

USAGE

Several of the usage errors in Level Three involve prepositional or infinitive phrases.

Use **afraid of** and **frightened by** rather than **frightened of**: *He was frightened by a moose and has been afraid of them ever since.*

Something is **between** two: *This secret is between you and that Visigoth.*

Something is **among** three or more: *Divide the fish among the five centurions.*

Not **could of** or **should of** but **could have** or **should have**: *I could have chased pigeons, and I should have chased pigeons.* *Of* is a preposition; it is never a helping verb. It is not that you *of* listened; it is that you *have* listened.

Different from, not **different than**: *The oar was different from the others.*

Use **kind of** rather than **kind of a**: *It seemed to be some kind of room.*

Use **like** to compare nouns and pronouns as a preposition that indicates similarity: *William Butler Yeats once wrote that old men had "hands like claws."*

Use **such as** to show examples: *He had enemies, such as Alaric the Visigoth.*

The phrase **relate to** is a vague colloquialism. Instead of saying that many people relate to J.D. Salinger's character Holden Caulfield, say that many people understand Holden, or they find that Holden's struggles remind them of their own struggles.

Use the infinitive construction **try to** rather than **try and**: *Please try to help.*

The issue here is largely one of knowing the difference between the customs of academic language and the customs of colloquial conversation. You acquire a feeling for these details by reading excellent nonfiction and by taking the time to study the details of good usage directly.