Writing That Works:
Agenda

• **Common grammar errors**
  • Possessives
  • Comma splices
  • Dangling participles
  • Impersonal “you”
  • Singular vs. plural pronouns

• **Misused words**

• **Style**
  • Parallelism
  • Conciseness
  • Directness
Writing That Works:

**Misused Words**

- **There, their, and they’re**
  - There = location
  - Their = belonging to them
  - They’re = they are

- **Two, to, and too**
  - Two = 2
  - To = possession or movement
  - Too = also

- **Then and than**
  - Then = time
  - Than = comparison
Writing That Works:

Misused Words

- Assure, ensure, and insure
  - Assure = to make confident
  - Ensure = to make certain
  - Insure = to issue an insurance policy

- It’s and its
  - It’s = it is
  - Its = possession

- You’re and your
  - You’re = you are
  - Your = possession
Affect and effect
- Affect = To make an impression, influence, or effect on something (verb)
- Effect = A result or consequence (noun)

Accept and except
- Accept = to receive
- Except = to leave out, exception

Advice and advise
- Advice = information
- Advise = to provide information

Writing That Works:
Misused Words
Writing That Works:
Misused Words

- Lay and lie
  - Lay = When the object is being laid down
  - Lie = When the object lays itself down

- Fewer and less
  - Fewer = things that can be counted
  - Less = uncountable things or abstract concepts
Writing That Works:
Misused Words

- Among and between
  - Among = three or more
  - Between = comparison between two

- Amount and number
  - Amount = quantities in bulk
  - Number = things that can be counted
Writing That Works:
Common Grammar Errors

- **Possessives**
  - Apostrophe use
  - Plurals with apostrophes
  - Confusion with subject/verb agreement
  - Exceptions to the rule (whose, its)

- **Comma splices**
  - Use of a comma to connect two complete sentences
  - Corrective actions:
    - Period
    - Semi-colon
    - Conjunction (and, also, because, etc.)
Writing That Works:
Common Grammar Errors

- **Dangling participles**
  - When the verb (ending with “ing”) doesn’t agree with the subject
  - Often a result of passive voice
    - *Example:*
      
      > While walking down the street, the cat caught my attention. –Who is walking?!?

- **The impersonal “you”**
  - Using “you” instead of “people”
    - *Example:*
      
      > You must work hard to make a living.
      - INCORRECT
      
      > People must work hard to make a living.
      - CORRECT
Writing That Works: Common Grammar Errors

- Singular versus plural pronouns
  - When using indefinite pronouns, the antecedent to the verb must be singular. The easy fix is to make the pronoun definite and/or plural.

  » Example:
  - Everyone wants to have their own computer.
    - INCORRECT!
  - Everyone wants to have his or her own computer.
    - CORRECT BUT STRANGE!
  - All employees would like to have their own computers.
    - CORRECT AND BETTER!
Writing That Works:
Style

Parallelism

Disrupts reader’s expectations when a series starts with one kind of unit and suddenly shifts to another.

- Within a sentence (commas)
- Within a set of bulleted items
Writing That Works:

Style

Parallelism Examples
(Note: the following examples are INCORRECT!)

1. He was a miser, bachelor, and egotistical. (noun, noun, adjective)
2. He was healthy, wealthy, and an athlete (adj., adj., noun)
3. Lincoln was a man of the people, for the people, and loved by the people. (prepositional phrase, prepositional phrase, participle phrase)
Writing That Works:

Style

Conciseness

A message should make its point using the fewest words possible. You should:

- Remove opening fillers
- Eliminate redundancies
- Reduce compound prepositions
- Purge empty words
Writing That Works:

Style

Conciseness: Remove Opening Fillers

Openers like *there is/are* and *it is* fill in sentences but add no meaning.

- There are three things I want you to do. (wordy)
- I want you to do three things. (concise)

- It is important to start meetings on time. (wordy)
- Starting meetings on time is important. (concise)
Writing That Works:

Style

Conciseness: Eliminate Redundancies

Say it only once. Repeating yourself wastes your time and weakens the point you want to emphasize.

Watch for--

- Redundant words
- Redundancies using conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositions
Writing That Works:

Style

Conciseness: Eliminate Redundancies (Examples)

- Advance warning
- Dollar amount
- End result
- Perfectly clear
- Great majority
- New changes
- Past history
- Serious interest
- Personal opinion
- True facts

- Alter or change
- Consensus of opinion
- Each and every
- Few in number
- Free and clear
- Necessary and important
- Visible to the eye
- Last and final
Writing That Works:

Style

Conciseness: Reduce Compound Prepositions

Replace phrases with a single word when possible.

- At this point in time — now
- At such time — when
- Due to the fact — because
- For the amount of — for
- In regards to — regarding
- The manner in which — how
Writing That Works:

Style

Directness

Avoid noun phrases and trite business sayings. They tend to muddy meaning.

- Noun phrases: changing verbs into nouns (we make a recommendation of instead of we recommend)
- Trite business phrases: “business-ese”
Writing That Works:

Style

Directness: Noun Phrases

- Conduct a discussion of—discuss
- Engage in the preparation of—prepare
- In regards to—regarding
- Perform an analysis of—analyze
- Take action on—act
Writing That Works:

Style

Directness: Trite Business Phrases

- As per your request—as you requested
- Every effort will be made—we will try
- In receipt of—have received
- Please do not hesitate—please
- Under separate cover—separately
- With reference to—about
Misused Words: Exercises

1. Students often have questions about their schedules.

2. You’re desk will be over their by the window.

3. We want to assure that all students have access to a quality education, to.

4. If you want my advise you could of asked for they’re opinion first.

5. She had a strong effect on the administration by instituting less regulations.
6. Dr. Madison and Mrs. Lewis decided among themselves that its the most appropriate course of action.

7. With the large amount of students we deal with every year, the school must except a variety of articulation agreements.

8. You should insure that student workers don’t lay down on the job!

9. Please make sure your appropriately dressed.

10. This is more important then you might think.
Possessives: Exercises

1. Which one is correct?
   » The students' success was largely attributable to their hard work and dedication.
   » The student's success was largely attributable to their hard work and dedication.

2. Which one is correct?
   » The responsibility for the bills was yours' and her's.
   » The responsibility for the bills was yours and hers.
   » The responsibility for the bill was your’s and hers.
Possessives: Exercises

3. Which one is correct?
   » The lawyers could generally be found after hours at the Hanover Street Bar and Grill.
   » The lawyer's could generally be found after hours at the Hanover Street Bar and Grill.
   » The lawyers' could generally be found after hours at the Hanover Street Bar and Grill.

4. Which is correct?
   » The dodo bird is known for its inability to fly.
   » The dodo bird is known for it’s inability to fly.
   » The dodo bird is known for his inability to fly.
Comma Splices: Exercises

1. Which is correct?
   » Phyllis got off the plane in New York her bags continued on to Boston.
   » Phyllis got off the plane in New York. Her bags continued on to Boston.
   » Phyllis got off the plane in New York; her bags continued on to Boston.

2. Which is correct?
   » A black-crowned night heron stood among the rushes at dusk it would come out to hunt.
   » A black-crowned night heron stood among the rushes, at dusk it would come out to hunt.
   » A black-crowned night heron stood among the rushes. At dusk it would come out to hunt.
Comma Splices: Exercises

3. Which is correct?
» Four people were late Scott, Ewing, Schmidt, and Pauling.
» Four people were late. Scott, Ewing, Schmidt, and Pauling.
» Four people were late: Scott, Ewing, Schmidt, and Pauling.
Dangling Participles: Exercises

1. After *being whipped* fiercely, the cook boiled the egg.

2. *Flitting* gaily from flower to flower, the football player watched the bee.

3. Rushing to the catch the bus, Bob’s wallet fell out of his pocket.

4. Falling through the thin ice, the jogger dived into the lake to save the dog.

5. Breathing his last, the man's dog jumped up and gave a howl.
Impersonal “You:”
Exercises

1. You have to work very hard to make a dollar these days.

2. It’s so smoggy in Los Angeles, you can hardly breathe.


4. If you want to sell cars, you have to have a lot of personality.

5. When preparing professional documents, you should always spell check before printing.
Single versus Plural Pronouns: Exercises

1. If anyone has any questions they should raise their hands.

2. When the supervisor has a new project they should notify the foreperson.

3. Every student must study hard if they wish to succeed.

4. The Achievement Council gave their award to Joe Titan.

5. When Mrs. Wilson spoke the class gave her their full attention.
Parallelism: Exercises

1. At 16, I was full of wildness, arrogant, and I was an angry person.

2. The stock prices wavered, stall, were rising and falling.

3. Good writing must be honest, have freshness, and precision.

4. My son wants to be either a firefighter or fly planes.

5. The students were more interested in profiting than in the bottom line.
Parallelism: Exercises

6. Continual dieting and to be inactive are health hazards.

7. Sarah is kind, compassionate, and a hard worker.

8. Not only did Rosemary attend the meeting, but also David.

9. The ladder was either stolen, or Burt borrowed it.

10. The girl likes painting but not to sing.
Conciseness: Exercises

1. As per your written instruction, we will undertake the task of studying your investment program.

2. Please be advised that it is our intention to make every effort to deliver your order by the date of your request, December 1.

3. It has been determined by the staff that our process of check verification for customers must be simplified.

4. It has been established that the incontestable key to the future success of QuadCam is a deep and firm commitment to quality.
Directness: Exercises

1. We must make the assumption that you wish to be transferred.

2. The committee reached the conclusion that a great majority of students had a preference for mail-in registration.

3. Whether or not we make a continuation of the sales campaign is dependent on its success in the city of Houston.

4. Members of the team have taken into consideration every one of the factors that has the capacity to affect the purchase.
THANK YOU!

For questions or more information:
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