Common Word Usage Errors

Affect vs. Effect
Affect is a verb.
Global warming affects the melt-rate of alpine glaciers.
Effect is a noun.
One effect of global warming is a decrease in the balance mass of alpine glaciers.
Polar bears have been greatly affected by the effects of global warming.

Who vs. Whom
Who is the subject of a verb, or the compliment of a linking verb.
Who is going to the party?
It was John who ate all the cookies.
Whom is the object of a verb or preposition.
My father, whom I trust, will give me excellent advice.
To whom should I send my car payments?
A simple tool to remember the difference is to move the sentence around; use who if you can replace it with he, she, it, or they, and use whom if you can replace it with him, her or them.
He is going to the party.
It was John; he ate all the cookies.
My father will give me excellent advice; I trust him.
I should send my car payment to him.

Which vs. That
Which is used with non restrictive clauses, those that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence; it replaces a parenthetical phrase and must be set off by commas.
My house, which is blue, is located on the corner of Fifth Avenue and “B” street.
That is used with restrictive clauses, those that are essential to the meaning of the sentence.
Houses that are in disrepair should be condemned.

Shall vs. Should
Should means ought to.
Students should remove their hats in the classroom. (In this case, students are encouraged to remove their hats; there would be no consequence for wearing a hat.)
Shall means must.
Students shall remove their hats in the classroom. (In this case, students are required to remove their hats; there would be some type of consequence for wearing a hat in the classroom.)

i.e. vs. e.g.
The abbreviation i.e. stands for the Latin term “id est” which is literally translated “that is” which means “in other words.”
One must contribute to the finance of government through non-voluntary annual contributions to the national treasury (i.e. pay taxes).
The abbreviation e.g. stands for the Latin term “exempli gratia” which is literally translated “for example.”
Citizens can participate in the functioning of the government (e.g. paying taxes, voting, etc.).