

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL WRITING

WATCH PRONOUN USAGE.

- Do not use "that" to refer to a person ("that" and "which" should be reserved for inanimate objects. Use "who" or "whom" to refer to a person).
 - Incorrect: *He liked people that looked after themselves.*
 - Correct: **He liked people who looked after themselves.**
- Do not use reflexive pronouns in compound subjects (1) or as direct or indirect objects (2).
 - Incorrect: *John and myself will do the work tomorrow.*
 - Correct: **John and I will do the work tomorrow.**
 - Incorrect: *He gave it to John and myself.*
 - Correct: **He gave it to John and me.**
- Do not use nominative forms of pronouns (I, he, she, we, they) as direct objects or objects of prepositions.
 - Incorrect: *He talked to Peter and I.*
 - Correct: **He talked to Peter and me.**
- Avoid pronoun disagreement.
 - *If anyone protested, ~~they~~ were shot.*
 - **If anyone protested, he (or she) was shot.**

Rule: Indefinite pronouns (*anybody, somebody, someone, nobody*) are singular and therefore should be followed by a singular pronoun. To avoid sexism, use the plural: **All who protested were shot.**

- Do not use objective pronoun forms (such as me, him, her) as the subject of a verb.
 - Incorrect: *He talked the same way as me.*
 - Correct: **He talked the same way as I do.**
- Do not confuse possessive pronoun forms (which generally do not require apostrophes - e.g. ours, its, yours, theirs) with contractions (you're, they're, it's) and in formal papers avoid the use of all contractions (can't, won't, didn't, etc.).
- Use possessive pronoun forms (my, your, his, her, their) before gerunds (an -ing form used as a noun) instead of the objective.
 - Incorrect: *He did not like ~~me~~ doing it.*
 - Correct: **He did not like my doing it.**

DO NOT USE SENTENCE FRAGMENTS (SENTENCES IN WHICH SUBJECTS OR VERBS ARE OMITTED OR WHICH DO NOT EXPRESS COMPLETE THOUGHTS).

- Incorrect: *Also in one of her moments of trying to be a better queen.*
- Correct: **It occurred during one of her moments of trying to be a better queen. [verb added]**

AVOID REDUNDANCY (RESTORE ... BACK, REVERT ... BACK, DESCEND ... DOWN, THE REASON WHY ... IS BECAUSE).

- Incorrect: *He restored the table ~~back~~ to its original condition.*
- Correct: **He restored the table to its original condition.**

DO NOT PERSONIFY INANIMATE OBJECTS.

- Incorrect: *The story discusses how Phoenix made the long walk for her grandson.*
- Correct: **The author tells us that Phoenix made the long walk for her grandson.**

DO NOT USE “WHERE” IN PLACE OF “WHICH”.

- Incorrect: *The doctors performed an operation where bleeding was employed.*
- Correct: **The doctors performed an operation in which bleeding was employed.**

USE “THIS” OR “THAT” TO REFER TO AN IDEA, NOT “WHICH” (WHICH REFERS TO A SINGLE WORD).

- Incorrect: *Many teenagers are committing suicide, which shocks the nation.*
- Correct: **Many teenagers are committing suicide; this shocks the nation.**

AVOID “IS ... WHEN” AND “IS ... BECAUSE” CONSTRUCTION.

- Incorrect: *The reason we do not do it is because we may be caught.*
- Correct: **We do not do it because we may be caught.**

USE SEMICOLONS CORRECTLY; AS A GENERAL RULE THEY ARE PRECEDED AND FOLLOWED BY A COMPLETE SENTENCE.

- Incorrect: *The dogs ran together; one black and one tan.*
- Correct: **The dogs ran together; one was black, and one was tan.** [verbs added]

DO NOT CONFUSE THE USE OF:

- accept (to receive) and except (to exclude)
 - Incorrect: *He excepted the book from Gary.*
 - Correct: **He accepted the book from Gary.**

- affect (a verb) and effect (usually a noun)
 - Incorrect: *Love had an important affect on their relationship.*
 - Correct: **Love had an important effect on their relationship.**

 - Incorrect: *Their relationship affected her adversely.*
 - Correct: **Their relationship affected her adversely.**

- good (an adjective) and well (an adverb)
 - Incorrect: *He did good on his test.*
 - Correct: **He did well on his test.**

- lay (a transitive verb which takes an object) and lie (an intransitive verb which has no object)
 - Incorrect: *I want to lay down.*
 - Correct: **I want to lie down.**

 - Incorrect: *I tried to lie it down.*
 - Correct: **I tried to lay it down.**

- fewer (use for number) and less (use for quantity)
 - Incorrect: *Less casualties resulted than had been expected.*
 - Correct: **Fewer casualties resulted than had been expected.**

 - Correct: **There is less water in the basement now than yesterday.**

- it's (a contraction) and its (a possessive pronoun)
 - Incorrect: *He was unsure of it's(its) outcome.*
 - Correct: ~~Its~~ **(It's) what he wanted to do.**

AVOID THE DOUBLE NEGATIVES.

- Incorrect: *He could not hardly do his work.*
- Correct: **He could hardly do his work.**

- Incorrect: *Nobody knew nothing about Hinduism.*
- Correct: **Nobody knew anything about Hinduism.**

DO NOT USE MISPLACED OR FAULTY MODIFIERS.

- Incorrect: *A group of unruly boys ruined our meeting from a nearby high school.*
- Correct: **A group of unruly boys from a nearby high school ruined our meeting.**

- Incorrect: *To sell antiques, knowledge of their history is an asset.*
- Correct: **To sell antiques, one should have a knowledge of their history.**

BE SURE THAT VERBS AND SUBJECTS AGREE IN NUMBER.

- Incorrect: *The color of the wagons were red.*
- Correct: **The color of the wagons was red.**

AVOID COMMA SPLICES (TWO COMPLETE SENTENCES JOINED ONLY BY A COMMA). USE A PERIOD, SEMICOLON, OR A COMMA WITH A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION.

- Incorrect: *Eleven states comprised the Southern Confederacy, North Carolina supplied more troops than any other Southern state.*
- Correct: **Eleven states comprised the Southern Confederacy; North Carolina supplied more troops than any other Southern state.**

USE PARALLEL TERMS WHEN LISTING.

- Incorrect: *He likes to run, swimming, and hiking.*
- Correct: **He likes to run, swim, and hike.**

- Correct: **He likes running, swimming, and hiking.**

AVOID SPLIT INFINITIVES.

- Incorrect: *He wanted to quickly finish his homework.*
- Correct: **He wanted to finish his homework quickly.**

USE APOSTROPHES CORRECTLY.

- Singular possessive: *It was Charles' book.*
- Plural possessive: **I saw the Joneses' house.**

AVOID USING PAST TENSE OF VERBS WITH HELPING VERBS; USE INSTEAD THE CORRECT PAST PARTICIPLE.

- Incorrect: *If I had ~~went~~ earlier, I would have seen the accident.*
- Correct: **If I had gone earlier, I would have seen the accident.**

USE “AN” BEFORE WORDS BEGINNING WITH A VOWEL OR A VOWEL SOUND.

- Incorrect: *I'll wait a hour for you.*
- Correct: **I'll wait an hour for you.**

- **AVOID THE USE OF ABBREVIATIONS [SUCH AS “THRU” FOR “THROUGH”, THE NAMES OF STATES, AND THE UNITED STATES UNLESS USED AS AN ADJECTIVE (I.E. U.S. SOLDIERS)]**

WORDS OR PHRASES TO BE AVOIDED

- Irregardless (There is no such word)
- I feel (substitute “I think” instead)
- Enthused (as a substitute for enthusiastic)
 - *He was enthused(enthusiastic) about the new job.*
- Hopefully (literally means “with hope” and should be used as an adverb)
 - Incorrect: *Hopefully, they would be married soon.*
 - Correct: **They awaited hopefully their approaching marriage.**
- **The reason being (use “because” instead)**

AVOID THESE COMMON MISSPELLINGS:

- | <u>Incorrect</u> | <u>Correct</u> |
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| ● alot | a lot |
| ● judgement | judgment |
| ● seperate | separate |
| ● truely | truly |
| ● innoculate | inoculate |
| ● independant | independent |
| ● alright | al I right |