

English Language Use Exercise
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[updated: Saturday, January 17, 2015]

“Only in grammar can you be more than perfect.”
---William Safire (1929-2009)

Purpose

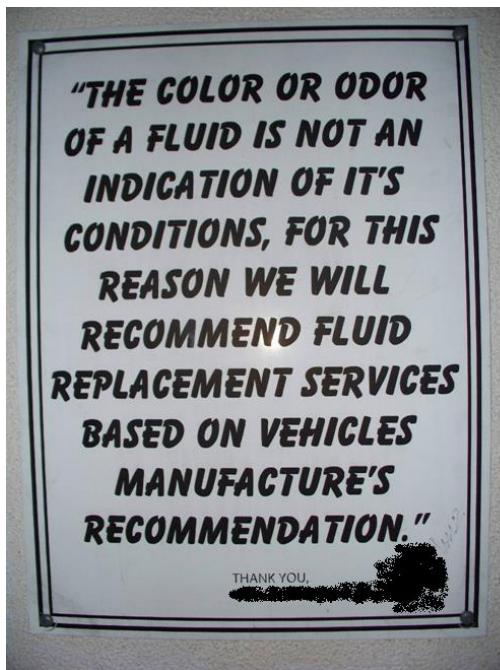
The purpose of this document is to help students identify and rectify punctuation anomalies. The passage below was taken verbatim from a customer-facing, publicly-visible sign at a commercial establishment located in the San Fernando Valley.

The references in the table below refer to the following writing handbook:

Hacker, D. (2007), *The Writer's Reference* (6th ed.), Bedford/St. Martin's.

If this document is unclear, please see the instructor.

Initial Passage



“The color or odor of a fluid is not an indication of it’s conditions, for this reason we will recommend fluid replacement services based on vehicles manufacture’s recommendation.”

Potential Anomalies

<i>Fragment</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Correction</i>
...it's...	<i>It's</i> is a contraction of <i>it is</i> . The possessive pronoun <i>its</i> refers to the fluid.	“Do not use an apostrophe in the possessive pronouns <i>its, whose, his, hers, ours, yours, and theirs</i> despite the fact that these pronouns are possessive.” [W1, p. 130], [P5-e, pp. 281-282]	...its...
...conditions...	The noun <i>conditions</i> refers to the (singular, possessive pronoun) <i>its</i> , which in turn refers to the (singular noun) <i>fluid</i> . The noun <i>conditions</i> neither refers to the <i>color or odor of the fluid</i> (which could reasonably be interpreted as plural) nor the (plural inflection) <i>fluids</i> .	“If two or more ideas are parallel, they are easier to grasp when expressed in parallel grammatical form.” [S1, p. 93]	...condition...
...it's conditions, for this reason...	A comma splice is a type of run-on sentence. [G6, p. 210]	“[Commas require] a coordinating conjunction (<i>and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet</i>) [G6-a, p. 212]. [Semicolons require] a transitional expression (such as <i>however</i>) [P3-b, p. 274], a transitional phrase (such as <i>as a result</i>) [P3-c, p. 275], or a conjunctive adverb (such as <i>accordingly</i>) [B1-g, p. 497].	...its condition. For this reason,...
...on vehicles...	The definite article <i>the</i> is omitted.	“Use <i>the</i> with most specific common [both count and non-	...on the vehicle...

		count] nouns.” [E3-c, p. 243]	
...manufacture’s...	<i>Manufacture</i> is a noun or a verb (i.e., a process). <i>Manufacturer</i> is specific common noun (i.e., an entity).	“A good dictionary...is an indispensable writer’s aid.” [W6-a, p. 156]	...manufacturer’s
...on vehicles manufacture’s recommendation.	The <i>recommendation</i> is owned by the <i>vehicle manufacturer</i> (as opposed to, say, an <i>oil manufacturer</i>). As used in this sentence fragment, <i>vehicle</i> is a singular, cumulative adjective.	“In English, adjectives are not pluralized to agree with the words they modify.” [G4, p. 199]	...on the vehicle manufacturer’s recommendation.

Improved Passage

“The color or odor of a fluid is not an indication of its condition. For this reason, we will recommend fluid replacement services based on the vehicle manufacturer’s recommendation.”

(Note: With respect to the selection and arrangement of words and sentences above, other writers might make choices that are different but equivalent.)