Verbs: some common mistakes

Here is a list of errors students often make in the use of verbs.

Incorrect: My father told me that honesty was the best policy.
Correct: My father told me that honesty is the best policy.
We usually use a past tense in the subordinate clause when the verb in the main clause is in the past tense. However, a past tense is unnecessary when the subordinate clause gives information that is always true.

Incorrect: The cashier-cum-accountant are on leave today.
Correct: The cashier-cum-accountant is on leave today.
Expressions like the cashier-cum-accountant refer to one person and hence a singular verb is needed.

Incorrect: The cashier and the accountant is on leave today.
Correct: The cashier and the accountant are on leave today.
Incorrect: I am so weak that I may not walk.
Correct: I am so weak that I cannot walk.
To talk about ability we use can, not may.

Incorrect: Tell me why are you beating the child.
Correct: Tell me why you are beating the child.
Incorrect: I don’t know why is she late.
Correct: I don’t know why she is late.
The two sentences given above are examples of indirect questions. In indirect questions, there is no inversion of subject and verb.

Incorrect: The ship was drowned.
Correct: The ship sank.
People drown. Ships and boats sink.

Incorrect: Seldom I visit my parents.
Correct: Seldom do I visit my parents.
Verbs: some common mistakes

Incorrect: This food is hard to be digested.
Correct: This food is hard to digest.
Incorrect: I never have, and I never will do it.
Correct: I have never done and I will never do it.