

Faulty Comparisons

Sometimes a comparison may be clear in the writer's mind, but because of the word arrangement or omission of words, the written comparison may be unclear to the reader. These comparisons may be **illogical**, **incomplete**, **ambiguous**, or **ungrammatical**.

1. Illogical Comparisons

Frequently, writers compare two items other than the two items they intend to compare.

Example 1:

Illogical LSU's workshops are more effective than FSU.
Logical LSU's workshops are more effective than FSU's.
Logical LSU's workshops are more effective than those at FSU.

The illogical comparison above compares the **LSU workshops** to **FSU** when the writer means to compare the **LSU workshops** to **workshops at FSU**.

Example 2:

Illogical That famous lawyer is a friend of my father's.
Logical That famous lawyer is a friend of my father.

The illogical comparison above incorrectly suggests that the **famous lawyer** is "a **friend of my father's (friend)**."

NOTE: Include the word **other** or **else** when comparing a member of a group to the other members of the same group.

Example 3:

Illogical King drank more than any frat boy.
Logical King drank more than any **other** frat boy.
Logical King drank more than anyone **else** at the frat party.

2. Incomplete Comparisons

A comparison which is started but not completed forces readers to try to imagine what the writer intended, creating the possibility of error.

Examples:

Incomplete The string on Kiki's kite is shorter.
Complete The string on Kiki's kite is shorter than the string on Ann's kite.

- Incomplete** A Key West sunset is more beautiful.
- Complete** A Key West sunset is more beautiful than a St. George Island sunset.

The incomplete comparisons above are lacking the second part of the analogy and leave too much up to reader interpretation. The writer is clear about the meaning in the completed comparisons.

3. Ambiguous Comparisons

These comparisons are unclear and easily misunderstood. As seen by the comparisons below, the ambiguous comparisons can be interpreted in **two ways**, and this ambiguity can confuse or mislead the reader.

Examples:

- Unclear** Penny looks much more like Marci than Debbie.
- Clear** Penny looks much more like Marci than Debbie does.
- Clear** Penny looks much more like Marci than she looks like Debbie.

- Unclear** I knew that I would get along better with Evan than Jed.
- Clear** I knew that I would get along better with Evan than I would with Jed.
- Clear** I knew that I would get along better with Evan than Jed would.

4. Ungrammatical Comparisons

These comparisons are incorrect because of the simple omission of the word **as**.

Example:

- Incorrect** Friday was just as humid, if not more humid than, yesterday.
*(The word **as** has been omitted after the word **humid**. Try reading this sentence without the part set off by commas: Friday was just as humid yesterday. You can clearly see the need for **as**.)*
- Correct** Friday was just as humid **as**, if not more humid **than**, yesterday.
*(When making comparisons like this one, be certain to use both **as** and **than** in the sentence.)*