

WEEKLY WISDOM

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone back to the spring semester.

This year, I have decided to change the format and experiment with a Grammar Guru column. I am inviting students and staff to e-mail me their grammar difficulties and I will help shed some light. Faculty, what kinds of errors are you seeing over and over? And you need not limit your questions to grammar. Do you get confused over the meanings of similarly spelled words? Is there a punctuation mark that drives you insane? I can help!

In the meantime, I would like to share with the humorous side of grammar. Yes, grammar can be fun! I will start with a panda joke.

A panda walks into a restaurant, sits down and orders a sandwich. After he finishes eating the sandwich, the panda pulls out a gun and shoots the waiter, and then stands up to go. "Hey!" shouts the manager. "Where are you going? You just shot my waiter and you didn't pay for your sandwich!"

The panda yells back at the manager, "Hey man, I am a PANDA! Look it up!"

The manager opens his dictionary and sees the following definition for panda: "A tree-dwelling marsupial of Asian origin, characterised by distinct black and white colouring. Eats shoots and leaves."

Source: <http://www.corsinet.com/braincandy/hanimals11.html>

Moral of this story: A misplaced comma can make the difference between life and death.

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The theme of this week's column is "Commas can be fun." I found several examples of how a misplaced or missing comma can change the meaning of a sentence in a newsletter called Cybertext Newsletter (<https://cybertext.wordpress.com/2012/11/22/a-light-hearted-look-at-how-punctuation-can-change-meaning/>).

1. With a comma: *"Most of the time, travellers worry about their luggage."*

Without a comma: *"Most of the time travellers worry about their luggage."*

2. Without a comma: *"Stop clubbing baby seals."*

With a comma: *"Stop clubbing, baby seals." You're underage.*

3. Original letter: Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is all about.

You are generous, kind, thoughtful.

People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior.

You have ruined me for other men.

I yearn for you.

I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart.

I can be forever happy.

Will you let me be yours?

Gloria

With changed punctuation and sentence structure:

Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is.

All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you.

Admit to being useless and inferior.

You have ruined me.

For other men, I yearn.

For you, I have no feelings whatsoever.

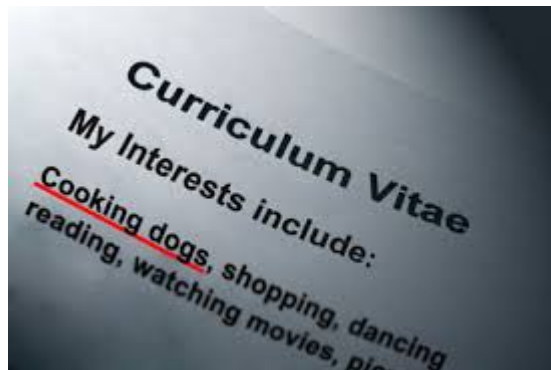
When we're apart, I can be forever happy.

Will you let me be?

Yours,

Gloria

Finally, don't make this mistake on your resumé:



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Ready for another grammar joke? This one is guaranteed to make you groan.

A pregnant woman was getting close to her due date. Suddenly she started screaming, "I won't! I can't! I'm not! I couldn't! I shouldn't! I wouldn't! I mustn't!"

Her husband, worried that his wife was going crazy before their child was even born, called the doctor and asked her what he should do.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry," said the doctor. "She's just having contractions."

[Source: Family blog]

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A boy answers the phone. The caller asks, "Where are your parents?"

"They ain't here!"

"Come on, son. Where's your [grammar](#)?"

"My gramma ain't here neither. She's gone to church!"

* * * * *

If "can't" is the [contraction](#) for "cannot," what is "don't" short for?

Doughnut.

Source: Richard Nordquist (<http://grammar.about.com/od/60essays/a/Grammar-Crackers-Jokes-Riddles-And-Word-Play-From-The-Lighter-Side-Of-English.htm>)

Finally, omitting a punctuation mark could land you in jail! Don't post this on Facebook:

WE HAVE TWO HOURS TO KILL SOMEONE COME SEE US.

Source: Buzz Feed (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/daves4/commas-are-the-most-important#.kmoXVoP5Nr>)

WEEKLY WISDOM

Grammar can be fun! If you don't believe me, take a look at these rules rephrased.

1. Verbs HAS to agree with their subjects.
2. Never use a preposition to end a sentence with. Winston Churchill, corrected on this error once, responded to the young man who corrected him by saying "Young man, that is the kind of impudence up with which I will not put!
3. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
4. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
2. Avoid cliches like the plague. (They're old hat.)
3. Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.
4. Be more or less specific.
5. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.
6. Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies endlessly over and over again.
7. No sentence fragments.
8. Contractions aren't always necessary and shouldn't be used to excess so don't.
9. Foreign words and phrases are not always apropos.
10. Do not be redundant; do not use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous and can be excessive.

11. All generalizations are bad.

12. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.

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Grammar can be fun! Here are this week's batch of what NOT to say.

1. Make sure each pronoun agrees with their antecedent.
2. Just between you and I, the case of pronoun is important.
3. Watch out for irregular verbs which have crope into English.
4. Verbs has to agree in number with their subjects.
5. Don't use no double negatives.
6. Being bad grammar, a writer should not use dangling modifiers.
7. Join clauses good like a conjunction should.
8. A writer must be not shift your point of view.
9. About sentence fragments to avoid.
10. Don't use run-on sentences you got to punctuate them.
11. In letters essays and reports use commas to separate items in series.
12. Don't use commas, which are not necessary.
13. Parenthetical words however should be enclosed in commas.
14. Its important to use apostrophes right in everybodys writing.
15. Don't abbrev.

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More fun with Grammar. Here are more things NOT to say or do.

1. Check to see if you any words out.
2. In the case of a report, check to see that jargonwise, it's A-OK.
3. As far as incomplete constructions, they are wrong.
4. About repetition, the repetition of a word might be real effective repetition - take, for instance the repetition of Abraham Lincoln.
5. In my opinion, I think that an author when he is writing should definitely not get into the habit of making use of too many unnecessary words that he does not really need in order to put his message across.
6. Use parallel construction not only to be concise but also clarify.
7. It behooves us all to avoid archaic expressions.
8. Mixed metaphors are a pain in the neck and ought to be weeded out.
9. Consult the dictionary to avoid misspellings.
10. To ignorantly split an infinitive is a practice to religiously avoid.
11. Last but not least, lay off cliches.

--And don't forget to laugh!

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Will having a paper run through Spell Check guarantee you your paper will be error-free? Not always! In this week's column, I will share with you a short poem that reveals the limitations of Spell Check.

The English language contains many words that sound alike, but have different meanings and different spellings. They sound like the same word but are not. These sound-alike words are called homonyms. An example is the famous "2 Trio"—to, too, and two. Therefore, if you type a word that is the correctly spelled homonym of the word you were thinking of, Spell Check will not recognize it as an error. After all, it's just a robot, not a human editor.

To illustrate my point, I found the following poem on the internet.

I have a spelling checker
It came with my PC
It highlights for my review
Mistakes I cannot see.

I ran this poem thru it
I'm sure your pleased to no
Its letter perfect in it's weigh
My checker told me sew.

A longer version is available, but the short version will do just fine for purposes of making my point.

And now for a quiz: Find and correct the mistakes in the poem. Answer will appear in next week's column.

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Hello, readers. Did you find the mistakes in last week's spellcheck poem? Here is the poem that is full of correctly spelled words, but the wrong words for the context, that Spell Check didn't catch:

I have a spelling checker
It came with my PC
It highlights for my review
Mistakes I cannot sea.

I ran this poem thru it
I'm sure your pleased to no
Its letter perfect in it's weigh
My checker told me sew.

And the answer is (corrected words are underscored):

I have a spelling checker
It came with my PC
It highlights for my review
Mistakes I cannot see.

I ran this poem through it
I'm sure you're pleased to know
It's letter perfect in its way
My checker told me so.

Did you catch the distinction between "its" and "it's"? They're easily confused, judging by the number of mistakes I see on student papers, but really, the rule is so simple it's easy to learn how to be right 100 percent of the time. The rule is: If you are using the word as a contraction for "it is," then use the apostrophe.

EXAMPLE: It's been great knowing you.

Otherwise, no apostrophe.

EXAMPLE: The company held its annual meeting last week.

EXAMPLE: The lion was licking its wounds.

So now that you know the rule, you will never get this word wrong again!

Another often confused set of words is “your” and “you’re.” Again, the rule is straightforward. If you mean to say “you are,” then use the contraction “you’re,” placing the apostrophe after the letter “u.” If you mean “belonging to you,” then go with “your.”

EXAMPLE: You’re not going out without your umbrella, are you?

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Ready for more fun? Here are some poems that explain why English spelling is so difficult to master.

In what other language do people drive in a parkway and park in a driveway?

In what other language do people play at a recital and recite at a play?

Why does night fall but never break and day break but never fall?

Why is it that when we transport something by car, it's called a *shipment*, but when we transport something by ship, it's called *cargo*?

Why does a man get a *hemia* and a woman a *hysterectomy*?

Why do we pack suits in a garment bag and garments in a suitcase?

Why do privates eat in the general mess and generals eat in the private mess?

Why do we call it *newsprint* when it contains no printing but when we put print on it, we call it a *newspaper*?

Why are people who ride motorcycles called *bikers* and people who ride bikes called *cyclists*?

Why -- in our crazy language -- can your nose run and your feet smell?

In what other language do they call the third hand on the clock the second hand?

Why do they call them *apartments* when they're all together?

Why do we call them *buildings*, when they're already built?

Why is it called a *TV set* when you get only one?

Why is *phonetic* not spelled phonetically?

Why is it so hard to remember how to spell *mnemonic*?

Why doesn't *onomatopoeia* sound like what it is?

Why is the word *abbreviation* so long?

Why is *diminutive* so undiminutive?

Why does the word *monosyllabic* consist of five syllables?

Why is there no synonym for *synonym* or *thesaurus*?

And why, pray tell, does *lisp* have an s in it?

No, I didn't make it up. I quoted it from an article by Richard Lederer called "English Is a Crazy Language." Source: <http://www.english-zone.com/language/english.html>. Check it out for even more craziness.

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This week as we prepare for finals, I thought it would be helpful to give a few tips to help impress your professors with the right vocabulary to prove you are mastering higher education. Try to work in these fancy phrases that are often bandied about by higher level thinkers.

Let's start with some general terms.: Paradigm shift, overarching, discourse, perspective. Anytime you learn a new way of looking at something, that's a paradigm shift, such as Einstein's theory of relativity. No more were matter and energy considered separate spheres; they're actually changeable. An example is burning off fat by exercising. You can put fat back on by loading up on high-calorie treats.

Overarching is a four-syllable way of saying overall, as in the overarching principle of Kant's philosophy. I think of a black cat with back arched, hissing and threatening.

Remember, we don't have conversations or dialogues (although those are good solid college-level words), but a Ph.D. candidate will engage in discourse. You would not present a viewpoint, but a perspective. Remember, the rule is try to add one syllable to the normal word and then use the longer synonym. Discourse is an exception.

In scientific studies, the newer word for data used to measure things is metrics. In business studies you look for parity rather than points of similarity or equality. In academic circles, teaching strategies are collectively called pedagogy. Studies are not informative, they're robust, just full of themselves. Another buzzword is synergy, meaning two things work together well, as the synergy of ipads and classroom pedagogy.

Two pedantic phrases to expand your word count are "That being said" and "if you will." Use one at the beginning of sentences, the other at the end, to point out to your professor that you are making a prodigious effort to use elegant phrases.

For your male professors, throw in some sports analogies, and maybe your female professors as well. They will either be a sports fan (and appreciate the analogy) or not (and grasp the fact that the comparison is beyond their grasp).

It will also help to read the assignments and throw in some quotes from these as well.

Happy writing!