown in bold).

- I called him to ask about fixing **the** TV.
- **The** National Art Gallery and **the** river trip to Greenwich would please them.
- I think it's **a** good idea for us to find a job together.

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



## Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

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The most frequent verbs that learners tend to miss out are *have*, *get* and *go* and the most common errors are using **wish** for **hope** and **can** for **will**.

- Well, I **wish hope** you will enjoy your stay.
- I was disappointed with it so I **would must** ask you for my money back.
- It could **be have** either good or bad effects for them.

## Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

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The most common error is **in** for **on**, while *in* and *for* are the most common prepositions that learners tend to miss out.

- The reasons **of for** the increasing weight (of people) in some countries can be impacted by fast food.
- More than one in five students were enrolled **to for** further study.
- I often used to go out and play with my friend **at in** the countryside.
- The technologies are based **in on** the old history or culture.

A prominent error for Japanese learners is forgetting prepositions. For example “I looked **at** it very carefully”.

## Confusion between verb tenses

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The most common errors are made when Japanese learners use **would** for **will**, **is** for **was** and **can** for **could**.

- She **is was** not kind to us.
- The sun **is shining shone** very much.
- Please ensure next year’s programme **would will** be great for students.

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





# COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

## when a learner's first language is Korean

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

### Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

Learners tend to omit the *n* in words like *government* and *environment*.

- **government** (for example, spelled **goverment**)
- **environment** (for example, spelled **enviroment**)
- **convenient** (for example, spelled **convinient**)
- **modern** (for example, spelled **mordern**)
- **attendance** (for example, spelled **attendence**)
- **recommend** (for example, spelled **recommand**)
- **restaurant** (for example, spelled **resturant**)
- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **accomodation**)
- **nowadays** (for example, spelled **nowdays**)
- **different** (for example, spelled **diffrent**)

### Not remembering all the determiners

Determiners include words like *the*, *a/an*, and also *my*, *your*, *their*, etc. Determiners are a major problem for languages in the Eastern Hemisphere which tend not to use a word like *the*.

- There is **a** new coach service to get to Lampton you can use instead of taking **the** train from London.
- I have a TV with **a** video recorder which I bought last year.

Korean speakers are the most likely to add unnecessary determiners to a sentence.

- We walked to **the** Durham Castle and went shopping.

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



## Use of the wrong preposition in a particular context or phrase

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Preposition errors may depend on the verbs, nouns or adjectives (shown in bold) used either before or after the preposition, so there are a lot of patterns to learn. The most frequently underused prepositions are *in*, *for* and *on*.

- The **reasons** **of** **for** unemployment may be different from country to country.
- The graph shows the **change** **of** **in** TV advertising income.
- 10% of students reside in the boarding house **in** **on** the **campus**.

## Use of the wrong verb in a particular context or phrase

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The most frequent verbs that Korean speakers tend to miss out are forms of *have*: *has*, *have* and *had*.

- During this century, scientific technology **is** **has** developed.
- All age groups **attending** **going to** the cinema have increased.
- I **wish** **hope** I can help you with your project.

## Confusion between verb tenses

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The most common errors are made with modals and present/past confusions.

- You must be excited about coming to Korea. I know it **would** **will** be quite different from other countries you've visited.
- The hotel where we stayed **is** **was** very clean.
- We decided to go down as quickly as we **can** **could**.

Key: errors in red, corrections in blue.



# COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

## when a learner's first language is Portuguese

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

### Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **comfortable** (for example, spelled **confortable**)
- **beautiful** (for example, spelled **beatiful**)
- **beginning** (for example, spelled **begining**)
- **because** (for example, spelled **becouse**)
- **believe** (for example, spelled **belive**)
- **different** (for example, spelled **diferent**)
- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **acomodation**)
- **together** (for example, spelled **togheter**)
- **always** (for example, spelled **allways**)

### Confusion of prepositions in a context or phrase

The most frequently confused prepositions are *in*, *at* and *on*. The top errors are **in** for **at**, **in** for **on** and **on** for **in**.

- She sat **in** the living room with the letter **on in** her hands.
- I would like to apply **to for** the job.
- A person could expect to have a job **in at** that time.

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



## Use of the wrong verb in a context or phrase

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The most commonly confused verbs are **use** for **wear**, **go** for **come** and **forgot** for **left**. The most frequent verbs that Portuguese learners miss out are verbs are *have*, *wear* and *is*.

- It's going to be hot so try to **use wear** comfortable clothes.
- Can you **go come** to my house?
- I **forgot left** my passport at your house yesterday evening.

A distinctive error that Portuguese learners make is the use of the wrong form of a non-finite verb, e.g. "You can get a bus or taxi **for going to go** to the park". This may also include an incorrect preposition.

## Confusion between verb tenses

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Portuguese speakers often use the present instead of the past, often in conditionals...

- It would be reasonable if I **have had** at least part of the money refunded.

...or just normal past and present confusion.

- Everybody **like liked** to talk about their problems with him.

## Learners often confuse nouns

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Some of the most commonly confused nouns include **work** for **job**, **cloth** for **clothes**, or **travel** for **trip**.

- A good person is one who has achieved a good professional level in a **work job** which he or she enjoys.
- The **travel trip** was already paid for.
- I moved to a new **home house** last week.

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



# COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

## when a learner's first language is Spanish

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

### Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **acomodation**)
- **comfortable** (for example, spelled **confortable**)
- **because** (for example, spelled **becouse**)
- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **received** (for example, spelled **recived**)
- **beautiful** (for example, spelled **beatiful**)
- **recommend** (for example, spelled **recomend**)
- **together** (for example, spelled **toghether**)
- **believe** (for example, spelled **belive**)
- **excellent** (for example, spelled **excelent**)

*Accommodation* and *comfortable* are two words that typically cause problems for Spanish learners, as these cognates are spelled slightly differently in Spanish.

### Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

This is the most common grammatical error made by Spanish learners. The words most often missed out are *in*, *at* and *on*. The most common errors arise with wrong preposition + noun.

- I have to wake up five hours beforehand to arrive **in at** my job on time.
- They like going abroad **in on** package holidays.
- The traffic is impossible **on at** peak hours.

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



## Use of present tenses instead of past tenses (and vice versa)

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This is the second most common grammatical error for Spanish learners, and it is high for Spanish learners in comparison to other first languages. The most commonly confused words are *had*, *was* and *would*. *Had* is also overused. There are many different tenses involved.

- I **remember** **I've just remembered** that I have to go to the dentist at 4pm.
- I **buy** **bought** a new bed because the other bed was very old.
- London became my home because I **have** **had** already left mine in Spain.

## Using the wrong verb for a particular context

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Use of the right verb often depends on a phrase, e.g. “make a decision”. The most commonly confused verbs are *have*, *come* and *go*. The most common mistakes are **go** for **come**, **use** for **wear** and **make** for **do**.

- Trust me, you won't **do** **make** the wrong choice.
- It is her birthday so I want to **do** **have** a party.
- He has to **travel** **commute** five days a week.

Another error which stands out for Spanish learners as opposed to other first languages is use of the wrong verb form, e.g. “I tried **go to go** out into the garden.”

## Using the wrong noun for a particular context

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The most commonly confused nouns are *time*, *clothes* and *house*, and the most common mistakes are **home** for **house** and **cloth** for **clothes**.

- Suddenly we saw a figure in the **shades** **shadows**.
- I have just moved into another **home** **house**.
- We used to take the bus every day at the same **hour** **time**.

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