

Lesson 27: Errors from Students' Homework

This is our final lesson about vocabulary mistakes, and today I'll teach you about some errors that I and my teaching team have found very frequently when correcting students' homework.

If you're interested in getting personalized feedback and corrections on your writing, you can join our [Advanced English Grammar Course](#) or our [Reading Course](#), and select the option with teacher feedback.

Error #108

The first mistake is using **actually** when you should say **currently** - for example, if someone asks a student, "Where do you work now?" and they say, "I actually work at a university." This is incorrect.

Currently means "now, at the present moment."

- The unemployment rate is **currently** 8%.
(the rate right now)
- I'm **currently** taking a course with Espresso English.
(I'm taking a course now)

Actually means "in reality," and it is often used to make corrections:

- "You're from Brazil so you speak Spanish, right?"
"Actually, Portuguese is spoken in Brazil."
(making a correction)
- This article claims that unemployment is at 5%, but it's **actually** 8%.
(= the real/true rate)

Error #109

Don't say:

- I need to finish the project **until** Friday.

Say:

- I need to finish the project **by** Friday.

When talking about with a time in the future, **by** is used for one specific event, and **until** is used for a continuous event. "Finishing the project" is a single moment in time (one specific event) so we use "by Friday" in this case.

Here's an example with **until**: "Can I stay at your house until Friday?" In this case, the action of "staying at your house" is a continuous action that covers ALL the time from now to Friday.

Here are more examples:

Use **by** if a single event will happen before that point:

- I will send you the information **by** Friday. (= *before Friday*)
- Our guests will arrive **by** 6:00. (= *before 6:00*)

Use **until** if a continuous event will continue and then stop at that point:

- I'll be working on the project **until** Friday.
(= *continuously until Friday; I will stop working on Friday*)
- Our guests will stay **until** 9:00.
(= *continuously until 9:00; they will leave at 9:00*)

Error #110

Don't say:

- My roommates went out, so I'm home **only**.

Say:

- My roommates went out, so I'm home **alone**.

Alone means “by yourself” – there is nobody else with you:

- I like to take long walks **alone** so that I have time to think.
- He got up and left the restaurant, leaving me **alone** at the table.

Only means “just one” and can be used with people, objects, or actions. After the word **only**, we must have a person, object, or action.

- Dana was the **only** student who understood today's English lesson.
- I have **only** one pair of sunglasses.
- I didn't have a lot of money, so I **only** bought this T-shirt.

We also have the word **lonely** meaning “feeling sad and isolated” – it is a negative emotion.

- I was **lonely** on my first day of class because I didn't have any friends.
- She can't stand being single; she says she feels **lonely** without a boyfriend.

Error #111

Don't say:

- I sent the letter two months **before**.

Say:

- I sent the letter two months **ago**.
- I sent the letter two months **back**. (informal)

Ago and **back** (*informal*) are used for past times *from the present moment*:

- I graduated from high school ten years **ago**.
(*ten years in the past from today*)
- We sent the package three days **ago**.
(*three days in the past from today*)

- I moved here about five years **back**.
(*informal – five years in the past from today*)

Before and **earlier** are used for past times *from another time in the past*.

Here are some examples:

- Yesterday I missed my train. I got to the train station at 7:10, but the train had left ten minutes **before**. (or ten minutes **earlier**)
(= at 7:00, ten minutes before I got to the train station yesterday)
- I was very happy when I got this job last June, because I had lost my previous job six months **before**. (or six months **earlier**).
(= six months before last June)

Error #112

Don't say:

- I have **so** wonderful friends.

Say:

- I have **such** wonderful friends.
- My friends are **so** wonderful.

The rule here is simple:

- **SO** + adjective
- **SUCH** + adjective + noun (object / person described)

Compare these sentences:

- Their dog is **so** cute.
- They have **such** a cute **dog**.
- Her kids are **so** obedient.
- She has **such** obedient **kids**.

Error #113

Don't say:

- I invited **all the class** to the party.

Say:

- I invited **the entire class** to the party.
- I invited **the whole class** to the party. (*more informal*)

Use **all** with *plural* countable nouns to mean 100% of many things:

- **All** the **students** in the class have computers.
- **All** the **necklaces** in this store are expensive.

Use **whole** or **entire** with *singular* countable nouns to mean 100% of one thing:

- I ate the **whole/entire** pizza.
= 100% of one pizza.
- I finished reading the **whole/entire** book in three days.
=100% of one book.

Here are more examples that show the difference between **all** and **whole**:

- I ate the **whole** cake.
= 100% of one cake.
- I ate **all** the cakes.
= 100% of many cakes
- The **whole** house is messy.
= 100% of one house.
- **All the houses** are messy.
= 100% of many houses

Coming back to our original example, we invited the class - one class. So we say I invited the whole class / the entire class.

If we wanted to use the word students, plural, then we could say I invited **all the students** (many students). But class is singular so we say **the whole class or the entire class** (not all the class).

This brings us to the end of our section on vocabulary - next, we'll dive into the most common spelling errors. Go ahead and take the practice quiz to review what you've learned in this lesson. Bye for now!

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[200 COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH COURSE:](#)



Quiz – Lesson 27

Choose the best word to complete each sentence:

1. I'll get my master's degree by/until the time I'm 26 years old.
2. Are there hardwood floors in all the house / the whole house, or only the living room?
3. He did have heart problems, but he actually/currently died in a car accident.
4. My daughter likes playing with other kids; she gets bored when she's alone/only.
5. He's not here - he left fifteen minutes ago/before.
6. All my body / My entire body was sore the day after the hike.
7. I had so/such amazing experiences on my trip to South America.
8. They're actually/currently Korean, not Chinese.
9. Immigrants to a new country often feel only/lonely if they don't speak the language.
10. My boyfriend is the alone/only guy I've dated who has treated me well.
11. The boss is actually/currently in a meeting; she'll be available in about 40 minutes.
12. I adopted a new cat in January; my previous cat had died two months ago/before.
13. We're on vacation by/until August 18.
14. Wow, this cake is so/such delicious!
15. You need to pick up your children from school by/until 3:30 at the latest.
16. Her grades were so/such good that she got a full scholarship to college.
17. I couldn't find a seat because all the chairs / the whole chairs were taken.

Answers – Quiz – Lesson 27

1. by
2. the whole house
3. actually
4. alone
5. ago
6. My entire body
7. such
8. actually
9. lonely
10. only
11. currently
12. before
13. until
14. so
15. by
16. so
17. all the chairs