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The New Zealand Water & Wastes Association Waiora Aotearoa



Water New Zealand Presentation Guide

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Start with a laugh - A bunch of words walk into a bar

Here is a selection of howlers from wonderful list¹ of common errors in English usage.

Want to understand and avoid them?

They are decoded in the table at the very end of this Guide – and you can download all these excellent grammar bar jokes from the Water New Zealand Presentation Guide webpage as a standalone booklet.

A dangling participle walks into a bar. Enjoying a cocktail and chatting with the bartender, the evening passes pleasantly.

A bar was walked into by the passive voice.

Two quotation marks walk into a “bar.”

A non sequitur walks into a bar. In a strong wind, even turkeys can fly.

A mixed metaphor walks into a bar, seeing the handwriting on the wall but hoping to nip it in the bud.

A comma splice walks into a bar, it has a drink and then leaves.

At the end of the day, a cliché walks into a bar -- fresh as a daisy, cute as a button, and sharp as a tack.

A run-on sentence walks into a bar it starts flirting. With a cute little sentence fragment.

A misplaced modifier walks into a bar owned a man with a glass eye named Ralph.

A dyslexic walk into a bra.

The grammar of bar jokes explained

The information here has been lightly edited from the source below.

[Linda K Sienkiewicz](http://lindak sienkiewicz.com/bar-jokes-and-grammar/), 14 May 2018. Downloaded from <http://lindak sienkiewicz.com/bar-jokes-and-grammar/> (accessed 10 August 2021)

What’s better than bar jokes for English majors, grammar nerds and writers? Especially when they also serve as mini grammar lessons! These jokes are all over the internet, and unfortunately I couldn’t find the author. But here they are for you, with my lessons.

A dangling participle walks into a bar. Enjoying a cocktail and chatting with the bartender, the evening passes pleasantly.

A dangling participle is one that was intended to modify a noun which is not actually present in the text. The second sentence reads as if the evening is enjoying the cocktail and chatting, which makes no sense.

A bar was walked into by the passive voice.

The passive voice is when the subject of the sentence is acted on by the verb. Good writers avoid using the passive voice, and instead use the active voice, writing, *A voice walked into the bar*. Passive voice is often used by people who are loath to say *they* made a mistake, and use the passive voice to say, ‘Mistakes were made.’ It leaves us to wonder who it was who made the mistake.

An oxymoron walked into a bar, and the silence was deafening.

Silence and deafening are self-contradicting words defined as an oxymoron. This is not necessarily a grammar error, however. If used well, oxymorons can be effective.

Two quotation marks walk into a “bar.”

Putting quotation marks around a word brings attention to it, and not always in a good way. [Unnecessary quotation marks](#) can cause a reader to question the validity of the quoted object. Was it really a bar, or was it pretending?

A malapropism walks into a bar, looking for all intents and purposes like a wolf in cheap clothing, muttering epitaphs and casting dispersions on his magnificent other, who takes him for granite.

Can you find the six malapropisms in this sentence? A malapropism is the mistaken and often amusing use of a word in place of a similar-sounding one. In this sentence;

1. 'intensive purposes' is mistakenly used for intents and purposes
2. 'cheap' clothing used for sheep
3. muttering 'epitaphs' instead of 'epigrams'
4. casting 'dispersions' mistakenly used for casting 'aspersions'
5. 'magnificent' other instead of 'significant' other
6. 'granite' instead of granted.

Find out more about Mrs Malaprop [here](#).

Hyperbole totally rips into this insane bar and absolutely destroys everything.

Hyperbole is exaggeration so insanely wild that it can't be taken seriously.

A question mark walks into a bar?

Say what?

A non sequitur walks into a bar. In a strong wind, even turkeys can fly.

A non sequitur is a conclusion or statement that does not logically follow from the previous argument or statement.

Papyrus and Comic Sans walk into a bar. The bartender says, 'Get out — we don't serve your type here.'

Papyrus and Comic Sans are typeface fonts.

A mixed metaphor walks into a bar, seeing the handwriting on the wall but hoping to nip it in the bud.

In this case, the two metaphors are not compatible. Compatible metaphors might be 'A metaphor walks into a bar, sees the handwriting on the wall and hopes to make a clean slate.' Of course, the sentence makes no sense, but that's beside the point.

A comma splice walks into a bar, it has a drink and then leaves.

A comma splice is when the comma doesn't connect the two parts of the sentences. Corrected, it would read, 'A comma walks into a bar, has a drink and then leaves.' The comma splice structure is annoyingly common. It can also be fixed by turning it into two separate sentences, e.g. 'A comma walks into a bar. It has a drink and then leaves.' (Except now there's no comma in the sentence.)

A run-on sentence walks into a bar it starts flirting. With a cute little sentence fragment.

Obviously. A bit like the comma splice above, this creates sentences that are just not grammatically correct.

Three intransitive verbs walk into a bar. They sit. They converse. They depart.

Do you know what's wrong with these sentences? Nothing! That's because intransitive verbs are action verbs that do not need to be followed by a direct object. Find out more about transitive verbs [here](#).

A synonym strolls into a tavern.

Synonyms are two words that have nearly the same meaning, like 'tavern' and 'bar'. I guess because people go on tavern strolls or bar strolls, 'strolls into a tavern' makes them synonyms, but personally I don't think it's a great example. Unless I'm missing something. Perhaps because this series is called 'words walk into a bar', use of the word 'tavern' illustrates the point...

At the end of the day, a cliché walks into a bar — fresh as a daisy, cute as a button, and sharp as a tack.

As George Orwell said, 'Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.' Linda finds these 'really unimaginative examples of clichés! At least they could have been drinking related, as in drunk as a skunk, three sheets to the wind, and fit to be tied,' she says.

Falling slowly, softly falling, the chiasmus collapses to the bar floor.

A chiasmus is a sentence structure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form, as in 'falling slowly, softly falling'.

A figure of speech literally walks into a bar and ends up getting figuratively hammered.

'Literally' means taken in the strictest sense. If someone literally walked into a bar, they would have walked into the wall of the building (as opposed to using the door to go inside.) Figuratively means with a more imaginative meaning or in a metaphorical sense. Here, the figure didn't get literally hit by a hammer, or figuratively 'hammered' as in 'drunk'; he was figuratively hammered by hitting the wall of the bar.

An allusion walks into a bar, despite the fact that alcohol is its Achilles heel.

An allusion an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly, or an indirect or passing reference. An Achilles heel is a shortcoming, weakness or failing. So alcohol is the shortcoming of this allusion.

The subjunctive would have walked into a bar, had it only known one was there.

A [subjunctive verb](#) denotes an action that did not occur for some reason and is therefore not a real action.

A misplaced modifier walks into a bar owned by a man with a glass eye named Ralph.

The modifier is the glass eye, and because it's misplaced in this sentence, it reads as if the eye is named Ralph. It should read, 'The modifier walks into a bar owned by a one-eyed man named Ralph.'

The past, present, and future walked into a bar. The atmosphere was tense.

Hopefully this needs no explanation!

A dyslexic walks into a bra.

If you're a person with dyslexia, this may not be funny.

A verb walks into a bar, sees a beautiful noun, and suggests they conjugate. The noun declines.

Linda says, 'I'll let you look up the definition of a [conjugated verb!](#)' This is one of the times I'm glad I took Latin at high school! (Ed.)

An Oxford comma walks into a bar, where it spends the evening watching the television getting drunk and smoking cigars.

The [Oxford](#) (or serial) comma is the final comma in a list of things, and it's missing in this list! It should read, '*An Oxford comma walks into a bar, where it spends the evening watching the television, getting drunk, and smoking cigars.*'

A simile walks into a bar, as parched as a desert.

A simile is a comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, and is used to make a description more emphatic or vivid.

A gerund and an infinitive walk into a bar. The gerund suggested drinking to forget.

A gerund, sometimes called a noun-verb, is a verb with 'ing' added, which turns it into a noun. An infinitive is a verb with 'to' preceding it e.g. 'walk' vs 'to walk'. More about gerunds [here](#).

A hyphenated word and a non-hyphenated word walk into a bar and the bartender nearly chokes on the irony.

The irony is there's no hyphen in hyphenated, and there is a hyphen in non-hyphenated!

References cited

- ¹ Grammar walks into a bar. Sourced from <https://www.bar.com/bar-jokes/grammar-walks-into-a-bar/> (accessed 10 August 2021)