

These are the errors that appear year after year in examiner reports. Knowing *what not to write* is just as important as knowing what to write. ★ marks Higher Tier only. Every mistake here has cost students marks in real exams.

Nutrient Cycles

■ **Students often write:**

"Photosynthesis adds CO₂ to the atmosphere."

✓ **Correct answer:**

Photosynthesis REMOVES CO₂ from the atmosphere. Respiration, decomposition and combustion all ADD CO₂. This is the most commonly reversed fact in the carbon cycle.

■ **Examiner insight:**

Only photosynthesis removes CO₂. All other processes add it. Write it on a sticky note.

■ **Students often write:**

"Eutrophication is when algae produce toxins that kill fish."

✓ **Correct answer:**

Eutrophication kills aquatic life through oxygen depletion: fertiliser run-off → algal bloom → algae block light → plants die → bacteria decompose dead matter → bacteria use all dissolved oxygen → fish suffocate.

■ **Examiner insight:**

Fish die from lack of oxygen, not from algal toxins. The full chain must be described for full marks in OCR.