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Grammar Rules in Real Estate

It's not just English teachers who notice misspellings in luxury-home listings; typos and missing commas can slow sales and drag down prices

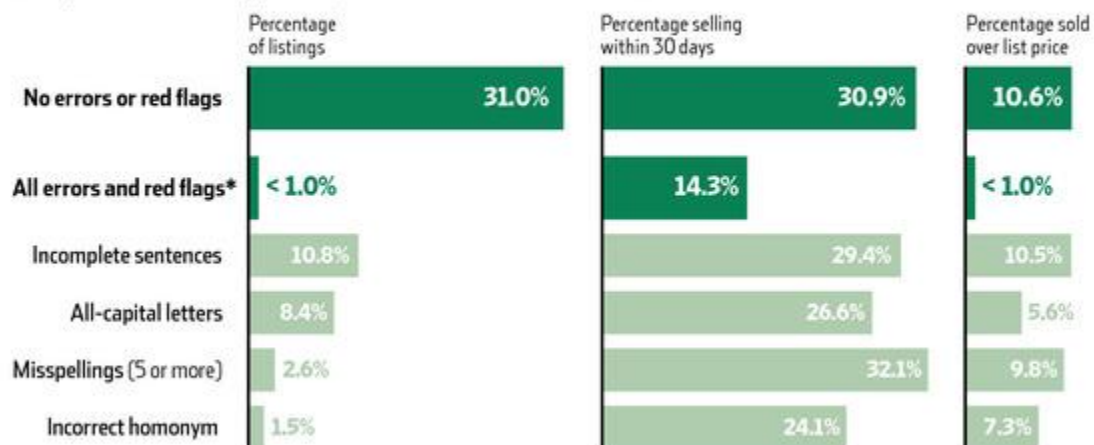
Real-estate agents, better take out that red pen.

An analysis of listings priced at \$1 million and up shows that "perfect" listings—written in full sentences without spelling or grammatical errors—sell three days faster and are 10% more likely to sell for more than their list price than listings overall.

On the flip side, listings riddled with technical errors—misspellings, incorrect homonyms, incomplete sentences, among others—log the most median days on the market before selling and have the lowest percentage of homes that sell over list price. The analysis, conducted by Redfin, a national real-estate brokerage, and Grammarly, an online proofreading application, examined spelling errors and other grammatical red flags in 106,850 luxury listings in 52 metro areas in 2013.

Read Back

Redfin and Grammarly identified spelling errors and other grammatical red flags in descriptions of home listings priced at \$1 million and above in 52 metro areas in 2013.



*Includes listings that have at least one instance in each category: incomplete sentences, all-capital letters, misspellings, incorrect homonyms and any kind of abbreviation.

Source: Redfin and Grammarly

Note: Sample set consisted of roughly 106,850 listings

The Wall Street Journal

For an industry without a universal stylebook, real-estate agents vary greatly in their listing descriptions. While some brokerages have created internal guidelines, much of the actual writing is still left up to the discretion of listing agents.

"It's ubiquitous in this business. Bad grammar, misspellings, stray commas, missing periods—it's all part of listing descriptions," says Mickey Conlon, associate real-estate broker with Core in New York.

Good spelling and grammar may indicate the agent is attentive to other details as well, like pricing the home correctly and weighing offers, says Karen Krupsaw, vice president of real-estate operations at Redfin.

"You can get a sense of what the transaction will be like based on the listing description. If it's exceptionally sloppy, then it's a warning sign of a potentially sloppy transaction," Mr. Conlon says.

Aside from errors, the analysis also looked at style preferences in listings. One of the most common: phrases written in all-capital letters. These listings saw the least success in terms of sale price, with only 5.6% of homes selling above list price. The practice is most common in Las Vegas, where 28.5% of listings were written in all capital letters in 2013, compared with 8.4% of listings nationwide.

Common abbreviations, like "bdrm" for "bedroom," and short phrases fared well by comparison.

Amy Williams, a broker with Century 21 Real Estate Consultants in Charlotte, N.C., says abbreviations are necessary in multiple-listing services with low character limits. "That's why we see people resort to abbreviations, to fit everything in," says Ms. Williams, adding that her MLS caps listing descriptions at 500 characters.

Last year, Francine Chalmé Meyberg, an agent with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties in Encino, Calif., had a \$1.499 million listing for a five-bedroom home in Bell Canyon. In addition to the home's many features, the listing boasted a kitchen "updated w/ redone cab. & recs. lit., & opens to the the bk. area & lg. fam. rm. w/ fipl. & access to the majestic outside." Her cramming paid off. She sold the property within months of listing for \$1.425 million.