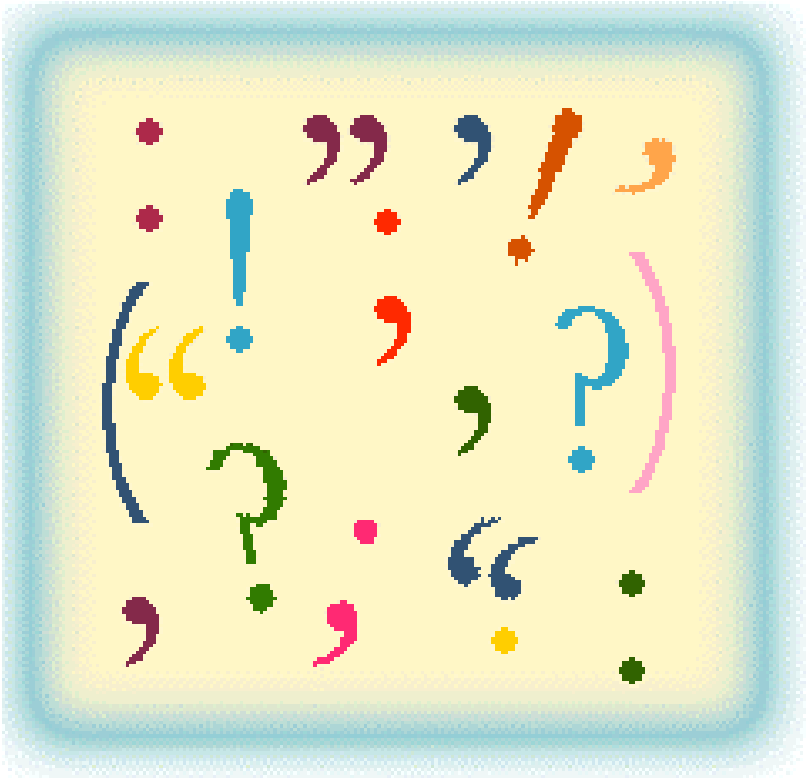
Department of Mass Communication
– Journalism Program



Towards a working grammar for journalists

Revising
punctuation,
conventions,
parts of speech,
pronouns,
prepositions,
conjunctions
&
other handy stuff

Compiled by
Trina McLellan & Natalie Crump

1.0 Punctuation marks

1.1 capital letters (**A**)

- the **first letter of a sentence is ALWAYS a capital letter**, even when there are **quotation marks** around the sentence

- the first letter of all **proper nouns** are capitalised
  James went to Cairns for his holiday.
  Katy played the flute for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

- the **main words in titles of books, films, videos, DVDs, programs, poems, songs or plays** also begin with a capital letter … book & program titles are also usually italicised
  ***The Lion King* is a wonderful book for young children.**

- the pronoun '**I**' is always a capital letter

- capitals are referred to in editing as '**upper case**'

1.1.1 use capitals wisely

- first word of sentence or whole-sentence (complete) direct quote

- first word after a colon when it begins a complete sentence

- brand/trade names are almost always capitalised

- proper nouns (person's name, place name, official entity)

- only capitalise words like street, avenue or river if they refer to a single, specific location (i.e., lower case for multiple references)

- no capital on first word of several words enclosed within parentheses or by dashes if those words are part of a larger sentence

- no capital when restarting an interrupted (broken) quote

- no capital for first word of a partial direct quote unless that word is a proper noun

- no capitals on generic (non-specific) words

Use of capitals can be confusing at times, but try to minimise wherever possible. According to the News Limited's in-house *Style* guide for journalists -

> Research shows they arrest the eye and slow the reader. The general rules are:
> 1. Cap proper names and specific titles, but not parts of titles (*the Royal Commission into Drug Trafficking*, but thereafter *the royal commission*).
> 2. Cap references to specific institutions and incumbents, but lower case for general reference (*the Parliament*, but *a parliament*; *the Premier*, but *a premier*).
> 3. Cap principal words in the titles of books, plays and the like.
> 4. Cap words to avoid confusion with other meanings (*Act/act*; *Speaker/speaker*).
> 5. Do not cap words which, although derived from a proper noun, are no longer strongly associated with their place of origin (afghan hound, cheddar cheese, chinese burn, brussels sprout, french polish, dutch courage, molotov cocktail).

Job titles are generally not capitalised because otherwise the organisational name, job title and person's name would result in a string of capitals.

> It was left to Acme Ltd state manager Bob Smith to explain.
>
> Berrimba scout troop's leader, Justin Forthright, was jubilant the missing scouts had walked out of the national park unharmed.

Notice the generic use of "national park" does not require capitals, however when you refer to a specific location, the title is a proper noun and requires capitals.

> The missing scouts walked out of the Lamington National Park unharmed.

Similarly, the first time you mention an organisation, its name is capitalised, but if you refer to that organisation again in a generic way, no capital is needed.

> The Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland will host the event.
> A spokesperson for the league said …
>
> International Taekwon-do Federation spokesperson Stuart Graf said the competition would be "tough but fair".
>
> "The federation will ensure all rules are followed," Mr Graf said.

1.2 full stop (**.**) *or* (**…**)

– shows the **end of a sentence**

– indicates an **abbreviation**

☑ remember that's only where the last letter of the abbreviation is different to the last letter of the word

Tues. Vic. no. Prof. fig.

☒ they are not used when the last letter of an abbreviation is the same as the last letter of that word

Qld Dr Mrs Ms Mr

☒ not used when the first letters of a number of words are shortened into an acronym

US Qantas Anzac Comalco

– used either **singularly *OR* in threes**

• an 'ellipsis' (…) indicates the omission of letters or words (ellipses have a space either side)

• full stops are not used in any other multiples

– runs inside a final parenthesis (bracket) only when the brackets enclose an entire sentence

– placed outside a final parenthesis (bracket) when the contents are part of a larger sentence

1.3 comma (**,**)

– shows small breaks in the continuity of a sentence

– separates simple items in a list

My cherished child comes first, last, always.

– but, importantly, not usually between the last two items when they are separated by 'and'

One, two, three and four times they came back for more.
May, Lee, Shane and I went to the movies together.

– separates items in a list of adjectives or adverbs within a sentence

– separates different parts of a sentence (e.g., clauses in a complex sentence)

– closes full quotations (direct speech) … but *not* partial quotes

– separates introductory or extra words in a sentence

Commas are used to:

1) splice/separate two separate sentences within the one sentence

We have a test next week, so please remember to bring your *Style* book and a dictionary.

It can make your writing much clearer to separate the one sentence into two.

2) separate lists

Last night I wrote an abstract for an assignment, prepared for my tutorial and edited some articles.

In business writing and formal publishing, it is common to include a comma before the "and" in the sentence above. This is not the practice elsewhere and nor is it journalistic style so the extra comma is not used.

3) insert information or a brief aside

My readings, I am pleased to say, are all up-to-date.

Ensure in such instances that the additional information is "bracketed" by a comma pair. Information within comma pairs should not alter the meaning of a sentence should it be removed.

4) separate sentences where there is a natural break in structure

    For further information, please contact Trina McLellan.

5) partition off a non-restrictive clause (which can be "read over")

    The tax returns, which were on the desk, were audited.

    A non-restrictive clause starts with "which" and is always encapsulated by a comma pair. Non-restrictive clauses are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. An example of a restrictive clause is "The tax returns that were on the desk were audited. This indicates that only the tax returns that were on the desk received audits, no other tax returns did.

Special note

Particular care needs to be taken with comma placement around names. Pay close attention to comma usage in the following examples:

- ✓ Griggs Ltd chief executive officer Maryanne Moses said her company would weather the difficult economic conditions for small businesses. (No commas.)

- ✓ The chief executive officer of Griggs Ltd, Maryanne Moses, said her company would weather the difficult economic conditions for small businesses. (2)

- ✓ Griggs Ltd's chief executive officer, Maryanne Moses, said her company would weather the difficult economic conditions for small businesses. (2)

In the first example the company and position title merely act as adjectives describing the person whose words were reported, in much the same way as a shorter personal title – like Ms or Mrs – would. Therefore no commas are required.

In the second and third examples the definite article (the) is either used overtly or implied, making it possible for you to "read over" the name with commas around it and the sentences still make sense.

It is never correct to use one comma with a name.

- × Griggs Ltd's chief executive officer Maryanne Moses, said her company would weather the difficult economic conditions for small businesses.

This would interrupt the meaning of the sentence.

A good way to memorise this is to think:

    When it comes to names and titles, I can use two commas or none, but **never** just one.

1.4 semi-colon (**;**)

– separate items in a series **if items are unusually long** or **if punctuation is used within one or more items**

> Not long ago, a divorced person was thought to be weak or wicked. Perhaps these stereotypes have begun to crumble because of increased social tolerance; because of an increased awareness of the needs of individuals; or, and this is more likely, simply because more and more people have become divorced.
>
> *- adapted from an example by Joseph Epstein in Lefcowitz*

- NB: semi-colons are extremely rarely used in newspapers

1.5 colon (**:**)

– tells readers a **series (numbered or unnumbered)** is to follow when subject matter is relatively formal or technical

- NB: colons are rarely used in newspapers
- in newswriting a colon should not be used to introduce direct speech … because attribution phrases come after quotes, not before

1.6 hyphen (**-**)

– links two or more words or word parts that have to do the job of one

– do not do same job as dashes (if no long dashes available, use two hyphens)

– used with a prefix when main word starts with a capital letter

un-Australian **non-English**

– used with special prefixes

self-control **re-enter** **co-ordinate** (now News Ltd style)

– used to make meaning clear

re-creation, recreation

– used with fractions

two-thirds

– used to form compound adjectives (modifiers)

half-hearted attempt **well-known author**

– used to form some compound nouns

brother-in-law **jack-of-all-trades**

1.7 dash (**—**)

– shows beginning & end of a discrete interruption to main thought of a sentence

• around a series of items listed as an example

With an increasing number of 'extended' families **—** children, step-children, former and current spouses, as well as other close relatives **—** many buyers are looking for larger homes.

There were good reasons **—** from an unbeaten season, three medals and four trophies to a national award for its coach **—** for the team to be jubliant.

• around a complex clause that can be 'read over'

The play was such a success **—** ultimately because this cast had such an accomplished director **—** that its run will be extended by six weeks.

– used singularly for a summarising series (at start/end of sentence)

Alimony, custody, visitation and shared property **—** all are ties that bind the new extended family.

OR

The new extended family is tied by decree **—** alimony, custody, visitation and shared property.

NB: A dash has a single space on either side to separate it from other letters. Hyphens between words do not carry such spaces.

1.8 question mark (**?**)

– placed at the **end of a sentence** that asks a direct question

– indirect questions ***do not have*** question marks

The Opposition Leader asked whether the government would meet the expectations of rural electorates.

– the question mark runs **inside quotation marks or parentheses** only **when the question is part of the quoted or parenthetical expression**

When Basil was introduced to the CIA agent (had they met somewhere before?), he turned to Glenda and demanded: "Why didn't you tell me our phone was bugged?"

Why did you suspect we would be "celebrating"?

1.9 exclamation (**!**)

– used to show **strong feelings**: anger, disgust, surprise, excitement or disappointment

– a skilled writer will communicate strong emotion more effectively through the choice & arrangement of words & phrases than by an exclamation point

- instead of helping to emphasise a statement, the exclamation point causes the reader to focus on the mark itself

– exclamation marks are **not used** in news stories

1.10 quotation marks (**“**) *&* (**”**)

– **enclose direct quotes** of exact words someone spoke or wrote

– ***not*** used for **indirect quotes**

– use **double quotation marks for direct speech** & only use single quotation marks if there needs to be some emphasis or partial quote within a quotation

“This would be an ‘epiphany’ for our congregation,” the pastor said.

– can be used to **show breaks in direct speech**

“Where this young competitor might leave tomorrow,” the spokesperson said, “the rest of the team will not leave before the end of the week.”

– denote a **quotation** is being used

“You catch more flies with honey” was Dad’s favorite saying.

1.11 apostrophe (’)

– in contractions, show something has been left out
can’t I’ll it’s he’s

– with nouns & pronouns, show ownership (possession)
a boy’s shoe the children’s books one’s foot

TIPS:

Possessive pronouns do not have an apostrophe
his hers its yours theirs

When something is owned, place apostrophe after last letter of owner/s
Mary’s music the athletes’ performances an athlete’s reward

– if two or more people share ownership, only last one has apostrophe
Tim and Mary’s house

– if two or more people own different things, each one has apostrophe
Yan’s and Eli’s noses

– use to show plurals of numbers & letters
five 4’s mind your p’s and q’s

Remember to use the apostrophe for ownership or contractions only … it is not used for plurals.

✓ I won’t lose Natalie’s handout because it’s a beauty.
× I wo**nt** lose Natali**es** handout because i**ts** a beauty. (Three errors.)

✓ I have Victor’s readings. (*Literally:* The readings belonging to Victor.)
× I have Victo**rs** readings. (No possessive indicated.)

✓ Flared trousers were last popular in the 1970s.
✓ Beware that 1970’s trend has returned. (*Literally*: a trend of the 1970s)
× Flared trousers were last popular in the 197**0’s**. (Not a possessive.)

✓ With three sound stages, we will need three MCs at the festival.
× With three sound stages, we will need three M**C’s** at the festival.

✓ Let’s not be impatient or he’ll get angry.
(*Literally:* Let us not be impatient or he will get angry.)

✓ We shouldn’t have been impatient because we knew she’d get angry.
(*Literally:* We <u>should</u> not have been impatient because we knew she <u>would</u> get angry. [Note the agreement in tense.])

If the noun is singular but ends in “ss”, it is still correct to add an apostrophe followed by an “s”.

✓ The moss’s spores spread in the damp conditions.
✓ The moss’ spores spread in the damp conditions. (Both possessive.)

2.0 Conventions

2.1 the role of *italics*

- italic text slants toward the right
- titles of books, magazines, newspapers, motion pictures, plays, works of art, ships, aircraft, spacecraft & pamphlets are italicised
- foreign words & phrases
  - Latin: *per se*, *ad hoc*, *ad infinitum, per annum, magna cum laude*
  - French: *pièce de résistance, de rigeur, coup d'état*
- no italics for book chapters, magazine articles or short poems
- no italics for legal document titles, the Bible or parts of the Bible

2.2 when to abbreviate

- personal titles
- military, political, professional & ecclesiastical titles when placed before the full name of a person, otherwise spelled out in full

2.3 when not to abbreviate

- do not abbreviate names of people, cities or countries
- do not abbreviate 'company' or 'corporation' in an organisation's name
- do not use the ampersand (&) for 'and' unless this abbreviation is part of an official title
- do not abbreviate name of a subject, nor the words 'volume', 'chapter' or 'page' in a published work
- do not abbreviate days of the week nor months of the year

2.4 expressing numbers

- measurements
  - spell out numbers up to nine, use digits for 10 and above
  - use commas (not spaces) when a number has more than four digits (10 and 100 and 1000 but 10,000 and 100,000)
  - combine figures & units (of millions or billions) to refer to very large numbers (8.5 million, 13 billion)
  - don't start sentences with numbers if you can avoid it, if not, then spell out
  - use figures to express heights, decimals & percentages
  - when units of measurement are shown as abbreviations or symbols, only use figures (359g, 1kg)
- addresses
  - use figures in addresses
- dates
  - use figures for dates and exact times (NB: stick to style)

    9am on May 9, 2003 10.15pm 2:10:30 (time for marathon)
- plural & inclusive numbers
  - the plurals of figures and decades are formed by adding 's'
  - no hyphen between numbers when they're preceded by 'from' or 'between'

3.0 Parts of speech

- **noun** name of a person, place or thing
- **verb** a doing or being word
- **adjective** describes or gives extra meaning to a noun
- **adverb** describes or gives extra meaning to a verb
- **phrase** word group that acts as a part of speech (such as an adverb) & does not contain a verb
- **clause** word group that contains a verb & expresses a complete thought
- **sentence** a collection of words which consist of at least one clause that begins with a capital letter & ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark
- **text** a collection of sentences designed to achieve a purpose

Intransitive verbs do not have a direct object.
They make assertions but do not require and object.

The stars *twinkle*.

Transitive verbs require an object to complete their meaning.

I *washed* my filthy dog.

If a verb requires a **preposition** (a word that shows a relationship between its object and another word) or an **infinitive** (a present-tense verb that follows a preposition) it IS NOT an intransitive verb.

Examples:

We prevent (needs a preposition).

It is important to participate (participate is an infinitive followed by the preposition “to”. The use of the preposition shows it is not intransitive).

Tenses, simply put, allow you to express notions of the past, present or future. They play an important role in defining the actions of verbs and grounding them in relation to time.

Perfect tenses indicate that an action has been completed

Present perfect:	I have run
Past perfect:	I had run
Future perfect:	I shall have run

Progressive tenses indicate the action is still continuing in the past, present and future.

Present progressive:	I am running
Past progressive:	I was running
Future progressive:	I shall be running
Present perfect progressive:	I have been running
Past perfect progressive:	I had been running
Future perfect progressive:	I shall have been running

NB: Progressive tenses are often awkward and are therefore rarely used.

Subject-predicate disagreement occurs when singular subjects are used with plural predicates and vice versa.

- × Whether I study for my test or go out drinking *are decisions* I have to make.
- ✓ Whether I study for my test or go out drinking *is a decision* I have to make.

  TIP: If you are unsure why, reformulate sentence to check:

- ✓ I have to make a decision whether I study for my test or go out drinking.
- × Agreement within the Coalition and the passing of the Bill *is* necessary for any real change to be made.
- ✓ Agreement and the passing of the Bill *are* necessary…
- × The team, and the coach, have agreed to forfeit.
- ✓ The team, and the coach, has agreed to forfeit.

  In this case, the team is the subject; the coach is an ancillary subject and is, therefore, ignored. But, if they are joint subjects, then:

- ✓ The team and its coach have agreed to forfeit.

In **straight news writing**, use the past tense for attribution.

The moment a word is spoken, it exists in the past. Present tense sounds stylish but requires skill in order to use it properly. Once you start in present tense, be consistent. Do not switch tenses:

- ✗ "The state is in serious trouble," Mr Smith *says.*
  Speaking to a public meeting last night, Mr Smith *said* the ingredients were . . .

- ✓ "The state is in serious trouble," Mr Smith *said.*
  Speaking to a public meeting last night, Mr Smith *said . . .*

In reported speech, the verb *said* is the governing verb and, therefore, controls the tenses of any subordinate verbs.

In reported speech, when the verb *said* is in the past tense, the primary tenses of subordinate verbs must be changed to secondary tenses. Accordingly, present is changed to past, perfect to past perfect, future to conditional, and future perfect to conditional perfect. This is called following the sequence of tenses. Thus:

- ✓ He said he was old but energetic.

- ✓ She said she had aged but she had not lost her energy.

- ✓ He said he would go but he would be late.

- ✓ She said she would have lost her patience by then.

- ✓ He said he thought the war was immoral.

As in parenthetical speech, the person of pronouns in reported speech are changed from first to third, and from second to third.

NB: Some newspapers do not use the sequence of tenses, although it is grammatically correct. They take the position that, while attribution normally will be in the past tense, verbs within the attributed statement may well be in present tense. They would argue, for example, that someone's opinion, expressed to a reporter on a given day, continues to exist:

> She *said* she *thinks* the war *is* immoral.

Documents, which continue to exist after a reporter reads them, should be cited in present tense, and, when possible, the use of the imprecise *said* should be avoided:

> Court records *show* that Smith had been arrested twice before on assault charges.

The timeless phrase *according to* also may be used when writing about records.

> According to the accident report, Smith was driving along Main Road when his car's brakes failed.

Dangling modifiers make the reader work to untangle the meaning of the sentence.

In such cases, the modifier – which can be a word, phrase or clause – is located in such a way that it relates to the wrong component.

- × Although injured, his wallet was not stolen.

  Confuses the subject of the sentence and indicates it was the wallet that was injured.

- ✓ Although he was injured, his wallet was not stolen.

  Subject of sentence is now clear.

- × After a consultative process, we decided to make dog vaccinations mandatory with the partners of the veterinary hospital.

  This indicates that the dogs will be vaccinated with the partners, not vaccinations.

- ✓ After a consultative process involving the partners of the veterinary hospital, we decided to make dog vaccinations mandatory.

  Subject of sentence is now clear.

- × Presumptuous and contrived, I sat through the rest of the movie.

  This indicates that I, and not the movie, was presumptuous and contrived.

- ✓ I sat through the rest of the presumptuous and contrived movie.

  Your intent is now clear.

A **squinting modifier** "squints" in both directions of a sentence.

- × Reading the text completely confuses some students.

  Does the text need to read completely to confuse the students or does any reading of the text *completely confuse* the students?

- ✓ Some students are confused by reading the text completely.

- ✓ Some students are completely confused by reading the text.

- × Thinking about the problem rationally relates to philosophical teachings.

  Do you need to think about the problem rationally or does thinking about the problem *rationally relate* to the teachings?

  Either restructuring the sentence or using a comma can clarify such confusing sentences.

- ✓ If you are thinking about the problem you can rationally relate to philosophical teachings.

Non-sequiturs come from the Latin for “it does not follow”. These are classic examples of errors in logic.

× Sitting on a dusty bookshelf, the priceless manuscript revealed a forgotten history.

This relates to where the manuscript was kept and indicates that it is only because it was on the bookshelf, that the manuscript was valuable. One possible rewrite would be:

✓ The priceless manuscript, which was sitting on a dusty bookshelf, revealed a forgotten history.

× Worn elegantly on her finger, the ring was worth $1,200.

If the ring were to be worn on her toe, would the price be different?

✓ The ring, worn elegantly on her finger, was worth $1,200.

Still not perfect, but clearer

× Some people say the Liberal government is paternalistic and anachronistic in its policies. The refugees should be freed tomorrow.

The reader might make the link between the first and last sentence in the formation of the writer’s argument. However, there is no real transition and the last statement does not provide evidence as to *why* the refugees should be freed tomorrow.

✓ Some people say that, because the Liberal government has been paternalistic and anachronistic in its policies, the refugees deserve to be freed tomorrow.

Reasoning is clearer.

× She comes from Melbourne, so she must only wear black.

The second phrase does not logically follow the preceding fact.

✓ She comes from Melbourne where it’s fashionable to only wear black.

Pronouns

Remember that a **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of a noun and, therefore, can perform the same function. In written English, *it*, for example, has only the meaning it acquires from its reference to another word, or words, called its *antecedent*.

There are eight classes of pronouns and each pronoun is placed in one or more categories, depending on its function.

1. Personal pronouns **refer to particular people, objects, qualities, and so on (I, me; you, he, him; she, her; it; we, us; they, them):**
   She **has never been one of my close friends.**
   We **decided to play tennis instead of golf.**
2. Relative pronouns **relate one group of words to another (who, whose, whom, which, that, what, whatever, whichever & a few others)**
   People who **take themselves too seriously often end up making fools of themselves.**
   The AFL Grand Final is the game that **ultimately decides the national football championship.**
3. Interrogative pronouns **are used to ask questions (who, which & what)**
   Who **is the king of rock?**
   What **is the best book you have read this year?**
4. Demonstrative pronouns **point out (this, that, these, those & others):**
   That **is an absurd question.**
   This **was one of your better days.**
5. Indefinite pronouns **act like nouns and require no antecedent (all, both, it, each, anybody, anything & others)**
   Anything **you want to do will be fine with me.**
   Anyone **can ride a bicycle.**
   It **is raining.**
6. Reciprocal pronouns **express mutual relationships (each other, one another)**

   A marriage can hardly be called successful if both partners constantly hurt each other**.**
   An unwillingness to share can interfere with young children's ability to play with one another**.**
7. Intensive pronouns **add emphasis to the word they refer to (myself, yourself, herself, themselves & others)**
   All Shakespeare's plays were written by Shakespeare himself**.**
   I myself **copied down the licence number of the hit-and-run truck.**
8. Reflexive pronouns **have the same meaning as the subject and are used when the action of the subject passes back to it (itself, ourselves & others)**
   The bumper bar did not dent itself**.**
   What is freedom is a matter we decide for ourselves**.**

Overcoming common pronoun difficulties

Gendered language

Many people ponder how to re-write sentences to keep the subject's gender open.

Consider this:

> In today's newsrooms, the journalist often finds *himself*
> wading through a quagmire of media releases and internet research.

How can this be re-written to keep the gender open? (There are many choices available.)

Plural structures

> In today's newsrooms, *journalists* often find *themselves*
> wading through a quagmire of media releases and internet research.

Note the verb "find" has been altered to its singular usage.

Impersonal structures

> In today's newsrooms, *the journalist is often* wading
> through a quagmire of media releases and internet research.

This can also make the sentence simpler and more direct by deleting the necessity of an ancillary pronoun.

Pronoun replacement

Replace the third person pronoun with either first ("I", "we") or second person ("you").

Note: "I", "we" and "you" are nominative case pronouns. Nominative pronouns provide the subject of the sentence or clause.

> In today's newsrooms, *we* journalists often find *ourselves*
> wading through a quagmire of media releases and internet research.

Although this form can personalise writing, it can also make it sound bulky.

Use of 'one'

One can make use of the pronoun "one" but one may find oneself forced to keep using it throughout one's writing. It also makes one sound incredibly affected.

> As a journalist in today's newsrooms, *one* often finds *oneself*
> wading through a quagmire of media releases and internet research.

Masculine/feminine nominatives

If nothing else works, you can use either nominative ("he", "she") or possessive ("his", "her") masculine and feminine pronouns. Beware this does not make your writing clumsy.

> In today's newsrooms, the journalist often finds *himself/herself*
> wading through a quagmire of media releases and internet research.

Possessive following the singular

Bending the rules can be one way to solve the dilemma.

> In today's newsrooms, the journalist often finds *themselves*
> wading through a quagmire of media releases and internet research.

This can also appear awkward but in the right context can sound secure.

> *Every student* who passes this course will find *their* writing
> has improved.

In this case, the singular modifier "every" of the noun "student" should be followed by a singular pronoun. The use of the plural pronoun following singular case is becoming more widely accepted in business writing.

MS Word will pick this up as an error, but as we all know Word can be misguided!

Dangling constructions

Watch for modifiers that do not modify anything in the main clause of a sentence and for ones that seem to modify a word to which it is not logically related:

× **Convinced that voters were not well informed about the candidate's speaking engagement**, advertisements were distributed announcing the new schedule.

✓ **Because he was convinced that the voters were not well informed about the candidate's speaking engagement**, the campaign manager distributed advertisements announcing the new schedule.

× **Entering the auditorium late**, 300 disgruntled members of the audience could be heard shifting restlessly in their seats.

✓ **Entering the auditorium late**, we heard 300 disgruntled members of the audience could be heard shifting restlessly in their seats.

Participles

All verbs have two participle forms, a present and a past. The **present participle** consists of the verb itself plus the ending ***–ing***.

shopping hoping trapping running

The **past participle** of most verbs consists of the verb itself plus, usually, ***–d*** or ***–ed***.

shopped hoped trapped run

Conjunctions

A conjunction is a word that connects words, phrases or clauses. Conjunctions are divided into three subclasses and a fourth group:

Co-ordinating Conjunctions	**Subordinating Conjunctions**	**Correlative Conjunctions**	**Adverbial Conjunctions**
and	after	either … or	consequently
but	although	neither … nor	therefore
for	as	both … and	furthermore
or	because	not only … but also	however
nor	before		likewise
	how		moreover
	if		nevertheless
	since		thus
	while		
	when		
	whether		
	why		

Co-ordinating conjunctions connect items of equal grammatical value:

> The ballerina **and** her partner received thunderous applause.
>
> Some dieters are easily tempted, **but** others are not.

In this example the conjunction ‘but’ joins two independent clauses.

Subordinating conjunctions join subordinate clauses to main clauses:

> Most students found the exam difficult, **although** they had studied diligently.
>
> **If** you reserve a seat 60 days in advance, you receive a $100 discount on your fare.

In both examples, the subordinating conjunction introduces the subordinate clause.

Correlative conjunctions operate in pairs and join elements of equal grammatical value:

> The customer decided to buy **either** the 2001 Falcon **or** the 2002 Camry.
>
> **Both** Li-Ling **and** Tran are qualified doctors.

Adverbial conjunctions (also known as conjunctive adverbs) function primarily to connect main clauses or complete sentences.

> One year my father waited until April 20 to file his tax return: **consequently**, he had to pay a penalty for lateness. **However**, because he learns from his mistakes, my father has never filed a late tax return again.

Prepositions

A preposition is a word that shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun (called the *object* of the preposition) and some other word in the sentence. Common prepositions are: after, at, before, by, for, from, in, of, on, to & with

> Writers look **to** their editors for guidance.
> She placed the letter **on** the table.
> Jim and Louise flew **from** New York to London.

Prepositional phrases, consisting of a preposition plus its object, are used to modify the subject or the predicate of a sentence:

> She left **through the lobby**.
> The waiter carried the dishes **to the kitchen**.

Predicates

A predicate is the part of a sentence that makes a statement or asks a question about the subject. It must be linked to its subject by agreement in number and person. It may consist of a single verb:

> She **talks**.

The predicate may also contain auxiliary verbs and modifiers:

> She **had been talking on the telephone all morning**.

The predicate may also contain nouns, noun phrases or pronouns that function as objects:

> She **had been talking all morning on the telephone to her sister in Sydney**.

Each of these constructions may itself be modified:

> She had been talking all morning on the telephone downstairs in the lobby to her sister who had recently moved to Sydney.

Split infinitives

> The intervention of an adverb or other expression between the word *to* and its verb creates a split infinitive, however it is not always wrong. Wise writers avoid or rewrite split infinitives where possible to avoid disrupting the flow of the sentence for their readers:

- ✗ After the end of semester exams, the lecturer asked me **to as quickly as possible bring** my grade-point average up to the minimum.
- ✓ **After the end-of-semester exams, the lecturer asked me** to bring **my grade-point average up to the minimum** as quickly as possible**.**
- ✗ **I promised** to immediately finish **my two incomplete courses and** to in the future **contact my academic advisor if I had any problems.**
- ✓ **I promised** to finish **my two incomplete courses immediately and to contact my academic advisor** in the future **if I had any problems.**

Where avoidance would create awkwardness, however, split infinitives are acceptable:

To just miss **the bus is a frustrating way to start the day.**

Phrases

A group of related words lacking a subject and a verb that modify subjects and objects. Phrases are used as nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs!

> The architect **with the blueprints** stared gloomily **at the construction site**.
> *prepositional phrase* *prepositional phrase*
> *modifying 'architect'* *modifying 'stared'*

Clauses

A group of words with a subject and a predicate. A *main* – or *independent* – clause makes an independent assertion and can stand alone as a sentence. Every complete sentence must contain at least one main clause:

> After refusing to install an expensive burglar-alarm system,
> **we were robbed twice this year**.

Subordinate – or *dependent* – clauses cannot stand alone. They function as nouns, adjectives or adverbs. A *noun clause* is a group of words with a subject and a verb that functions as a noun. It can serve, therefore, as subject or object of a verb or occupy virtually any other sentence position that a noun can:

> **That fluorocarbons are stable** is one of their biggest advantages. [subject]

> Vinita had read, however, **that they were harming the environment**. [object]

An *adjective* – or *relative* – clause is used to modify a noun. It appears after the noun and is usually introduced by one of the relative pronouns, of which the most common are *who*, *which* and *that*:

> The chemical engineers were trying to find a new freezing substance **that was neither poisonous nor flammable**.

> The people **who witnessed the accident** were all willing to testify in court.

An *adverb clause* is used to modify a verb, an adjective, an adverb, or an entire main clause. It is often introduced by one of the subordinating conjunctions (when, if, because, after, since, although & others):

> **When they are pressurised slightly**, fluorocarbons liquefy.

> They make an ideal refrigerant **because they also withstand a large amount of heat before breaking down**.

Checking your writing

Phrases, clauses, sentences & paragraphs

- Are there phrases which could be better expressed in one word?
- Are there words which would be more expressive in phrases?
- Does the writing have a balance of prepositional and participial phrases?
- Is the phrase placed near to the noun or pronoun it describes?
- Are main clauses separated by a full stop or conjunction?
- Is the relative pronoun in the adjectival clause next to its antecedent?
- Could sentences be joined to make the writing more fluent?
- Is the best conjunction used to link the clauses?
- Does each sentence begin with a capital letter?
- Does each sentence contain at least one finite verb?
- Does each sentence have a subject?
- Does the writing contain a variety of sentence types?
- Does each paragraph have a unity of idea?
- Does each paragraph have a topic sentence?
- Are connectives (transitions) used effectively to develop the idea in each paragraph?
- Is there a good use of transition sentences?

Online grammar resources

Visit, explore & bookmark these sites (remember, some are US based, so be aware of different spellings)**:**

Dictionaries, thesauruses, references, etc.

- dictionary.oed.com
- www.bartleby.com/141 (site for *The Elements of Style* by Strunk)

Editing your writing

- www.powa.org/edit
- www.powa.org/revise
- writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb.html
- writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/finaled.html

Fun language stuff

- www.oxymoronlist.com
- www.lssu.edu/banished

Learning & practising grammar

- **www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar** (a comprehensive, indexed portal to multiple sites)
- **webster.commnet.edu/sensen** (an excellent, online book)
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/notorious.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part2/fourteen/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/marks.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/apostrophe.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/sentences.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/runons.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/combining_skills.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part1/one/growing.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part1/two/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part1/three/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part1/four/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part1/six/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part2/twelve/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part2/nine/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part2/eight/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part2/fifteen/consistency_finding.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/paragraphs.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/phrases.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/clauses.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part1/five/index.html

- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/cases.htm
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part2/thirteen/index.html
- www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/tenses/definition1.htm (+ /definition2.htm through to /definition12.htm)
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html#punctuation
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_apost.html
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_hyphen.html
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/eslsubverb.html
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html#construction (Sentence structure)
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_dangmod.html
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_parallel.html
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_pgrph2.html
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_cohere.html
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_clause.html
- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_proncase.html
- writing.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/parstruc.html
- writing.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/paragrph.html
- writing.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/glossing.html
- writing.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/trans2.html
- writing.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/subidea.html
- www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/acchtml/gram2.html#subjverb
- www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/acchtml/twsent.html
- www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/acchtml/gram2.html#paral
- www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/acchtml/twsent.html (Phrases)
- www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/acchtml/twsent.html (Clauses)
- www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/acchtml/gram2.html#procase
- www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/apostrph.html
- www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/dash.html
- www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/partsp.html
- www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/bldphr.html
- www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/bldcls.html
- www.colorado.edu/kines/cuwrite/para.html
- virtual.clemson.edu/groups/dial/lap101/SENTCHC.htm
- www.shared-visions.com/explore/english/proagree.html
- www.wuacc.edu/services/zzcwwctr/sentencestructure_menu.html
- www.furman.edu/~moakes/Powerwrite/sentvariation.htm
- www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/McConnellMS/cscott/sentence.htm
- teacherweb.ftl.pinecrest.edu/crawfoj/engIIIap/introduc.htm (See “Types of sentence structure”)
- www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/07118/grammar.htm
- www.citadel.edu/citadel/otherserv/wctr/punct.html
- www.apostrophe.fsnet.co.uk
- eslus.com/LESSONS/GRAMMAR/POS/pos.htm

- www.smart.net/~wisdom/mary/confusbl.html
- www.cftech.com/BrainBank/OTHERREFERENCE/GRAMMARANDPUNCTUATION/PartsSpeech.html
- writesite.cuny.edu/grammar/general/clauses/more.html
- grammar.uoregon.edu/goals/accurate.html

Non-discriminatory language

- www.education.qld.gov.au/publication/style/writing/non-discrim.html
- www.nh.org.au/research_edu/resbecc/research_becc_ageism.htm

Rudiments of formal English

- www.litencyc.com/StyleBook/TheEnglishStyleBook.htm
- www.idbsu.edu/wcenter/ww88.htm

Simple English

- www.web.net/~plain/PlainTrain/IntroducingPlainLanguage.html
- www.blm.gov/nhp/NPR/pe_toc.html

Skeptics anonymous

- www.urbanlegends.com/ulz

Spelling

- owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/index2.html#spelling

Test your skills

- www.sentex.net/~mmcadams/spelling.html
- www.brainpop.com/english/seeall.weml

Thinking, logic & learning

- aps.eu.rmit.edu.au/lsu/resources/links/think.html
- ec.hku.hk/acadgrammar/general/argue/illogic/frame3.htm
- web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/LogicTOC.html
- writing.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/reason.html
- www.regent.edu/admin/inseff/crtthink.html

Books referenced for this handout:

- Lefcowitz, A.B.,
  The Writer's Handbook **(US)**
  Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. © 1976
  [USQ Toowoomba Library Call No.: **808.042 Lef**]

- News Limited
  Style: A guide for journalists **(Australian)**
  Surry Hills, NSW: News Limited © 2001
  [USQ Toowoomba Library Call No.: **808.027 Sty** (2001)]
  [USQ Toowoomba Library Call No.: **808.06607 Sty** (2003)]

- Beazley, M. & Marr, G.,
  The Writer's Handbook **(Australian)**
  Albert Park, Vic: Phoenix Education © 1992
  [USQ Toowoomba Library Call No.: **428 Bea**]

- Barwick, J. & Barwick, J.,
  The Writing Skills Handbook **(Australian)**
  St Leonards, NSW: Horwitz Martin © 1999

- Winch, G. & Blaxall, G.,
  The Primary Grammar Handbook **(Australian)**
  St Leonards, NSW: Horwitz Martin © 1999
  [USQ Toowoomba Library Call No.: **428.2 Win**]

- Tardiff, R. & Butler, S., Blair, D. (Editor)
  Macquarie Pocket Thesaurus **(Australian)**
  Milton, Qld: Jacaranda © 1986

- Blair, D. (Editor)
  Macquarie Pocket Dictionary **(Australian)**
  Milton, Qld: Jacaranda © 1982