

Key: Recognizing Common Errors in Usage

The following exercise is intended to make you sensitive to the most common usage errors made by engineers and scientists in their writing. Explanations of these errors can be found in Appendix B of *The Craft of Scientific Writing* and at the following site:

<http://writing.engr.psu.edu/exercises/>

The correct choice is highlighted.

- 1) We produced a small (amount / **number**) of automobiles this year, even (**fewer** / less) than last year.
- 2) The serum, which was (**composed** / comprised) of two antigens, had serious side (affects / **effects**).
- 3) Every 250 years, Pluto completes (**its** / it's) orbit about the sun.
- 4) The talk centered (around / **on**) the (principal / **principle**) of virtual work.
- 5) This report discusses how the eruption (**affected** / effected) the surrounding terrain.
- 6) Reduced weight was the (**principal** / principle) reason for choosing aluminum.
- 7) All the bombings involved explosives (**that** / , which) contained the chemicals PETN and RDX.
- 8) All the bombings involved Semtex (that / , **which**) contains the chemicals PETN and RDX.
- 9) In the past three months, a new series of low-priced computers (**has** / have) been released.
- 10) When you receive my (boss' / **boss's**) memo, please respond quickly.
- 11) Following those descriptions, the criteria for assessing each system (**are** / is) given.
- 12) Our experiment had (3 / **three**) transducers.
- 13) The velocity was (**3** / three) m/s.
- 14) (**54** / Fifty-four) sets of data were taken in all.
- 15) Last year, Japan (lead / **led**) the world in automobile sales.
- 16) Over the past three weeks, our team made (**continual** / continuous) improvements to the design.
- 17) Thank you for the job offer. I am (anxious, **eager**) to begin work next month.
- 18) When a photon in that energy range strikes the atom, the atom (looses / **loses**) one of its outer electrons.
- 19) The airfield looked much (**as** / like) it did when the Hindenburg exploded almost fifty years ago.
- 20) (**Hopefully**, / **It is hoped that**) the antibodies will destroy the cancer cells.