CRINGEWORTHY

The other day a superintendent responded to an e-mail I sent him with the one-liner that sends shudders down my spine. For me, it’s like the sound of nails on a chalkboard or the thought of chewing on tissue. It’s just plain cringeworthy.

“Your welcome,” the superintendent wrote.

Many of you are cringing yourselves. The rest of you are probably scratching your heads, wondering what’s wrong. Those of you in the latter group are missing the point, and it may be hurting your careers. Why? It’s “you’re welcome.” Always. It’s never, ever “your welcome.”

PLURALS & POSSESSIVES

• In almost all cases, you make words plural by adding an s or ies. Apostrophes don’t make words plural; they indicate possessiveness.

Hence, the plural of employee is employees, not employee’s.

• To make a singular word possessive, simply add an apostrophe (“crew’s equipment”).

• It gets tricky when the word ends in s. For proper nouns like names, add an apostrophe (“Russ’ computer”). Add an ’s to make a singular common noun possessive (“boss’ plan”). However, if the next word starts with an s, only add an apostrophe (“boss’ schedule”).

THERE/THERE/THEY’RE

• There refers to a place (“over there”). This may be a silly way to remember it, but an English teacher once taught me that there refers to a place, and both words end in the letter e.

• Their is a plural possessive pronoun (“their house”). Again, a weird tip: Their refers to people, it contains the letter i and I am a person.

• They’re is a contraction for “they are.” In they’re, the apostrophe replaces the a in are.

IT’S/ITS

• It’s is a contraction for it is. (“It’s my job.”)

• Its is a possessive pronoun, which means it functions like other pronouns such as his, her and their. (“The mower was at the end of its life.”)

Got it? Now that we have that settled, I feel much better. You’re welcome. GCI

As a takeaway message, I offer my Most Cringeworthy Grammar Mistakes List:

YOUR/YOU’RE

• Your is a possessive pronoun (“your course”).

• You’re is a contraction for you are (“you’re welcome”).

CONTRACTIONS

• Although those who’ve come from personal acquaintances. It’s an older folks, middle-aged people and young professionals, too. Although those who’ve come of age texting, Facebooking, Tweeting are entering the workforce more grammatically challenged than the generations before them (soon we’ll be worrying about the widespread use of “ur welcome”).

You may be thinking that proper grammar matters because it doesn’t affect how well you grow grass or manage a budget. You’re wrong.

Grammar is about credibility. If your resume and cover letter are fraught with yours that should be you’re or their that should be theirs, it reflects poorly on you and it might prevent you from landing an interview. Potential employers know that grammatical mistakes may reflect several things: You’re careless, you’re not well educated or you’re unprofessional. Any or all of these may mean you have other bad habits, you’re not detail-oriented or that you’d present badly at green committee meetings or in your interactions with owners. You don’t want any of these assumptions being made about you, do you?