The 20 Most Confusing Rules in the Grammar World

1.   "Me" vs. "I"

This is one rule you probably heard starting back in elementary school. If you uttered, "Me and Mike went to the store," you probably heard someone admonish, "Mike *and I*!" The problem with that, though, is that many people end up over-correcting. Though "Mike and I went to the store" is right, in some sentences, it *is* correct to use "me"—it depends on whether the first-person pronoun is a subject or an object. Here's an easy way to know: Take out the other person, and

see if "me" or "I" makes sense. "Me went to the store" is incorrect, but "My mom met me at the store" is perfectly fine. So it's grammatically correct to say "My mom met me and my dad at the store," *not* "my dad and I."

2.   "It's" vs. "its"

The rabbit crawled into it's burrow.

Use the wrong form of "its," "there," or "your," and *you're* (a contraction of "you are") sure to have the grammar police wag *their* (the possessive form of "they") fingers at you. But we do have to admit, when it comes to "it's" vs. "its," the confusion is easy to understand. In virtually every other situation, an apostrophe indicates possession. Bob's car. Lisa's house. *Reader's Digest*. But when it comes to "it," the possessive form is the form *without* the apostrophe. "The rabbit crawled into *its* burrow" is the correct use. In the case of "it's," the apostrophe means the word is a contraction of "it is." It serves the same function as the apostrophe in "won't" or "shouldn't."

3.   Who vs. Whom

With whom
Who did you go shopping with?

Boiled down, this rule is simple. "Who" refers to the subject of a sentence or clause, while "whom" refers to the object. But when you actually get down to using the two words in a sentence, that's when things get dicey. You would ask, "**Who** went shopping with you?" since "Who" is the subject. But you could also ask, "With **whom** did you go shopping?" since "You" is the subject. Grammarly

recommends a tip that should help you figure it out, if you're truly determined to. Substitute the "who/whom" pronoun with "he/him" or "she/her," rearranging the sentence if necessary. "**She** went shopping with you" ("who"), but "You went shopping with **her**" ("whom").

4.   Wacky plurals

Three deers crossed the road at noon.

From "goose/geese" to "mouse/mice" to "foot/feet," English is full of plural forms that leave even native speakers scratching their heads. And for some words, the plural form of the word is exactly the same as the singular form. Consider "deer," "sheep," and even "aircraft." In the case of "aircraft," it may be because the word "craft," as in a vessel, originated as an "elliptical expression." The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that the old expression may have been something like "vessels of small craft." "Deer," though confusing, is pretty tame compared to these hilarious irregular plurals you won't believe are real.

5.   British vs. American spellings

There are so many colours in her painting.

Even within the single language of English, we're not guaranteed standardized spelling. Or, rather, "standardised," as people on the other side of the pond usually spell it! The fact that there are British and American spellings of different words is a bane of linguists and study-abroaders in English-speaking countries. For the different spellings, we can thank those pesky American revolutionaries. In 1789,

Noah Webster of Webster's Dictionary fame spearheaded the push toward "American" variations on some words. For the most part, the alterations of the words involved removing "superfluous" letters like the U in "colour" and the final "-me" in "programme."

6.   Ending sentences with prepositions

This is one rule that grammar sticklers love to argue about. (See what we did there?) Because the word "preposition" derives from a Latin word meaning "to place before," some insist that prepositions should always go before their prepositional objects. However, while that's true in Latin grammar claims that "English grammar is different from Latin grammar, and the rule does not fit English."

7.   "Good" or "well"?

The big quandary with this one is that "good" is primarily an adjective (though it could be a noun), and "well" is an adverb. When people say, "I'm doing good," they're using "good" as an adverb to modify the verb "doing." Technically, "I'm

doing well" is the correct phrase, and "I'm doing good" actually means that you're doing good deeds like a superhero. But, if you're not hung up on being correct, it's not worth it to stress about it—people will almost definitely know what you mean!

8.   "Badly" or "bad"?

Less hotly debated than "good" vs. "well," but equally confusing, is its moral counterpart: bad. Whether you "feel bad" about something as in feeling sorry or remorseful, or "feel bad" as in feeling sick or unpleasant, it should be "bad," not "badly." The confusing part about this, though, is that "badly" is also an adverb. But, simply because of the different usages of the verb "feel," the only time "I feel badly" would be completely correct is if you were using "feel" to mean physically discern something by touch. If your hand is numb because you slept on your arm weird, you might feel badly. Here's another rule, though, where context clues will almost definitely ensure that people know what you mean, regardless of whether you're using the phrase correctly.

9.   Apostrophes on words ending with S

Is "I went to Lucas' for dinner" or "I went to Lucas's for dinner" correct? Grammarians are divided, but the Oxford Living Dictionaries suggest this rule:

Add an apostrophe and an S, as in the latter example, when you would actually pronounce the additional S while saying the sentence out loud. This extra S business gets even more confusing when the word ending with S is also plural. In that case, add an "-es" to the end and throw the apostrophe at the very end: "The Joneses' car was blocking my driveway."

10. "Could care less"

"I couldn't care less" means exactly that. You care so little that you could not care any less. Not so confusing! What *is* confusing about this one is the fact that people seem to think that "*could* care less" means the same thing, when it's really the exact opposite. According to Grammar Girl, "The phrase 'I couldn't care less' originated in Britain and made its way to the United States in the 1950s. The phrase 'I could care less' appeared in the U.S. about a decade later." Harvard professor Stephen Pinker has suggested that people started saying "I could care less" sarcastically, meaning that they actually *couldn't* care less, and that this version of the expression—without the intentional sarcasm—stuck.

To be continued …

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