Grammar and Usage Review

1. What’s a complete sentence?  S-V-O  (The actor does something to the object)
   *The pitcher threw the ball.*

2. Consistent Use of Tenses: Don't switch mid-story from past to present. News is past tense. Features may be written in present tense. (Check with your professor)

3. Subject-Verb Agreement: Singular subjects need singular verbs.
   *The box of blocks was scattered across the playroom. (disregard the prepositional phrase “of blocks”)*

   Everyone, each, everything and everybody sound plural, but they take singular verbs.

   Wrong: *The coach told everyone to try their hardest.*
   Right: *The coach told everyone to try his hardest.* (if clear all are male)
   Or *The coach told all of them to try their hardest.*

4. It’s vs. Its and other errors in apostrophe usage:

   “It’s” is the possessive and “it’s” is a contraction.
   *It’s their dog. Its name is “Peppy”*

5. Their/ there/ they’re

   *Where is their dog?*
   *It’s over there.*
   *They always lose Peppy; they’re fairly irresponsible.*

   *The hogs are in their place over there when they’re in the barn.*

6. Misplaced modifiers

   Right: *Gazing out the window, Paul missed the homework assignment that Professor Zuromski wrote on the board.*
   Wrong: *Gazing out the window, the homework assignment that Professor Zuromski wrote on the board went unnoticed by Paul.*
7. I, me/ who, whom /he, him: I, who and he are subjects. Me, whom and him are objects.
   She knew whom the director would interview next.
   Who should be the next president? (Try replacing who with he and whom with him)

8. Affect/ effect

   What effect does caffeine have on your brain?
   Caffeine affects my ability to sit still for more than 15 minutes.

9. Persuade/convince: Convince someone to believe and persuade them to act.

   I persuaded my friends to stay until the end of the game.
   I convince my friends that UT was about to make a comeback.

10. Clarity in pronouns: Who are THEY?
    The students honored their teachers and recalled their most memorable moments of the semester. Whose moments are memorable?

11. That/ which: Use that without commas for essential clauses. Use a comma before which in non-essential clauses.

   I go to the university that offers the only Arabic program specializing in foreign relations.
   I go to the University of Texas, which offers over 50 different majors.

12. Lay/lie: Lay means “to place” and takes a direct object. Lie means “to recline” and has no direct object.
   I laid the style book on the desk.
   Diana lay on the beach.

13. Eliminate passive voice. If you can add “by zombies” after the verb, it’s passive.

   The ball was thrown by the quarterback. (by zombies)
   The quarterback threw the ball.

14. Good/well

   How’s your day going, Matt? It’s going well.
   I’ve never been to that new ramen place on the drag. How is it? It’s pretty good.